TOGETHER

With you, we make a difference

TELETHON KIDS INSTITUTE
Discover. Prevent. Cure.

30 YEARS 1990 - 2020

Celebrating 30 years of research

Meet our community

Saving newborn babies worldwide

MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR & PATRON

Birthdays are a great time for reflection and to recognise and celebrate with those who have been with you along the way.

That's why we're delighted to launch **Together**, a new magazine that shines a light on our Telethon Kids Institute community. This first edition officially launches our 30-year celebration, and is just one small way that we want to say thank you to those who tirelessly fundraise or volunteer at the Institute, to those who donate, advocate, participate in and help drive research.

Since the Institute was founded in 1990, it has only had two Directors – proudly, that's the two of us. When you have had the privilege of leading an organisation like this, it is genuinely hard to top. That's not to say that it has all been easy. In the early days, it was a battle for financial viability as we had to prove that world-class research could not only be done in Western Australia, it could be done to the highest quality.

Most recently, COVID-19 has thrown up a challenge to us all. As WA's largest medical research facility, we quickly pivoted our focus to helping end this pandemic as safely and as swiftly as possible for the sake of all our families. Our response centred around three pillars - research, public policy response and keeping the community informed. We hope it has reinforced the importance of having internationally respected and connected medical researchers in WA that can respond locally, even in a global crisis.

As Australia returns to a 'new normal,' our focus is again on finding answers to childhood diseases, disability and disadvantage. Our research teams are passionate in their pursuit of better therapies that will give children back their childhood and reduce the devastating impact of childhood cancer, poor mental health, infectious diseases, autism, rare diseases, respiratory conditions and more. Our commitment to ensuring that Aboriginal children have the same opportunities and outcomes as other Australian children is unwavering.

At age 30 – still quite young in our view -- Telethon Kids is recognised as a leading medical research institute, home to more than 750 staff and students, with a level of impact that influences child health, policy and clinical practice across the world. Over the coming months we will showcase how our research has made a difference to so many young lives.

Our Institute's relationship with the WA community is unique. In most other cities with research institutes, there is not the same intimacy which we have and value so much. This has translated not only in people supporting us financially in so many ways, but through participation and interest in our research. Having a close connection with our community means our research aligns with the needs of the community - and its kids, young people and families - and is used more effectively. And it has made our job so much more rewarding too.

Our community is one of our greatest strengths. **None of this could happen without you.** You drive our research, our fundraising and our ability to make a difference.

Thank you for your support.

Jonathan Carapetis AM
Executive Director

Fiona Stanley AC
Founding Director and Patron

OCTOBER 1987
The Western Australian Research Institute for Child Health (WARICH) is incorporated as a public company

JUNE 1990
His Excellency the Hon. Bill Hayden Governor-General of Australia officially opens the Institute; Fiona Stanley is the Founding Director

JANUARY 1994
HRH Prince Charles visits the Institute

MARCH 1994
The Institute changes its name from WARICH to the Institute for Child Health Research

JUNE 1995
We changed our name to Telethon Institute for Child Health Research in recognition of ongoing support from the people of WA through Channel 7's Telethon

JULY 1997
The State and Federal Governments together provide a $22.5M grant to build the Roberts Road facility

SEPTEMBER 2000
The Governor-General, His Excellency Sir William Deane, officially opens the Roberts Road facility

JULY 2011
Plans are announced to build a state-of-the-art research facility for the Institute within the new children's hospital on the QEII site

DECEMBER 2011
Fiona Stanley retires

JULY 2012
Jonathan Carapetis is appointed as the Institute's new Director

FEBRUARY 2014
The Institute changes its name to Telethon Kids Institute

2016
We established a permanent presence in the Kimberley

AUGUST 2018
We moved to our new facility within Perth Children's Hospital

JUNE 2019
We opened our Discovery Centre, a fun and interactive space for kids

AUGUST 2019
After 14 years, John Langoulant stepped down from our Board and the Hon Julie Bishop was appointed our new Chair

