Parenting Research Centre
raising children well

Year in Review 2014-15

PARTNERING TO IMPROVE
CHILDREN'S OUTCOMES

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Partnering to improve children's outcomes

CONTENTS

Introduction

The Parenting Research Centre seeks better outcomes for children by increasing effectiveness and innovation in the way families are supported in their parenting.

In 2014-15 we secured ongoing funding for established projects and grew our partnerships.

Indeed partnerships are the basis upon which our organisation delivers impact and achieves change.

We are a highly skilled, passionate and responsive team. However, we recognise that the best practices in research, implementation and evaluation won't combine to deliver better outcomes for children if we work in isolation.

That's why in 2014-15 we were thrilled to secure Australian Government five-year funding for three of our long-term partnership projects:

- **Raising Children Network**: this award-winning website provides tips and tools on everyday parenting from pregnancy to teens. Its continued success is testament to our long-term collaboration with the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute with The Royal Children's Hospital Centre for Community Child Health.

- **MyTime**: delivered by 14 state and territory-based community organisations and culminating in more than 200 facilitated peer support groups servicing approximately 3000 parents of children with disability every year.

- **Intensive Family Support Service**: where we are supporting service providers in implementing an evidence-based approach that assists families with a risk of recurring child neglect.

The refunding of these projects demonstrates the Parenting Research Centre's expertise in delivering tailored and outcomes-focused solutions based on the best available evidence.

And in 2014-15 we continued combining our expertise with that of others to deliver additional high-quality outcomes for a range of governments and service delivery agencies.
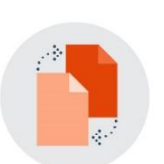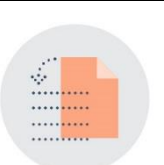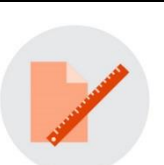
These partnerships are highlighted in the achievements listed on the following pages.

How we work

The Parenting Research Centre brings scientific rigour to the practical task of improving the quality and effectiveness of services and supports provided to children and families.

This sees us working with funders – typically government departments and service delivery agencies – to help improve outcomes for children.

We do this through our expertise in six inter-related work areas:

Research design and analysis		In partnership with our clients, our research aims to build the evidence base for parenting interventions, programs or strategies applied in the family support, health, welfare and education sectors.
Knowledge synthesis		Our knowledge synthesis specialists identify, synthesise and contextualise evidence to answer key questions about 'what works' in various domains of the welfare, health and education sectors.
Knowledge translation and exchange		We translate and share knowledge in a form that fits the context in which it will be used. We co-develop evidence-based resources through collaboration with those best placed to apply evidence and affect better outcomes for children.
Practice design		Our practice design expertise allows us to collaborate with clients in adapting or developing evidence-informed interventions, programs and services that work in the local context.
Implementation		Our implementation specialists support practitioners, organisations and governments to effectively implement evidence-based practices and programs in a sustainable way.
Evaluation		We offer a mix of evaluation services, ranging from evaluation of small-scale single-agency interventions through to evaluation of national large-scale, multi-site and multi-partner initiatives.

These skillsets, combined with the unique credentials and capabilities of our partners, allow the Parenting Research Centre to provide clients with insight, advice and support that is both responsive and rigorous.

Achievements in supporting families in parenting their children

The Parenting Research Centre (PRC) promotes the importance of parenting and provides practical help and support for families raising children.

Our 2014-15 achievements included:

Securing funding for flagship national projects

1. Securing five-year funding for key Australian Government Department of Social Services supported programs:

   a. Raising Children Network.

   b. MyTime.

Raising Children Network achievements

2. raisingchildren.net.au provided trusted information to nine million visitors in 2014-15.

   a. New and high quality resources were added to the site, including articles and videos relating to breastfeeding and parenting gifted and talented children.

   b. The website's Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder/Disability app won the Outstanding Achievement award in the Healthcare section of the Interactive Media Awards.

   c. A major upgrade to the website's homepage and navigational structure allowed users to:

      − See more helpful information on the homepage, including new content and most popular items.

      − Access more topics via the navigation menus.

      − Personalise what they see on the website, according to their interests.

   d. FaceBook continued to emerge as a major channel for parents to talk about the website and share its content. More than 200 individuals shared some posts and Raising Children Network enjoyed approximately 78,000 likes at the time of writing.

MyTime achievements

3. Continuing our partnership with 14 coalition lead agencies running 218 MyTime groups around Australia and reaching approximately 3000 parents of children with disability each year.

4. Developing a new MyTime website to better support eligible parents and quickly connect them to local MyTime groups.

5. Commencing a detailed review of MyTime to consider further enhancements to the facilitated peer support model that underpins the program.

Helping parents of children with disability via Raising Children Network

6. Renewing Raising Children Network's funding under the Helping Children with Autism and BetterStart initiatives (both relating to parents of children with disabilities).

