



Healthy Development Adelaide
A Research and Innovation Cluster in South Australia

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS

**GET YOUR RESEARCH,
NEWS, PAPERS, MEDIA
RELEASES,
RECRUITMENT TRIALS,
EVENTS OUT THERE!!**

*Submissions by end
November for our next
issue out in December*

**Social Media
submissions
(TWITTER, FB AND
LINKEDIN):**

*Submissions open
anytime*

**Submissions must align
with HDA:**

We aim to promote, facilitate and enable multidisciplinary research to advance understanding of healthy development, ensuring the physical, psychological and social health of infants, children and adolescents.

OUR PARTNERS

PLATINUM



GOLD



**University of
South Australia**



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University**

SILVER



Government of South Australia
Department for Education



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Women's and Children's Health Network



Women and Kids



Government of South Australia
Department for Child Protection

BRONZE



UPCOMING HDA EVENT



Join us for the Healthy Development Adelaide (HDA) and Women's and Children's Hospital Grand Round - **Can stress influence our genes, now and in the future?**

This event will be held on **Wednesday 19 October, 12.30-1.30pm**, Queen Victoria Building, lecture theatre, level 1, Women's and Children's Hospital, North Adelaide and online via MS Teams.

This event is free and open to everyone to attend from researchers, clinicians, students, government and the community.

Can psychological stress influence mechanisms key in gene expression (epigenetics), in turn elevating risk to poorer health outcomes? This talk will center on how childhood experiences can influence individuals throughout the life-cycle, starting with epigenetics and mental health outcomes in early adulthood, and all the way back again to the sperm epigenome which in turn may influence baby health outcomes and fertility outcomes impacting both mother and baby. This latter area speaks to the intergenerational transmission of pre-conception stress, and if this can feasibly be transmitted across generations.

OUR SPEAKER



A/Professor Sarah Cohen-Woods is a Matthew Flinders Fellow situated within the College of Education, Psychology and Social Work and the Flinders Institute for Mental Health and Wellbeing at Flinders University.

Sarah completed her PhD in 2008 at Kings College London, and after completing a post-doc moved to Adelaide in 2012. In 2016 Sarah established the Behavioural Genomic and Environmental Mechanisms lab where her group investigates genetic factors in eating disorders, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and even every day cognition and thinking. Her work centres on the nexus between our genes and environment, understanding how they interact to alter our outcomes with a focus on epigenetics and how this is influenced by external factors across the life-cycle – from conception to old age.

OUR CHAIR

Rachael Yates, Executive Director of Nursing and Midwifery, Women's and Children's Health Network.

Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/423704460447>

HDA MEMBER PROFILE - DR JOANNE FLAVEL STRETTON INSTITUTE, UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE



Joanne Flavel is a Research Fellow at Stretton Health Equity in the Stretton Institute at the University of Adelaide. She has qualifications and experience in economics and public health, and expertise in quantitative analysis. She worked at the Southgate Institute for Health, Society & Equity at Flinders university prior to joining Stretton Health Equity, and prior to that worked at the National Institute of Labour Studies. Her research interests and research experience cover a variety of topics, including interactions between health and work, the social and economic determinants of health, health economics, injury epidemiology and global public health.

Joanne is a scholar in social epidemiology and public health but her quantitative skills and social science background are interdisciplinary. Her research focuses primarily on health equity and social determinants of health, which is her passion. The main project she is currently working on is Restoring the

Fair Go: which policies and practices are likely to revise growing health inequities in Australia post COVID-19? This project builds on the previous work of the Southgate Institute, including Joanne's previous research on the scale of inequities in health and social determinants in Australia and highlighting gaps in data on social determinants of health equity. Joanne also leads a project that aims to improve our understanding of gender and health inequalities in Australia.

Joanne is a member of the international Punching Above Weight (PAW) Network, formed to advance thinking and research about why some countries do much better in terms of health outcomes than would be predicted by their economic status. She is also a Global Burden of Disease Collaborator. She has also worked on projects funded by the WHO, World Bank and Wellbeing SA and has worked on projects in partnership with Baptist Care SA and the South Australian Council of Social Service.

Alongside her academic position, Joanne is actively involved in the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) and the Australian Health Promotion Association. She is Co-convenor of the PHAA Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Special Interest Group and is Membership Secretary and Events Coordinator for the PHAA South Australian Branch. She received the Public Health Association of Australia Emerging Leader Award and the Health Promotion Special Interest Group Early Career Award for Research in 2022.

HDA MEMBER NEWS



Congratulations to **Professor Jozef Gecz**, Founding Head of the Neurogenetics Research Program at the Adelaide Medical School, University of Adelaide.

Professor Gecz and his team will use its \$2,996,428 Medical Research Future Fund grant over five years to study the origins and reasons behind numerous genetic disorders.



Congratulations to **Dr Dot Dumuid**, University of South Australia for being awarded a 3 year ARC Discovery Early Career Researcher Award 2023 for \$443,154.

At every stage of life, how we use our time is one of the greatest determinants of our happiness, productivity, social wellbeing and quality of life. Time-use habits, for better or worse, are entrenched in daily routines that are difficult to break. This project aims to use existing population datasets to identify when during their life people are most likely to change their time-use habits, and to describe who may be at greatest risk of making unfavourable changes.

