

THE ASSOCIATION OF CHILD LIFE THERAPISTS NEWSLETTER

JULY 2022



ACLTA Chairperson Update

Carlie Alicastro

Welcome to 2022. Who can believe we are already half way through the year?!

The ACLTA have been working on many projects to help support you, Child Life Therapists, and to help advocate for the Child Life profession nationally.

The ACLTA are aware that recruiting new staff to the Child Life Profession can pose many challenges. We are conscious that there is no formal training in Australia for the Child Life Profession and that onsite training using the ACLTA competencies is standard across hospitals in Australia when on boarding new staff to CLT positions.

The ACLTA understands that recruitment can be challenging when applicants, majority of which have an education background, have very little knowledge about the Child Life Profession.

As such, the ACLTA have recently reviewed the Online Course, Child Life: Introduction to Theory and Practice (see link below), developed by UC Santa Barbara, to encourage potential applicants to complete to make them more desirable when applying for Child Life Therapy positions.

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Although this is not a professional qualification, we hope that it will provide future Child Life Therapists with foundational knowledge that will support their work.

The ACLTA highly recommend that managers recommend this course as 'desirable experience' when recruiting new staff to the Child Life Profession.

Many hospitals around the state are in the process of trialling, or have purchased and are using, the Smileyscope Virtual Reality device [Home | Smileyscope AU](#). It is a virtual reality device developed by clinicians, for clinicians, to alleviate the fear of needle experiences as well as other medical experiences. Currently, the Smileyscope is being used without guidelines. The ACLTA have developed a set of guidelines so that the device is used safely and appropriately. This document is now available on the ACLTA website. We are also working with Smileyscope to have these guidelines sent to healthcare facilities using the device and included with any purchase.

The ACLTA know that professional development is essential and as such are continuing to provide high quality webinars in partnership with the Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP). If you are a member and have not yet signed up for this free program, please send us an email at email@childlife.org.au.

The ACLTA are also providing monthly networking sessions to connect, share and talk about a variety of topics. We recently engaged sessions about Medical Imaging and Adolescents and Mental Health. Upcoming networking sessions will include topics such as Pathology, Burns and Oncology. Keep an eye on the ACLTA social pages and email. If you have any feedback about these session, please send an email to email@childlife.org.au.

I would like to thank the ACLTA committee for their hard work and dedication over the past year and I very much look forward to what we can do this year in advocating for the Child Life profession and supporting you and the wonderful work that you do.

If you have any ideas, concerns or questions about the ACLTA, please don't hesitate to send us an email. The Child Life profession in Australia is still a little seedling and although we have helped it to grow some leaves, we still have a way to go to help it become the tall, fruitful tree that we know it can be.

Carlie Alicastro



The ACLTA's New Executive Members

We are excited to introduce you to our new executive members who will be serving in their respective positions for the next two years.

Vice Chairperson- Tammy Young, Monash Children's Hospital, Victoria



I have worked at Monash Children's Hospital for the past 7 years. Prior to this I worked in early childhood services for over 20 years across a range of early childhood education and intervention within kindergarten, community health settings and TAFE.

I am passionate about family centre practice and including the child's voice within the hospital setting.

National Liaison -Tanya Walker, Nepean Hospital, NSW



I have worked as a child life therapist and sole practitioner for the past 20 years in the children's ward at Nepean Hospital. Before this I was a primary school teacher for 8 years working at a number of different schools in my local area.

My passions as a therapist are child empowerment and giving young people a sense of control throughout their hospital journey, non pharmacological pain management strategies and mindfulness techniques. Working with our chronic and complex patients, many, having life limiting illnesses also holds a special place in my heart. Constantly improving the services we provide through ward and area health service through quality improvement initiatives also keeps me very busy.

Currently I'm completing my graduate certificate in professional practice before commencing my graduate diploma in counselling/child and adolescent counselling in 2023.

I am looking forward to working more closely with like minded professionals continuing to move forward with our wonderful child life profession.

**Professional Development Coordinator- Aimee Kirkham
Royal Children's Hospital, Victoria**

I am very excited to have joined the ACLTA committee to learn and work alongside professionals with the same passions - helping children.

I am very lucky to be working as a Child Life Therapist at Royal Children's Hospital in the Medical Imaging department.

I have a Bachelor of Early Childhood Education and then went on to complete my Masters in Sensory Disability. From there over the past ten years I have worked in a variety of early childhood settings and with Ronald McDonald House Charities in Newcastle.

I have always wanted to become a Child Life Therapist and I am very much enjoying the demands of the role and how rewarding it is helping children in their time of need.



**NSW State Representative- Sarah Scott,
The Children's Hospital at Westmead, NSW**

I started my child life journey as a teacher for 5 years, after completing my honours thesis on CLT at university. Teaching was always intended as my foundation to enter the child life field.

I have now been a child life therapist for 6.5 years. During that time I have worked across many clinical areas including Respiratory, Long Term Ventilation and Paediatric Intensive Care. However, Burns and plastics became my first, unexpected love and has become my passion and specialist area, remaining steadfast for the entirety of my child life work so far.

