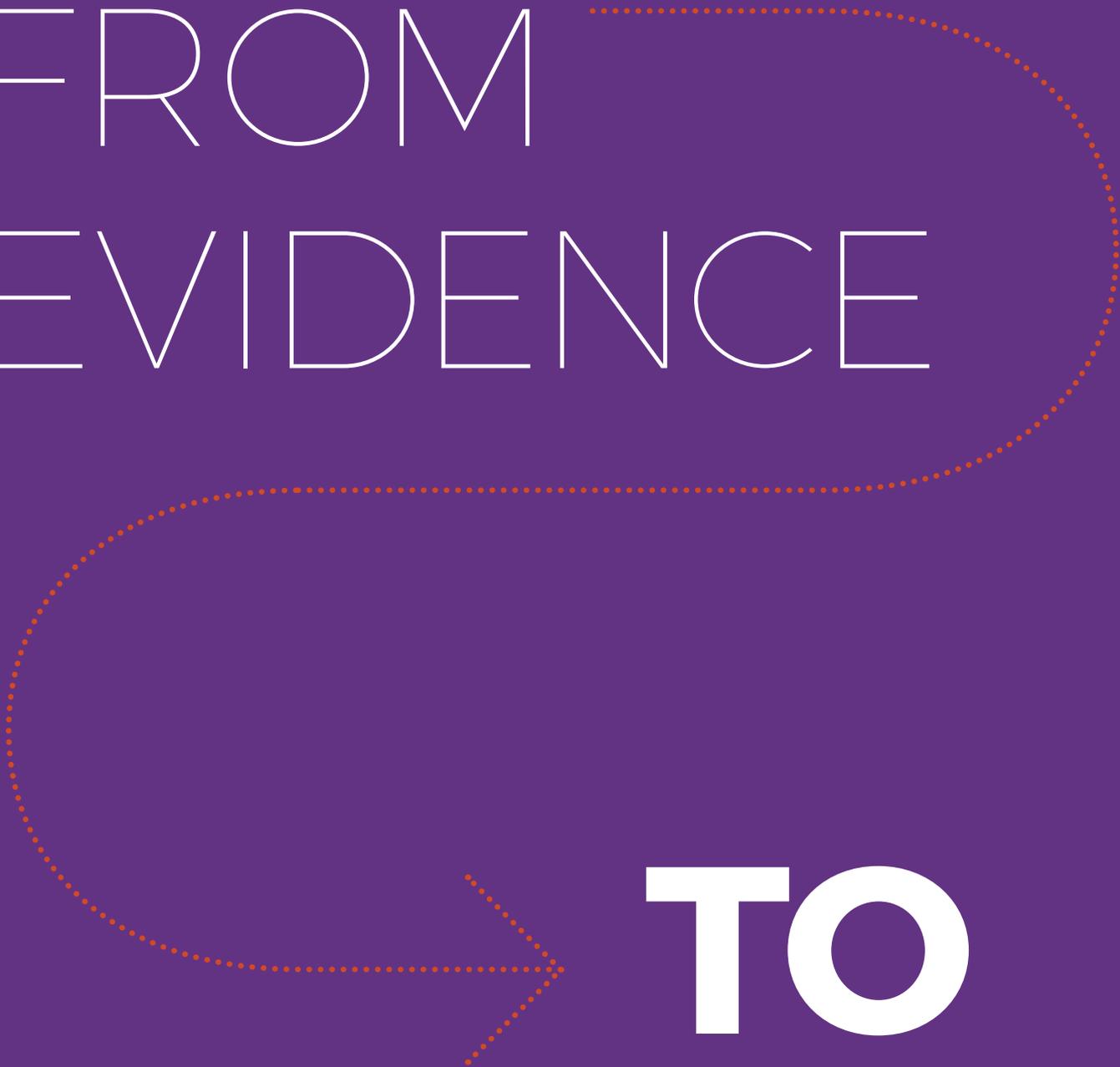


FROM
EVIDENCE



TO
ACTION

Parenting Research Centre

Year in Review 2016-17

From evidence to action

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Introduction

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

We believe that universally available and accessible high-quality parenting support is a powerful driver of child wellbeing. To this end, we are working with a growing network of government and community organisations in the fields of health, education and welfare – helping our clients find the answers they need to better support families.

At the heart of our work are two key principles: collaboration and evidence-informed policy and practice. Bringing the best available evidence to the table in a way that works for our clients and partners has helped us forge many trusted relationships. In 2016–17 we built on these relationships; supporting our partners in new ways to design and deliver effective, high-quality policies, programs and services.

Key highlights of 2016–17 were:

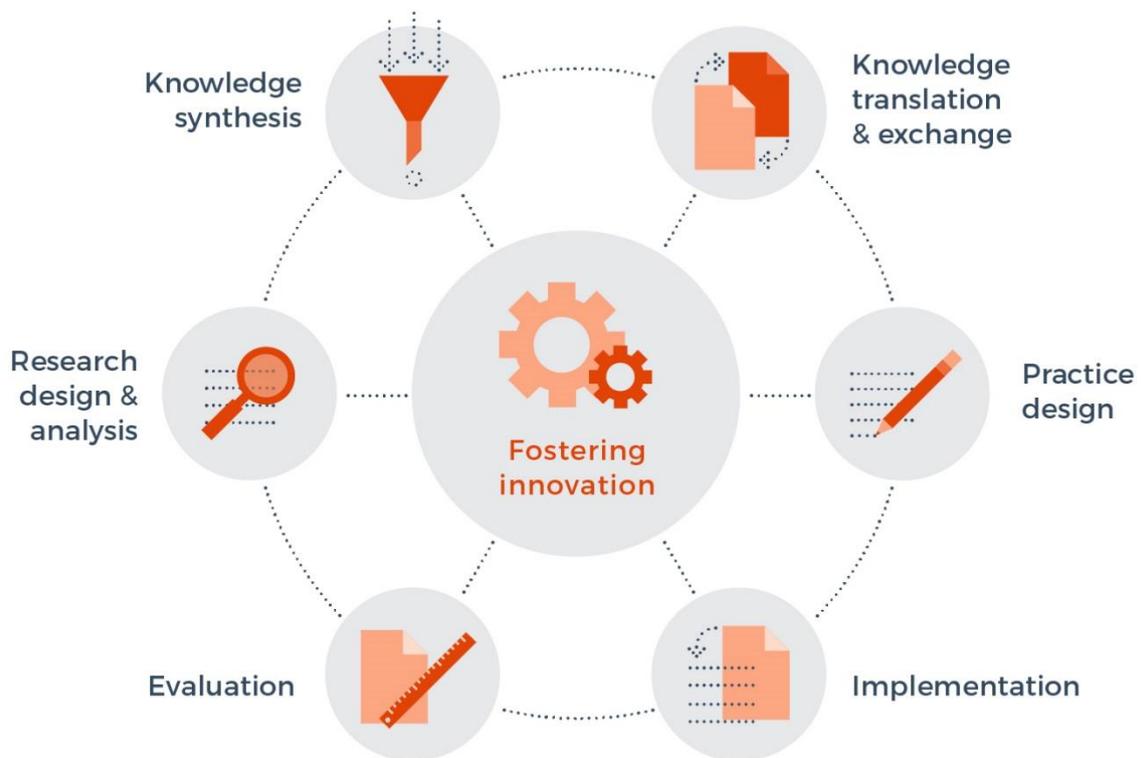
- A major milestone for the [Raising Children Network](#), which celebrated a decade of offering accessible, quality, evidence-based information for parents and carers of children and teens, and which is now driving a major initiative to establish a parent portal for Singaporean families.
- Joining [Emerging Minds: the National Workforce Centre for Child Mental Health](#), a major national partnership to support professionals who work with children at risk of mental health difficulties.
- Launching a new and robust process of continuous quality improvement for [MyTime](#) that draws on regular feedback to help us evaluate the program. We also initiated an integrated social media strategy that saw MyTime Facebook followers increase by more than 60%.
- Working with local government through our [smalltalk](#) program to develop a sustainable model to improve the home learning environment for young children in disadvantaged families.
- We were also pleased to see findings from the original *smalltalk* trial in print, with two publications from the Early Home Learning Study appearing as peer-reviewed journal articles this year.
- Building organisational capacity within the [Intensive Family Support Service](#) by working with parenting support staff across the Northern Territory to increase their skills in delivering effective and targeted services to vulnerable families.
- Expanding our role in the New South Wales Government Quality Assurance Framework for out-of-home care through three new Family and Community Services trial sites on the Mid-North Coast
- Extending our role in delivering the SafeCare® program in New South Wales to enhance parents' positive interactions with their children and reduce child abuse and neglect; we helped expand the program to five new sites and began the process of accreditation as a SafeCare training and coaching provider.
- Establishing a partnership in Queensland to evaluate the Queensland Government Intensive Family Support services and their statewide implementation.

