



# JUDITH LUMLEY CENTRE

FOR WOMEN,  
CHILDREN AND  
FAMILY HEALTH  
RESEARCH



Annual Report  
| 2023



*Founding Director*

**Judith Lumley, AO**

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Professor Emerita  
Director 1991–2008

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Cover image – Hilary Walker Photography

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# Director's report

It is with mixed emotions that I write this, my last Centre Director's report for JLC following my decision to retire at the end of 2023. I moved to JLC on the Roberta Holmes Transition to Contemporary Parenthood Program (TCPP) funding in 2014 and became Centre Director in 2017. It has been a privilege and a pleasure. My colleagues at JLC, and La Trobe more broadly, have been inspiring, enormously hard working, smart and caring. JLC has truly been the pinnacle of my career and I count myself as fortunate to have worked here.

As demonstrated in this Annual Report for 2023, JLC had another stellar year with many notable achievements. Some have been the result of new initiatives, while others are the accumulation of years of hard work. Among the latter is the publication of Dr Kayli Wild, Professor Angela Taft and colleagues' textbook on gender-based violence and healthcare in Timor-Leste. With book launches in Timor-Leste and Australia, this book is the culmination of several years' work to identify how to effectively detect and prevent violence against women and children. This important work is being continued by Professor Leesa Hooker (JLC, La Trobe Rural Health School), Felicity Young, and colleagues in the Centre for Human Security and Social Change via a multi-year partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to strengthen the ability of health systems to respond to women and children experiencing violence in the Asia-Pacific, with an initial focus in Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea.

Leesa Hooker's outstanding research and teaching leadership in the fields of child, family and community health and reducing sexual and gender-based violence were recognised with her promotion to Professor, and we congratulated Associate Professor Michelle Newton on her appointment as the incoming President of the Australian College of Midwives.

Centre staff and students have been the recipients of a number of awards in 2023. Special acknowledgement to Desireé LaGrappe who received a prestigious Fulbright Public Health Policy Fellowship Scholar Award. This will enable her to undertake a public health policy placement in Vietnam expanding on her research into reproductive



coercion and abuse. Desireé's other awards in 2023 included for conference presentations as an emerging researcher at ASPOG (Australian Society for Psychosocial Obstetrics and Gynaecology) and a new investigator at PSANZ (Perinatal Society of Australia and New Zealand). Congratulations also to Dr Jess Ison who received a La Trobe University Accessibility and Inclusion Award for creating a safe teaching space inclusive of those with mental health difficulties, Professor Christine East who was the inaugural recipient of a School of Nursing and Midwifery Cultural Qualities Award, Jasmine Love for a best paper award at ICEPS (International Congress on Evidence-Based Parenting), and to Robyn Matthews who is the 2023 recipient of the Maggie Flood Bursary supporting her future conference attendance. Professor Helen McLachlan and team were finalists in the Shaping Australia Awards (Problem Solving category) for their work towards "Transforming midwifery care for First Nations women". Professor Angela Taft was also appointed as an Emeritus Professor to La Trobe University in recognition of her outstanding career contributions.

We sadly farewelled Dr Sharinne Crawford and Dr Méabh Cullinane in 2023. Sharinne joined the Centre in 2014 as Project Manager of the VicHealth funded program investigating the impact of parental fear on children's independent mobility. As part of the initial group established for the Transition to Contemporary Parenthood Program, she has been a valued and active member of the Centre acknowledged for her expertise in qualitative

methods. She has led/co-led research in the areas of child health and development, parenting and social media, social media and ethics, and women's health. She was Postgraduate Research Coordinator (2021-2023), a long-term member of the newsletter committee and supported several students and colleagues with their research analyses. Sharinne is now a Project Manager at Monash University undertaking a large project on endometriosis.

Dr Méabh Cullinane has been with the Centre for 14 years. Originally a microbiologist, she has been an integral member of the midwifery and maternity services, and breastfeeding research teams, and also worked on Early Home Learning Study. Méabh led a number of statewide maternity service evaluations, including the MANE project (with Professor Della Forster and colleagues) which evaluated an education program to improve how rural and regional maternity services managed maternity and newborn emergencies, and an evaluation (with Dr Laura Whitburn) of the midwifery group practice model of care at Dhelkaya Health (previously Castlemaine Health). She was joint coordinator of the MAGNOLIA trial, assessing continuity of midwifery care for socially disadvantaged women. Méabh's breastfeeding research has included studying general practitioners' knowledge and use of therapeutic guidelines. Méabh continues to work on a casual basis with the Centre, while now employed primarily in the Department of Health Services Research at the Peter McCallum Cancer Centre.

2023 was a big year for conference travel – reflecting an eagerness to get out and engage intellectually after the isolation of the pandemic and subsequent years. These included: ICEPS (International Congress on Evidence-Based Parenting, online, 7 staff and students); PSANZ (Melbourne, 11 staff and students); MAINN (Maternal and Infant Nutrition and Nurture, UK, 3 presentations); International Congress of Midwives (Bali, 9 staff and students); Australian College of Midwives (Adelaide, 8 staff and students); and the European Conference on Domestic Violence in beautiful Reykjavik in Iceland (4 staff and associates).

Across 2023, we had 84 peer-reviewed publications, major reports and book chapters, more than half of which had a Centre higher research degree student

as the first author. Impressively, we had four publications in Lancet journals, 2 papers (*Lancet Psychiatry*, *Lancet Public Health*) and 2 letters (*Lancet Regional Health – West Pacific*; *E-Clinical Medicine*). Congratulations to all our authors. These papers reflect many months, and often years, of work.

Our income has remained strong in an environment where there is greatly increased competition for all types of funding. Special congratulations to Dr Stacey Hokke who received a second year of funding for her work exploring young people's perceptions of organ donation, Dr Shannon Bennetts who successfully led an internally funded evaluation of a risky play program, Professor Lisa Amir who is a co-investigator on two new National Health and Medical Research Council grants (NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence and Partnership grants), Associate Professor Kristina Edvardsson who is a co-investigator on the renewed NHMRC funding for the SPHERE CRE, and Professor Leesa Hooker and Dr Jess Ison who were the successful recipients of a Family Safety Victoria grant.

We had two students graduate with their PhDs in 2023 – Drs Noushin Aref-adib and Ranmali Rodrigo whose respective theses examined screening for postnatal depression and anxiety, and the storage and transport of expressed milk. Across the year, 38 students were enrolled in higher research degrees with the Centre, including another three who have submitted their theses for examination.

I want to conclude by congratulating everyone for their hard work and terrific successes across 2023, and by acknowledging the culture of support and volunteering that enables JLC to continue to provide a comprehensive, high quality program of education and development activities, whilst ensuring that we care for our colleagues. I want to thank my many wonderful JLC colleagues for their support and friendship and for making my time at La Trobe a period that I will treasure.

I hope you enjoy reading this report.

Professor Jan Nicholson  
Judith Lumley Centre Director

# Research Programs

## Breastfeeding



**Program Lead: Professor Lisa Amir**

The Centre is interested in all aspects of breastfeeding.

Our staff and students have conducted randomised trials, cohort studies, cross-sectional studies, audits and qualitative studies in this area. Our projects include clinically focused studies on nipple and breast pain, infection and the use of medicines for breastfeeding women, as well as interventions aiming to increase the maintenance of breastfeeding in communities with low rates.

We have partnerships with the major Victorian maternity services, maternal and child health services, and the Australian Breastfeeding Association, the main advocacy group in Australia.

Mastitis continues to be a particular focus for the Centre and work continues on our two funded projects on this topic. We're analysing data collected for the mixed method study looking at antibiotic prescribing for mastitis in breastfeeding women funded by Therapeutic Guidelines Ltd/RACGP Research Foundation. We have also started data collection investigating immune factors in breastmilk in the NHMRC-funded study led by A/Prof Wendy Ingman, one of our Adelaide collaborators.

Highlights in 2023 included commencing the NHMRC-funded multi-centred trial of domperidone for mothers of preterm infants with low milk production at the Royal Women's Hospital, and funding approval for a NHMRC Partnership grant, *Pasteurised donor human milk supplementation for term babies*, led by A/Prof Jennifer Koplin (University of Queensland).

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### **RUBY (Ringing Up about Breastfeeding early): proactive peer (mother-to-mother) breastfeeding support by telephone**

*Della Forster, Lisa Amir, Helen McLachlan, Touran Shafiei, Rhonda Small, Fiona McLardie-Hore, Heather Grimes, Christine East; in collaboration with Anita Moorhead, Royal Women's Hospital; Mary-Ann Davey, Monash University; Cindy-Lee Dennis, University of Toronto; Lisa Gold, Deakin University; Kate Mortensen and Susan Tawia, Australian Breastfeeding Association*

The RUBY study aimed to determine whether proactive telephone-based peer support during the postnatal period increases the proportion of infants being breastfed at six months of age. RUBY was a multicentre, randomised controlled trial conducted in three hospitals in Victoria, between February 2013 and December 2015.

Over 1,150 first-time mothers intending to breastfeed were recruited at one of the three hospitals (Royal Women's, Monash Health, Western Health Sunshine) after birth and prior to hospital discharge.

The study found that infants of women allocated to telephone-based peer support were more likely than those allocated to usual care to be receiving breast milk at six months of age (intervention 75%, usual care 69%).

**Funding:** The Felton Bequest, Australia and La Trobe University

**Status:** main outcomes paper published in *EClinicalMedicine* (2019); economic outcomes published in *BMJ Open* in 2023; five other papers published

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## Understanding community attitudes and identifying design solutions to increase women's comfort with breastfeeding in public

*Lisa Amir, Stephanie Amir, Helene Johns; in collaboration with Julie Rudner, La Trobe University; Jenny Donovan, Inclusive Design; Miranda Buck, Australian Breastfeeding Association; Sinead Currie and Pat Hoddinott, University of Stirling, UK*

This project explores design features and community attitudes that invite or deter breastfeeding in public. We conducted interviews and focus groups with breastfeeding mothers in three local government areas in 2016 (Rural City of Swan Hill, City of Greater Bendigo and City of Melbourne) and at the Royal Women's Hospital in 2018. We received input from over 80 mothers speaking five languages, as well as health professionals and council planning staff. Using these data, we developed design guidelines that outline how a everyday shared spaces could become breastfeeding-friendly as well as the optimal design characteristics for dedicated breastfeeding spaces.

**Funding:** Building Healthy Communities Research Focus Area

**Status:** presented at local and international conferences; papers in preparation

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## Storage and transport of expressed breast milk for infants in two Neonatal Intensive Care Units: Exploratory studies in Australia and Sri Lanka

*Ranmali Rodrigo (PhD candidature), Lisa Amir, Della Forster*

In Australia, mothers whose newborns are in neonatal units express and store their breast milk at home and transport it to hospital. However, in Sri Lanka, mothers are expected to stay in hospital continuously throughout their infant's stay. This PhD project explored use of expressed breast milk for mothers' own infants in neonatal units in Australia and Sri Lanka. Component 1: review of selected guidelines on handling of expressed breast milk. Component 2: exploration of practices related to use of expressed breast milk in 100 mothers of infants in an Australian neonatal unit. Components 3 and 4 were conducted at a neonatal unit in Sri Lanka. Component 3: survey of parental views on current practice of mothers staying in hospital continuously with their infant; 50 mothers and 40 fathers. Component 4: assessment of bacterial growth in breast milk of 50 mothers, using simulated conditions of storage and transport.

**Funding:** HDR student support grant for equipment

**Status:** 3 papers published, 1 paper in press; thesis passed

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## Pasteurised donor human milk supplementation for term babies

*Jennifer Koplun, University of Queensland; Vanessa Clifford, Murdoch Children's Research Institute; Lisa Amir, La Trobe University; Jane Fisher, Monash University; Kim Dalziel, University of Melbourne; Sarah Price, University of Melbourne; Anna Tottman, Royal Women's Hospital; Alice Rumbold, South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute; Kirsten Perrett, Murdoch Children's Research Institute; and Laura Klein, Australian Red Cross Lifeblood*

This novel multi-centre randomised controlled trial will compare pasteurised donor human milk as supplemental nutrition for term infants of women with diabetes in pregnancy in the first four days of life, compared with standard care. A qualitative sub-study will explore the maternal mental health impact of access to pasteurised donor human milk.

**Funding:** NHRMC Partnership Grant, 2023-2026, with Australian Red Cross Lifeblood; Ramsay Hospital Health Foundation

**Status:** protocol development

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## Evaluation of the Milkdrop Breast Pump Cushion: as new device to help breastfeeding women using a breast pump

*Rebecca Hyde, Lisa Amir, Anita Moorhead; with Lauren Indiveri-Clark, consumer*

The Milkdrop breast pump cushion is a silicone device which attaches to the breast pump kit for electric breast pumps and aims to improve the comfort and experience of expressing for mothers. The study has three components: 1) women trialling the Milkdrop cushion for one week and providing feedback via two surveys and an expressing diary; 2) individual interviews with women from component one to further explore their experience of using the cushion; and 3) focus groups with lactation consultants to explore their thoughts on the product. Findings from this study will add to the limited evidence for the use of the Milkdrop cushion and may help to inform a larger trial.

**Funding:** Research Teams Seeding Grants: early- to mid-career researchers, School of Nursing & Midwifery, La Trobe University, 2021-22

**Status:** recruitment continued in 2023



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## Understanding antibiotic prescribing for mastitis in breastfeeding women: a mixed method study

*Lisa Amir, Sharinne Crawford, Méabh Cullinane; in collaboration with Luke Grzeskowiak, Flinders University*

This project has two broad aims: 1) to describe how general practitioners (GPs) around Australia treat mastitis with antibiotics to see if they are following the antibiotic guidelines for best practice; 2) to understand how GPs make decisions about prescribing for breastfeeding women, and how they use guidelines. The first component uses the MedicinesInsight database (2011 to 2021) to extract data on antibiotics prescribed and investigations ordered for mastitis encounters in general practice. The second component is in-depth interviews with GPs.

**Funding:** Therapeutic Guidelines Ltd/RACGP Foundation  
**Status:** data collection complete, presentation at local and international conferences; report submitted; publications in preparation

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## Improving management mastitis in breastfeeding women: audit

*Lisa Amir, La Trobe University; Irena Zakarija-Grkovic, Split University, Croatia; Kelly Coca, Universidade Federal de São Paulo, Brazil*

The aim of this project is to improve the management of women with mastitis and breast abscesses during lactation, by focusing on care received in Emergency Departments to understand current practices. The project is being conducted at the Royal Women's Hospital, Melbourne, as well as hospital sites in Brazil, Croatia, Germany and Türkiye. An audit of medical records will examine antibiotic prescribing and use of investigations, which will be compared to best practice guidelines.

**Funding:** N/A  
**Status:** data collection underway

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## A paradigm shift in lactational mastitis

*Lisa Amir; in collaboration with Wendy Ingman, University of Adelaide*

This project explores the role of the innate immune system in the development of mastitis. This is the response of the host (animal/woman) that involves inflammation (including white blood cells) and the complement cascade system, rather than the more well-known adaptive immune system which includes antibody production. We will explore these inflammatory cells in human milk samples to improve our understanding of the role of inflammation in mastitis and explore the feasibility of using anti-inflammatory agents to prevent and treat mastitis.

The first component is a cohort study of multiparous women recruited at the Royal Women's Hospital to compare milk in women with and without a history of mastitis (ROBIN: Risk Of Breast Inflammation).

**Funding:** NHMRC Ideas Grant 2022-24  
**Status:** recruitment and data collection ongoing



*This is mastitis - Selfie by Remi Peers, Painting by Leanne Pearce*

# Child, family and community health



## Program Lead: Professor Leesa Hooker

The Child, Family and Community Health research stream commenced in late 2019 and has grown to attract interest from government, industry and HDR scholars.

Our emerging team of Maternal and Child Health (MCH) clinician academics and researchers have established collaborative links with international public health nursing and health visitor academic researchers and services.

In Australia, we work with all tiers of government, including urban and rural MCH teams, and the non-government sector, to improve health services, client experiences and maternal, child and family health outcomes.

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## Victorian Association of Maternal and Child Health Nurses (VAMCHN): MCH Competency Standards project

*Leesa Hooker, Bernice Boland and colleagues; in collaboration with the Victorian Association of Maternal and Child Health Nurses and the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Vic branch)*

The Victorian Maternal and Child Health (MCH) professional standards were first developed in 1993. The current, fourth iteration of Standards are outdated and may not be meaningful to intended users. Current MCH nursing practice is dynamic, with significant policy change occurring since the existing standards were released in 2010. In addition, there is limited understanding on how the Standards are viewed and used. In conjunction with existing state government program guidelines, there is need for contemporary MCH nurse competency standards that can assist nurses to demonstrate continuing competence, frame professional development and improve clinical practice.

Using a parallel, mixed method design including document analysis, focus groups with nurse managers and an online MCH nurse questionnaire we aim to explore views and experiences in using the current standards and to produce a contemporary document that is relevant and useful for all intended users.

