

**Australian Centre for  
Child Protection**

# **ANNUAL REPORT**

**2024**



University of  
South Australia

Australian  
Centre for  
Child Protection

## **Acknowledgment Of Country**

We respectfully acknowledge the Kurna and Whadjuk Noongar Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their Elders past and present, who are the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners of the lands that are now home to the Australian Centre for Child Protection's offices in Adelaide and Perth.

We are honoured to recognise our connection to the Kurna and Whadjuk Noongar lands, and Aboriginal Peoples' history, culture and spirituality through these locations, and we strive to ensure that we operate in a manner which respects their Elders and ancestors.

We also acknowledge the other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People of lands across Australia where we undertake our work, their Elders, ancestors, cultures and heritage.



# From the Director

This year marked a significant milestone - 20 years of the Australian Centre for Child Protection (ACCP).

In 2004, the Australian Government and the University of South Australia jointly established the ACCP, to be the national centre for creating and translating evidence into practice to better prevent and respond to child abuse and neglect. We have grown over the last 2 decades into Australia's largest centre of its type, through cutting-edge research and new knowledge generation across policy, practice and workforce development.

2024 was not only a milestone for achieving 20 years of the ACCP but it was also another busy and successful year with the awarding of important new projects including Dr Jacyntha Krakouer's Australian Research Council Indigenous Discovery Grant to investigate the rates of removals of Aboriginal children and Professor Melissa O'Donnell's Discovery Grant focused on families with multiple and complex needs. Amanda Paton also led workshops in Singapore on Harmful Sexual Behaviours, our online courses continued to support workforces across Australia, and I continued to work with the South Australian Government to lead the state child protection transformation agenda. Our work across these and many other areas continues into 2025 and beyond.



+249

MEDIA  
COVERAGE

+29

NEW & CONTINUING  
PROJECTS

+1,921

NEW LINKEDIN  
FOLLOWERS

Professor Leah Bromfield,  
Director and Chair of  
Child Protection



*At this 20-year milestone, we believe our work to this point demonstrates the need to reimagine and transform our child protection systems that are no longer fit for purpose.*

# 2024 New Initiatives



## Launch of ACCP LinkedIn

A new platform for connecting to our partners, friends and followers. By the end of 2024, we reached 1,921 followers [linkedin.com/ACCPUniSA](https://www.linkedin.com/company/accpuni)



## 20th Birthday Celebration & Symposium

Following our 20<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebration event, the Centre delivered our first ever full-day symposium, a world-class event with content across a wide range of topics, building on our two decades of work and impact.



## Increased Reach and Accessibility of Education

Launched the online Professional Certificate in Understanding Childhood Trauma, to be accessible to the workforce across Australia.



## Appointment of the South Australian Child Protection Expert Group

Chair Professor Leah Bromfield and 15 national experts were appointed to assist the South Australian government in developing and driving a long-term vision to transform the state's child protection system, and to work towards improved outcomes for children and young people.



## ACCP National Advisory Board

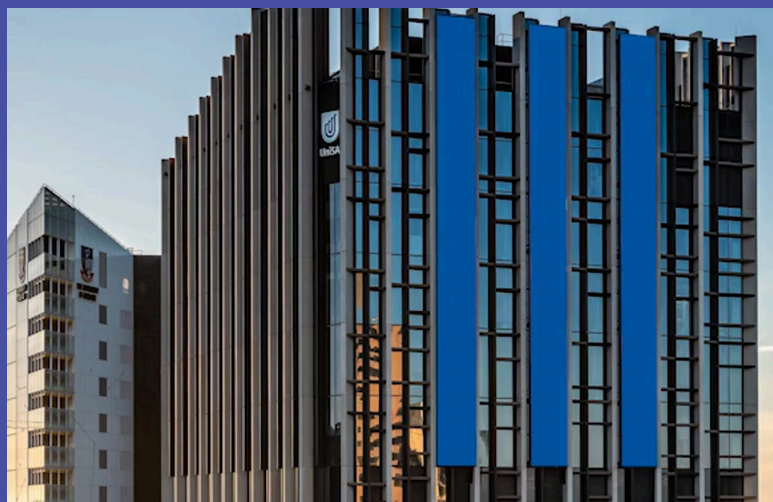
A new Advisory Board structure was introduced to include external Board members. We welcomed Anne Hollonds, National Children's Commissioner, Tim Crossier, Branch Manager, National Policy, Commonwealth Department of Social Services and Sarah Gun, CEO of the Gogo Foundation to the ACCP National Advisory Board.



