

## Leadership in Practice: Publications, Presentations and Sector Engagement

### 1. Keynote Presentations

Mahmic, S. (2024, April 26). *Enhancing outcomes for children and families through team collaboration*, [Keynote address]. Early Intervention Conference, Singapore.

Mahmic, S. (2018, April 11). *Now & Next: Capacity building through family leadership, peer work and education*, [Keynote address]. New Zealand Disability Support Network Annual Conference, Wellington, New Zealand.

Mahmic, S. (2017, October 5). *Young children with disabilities and family wellbeing: Reimagining capacity building through family leadership, peer work and education*, [Keynote address]. 7th International Carers Conference, Adelaide, South Australia, Australia.

Mahmic, S. (2016, September 7). *Family-centred practice: Are we there yet?* [Pauline McGregor Address, keynote address]. Early Childhood Intervention Australia National Conference, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

### 2. Conference Presentations

Mahmic, S., Goldfeld, S., Saastamoinen, T., & Duggan, K. (2024, June 13). *Supporting every child to thrive in the early years* [Panel presentation]. Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

Mahmic, S., & Bhopti, A. (2024, May 1). *Essential ingredients for running parent/caregiver support groups* [Masterclass]. Pre-conference workshop at the 2nd National PRECI Conference, Surfers Paradise, Queensland, Australia.

Lancaster, K., Bhopti, A., Mahmic, S. (2024, May 3). *Exploring long-term outcomes of a peer support program for parents of children with a disability in Australia* [Conference presentation].

2<sup>nd</sup> National Professionals and Researchers in Early Childhood Intervention (PRECI) Conference, Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia.

Mahmic, S. (2024, April 26th). *Now & Next: Families Navigating their Future Through a Peer-Led Approach*. Early Intervention Conference, Singapore.

Mahmic, S. (2024, April 26th). *Pictability: A Family-Centred Approach to Innovative Planning and Goal Setting*. Early Intervention Conference, Singapore.

Mahmic, S., Forster, J., Bull, K., & Whitehouse, A. (2024, March 26). *Early childhood: The big changes* [Panel presentation]. Disability Services Consulting (DSC) Annual NDIS Conference, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia.

Mahmic, S., Bhopti, T., Moore, T., Zhang, Y., Lancaster, K., Taylor, R., Janson, A., & Kern, M. L. (2023, June 6–8). *Now & Next: An innovative parent-led program for building capacity in families of children with disability grounded in a systems-informed positive psychology perspective* [Conference presentation]. International Congress on Evidence-Based Parenting Support (I-CEPS), Online.

Mahmic, S., & Forster, J. (2022, September 3–5). *Evolving service centres for young children with disabilities in Australia* [Conference presentation]. 8th National Early Childhood Intervention Conference, Sarawak, Malaysia.

Mahmic, S. (2019, June 28). *Individual funding and families of young children with delays or disabilities: An Australian perspective* [Conference presentation]. International Society on Early Intervention (ISEI) Conference, Sydney, NSW, Australia.

Moore, T., Mahmic, S., Janson, A., & Bayasgalan, M. (2019, June 28). *Evaluation of an innovative parent-led program for building family capacity* [Conference presentation]. International Society on Early Intervention Conference, Sydney, NSW, Australia.

Bhopti, A., Bayasgalan, M., Janson, A., Kern, M. L., Lancaster, K., Mahmic, S., Moore, T., Morrah, J., & Taylor, R. (2021, June 14). *Supporting a child with a disability: A systems-informed positive psychology response* [Conference presentation]. New Zealand Association of Positive Psychology Conference, Online.

Zhang, Y., Bayasgalan, M., Mahmic, S., Janson, A., & Kern, M. L. (2021, June). “*We are in this together*”: *An international positive psychology program for parents of children with disabilities* [Poster presentation]. Future Directions Forum (FDF) 2021, Washington, DC, United States.

Mahmic, S., & Kern, M. L. (2021, July 6). *Empowering families through a system-informed approach to developing wellbeing literacy*. In M. L. Kern (Chair), *Supporting the wellbeing of families of children with disabilities: Theory, evidence, and practice*. Symposium conducted at the International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IASSIDD) 6th Europe Conference: *Value Diversity*, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Mahmic, Janson, A., Williamson, J., Farah, I. (2016). ‘*How family-centred is individual funding for families of young children with disabilities?*’ Early Childhood Intervention Australia (ECIA) Conference, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

Mahmic, S. (2016). Families of young children and individualised funding: Are families in Holland and professionals in Belgium? National Disability Services Conference.

