

ACA⁴H

ACADEMY OF CHILD &
ADOLESCENT HEALTH



Newsletter March 2026



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



admin@acah.org.au



Academy of Child and Adolescent Health

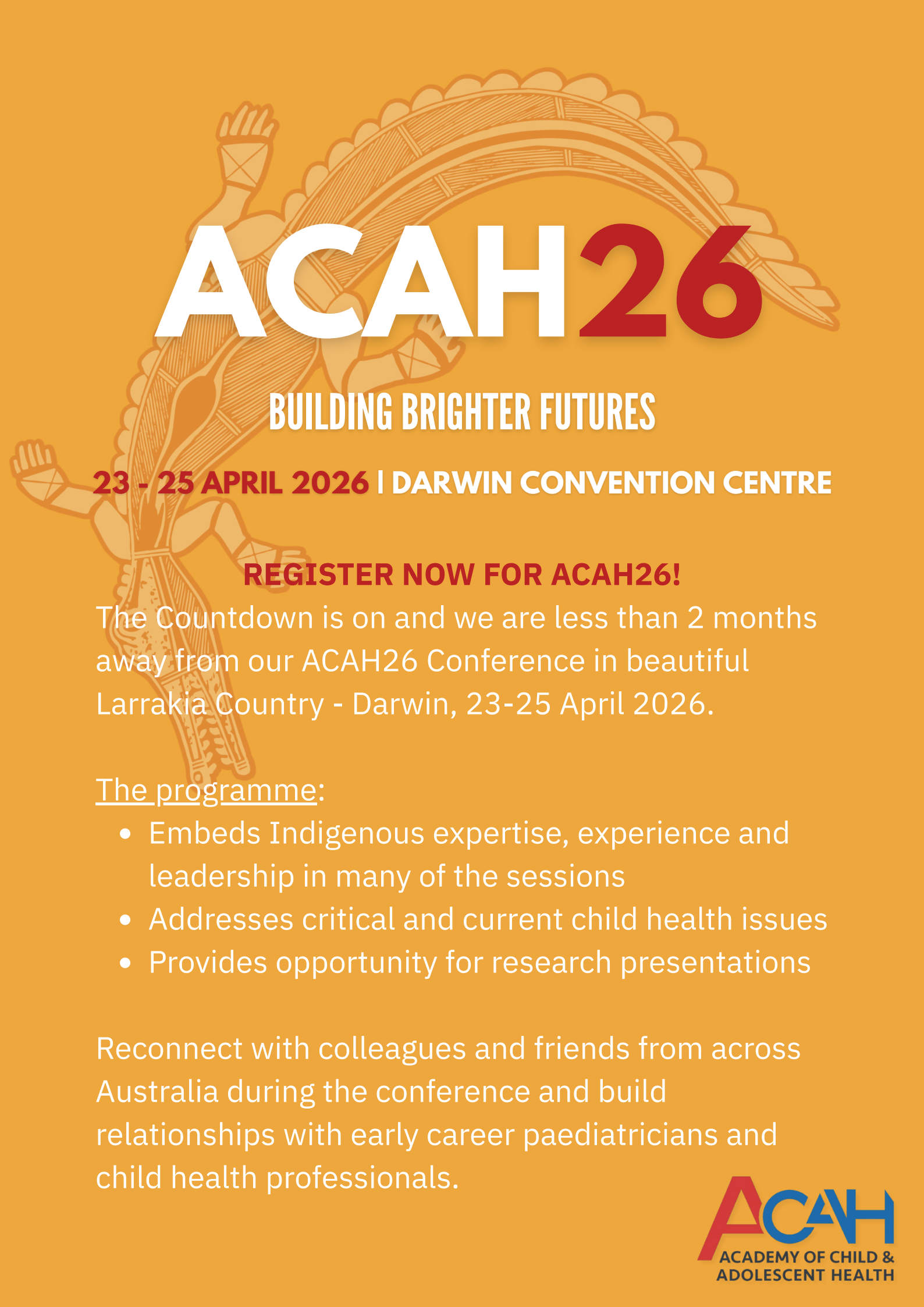


