CHILDREN'S RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Annual Report 2024

Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation the Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

Contents

Funding Research Today to Improve the Lives of Children Tomorrow

Since 1976, the Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation (CRF) has played a pivotal role in driving research into issues affecting children's health, education and welfare in South Australia.

The CRF is an independent not-for-profit organisation established with funds donated to the Channel 7 (then Channel 10) Christmas Telethon Appeals by the South Australian public.

A partnership between its member organisations (Flinders University, Novita, The University of Adelaide, University of South Australia, the Women's and Children's Health Network, and Channel 7 Adelaide) continues to drive the vision that was created in 1976 – and currently around $1.8M per year is allocated to enable new research opportunities.

More than 1000 projects have been supported to date, and the CRF continues to explore ways to support research and advocate for researchers to help improve the lives of children.

To find out more: crf.org.au

Paul Jury

Chairperson

Greg Ward

Executive Director

Message from the Chair and Executive Director

On behalf of the Board of Directors, it is our pleasure to present the 48th Annual Report of the Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation of South Australia (CRF).

As always at this juncture, we reflect on our impact during the year just past, and we are confident that the CRF has again made a positive difference for South Australian children into the future.

The CRF continues to play a vital role in funding research in various fields and domains. We have laid some solid steppingstones, enabling ground-breaking discoveries and helping to tackle pressing challenges that affect the lives of children.

First and foremost, our goal is to improve children's lives through research; however, in order to achieve a healthy children's research focus in South Australia, we also need to build capacity in this state.

To this end we continue to support SA researchers via our Annual Grants, Enabling Grants, Fellowships, and, through Healthy Development Adelaide, sponsorship of PhD Excellence Awards.

We have highlighted in this report just a few of the good news stories resulting from CRF funding this year, and we hope that you will be inspired to read them.

In September 2023, the Board farewelled Professor John Lynch, representative of The University of Adelaide, and welcomed the incoming Board member, Professor Amanda Page.

Board and Research Committee members are nominated by the member organisations: Channel 7 Adelaide, Flinders University, Novita, The University of Adelaide, University of South Australia, the Women's and Children's Health Network, as well as invited by the CRF Board.

We acknowledge the generosity of these individuals in volunteering their time and expertise to steer the Board in its governance, and the Research Committee in its grant selection process. These are demanding roles, and we very much appreciate their input.

The highlight of the CRF calendar is undoubtedly the Research Excellence Awards evening in October, where we announce the grants for the following year and acknowledge achievements and outcomes in children's research via the Research Excellence Awards.

We were delighted that our joint patrons, Her Excellency the Honourable Francis Adamson AC, Governor of South Australia, and Mr Rod Bunton, were able to join us and present the awards to this year's recipients. (see page 23)

A report by the Chair of the CRF Research Committee can be read on page 10, and a summary of the 18 grants for 2024 can be found on page 12.

We would also like to acknowledge the work of the Treasurer and Finance Committee for their careful management of the investment portfolio, ensuring our ongoing ability to provide researchers with the funding they need to help change children's lives.

So, to the researchers and those who support research, we thank you for your dedication and commitment and we look forward to working together in our common goal of supporting research into *"things that shouldn't be part of a kid's life."*

> we reflect on our impact during the year just past, and we are confident that the CRF has again made a positive difference for South Australian children into the future.

Board and Foundation Representatives

Our Board comprises representatives from our Member Organisations, who dedicate their time and expertise to preserving and protecting the legacy of the Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation.

Paul Jury
Chair (Channel 7)

Stephen Woolley
Deputy Chair (Channel 7)

Chantelle Hugo
(Channel 7)

Libby Rayner
(Channel 7)

Mike Smithson
(Channel 7)

Prof Helen Marshall AM
(Women's and Children's Health Network)

Prof Claire Roberts
(Flinders University)

Prof John Lynch
(The University of Adelaide - to September 2023)

Prof Amanda Page
(The University of Adelaide – from September 2023)

Prof Carol Maher
(University of South Australia)

Prof Kevin Forsyth
co-opted by the Board,
Chair CRF Research Committee

Greg de Cure
(Novita)

Greg Ward
Executive Director

Jonathon Grant
Treasurer

CRF Research Committee

CRF's Annual Grants program is a two-step competitive process. Applications are rigorously reviewed by the CRF Research Committee, comprising representatives from member organisations and Board-appointed members.

Professor Kevin Forsyth
CHAIR

Dr Rhiannon Pilkington
CO-OPTED BY THE BOARD

Dr Catherine Chittleborough
CO-OPTED BY THE BOARD

Mr Paul Jury
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE BOARD

Associate Professor Luke Grzeskowiak
FLINDERS UNIVERSITY

Dr Tina Bianco-Miotto
THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE

Professor Leanne Dibbens
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Dr Drago Bratkovic
WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH NETWORK

Independent Referees

CRF relies on the voluntary participation of the international research community in the peer review process of the annual grant applications, so that the highest quality research is funded.

Our Board and Research Committee acknowledge with thanks the reviewers listed below or anonymous who dedicated time and expertise for the 2024 Annual Research Grants Round.

