



**STRONG kids,  
STRONG future**

## The inaugural Department of Paediatrics Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Health Research PhD Scholarship

### Expression of Interest

The Department of Paediatrics, Melbourne Medical School, is offering a **three-year scholarship for an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander graduate to undertake a PhD in the [STRONG kids, STRONG future program](#)** based at the Melbourne Children's Campus (Royal Children's Hospital). The scholarship includes an **annual stipend of \$50,000 a year tax free**, with additional non-financial support (e.g. research costs, travel, conference support etc.).

### PhD Opportunity

This PhD opportunity is focusing on the culturally responsive validation and evaluation of a measure to evaluate developmental outcomes in Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. This project is a collaboration between the University of Melbourne, and agencies in the Northern Territory, South Australia, Queensland and Victoria. The candidate will have the opportunity to work with the team and partners to design and lead research that has a social impact and ultimately leads to improved early childhood development outcomes.

The PhD research will involve validation of the ASQ-Steps for Measuring Aboriginal Child Development (ASQ-STEPS). The ASQ-STEPS is a developmental outcome measure, adapted from the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) Inventory, for use in Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This study will require engagement and close collaboration with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, peak bodies, government health and education agencies, and government departments. It will also involve working alongside community members in urban, regional and remote health and education settings.

The ASQ-STEPS prototype has been developed and pre-tested. The next phase will evaluate the ASQ-STEPS to confirm how accurate and reliable the instrument is (instrument content and face validity, concurrent validity) followed by the final phase, examining feasibility. Further research questions would be tailored with the candidate to suit the candidate's and research team's areas of interest.

The PhD research will involve: adopting a mixed methods approach; developing and delivering training; and field trips to health, early learning and family support settings in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia for data collection, when possible.

The project will suit candidates with degrees in **psychology, allied health specialties or early childhood education or candidates with health/biomedical background and with solid experience in early childhood**. Applicants need to be able to demonstrate their ability to complete a research higher degree through a combination of academic study, research experience, professional experience and overall knowledge of the proposed area of study.

The PhD will be supervised by Associate Professor Anita D'Aprano (Developmental Paediatrician and Clinical Lead), as the principal supervisor, and by a co-supervisor with psychometric expertise. The successful candidate will be supported to find an appropriate Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander supervisor.

### Student support

In addition to support from the Graduate Research at Melbourne Children's office, the student will also be offered support through the **Melbourne Poche Centre for Indigenous Health, Murrup Barak Melbourne Institute for Indigenous Development** and the **Indigenous Graduate Student Association**.

The student will also have the opportunity to participate in the Murdoch Children's Research Institute's (MCRI) **Aboriginal Health Network**, and extensive academic seminars and other training opportunities available at the Melbourne Children's campus. There will be opportunities to meet with other Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander PhD students working in the MCRI Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research Program.

### Additional Opportunities

**A further opportunity may be available to work as part of the ASQ-TRAK training team** on a casual basis. The ASQ-TRAK is a developmental screening tool, previously adapted from the mainstream Ages and Stages Questionnaires, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (ASQ®-3). The ASQ-TRAK is used to observe and monitor the development of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as part of routine child health checks. The STRONG kids, STRONG future program, under Associate Professor Anita D'Aprano's clinical leadership, offers ASQ-TRAK Training to organisations nationally. Workshops consist of 2-day classroom training followed by ½ workplace training. The opportunity would involve becoming a trained facilitator and co-facilitating customised on-site training workshops or training workshops based at the University of Melbourne.

### About You

This PhD opportunity is available to Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people who have obtained an Honours or Masters Degree or demonstrated equivalence. Applicants are required to meet the University of Melbourne's requirements for a Research Higher Degree candidature. Please refer to: <http://mdhs-study.unimelb.edu.au/degrees/doctor-of-philosophy/entry-requirements#entry-requirements>.



Applicants will have access to ‘academic shepherds’, who are senior researchers at the University who volunteer their time to guide applicants through the application process. Refer to <https://research.unimelb.edu.au/graduate-research/Indigenous-Researchers> for more information.

## About the Scholarship

The Department of Paediatrics is offering one scholarship for an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander student to undertake research on this early childhood development instrument design and evaluation. You will receive a Scholarship which provides a fortnightly stipend. Additional funding is available for conference attendance, travel etc. Further details on the stipend and scholarship terms can be found [here](#).

