



SAGE

SCIENCE IN AUSTRALIA
GENDER EQUITY

The Kids Research Institute Australia Institutional Context

Name of Institution	The Kids Research Institute Australia (formerly Telethon Kids Institute)
Date of Application	
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Acknowledgements

The Kids Research Institute Australia (The Kids) would like to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of the land and waters of Australia. We also acknowledge the Nyoongar Wadjuk, Yawuru, Kariyarra and Kurna Elders, their people and their land upon which the Institute is located and seek their wisdom in our work to improve the health and development of all children.

We would also like to acknowledge the work of the Institute's Gender, Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity (GEDI) Council and our Special Interest Groups. These groups dedicate their time and passion to advancing the causes of equity, fairness, inclusivity and diversity at The Kids, providing continued support to people of all backgrounds who work and study at the Institute.

Institutional Context

The Kids Research Institute Australia (The Kids) is a large, not-for-profit medical research institute with multiple sites across Western Australia and South Australia. Established in 1990, The Kids employs nearly 1,500 staff and students across research, clinical and professional services roles.

In 2024, Telethon Kids Institute rebranded to The Kids Research Institute Australia. This change reflected the organisation’s operation as an independent legal entity, separate from Telethon, with its own governance arrangements, structures and mission. The rebrand also aligned with contemporary branding and donor-recognition practices for charitable and not-for-profit organisations that receive funding from a range of sources, including (but not limited to) Telethon.

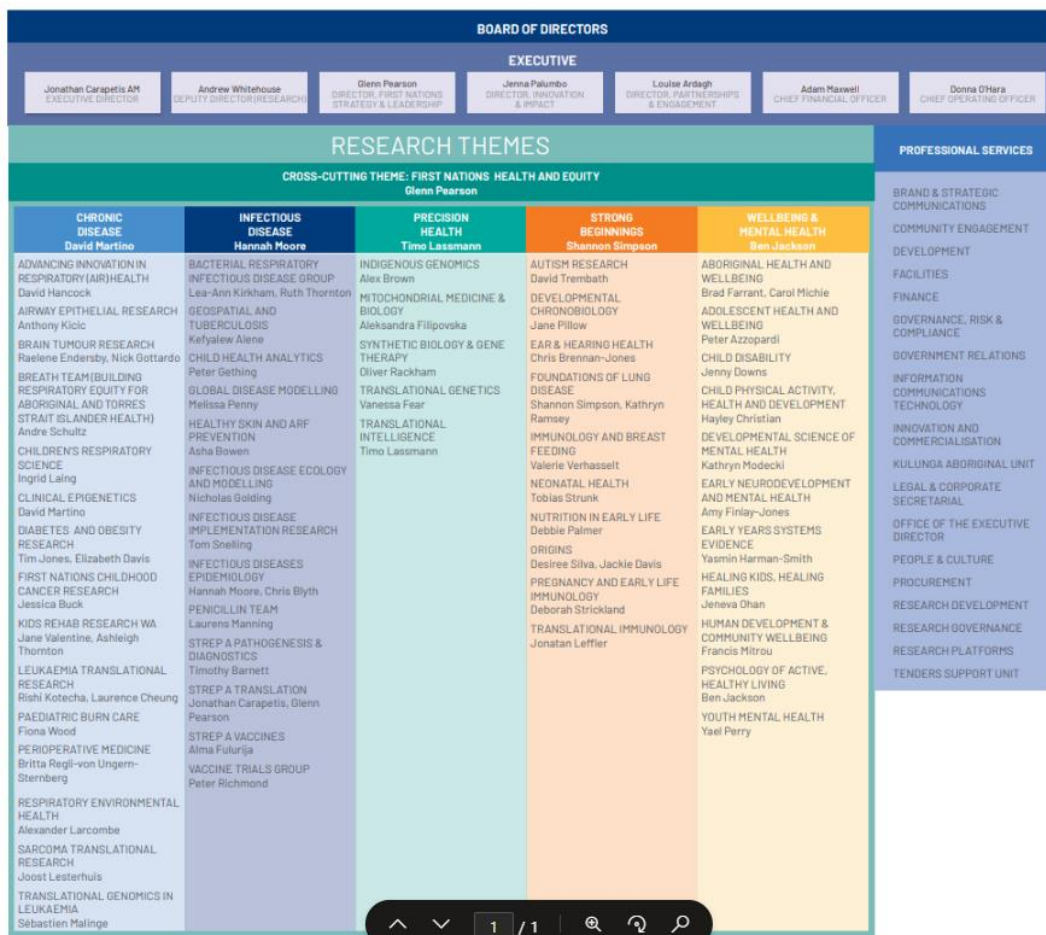
The Institute is led by Professor Jonathan Carapetis AM, with Founding Director Professor Fiona Stanley AC now Patron. The Kids has a strong history of women in leadership and a sustained commitment to equity, inclusion and Aboriginal health research as a core organisational priority.

