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News from the Director

The annual National Child Protection Week was held from 3 - 9 September, and provided a valuable opportunity to reflect on the status of child protection in Australia, and how well our communities are protecting children. Several staff were involved in presentations around Australia, and we also released two new Research to Practice issues during the week, focusing on young people's safety in residential care.

These Research to Practice issues are based on our research conducted for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. ICPS has significantly contributed to the research program of the Royal Commission over the last four years, and as the Royal Commission nears its conclusion we anticipate that the new and valuable insights from our research will inform their final recommendations. As part of our commitment to continue to support institutions to protect children, we developed a short animation for the Catholic National Committee for Professional Standards presenting the findings of these children's safety studies, which was released across Australia on Child Protection Sunday; and we are working directly with several community services and education-based agencies. Earlier this month, I also wrote an article for The Conversation which calls on the leaders of institutions to take responsibility for organisational change, to ensure that children are better protected from harm.

We recently concluded an important research project for Melbourne City Mission, which examined the underlying causes of family conflict, and their relationship to youth homelessness. The findings of this research have already been presented at the Victorian Homelessness Conference, and the full report will be released in late 2017. This research has led to new findings regarding family conflict, and has important implications for practice with young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness - read more about this in the Project Spotlight.

We are also delighted to have commenced two new research projects commissioned by the Department of Social Services. The first will identify strategies for talking with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children about family and domestic violence, while the second study is looking at statutory responses for children experiencing family violence, and will develop a profile of the children and families reported to child protection with issues of domestic and family violence, identify and map service responses, and implications for how services can better recognise and respond to violence.



Professor Daryl Higgins
Director, Institute of Child Protection Studies

Project Spotlight:

Exploring the contemporary causes of family conflict that contribute to experiences of youth homelessness

About the Study

In 2015, Melbourne City Mission commissioned ICPS to conduct research into the underlying causes of family breakdown and their relationship to youth homelessness. Conducted by Steven Roche and Dr Justin Barker, this research aimed to explore the contemporary social and cultural factors that contribute to family conflict and breakdown that may lead to young people experiencing homelessness, as well as the risk and protective factors for family conflict and breakdown.

Young people aged 16 to 24 (who have experienced homelessness or are at risk of homelessness), parents with experience of family conflict, and Melbourne City Mission staff participated in the project. The research team conducted focus groups with young people, parents, and staff. The final report will be released by Melbourne City Mission in late 2017.

Findings

Types of family conflict:

Participants described two types of inter-related forms of family conflict - 'overt and situational' and 'latent and ongoing'. These were common experiences for families with young people at risk of homelessness.



'Overt and situational' family conflict:

Expressive and demonstrable actions and behaviours that are antagonistic in nature. They are 'overt' in that they are explicit forms of conflict, largely identifiable as conflict, have an immediate impact on participants, and are often based on the situational contexts in which they occur.

'Latent and ongoing' family conflict:

Accumulated and unresolved conflict underscoring family life. Experiences of 'latent' conflict occur beyond the instance or incident of 'overt and situational' conflict, and is typically ongoing in nature. It is frequently experienced in discreet and unapparent forms of family functioning, feelings and

generalised atmosphere of family life, often not yet manifested into 'overt and situational' forms of conflict.

When does family conflict turn into homelessness?

Young people described leaving home as a highly considered decision, typically in response to ongoing family conflict, and observations of other families.

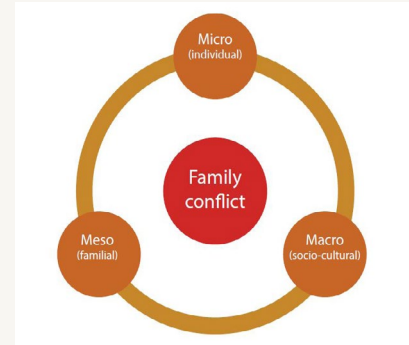
For participants, their experiences of family conflict reached a 'tipping point' in which homelessness became a more attractive living scenario. For some young people, observing other families enjoying each other's company, spending time with each other and communicating effectively provoked a realisation of their own family's dysfunction, conflict and poor relationships.

