





# AN INVITATION...

....to join us in Wollongon<mark>g,</mark> Australi<mark>a, this September for</mark> an international conference on early childhood development issues

On behalf of the University of Wollongong's Early Start<sup>™</sup> Initiative, I warmly invite you to the *Inaugural Early Start* Conference this September 28-30.

The Early Start™ Conference is a multidisciplinary conference that will celebrate the opening of the world-first \$44m Early Start™ research, teaching and community engagement hub at the University of Wollongong. The conference theme nicely articulates the Early Start™ mission: "Improving Children's Lives: translating research for practice, policy and community". Early Start™ will radically transform educational, health, social outcomes in regional, rural and remote communities by providing a core facility at the University of Wollongong to connect with 41 initial Early Start™ Engagement Centres across NSW and the ACT.

The inaugural Early Start<sup>TM</sup> Conference will provide opportunities for innovative interdisciplinary research findings to be shared and will encourage a dialogue around reframing policy and practice in areas such as school readiness, physical activity and health, information and communications technology, literacy and numeracy, social inclusion and Aboriginal education.

With an extremely impressive line-up of internationally respected early childhood speakers, the conference will attract academics from around the globe, and politicians, senior bureaucrats, government officials and practitioners from around Australia and Oceania. To give a sense of the international interest in this Australian conference, listed below are the confirmed invited speakers:

#### Professor Catherine Snow, Harvard University, USA

Keynote speaker and one of the world's foremost education scholars for over three decades.

#### Professor Edward Melhuish, Oxford University, UK

Leading childhood psychology scholar and adviser to the OECD on childhood developme<mark>nt</mark> issues.

#### Professor Iram Siraj, University College London, UK

Internationally respected scholar on early childhood education.

#### Professor Michael Wald, Stanford University, USA

Leading scholarly authority on youth and children's legal issues.

#### Professor Dianne Ward, University of North Carolina, USA

Internationally respected scholar on youth and children's' physical health issues.

#### **Professor Fred Paas, Erasmus University, Netherlands**

Internationally respected for his work on cognitive load theory.

The conference will provide delegates from around the world and interstate with a fantastic opportunity to network and engage with colleagues from acorss disciplines and around the world.

I truly hope we can welcome you to Wollongong this September.

Sincerely yours,

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Professor Tony Okely
Director, Early Start™ Research Institute
Early Start™ Conference Chair

# **ABOUT EARLY START™**

Early Start<sup>™</sup> is a major social change initiative of the University of Wollongong and its strategic partners. It brings communities and practioners together with our academics from across many disciplines including education, psychology, public health, social work, human geography and the applied social sciences in strategic collaboration for teaching, research and community engagement. Each arm of Early Start<sup>™</sup> helps and facilitates the others, creating an interdisciplinary network that works together towards a common goal of driving positive social change.

## Early Start™ Facility

The Early Start™ building is a \$44M teaching, research and community engagement facility that will produce a new generation of graduates to work with children (0-12 years), young people, their families and communities. Early Start™ is designed to facilitate educational, health and social outcomes in regional, rural and remote communities. Located on the main campus in Wollongong, the Early Start™ Facility incorporates innovative design principles that encourage engagement and collaboration in teaching, learning and research. Areas that integrate face-to-face experiences with an online and virtual learning environment will provide a medium for enriching student access and engagement, particularly for those who aspire to higher education in regional, rural and remote areas. Research facilities are designed to enhance collaboration while virtual access will help to bridge the barriers of distance.

#### **Early Start™ Discovery Space**

A hands-on, creative learning venue, the Early Start™ Discovery Space is an exciting new destination, specifically designed for children from birth to 12 years and their accompanying families, carers, educators and teachers. The Early Start™ Discovery Space offers more than a dozen interactive playful experiences that inspire imagination and ignite a love of learning. Based on strongly grounded evidence that play in integral to children's learning and development, The Early Start™ Discovery Space will act as a partner for families, early childhood centres and schools, by enhancing the value that children gain through play-based experiences.

