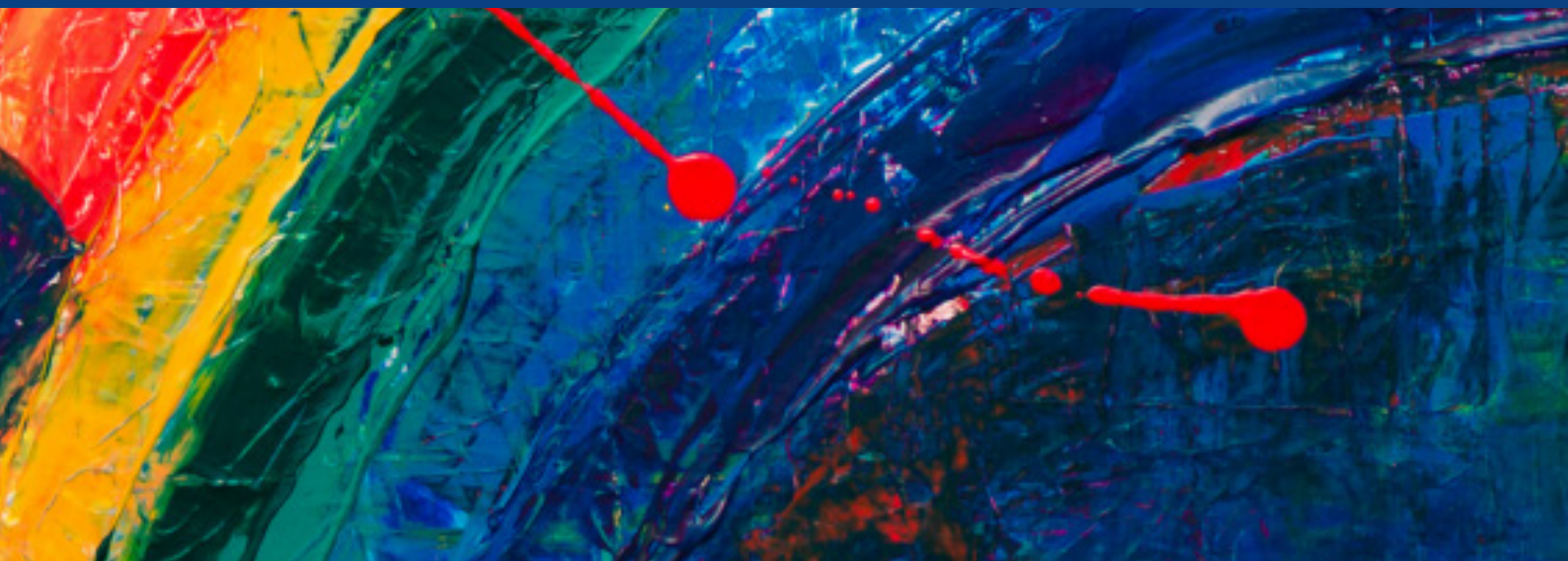
THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

2019

MELBOURNE DISABILITY INSTITUTE

2019 ANNUAL REPORT



THE MELBOURNE DISABILITY INSTITUTE WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE PEOPLE OF THE KULIN NATION WHO ARE THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS OF THIS LAND.

WE ALSO PAY RESPECT TO THE ELDERS BOTH PAST AND PRESENT AND EXTEND THAT RESPECT TO OTHER INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS PRESENT.

LETTER
FROM THE

DIRECTOR

In the nearly two years since the Melbourne Disability Institute was founded, it has grown into both a fixture and a resource for many in the University of Melbourne community and beyond.

PROFESSOR BRUCE BONYHADY, AM
EXECUTIVE CHAIR AND DIRECTOR

In the nearly two years since the Melbourne Disability Institute (MDI) was founded, it has grown into both a fixture and a resource for many in the University of Melbourne community and beyond. Our growing internal cadre of faculty, researchers and staff and external partners are working together to drive our mission to build a truly collaborative research program to improve the lives of people with disability, their families and carers.

It has been a year of very significant progress. We committed more than $595,000 for capacity building through our seed funding program, helped shape and explore new disability research through collaborative partnerships and our community of practice; and, helped to translate this knowledge by facilitating connections with governments and the disability sector.

We have also built significant external partnerships. Foremost amongst these is the National Disability Research Partnership (NDRP), which is being led by MDI. The NDRP has received $2.5 million from the Commonwealth Department of Social Services and will facilitate a collaborative, translational research program through deep engagement between academics, governments, service providers and advocacy groups to guide Australia's actions in ensuring all people with disability have the opportunity to become full citizens and live in an inclusive and accessible society.

In 2018, MDI convened a coalition of Australian researchers and stakeholders in the disability sector committed to ensuring that data related to disability would be linked to health, education, employment and other data and be made available to researchers to undertake world-leading research. We were therefore delighted when the Australian Data and Digital Council announced in September 2019 that an enduring National Disability Data Asset will be established to underpin policy-related research and evaluation.

The under-utilisation of NDIS plans was noted by the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into NDIS Costs in 2019 as a major issue of concern. MDI is therefore very pleased to be working closely with both the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services and the Commonwealth Department of Social Services to provide a detailed description of the predictors of plan utilisation using sophisticated quantitative and qualitative research techniques.

MDI has also been busy building international links. In close collaboration with the Nossal Institute of Global Health, we are working with the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities in the Government of India to advance a number of collaborations, including a co-designed community-based disability course and an economic analysis for increased investment in disability.

Building on these foundations and achievements, we are now aiming higher to address new research and knowledge translation gaps that will positively impact more Australians with disability, their families and carers and lead to improvements in other countries as well. Our goal is to build a leading global and university-wide centre of excellence for disability research, education and capacity building.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the MDI Executive Committee, all MDI staff and our partners. Without your dedication, hard work, resourcefulness and creativity, we could not have achieved any of our results since MDI was established.

Now with the COVID-19 pandemic upon us and with the additional significant risks it is creating for people with disabilities, their families and carers we will need your support, advice and counsel even more in the very challenging times which lie ahead.

LETTER
FROM THE

ACADEMIC DIRECTOR

PROFESSOR ANNE KAVANAGH

When we started the Melbourne Disability Institute just over two years ago, we established a vision to help transform the social and economic wellbeing and the health of people with disability through high-quality research, teaching and training, and knowledge translation.

It is our mission to create an evidence-base that informs policy and service development across all aspects of the lives of people with disability including employment, housing, education, participation in the community and freedom from discrimination. Our program is centered on providing much needed evidence for the disability sector and to do so by uplifting and supporting the research capability that exists on campus.

This includes driving collaboration and innovation across the research pipeline, strengthening transdisciplinary research collaboration, providing better access to research infrastructure, maximizing opportunities for research translation and positioning the University to tackle future challenges.

In line with our remit as a portal for disability research, MDI hosted a range of events and activities throughout 2019 that brought together University of Melbourne researchers, and the external communities we serve, in innovative discourses around the future state of things. Among our highlights, we hosted the Hon Jenny Macklin, former member of Parliament at our Disability Research Community of Practice, launched a new podcast to explore some of the most complex issues facing people with disability today and provided seed funding to 24 new projects across the University.

We look forward to the year ahead and appreciate your support in our ongoing efforts to support collaborative research.

ABOUT US

As one of the University of Melbourne's five Interdisciplinary Research Institutes, the Melbourne Disability Institute's mission is twofold – to build vision and greater activity across the University's faculties and disciplines in disability-focused research, and to be a portal to the outside world for translating and disseminating disability knowledge that builds a platform for addressing the critical issues of our time.

OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- Build research capacity at the University of Melbourne by catalysing new research, facilitating research translation, promoting all aspects of research, and creating new partnerships
- Provide a point of contact into the relevant fields of research expertise at the University of Melbourne
- Grow the University's reputation as a leader in accessible, important and relevant disability research
- Actively generate external funding and other resources for disability research at the University of Melbourne

OUR VISION:

To transform the social and economic wellbeing and the health of people with disability through high-quality research, teaching and training, and knowledge translation.

