

Newsletter of the Women's Wellbeing Academy

Message from Co-Chairs Mehera San Roque and Amanda Henry

It's been another busy year. The WWBA SteerCo saw some departures at the conclusion of 2023. After contributing to the establishment and growth of the Women's Wellbeing Academy over a period of years, several of our long-serving members decided to step down and create an opportunity to bring on board new members. We were saddened to see the departure of our wonderful colleagues and would like to again extend our sincere thanks to Professor Adrienne Torda, Professor Timothy O'Leary, Angela Hehir and Angela Griffin for their invaluable contributions, and to Professor Bill Ledger who made time in his very busy schedule to provide years of guidance and counsel to the WWBA as co-Chair.

The SteerCo discussed our approach to revitalizing our membership and agreed that we would widen membership, with a view to increasing the diversity of our steering committee, so as to strengthen our work.

A call for Expressions of Interest in Steering Committee membership was put out, with a very positive response. After much deliberation and discussion, invitations to new members were issued. Our new Committee enjoys representation from across the University, including early career academics, professional and technical staff, and student representatives. Photos and biographies of our new members appear below.

Associate Professor Mehera San Roque (Law) has continued as co-Chair, and Professor Amanda Henry (Medicine and Health) has become co-Chair following Professor Bill Ledger's retirement.

We wish all our WWBA colleagues a very happy holiday season, a healthy and safe New Year, and a well-deserved break.

Associate Professor Mehera San Roque and Professor Amanda Henry

WWBA Co-Chairs

December 2024

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Seminar and Masterclass: Incorporating sex and gender considerations into health research, policy, and practice

On 18 November the WWBA co-hosted a hybrid seminar and in-person masterclass on 'Incorporating sex and gender considerations into health research, policy, and practice' with the George Institute for Global Health, the UNSW Faculty of Medicine & Health, and the Centre for Sex and Gender Equity in Health and Medicine.

Held at the Kirby Institute, the event featured a keynote address by [Professor Cara Tannenbaum](#) on incorporating diversity considerations including sex and gender into healthcare research, policy and practice. Associate Professor Lizzie Muller and Mehera San

Roque presented on WWBA projects, including [Recognizing Carers](#) at UNSW.



Participants in the Masterclass were selected after an Expression of Interest, and each participant brought a slide describing their projects and outlining their initial plans for incorporating sex/gender/diversity considerations into their research. The workshop offered participants the opportunity to get detailed

advice about how to develop their research design, analyse and present their data more

effectively, as well as guidance for workshop participants who were on human ethics panels and committees to offer guidance to applicants. Some useful resources can be found here: <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/50836.html> as well as here: [variations-sex-characteristics-and-sexual-orientation-variables/latest-releasecharacteristics-and-sexual-orientation-variables/latest-release](https://www.unsw.edu.au/research/copqti) and here: <https://www.unsw.edu.au/research/copqti>.

Small Grants awarded in 2024

The WWBA is delighted to announce the outcome of its Small Grants 2024 Round. The Steering Committee, after deliberation, selected five winners from a strongly competitive field of applicants. The grants continue to support interdisciplinary and innovative projects with a community outreach orientation. The Steering Committee congratulates the awardees, and thanks all of the WWBA members who took the time to submit an application. The small grants program will continue in 2025, thanks to the ongoing support from the PVC Inclusion, Professor Bruce Watson, and the Division of Societal Impact, Equity and Engagement led by Professor Verity Firth.

Being Patient: Close Encounters in Cancer World

Dr Naama Carlin, Prof Louise Chappell, A/Prof Siobhan O'Sullivan (posthumously) analyse power relations that prevail in Cancer World and the implications this has for patients and healthcare professionals. This project uses testimonials and storytelling, known in the social sciences as narrative methodology, in its analysis of the power relations that prevail in the Australian oncology system and the implications these have for both patients and healthcare professionals. The investigators chose this approach as through storytelling they wish to centre the participant's experiences and shed light on ways of thinking about – and lived experiences with – cancer. By speaking with socially marginalised people, in particular women, who have had a cancer diagnosis and with cancer healthcare professionals within the Australian medical system, this project offers a unique insight into the lived experiences of oncology from “both sides of the desk”. Having conversations with both patients and healthcare workers gives us an insider view into – and a deeper understanding of – issues, relationships, and experiences. They also use an autoethnographic method to enable the CIs, each of whom has their own cancer diagnosis, to analyse their own cancer experiences while also reflecting on their dual roles as research observer/patient.

