

ACA^H

ACADEMY OF CHILD & ADOLESCENT HEALTH



Newsletter June 2026



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



admin@acah.org.au



Academy of Child and Adolescent Health



academycah



@AcademyCAH

Dr Lily Chen
Newsletter producer

Welcome to the June ACAH Newsletter - I hope you enjoy reading it.

Firstly, I must thank the very capable Lily Chen, ACAH newsletter producer and member of the ACAH PreVoc Committee. She is generously continuing her expertise to producing the Newsletter, and much of our social media, to build connections and inform members and interested stakeholders.

The latest hot off the press news is the announcement of the **ACAH27 Conference- A Shared Vision to be held 6-8 May 2027 Sydney**. Please see details later in this newsletter.

Some key recent ACAH initiatives include:

1. Finalising the criteria for ACAH Affiliated Organisation Relationship (AfO), it provides for the following:

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

Please contact us on admin@acah.org.au if you have suggestions of organisations we can contact.

2. Formalising terms of reference for the Prevocation Committee so that it has prominent status in ACAH. This is the leading committee for medical students, interns, paediatric trainees, allied health and nursing students or trainees.

- The Board thanks Pretashini Somasundrum and her team for their leadership and innovative workplan. More to come!
- A webpage will be created on our website so that you can easily stay in touch with their activities.

3. Revision of the sponsorship opportunities and benefits. Sponsorship of the conference has helped us deliver a strong programme for you and keep costs down. These will be detailed in the sponsorship prospectus. Please let us know if you have suggestions.

We encourage you to renew your membership before the end of the financial year if you haven't already done so <https://acah.org.au/membership/apply-for-or-renew-membership/>.

Jacqueline Small
Chair ACAH Board

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ACADEMY OF CHILD &
ADOLESCENT HEALTH

A Shared Vision



6-8th May 2027



Sydney, NSW



ACAH27 Conference

A Shared Vision

The Board is excited to announce the launch of our 2027 Conference. We were thrilled with the ACAH26 held in Darwin that brought us together and was organised by Marissa Loh, Monica Parker and team.

The ACAH27 Conference is to be held on 6-8 May 2027 in Sydney at the lovely Aerial Function Centre, University of Technology, Sydney. Put it in your diary now!

The theme, ***A shared vision***, will draw on diverse voices to address cutting edge clinical and health/social policy issues for child and adolescent health. The ACAH27 vision will build on our ACAH vision ***to promote the health and wellbeing of every newborn, child and young person in order that they may meet their potential.***

ACAH27 A shared vision will feature:

- Leading local, national and international speakers.
- Inclusion of important voices, especially Indigenous colleagues and community members.
- Opportunities for research presentations.
- Involvement of allied health, nursing, paediatricians and trainees and students.
- Social events to build friendship and re-connect.
- And more!

The Board is establishing the Conference Organising Committee and we encourage members to reach out to us as soon as possible if you are interested in being part of the planning committee- admin@acah.org.au.

ACAH26 Recap

Building Brighter Futures – Day 1

“You will be the difference, and you will be the change.”

These were the powerful words sung by Dr Richard Fejo, Senior Larrakia Elder, which opened the 2026 Academy of Child and Adolescent Health Conference (ACAH26) and set the scene for three days of inspiring and meaningful conversations about contemporary issues facing today's children and youth, with a focus on First Nations health. Following a standing ovation, ACAH26, with a theme of Building Brighter Futures, was off to a strong start, welcoming over 170 delegates and speakers from every state and territory in Australia and as far as Japan.

Day 1, themed Building Healthy Starts, opened with Dr Fejo's Welcome to Country and Opening Plenary. This was followed by a plenary from Prof Nelson Martins, who spoke about his experiences in public health, policy and child health in Timor-Leste, and in building a health care system in a country ravaged by conflict, as a former Health Minister.

After this, Raelene Mungatopi, Roy Farmer, Paul Bourke, Linda Pupangamirri and Libby Coombes, Aboriginal Health Practitioners from the Tiwi Islands, shared their honest and heartfelt stories and journeys in becoming health workers and caring for their mob.

The afternoon then featured contemporary research in First Nations health with eminent Menzies researchers Prof Amanda Leach, Dr Jemima Beissbarth and Dr Bianca Middleton. This was followed by Pharmacy Updates with the Sydney Children's Hospital team, Peter Barclay, Deshina Naidoo, Dr Felicity Wright and Madison Groves, which was an excellent opportunity to learn from our Pharmacy colleagues about recent developments in therapeutics. The day concluded with one of Darwin's spectacular sunsets at the Ski Club.

