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Translating evidence into practice: Implementing culturally safe continuity of midwifery care for First Nations women in three maternity services in Victoria, Australia

Helen McLachlan, Fiona McLardie-Hore



Storm Henry, Helen McLachlan, Fiona McLardie-Hore, Della Forster, Cinnamon-Bliss Henry and Gina Bundle

Strategies to improve outcomes for Australian First Nations mothers and babies are urgently needed. Caseload midwifery, where women are assigned a primary midwife to care for them throughout pregnancy, labour, birth and the early postnatal period, is associated with substantially better perinatal health outcomes, compared to women who receive standard care. Women who receive caseload midwifery are more likely to report being satisfied with their care, feel safe, informed, supported emotionally, and that their concerns are taken seriously. Despite these benefits, few First Nations women receive caseload care.

In partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) and three Victorian metropolitan hospitals (The Royal Women's Hospital; Western Health, Sunshine; Mercy Hospital for Women, Heidelberg) and one regional hospital (Goulburn Valley Health) we conducted a research translation study recently published in *The Lancet* journal, *EClinicalMedicine*. The primary aim of the study (called 'Baggarrook Yurrongi' which in Woiwurrung language means Woman's Journey), was to assess the capacity of the maternity services to implement, embed and sustain a culturally responsive caseload midwifery model for women having a First Nations baby. The broader aim was to help 'close the gap' in maternal and infant health outcomes for First Nations people.

NEWS IN BRIEF**Staff news****We welcomed**

Adele Marulli who is the new administration officer at JLC. Adele has previously held roles at La Trobe University in the Marketing and Recruitment division, Market Strategy and Partnering Unit (MSPU), in the Faculty of Education and as a Research Marketing Officer supporting the Business Partner for Research, Alumni and Advancement Portfolio. Adele has also had contracting roles at Monash University and Box Hill TAFE. Adele's experience and capabilities will be well suited to the many aspects of her new role at JLC.

We said farewell to

Dr Kayli Wild who has been at JLC since 2012. Kayli has a new role as a Principal Research Fellow at the Centre for Child Development and Education at Menzies School of Health Research in Darwin. We thank Kayli for her contributions to JLC and wish her well for her new role.

Dr Sophia Holmund who has been working with JLC since July 2021 to complete her postdoctoral fellowship. Sophia has returned to Sweden and is continuing her collaboration with JLC.

What did we find?

Between March 2017 and December 2020, a total of 1040 women having a First Nations baby were booked for maternity care at one of the three metropolitan sites. The aim was to offer the new culturally sensitive model to all these women. Before introducing the model, only 34 First Nations women had received caseload care at one of the three metropolitan hospitals. Following study implementation, this number increased to 703 women, a 21-fold increase in access to the model for First Nations women. Uptake of the culturally sensitive model for First Nations families was high - 90% of the 844 women who were offered the model accepted care in the culturally specific caseload group. The model was not able to be implemented in the regional setting due to ongoing staffing challenges.

Key reasons for the successful implementation of the program at the three metropolitan sites were: co-designing the study with First Nations people, conducting staff cultural competency training, improving the identification of First Nations women (and babies), and regular engagement between caseload midwives and First Nations hospital and community teams.

The model has enabled First Nations women to have a known midwife in the hospital system who is there for them throughout their maternity care – a model that has built on existing initiatives in a responsive and individualised way.

Conclusion and recommendations

Our study demonstrated how three metropolitan tertiary maternity services in Melbourne, Australia, successfully translated gold standard evidence into practice on a large scale. The findings support government policies that have recommended the development and implementation of culturally safe, evidence-based models of care that have been developed in partnership with First Nations communities. The expansion of this model should be prioritised, with further research focused on understanding key features of sustaining the model and continuing to bridge the partnership between First Nations and mainstream health services. Given our findings, we believe there should be a push to implement, embed and sustain a culturally responsive caseload midwifery model for all First Nations women in Australia.

Primary outcome paper: McLachlan HL, Newton M, McLardie-Hore FE, McCalman P, Jackomos M, Bundle G, Kildea S, Chamberlain C, Browne J, Ryan J, Freemantle J, Shafiei T, Jacobs SE, Oats J, Blow N, Ferguson K, Gold L, Watkins J, Dell M, Read K, Hyde R, Matthews R, Forster DA. Translating evidence into practice: Implementing culturally safe continuity of midwifery care for First Nations women in three maternity services in Victoria, Australia. *EClinicalMedicine*. 2022;47:101415. doi: 10.1016/j.eclinm.2022.101415.