Emeritus Prof Jim Anderson
Dr Fiona Arney
A/Prof Stacie Atrill
Dr Rossana Azzoni
Dr Marnie Best
Dr Danielle Bond
A/Prof Femke Buisman-Pijlman
Prof Jill Carr
Dr Jonathan Chee
A/Prof Anthony Cook
Dr Bart Eijkelkamp
Dr Preethi Eldi
A/Prof Brooke Farrugia
Dr Rebecca Feo
Dr Stephen Fitter
Dr Alison Fogarty
Prof Alistair Forrest
A/Prof Kathryn Gatford
Prof Lisa Gold
Dr Jacqueline Gould
Dr Amy Graham
Dr Nahal Habibi
Prof Anthony Hannan
A/Prof Jordan Hansford
Prof Bronwyn Hemsley
Dr Kate Hetherington
Dr Paul Joyce
Prof Ilan Katz
Dr Stephen Kidd
Adjunct A/Prof Lesley King
Dr Pierre-Pascal Lenck-Santini
Prof Pranee Liamputtong
A/Prof Paul Licciardi
Dr Sarah Marshall
Dr Louisa Matwiejczyk
Prof Elspeth McInnes
A/Prof Divya Mehta
Dr Sam Mesiano
Dr Georgia Middleton
Prof Mike Nicholls
Dr Boris Novakovic
A/Prof Yvonne Parry
Prof Stuart Pitson
Dr Brianna Poirier
Prof Sheena Reilly
Dr Pedro Ribeiro Santiago
Dr Calum Roberts
Prof Roberts
Dr Eugene Roscioli
A/Prof Claudia Rutherford
Dr Feargal Ryan
Dr Alyssa Sawyer
Dr Raman Sharma
A/Prof Cheryl Shoubridge
Prof Simon Smith
Dr Jacqueline Stephens
A/Prof Jennifer Stephenson
A/Prof Daniel Thomas
Prof Paul Thomas
Dr Liam Welsh
Prof Sue Woolfenden
Dr Caitlin Wyrwoll
Dr Kwok Ho, Dave Yip
Dr Jo Zhou
Prof David Ziegler

Professor Kevin Forsyth

Co-opted by the Board,
CRF Research Committee Chair

Report by the Chair of the Research Committee

Each year, the Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation grants around $1.8 million to supporting quality research within South Australia's world-class universities, research institutes, and health services, by way of annual grants, CRF Fellowships, HDA Research Excellence Awards and enabling grants.

At our annual Excellence in Research Awards in October 2023, the CRF announced the Research Grants awarded for 2024.

As always, the focus of CRF funding is the quest to improve the health, education and wellbeing of children, and funding in 2024 was directed towards projects ranging from pre-natal risk issues to juvenile onset Parkinson's disease and childhood cancers, from respiratory diseases to zero-alcohol advertising, from young carers to young gamers, complex communication needs and bibliotherapy, and more… all critical areas worthy of research exploration and dedication.

To encourage and enable ongoing quality research into things that shouldn't be part of kids' lives, we are also keen to support the development of research capacity in South Australia.

From the Expressions of Interest submitted for the 2024 funding period, the CRF Research Committee invited 47 researchers to submit full grant applications and ultimately recommended 18 projects to be supported in 2024 for a total allocation of $1,283,252.

I congratulate the recipients of grants in 2024 and wish them success in their work. Please see page 12 for details of the projects.

With the demands and difficulties of grant writing, a significant success rate of approximately 41% is encouraging researchers to submit high quality applications.

At a maximum of $100K per grant, our grants enable new researchers to start their careers, they allow researchers to pursue new ideas and obtain data for potential larger studies – and we're pleased to note that CRF-funded researchers have been published and have been successful in subsequent NHMRC grant applications over the years.

One such recent success was the inaugural recipient of a CRF Enabling Grant. Professor Carol Maher was successful in her application for an NHMRC Partnership Grant for her project *Levelling the Playing Field: A Scalable Community-wide Strategy to Improve Equity in Access to a Universal Children's Sports Voucher Program.*

> CRF funding is vital to allow continuing investigations into child-specific issues and we proudly continue to fund research today to improve the lives of children tomorrow!

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I'm honoured to hold the position of Research Committee Chair, and on behalf of the Research Committee, I thank the Board for their support and vision.

As always, I extend my thanks to the Research Committee for their commitment to the CRF, to the independent reviewers from the international research community (see page 9), and to the South Australian researchers who dedicate their focus to issues affecting children, here and beyond our borders.

We look forward to future reports on their research outcomes.

2024

Research Grants

The funding outcomes for the CRF 2024 grants opportunity were announced on 31 October 2023, at the Annual CRF Research Excellence Awards attended by Her Excellency, The Honourable Frances Adamson AC, Governor of South Australia, and Mr Rod Bunten, joint Patrons of the CRF.

The 18 research projects funded from January 2024 received a total of $1,283,252, covering community-based studies, clinical studies and basic science projects in various disciplines relating to the health, welfare and education of children.

Read more on the funded projects on the Research page on our website: **crf.org.au.**

Circular RNAs indicate placental ageing, signalling stillbirth risk and infant morbidity in survivors

Overview:
Growth restricted babies are more likely to suffer stillbirth or neonatal death. Molecules called circular RNAs (circRNAs) accumulate in the stillbirth placenta and indicate premature placental ageing. We will determine if circRNAs in maternal blood indicate stillbirth risk and the therapeutic potential of mitigating DNA damage caused by accumulated circRNAs.

Grant:
$39,999

Chief Investigator:
Dr Anya Arthurs
(EARLY CAREER RESEARCHER)

Category:
Basic Science

Discipline:
Biochemistry

Administering Institution:
Flinders University

A new personalised immunotherapy for the deadly paediatric cancer neuroblastoma

Overview:
Neuroblastoma is a deadly paediatric cancer. We will test a new personalised immunotherapy, made by modifying the patient's own immune cells, as a treatment for neuroblastoma. Preliminary studies showed high cytotoxicity against neuroblastoma cell lines, and now further studies are needed to prove the safety and efficacy of this immunotherapy.

Grant:
$100,000

Chief Investigator:
Dr Veronika Bandara

Category:
Basic Science

Discipline:
Immunology

Administering institution:
The University of Adelaide

From tank to treatment: Using zebrafish to find therapies for Sanfilippo syndrome childhood dementia and juvenile-onset Parkinson's disease

Overview:
Our unique research strategy compares gene expression and behaviour patterns using machine learning in zebrafish models of two childhood dementias: Sanfilippo syndrome and juvenile-onset Parkinson's disease. We will evaluate the therapeutic potential of drugs targeting cell functions dysregulated in both diseases, addressing an unmet need for these devastating diseases.