HDA TRAVEL AND DEVELOPMENT GRANT RECIPIENT REPORT



Dr Lauren Lines

Caring Futures Institute, College of Nursing and Health Sciences, Flinders University

I would like to thank Healthy Development Adelaide for their valuable support through the award of a 2022 HDA Travel and Development Grant. This grant provided the opportunity to attend my first post-COVID in-person conference and share key findings from my research. On the 1st-3rd September, I attended the Maternal Child and Family Health Nurses Australia's (MCAFHNA) biennial conference in Canberra. The 2022 MCAFHNA Conference was attended by 450 child and family health nurses from across Australia to build professional networks, keep updated with emerging evidence and explore innovative approaches to caring for infants, children and families. I was privileged to present a poster (pictured) of our recent research funded by a Flinders Foundation Health Seed Grant 2020.

My poster reported findings of a Delphi study that aimed to build consensus of the nature and scope of Australian nursing and midwifery practice in safeguarding children. Key findings

showed that participating nurses and midwives were committed to safeguarding children from abuse as demonstrated by achievement of 80% consensus after two rounds. These findings highlighted the essential but invisible roles of nurses and midwives in advancing the *Safe and Supported: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031*. Furthermore, findings will increase visibility of nurses' and midwives' diverse roles in safeguarding children from abuse and neglect by facilitating clearer understandings of their unique practices and skills. Benefits of increased visibility and clarity of nurses' and midwives' roles include enhanced interdisciplinary collaboration and evidence for tailored professional education, support and resourcing. Ultimately, with a unified understanding of nursing and midwifery roles, these professions can more confidently advocate for children at risk of abuse and neglect within interprofessional contexts. As such, attending the MCAFHNA conference is a first step towards my broader aim of improving interprofessional practice and collaboration for all professionals to better support children to thrive in their families and communities.

Given the essential roles of child and family health nurses in preventing and responding to child abuse and neglect, the MCAFHNA conference was an ideal audience with whom to share my findings. The posters were located in the conference refreshment and networking area which facilitated many opportunities to discuss my research with a range of attendees. I received very positive feedback about the importance and relevance of my work to attendees' own practice and/or research. Furthermore, many keynote speakers and abstract presenters discussed themes that resonated with my ongoing work. Listening to these presentations encouraged me to think creatively about how to progress my program of research for maximum impact for Australian children and families. Several conference speakers have programs of research closely aligned with my own, and I have made plans to connect with these researchers to learn more about their research and potential future collaborations. I once again thank the HDA for supporting my ability to attend the MCAFHNA conference to present my research and participate in networking opportunities crucial to my development as an Early Career Researcher.

HDA Scholar News



Congratulations to HDA Scholar **Joshua Robinson**, a PhD candidate within A/Prof Michael Stark's group, Robinson Research Institute for being the University of Adelaide's representative for the 3 Minute Thesis competition for his presentation: *Helping babies breathe: Improving lung health in babies of asthmatic mothers*.

The 2022 virtual Asia-Pacific 3MT Final showcase will be held on Monday 10 October.

RECENT HDA EVENTS

HDA forum (online) on **Mental health specialist nurses, working with young and diverse populations**. This forum was held in conjunction with our partner organisation the Women's and Children's Health Network.

Our speakers included **Tim Crowley**, Nursing Director / Manager - Acute and Statewide Services / Nurse Practitioner – Complex Care and Trauma Mental Health, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), Women's and Children's Health Network (WCHN); **Tom Sheppard**, Nurse Lead / Clinical Coordinator – Emergency Mental Health Services, CAMHS, WCHN; **Dr Monica McEvoy**, Multicultural Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, CAMHS, WCHN; and **Jorja Terrell**, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Nurse Practitioner – Forensic, CAMHS, WCHN. Our chair was **Dr Jenny Fereday** (HDA Ambassador), Executive Director of Nursing and Midwifery, WCHN, Adjunct A/Professor, University of South Australia.



18th annual HDA Oration presented by **Helen Connolly**, South Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People on **Keeping Our Promises**. Our chair was **Professor Claire Roberts** (HDA Co-Convenor), College of Medicine and Public Health, Flinders University.

The HDA Oration provided an overview of what the Commissioner has learnt during her first term as Commissioner for Children and Young People. What needs to happen for us to be more child focused in policy and practice and the things we adults need to stop and start doing, to ensure we keep our promises to all children to support them to live the best lives they can.

Pictured l to r: Helen Connolly, Claire Roberts



Pictured l to r: April Lawrie, Jacqui Beall, Jisca Sterk, Melissa O'Donnell

HDA forum on **Growing up safe and supported**. This forum is held in conjunction with our partner organisation, the Department for Child Protection. This year National Child Protection Week (4-10 September) focussed on 'Every child, in every community, needs a fair go', in particular on children growing up safe and supported.

Our speakers included **April Lawrie**, South Australian Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People; **A/Professor Melissa O'Donnell**, Deputy Director Research, Australian Centre for Child Protection, University of South Australia; **Dr Jacqui Beall**, Director, Child Protection Service, Flinders Medical Centre, Southern Adelaide Local Health Network; and **Jisca Sterk**, Clinical Psychologist and Manager, Therapeutic Carer Support Team, Department for Child Protection. Our chair was Dr Anna Kontos (HDA Co-Convenor), Robinson Research Institute, University of Adelaide.

