

# Rehabilitation, Ageing and Independent Living (RAIL) Research Centre

## Member & Partner eBulletin – September 2024

**Members** of RAIL are Monash University education and research staff or students across a variety of disciplines that are interested in rehabilitation, ageing and independent living.

**Partners** of RAIL are people outside Monash University from various types of organisations/background across rehabilitation, ageing and/or independent living including academics from other Australian and international Universities, industry leaders, clinicians and other health and care providers, service providers and those involved in policy and planning.

### In this RAIL eBulletin edition:

- [A message from the Director](#)
- [Member profile](#)
- [RAIL Research Centre eForum](#)
- [RAIL paper of the month](#)
- [RAIL 2024 EMCR awardee profile](#)
- [Community Opening at the Healthy Futures Hub](#)
- [Carer Health and Wellbeing Service Official Launch](#)
- [The Exercise Right for Active Ageing study](#)
- [Communication Robot in action](#)
- [Building strong connections in Malaysia](#)
- [RAIL External Advisory Committee member and Friends of RAIL community representative presenting on consumer and community involvement in research](#)
- [2024 Empathy Symposium](#)
- [Member and Partner Contributions](#)

## A message from the Director

RAIL has had a busy couple of months! This has included the community opening of the Healthy Futures Hub, the launch of the Carers Health and Wellbeing Service, as well as travel to Malaysia for team members Professor Keith Hill, Dr Angel Lee, and Dr Aislinn Lalor, who undertook a 10-day trip to build connections for RAIL across a range of activities.



I would like to congratulate Dr Aislinn Lalor and Dr Christina Ekegren from the RAIL Research Centre who have been appointed as RAIL's new Stream Leads for Ageing and Rehabilitation, respectively. Aislinn takes over from Professor Keith Hill and Christina takes over from me, with the new roles to commence in January 2025.

I hope you enjoy reading about our activities and outcomes in the e-bulletin, and we welcome any contributions you consider will be of interest to others.

Finally, if you have a colleague who would like to become a Member of RAIL (Monash staff or students) or a Partner of RAIL (non-Monash), and thereby be on our email communications and e-bulletin distribution list, please ask them to complete the [Member survey](#) (Monash) or the [Partner survey](#) (non-Monash) as relevant.

A/Prof Tarsh Brusco

## Member profile



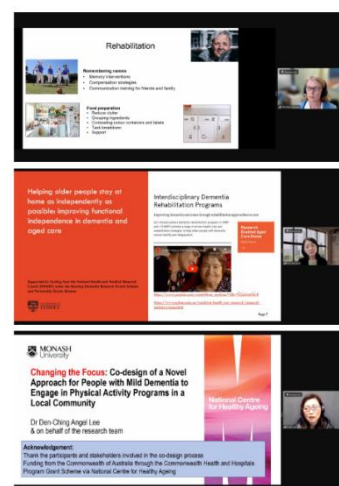
Dr Matthew Carroll is a Senior Research Fellow with Monash Rural Health, based in Churchill in Gippsland. His doctoral research was in psychophysiology but his research since then has had a public health focus, with extensive involvement in developing and supporting major research platforms. The majority of his work has been related to ageing, including helping to establish the 45 and Up Study and overseeing the ARC/NHMRC Research Network in Ageing Well.

For the last 10 years he has been one of the lead investigators on the Hazelwood Health Study looking at the impacts of the 2014 mine fire on the local community, including examining the impacts on older people. Matthew has had a long-term focus on building ageing research capacity, and is the National Convenor for the Emerging Researchers in Ageing (ERA) initiative, which provides opportunities for emerging researchers, particularly doctoral students, to network and collaborate with their peers, senior academics, and policy makers. Matthew is excited to be working with RAIL to present the [2024 ERA conference](#), which is being chaired by A/Prof Tarsh Brusco.

## RAIL Research Centre eForum

On 22 August, RAIL hosted an eForum on [Improving access to rehabilitation, reablement, and physical activity for people living with dementia](#). Three expert speakers presented at the forum, including Professor Yun-Hee Jeon, the inaugural Susan and Isaac Wakil Healthy Ageing Chair at the University of Sydney, Associate Professor Michele Callisaya from Monash University and Dr Angel Lee from the RAIL Research Centre and the National Centre for Healthy Ageing (NCHA).

Almost 100 attendees joined the event, with a great Q and A session held on improving access and funding as well as a discussion on the rewards and challenges of conducting research in this field.