Designing Victoria's new standard supported playgroup model

7. Welcoming the Victorian Department of Education and Training's announcement that the *smalltalk* initiative – designed and evaluated as part of our Early Home Learning Study – will become the standard supported playgroup model delivered in the state. The Parenting Research Centre will provide implementation support for the scale-up of the model.

Achievements in enhancing the capacity of child and family services

Through a genuine exchange with users of research, the Parenting Research Centre (PRC) builds the capacity of community services to improve child outcomes through effective parenting support.

Our 2014-15 achievements included:

Helping frontline workers support families across the Northern Territory

9. Securing five-year funding from the Department of Social Services to continue our work helping service delivery agencies implement the Australian Government's Intensive Family Support Service (IFSS). Our unique role in providing the Implementation Capacity Support Service sees Parenting Research Centre staff support front-line workers in delivering IFSS to families across the Northern Territory.

Sharing new knowledge about parents with intellectual disability

10. Investigating the state of knowledge about parents with intellectual disability, including the number of parents in this position and their characteristics. This work was conducted as part of our Healthy Start national initiative to support organisations and practitioners who work with parents who have an intellectual disability. Our 2014-15 work delivered new insights to inform practice in supporting this often at-risk group of parents, including:

    a. National survey data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) showed that parents with intellectual disability face significant disadvantage in a number of areas including employment, income and general health and wellbeing. For example, the findings indicated that these parents are more likely to live in a jobless household and to be on government pensions as the main source of personal income.

    b. A review of Centrelink data indicated there are more than 5000 parents with intellectual disability nationwide on income support.

    c. The same Centrelink data indicated that – compared to other Australian parents – parents with intellectual disability are more likely to be caring for a child with disability, more likely to be in public housing and more likely to live in the Northern Territory.

Evaluating the Victorian Government's Services Connect model

11. Working with our partners at the University of Melbourne and PricewaterhouseCoopers to evaluate the Victorian Government's Services Connect model. Services Connect is described by the Victorian Government as '… a small-scale trial of a model for integrated human services in Victoria, designed to connect people with the right support, address the whole range of a person's or family's needs, and help people build their capabilities to improve their lives[1]'.

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[1] http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-service-providers/for-funded-agencies/services-connect. Accessed 7 October 2015.

Brokering the first Australian trial of SafeCare

12. Facilitating the first ever trial of SafeCare in Australia by brokering a relationship between the New South Wales Department of Family and Community Services and National SafeCare Training and Research Center (NSTRC) of Georgia State University, USA.

    a. SafeCare sees trained practitioners support parents in enhancing their positive interactions with children, keeping homes safe and improving child health.

    b. PRC assisted in adapting SafeCare to the Australian context and developed rigorous implementation support systems to support the program's trial by representatives from the Department of Family and Community Services in Batemans Bay and Penrith, along with home-visiting practitioners from Wesley Mission's Western Sydney Brighter Futures program.

Building the skills of early childhood professionals in engaging with parents

13. Developing a practice model that builds the skills and confidence of early childhood professionals in engaging with parents.

Increasing parenting support in Early Childhood Intervention Services

14. Commencing another project with the Victorian Department of Education and Training to identify more effective platforms for the delivery of parenting support in Early Childhood Intervention Services.

Developing practice in Early Childhood Intervention Services

15. Working with Knox City Council to develop and pilot a Continuous Practice Development System to support Specialist Support Services staff in working with parents in Early Childhood Intervention Services.

Engaging parents in their children's learning

16. Partnering with the Centre for Community Child Health, Murdoch Childrens Research Institute and Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth to identify parenting behaviours that have the greatest positive impact on children's learning and development, especially school readiness and academic outcomes. This project, funded by the Victorian Department of Education and Training, will build on research showing the importance of the home environment and the quality of parent-child relationships on children's development.

Consulting on a continuous quality improvement evaluation plan

17. Consulting with the service implementation and evaluation teams at Children's Health Queensland in developing a continuous quality improvement evaluation plan and related tools.

Providing implementation support

18. Providing implementation support to Waminda South Coast Women's Health and Welfare Aboriginal Corporation for their newly funded program.

    a. This five-year partnership focuses on the exploration and implementation of programs designed to strengthen parenting skills of mothers/families and improve child and family outcomes.

    b. PRC's involvement will strengthen and sustain Waminda staff member capacity to implement evidence-informed parenting programs that are of most benefit to families.

Commencing a national audit of parent engagement

19. Commencing a national data audit of parent engagement in education with our partner: Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY). This work forms part of ARACY's Australian Government funded Parent Engagement in Education project.

