Newsletter: Vol 22, Issue 2 - April 2025

## Newsletter submissions

**Get your Research, News, Papers, Media Releases, Recruitment Trials, Events out there!!**

***Submissions by end May for our next issue out in June***

## Social Media submissions (X, 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

Children's Research Foundation

### GOLD

The University of Adelaide

Robinson Research Institute

Government of South Australia – Department of Human Services

University of South Australia

Flinders University

### SILVER

Government of South Australia – Department for Education

Government of South Australia – Women's and Children's Health Network

SAHMRI – South Australian Health & Medical Research Institute – Women and Kids

Government of South Australia – Preventive Health SA

Government of South Australia – Department for Child Protection

Women's & Children's Hospital Foundation

### BRONZE

novita

# Congratulations to our HDA Women's Excellence in Research Award winner for 2025!

## Congratulations to our HDA Women's Excellence in Research Award winner for 2025 – Dr Karen Best

This Award recognises and celebrates excellence of research achievement by women working in the field of developmental health. Dr Karen Best will receive $1,000 and an award certificate in recognition.

Dr Karen Best is a Principal Research Fellow and Lead of the Pregnancy and Newborn Health research program within SAHMRI Women and Kids, SAHMRI.

Karen's mission is to improve the lives of mothers and babies by generating high-quality evidence and translating findings into practice. Her research explores how prenatal exposures influence maternal and infant outcomes, with a focus on nutrition and preventive care.

This work has led to transformative policy and clinical practice changes. Karen has led the landmark ORIP Trial, providing critical evidence on omega-3 supplementation for preterm birth prevention.

This research shaped local and international guidelines, including the 2021 NHMRC Pregnancy Care Guidelines. Building on ORIP's success, Karen now leads the world's first Omega-3 Test-and-Treat Program, supported by a $1.66M MRFF Maternal Health and Healthy Lifestyles grant. This program has engaged over 25,000 women and 1,200 GPs, demonstrating the feasibility of embedding precision nutrition strategies into routine antenatal care and laying the foundation for national implementation to reduce preterm birth.

As Principal Investigator of the national PoppiE Trial, Karen is pioneering research on prenatal iodine supplementation in iodine-sufficient populations. This large-scale study addresses critical gaps in maternal and child health knowledge, with potential to influence global policies and improve cognitive development and long-term childhood outcomes.

In addition to these flagship projects, Karen is a Chief or Associate Investigator on multiple perinatal research projects, demonstrating her ability to lead impactful and collaborative research. Her contributions are reflected in high-impact publications, key policy recommendations, and securing over $8 million in research funding.

Looking forward, her program will drive precision healthcare strategies, launch landmark national clinical trials, and ensure equitable access to proven interventions. By addressing critical gaps in maternal and infant healthcare, Karen aims to create transformative advancements, paving the way for healthier futures for children and families worldwide.

"I am deeply honoured to receive the HDA Women's Excellence in Research Award. My passion lies in conducting high-quality clinical trials that generate the evidence needed to improve maternal and infant health. This work would not be possible without the dedication of an incredible team and collaborators, together our efforts drive real-world impact. By embedding proven interventions into routine care, we aim to create lasting change that ensures the best possible outcomes for mothers and babies, both in Australia and globally."

Pic l to r: HDA Co-Convenor A/Prof Zohra Lassi presenting the award certificate to Dr Karen Best.

Find out more about Dr Karen Best here: **https://sahmri.org.au/people/karen-best**

# Congratulations to HDA and Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation PhD Excellence Awardees

**Congratulations to Rashmi Baid and Eskedar Mekonnen two of our Healthy Development Adelaide (HDA) and Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation PhD Excellence Award winners for 2025.**

**We thank the Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation for its ongoing financial support of the PhD Excellence Award and its partnership of 18 years helping HDA to foster research excellence and career development in South Australia. This is our 14th cohort and our two winners will each receive $5,000 per annum for 3 years to augment their scholarships.**

Rashmi Baid is a PhD candidate at the Robinson Research Institute at the University of Adelaide. Rashmi's research project focuses on endocrine and immune dysfunction as determinants of recurrent pregnancy loss and the clinical efficacy of Metformin in improving outcomes.

This project seeks to identify the biological basis of recurrent pregnancy loss, which affects 5% of women, with the cause remaining unknown in 50% of cases. By uncovering key metabolic and immunological mechanisms, her work aims to pave the way for more personalised and targeted treatment strategies, ultimately improving pregnancy outcomes and reproductive care.

This project is supervised by Professor Louise Hull and co-supervised by Professor Sarah Robertson and Dr Lachlan Moldenhauer from the University of Adelaide.

"I am honoured to receive the HDA and Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation PhD Excellence Award 2025 and grateful for the recognition and support of my research," Rashmi.

Eskedar Mekonnen is a PhD candidate within the Robinson Research Institute at the University of Adelaide. Eskedar's research project focusses on complicated pregnancies and their long-term effects on offspring health, through the lens of biological aging.

This project will investigate whether complications during pregnancy influence the development of metabolic syndrome in offspring. It will also explore the role of epigenetic modification, such as DNA methylation, and telomere length.

Grounded in life course epidemiology, this project will focus on exploring the impact of cardiometabolic risk factors and adverse events during pregnancy on the health trajectories of offspring as they grow into adulthood.

This project is supervised by Dr Jessica Grieger, and co-supervised by Dr Tina Bianco-Miotto and Dr Kai Liu, University of Adelaide.

"I am sincerely grateful and honoured to receive the HDA and the Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation PhD Excellence Award for 2025. Understanding the roots of health, particularly during pregnancy, is key to nurturing future generations. Our project will contribute to the progress toward healthy growth and optimal development for children and adolescents by exploring the risk of health and disease and identifying key intervention points. The support from this award provides a valuable opportunity to build a professional network and foster collaboration, thus broadening the impact of this project," Eskedar.

# Congratulations to our HDA Publication Award winners for 2024

**This award recognises and promotes research publications of our PhD students, early career researcher (ECR) and mid career researcher (MCR) members. Each awardee receives $500 for their winning publication.**

**MCR category – Dr Jack Darby, Research Fellow, Early Origins of Adult Health Research Group, UniSA: Clinical and Health Sciences, University of South Australia.**

Acute-on-chronic: using magnetic resonance imaging to disentangle the haemodynamic responses to acute and chronic fetal hypoxaemia.
Jack R. T. Darby, Brahmdeep S. Saini, Stacey L. Holman, Sarah J. Hammond, Sunthara Rajan Perumal, Christopher K. Macgowan, Mike Seed and Janna L. Morrison

Frontiers in Medicine - https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/medicine/articles/10.3389/fmed.2024.1340012/full

The fetal haemodynamic response to acute episodes of hypoxaemia are well characterised. However, how these responses change when the hypoxaemia becomes more chronic in nature such as that associated with fetal growth restriction (FGR), is less well understood. Herein, we utilised a combination of clinically relevant MRI techniques to comprehensively characterize and differentiate the haemodynamic responses occurring during acute and chronic periods of fetal hypoxaemia.

