

ACA^YH

ACADEMY OF CHILD &
ADOLESCENT HEALTH



Newsletter December 2025



<https://acah.org.au/>



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Academy of Child and Adolescent Health



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@AcademyCAH

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Newsletter producer



ACAH26

BUILDING BRIGHTER FUTURES

23 - 25 APRIL 2026 | DARWIN CONVENTION CENTRE

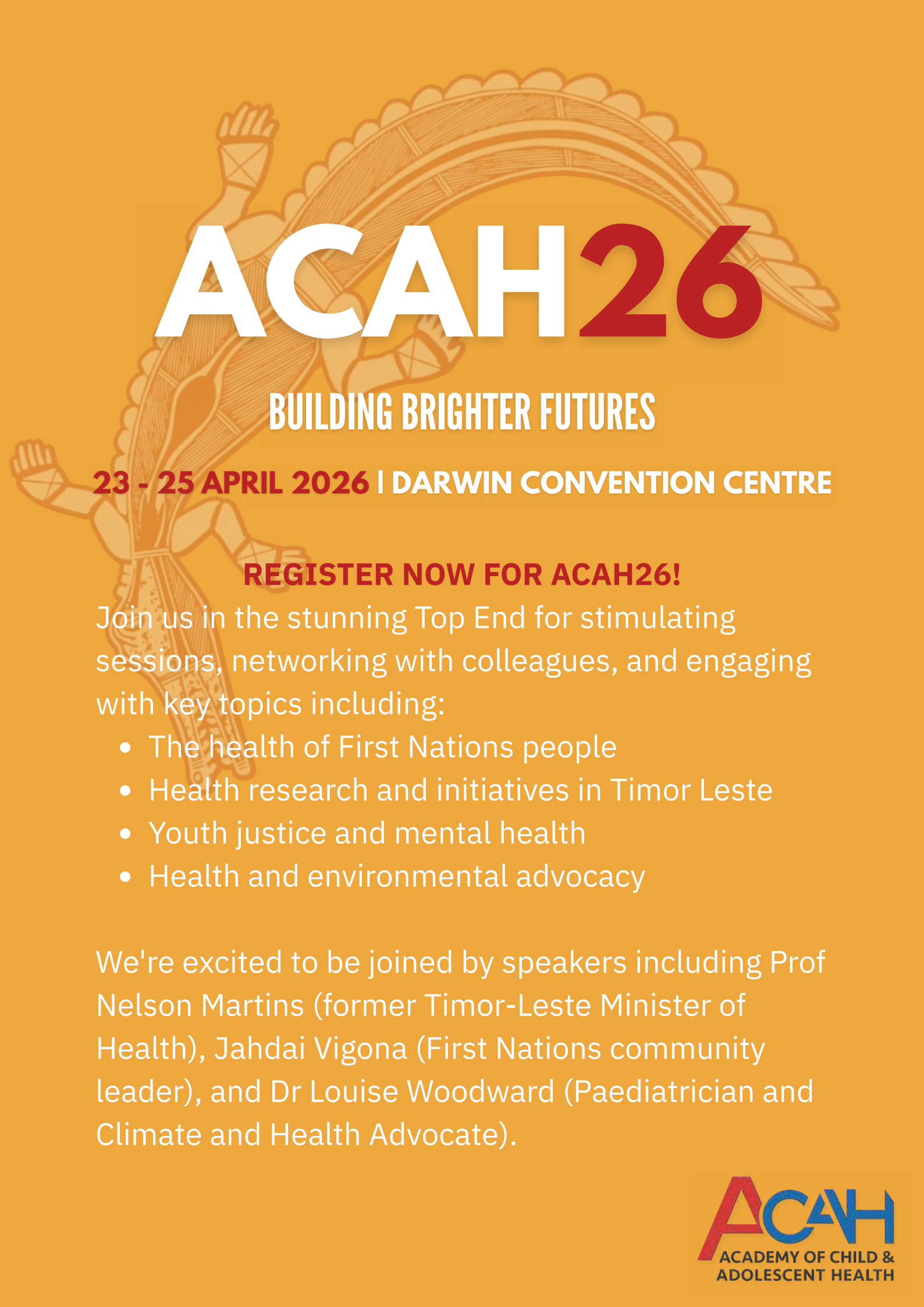
Announcing

Our paediatrics conference is back!
ACAH26 is a multidisciplinary
conference for those
passionate about
child and adolescent health

