



# **Early Career Researcher (ECR) Training Program Handbook**

Training the future leaders of mental health and  
substance use research



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SYDNEY**  
—  
Matilda Centre

## Table of Contents

Overview and aims.....	3
Objectives and benefits.....	3
Who are our members? .....	4
PREMISE CRE Early Career Researchers .....	4
Program structure.....	4
<i>Meetings</i> .....	4
<i>Mentoring</i> .....	4
Grant writing and workshops .....	6
Achievements of current and past members .....	6
Communication .....	7
Annual Feedback Survey .....	7
Contact us.....	7
Members and contacts .....	8
<i>Coordinators</i> .....	8
<i>Early Career Researchers</i> .....	8
Dr Louise Birrell.....	9
Dr Peter Clay.....	11
Dr Jennifer Debenham .....	12
Dr Emma Devine.....	13
Dr Lauren Gardner .....	14
Dr Erin Kelly .....	15
Dr Steph Kershaw .....	16
Dr Siobhan O'Dean .....	17
Dr Natalie Peach .....	18
Dr Katrina Prior.....	19
Dr Kylie Routledge .....	20
Dr Ewa Siedlecka .....	21

## Overview and aims

The Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use (the Matilda Centre) delivers research programs to prevent, treat and reduce substance use and mental disorders. While the Matilda Centre covers the whole life course, a key focus of our research is on youth. The work of the Matilda Centre is built upon the success of the formerly-known NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Mental Health and Substance Use (CREMS).

With a focus on prevention, treatment and epidemiology, our research streams facilitate knowledge exchange and develop strategic partnerships with the aim of increasing the knowledge base around the effective prevention and treatment of mental and substance use disorders.

The Matilda Centre recognises the importance of providing early career researchers (ECRs) with the necessary training and skills to develop as the future leaders of substance use and mental health research. To this end, the Matilda Centre ECR Training Program builds on the CREMS ECR program which was established in 2013.

*The Matilda Centre ECR Training Program provides early career researchers with the necessary training, skills and support to develop as the future leaders of substance use and mental health research*

ECRs within the Matilda Centre have world-class specialised training in the prevention, treatment, and epidemiology of mental health and substance use disorders. The Matilda Centre ECR Training Program provides ECRs with the foundations upon which to build their own successful programs of research. Working alongside peers and internationally recognised research leaders in seven different research institutions around the world, ECRs receive training in a variety of methodologies used to undertake comorbidity research. In addition, ECRs will enhance their leadership, management, and research skills in a supportive and collaborative group.

## Objectives and benefits

The **objectives** of the Matilda Centre ECR Training Program are to:

- Expand research skills and knowledge
- Improve management and leaderships skills
- Provide mentorship opportunities
- Improve grant writing skills
- Provide opportunities for networking and collaboration with senior academics, peers and service providers in the community
- Provide professional and personal development support
- Provide opportunities to share new ideas, skills, and the latest research on comorbidity
- Promote of a collegial and supportive workplace

The **benefits** of the Matilda Centre ECR Training Program include:

- Development of a strong professional profile and career trajectory
- Increased confidence as researchers and clinicians
- Increased confidence and skill in mentoring and leadership skills
- Ongoing professional and personal development support
- Facilitation of collaborations with senior academics, peers and service providers in the community
- Opportunities to share new ideas, skills and the latest research on comorbidity
- Promotion of a collaborative and supportive workplace



## Who are our members?

Matilda Centre ECRs are researchers at academic Level A and Level B, who have been awarded their PhD. This includes Postdoctoral Research Fellows and Research Fellows, Research Associates, Associate Lecturers and Lecturers. Our members are passionate about mental health and substance use research, interested in developing their career and enhancing their leadership, mentorship, grant writing skills. For more details on our members and their research interests, see the Member Profiles at the end of this Handbook.



## PREMISE CRE Early Career Researchers

The Matilda Centre hosts the Centre of Research Excellence in Prevention and Early Intervention of Mental Health and Substance Use (PREMISE; 2018-2023). An important element of PREMISE is providing support for PREMISE ECRs working in comorbidity. In order to facilitate this, The Matilda Centre also organises quarterly events for ECRs that are working on PREMISE-related projects at collaborative universities and research centres. PREMISE ECRs who are provided with this opportunity are academics employed on level A or B who are either paid by PREMISE, receive funding from PREMISE (seed/travel grants) or an associate investigator on PREMISE.