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@AcademyCAH

Dr Lily Chen
Newsletter producer



ACAH26

BUILDING BRIGHTER FUTURES

23 - 25 APRIL 2026 | DARWIN CONVENTION CENTRE

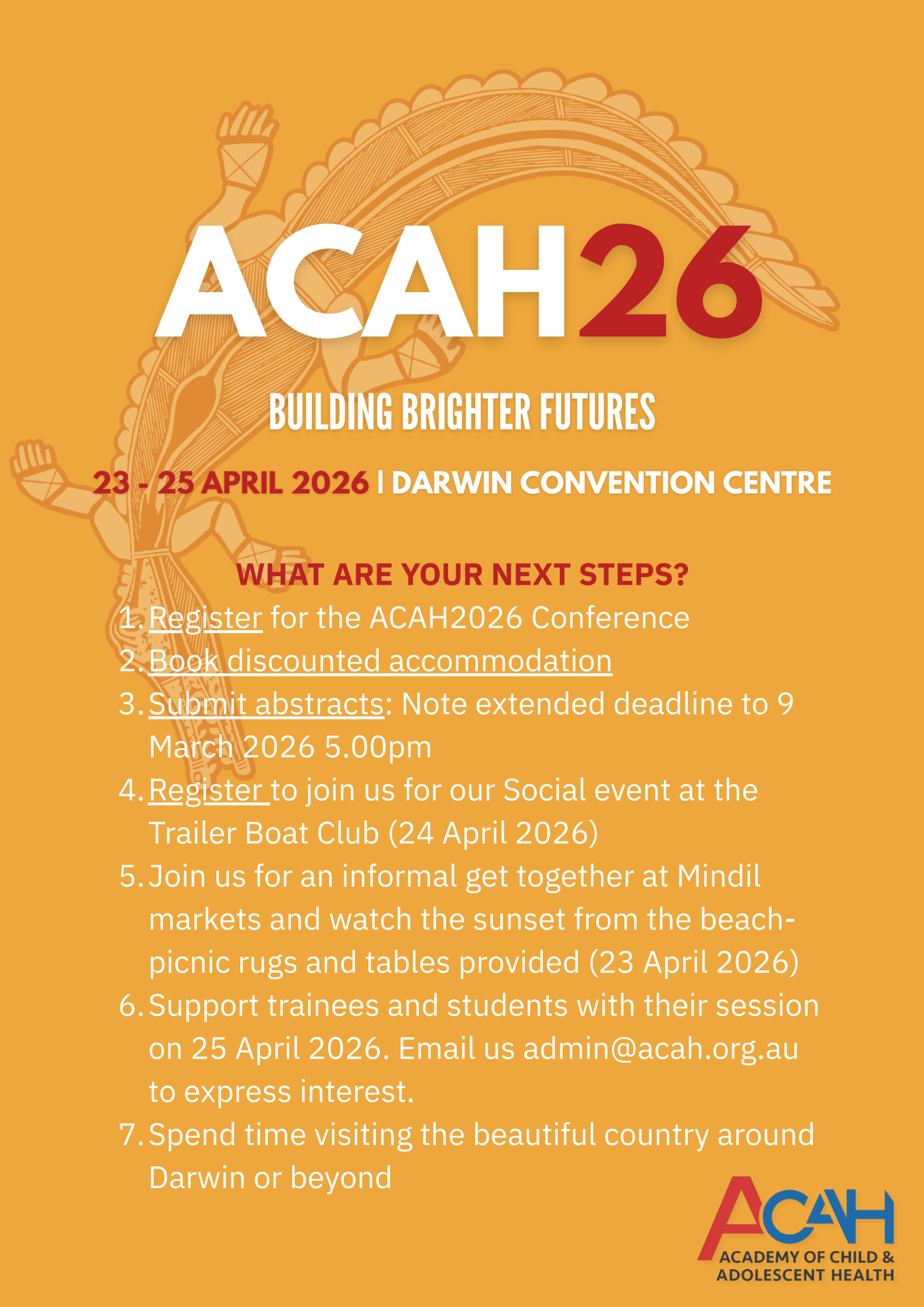
REGISTER NOW FOR ACAH26!

