Australian Government
Australian Research Council

EI 2018 ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT

Engagement and Impact 2018

Southern Cross University

SCU16 (SS) - Impact

Overview

Title

(Title of the impact study)

Research into practice: Generating knowledge that supports children, young people and adults to understand and adapt to experiences of loss and grief in their lives

Unit of Assessment

16 - Studies In Human Society

Additional FoR codes

(Identify up to two additional two-digit FoRs that relate to the overall content of the impact study.)

13 - Education

Socio-Economic Objective (SEO) Codes

(Choose from the list of two-digit SEO codes that are relevant to the impact study.)

92 - Health

Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) Codes

(Choose from the list of two-digit ANZSIC codes that are relevant to the impact study.)

80 - Preschool and School Education
82 - Adult, Community and Other Education
87 - Social Assistance Services

Keywords

(List up to 10 keywords related to the impact described in Part A.)

Children

Young people

Loss

Grief

Program intervention

Education

Mental health

Wellbeing

Sensitivities

Commercially sensitive

No

Culturally sensitive

No

Sensitivities description

(Please describe any sensitivities in relation to the impact study that need to be considered, including any particular instructions for ARC staff or assessors, or for the impact study to be made publicly available after EI 2018.)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research flag

(Is this impact study associated with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content?
NOTE - institutions may identify impact studies where the impact, associated research and/or approach to impact relates to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, nations, communities, language, place, culture and knowledges and/or is undertaken with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, nations, and/or communities.)

Yes

Science and Research Priorities

(Does this impact study fall within one or more of the Science and Research Priorities?)

Yes

Science and Research Priority	Practical Research Challenge
Health	Better models of health care and services that improve outcomes, reduce disparities for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, increase efficiency and provide greater value for a given expenditure.
Health	Better health outcomes for Indigenous people, with strategies for both urban and regional communities.

Impact

Summary of the impact

(Briefly describe the specific impact in simple, clear English. This will enable the general community to understand the impact of the research.)

Loss at any time in life can be challenging. In response, Southern Cross University developed the Seasons for Growth (SfG) program to support children and young people following death, separation, divorce and other loss experiences. At the request of other groups, SfG was adapted to support refugee children, young people in suicide 'hotspots' and children involved in natural disasters. The program was also adapted for adults experiencing loss, Indigenous people, prisoners, and parents of children in the program. Since 1996, 260,000 children, young people and adults in 5 countries have taken part in SfG and 82,000 were involved between 2011-16. The program has given them a new start, a chance to transform their experiences of change and loss and move forward with confidence and hope.

Beneficiaries

(List up to 10 beneficiaries related to the impact study)

Children & young people

Parents experiencing bereavement, separation or divorce

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples

Survivors of natural disasters (floods/bushfires/earthquakes)

Refugees

Prisons/prisoners

Government departments/authorities (e.g. Education/Family and Community Services/Local councils)

Government and non-government schools

Community organisations (e.g. family relationship centres/disability organisations/out-of-home care/aged care)

Foundations and NGOs (e.g., headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation)

Countries in which the impact occurred

(Search the list of countries and add as many as relate to the location of the impact)

Australia
New Zealand
Scotland
England
Ireland

Details of the impact

(Provide a narrative that clearly outlines the research impact. The narrative should explain the relationship between the associated research and the impact. It should also identify the contribution the research has made beyond academia, including:
- who or what has benefitted from the results of the research (this should identify relevant research end-users, or beneficiaries from industry, the community, government, wider public etc.)
- the nature or type of impact and how the research made a social, economic, cultural, and/or environmental impact
- the extent of the impact (with specific references to appropriate evidence, such as cost-benefit-analysis, quantity of those affected, reported benefits etc.)
- the dates and time period in which the impact occurred.

NOTE - the narrative must describe only impact that has occurred within the reference period, and must not make aspirational claims.)