OCTOBER 2019
We launched CliniKids, our first stand-alone clinical service

FEBRUARY 2020
We received the Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) Athena SWAN Bronze Award

4 A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER

When the novel coronavirus we now know as COVID-19 swept the world, killing hundreds of thousands of people and putting millions of lives and livelihoods at stake, we had a new, urgent issue at hand. While children will always be at the heart of what we do, as any infectious disease outbreak fast proves, the strongest and quickest defence we have in protecting the community is research – and this is why we knew we had to join the global COVID-19 fight.

So, hand-in-hand with our critical mission of healthy, happy kids, we've been proud to use our expertise, technologies and experience to join the global fight against this pandemic.

We created a new COVID-19 research portfolio

Within a matter of days, Telethon Kids researchers were ready to start tackling COVID-19, assembling a comprehensive portfolio of research projects across three areas:

- **Save lives and contain spread**
  Critical interventions to stop and slow viral transmission.
- **Map and track**
  Map the spread across communities to enable more effective controls and inform government policies on social restrictions and safe return-to-school options.
- **Reduce impact on families**
  Preserve the mental health and development of our children and families during the isolation and as we return to normal.

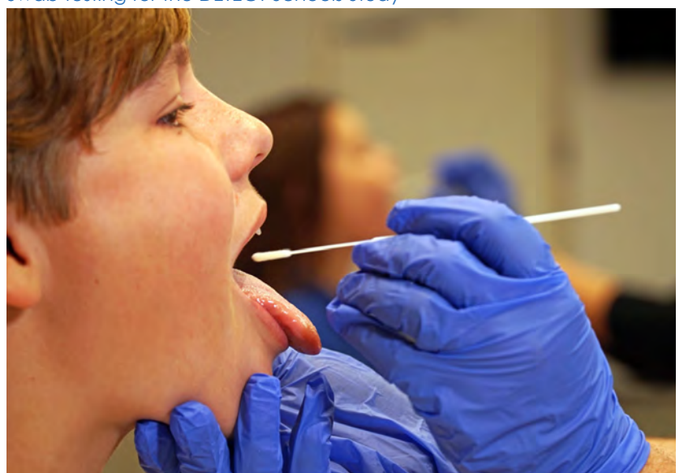
Here are just some of the projects we've been working on:

"Flattening the curve" is a term we have all come to know and understand as vital to Australia's response to COVID-19. Complex mathematical modelling is at the heart of this vital strategy. Our Geospatial Health Team were at the coal face, working to inform Federal policy in conjunction with the Doherty Institute, Melbourne in a national collaboration. Led by Professor Peter Gething, the team swung quickly into action to use their more than a decade of experience in modelling infectious diseases, particularly malaria. They're developing a sophisticated **COVID-19 modelling framework** that is tailored to Western Australia: its population structure and mobility; its outbreak status; and its response capability.

The **CoCo Study** is a world-first trial to test the effectiveness of the drug Interferon in stopping outbreaks of COVID-19 by reducing the infectiousness of people who contract the virus. Funded by BHP's Vital Resources fund, the trial is being led by Telethon Kids paediatric infectious diseases physician Professor Tobias Kollmann and respiratory specialist Professor Stephen Stick.

In the absence of a COVID-19 vaccine, Professors Peter Richmond, Tobias Kollmann and Stephen Stick have led our participation in the internationally acclaimed **BRACE trial** that is exploring whether the BCG vaccine, used for more than a century to fight tuberculosis, could help protect against the virus. Run in collaboration with the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, more than 10,000 frontline healthcare workers in Australia and Europe will participate. Minderoo Foundation generously led the way in WA with their support.