Mahmic, S. & Janson, A. (2016, November 16-17). *Transforming families' experience of self-direction*. Manawanui: Building Momentum: Turning Ideas into Action Through Self-Direction, Eden Park, Auckland, New Zealand.

Mahmic, S. & Janson, A. (2015, 27-29 October). Family story telling: Digital dreams. National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) New World Conference, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia.

Johnston, C., Tracey, D., Papps, F., & Mahmic, S. (2014, May). *Getting the best from the NDIS: Families, information and decision making – Key findings from research revealed* [Conference presentation]. Centre for Disability Research and Evaluation (CADRE) Conference, Sydney, NSW, Australia.

### **3. Publications**

#### **List of publications**

Mahmic, S., Johnston, C., Tracey, D. (Under review). Informing Future Family-Centred Individual Funding Policies: Lessons from Pre-NDIS Models. *Journal to be advised*.

Mahmic, S., Johnston, C., Tracey, D. (Under review). Enhancing Parental Participation in Early Childhood Intervention through Family-Centred Planning: Integrating Positive Psychology and Gamification. *Journal to be advised*.

Mahmic, S., Kern, M.L., Janson, A., Tracey, D., Johnston, C. (In press) Powering Up Family Systems Using Systems -Informed Positive Psychology: Parent Peer Workers as Levers for Change. In M. Wehmeyer (Ed), *Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology and Disability*.

Lancaster, K., Kern, M. L., Harding, K., Bayasgalan, M., Janson, A., Mahmic, S., & Bhohti, A. (2024). Exploring long-term outcomes of a peer support programme for parents\* of children with disability in Australia. *Child: Care, Health and Development*, 50(2), e13236.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/cch.13236>

Taylor, R., & Kern, M. L. (2022). Annick Janson and Sylvana Mahmic: Ways to Wellbeing for Parents of Children With a Disability. In *Women Community Leaders and Their Impact as Global Changemakers* (pp. 232-237). IGI Global.

<https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-2490-2.ch039>

Mahmic, S., Kern, M. L., & Janson, A. (2021). Identifying and Shifting Disempowering Paradigms for Families of Children With Disability Through a System Informed Positive Psychology Approach. *Frontiers in psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.663640>

Tracey, D., Johnston, C., Papps, F. A., & Mahmic, S. (2018). How do parents acquire information to support their child with a disability and navigate individualised funding schemes?. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 18(1), 25-35. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-3802.12390>

Mahmic, S., & Janson, A. (2018). *Now and Next: An innovative leadership pipeline for families with young children with disability or delay* (with an overview by M. Heyworth). Citizen Network Research. <https://citizen-network.org/uploads/attachment/615/now-and-next.pdf>

Johnston, C., Tracey, D. K., Mahmic, S., & Papps, F. A. (2013). *Getting the Best from DisabilityCare Australia: Families, Information and Decision Making: Report of a Project Undertaken for the Practical Design Fund Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs*. Practical Design Fund (Australian Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs), [ORS ID: 235512].

### **Publications and resources focused on establishing and supporting peer work in early childhood intervention**

Mahmic, S. (2018). *At a glance: Families as peer workers in early childhood intervention*.

[Knowledge Translation Summary]. Plumtree Children's Services.

[https://www.plumtree.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Families-as-peer-workers-ECI-at-a-glance\\_v282166.pdf](https://www.plumtree.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Families-as-peer-workers-ECI-at-a-glance_v282166.pdf)

Heyworth, M., & Mahmic, S. (2018). *Knowledge translation strategy and action plan:*

*Disseminating key messages on peer work in ECI*. Plumtree. [https://www.plumtree.org.au/wp-](https://www.plumtree.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Knowledge-Translation-Action-Plan_Families-as-Peer-Workers_Plumtree-IWF-Project_july-version.pdf)

[content/uploads/2020/04/Knowledge-Translation-Action-Plan\\_Families-as-Peer-Workers\\_Plumtree-IWF-Project\\_july-version.pdf](https://www.plumtree.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Knowledge-Translation-Action-Plan_Families-as-Peer-Workers_Plumtree-IWF-Project_july-version.pdf)

Heyworth, M. (2018). *Families as peer workers in early intervention organisations: Literature*

*review*. Plumtree Children's Services. [https://www.plumtree.org.au/wp-](https://www.plumtree.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Literature-Review_Building-a-peer-workforce-in-ECI.pdf)