DARWIN, LARRAKIA COUNTRY

With a theme of **Building Brighter Futures**, we are bringing together a brilliant range of speakers to discuss issues that affect young people and their health. Topics will span across perinatal medicine, childhood & adolescent health, and population health & advocates, with a focus on First Nations voices and community led solutions.

There will also be research presentations and prizes, so submit your abstracts now!



ACAH26

BUILDING BRIGHTER FUTURES

23 - 25 APRIL 2026 | DARWIN CONVENTION CENTRE

REGISTER NOW FOR ACAH26!

Join us in the stunning Top End for stimulating sessions, networking with colleagues, and engaging with key topics including:

- The health of First Nations people
- Health research and initiatives in Timor Leste
- Youth justice and mental health
- Health and environmental advocacy

We're excited to be joined by speakers including Prof Nelson Martins (former Timor-Leste Minister of Health), Jahdai Vigona (First Nations community leader), and Dr Louise Woodward (Paediatrician and Climate and Health Advocate).

ACAH26: Day One

Thursday 23rd April | Building Healthy Starts

Time	Session
8:30 - 9:00	Delegate Registration
9:00 - 9:30	Opening Ceremony Welcome to Country Uncle Richie Fejo , Senior Larrakia Elder, Flinders Uni Elder on Campus. Welcome from ACAH Board Dr Simone Sherriff , ACAH Board Director and proud Wotjobaluk woman Dr Jacqueline Small , Chair, ACAH Board
9:30 - 10:30	Opening Plenary: Introduction to Place and Culture Uncle Richie Fejo , Senior Larrakia Elder, Flinders Uni Elder on Campus.
10:30 - 11:00	Morning Tea
11:00 - 11:45	Birthing on Country Dr Kiarna Brown , Senior Research Fellow, Child and Maternal Health Division Menzies School of Health Research. First Nations Obstetrician & Gynaecologist
11:45 - 12:30	Panel Discussion: Neonatal Health in the NT Dr Mantho Kgosiemang , Specialist Neonatologist and General Paediatrician, Royal Darwin Hospital Dr Mathew Wong , Specialist Neonatologist and General Paediatrician, Royal Darwin Hospital Dr Gurmeet Singh , Specialist Neonatologist and General Paediatrician, Royal Darwin Hospital and Senior Principal Research Fellow, Head of the Life Course Program, Deputy Head of the Child and Maternal Health Division Menzies School of Health Research.
12:30 - 13:30	Lunch

Time	Session	
13:30 - 15:00	NT Research Showcase: the Latest in First Nations Health Dr Jemima Beissbarth , Senior Research Officer, Child and Maternal Health Division Menzies School of Health Research Dr Bianca Middleton , Paediatrician, Royal Darwin Hospital and PhD student Global and Tropical Health Division at Menzies School of Health Research Prof Amanda Leach AM , Senior Principal Research Fellow, Head of the Ear Health Research Programme, Child and Maternal Health Division, Menzies School of Health Research A/Prof Gabrielle McCallum , Head of Discipline, School of Nursing at Charles Darwin University; Senior Principal Researcher at Menzies School of Health Research	
15:00 - 15:30	Afternoon Tea	
15:30 - 16:15	<u>ROOM 1</u> Cultural Safety & Communication	<u>ROOM 2</u> Research Presentations
16:15 - 17:00	<u>ROOM 1</u> Health Policy: Removing barriers to medication access	<u>ROOM 2</u> Research Presentations
Social: Opening Night of Mindil Beach Sunset Markets (delegates to make own travel arrangements, meeting spot to be confirmed)		