Experiences of loss and grief feature in the lives of many children and young people. Almost one in four Australians aged 18-24 have experienced divorce or separation of their parents (ABS 2010) and 6% the death of a parent during childhood (ABS 2013). Seasons for Growth (SfG) is an evidence-based, small-group, psycho-social education program providing children and young people (6-18 years) with knowledge and skills to adapt to significant changes following death, separation, divorce and other loss experiences. Launched in 1996, it is the only such program developed in Australia that is nationally and internationally available.

Prof Anne Graham (AG), Director Centre for Children and Young People (CCYP) authored the program which is structured around the metaphor of seasonal change, Worden's task theory and contemporary evidence about what children need to know and do to adapt to loss. SfG emphasises agency: accepting the reality of the loss, working through the pain of grief, adjusting to the new situation and emotionally relocating the person or thing. It promotes resilience and self-esteem, normalises grief, builds peer support and fosters positive coping strategies. After numerous requests from the community an adult program was developed in 1999 and in 2002 SfG 2nd ed. Children & Young People (CYP) was launched.

At the request of end-users, SfG has been adapted for a range of contexts in which grieving CYP and adults need support. Incorporating research on the specific needs of children involved in natural disasters, the Stormbirds program was developed in 2009. It has supported more than 4,800 CYP impacted by Victorian bushfires, Queensland floods, other Australian natural disasters and New Zealand (NZ) earthquakes.

In 2010 SfG's Adult Program 2nd ed. was launched. It reflected updated research and broader uptake of the program into specific contexts (e.g. prisons which required adaptations for limited learning resources). From 2011-16, 7,751 adults participated in Australia, Scotland and NZ.

Following requests from ATSI Elders for an Indigenous adaptation of the program, Seasons for Healing was launched in 2012. Elders and Indigenous-led organisations collaborated on program design, Indigenous researchers were employed to guide program adaptation and 176 companions were trained for program delivery.

A Parent Program was also developed for separation and divorce (2013) and death of a loved one (2015). The Parent Program is significant as CCYP research indicated that parenting capacity is often impaired following major change and loss in families and assisting children without providing appropriate support for parents was unlikely to deliver optimal outcomes. The Parent Program incorporates research about children's needs and empowers parents to support their children.

SfG 3rd ed. CYP was launched in 2015. This edition synthesised and integrated much of CCYP's research

conducted over the preceding decade, including contemporary interdisciplinary understandings of childhood (emphasising children's agency as well as vulnerability), children's rights, grief theory, understandings of wellbeing (subjective wellbeing grounded in children's conceptualisations) and Honneth's recognition theory.

In 2011 several community-based refugee organisations requested a trial of an adapted version of SfG. The trial yielded positive outcomes and 51 companions were trained to deliver the program in Australia. The adapted program, with its sensitivity to diverse cultural backgrounds, is now being widely used to assist refugee children in Australia and Scotland.

Suicide is the leading cause of death for 15-24 year olds in Australia (24%/15% of male/female deaths respectively). In 2015 headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation requested a trial of SfG as a suicide post-vention in schools. CCYP researchers modified the program, conducted a successful trial, trained 72 companions, and rolled it out into communities across Australia identified as youth suicide hotspots.

Between 2011-16, 81,993 people (91% of them CYP) participated in SfG (and its adaptations) in Australia, NZ and Scotland. Since its development in 1996, SfG has delivered significant social benefits to over 260,000 CYP and adults in Australia, NZ, Scotland, England and Republic of Ireland.

Uptake in Scotland has been spectacular. The Scottish Government funded a National Coordinator from 2008, 2,204 companions were trained and 24,210 CYP participated (2011-16). SfG won a City of Edinburgh Council Children & Families Award 2011. There is solid evidence that it has made a very positive contribution to the social and emotional well-being of Scottish children.