## Program structure

The Matilda Centre ECR Training Program is organised and run by two coordinators on a two-year rolling term ([Dr Kylie Routledge](#) and [Dr Ewa Siedlecka](#)) and is overseen by a member of the Matilda Centre senior leadership advisory group ([Prof Katherine Mills](#)). The structure is designed to provide our postdoctoral researchers with requisite support for both their professional and personal development, and is delivered through; i) meetings tailored specifically to the needs of its members, ii) formal and informal mentoring, and iii) the Matilda Centre Grant Development Workshops.

## Meetings

Monthly meetings occur on the second Friday of each month and provide members with the opportunity to meet, share ideas, and to openly discuss any issues they may have. To cater for the unique needs of external or overseas postdoctoral members, there is the opportunity to join in via Zoom.

## Mentoring

At the Matilda Centre we believe mentoring facilitates supportive relationships that are integral for guidance and research career development. As such, the Matilda Centre ECR Training Program provides opportunities not only to receive mentoring, but also to provide mentoring to others.

Mentoring offers a number of benefits. For the mentee, mentoring can increase self-confidence and ability, help clarify career paths and goals, enhance skills and knowledge and broaden research collaborations. For mentors, such relationships can also broaden research collaborations, increase research profile, and assist in developing leadership skills. For Matilda Centre, mentoring promotes



collegiality, and increases productivity and staff commitment. Members are assisted in accessing and providing mentoring (both formal and informal) through two complimentary processes:

### **1. Mentoring provided by the Matilda Centre Executives**

As a main aim of the Matilda Centre ECR Training Program is to provide world class specialised training in the prevention, treatment and epidemiology of comorbidity, members have unique access to support from the Senior Matilda Academic Group comprising academics level C – E (Prof Maree Teesson, A/Prof Cath Chapman, Prof Katherine Mills, A/Prof Nicola Newton, A/Prof Tim Slade, Dr Emma Barrett, Dr Katrina Champion, Dr Christina Marel, A/Prof Lexine Stapinski, A/Prof Matthew Sunderland).

We have strong collaborations with leading comorbidity researchers nationally and internationally including Profs Paul Haber and Andrew Baillie (University of Sydney), Prof Frances Kay-Lambkin (University of Newcastle), Prof Helen Christensen (Black Dog Institute & UNSW), Prof Pat McGorry, A/Prof Eoin Killackey, and Dr Sarah Bendall (Orygen & University of Melbourne), Prof Leanne Hides and A/Prof Vanessa Cobham (University of Queensland), Prof Steve Allsop and Dr Nyanda McBride (Curtin University), Prof Cathy Mihalopoulos (Deakin University), Prof Bonnie Spring (Northwestern University, US), Profs Kathleen Brady & Sudie Back (Medical University of South Carolina, US), Prof Bob Krueger (University of Minnesota, US), Prof Patricia Conrod (University of Montreal, Canada), Prof Kevin Gournay (Emeritus Kings College London, UK).

Our collaborations span multidisciplinary international experts in the field of comorbidity and offer extensive research and clinical experience in the mental health and drug and alcohol arenas. There are also a number of external mentoring opportunities available through professional societies (such as the Society for Mental Health Research, Franklin Women). ECRs can speak to their supervisors about facilitating links with our collaborators and other mentoring opportunities.

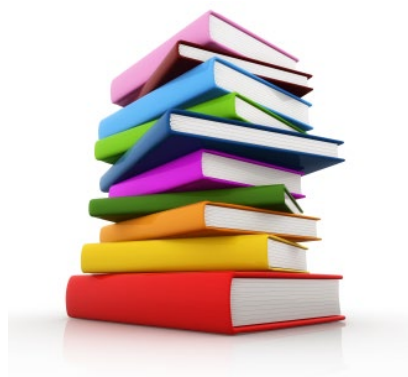
### **2. Mentoring drug and alcohol and mental health workers in the field: The Matilda Centre Mentoring Program**

The Matilda Centre and the Community Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Research Network (CMHDARN) are working in partnership to implement an exciting Matilda Centre Mentoring Program. This opportunity recognises a shared interest in improving comorbidity research and practice, as well as a commitment to optimising the translation and impact of research findings.