**ECR category – Dr Lauren Lines, Senior Lecturer in Nursing, Postgraduate Course Coordinator (Nursing), College of Nursing and Health Sciences, Flinders University.**

Interprofessional Education in Child Protection for Preservice Health and Allied Health Professionals: A Scoping Review
Lauren Elizabeth Lines, Tracy Alexis Kakyo, Helen McLaren, Megan Cooper, Nina Sivertsen, Alison Hutton, Lana Zannettino, Rebecca Starrs , Donna Hartz , Shannon Brown , and Julian Grant

Trauma, Violence & Abuse - https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/15248380231221279

Health and allied health professionals are uniquely positioned to collaborate in prevention, early intervention and responses to child maltreatment. Effective collaboration requires comprehensive interprofessional education (IPE), and inadequate collaboration across sectors and professions continually contributes to poor outcomes for children. Little is known about what interprofessional preparation health and allied health professionals receive before initial qualification (preservice) that equips them for interprofessional collaboration and provision of culturally safe care in child protection.

**PhD category – Rudrarup Bhattacharjee, Post-Doctoral Researcher, Adelaide Centre for Epigenetics (ACE), South Australian immunoGENomics Cancer Institute (SAiGENCI), Faculty of Health and Medical Science, University of Adelaide.**

Compromised transcription-mRNA export factor THOC2 causes R-loop accumulation, DNA damage and adverse neurodevelopment
Rudrarup Bhattacharjee, Lachlan A. Jolly, Mark A. Corbett, Ing Chee Wee, Sushma R. Rao, Alison E. Gardner, Tarin Ritchie, Eline J. H. van Hugte, Ummi Ciptasari, Sandra Piltz, Jacqueline E. Noll, Nazzmer Nazri, Clare L. van Eyk, Melissa White, Dani Fornarino, Cathryn Poulton, Gareth Baynam, Lyndsey E. Collins-Praino, Marten F. Snel1, Nael Nadif Kasri, Kim M. Hemsley, Paul Q. Thomas, Raman Kumar & Jozef Gecz

Nature Communications - https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-024-45121-5

Human neurodevelopment is a highly orchestrated and complex process. The identification of naturally occurring gene variants leading to neurodevelopmental disorders (NDD) highlights the involvement of over 2300 different genes and a myriad of cellular, molecular, and developmental mechanisms, only a few of which are being successfully targeted with precision therapies. Many essential biological processes are compromised by such NDD gene variants and often knockout of these genes cause embryonic lethality. One such example is variants in the X-chromosome gene *THOC2* that cause NDDs with clinically heterogeneous presentations, now we call *THOC2* syndrome. *THOC2*, a highly constrained gene, encodes the largest subunit of the THO subcomplex in the highly-conserved Transcription-Export (TREX) complex. The TREX complex is essential for transcription, mRNA processing and export, preventing DNA damage, and maintaining ESC self-renewal, pluripotency and differentiation during embryogenesis.

## Congratulations to our HDA Travel and Development Grant recipients, round 1 2025

**Congratulations to our PhD student and early career research members who will each receive funding towards their conference travel and development, January-June 2025.**

**Meredith Smith,** School of Allied Health Science and Practice, University of Adelaide. European Academy of Childhood Disability/International Alliance of the Academies of Childhood Disability Conference, Germany.

**Dr Anya Arthurs**, Robinson Research Institute, University of Adelaide. Perinatal Society of Australia and New Zealand Annual Congress, Australia.

**Jessica Williamson**, College of Medicine and Public Health, Flinders University. Interstate collaboration/ Lab visit, Australia.

**Amelia Scott**, College of Nursing and Health Sciences, Caring Futures Institute Flinders University. International Society of Behavioural Nutrition and Physical Activity Conference, New Zealand.

**Alexandra Manson**, College of Nursing and Health Sciences, Caring Futures Institute, Flinders University. International Society of Behavioural Nutrition and Physical Activity Conference, New Zealand.

**Zahra Padhani,** School of Public Health, University of Adelaide. Society for Epidemiologic Research Conference / Society for Paediatric and Perinatal Epidemiologic Research Annual Meeting, USA.

**Dr Emily Shepherd**, SAHMRI Women and Kids / University of Adelaide. Perinatal Society of Australia and New Zealand Congress, Australia.

**Yohannes Efa**, Allied Health and Human Performance, Cancer Epidemiology and Population Health, University of South Australia. International Society of Behavioural Nutrition and Physical Activity Conference, New Zealand.

**Negin Damabi**, School of Public Health, University of Adelaide. 51st Annual Meeting of the International Academy of Sex Research, USA.

**Jordan Minns**, Clinical and Health Sciences, University of South Australia. Society of Reproductive Investigation, USA.

## HDA Member Publication

**What is known about Indigenous women's dissatisfaction of Birthing experiences in mainstream maternity hospitals in Australia, Aotearoa, Canada, US, Kalaallit Nunaat and Sápmi? A systematic scoping review**

Authors: Nina Sivertsen, Tahlia Johnson, Grete Mehus, Tove Ness, **Susan Smith**, Josephine McGill

Understanding Indigenous women's dissatisfaction with birthing experiences is vital for improving maternal healthcare. It highlights the need for compassionate, respectful care that meets women's physical and emotional needs. Addressing these concerns can enhance patient satisfaction, reduce postpartum mental health issues and wellness, and ensure safer, more positive outcomes for mothers and babies.

This scoping review aimed to identify what is known about Indigenous women's dissatisfaction of birthing experiences in mainstream maternity hospitals. A total of 22 manuscripts reporting 22 studies met the inclusion criteria and were included in the synthesis.

**Read the full paper here: https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/public-health/articles/10.3389/fpubh.2025.1495197/full**

# HDA Media Training Workshop 2025
# OPEN CALL

**We are holding our annual 2 hour media training workshop with Mike Smithson from 7 NEWS.**

**It will be delivered to our HDA Scholars and HDA PhD student members who are in their second, third or final year.**

**This course covers the latest interviewing techniques and styles for application in television news and current affairs, as well as radio and newspapers.**

Mike has been involved in on-air television for the past 40 years, and is the most experienced "hands-on" journalist in Adelaide currently conducting presentation training courses.

The course is designed to give participants the ability to tackle any media interview under almost any circumstance. Public speaking confidence and presentation skills are crucial to winning over any audience. Correct use of social media is also critical.

The object of the workshop is to instruct on :::: key message delivery :::: the psychology of controlling an audience :::: handling difficult interviews :::: how to make answers water tight :::: confident public presentation and controlling your audience :::: the importance of social media

Eligibility:  Open to our HDA second, third or final year PhD students undertaking their study in a South Australian University  Open to paid members only. Membership is $30 (excluding GST) for 1 year or $60 (excluding GST) for 3 years
Become a member here: **https://health.adelaide.edu.au/healthy-development-adelaide/get-involved**

Applications will close at 5.00pm Thursday 24 April 2025. Late applications will not be considered.

Enquires and/or submit applications to anne.jurisevic@adelaide.edu.au Spaces will be limited.
The workshop will be held 'in person' only on Tuesday 13 May, 2.30-4.30pm

Full information here:
**https://health.adelaide.edu.au/healthy-development-adelaide/news/list/2025/04/01/hda-media-training-workshop-2025-open-call**

# Words Grow Minds Parent Podcast


**NEW PODCAST hosted by Kate Ellis and Amelia Mulcahy.**

**Launching Wednesday 2 April**

**Expert insights : Practical tips : No judgement.**

**Tune in to wherever you get your podcasts.**

Contact our team at **admin@raisingliteracy.org.au** or **(08) 8331 3095**

## HDA Member Profile - Dr Catharine Jawahar
## Discipline of Psychiatry, University of Adelaide

Dr Catharine Jawahar is a lecturer at the Discipline of Psychiatry, University of Adelaide. She coordinates the undergraduate, Fundamentals of Biological Psychiatry course.

Her research focus is on understanding the biological mechanisms mediating psychosocial stress effects to increased risk of psychiatric disorders.