> "Harnessing interdisciplinary research to provide innovative solutions

OUR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

MDI enjoys the support of a diverse and vibrant Executive Committee made up of experts, thought leaders and champions of disability research within the University of Melbourne. The Executive Committee provides assistance with strategic planning for MDI and provides advice on areas in which MDI can create linkages with external stakeholders in order to grow the research program and attract funding.

Professor Mark Hargreaves
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Collaboration & Partnerships)

Professor Lou Harms
Department of Social Work

Professor Anne Kavanagh
Melbourne School of Population and Global Health

Dr Anna Arstein-Kerslake
Melbourne Law School

Professor Bruce Bonyhady
Melbourne Disability Institute

The Hon. Jenny Macklin
School of Government

Professor Barbara McPake
Nossal Institute for Global Health

Professor Shelley Mallett
School of Social and Political Sciences

Professor Lorraine Graham
Melbourne Graduate School of Education

Professor Brendan Gleeson
Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute

Professor Keith McVilly
School of Social & Political Sciences

Professor Abigail Payne
Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research

Dr Simon Wilkins
Translating Research at Melbourne (TRAM)

OUR TEAM

MDI'S EXCELLENCE IS BUILT ON THE FOUNDATION OF HIGHLY DEDICATED AND TALENTED STAFF, COMMITTED TO THE SHARED VISION TO HELP TRANSFORM THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING AND THE HEALTH OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY THROUGH HIGH-QUALITY RESEARCH, TEACHING AND TRAINING, AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION.

Professor Bruce Bonyhady
Executive Chair and Director

Professor Anne Kavanagh
Academic Director

Tessa de Vries
Institute Manager

Dr. Sue Olney
Senior Research Fellow

Campbell Message
Program Manager

Lishia Singh
Program Manager

Sara Donaldson
Communications Manager

Georgia Katsikis
Co-research Coordinator

Alicia Yon
Project Coordinator Housing

OUR RESEARCH

PROGRAM

SUPPORTING RESEARCHERS AND BUILDING CAPACITY

Our research funding portfolio is designed to support and develop collaborative research that atively influences policy and practice to improve the lives of people with disability, their families and carers.

RESEARCH PRINCIPLES

The MDI research program is underpinned by four foundation principles: data; interdisciplinarity; experience-based co-production with people with lived experience of disability; and active partnerships.

In 2019 we were proud to facilitate a wide range of interdisciplinary research at the University of Melbourne through our three funding schemes; seed funding for small-medium projects at the discovery or pilot end of research, event funding to support disability-related public events, and our community-based research scheme through which we encourage and support the evaluation and research of innovative ideas in the broader disability community, by linking community organisations to researchers.

PARTNERSHIPS AND ENGAGEMENT

The MDI could not achieve its goals without strong partnerships with academics, the disability sector, governments, business and philanthropy. Some of the partnerships and key relationships that underpin the MDI program of work include:

- The Commonwealth of Australia and the State Government of Victoria
- Disability service providers and not-for-profits such as the Brotherhood of St Laurence and Baptcare
- Peak bodies, disability people organisations, disability advocacy organisations, and family advocacy and support groups
- Other universities and research institutes in Australia and internationally.

01

OPPORTUNITY AND EQUITY

Ensuring equitable access for people with disability to justice, inclusive education, meaningful employment, intervention and support, and mainstream services

02

INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

Research that focuses on the structures and practices that increase the participation and inclusion of people with disability into everyday activities

03

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Improving all other aspects that contribute to a person's health and well-being, focusing on the intersection between disability and health

04

MARKETS AND SUSTAINABILITY

The introduction of the NDIS is creating opportunities for research into smart and ethical technology, effective market design, new models of service delivery, best practice approaches to consumer-directed models of technological and service development, and niche industries

05

POLICY AND PRACTICE

This theme focuses on the best approaches to incorporating evidence into policy and practice so that we can transform the lives of people with disability, families and carers for the better

SUPPORTING NEW RESEARCH

Seed Funding

The MDI Seed Funding scheme is intended to support pilot or discovery research that falls within five strategic research themes. Funding supports innovate, interdisciplinary research that is likely to improve the lives of people with disability, their families and carers, and shows significant potential for impact or further funding.

In 2019 we were pleased to support 24 projects to a total value of $ 595,201.55.

MYTH BUSTING AND NUMBER CRUNCHING: THE DISABILITY PAY GAP

Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences
Centre for Health Equity, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health
Lead researcher: Dr George Disney

People with disability often experience poor employment outcomes. However, the size and nature of employment disadvantage faced by people with disability is not understood and remains unaddressed. To bridge the gap between evidence and understanding of disability-related inequalities, this project will pilot t a data-driven, Q&A style on-line interactive tool where the general public, policy makers and users of disability statistics can learn about the disparities that people with disability experience in the job market. The pilot study will use an analysis of the "disability pay gap", a simple comparison of average earnings for people with disability in comparison to those without. The tool will use creative visualisations and accessible user-engagement to maximise knowledge translation.

EVERYONE'S MOOMBA

Faculty of Arts
Work Integrated Learning, Academic Support Office
Lead researcher: Dr Lea Campbell

The Committee for Melbourne, a non-for profit NGO, is collaborating with the City of Melbourne to deliver a benchmarking audit and community survey of Moomba, Australia's largest and free community festival. A report will inform the City of Melbourne on how to strengthen and future proof the festival for people with a disability. Other organisation will potentially be able to use Everyone's Moomba as a best practice example for holistic and authentic inclusive events hosting.

ACCESS TO SERVICES FOR ABORIGINAL CHILDREN WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY (WA)

Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences
Indigenous Epidemiology and Health, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health
Lead researcher: Dr Alison Gibberd

Intellectual disability and/or autism spectrum disorder ('developmental disability') affect 4% of Aboriginal children in Western Australia, more than twice the percentage of non-Aboriginal children. Overall, they are less likely to access disability services prior to school entry. However, it is not known whether this reduced access is uniform across the state and families or whether there is important variation within the population. This project will use total population data from Western Australia to understand why Aboriginal children with developmental disability are less likely to receive disability services prior to school than non-Aboriginal children. The project also aims to understand the current relationship between Aboriginal families affected by developmental disability and the child protection system.

VIOLENCE AGAINST PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES: MAXIMISING THE USE OF DATA TO INFORM THE ROYAL COMMISSION

Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences
Centre for Health Equity, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health
Lead researcher: Professor Anne Kavanagh

In light of the Royal Commission on Violence and Abuse against People with Disabilities, there is an urgent need for contemporary estimates of the prevalence of violence and abuse against people with disability for the public, policy makers and Commissioners to consider. This is particularly important as misinformation on the prevalence of violence is promulgated such as that 90% of women with intellectual disabilities have been sexually assaulted. This project will inform a submission to the Royal Commission into Violence and Abuse against people with disability by providing the most up-to-date population-based estimates on the prevalence of violence among people with disability in Australia. In addition, the project will identify existing Australian data sources and make recommendations for improvements including the potential for data linkages. Co-researchers with disability will work with key stakeholders to design dissemination strategies to maximise the impact of the research.

TRIAL AND VALIDATION OF THE ASQ-TRAK – A DEVELOPMENTAL OUTCOME MEASURE FOR AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL CHILDREN

Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences
Indigenous Child Health, Department of Paediatrics
Melbourne Medical School
Lead researcher: Dr Anita D'Aprano

The ASQ-TRAK Extended has been developed in collaboration with communities in the Northern Territory and South Australia. Comprised of culturally and linguistically modified items from the Ages and Stages Questionnaires, 3rd edition (ASQ-3), the ASQ-TRAK Extended is a developmental outcome measure for Australian Aboriginal children that can assess individual children's developmental progress and evaluate the impact of early childhood programs and intervention. The ASQ TRAK Extended is a prototype that still needs to be trialled and validated in the contexts where it will be implemented. A three-tiered research program has been conceived to achieve this. First, to develop the ASQ-TRAK Extended; second, to validate the ASQ-TRAK Extended; and third, to examine the feasibility and the cost of implementing the ASQ-TRAK Extended.