## RAIL paper of the month

Levinger P, Dreher BL, **Soh SE**, Dow B, Batchelor F, Hill KD. (2024) Multigenerational spaces: the usage and activities of different age groups within six community parks in Victoria, Australia. *J Public Health (Oxf)*. *Journal of Public Health*, Volume 46, Issue 3, September 2024, Pages 403–411, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdae119>

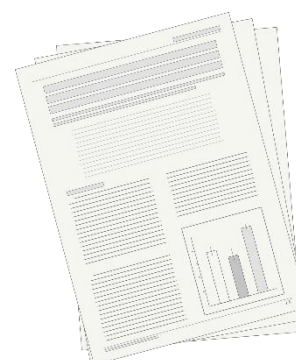
### **Abstract**

**Background:** This study investigated how different spaces within multigenerational local parks are being used by older people and other age groups.

**Methods:** Observation of park visitors occurred in six Victorian parks one month after park refurbishment. Parks were classified into six spaces based on equipment/amenities and associated expected activity. Observations were summarized descriptively, and negative binomial regression models were used to examine the association between visitor counts and classified targeted areas.

**Results:** A total of 12 501 people visited the parks with 4.1% older visitors. The number of older visitors in each park area was consistently less than other age groups, with counts of older visitors being 50% less in mixed spaces (95% confidence interval [CI] 0.38, 0.65), 40% less in adult exercise equipment areas (95% CI 0.46, 0.77) and 59% less in walking paths (95% CI 0.31, 0.55). The number of older visitors engaging in physical activity were significantly greater in walking paths (incidence rate ratios 1.75; 95% CI 1.16, 2.64) compared with children's play spaces.

**Conclusion:** The number of visitors across different age groups varied significantly between the park targeted areas. Most spaces were mainly used by the intended target age group/user, with no particular area used by all age groups in similar proportions.



## RAIL 2024 EMCR awardee profile

In our last edition, Dr Jack Nguyen (Monash-Epworth Rehabilitation Research Centre (MERRC)) was profiled as one of the two RAIL EMCR 2024 grant awardees. In this edition, we are profiling the other 2024 awardee Dr Denise Azar (School of Rural Health, Monash University):



**Dr Denise Azar** (PhD, BExSchons) is a Research Fellow at the School of Rural Health, Monash University. Denise has over 18 years' experience working in health-related research and evaluation settings, including not-for profit organisations and State Government. Denise is the project manager for [Equal Hearts Study: Using co-design to improve accessibility and acceptability of cardiac services](#) and is a member of the [Enhancing Health Literacy in Secondary Prevention of Cardiac Events \(ENHEARTEN\) study](#) project team.

Her current projects focus on understanding the role of health literacy and accessibility in reducing health inequalities, and co-design and application of health literacy interventions with health services, consumers and practitioners.

Denise holds particular interest in understanding social determinants of health experienced by individuals living in rural areas and people from culturally diverse communities to improve health outcomes. The 2024 RAIL EMCR seed grant will help understand the health literacy challenges within residential aged care facilities for those living in rural and metropolitan areas.

## Community Opening at the Healthy Futures Hub



On Saturday 20th July 2024, RAIL Research Centre Director A/Prof Tarsh Brusco and Independent Living Stream Lead A/Prof Libby Callaway joined with staff from the Monash School of Primary and Allied Health Care (SPAHC), industry partners, and community members to attend the [Healthy Futures Hub](#) Community Grand Opening.

The RAIL Research Centre has led the co-design of this Hub, starting back in 2020 with a meeting between Professor Keith Hill (the inaugural RAIL director) and A/Prof Libby Callaway presenting the concept for a multi-partner, co-located health and wellbeing hub to the St Kilda Football Club CEO and executive team. That meeting led to over two years of work to engage the Frankston City Council, draw on our team's existing industry

partnerships and collaborations to engage and co-locate providers of rehabilitation, ageing and independent living services with other service providers of a community gym and local community centre

The Community Grant Opening was an open invitation to people to come and try out different offerings at the Hub. The Monash team hosted a range of activities and provided information on our research, education and projects run out of the Allied Health Student Clinic space at the Hub.

A/Prof Tarsh Brusco set up George's Gymnastic Program in the Monash space, showcasing the award-winning all abilities gymnastics program being piloted and evaluated by the RAIL Research Centre with Waverly Gymnastics Centre, and supported by Monash Allied Health Students. A/Prof Libby Callaway, the Independent Living Stream Lead in RAIL was invited to speak at the Community Opening, with Frankston City Council Mayor Gareth Conroy.



