



Australian Research Council
Centre of Excellence for Children
and Families over the Life Course

Annual Report 2023

A large, stylized number '3' in orange and blue, set against a background of various light blue icons including a speech bubble, question mark, megaphone, pie chart, head with brain, umbrella, padlock, piggy bank, and magnifying glass.

Reaching New Heights

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



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

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About Us

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.

Our 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. We are also supported by key Australian government and non-government organisations and community, business and philanthropic partners working at the front line of disadvantage.

Bringing together multiple research disciplines, methods, data and collaborating partners, the Life Course Centre is uniquely positioned to track the trajectories and lived experiences of disadvantaged individuals across their lifetimes in more detail than ever before, to identify the interventions at specific stages of the life course that can make a real difference, and to inform the development of personalised and community-based solutions that can break the cycle of disadvantage.



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

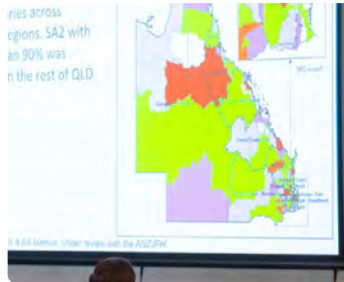
To produce new knowledge, precision methods, transformative social interventions, enduring infrastructure and new capacity that supports all Australians to achieve their potential over their life course.



Life Course Approach

The Life Course Centre is grounded in an innovative approach to identifying important life course influences, events and transitions, and developing strategic interventions to improve life opportunities and outcomes. Life course theory is a framework to understand how life pathways are shaped by interacting factors that bubble up at key life stages such as early childhood, adolescence, adulthood and parenthood. It allows investigation of how life trajectories are influenced by factors such as inherited disadvantage and the institutional systems governing how we live and work. The Life Course Centre is the first to apply life course theory to Australia's growing social and economic problem of deep and persistent disadvantage.

About Us



Director's Report

Welcome to our 2023 Annual Report. Looking back at the third year of our current seven-year Centre of Excellence funding term, it was a highly productive year marked by many great successes for the Centre and our researchers. Looking forward as we approach our mid-term review, we are well placed with the progression of our research agenda and our strong engagement and impact activity.

Our 2023 achievements are showcased throughout this report, but I wanted to make note of a few standout highlights that make me very proud as Centre Director. It is clear that the Life Course Centre now has a key seat at the table on the important national policy discussions on addressing deep and persistent disadvantage in Australia. Our life course approach to understanding the causes and consequences of disadvantage, and the critical time points at which interventions can be most effective, is increasingly being embedded in national policy debate and decision making.

In 2023, this was demonstrated by our involvement in a number of prominent policy reviews and reports and was most clearly illustrated by the announcement in the 2023–24 Federal Budget of a new funding package to target entrenched community disadvantage, including the creation of a new \$16.4 million 'Life Course Data Initiative' by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. This is a very exciting outcome that reflects our sustained research and data focus and highlights our impact in informing and influencing significant national policy discourse, development and investment.

Central to this impact has been our ongoing Data for Policy initiative. In 2023, we hosted our latest and largest Data for Policy Summit in Canberra. This was a huge success, attracting 150 attendees from across all levels of government, the non-profit and community services sector and academia to explore new directions in innovative data access and research projects to inform social policy. The program was strongly shaped by our partners and featured a diverse range of speakers, facilitators, discussants and networking, setting strong foundations for future projects and collaborations.

Our full program of Centre events in 2023, highlighted by the Data for Policy Summit, was another real highlight of the year for me. It was great to be back to hosting in-person events and to be moving ahead again with our face-to-face outreach and engagement agenda supported by our strategic communications focus, particularly around Anti-Poverty Week in October.

It was also wonderful to again be welcoming back international visitors, including our Associate Investigator Professor Kathryn Edin of Princeton University who attended our single parenting workshop and our Places and Opportunities research symposium in Melbourne. While online events can certainly play a very important role in connecting geographically distributed centres such as ours, getting together in person is essential for the informal conversations and idea sparking that often occurs at these events.

Other key highlights of 2023 included the establishment of our First Nations Research Portfolio and our Community Advisory Committee. Both of these initiatives will further strengthen our research, engagement and translation and take us closer to the groups whose lives we are striving to support. There were also many high-profile grant wins by our researchers in 2023 across the highly competitive Australian Research Council, National Health and Medical Research Council, and Medical Research Future Fund schemes. These aligned projects provide a boost to not only the careers of the successful researchers but also important topics of ongoing research focus for the Centre.

And finally, I am heartened that the Life Course Centre's standing in Australia is now starting to be replicated on the global stage. Attending the 2023 Society for Longitudinal and Lifecourse Studies international conference in Germany in October, it was great to hear of the growing global awareness of our Centre and its activities. Side visits to the Swiss LIVES research centre and the World Health Organisation (WHO) in Switzerland, plus a follow-up visit by two of our Centre research leaders to the WHO's latest global Life Course Network Meeting in late 2023, pave the way for progressing new connections that will extend our international reach.

I hope you enjoy reading our 2023 Annual Report.



Professor Janeen Baxter
Centre Director



Director's Report



Thank you

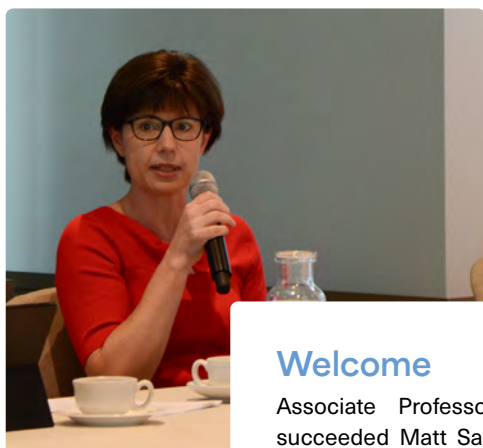
Thank you to Professor Shelley Mallett who in 2023 stepped back from her roles with our partner organisation Brotherhood of St. Laurence, where she was Director of Research and Policy, and the University of Melbourne, where she was a Professorial Fellow. Shelley has been actively involved with our Centre since 2014 in many ways, including supporting student projects, delivering professional development talks, advising on research projects and as a member of our Advisory Committee.

Thank you also to Elizabeth Hefren-Webb, former Deputy Secretary, Families and Communities at the Australian Government Department of Social Services who stood down from our Advisory Committee in 2023 after her move to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.



The end of 2023 was also marked by the start of a retirement transition for Professor Matthew Sanders. Matt has been a Chief Investigator in the Centre since our establishment in 2014 and was a member of our first ARC Centre of Excellence bid interview team. As the founder of UQ's Parenting Family Support Centre (PFSC) and its flagship Triple P Positive Parenting Program, Matt has overseen a large body of research on the transformative power of parenting, including the Life Course Centre-supported Every Family: Australian Triple P System Population Trial. He also led the formation of the Parenting and Family Research Alliance (PAFRA) and its inaugural International Congress on Evidence-based Parenting Support (I-CEPS) held in 2023 and sponsored by the Life Course Centre. Matt has stepped down as PFSC Director and Chief Investigator for the Life Course Centre. But, like our other former Chief Investigators, we will continue to draw on his extensive expertise and connections to support our ongoing research, engagement and translation work.

We sincerely thank Shelley, Elizabeth and Matt for their valuable contributions, leadership and guidance to the Life Course Centre over many years and wish them all the best for the future.



Welcome

Associate Professor Alina Morawska has succeeded Matt Sanders as Director of UQ's PFSC and has been nominated as a new Chief Investigator in the Life Course Centre. Alina has already been closely involved with the Centre as a former Associate Investigator and through the Every Family project. Alina's research is focused on empowering families to create safe and nurturing environments for children to thrive, and she is a wonderful addition to our team of Chief Investigators.

Vale

We were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Dr Monique LeBourgeois in late 2023. A Life Course Centre Associate Investigator from the University of Colorado Boulder, Monique's research focussed on early developmental changes in sleep and circadian physiology, including new methods to conduct circadian and sleep research in home environments.

Activity Plan

The Centre has an extensive range of activities planned for 2024, including a wide range of workshops and training sessions. We will also be having our mid-term review in the second half of 2024 and celebrating 10 years since the establishment of the first Life Course Centre, and in preparation for this we will be doing a thorough internal review of our research progress and excellence.

Leadership and Governance

The Executive Committee will be focusing on the mid-term review in 2024, and is the primary body that will be coordinating the Centre's preparations, submissions and response. This will include a new Strategic Plan 2024–2026. In addition, the Executive Committee will be overseeing a number of new initiatives in First Nations Research and Data for Policy, through newly created portfolios. The committee continues to closely monitor the Centre's finances and performance measures and implement changes where required.

The Advisory Committee will welcome several new members in 2024. Laetitia Hope, Deputy Secretary, Australian Government Department of Social Services, replaced Liz Hefren-Webb in 2023. Dr Nicole Bieske will replace Professor Shelley Mallett as our representative from longtime Centre partner The Brotherhood of St. Laurence. We also welcome three new members. Professor Kerrie Wilson is the new Queensland Chief Scientist and a former Centre of Excellence Director. Professor Nicholas Biddle is Deputy Director for the Centre for Social Policy at ANU. And Victoria Anderson is Deputy Secretary at the Australian Government Department of the Treasury. Along with our continuing members, the new members will bring highly valuable expertise and new perspectives to an expanded Advisory Committee.

The Advisory Committee will also include a representative from the Community Advisory Committee, which is an initiative of the Knowledge Transfer Portfolio. This new committee brings together people with lived experience of aspects of our research. They will provide an irreplaceable perspective on how we define, carry out and represent our research.

Research

Over the first three years of the Life Course Centre, the Research Committee has identified and supported new areas of research that have arisen since the Centre bid was originally submitted. With a mid-term review in 2024, the Research Committee will spend the first half of this year assessing progress against the entirety of the research program and will then take responsibility for the review recommendations that relate to research. In addition, the committee will continue its responsibility for promoting research collaboration through major academic events.

1. Review of Centre research progress:

- a. Assessing the three research programs for progress against the core research as outlined in the bid, and new research that has been initiated for each program.
- b. Assessing the progress of the flagship research projects—the large and complex multi-faceted projects that often serve as test cases for initiatives in research excellence and knowledge transfer.

2. Development of the programs for the 2024 Research Retreat and 2025 International Life Course Conference.

This includes steering committees that are open to a broad range of students, ECRs and MCRs, thus promoting Centre-wide engagement with the entire research endeavour.

3. Continued support of the Research Networks.

At the end of 2023, the Research Committee identified several cross-nodal and multi-disciplinary networks that existed within the Centre for areas of common interest. Each network was awarded funding for activities that they will undertake in 2024, which range from workshops to new projects and projects co-designed with partners.

