

Department of Human Services NSW

# Community Services Research Report 2008/09



**Human Services**  
Community Services

Produced by  
Centre for Parenting and Research  
Community Services

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# Community Services Research Report 2008/09

The Community Services Research Report outlines current internal research projects being undertaken by the Centre for Parenting and Research, as well as reporting on external projects that are either being funded or supported by Community Services.

The report reflects Community Services four core business areas: Prevention and Early Intervention, Child Protection, Out-of-Home Care and Community Development and Capacity Building.

## Centre for Parenting and Research

The Centre was established as part of Community Services commitment to providing a strong evidence-base to inform policy, practice and program development. The work of the Centre is guided by Community Services Research Agenda and Research to Practice Program. In April 2007 the Evaluation Unit joined the Centre for Parenting and Research, including evaluation as part of the evidence-based information that the Centre is able to provide to inform decisions.

The **Research Agenda** aims to answer the question: *What interventions and practice approaches lead to the desired results for Community Services clients and in what contexts or circumstances?*

This overarching research focus requires gaining better knowledge and understanding of three inter-related areas of research. These are:

- ◆ Knowledge about the outcomes and relative effectiveness of interventions across a continuum of practice areas
- ◆ Knowledge about the nature and characteristics of the Community Services client base (strengths and needs)
- ◆ Knowledge about community capacity building and resilience

The **Research to Practice Program** encourages the active use of research within Community Services. It includes a range of initiatives aimed to:

- ◆ raise awareness about the importance of research amongst staff and stakeholders
- ◆ promote more effective and productive interaction between researchers, policy makers, educators and practitioners
- ◆ disseminate research undertaken by, and for the Department
- ◆ provide information and advice based on the latest research evidence and best practice, for early intervention and prevention, out-of-home care, child protection and parenting
- ◆ inform and improve consistency of practice.

All publications are available online at [www.community.nsw.gov.au](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au),  
under 'Research Centre'

# Community Services

## Research Report 2008/09

### Collaborative Research Program

Community Services is committed to establishing a solid evidence base to inform policy, practice and service delivery in areas relating to its core business. With the establishment of the Centre for Parenting and Research, Community Services has developed a capacity for in-house research. In addition, it has sought out opportunities to build strategic collaborations with research institutions and universities in order to develop and consolidate an evidence base for policy and practice.

The Collaborative Research Program was established in October 2006 with the overarching goal of building local research capacity in the child, family and community services field so as to better inform policy and practice. Community Services recognises the breadth of this field and the need for research to address behavioural, health, economic, cultural and organisational influences on the welfare of children and their families. Consequently, the program will be of most interest but not limited to the following areas: behavioural and social sciences, social work, education, health sciences, economics and government. The Program has two separate but linked schemes:

- ◆ a PhD Scholarship Scheme
- ◆ a Post Doctoral Fellowship Scheme

The implementation of these schemes in collaboration with external research institutions will support research of high academic quality that is relevant to Community Services and help build a culture of research within Community Services and the sector more widely.

The specific objectives of the Program are to:

- ◆ promote high quality and locally relevant research to ensure Community Services policy and practice achieve better outcomes for children and families
- ◆ ensure that research undertaken with and for Community Services addresses research questions and topics prioritised on the Community Services Research Agenda
- ◆ stimulate interest in NSW universities and academic institutions in research topics of relevance to Community Services and build strategic research collaborations
- ◆ build research capacity in the child welfare sector by the provision of doctoral and post doctoral fellowships.

# Community Services

## Research Report 2008/09

### Contents

#### Prevention and Early Intervention 1

##### Completed

- Parenting capacity assessment reports within the NSW Children's Court: perceptions and preferences
- Child Care Choices longitudinal extension study

##### In progress

- Brighter Futures program evaluation: Intensive outcomes cohort study
- Effective early intervention strategies for children and families within Indigenous communities
- Brighter Futures Aboriginal Family Studies
- Child Care Choices of Indigenous families
- Facilitating children's transition to school in families with complex support needs
- Miller early childhood sustained home visiting trial
- Barriers to participation: the experiences of disadvantaged young children, their families and professionals in engaging with early childhood services
- Paradigm shifts in family support service provision

#### Child Protection 8

##### Completed

- Effective strategies and interventions for adolescents in the child protection context: literature review
- Effective child protection strategies in a context of parental substance misuse
- Parents with mental health issues: consequences for children and effectiveness of interventions designed to assist children and their families

##### In progress

- Neglect risk factors: severity and chronicity
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) families in the NSW child protection system (CPS)
- Child protection and mothers in substance abuse treatment
- Outcomes in non-accidental brain injury
- Teachers' reporting of child sexual abuse: towards evidence based reform of law, policy and practice

# Community Services Research Report 2008/09

## Contents continued

### Out-of-Home Care 12

#### Completed

- Children and young people from non-English speaking backgrounds in out-of-home care in NSW
- Adopting an older child from overseas: what supports make it easier?

