

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

Friends of RAIL eBulletin – September 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 welcome to our Spring eBulletin!

I hope this finds you well as we step into the warmer months and longer days. In this edition, we're sharing some wonderful contributions from our community, including Grainne's inspiring story about planning an accessible holiday in Noosa (take a read for some excellent tips and considerations if you're in a similar situation), reflections on independent living in aged care by Friend of RAIL, Stephen, as well as introducing you all to our new team member, Deb Mitchell.

You'll also find updates on upcoming events like our Friends of RAIL 2025 online gathering in November (mark the date in your calendar!), and both Carers Week and the Victorian Seniors Festival in October. Plus, there are opportunities to get involved in co-design projects and global research that aim to shape better services and support for our communities – so if you've ever thought you'd like to be involved in research, please check out these possible options.

At the end of this month I will be heading to Japan to present at the International Psychogeriatric Association conference regarding the work I am doing leading the Carer Health and Wellbeing Service, as well as the delivery of online, interactive content into aged care homes through the Ciao! Project. I look forward to telling you more about these in our next eBulletin. In the meantime, thank you for being part of our Friends of RAIL—we love hearing from you and sharing your stories. Enjoy this edition, and please reach out if you'd like to contribute to future eBulletins!

Warm regards,
Aislinn
RAIL Consumer and Community Engagement Lead

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

Welcome to our spring newsletter! It is wonderful to see the days getting a bit longer and not sooo cold.

Some of you will know that I love Noosa and at any opportunity to go, I do. During my next trip, a friend and I are going to do some research to explore the possibility of her friend having a holiday in Noosa. The friend is very social, he is 70, has a disability and uses a powered wheelchair, but has travelled before. We think he would prefer to get respite with care.



We are going with a checklist of requirements:

- Would he and can he travel with his power chair? Would he be happy to use a manual wheelchair or hire a power chair in Noosa?

- Does he need assistance? A carer.
- Does he need a shower commode?
- Does he need a lifting machine?
- What activities would he like to do?
- What airline could he travel with hoists, wheelchair transportation, assistance at airports etc?
 - Airlines do transport powered chairs but there are strict requirements with batteries.
 - Below is an image of the device used for transfers to and from the plane at Sunshine Coast.



- Are there maxi taxis in Noosa and surrounds? Yes 13cabs is the major provider.
- Are public buses in Noosa accessible? Yes, buses with low floor entry, 50 cent flat bus fares information in My TransLink App.
- Accommodation: this is available - many hotels have degrees of accessible rooms. This gentleman might have bigger requirements hence respite could be an option. I have had preliminary discussions on the phone with two Aged Care accommodation providers and they do provide respite care so we need to have specific conversations with the gentleman and the places as to needs.

In the past my husband and I hired aids from EMU Holiday Hire and on a quick internet search they still operate: <https://www.emuholidayhire.com.au/mobility-aids>. There is also an Aidacare shop (<https://www.aidacare.com.au/>) in Noosaville now that may hire equipment.

I know the beach has access via a plastic rolled path and from memory there is a shower chair helps people get to the water: <https://accessiblebeaches.com/beach-directory/noosa->

[beach](#)

Life is so much easier with the internet. I have been able to research much of this online but of course, everything has to be checked individually and with the gentlemen's needs but it all looks possible. Most importantly, accommodation and care is very specific and will require individual attention.

Checklist in hand, my friend and I are off on a reconnaissance mission. Let's hope we can start the gentleman's holiday plans off well.

RAIL Team member introduction

Hello Friends of RAIL,

I am Deb Mitchell, Senior Research Fellow in the Each Monash University Partnership. This is an exciting role building research capacity and capability at Each. Each (<https://www.each.com.au/>) is a for-purpose organisation that started as Eastern Access Community Health Centre in Ringwood and has grown to have services in Victoria, New South Wales, ACT, Queensland and Tasmania.



Like a number of the RAIL team, my background is in physiotherapy, having worked clinically in health services, private practice and Community Health. I then moved into health service quality, project and management in allied health and in community services, where my involvement in health services research began. I'm really interested in value-based healthcare – making sure that healthcare delivers the outcomes that are important to the community in a sustainable way.

My role at Each is a fabulous opportunity to build pragmatic research in an innovative, forward-thinking organisation. The Each and Monash University Partnership started early in 2025, led by RAIL and focusing on co-designed research, education and innovation to empower and extend both organisations' workforce, services, and community engagement. One aim of this partnership is to increase research questions asked and answered by Each staff member. Another is to demonstrate and share the areas of excellence at Each. We're currently building a Research Plan to guide this work.