## Improved Reporting of Activity & Impact

Introduced quarterly reporting demonstrating the activities, achievements and impacts of the Centre through the year.

LED display celebrating 20 years of the ACCP on UniSA's Bradley Building



# ACCP Awards & Recognition

Congratulations to the ACCP team who contributed to the centre's success across 2024.

## ◆ **UniSA Justice and Society Champion Awards**

ACCP nominees:

- Prof Leah Bromfield for Established Academic – Leadership
- Dr Jacynta Krakouer for Early Career Researcher – Impact
- Amanda Paton for Professional Staff – Leadership
- Jenny Macpherson for Professional Staff – Continuous Improvement.

Congratulations to Prof Bromfield and Dr Krakouer for receiving the award in their respective categories.

## ◆ **Media Award**

Prof Melissa O'Donnell acknowledged with the Wiley Top Downloaded Article during its first 12 months in publication for Parents' experiences with child protection during pregnancy and post-birth in *Child & Family Social Work*.

## ◆ **PhD Award**

Rachel Lever, PhD student, was awarded a 2024 Healthy Development Adelaide Travel and Development Grant to support her attendance at the Child Sexual Abuse and Harmful Sexual Behaviours National Conference 2024, held in Melbourne.

## ◆ **Scholarship Award**

Dr Miriam Maclean was awarded a 2024 Franklin Women Carer's Scholarship, which invests in the careers of individuals in the health and medical research sector who also manage unpaid caring responsibilities.

## ◆ **UniSA Unstoppable Award**

ACCP Nominees

- Prof Leah Bromfield: Senior-Career Researcher in the Research and Enterprise Excellence Category,
- Dr Jacynta Krakouer: Early-Career Researcher in the Research and Enterprise Excellence Category,
- Lisa McDonald: HEO8 and above in the Professional Staff Excellence Category,
- Dr Michelle Fernando: Mid Career Teaching in the Teaching & Learning Category.

Congratulations to Dr Krakouer and Dr Fernando for receiving the award in their categories.

## 2025 Australian of the Year for South Australia

Professor Leah Bromfield



## M MEDIA

Professor Leah Bromfield was UniSA's top spokesperson for Q4 2024 with 249 media profiles, mostly in relation to her award of 2025 Australian of the Year for South Australia, for her outstanding work in child protection. Stories on Prof Bromfield and the award appeared in *The Australian* and more than 100 other News Corp sites as well as Channel 9 Adelaide, 5AA Radio, ABC Radio Adelaide and online, and *The Australian Women's Weekly*.



## N IN THE NEWS - SPOTLIGHT

1 Dec 2024: Prof Leah Bromfield was interviewed by *The Australian's* Natasha Bita for the article *Mandatory reporting frightens families from seeking help*. "It's like saying go to the emergency department, rather than a GP, as the first step in help-seeking. It's actually discouraging help-seeking because our families are afraid. This is a system that's not fit for purpose."

## IN LINKEDIN HIGHLIGHTS

Impressions	Reactions	Comments	Reposts
83,842	2,001	140	49

# ACCP in the media

3 June 2024: Prof Melissa O'Donnell was interviewed by UniSA in relation to new research from the UniSA and Curtin University that found that up to 36% of young people leaving out-of-home care in Australia become homeless – compared to less than 10% of the general youth population, "*Increased risk of homelessness for youth leaving out-of-home care*".

# ACCP Projects

Our project partners are based nationally and internationally, including:

- The Research Council of Norway
- Western Australia Police
- WA Dept. of Communities
- Perron Foundation
- Ch7 Children's Research Foundation
- Daniel Morcombe Foundation
- Catholic Education Western Australia
- Commonwealth Government Attorney General Department
- Dept. for Child Protection (SA)
- Dept. of Families, Fairness & Housing (VIC)
- Griffith University (QLD)
- Department of Justice and Attorney-General (QLD)

## National Clinical and Therapeutic Framework

The ACCP, led by Deputy Director, Practice, Amanda Paton, in partnership with Professor Simon Hackett, Durham University and ACCP Adjunct, and Lumenia, have been working with the National Office for Child Safety to establish a National Clinical and Therapeutic Framework for responding to children and young people who have displayed concerning or harmful sexual behaviours. The framework will provide guidance and direction to support the design, development and operation of best practice, evidence-based therapeutic services for children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours.