The Countdown is on and we are less than 2 months away from our ACAH26 Conference in beautiful Larrakia Country - Darwin, 23-25 April 2026.

The programme:

- Embeds Indigenous expertise, experience and leadership in many of the sessions
- Addresses critical and current child health issues
- Provides opportunity for research presentations

Reconnect with colleagues and friends from across Australia during the conference and build relationships with early career paediatricians and child health professionals.



ACAH26

BUILDING BRIGHTER FUTURES

23 - 25 APRIL 2026 | DARWIN CONVENTION CENTRE

WHAT ARE YOUR NEXT STEPS?

1. [Register](#) for the ACAH2026 Conference
2. [Book discounted accommodation](#)
3. [Submit abstracts](#): Note extended deadline to 9 March 2026 5.00pm
4. [Register](#) to join us for our Social event at the Trailer Boat Club (24 April 2026)
5. Join us for an informal get together at Mindil markets and watch the sunset from the beach- picnic rugs and tables provided (23 April 2026)
6. Support trainees and students with their session on 25 April 2026. Email us admin@acah.org.au to express interest.
7. Spend time visiting the beautiful country around Darwin or beyond

ACAH26

BUILDING BRIGHTER FUTURES

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The ACAH thanks our generous sponsors

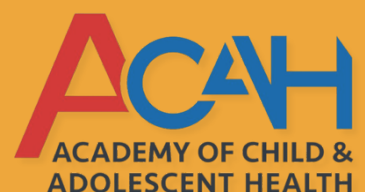
Destination Partner



Bronze Partners



Exhibitors



I continue to be reminded of the benefit for each of us as paediatricians and child health professionals when we collaborate with and across our professions as well as with people with lived experience.

I was privileged to be invited by the Department of Health and Ageing to participate in a National Disability Strategy Forum in Adelaide 24-25 February 2026. People with lived experience are involved in a range of aspects of the Strategy, including evaluation, demonstrating their important leadership.

It provided an opportunity me with an opportunity to represent the advocacy and research of others, eg impact of Community Hubs, progress made in NSW and Australia for people with intellectual disability and to ensure Thriving Kids and the needs of children and young people were acknowledged.

In this newsletter, we provide you with an array of opportunities to participate in ACAH and community activities. I especially encourage you to:

- Register to attend ACAH26 Building Brighter Futures Conference 23-25 April 2026 in Darwin.
 - **Note extension of date for submission of abstracts to 9 March 2026**
- Register for Upcoming webinars - especially March 5 2026 "Children and community safety: Can we move beyond criminalisation?"
- Apply for casual Board vacancies
- Nominate your colleague for the ACAH 2026 Champion award
- Watch the ACAH webinars that you missed
- Attend WHO webinars on Child Safety
- Join the Raise the Age campaign.

We welcome your contributions and engagement with ACAH. Please share this newsletter in your networks and [join our organization](#).

Please don't hesitate to contact me on admin@acah.org.au

Jacqueline Small
Chair ACAH Board

ACAH Champion Award

Nominations for ACAH26 Champion Award are now open!

The Academy of Child and Adolescent Health established the ACAH Champion Awards in 2022 to recognise passionate, innovative people, from diverse backgrounds, who are gamechangers in Child and Adolescent Health!

The difference between these awards and other honours, is that these awards are peer-nominated and peer-voted.

Past awardees include:

- Prof Kelvin Kong, 2022
- Prof David Isaacs, 2023

Any ACAH member/non-member is eligible to be nominated but only ACAH members can nominate and only ACAH voting members can vote for the winners. ACAH Board members are not eligible for the ACAH Champion awards as the final decision on awards will be made by the Board.