#### In progress

- Pathways of Care longitudinal study of children and young people in care
- Kinship care in NSW: an analysis of the characteristics of children and young people
- Grandparents as primary carers of their grandchildren: a national, state and territory analysis of grandparent-headed families - policy and practice implications
- An examination of issues around support and supervision of kinship carers, with a particular focus on NSW
- The Children in Care Study: Stage 4
- Are we making the grade? Educational outcomes of children and young people in out-of-home care
- An analysis of the policies and procedures used in intercountry adoption assessments in NSW
- The identification of factors that enhance and hinder the implementation of the authorised foster care role in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven regions of NSW
- Understanding the coping strategies of young people in foster care

### Communities 20

#### In progress

- Closing the gap—implementing and evaluating the impact of an early literacy program in informal settings
- Informal pathways to wellbeing: cultural forms of belonging, inclusion and engagement for young people in Western Sydney
- Working together for community healing

### Organisational Performance 22

#### Completed

- Managing People in the Age of Empowerment

#### In progress

- The research utilisation nexus: putting research into practice

### Research to Practice Publications 23

### Research to Practice Seminar Series 24

# Community Services

## Research Report 2008/09

### Prevention and Early Intervention

#### Completed

Project title	Researcher	Products
Parenting capacity assessment reports within the NSW Children's Court: perceptions and preferences	Maria Fillipou	Masters Thesis
Child Care Choices longitudinal extension	Professor Jennifer Bowes, Associate Professor Judy Ungerer, Dr Alan Taylor, Dr Cathrine Nielsen-Hewett Macquarie University Dr Linda Harrison & Ms Tracey Simpson, Charles Sturt University	Research Report Journal articles Web publications Published abstracts

## Prevention and Early Intervention

### In progress

Title	<b>Brighter Futures program evaluation: Intensive outcomes study</b>
Principal researchers	Sharon Burke, Lucy Tully, Peter Walsh, Johanna Watson, Cathy Stirling
Institution	Centre for Parenting and Research
Project description	The aim of this study/studies is to examine the extent to which child development, parenting skills and family functioning have improved or strengthened and why for a sample of 100–120 <i>Brighter Futures</i> families. This study will be conducted in conjunction with researchers from the Social Policy Research Centre as part of the <i>Brighter Futures</i> evaluation.
Status/timeframe	2007 - 2010

Title	<b>Effective early intervention strategies for children, young people and families within Indigenous communities</b>
Principal researcher	Hyllus Munro
Institution	Centre for Parenting and Research
Project description	The study will examine the literature related to effective prevention and early intervention strategies within Indigenous communities. International literature will also be examined as appropriate.
Status/timeframe	October 2009

# Community Services Research Report 2008/09

## Prevention and Early Intervention

Title	Brighter Futures Aboriginal Families Study
Principal researchers	Hyllus Munro, Peter Walsh, Sharon Burke
Institution	Centre for Parenting and Research
Project description	<p>The Aboriginal Families Study aims to provide evidence of the program benefits of Brighter Futures, including evidence for what might be the most effective service delivery approaches and characteristics to best support Aboriginal families engage in and achieve intended program results. There are three key research objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. To gain an in-depth understanding of the experience of Brighter Futures for Aboriginal families</li><li>2. To determine the outcomes for Aboriginal families and children as a result of their participation in Brighter Futures</li><li>3. To identify which service delivery approaches or characteristics appear to be most effective for supporting participation and positive program outcomes for Aboriginal families.</li></ol> <p>This study will be conducted in conjunction with researchers from the Social Policy Research Centre as part of the Brighter Futures evaluation</p>
Status/timeframe	2009 - end of 2010