Swab testing for the DETECT Schools Study



We teamed up as a research partner with the WA State Government on a study of 80 Western Australian schools, education support settings and residential colleges for the **DETECT program in schools**. The study will help us learn more about any undiagnosed and asymptomatic COVID-19 cases in the school environment and the impact the pandemic has on the mental health and wellbeing of WA schoolchildren, their families, and staff.

In another Australian-first, the **ORIGINS Community Wellbeing during COVID-19 Project** is measuring the perceived stress, financial hardship and family functioning of more than 2,000 families in the northern suburbs of Perth. Telethon Kids' Professor Desiree Silva, who co-leads the project, anticipates the information being collected will help plan essential support services for families both during and after the pandemic.

A huge THANK YOU to everyone who helped make this happen.

THANK YOU to **ALL** our donors, for your generosity and for the care you consistently show the WA community.

THANK YOU to everyone who has taken part in our trials and studies, including over 2,000 healthcare workers and families from the northern suburbs. Your time and generosity is so appreciated.

THANK YOU to our collaborators, including Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, Fiona Stanley Hospital, Perth Children's Hospital, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, and to the 80 schools, education support centres and residential colleges who took time from their busy schedules to assist with research to benefit the entire community.

Our work tackling COVID-19 is not finished and many of our projects still require funding to proceed. If you would like to donate and join the fight against COVID-19, please visit telethonkids.org.au/donate

We created Australia's first COVID-19 Community Advisory Group
With researchers in a race against time to understand and develop treatments for COVID-19, we knew it was vital to ensure community representation in this process. Telethon Kids Institute's Manager of Community Engagement, Anne McKenzie AM, and her team tapped into their extensive networks of consumer and community advocates to rapidly draw together Australia's first national Community Advisory Group for COVID-19 research. The group of 19 senior experienced community advocates from all over Australia are providing rapid input into grant applications, ethics applications, plain language summaries, consent and recruitment.

We adapted for our kids

- Led by Professor Andrew Whitehouse, the team at CliniKids swiftly re-imagined the delivery of crucial allied health services for children with autism spectrum disorder or developmental delays during COVID-19 restrictions, providing speech therapy, occupational therapy, and clinical psychology services via telehealth sessions.
- Developed by Telethon Kids Institute and Minderoo Foundation through their CoLab partnership, the Bright Tomorrows app launched a new campaign encouraging parents and carers to use time at home during COVID-19 restrictions to develop their children's life skills. The app prioritises tips ideal for social isolation, such as activities to help children burn off excess energy indoors and ideas to help children and parents manage difficult emotions.
- With our Discovery Centre at Perth Children's Hospital having to temporarily close its doors to budding young scientists due to social distancing restrictions, the Telethon Kids team quickly built a fantastic new website filled with videos, quizzes, activities and science adventures to help keep kids' brains busy.

We built a comprehensive COVID-19 webpage to help families stay safe and well
More details of our research projects and resources can be found here:
tacklingcovid19.org.au

MEET OUR COMMUNITY

Madison Bailey

"I volunteer at the Discovery Centre and love it."

Madison 'Madi' Bailey is in her second year of a double major in neuroscience and physiology at UWA. When an opportunity came up to volunteer in the Discovery Centre at Telethon Kids Institute, she was keen to give it a go.

"I absolutely fell in love with it," the bubbly 19-year-old says. "I loved coming in and meeting the kids. As a science nerd, it was very cool to help children get excited about the human body."

Eager to become a medical researcher herself, Madi says the experience made her realise the difference volunteering can make to a child's life.

"One boy was absolutely amazed by the Discovery Centre. He spent ages playing with this interactive X-ray game and I'd tell him all the fun facts I knew. I'd ask him trivia questions and he was so happy and engaged.

"A colleague also told me about a boy with an immune deficiency who hated going to hospital until the Discovery Centre opened. Suddenly, it went from dread to excitement, and he'd ask his mum how long he could play in there."

Madi encourages everyone to put their hand up and volunteer, especially fellow students.