Nomination process:

- Any ACAH member can nominate up to 3 people for any of the Champion awards (NB: the nominee does not need to be a member)
- Nominations will be made online through the ACAH website using a standard form
- The nominator can choose to remain anonymous to the nominee and does not need to inform or seek the consent of the nominee at this stage
- The ACAH Board will ratify nominations and then contact the nominee before placing the nominations on the ACAH Website for member voting

[Submit your nomination here](#) or email admin@acah.org.au for more information.

Timeline:

- Nominations close 18 March 2026 (close of business).
- Member voting dates TBA
- Champion Awardee announced at ACAH26 Conference
- The Champion awardee can choose to accept the award in person in Darwin c
ACAH27 Conference

Upcoming webinars

Children and Community Safety: Can we move beyond criminalization

Thursday, Mar 5th, 2026 / 6 - 7pm AEDT

Despite decades of evidence pointing to harm caused by criminalising young children - and its ineffectiveness in making our communities safer - in NSW we continue to send children as young as 10 to prison.

In November 2025, contrary to the recommendations of an independent expert report, the NSW Government made it easier to prosecute young children, with changes to the law concerning “doli incapax”: a legal presumption that children under 14 are incapable of criminal intent.

Why do we seem to be going backwards? And in the face of concerns about crime and safety, how can we do better for children and our communities? Are other jurisdictions also following the same path?

[Register here](#) to join us for this discussion.



Featuring Jonathon Hunyor, CEO Justice and Equity Centre (formerly the Public Interest Advocacy Centre).

Future Webinars in Planning

(see <https://acah.org.au/events/> for updates and registration details).

23

July 2026

Thursday, 23 July 2026

Thriving Kids with Frank Oberklaid and Morgan Fitzpatrick

TBA

2026

TBA

Primary Care: Thriving Kids theme

TBA

2026

TBA

Primary Care: ADHD for GPs and Primary Care

TBA

2026

TBA

Breastfeeding with focus on First Nations programmes and research

Please contact us to suggest topics or speakers (such as international experts visiting Australia) for webinars, your contributions are very welcome.

These webinars are recorded for later viewing by members. [Join ACAH to get access to these.](#)

Become a board director

The Board welcomes nominations for 2 casual vacancies:

- Board appointed Director – open to members and non-members
- Member Director – open to members

This is an opportunity to contribute to the leadership of the ACAH and to develop your skills and experience in governance.

The term runs until the AGM in late 2026. **Please submit your nominations by 18 March 2026** by emailing admin@acah.org.au and including the following:

- Cover note detailing your reasons for nominating, what you bring to the ACAH Board and skills and experience for the Board.
- Current CV
- Referee who we may contact

Some key information about the ACAH:

The primary purpose of the ACAH is to promote the health and wellbeing of every newborn, child and young person in order that they may reach their maximum potential. It does this through a range of activities including education, advocating, promoting communication and liaison with other health agencies, promoting preventative and positive environmental health strategies among others.

The ACAH was registered in December 2016 as a company limited by guarantee. Membership is open to any person committed to the principal purpose and there are several classes of membership.

The Constitution describes the relationship between the Board, members and the Company. Please familiarize yourself with this important document.

Become a board director

Some key information about the role:

As a Board director, you will be expected to attend Board meetings, actively participate in decision making processes, offer strategic guidance and support for our initiatives through your professional experience and networks.

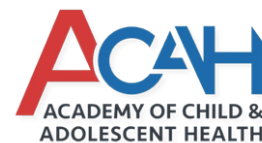
In addition to preparing for and attending Board meetings, many Directors are also active in other roles, such as secretary or treasurer, to support the ACAH. This may require additional time dedicated to supporting the organization.

Directors carry certain responsibilities and duties. A summary of these can be found on the Australian Institute of Company Directors website.