PARTNER NEWS NOVITA

The language of autism, and why it is changing

A significant shift is underway in the language we use to describe and define disability, particularly autism. For some time, we have used language such as 'living with disability' or more specifically 'living with autism'. However, as increasing numbers of autistic people find their voice, the disability sector – and even the corporate world – has started to listen.

Penny Miller – Novita's Service Stream Leader, Neurodevelopmental – has recognised the significant cultural and language shift that is underway, and says autistic people are making a statement.

"They're saying 'my autism is part of who I am; it guides my thoughts and feelings, my decisions, what I can and can't do every day, and I really want it to be recognised as part of who I am'," says Penny.

Penny says autism is very individual, and there is no 'one size fits all' approach to how someone with autism thinks or feels, or how they respond to things each day.

Read the full story here

<https://www.novita.org.au/helpful-information/the-language-of-autism-and-why-it-is-changing/>

PARTNER NEWS ROBINSON RESEARCH INSTITUTE

ROBINSON RESEARCH INSTITUTE 2021 ANNUAL REPORT



Reading over our yearly report reminds me why I'm proud to work at the Robinson Research Institute. Our scientists, clinicians and HDR students work tirelessly and collaboratively to improve the lives of children and families around the world.

This report details some of the incredible discoveries we are working on, as well as providing examples of how our work is making a difference in the community. We could not do this alone, so many of our collaborators are highlighted too.

A few high-level achievements from 2021 include:

- Valuable contribution to the Community Affairs Legislation Committee addressing the Mitochondrial Donation Law Reform
- Securing more than \$20 million in research funding
- Being awarded \$5.8M in NHMRC Funding
- Producing 487 publications, reporting scientific advances in many facets of reproductive, pregnancy, and child health
- Our members receiving many accolades, including induction into the Australian Academy of Science for two of our Research Leaders

The report can be viewed here <https://www.adelaide.edu.au/robinson-research-institute/news/list/2022/08/18/2021-rri-annual-report-just-released>

Professor Ray Rodgers

Interim Director, Robinson Research Institute

HDA TRAVEL AND DEVELOPMENT GRANT RECIPIENT REPORT

Mary Brushe

PhD Candidate, University of Adelaide; Study Manager, Telethon Kids Institute

The Population Health Congress was held in Adelaide from the 21st to the 23rd of September 2022, which I was able to attend thanks to a travel and development grant from Healthy Development Adelaide (HDA). The congress brought together public health researchers and professionals from across Australasia, many meeting for the first time since the pandemic. The congress theme was 'Towards a just, safe and sustainable future for Australasia' which was carried throughout the keynote and plenary presentations hearing from well-renowned speakers on issues related to Indigenous health equity, sustainability and climate change, and chief public health officers' learnings from the pandemic.

Of particular interest to my research, was a concurrent session on child and adolescent health. It was within this session I gave two presentations about my work on parent-child interactions and screen time in early childhood. Having the opportunity to present this work to others in my field, allowed me to refine my presentation skills, receive feedback from peers and network with other researchers in the area. I also had the opportunity to hear about others' work which ranged from student's and teacher's perspectives on how to reduce sedentary time at school, breakfast skipping among South Australian students and its relationship with school engagement, the nutritional and environmental aspects of school lunch-boxes, and the mistreatment and social control of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The array of presentations highlighted the diversity of research being undertaken to support the health and well-being of children across Australia, which was both motivating and inspiring to hear.

Another concurrent session titled 'socioeconomic disadvantage and health equity' provided new insights into the influence different forms of disadvantage had on varying health outcomes. One presentation presented findings that quantified the hospital burden of intergenerational contact with the welfare system, using data from the BE BOLD data platform at the University of Adelaide. Another presentation highlighted the progressivity, or lack thereof, of out-of-pocket costs for Medicare-subsidised services and medicines. Aligned with this theme, I attended a workshop that was facilitated by Dr Saman Khalatbari-Soltani and Dr Anita van Zwieten on addressing methodological issues to improve evidence on socioeconomic inequities in health. This introduced the concepts of life course epidemiology, directed acyclic graphs (a tool used in epidemiology to describe the theoretical basis of the research question), and how to ask and answer clear policy-relevant research questions. Having this opportunity to discuss these issues with peers and learn from experts in the field has been extremely beneficial to my own research and way of thinking.

Overall, I am very grateful to HDA for supporting me to attend the Population Health Congress. I have made new connections with researchers which I'm sure will lead to exciting new collaborations. I have a much better sense of the broader public health field – especially within the context of child and adolescent health. Finally, I was able to further develop my presentation skills and think more deeply about the policy implications of my research.

BECOME A HDA MEMBER TODAY ...

Join us in fostering South Australian multidisciplinary research, policy and practice at basic, clinical, social and population levels to enhance the healthy development and wellbeing of Australia's future generations.

HDA membership is open to researchers, PhD students and professionals working in areas relevant to HDA's research.

