Sarah Verdon, from the Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education, Charles Sturt University, Australia, will present “Embracing diversity, creating equality: Supporting the speech, language, and communication of culturally and linguistically diverse children.”

Abstract: The development of effective communication skills is essential for children’s social engagement, educational attainment, and lifelong participation in society and the workforce. As the world becomes more mobile, nations are becoming increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse. An understanding of this diversity is essential for planning services to support all children to become competent and effective communicators in ways that are responsive to their cultural and linguistic background. Yet, in many countries, little is known about young children’s linguistic diversity and how their multilingual speech, language, and communication development can be supported. This PhD research addresses this need by contributing to the literature in two ways. Firstly, by focusing Australian children as an example of cultural and linguistic diversity within an English-dominant nation, this PhD research draws upon large scale longitudinal studies of over 5,000 children to describe the linguistic diversity of Australia’s children in the early years. In addition, factors that support and inhibit the acquisition and maintenance of multiple languages in early childhood among both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian children are explored. Secondly, this PhD research uses ethnographic data collected from international 14 sites (in Brazil, Italy, Hong Kong, Canada and the US) to investigate approaches to practice that can facilitate effective assessment and intervention for culturally and linguistically diverse children with speech, language, and communication needs. The outcomes of this research inform service planning and provision to support children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to develop their speech, language and communication for positive lifelong outcomes.