## Community Services Research Report 2008/09

Title	Child Care Choices of Indigenous Families
Principal researchers	Associate Professor Jennifer Bowes, Macquarie University Tracey Simpson & Laurie Crawford, Charles Sturt University
Institution	Macquarie University, Charles Sturt University
Project description	<p>This project aims to provide evidence to drive decision-making in relation to the provision of quality children's services and family support services in Indigenous communities. It will address the following research questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are early care and education experiences of Indigenous children in rural and regional locations?</li><li>• When and how do Indigenous families use licensed and unlicensed care arrangements?</li><li>• What are the major influences on child care choices made by Indigenous families for their children?</li><li>• What roles do multiple and changeable child care play in the lives of Indigenous children and their families?</li><li>• What is the relationship between different care arrangements and outcomes for Indigenous children and families?</li></ul>
Status/timeframe	<p>External project funded by Community Services and/or managed by a Community Services steering committee</p> <p>2004 to 2009</p>

## Community Services Research Report 2008/09

Title	Facilitating children's transition to school in families with complex support needs
Principal researcher	Associate Professor Sue Docket
Institution	Charles Sturt University Linkage Partners include: Community Services, University of Western Sydney, Mission Australia
Project description	Investigators include: Associate Professor Bob Perry, Professor Jan Mason, Associate Professor Virginia Schmied, Anne Hampshire.  A successful start to school has a long term impact on children's school success. Children who experience early school success tend to exhibit higher levels of social competence and academic achievement than those who experience difficulties starting school. The overall aim of the project is to work with families, where the individuals within them have what service delivery agencies describe as 'complex support needs', to determine ways in which their children can be facilitated to have positive experiences of the transition to school. The transition period represents a key opportunity to engage with families so that both adults and children can have positive interaction with schools and schooling. Establishing such positive interactions early is crucial, as this sets the pattern for ongoing engagement with schools.
Status/timeframe	Australian Research Council Linkage project  December 2006–March 2009 Final report is expected by December 2009.

## Community Services Research Report 2008/09

Title	Miller Early Childhood Randomised Sustained Home Visiting Trial
Principal researcher	Ms Elizabeth Harris and Dr Lyn Kemp
Institution	<p>University of New South Wales - Centre for Health Equity Training, Research and Evaluation</p> <p>Investigators include: Dr Catherine McMahon, Dr Stephen Matthey, Professor Graham Vimpani, Dr Teresa Anderson and Associate Professor Virginia Schmied.</p> <p>Linkage partners include: Community Services, NSW Health, Families First and Community Solutions.</p>
Project description	<p>This project is the first Australian randomised control trial of sustained nurse home visiting in a population group living in an area of profound socioeconomic disadvantage. The home visiting intervention commences antenatally with at risk mothers and continues until the child is two years old.</p> <p>The trial will measure the impact of home visiting on outcomes including household environment and health, development and well being of the family, mother and child.</p>
Status/timeframe	<p>Australian Research Council Linkage project: 2004 - 2007</p> <p>The results from the Miller randomised control trial of sustained home visiting have added to the evidence base for this model in NSW. Two year research results showed that sustained home visiting led to improvements in the quality of the home environment for child development, experience of being a mother, and breastfeeding over a longer period, particularly for psychosocially distressed mothers and mothers who were born overseas. The project has been completed and Community Services expects to receive a final report on the project by late 2009.</p>

## Community Services Research Report 2008/09

Title	<b>Barriers to participation: the experiences of disadvantaged young children, their families and professionals in engaging with early childhood services</b>
Principal researcher	Dr Rebekah Grace
Institution	Macquarie University
Project description	<p>Participation rates in early childhood services are low for families who experience socioeconomic disadvantage despite research and policy supporting the benefits for both children and their carers of engaging with these services.</p> <p>The current research explores parent and child experiences of engagement with early childhood services with a focus on families who experience socioeconomic disadvantage. A new methodology will facilitate the young children's telling of their own experiences. In addition, this research examines parent and professional perspectives on the barriers to access for disadvantaged families.</p> <p>This research will contribute directly to the Community Services Research Agenda and will provide evidence-based resources and training for Community Services personnel to better understand the needs of our most disadvantaged young people and their families.</p>
Status/timeframe	<p>Post doctoral fellowship under the Collaborative Research Program</p> <p>2007–2010</p>
Title	<b>Paradigm shifts in family support service provision</b>
Principal Researcher	Lorraine McGlashan
Institution	University of Western Sydney
Project Description	<p>The study is an in-depth enquiry into how organisations involved in the delivery of welfare services negotiate a "new paradigm" that of partnership toward an integrated approach to family support provision through the Early Intervention Program (EIP). Initially research commenced with non-government organisations as this reflected the researcher's interest in the initiative. It has become evident as the research has progressed that Community Services, as a major player in the way the program is implemented, should be making input to the research in order that the paradigm shift is understood in a comprehensive way.</p>
Status/ Timeframe	<p>Postgraduate student project, non financially supported</p> <p>2005–2009</p>