#### Early Start™ Engagement Centres

The 41 Early Start™ Engagement Centres (ESECs) form a network of early childhood and family services situated in areas of recognised disadvantage across the state of New South Wales and the ACT. These centres provide portals into their communities and will facilitate multidirectional interactions, grounding teaching and research in real life settings and providing authentic learning opportunities for students and researchers across many disciplines.



[Above: The Early Start™ Facility]

# **OUR VISION**

A world leading initiative focused on early childhood.

# STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Every child deserves the best possible start to life. Our purpose is to generate and propel opportunities, expectations and networks that will drive positive social change by enhancing the experiences of children, families and communities.

# **OUR VALUES**

### Evidence based impact:

We believe in capturing real-time research outcomes and translating them into real-world applications

## **Creative** inspiration:

We encourage creativity in everything we do because it breaks down barriers and encourages positive risk taking

# **Empowered choices:**

We want to build people's confidence and self-expression to help them make informed decisions that shape their futures in positive ways

# Multi-directional connectivity:

We place the highest value on dynamic relationships that work in a myriad of directions

# **ABOUT THE CONFERENCE**

This conference will address the challenges that exist in policy and practice for children, families and educators by exploring current approaches to research in the early years of life and proposing strategies for the future that will both inform and improve work in the field. Target audience: researchers with a focus on investment in young children from the perspectives of education, health, law, psychology, sociology, economics, policy, indigenous affairs, social work and other related areas as well as practitioners and policy specialists.

#### **CONFERENCE THEME**

Improving Children's Lives:

Translating Research For Practice, Policy And Community

At the core of the Early Start™ mission is the goal of improving children's lives. Its research efforts are founded on a commitment to bringing together academics from across discipline boundaries and working closely with government and the sector to improve early childhood policy and practice.

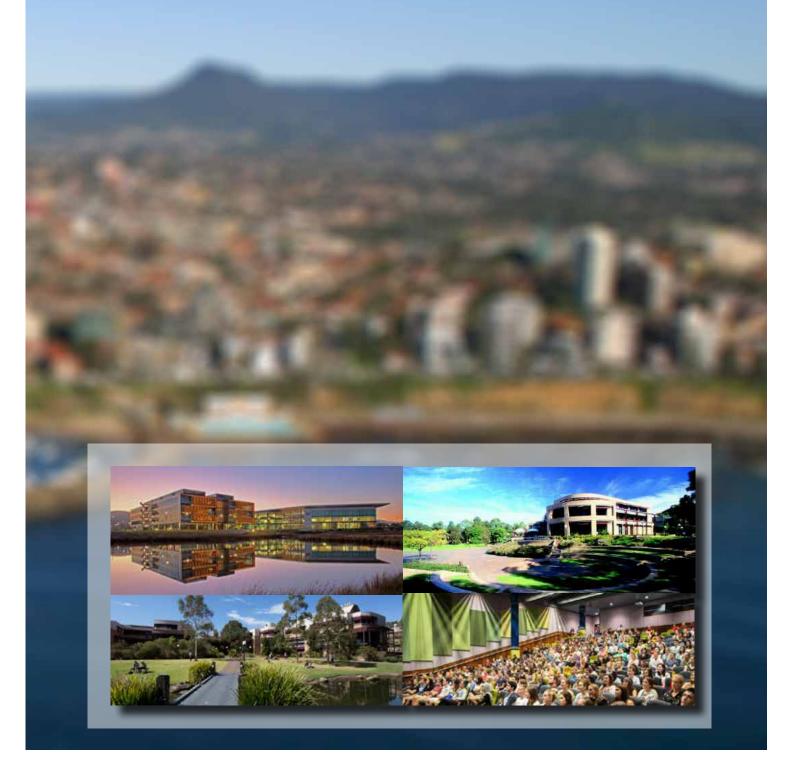
## **HOST CITY**

The City of Wollongong is located just 80km south of Sydney on a spectacular stretch of the southern New South Wales coast. Wollongong's natural environment includes some of the most pristine beaches in Australia and the escarpment to the west offers a great network of walking trails and dazzling views of the coastline. Wollongong is the 10th largest city in Australia and is well known for its tourism and steel industries.