## How to Apply

To apply for this opportunity please provide:

- A 1-2 page cover letter which outlines your research skills, experience and why this PhD interests you
- A completed copy of the Expression of Interest form (over page)
- Your CV
- Your academic transcript

**as a single pdf document** to Associate Professor Anita D’Aprano: [anita.daprano@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:anita.daprano@unimelb.edu.au)

## Further enquiries

If you would like to learn more about this PhD scholarship opportunity or have any questions about the application process, please contact **Associate Professor Anita D’Aprano**: [anita.daprano@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:anita.daprano@unimelb.edu.au)

If you would like to learn more about the support that the Melbourne Poche Centre provides for Indigenous research students in the University of Melbourne, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, please contact **Mr Josh Cubillo**: [josh.cubillo@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:josh.cubillo@unimelb.edu.au)



## Expression of Interest Form

Please note that, if successful, you are required to submit a PhD application to the University of Melbourne. Assistance will be provided to the successful applicant with this process.

<http://futurestudents.unimelb.edu.au/admissions/applications/research>

### Applicant Information

<b>Full name:</b> <i>(including title)</i>	
<b>Current institution:</b>	
<b>University of Melbourne student number (if applicable):</b>	
<b>Residential address:</b>	
<b>Suburb:</b>	
<b>Postcode:</b>	
<b>Telephone contact:</b>	
<b>Email:</b>	
<b>Citizenship category:</b> <i>(Please indicate)</i>	Australian citizen: <input type="checkbox"/> Permanent resident: <input type="checkbox"/> New Zealand citizen holding a Special Category Visa: <input type="checkbox"/>



## Academic Details

List below all tertiary level studies you have undertaken including those in which you are currently enrolled (whether you have completed them or not) beginning with the most recent.

† If you are currently completing a degree, please write CU for 'current' and include the date that you anticipate completion. If you began a degree and did not complete it, write INC for 'incomplete' and include the date when you ceased study. If you completed the degree please write CO for 'complete' and include the completion date.

‡ Program length is the usual duration of the program on a full-time basis.

Name of degree (e.g. Bachelor of Arts)	Name of Institution & country	Current (CU)/ Incomplete (INC)/Complete (CO) †	Date completed/ ceased Expected date of completion (mm/yy)	Program length ‡ (e.g. 3 years)

## Referee 1 - Contact details

<b>Full name:</b> (including title)	
<b>Institution:</b>	
<b>Department:</b>	
<b>Telephone:</b>	



<b>Email:</b>	
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## Referee 2 - Contact details

<b>Full name:</b> <i>(including title)</i>	
<b>Institution:</b>	
<b>Department:</b>	
<b>Telephone:</b>	
<b>Email:</b>	

## Career Objectives/Vision

*Please summarise how the Scholarship would advance your career objectives and outline your vision for the next 5 years (max 200 words).*

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## Documents to Attach

- **Please attach your Curriculum Vitae** (maximum three A4 pages)
- **Please attach your academic transcripts**

Please note the following documentation requirements:

- You must provide the full official transcript(s) on official university letterhead, indicating all subjects and results in all years of study for each qualification completed or attempted.
- If you have completed a degree but your transcript does not state this, you must provide a copy of the award certificate or an original or copy of a letter from your institution on university letterhead confirming you have completed all the requirements of the degree program and are eligible to graduate or have graduated.
- If your transcripts do not contain actual numeric marks (e.g. 82%) or Grade Point Averages (e.g. 3.4) you should provide a separate official explanation of the relevant university's grading system, or official advice from the awarding institution detailing the numeric marks you achieved for your tertiary studies.
- Applicants with a Masters qualification that is graded as Pass/Fail only should provide examiners' reports (a report containing examiners' feedback/ detailed information about your thesis) if they are available.
- All applicants with a Masters qualification should provide an extract from the relevant university handbook (or website) that clearly states (i) the normal duration of the Masters course (e.g. two years full-time) and (ii) the structure of the course (e.g. minimum of 24 points, of which 18 points are a research project). You must provide information about the amount of research required for the qualification.
- If you are currently enrolled in a tertiary course, please provide a transcript that shows your results to date and provide final transcripts as soon as they become available.
- If you have received credit toward your degree at the third year level or higher, please include the transcript/s for the studies for which you have received credit.
- Documents in languages other than English must be accompanied by an English translation by an accredited translator.
- If your current name is not the same as the name on your transcripts (e.g. due to marriage) please provide a copy of evidence of change of name (e.g. a marriage certificate).