Helping develop a research governance structure

20. Supporting Aboriginal Affairs (New South Wales) to develop a research governance structure.

Advancing a common elements approach to program development

21. Participating in an international scientific meeting to advance the idea of a common elements approach to program development. This means identifying the key ingredients (or kernels) that are common to effective programs and applying the elements in a more flexible and tailored way to suit local context.

Achievements in informing policy and practice

The Parenting Research Centre (PRC) assists policymakers, organisational leaders and practitioners in effectively engaging with scientific knowledge of what works in parenting and family support.

Our 2014-15 achievements included:

Co-hosting the 2014 Australian Implementation Conference

22. Conducting the 2nd Biannual Australian Implementation Conference (AIC) in Sydney with 400 delegates in attendance.

Launching the Australasian Implementation Network

23. Launching the Australasian Implementation Network (AIN) and attracting 300 members with an interest in:

   a. Sharing practice and research knowledge about implementation science.

   b. Promoting broader awareness and understanding of implementation science.

   c. Linking implementation expertise across networks, regions and sectors locally and internationally.

   d. Offering opportunities to generate research and knowledge on implementation.

Reviewing the Victorian Government's Strengthening Families program

24. Commencing a Victorian Department of Education and Training commissioned review of the Strengthening Families program.

Informing the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

25. Delivering three research reports for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

   a. One report, conducted in partnership with the University of Melbourne, explored the evidence relating to practices in out-of-home care (OOHC) that prevent child sexual abuse. This review highlighted strategies that can be implemented to do more for children in these vulnerable circumstances. Strategies included: rigorous pre-employment screening; public health messaging; and other preventive efforts such as safety planning, education and an environment that is conducive to disclosure.

   b. A second report mapped evaluations of pre-employment screening practices that aim to prevent child sexual abuse in child-related work. The report – conducted in partnership with the University of Melbourne – reported some promise with the use of criminal background checks. While these have limited effectiveness when used as the only safeguard, background checks may be important components of pre-employment screening practices and may be more effective when combined with other safeguards, such as thorough reference checks and verification of the applicant's identity, employment history and qualifications.

c. The third and major report assessed the extent to which 288 recommendations from 67 previous inquiries relevant to the Commission's work had been implemented. It highlighted factors that contributed to, or were barriers to, successful implementation. Some of the findings included:

– 64% of recommendations were implemented either in full (48%) or partially (16%).

– 21% of recommendations were rated as not implemented (14% could not be determined; of those not implemented, nearly 40% were in progress or under consideration).

– Successful implementation of recommendations was more likely where processes and structures that support implementation, strong leadership and stakeholder engagement, as well as accountability and monitoring mechanisms, were established.

– Barriers to implementation of recommendations included resource and structural constraints, policy concerns, and organisational culture.

Undertaking knowledge synthesis

26. Undertaking several knowledge synthesis assignments including:

a. Rapid Evidence Assessment on Effective Intensive Family Services for the New South Wales Department of Family and Community Services.

b. Reviewing the evidence on knowledge translation and exchange in the area of violence against women for Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety.

c. Review of effective therapeutic interventions for families with complex needs (New South Wales Department of Health).

d. Review of child protection systems (Ministry of Social Development, New Zealand).

e. Assessment of Implementation Best Practice (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse).

Making a submission to Victoria's Royal Commission into Family Violence

27. Making a submission to Victoria's Royal Commission into Family Violence, emphasising the need to focus on evidence-based approaches, support parents in their parenting roles and adopt a harm reduction approach.

Making a submission to the Productivity Commission Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Draft Report

28. Responding to the Productivity Commission Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Draft Report (July 2014). Our submission highlighted concerns that the Report did not make any recommendations to enhance early intervention support or parenting support as part of Early Childhood Education and Care services.

Taking a leading role in the Global Implementation Conference

29. Participating in the Global Implementation Conference, Dublin, Ireland, including chairing multiple sessions and presenting two papers: use of rapid continuous quality improvement and the leadership factor in implementation.

Achievements in building scientific knowledge of parenting to drive innovation

The Parenting Research Centre (PRC) builds knowledge of the factors that shape modern parenting and understanding of what effective parenting is.

Our 2014-15 achievements included:

Developing a comprehensive survey of Victorian parents

30. Working with the Victorian Department of Education and Training to plan a repeatable, population level, representative, cross-sectional survey of Victorian parents of children aged 0-18 years. The 'Parenting Today in Victoria' survey will be administered in the first half of 2016 and is likely to be repeated at three-year intervals.

Evaluating the Cry Baby program

31. Completing an evaluation of Cry Baby, a PRC online program that informs parents about normal crying, strategies to cope, and advice on promoting good infant sleep. As part of this study we examined the effect of recruitment mode and ongoing email contact on program engagement and retention.

Presenting the Take a Breath program pilot to an international audience

32. Presenting at the Association for Contextual Behavioral Science International Conference Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA on findings from the Take a Breath program pilot project, a promising and innovative iPad-based intervention designed to build coping skills in parents of children with life threatening illness or injury.