# **CONFERENCE VENUE**

UOW has a real buzz about it that's noticeable as soon as you step onto campus. It's a great place to be, with an emphasis on connecting bright minds with the best possible insights and research - to encourage initiative, creativity and performance so that as a community we can proactively shape the world we live in.

Our campus has everything you could wish for: World class facilities, cutting edge research, a renowned library, a state-of-the-art recreation and aquatic centre, business services, entertainment facilities and so much more. It's also home to dozens of native Illawarra Flame Trees whose bright red flowers are featured on our coat of arms. A superb walking and cycling environment both on and off campus adds to this inspiring work setting.



# **CONFERENCE THEMES**

#### **OVERVIEW**

UOW's vision is to transform the lives of people, their communities and the environment through innovative ideas and solutions that enable original and creative connections across disciplinary, social and cultural boundaries. This vision is consistent with a new wave of worldwide research confirming the critical impact of the early years of children's lives on their future education, health and life outcomes. The Early Start™ Initiative, a \$44 million venture based in the Faculty of Social Sciences, provides opportunities for local, national and international collaboration aimed at enhancing social capital and addressing disadvantage in our most vulnerable communities.

Early Start<sup>™</sup> is a strategic interdisciplinary teaching, research and community initiative which will enable a new generation of graduates to work with young children, their families and communities. Using pedagogies and technologies that shape learning for the 21st Century, Early Start<sup>™</sup> will offer 'world class' research facilities as well as Australia's first Children's Discovery Space. Early Start<sup>™</sup> has connections across 41 early childhood education and care centres. These services, or Engagement Centres, are located across regional, rural and remote areas of NSW.

#### THEME 1: COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

The development of a child's mind in the early years of life sets the stage for a broad range of abilities and achievements in later life. For instance, a child's ability with basic concepts and the ability to control their thoughts, behaviours, emotions and social interactions is related to many important outcomes (e.g., school readiness, academic success, social competence, peer acceptance). Research in this area has sought to understand and promote the development of young children's cognitive abilities, giving children the best possible start to life. Workshops, presentations, demonstrations and interactions in the Cognitive Development strand will explore the translation of this theory and research into practice, giving insight into how educators and parents can support children's cognitive development.



Prof. Ted Melhuish, Oxford University

# **THEME 2: PEDAGOGY AND EDUCATION POLICY**

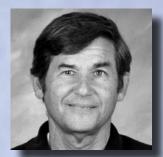
Children's rights and the need for quality early childhood education and care are symbolised both within the National Quality Framework and the UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child. Valuing children's rights necessitates high quality pedagogy based on respect and appreciation of the individual, the family and the cultural and educational context. Conceptions of pedagogy are increasingly complex and reflect our practice, our values, beliefs and the learning theories upon which we base our practices. Effective pedagogy demands contributions from researchers, teachers, policy makers, parents and children. Within this conference theme we explore early childhood pedagogies that drive current and future practice and invite contributions from both researchers and practitioners.



Prof. Iram Siraj, UCL Institute of Education

#### **THEME 3: SOCIAL INCLUSION**

Children's development and well-being are influenced by their opportunities to participate in supportive environments and relationships, as well as the social connections and support available for their families. Social inclusion is defined by the Australian Government as people having the resources, opportunities and capabilities they need to learn, work, engage with others and have a voice in decisions that affect them. Research into social inclusion recognizes that individuals and communities can be co-creators of their reality, rather than passive recipients of outcomes. It also recognises that policies and structural and physical environments contribute to the health and well-being of individuals, families and societies. Conference sessions in the Social Inclusion theme feature multidisciplinary research and innovative practice about empowering individuals, families and communities to enable social connections and meaningful participation. This theme has a particular focus on overcoming barriers associated with disadvantage and investments in capabilities.



Prof. Michael Wald, Stanford



Prof. Marc de Rosnay, UOW

#### THEME 4: HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

This area of research includes understanding factors associated with the development of healthy lifestyles among young children and their families. It also encompasses interventions to promote better health and developmental outcomes. Integral to the success of interventions is an understanding of how effective programs can be translated into policy and practice and to ensure that approaches are inclusive of socio-economic evidence. As such, this area includes social marketing research that seeks to better understand how children and their families receive and negotiate messages they receive around their health; and the politics of health policy agenda setting and implementation. Conference sessions in the Healthy Lifestyles strand will examines how relevant stakeholders can take up and can be engaged to inform practice, policy, guidelines and programs.