Broadly, my research is on understanding the effects of psychosocial stress on brain development, neuroendocrine and immune functions and behaviors across lifespan.

As a molecular biologist with a specific interest in the genetics of psychiatric disorders, my research aims to unravel the complex interplay of genes and environment in the onset and progression of various psychiatric disorders. In particular, my research focus is on the effect of early life stressors and their role in programming the brain for later-life psychopathology in either adolescence or adulthood.

My primary expertise is with animal models of psychiatric endophenotypes, focused on the effect of early stress and trauma in WT or genetically modified mouse strains.

More recently I have also been working with clinical cohorts of depression and psychosis within the discipline in collaboration with other researchers.

## HDA School Communicators for Schools!

**Are you a teacher – interested in offering exciting topics for your students?**
We are offering free interactive school sessions for Years 8 to 12 with one or both of our HDA School Communicators. Our HDA School Communicators are funded by the Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation (CRF).

Three sessions only for each HDA School Communicator is available so be quick and don't miss out!

1. **Dr Hayley Leake is a Research Fellow within the Body in Mind Research Group, IIMPACT in Health at the University of South Australia. Hayley's session is on The Mysterious Science of Pain.**

Hayley's research focuses on chronic pain management, pain education and digital health, particularly in adolescence. Her work identifies and implements interventions to change individual's misconceptions about pain, to improve active engagement in pain rehabilitation.

**2. Dr Eloise Doherty is a Lecturer in Audiology within the College of Nursing and Health Sciences at Flinders University. Eloise's session is on Hearing, Musical Engagement, and Auditory Processing.**

Eloise's research explores the links between music education and auditory processing for children with hearing impairment, applying novel research methodologies to explore both outcomes and experience. Eloise is an experienced educator, previously working as an instrumental music teacher in schools before transitioning into clinical and lecturing roles in audiology.

The goal of this program is to help our emerging researchers showcase their research to South Australian high school students with the aim of getting students excited about the amazing opportunities open to them in health science or science career pathways.

For further information or booking, contact **anne.jurisevic@adelaide.edu.au**

## UPCOMING HDA EVENT

Join us for the **Healthy Development Adelaide (HDA)** and **Women's & Children's Hospital Foundation** forum on **Working hand in hand to improve infant health and development.**

This forum will be held on Tuesday 8 April, 5.30-8.00pm, Napier 102 lecture theatre, Napier building, First floor, University of Adelaide, North Terrace.

**IN PARTNERSHIP WITH**

Women's & Children's Hospital Foundation

The Women's & Children's Hospital Foundation (WCH Foundation) partners to create healthier futures for children and their families under the care of the Women's and Children's Health Network. This joint forum will highlight some of the research and programs being supported by the WCH Foundation which are working to improve infant health and development.

*OUR SPEAKERS*
**Verity Gobbett**, CEO, WCH Foundation
***Introduction to the WCH Foundation***

**A/Professor Jaqueline Gould,** Program lead of Supportive Neurodevelopment at SAHMRI Women and Kids
***Omega-3 DHA to support the neurodevelopment of very preterm infants***

**Jill Newman,** Arts in Health Manager, WCH Foundation
***Music for Wellness***

**Professor David Lynn,** Program Director, SAHMRI Precision Medicine, SAHMRI / Head of Strategic Partnerships and Professor of Systems Immunology, Flinders University Health and Medical Research Institute, Flinders University / Scientific Director, SA Genomics Centre
***The impact of antibiotics on infant vaccine immune responses and how we may be able to mitigate these deleterious effects***

**Dr Malithi Hauser,** Consultant Paediatrician and medical lead of the Cocoon Program, Women's and Children's Hospital & **Charlotte Watson,** Social Worker, Women's and Children's Hospital, Women's and Children's Health Network
***The WCH Foundation Cocoon Program***

*OUR CHAIR*
**Dr Chelsea Mauch**, Head of Programs & Impact, WCH Foundation

*Other event information:*
*Networking and light refreshments will follow the session from 7.00pm.*
*This is a public forum and also open to the community, everyone is welcome to attend.*

For the full program and to register please go here: **https://events.humanitix.com/working-hand-in-hand-to-improve-infant-health-and-development**

We look forward to seeing you there. Please share far and wide to your colleagues and networks.

# HDA Past Events

**Healthy Development Adelaide (HDA)** and **SAHMRI Women and Kids** forum on **Current trials and studies in preterm birth and pregnancy complications – better outcomes for mother's, babies and families.** Held on Wednesday 5 February, chaired by **Professor Alice Rumbold,** SAHMRI Women and Kids.


Pic l to r: Beth Kean, Karen Glover, Dr Emily Shepherd, Prof Alice Rumbold, Dr Karen Best and Prof Tim Green.

Our speakers included:
**Dr Karen Best**, SAHMRI Women and Kids : Omega-3 Fatty Acids and the Prevention of Preterm Birth
**Professor Tim Green**, Flinders University / SAHMRI Women and Kids : Optimising Prenatal Folic Acid Supplementation to Promote Best Outcomes for Mum and Child: The Folic Acid in Gestation Trial (Funded by the Women & Children's Hospital Foundation);
**Dr Emily Shepherd**, SAHMRI Women and Kids / Robinson Research Institute, University of Adelaide : Magnesium sulphate for cerebral palsy prevention;
**Ms Karen Glover** and **Ms Beth Kean**, SAHMRI Women and Kids : Innovative approaches to supporting Aboriginal families: Insights from Corka Bubs to ICARE.


**Healthy Development Adelaide (HDA) forum** held in conjunction with **Flinders University** on **Hear us, See us: children and families living in temporary accommodation/ homelessness.**

Presented by our international guest speaker **Professor Monica Lakhanpaul** from the **University College London, UK.**

Held on Wednesday 12 March, chaired by **A/Professor Yvonne Parry**, College of Nursing and Health Sciences, Caring Futures Institute, Flinders University.

Pic l to r: A/Prof Yvonne Parry, Prof Monica Lakhanpaul, and HDA Co-Convenor A/Prof Zohra Lassi.

The talks can be found and viewed here: **https://health.adelaide.edu.au/healthy-development-adelaide/events/list**

# HDA Member News

**Congratulations to our members for being awarded NHMRC Investigator Grants!**

**Professor Claire Roberts, College of Medicine and Public Health, Flinders University**
$3,014,025 - Pregnancy: Window to Health Futures *** HDA Co-Convenor ***

**Professor Sarah Robertson, Robinson Research Institute, University of Adelaide**
$3,014,025 - Periconception mechanisms impacting fertility and pregnancy health

**Professor Simon Conn, College of Medicine and Public Health, Flinders University**
$2,954,575 - Targeting Alternative RNA Splicing Dichotomy of Brain Cancer as Novel Anticancer Strategy

**Professor Janna Morrison, Clinical and Health Sciences, UniSA**
$2,354,575 - Fetal growth restriction and cardiovascular-related death in adulthood: a world first in transforming detection and intervention *** HDA Steering Group and Executive Committee member ***

**Professor Dorothea Dumuid, Allied Health and Human Performance, UniSA**
$1,323,700 - Advancing the analysis of 24-hour time-use data

**Congratulations to our members for their awards!**

**A/Professor Zohra Lassi, Robinson Research Institute / School of Public Health, University of Adelaide** *** HDA Co-Convenor * -** Public Health Association of Australia: Health Promotion SIG Individual Award for Research for her work in Global Health

**A/Professor Zohra Lassi, Robinson Research Institute / School of Public Health, University of Adelaide** *** HDA Co-Convenor * -** School of Public Health, University of Adelaide: Excellence in HDR Supervision, 2024 School Performance Awards

**Professor Jozef Gecz, Head Neurogenetics, Adelaide Medical School / Robinson Research Institute, University of Adelaide -** Lorne Genome Conference: 2025 Julian Wells Medal for outstanding contribution to the understanding of genome expressions and research development in Australia.

