Dumplings Against Depression - Uniting Cultures for Mental Wellbeing

Speaker Bios

MACQUARIE University

Guest Speakers

Ms Sally Sitou | Member for Reid



My husband Rui and I are raising our young son, Max, in Homebush.

My parents are of Chinese heritage and fled Laos because of the Vietnam War. I believe in the educational and work opportunities that allowed my family to prosper in Australia and I will use my voice to passionately fight for our local community.

I've spent years working with vulnerable communities in the international development sector. More recently, I worked at the University of Sydney where I saw first-hand how investment in education and research changes lives – I know that with hard work and a good education, everyone can build the prosperous and safe future they want for their family.

Reid is one of Australia's most culturally diverse electorates, with the second largest number of people with Chinese heritage, and a thriving community that includes Indian, Korean, Sri Lankan, Italian, and Greek Australians. There are a high number of professionals and degree-holders, and a growing number of young families and successful small businesses. There are many communities of faith in the electorate who all contribute to the wellbeing and vibrancy of Reid. I am proud to be the member for Reid because I want more investment in our schools and education. I want to support small businesses and see them prosper. I want to strengthen and improve our healthcare and ensure we have good local infrastructure like high-speed internet, community parks and outdoor spaces. I will work to ease road congestion in our local area.

I want the next generation to benefit from the well-paid, high-skill jobs that will become from building a clean energy future, and I want action on climate change so that our future generations can benefit from this beautiful place we call home for years to come.

Mr Zhi Soon | Member for Banks



Zhi Soon MP is the Federal Member for the electorate of Banks, located in South-Western Sydney. Prior to entering Parliament, Mr Soon had an extensive career as a senior leader in public policy both in Australia and internationally. This included senior executive roles in education policy, behavioural economics, innovation, foreign affairs and international trade. A qualified lawyer, he has also previously served as an Australian diplomat, worked in Australian Prime Minister's Office and was a leader in an international policy consulting firm providing advice to governments, companies and not-for-profits globally. Mr Soon is a strong advocate for evidence-based policy making, robust evaluation and more human government.

Chair

Dr Jessamine Chen | Macquarie University Lifepsan Health and Wellbeing Research Centre



Jessamine Chen [BPsych (Hons), MClin Psych, PhD] is a bilingual (English and Mandarin) Research Fellow and Senior Clinical Psychologist at Macquarie University Lifespan Health and Wellbeing Research Centre. She has 20 years of experience integrating clinical practice, research, and service leadership across private practice and NSW Health. Jessamine's research focuses on improving the effectiveness of psychological treatments for late-life depression and anxiety. She currently leads the evaluation of a Chinese adaptation of an evidence-based English-language psychologist treatment program, designed to be culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate for Chinese-speaking older adults experiencing anxiety and depression. Jessamine is passionate about training and mentoring early-career clinicians, including bilingual practitioners. Since 2008, she has supervised over 70 Provisional Psychologists and seven Clinical Psychology Registrars and has taught into Master of Clinical Psychology programs across several Sydney universities. Before joining Macquarie University, Jessamine worked for 11 years at an outpatient anxiety specialist clinic (four years as Head of Clinic) in Western Sydney, where she developed expertise in delivering evidence-based psychological interventions to adult clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Panel

Panel #1: *Community Voices in Multicultural Mental Health*

Dr Judy Tang OAM | Australians for Intersectionality and Diversity in Mental Health (aidMH)



Dr Judy Tang OAM is a Clinical Neuropsychologist with more than a decade of clinical and academic experience in brain health, cognitive assessment, and complex mental health presentations. She has held leadership roles including Victorian Multicultural Commissioner and Board Director at the Victorian Pride Centre, championing equity and inclusion across health and community settings. Nationally recognised for her advocacy, she works at the intersection of mental health, ageing, disability, multiculturalism, LGBTIQA+ communities, and neurodiversity to drive systemic change. Judy's areas of expertise include culture and psychology, advocacy and social impact, and intersectionality and mental health.

Judy and the Solis group co-created the *Dumplings Against Depression* event in 2022, fostering connection and collaboration within the multicultural community.

Joye Chan JP | Eastwood Chinese Senior Citizens Club



Joey Chan is the President and Programme/Event Director of the Eastwood Chinese Senior Citizens Club (ECSCC), a long-established community organisation supporting Chinese-speaking older adults in Sydney. She is also the Ethnic Programme Director and Cantonese radio presenter at 2RRR 88.5FM, where she promotes multicultural community voices, communication and engagement.

