Justice Collaboration

Newsletter Compilation June 2024-26



THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

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Introduction

The University of Sydney Justice Collaboration unites researchers, students, and partners to enhance justice systems and outcomes, with a focus on interdisciplinary whole-of-university approaches.

This compilation contains extracts from the last 20 editions of our newsletter. For the last two years our newsletters have showcased both Collaboration and wider University projects, publications and events directly related to criminal justice work. These newsletters have also celebrated the achievements of the Collaboration and it's growing number of members, affiliates and research students.

Research Centres

The University of Sydney has a track record of work across research centres directly and indirectly relevant to crime justice systems and those in conflict with the law. A key aim of the Collaboration is to unite this work. We maintain connections with the following centres from across the University:

The Matilda Centre

The Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use is a multidisciplinary research centre committed to improving the health and wellbeing of people affected by co-occurring substance use and mental disorders. A focus of the Centre is the prevention and treatment of youth mental health and substance use issues. Past projects in this space include the Preventure and Positive Choices programs which aim to facilitate teacher-led interventions.

The Centre recently received funding for various projects including Fulbright Scholar Associate Professor Louise Mewton's work on brain development and educational support for school students with FASD. More about these projects can be read in the Centre news here.

You can subscribe to their newsletter here.

The Brain and Mind Centre

The Brain and Mind Centre runs the Camperdown Headspace Clinic. It has also created resources for parents of children with challenging behaviours (ParentWorks), resources for parents of children under five (Thrive By Five), and training packages for mental health professionals. The Centre is also researching the effect of adjunctive brexpiprazole on sleep-wake and circadian parameters in youth with depressive syndromes.

The Brain and Mind Centre has recently partnered with the BHP Foundation, starting a five year project to to guide investments in sustained, coordinated and digitally-enhanced youth mental health care.

This project - *Right Care, first time, where you live* – brings an evidence-based discipline to investments in Australia's youth mental health systems that will provide young people with timely access to the right level of care, delivered early in the course of illness, and for a sufficiently long-period, to ensure that they thrive economically and socially.

You can find out more about the work of the Brain and Mind Centre on their website.

The CREATE Centre

The CREATE Centre **(Creativity in Research, Engaging the Arts and Transforming Education, Health and Wellbeing)** engages in three main areas: creativity research; the role of the arts in creative education, health and wellbeing; and how the arts transform all

levels of education from early childhood through to higher education. Their researchers come from education, performance studies, medicine and health, literature, architecture, music, business, and the visual arts.

The centre's current projects include researching body-mapping for communities impacted by suicide, the use of multi-arts workshops to increase young people's wellbeing and employability, facilitating performance workshops for young people, anti-racism advocacy and empathy pedagogy. The centre also researches school transformation and runs training programs for teachers.

More information on the work of the centre can be accessed through their website.

Centre for Disability Research and Policy

The Centre for Disability Research and Policy produces collaborative research that actively influences policy and practice to improve the lives of people with disability in Australia and the Asia-Pacific.

The Centre collaborates with a large number of local and international organisations, agencies, governments and service providers to enhance the wellbeing of people with disability especially Indigenous peoples with disabilities. They actively partner with, and employ, people with lived experiences of disability in order to do that. They have evaluated parts of the NDIS for the NDIA, served as expert advisors to the Disability Royal Commission and regularly undertake commissioned research. They have also created resources for practitioners on the use of telepractice and the National Guidelines for Best Practice in Early Childhood Intervention.

You can sign up for their newsletter here.

National Centre for Cultural Competence

The National Centre for Cultural Competence (NCCC) was established in 2014 as a joint venture between the Australian Government and the University of Sydney.
Through collaboration and partnerships with diverse individuals, communities and organisations the NCCC provides an opportunity for all Australians to develop their cultural competence and responsiveness to empower them to make respectful, ethical, and effective choices in intercultural settings.

The Centre aims to be a major contributor at the interface between cultural competence research and transformational education. It delivers online and in person education programs, as well as consultancy and research. The Centre delivers training through Sydney's Centre for Continuing Education and provides free short courses through its Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs). It also conference on cultural competence in higher education last month.

You can find out more about the NCCC on its website.

Sydney Policy Lab

The Sydney Policy Lab was created by the University of Sydney in 2018 to be a non-partisan space where people from all walks of life gather to set the agenda, experiment and make public policy that transforms lives. The Lab's prime focus is on and with the community, working with people who have been excluded from decision-making, leadership and power.

One such project is Australia Cares. This project was founded in 2022 to enable community-led policy development for care systems shaped by lived experience, and community and academic expertise. The Policy Lab has run online and place-based assemblies on care to allow community members to participate in and lead policymaking. The report arising out of phase one of the project can be read here. The second phase of the project – Championing Australia's Relational Economy – seeks to elevate care in society. More information about phase can be found here. You can sign up to the Policy Lab's newsletter here.

Collaboration News

The Justice Collaboration was established in 2023. Initially named the Youth Justice Collaboration, the Collaboration's purpose was to utilise the resources of the University to improve outcomes for young people interacting with the youth justice system. We changed our name and broadened our focus in 2024. We are now committed to improving the outcomes of people interacting with the criminal justice system through an interdisciplinary whole-of-university approach. What follows is some news about the Collaboration from the last two years.

One Sydney Many People: Closing the Gap Outcome 11 – June 2024

The Collaboration recently secured funding from the University of Sydney through the One Sydney Many People strategy - Sydney's whole-of-university Indigenous strategy which aims to support the best researchers and most promising students to achieve their full potential. This funding is supporting work focused on Closing the Gap Outcome 11 – reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in youth detention.

The project seeks to identify relevant projects led by staff and students across the University of Sydney to work out how we can contribute to Outcome 11 and help to reduce the over-representation of First Nations young people in youth detention.

Introducing our new name - we are now the Justice Collaboration! – September 2024

We have rebranded to reflect the growing scope of our collaboration and the projects of our members. The youth justice system remains a key focus of our work, but a broader scope will allow us to engage with other parts of the criminal justice system, will enable more inter-disciplinary projects and will help us improve outcomes for all involved in criminal justice systems.



AFR Higher Education Awards – September 2024

The Justice Collaboration was recently shortlisted for an AFR Higher Education Award for our community engagement work. This is a testament to the great work by hundreds of staff and students over the last few years.

From the AFR:
The Justice Collaboration 'has students from non-traditional disciplines, including computer science, digital innovation, and media and communications, applying their skills to improve youth justice outcomes and prevent youth crime.
It has produced about 20 high-impact projects in the past five years, while exposing more than 500 students to the youth justice system to improve their understanding of its challenges.'

The AFR article profiling the other nominees can be accessed here.



Justice Collaboration joins Sydney Policy Lab as node – February 2025

We are pleased to announce that we have been selected as a Sydney Policy Lab node. Each of the Lab's seven nodes is a group of academics and community members with a shared interest in a specific public policy area or methodology that can transform lives. They are convened by two or more University of Sydney researchers who are joined by early- and mid-career researchers as founding members.

With Lab support and seed funding, node members will share existing work, create space for collaboration and nurture future full-scale Lab research projects. As a Sydney Policy lab node we will focus on supporting and improving criminal justice policy, including through student-led projects, engaged research, and joint training and education. We look forward to working with the Sydney Policy Lab team over the coming year!

More information about nodes at the Lab can be accessed here.

Funding News: Justice Collaboration members and affiliates awarded Australian Research Council funding – June 2026

Two projects led by Collaboration members and affiliates were awarded funding by the Australian Government in the latest Linkage Projects funding round. The Australian Research Council Linkage Projects scheme supports new research tackling some of the

nation's most important social, economic and environmental challenges by bringing together universities with industry, community partners and government agencies.

Collaboration member Dr Jedidiah Evans leads a project that was awarded $542,050 to address a lack of meaningful education and personal development opportunities for Australian women in prison. In partnership with Corrective Services NSW, this project will investigate the implementation of an innovative humanistic education program with incarcerated women in NSW. Employing participatory action research methods, this project will generate new knowledge about the experiences and needs of women in prison and the impact of humanistic education on their wellbeing. Other expected outcomes include an expanded evidence base for gender-responsive programming and lived-experience informed strategic and policy recommendations and resources for correctional centres. This project will provide substantial benefits to prison reform for women at a national level.

Collaboration affiliate Associate Professor Justine Humphry leads a project that was awarded $448,422 to coproduce media for education and policy with young people involved in the youth justice system to foster safe and inclusive digital media use. This project expects to generate insights into the social media literacies and digital cultures of this group - over half of whom are First Nations young people - utilising innovative, participatory methods including media-making. Expected outcomes are digital literacy knowledge, enhanced digital media skills and evidence-based digital safety education co-designed with young people. This should provide significant benefits by developing effective preventative strategies and sector-wide service integration to improve outcomes for justice-involved young people throughout Australia. Partner organisations for the project are Youth Justice NSW, The Alannah & Madeline Foundation, the Telstra Foundation and Youth Action.

You can read more about the Linkage Project funding round here.

Funding News: Justice Collaboration members and affiliates receive funding from Sydney Law School – June 2026

Two projects involving Justice Collaboration members and affiliates have received funding from Sydney Law School. Dr Jedidiah Evans, Associate Professor Garner Clancey, Dr Lobna Yassine and Dr Sacha Jamieson have been awarded funding to continue working on a project exploring how to improve the way the University of Sydney engages with those with lived experience of the criminal justice system. Collaboration director Associate Professor Garner Clancey was also awarded funding to commence research on careers in criminology and criminal justice.

People

The Justice Collaboration was established by a small number of University of Sydney staff who have a direct interest and experience in criminal justice systems. Over the last two years we welcomed affiliates whose work is relevant to improving the outcomes of those interacting with justice systems. Our newsletters have also featured both researchers and research students from beyond the Collaboration and across the University. This section showcases some of the achievements and work of our members, affiliates and research . students.



Transforming justice: The power of arts education

Collaboration member Dr Jedidiah Evans' work in arts education at Parklea Correctional Centre was recently featured by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.
Dr Evans' students developed their own research questions related to arts, incarceration, and education. Some research projects explored the possibility of running creative workshops in remand centres, researching the efficacy of arts programs to reduce reoffending and exploring specific visual arts workshops in local facilities. They received letters from incarcerated people describing their first-hand experience of education in prisons and engaged with an advisory panel of people who have experienced incarceration.

From Dr Evans – 'A partnership like this can provide student-learning experience, support the flourishing of communities for the incarcerated, and introduce both inside and outside participants to the life-changing potential of studying the arts.'

The article can be read here.



Lluwannee George attends the 2024 Garma Festival

Collaboration member, and Manager of Indigenous Employment at the University, Lluwannee George recently attended the Garma Fesitval. She shared the following on her experience:
I had the incredible opportunity to attend the Garma Festival at the Gulkula ceremonial site, located about 40 kilometers from Nhulunbuy on the Gove Peninsula, NT.

The Garma Festival, Australia's largest Indigenous gathering, is a four-day celebration of Yolngu life and culture held in the remote northeast of Arnhem Land. Hosted by the Yothu Yindi Foundation, the festival showcases traditional miny'tji (art), manikay (song), bunggul (dance), and storytelling, serving as an important meeting point for the clans and families of the region.

The festival's primary cultural mission is to create a contemporary environment for the expression and preservation of traditional Yolngu knowledge systems and customs, sharing these practices within an authentic Yolngu setting.

I spent four unforgettable days in the far north of Australia, joined by 20 other University of Sydney staff and 3,000 people from across Australia and the world. I'm still processing the experience. The Yolngu people are incredibly generous with their culture. Their storytelling is powerful, and the pride and respect they hold for their elders is truly special to witness. Seeing the children perform traditional dances with such pride absolutely melted my heart. They give so much, and I feel incredibly privileged to have been invited and welcomed onto their Country.

One of the final sessions was a youth statement, where young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from around the country shared their vision for the future and how we as a nation can achieve it. It was deeply moving, and although I'm not usually an emotional person, this session touched me profoundly. Our young people have so much strength and courage, and even after the referendum, they remain eager to fight for justice. They are immensely proud of their cultures, and witnessing their positivity and forward-thinking gave me the encouragement I needed to continue my work for my community, including the small but powerful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff community at the

University of Sydney.

I understand that not everyone has the opportunity to travel to a remote community, but one of the things I learned to appreciate is that community exists everywhere. We create community—whether with our friends and family, through sporting clubs, or within community organizations. We build relationships and connections through trust, bridge-building, partnerships, and valuing and respecting each individual. This is what the Yolngu taught us. I can't recall who said it, but one lesson that will stay with me is, "Everything moves at the speed of trust."
Photo by Cornel Ozies and Laura Heron.

Dr Lobna Yassine: Critical Whiteness in the Child Protection & Youth Justice Systems

In a recent book chapter, Collaboration member Dr Lobna Yassine interrogated the Youth Level of Service Case Management Inventory, a risk assessment tool used in Australian youth justice systems. In the chapter she problematises the tool, suggesting that 'risk assessments do not simply predict, but rather produce and re-produce the 'risky juvenile''. Presented as neutral and objective the tool 'guarantees that the gaze remains fixed on individuals and families, rather than to the institutions and policies that produce risky environments for children and communities'. In doing so, the tool neglects wider issues of racism, colonialism and poverty, while reinforcing the overrepresentation of marginalised groups in the youth justice system.

In an article co-authored with Caitlin van Noppen and Katarzyna Olcoń, Dr Yassine also analysed practice standards for the NSW child protection system. The authors found that these documents established Whiteness—and White parenting—as the norm, and 'entirely omit the impacts of racialization and Whiteness despite the historical context and other evidence of institutional racism embedded in human service organizations and the ongoing overrepresentation of racialized children in the child protection system.'

'YLS-CMI Risk Assessment Tool and Neutrality' is a chapter in *Youth Crime, Youth Justice and Children's Courts in NSW*, an edited book that can purchased through the Lexis Nexis website. 'Whiteness in our understanding of culture: A critical discourse analysis of the cultural responsivity practice frameworks in child protection' can be accessed through *Qualitative Social Work*.



Just Cause Podcast

The youth justice system is under constant critique. But in a recent podcast episode, University of Sydney student Julia Jacobson talked to Collaboration member Associate Professor Garner Clancey about why there is reason to have hope in the future of youth justice in Australia. With an emphasis on the need for innovation and interdisciplinarity in the study of law, this episode reflects on the relationship between theory and practice.

Listen via SoundCloud

Locked Up & Locked Out: Incarceration & Children's Interests

Gabriel McGuire is the administrator of the Justice Collaboration and a student at Sydney Law School. He recently completed an honours in philosophy, writing his thesis on the justifiability of the current practice of juvenile incarceration.

In the thesis he argued that children have rights borne out of both extrinsic and intrinsic interests. Gabriel suggested that the detained child's interests in development allow us to justify incarceration as a means of moral education. However, he concludes that the current practice of juvenile incarceration—as evidenced in Queensland—violates the detained child's rights to carefreeness, connection, and future autonomy. In doing so, the justifiability and permissibility of the practice is undermined.

His thesis can be accessed via the Sydney eScholarship Repository.

Research Student Spotlight: Rene Jones

Rene Jones recently completed her master's degree. Her thesis evaluated a pilot study of a program she helped develop alongside other USYD researchers. The program is designed to encourage the development of life skills necessary for young people's successful reintegration into society post-release.

The researchers developed a targeted, culturally aware program (the School-Link Advantage (SLA) treatment program) that combines Cognitive Remediation Therapy (CRT) and Social Cognitive Remediation Therapy (SCRT).
Participants voluntarily attended the 20 treatment sessions conducted over 10 weeks, each session running for approximately 60 to 90 minutes. Each treatment session included CRT and SCRT activities, tailored to the participants' needs. Activities included debates and challenges, such as assessing the best mobile phone deal from various options with different features and costs

Jones' analysis of the pilot program found encouraging positive outcomes. Improvements were found in young people's cognitive domains, working memory, emotional control and planning and organising.

Jones' thesis can be accessed via the Sydney eScholarship repository here.