The main campus is located within the Perth Children’s Hospital precinct at the QEII Medical Centre in Nedlands, a major health and research hub. Since 2018, the Institute has operated from a purpose-built facility that supports close collaboration with clinicians and partners to translate research into improved outcomes for children and young people. In addition to its primary site, The Kids has staff based in regional Western Australia, metropolitan Perth and South Australia, and is affiliated with major universities including The University of Western Australia and Curtin University.

Research is primarily funded through competitive grants, research contracts and philanthropy.

The current organisation structure (Figure 1) was implemented in 2025, as was an updated strategic plan, Research Reimagined.

Figure 1 The Kids Research Institute Australia organisational chart as at 4 February 2026



Over the past decade, The Kids has experienced significant and sustained growth, as shown in Figure 2. Total employee numbers increased from 435 in 2016 to 868 in 2026, representing an almost 100% increase in workforce size. Growth has been steady, reflecting the Institute’s expansion in research activity, programs and operational complexity. Women have consistently comprised a majority of the workforce and have driven much of this growth, increasing from 328 to 645 employees over the period. The number of men also doubled, from 107 to 216, indicating proportional growth across binary genders as the organisation scaled. While numbers remain small, the emergence and gradual increase in staff identifying as non-binary, from none recorded in 2016 to seven by 2026, reflects more inclusive data collection practices and increased confidence in gender diversity disclosure.

This rapid growth provides important institutional context. As the organisation expanded from a mid-sized institute to a large, multi-site workforce, informal and manager-dependent practices became less sustainable. The increasing scale and diversity of the workforce heightened the need for formalised, consistent and equity-informed policies, particularly in areas such as flexible work, leadership capability and workforce support systems.

Figure 2 Growth of Workforce by Gender (2016-2026)