The Monash paramedicine team offered an introduction to CPR and the opportunity to tour an Ambulance, and the Social Work department shared details of the Social Work Student Law Clinic. The Hon. Jodie Belyea MP, the Member for Dunkley, toured the Monash space, which has now become a hive of activity with various allied health fieldwork programs being run out of the Hub, where Monash students are engaging with consumer and community members involved with various Hub partner organisations including Belvedere Community Centre, Guide Dogs Victoria and Wallara.

Dr Em Bould and A/Prof Libby Callaway from the RAIL Research Centre and Occupational Therapy Department at Monash are now leading an evaluation of the impact of this Hub on community member experiences, and health and wellbeing outcomes.

To learn more about our partner organisations and the work of Monash at the Healthy Futures Hub, go to

<https://www.healthyfutureshub.com.au/>

## Carer Health and Wellbeing Service Official Launch



Dr Aislinn Lalor, Senior Research Fellow at the RAIL Research Centre, is the Project Lead for the Carer Health and Wellbeing Service. On Monday 26th August, the Australian Government Federal Member for Dunkley, Hon. Jodie Belyea MP, officially launched the Carer Health and Wellbeing Service. The Launch was an opportunity to celebrate the Service's 6-months of operation; showcasing the culmination of years of collaborative research work that has now been translated into developing and piloting the novel co-designed service that is particularly for carers aged 50 years and older, who are caring for someone 65 years and older in the community.

The Launch included presentations from Hon. Jodie Belyea MP, Associate Professor [Helen Cooper](#) (Chief Executive, [Peninsula Health](#)), Professor [Wayne Hodgson](#) ([Monash University](#)), Professor [Velandai Srikanth](#) (Director, [National Centre for Healthy Ageing \(NCHA\)](#)), [Iain Edwards](#) ([Peninsula Health](#)) as well as both Aislinn and A/Prof [Tarsh Brusco](#) (Director, Monash University's [#RAIL](#) Research Centre). It also enabled RAIL team members to join with members from various community services and organisations at the Official Launch. We were particularly honoured to have Ivan Freer, a carer and client of the Carer Health and Wellbeing Service, attend and share his lived experiences as well as highlight the difference this service can have for carers.

[Select here to hear Ivan's story](#)

The Carer Health and Wellbeing Service is funded through the Commonwealth Government of Australia Community Health and Hospitals Program Grant through the NCHA's Living Labs Research Program and partners the Rehabilitation, Ageing, and Independent Living (RAIL) Research Centre with clinical leaders from Peninsula

Health. With studies showing that two thirds of the care of older Australians at home is being provided by an unpaid older family member or friend, we know that often the carer's own health and wellbeing needs fall by the wayside, and feelings of isolation and loneliness become real. Our Service prioritises the often-neglected health and wellbeing needs of older carers, through access to a team including social workers, psychologists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists. The interdisciplinary team assess and implement treatments addressing the carer's self-prioritised needs, which may include addressing stress, feelings of guilt or isolation, poor sleep quality, low physical activity, or improving manual handling skills.

If you or someone you know is a carer aged 50 and over, caring for someone 65 and over, you can find out more about the Service and how to access it here:

<https://www.peninsulahealth.org.au/services/community-health-services/carers-health-and-wellbeing-service/>

If you would like to know more about the research behind the Service, please feel free to contact Dr Aislinn Lalor via: [aislinn.lalor@monash.edu](mailto:aislinn.lalor@monash.edu)

[ABC Radio interview with Dr Aislinn Lalor](#)

### **The Exercise Right for Active Ageing study**

[Dr Christina Ekegren](#), [A/Prof Sze-Ee Soh](#) and [A/Prof Tarsh Brusco](#) from the [Rehabilitation, Ageing and Independent Living \(RAIL\) Research Centre](#) and [Department of Physiotherapy](#), along with colleagues [A/Prof Darshini Ayton](#) and [Professor Helen Skouteris](#) from the [School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine](#) have recently completed an evaluation of the landmark [Exercise Right for Active Ageing study](#), which delivered subsidised exercise classes to ~7,000 older adults across Australia. The research found subsidised 12-week exercise classes of low-to-moderate intensity, run by accredited exercise professionals, led to significant improvements in physical function, physical activity and quality of life. The findings are outlined in three new studies published in the [Journal of Aging and Physical Activity](#), [BMC Geriatrics](#) and [Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport](#).