4. Ongoing monitoring of research projects.

This is a primary responsibility of the committee, and includes recommending new projects to Executive for approval, and receiving interim and final reports for projects.

Capacity Building

The Capacity Building Portfolio focuses on training and mentoring for students and ECRs. The committee is highly representative, with student and ECR members playing a strong role. The committee also regularly solicits feedback and input from the broader Centre in the development and delivery of training.

1. Capacity Building Award.

This award has demonstrated that it represents significant value for money in delivering capacity building outcomes to Centre members. Grant applicants are able to identify opportunities for training, networking and mentoring that are specific to their educational and professional needs. This allows the Portfolio to deliver highly tailored capacity building with maximum impact at an individual level.

2. Diverse Advisory Grant Scheme.

The funding scheme aims to incentivise HDRs to incorporate greater diversity into their advisory teams, by taking on a cross-nodal, interdisciplinary or industry mentor as an informal advisor.

3. Centre School.

The Portfolio has received outstanding feedback for the delivery of training targeted at ECRs and HDRs through the Centre School. The Centre aims to deliver another Centre School for HDRs in 2024.

4. Other Training.

Training requests from Centre members include leadership, science communication, writing for The Conversation, and building engagement with end users. Where these activities are not offered by the partner universities, the Capacity Building Portfolio has budgeted for a series of small group workshops delivered by external experts.

Data for Policy

The Centre has delivered Data for Policy workshops since 2014, with a highly successful summit in Canberra in August 2023. A number of potential events and projects have arisen from this, and the work has now been consolidated into a formal portfolio with dedicated staff and a dedicated budget.

1. Continuation of the Data for Policy Portfolio Committee.

This is a multi-sector committee with representatives from state and federal government and NGOs. The committee was instituted as a steering group for the 2023 Data for Policy Summit and wished to continue meeting as a cross-sectoral discussion group and to advance shared projects. This group will now act as the committee for the portfolio, which heightens external engagement with the Centre.

2. Two National Workshops.

These workshops will aim to bring together Life Course Centre members with partners and other relevant organisations and interest groups to discuss issues and opportunities around the use of data for policy. The proposed themes are NGO data issues and opportunities, and national data integration.

3. International Workshop.

To be held in Chicago in September 2024, this will showcase Australia's current state-of-play regarding linked longitudinal life course data, including the challenge of incorporating non-government data into established government data assets, and contrast this with the situations in other countries via contributions from several international speakers.

4. Consolidation of Data for Policy initiatives.

This includes coordinating the publication of Data for Policy related outputs and fostering new and continuing stakeholder relationships. It also includes support for significant data projects such as the project that the Life Course Centre is currently leading for the World Health Organisation, and the Life Course Data Initiative proposed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

First Nations Research

The First Nations Portfolio promotes best practice in the Centre in research involving First Nations people and promotes increased engagement of First Nations people with the Centre's research. The Co-Leader of the portfolio, Brendan Kennedy, is a Tati Tati man whose major project with the Centre, Kulingi kaiejn ruwe, is looking at water rights on the Milloo, the Murray River, near Robinvale in Victoria.

1. Review of Indigenous data governance and sovereignty in Australia and internationally:

- a. Identifying principles, protocols, institutional arrangements, case studies and best practice.
- b. Reviewing how Indigenous data governance principles have been adopted and implemented in research institutes and other relevant institutions in Australia.
- c. Identifying points of connection with Closing the Gap Priority Reform 4.
- d. Conversing with the Indigenous Data Network.

2. Indigenous data governance model for the Life Course Centre:

- a. Existing resources made accessible to Centre members.
- b. Identify key principles and strategies to embed in a Life Course Centre-specific framework.
- c. Provide seminars and training to develop a shared understanding of what Indigenous data governance and sovereignty might mean in the Centre.
- d. Build connections around Closing the Gap Priority Reform Area 4 and visit Indigenous Data Governance and Area 4 project sites.

3. Support for Centre projects:

- a. Mapping Centre projects that use First Nations data.
- b. Portfolio Seminars profiling First Nations-centred projects in the Life Course Centre.
- c. First Nations research and engagement project funding.
- d. Cultural Awareness training for Centre researchers.

4. Developing First Nations researchers:

- a. Visit centres with a First Nations focus to share knowledge.
- b. Develop agenda on alternative pathways into research for First Nations researchers.
- c. Travel support scheme for First Nations researchers.
- d. First Nations Research session prior to the Research Retreat.

Knowledge Transfer

The Knowledge Transfer Portfolio provides resources and support for best practice in knowledge transfer including developing new resources and establishing and running the Community Advisory Committee. The focus in 2024 will be on consolidating these initiatives and promoting their uptake.

1. Centre-wide implementation of Knowledge Transfer best practice guides and training:

- a. Promote and disseminate existing resources and training.
- b. Establishment of additional shorter training resources (e.g. videos) that provide a more agile approach to knowledge transfer training across the full life cycle of a research project.
- c. Expansion of the Knowledge Transfer Awards, including ongoing 'Innovation Award' for EMCRs, 'Rising Star' for HDRs, and a new 'Outstanding Leadership Award' for MCRs and above to support all levels of researchers to undertake knowledge transfer activities.
- d. Operationalise and report on knowledge transfer plans, activities and outcomes across current and new projects across the Centre (especially Flagships).

2. Centre-wide implementation of Community Involvement Program:

- a. Establish and provide ongoing support to the Centre-wide national Community Advisory Committee.
- b. Manage the community involvement bank that will provide small grants to Centre members to enable them to undertake initial community involvement activities.
- c. Ongoing review and updating of repository of good practice community involvement activities across the Centre and any associated training.
- d. Developing and undertaking a priority setting process with Community Advisory Committee members, and additional community members if required, to seek community priorities for future research to guide the Centre's strategic planning.

Operations

The operations team has a significant role to play in all aspects of the Centre's Activity Plan, including providing support to the governance and portfolio committees, and managing Centre data collection, reporting and analysis. In addition to the business-as-usual operations, there will be several key areas that are an operational priority in 2024.

1. Centre outreach and events. There are many small- and large-scale events happening in 2024, including:

- a. Research Retreat, Queensland, August 2024. A two-day event for Centre members, with pre- and post-Retreat training and outreach events.
- b. International Data for Policy Summit, Chicago, September 2024.
- c. National Centres of Excellence Directors' Forum and Professional Staff Day, Queensland, July 2024.
- d. Planning and development for the International Life Course Conference, to be held in mid-2025.
- e. Multiple targeted workshops in conjunction with Centre partners, on a wide variety of themes.
- f. Ongoing seminar series and visitor program.
- g. Celebration of 10-year anniversary.

2. Media and Communications.

A new Media and Communications Officer will commence in April 2024. In conjunction with the Engagement Officer and Visual Communications Officer, she will develop a new communications plan for the Centre, taking into account changes in the media and social media landscape, and the Centre's changing strategic priorities.

3. Mid-Term Review.

The operations team will be heavily involved in providing data and analysis, engaging with stakeholders, supporting interviewees and organising the site visit in September.

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 AO

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

General Manager, Advocacy & Strategy, Anglicare WA

Ms Letitia Hope

Deputy Secretary, Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Ms Myra Geddes

General Manager Social Impact, Goodstart Early Learning

Ms Toni Wren

Executive Director, Anti-Poverty Week

Dr Nicole Bieske

Director, Social Policy and Research Centre,
Brotherhood of St. Laurence

Professor Kerrie Wilson

Queensland Chief Scientist

Professor Nicholas Biddle

Deputy Director, The Centre for Social Policy
Research, Australian National University

Professor Janeen Baxter

Centre Director, Life Course Centre

Executive Committee

CHAIR

Janeen Baxter (UQ)

CENTRE DIRECTOR

Overall executive responsibility for Centre performance and success.

Deborah Cobb-Clark (Syd)

DEPUTY DIRECTOR

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

Lucy Mills (UQ)

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

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

NODE DIRECTORS

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

**UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA,
TELETHON KIDS INSTITUTE**
Francis Mitrou (UWA-TKI)

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
Guyonne Kalb (Melb)

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND
Simon Smith (UQ)

THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY
Agnieszka Tymula (Syd)

PORTFOLIO LEADERS

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

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER PORTFOLIO

Alyssa Milton (Syd)

The Executive Committee would like to express heartfelt thanks to Hayley Christian, who inaugurated the Knowledge Transfer Portfolio and has now left the portfolio and the Executive Committee.

CAPACITY BUILDING PORTFOLIO

Cameron Parsell (UQ)

FIRST NATIONS RESEARCH PORTFOLIO

Brendan Kennedy (Melb) and
Sangeetha Chandrashekeran (Melb)

DATA FOR POLICY PORTFOLIO

Francis Mitrou (UWA-TKI)

Research Committee

CHAIR

[Deborah Cobb-Clark](#) (Syd)

DEPUTY DIRECTOR

[Janeen Baxter](#) (UQ)

CENTRE DIRECTOR

PROGRAM LEADERS

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.

PROGRAM 1: PEOPLE

[Nick Glozier](#) (Syd)

DEPUTY: [Alyssa Milton](#) (Syd)

PROGRAM 2: PLACES

[Mark Stevenson](#) (Melb)

DEPUTY: [Sangeetha Chandrashekeran](#) (Melb)

PROGRAM 3: OPPORTUNITIES

[Wojtek Tomaszewski](#) (UQ)

DEPUTY: [Tomasz Zajac](#) (UQ)

APPOINTED REPRESENTATIVES

[Karen Thorpe](#) (UQ)

[Azhar Potia](#) (UQ)

[Hayley Christian](#) (UWA-TKI)

[Andrea Nathan](#) (UWA-TKI)

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

[Lucy Mills](#) (UQ)

Our Research

Deputy Director's Research Report

Research program 1: People

Research program 2: Places

Research program 3: Opportunities

Deputy Director's Research Report

In 2023, the Life Course Centre continued to build strong momentum across its three interconnected programs of research and translation—People, Places and Opportunities.

We collectively delivered high quality academic outputs, and we continue to greatly exceed our targets in translation materials. This focus on translation pathways, including a large number of non-academic articles in outlets such as *The Conversation*, partner reports, policy submissions and coordinated outreach and profiling activities, ensures our research reaches the widest possible audiences where there is the greatest potential for achieving impact.