Prof. Dianne Ward, University of North Carolina

#### THEME 5: DIGITAL LEARNING AND LITERACY

Digital technologies mediate many children's daily experiences, yet we have limited understanding how various technologies promote and/or hinder development. Children's use of technology is source of debate, both in terms of whether technology-based activities should be limited and whether it should be encouraged to assist literacy, social and cognitive development. The reality is that digital play is an emerging phenomenon amongst young children that needs to be examined. The 'digital divide' in skills, knowledge and dispositions between children from lower socio-economic backgrounds and their more advantaged peers also requires our attention. Conference sessions in this strand will focus on how young children engage, learn and develop with digital technologies. Our focus is on digital activities across all areas of life (including formal and informal/non-formal learning, inside and outside educational settings) and the literacy opportunities, learning activities, play, entertainment and family interactions that come from these.



Prof. Catherine Snow, Harvard University

# **INVITED SPEAKERS**

We are very fortunate to have attracted a first-class lineup of internationally respected scholars from around the world to the Inaugural Early Start™ Conference

# PROFESSOR CATHERINE SNOW [HARVARD UNIVERSITY, USA]

Catherine Snow is the Patricia Albjerg Graham Professor of Education at Harvard. She received her Ph.D. in psychology from McGill University in 1971, and subsequently worked for several years at the Department of General Linguistics at the University of Amsterdam. Since 1979 she has been on the faculty at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, teaching and conducting research on topics related to language and literacy development, primarily among children placed at educational risk by poverty and/or language minority status. Snow chaired the National Academy of Sciences Committees on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children and on Assessment of Young Children, as well as the Carnegie Corporation's Advisory Council on Adolescent Literacy. Most recently she has been working with the Strategic Education Research Partnership to evaluate the effectiveness of discussion-based curricula in promoting middle-grades students' literacy outcomes. She is Visiting Professor at the University of Oslo, University of Johannesburg, and East China Normal University, appointments that are enabling her to study early childhood education from a comparative perspective.

## PROFESSOR IRAM SIRAJ, OBE [UCL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, UK]

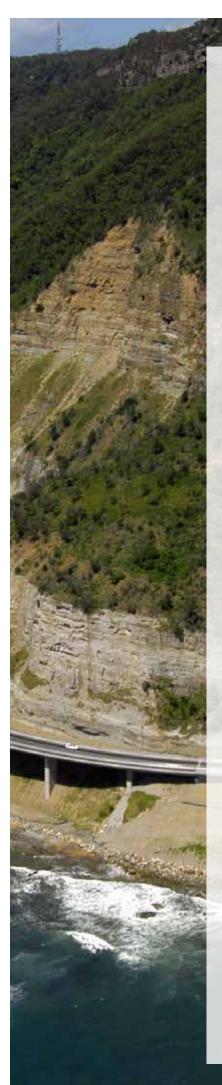
As Professor of Education at University College London, Institute of Education, and a visiting professor at the University of Wollongong, Iram's recent research projects have included the major DCSF 17-year study on Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education (EPPSE 3-16, 1997-2014) and the influential Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years project (REPEY). She has led longitudinal studies/RCTs as a principal investigator in a number of countries including the UK, Australia and Ireland. She has always been particularly interested in undertaking research which investigates disadvantage and gives children and families from these backgrounds a better start. She is a specialist, early years advisor to governments and ministers in the UK and overseas. She has published widely and been a specialist adviser to the House of Commons Select Committee on Education. Recently she undertook a review of the Implementation of the Foundation Phase for the Welsh Govt. and is currently reviewing the early years workforce for the Scottish Govt. She was awarded an OBE in the Queen's New Years honours list in January 2015 for her services to early education.