ACAH26: Day Two

Friday 24th April: Building Stronger Youths

Time	Session	Time	Session
8:30 - 9:15	Plenary: Child Health in Timor-Leste Prof Nelson Martins , Senior Technical Adviser Menzies School of Health Research. Timor-Leste Health Minister 2007-2012, President Timor-Leste's National Commission for HIV/AIDS, creator of SISCa (Integrated Community Health Services) and author of Re-vitalisation of Primary Health Care System in Timor-Leste through SISCa.	13:00 - 14:30	Plenary & Panel Discussion: Youth Justice Shahleena Musk , Larrakia woman; Children's Commissioner in the Office of the Children's Commissioner NT. Tabitha Lean , Adelaide based Indigenous woman, Prisoner Activist, Freelance Story Teller, Writer and Poet Dante Rodrigues , Aboriginal Tiwi/Portuguese man, Athlete and Entrepreneur from Darwin 2024 National NAIDOC Youth of the Year and State NAIDOC Youth and Sports Person of the Year
9:15am - 10:00	Health on Country - Tiwi Islands: Panel Discussion Aboriginal Health Practitioners from Tiwi Islands	14:30 - 15:00	Afternoon Tea
10:00 - 10:30	Morning Tea		
10:30 - 11:00	Plenary: Youth Mental Health Jadhav Vigona , Tiwi man, First Nations community leader, 2023 NT Young Australian of the Year, GTNT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year and Overall Trainee of the Year and UN Youth Forum delegate Co-Founder and Director of the One Percent Program Dante Rodrigues , Proud Aboriginal Tiwi/Portuguese man, Athlete and Entrepreneur from Darwin, Co-Founder and Director of the One Percent Program 2024 National NAIDOC Youth of the Year and State NAIDOC Youth and Sports Person of the Year	15:00 - 15:45	ROOM 1 Bias in Clinical Trials Prof Tom Snelling , Head of Infectious Disease Implementation research team, The Kids Research Institute Australia's Westfarmers Centre of Vaccines and Infectious Diseases, NHMRC Career Development Fellow
11:00 - 12:00	Panel Discussion: Youth Mental Health Jadhav Vigona , Tiwi man, First Nations community leader, 2023 NT Young Australian of the Year, GTNT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year and Overall Trainee of the Year and UN Youth Forum delegate Angelena Harradine , Kurna Elder, South Australia Emer O'Connor , Adolescent CNC, 2023-2024 Nurse of the Year NTPHN	15:35 - 17:00	ROOM 1 Challenges Facing Top End Youth - Diabetes Dr Angela Titmuss Paediatric Endocrinologist and Paediatrician at Royal Darwin Hospital, Senior Research Fellow at Menzies School of Health Research
12:00 - 13:00	Lunch		
			ROOM 2 Research Presentations
			ROOM 2 Research Presentations
			Social: Conference Cocktail Evening (canapes and drinks overlooking a famous Darwin sunset, ticket sales to be launched)

ACAH26: Day Three

Saturday 25th April: Powerful Communities

Time	Session
8:30 - 9:15	Plenary/Panel Discussion: Refugee and Asylum Seeker Health & Advocacy – Current Evidence for Managing Children from Refugee Backgrounds Prof Hasantha Gunasekera , Professor of Paediatric Priority Populations, Children's Hospital at Westmead Clinical School, University of Sydney
9:15 - 10:30	Plenary/Panel Discussion: Health of Children Experiencing War and Conflict Prof Amy Gray , Chair and Head of Department of Paediatrics at The University of Melbourne, General Paediatrician, Medical Educator
10:30 - 11:00	Morning Tea
11:00 - 12:00	Plenary: Environmental Health & Advocacy Dr Louise Woodward , Paediatrician, Royal Darwin Hospital, Environmental Activist Mililma May , Danggalaba Kulumbiringin Tiwi writer and Community Organiser; Former CEO and Co-Founder of Uprising of the People Ltd
12:00 - 13:00	Lunch
13:00 - 15:00	Prevocational Workshops Mentoring Program
Social: Farewell Drinks by the Waterfront (venue to be confirmed, all welcome, drinks not included in registration)	

Please note: Program is subject to change until the day of the conference.

