

Rehabilitation, Ageing and Independent Living (RAIL) Research Centre

Friends of RAIL eBulletin – April 2025

Friends of RAIL are people in our community who may contribute to – or use – any of RAIL’s research outputs across the areas of rehabilitation, ageing and/or independent living. Friends include consumer and community members, such as people with their own lived experience across the areas of rehabilitation, ageing and/or independent living, and their families and friends.

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A message from Aislinn (RAIL Consumer and Community Engagement Lead)



Hello Friends of RAIL and Happy 2025!

Welcome to our first Friends of RAIL e-bulletin for this year. We are really happy to have a fantastic response from one of our Friends about the last ebulletin – which we have permission to share with you all (see below in the section called ‘Response from a Friend’). These reflections are really useful and we hope you find them equally interesting

to ponder. If you would like to share your reflections from this eBulletin, please refer to the

contact details provided at the end of the eBulletin – we are always happy to receive input or feedback.

As always, we hope you enjoy reading about the various successes and goings on at RAIL, as well as the tips – Aislinn.

A message from Grainne (Friends of RAIL Consumer and Community Representative)

Welcome everyone to the first e-bulletin for 2025!

To our new members, my name is Grainne Cruickshank (pronounced Gron-ya) and I am the Friends of RAIL Consumer and Community Representative (or “Head Friend” as the RAIL staff refer to me!).



I wanted to share a friend’s experience; her partner had to have surgery in Queensland during their holiday. When he was finally well enough to travel, they tried to arrange wheelchair assist for their flight home. Their booking was with Jetstar but their quota for assistance had been met for that flight so without any fuss Jetstar moved them onto a later flight and were excellent, couldn’t do enough to help them. To support my husband, we used wheelchair assist every time we travelled and it is an excellent service. Flying is stressful, anything that can ease that is terrific.

In all my roles as a Lived Experience Advisor I have given the advice to ask for help and accept it. I wish I had asked more often. There is so much being done to help and cater for people with disabilities or age-related needs but needs often aren’t obvious.

Telling others about becoming a Friend of RAIL



Do you know someone who may like to become a ‘Friend of RAIL’?

If so, please either:

[share this link](#) with them to complete the registration survey

Or they can:

- email spahc.rail@monash.edu or,
- call 03 9904 4557 to speak to Karine about registering.

In addition to this Friends of RAIL eBulletin (distributed four times per year), RAIL also runs free networking events for our Friends and invites Friends to contribute to and/or collaborate on education and research activities.

RAIL Team member introduction

Hello to our Friends of RAIL. My name is Dr Em Bould (they/them) and I am a Senior Research Fellow working across RAIL and the occupational therapy department. I have a background in Psychology and have worked in research in the UK and Australia for over 20 years. The picture here is of me with my Australian Terrier Dog, Barney, who I adopted from the UK in 2020.



He is a retired show dog, who won three Challenge Certificates, and Best of Breed, so his long name is Champion Silhill Barney Rubble. He now dips his paws into some of my research projects, which are building evidence regarding the impact of animal supports on social and community inclusion. Our recent project found a shared interest in pets helped build connections between young and older adults, reduced loneliness and improved overall health and wellbeing. You can [select here to read the paper](#), or [select here to watch a short video summary of the paper](#).

My other passion is developing accessible content for research projects, teaching activities and grant applications. This includes Easy Read and plain language documents, 2D animation videos, posters and infographics. I am currently developing a new short course called 'Designing accessible research, education and services', or DARES for short. To find out more about who needs the DARES short course you can either [select here to download a PDF document](#) or [select here to watch a 3-minute video](#).

Outside of work Barney and I enjoy going on walks, gardening and supporting the St Kilda Football club.

Call for Friends articles

We would love to hear from you!



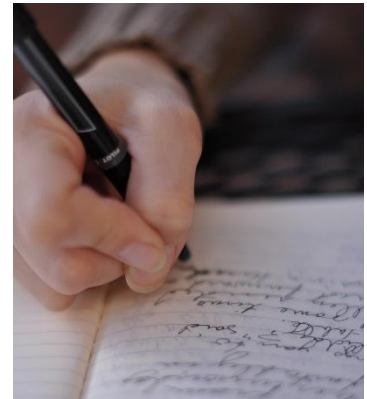
We are calling for any Friends who may be interested in writing a brief profile about themselves, a reflection on a topic related to rehabilitation, ageing and/or independent living/disabilities, or a poem they might have written. The format is flexible!

