

# Nurturing research excellence to support children's holistic well-being.

YEAR IN REVIEW  
MARCH 2025 – MARCH 2026



# *Whiriwhiria, kia ora ai te tamaiti*

## **Braiding knowledge so the child will flourish.**

The kōwhaiwhai that is used as a background throughout this Year in Review is the Haehae Moana (or braided river). This is significant for the University of Canterbury as it symbolises the importance of our local waterways and braided rivers across Canterbury for Ngāi Tahu iwi. The Haehae Moana design is based on the concept that healthy waterways are the indicator of excellence and well-being. This report from Child Well-being Research Institute | Te Kāhui Pā Harakeke, illustrates the excellence achieved through braiding knowledge streams in our research activities to support our tamariki (children) and rangatahi (youth) to thrive and succeed.

# TE KĀHUI PĀ HARAKEKE CHILD WELL-BEING RESEARCH INSTITUTE

## OUR VISION AND MISSION

*Mō ngā uri  
Leading real-world research  
that transforms the well-being of  
children and youth*

The Child Well-being Research Institute leads at the interface of research and real-world change for children and young people (mokopuna). Our specialty is using our expertise to develop new and strengthen existing solutions for mokopuna well-being. We partner with government, community and Iwi Māori to effect transformation across policy, practice and paradigms that lift waiora (well-being) for our mokopuna. We leverage our academic expertise to evidence what works, creating

a learning and innovation loop. We combine world class inter-disciplinary research with the highest standards of project execution to create measurable and meaningful impact, underpinned by a resolutely strengths-based philosophy.

**Global impact and footprint for solving some of the most pressing challenges affecting children and young people, while unlocking the potential of all children we work with.**

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# Director's Report

Our Institute is focused on advancing excellence in multidisciplinary research to enhance the learning success and healthy well-being of children and young people.

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We nurture research excellence to support children's holistic well-being. We demonstrate this by working collaboratively and in culturally responsive ways across a wide range of disciplines that are central to the well-being of tamariki (children) and their whānau (family). We develop evidence-based guidance and insights for parents, government, community groups, iwi, educators, health practitioners and the research community.

We publish our work in international scientific journals and showcase the difference our collective efforts are making in uplifting the wellbeing of children in Aotearoa New Zealand. Our Year in Review 2025 highlights our recent research activities.



*Professor Gail Gillon.*

Our Institute continues to lead high-impact, multidisciplinary research that strengthens the learning success and holistic well-being of tamariki (children) and rangatahi (youth). Central to our work is a commitment to translating rigorous research into meaningful, real-world change, working in partnership with whānau (families), educators, practitioners, iwi and communities across Aotearoa New Zealand.

Over the past year, we have seen significant growth in both the reach and impact of the Better Start Literacy Approach (BSLA). Our Professional Learning and Development (PLD) suite has continued to expand. To date we have supported over 12,000 teachers and literacy specialists, and implemented evidence-based assessment and teaching practices in oral language, reading and writing. We have recently been invited to extend our PLD to literacy leaders in secondary schools as well as to teachers in all specialist schools across the country. Through the national implementation of BSLA we have established our country's largest data base of children's oral language and literacy development in the junior school years. This data base is informing numerous research activities as well as supporting nation-wide assessment and teaching practices.

Other research programmes within our Institute continue to generate impactful insights across key areas of child and youth well-being. Research into digital media use and educational technologies is providing practical, evidence-informed guidance for whānau and educators navigating increasingly

complex digital environments. Our studies in autism, communication, and stuttering are advancing understanding of diverse learning and developmental profiles, while youth-focused research, including work on climate distress and mental health, is highlighting the importance of culturally grounded, strengths-based approaches that centre young people's voices and lived experiences.

The Institute's Research Grants and Summer Scholarship programmes continue to play an important role in fostering innovation and supporting emerging researchers. Our Research Grants enable the development of novel projects that respond to current challenges in child and youth well-being, often serving as a foundation for larger externally funded initiatives. The Summer Scholarships provide valuable opportunities for students to engage in research, contributing to ongoing projects while developing their skills and interest in research pathways. Together, these initiatives strengthen our research pipeline and build future capability within the field.

A key highlight of the year was the establishment of new collaborative initiatives, including the Autism Research Centre and the Digital Media Network, both of which exemplify our commitment to co-designed, strengths-based research that responds to contemporary challenges. Our partnerships with international leaders, including the University of Oxford, continue to strengthen the global relevance and impact of our work.

The 2025 Child Well-being Research Institute Symposium further reinforced the importance of connection, bringing together researchers, practitioners and community partners to advance shared priorities for child and youth well-being. Across all of our activities, the voices of tamariki (children) and rangatahi (youth) remain central, ensuring that our research is grounded in lived experience and focused on creating positive futures.

I would like to acknowledge and thank our exceptional team of researchers, educators, students, professional staff, advisors and collaborators. Their commitment, expertise, and shared vision are central to the Institute's success. It is through their collective effort that we continue to deliver research that is impactful, innovative, and responsive to the needs of our communities.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to leading transformative research that is culturally responsive, collaborative and impactful—supporting all children to thrive.



PROFESSOR GAIL GILLON (NGĀI TAHU)  
Founding Director, University of Canterbury Child Well-being Research Institute <https://www.canterbury.ac.nz/childwellbeing/>

Deputy Director, Better Start National Science Challenge E Tipu E Rea <https://www.abetterstart.nz/>

# From Insight to Impact

The Child Well-being Research Institute Symposium ignited a national conversation on child and youth well-being.

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The University of Canterbury's Child Well-being Research Institute | Te Kāhui Pā Harakeke, leads high-quality, multidisciplinary research that strengthens the learning success and holistic wellbeing of children and young people. The Institute's work spans infancy through adolescence and recognises children within the interconnected contexts of whānau (family) and community. Central to the Institute's approach is a strengths-based philosophy that is grounded in, and responsive to, the unique social, cultural and educational context of Aotearoa New Zealand. This commitment to translating research into real-world change underpinned the 2025 Child Well-being Research Institute Symposium.

The symposium provided a valuable opportunity for the education and research community to engage with world-leading expertise and critically important issues shaping children's learning, literacy and wellbeing. Designed as a space for connection and exchange, the symposium supported meaningful dialogue between researchers, practitioners and community partners about how evidence can inform practice, policy and future directions.

## A gathering focused on impact

The 2025 Child Well-being Research Institute Symposium was held on 21 October at the University of Canterbury campus, bringing together approximately 100 participants, including researchers, practitioners, teachers and community leaders. The theme, *From Insight to Impact: Advancing Child Well-being in a Changing World*, framed a day of rich discussion, reflection and collaboration.

Proceedings opened with a keynote address from Dr Claire Achmad, Children's Commissioner for Aotearoa New Zealand. Her reflections on children's rights, voice and wellbeing set a compelling tone for the day and highlighted the importance of evidence-informed action and cross-sector collaboration in

supporting positive outcomes for tamariki (children) and rangatahi (youth).

## Showcasing interdisciplinary research

The symposium programme featured research across two key streams: *Literacy and Learning* and *Contemporary Issues in Child and Youth Well-being*. Together, these streams reflected the breadth of the Child Well-being Research Institute's research activity and its focus on both current challenges and future opportunities.

Within the *Literacy and Learning* stream, presentations explored topics ranging from emerging technologies to national education reform. Professor Kathryn MacCallum examined AI literacy in a rapidly changing world, Dr Amy Scott presented advances in literacy assessment, and Professor Brigid McNeill discussed the national implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction, showing clear evidence of its positive impact.

Interdisciplinary collaboration was a strong feature of the programme. A research team comprising researchers across education and health, led by Associate Professor Sarah-Kate Millar, presented work exploring the integration of physical education with the Better Start Literacy Approach, investigating whether curriculum areas can meaningfully reinforce one another. Additional presentations examined the content features of television programming for preschoolers and their associations with later language and literacy outcomes.

The *Contemporary Issues in Child and Youth Well-being* stream focused on some of the most pressing challenges facing young people today. Presentations included research on young people's perspectives on media, technology and family life, developed in collaboration with members of a Youth Advisory Team.

Professor Laurie McLay and Dr Nick Bowden (University of Otago) presented evidence on educational outcomes for autistic children aged five to 12 using integrated data infrastructure. Professor Don Hine and PhD-candidate Miranda Huston shared findings on climate-related distress and perceptions of government responses among Indigenous and non-Indigenous rangatahi (youth) in New Zealand. Research presented by Professor Catherine Theys offered new insights into stuttering treatment for preschoolers.

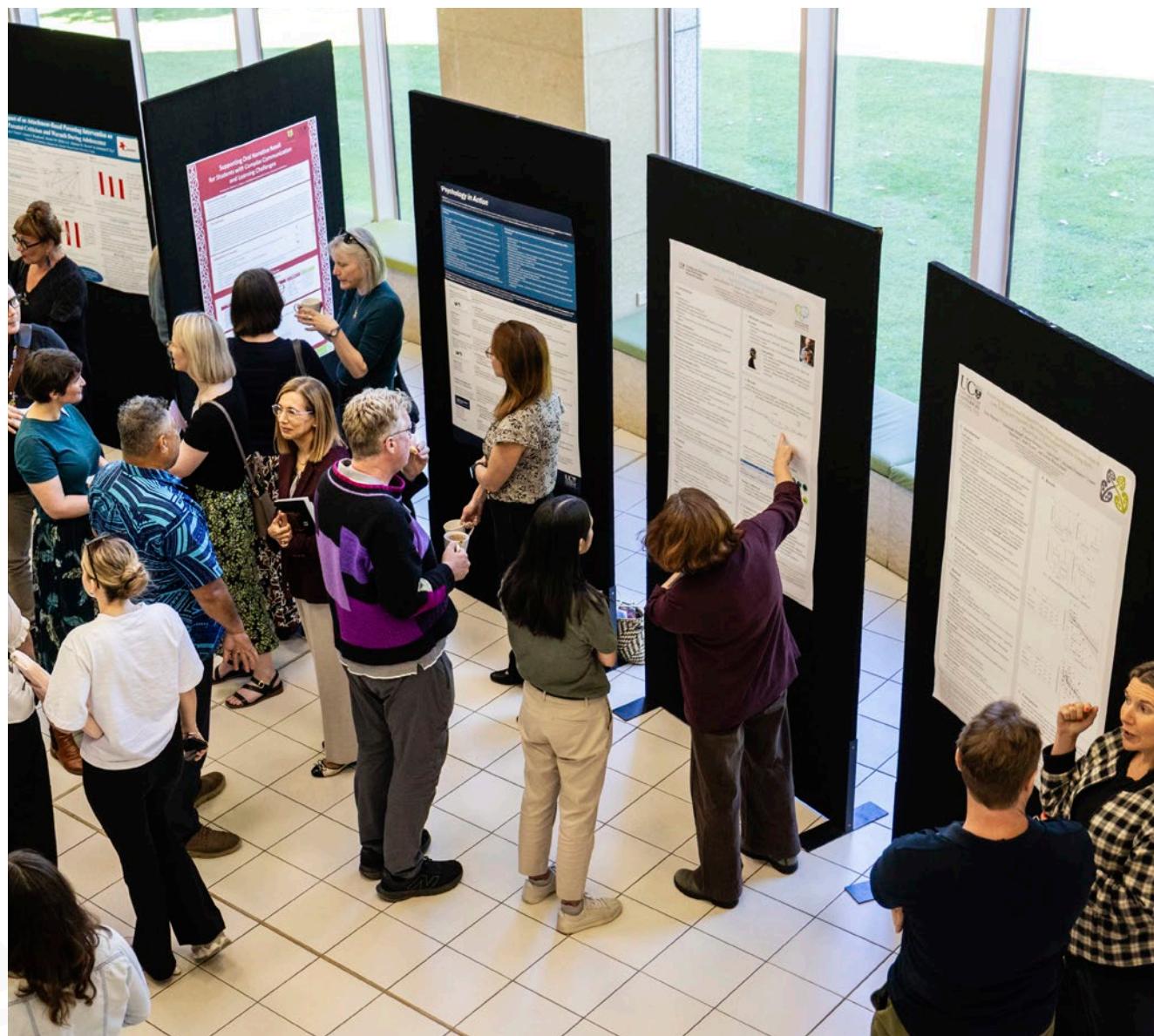
### Connection, conversation, and collaboration