Membership benefits

- Access to travel grants (PhD students and early career researchers)
- Access to PhD scholarships
- Eligibility to apply for HDA awards
- Free HDA event attendance certificates towards your continuing professional development points
- Build relationships with people working in areas relevant to the health and development of young children and adolescents
- Contribute your knowledge and expertise to make a difference
- Support HDA into the future

1 year (2022) for \$20 or 3 years (to 31 Dec 2024) for \$50 (excluding GST).

<https://health.adelaide.edu.au/healthy-development-adelaide/get-involved>

In-school occupational therapy creates positive education experiences for kids with autism

Media Release - 23 August, University of South Australia



In an Australian first, South Australia has appointed a new Assistant Minister for Autism, tasked to increase autism supports in public primary schools. This could not have come at a more urgent time as new research from the University of South Australia shows that parents world-wide report a lack of awareness and understanding of the unique learning needs of autistic children across all levels of mainstream school.

Strong parent-school relationships are central to a child's learning, development, and wellbeing, yet when it comes to children with autism (ASD), it seems positive relationships are few and far between say UniSA researchers. In Australia, an estimated 200,000 people are autistic, with autism the largest primary disability group served by the NDIS. Globally, about one in 100 children are autistic.

Lead researcher, UniSA's Dr Kobie Boshoff, says support is urgently needed in schools to support the learning needs of children with autism. Occupational therapists are amongst the support services that are ideally placed to provide support to schools.

"Effective parent-teacher relationships are vital for successful learning and wellbeing for children with ASD, but as this research shows, many parents are struggling to establish positive communications with schools," Dr Boshoff says.

"Part of the problem is that schools do not have enough time or resources to appropriately support families with autistic children, but another is a general limited understanding of what autism is in practice, and what children with ASD need to support their learning.

"The other issues relate to poor communication – many parents find it hard to connect with teachers, feel unheard, frustrated or stressed when talking with schools, or have been kept in dark when it comes to their child's progress. Where parents report being heard, they are able to provide ideas and support the learning of their child in the classroom, allowing the teacher to get to know the child's needs better.

"When positive parent-school relationships are not established, schools cannot properly understand and support the unique learning needs of children with autism – and this leads to stress for all parties. Occupational therapists can help change this. By acting as a bridge between the parent and the school they can support parent advocacy, while facilitating school and staff understanding of the unique learning needs of each child with ASD.

"They work holistically within a child's environment, so whether it's working one-on-one with children, in groups or with teachers, they can design alternative ways to help children meet their learning goals. Positive parent-school relationships play a big part in creating successful outcomes for children with autism. Occupational Therapists can help deliver these and should be a consideration for the new Assistant Minister for Autism."

Child Development Council - Reports

What is life like for children and young people in Australia today?

This report aims to describe how Australian children are faring across all aspects of wellbeing and how this is changing.

A decade of data: findings from the first 10 years of Footprints in Time

This report follows the developmental pathways of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children focussing on what helps Indigenous children 'grow up strong'.

Without a home: First-time youth homelessness in the COVID-19 period

This report reveals almost one in 20 young people aged 15 to 19 who responded to Mission Australia's Youth Survey 2021 were homeless for the first time during the pandemic.

Access to and quality of neighbourhood public open space and children's mental health outcomes

This study examines access to and quality of public open space and young children's mental health across eight Australian capital cities.

These reports and others can be found here <https://childrensa.sa.gov.au/cyp-matters-issue-2022-1>

Sport, sleep or screens: new app reveals the ‘just right’ day for kids

Media Release - 9 September, University of South Australia



Not too sport heavy, not too sleep deprived – finding the ‘just right’ balance in a child’s busy day can be a challenge. But while parents may struggle to squeeze in homework amid extracurricular commitments and downtime, a world-first app could provide a much-needed solution.

Developed by University of South Australia in partnership with the Murdoch Children’s Research Institute, the Health-Day-App is helping parents understand which combination of activities can best help their child’s mental, physical, and academic outcomes.

The study found that shifting 60 minutes of screen time to 60 minutes of physical activity resulted in 4.2 per cent lower body fat, 2.5 per cent improved wellbeing and 0.9 per cent higher academic performance.

Lead researcher, UniSA’s Dr Dot Dumuid says that the app will help parents and health professionals better understand the relationships between children’s time use, health, and academic outcomes.

“How children use their time can have a big impact on their health, wellbeing, and productivity,” Dr Dumuid says.

“We know that screens are not great for children’s wellbeing, so if they’re choosing to play video games at the expense of playing sport, it’s easy to

guess the negative impacts effects on their health.

“This app helps guide healthier behaviours. By tracking a child’s current activities over the day, and using the app to adjust these, we can model how any changes are expected to impact on their physical, wellbeing and academic performance.

“It’s a quick and easy tool that can predict health and wellbeing outcomes for children.”

Assessing 1685 data records from the Australian Child Health CheckPoint study (children aged 11-12 years), the new app enables users to make hypothetical adjustments to time use behaviours.

It firstly requests users to input a child’s current 24-hour time usage across seven categories – sleep, screen time, physical activity, quiet time (such as reading or listening to music), passive transport (such as catching public transport), school-related time (including homework), and domestic/self-care (chores/getting ready).