Grant:
$73,682

Chief Investigator:
Dr Karissa Barthelson

Category:
Basic Science

Discipline:
Cell and Molecular Biology

Administering Institution:
Flinders University

A novel prophylactic for the prevention of ventilator induced lung injury in preterm infants

Overview:
To survive being born too soon, preterm babies sometimes require ventilation or supplemental oxygen to help them breathe. Whilst this will save their lives, it can severely damage their lungs. This project aims to develop and test a novel prophylactic treatment to protect the lungs of preterm babies.

Grant:
$99,987

Chief Investigator:
Dr Jack Darby

Category:
Basic Science

Discipline:
Respiratory Diseases

Administering Institution:
University of South Australia

Optimising the use of the tripeptide feG for treatment of RSV bronchiolitis and subsequent airway hypersensitivity

Overview:
Bronchiolitis, the most common severe respiratory tract illness in infants, remains a major cause of hospitalisation in Australia. Currently there is no treatment or vaccine against most causative viruses, including respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). Here we examine the therapeutic application of the anti-inflammatory tripeptide, feG, to treat RSV infection.

Grant:
$99,973

Chief Investigator:
A/Prof Dani-Louise Dixon

Category:
Basic Science

Discipline:
Respiratory Diseases

Administering Institution:
Flinders University

Treating early pregnancy T regulatory cell deficiency with IL-2/JES6-1 to boost maternal immune tolerance and reduce risk for inflammation-induced preterm labour

Overview:
Preterm birth is the leading cause of childhood death, affecting nearly 1 in 10 babies. This project will test whether an agent that boosts anti-inflammatory immune cells prevents preterm birth in a mouse model. The results will inform development of interventions to improve outcomes for babies born premature.

Grant:
$39,538

Chief Investigator:
Dr Kerrie Foyle
(EARLY CAREER RESEARCHER)

Category:
Basic Science

Discipline:
Immunology

Administering Institution:
The University of Adelaide

Development of a smart dissolvable antibacterial microneedle patch for deep burn wound biofilm infections

Overview:
Management of paediatric burns is complicated with development of biofilms resulting in delayed healing or sepsis and death. Current antimicrobials, including antibiotics, have been unsuccessful in eliminating deep wound biofilms. This project aims to develop a dissolvable microneedle technology for efficient antimicrobial delivery to deep wounds, addressing this clinical challenge.

Grant:
$100,000

Chief Investigator:
Dr Hanif Haidari

Category:
Basic Science

Discipline:
Wound Healing

Administering Institution:
University of South Australia

Using single cell sequencing to elucidate the clonal evolution of Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia to prevent relapse in children and improve outcomes

Overview:
Acute lymphoblastic leukaemia is a devastating disease and we have reached the limit of what chemotherapy alone can achieve. It is imperative to understand how genomic alterations drive relapse in order to develop new treatments. This study will investigate the genomic changes between diagnosis and relapse using single cell sequencing.

Grant:
$99,838

Chief Investigator:
Dr Susan Heatley

Category:
Basic Science

Discipline:
Cell and Molecular Biology

Administering Institution:
SAHMRI

Using gene editing and single cell RNA-seq to investigate FOSL transcription factors involvement in the breakdown in Treg-mediated immunological tolerance in type 1 diabetes

Overview:
Type 1 diabetes (T1D) is a common and serious autoimmune disease in children caused by immune cell mediated destruction of insulin-producing pancreatic beta-cells. Our goal is to determine if decreased FOSL1 and FOSL2 transcription factor levels in regulatory T cells prevents these cells from working normally to prevent T1D development.

Grant:
$100,000

Chief Investigator:
Dr Timothy Sadlon

Category:
Basic Science

Discipline:
Immunology

Administering Institution:
The University of Adelaide

Responding to the needs of kinship carers in South Australia

Overview:
This study explores success factors and characteristics of kinship care that promote safety, stability and support for children. The study aims to inform the development of effective strategies to improve our systems of care and ensure that children are offered the best possible care that supports their healthy development.

Grant:
$40,000

Chief Investigator:
Dr Fatin Shabbar
(EARLY CAREER RESEARCHER)

Category:
Basic Science

Discipline:
Health science/social science

Administering Institution:
University of South Australia

Investigating proof-of-concept for genetic therapy of PCDH19-Clustering Epilepsy using preclinical mouse models

Overview:
This project investigates the potential rescue of PCDH19-Clustering Epilepsy neuropathology through annulment of Pcdh19 in the brain. Using our unique pre-clinical models and novel adeno-associated virus vectors, we will identify when pathological changes first occur in the brain and determine the potential efficacy of genetic therapy in counteracting this pathology.

Grant:
$99,988

Chief Investigator:
Prof Paul Thomas

Category:
Basic Science

Discipline:
Gene therapy/ Genetic medicine

Administering Institution:
The University of Adelaide

COMMUNITY BASED STUDIES

Alcohol advertising in disguise? How exposure to zero-alcohol products and promotions drives children's perceptions of alcohol

Overview:
Zero-alcohol beverages (<0.5% alcohol) resemble alcohol in appearance and taste, often using alcohol brands. These beverages evade regulations that reduce children's exposure to alcohol products and promotions to protect them from alcohol-related harms. This project examines whether zero-alcohol products and promotions affect children's perceptions of alcohol, and thus warrant regulation.