**Reserve
your ticket**



EARLY BIRD tickets are available until 1st March 2026. We are also offering a special deal including a discounted annual ACAH membership in the ticket pricing. (usually valued at \$100–300 depending on income level, and priced at \$100 for those registering for full registration and \$50 for trainees / allied health / nursing).

Visit <https://acah.org.au/events/acah26-darwin/> for ticketing options and event details.

The background of the entire page is a solid orange color. Overlaid on this is a faint, stylized illustration of a Indigenous Australian figure, possibly a man, in a dynamic pose with arms raised. A large, multi-colored rainbow arches over the figure's head.

ACAH26

BUILDING BRIGHTER FUTURES

23 - 25 APRIL 2026 | DARWIN CONVENTION CENTRE

WHAT ARE YOUR NEXT STEPS?

1. Register for the ACAH2026 Conference: Early bird tickets from \$350 (discounts for ACAH members and special offers for new members who join and register).
2. Book discounted accommodation via this portal: Rooms are limited. Book in early and save on your stay!
3. Submit abstracts for presentation here: Present your latest work on a national stage and connect with peers.

Interested in sponsoring ACAH26? See our [prospectus here](#) for a full breakdown of partnership opportunities.

Chair's Report

Recently, I have had conversations about the high rates of emotional and behavioral distress experienced by children and young people. Many parents are seeking expert advice from child health professionals and paediatricians on how to manage and support their children. Certainly, there are many experiencing clinical levels of distress who need expert professional support.

Undoubtedly though there are environmental factors contributing to this public health crisis with commercial determinants of health receiving increasing recognition. Toxic stress, social media and junk food are but a few of these.

We do have frameworks and guidelines that can be foundations for services and population level interventions such as:

- Nurturing Care framework for helping children SURVIVE and THRIVE to TRANSFORM health and human potential that recognizes five interrelated and indivisible components of nurturing care (<https://nurturing-care.org/>)
- National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy co-chaired by Frank Oberklaid AM (<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/projects/childrens-strategy>).

The ACAH provides us with an important opportunity to network and advocate for the health of our children and young people, building on the strengths of our membership and connections across the child health community in Australia.

On behalf of the Board, I want to warmly welcome Dr Amelia Lewis, Clinical Neuropsychologist, who has recently joined us in a casual vacancy. We are looking forward to her contributions to ACAH.

As we are approaching the end of the year, I want to wish you all the best and thank you for your membership of the ACAH and the contributions you have made to child health through 2025. We hope to continue to grow our activities through 2026 and welcome your involvement in whatever way you can manage.

And finally, for your to do list:

- Register for ACAH26 Conference 23-25 April in Darwin Building Brighter Futures <https://acah.org.au/events/acah26-darwin/>
- Join, renew or even gift a ACAH membership <https://acah.org.au/membership/apply-for-or-renew-membership/>
- Contact us with your suggestions admin@acah.org.au

I want to thank all those who have contributed to the ACAH through 2025 including current and retired Board members, Marissa Loh and Monica Parker and members of the Conference Organising Committee and Pretashini Somasundram and her team on the PreVoc Group. Particular thanks to Michelle Pham our wonderful admin officer.

Jacqueline Small, Chair ACAH Board.

Act for Children

Every child deserves to thrive

ACAHA is proud to be a part of the Act for Children Alliance which demands that child safety and wellbeing become a national priority, calling for the following key actions:

1. Appointing a Cabinet Minister for Children
2. Making child wellbeing a standing priority of National Cabinet
3. Developing and implementing a National Plan for Child Wellbeing
4. Enshrining children's rights in law through a National Children's Act

Recent updates:

UNICEF Australia and ARACY, supported by the Minderoo Foundation, launched the State of Australia's Children 2025 report — a national snapshot of how children and young people are really faring.

Australia's Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates have welcomed the report as a vital, if worrying, snapshot and urged governments to treat it as a turning point. They warn that many children remain deeply vulnerable - especially those in out-of-home care, children with disability, and those in youth justice or child protection - and call for urgent action to tackle poverty, housing stress and systemic racism, provide wraparound support for families, invest in children's mental health and wellbeing, and embed children's participation and co-design in policy making.

