

# Kids are not OK after KO

**EXCLUSIVE**  
**MANDY SQUIRES**

CHILDHOOD concussions may lead to depression.

New research shows kids who do not recover quickly from concussion are at risk of developing mental illness.

Landmark research by the Murdoch Children's Research Institute suggests psychologists and physiotherapists should treat kids who are taking a long time to recover from concussion, to guard against future mental health problems.

Murdoch paediatric neuropsychologist Vicki Anderson said a study of 300 badly concussed children had just finished and a pilot program was under way using a "multi-modal" approach, treating both physical and mental illness post-concussion.

It comes as a sports law expert calls for a national regulatory body to tackle concussion across all Australian sports, at all levels.

Bond University's Annette Greenhow said a national concussion strategy to minimise brain injuries was urgently needed as more females signed up to play contact sport.

Assistant Professor Greenhow said concussion was a major public health issue and the Federal Government needed to take a lead role in protecting sportspeople of all ages.

Under the model, state governments, sporting codes and experts would work with Sports Australia to develop a national concussion framework that produced consistent guidelines and led research.

US studies showed that females had higher concussion rates than men, Prof Greenhow said.

Concussion looms as one of sport's most important issues, with a class action from AFL players who allege they have suffered long-term brain injury due to on-field concussions set for later this year.

Brain Injury Australia executive officer Nick Rushworth said the link between concussion and brain injury was "undeniable" and research showed up to 60 per cent of people who suffered a traumatic brain injury experienced mental health problems.

The AFLW's injury report reveals there were 14 concussions in the inaugural 2017 season and 16 this year.