**Professor Helen Marshall AM, Robinson Research Institute, University of Adelaide / Women's and Children's Hospital** - NHMRC Elizabeth Blackburn Investigator Grant Awards - Public Health (Leadership) for 'Novel strategies for global control of meningococcal disease and gonorrhoea'.

**Dr Anya Arthurs**, **Robinson Research Institute, University of Adelaide -** PSANZ 2025: Best New Investigator Poster Award - circRNAs, placental ageing and stillbirth, Flinders Health and Medical Research Institute, Flinders University

## 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
- 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

**If you are not involved in research or are part of the general community not to worry as we also welcome your membership and support. We would love to have you be a part of our network!**

1 year for $30 or 3 years for $60 (excluding GST).
**https://health.adelaide.edu.au/healthy-development-adelaide/get-involved**

# HDA Partner News
# Robinson Research Institute

**Are you the 1 in 7 living with endometriosis? If you're not, chances are you know someone who is.**

**For recent #EndometriosisAwarenessMonth, we are sharing some endo-related resources, updates, and studies currently happening in our institute.**

**www.EndoZone.com.au**
If you are affected by endometriosis symptoms, have a look at EndoZone, an evidence-based platform for those living with or suspecting they might have endometriosis. You'll find self-management tips, a symptom checker that gives you a report you can pass on to your healthcare provider and much, much more.

**www.IMAGENDO.com.au**
IMAGENDO is a diagnostic tool that's on track to revolutionise the diagnosis of endometriosis with the help of artificial intelligence. An algorithm identifies endometriosis related markers on transvaginal ultrasound or MRI images. This can diagnose endo, and the likely severity, quickly, reliably, and non-invasively. You can still participate in this study and help our researchers get there even quicker!

**New endo drug on the PBS**
The drug Relugolix / Ryeqo® that 'silences' endo has recently been added to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), making this treatment option a lot more affordable and accessible.

**SA Parliament's Select Committee on Endometriosis**
The Select Committee, which our researchers contributed evidence to, handed down their report to parliament last week with a number of recommendations that received bipartisan support.

## HDA Partner News
## Department of Human Services

**SA Youth Week (SAYW), South Australia's biggest celebration of young people aged 12 to 25, will take place from 9 - 17 April 2025, supported by the Department of Human Services.**

SAYW recognises the ideas, talents and contributions of young people in South Australia and includes a wide range of events and activities created by and for young people.

SAYW features nine days of events and activities throughout South Australia, including arts, culture, sports and community-building initiatives. Explore the SA Youth Week 2025 calendar and find an event near you!

This year, a youth disability network, a multicultural youth organisation and a host of regional councils are among 29 recipients to be awarded up to $2,500 each - a total of $70,000 in grant funding, up from $50,000 in 2024 - to host events during SAYW.

The latest funding round saw an unprecedented number of applications from across the state, underscoring the growing interest in celebrating and empowering young people.

Applications for 2026 SA Youth Week grants will open in late 2025.

Visit here: **https://dhs.sa.gov.au/how-we-help/youth/sa-youth-week?s=03**
Contact us via email: youthactionplan@sa.gov.au

# HDA Partner News
# Women's and Children's Health Network

**Learn about research related events at the WCHN, including Research Week and our Research Seminar Series.**

**2025 Research Training Seminars**
All are from 12.30 to 1.30pm on Thursdays in the Queen Victoria Lecture Theatre, Women's and Children's Hospital, North Adelaide, and streamed via MS Teams. A light lunch will be provided. Open to everyone.

The seminars and MS Teams link to join can be found here: **https://www.wchn.sa.gov.au/research/research-events**

Thursday 3 April – **Interdisciplinary research in emerging technologies**
Dr Melissa McCradden, AI Director, WCHN

Thursday 29 May – **The diversity of research opportunities across SA Pathology**
Prof Joy Rathjen, Director, Research and Innovation, SA Pathology

Thursday 5 June – **Why do a PhD and how?** and **Life after a PhD**
Dr Agnes Arthur, A/Dean of Graduate Studies, and Dr Thomas Kontou, Research Development Officer, University of Adelaide

Thursday 10 July – **Pharmacy support for researchers at WCHN**
Sharelle Campbell, Senior Pharmacist; Sean Turner, Director Pharmacy; Alka Garg, Deputy Director Pharmacy

Thursday 7 August – **How to prepare a systematic review**
A/Professor Edoardo Aromataris, Director, Synthesis Science, JBI, University of Adelaide

Thursday 4 September – **Study start up for beginners + Q&A session on getting your study started**
Dr Jennie Louise, Senior Biostatistician; Kathryn Riley, Lead, Study Start Up and Logistics (VIRTU); Dr Tamara Zutlevics, Patient Ethicist, Chair HREC & PCEC; Dr Natalie Lewis, Research Governance Officer

Thursday 2 October – **Building trust with vulnerable and marginalised groups**
Cathy Leane, Manager Strategic Partnerships, Aboriginal Health Division; Monica Diaz, Midwife/Nurse Consultant and PhD student

## HDA Partner News
## Department of Human Services

**Department of Human Services Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2025-2028**

**Share your feedback on the Department of Human Services Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2025-2028.**

**What's being decided?**

The Department of Human Services (DHS) is developing its first Suicide Prevention Action Plan.

We invite you to have your say to ensure our Suicide Prevention Action Plan will allow DHS to support wellbeing and help reduce suicide risk for our staff and people we engage with, especially people who access our services.

Applications close 28 April 2025

yourSAy

The survey link and to find out more go here: **https://yoursay.sa.gov.au/dhssuicidepreventionactionplan**

## Music Innovation Fund grants hit the right notes

Classrooms at 108 public schools and preschools will be filled with music, after being granted a share in about $275,000 to deliver quality music education programs in South Australia.

The successful applicants will use the funding to purchase instruments, strengthen music programs and engage musicians and music organisations. Among the recipients are Melaleuca Park Primary School who were granted $17,000 to invest in musical equipment and instruments, Salisbury Downs Primary School who received $8,000 for a program expanding access to musical education through percussion, and Napperby Primary School who received $2,400 for xylophones.

This round has a strong focus on the early years of a child's education, with 100 grants going to preschools and primary schools. This is the sixth round of the Music Innovation Fund, an initiative of the state's Music Education Strategy which recommends that music – which includes singing, playing a musical instrument, songwriting or composing – should be part of students' regular learning, rather than a special activity.

Department for Education Chief Executive Professor Martin Westwell said, Music plays a pivotal role in the overall development of our students and young people to encourage creativity, critical thinking and emotional intelligence.

"Starting quality music education early and continuing to deliver music learning opportunities provides benefits throughout a child's school life and beyond. Music can help children to connect and feel a sense of belonging".

"I'm pleased to see so many of our schools and preschools are committing to bring quality music education to their classrooms", said Professor Westwell.

More than $1.5 million has been allocated to 368 government schools and preschools and 11 external music-related organisations since the initiative began in 2020.

In 2024, the State Government announced it was committing $7.5 million in funding towards expanding music education in schools over the next three years.