If you are interested in writing a brief piece for the next eBulletin, or have something you'd like to be able to be written up on your behalf (e.g. based on a phone call with yourself), please contact Karine via email spahc.rail@monash.edu or phone (03) 9904 4557.

Response from a Friend

When I commenced reading the Friends of RAIL eBulletin of December last year, my initial impression was of how many really good people are associated with RAIL, and I've been fortunate to meet some of them at RAIL events. The whole newsletter is good reading, but there were three articles in particular that piqued my interest.

Firstly, the article on travel. Japan is currently 'flavour of the month' in travel circles. Four couples I know went there in 2024 and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. During a month-long visit, one couple ate in a restaurant only once, instead purchasing food in supermarkets and other outlets, like locals, using Google translate on their phones to read and translate the labels. They also used this technology to assist with the spoken word, overall contributing greatly to the enjoyment of their trip.



The second point from the newsletter relates to the design of residences for people with a disability. As a Community Visitor with the Office of Public Advocate, I visit homes where people with a disability live in a supported living environment. Some residences are purpose-built, others have been adapted, with varying degrees of success. The take-out, from my observations and conversations in the houses, is that the special needs people with a disability have can often be effectively catered to by fully informed and understanding design. Focussing on an issue like this, that is of everyday importance to a lot of people, is a very important part of RAIL's function.

The third topic in the newsletter I read with great interest was about Dr Ekegren's research interest in the area of physical activity. Ever since I was a young boy, I have enjoyed sport and physical activity, and now aged 75 remain physically active. However, I have noticed that within my demographic this is often not the case. Especially after hospitalisation, I have noticed friends to be physically weaker and less mobile.

If they are prescribed exercise or rehabilitation as part of their recovery program, they are likely to adhere to that, although for how long can be an issue. One friend is a prime example. Apart from walking, on and off, over the years, he has played no sport since leaving school, nor exercised at all – he has no history of exercise, nor any inclination to undertake it, despite now needing to undertake a medically prescribed regimen of physio and other exercise to regain an adequate level of strength.

Any mention of the word exercise, even the mere hint of it, will immediately annoy, if not anger him, and during our morning coffees I refrain from doing so. Yet, this person needs to be informed and convinced by someone he is likely to listen to – a clinician who might be able to successfully convey the importance of exercise, along with having a diet that will aid in the physical rebuilding.

It seems to me this is a real challenge - how to successfully convince a person who has no history of exercise, in fact has always had an attitude of antipathy to it, about the importance of it for their health and wellbeing, and then who would be the best person to do this. Might it be the treating specialist, a physiotherapist, the GP? Ease of undertaking the required physical activity, supervised or not, plus ongoing follow up, would be essential components.

Many thanks for including these interesting topics, along with all the others, in the newsletter.

Stephen Peterson, Friend of RAIL

Friends of RAIL event



On 10th February 2025, the RAIL team hosted a Friends event on the Monash University Peninsula Campus. The event included brief presentations from the RAIL team and Friends of RAIL as well as a "rapid connection" workshop session in small groups during which RAIL team members briefly summarised their research projects and interests and heard from Friends on their perspective and ideas around RAIL's research and activities.

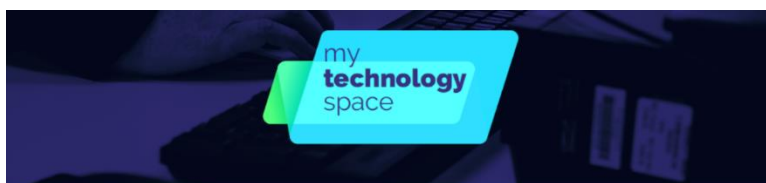
The team has compiled a summary of the key points raised by Friends during the "rapid connection" session and will be discussing these during their next Strategic Planning meeting. If you would like to access a copy of the summary key points

discussed during the event, please contact us at spahc.rail@monash.edu or, call 03 9904 4557 to speak to Karine.

