

17th National Paediatric Bioethics Conference
2 - 4 September 2026

The 'Best Interests' Standard: Myth, Mandate or Moving Target?



Ella Latham Theatre | The Royal Children's Hospital **Provisional Program**

Wednesday 2 September	
10:00-11:25	Pre-conference Session 1: Balancing best interests in therapeutic innovation- when the evidence is still emerging
10:10 – 10:35	<i>Navigating Ethics, Autonomy and Access in Rare Disease Clinical Trials</i> Jessie Head-Gray , Murdoch Children's Research Institute
10:35-11:00	<i>How do you aim at a moving target?</i> Sophie Manoy , Queensland Children's Hospital
11:00-11:25	<i>'Funding High-Cost Rare Disease Therapies: When the 'Best Interests' Standard Becomes a Moving Target'</i> Megan Sheppard , Flinders Medical Centre
11:25 – 12:15	Mid-day Break
12:15-12:30	Conference Welcome & Opening
12:30 – 13:30	Session 2: Grand Rounds International Keynote Speaker <i>From Moving Target to Solid Ground: Rethinking the Best Interests Standard & Its Place in Pediatric Decision Making</i> Erica Salter , Associate Professor of Health Care Ethics and Pediatrics, Department of Health Care Ethics and Department of Pediatrics, Saint Louis University
13:30-13:40	Changeover break
13:40 – 14:55	Session 3: Best interests at the end of life
13:40 – 14:05	<i>Hope, Harm and Advocacy: Understanding Best Interests Across Cultures</i> Tamara Rumble , The Royal Children's Hospital
14:05 – 14:30	<i>When Better Living Means Better Dying: Best interests at the edge of escalation</i> Sarah Greenslade , The Royal Children's Hospital
14:30 – 14:55	<i>Best Interests Under Pressure: Navigating Disagreement around End-of-Life Sedation</i> Daniel Dorevitch , Queensland Children's Hospital
14:55 – 15:25	Break
15:25 – 17:05	Session 4: Rethinking the Best Interests Standard
15:25 – 15:50	<i>Embodiment of health technologies: in whose "best" interests?</i> Anne Preisz , The Sydney Children's Hospital Network, University of Sydney, University of Notre Dame Australia; Lavvina Thiyagarajan , The Sydney Children's Hospitals Network, The University of New South Wales; Philip Britton , The Sydney Children's Hospitals Network, University of Sydney
15:50-16:15	<i>Outdated Maps or New Directions? Navigating Children's Best Interests today</i> Zoë Cotton , Queensland Children's Hospital
16:15 – 16:40	<i>When best interest is trumped</i> Chris Gyngell , Murdoch Children's Research Institute, The University of Melbourne
16:40 – 17:05	<i>Best Interests - A Blunt Tool to Aid Clinicians to Get Their Own Way</i> Deborah Gilmour , Children's Health Queensland, Mater Mothers Hospital, University of Queensland
18:00-19:30	Friends of the CBC Hypothetical , RCH Foundation, Level 2, 48 Flemington Rd