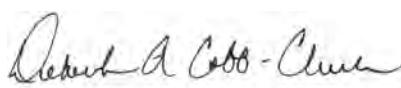
It was great to see our Places and Opportunities research programs come together to host a joint symposium in Melbourne in June. This event examined the multidimensional nature of disadvantage, wellbeing and place, and new ways to tailor access to opportunities in local communities. One of the highlights of the symposium was a presentation by Brendan Kennedy and Dr Sangeetha Chandrashekeran, both Life Course Centre Senior Research Fellows at the University of Melbourne, on Tati Tati people, water and Country, and impacts on wellbeing over the life course. Brendan is a Tati Tati senior knowledge holder and he and Sangeetha are leading our new First Nations Research Portfolio, a wonderful initiative for our Centre.

We were also delighted to have our international Associate Investigator Professor Kathryn Edin of Princeton University attend and present at the Places and Opportunities symposium. Kathy and Princeton colleague Dr Tim Nelson spoke on their new book 'The Injustice of Place', covering themes that strongly resonate with our Places research program.

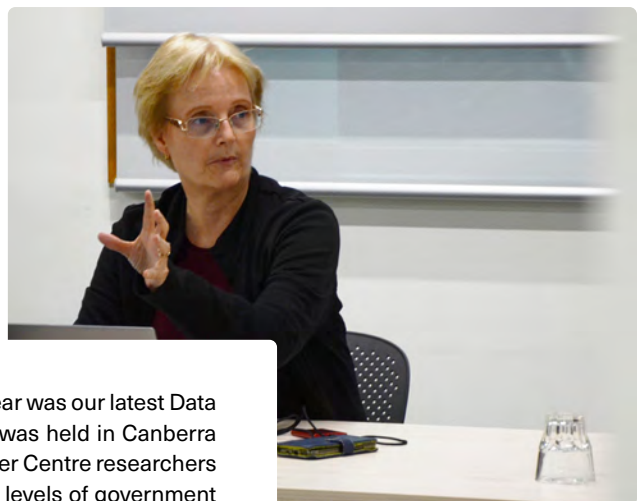
Another highlight of the year was our latest Data for Policy Summit, which was held in Canberra in August, bringing together Centre researchers with representatives of all levels of government and the community sector to explore future directions in data access. Data for Policy is one of the great success stories of the Life Course Centre, showcasing our leadership and innovation in data access and analysis and the partnerships and collaborations that are achievable due to the sustained focus of the ARC Centre of Excellence funding scheme.

In 2023, we also celebrated many outstanding achievements by our researchers, including a large number of prestigious grant awards that clearly demonstrate our capacity building strengths and will progress key areas of research closely aligned to our research programs. It was also pleasing to see our research and researchers represented at many prominent conferences in 2023, including the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) and Outlook conferences in Melbourne and the Society for Longitudinal and Lifecourse Studies international conference in Germany.

Looking ahead, preparations are now well underway for our next all-Centre Research Retreat to be held on Queensland's Gold Coast in August 2024.



Professor Deborah Cobb-Clark
Centre Deputy Director



The kids are not alright

New Life Course Centre research has identified the poorer mental health of young adults as the driver of declining population-level mental health in Australia. While there has been an observed overall deterioration in the mental health of Australians since 2010, this research is the first to investigate to what extent this differs in people born in different decades. Using 20 years of data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey, the study found that declining mental health is largely driven by young adults born in the 1990s, and to a lesser extent in the 1980s. It found little evidence that mental health is worsening with age for people born prior to the 1980s and suggested the deteriorating mental health of young Australians may not be expected to recover or disappear. Understanding the societal context and changes that have affected younger Australians can help to inform efforts to address this trend and prevent it continuing for emerging cohorts. The results of this study were first published in the Life Course Centre Working Paper Series in early 2023 as 'The kids are not alright: Differential trends in Mental ill-health in Australia' and then published in late 2023 in the journal of the National Academy of Sciences, Washington DC, which generated high levels of media exposure in Australia and internationally.

Botha, F., Morris, R.W., Butterworth, P., & Glozier, N. (2023). Generational differences in mental health trends in the twenty-first century. The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS). <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2303781120>

A new measure of sleep routines

We know that sleep is critical to health, wellbeing and daily functioning. Measuring sleep, including the promoters and barriers of healthy sleep, is therefore vital. However, there are few tools available for in-depth assessment of the home sleep environment and individual and family sleep routines. To address this, our researchers developed a novel mixed method semi-structured interview approach, combining visual data and time use, to create a new measure of sleep and sleep routines. They found that adherence, feasibility and acceptability of this method was high and led to increased accuracy and recall of the home sleep environment and sleep routines. This new method can help to inform the development of new survey instruments and potential interventions to improve sleep health. Other sleep research published by our researchers in 2023 examined the effectiveness of current interventions to increase sleep duration in young people, and the lived experiences of people with narcolepsy and associated self-stigma and psychological comorbidity.

Rossa, K., Pattinson, C.L., Edmed, S.L., Coles, L., Allan, A., & Smith, S.S. (2023). Understanding sleep routines: A novel mixed methods approach to understand promoters and barriers of healthy sleep, Life Course Centre Working Paper Series, 2023-21.

Gadam, S., Pattinson, C.L., Rossa, K.R., Soleimanloo, S.S., Moore, J., Begum, T., Srinivasan, A. G., & Smith, S. S. (2023). Interventions to increase sleep duration in young people: A systematic review. *Sleep Medicine Reviews* (70). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smrv.2023.101807>

Schokman, A., Cheung, J., Milton, A., Naehrig, D., Thornton, N., Bin, Y., Kairaitis, K., & Glozier, N. (2023). 'Making sense of narcolepsy: A qualitative exploration of how persons with narcolepsy perceive symptoms and Their Illness Experience', Life Course Centre Working Paper Series, 2023-22.

Why people make different economic choices

Why do some people prefer taking risks, like starting a business, while others prefer secure jobs? Why do some people spend their money now, rather than saving for the future? Our research is exploring how people make different economic choices when dealing with present risk and future rewards. This can help to understand how these preferences lead to different life course outcomes. Our research found that the way people handle risk and value the present versus the future is more influenced by their own surroundings and experiences than by their genetic makeup. The finding that the home environment influences attitudes towards time and future rewards twice as much as it does towards risk is a particularly valuable insight for policymaking and parenting. Separate research examined the concept of 'ambiguity vulnerability' where people tend to be more cautious when the probability of an uncertain event is unknown. Addressing factors that contribute to this, such as financial stress, could enhance individual decision-making and outcomes.

Kettlewell, N., Tymula, A., & Yoo, H.I. (2023). The heritability of economic preferences. Life Course Centre Working Paper Series, 2023-28.

Akbari, M., Alladi, V., Je, H., & Tymula, A. (2023). 'Ambiguity Vulnerability', Life Course Centre Working Paper Series, 2023-29.

Childhood trauma linked to pregnancy complications

New Life Course Centre research has found women who experienced maltreatment, domestic violence or household substance abuse as children have higher risks of pregnancy complications in adulthood. While the impact of childhood trauma on adult mental health is well documented, little had been known about its effect on pregnancy. This research analysed 21 existing studies on the effects of childhood trauma to investigate possible links to complications during pregnancy. It found women who had adverse childhood experiences had a 37% higher risk of pregnancy complications, including diabetes during pregnancy, high blood pressure, excessive weight gain, anxiety and depression. These women were also 31% more likely to have an adverse pregnancy outcome such as a premature birth or low birth weight. This research, which generated high levels of national and international media exposure, highlights the long-term effects of adverse childhood experiences and the need for screening and trauma-informed care to reduce intergenerational impacts.

Mamun, A., Biswas, T., Scott, J., Sly, P.D., McIntyre, H.D., Thorpe, K. et al. (2023). Adverse childhood experiences, the risk of pregnancy complications and adverse pregnancy outcomes: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMJ Open* 2023;13. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2022-063826>

The prevalence of childhood adversity

Using data from the National Health Survey Australia, our research has investigated the prevalence of adverse childhood experiences in Australia. Examining the adversities experienced by children (aged 0–17) living with 4,161 adult survey respondents, this study found at least one-third of children had experienced one or more adversities, and almost 8% had experienced multiple adversities. Three types of childhood adversity were examined: living with only one parent, parental mental health condition and parental substance use problem. This study shows that adversity affects many Australian children across all demographic contexts, and is associated with a range of area, household, and person-level characteristics. This requires a blend of population-based and targeted approaches to better support children and families experiencing adversity.

Chainey, C., Burke, K., & Haynes, M. (2023). Relationships between adverse childhood experiences and demographic characteristics in a national Australian sample. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-023-02664-3>

RESEARCH PROGRAM 2

Places



Our Places research program explores the community-driven contexts of deep and persistent disadvantage, how it is experienced in place, and the ways to deliver thriving, healthy and socially inclusive communities.

PROGRAM LEADERS



Mark Stevenson
(Melb)



DEPUTY:
Sangeetha
Chandrashekeran
(Melb)

RESEARCH PROGRAM 2 Places

Informing an equitable energy transition

While lower-income households support shifting to electric-only homes, they will require more assistance from government to do so. This was the key message from a 2023 report from the Life Course Centre and our partner, the Brotherhood of St. Laurence. This report drew on surveys and focus groups with households in Victoria facing energy stress to understand their attitudes to disconnecting from gas and to identify barriers and enablers to the change. Shifting households from gas to renewable electricity is becoming a policy priority for government as the imperative to decarbonise and improve energy affordability grows. But there has been little research exploring the capacity of lower-income households to shift to electric. Most participants in the research supported the move from household gas to electric, but household tenure was a key factor. The report calls for a clear plan to move away from gas and accelerate quality retrofits for lower-income homes, including subsidies, a one-stop-shop for tailored and trusted electrification information and advice, and reforms to help renters electrify. This report was launched by The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio MP, Victorian Government Minister for Climate Action and Energy and Resources, and was featured in *The Conversation*.



PICTURED LEFT TO RIGHT Brotherhood of St. Laurence CEO Travers McLeod, report co-author Dr Sangeetha Chandrashekeran, Minister the Hon Lily D'Ambrosio, report co-author Damian Sullivan, and Melbourne Institute Director Professor A. Abigail Payne, at the report launch

RESEARCH PROGRAM 2 Places

Where are young children physically active?

This study used innovative device-based methods to investigate where pre-school children are physically active outside of home and childcare settings. It combined accelerometry, Global Positioning System (GPS), and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data from 168 pre-school children aged 2–5 years in Perth to identify locations where they engaged in Moderate to Vigorous Physical Activity (MVPA). Close to home (less than 500m), the locations with high MVPA counts were playgrounds (66.6%), schools (16.7%) and parks (16.7%). Further from home (500m–1600m), the high MVPA count locations were playgrounds (33.3%), non-home residential (29.6%), childcare centres (11.1%) and parks (3.7%). Even further away from home (more than 1600m), the high MVPA count locations were non-home residential (54.7%), sports and recreation centres (11.1%), playgrounds (6.8%) and parks (5.3%). These results show that local parks and playgrounds are important but, beyond the local neighbourhood, the homes of others are also key locations for children's physical activity. Separate 2023 research examined the benefits of blue spaces, such as oceans, creeks, rivers and lakes, in promoting children's physical activity. While there is much research on the role of outdoor green spaces, this study highlights that blue spaces are also an important setting for supporting children's physical activity, health, development and environmental consciousness.

