A top-down view of a desk with a laptop, a cup of coffee, a mouse, glasses, and a pen. The background is a light teal color. The text is overlaid on a white rectangular area.

***'Embracing the  
Journey'-  
Navigating  
challenges as an  
ECR***

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FIONA BRIGHT

# Topics to cover

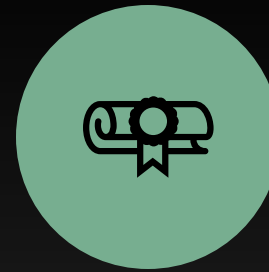
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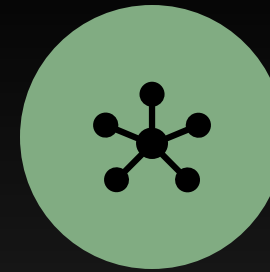
EXPERIENCES IN ENGAGING  
WITH ECR INITIATIVES AT  
VARIOUS UNIVERSITIES



MENTORSHIP



INDEPENDENCE AS AN ECR  
(FELLOWSHIP/SMALL GRANT  
FUNDING)



BUILDING YOUR NETWORKS

NOTE: these are my own personal views  
Experiences in academia vary, do what is best for YOU!!

# Journey to Research in STEMM

**PhD 2013-2016**    **Postdoc Fellowship 2017-2018**



**PhD Research Fellowship 2014-2016**



**Prof Hannah Kinney**  
**Dr David Paterson**



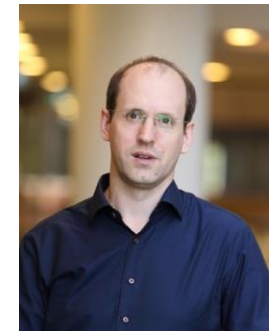
**Prof Roger Byard, Prof Robert Vink, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) Neuropathology, Human Brain tissue**



**Postdoc 2018-2020**



**x2 Postdoc Fellowships 2020-current**



**Prof Lars Ittner, Dementia Research Centre, Neurodegenerative Diseases, Molecular Biology, Transgenic mouse models, Human stem cells & brain organoids**



**Prof Jillian Kril, Frontotemporal Dementia, Neuropathology, Human Brain tissue**



## Early career researchers

*Superhero's who are expected to....*



- Be in the lab 24/7
- Publish, then publish more
- Present at lab meeting/ department seminars
- Run overnight/weekend experiments
- Know every experimental procedure/equipment
- Write grants
- Help mentor HDR students
- Mark undergraduate assessments
- Join ECR committees

- Teach + supervise- tutes, pracs, lectures
- Compete against colleagues for limited funding opportunities
- Be superstar of STEM & a tall poppy
- Manage personal life & work life
- Build social media/LinkedIn profiles
- Engage in community
- Get a DECRA then an Ideas grant
- Bring in \$1 million in research funding

# Early-career researchers in Australia are miserable at work

Heavy workloads, bullying and a lack of support add to falling job satisfaction for postdocs, junior faculty members and other young scientists.






**bioRxiv**  
THE PREPRINT SERVER FOR BIOLOGY

New Results

 [Follow this preprint](#)

**The Australian academic STEM workplace post-COVID: a picture of disarray**

 Katherine Christian,  Jo-ann Larkins,  Michael R. Doran

doi: <https://doi.org/10.1101/2022.12.06.519378>

<https://www.biorxiv.org/content/10.1101/2022.12.06.519378v1>  
<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-00193-z>

ECRs almost unanimously declared a “love of research”, however, many reported frequent bullying and questionable research practices (QRPs), and that they intended to leave because of poor career stability.

Job satisfaction declined (62% versus 57%), workload concerns increased (48.6% versus 60.6%), more indicated “now is a poor time to commence a research career” (65% versus 76%) from 2019 to 2022, and roughly half reported experiencing bullying.

