

MEDIA RELEASE

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Daryl Higgins appointed Director of the Institute of Child Protection Studies

Australian Catholic University (ACU) has appointed Professor Daryl Higgins as the new Director of the Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS), a nationally recognised centre of research excellence in the field of child, youth and family welfare.

Professor Higgins comes to ACU from the Australian Institute of Family Studies, where as Deputy Director he led the research program, with responsibility for research projects and research communication outputs across a broad range of issues relating to families in Australia.

A registered psychologist, Professor Higgins' research focuses on public health approaches to protecting children, and child-safe organisational strategies. He has been researching child abuse impacts and prevention, family violence, and family functioning for more than 25 years. In his research on child maltreatment, he pioneered the concept of 'multi-type maltreatment', which led to new conceptual developments and policy implications for statutory child protection services, including the recognition that regardless of maltreatment type, harms can accumulate and vulnerable children need appropriate responses based not just on discrete single incidents.

Additionally, Professor Higgins has examined statutory child protection systems across Australia, and the intersections and gaps with the family law system.

In taking on his new role, Professor Higgins said he looked forward to working with the dedicated team at ICPS.

"It is so valuable to know that the research our staff is dedicated to can make a real difference to children's lives through improved systems of safety for children. This is happening at the structural level, in terms of how governments, services and communities look out for families and children in need, and support families to do the best job they can in the important role of parenting and caring for children," said Professor Higgins.

"Additionally, in the context of the work of the child abuse Royal Commission, it is critical to look at what methods work in keeping children safe within the vast range of organisations across Australia that engage with young people. There is a distinct need for ongoing support with evidence-informed strategies to identify and respond to risks."

Executive Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences Michelle Campbell welcomed Professor Higgins to the University.

"The Institute of Child Protection Studies is a leading Australian research centre examining child protection and child safety issues. With his extensive experience and expertise in this field, both in research and dissemination, Professor Higgins is the ideal candidate to lead the Institute into this next phase."

Professor Higgins will commence at Australian Catholic University on Tuesday 14 February, and will be based at the Melbourne Campus.

ICPS was established in 2005, to generate and promote knowledge to improve the wellbeing of children, young people, families and communities. It is undertaking ground-breaking research into the safety of children in institutions, the involvement of children in social research on sensitive issues, and trialling a model of contact between children in out-of-home care and their parents.

For more information about the Institute of Child Protection Studies, visit: www.acu.edu.au/icps

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