Bai, P., Schipperijn, J., Rosenberg, M., & Christian, H. (2023). Neighborhood places for preschool children's physical activity: A mixed-methods study using Global Positioning System, Geographic Information Systems, and Accelerometry data. *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, 20(8), 781-791. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jpah.2022-0462>

George, P., Murray, K., & Christian, H. (2023). Young children's use of blue spaces and the impact on their health, development and environmental awareness: A qualitative study from parents' perspectives. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hpja.710>

Creating sustainable cities

To meet the challenges of the 21st century, our cities must be sustainable, productive and capable of delivering an environment conducive to health and wellbeing, according to Chief Investigator and Places research program leader Professor Mark Stevenson (Melbourne). In his address to the Life Course Centre Seminar Series in 2023, Mark said the evidence base to inform decision-making for future cities is currently scattered within disciplinary and thematic silos. He outlined how digital disruption presented an opportunity to embrace new methods and approaches in urban science to design and deliver more sustainable, productive and healthy cities. Better integration of land use, transport and infrastructure would improve economic and health outcomes and address the challenges of growing and ageing populations, climate change and rising inequality, particularly on the urban fringes of major cities.

Mark's seminar is available to watch on our website



How neighbourhoods affect our sleep

Sleep health can be influenced by many factors, including perceptions of our neighbourhood's physical and social characteristics. This study examined associations, previously not well studied in Australia, between perceived neighbourhood characteristics and self-reported sleep duration and disturbance. Using data from 9,792 people aged 16 years or older from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey, it found 'neighbourhood interaction and support' and 'neighbourhood physical condition' were not associated with any sleep outcomes but 'environmental noise' and 'neighbourhood insecurity' were significantly associated with sleep duration and disturbance. This highlights the potential benefit of public health policies to address noise and safety in neighbourhoods to improve sleep.

Edmed, S.L., Huda, M.M., Pattinson, C.L., Rossa, K.R., & Smith, S.S. (2023). Perceived neighborhood characteristics and sleep in Australian adults. *Health Education & Behavior*. 2023;0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/10901981231177687>

Exploring spatial polarisation

Growing concerns about inequality, and the hollowing out of the middle class, is fuelling debate on the polarisation of modern society. This study introduces the concept of expenditure-adjusted polarisation that considers not only income, but also household level expenditure such as housing, food, transport and energy. It found Australian society is more polarised, with fewer middle-income households when the relative size of income groups is based on expenditure-adjusted income. Such polarisation is most prominent when housing expenditure is considered and has distinctive spatial patterns. This presents opportunities for new directions and research in 'spatial polarisation', including more nuance in conceptualisation and measurement, and intersections with other forms of social diversity such as life course stage, gender, race, ethnicity and disability.

Wiesel, I., de Bruyn, J., Meekes, J., & Chandrashekeran, S. (2023). Income polarisation, expenditure and the Australian urban middle class. *Urban Studies*, 60(14), 2779-2798. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980231164922>

RESEARCH PROGRAM 3

Opportunities



Our Opportunities research program investigates how institutional structures shape experiences of deep and persistent disadvantage, and how system-wide approaches to reform have the power to unlock life opportunities.

PROGRAM LEADERS



Wojtek Tomaszewski
(UQ)



DEPUTY:
Tomasz Zajęc (UQ)

RESEARCH PROGRAM 3 Opportunities

Benefits of the Adult Migrant English Program

In 2023, Australia's Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) marked its 75th year of operation. It also saw the release of the largest study in AMEP's history to better understand participation in the program, and AMEP's broader impact on employment and welfare outcomes. The AMEP Impact Evaluation Project was conducted by the Department of Home Affairs and the Telethon Kids Institute and supported by the Life Course Centre. Information held within the Australian Bureau of Statistics was analysed for the study. Through linked data analysis, our researchers showed that migrants with higher levels of English had better labour market outcomes, higher income levels, lower rates of public housing tenancy and were less likely to receive income support. This study provides the foundations to further enhance the quality and effectiveness of AMEP, to support increased engagement and improved migrant outcomes, and to progress future program evaluations. Five research papers on the AMEP Impact Evaluation Project were published on the Department of Home Affairs website in 2023. The authors, Life Course Centre Chief Investigator Associate Professor Francis Mitrou and Research Fellow Dr Ha Nguyen (pictured below) presented the findings at the AMEP 75th Anniversary Conference in Melbourne in June 2023.



Socioeconomic status and university participation

While there is already a wealth of research on the effects of socioeconomic status (SES) on university enrolment, few studies have investigated the relative influences of different facets of SES. Life Course Centre researchers addressed this research gap with a unique data analysis published in AIHW's Australia's Welfare 2023 data insights report. Leveraging linked administrative data on Australian 16 and 17-year-olds, our researchers produced valuable new insights on associations between various facets of SES and starting university. The SES facets examined were family income, parental education, parental occupation and SES status of area of residence. The results suggest all four SES facets have independent influences on university participation. Specifically, the disadvantage stemming from low levels of parental education appears to have a particularly detrimental effect on the chance of university enrolment, whereas the effects of family income are much less pronounced.

Zajac, T., & Tomaszewski, W. (2023). Relative influence of different markers of socioeconomic status on university participation, Chapter 7 in Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) Australia's Welfare 2023 data insights report.

Motherhood earnings penalty persists for up to 10 years

New Life Course Centre research shows that motherhood has persistent negative effects on women's employment earnings for up to 10 years after the birth of their first child. While previous research has established the presence of an immediate motherhood penalty on women's earnings, this study is one of the first to examine the long-term trajectories of couples' household earnings across the transition to parenthood using data from the Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey. While there is an expectation over the long term that couples will gradually return to pre-parenthood earnings arrangements, this study found the gender gap in earnings is still evident up to 10 years after the first birth. Separate 2023 research on the risk of poverty around the time of childbirth found the birth of a first child results in an average 27% decrease in household income in one-parent households and an average 18% decrease in two-parent households. Within five years of the first child's birth, a substantial portion of households (37–40%) either remain in poverty or enter poverty. This is more common for one-parent (63–70%) than two-parent households (34–36%).

Steinbring, R., Perales, F., Baxter, J., & Lam, J. (2023) Taking the long view: Long-term couple earnings arrangements across the transition to parenthood. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 00, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajs4.264>

Gamarra Rondinel, A., & Price MH A. (2023). 'Household Income and the Risk of Poverty Around the Time of Childbirth', Life Course Centre Working Paper Series, 2023-26. <https://lifecoursecentre.org.au/working-papers/household-income-and-the-risk-of-poverty-around-the-time-of-childbirth/>

Rethinking homelessness and charity

Homelessness and charity are policy choices by government that demonstrate deep societal failures, according to new Life Course Centre research published in 2023. Chief Investigator Professor Cameron Parsell's latest book, 'Homelessness: A critical introduction' argues that we have the knowledge and momentum to reduce, and even end, homelessness. But the first task is to confront the fact that homelessness is a relatively predictable phenomenon that disproportionately impacts people who have been failed by society in myriad ways. To be homeless is to face daily victimisation, to be a recipient of someone else's care, and to have autonomy taken away, and we must respond to the problem in ways that do not recreate these dehumanising conditions. Separate 2023 research showed the additional, sustained income support payments made during COVID-19 significantly reduced demand for charity assistance in Australia. This demonstrates that government does have the power to directly reduce the need for charity and, indirectly, levels of poverty. The capacity freed up by increasing government income support would allow charities to better assist other vulnerable groups, such as refugees, who may fall through the cracks of the welfare system.

Parsell, C. (2023). *Homelessness: A critical introduction*. Polity Press. Cambridge, United Kingdom. https://www.politybooks.com/bookdetail?book_slug=homelessness-a-critical-introduction-9781509554492

Ablaza, C., Perales, F., Parsell, C., Middlebrook, N., Robinson, R.N.S., Kuskoff, E., & Plage, S. (2023). Increases in income-support payments reduce the demand for charity: A difference-in-difference analysis of charitable-assistance data from Australia over the COVID-19 pandemic. *PLOS ONE*. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0287533>

RESEARCH PROGRAM 3 Opportunities

Working Papers shine light on housing insecurity

[You can explore our Working Paper Series on our website](#)

Homelessness and housing insecurity were key topics of public and policy debate in 2023, and this was reflected in our Life Course Centre Working Paper Series. In 2023, eight working papers explored various issues related to homelessness and housing insecurity, including the health and wellbeing of homeless people, entries into and exits from homelessness, innovative outreach, responses to and ways to end homelessness, and the cost savings that can be achieved by doing so. In one paper, our researchers found that moving a person from chronic homeless to permanent supportive housing in 2023 would result in an annual cost offset to the Queensland Government of \$17,462 per person. This highlights the high costs directed towards responding to homeless, the cost offsets that can be achieved when homelessness is ended and the importance of prioritising permanent supportive housing programs.

Parsell, C., Sharma, N., & Kuskoff, E. (2023). 'Ending homelessness through permanent supportive housing: A cost offset update', Life Course Centre Working Paper Series, 2023-27.

Our Impact

IMPACT CASE STUDY 1:

**Australian Government's new
Life Course Data Initiative**

IMPACT CASE STUDY 2:

**Applying our expertise in family
and gender studies**

Achievements

Communications

IMPACT CASE STUDY 1

Australian Government's new Life Course Data Initiative



Data on the Agenda

The Life Course Centre welcomed the Australian Government's commitment in the 2023–24 Federal Budget, announced in May 2023, to provide \$199.8 million of new investment to target entrenched community disadvantage in Australia. This new funding has a strong focus on addressing intergenerational disadvantage and is closely aligned to the mission of the Life Course Centre.

In particular, we were very pleased to see \$16.4 million within this package committed to a new Life Course Data Initiative that will capture data insights to improve understanding of how communities experience disadvantage, including through longitudinal data. This initiative will build important new data capability and develop a new integrated data asset to help guide local decision-making and better direct government funding to inform improved outcomes over the long term.

This is an exciting development that reflects the sustained research and data focus of the Life Course Centre since our establishment in 2014. To see an Australian Government policy aimed at interrupting intergenerational cycles of disadvantage titled Life Course Data Initiative is an outcome of which our Centre is extremely proud. It not only validates the pre-eminent standing of our life course approach to addressing disadvantage in Australia, it also clearly demonstrates our impact in informing and influencing important national social policy discourse and development.