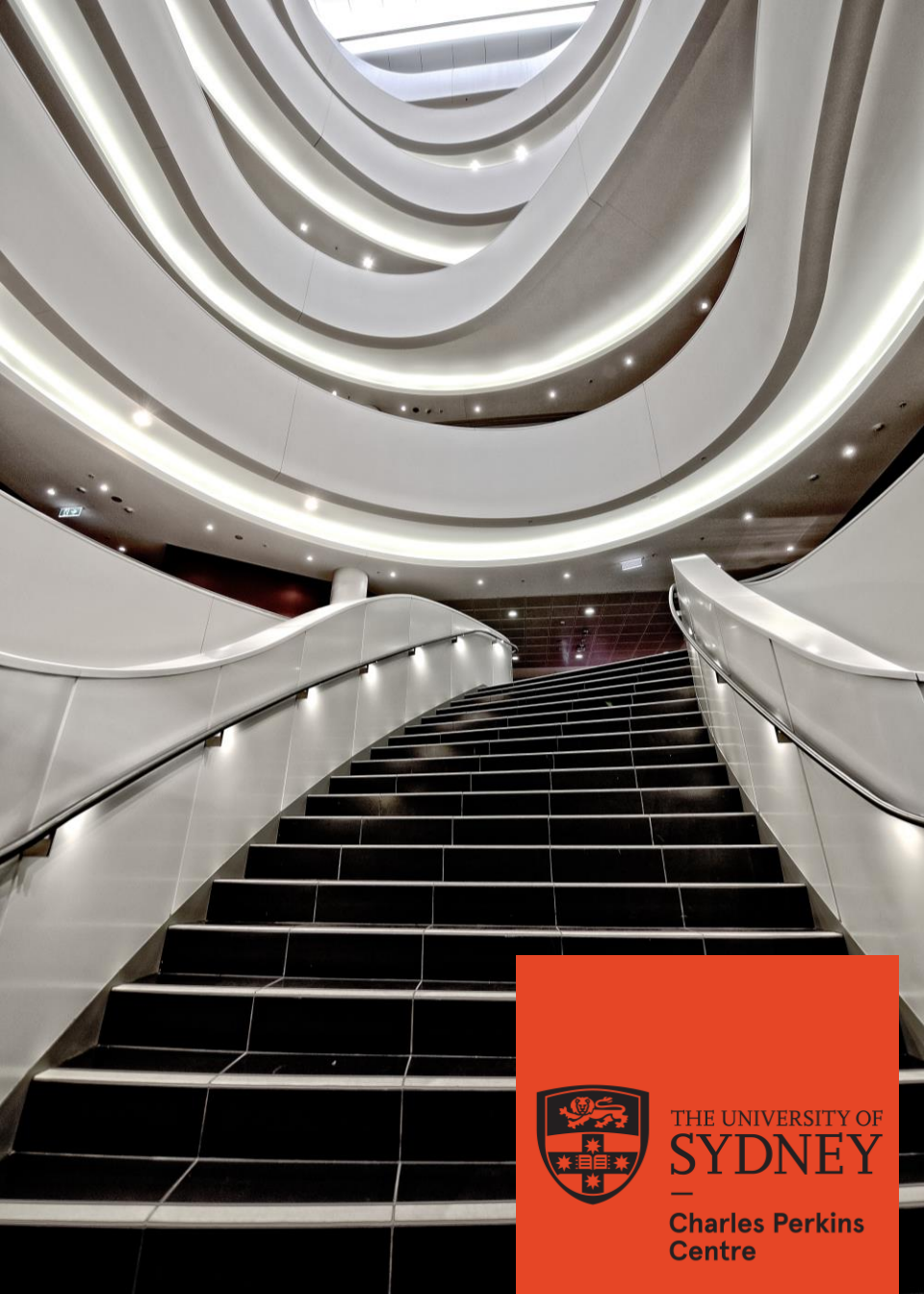
*“Most of the pressure I have felt to fabricate data or rush studies has come from the need to publish for grants and to publish before my contract runs out”*

*“Working 60–70 hours a week is normalized and expected; if you don’t do it then you’re not a good researcher,”*

*“I have often been subjected to sexist comments, and doubts over the quality of my work because of my age and gender”*

*“I have been micromanaged earlier in my career and that was stressful/undermined my autonomy. As an ECR, you can feel powerless and it is difficult to know how/whether to speak out”*

*“The impact of this was depression and a few suicidal attempts”*



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SYDNEY**

—  
Charles Perkins  
Centre

### Annual Operating budget: ~\$30,000

- Steering Committee 10-15 members, 2 chairs
- Representing ~500 EMCRs
- EMCR representation on steering committees/Executive Board
- EMCR Research Symposium
- Honours, HDR Welcome event
- Travel Grants
- Seed funding
- Career Development workshops
- Social- trivia nights, networking



### CPC EMCR Travel Funding 2019 Applications now open!

Do you need funding for attending conferences, workshops, or fieldwork?

Our travel awards are open to CPC HDR students (Masters and PhD) and Level A postdocs

Application guide and marking rubric can be found on SharePoint



Where can your research take you?

