

Annual Report 2024

A large, stylized number '4' is centered on the page. The top loop of the '4' is orange, and the bottom stem is blue. The background is dark blue with various white icons: a house, a sun, a family, a lightbulb, a bar chart, a person, a speech bubble, a briefcase, and a cloud with lightning.

Partnering With Community

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

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 in 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 examine the trajectories and lived experiences of disadvantaged individuals across their lifetimes, 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.

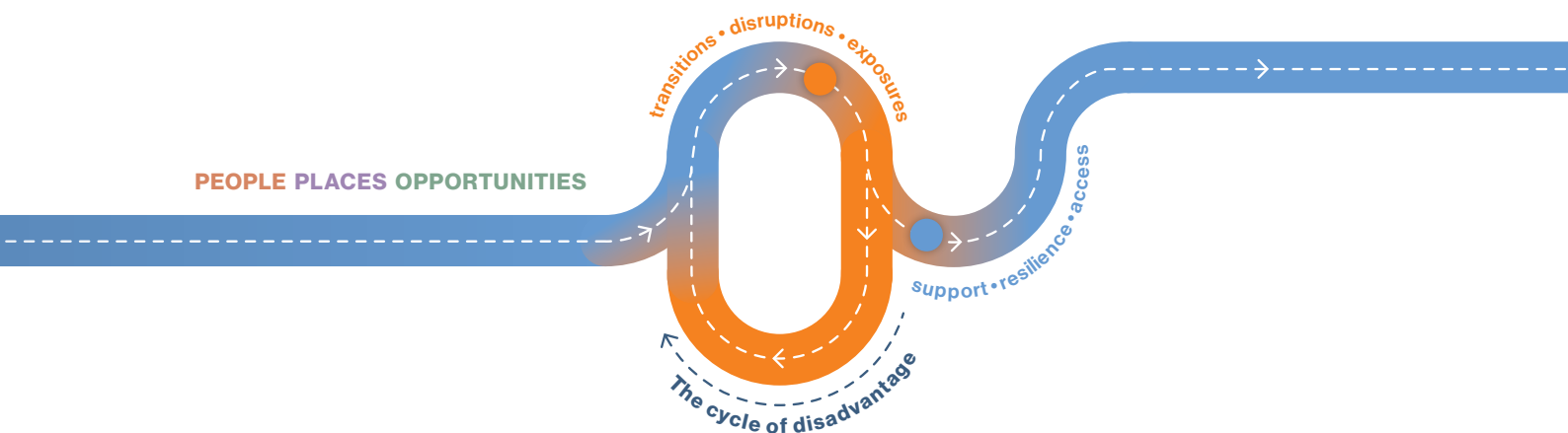


Our Vision

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 shape 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. Our Centre is the first to apply life course theory to Australia's growing social and economic problem of deep and persistent disadvantage.

Director's Report

Welcome to our 2024 Annual Report for the Life Course Centre. It was a pivotal year defined by two major milestones – the mid-term review for our current ARC funding and the 10-year anniversary since our original ARC funding. This report highlights the Centre's continuing progress and reaffirms our position as a leading research centre understanding and addressing deep and persistent disadvantage over the life course and across generations.

The mid-term review provided an opportunity to assess three years of transformative research and our strategies to support policy and decision-making to reduce social disadvantage. This was the second mid-term review in our Centre's history, and we approached it with the same comprehensive and thorough strategic planning. This included deep and frank reflection on our achievements, outcomes, and priorities in consultation with our partners and stakeholders, the preparation of a detailed written submission, and a full day of interviews and discussions with the ARC review panel. Preparing for the review demonstrated the Centre's efficiency and cohesion, with close collaboration among researchers, committee members, partners, and critical friends. I'd particularly like to thank our Advisory Committee, chaired by Emeritus Professor Peter Saunders, for providing strategic advice and input. We're fortunate to have such an experienced, esteemed, and engaged committee supporting our endeavours.

I'm pleased to report that the review committee responded favourably and commended us for achieving all our objectives. The panel was impressed with the quality of our research outcomes and commended our engagement with research teams, stakeholders, and professional staff. Key strengths highlighted by the panel included our leadership, governance and structure, postgraduate and postdoctoral training opportunities, and collaborative partnerships. There were several recommendations for building closer engagement and capacity with First Nations researchers and communities, and ensuring our impact is clearly articulated at the end of our current funding cycle. We're well on the way to developing our strategy and implementing additional measures to address these recommendations.

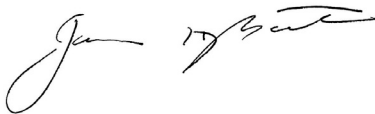
The second major milestone was celebrating our 10-year anniversary. The Life Course Centre began in 2014 under ARC CE14 funding before it was successfully awarded a further seven-year funding term commencing in 2021. Since then, the Centre has grown into a trusted and leading research centre providing new knowledge and solutions to address disadvantage. In addition to our research leadership, I'm very proud of our national and international reputation and growing network of alumni and researchers who have benefitted from the training and capacity building opportunities afforded by the Centre. Our researchers form an enduring workforce that will continue to advance the research and partnerships needed to reduce social and economic disadvantage in Australia.

The Centre also continued to enhance its global reputation in 2024 through international activities. We progressed our work to develop a framework implementing a life course approach in practice with the World Health Organisation, presented our research at conferences and meetings around the world, and hosted an International Data for Policy workshop in Chicago. These international activities built on our strong domestic achievements, including sponsorship and strong involvement in the development of the *Decadal Plan for Social Science Research Infrastructure 2024-33* – a 10-year strategy led by the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia.

In 2024, numerous researchers secured additional significant competitive grants from various agencies, and many were recognised with awards and honours for their outstanding contributions to research. My election to the US National Academy of Sciences was a particularly proud moment. I was also delighted to congratulate our Deputy Director, Professor Deborah Cobb-Clark, on her appointment as an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) and our Chief Investigator, Professor Hayley Christian, for her appointment as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM).

With the mid-term review completed, our focus shifts to the future. We will develop a comprehensive roadmap to be delivered at the end of our current funding that will serve as a guide for policymakers and decision-makers into the future to break the cycle of deep and persistent disadvantage in this country. Creating a roadmap for the future is a key strategic goal and will also be the theme of the Life Course Centre International Conference in Brisbane in July 2025. The conference will bring together leading international and national speakers to advance discussions and shape impactful research outcomes and we look forward to reporting on its progress in future reports.

I thank everyone who has contributed to the Centre's success in 2024. I hope you enjoy reading our 2024 Annual Report.



Professor Janeen Baxter
Centre Director



Thank You

The Life Course Centre extends its gratitude to a number of valued supporters who stepped back from their roles in 2024 to embrace new opportunities or enjoy a well-earned retirement.



Thank you to **Marilyn Chilvers**, who retired from the NSW Government Department of Customer Service and the Life Course Centre Advisory Committee. Marilyn has been an invaluable member of the Centre since 2014. She has provided exceptional advice through her membership of our Advisory and Data for Policy Portfolio committees.

Thank you to **Matthew James** from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, who retired in October 2024. Matthew was a long-time friend and supporter of the Life Course Centre and a dedicated member of our Data for Policy committee.



Thank you to **Dr Kate Liley**, who concluded her role as National Research Manager at our partner organisation, Goodstart Early Learning.. Kate was a vital contributor to the Centre through the Advisory Committee and her involvement in research projects on early childhood education and care. She has taken on a new role as Head of Research with AEIOU Foundation for children with autism.

We sincerely thank Marilyn, Matthew, and Kate for their valuable contributions, leadership and guidance, which have been instrumental in shaping the Life Course Centre over many years. We will greatly miss their expertise, advice and support, and wish them the very best for the future. We look forward to welcoming new representatives and continuing our close associations and partnerships with each of their former organisations.

Our Research

Deputy Director's Research Report

2024 proved to be another significant year for the Life Course Centre. Our research continued to make meaningful impact on policymakers, non-government organisations, and the broader community, as evident throughout this annual report.

A key milestone this year was our mid-term review, which offered a valuable opportunity to reflect on what we have established, achieved, and delivered since the Centre commenced in 2021. Having moved beyond our foundational years, we have strengthened our research outputs and deepened our collaborations and partnerships. As we enter the second half of our current funding period, we have a renewed focus on leading research that addresses disadvantage over the life course, while being guided by emerging issues that shape new areas of research.

In 2024, we continued to drive research across our three interconnected programs of research and translation – People, Places, and Opportunities. Collectively, we delivered high-quality academic outputs, including many journal articles, as well as non-academic contributions in media outlets and partner reports. I am particularly pleased with the Life Course Centre Working Paper Series, which saw a record 37 working papers published, the most in a single year. Contributions from students, early-career researchers, Associate Investigators, Chief Investigators, and industry and community partners, provided important research insights and ensured the timely and accessible dissemination of up-to-date research.



One of the year's standout moments was our Research Retreat on the Gold Coast in August. The calibre of presentations, panel discussions, and workshops underscored just how far we have come as a Centre of Excellence. One highlight to mention was the 'Shark Tank' style exercise, an energetic pitch-style event, which fostered cross-nodal and cross-disciplinary collaborations among our researchers. I am incredibly proud of our researchers and students for their dedication to understanding and addressing deep and persistent disadvantage in Australia. Equally striking was the strong sense of cohesion and camaraderie among our members – from Chief Investigators to students and professional staff. This sense of community is an invaluable strength of our Centre and what it achieves.

We were privileged to host esteemed international visitors in 2024. Among them were Associate Investigator Professor Ariel Kalil from the University of Chicago and Professor Cathrine Egeland from Oslo Metropolitan University, which recently established the Nordic Centre for Research on Work and Family Life Through the Life Course. Their visits provided opportunities for collaboration and mentoring, as well as knowledge sharing through our Life Course Centre Seminar Series, which continued to foster deep engagement for our members across our four nodes.

As we move into the second half of our seven-year funding term, I am truly excited by the opportunities ahead. This Centre's work is more relevant than ever, and I am confident that our research will continue to drive meaningful change in addressing deep and persistent disadvantage in this country over the coming years and beyond.

I am grateful as always to our researchers, students, and professional staff for their commitment and valuable contributions. A special thanks to our Research Committee whose time and expertise help guide our research endeavours. I look forward to what we will achieve together in 2025.



Professor Deborah Cobb-Clark
Centre Deputy Director



2024 Research Retreat

The Life Course Centre's Research Retreat on the Gold Coast was a standout event on our 2024 calendar. The gathering brought together more than 150 researchers, PhD students, and professional staff from across our four university nodes, along with Centre partners and friends, for two days of dynamic discussions, workshops, knowledge sharing, and professional development.