This Mentoring Program aims to provide workers in community managed organisations with an interest in research with academic mentor support to develop their research knowledge and skill development. Matilda Centre ECRs offer support to individuals and organisations in developing their research practice, skills and knowledge. Short-term informal mentoring (3-6 months) and/or longer-term formal mentoring (6-12 months) will be delivered based on the specific areas indicated by the mentees. This is a unique and highly beneficial opportunity for the Matilda Centre ECR members to gain valuable mentoring experience, increase research knowledge and skills, enhance understanding of community managed organisations, and engage with the community. The Mentoring Program also promotes capacity building and facilitates the development of a collaborative research culture between Matilda Centre and service providers to promote practice-based research. More information can be accessed via the [Matilda Centre website](#).

## Grant writing and workshops

Members have a valuable opportunity to attend annual Grant Development Workshops designed to provide continued support with grant applications throughout the year. These workshops are designed so that senior academics and ECR researchers can provide and receive targeted advice in the planning, development, and revision of grant applications. Moreover, these workshops provide the opportunity for ECRs to review other grants and be spokespersons during the workshops (as reflected by the NHMRC model of grant review). This is a valuable opportunity for members to experience the grant review process.



Workshop topic	Date
Brainstorming and grant review	April (1 day)
Brainstorming and preparing rebuttals	August/September (1-day)
Developing and reviewing grants	November/December (2-days)

## Achievements of current and past members

The Matilda Centre ECR group is a supportive and collaborative environment, with strong and active links with the Senior Matilda Academic Group. Since the group was first established in 2013, members have achieved success in grant funding and been the recipients of numerous awards. Although these have been obtained in partnership with the Matilda Centre Senior Leadership Advisory Group and other Matilda Centre members, all have been led by Matilda Centre ECR members. Some of these include:

- Australian Drug Foundation Excellence and Innovation in Research
- Australian Drug Foundation Innovation in Prevention and Education
- Australasian Professional Society for Alcohol and Drugs (APSAD) Early Career Researcher Award
- Australian Rotary Health Bruce Edwards Postdoctoral Fellowship
- Australian Rotary Health Knowledge Dissemination Award
- Australian Rotary Health and Alliance for the Prevention of Mental Disorders Award for Research Excellence
- Fulbright Postdoctoral scholarship
- Mental Health Matters Mental Health Promotion and Wellbeing
- National Council of Women of NSW Australia Day Award
- NHMRC Early Career Fellowship
- NSW Health Early-Mid Career Fellowships
- Society for Mental Health Research (SMHR) Early Career Researcher Fellowships
- TheMHS Best Practice Award: Highly Commended
- TheMHS Early Career Research Award: High Commendation
- Public Health Association of Australia NSW Branch President's award

## Communication

All Matilda Centre ECRs are members of the Matilda Centre ECR Training Program and provided with a copy of this Handbook. Members communicate via email and at monthly ECR meetings, with those located off-site welcome to attend meetings remotely via Zoom. ECRs are encouraged to use email to generate informal discussions or seek advice.

## Annual Feedback Survey

Outcomes of the Matilda Centre ECR Training Program are annually assessed via a feedback survey. At the end of each academic year, members are asked to confidentially respond to a short, electronic survey. This information both evaluates the annual progress of the program and informs revisions and refinements to the program.