## Evaluation of SA Family Group Conferencing

Dr Jacynta Krakouer, Dr Eden Thain, Dr Miriam Maclean, Dr Olivia Octoman and Dr Melissa Kaltner (Lumenia) undertook an evaluation of Family Group Conferencing in South Australia, which found the program is having a positive impact for participating children and families, with high levels of satisfaction from families involved, and strong outcomes related to its effectiveness. The independent evaluation is on the SA Department for Child Protection [website](#).

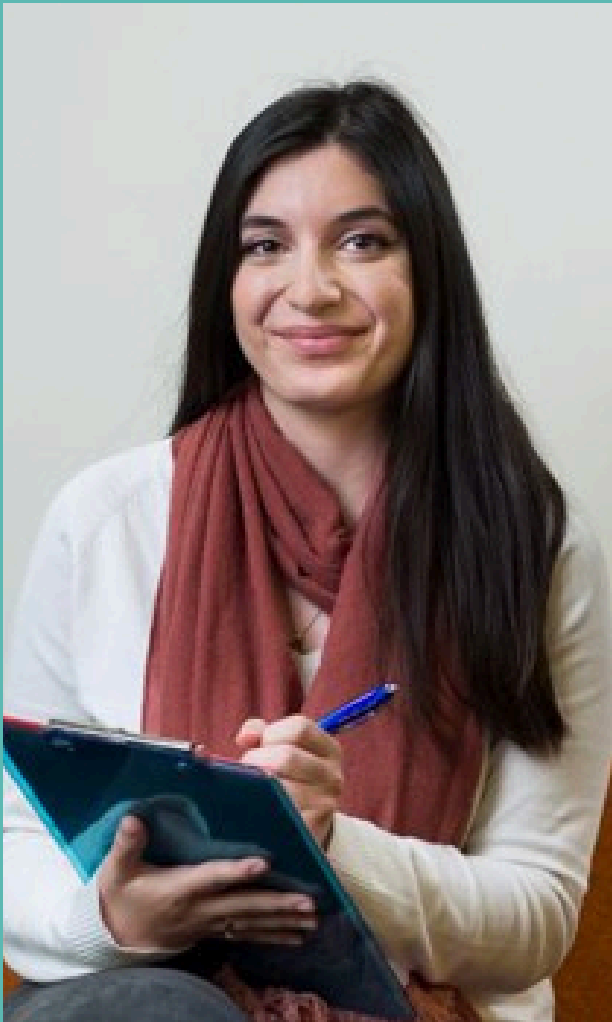
## Improving practice when child protection intervenes with pregnant mothers and newborns

Through funding from the Stan Perron Charitable Foundation, the ACCP has been working with the University of Western Australia on a project aiming to improve child protection intervention in perinatal practice with mothers, through the co-design and evaluation of evidence informed guidelines. The project brings the leading data expertise of Chief Investigator Prof Melissa O'Donnell with a review of the evidence as well as engagement across lived expertise interviews, focus groups and workshops.

# ACCP Online Courses

The ACCP has continued over 2024 to bring excellence in research and practice to develop course offerings which support the sector workforce, for both partner organisations as well as ACCP online courses. ACCP courses include the **Professional Certificate in Understanding Childhood Trauma** and **Graduate Certificate in Childhood Trauma**.

Both have been designed by experienced practitioners and informed by contemporary research from the ACCP, to support professionals currently working with children and young people impacted by abuse and neglect to develop a trauma-informed understanding of child abuse and neglect.



“

*Fantastic readings of a real intellectual quality, relevant and thought-provoking*

“

*The interactive nature of this course with lots of different resources available. Very practical and will be easy to apply to my work*

**93%**

**successful completion**

of students enrolled across four intakes in the Professional Certificate in Understanding Childhood Trauma in 2024

# Sector resources, influence & dissemination



## 20th Birthday Symposium

On Thursday 24 October 2024, the ACCP streamed a full day program of research and practice presentations, sharing the latest research outcomes and policy and practice solutions with the sector. More than 700 individuals and groups tuned in over the course of the day, across Australia and internationally.

The keynote speakers featured guest Prof Barbara Fallon and Prof Leah Bromfield on rethinking child protection in Australia and globally. ACCP Adjunct Prof Simon Hackett and Amanda Paton spoke on harmful sexual behaviours; issues, responses and resources, and Prof Melissa O'Donnell presented her work on preventing infant removals.