Researcher Highlight: Exercise Physiology in Criminal Justice Settings

A small team from the University of Sydney in partnership with colleagues in industry, have come together to explore the role of Accredited Exercise Physiologists in criminal justice settings. With significant levels of mental illness, disabilities and diverse health needs, inmates and detainees are likely to benefit greatly from services provided Accredited Exercise Physiologists within their scope of practice and as part of multidisciplinary approach to health care. The team has facilitated two student projects as part of the Discipline of Exercise and Sport Science's Project-Based Learning Initiative in youth justice settings focusing on exercise delivery within high-risk youth while another group focused on presenting a value analysis of Exercise Physiology within justice system more broadly. Other groups of students have engaged with a forensic hospital where students designed exercise-focused education and activities with Indigenous consumers within the hospital. Through experiences gained via these placements, it is clear that Accredited Exercise Physiologists could play an important role in the growing work of Allied Health Professionals in criminal justice settings.

The team is led by Dr Timothy Davies and includes Professor Jeanette Thom, Associate Professor Gillian Nisbet, Dr Jennifer Fleeton, Amanda Semaan, and Associate Professor Garner Clancey.

Research Student Focus: Laura Metcalfe

Laura Metcalfe is currently researching the age of criminal responsibility in Australia. She will argue that while there is ample evidence of the merits of raising the age to 14, consideration of reform must go beyond debate around raising the age as delimited to reform of a legal construct, to development of a conceptual framework for delivery of services and supports that crosscut governmental departments and that effectively respond to the needs of children at-risk for, or in contact with, the justice system.

Laura's research will investigate the practical operation of the doli incapax presumption in NSW via observation of Children's Court proceedings and interviews with current and former judicial officers and legal practitioners with experience in doli matters. She will then analyse a linked administrative dataset (Human Services Dataset) to explore risk and

protective factors that predict justice system contact for youth aged 8-13 in NSW. Understanding how these risk factors, individually and in conjunction, affect the odds of youth's contact with the justice system can drive investment into primary and secondary prevention and intervention services that address these co-occurring risk factors through an integrated approach.

Laura has co-authored multiple articles and reports with Collaboration members. A recent article on education in youth justice centres can be accessed here.



Researcher Highlight: Designing Trauma Informed Behavioural Interventions for Young Offenders

When presented with an opportunity to look at innovative solutions for Youth Justice NSW, as part of a Master of Innovation and Strategic Design course, Susan Morley was keen to understand if there might be a connection between young people in custody, early adverse childhood experiences, and poorly developed structural brain capability. A review of the literature revealed that most kids in custody have some form of early trauma and also inadvertently, display many of the symptoms of disrupted brain development, when viewed from this perspective. As a result, Susan–now a PhD researcher–is keen to see if the young people who frequent the NSW custodial corridors reflect this finding also. If so, to establish how we might provide more tailored early trauma informed support, to develop any missing structural brain connections that may prevent more developmentally appropriate social behaviour by young offenders.

This research is being supervised by Dr Luke Hespanhol, Research Partnerships Lead and Director of the Master of Interaction Design and Electronic Arts at the school of Architecture, Design and Planning, Dr Garner Clancey, Associate Professor of Criminology at The University of Sydney Law School and Dr Rohan Lulham, Senior Lecturer in Design at the school of Architecture, Design and Planning. It is also being supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarship

Affiliate – Dr Justine Humphry

Dr Justine Humphry SFHEA is a Senior Lecturer in Digital Cultures in the Discipline of Media and Communications at the University of Sydney. She is also the Deputy Head of School (Research) of Art, Communication and English.

Justine researches the cultures and politics of digital media and emerging technologies with a focus on the social consequences of mobile, smart and data-driven technologies. Her research addresses digital inequalities, young people and digital media, mediation of home/homelessness and urban datafication.

Justine was the chief investigator of research on homelessness and mobile connectivity for the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (from 2013-14) and for the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre (from 2015-16). She co-led the Smart Publics USyd/Glasgow partnership collaboration (from 2019-20). She led the Emerging Online Safety Issues project collaboration funded by the Online Safety Grants Program of the Office of the eSafety Commissioner. Her book Homelessness and Mobile communication – Precariously Connected, brings together research in this area carried out in Australia and the United States over a number of years.



Affiliate – Associate Professor Marietta Martinovic

Dr Marietta Martinovic OAM is an Associate Professor in Criminology and Justice studies at RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia. She is internationally recognised criminologist in the field of transformative learning in prisons and development of opportunities for the inclusion of lived criminal justice experience in policy making. She started the first Australian Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program in Australia, and has established, and is leading six prison-based and one community-based Think Tank. Think Tanks are composed of people with lived experience of the Criminal Justice System (CJS), university students, researchers and CJS practitioners. Over the last decade, as a Director of the Advocacy Think Tanks, Dr Martinovic has led 100+ stakeholder consultations, authored 50+ reports and 5 parliamentary inquiries, resulting in unprecedented systemic change mandating government/non-government organisations to include those with lived/living CJ experience in policy-making. Her pioneering work has been recognised nationally and internationally.

Marietta recently joined Dr Jedidiah Evans for a discussion on prison-based education. A summary of both of their work can be found here.

Affiliate – Dr Sacha Jamieson

Dr Sacha Jamieson is a qualitative researcher of health, carcerality, and the moral-political activity of professional work. Her work examines the intersections of structural oppression, institutional discourse and practices, ethics, and health equity. Using critical methodologies,

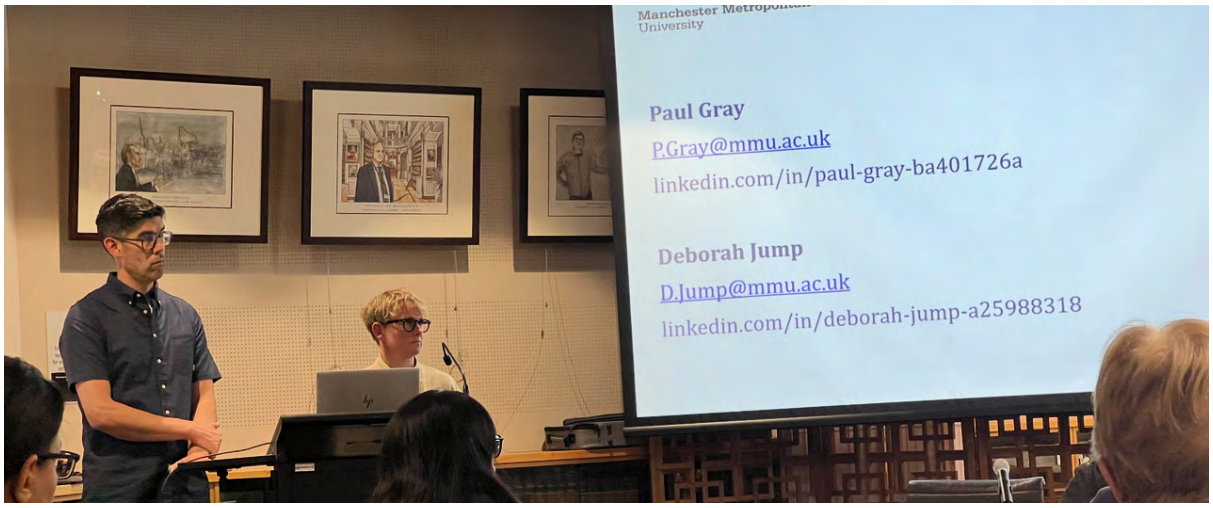
her research aims to inform theory, policy and practice by examining the construction of health and social issues and centreing the experiences of service users.

Sacha has practiced as a social worker in acute mental health services and as a researcher on projects focused on the health and social and emotional wellbeing of criminalised and incarcerated women.

Last year, Sacha co-authored a paper examining the health and social circumstances women experience when reimprisonment occurs. The study explored the relationship between social determinants of health, mental health, substance-use and recidivism among women exiting prison with histories of substance-use. It found that substance-use was associated with increased odds of recidivism. Poor mental health, ongoing social support, child custody, financial and housing needs were all associated with increased odds of substance-use.

These findings emphasise the need for approaches the target the social determinants of health as means to reduce mental distress, substance-use and related recidivism.

You can read the full paper, published in the Harm Reduction Journal, here.



Affiliate – The Manchester Centre for Youth Studies

Established in 2014 (by Professor Hannah Smithson), the Manchester Centre for Youth Studies (MCYS) has established itself as an internationally recognised research centre, known for its innovative methodological approaches to working with young people. MCYS has a particular focus on young people in youth justicesystems and young people's mental health.

Co-directors Dr Paul Gray and Dr Deborah Jump recently visited the University of Sydney, meeting with a range of our academics and research centres. Dr Gray and Dr Jump also presented a fantastic seminar on the recent work of the MCYS, including their research into girls associated with gangs and the use of storytelling with young people who have committed serious violence.

You can find out more about the MCYS, and subscribe to their podcast, here.

Affiliate – Dr Marlee Bower

Dr Marlee Bower is a Senior 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.

Dr Bower is the Academic Lead of The Mentally Healthy Futures Project, a five-year project (2023-2027) aimed at building partnerships and providing holistic, evidence-based policy recommendations to improve the mental health of Australians now and into the future. She is also the Academic Lead of Australia's Mental Health Think Tank.

Prior to joining the Matilda Centre, Dr Bower worked in government research and strategy in prison and homelessness settings. Dr Bower recently co-authored an article examining the prevalence and impact of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and hazardous alcohol use on criminogenic needs and reoffending outcomes among incarcerated adults in NSW. The authors found that hazardous alcohol use, but not PTSD, was associated with greater odds of, and a shorter time to, violent reoffending. Both PTSD and hazardous alcohol use were independently associated with higher criminogenic needs. The article, published in Advances in Dual Diagnosis, is freely accessible here.



Introducing the Centre for Crime and Youth Justice Research

Last year we announced an affiliation between the University of Sydney's Justice Collaboration and Manchester Metropolitan University's Centre for Youth Studies. The Manchester Centre for Youth Studies is now the Centre for Crime and Youth Research (CCYJR).

CCYJR is dedicated to improving outcomes for children and young people in contact with the criminal justice system. Their research explores the lives, voices, and experiences of children and young people across diverse contexts. They work collaboratively with communities, practitioners, and policymakers to generate insights that inform practice and shape fairer, more effective responses to the challenges young people face. Their projects span youth justice, education, health, social care, and community settings. These are all grounded in a commitment to co-production, inclusivity, and social change. Through innovative, interdisciplinary research, they aim to influence policy, challenge inequality, and amplify the perspectives of young people.

Affiliate – Dr Sacha Jamieson

Dr Sacha Jamieson is a qualitative researcher of health, carcerality, and the moral-political activity of professional work. Her work examines the intersections of structural oppression, institutional discourse and practices, ethics, and health equity. Using critical methodologies, her research aims to inform theory, policy and practice by examining the construction of health and social issues and centreing the experiences of service users. Dr Jamieson has practiced as a social worker in acute mental health services and as a researcher on projects

focused on the health and social and emotional wellbeing of criminalised and incarcerated women.

Last year Dr Jamieson, Associate Professor Emma Tseris and Collaboration member Dr Lobna Yassine hosted a seminar series entitled "Australia's disciplinary regimes: how carcerality is enacted and resisted in the 'helping' professions". Speakers from across the human services presented on the topic, from schooling and education, the social work profession, child protection services, mental health and prisons.

Dr Jamieson recently published a chapter coauthored with Dr Yassine entitled "Punishment disguised as 'help': carcerality in the human services and the role of social work towards abolition". The chapter, included within *Abolition in Social Work and Human Services* (edited by Ian Hyslop and Bob Pease) argues that if social work is to be anti-oppressive, then it must also be for abolition. Using examples from the authors' practice, this chapter aims to: (1) critique dominant discourses that perpetuate the carceral state; (2) recognise that the community is already engaged in abolition strategies, despite these strategies often being ignored; and (3) explore possibilities for social workers to dismantle carceral structures and build practices that shift power to communities.

The chapter, published by Bristol University Press, can be accessed here.

Research Student Spotlight: Luke Strong

Luke Strong is a PhD candidate at the Sydney School of Architecture, Design and Planning.

Luke's research examines the relationship between acoustic design, occupied noise patterns and inmate behaviour in operational correctional environments in New South Wales. To date, more than 100 total days of noise logging has been completed across 10 maximum-security remand units in four correctional centres, alongside impulse response measurements to characterise the acoustic conditions of each space. The data will be used to better understand how acoustic design shapes noise exposure in correctional settings, and how sustained exposure may influence behaviour and overall wellbeing for both inmates and officers.

The project is being supervised by Associate Professor Densil Cabrera and Collaboration Member Dr Rohan Lulham.

Congratulations Dr Laura Metcalfe!

HDR student Laura Metcalfe has been awarded her PhD for her thesis - *Examining the operation of doli incapax and implications for reform in New South Wales (NSW), Australia*

Children aged between 10 and 13 occupy a distinctive position within the criminal justice system in NSW. Under the doctrine of doli incapax, they are presumed incapable of criminal responsibility unless the prosecution can prove otherwise. Despite the centrality of this doctrine, relatively little empirical research has examined how it operates in practice, how legal actors interpret its requirements, or how it interacts with broader justice system processes. At the same time, debates about youth crime, community safety, and the appropriate age of criminal responsibility have intensified, often without sufficient attention to the day-to-day operation of existing legal safeguards or the lived experiences of children subject to them. This thesis addresses that gap through a mixed-methods examination of doli incapax across legal doctrine, courtroom practice, and children's trajectories across justice and related systems. By integrating qualitative interviews with magistrates and legal practitioners (n=27), courtroom observations (n=20), an

online survey of Local Court magistrates (n=36), and linked administrative data (n=15,895 children with police contact between 10–13), the study provides a comprehensive account of how doli incapax functions not only as a legal principle, but as a mechanism embedded within institutional processes and children's life courses. The findings demonstrate that the presumption operates primarily as a procedural safeguard that limits conviction but does not prevent children's exposure to extended justice processes. They further show that early justice system contact is concentrated among children experiencing cumulative and intersecting disadvantage, challenging individualised accounts of offending. In so doing, the thesis contributes new empirical insight into the operation of doli incapax and reframes debates about criminal responsibility by situating the presumption within broader questions of youth justice governance and system design.

Laura was supervised by Associate Professor Garner Clancey, Professor Emerita Judy Cashmore and Dr Betty Luu. You can access her thesis for free here.



Raising the Bar Sydney – Dr Jedidiah Evans on Reading, Writing and Redemption

Collaboration member Dr Jedidiah Evans recently participated in Raising the Bar Sydney, presenting on his work in NSW prisons.

For over a decade, Collaboration member Dr Evans has run workshops in NSW prisons, bringing poetry, philosophy, and creative writing to incarcerated men and women. His research shows that meaningful education builds communities on the inside and networks on the outside. And crucially, it reduces the likelihood of people returning. This is restorative justice in action, one poem at a time.

Prior to the event, Dr Evans joined Canny Chifley on 2SER Must Listen to discuss reading, writing and redemption in prison. You can listen to the interview here.

Affiliate – Associate Professor Jo-An Occhipinti

Associate Professor Jo-An Occhipinti is an epidemiologist and systems scientist at the Sydney School of Public Health, University of Sydney. She is an NHMRC Principal Research Fellow and leads *Generation Mental Wealth*, a national research program developing new measures and policy insights to improve the mental wellbeing of young people by strengthening social participation, social cohesion, and other systemic foundations of wellbeing. She is also Co-Director of the University of Sydney's Mental Wealth Initiative, a transdisciplinary initiative spanning public health, economics, business, law, and systems science, and working in partnership with global research, policy, and industry leaders to inform wellbeing-oriented economic and social policy.

Associate Professor Occhipinti recently published a policy brief in collaboration with the Orygen Policy Centre. It shows that the headline unemployment rate conceals a deteriorating structural position for young people that has been building for nearly half a century. Even when young people find work, they cannot get enough hours. The youth-to-adult underemployment ratio has reached the highest levels ever recorded.

Young men experienced a sharp post-COVID spike that has partially corrected. Young women show a steady, accelerating climb, with no sign of peaking. Young women aged 15–24 now have a higher underemployment rate than young men of the same age (16.4% versus 12.6%). Any policy response that treats youth underemployment as a uniform problem will misdiagnose the mechanism in both cases.