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Sources of conflict:

- **Micro (individual)** sources of family conflict refer to the types and experiences of conflict involving incidents, events and behaviours that lead to 'overt and situational' conflict. These sources mostly pertain to the actions and behaviours of individuals who are directly involved in the conflict itself. For example: routine conflict and general disagreement, conflict and tension over chores, verbal aggression, arguments and criticism, and violence.
- **Meso (familial)** sources of family conflict refers to underlying family functioning and the home environment. These sources of family conflict have an indirect relationship to family conflict, yet have a strong influence over the environment and conditions in which conflict manifests. This category draws attention to how problematic family relationships can be an organising principle of the family; and typically pertain to pervasive and ongoing behaviours and functioning of a family. For example: disintegration of trust in family, absence of love, strong feelings of abandonment.
- **Macro (socio-cultural)** sources of family conflict are the structural stresses on families, the social conditions in which conflict manifests, and the impact of intergenerational trauma and family dysfunction. For example: poverty and financial marginalisation, unemployment, unstable housing, mental illness and substance abuse.



The full research report will be released in late 2017. For more information, contact [Steven Roche](#).

In the Media:

Protecting children from abuse in organisations needs leadership and cultural change

September 12, 2017 12:30pm AEST



Protecting children from abuse in organisations needs leadership and cultural change

Article for The Conversation, by Prof Daryl Higgins, 12 September 2017

The rhetoric of preventing child sexual abuse in organisations focuses mostly on screening: weeding out 'bad people'. If this continues to be the main focus, institutions will keep failing children.

In this article for The Conversation, Prof Higgins calls on leaders of institutions to take responsibility for organisational change to reduce child sexual abuse.

Interview for National Child Protection Week

Dr Tim Moore

Interview with ABC Darwin with Richard Margetson, 7 September 2017

Kids in sport and safety

Dr Tim Moore

Interview with ABC Territory Grandstand, 9 September 2017

More Canberra kids in care as advocates call for community prevention

Prof Morag McArthur

The Canberra Times, 13 September 2017

National Child Protection Week 2017

National Child Protection Week, held from 3 - 9 September, is coordinated by NAPCAN. The Institute of Child Protection Studies is proud to support this annual initiative, with researchers from ICPS presenting at several events across Australia:

Workshop for Safeguarding Officers in the Perth Catholic Archdiocese

Prof Daryl Higgins, ICPS Director, Tuesday 5 September

This workshop focused on understanding the context and drivers of abuse in organisations, an overview of strategies to address risks and enhance protective factors, focusing on the situational prevention model and specific issues to address within a church-related context.

NAPCAN NT Child Protection Week Breakfast, Darwin

Dr Tim Moore, ICPS Senior Research Fellow, Tuesday 5 September

Dr Moore's presentation focused on empowering children to help shape the ways that organisations keep them safe and respond to their needs.

NAPCAN Alice Springs Child Protection Week Breakfast, Alice Springs

Prof Morag McArthur, ICPS Associate, Tuesday 5 September

Prof McArthur's presentation outlined the current crisis in child protection, the importance of prevention, and how and why it is so difficult to fund and implement prevention programs; focusing on strengthening communities as a key prevention strategy.

ACT Ombudsman Office NCPW Event

Prof Daryl Higgins, ICPS Director, Wednesday 6 September

Prof Higgins presented to ACT government and community sector stakeholders about safeguarding children in institutions. The event also included a presentation by the ACT Ombudsman about the ACT Reportable Conduct Scheme.

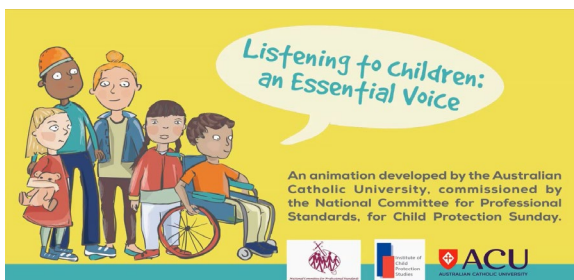
Safeguarding Day for Clergy, Safeguarding and Ministerial Integrity Office

Dr Tim Moore, ICPS Senior Research Fellow, Thursday 7 September

Dr Moore presented the findings from the Children's Safety Studies and promoted the need for the whole community to recognise the value of children and their participation. Children's need for relationships with powerful adult allies was also stressed.



Child Safety Animation



ICPS worked with the Catholic National Committee for Professional Standards to develop a short animation presenting the findings of the Children's Safety Studies.

These studies were commissioned by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and explored what children and young people think about interpersonal safety in institutions. The animation was presented across Catholic dioceses on Child Protection Sunday, 10 September 2017.

