

# It Takes a Village: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Parenting

**Date:** 31st July 2024

**Time:** 10:00 am – 2:30 pm

**Venue: Western Sydney University**

Parramatta City Campus  
(1PSQ)

Level 9, Conference Room 2  
Macquarie Street, Parramatta

[Register Here](#)



Parenting in a contemporary context can be challenging, and in individualistic cultures, parents often feel isolated and lacking in social and familial support. Instead, we encourage coming together to support the development of our youngest members of the community and the parents who care for them; acknowledging the more collectivist cultural notion that 'it takes a village to raise a child'. In this forum we bring together industry partners, community voices, and academic perspectives on parenting to advocate for the psychological, social, and economic health and wellbeing of parents and children. We take an intersectional approach to parenting; addressing gender and sexuality inclusivity, regionality, and the diverse support needs of parents and children.

## Program

**10:00am** Tea / coffee on arrival

**10.30am** Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country

**Professor Tanya Meade**, Dean & Discipline Lead, School of Psychology, Western Sydney University

### Presenters:

**10:45am** Title: "Rainbow Families – supporting LGBTQ+ parents and their families"

**Ashley Scott**: Executive Officer and one of the founders of Rainbow Families

**11:10am** Title: "Supporting new parents in regional and remote communities: Evaluation of the Neurodevelopmental Care Program (NDC)"

**Associate Professor Karen Mattock**: Western Sydney University

**11:35am** Title: "Your baby is smart: Core knowledge and what your baby understands about the world"

**Professor Susan Hespos**: Western Sydney University

**12:00pm** Title: "Evaluating early parenting interventions: Supporting families via in-patient and telehealth services"

**Dr Nicole Traynor**: Western Sydney University

**12: 25pm – 1: 10pm** Lunch break

**1:10pm** "Understanding and Supporting Parents in the Emotional Development of Autistic Children and Adolescents"

**Anita Gardner**: Children's Hospital at Westmead

**Stephanie Le**: Western Sydney University

**1:35pm** Title: "Daddy Guilt: An emerging phenomenon"

**Dr Sarah Duffy**: Western Sydney University

**2:00pm** "Fathering Identities and Men's Engagement with Flexible Working Arrangements"

**Dr Alina Ewald**: Western Sydney University

**2:25pm Panel Discussion**: Addressing the Unmet Needs of Parents using an Intersectional Approach

**Panelists**: Ashley Scott, Associate Professor Karen Mattock, Professor Susan Hespos, Dr Nicole Traynor, Anita Gardner, Stephanie Le, Dr Sarah Duffy, Dr Alina Ewald and Blake Woodward (Founder of Dads&)

**Panel Chair**: Associate Professor Emilee Gilbert

**2:55pm** Thank you and close



# Presenters and Panel Members



**Title: "Rainbow Families – supporting LGBTQ+ parents and their families"**  
**Ashley Scott**

Ashley is the Executive Officer and one of the founders of Rainbow Families – a charity that supports, connects and empowers LGBTQ+ parents and their families. As a proud gay dad, in 2012 when Ashley's eldest daughter was born, he was shocked at the lack of support for LGBTQ+ parents. In 2015 Ashley came together with other queer parents to create Rainbow Families. Since that time Ashley and Rainbow Families have supported thousands of parents across Australia to be their best, authentic selves.



**Title: Supporting new parents in regional and remote communities: Evaluation of the Neurodevelopmental Care Program (NDC)**  
**Associate Professor Karen Mattock**

Karen's research is in the area of Evaluation of Neuroprotective Developmental Care in Rural Primary Care. She also investigates language development with particular focus on speech perception and babbling in infancy and word learning in infants, children and adults using phonetic, constraints, socio-pragmatic, cross-situational, and sound-symbolic approaches. I am interested in the factors that influence language development such as exposure and experience with language, cross-linguistic influences, learning one vs two languages (bilingualism), hearing impairment, and infant-directed speech. My most significant contribution is in the area of infants' perception of lexical tone, a feature of tone languages such as Mandarin and Thai.



**Title: 'Your baby is smart': Core knowledge and what your baby understands about the world**  
**Professor Susan Hespos**

Sue is the leader of BabyLab at MARCS. Her research focuses on early conceptual abilities, and how early thinking lays the foundation for adult reasoning. She uses a variety of methods to ask preverbal infants questions and investigates what infants understand about their world. This information sheds light on the basic principles that guide cognition and learning, not only in infants, but throughout the lifespan. Prior to joining MARCS she was a professor at Northwestern University in the United States. The work from her lab is current featured on a Netflix docuseries call "Babies" (season 2, episode 1).



**Title: Evaluating early parenting interventions: Supporting families via in-patient and telehealth services**  
**Dr Nicole Traynor**

Nicole M. Traynor is an Associate Lecturer in the School of Psychology at Western Sydney University. Her research has focused on infant-directed speech, and how specific properties of this register facilitate infants' early word learning. She also has worked on collaborative projects in perinatal, infant, and early childhood mental health, with an emphasis on assessing interventions and outcomes of parenting programs for families experiencing complex issues during the perinatal period.



**Title: "Understanding and Supporting Parents in the Emotional Development of Autistic Children and Adolescents"**  
**Anita Gardner**

Anita is a registered psychologist with over 20 years of experience working in the field of autism and disability. Anita currently works as a research psychologist at The Children's Hospital at Westmead leading a dynamic team dedicated to co-designing emotion-based programs tailored to support autistic youth, their families, educators, and allied health professionals. As a part-time private practice psychologist, Anita also works directly with neurodivergent children and adults. Anita's commitment to advancing the field extends beyond her clinical and research roles. She serves as a committee member of the Australian Psychological Society's Psychology of Intellectual Disability and Autism Interest Group, contributing to professional networks and initiatives. Anita's impact is further evidenced by her extensive record of delivering workshops and presented at conferences across Australia and overseas, fostering knowledge exchange and collaboration in the global community of autism and disability research and practice.



**Stephaine Le**

Stephanie is currently in her fourth year of her Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) degree at WSU. Her thesis project is exploring the types of emotional support that parents provide to their adolescents to build their emotional skills. She is primarily focusing on parents with autistic adolescents and seeing if the type of emotional support they provide differs from parents of non-autistic adolescents.



**Title: "Daddy Guilt: An emerging phenomenon"**  
**Dr Sarah Duffy**

Dr Sarah Duffy is a Senior Lecturer at Western Sydney University who researches gender equity in institutional contexts. Dr Duffy is a qualitative researcher whose work focuses on the intersection between policy, practice and lived experience. Her key ongoing research projects relate to how fathers juggle work and parenting, how parents negotiate return to work after parental leave and the impact of menstruation of work and education. Sarah publishes in high impact, international scholarly journals, has over 400k reads on The Conversation and regularly engages with the media to advocate for social change.



**Title: "Fathering Identities and Men's Engagement with Flexible Working Arrangements"**  
**Dr Alina Ewald**

Alina is a fathering and work-family scholar, she completed her PhD in Psychology at Western Sydney University in early 2022. Her research explores fathering identities, fathering practices, and fatherhood models, and examines the organisational and societal acceptance of men modifying their paid work for caregiving purposes. Alina's research focuses on investigating the impact of flexible working arrangements in employee's achieving work-family balance and work-life balance, and she explores the intricate power dynamics that influence perceptions and experiences of workplace practices and policies more broadly.