I now share the role of Head of Department for Child Life and Music Therapy at The Children's Hospital, Westmead alongside my work in burns. I am grateful to have this opportunity to be a member of the association as it aligns with my desire to be part of our collaborative force, driving our future forward as an industry.

Victorian State Representative- Annabelle Russell, Monash Children's Hospital Victoria



My name is Annabelle and I am very excited to have received a nomination to be the ACLTA Victorian State Representative.

I have been a Child Life Therapist for four years. I am currently working Full Time at Monash Children's Hospital. I am very grateful to have previously worked as a Child Life Therapist at The Royal Children's Hospital. I have specialised Child Life Therapy experience in Emergency and Oncology.

I wish to be on the committee to help connect Child Life Therapists across Victoria and to be an advocate for the incredible work we do as Child Life Therapists to improve the hospital experience for children, their families and the healthcare team.

Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with family and friends, cooking and playing tennis

Course Review

Child Life: Introduction to Theory and Practice

Recently I completed the introduction to Child life course run by UC Santa Barbara. I found the course really well structured and would be a great course for people interesting in entering the Child Life Therapy field or newly employed as a Child Life Therapist. The course ran for 10 weeks and each week considered of a new topic.

Topic covered included:

Week 1: Introduction to Theory and practice

Week 2: Developmental theories

Week 3: Research in the field of CL

Week 4: Importance of play

Week 5: Assessment

Week 6: Preparation

Week 7: Coping, procedural support and distraction

Week 8: Stress, Loss, Grief, Death and Dying

Week 9: Setting and special topics

Week 10: Communication and documentation

Each week you are required to participate in a discussion topic, as well as assessment pieces throughout the course. There is quite a bit of reading and video content each week and a rough estimation on time would be between 2-4hrs per week (some weeks are more heavy in reading requirements than others), plus time to complete assessments. As this course is online the time difference is not an issue, you can just engage in the content as this suits you.

Whilst the course was designed as a step towards Certification as a Child Life Specialist, which is heavily discussed throughout the content is a really good foundation for interested or new people to the field of Child Life Therapy.

If you would like to discuss the course in more detail really happy to be contacted

tammy.young@monashhealth.org

Take care,

Tammy Young



Professional Development Opportunities

Ted X- Fun in the Face of Crisis

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T_Kvefokrpw



Networking Groups

Following overwhelming interest in the networking groups held on the second day of the conference, ACLTA have begun facilitating monthly networking groups on different topics. These groups are open to Child Life Therapists working within the field and are designed to share ideas, resources, ways of working and challenges experienced along the way.

A schedule with a list of topics is below. Keep an eye on your email each month for further details on the date and time of the session!

DATE	TOPIC
July- Friday 22nd July 2pm	Cardiac
August - Thursday 11th 12pm	Pathology
September - Monday 19th 1pm	Burns/Plastics
October- TBC	VR and Tech
November- TBC	ED/Trauma
December- TBC	Palliative Care

Staff Spotlight

Kate Strickland - Child Life Therapist at The Royal Children's Hospital

Hi! My name is Kate Strickland and I am a Child Life Therapist at the Royal Children's Hospital. I started working here 6 years ago and have never looked back! My background is in Occupational Therapy (Mental Health) and Primary Teaching and it was always my dream to find a job that combined both roles.

I have work in the Cardiac department for the majority of my time here and have the pleasure of working across the wards, PICU and outpatient areas giving me an opportunity to follow patients through their cardiac journey.

I love working with patients in a pre-admission capacity because it allows me to get to know them from the beginning of their hospital experiences. I also love working with our long-term transplant patients and providing therapeutic and medical play opportunities to help them cope with their often quite long admissions. I feel like as Child Life Therapists we have such a beautiful and unique opportunity to be a safe and trusted person in an often ever-changing and scary environment.

When I am not working, I spend my time hanging out with my own two little people and the cutest dog in the world. I love musicals, bad karaoke singing in my car, going to the footy and having a cheeky glass of wine at the end of a long day!



Resource Spotlight

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Currently, the Smileyscope is being used without guidelines. The ACLTA have developed a set of guidelines so that the device is used safely and appropriately.

We are also working with Smileyscope to have these guidelines sent to healthcare facilities using the device and included with any purchase.

[Click here](#) for Smileyscope Guidelines

AWCH and ACLTA – Resource Hub

We know there are so many great resources for children and young people (C&YP) to support them in hospital or with a healthcare experience, but it can be time consuming to find exactly what you are looking for. AWCH and ACLTA are keen to gain an understanding into what resources are out there already and bring them together into a “hub” that would be easy to access for all who need them.

This curation of existing resources would also allow us to see where there may be gaps in resources and advocate for the development of resources in areas that are needed.

We would greatly appreciate your help by completing this survey and will share the results with all participants.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JLJ7SGM>