Grant:
$39,700

Chief Investigator:
Dr Ashlea Bartram
(EARLY CAREER RESEARCHER)

Category:
Community Based Study

Discipline:
Nutrition

Administering Institution:
Flinders University

Developing a Communications Toolkit for children and young people with complex communication needs and their communication partners

Overview:
The purpose of the project is to develop, test and refine practical tools and training for supporting effective communication with children and young people with Complex Communication Needs (CCN) in care, education and clinical settings. Effective communication practices promote improved safety, health, wellbeing, participation and education outcomes for children.

Grant:
$39,304

Chief Investigator:
Dr Veronica Coram
(EARLY CAREER RESEARCHER)

Category:
Community Based Study

Discipline:
Allied health (Physio/SP/OT/Psych)

Administering Institution:
Novita

Young carers from migrant and refugee backgrounds: recognising contributions and supporting mental health and wellbeing

Overview:
Young carers are often not centred in research despite their significant contributions. This is especially true of young carers from migrant and refugee backgrounds. This research will elevate these voices, bringing a better understanding of their experiences, how their caring roles impact their mental wellbeing and what supports are needed.

Grant:
$39,997

Chief Investigator:
Dr Moira Walsh
(EARLY CAREER RESEARCHER)

Category:
Community Based Study

Discipline:
Mental Health

Administering Institution:
Flinders University

CLINICAL STUDIES

Brighter with books: co-designing a reading intervention to improve emotional wellbeing in children with cancer

Overview:
Bibliotherapy has been a successful adjunct therapy to support adults with cancer and promises to be similarly advantageous in children. The challenge is how best to adapt current practices for children. We propose to work with families, health professionals, librarians, co-design specialists and teachers to co-design an informed bibliotherapy intervention.

Grant:
$97,389

Chief Investigator:
A/Prof Amanda Hutchinson

Category:
Clinical Study

Discipline:
Psychosocial

Administering Institution:
University of South Australia

AI-assisted contouring of sarcomas to improve safety of proton therapy in children

Overview:
Proton therapy can benefit cancer treatment by precisely targeting tumours while sparing healthy tissues. This project will develop and pilot artificial intelligence methods to improve paediatric sarcoma contouring for radiation planning. Improved contouring benefits children by reducing radiation exposure to critical structures, supporting healthy growth, and minimising long-term side effects.

Grant:
$39,570

Chief Investigator:
Mr Vu Minh Hieu Phan
(EARLY CAREER RESEARCHER)

Category:
Clinical Study

Discipline:
Paediatrics

Administering institution:
The University of Adelaide

New strategies to improve breastfeeding outcomes in preterm infants

Overview:
We aim to improve breastfeeding outcomes in preterm infants by: (a) understanding current gaps in lactation care; and (b) co-designing and pilot testing a relaxation therapy intervention, as a novel component of holistic lactation support services, to reduce maternal stress early after birth when milk supply is being established.

Grant:
$94,292

Chief Investigator:
A/Prof Alice Rumbold

Category:
Clinical Study

Discipline:
Maternal and Child Health

Administering institution:
SAHMRI

Making friends with Minecraft: Determining optimal intensity and modality for a game-based intervention

Overview:
We will use Minecraft®, a popular, off-the-shelf digital game as an accessible intervention platform to promote social collaborative skill development in autistic children. Informed by findings from a feasibility study co-designed with autistic Minecraft consumers, and partnering with AutismSA, intervention outcomes will measure modality and intensity settings for service providers.

Grant:
$39,995

Chief Investigator:
Dr Abirami Thirumanickam
(EARLY CAREER RESEARCHER)

Category:
Clinical Study

Discipline:
Allied health (Physio/SP/OT/Psych)

Administering institution:
The University of Adelaide

2024 Funding Round Statistics

The Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation Annual Grants application process consists of two stages:

1. Expression of Interest (EOI)
2. Full Grant Application (GA) - invited applicants

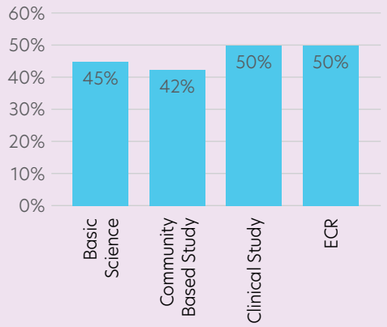
From 97 Expressions of Interest received, 47 projects were invited to be submitted as a Full Grant Application for the 2024 Annual Grant Funding round.

EOI	% of Total
Basic Science	50%
Community Based Study	25%
Clinical Study	25%
Total	100%
ECR	31%

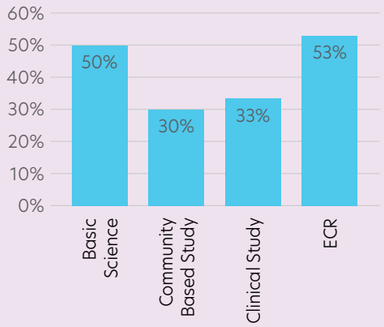
Shortlisted FGA	% of Total FGA
Basic Science	50%
Community Based Study	23%
Clinical Study	27%
Total	100%
ECR	34%

Funded	% of Total
Basic Science	61%
Community Based Study	17%
Clinical Study	22%
Total	100%
ECR	44%

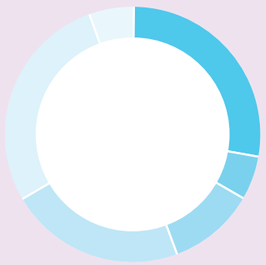
EOI Success Rate



GA Success Rate



Administering Organisation



	GRANTS	% OF TOTAL
Flinders University	5	28%
Novita	1	5.5%
SAHMRI	2	11%
The University of Adelaide	4	22%
University of South Australia	5	28%
WCHN	1	5.5%
Total	18	100%

Awards for Achievement in Children's Research

The CRF recognises champion CRF-funded researchers who have made a significant impact in areas of children's research.