# Community Services Research Report 2008/09

## Child Protection

### Completed

Project title	Researcher	Products
Effective strategies and interventions for adolescents in the child protection context: a literature review	Dr Virginia Schmied, Lucy Tully	Literature review
Effective child protection strategies in a context of parental substance misuse	Sharon Burke, Dr Stephanie Taplin	Research paper
Parents with mental health issues: consequences for children and effectiveness of interventions to support children and their families	Dr Leone Huntsman, Dr Johanna Watson	Research paper

# Community Services Research Report 2008/09

## In Progress

Title	Neglect risk factors: severity and chronicity
Principal researcher	Johanna Watson, Sharon Burke, Peter Walsh
Institution	Centre for Parenting and Research
Project description	<p>This research proposal adopts a systematic, empirical examination of issues associated with neglect. It aims to identify a set of risk and protective criteria to guide assessment and inform decision-making regarding service provision. It has three components reflecting the three key areas identified in the policy implementation. It aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ identify the criteria used to categorise maltreatment as neglect including the criteria underlying decisions to grade incident-severity and chronicity of neglect at each level of assessment</li> <li>▪ identify social and familial risk and protective factors associated with the chronicity and the severity of neglect</li> <li>▪ design a tool (or tools) which will allow for more effective decision making with regard to the assessment of neglect and its likelihood of recurrence and risk of harm using the criteria and risk/protective factors found to have significant associations with neglect</li> <li>▪ assess the usefulness of this tool in guiding decisions regarding the selection of appropriate service provision</li> <li>▪ examine the effectiveness of the interventions selected as a function of chronicity and severity of neglect.</li> </ul>
Status/ Timeframe	<p>Component 1: Identifying risk criteria—completed            Component 2: Analyse data relating to assessment guide—December 2009            Component 3: Effective interventions -December 2010</p>

## Community Services Research Report 2008/09

Title	<b>Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families in the NSW child protection system (CPS)</b>
Principal researcher	Dr Pooja Sawrikar
Institution	Social Policy Research Centre, University of NSW
Project description	The aim of this study is to discover whether there is an unmet need to develop culturally appropriate strategies among ethnic minority families in the child protection system. This study addresses a high priority research area for Community Services and is consistent with its Ethnic Affairs Policy Directions to promote the strengths and needs of CALD families. The study employs both quantitative and qualitative methods to develop a research profile of issues associated with the implementation of child protection policies in Australia and to compare these with international results. This study will provide an important contribution to the empirical and theoretical literature on best practice for CALD families in the Child Protection System.
Status/timeframe	Post doctoral fellowship under the Collaborative Research Program 2007–2010

Title	<b>Child protection and mothers in substance abuse treatment</b>
Principal researcher	Dr Stephanie Taplin
Institution	University of New South Wales
Project description	Anecdotal reports suggest that significant numbers of parents are entering drug treatment in response to the involvement of the child protection system in NSW: entering treatment and ceasing drug use may be a condition of retaining parental responsibility for their children. But how well do these parents do in treatment? What services do they receive? What are the characteristics of these parents? Does drug treatment improve their outcomes in terms of parenting and child protection
Status/timeframe	Post doctoral fellowship under the Collaborative Research Program March 2011

## Community Services Research Report 2008/09

Title	<b>Outcomes in non-accidental brain injury</b>
Principal Researcher	Dr Amanda Stephens
Institution	University of Sydney/ Children's Hospital Westmead
Project Description	<p>Cases of suspected non-accidental brain injury (NABI) occurring between 1997 and 2005 will be tracked from their referral to the Child Protection Unit (The Children's Hospital at Westmead) through Community Services, the NSW Children's Court and the Criminal Courts. Approximately 70 cases will be reviewed.</p> <p>The primary aim of the project is to perform an audit of the medical, social and legal outcomes of suspected NABI cases. This audit would answer important epidemiological and sociological questions such as: how many cases result in criminal prosecution? What is the social context for this type of abuse? How many of the children in this cohort are removed from their parents' care? How many children had previous referrals to Community Services or health workers? In how many cases was there a previous history of domestic violence or other abuse?</p>
Status / Timeframe	Postgraduate student project, non financially supported 2007–2010
Title	<b>Teachers' reporting of child sexual abuse: towards evidence based reform of law, policy and practice</b>
Principal researcher	Professor Des Butler
Institution	Queensland University of Technology
Project description	This research will examine official government statistics in relation to notifications and substantiations of teacher reports to child protection Authorities across three Australian jurisdictions. Through analysis of the data the research will describe teachers' reporting patterns for child sexual abuse and identify trends in teachers' reporting in relation to differences in legislation and policy across each of the states. The outcome of the research will be to develop a model of the most effective legislative practice in teacher reporting of child sexual abuse.
Status/timeframe	External research project non financially supported December 2009