A full list of the round 6 recipients for the Music Innovation Fund is available on the Department for Education website at **https://www.education.sa.gov.au/schools-and-educators/strategies-and-initiatives/music-education-strategy-and-innovation-fund/music-innovation-fund-round-6-winners**

# EMPOWERED VOICES, SHAPING A YOUTHFUL FUTURE!

## COME JOIN THE ADOLESCENTS' AND YOUTH ADVISORY GROUP

Are you aged between 18 and 24 years ?
Residing in Adelaide for more than 6 month?
**if yes, then come join our advisory group!**

This group will meet quarterly/bi-annually to:

- **Shape Research:** Contribute to research initiatives to ensure relevance and alignment with youth needs.
- **Discuss Progress:** Engage in discussions, providing feedback to guide meaningful research directions.
- **Community Engagement**: Share findings with youth, fostering empowerment and informed participation.

### Come join our advisory group!

If you are interested in joining the Adolescent and Youth Advisory Group, please email to:
zahraali.padhani@adelaide.edu.au

**Your time will be compensated!!**

# New clues to a healthy pregnancy

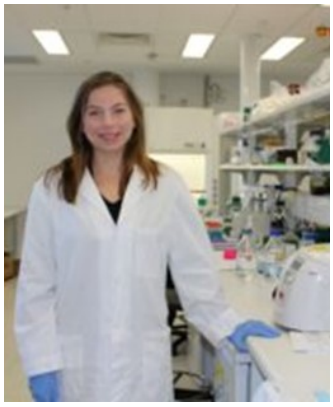
**Media release - 18 February, Flinders University**

In a world first, researchers from Flinders University have applied advanced gene editing to explore how an enzyme, made famous in the COVID-19 pandemic, plays a pivotal role in the healthy development of the placenta during pregnancy.

Connected to the developing baby by the umbilical cord, the placenta provides essential oxygen and nutrients until the baby is born. Complications with the placenta can happen during pregnancy, birth and after birth and are potentially dangerous to mother and baby.

The study, published in the journal, *Cell Death & Disease,* reveals important progress in unravelling how the enzyme, '*angiotensin-converting enzyme 2'* (*ACE2*), contributes to healthy placental and fetal development.

The research was led by Dr Anya Arthurs and Professor Claire Roberts from the Pregnancy Health and Beyond (PHaB) Laboratory in the Flinders Health and Medical Research Institute (FHMRI).



*Pictured l to r: HDA member Dr Anya Arthurs and HDA Co-Convenor Professor Claire Roberts*

"Despite significant advances in obstetric care, complications such as small for gestational age births, fetal growth restriction and preeclampsia continue to pose substantial risks to mother and baby," says molecular biologist Dr Anya Arthurs.

"Our findings not only improve our understanding of vital functions in placental health but also provides new insights into the genetic underpinnings of placental development and its impact on pregnancy outcomes."

The research was done with models of human placenta called organoids; grown from donated placental tissue, they mimic the functionality and architecture of early gestation placentas.

The team then tested how the enzyme *ACE2* affects the development of the placenta, using gene-editing to create placental organoids with different versions of the ACE2 gene.

"We wanted to specifically look at two scenarios, one without the *ACE2* gene (called knockout) and one that included a genetic variation known as rs2074192, which has been associated with various health complications, including those related to pregnancy and diseases like high blood pressure and COVID-19.

"By creating these different mini placentas, we could examine how *ACE2* normally works, and how various versions of this gene (there are three variations: CC, CT, and TT) can influence the development or failure of the placenta.

"We found that *ACE2* plays a key role in helping the cells in the placenta grow properly and when it is 'knocked out' the cells struggled to grow, and more cell death was observed.

"We also confirmed that the genetic variation, rs2074192, alters the dynamics of placental development, linking it to major pregnancy complications such as preeclampsia and small for gestational age births."

The study indicates that while *ACE2* expression is essential, the activity and balance of the enzyme may be even more crucial for healthy development of the baby.

Senior author Professor Claire Roberts says that this new understanding of *ACE2's* role, and the ability to edit genes in mini placentas in a dish, pave the way for further research into the mechanisms behind pregnancy-related diseases and inform future treatments.

"While this study is a long way from clinical application, it nevertheless provides us with important new insights into placental development and pregnancy health," says Professor Roberts.

The paper, *Genetically edited human placental organoids cast new light on the role of ACE2*, by Anya L. Arthurs, Bianca Dietrich, Martin Knöfler, Caleb J. Lushington, Paul Q. Thomas, Fatwa Adikusuma, Jessica M. Williamson, Susan Babikha, Tyla Damhuis, Tanja Jankovic-Karasoulos, Melanie D. Smith, Kirsty G. Pringle and Claire T. Roberts was published in *Cell, Death & Disease* journal. DOI: 10.1038/s41419-025-07400-x

**Acknowledgements:** ALA is supported by funding from the Flinders Foundation, Flinders University and the Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation. CTR is supported by an NHMRC Investigator Grant (GNT1174971) and a Matthew Flinders Fellowship from Flinders University.

# Humans and AI in new collaboration for endometriosis classification

**Media Release - 10 February, University of Adelaide**

University of Adelaide researchers have identified a new approach for endometriosis classification, believed to be the first of its kind which combines both machine learning models and human knowledge.

The IMAGENDO team from the University's Robinson Research Institute and Australian Institute for Machine Learning (AIML) developed the system -- Human-Artificial Intelligence Collaborative Multi-modal Multi-rater Learning (HAICOMM) -- and published their initial findings in *Physics in Medicine and Biology.*

HAICOMM was found to eliminate three important challenges in diagnosis by combining AI and human perspectives through several stages.

"First, it uses multi-rater learning to identify a clearer, more reliable label by combining and refining multiple inconsistent or 'noisy' labels for each training sample," says Dr Yuan Zhang, IMAGENDOteam member and grant-funded researcher with the University's Robinson Research Institute.

"Second, it incorporates multi-modal learning, leveraging T1-and T2-weighted MRI images during both training and testing to enhance system's understanding & accuracy. "Finally, HAICOMM introduces human-AI collaboration, combining predictions from clinicians with those of the AI model to achieve more accurate and reliable classifications than either clinicians or AI could achieve alone."

A key diagnostic sign of endometriosis is the obliteration of the Pouch of Douglas (a small space in the female pelvis between the uterus and rectum), which even experienced clinicians can struggle to accurately spot in MRI images. Research has found that manual classification of Pouch of Douglas obliteration from MRI images has a remarkably high rate of uncertainty, with only 61.4 per cent to 71.9 per cent accuracy. "This can also complicate the training of reliable AI models," says Dr Zhang.

Endometriosis, where tissue similar to the lining of the uterus grows outside the womb, affects about 14 per cent of individuals assigned female at birth. It takes on average 6.4 years for patients to receive a formal diagnosis, which generally occurs after the identification of various signs through imaging and/or laparoscopic surgery.

"The long waiting period for a diagnosis lowers the quality of life for those afflicted by the condition and the current reliance on invasive procedures to assist diagnoses escalates healthcare costs, imposing a considerable burden on both healthcare systems and patients," says Dr Zhang. "These challenges underscore the pressing need for innovative imaging-based diagnostic solutions that can mitigate these issues while enhancing patient care.

"HAICOMM is the first method that explores three important aspects of the challenge in diagnosing endometriosis – multi-rater learning to extract a cleaner label from the multiple 'noisy' labels available per training sample, multi-modal learning to leverage the presence of MRI images for training and testing, and human-AI collaboration to build a system that leverages the predictions from clinicians and the AI model to provide more accurate classification than standalone clinicians and AI models."