Participants praised the breadth, quality and accessibility of the presentations. Poster sessions and shared kai (food) throughout the day created opportunities for informal discussion and interdisciplinary exchange, enabling attendees to engage directly with researchers and focus on the practical implications of presented findings.

The day concluded with a focused panel discussion on supporting Indigenous youth, reinforcing the importance of culturally grounded, strengths-based approaches to well-being and learning.

### Driving the future of wellbeing research

The 2025 Child Well-being Research Institute Symposium served as a vital forum for evidence-based professional learning and collaboration. The insights shared and connections formed throughout the day extended beyond academic exchange, laying a strong foundation for future research, partnerships and action to support children and young people.



*Pictured to the left, Vice-Chancellor Professor Cheryl de la Rey having a conversation with Dr Tufulasi Taleni at the poster session.*

# Children's Commissioner Visit

The Child Well-being Research Institute hosted the Children's Commissioner for Aotearoa New Zealand, Dr Claire Achmad.

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The Child Well-being Research Institute | Te Kāhui Pā Harakeke was honoured to welcome Aotearoa New Zealand's Children's Commissioner, Dr Claire Achmad, as the keynote speaker at the 2025 Child Well-being Research Institute Symposium, *From Insight to Impact*.

Since taking up the role of Children's Commissioner in 2023, Dr Achmad has brought an impressive background in international children's rights law, alongside extensive experience across legal, policy, and practice settings to the role. She has dedicated her career to translating high-level policy and international commitments into tangible change for whānau (families) and communities across the country.

Her work focuses on ensuring that every child and young person in New Zealand knows their rights are promoted, protected, and powerfully advocated for. Central to Dr Achmad's mahi (work) is listening directly to tamariki (children) and rangatahi (youth) and carrying their voices into spaces where decisions are made. Her role involves advocating to government and systems leaders to ensure children's well-being, lived experiences, and aspirations are not only heard, but meaningfully reflected in policy and practice.

## A Call to Action for New Zealand

Following a warm introduction from Vice-Chancellor Professor Cheryl de la Rey, Dr Achmad delivered a compelling keynote that set the tone for the symposium. Her address offered a candid exploration of the current landscape for children in New Zealand as well as a strategic roadmap towards a more equitable future. Dr Achmad achieved this by presenting a combination of confronting data on child well-being outcomes, while also sharing

stories that highlighted resilience, innovation, and hope. Her address was underpinned by a clear sense of possibility and a steadfast belief that meaningful change is achievable.

## A Shared Responsibility

During her visit, Dr Achmad also met with Vice-Chancellor Prof Cheryl De La Rey, Professor Gail Gillon, and Kaihautū Matua Dr Liz Brown to discuss the ongoing role for research and the critical pathways needed to translate evidence into practice. UC leadership reaffirmed their commitment to advancing children's well-being through research, partnership, and action.

The Children's Commissioner's visit resulted in a robust call to action, challenging those present to recognise their agency within the child well-being ecosystem, emphasising that improving outcomes for tamariki (children) is a shared responsibility. She called on the sector to commit to:

- Active advocacy by challenging the status quo when systems fail to serve the most vulnerable.
- Cultural responsiveness by ensuring that every young person sees their identity reflected, respected, and valued within their learning environments.

Dr Achmad's address served as a powerful reminder that while there are undeniably challenges to address, the collective mahi (work) of educators, researchers, policymakers, and communities remains our most potent tool to address these. Through shared commitment and action, we can all help to create the conditions for every child and young person in New Zealand to thrive.



*Children's Commissioner Dr Claire Achmad giving her keynote address.*

# The Better Start Literacy Approach

The Better Start Literacy Approach (BSLA), developed by leading researchers at the University of Canterbury (Gillon et al., 2024), is an evidence-based framework designed to strengthen children's oral language, reading, and writing skills. Grounded in extensive research trials, BSLA is now being implemented in over 1,000 primary and specialist schools across Aotearoa New Zealand. This national rollout is funded by the Ministry of Education as part of the Government's structured literacy initiative.

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A central component of this initiative is the provision of high-quality professional learning and development (PLD). The BSLA team is a leading provider of this PLD and has supported more than 12,000 educators nationwide to implement effective literacy assessment and teaching practices. BSLA is informed by the science of learning and aligns closely with the New Zealand English Curriculum, ensuring it is both research-driven and contextually relevant.

The BSLA team is also playing a key role in supporting literacy development in specialist education settings. In partnership with Associate Professor Sally Clendon (Massey University), Professor Gillon is leading professional learning for teachers, teacher aides, speech-language therapists, and other professionals working in specialist schools. This work focuses on enhancing communication and literacy outcomes for students with high and complex learning needs, ensuring equitable access to effective literacy instruction.

Recent research on the effectiveness of BSLA has been published in the highly regarded international journal *Topics in Language Disorders* (McNeill & Gillon, 2025). The findings highlight the powerful impact of early, targeted literacy support for children who may struggle to learn to read, including those with dyslexia. The research shows that when teachers provide structured, explicit classroom instruction alongside additional small-group support, children with reading challenges can make accelerated progress. Importantly, many can catch up with their peers in key reading and spelling skills.

These findings reinforce the importance of identifying children's learning needs early, rather than waiting

for difficulties to become entrenched. They also emphasise the critical role of well-supported teachers. High-quality PLD, combined with access to evidence-based lesson plans and teaching resources, is essential for ensuring that effective literacy practices are implemented consistently and successfully.

This research has directly informed the development of BSLA's specialised PLD offerings. The Targeted and Tailored PLD course is an intensive 12-month programme designed for teachers and specialists working with children who require additional support in language, reading, spelling, or writing. Participants gain access to the quality targeted lesson plans and resources shown to be effective in the research. Teachers who successfully complete the course are awarded a Certificate of Proficiency in Effective Interventions in BSLA Structured Literacy. This programme has proven highly popular, with the first cohort of educators from across the country set to complete the 12-month course later this year.

Together, BSLA's Professional Learning and Development suite represents a coherent, research-informed approach to improving literacy teaching. By combining academic rigour with practical, scalable solutions, BSLA is supporting educators to lift literacy outcomes for tamariki (children) across Aotearoa New Zealand.

***The latest BSLA publication can be found at:  
[https://journals.lww.com/topicsinlanguagedisorders/fulltext/2025/04000/the\\_impact\\_of\\_a\\_national\\_implementation\\_of\\_tier\\_2.3.aspx](https://journals.lww.com/topicsinlanguagedisorders/fulltext/2025/04000/the_impact_of_a_national_implementation_of_tier_2.3.aspx)***



*Teachers are well-supported by world class lesson plans and teaching resources to ensure that effective literacy practices are implemented successfully and consistently.*



# Specialist Teaching

Extending evidence-based literacy teaching to learners with complex communication and learning needs is a critical step in advancing equity across Aotearoa New Zealand's education system. In 2025, Child Well-being Research Institute | Te Kāhui Pā Harakeke Director Professor Gail Gillon and Associate Professor Sally Clendon (Massey University), led the implementation of a crucial national initiative to support structured literacy teaching in specialist schools, building on the proven success of the Better Start Literacy Approach in mainstream settings.

This government-supported initiative involves 30 specialist schools and more than 3,000 staff nationwide, including teachers, school leaders, therapists and teacher aides. Together, these educators are participating in a comprehensive Professional Learning & Development programme designed to strengthen communication and literacy outcomes for learners with diverse and complex needs.

The specialist teaching professional learning and development has been created in close collaboration between the Child Well-being Research Institute, the Ministry of Education and specialist school leaders. This co-construction has ensured the programme is both accessible and relevant, recognising the unique contexts in which specialist schools operate and the wide range of learner profiles they support. Collaboration is a core principle of the approach, supporting long-term sustainability and consistency of practice across schools.

The Better Start Literacy Approach is grounded in explicit, evidence-based instruction in oral language, phonological awareness and phonics, and is underpinned by culturally responsive and inclusive teaching frameworks. The specialist schools professional development adapts these principles to meet the needs of learners who may use a range of communication modes, including communication boards and digital speech-output devices, and who often require highly individualised teaching approaches.

Central to the initiative is an assumption of potential in every learner. Educators are supported to use accessible, strengths-based assessment practices and to extend structured literacy teaching to include emergent literacy through shared reading, explicit vocabulary instruction, phoneme awareness and phonics. The professional

development also provides specialist teaching resources, including video examples of classroom practice in specialist school settings and online communities of practice that foster collaboration and shared problem-solving among educators.

Early feedback from the initiative has been highly encouraging. Evaluation surveys indicate strong enthusiasm and readiness for change across participating schools. Workshop feedback shows that 95% of educators found the sessions a positive learning experience, and 92% agreed that the content was directly useful for their day-to-day practice. These early indicators suggest the professional development is meeting a critical need within the specialist education sector.

