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### July 2010

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#### Dear

Congratulations to the Australian Government for progressing the tremendously important Paid Parental Leave scheme, following years of lobbying by many ARACY members. Symbolically, it demonstrates that as a society we highly value the role of parents and the importance of children in society. The announcement that a major bank will pay superannuation for staff on unpaid parental leave is also a great sign. This private sector initiative reflects the growing community consensus of the importance of supporting children in critical early years of life, and of the importance of providing the best work conditions for parents. After all, those countries that invest strongly in such a scheme are amongst the most economically productive in the world.



Also this month – while Australia has a national early childhood development strategy, and the start on a youth strategy, we don't have a policy or strong agenda for the middle years (children aged 8-14). Join us in discussing what this agenda needs to include.

Last week was NAIDOC Week with the theme 'Unsung Heroes - Closing the Gap by Leading Their Way'. Dr Roz Walker, the Indigenous Projects Lead at the Telethon Institute of Child Health Research in Perth provides the In Focus article this month.

And finally, the Common Approach to Assessment, Referral and Support (CAARS) project has resulted in a simple, easy-to-use and adaptable means of identifying and responding *early* to indicators of need, before problems escalate into crises. The final materials to support the Common Approach were presented to the Australian Government recently, including a guidance manual and recommendations for testing. A proposal to pilot this resource prior to a national roll-out is under consideration. I thank everyone involved in the Taskforce for their contributions towards this excellent outcome.

## In Focus: Working with Indigenous Australians to 'Close the Gap'

I have worked in Aboriginal education and research with Aboriginal communities and organisations for over 25 years. I am honoured to be invited to offer my thoughts on how we as researchers and practitioners can continue to improve relations and work in proactive and respectful ways with Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people to 'Close the Gap'. This is an urgent task given the disparities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in health, housing and across all social determinants that impact on Aboriginal community wellbeing. Over the past 25 years, despite the policy rhetoric following Aboriginal Self Determination and despite the amazing strength and resilience of Aboriginal communities, we have continued to witness increasing disparities in the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal children, families and communities, in contrast to the wider population.

As Indigenous Projects Lead with the Collaboration for Applied Research and Evaluation at the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research (TICHR), some of my work involves working with the Kulunga Research Network, the Indigenous research arm at TICHR. This involves the translation of the Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey (WAACHS) findings and recommendations through community-based participatory action in specific research projects with Aboriginal communities throughout WA. Reflecting on this work reveals a common theme — a commitment to Partnership, underpinned genuine and respectful relationships, as well as supporting initiatives based on local Aboriginal solutions.

These principles are reinforced by research and practice evidence for engaging parents in their children's early development to support positive and protective life course trajectories/pathways. These themes serve as guiding principles for effective implementation of all programs, services and policies (targeted and universal) impacting on Aboriginal people, they include:

- ensuring Indigenous participation and consultation in all stages of a program or intervention
- building the capacity of parents and families wherever possible
- recognising and respecting Indigenous peoples and cultures. (See Shepherd & Walker 2009 p.40 ARACY Topical paper)

Our work in Warburton funded by an ARACY seeding grant highlighted the importance of partnership in improving outcomes for children in school supporting initiatives identified by local community. The breakfast club and parent's place are two examples of successful outcomes which highlight that the principle of respectful relationship and partnership really work.

Nevertheless, this is complex and difficult work and communities and services need to be supported to have a stronger focus on prevention and early intervention initiatives for children, young people and families. This requires a system wide commitment to the implementation of the Aboriginal cultural respect framework as well as a commitment to developing individual, professional and organisational cultural competence — an area of work several of us at Institute currently involved in further developing in our partnerships with the Women's and Newborns Health Network and WA Department of Health.

*Dr Roz Walker, Indigenous Projects Lead, Telethon Institute for Child Health Research*

## Member profile: Telethon Institute for Child Health Research

The Telethon Institute for Child Health Research was founded in Western Australia in 1990 with the mission to improve and promote the health and wellbeing of all children.

Under the leadership of founding Director Professor Fiona Stanley AC, the Institute has pioneered a multidisciplinary approach in child health research that brings together scientists with a wide range of expertise to examine the most costly, common or debilitating diseases and issues affecting young people today. The Institute now has more than 450 staff and students.