Joey is also a member of the Department of Home Affairs Women's Reference Group, contributing to discussions on issues and experiences affecting women and migrant communities. Through her extensive community involvement, Joey has developed a strong understanding of the challenges faced by older migrants, including language barriers, social isolation and difficulties accessing culturally and linguistically appropriate services. She is passionate about promoting active ageing, connection, inclusion and wellbeing within multicultural communities.

Ronna Guzman | Philippine Australian Multicultural Association Inc.



Ronna Guzman is a Filipino-Australian community leader, human services professional and advocate with more than 14 years' experience across aged care, disability, mental health, justice and community services.

Her perspective on multicultural mental health is informed by multiple lenses: personal lived experience of mental health diagnosis and recovery, long-term experience as a family carer and advocate and professional experience supporting people across different stages of life and navigating complex health and community service systems.

Alongside her role as a Consumer Advisor with NSW Health's Northern Sydney Local Health District, Ronna is Director & Head of Growth at Care.Live.Smile, where she works within the aged care sector with a strong focus on culturally responsive care, supporting individuals and families experiencing mental health challenges, disability and complex social circumstances.

Ronna is also President of the Philippine Australian Multicultural Association Inc. (PAMAI) and a Board Director of the Multicultural Communities Council of NSW, bringing grassroots community experience together with broader advocacy and systems perspectives.

Her work is grounded in the belief that resilience and vulnerability can coexist, and that culturally responsive mental health systems must not only recognise the diagnosis, but the whole person: their culture, family, strengths, relationships, lived experience and aspirations.

Emalynne So | Transcultural Mental Health Centre



Emalynne So is a Mental Health Consultant at the Transcultural Mental Health Centre (TMHC), strengthening clinical capacity of mental health services with new and emerging communities. She provides consultation and training to support practitioners working with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, with a focus on refugee and migrant experiences across the lifespan. As a clinical psychologist, she has worked across public and private settings in chronic pain, medical rehabilitation, and psychological medicine, bringing a culturally responsive and trauma informed approach to her work with migrant and refugee communities.

Kawthar Ibrahim | School of Psychological Sciences, Macquarie University



Kawthar is a Lebanese and Fiji-Indian Australian who recently graduated with a Bachelor of Psychological Science and is currently completing her Psychology Honours degree at Macquarie University. Her Honours thesis investigates factors that may drive aggressive bystander behaviour in online environments.

Alongside her studies, Kawthar works as a Therapy Assistant in a private practice in Western Sydney, where she supports neurodiverse children and adolescents from CALD backgrounds. Having previously worked as the Practice Manager, she has gained a unique perspective on the systemic barriers that can limit access to psychological care, that limit or prevent access to families navigating the mental health system.

As a CALD Muslim, Kawthar is committed to advocating for more equitable, culturally appropriate, and accessible mental health services for her communities. With a long-term goal of completing a Master's in Neuropsychology, she hopes to continue care while contributing to a mental health system that not only recognises existing gaps in support but actively works to address them.

Panel #2: *Transforming Multicultural Mental Health Through Research*

Professor Lee-Fay Low | University of Sydney



Lee-Fay Low (BSc Psych (Hons), PhD) is Professor in Ageing and Health, University of Sydney. She is a registered psychologist with a PhD in psychiatric epidemiology. Prof Low conducts research that she hopes will make a difference in the world.

Her knowledge expertise is in rehabilitation and post-diagnostic support for people with dementia, timely diagnosis of dementia, stigma and dementia literacy, community and aged care and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. She has methodological skills in the design of complex interventions, implementation methods, population studies, systematic reviews and clustered randomised trials.

She has authored over 180 peer-reviewed articles, and three books on dementia. She is an active advocate for improving how older people are included and treated. Lee-Fay is enthusiastic about research, and even admits to liking statistics.

Associate Professor Ilse Blignault | Western Sydney University Translational Health Research Institute



Dr Ilse Blignault is one of the Chief Investigators on the State of Multicultural Mental Health in Australia research report that was launched earlier this year. Ilse is Adjunct Associate Professor at the Western Sydney University Translational Health Research Institute. She has qualifications in clinical psychology and international public health and broad expertise in clinical and population mental health and wellbeing, health and community services delivery in a multicultural society, and research translation.

Dr Xin Wang | Department of Linguistics, Macquarie University



Dr Xin Wang is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Linguistics at Macquarie University. Her research investigates the cognitive and neural mechanisms underlying bilingual and multilingual language processing in both comprehension and production. Using behavioural methods together with advanced neurocognitive techniques such as eye-tracking and magnetoencephalography (MEG), she studies how multiple languages are represented, activated, and managed in the human mind and brain.