The good news - the report finishes with concrete recommendations that include all of the core Act for Children campaign asks, giving governments a clear roadmap for action.

Act for Children

Every child deserves to thrive

These recommendations sit alongside growing momentum to put children's rights and voices at the centre of public policy. Shout out to 54 Reasons and the Australian Centre for Child Rights -with the Melbourne Law School Human Rights Program and UNICEF Australia - for the Accountable Together 2025 symposium, asking what it would mean if every system, service and policy began with children's rights, voices and lived experience, and helping sharpen the case for stronger child rights accountability across Australia.

We also mark an important transition in the leadership of children's rights and wellbeing advocacy. We congratulate Anne Hollonds on the completion of her term as National Children's Commissioner and appointment as the new CEO of the Early Learning and Care Council of Australia. We thank her for her ongoing commitment to championing Act for Children. We also warmly welcome Deb Tsorbaris as the new National Children's Commissioner and look forward to working with her to advance this agenda.

How you can help:

Please help us seize this moment by:

- Sharing the State of Australia's Children report with your networks
- Referencing it alongside our four asks in your advocacy, meetings and communications

Together, we can turn this national spotlight into lasting structures that put children at the centre of decision-making.

ACAH26 Conference

Convenors Update

We are excited to release the program overview for our 2026 ACAH Conference, Building Brighter Futures! We have curated an inspiring program featuring speakers from around the country and across the Timor sea. We are pleased to invite Uncle Richie Fejo to open our conference (Senior Larrakia Elder, Flinders Uni Elder on Campus).

Other highlights include Aboriginal Health Practitioners from the Tiwi Islands sharing their experiences of delivering health care on Country, researchers from the Menzies Institute sharing their latest work, and First Nations community leaders discussing key topics of youth mental health and youth justice, including:

- Jadhav Vigona (Tiwi man, 2023 NT Young Australian of the Year)
- Dante Rodrigues (Tiwi/Portuguese man, 2024 National NAIDOC Youth of the Year)
- Shahleena Musk (Larrakia woman, NT Children's Commissioner).
- Prof Nelson Martins (Timorese medical doctor, public health specialist, and national health leader, Timor-Leste Health Minister 2007-2012)

And we will be joined by more experts in global health and environmental advocacy - [check out the full program for more details!](#)

Next steps:

Register now for early bird prices: <https://events.humanitix.com/acah-2026-building-brighter-futures-academy-of-child-and-adolescent-health-conference-darwin>

Submit abstracts for our research program and the opportunity to present here: <https://acah.org.au/home/abstracts-submission/>

Book your discounted accommodation here:

<https://book.accommodationlink.com.au/ACAH2026>

ACAH in 2025

Summary of key 2025 ACAH Activities

Educational webinars including:

- Primary Care Workshop
- Participatory Approaches in Childhood Onset Disability Research featuring Olaf Kraus De Camargo, Can-Child and McMaster University, Canada.
- Fake News: Paracetamol, vaccinations and Autism-how clinicians can combat misinformation featuring Margie Danchin and Nick Woods.
- Do children gamble? They do. Why do they do it? Featuring Dr Monique Ryan MP.

Advocacy:

Thriving Kids.

- ACAH made a submission to the Thriving Kids Inquiry chaired by Dr Mike Freeland MP.
- Along with the ASDP and RACP we wrote to Minister Butler.
- On behalf of ACAH, Kim Oates and Jacqueline Small met with Dr Mike Freeland MP.
- The ACAH Thriving Kids submission was sent to national and state health ministers, Tasmania's Children's Minister.
- The ACAH will be meeting with Queensland Minister for Health and senior policy advisers in the office of the Western Australia Minister for Health.
- Discussions have been held with Frank Oberklaid, CoChair Thriving Kids Advisory Committee and Sharon Goldfeld, Director of the Centre for Community Child Health.

Adolescent Gambling.

- ACAH wrote to Anika Wells Minister for Communication to call for implementation of the Murphy Report to address predatory advertising.

Keep an eye out for upcoming events!

