



STRENGTHENING COLLABORATIVE ACTION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN AUSTRALIA

Introduction to
Australian Research Alliance
for Children and Youth -

and

A proposed ARC Research Network:

Future Generation



Outline

1. Rationale for a new way of working
2. Trends in child and youth development, health and wellbeing
3. The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth
4. The *Future Generation* ARC Network



Summary of Rationale for Improved Collaboration

- Increases in many childhood diseases, disabilities and problems
- Causal or developmental pathways many and varied but often have common antecedents
- Multiple outcomes from single pathways and multiple pathways to single outcomes
- Research in silos
- Policy not evidence based
- Fragmented databases



Indicators: Australian Children 1970s-2000s

Increasing:

- Preterm births
- Mental health problems
- Behavioural problems
- Child abuse/neglect
- Asthma, diabetes, obesity
- Birth defects
- Cerebral palsies
- Educational problems
- Drug and substance abuse
- Juvenile crime
- Youth unemployment



Juvenile Crime - Violent Assaults

Males

1973-74

1993-94

Adult : juvenile arrests

2.1 : 1

1.2 : 1

Females

1973-74

1993-94

Adult : juvenile arrests

3.4 : 1

1 : 1.9

Juvenile

1973-74

1993-94

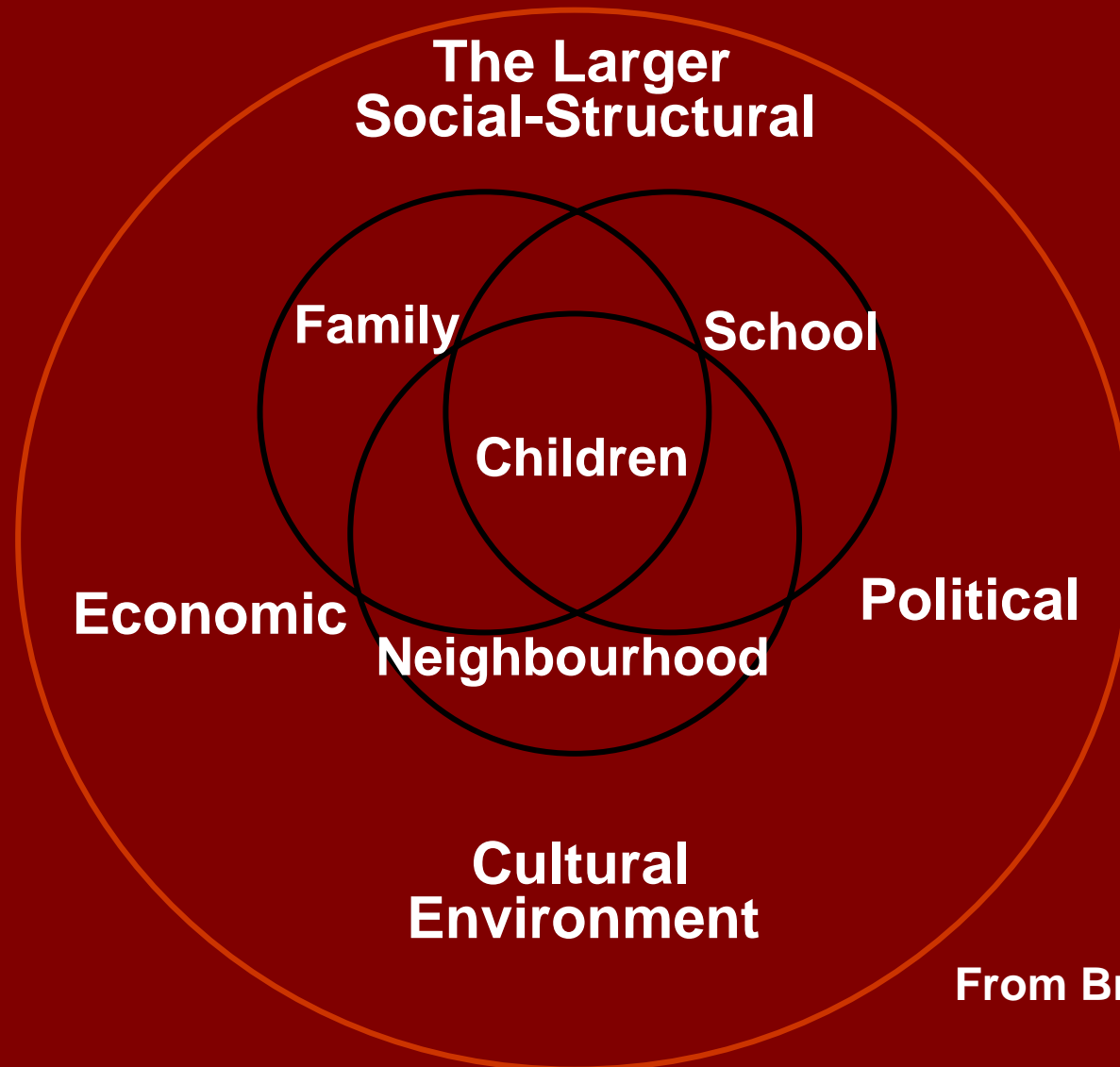
Boys : girls arrested

24 : 1

4.4 : 1



Ecological Contexts Shaping Child Development



From Bronfenbrenner



Most Pathways:

- Complex
- Start early in life (some intergenerational)
- Arise in social, environmental adversity
- Inadequately researched
- Research is fragmented, done in separate silos and does not inform solutions



Research done in silos

Epidemiology

Economics

Sociology

Education

Genetics

Criminology

Individual good research output

Policy developed in silos

Health

Education

Employment

Police

Housing

Family Services

Justice

Finance

Individual good policy development



Challenge

- Acknowledge complexity of pathways to a range of poor outcomes
- Investigate social and ecological contexts
- Develop better measures
- Create cross disciplinary research collaborations with geneticists, sociologists, psychosocial researchers and others



Purpose of Alliance

A national collaboration established to facilitate, coordinate and support the development of knowledge and its effective use to enhance the well-being and life chances of children and young people.