[content/uploads/2022/12/Literature-Review\\_Building-a-peer-workforce-in-ECI.pdf](https://www.plumtree.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Literature-Review_Building-a-peer-workforce-in-ECI.pdf)

Heyworth, M. (2018). *Guide and resource toolkit to support peer workforce integration in early*

*childhood intervention organisations*. Plumtree. [https://www.plumtree.org.au/wp-](https://www.plumtree.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Guide-and-Toolkit_Building-a-peer-workforce-in-ECI.pdf)

[content/uploads/2022/12/Guide-and-Toolkit\\_Building-a-peer-workforce-in-ECI.pdf](https://www.plumtree.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Guide-and-Toolkit_Building-a-peer-workforce-in-ECI.pdf)

O'Brien, P., Taylor, D., & Riches, T. (2018). *The role of peer facilitators in the Now & Next program* [Research report]. Centre for Disability Studies, University of Sydney.

[https://www.plumtree.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/CDS-Research-Report\\_Families-as-Peer-Workers\\_Plumtree-IWF-Project\\_july-version.pdf](https://www.plumtree.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/CDS-Research-Report_Families-as-Peer-Workers_Plumtree-IWF-Project_july-version.pdf)

#### **4. Awards**

Excellence in Education and Training Award, Centre for Disability Studies (2019): Awarded as part of the Trevor Parmenter Awards in recognition of contributions to family-centred practice and parent-peer education, as demonstrated through the development of the Now & Next program and associated research informing this thesis.

ECIA NSW/ACT Outstanding Family-Centred and Culturally Responsive Practice (2017):

Awarded to support the development and evaluation of innovative approaches to family-centred practice.

National Disability Services (2017): Industry Innovation Awards in Recognition of Excellence in the Disability Sector. Innovation in Improving Outcomes for Children and Young People

#### **5. Program and Resource Development**

Now & Next program is an 8-week peer-led capacity-building program for parents that was co-designed with parents of young children with disability or developmental delay. The program supports goal setting, family leadership, and parent-peer support. Since its inception in 2015, Now & Next has reached over 2,000 families and is being delivered in Australia and seven countries internationally. It has been featured in policy and practitioner forums as a novel innovation in early childhood intervention.

Pictability™ is a planning and visioning tool developed to support families in identifying priorities and setting meaningful goals. Grounded in the research on family-centred practice, positive psychology, and gamification, the tool can be used independently by families or facilitated by parent-peer workers or professionals.

Plan & Do is a 28-page paper-based toolkit to assist professionals and parents to work collaboratively on planning and goal setting, particularly within the individual funding context.

## **6. Sector Engagement and Professional Development**

Mahmic, S., Kern, M. L., Bhoiti, A., & Aekins, K. (2025). *Parents as peer leaders: A systems-informed positive psychology approach to wellbeing and family quality of life in early childhood intervention* [Webinar]. Professionals and Researchers in Early Childhood Intervention (PRECI), Australia.

Mahmic, S. (2025, May 15). Lending a hand to thrive-Supporting each other [Speaker presentation]. National Families Week 2025 Speaker Series, Online.

Mahmic, S. (2024, April 26). *Pictability: Creating your vision for a positive future* [Parent workshop]. Rainbow Centre Early Intervention Programme, Singapore.

Mahmic, S., Riverland, S., Grevers, K., & Archuleta, L. (2024, March 8). *The power of inspiring inclusion: A panel discussion with international women leaders* [Webinar panel]. Northeastern University.

Mahmic, S., Hollonds, A., Brinkman, S., & Duke, K. (2024, May 21). *Stronger Starts, Brighter Futures online launch* [Panel]. Settlement Services International, Australia.



Mahmic, S. (2023, May 23). *Beyond partnerships with families: Collaborating for inclusion* [Webinar]. KU Children's Services, Online.

Mahmic, S. (2023, February 17). *Panelist: Session 2 - Principles – What is important for children and families?* [Panel]. National Early Years Summit, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, Australia.

Mahmic, S. (2022, November 19). *Successful inclusion of children with disabilities: Getting families collaboration-ready and why that matters* [Webinar]. Inclusion Expert Series, AWWA, Singapore.

Mahmic, S., Buffoni, N., Buffoni, C., Janson, A., & Bayasgalan, M. (2020, May 6). *Building capacity through family-centred practices in an online environment* [Webinar]. Early Childhood Intervention Australia (ECIA), Online.

Mahmic, S. (2019, June 25). *NDIS early childhood early intervention: Building family capability through peer-led and participatory approaches – Innovations in ECI best practices under the NDIS* [Workshop]. National Disability Insurance Scheme Early Childhood Early Intervention Partners, Melbourne, VIC, Australia.