PATHWAYS FOR RESPONDING TO CONFLICT AND HIGH-RISK BEHAVIOURS IN FAMILIES: A FEASIBILITY STUDY BASED ON FAMILIES LIVING WITH A CHILD/YOUNG PERSON WITH AUTISM

Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences
Department of Social Work, Melbourne School of Health Sciences
Lead researcher: Professor Cathy Humphreys

This research aims to investigate the difficulties of familial conflict, high risk behaviours, and sources of support for families living with a child/young person with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This research will include the lived experiences communicated by family members as well as input from practitioners and managers within disability, family violence and autism services about their perspectives on responding to needs of families with ASD. It also seeks to better understand when support may be most important, across pre-diagnoses, diagnosis and beyond. The outcomes of this small-scale study may identify pathways for service development in this area, and further inform sensitive and appropriate service provision and interventions for families where there is a child/young person with ASD.

DENTAL HEALTH FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

Faculty of Arts School of Social and Political Sciences
Lead researcher: Professor Keith McVilly

This activity is part of a larger project titled 'Communities of Practice - Dental Health for People with Disabilities' which aims to improve the oral health of people with intellectual disability and increase the volume of people with intellectual disability being treated in community and private dental practice settings. In the short-term, this current project will identify best practice solutions for Australian dental professionals to include people with intellectual disability in their everyday practice. In the long-term, this interdisciplinary project will establish an evidence-base model derived by dentists, people with intellectual disability, disability support professionals, and allied health practitioners for use across both dentistry and disability sectors.

NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME (NDIS) LEGAL CLINIC

Melbourne Law School
Disability Human Rights Clinic
Lead researcher: Associate Professor Dr Anna Arstein-Kerslake

This project will establish the NDIS Legal Clinic at Melbourne Law School, which is the first of its kind in Australia. People with disability, their families and carers are struggling to find appropriate, independent assistance in dealing with the NDIS. This clinic will fill this significant gap. Students will be trained and supervised to deliver information and assistance in accessing, navigating, and successfully utilising the NDIS. More specifically, the clinic will assist with the provision of advice to NDIS participants, their families and carers, who would be otherwise unable to access it; a database of practical experiences of issues in the NDIS system will inform current research and policy advice. Additionally, this clinic provides an opportunity for students to gain practical experience and develop associated skills, while providing assistance to people with disability, their families and carers in exercising informed consumer choice and demanding appropriate products and services under the NDIS.

AFRICAN AUSTRALIANS WITH DISABILITY AND THE NDIS: EXPLORING THE SUPPORT AND SERVICE NEEDS OF AFRICAN AUSTRALIANS WITH DISABILITY

Faculty of Arts School of Social and Political Sciences
Dr Claire Spivakovsky

This project will explore the experiences of African Australians with disability seeking access to the NDIS. Particular focus is on the gaps that form between the available support, this group's service needs, and the coverage of the NDIS. The exploration will include consideration of this group's awareness of NDIS coverage; the pathways African Australians with disability take to access the NDIS; the funding experiences and outcomes, including the transition period; and intersecting factors, including migration and settlement experiences that shape each of the above.

EVALUATION OF SAFE PLACE PILOT PROGRAM

Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences
Centre for Health Equity, Gender and Women's Health team, School of Population and Global Health
Lead researcher: Erik Martino (PhD Candidate)

MDI was pleased to provide top-up funding to this project as part of the Housing Hallmark Seed Fund Scheme. Safe Steps and its partners will deliver a pilot program that uses vacant homes in Melbourne's private real estate market to fill the emergency housing gap for intimate partner violence survivors, to provide quality, affordable and safe emergency housing to women. This research project is to evaluate the economic and social impacts of this housing pilot program and examine possibilities for upscaling the model. Specifically, the project will initiate and refine the pilot program and evaluation criteria; plan the pilot and its evaluation; conduct the pilot and its evaluation; communicate findings; and use findings to inform improvements.

A MIXED METHODS EVALUATION OF A WELLBEING SERVICE FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH COMPLEX NEURODEVELOPMENTAL CONDITIONS

Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences
Department of Paediatrics
Lead researcher: Professor David Amor

This project is to evaluate a Parent Wellbeing Service, a pilot program currently being run within the Department of Neurodevelopment and Disability, Royal Children's Hospital. Parents/caregivers of children with a neurodevelopmental disability have consistently been identified as a group at higher risk of experiencing mental health problems compared to parents of typically developing children. There are currently limited options for parents to access free or low cost services in the community. This pilot supports parents of children with a neurodevelopmental disability who receive ongoing outpatient medical care within the department. Pilot data suggests that parents are willing to come to appointments about their own wellbeing when the service is embedded in the broader care system for their child and has no cost to parents. Given that this is the first service model for supporting the mental health of parents of a child with a neurodevelopmental condition in a paediatric tertiary institution, we believe it is critical to evaluate the model, considering potential benefits to parents as well as to the hospital system. This research will identify the barriers and facilities of the program, and inform the improved modifications of the service. It will provide key data on whether taking an innovative, novel approach to focus on parents within a paediatric tertiary hospital has the potential to improve medical treatment for the child and save money in terms of reduced inpatient stays from complex psychosocial contexts and lengthy paediatrician consult times.

THE IMPACT OF LOW VISION ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ON MOBILITY IN PEOPLE WITH VISION IMPAIRMENT

Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences
Optometry and Vision Sciences
Lead researcher: Dr Lauren Ayton

Impaired mobility is one of the most significant challenges that affects people with vision loss and blindness. Low-tech mobility aids such as long canes and guide dogs are still the mainstay of support, but newer technologies such as visual-to-audio substitution, tactile wearables and 'augmented-reality' smart glasses are gaining wide-spread interest in the community. At the same time, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) requires evidence to fund assistive devices such as these, which unfortunately is lacking in the low vision space. As new technologies emerge that support people with vison impairment to engage and participate more independently in the community, evaluations will be needed to influence funding and policy decisions. This pilot study will investigate the effect of smart glass technology on mobility and gait, using advanced biomotion laboratories within the Department of Physiotherapy at the University of Melbourne.

EXPLORING THE INTERFACE OF THE NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME (NDIS) AND DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES (DES) AND THE INFLUENCE ON EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES FOR AUSTRALIANS WITH DISABILITIES

Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences
Nossal Institute for Global Health, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health
Lead researcher: Alexandra Devine (PhD Candidate)

There is limited evidence on whether and how the NDIS/DES interface is functioning effectively to improve employment outcomes for Australian's with disability. Understanding in this area is further complicated as the NDIS/DES interface intersects (and sometimes competes) with multiple Federal, State and Territory education and training, and, employment programs. This exploratory project will seek to understand stakeholder perspectives and concerns on the functioning and positioning of NDIS/DES interface within the broader education, training and employment sector. This project also aims to foster collaborative partnerships and research opportunities towards the improvement of employment outcomes for Australians with disability.

IMPROVING PAEDIATRIC ADVANCE PLANNING FOR CHILDREN WITH SEVERE NEURODISABILITY

Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences
Melbourne School of Population and Global Health
Lead researcher: Professor Lynn Gillam

When a child is nearing the end of their life, their parents and clinicians are faced with difficult decisions. Paediatric advance care planning is a recommended process that facilitates shared decision-making at these times. Importantly, advance care planning can commence early in the life for a child with severe neurodisability and involves communication between their parents and clinicians. It may reduce conflict between the child's parents and clinicians, and facilitate the provision of optimal care for the child and family. To improve advance care planning we need information about effective communication elements. This research, using state-of-the-art simulation methods, aims to create knowledge about the most effective and helpful ways to communicate with parents when faced with uncertainty.

DIGITISING SOCIAL CARE: AN ALTERNATIVE VISION FOR AUSTRALIA'S DIGITAL FUTURE OF CARE

Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Business and Economics, Melbourne Law School
Melbourne School of Government
Lead researcher: Timothy Kariotis (PhD Candidate)

The current Australian digital health strategy excludes social care services such as disability and community support services, which risks creating a two-tiered system where innovations, efficiencies and experiences are developed in the health system, while other services are left behind. Adoption of information technology could improve the siloed and fragmented nature of care, and could support the collection of quality data to assist in planning, policy and evaluation. This is especially pertinent with the huge amounts of data collected in the NDIS, and the recent announcement of a National Disability Data Asset. This project aims to describe the current information technology readiness of the social care sector and will explore the adoption and use of information systems, data collection and quality, and workforce readiness. Further, working with the social care sector, an alternative vision for digital health that is inclusive of these sectors will be designed to support policy, advocacy and planning.