This matters beyond the labour market. Work provides identity, purpose, inclusion, and social connection. There is strong evidence that unemployment and underemployment are causal drivers of suicide mortality. And these record gaps are emerging just as generative AI begins to reshape demand for exactly the roles a university education is designed to prepare young people for. The youth mental health emergency and the youth labour market failure are deeply interconnected problems. If we are serious about the future of young Australians, the labour market is where upstream policy attention needs to be directed.

You can read the full policy brief here.

Affiliate – Dr Milica Stilinovic

Dr Milica (Milly) Stilinovic is a Post-Doctoral Research Associate working on the ARC-funded project *Governing Immersive Technologies*, led by Dr Joanne Gray, Dr Ben Egliston, and Professor Marcus Carter.

Her doctoral research analysed how far-right and white supremacist groups mobilise and recruit online, establishing the foundation for her ongoing work on platform power, technological harm, and digital extremism. She has since extended her scholarship to artificial intelligence, coining the concept of the “underspheres” to describe decentralised AI communities whose emergent and unregulated practices challenge existing governance frameworks.

Prior to academia, she worked in journalism and narrative strategy, with reporting published in *TIME*, *Forbes*, *BBC*, *Nine News*, and Amnesty International. This background informs her commitment to research that is publicly engaged, policy-relevant, and accessible beyond the academy.

Dr Stilinovic has been featured in recent media coverage on digital harm. She joined Waleed Aly and Scott Stephens on ABC’s The Minefield podcast to discuss smart glasses and the gap between technological development and law reform. You can listen to the episode here, and read Dr Stilinovic’s accompanying opinion piece here.

Affiliate – Dr Michelle Peterie

Dr Michelle Peterie is ARC DECRA Senior Research Fellow and University Robinson Fellow in the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Sydney. She co-leads the Sydney Centre for Healthy Societies' research themes on 'Work, Education and Welfare' and 'Migration, Im/mobility and Belonging'. Michelle is an Editor-in-Chief of the *Australian Journal of Social Issues* and co-convener of The Australian Sociological Association's Families and Relationships Thematic Group.

Michelle's research investigates the impacts of social policies and practices on individual and collective wellbeing. Taking a person-centred approach - and in close collaboration with research participants and third-sector stakeholders - her work seeks to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children, families and communities. Michelle is currently leading two

Australian Research Council (ARC) projects about immigration detention in Australia. Both studies are being undertaken in partnership with the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Child Wellbeing in the Context of Parental Immigration Detention and Deportation: The first project is an ARC DECRA study about children's experiences of parental immigration detention and/or deportation. As part of this study, Michelle and her team is speaking with children who have had a parent detained in or deported from Australia. They are also be speaking with these children's parents/guardians, and with the people who support them. For more information about this study, please visit the project webpage.

The Forgotten Children, Ten Years On: The second project is an ARC Linkage study about the long-term impacts of immigration detention in the lives of people who were detained as children. The research builds on the AHRC's 2014 *Forgotten Children* report, and will be one of the first studies internationally to investigate the long-term impacts of detaining children. The team is interested in speaking to people who were detained in Australia's onshore or offshore detention system at any point during their childhoods. Recruitment for this project is now open. For more information or to ask about being involved, please visit the project webpage.

Michelle recently co-authored an opinion piece for the ABC on the Forgotten Children, Ten Years On project. You can read that piece here. She was also recently quoted in a Guardian article about Australian's deportation policies. You can read that piece here.

Affiliate – Dr Zoe Hogan

Dr Zoe Hogan is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Sydney Centre for Healthy Societies at the University of Sydney. Her research interests include arts-based research, applied theatre and teaching artistry. Zoe is currently working on an ARC Linkage Project about the long-term impacts of immigration detention in the lives of people who were detained as children.

Zoe's doctoral research explored the experiences of Community Languages teachers engaging in a drama and storytelling program. Her thesis was awarded Finalist in the Drama Australia Christine Sinclair Research Award 2024. She is a member of the Editorial Board of Journal of Applied Arts & Health. She is a co-author of *Connecting through Drama (2022)* and the author of *Teaching Artistry through Drama-in-Education (2026)*.

Zoe's new book explores the complexity of teaching artistry through the lens of a participatory drama project with adults from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Interweaving theory with practice-based research, Hogan considers how themes of flow, affect, care, and thirdspace illuminate participants' experiences. This timely exploration adds to a growing discourse in drama-in-education and applied theatre that moves away from positivist jargon and grandiose claims in favour of research methods informed by social justice and the centring of the intrinsic value of arts-rich experiences. Weaving, unweaving, and reweaving is a central metaphor throughout the book, considering how arts-based research constitutes an iterative process of learning, unlearning, revisiting, and reconceiving preconceived notions and ideas.

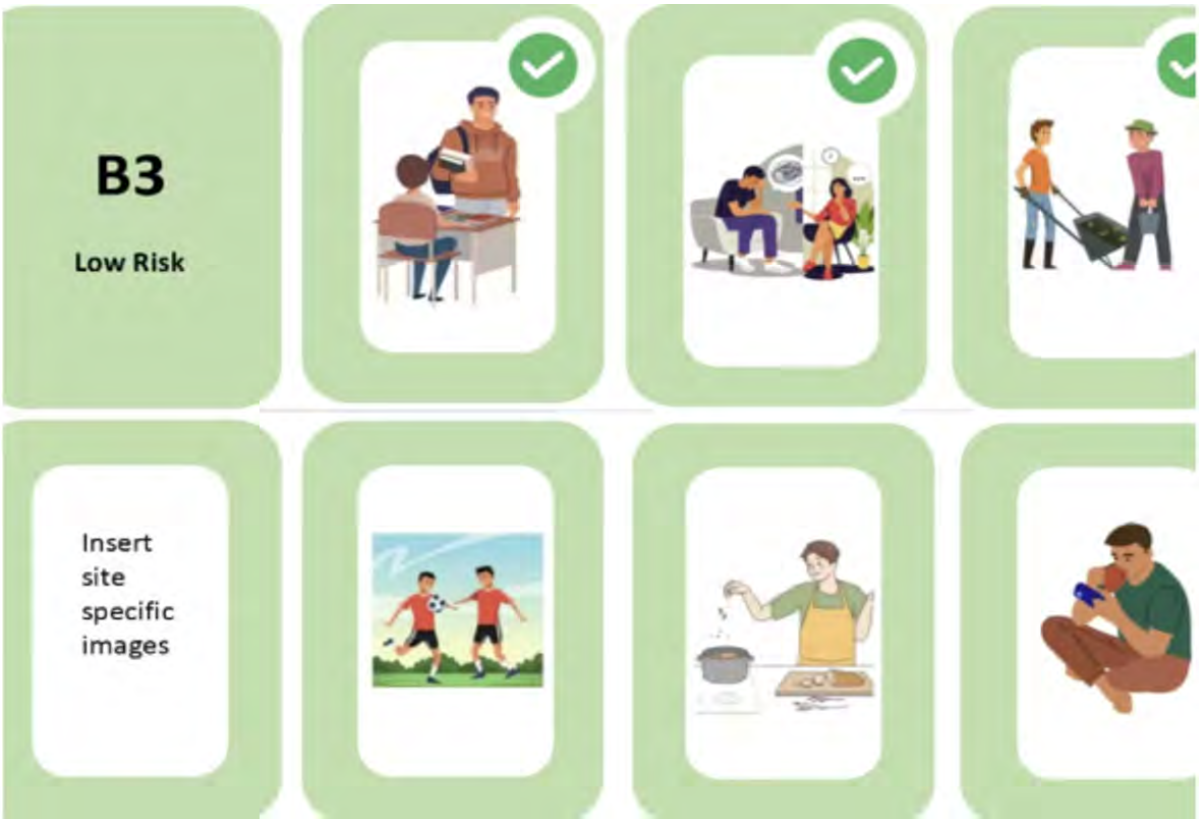
Zoe's research approach is informed by her practice as a teaching artist and community arts facilitator, where she has worked extensively with children and young people, migrant and refugee communities, people with lived experience of homelessness, and young people who are incarcerated. Her work in this area has been recognised with a UNESCO case study and STARTTS NSW Humanitarian Award. She has held various leadership, artistic and consultative positions at organisations including Sydney Theatre Company, Milk Crate

Theatre, Powerhouse Museum and Australian Plays Transform. Zoe is the recipient of The Lloyd Martin Travelling Scholarship for Emerging Arts Leaders from Sydney Opera House.

Projects

Projects from across the University are directly or indirectly relevant to criminal justice systems and those in conflict with the law. This section features some of this work. It first showcases some projects run by Collaboration members and affiliates. It then features some work from beyond the Collaboration and across the University.

From Collaboration Members and Affiliates

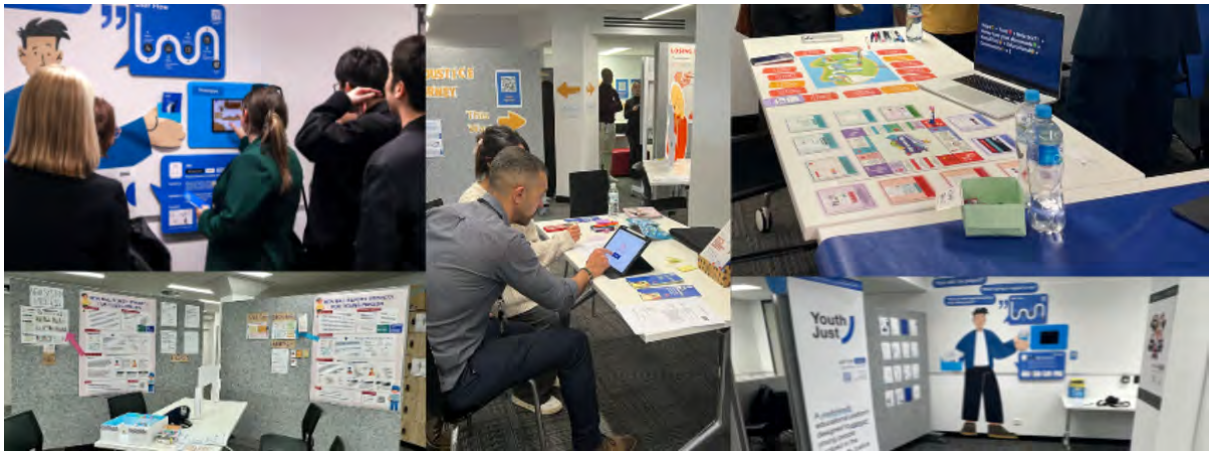


Explaining Classification

Master of Occupational Therapy students completing the OCCP5239: Community Fieldwork Project Placement unit recently participated in a project to develop a series of visual aid resources for Youth Justice NSW.

These students collaborated with YJNSW classification officers to produce a range of resources that help explain classification to young people with low levels of literacy. By providing a clear understanding of classification ratings, the resources aimed to engage and motivate those within the youth justice system to work towards lowering their classification and setting their own goals for the future.

This project was recently featured in Sydney's Student News. That article can be read here.



Re-thinking (communication of) court processes and outcomes with young people

Master of Design students recently exhibited work completed for a unit of study convened by collaboration member Dr Rohan Lulham and collegues Mariana Zafeirakopoulos and Moe Qashlan.

Students worked on an inter-agency project facilitated by Youth Justice NSW. The project asked students to explore ways to better communicate information to young people in and around processes surrounding a court case - including the understanding of Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders and Bail conditions.

Each team was asked to develop a concept that addressed issues related to a current specific court form or resource. They were also asked to develop a digital concept that addresses a specific or general issue related to young people appearing in the Children's Court.

The project was led by Youth Justice NSW, Speech Pathology Australia, Legal Aid NSW, Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT, the Advocate for Children and Young People, and the Children's Court of NSW.

Pasifika Review

Chair of Social Work and Policy Studies and Collaboration Member Professor Jioji Ravulo, recently undertook a formal review of the Pasifika Program implemented by Cobham Youth Justice Centre.

This program works alongside young people who identify as being from an Indigenous-Pacific heritage to further support a deeper insight and understanding of cultural strengths and perspectives that support individual and family identities alongside their wellbeing. This initiative strived to decrease unhelpful behaviours whilst focusing on pro-social engagement with education, vocational pursuits and employment.



Bridges Inside

Collaboration members Dr Jedidiah Evans and Dr Sam Shpall—in partnership with HDR students Lily Patchett and Amie Doan— have started a forum for students, community members, and academics interested in examining prison justice alongside philosophy and literature.

Bridges Inside will hold regular discussion series. Each discussion series consists of four to five monthly sessions focusing on philosophical and literary texts. From August to December of 2024, *Bridges Inside* will examine Tommie Shelby's book *The Idea of Prison Abolition* (2022) alongside selected works of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction.

You can find out more and register for the series on the project website - Bridges Inside.

Moral Emotions Inside

Run by collaboration members Dr Jedidiah Evans and Dr Sam Shpall, Moral Emotions Inside was a twelve-week course of philosophy and creative writing classes conducted at Dillwynia Correctional Centre in 2023. Students studied moral emotions like grief, love, and forgiveness in an intensive seminar format with lecturers from the University of Sydney, established a vibrant and respectful learning community, and applied their knowledge and experience in a self-led capstone project. Students had weekly readings, completed weekly creative writing tasks and optional philosophy homework. These tasks prompted reflection on students' experience of the moral emotions.

Here is what two students had to say about the program:
"We felt safe in the space we were in. It has helped us to relate more to others and to realise that we were not alone in the battle we were fighting, that we are not alone in what we were feeling."

"Beyond the lectures and discussions, we have learned how to think, to be more aware of our surroundings, how to be more considerate of others".

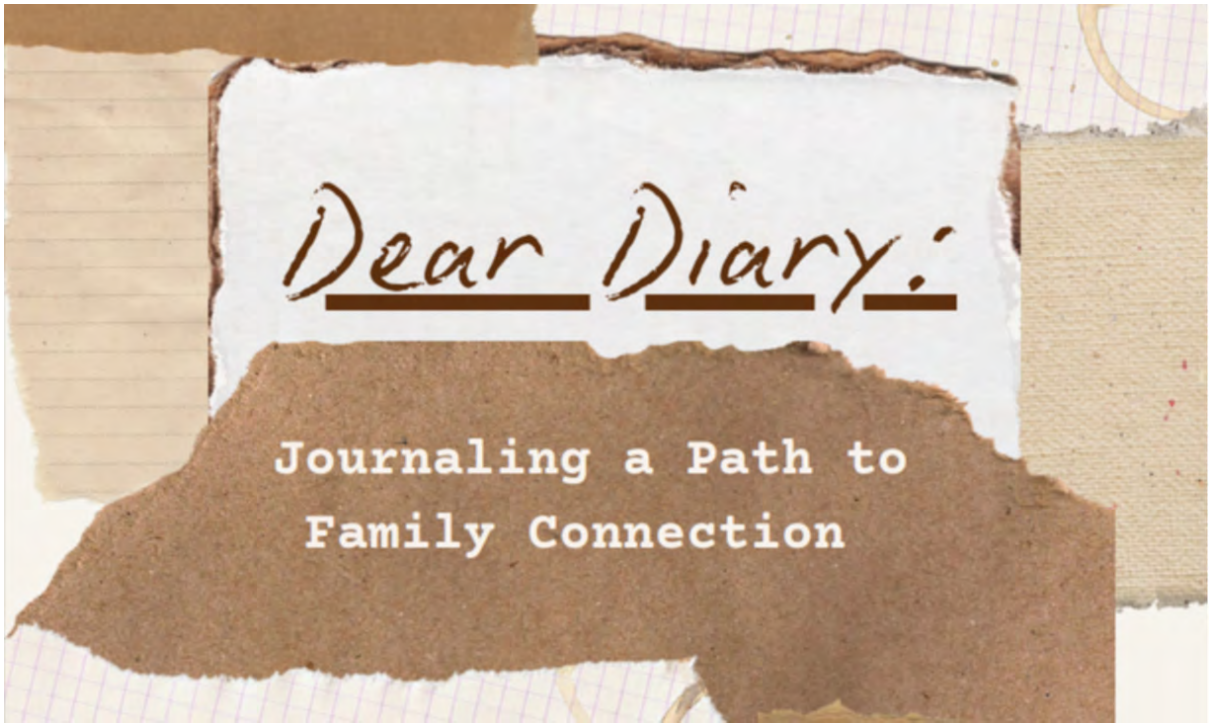
2025 Industry and Community Project Unit to collaborate with NSW Police

Industry and Community Project Units (ICPUs) provide undergraduate students with the opportunity to work on authentic problems and issues set out by industry, community and government organisations. This semester students will be working on a project for NSW Police.
NSW is facing persistent and evolving challenges related to youth behaviour and offending in both regional and metropolitan areas, driven by complex sociological and technological factors. NSW Police seeks to collaborate with University of Sydney to better understand these issues from a youth perspective and develop innovative recommendations and

insights. Key questions include whether the Young Offenders Act effectively addresses the needs of today's youth, if the justice system appropriately differentiates between age groups within the 10–17 range, and how age influences children's understanding of legal proceedings. Addressing these questions is critical to ensuring the justice system supports the evolving needs of youth and fosters safer communities for future generations.

