



ACAHA 26

BUILDING BRIGHTER FUTURES

23-25 APRIL 2026 | DARWIN CONVENTION CENTRE

PROGRAM OVERVIEW



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



Academy of Child and Adolescent Health



academycah



ACAH26: Day One

Thursday 23rd April | Building Healthy Starts

Time	Session	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	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
9:30 - 10:15	Opening Plenary: Introduction to Place and Culture Uncle Richie Fejo , Senior Larrakia Elder, Flinders Uni Elder on Campus.	15:00 - 15:30	Afternoon Tea
10:15 - 10:45	Morning Tea	15:30 - 17:00	Pharmacy Updates: the latest in Paediatrics Peter Barclay, Director of Pharmacy at the Sydney Children's Hospitals Network, and colleagues ROOM 2 Research Presentations
10:45 - 11:30	Plenary: Birthing on Country - Child Health in Timor-Leste Prof Nelson Martins , Timorese medical doctor, public health specialist, and national health leader; Senior Technical Advisor, Menzies School of Health Research Timor-Leste Health Minister 2007-2012.	16:15 - 17:00	ROOM 2 Research Presentations
11:30 - 12:30	Panel Discussion: Health on Country - Tiwi Islands Aboriginal Health Practitioners from Tiwi Islands	Social: Opening Night of Mindil Beach Sunset Markets (delegates to make own travel arrangements, meeting spot to be confirmed)	
12:30 - 13:30	Lunch		

ACAH26: Day Two

Friday 24th April: Building Stronger Youths

Time	Session	Time	Session
8:30 - 9:00	<p>Plenary: Youth Mental Health Jahdai 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</p>	13:00 - 14:30	<p>Birthing on Country Dr Kiarna Brown, Senior Research Fellow, Child and Maternal Health Division Menzies School of Health Research. First Nations Obstetrician & Gynaecologist</p> <p>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.</p>
9:00 - 10:00	<p>Panel Discussion: Youth Mental Health Jahdai 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, Kaurna Elder, South Australia</p>	14:30 - 15:00	<p>Afternoon Tea</p>
10:00 - 10:30	<p>Morning Tea</p>	15:00 - 15:45	<p>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</p> <p>ROOM 2 Research Presentations</p>
10:30 - 11:00	<p>Plenary: Youth Justice in the NT Shahleena Musk, Larrakia woman; Children's Commissioner in the Office of the Children's Commissioner NT</p>	15:35 - 17:00	<p>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</p> <p>ROOM 2 Research Presentations</p>
11:00 - 12:00	<p>Panel Discussion: Youth Justice 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</p>		
12:00 - 13:00	<p>Lunch</p>		
<p>Social: Conference Cocktail Evening, Darwin Trailer Boat Club</p>			

ACAH26: Day Three

Saturday 25th April: Powerful Communities

Time	Session
8:30 - 9:00	Plenary: Refugee and Asylum Seeker Health & Advocacy – Current Evidence for Managing Children from Refugee Backgrounds Dr Sarah Cherian , Perth Children’s Refugee Health Service Prof Hasantha Gunasekera , Professor of Paediatric Priority Populations, Children’s Hospital at Westmead Clinical School, University of Sydney
9:00 - 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 Prof Shanti Raman , Editor-in-Chief BMJ Paediatrics Open Prof Nelson Martins , Timorese medical doctor, public health specialist, and national health leader; Senior Technical Advisor, Menzies School of Health Research Timor-Leste Health Minister 2007–2012.
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: Practical Advocacy – Dr Paul Bauert, Dr Louise Woodward
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.

DARWIN, LARRAKIA COUNTRY

We are excited to be hosting ACAH26 in Darwin, on Larrakia Country. The Larrakia people are the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Darwin Region.

Darwin is a vibrant and multicultural city in the tropical north of Australia, with plenty to offer for visitors. It is the gateway to Litchfield and Kakadu National Parks, with stunning sunsets and beaches, and world-famous street food markets running year round.



About the venue

ACAH26 will be held at the Darwin Convention Centre, which is the largest conference and event facility in the Northern Territory. Located in the Waterfront Precinct, the world class venue offers meeting rooms and auditoriums, paired with outstanding dining experiences and excellent service.



Discounted accommodation for attendees

Make your trip to Darwin cost-effective! We've partnered with Accommodation Link to negotiate discounts and secure a limited number of reduced-rate hotel rooms for ACAH26 delegates.