Data for Policy

The announcement of the new Life Course Data Initiative reflects and builds on the Life Course Centre's ongoing Data for Policy agenda, which has played a leading role in bringing together researchers, government data custodians and community sector leaders to explore ways to collaborate and fully utilise administrative data to address complex policy issues related to deep and persistent disadvantage.

In order to better understand the causes and life course consequences of disadvantage, and to develop effective interventions to address them, our research requires access to integrated longitudinal data on children and families. This enables our researchers to investigate people's interactions with government and community services over time, and to identify the critical time-points at which interventions can be most effective.

Through our efforts over the past 10 years, we have successfully unlocked, linked and analysed sensitive administrative data on Australian children and families that was previously not used for research purposes. We have championed access to this data through sustained engagement with our partners, particularly the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), and other key government agencies such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), and the Office of the National Data Commissioner (ONDC).

Our Data for Policy agenda, which has included a total of six workshops and summits dating back to 2014, has been central to this successful engagement. It has also enabled us to progress innovative proof-of-concept research projects in policy areas such as people Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) and evaluation of the Try, Test and Learn (TTL) Fund.

In August 2023, we hosted our latest and largest Data for Policy Summit in Canberra. The two-day summit attracted 150 attendees from across our Centre, all levels of government and the community services sector to explore new directions in data access and collaborative projects to inform social

IMPACT CASE STUDY 1



“It is an exciting time to be involved in studying the life course.”

Dr David Gruen AO

policy. The 2023 summit featured keynote addresses by Dr David Gruen AO, Australian Statistician at the ABS, and the Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP, Assistant Minister for Competition, Charities and Treasury.

Dr Leigh's address was titled 'Data and Evaluation: A Match Made in Policy Heaven', while Dr Gruen's 'Supporting Analysis of The Life Course' address outlined initial work underway on the new Life Course Data Initiative, to be housed within the ABS. “The aim is to deliver the capacity to undertake detailed longitudinal analysis over the life course and thereby to support targeted investment decisions by Government, while also informing local priorities,” Dr Gruen said.

Future Directions

We are proud of the role we have played, and the impact we have achieved, through our ongoing Data for Policy agenda. A lot of positive progress has been made in new linked data infrastructure on Australian children and families in disadvantage, but there are still challenges remaining and new strategies required—most notably in the field of community sector data. This was highlighted in the keynote address of Travers McLeod, Chief Executive Officer, Brotherhood of St. Laurence, to our 2023 Data for Policy Summit 'Destination Unknown?', which explored innovations in data collection and program evaluations in new areas such as lived experience, wellbeing, agency and place.

The Australian Government's investment in the new Life Course Data Initiative provides important new funding, coordination and momentum to further progress data infrastructure in Australia to help interrupt intergenerational disadvantage and maximise life opportunities for the benefit of all Australian children and families. We also welcome the other initiatives within the government's entrenched disadvantage package, including the strong focus on place-based partnerships and local community outcomes, which is closely aligned with our Places research program, and the new Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children to build long-term partnerships between philanthropy and government to coordinate efforts and direct funding.



PICTURED Featured speakers at the Data for Policy Summit, Canberra. **TOP** Dr David Gruen AO, Australian Statistician, Australian Bureau of Statistics. **MIDDLE** Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP, Assistant Minister for Competition, Charities and Treasury. **BOTTOM** Gemma Van Halderen, Chief Data Officer and Group Manager, Data and Evaluation Group, Australian Government Department of Social Services.

IMPACT CASE STUDY 2

Applying our expertise in family and gender studies



Recognition

In 2023, two Life Course Centre researchers were named as the top researchers in the fields of Family and Gender studies by The Australian newspaper's Research Magazine. This annual magazine celebrates excellence in Australian research by ranking the top researcher, and research institution, across 250 fields of research. The rankings are based on analytics by the League of Scholars that produce impact scores on the quality of publishing, and number of citations, in academic journals.

Our Centre Director Professor Janeen Baxter (UQ) was named as the top researcher in the field of family studies, and UQ was also ranked as the top research institution in this field. Associate Investigator Professor Leah Ruppner (Melbourne) was named as the top researcher in the field of gender studies and also in sociology, with the University of Melbourne also ranked as the top research institution in these fields.

We were very proud to see our researchers receive this prominent national recognition in 2023 for the quality and impact of their academic publishing in the fields of family and gender studies, which are important topics of research for the Life Course Centre. However, our commitment to excellence and impact in these research fields is not just theoretical, it is also applied. This was demonstrated in 2023 in two key areas—lived experience and policy engagement.

Lived Experience

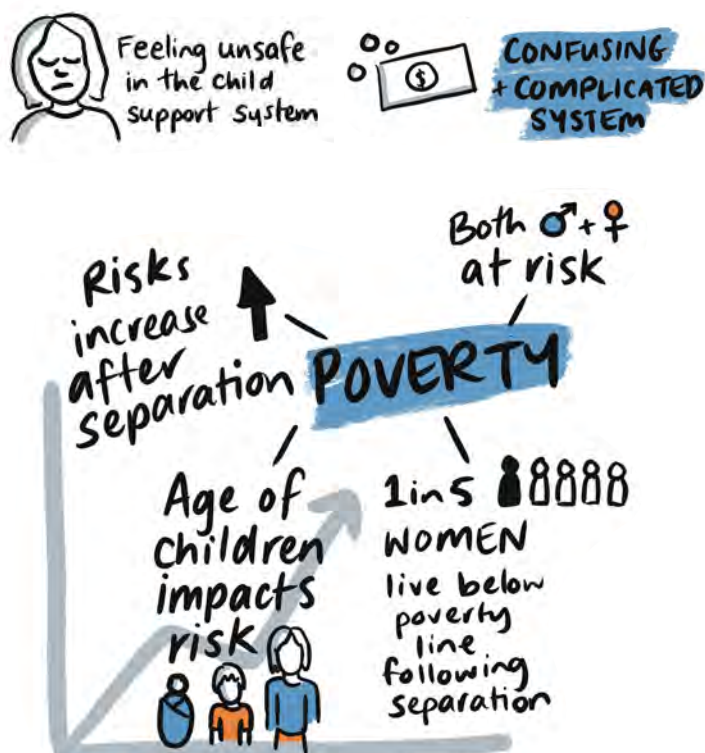
Integrating lived experience of disadvantage is an ongoing focus of our research, knowledge transfer and engagement activities. Our commitment to listening to, and learning from, lived experiences was showcased in our June 2023 workshop 'Single parenting, co-parenting, and post-separation families: Challenges and opportunities in times of crisis'. This collaborative workshop in Melbourne brought together academics, community members, policy makers, industry partners and advocates to examine ways to better support single parents, who are overwhelmingly women, and their children.

A highlight of this workshop was hearing the stories of the four single mothers who took part in the lived experience panel, moderated by Terese Edwards, CEO of Single Mother Families Australia. This opportunity to hear directly from single mothers on the challenges they face, in particular their experiences in navigating the child and income support systems, grew out of our ongoing partnership with Anti-Poverty Week. Since 2021, this research partnership has focused on the gendered nature of poverty and structural inequalities for Australian women, including links between experiences of family violence and subsequent financial hardship.

In 2023, the Life Course Centre also established a new partnership with the Domestic Violence Action Centre (DVAC) on a project to explore the experience of survivors who have recently engaged with DVAC's services. The knowledge generated through hearing directly from survivor experiences will not only contribute to academic scholarship on gender-based violence and how best to address it, but also inform future decision making on funding models and service design to more effectively support domestic violence survivors. Our researchers also published a Life Course Centre Working Paper in 2023 titled 'Gender Trap: the gender structure, violence, and women's unfreedom'.

ABOVE Professor Kathryn J. Edin, Princeton University presenting at the workshop *Single parenting, co-parenting, and post-separation families: Challenges and opportunities in times of crisis* co-hosted by the Life Course Centre and The Australian Sociological Association, Melbourne.

IMPACT CASE STUDY 2



Policy Engagement

Our partner, the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) was involved in our 2023 single parenting workshop, with Agnieszka Nelson, DSS Branch Manager, Families and Payment Support, featuring in the stakeholder panel discussion. Following the workshop, we provided a policy briefing to DSS highlighting the challenges for single mothers in the child support system, and the opportunities for new longitudinal data on child support to better support policy making. Our Centre Director Professor Janeen Baxter (UQ) was also invited by DSS to join a new expert panel to provide advice on improving the child support scheme, including financial support for single parents. Our research was also featured in the 2023 DSS Impact Analysis 'Additional Support for Single Parents OIA23-04851'.

In October 2023, we co-hosted a Public Economics Forum in Canberra with the Melbourne Institute on 'Addressing Female Poverty: Causes and Solutions'. This event was well attended by government policy makers and featured presentations on our latest research on families and gender, including relationship breakdown, family violence and child support. Dr Angela Jackson, Lead Economist, Impact Economics and Policy, examined previous approaches and future recommendations for addressing female poverty, while a Q&A session moderated by Victoria Anderson, Deputy Secretary, Treasury, featured further discussions on violence, divorce and older women in poverty.

The Life Course Centre has also been actively engaged in consultation on the Australian Government's White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities, released in September 2023. We provided a Centre submission to the White Paper during the public consultation phase in 2020, which led to a follow-up meeting between our researchers and Treasury. Our submission highlighted the barriers for women, particularly mothers, for employment, including current childcare and income support settings, and it was very pleasing to see a key White Paper objective focused on overcoming these barriers and broadening opportunities for women in the labour market. These objectives are also reflected in the 2023 report from the Women's Economic Equality Taskforce established by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.



ILLUSTRATIONS Graphic recordings from the workshop *Single parenting, co-parenting, and post-separation families: Challenges and opportunities in times of crisis* by Jade Miller.

TOP RIGHT - LEFT TO RIGHT Victoria Anderson: Deputy Secretary, Commonwealth Treasury; Dr Barbara Broadway, Senior Research Fellow, Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic & Social Research, the University of Melbourne; Dr Alice Campbell, Research Fellow, Institute for Social Science Research, University of Queensland; Dr Angela Jackson, Lead Economist, Impact Economics and Policy on the panel at the Public Economics Forum co-hosted by the Melbourne Institute and the Life Course Centre, Canberra.

ABOVE - LEFT TO RIGHT Professor Shelley Mallett, Director of Research and Policy Centre, Brotherhood of St. Laurence; Terese Edwards, CEO, National Council of Single Mothers and their Children; Agnieszka Nelson, Branch Manager, Families and Payment Support, Australian Government Department of Social Services; expert panel at the workshop *Single parenting, co-parenting, and post-separation families: Challenges and opportunities in times of crisis* co-hosted by the Life Course Centre and The Australian Sociological Association, Melbourne.

