



### Update from the Principal Investigator

2016 has been an exciting and busy year for Triple B. We have had three PhD students complete their studies and graduate. We have published and presented our findings both in Australia and overseas on topics including alcohol use in pregnancy and whilst breastfeeding, children's sleep, and bonding between caregivers and their infants. You can read more about these findings in the following pages. As 2017 begins, we will be busy launching a new pilot phase of the project: Life at 8. We will follow up with some of our first families in the study to see how their children are developing at 8 years of age. Thank you for your continued support for Triple B and we hope to speak with you soon!

**Dr Delyse Hutchinson**

Senior Research Fellow and Clinical Child Psychologist  
Triple B Principal Investigator

An illustration of three graduation caps (mortarboards) in blue, green, and dark blue, arranged in a cluster. The caps are set against a light blue background with small, colorful triangular confetti shapes scattered around them.

### Triple B Student Graduations

Congratulations to three former Triple B PhD students who have now graduated:

*Dr Clare McCormack*, who investigated prenatal alcohol exposure and infant cognition;

*Dr Larissa Rossen*, who investigated parent mental health, substance use and early offspring bonding;

*Dr Hannah Fiedler*, who investigated maternal mental health and infant sleep.

Thank you to the families who participated in these research projects, and well done to Clare, Larissa and Hannah!

## Triple B's new partnership with SEED

The Triple B Study has formed a new and exciting partnership with the [Strategic Research Centre for Social and Early Emotional Development](#) (SEED), hosted at Deakin University, Melbourne. This new partnership was formed following Dr Hutchinson's appointment as a Senior Research Fellow at Deakin University. SEED aims to promote a secure start to emotional life in all children and young people through original research on the first 10,000 days of life.

Triple B will continue to be hosted at the University of New South Wales, where Delyse remains a Visiting Lecturer. Going forward, some aspects of the project will be managed through SEED, including our Life at 8 phone interviews. Triple B will continue its many other established collaborations with institutions including Curtin University, the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, the University of Melbourne and our collaborating hospitals in NSW, WA and VIC .



### Research in Focus: Alcohol use during pregnancy

Congratulations to Dr Clare McCormack who graduated with a PhD in March 2016. Clare's research explored alcohol use during pregnancy, including patterns of alcohol use in pregnancy, alcohol use before awareness of pregnancy, and infant cognitive development following light alcohol exposure.

Clare's results show that while alcohol use is common between conception and awareness of pregnancy, most women cease or reduce consumption after becoming aware of a pregnancy. Clare's results also found strong links between alcohol consumption patterns in mothers and their partners. In terms of infant cognitive development, her research did not show any harms associated with occasional light drinking during pregnancy.

Clare's work has recently been accepted for publication. Clare also presented her findings at the International Marce Society Conference, and through media interviews with radio and newspapers. Clare was recently awarded a prestigious research fellowship in the Department of Psychiatry at Columbia University in New York. Clare is continuing to research prenatal influences on offspring health and development and will remain involved with us on Triple B.



## What's next for Triple B? Life at 8

The Triple B Study team is excited to announce a new pilot phase of the project called **Life at 8**. In this next phase we will follow up with some of our first families in the study to see how their children are developing at 8 years of age. Middle childhood is a significant period of development for children and their families. The Triple B Study will investigate how perinatal, early childhood, family and biological factors influence child development across the early years.

We are aiming to secure research funding to extend this next phase of the study to all 1,600 Triple B families as the cohort children reach 8 years of age over the next 5-years.

### Research in Focus: Bonding in the first year of life

Congratulations to Dr Larissa Rossen who graduated with a PhD in November 2016. Larissa's research investigated factors that influence parent-to-infant bonding and emotional connectedness through the first year of life.

Larissa's results found that the bond a mother experiences with her infant in the first year of life is critically important. Early bonding was the key predictor of bonding when infants reached 1-year of age, over and above a mother's symptoms of stress, anxiety, depression or substance use (which occurred mainly at low-levels in Larissa's sample). These findings point to the importance of building a secure bond between mothers and their infants in the early postpartum period.

Larissa's research also found that parental depression at 8-weeks postpartum predicted poorer parent-child emotional connectedness when infants reached 1-year of age. These findings suggest that it may be particularly important to support parents struggling with depression during the postnatal period.

Larissa's work has been published in the *Archives of Women's Mental Health*.

An illustration of a blue envelope with a white card inside. The card features the 'triple b study' logo. The envelope is surrounded by small, colorful triangles (blue, yellow, green) floating around it.

**Have you moved recently?**

Or changed phone numbers, email addresses or any other contact details? If so, you can update your details online at:  
<http://ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au/content/project-participant>

Alternatively, you can email us at:  
[antenatalstudy@unsw.edu.au](mailto:antenatalstudy@unsw.edu.au)

## Research in Focus: Infant and toddler development

Ingrid Honan is in the final year of her PhD on the Triple B Study. Ingrid's research focuses on the use and application of the Bayley Scales of Infant and Toddler Development-III in Australia. In 2016, Ingrid focused on analysing data from around 150 3-year-old assessments she conducted in 2015.

Some interesting preliminary results suggest that on average, Australian children are performing better than US children in their fine motor and language development at 3-years of age. Ingrid presented these results at the College of Clinical Neuropsychologists Conference in Port Stephens, NSW. Ingrid is also examining the performance of children identified as "at risk" in the perinatal period compared to children identified as "low risk", and how consistent infant performance is from 1 year to 3 years of age, for those children who completed the Bayley Scales of Infant and Toddler Development-III as part of our Life at 3 pilot study. We look forward to sharing these results with you next year.

### Stay in touch!

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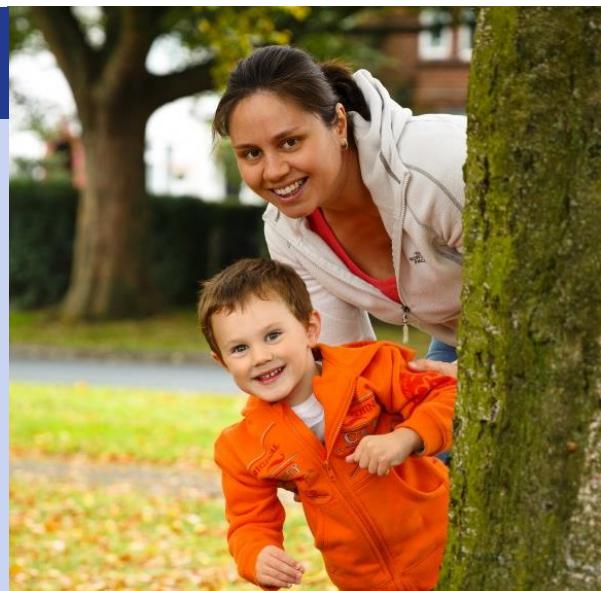
Please make sure your contact details are up to date so that we can stay in touch.

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### About the Triple B Study

The **Triple B Pregnancy Cohort Study: Bumps, Babies and Beyond** commenced in 2009. It is a National Health and Medical Research Centre funded initiative with around 1600 mothers, partners and their offspring. The project is a longitudinal pregnancy cohort that examines how a range of biopsychosocial factors influence the health and development of children and families. Importantly, the project has a key focus on understanding the impacts of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use among pregnant women and their partners in the prenatal period on infant development and family functioning. The results of this study will inform public health and treatment initiatives that improve the health and well-being of Australian children and families.



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