The mental health consequences of hormonal contraceptives: from rats to humans

Hormonal contraceptives produce adverse mental health side effects in up to 30% of users, however, we currently have no method to predict for whom, and why, this occurs. **Dr Jodie Pestana** aims to identify individual risk factors that increase the vulnerability to adverse mental health side effects of hormonal contraceptives. The outcomes of this project may lead to hormonal contraceptives being specifically tailored towards individuals to reduce their risk of mental health conditions. Moreover, this project will substantially advance our understanding of women's mental health by generating new knowledge on the impact of hormonal contraceptives on anxiety regulation across development.

What can't be understood, can't be actioned: Knowledge translation of gendered violence research

The **Gendered Violence Research Network (GVRN)** aim to provide an accessible, Simple English summary of the findings of ten of their most notable research projects. These research projects will

cover important topics such as financial abuse, LGBTQIA+ experiences of sexual violence, dowry abuse, child sexual abuse and gendered violence in the workplace. The audience for these summaries will be other researchers, students, professional university staff, government and interested members of the community. These summaries will be promoted on the GVRN website, LinkedIn, faculty communications and through their mailing lists as well as any other relevant communication method. More than ever, gendered violence is a topic of importance to governments, universities and individuals. The National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Their Children has recently been renewed and, in the university sector, a new Action Plan to Address Gender-Based Violence has been released. This, along with the tireless, continuous work of victim-survivors and advocates, means that gendered violence is more relevant than ever and as such, now is a perfect time to promote the research and findings that GVRN has made.

My Voice Matters Program – Matraville Youth Voicing Our Identities, Cultures and Experiences

Following a successful version of this program in 2023 focussing on antiracism, Matraville Sports High School has expressed an interest in the program to continue to provide insight into the experiences of marginalised students. **Katherine Thompson** and **Rose Amazan** propose for a UNSW team to work with Matraville staff and students to develop a professional learning session for Matraville teachers educating them about female and nonbinary students' experiences of gender at school. They will conduct workshops with Matraville students to both examine gender-based dynamics in school and society and to learn more about their own experiences at school, in order to tailor the PL session for staff based on (anonymised) actual student experiences.

Democratizing Bedrooms

Bedrooms serve as sanctuaries and play a key role throughout various stages of a woman's life, contributing to the formation of identities and the development of autonomy. Existing research on "women and bedroom use" has primarily focused on aspects of sexual health and privacy needs, exploring power dynamics, gender roles and sexuality. However, they do not address the evolving needs of women throughout the various stages of their lives, particularly in relation to contemporary demands on physical space. Studies suggest that further research on gendered interaction with material objects in a bedroom (such as beds) can provide deeper insights into how gender roles and identities are constructed. The bedroom environment impacts sleep quality, and today, inadequate sleep is considered as an under-reported health epidemic. Research findings show that many sleep disturbances are more prevalent among women and people from gender minority groups. There are no studies exploring the unique sleep requirements of women, which can guide the development of optimized bedroom environments. In the initial phase of this research, **Dr Demet Dincer** and **Professor Oya Demirbilek** will explore women's bedroom needs, providing insights into their evolving requirements, identity reflection, and sharing dynamics. Subsequently, they will gain a more in-depth understanding of the arrangement and utilisation of bedroom space, which will be integrated with sleep data. As the first transdisciplinary collaboration between health and design experts, this study will provide in-depth insights into women's mental and physical needs related to their bedroom spaces.

