

Annual Report 2021

The background is a dark blue textured surface with various light blue icons. These include a family of three, a hand holding a coin, a sun, gears, an umbrella, a house, a speech bubble, a face mask, a lightning bolt, a heart rate monitor, and a rainbow. A large, stylized number '1' is positioned vertically in the center, with its top bar in blue and its stem in orange.

Building New Connections

Our Partners

Australian Universities

The University of Queensland
The University of Western Australia
The University of Melbourne
The University of Sydney

National Partners

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
NSW Department of Customer Service
Anglicare WA
The Benevolent Society
Australian Government Department of Social Services
Brotherhood of St Laurence
Goodstart Early Learning
National Growth Areas Alliance
Minderoo Foundation

International Partners

Auckland University of Technology
Boston College
University College Dublin
University of Essex
University of Pennsylvania
University of Wisconsin, Madison



Australian Government

Australian Research Council



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work and live across Australia. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and recognise their continued connections to land, sea and community.

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Our Centre

About the Life Course Centre

The Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Children and Families over the Life Course (Life Course Centre) is a national research centre investigating the critical factors underlying deep and persistent disadvantage to provide new knowledge and life-changing solutions for policy, service providers and communities.

The Centre is administered by the Institute for Social Science Research at The University of Queensland and is a collaboration with the University of Sydney, the University of Melbourne and The University of Western Australia as well as leading international experts. It is supported by key Australian government and non-government organisations and community, business and philanthropic partners working at the front line of disadvantage.

Established in 2014, the Life Course Centre has been instrumental in introducing a life course perspective to policy debate and discussions on addressing disadvantage in Australia. It has also played a pivotal role in accessing and linking administrative data sources to track disadvantage over time and inform evidence-based policy making.

In 2021, the new expanded Life Course Centre—funded for a further seven-year term by the Australian Research Council—began deepening and broadening its research agenda by bringing together new research leaders and teams, research disciplines, methods and data, and collaborating partners to progress an innovative multi-disciplinary science of disadvantage.

This approach uniquely positions the Centre to track the experiences and trajectories of disadvantaged Australians in more detail than ever before, and to pinpoint new strategic interventions at specific stages of the life course to improve life opportunities and outcomes.

Our Connections

260+

Centre Members

15
Chief
Investigators

6
Partner
Investigators

41
Associate
Investigators

71
PhD
Students

96
Research
Fellows

32
Collaborating
Organisations

Visit our website to find out more about Centre members.
lifecoursecentre.org.au



Our Vision

To deliver transformative research and translation to break the cycle of deep and persistent disadvantage and improve outcomes for all Australians.

Our Mission

To produce new knowledge, precision methods, transformative social interventions, enduring infrastructure and new capacity that supports all Australians to achieve their potential over their life course.

Our Goals

Increase commitment in Australia to reducing deep and persistent disadvantage.

Research, design, implement and evaluate policy and practice that addresses factors associated with social and economic disadvantage, informed by life course theory and enabled through diverse disciplines.

Demonstrate international leadership in advanced research and social interventions to address disadvantage in ways that are truly responsive to individuals and communities.

Show leadership in evidence-based research to improve measurement and understanding of disadvantage.

Collaborate with policy makers, service providers and communities to support evidence-informed policy and practice to address disadvantage.

Build Australian capacity and capability through training in life course approaches for early- and mid-career researchers, supported by leading international scholars and cross-sector external partnerships.

image: Centre members at the national research retreat, UQ, February 2021.

Director's Report

2021 marked the first year of the new Life Course Centre and I am extremely proud of the enormous progress we have made towards building a strong new program of research and engagement.

We have built on the fantastic foundations of our previous Centre to develop new Research Programs and engage new people and partners. We have been in the fortunate position of being able to look back and reflect on what has worked well, and we have used this knowledge and experience to fine-tune and implement strong new research projects, portfolio structures and government arrangements to support our full breadth of activities.

We are a much bigger Centre now—more people, more partners, across more disciplines, with new data, methods and research agendas—working together to provide the insights and evidence to support tailored interventions that can make a difference to people's lives.

This expansion brings opportunities and challenges. A focus on how disadvantage develops and concentrates in specific places, and the necessity to move beyond averages are key priorities for the new Life Course Centre. We are also bringing new methodologies and data including ethnographic and case study approaches and access to new partner administrative data—both of which enable more precise insights into the unique circumstances driving life course outcomes for Australian children and families.

One of our main goals for 2021 was to connect our new people, programs and partners. Although the pandemic forced most of this work online, we delivered some creative new hybrid face-to-face and online events, and even managed visits to some of our interstate nodes in between border closures and lockdowns. The progress made in the first year of the new Life Course Centre in 2021 is the direct result of the creativity, persistence, resilience and flexibility of our people in adapting to changing circumstances and new ways of connecting. This is reflected in the theme for our 2021 Annual Report 'Connections.'



Connections are central to the success of the Life Course Centre. They are also more important than ever for communities, small and large, and will be critical to our eventual recovery from the pandemic.

There is no doubt that 2021 was another challenging year, given the ongoing impacts of COVID-19. Many people have lost loved ones. Our nightly news was dominated by infection, hospitalisation and death rates and while we ended the year with hopes for a reprieve over the summer, it was not to be. Everyone has been impacted by the pandemic and disconnected in some way from family and friends across state and country borders. It is important that we continue to look after ourselves, our loved ones and each other, whilst always remaining mindful of those most vulnerable and in need.

image: Professor Janeen Baxter addressing Q&A session in November 2021.

Director's Report

We obviously do not yet know the long-term impacts of COVID-19, including the impact of educational interruptions on children and adolescents or the lasting employment consequences for those in industries such as tourism and hospitality. But undoubtedly, the pandemic will drive a stronger cleavage between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' in many areas and open new fissures in others. Having shone a light on many of these institutional inequalities in our research, we have also argued that the pandemic presents unique opportunities for major long-term social, economic and political reforms. We will continue to expose these inequalities, and identify opportunities to work with our partners and communities to offer new solutions.

An important milestone for the Life Course Centre in 2021 was finalising our new Strategic Plan (2021-2023). This plan was developed in the first half of 2021 through an extensive consultation process including: one-on-one interviews with Advisory Committee members, planning sessions with Chief Investigators, the Executive Committee, Research Committee and Portfolio Leaders; and input from Centre members through facilitated suggestions, groupwork sessions, a survey, and working groups.

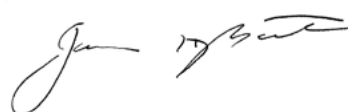
Our strategy will be reviewed at our Annual Planning Day at the end of 2022, and will take the Centre through to 2023, when a major internal review will be undertaken in preparation for our mid-term review. Key elements of this strategy are presented in the following pages, supported by action plans against our objectives in the areas of Leadership and Governance, Research, Capacity Building, Knowledge Transfer, and Research Linkages.

As we head into 2022, I am confident of the arrangements we have in place, the connections we have established, and the momentum we have built to realise our vision to produce new knowledge and targeted interventions to support disadvantaged Australian children and families. Our first major event in 2022 was our official launch in March. Later in the year we will hold our partner summits and a research retreat, interspersed with our regular seminars, symposiums, and research network meetings. Like many of our events in the last year, some of these will be a hybrid model of face-to-face and online connections—others we hope might eventually be face-to-face.

The responsiveness and flexibility we have displayed in the face of ongoing COVID-19 disruptions has worked well and even had some positive outcomes, allowing people to connect from wherever they are in the world regardless of lockdowns and isolation requirements. But hopefully, we will soon be able to connect in person a little more. While online connection modes are terrific, there is always a lot to be gained from meeting in person. I look forward to being able to connect with everyone across the Life Course Centre in multiple ways in the year ahead.

As always, I hope you enjoy reading about our Centre, our research, our people, our connections, and our impact, and you find ways to connect with us as we go forward in these uncertain but exciting times.

Stay safe and connected.



Professor Janeen Baxter
Centre Director



image: Professor Janeen Baxter with Dr Andrea Nathan, Telethon Kids Institute, on a visit to our WA node in June 2021.

Strategy and Plans

1. Leadership and Governance

Objective 1.1

Forge effective working relationships with the Centre's participating organisations, partner organisations and key stakeholders that deliver mutual benefits and make use of the unique skills and capabilities of the parties.

1.1 Actions

Ensure that the Centre's standing committees and working groups have a diverse and representative membership and that opportunities for engagement are publicised to all eligible members.

Promote the Life Course Centre within the participating organisations and seek opportunities to contribute to the participating organisations' strategic goals.

Engage with Centre partners through regular reporting, joint planning sessions and two Partner Summits a year.

Engage with Life Course Centre partner representatives and key stakeholders through the Advisory Committee and projects of mutual interest.

Objective 1.2

To ensure strong performance for the Centre and effective use of Centre resources through regular reporting and evaluation against agreed timeframes and measures.

1.2 Actions

Establish an effective Business Intelligence system through Life Course Central.

Set appropriate timeframes for reporting and support Centre researchers in meeting these.

Develop meaningful reports for the appropriate committees to assess performance against the agreed measures.

Objective 1.3

To pursue strategic growth for the Life Course Centre by balancing the Centre's core research program, vision and mission with emerging areas of importance and need.

1.3 Actions

To identify potential areas of growth for the Centre in new partnerships, new funding opportunities and new areas of influence.

Executive Committee will assess all opportunities against the Centre's mission, vision and objectives, and seek advice from the Advisory Committee where appropriate.

Objective 1.4

To ensure the sustainability of the Life Course Centre throughout its funding period and beyond through leadership training and careful succession planning.

1.4 Actions

To identify leadership training opportunities for Centre leaders and prospective leaders.

To identify the next generation of research leadership in the Life Course Centre and offer them positions as Associate Investigators in the Centre.

To ensure that leadership opportunities are made available to potential successors.

To support the research and career success of potential successors through mentoring and development opportunities.

2. Research

Objective 2.1

To develop highly strategic and innovative research and capabilities for Australia in research areas relevant to understanding and reducing the transmission of social disadvantage over the life course and across generations.

2.1 Actions

Identify research projects with the most significant theoretical and methodological innovation and strategic value to ensure that they have a high profile in the Centre and influence beyond.

Identify areas of emerging interest to researchers and partners and facilitate discussion and development in those areas.

Establish a process for identifying the optimal use of agile research funding within the Centre and ensure that it is fair and transparent and aligns with the aims and objectives of the Centre.

Objective 2.2

To firmly establish the Centre's core research agenda, as outlined in the Centre Proposal, as a baseline for future research growth and development.

2.2 Actions

Specify the projects outlined in the Centre Proposal.

Identify the project lead and establish project teams.

Set a deadline for submission of project plans for approval.

Establish milestones, including milestones linked to the mid-term review.

Strategy and Plans

Objective 2.3

To establish the Centre's Flagship Research as models of collaborative, co-designed and multi-disciplinary applied research.

2.3 Actions

Identify research proposals of significant scale and notable potential impact.

Establish steering committees for each flagship project, including international and partner expertise as well as our research partners.

Establish a process to identify and attract a diverse group of cross-nodal and cross-disciplinary researchers for each project.

Ensure that each flagship project has a knowledge transfer and partner engagement plan.

Approve project plans for the flagship projects.

Objective 2.4

To identify critical areas in research development, including indigenous data sovereignty, citizen consent and ethical use of data. To demonstrate leadership and best practice in these areas by working with national and international experts and provide strong risk management for Centre projects.

2.4 Actions

Identify areas of critical interest to the Centre, being areas where there is notable potential risk for Centre projects or areas with emerging international scientific trends.

Identify experts of significant international status for these areas of critical interest and establish strong working relationships with them.

