



Mobility & Accessibility for Children in Australia

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ADELAIDE FAMILY TAKING PART IN GROUNDBREAKING RESEARCH

An Adelaide family is taking part in groundbreaking research that aims to shed new light on the day-to-day transport challenges faced by families of children with disabilities in Australia.

In a partnership between Mobility and Accessibility for Children in Australia Ltd (MACA) and Monash University, researchers are immersing themselves in the lives of families to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of transport arrangements on their daily life.

The researchers are conducting interviews with the families to learn about how they go about everyday transport. The families also keep video, photographic and written diaries of their experiences.

This includes Hillbank parents Amy and Alan Haythorpe, whose 7-year-old son Liam has autism spectrum disorder and requires a special purpose car seat.

The research team is visiting from Melbourne tomorrow to better understand the family's day-to-day experience when it comes to transport.

MACA Chief Executive Helen Lindner said many Australian children with disabilities are unable to travel in regular, 'off-the-shelf' car restraints, and a trip in the car to safely get from A to B is often no easy feat for their families.

"MACA's national survey revealed stark challenges, with more than half of parents reporting that their child had gotten out of their child restraint or their seatbelt while they were driving, and more than two-thirds of parents reported never receiving information on safely transporting their child," Helen said.

"We've had parents share with us harrowing stories of resorting to restraining their child with cable ties and duct tape because they felt they had no other choice.

"Families of children with disabilities and allied health professionals can now access a national website – www.macahub.org – aimed at improving motor vehicle transport for children like Liam.

"This research will provide a deeper understanding of the experience of families than we've ever had before, which will inform the development of new products and services that respond to the real-world transport needs of families living with disability."

As well as the Haythorpe family, the research project involves families in Melbourne VIC, Tamborine QLD, Theodore ACT, Launceston TAS, and Bathurst NSW.

Sarah Pink, Professor of Design and Emerging Technologies at Monash University said the research would go much further than standard observation.

"Families of children with disabilities and medical conditions have an enormous amount of knowledge, creativity and expertise when it comes to keeping their children safe when travelling, and our objective is to get under the surface and learn from them," Sarah said.

"The research will help identify how a deeper understanding of human experience and everyday social innovation offers new opportunities to solve complex and enduring problems.

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“It’s important we bring all of that in depth knowledge together and apply it to the design of future safe travel, whether it’s policy, regulation, products or future technology.”

This research project is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services. A report of findings will be published at macahub.org later in 2022.

For further information visit www.makahub.org/projects/ethnographic-research

Families and allied health professionals can find evidence-based information about safe vehicle transport for children with disabilities and medical conditions from MACA’s website: <http://www.makahub.org>

About MACA

[MACA](http://www.makahub.org) is a registered charity dedicated to advancing the rights of children with disabilities and medical conditions to safe and accessible transport.

Until the establishment of MACA around two years ago, there was no national expert body advocating for the rights of children with disabilities and medical conditions to safe and accessible transport.

MACA addresses the gap in Australia between policy, research, and practice impacting the transport of children with disabilities and medical conditions.

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