## Contact us

If you have any questions please contact the Program Coordinators, **Dr Kylie Routledge** ([kylie.routledge@sydney.edu.au](mailto:kylie.routledge@sydney.edu.au)) or **Dr Ewa Siedlecka** ([ewa.siedlecka@sydney.edu.au](mailto:ewa.siedlecka@sydney.edu.au)) or visit the [Matilda Centre](#) website or follow us on social media:



[TheMatilda USyd](#)



[TheMatildaUSyd](#)

# Members and contacts

## Coordinators

Dr Kylie Routledge

[kylie.routledge@sydney.edu.au](mailto:kylie.routledge@sydney.edu.au)

Dr Ewa Siedlecka

[ewa.siedlecka@sydney.edu.au](mailto:ewa.siedlecka@sydney.edu.au)

## Early Career Researchers

Dr Louise Birrell	<a href="mailto:louise.birrell@sydney.edu.au">louise.birrell@sydney.edu.au</a>
Dr Marlee Bower	<a href="mailto:marlee.bower@sydney.edu.au">marlee.bower@sydney.edu.au</a>
Dr Peter Clay	<a href="mailto:peter.clay@sydney.edu.au">peter.clay@sydney.edu.au</a>
Dr Jennifer Debenham	<a href="mailto:jennifer.debenham@sydney.edu.au">jennifer.debenham@sydney.edu.au</a>
Dr Emma Devine	<a href="mailto:emma.devine@sydney.edu.au">emma.devine@sydney.edu.au</a>
Dr Lauren Gardner	<a href="mailto:lauren.gardner@sydney.edu.au">lauren.gardner@sydney.edu.au</a>
Dr Erin Kelly	<a href="mailto:erin.k@sydney.edu.au">erin.k@sydney.edu.au</a>
Dr Steph Kershaw	<a href="mailto:steph.kershaw@sydney.edu.au">steph.kershaw@sydney.edu.au</a>
Dr Siobhan O'Dean	<a href="mailto:siobhan.odean@sydney.edu.au">siobhan.odean@sydney.edu.au</a>
Dr Natalie Peach	<a href="mailto:natalie.peach@sydney.edu.au">natalie.peach@sydney.edu.au</a>
Dr Katrina Prior	<a href="mailto:katrina.prior@sydney.edu.au">katrina.prior@sydney.edu.au</a>

*We are very grateful to the previous ECR Training Program coordinators for their assistance with, and contribution to, the Program and this Handbook*





### **Dr Louise Birrell**

The Matilda Centre  
University of Sydney

#### **Background**

Dr Louise Birrell is an Australian Rotary Health Bruce Edwards Post-doctoral Research Fellow at the Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use. Louise has a passion for developing, evaluating and disseminating innovative prevention interventions to improve mental health and wellbeing among youth. In 2019 she was awarded a competitive fellowship to develop and trial an online intervention, in the form of a smartphone app (Mind your Mate), to upskill adolescents to better support peers with mental health and/or substance use problems and encourage early help-seeking.

Louise has extensive experience trialing substance use and mental health prevention programs, particularly developing and evaluating online programs including mobile apps and working with schools. Louise coordinated the first online preventative trial to combine substance use education with depression and anxiety education for high-school students and is currently a Chief Investigator of a 7-year longitudinal follow-up of this study. She is also part of the leadership team for the Cracks in the Ice portal, funded by the Australian Government Department of Health, and Chief Investigator on a trial of the Preventure program delivered by school staff. Louise holds a PhD, Bachelor of Psychology, and Bachelor of Social Science.

#### **Research interests**

- Anxiety disorders;
- Mood disorders;
- Adolescent alcohol use;
- Adolescence;
- School-based prevention;
- e-Mental Health.

#### **Methodological expertise**

- Analysis of large-scale epidemiological and longitudinal data sets (e.g. discrete-time survival models);
- Analysis of randomised controlled trial data;
- Latent variable modelling (e.g., latent class analysis, parallel latent growth modelling, growth mixture models);
- Conducting focus groups and thematic analysis.

#### **Potential Topics**

I am available to supervise honours, masters, PhD and undergraduate student placements related to any of my research interests listed above. Some examples of potential topics are listed below:

- Peer-support interventions for mental health or substance use;
- Developing and evaluating new online or mobile interventions;
- Examining trends and/or links between adolescent alcohol use and mental health;
- Systematic review of e-health apps.



**Dr Marlee Bower**  
The Matilda Centre  
University of Sydney

### **Background**

Dr Marlee Bower is a Research Fellow at the Matilda Centre who is interested in the broader social determinants of mental health, particularly in understanding loneliness and isolation amongst marginalised individuals and how this relates to the built environment. She recently completed her PhD in September 2019 on the experience of loneliness amongst Australians with lived experience of homelessness from the Translational Health Research Institute, Western Sydney University, Australia.