The event was also an opportunity to launch the Friends of RAIL White Paper and provide everyone with a hard copy of the Paper. An electronic version of the White Paper is now available for download on our [RAIL website/publication page](#).

If you would like a hard copy of the White Paper to be posted to you, please contact us at spahc.rail@monash.edu or, call 03 9904 4557.

My Technology Space



A digital education resource on assistive technology used for cognitive support in everyday activities after brain injury.



In late 2024, RAIL Independent Living Stream Lead Associate Professor Libby Callaway, Senior Research Fellow Dr Em Bould and Research Fellow Lisa Licciardi – along with colleagues from the Ingham Institute, University of Sydney, and the University of Melbourne, community based allied health professionals, and three lived experience experts with acquired brain injury – launched My Technology Space (www.mytechnologyspace.org).

My Technology Space is a website for people with brain injury, their families, and allied health professionals working with them to assist in planning the use of technology for cognitive support following brain injury. My Technology Space was officially launched during the 2024 National Brain Injury Conference in Adelaide. This free web-based resource is the final deliverable in a joint TAC and icare NSW funded project scoping, evaluating and building education resources on the use of technology for cognitive support after brain injury. Since its launch, My Technology Space has already had over 1,100 active users engage with the website, from countries including Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Ireland, Pakistan and the United States of America.

In December 2024, ABC National News Radio showcased My Technology Space on both their national breakfast program and NewsRadio Drive via an interview with TAC client Josh Taylor, who was one of the lived experience experts with acquired brain injury working on the project.

Friends of RAIL contributing to a new textbook for health professions education

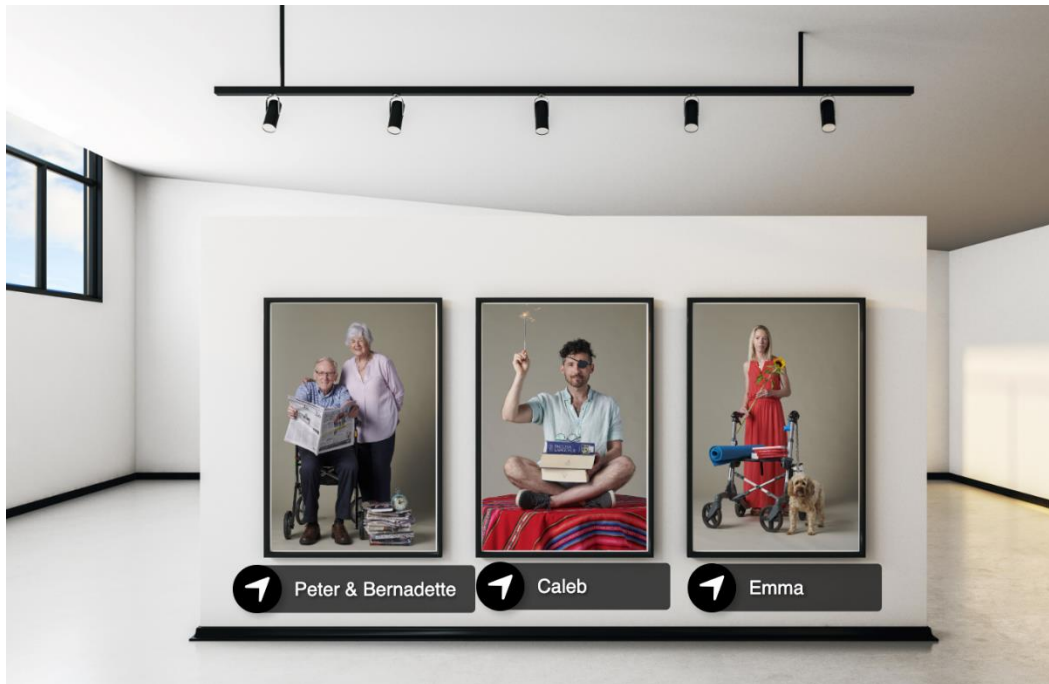
The RAIL Research Centre is very grateful to photographer Fred Kroh and Friends of RAIL Joy, Peter and Bernadette, as well Caleb and Emma, who agreed for their narrative portraits to be included in a chapter of a new open access textbook edited by Michelle Lazaras and Georgina Stephens, called "Preparing learnings for uncertainty in health professions: A handbook for educators".