UPSKILLING HEALTH PROFESSIONALS ON EARLY DETECTION AND INTERVENTION FOR INFANTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES IN LOW TO MIDDLE INCOME COUNTRIES

Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences
Department of Physiotherapy, Melbourne School of Health Sciences
Lead researcher: Professor Alicia Spittle

Early detection and intervention for infants and young children with neurodevelopmental disabilities is essential to maximise outcomes for the child, family and community. World-wide, the allied health workforce are directly involved in delivery of early intervention for infants and young children with developmental disabilities. Educational standards in many low to middle income countries are varied and have not been able to keep up with the rapidly expanding evidence in this field over the past decade. With plans for schemes similar to the National Disability Insurance Scheme to be implemented in developing countries, it is essential that health professionals are trained in current evidence-based practice to ensure families receive appropriate and timely intervention. This project will develop and pilot a training program on early detection and intervention for infants and young children with neurodevelopmental disability targeting health professionals in low to middle income countries (including Kazakhstan and Nepal), with a focus on capacity building of allied health professionals. The aim is to provide evidence for training programs, towards creating a skilled provider market if schemes such as the NDIS are to be implemented in other regions.

CULTIVATING WELLBEING BY EMPOWERING FAMILIES: ESTABLISHING EVIDENCE FOR AND IMPACT OF THE NOW AND NEXT PROGRAM

Melbourne Graduate School of Education, Centre for Positive Psychology
Lead researcher: Associate Professor Peggy Kern

Current policies and programs for disability care often rely on reactive, treatment-based, expert provided services. Additional benefit may arise from proactive approaches that place parents at the centre of care. 'Now and Next' is an evidenced-informed program that fosters empowerment, agency, and wellbeing for the family as a whole. Results to date suggest that parent capacity building can successfully be delivered early in a family's experience, with high levels of engagement by both mothers and fathers. The program helps parents successfully return to work, and has positive impacts on the health, wellbeing, and trajectory of the child and family. However, to impact upon disability policy, further evaluation of the immediate impact of the program, consideration of mechanisms, comparison with standard approaches to care, testing of longer-term effects, and examination of sustainability and scalability of the program are needed. This project will launch an inter-disciplinary, collaborative longitudinal impact study, with the intention of informing proactive policies and approaches to early childhood disability care.

TOWARDS A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF HOW TO REDUCE SOCIAL STIGMA AMONG MEDICAL STUDENTS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences
Disability and Health Unit, School of Population and Global Health

Lead researcher: Dr Ashley McAllister

While not everyone who experiences a mental illness will experience disability, those that do can experience significant disadvantage leading to social and economic exclusion. Physicians are formal gatekeepers to medical care, but also informal gatekeepers to essential government support such as housing benefits, welfare benefits, or more recently, the National Disability Insurance Scheme, as many of these supports rely on a physician's medical assessment to determine eligibility. Evidence suggests that physicians are not neutral in their medical assessment. A contributing factor could be psychosocial disability-related stigma. In general, the evidence shows that physicians' negative attitudes towards people with mental illness can contribute to inequalities in care provided. Health professionals, including physicians, have been identified as a major source of social stigma and discrimination, including by the Australian Government. Reducing stigma among the healthcare workforce is therefore critical to improving the outcomes for people with psychosocial disability. This project aims to address the prejudicial and stigmatising views of healthcare professionals regarding persons with mental health conditions. This research focuses on medical students' perceptions, current educational training targeting stigma, as well as an exploration of evidence-based approaches to reduce stigma.

DIGITECH4ALL: OPTIMISING INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGIES FOR TEACHING THE DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES CURRICULUM

International Centre for Classroom Research , Melbourne Graduate School of Education
Lead researcher: Dr Carmel Mesiti

There is a recognition in local, national and global contexts that inclusive education is crucial for providing a high quality of life for people with disability. Research has consistently shown important academic, social and economic benefits for all learners in school systems where adjustments are made to support students with disability. The central problem is that a significant number of educators do not have the expertise to provide the reasonable adjustments required for students with disability to be successfully included within their classrooms. This project will investigate effective teaching strategies so that students with disability and additional needs are included in Digital Technologies lessons alongside their same age peers in a mainstream middle school classroom. DigiTech4All is a pilot research project designed to bring together the professional knowledge and experiences of mainstream and specialist educators. In addition to significant policy implications, this project will develop a set of principles for planning and designing inclusive Digital Technologies Lessons for students with disability. A video library of effective teaching strategies will also provide a useful resource available to relevant stakeholders.

EXTENDING PARENTAL LEAVE AND PAY FOR PARENTS OF BABIES BORN PRETERM OR SICK

Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences
School of Health Sciences
Lead researcher: Professor Alicia Spittle

In Australia, of the 300,000 babies born each year, approximately 48,000 are born preterm or sick. A baby who is born preterm or sick may spend weeks or months in hospital, which means parents use a large amount, if not all of their leave entitlements before their baby goes home. Time for babies and parents to spend together in the early developmental period is fundamental to optimal child development and bonding. Some babies go on to have significant medical needs and disabilities after they have gone home from hospital and are more vulnerable to common colds and viruses, which mean they may not be ready to enter childcare by the time parents have to start work, or may require hospital readmission. Yet, mothers and fathers who have a baby born preterm or sick are not currently entitled to any extra parental leave or pay. Extended leave for parents of preterm or sick babies has existed in some European and Scandinavian countries for many years. In New Zealand, policy was recently introduced for extended parental leave for parents of preterm babies, and the UK Government is currently conducting a neonatal leave and pay consultation. However, no current policies exist in Australia since the introduction of paid parental leave. This project will conduct a scoping review and survey of parents of preterm and sick babies in Australia to understand the impact of current and future leave policy, specific to parents of babies born preterm or sick. This will used as a foundation to lobby the Australia Government for policy change in parental leave and pay for parents of preterm and sick babies.

THIS IS ME: EXPLORING HOW INCLUSIVE MUSIC WORKSHOPS CAN SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH & QUALITY OF LIFE IN AUTISTIC CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS

Faculty of Fine Arts and Music
Music Therapy Unit
Lead researcher: Dr Grace Thompson

While research shows that participating in community music making can foster a sense of belonging and connection between group members, this potential has not been researched in the Australian autistic community. This pilot project will examine and evaluate the benefits of group music making on the mental health and quality of life of participants from three different age groups of upper primary school aged children (year 4 and 5), secondary school aged children, and young adults between the ages of 18-25 years. Participants will have the opportunity to build peer networks by engaging in expressive music creation that does not rely on verbal communication. This participatory project will co-design and deliver an innovative creative arts music program aimed at improving wellbeing outcomes in autistic children and young adults; build and share knowledge, while engaging the community by sharing the results through a symposium to facilitate further dialogue with the stakeholders.

LINKING THERAPY AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION THROUGH CYCLING (CYCLINK) FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES: A FEASIBILITY STUDY

Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences
Department of Physiotherapy, Melbourne School of Health Sciences
Lead Researcher: Dr Rachel Toovey

Cycling is a popular activity and a common goal for children with disability yet few inclusive community cycling initiatives exist in Australia. Until recently there was limited high quality evidence regarding best practice in achieving goals related to cycling in people with disability. A recent study found that a task-specific, bike skills program was more effective for attaining cycling goals than a parent-led home program in children with cerebral palsy. Recent research suggests that building relationships and capacity between therapists and community-based sport and recreational organisations are key ingredients of participation interventions for children with disabilities. As such, our study aims to work towards addressing the gap by testing the feasibility of "CycLink," an intervention that builds on the task-specific bike skills program by linking therapy to community participation. CycLink will be a co-designed and delivered program that draws on the knowledge of local programs and facilities from community sport and recreation organisations and families, while utilising the expertise of the physiotherapists in disability and skill development. A positive outcome of this study would inform a model for cycling through a partnership between rehabilitation and/or therapy services and community organisations. The knowledge gained may also be applied to other sports and activities, towards more inclusive community sporting programs.