It also includes an advanced option for health professionals to account for puberty and social economic status. On the subsequent panel (accessed by selecting ‘Specify reallocations’ on the left side bar) app users can move sliders to try out time reallocations of their choice. Expected differences to body fat percentages, psychological health, and academic performance are presented in numerical and graphical formats.

“The Healthy-Day-App lets parents, carers and health professionals consider possible changes to a child’s day and predict how this might impact health outcomes,” Dr Dumuid says. “I encourage parents to play around with it – it may just make you reconsider how much screen time your child has in the car, in a café, waiting for an appointment...try it and see. It may surprise you.”

The Healthy-Day-App can be accessed here: www.unisa.edu.au/Healthy-Day-App

The study is published in PLOS ONE, and can be accessed here: <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0272343>

We asked Australian children what they needed from their communities. Here’s what they said

The Conversation, 7 September

What does a “fair go” look like for Australian children? Many felt communities are about care and connection. As one ten-year-old girl said, “a community is really just a group of people that help you and always look out for you”.

Read the full story here <https://theconversation.com/au/politics>

Providing mental health support for kids

Media Release - 27 September, Flinders University



The rollout of a short online course focusing on young people's mental health and wellbeing in South Australian primary schools is giving trainee teachers and other educators important support in helping students manage their behaviour, say Flinders University child development experts.

Results from a pilot study of the 'Big Talks for Little People' module last year confirmed its usefulness in promoting wellbeing and easing anxiety among children, who are encouraged to speak about feelings and emotions. It also features practical teacher information sheets, giving educators knowledge and confidence in recognising and promoting children's mental health in the classroom.

The program, which is expanding to nine more metropolitan and country schools and 10 selected Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) centres this year, has been developed for use in the Australian Curriculum. Its six-class format features short digital animations, as well as multimedia games and activities, produced by Adelaide-based studio Monkeystack.

Funded by the Breakthrough Mental Health Research Foundation and Little Heroes Foundation, the program has been described by teachers as "a modernised wellbeing program that's relevant with what kids are going through at the moment," says one of the developers, Flinders University researcher and child psychologist Professor Phillip Slee, who continues to assess results so far.

"Teachers, including trainee teachers on placement, said it was clear and easy to use the practical teaching resources and 'the children found it engaging,' and 'has digital resources that other programs do not which kids enjoyed and found exciting and engaging,' our feedback found."

"It was a great resource to spark conversation about mental wellbeing in the classroom," says Flinders University education expert Dr Grace

Skrzypiec, who also is involved in developing the project.

"We must provide early intervention strategies and prevention that provides children with the tools to ensure their wellbeing and resilience as they get older. Of significance is that children develop an understanding of now only their own feelings but how others might be feeling as well."

Standardised questionnaires completed by 238 primary school students from five schools who took part last year indicated a significant improvement in their emotional states and wellbeing and fall in anxiety, with children being told "You are never too young to talk about mental health, and how you're feeling".

In an innovative adaption of the primary school program supported by funding from Breakthrough Mental Health Research Foundation, Little Heroes Foundation and Happy Haven OHSC, 10 centres have run the the program in terms 2 and 3 this year.

Preliminary findings "have highlighted its effectiveness in promoting awareness of young students' mental health," says Associate Professor Shane Pill of Flinders University

Flinders University speech pathology graduate Doniya Matthews, who works at the Mount Barker Primary School Happy Haven OHSC, says the program gives students awareness about mental health and their social and emotional wellbeing.

"It's very helpful in opening conversations about these topics and giving them insights and and also provides a way to talk about issues or challenges that they might be facing around self-confidence, resilience etc," she says.

In consultation with Mr Nicholas Smith, Director of Happy Haven OSCH the new 'Big Talks for Little People' OSHC module features:

- Six 35-40 minute sessions aligned with the Australian Curriculum (General Capabilities).
- Short digital animations for each lesson (5-6 animations) focusing on children's mental health issues, e.g., anxiety.
- Eight education information sheets on topics such as social and emotional learning, wellbeing, bullying, etc.

The Flinders University team is now developing a set of flexible lessons suitable for middle school students. The evidence-based mental health and wellbeing program is also being adapted for use in sporting clubs and for children in disaster areas, including after bushfire, flood or drought.

Launch of unique child protection course

Media Release - 29 September, Flinders University



Child protection workers in South Australia now have access to a unique course to build on their expertise when working directly with families experiencing domestic and family violence (DFV) and focusing on improved outcomes for children and young people. DFV is the most prevalent risk factor in families reported to the Department for Child Protection (DCP) and significantly impacts on children's safety and wellbeing.

DCP has partnered with Flinders University's Social Work Innovation Research Living Space (SWIRLS) to co-design the *Responding to DFV in the context of child protection: Advanced understanding and leadership* course.

More than 100 DCP staff, including practice leaders, Principal Aboriginal Consultants, supervisors and senior practitioners, are participating in the first intake of the course, which includes a combination of six online modules and three face-to-face master classes.

The course covers topics such as enhancing specialised skills in responding to children, young people and families experiencing DFV, developing a shared language and understanding to inform work with children, young people and families with complex needs and refining leadership skills in responding to domestic and family violence.