ACAH26 Recap

Building Brighter Futures – Day 2

The theme of day 2 was Building Stronger Youths. The day began with the wise words of Aunty Angelena Harradine, a senior Kurna Elder from South Australia, who shared the importance of Country and cultural identity in youth wellbeing. This was followed by a panel on Youth Mental Health, facilitated by Dr Amelia Lewis, with Angelena Harradine, Ranjika Huppatz-Daley (Western Arrernte and Bundjalung woman, Mental Health Researcher) and Simon Davis (Program Manager, Headspace).

From here, the Youth Justice session opened with a plenary from Shahleena Musk (Larrakia woman, NT Children's Commissioner), who set the scene for the current state of youth justice in the NT and the shocking reality for our most vulnerable children.

A panel discussion, moderated by Dr Richard Fejo, then focused on current advocacy work and challenges in this space, with Natalie Hunter (Nykina and Jabba Jabba woman, Founding Member of Close Don Dale Now and Justice Not Jails), Mililma May (Larrakia and Tiwi woman, Community Organiser), Justine Davis MLA (Independent Member) and John Lawrence SC (Legal Practitioner). This was an extremely powerful morning which highlighted the injustices facing youth in the justice system, especially First Nations youth, and served as a call to action for many.

The afternoon of day 2 then focused on common issues in our daily clinical practice in the NT. Facilitated by Dr Monica Parker, Dr Kiarna Brown (First Nations Obstetrician and Gynaecologist), Dr Mantho Kgosiemang, Dr Mathew Wong and Dr Gurmeet Singh (Paediatricians and Neonatologists) discussed successes and challenges in establishing maternal and neonatal services, including retrievals, in the context of the NT.

Dr Angela Titmuss (Paediatric Endocrinologist) presented on youth-onset type 2 diabetes, and Prof Anna Ralph (Infectious Diseases Physician), Dr Hilary Hardefeldt (Paediatric Cardiologist) and A/Prof Jennifer Yan (Infectious Diseases Paediatrician) presented on the latest in rheumatic heart disease and acute rheumatic fever. Patient stories and personal experiences highlighted the challenges that First Nations youth face and how clinicians can best care for children with these conditions. Finally, Prof Tom Snelling (Head of Health and Clinical Analytics at the University of Sydney) discussed how to best optimise value from research. Day 2 finished with the Conference Cocktail Evening at the Trailer Boat Club, with canapés, drinks and wonderful company over yet another beautiful sunset.

ACAH26 Recap

Building Brighter Futures – Day 3

The third and final day, Powerful Communities, served as a meaningful reminder about our role as paediatric doctors in advocating and caring for vulnerable children and their families. Dr Sarah Cherian shared her experiences in caring for refugee and asylum seeker families for over twenty years and the development and evolution of a holistic and multidisciplinary service.

This was followed by a panel about the health of children experiencing war and conflict, chaired by Dr Jacki Small, with Prof Amy Gray (Chair and Head of Department of Paediatrics at The University of Melbourne), Prof Shanti Raman (Paediatrician, Editor-in-Chief BMJ Paediatrics Open) and Prof Nelson Martins. Personal and professional reflections emphasised the significance and scope of the problem, with millions of children worldwide affected by this humanitarian crisis. This poignant panel allowed us to reflect on the challenges and obligations of healthcare professionals in this space.

The closing plenary was delivered by Dr Louise Woodward (Paediatrician, Environmental Advocate) and Mililma May, who discussed the significant impacts of fossil fuels and climate change on health, latest developments, and the powerful role of paediatricians in advocacy.

In the afternoon, prevocational workshops featured a mentoring program connecting trainees and consultants, and a panel on practical advocacy with Dr Louise Woodward and Dr Paul Bauert.

ACAH26 also featured fourteen emerging and established researchers who shared their latest work in child and adolescent health. Congratulations to the prize winners. Dr Stephanie Nesbit won the ACAH26 Research Prize for her presentation, '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'. The Higher Degree Research Prize was awarded to Patrick Hawker, for his presentation, 'Development of a family-focussed digital intervention for children with neurodevelopmental disabilities'. The judging panel were impressed with the high standard of research presentations and would like to congratulate all the presenters and their teams.

ACAH26 Recap

Building Brighter Futures - Final Remarks

Feedback from delegates has been overwhelmingly positive:

"Best conference I've attended in a while. Strongly paediatric focused with a very local context, championed voices of local community and passionate speakers working on the ground and also maintained wider lens of global health. Excellent convenors, and the size of the conference allowed for extremely high standards for presentation and immersion in learning as opposed to often very rapid and corporate feeling conferences! Amazing work team!"