By involving all teaching and therapy staff within specialist schools, the initiative aims to strengthen collaboration, deepen shared understanding and promote consistent, high-quality literacy teaching across teams. Over time, this large-scale professional development is expected to contribute to more equitable learning experiences and improved communication and literacy outcomes for learners with complex needs.

The specialist teaching professional learning & development initiative reflects the Child Well-being Research Institute's commitment to translating research into practice and ensuring that evidence-based approaches are accessible to all learners. By extending the Better Start Literacy Approach into specialist school contexts, the Child Well-being Research Institute continues to support educators nationwide to unlock the communication potential of every child and young person, enabling greater independence, participation and well-being.

# Multisensory Reading Comprehension in Autistic Children

Research associated with the Child Well-being Research Institute | Te Kāhui Pā Harakeke advanced understanding of how autistic children make sense of written language and how everyday classroom supports may support or complicate learning. This work culminated in Sarah Hinchey's doctoral research, supervised by Professor Catherine Theys, Associate Professor Donald Derrick and Dr Jayne Newbury. Dr Hinchey's work examined multisensory reading comprehension in autistic children and challenged assumptions about standard literacy practices.

Differences in sensory processing are well-recognised in autism and can affect how information is understood when presented visually, auditorily, or through multiple senses simultaneously. Reading comprehension is also an area of difficulty for some autistic children, although abilities vary widely. In Aotearoa New Zealand classrooms, multisensory strategies such as reading aloud or pairing text with pictures are widely used to support comprehension. However, limited evidence exists about whether these approaches consistently benefit autistic learners.

This doctoral research was designed around Dr Hinchey's observations of her own autistic daughter's difficulties with silent reading compared with reading aloud. The study examined reading comprehension under three conditions: silent reading, reading aloud, and reading with picture supports. A key feature of the study was the use of electroencephalography (EEG) alongside behavioural assessments. EEG measures brain activity and can provide an objective indicator of comprehension, offering insight beyond what can be captured through performance on behavioural reading tests alone.

A child-friendly experimental paradigm was designed using a wireless EEG system to reduce stress and allow testing in familiar environments, including participants' homes. The paradigm featured simple sentences with contrasting endings to create congruent and incongruent conditions. For example: "Hold the string and fly the kite" versus "Hold the string

and fly the teacher." The main study included 67 children aged 8-12 years, including 36 autistic children. All participants completed behavioural assessments and EEG-based reading tasks. A subset of autistic children also completed a questionnaire to share their experiences of the different reading conditions.

Behavioural results showed that autistic children, as a group, had lower vocabulary scores but comparable IQ, working memory and overall reading comprehension relative to non-autistic peers. EEG data from 42 participants indicated that children across both groups were able to comprehend the sentences they read. However, at a group level, EEG data indicated that autistic children showed lower comprehension when pictures were presented alongside text, compared with when they read the text aloud. Qualitative findings highlighted substantial individual differences. While some autistic children found picture supports helpful, others found them distracting. These findings underscore the diversity of sensory processing profiles among autistic learners.

Overall, the research challenges the assumption that adding visual supports will universally enhance reading comprehension for autistic children. Instead, it suggests that reading supports are most effective when tailored to individual sensory strengths and preferences. Future research will examine the use of text-to-speech tools using EEG, with the aim of developing evidence-based supports that reduce barriers to learning for autistic children.

*Professor Catherine Theys and Dr Sarah Hinchey using a mobile EEG headset.*



*BSLA telepractice session in action.*



# Improving Access to Vital Literacy Teaching

Access to effective intervention can be life-changing for children who struggle to learn to read. Many tamariki (children) across Aotearoa New Zealand are unable to access support due to geographical barriers, cost and shortages of educational specialists and professionals able to provide remedial support. A Child Well-being Research Institute | Te Kāhui Pā Harakeke-funded study led by Dr Amy Scott and Dr Lisa Furlong explored how telepractice (intervention delivered via video call) can help bridge this gap.



Drs Scott and Furlong, researchers and speech-language therapists at the Child Well-being Research Institute, investigated whether a well-established evidence-based literacy intervention could be delivered effectively online. The project was supported by a Child Well-being Research Institute Small Grant and conducted in partnership with several schools across the country.

The study focused on the Better Start Literacy Approach Tier 2 (small group) intervention, which has strong evidence for accelerating children's reading development when delivered in person. The research aimed to compare literacy outcomes for children receiving Better Start Literacy Approach Tier 2 lessons via telepractice, with peers who completed the same intervention face-to-face.

The final project included 34 children from nine schools around New Zealand. Children participated in daily, structured lessons targeting critical foundations for reading success, including letter-sound knowledge, phonological awareness and supported practice in applying these skills to reading. The lessons were delivered online by qualified speech-language therapists with expertise in literacy intervention and followed the Better Start Literacy Approach Tier 2 teaching framework. Lessons were carefully adapted for delivery in an online setting.

Quantitative data captured children's progress before and after the intervention and compared

outcomes across telepractice and in-person groups. In addition, qualitative feedback was gathered from interventionists delivering the sessions and from school-based support teachers, providing insight into the practical realities of telepractice delivery.

Dr Scott says the study responds to a pressing need. *“Many New Zealand children who would benefit from targeted literacy support face barriers to accessing appropriate services. Telepractice has real potential to improve equity of access, but there is limited high-quality evidence to guide the delivery of small-group interventions in online settings. The findings of this study help to address this need, generating evidence that informs research as well as clinical and educational practices.”*

By combining outcome data with practitioner perspectives, the research adds depth to the growing international literature on telepractice literacy interventions. The findings add to the existing literature on the effectiveness of telepractice, but also the conditions that support its success.

Drs Scott and Furlong hope to use this study's findings to apply for further funding, extend the scale of the research, and use knowledge gained from this exploratory study to refine further delivery of the intervention. Ultimately, they aim to provide a robust evidence base for more flexible, equitable, and sustainable literacy support for children across New Zealand.

# Nuffield Early Language Intervention

Since mid-2024, the Child Well-being Research Institute | Te Kāhui Pā Harakeke has been working in partnership with the University of Oxford on a collaborative intervention trial focused on strengthening children's early oral language skills. This partnership reflects the Institute's commitment to evidence-based, internationally connected research that delivers meaningful, real-world impact for tamariki (children) and their whānau (family) in Aotearoa New Zealand.



Developed by a team of Oxford researchers led by Professor Emeritus Maggie Snowling and Professor Emeritus Charles Hulme, the Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) is a targeted programme that provides structured small-group and one-to-one support for new entrant children experiencing challenges with oral language and communication. NELI has a strong international evidence base, with previous research demonstrating positive and sustained effects on children's language development and early literacy outcomes.

At the end of 2025, the Child Well-being Research Institute completed data collection for the first trial of NELI adapted for the New Zealand context. The NELI-NZ trial involved more than 300 students across 48 schools nationwide, marking a significant milestone in the Child Wellbeing Research Institute's growing portfolio of research. Data analysis is currently underway, with early language and literacy research findings indicating benefits for children's language skills, including gains in expressive vocabulary. These preliminary results align with international evidence and point to the promise of NELI as an additional evidence-based tool for supporting children who require extra assistance in their early years of schooling.

Feedback from participating teachers has been overwhelmingly positive, with many highlighting the value of the programme's structured, focused approach and the opportunity it provides for children to practise language skills in supportive, small-group settings. Several schools have indicated plans to

continue using NELI with students who experience ongoing language difficulties following the conclusion of the research trial.

*"NELI, I think, really helped them, especially [...] when we slowed it down. The girls had learnt their alphabet fairly quickly, but they didn't know their sounds, so that was the amazing thing of NELI, was it sorted. By the end of NELI, she knew all her letters, she knew all her sounds, which I don't think would have quite happened in the classroom."*

– Focus group with NELI teachers

Teachers also emphasised the importance of the individualised attention and structured opportunities for children to practise vocabulary and sentence construction at a critical stage of development.

*"I think the one-on-one, well you know, the small group is just so positive ... to have that opportunity at 5 is just huge. And the fact that they do get to practice not only vocabulary, but sentences is just such a strength of the program."*

– Focus group with NELI teachers

As part of the ongoing partnership between the Child Well-being Research Institute and the University of Oxford, Professors Snowling and Hulme visited the University of Canterbury as Erskine Fellows during February and March 2026. During their visit, they served as keynote speakers at the *Global Perspectives on Literacy: Evidence, Innovation, and Impact* research symposium, contributed to undergraduate teaching for speech-language therapy students, and supported professional learning and development workshops for educators within the Better Start Literacy Approach.

This partnership exemplifies the Child Well-being Research Institute's approach to braiding international expertise with local knowledge and practice, strengthening the evidence base for literacy interventions and supporting better outcomes for children across New Zealand and internationally.



# Education Apps

Digital technologies are now a familiar part of children’s learning environments at home and in education settings. Tablets and mobile apps are widely used by young children and increasingly incorporated into classroom and clinical practice. While this growth offers opportunities to support early literacy development, it also raises concerns about the quality and educational value of digital tools available to children.

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In 2025, researchers Dr Lisa Furlong and Dr Megan Gath from the Child Well-being Research Institute | Te Kāhui Pā Harakeke, together with Australian colleagues from La Trobe University and Flinders University, led a world-first study addressing this challenge. The research systematically evaluated mobile apps designed to support foundational reading skills, responding to the largely unregulated nature of the digital learning marketplace.

The study focused on apps targeting phonics and phonological awareness—key components of early reading development. With more than 9,000 apps across the Apple App Store and Google Play Store claiming to support early reading, educators and families face an overwhelming range of choices. App store descriptions and star ratings are commonly relied upon, despite offering little indication of alignment with evidence-based literacy instruction.

The research team appraised 309 mobile apps using the Mobile Application Rating Scale, a validated tool assessing engagement, functionality, aesthetics and information quality. Apps were also assessed for alignment with evidence-based principles of phonics and phonological awareness instruction, including explicit teaching, systematic sequencing and appropriate opportunities for practice.

The findings were concerning. While many apps performed adequately in terms of functionality and visual appeal, only around one quarter achieved a quality rating considered “good”. When instructional quality was considered, expert reviewers recommended just 85 apps, approximately 27% of those appraised. Consumer star ratings showed little correlation with expert evaluations, highlighting their unreliability as indicators of educational value.

Common issues were identified across many apps. These included reliance on implicit learning without clear instruction, random or developmentally inappropriate sequencing, inaccuracies in phoneme–grapheme relationships, and activities that allowed children to succeed through guessing or visual matching rather than meaningful skill application.

The study does not argue against the use of apps in literacy instruction. Instead, it emphasises that digital tools should meet the same evidence-based standards as traditional teaching approaches. When carefully designed and used alongside teacher guidance, apps can complement classroom instruction and provide additional practice opportunities.