Katrine Hildyard MP, Minister for Child Protection and Minister for Women and the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence said "the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and women is a critical priority; relentless, ongoing effort to tackle the horrific scourge of domestic violence is needed if we are to begin to prevent and end it."

"Domestic and family violence is a factor in at least 70% of child protection cases; a figure that speaks to its deep and unacceptable impact on children. Tackling domestic and family violence requires aligned effort and for everyone to feel confident to recognize the signs and to feel confident to act, support and empower those experiencing it, including children. This course will build on the expertise of child protection workers as they navigate

the complexities of domestic and family violence within families to ensure children and young people are safe, nurtured and well-cared for and to ensure we take steps toward breaking the cycle."

Chief Executive of the Department of Child Protection Cathy Taylor said children and young people experiencing domestic and family violence, directly or otherwise, are impacted in a range of ways including their development, social and emotional wellbeing, and possible cumulative harm.

"Children don't necessarily need to see or hear direct physical violence to be impacted by domestic and family violence, there are so many complexities and nuances for each family. Coercive control may impact how a household functions and how the victim parent functions. This can lead to children and young people feeling fear and tension, isolated or not having their basic needs met due to the perpetrator's financial control.

"The course development was about making sure our staff have the most current evidence-based practice, knowledge and skills to work with families, to understand the complexities of DFV and above all to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people."

SWIRLS Director Professor Sarah Wendt, Matthew Flinders Fellow and Professor in Social Work in the College of Education, Psychology and Social Work says the course is backed by the research and experience of SWIRLS leading experts, who between them have over 30 years' experience in social work practice and management.

"One of our guiding principles at SWIRLS is that social work research should be undertaken in the community, in real time, with real people and real lives.

"This is further enhanced through innovation and collaboration, and thanks to this partnership with the Department for Child Protection, we are able to play a part in improving outcomes for children and families who experience domestic and family violence."

Dr Carmela Bastian, Project Lead and SWIRLS academic, says the course has been uniquely co-designed by SWIRLS and the Department for Child Protection, specifically for the Department.

"The course will ensure that participants are well versed in the many intricacies and dynamics of domestic family violence in the context of child protection in order to be best placed to provide appropriate care and support."

It is envisaged the course will be opened to other participants from 2023. Further information is available at: flinders.edu.au/shortcourse-dcp

Children with disability experiencing domestic and family violence

Media Release - 30 September, Flinders University



Children with disability require urgent policy attention and trauma-informed responses to their experiences of domestic and family violence (DFV).

ANROWS research led by Flinders University Professor in Disability and Community Inclusion, Sally Robinson, provides evidence on the prevalence of children and young people with disability experiencing DFV.

“Connecting the dots: Understanding the DFV experiences of children and young people with disability within and across sectors” examines the perspectives of children, their families and workers to understand their priorities and service needs. This research identifies how policies and systems can be more child informed to create better responses for children with disability experiencing domestic and family violence.

The new research which included an analysis of state-linked data in Western Australia found that approximately 30% of children who experience domestic violence are children with disability.

Children with disability were far more likely than children without disability to have contact with the child protection system and to enter out-of-home care; and twice as likely to have a mother hospitalised due to a DFV assault (8% compared to 4%).

Researchers also spoke directly to children, young people, families, and practitioners, who disclosed the destabilising and isolating effects of DFV on children and young people with disability and how DFV impacts their sense of safety.

Children and young people showed signs of trauma as a result of their experiences of DFV and were found to know more about the violence they were exposed to than many adults assume.

Lead researcher Professor Sally Robinson noted that above all else, children and young people with

disability are children first.

“They are whole people with interests, humour, contributions, and a sense of fun. They are valued and loved. Most live with their family members in a network of relationships, many of which are complex.”

Children, young people, families and practitioners who participated in the research shared their experiences of being on support service waitlists for up to a year, barriers to securing support from government agencies and financial assistance, fear of harm during a violent parent’s access visits with children, and the discontinuity of care when service providers fail to turn up to appointments.

These issues tell a story of a system that is not meeting the needs of children with disability experiencing violence and are evidence of the urgent need for policy attention from all levels of government.

Professor Robinson says the over-representation of children and young people with disability is not because of the children themselves.

“In our study, children and their families had unmet needs for support, experienced unresponsive service systems and intersecting disadvantage relating to violence, poverty, housing crisis and discrimination.

Their complex, compounding circumstances often included disability, but disability did not drive domestic and family violence.”

In the absence of skilled assistance in services for children with disability experiencing DFV, researchers found that a significant amount of advocacy and persistence by family and supportive practitioners was required to access the support children needed.

Effective advocacy can be particularly challenging for family members who are experiencing DFV themselves with many victims and survivors reporting that it is harder to leave unsafe housing when alternate support for children and young people with disability is not easily accessible through DFV, disability or family support services.

Given the intersectional nature of the challenges faced by young people with disability and their families this research finds it is essential that they be included in the design of policy and child-centred responses.

Generating positive conversations around childhood health behaviours

Caring Futures Institute - 24 August, Flinders University



Could embedding a health behaviour screening tool within routine primary health care be the answer to improving the health, wellbeing and development of children in the early years? This important question is being explored by Flinders Caring Futures Institute researcher and PhD candidate Dimity Dutch.