The awards were presented by Her Excellency, the Honourable Frances Adamson AC, Governor of South Australia and Mr Rod Bunten, joint Patrons of the Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation.

L-R: Mr Paul Jury, A/Prof Tim Chataway, Her Excellency, the Honourable Frances Adamson AC, Joint Patron Dr Jacqui Beall, Mr Rod Bunten, Joint Patron, Mr Greg Ward

The COLIN MATTHEWS AO AWARD

The recipient of the 2023 Colin Matthews AO Award for outstanding achievement in **children's health** research is Associate Professor Timothy Chataway, for his research into treatments for children living with peanut allergies.

Tim Chataway is head of the Flinders Proteomics Facility which provides advanced analytical analysis of proteins for labs across the state.

Tim has been heavily involved in several CRF-funded peanut allergies projects which have resulted in important findings, informing potential treatment strategies.

The LEN FRANKHAM AWARD

The recipient of the 2023 Len Frankham Award, for outstanding achievement in **children's education and wellbeing** research is Dr Jacqui Beall, for her substantial leadership in the area of child protection.

Jacqui Beall is Director of the Southern Adelaide Local Health Network (SALHN) Child Protection Service, based in Flinders Medical Centre.

Over the last 21 years Jacqui has worked with families in conflict, focussing on breaking the intergenerational transmission of child maltreatment by intervening at key times such as during early pregnancy and when children enter into Out-of-Home-Care, aiming to develop secure and stable child-parent relationships for healthy child development and lifelong resilience.

CRF Research Fellowships

Improving the management of children suffering from the rare skin blistering condition Epidermolysis Bullosa

Dr Zlatko Kopecki

Epidermolysis bullosa (EB) is a rare genetic skin condition affecting over 1000 individuals in Australia that leads to widespread blistering, chronic wounds and often development of infection or sepsis. Sepsis is a leading cause of neonatal death in EB, and therefore 80% of children with EB use bleach baths and antibiotics in their bathing regime to prevent infection development.

Overseas studies have shown that 56% of EB wounds have resistance to common wound pathogens including S. aureus bacteria however our understanding of bacterial infection in Australian EB population is limited.

As the CRF Fellow in Childhood Wound Infections, Dr Kopecki aims to understand the bacterial composition of blister wounds in children with EB in Australia, which will inform the development of more targeted approaches to combat infection and guide clinical EB management and antibiotic stewardship.

"Over the last three years we have been collecting bacterial swab samples from blistered skin of children with EB attending EB clinics nationally", says Zlatko Kopecki.

This has allowed researchers to identify the bacterial pathogens and antimicrobial resistance pattern in blistered EB skin of Australian patients. "Using this information, we have progressed the development and preclinical testing of a novel stimuliresponsive hydrogel for treatment of wound infection in EB."
says Zlatko.

Zlatko's research addresses the longstanding clinical challenge of infection in children with EB. Understanding the microbiome of Australian EB patients will inform better antimicrobial stewardship, while novel targeted therapies hold promise to address the drug-resistant infections in blistered skin, thereby contributing to improved management of children living with EB.

Improving maternal and child health by optimising the safe and effective use of medicines

A/Prof Luke Grzeskowiak

In Australia, 1 in 11 children are born premature (before 37 weeks gestation) each year. These children are at increased risk of cognitive and motor impairment, behavioural disorders and chronic health conditions.

The provision of mothers' own breast milk remains one of the few high-impact interventions known to improve short- and long-term outcomes of prematurity.

Despite this, breastfeeding rates among these tiny, vulnerable babies are significantly lower than full-term infants and haven't improved in the past 20 years. Low breast milk supply affects more than 40% of mothers of preterm infants and is the most common reason for early breastfeeding cessation.

A/Prof Dr Grzeskowiak's research has found that more than 70% of mothers take medicines to help initiate, maintain, or increase breast milk production, but there is very little evidence as to whether they are effective or safe to use in this setting.

As the CRF Fellow in Medicines Use and Safety based at Flinders University and the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI), Luke Grzeskowiak and his team are working in partnership with families, consumer groups, healthcare providers, and industry, to improve lactation support strategies in neonatal units and give preterm infants the best start in life.

Luke has received international recognition for his research and is currently working on the development of international clinical practice guidelines to improve the identification and treatment of lactation disorders.

The CRF Fellowship funding has been integral to helping Luke expand his team and secure other major grant funding to grow his research, including a significant 5-year grant ($2.5M) to establish a prestigious Centre of Research Excellence (CRE) in Human Milk Nutrition for Preterm Infants. The CRE is based here in Adelaide at SAHMRI and is led by Professor Alice Rumbold. As Deputy Director of the CRE, Luke has the privilege of leading research on optimising lactation care for mothers and babies.

Helping sports incentives kick goals for disadvantaged kids

Prof Carol Maher,
Dr Rachel Curtis,
and Catherine Simpson

The University of South Australia

Children reap enormous rewards from participating in organised sport or physical activities. These include physical and social benefits, and assistance building emotional control, resilience and self-esteem – while providing a healthy outlet from life's daily pressures.

Every Australian state has its version of an incentive program that focuses on getting more children participating in organised physical activities.

In South Australia, the State Government's $100 Sports Voucher program has disbursed more than $48 million since it launched in 2015, helping ease the cost of sports participation for families. However, data reveals that children from disadvantaged areas are less likely to use Sports Vouchers, when compared to children from advantaged areas.

Now, a team from the University of South Australia is delving into the reasons behind the low take-up rate by families who need it the most and developing a strategy to overcome the barriers.

Funded by a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) 2023 Partnerships Projects grant and a Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation Enabling Grant, the project is led by UniSA researchers Professor Carol Maher, Dr Rachel Curtis, and Catherine Simpson.