The research team will now integrate the technique into the IMAGENDOpatented algorithm, which will leverage both MRI and transvaginal ultrasound images for endometriosis diagnosis.

"By incorporating multi-rater learning, multi-modal MRI data, and human-AI collaboration, we aim to enhance the accuracy and reliability of the IMAGENDO algorithm," says Dr Zhang. "Additionally, we will expand the system to detect a wider range of endometriosis signs, including bowel nodules, endometriomas, and uterosacral ligament endometriosis, in addition to Pouch of Douglas obliteration.

"The next phase will include evaluating the performance of this enhanced system on diverse datasets and applying it in clinical settings to further assess its practical utility and effectiveness."

**SA Science Excellence & Innovation Award Applications - Now Open!**

Apply now in one of the following categories - South Australian Scientist of the Year : PhD Research Excellence : Excellence in Collaborative Innovation : Mid-Career STEMM Professional of the Year : STEMM Educator of the Year – School teaching : STEMM Educator of the Year – Tertiary teaching

Applications close Monday 28 April. For more information visit **scienceawards.sa.gov.au**

# UniSA scientists secure $7 million for health and medical research

**Media release - 28 March, UniSA**

Identifying genetic links that predispose children to deadly brain cancers and neuroblastoma is the focus of a new Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) project led by University of South Australia researchers.

The $976,292 project is one of five successful UniSA research projects, totalling more than $7 million, announced by the Federal Government today.

Chief Investigator Associate Professor Quenten Schwarz from the Centre for Cancer Biology says he hopes the $976,292 stem cell project will improve treatment outcomes for the two diseases that have a very low survival rate.

“Current treatment-induced side effects lead to long-term complications for children with these neuronal tumours, affecting their neurological and neurocognitive functions,” Assoc Prof Schwarz says.

“If we can better identify the genetic links to these diseases, it will inform new targeted treatment options for these cancers that are less toxic.”

Other UniSA chief investigators on the project include Professor Stuart Pitson, Dr Katherine Pillman, and Professor Natasha Harvey, along with researchers from SAHMRI, UNSW and the University of Western Australia.

The other UniSA projects awarded MRFF funding include: Co-design models of care for youth with chronic pain ($2,604,235): MRFF EPCDRI & PHCR Multidisciplinary Models of Primary Care, Chief Investigators: UniSA’s Dr Carolyn Berryman, Prof Lorimer Moseley, Dr Hayley Leake, Prof Ian Gwilt, Dr Sarah Wallwork, Abby Jennings, and Prof Adrian Esterman.

This project will develop an improved model of care for the 20% of youths in South Australia who experience chronic pain. This is a serious unmet need in Australia due to affected youths not being believed, leading to delayed diagnosis.

Cost-effectiveness of a new treatment to reduce the risk of chronic post-surgical pain after total knee replacement surgery ($1,998,433): MRFF Preventive and Public Health Research Initiative, Chief Investigators: UniSA’s Assoc Prof Natasha Stanton, Prof Lorimer Moseley, Dr Daniel Harvie, Dr Felicity Braithwaite, Peter Ninnes, Dr Tyman Stanford).

Total knee replacement surgery (TKR) is the gold standard care for knee osteoarthritis, with approximately 70,000 TKR surgeries performed each year. However, TKR causes long lasting severe pain for up to 15% of people undergoing surgery. This project will investigate a new lifestyle treatment approach so that people can rehabilitate with better outcomes.

Medication safety rounds in aged care to prevent medication induced harm ($990,645): MRFF Dementia, Ageing and Aged Care Mission, Chief Investigators: UniSA’s Assoc Prof Janet Sluggett, Dr Sara Javanparast, Prof Marion Eckert, Prof Debra Rowett, Prof Ian Gwilt, Aaron Davis, Dr Daria Gutteridge.

This study will equip pharmacists, nurses, and aged care workers with the tools to identify medication issues early and develop safe action plans for aged care residents. New medication safety rounds will help address medication harm and management, which is the most common complaint reported to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission.

Tailored hydrogels to improve wound healing therapy ($588,922): MRFF Stem Cells Therapies Mission, Chief Investigators: UniSA’s Prof Allison Cowin and Prof Ferry Melchels.

Epidermolysis bullosa (EB) is a genetic skin condition affecting children and characterised by fragile skin, chronic blistering, open wounds, fibrosis, constant pain and early death. This project will develop an easy-to-apply stem-cell based WoundGel that stimulates healing without scarring and fibrosis.

The Medical Research Future Fund is a $22 billion long-term investment supporting Australian health and medical research. The MRFF aims to transform health and medical research and innovation to improve lives, build the economy and contribute to health system sustainability.

## Without change, half of Australian kids and adolescents will be overweight or obese by 2050

**The Conversation, 4 March**

Since the 1990s, the proportion of the world’s population who are overweight (with a body mass index of 25–30) or obese (with a body mass index of 30 or above) has doubled. If current patterns continue, we estimate that by 2050, 30% of the world’s children and adolescents (aged five to 24 years) will be overweight or obese, according to our new research in The Lancet.

Read the full article: https://theconversation.com/without-change-half-of-australian-kids-and-adolescents-will-be-overweight-or-obese-by-2050-250520?utm_medium=article_native_share&utm_source=theconversation.com

# Top screen time tips every parent should read

**Media Release - 13 March, thepost by Laura Dare**

*How should parents navigate screen time? An award-winning Adelaide researcher shares her findings – and practical solutions – to help kids and parents.*

Dr Mary Brushe,The Kids Research Institute Australia

Did you know that toddlers are missing out on hearing up to 1,000 words a day because of screens? That mind-boggling statistic is one of the insights Dr Mary Brushe's groundbreaking research has brought to light.

Dr Brushe, an Adelaide-based public health researcher, advocate and winner of the prestigious 2024 SASEIA PhD Research Excellence Award, is changing the way we think about screen time and early childhood development.

But Dr Brushe is adamant her results shouldn't be used to point fingers or make parents feel guilty. Instead, she sees her research as the basis for developing practical, society-wide solutions to help families navigate screen time in a way that works for them.

"I would really love it if eventually, we can create an open, honest dialogue where parents feel supported in making decisions that work for them," she says.
Empowerment – not judgment – is at the core of her work.

**The early years matter most**
The first three years of a child's life are when up to 85 per cent of brain growth occurs.

"There's no more crucial period, really, than those first few years of life to set children up for success," Dr Brushe says. "What happens in those early years can impact their later learning, development, and even chronic health conditions."

"When we talk, sing, read, or play with children in their early years, we're not just entertaining them – we're literally shaping their brains," says Dr Brushe.

"Those interactions create neural connections that are the foundation for all future learning and development."

**How tech impacts talk**
Dr Brushe's PhD research at the University of Adelaide and the Kids Research Institute Australia focused on one big question: How does screen time affect young children's language development?

Using Fitbit-like devices equipped with speech recognition technology, her team tracked over 7,000 hours of audio to understand how screen time impacts parent-child interactions in the home.

Here's what they discovered:
- Reduction in adult words: For every minute of screen time, children heard seven fewer words from adults.
- Fewer child vocalisations: Children made five fewer vocal sounds during these moments.
- Decreased back-and-forth conversations: Screen time significantly reduced the number of interactive exchanges, which are crucial for language development.

These findings highlight a phenomenon called "technoference," where screen use interrupts the rich interactions young children need to thrive.

**Building a judgment-free zone for parents**
Dr Brushe is committed to breaking down the stigma around screen time.

"We're not here to guilt parents but to offer practical ways to balance screen time with meaningful interactions," she says.