## PROFESSOR EDWARD MELHUISH [OXFORD, BIRKBECK, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON, UK]

Edward Melhuish is a professor at the University of Oxford, and Birkbeck, University of London, and a visiting professor at the University of Wollongong. He was involved with the National Evaluation of Sure Start, the Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education (EPPSE) project and the Effective Pre-school Provision in Northern Ireland (EPPNI) project and is currently undertaking studies in Norway, European community, UK, and Australia. His research influenced the 1989 Children Act, the 2005 Children Act, 2006 Childcare Bill and policy on childcare, early education, child poverty and parental support in the UK and other countries. He has served as an expert witness to several House of Commons Select Committees, and been a scientific advisor to research councils and governments in Norway, Finland, Portugal, South Korea, Chile, Australia, and Canada. He also is a consultant to the European Commission, OECD and WHO.

#### PROFESSOR MICHAEL WALD [STANFORD UNIVERSITY, USA]

Michael S. Wald is the Jackson Eli Reynolds Professor of Law, Emeritus, at Stanford University. He joined the faculty in 1967. His teaching and research focuses on public policy towards children and families. He also had appointments (by courtesy) in the School of Education and the Public Policy Program and served as Director of the Stanford Center on Child, Youth, and their Families. Professor Wald has extensive experience designing and implementing public policy related to parents and children, including holding a number of government positions at the federal, state, and local levels connected to social services for children and families, and has helped author legislation related to child welfare at the federal and state levels. He has also been invited to serve on a number of commissions charged with developing research-based recommendations for improving the well being of children and families, including the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on the Welfare of Children, the Board of Directors Chapin Hall Children's Center, University of Chicago, and the Carnegie Foundation's Commission on Children 0-3. He is currently a member of the National Academy of Sciences Committee on Supporting the Parents of Young Children. Wald has published extensively on issues related to state regulation of, and involvement with, children and families. His most recent publications include invited chapters for books focusing on various aspects of public policy and parenting.



# PROFESSOR MARC DE ROSNAY [UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG, AUS]

Marc de Rosnay is the current Professor & Academic Head of Early Start™ at the University of Wollongong. In this role, Marc is leading transformational initiatives between the University and the community with the goal of improving educational and social opportunities for young children in regional, rural and remote contexts. Between 2003 and 2006 Marc was awarded a prestigious College Fellowship (Churchill College, University of Cambridge) in recognition of his original work on emotion understanding in infancy and early childhood. In 2006 he moved to the School of Psychology, University of Sydney, where he held and Australian Research Council (ARC) Postdoctoral Fellowship between 2007 and 2010. Marc joined Early Start™ in 2014 because of his belief that early intervention provides the single best mechanism to improve children's lives. Marc's own research focuses on social and emotional development in the early years, and the ways in which children's growing understanding of the world (i.e., cognitive development) affects their experience; both social and emotional. Marc is widely published in leading international journals and has attracted over \$1.5m of competitive research funding since graduating with his doctorate from the University of Oxford in 2003. In addition to his scholarly outputs, Marc has worked consistently to communicate research and knowledge about early childhood and development in the public forum. He has taken a leading scientific role in various documentaries (including the Life at series on ABC television), contributes regularly to the print media, and has had a fortnightly radio slot on ABC702 since 2012.

## PROFESSOR DIANNE WARD [UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, USA]

Dianne Ward is Professor of Nutrition in the Gillings School of Global Public Health at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her research focuses on preventing childhood obesity through home, school, and community interventions that promote healthy eating and regular physical activity in children and families. Dr. Ward led the team that developed the highly regarded policy and environmental intervention for child care, NAP SACC (The Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care). The second generation of NAP SACC, called GoNAPSACC, includes an updated self-assessment for centers and family child care homes, and an online, interactive version of the original program. Dr. Ward is co-directing a National Institute of Health-funded project to test a three-component intervention designed to increase healthy nutrition and regular physical activity in children enrolled in family child care homes (KEYS to a Healthy Family Child Care Home). Her other NIH projects include Caring and Reaching for Health, a worksite intervention for child care workers, and a social marketing intervention for child care centers (Our Year of Healthy Living). Dr. Ward is very active in leadership positions among early care and education researchers including the ECE workgroup sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the ECE Special Interest Group of the International Society for Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity.