One example is the Child Well-being Research Institute’s web-based Better Start Literacy Approach Tier 2 App. This supplementary resource reinforces the phonological awareness, phonics and word-decoding skills explicitly taught in teacher-delivered BSLA Tier 2 (small group) lessons. It provides structured practice aligned with the instructional principles and teaching sequence of the BSLA Tier 2 manuals and is intended for use alongside high-quality Tier 1 BSLA (classroom-level) instruction.

Overall, the findings of Furlong et al. (2025) highlight the need for clearer guidance and stronger regulation of educational apps and demonstrate the critical role of research in navigating the digital learning landscape. This work reflects the Child Well-being Research Institute’s commitment to translating rigorous research into practical guidance that supports children’s learning and wellbeing, helping ensure digital tools used in early literacy genuinely benefit children.



*Dr Megan Gath presenting her research.*



# Educational Media Content for Preschoolers

Screen media is an increasingly prevalent influence in young children's daily lives. For preschoolers aged 2-5 years, television and video viewing remains the most common forms of screen use. With initial funding from a Child Well-being Research Institute Small Grant in 2024, UC researchers Dr Megan Gath, Associate Professor Cara Swit, and Dr Jennifer Smith, along with Auckland University of Technology researchers Dr Mia Mclean and Dr Ying Wang, have been examining the different features of media content preschoolers are watching, and how these relate to their development.

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Rather than focusing on how much screen time children have, this project focused on instructional strategies aimed at teaching language, literacy, and numeracy. For the first phase of the project, a team of research assistants coded hours of video content to identify which specific content features were most successful at boosting preschool children's language, literacy, and numeracy skills when embedded within children's media programming.

The results provide stronger evidence that children learned language and maths skills from television than literacy skills. However, these benefits were only observed in certain groups of children. Language-focused strategies, such as defining vocabulary and matched labelling of objects was associated with higher vocabulary and communication skills, but only among children from areas of high socioeconomic deprivation. This suggests that well-designed educational media content may help boost the

language skills of children who are not exposed to a rich social and linguistic environment at home. Similarly, maths-focused media content, such as counting, seriation, and measurement, was associated stronger numeracy skills, but only when children were frequently exposed to this mathematical content.

This research provides relevant insights to parents and practitioners regarding the extent to which educational television programming can benefit preschoolers, and the specific features of media content to look for. The results are also of relevance to designers of children's media in terms of the features most likely to have educational impact.

This research was presented in July 2025 at the annual conference of the Society for the Scientific Study of Reading and will also be presented at the 2026 Dyslexia SPELD Foundation Language, Literacy and Learning Conference.

# Stuttering

Research led by Professor Catherine Theys continues to advance understanding of the neurological foundations of stuttering, offering new insight into a speech condition that affects millions of people worldwide and often emerges in early childhood. This work brings an internationally unique contribution to the field of speech-language science and aligns with the Child Well-being Research Institute | Te Kāhui Pā Harakeke's commitment to research that deepens understanding and improves outcomes across the lifespan.

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Stuttering affects speech fluency. It is characterised by disruptions to the flow of speech, presenting as repetitions, prolongations and blocks in speech. While many preschool children who stutter recover naturally, a substantial number continue to experience stuttering into adolescence and adulthood. For these individuals, stuttering can have far-reaching effects on communication, participation, confidence and well-being. Despite decades of research, the underlying neural (brain) mechanisms of stuttering are still poorly understood.

Professor Theys's research examines whether different forms of stuttering share common neural foundations. Traditionally, developmental stuttering (which begins in the preschool years), and acquired stuttering (which can occur following e.g., stroke or brain injury), have been studied separately. Her research takes a novel approach by exploring similarities rather than differences in the behavioural and neural representation of both types of stuttering.

Using advanced neuroimaging and network-based analytical methods, the research examined data from individuals with acquired stuttering following a stroke alongside data from adults with persistent developmental stuttering. The analyses investigated how affected brain regions connected with broader networks involved in speech production. The findings revealed a new neural network associated with stuttering following stroke, that also showed differences in people with persistent developmental stuttering. Central to this common network was the left putamen, a region known to play a key role in

timing and sequencing of motor movements, including those required for fluent speech.

This network-based perspective represents an important conceptual shift in how stuttering is understood, as evidenced by this study being a top-read article in the prestigious journal *Brain*. It provides a unifying explanation for why stuttering can arise from different underlying aetiologies yet present with similar speech characteristics. The implications of this research are both theoretical and practical. By identifying shared neural mechanisms, the findings create opportunities to refine assessment and intervention approaches for people who stutter. For individuals with acquired stuttering, the research offers clearer explanations of the underlying causes of their speech difficulties. For those with developmental stuttering, it points to neural systems that may be responsive to targeted therapies.

Importantly, this work reinforces the value of viewing communication differences through a neural lens and supports the development of treatments based on speakers' strengths.

As this programme of research continues, current studies by the team are now exploring how these neural networks develop over time and how interventions may support more effortless communication in both children and adults. Professor Theys's research plays a key role in growing the knowledge that supports more inclusive, informed and effective responses to stuttering across Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond.

*Professor Catherine Theys and Dr Fathiya Al'Amri reviewing MRI scans.*



# Māori Framework for Communication

Communication is central to human connection, identity and well-being. In Aotearoa New Zealand, however, approaches to communication support and within speech-language therapy have largely been shaped by Western scientific frameworks. This has often resulted in a misalignment with Māori worldviews and a lack of culturally grounded practice.



Research led by Megan Eustace (Taranaki), in collaboration with Professor Catherine Theys, Professor Jeannette King, Dr Campbell Le Heron and Katrina McGarr (Ngāi Tahu), drew on ancestral Māori knowledge to reframe how communication is understood and supported. This study formed part of Eustace's PhD research, which was awarded the 2025 Jean Seabrook Prize for doctoral research.

The research explored Māori perspectives on communication through an extensive analysis of pepeha, ancestral sayings that carry knowledge across generations. From a collection of 2,669 pepeha, 368 sayings relating to communication were identified and analysed.

Rather than treating Māori communication as solely an oral language, the research reveals a rich, holistic understanding that encompasses spoken language; body movement; sound; emotion; silence; signs from the environment; and relationships with others, the natural world, and the spiritual realm.

Eight interconnected themes emerged. Included in these themes was the power and influence of language (mana reo); listening, hearing, and obeying (whakarongo); the role of body language (reo ā-tinana); emotional expression (whatumanawa); and the central importance of relationships (whanaungatanga). Together, they show that communication in te ao Māori is not simply the exchange of information, but

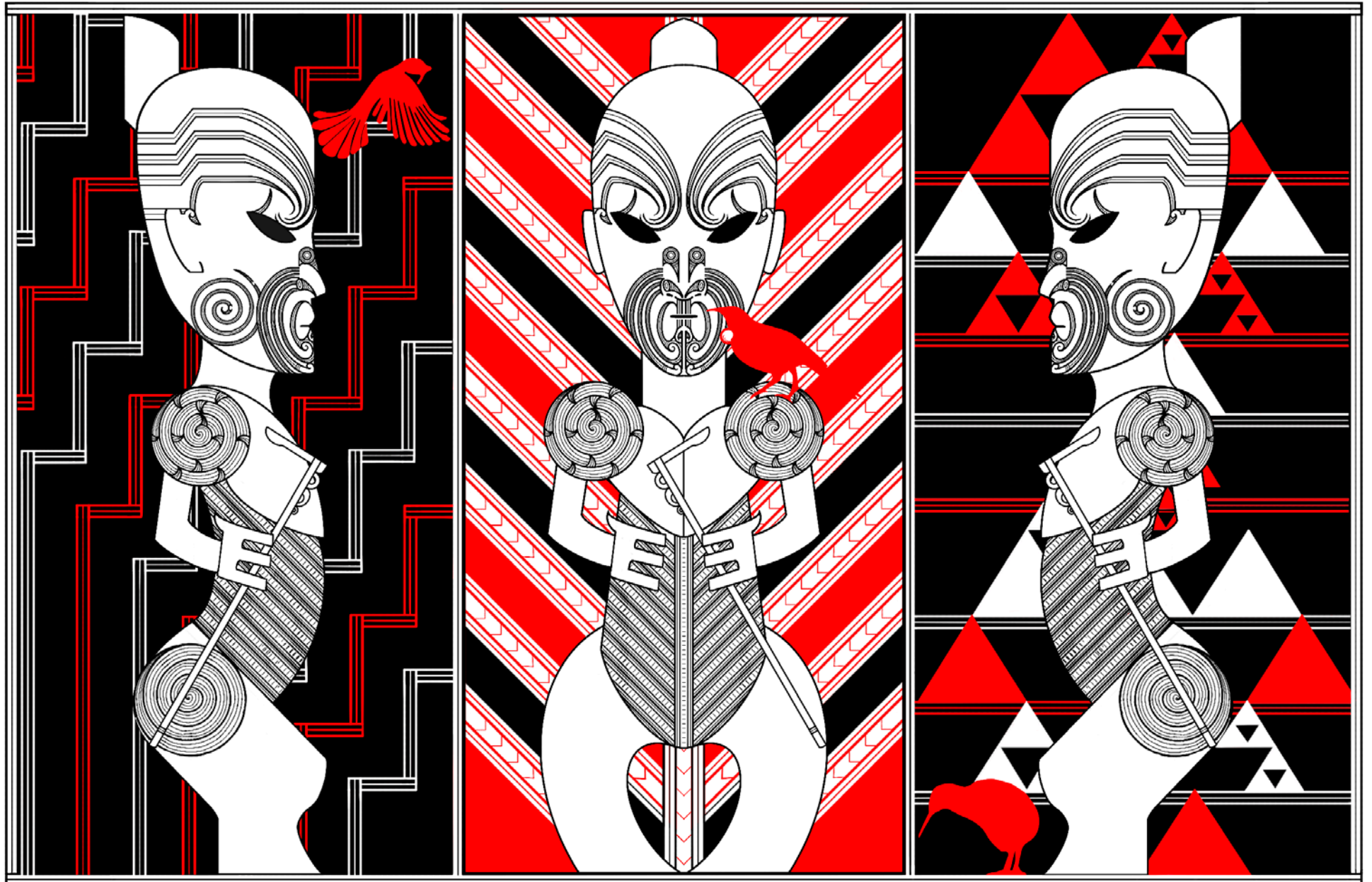
an active force that shapes relationships, restores balance, and connects people to whakapapa (genealogy), whenua (land), and wairua (spirit).