Achievements

In 2023, our researchers secured a number of prestigious grants that will further progress key areas of research closely aligned to the Life Course Centre. Here is a selection of 2023 grants awarded to our researchers across the highly competitive Australian Research Council, National Health and Medical Research Council, and Medical Research Future Fund schemes.



Australian Research Council

Centre Director Professor Janeen Baxter (UQ) received an ARC Australian Laureate Fellowship in 2023. Janeen was awarded \$3.4 million for her project, 'Bringing Equality Home: A New Gender Agenda', that will investigate a new approach to caregiving and social relationships in the home to progress gender equality and build a more equal, stronger and prosperous Australia. Janeen was also the recipient of the Kathleen Fitzpatrick Australian Laureate Fellowship, which supports outstanding female Laureate recipients in the humanities, arts and social sciences to promote and support women in research.

Research Fellow Professor Jennifer Smith-Merry (Sydney) was awarded an ARC Industry Laureate Fellowship in 2023. Jennifer received \$2.58 million in funding for her project that will map client experiences with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) 'Fixing the NDIS: cost, effectiveness and access for psychosocial disability'.

Chief Investigator Professor Cameron Parsell (UQ) received an ARC Mid-Career Industry Fellowship in 2023. Cameron was awarded \$1.08 million (the largest awarded in this new fellowship) for his research project partnering with Micah Projects to better understand how not-for-profit organisations can bring together their clients and governments to collaboratively solve social issues.

Research Fellow Dr Azhar Potia (UQ) received an ARC Early Career Industry Fellowship in 2023. Azhar was awarded \$476,053 for his research, in collaboration with First Nations communities and organisations and the Queensland Department of Education, on pathways to prevent the decline in attendance rates of First Nation students as they transition from primary to secondary school.

Chief Investigator Professor Agnieszka Tymula (Sydney) was awarded \$328,879 in ARC Discovery Project funding in 2023 for her project that will investigate how to improve financial decisions and wellbeing by the socially disadvantaged and during unexpected economic shocks, such as COVID-19. The project team also includes Associate Investigator Paul Glimcher (New York University) and Dr Xueting Wang (former Sydney student alumni, now at RMIT).

ABOVE Professor Janeen Baxter and Professor Jennifer Smith-Merry receive their Laureate pins from The Hon Jason Clare, Commonwealth Minister for Education.

Achievements

National Health and Medical Research Council

Chief Investigator Associate Professor Abdullah Mamun (UQ) was awarded \$2.6 million in funding in 2023 from the NHMRC and the Research Council of Norway, through the Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases. An international leader in life course epidemiology, Mamun's project will investigate the implementation of a life course approach in antenatal and postnatal care settings in Nepal. Mamun was also awarded a \$2.89 million NHMRC Investigator Grant in 2023 for his project 'A life course approach to early detection and prevention of noncommunicable diseases in priority populations.'

Research Fellow Dr Alyssa Milton (Sydney) was awarded \$1.2 million in funding in 2023 through the NHMRC's Targeted Call for Research—Improving Physical Health of People with a Mental Illness. Her project will build and test a world-first peer-supported digital app that promotes self-care strategies to address the physical health needs of people with schizophrenia. The project team also includes Chief Investigator Professor Nick Glozier and Research Fellow Dr Parisa Vidafar (Sydney).

Associate Investigator Professor Sharon Goldfeld (Murdoch Children's Research Institute) was awarded \$2.44 million in funding in 2023 for a NHMRC Investigator Grant addressing child health inequities 'Changing Children's Chances: a research framework to take evidence into action.'

Medical Research Future Fund

Chief Investigator Associate Professor Hayley Christian (TKI-UWA) led a team that was awarded \$1.7 million by the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) in 2023 in the Maternal Health and Healthy Lifestyles category for a research project to scale up the 'Play Active' program to improve children's physical activity in early childhood education and care through a multi-state hybrid effectiveness-implementation trial.

Associate Investigator Associate Professor Yaqoot Fatima (UQ) led a team that was awarded \$4.063 million by the MRFF in 2023 in the Early to Mid-Career Researchers category for a research project on obstructive sleep apnoea diagnosis and management in First Nations communities through community co-design, local capacity building and place-based models for sustainable success.

Student Successes

We are very proud of our Centre students and their successes and it was wonderful to see them celebrating important milestones in 2023.

Doctor of Philosophy

- Dr Dure Jabran (UQ)
- Dr Yongbo Liu (UQ)
- Dr Asma Zulfiqar (UQ)
- Dr Aaron Schokman (Syd)
- Dr Bonnie Searle (UQ)
- Dr Nikita Sharma (UQ)
- Dr Zijian Wang (UQ)
- Dr Thao Thu Nguyen (Melb)
- Dr Sonia Pervin (UQ)
- Dr Pulan Bai (UWA)
- Dr Alicia Yon (Melb)



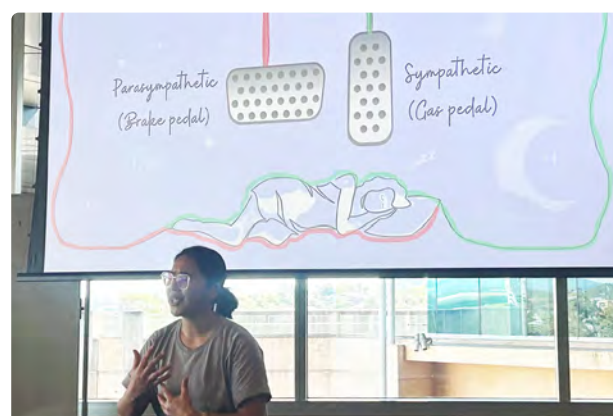
Masters

- Ruth Steinbring (UQ, MPhil)
- Sofia Weerts (Melb, coursework)

Honours

- Madison Lloyd (UQ)
- Darrel Yao Jie Chang (Melb)
- Grace Lagan (Syd)
- Arquette Milin-Byrne (Syd)
- Blake Pyne (Melb)
- Olivia Ru (Syd)
- Juan Zhong (Melb)
- Diego Machillanda Flechas (Melb)

It was also great to see our Centre PhD student Sylistah Gadam (UQ) (pictured below) judged as the People's Choice winner of the UQ Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Three-Minute Thesis (3MT) Final in 2023. Sylistah presented on 'Sleep: The driver of your body's gas and brake pedals'.



Communications

The Life Course Centre has an agile communications strategy spanning multiple mediums, channels and partnerships. This enables highly targeted and strategic communications to key non-academic audiences, including media, policymakers, practitioners and communities, where there is the greatest potential of maximising the reach and impact of our research. Here are some highlights of our 2023 communications activities.

Blog Writing

We assisted our researchers in providing blogs and feature articles to a range of non-academic outlets in 2023, including The Conversation, Austaxpolicy blog, 360info.org and various publications produced by our partner universities. We also coordinated a series of blogs by our researchers from across our four Australian university nodes to The Power to Persuade website in the lead-up to Anti-Poverty Week in October 2023. The Power to Persuade is an independent platform for social policy discussion supported by Good Shepherd Aust & NZ and our blogs generated strong engagement levels: 1,100 unique visitors and 1,500 page views (up approximately 30% on 2023 weekly average)

600+ individual reads across the 5 blog posts

Raising children in the lucky country: Understanding the income penalty and poverty at childbirth

Dr Ana Gamarra Rondinel (Melb)

Why housing is key to understanding, and alleviating(!), poverty

Professor Stephen Whelan (Syd)

What research says about studying with the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)

Associate Professor Francis Mitrou & Dr Ha Nguyen (TKI-UWA)

Single parents and post-separation families: Challenges and opportunities in times of crisis

Dr Alice Campbell (UQ)

Understanding the feelings of poverty: Shame, anger, and hope

Dr Rose-Marie Stambe & Professor Cameron Parsell (UQ)



Communications



Anti-Poverty Week 2023

We have built a strong partnership with Anti-Poverty Week (APW) and the annual awareness-raising week in October provides an important focal point for our communications. In 2023, our research was used to update APW Fast Facts sheets on Women, Poverty and Violence and Child and Family Poverty and to inform APW media releases on addressing poverty and child support. Our partnership on these communications materials helped contribute to the high-impact exposure of APW in 2023, including nearly 30,000 visits to the APW website in October and 460 media mentions across print, online, radio and TV for a total potential reach of 2.7 million people (see APW 2023 Evaluation).

Chief Investigator Professor A. Abigail Payne (Melbourne) represented the Life Course Centre at a special 'Parliamentary Friendship Group to End Poverty' event at Parliament House in Canberra to mark APW, and we also hosted an APW Roundtable event, in conjunction with the Melbourne Institute, in Brisbane in October. We were also proud to see artwork by the daughter of our Master of Philosophy graduate Ruth Steinbring, who works for the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations in Canberra, featured in the APW 2023 promotional materials.



TOP LEFT - LEFT TO RIGHT Toni Wren, Executive Director of Anti-Poverty Week; Professor A. Abigail Payne, Director and Ronald Henderson Professor, Melbourne Institute and Life Course Centre Chief Investigator; Brianna Casey, CEO of Foodbank Australia; Dr Cassandra Goldie AO, CEO of the Australian Council of Social Service and Alicia Payne MP for Canberra and Co-Convenor of the Parliamentary Friendship Group to End Poverty. **TOP RIGHT** Professor Abigail Payne with Julian Hill MP **BOTTOM LEFT** Anti-Poverty Week roundtable: Tackling poverty and disadvantage through data, Brisbane. **BOTTOM RIGHT** Dr Rajeev Samarge, Senior Research Fellow, Data Analytics and Program Coordinator, Melbourne Institute.

Communications



Policy Submissions

Submissions to government inquiries and reviews is an important and impactful component of our communications strategy. In 2023, we coordinated Centre submissions on three key policy areas—the Senate Inquiry into the extent and nature of poverty in Australia, the Department of Social Services Early Years Strategy, and the Department of Social Services Issues Paper on a stronger, more diverse and independent community sector. The impact generated by these submissions included:

In February 2023, we provided a submission to the Senate Inquiry into the extent and nature of poverty in Australia. In May 2023, the Senate Community Affairs References Committee tabled its Interim Report on this inquiry. The Interim report featured a total of eight direct references to our submission, covering issues such as economic participation, employment, those more likely to experience poverty, and the structural drivers and human impact of poverty.

