

The Australian Fatherhood Research Symposium 2019



The 2019 Australian Fatherhood Research Symposium was held at Deakin University, Melbourne on May 2nd and 3rd. This year, 60 attendees came from across Australia representing academics, practitioners, policymakers, health service and community workers.

DAY 1

The first day of the Symposium saw keynote presentations by Professor John Aitken, University of Newcastle, on declining rates of fertility, Emma Walsh, Parents At Work, on shared parental leave, and Professor Paul Ramchandani, University of Cambridge, on paternal depression and play.

Powerpoint slides from the talks by Emma Walsh and Paul Ramchandani are available on the Family Action Centre website. <https://www.newcastle.edu.au/research-and-innovation/centre/fac/research> The gist of the talk by John Aitken can be seen in this video clip <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUQMOY77KOY>

A panel discussion featuring Emma Walsh, Associate Professor Rebecca Giallo, from the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute, and Glen Poole, from the Australian Men's Health Forum, discussed opportunities and ways to inform policy that supports fathers. Also, across three sessions, attendees gave mini presentations on new research and programs.

In a summary of the range of activities on Day 1, Dr Karen Wynter, noted the following words and phrases arising through the day:

Researching, Normalising, Creating partnerships between services and researchers, Supporting, Starting conversations, Raising awareness: <https://dadsgroup.org/man-with-a-pram-2018/>, Providing services for dads / whole families, Being relentless, Being a mouthpiece www.the-fatherhood.com, Asking fathers about their experiences, Informing social policy.

And these quotable quotations:

The rising tide of male infertility: The sperm cells get to the egg, and they don't know what to do!
John Aitken

It's about what you do and not what you are. This is an important shift in understanding parenting behaviours.

Jennifer StGeorge

(The text messaging intervention) changed him from being the father he thought he should be to the father he wanted to be.

Chris May

"Primary" and "secondary" carer labels perpetuate the stereotypes that we have.

Emma Walsh

To be home on parental leave, we could say it is management training

Swedish father

Strategies should focus on dads...but you ARE the strategy. Why don't YOU focus on dads?

Glen Poole

Depression and play are two ways of thinking about fathers' early influence on children.

Paul Ramchandani

DAY 2

On **Day 2** of the Symposium the four existing Australian Fatherhood Research Consortium working groups (Literature Review; Data & Analysis; Intervention; Science Communications/Policy) met to develop their projects and two new interest groups were formed:

A **Father-Inclusive Practice Interest Group** will be chaired by Julie Graney julietgraney@gmail.com from Kids First Australia and Claire Ruthven from Merri Health Claire.Ruthven@merrihealth.org.au . Please contact Julie and Claire if you would like to share ideas, knowledge and experiences about father inclusive practices.

A **Postgrad Students and Early Career Researcher Interest Group** will be chaired by Dr Jennifer StGeorge (jennifer.stgeorge@newcastle.edu.au) and supported by Lauren Francis (Deakin University PhD candidate) lauren.francis@deakin.edu.au. This group aims to support knowledge exchange and collaborations between students that will build their research track records. Already one cross-institutional student collaboration has emerged among doctoral candidates who met at the symposium. Please email Jennifer and Lauren if you would like to be part of this group.