

# 44th APS Annual Conference **DARWIN**



## MEDIA RELEASE

30 September – 4 October 2009

Darwin Convention Centre, Northern Territory

**Embargoed to:** 30 September 2009

### **Girls hung up on weight, while boys focus on muscles to feel good**

Body image pressures are being felt in Australian children as young as eight, a preliminary psychological study has found.

According to the study of 101 children, aged between eight and 11, girls compare their bodies more negatively than their male counterparts.

“We found 25 per cent of girls compared their weight to their peers, while 26 per cent of boys compared their muscles,” said Associate Professor Lina Ricciardelli, psychologist and study author from Deakin University.

Dr Ricciardelli will present her findings at the Australian Psychological Society’s 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Darwin this week.

“Girls were more likely to focus on their peers who they felt had a better body, particularly on those features they wish they had or could change,” she said.

“Whereas, boys tended to focus on their strengths and used social comparisons to feel good about themselves, helping to build their self-esteem.

“While comparisons seem to help boys to feel more positive and confident, girls tend to show signs of lower self-esteem and feel more discontent with their figures.”

The study shows body image concerns can develop at an early age, according to Dr Ricciardelli.

“Children regularly compare their height, weight and muscles with their peers and this is natural, but on the flip side, it can have serious implications when children are still developing their self-perceptions and identities,” she said.

“Many children make these comparisons subconsciously, so it’s important for parents to educate children that it’s normal to be different heights and weights.

“We need to try and encourage children to focus on their individual strengths to help form a positive, healthy body image.”

For more information on the APS 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference visit:

[www.apskonference.com.au](http://www.apskonference.com.au)

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#### MEDIA CONTACTS:

Please direct all media queries to:

Elaine Grant  
+61 412 683 068

Ellise McLoughlan  
+61 428 445 097



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**To coordinate an interview with Dr Lina Ricciardelli, please contact: Elaine Grant on 0412 683 068 or Ellise McLoughlan on 0428 445 097.**

**About the 44<sup>th</sup> APS Annual Conference:**

This year's Conference will be held at the Darwin Convention Centre from 30 September to 4 October 2009. The Conference will bring together prominent psychologists, practitioners and researchers to explore topical issues including: psychological responses to disaster, emotional intelligence, Indigenous mental health and wellbeing, women in management, body image and youth substance abuse issues.

**About Australian Psychological Society:**

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) is the peak professional body for Australian psychologists. With more than 17,500 members and 40 branches across the country, the APS is the largest of all non-medical health professionals' associations in Australia.

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