You can read more about the unit here.

If you would like to enquire into partnering with the university for an IPCU you can do so here.



Enhancing Family Connections for Youth Detention: A Collaborative Effort

In the second semester of 2024, students enrolled in Industry Community Project Units (ICPUs) worked closely with Cobham Youth Justice Centre staff on the project "Enhancing family engagement", to propose innovative recommendations to help develop the relationships between youth in detention and their families, whether biological or otherwise. This initiative not only provided students with a unique learning experience but also aimed to make a tangible impact on the lives of young people in detention.

The semester included a visit to the youth detention centre, where students gained firsthand insights into the centre and its operations, and the challenges faced by the youth and the existing mechanisms for maintaining family connections. Students were grouped in eight interdisciplinary teams, comprising students from diverse disciplines such as Arts and Social Sciences, Life Sciences, Business, Law, Computer Science, and Pure Mathematics. Each group focused on a specific area of interest and involved both primary and secondary data collection. The semester culminated in the presentation of eight insightful, feasible, and innovative proposals to the Cobham Youth Centre staff.

Students had an exceptional opportunity to gain awareness of the reality of youth in detention, and help contribute with ideas towards improving their conditions. This initiative

showcased the power of collaboration between students, academics and Youth Justice NSW. The extent of research and thinking that went into delivering these recommendations was evident in the detailed and thoughtful final reports from each team.

A summary of each is available here.



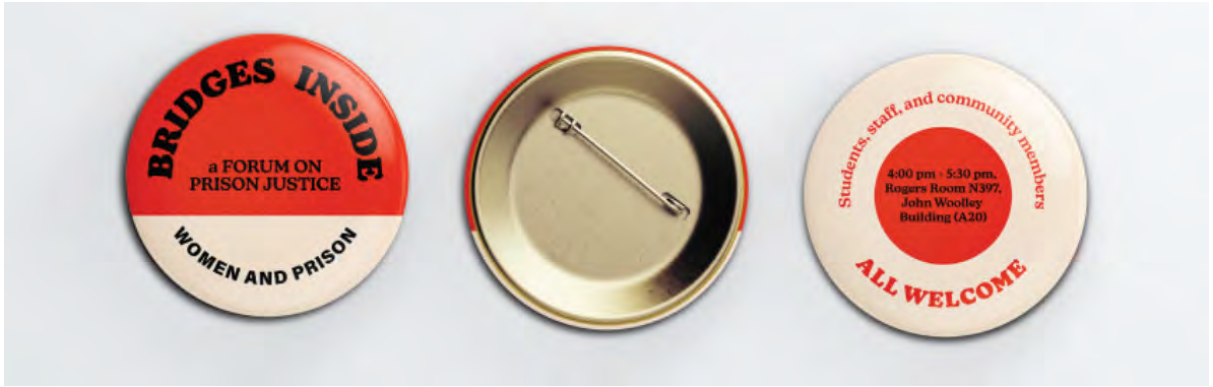
Generation mental wealth: A new paradigm for fostering youth mental health

Co-founder of the Brain and Mind Centre's Mental Wealth Initiative Associate Professor Jo-An Occhipinti has secured a $2.8 million National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Investigator Grant for her research program 'Generation Mental Wealth'.

This program applies a Mental Wealth lens to the complex challenge of declining youth mental health, examining its implications for national prosperity and exploring new ways to secure a healthier future for young people and society.

This program flows from A/Professor Occhipinti's transdisciplinary work on Mental Wealth - an emerging concept that takes stock of the value of our collective brain capital and social assets. Her work aims to create environments where individuals and societies thrive, where economies prosper by prioritizing well-being, and where we can address global challenges with resilience, unity, and innovation.

The grant will fund the program for the next five years. More information can be found here.

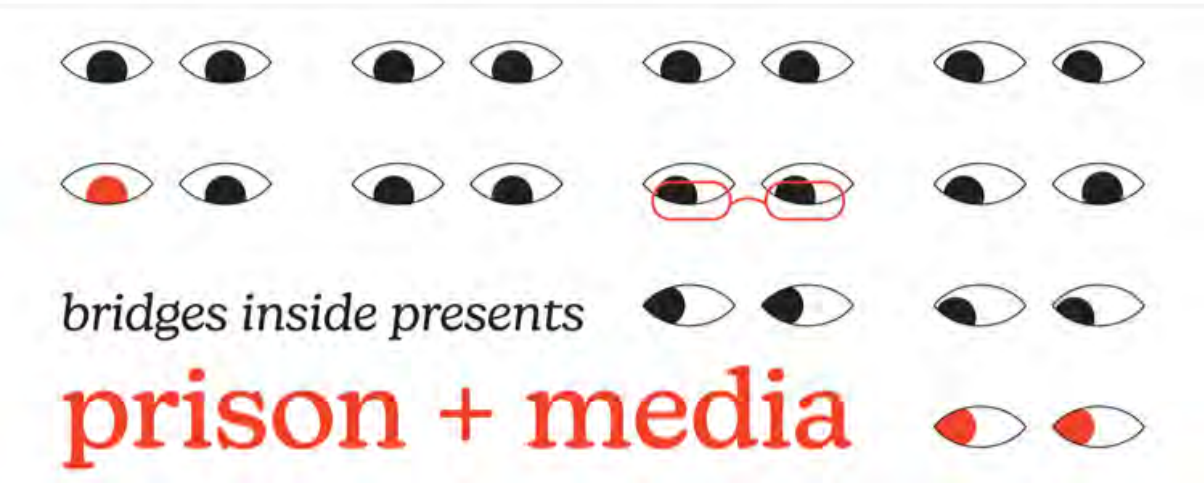


Bridges Inside Forum Returns for 2025

Bridges Inside, an initiative of Collaboration members Dr Jedidiah Evans and Dr Sam Shpall—in partnership with HDR students Lily Patchett and Amie Doan—returns for 2025. *Bridges Inside* is a forum for students, community members, and academics interested in examining prison justice alongside philosophy and literature.

From April to June 2025, *Bridges Inside* are discussing "Women and Prison." Although the prison has historically been seen as a male-dominated space, women's correctional facilities are seing an increasing number of inmates. Together, participants explore the complicated relationship between gender and carcerality by examining the lived experiences of women inside.

You can find out more and register for the series on the project website - Bridges Inside.



Bridges Inside Returns for 2026!

Bridges Inside, an initiative of Collaboration members Dr Jedidiah Evans and Dr Sam Shpall — in partnership with HDR students Lily Patchett and Amie Doan — returns for 2026. Bridges Inside is a forum for students, community members, and academics interested in examining prison justice alongside philosophy and literature.

From April to June 2026, Bridges Inside are exploring "prison + media". Each session examines a different site of interaction between the prison and the media landscape to examine how the lives of incarcerated people are shaped, for good or for ill, by different forms of communication.

The next session will take place on Thursday 14 May between 4:00 - 5:30pm. It will feature About Time Media - the publisher of Australia's national prison newspaper - discussing the importance of prison writing for change.

You can get your free ticket for the event here. Check the Bridges Inside website for the readings for the session.



Project News: Better understanding online safety education delivery in Youth Justice - Indigenous perspectives

This is an initiative by an interdisciplinary research team at the University of Sydney — in partnership with Youth Justice NSW, Alannah & Madeline Foundation, Telstra Foundation and Youth Action — to gather views and perspectives from young people, educators, Youth Justice workers and community members about the status of online safety education in youth justice and assess the feasibility of our proposed research design.

The consultations are scoping for the recently funded project - Digital Media for Youth Justice: Co-producing media for education and policy - which has as its aim to investigate the digital literacies and social media cultures of justice-involved young people and to co-create tailored online safety education that responds to areas of digital risk and develops essential safety skills and literacies. The purpose of the consultations was to gather views and perspectives from project participants and stakeholders, focusing on First Nations young people and their communities, to inform how we go about designing online safety resources and assess the feasibility of our plan to co-create educational resources with young people involved in youth justice in the form of videos and podcasts, to be embedded in school and community learning programs.

The consultations were carried out in December 2025 and March 2026. The consultations were supported by a grant from the University of Sydney's Ngarangun: Sydney Indigenous Research Strategy Grants 2025, which enabled us to employ an Aboriginal youth justice specialist to help access and engage with young people in YJ centres and covered researcher travel to the consultation sites in Western Sydney and Grafton. University of Sydney researchers in the project are: Associate Professor Justine Humphry, Dr Catherine Page Jeffery, Associate Professor Jonathon Hutchinson, Professor Jakelin Troy and Associate Professor Garner Clancey.

From Beyond the Collaboration



ActBack Hunters Hill

The CREATE Centre facilitated a drama and theatremaking workshop in Hunters Hill last year. The program, supported by the NSW State Government's Office of Regional Youth, through the Children and Young People Wellbeing Recovery Initiative, sought to build resilience in the face of recent disasters including floods and COVID-19 and teach skills in disaster recovery to participant young people.
Across 5 days, 25 young people learnt theatremaking and drama skills, and developed a show that was performed for friends and family. The drama-based process helped them process and respond to recent disasters in a supportive environment.

Service Learning in Indigenous Communities

Service Learning in Indigenous Communities (SILC) units allow student groups to work on essential projects co-designed and directed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Over the course of the semester students learn about the community and design projects in response to the community's priorities. This culminates in a trip to the host community in which students finalise and conduct their community projects.

This semester students will be working in Aboriginal communities in north Queensland with University and Community supervisors and Girringun Aboriginal Corporation (GAC). Girringun Aboriginal Corporation is diverse and dynamic, and they are looking to expand their footprint in areas including community services, environment and marine protection, the Indigenous arts sector, biodiversity and education. In the five projects being undertaken this semester—ranging from strengthening Girringun's financial future, to securing the traditional use of marine resources —the focus will be on youth justice and the current and future needs of young Traditional Owners of the nine member tribes of Girringun.

You can find out more about SILC and past projects undertaken by students here.



Growing Minds Check-In Tool

The University of Sydney has launched a new tool to support parents and children/ young people's mental health and wellbeing. The Growing Minds 'Check-In' is an online tool for parents of children aged from birth to 17 years, which allows parents and caregivers to track their child's wellbeing and get recommendations to research-backed programs and resources when needed. The Check-In seeks to transform early intervention by helping parents to identify when children/young people are at risk of mental health problems and increasing access to evidence-based programs.

We are currently recruiting parents to test this free and accessible tool in a research study to make sure it is as helpful and user-friendly as possible. All parents are encouraged to participate even if you do not have concerns about your child's wellbeing.

Please see more information here or sign up here

No More Victims

A team of researchers from the Matilda Centre led by Dr Siobhan O'Dean have recently been awarded a Medical Research Future Fund Grant. This grant will provide funding for a new project titled "No more victims: Building healthy relationships and preventing intimate partner violence and sexual violence through a novel, scalable school-based intervention".

This project aims to address intimate partner and sexual violence among young Australians using the 'OurFutures' web-based prevention model created by the Matilda Centre. The OurFutures Healthy Relationships Program is designed with young people and experts, it uses online cartoon lessons to improve attitudes and help students develop healthy relationship skills. With this funding the team will test the effectiveness of the program through a research trial in 24 secondary schools, the first evaluation of its kind in Australia.



Exploring AI in criminal justice: What Malaysia can teach us

As nations around the world grapple with how emerging technologies intersect with justice, a new University of Sydney study is looking to Malaysia for insights on the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in criminal sentencing.

Funded by the South East Asia Centre's Ignition Grant, the project 'Exploring the Role of AI in Criminal Justice: Lessons Learned from Practitioners in Malaysia' is a timely and globally relevant collaboration between The University of Sydney's Professor Azrini Wahidin, Professor Lemuria Carter and Dr Haezreena Hamid from the University of Malaya's Faculty of Law.

With Malaysia currently undergoing a national criminal justice review, the country has emerged as a key site for studying how technology and justice intersect.

At the heart of this is Malaysia's pioneering development of AI-based sentencing tools—namely, the Artificial Intelligence Sentencing System (AISS), also known as the Artificial Intelligence in Court System (AiCOS). These tools, first launched in Sabah and Sarawak in 2020, are now being gradually introduced across Peninsular Malaysia.

You can find out more about the project here.

Researcher Focus: Dr Jacob Crouse

Brain and Mind Centre Member and University of Sydney researcher Dr Jacob Crouse has been awarded a BBRF Young Investigator Grant. Through this grant, the team will track how disruptions in sleep and circadian rhythms, along with genetic predispositions to these disturbances, may trigger mood disorders during young people's formative years.

The study will leverage 3 large, genetically informative, longitudinal, youth-focused cohorts to explore the existence of a sleep-circadian causal pathway to youth-onset mood disorders. One part of the work uses the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) Study to examine parent-rated measures of sleep and mental health on >10,000 children ages 9–10 over 2 years of follow-up. A powerful technique called joint modelling will be used to examine whether patterns of sleep (and dynamic change in sleep)—in combination with baseline variables including sex and genetic liability to sleep-circadian traits (e.g., chronotype, sleep duration, circadian amplitude)—can predict the onset of mental disorders over the follow-up. Another part of the study uses the Brisbane Longitudinal Twin Study to examine whether patterns of sleep (and change over time)—alongside sex and genetic indices of sleep-circadian traits—are associated with onset of depression, hypo/mania, or psychosis in early adulthood. A third part will examine whether patterns of objective sleep-circadian function

(and change over time)—combined with genetic indices of sleep-circadian traits—predict transition from a subthreshold to a full-threshold mental disorder over the follow-up.

Recruiting young people for PTSD and substance use treatment trial

The University of Sydney is conducting a trial of a psychological treatment delivered in person compared to via telehealth for adolescents and young adults (aged 12-25 years) who are having difficulties after experiencing a traumatic event and have drunk alcohol or used drugs in the past month. Participation includes 16 free therapy sessions.

For further information please visit https://copea.org.au/ or call the research team on 0494 394 093.

All information provided will remain anonymous and confidential.

Sydney Children's Hospitals Network HREC approval: 2024/ETH01050



Centre of Research Excellence in Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

Known as FASD-CRE, the Centre of Research Excellence in Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder has been awarded $3,000,000 over five years and will be led by Professor Elizabeth Elliott at the University of Sydney.

With collaborators across Australia and internationally, the FASD-CRE team are committed to supporting children and families through innovations in diagnosis, treatment, prevention and a better understanding of the burden of disease.

Collaborating organisations include the University of Sydney, the University of Newcastle, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (Canada) the Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre, NOFASD, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada, and Deakin University.

You can find out more about the NHMRC funding here.

Justice System Experience of Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) Victim-Survivors

A new project funded by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice and led by the University of Sydney aims to understand how domestic and family violence victim-survivors experience the justice system in New South Wales, especially following recent changes to the law criminalising coercive control.

The project will engage with adult DFV victim-survivors and justice system professionals to learn about people's experiences at different stages of the criminal justice process — from first contact with police, through court, and through support services connected to justice agencies. By listening to people and their insights, the project will help identify what is working well, what needs to improve and where there are opportunities to better support victim-survivors, especially Aboriginal people, people with disability, older people, LGBTQIA+ communities, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and people living in regional and remote areas.