**Funding:** Victorian Association of Maternal and Child Health Nurses (VAMCHN) and Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF)

**Status:** project ongoing; Standards for MCH practice in draft

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## TRANSFORM: Transforming health systems to identify and respond to family violence – maternal and child health services

*Leesa Hooker, Catina Adams, Felicity Young; in collaboration with Kelsey Hegarty and the Safer Families CRE, University of Melbourne*

This project extends extensive research conducted as part of the 2017-2023 NHMRC-funded Safer Families Centre of Research Excellence <https://www.saferfamilies.org.au/>.

The TRANSFORM Project aims to develop and test a trauma and violence-informed 'model of care' for health services who are visited by people who may be experiencing family violence. LRHS has been focusing on Maternal and Child Health services and working with rural and metropolitan councils to improve the identification and support of women and children experiencing family violence.

**Funder:** NHMRC Safer Families CRE via University of Melbourne

**Status:** Project ongoing; manuscripts in preparation; Presentations at the European Domestic Violence Conference, Iceland September 2023

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## CORNELIA: A housing intervention for pregnant women experiencing homelessness

*Leesa Hooker, Jacqui Theobald; in collaboration with Juliet Watson and Sue Ellen Murray, RMIT University*

The Cornelia project aims to evaluate the impact of a supportive housing intervention for pregnant and homeless women. Using mixed methods, this project involves completing qualitative interviews with women at three different stages of the intervention (on recent arrival, on exit and six months post). Focus groups will be conducted with Cornelia staff and senior managers of involved organisations (Launch Housing, Housing First). We will also survey women participants at baseline, post and six months follow-up. RWH routine data will be collected and analysed to assess obstetric and neonatal outcomes between women using the Cornelia (case) service and all women using the RWH services (control) over a two-year period.

**Funder:** Royal Women's Hospital

**Status:** Project ongoing. Data collection complete. Reports in draft

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## Maternal and Child Health Nurses' and consumers' experience of father and non-birthing parent inclusive practice in rural and urban MCH settings in Victoria

*Kristina Edvardsson, Catina Adams, Bijaya Pokharel, Anne O'Neill, Leesa Hooker, Lael Ridgway, Christine East, Richard Gray*

Maternal and newborn health services have traditionally been directed towards mothers, however there is a growing body of research demonstrating the benefits of father/non-birthing parent engagement in maternal and newborn health, with benefits to the mothers, newborns and parents themselves. Interventions to engage fathers/non-birthing parents have also shown benefits in terms of strengthening family relationships, and support bonding between the non-birthing parents and the child.

The Victorian Maternal and Child Health (MCH) service provides population-based preventive health care for families with children from birth to school age through the promotion of health and development, early detection, and intervention for physical, emotional and social health issues.

This study sets out to explore MCH nurses' and fathers/non-birthing parents' perspectives and experiences of father/non-birthing parent inclusive practice in urban and

rural MCH settings in Victoria, Australia, and to identify suitable strategies to improve inclusion of fathers/non-birthing parents in the MCH service.

**Funding:** La Trobe University, School of Nursing and Midwifery seed grant.

**Status:** Interviews with fathers and non-birthing parents, and MCH nurses complete. Data analysis and write-up underway. A systematic review on father inclusive practice in child, family and community health has been completed, with a manuscript in draft.

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## MERTIL for Parents: A feasibility study of an online program for parents to promote infant social and emotional well-being.

*Leesa Hooker in collaboration with Jessica Opie and Jennifer McIntosh from the La Trobe University Bouverie Centre*

Early relational health is a key determinant of childhood development. Meta-analytic evidence shows early childhood relational security is open to revision, for better or worse, and relational trauma in the parent-child dyad can instigate a cascading pattern of risk. Importantly, relational trauma is modifiable through enhanced parental sensitivity and infant's experience of caregiver trust.

MERTIL program evaluation findings showed enhanced competence and confidence in nurses to identify relational trauma. However, capacity to respond was inhibited by inadequate referral options, particularly in rural and remote settings.

In response, the MERTIL team began to develop MERTIL for Parents (My Early Relational Trust-Informed Learning), co-designed with parents and nurses, and informed by the feedback of over 1300 MCHNs. MERTIL for Parents will be piloted in 2022, as a 40-minute online, self-paced parenting program that focuses on parent knowledge of relational trust and its significance for infant development. The program is an evidence-based, low-cost, accessible prevention resource, promoting equitable healthcare access, targeting emerging relational concerns before they reach clinical levels, with the aim of reducing need for service system engagement. The format aims to overcome logistical and financial barriers in accessing face-to-face services, intensified by COVID-19 and the critical shortage of trained professionals.

More broadly, the potential for universal online programs that target the development of early relational trust remains under-explored.

**Funding:** ABC grant

**Status:** Completed; 2 papers published in *PLOS One* and *Clin Child Fam Psychol Rev* in 2023

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## EVE: Usability, impact and acceptance of an mHealth app to engage and support pregnant and childbearing women

*Fiona Faulks, Leesa Hooker, Kristina Edvardsson, in collaboration with Nicole Carlon, Northern Health and Josh Farrington, Medicity*

EVE is a unique mHealth app designed to improve pregnancy outcomes and provide new and expectant mothers with access to healthcare providers, peers and resources to enrich their pregnancy, birthing and parenting experience. This project aims to evaluate end-user acceptance and feasibility of the EVE platform utilising the RE-AIM (Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation and Maintenance) framework. We will explore participants' views of the app (interviews and survey) and analyse deidentified EVE data on pregnant women's educational resource use and help-seeking behaviours.

**Funding:** ABC grant

**Status:** In progress, awaiting ethics approval

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## Family Centred Care research in paediatrics – a systematic quantitative review

*Ashleigh Butler, Lael Ridgway, Stacey Hokke, Kristina Edvardsson, Lisa McKenna, Bev Copnell, Christine East, Catina Adams, Ellen Henderson, Ulster University, UK*

A 'State of the Science' look at Family Centred Care (FCC) research: How much research is there from the past 10 or so years on FCC? What discipline is it in (i.e., medical, nursing, allied health etc); what specialty areas (i.e., NICU, PICU, ED, general paediatrics, oncology, palliative care etc.); what methodologies are used; what countries is the research conducted in; what types of participants are included (e.g., are they looking at perspectives of parents, children, health care practitioners?). The aim is to look for where the research is clustered and where it is lacking, in order to provide recommendations for future research.

**Funding:** N/A

**Status:** Completed; manuscripts submitted and under review

# Mother and infant health and maternity services

Program Leads: Professor Della Forster  
Professor Helen McLachlan  
Professor Christine East



The Judith Lumley Centre (JLC) has a long history of researching mother and infant health and wellbeing, as well as provision of maternity care, including care providers' views and experiences. Our aim is for our research to make sure the best possible outcomes are achieved for women, their infants, and the maternity care workforce.

Some of our studies focus on specific groups of women, for example immigrant women or other vulnerable groups. Other studies look more broadly. We are undertaking many state-wide and national studies in this area, mostly with a focus on describing and improving current practice.

A 2023 highlight was the Baggarook Yarrongi project team being a finalist in the Universities Australia 'Shaping Australia awards' which recognises an individual or team's work, research or otherwise that has changed or has the potential to change the lives of Australians for the better.

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## The ABLE Study (Asking women About disabiliTiEs)

*Charlie Smithson, Helen McLachlan, Della Forster, Michelle Newton*

It is estimated that more than one billion people worldwide are living with a disability. However, limited information exists on the disability status and needs of women during pregnancy. In Australia, disability status is not included in the Perinatal National Minimum Data Set. While there is a limited amount of qualitative research focusing on the experiences of pregnancy and childbirth of women with a disability, there is an absence of quantifiable data. We aim to address this gap by exploring the prevalence and identification of women with disabilities who utilise maternity services at the Royal Women's Hospital and also explore disability identification practices within public maternity services in Australia. Two separate recruitment periods took place in 2019 at the Women's using two different disability identification questions to attempt to determine optimal disability identification. It was found that disability prevalence data is highly dependent on the wording of the disability identification question. Women reported that they

were comfortable in being asked about their disability status. A follow-up questionnaire was used to gain insight into the experiences of women who identify as having a disability about how they found their pregnancy, labour and birth and the early postnatal period. Overall women were satisfied with the care they received during pregnancy, labour and birth and the postnatal periods, however, suggestions for improvement centred around communication, continuity of care provider and the need for increased recognition of women's disability/additional support needs.

A cross-sectional online survey was sent to all maternity managers of public maternity hospitals in Australia to explore disability identification practices. Seventy maternity hospitals completed the questionnaire, which represented all states and territories. Overall, disability identification practices within public maternity services are highly varied and documentation processes are not standardised. We have also examined the perinatal outcomes of women with a disability who had specialised care through the Women with Individual Needs (WIN) Clinic at the Women's and compared this with hospital-wide perinatal outcome data.

The study found that women with disabilities who received care from the WIN clinic were more likely to have a caesarean section and their infants were more likely to be born preterm and be admitted to the Neonatal Intensive Care or Special Care Unit when compared to all other women who gave birth at the Women's.

In response to the ABLE study, a Disability Identifier was introduced in the Parkville precinct (the Women's, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, the Royal Melbourne Hospital and the Royal Children's Hospital) to allow women and patients to self-identify with a disability.

**Funding:** The Royal Women's Hospital and Victorian Nurses and Midwives Trust (VNMT)

**Status:** initial project completed. Paper on disability identification published in *Midwifery* in 2023, discussion paper published in *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology* in 2023. VNMT funding to further explore the views and experiences and clinical outcomes of all pregnant women self-identifying with a disability who have received care at the Women's

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## Diabetes and antenatal milk expressing (DAME): a randomised controlled trial

*Della Forster, Lisa Amir, Anita Moorhead, Christine East; in collaboration with Susan Jacobs, Peter Davis, Amanda Aylward and Rachael Ford, Royal Women's Hospital; Susan Walker, Kerri McEgan, Gillian Opie and Catherine McNamara, Mercy Hospital for Women; Susan Donath, Murdoch Children's Research Institute; Lisa Gold, Deakin University*

This world first study found that women with diabetes in a low-risk pregnancy can safely express breast milk in late pregnancy, with the study dispelling concerns that the practice could cause harm to babies.

The DAME study explored the safety and effectiveness of advising women with diabetes in pregnancy to commence expressing breast milk from 36 weeks of pregnancy.

We recruited a total of 635 women and randomised them to the study – about half of them were advised to express. We recruited the women at six sites that provide pregnancy and birth care: the Royal Women's Hospital, Mercy Hospital for Women, Monash Health, Barwon Health, the Women's at Sandringham (part of the Royal Women's Hospital) and Frankston Hospital, from June 2011 until

October 2015. We collected data at recruitment in late pregnancy as well as from birth records, and then by telephone interview at two weeks and 12 weeks after birth.

The study found that for women with diabetes in pregnancy who were considered to be of low obstetric risk, there was no harm in advising them to express breast milk in late pregnancy. We also found evidence that infants of these women were more likely to receive only breastmilk in the first 24 hours after birth.

The findings pave the way for clinicians to recommend that low-risk pregnant women with diabetes in pregnancy express and store breastmilk to give to their newborns in the event they develop hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar levels) – a condition that can cause serious health problems in newborns.

The results of our study should not be extrapolated to high-risk groups with diabetes in pregnancy. The primary study results were published in *The Lancet* in 2017, and clinical guidelines have been developed based on the study outcomes.

**Funding:** NHMRC Project Grant; La Trobe University

**Status:** primary outcomes published in *The Lancet* in 2017; 3 month outcomes accepted in *Birth* (2023); more papers in preparation, presentations at national and international conferences

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## Evaluation of the *Growing Together Parenting Kit*: a mixed methods study

*Della Forster, Jan Nicholson, Helen McLachlan, Michelle Newton, Heather Grimes, Fiona McLardie-Hore, Touran Shafiei, Sarah Hay*

The Royal Women's Hospital developed an educational kit for pregnant women about early parenting, known as *Growing Together*, with funding from the Victorian State Government. The kit had three components – an information book for parents that covered the journey from conception to one year of age, an App that had been specifically designed for the project, and a children's book that parents were encouraged to read to their infants.

We evaluated the kit using mixed methods, measuring a range of outcomes including parents' views and experiences of the care and information, women's experience of motherhood, attachment, infant development, and parental knowledge and confidence as well as the views and experiences of health professionals.

**Funding:** The Royal Women's Hospital

**Status:** data collection completed; final report submitted; protocol paper published in *BMC Psychology* (2019); sources of information paper published in *Midwifery* (2022), primary outcome paper currently under review and paper reporting the outcomes of partners in preparation

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## Exploring the impact of caseload midwifery on preterm birth among socially disadvantaged women (the MAGNOLIA trial)

*Helen McLachlan, Della Forster, Michelle Newton, Touran Shafiei, Fiona McLardie-Hore, Sophia Holmlund, Méabh Cullinane; in collaboration with Stefan Kane, University of Melbourne; Jane Sandall, King's College London, UK; Rocco Cuzzilla, Royal Women's Hospital; Emily Callander, Monash University; Catram Nguyen, Murdoch Children's Research Institute; and Michael Kingsley, University of Auckland, New Zealand; Mia Ahlberg, Karolinska Institute, Sweden*

In Australia, approximately 27,000 babies are born preterm each year. Preterm birth is a key indicator of poorer short and long-term health. Poor birth outcomes such as preterm birth are substantially more common for socially disadvantaged populations.

The MAGNOLIA trial is investigating whether receiving continuity of care from one midwife through pregnancy, birth and after-birth (known as *caseload midwifery*) reduces preterm birth among socially disadvantaged women. It will also investigate women's views and satisfaction with care provision; midwives experiences of providing care; stakeholder views on implementation of the caseload model; and conduct a cost-effectiveness analysis of the model.

We are currently recruiting 1,894 women to the MAGNOLIA trial from two hospital sites in metropolitan Melbourne – the Royal Women's Hospital and Northern Health. Approximately half of these women will be randomly allocated to receive caseload midwifery care throughout their pregnancy and birth (the intervention), while the other half will be allocated to choose from all other standard care options available to them at that trial site.

A nested sub-study will be conducted alongside the trial at the Royal Women's Hospital to explore whether the caseload model reduces the physiological stress response in women allocated to that trial arm.

**Funding:** NHMRC Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) 2019 Preventive and Public Health Research Grant

**Status:** recruitment and data collection ongoing

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## The GEM Study: Exploring the impact of Group pregnancy Midwife-led care on caesarean section rates and infant health: a multi-site randomised controlled trial

*Della Forster, Helen McLachlan, Touran Shafiei, Robyn Matthews, Rebecca Hyde; in collaboration with Stefan Kane, Sue Jacobs, Tram Nguyen, Jenny Ryan and Trish Ryan, Royal Women's Hospital; Nicole Carlon, Northern Health; Emily Callander, University of Technology Sydney; Fleur D'Altera, consumer*

Group-based pregnancy care is undertaken in groups of 8–10 women for 6–8 sessions with two midwives and includes education and physical pregnancy checks. Evidence regarding potential benefit or harm is inconclusive, with some suggestion the model is associated with fewer preterm births. A Cochrane review concludes more evidence is needed.

We will be conducting a two-arm, multi-site randomised controlled trial, at two maternity hospitals in Melbourne. We will recruit 3,083 women of low- to moderate-obstetric risk, having their first baby, to compare the effectiveness of midwife-led group pregnancy care (Group Care) with standard individual based pregnancy care (Usual Care). The

primary objective is to evaluate the impact of Group Care on caesarean section rates in primiparous women compared with usual care; with the main secondary outcome evaluating the impact of Group Care on women having a 'healthy' infant. We will collect data on women's clinical outcomes and views and experiences; views and experiences of support people; views of experiences of midwives working in Group Care; and an economic evaluation of Group Care.

**Funding:** Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) – Preventative and Public Health Research (PPHR) Initiative - 2020 Maternal First 2000 Days and Childhood Health.

**Status:** all governance approvals in place, model developed, midwives recruited

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## Maternity and newborn emergencies (MANE) program evaluation

*Della Forster, Méabh Cullinane, Helen McLachlan, Michelle Newton, Stefanie Zugna*

The Victorian Department of Health funded the *Maternity and Newborn Emergencies* (MANE) education program, which was auspiced and run by the Royal Women's Hospital Maternity Services Education Program for regional and rural public maternity providers.

To inform the development of content, design and delivery of the program, a team from the Judith Lumley Centre evaluated MANE. The evaluation was conducted over a three-year period from 2017 to 2020. All rural and regional maternity services who received MANE in 2018 and 2019 participated in the evaluation, with in-depth case studies conducted at five maternity service providers.

**Funding:** The Royal Women's Hospital

**Status:** Evaluation complete. Final report submitted to Royal Women's Hospital. Three papers published including a protocol paper. A final paper is in preparation

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## The 'EXPert' Study: exploring nurses' and midwives' perceptions of 'expertise' and what it is like to work at a tertiary hospital

*Della Forster, Robyn Matthews, Rebecca Hyde, Touran Shafiei, Michelle Newton; in collaboration with Fleur Llewelyn, Royal Women's Hospital*

In Australia the concept of 'expertise' within the midwifery and nursing workforce is traditionally based on number of years that the clinician has been practicing. As the number of years in the workforce increases, so does the level of compensation. Anecdotally though, when managers are arranging staffing for a given roster or shift, they may view each staff member not simply based on the number of years they have been practicing but also in terms of how much of an 'expert' they consider the staff member to be. Some staff exhibit a high level of perceived 'expertise' yet receive no formal recognition. What is 'expertise' from a practical point of view if it means more than just the number of years worked? There is a significant lack of research and understanding in this area.