"There are so many benefits to volunteering. At UWA, the volunteer hours we do get put on a transcript for when we graduate, which then goes on our CV. It's also great for networking opportunities.

"But that aside, it's lovely to just escape for a few hours each week. We're so busy with everything going on that it's nice to have a few hours to go, 'right, the only thing I'm allowed to concentrate on is playing games with kids and trying to make science fun'."

Want to organise your own fundraiser or volunteer at Telethon Kids Institute? We'd love to hear from you.

Visit telethonkids.org.au/be-involved


Professor Timo Lassmann

THE NEW FRONTIER

Precision health

We are composed of 30 trillion cells, and each contains a copy of our genome. This is the 3 billion letter book that is the blueprint for the proteins and enzymes each cell needs to function.

The genome presents in all our cells and contains about 20,000 genes. It is what makes us unique, determining physical traits – like eye and hair colour – but also things like the likelihood of getting certain diseases. A mutation or change anywhere in the genome can result in a disease, physical disability, or shorted life span.

Over the last decade medical researchers have made massive leaps forward in understanding how the genome functions. Although it has been mapped for two decades, searching a patients' entire code to identify culprits of disease and disability is relatively new.

At Telethon Kids we are at the forefront of this science and are using powerful new tools to discover the causes of diseases and better predict future disease and treatment outcomes.

Spearheading this work is Dr Timo Lassmann, the Feilman Fellow in Genomics and Program Head of Precision Health at Telethon Kids.

"Instead of treating each child as a blank canvas, we are pursuing a unique approach that treats every patient as an individual by undertaking a targeted analysis of their unique genetic make-up," Dr Lassmann said.

"I call this 'personalised analytics'. It is a new thing we do – build an analysis pipeline around what's wrong with that unique child. This is enabling us to be far more confident in diagnosing a child presenting with a complex array of symptoms and is key in predicting future disease and treatment outcomes," he says.

Timo, who grew up in Germany, studied at Kings' College London and undertook his PhD at the Karolinska Institute in Sweden, later moved to RIKEN Japan where he held leadership roles in the International Functional Annotation of the Mammalian Genome. Considered an international leader in computational biology and genomics, Timo was appointed as the head of computational biology at Telethon Kids Institute in 2014 and received a Fellowship from the Feilman Foundation in 2017. This Fellowship has meant he can continue to do his vital work right here in Western Australia.

"WA is becoming well known for excellence in research in the field of genomics and personalised medicine. Being able to retain a researcher of Timo's calibre in Perth and extend Telethon Kids' capabilities in this space is an important step as the Institute work towards becoming the global leaders in paediatric precision medicine," says John Palermo, Secretary, Feilman Foundation.

"The Feilman Foundation is proud to support the world class research undertaken by Telethon Kids and Timo Lassmann."

Timo says "Fellowships are critical for job stability and security but also for research. Research grants will only fund a proportion of what is required to complete a project. Without the Fellowship, I wouldn't be able to undertake this pioneering work. I am so grateful to the Feilman Foundation for their support. Together we are poised to make a dramatic difference to the health and wellbeing of every Western Australian child."

Dr Timo Lassmann is generously supported through the Feilman Fellowship in Genomics.

CONGRATULATIONS

Horses Doing Healing

Congratulations to the eight Broome and Derby locals who completed 150 hours of training and additional supervised sessions to become certified Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) practitioners. Trained as part of the Yawardani Jan-ga (Yawuru language: horses doing healing) research project headed by Professor Juli Coffin, the group are now qualified to work with Aboriginal young people in the Kimberley using horses to help support social, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing.

Professor Juli Coffin

What is Yawardani Jan-ga EAL?

Yawardani Jan-ga Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) is a research program where horses are the teachers. The program utilises horse wisdom, which can help to develop valuable life skills such as self-regulation, relationship development, authenticity and effective non-verbal communication. These life skills can assist in managing stress and building healthy relationships with others.