More information on the project is available here. Key justice professionals with significant experience in working in DFV issues in NSW and those who work with victim-survivors can obtain more information about the project and how to participate by contacting Project Officer, Elise Testa at elise.testa@sydney.edu.au.



Right Care, First Time, Where You Live

The Brain and Mind Centre's Right Care, First Time, Where You Live program is concluding after 5 years. Funded by the BHP Foundation, the program aimed to deliver a bold vision to get young people back to work, back to school, and thriving in their communities.

The project team worked with six communities to create decision support tools and health systems solutions that will empower communities to capitalise on the mental health of young people. This was achieved by building community capacity to leverage systems modelling and simulation to strengthen and coordinate the delivery of local mental health care in a responsive and dynamic way. Such a tool will then emphasise the social and economic drivers of mental health and well-being and will empower communities to make compelling investment cases to decision-makers for each site.

The project team worked closely with young people with lived experience of mental illness, local community members and stakeholders via a series of workshops in each community.

Watch the program overview video here. Specific examples of the project's methodology and outputs can be found on the Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network website.

New Project: Ensuring young people are safe, well, and respectED

Dr Amy-Leigh Rowe and Dr Siobhan O'Dean from the Matilda Centre are leading an evaluation of a new evidence-based consent education program. The respectED program has been co-designed with young people, including those with lived experience, to ensure the content is relevant, authentic, and resonates with the realities they face. The program will be delivered in schools in years 9 and 10 (Stage 5) and aims to prevent relationship and sexual violence through empowering young people with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to navigate relationships both online and offline.

A randomised control trial will be used to evaluate the program's effectiveness. Expressions of interest are now open for schools to register for the respectED trial in 2026. Please get in touch or email the team at respectED.study@sydney.edu.au for more information.

Publications

Publications from across the University are directly or indirectly relevant to improving the outcomes of those interacting with the criminal justice system or preventing crime. This section features some of this work. It first showcases publications by Collaboration members and affiliates. It then features some justice-related work from beyond the Collaboration and across the University.

From Collaboration Members and Affiliates

Book Launch: *Youth Crime, Youth Justice and Children's Courts in NSW*

On 27 February 2024, the University of Sydney Law School hosted the book launch of *Youth Crime, Youth Justice and Children's Courts in NSW*, co-edited by Dr Garner Clancey, Sydney Law School, and Dr Rohan Lulham, Sydney School of Architecture, Design & Planning. The book, with chapters written by academics, legal practitioners and Youth Justice NSW staff, provides a comprehensive account of the complex arrangements impacting youth crime, youth justice and Children's Courts in NSW.

From the foreword by Judge Peter Johnstone, Chief Magistrate of New South Wales: 'This book comprehensively covers contemporary issues relating to youth crime, various aspects of the youth justice system, the Children's Court and its criminal jurisdiction, and is, in my view, a landmark publication. It brings together chapters prepared by respected contributors from a variety of disciplines with firsthand specialist knowledge, experience and expertise in relation to children's law and youth justice. This book provides invaluable insights into the Children's Court's criminal jurisdiction and around how to best support children and young people who come into contact with the criminal justice system'.

Emerging online safety issues: co-creating social media education with young people

This project, led by Dr Justine Humphry, Dr Jonathon Hutchinson and Dr Olga Boichak was a collaboration between the University of Sydney, Youth Action and Student Edge. Funded by The Australian Government's eSafety Commissioner, the project engaged young people (12-17) and parents and carers in participatory research and co-design to develop, disseminate and evaluate evidence-based social media education resources focusing on key and emerging issues for young people's safety online.

As an outcome of the research, six peer-to-peer videos and three fact sheets were codesigned with young people, and then professionally produced with the engagement of performers from the Australian Theatre for Young People. These evidence-based educational resources formed the basis of the Youth Online Safety campaign, which can be accessed via the project website.

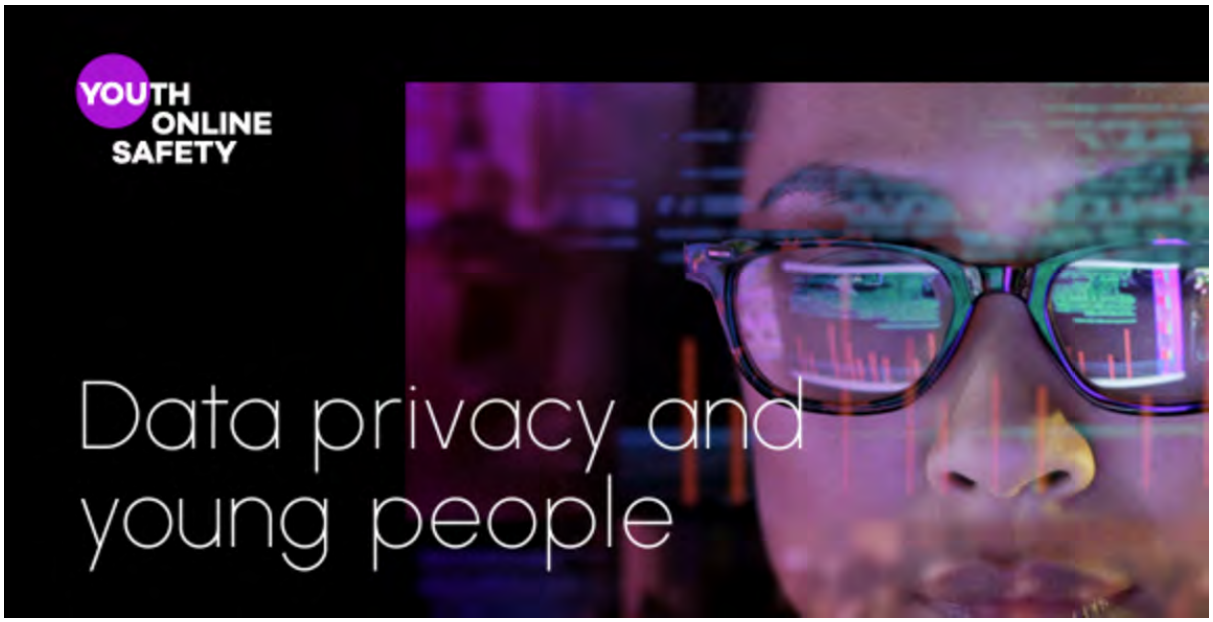
The team's final report can be accessed via the Sydney eScholarship Repository.

Education in Youth Justice Centres

Collaboration members recently published an article in the Journal of Prison Education Research. This article, drawing on publicly available information, raises questions about how best the significant resources invested in Educational Training Units in NSW Youth Justice Centres can be deployed.

The authors believe that there is scope for some re-thinking of how the significant resources invested in schools in NSW YJCs are allocated and considerable scope for the three key agencies (Youth Justice NSW, NSW Department of Education and Justice Health) to collaborate on a program delivery model for young people in custody that reflects the changing circumstances impacting these centres, changes in technology, and changes in the population in these centres.

The article, written by Laura Metcalfe, Dr Cathy Little, Dr Garner Clancey and Dr David Evans, can be accessed here.



Age Verification on Social Media

The researchers behind the 'Emerging Online Safety' report, led by Dr Justine Humphry, have written an opinion piece on age verification proposals for social media. The authors argue that the voice of young people and parents has been missing from discussions about age verification.

Their research, which focused on Australian teenagers aged 12–17 and their parents, drew from focus groups and a national survey in 2022–23. Overall, the survey showed broad support for age verification. Specifically, 72% of young people and 86% of parents believed more effective age limits would improve online safety for young people. However, participants thought that age verification will likely not work. Instead, they said more safety education, face-to-face dialogue, and accountability from social media companies would be better approaches to keeping young people safe online.

The opinion piece was originally published in the Conversation. It can be accessed here.

Burden of Mental Disorders and Suicide Attributable to Childhood Maltreatment

Collaboration member Dr Emma Barrett, alongside members of the Matilda Centre, recently published an article investigating the impact of child abuse and neglect in Australia.

The researchers found that childhood maltreatment—physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and neglect—causes up to 40 percent of common, life-long mental health conditions. Childhood maltreatment was found to account for 41 percent of suicide attempts in Australia, 35 percent for cases of self-harm and 21 percent for depression. Researchers estimate that more than 1.8 million cases of depressive, anxiety, and substance use disorders, 66 143 years of life lost, and 184 636 disability-adjusted life-years could be prevented if childhood maltreatment was eradicated in Australia. The researchers say the results are an urgent call to invest in prevention and family support.

The article can be read in JAMA Psychiatry. A summary of the article can be accessed here.

Child Protection: Domestic & Family Violence, Alcohol & Other Drug Use, and Mental Health Issues

Funded by the Australian Nation Research Organisation for Women's Safety, and utilising the newly established NSW Human Services Dataset a team of researchers from across the University of Sydney investigated the experiences and needs of children from families experiencing domestic and family violence (DFV), parental alcohol and other drug use (AOD), and parental mental health issues (MH).

Researchers found that 33 per cent of children reported to NSW's Child Protection Helpline had either experienced parental DFV or DFV alongside parental AOD use and/or MH issues. When all variables are controlled for, children who are experiencing DFV, parental AOD use and parental MH issues are twice as likely to be removed from their parent's care.

The research underscores the importance of greater investment in integrated models of care for MH issues, AOD use and DFV, along with evidence-based, trauma-informed early interventions for children.

The research can be accessed through the project page on the ANROWS website.

The long-term effectiveness of a personality targeted substance use prevention program on aggression from adolescence to early adulthood

Collaboration member Associate Professor Emma Barrett, her colleagues from the Matilda Centre and researchers from the University of Montreal recently published an article showing how the Matilda Centre's personality targeted substance use prevention program delivered in Year 8 in schools significantly reduces both reactive and proactive aggression up to 7 years following intervention.

The Preventure program is a selective prevention intervention that targets adolescents that relate highly to one of the four personality risk factors for substance use: sensation seeking, hopelessness, impulsivity, and anxiety sensitivity (Conrod, Stewart, Comeau, & Maclean, 2006; Newton et al., 2016). Preventure provides personality-specific coping skills

via a two-session brief intervention incorporating best practice principles for substance misuse (i.e. CBT, MI).

The results of the study suggests a brief personality-targeted intervention may have long-term impacts on aggression among young people. The analysis found that students who received the Preventure program demonstrated larger reductions in aggression over the 7-year follow-up period, from adolescence to young adulthood. Young people who received the Preventure intervention demonstrated accelerated declines in aggressive behaviors compared to those who did not receive the intervention.

The article, published in *Psychological Medicine* can be accessed here.

The efficacy of 'modular dosage' in prison-based psychological interventions to reduce recidivism

Matilda Centre Research Fellow Dr Marlee Bower, alongside Collaboration member Associate Professor Emma Barrett, recently published a study evaluating EQUIPS - a modular suite of programs designed to reduce adult offenders' risk of reoffending. This is the first evaluation of EQUIPS, which is one of the main offender rehabilitation strategies delivered by Corrective Services NSW.

Analysing the dose-response relationship in 4345 participants, Dr Bower found that completing one EQUIPS program was associated with a 24% decrease in the likelihood of reoffending in the 12 months post-release, compared to those who did not complete an EQUIPS program. However, the study found that only half of EQUIPS participants complete a program with the benefit of one compared to no programs only observed when analyses were restricted to the 56% of participants who completed all treatment sessions. The results also show there was no significant difference in odds of serious offending in the 12-months post-release between those who completed two vs. one EQUIPS programs.

Dr Bower's findings challenge the assumption that increased dosage inherently improves individual rehabilitation outcomes. Instead, tailoring treatment intensity and content to individual needs and emphasising responsivity, might yield more meaningful reductions in recidivism.

The full study can be accessed through the *Journal of Criminal Justice* here.

New Book: Careers in Criminology and Criminal Justice in Australia

Justice Collaboration Director Associate Professor Garner Clancey has published *Careers in Criminology and Criminal Justice in Australia.*

This book maps out careers open to a criminology graduate. It provides an overview of the many potential roles, broken down by government agency and employer. This illuminates the types of skills and knowledge required for diverse roles, which will help criminology students (and those in related disciplines) to make the most of their time at university and to prepare for future work.

The book, supported by the University of Sydney Careers Centre, is available for free here.

New Publication: Supporting the cultural connections of children from culturally diverse backgrounds in out-of-home care: perspectives from Australian foster and kinship carers.

Collaboration member Professor Jioji Ravulo co-authored a recently published study examining cultural engagement for children from culturally diverse backgrounds in out-of-home care.

The study explored the perspectives of Australian foster and kinship carers ($n = 31$) on the importance of cultural connection for children from culturally diverse backgrounds in care. Most recognized culture as crucial to child identity and wellbeing. However, the findings highlight the complexity of navigating cultural care, including differing opinions on who should lead cultural engagement, challenges in balancing the child's cultural needs with existing family dynamics, and difficulties accessing accurate information and support from child protection agencies. Findings emphasize the need for training in cultural humility for carers, mechanisms for accurate cultural data gathering, and a collaborative approach to cultural care planning involving all stakeholders, including children and birth parents as key stakeholders and decision-makers.

The article, published in the *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work,* can be accessed here.

Professor Ravulo was a recent guest on Vice-Chancellor Mark Scott's *The Solutionists* podcast. The episode, in which Professor Ravulo discusses the harms of youth detention, can be accessed here.

New research: the potential for digital services to close the mental health care gap in Western Sydney

Digital mental health services and tools could help close the care gap for young people in Western Sydney, according to new research from the University of Sydney's Brain and Mind Centre.

Led by Dr Hossein Hosseini and published in the *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, the study found that digital services – including online therapy, assessments, evidence-based resources, and care coordination – could match the impact of doubling the growth rate of traditional specialised mental health services such as face-to-face psychology and psychiatry, offering a scalable solution while the system catches up to demand.

The study used system dynamics modelling to simulate how digital and traditional services could work together to improve outcomes for young people aged 15-24 in Western Sydney over the next decade. The implementation of digital services led to a 14% reduction in the number of years this demographic lives with mental health disorders, a 6.4% drop in mental health-related emergency department visits and a 4.1% reduction in hospitalisations from self-harm.

You can read the research here, and find out more here.

The Global Impact of Multisystemic Vulnerabilities on Criminal Variety: A Cross-Continental Study in Young Adults

Matilda Centre researchers recently collaborated with an international team to investigate global risk factors of youth offending. The study examined the relationship between individual, familial, and contextual vulnerabilities and criminal versatility during young adulthood, accounting for sociodemographic factors and cross-national differences.

Data were derived from a diverse sample of 4,182 young adults (67% female; mean age = 18.96; *SD* = 0.81) residing in 10 countries across 5 continents who participated in the *International Study of Pro/Antisocial Behavior in Young Adults*. Results indicate that child maltreatment, substance abuse, and delinquent peers are consistent, significant risk factors for crime across all countries. Moreover, they are independent across males and females and among youths living in countries that are ranked differently on the Human Development Index (HDI). In addition, some childhood vulnerabilities showed different predictive ability across sexes (e.g., school failure), and across countries ranked differently on the HDI (e.g., family dysfunction).

The paper can be read on the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* here.

Recent Research: Understanding families with multiple, complex, and unmet service needs in the NSW child protection system

Academics from across the University of Sydney recently published an article analysing the service needs of families in contact with the child protection system. Researchers used population-level, high-volume linked administrative data from the NSW Human Services Data Set to quantify the prevalence of children reported to child protection services who live in families with co-occurring domestic and family violence (DFV), substance misuse (SM), and mental health (MH) issues.

The sample comprised a retrospective cohort of 584,365 unique children with a first child protection Helpline record between 2004 and 2018. Out of 584,365 children, 33% had at least one Helpline concern of DFV. Of these, 81% recorded only DFV, 16.6% had DFV in combination with either SM or MH, and 2.4% recorded all three. For a large share of these children, there was evidence in other systems that their parents had those issues prior: up to 47% had a police report for DFV, 34% (37%) were treated in ambulatory care for (diagnosed with) MH, and 27% had a diagnosis of SM.

The authors conclude that information linked together from other service systems can help identify and create avenues for interventions to support the large share of families with multiple and complex service needs prior to child protection involvement.

The article, published in *Child Protection and Practice,* can be accessed here.