THE PREVALENCE AND CAUSES OF HEARING LOSS IN THE KANDAL PROVINCE OF CAMBODIA USING THE RAPID ASSESSMENT OF HEARING LOSS

Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences
Melbourne Audiology and Speech Pathology Clinic, Melbourne School of Health Sciences
Lead researcher: Chris Waterworth (Research Audiologist & PhD Candidate)

The Rapid Assessment of Hearing Loss (RAHL) is a new survey methodology recently developed by the International Centre for Evidence in Disability at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. The RAHL is a population-based survey of the prevalence and causes of hearing loss in people aged

50 and over. This project aims to provide evidence on the prevalence and causes of hearing loss in one province of Cambodia for people aged 50 and over; to identify the main barriers to the uptake of ear care services in urban and rural areas; and to improve the baseline data for planning of ear care services and awareness of the need to improve health policy, programming, and delivery.

INCLUSIVE CITY OF MELBOURNE

Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences
Melbourne School of Population and Global Health
Lead researcher: Dr. Jerome Rachele

This study brought together people with disability, City of Melbourne staff, disability advocates, and academics, with the aim of generating ideas on how to make the City of Melbourne more inclusive for people with disability. It further aimed to see which of these ideas were the most important and feasible to implement. The City of Melbourne Disability Advisory Committee and the Inclusive Melbourne Steering Committee with representatives of Melbourne University, the Melbourne Disability Institute, City of Melbourne and people with disability worked in partnership assisting the project team throughout the project. Findings from this study will inform the development of the City of Melbourne's Disability Action Plan and other relevant strategies.

RESEARCH TRANSLATION

FUNDING TO SUPPORT THE TRANSLATION OF RESEARCH INTO POLICY OR PRACTICE

CLARIFYING FACTORS TO TARGET IN UNDERTAKING MODULAR PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTION FOR POORLY RECOVERING INDIVIDUALS WITH MILD TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences
Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences

Chief investigator: Dr. Jacqueline Anderson

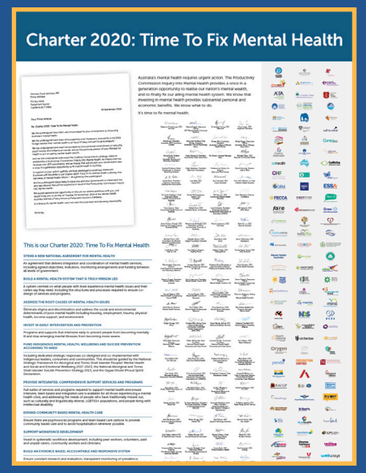
Individuals recovering from mild traumatic brain injury are recognised as having significant cognitive, psychological and physical disability, which prevent them from returning to work or undertaking their normal activities during the recovery process. Following mild traumatic brain injury, individuals are expected to make a complete recovery within 3 months of injury but 20% of individuals (approx. 12,000/ year in Australia) have delayed or incomplete recovery. Most of these 'poorly recovering' individuals continue to report debilitating changes in cognition, mood and physical factors for many years afterwards. There is clear evidence that early psychological intervention can improve recovery for many of these individuals, but we do not have a clear understanding of how cognitive, psychological, psychiatric and physical factors interact to result in poor recovery for a particular individual. Consequently, we are unable to design appropriate individualised interventions for this group. This study will follow up an existing cohort of individuals with mild traumatic brain injury to provide detailed characterisation of factors that are amenable to psychological intervention and are contributory factors to poor recovery. This will enable us to develop, deliver and measure the first-ever evidence-based modular mild traumatic brain injury specific psychological intervention package.

MARKETING FOR NDIS MARKET STEWARDSHIP

Melbourne Social Equity Institute

Chief Investigator: Aviva Beecher Kelk (PhD Candidate)

Market stewardship literature is primarily top-down, and does not include consumer views; it has not examined the information consumers need to ensure the market is functional; and it has not examined what kind of capacity-building work is required to ensure than the information is accessible, relevant and useful. While there is some evidence in healthcare literature about how patients make decisions, and behavioural economics literature provides another body of evidence around consumership and decision-making, very little has entered the market stewardship literature or been applied to the NDIS. The PhD project sought to contribute to filling these gaps as an exploratory study. Results showed show that NDIS participants place an extremely high value on trusted interpersonal sources of information. They also showed that trust was being used in place of information in order to reduce uncertainty in the NDIS environment. This Research Translation project will build an online tool that service providers can use to see what information they should use to assist consumer decision-making, and a second online tool that consumers can use to think about where to look for information and what to ask potential providers.


Charter 2020: Time To Fix Mental Health

This is our Charter 2020: Time To Fix Mental Health

PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION INQUIRY INTO MENTAL HEALTH

Melbourne Disability Institute

Submission to the Inquiry to Improve the NDIS Experience: Establishing an NDIS Participant Service Guarantee and removing legislative red tape

SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY TO IMPROVE THE NDIS EXPERIENCE

Melbourne Disability Institute

16 August 2019

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary

National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment (Streamlined Governance) Bill 2019

NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME AMENDMENT (STREAMLINED GOVERNANCE) BILL 2019

Embedding accessibility and inclusion into the DNA of the City of Melbourne

Academic Expertise

Guiding Principles

EMBEDDING ACCESS AND INCLUSION INTO THE DNA OF THE CITY OF MELBOURNE

POLICY SUBMISSIONS

SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY BASED RESEARCH SCHEME

The Community Based Research scheme provides support for projects run by community-based organisations that build social capital. The Scheme connects community-based organisations with researchers to support close working partnerships focusing on research or evaluation of innovative practice or ideas that improve lives of people with disability, their families or carers. The Scheme launched in 2019 to help build evidence in the disability sector and replicate and share ideas, and supported 11 projects in the first two rounds. We look forward to supporting more community-based research in 2020.

IMAGE COURTESY OF YELLOWBRIDGE QLD

PATHWAY FOR CARERS: NO-ONE CAN DO IT ALONE

Maroondah City Council

This project is an evaluation of the Pathways for Carers program which began in 2015 in response to a need for carers to learn more about news, services and supports available in their community. The Pathways for Carers is an evolving community development initiative that aims to improve the health and wellbeing of carers within the City of Maroondah and four additional local government areas. Pathways for Carers combines the physical and mental health benefits of social group walking, with the direct delivery of targeted messages from providers on an informal platform.

THE BENEFITS OF THERAPEUTIC HORTICULTURE FOR PEOPLE WITH AUTISM

Kevin Heinze Grow

The aim of this project is to evaluate Kevin Heinze Grow's 'Grow Model' and its impact on participants with autism. The Kevin Heinze Grow Model is a therapeutic horticultural program. The organisation works with NDIS participants; Children and teenagers who have experienced significant trauma; People with an acquired brain injury; People with mental health challenges or dementia; Refugees and asylum seekers; Schools, aged-care services, and disability providers. The model uses the peaceful stress-free environment of a garden to support social, emotional, educational and vocational goals, enabling Kevin Heinze Grow to work holistically with people to meet their needs.

This evaluation will look at the benefits of the program for people on the autism spectrum, and possibly for participants with intellectual disabilities. It will also look at the strengths and weaknesses of the program and what changes could be made to improve the program.

EVALUATION OF THE COMMUNITY ABUNDANCE WORKSHOPS

Community Abundance

This project aims to evaluate the processes and outcomes of the capacity building workshops offered by Community Abundance. The aim is to help Community Abundance improve the ongoing workshops, and to understand the impact of workshops on understanding of disability and the NDIS, on understanding of advocacy, confidence in speaking up, and access to the NDIS.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR ALL

Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria

Assistive technology plays a powerful role in the lives of people with disability by facilitating independence, social inclusion and economic participation. This study will review literature to demonstrate the economic and social benefits associated with providing people with timely access to affordable assistive technology. The areas explored will include an examination of the economic modelling to demonstrate the cost-benefits of providing timely access to assistive technology; the positive impact on families and carers of people with disability; potentially decreasing the risk of people with disability experiencing violence, abuse, neglect and/or exploitation. Additionally, the role of assistive technology in supporting in-home care will be explored in relation to reducing social isolation and loneliness, with positive impact on mental health and well-being. The research will result in a business case that will be presented to the Government outlining the social and economic benefits of increasing access to assistive technology for people with disability outside the NDIS.