The Symposium covered a wide range of additional topics including:

- Enhancing perinatal care
- Leading models for Aboriginal-led and Lived Experience co-design
- New insights from linked administrative data
- New evidence and resources to enhance practice
- Working across sectors
- Interdisciplinary practice

In 2024, staff and students from the ACCP contributed to the following conferences, presentations & other forums:

## 5 International Invitations

- CELCIS Centre for Excellence for Child's Care and Prevention Conference. Glasgow, Scotland
- Kids Count: the 3<sup>rd</sup> National Child Welfare Data Exchange Meeting, Montreal, Canada
- Workshop and Masterclasses for Professional Development in Child Abuse and Trauma and Harmful Sexual Behaviours. Ministry of Home Affairs, Singapore
- ASEAN ICT Forum on Child Online Protection. Indonesia

## 22 National Invitations

Notable invitations include:

- Association of Children's Welfare Agencies National Conference
- Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference
- Australasian Research Management Society Conference
- Australian Public Health Conference
- Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence
- Child Sexual Abuse and Harmful Sexual Behaviours National Conference

## Resources

New ACCP sector resources included:

- [Practice Guide - Layered Therapeutic Assessment and Treatment Mapping Approach for Harmful Sexual Behaviours.](#)
- [Evidence Based Review of Therapeutic Residential Care Models.](#)
- [Practice Guide - Understanding HSB: A Layered Continuum.](#)

# Publications

The ACCP team contributed to more than 30 reports and publications in 2024.

## Top Downloaded Article

Prof Melissa O'Donnell was acknowledged with Wiley Top Downloaded Article during its first 12 months in publication.

*Parents' experiences with child protection during pregnancy and post-birth* in *Child & Family Social Work*.



## Notable publications

Chikwava, F., Cordier, R., Ferrante, A., O'Donnell, M., & Pakpahan, E. (2024). *Trajectories of homelessness and association with mental health and substance use disorders among young people transitioning from out-of-home care in Australia*. *Child Abuse & Neglect*. This study demonstrates that subgroups of young people transitioning from care exit with distinct longitudinal trajectories of homelessness, and these are associated with different risk factors. Early intervention and different approaches to tackling homelessness should be considered for these three distinct groups before transitioning from care and during the first few years after leaving care.

Maclean, M., Lima, F., & O'Donnell, M. (2024). *Positive reading achievement outcomes in children who experience out-of-home care: Characteristics and predictors*. *Child Abuse & Neglect*. This study's results indicate potential interventions could target cognitive ability, wellbeing and environmental factors, and involve interventions directly with children and via carers to help improve student outcomes.

Paton, A., Burgess, S. & Bromfield, L. (2024) *Key elements to consider when choosing an assessment tool for understanding risk related to harmful sexual behaviours*. *Children Australia*. This paper takes a critical practice lens to examine the challenge of selecting a fit-for-purpose tool to assess children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours.



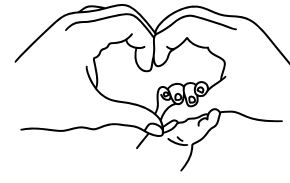
### **Our Vision**

Children thrive in safe and supportive families and communities



### **Our Mission**

Improving the lives of vulnerable children by creating and applying knowledge to shape a better future



### **Our Values**

Excellence  
Integrity  
Collaboration  
Decolonising  
Impact

# Child Protection Strategic Framework

Across 2024, the ACCP’s strategic framework 2022-2027 continued to lead the Centre’s priorities, ambitions and commitments in taking on the critical challenges impacting the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable children and families.

## **Research & Dissemination**

Supporting research excellence in the field by undertaking research and dissemination, while supporting and developing existing and future researchers to specialise in preventing and responding to child abuse and neglect.

## **Policy and Practice Solutions**

Supporting the development and implementation of fit for purpose policy and practice solutions through consultation and collaboration - working with or on behalf of our partners.

## **Teaching & Workforce Development**

Supporting the development of new knowledge and practice skills to undergraduates, graduates and existing practitioners through effective models which are innovative, engaging and accessible.

## **Aligned to National Priorities**

The ACCP has and continues to play a pivotal role in leading and supporting relevant national strategic initiatives and addressing key challenges for the sector.

# ACCP Staff

The ACCP has a nationally leading team of expertise across research, policy and practice, which is supported by a professional staff team. In December 2024, ACCP had 35 staff (11 Academic, 7 Teaching & Research, 7 Professional and 10 casuals) and 4 adjuncts. The ACCP continued to consolidate its structure in 2024 with a more streamlined management structure and distributed leadership across program areas.