The animation and a short feedback survey is available at:
www.ncps.org.au

Selected Research Updates

[Click Here](#)

for more information about these projects and other current studies.



kContact: Keeping Contact between Parents and Children in Care

This 3 year ARC Linkage Project has developed and trialled an enhanced model of managing and supporting contact between children in care and their birth parents, and is being conducted in the ACT and Victoria. NSW FACS has funded an extension of the project into NSW.



MESSI: Managing Ethical Studies on Sensitive Issues

This 3 year ARC Discovery Project aims to better understand and address the tensions between the protection of children and young people and their participation in social research about sensitive issues. A national online survey of young people, parents and professionals recently concluded.

Removal of infants by the child protection system: Examining their nature, extent and impact to guide prevention and early intervention

This 3 year ARC Discovery Project aims to increase our knowledge about the nature, extent and impact of the removal of infants (< 1 year old) and newborns (< 31 days old) from their mothers. It will be conducted in two Australian jurisdictions, NSW and WA, and comparisons made with the findings from parallel studies in England and the USA, via the project partners. The study will provide recommendations for best practice in relation to prenatal reporting responses, and identify appropriate early intervention strategies which may reduce the need for babies to be removed from their parents.

Encouraging and sustaining quality care to improve outcomes for children and young people in care

This 3 year project is being conducted in collaboration with the Australia Foster Care Association, and seeks to help address the difficulties in recruiting and retaining skilled foster carers, by identifying the most effective strategies to attract, support and retain successful foster care families. The second phase of the project, a qualitative study to identify successful and new approaches to recruitment, support and retention of foster care and kinship carers, is close to completion.

Identifying strategies for talking to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children experiencing family and domestic violence

The Department of Social Services have funded ICPS to conduct a scoping study which aims to identify strategies for talking to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children experiencing family and domestic violence. The study will identify the barriers and enablers to directly engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children about their experiences of family and domestic violence, identify what is needed for them to feel safe about researchers exploring these experiences,

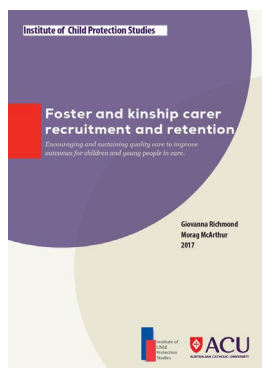
Child protection interventions: Statutory responses for children experiencing family violence

The Department of Social Services have funded ICPS to develop a profile of the children and families reported to child protection with issues of domestic and family violence; identify and map service responses, including the use of safety plans and other actions taken, such as referrals; and identify implications for how community-based and government services can better recognise and respond to violence.

Youth Hope Evaluation

ICPS and the Australian Institute of Criminology were commissioned by NSW FACS to undertake a process and outcome evaluation, and economic assessment, of the Youth Hope Program. A literature review is currently underway, and a qualitative survey of service providers is also being completed.

New Publications



Research Reports:

Foster and kinship carer recruitment and retention: Encouraging and sustaining quality care to improve outcomes for children in care

2017, Giovanna Richmond, Morag McArthur
A report for the Australian Foster Care Association

Research to Practice Issues:



#17 Safe and Sound:
The safety concerns
of young people in
residential care

Tim Moore, Morag
McArthur, Steven Roche



#18 Safe and Sound:
Creating safe
residential care
services for children
and young people

Tim Moore, Morag
McArthur, Steven Roche

Journal Articles:

Bullen, T., Taplin, S., McArthur, M., Humphreys, C., & Kertesz, M. (2017). *Interventions to improve supervised contact visits between children in out of home care and their parents: a systematic review*, *Child and Family Social Work*, 22(2), 822-833.

Dawe, S., Taplin, S., & Mattick, R. (2017). *Psychometric Investigation of the Brief Child Abuse Potential Inventory in Mothers on Opioid Substitution Therapy*. *Journal of Family Violence*, 32(3), 341-348.

Doidge, J.C., Higgins, D., Delfrabbo, P., Edwards, B., Vassallo, S., Toumbourou, J.W., & Segal, L. (2017). *Economic predictors of child maltreatment in an Australian population-based birth cohort*. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 72, 14-25.

Doidge, J.C., Higgins, D., Delfrabbo, P., & Segal, L. (2017). *Risk factors for child maltreatment in an Australian population-based birth cohort*. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 64, 47-60.

Moore, T. (2017). *Children and young people's views on institutional safety: It's not just because we're little*. *Child Abuse and Neglect*.

