

ACAH

ACADEMY OF CHILD &
ADOLESCENT HEALTH



Newsletter May 2026



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



admin@acah.org.au



Academy of Child and Adolescent Health



academycah



@AcademyCAH

Dr Lily Chen
Newsletter producer

What an amazing ACAH26 conference it was! Organised and run by a talented team of early career members. It went off without a hitch. The Darwin sunsets and sunrises alone were worth the trip to Darwin. Some of the initial feedback includes:

"Connecting with paediatricians and children's health practitioners throughout the day was beyond inspiring, and the passion, humility and dedication was tangible. I met so many kind, engaged, hopeful and supportive people."

"Thank you for such a phenomenal child and adolescent conference."

"Stunning, fabulous, inspiring conference. Thank you all."

Throughout the conference, the programme featured a range of experts, often with lived experience, that included leading and motivating First Nations presenters. Often their presentations were tinged with emotions that emphasised the risks and harm that children and young people are continuing to be exposed to.

The programme boldly addressed many sensitive issues such as youth justice, environmental health, children living in war and conflict regions and youth mental health. We also welcomed original research presentations, and presentations on important clinical issues such as birthing on country, rheumatic fever and a range of medication and pharmacy topics.

A more formal report will follow, but in the meantime, I want to thank the organisers: Marissa Loh and Monica Parker (Co Chairs Conference organising committee), Te-Yu Hung, Tara McFadyen, Teresa Pham, Benedicta Yudianto, Paul Bauert, Peter Morris

Also thanks to PreVoc Committee organisers of the trainee sessions: Kumaran Manivannan, Clara Charbine, Anysha Walia (Board director)

Thanks to those who made important contributions behind the scenes: Pretashini Somasundrum, Lily Chen (who also produces this newsletter!), Nelasha Damji, Jessica Wong, Michelle Pham (our amazing admin officer) and the Board - especially Treasurer Has Gunasekera.

Chair's Report

The ACAH Board is starting to plan our conference for 2027 and will provide a range of opportunities to participate. Our events calendar is continuing to fill.

Keep an eye on our website for more information <https://acah.org.au/events/>

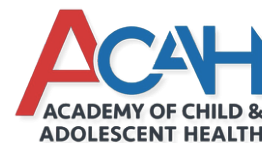
The Board is also engaging in some strategic reflection and will provide opportunities for you to respond and engage. Please see the item in this newsletter on ACAH Affiliated Organisations.

If there's something else you would like to see or just to have a yarn with one of us please contact us on admin@acah.org.au.

Or to join the ACAH <https://acah.org.au/membership/apply-for-or-renew-membership/>

Jacqueline Small
Chair ACAH Board

Development of ACAH Affiliated Organisations initiative



Collaborating for brighter futures in child and adolescent health

Since its establishment in 2016, the ACAH has fostered collaboration with like-minded organisations that share the ACAH vision.

The ACAH vision is to promote the health and wellbeing of every newborn, child and young person in order that they may meet their maximum potential.

The Board is reviewing the benefits and opportunities of being an ACAH Affiliated Organisation (AfO) and is seeking your comments.

The following are proposed features of AfO relationship (subject to ACAH Board oversight):

1. AfO may advertise their events in ACAH newsletters and will share through their membership/networks information about ACAH events/activities.
2. Opportunities to participate/present at ACAH conferences/events.
3. Collaboration on key advocacy initiatives.
4. Demonstration of shared value of promoting child and adolescent health.

We also welcome your suggestions, including contact details, of organisations who share the ACAH vision and may be interested in fostering closer relationships.

Please send your comments to acah@acah.org.au.

ACAH26 Overall Research Prize

"Room for improvement: compliance with standards for echocardiography and clinical review in children with acute rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease in Central Australia and the Barkly, 2019 - 2023"

For paediatric patients with acute rheumatic fever (ARF) and rheumatic heart disease (RHD) in Central Australia and the Barkly, the rates of diagnostic and follow-up echocardiogram, and rates of paediatric review, were compared to national guidelines. Whilst 83% of children received a diagnostic echocardiogram, only 50% and 56.5% received timely follow-up echocardiograms and paediatric reviews, respectively.



We found hospitalisation of cases of suspected ARF is necessary to coordinate appropriate diagnostic evaluation in the Central Australian context. Additionally, there continues to be systemic barriers to appropriate follow-up for children with ARF and RHD in the Northern Territory, which must be addressed to ensure equitable access to essential healthcare.

Dr Stephanie Nesbit

General Paediatric Advanced Trainee

Currently working at Sunshine Hospital in Victoria

(Completed this work whilst working as a registrar in Alice Springs)

"Development of a family-focussed digital intervention for children with neurodevelopmental disabilities"

Children with neurodevelopmental disabilities are increasingly prescribed psychotropic medications that can contribute to weight gain and obesity risk. While lifestyle interventions addressing diet and physical activity are recommended for paediatric obesity, our work has shown that their effectiveness in this cohort is unclear. Diverse families face many barriers to accessing in-person supports.



Using Design Thinking, we co-designed Growing Minds Feeling Good, a 12-week family-focused digital lifestyle intervention, with parents and service providers in South West Sydney (n=23). Preliminary feasibility testing (n=14) suggested the program was acceptable, user-friendly, and may support family behaviour change, while highlighting recruitment challenges. This work provides an accessible, tailored intervention for families with complex needs.

Dr Patrick Hawker

Lecturer, PhD Candidate

School of Clinical Medicine, UNSW Medicine & Health

ACAH Webinar Updates

Upcoming webinars

The First 2000 days framework: Shaping a healthier future for children

20

MAY 2026

Tuesday, 20 May 2026

The First 2000 Days Framework is a key policy that addresses this period, the environmental factors that can impact children and their families and how our health services and communities can support them for the best outcomes across the lifespan.