As an Accredited Practising Dietitian, Ms Dutch says she has always been interested in working with children and families to promote and establish positive health behaviours from a young age. Recognising that health and wellbeing is more than just what we eat, she is taking a holistic approach by focusing on modifiable health behaviours as an alternative to BMI screening in primary health care.

Traditionally, children have their height, weight and BMI charted on growth percentile charts by a GP or primary health care practitioner. However, Ms Dutch says measuring a child's height and weight shouldn't be relied upon as a sole measure of health. She highlights that there is often a disconnect between the number on a scale and a child's overall health and wellbeing due to the complex and multifaceted world we live in.

"Without measuring behaviours, the health care practitioner may not get a clear idea of what advice they should provide, which referral pathways they should follow or what that child and family might need extra support with. What I want to do is

modify the screening process to focus less on weight and shift to measuring health behaviours, generating more positive conversations around improving health and wellbeing in the early years."

Particularly with nutrition, by engaging with parents in the health care settings they are already visiting, Ms Dutch says there are many behaviours that can be supported to help establish healthy habits that last for life.

"Many parents are also uncomfortable discussing their child's weight, given the stigma surrounding childhood overweight and obesity. Weight-focused conversations can be polarising and make families want to disengage with the healthcare system."

As part of her PhD, Ms Dutch will identify the current guidelines for health behaviour screening in primary health care. She will then work collaboratively with practitioners to determine facilitators, barriers and the resources that would be required to feasibly implement the screening tool in routine practice. She will also engage with parents, caregivers and other key stakeholders to gain their valuable feedback.

"I want to see whether a brief screening tool can be used in this setting, that captures all the behaviours that can impact a child's health, wellbeing and development. This could include fruit and vegetable consumption, sleep, screen-time and physical activity. This tool could be used widely across the primary health care system to make every contact count."

From a health monitoring perspective, such a tool could also support the tracking of behaviours over time and allow practitioners to readily compare the child's behaviour to national recommendations.

"I hope that a brief health behaviour screening tool will facilitate more tailored and positive conversations to support the health and wellbeing of children," Ms Dutch says. "Ultimately, the aim is to improve and support alignment towards national health behaviour recommendations and to identify poor health behaviours earlier, leading to improved health outcomes across the lifespan."

Ms Dutch's supervisory team includes Prof Rebecca Golley and Dr Lucy Bell.

The Conversation

An Autism Minister may boost support and coordination.

The South Australian government announced the appointment of Emily Bourke to the role of assistant minister for autism. It's the first portfolio of its kind in Australia. The appointment of a minister specifically responsible for autism matters is a landmark moment. But it also raises questions about why a government has chosen a specific focus on autism.

Read more at theconversation.com/au/health

A fair go for all children



Via **LIVE STREAM** or

Friday 7 October
12.30pm – 2.30pm

Lecture Theatre 1, Level 5, Flinders Medical Centre

A fair go for all children

GUEST SPEAKERS



Hon Katrine Hildyard
Minister for Child Protection



Prof Leonie Segal
Chair, Health Economics &
Social Policy, University of SA



Assoc Prof Tamara Mackean
Proud Waljen woman; College of Medicine & Public
Health Flinders University; SALHN Board Member

A special child protection event hosted by the Flinders Medical Centre, SALHN and supported by the Flinders Foundation: 'A fair go for all children'.

As individuals and healthcare workers we all have an important role to play in building a child-safe community, protecting children from harm and supporting all children to thrive.

Friday 7 October, 12:30pm-2:30pm

Lecture Theatre 1, Level 5 Flinders Medical Centre (access via Southern Entrance) or via live stream [here yououtu.be/TQO8x-Ynlw4](https://youtu.be/TQO8x-Ynlw4)

Guest speakers include:

The Honourable Katrine Hildyard MP – Minister for Child Protection

Professor Leonie Segal – Foundation Chair, Health Economics and Social Policy, University of South Australia – who is presenting “*A better future for our children: Health, social and economic consequences of child abuse and neglect – Disrupting the harm cascade*”.

Associate Professor Tamara Mackean – Proud Waljen woman; Associate Professor College of Medicine and Public Health Flinders University; SALHN Board Member – who is presenting “*Indigenous research methodologies: safe yarning and supported co-design in child protection research*”.

Uncertainty and Child Protection *Online livestream*

Wednesday 6 October, 6-7pm ACDT

This public event, presented by the Social Work Innovation Research Living Space (SWIRLS) at Flinders University in South Australia and the Centre for Social Work Innovation and Research (CSWIR) at the University of Sussex in the UK, will be an ‘in conversation with’ style event, where academics, and practitioners will discuss how practice has adapted to the heightened sense of uncertainty engendered by the pandemic in everyday child protection social work. The unique perspectives of social work practitioners and managers from Australian and UK practice contexts will be brought together in conversation with academic colleagues from SWIRLS and CSWIR.

Register now for this online livestream <https://events.flinders.edu.au/events/uncertainty-and-child-protection/>

Schools, Society and Digital Wellbeing

Panel discussion event

ADVANCING SAFE, HEALTHY AND ETHICAL ENGAGEMENT ONLINE

Thursday 27 October, 6.00 - 7.15pm

Allan Scott Auditorium, Hawke Building, UniSA City West Campus, 55 North Terrace Adelaide

This event is presented by The Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre, Centre for Digital Wellbeing and The Social Policy Group, UniSA.