Panel #3: *Creating a Culturally Responsive Mental Health Workforce*

Dr Deepika Yerrakalva | Australian Society of Psychiatrists



Deepika is a child and adolescent psychiatrist who has worked in the regional areas of four different states of Australia including as clinical director for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in an Local Health District in NSW. She is Director on the board of Australian Society of Psychiatrists. She is currently working in Canberra helping set up the ACT youth trauma service where she is also clinical lead with Uniting. She has held various training and medical leadership roles.

Deepika is UK-trained, studying medicine at the University of Cambridge including Ethics and Law, as well as child and adolescent psychiatry training at the Tavistock Clinic in London. She has a special interest and training in systemic work, family therapy, and organisational dynamics. She is studying her Masters in Clinical Family Therapy with La Trobe at present.

Dr Vincent Oxenham | School of Psychological Sciences, Macquarie University

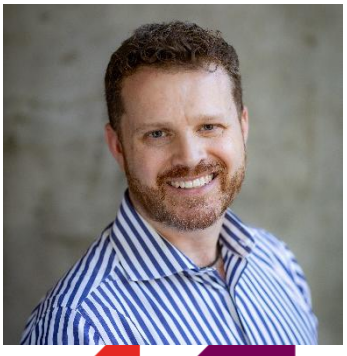


Vincent Oxenham, DPsych, MAPS, FCCN, is a Mauritian clinical neuropsychologist whose work bridges brain health, psychological wellbeing, and cultural responsiveness in care. He is Senior Lecturer in Neuropsychology and Clinical Discipline Head of Neuropsychology at Macquarie University, and Senior Clinical Neuropsychologist at Royal North Shore Hospital, where he leads the hospital's neuropsychology service.

Trilingual in Mauritian Kreol, French, and English, Vincent grew up in Mauritius, a multicultural and multilingual society, before moving to England to complete his Bachelor of Science in Psychology at the University of Birmingham, and then to Australia, at Macquarie University, for his doctorate. His early career was spent working with older adults from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds at the Prince of Wales Hospital, an experience that shaped a lasting interest in how assessment and care can be adapted for people whose language and cultural context differ from the tools and norms clinicians are trained on.

A significant portion of his work now focuses on workforce and training. He oversees Macquarie's Master of Clinical Neuropsychology placement and clinical practice program, has trained over 50 neuropsychologists, and has supervised the first Aboriginal clinical neuropsychology trainees in Australia. As co-chair of the Australian Neuropsychology Alliance of Training and Practice Leaders and a member of the Australian Psychological Society's Decolonising Neuropsychology committee, he has helped develop competency frameworks and training standards that take cultural responsiveness seriously rather than treating it as an add-on. His clinical and research interests include functional neurological disorder, concussion, and building more preventative and accessible models of care, including New South Wales Health's first public multidisciplinary concussion clinic, which received a NSW Health award in 2023.

Dr Christopher Hunt | Macquarie University Psychology Clinic



Dr Christopher Hunt is the Clinic Director at the Macquarie University Psychology Clinic. His areas of interest include gambling, masculinity and gender roles, and Dialectical Behaviour Therapy. He completed his PhD in 2013 at the University of Sydney and spent time studying and working in research in Italy, at the University of Padua and the University of Trieste. Christopher has a passion for using psychological research and clinical work to educate general audiences and to make changes at policy levels. His work as both a clinical and research supervisor has led to a keen interest in the education of the next generation of psychologists and how we can work as a profession to enact social change by supporting students from diverse backgrounds.

Angela Cao | Emotional Health Clinic, Macquarie University Lifespan Health and Wellbeing Research Centre



Angela is a Chinese Australian Clinical Psychologist who provides therapy in both English and Mandarin. She completed her Master of Clinical Psychology at Macquarie University in 2023.

Angela has a special interest in psycho-oncology and works with the Western Sydney Youth Cancer Service and the Australian Catholic University Personalised Psychology Clinic. She also supports children, adolescents, and their families through her private practice role at the Emotional Health Clinic.

As a bilingual psychologist, Angela is passionate about providing culturally responsive care for the Chinese community. She understands the importance of feeling truly heard and is committed to creating a warm, collaborative, and culturally sensitive space where people feel safe, understood, and supported to navigate life's challenges and work towards meaningful change.

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