Concurrently, recent evidence shows an increasing prevalence of midwives' and nurses' expressing stress and dissatisfaction about their work. At the Royal Women's Hospital in Melbourne, Victoria, there were anecdotal reports of increased staff dissatisfaction, worries about staff skill mix, and concerns about potential poor workforce retention among midwives and nurses. Given all these factors, we wanted to explore these issues, and also look at what factors positively or negatively affect staff experiences.

The purpose of the 'EXPert' study is to develop a functional definition of expertise within the midwifery and nursing workforce (that can be applied to recruitment, rostering, supporting staff, skill mix and workforce strategies) and to explore midwives' and nurses' experiences of work and what factors affect their views.

**Funding:** The Royal Women's Hospital (staff support)

**Status:** data collection complete, two papers published in 2022, one paper under review and a manuscript in final stages of preparation



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## Your views matter: exploring the experiences, satisfaction and needs of parents of infants admitted to Newborn Services at the Royal Women's Hospital

*Rebecca Hyde, Della Forster, Touran Shafiei, Anita Moorhead, Helen McLachlan; in collaboration with Sue Jacobs and Laura Bignell, Royal Women's Hospital; Silvana Favorito, consumer*

Consumer satisfaction is now a fundamental aspect of evaluating the delivery of health care services in today's society. Traditionally, long term outcomes of neonatal intensive care were measured mainly in relation to clinical indicators, but consumer satisfaction is increasingly becoming a quality of care indicator for paediatric and neonatal units. Past explorations of families' experiences of neonatal care at the Women's have been limited and have not included all families whose babies have been admitted to the neonatal intensive or special care (NISC).

The aim of *Your Views Matter* was to explore the satisfaction, experiences and needs of parents whose babies had been admitted to NISC at the Women's, in order to inform the way future care is provided.

A cross-sectional survey was undertaken. Families who had a baby or babies admitted to NISC were assessed for eligibility (admitted  $\geq$  4 hours and discharged from NISC by 6 months of age).

Eligible families were sent a survey in the mail followed by three reminders. Families who had experienced the death of their baby during their admission were also included in the study and were sent a more tailored invitation to participate, followed by a modified survey if they indicated they would like to participate. A total of 1,014 surveys (or invitations to participate) were sent (990 to non-bereaved families and 24 to bereaved families). Of these, 318 surveys were returned – 32% (314/990) of non-bereaved families, and 57% (4/7) of bereaved families who indicated they wanted to participate.

Families had high levels of satisfaction with care, however level of satisfaction differed depending on gestation of baby at birth, with lower infant gestational age associated with higher parental satisfaction.

**Funding:** The Royal Women's Hospital Foundation

**Status:** data collection complete, analyses and manuscript preparation underway

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## Labour pain assessment: evaluation of a new woman-centred approach

*Laura Whitburn, Christine East, Lester Jones; in collaboration with Mary-Ann Davey, Monash University*

Current approaches to assessing labour pain need reconsideration. We have developed a multidimensional measurement tool to assess women's labour pain experience. A study at Mercy Health has been conducted to evaluate the appropriateness and validity of this new tool, and will be utilised to further refine the tool for a large longitudinal cohort study. Planning for the next stage is underway.

**Funding:** Mercy Health Academic Research; LTU Social Research Assistance

**Status:** manuscript preparation, dissemination

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## Midwives' views and experiences of supporting women to manage labour pain

*Laura Whitburn, Christine East, Lester Jones; in collaboration with Kate Dawson, Australian Catholic University; Elizabeth Newnham, University of Newcastle*

This national survey study aimed to explore midwives' experiences of supporting women to manage pain during childbirth. It focused on the midwives' attitudes towards labour pain, and the strategies (verbal and non-verbal) that midwives use to support birthing women. A total of 557 midwives across Australia participated in the survey, and 17 completed an interview. Findings relating to midwives' ways of working and associated workplace barriers and facilitators were presented at the 2023 Australian College of Midwives conference.

**Funding:** N/A

**Status:** : manuscript preparation, dissemination

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## Induction of labour: a shared decision. A pilot project to develop surveys for women before and after their induction of labour

*Christine East; in collaboration with Melissa Buultjens, La Trobe University and Jen Fielding, Monash Health*

This project forms part of an overall program of research that aims to explore women's experiences of shared involvement in decisions related to induction of labour (IOL), using surveys pre- and post-IOL. Funding has been obtained to develop and pilot a survey of women pre- and post-IOL.

**Funding:** Mercy Health Academic Research; Mercy La Trobe ARCH

**Status:** literature search; draft surveys developed; ethics application pending

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## Postpartum haemorrhage

*Christine East, Kritika Poudel*

Postpartum haemorrhage (PPH) contributes to significant morbidity in Australian childbearing women, with rates of severe haemorrhage seeming to rise in the past decade. We have explored risk factors as they relate to Mercy Health's two maternity services and considered the impact of improved ascertainment of blood loss volumes on both overall PPH rates and the need for transfusions or higher dependency care. Blood loss ascertainment by visual estimation and weighing/measuring has changed over time. We explored the uptake of changing to predominantly weighing/measuring, by comparison of two 3-year epochs.

**Funding:** La Trobe Alumni donation; Mercy La Trobe ARCH

**Status:** conference abstracts; manuscript submitted for publication

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## Safer Care Victoria: Review of 10 years of recommendations from the Consultative Council on Obstetric and Paediatric Morbidity and Mortality (CCOPMM)

*Christine East, Kritika Poudel, Jia Jia (Jessie) Liu, Noushin Arefadib*

This review is considering the recommendations made regarding postpartum haemorrhage, fetal surveillance and neonatal resuscitation in the *Victoria's Mothers, Babies and Children* reports produced by CCOPMM from 2010 to 2020. The final report proposed a way forward for promoting the inclusion of CCOPMM recommendations in clinical guidelines, service policies and ultimately, clinical practice. The next phase of this program includes evaluation of risk factors for postpartum haemorrhage, based on Victoria-wide data 2017-2021.

**Funding:** Safer Care Victoria Fellowship 2022-2024

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## The TULIP study: Telehealth Use In Pregnancy – a pilot randomised controlled trial

*Della Forster, Robyn Matthews, Rebecca Hyde, Touran Shafiei, Helen McLachlan, Christine East; in collaboration with Stefan Kane and Jeanie Cheong, Royal Women's Hospital; Sue Walker, Lisa Hui and Andrea Dodd, Mercy Hospital for Women; and Emily Callander, University of Technology Sydney*

Pregnancy care has traditionally been delivered through face-to-face visits, however as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a rapid move to having pregnancy care via telehealth. This rapid change led to concerns about what this meant for clinical outcomes and also consumer experiences. Despite these concerns, many health services plan to continue to offer telehealth for pregnancy care in some way.

We are conducting a two-site, pilot randomised controlled study with 200 pregnant women, comparing all face-to-face care pregnancy care with combined telehealth and face-to-face care. We will collect data on clinical outcomes, adherence to telehealth schedule, clinician's views of telehealth and women's views and experiences of pregnancy care.

**Funding:** Norman Beischer Medical Research Foundation Innovation Grant, 2021

**Status:** data analysis and manuscript preparation underway

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## Improving the health of Aboriginal mothers and babies through continuity of midwife care: a multi methods translational study

*Helen McLachlan, Della Forster, Michelle Newton, Catherine Chamberlain, Fiona McLardie-Hore, Pamela McCalman; in collaboration with Sue Kildea, Charles Darwin University; Jane Freemantle, Ngaree Blow, Karyn Ferguson and Jeremy Oats, University of Melbourne; Jennifer Brown, Deakin University; Georgia Dickinson, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation; Marika Jackomos, Mercy Hospital for Women; Sue Jacobs and Jenny Ryan, the Royal Women's Hospital; Susan Donath, Murdoch Children's Research Institute; Lisa Gold, Deakin University*

The Baggarrook Yurrongi (Woiwurrung language of the Wurundjeri people) meaning 'Woman's Journey' and the Nuraagh Manma Buliana (Yorta Yorta language meaning 'All of us working together in pregnancy') was a five-year NHMRC funded Partnership Project with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO), the Royal Women's Hospital, the Mercy Hospital for Women, Sunshine Hospital (Joan Kirner Women's and Children's) and Goulburn Valley Health. The primary aim of the project was to explore the capacity of maternity services to implement a new, culturally safe model of care for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women (or women having an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander baby). Women were proactively offered 'caseload' midwifery: they received continuity of care from a primary midwife through pregnancy, labour, birth and postpartum..

The study also explored the effect of the model on perinatal outcomes for Aboriginal women and their infants, women's experiences of care as well as midwives' views and experiences. The model was introduced at the Royal Women's Hospital in March 2017, Sunshine Hospital in October 2017, and the Mercy Hospital in April 2018, and is embedded at the three sites

In 2022 we published our primary study outcomes of model implementation in the Lancet journal's *Eclinical Medicine*, reporting a 90% uptake of the model and a 21 fold increase in First Nations women accessing the model. In 2023 we reported on breastfeeding outcomes, midwives' satisfaction, and accurate identification and documentation of women having a First Nations baby.

A highlight was publication of an invited commentary in the Lancet journal *Eclinical Medicine* which called for upscaling Baggarrook models.

Analysis of clinical outcomes are underway. A further highlight of the project was the team being a finalist in the Universities Australia 'Shaping Australia awards' which recognises an individual or team's work, research or otherwise that has changed or has the potential to change the lives of Australians for the better

**Funding:** NHMRC Partnership Grant and funding from five partner organisations

**Status:** in progress; main findings published, 5 papers published, others in draft



Image La Trobe University

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## RUSOM (Registered Undergraduate Student in Midwifery): Evaluating an undergraduate midwifery student employment model in Victoria

*Sharon Mumford, Helen McLachlan, Michelle Newton, Charlie Benzie, Rebecca Hyde, Christine Trevena, Christine East, Rebecca Hyde, Della Forster; Fleur Llewellyn, Royal Women's Hospital; Magdalena Pliszka, Mercy Health; Shelley Hardingham, Bendigo Health*

In response to the COVID19 pandemic, in 2020 the Victorian Department of Health developed a number of health care workforce maximisation strategies, one of which included a 'Registered Undergraduate Student of Midwifery' (RUSOM) model. This was in recognition of the potential for midwifery students to support the maternity care workforce shortages that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. A RUSOM is defined as "a person currently enrolled at a university to undertake midwifery study, who is registered with AHPRA as a student midwife, and who at commencement has successfully completed not less than two years of the Bachelor of Midwifery Degree or dual degree Bachelor of Nursing and Midwifery". RUSOMs must work under the delegation and supervision of a midwife and cannot have sole allocation of a patient. They also must work within the scope of a core activity list, be employed for a minimum of 7.5 hours per week, and work shifts of four hours or more during the day and evening or 10 hours at night.

This model has been implemented in a number of maternity settings across the state. There has been no previous evaluation of the RUSOM model. Three independent evaluations of the RUSOM model in four maternity services (three metropolitan and one regional) from the perspective of RUSOMs and midwives have been conducted by La Trobe University in 2021 and 2022.

These evaluations have added to the limited evidence regarding undergraduate employment models for midwifery students, and were used to support an expansion of the duties list of RUSOMs in 2022. The model was highly valued at all sites and participants were strongly in support of continuation of the model and considered it to be a key strategy given the workforce shortages. Further research should explore the expansion and sustainability of RUSOMs in the maternity workforce.

**Funding:** Royal Women's Hospital, Mercy Health and Bendigo Health

**Status:** Complete: Publication in *Women and Birth* (2022). Evaluation reports - The Women's October 2021, Mercy Health August 2022, Bendigo Health March 2023

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## Centre for Teamwork Excellence in Maternity Emergencies (CTEME) program evaluation

*Méabh Cullinane, Della Forster, Laura Whitburn, Helen McLachlan, Michelle Newton, Stefanie Zugna, Charlie Benzie*

The Centre for Teamwork Excellence in Maternity Emergencies (CTEME) program encompassed several education programs delivered by the Royal Women's Hospital Maternity Services Education Program (MSEP) team. The programs are delivered primarily to maternity and newborn care clinicians across Victoria, and include an emergency birthing program designed for non-birthing services and a maternity emergency program delivered to rural and regional maternity service providers.

An evaluation of the CTEME program, with a specific focus on sustainability, was conducted by researchers at the Judith Lumley Centre. The evaluation included all Victorian services who received a CTEME program in 2022 and early 2023. A final report was delivered to the Royal Women's Hospital in November 2023.

**Funding:** The Royal Women's Hospital

**Status:** Evaluation is complete. Final report was submitted to and received by the Royal Women's Hospital in November 2023

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## The FUCHSIA Study: FUTURE proofing the midwifery workforce in Victoria: statewide cross-sectional survey exploring Health, wellbeing and SustainAbility

*Della Forster, Robyn Matthews, Rebecca Hyde, Touran Shafiei, Michelle Newton, Helen McLachlan, Sharon Mumford, Méabh Cullinane; in collaboration with Fleur Llewelyn, Royal Women's Hospital*

The provision of safe maternity care depends on an adequately staffed and skilled midwifery workforce. Accurate and up to date midwifery workforce data are currently lacking due to inadequate data collection and mapping of workforce needs. Victoria has had ongoing maternity sector workforce issues, and the 2018 inquiry into Victoria's perinatal services identified significant

We conducted an online, population-based cross-sectional study in Victoria, Australia between March and October 2021. All midwives employed in public and private maternity services, managers of maternity services, privately employed midwives and midwifery students enrolled in 2021 were invited to participate.

We aimed to assess the state of the midwifery workforce in Victoria in 2021, what may affect the sustainability of the future midwifery profession in Victoria and to further understand what the workforce challenges are (related to health, wellbeing, sustainability and the COVID-19 pandemic) facing Victorian midwives, midwifery students and maternity services in 2021 and what factors affect these. We plan to repeat the survey of managers and midwives – this time Australia-wide – in 2026.

**Funding:** N/A

**Status:** data collection complete for 2021 survey, analyses and manuscript preparation of 2021 findings underway

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## The FUCHSIA Cohort study: FUTURE proofing the midwifery workforce in Victoria: a statewide longitudinal Cohort study exploring Health, wellbeing and SustainAbility

*Della Forster, Robyn Matthews, Rebecca Hyde, Touran Shafiei, Michelle Newton, Helen McLachlan, Amanda Cooklin, Méabh Cullinane; in collaboration with Fleur Llewelyn, Royal Women's Hospital and Anna O'Connell, Deakin University*

Midwives are integral for ensuring high-quality care and positive outcomes for women and newborns globally. However, without acceptable staffing levels and skill mix there is a potential for a reduction in the quality of care. There are significant problems with retention and equitable distribution of midwives across rural, regional, and metropolitan areas in Australia. There is also local and international evidence the midwifery profession is facing significant challenges, e.g., high rates of burnout and mental health issues, job dissatisfaction, and an ageing workforce that is predominantly part-time. Very few studies of Australian midwives have been conducted longitudinally so most evidence is based on cross-sectional studies, which may over-emphasise the causal link between workforce challenges, health outcomes and intention to leave the profession.

We are conducting a longitudinal cohort study using a group of midwifery students and midwives (n=474) who agreed to participate from the FUCHSIA study in 2021. We will be conducting annual surveys of this group in 2022, 2023, 2024 and a final survey in 2025.

We aim to describe the career trajectories and wellbeing of midwifery students and midwives over a five-year period and explore the risk or preventative factors that affect these and what that means for the sustainability of the midwifery profession.

**Funding:** Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation – Victorian branch

**Status:** data collection complete for 2022 and 2023 survey, analyses and manuscript preparation of 2022 and 2023 findings underway

## COLLABORATIVE WORK

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### My baby's movements: a stepped wedged cluster randomised trial of maternal awareness and reporting of decreased fetal movements to reduce stillbirth

*Christine East, Della Forster; in collaboration with Vicki Flenady and Glenn Gardener, University of Queensland; Philippa Middleton, South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute ; Michael Coorey, Murdoch Children's Research Institute; David Ellwood, Griffith University; Caroline Crowther and Emily Callander, NHMRC Clinical Trials Centre; Jane Norman, Medical Research Council (MRC) Centre for Reproductive Health, Edinburgh, UK; Frances Boyle, University of Queensland*

The My Baby's Movements study was aligned with the Stillbirth CRE (see below for more information). This was conducted in 26 Australian hospitals. Christine East is one of the chief investigators and also coordinated this from 2017–2019 in her previous role at Monash Health, while Della Forster and colleagues undertook this at the Royal Women's Hospital and Sue McDonald coordinated this at Mercy Health (2018–2019).