Horse wisdom can help with supporting young people to reach their potential, offering no judgement, comforting those who are struggling with feelings like hurt, anger or confusion, developing the potential of holding space and valuing the individual. Yawardani Jan-ga also has a component that offers those who are ready opportunity to develop their leadership capacity and skills.

In the program, the horses are working in a natural space and are also 'housed' in a herd environment.

How does EAL work?

Horses are naturally intuitive prey, play and herd animals with a strong emotional sense and ability to respond to behaviour in other beings. In a herd, they use this sense as a tool to survive, responding to the environment and others around them through vibration and body language. Incredibly, they respond in a variety of ways, such as mirroring the emotions and providing responses to stimulus around them.

"Yawardani Jan-ga demonstrates the extraordinary connection horses have with humans and their unique sense of being able to interpret and provide what a young person needs. If a young person is positive with energy and enthusiasm, the horse will respond," says Professor Coffin.

"Horses provide learning opportunities and model relationships beautifully. If they have a confrontation, they soon go back to grazing. They live entirely in the moment, not harbouring grudges or exhibiting judgement; they don't care what someone did last week, or what they are planning on doing tomorrow. This is very important for young people around not being judged.

"Being around 600kg, horses also have a presence that is very affirming and can make people feel worthwhile. They provide a safe touch. Some young people have trouble with self-regulation and the deep outbreath of the horse helps them to feel calm. The program helps young people to master this deep outbreath."

What inspired Yawardani Jan-ga EAL?

Yawardani Jan-ga is a direct response to community concerns over youth social and emotional wellbeing, and community requests for strengths-based programs that focus on building healthy coping skills among Aboriginal young people.

We look forward to updating you with the incredible work Yawardani Jan-ga is doing in the future!

Professor Juli Coffin is the Ellison Fellow of Aboriginal Health. Thank you to Mineral Resources Limited and Chris and Tia Ellison for your ongoing support of Professor Coffin's work, and Mary MacKillop Today and Majarlin Kimberley Centre for Remote Health for your generous support of the Yawardani Jan-ga EAL program.

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RESEARCH FOCUS

On a mission to save millions

Dr Nelly Amenyogbe and Professor Tobias Kollmann

A century-old tuberculosis (TB) vaccine could be the key to saving millions of newborn babies worldwide each year. Telethon Kids Institute researchers working with a global team have identified the mechanism behind what makes the vaccine so effective at preventing newborn deaths from diseases other than tuberculosis.

The potential of Bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG) – one of the oldest, safest and cheapest vaccines available – is something Professor Tobias Kollmann and Dr Nelly Amenyogbe are very passionate about.

The Telethon Kids researchers have been part of the global study which has now explained why the BCG vaccine is able to provide protection to newborns beyond its intended purpose of fighting off TB.

"This study identified a dramatic and rapid increase in neutrophils – white blood cells which patrol the body and destroy invading bacterial pathogens – within three days of BCG vaccination," Dr Amenyogbe said.

"It's been known for a very long time that neutrophils play a very important role in managing sepsis, but until now nobody understood the role of BCG in initiating this critical process."

"It was actually thought to be biologically implausible, however we've not only shown how BCG is involved, but that it kicks off this process almost instantly following vaccination – far more quickly than anticipated."

Professor Kollmann said the findings reinforced how critical it was for newborns in low resource settings to receive BCG immediately after birth.

"Less than half the babies who should get this vaccine right after birth actually get it then, partly because of logistics and partly because TB is not seen as a huge risk in those first few weeks. Administration is often delayed to 4-6 weeks, but by then it's too late for many newborns," Professor Kollmann said.

"Around half of all newborn deaths from infection happen in the first week of life, with about 75 per cent of those deaths caused by sepsis. Given BCG's clear role in helping newborns to fight off sepsis, we could save the lives of close to a million newborns every year if they were given this vaccine within days of birth instead of weeks later."