SUPPORT WORKERS AS MEDIATORS BETWEEN LEARNERS, CARERS AND PROVIDERS IN LEARN LOCAL DISABILITY PROGRAMS.

Laverton Community Education Centre

This is a local small-scale case study research project to investigate the dynamic relationships between education and training providers, NDIS-funded support workers, learners and carers. The case study would be conducted across two to three learning groups in Laverton Community Education Centre and Yarraville Community Centre. The key components include desktop research to identify support models for people with a cognitive disability in community-based education and training providers; interviews with experts with experience in this context including people with a disability, carers, support workers, teachers; and observation of classroom dynamics where these participants are all present. A set of guidelines will be produced to assist with consistent engagement of support workers and build and communicate a clearer message to people with a disability and their carers about how government funded education and training can be effectively coordinated with NDIS funded supports, such as Support Workers.

AMPUTEES AND SPORT. A QUALITATIVE STUDY MEASURING THE IMPACT OF PARTICIPATION IN SPORT FOR AMPUTEES REQUIRING SPORTS PROSTHESIS OR ADAPTIVE SPORTS EQUIPMENT

START Foundation

This project aims to understand the following three concerns: the impact of participation in sport and recreation on the lives of amputees, from a range of perspectives including physical, psychological, social and emotional; the role of sports prosthesis or adaptive sporting equipment in increasing the ability to participate in sport and recreation; and the quality of the experience of participating in sport and recreation with a sports specific prosthesis or adaptive sporting equipment. The data gathered from this project will inform policy and the scope to which the NDIS supports the funding of sports prosthesis for amputees.

YELLOWBRIDGE COLLECTABLES IMPACT STUDY

YellowBridge Queensland

This evaluation project measures the community and social impact of the support delivered by the Collectables Boutique Opportunity Shop which is a community service provided by YellowBridge Queensland, a not-for-profit and registered charity. The analysis will be used to improve outcomes for both the clients who are supported, and the community organisations supported by the program. The evaluation can also potentially provide guidance for replicating the model used at the Collectables Boutique Opportunity Shop elsewhere.

EVALUATION OF A PILOT PROJECT ASSESSING WHETHER HOLOLENS MIXED REALITY HEADSETS, IMPROVE THE WORKPLACE SKILLS AND INDEPENDENCE OF PEOPLE WITH COGNITIVE DISABILITIES

Ability Works Australia Ltd

Ability Works is seeking to empower employees with cognitive disabilities in the workplace by improving their skills, independence and sense of achievement. To realise this, a Microsoft HoloLens headset using Mixed Reality as a medium is being programmed to pilot test whether this is achievable in a real-world manufacturing workplace, on one wire bending machine. The evaluation of the pilot will monitor and assess the product design, implementation and initial user experience, understand the early results and areas for change or improvement, and identify ingredients and costs of the model for further scaling. The project will only be scaled if based on the evidence collected it is a viable solution, to many of the issues faced in the workplace by people with cognitive disabilities.

ACTIVE FOR EVERYONE

Disability Sport & Recreation Limited (DSR)

This project aims to review the Inclusive Leisure Initiative (ILI), a tool which audits disability accessibility at leisure centres, developed in 2010, within the context of NDIS. This project aims to build capacity in the leisure industry, increase understanding of enablers and barriers, develop appropriate resources, establish benchmarks and inclusive standards, provide training and advocate for people with a disability. The partnership between DSR and the University of Melbourne led to the scoping and design of 'Active for Everyone', which aims to develop and evaluate a best practice step-by-step resource (pathway) for organisations so they can support participation and inclusion of people with disability in sport, leisure and outdoor recreation.

EXTERNALLY FUNDED RESEARCH PROJECTS

FLAGSHIP PROJECTS AND COMMISSIONED RESEARCH

We are strongly committed to working collaboratively both across our own institution and through research partnerships with government and other universities and organisations.

We regularly work in partnership with external organisations to provide evidence to inform policy or practice.

NDIS HOUSING PATHWAYS PROJECT

BROTHERHOOD OF ST LAURENCE

Academics at the University of Melbourne in collaboration with the Brotherhood of St Laurence and people with disability are co-designing a guide to housing for NDIS Participants who are not eligible for SDA. This guide aims to help people with disability understand what their housing options are, which might be most suited to their situation and how to access funding, in order to help find the right home. The guide will be distributed alongside a training program to support Local Area Coordinators and Support Coordinators in helping their clients find suitable housing.

NDIS HOUSING PROJECT

BAPTCARE

This project produced and presented an overview of the strategic opportunities that may be available to Baptcare (and Baptcare Affordable Housing) in responding to the housing needs of NDIS Participants and suggests a series of criteria to frame further investigations. Due to the scale and complexity of the potential opportunities, this project is proposed as the first part of a multi-stage process.

INFORMING THE TAC'S CHILD AND YOUTH FRAMEWORK

TRANSPORT ACCIDENT COMMISSION

The Transport Accident Commission (TAC) developed an enterprise-wide Child and Youth Framework for supporting young clients and their families using a family-centred approach informed by contemporary disability practice. The University of Melbourne (Melbourne Disability Institute in collaboration with the Murdoch Children's Research Institute) undertook a project that delivered a comprehensive evidence base of current effective approaches to health and disability assessment, planning and management for young people (aged 0-18 years) who have sustained major traumatic injuries including acquired brain injury and spinal cord injury.

BUILDING THE EVIDENCE-BASE FOR LOCAL AREA COORDINATION

BAPTCARE

Local Area Coordinators play a key role in the delivery and navigation of the NDIS. Many aspects of local area coordination have limited or no evidence base, making it difficult for organisations to identify and model best practice.

This project, commissioned by Baptcare and closely aligned with the Brotherhood of St Laurence, builds on existing work to synthesise available academic and non-academic literature on key selected areas to help build an evidence-base to support best practice local area coordination. This project is intended to make a contribution to the literature and provide guidance to inform Baptcare's practice.

NDIS PLAN UTILISATION

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AND DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

The under-utilisation of NDIS plans was noted by the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into NDIS Costs in 2019 as a major issue of concern. Some analyses of utilisation rates have been reported by the Productivity Commission and in the COAG Disability Reform Council Quarterly reports, however more in-depth analyses are needed to fully understand the drivers of plan utilisation. There is also anecdotal evidence which suggests that participants and families who are strong and effective advocates are benefitting most from the NDIS and so there

NDIS PLAN UTILISATION

(CONTINUED)

is a need to ensure that the NDIS is fair.

While the Productivity Commission acknowledged that utilisation rates will never reach 100%, they contended that with the maturing of the market, utilisation rates should increase to between 75-85% by the end of the transition period. In accident compensation schemes, utilisation rates are typically around 95%.

Now, there is a need for a much more nuanced analyses of the groups and support types that are most affected, the reasons for under-utilisation and recommendations for policy interventions to address the problem. MDI is therefore very pleased to be working closely with both the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services and the Commonwealth Department of Social Services to provide a detailed description of the predictors of plan utilisation through sophisticated quantitative analysis of longitudinal NDIS data across Australia, investigate the reasons for the patterns of low utilisation through qualitative participant interviews in Victoria, investigate utilisation rates from comparable programs with individualised funding models in Australia and internationally, and develop recommendations for improving utilisation in Victoria and how policy interventions could be evaluated.