"The excellent, thought provoking plenaries on topics particularly that feel neglected at other meetings and conferences including youth justice, environment, mental health and war and conflict."

"Strong focus on First Nations health from experts and people working in the NT, focus on advocacy and display of amazing people doing great things in child health."

"The diversity of presentations and the deep and meaningful conversations that were encouraged."

Thank you to everyone who made ACAH26 such a success, especially our Bronze sponsors: Avant, University of Sydney, MediFinancial and Flinders University.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the organising committee for their incredible work over the last year: Dr Monica Parker, Dr Teresa Pham, Dr Tara McFadyen, Dr Te-Yu Hung, Prof Peter Morris, Dr Paul Bauert and Dr Benedicta Yudianto.

Thank you to the ACAH Board and Prevocational Committee for your support of our vision and our event, especially Dr Jacki Small, Prof Hasantha Gunasekera, Peter Barclay, Dr Amelia Lewis, Dr Anysha Walia, Dr Pretashini Somasundram, Dr Clara Charbine and Dr Kumaran Manivannan.

Thank you to Michelle Pham and Dr Lily Chen for your incredible behind-the-scenes work with marketing, social media, design and much more. Finally, many thanks to everyone who travelled to Larrakia Country to join us. We hope you left ACAH26 feeling inspired to "be the change" – just like Dr Fejo's song.

Looking forward to seeing you at ACAH27!

Marissa Loh

Co-Convenor, ACAH26 Conference

ACAH Webinar Updates

Upcoming webinars

Children with developmental concerns: Key issues for GPs and primary care
Wednesday, 22 July 2026

22

JUL 2026

Covering when and how to screen for developmental concerns, what tools work best in primary care settings, and practical strategies for supporting children's development at the earliest opportunity.

→ [Register here](#)



CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL CONCERNS: KEY ISSUES FOR GPs AND PRIMARY CARE

ACAH X THRIVING KIDS WEBINAR SERIES

Thriving Kids is a new Australian initiative to help children with developmental needs be identified and connected with supports earlier.

22 JULY	6:00 - 7:00 PM ONLINE VIA ZOOM	TICKETS FREE FOR ACAH MEMBERS
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Every child deserves the best start, and early identification is key. Developmental concerns are increasingly recognised in children, and healthcare professionals play a critical role in early identification, intervention, and support. This practical ACAH webinar is designed for trainees, paediatricians, nurses, GPs, and allied health professionals interested in child development and developmental assessment. Participants will gain practical insights into when and how to screen for developmental concerns, the tools that work best in primary care settings, and the role of clinicians in supporting children and families at the earliest opportunity.

Our expert panel brings together perspectives from developmental paediatrics, neuropsychology, child and family health nursing, and family-centred early intervention. Through a series of short presentations and an interactive panel discussion, speakers will explore developmental assessment, multidisciplinary care, family-centred and peer-led support, and the evolving landscape of NDIS and foundational supports. Participants will leave with practical strategies and resources to confidently identify developmental concerns, navigate referral pathways, and support children's development in everyday clinical practice.

ACAH Webinar Updates

Upcoming webinars

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](#)



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THRIVING KIDS: A ONCE IN A GENERATION OPPORTUNITY

ACAH WEBINAR SERIES 2026

Thriving Kids is a new Australian initiative to help children with developmental needs be identified and connected with supports earlier.

23 JUL 2026	6:00PM - 7:00PM ONLINE VIA ZOOM	TICKETS FREE FOR ACAH MEMBERS
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Thriving Kids is an Australian government initiative to help give children the best start in life by identifying those with additional developmental needs earlier and connecting them to support. It is for children under 8 years and with low to moderate support needs. This is a once in a generation opportunity to reset how support is provided to children and their families.

Children's experiences in the early years have lifelong impacts, including for physical and mental health, employment and relationships. This is particularly important for children with developmental delays or concerns and they and their families deserve to be able to access support that is evidence based, family centred and accessible.

ACAH Webinar Updates

Webinars in planning

Primary Care: ADHD for GPs and Primary Care

TBA

2026

TBA

Providing culturally safe lactation care for all women

04

Aug 2026

Tuesday, 4 August 2026

This webinar will address provision of culturally safe breastfeeding for all women, Breastfeeding is good for baby and for women.

Breastmilk provides vital nutrition, boosts cognitive development, and acts as a baby's "first vaccine" against common illnesses. It also offers long-term health benefits for parents, including reduced risks of certain cancers and type 2 diabetes.

World Breastfeeding Week World Breastfeeding Week is an annual global campaign celebrated from August 1 to 7 to raise awareness about the benefits of breastfeeding. Endorsed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF, the week encourages healthcare, workplace, and community support.