Thursday 3 rd September 2026	
7:30 - 8:30	MSA Breakfast, Vernon Collins <i>Parental Discretion in the Age of Influencers: Navigating the Best Interests Standard</i> Fadhullah Yusuf , The University of Melbourne, Monash Children's Hospital & MSA Panel TBA
9:00 - 10:30	Session 5: Determining Best Interests in Complex Situations 9:00 – 10:00 <i>Determining trans and gender diverse young people's interests and care planning: Who gets to decide?</i> Tim Cronin , The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, University of Melbourne, La Trobe University, University of Manchester; Cate Rayner , The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, University of Melbourne; Zeffie Poulakis The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, University of Melbourne, La Trobe University; Daniel Wright , Murdoch Children's Research Institute; University of Melbourne, University of Manchester; Chloe Oulton , Murdoch Children's Research Institute 10:05 – 10:30 <i>When medicine doesn't help but families demand a medical cure: Is it in the best interests of a child to enforce a functional non-medical approach or to accept a functionally impaired "little life"?</i> Andrew Court , The Royal Children's Hospital; Lynn Gillam , The Royal Children's Hospital, The University of Melbourne
10:30 – 11:00	Break
11:00 - 11:50	Session 6: Whose Best Interests does the Truth Serve? Best interests and truth-telling 11:00 – 11:25 <i>Should we tell them they're dying?</i> Jessie Rowe , The Royal Children's Hospital 11:25 – 11:50 <i>An Uncomfortable Silence: Whose Best Interests are we Serving?</i> Tania Ramos , The Royal Children's Hospital
11:50 – 13:00	Mid-day Break
13:00 – 14:00	Session 7: National Keynote Speaker <i>Best interests - a necessary mandate, an aspirational principle, or an impractical millstone?</i> James Cameron , Barrister, Honorary Research Fellow, Melbourne Law School, The University of Melbourne
14:00- 14:10	Changeover break
14:10 – 15:00	Session 8: Parents or patients? When best interests are in conflict 14:10 - 14:35 <i>The bedside dilemma; when parental presence collides with a child's best interests</i> Kimberly Bowtell , The Royal Children's Hospital 14:35 - 15:00 <i>Parental dispute and divorce: When childhood vaccination is court ordered</i> Lynne Addlem , The Royal Children's Hospital
15:00 - 15:30	Break
15:30 - 16:45	Session 9: Best Interests in the Face of Inequity 15:30 – 15:55 <i>Lessons from Care of CALD Families Experiencing Healthcare Inequity</i> Angela Croke , The Royal Children's Hospital; Erin Dobinson , The Royal Children's Hospital; Jane Carroll , The Royal Children's Hospital 15:55 – 16:20 <i>A Fork in the Road: Navigating the Ethical Terrain of Health Inequity for Medicare Ineligible Children</i> Charlotte Peake , The Royal Children's Hospital; Sarah Connolly , The Royal Children's Hospital 16:20 – 16:45 <i>"Primum Non Nocere" – First, Do No Harm: Ethical Decision-Making in Extreme Prematurity: A Perinatal Case of Aboriginal Twins in a Resource-Limited Rural Hospital Setting</i> Muhammad Aiman Shuib , Hospital Gua Musang

Friday 4th September 2026	
9:15 – 10:55	Session 10: Best interests in Adolescence
9:15– 9:40	“I would always go medication first, always, always, always”: Is there an ethical hierarchy of restraint? Naomi Brockenshire , The University of Melbourne; Jenny O’Neill , The Royal Children’s Hospital
9:40 – 10:05	‘Willness’: Navigating Adolescent Best Interests when Wellness and Illness Blur Online Elise Burn , Queensland Children's Hospital
10:05 – 10:30	Are we there yet? Teens and hearing their views on best interests in the clinical ethics consultation. Ciara Earley , Monash Children's Hospital
10:30 – 10:55	Voluntary Assisted Dying for Children: Suffering, Authenticity, Best Interests, and Avoiding Harm Tessa Holzman , Charles Sturt University
10:55 – 11:25	Break
11:25 – 12:40	Session 11: Best Interests in Complex Paediatric Care
11:25-11:50	<i>A Moving Target Worth Keeping: Best Interests as the “Best” We Have</i> Prasadi Adikari , Children’s Health Queensland
11:50-12:15	<i>Balancing benefit and burden: Is a lifetime of dialysis and transplant in the 'best interests' of an adolescent with profound intellectual disability?</i> Carolyn van Heerden , The Royal Children’s Hospital; Simon Carter , The Royal Children’s Hospital
12:15-12:40	<i>Ethical Challenges in Kidney Transplantation for Children with Mitochondrial Disease: Best Interests and Uncertain Futures</i> Taylor Pennell , Monash Children's Hospital, Monash University, The Royal Children’s Hospital
12:40 – 13:10	Mid-day Break
13:10 – 13:50	Session 12: Beyond Best Interests: Lessons and Lingering Questions
13:10– 13:35	<i>Beyond Best Interests: Moral Residue and Ritual Practice in Clinical Care</i> Emily Booth , The Royal Children’s Hospital; Brenda Grant , The Royal Children’s Hospital
13:35 – 13:50	Conference Wrap Up Erica Salter , Associate Professor of Health Care Ethics and Pediatrics, Department of Health Care Ethics and Department of Pediatrics, Saint Louis University
13:50 – 14:00	Closing & Prizes