Applications close  
**5PM Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019**





Annual operating budget \$10,000

Represent ~200 ECRs

- Faculty ECR Research Symposium
- ECR Retreat
- ECR publication awards
- 'Spirit of EnCouRage Awards'
- Mentoring Program
- Annual meeting with Faculty Dean
- ECR representation on all Faculty Boards/Committees
- ECR representation on University wide ECR NAG
- ECR Forum/Harmony Week
- Social events: Trivia Night, etc...



# FMHHS ENCOURAGE ECR FORUM 2023

*In conjunction with Harmony Week, under the theme 'Everyone Belongs':*

Please join the FMHHS EnCouRage Committee for a forum to discuss critical ECR matters including challenges ECRs in Australia are facing outlined in recent publications (see refs below).

This forum will be a safe space for open discussion for ECRs and we aim to provide a 'toolkit' of resources that ECRs can take away with them for ongoing support.

The goal is to identify key issues/challenges ECRs in FMHHS at MQ Uni are facing and identify potential solutions and where further support is needed and how this support can be implemented in 2023 by EnCouRage, the ECR Network and the FMHHS leadership.

<https://www.biorxiv.org/content/10.1101/2022.12.06.519378v1>  
<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-00193-z>

## HARMONY WEEK



Friday March 24<sup>th</sup> 10am-12pm  
75T Continuum Meeting Room L3  
& Zoom

*Morning tea provided, however we encourage attendees to bring a plate of their favourite cultural food to share for Harmony Week*

*Please register via QR code*



For more information or any questions please contact  
[o365-group-encourage@mq.edu.au](mailto:o365-group-encourage@mq.edu.au)

## Key challenges identified for ECRs in FMHHS at MQ University:

- Lack of mentorship
- Address challenges with work/life balance
- Need for a focus on wellbeing
- Address internal job security challenges (12-month contracts, restrictions on applying for internal grant schemes)
- Need for more opportunities for ERCs within FMHHS to showcase research, access grant funding, grant writing support





# Mentorship

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- ❑ Mentorship is well-established in the literature as **fostering scientific identity and career pathways** for underrepresented minorities in STEM
- ❑ Mentoring, at its core, is the opportunity for academics to **learn from one another** and enable those with more experience to guide & support ECRs

Various forms of mentorship:

- o Official mentoring programs
- o Unofficial 1:1 mentoring relationships
- o Peer mentoring
- o Mentoring workshops



### Prof Andrew Georgiou

Professor of Diagnostic Informatics (Research focused)

#### About me:

I am a health Informatics researcher with expertise in the areas of outcome measurement, quality and safety, diagnostic Informatics and organisational communications research. I have over 400 publications and was able to secure over \$15 million in research grants including four ARC (totaling \$2.5 million), and seven NHMRC grants (totaling \$7.2 million). I am a recognized ARC Expert Reviewer of International Standing and actively review for over 20 world-class journals and am currently an Associate Editor of the International Journal of Medical Informatics (2017). My supervision record includes a cohort of seventeen higher degree students. This includes eight PhD students (two on ARC or NHMRC-funded scholarships), five Masters students and four completed Honours students including a Dean's Scholar winner.

#### Areas I can advise on:

- > Grant writing (NHMRC, MRFF)
- > Academic promotion
- > Sharing experience as an international academic



### Prof Yvonne Zurynski

Professor of Health System Sustainability

#### About me:

With a background in biomedical sciences and experience in epidemiology I became interested in health services and health policy research about 10 years ago. My career path has not been linear as I have followed my research interests, sometimes taking side-wise moves rather than following a purely "climb-the-ladder" pathway. This has given me a unique set of skills and broad experience across fields and settings, whilst maintaining interest and passion for my research.

#### Something personal about you (i.e. what are you most proud of):

I'm most proud of influencing policy and practice in the health system, for example, I contributed evidence to support the adoption of Australia's first National Strategic Action Plan for Rare Diseases. On a personal

#### Areas I can advise on:

- > Grant writing (NHMRC)
- > Work/ Life balance
- > Career planning
- > Building a Research track record



### Prof Jeffrey Braithwaite

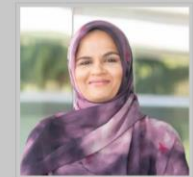
Director CHRIS and Professor of Health Systems Research (Research focused)

#### About me:

Professor Jeffrey Braithwaite, is Foundation Director of the Australian Institute of Health Innovation, Director of the Centre for Healthcare Resilience and Implementation Science, and Professor of Health Systems Research, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. His research examines the changing nature of health systems, which has attracted funding of more than AUD \$110 million and generated over 450 refereed publications. He is particularly interested in health care as a complex adaptive system, and applying complexity science to health care problems and has received 40 different national and international awards for his teaching and research.