The retreat opened with a Welcome to Country by Uncle John Graham, a Traditional Custodian of the Gold Coast region, a Kombumerri man, and a saltwater man of the Gold Coast part of the wider Yugambeh Language Group.

Day one started with an engaging icebreaker activity, followed by updates from our Centre Director and Capacity Building, Knowledge Transfer, First Nations Research, and Data for Policy portfolios. Guest speakers then shared valuable insights during two panel discussions on First Nations research, and developing and maintaining research partnerships. In the afternoon, smaller breakout sessions covered a range of topics, including housing, children and young people, improving our decision-making, and restoring social and economic opportunity.

The evening provided an opportunity for everyone to acknowledge and celebrate the Centre's 10th anniversary. Festivities included a commemorative video, talks from former Centre investigators, and heartfelt speeches from Centre leaders, including the Director and Deputy Director, both of whom have been integral to the Centre since its first funding submission.





Day two kicked off early with a range of social activities, including jogging, walking, yoga, aqua aerobics, volleyball, and dog therapy, which brought plenty of smiles. Skills development and new ideas were the focus of the final two breakout sessions before everyone gathered together again for combined discussion about the Centre's 'grand challenges', future opportunities, and next steps. The retreat concluded with several energetic 'Shark Tank' style presentations by PhD and early career researchers.



The two-day Research Retreat was flanked by two additional, smaller workshops. The day before the retreat, the Centre's First Nations Research Portfolio organised an Indigenous Data Governance workshop for Chief Investigators and other research leaders. Following the retreat, the Capacity Building and Knowledge Transfer portfolios held a co-design workshop for early-career researchers, providing them with a deeper understanding of co-design, practical tools to integrate concepts into their research, and opportunities to foster collaborative and innovative projects.

Thank you to the organising committee and everyone who contributed to the retreat's success.



Our research programs

PEOPLE

PLACES

OPPORTUNITIES



Our People research program examines the **individual** experiences of children and families in deep and persistent disadvantage, and the impact of factors such as decision-making, trauma, mental health, and sleep.



PROGRAM LEADER
Nick Glozier (USyd)



DEPUTY
Alyssa Milton (USyd)

Our research programs

PEOPLE

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OPPORTUNITIES

Understanding male loneliness in Australia

Loneliness has emerged as a significant public health concern globally, yet its impact on men across different life stages has been under explored. To address this, our researchers examined the prevalence and predictors of loneliness among adult men aged 15 to 98, using data collected for the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey spanning 2002 to 2021. Key findings found social isolation, and social relationships including romantic, friendship and family relationships, were linked with loneliness. The study also revealed several differences in the predictors of loneliness over the life course. Job security was especially important for younger men – those who were unemployed or in insecure jobs were more prone to loneliness than those with stable jobs. Additionally, men, particularly middle-aged men, who believed they should be the main breadwinners in a household were lonelier in the workplace than those without this belief. This research provided new insights into loneliness and emphasised the need to consider age-specific factors and societal expectations in understanding and addressing loneliness among men. The study's insights are valuable for policymakers, healthcare providers, and community organisations developing interventions to strengthen mental health and social connectedness among Australian men.

Botha, F., Bower, M. Predictors of male loneliness across life stages: an Australian study of longitudinal data. *BMC Public Health* 24, 1285 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-024-18770-w>

Botha, F., Deady, M., & Bower, M. (2024, July 16). *Loneliness in the workplace is greatest among men with traditional views about being the breadwinner*. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/loneliness-in-the-workplace-is-greatest-among-men-with-traditional-views-about-being-the-breadwinner-230535>

A novel approach to sleep security

Sleep plays a fundamental role in health, wellbeing, and cognitive function. Poor sleep can exacerbate existing inequalities and create further barriers for people experiencing disadvantage. Factors such as poverty, poor housing, job insecurity, loneliness, and poor mental health all contribute to poor sleep. Understanding these barriers and developing targeted interventions and policies can help reduce the risks associated with poor sleep and improve outcomes. To support this, our researchers are developing a novel approach to sleep security, which focuses on ensuring individuals have sufficient and high-quality sleep to maintain a healthy life. They are seeking to understand how disadvantage interacts with sleep health, identifying potential modifiable pathways that lead to poor outcomes. The initial focus will be on supporting sleep security for children, recognising its vital role for physical growth, learning, and during critical life transitions. There is the potential to extend this to other age groups. This new approach will inform the development of new tools and frameworks designed to guide the development and evaluation of interventions for sleep, with a unique focus on social and educational outcomes.

Our research programs

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PLACES

OPPORTUNITIES

Other sleep research published by our researchers in 2024 examined the effects of sleep on child health and development, reducing crash risk for young drivers, and the lived experiences of people with narcolepsy, and mothers caring for a child with narcolepsy.

Smith, S. S., Rossa, K. R., Soleimanloo, S. S., Pattinson, C. L., Mann, D. L., Edmed, S. L., Salmon, P. M., & Sullivan, K. A. (2024). Reducing crash risk for young drivers: Protocol for a pragmatic randomised controlled trial to improve young driver sleep. *Heliyon*, 10(5), e27066 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e27066>

Nguyen, H.T., Zubrick, S., & Mitrou, F. (2024). The effects of sleep duration on child health and development. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 221, 35-51. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2024.03.016>

Schokman, A., Cheung, J., Milton, A., Naehrig, D., Thornton, N., Bin, Y. S., Kairaitis, K., & Glozier, N. (2024). Making sense of narcolepsy: A qualitative exploration of how persons with narcolepsy perceive symptoms and their illness experience. *Sleep Medicine*, 116, 62-70. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sleep.2024.02.026>.

Schokman, A., Cheung, J., Klinner, C., Milton, A., Naehrig, D., Thornton, N., Bin, Y. S., Kairaitis, K., & Glozier, N. (2024). A qualitative exploration of the lived experience of mothers caring for a child with narcolepsy. *Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine*, 20(5). <https://doi.org/10.5664/jcsm.10984>

Loeffler, A., Rankin, P., Smith, S. S., Thorpe, K., & Staton, S. (2024). Exploring the Relationship Between Age at Nap Cessation and Social-Emotional Functioning in Children. *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics*, 45(2), e150-e158. <https://doi.org/10.1097/dbp.0000000000001259>

Financial decision-making and disadvantage

How do experiences of disadvantage influence the financial decisions people make? Could this contribute to ongoing cycles of disadvantage? Our research is currently exploring the factors contributing to decisiveness in individuals and its correlation with various life outcomes. This will help to design interventions and strategies aimed at improving the wellbeing of all Australians. One study has examined how discrimination influences individual financial decision-making, particularly in contexts where the probability of success is uncertain. Simulating real-world discrimination to observe its impact on people's financial choices, the research found it notably affected financial decisions. Since discrimination can alter decision-making, these findings suggested that it may be a contributing factor to the cycle of poverty. Separate research investigated gender differences in the decision to take initiative in bargaining situations. The findings suggested these factors could contribute to disparities in pay and career progression, highlighting the need for policies and practices that encourage and support women.

Phillips, L., Tymula, A., & Wang, X. (2024). 'The Effect of Disadvantage on Decision Making Under Uncertainty', Life Course Centre Working Paper Series, 2024-21. Institute for Social Science Research, The University of Queensland. <https://doi.org/10.14264/28ca81f>

Gangadharan, L., Gertsberg, M., Levy, J., & Xiao, E. (2024). 'Who wants to move first?', Life Course Centre Working Paper Series, 2024-01. Institute for Social Science Research, The University of Queensland. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14264/7a18cd0>

Our research programs

PEOPLE

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OPPORTUNITIES

Childbirth and poverty risk

The first two years of a child's life are among their most important, yet many Australian parents are struggling to make ends meet. Life Course Centre research examined the relationship between household income and poverty when a family has their first baby. Using longitudinal data from the Household, Income, and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey (2001-2021) and an event study approach, the study explored how childbirth affects household income and poverty during the crucial first 1,000 days of a child's life. The findings revealed that the birth of a first child reduces household income and increases the risk of disadvantage. On average, one-parent households experienced a 27% decrease in household gross income, while two-parent households saw an 18% decrease. Furthermore, within five years of the first child's birth, a substantial portion of households either remained in poverty or entered poverty – this was more common for one-parent households. The study also analysed the impact of government payments which assist in mitigating poverty, but do not fully shield families from the risk.

Gamarra Rondinel, A., Price A. (2024, 2 May). Spend now, save later on poverty-curbing policies. *360info*. <https://360info.org/spend-now-save-later-on-poverty-curbing-policies/>

Gamarra Rondinel, A., Price, A. (2024, 22 February). Too many Aussies are starting a family and raising their kids in poverty. *Pursuit*, University of Melbourne. <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/too-many-aussies-are-starting-a-family-and-raising-their-kids-in-poverty>

NEW
PROJECT

Understanding gambling decision-making under economic disadvantage

A new People research program project, funded in 2024, will investigate and understand the intersection of economic disadvantage, decision-making, and gambling behaviour among regular gamblers to develop targeted interventions that enhance financial wellbeing and minimise gambling harm.

Led by Professor Sally Gainsbury, Research Fellow, this multi-disciplinary study brings together experts from psychology, economics, and business, alongside researchers from the University of Sydney Brain and Mind Centre and the Gambling Treatment and Research Clinic. The project will explore how individuals make gambling-related decisions and the factors that influence these choices. A key focus will be on conscious and informed decision-making – an area that remains under-explored in gambling research, particularly among economically disadvantaged communities.

By addressing this critical knowledge gap, the research will generate evidence-based insights for the development of interventions to reduce gambling harms and improve financial wellbeing.

Our research programs

PEOPLE

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OPPORTUNITIES



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 LEADER
Mark Stevenson (Melb)



DEPUTY
Sangeetha
Chandrashekeran (Melb)

Our research programs

PEOPLE PLACES OPPORTUNITIES

Changing neighbourhoods and children's activity

This research examined how changes in the built environment over time can impact and influence physical activity among young children. Using data from the Play Spaces and Environments for Children's Physical Activity (PLAYCE) cohort study, the research examined the key neighbourhood aspects of more than 1500 children across eight years. The environment factors assessed included traffic exposure, street connectivity, access to public transport, residential density, and neighbourhood vegetation. The findings revealed that while some neighbourhoods experienced modest improvements – like more public transport stops and greener streets – children who moved neighbourhoods often ended up in areas with fewer amenities. The study also examined differences in built environment attributes depending on the socio-economic status of the neighbourhood and found most socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods had greater exposure to traffic, more public transport stops, and high residential density, while the least disadvantaged neighbourhoods had the most vegetation. This research emphasised the need for future urban planning and policy to consider how neighbourhood environments can better support healthy, active childhoods, especially in disadvantaged communities. The results were first published in the Life Course Centre Working Paper Series and then published in late 2024 in the journal *Health and Place*. Separate research included investigating neighbourhood walkability and body mass index in children, the effects of dog ownership in children's movement behaviour, and the association between green areas and preschooler's outdoor play.