Reduced contracted rates will expire 30 days prior to the event. [Book early here for best selection and price.](#)

Book your
stay



INTRODUCING OUR SPEAKERS



Dr Richard Fejo

Dr Richard Fejo is a Larrakia Man from Darwin from his father, his grandfather and his great grandfather in what culture calls "Grandfather lore".

Richard is also Warumungu from Tennant Creek on his mother's side and holds a great amount of cultural knowledge and experiences from both northern and Central Australia across the Northern Territory. Richard has worked for 30 years across 40 First Nations communities across the Northern Territory, training doctors in Aboriginal cultural practices in the last 15 years, earning his Honorary Doctorate from Flinders University in 2022. He is also a stand-up comedian and emerging singer and songwriter.



Prof Tom Snelling BMBS DTMH GDipClinEpi PhD FRACP

Tom Snelling is a clinical scientist, Director of Health and Clinical Analytics in the School of Public Health at the University of Sydney, and an infectious diseases physician in the Sydney Children's Hospitals Network. He leads a team implementing learning health systems to improve healthcare and reduce the burden of infectious disease.

His collaborative projects across Australia cover a range of clinical domains, including improving treatment and prevention of severe gastroenteritis in remote Aboriginal children, primary prevention of food allergies, SMS-based interventions to improve immunisation timeliness, and improving management of cystic fibrosis.



Tabitha Lean

Tabitha Lean is a First Nations prisoner activist, Mad survivor, abolitionist and storyteller whose work is grounded in her lived experience of criminal and psychiatric incarceration. A loud mouth, disruptor and trouble maker, Tabitha uses poetry, art, and narrative to expose and resist the violence of the colonial carceral state. Her activism is rooted in collective care, community accountability, and the belief that no one is disposable. Living and creating at the margins, she channels her experiences into a powerful refusal of systems of punishment and control – always with love, always in resistance.



Mililma May

Mililma May is a Danggalaba Kulumbiringin Tiwi writer and community organiser who has led and supported Northern Territory grassroots campaigns including Shut Down Don Dale, Save Lee Point, and Stop Middle Arm. A former CEO and co-founder of Uprising of the People Ltd, she carries forward her Old People's legacy, grounded in lived knowledge across Colonial and Traditional systems. She is currently Campaigns and Advocacy Manager at Change the Record, working for Indigenous self-determination and an inevitable future where every single Indigenous child can thrive.

[Reserve tickets](#) 

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INTRODUCING OUR SPEAKERS



Dr Jemima Beissbarth PhD BSc/Teach

Dr Jemima Beissbarth recently completed her PhD in otitis media (middle ear disease) microbiology. Her research focus is the bacteria involved in sustaining chronic disease, the associated antimicrobial resistance, and vaccine impact on these bacteria, including pneumococcal vaccines. Senior Research Fellow at the Charles Darwin University



Jahdai Vigona

A proud Tiwi Islands man, Jahdai Vigona is a leading voice in Indigenous-led health care. He advocates that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are best placed to design and deliver the health services their people need – and he's putting that into practice through mental health programs that educate young First Nations students on how to seek help.

A sought-after speaker at government forums and research summits, Jahdai has been recognised with multiple awards including 2023 NT Young Australian of the Year.



Gabrielle McCallum

Associate Prof Gabrielle McCallum is Head of Discipline in the School of Nursing at Charles Darwin University and Senior Principal Researcher at Menzies School of Health Research. A registered nurse and clinical researcher with decades of experience in the Northern Territory, her research focuses on improving lung health outcomes for children and adolescents in Australia, Timor-Leste and the Asia-Pacific region. Gabrielle is committed to translating research into culturally appropriate, evidence-based resources and building the next generation of clinical and research leaders.



Dr Louise Woodward FRACP

Dr Louise Woodward is a Northern Territory paediatrician and environmental advocate who has been adding a health voice to campaigns with environmental groups, Indigenous leaders, and public health organisations by highlighting the health impacts of fossil fuel projects on local communities in fossil fuel sacrifice zones, like her own home of Darwin. She has used her privileged role as a paediatrician to speak out publicly on the obligation of governments to prioritise human health by protecting air and water quality and over corporate interests.