**Funding:** NHMRC Project Grant APP1067363; NHMRC Stillbirth Centre for Research Excellence APP1116640;  
**Status:** completed, four publications

### Prevention of adverse child behavioural development following maternal depression in pregnancy: Beating the blues before birth

*Christine East; in collaboration with Jeanette Milgrom, University of Melbourne; Helen Skouteris, Monash University; Megan Galbally, Murdoch University; Vivette Glover, Imperial College London, UK*

There is substantial evidence that maternal depression during pregnancy can affect fetal and child neurodevelopment. Children of women depressed in pregnancy are likely to have an increased risk of behavioural problems such as anxiety, depression and attention deficit/ hyperactivity, with effects on mental health lasting at least to adolescence. This randomised controlled trial compares medium-term change in child outcomes following cognitive behavioural treatment of depression in pregnancy or usual care. It has transitioned to being known as "Beating the Blues Before Birth" and continues to recruit.

**Funding:** NHMRC Project Grant APP1143448  
**Status:** in progress

## Perinatal mental health

**Program Lead: Associate Professor Touran Shafiei**



Perinatal mental illness is a major public health issue, with potential serious health consequences for the woman, her infant and family members. In Australia, up to one in five women (more than 60,000 women) experiencing depression and/or anxiety per year, posing a significant health and economic burden.

This research program aims to build evidence about the critical factors around maternal emotional wellbeing and then to design, test and implement evidence-based interventions to improve maternal mental health.

We are currently undertaking a large NHMRC-funded randomised controlled trial (DAISY) which aims to evaluate the impact of proactive telephone peer support on preventing postnatal depression and anxiety. In 2020, we had to pause participant recruitment due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. Given the high levels of stress and anxiety in the community and an increasing pool of trained volunteers available to provide telephone peer support, we commenced a DAISY sub-study offering eligible women birthing at the study sites self-referral to access support.

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### DAISY: preventing postnatal depression in new mothers using telephone peer support – a randomised controlled trial

*Della Forster, Helen McLachlan, Touran Shafiei, Jan Nicholson, Jessica Bee, Heather Grimes, Catina Adams; in collaboration with Alan Shiell, La Trobe University School of Psychology and Public Health; Cindy-Lee Dennis, University of Toronto; Tram Nguyen, Royal Women's Hospital; Catram Nguyen, Murdoch Children's Research Institute; Jane Fisher, Monash University; in collaboration with Hume and Wyndham Local Government Areas (LGAs), Royal Women's Hospital and PANDA (Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia)*

In Australia, 17% of new mothers experience postnatal depression (PND), with potential serious health consequences for the woman, her infant and family members. However, one in three Victorian new mothers experiencing PND do not seek help. The DAISY study is a multi-site, two-arm randomised controlled trial (RCT) matching peer volunteer mothers with a lived experience of postnatal depression and/or anxiety (from which they have recovered) with new mothers at increased risk of postnatal depression or anxiety. New mothers, who are at slightly higher risk than average of developing depression and/or anxiety, are recruited from the postnatal units at the Women's.

Mothers randomly allocated to peer support group receive proactive telephone-based support from a peer volunteer up until six months postpartum, and both groups receive all the usual care and supports available as part of routine care.

The aim of DAISY is to test whether proactive peer support by telephone decreases the risk of postnatal depression at six months postpartum. A range of other health outcomes are also measured, along with exploring the cost-effectiveness of such a service. We will recruit 1,060 women to the study and aim to train about 200 peer volunteer mothers to provide the telephone support.

**Funding:** NHMRC Project Grant GNT1141284

**Status:** volunteer recruitment and training completed; participant recruitment and data collection underway



Laura Garcia, Pexels

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## Peer support for new mothers during COVID-19

*Della Forster, Helen McLachlan, Touran Shafiei, Jan Nicholson, Jessica Bee, Meabh Cullinane, Heather Grimes, Catina Adams; in collaboration with Alan Shiell, La Trobe University School of Psychology and Public Health; Cindy-Lee Dennis, University of Toronto, Canada; Tram Nguyen, Royal Women's Hospital; Cattram Nguyen, Murdoch Children's Research Institute; Royal Women's Hospital and PANDA (Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia)*

Women birthing during COVID-19 lockdown had shorter postnatal stays, reduced interaction with health services and less social supports following birth. Levels of stress and anxiety was generally higher, and social isolation was greater than usual for new mothers. Given the potentially high levels of stress and anxiety in the community, and given we had an increasing pool of peer volunteers trained and available to provide telephone peer support, we commenced a DAISY sub-study where we offered all eligible women birthing at the study sites self-referral to access telephone peer support. All women who gave birth at the maternity services at hospital trial sites were provided a flier prior to hospital discharge postpartum (Jun to Oct 2020), including information and how to express their interest via a QR code to scan, a URL link, a study email address, and a study phone number.

Interested women completed a baseline survey (assessing their eligibility) and provided their consent online. Eligible women who consented were matched with a peer volunteer mother to receive regular telephone support for a few months. Data on women's wellbeing and experiences of peer support were collected at completion of the support period.

**Funding:** N/A

**Status:** completed

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## IVY: investigating an online community of support for emotional health in pregnancy

*Della Forster, Touran Shafiei, Helen McLachlan, Laura Biggs, Sara Couch; in collaboration with Terri Smith, Cathy Wyett, PANDA; Greg Wadley, University of Melbourne*

This study aimed to develop and test the feasibility, acceptability and functionality of a moderated online peer support App to be used on smartphones, tablets or computers, to reduce perinatal depression and anxiety in women at increased risk. The project has been undertaken in collaboration with Australia's peak consumer perinatal mental health organisation PANDA – Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia.

An iterative user-centred approach was used to design and develop the App, via a series of interviews, focus groups and design workshops with consumers, stakeholders and software designers. We then conducted a pilot randomised controlled trial (RCT) of the App with 100 pregnant women to test potential impact and engagement as well as to inform a large adequately powered RCT.

**Funding:** Norman Beischer Medical Research Foundation; Building Healthy Communities RFA, La Trobe University

**Status:** app developed; final report submitted to the funding body; data analysis in progress; papers in preparation

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## Identifying the perinatal mental health needs of immigrant and refugee women

*Touran Shafiei, Margaret Flood, Jessica Bee; in partnership with Multicultural Centre for Women's Health*

Compared to native-born women, immigrant and refugee women are more likely to experience perinatal mental illness, less likely to seek help for their emotional difficulties and less likely to use perinatal mental health services. We conducted a study of perinatal mental health needs of immigrant and refugee women living in the North Division of Victoria, to gain a better understanding of the local barriers and facilitators to immigrant women's access to health services during the perinatal period.



The study had three components:

1. A literature review of perinatal mental health, its prevalence, impacts and risk factors, with a focus on the experiences of immigrant and refugee women and their health seeking;
2. 'Response mapping' to identify the range of current perinatal support services and related activities in the North Division and current perinatal support programs and services which are specifically for immigrant and refugee women; and
3. In-depth interviews with service providers about the gaps and facilitators of providing mental health services to immigrant women during pregnancy and after birth.

**Funding:** Department of Health, Victoria

**Status:** final report submitted to the funding body; paper in preparation

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## Examining the postnatal depression and anxiety screening and management practices of Maternal and Child Health Nurses in Victoria, Australia: A multiphase study

*Noushin Arefadib (PhD candidature), Touran Shafiei, Amanda Cooklin, Jan Nicholson*

Routine screening for postnatal depression and anxiety (PNDA) can increase rates of detection, referral, and service utilisation among women. In Victoria, Australia identifying women with PNDA and facilitating their access to supports is largely the responsibility of Maternal and Child Health Nurses (MCHNs). Little is known how MCHNs carry out this work and the socio-ecological factors which impact their ability to do so. The aim of this project was to understand MCHNs' PNDA screening and management practices, and the factors which impacted these. A multiphase design, comprising three sequential studies was used. Study One was a scoping review which examined the range and nature of primary research evidence on PNDA screening and management by MCHNs in community-settings.

Study Two was a population-based cross-sectional survey which examined Victorian MCHNs' PNDA screening practices and the factors which impacted screening in line with the Australian Clinical Practice Guideline. Study Three comprised qualitative interviews with MCHNs to explore their experiences in greater detail.

**Funding:** La Trobe University Postgraduate Research Scholarship

**Status:** four papers published (2021-22); thesis passed

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## Realist evaluation of an Australian volunteer doula program for women experiencing socioeconomic adversity

*Kerryn O'Rourke (PhD candidature), Touran Shafiei, Michelle Newton, Jane Yelland, Murdoch Children's Research Institute*

How women are cared for while having a baby can have profound and lasting effects on their lives. Women living with socioeconomic adversity have often have inequitable and unreliable access to high quality maternity care. Doula support programs offer complementary care for these women and are known to, on average, have positive outcomes. Less understood is how, when, and for whom these programs work. A realist evaluation of an Australian doula program explored these questions. The program provides free social, emotional, and practical support by trained volunteer doulas during pregnancy, birth, and new parenting.

Using realist evaluation methodology, seven hypothesised program theories of how, when and for whom the doula support works were developed from key informant interviews and a rapid realist review of literature. Two of these hypothesised theories were tested and refined with data from focus groups with eight doulas, and realist interviews with seven English speaking and six Arabic speaking clients. Realist interview and cross-cultural qualitative research methods were integrated for interviews with Arabic speakers, in collaboration with a bicultural researcher.

**Funding:** Birth for Humankind (Industry Postgraduate Research Scholarship); La Trobe University Research Training Program Scholarship

**Status:** four papers published (2020-22); thesis passed

## Reducing sexual and gender based violence



**Program Lead:** Professor Leesa Hooker

**Co-lead:** Dr Jessica Ison



The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced physical and / or sexual violence in their lifetime, mostly by an intimate partner. This research program aims to build a body of evidence for effective interventions to prevent and reduce the effects of sexual and gender-based violence, especially those that can be delivered in primary health care and community settings.

We also acknowledge the importance to tailor prevention and response intervention, such as work with victim-survivors from various communities to ensure our research addresses the needs of all victim-survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

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### HARMONY: a pragmatic cluster randomised controlled trial to strengthen primary care response to domestic violence among migrant and refugee communities

*Angela Taft, Felicity Young, Molly Allen-Leap, Bijaya Pokharel, Xia Li, in collaboration with Gene Feder, University of Bristol; Kelsey Hegarty and Douglas Boyle, University of Melbourne; Danielle Mazza, Monash University; Jane Yelland and Cattram Nguyen, Murdoch Children's Research Institute; Richard Norman, Curtin University; Ruth Fox, InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence; Claudia Garcia-Moreno, World Health Organization*

HARMONY is an adaptation of a highly successful UK trial (Feder et al, 2006), with the addition of elements from two Australian studies, WEAVE (Hegarty et al, 2013) and MOSAIC (Taft et al, 2009), including cultural safety.

The primary aim is to test the effectiveness of culturally safe domestic and family violence (DFV) training, combined with the yearlong support of a bilingual advocate support worker, to increase the rates of GP identification, documentation and referrals of women

experiencing DFV, especially those of migrant/refugee background. A secondary aim is to evaluate routine GP systems software developed to collect aggregated anonymised patient data on the identification, safety planning and referral of DFV incidents, as well as increase the coding of patient ethnicity.

Recruitment of clinics began in 2019. Following a six-month suspension during the COVID-19 pandemic, we recruited 24 clinics but had 5 withdraw. The DFV training was completed between October 2020 and June 2021. The protocol paper was published 2021 in *BMJ Open* and a systematic review of culturally competent family violence response to women in primary care was published in 2022 in *Trauma Violence and Abuse*. HARMONY training was the focus of presentations at conferences in 2022, including NNVAWI and SVRI. Data collection (GrHanite) through electric medical records for participating GP clinics concluded in August 2022.

**Funding:** NHMRC, Commonwealth Department of Social Services and Victorian Government Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion

**Status:** project ongoing; manuscripts submitted

## Preventing sexual assault on campus: women’s empowerment and safety through education and action (WEACT)

Leesa Hooker, Jessica Ison, Angela Taft, Felicity Young; in collaboration with Kirsty Forsdike, La Trobe Business School; Elli Darwinkel, Monash University; Fiona Marshall, Monash University; Charlene Senn, University of Windsor, Canada

Young women on campus experience unacceptably high rates of avoidable rape / attempted rape by male acquaintances. More than 50% of Australian university students have experienced sexual harassment and 7% have been sexually assaulted in university settings. The Canadian Enhanced Assess, Acknowledge, Act (EAAA) program reduced campus completed rape and attempted rape by 50% (Senn et al., 2015), and sustained two years post-training (Senn, 2017).

The WEACT project aims to: assess the feasibility of implementing the EAAA sexual assault resistance education program into the Australian University context (recruitment, retention, fidelity); explore the acceptability of resistance education (and evaluation methods) for female students; improve student knowledge and self-efficacy of sexual assault; and reduce the incidence of sexual assault/rape experienced by students. Interviews were conducted with 31 Safer Community staff across Australia.

In 2023, La Trobe University, Monash University and the Australian Nation University Safer Communities’ teams delivered the EAAA program to students, with the evaluation team collecting pre and post surveys to assess the programs suitability for the Australian University context.

Pilot evaluation data will support a grant application for a national women’s empowerment (WEACT) project evaluation.

**Funding:** Transforming Human Societies RFA; Evaluation funded by La Trobe University and Monash University.

**Status:** Project ongoing; manuscripts in progress

## RESPOND: Community action to address alcohol and other drug-facilitated sexual violence in the Bendigo region

Leesa Hooker, Jessica Ison; in collaboration with Kirsty Forsdike, Jacqui Theobald, Anne-Marie Laslett, Alex Donaldson, Elena Wilson, La Trobe University; Ingrid Wilson, Singapore Institute of Technology; in partnership with the Centre Against Sexual Assault Central Victoria

This project is building community capacity to prevent and respond to alcohol and other drug-facilitated sexual violence in the Greater Bendigo region. Through multi-stakeholder participatory action and co-design, the project is developing and evaluating a community-based program that can support the diverse Bendigo community to prevent and appropriately respond to alcohol and other drug-facilitated sexual violence.

In 2022, the team conducted a concept mapping exercise with stakeholders. This was followed by a World Café forum in the Bendigo region. The team also undertook a scoping review on alcohol and other drug-facilitated sexual violence. Data collection is complete and analysis and resource development to be finalised.

**Funding:** Crime Prevention Innovation Fund, Victorian Government

**Status:** project ongoing; manuscripts in progress



Image La Trobe University

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## Alcohol and other drug-facilitated sexual violence across Victoria

*Jessica Ison, Leesa Hooker; in collaboration with Kirsty Forsdike, Jacqui Theobald, Anne-Marie Laslett, Alex Donaldson, Elena Wilson La Trobe University*

Alcohol and other drug-facilitated sexual violence is a pervasive issue which can have lasting impacts on victim-survivors. However, it is under researched in Australia and internationally. Further, there is little knowledge on how victim-survivors experience the service system and where improvements could be made. This project aims to address this evidence gap in service provision. Through interviews with key stakeholders in the service system, the project will map out where improvements could be made to ensure victim-survivors are supported and cared for.

**Funding:** La Trobe University Postdoctoral Research Fellowship

**Status:** project ongoing; manuscripts in progress

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## UNFPA partnership to develop a national curriculum and system supports for health providers responding to gender-based violence in Timor-Leste

*Kayli Wild, Guilhermina de Araujo, Angela Taft, Felicity Young, Leesa Hooker; in collaboration with Linda Kelly, and Eileen Christou, Institute for Human Security and Social Change; Lidia Gomes, National University of Timor-Leste Timor-Leste*

JLC, in collaboration with La Trobe's Institute for Human Security and Social Change, were successful in a competitive tender for a multi-year partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The partnership will strengthen the ability of health systems to respond to women and children experiencing violence in the Asia-Pacific, with an initial focus in Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea. In 2021 we began work in Timor-Leste, together with UNFPA, the Ministry for Health, National Institute for Health and non-government organisations. In 2022 we worked together with Timorese partners and developed a National in-service curriculum, co-designed models of system support and evaluation, and mentored a group of National trainers as they began roll out capacity building in district health services. The La Trobe-UNFPA collaboration demonstrates the significant potential of university and industry partnerships for scaling up approaches to addressing global human development problems; approaches that are based on

the synthesis of international evidence, carefully tailored to contextual realities in different settings, and are locally owned and led.

**Funding:** UNFPA

**Status:** Ongoing

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## Supporting the health system response to violence against women and children in Timor-Leste

*Kayli Wild, Angela Taft, Leesa Hooker; in collaboration with Lidia Gomes, National University of Timor-Leste, Timor-Leste; Angelina Fernandes, Cristal Institute, Timor-Leste; Guilhermina de Araujo, Institute for Human Security and Social Change, La Trobe University; Luisa Marcal, PRADET Timor-Leste*

We collaborated with the two main nursing and midwifery training Universities in Timor-Leste to adapt and pilot the World Health Organization's (WHO) new curriculum on responding to violence against women in low resource health systems. The outcomes from this work have provided the foundation for national systems-level approaches in Timor-Leste and have fed back into WHO's global curriculum. The successive pilots showed a significant improvement to nursing and midwifery students' knowledge, attitude and confidence in responding to violence against women and children, after training and sustained at 6-months follow-up. Following advocacy by our Timorese midwifery leaders, the Ministry of Higher Education has made responding to violence against women a core subject in all accredited midwifery programs nationally. We have now provided professional development and mentoring to lecturers at all six universities in Timor-Leste that offer nursing, midwifery and public health degrees. In 2022, the pre-service university curriculum was finalised, and collaboration between La Trobe University, the Ministry of Health and UNFPA commenced to adapt the curriculum for health provider in-service training, with delivery in 2023. In 2023, a Textbook - *Gender-based Violence and Healthcare in Timor-Leste* was released in Tetum and English.