We can no longer consider the online and digital space as separate from the offline one. Technology has become an integrated part of our daily lives, fundamentally shifting the way we interact with each other and the world. For children and young people especially, it has changed how they grow, learn, and maintain and develop social connections.

While technological innovation has its benefits, it also carries with it a number of risks. Not only does it impact the physical and mental wellbeing, emotional development, and cognitive functions of our children, it has also created a new information ecosystem which facilitates the proliferation of dis- and misinformation, amplifying political divides and misogyny. Supporting communities to enjoy the benefits of being online while protecting them against the risks of psychological distress, exposure to inappropriate materials, cyberbullying, harassment, and disinformation is a complex problem that raises important questions about the role of government and the community in teaching young people how to engage ethically and be safe online.

Join Minister for Education, Training and Skills Blair Boyer MP, journalist and author Van Badham, and Centre for Digital Wellbeing Director Carla Wilshire OAM for a conversation about how schools, educators, parents, caregivers, and the community can support young people to safely navigate this new digital world.

Further info and to register:

<https://www.unisa.edu.au/connect/hawke-centre/events-calendar/2022-events-program/hawke-centre-schools-society-digital-wellbeing/>

How infant-led practice in family violence settings can nurture hope for infants and families

Presenters: Dr Wendy Bunston, Tauri Smart and Kristin Walsh. Facilitated by Vicki Mansfield .

12 October, 12:30 – 1:30PM (ACDT)

This is a free webinar co-produced by AIFS and Emerging Minds.

Infants (0–24 months) are at a critical and formative stage of development. If exposed to domestic violence, they are at higher risk of neurological, psychological and physical harm. When working with families experiencing family and domestic violence, it is important to consider the infant's experience, and recognise their inherent capacities for engagement, exploration and discovery. Within family and domestic violence practice, infants can be observed formally or informally within a range of settings. The presenters will explore practice contexts, particularly focusing on infant observations and relationship-based conversations that support parents and infants to make meaning and heal.

Recognising the interdisciplinary practices that contribute to safety and care for infants this webinar will:

- Discuss practices that support the infant as an active agent of change in working with families experiencing family and domestic violence.
 - Explore how strategies for observing infants, having relationship-based conversations and fostering curiosity can support parents and infants to describe their stories of hope and resilience.
- Consider how preverbal infants communicate with their parent/s and how they make meaning of their experiences of trauma.

This webinar will be of interest to practitioners working in the child, family, health, accommodation and housing sectors who encounter or directly work with infants, toddlers and families within the context of domestic and family violence.

Register here <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/2673081418187116043>

2022 Barton Pope Lecture

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) SA Branch, **2022 Barton Pope Lecture** presented by Clinical **Associate Professor Anne Sved Williams AM**.

Inspirational Infants! The panorama of prevention possibilities and public health advocacy for babies, their melancholic mothers and the forgotten fathers.



Anne Sved Williams is a perinatal and infant psychiatrist working at South Australia's mother-baby unit, Helen Mayo House, at the University of Adelaide where she undertakes research and teaches. Anne has been appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for her service to medicine and medical education. She will be discussing issues surrounding infants and their families' mental health, the problems we face, how they might be addressed, and where we might be best served by focusing our public health efforts.

The lecture will be held on Monday 10 October at 7.00pm
U City Function Centre, 43 Franklin Street, Adelaide.

For further information and to register contact Trudy Lisk, RANZCP SA Branch Coordinator, at Trudy.Lisk@ranzcp.org or on 08 8219 4201.

Helen Mayo House Annual Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Conference

HELEN MAYO HOUSE ANNUAL PERINATAL AND INFANT MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE 2022

"The first 1000 days for everybody – connecting, decolonising, innovating"



Adelaide Convention Centre, 21-22 November

Enquiries—Tina Bull, Helen Mayo House

Ph: 08 7087 1047

Email: HelenMayoHouse@sa.gov.au /

tina.bull@sa.gov.au

Full info and program here:

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/helen-mayo-house-annual-perinatal-and-infant-mental-health-conference-2022-tickets-362799662557?aff=ebdsoporgprofile>

Does South Australia need school provided meals? Let the Citizens' Jury decide

Flinders University in partnership with the Commissioner for Children and Young People invite you to a live online jury style consultation on the topic of school provided meals.

Arguments for and against will be presented by "expert witnesses" to a group of "jurors" representing key stakeholders to determine support for or against the idea of school provided meals in SA .

Thursday 20 October, 12.30pm – 3.30pm (Adelaide time)

Book your place: <https://events.humanitix.com/healthy-school-meals-citizens-jury>

This event will be held in Anti-Poverty Week, which encourages an increased understanding of poverty and how to take action collectively to end it. Now in its 20th year, the focus this year is on halving child poverty by 2030.

School provided meals are common internationally to support families experiencing food insecurity and have achieved benefits in student attendance, academic performance and nutrition. However, costs, lack of infrastructure and potential resistance from stakeholders are barriers to adoption in South Australia.