In April 2023, we provided a submission to the Early Years Strategy in response to the Early Years Discussion Paper and National Early Years Summit in Canberra in February. In December 2023, the Early Years Draft Strategy featured a prominent reference to our submission on the importance of the early years in shaping an individual's life course (see quote below). The Early Years Draft Strategy also referenced our researchers at the Telethon Kids Institute on the need for improved data tracking children's development, and a Life Course Centre Working Paper on the impact of poverty on children (reinforcing the accessibility and value of our Working Papers Series to policymakers).

“The first five years of a child's life is one of the most critical stages in shaping an individual's life course, including brain development, behaviour and learning, and health and wellbeing outcomes into adulthood. The Early Years provide powerful opportunities to make a real difference to children's life chances.”

Submission to the Early Years Strategy Discussion Paper by Life Course Centre (2023).

ABOVE Chief Investigator Professor Karen Thorpe (UQ) pictured (second from right) at the National Early Years Summit at Parliament House in Canberra in February 2023 with (from left) with Hon. Dr Anne Aly MP, Minister for Early Childhood Education; Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, Minister for Social Services; and Associate Professor Cathrine Neilsen-Hewett, University of Wollongong.



Supporting Innovative Outreach

We are always seeking ways to take the work of our researchers to new audiences and in 2023 the Centre and our communications team supported some exciting new outreach initiatives.

These included two photovoice projects on lived experience of homelessness led by a team of UQ researchers, Dr Stefanie Plage, Dr Rose Stambe, Dr Ella Kuskoff and Professor Cameron Parsell. 'Health Home Hope—a photographic exhibition on housing instability and health' collaborated with Brisbane homelessness and housing support service providers, advocates and the people they assist. The photos taken by project participants were curated for public display in Brisbane in April, the UQ Open Day in August, and the National Housing Conference in Brisbane in October. This research team also produced a second photovoice project on young people's experiences of homelessness. 'Hanging by a Thread: Our Search for Home' showcased photos taken by vulnerable young people supported by Anglicare Southern Queensland and were curated for public display in Brisbane during Anti-Poverty Week in October, with further displays planned for 2024.

We also worked with AustLit, Australia's largest literary database, in 2023 on curating two Necessary Conversations for young people on the topics of Homelessness and Domestic and Family Violence. AustLit's Necessary Conversations are curated lists of picture books, children's fiction, and young-adult novels that create awareness of important topics for social learning. The Domestic and Family Violence list was created by Darby Jones, a Summer Research Scholar, while the Homelessness list was created by UQ Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences student Carly Watson with input from PhD student Skye Constantine.

ABOVE - LEFT TO RIGHT Leanne Wood, ASQ Manager, Research and Advocacy; Dr Rose Stambe, Life Course Centre Research Fellow, UQ; Rees Maddren, ASQ Service Manager; Dr Stefanie Plage, Life Course Centre Research Fellow, UQ; and Tahnee Ledgerwood, ASQ Service Manager at the photovoice exhibition Hanging by a Thread.

Communications



Photography featured in the two photovoice projects *Health Home Hope* and *Hanging by a Thread* led by Centre research fellow Dr Stefanie Plage



Our Activities

2023 Happenings

Capacity Building Portfolio

First Nations Research Portfolio

Knowledge Transfer Portfolio

2023 Happenings

6 FEBRUARY

TRAINING

How to do a systematic review
Training facilitated by Professor Nick Glozier, Dr Alyssa Milton, Dr Elizabeth Stratton and Nicollette Thornton

2–3 FEBRUARY

WORKSHOP

Reconciliation, Economic Opportunities and Emotional Wellbeing of First Nations Peoples: Yarning and Learning Together
Partially sponsored and organised by the Life Course Centre.

28 FEBRUARY

LIFE COURSE CENTRE SEMINAR SERIES

How do neural networks analyse drowsiness level for drivers?
Presented by Professor Helen Huang and Dr Ruihong Qiu

7, 14 & 21 MARCH

TRAINING

Community Involvement in Research
Training workshops facilitated by Anne McKenzie AM

13 MARCH

LIFE COURSE CENTRE SEMINAR SERIES

Measurement of self-reported mental health—are the gender patterns changed when both symptoms and impairment are considered?
Presented by Professor Curt Hagquist, Life Course Centre Affiliate

18 APRIL

MENTORING

Meet Life Course Centre Associate Investigator Alfredo Paloyo

19 APRIL

TRAINING

Professional development for national Life Course Centre professional staff

MAY

VISITOR

Magnus Jørgensen, PhD candidate from the University of Bergen, Norway

16 MAY

LIFE COURSE CENTRE SEMINAR SERIES

Reducing Racial Inequality in Crime and Justice: A U.S. National Academies of Science Consensus Report
Presented by Professor Bruce Western, Columbia University

30 MAY

LIFE COURSE CENTRE SEMINAR SERIES

Who responds to school accountability information? Evidence from the launch of the MySchool website
Presented by Life Course Centre Associate Investigator Cain Polidano

2 JUNE

WORKSHOP

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and Life Course Centre Workshop

JUNE

VISITOR

Professor Kathryn Edin, Life Course Centre Associate Investigator, Princeton University

22 JUNE

SYMPOSIUM

Social Disadvantage, Wellbeing and Place: How can we Improve Access to Opportunities in Place?
Presented in Melbourne by Professor Janeen Baxter, Dr Sangeetha Chandrashekeran, Professor Kathryn Edin, Brendan Kennedy, Professor Timothy Nelson and Professor Mark Stevenson

23 JUNE

WORKSHOP

Single parenting, co-parenting, and post-separation families: Challenges and opportunities in times of crisis, Melbourne
Keynote speakers included Professor Kathryn Edin, Dr Moeata Keil, Professor Kay Cook and featuring a lived experience panel moderated by Terese Edwards, CEO National Council of Single Mothers and their Children

6–9 JUNE

CONGRESS

International Congress on Evidence-based Parenting Support
Partially sponsored by the Life Course Centre and presented by Chief Investigator Professor Matthew Sanders

2023 Happenings

13 JULY**LIFE COURSE CENTRE SEMINAR SERIES**

Sustainable cities: integrating land use and transport systems

Presented by Professor Mark Stevenson

13 JULY**TRAINING**

Mastering Research Translation Training workshops

Delivered by the Research Impact Academy

26 JULY**SYMPOSIUM**

Life Course Centre Student Symposium

National hybrid event

15–16 AUGUST**SUMMIT**

2023 Life Course Centre Data for Policy Summit, Canberra

17 AUGUST**SUMMIT**

Life Course Centre Partner Summit, Canberra

7 SEPTEMBER**LIFE COURSE CENTRE SEMINAR SERIES**

Agent Based Modelling for Understanding Social Systems

Presented by Dr Rajith Vidanaarachchi

3 OCTOBER**WORKSHOP**

Places Partner Workshop (Agent-based Modelling), Sydney

9–11 OCTOBER**CONFERENCE**

Society for Longitudinal and Lifecourse Studies (SLLS) 2023 Annual Conference, Munich, Germany

Sponsored by Life Course Centre with presentations from Life Course Centre Researchers

18 OCTOBER**ROUNDTABLE**

Anti-Poverty Week Roundtable: Tackling poverty and disadvantage through Data-informed Decision Making, Brisbane

Presented by the Life Course Centre and Melbourne Institute

30 OCTOBER**FORUM**

Public Economics Forum: Addressing Female Poverty: Causes and Solutions, Canberra

Featured Centre Research Fellows Dr Barbara Broadway and Dr Alice Campbell

30 OCTOBER**ROUNDTABLE**

Decisions in Early Parenthood: Gender Norms, Government Policy and Lifetime Effects

Hosted by Treasury and the Life Course Centre

2 NOVEMBER**CONFERENCE**

Economic and Social Outlook Conference, Melbourne

Participation from Life Course Centre Researchers

8–9 NOVEMBER**CENTRE SCHOOL**

Centre School for ECRs, Brisbane

Hosted by three ARC Centres of Excellence: Life Course Centre, Digital Child, and Automated Decision-Making and Society

10 NOVEMBER**TRAINING**

Presenting with Confidence, Brisbane

Delivered by NIDA

28 NOVEMBER**LIFE COURSE CENTRE SEMINAR SERIES**

By how much is 'women's work' undervalued in the economy?

Presented by Life Course Centre Associate Investigator, Dr Leonora Risse

28 NOVEMBER**MEETING**

World Health Organisation (WHO) Life Course Network Meeting on Healthy Ageing over the Life Course, Geneva, Switzerland

Project led by Professor Janeen Baxter with Associate Professors Francis Mitrou and Abdullah Mamun

Capacity Building Portfolio

It was another active and productive year for our Capacity Building Portfolio, which is focused on developing the next generation of life course researchers. The portfolio provided Centre members, primarily students and Early Career Researchers (ECRs), with a range of training, mentoring and awards throughout the year.

Collaborating with other Centres

A key feature of our Capacity Building activities in 2023 was partnering with other ARC Centres of Excellence to expand networking, mentoring and collaboration opportunities. This was highlighted by a combined Centre School for ECRs jointly hosted by the Life Course Centre, ARC Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child and ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society. This two-day event in Brisbane in November was a great success, attended by 50 ECRs from across the three Centres and 14 universities Australia-wide. The school enabled ECRs to build new knowledge and relationships across Centres and research disciplines and lay the foundations for potential future collaborative projects to tackle grand societal challenges in areas such as supporting children and families, harnessing the power of AI and protecting democracy.

Another collaborative initiative across ARC Centres of Excellence that our Capacity Building Portfolio was involved in during 2023 was the launch of the Centres of Excellence Mentoring Program, using the platform Mentorloop. This provides our Centre members with a vastly expanded mentoring network to participate in, as either a mentee or mentor, across a total of 12 Centres. Mentorloop can suggest potential matches across the network of participating Centres and also provides supporting training materials for mentees and mentors.

NIDA Presenting with Confidence

Many of the Life Course Centre ECRs who attended the Centre School for ECRs in November attended an additional day of training in Brisbane delivered by the National Institute for Dramatic Arts (NIDA). The 'Presenting with Confidence' training was provided in response to Centre members' requests for training in public speaking. Participants learnt how to structure their content and use their breath, voice, physical posture, energy and timing to engage and influence their audience. Participants were also given the chance to practise these new skills in front of their peers and receive constructive feedback that could be incorporated into their presentations in real time. This training received a very positive response from all attendees, with some of the feedback received including:

"It's been one of the best professional training sessions I've attended..."

"It really exceeded my expectations... I loved the practical tips and the space to practise and get feedback."