Some of our Friends of RAIL may have previously attended the RAIL Research Centre exhibition of these portraits at the Frankston Arts Centre or on Monash Peninsula Campus. The narrative portraits were developed as part of a project led by Professor Gabby Brand (Monash Nursing and Midwifery) with RAIL Independent Living Stream Lead A/Professor Libby Callaway, using this method to listen to and learn from people with lived or learned experience of rehabilitation, ageing and/or disability to inform our Centre's development of our mission, vision and values.

These portraits were subsequently used with consent of the contributors to develop health professional education resources, which can now be accessed by Monash educators in a Moodle site. Gabby, her nursing colleague James Bonnamy and Libby wrote this new chapter. A component of the learning resources developed through the narrative portrait project have been included in the chapter (with a focus on occupational therapy education, but relevant for other disciplines) and can be downloaded for use in health professions education.

[Select here](#) to see the chapter and how the narrative portraits and other learning resources have been included in it.

To access the full textbook, [select here](#).



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Free legal information session for Frankston and Mornington Peninsula residents

This World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Safeguard Your Choices, Rights, and Finances

The [Peninsula Community Legal Centre](#) is hosting a free legal information session for the Frankston and Mornington Peninsula residents.

The session will focus on crucial topics that are important for everyone to understand.

Wills and Powers of Attorney: Learn how to protect your future and ensure your wishes are respected.

What To do When a Loved One Passes: Understand the important steps to take during a difficult time.

The Link Between Elder Abuse and Financial Abuse: Understand the signs and what you can do to help protect yourself against it.

Date: **Thursday June 5th**

Venue: **Safety Beach Community Centre**

Time: **10am-1pm**

If you have any questions about this event, please contact the Peninsula Community Legal Centre via email at pclc@pclc.org.au or via phone: (03) 9783 3600.

[Select here to book your ticket - for Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula residents only](#)



Free legal information session
Wills, Medical Powers of Attorney
What do I do when a loved one dies?

LEARN HOW TO SAFEGUARD YOUR RIGHTS, CHOICES AND FINANCES

Thursday 5 June 2025

10am - 1pm
 Safety Beach Community Centre
 185 Marine Drive, Safety Beach

Bookings & information:
 tel: 9783 3600
 email: pclc@pclc.org.au

Register:
 via QR code or link below



www.humanities.com.au/pclc-elder-forum-free-legal-information-session

Transport bookings:
 (limited and available only for those who may have difficulty attending)

Mornington Peninsula tel: 5950 1605
 Frankston - tel: 1300 322 322

Guest speakers:
Will Betts
 Peninsula Community Legal Centre

Gary Ferguson
 Seniors Rights Victoria

MC:
 Catherine Ashton
 Critical Info
 Podcast - "Don't Be Caught Dead"

pclc Peninsula Community Legal Centre

pace MORNINGTON PENINSULA Shire **Frankston City**

pclc.org.au

Top Tip from the RAIL team

Top Tips



Necessity is the mother of invention

Many of us will have heard this saying. It is also true that the people who are experiencing challenges are best placed to know 'what works'. This month's top tip links Friends of RAIL with the marvellous work of the AT Chat community ([select here to visit the AT Chat website](#)). RAIL researchers Prof Keith Hill, Dr Tash Layton and A/Prof Libby Callaway have had the pleasure of working with this community of assistive technology (AT) users for several years.

Run by and for users of aids and equipment or 'assistive technology (AT)' and supported by the allied health practitioners within iLA ([select here to visit the iLA website](#)) which is one of the services previously known as the Independent Living Centre of West Australia, this large community of skilled AT users share their skills, tips, product evaluations and life advice.

[Select here to visit the AT Chat YouTube channel](#) to find playlists including:

- Meet AT users through the '**AT + Me**' short videos, and **AT Check Ins** where people tell us how their AT is working for them over time
- '**Tech Tuesday**' and '**AT peer review**' contains clips of OTs and AT users reviewing assistive products
- Check out the role of assistive products and other supports as people living with disability 'show us how it's done' in a series of video collaborations called **Collabs**

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