The findings also highlight that communication holds both generative and harmful potential. Words were understood as containing life force, capable of strengthening relationships or causing lasting harm. Ancestral teachings stress the importance of consideration, intent, honesty, humility and appropriate expression. Listening, especially to elders and trusted knowledge holders, was regarded as essential, while selective or inattentive listening was cautioned against.

Importantly, this research moves beyond documentation of traditional knowledge. It introduces a conceptual model, *Tāmata Te Reo Tūpuna*, which provides a foundation for integrating Māori understandings of communication into contemporary practice. *Tāmata* refers to revitalising and cultivating, reflecting the study's aim to bring ancestral language and perspectives (te reo tūpuna) into modern practice in ways that are meaningful, ethical, and effective.

The implications are significant. By affirming Māori ways of knowing and communicating, the research promotes the development of culturally grounded communication support for Māori individuals and whānau (family). It also contributes to broader efforts to decolonise health and education practices and to uphold obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

This work exemplifies the Child Well-being Research Institute | Te Kāhui Pā Harakeke's commitment to research that honours mātauranga Māori, strengthens cultural alignment in practice, and supports well-being through knowledge grounded in place, people, and history.



The three panels in the figure above show an orator from different perspectives, representing communication within Te Ao Wairua (the spiritual world), Te Ao Tūrao (the physical world) and Te Taiao (the natural world).

© Jordan Tuhura in collaboration with Megan Eustace.



# Rangatahi Climate Distress in a Warming World

Climate change is increasingly recognised as a major threat to mental health, particularly for young people who are growing up with the knowledge that its impacts will shape their futures. With support from a Child Well-being Research Institute | Te Kāhui Pā Harakeke Small Grant, a research team led by PhD candidate Miranda Huston (Te Āti Awa), alongside Professor Don Hine, Professor Bronwyn Hayward, Dr Claudia Schneider, and Dr Lindsey Te Ata o Tū McDonald (Kāi Tahu), is investigating climate-related distress among rangatahi (youth) in Aotearoa New Zealand, with a particular focus on rangatahi Māori (Māori youth).

The project responds to growing international evidence that young people experience high levels of climate-related sadness, anxiety, anger, and powerlessness, often alongside low confidence in government responses. While global studies have highlighted these patterns, this research provides the first nationally representative evidence of how climate distress is experienced by youth in New Zealand, and how it intersects with cultural identity, trust in institutions, and everyday well-being.

At the centre of the study is a large cross-sectional online survey of rangatahi (youth) aged 16–25, completed by more than 1,100 participants, weighted to reflect the national population. The findings show that climate distress is widespread: two-thirds of rangatahi (youth) reported being at least moderately worried about climate change, and nearly half said their feelings negatively affected daily functioning such as sleep, eating, or concentration. For many, these emotions were not experienced in isolation, but clustered into distinct emotional profiles that included combinations of worry, sadness, anger, anxiety, helplessness, fear, and, for some, hope.

The research highlights important differences across groups. Rangatahi Māori and Pacific youth were more likely to report moderate or greater climate worry and disruptions to daily life, alongside stronger feelings of being dismissed or unheard when raising climate concerns. Patterns of emotion also differed by ethnicity, reflecting broader social and political contexts

rather than individual vulnerability alone. A key contribution of the research is its examination of how perceptions of government responses relate to emotional wellbeing. Youth who believed that government action on climate change was inadequate or dishonest were more likely to experience negative climate emotions, feelings of betrayal, and functional impairment. In contrast, trust and reassurance, though less common, were associated with greater hope and optimism. This underscores that climate distress is not simply fear about environmental impacts, but also a response to political legitimacy and accountability.

By situating rangatahi (youth) experiences within both international evidence and Te Tiriti o Waitangi-grounded perspectives, the project provides critical insights for policy, mental health practice, and youth engagement. It highlights the need for responses that move beyond individual coping strategies, and toward visible, accountable action and meaningful inclusion of rangatahi (youth) voices, particularly Māori and Pacific, in climate decision-making.

This work exemplifies the Child Well-being Research Institute | Te Kāhui Pā Harakeke's commitment to research that centres youth well-being, addresses structural drivers of distress, and supports more just and culturally grounded responses in a rapidly warming world.

# Autism Research Centre



Autism Research Centre  
Aotearoa New Zealand

The University of Canterbury established Aotearoa New Zealand's first dedicated Autism Research Centre, marking a significant milestone for autism research nationwide. The Centre was created to bring together researchers, autistic people, whānau (families) and partner organisations to shape research priorities and strengthen the translation of evidence into practice. Its overall aim is to improve the health and well-being of autistic children and adults across New Zealand.

Hosted at the University of Canterbury, the Autism Research Centre is a cross-institutional collaboration that connects autism researchers from around the country. A defining feature of the Centre is its commitment to genuine partnership with the autism community. This commitment is embedded through Autistic Partnership – Aotearoa New Zealand, an advisory group comprising autistic professionals, parents, advocates and community leaders. Autistic Partnership – Aotearoa New Zealand plays a central role in guiding the Autism Research Centre's research priorities and ensuring that autistic perspectives inform all stages of the research process.

The Autism Research Centre grew out of strong existing collaborations among autism researchers nationwide. Under the leadership of Director Professor Laurie McLay, Associate Director Professor Ann-Marie Kennedy, and Dr Ruth Monk, the Centre provides a dedicated platform to strengthen national partnerships, amplify research impact and formalise inclusive research practices.

The Autism Research Centre was officially launched in September 2025 at its inaugural symposium, held at The University of Canterbury. The symposium brought together researchers, practitioners, autistic people and family members for a day of shared learning, reflection and dialogue. Autistic and non-autistic presenters from across New Zealand and Australia contributed to the programme, including researchers from the University of Otago, Victoria University of Wellington and Auckland University of

Technology, reflecting the Centre's national reach and collaborative ethos.

The keynote address was delivered by Professor David Trembath, Head of Autism Research at The Kids Research Institute in Australia. Drawing on more than 25 years' experience as a speech and language therapist and researcher, Professor Trembath explored how autism research can be reshaped to better serve autistic people and their families. His keynote, *This Changes Everything*, emphasised the potential of community-led, collaborative research to enhance both relevance and impact.

Across the symposium, discussions consistently highlighted the importance of inclusion, reciprocity and respect. Participants reflected on the need for research to extend beyond academic settings and to be grounded in lived experience, recognising autistic people as partners in research rather than subjects of it. The symposium reinforced the Autism Research Centre's guiding principle that research should belong to the communities it seeks to support.

The establishment of the Autism Research Centre, alongside the successful delivery of its inaugural symposium, represents a significant step forward for autism research in New Zealand. By bringing researchers and autistic communities together within a shared, inclusive framework, the Autism Research Centre has laid strong foundations for research that is rigorous, relevant and able to enhance the well-being and participation of autistic people across the lifespan.

Professor Laurie McLay  
presenting on Autism  
Research Centre.

## The Voices of Autistic People

- Build intentional and authentic relationships
- Adjust the physical environment
- Social connection and friendships
- Clear routines and structure
- Understand learner profiles
- Respond to executive functioning differences

Thank you to Joanne Dacombe for sharing these tips!

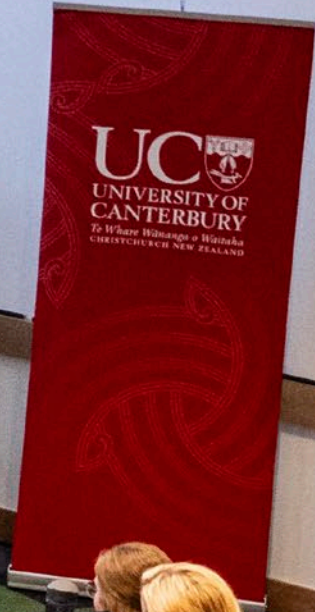


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**Child Well-being Research  
Institute**  
*Whiriwhiri, kia ora ai te tamaiti*



Nurturing research  
excellence to  
support children's  
holistic well-being



**UC**  
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*Dr Jennifer Smith (Ngāti Whātua; Ngāpuhi),  
Professor Gail Gillon (Ngāi Tahu),  
Rachel Maitland (Ngāi Tahu) attending the  
the Royal Society Te Apārangi TAIKURA  
Aotearoa Tri-Academy Indigenous  
Summit. November 2025.*



# Tri-Academy Indigenous Summit

Child Well-being Research Institute Director Professor Gail Gillon (Ngāi Tahu) co-chaired the Royal Society Te Apārangi TAIKURA Aotearoa Tri-Academy Indigenous Summit. This was an international summit that brought together Indigenous scholars, knowledge holders and research leaders to agree on shared priorities for advancing Indigenous research and leadership.

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The summit marked an important moment in strengthening global collaboration and reaffirming the central role of Indigenous knowledge systems in shaping equitable and impactful research. The Child Well-being Research Institute sponsored the attendance of emerging Indigenous research leaders from across Aotearoa New Zealand, including Dr Jennifer Smith (Ngāti Whātua, Ngāpuhi) and Rachel Maitland (Ngāi Tahu) from the Faculty of Education.

The three-day gathering was hosted in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland as part of the Tri-Academy Partnership on Indigenous Engagement, a collaboration between leading academies from Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia and Canada. More than 130 Indigenous scholars, community leaders and elders participated, representing Māori, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and First Nations communities. The summit built on momentum from an earlier meeting held in Canada and reflected a growing international commitment to Indigenous-led research transformation.

Across the programme, participants engaged in keynote addresses, panels, wānanga (meetings) and cultural practices that foregrounded Indigenous worldviews, values and lived experience. Discussions focused on shared challenges faced by Indigenous researchers, including systemic inequities in academia, limited recognition of Indigenous methodologies, and barriers to meaningful participation in research decision-making. There was strong consensus that these issues require structural change, rather than incremental adjustments, within research institutions and funding systems.

A central theme of the summit was the need to reposition Indigenous knowledge as foundational rather than peripheral to research excellence. Participants emphasised that Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing offer critical insights

across disciplines, including education, health, environmental stewardship and social policy. Indigenous methodologies and ethical frameworks were highlighted as essential for research that is both rigorous and accountable to communities.

The summit also underscored the importance of conducting research with Indigenous peoples, rather than on them. Calls for shared governance, co-design and Indigenous leadership were woven throughout discussions, alongside recognition of the importance of language, culture and intergenerational knowledge transmission. Delegates reflected on the responsibility of research systems to uphold Indigenous rights to determine priorities, steward knowledge and shape outcomes that support community well-being.

At the conclusion of the summit, Indigenous leaders issued a collective communiqué outlining agreed priorities for action. These included reducing inequities within academic systems, embedding Indigenous leadership in research governance, and strengthening partnerships between academies and Indigenous communities. The communiqué called on the participating academies to commit to sustained collaboration and accountability in advancing these goals.

