

President's Message August 2023

Dear Members

National Council of Women WA (NCWWA) now has joint Patrons, His Excellency the Honourable Chris Dawson AC APM and Mrs Darrilyn Dawson. Mrs Dawson has over forty years experience in the Education sector, and has taught in Government and Private schools in both country and metropolitan areas. I recently had a very productive meeting with Mrs Dawson where we discussed a range of matters and issues, a number raised by NCWWA members.



A concern expressed by a number of NCWWA members and also other community members is about the number of young children on the NDIS. A review is needed of the assessment procedures for children under seven years of age to become NDIS participants.

In the three months to March 2023, half of the NDIS 21,000 new entrants were children under seven years of age. Autism diagnoses are surging with 11 per cent of boys aged five to seven years of age and five per cent of girls in the same age bracket now on the NDIS; a jump of almost one percentage point in just three months. AT 54 per cent, autism is the most common disability for NDIS participants under 18 years old.



Is the NDIS the best solution for young children? Are more severe autism levels being over diagnosed so families can receive support for their struggling children from the NDIS? A Pilot Program run by Telethon Kids Institute and the University of Western Australia has 700 families on the program whose young children show early signs of autism into early intervention. I have met with Professor Andrew Whitehouse a global expert in the area of autism research from Telethon Kids about the program called Inklings.

Results from a trial of treatments for infants showing early behavioural signs of autism in 2021 demonstrated early intervention could reduce early developmental disability so dramatically that a childhood clinical autism diagnosis was two-thirds less likely.

A new era of Football has been ushered in this month in Australia—the Women’s World Cup. All eyes are on the host countries Australia and New Zealand as the 2023 FIFA World Cup kicks off. The new State Football Centre in Perth is a key legacy from the World Cup. It is the new home of football based in Queens Park. The Australian team has played brilliantly to now be in the semi-finals.

Sports tourism is a billion- dollar industry and bringing international teams to Perth on a regular basis will play a huge part in the centres success. It was 1921 when the first official women’s football game was held, in Australia in Brisbane. The love of football was strong with women across the country – eventually the W-League (now A League Women) and the Matildas were born.

The 2023-2024 Discount Directory for Western Australia Seniors Card members was recently launched. The directory offers a wide range of discounts on goods and services to help with cost of living. The Directory not only offers a wide range of goods and services but also encourages seniors to stay connected, engaged and active in their communities.

NCWWA is supportive of the additional Commonwealth funding (19.3 million) over four years through an extension to the National Partnership on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses 2021-2027. However, the additional five hundred community workers must be based locally and not FIFO, to gain trust in dealing with local communities. Similarly, the Innovative Perpetrator Response initiative should be run by local staff and not have valuable funds wasted on administration, airfares and accommodation. All funding for both programs must go to those needing help.

A number of NCWWA members have raised the issue of plastic recycling and it being a minefield. Kerbside recycling has been in many parts of Australia for almost forty years. However, some people still have some difficulty in understanding which plastics can be recycled and which ones cannot. There are no unified national standards for dealing with plastics and as such, guidelines vary from council to council.

A code 1-7 appears on the bottom of many plastic products. The number indicates what grade the plastic is. Most people understand PET (polyethylene terephthalate) which identifies as Code 1. It is in everything from water and food containers to sleeping bags and can be recycled in its pure form. Codes 2 (HDPE) and 5 (PP) are usually accepted by most councils but always check the packaging. Code 4 products can mostly be recycled however, for many people a code 4 plastic has to be returned to the point of sale or a special recycling place.

Where codes 3, 6, 7 are identified, for the most part the answer is no to recycling. All plastics are made up of molecules called monomers bonded together to form chains called polymers. How easy or hard plastic polymer is to chemically recycle basically, comes down to how hard it is to break apart the bonds between the monomers. Recycling is broadly mechanical or chemical. Mechanical recycling is where the plastic is sorted into its type, then shredded, melted and reused. Chemical recycling involves reducing plastics back to their starting monomers.

The recent NCWWA “Movie Afternoon” was as always a success. While not as many people attended the afternoon as in previous movie



afternoons, the raffle ensured funds were raised. Thank you to Sandra Brown who donated a lovely box of goodies and congratulations to Colette Wiltshire who was the lucky winner.

The 2023 State Awards Ceremony Girl Guides Western Australia Annual Youth and Adult Awards will be held at the Perth Town Hall in early September. The 2023 Paddy Firstenberg Memorial Award will be announced at the Awards Ceremony.

The WA Women's Hall of Fame 'Call for Nominations' 2024 Launch will take place on Wednesday 30 August 2023. The event signifies the start of the annual process to acknowledge 'inspiring' women in Western Australia.

NCWWA membership fees are now due for the 2023-2024 membership year. Details regarding payment of fees are in this Newsletter. The

NCWWA has a new Westpac Bank account for the payment of fees. Please ensure you identify (name) with your payment. Fees remain the same \$66.00 for Affiliate members and \$55.00 for Associate members. If you require an invoice please let me know.

Robyn Nolan

WA WOMEN'S HALL OF FAME

The WA Women's Hall of Fame was first established in 2011 in recognition of the Centenary of International Women's Day held annually on 8 March. Its purpose is to recognise and celebrate the achievements of Western Australian women, past, present and future each year on International Women's Day.

Do think about nominating someone who would be a worthy recipient. Once nominations officially open an application form will be available on the WAWHOF website.

The WA Women's Hall of Fame (WAWHOF) Awards recognises the achievements and contribution of Women in Western Australia, in eight categories.

Arts
Business
Community
Culture
Education
Health
Sport
STEM

The Call for Nominations 2024 will open shortly.