Reaching every state and territory the research has highlighted to policy makers the need for continued Government subsidies to boost exercise engagement in this extremely underserved group. The research has attracted significant media attention including an interview with ABC Perth ([5/8/24](#)).

## Communication Robot in action

On Wednesday 14th August 2024, the Director of the RAIL Research Centre A/Prof Tarsh Brusco along with RAIL Senior Research Fellow Dr Aislinn Lalor and Monash University Human robot-interaction researcher Dr Pamela Carreno-Medrano, visited Grand Cedar Aged Care Home to observe in action [ABI from Andromeda, the robotic companion](#) and discuss collaborative opportunities with the [Medical & Aged Care Group](#).

The session enabled the opportunity to interact with residents with the robot as a group, as well as engage one-on-one with Abi and a resident in her room. The overall consensus from residents and RAIL staff attending were delighted by Abi's sassy interaction and conversation - as well as getting everyone involved in some Tai Chi and dance movements. Tarsh and Aislinn, along with Pamela, look forward to progressing a potential ITTC PhD project with MACG and Abi.



## Building strong connections in Malaysia



In late July, three of the RAIL team (Professor Keith Hill, Dr Aislinn Lalor, and Dr Angel Lee) undertook a 10-day trip to Malaysia, to build connections for RAIL across a range of activities. The first component of the trip was attending and presenting at the ASEAN Conference on Healthy Ageing in Penang. Presentations included the Changing the Focus (physical activity program for people living with dementia), by Angel, the Carer Health and Wellbeing Service, by Aislinn, and Seniors Exercise Parks, by Keith. RAIL also had an exhibition booth at the conference, that attracted a lot of interest, including attendees taking a large number of our research papers, having discussions with our team, and taking away clip on koalas and Australian chocolates. Special thanks to Pek Hill and Anne Lalor, who also assisted with the booth. We attracted 45 people indicating

interest in becoming Partners of RAIL at the conference. Of note, Penang City Council expressed interest in following up after Keith's presentation, indicating they were interested in installing a Seniors Exercise Park as part of their application to be a WHO Age Friendly City.

The team then travelled to Kuala Lumpur for a number of activities with our colleagues at Monash Malaysia – with special thanks to Professor Shah Yasin and Dr Sarah Mattap from the Jeffrey Cheah School of Medicine and Health Sciences for their wonderful support for our visit. Key aspects of our visit to Monash Malaysia included:

- Detailed planning of a co-funded project (between RAIL and Monash Malaysia), led by Angel and Dr Sarah Mattap, exploring *Understanding current practice and challenges to the implementation of rehabilitation for people living with dementia: Insights from Malaysia*;
- A one-day visit to a rural area 3 hours from Kuala Lumpur, (Segamat), which is the base for the large longitudinal and cross-sectional survey of the South East Asia Community Observatory (SEACO), and local hospital, and health clinics;
- Other meetings with staff at the School of Medicine and Health Sciences discussing potential future collaborations;
- Presentations to the School by Keith, Aislinn and Angel, on similar topics to those presented at the ASEAN conference (again, there was interest in the possibility of installing a Seniors Exercise Park near the Monash Malaysia campus, and possibly also in the associated rural community of Segamat);
- Keith met with an established collaborator (Professor Pei Lee Teh) at the Business School at Monash Malaysia; and a former PhD student (discussing future collaborations); and Keith and Aislinn visited the OASIS Place program (an interdisciplinary program for children and adults with autism), after meeting Dr Choy at the Penang conference; and
- For Keith, a highlight was meeting and having a beer with Mr Sze Mun Yee, an 87 year old inspirational Ironman who commenced fitness activities after a sedentary life till about 50 years of age, and did his last IronMan event at 85 years (but still keeps fit!)

Of course, there was also a bit of opportunity to experience some of the wonderful cultural and culinary delights that Malaysia offers. All in all – a wonderful opportunity to build RAIL's collaborative research in Malaysia, including with Monash Malaysia.