Student news

Congratulations to **Heather Grimes** who recently graduated from her PhD! Her thesis was titled: *The RUBY breastfeeding randomised trial: A mixed methods study of the implementation of an effective breastfeeding peer support intervention*. See page 8. Supervised by **Prof Della Forster, Prof Helen McLachlan** and **Dr Touran Shafiei**

New Higher Degree students

Kate McCredie (PhD): *The Long Arm of the Job: exploring the impact of parents' jobs on children's school outcomes*. Supervised by **Assoc Prof Amanda Cooklin, Dr Stacey Hokke** & **Dr Liana Leach** (ANU)

Elly Greenwood (PhD): *Autism coming to hospital: improving the experiences of autistic patients in an Acute Care setting*. Supervised by **Assoc Prof Amanda Cooklin, Assoc Prof Josephine Barbaro, Dr Charne Miller** (Uni Melb)

Grants

Congratulations on the following grant awarded to JLC staff:

Donate Life Community Awareness Grants Programme (\$22,319)
Exploring young peoples' knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of organ donation
Dr Brooke Huuskes & Dr Stacey Hokke



Saying farewell to JLC after 10 years

Kayli Wild

I have been with the Judith Lumley Centre (JLC) since 2012, and a Senior Research Fellow with the Institute for Human Security and Social Change at La Trobe University since 2017.

In 2022, I will be leaving La Trobe to take up a position as Principal Research Fellow, Centre for Child Development and Education at Menzies School of Health Research in Darwin.

In 2017, I was awarded an ARC post-doctoral fellowship to examine the health system response to violence against women and children in Timor-Leste. Together with many collaborators in Timor-Leste and mentored by Angela Taft and Linda Kelly (from La Trobe's Institute for Human Security and Social Change), my team and I collaborated with health providers and women-survivors of violence to develop and evaluate educational resources, a university pre-service curriculum and a National in-service curriculum. Through mentoring University lecturers and Ministry of Health trainers, and evaluating the implementation of models of training, this work has provided the foundation to expand education and follow-up support for health services to address violence against women and children across Timor-Leste.

At Menzies, I will work on the evaluation of the Northern Territory's Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home-visiting (MECSH) Program in four remote regions. A large part of the role is the co-design of program resources with women and families, nurses and Aboriginal health services in the region. I look forward to an ongoing collaboration with La Trobe in my new position.



Kayli Wild, Lidia Gomes, Amina de Araujo, Angelina Fernandes



Dirce Soares, Luisa Marcal, Angela Taft, Amina de Araujo, Kayli Wild, Lidia Gomes, Angelina Fernandes

Conference presentations

Australian Fatherhood Research
Symposium, Melbourne, 5-6 May 2022

Dr Stacey Hokke: Exploring workplace barriers and supports of fathers' work-family balance: Interviews with Australian dads

Perinatal Society of Australia and New Zealand (PSANZ), Adelaide, 15-18 May 2022

Prof Della Forster: COVID-19 and Beyond – Changes to provision of maternity care and future plans among Victorian Maternity Services [oral]

Rebecca Hyde: Women's views and experiences of antenatal care during the COVID-19 pandemic: a cross-sectional survey of women birthing in Melbourne, Victoria in 2020 [oral]

Robyn Matthews: Midwifery workforce challenges – Staffing and skill mix in Victorian hospitals in 2021 [oral]

Tanisha Springall: Rates of breastfeeding for First Nations women in Victoria, Australia: A cross-sectional study [oral]

Dr Margaret Flood: Postpartum haemorrhage (PPH) rates are rising in Australia regardless of definition used [poster]

Prof Della Forster chaired the Concurrent symposium: Strategies for improving breastfeeding outcomes

Fathers at work: Identifying workplace barriers and supports for fathers to combine work and care

Stacey Hokke, Jasmine Love and Mandi Cooklin

Despite fathers' increased involvement in parenting and the introduction of 'family-friendly' policies in Australia, fathers' employment patterns have been largely resistant to change. Few fathers access family-friendly work arrangements, even when policies are gender neutral (e.g., flexible work) or targeted (e.g., Dad and Partner Pay). This qualitative study aimed to explore the workplace cultures, norms, supports and policies that help or hinder fathers' work-family balance, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. We also aimed to understand fathers' own narratives of work-family (im)balance and how this relates to their wellbeing.

We conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 fathers of children aged 2-16 years, from across Australia and with diverse occupations and family types. Interviews explored fathers' perceptions and experiences of work-family balance and workplace supports and were conducted between 2019-2021, including follow-up interviews with some fathers to capture any pandemic-related changes in work-family experiences.

We found that fathers valued having choice and control over their work arrangements and were willing to work together with their employer - or change jobs - to achieve good work-family balance. Fathers emphasised the importance of longer paternity leave, and the benefits of parental leave for families and their own wellbeing. Themes indicate that: work, care and work arrangements are a family decision; work experiences are guided by child ages and stages; finding balance is a journey that requires ongoing trade-offs in time, money, and wellbeing; taking time to connect with children is important, yet fitting work hours around family needs is a constant challenge; fathers value supportive colleagues and managers, who themselves prioritise family, are parents, and are understanding of fathers' needs; policies alone are ineffective if unsupported by workplace culture; and we need to redefine the future of flexible work for fathers.

This study provides timely evidence about the contemporary national dilemma of enabling fathers to combine work and family. Our research has identified how workplaces can provide fathers and mothers with more equal opportunities to engage in work and care, and will inform the future of work following COVID-19. Research dissemination is underway, with findings presented recently at the Australian Fatherhood Research Symposium and the Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference. Our next steps are to finalise the manuscript for publication, and disseminate our findings and recommendations to workplaces to support fuller and fairer implementation of 'family-friendly' policies.

The Fathers at Work team: Stacey Hokke, Sharinne Crawford, Shannon Bennetts, Jasmine Love, Jan Nicholson, Amanda Cooklin (all from JLC) and Liana Leach (The Australian National University).

Lactation Consultants of Australia and New Zealand (LCANZ) conference, Kingscliff, NSW, 20-21 May 2022

Prof Lisa Amir: When breastfeeding is a pain: how to assess and manage pain in lactation; and Identifying design solutions to increase women's comfort with breastfeeding in public [oral]

Anita Moorhead: 'Is there any point in me doing this?' The views and experiences of women in the Diabetes and Antenatal Milk Expressing (DAME) trial [oral]

Renee Kam: Breast hypoplasia and insufficient milk production: An exploration [oral]

Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) Conference, Melbourne, 15-17 June 2022

Dr Stacey Hokke: What helps dads balance work and family? Interviews with Australian fathers [oral]

Dr Sharinne Crawford & Dr Stacey Hokke: "Everything's magnified, the good and the bad": Parenting in the social media age [oral]

Kerryn O'Rouke: Realist evaluation of a volunteer doula program for women experiencing socio-economic adversity in Melbourne [oral]

Catina Adams: Threads of practice: The roles of Enhanced Maternal and Child Health home-visiting nurses working with women experiencing domestic violence [oral]

Catina Adams: Managing home visiting nurses undertaking family violence work in Australia: a qualitative study [poster]

Catina Adams: The characteristics of Maternal and Child Health home visiting nurses undertaking family violence work: an interpretive descriptive study [poster]

Dr Shannon Bennetts: Companionship through uncertain times: The role of pets for families during COVID-19 [poster]

Alumni profile – Associate Professor Michelle Newton

Fiona Burgemeister



Michelle Newton completed her PhD at the Judith Lumley Centre in 2013 and is currently a teaching and research academic staff member in the School of Nursing and Midwifery at La Trobe University. Michelle shares how she came to undertake a PhD at JLC, and the benefits of a dual teaching and research role.

After Michelle completed her Master's degree, further study was the last thing on her mind. Michelle started a lecturing job with La Trobe University's School of Nursing and Midwifery and soon became interested in continuity (one-to-one) midwifery care because of its potential benefits for mothers and their babies. She was asked to join a research project (the COSMOS trial) led by Della Forster and Helen McLachlan, to look at the views and experiences of the midwives who were delivering midwifery-led continuity at two hospitals in Victoria. From there, her PhD project was born.

"For me, it was the offer, combined with the people who were leading the project to support me in it, so I wasn't coming up with something all on my own. It was being part of something that was going to lead to practice change."

Since completing her PhD, Michelle has continued to pursue her research interests in continuity care models and applies her expertise more broadly through her participation in a range of project teams and by mentoring new students coming through.