**Funding:** ARC DECRA (DE170101454), WHO Geneva,

Rotary Foundation (Rotary Manningham and Dili Lafaek)

**Status:** Completed. The curriculum, supporting resources and Textbook are available at

<https://www.latrobe.edu.au/jlc/research/reducing-violence/timor-leste>



## COLLABORATION

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### Centre for Research Excellence to Promote Safer Families

*Angela Taft; in collaboration with Kelsey Hegarty, Stephanie Brown, Cathy Humphreys, Kerry Arabena, Lena Sancj, University of Melbourne; Harriet MacMillan, McMaster University, Canada; Gene Feder, University of Bristol, UK; Karen Glover, South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute; Peter Anderson, Murdoch Children's Research Institute*

*JLC CRE Scholars - Leesa Hooker, Ingrid Wilson, Sonia Reisenhofer*

The Centre of Research Excellence (CRE) to promote Safer Families (Safer Families Centre) is the first dedicated Centre to lead research into the health effects of domestic violence and abuse and the health sector policy and practice responses needed to improve the safety, health and well-being of women, children and young people. The Centre has been funded for five years (2017 – 2022 with a recent six-month extension) to research and collaborate to transform the health sector response to domestic violence and abuse.

<https://www.saferfamilies.org.au/>

Recent research from the Safer Families CRE includes the TRANSFORM project (see Child, Family & Community stream), policy briefs and a range of meta-syntheses work that builds on previous reviews and provides ongoing guidance for healthcare providers when responding to and caring for people experiencing domestic violence.

**Funding:** NHMRC CRE

**Status:** CRE finished 2023; manuscripts in progress

### Supporting the Readiness of Regional Sports to prevent and respond to Family Violence and Violence Against Women (RRPV)

*Jessica Ison, Leesa Hooker; in collaboration with Kirsty Forsdike (Project Lead), La Trobe University*

Violence against women in sport is an area of concern. This project will develop guideline implementation initiatives that ensure regional sports settings understand how to undertake primary prevention of, and where required respond to, family, sexual and domestic violence and violence against women both in sport and through sport in a gender-sensitive manner. The project brings together research, content and context expertise in organisational prevention of and responses to family, sexual and domestic violence and violence against women, the primary prevention of and response to family, sexual and domestic violence and violence against women specialist sector (including those working with men), and Regional Sports Assemblies with their networks of community sports clubs, leagues and associations, local recreation facilities, and local stakeholders.

This project aims to build the capacity of regional community sport and recreation to prevent and respond to Family Safety Victoria and violence against women both in sport and through sport in collaboration with their regional communities. The project also partners with Safe and Equal, Centre Against Sexual Assault Central Victoria, and No to Violence.

**Funding:** Preventing violence through sport grant program, Victorian Government

**Status:** Project ongoing; manuscripts in progress

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## Generalised Health Curriculum for Sexual and Gender-based Violence Papua New Guinea

*Felicity Young, Leesa Hooker, Kayli Wild; in collaboration with Linda Kelly, Lisa Denney and Allan Illingworth, Institute for Human Security and Social Change, La Trobe University; Pamela Kamy, PNG-SGBV Consultant*

In 2021, La Trobe University was selected as a partner by UNFPA Asia Pacific to provide research and technical support on the health sector response to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). In 2022, UNFPA funded the team to undertake a scoping study to understand how SGBV is currently addressed in both pre- and in-service health curricula, and to map critical partnerships that will support leadership on this issue in Papua New Guinea. The scoping study also included review of international SGBV curricula to distil the core components of best practice and lessons learned from other countries in the Asia Pacific region. The project aims to work in partnership with organisations in Papua New Guinea to co-develop curricula across sectors and strengthen sustainable systems to support the health system response to SGBV.

**Funding:** UNFPA

**Status:** Ongoing

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## Sexual violence research with LGBTQ+ communities

*Jessica Ison, in collaboration with Sophie Hines and Bianca Fileborne, University of Melbourne*

Research into sexual violence in LGBTQ+ communities has advanced significantly since the 1990s. This research is an attempt to synthesise the body of research in order to draw out how research has changed and where gaps still exist.

This study includes a scoping review of sexual violence research with LGBTQ+ communities. The search included peer reviewed evidence from 1990 - March 2022. The findings include 125 papers with key themes emerging around sample, context and prevalence. Findings will be used to influence policy on sexual violence and LGBTQ+ communities. They will also be used to advocate for research that is more inclusive of LGBTQ+ communities and the diverse needs of victim-survivors.

**Funding:** N/A

**Status:** Data analysis complete; manuscript in preparation



*La Trobe Image library*

# Sexual and reproductive health

**Program Leads: Associate Professor Kristina Edvardsson  
Emeritus Professor Angela Taft**



Sexual and reproductive health is a human right and planned parenthood confers significant health benefits for women and their families. This program of work addresses sexual and reproductive health and the desire by women and pregnancy-capable people, and their families to effectively control their fertility and maximise their opportunities for a planned and wanted pregnancy and birth.

We use both epidemiological and ethnographic methods to investigate the prevalence of, attitudes to, and use of contraception, emergency contraception, the measurement of and extent of reproductive coercion and safe and unsafe pregnancy termination in Australia and other countries (e.g. Timor Leste and Ghana). We aim to improve the access, equity, effectiveness, quality and affordability of sexual and reproductive health services.

In 2023 the team had several highlights:

- A/Prof Kristina Edvardsson and Emeritus Prof Angela Taft were part of a successful NHMRC research grant 'The Centre of Research Excellence (CRE) in Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health in Primary Care' led by Prof Danielle Mazza, Monash University. The project period is 2024-2028 and three of the centres' PhD students will be involved in this NHMRC supported CRE.
- PhD student Desireé LaGrappe received a Fulbright Public Policy Fellowship award to serve in a public health professional placement in Vietnam for the 2023-2024 academic year from the U.S. Department of State and the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board.
- The team secured a 'Synergy Think Tank Grant' from La Trobe University to bring Vietnamese collaborators to the Centre ahead of Desiree's Vietnam based Fulbright Fellowship, and hosted a one-week 'think tank' workshop in December. The week included site visits to collaborators at Monash University, the University of Melbourne and the Burnet Institute to learn about the work of the visiting scholars and collaborators, and exchange ideas.
- Two members of the team attended and presented at the Australasian Sexual and Reproductive Health Conference 2023, Sydney, September 18-20 (K Edvardsson, G Edwards).



*Pexels, Ginny*

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## The prevalence and variations in unintended pregnancy by socio-demographic and health-related factors in a population-based cohort of young Australian women

Angela Taft, Kristina Edvardsson, Leesa Hooker; in collaboration with Mridula Shankar, University of Melbourne; Wendy V Norman, University of British Columbia, Canada

Unintended pregnancy is an important population-level indicator of access to essential sexual and reproductive health services. Examining which population sub-groups have higher exposure to unintended pregnancies and understanding why that is the case is critical to guide equity-focused public health responses to close gaps in service delivery and access.

In this study, we aim to estimate the prevalence of unintended pregnancy and associated socio-demographic and health-related factors among a national cohort of young Australian women. We also examine pregnancy outcomes among women with a history of unintended pregnancy by urban and rural residence, and factors associated with recent experience of unintended pregnancy in the previous year. We utilise data from three waves (2013-2015) of the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health (ALSWH) new young cohort. More information about ALSWH can be found here: <https://alswh.org.au/>

**Funding:** NHMRC SPHERE CRE (seed funding)

**Status:** completed; findings presented at the SPHERE Annual Meeting (K Edvardsson); paper published in *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*

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## Testing a methodological approach for measuring agreement across data sources and trends in the incidence and methods of induced abortion by characteristics of young women in Australia using self-report and linked administrative health data

Kristina Edvardsson, Leesa Hooker, Angela Taft; in collaboration with Mridula Shankar, University of Melbourne, Kirsten Black and Deborah Bateson, University of Sydney; Wendy V Norman, University of British Columbia, Canada; Katrina Moss, University of Queensland; Melissa Harris, Nick Egan, Peta Forde, University of Newcastle

Induced abortion is a common reproductive experience for women in Australia and is recognised as an essential service. Presently abortion data for public health planning and assessment is limited, and there is no national routine data collection on abortions. In this study, we will develop a method (algorithm) to identify abortion events using self-report surveys and three administrative datasets. The algorithm will form a key to several sub-studies undertaken by the team and collaborators.

We utilise self-reported abortion data from six waves of the ALSWH's new young cohort (2013-2019) and its linkages with the Medicare Benefits Schedule, Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and the National Morbidity Hospital Database to: (1) evaluate levels of agreement between self-report and administrative data, and (2) test a measurement approach for ascertainment of abortion method, time trends in method distribution and characteristics associated with method type among this sample of young women.

**Funding:** La Trobe University, ABC grant

**Status:** Two manuscripts in preparation



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## The prevalence and factors associated with prior induced abortion among women who gave birth in Victoria, 2010-2019

*Kristina Edvardsson, Leesa Hooker, Xia Li, Angela Taft; in collaboration with Mridula Shankar, University of Melbourne; Kirsten Black, Deborah Bateson, University of Sydney; Wendy V Norman, University of British Columbia, Canada*

Nearly half of all pregnancies worldwide are unintended, and many of these unintended pregnancies end in induced abortion. Robust data on abortions are needed for tailored public health responses that include equitable access to contraception and abortion care.

In this study, we aimed to fill an important data gap by examining the prevalence of a history of induced abortion among individuals giving birth in Victoria, and changes in prevalence by time and sociodemographic characteristics. We analysed population-based perinatal data obtained from the Victorian Perinatal Data Collection. The dataset included a total population sample of women experiencing a childbirth in Victoria, Australia years 2010 to 2019 (n=767 055).

**Funding:** N/A

**Status:** Paper accepted for publication in the *Medical Journal of Australia*. Findings presented, Australasian Sexual and Reproductive Health Conference 2023 and the Sexual Health Society of Victoria conference feedback event (K Edvardsson)

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## Global variations in the underreporting of induced abortion: A systematic review

*Kristina Edvardsson, Leesa Hooker, Felicity Young, Angela Taft; in collaboration with Mridula Shankar, University of Melbourne; Kirsten Black, Deborah Bateson, University of Sydney; Melissa Harris, University of Newcastle; Wendy V Norman, University of British Columbia, Canada*

An important consideration when using abortion data to estimate prevalence and incidence is the extent of completeness of data. Data on induced abortions are susceptible to underreporting due to stigma and social disapproval of the procedure. In this systematic review, we will explore the worldwide variation in the underreporting of induced abortions by individuals. We will also investigate if and how underreporting of induced abortions changes over time and by age cohort, vary by survey methodology or design, country

or regional context, or sociodemographic characteristics. A total of 6810 records across five databases have been identified for initial screening, and 167 full text papers assessed for eligibility.

**Funding:** N/A

**Status:** systematic review protocol registered (Prospero); data extraction and write up ongoing

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## Reproductive coercion: Defining the domain and developing a comprehensive and validated prevalence measure

*Desireé LaGrappe, Angela Taft, Leesa Hooker, Kristina Edvardsson; in collaboration with Laura Tarzia, University of Melbourne*

Reproductive coercion, or reproductive coercion and abuse, describes controlling behaviours infringing on autonomy over reproductive health decisions about pregnancy, abortion, and/or contraceptive use. This type of abuse is a distinct form of gender-based violence, overlapping with domestic, family, and sexual violence. Public health policies and interventions to address reproductive coercion are beginning to advance to scale, yet neither an internationally accepted definition nor a comprehensive, validated measure are available.

The lack of a conceptually clear and consistently used definition and measure threatens the ability to make progress in understanding and preventing reproductive coercion and its harm. To address this public health research gap, this study will develop a new rigorous and comprehensive reproductive coercion measure, with an overall goal to pilot prevalence in Australian Maternal and Child Health (MCH) and General Practice primary care settings.

This research is a part of SPHERE, the NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Sexual and Reproductive Health for Women in Primary Care.

**Funding:** Postgraduate Scholarship (NHMRC Project GNT2013949)

**Status:** ongoing; findings presented at the Sexual Health Society of Victoria ASRH 2023 conference feedback event

## COLLABORATIVE WORK

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### **SPHERE -The Centre of Research Excellence in Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health in Primary Care.**

*Kristina Edvardsson, Angela Taft; in collaboration with Danielle Mazza and Jane Fisher, Monash University, Kirsten Black and Deborah Bateson, University of Sydney; Wendy Norman, University of British Columbia, Canada; Gita Mishra, University of Queensland; Luke Grzeskowiak, Flinders University; Laura Tarzia, University of Melbourne; Sharon Cameron, University of Edinburgh, UK*

Australia's 6 million women of reproductive age continue to struggle with accessing high quality care to optimise their health prior to pregnancy, prevent unplanned pregnancy or terminate a pregnancy when desired or required. The aim of SPHERE 2.0 is to increase access to high quality, patient-centred sexual and reproductive health care so that women in Australia can achieve bodily autonomy and have the number of children they want when they want them.



*Pexels, Gilberto Olympio*

## Transition to contemporary parenthood – preparation and support

**Program Leads:** Professor Jan Nicholson  
Associate Professor Amanda Cooklin



*The Transition to Contemporary Parenthood Program – Preparation and Support (TCPP)* was established in 2013 as the result of a major gift from Mrs Roberta Holmes. TCPP undertakes innovative research to identify the best ways to support mothers and fathers in their roles as parents.

The program examines the influence of contemporary factors on parents and how these affect children's healthy development. This information is then used to guide the design of new or improved programs and supports for parents.

Much of our work involves long-standing collaborations, especially with The Australian National University, Deakin University, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, the Parenting Research Centre and Queensland University of Technology.

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### EHLS at School: school-age follow-up of the Early Home Learning Study

*Jan Nicholson, Shannon Bennetts, Jasmine Love, Clair Bennett; in collaboration with Elizabeth Westrupp, Deakin University; Donna Berthelsen, Queensland University of Technology; Naomi Hackworth, Parenting Research Centre; Fiona Mensah, Murdoch Children's Research Institute; Sheena Reilly, Griffith University; Lisa Gold; Deakin University; Penny Levickis, University of Melbourne*

The original *Early Home Learning Study* (EHLS) evaluated the "smalltalk" parenting program, which was designed to support parents to create an enriched home learning environment for their young children. The study involved over 2,000 families with half participating in parent groups (for parents of infants) and half in playgroups (for parents of toddlers). The evaluation was conducted by the Parenting Research Centre, in partnership with and funded by the Victorian Department of Early Education and Childhood Development from 2010–2013.

Around five years later, the *EHLS at School* study followed up over 600 of the families who participated in the playgroups program, when their child was aged 7–8 years. The study aims to evaluate the longer-term outcomes of *smalltalk*, including impact on children's school readiness, language and literacy development.

**Funding:** National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC Partnership GNT1076857), together with the Victorian Government Department of Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)

**Status:** completed; six papers published

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### Supporting children's resilience and mental health through risky play: Children's and parents' experiences of the Risky Kids program

*Shannon Bennetts, Sharinne Crawford, Jasmine Love, Stacey Hokke, Clair Bennett, Jan Nicholson, Hulya Gilbert (School of Humanities and Social Sciences), Karli Treyvaud (School of Psychology and Public Health)*

Established in 2018, *Risky Kids* is a community-based program that seeks to build resilience in children and adolescents by teaching 'risk intelligence' through parkour, ninja, and free-running skills, underpinned by psychological approaches. This study aimed to explore children's and parents' experiences of the *Risky Kids* program, with a particular focus on mental health and resilience.

**Funding:** La Trobe University ABC Funding Scheme 2023

**Status:** Completed; One paper in submission

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## Media reporting of ‘stranger danger’ and other factors relating to children’s independent mobility

*Sharinne Crawford, Shannon Bennetts, Jan Nicholson, Amanda Cooklin; in collaboration with Naomi Hackworth and Julie Green, Parenting Research Centre; Stephen Zubrick, University of Western Australia*

Children’s independent mobility has important health, social and emotional benefits, however parents commonly act as ‘gatekeepers’, restricting or encouraging their child’s independence. The media may contribute to parents’ perception of risk to children and provides a reference point for parents’ decision-making around children’s independent mobility.

This study evaluated the media climate during a three-month period in 2013 when 1,779 Victorian parents of children aged 9 to 15 years reported on their attitudes towards children’s independent mobility via telephone interview. We examined print, online and television news reports of the risks and benefits of children’s independent mobility over this period and compared the media coverage to parents’ ratings of concern about their child’s independent mobility.

**Funding:** La Trobe University Social Research Assistance Platform

**Status:** completed; one paper published in 2023; four papers and a report previously published

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## Parenting in the age of social media: opportunities or disruptions?