Our key research themes include:

- Aboriginal child health
- asthma, allergies and respiratory disease
- children's cancers and leukaemia
- healthy development
- infectious disease
- mental health, social and emotional wellbeing
- the early years

The Telethon Institute for Child Health Research has a proven track record of translating research findings into actions that make a real difference to the lives of children everywhere.

Our achievements including identifying the important role of folate in reducing neural tube defects such as spina bifida and ground-breaking findings into the way the immune system develops. The Institute has established powerful data-bases of de-identified information that tracks births and later health outcomes. It also has disability databases, a twins register, a cerebral palsy register and is home to the international Rett Syndrome database.

More information about the Institute's research and achievements is available at [www.childhealthresearch.com.au](http://www.childhealthresearch.com.au).

#### Get involved with ARACY!



##### Access Grid seminars

On **24 August**, Dr Margaret Brechman-Toussaint from The Benevolent Society will present 'A review of integrated service models for young people in the preadolescent and adolescent years: Benefits, barriers and enablers'.

[Register here >>](#)

On **15 September**, Professor Gwynnyth Llewellyn, Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Sydney, will give a presentation on her research into health and well-being indicators for children and youth with disabilities. Registrations will be available soon.

**NB** We have added the [University of Wollongong](#) as



##### Interested in a National Middle Years Agenda?

Australia has a national early childhood development strategy, and the start on a youth strategy, but what about a policy for the middle years – children aged 8-14? ARACY is starting a special interest group for the middle years, and is eager to hear from you. [Register your interest>>](#)

#### ARACY News



##### Collaboration materials

The ninth and tenth collaboration fact sheets are available, along with a report on using technology to advance collaboration and the lessons learned from a recent collaboration. [Read more >>](#)



##### CAARS Taskforce outcomes

The final meeting of the Common Approach to Assessment, Referral and Support (CAARS) Taskforce was held in June. The

#### Member benefits and news



##### Publicise upcoming events

Publicise your event through our online Events calendar. It's easy to do! [Submit your event here>>](#)

##### ACWA Conference

From 2-4 August, the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies National Conference will be held in Sydney with the theme of 'Building a child-friendly Australia: Responding to vulnerable families'. [Read more >>](#)

##### SNAICC Conference

Some sessions still available. [Read more >>](#)

##### Family Relationship Services Australia Conference

This will be held in Melbourne

an Access Grid site.



**Join the New Investigators Network**

Applications are open until 30 July for places in the second intake of the ARACY New Investigators Network, to support promising early-career researchers. [Read more >>](#)

Taskforce endorsed the proposed approach for identifying and responding early to indicators of need, before problems escalate into crises. The outcomes of the final meeting of the Taskforce are available [here](#).

from 3-5 November with the theme: 'DIVERSITY: Everyone Benefits'. [Read more >>](#)

**Youth matters!**

You can subscribe to the journal Youth Studies Australia, the free monthly newsletter, Youth Field Xpress and a quarterly news update, from the Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies. [Read more >>](#)

**Also this month...**

· [Preventing youth violence roundtable](#)

· [Report on Social and emotional wellbeing indicators](#)

· [UNICEF seeking Voices of Youth by 30 July](#)

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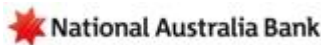
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**ARACY thanks its major supporters**

ARACY relies on the generosity and commitment of individuals and organisations who support our commitment to a future where Australia's children and young people thrive and their wellbeing is a national priority. ARACY's primary funding is received from the [Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs](#) (FaHCSIA). We are deeply grateful to FaHCSIA, the following major partners and all supporting our work:



**Education partner**



**Australian Government**  
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

**Research partners**



**Governance partner**

**For more information on how you can support ARACY, contact Chantal Lewis [by email](#).**

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Please send any comments about this email to [enquiries@aracy.org.au](mailto:enquiries@aracy.org.au)

ARACY Canberra  
10 Bowes Street  
Juliana House  
Woden, ACT 2606

ARACY Research Network  
Department of Paediatrics  
University of Melbourne  
Royal Children's Hospital  
Flemington Road, Parkville, VIC  
3052

ARACY Perth  
Level 13, Dumas House  
2 Havelock Street  
West Perth, WA 6005

ARACY Sydney  
Level 9/117 Clarence Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