Mahmic, S., Janson, A., Hussaini, M., Buffoni, C., & Williams, G. (2019, February 27). *Building capacity using family-centred approaches to promote the best life for young children with disabilities: An innovative family-to-family program* [Webinar]. National Center on Advancing Person-Centered Practices and Systems (NCAPPS), United States.

Mahmic, S., Janson, A., Kalemkeridis, M., Touma, S., (2019, June 24-25). *Welcome to Plumtree ISEI Conference*. Two days of panels, workshops showcasing Now & Next, Pictability, and parent-peer work. Sydney, [Service Tour]. Sydney, New South Wales Australia.

IRISS. (2018, October 18). *Families as peer workers in early childhood intervention* (Dr. Melanie Heyworth & Sylvana Mahmic, Guests) [Podcast episode]. IRISS.FM.

<https://transcripts.podcast.iriss.org.uk/transcript/families-as-peer-workers-in-early-childhood-intervention/>

Disability Services Consulting. (2022, March 31). *ECEI and the role of family: A candid conversation with Sylvana Mahmic* [Podcast episode]. Disability Done Different: Candid Conversations. <https://teamdsc.com.au/podcasts/episode-16>

## **7. Policy Contributions, Advocacy, and Sector Leadership**

Key advisory roles include:

- NDIS Independent Advisory Council 2013-2024

As a long-standing member of the National Disability Insurance Scheme Independent Advisory Council (NDIS IAC) from 2013 to 2024, I advised on the development and implementation of individual funding for young children with disability, advocating for a family-centred and capacity-building approach. My contributions to IAC advice papers drew on insights from my action research, program development, and experience leading peer-led family programs. Working in collaboration with IAC's policy consultant and

other members, I contributed to the co-development of key IAC advice papers submitted to the NDIS Board, including:

- NDIS Independent Advisory Council (2023). *Improving the NDIS for children and young people: The importance of being guided by their voice*
- NDIS Independent Advisory Council (2020). *Promoting best practice in early childhood intervention in the NDIS*
- Member, *NDIS Children's Expert Advisory Group* (2023–present)  
Advising on the redesign of the NDIS early childhood pathway, including eligibility, planning, and foundational supports for children with developmental delay or disability and their families.
- Member, *IAC Children's, Young Persons and Families Reference Group* (2020-present)  
Supporting the IAC's work with targeted advice on how the scheme can better include and support families of children and young people with disability.
- Member, *NDIA Self-Management Advisory Group* (2025-present)  
Contributing lived and organisational experience to inform policies, tools, and supports for families who self-manage their NDIS funding, particularly in the early childhood years.

## **8. Work Mentioned in Reports**

Duffy, S., & Brown, M. (2023). *Redesigning the NDIS: An international perspective on an Australian disability support system* (ISBN 978-1-912712-47-2). Citizen Network Research.  
[Redesigning the NDIS](#)

Bennet, S., Jessurun, M., Orban, H. (2025). *Saving the NDIS: How to rebalance disability services to get better results*. The Grattan Institute.

Imms, C., Moore, T., Bull, K., Gavidia-Payne, S., Lami, F., Wilson, M., Allen, L., & Knight, S. (2024). *Review of best practice in early childhood intervention: Desktop review full report*. The University of Melbourne. Report commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Social Services. [ECI-TAP-Deliverable-1-Desktop-Review-Full-Report-V1.0\\_Nov2024.pdf](#)

Kalopisis, V., & Bertana, I. (2023). *European inspiring practices in ECI* (Deliverable 4.5, Work Package 4: Greek Agora on ECI). European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD).. [D4.5-EU-Inspiring-Practices\\_EN\\_layout.pdf](#)

Office of Disability Issues, New Zealand Government. (2020, February). *A good start in life: Practice guidance*. <https://www.hqsc.govt.nz/assets/Consumer-hub/Partners-in-Care/Publications-resources/Good-start-in-life-practice-guidance-Mar-2020.pdf>

## **9. Research Impact and Legacy: Founding New Peer-Led Organisations**

I auspiced two new peer-led organisations: Reframing Autism and Belongside (formerly *Kindred*). Both were established to extend the peer work and family leadership principles to promote stronger peer connection, capability-building, and systems advocacy by and for families of children with disability. I successfully secured funding to establish these organisations and auspiced them through Plumtree Children's Services during their start-up phase which provided the necessary infrastructure while they built their governance, programs, and networks.