"I am very lucky having a continuing teaching and research position here. After finishing your PhD, you do have to carve out what you're going to do in the research space. I've been very fortunate to be part of the team that have gone on to do more work in continuity model research."

Nursing Network on Violence Against Women International (NNVAWI) conference, 21-23 June 2022

A/Prof Leesa Hooker: Child-Parent Psychotherapy for mothers and children who have experienced intimate partner violence trauma: a qualitative study of women's experiences [oral]

A/Prof Leesa Hooker: The prevalence of unplanned pregnancy and associated factors among a population-based cohort of young Australian women [oral]

Dr Jessica Ison: Is the primary prevention of sexual violence and harassment a priority at Australian universities? A qualitative study [virtual]

Catina Adams: Threads of practice: The roles of Enhanced Maternal and Child Health home visiting nurses working with women experiencing family violence [virtual]

Dr Kayli Wild: Empathy as a cornerstone of responding to violence against women: Measuring the impact of the WHO curriculum on health provider empathy in Timor-Leste [virtual]

Bijaya Pokharel: Qualitative process evaluation of a general practice-based culturally competent family violence intervention in Australia [virtual]

Bijaya Pokharel: Family violence primary care response to women from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds: a systematic review [virtual]

Prof Angela Taft: Building cultural competency into primary care management of domestic violence among migrant/refugee communities: Harmony, a cluster randomised trial [virtual]

One project grew directly out of my PhD and that's the PhD of another student and she's nearly finished now ... there were questions left unanswered that we thought lent itself well to further exploration.

We've had further NHMRC funding for work on continuity models for Aboriginal women, and a MRFF grant that will allow us to explore the benefits of this model for women with social vulnerabilities. It's the project that just keeps on giving. It's a lovely thing to continue to see it grow and evolve, and it's always been my role to look at the workforce side of things.

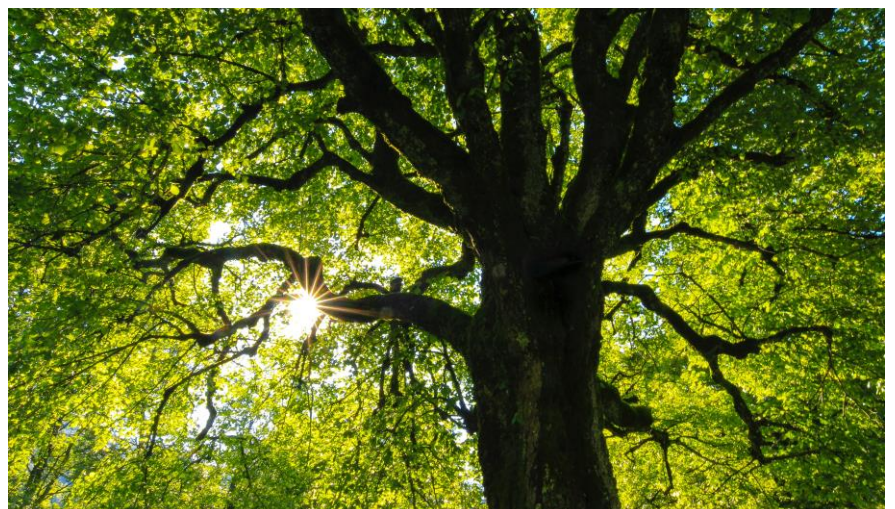
This helps my work but also the work of the Centre and the University. It helps my students too. We are looking to establish an initiative for students to have the opportunity to work in a continuity model."

Her research work has led to involvement with various professional bodies that set national practice and education standards: "People start to take you a little bit more seriously when you've got a reputation as having expertise in that area. And these opportunities lead to more research opportunities."

The dual teaching and research role is a juggle sometimes but being part of JLC helps balance those roles.

"There's an understanding at JLC that many of us have dual roles. People can see that you flex up and down accordingly. Being embedded in JLC in the School has been good in that way."

Michelle is really proud of the work of the Judith Lumley Centre: "Some of these projects the Centre is doing are really quite ground-breaking. We are building a national and an international profile". She values the culture in JLC that enables people to learn and thrive: "You are surrounded by learning. You pick up so many things along away and eventually things start to make sense to you. You don't graduate from a PhD knowing everything you need to know about research. We all benefit from being in an environment with active researchers. The nature of the sharing and real collaboration that is part of the Centre makes that so much easier. And just really nice, really good people."