She is currently working with Dr Emma Barrett on a Process Evaluation of the EQUIPS programs, offender therapeutic programs delivered in custody and in the community by Corrective Services NSW and is the Academic Lead on the world first Mental Health Think Tank, chaired by Professor Maree Teesson. She also leads the Alone Together study, a longitudinal study investigating the social determinants of mental health outcomes of approximately 2000 Australians following COVID-19.

Marlee is also the convenor of the multidisciplinary Network for Research in the Built Environment and Mental Health and the co-convenor of the Matilda Centre Crime Research Research Portfolio and the Mixed Methods Research Portfolio. Prior to working at the Matilda Centre, Marlee worked in government research and strategy in prison and homelessness settings.

### **Research interests**

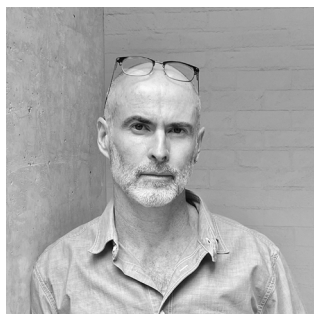
- Broader social determinants of mental health, particularly in understanding loneliness and isolation amongst marginalised individuals.
- Translating mental health research into social policy and practice.
- Homelessness, mental health and substance use.
- The relationship between mental health and the built environment.

### **Methodological expertise**

- Mixed methods research.
- Qualitative methods – interviews, focus groups, thematic analysis across different epistemological frameworks.
- Quantitative methods – Cross sectional studies using regression and ANOVA models & panel/longitudinal studies using repeated measures and multi-level modelling.

### **Potential Topics**

I am available to supervise honours, masters, PhD and undergraduate student placements related to any of my research interests listed above.



### **Dr Peter Clay**

The Matilda Centre  
University of Sydney

#### **Background**

Dr Peter Clay is Research Affiliate at the Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use. Peter completed his PhD at The University of Sydney in 2021, with his thesis titled “Aetiology of excessive alcohol consumption and Alcohol Use Disorder in young adults: Identifying change mechanisms to inform intervention strategies.” The research program was particularly focused on considering if the causal processes leading people to become excessive consumers of alcohol as young adults were the same processes that lead them to develop an alcohol use disorder. One especially novel feature of the research was consideration of the role that different experiential avoidance strategies play in the development of these outcomes. Having used data from the RADAR project during his PhD, Peter remains involved with the Matilda Centre while publishing his research and continues to work collaboratively with others at the Centre.

Prior to embarking on his PhD at The Matilda Centre, Peter attained a Bachelor of Psychology (Hons 1) from the University of Wollongong, a Bachelor of Economics from the Australian National University, and a Masters in Applied Finance from Macquarie University. Peter doesn't know what he wants to be when he grows up.

#### **Research interests**

- Conceptual analyses and metatheory
- Causation
- Developmental psychology
- Alcohol consumption
- Active ingredients in intervention strategies
- Mental health

#### **Methodological expertise**

- Conceptual analyses
- Analysis of time-series data
- Latent variable and structural equation modelling
- Moderation and mediation analyses
- Analysis of cross-sectional and longitudinal data

#### **Potential Topics**

I am happy to collaborate on anything where I can add value (including with students), but do not currently have the capacity to formally supervise students.



### **Dr Jennifer Debenham**

The Matilda Centre  
University of Sydney

#### **Background**

Dr Jennifer Debenham is a PREMISE Post-doctoral Researcher at the Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use. Jennifer has a passion for research translation and evaluation, including place-based evaluations and embedding new interventions into the broader health system. Jennifer's doctorate focused on disentangling neural predictors from consequences of illicit substance use during adolescence. Jennifer has a passion for developing, evaluating and disseminating innovative prevention interventions to reduce the harms of substance use and promote wellbeing among young people. In 2020, she developed a digital eHealth intervention known as The Illicit Project, which uses neuroscience to upskill young people in substance use harm reduction.