Establish a process whereby Centre researchers can easily obtain advice and guidance on areas of critical interest.

3. Capacity Building

Objective 3.1

Enhance multi-methodological research design and methods skills and offer opportunities for inter-disciplinary research experiences.

3.1 Actions

Provide training on a diverse set of research design paradigms and methods, with a focus on the combination of multiple approaches to address complex research questions. This includes both internal training and a funding scheme for specialised training opportunities.

Engage with presentations reporting the findings, including methodological successes and challenges, on research approaches that encapsulate the diversity of the Life Course Centre.

Offer visitations and exchanges across the four nodes, with a particular focus on experiencing diverse disciplinary and methodological environments.

Offer cross-nodal and multi-disciplinary supervision experiences to all Life Course Centre HDR students.

Objective 3.2

Develop a capacity to obtain research funding, through both formal funding schemes and researcher-initiated opportunities.

3.2 Actions

Provide direct and facilitated access to mentoring with senior Life Course Centre scholars about the challenges they face and the successful strategies they adopt, to access research funding.

Deliver tailored training workshops on the techniques, skills, and interpersonal attributes required to gain research grants.

Actively promote and cultivate a collegial culture whereby senior Life Course Centre scholars play a key role in identifying Early Career Researchers and Higher Degree Research students for research funding opportunities, and then facilitate their participation in research applications and research grants as named investigators.

Objective 3.3

Strengthen capacity in research design, delivery and project management.

3.3 Actions

Develop and implement a structured training workshop on the key characteristic and skills necessary to successfully project manage research.

Provide direct and facilitated access to mentoring with senior Life Course Centre scholars to experience firsthand how research projects are managed on a day-to-day basis, including from conception to completion.

When available, participate as a named investigator on the project management of research projects.

Objective 3.4

Strengthen scientific communication to enable accessible dissemination to a broad section of society.

3.4 Actions

Arrange precision guidance about the methods and strategy for communicating scientific research to non-scientific audiences, this includes not only media communication, but also coaching in communicating to the general non-specialised population.

Offer specific short-term mentoring with senior Life Course Centre scholars who embody the practices of accessible scientific communication with the public.

Strategy and Plans

Provide practical opportunities and guided support for Early Career Researchers and Higher Degree Research students to learn how to translate their academic (traditional scholarly) outputs into accessible formats (i.e., facts sheets, evidence notes, policy implications) for public consumption.

Objective 3.5

Develop capacity for engagement with partners, stakeholders and communities.

3.5 Actions

Establish opportunities for Life Course Centre scholars and Higher Degree Research students to undertake formal placements in industry (government, non-government, and the private sector).

Establish opportunities for Life Course Centre industry partners to undertake visiting professional fellowships at Life Course Centre nodes.

Offer targeted opportunities for Early Career Researchers and Higher Degree Research students to be mentored by senior Life Course Centre scholars who successfully achieve industry engagement and/or impact.

Facilitate access to training centred on the strategies and practical techniques to achieve industry engagement and impact.

4. Knowledge Transfer

Objective 4.1

Creation and implementation of a 'Life Course Centre Knowledge Transfer strategy' that embeds Knowledge Transfer throughout the research process and encourages engagement with the full spectrum of stakeholders for Life Course Centre projects.

4.1 Actions

Establish a Knowledge Transfer working group and Terms of Reference for a formal Knowledge Transfer Portfolio committee.

Develop what Knowledge Transfer looks like at an individual level, across the different disciplines and at different points in the research process at a project and Centre level.

Develop a proposed Knowledge Transfer strategy and seek feedback on the proposal across different academic disciplines within the Life Course Centre. This strategy will link Knowledge Transfer to impact and look at best practice for measuring impact.

Within the Knowledge Transfer strategy develop a method for facilitating the implementation of findings for the development of new policy (or changing existing policy), influencing practice, shaping legislation, and influencing behaviour.

Define the role of the Knowledge Transfer strategy in relation to Life Course Centre 'Communication' and 'Engagement' plans. Establish links to both Life Course Centre 'Communication' and 'Engagement' plans and embed these within the Knowledge Transfer strategy and the Knowledge Transfer strategy within them.

Identify opportunities to incorporate Capacity Building and Research Linkages Portfolio strategies.

Engage with external stakeholders, Life Course Centre members and the Life Course Centre Advisory Board to determine how the Knowledge Transfer strategy can be best measured and captured in Life Course Central.

Publish a discussion paper defining Knowledge Transfer within the Life Course Centre outlining the Life Course Centre Knowledge Transfer strategy.

Objective 4.2

Develop Knowledge Transfer best practice guides and training that is flexible for different disciplines and projects.

4.2 Actions

Establish a 'Knowledge Transfer best practice guide' development plan within the Knowledge Transfer working group.

Establish Knowledge Transfer working principles that can be implemented across all disciplines.

Identify projects and disciplines within the Life Course Centre where case studies would be an effective way of delivering Knowledge Transfer guidance and demonstrate best practice.

Develop Knowledge Transfer best practice guides and circulate for feedback.

Develop workshops and other training in-line with Knowledge Transfer best practice guides.

Develop a checklist for researchers of key considerations for Knowledge Transfer in project development and implementation.

Encourage engagement in workshops and use of Knowledge Transfer best practice guides among Life Course Centre researchers.

Invite Knowledge Transfer visiting experts/scholars to increase Centre capacity.

Objective 4.3

Develop a 'Community, Consumer and Stakeholder Engagement Plan' that is ethical and effective, enabling disadvantaged groups and individuals to participate in the research design, be engaged throughout the research process, receive outputs from the Centre in the most accessible and effective format and inform the use, uptake and translation of research findings.

Strategy and Plans

4.3 Actions

Engage with groups from multiple disciplines across the Life Course Centre to identify and map critical community, consumer and stakeholder groups within the Life Course Centre.

Identify hard-to-reach groups and prioritise the development of effective collaboration and engagement strategies.

Consult with Life Course Centre members already working in consumer (and stakeholder) engagement to identify best practice principles and methods to engage with relevant hard-to-reach groups and other relevant consumer groups.

Ethically and effectively engage with community and consumer (and other stakeholder) groups especially marginalised or under-represented groups to identify effective and ethical methods for collaboration and engagement.

Identify training needs around community, consumer and stakeholder engagement for Life Course Centre researchers and staff; establish and action a training program.

Determine how consumer, community and stakeholder engagement can be best measured and captured in Life Course Central.

Reflect on the diversity and inclusiveness of Life Course Centre members, staff, and governance arrangements, and seek continuous improvement in recruitment to ensure that the voices of communities with diverse experiences of disadvantage have the appropriate recognition in the Life Course Centre structure; strive for excellence on Diversity and Inclusion in recruitment and governance processes and measuring this effectively.

5. Research Linkages

Objective 5.1

Provide leadership, mentoring and funding for initiatives that support external linkages and research alliances across multiple institutions and sectors in areas related to the Centre's research program and mission. This can include funding of workshops, sponsorship of outside events and other initiatives, through a competitive funding program.

5.1 Actions

Establish Terms and Conditions for a competitive funding scheme with the Research Linkages Committee.

After each funding round, review the applications received against the committee's assessment of what would be best practice for the Centre and amend the Terms and Conditions as required to keep the scheme dynamic and responsive.

Provide expert analysis to the Centre's leadership and membership to promote good research linkages. This includes analysing the success of the Parenting and Family Research Alliance (PAFRA) as an example of a research alliance and identifying what can be reproduced in other areas.

Objective 5.2

Plan and design a Summit for the Life Course Centre, with the format and purpose for the Summit to be agreed and supported by the Centre 12 months before the proposed Summit dates. Deliver the Summit to plan, within budget and within the agreed timeframes.

5.2 Actions

Form a Working Group to explore best practice in research summits and explore options.

Draft a proposed format and engage with research leaders, Centre members, partners and stakeholders to seek feedback and input about the format.

Draft a final format and gain approval of this from Centre leadership, including securing an approved budget.

On the basis of the approved plan, establish measures by which the Summit will be seen to have been successful.

Form a Steering Committee for the Summit. The Steering Committee will include the Engagement Officer as the professional staff member responsible for Centre events.

Secure venues, sponsorships and specialised support as required.

Form Working Groups for the development of specified aspects of the Program.

Other Actions will depend on the final design of the Summit.

Objective 5.3

Promote our research links and communities through innovative use of communications designed to reach an external audience and promote increased collaboration.

5.3 Actions

Continued delivery of the podcast series "Families under Pressure".

Applicants for Linkages funding are encouraged to include innovative communications in their outreach and linkages events and initiatives.

The Linkages Committee will work with the Knowledge Transfer Committee and the Communications and Visual Communications Officers to promote effective use of a range of communications channels across the Centre.

Operational Plan

The Operations team, including Centre Management staff and the node Administrators, are a major resource for the Centre with the critical job of ensuring that the Centre's initiatives and day-to-day operations are delivered according to the requirements of the Grant and the decisions of the Executive Committee.

Communications

Communications resources will focus on areas that best support our research endeavours and promote the efforts, findings and achievements of our researchers on the national and global stage. This includes a strong focus on digital communications and analytics to ensure that resources are directed to initiatives with the most shared benefit and impact.

- Highly targeted, multi-channel approach to produce a consistent flow of readily accessible, usable and high-quality material for the greatest chance to enact real change.
- Communications analytics framework to measure the efficiency, reach and impact of our communications activities. This will be critical to ensuring we allocate resources to activities and channels that can deliver the greatest impact.
- Key priority areas for Life Course Centre communications include:
 - » **Major Translation Projects:** that bring together and synthesise research, presented across a coordinated suite of printed, online and digital communications materials.
 - » **Targeting Policymakers:** target key public policy communications channels in Australia, including The Mandarin, APO, The Bridge, Policy Forum.
 - » **Submissions:** target Government inquiries and reviews through co-ordinated Centre submissions.
 - » **Multimedia Outputs:** make Centre research available through a range of media, including fact sheets, project reports, podcasts, videos and social media.
 - » **Website:** undertake strategic upgrades to make the website more visually appealing, accessible and user-friendly.
 - » **Newsletters:** distribute quarterly 'themed' newsletters and regular digest newsletters summarising our latest published research.
 - » **Media Opportunities:** link Centre communications with communications teams across our university nodes and partners.

Engagement

Engagement operations support relationships with Centre partners and stakeholders and with the Centre's broader research networks.

- Drive partner engagement and enable project collaboration, including through the bi-annual Partner Summits.
- Relationship management of signed Partner Organisations and ongoing management of the signed agreements.
- Support the Centre's Advisory Committee and liaise regularly with relevant industry and community groups.
- Develop, plan and implement an effective Centre engagement strategy in conjunction with Centre stakeholders.
- Develop and evaluate new relationships to bring to the Centre.
- Facilitate third-party agreements or similar for new researchers and stakeholders.
- Coordinate a strategy to engage with Life Course Affiliates.
- Coordinate effective internal engagement, including through node meetings and Research Networks within the Centre.

Operational Plan

Initiatives and Events

The Operations team will be agile, and direct resources appropriately to deliver Centre initiatives and to support both regular and special Centre events.

- Provide support and input to knowledge transfer plans.
- Organise Centre training initiatives, including targeted programs for HDR students and ECRs.
- Support establishment and delivery of the Research Alliances.
- Administer Centre competitive funding schemes.
- Establish and administer Centre mentoring schemes.
- Coordinate national Centre activities such as the Centre launch, summits, round tables, national workshops, seminars and invited guests and visitors.
- Deliver co-branded events through Centre faculties, institutes and partner organisations.