12th International Conference on Social Media + Society, online, 18-20 July 2022

Dr Sharinne Crawford & Dr Stacey Hokke: "Everything's magnified, the good and the bad": Parenting in the social media age [virtual]

Other presentations

Prof Lisa Amir presented live at an online conference, I Congreso LactApp Medical, in Spain on the topic: Shining a light on mastitis research with simultaneous translation.



LactApp MEDICAL

I Congreso LactApp Medical
La evidencia científica como reto en la lactancia materna

LISA H. AMIR

CONFERENCIA

27 de mayo de 2022 - 11:00/12:00 CET

Shining a light on mastitis research
Arrojando luz a la investigación de la mastitis

LactApp | Blanquerna | congreso2022@lactapp.es | congreso.lactapp.es

2021 Australian Awards for University Teaching

Laura Whitburn

In February 2022, my team and I received a Citation for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning at the Australian Awards for University Teaching. This award recognised a significant body of work to transform the way we teach anatomy at La Trobe University. The focus was on how our team developed sustainable, peer-reviewed blended learning content to engage anatomy students, and the positive effect this transformation had on students' experiences and learning outcomes. The team included seven staff from the anatomy discipline across the Bundoora and Bendigo campuses, and I was the team lead. This award is a meaningful recognition of the passion and dedication of our team to positively impact our students' learning.



Dr Laura Whitburn and Heath McGowan

Make the Difference Campaign

On 21st June, our Centre Director Jan Nicholson attended La Trobe University's *Make the Difference* fundraising campaign at the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV). The campaign aims to raise \$50 million to fund life-changing scholarships, bold research and the very best facilities. The event provided an opportunity to recognise the remarkable generosity, foresight, and kindness of supporters, whilst launching the next phase of the Make the Difference campaign.

Professor Jan Nicholson, Director, Judith Lumley Centre, Gerard Blood, Executive Director, Business Development, University City of the Future Initiative and Dr Megan Fisher, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Industry Engagement



MAKE THE DIFFERENCE
creating the future together

In the media

Res McCalman, Cath Chamberlain, and Machellee Kosiak: [*First Nations mothers are more likely to die during childbirth. More First Nations midwives could close this gap.*](#) *The Conversation*, 16 June 2022

Prof Helen McLachlan was recently in the media following publication of the Baggarrook Yurrongi caseload midwifery paper [*The Lancet, eClinical Medicine \(p. 1\)*](#). In addition to a news item on ABC TV News on 5 May 2022, [*How an Indigenous midwife program is hoping to close the gap*](#) - ABC News, she spoke to ABC Newsradio, and news items appeared in *Medical Xpress* and *ANMJ News*.

My PhD journey

Heather Grimes

My PhD started in January 2013 and ended with my graduation in March 2022. From my current vantage point, I can say it is in my 'top 10' of life experiences. It is so much more than receiving a testamur that is too heavy to hang on the fridge with a magnet!

Back in 2013, the RUBY (Ringing Up about Breastfeeding early) research team, led by Professor Della Forster, welcomed me on board. Fiona McLardie-Hore, the RUBY project manager, helped me get organised and her enthusiasm and collegiality made the whole thing enjoyable, especially during the 24 RUBY peer training sessions.

I met with my supervisors Professor Della Forster, Professor Helen McLachlan and Dr Touran Shafiei and we started talking about my research questions – these questions were a topic of conversation at different points, right up until submission in November 2021. My PhD explored the implementation of a breastfeeding peer support intervention in the RUBY study. We found that peer support increased the duration of breastfeeding amongst new mothers at six months postpartum. The RUBY volunteers were inspiring, and it was so good to be around young mothers!

The high points of my candidature included being a part of the JLC community and learning from internationally recognised researchers. It was so great to hear them talk about their projects and to be exposed to the integrity and respect they demonstrated for the research process. Attending workshops and expanding my skill set was satisfying, especially in the first few years. The travel opportunities and conferences were also a highlight. On a personal level there were family weddings, births, and graduations; my daughters left adolescence and my husband's hair started to go grey.

Have I mentioned the high I felt when getting an article accepted?

During my low points, hurdles seemed insurmountable, and all perspective was lost. It really did feel that bleak and never-ending at times. With the benefit of hindsight, these times sometimes heralded a new learning experience, but sometimes it was just a rubbish period. I took a leave of absence at a couple of points to take the pressure off following family illness and after my mum and both parents-in-law passed away. Life certainly changes during candidature!