#### **Research interests**

- Neuroscience
- Older adolescents and young adults (16-24 years)
- Illicit substance use
- Harm reduction
- Digital interventions
- Place-based evaluation

#### **Methodological expertise**

- Qualitative and quantitative research skills, including statistical modelling of complex randomised controlled trial data and epidemiological data sets;
- Evidence-based program development
- Design and co-ordination of pilot and trial evaluations

#### **Potential Topics**

I am available to supervise honours, masters, PhD and undergraduate student placements related to any of my research interests listed above.

**Dr Emma Devine**  
The Matilda Centre  
University of Sydney



### **Background**

Dr Emma Devine is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use at the University of Sydney. She holds a Bachelor of Psychology (2015) and a Masters of Psychological Science (2016) both from University College Dublin. She recently completed her PhD in Psychology (2021) from the Institute for Positive Psychology and Education at Australian Catholic University which examined the longitudinal associations between aggression and mental ill-health in friendship groups.

Emma is currently working on the Positive Choices initiative which provides schools, parents, and students with evidence-based alcohol and other drug resources, and also the Learning with FASD (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder) initiative which provides evidence-based resources to help primary school educators identify, manage, and support children with FASD. Emma's current research focuses on alcohol and other drug prevention, prenatal alcohol exposure, and adolescent mental health.

### **Research interests**

- Alcohol and other drug prevention
- Prenatal alcohol exposure
- Mental health
- Adolescence
- School-based interventions
- Friendship social networks
- Aggression

### **Methodological expertise**

- Structural equation modelling & multi-level modelling
- Social network analysis
- Systematic reviews and meta-analyses
- Cross-sectional and longitudinal data analysis
- Conducting analyses in R

### **Potential Topics**

I am available to supervise honours, masters, PhD and undergraduate student placements related to any of my research interests listed above.





### **Dr Lauren Gardner**

The Matilda Centre  
University of Sydney

#### **Background**

Lauren is a Research Fellow at the Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use at the University of Sydney. She holds a Bachelor of Psychology with first class Honours (2013) and a PhD in Psychology (2018) from the University of Wollongong. Her PhD focused on the cognitive and social factors underlying participation and dropout in organised youth sport. She is currently working on the *Health4Life* Initiative which aims to develop and evaluate the first eHealth program simultaneously targeting six key lifestyle risk behaviours (physical inactivity, poor diet, risky alcohol use, smoking, passive recreational screen time and poor sleep) to prevent chronic disease risk among secondary school students. Lauren is also working on *Climate Schools*, a universal, online school-based program designed to prevent substance use and improve wellbeing among adolescents.

#### **Research interests**

- Improving health and wellbeing through sport and physical activity;
- Prevention of chronic disease risk;
- Substance use prevention and education;
- School-based prevention;
- Internet-based interventions.

#### **Methodological expertise**

- Design and analysis of cross-sectional and longitudinal survey data;
- Structural equation modelling (e.g., mediation);
- Latent variable modelling (e.g., latent profile analysis, growth mixture models).
- Randomised controlled trials

#### **Potential Topics**

I am available to supervise honours, masters, PhD and undergraduate student placements related to any of my research interests listed above.



### **Background**

Dr Erin Kelly is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at The Matilda Centre, leading a program of research in the translation of brief intervention in schools for the prevention of substance use and mental disorders. She completed her PhD at the University of New South Wales in 2018, titled “Tackling adolescent bullying head on: Victimisation, perpetration and targeted intervention”.

Erin is also a practicing Clinical Psychologist (working in private practice) and is the lead trainer of the Preventure program in Australia, a personality-focused brief intervention for preventing substance use and mental disorders in adolescents.

### **Research interests**

- Bullying;
- Adolescence;
- School-based prevention and early intervention;
- Comorbidity between substance use and mental disorders;
- Transdiagnostic treatment approaches;
- e-Mental Health;
- Mental health impacts of climate change.

### **Methodological expertise**

- Design and analysis of randomised controlled trials;
- Design and analysis of cross-sectional and longitudinal survey data (e.g. regression, mixed models);
- Development and evaluation of interventions;
- Translation of evidence-based interventions.