NCWWA MEMBERSHIP FEES

NCWWA membership fees for the 2023 – 2024 year are now due. Payment may be made by Bank Transfer or by Cheque.

Fees remain the same:

Associate Members \$55
Affiliate Members \$66

Payment by Direct Transfer:

Account name: National Council of Women of WA Inc
BSB: 036-034
Account Number: 559683

Please ensure you identify your name in the 'comments' field

PLEASE NOTE
New Bank Account Details

Payment by Cheque:

National Council of Women of WA Inc
PO Box 6224 East Perth WA 6892



Inklings Briefing Note for Robyn Nolan

11th August 2023

What is Inklings?

Inklings is an early childhood program based on the iBASIS therapy for babies aged 6-18 months showing early social communication delays, and thus at increased likelihood of autism spectrum disorder.

The parent support program uses short videos of the parent with their baby to help parents better understand their baby's thoughts and feelings, the different ways that babies communicate, the importance of interaction and of following their baby's focus of interest.

What does the research say?

In a study published in *JAMA Pediatrics*,¹ an international research team led by Prof Andrew Whitehouse in collaboration with the Child and Adolescent Health Service (WA) and La Trobe University, found the world's first evidence that a pre-emptive therapy in infancy could lead to such a significant improvement in children's development that they then fell below the threshold for a clinical autism diagnosis.

The four-year randomised clinical trial enrolled babies aged 9-14 months to investigate the impacts of iBASIS. All babies had shown early signs of autism, such as reduced eye contact, imitation, or social smiling.

Over a period of five months, half received iBASIS, while a control group received normal community therapy. Eighty-nine children completed an assessment at the start of the study, at the end of the therapy period, and when they were 3 years of age.

The study found that, at age 3 years, children who received iBASIS:

- Had fewer social communication difficulties characteristic of autism.
- Were two-thirds less likely to meet diagnostic criteria for autism at age 3 years compared to the control group.
- Had an increase in parent-reported expressive and receptive vocabulary.
- The intervention also resulted in increased parental sensitivity to their baby's unique communication.

Economic evaluation indicated a saving of \$3.08 for every \$1 invested in Inklings therapy.² Cost savings were modelled for the NDIS system only, and don't include savings to other systems (e.g., Education, Health etc.).

This study replicated closely the positive findings of a previous clinical trial,³ making Inklings ready for wide-scale community implementation.

The clinical trial publications and subsequent media coverage has seen direct approaches from the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and other organisations to be directly involved in accelerating implementation of Inklings (iBASIS intervention) in Australia and internationally.

¹ Whitehouse AJO, et al. Effect of preemptive intervention on developmental outcomes among infants showing early signs of autism. *JAMA Pediatr.* 2021;175(11):e213298.

² Segal, L.Whitehouse AJO. Estimated Therapy costs and downstream cost consequences of the iBASIS-Video Interaction to Promote Positive Parenting intervention vs usual care in children displaying early behavioral signs of autism. *JAMA Network Open* in press.

³ Green J et al. Parent-mediated intervention versus no intervention for infants at high risk of autism. *Lancet Psychiatry.* 2015;2(2):133-40.

is there a need for Inklings?

Autism is not typically diagnosed until three years of age at the earliest, and this diagnosis is usually the 'trigger' to commence therapeutic support. This 'clinical pathway' is not aligned with current scientific understanding of the critical window of early brain development during very early life. Therapies that commence during the first 2 years of life, when the first signs of atypical development are observed and the brain is rapidly developing, may lead to an even greater impact on developmental outcomes in later childhood - a proactive approach in helping babies now, rather than waiting for an autism diagnosis to commence intervention.

Given the prevalence of autism (2 per cent of Australians), the high representative of participants with autism in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (one-third), and the lifelong support costs associated with autism, the findings of this research have profound implications for how we structure health and disability systems to best support the needs of autistic children and their families.

The aim of Inklings is to support developmentally vulnerable babies with an evidence-based therapy, which will enable them to acquire skills that help them flourish. Inklings pre-emptive therapy provides an evidence-based and cost-effective way to build early developmental skills and family functioning that have significant downstream benefits to the Health, Disability and Child Protection systems.

How does Inklings work?

Inklings uses video-feedback as a means of helping parents recognise their baby's communication cues and responding in a way that builds their social communication development. The program focuses on supporting parents to understand the unique abilities of their babies while providing a social environment that is adaptive and responsive to their needs. This is consistent with neurodiversity affirming principles.

Inklings is delivered at fortnightly intervals for 60-75 minute for 10 sessions by a range of allied health specialists, including speech pathologists, clinical psychologists, and child health nurses.

What's next?

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is funding an Implementation Pilot of Inklings across Western Australia. The likely model for this implementation will be for the Western Australian state health services to support the screening of babies (using existing resourcing for child health nurses) and for the NDIA to support funding the delivery of Inklings intervention within the private sector by allied health professionals. The likely commencement data for this Implementation Pilot is Q34 2023.

In the May 2023 Federal budget, funding was announced for the implementation of the Inklings program in additional Australian jurisdictions. The Department of Social Services is coordinating the process of selecting these additional jurisdictions, and is expected to announce this in Q4 2023.

The high-quality evidence underpinning Inklings, along with its potential to be delivered in a broad range of settings, creates huge potential for implementation of a population-wide program that could support child development for Australian children. Early childhood education and care settings (e.g., childcare) is one setting in which Inklings could be implemented to create an exceptional environment to support early learning for children with developmental differences.

Contact: For further information, contact Prof Andrew Whitehouse (Andrew.Whitehouse@telethonkids.org.au)