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.

Guided by a common aim to improve services in partnership with our clients, we design, adapt, implement and evaluate approaches to parenting support.

We do this by drawing on our unique combination of skillsets:



Our skills, combined with our partners' capabilities, enable us to provide clients with insight, advice and recommendations that are supported by rigorous research and are responsive to their needs.

1. Achievements in supporting families in parenting their children

Providing practical support to help families raise their children is a key plank of our work. In 2016–17 we looked at new ways to reach and engage with parents and carers and harnessed the potential of technology to provide quality, trusted information to busy families. Our key achievements are outlined below.

1.1. Raising Children Network

[Raising Children Network](#) is our online platform produced in collaboration with Murdoch Children’s Research Institute with The Royal Children’s Hospital Centre for Community Child Health.

Funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services, the site provides free, evidence-based, easy-to-access information about parenting issues from pregnancy to adolescence.

In 2016–17 the Singaporean Government sought our expertise in developing a parenting portal for Singaporean families. This three-year, \$1.7 million initiative will provide training, consultancy and specifically tailored content, drawing on expertise from both partnering institutions.

Visitors to raisingchildren.net.au

Trust in raisingchildren.net.au among families is well-established after a decade of operation, and engagement continues to grow. During 2016–17:

- 48,000 people each day accessed over 2300 videos, apps and articles – an increase of 20% over the previous year
- 14.9 million visitors viewed 24.3 million pages – a 15% increase
- 170,000+ people followed Raising Children Network on Facebook as at June 2017 – 37% more than the same time last year
- More than 60% of visitors to the site came via a mobile device, compared with 45% of visitors the previous year.

Content

We continued our focus on publishing new and updated high-quality content, producing 58 new content resources and updating 623 existing resources. New content features included:

- [online videos and articles](#) in partnership with the National Disability Insurance Agency and launched for the National Disability Insurance Scheme in July 2016
- **new digital entertainment and technology** content for [pre-teens](#) and [teens](#), covering topics such as social media and sexting; these resources were produced in partnership with researchers from the Western Sydney University and the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre, and promoted through radio and print media
- **Parenting in Pictures** – updated [illustrated resources](#) on safety, newborn care and cyber safety and designed for use on mobile devices.

Community engagement

Acknowledging the important role that grandparents play, we developed new content for grandparents who care for their grandchildren. In collaboration with the Australian Government Department of Social Services and a range of service providers, we conducted forums and held consultations in five states across Australia. Attracting an average of 60 grandparents per session, the forums focused on connecting carers with each other and other supports. Valuable discussions

were held on the needs and experiences of grandparent and kinship carers. An outreach campaign to promote the resources to grandparents was conducted via local radio and print and social media.

Content licensing

Our resources continued to attract interest from organisations wishing to source good-quality content for parents. We assisted:

- The Goshen Project, an Israeli parenting website, to licence 338 articles that will be translated to Hebrew and Arabic
- Goodstart Early Learning to use 20 Raising Children Network articles which we customised for their website.

1.2. MyTime

[MyTime](#) is a unique national program we created in 2006 to support parents of children with a disability, developmental delay or chronic medical condition.

Coordinated across Australia with 12 agency partners who deliver services in their communities, MyTime is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services. During the year we made a concerted effort to engage parents online. Our successful social media strategy used Facebook as the key channel to communicate with parents and increase recruitment to the program. As a result we saw a 62% increase in both Facebook followers and likes over the previous year. During 2016–17:

- 5617 sessions took place across the country
- 7318 attendances
- 2830 Facebook followers
- 2884 Facebook likes
- 9921 unique users saw our promotional video animation on [Facebook](#).

We also established a new and robust process of continuous quality improvement to engage members and group facilitators in providing regular feedback. We are using this feedback to help us evaluate the program. And we created resources for both practitioners and parents on topics such as dealing with grief and loss.

1.3. Information resources for same-sex and gender-diverse parents

In this multidisciplinary project, we combined our expertise in knowledge synthesis and knowledge translation to create evidence-based information resources for same-sex and gender-diverse Australian parents.

Our synthesis of the literature identified the latest and most rigorous national and international reviews of the scientific evidence related to social and emotional outcomes for children raised by same-sex parents.

This analysis informed the development of new online resources for the general public that provide easy-to-understand overviews of the evidence. Promoted via Raising Children Network, the take-home message of the resources is: It's what parents do that matters.

This project was funded by the Victorian Government Department of Premier and Cabinet.

1.4. Driving digital engagement

Technology continues to be a key vehicle that helps us meet our commitment to supporting parents. The following projects are examples of how we used digital platforms to drive parent engagement in 2016–17.

Live interactive webinars

A series of free, live and interactive webinars we offered during the year gave parents an opportunity to engage with qualified parenting experts in real time, ask questions and give instant feedback.