### **Potential Topics**

I do not currently have the capacity to supervise honours, masters, or PhD students, but I welcome emails from students interested in my research areas, to flag their interest for future opportunities, or to facilitate contact with other potential supervisors.



## **Dr Steph Kershaw**

The Matilda Centre  
University of Sydney

### **Background**

Dr Steph Kershaw is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at The Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use. Steph leads an innovative program of research and translation on the prevention and treatment of illicit substance misuse. Her research aims to improve the health outcomes for individuals, families and communities especially among vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. She is currently Project Lead for Cracks in the Ice, a National Online Portal funded by the Australian Government Department of Health to develop and disseminate evidence-based resources about crystal methamphetamine ('ice') for the Australian Community. Steph also leads Australia's first project to develop and adapt culturally appropriate resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to reduce the impact of crystal methamphetamine use among communities.

Steph completed her PhD in 2015 at the University of South Australia, which focused on the impact of genetic predictors of opioid dependence on neuroimmune and endocrine markers in healthy adults. Following which, she undertook several appointments at the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva, Switzerland focusing on the impact of illicit drugs on public health, and the translation of evidence-based research into international policy outcomes.

### **Research interests**

- Epidemiology, prevention and treatment of substance misuse
- Translation of evidence-based research
- National and international policies for illicit drugs
- Improving health outcomes for individuals and communities

### **Methodological expertise**

- Design and analysis of randomised controlled trials
- Design, collection and analysis of online survey research

### **Potential Topics**

I am available to supervise honours, masters, PhD and undergraduate student placements related to any of my research interests listed above.

## Dr Siobhan O'Dean

The Matilda Centre  
University of Sydney



### Background

Dr. Siobhan O'Dean is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow with the Matilda Centre at the University of Sydney. She contributes to the RADAR project, investigating the developmental course of alcohol use disorder in young adults. Siobhan is also contributing to the Climate Schools Combined programme, looking at the effects of the CSC intervention on general and specific psychopathology. She holds a Bachelor of Psychology (Hons, 1st class) and a PhD in Social Psychology from the University of New South Wales. Her PhD research investigated whether mindfulness meditation could reduce interpersonal aggression. Siobhan thoroughly enjoys teaching and supervising students. She has 4 years teaching experience at University of New South Wales and has co-supervised two Psychology Honours students.

### Research interests

- Adolescent and young adult substance use
- Adolescent mental health
- Alcohol epidemiology
- Aggression
- Translational research

### Methodological expertise

- Design and analysis of experimental studies
- Design and analysis of online survey studies
- Analysis of longitudinal survey data
- Multi-level meta-analysis
- Multilevel modelling (e.g., linear mixed effects)
- Analysis of data with non-normal distributions (e.g., Poisson and negative binomial regressions)
- Social sequence analysis

### Potential Topics

I am available to supervise honours, masters, PhD and undergraduate student placements related to any of my research interests listed above.



**Dr Natalie Peach**

The Matilda Centre  
University of Sydney

**Background**

Natalie is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Matilda Centre, University of Sydney. She currently works as the Project Coordinator on the COPE-A clinical trial, investigating the efficacy of integrated exposure-based therapy for co-occurring post-traumatic stress and substance use disorders in adolescents. She completed a combined Masters/PhD in clinical psychology at the University of Melbourne and Orygen Youth Health in 2017. Her PhD focused on phenomenological relationships between childhood trauma, PTSD symptoms and psychotic symptoms in young people with early psychosis.

**Research interests:**

- PTSD
- Childhood trauma
- Adolescent mental health
- Comorbidity
- Early intervention and treatment
- Psychosis

**Methodological expertise:**

- Cross-sectional studies
- Regression analyses
- Qualitative research





### **Background**

Dr Katrina Prior is a Research Fellow within the Matilda Centre at the University of Sydney. She has extensive experience trialling interventions for co-occurring mental health and substance use programs, among both young people and adults. Katrina completed a Bachelor's degree in Psychology (Honours) and Commerce at ANU, and a PhD in Public Health and Community Medicine at UNSW (2018). Her thesis focused on the prevalence, impact and persistence of social anxiety among depressed individuals in treatment for substance dependence.