[→ Register here](#)

AI Ethics and Law: Responsibility of clinicians in direct patient care

03

Dec 2026

Thursday 3rd December 2026

This webinar will address AI ethics and law and the responsibility of clinicians in direct patient care.

[→ Register here](#)

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.](#)

Taking Paediatrics Abroad

Building Paediatric Capacity Through International Collaboration

It is a privilege to engage with colleagues who share a commitment to improving outcomes for children facing disadvantage, whether through geographic isolation, poverty, limited healthcare resources, or displacement.

Taking Paediatrics Abroad (TPA) is an Australian charity established in response to requests from paediatric colleagues in low-resource countries across the Asia-Pacific region for access to paediatric subspecialty expertise. Simultaneously, many Australian clinicians expressed a desire to contribute internationally but were unable to commit to prolonged overseas placements. TPA was developed to facilitate sustainable, recurring volunteer engagement through a combination of virtual collaboration and targeted in-country support.



The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the development of TPA's telehealth model, with regular virtual clinical discussions commencing in 2020. Since then, the program has expanded substantially and remains entirely volunteer-led.

Current Activities

TPA's clinical model was co-designed with overseas colleagues to ensure that activities address locally identified priorities. Regular meetings connect Australian paediatric subspecialists with clinicians in partner countries for case discussion, problem-solving, mentoring, and educational support. Semi-urgent clinical consultations can also be accommodated when requested. In addition to medical sessions, nurse-led and allied health forums provide education and professional support tailored to local needs. Australian nurse educators, clinical nurse consultants, nurse practitioners, and allied health professionals contribute regularly to these programs. Educational resources, including presentations and recordings, are shared to maximise ongoing learning opportunities.

TPA's activities have expanded to include subspecialty mentor groups, a quarterly journal club, surgical discussion forums, and selective face-to-face skills training facilitated by self-funded Australian volunteers.

In Australia, TPA has introduced paediatricians to provide telemedicine consultations for children in Aboriginal Medical Services in north NSW.

Taking Paediatrics Abroad

Building Paediatric Capacity Through International Collaboration

Regional Engagement

TPA initially operated in four countries and now supports clinicians across more than eleven Pacific Island nations, as well as Cambodia, Vietnam, and Mongolia.

Regular paediatric and nursing meetings have become established components of clinical support in Cambodia, complemented by child protection education and subspecialty mentoring. In Vietnam, collaborations with departments at the National Children's Hospital focus on evidence-based subspecialty education. Mongolia has recently resumed regular subspecialty case discussions.

These partnerships are characterised by mutual respect, long-term relationship building, and responsiveness to locally identified priorities.

Impact

Since 2020, more than 1,600 virtual meetings have been conducted. The impact extends beyond individual patient consultations to broader workforce development, professional confidence, and service capacity building.

Clinical discussions have contributed to improved management of complex paediatric conditions, supported the development of emerging specialised services, and facilitated multidisciplinary problem-solving across geographically dispersed settings. Each case discussion not only benefits the child concerned but also strengthens local expertise and informs the care of future patients.

Importantly, TPA provides professional connection and collegial support for clinicians working in environments characterised by resource limitations, workforce shortages, and significant clinical challenges.

Additional Initiatives

TPA also supports collaborative projects beyond clinical education. Current activities include a newborn screening research program for congenital hypothyroidism in the Solomon Islands, led by Professor Shubha Srinivasan and Dr Zarina Kere, and partnerships with the School of Biomedical Engineering at the University of New South Wales to develop assistive technology solutions across several Pacific nations.

Taking Paediatrics Abroad

Building Paediatric Capacity Through International Collaboration

Reflections

Feedback from both Australian and international participants consistently highlights the educational value, professional satisfaction, and collegiality fostered through TPA. Australian volunteers frequently describe the experience as one of the most rewarding aspects of their clinical practice, while overseas colleagues emphasise the benefits of accessible subspecialty expertise, collaborative learning, research partnerships, and professional support.

At its core, TPA addresses a critical inequity: access to paediatric subspecialty knowledge. By connecting clinicians across borders, the program supports local capacity building, strengthens professional networks, and contributes to improved outcomes for children and families throughout the Asia-Pacific region.



TPA remains deeply grateful for the support, expertise, and commitment of its Australian and international partners, whose collaboration continues to expand opportunities for children in some of the region's most resource-constrained settings.

Your ideas, recommendations, introductions and support are greatly appreciated. Please contact at k.currow@takingpaediatricsabroad.org.au.

Learn more about TPA at www.takingpaediatricsabroad.org.au.

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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.