# Community Services Research Report 2008/09

## Out-of-Home Care

### Completed

Project title	Researcher	Products
NESB out-of-home care in NSW	Sharon Burke and Marina Paxman	Research paper
Adopting an older child from overseas: what supports make it easier?	Kate Alessia	PhD Thesis

### In progress

Title	Pathways of Care longitudinal study of children and young people in care
Principal researcher	Peter Walsh, Marilyn Chilvers, Marina Paxman, Lucy Tully, Dr Johanna Watson, Merran Butler, Dr Inga Jacobsson, Joanna Hopkins, Dr Fred Wulczyn
Institution	A collaborative study to be conducted by Centre For Parenting and Research, Statistics Branch, and the OOHC Directorate in conjunction with Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago and other external research institutes.
Project description	<p>The overall aim of this longitudinal study of children and young people in OOHC in NSW is to enhance the OOHC service system and casework practice in order to improve outcomes for children and young people in care. The research will examine the access to and uptake of services, interventions and pathways through care for different groups of infants, children and young people in OOHC, and will help Community Services to understand how the following factors contribute to child outcomes: child/adolescent characteristics; socio-cultural context; characteristics of the care system (the services/interventions provided characteristics of the carer and placement and pathways in care) and the interactions between them.</p> <p>Community Services has engaged Chapin Hall, University of Chicago, to play a key role in the ongoing analysis of administrative data and an in-depth study of infants entering care prior to their first birthday.</p>
Status/timeframe	<p>2008–2013</p> <p>It is anticipated that field work will commence in early 2010</p>

## Out-of-Home Care

Title	Kinship care in NSW: an analysis of the characteristics of children and young people
Principal researcher	Marina Paxman, Marilyn Chilvers, Albert Zhou
Institution	Centre for Parenting and Research, Planning and Corporate Performance
Project description	<p>The aim of the research is to describe the characteristics of children and young people in kinship care in NSW and to compare these with the characteristics of children and young people in foster care. The specific research objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to undertake an analysis of the children and young people in kinship care with regard to their health and educational wellbeing</li> <li>• to undertake an analysis of the services and interventions provided to children and young people in kinship care and to their carers</li> <li>• to examine the similarities and differences between children and young people in supported kinship care, statutory kinship care and foster care.</li> </ul> <p>The study comprises two stages of research inquiry:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Analysis of administrative client data available for all children and young people in kinship care and foster care in NSW and</li> <li>2. Analysis of case files/records of a sample of children and young people who have been in kinship care and foster care for longer than six months in NSW.</li> </ol>
Status/timeframe	<p>Stage 1 completed Stage 2 in progress due March 2010</p>

## Community Services Research Report 2008/09

Title	Grandparents as primary carers of their grandchildren: a national, state and territory analysis of grandparent-headed families - policy and practice implications
Principal researcher	Professor Bettina Cass Investigators include: Associate Professor Deborah Brennan, Anne Hampshire, Bridget Jenkins (APAI), Sue Green (Nura Gili), Marilyn McHugh
Institution	Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales Linkage partners include: University of Sydney, Mission Australia, NSW Department of Human Services (Community Services), NT Department of Health and Families, SA Department for Families and Communities, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Project description	<p>This project will explore the circumstances and needs of children and adults in grandparent families in three states/territories: (South Australia, Northern Territory and New South Wales) where grandparents are the primary carers of children and young people up to the age of 17. The study focuses on a triadic model of care involving formal and informal caring arrangements between grandparents, children and parents - the first time a study of this kind has been undertaken in Australia. A large component of the study focuses on grandparental care in Indigenous families. The project consists of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. quantitative analysis of large national and State/Territory datasets</li> <li>2. qualitative interviews with Indigenous and non-Indigenous grandparents who are primary carers, interviews with older grandchildren (aged 12-17) in grandparental care; and (where possible) interviews with parents</li> <li>3. focus groups with key government and non-government organisations involved in policy-making and service delivery in the fields of child protection and child welfare, children's services and child and family support payments.</li> </ol>
Status/timeframe	Australian Research Council Linkage project 2007–2010