#### Areas I can advise on:

- > Grant writing (NHMRC)
- > Academic promotion
- > Sharing experience as an international academic



### Prof Farah Magrabi

Professor of Biomedical and Health Informatics (Research focussed)

#### About me:

I have a background in electrical and biomedical engineering, and have worked as a health services researcher for almost 20 years (UNSW and MQ). At the Australian Institute of Health Innovation, I lead a research stream in patient safety Informatics looking at the clinical safety and effectiveness of digital health and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies for clinicians and consumers. Over the years I have mentored and coached individuals both within and outside academia.

I can assist with general advice about the various dimensions of academic life (e.g. building a profile internationally, career interruptions) as well as how to achieve specific goals (e.g. awards, fellowships, academic promotion).

#### Areas I can advise on:

- > Grant and Fellowship writing
- > academic promotion
- > Building a profile internationally
- > Career interruptions

## Speed mentoring 2023

- o Built a portfolio of mentors (Level C-E), online mentor profiles (~40 across 6 departments)
- o Matched mentors & mentees based on surveying both prior to event
- o Organised time slots for mentor/mentee pairs to meet
- o Had mentor profiles for any ECR attending to view
- o Drop in sessions, flexible timeframe
- o Surveyed mentors & mentees post event



## ECR Retreat 2023

### Mentorship panel session

- Examples of successful mentor/mentee pairings
- Mentors with experience in official programs
- Experiences positive and negative with mentor/mentee relationships
  
- Respect & trust are essential
- Good, consistent communication is crucial
- Upfront goal setting, intentions, xxxx
- If it's not working, don't be afraid to step away
- Mentorship comes in different shapes & sizes and may be sporadic in nature depending on the career stage/needs of the mentee
- Likely that ECRs need various mentors across different facets of career development
- Don't discount the benefits of peer mentoring
- Workshops/programs for developing mentors are highly beneficial

### Focused on Wellbeing & Mentorship

#### FREE event!

*Opt in/out for any of the sessions across the day*

#### Format of the day:

- 9:30-10 am **Coffee/ Tea**
- 10-11am **Yoga for stress**
- 11-12:30pm **Self-Compassion**
- 12:30-1:30pm **Lunch**
- 1:30- 3pm **Mentorship Panel**
- 3-4pm **Networking drinks**

*More details to come!*

Register here:



Questions, please don't hesitate to email: o365-group-

## Join us for the 2023 EnCouRage...





*But beware! With independence comes more responsibility & accountability*



*Building independence takes times & your investment, be careful no to loose sight of what you need to achieve day to day to stay in 'the game' of academia*

- 
- o Important to establish your own identity in academia
  - o Build your own 'brand'
  - o Continue to build your own CV
  - o Develop your writing skills by writing papers/small grants early in your PhD/postdoc
  - o Reviewing journals
  - o Reading the literature widely
  - o Supervising students/guests in lab
  - o Engage in leadership & community outreach
  - o Engaging in ECR events internal & external
  - o Say 'yes' to opportunities to put yourself out there

## First 5 years in academia, post PhD are crucial

### Years 1-2

**Publish!!!**

### Years 2-3

**Publish!!!**

Small grants & awards  
Community engagement  
Conferences

### Years 3-5

**Publish!!!**

More small grants & awards  
Build leadership & community engagement  
Engage networks  
Conferences