This unique delivery format is a first in parenting support. And it can be used by practitioners to supplement their face-to-face work with parents to help build parenting skills.

The webinars were funded by the Victorian Department of Education and Training and are aimed at parents of children aged 2–12, including children with additional or complex needs. More than 600 participants have attended 27 webinars since we piloted the project in 2016. Topics to date have covered sleep, behaviour (tantrums), and self-care (stress and management).

Our evaluation of this project is based on the action research model, allowing us to adapt the content and delivery mode based on participant feedback. Evaluation also helps us examine the feasibility and impact of the webinars.

An integrated approach to promoting good sleep

In a project commissioned by Hunter New England Population Health and the University of Newcastle, we developed a short video and follow-up intervention to help parents with good sleep management of children aged 2–5. The video, *Healthy Sleeping*, explained how much sleep young children need, why sleep is important, and basic strategies to improve child sleep.

The project was the intervention arm of a larger study, funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). This study is examining the effect of increased opportunities for outdoor play periods on physical activity and sleep duration among children attending childcare centres.

About 40 parents participating in the study were randomly selected to watch the video and receive a 30-minute phone call from a psychologist from the Parenting Research Centre to discuss ways to implement the strategies. Parents also received two follow-up text messages to encourage use of the strategies.

The NHMRC-funded study is the first randomised controlled trial reporting on the impact of a sleep intervention on physical activity and sleep in preschool-age children. Its findings will inform future research and interventions examining the impact of sleep on children.

2. Achievements in enhancing the capacity of child and family services

The Parenting Research Centre builds the capacity of community services in the health, welfare and education sectors to improve child outcomes through effective parenting support. In 2016–17 we supported clients from a wide range of services to interact more effectively with parents and families and launched a new venture in child and youth mental health.

2.1. Designing evidence-informed practice models

Our expertise in practice design is instrumental in helping our clients adapt and develop evidence-informed interventions, programs and services that work in the local context.

In 2016–17 our clinically experienced practice design team helped a number of agencies adapt their practices or programs to:

- identify their desired outcomes
- choose the most effective evidence-based strategies to achieve those outcomes
- apply the strategies to their particular setting and context
- build staff capacity in implementing the chosen intervention, program or service
- establish a process to monitor effectiveness.

Waminda South Coast Women’s Health and Welfare Aboriginal Corporation

We supported Waminda in their prevention and early intervention work with families by helping them develop a practice model, plan its installation, implement the model and ensure sustainable delivery.

We also offered training to support the delivery of [smalltalk](#) – a program which improves the home learning environment for young children in disadvantaged families. And we supported evidence-based safety planning, adapted to the Waminda context. Our post-training support helped caseworkers at the organisation effectively apply the skills and knowledge they had learned to their ongoing work with families.

Another core element of our work with Waminda involved supporting caseworkers to introduce evidence-informed practices when working directly with families. Using a strengths-based approach, we advised on a range of processes: streamlining intake and assessment; shifting assessment from the carer to the individual child; and determining appropriate early intervention and prevention programs or services for each family.

Key Assets Australia and New Zealand

Our work with Key Assets involved developing an evidence-informed practice framework to help them reform service delivery and practice in foster care services.

During the year we consulted with leadership staff and practitioners to identify and evaluate existing systems, practices and stated outcomes within the agency; we mapped the desired outcomes and co-designed the practice framework with Key Assets staff. The next stage of this work involves setting up the support structures to help embed the new framework into Key Assets service delivery.

As the project continues we will work with Key Assets to implement the framework in foster care services and evaluate its effectiveness.

This process will identify any gaps in the practice framework and allow Key Assets to design a practice architecture that will help it deliver the right support for foster carers.

Wesley Mission, New South Wales

Wesley Mission engaged us to review and redesign its Brighter Futures service by developing an evidence-based practice model to improve case management and parenting support.

The new practice model will help the agency work more effectively with vulnerable families who are at risk of entering or re-entering child protection services, including families with children aged 0–8 who have experienced child abuse and neglect. Our approach supports new processes and strategies that can be implemented across the agency.

During the financial year we completed the exploration phase and started designing the framework. We analysed existing practices within the agency in consultation with its leadership staff and practitioners. This helped us understand how the existing program works and what outcomes are intended, as well as any identified gaps in current practice. We also explored evidence-based strategies and interventions that could deliver these clarified intended outcomes of the program and started developing a new practice framework for Wesley's Brighter Futures program.

In the next phase, we will: assess organisational capacity and readiness; facilitate the implementation of the new practice framework; and support development of the data collection system to enable sustainable continuous quality improvement.

Enhancing the Wanslea practice framework for reunification

Our decade-long collaboration with Wanslea Family Services culminated in us working with the agency to enhance their existing practice framework in order to strengthen reunification of families whose children have been in out-of-home care. Through a process of collaboration and co-design, we conducted a common elements review of existing reunification practices and adapted this to the Wanslea service delivery context.

We also assisted Wanslea to update their supervision practices, as well as to design and report on an evaluation of their family work. This provided a framework for future monitoring and continuous quality improvement.

2.2. Implementation support

Supporting organisations to effectively implement evidence-based practices and programs improves their organisational capacity and is a key element of the value we bring to our partnerships. This work, which integrates practical experience with implementation science, helps organisations deliver services that are not only high-quality, but also sustainable.

***smalltalk* supported playgroups**

The *smalltalk* program supports parents experiencing disadvantage to enhance the home learning environment for their young children. In 2016–17 we worked with 34 [*smalltalk*](#) supported playgroups in local government areas (LGAs) across Victoria towards a sustainable model of implementation. As well as supporting facilitators, we involved supervisors in the larger implementation process within their LGA. This approach allowed us to assess organisational structure and help each LGA deliver a better service.

A highlight of the year included working with the Willum Warrain supported playgroup for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, run in a bush setting on the Mornington Peninsula. We implemented the home-visiting component of *smalltalk* with participating families and consulted with families and staff to learn more about their perceptions of the *smalltalk* approach and content.

Intensive Family Support Service, Northern Territory

Our ongoing role in the Intensive Family Support Service (IFSS) saw a number of developments during the year. This parenting support service for vulnerable families in the Northern Territory is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services and assists families from Darwin, Alice Springs, and remote areas such as Ngukurr, Ntaria, Santa Teresa, Tennant Creek and Ali Curung.

Our position as an Implementation Capacity Support Service provider means we work closely with IFSS staff in these areas, developing annual support plans and building the capacity of agencies to collect data and use it in practice. Such work is based on a process of continuous quality assurance that informs our practice and helps us adapt interventions within a short time frame to improve outcomes.

During 2016–17 we provided a suite of capacity building services, including: offering extra support to IFSS workers completing formal qualifications; training program workers to use a ‘yarning mat’ to engage parents in a culturally responsive manner; and providing a range of training in areas such as effective supervision practices and booster training to reinforce practice.

