



Dear << Test First Name >>,

The first Newsletter of 2020 takes a look at the latest news and events from the Living with Disability Research Centre.

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COVID -19. A Message from the Director

We have all been watching the development of the novel coronavirus pandemic with feelings of uncertainty and concern. Our team at the Living with Disability Research Centre understands that people everywhere are going through particularly challenging times and we encourage everyone to show support for one another at this difficult time.

Like so many organisations across Australia, the Living with Disability Research Centre has implemented measures to protect our staff and assist them to carry

on their work as seamlessly as possible.

The Living with Disability Research Centre is committed to supporting concerted and targeted action that ensures people with intellectual disabilities gain equitable access to screening, effective prevention and the necessary healthcare for COVID-19. To this end, it was encouraging to see that in response to sustained advocacy from various organisations, an advisory group was established by the Morrison Government to guide the development and implementation of a response plan that will focus specifically on the unique health needs of people with disability during the coronavirus pandemic.

If there is anything we can do to support you or your organisation in these challenging times, please don't hesitate to get in touch with our staff at the Centre. Meanwhile, if you have any questions about our ongoing work, please contact me, Professor [Christine Bigby](#), Director Living with Disability Research Centre.

Professor Christine Bigby

Director - Living with Disability Research Centre

Impact of COVID-19

Still on the issue of COVID-19. Professor Christine Bigby is Chief Investigator of the Australian arm of a new international study investigating the impact of COVID-19 on people with intellectual disabilities, their families and service providers. Dr Tal Araten-Bergman from LIDS is also involved in the study and will lead the Israeli arm of the project, while LIDS adjunct Professor Magnus Tideman will lead the Swedish arm. The project, titled the **Impact of COVID-19 on Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Caregivers**, is led by Professor Christine Linehan, University College Dublin, and funded by the Irish Health Research Board.

The project involves researchers in Ireland, the UK, the USA, Netherlands, Zambia, Czech Republic, India and Norway. The group will develop an online survey for caregivers around the world that will ask about symptoms, access to treatment and equipment, and the impact of social distancing measures during

the pandemic. The global findings will be used to draft policy and practice guidelines on how best to support people with intellectual disabilities, their families and support services during pandemics and other natural disasters.



Graduate Certificate in Disability Practice

The Australian workforce is facing significant challenges during this period of uncertainty. As part of the Federal Government's COVID-19 relief package, we will be offering our Graduate Certificate in Disability Practice at [discounted rates](#) in 2020. Our six-month graduate certificate is specifically designed help you find employment in areas of high demand. You'll get significantly discounted rates, plus you can defer payments through HECS-HELP. Our flexible, online courses will equip you to undertake a range of challenging and exiting roles in the rapidly growing disability sector and can lead to a satisfying career in improving the lives of people with disabilities and their communities.

Please contact our course coordinator, Dr Sian Anderson, with any queries you may have about enrolment of any other aspect of our [Disability Practice](#) courses.

Email: Sian.Anderson@latrobe.edu.au

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Other new projects in 2019

We are pleased to announce that the Living with Disability Research Centre has embarked on two other new projects this year. Each project varies in scope and focus, but each is an example of the way in which our Research Centre works across an exceptional array disciplines and themes.

Increasing hospital access and quality care for people with cognitive disability

Funding: Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (NDIS)

Professor Teresa Iacono, Professor Christine Bigby, Professor Jacinta Douglas and Dr Jo Spong

This project translates research evidence about the quality of hospital care for people with cognitive disabilities in Victoria to build mainstream health service capacity. The project brings together regional and metropolitan hospitals and disability services. Key activities are the trial and evaluation of multi-media training for patients, families, disability support workers and hospital staff to improve hospital care and the experiences of adults with cognitive disabilities. This work is particularly timely in light of the particular health vulnerabilities of

people with life-long or long term disabilities in the current COVID-19 environment.

Measuring organisational factors that sustain good quality support

Funding: Lorna Hodgkins Foundation

Professor Christine Bigby, Professor Teresa Iacono, Dr Lincoln Humphreys, Dr Tal Araten-Bergman

This study builds on earlier research conducted by the Research Centre about the organisational factors needed to embed Active Support and Practice Leadership in services. It will develop a new scale to measure these factors and test its psychometric properties. The La Trobe Unisson Scale will provide a means to measure organisational factors that potentially contribute to good quality support. The scale could be used in research to examine the extent to which organisational factors are associated with the quality of Active Support. The findings from this research could also be used by people with disabilities and their families to inform decisions about purchasing services from organisations. The study will involve interviews with senior managers from disability support organisations across Australia.

Royal Commission

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability held public hearings in Melbourne in early December 2019. The Melbourne public hearings were concerned with housing, particularly group homes, for people with disability in Victoria.



Professor Christine Bigby made a submission on the final day of the Melbourne public hearing. Her submission drew on more than ten years of research into

accommodation services for people with intellectual disability. It covered a variety of themes, from the important role that Active Support plays in ensuring people with intellectual disabilities are more engaged and have a better quality of life, to the links between leadership and good culture in group homes.

Local Solutions Forum

In February this year, approximately 60 representatives from Rural and Regional NDIS providers, tertiary training organisations and others came together at La Trobe University in Bendigo for a forum organised by the Regional Allied Health Disability Workforce working party. Convened by Professor Teresa Iacono, the forum was primarily focused on growing and supporting allied health student placements and mentoring graduates working with people with disability across rural and regional Victoria.



By bringing together stakeholders from Victoria and other states concerned about building a quality regional and rural allied health NDIS workforce, the forum provided opportunities for conversations between industry and training organisations, and others concerned about meeting the needs of people with disability accessing NDIS funded supports.