Moore, T., McArthur, M., Death, J., Tilbury, C., & Roche, S. (2017). *Young people's views on safety and preventing abuse and harm in residential care: "It's got to be better than home"*. *Children and Youth Services Review*.

McArthur, M., & Winkworth, G. (2017). *Give Them a Break: How stigma impacts on younger mothers accessing early and supportive help in Australia*. *The British Journal of Social Work*.

McArthur, M., & Winkworth, G. (2017). *What do we know about the social networks of single parents who do not use support services?* *Child and Family Social Work*, 22(2), 638-647.

Roche, S., Barker, J., & McArthur, M. (2017). *'Performing' fathering while homeless: Utilising a critical social work perspective*. *The British Journal of Social Work*.

Introducing: ICPS Associates

Professor Morag McArthur



Dip. Welfare, BSocSci (Hons), UNSW; Postgrad Cert Higher Ed Teaching, UNSW; PhD, UNSW

Prof Morag McArthur was the ICPS founding Director, establishing ICPS in 2005 as a partnership between the ACU and ACT Government. As a social work academic with over 25 years of teaching and research experience, Morag has worked with governments, non-government and community organisations on a range of research and evaluation projects. She had a key role in designing and implementing the first postgraduate courses in child welfare in Australia. Morag has worked to successfully bridge the gap between research, policy and practice, assisting organisations to develop and utilise evidence more effectively, and to build organisational research capacity. She has conducted research aimed specifically at improving policy and practice that affects children, young people and their families. One key area of expertise is the development of innovative and participatory methodologies that include children and young people.

Morag concluded her role as Director of ICPS in 2016, and continues to support ICPS as an Associate, based in the social work program in the School of Allied Health. Morag is a Chief Investigator on the kContact and MESSI ARC studies; as well as the Chief Investigator for two current studies for the Department of Social Services: Child protection interventions - statutory responses for children experiencing family violence; and Talking to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children experiencing family and domestic violence. Morag is also collaborating with the Australian Foster Care Association to conduct a three-year project on encouraging and sustaining quality care to improve outcomes for children and young people in care.

Professor Gail Winkworth PSM



BSW (Hons), UNSW; DSW, University of Sydney

Prof Gail Winkworth was a Senior Research Fellow with ICPS from 2005 to 2011, and the founding editor of the peer-reviewed journal *Communities, Children and Families Australia*. With her combination of practice, policy, administrative and academic experience, Gail is an adjunct professor of the ACU, with a continuing role in research, publishing and teaching. Gail is a social worker with a special expertise in collaboration and integration across service delivery systems and has developed a range of innovative tools to build and sustain partnerships in human service delivery. Gail led child and family welfare programs in both NSW and the ACT, including statutory child protection, adoptions, out-of-home care, family support and the prevention of child abuse and neglect. She is a recipient of The Public Service Medal for the implementation of mandatory reporting in the ACT and for the development of innovative programs for disadvantaged children and families. In recent years, Gail's work has involved program design and evaluation in child protection, early childhood services, family relationships and disaster recover. Gail works in a range of professional consultancies and is a member of the ACT Ministerial Advisory Council for Children and Youth.

Dr Giovanna Richmond



PSM, BSocStud, Sydney; BA (Hons), ANU; PhD, ACU

Dr Giovanna Richmond has been involved with the ACU in teaching and research roles since 2004. Prior to this she held senior management and professional positions in the ACT Government, in the fields of community health, child and family support services, child welfare and disability services. From 1997-2003 she was the Director of the Child, Youth and Women's Health Program in ACT Health. Giovanna was a key contributor to the ACT Children's Plan and many other projects both locally and nationally, that helped place children and young people's health and development on the Commonwealth and Territory governments' agenda. She was awarded The Public Service Medal in 2002 for the ACT for her services to children and families. Giovanna has undertaken a number of projects for non-government and government sectors, and her research activity has covered cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral learning and practice, public inquiries into child abuse and workforce planning. Most recently, Giovanna conducted research for ICPS about recruiting and retaining foster and kinship carers.

ICPS Staff

[Click Here](#)

for more information about ICPS research and professional staff.

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Associate Director

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Paola Tretow-Loof
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Contact Us

ICPS is located within the Faculty of Health Sciences at the Australian Catholic University, and has offices in Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney.

The Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS) at the Australian Catholic University aims to enhance outcomes for children, young people and families through quality research, evaluation, training and community education. ICPS research strengths include promoting children's participation, strengthening service systems and informing practice, and supporting child-safe communities.

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