We also redeveloped the [IFSS website](#) to help visitors locate where IFSS is offered and learn about the service, and give workers a secure password-protected area of the site where they can exchange ideas and achievements.

SafeCare®

In 2016–17 we successfully tendered to expand our contribution to implementing the SafeCare program for the New South Wales Department of Family and Community Services (FACS). Our recognised role as an intermediary partner and our expertise in implementation support were key factors in our ability to secure this project.

SafeCare is an evidence-based parenting program that addresses child abuse and neglect. It is run by the National SafeCare Training and Research Center (NSTRC), Georgia State University, US.

Our new contribution to SafeCare builds on an earlier trial (2014–16) in which NSTRC staff trained a small cohort of NSW-based practitioners from two agencies to deliver SafeCare in five locations and where we played an intermediary role. In 2016–17 we supported NSTRC and FACS to extend the program at one of the original sites – Wesley Mission (Western Sydney) – and expand to five new selected sites within the Brighter Futures program: CareSouth (Illawarra); Barnardos (Central West and Western NSW, Orana); CatholicCare (Mid North Coast, Manning); Samaritans (Newcastle/Lake Macquarie); Mission Australia (Wagga Wagga).

We also began working with NSTRC to become an accredited SafeCare training and coaching organisation as part of the NSW implementation of SafeCare. Once our staff are accredited, these agencies will be able to access local, high-quality SafeCare coaching support.

Working in early childhood education and care

Navigating the complexities of working with, and meeting the needs of, parents can be challenging for early childhood education and care providers. A set of resources we developed during 2016–17

aims to address this challenge. The resources include a framework that sheds light on the social and psychological context of parental help-seeking and offers a way forward when parent behaviour change may be needed to enhance child outcomes.

Building on this framework, completed for the Victorian Government Department of Education and Training, we are continuing to develop and evaluate training and support resources for centres and their staff. These include resources for pre-service training, online educator resources, educational leader training and an implementation support plan. They will help early childhood professionals collaborate effectively with parents in setting goals, developing solutions and defining success.

2.3. Improving practitioner interactions with parents

WA Country Health Service

During the year we developed a 10-part, online, video-based program for the Western Australian Country Health Service (WACHS), which is currently being rolled out to over 360 allied health and community nursing staff across 21 sites in Western Australia. The *Working with Parents Practice Series: Collaborative Goal Setting* aims to develop staff skills in helping families to identify parenting goals that are meaningful to them and which they can be motivated by. It is also designed to support a flexible learning process that has the potential to reach staff over a large geographic area. The program draws heavily on self-regulation theory and the content is targeted at practitioners providing family-centred, early intervention services to children with developmental delay/disability and their families.

The program consists of both self-directed and interactive learning, individual action plans and translation-to-practice activities at a local level. It will undergo rigorous evaluation by the University of Melbourne and the Parenting Research Centre.

Goodstart Early Learning Australia

We launched an exciting partnership with Goodstart Early Learning Australia during the year to build educators' capacity to improve their relationships and interactions with children and their parents.

Research evidence shows that engaging more effectively with children improves their learning and development outcomes. Our partnership with Goodstart aims to address services at both a system and a practice level, improve program delivery, develop practitioner skills, and sustain improved service and practice in the long-term.

We implemented Making Moments Matter, a program we developed to help educators work more effectively with children by maximising everyday interactions. We adapted the Making Moments Matter program to the Goodstart context, trialling the program in four Victorian centres.

Our work on this project involved exploring the current approach at Goodstart to practice improvement, identifying areas to target for further development and devising an implementation plan for each centre.

We also consulted on how to engage educators and improve their skills in working with children and delivered individual and group coaching sessions to 64 educators.

The Smith Family

Learning for Life is a Smith Family program that aims to keep disadvantaged students engaged in education. We partnered with the Smith Family in 2016–17 to co-design an evidence-based practice framework for this program that will enhance the family partnership approach.

To date we have consulted with key personnel and stakeholders to identify practice challenges and processes that are already achieving outcomes and we have assessed assumptions that underpin current policy and practice guidelines.

The next phase of the project will involve designing the framework to include new skills, behaviours and competencies required for practice. We will also identify a range of tools and resources, including training materials, to support continuous practice improvement.

2.4. Supporting child and youth mental health

A major highlight of the year was our role in the [National Workforce Centre for Child Mental Health](#) led by Emerging Minds, which was awarded more than \$18 million by the Australian Government to build a major new workforce development initiative to support child mental health.

The program will support clinical and non-clinical professionals who work with parents, children or families to identify, assess and support children at risk of mental health difficulties. The consortium will take an innovative approach that includes: national online access to training, practice resources and real-time support; tools for engaging children and parents/guardians in the design and delivery of services; a network of child mental health consultants to support practice development; and a communication and implementation strategy to support distribution of evidence into practice.

Our role in this major national initiative will be to provide content development expertise and leadership in evaluation services, knowledge synthesis and knowledge translation in parenting, implementation and quality improvement.

Other partners in the consortium are the Australian National University, Australian Institute of Family Studies, and Royal Australian College of General Practitioners.

2.5. Delivering training to develop capacity and improve service delivery

Our expertise in delivering customised training has attracted national and international demand and we were contracted by numerous agencies to deliver training during the year. For example, we delivered [smalltalk](#) training in seven agencies including the Singapore Early Childhood Development Agency, Anglicare Tasmania, The Benevolent Society and Best Chance.

We also delivered training events to nine Local Government Areas in New South Wales to promote evidence-based and accessible services to families and young children. The agencies, funded by Families New South Wales to support the child and family sector in the Hunter Region, undertook training in the Parenting Young Children, Healthy & Safe and Signposts for Building Better Behaviour programs.

Other training activities were undertaken with: Windemere Child and Family Services Victoria; Sunrise Health Service, Katherine, Northern Territory; and for the Southern Mallee Early Years Together Project, Victoria.

3. Achievements in informing policy and practice

Applying scientific knowledge of what works in parenting and family support is a focus of our work and expertise. Putting evidence into action, however, is not a simple linear process. The complexities of the policy environment can make it challenging to put research knowledge to best use. In this process we act as a facilitator, an intermediary and a trusted advisor, working with policymakers, organisational leaders and practitioners to apply evidence to their own contexts and challenges.

Our 2016-17 achievements included:

3.1. Building internal capacity

As governments at all levels increasingly require the programs and services they fund to be based on robust evidence, more agencies are seeking our help. They seek us out because of our track record in building organisational capacity to use evidence and our commitment to continuous quality improvement and sustainability. This record has seen us included in the Australian Institute of Family Studies industry list as a preferred provider in this space.

Some examples of how we have delivered value to agencies are outlined below.

Windermere Child and Family Services

Our existing relationship with Victorian-based agency Windermere Child and Family Services prompted the agency to seek our help in meeting the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) criteria on evidence-based programs.