New WWBA SteerCo Member Biographies 2024



Rebecca Moran is ALIVE National Centre Research Fellow at the Big Anxiety Research Centre (BARC) and Felt Experience and Empathy Lab (fEEL). Bec's work includes a focus on complex trauma, eating disorders, and how art, design, and technology innovations might be used in mental health in the community. Bec brings lived experience as well as practice and academic experience to her role and is passionate about lived experience engagement and dignity in all practices.

Bec's interest in joining the WWBA comes from this passion for social justice in representation, and from her lived experience as a woman with disabilities and carer responsibilities working in the challenging arena of academia.



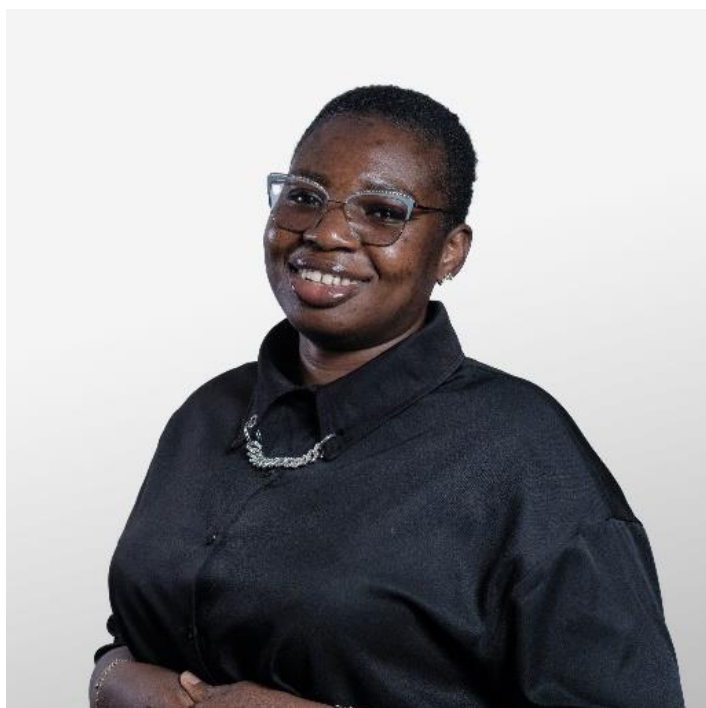
As a PhD Candidate at the University of New South Wales, **Molly Saunders** is examining gender inequity within marketised systems of disability support, using a case study analysis of women with disability's human rights within the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Molly also works as a Research Associate at the Crawford School of Public Policy, Australian National University, where she is supporting the delivery of a co-designed research project that aims to explore the experiences of young people with disability and young carers in relation to institutional listening. Broadly, Molly's research interests include critical feminist and disability theory, human rights, inclusive research methodologies and minority group experiences of social policy.



Associate Professor **Cheryl Carcel** is the Head of the Brain Health Program at The George Institute for Global Health and works part-time as a clinical neurologist. Cheryl is an NHMRC Emerging Leader Fellow, an Australian and New Zealand Stroke Organisation Emerging Stroke Clinician and Scientist and a World Heart Federation Emerging Leader in Stroke.

Associate Professor Carcel's research focuses on health equity, in particular working on sex and gender differences, women's brain health and policies encouraging disaggregation of data by sex and gender.

Joining the Women's Wellbeing Academy offered a unique opportunity for her to engage in impact-driven research and practice by addressing tangible issues in women's health.



Aba Afful is a PhD candidate from Ghana in the UNSW School of Built Environment. She has an MPhil Construction Management and BSc Quantity Surveying and Construction Economics from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST). She has three years in teaching and research at KNUST where she served as a Graduate Research and Teaching Assistant. Her research focuses on empowering women in the construction industry and is funded by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's Office for Women, as part of the Australian Government's Women's Leadership and Development Program and UNSW.

Her interest in joining the WWBA Steering Committee stems from her aspiration to actively engage in policy development, analysis, and implementation aimed at empowering women in the construction industry. Her research has instilled in her a strong commitment to effecting tangible change.