Outside of work, I love bushwalking and camping. We recently returned from walking in the Mont Blanc circuit – starting in France and walking to Italy and Switzerland before returning to Chamonix – a walk I've been planning for many years.

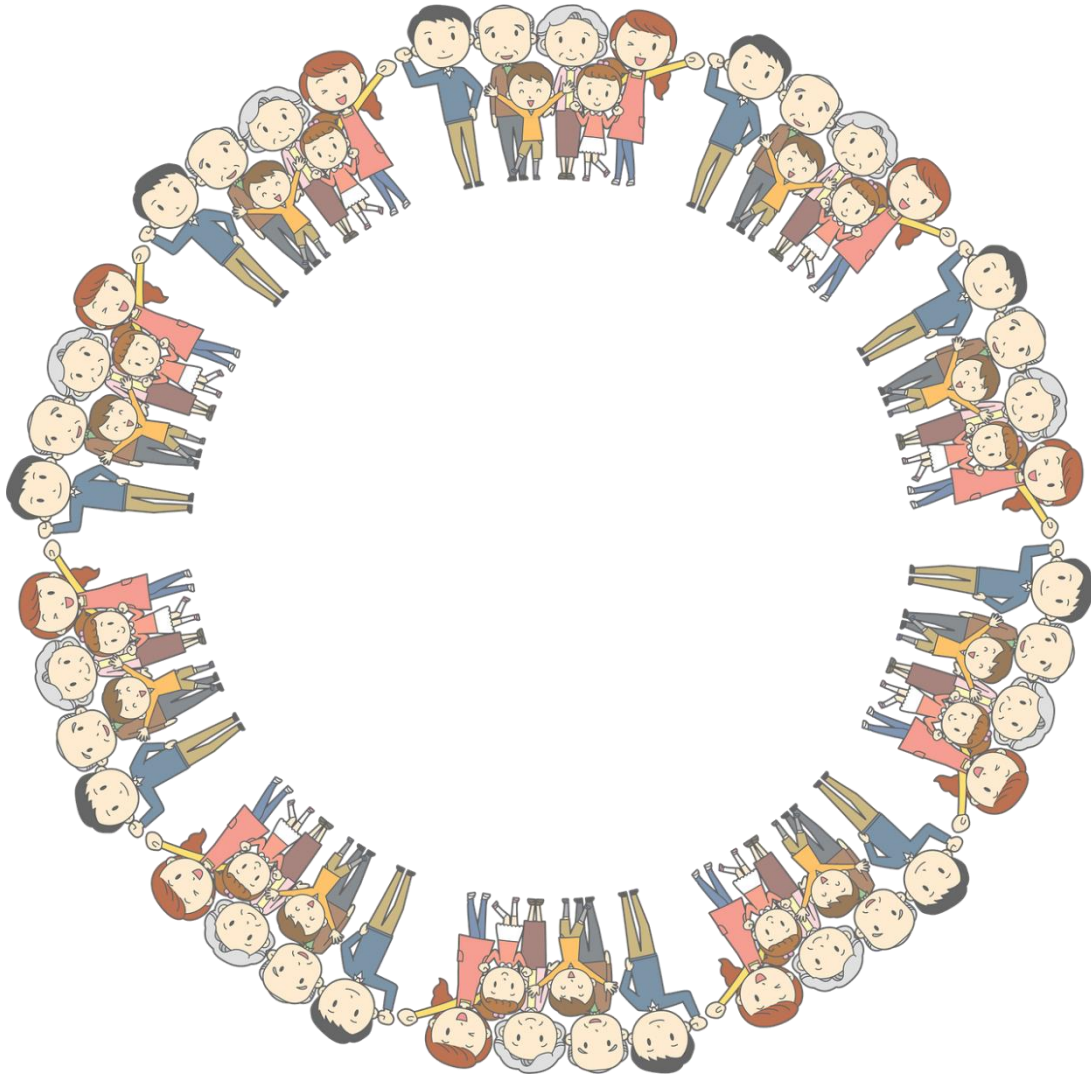
Reflection from a Friend of RAIL

When first considered, the expression 'independent living' and residence in an aged care facility may appear to have little in common, if not be completely incompatible. Whilst the reality for many new residents is that they soon lose touch with some, even all, of their life connections, this need not be the outcome of entry to an aged care facility.

The key factors are a person's level of mobility and the nature of the external family and social network they have. The ability to move about relatively freely in the community is a valuable asset, but even mostly immobile residents can still live a happy and fulfilling life

separate from their residence in aged care, if they have the right kind of external support. I have recently seen this exemplified by a 102 year old lady, who is constantly being taken out to lunch at her favourite restaurant and joins in all family activities, yet she can barely walk even with a frame.