Katrina is currently running a pilot trial to evaluate the feasibility, acceptability and efficacy of an online Cognitive Bias Modification program (i.e., brain training) for young people who experience anxiety and problematic drinking, funded by a 3-year Australian Rotary Health Postdoctoral Fellowship. This program of research builds on her experience in developing, coordinating, and evaluating other interventions in world-first randomised controlled trials, including an internet-delivered early intervention for young adults who drink to cope with anxiety, and an integrated intervention for depression and substance use disorders.

### **Research interests**

- Prevention, early intervention and treatment for co-occurring mental health and drug/alcohol use disorders, particularly among young people.
- Technology-driven interventions to improve the wellbeing of young people with comorbid anxiety and alcohol use disorders
- Risk factors and psychological mechanisms that initiate and maintain the anxiety-alcohol use comorbidity
- Implicit cognitive processes involved in addiction and anxiety disorders
- The complex relationship between sleep disorders and co-occurring mental and substance use disorders

Key terms: Anxiety, alcohol and other drugs, comorbidity, prevention, early intervention, treatment, adolescent health, e-mental health, online intervention

### **Methodological expertise**

- Design and coordination of randomised controlled trials, particularly among youth
- Development of online interventions for young people
- Design, collection and analysis of cross-sectional and longitudinal data
- Analysis of large-scale epidemiological data sets.

### **Potential Topics**

I am available to supervise honours, masters, PhD and undergraduate students/placements related to any of my research interests listed above.



## **Dr Kylie Routledge**

The Matilda Centre  
University of Sydney

### **Background**

Kylie Routledge is a Research Fellow with the Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use. She is leading a cluster randomised controlled trial of a computerised school-based alcohol and drug prevention program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, *Strong & Deadly Futures*. Kylie holds a PhD in Neuroscience (2018) from the University of Sydney, for which she examined the genetic and environmental contributions to wellbeing and non-clinical depression and anxiety in healthy adults. She also conducted a randomised controlled trial testing the effectiveness of an online brain-training tool in improving psychological wellbeing and reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression. Kylie has 15 years' experience in research-related roles, and most recently, spent two years working in domestic violence policy at the Department of Communities and Justice.

### **Research interests**

- Empowerment
- Health and wellbeing promotion
- eHealth and internet-based interventions
- Prevention of violence against women
- Prevention or control of alcohol use
- Behaviour change

### **Methodological expertise**

- Design and analysis of randomised controlled trials;
- Design and analysis of cross-sectional and longitudinal survey data;
- Twin studies

### **Potential Topics**

I am available to supervise honours, masters, PhD and undergraduate student placements related to any of my research interests listed above.

## Dr Ewa Siedlecka

The Matilda Centre  
University of Sydney



### Background

Dr. Ewa Siedlecka completed her PhD in Social and Cognitive Psychology in 2020 at the University of New South Wales. Her PhD research investigated how emotions influence time perception and attempted to create a novel model explaining this relationship. Ewa's additional research experience includes statistical consulting for clinical trials in high schools, and working with major Australian industries to improve their social license and minimize the impact of industry activity. Ewa joined The Matilda Centre in 2021 as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow. She contributes to a project reviewing and updating guidelines for the management of co-occurring alcohol and other drug and mental health conditions.

### Research interests

- Translational research;
- Early intervention and treatment;
- Comorbidity of mental health and substance use, particularly in younger populations;
- Underlying predictors of mental health and maladaptive cognitions.

### Methodological expertise

- Quantitative research methods and analysis;
- Experimental psychology;
- Multidisciplinary systematic reviews;
- Emotion induction;
- Physiological data collection.

### Potential Topics

I am available to supervise honours, masters, PhD and undergraduate student placements related to any of my research interests listed above.

**The Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use**

Level 6, Jane Foss Russell building (G02)  
University of Sydney NSW 2006



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SYDNEY**  
—  
Matilda Centre

**T** 02 8627 9048 | **E** [matilda.centre@sydney.edu.au](mailto:matilda.centre@sydney.edu.au)  
**W** [sydney.edu.au/research/centres/matilda-centre](https://sydney.edu.au/research/centres/matilda-centre)

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