The information gathered through this forum will be used by the Regional Allied Health Disability Workforce working party to consider next steps in their work, with the intention of drawing on the network of people and organisations who were present at the forum on the day.

[VIEW REPORT](#)

Visiting Scholars

Before the COVID-19 pandemic took a grip in Australia, the Living with Disability Research Centre played host to two Visiting Scholars at opposite ends of their academic careers. Last year, in November, Associate Professor Phylis Wong, Chinese University of Hong Kong, visited our Research Centre for two of weeks. Then, in February this year, Per Arvidsson, PhD Candidate, Malmo University, Sweden, joined us for more than a month. While they were here, Dr Wong and Arvidsson each shared and developed their work, and also contributed to the vibrant community of scholars here by providing thought provoking presentations at our Research Seminar Series. It was a pleasure hosting Wong and Arvidsson and it offered us an opportunity to share our expertise and explore opportunities for further collaboration.



Research Seminar Series



We have put together a well balanced programme of established and emerging scholars for our 2020 Research Seminar Series. In February, we kicked off the year with a wonderful presentation by Dr Lincoln Humphreys on Practice Leadership and the important role it plays in ensuring Active Support remains embedded in accommodation services for people with intellectual disabilities. And in March, Dr Sian Anderson provided a fascinating insight into twitter responses to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

We were forced to put our Seminar Series on hold for a while, due to COVID-19 pandemic, but we have since moved to an online format that will allow us to continue our Seminar Series while Victorian social distancing measures remain in place. It was great to see that there was really strong interest in our first online Webinar in May, when Professor Christine Bigby and Dr Clarie Spivakovsky delivered presentations on issues of risk and dedifferentiation for people with intellectual disability. We hope you will join us again in June.

The slides of Professor Bigby's and Dr Claire Spivakovsky's presentations are now available for download and can be found here:

[Bigby_13May2020.](#)

[Spivakovsky_13May2020.](#)

Research Seminar Series - Semester 1 Programme

Professor Teresa Iacono	Development of the La Trobe Reasonable Adjustments for Inclusive Education rating scale
June 10	A randomised control trial of shifting perceptions to enhance inclusive school education of students with disability through reasonable adjustments
Dr Jo Spong	

Welcome

We would like to extend a warm welcome to two new members of the team at the Living with Disability Research Centre. Ana Garcia Melgar recently joined the team and will be working on the new **Increasing Hospital Access** project.

Meanwhile, Kangwei Xun commenced his PhD at the Living with Disability Research Centre a few weeks before the country went into lockdown. Kangwei is a social worker with experience of working with people with intellectual disabilities in China and Hong Kong. He is particularly interested in the development of services for older people with an intellectual disability in Hong Kong. He will be supervised by Professor Christine Bigby and Dr Tal Araten-Bergman. We look forward to making both Ana and Kangwei welcome once social distancing restrictions are lifted in Victoria.

Finally, we would like to pass on our congratulations to long time Living with Disability Research Member and Honorary Associate Professor Hillary Johnson, who was this week awarded life membership of Speech Pathology Australia. The award is the highest public professional honour the association awards to its members.



Over the course of her career, Hillary Johnson has been an exemplary clinician, advocate and researcher. Her work has been driven by a firm commitment to improving the lives of people with the most severe disability and it is wonderful to see her sustained and multifaceted contribution to the profession - and to people with disability - being recognised in such an award.

New Publications

Anderson, S., & Bigby, C. (2020). Writing the script: The overt and hidden contradictions of supporters' work in independent self-advocacy groups. *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability*, 45(1), 1-11.

doi.org/10.3109/13668250.2019.1592127

Anderson, S., & Bigby, C. (2020). Community participation as identity and belonging: A case study of Arts Project Australia. *Research and Practice in Intellectual and Developmental Disability*.

doi.org/10.1080/23297018.2020.1753231

Araten-Bergman, T., & Bigby, C. (in press). Violence prevention strategies for people with intellectual disability - a scoping review. *Australian Social Work*.

Bigby, C. (in press) Dedifferentiation and people with intellectual disabilities in the Australian National Disability Insurance Scheme: Bringing research, politics and policy together. *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*.

Bigby, C. & Douglas, J. (2020). Supported decision making. In, Stancliffe, R., Wehmeyer, P., Shrogran, K. (Eds) *Choice, preference, and disability: Promoting self-determination across the lifespan*. New York: Springer, 45-6.

Humphries, L., Bigby, C., Iacono, T. (2020). Dimensions of group home culture as predictors of quality of life outcomes. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*.

doi.org/10.1111/jar.12748

Humphreys, L., Bigby, C., Iacono, T., & Bould, E. (2020). Development and psychometric evaluation of the group home culture scale. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disability*, 33(3), 515-528.

doi.org/10.1111/jar.12693

Iacono, T., Bigby, C., Douglas, J., & Spong, J. (2020). A prospective study of hospital episodes of adults with intellectual disability. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 64(5), 357-367

doi.org/10.1111/jir.12725

Vassallo, S., & Douglas, J. (2020). A novel combined visual scanning and verbal cuing intervention improves facial affect recognition after chronic severe traumatic brain injury: A single case design. *Neuropsychological Rehabilitation*.

doi.org/10.1080/09602011.2020.1742744

Wiesel, I., Bigby, C., Carney, T., Then, S., Douglas, J., Smith, E. (in press). The temporalities of supported decision-making by people with cognitive disability. *Social and Cultural Geography*.



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