Team lead, Prof Maher, says "Sports and other active pursuits like dance are excellent for children – keeping them fit and healthy, and teaching them the value of practice and discipline. Physical activity is a great outlet from a mental health perspective, plus it's fun and social.

"In this project we'll work with a range of stakeholders, community leaders and service providers to roll out a community-wide strategy to increase Sports Voucher uptake and sports participation.

"We are starting with a trial across the whole of the City of Salisbury. In the future, it could potentially be scaled up in other communities across SA and nationally."

There are multiple reasons for the low use of Sports Vouchers, so the team will work with many partners to develop a multi-faceted solution.

While additional costs involved with playing a sport are cited by families as the number one barrier, there are other hurdles. These include transportation requirements, the impacts of challenging personal circumstances, and low awareness of the Sports Voucher program.

Dr Curtis says awareness of the Sports Voucher program is particularly low amongst parents from non-English speaking backgrounds.

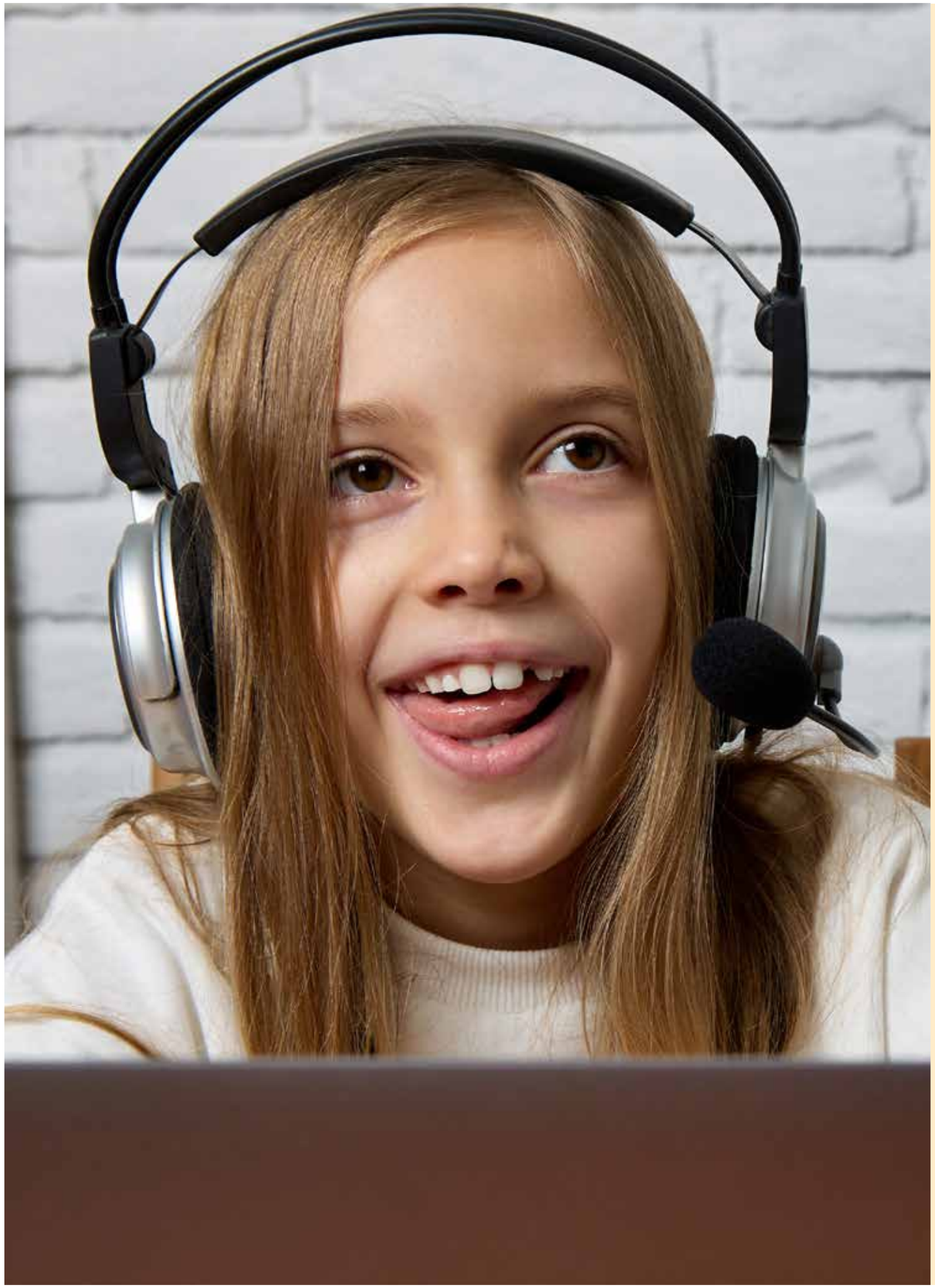
"This is highly relevant to culturally diverse areas like Salisbury, where over 40% of families with children are English-as-a-second-language households," Dr Curtis says. "So, one of our goals will be to raise awareness of the program, working with schools and partnering on community events."

Simpson says there are many activity providers in the city of Salisbury who currently do not accept the vouchers, so we will be working with them to understand why and what approaches might encourage greater uptake.

"We'll partner with more organisations to ensure an affordable, welcoming experience for children who are thinking about joining all kinds of clubs," Simpson says. "We also want to help families tap into other existing resources that help address the barriers to sports. For example, Play It On provides second-hand sports equipment and top-up financial support for families that need it."

National and State partners on the project include the Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation; South Australian Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing; Preventive Health SA; City of Salisbury; Alcohol and Drug Foundation; Play It On; Australian Sports Commission; Department for Education; Department for Human Services.

SPOTLIGHT



Autistic children the real winners from online gaming

Dr Abi Thirumanickam

Lecturer, School of Allied Health Science and Practice,
The University of Adelaide

Online gaming could be beneficial for pre-teens on the autism spectrum, with new research by the University of Adelaide indicating the popular pastime can help improve social skills and expand friendship networks.