Published in *Science Translational Medicine*, the five-year study - which involved researchers from Australia, Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Papua New Guinea, The Gambia and Guinea Bissau - is the first to demonstrate the beneficial mechanism triggered by administration of BCG in newborns.

"The most novel aspect of our work on BCG is the demonstration that has such a profound effect on neutrophils in such a short amount of time in the newborn period," Dr Amenyogbe said. "This is something that hasn't been known before."

Professor Kollmann explains that BCG rapidly, within hours of administration, ramps up production of white blood cells, specifically neutrophils, that gobble up bacteria.

"They sit and wait for something bad that shouldn't be there to come by and then they are unleashed and destroy the invading bacteria without causing any damage," Professor Kollmann said.

"Our research strongly suggests that the best time to get BCG is immediately after birth," Dr Amenyogbe said. "This is because most newborn mortality occurs within the first week of life. So delaying vaccination by even a week, most of the newborns that could have been saved would have already succumbed to disease before they would have had the chance to receive the vaccine."

"This is what makes this window critical, the fact that BCG works so quickly is very important because you only have a few days to achieve this protection in this very vulnerable time of life."

Professor Kollmann and Dr Amenyogbe said their next steps with the BCG vaccine are to look beyond the immediate effects on sepsis and explore some of the other important roles that BCG might play for other types of infections later in childhood or perhaps also in adulthood.

The researchers are currently involved in the Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth-based BRACE trial, which is testing BCG's potential to fight off COVID-19.

"Everybody's attention is focused at the moment on whether BCG can help adults, particularly whether it can offer protection against COVID-19," Dr Amenyogbe said.

"Our study only looked at BCG in the context of newborn sepsis. We narrowed in on sepsis because it's one of the top causes of infectious death in newborns in low resource settings.

"The potential for BCG to play a protective role for other types of infections, such as COVID-19, remains entirely reasonable and worth looking at, but at the moment, we simply do not know."

Professor Kollmann said whether BCG may or may not be protective against COVID-19 remained to be seen, but in the meantime, its real and proven potential to save the lives of vulnerable newborns had to be maximised.

"BCG is very, very safe, costs only a few cents per dose, and reduces infectious causes of mortality – not just tuberculosis – in newborns by almost 50 per cent," he said.

"There's nothing that we have in our entire current medical arsenal, that is as effective, cheap, safe, feasible and affordable as this vaccine. All we have to do is ensure all newborns at risk get it right away at birth."

Thank you to all our supporters who make Professor Kollmann's research possible. Professor Kollmann is co-funded by the Perth Children's Hospital Foundation. His research is generously supported by the McCusker Charitable Foundation, Stan Perron Charitable Foundation and Channel 7's Telethon.

12

REAL IMPACT

We Belong

Jenelle and Lucy Macri

Starting a new school can be challenging for all kids, but especially for those who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing. But new resources developed by Telethon Kids Institute aim to make life a little easier.

Like all adolescents making the leap from primary school to high school this year, Lucy Macri was nervous about making new friends. Witty and whip-smart, there's nothing to give away that she is hard-of-hearing except for a cochlear implant hidden under her hair.

"There's no better way to advocate for change than engaging families who are directly affected by it."
- Professor Donna Cross

But mum Jenelle, who is also hard-of-hearing, understands the unique difficulties her daughter will face both as an adolescent navigating a whole new world, and as a young person facing the additional social challenges that come with being Deaf or hard-of-hearing.

"Lucy has never seen herself as someone who struggles," Jenelle says. "But as her mum, I have struggled with the social impact on her. It's been tough watching her go through the same social and emotional challenges I did at school, like not being invited to parties or sleepovers, or barely having any playdates.

"At primary school, she was always alone at recess and lunch time and the last picked for a dorm when they went to school camp. She's never had that group of mates saying, 'You're with us, Lucy!' I'm an adult and I know how to choose my friends wisely. But at that age, it's hard to feel different."