Alliance Goals

- To promote collaborative research and agenda setting

AND

- The application of research to policy and practice for children and young people





Status of Alliance

- Has been established as a not for profit company
- Seeding money received from Ian Potter Foundation, Baker Foundation, WA Lotteries Commission, Commonwealth and WA State government
- Collaborative model of funding



Key Activities of Alliance

- Develop a national research agenda - this will frame:
- Establishment of collaborative research nodes (through a new ARC Research Network)
- Supported by a national data base, a clearing house of effective interventions, and a communication strategy for putting research into action



Research Directions Project

- Alliance is seeking a set of questions that can shape Australia's future research for children and youth
- Ensure that the outcomes of research inform practice and policy development
- *Project currently being conducted by Ross Homel and Jan Carter, involving focus groups and on-line questionnaire with stakeholders across Australia*



National Database

- Develop infrastructure for linking fragmented data sets and studies
- Ensure best use is made of existing data to answer new questions
- Without compromising privacy or intellectual copyright



National Clearing House

- Focus on effective interventions for families, children and youth
- Commission systematic reviews and meta-evaluations
- Complement existing Australian and international clearing houses
- Make information web accessible



Communication Strategy

- Make research more accessible to policy makers and those in service delivery
- Use cost effective web based communication targeting key audiences
- Advocate for the use of evidence based strategies suited to very complex situations



New Model for Research Funding

- Currently fragmented inputs lead to fragmented outputs and encourage silos
- Need overarching agreed national priorities
- Consider novel ways of allocating funds (AIDS model)



Dedicated Research Budget

- Alliance will press for a dedicated research budget for children and youth
- Not administered by the Alliance but by the Australian Research Council
- Established in a form to enable input by governments, corporate and philanthropic bodies