## Community Services Research Report 2008/09

Title	An examination of issues around support and supervision of kinship carers, with a particular focus on NSW
Principal researcher	Professor Jan Mason, Dr Elizabeth Watson and Dr Ainslie Yardley
Institution	University of Western Sydney
Project description	This project will be the first in-depth exploration of issues around provisions of support for and supervision of kinship carers. The exploration will include an analysis of paradigms influencing child welfare provisions and will also include a study of characteristics and experiences of formal kinship carers, informal kinship carers and foster carers in NSW. The findings will contribute to knowledge for policy development on kinship care, particularly in NSW.
Status/timeframe	External collaborative project, supported by Community Services July 2006 - December 2009

# Community Services Research Report 2008/09

Title	<b>The Children in Care Study—Stage 4</b>
Principal researcher	Dr Michael Tarren-Sweeney
Institution	University of Newcastle
Project description	The Children in Care Study is a prospective, epidemiological study of the mental health of children in court-ordered foster and kinship care in NSW. This final stage of the study consists of two related investigations. In 2008-09 a prospective component will seek to obtain follow-up measures of the mental health, self-esteem, social competence and developmental histories of young people recruited to the baseline survey, with a view to identifying retrospective and prospective predictors of children's mental health, and other developmental and placement outcomes. A cross-sectional survey of the mental health of adolescents in court-ordered care in NSW will be conducted at the same time.
Status/timeframe	External collaborative project, supported by Community Services June 2011
Publications (Includes outputs from earlier stages of the study)	<p><b>Refereed Journal Articles</b></p> <p>Tarren-Sweeney, M. (In Press). The mental health of children in care out of home. <i>Current Opinion in Psychiatry</i>.</p> <p>Tarren-Sweeney, M. (2008). Predictors of problematic sexual behavior among children with complex maltreatment histories. <i>Child Maltreatment</i>, 13(2), 182-198. [special issue on child sexual behaviour problems]</p> <p>Tarren-Sweeney, M. (2008). Retrospective and concurrent predictors of the mental health of children in care. <i>Children &amp; Youth Services Review</i>, 30, 1-25.</p> <p>Tarren-Sweeney, M. (2007). The Assessment Checklist for Children - ACC: A behavioral rating scale for children in foster, residential and kinship care. <i>Children and Youth Services Review</i>, 29, 672-691.</p> <p>Tarren-Sweeney, M. (2006). Patterns of aberrant eating among pre-adolescent children in foster care. <i>Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology</i>, 34, 623-634.</p> <p>Tarren-Sweeney, M., Hazell, P. (2006). The mental health of children in foster and kinship care in New South Wales, Australia. <i>Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health</i>. 42, 89-97.</p> <p>Tarren-Sweeney, M., Hazell, P. (2005). The mental health and socialization of siblings in care. <i>Children and Youth Services Review</i>, 27, 821-843. (<i>Siblings in foster care special issue</i>)</p>

## Community Services Research Report 2008/09

Title	<b>The Children in Care Study—Stage 4</b>
Publications continued	<p>Tarren-Sweeney, M., Hazell, P., Carr, V. (2004). Are foster parents reliable informants of children's behaviour problems? <i>Child: Care, Health and Development</i>. 30(2), 167-175.</p> <p><b>Journal article in preparation</b>            Tarren-Sweeney, M. Abnormal pain response among pre-adolescent children in care</p> <p><b>Other Publications</b>            Tarren-Sweeney, M. <i>The Children in Care Study: Technical report of baseline survey findings</i>. Newcastle, Australia: University of Newcastle; 2005.            Tarren-Sweeney, M., Hazell, P., Carr, V., Tadele, G. <i>Report of the pilot stage of the Children in Care Study: Technical report to the NSW Department of Community Services</i>. Newcastle, Australia: University of Newcastle; 1997.</p>

Title	<b>Are we making the grade? Educational outcomes of children and young people in out-of-home care</b>
Principal researcher	Michelle Townsend Supervised by Associate Professor Anne Graham and Associate Professor Judy Cashmore
Institution	Southern Cross University - The Centre for Children and Young People (CCYP)
Project description	The study is guided by the central research question: What are the factors that facilitate and impede educational engagement and achievement by children and young people in out-of-home care? The project aims to provide background knowledge of the factors within the home and school context, and within the broader care and protection and education systems at key education points, transitioning between primary and secondary school, to assist policy-makers, practitioners and carers to improve policy and practice.
Status/timeframe	PhD scholarship financially supported in partnership with the university June 2005 to December 2009.
Publications	<p>Townsend, M. (2007) Report Review: Educational outcomes of children on guardianship or custody orders. <i>Children Australia</i> 32(3), 4-5.</p> <p>Cashmore, J., &amp; Townsend, M. (2006). Education and disadvantaged children. <i>Developing Practice</i> 17(Summer), 12-16.</p> <p>Cashmore, J., Paxman, M. &amp; Townsend, M. (2007) The educational outcomes of young people 4-5 years after leaving care: an Australian perspective. <i>Adoption and Fostering</i> 31(1) 50-61.</p>

