

1 August 2018

MEDIA RELEASE

International expert on child protection to present important research findings in Newcastle

Family Inclusion Strategies in the Hunter (FISH) has collaborated with the University of Newcastle's Family Action Centre, social-purpose organisation Life Without Barriers and TAFE NSW to facilitate the presentation of new research from an international expert on the role of poverty in the child protection system.

Brid Featherstone, Professor of Social Work at Huddersfield University in Northern England, will share key findings from a large UK-wide research project into the experiences of families who have had contact with child protection systems when she speaks at TAFE in Newcastle on Wednesday, 1 August (event details below).

According to Professor Featherstone and her colleagues in the UK, poverty and deprivation were the largest contributing factor to children's contact with child protection systems. Children from the poorest 10 per cent of neighborhoods were ten times more likely to be removed from their families relative to the most well-off 10 per cent. Despite this, there is very little assistance given to families to help them maximize their income, manage debts or maintain stable and affordable housing.

The research will be introduced by University of Newcastle Family Action Centre's Professor Alan Hayes, who will speak about the social and economic context of child protection in Australia, and how Professor Featherstone's findings can be applied in our context. This will be followed by a presentation from Ms Felicity Kime, a parent leader from FISH.

Professor Alan Hayes said: "Children and young people in the out of home care system in Australia, like in the UK, come from families facing complex challenges. These include factors that flow from life in disadvantage and poverty, that are barriers to reunifying with their families and impede life chances and opportunities."

Life Without Barriers Practice Lead for Children, Young People and Families, Jessica Cocks, said, "We are really pleased to collaborate with our partners in Newcastle to bring an international expert like Professor Featherstone here to present her evidence on such an important issue.

"Our experience in out of home care shows us that poverty and entrenched disadvantage are key issues to address if we want to reduce harm to children in the community and reduce the numbers of children in the care system. If we can support families to overcome poverty, we will be better able to protect children."

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What: Presentation of research findings by Professor Featherstone about the role of poverty in the child protection system

When: Wednesday 1 August, 9:30-12 noon

Where: Clydesdale room – level 3, TAFE Hamilton, 91 Parry St Hamilton

Who: Professor Brid Featherstone, Head of School of Social Work, Huddersfield University, UK
Professor Alan Hayes, University of Newcastle Professor of Family Studies;
Director of Family Action Centre
Felicity Kime, Parent Leader, Family Inclusion Strategies in the Hunter (FISH)

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About Life Without Barriers: Life Without Barriers (LWB) is one of Australia's largest not-for-profit social purpose organisations, delivering innovative, community-based programs to more than 18,000 people from diverse community groups across the country. LWB works in more than 440 communities delivering services in family support, disability, out-of-home care, aged care, mental health, youth justice, homelessness, substance abuse, and provides support for refugees and asylum seekers.