Australian children aged between 10 and 12 recently took part in a small feasibility study focusing on the easily accessible video game, Minecraft. The off-the-shelf game encourages players to work together to build 3D worlds from digital blocks.

Consumers with lived experience, including autistic Minecraft players and parents of autistic Minecraft players, were involved in informing the design and implementation of the program.

Participants had the opportunity to play the game in both online and face-to-face settings. The low intensity sessions involved two hours of gaming once a week during the school term, while the high intensity sessions involved two hours of game play three times a week during the school holidays.

"The preliminary findings are very promising with both children and their parents reporting improvements in the participants' social skills and expansion of their social networks," said principal investigator Dr Abi Thirumanickam from the University of Adelaide.

The most substantial changes were observed in the low-intensity (weekly sessions over 6 weeks of the school term) online and high-intensity (three times a week over the 2-week school term holidays) face-to-face sessions.

"The feedback we received from the participants was that they enjoyed making friends, meeting new people and communicating with others. Social communication is one of the areas where autistic people typically face challenges so this suggests that gaming could be used as another therapy option."

The children's social skills were assessed using several different measures including questionnaires completed by both participants and their parents, as well as other tools to monitor changes to their social networks.

"While the children would initially start off talking about the game, this then led to other conversations about life away from the game which was really positive to see," said Dr Thirumanickam.

"We also observed eagerness to continue playing Minecraft beyond the session times. The social aspects of the program even extended outside of the children's participation, with some parents forming connections as well."

Approximately one in 150 Australians are autistic. The developmental condition affects how people engage, interact and respond with the world around them. Characteristics can include differences with social interaction and communication, as well as challenges in processing sensory information.

Autism SA was a partner in the research and the project also involved researchers from Flinders University. The pilot study was supported by the Faculty of Health and Medical Science's Emerging Leaders Development grant in 2022 awarded to Dr Thirumanickam.

As the industry partner, Autism SA expressed excitement about the early findings of the study.

Researchers say although the findings are positive, they need to be interpreted with some caution due to the small sample size and high variability.

There are now plans to conduct larger trials of primary school-aged students over 2024 to solidify the findings, which the Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation is proud to fund through its 2024 Research Grant Round.

Statement of Financial Position

AS AT 30 JUNE 2024

	2024 $	2023 $
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	2,399,434	1,402,832
Trade and Other Receivables	1,027,474	1,009,159
Other Assets	79,954	161,532
Total Current Assets	**3,506,862**	**2,573,523**
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Investments:		
Capital/Convertible Notes	6,412,333	6,737,148
Investments in Listed Companies	43,584,173	41,036,449
Total Non-Current Assets	**49,996,506**	**47,773,598**
TOTAL ASSETS	**53,503,368**	**50,347,121**
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and Other Payables	273,984	295,584
Total Current Liabilities	**273,984**	**295,584**
TOTAL LIABILITIES	**273,984**	**295,584**
NET ASSETS	**53,229,383**	**50,051,535**
ACCUMULATED FUNDS		
Fair Value Reserve	16,358,989	14,257,674
Accumulated Surplus	36,870,394	35,793,861
TOTAL ACCUMULATED FUNDS	**53,229,383**	**50,051,535**

Statement of Profit or Loss & Other Comprehensive Income

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	2024 $	2023 $
INCOME		
Other Income	10	2,144
Refund of Research Grant (previous years)	60,581	19,321
TOTAL INCOME	**60,591**	**21,466**
EXPENDITURE		
Administration Fees	180,603	184,651
Advertising	98,711	394,568
Audit Fees	10,400	21,080
Legal Fees	2,654	2,604
Meeting Expenses	30,151	16,277
Postage, Stationery and Telephone	2,400	2,400
Research Grants	1,859,683	1,843,982
Research Support	35,609	38,742
Research Chair Support	-	0
Sundry Expenses	24,751	30,773
Website	-	320
Bad Debt expenses	-	-
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	**2,244,962**	**2,535,396**
Deficit before Financial Income	(2,184,372)	(2,513,930)
Financial Income:		
Dividends Received	2,144,846	2,064,602
Interest on Investments	4,953	4,780
(Loss)/ Gain on Sale of Investments	(20,593)	-
Revaluation Gain on Investment	-	-
Franking Credit Refund	656,619	698,506
Revaluation of Investments	**475,078**	**316,132**
Net Financial Income	**3,260,905**	**3,084,020**
SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR	**1,076,533**	**570,090**

Statement of Profit or Loss & Other Comprehensive Income (cont'd)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	2024 $	2023 $
SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR	**1,076,533**	**570,090**
Net change in fair value of financial assets	2,101,314	3,082,960
Total other comprehensive income for the year	2,101,314	3,082,960
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR	**3,177,847**	**3,653,050**

Statement of Changes in Equity

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	Fair Value Reserve $	Accumulated Surplus $	Total Equity $
Balance at 1 July 2022	11,174,715	35,223,772	46,398,487
Total comprehensive income	3,082,960	570,090	3,653,050
Balance at 30 June 2023	**14,257,675**	**35,793,861**	**50,051,536**
Balance at 1 July 2023	14,257,675	35,793,861	50,051,536
Total comprehensive income	2,101,314	1,076,533	3,177,847
Balance at 30 June 2024	**16,358,989**	**36,870,394**	**53,229,383**

Statement of Cash Flows

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	2024 $	2023 $
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Cash receipts in the course of operations	123,853	616,361
Cash payments in the course of operations	(2,266,562)	(2,525,520)
Net cash used in operating activities	**(2,142,709)**	**(1,909,158)**
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES		
Dividends and franking credits received	2,801,466	2,763,108
Interest received	4,953	4,780
Payments for investments	(4,753,172)	(3,681,526)
Proceeds from sale of investments	5,086,064	2,144,527
Net cash provided by investing activities	**3,139,311**	**1,230,888**
Net (decrease)/increase in cash held	996,602	(678,270)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year	**1,402,832**	**2,081,102**
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the financial year	**2,399,434**	**1,402,832**

Financial Summary

Statement of Significant Accounting Policies

The Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation of South Australia Incorporated (the Association) is an Association incorporated and domiciled in Australia. The address of the Association's registered office is 341 Port Road, Hindmarsh, South Australia. The principal activity of the Association is to promote and advance the research into the cause, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of conditions that affect the general health, education, and welfare of children. The Association is a not-for-profit entity for the purpose of preparing financial statements.

