

Final Report

TRANSLATING ATTACHMENT THEORY INTO PRACTICE

Assoc. Prof. Judy Pickard
Dr Amy Bird

The Creswick Foundation: Fellowship in Child and Young People's
Mental Health



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA



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WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

NEW ZEALAND

Funding period: January 2025 – December 31, 2025.

Recipients: Associate Professor Judy Pickard, University of Wollongong, and Dr Amy Bird, University of Waikato.

Background: The aim of our project was to support the dissemination of contemporary evidence on parent-child attachment, reflective functioning (mentalising) and their clinical applications in improving child development outcomes to key stakeholders.

Through previous Creswick Fellowship funding, we established professional relationships with internationally recognised experts in attachment theory, particularly in assessment of attachment relationships and the cognitive capacities underpinning parent-child interactions. These prior partnerships provided the foundation for the current project.

The primary objective of the current grant was to extend this work by disseminating evidence to key stakeholders, including clinicians, researchers, and educators. To achieve this, we proposed to:

1. Host symposia in Wollongong (University of Wollongong) and Melbourne (in collaboration with Federation University), featuring Professors Howard and Miriam Steele (The New School, New York) as keynote presenters.
2. Support delivery of Reflective Functioning training by Professor Howard Steele while in Australia at a time accessible to Australian audiences. Attendance by participants to be self-funded.
3. Establish a Community of Practice to facilitate ongoing collaboration among stakeholders.

Actual Activities and Outcomes

Due to unforeseen personal circumstances, Professors Howard and Miriam Steele were unable to travel to Australia. With Creswick approval, the project was adapted as follows:

1. Hybrid Symposium Delivery

A hybrid symposium, *Translating Attachment Theory into Practice*, was held at Federation University in Melbourne on Friday, 7 November 2025. Professors Howard and Miriam Steele delivered keynote presentations online. In addition, Professor Jessica Borelli (University of California, Irvine), a globally recognised leader in attachment research, was funded to attend and present in person. Two Early Career Researchers (ECRs)—Dr Stephanie Milford (Monash University) and Carly Grubb (Beyond Sleep Training)—were also supported to present their work.

The symposium attracted over 130 registrations, with approximately one-third attending in person and the remainder live online, demonstrating strong engagement across research and practice communities.

2. Reflective Functioning Training Scholarships

Again with the prior agreement of Creswick, some of the funds that had been allocated for keynote speaker travel were redirected to enable specialist training. Through a competitive application process, six ECRs and PhD candidates were awarded scholarships to undertake online Reflective Functioning training delivered at a time suitable for Australian and New Zealand participants. This training was delivered online from the US and provided advanced theoretical knowledge and gold-standard coding skills in reflective functioning.

3. **Development of a Community of Practice**

A Community of Practice has been initiated through the development of a stakeholder mailing list comprising clinicians, academics, educators, policymakers, and community members who attended the symposium. It is anticipated that this community of practice will continue to grow through colleague networks of existing members. This network will support ongoing collaboration, training, and knowledge exchange.

4. **International Dissemination and Collaboration**

Drs Pickard and Bird have been accepted to present at the International Attachment Conference (Belgium, July 2026). This provides an opportunity to further disseminate project-related research and strengthen international collaborations.

We thank the Creswick Foundation for their generous support of our work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'J Pickard et al.', is written in dark ink.

Associate Professor Judy Pickard and Dr Amy Bird