Robinson, T., Boruff, B., Duncan, J., Murray, K., Schipperijn, J., Nathan, A., Beck, B., Stratton, G., Griffiths, L. J., Fry, R., Beesley, B., & Christian, H. (2024). Understanding variations in the built environment over time to inform longitudinal studies of young children's physical activity behaviour - The BEACHES project. *Health & Place*, 90, 103345. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2024.103345>.

Robinson, T., Boruff, B., Duncan, J., Murray, K., Schipperijn, J., Beck, B., Stratton, G., Griffiths, L., Fry, R., & Christian, H. (2024). 'Understanding variations in the built environment over time to inform longitudinal studies of young children's physical activity behaviour - The BEACHES Project', Life Course Centre Working Paper Series, 2024-08. Institute for Social Science Research, The University of Queensland. DOI: [10.14264/0ae8a48](https://doi.org/10.14264/0ae8a48)

Bai, P., Schipperijn, J., Rosenberg, M., & Christian, H. (2024). Preschool children's physical activity in the home, childcare and neighbourhood environment: A latent profile analysis using device-based measures. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 42(13), 1173–1183. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02640414.2024.2376392>

Pouliou, T., Pedrick-Case, R., Bailey, R., Rawlings, A., Mizen, A., Davies, J., Stratton, G., Lyons, R. A., Beck, B., Christian, H., Fry, R., & Griffiths, L. J. (2024). Neighbourhood walkability and body mass index in children: Evidence from the Millennium Cohort Study in Wales. *Journal of Transport and Health*, 38, Article 101855. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jth.2024.101855>

Adams, E. K., Murray, K., Trost, S. G., & Khristian, H. (2024). Longitudinal effects of dog ownership, dog acquisition, and dog loss on children's movement behaviours: findings from the PLAYCE cohort study. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 21, 7. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-023-01544-9>

Robinson, T., Dhamrait, G., Murray, K., Boruff, B., Duncan, J., Schipperijn, J., & Christian, H. (2024). Association between preschooler outdoor play and home yard vegetation as measured by high resolution imagery: Findings from the PLAYCE study. *Health Place*, 85, 103178. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2024.103178>

Our research programs

PEOPLE

PLACES

OPPORTUNITIES

Electrification and lower-income households

It is recognised that there needs to be a shift to renewable electricity for decarbonisation. But what helps or hinders low-income Australian households to transition away from gas? New research by the Life Course Centre investigated how people adapt to the transition from gas to electric appliances, focusing on the challenges and opportunities presented by electrification. The study combined surveys and focus group discussions to assess adaptive capacity and energy poverty, providing deeper insights into what a just transition should look like, and the supports that are needed. Findings indicate that while electrification can offer environmental benefits, it may also impose financial and practical burdens on lower-income households. The research underscores the need for targeted policies and support mechanisms to assist these households in navigating the energy transition, ensuring that electrification contributes to both environmental sustainability and social equity.

Chandrashekeran, S., de Bruyn, J., Sullivan, D., & Bryant, D. (2024). Electrification and lower-income households in Australia: An integrated analysis of adaptive capacity and hardship. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 116, 103688. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2024.103688>

20-minute neighbourhoods

Where you live can shape your opportunities. Rapid urbanisation is posing challenges for the equitable delivery of services to disadvantaged populations, including access to public transport, education, and health services. This research uses spatial data and vector-type data to examine people's access to essential services, including GPs, pharmacies, and childcare centres, in socio-economically disadvantaged areas. It examines what is needed to ensure neighbourhoods not only have the services that are needed, but also a match between the number of residents who need to use them and the capacity of childcare facilities, pharmacies, and GPs to provide them. This evidence-based research will help inform future urban planning to provide better integration of services to improve economic and health outcomes and address the challenges of growing populations. The research featured in *Pursuit* in an article titled 'How many 20-minute neighbourhoods does Melbourne really have?'

Melbourne, D. K. N., Dr Sachith Seneviratne and Professor Mark Stevenson, University of. (2024, May 31). *How many 20-minute neighbourhoods does Melbourne really have?* *Pursuit*. <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/how-many-20-minute-neighbourhoods-does-melbourne-really-have>

Our research programs

PEOPLE

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Cultural mapping

Life Course Centre research is exploring the relationship between the natural environment and the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Tati Tati Traditional Owners and community living on the Milloo (Murray River) near Robinvale, Victoria. This study, co-designed with Tati Tati leaders, involves collecting interview data on traditional resource use and land occupancy, presented through maps and story maps. These visual tools will support storytelling and engagement on the community's continuing connection to land and water, and strengthen understanding and connection to Country. They will also serve as an important tool for policy reform, aiming to improve water control, entitlements and tenure, and land resource management.

Commonwealth-funded cultural mapping project on Tati Tati Country along Murray River set to start. (2024, August 8). DAWE. <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/cewh/resources-media/news/commonwealth-funded-cultural-mapping-project-tati-tati-country-along-murray-river-set-to-start>

NEW
PROJECT

Incorporating children's voices

A new Place research program project, funded in 2024, aims to amplify the voices of children experiencing disadvantage living in urban growth areas to understand how neighbourhood environments can shape and support their mental health outcomes. Affordable housing shortages are pushing many families into fast-growing urban fringe suburbs that are typically low density, less walkable, and lack good access to essential services and infrastructure needed for daily life. There is increasing concern about how aspects of the neighbourhood may limit the opportunity and wellbeing of children and families experiencing disadvantage. Little is known about which built and social environment features are most crucial for children or how these factors shape mental health outcomes for children across urban growth and disadvantaged communities.

This study will fill that gap by engaging children and parents in co-designed workshops, which will help generate new insights and guide policymakers and practitioners in designing neighbourhoods that better support children's mental health. This project will ensure young people have the opportunity and resources needed to become local advocates for more inclusive, equitable, and child-friendly urban environments.

Our research programs

PEOPLE

PLACES

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 LEADER
Wojtek Tomaszewski (UQ)



DEPUTY
Tomasz Zając (UQ)

Our research programs

PEOPLE

PLACES

OPPORTUNITIES

Examining socio-economic disparities in higher education

Despite policy efforts to promote equitable access to higher education, socio-economic disparities in university participation persist. This study examined how social origins influenced university attendance across different levels of academic performance, offering new insights into the intersection of social background and educational achievement. Using multilevel models applied to large-scale Australian administrative and survey data, our research found that the impact of social origins on university participation was strongest for students with mid-range academic performance, diminishing at both high and low ends of the achievement spectrum. Additionally, this research explored different ways to capture socio-economic status (SES) as an indicator of social origins. The findings added to the evidence that parental education is a stronger predictor of university participation than parental occupation, reinforcing the importance of educational background in shaping students' trajectories. This study has policy implications, particularly for initiatives aimed at increasing university access for students from low SES backgrounds.

Tomaszewski, W., Xiang, N. & Kubler, M. (2024) Socio-economic status, school performance, and university participation: evidence from linked administrative and survey data from Australia. *Higher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-024-01245-7>

Enhancing children's journey through Out of Home Care

Children in out-of-home care are a highly vulnerable group who face enormous challenges over their life course. Their experiences can have life-long effects on their emotional, social, and cultural wellbeing. Despite government initiatives aimed at reducing the number of children in out-of-home care, the figures continue to rise. This three-year study, involving Life Course Centre researchers, examined the experiences of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children in out-of-home care and their social, emotional, and cultural outcomes over time and at key points. The project aimed to provide evidence to improve service agencies' understanding of children's experiences in out-of-home care and how agencies can best support families, carers, and communities to enhance the wellbeing of all these children.

One study in the project explored the emotional dynamics between foster and kinship carers and the birth parents of children in out-of-home care. Using qualitative data, the study revealed that carers experience a wide spectrum of emotions in their relationships with parents, some of which strengthen these relationships while others create distance. Our researchers also identified gaps in formal support systems for birth parents who often experience multiple crises in circumstances leading up to the removal of their children and increased trauma and

Our research programs

PEOPLE

PLACES

OPPORTUNITIES

isolation afterwards. The findings underscore the need for policy and practices that improve support for parents and carers in building and maintaining relationships – an outcome that would ultimately enhance the wellbeing of children in out-of-home care and help create a pathway to reunification with birth parents.

Healy, K., Venables, J., Povey, J., Baxter, J., Scull, S., Thompson, K., and Boman, M. (2024). The Emotional Terrain of Foster and Kinship Carers' Relationships with Parents of Children in Care: Carers' Perspectives. *Children and Youth Services Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chidyouth.2024.107672>

Venables, J., Povey, P., Kolesnikova, I., Thompson, K., Boman, M., Richmond, J., Healy, K., Baxter, J., Thwaite I., Hussain A. (2024). Children in Out-of-Home Care's Right to Family and Cultural Connection: Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australian Children's Perspectives. *Child Abuse & Neglect*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2024.107009>

Healy, K., Simpson Reeves, L., Boman, M., Kolesnikova, I., Povey, J., Venables, J., Baxter, J., and Thompson, K. (2024). The Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Children in Out-of-Home Care: A Scoping Review exploring Structural and Social Factors. *Children and Youth Services Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chidyouth.2024.107991>

Who earns what in Australian households

What impact does parenthood have on household earnings? This Life Course Centre study aimed to investigate the social and economic factors that influence how couples share the responsibility of earnings by focusing on three common household types: male-breadwinner, female-breadwinner, and equal-earner arrangements. Using national survey data spanning two decades, our research found that households where men are the primary earners still dominate. However, there has been growth in both equal-earner and female-breadwinner arrangements. Couples with similar levels of education and employment are more likely to share earning responsibilities. In contrast, when one partner – often the man – has higher qualifications or more stable employment, traditional male-breadwinner patterns tend to continue. The study also showed that female-breadwinner households are more common where men face lower job security or educational disadvantage, and they have the lowest overall earnings of all household types.

This research sheds light on how social and economic factors shape the way couples manage work and family life. It offers valuable evidence for those working on gender equality, family policy, and public initiatives that encourage women's investment in education and the workforce in Australia.