Business Intelligence

The Operations team will develop and maintain a Business Intelligence system for the Centre (Life Course Central) and produce regular and ad hoc reports to inform Centre decision making. Priorities include:

- Project planning and reporting.
- Knowledge transfer planning and reporting.
- KPI reporting and compliance reporting.
- Accurate and up-to-date records of Centre membership, including tools to promote collaboration between members.
- Stakeholder mapping and engagement reports for Centre partners.
- Reporting and analysis of communications activity, and impact reporting.
- Guides for system users, workflow models and operational guides.

Project Management

The Operations team will provide support for the management of Centre projects. This will include:

- Facilitating effective and timely recruitment and onboarding of Research Fellows and students.
- Management of node and research project budgets.
- Working with researchers to develop and monitor project timelines.
- Ensuring that all projects are compliant with open access and data management policies, and any other relevant research policies.
- Providing expert advice and administrative support for project development, including support for grant applications and new third-party agreements.

Structure and Governance

Advisory Committee

The Centre's Advisory Committee provides strategic guidance and advocacy for the Centre to ensure its work is grounded in real-world context and has a public voice. It has an independent Chair and includes representation from government and non-government organisations.

CHAIR

Emeritus Professor Peter Saunders

University of New South Wales

Ms Marilyn Chilvers

Executive Director, Strategy, Customer, Delivery and Transformation, NSW Government Department of Customer Service

Professor Greg Duncan

Distinguished Professor, University of California, Irvine

Dr Shae Garwood

Manager, Research, Advocacy & Prevention, Innovation & Strategy, Anglicare, WA

Ms Elizabeth Hefren-Webb

Deputy Secretary, Australian Government Department of Social Services

Ms Myra Geddes

Social Impact General Manager, Goodstart Early Learning

Ms Toni Wren

Executive Director, Anti-Poverty Week

Professor Shelley Mallett

Professorial Fellow, University of Melbourne
Director, Research and Policy Centre, Brotherhood of St Laurence

Professor Janeen Baxter

Centre Director, Life Course Centre

Executive Committee

CHAIR

Centre Director

Overall executive responsibility for Centre performance and success

— Janeen Baxter (UQ)

Deputy Director

As well as supporting and advising the Director, the Deputy Director is the Chair of the Research Committee

— Deborah Cobb-Clark (Syd)

Chief Operating Officer

Coordinates and manages the Centre's operations, including planning, reporting, contract management and budgets

— Lucy Mills (UQ)

Node Directors

Effective functioning of each node, and also representing the interests of the node within the Centre

- Donna Cross (UWA-TKI)
- Guyonne Kalb (Melb)
- Simon Smith (UQ)
- Deborah Cobb-Clark (Syd)

Portfolio Leaders

Operating across the entire Centre, the Portfolio Leaders have special responsibility for achieving the broader objectives of a Centre of Excellence

- Hayley Christian (UWA-TKI)
Knowledge Transfer Portfolio
- Cameron Parsell (UQ)
Capacity Building Portfolio
- Matt Sanders (UQ)
Research Linkages Portfolio

Structure and Governance

Research Committee

CHAIR

Deputy Director

- Deborah Cobb-Clark (Syd)

Centre Director

- Janeen Baxter (UQ)

Program Leaders*

Program 1: People

- Nick Glozier (Syd)
- Deputy: Agnieszka Tymula (Syd)

Program 2: Places

- Brendan Gleeson (Melb)
- Deputy: Sangeetha Chandrashekeran (Melb)

Program 3: Opportunities

- Janeen Baxter (UQ)
- Deputy: Wojtek Tomaszewski (UQ)

Appointed representatives

- Karen Thorpe (UQ)
- Azhar Potia (UQ)
- Kevin Runions (UWA-TKI)

Chief Operating Officer

- Lucy Mills (UQ)

* The Program Leaders provide intellectual guidance for the three Research Programs and the Centre's research as a whole, and each of them is an internationally recognised leader in the area their Program covers.

Sub-Committees

The Executive Committee can appoint sub-committees to deal with strategic and targeted areas. This can include:

- Portfolio Committees
- Ethics Committee
- Intellectual Property Committee
- Conference and Research Retreat Organising Committees

The Centre's sub-committees, and the opportunity to serve on the Research Committee, are a critical component of the Centre's succession planning. They provide an opportunity for early- and mid-career researchers to gain experience in strategy, planning and decision making in a major collaborative endeavour, and ensure that talented researchers are working directly with the Centre's Chief Investigators from all nodes and disciplines.

Our Research

Deputy Director's Research Report



Building on the success of the first Life Course Centre, the expansion of the new Centre in 2021 to 15 Chief Investigators across a broader range of disciplines meant much of the year involved laying the foundations for our new Research Programs and strong interdisciplinary collaborations.

The new Centre is both deepening and broadening its research focus to track the trajectories and experiences of disadvantaged individuals across their lifetimes in more detail than ever before. This will deliver a more fine-grained picture of why disadvantage takes hold of particular people and places and the opportunities that can make a difference to breaking the cycle.

Reflecting this approach, our research is organised into three new programs: **People**, **Places** and **Opportunities**. To progress these new programs, and connect people across the Centre, we established meetings at the national, node, program and network levels in 2021. This required a lot of work and I want to thank all involved for their contributions and participation. Some key highlights of these foundational activities and early research is featured in this Research section of the annual report.

People

Our People research program positions the Life Course Centre, and Australia, at the forefront of an emerging field of study—the cognitive science of disadvantage. This work represents a major innovation in the Centre's research that investigates the two-way relationship between deep and persistent disadvantage and individual cognition, decision-making and choices.



Places

Our Places research program is generating transformational knowledge about the community dynamics of disadvantage. Where you grow up and where you live matters to disadvantage. These 'places' play a big part in determining whether you have access to quality schooling, higher education, employment, and other life opportunities.



Opportunities

Our Opportunities research program focuses on structural access to opportunities in Australia. It examines existing opportunity structures and obstacles that hinder people from accessing seemingly available opportunities and drives evidence-informed decision-making about what works to assist Australian children and families to overcome deep and persistent disadvantage.



Image: Life Course Centre Deputy Director Professor Deborah Cobb-Clark addressing our national research retreat in February 2021.

Deputy Director's Research Report

Connections

We began the 2021 year with an ambitious hybrid national research retreat in February. Due to COVID-19 restrictions we were not able to gather as a whole Centre, but the hybrid model allowed the four nodes to gather simultaneously for local activities. Unfortunately, last-minute lockdowns saw the Melbourne node's experience switch to online.

Across the three different time zones, the research retreat agenda was packed with local node discussions and activities as well as Centre-wide plenary sessions and topical Zoom-based meetups and discussions. This was a critical event for introducing the new Centre, our three new Research Programs, and some new flagship projects to our expanded teams nationally.

Stemming from our national research retreat, a number of active Research Networks have emerged across the Centre in 2021. These networks allow researchers to gather online for presentations, workshops and discussions, and have fostered new collaborations as well as shared knowledge around interdisciplinary research methods.

Our new Research Networks were most active within the People research program, while our Places program hosted a Geographies of the Life Course workshop with national and international guests, and our Opportunities program held a symposium with presentations from all four nodes.

We also introduced a successful Centre-wide online seminar series in 2021 which attracted strong attendance and engagement. As we build our new research agenda, our schedule of network, node, program, and national meetings and connections will continue to grow and evolve in 2022.

Outputs

The first year of the new Centre was defined by high-quality, collaborative academic publication. There were 58 journal articles published in 2021 that were coded to the new Life Course Centre (CE200100025). Of these, 52 were indexed in Scopus with nearly 73% in top quartile ranked journals and 37% in top 10% tier journals (Scimago Journal Rank, SciVal 25/03/2022) such as the *Journal of Population Economics*, *Gender and Society*, *Social Science and Medicine*, and *Economy and Society*.

Our top ranked journal article, by Altmetric, in 2021 (see following page) was a timely reflection on the gendered impacts of COVID-19, and our research will continue to explore the ongoing impacts of the pandemic on social, economic and health disadvantage. There were also an additional 32 journal articles published in 2021 that were coded to the previous Life Course Centre (CE140100027). These were new publications not previously captured in our reporting that add to the growing evidence-base produced across both Centres.

As well as journal articles, our 2021 research outputs included 10 conference publications, eight book chapters and one book. There was a strong emphasis on pre-publication working papers, with a total of 33 working papers published in 2021 including 25 in our Life Course Centre Working Paper Series. We also had a total of 42 non-academic outputs including 12 articles in The Conversation plus national, international and social media exposure. These are important channels for both building our new research foundations and maximising our reach.



Professor Deborah Cobb-Clark
Centre Deputy Director

Top 5 most impactful journal articles 2021

1	<p>Mooi-Reci, I., & Risman, B. J. (2021). 'The gendered impacts of COVID-19: Lessons and reflections'. <i>Gender & Society</i>, 35(2), 161–67.</p>	<p>12 news items</p> <p>139 tweets</p>	 <p>184</p>
2	<p>Dean, L., Churchill, B., & Ruppanner, L. (2021). 'The mental load: building a deeper theoretical understanding of how cognitive and emotional labor overload women and mothers'. <i>Community, Work & Family</i>, 25(1), 13–29.</p>	<p>11 news items</p> <p>115 tweets</p>	 <p>165</p>
3	<p>Morris, R. W., Kettlewell, N., & Glozier, N. (2021). 'The increasing cost of happiness'. <i>SSM-Population Health</i>, 16(2021).</p>	<p>9 news items</p> <p>5 tweets</p>	 <p>73</p>
4	<p>Hasan, M. M., Fatima, Y., Pandey, S., Tariqujjaman, M., Cleary, A., Baxter, J., & Mamun, A. A. (2021). 'Pathways linking bullying victimisation and suicidal behaviours among adolescents'. <i>Psychiatry Research</i>, 302(2021).</p>	<p>4 news items</p> <p>9 tweets</p>	 <p>37</p>
5	<p>Hasan, M. M., Magalhaes, R. J. S., Ahmed, S., Pervin, S., Tariqujjaman, M., Fatima, Y., & Mamun, A. A. (2021). 'Geographical variation and temporal trend in anemia among children aged 6–59 months in low-and middle-income countries during 2000–2018: forecasting the 2030 SDG target'. <i>Public Health Nutrition</i>, 24(18), 6236–6246.</p>	<p>5 news items</p>	 <p>35</p>

Top 5 most impactful Life Course Centre journal articles of 2021 based on Altmetrics, which aggregates online attention associated with research outputs. These five articles were all ranked in the top 5% of all research outputs scored by Altmetric in 2021.



Professor Nick Glozier
People research program leader

The Qualitative Methods network, coordinated by Dr Alyssa Milton, has been developing skills through sharing of different research methodologies especially those focusing on developmental stages and disadvantaged populations. The Sleep network, led by Chief Investigator Professor Simon Smith, presented a 'Sleep and Society' symposium as a plenary at the 2021 Australasian Sleep Association Annual Scientific Conference, the peak society for sleep research in Australia. This has formed the basis for a program of work in coordination with the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child.

Qualitative Methods

Research program 1 People



Children's sleep and fathers' wellbeing

Waking at night is typical across infancy and early childhood and inevitably disrupts family sleep. In 2021, our researchers have specifically examined how children's sleep impacts on fathers. This study, involving teams led by Chief Investigators Professors Simon Smith and Karen Thorpe, UQ, and collaboration with our Melbourne node, showed poor child sleep in children from birth to age 12 was associated with poorer health and wellbeing in fathers. But associations of poor child sleep with depression in fathers were weaker than for mothers in the same household. Poor child sleep had a negative impact on the quality of family relationships, both within couples and between parent and child. Significantly, the associations between children's sleep and father's sleep were observed when child sleep was measured via actigraphy or paternal report, but not when measured via maternal report, suggesting mothers may not always be aware of disruptions that wake fathers.