The summit represented a significant step forward in international efforts to transform research cultures and practices. For the Child Well-being Research Institute, participation reinforced the Institute's commitment to Indigenous leadership, partnership and culturally grounded research. The relationships strengthened and priorities agreed at the summit contributed to a shared vision of research that honours Indigenous knowledge and supports more just and inclusive futures in New Zealand and beyond.

# Tautai: The Master Navigator

The publication of *Tautai: The Master Navigator* provided a significant contribution to conversations about educational leadership, equity and Pacific success in Aotearoa New Zealand in 2025. Published and released by NZCER Press, the book offers a culturally grounded reimagining of leadership, addressing the persistent and complex challenges that continue to undermine Pacific learners' educational achievement.

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Authored by Dr Tufulasi Taleni, *Tautai: The Master Navigator* brings together Indigenous knowledge, academic research and lived experience to propose a powerful new framework for leadership rooted in Pacific values. The book is both scholarly and deeply personal, tracing a journey that spans generations and geographies, from Dr Taleni's Samoan village to Aotearoa New Zealand's education systems, and reflecting the navigational wisdom that has sustained Pacific peoples for centuries.

At the heart of the book is the concept of the *tautai*, the master navigator. In Pacific traditions, the *tautai* is responsible not only for charting a course, but for reading the environment, responding to change and guiding others safely toward a shared destination. Dr Taleni uses this metaphor to explore the critical role of educational leaders in steering Pacific learners, their families and communities through an education system shaped by historical inequities and structural barriers.

Drawing on his culturally grounded doctoral research, decades of professional practice, and the collective wisdom of Indigenous, school and community leaders, Dr Taleni positions leadership as a relational and values-driven practice. The book foregrounds the importance of cultural identity, spirituality and collective responsibility in shaping leadership that is responsive to Pacific aspirations and realities.

Central to the book are insights gathered through *talanoa* (dialogue) and *fa'afaletui* (weaving together) with Samoan *matai* (chiefs), educators and community leaders. Through these rich dialogues, Dr Taleni identifies eight foundational leadership qualities that underpin effective educational leadership. These qualities are woven together through the Soalaupulega Samoa Theoretical Research Framework and the Taleni Soalaupulega Leadership Framework,

which culminate in the metaphor of the *Fala* (mat) of Soalaupulega. This *fala* serves as a culturally grounded blueprint for leadership that is collaborative, inclusive and transformative.

Rather than positioning leadership as the responsibility of individuals alone, *Tautai: The Master Navigator* emphasises collective action and shared purpose. Leaders are encouraged to "set the sails" together, drawing on the strengths, knowledge and relationships within Pacific communities to create learning environments where Pacific learners can flourish.

The book speaks directly to educators, school leaders, policymakers and researchers, while remaining accessible to families and community members. It challenges readers to reflect critically on dominant leadership models and to consider how culturally sustaining approaches can reshape educational systems to better serve Pacific learners.

As a contribution to research, practice and public discourse, *Tautai: The Master Navigator* reinforces the importance of leadership that honours culture, values and relationships. It offers a compelling vision for strengthening education in New Zealand, one in which Pacific learners are supported to thrive, guided by leaders who navigate with wisdom, humility and collective purpose. When leaders achieve this, they are contributing to the metaphorical concept used by Dr Taleni throughout his doctoral research rooted from his Samoan epistemology as 'ole talatalaina ole uepega lavelave | the untangling of the tangled net'. It sums up the contribution of the *Tautai* in inspiring and motivating leaders to come together to collaborate in finding solutions to contribute to complex issues impacting on the lives of Pacific learners, families and community.



# TAUTAI

THE MASTER NAVIGATOR  
Leali'ie'e Dr Tufulasi Ova Taleni

*From left to right, Utufaasili Rosemary Mose (Deputy Chief Executive Pasifika and People NZQA), Leali'ie'e Dr Tufulasi Taleni (Senior Lecturer, University of Canterbury), Jann Marshall (Deputy Chief Executive Assessment NZQA), Alex Bidois (Deputy Chief Executive Māori NZQA).*

*Photographer - To'omata Su'esu'e Toilolo (Senior Advisor Pasifika, NZQA).*

# UC Innovation Medal

In 2025, the University of Canterbury recognised outstanding research impact with the awarding of the UC Innovation Medal to Professor Nick Draper, acknowledging his sustained contribution to sport and exercise science and his leadership in developing practical innovations that enhance player safety and well-being.

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The UC Innovation Medal celebrates research that moves beyond theory to deliver real-world change. Professor Draper's work exemplifies this purpose through more than 15 years of applied research focused on understanding and reducing injury risk in sport, particularly within rugby. His research responds to growing national and international concern about head impacts and long-term player welfare, especially for children and young people.

A central focus of Professor Draper's work has been junior rugby safety. Motivated by his experience as a junior rugby coach and parent, he led the UC Collisions in Junior Rugby research programme, a multidisciplinary initiative involving engineers, medical researchers and sport scientists. The programme engaged more than 300 players aged 8-18 years and combined advanced methods such as MRI scanning, video analysis, neurocognitive testing and data from instrumented mouthguards. Together, these approaches provided new insights into the frequency, magnitude and characteristics of collisions experienced by young players.

One of the most tangible outcomes of this research is the development of a prototype softshell headgear, known as Ruru, which is expected to enter the market in the near future. The design reflects evidence gathered through years of field-based research and

responds to emerging understanding that concussion risk and recovery may differ across groups, including differences related to sex and ethnicity. This work demonstrates how rigorous research can directly inform safer equipment design.

Beyond rugby, Professor Draper has contributed to broader innovation in sport science, including research focused on female athlete health and performance. In collaboration with national partners, his work has addressed long-standing gaps in evidence related to female physiology, including the influence of hormonal cycles on training and performance. This research supports the development of training programmes that better reflect the needs of women in sport.

Professor Draper's career spans roles as a physical education teacher, sport scientist and performance manager, bringing strong applied insight to his research leadership. The UC Innovation Medal recognises not only the quality of his scholarship, but also its clear value to athletes, families, sporting organisations and communities.

The award highlights the importance of research that translates evidence into action and reinforces UC's commitment to innovation that improves safety, participation and well-being in sport.

*Professor Nick Draper | Recipient of UC Innovation Medal.  
CWRI have been proud to support some of Professor Draper's  
research activities.*



# Te Rangaunua Hiranga Māori Medal

Aotearoa New Zealand's national science academy, the Royal Society Te Apārangi, continued its long tradition of recognising research excellence in 2025 with the annual Research Honours. The Child Well-being Research Institute | Te Kāhui Pā Harakeke and the broader research community were proud to see the Te Rangaunua Hiranga Māori Medal awarded to Te Kāhui a Te Rū Rangahau from the School of Teacher Education at the University of Canterbury. This medal recognises outstanding research with deep community impact.

The Royal Society Te Apārangi's Research Honours Aotearoa programme celebrates excellence, innovation and contribution to knowledge across disciplines, ranging from science and technology to the humanities and social sciences. Medals are presented in a series of regional events, bringing recognition to researchers whose work has shaped understanding, influenced practice, and enriched society. The Honours reflect decades of commitment by the Royal Society Te Apārangi to champion research that benefits New Zealand and the world, marking both individual and collective achievement in scholarship and innovation.

### Championing Māori-led research and teaching

The Te Rangaunua Hiranga Māori Medal is awarded biennially for excellent and innovative research that is co-created in community contexts by Māori and has made a distinctive contribution to well-being and development in New Zealand. The 2025 award recognised Te Kāhui a Te Rū Rangahau, led by Associate Professor Sonja Macfarlane (Ngāi Tahu; Ngāti Waewae) (Massey University), Associate Professor Te Hurinui Renata Karaka-Clarke (Te Arawa; Ngāi Tahu), Dr Matiu Tai Rātima (Te Whakatōhea; Ngāti Pūkeko), and Dr Jennifer Pearl Smith (Ngāti Whātua, Ngāpuhi), for their collaborative work in developing culturally responsive teaching resources that strengthen educational practice at multiple levels of the schooling system.

Central to the group's contribution is the Hikairo Schema book series and its associated tertiary companion volume, *Ngā Hau e Whā o Tāwhirimātea*. These resources were developed in partnership

with educators and communities to provide evidence-informed, culturally grounded strategies that guide teachers in responsive and coherent pedagogical practice. Designed to support learners across early childhood, primary, intermediate and secondary settings, the guides bridge the gap between theory and classroom practice, offering practical examples of how educators can integrate cultural knowledge, language and identity into everyday teaching. These tools have been widely used not only within New Zealand but also inform international conversations about culturally sustaining pedagogy.

The award highlights research that is not only academically rigorous but also deeply rooted in tikanga Māori (Māori customs) and relational community engagement. By foregrounding kaupapa Māori (Māori approaches) perspectives alongside structured teaching frameworks, the work of Te Kāhui a Te Rū Rangahau exemplifies how scholarly inquiry can be woven with practice to support more inclusive, affirming and effective educational environments.

### Research honours that reflect breadth and impact

This recognition underscores the importance of research that is co-designed with communities, honours Indigenous knowledge systems, and contributes to transformative educational practice. This work continues to inform how educators engage with theory, culture and learner identities, reinforcing the role that collaborative, community-responsive research plays in shaping equitable futures for tamariki (children) and rangatahi (youth) throughout New Zealand.



From left to right Associate Professor Te Huringi Renata Karaka-Clarke, Dr Jennifer Smith, Associate Professor Sonja Macfarlane, Dr Matiu Tai Rātima.

# Research Grants

In 2025, the Child Well-being Research Institute | Te Kāhui Pā Harakeke offered funding to support impactful research.



## **Te Harakeke Matihiko | Digital Media Network**

Project leaders: Associate Professor Cara Swit, Dr Megan Gath, Dr Jennifer Smith

The Digital Media Network | Te Harakeke Matihiko was established to translate emerging research into accessible, strengths-based guidance to support the digital wellbeing of tamariki (children) and rangatahi (youth) in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Network responds to growing demand from whānau (families), educators and practitioners for evidence-informed, culturally grounded resources that can be applied in real-world digital contexts. Central to the kaupapa (topic) is the active involvement of rangatahi (youth), ensuring that young people's perspectives and lived experiences inform all stages of the work. Bringing together expertise in child and adolescent development, psychology, digital well-being and culturally responsive research translation, the Network is strengthened through partnerships with schools, whānau, community organisations and professionals.