Showcasing the Early Home Learning Study to an international audience

33. Showcasing our Early Home Learning Study at the Head Start 12th National Research Conference on Early Childhood, Washington DC.

Sharing new knowledge through published papers

34. Contributing to many published papers, including:

    a. Chau, V. & Giallo, R. (2015). The relationship between parental fatigue, parenting self-efficacy and behaviour: Implications for supporting parents in the early parenting period. *Child: Care Health and Development. 1*(4), 626-633.

    b. Cook, F., Seymour, M., Giallo, R., Cann, W., Nicholson, J., Green, J. & Hiscock, H. (2015). Comparison of methods for recruiting and engaging parents in online interventions: Study protocol for the Cry Baby infant sleep and settling program. *BMC Paediatrics* 15:174 DOI 10.1186/s12887-015-0502-9.

c. Hamilton, V., Matthews, J. & Crawford, S. (2014). Development and preliminary validation of a parenting self-regulation scale: "Me as a Parent". *Journal of Child & Family Studies.* DOI 10.1007/s10826-014-0089-z.

d. Hopkins, L., Wadley, G., Fong, M., Green, J. & Vetere, F. (2014). Utilising technology to connect the hospital and the classroom: maintaining connections using tablet computers and a "Presence" App. *Australian Journal of Education. 58*(3) 278-296. IF 0.243.

e. Macvean, M., Shlonsky, A., Mildon, R. & Devine, B. (2015). Parenting interventions for Indigenous child psychosocial functioning: A scoping review. *Research on Social Work Practice.* 1-28. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1177/1049731514565668.

f. Macvean, M.L., Wade, C., Devine, B., Falkiner, J., & Mildon, R. (2015). A rapid evidence assessment of Australian evaluations of parenting programs. *Communities, Children and Families Australia, 8*(2), 93-122.

g. Renzaho, A., Halliday, J., Mellor, D. & Green, J. (2015) The Healthy Migrant Families Initiative: Development of a culturally competent obesity prevention intervention for African migrants, *BMC Public Health.* 15:272. IF 2.32.

h. Rowe, H., Wynter, K., Lorgelly, P., Amir, L. H., Ranasinha, S., Proimos, J., Cann, W., Hiscock, H., Bayer, J., Burns, J., Ride, J., Bobevski, I. & Fisher, J. (2014). A cluster randomised controlled trial of a brief couple-focused psychoeducational intervention to prevent common postnatal mental disorders among women: study protocol. *BMJ Open, 4*(9), e006436-e006436. http://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2014-006436.

i. Sciberras, E., Westrupp, E.M., Wake, M., Nicholson, J.M., Lucas, N., Mensah, F., Gold, L. & Reilly S.R. (2015). Healthcare costs associated with language difficulties up to 9 years of age: Australian population-based study. *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology. 17*(1), 51-52. DOI: 10.3109/17549507.2014.898095.

j. Seymour, M., Giallo, R., Cooklin, M. & Dunning, M. (2015). Maternal anxiety, risk factors and parenting in the first pot-natal year. *Child: Care, Health and Development. 41*(2), 314-323.

k. Wade, C., Llewellyn, G., & Matthews J. (2015). Parent mental health as a mediator of contextual effects on parents with intellectual disabilities and their children. *Clinical Psychologist,* 19, 27-37.

l. Wadley, G., Vetere, F., Hopkins, L., Green, J. & Kulik, L. (2014). Exploring ambient technology for connecting hospitalised children with school and home. *International Journal of Human Computer Studies Special issue on Designing for Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing 2014. 72*(8-9) 640-653. IF 1.165.

m. Woods, D.T., Catroppa, C., Godfrey, C., Giallo, R., Matthews, J. & Anderson, V. (2014). Challenging behaviours following paediatric acquired brain injury (ABI): The clinical utility for a manualised behavioural intervention programme, *Social Care and Neurodisability, 5*(3), 145-159.

n. Woods, D.T., Catroppa, C., Godfrey, C., Giallo, R., Matthews, J. & Anderson, V. A. (2014). A telehealth intervention for families caring for a child with traumatic brain injury (TBI). *Social Care and Neurodisability, 5*(1), 51-62.

o. Wynter, K., Hammarberg, K., Sartore, G. M., Cann, W., & Fisher, J. (2015). Brief online surveys to monitor and evaluate facilitated peer support groups for caregivers of children with special needs. *Evaluation Program Planning,* 49, 70-5.

Leadership and Governance

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Bianca Albers – Director (from February 2015)

Associate Professor Julie Green – Executive Director Raising Children Network

Annette Michaux – Director

Dr Robyn Mildon - Director

Christian Thompson – Director

Financial report

The Parenting Research Centre Financial Report 2014-15 is available from our website.