New Publication: Words Within Walls: A Scoping Review of Prison-Based Creative Writing

Justice Collaboration member Dr Jedidiah Evans recently co-authored a meta-review of prison-based creative writing programs. The authors found that despite numerous publications on these programs, there is a lack of summaries detailing the types of programs, providers, target audiences, and rigorous evaluation of the benefits.

Nearly half of the studies examined did not provide demographic information about participants, and few included evaluations. Evaluations relied on self-reports, observations, and analysis of written works, with minimal use of surveys or interviews. The

study highlights the need for more rigorous research to assess the effectiveness of creative writing programs, which have the potential to improve prisoners' wellbeing during and after imprisonment. The authors concluded that research could demonstrate effectiveness, identify best practices, understand impact, improve programs and inform policy.

The article, published in the *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* can be accessed here.

New Publication: Help seeking attitudes and barriers to support for Pasifika young people in South West Sydney

A recent article, cowritten by Collaboration member Professor Jioji Ravulo, explores the barriers and enablers that influence Pacific Islander Pasifika young people's help seeking behaviours in South Western Sydney for substance use and mental health problems. The authors discovered that there is a growing concern around mental illness and substance use among Pasifika young people residing in parts of Greater Western Sydney. Findings illustrate how structural disadvantages operating from individual, community, and systemic levels serve as barriers to help seeking leaving Pasifika young people to deal with these wellbeing issues in isolation. The study found that Pasifika young people often deal with mental health issues and life stress on their own due to layers of cultural stigma, and that alcohol and other drugs are sometimes used to cope with emotional stress. The study also shows that Pasifika young people are proactive in changing the rhetoric to normalise help seeking and advocating for culturally appropriate services which respect Pacific ways of 'knowing' and 'being'.

The article, published in *Public Health in Practice*, can be accessed here.

New Publication: Post-traumatic stress disorder and hazardous alcohol use among incarcerated adults: associations with criminogenic needs and reoffending in New South Wales, Australia

A recent article, co-written by Collaboration affiliate Dr Marlee Bower and researchers from the Matilda Centre, examines the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), associations with criminogenic needs and reoffending and the role of alcohol use in these associations among adults in custody.

Researchers drew data from a linked dataset combining health (data collected in 2015), correctional and reoffending records for 1,033 incarcerated individuals in Australia. Most participants were male (66.9%), mean age 35.57 (SD = 11.6) and 15.9% meeting criteria for current PTSD. Two in five participants (43.8%) exceeded the threshold for hazardous alcohol use prior to incarceration, with 28% meeting criteria for alcohol dependence. PTSD and hazardous alcohol use were independently associated with higher criminogenic needs. Hazardous alcohol use, but not PTSD, was associated with greater odds of, and a shorter time to violent reoffending. There was no evidence of any association between PTSD and reoffending.

The findings underscore the importance of trauma-informed rehabilitation programs that are responsive to the psychological and emotional needs of individuals in custody, but also to substance use issues that may elevate risk.

The article, published in *Advances of Dual Diagnosis* can accessed here.

New Publication: Client characteristics associated with early therapeutic alliance in a drug court program

A recent article, co-written by Collaboration affiliate Dr Marlee Bower and researchers from the Matilda Centre, examines the role of client characteristics play in the development of the therapeutic alliance in the early stages of a drug court program. Drug court programs are one of the most prominent interventions for people with a drug use disorder who have offended, and there is emerging evidence of the crucial role psychological therapy plays in achieving optimised program outcomes. The therapeutic alliance between therapist and client underpins effective psychological treatment in a range of mental health disorders, including drug use disorders. Little is known, however about the forging of a therapeutic alliance when delivered treatment is delivered within a legal framework such as a drug court program.

This study included 93 participants from two NSW drug court programs. Participants completed baseline assessment interviews at two weeks into their community-based drug court program. Motivation to change drug use was associated with a stronger early therapeutic alliance with therapist. A history of exposure to trauma in childhood negatively impacted upon the strength of early alliance. The authors recommend clinical practices which build therapist responsivity to individual client factors in the early days of forging a therapeutic alliance in a drug court program.

The article, published in the *Journal of Substance Use and Addiction Treatment* can accessed here.

New Publication: Creative Underspheres and democratic challenges: Exploring the implications of generative AI misuse

Co-authored by Collaboration Affiliate Milly Stilinovic, this article introduces the concept of the Undersphere - a networked community brought together via creative exchange - to highlight how the increased proliferation of Generative AI poses risks not yet acknowledged by policymakers within emerging AI regulatory frameworks. Employing a single case study methodology - namely, exploring exchanges made on r/StableDiffusion, a known subgroup on Reddit - it illustrates the conceptual parameters of the Undersphere, outlines the potential for creative harm within the GenAI space, and counters these elements against the AI regulatory frameworks found within the EU AI Act. It concludes that a risk management framework that provides a more fluid approach to addressing risks, such as those found in governance frameworks aimed at eradicating climate change, could be better positioned to address insecurities manifesting from the GenAI space.

The article, published in *New Media & Society* can be accessed for free here.

From Beyond the Collaboration



Research Student Focus: Ash Wright

Ash Wright is a Nunga woman raised Muruwari way. She is a provisional psychologist and PhD candidate at the University of Sydney whose research supports collective self-governance processes by Aboriginal communities to determine the 'attachment' contexts in which their children should be loved and cared for.

She recently co-authored an article that discussed the misapplication of Western developmental constructs on Aboriginal children and offered insights about how reimagining child protection policies and practices to value Aboriginal worldviews is critical to efforts to transform those systems grounded on self-determination.

This paper, co-authored with Aunty Rita Wright, Dr Paul Gray and Professor Caroline Hunt, was recently presented at a Sydney Ideas Lecture. It can be accessed through Taylor and Francis Online.

FASD and the Youth Justice System

Distinguished Professor Elizabeth Elliot and Dr Fiona Robards recently published an article exploring the behavioural and cognitive implications of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) for Australian children and adolescents in contact with the justice system. Rates of FASD are high among young people in the youth justice system. An estimated one in three detainees in Australia has FASD. Many adolescents in contact with the justice system have un-diagnosed FASD and complex needs.

The authors call for a proactive commitment to the primary prevention of alcohol harm in pregnancy, early diagnosis of FASD and better support for children and adolescents with

FASD and their families. They suggest that justice system reform is required and that custody is not the right place for young people with FASD. The authors urge that all children and adolescents should be screened for FASD and other neurodevelopmental impairments at first contact with the justice system or child protection system. Without reform, children and adolescents with undiagnosed FASD may miss out on the support they need and continue to experience poor outcomes that could otherwise be avoided. A justice system that is attuned to the needs of children and adolescents with neurodevelopmental disabilities, including FASD, will not only mitigate the risk of reoffending but will also empower children and adolescents to build their strengths and overcome challenges.

The article can be read on the Judicial Quarterly Review here.

New models of care needed to meet increasing youth mental health demand

A recent review of clinical data from headspace has found that the national service for young people experiencing psychological distress is struggling to meet demand. Data suggests approximately 75% of headspace attendees require substantive clinical care. Clinical outcomes data from all sources indicate limited impacts on functional outcomes, with less than a third achieving significant improvement. Two-thirds either remain the same or deteriorate.

As demand for youth services continues to rise, there is an urgent need to reconfigure the national youth service networks to address the unmet clinical and psychosocial needs of youth presenting in the early stages of major mental disorders. This could include senior clinicians being involved in the diagnosis of young people at an earlier stage; increasing the use of online assessments to determine the severity of a client's psychological distress; and having a consistent approach to psychological assessments to ensure a national standard.

The review, led by Professor Ian Hickie and Dr Frank Iorfino from the Brain and Mind Centre, was published in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry. More about the research can be read here.

Transforming Australia's outside-school-hours landscape: Beyond the Bell

A collaboration with the Sydney Policy Lab and the Brain and Mind Centre, "Beyond the Bell" is looking to change Out of School Hours (OOSH) care. The project is led by Professor Ian Hickie, Co-director of the Brain and Mind Centre and Dr Kate Harrison Brennan, Director of the Sydney Policy Lab.

It aims to start a conversation about how outside school hours care can bridge the work-school gulf while addressing disadvantage and improving children's mental and physical wellbeing, educational outcomes, social development, online safety, and skills for the future.

The partnership's first discussion paper, *Beyond the Bell*, sets out the challenges facing the overlooked outside school hours care (OSHC) sector, and highlights the host of opportunities awaiting families and governments if support were available for trialing new models of before and after school care and extracurricular activities.

You can read more about the project and read the discussion paper here.

Immigration Detention: No Safe Form for Children

A first-of-its-kind review into the psychological impact of immigration detention has shown there are no safe forms of detention for children.

The study led by psychologists at the University of Sydney reviewed findings from 21 English-language studies involving 9620 children in eight countries. It reveals alarming levels of mental health issues, including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), among children held in all forms of immigration detention.

The study showed 42.2 percent of children experienced depression and 32.0 percent displayed symptoms consistent with PTSD.

Senior author Professor Caroline Hunt, Head of Clinical Psychology at the University of Sydney, said: ñThe data shows any level of detention will put a childôs mental health at risk, with the lengthiest and most restrictive showing serious harms, including high levels of post-traumatic stress, self-harm and suicide attempts.

You can read more about the research here.



Co-production in action: Youth Advisory Board making an impact through the Youth Priorities Project

In April 2025, the Matilda Centre published The Coproduced Youth Priorities Project: Australian Youth Priorities for Mental Health and Substance Use Prevention Research in the academic journal Health Expectations. The study surveyed over 660 young Australians to understand their views on what should be prioritised in mental health and substance use prevention research. Previous activities have worked to identify Australiansôpriorities for mental health research, but none have centred young people as primary stakeholders, making this a first of its kind in Australia.

A Coproduction Research Team (CPRT), which consisted of two members of the Matilda Centre Youth Advisory Board (YAB), two researchers and three coordinators was established to lead and contribute to the project. Youth CPRT members were involved in all stages of the research including agenda setting, coproducing the research design and protocol, developing recruitment materials, recruiting participants, collecting data , facilitating focus groups and even presenting findings to stakeholders at conferences.

At the end of the project, young people had identified five final principles for investment and nine priorities for youth mental health and substance use prevention research. They also made eight recommendations for actions that governments can take immediately to support youth mental health.

You can read these recommendations and out more about the project here.

One child in every Australian classroom affected by fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, study finds

A new study led by the late Dr Tracey Tsang of the University of Sydney has found that up to one in 28 Australians – or roughly one child per classroom – may be living with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD), a potentially preventable condition caused by prenatal alcohol exposure.

Published in the Drug and Alcohol Review, it is the first Australian study to estimate FASD prevalence in the general population, using national-level modelling. Researchers combined data on alcohol use during pregnancy in Australia with the known risk of FASD to estimate a national prevalence rate of 3.64 percent, or nearly 4 per hundred. The result was drawn from a meta-analysis of 78 studies spanning from 1975 to 2018.

The report highlights the urgent need for increased awareness of the harms of prenatal alcohol exposure. Early diagnosis and early intervention are critical to improve life outcomes, particularly in vulnerable populations such as youth in detention, children in foster care, and some remote Indigenous communities, where prevalence rates of FASD are significantly higher.

You can read the full paper here.

New Book: Research Handbook on Youth Criminology

This timely Handbook, edited by the University of Sydney's Dr Estrella Pearce and Professor Greg Martin, provides historical, contemporary, theoretical and methodological perspectives on youth criminology. It explores cutting-edge research on juvenile justice and youth governance and proposes directions for future research.

Bringing together a diverse range of international experts, the Handbook emphasises the hybrid nature of youth justice governance, highlighting ongoing debates over prioritising human rights, welfare, justice, or risk management. The chapters explore trends in youth criminology drawing on empirical data from a variety of geographical and institutional contexts of juvenile justice. Key topics include the care and criminalisation of institutionalised children, moral panic theory and its relevance to child sexual abuse, the criminal responsibility of young people in Australia and China, and the experiences of girls in custody in the Brazilian youth justicesystem. They also discuss the involvement of children in armed conflicts across different jurisdictions, and present reformist perspectives on juvenile legal systems, including reflections on the minimum age of criminal responsibility and abolitionist debates.

Providing global insights, case studies and real-life examples, the Research Handbook on Youth Criminology will be an invaluable resource for university students and academic researchers in sociology and criminology, as well as practitioners and policymakers working in juvenile justice and youth governance.

You can find out more and preorder the handbook here.

Should a criminal record automatically cost you your job? New study says no

A recent paper led by Associate Professor Sandra Noakes examines the risk of dismissal as a "collateral consequence" of a criminal record. The paper highlights a growing trend:

employers increasingly scrutinising off-duty behaviour, including employees' conduct on social media, and past criminal behaviour outside of work.

"In most cases, employers should not be allowed to dismiss an employee because the criminal record reflects badly on the employer. Most employees are not paid to be their employer's brand ambassadors when they are 'off the clock'," Associate Professor Noakes said.

The research recommends a new legal framework centred on fairness, relevance, and rehabilitation. Among the proposals: a direct link should exist between the specific requirements of the job and dismissal based on a criminal record; better alignment of unfair dismissal laws with anti-discrimination laws and the protection of an employee's right to a personal life; and a reduction in "invisible punishments" that prevent reintegration after justice has been served.

You can read the paper published in the Tasmanian Law Review here.

Depression linked to 'internal jet lag', study finds

A Sydney-based study of 69 young people seeking mental health care found almost a quarter showed disrupted body clocks that showed signs that looked like jet lag, despite not having travelled across time zones. The University of Sydney researchers suggest the finding could lead to new ways to treat and study mental health conditions such as depression and bipolar disorder.

The study, led by Dr Joanne Carpenter and Professor Ian Hickie from the University of Sydney, is the first to look simultaneously at three key measures of body clock regulation in people with mental ill-health.

Dr Jacob Crouse, co-author of the study and academic lead of the Clinical Stream of the Youth Mental Health and Technology Team, said these results could indicate new ways to approach mental health.

"Our findings suggest we might need to think differently about what kinds of treatments we're giving people with mood disorders, and whether we should be targeting body clocks as another option for managing these conditions."

You can read the research here, and find out more here.

More than 40 percent of young Aussies are lonely, as experts call for National Loneliness Strategy

A recent report written by A/Prof Michelle Lim and Professor Ben Smith found that 43 percent of young people aged 15 to 25 feel lonely.

While one in four felt lonely when asked, one in seven had felt lonely for at least two years (called persistent loneliness).

The research found that having poor physical and mental health can double the likelihood of persistent loneliness among young people. As can low levels of physical activity, financial strain and low household prosperity. Persistent loneliness has been found to detrimentally impact a person's mental and physical health.

The researchers have called for a national loneliness strategy.

You can read more about the research here.

Sydney-led school program reduces the odds of teen vaping by 65 percent, study finds

An Australian vaping education program being rolled out in schools nationally has been hailed as one of the most successful school-based strategies in the world for curbing youth e-cigarette use in a study published recently in the *Lancet Public Health*.

Led by Dr Lauren Gardner and Professor Nicola Newton from the Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use at the University of Sydney – the Vaping Prevention Program was found to reduce the likelihood of adolescent vaping by 65 percent a year after completing the program, compared to students who received standard health education.

You can read the research here, and find out more here.



New research: Teens 65% less likely to vape after undertaking leading prevention program

A new co-designed and interactive vaping prevention program has significantly reduced adolescent e-cigarette use (vaping), new research from the Matilda Centre has found.

The research, published in the Lancet Public Health, involved a randomised controlled trial among >5000 students across three states in Australia. Students received either their regular school health education or the OurFutures Vaping program.

The program, which was co-designed with students and teachers, delivers both knowledge and practical skills such as critical thinking and assertive refusal. The program also includes dedicated curriculum-aligned classroom activities to reinforce learning.

Twelve month follow ups found that teenagers who received the OurFutures Vaping program were 65% less likely to vape compared to their peers who received standard health education. Additionally, there was high support for the program from students and their teachers, with over 80% approval of the program from both roles.

The Matilda Centre has recently received philanthropic funding to expand the evidence-based OurFutures Vaping program to primary schools and test its effectiveness at a younger age.