REFERENCE

Coles, L., Thorpe, K., Smith, S., Hewitt, B., Ruppanner, L., Bayliss, O., O'Flaherty, M., & Staton, S. (2021). 'Children's sleep and fathers' health and wellbeing: A systematic review'. *Sleep Medicine Reviews*, 61.

Self-control and choices

Self-control, or the ability to override inner impulses, temptations and behavioural tendencies, is integral to the choices that people make. Centre researchers, led by Chief Investigator Professor Deborah Cobb-Clark, Sydney, made important new contributions to this field with two 2021 Life Course Centre Working Papers examining sophistication and stability around self-control. One paper explored people's sophistication about, or awareness of, their self-control, compared to naivety. It showed that having awareness of one's self-control had positive consequences for people's health and wellbeing, highlighting the need for raising people's awareness of their levels of self-control. Another paper investigated the stability of self-control over the life course. It found that changes in people's measured self-control are unrelated to major life events, such as employment shocks, relationship breakdown, family death, childbirth, or length of exposure to COVID-19, highlighting that self-control can be a stable personality trait for navigating life course events and experiences.

REFERENCES

Cobb-Clark, D. A., Dahmann, S. C., Kamhöfer, D. A., & Schildberg-Hörisch, H. (2021). 'Sophistication about Self-Control', *Life Course Centre Working Paper Series*, 2021-14.

Cobb-Clark, D., Kong, N. & Schildberg-Hörisch, H. (2021). 'The Stability of Self-Control in a Population Representative Study', *Life Course Centre Working Paper Series*, 2021-25.

image: Life Course Centre Chief Investigator Professor Simon Smith, UQ, is leading the People program research on sleep.

Research program 1 People

Twin studies

The Australian Twins Economic Preferences Survey is a valuable new dataset for studying economic preferences and behaviours. Led by Centre researchers and based on survey responses from 1,120 adult twins (560 pairs), it covers a range of incentivised preference measures such as risk, impatience, trust and confidence. Researching twins can provide strong counterfactuals for causal inference and can break down variations in personal characteristics into genetic, family, and unique environment effects. This can help to shed light on the intergenerational transmission of behaviours. One of the first studies from the survey explored the impact of genetic and environment factors on trust.

REFERENCES

Kettlewell, N. & Tymula, A. (2021). 'The Australian Twins Economic Preferences Survey', *Life Course Centre Working Paper Series*, 2021-17.

Kettlewell, N. & Tymula, A. (2021). 'The heritability of trust and trustworthiness depends on the measure of trust', *Life Course Centre Working Paper Series*, 2021-19.



image: Life Course Centre Chief Investigator Professor Agnieszka Tymula, Sydney, is leading the People program research on decision making.

The rising costs of happiness

The happiness of increasing numbers of Australians is becoming more and more dependent on income and this is likely to drive further inequities in wellbeing between the rich and poor.

This is a key finding of new Centre research, led by Chief Investigator Professor Nick Glozier and colleagues at the Faculty of Medicine and Health, Sydney, exploring the associations between income and happiness. Specifically, this research identified that the 'change point' at which Australians' happiness is no longer strongly dependent on income has almost doubled from A\$43,000 to A\$74,000 from 2001-2019. As this point has grown, the happiness of more Australians has become more dependent on their income. This study, which attracted high levels of media exposure on publication, concluded that happiness was becoming more expensive and out of reach for many Australians. It recommended that, as we head into a post-COVID economic recovery, governments pay attention to more than economic growth and ask if the distribution of wellbeing and happiness is improving for all.

Other work from the Mental Health network focussed on COVID-related financial impacts. Dr Isabella Choi, Research Fellow, Sydney, led a 2021 study working with Australia's largest provider of disability insurance and income protection that found Australian workers who accessed the COVID-19 early access superannuation scheme had high levels of psychological distress, felt a greater impact of the pandemic, and could benefit from targeted financial supports and resources. Separate research, involving several Centre and Mental Health network researchers from the Melbourne Institute: Applied Economics & Social Research, found that workers who experienced a labour market shock during COVID-19 had, on average, a 29% lower level of perceived financial wellbeing. It recommended targeted financial counselling and supports could help people regain financial control during periods of economic uncertainty.

REFERENCES

Morris, R.W., Kettlewell, N., & Glozier, N. (2021). 'The increasing cost of happiness', *SSM - Population Health*, 16(2021)

Choi, I., Maxwell, J.-K., & Glozier, N. (2021). 'Psychological distress among Australian workers accessing the COVID-19 superannuation early access scheme', *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*.

Botha, F., de New, J.P., de New, S.C., Ribar, D.C., & Salamanca, N. (2021). 'Implications of COVID-19 labour market shocks for inequality in financial wellbeing', *Journal of Population Economics*, 34, 655-689.



Professor Brendan Gleeson
Places research program leader

Goldfeld, S. (2021). 'Children need playgrounds now, more than ever. We can reduce COVID risk and keep them open', *The Conversation*, August 24, 2021.

Research program 2 Places

Research Workshop

The Places research program hosted a two-day Geographies of the Life Course workshop in April 2021. This collaborative ‘kick-start’ event for what is a major research innovation and ambition for the new Life Course Centre explored the issue of ‘why geography matters to disadvantage and the life course’.

Hosted in person at the University of Melbourne and via online connections in other states and overseas, the workshop brought people together across research disciplines and nodes to examine foundational concepts and understandings of ‘place’, challenges and opportunities of spatial analysis, and the potential and impact of geographic life course research. As well as discussing different meanings of place, the workshop also highlighted the importance of mobility, the role of neighbourhoods, environments, regulations and sustainability, and the design and delivery of evidence-based interventions that are fit for context.

The workshop also featured a collaborative session on interdisciplinary spatial analysis of disadvantage featuring Centre Research Fellows Dr Jordy Meekes, from the Melbourne Institute: Applied Economics & Social Research, and Associate Professor Ilan Wiesel, from the University of Melbourne School of Geography, as well as several break-out and reflection discussions.

Moderated by Chief Investigator Professor Brendan Gleeson and Senior Research Fellow Dr Sangeetha Chandrashekeran, the workshop featured key presentations by:

Professor Ruth Fincher

Redmond Barry Distinguished Professor Emeritus,
School of Geography, University of Melbourne
“Place, disadvantage, and the life course”

Brendan Kennedy and Melissa Kennedy

Research Fellows, University of Melbourne
“First Nations cultural water flows
and wellbeing”

Professor Mei-Po Kwan

Institute of Space and Earth Information Science,
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
“Human mobility, individual context, and
environmental exposure”



image left: The Geographies of the Life Course workshop in Melbourne in April 2021.
image right: Dr Sangeetha Chandrashekeran (left) and Dr Jordy Meekes.

Research program 2 Places

Re-imagining charity

A 2021 book by Centre researchers, including Chief Investigator Professor Cameron Parsell, UQ, examines whether the provision of charity services is well-suited to addressing poverty. Using multiple data sources, from government and survey data to media analyses and ethnographic data, this book advocates for a revised model of charity that enables reciprocity. While the experience of receiving charity is often shameful and passive, a more reciprocal and inclusive approach could foster greater solidarity and wellbeing. The book argues that charity currently does not have the capacity to address the structural causes of, and solutions to, poverty, such as affordable housing.

REFERENCE

Parsell, C., Clarke, A., & Perales, F. (2021). *'Charity and poverty in advanced welfare states'*, Routledge.



Built environments and obesity

Childhood obesity is one of the most serious public health challenges of the 21st century and our researchers have begun investigating the role of built environments, such as green spaces, transport and recreation facilities, in increasing physical activity and reducing obesity.

A 2021 Life Course Centre Working Paper, led by Chief Investigator Associate Professor Hayley Christian and her team at the Telethon Kids Institute and UWA, examined how built environments can support more active lifestyles for children in their local communities. Bringing together public health, environmental, exercise and nutrition scientists in Australia and internationally, this paper investigated current policies in Australia addressing child health through built environments. It recommended future policies better incorporate the voices of children and families as well as child-specific features, including walkability, park access, and home yard size. It also highlighted the need for coordinated multi-departmental policies, with implementation and evaluation plans.

Separate research, involving Dr Jack Lam, Research Fellow, UQ, and Professor Mei-Po Kwan, The Chinese University of Hong Kong (a speaker at our Geographies of the Life Course workshop), explored the pathways between built environments, physical activity, health and obesity. Combining data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey with Geographic Information System (GIS) methods, it found that easy access to green spaces could enhance physical activity and general health and help to reduce obesity. This study recommended that education programs promoting changes to daily routines and lifestyles to take advantage of activity-friendly built environments should be part of health interventions for obesity prevention.

REFERENCES

Christian, H., Fried, L., Dhamrait, G., Nathan, A., Beck, B., Boruff, B., Cross, D., Gething, P., Schipperijn, J., Trost, S., & Villanueva, K. (2021). 'Built environments and child health: A policy review', *Life Course Centre Working Paper Series*, 2021-22.

Wang, S., Liu, Y., Lam, J., & Kwan, M.-P. (2021). 'The effects of the built environment on the general health, physical activity and obesity of adults in Queensland, Australia', *Spatial and Spatio-temporal Epidemiology*, 39.

image: Chief Investigator Professor Cameron Parsell, UQ, addressing our national research retreat in February 2021.

Opportunities



Disadvantage is shaped by the opportunities, contexts and institutional circumstances that people encounter throughout their lives. A life course approach directs attention to the ways in which these opportunity structures shape life pathways. Our Opportunities research program looks beyond individuals to social, institutional and service settings for strategic interventions and system-wide solutions.

Professor Janeen Baxter
Opportunities research program leader

Research Symposium

The first Opportunities research program symposium was held online in November, bringing together a wide cross-section of researchers from across all four of our Australian university nodes.

Moderated by Associate Professor Wojtek Tomaszewski, Associate Investigator, UQ, the symposium covered a range of topics, including new flagship projects in the Opportunities program, new research themes and networks, new Centre partners, research disciplines, methodologies, and data. Participants also discussed opportunities and challenges in connecting and scaling-up research.

The symposium also featured closing comments and discussion led by Life Course Centre Advisory Chair Emeritus Professor Peter Saunders, UNSW, who stressed the importance of researchers investigating disadvantage to 'always keep opportunities for people front of mind'.

Key presentations at the Opportunities symposium:

Associate Professor Jenny Povey
Associate Investigator, UQ
Longitudinal Study of Life Opportunities project

Professor Karen Thorpe
Chief Investigator, UQ
Goodstart Early Learning partnership project

Professor Guyonne Kalb
Chief Investigator, Melbourne
Enduring Family Factors project

Professor Matt Sanders
Chief Investigator, UQ
Supporting Service Provider Workforces project

Professor Donna Cross and Associate Professor Hayley Christian
Telethon Kids Institute and UWA
Friendly Schools, Digital Disadvantage, and Play Active projects.

Research program 3 Opportunities



Unemployment not just a youth issue

New Life Course Centre research published in 2021 highlighted the need to extend the definition of Australians who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) in order to deliver the right support and interventions to the right age groups.

This study, one of the first in Australia to use population-wide linked administrative data from the Commonwealth Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Australian Census, found NEETs are a more diverse population than previously assumed. NEETs reporting and policy development has traditionally focussed on young people aged 15–29 years, but our research showed this group represented less than 20% of DSS payment recipients. The current system is therefore missing information on more than 80% of the working age NEET population in Australia. Our study recommended extending NEETs reporting and policymaking to cover all working-age persons aged 15–64 years. This would cover more NEETs and more associated social factors, such as physical or mental disability or breaks to raise children, and also enable the provision of more tailored supports to meet their circumstances at different stages of the life course.

