

# The Australian Study of Child Health In Same-Sex Families (ACHESS)

## Interim report



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
MELBOURNE

### INTRODUCTION

The Australian Study of Child Health in Same-Sex Families (ACHESS) was designed to explore for the first time the complete health and wellbeing of Australian children with same-sex attracted parents, and in particular the impact that discrimination has on them.

There are an increasing number of children with same-sex attracted parents in Australia. International research to date has suggested that these children are doing well in many aspects of their lives, however they are often affected by the discrimination that their families may experience due to parental sexual orientation. Previous work has been limited by a focus on lesbian parents and small sample sizes, and the relevance to the Australia context is uncertain.

This brief interim report identifies some of the key early highlights from the ACHESS. A detailed description of the study protocol and background research can be found in the references at the end of this report.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- The ACHESS collected data on 500 children aged 0-17 years from 315 index parents.
- For 80% of the children a female parent completed the survey, 18% were completed by a male parent, with 2% having an other gendered parent. These parents describe a range of sexual orientations including homosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual and queer.
- Ninety-three per cent of parents are currently in a relationship.
- The children come from all states and territories in Australia, with the exception of the Northern Territory.
- Fifteen per cent of children were born overseas and 11% speak a language other than English at home.
- On measures of **general health** and **family cohesion** children aged 5 to 17 years with same-sex attracted parents showed a significantly better score when compared to Australian children from all backgrounds and family contexts. For all other health measures there were no statistically significant differences.
- Australian children with same-sex attracted parents and their families continue to face discrimination in a variety of contexts.

### SUMMARY

These early findings suggest that Australian children with same-sex attracted parents are developing well. They are growing up in a range of contexts and score well on measures of health and wellbeing in the face of discrimination. Further analysis of the ACHESS data will identify in what ways this discrimination affects children and their families, as well as characterising overall health and wellbeing in more detail. It is anticipated that full results will be available by September 2013.

### FURTHER READING

Crouch SR, McNair RP, Waters EB and Power JJ (2013). What makes a same-sex parented family? *Med J Aust* 198(9): 1

Crouch SR, Waters E, McNair R, Power J and Davis E (2012). ACHESS – The Australian study of child health in same-sex families: background research, design and methodology. *BMC Public Health* 12:646

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