**RAIL External Advisory Committee member and Friends of RAIL community representative presenting on consumer and community involvement in research**

## Empowering Voices

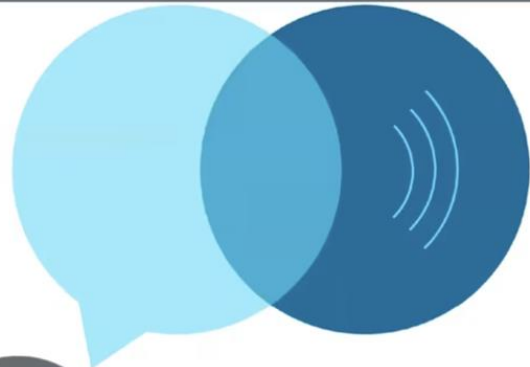
Lived Experience in Health and Safety Research Design

### ISCRR Learning Series Webinar

13 August, 2024

11am - 12pm

AEST



With speakers



Grainne Cruickshank  
Lived Experience  
advisor



Prof. Alex Collie  
Healthy Working Lives  
Research Group



Dr. Elizabeth Pritchard  
Healthy Working Lives  
Research Group



[Worker's Voice](#) is an ARC funded project led by Professor Alex Collie (Monash SPHPM), which includes as part of the team A/Prof Libby Callaway (RAIL Research Centre Independent Living Stream Lead) and Grainne Cruickshank (RAIL External Advisory Committee member and Friends of RAIL community representative).

As part of this project, Grainne was invited with Project CI Dr Elizabeth Pritchard to present at a recent Institute for Safety, Compensation and Recovery Research (ISCRR) Learning Series webinar titled "Empowering Voices Lived Experience in Health and Safety Research Design". Through an in-depth interview as a lived-experience expert, Grainne discussed her reflections on the 'dos' and 'don'ts' of consumer and community involvement in research. The recording of the session is available on the ISCRR's Vimeo channel: <https://vimeo.com/998139748>

Workers' Voice is a 3-year research study that aims to re-imagine workers' compensation in Australia, recognising that there is opportunity to improve the management and design of workers' compensation systems so that they can better support workers who have been injured to return to work following a workplace injury or disease.

## 2024 Empathy Symposium

Monash Nursing & Midwifery is hosting the 2024 Empathy symposium at the Frankston arts Centre on 5-6 December 2024 and PhD candidate Cameron Marshman's associated exhibition at the Cube 37 Gallery from 4-21 December 2024.

The Empathy Symposium will be three days of collaborative and interesting dialogue which will include plenary speakers, workshops and oral presentations exploring the relationship between art, empathy and compassion across health professions education, research and practice.

For more information on the symposium or to register or submit an abstract, please visit: <https://www.monash.edu/medicine/nursing/empathy-symposium>.



MONASH  
NURSING AND  
MIDWIFERY



## MONASH NURSING AND MIDWIFERY WILL BE HOSTING THE 2024 EMPATHY SYMPOSIUM.

This will be an exciting event that brings together healthcare consumers, educators, clinicians and researchers who are committed to sharing the power of empathy and compassion to transform education and healthcare.

The Symposium will include plenary speakers, workshops and oral presentations exploring the relationship between art, empathy and compassion across health professions education, research and practice.

*Artwork by Cameron Marshman*

### SPECIAL EXHIBITION: CULTIVATING COMPASSION

Monash Nursing and Midwifery PhD candidate Cameron Marshman will hold an exhibition showcasing his PhD research and the visual art created by participants. This research explores the embodied understandings of compassion in mental healthcare and how we can work together to cultivate flourishing and compassionate mental healthcare systems.

The exhibition will run from Wednesday 4 - 21 December 2024 at Cube 37 Gallery.

### EVENT DETAILS

**DATE:** 5 - 6 DECEMBER 2024

**Where:** Cube 37 Gallery  
Frankston Arts Centre  
Frankston, VIC 3199

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**  
[monash.edu/empathy-symposium](https://monash.edu/empathy-symposium)

CRICOS Provider Number: Monash University 00008C



## Member and Partner contributions

We would love to showcase current research from our members and partners. We invite you to submit a short story (and relevant images) about any research you are working on that aligns with RAIL. Submissions are due by the 30th of each month to [spahc.rail@monash.edu](mailto:spahc.rail@monash.edu).

RAIL aims to provide an accessible eBulletin for all. Image descriptions are available for images appearing in the eBulletin, with the use of a screen reader. If you have any issues with accessing any part of the eBulletin, please let us know at [spahc.rail@monash.edu](mailto:spahc.rail@monash.edu).

We acknowledge and pay respects to the Elders and Traditional Owners of the land on which our four Australian campuses stand. Information for [Indigenous Australians](#)

We're committed to [diversity and inclusion](#)

<https://www.monash.edu/medicine/spahc/rail/>

**Our mailing address is:**

[spahc.rail@monash.edu](mailto:spahc.rail@monash.edu)

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