Your role in ensuring that the ACAH continues to grow and achieve its goals in advancing the health and well-being of children and adolescents will be valuable. We ask that each Director be an active advocate for the ACAH, assisting in advocacy efforts, fostering relationships with key stakeholders and contributes to the organisation's overall success.

Please email admin@acah.org.au if you have questions.

ACAH Prevocational Mentorship Program Launch



The ACAH Prevocational Mentorship Program aims to strengthen the paediatric workforce pipeline by connecting aspiring clinicians with mentors who can offer guidance, insight and encouragement.

We are very excited to announce the launch of this program which supports ACAH's broad mission to advance child and adolescent health by fostering professional development and community within this field.

This program will run over a 6-month period and match mentors (paediatric ATs, current or retired consultants) with mentees (medical students, prevocational doctors) on a 1-on-1 basis, based on goals and interests.

We will also be aiming to run additional optional events for the program alongside the formal mentoring relationship, including 'Speed Dating' and 'Introduction to Advocacy' at the upcoming ACAH Conference, as well as subspecialty panel events on Zoom.

We would love you to participate in our Mentorship Program to build meaningful connections within our ACAH community and support the future of paediatric health professionals.

Sign-ups will be open from March 2nd to 16th.

- If you would like to sign up as a mentee: <https://forms.gle/GZQgGZ8PSDLmZAWH8>
- If you would like to sign up as a mentor: <https://forms.gle/ve1zWbtvTksLDrvt9>

Clara & Kumaran
Mentorship Leads, Prevocational Committee

Please email ACAHmentoring@gmail.com if you have questions.

Other upcoming events

Webinar 2: “Enhance Medication Safety”

Thursday, Mar 5th, 2026 / 2 - 3:30pm CET

Register for the webinar [here](#)

Peter Lachman is pleased to invite you to the second webinar in a five-part global webinar series on the implementation of the **World Patient Safety Day Goals** for safe care for every newborn and every child.

This webinar will bring together global experts and practitioners to explore how medication safety interventions can be implemented to improve safety in newborn and child care and help reduce avoidable harm.

The webinar will focus on:

- Why medication safety is essential for safe newborn and childcare
- How Goal 2 can be implemented in practice at the point of care
- What health care workers, leaders, managers, and policymakers can do to enhance medication safety

This webinar series is co-hosted by the **World Health Organization**, the **International Pediatric Association**, the **International Union of Basic and Clinical Pharmacology** and the **Child Health Task Force**.

One webinar will be organized each month, with each session focusing on a specific World Patient Safety Day Goal. The dates for the remaining four webinars will be communicated in due course.

We encourage you to share this invitation widely within your networks and to join us for this important discussion.

Other upcoming events

Raise the Age National Campaign

Sign the petition now!

- **National Campaign to Raise the Age:** <https://raisetheage.org.au/>
- **NSW Campaign to Raise the Age:** <https://raisetheagenewsw.org.au/>

Everyone knows that children do their best when they are supported, nurtured and loved. But right now across Australia, children as young as 10 can be arrested by police, charged with an offence, hauled before a court and locked away in a prison.

We know these laws are harming children at a critical time in their lives. When children are forced through a criminal legal process, at such a formative time in their development, they can suffer lifelong harm to their health, wellbeing and future.

The #RaiseTheAge campaign was born to change this. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations and activists have been pushing for the age of criminal responsibility to be changed for decades, having seen first hand how locking away young children and removing them from their communities and families only does more damage.

Tens of thousands of people have joined the campaign, but in 2025, Australia is trending in the wrong direction. Instead of listening to evidence and experts, more state governments are doubling down on punitive approaches that harm children—especially in the Northern Territory and Queensland, where regressive laws are locking up more kids at younger ages. This isn't justice—it's a crisis. Now more than ever, we need your voice. Together, we can push for real solutions that protect our children and create safer communities for everyone.