## Community Services Research Report 2008/09

Title	An analysis of the policies and procedures used in intercountry adoption assessments in NSW
Principal researcher	Alexandra Young - PhD Candidate,
Institution	The University of Sydney
Project description	Intercountry adoption is a term used to describe the adoption of a child who is born in a different country to where the adoptive parents live, and where an agreement is made for the child to enter and reside permanently in the adoptive parents' country. This project will review current policies and procedures in relation to intercountry adoption assessments in NSW and provide an overview on how other Australian States and Territories, New Zealand and the United Kingdom assess prospective adoptive parents. Interviews will also be conducted with prospective intercountry adoptive parents and other adoptive parents.
Status/timeframe	Postgraduate student project, non financially supported July 2006 - December 2009

Title	The identification of factors that enhance and hinder the implementation of the authorised foster care role in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven regions of NSW
Principal researcher	Michelle Hopkinson
Institution	The University of Wollongong
Project description	The project seeks to identify factors that influence the implementation of the authorised foster care role in capacities that both enhance and hinder this role. Identification of these factors will occur through discussions with focus groups comprising authorised foster carers. Once identified these factors have the potential to be utilised in both the practical implementation of the role of authorised foster carers as well as in further research around this role. Furthermore, the data arising from this research will enable the development of processes designed to support and strengthen the role of the foster carer by addressing areas of difficulty and strengthening those domains that are considered to be positive.
Status/timeframe	Postgraduate student project, non financially supported August 2008– December 2009

## Community Services Research Report 2008/09

Title	Understanding the coping strategies of young people in foster care
Principal researcher	Megan Robb - Masters Candidate,
Institution	The University of Newcastle
Project description	The aim of this research is to identify the coping strategies used by young people in foster care and identify variables that may impact on coping processes including age, gender, time in care, number of placements, as well as psychological symptomatology. While our understanding of coping in young people has increased significantly in the last ten years, little of this research has been conducted in Australia or with children in foster care. This information is important in identifying the types of interventions that will be most effective in this population and if there are specific areas of skill development required.
Status/timeframe	Postgraduate student project, non financially supported 2009–2010

# Community Services Research Report 2008/09

## Communities

### In progress

Title	Closing the gap - implementing and evaluating the impact of an early literacy program in informal settings
Principal researcher and Institution	Professor Alistair Pennycook, Associate Professor Pauline Gibbons, Dr Liam Morgan, University of Technology, Sydney Associate Professor Garth Alperstein, University of Notre Dame Dr Ken Cruikshank, University of Wollongong
Project description	A proportion of children and families are missing out on support for the development of their early literacy in the years before they start school. This study will address the gap in early childhood services for socio-economically disadvantaged and hard to reach communities who do not access the formal early childhood system.
Status/timeframe	Collaborative research supported through Communities Division Due December 2009

Title	Informal pathways to wellbeing: cultural forms of belonging, inclusion and engagement for young people in Western Sydney
Principal researcher	Dr Cameron McAuliffe
Institution	Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney
Project description	This project is concerned with the dynamics of growing up in the culturally diverse region of Western Sydney and how young people create change within and through their lived experiences. It draws upon a growing body of research within the Centre for Cultural Research (CCR) into the wellbeing and life choices of children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, especially those nominally referred to as 2 <sup>nd</sup> Generation.
Status/timeframe	Post doctoral research non-financially supported 2008 -2010

# Community Services Research Report 2008/09

## Communities

Title	Working together for community healing
Principal researcher	Judy Knox
Institution	Southern Cross University - Gnibi, The College of Indigenous Australian Peoples
Project description	This project is investigating through participatory research the potential for improvements to NSW and QLD Government services for the Aboriginal communities of Toomelah, Boggabilla and Goondiwindi. The study will examine whole-of-government service provision with a focus on domestic violence, sexual assault and drug misuse. The research addresses the question: What are the principles of Aboriginal Community Governance that would help influence better service delivery and build resilience and resonance within individuals, families and the community?
Status/timeframe	PhD scholarship financially supported in partnership with the university July 2005 to Dec 2008 Project extended with funding from Abstudy.