EVERY OPPORTUNITY: INCREASING EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (DHHS)

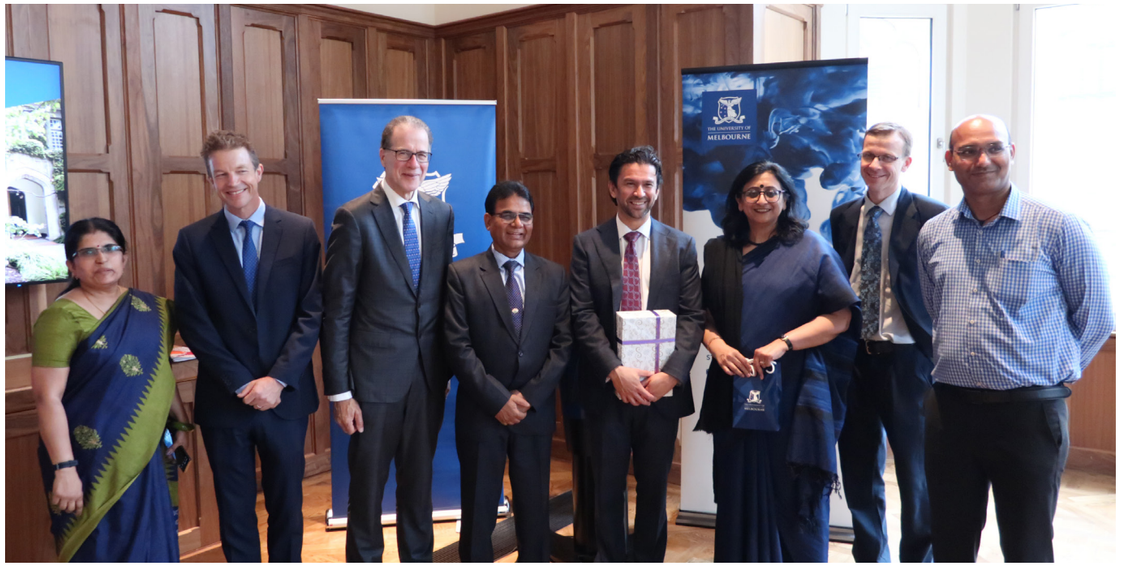
This report, commissioned by the Office for Disability in the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), explores opportunities to improve the prospects of Victorians with disability finding and keeping a job.

Every Opportunity 2018-2020 was the first iteration of a whole-of-government plan to boost the economic participation of people with disability in Victoria. Nested within the Victorian Government's state disability plan, it set out twenty-one actions to encourage and support people with disability to contribute to and participate more fully in economic life through improved education and learning pathways, employment opportunities and business ownership. The report produced by MDI builds on that foundation and draws in new evidence to inform the plan's next iteration.

NDIS MARKET ANALYSIS

THE GORDON INSTITUTE / TAFE NETWORK

MDI supported ACIL Allen in this project which aimed to understand NDIS associated workforce trends, facilitate workshops and deliver a report outlining recommendations to the TAFE Network for responding to the core and emerging markets with a key aim of supporting TAFEs in building a high-performing NDIS workforce and being a provider of choice in the training market.



INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

COLLABORATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE & EMPOWERMENT FACILITATES

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

Last year MDI was involved in two senior visits from the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPWD) within the Indian Government which resulted in the signing of a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding to advance a number of collaborations, including a co-designed community-based disability course.

Developed in partnership with DEPWD and the University's Nossal Institute for Global Health and Melbourne Disability Institute, the unique course is designed to train and equip locals to help them respond to the rehabilitation and inclusion needs of community members living with disability. It is currently being rolled out in India.

Other key initiatives with the DEPWD include the development and delivery of a joint leadership training course for the heads of national disability in Australia and India, where leaders will share their expertise and discuss challenges and opportunities.

CAMBODIA NATIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION COUNCIL

CAMBODIA

In 2019 MDI was approached by the Cambodian National Social Protection Council for guidance and advice on social protection for people with disabilities in Cambodia. Following several initial conversations, MDI has been invited to participate in a workshop in Cambodia to drive further exploration into the Social Protection Policy Framework, as well as share learnings from the Australian experience and the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

NATIONAL DISABILITY RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP

We are pleased to be coordinating and leading the establishment of a new National Disability Research Partnership (NDRP), which will facilitate a collaborative, translational research program through deep engagement between academics, governments, service providers and advocacy groups to guide Australia's actions in ensuring all people with disability have the opportunity to become full citizens and live in an inclusive and accessible society. The NDRP is being led by the Academic Director of MDI, Professor Anne Kavanagh.

The NDRP is inclusive and will provide an opportunity for top researchers from around Australia to combine forces with governments, the disability sector and advocacy groups to conduct high quality research that provides evidence that can be applied to solve pressing and emerging disability policy and practice challenges.

We have received $2.5 million from the Commonwealth Department of Social Services to provide advice on a long-term governance arrangement for NDRP, undertake an audit of Australian disability research and capabilities and undertake two large collaborative research projects to validate the benefits of NDRP.

OBJECTIVES

- Collaboration underpinned by deep and respectful engagement between academics, advocacy groups, government and service providers.
- A commitment to co-production of research and governance with people with disability.
- Build on existing knowledge to avoid duplication, align projects and work effectively and efficiently in disability research.
- Outcomes and deliverables will be focused on creating public value and freely accessible.

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW?

- An initial working group has been established to drive the development of a long-term governance structure, a research agenda and map research capability in Australia. The current working group members are listed below and we are currently seeking an advocacy representative.
- A communication strategy and public website will be built to engage key stakeholders including people with disability, universities, peak consumer and advocacy bodies, service providers and State and Territory Governments.

NDRP WORKING PARTY

Professor Anne Kavanagh
Chair, Disability and Health
Head, Disability and Health Unit, Centre for Health Equity
Melbourne School of Population Health
Academic Director, Melbourne Disability Institute

Professor Bruce Bonyhady, AM
Executive Chair and Director
Melbourne Disability Institute

Professor Elizabeth Kendall
Program Director
Menzies Health Institute - Disability and Rehabilitation
Griffith University

Mr Gordon Duff
General Manager
National Disability Services

Professor Gwynnyth Llewellyn
Professor of Family and Disability Studies
Co-Director Centre for Research Excellence in Disability and Health
Head, WHO Collaborating Centre for Strengthening Rehabilitation in Health Systems

Professor Helen Dickinson
Professor of Public Service Research
Director, Public Service Research Group
University of New South Wales, Canberra

Professor Jackie Leach Scully
Director, Disability Innovation Institute
University of New South Wales

Ms Keran Howe
Former Executive Director
Women with Disabilities Victoria

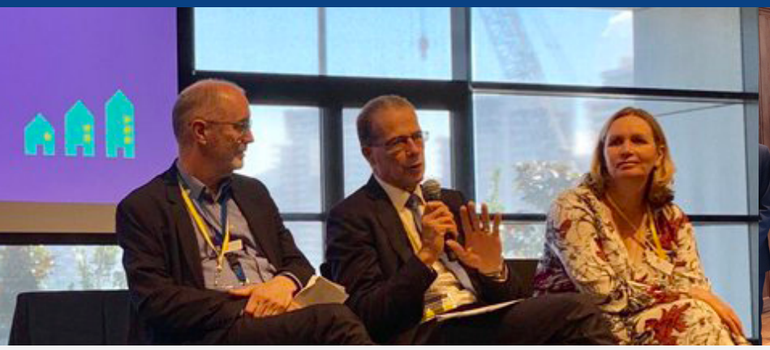
Emeritus Professor Lesley Chenoweth
Former Pro Vice Chancellor Griffith University

Ms Tessa de Vries
Institute Manager
Melbourne Disability Institute

TBC: advocacy representative(s)

ENGAGEMENT

MDI REGARDS ENGAGEMENT AS CENTRAL TO OUR VALUE IN SHARING KNOWLEDGE. FURTHER, EXTENDING OUR ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITIES BEYOND THE UNIVERSITY IS FUNDAMENTAL TO INCREASING OUR IMPACT AND INFLUENCE. WE HOST, CO-HOST AND SUPPORT A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF EVENTS, AS WE SEE THESE AS A PRIORITY VEHICLE FOR RESEARCH TRANSLATION, ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT.



GET BUILDING SDA: NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2019

DISABILITY ROUNDTABLE SERIES: GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

DISABILITY RESEARCH COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

BROTHERHOOD TALKS: NDIS: WHAT'S WORKING AND WHAT IS NOT?

7TH ANNUAL NATIONAL BRAIN INJURY CONFERENCE

Brain Injury Australia's 7th National Brain Injury Conference was held, in partnership with the Melbourne Disability Institute, at The University of Melbourne, on Monday 28th and Tuesday 29th October, 2019. The Conference has become one of the premier learning and development events on the disability calendar – driving improvements in services and supports for the over 700,000 Australians living with a brain injury.