SfG also provides the Australian government with an evidence-based, credible program to support CYP facing loss. While schools were previously the major sites for SfG in Australia, 27% of programs are now run through community agencies. In 2005 AG gifted her IP to the newly-established non-profit organisation Good Grief Ltd (GG) which was established to administer SfG programs across Australia and coordinate mandatory training. From 2011-2016 GG's 7.5 staff trained 3,098 companions who delivered the suite of SfG programs and seminars to 50,280 people (85% of them CYP).

In 2009 Access Economics reported that nearly a quarter of young people in Australia aged 12-25 had some mental health difficulty. The direct financial cost of this mental illness was estimated at $10.6b. Proven intervention programs such as SfG, which raises self-confidence, self-respect, self-esteem, and lowers depression and anxiety, provide economic benefit to Australia by lowering health costs.

Any economic benefits that may flow from SfG are overshadowed by the social benefits that have accrued from this program in its many forms. SfG has given 1,000s of children, young people and adults a new start, a chance to transform their experiences of change and loss and move forward with confidence and hope.

Associated research

(Briefly describe the research that led to the impact presented for the UoA. The research must meet the definition of research in Section 1.9 of the EI 2018 Submission Guidelines. The description should include details of:
- what was researched
- when the research occurred
- who conducted the research and what is the association with the institution)

SfG's early success engendered areas for further research which were supported by ARC funding of $1.4m (3 Linkage/1 Discovery) and $505,000 industry cash. In 2002-03 Graham and Phelps (SCU) investigated teacher self-efficacy and confidence in the provision of mental health education. Graham and Fitzgerald (SCU) researched children's experiences in contested family law proceedings (2002-03), and the notion of children's 'best interests' and hearing the voice of the child in family law proceedings (2003).

In 2006-08 children's involvement in decision-making in family relationship centres was researched by Graham and Fitzgerald and in 2009-11 Graham/Fitzgerald/Phelps/Cashmore (SCU adjunct) explored innovations in professional practice to support children's participation in family relationship centres. Informed by a 2010-11 evaluation of SfG children's program, Graham/Fitzgerald/Anderson (SCU) researched parenting capacity following separation/divorce (2010-11). A study of ethical issues in researching with children was undertaken from 2011-16 (Graham/Powell (SCU)/Taylor (Otago – 10% contribution)/Fitzgerald/Anderson), alongside a 2015-18 project on the ethics of researching sensitive issues with children (Graham/Powell). An investigation of 'best practice' in facilitating participation of children in family law processes was undertaken by Graham/Cashmore/Anderson (2014-16).

These research projects informed the development of SfG 3rd ed and the many adaptations of the program.

FoR of associated research

(Up to three two-digit FoRs that best describe the associated research)

16 - Studies in Human Society
13 - Education

References (up to 10 references, 350 characters per reference)

(This section should include a list of up to 10 of the most relevant research outputs associated with the impact)

Graham, A. and Fitzgerald R. (2006) Taking account of the 'to and fro' of children's experiences in family law. Children Australia. 31(2) 30-36.

Graham, A. and Fitzgerald, R. (2010) Supporting children's social and emotional wellbeing: Does having a say matter? Children and Society: The International Journal of Childhood and Children's Services. 25(3) 447-457.

Graham, A., Phelps, R., Maddison, C. and Fitzgerald, R. (2011) Supporting children's mental health in schools: Teacher views. Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice. 17(4) 479-496.

Fitzgerald, R. and Graham, A. (2011) The Changing Status of Children Within Family Law: From Vision to Reality? Griffith Law Review. 20(2) 421- 448.

Backhouse, J. and Graham, A. (2013) Grandparents raising their grandchildren: Acknowledging the experience of grief. Australian Social Work. 66(3) 440-454. [Awarded the Norman Smith Publication in Social Work Research Award for 2013].

Graham, A., Fitzgerald, R. and Cashmore, J. (2015) Professionals' Conceptions of Children, Childhood and Participation in an Australian Family Relationship Services Sector Organization. Pp 257-280. In T. Gal and B. Faedi Duramy (Eds), International Perspectives and Empirical Findings on Child Participation. London: Oxford University Press.