Another lady I know at the same facility, still driving at 91, albeit just locally, is maintaining the same lifestyle she had for many years prior to entering aged care – it's just the location and nature of her residence that has changed since she left the old family home after her husband died. She still sees the same people and visits the same favourite places, aided to the extent she needs by friends and family.



The point is, with some mobility, including using a frame, residence in aged care can provide the best of both worlds: a secure, fully supportive living environment that is used mainly as a base whilst maintaining the same kind of active lifestyle in the community as was previously enjoyed. But, as noted, this does require appropriate support from friends and family, which, sadly for the majority of residents, doesn't exist apart from brief visits at varying frequencies.

The aged care facilities themselves also can enhance the prospects of residents keeping in contact with their former life and friends – such as, by having an internal café, where visitors can spend time with the resident in a normal commercial hospitality environment, where of course, everything on offer is for a price, as in the real world. Even if open for limited hours each day, this can be a very useful and comforting resource for socially-oriented residents.

Whilst having a daily program of activities, including outings, is an important feature for aged care residents, whatever can be done to facilitate the continuance of the social and family life residents had before entering the residence is also of great importance. This is how the actuality of independent living, in which existing family and social connections are maintained externally, and life in a fully supported physical environment, can be achieved and be fully compatible.

Stephen Peterson, Friend of RAIL

Friend contribution to RAIL eBulletin and feedback

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



Finally, if you know someone who may like to become a 'Friend of RAIL', please either [share this link](#) with them to complete the registration survey, or they can email us at spahc.rail@monash.edu or call 03 9904 4557 to speak to Karine about registering.

Friends of RAIL 2025 online event

Please save the date for our online Friends of RAIL 2025 event that will be hosted on Monday, 24th November, 12.00pm - 1.15pm, AEDT (via Zoom).

We will have the pleasure of an exciting guest speaker who has contributed extensively both in Australia and internationally to non-government organisations, as well as within local government, and will be well recognised by many of our Friends.



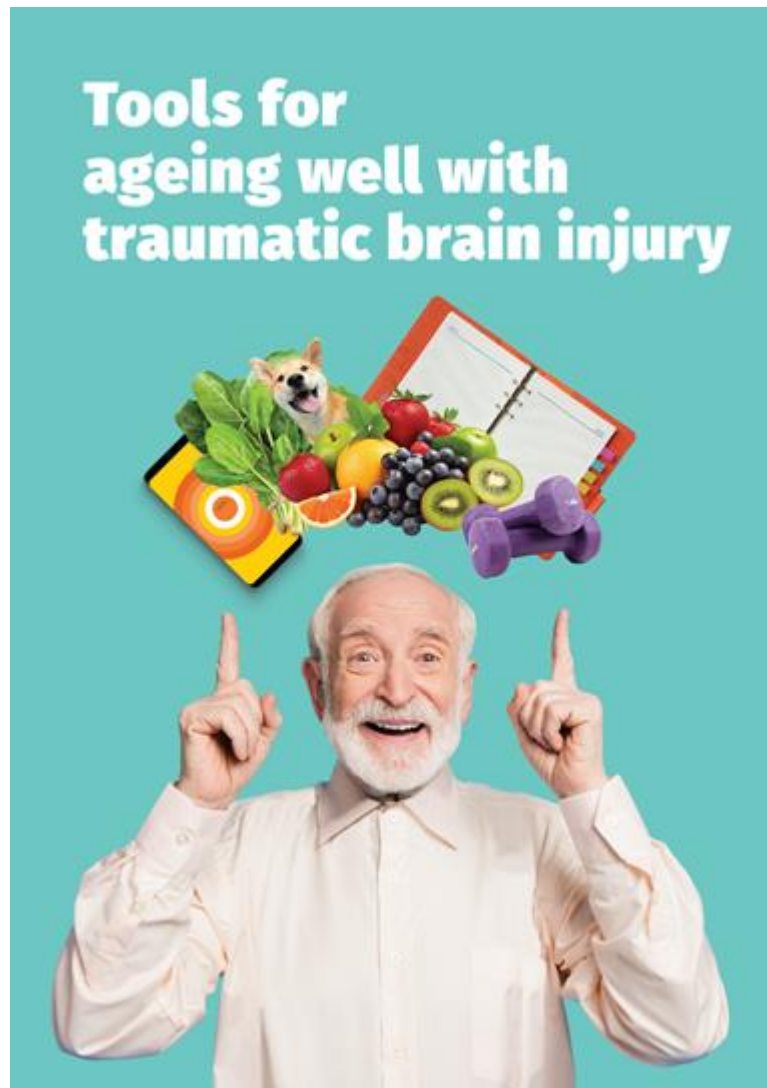
More details will be provided in the coming weeks!