Steinbring, R., Perales, F., Baxter, J., & Lam, J. (2024). 'Characteristics of male-breadwinner, female-breadwinner and equal-earner households in Australia: The role of couple-level human capital', Life Course Centre Working Paper Series, 2024-11. Institute for Social Science Research, The University of Queensland. DOI: [10.14264/f39e3d0](https://doi.org/10.14264/f39e3d0)

Steinbring, R., Perales, F., Lam, J., and Baxter, J. (2024). Characteristics of Male-breadwinner, Female-breadwinner and Equal-earner Households in Australia: The Role of Couple-level Human Capital. *Australian Journal of Labour Economics*, 26 (2): 133-163. https://ajle.org/index.php/ajle_home/article/view/177

Our research programs

PEOPLE

PLACES

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Health, Home and Hope

What happens when people are ready for housing, but there is no housing ready for them? Life Course Centre research explored how individuals experiencing housing instability envision their futures, and what they consider right and actionable. To examine and understand these experiences, researchers interviewed participants living unhoused, in crisis accommodation, boarding houses, or in permanent supportive and social housing after exiting homelessness. To enhance the richness of the research, some participants used photography to express their experiences, feelings, and hope. The findings revealed uncertainty plays a significant role in the lives of people experiencing housing instability and it affects their opportunities for good mental and physical health. Separate research focused on a supportive housing program for women leaving intimate partner violence (IPV). The study identified key factors that perpetuate housing instability, including economic hardship, social isolation, and other systemic barriers. By understanding these social forces, policymakers and practitioners can develop more effective interventions to prevent and mitigate housing instability among this vulnerable population.

Kuskoff, E., Sharma, N., Stambe, R.-M., Plage, S., & Parsell, C. (2024). 'Moving, moving, moving': the social forces that perpetuate housing instability for women experiencing intimate partner violence. *Housing Studies*, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2024.2367650>

Plage, S., Stambe, R.-M., Parsell, C., & Kuskoff, E. (2024). Climbing, stalling, falling: How people experiencing housing instability anticipate their futures. *Journal of Sociology*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14407833241255151>

Plage, S., Parsell, C., Kuskoff, E., Stambe, R., Baker, K., & Mansuri, A. (2023). Health, Home, Hope – A research report on Inclusive Health and Wellness Partnerships. Brisbane, QLD, Australia. The University of Queensland

NEW
PROJECT

Understanding how Australian youth can thrive

A new Opportunities research program, funded in 2024, aims to identify the socio-ecological factors that drive, or support, better outcomes for young people aged 11 to 17, and their families, living in disadvantaged communities. The research focuses on this critical stage of development to better understand what helps young people thrive. The research team will combine qualitative analysis identifying key drivers associated with young people thriving, with in-depth examination exploring and understanding community perspectives.

The project will identify communities where young people and families have more positive outcomes, compared to otherwise similar communities, and focus on determining the socio-ecological factors that help to explain the diverse outcomes. The results will provide evidence for future interventions and policies aimed at supporting communities and fostering positive outcomes to help Australian youth thrive.

Our Impact

Impact Stories

People experiencing deep and persistent disadvantage in Australia often struggle to have their voices heard. Various factors can affect their ability to participate in, or influence, decision-making that impacts their lives. The Life Course Centre identifies opportunities for those with lived experience to contribute to and help inform research projects through their expertise, thereby playing a role in helping to shape policy and decision-making.

The Life Course Centre formalised its commitment to involving the community by establishing its national Community Advisory Committee in late 2023. The Committee comprises members with lived experience of disadvantage as well as backgrounds in community, advocacy, and charity organisations. It was created to provide community perspectives on research activities across the Centre and strengthen connections between researchers and communities. In 2024, the Committee completed its first full year of providing strategic advice and enhancing new Life Course Centre research projects.

Impact Stories

All in this together

Community-informed research insights

While our community-informed projects are researcher-led, input from the community is essential for the research and enriches the findings. These valuable insights ensure that the voices and experiences of those directly engaged are reflected in our research outcomes, enabling researchers investigating disadvantage over the life course to better address challenges and inform more effective policies that drive meaningful change.



The Life Course Centre supported program, Play Active, involved educators, families, and policy makers in research investigating the **physical activity of children aged birth to five years old**. Previous studies by the research team had found the physical activity of children in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings was declining due to sedentary routines and limited opportunities for active play. As physical activity is critical in early childhood to support physical health along with cognitive, emotional and psychosocial development, researchers worked closely with community members to identify barriers and ultimately design an evidence-based program to boost energetic play. Following the successful pilot study at Perth daycare centres, Play Active received government and non-government funding to scale up into a national program in 2024, which could eventually benefit more than 80,000 children at 700 childcare centres across Australia.



Community-informed evidence has been vital for Life Course Centre researchers at The Kids Research Institute Australia, engaged to evaluate the effectiveness of the Early Years Partnership (EYP). The Partnership is a 10-year commitment by the Western Australian State Government Departments of Communities, Health and Education, and Mindereroo Foundation to improve **child wellbeing and school readiness across four communities experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage** through a range of programs. In assessing the EYP's Dental Health Project, which aims to address the issue of poor oral health, the research team assessed interviews and surveys conducted with parents, caregivers, and stakeholders. The experiences and insights provided by community members and those directly involved in the project have been invaluable in shaping the key findings and recommendations for the program, which could help improve the life-long development, health, and learning trajectories of young children in these communities.

Impact Stories

All in this together

Community-informed research insights



Centre research continued to underscore the importance of early intervention in shaping positive outcomes for children. The Every Family 2 Population Trial studied how **evidence-based parenting programs are reflected in child maltreatment statistics in socially disadvantaged communities**. The multi-year study involved delivering parenting programs to more than 5,000 families across Queensland and New South Wales. Parent surveys and administrative data were integral components of the research project. Findings showed that providing structured, accessible parenting support is associated with a 25% decrease in confirmed child maltreatment cases, along with reduced out-of-home care placements and parenting stress. This study provided insights into ways to reduce child maltreatment.



Brotherhood
of St Laurence

Working for an Australia free of poverty

The challenges faced by households transitioning from natural gas to electricity in Victoria were explored by Centre researchers in partnership with the Brotherhood of St Laurence. The team engaged directly with people experiencing energy hardship or living on lower incomes to inform research, gathering firsthand insights into the barriers and enabling factors affecting the switch to electricity as the power grid shifts towards renewable energy. These perspectives, collected through surveys and focus groups, provided a deeper understanding of **the emerging divide and real-world impacts of the energy transition on disadvantaged communities**. The findings were released in a joint report with the Brotherhood of St Laurence by the Victorian Government Minister for Climate Action and Energy and Resources. Further analysis by researchers shed light on the variety of needs of lower-income households seeking to electrify. These findings can help inform, design, and deliver tailored supports for those experiencing energy hardship, contributing to efforts to bridge the decarbonisation divide.

Impact Stories

Lived experience

Community-involved research insights

Our community-involved research plays a vital role in ensuring research projects are relevant and responsive. The community actively participate and contribute to various stages of the research, enhancing the quality and applicability of our research. This collaborative approach recognises the deep knowledge people and organisations in the community provide, allowing for the exchange of information, experiences, and perspectives. By involving communities directly in the research process, researchers are better positioned to produce meaningful outcomes and contribute to policies and practices that support positive social change.

MISSION AUSTRALIA

In July 2024, the Life Course Centre and Mission Australia brought together a mix of key people with lived experience, lived expertise, and professional experience for a two-day co-designing workshop. The objective was to examine **how the Mission Australia Youth Survey's inbuilt wellbeing risk of harm notifications provided a bridge to appropriate supports for young people**. Through information sharing sessions and co-design activities, the group of researchers, youth-sector industry partners, school representatives, and young people sought to understand what happens after the notifications are sent to schools, and capture experiences, thoughts, and opinions relating to the management of student wellbeing. By bringing together a diverse range of people with a shared vision, the workshop identified a list of high priority next steps for the project, including consultation with young people, their families, and teachers to develop best practice approaches, and a toolkit to support teachers.



The Life Course Centre's research for the Survivor Experiences Report underscored the vital role of community input in addressing domestic violence. The Domestic Violence Action Centre (DVAC), which provides specialist services to survivors of gender-based violence in South-East Queensland, engaged our researchers to analyse their services. Working with DVAC staff, researchers conducted interviews with survivors who had engaged with DVAC's support services. Their voices and experiences shaped the research outcomes. These insights provided valuable perspectives on **the effectiveness of DVAC's support services, highlighted areas for improvement, and informed policy recommendations**. The research revealed that while DVAC's services were highly beneficial, challenges like wait times and limited capacity underscored the need for sustained funding to expand support services and drive meaningful change. Following the release of the report, a public webinar was held to present the key findings and discuss insights and opportunities for further dialogue among researchers, policymakers, and community stakeholders, fostering a collaborative approach to addressing domestic violence.

Impact Stories

Lived experience

Community-involved research insights



MICAH PROJECTS



Community-involved research on the Keeping Families Together program placed the voices and experiences of families, practitioners, and stakeholders at the heart of the study to capture the true impact of the program. This research, conducted in partnership with Micah Projects and Common Ground Queensland over three years, initially investigated the outcomes of the 12-month pilot program to provide secure housing and multidisciplinary support for 20 at-risk families. The research team's first evaluation in 2021 delivered evidence of the pilot program's effectiveness, which played a role in the Keeping Families Together program receiving a four-year extension. In 2024, the research team delivered a second report which assessed the **long-term impact of stable and supported housing on family outcomes**. The research demonstrated that sustained access to safe, affordable housing significantly reduced the risk of homelessness and family separation. The Keeping Families Together research reinforced the value of collaborative research in the Centre's approach to addressing complex social issues.

More information

Play Active

<https://playactive.org.au>

Early Years Partnership Dental Health Project

<https://earlyyearspartnership.org.au/blog/facilitating-young-children-access-to-dental-care-in-rural-western-australia/>

Every Family 2 Population Trial

<https://lifecoursecentre.org.au/news/centre-research-shows-positive-parenting-strategies-can-reduce-child-maltreatment/>

Electrification and Lower Income Households in Australia

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2024.103688>

Mission Australia Youth Survey Workshop

<https://lifecoursecentre.org.au/news/collaborative-workshop-co-designs-well-being-support-for-young-people/>

Survivor Experiences Report

<https://lifecoursecentre.org.au/events/a-way-forward/>

Keeping Families Together Study Report

<https://www.micahprojects.org.au/resources/resources/publications/keeping-families-together-study-report-second-report>

Recognition of Excellence

We are immensely proud of the achievements of our researchers across all career stages and nodes of the Life Course Centre. In 2024, we celebrated our Centre members who secured prestigious grants for research aligned with the Centre, received awards recognising their contributions to research, and reached significant milestones as students. Here are some highlights showcasing the success of our Centre members.