You can read the research here, and find out more here.

New Book: Youth Diversion - Exploring Criminal Justice Perspectives through an Australian Case Study

Sydney University's Dr Estrella Pearce has published *Exploring Criminal Justice Perspectives through An Australian Case Study.*

Using New South Wales as a case example, this book engages with central themes of discretionary decision-making processes regarding youth diversion away from court and the broader political and policy constraints that impact implementation to full potential.

Drawing on mixed quantitative and qualitative data, including interviews with experienced police officers, magistrates and youth justice personnel, this study examines discretionary decision-making processes under the *Young Offenders Act 1997* (NSW). While focusing on the Australian experience, the shared colonisation history with other Commonwealth countries such as New Zealand, Canada, and the United Kingdom allow for the insights to be globally applicable. Readers will gain insights into implementing diversionary justice, understand theoretical frameworks shaping contemporary youth justice.

An Open Access version of the book is available here. A hardback version can be purchased here.

New Research: Clinical Features of Children at Risk of Profound Autism

Academics from the Brain and Mind Centre and Westmead Hospital have conducted the first Australian study to examine the assessment of "profound autism" - a category coined in 2021 to describe autistic people who have little or no language (spoken, written, signed or via a communication device), who have an IQ of less than 50, and who require 24-hour supervision and support.

The authors examined data from 513 autistic children assessed between 2019 and 2024. A quarter of children presenting with autism also met the profound criteria. These children were of younger age (Age = 1.79 years) at first concern and at diagnosis (Age = 3.93 years) than children in the not profound group. Almost half (49.6 percent) showed behaviours that were a safety risk, such as attempting to run away from carers, compared with one-third (31.2 percent) of other autistic children.

Importantly, the authors found the definition of "profound autism" doesn't always line up with the official diagnostic levels which determine the level of support and NDIS funding children receive. 8 percent of children at risk of profound autism were classified as level 2, rather than level 3 (the highest level of support). Meanwhile, 17 percent of children classified as level 3 did not meet criteria for profound autism. This suggests that modifications will be needed if the criteria for "profound autism" is going to be used to inform funding decisions

The article, published in the *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders,* can be accessed here. More information on the research can be found here.

New Publication: Understanding Inequality Within a Personalised System of Disability Support

A recent article, written by University of Sydney and University of Queensland academics, investigates inequalities in support among children with disabilities in Australia. To investigate inequalities in support, a survey of parents of children with disabilities aged 2–17 was conducted. Data from 644 participants was used to analyse unmet needs. Researchers found that most children (83%) were reported to have unmet needs, with therapy, school-based support, and support workers most common. Older children and those with greater functional difficulty had higher unmet need. Low household income, adult disability, single-parent families and residence in regional areas were also associated with higher unmet need. Individual funding was associated with lower unmet need for therapy and medical care, but higher unmet need for support workers, access to community activities and transport. Unmet needs for support are common, and there exist substantial inequalities in support for children with disabilities. Individual funding was not found to reduce unmet needs for support. These results indicate that there is an urgent need for reform of Australia's disability support systems to enhance equitable support.

The article, published in the *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, can be accessed here.

Three papers that make use of micro- and macro-econometrics to evaluate criminal justice policy in New South Wales - Steve Yeong (2023)

This thesis examines the relationship between policing and criminal justice outcomes in the Australian state of New South Wales. The first chapter identifies the effect of an increase in the size of the police force on the volume of crime and arrests. The second chapter examines the relationship between proactive policing, crime and incarcerations. The principal finding from both chapters is that police predominately reduce crime through deterrence, rather than incapacitation. The final chapter examines the relationship between pre-recorded evidence and conviction rates in cases of domestic violence. The main finding from this chapter is that pre-recorded evidence raises the probability of a conviction in such cases.

Steve Yeong’s thesis can be accessed for free here.

Government-housing: governing crime and disorder in public housing in New South Wales - Christopher Martin (2010)

This thesis examines the variety of practices that are directed at crime and disorder specifically in public housing in New South Wales. It argues that social housing represents a concentration of law and order, and that the conduct of social housing tenants is subject to a distinctive and unusually dense regime of government.

The government-housing relation is examined at both a macro and micro level. At the macro level, this thesis considers the government-housing relation as it is formulated in terms of governmental rationalities and programs - particularly of liberal governmentality - and hence housing policies and institutions, the prescriptions of experts for its design and management, and the law of landlord and tenant. This is complimented by an examination of the history of these developments. This thesis also presents fieldwork undertaken at the public housing estate at Riverwood, a suburb in southwest Sydney, New South Wales, that recorded the 'crime talk' of tenants and workers on the estate. This local discourse folds together

concerns about crime and disorder with wider concerns about the estate's place in the world, and constructs crime and disorder as problems for local action, including through practices of public housing.

Christopher Martin's thesis can be accessed for free here.

Inattentional blindness in eyewitnesses to crime: Consequences for eyewitness safety, memory and credibility - Hayley Cullen (2020)

When attention is focused elsewhere, individuals may fail to notice unexpected events in plain sight, a phenomenon known as inattentional blindness (IB: Mack & Rock, 1998). In legal settings, eyewitnesses may experience IB and fail to notice entire crimes occurring (Hyman, 2016). The current thesis aimed to assess the impact of IB on eyewitness safety, memory, and credibility. In the first two studies, IB for an assault crime was measured. The presence of a weapon was manipulated (Study 1), and memory for the crime was assessed (Study 1 & Study 2). The results showed that weapon presence did not impact rates of IB. Study 1 found that IB impacted the quantity, but not quality, of witness memory. However, when manipulating the recall instructions in Study 2, IB negatively affected both the quantity and quality of memory. Given that witnesses who experience IB may testify in court, subsequent studies were conducted to explore perceptions of eyewitness IB. In Study 3, lawyers, psychology students, and members of the public were surveyed regarding their beliefs about IB in legal scenarios. All populations overestimated visual detection across most legal scenarios. In Studies 4 and 5, mock-jurors read a trial containing two key witnesses: one who saw the crime, and one who experienced IB. Both studies showed that the witness who experienced IB was perceived as less credible than the witness who saw the crime. In Study 5, several factors (witness role, witness familiarity with defendant, and expert testimony) did not influence the negative perceptions of IB. Therefore, Studies 6 and 7 aimed to determine whether demonstrating IB and providing expert testimony on IB would improve perceptions of witness IB. Neither demonstrating IB nor expert testimony rectified the negative perceptions of witness IB. The findings within this thesis indicate that IB among eyewitnesses presents a unique challenge in criminal settings.

Hayley Cullen's thesis can be accessed for free here.

'When the stars align': decision-making in the NSW juvenile justice system 1990-2005 - Elaine Fishwick (2014)

This thesis examines decision-making in the New South Wales juvenile justice system. It investigates what factors and which people influenced the setting of policy agendas and the choice of policy options during the period 1990 – 2005. Using data from in-depth interviews with key policy actors and from documentary analysis, it aims to identify the dynamic interplay of historical, institutional, legal, professional, pragmatic and political factors within wider economic, social and public policy contexts to explore how and why juvenile justice policy developed in the way that it did during this period. The time frame for the study begins with the publication of the report Kids In Justice: A Blueprint for the Nineties by the NSW Youth Justice Coalition, and continues to 2005, a year marked by the publication of the NSW Law Reform Commission's Report on Young Offenders, public street disturbances in suburbs of Sydney and the resignation of the Labor Premier the Hon. Bob Carr on August 6th. This time frame is significant as it epitomizes what appears to be a gradual, although not complete shift in approaches to juvenile justice policy: from the promise of potentially progressive diversionary strategies envisaged in the Kids in Justice Report to an approach which increasingly appeared to be concerned with control and punishment and with appeasing media demands. The thesis is a trans disciplinary study. It draws on insights from law, policy studies, media studies and criminology, and pulls

them together to develop a unique analytical approach to juvenile justice. It adopts a blended theoretical perspective by combining key elements of critical social sciences with complexity theory together, in an approach, which has been termed by Byrne (1998, 2011) as 'complex realism' and by Carroll (2009) as 'critical complexity'. The thesis concludes that decision takes place within an historically contingent context of what can be termed 'negotiated order'. There are elements of certainty in the decision-making process but it is also characterised by serendipity and change. Policy processes are dynamic and change can be at times minimal and incremental and at other times monumental. It is argued that people and their ambitions, emotions, skills and experiences are absolutely fundamental to any understanding of policy and this thesis emphasises their role in decision-making. It is anticipated that the insights gathered from looking at this moment in the history of juvenile justice and the influences on decision-making will not only contribute to a more detailed understanding of the policy process in criminology and related disciplines, but might also provide those engaged in advocacy and reform with some tools for even more effective action.

Elaine Fishwick's thesis can be accessed for free here.

New Publication: Digital Vulnerability in Criminal Justice, Vulnerable People and Communication Technologies

This open access book authored by Sydney Law School's Associate Professor Carolyn McKay examines the impact of digitalisation processes on fair, accessible and inclusive criminal justice for vulnerable individuals. Based on original empirical data from an Australian Research Council funded national study, the book evaluates digitalised criminal justice, specifically, the increasing use of remote hearings and virtual courts, and the interrelationship with vulnerability. It asks: in what ways do remote communication technologies, such as videolinks, videoconferencing, and pre-recorded evidence, assist or disadvantage vulnerable witnesses, complainants, victims and defendants in the criminal justice system? By interviewing and surveying 175 Australian judicial officers, prosecutors, defence lawyers and affiliated professionals, the book examines the impact of digitalised criminal justice on all vulnerable individuals. Themes include the benefits and challenges to human connection, communication, comprehension and confidentiality, as well as court authority, cross-examination, and emotional expression. While there are certain universal and non-contentious experiences of videolinks, the key practical findings are sharply delineated between vulnerable witnesses versus vulnerable defendants. Theoretically, the book merges digital criminology with vulnerability theories to contribute understandings of 'digital vulnerability', that is, the interplay between digital technologies and vulnerable individuals in criminal justice. Digital Vulnerability in Criminal Justice provides critical and contemporary insights, and forward-looking recommendations for ensuring fair digitalised criminal justice into the future

You can read more about Associate Professor McKay's research project here. Digital Vulnerability in Criminal Justice, Vulnerable People and Communication Technologies can be accessed for free here.

Alcohol, Aggression and Violence Among Young People: A Volatile Mix - Siobhan Lawler (2021)

Hazardous alcohol use and aggression in youth are substantial global challenges associated with significant social, emotional and economic burdens across health, school and justice systems. To date, understanding in these areas is limited for several reasons: the lack of prospective longitudinal research examining how these behaviours develop and influence each other over time; the limited number of studies examining justiceresponses and the relative role of alcohol in youth violence; and a lack of evidence-based prevention

programs addressing both alcohol use and aggression. This thesis sought to address these gaps. Specifically, this thesis aimed to: 1) examine the developmental relationship; 2) explore criminal justice responses; and 3) evaluate an intervention for preventing harmful alcohol use and aggression among young people. Developmental trajectories of alcohol use and aggression were modelled in parallel (see Paper 1). The findings indicated reciprocal contemporaneous associations between alcohol and aggression and demonstrated a prospective link between heightened aggression and subsequent hazardous alcohol use. Paper 2 situated hazardous alcohol use as the most significant proximal influence on violence, demonstrating a robust association even after accounting for individual and early environmental risk factors. Paper 3 explored the intersections between youth alcohol use and violent crime in the criminal justice system, finding that alcohol was commonly implicated in violent crime by young adults. Papers 1ï 3 provided strong evidence that adolescence and emerging adulthood are critical periods for the co-development of alcohol and aggression. Thus, the final study (Paper 4) examined the impact of a prevention program that targets high-risk personality styles associated with both alcohol use and aggression in early adolescence. Outcomes showed sustained reductions in aggression for youth who received the intervention over a seven-year period (from age 13ï 20). This thesis contains a series of rigorous, novel studies that collectively contribute a mixed- methods account of the nature and correlates of aggression and violent behaviour among young people and provide critical evidence for prevention.

Siobhan Lawler's thesis can be accessed for free here.

The temperance shift: drunkenness, responsibility and the regulation of alcohol in NSW, 1788-1856 - Matthew Allen (2013)

This thesis begins with a broad overview of alcohol regulation in early modern England, illustrating the abiding importance of drinking to English society and the equally persistent concern about the consequences of excess for both public morality and public order. The ambiguous status of drinking, essential to the economy and social life but condemned as a symbol of disorder and sin, contributed to the problem of regulating alcohol in early NSW. Rum played a symbolic role in the clash between two visions of the colony: as a moral reformatory for convicts and as a commercial opportunity for the growing class of free and freed entrepreneurs. With the arrival of Macquarie, the greater stability of NSW was mirrored by a growing consensus about the role of alcohol as a necessary evil, reflected in regulation that mirrored the traditional English system. But from the mid-1830s, this consensus was challenged by the emergence of the temperance movement, the rapid growth of the free population and the development of more modern systems of policing that allowed for greater control over the use and abuse of strong drink. As temperance societies radicalised in the 1840s they lost elite support and their influence in NSW correspondingly declined but despite this, temperance grew in influence as an idea. By the time the organised movement re-emerged in the 1850s, a new consensus saw alcohol itself as a as a fundamentally problematic substance that rendered the drinker incapable of self-control. This temperance shift in the understanding of alcohol was the key to the institutionalisation of a new concept of responsibility which cast drunkenness and other social problems as the responsibility of the liberal state.

Matthew Allenôs thesis can be accessed for free here.

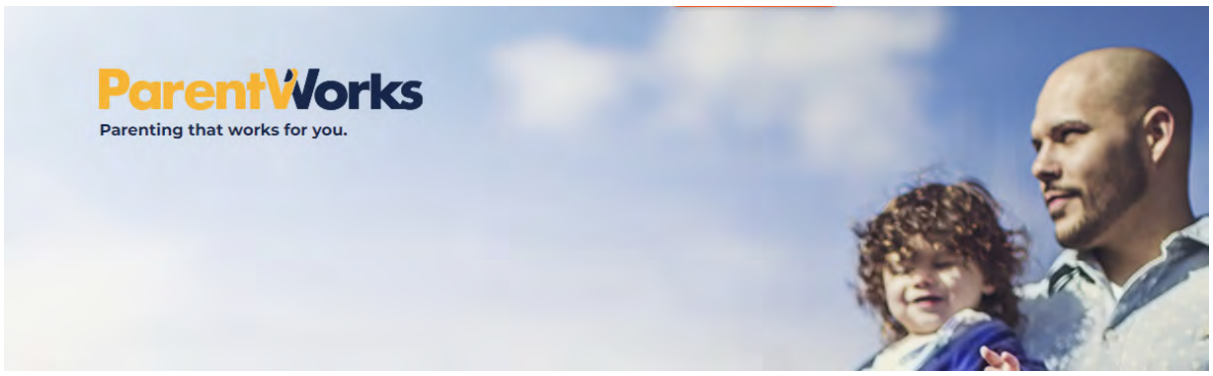
Resources

Over the last two years we have featured some great resources created across the University. These resources cover a broad range of areas including alcohol and other drug use, mental health, communication and parenting. Showcasing these resources aligns with the Collaboration's aim to provide low or no-cost solutions to improve outcomes for those interacting with the criminal justice system.



Learning with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder

In 2020, the Matilda Centre for Mental Health and Substance Use was funded by the Department of Health and Aged Care to develop the Learning with FASD portal, a website dedicated to the provision of evidence-based resources to help educators understand and support children with FASD in Australian primary schools.
Researchers at the Matilda Centre, lead by Associate Professor Mewton, will now work to create resources for secondary school educators. This project will adress the important gap in educator's skills and knowledge by providing school leaders, teachers and the broader school community with easy-to-access, evidence-based resources and tools to sensitively and effectively recognise and respond to potential indicators of FASD in the secondary school context.
More about information the project can be accessed on the Learning with FASD website.



ParentWorks

Parentworks is Australia's first online, nationally available parenting program, developed by The Brain and Mind Centre. The centre developed this program to provde strategies for families to help improve parenting skills, children's confidence and improve child behavior. The program aims to increase the involvement of parents in improving outcomes for families.