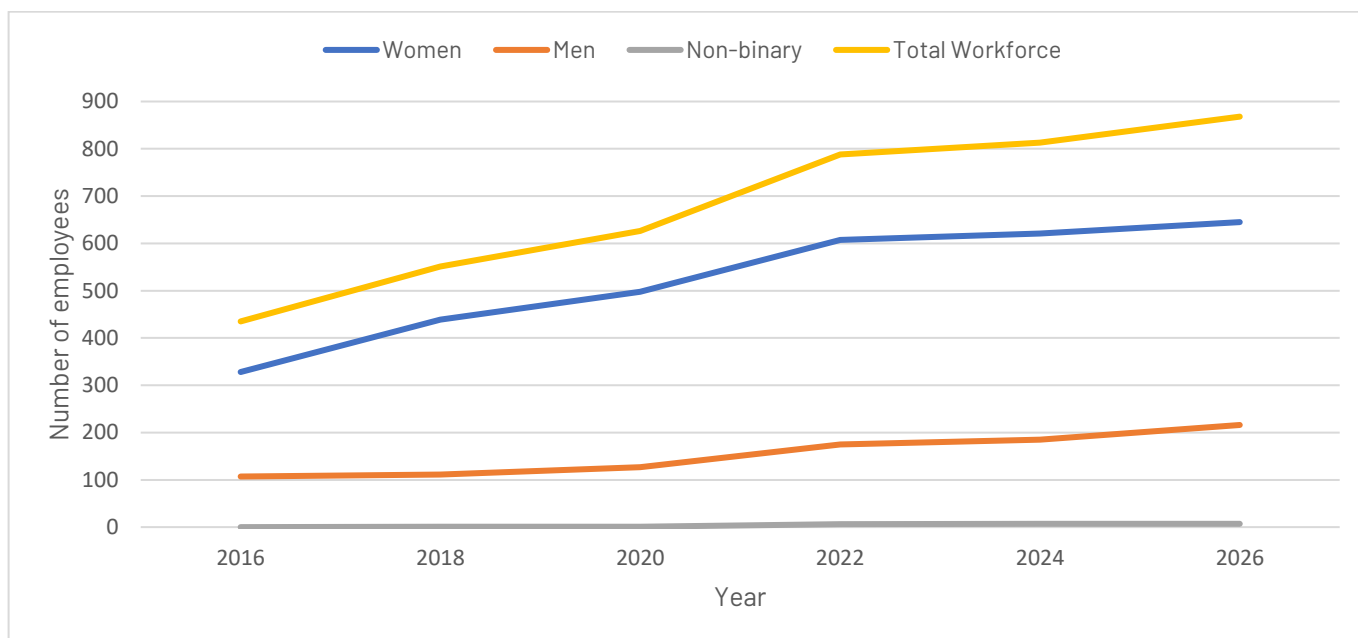


Table 1 Headcount by gender of staff at The Kids from 2016 - 2026

	2016	2018	2020	2022	2024	2026
Women	328	439	498	607	621	645
Men	107	111	127	175	185	216
Non-binary	NOT AVAILABLE	1	1	6	7	7
Total	435	551	626	788	813	868

As of 1 January 2026, the Institute had a total headcount of 1455 people: 871 staff (60%), 376 honorary appointees (26%), 146 students (12%) and 34 volunteers (2%). See Table 2.

Table 2 Headcount by gender of staff and non-staff at The Kids as of 1 January 2026

		Staff			Non-Staff			Total
		Research	Professional	Program	Honorary	Students	Volunteers	
Gender	Women	300	212	136	259	117	67	1060
	Men	128	79	9	117	59	14	388
	Non-Binary	7	1	2		3		7
Total		432	292	147	376	179	81	1455

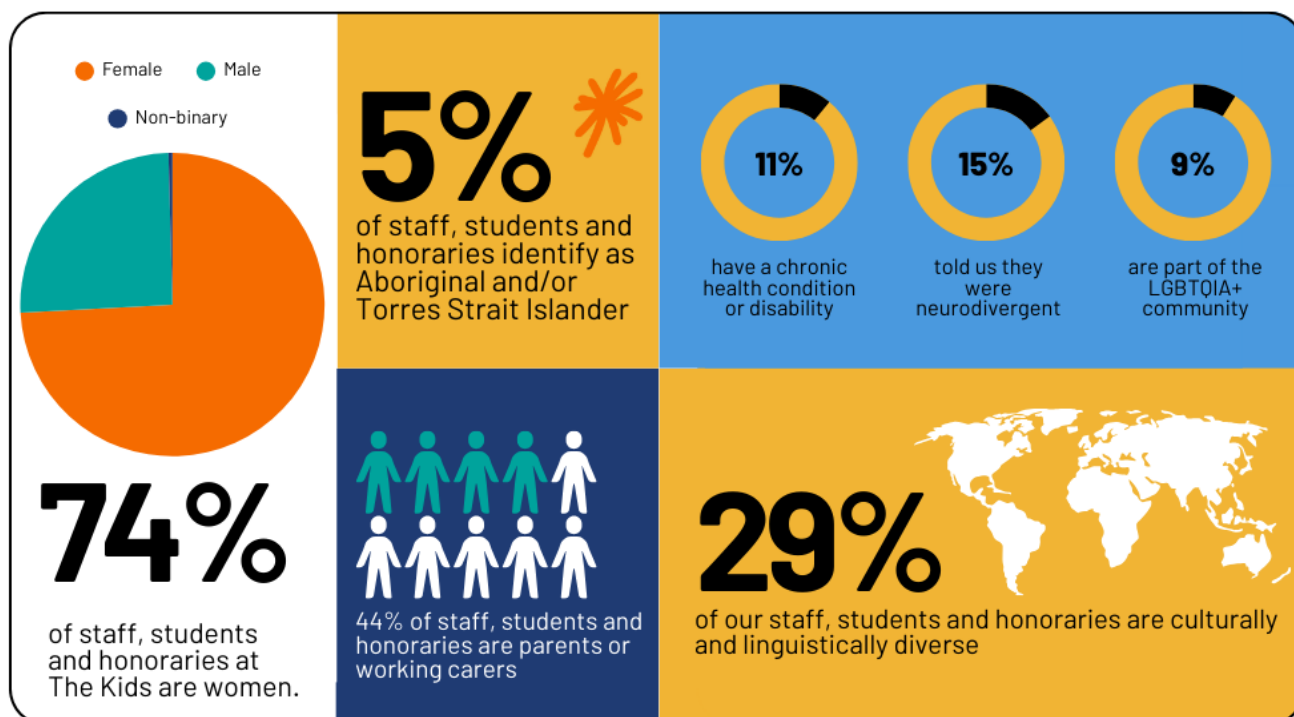
Please note that the combined number of Research, Program and Professional staff exceeds the total Institute headcount, as some individuals hold multiple appointments across different staff groups. These individuals are counted in each relevant category but are counted only once in the total Institute staff figure.