Even paediatricians make mistakes: Improving child health by avoiding error traps

25

Feb 2026

Wednesday, Feb 25th, 2026 | 7 - 8 pm AEDT

Providing quality and safe health care is providing the right care, in the right place at the right time is particularly important for children. International experts in paediatrics and child health will address quality and safety in paediatric healthcare.

Keeping children out of jail

5

Mar 2026

Thursday, Mar 5th, 2026 | In planning

Jonathon Hunyor, CEO of the Justice and Equity Centre

ACAH26 Conference: Building Brighter Futures

23-

25

Apr 2026

Thursday - Saturday, April 23rd - 25th, 2026

Join our 5th Annual ACAH Conference, "Building Brighter Futures," in Darwin on Larrakia Country from 23-25 April 2026. Explore child and adolescent health across Australia and beyond, with sessions on First Nations health, youth justice, mental health, advocacy, and environmental health, alongside inspiring speakers, research leaders, and opportunities to connect with passionate colleagues.

Meet the Board



Dr Jacqueline Small, Chair

Jacki is a Community Child Health Consultant in SLHD and has over 27 years experience in multidisciplinary teams for children with developmental disabilities. She was RACP President/Board Chair 2022-2024 and President Australian Association Developmental Disability Medicine (2015-2020).

Dr Has Gunasekera, Treasurer

Has is a Clinical Academic and Professor of Paediatric Priority Populations at CHW and University of Sydney. He is engaged in research with ACCHOs and worked in Health Assessment for Refugee Kids clinic for over two decades.



Dr Kim Oates AO

Kim is a paediatrician who trained across 3 countries and was the first holder of University of Sydney's Chair of Paediatrics and Child Health (1985-1997) and subsequently, CE from 1997-2006. Kim retains his international reputation as an expert in child abuse and neglect and as a teacher of medical students.

Simone Sherriff

Simone is a Wotjobaluk woman who lives and works on Wiradjuri country and is a Research Fellow at the Poche Centre for Indigenous Health at Sydney University. Simone has extensive experience working in the Aboriginal community-controlled health sector in NSW and has worked with Aboriginal community organisations for the last 15 years on health research and the implementation of services around key priority areas for communities. Simone's research interests are around food security, breastfeeding, and child health.



Sam Harkus

Sam is an audiologist based in Gadigal, Sydney NSW. Her work has predominantly focussed on equitable and earlier access to ear health and hearing care for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Meet the Board

Dr Anysha Walia

Anysha is a paediatric trainee in Victoria and was shortlisted as Intern of the year in 2022. She has been active in the ACAH since she was a medical student and was co-convenor of ACAH2023. She is a volunteer for Water Well project and involved in refugee health research.



Dr Devin Deo

Devin is a Paediatric Trainee at The Children's Hospital at Westmead, NSW. He completed his undergraduate medical degree from The University of Newcastle in 2020, before completing his internship in rural Taree. He is currently the President of the Kids Resident Medical Officer Association at Westmead Kids and also a member of the Clinical Council of the Sydney Children's Hospital Network. Devin also serves as the Hospital Representative for Westmead Kids in the Australian Medical Association NSW Doctors-In-Training Committee.



Peter Barclay

Peter is the Sydney Children's Hospitals Network Director of Pharmacy. Having worked as a Hospital Pharmacist for over 40 years, Peter is passionate about enabling access to appropriate medications for children and families and removing barriers that exist in the health system. Actively engaged in the provision of precision medicines including gene therapies for children at SCHN. Peter is experienced using pharmacy technology to deliver patient safety and business efficiency. He has been a strong advocate for the role of Hospital Pharmacists as clinicians, advocates for patient safety, efficient pharmaceutical procurers and key stakeholders in medication related clinical governance.



Amelia Lewis

Amelia is the Senior Clinical Neuropsychologist at the Disability Specialist Unit, Sydney Local Health District. With over a decade of experience supporting children and adolescents with neurodevelopmental differences and disabilities, she brings expertise in clinical neuropsychology, research, and health policy. Amelia's work is guided by systems thinking, collaboration, and child-and-family-centred care. She is deeply committed to promoting the wellbeing of children and young people, as well as their families and communities.