"For some families, it's completely feasible for them to not have any screen time in the first few years of life, and that works for them. And to those families, I think that's fantastic."

But she says that's just not an option for a lot of families: "So often we heard from parents that, 'if I don't put the screen on for 15 minutes, I'm not going to be able to have a shower that day'. And so to turn around to those parents and say, 'Well, too bad,' just feels extremely unfair."

Her advice? "It's not about being perfect; it's about finding what works for your family."

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# Top screen time tips every parent should read

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**Dr Brushe's's top tips for parents**

1. *Kill the background noise:* If no one's watching the TV, turn it off. Background noise distracts young children from focusing on play or interactions.
2. *Choose quality content:* Opt for educational, age-appropriate shows. ABC Kids, for example, offers great options.
3. *Make screens interactive:* Sing along to theme songs or recreate scenes from shows during playtime. It's about turning passive screen time into active engagement.
4. *Screen-free zones:* Mealtimes and bedtimes are perfect opportunities to switch off and connect.
5. *Start small:* If cutting back on screen time feels overwhelming, start with achievable goals, like reducing screen use by 15 minutes a day.

**From psychology to public health**

Dr Brushe's career journey started with a psychology degree, and a plan to help people by becoming a clinical psychologist. But a research role at the Kids Research Institute Australia opened her eyes to public health — a field that's less about one-on-one treatment and more about helping entire populations thrive.

"Public health really resonated with me," she says. "It's about translating research into policies and practices that make a difference on a larger scale. That was a game-changer for me."

This broader perspective led her to focus on early childhood health, driven by her passion for prevention and early intervention. She's now an Adjunct Fellow in the University of Adelaide's School of Public Health and a Senior Research Officer at The Kids Research Institute Australia.

**Government support: A key to success**

Dr Brushe's work has shaped state and national policy, contributing to the National Early Language and Literacy Strategy and South Australia's Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care.

The South Australian Government's *Words Grow Minds* campaign – a result of its Royal Commission – is a cornerstone of its broader commitment to preventive health and early childhood development. Backed by $4 million in funding, the initiative encourages parents to talk, read, sing, and play with their children – from birth.

"It's been amazing to see how my research has informed real-world initiatives," says Dr Brushe. The campaign makes neuroscience accessible and engaging. It's not about scaring parents but equipping them with tools to make small but powerful changes."

**Supporting parents, shaping futures**

The *Words Grow Minds* campaign's free resources include baby book packs, webinars, and tips for integrating language-building activities into everyday life. It's part of a larger effort by the state government to embed prevention into health policy, from universal preschool initiatives to the establishment of a dedicated Preventive Health SA agency.

**Global impact and local change**

Dr Brushe's PhD research hasn't just impacted South Australian families – it's gone global.

Over 800 publications worldwide covered her findings, bringing much-needed attention to the issue of screen time and early childhood development.

"It was incredible to see how much attention the research received," she says. "It really reinforced for me how timely and important this topic is, and how much parents and policymakers are looking for guidance."

Winning the 2024 PhD Research Excellence Award at the SA Science Excellence and Innovation Awards added to this recognition, providing her with a platform to advocate for practical solutions.

"Hearing my name called out on the night was such a shock," she says. "Being recognised by the SA science community was such an honour. It's validating to know the effort I put into making this research practical and impactful didn't go unnoticed.

The award represents the importance of listening to communities and translating research into meaningful outcomes."


**Image - Words Grow Minds - https://wordsgrowminds.org.au**

# Government consulting on the scope of new social media restrictions

For millions of Australian families struggling with the digital age, conflict around screen time and widespread poor mental health impacts of social media, Australia's *Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act* could not come sooner.

The law is aimed at minimising the exposure of children to harmful engagement and content while they are still developing. It will put the onus on specified social media platforms to take reasonable steps to keep anyone under 16 off their platforms.

Consultations are continuing about the scope of the Act and the rule-making power of the Communications Minister to include or leave out certain platforms and services. The Minister, under the new law, is mandated to ask the eSafety Commissioner for independent advice and guidance.

The Act, regardless of who wins the May federal election, is due to commence on or before December 10.

Getting the inclusions and exemptions right will be tricky, like drawing any map with terrain that keeps shifting. No government anywhere in the world has done this before.

Controversy surrounds whether YouTube (owned by tech giant Google whose parent company is Alphabet) will be included or excluded. The government has been heavily lobbied by Google.

YouTube may well be a useful provider of educational services but YouTube Shorts is just like TikTok, providing short videos (often with little content and an algorithmic soup that keeps users logged on for longer) and content often recycled from Instagram and TikTok.

The Social Media Minimum Age amendments will make a difference, for example, by limiting the facilitation of cyberbullying, but it will not be a silver bullet. It is one new weapon in the online safety arsenal the Commonwealth has. Even if platforms, known for facilitating harmful cyberbullying, have new access limits for under 16-year-olds, the cyberbullying will move to whichever platforms and apps remain available.

What's important is the Minister's ability to be agile as the industry shifts and resist lobbying by Big Tech whose products were never designed with the well-being of children in mind.

Meanwhile, the government is under pressure to do more to limit access to social media style online gaming. The Commonwealth argues gaming is subject to the classification regime where parents can find information about what is suitable. However, that regime is inadequate in that it fails to acknowledge the persuasive design of online gaming that leads to compulsive use, stunts impulse control and contributes to other lifelong developmental delays.

All governments could certainly do more to regulate the fast changing and disruptive digital environment.

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Toni Hassan is the author of *Families in the Digital Age: Every Parent's Guide* (Hybrid Press, 2019), a Charles Sturt University scholar and has been an advisor to Children and Media Australia based in Adelaide. **https://www.tonihassan.com**

## South Australia's Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2024-2026

The Government of South Australia is committed to working in partnership to close the gap and improve the lives of Aboriginal people in South Australia.

The Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2024-26 was developed in partnership with SAACCON and the South Australian Government. It was formally agreed by both parties in November 2024.

The Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2024-26 sets out how South Australia will deliver on the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. This second plan builds on the first Implementation Plan agreed in 2021. The plan outlines our shared approach to addressing the needs, priorities and circumstances of Aboriginal people and communities in SA. It describes our partnership actions, and how we will achieve the Priority Reforms across the 17 socio-economic outcome areas of Closing the Gap.

SA's first Implementation Plan was developed in 2021 and set the foundations for our implementation of the National Agreement. Across the life of the first Implementation Plan, we established a historic Partnership Agreement between SA Government and SAACCON and set up the SA Partnership Committee (SAPC) on Closing the Gap, as the central governance mechanism for our Closing the Gap implementation.

Further information and the report can be viewed here: https://www.agd.sa.gov.au/aboriginal-affairs-and-reconciliation/closing-the-gap/south-australias-implementation-plan?sfnsn=mo

# Secrecy around donor conception lifted

**Media Release - 26 February, MirageNews**

*Secrecy around donor conception will be lifted from today, with all donor-conceived South Australians now able to access available information about their genetic heritage and relatives from an Australian-first online register.*

As part of new laws introduced by the Malinauskas Labor Government, donor-conceived people aged 18 years and over, and parents of donor-conceived children, can access available information about their donor and genetic siblings through the South Australian Donor Conception Register.

The register was established in November 2021 with donor conception information added by staff from SA Health and clinics, but it hasn't been accessible by donor-conceived people until today.

The Malinauskas Labor Government has reversed that secrecy, with the online register going live from today for donor-conceived people and donors if the donor-conceived person has consented. This includes information about those who made donations under the condition of anonymity before September 2004.