Working with four of the agency's community partners and acting in the role of 'critical friend,' we provided a wide range of advice, from identifying key research and theories to inform their programs, to providing support on program evaluation. Our partnership with these organisations is ongoing as we help them continue to build program evidence. One of the community partners has already successfully applied for further AIFs funding as a result of this work.

Connections UnitingCare

In 2016–17 we conducted an evaluation of Mother Safe Child Safe, a program run by Connections UnitingCare in Victoria to help women and their children experiencing family violence. We used precision outcomes mapping to identify crucial outcomes for the evaluation. Our analysis showed that the program was delivering positive outcomes for both mothers and their children, such as: reducing family violence, improving emotional and/or mental health and community connectedness. Our evaluation expertise helped Connections staff build internal capacity to continue evaluating the program.

Centacare Geraldton

During the year we also began to evaluate the Staying Connected program, a group program run by Centacare in Geraldton, Western Australia (WA), to help parents manage their parenting role during separation or divorce. We have helped the agency clarify the critical outcomes to assess in the evaluation and supported its staff through the evaluation process. We are continuing to work together on a rigorous evaluation process, which Centacare has committed to as a feature of delivering evidence-based services to its clients.

Melbourne City Mission

Our work with Melbourne City Mission during the year involved helping them identify a range of tools that staff could use to best measure the impact of their services. We also worked with staff to build their skills in collecting and using data to improve their practice, confirming the value of evaluation, and its practical implications.

3.2. Supporting better outcomes for children in out-of-home care

The New South Wales Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) is currently trialling a Quality Assurance Framework to give caseworkers access to reliable and comprehensive information about the safety, permanency and wellbeing of children in out-of-home care. The Parenting Research Centre played an expanded role in trialling this framework during 2016–17

The framework aims to enhance children and young people's wellbeing by giving caseworkers access to data which they can use to inform case planning with the ultimate aim of enhancing the services offered to children and their carers. Information is gathered from a range of sources including the children themselves, carers, FACS and other government agencies in the health and education sectors. These details give caseworkers a more comprehensive picture of what is happening in a child's life.

As well as supporting the implementation of the framework in three non-government organisations – Burrun Dalai Aboriginal Corporation, Key Assets Australasia and MacKillop Family Services – we are providing intermediary support for the trial in three FACS Community Service Centres on the Mid North Coast: Kempsey, Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie.

Working closely with agencies, we are helping them implement the framework. This will inform how the framework is adapted and scaled up across New South Wales in the longer term.

3.3. Evaluating policy and program initiatives

Intensive Family Support services, Queensland

This program of work saw us enter into a partnership with the Queensland Government Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, to evaluate the service outcomes and state-wide implementation of Intensive Family Support (IFS) services. Our research partner in this project is the University of Queensland.

IFS services have recently been implemented across Queensland as part of major reforms in services to vulnerable families. These agencies provide intensive case management and support for families with complex needs in caring for their children. Some families for example, are at risk of entering child protection and some are experiencing family violence.

Our evaluation work on this project involved multiple analyses and comprehensive consultations with departmental and IFS staff as well as parents and carers. The evaluation will provide feedback to the department on the implementation of these important service reforms.

Connections UnitingCare, School Attendance Support program

During the year, Connections UnitingCare in Victoria commissioned us to co-design an evaluation of its School Attendance Support Program, which focuses on improving children's school attendance and connection to their school community. Working with the entire family, the program aims to sustain family engagement with education to improve future outcomes and prospects for the child.

We measured program outcomes in terms of implementation, client engagement and impact. Positive outcomes included improved child resilience, increased school attendance, improved family engagement with schools, and improved ability of parents to respond effectively to their children.

3.4. Knowledge synthesis supporting policy decision making

Answering key questions about 'what works' through identifying, synthesising and contextualising evidence can be an important part of the decision-making process in policy and practice. Our expertise in knowledge synthesis adds value because it helps policymakers choose interventions and develop initiatives that are effective and well suited to their own context. Over the past year we can point to examples of our work supporting the policy making process in multiple jurisdictions. Some examples are below.

Working with parents involved in child protection

The New South Wales Government Department of Family and Community Services is developing a strategy to improve ways of engaging, working with and supporting birth parents of children involved in the child protection system. The department engaged us to conduct two scoping reviews that will help inform this strategy.

The reviews, which are near completion, will identify and synthesise strategies to engage parents who are involved in child protection and will also identify ways to support parents who have a child placed in out-of-home care. We will synthesise our findings to inform policy and practice in New South Wales.

Assessing community awareness initiatives with messages on parenting

There are hundreds public-facing parenting initiatives in Australia today but how many meet the standards of rigour required to qualify as a comprehensive, trusted source of information? We set out to examine this question in partnership with the Centre for Community Child Health at the Royal Children's Hospital as part of the Australian Government Department of Social Services project: an analysis of Australian initiatives with community awareness raising messages about parenting. The project was conducted as part of the Third Action Plan of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children.

In our *Analysis summary: Raising community awareness of parenting*, we examined community awareness-raising initiatives that focus on effective parenting and on creating safe and supportive environments in the early years of a child's life. We found 125 initiatives that met our criteria of having national reach and a broad target audience, being cost-free to the user, aimed at parents of under-8s and focused on the first 1000 days of a child's life.

We also looked for initiatives that primarily delivered via internet, audio, video or smart phone applications, rather than face-to-face. Six stand-out initiatives were identified for their national reach, range of universal parenting messages, currency and sustainability: Better Health Channel; Health Direct; Kinderling; Love Talk Sing Read Play; My Health, Learning and Development; and Raising Children Network.

Our report discusses the implications of our findings for developing messages, messaging about parenting, communication channels, campaign development and communications research. The findings will be used to inform the development of a campaign about the importance of the early years and parenting.

We are now translating the findings from this body of work into a more accessible summary to assist policymakers and practitioners in the development of communications initiatives, especially those promoting the importance of parenting in the early years.

Supporting the selection of parenting programs for targeted earlier intervention

A foundational piece of work we conducted in 2016–17 will help the NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) select programs and practices that are supported by evidence. It has wider application and we hope to use this work to inform other jurisdictions on how they might also introduce evidence-informed change.

FACS has embarked on a series of child welfare reforms as part of a wider State Government initiative to better assist vulnerable families before they enter the child protection system. As an initial step in this reform, FACS asked us to review the evidence for parenting programs and practices.

Our report identified 57 evidence-based parenting programs and practices that target desired child outcomes. We also recommended 10 programs that are likely to offer the best value and described the core characteristics of evidence-based practice in parenting skill development (common elements such as role play, in-home visits). We also described key considerations for implementing best practice.