A full description of the accounting policies adopted by the Association is provided in the Association's full consolidated financial report.

This financial report was authorised for issue by the Directors on 1 October 2024.

Basis of Preparation

The financial reports of the Association have been prepared on the accrual basis of accounting. Except where noted, the accounting policies have been consistently applied.

The financial reports have been prepared on a historical cost basis except for investments classified as financial investments which are measured at fair value.

The Association's functional and presentational currency is Australian Dollars.

Statement by the Board

The summary consolidated financial statements and other specific disclosures are a summary of and have been derived from Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation's full consolidated financial report for the financial year. Other information included in the summary consolidated financial report is consistent with the Association's full consolidated financial report.

The Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation recorded a Net Financial Income of $3.26M which is completely from Dividend received and franking credit refund. The summary consolidated financial report does not, and cannot be expected to, provide as full an understanding of the financial performance and position, financing and investing activities of the Association, as the full consolidated financial report.

A copy of the Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation's Annual Financial Report, including the Independent Audit Report, is available to all members, and will be sent to members without charge upon request.

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Directors

PAUL JURY
DIRECTOR

GREG WARD
DIRECTOR

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REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT AUDITOR ON THE SUMMARY FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

TO THE MEMBERS OF CHANNEL 7 CHILDREN'S RESEARCH FOUNDATION OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA INCORPORATED

Opinion

The summary financial statements, which comprise the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2024, the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income, statement of changes in equity, and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and financial summary, are derived from the audited financial report of Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation of South Australia Incorporated for the year ended 30 June 2024.

In our opinion, the accompanying summary financial statements are consistent, in all material respects, with the audited financial report, on the basis described in the financial summary.

Summary Financial Statements

The summary financial statements do not contain all the disclosures required by the special purpose reporting framework described in Note 1 to the audited financial. Reading the summary financial statements and the auditor's report thereon, therefore, is not a substitute for reading the audited financial report and the auditor's report thereon.

The Audited Financial Report and Our Report Thereon

We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on the audited financial report in our report dated 3 October 2024.

Other matter – Basis of accounting

The audited financial report from which these summary financial statements have been derived has been prepared for the purpose of fulfilling the Association's financial reporting responsibilities under the *ACNC Act 2012* and the *Associations Incorporation Act 1985 (SA*), in accordance with the recognition, measurement and classification aspects of all applicable Australian Accounting Standards (AASBs) adopted by the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB), but including only the disclosure requirements of the following AASBs and any considered necessary to meet the needs of members:

- AASB 101 *Presentation of Financial Statements*
- AASB 107 *Statement of Cashflows*
- AASB 108 *Accounting Policies, Changes in Accounting Estimates and Errors*
- AASB 1048 *Interpretation and Application of Standards*
- AASB 1054 *Australian Additional Disclosures.*

Directors' Responsibility for the Summary Financial Statements

The Directors are responsible for the preparation of the summary financial statements on the basis described in the financial summary.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on whether the summary financial statements are consistent, in all material respects, with the audited financial report based on our procedures, which were conducted in accordance with Auditing Standard ASA 810 *Engagements to Report on Summary Financial Statements*.

BDO

BDO Audit Pty Ltd

Andrew Tickle
Director

Adelaide, 3 October 2024

A Valued Foundation

Supporting Research into things that shouldn't be part of a kid's life

The establishment of the CRF was enabled through public and business community support, with a big goal in 1976 to support research into any conditions affecting the health, education and welfare of children.

This is still our goal.

From those early days, the CRF has wisely invested the endowment fund, enabling the awarding of more, and larger, grants for research projects over many years.

Currently, the Foundation proudly allocates around $1.8M per year to support SA researchers who share our vision.

We are proud to highlight the impact of the public's generosity and the research achievements resulting from CRF grants.

At 5, Harry's parents discovered he had asthma.

At 8, Olivia developed mental health issues.

At 11, Grace started being bullied at school.

At 7, we're doing something about it.

The Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation supports research into things that shouldn't be part of a kid's life.

DONATE, and help us, help them.

You can Make a Difference

At CRF, we're driven by the belief that all children should live happy, healthy lives.

That's why we make research happen.

Our ability to fund research comes from well-managed investments that started from the kindness of community giving. Nonetheless these funds can only support a limited number of research projects.

- CRF grants are building capacity in South Australia to continue research into things that matter to children's health, education and wellbeing.
- We support early seed funding and invest in long-term visions.
- We enable researchers to test bold ideas and overcome challenges.
- We encourage collaborations between researchers from different disciplines, institutions and sectors.

Through the kindness of giving today, you too can help make research happen and make a difference to children's lives tomorrow.

To grow our capacity, we seek partnerships from organisations that share our vision and from individuals who aspire - like us - to help improve the lives of children through research.

If you would like to learn more about forming a partnership with the Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation of South Australia, we'd love to hear from you.

Or please make a donation @ **donate.crf.org.au**

crf@crf.org.au I (08) 8243 8258

crf.org.au

CHILDREN'S RESEARCH FOUNDATION

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