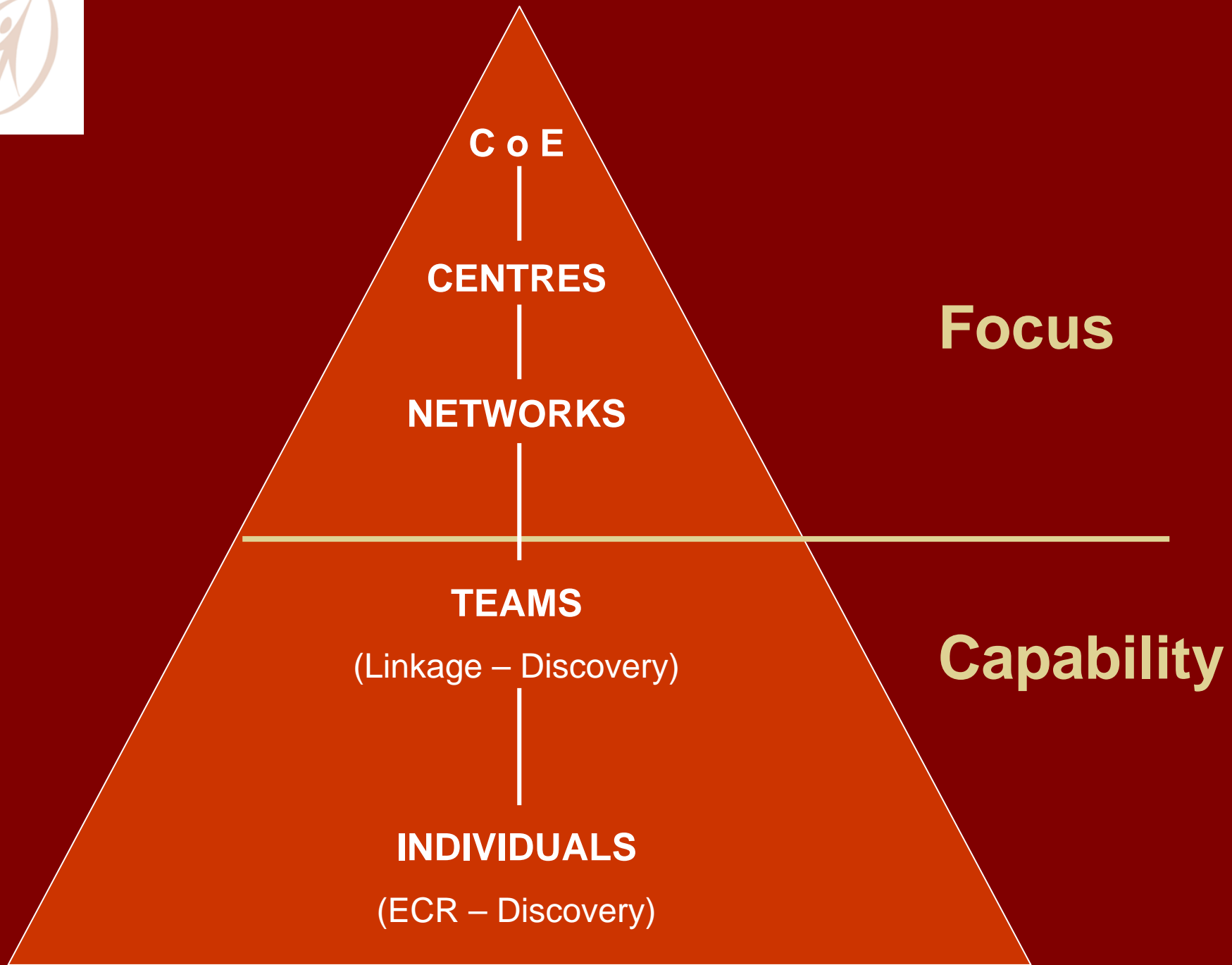


Engaging Research, Policy and Practice

- Ensure they are engaged at every level, from devising research questions to communicating outcomes
- Identify issues of key stakeholders
- Consider how consumers have a voice



ARC Research Networks





Objectives

- Building focus & scale
- Encouraging inter-disciplinary approaches
- Facilitating collaboration

AND

- Supporting highly innovative research
- Embracing risky research
- Addressing the “hard” challenges



People & Networks

- Networks are founded on **people**:
 - Research Students
 - Professional & Technical Staff
 - Researchers
 - End-users, “
- Network Convenor
- Network Administrator
- Young Investigators



Organisations & Networks

- The ARC intends that Networks will operate successfully across institutional & administrative boundaries:
FLEXIBILITY
- Administering Institution plays a key role
- People in networks will require organisational support – time, facilities, projects
- Engagement of researchers “outside” the ARC-eligible community is a challenge to be accepted
- ARC encourages engagement of NHMRC, CSIRO, ANSTO, AIMS, DSTO, GA, Antarctic Division, Australia Council, Rural research boards, CRCs, State instrumentalities, private sector researchers, etc etc



Funding for Networks

- Up to \$500,000 per annum for 5 years
- Approximately 15 Networks
- Over 10% of ARC researchers in Networks
 - To estimate the scale, note that there are approximately 4,000 ARC projects currently.
 - Thus, to achieve 10% engagement, each network might involve the teams associated with over 30 ARC projects (i.e. over \$2M of ARC project funding), together with researchers not funded by the ARC.
 - This does NOT mean that Networks should focus on ARC grant holders!