3.5. Disseminating knowledge from research

We specialise in producing scoping reviews, rapid evidence reviews and evidence briefs, which are used by our clients to inform their decision making. During this financial year we were commissioned to investigate a broad range of topics. See below for a summary of the reports we produced:

1. May, F., Shackleton, F., Avdagic, E., Wade, C., Michaux, A. (July 2016). *Evaluating the Implementation of Uniting's Working with Families Experiencing Domestic Violence Practice Framework: Qualitative Evaluation Report*, Report prepared by Parenting Research Centre for Uniting
2. Neill, E., Wade, C., Michaux, A., Cann, W., Matthews, J., Petrovic, Z. & Shackleton, F. (September 2016). *Feasibility Report for undertaking the survey: Parenting Today in Victoria*, Report prepared by Parenting Research Centre for Victorian Government Department of Education and Training
3. Wade, C., Bent, C., Matthews, J., Nguyen, H., Forbes, F., Michaux, A., & Cann, W. (March 2017). *Parenting Today in Victoria: Report of Key Findings*, Report prepared by Parenting Research Centre for the Victorian Government Department of Education and Training
4. Wade, C., Bent, C., Matthews, J., Nguyen, H., Forbes, F., Michaux, A., & Cann, W. (May 2017). *Parenting Today in Victoria: Technical Report*, Report prepared by Parenting Research Centre for the Victorian Government Department of Education and Training
5. Parenting Research Centre and the Centre for Community Child Health, Murdoch Childrens Research Institute (December 2016). *An analysis of Australian initiatives with community awareness raising messages about parenting*, Report prepared for the Australian Government Department of Social Services
6. Parolini, A., Shackleton, F., Wade, C. (December 2016). *Estimated Demand and Supply of MyTime Support Groups in Australia*, Report prepared by Parenting Research Centre for the Australian Government Department of Social Services
7. Pourliakas, A., McDonald, M., Macvean, M., Shackleton, F., Clayton, O., Palmieri, R. & Michaux, A. (2016). [Review of approaches to prevent and respond to problem sexual](#)

- [behaviour in children and young people in out-of-home care](#), Report prepared by Parenting Research Centre for the NSW Government Department of Family and Community Services
8. Sartore, G. M., Devine, B., Macvean, M., Green, J., & Cann, W. (June 2016). *Information technology-based support for parents—a rapid evidence assessment*, Report prepared by Parenting Research Centre on behalf of Victorian Government Department of Education and Training
 9. valentine, k., Katz, I., Smyth, C., Bent, C., Rinaldis, S., Wade, C. & Albers, B. (July 2016). [Key Elements of Child Safe Organisations](#), Report prepared by Social Policy Research Centre and Parenting Research Centre for Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
 10. Wade, C., Cann, W., Macvean, M., Devine, B. (March 2017). *Supporting appropriate selection of parenting programs within Targeted Earlier Intervention Reforms (TEIR): Review of Parenting Programs (Methodology and Findings)*, Report prepared by Parenting Research Centre for NSW Government Department of Family and Community Services
 11. Wade, C., Shackleton, F., Stratton, K., Dixon, P., Su, D. (January 2017). *Wanslea Practice Framework: Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Evaluation Report*, Report prepared by the Parenting Research Centre for Wanslea Family Services

3.6. Sharing our expertise

The Parenting Research Centre works collaboratively with organisations right across Australia and internationally. We do this in many capacities – from working with our clients on discrete projects (outlined earlier in this report) to acting in an advisory capacity on numerous committees, panels and other bodies. This work helps us inform research, policy and practice. A summary of our 2016–17 work in this latter area is outlined below.

Parenting Young Children abroad

This parenting program, developed by the Parenting Research Centre, has been the focus of our ongoing relationship with international partners in Sweden and Norway who are implementing it for parents with learning difficulties and investigating digital delivery. We are also exploring options to deliver the program and research its implementation in Japan and Iceland.

Membership in advisory committees

Our executive and senior staff members contribute to numerous advisory committees, expert reference groups and panels. We are proud to be involved in the following panels:

- Preferred supplier for the West Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People review panel
- Member of the Victorian Government Department of Education and Training Evaluation Panel (July 2013-current)
- Member of the Victorian Government Department of Education and Training Research and Analytics Services Panel (June 2015-current)
- Member of the Australian Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Collaborative Evaluation, Research and Planning Panel (Feb 2016-current)

Warren Cann, Chief Executive Officer

- Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, Parent Engagement Expert Reference Group
- *beyondblue*, Healthy Dads Advisory Group
- Victorian Government Department of Education and Training, Ministerial Expert Panel for Early Childhood Development
- Victorian Government Department of Education and Training, Engaging Families in Learning Strategy Expert Advisory Group
- Victorian Government Department of Education and Training, Transition to Primary School Expert Advisory Group
- Victorian Government Department of Education and Training, Early Childhood Development Advisory Group
- University of Newcastle and Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, Paternal Perinatal Depression Initiative Advisory Committee

Associate Professor Julie Green, Executive Director, Raising Children Network

- Early Childhood Australia, Digital Policy Group

Annette Michaux, Director

- New South Wales Government Department of Family and Community Services, Early Intervention Council
- New South Wales Government Ministry of Health, Youth Health and Wellbeing Advisory Group
- New South Wales Kids and Families, Scientific Advisory Committee
- Uniting Child and Family, Futures Group

Associate Professor Jan Matthews, Principal Research Fellow

- HIPPY Australia National Longitudinal Study (HANLS 2016-18), Independent Research Advisory Group
- Queen Elizabeth Centre, Victoria, Research Advisory Group
- Victoria Polytechnic and Department of Education and Training, Project Steering Committee for the course in Supported Playgroup Facilitation

Dr Catherine Wade, Principal Research Specialist

- The Association for Successful Parenting, Board Member
- Australasian Implementation Network, Founding Member (2013–current)
- International Association of the Scientific Study of Intellectual Disabilities (IASSID), Member of the Special Interest Research Group on Parenting with Intellectual Disabilities
- Global Implementation Initiative, Member (2014–current)
- Society for Implementation Research Collaboration, Founding Member (2014–current)

Dr Melinda Polimeni, Senior Practice Design Specialist

- Australian Centre for Child Protection, Third Action Plan of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children, Expert Panel Member
- Cochrane Library review paper, Parent training support for intellectually disabled parents, External Referee
- Developing a Menu of Evidenced Informed Practices and Programs conducted by Centre for Evidence and Implementation, funded by Department of Health and Human Services Victoria, Reference Group Member

4. Building the scientific knowledge of parenting to drive innovation

The Parenting Research Centre builds knowledge of the factors that shape contemporary parenting and understanding of what effective parenting is. This contribution to the national and international knowledge base is an important foundation for our other work driving evidence-informed approaches to policies, programs and services.

In 2016–17 our work in this area included two major projects on mental health and wellbeing as well as a range of published papers in peer reviewed journals.