REFERENCE

Mitrou, F., Haynes, M., Perales, F., Zubrick, S.R., & Baxter, J. (2021). 'Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET); more than a youth policy issue'. *International Journal of Population Data Science*, 6(1).

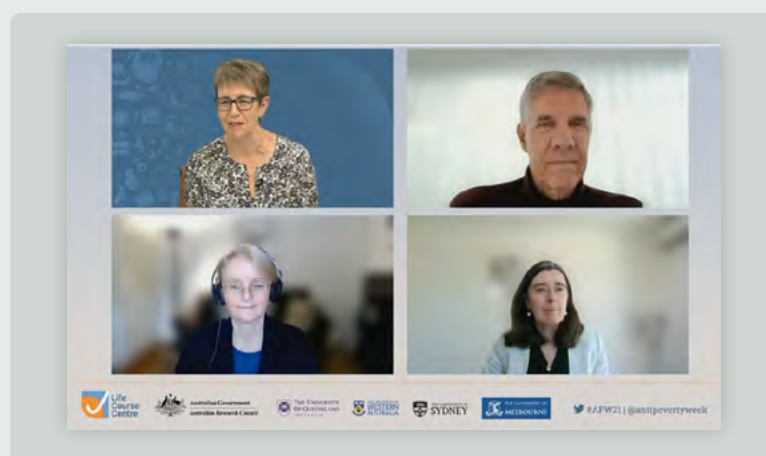
Reform opportunities from COVID-19

COVID-19 has undoubtedly been a catastrophic global event, but it also presents opportunities for rethinking and redesigning long-standing rules and regulations covering how people live and work. In a collaborative multi-disciplinary paper, Life Course Centre researchers identified and examined social policy reform opportunities in Australia arising from COVID-19. Some of these may arise coincidentally, and others will require purposeful policy and institutional redesign.

This paper presented a broad range of ideas to address entrenched disadvantage in Australia in areas such as health, labour markets, the tax and transfer system, gender equality, education, housing, and criminal justice. There will be other pandemics and other global shocks. What we learn, and do, today will have significant bearing on future preparations and responses. The examples in this paper are just some of the ways we might leverage the COVID-19 crisis to build back a better society.

REFERENCE

Baxter, J., Cobb-Clark, D., Cornish, A., Ho, T., Kalb, G., Mazerolle, L., Parsell, C., Pawson, H., Thorpe, K., De Silva, L. and Zubrick, S.R. (2021). 'Never Let a Crisis Go to Waste: Opportunities to Reduce Social Disadvantage from COVID-19'. *The Australian Economic Review*, 54: 343–358.



top image: Life Course Centre Advisory Chair Emeritus Professor Peter Saunders, UNSW, addressed our online Opportunities symposium in November 2021. **bottom image:** (clockwise from top left) Professors Janeen Baxter, Stephen Zubrick, Guyonne Kalb and Deborah Cobb-Clark address our October 2021 Anti-Poverty Week webinar on reform opportunities arising from COVID-19.

Research program 3

Opportunities

Teenage mothers

The disadvantage associated with teenage motherhood was the focus of several Life Course Centre Working Papers in 2021. One used Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey data to track the health of teenage mothers for up to 15 years. It showed poorer outcomes across all mental and physical health domains. This disadvantage is persistent, worsens over time, and requires targeted socioeconomic supports.

Another paper used the 1970 British Cohort Study to examine the effects of teen motherhood on mental health. Our researchers created a new analytic method to show the associations between teen motherhood and later-life mental health primarily reflect existing adolescent disadvantage, rather than direct effects of teen motherhood. Ongoing mental health supports are required, and the new analytic method used may be of wider interest to social scientists, particularly relating to prior knowledge of the true relationships between variables.

REFERENCES

- Kalb, G. & Vu, H. (2021). 'Teenage mother's health across different life stages'. *Life Course Centre Working Paper Series*, 2021-01.
- O'Flaherty, M., Kalucza, S., & Bon, J. (2021). 'Does anyone suffer from teenage motherhood? Mental health effects of teen motherhood in the UK are small and homogenous'. *Life Course Centre Working Paper Series*, 2021-20.
- Kalucza, S., Lam, J., and Baxter, J. (2021). Transformation, Disruption or Cumulative Disadvantage? Labor Market and Education Trajectories of Young Mothers in Australia. *Advances in Life Course Research*.

Disadvantage, university and employment

Despite evidence that university graduation enhances labour market prospects, there are growing concerns about unequal returns for graduates from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds.

A 2021 Life Course Centre Working Paper leveraged large-scale linked administrative data on employment earnings and unemployment benefits to investigate the trajectories of graduates from multiple social backgrounds. In the 10 years post-graduation, it found higher returns for those from advantaged backgrounds, compared to peers from disadvantaged backgrounds. Graduates with a disability and from non-English speaking backgrounds experienced the worst outcomes. This study showed that the inequalities observed at university access and participation extend well beyond graduation and required urgent policy attention and support. It also highlighted a reliance on unemployment benefits for graduates across socially disadvantaged groups, and the importance of building up employability skills at university. Another 2021 Life Course Centre Working Paper specifically examined the worsening employment outcomes of international graduates in Australia, and the need for better labour market preparation and integration.

Separate Centre research published in 2021 explored the role of higher education expectations among school students from low and high socio-economic backgrounds. Capitalising on a unique large-scale dataset linking administrative records and longitudinal survey responses, this study showed a significant and consistent gap between low and high socio-economic students' trajectories of expectations for higher education. It recommended strategically timed interventions addressing factors such as positive peer relations, interest in learning, and teachers' expectations.

REFERENCES

- Zajac, T., Tomaszewski, W., Perales, F., & Xiang, N. (2021). 'Diverging labour-market trajectories of Australian graduates from advantaged and disadvantaged social backgrounds: A longitudinal analysis of population-wide linked administrative data'. *Life Course Centre Working Paper Series*, 2021-21.
- Tang, A., Perales, F., Rowe, F. & Baxter, J. (2021). 'From bad to worse: Examining the deteriorating labour market outcomes of international graduates in Australia'. *Life Course Centre Working Paper Series*, 2021-10.
- Tomaszewski, W., Huang, Y., Xiang, N., Flesken, A., McCourt, B., & McCarthy, I. (2021). 'Investigating the drivers of higher education expectations among students from low and high socio-economic backgrounds in Australia'. *International Journal of Educational Research*.

Our Connections

Retreats and Meetings

Building new connections across our national research teams was a key focus for the Life Course Centre in 2021, highlighted by our national research retreat and regular node and research network meetings.

The Life Course Centre's national retreat in February 2021 brought together our new, existing and expanded teams across the country for the first time in a blend of face-to-face and online connections. The two-day retreat saw our UQ, Sydney and UWA teams gather in-person in their respective states, while COVID-19 lockdowns meant Melbourne researchers joined online from home.

This was a new style of retreat for the Centre, as previously all nodes have come together in the one location. A huge amount of work went into organising and co-ordinating this hybrid event, and it was very pleasing to see our people rise to the challenge, adapt, and participate so enthusiastically.



top image: National research retreat, UWA, February 2021. **bottom image:** National research retreat, Sydney, February 2021.

Retreats and Meetings



Utilising digital platforms, Centre researchers across the country were able to connect for national retreat sessions including key presentations on our new Research Programs and flagship projects. There were also a range of topical sessions where researchers could choose specific topics of interest, ranging from families, gender, sleep and health to big data, ethnography and cognitive science. Throughout the two-day retreat, there was a strong emphasis on open interaction and exchanging of ideas and social networking.

Complementing our national retreat, there were also node meetings, research network meetings, seminars and symposiums held throughout 2021 to continue fostering new connections and collaborations across the Centre and our partner networks.

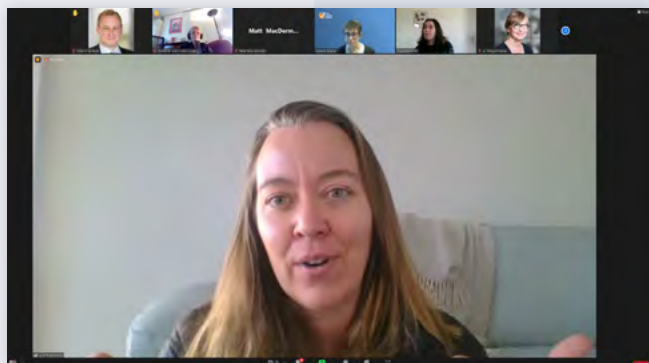


top image: National research retreat, UQ, February 2021. **bottom image:** UWA node meeting June 2021.

Seminar Series

Due to ongoing COVID-19 disruptions, in-person seminars and visitors to the Life Course Centre were again limited in 2021.

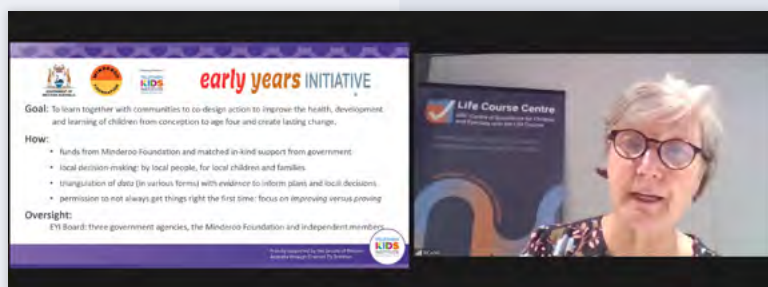
One of our few face-to-face seminars for the year was in April 2021 when Dr Rennie Lee, Research Fellow, UQ, presented at UQ's Institute for Social Science Research on the employment trajectories of immigrant women in the United States and Australia. She highlighted the contrasting immigration policies of the two countries, and how neither provided gender equal labour market outcomes. "For immigrant women, the biggest barrier is getting into employment. We need to be thinking more about gender in this area," Rennie said.



Our Life Course Centre Seminar Series then pivoted to online delivery, which drew strong attendance and engagement across our nodes. In August 2021, Professor Leah Ruppanner, Associate Investigator, Melbourne, presented emerging evidence on COVID-19 gender inequality trends. "COVID has illuminated and crystalized existing trends around women and gender," Leah said. "The pandemic has not equalised gender relations, but rather disadvantaged mothers. Mothers are being knocked out of employment at higher rates than fathers and their mental health is impacted by unstable employment and larger domestic loads."

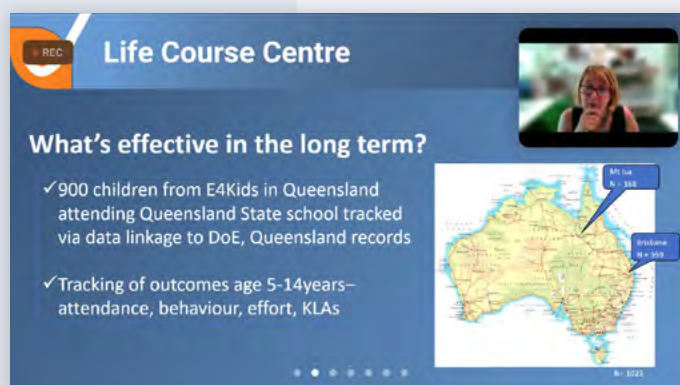
top image: Dr Rennie Lee (centre) at April 2021 seminar with Professor Janeen Baxter (left) and Centre PhD student Nikita Sharma (right).