Network Budgets - Examples

- *Support for researchers and research students to work together (visits; international visitors; exchanges; residential programs)*
- *Facilitating deep exploration of research problems ("The Lorne Meeting"; long-term exchange; industry/policy placements)*
- *E-Research: information technologies and knowledge management tools, new databases, and new technologies for communication and interaction;*
- *New avenues for contact between researchers and other people and organisations;*
- *Australian-initiated research activities in an international setting, such as participation in bi-national or multi-national research programs or networks. Where appropriate the ARC may assist a successful Network by entering into an international, inter-agency supporting agreement.*



Network Agreements

- Administering Institution will manage the Network Agreement
 - Membership, entry, exit
 - Resource sharing
 - IP management
 - Reporting for ARC purposes
 - Planning processes
 - The *Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth* as a prototype



<http://www.aracy.org.au>

http://www.aracy.org.au/proposals/arc_seed_network

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the homepage of the Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth. The browser's address bar shows the URL <http://www.aracy.org.au/index.htm>. The website features a navigation menu on the left with links to **About Us**, **Programs**, **Publications**, **Media Centre**, **What's On**, **Get Involved**, and **Contact Us**. The main content area includes the organization's logo and tagline: "Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth. Working together to enhance the wellbeing and life chances of children and young people." Below this, there are sections for "What is the Alliance?", "Latest News" (mentioning Professor Fiona Stanley AC awarded 2003 Australian of the Year), "Join the Alliance" (with a "Download Form" link), and "Contact Us" (providing a phone number 9476 7800 and an email address enquiries@aracy.org.au). A photograph of a family walking in a park is visible on the right side of the page.



Application & Selection

- Funding Rules & GAMS form available
November 2003
- Closing date **22 March 2004**
- Selection in April. No external assessment or rejoinders since research has been evaluated already
- Announcement in late May 2004
- Funding to start **1 July 2004** (5 years)



Seed Funding

- ARC wishes to engage the research community in responding to research priorities;
- ARC recognises the importance and cost of preparing a Network proposal;
- ARC proposes to offer **seed funding** to assist in both of these aims.



Seed Funding

- Solicit ARC Special Research Initiative proposals
“STOCKTAKE & ROADMAP”
- Funding (up to \$50,000 each) will be provided for
 - Workshops
 - Visits
 - Bibliometric surveys
 - Writing & presenting a report
- Report is a website (opened by **9 February 2004**)
 - Published by Administering Institution; CD-ROM to ARC
 - Covers specified items
- Seed funding is primarily for designing & planning research futures, including Networks, and not for the full-scale production of a web site!



DISCUSSION

- Who? Leaders will be needed. Focus on inclusiveness and team strength. Try to forget any scholarly (or other) battles of the past!
- What? What kind of network?
- Why? Is there a better configuration to achieve optimal “gluing”
- When? Start talking soon, prepare workshop and meeting agendas carefully. Consider facilitator.
- Where? Try to avoid letting “institutional” values & expectations intervene too early. Use “Peak Bodies”
- How? Jaw-Jaw not War-War



Future Generation: New Knowledge for Better Outcomes for Children and Young People

Australia is a prosperous country, yet over recent decades many indices of the health and wellbeing of children and young people have deteriorated. Reasons for this are not well understood, and the nation is poorly equipped to devise effective, sustainable responses. Our vision is to create new ways of thinking and acting through new collaborations across disciplines, sectors and levels of government, with nonresearch communities of interest as full partners. The aim is to generate and apply new concepts and forms of knowledge, undergirded by comprehensive, better integrated data. Expected outcomes are enriched life chances for children and young people.



Current Network Development

- 134 participants when seed funding application submitted
- Now approaching 200
- Includes CSIRO and ABS, as well as policy people and (some) practitioners
- Most universities represented
- Planning conference January 28 & 29, University House, ANU
- Based at Griffith University



***There can be no keener revelation
of a society's soul than the way it
treats its children***

**Nelson Mandela
1997**




<http://www.aracy.org.au>

http://www.aracy.org.au/proposals/arc_seed_network

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 **Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth**
Working together to enhance the wellbeing and life chances of children and young people.

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What is the Alliance?

The Alliance is a new venture: a national collaboration of researchers, policy makers and practitioners from a broad range of disciplines who are together building a better future for Australia's children and young people. [Find out more >>](#)

Latest News

Professor Fiona Stanley AC awarded 2003 Australian of the Year. [Find out more >>](#)

Join the Alliance

To become a member of the Alliance, simply download and fill out a registration form! [Download Form >>](#)

Contact Us

Feel free to contact us on 9476 7800 or email us at enquiries@aracy.org.au.