4.1. Supporting adults with a mental illness

An emerging research theme for the Parenting Research Centre is how parenting support for adults with a mental illness can aid in their recovery. We are supporting the implementation of a randomised controlled trial of [Let's Talk about Children](#), a parenting-focused intervention for parents with mental health problems. More than 400 families where a parent has serious mental illness and more than 1000 mental health or family service practitioners have engaged with the research project. The trial is due for completion in 2018, by which time we will have implemented the program in more than 40 adult mental health and family services across Victoria.

This four-year research project is funded by the Mental Illness Research Fund (Victorian Department of Health) and our partners include Monash University (lead agency), The Bouverie Centre (La Trobe University), and other research organisations and service providers.

4.2. Children's resilience research project

The concept of resilience is commonly understood as 'doing well or thriving in the face of adversity'. However, people who work with and care for children often have differing views about what resilience means.

During 2016–17, to better understand resilience in children, beyondblue commissioned the Parenting Research Centre and the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth to develop the Children's Resilience Practice Guide (Practice Guide) to help professionals understand how to promote resilience in children aged 0–12 years.

The Practice Guide is informed by the findings of existing international research and new work including consensus-building among Australian experts, in-depth consultation with professionals working with children and families, and incorporating the lived experiences, perceptions and voices of parents and children themselves.

The outcome was defining resilience as a process rather than a specific, stand-alone characteristic. Our research also reinforced the idea that resilience can be built with support. It also affirmed approaches to building resilience that involve parents, families and the broader community.

The Practice Guide will be a valuable resource for professionals across Australia who work with children, parents and families. It provides a shared and common language of resilience and is an important foundation for promoting resilience among children and the benefits of doing so.

4.3. Sharing new knowledge through published papers and presentations

The 2016–17 year saw us commissioned by a range of clients to apply our expertise in knowledge synthesis, evaluation, research design and analysis in producing a suite of reports. We also

contributed to published papers in multiple peer-reviewed journals, and presented at conferences in Australia and internationally.

Read the full list of our reports, publications and conference presentations below.

Journal publications 2016–17

1. Bennetts, S. K., Mensah, F. K., Green, J., Hackworth, N. J., Westrupp, E. M. & Reilly, S. (2017). Mothers' experiences of parent-reported and video-recorded observational assessments, *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 26: 3312. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-017-0826-1>
2. Cook, F., Giallo, R., Petrovic, Z., Coe, A., Seymour, M. & Cann, W. (2016 online). Depression and anger in fathers of unsettled infants: A community, *Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health*, 53(2), 131-135. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jpc.13311>
3. Cooklin, A.R., Westrupp, E.M., Strazdins, L., Martin, A., Giallo, R. & Nicholson, J.M. (2016). Fathers at work: Work-family conflict, work-family enrichment and parenting in an Australian cohort, *International Journal of Family Issues*, 37(11), 1611-1635. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X14553054>
4. Crawford, S., Green, J., Bennetts, S. K., et al. (2017). 'Worries, 'weirdos', neighbourhoods and knowing people: A qualitative study with parents and children of children's independent mobility, *Health & Place*, 45, 131-139. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2017.03.005>
5. Cyril, S., Green, J., Nicholson J. M. N., Agho, K., Polonsky, M. & Renzaho, A. (2017 epub). Using the nominal group technique to examine the barriers and facilitators to childhood obesity prevention among culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in Victoria, Australia. *Australia New Zealand Journal Public Health*, 41: 287-293. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1753-6405.12648>
6. Cyril, S., Green, J., Polonsky, M., Agho, K. & Renzaho, A. (2016). Readiness of communities to engage with childhood obesity prevention initiatives in disadvantaged areas of Victoria, *Australian Health Review*, 41(3), 297-307. <https://doi.org/10.1071/AH16069>
7. Goodyear, M., Maybery, D., Reupert, A., Allchin, R., Fraser, C., Fernbacher, S. & Cuff, R. (2016). Thinking families: A study of the characteristics of the workforce that delivers family-focussed practice, *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*, 26: 238-248. <https://doi.org/10.1111/inm.12293>
8. Hackworth, N.J., Berthelsen, D., Matthews, J., Westrupp, E.M., Cann, W., Ukoumunne, O.C., Bennetts, S.K., Phan, T., Scicluna, A., Trajanovska, M., Yu, M. & Nicholson. (2017). Impact of a Brief Group Intervention to Enhance Parenting and the Home Learning Environment for Children Aged 6–36 Months: a Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial, *Prevention Science*, 18: 337. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-017-0753-9>
9. Isobel, S., Goodyear, M., & Foster, K. (*in press*) Psychological Trauma in the Context of Familial Relationships: A Concept Analysis. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*. <https://doi:10.1177/1524838017726424>
10. Macvean, M., Shlonsky, A., Mildon, R. & Devine, B. (2017). Parenting interventions for Indigenous child psychosocial functioning: A scoping review, *Research on Social Work Practice*, 27(3), 307-334. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731514565668>

11. Man, W., Wade, C. & Llewellyn, G. (2017). Prevalence of parents with intellectual disabilities in Australia. *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability*, 42(2), 173-179.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.3109/13668250.2016.1218448>
12. Maybery, D., Goodyear, M., Reupert, A., Sheen, J., Cann, W., Dalziel, K., Tchernagovski, P., O'Hanlon, B. & von Dousa, H. (2017). Developing an Australian-first recovery model for parents in Victorian mental health and family services: a study protocol for a randomised controlled trial, *BMC*. 17:198. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-017-1357-4>
13. O'Connor, A., Nolan, A., Bergmeier, H., Hooley, M. Olsson, C., Cann, W., Williams-Smith, J. & Skouteris, H. (2016). Early childhood education and care educators supporting parent-child relationships: A systematic literature review. *Early Years International Research Journal*. 37(4). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2016.1233169>
14. von Doussa, H., Sundbery, J., Cuff, R., Jones, S. and Goodyear, M. (2017), 'Let's Talk About Children': Investigating the Use of a Family-focused Intervention in the Gambling Support Services Sector. *Australian New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 38: 482–495.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/anzf.1233>

Conference presentations 2016–17

1. Bent, C., Wade, C. & Mildon, R. *Measuring organisational support for evidence-based practice (poster)*. Australasian Implementation Conference, Melbourne, Australia, October 2016
2. Cann, W. *Collaborating with families*. Goodstart National Conferences, Australia: Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth (August 2016); Sydney (September 2016)
3. Cann, W. *Collaborating with parents*. KU Annual Conference, Sydney, Australia, October 2016
4. Cann, W., Roberts, W., Cleeve, S. & Meldrum, D. *A relational-invitational approach to building parental capacity*, 12th Biennial ECIA National Conference, Melbourne, Australia, September 2016
5. Fong, M., & Wade, C. *Engaging families in their children's learning and development*. Parent Engagement Conference, Melbourne, Australia, June 2017
6. Goodyear, M., (Chair and Presenter), Maybery, D., Reupert, A., Morgan, B., Cuff, R., Carter, H. & Obradovic, A. *Best practice, next practice. Developing and implementing a parenting recovery intervention in adult mental health and family welfare services*. Transgenerational Mental Health: the 5th International Conference on Families and Children with Parental Mental Health Challenges. Basel, Switzerland, August 2016
7. Goodyear, M., Cuff, R., Allchin, B. & Jungwirth, K. (2016). *Developing best practice standards to meet the needs of families where a parent has a mental illness in adult mental health services*. Transgenerational Mental Health: the 5th International Conference on Families and Children with Parental Mental Health Challenges. Basel, Switzerland, August 2016
8. Cook, F., Giallo, R., Petrovic, Z., Coe, A., Seymour, M., Cann, W. & Hiscock, H. *Associations between unsettled infant behaviour, paternal depressive symptoms and anger: a community cohort study*. International Marcé Society Biennial Scientific Conference, Melbourne, Australia, September 2016