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ACA26: Building Brighter Futures | 23 – 25 April | Darwin Convention Centre

INTRODUCING OUR SPEAKERS



Professor Amanda Leach AM MAgSc PhD

Prof Amanda Leach AM is a NHMRC Senior Principal Research Fellow and Leader of the Ear Health Research Program at Menzies School of Health Research, Darwin. Her work has had national and global influence through WHO recommendations for pneumococcal vaccine research, innovative multi-pathogen vaccine trials, and accredited national clinical guidelines for otitis media. A Member of the Order of Australia for her contributions to ear disease and Indigenous child health research, Professor Leach was also the 2019 NT Telstra Business Woman of the Year.



Dr Bianca Middleton MBBS (hons) MPH FRACP

Dr Bianca Middleton is a general paediatrician with a strong interest in public health. She co-leads a program of immunisation research at the Menzies School of Health Research which seeks to optimise immunisation schedules and uptake for children living in rural and remote northern Australia.



Danté Rodrigues

A proud Tiwi and Portuguese man, Danté is a multi-title Muay Thai and kickboxing champion, the 2024 National NAIDOC Youth of the Year, and Co-Founder and Director of the One Percent Program — delivering evidence-based personal development and wellbeing programs for young people, families, and communities.

His work blends lived experience, trauma-informed practice, and qualifications in Neuro-Linguistic Programming and Neuro Transformational Therapy. He also serves on the boards of the One Percent Program Foundation and SEDA, and has contributed to international youth advocacy through the United Nations and IUCN Youth Boards. His commitment is simple but powerful: help people become one percent better every day.



Dr Kiarna Brown MBBS FRANZCOG

Dr Kiarna Brown is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descended from the Wuthathi people of Cape York Peninsula. She has traditional family ties with the Gurindji People of the Northern Territory, and the people of the Torres Straits. She was born and raised in Garamilla (Darwin) on the beautiful lands of the Larrakia Nation and is a Specialist Obstetrician Gynaecologist dedicated to strengthening health outcomes for Top End women. She is a Senior Research Fellow and Co-Lead of the Maternal Health Program at Menzies School of Health Research and clinical lead of the Australian Preterm Birth Prevention Alliance in the Top End.

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INTRODUCING OUR SPEAKERS



Professor Amy Gray

Prof Amy Gray is the Stevenson Chair and Head of Department of Paediatrics at The University of Melbourne, Consultant Paediatrician at The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne, Australia and the Co-Chair of Melbourne Children's Global Health. She is a clinician, educator and researcher who has worked in the Asia Pacific for 20 years supporting paediatricians and other health workers improve care and outcomes for children.



Professor Shanti Raman

Prof Shanti Raman is a Consultant Paediatrician and Director of Community Paediatrics in South Western Sydney, leading clinical services in child development and child protection. She is Senior Clinical Advisor for Child and Family Health at the NSW Ministry of Health and Editor-in-Chief of BMJ Paediatrics Open. Her research spans migrant and refugee health, Indigenous child health, child rights, and global maternal and child health, and she is actively involved in policy development at state, national, and international levels promoting a rights-based approach to child health.

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THE BOARD & CONVENORS

Board Members



Dr Jacqueline Small (Chair)
Paediatrician



Prof Hasantha Gunasekera
(Treasurer)
Paediatrician



Dr Simone Sherriff
Research Fellow



Amelia Lewis
Senior Clinical
Neuropsychologist



Dr Anysha Walia
Paediatric Trainee



Dr Devin Deo
Paediatric Trainee



Peter Barclay
Pharmacist



Prof Kim Oates AO
Paediatrician

Convenors



Dr Marissa Loh
(Co-Convenor)
Paediatric Trainee



Dr Monica Parker
(Co-Convenor)
Paediatric Trainee



Dr Tara McFadyen
(Co-Convenor)
Resident Medical Officer



Dr Teresa Pham
(Co-Convenor)
Intern



REFLECTIONS ON ACAH

“I see the ACAH network continuing to grow and provide a platform for our emerging leaders in the health and medical space to share important learnings that are innovative and value a diversity of knowledges to shape the health and wellbeing for our next generations.”

- Dr Simone Sherriff, Wotjobaluk woman, ACAH Board Director

“When I was an intern interested in paediatrics, I was thrilled to first immerse myself in the world of ACAH at their 2023 conference in Melbourne and to instantly feel a sense of belonging in a tight-knit community passionate about child health and advocacy.

The approaching 2026 ACAH conference in Darwin will be another exciting opportunity to grow our community, and spark interest and connections among experienced as well as budding paediatric health care professionals, with the common goal of driving meaningful change in our paediatric population.

- Dr Clara Charbine - Paediatric Basic Trainee, ACAH Pre Vocational Committee



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