*Sharinne Crawford, Stacey Hokke, Amanda Cooklin, Shannon Bennetts, Jan Nicholson; in collaboration with Kimberley Mallan, Australian Catholic University; Tess Crane, School of Psychology and Public Health, La Trobe University*

Parents are increasingly looking to social media for information and support during the transition to parenthood. Social norms and peer support are well established drivers of parents’ wellbeing and parenting self-efficacy, yet how this operates – protectively or otherwise – via social media is unclear.

Applying a Social Norms theoretical framework, this study aims to investigate the influence of social media on Australian parents’ experiences of early parenthood, social and emotional wellbeing and parenting self-efficacy, as well as shaping parenting attitudes, decision-making and behaviours. The mixed methods research was conducted in two phases: qualitative interviews with 24 parents and expectant parents were followed by a quantitative online survey of 621 parents and expectant parents.

**Funding:** La Trobe University Transforming Human Societies Research Focus Area

**Status:** completed; two papers under review

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## Parenting, parent wellbeing and child development in Australia

Jan Nicholson, Amanda Cooklin, Stacey Hokke, Clair Bennett, Jasmine Love, Shannon Bennetts; in collaboration with Lyndall Strazdins and Liana Leach, Australian National University; Rebecca Giallo and Elizabeth Westrupp, Deakin University

Growing Up in Australia, the *Longitudinal Study of Australian Children* (LSAC) collects data every two years on 10,000 Australian children and their parents. The study is funded by Commonwealth Department of Social Services, managed by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, with data collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Jan Nicholson is a founding member of the LSAC Scientific Advisory Committee and Chair since 2019; Amanda Cooklin is a current member of the Scientific Advisory Committee.

This ongoing program of analytic work uses LSAC data to build understanding of the contemporary issues affecting the health and wellbeing of mothers and fathers, and how this affects family functioning and shapes children's development. We examine a range of common child outcomes including socio-emotional adjustment, self-regulation, language, cognitive development and weight.

**Funding:** Roberta Holmes Donation

**Status:** ongoing; over 50 papers published using LSAC data

## Parenting, Pets & Pandemic: exploring the role of pets for families with children during COVID-19

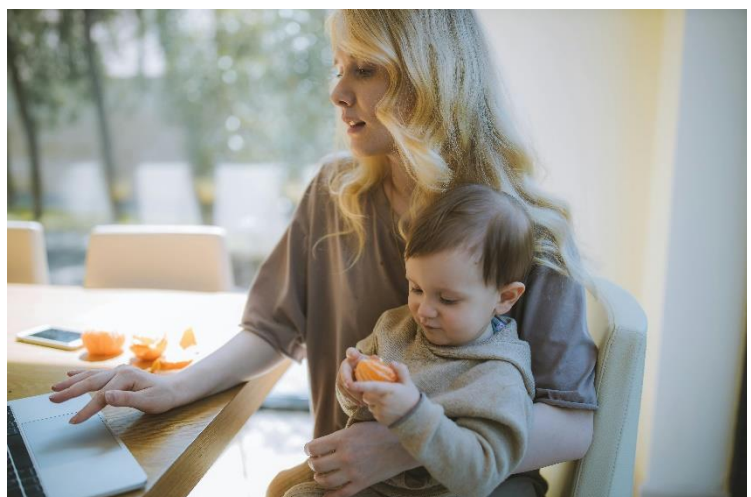
Shannon Bennetts, Sharinne Crawford, Jan Nicholson, Fiona Burgemeister; in collaboration with Tiffani Howell, Brian Ignacio, School of Psychology and Public Health, La Trobe University; Kylie Burke, Metro North Health Service – Mental Health, Queensland; Catherine Chamberlain, University of Melbourne

The global COVID-19 pandemic caused widespread and significant changes to the ways that we work, live, and study, disrupting opportunities to engage in social connections that help keep us mentally well. Parents and children have spent more time at home together with their pets, and there has been enormous demand for pet adoptions.

Conducted between July and October 2020, this national parent survey aimed to understand how families with children were spending time with their cats and dogs, including new pets; associations between pet attachment and mental health; and benefits and challenges of having children and a cat or dog during the pandemic.

**Funding:** Roberta Holmes Donation

**Status:** completed; two previous papers published; final paper published in 2023



Pexels, Anastasia Shuraeva

## COLLABORATIVE WORK

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### Children's Attention Project: longitudinal study of children with and without ADHD

*Jan Nicholson; in collaboration with Emma Sciberras and Tim Silk, Deakin University; Daryl Efron, Vicki Anderson, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Royal Children's Hospital and University of Melbourne; Phillip Hazel, University of Sydney; Obi Ukuommune, University of Exeter, UK; Brad Jongeling, Joondalup Child Development Centre, Perth*

The Children's Attention Project is a longitudinal study of a community sample of children with and without ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), examining the long-term effects of ADHD on children's behaviour, learning and day-to-day living. It includes an assessment of the influence of parenting and parent wellbeing on outcomes for these children. Children have been tracked from ages 6–8 to 10–11 years, with a subgroup who participated in a nested neuroimaging study.

**Funding:** NHMRC Project Grants GNT1065895, 2014–2018; 1008522, 2011–2015

**Status:** data collection completed; three papers published in 2023; 24 previous publications

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### DonateLife: exploring young people's knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of organ donation

*Stacey Hokke; in collaboration with Brooke Huuskes, School of Agriculture, Biomedicine and Environment, La Trobe University*

Young people (aged 18–35 years) are one of the most under-represented groups on the Australian Organ Donor Register. Using a qualitative study design, this project aims to explore the factors, informational needs and messaging preferences that may influence young people's motivations to register as an organ donor. Findings will provide insight into the key drivers and barriers of donor registration and can be used by the Organ and Tissue Authority to inform and enhance future community engagement and education targeted to young Australians.

**Funding:** Organ and Tissue Authority Community Awareness Grant 2022

**Status:** data collection complete; report and publication in preparation; one national conference presentation; and an invitation to appear before a Victorian Government Inquiry into increasing organ and tissue donation

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### DonateLife: Disseminating evidence-based resources to inform young people about organ donation

*Stacey Hokke; in collaboration with Brooke Huuskes, School of Agriculture, Biomedicine and Environment, La Trobe University*

Our prior qualitative research with young people identified several barriers to organ and tissue donation registration, including lack of awareness and knowledge of organ donation and inadequate promotion. To support young people to make an informed decision about organ donation, this co-designed community awareness project aims to (i) create evidence-based digital educational resources that resonate with young people, and (ii) disseminate educational content via La Trobe University's online media channels.

**Funding:** Organ and Tissue Authority Community Awareness Grant 2023.

**Status:** educational resources developed; dissemination underway; report and publication in preparation

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### Let's Grow: maximising health potential through enhancement of movement behaviours from early life

*Jan Nicholson and Sharinne Crawford; in collaboration with Kylie Hesketh, Jo Salmon, Liliana Orellana, Mohamed Abdelrazek, Harriet Koorts and Victoria Brown, Deakin University; Barbara Gelland and Rachel Taylor, University of Otago*

Low levels of physical activity, high sedentary behaviour and insufficient sleep during early childhood are each associated with poor physical and psychosocial health and all show suboptimal levels from early life. Interventions to improve these behaviours seldom consider all three together. In this study, we evaluate the efficacy, maintenance, cost-effectiveness and scalability of an 18-month program to increase physical activity, decrease sedentary behaviour and optimise sleep in 2-year old children. Underpinned by an implementation science approach, scalability and stakeholder input are incorporated into all aspects to increase potential translatability into real-world practice.

**Funding:** NHMRC Project Grant GNT1162980

**Status:** ongoing; one paper published previously; one paper published in 2023

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## More Than A Landlord: Responding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family aspirations to foster self-determination and social and emotional wellbeing

*Jan Nicholson; in collaboration with Gregory Armstrong, Alison Brown, Rebecca Ritte, Kelsey Hegarty, Lea Waters, Kristy Meiselbach, University of Melbourne; Yin Paradies, Lata Satyen, Elizabeth Doery, Deakin University; Stephanie Brown, Graham Gee, Fiona Mensah, Murdoch Children's Research Institute; Darren Smith, Samantha French, Aboriginal Housing Victoria*

*More Than A Landlord* is an innovative life coaching program that supports Indigenous families to articulate and achieve their short, medium and long-term aspirations. It seeks to promote social, emotional and cultural wellbeing (SEWB) by assisting parents, carers and children to set and achieve personal goals that will improve their lives. Life coaching is offered to Aboriginal Housing Victoria tenants in three urban areas: Mornington Peninsula, Healesville and northern metropolitan Melbourne. This Indigenous designed and led approach uses a strengths-based framework that supports self-determination with and for Indigenous families. The research evaluates its effects on the SEWB of Indigenous parents and their children.

**Funding:** NHMRC Targeted Research Grant GNT1154619  
**Status:** ongoing; one paper published in 2023; one paper published previously

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## Suicide prevention among men in early fatherhood: Determining the effectiveness of Working out Dads

*Amanda Cooklin, Jan Nicholson; in collaboration with Rebecca Giallo, Deakin University and Murdoch Children's Research Institute; Liana Leach, Australian National University; Jemimah Ride, University of Melbourne; Brian Oldenburg, La Trobe University; Anneke Grobler, Stephanie Brown, Murdoch Children's Research Institute; Catherine Wood, Swinburne University of Technology; Craig Garfield, Northwestern University, USA; and Tweddle Child and Family Services, Melbourne*

Designed in partnership with Tweddle Child and Family Services, *Working out Dads* is a suicide prevention intervention targeting men in early fatherhood. The program is a 6-week gym-based peer support program, targeted for fathers experiencing poor mental health or suicidal ideation. Led by Associate Professor Giallo, this project is a randomised controlled trial aimed at

generating robust evidence about the effectiveness, cost-effectiveness and scalability of *Working out Dads* as a targeted prevention approach to improve fathers' mental health, social support and help seeking.

**Funding:** MRFF Million Minds Mission Suicide Prevention Grant (2020–2024)

**Status:** Data collection completed Dec 2023; protocol paper published

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## 'Take A Breath': Implementation of videoconferencing group intervention for parents of ill children

*Jan Nicholson; in collaboration with Vicki Anderson, Frank Muscara, and Maria McCarthy, Murdoch Children's Research Institute and Royal Children's Hospital*

Parents of a seriously ill or injured child often experience debilitating stress and anxiety. When this persists, it is associated with a range of difficulties for both parents and children. Building on findings from a longitudinal study and a randomised controlled trial, the *Take A Breath* program which seeks to support parenting and prevent parent traumatic symptoms is being rolled out across multiple hospital departments. This project evaluates the processes and experiences of implementation.

**Funding:** Royal Children's Hospital; Ronald MacDonald House

**Status:** Data collection commenced in 2023

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## Differences in how men and women are studied in alcohol research: A systematic review

*Amanda Cooklin; Megan Cook, Sarah McLean, Amy Pennay, Ben Riordan, Gabriel Caluzzi, Sarah Callinan from the Centre for Alcohol Policy Research, La Trobe University*

Alongside broader gender parity debates, research on alcohol/substance use and gender has developed considerably in the last few decades. However, there are significant gaps in alcohol studies which may impact the framing of existing methodologies and research, ultimately shaping public discourse. The aim of the proposed study is to understand epistemological and methodological differences in published research on men's and women's alcohol consumption. This review will form the basis for establishing a funded program of work.

**Funding:** La Trobe Research Theme, ABC Grant, 2023-24 to the Centre for Alcohol Policy Research.

**Status:** Data analyses in process

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## CACE: Children across the Care Economy

*Amanda Cooklin; Anne-Marie Laslett; Sarah McLean; Jade Rintala; Koen Smit from the Centre for Alcohol Policy Research (CAPR), La Trobe University*

This project, led by researchers from CAPR, is part of a program of research exploring familial alcohol and substance abuse, and its harm to others, including children. Funding from La Trobe was awarded in 2023 to build towards a larger collaboration and competitive funding application for CACE – Children Across the Care Economy. The aims of the CACE project are to identify where and how familial alcohol and substance use is recorded in a range of services across the care economy; and when and how these services improve children's outcomes. A proposal and systematic review are underway, and links with partner organisations are being established.

**Funding:** La Trobe Rapid Synergy Grant, 2023 to the Centre for Alcohol Policy Research.

**Status:** Data analyses in process



## Work and family

**Program Lead: Associate Professor Amanda Cooklin**



This program of work aims to understand the role that parents' jobs and employment conditions have on parenting, parent-child relationships and family health and wellbeing.

These issues have become particularly salient since the COVID-19 pandemic. The effects of this disruption on family relationships, health and wellbeing are only just being understood, and we contribute to this growing evidence, taking a gendered lens to understand this.

This program builds on our long-standing collaborations with The Australian National University, Deakin University and the Work-Research Institute at Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway.

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### The great disruption of COVID-19: reimagining the work-family interface

*Amanda Cooklin, Stacey Hokke, Jasmine Love, Jodi Oakman, Jan Nicholson; in collaboration with Liana Leach and Tinh Doan, Australian National University; and Rebecca Giallo, Deakin University*

In 2023, we were awarded funding from the Australian Research Council to build on our collaborative Families at Work program of research (2016-2021).

This project aims to highlight new possibilities to re-imagine and reduce parents' work-family conflicts. COVID-19 brought an unprecedented disruption to Australian parents' work-care routines, with different effects for women, and those working 'at work' versus at home. Using mixed-methods approaches across two Streams, and multiple Australian datasets collected pre- and post-pandemic, this unique project intends to identify families who are at risk of longer-term scarring to family wellbeing from work-care conflicts; and critical workplace supports which may prevent this. Together, this urgently-needed evidence contributes to family-friendly work for diverse parents, employers and policy, protecting social and economic participation for Australian parents.

**Funding:** Australian Research Council (Discovery Project # 230100498; 2023-2025)

**Status:** Ongoing; two publications in 2023

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### Fathers at work: identifying workplace barriers and supports for fathers to combine work and care

*Stacey Hokke, Sharinne Crawford, Shannon Bennetts, Jasmine Love, Jan Nicholson, Amanda Cooklin; with Liana Leach, Australian National University*

Gender inequities in work and care persist and have likely been exacerbated by the "she-cession" due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Evidence suggests that fathers' unpaid care work has increased slightly due to the pandemic – but so has mothers', and all parents remain constrained by gendered notions of 'who works and who cares'.

This project aims to explore Australian fathers' work-family experiences to investigate how workplaces have (or have not) supported fathers to combine work and care, before, during and since the pandemic. We use a qualitative phenomenological study design; data are collected using in-depth semi-structured interviews with fathers of child(ren) aged 0–18 years, employed in an organisation.

**Funding:** La Trobe University Transforming Human Societies Research Focus Area Grant Ready Scheme

**Status:** data collection completed; findings in preparation

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## Parents' work-family interface, health and wellbeing

*Amanda Cooklin, Jan Nicholson; Stacey Hokke; Jasmine Love; Kate McCredie in collaboration with Liana Leach, Lyndall Strazdins, Yixuan Zhao, Tianying Wang, Peter Butterworth, Australian National University; and Jodi Oakman and Victoria Weale from the School of Psychology and Public Health, La Trobe.*

This ongoing, collaborative program of research uses available national, longitudinal and cohort data to identify the adverse effects of poor-quality jobs, work-family conflict, and time pressure on employees and their families across the life-course.

In 2023, we published four papers, the first examining the role of flexible work for parents in managing their daily stressors, and how this effects their distress, fatigue and stress. A second paper investigated the novel construct of work-study conflict for Australian University students, with links to adolescent mental health. Our collaboration with Jodi Oakman and colleagues from the School of Psychology and Public Health continues, with recent publications exploring the role of psychosocial work hazards in physical health complaints, including for parents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Funding:** Australian Research Council (A Cooklin Future Fellowship FT200100209)

**Status:** ongoing; four papers published in 2023



Pexels, Ketut Subiyanto

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## COLLABORATION

### 'Upwards support' for managers at work: Does gender and parent status matter?

*Amanda Cooklin; in collaboration with Nina Junker and Wendy Nilsen, Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway; Eunae Cho, Taipei Medical University, Taiwan*

This project is an international collaboration and aims to investigate whether stereotypes about 'working mothers' influence the support managers receive from their staff in the workplace. Based on gender role theory, we hypothesize that asking for practical support at work may serve as a penalty for women and mothers, but not for men and fathers, in supervisory roles. It is a collaboration between researchers in Germany, Singapore, Norway and Australia, with data collected in each setting to yield cross-national comparisons. In 2022, we completed further fieldwork in Germany and Norway to add to the original sample (collected in 2020) and analyses are underway.

**Status:** findings in preparation

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### CROSS-BOW: Crossing and managing boundaries between work and non-work & healthy tele-working

*Amanda Cooklin, Stacey Hokke; in collaboration with Nina Junker and Wendy Nilsen, Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway; Eunae Cho, Taipei Medical University, Taiwan*

This project is an international collaboration and aims to investigate the effects on employees of 'Boundary-Crossing ICT-use' on employees / parents wellbeing and the work-family interface.