Grants

Professor Karen Healy, Associate Investigator, secured a grant from the Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Projects scheme to help transform Australian child protection systems by building capability in peer-parent and family advocacy.

Professor Abdullah Mamum, Chief Investigator, and **Associate Professor Yaqoot Fatima**, Associate Investigator, secured a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases grant to investigate preventing non-communicable diseases among Indigenous children and youth in major cities of Australia.

Dr Cassandra Pattinson, Research Fellow, secured an ARC Discovery Early Career Researcher Award to improve understanding of the impact of artificial and environmental light on children's sleep, cognitive function and wellbeing.

Dr Ruihong Qiu, Research Fellow, secured an ARC Discovery Early Career Researcher Award to develop dynamic machine learning technology to support user decision-making on platforms such as e-commerce websites.

Professor Francis Mitrou, **Dr Vincent Mancini**, **Professor Steve Zubrick**, **Dr Vu Vuong**, and **Dr Jan Kabatek**, secured an ARC Discovery Projects grant to investigate how Australian fathers shape the trajectory of their children's wellbeing.

Professor Jennifer Smith-Merry, Research Fellow, secured an ARC Discovery Projects grant to investigate people with disability's full participation in the digital age by advancing a new conceptualisation of digital citizenship.

Professor Leah Ruppanner, Associate Investigator, secured an ARC Discovery Projects grant to investigate how workers, households and communities in Australia are reskilling in diverse ways.

Associate Professor Marian Vidal-Fernandez, Associate Investigator, secured an ARC Discovery Projects grant to measure the impact British colonialisation had on Australia on a range of socio-demographic and economic outcomes in the short and long-run.

Associate Professor Alyssa Milton, Research Fellow, was awarded funding from the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) to conduct a hybrid-II implementation-effectiveness trial of a peer-supported self-management tools for young people in preparation for early intervention in psychosis service discharge.

Professor Nick Glozier, Chief Investigator, is part of a team that was awarded MRFF funding for a project to test a new service model to address the unmet psychological needs of teens during the wait time for mental health treatment.

Other funding

Dr Elizabeth Stratton, Research Fellow, received a grant from the Moyira Elizabeth Vine and Tim Haire Endowment Fund

Professor Francis Mitrou, Chief Investigator, was awarded a Stan Perron Charitable Foundation Health Research Grant

Dr Aaron Schokman, Research Fellow, was awarded an American Academy of Sleep Medicine Foundation grant

Awards and Honours

US National Academy of Sciences

Professor Janeen Baxter, Centre Director, was elected as an international member to the US National Academy of Sciences in recognition of her distinguished and continuing achievements in original research.

Australia Day 2024 Honours

Professor Deborah Cobb-Clark, Chief Investigator, was appointed as an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in the General Division. For distinguished service to economic research, to tertiary education, and to the social sciences

Associate Professor Hayley Christian, Chief Investigator, was appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the General Division. For significant service to children's health through policy development and research

2025 Research Magazine

Professor Alina Morawska, Chief Investigator, was recognised as the leading researcher in the field of Family Studies in *The Australian 2025 Research Magazine*.

Professor Leah Ruppner, Associate Investigator, was recognised as the leader in the field of Sociology in *The Australian 2025 Research Magazine*.

University research awards

Dr Ella Kuskoff, Research Fellow
The University of Queensland Foundation Research Excellence Award

Associate Professor Yaqoot Fatima, Research Fellow
The University of Queensland Early to Mid-Career Researcher Industry Engagement Award

Let's Yarn About Sleep project
The University of Queensland Cultural Awards: Public Engagement & Community-led Research Award

Dr Stefanie Plage, Research Fellow
The University of Queensland HASS Early to Mid-Career Researcher Industry Impact Award

Dr April Hoang, Research Fellow
The University of Queensland HaBS Early Career Academic Research Accelerator Award

Dr Ferdi Botha, Research Fellow
University of Melbourne Deans' Excellence Awards: Prize for Exceptional Distinction in Research – Research Excellence

Other awards

Professor Nick Glozier, Chief Investigator, was named the winner of the 2024 RPA Research Foundation Medal for his work in the treatment of chronic and disabling mood disorders, and improving functional outcomes in mental health

Associate Professor Alyssa Milton, Research Fellow, received the 2024 Society for Mental Health Research Rising Star Award

Student successes

Doctor of Philosophy

Dr Maria Francisca Donoso Rivas (UQ)

Dr Anna Loeffler (UQ)

Dr Daniel Pejic (Melb)

Dr Elizabeth Wenden (The Kids/UWA)

Dr Imogen Carr (Melb)

Dr Meredith Burgess (UQ)

Dr Edmund Kanmiki (UQ)

Dr Laura Simpson Reeves (UQ)

Master's by Coursework

Antionette Rendeiro (USyd)

Claudy Gewani (USyd)

Helen Nguyen (USyd)

Keisha Christie (USyd)

Maria Yuliana Dumin (Melb)

Renee Bilston (USyd)

Master's by Research

Emma Kaye (Melb)

Madeline Frohlich (Melb)

Communications

The Centre continued to employ a multi-channel communications approach in 2024 to engage with targeted audiences, including policymakers, government and non-government organisations, partners, academia, and the community. By using a diverse range of channels – including social media, websites, media, blogs, and newsletters – we communicated Centre research and findings, along with news on members, achievements, and events to our audience. This strategic approach not only enhanced the reach and visibility of our research but also facilitated knowledge exchange and connections.

In 2024, the Centre welcomed a new Media and Communications Officer, Belinda McDougall, who brings extensive communications and broadcast journalism experience. At the end of 2024, the Centre also appointed its Visual Communications Officer, Heidi Minchin, with an expanded role. Along with established communication strategies, together Belinda and Heidi are strengthening the Centre's visual communication outputs to enhance research impact, knowledge transfer, and expand our audience across multiple channels in the second half of the Centre's seven-year funding period.

Here are some of our key communications activities in 2024.

Media highlights

In 2024, Life Course Centre researchers actively shared their expertise with a wider audience across print, podcasts, radio, and online media. They offered insights and evidence-based research findings into a range of issues related to disadvantage across the life course in Australia. Some media highlights include:

How many 20-minute neighbourhoods does Melbourne really have?

Pursuit, 31 May 2024

Loneliness in the workplace is greatest among men with traditional views about being the breadwinner

The Conversation, 16 July 2024

Meals matter for brain development

A Grey Matter podcast, July 2024

How is digital technology affecting our kids' sleep?

360info, 22 July 2024

Australia needs permanent supportive housing to end homelessness – and it will pay for itself

The Conversation, 8 August 2024

Narcolepsy is reduced to a punch line in pop culture. What does that mean for people who live with it?

The Conversation, 3 September 2024

Pregnant mother with 'guaranteed income' left homeless after almost 100 unsuccessful rental applications

ABC News, 29 October 2024

Anti-Poverty Week

Anti-Poverty Week and the annual awareness-raising efforts in October remained a key focus of our communications activities in 2024. In the lead up to the national Anti-Poverty Week campaign (13-19 October), Chief Investigator Professor Cameron Parsell and his research team released key findings and recommendations from the Keeping Families Together Study Report. This research examined the long-term impact of a supportive housing program for at-risk families. The findings were presented at a special event in Brisbane, attended by representatives from government and non-government organisations, people with lived experience, researchers, and community members.

We leveraged our communication channels to promote our Anti-Poverty Week awareness activities through a targeted social media campaign, website articles, and content in both internal and external newsletters. Additionally, we coordinated and supported Centre researchers in writing a series of blog articles on a range of topics, which were published on The Power to Persuade – an independent platform for social policy discussion – in October. Our articles generated strong engagement, with 3,700 unique visitors and 4,500 views on the Power to Persuade website during the release and promotion period.

The Big Question: How can we help end child poverty in Australia?

Professor Cameron Parsell and Dr Ella Kuskoff (UQ), Professor Guyonne Kalb and Dr Barbara Broadway (Melb), Dr Alice Campbell (UQ)

How food insecurity is biting: Australians are going hungry

Dr Chandana Maitra (Syd)

Unlocking why mealtimes matter in early childhood centres for disadvantaged communities

Dr Bonnie Searle (UQ)

Social Media

The Centre continued to use social media platforms – X, Facebook, and LinkedIn – to enhance its outreach. A key focus of the communications strategy in 2024 was to increase the Centre's presence on LinkedIn. As a result, the Centre's posts totalled more than 20,000 impressions and 459 reactions, contributing to a 44% increase in followers, reaching 720 by the end of the year.

Analysis and Policy Observatory (APO)

The Centre leveraged APO to enhance the visibility, discoverability, accessibility, and impact of its research. APO, an open access evidence platform, serves more than 800,000 website users and 15,000 newsletter subscribers, making it a vital resource for anyone engaged in policy work. As a result, selected Life Course Centre Working Paper publications were featured on APO in 2024 to extend their reach to a larger audience.

Newsletters

The Centre newsletters are important communication channels for both internal and external stakeholders. In 2024, *The Source* – the Centre's internal newsletter – kept Centre members and affiliates across four nodes informed, engaged, and connected through 17 editions. The external newsletter, shared with stakeholders, partners, and subscribers, showcased the Centre's latest research, events, publications, news, and media coverage. Two editions were distributed to around 2,000 recipients, achieving an average open rate of 32% – exceeding Vision 6's industry benchmark of 20–30%.

Video content

Producing video content is a new communications initiative for the Centre, designed to build stronger connections with audiences in a more engaging and impactful way to share key research and messages. To celebrate our 10-year anniversary, a special video was produced to showcase the Centre's journey, research impact, and future direction. This involved scriptwriting, coordinating the filming of eight chief investigators at four universities across Australia, and overseeing the professional editing. The video was first shared at the Life Course Centre Research Retreat as part of our 10-year anniversary celebrations. The video was intentionally scripted and produced for adaptability, allowing it to be edited into shorter pieces for a range of communication opportunities. These vignettes will support the Centre's website, 2025 social media strategy, and stakeholder engagement efforts – helping inform and connect with existing and new audiences about the Centre's achievements and research programs.