Seminar Series



In September 2021, Dr Rosemary Cahill, Research Fellow (pictured left) Telethon Kids Institute, presented an overview of the new Life Course Centre flagship project—the Evaluation of the Early Years Initiative. This 10-year co-design partnership between the WA Government and Centre partners, Telethon Kids Institute and Minderoo Foundation, aims to improve developmental outcomes for children aged 0–4 years in four metropolitan, regional, remote and very remote areas of WA. Rosemary outlined how our evaluation will investigate what changes, for whom, in what circumstances, and to what extent changes can be attributed to the Early Years Initiative.

Our 2021 Life Course Centre Seminar Series concluded in November with Professor Karen Thorpe, Chief Investigator (pictured right), UQ, providing an online presentation on the importance of the first five years of Early Childhood Education & Care (ECEC) in setting strong life course foundations. This included new research being undertaken with Centre partner, Goodstart Early Learning. Children spend an average of 10,000 hours in ECEC and Karen stressed that access and affordability is not enough—experiences, relationships and emotional environments also matter so inequities in the system do not ‘disadvantage the disadvantaged’.



Communications

The Life Course Centre continued to progress a responsive, multi-channel communications strategy in 2021. This strategy utilises an array of communications mediums and channels to amplify news on Centre research, people, achievements and events. The aim of this approach is to connect with key non-academic audiences, including media, policymakers, practitioners and communities, where there is the greatest potential for achieving real impact.

Centre communications encompass a wide range of mediums, including media releases, newsletters, fact sheets, our website, social media, videos and podcasts, as well as the targeting of key public policy channels with research and government submissions. Importantly, our communications strategy also provides the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances, as demonstrated by an increased focus on online content such as podcasts and videos to maintain, develop and strengthen audience connections during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the first year of the new Life Course Centre, 2021 also saw a greater focus on internal communications, including a new internal newsletter, to connect members throughout the Centre.

Social Media Connections



1,608 Twitter followers



335 Facebook followers



213 LinkedIn followers

* as at 31 December 2021

Communications Highlights

Doubling the number of podcasts released from 4 in 2020 to 8 in 2021.

Introducing a new internal fortnightly newsletter, *The Source*, to connect Centre members.

Theming our external newsletter around prominent events, including International Women's Day in March and Anti-Poverty Week in October.

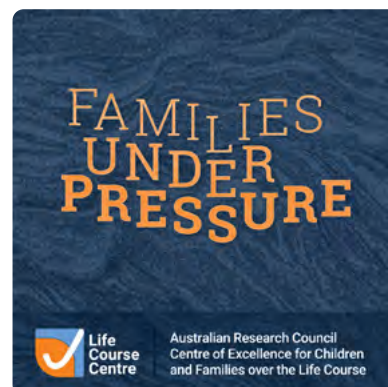
Developing new video content via professionally edited webinar, seminar and Chief Investigator interview recordings.

Strong growth of our social media presence across all platforms.

Communications

Families Under Pressure podcast

Our *Families Under Pressure* podcast series, launched in October 2020 and hosted by Chief Investigator Professor Matt Sanders, has been a successful communications initiative for the Centre. These podcasts feature guests from across our networks exploring ways to better support children and families over the life course. They have achieved large audiences in Australia and internationally, and the release of each episode is supported by coordinated promotion across our social media platforms.



Podcast episodes in 2021

7 January 2021

Every Family population trial of parenting support with Dr Kylie Burke

7 January 2021

Rapid responses to families' changing circumstances with Dr Jenna McWilliam

16 February 2021

Supporting parents to combine work and family with Professor Guyonne Kalb

16 March 2021

New research directions for the Life Course Centre with Professors Janeen Baxter & Deborah Cobb-Clark

11 October 2021

Every child in every community deserves a fair go with Professor Daryl Higgins

17 October 2021

Who experiences poverty in Australia and what can we do about it? with Toni Wren, Anti-Poverty Week

8 November 2021

Never let a crisis go to waste: COVID-19 silver linings with Professors Janeen Baxter, Deborah Cobb-Clark, Guyonne Kalb & Stephen Zubrick

10 December 2021

How social science can address our biggest challenges with Professor Mark Western

12
Total
episodes

1,100
Total
plays

Top 10 countries (by plays)

Australia

607

United States

346

Germany

32

United Kingdom

23

New Zealand

17

Norway

13

Belgium

13

Singapore

11

Netherlands

10

Canada

8

* as at 31 December 2021

Centre Profile

We are committed to continually growing our profile through a range of outreach activities that promote the Centre, its people, research focus and findings to broader non-academic audiences. This activity, led by our Director Professor Janeen Baxter and research leaders across the Centre, includes involvement in high-profile events, panels, conferences, presentations, reports, submissions and media. Collectively, the activity extends our Centre reach, recognition, and profile.



Professor Janeen Baxter, UQ, moderated 'The anxiety of parenthood' online session with authors Justin Coulson and Rob Sturrock at the Brisbane Writer's Festival in May 2021. A recording of this session was provided as a school resource for Queensland teachers and was also featured on ABC Radio National's Big Ideas program in June 2021.

Centre research by **Dr Ferdi Botha** and **Dr Sarah Dahmann**, Melbourne, investigating time stress, psychological distress, and self-control, was featured in a series of articles from the University of Melbourne in December 2021 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey.

Our research was featured in a number of prominent reports in 2021, including a Productivity Commission report on the National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development Review, and a Grattan Institute report on the need for more gender-equal paid parental leave.

Professor Deborah Cobb-Clark, Sydney, was a panellist on the 'Women's Economic Security' online forum hosted by the Women in Economics Network in September 2021. The panel of private sector and academic economists examined the changes required to improve women's economic security.



Professor Guyonne Kalb, Melbourne, was a speaker at the 'More than a word: How can economics contribute to Indigenous Reconciliation' webinar hosted by The Economic Society of Australia and Charles Darwin University in July 2021, where she presented research on childcare and Indigenous child development.

Professor Donna Cross, Telethon Kids Institute and UWA, contributed to a special report, 'Missing Out Matters: Child Poverty in Western Australia', released by the WA Commissioner for Children and Young People in 2021. Donna was one of 10 eminent WA leaders featured in the report, where she highlighted the importance of the early years to break the cycle of disadvantage.

Centre Profile



Chief Investigators **Professor Simon Smith**, UQ, and **Professor Nick Glozier**, Sydney, and teams presented the 'Sleep and society: continuity and chaos across the life course' online symposium at the Australasian Sleep Association's Sleep Downunder Conference in October 2021. They addressed the importance of sleep in a complex social world and across key life course transitions.

We provided coordinated Centre submissions to two prominent government inquiries in 2021—the Review of the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), and the Queensland Government Inquiry into Social Isolation and Loneliness.

Centre researchers achieved prominent exposure across a wide variety of media in 2021, including The Australian, The Australian Financial Review, The Age, Ch 7, Ch 10, ABC Radio, ABC TV and ABC online in Australia, and The Wall Street Journal, BBC, and The Washington Post internationally.

The Life Course Centre and our Director **Professor Janeen Baxter** were featured in a new UQ podcast series, 'Women Finding Success', released in 2021. An initiative of the SAGE Athena SWAN program to advance gender equality in science, these podcasts profiled inspiring female leaders who have achieved success and are working to implement systemic change.



Centre research on gender inequality was showcased at the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia's 50th Anniversary Symposium, The Social Future of Australia, in November 2021. **Professor Janeen Baxter** presented the research, undertaken with **Dr Alice Campbell**, in a session exploring how responses to crises such as COVID-19 can lead to a more just society.

Professors Deborah Cobb-Clark, Nick Glozier and **Agnieszka Tymula** and the Sydney node of the Life Course Centre were featured in the University of Sydney School of Economics Review showcase publication in 2021. The article, 'New Chief Investigators to take Centre in a new direction', highlighted their pioneering work on the cognitive science of disadvantage.

Partnerships

We continue to strengthen and grow our external partnerships across the government, non-government, community, philanthropy, and business sectors. Here we showcase some standout examples of how we collaborated with new and long-term partners in 2021.

Connecting communities

The National Growth Areas Alliance (NGAA), a new partner of the Centre, advocates for a stronger focus on the needs of Australia's fast-growing outer suburbs, home to more than 5 million people. We were proud to be the research partner for the three-day NGAA 2021 Symposium, held online in July and August, drawing more than 130 delegates from all levels of government and the planning, property and infrastructure sectors—an important new audience for our researchers to inform evidence-based policy and practice.

On Day 1, Associate Professor Hayley Christian and Dr Rosemary Cahill, Telethon Kids Institute and UWA, stressed the need for hearing the voices of children and families in growth area planning to provide the infrastructure for healthy, connected, resilient communities. "In community partnerships and engagement, it is important to consider the voices of children and families. If it works for them, it will work for everyone," Hayley said.

On Day 2, Professor Guyonne Kalb, Melbourne, outlined barriers to work for women, particularly mothers, including childcare, commuting, pay gaps and work-family pressures. "Mothers lose attachment to the labour force, are more financially vulnerable in the long term, men miss out on time with children, and society misses out on productivity," Guyonne said. Dr Jordy Meekes, Melbourne, described how making it attractive and easy for businesses to set up in growth areas can lead to positive 'amplifying' effects.

On Day 3, Associate Professor Sangeetha Chandrashekeran, Melbourne, highlighted the interaction between places, inequality and the life course. "Sadly, a lot of Australian cities are becoming more inequitable, with growing vulnerability and more shocks for those in the outer suburbs," she said. Place-based solutions should not just be economic, but also social—creating the spaces and services where communities can connect. "The intergenerational research focus of the Life Course Centre enables us to look at these challenges over the longer-term horizon. In a generation's time, what are going to be the needs in these communities?" Sangeetha said.



"We were fortunate to have researchers from the Life Course Centre participating in panel sessions across all three days of our 2021 Symposium and we are grateful to them for bringing such impressive academic credentials to our discussions. Rigorous, independent research on cities and the outer suburbs underpins the NGAA's advocacy, and our partnership with the Life Course Centre is an important element of this work."

— Bronwen Clark, NGAA
Chief Executive Officer

Centre Profile

Anti-Poverty Week

Anti-Poverty Week (17–23 October) was again a key focal point for our engagement activities in 2021. Its aim to raise awareness of poverty and to support action to address it, is closely aligned to the mission of the Life Course Centre, and we are proud to have been a sponsor of the week for the past five years. With COVID-19 causing ongoing disruptions, we had to innovate to bring people together and we were represented, alongside our partners, across various events during the week.

Our showcase Anti-Poverty Week event was the Life Course Centre Webinar: 'Never Let a Crisis Go to Waste: Opportunities to Reduce Social Disadvantage from COVID-19'. This professionally recorded and produced webinar had more than 100 attendees and featured a panel with representatives from all four of our nodes, Professors Janeen Baxter, Deborah Cobb-Clark, Guyonne Kalb and Stephen Zubrick, who explored opportunities arising from COVID-19 to rethink and rework social policies.

Other Anti-Poverty Week activities in which we were involved included the WA Social Research Network event 'Investing in WA's Future: Reducing Poverty and Improving Children's Wellbeing', which featured Centre Research Fellow Dr Rosemary Cahill, and Mark Glasson, CEO of Centre partner Anglicare WA. In Melbourne, our partner the Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) hosted an Anti-Poverty Week webinar: 'Shifting the Dial on Child and Family Poverty' featuring Professor Sharon Goldfeld, Centre Associate Investigator, Murdoch Children's Research Institute; and Professor Shelley Mallett, Centre Advisory Committee Member, BSL. We also released a themed newsletter and a special episode of 'Families Under Pressure' to coincide with Anti-Poverty Week.