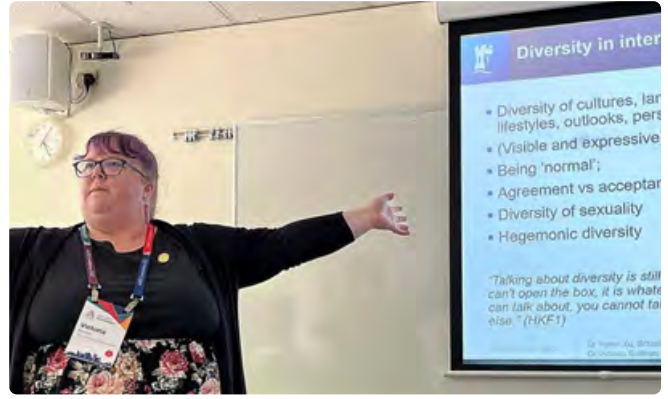
"I got so much out of it... It's crazy to think that we aren't routinely taught this, given how often we present as academics."



LEFT Attendees from the various CoEs at the Centre School for ECRs.

ABOVE Early Career Researchers participating in the Presenting with Confidence workshop.

Capacity Building Portfolio



Student Symposium

Our Capacity Building Portfolio hosted a special cross-nodal Student Symposium in July. This was a hybrid event where students gathered in-person at their nodes and also connected online nationally. Centre students heard about new funding, mentoring, networking and other opportunities and were given the chance to present their research to a cross-nodal audience. Centre researchers also attended to support the students and share feedback and experiences over afternoon tea.



Capacity Building Awards

Recipients of Capacity Building Awards in 2023 secured funding for a wide range of activities, from attending conferences to hosting workshops and focus groups to support their research. These included Tianyi Ma (UQ) and Dr Aaron Schokman (Sydney) who were supported by the Capacity Building Portfolio to attend the inSTEM Conference in Melbourne. An initiative of the STEM-focused ARC Centres of Excellence, this conference provides networking and career development for people from marginalised or underrepresented groups in STEM and their allies. Tianyi said he gained valuable insights on the importance of workplace inclusivity and diversity and ways to achieve this. Dr Victoria Sullivan (UQ) used her award to attend the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) conference in Adelaide as well as present a paper from her PhD thesis at a self-organised symposium.

“I learned a lot from the conference with presentations by leaders in education and equity... the intangible outcomes are even more promising, with further work, research and collaborations in progress.”

Dr Victoria Sullivan



Centre student Merrick Morley (Melbourne) received funds from the Capacity Building Award in 2023 to remunerate focus group participants as part of his PhD research. This enabled Merrick to demonstrate how he has built skills in organising and facilitating focus groups and in the collection and analysis of qualitative data. Merrick said the success of the focus group stage has helped to set the foundations for a questionnaire survey phase. Another recipient of a Capacity Building Award in 2023 was Dr Stefanie Plage (UQ) who received funding to deliver a stakeholder workshop and share findings from her Health, Home, Hope photovoice project on homelessness and housing insecurity

ABOVE Centre students and researchers on-site at UQ participating in the national Student Symposium held in-person and online.

ABOVE Dr Victoria Sullivan presenting at the Australian Association for Research in Education conference, Adelaide.

First Nations Research Portfolio

A key initiative of the Life Course Centre in 2023 was the establishment of a First Nations Research Portfolio. This new portfolio will play an important role in reviewing our approach to all aspects of partnership, research, capacity building, translation and engagement with Indigenous peoples.

This new portfolio is co-led by Brendan Kennedy and Dr Sangeetha Chandrashekeran, both Life Course Centre Senior Research Fellows at the University of Melbourne. Brendan is a Tati Tati senior knowledge holder with deep experience and knowledge in areas of First Nations culture, language, art, science and advocacy. Sangeetha is an economic geographer who has worked closely with Brendan on themes of First Nations cultural economies, water and wellbeing.

We are very grateful to have the experience and expertise of Brendan and Sangeetha to guide this new portfolio, which will make important contributions to the Centre going forward and align and work closely with our existing Capacity Building and Knowledge Transfer portfolios. Our First Nations Research Portfolio is supported by Jade Lor-Chan, who joined the Life Course Centre in 2023 as our new Sydney Node Administrator.



ABOVE Life Course Centre Research Fellows Brendan Kennedy and Dr Sangeetha Chandrashekeran, presenting plans for the new portfolio, First Nations Research.

First Nations Research Portfolio



Let's Yarn About Sleep program

One of the first actions of our new First Nations Research Portfolio was providing travel support for First Nations researchers from Mt Isa in Queensland who are involved with the Let's Yarn About Sleep program to attend the 2023 Sleep Down Under Conference in Adelaide in November. The team presented a plenary session at the conference on sleep health equity in First Nations communities and also had the opportunity to connect and network with sleep researchers from across Australia.

The Let's Yarn About Sleep program is Australia's first-ever sleep health program for First Nations Peoples. The program team is led by Life Course Centre Associate Investigator, Associate Professor Yaqoot Fatima (UQ) and also includes our Chief Investigator Professor Simon Smith (UQ) and Research Fellow Dr Azhar Potia (UQ). Let's Yarn About Sleep is rooted in community ownership and leadership and is focused on First Nations' sleep health improvement through the agency of First Nations peoples. The Let's Yarn About Sleep team won the UQ Partners in Indigenous Research Excellence Award at the UQ 2023 Research Partnerships and Translation Awards.



PICTURED TOP TO BOTTOM

Centre Chief Investigator, Professor Simon Smith (second from the right) and researchers from the Let's Yarn About Sleep program, attending the 2023 Sleep Down Under Conference in Adelaide in November.

Life Course Centre Associate Investigator, Yaqoot Fatima (pictured left) and researchers from the Let's Yarn About Sleep program, attending the 2023 Sleep Down Under Conference in Adelaide in November.

Plenary session on sleep health equity in First Nations communities at the Conference.

Let's Yarn About Sleep Workshop participants.

Knowledge Transfer Portfolio

In 2023, our Knowledge Transfer Portfolio progressed important areas of work including establishing our first Community Advisory Committee, providing training and a framework for community involvement in research, and awarding funding to foster innovation in knowledge transfer practice.

Community Advisory Committee

Establishing the Life Course Centre's first Community Advisory Committee is a key achievement of our Knowledge Transfer Portfolio. This new Committee has been established to provide community perspectives on research activities across the Centre and strengthen connections between our researchers and communities. In 2023 there was a coordinated national call-out for members to join the committee with experience in community, advocacy or charity organisations, and whose lived experience or interests align with the Centre's research. The following applicants were appointed to the Committee, which held its first meeting in late 2023.

Community Advisory Committee members

Macy Choudhury

Victoria

Social worker and active member of communities of practice for migrant women, women with disability, single parents, and survivors of family violence.

Sasha Bryant

Victoria

Runs a small community outreach program to help support the immediate needs of mothers, homeless people and other community members.

Sally Wright

Western Australia

A member of the Equity Project run WA community service organisation, and the 100 Families WA research project on families in disadvantage.

Aaron Schokman

New South Wales

Life Course Centre student alumni and Research Fellow, University of Sydney, sits on consumer reference council of Sleep Health Foundation.

Marcus Horwood

New South Wales

Academic, with NGO background, focused on health and wellbeing of students with additional needs and improving school engagement and attendance.

Cara Nolan

Victoria

A policy and advocacy advisor on the structural drivers of disadvantage with the Brotherhood of St. Laurence, a Life Course Centre partner organisation.

Michelle King

Queensland

A sociologist, lawyer and disability advocate focussed on transitions to adulthood for people with disabilities. Consumer Chair of Child UnLimited.

Shane Beacall

Queensland

A 20-year career with Wesley Mission Queensland, a former Life Course Centre partner organisation, in community, social, health and youth services.

Anita Siegersma

Victoria

Advocate for single mothers and the value of unpaid work and raising children and member of various parenting support and community groups.

Angela Finch

Tasmania

A Board Member of Single Mother Families Australia and the Poverty Inequality Partnership.

Knowledge Transfer Portfolio



Community Involvement Framework

In 2023, the Knowledge Transfer Portfolio began the development of a framework for embedding community involvement across the Centre’s research. The Community Involvement Framework document outlines an organisation-wide commitment to support our researchers and community members to work in effective, sustainable partnerships on research priorities, co-design, policy and practice. The framework, supported by mapping and banking of the Centre’s community involvement activities, is underpinned by the International Association of Public Participation’s (IAP2) core values.

Mastering Research Translation

The Knowledge Transfer Portfolio delivered a Mastering Research Translation Workshop in 2023. This training for Centre members comprised three two-hour online sessions hosted by Dr Tamika Heiden of the Research Impact Academy. The workshop gave participants a greater understanding of what research translation is, how it relates to their research, how to identify and build networks, and the process of ‘doing’ research translation including developing goals and action plans.

Innovation Awards

Dr Laetitia Coles (UQ) was the inaugural recipient of the Knowledge Transfer Innovation Award for early and mid-career researchers in 2022. In 2023, she set about implementing the knowledge transfer plan for ‘Families in Focus: Embedding the voices of children with a disability and their families in research priorities’ with industry partners, Children’s Health Queensland and the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY). Laetitia was supported by the Centre to run a first-of-its-kind research event at the Queensland Children’s Hospital. This two-day event was designed to garner a nuanced understanding of the experiences of children and families living with disability through a series of creative, play-based, interactive activities. The findings will inform the design of future research priorities and translate into improved outcomes for the community who informed the research. As well as the Innovation Award funding, the Centre also provided in-kind professional support for Laetitia and the team of researchers and volunteers to promote and deliver a successful and engaging event that brought much pride to all involved. Laetitia won a UQ Early to Mid-Career Researchers Industry Engagement Award in 2023 for this project.

In late 2023, the Knowledge Transfer Portfolio announced the winner of the 2023 Knowledge Transfer Innovation Award was Centre student Bonnie Searle (UQ). Bonnie will use the award to implement the knowledge transfer plan for: ‘Food for thought: Opportunities for improving food provision in ECEC in communities experiencing disadvantage’ in 2024.

TOP LEFT Families in Focus at Queensland Children’s Hospital.

TOP RIGHT Dr Laetitia Coles (centre) receiving her UQ Early to Mid-Career Researchers Industry Engagement Award from UQ Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Deborah Terry (left) and UQ Research Partnerships Executive Director Paul Nicholls (right).

RIGHT Bonnie Searle, recipient of the 2023 Knowledge Transfer Innovation Award.



Who are we?

The ARC Centre of Excellence for Children and Families over the Life Course (Life Course Centre) was established in 2014 to tackle deep and persistent social disadvantage in Australia. The life course approach includes looking at critical life points (such as early childhood, schooling, transition to employment, marriage, parenthood, divorce or retirement), to identify those periods at which life circumstances have the biggest and most lasting impact—positively and negatively. In 2019 we were awarded funding for an expanded Centre for another seven year period, starting in 2021.

Life Course Centre

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