Our Activity

2024 Calendar

February/March

VISITOR

Professor Ariel Kalil
Life Course Centre
Associate Investigator
University of Chicago

26 February

LIFE COURSE CENTRE SEMINAR SERIES

Raising Futures:
Narrowing the Skill Gap
between Advantaged and
Disadvantaged Children

*Presented by Professor Ariel Kalil,
University of Chicago*

5 March

TRAINING

Introduction to Qualitative
Research

*Training facilitated by Dr Stefanie
Plage and Dr Rose Stambe*

12 April

MENTORING

Meet the Researcher
Life Course Centre
Deputy Director, Professor
Deborah Cobb-Clark

23 April

LIFE COURSE SEMINAR SERIES

Results from the Every
Family 2 trial

*Presented by Professor Matthew
Sanders and Dr Kylie Burke*

3 May

LIFE COURSE CENTRE SEMINAR SERIES

Let's Yarn About Sleep: A
community-led research
program for improving
First Nations Australians'
sleep health

*Hosted by First Nations Research
Portfolio. Presented by Associate
Professor Yaqoot Fatima, Roslyn
Von Senden, and Alvin Hava*

13 May

TRAINING

ABS Data Integration

*Presented by Associate Professor
Cain Polidano*

28 May

LIFE COURSE CENTRE SEMINAR SERIES

Exploring the impact of
social experience on child
development and autism

*Presented by Professor Lane
Strathearn, The University of Iowa*

29 May

ROUNDTABLE

Tackling Poverty and
Disadvantage Through
Data, Perth

*Presented by the Life Course
Centre in partnership with
Breaking Down Barriers*

27 June

WORKSHOP

Neuroeconomics of
disadvantage
Delivered by Professor
Agnieszka Tymula

28 June

TRAINING

Sharing your story:
the how and why of
communicating your
research

*Delivered by Associate Professor
Jen Martin*

July

VISITOR

Professor Cathrine
Egeland, Oslo
Metropolitan University,
Norway

3 July

LIFE COURSE CENTRE SEMINAR SERIES

The third and fourth shift
of everyday life in families
in Norway – findings and
analyses from NORLIFE

*Presented by Professor Cathrine
Egeland, Oslo Metropolitan
University*

17 July

MENTORING

Meet the Researcher
Life Course Centre
Director, Professor
Janeen Baxter

24–25 July

FORUM

ARC Centres of Excellence Professional Staff Forum, Brisbane

29 July

LIFE COURSE CENTRE SEMINAR SERIES

The Shape of Forgetting

Presented by Professor Johannes Haushofer, National University of Singapore and Stockholm University

30–31 July

WORKSHOP

Turning Youth Mental Health Research into Real-World Action, Sydney

Co-hosted by the Life Course Centre and Mission Australia

15–16 August

WORKSHOP

26th Labour Econometric Workshop (LEW), Brisbane

Partially sponsored by Life Course Centre

19 August

WORKSHOP

Indigenous Data Governance Workshop, Gold Coast

Facilitated by Brendan Kennedy and Dr Sangeetha Chandrashekeran

20–21 August

CONFERENCE

National Life Course Centre Research Retreat, Gold Coast

22 August

TRAINING

Co-design workshop for ECRs, Gold Coast

Facilitated by the Life Course Centre's Capacity Building and Knowledge Transfer portfolios

28 August

LIFE COURSE CENTRE SEMINAR SERIES

Understanding the Geographic Variation in Disability Insurance

Presented by Professor Timothy Moore, Purdue University, with Amanda Michaud and David Wiczer

19 September

WORKSHOP

The ARC Life Course Centre International Data for Policy Workshop, Chicago USA

24 September

WORKSHOP

Housing Model Workshop

Facilitated by the Life Course Centre's Places Program

2 October

LIFE COURSE CENTRE SEMINAR SERIES

Intergenerational norms and work-care ambition for (Dutch) fathers

Presented by Assistant Professor Stéfanie André, Radboud University, Netherlands

12 November

MENTORING

How to Have Difficult Conversations

Presented by Professor Deborah Cobb-Clark and Professor Nick Glozier

25 November

PUBLIC WEBINAR

A way forward: How lived experience informs prevention and healing from domestic, family and sexual violence

Presented by the Life Course Centre and Domestic Violence Action Centre

26 November

TRAINING

Presenting with Confidence, Brisbane

Delivered by NIDA

27–28 November

CENTRE SCHOOL

Centre School for HDRs, Brisbane

Capacity Building Portfolio

Our Capacity Building Portfolio had another strong and successful year. Focused on supporting and developing the next generation of life course researchers, the Portfolio continued to provide a range of initiatives to Early Career Researchers and Higher Degree by Research students in 2024. These included a comprehensive program of training opportunities, awards to support career and professional development, and mentoring initiatives.

Centre School and NIDA Presenting with Confidence

In November, around 30 Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students from across our four Australian university nodes attended the Centre School for HDRs in Brisbane. The two-day program was tailored to support HDRs by providing essential information, developing key soft skills to help them excel, and offering them the opportunity to connect with peers. Day one sessions included a panel discussion with recent PhD graduates who shared their knowledge and experiences, insights into publishing research, and how to pitch and present research. Day two looked to the future, with sessions exploring how to build resilience as a researcher, identify and showcase research skills to potential employees, and navigate post-PhD pathways.

Many of the Life Course Centre HDRs who attended the Centre School in Brisbane also took part in a specialised professional training course, delivered by the National Institute for Dramatic Arts (NIDA). The 'Presenting with Confidence' workshop provided Centre members with practical techniques to boost their public speaking skills in an interactive and practical one-day course. Participants learned how to structure their content, use timing

effectively, and harness their vocal and physical presence to deliver their messages with confidence. At the end of the day, they were given the chance to put their new skills into practice and present in front of the group.

ECR Training Day and Seed Funding Scheme

Our Capacity Building Portfolio, in collaboration with the Knowledge Transfer Portfolio, held a full day of training for Early Career Researchers (ECRs) following our Research Retreat in August. HDRs were invited to join ECRs for a workshop on co-design, facilitated by Associate Professor Jeremy Kerr, author of 'The Art of Co-Design'. Attendees from across our four nodes left with a deeper understanding of co-design principles, equipped with practical tools to integrate these concepts into their own research, fostering more collaborative and innovative projects.

A new competitive funding initiative, delivered in partnership with the Research Committee, was established for ECRs in 2024. The ECR Seed Funding Scheme encouraged applicants to form interdisciplinary and cross-nodal teams to develop a project before presenting it to an audience that included members of the Centre Advisory Committee and Centre Research

Committee. The pitches were delivered in a ‘Shark Tank’ style event at the Research Retreat in August. Six teams were successful, with \$60,000 in funding awarded to ECRs.

2024 Capacity Building Awards

Across three rounds of funding, \$60,000 was awarded to 16 successful applicants in 2024. Recipients used the funding for a range of activities, including attending and presenting at conferences, joining workshops and forums, building connections, and pursuing learning and professional development opportunities. These included Dr Nikita Sharma (UQ) who received funds to attend the Oxford Spring School in Advanced Research Methods in April. While at the University of Oxford, Nikita also received mentoring from Dr Madeleine Sumption, Director of the Migration Observatory and a policy specialist focusing on the impacts of migration policies.

Early-career researcher Dr Elizabeth Stratton (Sydney) received funds from the Capacity Building Award in 2024 to adapt her Disability Inclusion Training for the Workplace program into an interactive online eLearning Course. Elizabeth will transform the in-person training into a self-paced online course, allowing delivery to a wider audience and promoting disability inclusion knowledge and best practices.

Centre student George Normore (UQ) was awarded funds to complete a three-month lab stay at the University of Oslo in Norway. There, he received intensive training in quantitative analysis techniques from leading experts in longitudinal modelling of child and family datasets, presented his research, and connected with peers.

“The Life Course Centre Capacity Building Award made it possible for me to engage with leading experts, expand my understanding of care ethics, and explore its relevance in my research.”

Saltanat Kamerova
HDR, Melb

“I developed a better understanding of community involvement and co-design, how it was done in different research projects and the key facilitators and barriers... [and] I observed the process of how a group of senior researchers can work collaboratively to generate project ideas.”

Tianyi Ma
HDR, UQ

“[I returned] with a new set of questions and a refined perspective. This research trip profoundly influenced my approach and solidified my path forward.”

Dr Ana Gamarra Rondinel
ECR, Melb

First Nations Research Portfolio

The First Nations Research Portfolio had its first full year of operation in 2024, with several major milestones. In June 2024, the First Nations Research Portfolio undertook a knowledge exchange trip to Aotearoa/New Zealand to explore how Indigenous Data Governance is approached and implemented in that context. The trip aimed to understand how local cultural perspectives shape governance frameworks, and to strengthen relationships with researchers and institutions across the Tasman.

During the visit, the Portfolio engaged with researchers from several institutions, including Te Kotahi Research Institute (University of Waikato), the Centre for Methods and Policy Application in the Social Sciences (Auckland University), Langimalie Research Centre, Fofonga for Pacific Research Excellence, the Pacific Island Families Study (Auckland University of Technology), and Whakauae Research Services – the only iwi-owned Māori health research centre in Aotearoa – located in Whanganui.

Since the trip, we have continued to strengthen these connections through conference engagement and online collaboration. Several researchers have been invited to Australia to contribute to Life Course Centre-aligned conferences and research initiatives. We are also developing a joint research project with Whakauae Research Services – supported by seed funding from the Indigenous Knowledge Institute at the University of Melbourne – focused on collaborative frameworks for Indigenous healing.

Indigenous Data Governance Workshop

The Indigenous Data Governance Workshop was a half-day event held in August prior to the Life Course Centre's Research Retreat, for Centre Chief Investigators and other research leaders. Hosted by Portfolio Leader Brendan Kennedy, the event featured Natalie Seigel-Brown, Productivity Commissioner; Sharif Deen, Head of Secretariat for the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations; and Associate Professor Andrew Sporle from the University of Auckland. The workshop explored the rapid development of Indigenous Data Governance, shared decision making, and the evolving landscape of research practices as they relate to First Nations people. The purpose of the workshop was to inform the research leadership of the critical issues to be considered from the field, and to build an understanding of how Indigenous Data Governance principles can be enacted in practical ways in research on disadvantage.

Brendan Kennedy was joined by the co-leader of the portfolio, Dr Sangeetha Chandrashekeran, and workshop presenters for a panel on First Nations Research on the first day of the Centre's Research Retreat.

Mid-term review

In preparation for the mid-term review, the First Nations Portfolio Leaders prepared a report for the Centre Executive outlining issues and challenges facing the Centre in relation to integration of First Nations perspectives and principles across the Centre. This extensive report covered Indigenous Data Governance, current Centre projects and capacity for new projects, opportunities, and recommendations. Brendan and Sangeetha were interviewed by the ARC panel, and the ARC's subsequent report placed significant emphasis on First Nations recommendations.