In this webinar, we are celebrating Assoc Prof Murphy's remarkable career as she talks about the First 2000 Days Framework, a new ABC: antenatal care, brain development and childhood experience!

→ [Register here](#)

Children with developmental concerns: Key issues for GPs and primary care

22

JUL 2026

Wednesday, 22 July 2026

Our expert panel will cover when and how to screen, what tools work best in primary care settings, and practical strategies for supporting children's development at the earliest opportunity.

→ [Register here](#)

Thriving Kids: A once in a generation opportunity

23

July 2026

Thursday, 23 July 2026

This webinar will feature key leaders from the Thriving Kids Advisory Committee to discuss the initiative and how it will work. What will it mean for children and families? What role will paediatricians and other child health professionals play? How will it enhance collaboration across the sectors and build on existing policy foundations such as First 2000 days. How will it help Australia's children to thrive?

→ [Register here](#)

ACAH Webinar Updates

Webinars in planning

Primary Care: ADHD for GPs and Primary Care

TBA
2026

TBA

Breastfeeding with focus on First Nations programmes and research

Wednesday, 5 August 2026

05
Aug 2026

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.](#)

Who is the ACAH?

Reflections from our Prevocational Committee

Pretashini Somasundram is a paediatric basic trainee with a Master of Public Health, whose work is guided by a strong belief that health is a fundamental human right and a commitment to equitable healthcare for children and young people.

Pretashini has a strong interest in global child health, particularly in addressing communicable diseases that continue to affect children despite being easily identified, preventable, and treatable. She is also passionate about improving healthcare access for asylum seekers and refugees and has been involved in health literacy initiatives aimed at empowering individuals and communities to navigate their own healthcare. As a medical student, she served as National Lead of the AMSA Crossing Borders initiative, advocating for the health and wellbeing of refugee and asylum seeker populations.



It is this commitment to child health equity that inspired her to found the ACAH Prevocational Committee. The committee aims to foster early interest in paediatrics and child health advocacy among medical students, junior doctors, nursing and allied health professionals, while building practical skills and confidence for those considering a career in child health and creating opportunities for meaningful multidisciplinary collaboration.

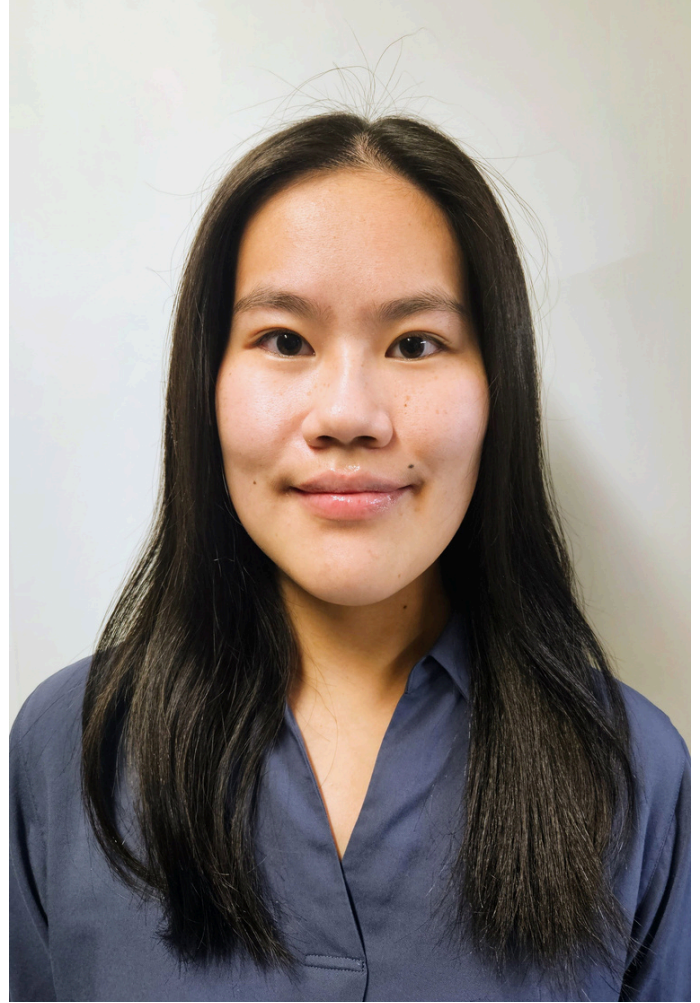
The committee's work is structured around four pillars: mentoring, education, research, and advocacy. Current priorities include establishing a national mentoring program and expanding educational initiatives such as webinars, advocacy-focused sessions, and clinical skills workshops.

Over the coming editions, we look forward to introducing the team behind this initiative. We encourage prospective prevocational members to sign up and reach out!

Who is the ACAH?

Reflections from our Prevocational Committee

Lily Chen is a Paediatric Basic Trainee who has been drawn to paediatric medicine since medical school. Early exposure to paediatrics during her clinical rotations sparked a strong interest in caring for children and young people, which has since grown into a genuine passion for the specialty. Through her paediatric placements, Lily found the field incredibly rewarding, particularly the opportunity to make a meaningful and lasting impact on a child's life through early intervention, preventative care, and holistic management.



As the Advocacy and Communications Officer of the ACAH Prevocational Committee, Lily is passionate about fostering a supportive and connected community for medical students and junior doctors interested in paediatrics. In this role, she aims to engage aspiring paediatric trainees by sharing educational opportunities, career pathways, and advocacy initiatives through the ACAH newsletter and social media platforms.

ACAH 26 MOMENTS





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.



Dr 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.

