Abstract: Digitising Early Childhood Conference; Perth, July 9-13

Session title: Technology in the home of children aged 0-5 – Design-thinking a solution
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The Alannah & Madeline Foundation has been working on a suite of interlinked projects that focus on the impact of digital technology in the early years. All of these projects aim to better understand the issues from differing viewpoints and design solutions that have both immediate practicality, but also align with a whole-of-society approach. This session will focus on the research findings and solutions prototyping of a recent collaboration with consulting firm Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC). The 'Early Years and Technology' project focused on technology use in the home of families with children aged 0-5. It had the broad aim of "helping families control the technology rather than the technology controlling them". Three guiding principles for technology use in the home were defined prior to the commencement of the project; they were: Safety, Support and Responsibility. After a thorough literature review, the main project ran for ten weeks, moving through a three week research phase, synthesis, ideation, five weeks of solutions prototyping, and culminating with a documentation of final deliverables. The research phase included contextual interviews with 49 parents and carers, plus an additional 30 video diary participants. It was vital to conduct the interviews in the context of the family home, as observations of the lived-in, physical environment formed an important component of the eventual insights. Four key personas of parents/carers were recognised and defined: 'Old School', 'Tight Ship', 'Tech Embracer' and 'Tech Reformer'. Nine key insights were identified and framed, and from these, the project entered the solutions prototyping phase, where a range of possibilities were explored using a robust design thinking methodology. The session will share deeper insights from each of these phases, as well as present the ultimate solutions that were built in skeleton form. This project complements the additional work of the Foundation in this space, which includes the design of a technology and wellbeing framework for early learning centres, and a cyber safety learning tool for children aged 5-8. Each project is a collaboration with established experts in the field and brings in stakeholders from government, education, academic and corporate sectors.