Major initiatives arising from the review include commitments to employing First Nations researchers, developing new First Nations projects – with associated new partnerships – and knowledge transfer materials specifically for First Nations audiences. Delivery of the commitments is the responsibility of the Centre as a whole, informed and guided by the First Nations Research Portfolio.

First Nations Research Enabling Scheme

In December, the Portfolio awarded the first grants under the First Nations Research Enabling Scheme. Seven grants of up to \$10,000 each were awarded, covering projects in the following areas:

Finalising the development of the First Nations Parent Wellbeing Scale to ensure cultural sensitivity and safety of the wording and imagery used in a new questionnaire. The measure has been developed in collaboration with the Cherbourg community.

Supporting Aboriginal children and families during the transition to school in Armadale, Western Australia. The project responds directly to a need identified by the community and aims to develop and deliver a trauma-informed program that supports Aboriginal families by using a Community-Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR) approach.

Impact of Climate Change on Indigenous Health: by conducting a comprehensive literature review and engaging directly with Indigenous communities, the project will develop a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between climate change and Indigenous health.

Empowering First Nations in advancing maternal and perinatal health outcomes through comprehensive research initiatives including capacity building activities, evidence synthesis, knowledge generation and translation.

Exploring the usage, adaptation, and need of audio-visual asthma management aid for better asthma management in First Nations People, through co-design of community resources.

Breaking the silence: the role of social and environmental determinants and community insights on Rheumatic Heart Disease in Indigenous Australians.

Socioecological and cultural associations of sleep health among First Nations adolescents in Australia: the project is supported and approved by the Inala Community Jury for Health Research and is grounded in the health priorities of the First Nations community in Inala.

Knowledge Transfer Portfolio

2024 was a year of growth and transformation for the Knowledge Transfer Portfolio. Building on its established foundations of training, resources, and identifying and promoting innovative ways to translate research for the community and stakeholder groups, the Portfolio advanced key initiatives, including those led by the Community Advisory Committee.

Strengthening Knowledge Transfer

In 2024, the Portfolio launched an initiative to develop centre-wide best practice guides and training to enhance the uptake and impact of knowledge transfer activities. This project commenced with the creation of the first resource in a planned suite of assets.

The Community Advisory Committee guide is designed for Centre researchers and students, outlining the benefits of co-design research. It provides essential information and practical tips for integrating lived experience into research aimed at addressing deep and persistent disadvantage in Australia.

Community Involvement Fund

2024 was the first full year of the Centre's Community Advisory Committee, which was established to provide community perspectives on research activities across the Centre and strengthen connections between our researchers and communities.

A key initiative of the Committee was to establish the Community Involvement Fund, which provides small grants to Centre members to enable them to undertake community involvement activities. These activities can range from meetings and gaining community input on projects to holding community forums or discussions. These grants will be used by researchers to commence, increase, or enhance community involvement activities. Three rounds of funding will be awarded to Centre members in 2025.

Knowledge Transfer Awards

Dr Bonnie Searle was the 2023 Knowledge Transfer Innovation Award recipient for early to mid-career researchers. In 2024, she used her award to initiate a knowledge transfer plan aimed at translating her research on improving food provision in Early Childhood Education and Care within communities experiencing disadvantage. In addition to funding, Bonnie has received in-kind support from the Centre's communications team to script and begin production on an educational video for childcare educators. Drawing on her research, the video will inform and offer practical methods to help promote healthy eating and ensure mealtimes matter for young children.

In 2024, the Knowledge Transfer Awards were expanded to recognise the impact of knowledge translation, with six awards available across three categories. The 2024 recipients were:

Outstanding Leadership Award

Dr Azhar Hussain Potia
PROJECT: Transition to secondary school: Supporting successful educational pathways of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

Innovation Awards

Dr Sandy Houen
PROJECT: Making moments matter: Co-designed resources to promote optimal adult-child interactions

Dr Elizabeth Stratton
PROJECT: Bridging the Gap: Digital Solutions for Inclusive Employment of Individuals with Invisible Disabilities

Rising Star Awards

Dr Laura Simpson Reeves
PROJECT: Integrating Sāmoan diaspora conceptualisations of 'the good life' into practice

Merrick Morley
PROJECT: Life between Apartments

Dr Edmund Kanmiki
PROJECT: Sharing Knowledge, Improving Community Health: A Tripartite Approach to Diabetes Prevention and Management in Indigenous Youth



Recipients of the 2024 Knowledge Transfer Awards with the Knowledge Transfer Portfolio leaders:

Left-right: Azhar Potia, Edmund Kanmiki, Aaron Schokman and Alyssa Milton, Elizabeth Stratton, Laura Simpson Reeves.

Data for Policy Portfolio

A key initiative of the Life Course Centre in 2024 was establishing Data for Policy as a formal portfolio. Since 2014, our Data for Policy agenda has played a leading role in bringing together researchers, government data custodians, and community sector leaders to explore ways to fully utilise administrative data in addressing deep and persistent disadvantage. The consolidation of this work into a portfolio means the highly important agenda of our Data for Policy committee can continue, with the addition of dedicated staff and a dedicated budget.

Our sustained efforts over the past 10 years to increase access to linked administrative data for research were reflected in the Australian Government's 2023–2024 budget commitment to a new Life Course Data initiative. This initiative is building an important new data capability and developing a new integrated data asset designed to support local decision-making and enhance government funding to improve long-term outcomes. Through our Data for Policy Portfolio, the Life Course Centre will continue to investigate ways to advocate for access to large datasets to generate new insights that inform evidence-based research.



Highlights from the Data for Policy Workshop held at the International Population Data Linkage Network Conference in Chicago:

1. **Left-right:** Carla McCarthy (UQ), Janeen Baxter (UQ) Andrew Sporle (University of Auckland), Mark Western (UQ), Francis Mitrou (The Kids/UWA).
2. Plenary Discussion "The Australian linked data setting".
3. Marcel van Kints (ABS) presenting, "Administrative data linkage for policy and research in Australia: Perspectives The Australian Bureau of Statistics".
4. Rachel Christie (Mission Australia) "Integrating non-government and civil society data to support social and health program evaluation".
5. Claire Sparke (AIHW) "Administrative data linkage for policy and research in Australia: Perspectives The Australian Bureau of Statistics".
6. Julia Lane (NYU) "Lessons learned from building linked data infrastructures".
7. Vanessa De Rubei (WHO) "Framework for Healthy Ageing over the Life Course".



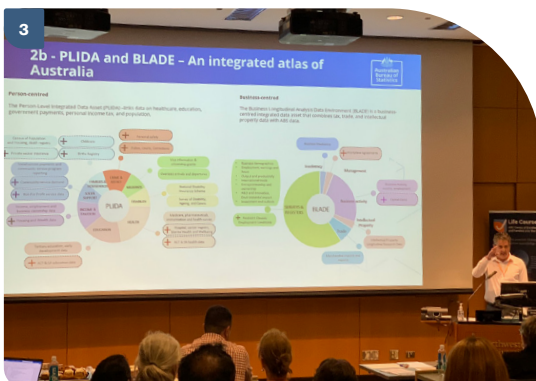
Chicago Workshop

In September, we hosted our Life Course Centre International Data for Policy Workshop in Chicago, USA. This one-day event followed the International Population Data Linkage Network Conference and focused on identifying key factors that support the development of socially acceptable, next generation linked data ecosystems. By bringing together researchers, government representatives, non-government representatives, and experts, the workshop sought to advance approaches that deliver higher standards in research, evaluation, and policy.

The program featured high-calibre presentations from Australian and international speakers, including Julia Lane (New York University), Nancy Potok (former Chief Statistician of the United States), Vanessa De Rubeis (World Health Organisation), Claire Spark (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare), and Marcel van Kints (Australian Bureau of Statistics). These presentations showcased Australia's current state of play in linked, longitudinal life course data and contrasted it with international approaches, prompting discussions that explored and provided critical insights to inform future data infrastructure and governance.

Recommendations generated from the workshop event included developing best practice guidelines for integrating NGO service data into government-funded linked data systems, standardising user accreditation that can be recognised across multiple data systems, and building evaluation funding into NGO service contracts. Additionally, participants emphasised the importance of establishing Community Data Labs to facilitate access and usability of data for non-expert users.

Looking ahead, the Data for Policy Portfolio will determine how to prioritise our approach to the points identified and gain a better understanding of how we could pursue them in partnership with key stakeholders domestically and internationally.



Our Strategic Plan

Activity Plan 2025

Once again, we will be delivering a very wide range of events and opportunities in 2025. There will be a significant emphasis on expanding and consolidating our national and international networks, leading towards the development of our Life Course Roadmap (to be launched in 2027). There will also be a significant emphasis on work with First Nations communities and academic leaders, specifically in response to our mid-term review recommendations.

Leadership and Governance

The **Executive Committee** has primary responsibility for ensuring the Centre's commitments in the mid-term review response will be met. Many of these commitments involve First Nations Research, including two major projects and a significant investment in paid positions for First Nations researchers. While the Research Committee and portfolio committees will make valuable contributions to meeting these goals, ultimately, they will require Centre-wide coordination and effort. To this end, the Executive Committee will oversee an audit of Centre projects to inform best practice research for projects affecting or involving First Nations communities. As the Centre moves past its mid-point, the Executive Committee is tightening its scrutiny of expenditure and forward planning, to ensure a strong finish to the current funding period.

The **Advisory Committee** played a significant role in the mid-term review. We would like to thank all members for their engagement with the Centre's submission and the response to the review. We would also like to thank Professor Nicholas Biddle for agreeing to be part of the mock interview panel organised by UQ. We would like to thank the Committee Chair, Professor Peter Saunders, and committee members Marilyn Chilvers, Kate Liley, and Toni

Wren for agreeing to be interviewed by the ARC panel. In 2025, the Advisory Committee will take a leading role in shaping the Life Course Roadmap process. We welcome the new members who will be part of this process. During 2024, we welcomed Mr James Bates, who replaced our longtime partner representative Marilyn Chilvers from the NSW Government Department of Customer Service, and Dr Michelle King, Chair of the Centre's Community Advisory Committee. Toni Wren moved from Executive Director of Anti-Poverty Week to Principal Adviser, Single Mother Families Australia, but remains on the committee. In 2025 we will welcome Marsha Reid from Anglicare WA, who replaces Dr Shae Garwood on the committee.