The grant has enabled the development of a suite of accessible, evidence-informed resources, which will be made available through the Child Well-being Research Institute and social media presence on Instagram @NZDigitalMediaResearchNetwork. Together, this work supports practical, mana (power)-enhancing approaches to digital media use for families, professionals and young people.



## **Understanding Climate Emotions in Aotearoa: Amplifying Pacific Youth Voices**

Project leaders: Dr Helena Cook, Dr Claudia Schneider, Dr Kate Pendergast, Professor Bronwyn Hayward, Professor Don Hine, Dr Lynette McLeod, Dr Rebecca Mitchell

Supporting well-being in the context of climate change is an urgent priority, particularly for young people and Indigenous communities most exposed to climate-related risks. This Small Grant project amplified the voices of Pacific youth in Aotearoa New Zealand, addressing an important gap in climate psychology research and policy.

The research explored how Pacific young people understand and respond emotionally to climate change. The first phase involved participatory, place-based research with Pacific youth aged 13–15 in Ōtautahi Christchurch's eastern suburbs. Through talanoa (dialogue) with Pacific elders, creative practices such as Ei Katu (flower garland creation), and youth workshops, participants explored environmental change, neighbourhood resilience and civic agency. A second phase involved a national survey of more than 450 Pacific youth and young adults.

Findings highlight the value of relational, culturally grounded approaches to understanding climate well-being. This work contributes evidence to inform policy, education, and community initiatives to better support Pacific youth to navigate climate change with agency, connection, and care for place.



### Understanding integrated youth-focused mental health care

Project leaders: Associate Professor Kaaren Mathias, Dr Rebecca Mitchell

Funded through Cure Kids and a Child Well-being Research Institute | Te Kāhui Pā Harakeke Small Grant, this two-year research project examines how integrated youth-focused care providers support rangatahi (youth) to access mental health care in ways that work for them.

The study focuses on services already being used by young people, seeking to understand how these providers reduce barriers to care. Young people with lived experience of mental health challenges have been involved from the outset, shaping the research design and approach.

Research is being undertaken across seven integrated youth health providers in Christchurch, Southland, Porirua, Taupō, Rotorua, Auckland and Palmerston North. Interviews, focus groups and observational methods capture the experiences of both youth and service providers.

A pilot phase began at Te Tahī Youth in Christchurch, where a youth peer researcher was recruited and trained. Data collection across the remaining providers will continue through 2026, contributing evidence to strengthen youth-centred models of care in Aotearoa New Zealand.



### Refreshing Tikanga Māori Resources for Sustainable Learning

Project leader: Dr Ngaroma Williams

This Small Grant supported the refreshing and expansion of the *Ngā Taonga Whakaako* resources to help kaiako (teachers) embed tikanga Māori (Māori customs) in everyday practice. Tikanga Māori provides a relational and ethical framework that guides responsibilities to people and place in Aotearoa New Zealand, yet teachers increasingly seek practical guidance for applying these principles within sustainability and environmental learning.

The project produced 30 refreshed teaching resources: 15 for early childhood education and 15 for primary school contexts. Grounded in kaupapa Māori (Māori approaches), the resources position tikanga not as standalone cultural activities, but as lived principles that inform how learning occurs. Each resource is structured around key tikanga concepts such as ako (learning), manaakitanga (care), whakapapa (genealogy), rangatiratanga (self-determination), kaitiakitanga (guardianship), and te taiao (environment), demonstrating how these can underpin sustainable practices within learning environments.

Designed to be adaptable to local contexts, the resources support schools and early learning services to enact tikanga in culturally grounded ways that strengthen sustainable futures for tamariki (children), whānau (families) and communities.



### Community water fluoridation, oral health and child development

Project leader: Professor Philip Schlüter

A Small Grant supported a large-scale population study examining the relationship between community water fluoridation, dental health and early childhood development in Aotearoa New Zealand. Tooth decay remains a significant issue for tamariki (children), particularly in regions without fluoridated water. At the same time, international debate has emerged about potential associations between fluoride exposure and neurodevelopmental outcomes, despite limited high-quality evidence.

This study drew on nationally collected B4 School Check data to investigate dental caries and psychological functioning in more than 330,000 four-year-old children assessed between 2016 and 2022. Alongside oral health screening, the analysis included standardised measures of emotional, social and behavioural functioning.

Preliminary findings indicate that community water fluoridation continues to be associated with lower levels of dental decay. Importantly, no evidence of increased psychological difficulty was observed among children exposed to fluoridated water. These findings will contribute robust New Zealand evidence to inform public health policy and support decision-making to improve the health and well-being of tamariki (children) across the globe.

# Summer Scholarships

In 2025-2026, the Child Well-being Research Institute | Te Kāhui Pā Harakeke offered five summer scholarships to support emerging researcher development and impactful research.

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## Advancing error analysis in oral language assessment

Student: Anya Krupp

Supervisor: Dr Amy Scott

Strong oral language skills are foundational to literacy success. Building on the Better Start Literacy Approach, this summer scholarship advances the next phase of innovation in oral language assessment by enhancing the Better Start Literacy Approach platform's ability to detect and analyse children's linguistic errors automatically.

The Better Start Literacy Approach oral narrative assessment already allows automatic transcription and analysis of children's speech with high accuracy. However, identifying fine-grained grammatical errors, such as missing morphemes, mazes and syntactic deviations, remains underdeveloped in automated systems. This project evaluates whether a child-trained automatic speech recognition model can preserve children's authentic speech patterns rather than normalising them and applies natural language processing techniques to detect and tag specific error patterns.

Using manually annotated narrative samples as a training set, the project will produce a proof-of-concept model capable of generating meaningful error metrics. These insights will support teachers and clinicians to better identify children at risk of language delay and later literacy challenges.

By strengthening early identification and monitoring, this research contributes to more equitable access to high-quality language assessment. In the longer term, it lays the groundwork for scalable, automated tools that support timely, targeted intervention, ensuring more tamariki (children) receive the support they need to thrive as confident communicators and readers.

## Shaping/Shaking bicultural foundations in Early Childhood Education

Student: Bek Galloway

Supervisors: Professor Jayne White and Dr Ngaroma Williams

Early Childhood Education in Aotearoa New Zealand draws on a wide range of philosophical traditions, yet the origins, tensions and cultural implications of these foundations are rarely made explicit. This summer scholarship examines the philosophical whakapapa that underpins early childhood education practice, with a particular focus on bicultural contexts.

Through a systematic review of key international philosophies and document analysis of successive versions of Te Whāriki, the project critically explores how dominant Western philosophical frames shape curriculum, policy and practice. It also analyses interviews with leading scholars to identify where tensions arise between theory and lived pedagogical practice.

The goal is to create a scholarly resource that supports kaiako (teachers) to critically engage with the philosophies guiding their work, strengthening culturally grounded approaches. The research will contribute to a co-authored publication aimed at supporting reflective and philosophically informed practice in early childhood education settings.

By equipping educators to more deeply understand and enact bicultural commitments, this work supports teaching that honours diverse identities, languages and histories. Ultimately, children benefit from pedagogies that are culturally responsive, philosophically grounded, and aligned with the heritage and aspirations of the communities they belong to.

## **Towards validation of the reo Māori Kendall Toy Test**

Student: May Gernhoefer

Supervisors: Professor Greg O'Beirne and Dr Jennifer Smith

Equitable access to culturally appropriate health assessments is essential for child well-being. Currently, the Kendall Toy Test, a widely used paediatric speech intelligibility assessment, is only clinically available in New Zealand English, limiting appropriate assessment for tamariki (children) whose primary language is te reo Māori (Māori language).

This summer scholarship advances the development of a reo Māori version of the Kendall Toy Test by finalising and calibrating auditory-visual stimuli and refining an innovative paired-app testing system. The clinician will control stimulus delivery and scoring from one device, while the child responds via a touchscreen displaying image sets.

The project includes recording and editing of stimuli with a fluent te reo Māori speaker, verifying acoustic parameters, and conducting usability trials across clinical environments. Wānanga (meetings) with audiologists working alongside tamariki Māori (Māori children) will ensure the system aligns with clinical practice and reduces barriers to uptake.

By providing the foundations for clinical piloting in 2026, this work addresses an urgent gap in culturally responsive hearing assessment. Tamariki Māori (Māori children) awaiting cochlear implant assessment or speech evaluation will benefit from tools that reflect their language and identity, supporting fairer, more accurate clinical pathways and improved well-being outcomes.

## **Developing scalable models for brain strain prediction in youth sport**

Student: Meriem Hcini

Supervisors: Professor Nick Draper and Associate Professor Sinead Moylett

Head impacts in contact sports are an ongoing concern for young people's health and well-being. While advanced biomechanical models can simulate how the brain is affected due to a collision, they are complex, time-consuming, and difficult to use in real-world sporting settings.

This summer scholarship builds on emerging kinematic-based approaches to estimate brain strain more efficiently. The project draws on head-impact data collected from instrumented mouthguards worn by youth rugby players. Using a measure called the Universal Brain Injury Criterion, the team can estimate injury risk without relying on highly technical and time-consuming computer simulations.

The research involves cleaning and analysing time-series data on head movements during impacts, including linear (straight-line) and angular (rotational) accelerations. It will examine how magnitude and direction of impacts relate to predicted brain strain. Machine learning techniques will be explored to improve prediction accuracy and identify patterns linked to higher injury risk.

By translating data from wearable sensors into meaningful injury risk information, this work supports earlier detection of potentially harmful impacts and informs concussion management protocols. The ultimate goal is safer participation in youth sport, empowering coaches, clinicians and whānau (families) with evidence-based tools to protect the developing brain and promote lifelong physical well-being.

## **Youth and counsellor engagement with AI tools in secondary schools**

Student: Shruti Palicha

Supervisors: Associate Professor Shane Barracough and Dr Kate Reid

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools, including chatbots and generative AI platforms, are increasingly being used by young people for therapeutic support. Yet little is known about how AI is being used by school guidance counsellors or rangatahi (youth) in Aotearoa New Zealand, and what ethical, professional and safety considerations arise.

This summer scholarship begins a multi-phase research programme exploring counsellors' and young people's perspectives, experiences and attitudes toward AI use in therapeutic contexts. The project includes a narrative literature review, development of a national Qualtrics survey for guidance counsellors, and preparation of an ethics application and interview protocols.

The research will identify both opportunities and risks associated with AI in school-based counselling, including issues of data privacy, therapeutic quality, harm, regulation and supplementary support. Understanding how AI is already intersecting with counselling practice is essential to developing safe, evidence-informed guidance.