Beyond the schoolyard, Lucy says that teachers are also often unaware of the little things they can do to make life easier in the classroom.

"Things like turning your back when talking – they do it a lot! Teachers need to speak loud and clearly and keep things in mind like setting up charging stations and making sure there are always spare batteries."

It's experiences like Lucy's that inspired the BELONG project, a research project conducted by Telethon Kids Institute with the support of Telethon Speech and ring and the School of Special Educational Needs: Sensory, Ear Science Institute Australia and Pindi-Pindi Limited. A study of the school-based experiences of children who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing, the four-year project was funded by Healthway and aimed to help these young people fit in even better than they currently do.

"We know that children and young people who experience chronic disease face even greater challenges in their social and emotional development," says Telethon Kids Professor Donna Cross, who led the project. "One of the groups that suffers quite significantly is children who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing.

"Sometimes they can't interact at the same pace as their peers. They're in this slightly awkward position because they may miss a key line of conversation or process things a little slower– not because they are neurologically deficient, but because of their hearing aid."

The BELONG project kicked off with a youth voice forum of 10 students who were Deaf or hard-of-hearing, who identified some of the key issues they faced and came up with a game plan for a technology-based intervention. Professor Cross says it was critical to hear directly from those impacted and involve them in the development of these resources.

"We want young people to be confident and self-directed in the actions they can take to help themselves. They told us what they needed at school, home and amongst their peers."

The end result was a comprehensive website, launched this year, which provides resources to parents, teachers and children who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing. The platform has three portals: the first is accessible to schools and advises teachers how to support students who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing and their social and emotional learning. It was informed by specialist Teachers of the Deaf, as well as regular classroom teachers and school principals. The second part of the website is for parents, with the project seeking out consumer groups to describe what information needed to be included.

"The parents were keen for a digital summary of what they wanted every teacher to know about their child and tips like what to do when a child feels lonely, or how to help a child build more friends," says Professor Cross.

The final portal was created by and for young people, who offered strong suggestions about what they needed.

Professor Donna Cross

"There's no better way to advocate for change than engaging families who are directly affected by it," adds Professor Cross.
For Jenelle and Lucy, the more people who learn about what life is like for the Deaf and hard-of-hearing, the better.

"There's still that throwback to the 1900s, where 'Deaf and dumb' was used as a collective, which is why Deaf awareness training and resources that challenge these misconceptions are so important," Jenelle says.

"I'm sure a lot of parents may have been more comfortable inviting Lucy over to play if they knew that it wasn't going to be an issue, or that she wouldn't require more resources than any other child."

Adds Lucy: "Some people seem to think if you're Deaf or hard-of-hearing you can't do anything or that we're not the same. But it's not true. We can do everything."

Thank you to all our supporters who made this project happen.

- ***Telethon Speech and Hearing and School of Special Educational Needs: Sensory, Ear Science Institute Australia and Pindi-Pindi Limited.***
- ***Healthway, for your generous funding.***
- ***All the students, parents, teachers and principals for all your time and efforts in helping to inform this study.***

Want to be a part of real-life research?
We'd love to hear from you.
Visit telethonkids.org.au/be-involved

MEET OUR COMMUNITY

Tino Riccio

When Tino Riccio was planning the launch of Tino's Pizza, his new Beeliar pizza parlour, he wasn't afraid to dream big.

"I wanted an opening that was grand, ridiculous and completely over-the-top for a little suburban shop, with a live band and a bunch of free pizza," the effervescent father-of-four says.

Fun may have been at the forefront of his mind, but a deeper message was behind the afternoon's festivities. Tino's self-proclaimed 'world's biggest pizza party' was also a fundraiser for Embrace @ Telethon Kids, our research centre devoted to the mental health of children and young people.

"I held the world's biggest pizza party to support mental health research."