ParentWorks is free for Australian parents and caregivers of children 2 to 17. It is an 'evidence-based' program that seeks to help parents and caregivers manage challenging child behavious such as tantrums, aggression, noncompliance, inattentive or hyperactive behaviour, sibling conflict, getting ready for school and/or bed, and behaviours outside the home, such as problems in the supermarket.

ParentWorks has been tested in research and found to be effective. A research study with 456 parents found that the program led to significant pre-to-post program decreases in child emotional/behaviour problems, ineffective parenting, conflict between parents and parent mental health problems (Piotrowska et al., 2020).

To find out more visit Parentworks.



Module 3

Hearing Children's Voices about Family Time



Module 4

Supporting Parents and Family Members with Family Time

Fostering Lifelong Connection

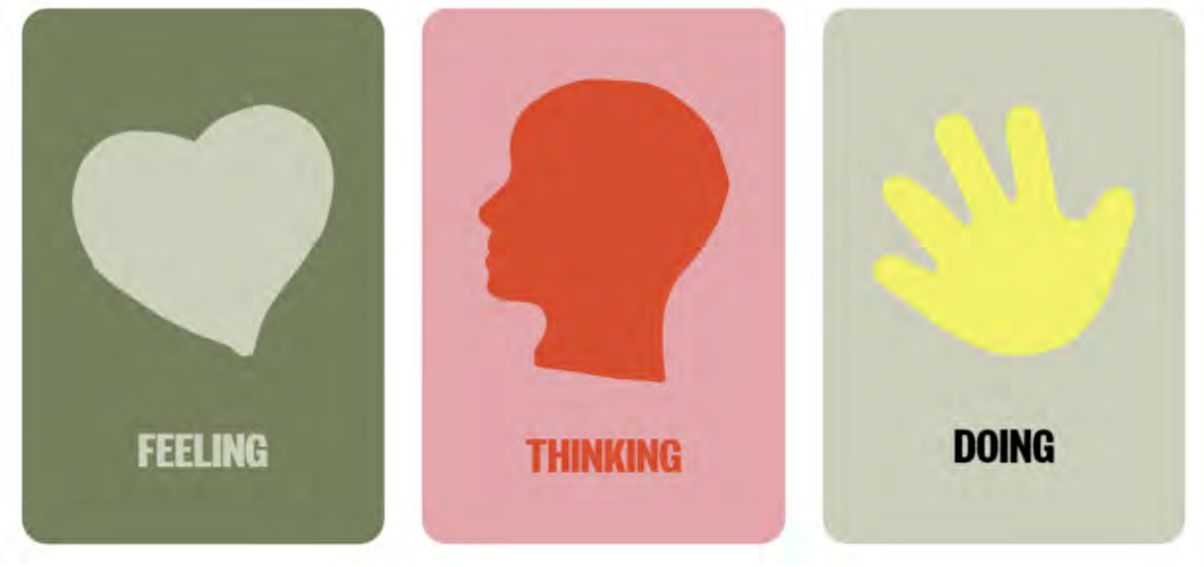
Fostering Lifelong Connections, was a 3-year action research project led by a team from the University of Sydney that explored how the out-of-home care sector could better support relationships between children, their families and carers.

This project developed, tested, embedded, and disseminated practices for children in permanent care to develop and sustain positive connections with birth relatives by:

- identifying relationship-building practices and co-designing resources to promote good practice
- conducting action research at four NSW sites to trial, implement and evaluate practice changes

- implementing new relationship-building practices in organisations through embedded champions, staff training and change management
- disseminating research findings, practice resources, and training to the out-of-home care sector.

More information is available on the project website.



Heart-Led Planning

Professor John Gilroy, Dr Kim Bulkeley and Dr Genevieve Johnsson of the Centre for Disability Research and Policy (CDRP) launched a website last year to educate the disability workforce about a more relational process to inform planning. The training focuses on how to work with people with disability.

The project builds off of a four-year study ways to improve the NDIS planning process for people with disability living in regional, rural, and remote regions of West NSW and Central Australia. The study found that, while the NDIS is improving the lives and wellbeing of people living with a disability in regional and remote regions the NDIS planning process is traumatic and scary.

CDRP co-designed a series of training modules with people with disability, local Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, allied health workers, the NDIA, and disability service providers. The training modules incorporate the Head, Heart, Hand holistic principles that captures the importance of THINKING, HEART, and DOING.

More information can be found on the project website here.

Wiradjuri Workbooks

In a bid to improve the outcome of Wiradjuri children in permanent foster care by helping them maintain cultural and Kinship connections, Professor Lynette Riley AO, Chair of Aboriginal Education and Indigenous Studies and her sister have

developed workbooks on Wiradjuri language that can be used by children and their carers, families, and teachers.

The workbooks contain lessons and activities on Wiradjuri sounds and words; greetings; Acknowledging Country; numbers, symbols and tracks; family terms; and body parts and colours.

Professor Riley has also created a ground-breaking unit where third-year teaching students focus on Aboriginal education during their eight-week placements in schools. Their assessment task is to create or complete an Aboriginal community and school profile. This involves getting to know their community and school, and understanding their relationship with Aboriginal education.

The first language book can be accessed here.

More information on the project can be found here.

WellMob: Healing Our Way

Founded by a collective of organisations that include the University of Sydney and it's University Centre for Rural Health, the WellMob website provides more than 500 mental health and wellbeing resources developed by and for First Nations Australians including websites, apps, videos, fact sheets, podcasts, PDFs, and social media.

WellMob takes a holistic strength-based approach around Indigenous wellbeing. The online resources it links to provide information, stories of lived experience, promote hope, and break down shame or stigma about mental health and wellbeing issues for First Nations Australians.

The website also has training resources for health and wellbeing workers to strengthen cultural understanding and safety in practice. The website is continuously updated as new resources are identified and developed.

For more information on Wellmob please visit their website.



COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

AOD Community of Practice

The Matilda Centre's online Community of Practice for professionals in Australia who work with people experiencing co-occurring alcohol and other drug (AOD) use and mental health conditions will be available soon.

The Community of Practice will provide a platform for those who are employed, affiliated or work with people who use AOD to make connections, access evidence-based resources and engage and collaborate with other professionals to enhance their practice. It will foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing among health and social service professionals to improve the management and outcomes of people experiencing co-occurring AOD use and mental health conditions.

To be notified when the Community of Practice is live, please register your interest. For more information email community@comorbidity.org.au

Positive Choices

Created by the Matilda Centre, Positive Choices is an online portal that helps school communities (parents, teachers and students) access up-to-date evidence-based alcohol and other drug education resources.

It provides a central access point for evidence-based information and prevention resources about alcohol and other drugs, and allows users to search by drug type, by resource type, such as factsheets, games or videos, and by age appropriateness.

The resources can be used to develop lesson plans which align with the Australian Curriculum.

MyCircle

Created by Kids Helpline, with support from the Cyberpsychology Research Group MyCircle is Australia's only clinically moderated peer-to-peer support platform that offers free 24/7 nationwide support specifically for young people aged 12 to 25 years. My

Circle operates by providing anonymous access to mental health and wellbeing information; self-guided programs; supervised peer-to-peer support; group facilitated discussions; clinical moderator support; and a referral pathway to Kids Helpline. of parents in improving outcomes for families.

Social Brain Toolkit

Created by the ABI Communication Lab, the Social Brain Toolkit is an evidence-based suite of free interventions that aim to improve communication after acquired brain injury.

Some of the interventions are self-guided and are designed for people with an acquired brain injury, their family and support network.

Guidelines for the Treatment of Alcohol Problems

Created by the specialty of Addiction Medicine these guidelines aim to provide up-to-date, evidence-based information to clinicians on available treatments for people with alcohol problems.

The guidelines are largely directed towards individual clinicians in practice, such as primary care physicians (general practitioners, nursing staff), specialist medical practitioners, psychologists, counsellors, and other health professionals.

Wiradjuri Workbooks

In-language workbooks created by Professor Lynette Riley and Diane Riley-McNaboe and intended for use with young people in Out of Home Care. The workbooks contain lessons and activities on Wiradjuri sounds and words; greetings; Acknowledging Country; numbers, symbols and tracks; family terms; and body parts and colours.

Respect Your Brain

Created by the Matilda Centre this video series focuses on the impact of five drugs commonly used in Australia and explores the way these drugs affect a young person's developing brain.

The videos are supported by more in depth information including where a young person can seek help for alcohol and other drug issues and links to more alcohol and other drug facts on the NSW Health drug and alcohol website.

Brief yarns on Alcohol

Created by the Centre for Alcohol Policy Research - Priority Populations, these short films show how to have a brief yarn about alcohol with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person – or any person. The three acted scenarios show how you can engage a person without shaming them when having a brief yarn about alcohol. The actors are themselves health professionals; three of the four are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Health4Life

Created by the Matilda Centre, Health4Life is the first eHealth education program to concurrently target the “Big 6” health behaviours to prevent chronic disease risk and improve mental health and wellbeing among adolescents. These behaviours include physical activity, healthy eating, limiting sedentary recreational screen time, getting the right amount of sleep, and avoiding alcohol use and smoking.

Research has found that students who complete the Health4Life lessons have greater knowledge about risky health behaviours (up to 2 years later), improved health behavioural intentions, and improved mental health outcomes in the short-term.

Open Language

Created by Sydney Institute for Community Languages Education, Open Language is a web portal collating teaching resources in a range languages including Arabic, Assyrian, Chinese, Greek, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Punjabi, Tamil, Turkish and Vietnamese.

Worksheets and lesson plans are available for beginner, intermediate and advanced speakers.

Cracks in the ice

Created by the Matilda Centre, Cracks in the Ice is an online toolkit providing evidence-based and up-to-date information and resources about crystal methamphetamine ('ice') for the Australian community.

The toolkit has resources designed for people who use ice, their families and friends, and healthcare workers. There are also resources specifically designed for use by parents and teachers of young people.

Handbook for Aboriginal alcohol and drug work

Created by University of Sydney academics, the Handbook for Aboriginal alcohol and drug work provides everyday practical information for working in the field of alcohol and other drugs (AOD), with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. It is based on the clinical and cultural experiences of the authors who have worked in a range of settings from large urban environments through to small remote communities.

Strong and Deadly Futures

Created by the Matilda Centre, Strong & Deadly Futures is a culturally-inclusive and curriculum-aligned alcohol and drug prevention program designed specifically for secondary students. It is the first program of its kind to be co-developed with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Importantly, the program takes a strengths-based approach, embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and evidence-based strategies to empower all students, foster safe attitudes, enhance psychological wellbeing, and prevent alcohol and drug-related harm.

Toward access and equity: disability-informed practice in child protection

This resource, created by the University of Sydney's Research Centre for Children and Families, offers an approach to engage parents with intellectual disability in a fair process for assessing their parenting. It includes practical reflections, activities and tips for workers. The resource is not just for child protection professionals, but can help any worker improve the way they adapt their communication and service responses to ensure they are inclusive and accessible.

Comorbidity Guidelines Online Training Program

Created by the University of Sydney's Matilda Centre, this online training program has been developed to assist alcohol and other drug (AOD) practitioners work with clients with co-occurring mental health conditions.

The program consists of 12 online self-paced modules and takes around 12 hours to complete. Once all modules and quizzes have been successfully completed, a completion certificate will be available to download. The program is free for anyone. You can find out more and register here.

Cultural Competence Online Modules

The National Centre for Cultural Competence – Cultural Competence Online Modules aim to encourage individuals' confidence, motivation, and knowledge in developing cultural competence capabilities as well as increase culturally competent practices in organisations across the country.

These modules offer a range of research-based educational resources, insights from academics and community members as well as reflective activities.

Events

The Collaboration runs regular events for University staff and students. These events connect academics to industry partners and promote justice-related careers to students. This section showcases some of the events run by us over the last two years.



Looking Back - Moving Forward: Touring Yasmar

Students from across the university were invited to register for a tour of a former youth detention centre – Yasmar. The 100 available spots were filled very quickly from students studying various degrees including education, psychology, social work, criminology and law. The day proved to be very successful with students getting a briefing from Youth Justice NSW staff before spending time on a unit that formerly housed young people. Students learnt about the contemporary features of the youth justice system, hearing about the challenges of working in youth detention and the ways that staff try to help young people. Students then spent time talking with YJNSW staff in small groups asking questions about the youth justice system, career options and more.



Children's Rights and Participation in Youth Justice Systems: An International Perspective

On 25 October 2023, a free webinar was hosted by the Manchester Centre for Youth Studies at Manchester Metropolitan University and the Youth Justice Collaboration at the University of Sydney.

The webinar provided an opportunity for academics and professionals to detail and discuss the upholding of children's rights and participation in the English and Australian Youth Justice Systems. The webinar also provided opportunities for interactive discussions about the enablers and barriers to meaningful participation in youth justice systems.

View the webinar - 'Children's Rights and Participation in Youth Justice Systems: An International Perspective'.



Student Visit to the Corrective Services NSW Training Academy

Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) is the government agency that provides Community Corrections services and manages prisons which currently detain almost 13,000 adults in NSW. CSNSW kindly agreed to host USYD students and staff at their Brush Farm Training Academy last month.

During this visit, students learned about CSNSW, the many roles they play in different parts of the criminal justice system, and potential career opportunities. Many roles within CSNSW might be attractive to social work, psychology, criminology, law, allied health and other USYD students upon graduation. The visit to the Academy provided insights into various aspects of CSNSW operations through presentations from senior staff and a tour of relevant facilities and observation of relevant simulations.



Youth Crime Prevention and Diversion Discussion

At the end of last month, academics from across the University of Sydney joined representatives from the Children's Court of NSW, NSW Police Force, Youth Justice NSW, Education and Legal Aid NSW to have roundtable discussions on early intervention and diversion. The focus of the discussion was on how the University of Sydney can assist these organisations in divert young people from offending and the criminal justice system. We look forward to continuing these productive conversations into the coming year.



Criminal Justice and Criminology Careers Night

Over 50 students attended a Criminal Justice and Criminology Careers Night hosted by the Careers Centre and the Justice Collaboration last week. Students heard from a dynamic panel featuring professionals from Corrective Services NSW, the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, and the Intellectual Disability Rights Service. Panellists spoke about their career journeys and experiences working in the criminal justice system. They also shared tips for success. Attendees then participated in informal networking and discussions with the panel.

Students gave very positive feedback on the event and shared that the insights from the panel were incredibly useful.



Introducing the Human Services Hub - a new initiative for University of Sydney students

The Human Services Hub is an initiative at the University of Sydney to provide students who might work in one of the many human services with an opportunity to hear from practitioners,

learn skills, develop professional networks and to receive updates on relevant policy reforms. A series of free events will be open to University of Sydney students who might want to work in (but not limited to): child protection, criminal justice, disability support, alcohol and other drugs, mental health, social justice, and welfare systems/agencies.

Justice Collaboration Director Associate Professor Garner Clancey hosted the first Human Services Hub event last week. Students heard from Angus Chance, a child protection caseworker at the NSW Department of Communities and Justice. Angus gave great insights into the child protection system, shared the skills needed for his role and answered students' questions about his work.

The next Human Services Hub event will take place on Thursday 23 April and will focus on Community Corrections. In this event, students will hear from two experienced Community Corrections staff working with the NSW Drug Court. They will explain their roles and work, giving insight into potential roles and careers that students might pursue upon graduation. University of Sydney students can learn more about this event and reserve a spot here.



Human Services Hub 2026 - Community Corrections

The Human Services Hub is an initiative at the University of Sydney to provide students who might work in one of the many human services with an opportunity to hear from practitioners, learn skills, develop professional networks and to receive updates on relevant policy reforms. A series of free events will be open to University of Sydney students who might want to work in (but not limited to): child protection, criminal justice, disability support, alcohol and other drugs, mental health, social justice, and welfare systems/agencies.

Justice Collaboration Director Associate Professor Garner Clancey hosted the second Human Services Hub last week. Students heard from Annique and Simon - community corrections officers currently working in the Drug Court of NSW. Both gave great insights into the role of a community corrections officer and the work of the Drug Court specifically. Students heard about their career progression, day-to-day work and the skills necessary for success working in correctional services.

Keep an eye on our website for details on the next Human Services Hub event.

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