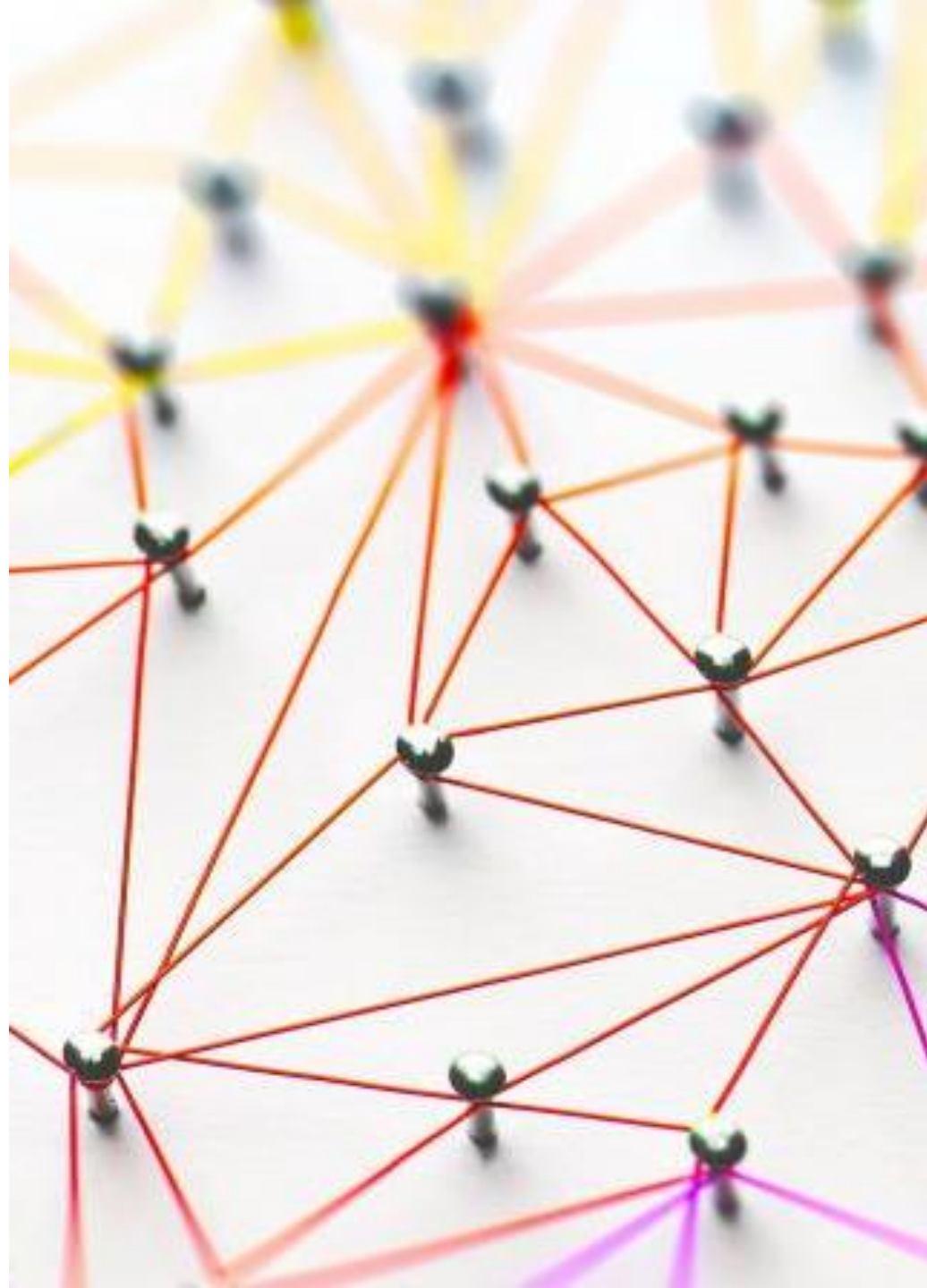
## PhD

- Draft all my own papers/letters to sponsors etc
- Set up meetings with collaborators
- Joined HDR committee
- Volunteered at conferences (stalls, setting up)
- Attended HDR workshops

## Postdoc

- Started applying for small ECR grants, seed funding
- After started to build a track record for grants/funding next went on to bigger endeavours- ECR fellowships
- Requested that my supervisor send papers to review
- Joined ECR committees, Faculty initiatives
- Started saying 'yes' to opportunities as they arose
- Volunteered to review internal & external grants
- Reached out to collaborators, started building own networks
- Submit own papers/corresponding author
- Started to build own small research arm within lab

**Career planning (with guidance from your supervisor/mentor is essential at all stages)**



- Social media
- Blogs
- Committees
- LinkedIn
- ORCID
- Research Gate

Show up, showcase, and show off!

Set networking goals!

# Building networks

- 
- Franklin Women
  - Australian Academy of Science (EMCR Forum)
  - Superstars of STEM
  - Young Tall Poppies
  - Pint of Science
  - 3MT, Visualise your thesis
  - ECR Showcases
  - Attend conferences (local, national, international)
  - Workshops, seminars





- Surround yourself with support
- Reach out for help
- Identify when you need time away from work
- Be honest with yourself & others
- Make changes when you need to
- Engage with your peers
- Check on others
- Make a career plan
- Time management (eughh) is important
- Be aware of your surroundings & the academic environment
- Know the playing field
- Collaborate!

**Do what is right for you!**



**MACQUARIE**  
University  
SYDNEY · AUSTRALIA

# Thank you



@itsme\_fenway

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Twitter: @DrFionaBright