Measuring wellbeing

We worked closely with our long-term partner, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), on their latest report on the welfare of Australians released in September 2021. In the lead up to the release of Australia's Welfare 2021, we undertook a review of AIHW's wellbeing indicators. This review, led by Matthias Kubler, UQ, analysed other wellbeing frameworks, including those used by New Zealand, Sweden and the OECD. We highlighted other indicators that can help to measure wellbeing, including the environment, disaster resistance, sustainability, and cohesiveness. The findings from our review were used to enhance and fine-tune AIHW's existing framework. Australia's Welfare 2021 also featured a chapter 'Social determinants of subjective wellbeing' authored by Centre researchers Dr Ferdi Botha, Melbourne, and Associate Professor Wojtek Tomaszewski, UQ.



A good start

Our new Centre partner, Goodstart Early Learning, is Australia's largest provider of early childhood education and care, with 650 centres and 15,000 staff providing services for 70,000 families. This partnership forms a flagship project in our Opportunities research program focussed on early education and care experiences as the foundation of life course trajectories.

In 2021, we worked on progressing this relationship to enable Centre researchers, led by Professor Karen Thorpe, UQ, to utilise Goodstart data to produce new knowledge on early learning settings, staff, children, and families. We look forward to this collaboration creating a deeper understanding of the power of early education and care and delivering new evidence to inform policy and practice and investment.

Keeping families together

The Keeping Families Together report was supported by the Life Course Centre and authored by a research team led by Professor Cameron Parsell, UQ. It examined a 12-month supportive housing pilot, delivered by Micah Projects, Common Ground Queensland, and the Queensland Government, that provided secure, affordable housing and supports for 20 vulnerable families. The report was launched at a December 2021 Micah Projects event with a presentation by Cameron and first-hand accounts from some of the families involved. Our researchers investigated the experiences of those in the program, with key findings including more safety and stability for families, less interactions with child safety, and increased parental confidence and child school participation. The report recommends expansion of the program and embedding supportive housing in government policy.

Image: Life Course Centre and Goodstart Early Learning teams met at the Goodstart head office in Brisbane in 2021.

Impact Case Study 1

Social Isolation & Loneliness

In May 2021, the Queensland Government's Community Support and Services Committee launched an inquiry into social isolation and loneliness in Queensland. The Life Course Centre, in conjunction with the Institute for Social Science Research at UQ, provided a detailed submission to the inquiry that highlighted relevant Centre research as well as national and international best practice examples of mitigating social isolation and loneliness.

Our submission covered: drivers of social isolation and loneliness; protective factors; measuring social isolation and loneliness and the effectiveness of government programs; services for connecting individuals and communities; and targeted support to vulnerable groups. After consideration of submissions, the Community Support and Services Committee tabled a report on the inquiry to the Queensland Parliament in December 2021. Of the 196 submissions received, our submission was heavily referenced throughout the tabled report.

Some key references included:

- The Life Course Centre identified that the two key life transitions that elevate the risk of loneliness are adolescence and retirement (reference 129, page 26).
- UQ's Institute for Social Science Research and the Life Course Centre expanded on the benefits of governments supporting digital inclusion (reference 536, page 107)

The report recommended the Queensland Government develop a 10-year state-wide strategy to address social isolation and loneliness, including identifying social determinants and preventative factors, and improving digital access and inclusion.

This impact was informed by the following Life Course Centre research:

Biswas, T., Scott, J. G., Munir, K., Thomas, H. J., Huda, M. M., Hasan, M. M., de Vries, T., Baxter, J. & Mamun, A. A. (2020). 'Global variation in the prevalence of bullying victimisation amongst adolescents: Role of peer and parental supports'. *EClinicalMedicine*.

Nguyen, H.T., Mitrou, F., Taylor, C. L. & Zubrick, S.R. (2020). 'Does retirement lead to life satisfaction? Causal evidence from fixed effect instrumental variable models'. *Life Course Centre Working Paper Series*: 2020-10.

Kettlewell, N. & Lam, J. (2020). 'Retirement, social support and mental wellbeing: A couple-level analysis'. *Life Course Centre Working Paper Series*: 2020-15.



... one of these initiatives, Be Connected (2016–2021), supports older Australians to develop digital skills and confidence... an analysis of participation found increased digital connections with family and friends, and demonstrated good value for money with \$4.01 created in social value for every \$1 invested.

(reference 536, page 107)

This research was showcased in Making a Difference: Outcomes of ARC supported research 2020–21, 'Teen Mental Health Study', pp 24–25.

Impact Case Study 2

Women, Violence & Poverty

The Life Course Centre worked closely with our partners at Anti-Poverty Week in 2021 to shine a light on the associations between an experience of violence and subsequent financial hardship for Australian women. We undertook special research analyses to provide a deeper understanding of the links between women, violence and poverty, and bring attention to the structural inequalities that perpetuate gendered disadvantage and heighten the risks of violence for women in Australia.

Our analyses, based on data from the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health, examined the rates of young Australian women (aged 21–28) moving into financial hardship following an experience of violence or abuse. We clearly demonstrated this direct association by highlighting that young women with a past-year experience of violence were much more likely to be in financial hardship—by two to three times the rate of women who did not suffer violence.

This research, led by Dr Alice Campbell and supported by Professor Janeen Baxter, was released just prior to the National Summit on Women's Safety in September 2021. Presented as a Life Course Centre Briefing Paper and an Anti-Poverty Week Fact Sheet, it attracted high levels of media attention including a prominent article 'Flight from violence leading to poverty' in The Australian newspaper, an article in The Conversation, and exposure on ABC Radio National.

Our research was featured in Life Course Centre and Anti-Poverty Week newsletters and generated positive feedback and requests for further information from a range of government, business and community organisations, including The Champions of Change Coalition and the Women's Policy Action Tank. Anti-Poverty Week Executive Director Toni Wren also highlighted our research in her address to the National Press Club in Canberra in November 2021.

Significantly, the associations between women, violence and poverty, and the need to address structural gender inequalities, were reflected in the Final Statement from Delegates at the National Summit on Women's Safety. The Australian Government also directly recognised the link between violence and financial hardship for women when it announced a new two-year Escaping Violence Payment trial in October 2021 to support women fleeing violent relationships.

Women, violence and poverty is an important research topic, as evidenced by the impact of our 2021 research analyses, and one that we will continue to progress in the Life Course Centre.

This impact was informed by the following Life Course Centre research:

- Anti-Poverty Week Fast Facts Series. (2021). Women, Violence and Poverty. www.antipovertyweek.org.au, August 2021.
- Life Course Centre Briefing Paper (2021). Understanding the links between violence, poverty and women. www.antipovertyweek.org.au, August 2021



One in five women experienced financial hardship in 2017 if they had been the victim of severe partner abuse in the past year. This was more than triple the rate of financial hardship experienced by women who had not been the victims of severe partner abuse in 2016 (20% vs 5.6%).

Our People

Awards and Recognition

We are extremely proud of the achievements of our researchers, across all career stages and nodes of the Life Course Centre. Here we celebrate some highlights of their successes in 2021.

Young Tall Poppies bloom in two states

The Life Course Centre was very proud to have two Young Tall Poppy Scientists in its ranks in 2021. **Dr Yaqoot Fatima**, Associate Investigator, UQ, was one of the recipients of a QLD Young Tall Poppy Science Award in July 2021, while **Associate Professor Hayley Christian**, Telethon Kids Institute and UWA, was honoured as the overall WA Young Tall Poppy Scientist of the Year, awarded in late 2020. This meant our Centre was simultaneously home to two Young Tall Poppy Scientists in two states in 2021. These awards are held state-by-state by the Australian Institute of Policy & Science to honour up-and-coming scientists combining world-class research with a passion for science communication and promoting greater engagement in science in the education and community sectors.

Fatima's research aims to improve sleep health in rural, remote and Indigenous populations. This includes the co-design and delivery of a sleep health program for Indigenous adolescents and upskilling Indigenous youth workers to be community 'sleep coaches'. "Through sleep health improvement, we can bring positive changes in community health, wellbeing and productivity and significantly reduce the future burden of chronic conditions and mental health issues," Fatima said.

Hayley's research aims to improve children's physical activity, health and development through interventions targeted at child, family, social and built environments. "One in five Australian children aged 2-4 are overweight or obese," Hayley said. "My multi-disciplinary team focuses on turning challenges into opportunities to make a positive difference to children's health and wellbeing through promoting more active childhoods."



image above left: (from left) Professor Hugh Possingham, Queensland Chief Scientist; Dr Yaqoot Fatima; Professor Bronwyn Harch, UQ Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation); and Ms Jonty Bush, member for Cooper in the Queensland Legislative Assembly at the QLD Young Tall Poppy Science Awards in July 2021. **image above right:** Associate Professor Hayley Christian, TKI-UWA.

Awards and Recognition

Professor Stefanie Schurer, Research Fellow, Sydney, was The Economic Society of Australia Young Economist of the Year for 2021. This award honours a young economist who has made a significant contribution to economic thought, knowledge and public policy debate. Stefanie is an internationally recognised expert in the economics of human development. Her recent research has used administrative data to study the consequences of Australia's key family, welfare and medical policies for children, including specifically Indigenous children. Stefanie also received a University of Sydney Vice Chancellor's Award for Excellence in 2021 for Outstanding Teaching & Research.

Also at The Economic Society of Australia 2021 Awards, **Dr Cain Polidano**, Associate Investigator, Melbourne, was an author on an article recognised as the Best Paper Winner from *The Economic Record*: Oguzoglu, U., Polidano, C. & Vu, H. (2020). 'Impacts from Delaying Access to Retirement Benefits on Welfare Receipt and Expenditure: Evidence from a Natural Experiment'. *The Economic Record*, 96 (312), 65–86.

A paper on Australia's paid parental leave scheme by **Dr Barbara Broadway**, Research Fellow, and **Professor Guyonne Kalb**, Chief Investigator, Melbourne, was nominated for the 2021 Rosabeth Moss Kanter International Award for Research Excellence in Work and Family. This award is jointly run by the Center for Families at Purdue University, Indiana, and Boston College's Center for Work & Family. The paper was selected as one of just 15 nominees for this prestigious international award, with a committee of 60 scholars examining over 2,500 articles published in 83 journals worldwide in 2020. Broadway, B., Kalb, G., McVicar, D., & Martin, B. (2020). 'The impact of paid parental leave on labor supply and employment outcomes in Australia'. *Feminist Economics*, 26(3), 30–65.

Dr Peter Rankin, Research Fellow, UQ, received a UQ Graduate School Dean's Award in November 2021 for Outstanding Higher Degree by Research Thesis. Peter's examiners nominated him for this award as they considered his thesis to be a substantial contribution to its field. Fewer than 10% of PhD and MPhil graduates are recognised this way each year. Peter's PhD thesis, Bridging the evidence gap: a systematic review and analysis of individual environment models of child development, was accepted without correction in 2019.

Professor Brendan Gleeson, Chief Investigator, Melbourne, received one of three Australasian Cities Research medals in December 2021 at the State of Australasian Cities conference, hosted by the Australasian Cities Research Network, for his sustained and outstanding contribution to urban research. Meanwhile, **Brendan Kennedy** and **Melissa Kennedy**, Research Fellows, Melbourne, and researchers within our new Places research program, were honoured with the Environmental Justice and Community Award by Environmental Justice Australia in October 2021 for their work on First Nations water justice in the Murray-Darling Basin.

Dr Andrew Clarke, Research Fellow, UQ, in collaboration with colleagues, including Chief Investigator **Professor Cameron Parsell**, won The Australian Sociological Association's Most Distinguished Peer-Reviewed Journal Article Published by an Early Career Researcher Award in 2021 for the article: Clarke, A., Cheshire, L., & Parsell, C. (2020). 'Bureaucratic encounters "after neoliberalism": Examining the supportive turn in social housing governance'. *British Journal of Sociology*, 71 (2), 253–268.