**Funding:** Research Council of Norway

**Status:** Papers in submission, ongoing

# Spotlights 2023

## Harnessing routinely collected perinatal data to explore trends, risk factors and outcomes

*Kristina Edvardsson and Fiona Faulks*

Researchers in the Judith Lumley Centre have developed expertise in using routinely collected perinatal data to explore trends and patterns in risk factors and outcomes on a range of topics of importance to women's and maternal and infant health. These include postpartum haemorrhage, breastfeeding, mental illness, induced abortion, and the impact of social disadvantage on maternal and infant outcomes.

One of the key datasets used is the Victorian Perinatal Data collection (VPDC). The VPDC includes over 160 data items on obstetric conditions, procedures and outcomes relating to all reported births in the state. Data are used to report on the health of mothers and their infants, with the aim to contribute to improvements in population health.

The advantages of using routinely collected data such as the VPDC for research include that there is no sampling bias, that is, there is no underrepresentation of any subgroup since the data collection captures virtually all births in the state. Sampling bias is a common problem when using other data collection methods including surveys, where socioeconomically advantaged people tend to be overrepresented, and minority groups, especially those culturally and linguistically diverse, underrepresented.

In 2023, JLC researchers published two papers based on data from the Victorian Perinatal Data Collection on topics including social disadvantage and induced abortions.

The first study, led by PhD candidate Fiona Faulks, A/Profs Touran Shafiei and Kristina Edvardsson in collaboration with local and international experts in obstetrics and maternity care, explored the perinatal outcomes for women experiencing social disadvantage between 1999 and 2016. This study included almost 1.2 million singleton births and demonstrated clear associations between social disadvantage and adverse perinatal outcomes for the mother and the infant. As Australia is a developed nation and has a comparatively safe maternity care system when compared to less resourced nations, routinely collected perinatal datasets of this size enable us to examine even rare adverse perinatal events (such as perinatal death and maternal admission to intensive care unit) and their associations with maternal factors such as living in disadvantaged circumstances. This statistical power and the fact that this dataset is a near complete record for a large population of women and their infants is important in determining validity and reliability of the findings.

In addition to associations between social disadvantage and perinatal outcomes, the research team also examined time trend analysis over eighteen years for each perinatal outcome in relation to area-level disadvantage measures. These findings are important because they demonstrate a persistent gap between the least and most disadvantaged women, and a widening gap between these groups for maternal admission to ICU and postpartum haemorrhage.



*Pixabay, Pexels*

This study illuminates a state of inequity that has existed for disadvantaged women for a long period of time. The analysis and interpretation of this data provides an important summary of the impact of disadvantage on perinatal outcomes to the healthcare system and associated governing bodies to inform strategy and resourcing decisions aimed at addressing the inequity and disparities that continue to exist.

It is also important to recognise the limitations of routinely collected perinatal data with respect to the depth of the social picture it can provide. For example, our study was unable to consider other highly relevant social factors such as family violence, pre-existing complex trauma, stress, mental illness and environmental factors such as housing quality, nutrition and pollution – all factors that have been shown to impact on perinatal outcomes.

The second study, led by A/Prof Kristina Edvardsson, Professors Angela Taft and Leesa Hooker, in collaboration with national and international experts in Sexual and Reproductive Health, explored time trends and factors associated with prior abortion at time of childbirth, among women who gave birth in Victoria 2010 to 2019. Since there is no routinely collected data on abortion in the state of Victoria, or nationally, the study contributes important information that can be used to improve abortion care and to guide sexual and reproductive health policy in Australia.

The study, which included over 760,000 women, covered a period marked by key changes to abortion care access in Australia. Medication abortion, also known as medical abortion, was introduced to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme in 2013, and abortion care later expanded to include telehealth services.

The study findings indicate changes in trends that coincide with the introduction of medication abortion and suggest improved access to abortion care in regional and remote areas of Victoria during the study period. These findings are consistent with those of other studies demonstrating higher prescription rates of medication abortion in regional and remote areas of Australia. One of the key limitations of the study is that the VPDC only includes information on women who have given birth. Therefore, the authors are unable to draw conclusions about the sizable group of women who have had an abortion but not given birth.

In Australia we still lack sufficient data to draw firm conclusions about the complex interplay between unintended pregnancy, contraceptive use, and induced abortion, and how sexual and reproductive health care access vary by remoteness. The team of researchers will focus future efforts on improving data quality and reporting on key Sexual and Reproductive Health factors and outcomes, to guide policy and programs.

The authors are grateful to the Consultative Council on Obstetric and Paediatric Mortality and Morbidity (CCOPMM) for providing access to the data used for these projects and for the assistance of the staff at the Consultative Councils Unit, Safer Care Victoria.

1. Faulks F, Shafiei T, McLachlan H, Forster D, Mogren I, Copnell B, Edvardsson K. Perinatal outcomes of socially disadvantaged women in Australia: A population-based retrospective cohort study. *BJOG* 2023; 130(11):1380-93
2. Edvardsson K, Black KI, Bateson D, Norman WV, Shankar M, Hooker L, Li X, Taft AJ. The prevalence of and factors associated with prior induced abortion among women who gave birth in Victoria, 2010-2019. *Med J Aust* 2023; In press

# The Judith Lumley Centre Journal Club tradition continues

*Lisa Amir and Maggie Flood*

## **Background**

At Journal Club a group of colleagues meets to discuss one or more published articles. For nearly three decades, Journal Club at the Judith Lumley Centre has provided regular opportunities for newer researchers to learn critical appraisal skills and develop their reviewing and writing skills. Papers presented may focus on a particular aspect of the publication, perhaps study methodology or presentation of results.

## **Methods**

Journal Club at JLC is a calendar fixture: held the third Wednesday of the month at 9.30 am for one hour via Zoom. Two staff members or students choose and lead one paper each. Two co-ordinators currently run Journal club by maintaining a list of presenters and distributing the selected articles one week prior to each meeting, allowing all participants time to prepare.

## **Results**

Each month, Journal club attendees enjoy the collegiality of gathering to discuss academic writing and share ideas about strengths and weaknesses of each paper. Participants, whether senior or junior staff or students, are exposed to topics or research methods that may be new or less familiar, and have the opportunity to learn from each other. Did the authors have a clear research question? Did they use the best method to achieve this? Have they discussed the potential biases? Are the findings trustworthy and why? Was the writing concise? The presenter may use an established appraisal tool, but the format is flexible.

## **Conclusions**

Attending Journal club helps demystify academic writing for new researchers which can facilitate their own writing practice. And more experienced researchers find the discussions stimulating, often generating new ideas. The long tradition of Journal club at JLC is a communal activity that benefits all participants!



*La Trobe University*

# Staff

The Judith Lumley Centre brings together a multi-disciplinary team of researchers with qualifications and experience in epidemiology, women's health policy, education, psychology, historical and social research, biomedical research, consumer advocacy, anthropology, medicine, nursing and midwifery.

We have not listed our field and casual staff here but would like to acknowledge their highly valuable contributions to our projects.

## Professor and Director

**Jan Nicholson**  
BSc(Hons), MSc, PhD

## Professors

**Lisa Amir**  
MBBS, MMed(WomH), PhD,  
IBCLC

**Christine East**  
RN, RM, DAppSc(ClinNurs),  
BAppSc(Nurs), MMSc, PhD

**Della Forster**  
RN, RM, DipAppSc, BHSc, MMid,  
PhD

**Leesa Hooker**  
RN, RM, CertCritCare,  
PGDipPH(ChildFamHealthNurs),  
MHSc, GradCert Biostats, PhD

**Helen McLachlan**  
RN, GradDipAdvNurs(Mid),  
MNursStud, PhD

## Associate Professors

**Amanda Cooklin**  
BA(Hons), MPH(WomH), PhD

**Kristina Edvardsson**  
RN, MHSc, PhD

**Michelle Newton**  
GradDipAppSc(Nurs),  
PGradDip H Ed, MMid, PhD

**Touran Shafiei**  
BMid, PhD

## Senior Research Fellow

**Laura Whitburn**  
BPhysio, PhD

## Research Fellows

**Clair Bennett**  
BA(Hons), DPpsych, PhD

**Shannon Bennetts**  
BA(Hons), PhD

**Sharinne Crawford**  
BAppSci(Hons), PhD

**Méabh Cullinane**  
BSc, PhD

**Margaret Flood**  
RN, RM, PhD

**Stacey Hokke**  
BBiomedSc(Hons), PhD

**Jessica Ison**  
BA(Hons), MA, PhD

## Research Officers

**Jessica Bee**

**Shari Boyanton**

**Fiona Burgemeister**

**Jane DeMarco**

**Rachel Friebe**

**Jess Halloran**

**Renee Kam**

**Desiree LaGrappé**

**Jasmine Love**

**Chani Lucardi**

**Res McCalman**

**Fiona McLardie-Hore**

**Kate McKredie**

**Robyn Matthews**

**Isobel Pietrowski**

**Saman Roshanaei**

**Karen Rowland**

**Shona Ruane**

**Kolsoom Safari**

**Susan Saunders**

**Laura Seymour**

**Janine Shifman**

**Joanne Terry**

**Shannon Thatcher**

**Amy Volich**

**Felicity Young**

## Administration

**Adele Marulli**

# Staff

## **Emeritus Professor**

### **Angela Taft**

BA, DipEd, MPH, PhD  
Director 2013–2016

## **Adjunct Professors**

### **Catherine Chamberlain**

MScPHP, MPH, GCIRL, GCHSM,  
BSc(RM) PhD  
*University of Melbourne*

### **Tanya Farrell**

DipAppSc, MNurs,  
PostGradChildHealth  
*Victorian Department of Health and  
Human Services*

### **Ingrid Mogren**

PhD  
*Umeå University, Sweden*

### **Wendy Pollock**

RN, RM, GradDipEd, GradCertALL, PhD  
*Northumbria University*

### **Jane Sandall, CBE**

PhD, RN, RM, HV, BSc, MSc,  
*King's College London, UK*

### **Rhonda Small**

BA, DipEd, GradDipLib, GradDipEpid, PhD  
Director 2008–2013

## **Adjunct Senior Research Fellow**

### **Mia Ahlberg**

RN, RM, PhD  
*Karolinska Institute, Sweden*

## **Honorary Associate**

### **Emma Toone**

BHScND, GradDipPsychoanalStud,  
MCPP  
*Berry Street Innovations Partnership*

## **Honorary Research Fellows**

### **Guilhermina de Araujo**

BA(CommunityDev)  
*Independent Consultant, Timor  
Leste*

### **Beatriz Paulina Ayala Quintanilla**

MBBS, PhD(Med), MPH, PhD  
*Peruvian National Institute of  
Health*

### **Naomi Hackworth**

BSc BA(Hons), DPsyCh(Health)  
*Parenting Research Centre*

### **Sophia Holmlund**

RN, RM, PhD  
*Umeå University, Sweden*

### **Lester Jones**

BBSc, BAppSc(Physio),  
MScMed(PainMgt), PhD  
*Singapore Institute of Technology,  
Singapore*

### **Mirjam Lukasse**

MSc(Mid), PhD  
*Oslo Metropolitan University,  
Norway*

### **Hassan Vally**

BSc(Hons, MAppEpid, GradCert  
(Higher Edu), PhD  
*Deakin University*

### **Elizabeth Westrupp**

MPsych, PhD  
*Deakin University*

### **Ingrid Wilson**

BA(Hons), GradDipLaw, PhD  
*Singapore Institute of Technology,  
Singapore*

# Higher degree research

## PhD graduates 2023

### **Noushin Aref-adib**

#### **Examining the postnatal depression and anxiety screening and management practices of Maternal and Child Health Nurses in Victoria, Australia: A multiphase study**

Dr. Aref-adib's PhD research examined how Victorian maternal and child health nurses' identify and support women experiencing postnatal depression and anxiety. She found that socioecological factors significantly impact clinic practice. Her research has important policy and practice implications and addresses gaps in our understanding regarding how best to support women's postnatal mental health

Supervised by Amanda Cooklin, Touran Shafiei and Jan Nicholson



*Noushin Aref-adib*

### **Ranmali Rodrigo**

#### **Storage and transport of expressed breast milk for infants in two Neonatal Intensive Care Units: Exploratory studies in Australia and Sri Lanka**

Dr. Rodrigo studied storage and transport of expressed breast milk in tertiary neonatal units in Australia and Sri Lanka. Adhering to hospital recommendations for transportation could maintain satisfactory milk temperatures in the Australian setting. She identified a safe low-cost method of transporting expressed breast milk in Sri Lanka.

Supervised by Lisa Amir and Della Forster



*Ranmali Rodrigo*



# Postgraduate Students

## **Anna O'Connell**

Keeping midwives in Midwifery:  
Addressing novice midwife  
"wastage"

Supervised by Michelle Newton and  
Amanda Cooklin

## **Anita Moorhead**

Diabetes and Antenatal Milk  
Expressing (DAME): A randomised  
controlled trial

Supervised by Della Forster, Lisa Amir  
and Sharinne Crawford

## **Ann (Kathryn) Hindell**

Maternal and child health service data-  
critical analysis

Supervised by Leesa Hooker and  
Catina Adams

## **Anne O'Neill**

Clinical supervision in the Victorian  
maternal and child health nurses: A  
mixed method study

Supervised by Kristina Edvardsson and  
Leesa Hooker

## **Bijaya Pokharel**

Developing and evaluating a  
sustainable and culturally competent  
family violence response in general  
practice

Supervised by Angela Taft, Leesa  
Hooker and Jane Yelland

## **Brianna Pike**

How does reproductive coercion  
impact safety, life choices and help-  
seeking behaviours?

Supervised by Kristina Edvardsson and  
Leesa Hooker

## **Brooke Henshall**

Perceived barriers to physiological  
birth among midwives and  
obstetricians: An investigation into  
shared decision making, medical  
intervention in birth, and clinical  
practices

Supervised by Christine East, Heather  
Grimes and Jenny Davis

## **Carol Reid**

Rural workforce perspectives on  
trauma-informed primary health care:  
Service approaches inclusive of  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
parents

Supervised by Catherine Chamberlain,  
Lisa Amir and Shannon Bennetts

## **Charlie Benzie**

ABLE: Asking women aBout  
disabiLitiEs

Supervised by Helen McLachlan, Della  
Forster and Michelle Newton

## **Deborah Pidd**

Identifying a woman-centred  
evidenced-based pathway for women  
who have experienced a previous  
psychologically traumatic birth

Supervised by Christine East, Catina  
Adams, Ingrid Wilson and Michelle  
Newton

## **Desireé LaGrappe**

Maternal and Child Health Nursing: A  
golden opportunity to integrate  
screening for reproductive coercion  
and increase effective contraception  
use in Australia and beyond?

Supervised by Kristina Edvardsson,  
Leesa Hooker and Angela Taft

## **Elenora Greenwood**

Autism coming to hospital:  
Optimising care for patients with  
autism spectrum disorder

Supervised by Amanda Cooklin, Josie  
Barbaro (School of Psychology and  
Public Health) and Charne Miller  
(University of Melbourne)

## **Emily Goodnow Bjaalid**

Sexual violence among bisexual+  
women in Australia

Supervised by Adam Bourne (ARCHS)  
and Jess Ison

## **Fiona Faulks**

The impact of caseload midwifery  
(continuity of care) on the perinatal  
outcomes of vulnerable women in a  
regional centre

Supervised by Touran Shafiei, Kristina  
Edvardsson and Méabh Cullinane

## **Fiona McLardie-Hore**

RUBY – Ringing up about  
breastfeeding early: A randomised  
controlled trial

Supervised by Della Forster, Helen  
McLachlan and Touran Shafiei

## **Genevieve Edwards**

Understanding the factors influencing  
pregnancy outcomes for women in  
rural Australia who experience an  
unintended pregnancy

Supervised by Kristina Edvardsson and  
Leesa Hooker

## **Helen Findley**

The great disruption of Covid-19:  
Reimagining the work-family interface

Supervised by Amanda Cooklin, Stacey  
Hokke, Jodi Oakman (Health & Society),  
Natalie Amos (ARCHS) and Liana Leach  
(ANU)

## **Helen Lees**

How does the Victorian maternal and  
child health service demonstrate it is  
making a difference to the health  
outcomes of children

Supervised by Leesa Hooker and Kristina  
Edvardsson

## **Jess Appleyard**

Siblings in PICU: An exploration of  
sibling inclusion and support when a  
child is critically ill

Supervised by Ashleigh Butler, Bev  
Copnell and Cheryle Moss

**Jessica Bee**

Exploring volunteers' experience of and motivations for providing peer support in the DAISY (Depression and Anxiety peer Support study) randomised controlled trial

Supervised by Della Forster, Helen McLachlan and Touran Shafiei

**Kate McCredie**

The long arm of the job: Exploring parents' jobs and children's development

Supervised by Amanda Cooklin, Stacey Hokke and Liana Leach (Australian National University)

**Kerryn O'Rourke**

Volunteer doula support for women experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage in Melbourne: A realist evaluation

Supervised by Touran Shafiei, Michelle Newton and Jane Yelland (Murdoch Children's Research Institute)

**Kim Howland**

An exploration of tele health in the Victorian maternal and child health services

Supervised by Leesa Hooker and Kristina Edvardsson

**Lael Ridgway**

Victorian maternal and child health service provision: What, when and how?