Brain Injury Matters webinar - Tools for ageing well with traumatic brain injury

On 28th August, Associate Professor Christina Ekegren presented a webinar for Brain Injury Matters on [Tools for ageing well with traumatic brain injury](#). [Brain Injury Matters](#) is a not-for-profit self-advocacy organisation that aims to empower people living with an acquired brain injury. The webinar was attended by around 25 people from across Australia living with an acquired brain injury. It provided Christina with an important opportunity to present this new resource to the people for whom it was created.

The Tools for ageing well with traumatic brain injury project, jointly funded by the TAC and icare NSW, was led by Associate Professor Ekegren and Professor Ian Cameron from the University of Sydney, with team members including RAIL's Associate Professor Libby Callaway and consumer lead, Grainne Cruickshank, with input from occupational therapist Lisa Licciardi. The project included extensive stakeholder consultation and consumer co-design workshops with older adults with brain injury, their families and expert clinicians. If

you are interested in learning more, please email christina.ekegren@monash.edu or go to [Tools for ageing well with traumatic brain injury](#).



Top Tip from the RAIL team

Top Tips



Colour contrast

Good contrast levels are important for people with colour blindness, but also help make text easier to read for everyone.

- For text to be readable there needs to be sufficient contrast between the text colour with the background colour. As a rule of thumb, use light and dark colours.
- There are many online tools you can use to check the contrast between your background and text colours - [select here for an example of one contrast checker](#).

High contrast

High contrast

Low contrast

Low contrast

If you have a top tip that you would like to share with others, please feel free to contact us at spahc.rail@monash.edu.

Victorian Seniors Festival 2025



The "Victorian Seniors Festival", a state-wide festival for and involving older people runs from 1st to 31st of October every year.

The 2025 theme is "Connect. Create. Celebrate". There are several free events offered by local councils, so we would recommend those who are interested to review their local councils' activities.

You can [select here](#) to access the Victoria State Government Festival webpage and learn

more about the 2025 event, and [select here](#) to watch a summary video of last year's event.

For information on the range of activities offered in Melbourne, please [select here](#).

Victorian Seniors Card holders are also eligible to 8 days of free public transport (between 5-12 October) across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Carers Week 2025



Have you heard of the National Carers Week?

National Carers Week is an initiative of Carers Australia, funded by the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, and coordinated with the assistance and participation of the National Carer Network, aiming to recognise, celebrate and raise awareness about Australia's 3 million carers.

This year, the National Carers is scheduled from Sunday 12th to Saturday 18th October.

Carers Week webpage: <https://carersweek.com.au/>

There are events taking place across different locations. Events for 2025 will be listed on the webpage above in the 'Events' tab section close to the day.

Consumer Advisory Panel to design a Trauma Patient Navigator Service



Have you experienced serious injury or cared for someone with a serious injury and found navigating the 'system' after hospital discharge overwhelming?

Are you interested in helping to improve the recovery journey of injury-related trauma survivors? Help us co-design a Trauma Patient Navigator service.

Researchers from Monash University are setting up a Consumer Advisory Panel to design a Trauma Patient Navigator Service. The panel will provide advice on the design of a 'Trauma Patient Navigator' role, to help survivors of serious injury better navigate health and social support systems and improve their experience,

recovery and outcomes.

The Trauma Patient Navigator Service Consumer Advisory Panel is made up of:

- people who have experienced serious injuries and would like to contribute to better post-hospital service and care navigation; and
- carers and family members of trauma survivors with an interest in sharing their experience of supporting the recovery journey.



To find out more or apply, please [select here](#) or scan the QR Code.

Help Shape the Future of the Assistive Technology Workforce

We're inviting expressions of interest to join a global research study exploring the competencies needed to deliver safe, person-centred mobility assistive product services (e.g. wheelchairs, prostheses, orthoses, walking aids).

Who can apply?

We welcome participants from around the world, including:

- ✓ Users of mobility assistive products (or carers of people who use mobility assistive products)
- ✓ Providers (e.g. clinicians, technicians, rehab professionals)
- ✓ Educators, researchers, policymakers, and advocates

What's involved?

A 2-hour online focus group held in English (with Arabic and Spanish support available), where you will be invited to:

- Share your lived or professional experience
- Contribute to global standards for training, service delivery, and policy

Captioning will be provided, and participation is voluntary.

Interested?

Read more information about this research, and submit your Expression of Interest to participate by scanning the QR code. **Questions?** Contact Louise Puli:

louise.puli@monash.edu

Ethics approval ID: 48602



Image credit: Disabled and Here

Are you involved in mobility assistive products?

Consider participating in this Monash University research!

Scan the QR code for more information or to express your interest.



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.

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

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