Recognising the Invisible Labour of Parents and Carers in Child Development Support Systems update

When health practitioners are asked for advice about supporting children with developmental and behavioural concerns, many will speak to the importance of coordinated care from multidisciplinary teams. Paediatricians, psychologists, speech pathologists and other health providers can all certainly offer valuable input to optimise child development and wellbeing. However, there are team members whose contributions far outweigh our own in hours, emotional investment and influence: parents and carers. As we move toward a national realignment of child development support systems under the Thriving Kids reforms, it is important that this 'invisible' health workforce is brought front and centre. As ACAH members, we are well placed to advocate for a service design that integrates child-facing interventions with meaningful supports for the adults who will be implementing these interventions.

The scientific literature on child development has long established that children's emotional and behavioural regulation and skill development are shaped not in isolation, but within relationships. While therapy sessions may occupy an hour or two a week, parents and carers provide thousands of hours of modelling, co-regulation and scaffolding across the course of a child's development. Parent-mediated interventions consistently demonstrate that when caregivers are supported to respond calmly and consistently to their children, gains are more likely to persist and generalise outside the clinic environment.

The cumulative influence of these everyday interactions – shared problem-solving through play, coaching through moments of frustration in the supermarket aisles, connecting and communicating within bedtime routines – goes far beyond a simple dose-response therapeutic relationship.

At the same time, health practitioners should recognise that parents are not implementing these supports from a neutral baseline. Australian data indicate that caregivers report higher levels of psychological distress than adults without children, with symptoms of anxiety and depression remaining further elevated in the years following the COVID-19 pandemic. Families of children with developmental and behavioural needs experience an additional layer of strain, including increased financial pressure, disrupted workforce participation, social isolation and the emotional toll of navigating complex service systems. For many, the expectation to be both advocate and interventionist is superimposed upon already depleted emotional and cognitive reserves.

If Thriving Kids reforms are to meaningfully improve child development outcomes, they must recognise that 'thriving' is relational. This requires proactive consideration of parental wellbeing in assessment and formulation, accessible pathways for caregiver-oriented supports, and service models that view parent capacity as a core outcome. Supporting parents is not an adjunct to child health care; it is evidence-based developmental practice. As a sector, we have the opportunity – and responsibility – to advocate for well-designed systems that care not only for children, but for the adults who are the central figures in their lives.

Dr Amelia Lewis
ACAH Board Director
Senior Clinical Neuropsychologist
Allied Health Research Leader



Advocacy update

The Academy of Child and Adolescent Health has continued to advocate with the government about Thriving Kids. Some key ACAH recommendations include:

1. **Family centred:** Parents are the primary and most powerful influence in their child's life
2. **Equity:** This must be proportionate to the child and family's needs.
3. **Integrated models of service delivery** where various health, early childhood education and social care providers collaborate. eg hubs
4. **Mainstream uplift** especially primary care and maternal/child health services
5. **Localised solutions** that build on existing services and resources and responds to the community's needs
6. **Paediatricians, child health professionals and primary care practitioners, allied health, nursing** and other key health organisations or frameworks, such as developmental screening, **are explicitly recognised and valued for their expertise**
7. **First Nations peoples** are involved in leading, planning and delivering services for their communities. Furthermore, First Nation knowledge and ways of working may be valuable for Thriving Kids as a whole

There are valuable lessons from the SNIPI model in Portugal that embeds:

- Governance-clinical and programme
- Family centred intervention in the community
- Consistency in intervention through manualized transdisciplinary approach
- Localised programmes

We have met/will meet with the following government departments:

- Western Australia and Queensland Department of Health
- NSW Departments of Communities and Justice and Health
- South Australia Women's and Children's Hospital Executive who is providing advice to government

The ACAH thanks **Sam Kaiser, Nitin Kapur, Kim Oates and Amelia Lewis** who have contributed to these meetings.

We welcome member engagement in our advocacy to improve child and adolescent health.

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.



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.

Meet the Board



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.