As at 1 January 2026, The Kids Research Institute Australia employed a total of 868 staff across Levels A-E. Of these, 645 (74%) identified as women, 216 (25%) as men, and 7 (<1%) as non-binary. A total of 65 staff (7%) identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, with representation across all employment levels (Figure 2).

Staff are distributed across employment streams, including 432 Research staff, 292 Professional staff, and 147 Program staff, with some individuals working across multiple streams.

In addition to employees, the Institute includes a broader community of non-staff members. This comprises 376 Honorary Research Fellows, 179 students, and 81 volunteers. Among non-staff cohorts, women represent the majority, including 117 women students (65%) and 67 women volunteers (83%).

Figure 3 Diversity at The Kids based on 2025 engagement survey



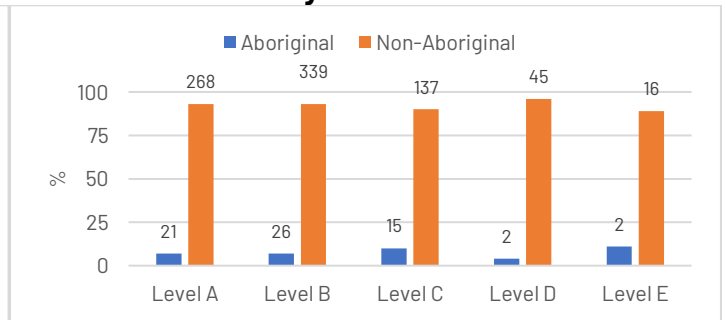
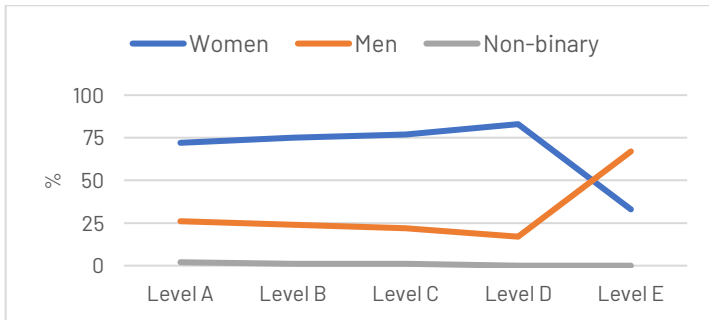
Additional workforce characteristics were captured through the 2025 Have Your Say Engagement Survey, providing important contextual insight that complements administrative workforce data. The survey achieved a 52% response rate, with 716 respondents from a total of 1,389 staff, students and honoraries at the time of completion.

Survey findings indicated that 44% of respondents identified as parents or working carers, reinforcing the relevance of flexible work arrangements across a substantial proportion of the workforce. Twenty-nine per cent (29%) of respondents identified as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), and 11% reported living with a chronic health condition or disability. A further 15% of respondents identified as neurodivergent, and 9% identified as part of the LGBTQIA+ community.

These data highlight the diversity of lived experience within the Institute and underscore the importance of flexible, inclusive and consistently applied workplace policies that respond to intersecting identities and needs. While engagement survey data are self-reported and not directly comparable with administrative workforce records, they provide valuable insight into the breadth of diversity across the organisation and inform the design and prioritisation of GEDI actions.