# Community Services Research Report 2008/09

## Organisational Performance

### Completed

Project title	Researcher	Products
Managing people in the age of empowerment	Tenielle Colussi, Leanne Fear, Cameron McAndrew, Alexi Paxinos	Masters theses

### In progress

Title	The research utilisation nexus: Putting research into practice. An examination of research utilisation in a child welfare practice context in NSW
Principal researcher	Cate Thomas
Institution	University of Sydney
Project description	<p>The aim of the research is to establish whether practitioners, managers and policy makers in a child welfare context in NSW use research to inform practice and policy making, that is research and evidence based knowledge and information utilisation. The project will examine the uses of research by practitioners and policy makers—whether it is for instrumental, conceptual or symbolic purposes. The research will also look at three spheres of influence that may impact on the uptake of research or evidence-based knowledge. These are the agency or organisational factors, environmental factors and individual factors.</p> <p>Evidence-based practice and policy is a relatively new concept in a human service perspective. Although it has been adapted from the medical field, there is literature on the broad concept of translating to a human service or social work setting. However, there is little literature of an evidence based approach in a child welfare context.</p>
Status/timeframe	Postgraduate student project, non financially supported 2009–2015

## Research to Practice Publications

### Research to Practice Notes

The Research to Practice Notes present the key issues and findings of research reports developed by the Centre and other relevant individuals and organisations. Their purpose is to increase knowledge as well as informing staff of practice implications where relevant. Research to Practice notes published between July 2008 - June 2009 include:

- ◆ Parental mental health
- ◆ Early intervention strategies for children and young people aged 8–14 years
- ◆ Prevention and early intervention update
- ◆ What determines quality in child care?
- ◆ What makes parenting programs effective? An overview of recent research

### Research to Practice Updates

Research to Practice Updates facilitate access to the latest national and international research articles, resources and websites. Updates are available online:

- ◆ July 2008
- ◆ August 2008
- ◆ October/November 2008
- ◆ December/January 2008-09
- ◆ February March 2009
- ◆ April/May 2009

**All publications are available online at [www.community.nsw.gov.au](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au)  
under 'Research Centre'**

# Community Services Research Report 2008/09

## Research to Practice Seminar Series

As part of the Research to Practice Program, the Centre coordinated a seminar series for staff with both local and international guest speakers, including:

**Professor Mark Courtney**, Ballmer Chair for Child Well-Being, University of Washington— *Foster youth in transition to adulthood: Challenges and opportunities for practice*

**Professor Diane DePanfilis**, University of Maryland School of Social Work— *Using prevention science to reduce the risk of child neglect*

**Dr Julie Selwyn**, Director, The Hadley Centre, University of Bristol— *Reunification, kinship care, foster care and adoption*

**Cindy Blackstock**, University of Toronto— *The breath of life: A first nations theory for addressing structural risk*

**Dr Lisa Aronson Fontes**, Union Institute & University Maryland— *Child abuse in culturally diverse families: Assuring fairness, reducing violence*

**Professor Deborah Phillips**, Director Center for Research on Children, Georgetown University— *The science of early development: Early environments, nurturing relationships, and early intervention*

**Dr Paul Delfabbro**, University of Adelaide— *Stability in care and infant trajectories through the system*

**Professor Robert Batey & Chris Shipway**, Department of Health— *Drug use in the family: Effective treatment responses*

**Michelle Townsend**, PhD scholarship, Community Services and Southern Cross University— *Educational Outcomes for children in out-of-home care*

**Dianne Nixon**, Practice Manager, Education, Uniting Care Burnside— *Four years of research to practice: Targeted methods for improving education results for children and young people in foster care*

### Regionally delivered seminars

**Professor Deborah Phillips**, Director Center for Research on Children, Georgetown University— *The science of early development: Early environments, nurturing relationships, and early intervention*

**Peter Walsh**, Director Research, NSW Department of Community Services— *Aboriginal Families Study - Brighter Futures Evaluation*

**Dr Paul Delfabbro**, University of Adelaide— *Stability in care and infant trajectories through the system*

**Professor Louise Newman**, Perinatal & Infant Psychiatry, University of Newcastle  
*Parenting capacity, risk and the experience of the child in families affected by parental mental illness*

**Richard Fletcher**, University of Newcastle— *Fathers and post natal depression*