The electronic register stores available and verifiable donor conception information relating to donor-conceived people, donors and recipient parents. It covers donated sperm, eggs and embryos.

It is the first publicly accessible electronic register of its kind in Australia to operate in real-time with retrospective effect.

It allows donor-conceived people aged 18 years and over, or parents to a donor-conceived child, and donors to list their contact preferences and supports the sharing of important medical and genetic information between relatives.

People who participated in donor conception through private arrangements, and not through a clinic, are also included in the register, where this information is included on the child's birth registration statement and verified by Births, Deaths and Marriages.

Information about a donor or donor-conceived person is only included in the register where the donor conception treatment was completed in South Australia.

About 2120 donor conception treatments undertaken in South Australia have already been added to the register, and more are being added as new information becomes available.

Before September 2004, donors, whether they wanted it or not, were guaranteed lifelong anonymity and parents were often advised to keep the truth of their child's conception a secret from their child. Record keeping practices reflected this culture of secrecy, resulting in many records and information being lost, damaged or even destroyed. Some people who sign up to the register may not be able to access information they are looking for.

People who donated or were conceived by donor conception prior to September 2004 may find that some aspects of the law changes and using the register leave them feeling like they need some support. Support and counselling services are being offered through Relationships Australia SA to these donor-conceived people, donors and their families, as well as those immediately affected.

The register contains personal information. For this reason, a person's identity must be verified using the Australian Government's Digital ID System, and they can only access information if allowed by law.

As put by Chris Picton
All donor-conceived people have the right to know where they come from and it's fantastic to see these new laws comes come into full effect from today.

Having access to such information – which many of us take for granted – can play a significant role in the development of a person's identity and self-esteem, while medical and genetic information can be important for things like family planning.

The operation of this Australian-first electronic register provides a regulated and supported space for these connections to be made.

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# Secrecy around donor conception lifted

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As stated by Department for Health and Wellbeing Executive Director of Governance Advisory Services, Prue Reid
The register will make a significant difference to the lives of many South Australian donor-conceived people, providing them with greater equality to access important information about their genetic history.

Consultation with the community was a major element in the development of this landmark legislation and we thank everyone who provided their thoughts so all views could be considered.

The changes reflect modern community views and the move away from a culture of secrecy around donor conception, while importantly providing a safe and supported way for people to access this information.

As put by Relationships Australia Deputy Chief Executive Pete Allred
While the register will be welcome for many people, it is also likely to bring up complex feelings and challenges.

For donor-conceived people, we recognise and support the importance of having information about their genetic heritage and connection to kin.

For people who donated on the condition of anonymity, this may be a time of uncertainty for them and their families.

We will offer support to those affected by the recent changes in legislation by providing counselling, search work, and support in facilitating connections between donors and donor-conceived individuals.

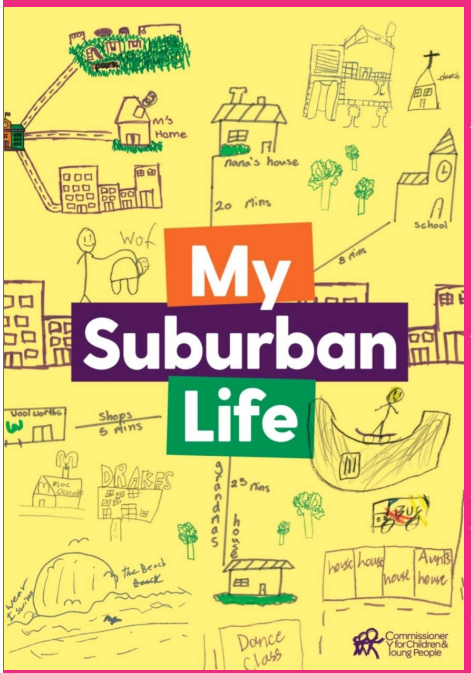
As put by donor-conceived reference group representative Damian Adams
I started searching for information when I was 15 and over the years I was told my records could not be found.

When I started pursuing the DNA option it was expensive and I had to test with multiple companies. If I'd had access to a register, it would have saved a lot of time and heartache and lost opportunities.

I found my donor father through DNA in 2017 and met him in 2019. He was open to contact and so we've missed out on decades. It is part of your identity to know where you come from, and not being allowed to access the information causes feelings of loss and grief.

I will be signing up to the register so I can get my records and go through the formal process of adding my donor father's name to my birth certificate.

## Commissioner for Children and Young People - REPORT
## My Suburban Life




Children and young people have unique perspectives on the world around them and the spaces they frequent. These perspectives should be heard when considering the future of neighbourhoods in South Australia.

From what children and young people have told the Commissioner, it is clear that where they grow up has a profound influence on their lives. It determines what facilities are available to them, their access to and from school, what opportunities for activity and employment are available, and it can mean the difference between 'getting on' in life or feeling left out.

Children's views on where they live are seldom sought or considered, so the Commissioner asked primary school students to draw their local neighbourhoods with the goal of gathering their insights into what they see and how they connect to the world around them, including what they believe is the most challenging thing about where they live and what they would change if they could.

What is clear from these insights is that neighbourhoods need to be child friendly and child safe. They need to be places where children have access to what they need to develop healthy, happy lives. If we committed to placing children's and young people's best interests at the centre of decision-making around planning and building of local neighbourhoods, the positive impact this would have on South Australian children would be enormous.

The full report can be read here: **https://www.ccyp.com.au/publications/my-suburban-life**

## SA Healthy Lifestyle State Research Forum

**Be part of the fourth SA Healthy Lifestyle State Research Forum**
Friday 8 August at UniSA's City West Campus.

**Call for Abstracts is NOW OPEN!**

We're calling all SA-based researchers to submit abstracts for:
5x5 oral presentations
Poster presentations

Theme: Healthy Lives Through Healthy Living
Share your work, connect with others, and contribute to a healthier SA.

Submissions close: Sunday 4 May
Submit now: **https://unisasurveys.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ebNb2IudE5Nih3o**

## HTSA Research Translation Essentials Course

**HTSAs Research Translation Essentials Course**
*1-2 May 2025, Education Development Centre (4 Milner Street, Hindmarsh)*

Are you ready to unlock your research potential? This course equips you with the skills and strategies to bridge the gap between scientific discovery and practical application. Learn to engage stakeholders, collaborate with policymakers, leverage implementation science, and measure your impact effectively.

Join us to transform your research into meaningful change!

**Location:** Education Development Centre (4 Milner St, Hindmarsh SA 5007)
**Cost:** $595 ($495 early bird rate until the end of March + 6 rural scholarships available - details below)
**Enrol:** Via Humanitix here: **https://events.humanitix.com/research-translation-essentials-course-may-2025**

Are you based in Rural South Australia?
If you are from a rural or regional health service or university campus and wish to attend the course, HTSA is offering 6 scholarships to cover the registration cost (excl. accommodation and travel). Please contact us via enquiries@healthtranslationsa.org.au and include RTE—Regional in the subject line.

## Join our therapeutic school holiday programs for ages 3-17

Autism SA's therapeutic school holiday programs are smaller groups delivered by Occupational Therapists and Speech Pathologists at a range of times and locations.

During the upcoming April 2025 School Holidays we will be running the following activities:

- On your marks, get set, school! (3-6 years)
- Aqua Skills (3-9 years)
- Lego Club (7-12 years)
- Dungeons and Dragons (8-12 years and 13-17 years)
- Fidget Masterclass (9-12 years)

Find out more and register here:
**https://autismsa.org.au/groups-programs/school-holiday-programs/**