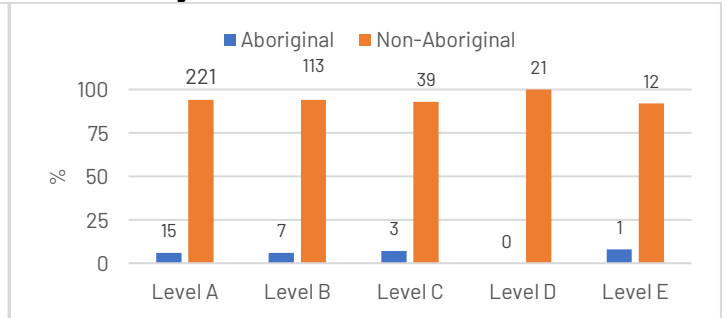
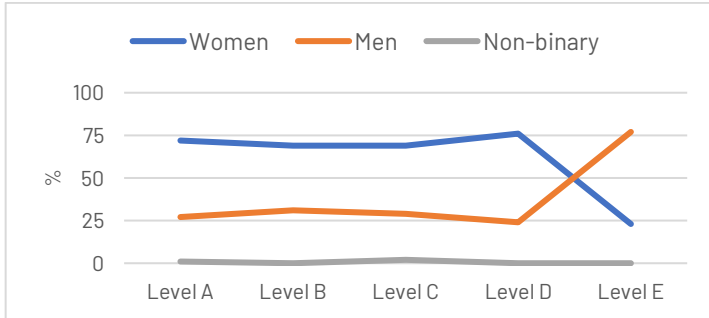
	Women	Men	Non-Binary
Abbreviation	W	M	NB

The Kids Research Institute Staff as of 1 January 2026



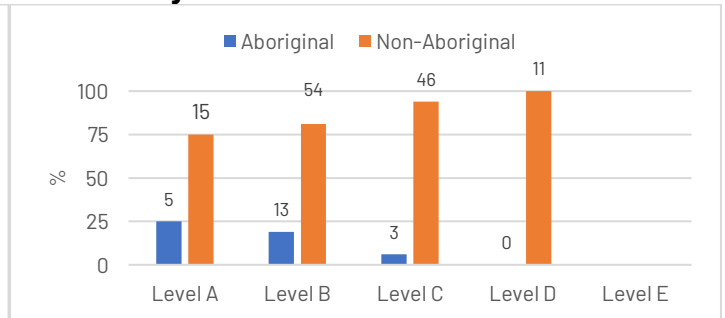
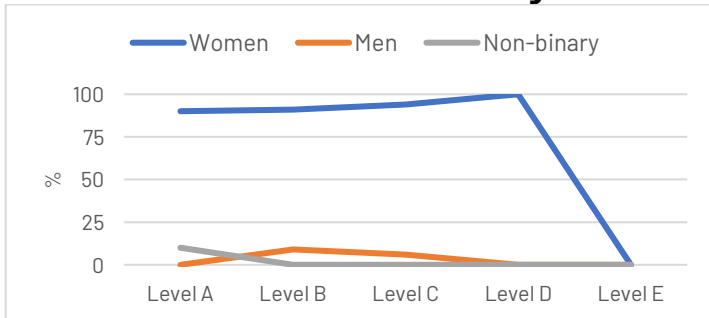
	Level A	Level B	Level C	Level D	Level E
W	209	276	117	39	6
M	75	88	34	8	12
NB	5	1	1		
Total	289	365	152	47	18

Research Staff as of 1 January 2026



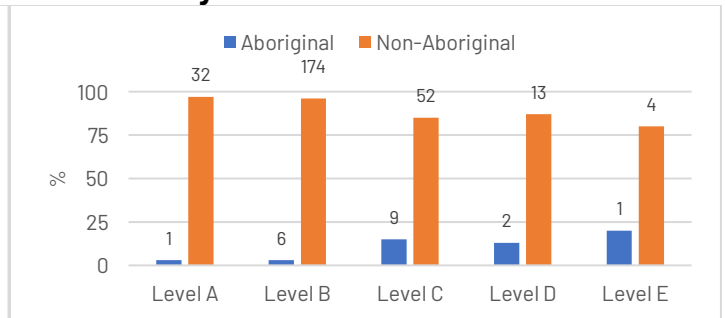
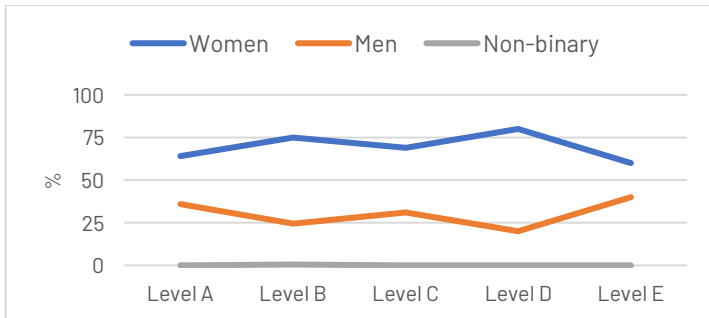
	Level A	Level B	Level C	Level D	Level E
W	170	82	29	16	3
M	63	38	12	5	10
NB	3	0	1		
Total	236	120	42	21	13