Powell, M.A. and Graham, A. (2015). Researching the experience of refugee children: Key ethical considerations. Chapter 1. In M. Crock (Ed), Creating New Futures: Settling Children and Youth from Refugee Backgrounds. Australia: Federation Press.

Graham, A., Powell, M. and Truscott, J. (2016). Facilitating student wellbeing: Relationships do matter. Educational Research. 58(4) 366-383.

Thomas, N., Graham, A., Powell, M. and Fitzgerald, R. (2016). Conceptualisations of children's wellbeing at school: The contribution of recognition theory. Childhood. 23(4) 506-520.

Graham, A., Powell, M. Thomas, N. and Anderson, D. (2016). Reframing wellbeing in schools: The potential of recognition. Cambridge Journal of Education. 47(4) 439-455. https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2016.1192104.

Additional impact indicator information

Additional impact indicator information

(Provide information about any indicators not captured above that are relevant to the impact study, for example return on investment, jobs created, improvements in quality of life years (QALYs). Additional indicators should be quantitative in nature and include:
- name of indicator (100 characters)
- data for indicator (200 characters)
- brief description of indicator and how it is calculated (300 characters).)

Name

Australian Seasons for Growth Children Young People (SfG CYP)/Refugee/Suicide/Stormbirds Programs

Indicator Data

2,043 CYP Program/51 Refugee Program/72 Suicide Program companions trained to deliver SfG to 41,229 CYP; 227 companions trained to deliver Stormbirds Program to 1,338 CYP in natural disaster areas

Indicator Description

Data from Good Grief Ltd (runs SfG Australia): Small-group facilitators (companions) trained to deliver CYP Programs across Australia/Stormbirds Programs in natural disaster zones (2011-16); companions deliver Refugee Programs (2013-16) and Suicide Post-vention Programs (2015-16) across Australia

Name

Australian Seasons for Growth SfG Adult/Parent Programs & Seasons for Healing SfH Programs 2011-16

Indicator Data

In Australia, 385 Adult/144 Parent SfG & 176 SfH Program companions trained to deliver programs to 4,359 adults (including 223 Indigenous people in SfH); 3,354 adults participate in SfG Adult Seminars

Indicator Description

Data from Good Grief Ltd (runs SfG Australia): From 2011-16, small-group facilitators (companions) trained to deliver SfG Adult Programs/Seminars across Australia for people experiencing grief; companions trained to deliver SfH Programs from 2012; companions trained/deliver Parent Programs (2014-16)

Name

Seasons for Growth Children Young People (SfG CYP)/Adult Programs across Scotland (2011-2016)

Indicator Data

23 new trainers trained 2,204 companions to deliver program to 24,210 CYP; 28 new trainers trained 297 companions to deliver program to 1,131 adults; 29/18 new area coordinators for SfG CYP/Adults

Indicator Description

Data from Notre Dame Centre (runs SfG Scotland): From 2011-16, 51 trainers were trained so that they, in turn, could conduct trainings for small-group facilitators (companions) who, in turn, deliver the program to CYP and adults experiencing grief. Area coordinators support SfG throughout Scotland.

Name

Seasons for Growth Children Young People (SfG CYP)/Stormbirds/Adult Progs, New Zealand, 2011-2016

Indicator Data

860 newly-trained companions delivered SfG to 6,279 CYP; 149 newly-trained companions delivered Stormbirds to 1,163 children; 274 newly-trained companions delivered Adult Program to 2,484 adults

Indicator Description

Data from SfG NZ (licenced to Catholic Archbishop Wellington): From 2011-16 small-group facilitators (companions) trained to deliver CYP Program through schools, public health system, Anglican dioceses/Stormbirds Program after Christchurch earthquakes/Adult Program within almost half of NZ prisons