

Announcement of the Winners of the 2017 AFGW Fellowships

Christina Signorelli, a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Medicine, University of New South Wales, has been awarded a Barbara Hale Fellowship for 2017. A researcher in paediatric psycho-oncology, with previous studies in psychology and sociology, Christina's PhD topic is: *Improving follow-up care for long term survivors of childhood cancer: a new model of care*. The project to be funded by the AFGW award proposes to extend the range of her PhD program by developing a new electronic triage tool and linked database to facilitate the appropriate risk-stratification and treatment options of long term survivors of childhood cancer, who often develop lifelong health problems related to after-effects of their cancer treatment.

Christina has already designed a paper-based triage tool for the Re-engage program, "a new online nurse-led intervention" intended to provide individually-tailored programs for childhood cancer survivors who are currently disengaged from cancer-related follow-up care. "Making the Triage Tool electronic", she says, "further harnesses this innovation, by addressing needs relating to limited time and resources, by offering a more feasible and user-friendly alternative to paper versions. This will contribute to the potential success of the Re-engage program, which will help to empower survivors and health professionals, increase engagement in follow-up care and therefore improve survivors' physical and emotional outcomes."

The Fellowship assessors have noted her established excellence as a researcher and the feasibility and accountability of her proposed budget. They praise her project as very well-presented and argued, a significant extension of the prior planned work of her thesis, and a potential model for the aftercare of survivors of other medical treatments that, despite being life-saving, can entail subsequent conditions calling for further intervention.

Cathryn Eatock, a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Sydney, has been awarded a 2017 Barbara Hale Fellowship. Her PhD research aims to assess the capacity of the United Nations to influence settler governments' responsiveness to Indigenous claims of self-determination and to contribute to Indigenous rights discourse within Australia. She aims to do the latter in the context of local broader discussion on constitutional recognition and international emerging norms in international law on Indigenous rights. In order to inform implementation of self-determination within Australia, her thesis will undertake a comparative study of Indigenous peoples in Canada, the United States, Bolivia and New Zealand

Cathryn brings to her research academic training in Public Administration and in Human Rights; extensive connections to the Indigenous community; valuable experience in Indigenous affairs through her role as Senior Policy Officer with Aboriginal Affairs NSW; and considerable experience of the workings and mechanisms of the United Nations. Her application was assessed as "conceptually strong, timely and soundly formulated vis-à-vis feasibility."

The Fellowship funds will be used for a double purpose. First to extend the quantitative range of filmed interviews for her comparative study by travelling to Canada and Bolivia. She has not been able to fulfil her expectations of conducting interviews with Canadian and Bolivian participants during attendance at the recent UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues because attendance of

participants from those countries was lower than predicted. Interviews are filmed in order to produce a documentary which will be a major addition to her written thesis, ensuring that the results of her research are available to those affected by these issues through a more broadly accessible medium.

Secondly, the funds will go to support an intensive short-term academic placement in Vancouver with four of the world's academic leaders in the field of Indigenous rights. Apart from contributing greatly to the intellectual quality of her theoretical methodology, this will provide, she says, "a rare opportunity for personal academic and professional development for myself, as an emerging Indigenous feminist researcher." To quote one of her referees, "given the international nature of her research and the complex issues that are raised in examining the intersection of Indigenous advocacy and rights, international politics and contestations over sovereignty, this opportunity to engage with scholars and other students working on similar issues will deeply enrich her work."

Bettina Mihalas, winner of the 2017 Georgina Sweet Fellowship, is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Environmental and Life Sciences at the University of Newcastle. The aim of her PhD study on female fertility is to explore the link between two major players affecting egg quality: age and oxidative stress (OS) and to determine whether the reproductive capacity of an egg can be extended by upregulating oxidative repair mechanisms. Addressing this question requires her to acquire cutting edge techniques in assisted reproductive technologies not available locally and not envisaged as part of the original research program.

The project to which she will apply the Fellowship funding is attendance at an intensive 3-week developmental biology technical course and seminar series at the Cold Spring Harbour Laboratory, New York, a renowned training ground for early career research scientists who seek to broaden their knowledge and experimental skills in developmental biology. She plans to reinforce the skills acquired there by further visits, to familiarise herself with gene editing technology at John Hopkins University and techniques in egg and embryo manipulation at the Université du Québec à Montréal. Lastly, attendance at the International Society for the Study of Reproduction (SSR) 51st Annual Meeting will allow her to present her data to an international audience from a wide range of reproductive research fields and receive valuable feedback on her project goals, discoveries and future grant applications. A referee comments that the proposed project answers the need for a "stretch target" to allow realisation of Bettina's potential, being "a step jump in expanding [her] international networks and enabling her to undertake academic visits to world leading laboratories, an essential upskilling for a career scientist."

Bettina's aims are by no means all self-oriented: she envisages her academic research as leading to active therapeutic intervention for women suffering the distress of infertility. This hope is endorsed by one of her referees, who says "This project is particularly important, as the direct translation of the findings will aid in understanding and diagnosing problems associated with declining oocyte quality, particularly in advanced reproductive age in women, and the possibility of therapeutics which will improve fertility in assisted reproduction."

Highly commended Applicants:

Of the 77 applicants, a further 6 were shortlisted and are cited as Highly Commended. They are:

Jamie Byrne, who is researching the interactions between sleep, circadian function, and reward at the Centre for Mental Health of Swinburne University.

Samantha Dawson, who is investigating the influence of the prenatal diet on maternal and infant gut health, at the Faculty of Medicine, Deakin University and the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute.

Samantha Goyen, who is researching the physiological and molecular acclimatization required for corals to thrive in high-latitude extremes at the School of Life Sciences, Climate Change Cluster, University of Technology Sydney.

Antoinette Poulton, who is researching cognitive factors influencing the transition from at-risk alcohol use to alcohol use disorders at the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry & Health Sciences; School of Psychological Sciences, University of Melbourne.

Mihiri Silva, who is exploring the link between oral and general health in twins at the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute, School of Paediatrics, The University of Melbourne.

Lily Van Eeden, who is researching means of improving wildlife management by understanding social and political constraints on coexistence with carnivores at the School of Life and Environmental Sciences, University of Sydney.