Program Staff as of 1 January 2026



	Level A	Level B	Level C	Level D	Level E
W	18	61	46	11	
M	0	6	3	0	
NB	2	0	0	0	
Total	20	67	49	11	

Professional Staff as of 1 January 2026



	Level A	Level B	Level C	Level D	Level E
W	21	135	42	12	3
M	12	44	19	3	2
NB	0	1	0	0	0
Total	33	180	61	15	5

The Kids Research Institute Australia joined the SAGE–Athena Swan program as Telethon Kids Research Institute in 2015. Between 2016 and 2019, the Self-Assessment Team (SAT), chaired by Associate Professor Deb Strickland, undertook a comprehensive analysis of qualitative and quantitative data relating to leadership, culture, policies and career progression. This work informed the Institute’s Bronze application, which was submitted in July 2019. Telethon Kids was awarded Athena Swan Bronze accreditation in February 2020. The Bronze Award was automatically reviewed as part of the MRI Athena Swan review and was extended through to end of 2026.

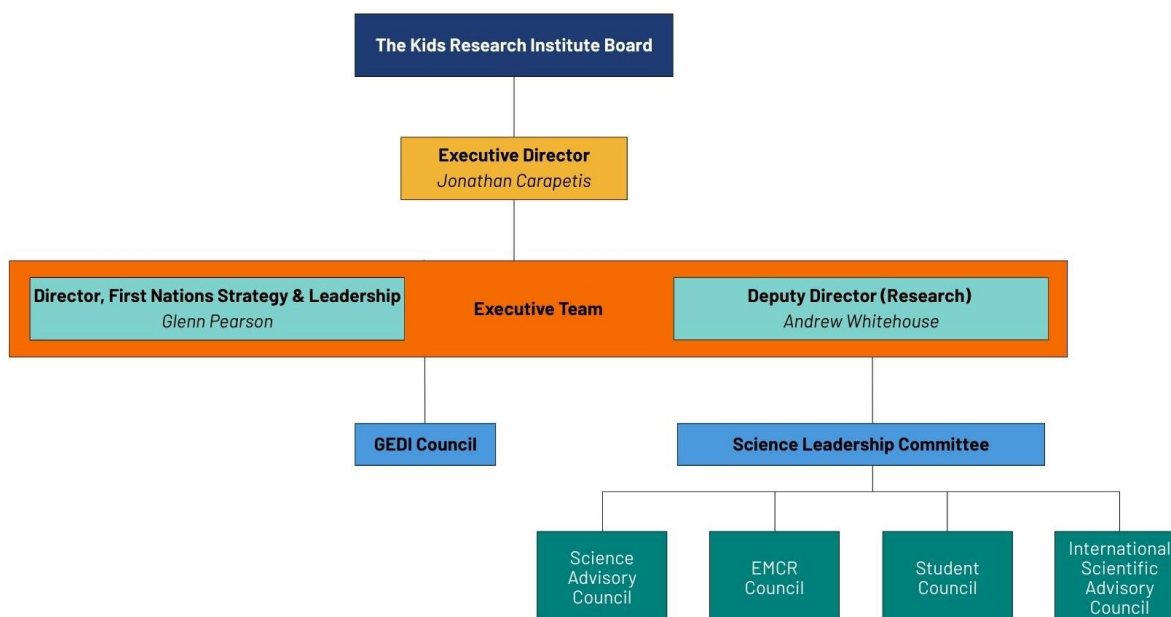
Following accreditation, the Institute implemented a 64-point Bronze Action Plan under the oversight of the GEDI Council, which evolved from the SAT and currently comprises 16 members. Implementation was supported by the Executive and Institute Leadership Team, with strong involvement from People & Culture, other professional services teams (including Development, Research Development and Communications), and internal committees such as the Policy Working Group. As of May 2023, all actions within the Bronze Action Plan have been completed.