Supervised by Jan Nicholson, Stacey Hokke, Lisa McKenna (School of Nursing and Midwifery) and Naomi Hackworth (Parenting Research Centre)

**Mercy Henry**

Family violence support systems for south east Asian community

Kristina Edvardsson, Touran Shafiei and Joyce Jiang (Multicultural Centre for Women's Health)

**Meriem Perona**

Pre-hospital management of atypical acute coronary syndrome by Victorian emergency ambulance paramedics

Supervised by Amanda Cooklin, Aziz Rahman (Federation University), Peter O'Meara (Monash University) and Omar Farouque (Austin Health)

**Mini Varughese**

Improving breastmilk feeding and breastfeeding in preterm infants in neonatal units

Supervised by Lisa Amir and Melissa Buultjens (School of Psychology and Public Health)

**Molly Allen-Leap**

What are the experiences of migrant and refugee women when seeking support for family violence from their GP?

Supervised by Angela Taft, Leesa Hooker, Kayli Wild and Ingrid Wilson

**Noushin Arefadib**

Examining the postnatal depression and anxiety screening and management practices of MCH nurses in Victoria: A mixed methods study

Supervised by Touran Shafiei, Amanda Cooklin and Jan Nicholson

**Raquel Dumas**

The experience of first-time parent groups in Australia: A qualitative study

Supervised by Christine East, Catina Adams and Jenny Davis

**Ranmali Rodrigo**

Storage and transport of expressed breast milk for infants in two neonatal intensive care units: Exploratory studies in Australia and Sri Lanka

Supervised by Lisa Amir and Della Forster

**Rebecca Hyde**

Your views matter – Exploring families experience of care in the newborn intensive care

Supervised by Della Forster, Helen McLachlan, Touran Shafiei and Sue Jacobs (Royal Women's Hospital)

**Renee Kam**

Breast hypoplasia and insufficient milk production: An exploration

Supervised by Lisa Amir and Méabh Cullinane

**Res McCalman**

What are the views and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women having a baby in Victoria?

Supervised by Helen McLachlan, Della Forster and Michelle Newton

**Robyn Matthews**

EXPerT study – Exploring midwives' perceptions of 'expertise' and experiences of work

Supervised by Della Forster, Michelle Newton, Touran Shafiei and Fleur Llewellyn (Royal Women's Hospital)

**Sarah Hay**

Evaluating a new parenting kit designed by the Royal Women's Hospital: A mixed methods study

Supervised by Helen McLachlan, Michelle Newton, Della Forster and Touran Shafiei

**Sharon Mumford**

FUCHSIA: Future proofing the midwifery workforce in Victoria: A statewide cross-sectional survey exploring health, wellbeing and sustainability

Supervised by Michelle Newton and Helen McLachlan

**Stefanie Zugna**

Evaluation of the impact of the Maternity and Newborn Emergencies (MANE) education program on safety culture in health organisations

Supervised by Helen McLachlan, Della Forster and Méabh Cullinane

# Lunchtime Seminars

2023

## 1 FEBRUARY

Associate Professor Jodi Oakman  
*School of Psychology and Public Health, La Trobe University*

Opportunities and challenges of undertaking projects in the workplace

## 2 FEBRUARY

Professor Charlene Senn  
*University of Windsor, Ontario, Canada*

The power of resistance: How decades of feminist knowledge and skill led to an effective sexual assault resistance program for young women

## 1 MARCH

Perinatal Society of Australia and New Zealand 2023 conference presentations

*La Trobe University - JLC Showcase*

Anita Moorhead

Antenatal expressing not associated with earlier onset of lactogenesis in women with diabetes in pregnancy

Janine Shifman

Exploring women's planning for childbirth: Identifying coping strategies as intrinsic or extrinsic

Stefanie Zugna

Evaluating the impact of a maternity and neonatal emergencies education program in Australian regional and rural health services on clinician knowledge and confidence

Deborah Pidd

Optimising shared decision making in a subsequent pregnancy after a psychologically traumatic birth

## 5 APRIL

Associate Professor Helen Hall  
*Federation University*

The PNG Midwifery Leadership Buddy Program

## 2 MAY

Associate Professor Susie de Jersey  
*The University of Queensland*

Prevention of excess gestational weight gain: Implementing a prevention initiative in maternity hospital settings

## 25 MAY

Dr Sandi Dheensa  
*The University of Bristol, UK*

Cancer made me weaker to abuse and abuse made me weaker to cancer": Enhancing the cancer workforce response to domestic abuse

## 7 JUNE

Dr Hulya Gilbert  
*School of Humanities and Social Sciences, La Trobe University*

Children's health and wellbeing in the car era

## 5 JULY

Professor Della Forster  
*La Trobe University*

Implementing a continuity model of midwifery care for women having a first aations baby in three Victorian maternity services: Clinical outcomes

## 2 AUGUST

Professor Jan Nicholson, Dr Shannon Bennetts, Dr Clair Bennett, Ms Jasmine Love  
*La Trobe University*

EHLS at School Symposium: Findings from the 5-year follow-up of the 'smalltalk' early childhood parenting program

## 6 SEPTEMBER

Professor Kylie Hesketh  
*Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition (IPAN), Deakin University*

From RCT to state-wide scale up: Experience of the INFANT program

## 5 OCTOBER

Dr Genevieve Le Bas  
*Deakin University*

Meta-analysis on the associations between paternal perinatal depression, anxiety, and stress, and child and adolescent development

## 1 NOVEMBER

Professor Tina Miller  
*School of Law and Social Sciences, Oxford Brookes University*

Motherhood – contemporary transitions and generational change

## 29 NOVEMBER

Dr Malin Edqvist Karolinska  
*University Hospital, Sweden*

Promoting shared decision-making, respectful and safe care during labour and birth in Sweden

## 6 DECEMBER

Associate Professor Hassan Vally  
*School of Health and Social Development, Deakin University*

My experience as a science communicator in a public health emergency: lessons and insights



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# Awards

## La Trobe University Accessibility and Inclusion Academic Award

Jess Ison received this award in recognition of her awareness of student mental health in her teaching and creating an inclusive learning space.

## School of Nursing & Midwifery 3MT Competition

First place went to Fiona Faulks for her talk entitled "Social vulnerability and maternity care: Determining gaps in access, equity and outcomes". Runner-up was Brooke Henshall, who asked "What is physiological birth?"

Fiona Faulks also received the People's Choice award.

## Fulbright Public Policy Fellowship Award

Desirée LaGrappe won a Fulbright award to serve in a public health professional placement in Vietnam for the 2023-2024 academic year.

## Australian Society for Psychosocial Obstetrics and Gynaecology Emerging Researcher Award

Desirée LaGrappe won the 2023 ASPOG Emerging Researcher Award for her conference presentation on how to better understand and measure reproductive coercion.

## Perinatal Society of Australia and New Zealand Awards

Janine Shifman (working with Laura Whitburn, Christine East and team) won a Midwifery New Investigator Oral Presentation Award for *Exploring women's planning for childbirth: Identifying coping strategies as intrinsic or extrinsic*.

Desirée LaGrappe won an Epidemiology/Public Health New Investigator Poster Award for *Reproductive coercion: A systematic review of measurement properties*.

Annie Tan (PhD student at the Burnet Institute) won the Judith Lumley Centre Travel Award for *Challenges of being a maternity service leader during the COVID-19 pandemic: A descriptive analysis of the journey*.

## Maggie Flood Bursary Winner

The Maggie Flood Bursary was established in 2021 by JLC alumna Dr Maggie Flood for HDR students at JLC to assist with costs associated with their research. The Maggie Flood Bursary is awarded each year for five years.

Robyn Matthews is completing her PhD part-time exploring midwives' experiences of working in the midwifery profession and received the Maggie Flood Bursary for 2023. This will enable Robyn to attend the PSANZ (Perinatal Society of Australia and New Zealand) conference in Christchurch, New Zealand, in April 2024.

## Royal Women's Hospital Research Week - Best Postgraduate Presentation

Anita Moorhead was awarded equal first Best Postgraduate presentation at the Royal Women's Hospital's research week in November. Anita prepared a poster on results of a substudy from the DAME trial and gave a three-minute presentation.

## Shaping Australia Awards

Helen McLachlan and team are finalists in the Problem Solver category for "Transforming midwifery care for First Nations women".



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# Publications

## Breastfeeding

### Program lead: Professor Lisa Amir

Flood MM, Pollock WE, McDonald SJ, Cullinane F, Davey MA. Primary postpartum haemorrhage adversely impacts breastfeeding initiation in Victoria, Australia. *Women Birth* 2023; 36(6):e582-590

Hyde MK, Thorpe R, Masser BM, Kruse SP, Amir LH, Brown R, Clifford V, Klein LD. Understanding mothers' experiences of being ineligible to donate their milk to a not-for-profit milk bank. *Breastfeed Med* 2023; 18( 2):149-54

Kam RL, Amir LH, Cullinane M. Worldwide prevalence of breast hypoplasia in women: A systematic review. *Breastfeed Rev* 2023; 31(3):17-27

McBride GM, Stevenson R, Zizzo G, Rumbold AR, Amir LH, Keir A, Grzeskowiak LE. Women's experiences with using domperidone as a galactagogue to increase breast milk supply: An Australian cross-sectional survey. *Int Breastfeed J* 2023; 18:11

McLardie-Hore FE, Forster DA, McLachlan HL, Shafiei T, Amir LH, Crawford S, Cullinane M, Davey MA, Grimes H, Gold L. Is proactive telephone-based breastfeeding peer support a cost-effective intervention? A within-trial cost-effectiveness analysis of the 'Ringing Up about Breastfeeding early' (RUBY) randomised controlled trial. *BMJ Open* 2023; 13(6):e067049

Moorhead AM, Amir LH, Crawford S, Forster DA. Breastfeeding outcomes at 3 months for women with diabetes in pregnancy: findings from the Diabetes and Antenatal Milk Expressing randomized controlled trial. *Birth* 2023; In press

Rodrigo R, Amir LH, Forster DA. Parents' views on prolonged maternal hospital stay with sick newborn infants in a tertiary neonatal unit in Sri Lanka. *Adv Neonatal Care* 2023; In press

Springall TL, McLachlan HL, Forster DA, Browne J, Chamberlain C. Factors associated with breastfeeding initiation and maintenance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in Australia: A systematic review and narrative analysis. *Women Birth* 2023; 36(2):224-34

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Moorhead AM, Amir LH, Forster DA. Re: "Education and experiences of antenatal breast milk expression: A systematic review" by Sobik et al [Letter]. *Breastfeed Med* 2023; 18(6):499

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Amir LH, Grzeskowiak LE, Crawford S, Cullinane M. Understanding antibiotic prescribing for mastitis in breastfeeding women: a mixed methods study: Outcomes report. Judith Lumley Centre, School of Nursing & Midwifery, La Trobe University; 2023

## Child, family and community health

### Program lead: Professor Leesa Hooker

Adams C, Hooker L, Taft A. A systematic review and qualitative meta-synthesis of the roles of home-visiting nurses working with women experiencing family violence. *J Adv Nurs* 2023; 79(4):1189-210

Adams C, Hooker L, Taft A. The characteristics of Australian maternal and child health home visiting nurses undertaking family violence work: An interpretive description study. *J Adv Nurs* 2023; 79(4):1314-28

Nightingale H, Mnatzaganian G, Hooker L, Barrett S, Kingsley M. The effect of motivational interviewing and/or cognitive behaviour therapy techniques on gestational weight gain - a systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMC Public Health* 2023; 23:626

Opie JE, Esler TB, Clancy EM, Wright B, Painter F, Vuong A, Booth AT, Newman L, Johns-Hayden A, Hameed M, Hooker L, Olsson C, McIntosh JE. Universal digital programs for promoting mental and relational health for parents of young children: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Clin Child Fam Psychol Rev* 2023; Online ahead of print

Opie J, Hooker L, Gibson T, McIntosh J. My early relational trust-informed learning (MERTIL) for parents: A study protocol for a brief, universal, online, preventative parenting program to enhance relational health. *PLOS ONE* 2023; 18(3):e0272101

O'Neill A, Hooker L, Edvardsson K. 'What is it we are trying to achieve here?' Community maternal and child health nurses and clinical supervision: A qualitative descriptive study. *J Adv Nurs* 2023; 79(10):3837-47

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Hooker L, Burgemeister F, Mills J. A 'rural ready' nursing workforce [Editorial]. *Collegian* 2023; 30(6):751-2

Hooker L, Burgemeister F, Mills J. Investment in community-based rural health care innovation to address health inequities in Australia [Letter]. *Lancet Reg Health West Pac* 2023; 40:100967

## OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Mills J, Burgemeister F, Hooker L. With the training to diagnose, test, prescribe and discharge, nurse practitioners could help rescue rural health. *The Conversation* 2023

## Mother and infant health and maternity services

**Program leads: Professor Della Forster, Professor Helen McLachlan, Professor Christine East**

Ahrne M, Byrskog U, Essen B, Andersson E, Small R, Schytt E. Group antenatal care compared with standard antenatal care for Somali-Swedish women: a historically controlled evaluation of the Hooyo Project. *BMJ Open* 2023; 13:e066000

Benzie CA, McLachlan HL, Forster DA, Newton MS. Exploring disability prevalence among childbearing women attending a tertiary maternity service in Melbourne, Australia using an audit and cross-sectional survey. *Midwifery* 2023; 122:103697

Benzie CA, Newton MS, Forster DA, McLachlan HL. How are women with a disability identified in maternity services in Australia? A cross-sectional survey of maternity managers. *Women Birth* 2023; 36(1):e161-e8

Benzie CA, Newton MS, McLachlan HL, Forster DA. Identifying women with a disability in Australian maternity services: Time for a change. *Aust N Z J Obstet Gynaecol* 2023; Online ahead of print

Faulks F, Shafiei T, McLachlan H, Forster D, Mogren I, Copnell B, Edvardsson K. Perinatal outcomes of socially disadvantaged women in Australia: A population-based retrospective cohort study. *BJOG* 2023; 130(11):1380-93

Fiolet R, Woods C, Moana AH, Reilly R, Herrman H, McLachlan H, Fisher J, Lynch J, Chamberlain C. Community perspectives on delivering trauma-aware and culturally safe perinatal care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents. *Women Birth* 2023; 36(2):e254-e62

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Pidd D, Newton M, Wilson I, East C. Optimising maternity care for a subsequent pregnancy after a psychologically traumatic birth: A scoping review. *Women Birth* 2023; 36(5):e471-80

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## Perinatal mental health

### Program lead: Associate Professor Touran Shafiei

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## Preventing and reducing violence against women and children

### Program lead: Professor Leesa Hooker

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Ison J, Matthewson G. More than a dot point: Connecting primary prevention of violence against women and public transport. *Journal of Transport & Health* 2023; 30:101591

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## Sexual and reproductive health

### Program lead: Associate Professor Kristina Edvardsson

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## Transition to contemporary parenthood – preparation and support

### Program leads: Professor Jan Nicholson, Associate Professor Amanda Cooklin

Bennett C, Regan D, Dunsmore JC, King G, Westrupp EM. Social and emotional determinants of parental reflective functioning in a multinational sample. *J Fam Psychol* 2023; 37(6):818-29

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## Work and family

### Associate Professor Amanda Cooklin

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# Funds

## FUNDS 2023

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### **Australia Research Council (ARC)** **\$365,704.95**

The long arm of the job: improving parents' jobs and child development \$233,076.90

The Great Disruption of COVID-19: Re-imagining the work-family interface \$132,628.05

### **National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)** **\$41,074.55**

A paradigm shift in lactational mastitis \$22,932.75

Let's Grow: Maximising health potential through enhancement of movement behaviours from early life \$18,141.80

### **Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS)** **\$660.00**

"What works" research consultancy \$660.00

### **Royal Women's Hospital** **\$220,826.60**

Developing midwifery and maternity services research and practice \$190,908.00

Evaluation of the Centre for Teamwork Excellence in Maternity Emergencies \$29,918.60

### **Monash University** **\$25,000.00**

Evaluation of EAAA sexual violence prevention intervention \$25,000.00

### **Block Grants** **\$1,014,608.26**

Research Training Program \$244,200.97

Research Support Program \$770,407.29

### **La Trobe Contribution** **\$417,131.08**

Project Support (SDVC-RIE) \$336,943.00

Project Support (School) \$65,188.08

Centre Renewal Support \$15,000.00

### **Miscellaneous income** **\$31,200.00**

Staff Giving Program \$31,200.00





La Trobe University proudly acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where its campuses are located in Victoria and New South Wales. We recognise that Indigenous Australians have an ongoing connection to the land and value their unique contribution, both to the University and the wider Australian society.

La Trobe University is committed to providing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, both as individuals and communities, through teaching and learning, research and community partnerships across all of our campuses.

The wedge-tailed eagle (*Aquila audax*) is one of the world's largest. The Wurundjeri people – traditional owners of the land where the Judith Lumley Centre is located and where most of our work is conducted – know the wedge-tailed eagle as Bunjil, the creator spirit of the Kulin Nations.

There is a special synergy between Bunjil and the La Trobe logo of an eagle. The symbolism and significance for both La Trobe and for Aboriginal people challenges us all to 'gamagoen yarrbat' – to soar.



# JUDITH LUMLEY CENTRE

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