At a time when youth mental health needs are rising, this project supports thoughtful engagement with emerging technologies. By clarifying affordances and safeguards, the research contributes to improved mental health support for rangatahi (youth) while ensuring that innovation is grounded in care, ethics and well-being.

## RESEARCH FUNDING AGENCIES AND PROJECT TITLES FOR 2025 INCLUDE:

STAFF MEMBER	GRANT ACCOUNT/CONSULTANCY NUMBER AND NAME	FUNDER	START DATE	END DATE
Prof Lianne Woodward	E7149 VAR: Targeting human milk fortification to improve preterm infant growth and brain development	National Institute of Health Research Project Grant	8/1/2021	7/31/2025
Prof Gail Gillon	E7280 VAR: Research Informed integrated professional support system for teaching of literacy using Better Start Literacy Approach (BLSA) Cohort 9 learners above requirement of fulfil contract	Ministry of Education	5/6/2024	3/31/2026
Prof Brigid McNeill/Dr Jennifer Smith	E7713 Whiriwhiria, kia ora ai te tamaiti: Building health, wellbeing and learning success for tamariki and rangatahi through mātauranga Māori and systems science approaches	MBIE National Science Challenge - A Better Start	9/1/2022	11/30/2025
Prof Laurie McLay	E7714 Optimizing a Personalized Health Approach for Virutally Treating High-Risk Caregivers During COVID-19 and Beyond	Purdue University	9/23/2022	6/30/2025
Prof Nick Draper	E7999 Collisions in junior rugby: incidence, magnitude and possible mitigation	Neurological Foundation Project Grant	1/28/2024	12/31/2025
Prof Nick Draper	E8083 Collisions in Junior Rugby: Incidence and magnitude and potential health effect	Maurice and Phyllis Pykel Trust	12/1/2024	11/30/2026
Dr Megan Gath	E8099 The impact of childrens screen exposure on developmental outcomes	Canterbury Medical Research Foundation	9/1/2024	8/31/2026
Prof Laurie McLay	E8277 Trends in autism prevalence and health service use in Aotearoa	Cure Kids	3/1/2025	2/28/2027
Prof Laurie McLay	E8284 Digital-delivery of well-being supports for Autistic children	Health Research Council Delivery Project Grant	4/1/2025	3/31/2029
Prof Nick Draper	E8321 Monitoring Female Sex Hormones (FSH) & Performance Readiness in Elite Female Athletes	High performance sport NZ	3/24/2025	12/31/2025

*We are grateful to the funders for these research opportunities and partnerships we have developed.*

STAFF MEMBER	GRANT ACCOUNT/CONSULTANCY NUMBER AND NAME	FUNDER	START DATE	END DATE
Dr Lisa Furlong	E8327 Paediatric speech-language therapy services in Aotearoa: Exploring speech-language therapist and whānau perspectives	Canterbury Medical Research Foundation	6/4/2025	12/19/2025
Dr Lisa Furlong	E8384 Furlong New Zealand Speech-Language Therapists' Association Conference 2025 (Canterbury Medical Research Foundation)	Canterbury Medical Research Foundation	9/9/2025	9/12/2025
Prof Cara Swit	M1273 Understanding Technoference from the Childs Perspective	Marsden Grant	4/1/2024	3/31/2027
Sacha McMeeking	E8017 Evidencing the Causal Mechanisms of Kaupapa Māori Health Transformation	Health Research Council	2/1/2024	1/31/2028
Prof Gail Gillon	E8078 Accelerated Learning Research Report	Ministry of Education	10/1/2025	12/31/2026
<b>Child Well-being Research Institute Research Grants 2025</b>				
Philip Schluter	Community water fluoridation and neurodevelopmental disorders: a population-based record linkage cohort study	CWRI research grant		11/1/2025
Cara Swit	Growing Up Digital: A Dual-Stream Project	CWRI research grant		11/1/2025
Claudia Schnieder/ Kate Prendergast/ Helena Cook	Understanding Climate Emotions in Aotearoa: Amplifying Pacific Youth Voices in a Changing Climate.	CWRI research grant		11/1/2025
Amy Scott/ Lisa Furlong	Tier 2 tele practice literacy intervention for children with reading and spelling difficulties: Comparing the effectiveness of in-person and telepractice delivery.	CWRI research grant		11/1/2025
Ngaroma Williams	Tikanga refresh	CWRI research grant		11/1/2025
Kaaren Mathias	How does integrated youth-focussed primary care improve youth mental health?	CWRI research grant		11/1/2025

Lead transformative  
research with real  
world impact for  
and with children.

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# Strategic Commitments



Our strategy is anchored in the UC values, with tangible commitments and practices to ensure that we embody the values that unite us as a community.

The Child Well-being Research Institute | Te Kāhui Pā Harakeke is committed to being a research centre of excellence that materially advances the University of Canterbury's Tangata Tū, Tangata Ora strategy by:

Leading high impact inter-disciplinary research;

Anchoring local, national and international research collaboration for impact; and

Building our collective reputation for high-impact research.

We also contribute to the University of Canterbury's goals of:

Being strongly locally connected through our presence in the Health Precinct of Ōtautahi Christchurch and locally embedded relationships;

Recognizing and serving Ngāi Tūāhuriri's aspirations, as mana whenua (custodians of the land), as well as contributing to the goals of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and a number of Papatipu Rūnanga;

Contributing to the aspirations of Pacific communities;

Promoting understanding of Aotearoa New Zealand's unique place in the world by leading culturally responsive, strengths based research and impact; and

Making a positive impact to hauora (well-being).

# OUR TEAM

## Directorate

Professor Gail Gillon  
(Ngāi Tahu) – Founding Director

Professor Laurie McLay – Deputy Director

Professor Catherine Theys – Deputy Director (from August 2025)

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## Child Well-being Research Institute | Te Kāhui Pā Harakeke Advisory team

Associate Professor Cathy Andrew  
(Executive Dean Te Kaupeka Oranga | The Faculty of Health)

Associate Professor Laurie McLay  
(Associate Dean Te Kaupeka Oranga | The Faculty of Health)

Professor Megan McAuliffe  
(Head of School Psychology, Speech and Hearing Te Kaupeka Pūtaiao | Faculty of Science)

Professor Stuart Parsons  
(Executive Dean Te Kaupeka Pūtaiao | Faculty of Science)

Professor Joce Nuttall  
(Executive Dean Te Kaupeka Ako | Faculty of Education)

Professor Brigid McNeill  
(Dean - Postgraduate Research Te Kaupeka Ako | Faculty of Education)

Professor John Everatt  
(Te Kaupeka Ako | Faculty of Education)

Associate Professor Yvonne Crichton-Hill  
(Te Kaupeka Oranga | The Faculty of Health)

## Cultural Advisors

Dr Tufulasi Taleni – Senior Lecturer  
(Te Kaupeka Ako | Faculty of Education)

Lynne Harata Te Aika  
(Ngāi Tahu)

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## Better Start Literacy Approach Advisory Team

Distinguished Professor Laura Justice  
(Professor Ohio State University, USA)

Professor Ilsa Schwarz  
(Professor University of Tennessee, USA)

Associate Professor Marleen Westerveld  
(Associate Professor Griffith University, Australia)

Professor Robert Savage  
(Institute of Education College of London)

Professor William Tunmer (Massey University)

Professor James Chapman (Massey University)

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## Child Well-being Research Institute | Te Kāhui Pā Harakeke Academics

Dr Amy Scott – Senior Lecturer Above the Bar

Dr Andy Vosslander – Senior Lecturer

Dr Ann Castle – Senior Lecturer

Dr Lisa Furlong – Senior Lecturer Above the Bar

Dr Mark LaVenía – Senior Lecturer

Dr Megan Gath – Senior Lecturer

Dr Jennifer Smith – Senior Lecturer and Culturally Responsive Lead

Associate Professor Sally Clendon – Lead of BSLA Specialist Teaching (Massey University | Institute of Education)

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## Better Start Literacy Approach Educators

Amy Fleming

Rebecca Kerr

Catherine Fairhall

Dr Jo Walker

Kate King

Marie Shipston

Nicole Plummer

Rachael Robertson

Rebecca Lindsay

Stephanie Richardson

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## Better Start Literacy Approach Support Team

Abbey Davison

Julia Martin

Bella Rothwell

## Key Professional Staff

Sally Trethowan – Institute and Senior Project Manager

Charlotte Endres – Institute Administrator

Dr Wendy Moore – Project Manager

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## Kaiārahi

Mel Tainui (UC Māori)

Liz Brown (Ngāi Tahu)  
Executive Director (Office of Treaty Partnership – UC Māori)

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## Child Well-being Research Institute | Te Kāhui Pā Harakeke grant researchers, doctoral students, research assistants, and staff

We are fortunate to have numerous talented researchers, research fellows, facilitators, practitioners, doctoral students, and research assistants associated with our many interdisciplinary research grants and institute activities.

We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the success of the Institute. Please refer to our website for full staff details.

## RESEARCH THEME LEADERS

### **Learning Success**

Professor Brigid McNeill  
(Dean -Postgraduate Research  
Te Kaupeka Ako | Faculty of Education)

Professor John Everatt  
(Te Kaupeka Ako | Faculty of Education)

### **Speech, Language, Communication and Well-being**

Professor Catherine Theys  
(Te Kaupeka Pūtaiao | Faculty of Science)

### **Autism Research Centre**

Professor Laurie McLay  
(Te Kaupeka Oranga | Faculty of Health)

### **Social and Emotional Well-being**

Associate Professor Yvonne Crichton-Hill  
(Te Kaupeka Oranga | Faculty of Health)

### **Child Population Health**

Professor Philip Schluter  
(Te Kaupeka Oranga | Faculty of Health)

### **Te Kāhui-a-te-ru-rangahau**

Māori Research Rōpū  
(Te Kaupeka Ako | Faculty of Education)

### **Pasifika Education and Well-being**

Dr Tufulasi Taleni – Senior Lecturer  
(Te Kaupeka Ako | Faculty of Education)

### **Early Years Learning**

Professor Jayne White  
(Te Kaupeka Ako | Faculty of Education)

### **Nutrition and Well-being**

Professor Julia Rucklidge  
(Te Kaupeka Pūtaiao | Faculty of Science)

*Aligned to our key  
themes, our researchers  
are producing creative,  
innovative and unique  
research that advances  
knowledge in child and  
youth well-being.*

PROFESSOR GAIL GILLON

*Whiriwhiria,  
kia ora ai te tamaiti.*

Braiding knowledge,  
so the child will flourish.

TE KĀHUI PĀ HARAKEKE | CHILD WELL-BEING RESEARCH INSTITUTE

FOR MORE INFORMATION,  
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<https://betterstartapproach.com/>

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