#### PROFESSOR FRED PAAS [ERASMUS UNIVERSITY, NED]

Fred Paas is professor of educational psychology and chair of the educational and developmental psychology program at Erasmus University Rotterdam in the Netherlands, and professorial fellow at the Early Start<sup>™</sup> Research Institute of the University of Wollongong. He holds a Master in human movement sciences from Maastricht University and a PhD in instructional technology from Twente University in the Netherlands. Professor Paas was one of the pioneers in the field of educational psychology in the early 1990's when he started to apply cognitive load theory principles to the design of instructions, multimedia and training of complex cognitive skills. His research focuses on the design of effective and efficient learning environments by applying current multidisciplinary scientific knowledge about the human cognitive system and covers a wide spectrum of areas from education to psychology and cognitive science. His ground-breaking work on measurement techniques for cognitive load, on instructional efficiency and uncovering the variability effect, the cognitive aging effect, the human movement effect, and the collective working memory effect not only extended the existing instructional theories, it also provided a framework for understanding a range of learning phenomena in different educational domains. His current research focus is on the the effects of human movement on learning and performance of young children.

# PROFESSOR SUSAN DANBY [QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF

TECHNOLOGY, AUS 1

Susan Danby is Professor in Early Childhood Education at Queensland University of Technology (QUT), and Program Leader of the Health, Wellbeing and Happiness program within the QUT Children and Youth Research Centre in Brisbane, Australia. Her research explores the everyday social and interactional practices of children, showing their complex and competent work as they build their social worlds within school settings, homes and communities. She has published in the areas of qualitative research, helpline interaction, home and classroom interaction, early childhood pedagogy, and doctoral education. She is currently an Australian Research Council Future Fellow investigating young children's everyday use of mobile technologies in home and school contexts.

# **CONFERENCE PROGRAM**

#### **MONDAY 28 SEPTEMBER**

# Pre-Conference Workshops - 1pm to 5pm

# Workshop 1: Supporting Intentional and Relational Pedagogy in Early Childhood Settings

Prof. Iram Siraj, UCL Institute of Education and University of Wollongong
Iram will introduce how the SSTEW scale was developed, what it measures and how it can be used by practitioners to improve high quality interactions, children's behaviour and create a strong social emotional climate. The session will be illustrated with examples of practice from high quality settings.

# Workshop 2: How to self-assess the nutrition and physical activity environments in early childhood education and care services

Prof. Dianne Ward, University of North Carolina

This workshop will show educators how to conduct a self-assessment of the nutrition, physical activity, outdoor play, and screen time in their service using the NAP SACC (Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment in Child Care) instruments. Dianne will also work with educators on how to analyse the data and make changes based on the results to enhance the nutrition and physical activity environments in their service.



# **Conference Opening and Keynote Speaker**

5:30pm Official Conference Opening & Welcome to Country

6:00pm Keynote Speaker: Professor Catherine Snow

7:00pm Welcome Reception

Relax and unwind at the Welcome Reception in the mezzanine level of the new \$44m Early Start<sup>™</sup> facility. Mingle with fellow delegates and VIP guests and enjoy a tour of the new Early Start<sup>™</sup> Discovery Space.



Keynote Speraker: Prof. Catherine Snow, Harvard

#### **TUESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER**

9:00am Invited Speaker: Professor Iram Siraj (UCL)

10:00am Panel Discussion

11:30am Social Inclusion Plenary Session

1:00pm Lunch & Tours of Early Start™ Facility

2:00pm Invited speaker: Professor Michael Wald (Stanford University)

3:00pm Social Inclusion Plenary Session

4:00pm Afternoon tea

4:30pm Invited Speaker: Professor Edward Melhuish (Oxford)

7:00pm Conference Dinner: Dinner Address - Professor Marc de Rosnay

# **WEDNESDAY 30 SEPTEMBER**

9:00am Invited Speaker: Professor Dianne Ward (University of North Carolina)

10:00am Morning tea

10:30am Cognitive Development Plenary Session

11:30am Panel Discussion

12:30pm Lunch & Tours of Early Start™ Facility

1:30pm Invited Speaker: Professor Fred Paas (Erasmus University)

2:30pm Cognitive Development Plenary Session

3:30pm Afternoon tea

4:00pm Invited Speaker: Professor Susan Danby (QUT)

5.30pm Conference close