The **Community Advisory Committee** was established in 2023 to bring life experience more directly into the Centre's research program. It extended its engagement significantly across the Centre in 2024. As well as the committee chair, Michelle King joining the Centre Advisory Committee, Dr Marcus Horwood and Anita Siegersma joined the Research Committee. Michelle King and Sally Bin Lee attended the Research Retreat, where their lived experience perspectives were gladly received by Centre researchers. And Michelle King also participated in the Centre's Leadership Planning Day in October 2024, bringing a lived

experience perspective directly to bear on the Centre's strategic planning process. In 2025, a primary focus of the Community Advisory Committee will be a structured priority setting process, which will help shape the direction of the Centre's research for the remainder of the grant.

The **Research Committee** has two goals – to ensure the quality of the Centre's research and its compliance with the Centre proposal, and to develop and support the Centre's research strategy. In 2024, the Committee reviewed all three research programs for progress against their goals, in order to inform the mid-term review. As well as steering the Research Retreat, the Committee also ran a “Shark Tank” style pitch session at the Research Retreat, and subsequently funded five cross-nodal projects for up to \$10,000 each. In 2025, the Committee will have a significant focus on larger-scale, community-led projects. This will include projects arising from the Community Advisory Committee's priority-setting process, and the two First Nations life course projects we have committed to in 2025 in our response to the mid-term review.

Capacity Building Portfolio

Based on survey responses from Centre members, the Portfolio Committee has determined a suite of initiatives to deliver in 2025:

- The **Capacity Building Award** has demonstrated that it represents significant value for money in delivering capacity building outcomes to Centre members. In 2024, the portfolio expanded the award to include early-career research professionals and will therefore allocate additional funding in 2025.

- In 2025, the portfolio will continue to promote the **Diverse Advisory Grant Scheme**.
- Following the success of the **ECR Seed Funding** at the Retreat, the Committee has also allocated \$30,000 for a similar scheme in 2025.
- The Portfolio has received outstanding feedback for its **Centre Schools for ECRs and HDRs**. The Centre aims to deliver another Centre School for ECRs in 2025, with a different format and focus.
- The Portfolio will also deliver a two-day in-person forum to offer **targeted training**, as identified by members in the Capacity Building survey. These sessions will be largely delivered by Centre members.
- The Portfolio will also deliver a suite of workshops to build capacity in Centre members around research and engagement with **First Nations** organisations, communities, and data. The **workshops** will focus on a range of topics, as identified by Centre members and refined in partnership with the First Nations Research Portfolio.

Data for Policy Portfolio

The Data for Policy Portfolio has two main areas of focus for 2025:

Formulate **Draft Guidelines for NGO Data Integration** to outline a vision for routine integration of NGO service data into Australian linked data assets to support program evaluation.

Host the **National Data for Policy Workshop 2025 – Developing Guidelines for NGO Data Integration**. This will be held in Canberra in late October, with approximately 80 representatives from a broad range of NGOs and government departments. The Workshop aims to:

Activity Plan 2025

- Provide feedback and revisions for the Draft Guidelines
- Explore the possibility of a standard NGO data consent form, allowing easier coordination with government requirements
- Agree on a proof-of-concept project that links NGO service data into one of the national linked data assets for the purpose of program evaluation (ideally, supporting causal inference) that uses the Draft Guidelines for NGO Data Integration as its operational basis

In addition to these two major projects, the Portfolio will host a session at the International Life Course Conference 2025 and contribute to the special Linked Data Across the Life Course edition of the International Journal of Population Data Science.

First Nations Research Portfolio

The Centre's response to the mid-term review contains a number of commitments relating to First Nations Research. Many of these require a whole-of-Centre effort to deliver. The Activity Plan Budget below relates only to the activities that the portfolio will direct. Following these, there is also a summary of collaborative activities with other parts of the Centre.

- **Workshop for community researchers.** The proposed workshop will bring together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community researchers working on Life Course Centre projects. At this stage, we estimate that there are about 20 of these researchers and they have little direct connection to the Centre.
- As part of the Life Course Centre **seminar series**, the portfolio will identify presenters with particular experience in First Nations research, to expand

knowledge of best practice within the Centre.

- The Portfolio will prepare a **repository of case studies** for the benefit of Centre members. This will include exploring the governance arrangements, co-design principles, and costs of running high-quality First Nations research. Subsequent case studies may be developed through site visits and new collaborations.
- As part of the Centre's commitment to First Nations researchers, the portfolio leaders wish to invest in **recognised training for community researchers**.
- The portfolio will host a session at the International Life Course Conference 2025.

Collaborative Activities

- Audit of Centre research, with the Executive Committee.
- Indigenous Life Course projects, with the Research Committee.
- First Nations Knowledge Transfer, with the Knowledge Transfer Portfolio.
- Training for Centre members, with the Capacity Building Portfolio.
- Indigenous Data Sovereignty, with the Data for Policy Portfolio.

Knowledge Transfer Portfolio

The Knowledge Transfer Portfolio has the following areas of focus in 2025:

- Centre-wide implementation of Knowledge Transfer **best practice guides and training**.
- Additional **shorter training resources** (e.g. videos and digital resources) that provide a more agile approach to

knowledge transfer training across the full life cycle of a research project.

- **Knowledge Transfer Awards**, including Innovation, Rising Star and Outstanding Leadership awards.
- Updated reporting capability in the Centre's database, to better capture current knowledge transfer activities.
- Provide ongoing support to the Centre-wide national **Community Advisory Committee** and their associated initiatives.
- Manage the **Community Involvement Bank** that will provide small grants to Centre members to enable them to undertake initial community involvement activities.
- Develop and undertake 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 and Life Course Roadmap.

Collaborative Activities

- Co-design training in partnership with the Capacity Building Portfolio.
- First Nations Knowledge Transfer, with the First Nations Research Portfolio.

Our Performance

Financial Report

2024		
ARC	Institutional Co-Contributions	TOTAL 2024
\$	\$	\$

Income

ARC Centre of Excellence Grant

Base Income	4,591,001		4,591,001
Indexation on Base Income	765,159		765,159
TOTAL ARC	5,356,160		5,356,160

Administering and Collaborating Organisation Contributions

The University of Queensland		549,989	549,989
The University of Melbourne		201,000	201,000
The University of Western Australia		175,800	175,800
The University of Sydney		204,800	204,800
TOTAL ADMIN & COLLABORATING ORGANISATION CONTRIBUTIONS		1,131,589	1,131,589

Partner Organisation Contributions

Goodstart Early Learning		70,000	70,000
Department of Social Services		150,000	150,000
TOTAL PARTNER ORGANISATION CONTRIBUTIONS		220,000	220,000

Other Income/ Return of funds			0
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TOTAL INCOME	5,356,160	1,351,589	6,707,749
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2024		
ARC	Institutional Co- Contributions	TOTAL 2024
\$	\$	\$

Expenditure

Personnel	4,935,128	854,940	5,790,068
Equipment	240	966	1,206
Maintenance	16,409	0	16,409
Travel	149,868	135,550	285,418
Other	75,519	257,618	333,137
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	5,177,163	1,249,075	6,426,238

Annual Surplus/(Deficit)	178,997	102,514	281,511
FORECAST BROUGHT FORWARD FROM PREVIOUS YEAR	7,228,739	1,457,421	8,686,160
FORECAST TOTAL CARRYFORWARD TO NEXT YEAR	7,407,736	1,559,935	8,967,671

Key Performance Indicators

Performance Measure	Actual 2021	Actual 2022	Actual 2023	Actual 2024	Target 2024	Target 2025	Target 2026	Target 2027
1. Number of research outputs (total)	110	156	154	166	200	210	225	235
Journal articles	58	103	99	104	180	185	200	210
Books	1	2	1	0	2	3	3	3
Book chapters	8	5	4	2	10	12	12	12
Conference publications	10	14	6	17	10–15	10–15	10–15	10–15
Working papers / preprints	33	32	44	43	40–50	40–50	40–50	40–50
2. Quality of research outputs								
Indexed journal articles in top quartile journals (%)	73.1	76.6	79.80%	82.30%	75%	75%	75%	75%
Indexed journal articles in top 10% journals (%)	36.5	26.6	40.50%	56.30%	40%	40%	40%	40%
Indexed publications in top 10% citation percentiles worldwide (%)			16.30%	17.30%	17%	18%	19%	20%
3. Number of workshops/conferences held/offered by the Centre	27	21	24	34	15–20	15–20	15–20	15–20
4. Number of training courses held/offered by the Centre	11	27	15	16	15–20	15–20	15–20	15–20
5. Number of additional researchers working on Centre research								
Postdoctoral researchers	40	10	7	9	10	10	5	0
Honours students	11	10	8	5	5–10	5–10	5–10	5–10
PhD Students	59	12	9	10	10	8	0	0
Masters by research students	4	0	0	1	2	2	2	0
Masters by coursework students	2	1	5	6	2	2	2	0
Associate Investigators	19	7	2	2	8	5	3	0
Other researchers (non–postdoctoral and in–kind)	42	19	11	28	10	10	10	0
6. Number of postgraduate completions	9	8	11	7	8	10	10	10–15
7. Number of mentoring programs offered by the Centre	5	6	6	5	5	5	5	5
8. Number of presentations/briefings								
To the public	13	17	21	55	15–20	15–20	20–25	20–25
To government (parliamentarians and department/agencies at both State and Federal level)	32	92	144	131	40–50	40–50	40–50	40–50
To industry/business/end users	21	51	70	135	20–25	20–25	20–25	20–25
To non–government organisations	20	30	70	89	20–25	20–25	20–25	20–25
To professional organisations and bodies	6	29	28	30	10–15	10–15	10–15	10–15
9. Number of new organisations collaborating with, or involved in, the Centre	15	18	26	34	10–20	10–20	5–10	0
10. Number of female research personnel	54%	53%	53%	51%	≥ 50%	≥ 50%	≥ 50%	≥ 50%
Centre–specific KPIs								
Position papers, reports and submissions to government	18	23	27	8	15–20	20–25	20–25	25–30
Publications and profiling of Centre research in non–academic outlets	42	65	80	75	40–50	40–50	50–60	50–60
Public awareness and outreach activities	46	48	61	52	50–60	50–60	60–70	60–70
Increasing participation in research: undergraduate researchers, community researchers and participants in equity initiatives	7	23	26	12	10–15	10–15	10–15	10–15
Demonstrated influence on policy and practice	10	26	29	25	20	25	25	30
New research projects co–designed with partners	4	5	7	5	5	5	3	0
New funding associated with the Centre	\$12,632,419	\$5,582,909	\$15,301,041	\$15,335,001	\$2–5M	\$2–5M	\$2–5M	\$2–5M
New Interventions	2	3	4	6	5	5	5	0

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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