Professor Sally Gainsbury, Research Fellow, Sydney, was named as one of the most influential women in the online gambling industry for 2021 by international publisher, *iGaming Business*. Sally's inclusion on this list as an academic demonstrates the importance of consumer protection and the significant accomplishments she has made influencing policy and practice on the development of safer gambling environments and reducing gambling-related harm.

UQ's Parenting and Family Support Centre, led by **Professor Matt Sanders**, Chief Investigator, hosted a 25-year celebration dinner in October 2021 attended by UQ senior management, researchers, government and industry partners. The event showcased the success of the evidence-based Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) which has reached over seven million families in 30 countries. In September 2021, Triple P was named by science communication publisher, *The Brilliant*, as one of the 10 Australian inventions equipping us for the future.

Building Capacity

Developing future research leaders is a key objective of an Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence, and the Life Course Centre is committed to achieving this through targeted and sustained support for our students, researchers, and partners. This includes a coordinated suite of mentoring, training, professional development, and networking activities to interact with, and learn from, senior leaders throughout the Centre and across our networks. While COVID-19 restrictions curtailed many face-to-face capacity building activities, we demonstrated agility to maximise virtual connections and supports for our aspiring research leaders of the future.

Mentoring Connections 2021

Mentee

Dr Alyssa Milton, Sydney

Career Stage

Early Career Researcher

Mentor

Professor Karen Thorpe,
Chief Investigator, UQ

Mentee

Dr Christine Ablaza, UQ

Career Stage

Postdoctoral Research
Fellow

Mentor

Professor Irma Mooi-Reci,
Associate Investigator,
Melbourne

Mentee

Arvind Gnani Srinivasan,
UQ

Career Stage

First Year Higher Degree
Research

Mentor

Dr Yaqoot Fatima,
Associate Investigator, UQ

Mentee

Saeed Jaydari Fard, UQ

Career Stage

1st Year Higher Degree
Research

Mentor

Dr Christine Ablaza,
Research Fellow, UQ

Mentee

Nancy Kong, Sydney

Career Stage

Early Career Researcher

Mentor

Professor Janeen Baxter,
Director, UQ

Mentee

Elizabeth-Rose Ahearn,
UQ

Career Stage

First Year Higher Degree
Research

Mentor

Associate Professor Julie
Moschion, Research
Fellow, Melbourne

Mentee

Dr Isabella Choi, Sydney

Career Stage

Early Career Researcher

Mentor

Associate Professor Alina
Morawska, Associate
Investigator, UQ

Building Capacity



Capacity Building Highlights 2021

We connected seven young researchers—students and early career researchers—to a more senior researcher in the Centre in 2021 through our one-on-one mentoring scheme. It was very pleasing that most of these mentoring partnerships, predominantly conducted online, were cross-nodal, with a young researcher connected to a more senior researcher virtually at an interstate university node.

We hosted new cohorts of UQ Summer and Winter Scholars in 2021 who worked across a total of seven Centre research projects. These undergraduate students, who hail from a variety of research disciplines, gain valuable first-hand experience working on Centre research, while our support of these schemes also provides first-time supervisory experience for our early career researchers.

We held three ‘Meet our Researchers’ virtual lunchtime sessions in 2021. These sessions featured Dr Cain Polidano, Melbourne, Dr Sally Staton, UQ, and Dr Alice Campbell, UQ, who provided students with the opportunity to learn from their experiences and advice on progressing their career pathways.

We held two new sessions of our dedicated journal article writing program for young researchers in 2021. These sessions, available via in-person and virtual attendance, support our students and early career researchers to progress an unpublished piece of work for academic publication.

We provided targeted support for PhD student Narayan Panthi, UQ, as he progressed through the UQ Three Minute Thesis (3MT) competition in 2021. Narayan made it to the UQ 3MT Final Showcase in September 2021, following earlier wins in the ISSR heat and HASS faculty final. This was a great achievement, and we provided practice and feedback for him along the way. Narayan’s 3MT video presentation focussed on supporting educators to manage behavioural challenges in early childhood services. He is supervised by Dr Sally Staton, Dr Sandra Houen and Professor Karen Thorpe, UQ.

We facilitated practice talks, with feedback from senior Centre researchers, for several Honours Degree students preparing for final examinations in 2021. A practice session was held for talks by UQ Honours students Catherine Dickson (advisors include Dr Jack Lam) and Emma Irvine (advised by Dr Ella Kuskoff, Dr Andrew Clarke and Professor Cameron Parsell). In Melbourne, a practice session was held for talks by Honours students Ilana Altas (advisors include Associate Professor Leah Ruppanner) and Lucas Lewit-Mendes (advisors include Dr Barbara Broadway) and Graduate Diploma student Tess Newton-Palmer (advisors include Professor Irma Mooi-Reci). Talks covered a range of topics related to disadvantage, from social connections and partnerships, to gender, health and education.

image top left: Life Course Centre Winter Scholars 2021 (from left) Tiffany Hales, Amira Hassan, Zoe Hodson, Mehar Mehar, Sitong Shen, Tianyi Ma. **image top centre:** Emma Irvine (left) and Catherine Dickson (right) at their practise UQ Honours talks organised by Dr Lisa Pope (centre) Life Course Centre Analysis and Development Coordinator. **image top right:** 3MT competitor Narayan Panthi, UQ.

The Next Generation

Celebrating the milestones and pathways of the next generation of life course researchers.

Completions and Graduations

The Life Course Centre has had a total of 20 PhD student completions over the past two years. We had nine new PhD completions in 2021, following on from 11 completions in 2020. While the pandemic has played havoc with graduation ceremonies over this time, universities have shown flexibility in extending timeframes for graduands to attend ceremonies. It was wonderful to see graduation ceremonies back on UQ campus in late 2021, and many of our recently completed cohort taking the opportunity to celebrate with family, friends and advisors.



Sydney economists at home in Brisbane

Early career researchers Dr Juliana Silva Goncalves and Dr Nancy Kong found a home away from home in 2021 at our UQ node. Both usually based at our University of Sydney School of Economics node, Juliana and Nancy worked out of UQ's Institute for Social Science Research for most of the year. This not only accommodated their personal circumstances and the ongoing restrictions and uncertainty on interstate travel, but also showcased the cross-nodal, cross-disciplinary strengths of an ARC Centre of Excellence. "As a behavioural and experimental economist, I suppose you could say this has been like our own little experiment," Juliana said. "For me, it has been a good experience meeting and collaborating with UQ social scientists on new and interesting projects, while still being connected with my team in Sydney. I am thankful to be part of a Centre that provides this opportunity and sense of belonging of a wider, inter-connected group of researchers."

image above: Dr Juliana Silva Goncalves. **images left:** (clockwise from top) Dr Xueting Wang, Sydney, celebrating with her supervisory team, Chief Investigator Professor Agnieszka Tymula and Dr Stephen Cheung. Xueting has this year started a postdoctoral fellowship at RMIT in Melbourne. Associate Professor Wojtek Tomaszewski and Dr Christine Ablaza, UQ. Dr Emma Cooke and Dr Alice Campbell, UQ.



US scholarship to support sleep study

Life Course Centre PhD student Emily Westwood (pictured above) has been awarded a Fulbright Scholarship, which supports study exchanges between Australia and the United States. Emily will travel to the University of Colorado to work with Associate Professor Monique LeBourgeois, a Life Course Centre Associate Investigator, who supported her application and specialises in early developmental changes in sleep and circadian physiology. Emily is advised by Life Course Centre researchers Dr Sally Staton, Professor Simon Smith, Dr Dwayne Mann and Dr Alicia Allan, and her PhD examines the effects of environmental light exposures on young children's sleep and circadian processes.



Kickstarting careers in policy

It is always pleasing to see young researchers take the knowledge and skills they have honed with the Life Course Centre to springboard careers in the policy sector. In 2021, we farewelled Research Assistants, Tiffany Ho (pictured above) and Lihini De Silva, from Professor Deborah Cobb-Clark's team in Sydney, who secured roles with NSW Treasury and Australian Education Research Organisation respectively. "This was my first job after graduating and I couldn't have asked for a better kickstart to my career. At the Life Course Centre, I was given opportunities not many people my age or at similar points in their careers have. I am so grateful to have worked on important projects that made me feel like I was contributing to a larger picture of positive change," Tiffany said.

The Next Generation



Young authors shine in Working Paper awards

Our young researchers were well represented in the Life Course Centre's latest Working Paper Awards, announced during Anti-Poverty Week in October 2021. All 32 Working Papers published in 2020 were eligible, with three awards determined by a panel of 11 judges.

Best contribution to scholarship on social and economic disadvantage over the life course

Cobb-Clark, D.A., Dahmann, S.C. & Gielen, A.C. 'The Intergenerational Effects of Requiring Unemployment Benefit Recipients to Engage in Non-Search Activities', *Life Course Centre Working Paper: 2020-18*. **Authors include early career researcher Dr Sarah Dahmann, Melbourne.**

Best contribution to policy, practice or engagement to reduce social and economic disadvantage over the life course

Baxter J. et al. 'Never Let a Crisis Go to Waste: Opportunities to Reduce Social Disadvantage from COVID-19', *Life Course Centre Working Paper: 2020-30*. **Authors include Research Assistants Alexander Cornish, Tiffany Ho and Lihini De Silva, Sydney.**

Best student contribution to scholarship on, and policy, practice or engagement to reduce, social and economic disadvantage over the life course

Hendy, P., Slonim, R. & Atalay, K. 'Prize Linked Debt: Increasing Credit Card Repayments in an Online Experiment', *Life Course Centre Working Paper: 2020-09*. **Authored by Honours Degree graduate Peter Hendy, Sydney.**

image above: Life Course Centre Working Paper award winners (from left): Lihini De Silva, Alex Cornish and Patrick Hendy, Sydney.

Financial Statement

Income and Expenditure 2021

Consolidated	ARC	Institutional Co-Contributions	TOTAL 2021
INCOME	\$	\$	\$
ARC Centre of Excellence Grant			
Base Income	4,591,001		4,591,001
Indexation on Base Income	166,764		166,764
Total ARC	4,757,765	0	4,757,765
Administering and Collaborating Organisation Contributions			
The University of Queensland		566,150	566,150
The University of Melbourne		201,000	201,000
The University of Western Australia		175,800	175,800
The University of Sydney		204,800	204,800
Total Admin & Collaborating Organisation contributions	0	1,147,750	1,147,750
Partner Organisation Contributions			
Goodstart Early Learning		70,000	70,000
Total Partner Organisation contributions	0	70,000	70,000
Other Income/ Return of funds			0
TOTAL INCOME	4,757,765	1,217,750	5,975,515
EXPENDITURE	\$	\$	\$
Salaries	2,443,512	576,929	3,020,441
Scholarships	23,299	22,000	45,299
Travel and Visitor support	4,264	3,635	7,899
Equipment and Maintenance	0	6,643	6,643
Workshops and Conferences	4,356	66,844	71,200
Management and Administration	6,709	11,945	18,654
Education, Outreach and Communications	4,715	37,669	42,385
Other Expenditure	409	1,968	2,377
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	2,487,264	727,633	3,214,897
Annual Surplus/(Deficit)	2,270,501	490,116	2,760,618
FORECAST BROUGHT FORWARD FRM PREVIOUS YEAR	4,673,640		4,673,640
FORECAST TOTAL CARRYFORWARD TO NEXT YEAR	6,944,141	490,116	7,434,257

Life Course Centre

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