## ACCP National Advisory Board

**Prof Leah Bromfield**  
Director & Chair of  
Child Protection



## Lived Expertise Advisory Panel

**Prof Melissa O'Donnell**  
Deputy Director  
Research



**Amanda Paton**  
Deputy Director  
Practice



**Amy Cleland**  
Aboriginal Strategy  
& Engagement Lead



**Lisa McDonald**  
Centre Manager



## Research Specialists



## Clinical Specialists



## PhD Students



## Project, Contract and Admin Management



**1 DR SARAH  
SEEKAMP**

**Thesis:** Exploring child and family focused outcomes to enhance interprofessional collaboration for children who have experienced or are at risk of abuse or neglect.

Conferred July 2024

**2 DR VICTORIA  
PARSONS**

**Thesis:** The general public's knowledge and beliefs about child sexual abuse.

Conferred September 2024

**3 EBONY  
TUCKER**

**Thesis:** Improving the process and long-term outcomes of reunification for families: Exploring the barriers and facilitators for successful and safe reunification.

**4 HELEN  
ALLPORT**

**Thesis:** Aboriginal Parenting: Challenging misconceptions and strengthening practice.

**5 KELLY  
WINSLADE**

**Thesis:** Families with multiple and complex needs: refocusing on early intervention.

**6 TIMOTHY  
WONG**

**Thesis:** Evidence based interventions delivered in schools for students who display HSB and students who experience HSB.

**7 TRACEY  
CORCORAN**

**Thesis:** Development of a well-being measurement tool for 0- to 3-year-olds in Out of Home Care.

**8 MIRANDA  
WILLET**

**Thesis:** Understanding Regulation Needs to Facilitate Therapeutic Management of Externalising Behaviours in Residential Care.

**9 AMY  
CLEALAND**

**Thesis:** Laws that Colonise: Aboriginal Children, Child Protection and the Australian Legal System.

**10 RACHEL  
LEVER**

**Thesis:** Children's Problematic Sexual Behaviour: Identifying and addressing South Australia Police and Justice System responses and attitudes to incidents; a collaborative approach.

**11 KRYSTAL  
LANAIS**

**Thesis:** Children with substantiated child maltreatment – What is the effect of removal to alternate (out-of-home) care during early childhood on child development and well-being.

# ACCP PhD Students

We are proud to welcome students across a range of study levels in the Centre. Our students contribute significantly to ACCP projects and the new knowledge the Centre is developing to prevent and respond to child abuse and neglect.

# ACCP National Advisory Board

The ACCP National Advisory board provides expert advice and guidance on the ACCP's strategic direction and opportunities for partnership, growth and impact and comprises the following members.

**Amy Cleland**

ACCP Aboriginal Strategy and Engagement Lead  
UniSA | Justice & Society

**Anne Hollonds**

National Children's Commissioner  
Australian Human Rights Commission

**Ben Raw**

General Manager  
UniSA | Justice & Society

**Prof Deirdre Tedmanson**

Dean: Work Integrated Learning  
UniSA | Business

**Jacqueline Le Mesurier**

Teaching Academic | Clinical Psychologist  
ACCP elected staff representative  
UniSA | Justice & Society

**Prof Jill Dorrian**

(Chair) Dean of Research  
UniSA | Justice & Society

**Prof Leah Bromfield**

Director and Chair of Child Protection | Australian Centre for Child Protection  
UniSA | Justice & Society

**Dr Michael Watkins**

Lecturer  
UniSA | Allied Health & Human Performance

**Prof Paula Geldens**

Executive Dean  
UniSA | Justice & Society

**Rachel Lever**

PhD Student  
ACCP elected student representative  
UniSA | Justice & Society

**Sarah Gun**

Director and Founder  
Gogo Foundation and Gogo Events

**Tim Crosier**

Branch Manager | National Policy  
Australian Government Department of Social Services



# ACCP Lived Expertise Advisory Panel

The Centre is proud to embed the voices of our [Lived Expertise Advisory Panel \(LEAP\)](#), across ACCP programs, approaches and activities. Our LEAP members are highlighted below.

★ **Craig Hughes-Cashmore (Chair)**



★ **Caroline Carroll OAM**



★ **Chrissie Foster AM**



★ **Joan Isaacs**



★ **Brenda Lin**



★ **Rebecca Moran**



★ **Adam Washbourne**





University of  
South Australia

Australian  
Centre for  
Child Protection

## Contact Details

Phone: 08 0392 2904

Email: [ChildProtection@unisa.edu.au](mailto:ChildProtection@unisa.edu.au)

Website: [unisa.edu.au/accp](http://unisa.edu.au/accp)

**Improving the lives of  
vulnerable children.**