DISABILITY ROUNDTABLE SERIES: GOVERMENT OF INDIA

Throughout 2019 the Melbourne Disability Institute in partnership with the Australia India Institute and the Nossal Institute for Global Health, led several engagements with the Department of Empowerment for Persons with Disabilities (DEPWD), including two roundtables and an evening reception with senior officials from the DEPWD; as well as an internal University-driven disability engagement strategy for India roundtable to review and discuss disability project work in India and consider an overarching framework for our work going forward.

BROTHERHOOD TALKS: NDIS: WHAT'S WORKING AND WHAT IS NOT?

The Melbourne Disability Institute and the Brotherhood of St Laurence have continued to strengthen their partnership over 2019, collaborating on several projects and events, including the Brotherhood Talks series of lunchtime seminars.

During this session, Melbourne Disability Institute's Executive Chair and Director, Bruce Bonyhady joined Karen Dimmock, CEO of the Association for Children with Disability, Samantha Connor, Disability and Human Rights Activist and John McKenna, Disability Advocate, NDIS Recruiter, Podcaster & Commentator to discuss the progress and future for the NDIS.

GET BUILDING SDA: NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2019

The Get Building SDA conference, auspiced by the Summer Foundation and Youngcare showcased what the Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) market has achieved to date and provided a forum for SDA developers, tenants, investors, academics and policy makers to discuss what it takes to achieve sustainable housing outcomes for all Australians with disabilities. MDI's Senior Housing Consultant, Joseph Connellan joined our Executive Chair and Director, Bruce Bonyhady to outline research and analysis by MDI on meeting the housing needs of NDIS participants who will be not be eligible for SDA. It is estimated that only 6 per cent of NDIS participants will receive SDA and so housing the "other 94 per cent" is essential for the equity and sustainability of the NDIS.

DISABILITY RESEARCH COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE GUEST SPEAKER: THE HONORABLE JENNY MACKLIN

The Honorable Jenny Macklin joined our Disability Research Community of Practice to kick-off a 3 part series focusing on the interaction between research and policy. She spoke about research as one of key pillars in the foundation of public policy, and how research impacts can be far-reaching; informing decisions being made right now.

The Disability Research Community of Practice gathers regularly over lunch and the occasional breakfast or evening session to find out what colleagues are working on, discuss current disability policy, hear from experts in the field and connect with like-minded researchers from across the university.

PODCAST

At the start of 2019, we set out to create a podcast which would explore some of the most complex issues facing people with disability today.

Our mission was to give voice to people with disability and ask about their experiences with employment, housing, the law, supporting families and early intervention as well as highlight ongoing research from the University.

Through this process, we spoke with a range of experts including people with disability, researchers and people working in the sector to talk about what we can do to improve the lives of people with disability.

In Australia, one in five people live with disability. This powerful statistic is the foundation of our podcast and the driving force behind the need for continued focus on the complex problems facing people with disability, their families and carers.

The podcast was launched on 3 December (International Day of People with Disability). For the launch we released the first three episodes, with the final four episodes released over the next two weeks leading into the holidays.

Since launching the podcast there have been 1,935 unique listens and they are growing everyday. The first employment episode, "When the rubber hits the road: Employment and Disability in Australia" continues to be the most popular.

All seven episodes are available for download through iTunes, Spotify, Stitcher, Pocketcasts or RSS.

EPISODE 1: EMPLOYMENT AND DISABILITY
When the rubber hits the road, part 1

EPISODE 2: EMPLOYMENT AND DISABILITY
When the rubber hits the road, part 2

EPISODE 3: HOUSING AND DISABILITY
Stuck in the middle

EPISODE 4: DISABILITY AND THE LAW
No one size fits all, part 1

EPISODE 5: DISABILITY AND THE LAW
No one size fits all, part 2

EPISODE 6: EARLY INTERVENTION
A whole new language

EPISODE 7: ONE IN FIVE
A podcast from the Melbourne Disability Institute

ONEINFIVE

people in Australia report living with a disability

1,935

total podcasts listens (March 2020)

435

individual downloads of the employment episode (part 1)

IMAGE COMPETITION

At the start of the year, we launched a Diversity in Disability Image Competition to support photographers and images that depict the full spectrum of disability. After careful consideration, one grand prize winner and 13 finalists were selected from over 100 submissions by photographers across Australia. With so many well-crafted, impactful and diverse images to choose from; our job was not easy. We are pleased to showcase these images throughout this report.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

MDI STRIVES TO FACILITATE HIGH LEVEL CHANGE-MAKING DISCUSSIONS, AND CONNECTIONS WITH A DIVERSE RANGE OF EXPERTS AROUND DISABILITY RESEARCH AND POLICY

CO-RESEARCHER TRAINING PROGRAM

Research done in partnership with people who have lived experience of disability is core to MDI's program of work. To help facilitate co-production and co-research, we are designing a training course that will equip people with disability with the skills and knowledge needed to be effective co-researchers. We have drawn together researchers from across the University to scope and design this short-course and hope to pilot it in 2020.

DISABILITY RESEARCH COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

As part of the Melbourne Disability Institute's ongoing effort to support University of Melbourne researchers working in the field of disability, in 2019 we introduced a community of practice to:

- Provide a forum to enable showcase research, share information (e.g., research findings, experiences, lessons learned, best practices) and problem-solve relevant to disability research
- Spark dialogue about disability, research and translation of research into practice
- Encourage collaboration within and outside of the University of Melbourne
- Develop, facilitate and mobilise resources for disability research
- Cultivate champions and facilitate connections between experts who might not otherwise interact

In the start of the year we sent out a survey to UoM researchers working in the field of disability to gather feedback on how MDI could best support this community.

Next, we convened a group of researchers, representing 8 of 9 faculties to serve on the planning committee, where they help inform activities and spread awareness about the community.

Mid year we held a launch event to welcome UoM researchers into the practice, gather more feedback on how to best shape the community and introduce MDI.

In October, we held the first meet-up which featured the Hon. Jenny Macklin as the guest speaker. Jenny spoke about her experience and the importance of evidence-based policy. This event marked the first of a larger series on policy translation to be launched in 2020.

At the end of the year we held our second meet-up, which provided a forum for 4 university researchers to briefly present on their projects, answer questions from peers and colleagues and find out more about projects taking place across campus.

Building on the success of this program, we will continue to drive the Community of Practice into 2020, creating a platform for University of Melbourne researchers to become informally bound together by shared expertise and passion to improve the wellbeing of people living with disability through research, by gathering insights, building understanding and sharing knowledge.

DEMOCRATISING DISABILITY DATA

In 2018, MDI convened a coalition of Australian researchers and stakeholders in the disability sector committed to capitalising on data related to disability, so we can learn from practice and continually refine services and policy to achieve better outcomes. The coalition included academics and universities; disability advocacy organisations; disability services and non-government organisations.

In September 2019, the Australian Data and Digital Council announced the establishment of a National Disability Data Asset, which will help bring together data from multiple sources and inform service choices by people with disabilities and their carers.

The Commonwealth will provide up to $15m to fund the pilot of the National Disability Data Asset, which will commence with data from the Commonwealth, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia.

This decision paves the way for a national view of the disability sector with significant potential, for example to inform the National Disability Strategy. We are pleased to see this significant step towards improved access to disability data and statistics, and are grateful to the coalition of researchers, advocates, service providers and other stakeholders who have been working with us to help shape this progress.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

INTERNAL INCOME

University of Melbourne Chancellery		
• Melbourne Disability Institute core funding		1,127,000.00
• Vice-Chancellor's Strategic Initiatives and Allocations Fund contribution		100,000.00
• Chancellery Research & Enterprise strategic allocation		200,000.00
• Space contribution		30,000.00
	Total	**$1,457,000.00**

EXPENDITURE

Core staff salary		590,253.83
Research project salary		80,368.93
Seed funding		595,201.55
Community-based research scheme		29,144.44
Research translation		44,000.00
Events & communication		26,673.01
Operating & administrative		28,710.98
Partnership development		25,919.90
Space charge		30,000.00
	Total	**$1,450,272.64**
	Surplus	**$6,727.36**

EXTERNAL INCOME

Industry		511,880.00
Government		470,000.00
	Total	**$981,880.00**

MELBOURNE DISABILITY INSTITUTE
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