Academic work is a privileged undertaking and one that involves untangling many knotty problems. I am grateful to La Trobe University and my supervisors Della, Helen, and Touran for supporting me throughout.



JLC travel award

The winner of the inaugural JLC travel award (\$1000 towards attendance at PSANZ 2023) was **Esther Calje**. Esther is a midwife researcher from New Zealand, working on her PhD titled “*An observational study of the incidence and treatment of postpartum anaemia in Aotearoa, New Zealand*”.

JLC welcomes Dogs on Campus Program



The Dogs on Campus Program is run by La Trobe University and Dogs for Life (part of the Centre for Service and Therapy Dogs Australia) and is based at the Bundoora and Bendigo campuses. This volunteer program involves fostering a puppy for around 12 months before they become assistance dogs for veterans diagnosed with Post

Traumatic Stress Disorder. Puppies follow their foster parent everywhere, including on campus, as they adjust to a wide range of environments, people and situations in their first year of life. Volunteer puppy raisers receive regular support, training and all food and equipment that the puppy needs, and weekly one-hour training sessions on campus. For more information about the program, or to express your interest, email dogsoncampus@latrobe.edu.au.



Volunteer puppy raiser Stacey Hokke with 6-month-old black Labrador Juni

JLC researcher Stacey Hokke joined the program this year and shares her experience:

I became a puppy foster parent in April, welcoming Juniper (Juni) into our home (and the JLC office!). The first couple of weeks were busy as Juni settled in, gained confidence in her new environment and worked on toilet training, and as I adjusted to new routines and finding a work-puppy balance. Since then, our focus has been on exposing her to as many new and different environments as possible; so far this includes public transport (train, tram and bus), busy roads and intersections, large stores such as Bunnings, Dan Murphy’s and Officeworks, shopping centres, cafes, primary schools, lifts, skate parks and sports centres. Bundoora campus is great for puppy exposure too with the busy Agora, different buildings and friendly staff and students who stop for a pat and chat.



We receive regular support from Dogs for Life and our wonderful socialiser, Jasmine, who trains Juni (and her foster parents!). Juni is a delight to look after (sometimes trying and cheeky, of course) but for a puppy she is quite calm. She is happy hanging out in the office, and it has been lovely to see how much joy Juni brings to colleagues from JLC and the School when we are on campus each week. Pats and puppy cuddles are very welcome!

Lunchtime seminars

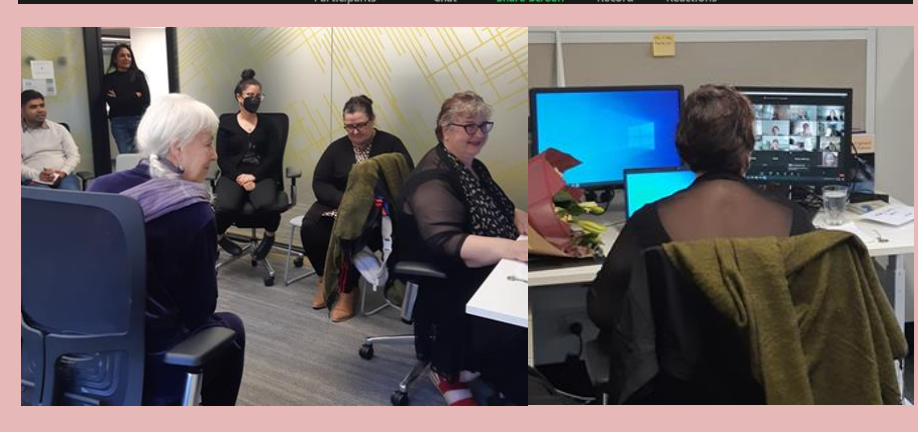
We hold lunchtime seminars on the first Wednesday of every month from February to December, from 12.30 - 1.30 pm.

These seminars showcase the work of our colleagues as well as national and international academics and researchers visiting the Centre and are open to all.

Please refer to our website at www.latrobe.edu.au/jlc/news-events/seminars-and-clubs

Celebrating thesis submissions

Acknowledging all their hard work and celebrating the submission of their theses with supervisors and colleagues! Photos from two thesis submissions in May 2022: Fiona Burgemeister and Catina Adams.



JLC researchers at recent conferences



Judith Lumley Centre

for women, children and family health research

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