Sophie Burrage is Project Manager for the Sustainability Group in the School of Photovoltaic and Renewable Energy Engineering (SPREE).

Sophie helps project manage externally funded research projects within the Sustainability Group. She has always been interested in doing more to achieve equality and justice for women's rights and since having a daughter this has only grown. She hopes that her skillset can help the WWBA in any way that she can!



Elena Cama is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Social Research in Health at the University of New South Wales.

Her PhD thesis examined sexual violence facilitated through dating and hookup platforms, for which she was awarded a Dean's Award for Outstanding PhD Theses in 2022.

She is currently working on a national study, which aims to develop and trial a new and novel stigma reduction intervention among health workers to reduce stigma and discrimination targeted at people affected by blood borne viruses and sexually transmissible infections.



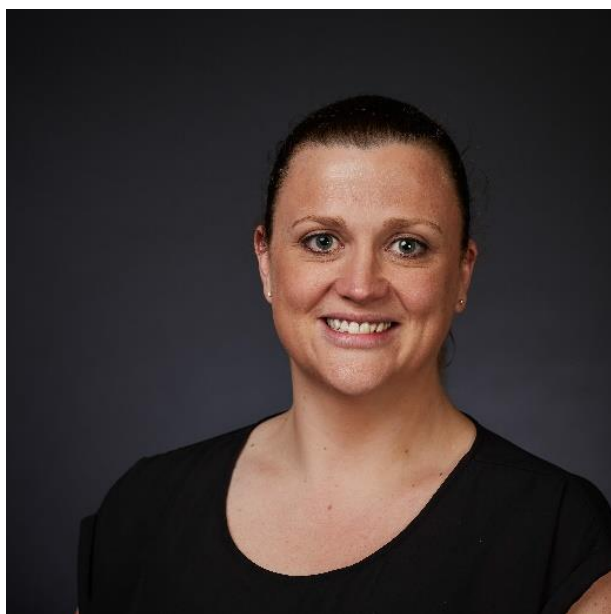
Rimi Nandy is a PhD candidate in the Laureate Centre for History & Population. Her doctoral work examines the social production of early-age hysterectomies in India.

Rimi began her career as a public health researcher, working with marginalised and under-served communities. For the last decade she was the manager in charge of community health education and product roll-out at a health technology lab focused on low-cost solutions for last mile areas.

In addition to her work in public health, Rimi is also an award-winning literary translator, with published and forthcoming titles from Penguin Random House and HarperCollins India.



An NHMRC Senior Research Fellow and Group Leader of the Global Health Trial Group at the Kirby Institute, and a Senior Research Fellow at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, **Lucia Romani** has over 15 years' experience leading and collaborating on implementation research focused on infectious diseases in low and middle-income countries. Lucia has extensive epidemiologic research experience in a diverse range of areas, including large-scale clinical trials and observational studies, mass drug administration for neglected tropical diseases and sexually transmitted infections in resource-poor settings.



Catherine Rowe has over 20 years of management experience and has worked at UNSW since 2011. She brings a wealth of operations management experience from her previous career in retail management and through her roles at UNSW. She is currently Faculties & Divisions Engagement Lead for Program Phoenix and most recently the Deputy Faculty Executive Director. At UNSW she has been responsible for delivering strategic and operational services within Faculty while developing and implementing Faculty-wide shared services.

Catherine's experience has seen her work in school, faculty and divisional roles. She has supported faculties and now the University through significant changes including the workplace change with OPEX in 2017 and the COVID related impacts leading to the creation of ADA in 2020.

Women's Wellbeing Academy – get involved in 2025!

Diverse multidisciplinary work in the area of women's wellbeing

Our vision

To create positive impacts nationally and globally, in key areas of women's wellbeing through collaborative translational research and practice to advance gender equity and equality.

It's easy to join the WWBA – just email WWBA.admin@unsw.edu.au

More information at <https://www.unsw.edu.au/edi/diversity-inclusion/gender-equity/womens-wellbeing-academy/become-a-member>