With four healthy children, Tino was keen to show his gratitude as well as support a cause close to his family's heart. Tino's 15-year-old son, Chase, is transgender, and his gender-affirming journey has inspired Tino to ensure there is plenty of support for other kids on similar paths.

"When Chase told us, my first thought was for his safety and wellbeing," he says. "I was never worried about us, our family. We love Chase regardless of his gender. He's a wonderful, smart and creative kid. Knowing he can be himself, and can express himself the way he wants to, means the most to us.

Chase says family support has meant the world to him as he attends appointments at CAHS Gender Diversity Service at Perth Children's Hospital.

"It's been really helpful and empowering taking those steps, but I can't imagine how hard it would be to go on this journey without support," he says.

With a loving group of friends and a supportive school behind him, Tino knows his son is fortunate and wants to see other kids with the same support systems in place. One of his greatest concerns is ensuring online communities are a safe space.

"One thing I tell Chase is regardless of what the outside world does or says, there's always a safe place at home. We all run into challenges and bigotry and racism or just someone being mean for no reason, but if you've got that safe haven to go back to, it can give you a sense of identity out there. Knowing you come from a good place means you can take on the challenges of the world."

Tino admits his comfort zone has been challenged a little during this journey, but he considers it a beautiful lesson and part of the joy of living.

These days, he says Chase's gender 'just is' in the Riccio household and the family doesn't really think about it.

"Like all my kids, I want Chase to be happy but more than that, I want him to enjoy peace of mind," Tino says. "Chase is a beautiful person. I know he will bring his creativity and joy and smile and kindness into the world and I'm looking forward to that."

As for the 'world's biggest pizza party', the afternoon exceeded Tino's lofty ambitions. Close to 150 people dropped in, gobbling up around 700 pieces of pizza over three hours – all made single-handedly by Tino's son Filip and served by Chase, daughter Bella and son Lorenzo. The day raised $714 for Embrace and, according to Tino, that's just the beginning.

"We'll be back every year on our anniversary," he declares with a wink.

Want to create your own fundraiser?
Visit telethonkids.org.au/fundraise

TELETHON KIDS INSTITUTE
Discover. Prevent. Cure.

30 YEARS 1990 - 2020

Please celebrate Telethon Kids' 30th birthday by donating today

For thirty years, Telethon Kids Institute's world class research has made a difference to the lives of thousands of children, every day right here in WA.

Please help us keep searching for better therapies that give children back their childhood and reduce the devastating impact of childhood cancer, poor mental health, infectious diseases, autism, rare diseases, respiratory conditions and much more.

Your support is deeply appreciated, now more than ever.

HOW TO DONATE

Donate online
telethonkids.org.au/donate

Donate by phone
08 6319 1333

Donate by post
Post to:
Telethon Kids Institute,
PO Box 855, West Perth WA 6872

If you would like to arrange a bank transfer for your gift, please call us or email donate@telethonkids.org.au. We would love to help you.

All donations more than $2 are tax deductible.

Yes! I want to celebrate 30 years of Telethon Kids with a donation.

PERSONAL DETAILS

Name .....

Address.....

Email ..... Phone.....

☐ I/We would like to be acknowledged as: .....
☐ I prefer to remain anonymous

PAYMENT DETAILS

I wish to make a ☐ one-time **OR** ☐ monthly donation

In the amount of: ☐ $30 ☐ $130 ☐ $300 ☐ $3,000 ☐ My choice $.....

I wish for my donation to go: ☐ Wherever is most needed
☐ A specific research area: .....

☐ Please debit my (please tick): ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐ AMEX

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'Why' is powerful. The more we ask it, the further it takes us.
It helps us find causes, cures and therapies to ensure
every kid has a healthy, happy childhood.

Asking 'why' may be difficult but never before has it been more important.
We'll never stop asking and answering the big questions
for the sake of our kids and community.

Thank you for helping us to change lives here in WA, and all over the world.

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