9. Cook, F., Seymour, M., Giallo, R., Cann, W., Nicholson, J.M., Green, J. & Hiscock, H. *Cry Baby: An online infant sleep and settling program*. International Marcé Society Biennial Scientific Conference, Melbourne, Australia, September 2016
10. Dixon, P. & Polimeni, M. *Scaling up evidence-based practice at Wanslea Family Services*. Australasian Implementation Conference, Melbourne, Australia, October 2016
11. Green, J. & McCormack, D. *Step and blended families: online innovations in quality parenting support*. Australian Institute of Family Studies National Conference, July 2016
12. Green, J. *Aligning health literacy and online parenting resources*. Health Direct Australia Partner Forum, Sydney, Australia, November 2016
13. Green, J. *Children's Voices in Contemporary Australia*. Symposium Summary, Centre for the History of Emotions, University of Melbourne, Australia, July 2016
14. Hood, P. & Michaux, A. *Improving safety, permanency and wellbeing for children and young people in OOHC: Implementing an outcome-focused Quality Assurance Framework in NSW*. Child Aware Approaches Conference, Brisbane, Australia, May 2017
15. Macvean, M. & Michaux, A. *Using rigorous reviews of the evidence to inform policy and practice decisions in child protection and out-of-home care*. Association of Children's Welfare Agencies Conference, Sydney, Australia, August 2016
16. Macvean, M., Sartore, G-M., Devine, B., & Pourliakas, A. *Using rigorous reviews of the evidence to inform organisational and policy decision in child and family policy and services*. Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference, Melbourne, Australia, July 2016
17. Man, N., Llewellyn, G. Wade, C., O'Donnell, M., Bourke, J. & Leonard, H. *Parents with intellectual disability in Western Australia*. IASSIDD World Congress, Melbourne, Australia, August 2016
18. McCormack, D., Green, J. & Ryan, D. *Choices that matter: ECI in a new era*. Early Childhood Intervention Australia, 12th Biennial National Conference, Melbourne, Australia, September 2016
19. Michaux, A & Macvean, M. *Using Rigorous Reviews Of The Evidence To Inform Practice And Policy Decisions In Child Protection And Out-of-Home Care*. Association of Children's Welfare Agencies Conference, Sydney, Australia, August 2016
20. Michaux, A. *Research to Action: Improving the uptake of research: Engaging ResearchPartnerships for Educational and Social Change*. Forum and Roundtable on Research Communities in Education, Social Work and Social Policy, Sydney, Australia, November 2016
21. Michaux, A. & Macvean, M. *Beyond Safety And Permanency: Trialling a Child Outcome-focussed Quality Assurance Framework for OOHC*. Association of Children's Welfare Agencies Conference, Sydney, Australia, August 2016
22. Michaux, A. & McDonald, M. *What can public perceptions of parenting tell us about parenting support in Australia?* Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference, Melbourne, Australia, July 2016
23. Michaux, A. *Supporting parents and early childhood*. Got it! Forum, Ultimo, Australia, April 2017

24. Michaux, A. *Turning up the dial on outcomes: Implementing evidence based approaches in NSW*. Leading Practice Conference – Holding the Risk, Sydney, Australia, February 2017
25. Michaux, A., Macvean, M. & Leone, V. *Approaches to prevent and respond to problem sexual behaviour in children and young people in out-of-home care*. Child Aware Approaches Conference, Brisbane, Australia, May 2017
26. Michaux, A. *Informing the National Framework 3rd Action Plan: Analysis Initiatives with Community Awareness Raising Messages about Parenting*. Child Aware Approaches, Brisbane, Australia, May 2017
27. Phan, T., Wade, C., Lagioia, V. & Hackworth, N. *Reach, retention and scale up of the smalltalk intervention targeting improvements to the home learning environment of vulnerable young children*. Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference, Melbourne, Australia, July 2016
28. Polimeni, M. *Implementation of 'Team around the Child' for vulnerable families – evaluation findings*. Australasian Implementation Conference, Melbourne, Australia, October 2016
29. Wade, C. & MacVean, M. *Worldwide prevalence estimates of parenting with intellectual disability*. IASSIDD World Congress, Melbourne, Australia, August 2016
30. Wade, C. *Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI): Moving beyond point-in-time evaluation*. Australian Evaluation Conference, Perth, Australia, September 2016
31. Wade, C., Bent, C. & Mildon, R. *Who puts the P in EBP: An exploration of pathways of influence on the use of EBP by Australian parenting practitioners*. Australasian Implementation Conference, Melbourne, Australia, October 2016
32. Wade, C., Man, N., Parolini, A., Shackleton, F. & Llewellyn, G. *What can we learn about prevalence and characteristics of people with disability and their families from population and service use data?* IASSIDD World Congress, Melbourne, Australia, August 2016

4.4. Ethics committee

- Emeritus Professor Alan Hudson: Chair
- Reverend Dr Peter Blackwood (active until June 2017)
- Susan Gribben
- Dr Laura Hayes (active until June 2017)
- Ian Jungwirth
- Dr Michelle Macvean (active until Dec 2016)
- Associate Professor Jan Matthews
- Helen Reilly
- Dr Gina-Maree Sartore
- Maggie Troup
- Judith Watkins (active until April 2017)

5. Leadership and governance

Board

- Tass Mousaferiadis – Chair
- Dr Alison Roberts – Deputy Chair
- Juliette Alush
- Tracey Gibson
- Dr Lindsay Heywood
- Linda Hornsey
- Andrew Hume
- Marina Jury
- John Lawrence (retired Nov 2016)
- Tim McEvoy (retired Nov 2016)
- Gregory Molyneux
- Tania Phillips

Executive Team

- Warren Cann – CEO
- Associate Professor Julie Green – Executive Director Raising Children Network
- Annette Michaux – Director
- Christian Thompson – Director

6. Financial report

The Parenting Research Centre [Financial Report 2016-17](#) is available from our website.



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FROM 
EVIDENCE
TO ACTION

Year in Review 2016-17