

**Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences
Research Seminar Program 2021**

Tuesday 7th September (12-1pm)

To be held via Teams Meeting

Dr Rachel Stevens

Rachel Stevens is a research fellow in the Research Centre for Refugees, Migration and Humanitarian Studies in the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences. Her books include *Immigration Policy from 1970 to the Present* (Routledge, 2016) and the edited collection (with Dr Jordana Silverstein), *Refugee Journeys: Resettlement, Representation and Resistance* (ANU Press, 2021). She served as guest editor (with Professor Joy Damousi) of the special issue of 'Refugees: Past and Present' in the *Australian Journal of Politics and History* (December 2019). Her research articles have appeared in *Australian Historical Studies*, *History Australia*, *Immigrants and Minorities*, *Australian Journal of Politics and History* and *Teaching in Higher Education*. Rachel has been awarded funded fellowships from the National Library of Australia (2018), the US Department of State (2013) and during her doctoral research was a visiting scholar at the University of California San Diego's Center for Comparative Immigration Studies and the University of Texas at Austin's Department of Government. Prior to joining the Australian Catholic University in 2020, she was a researcher at the University of Melbourne (2015-2020) and a Lecturer at Monash University (2010-2014).



Refugees, Relief and Revolution. Australian Humanitarian Networks during the Bangladesh Liberation War, 1971.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the independence of Bangladesh from Pakistani rule, a seismic event largely forgotten outside of South Asian communities. Yet at the time, the Bangladesh Liberation War received saturation media coverage, triggering moral outrage and protests among citizens across the globe. Contemporaneous international interest in this event is no wonder: it was one of the most destructive events after 1945, which caused the displacement of ten million refugees and the deaths of up to three million people. The enormity of the humanitarian task of relief and reconstruction did not deter the international community, particularly among individual citizens and civil society. Initially, many western governments eschewed meddling in what they considered a civil war. But the scale of destruction and suffering galvanized civil society to fill the vacuum left by governments. Indeed, for a moment in time, the Bangladesh liberation movement became the cause célèbre. Unlike the more intractable issues of the 1970s such as the Vietnam War and the Cambodian genocide, aid for Bangladesh had broad community support, appealing to both left and right; the secular and religious. Based on extensive archival research and oral history interviews, this paper explores the motivations, actions and transnational networks of Australian humanitarian organizations, Christian missionaries, political activists, and non-partisan citizens. This research provides a rich, multi-layered analysis of international humanitarianism in postcolonial Asia, examining activities at both the individual and institutional levels.