Table 3 The Kids Athena Swan Bronze action items relevant to addressing the key barrier in Cygnet 1

Action	Description
3.1	3.1.1 Utilise existing data management capacity to routinely collect diversity data and link to key career metrics related to the attraction, progression and retention of staff (and students). The type of data collected will be reviewed periodically and will support many actions in this plan.
	3.1.2 Twice-yearly review diversity outcomes across Institute employment level and stream with findings reported to ILT.
5.18	Hold focus groups to ascertain attitudes and expectations regarding parental leave. June 2020. Including: Utilising Keeping in Touch Days; and staff support to transition from parental leave back to work.
5.20	Hold Focus Groups to drill down further on negative perceptions in relation to work flexibility held by a minority of staff. June 2021
5.23	Hold focus groups to further drill down on the impact of caring responsibilities on promotion and career progression.

In 2025, The Kids Research Institute Australia undertook a broader governance and leadership restructure. Oversight is now provided by the Board of Directors and Executive Team (Figure 3), with the GEDI Council reporting directly to the Executive via a bi-monthly memorandum.

Figure 4 The GEDI Council reported to the Executive Team via a bi-monthly memo.



The GEDI Council meets monthly to provide oversight of GEDI-related initiatives across the Institute and to develop recommendations for the Executive Team and other governance bodies. While the original Athena Swan Bronze Action Plan has now been completed, GEDI Council continues to play a central role in monitoring progress, identifying emerging issues, and guiding the development and implementation of new actions and frameworks that support equity, inclusion and cultural change. Issues for consideration may be raised through GEDI Council members by staff, students and honoraries across The Kids.

GEDI Council membership is intentionally diverse and includes students, researchers and professional services staff, as well as the Deputy Director (Research). All Special Interest Groups (SIGs) are represented on the Council, ensuring that an intersectional, whole-of-workforce perspective informs decision-making and recommendations.

GEDI Council is supported by a number of Special Interest Groups (SIGs), comprising of GEDI Council members and non-members. These groups provide targeted, lived-experience-informed feedback on specific areas of focus and contribute to consultation, co-design and implementation activities. SIGs meet on their preferred scheduled or project-based basis and have included the following areas of focus:

- Chronic Conditions and Disability
- Neurodivergence
- Cultural and Linguistic Diversity
- Working Parents and Carers
- LGBTQIA+ Communities
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and allies.

The Kids experienced delays in implementing elements of its Athena Swan Bronze Action Plan due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. These included an initial six-month delay between receiving Bronze accreditation and the establishment of the GEDI Council. Pandemic-related funding constraints also delayed the appointment of a dedicated Diversity & Inclusion Coordinator by more than 12 months.

In addition, there was a further period between October 2023 and January 2025 during which the Diversity & Inclusion Specialist role was vacant. This resulted in delays to the coordination and progression of Athena Swan and Cygnet activities during that time. These delays were operational in

nature and did not reflect a reduction in organisational commitment to gender equity, diversity and inclusion. Governance structures, executive oversight and ongoing GEDI initiatives remained in place, and work has since recommenced with renewed focus, resourcing and visibility across The Kids.

While the Athena Swan Bronze Award provided a foundation for identifying and addressing key barriers to gender equity, diversity and inclusion at the Institute, many of the findings that informed the original action plan may no longer fully reflect the organisational context in 2026. The Bronze Award was received in 2020, following a self-assessment process that commenced nearly a decade earlier, and the Institute has since undergone significant growth, structural change and policy development. To ensure that future actions are grounded in current evidence and workplace experience, The Kids has developed an organisation-wide GEDI Survey, scheduled to launch in March 2026, to capture contemporary staff experiences across gender, equity, diversity and inclusion domains.

The findings of the 2026 GEDI Survey will inform the prioritisation of future work led by the Diversity and Inclusion Specialist and guide the identification of relevant, current barriers for subsequent Cygnet submissions. This approach ensures that Athena Swan activity at The Kids remains responsive, targeted and evidence-based, reflecting the lived experiences of the workforce today rather than relying solely on historical data.