



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

## Member and Partner eBulletin – December 2025

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.

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## A message from the Director

Dear RAIL Members and Partners,

I want to start by acknowledging the recent devastating events at Bondi Beach, and send my profound sympathies to our Australian Jewish community, and all people directly and indirectly affected. You are in my heart and my prayers.

2025 has been an incredible year for the RAIL Research Centre. There has been a multitude of achievements this year. Highlights include promotion to Associate Professor for Natasha Layton and Christina Ekegren; incredible grant success such as a NHMRC Partnership Project grant as well as significant tender work for the Commonwealth Government; acknowledgement through awards such as those from the Australian Association of Gerontology, City of Monash, and School of Primary and Allied Health Care; as well as community engagement through valuable resource development such as the Staying Active with Dementia booklet.

2025 has also been an incredible year for Friends of RAIL. Through our RAIL Executive Committee, Grainne Cruickshank and Margaret Thomas have provided continual and valuable feedback from the consumer perspective. In addition, our wider team of Friends contributed to RAIL's [White Paper](#), which detailed their perspectives regarding the opportunities and challenges across the areas of rehabilitation, ageing and independent living.

I wish each of you a safe and happy festive season and I look forward to connecting again in 2026.



## RAIL team member introduction



Hello everyone, my name is Lloyd Walker and I've recently joined the RAIL Team, working with A/Prof Libby Callaway. I was born with a combination of impairments, some visible and some hidden, leading to disability which has changed over time. As a teenager, I was offered some experimental treatments, but I chose to use assistive technology (AT) instead. Some of my technology is implanted, some external. This experience led me to become a rehabilitation engineer, earning degrees in Brisbane and Glasgow, Scotland.

I've worked in tropical regions to big cities, in teaching, research, clinical, and design roles. For the past 12 years, I've focused on assistive technology policy, both in Australia (with the NDIS) and internationally (with the World Health Organisation and International Organization for Standardisation).

I work part-time with the team, contributing to projects to inform the NDIS Evidence Advisory SubCommittees, new 6-unit Master's level subject on AT that Natasha Layton is spearheading and other emerging opportunities. I'm now staying fit regularly kayaking on the Sunshine Coast waterways and joining in wheelchair basketball.



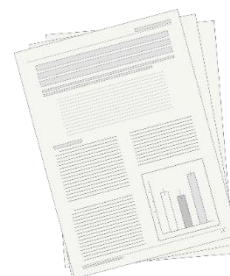
### Connected Ageing: Innovation, Inclusion, and Wellbeing RAIL eForum - 23 Oct 2025

Our October eForum drew a large audience and sparked interesting discussions about what meaningful digital connection looks like for older adults. Dr Marissa Dickins (Silverchain) opened the session with two promising initiatives: EMBED, a brief personalised program to support older adults experiencing depression, and the Virtual Lunch Club, an online social group designed to ease loneliness. Professor Jenny Waycott (University of Melbourne) shared early insights from the TALES project, exploring how emerging technologies, including AI, might safely and creatively support life-storytelling for older people. Dr Aislinn Lalor (RAIL, Monash University) presented early findings from the Ciao! Program, which brings virtual, interactive activities into residential aged care homes, with encouraging signs of engagement and satisfaction among residents and staff. Across all three presentations, attendees reflected on the many ways technology can help foster connection, reduce isolation and support wellbeing in later life.

The RAIL team is currently planning an exciting program of eForums for next year with the first event organised by the Rehabilitation stream to be hosted in February 2026. More information will be circulated to our network and posted on our [RAIL eForum web page](#) early in the new year. Stay tuned!

### Highlighted publication

**Lee, D. A.**, Collyer, T. A., Russell, G., Andrew, N. E., O'Connor, C. M. C., **Hill, K. D.**, Swaffer, K., **Layton, N.**, Srikanth, V., Barbosa Neves, B., Low, L. F., Oytam, Y., Daraganova, G., Devanny, C., & Callisaya, M. L. Referrals to allied health professionals for people with dementia: an analysis of general practitioner data from two Australian primary health networks. *Family Medicine and Community Health*. 2025;13:e003470. <https://doi.org/10.1136/fmch-2025-003470>



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Researchers from Monash University's Rehabilitation, Ageing and Independent Living (RAIL) Research Centre and the National Centre for Healthy Ageing (a partnership between Monash University and Peninsula Health) found that people with dementia were significantly less likely to receive any allied health referral compared with those with stroke or Parkinson's disease.

Led by Dr Angel Lee, from the School of Primary and Allied Health Care and published in the BMJ Journal Family Medicine and Community Health, the research examined the allied health referral patterns of general practitioners from 537 practices for people with dementia compared to those without dementia across two large Primary Health Networks (PHNs) in Melbourne. 693,328 patients were identified in the study, including 16,610 patients with dementia.

Lead author, Dr Lee said that GPs play an important role in informing patients about allied health services and coordinating referrals to facilitate access in Australia. Yet until now, the GP referral patterns had remained poorly understood and under-investigated.

This publication has generated a great interest in the media with multiple media outlets publishing articles including but not limited to [Community Care Review - Australian Ageing Agenda](#), [Aged Health](#), and [Your Life Choices](#).

[Select here to read the publication](#)

## Awards

### Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG) award to Professor Keith Hill

Former inaugural Director of RAIL, Professor Keith Hill, received an award from the Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG) in recognition of his contribution to the AAG Grant Programs Committee. Keith served as a member and senior mentor for the Grants Programs Committee from 2020 and was the Strategic Innovation Program Lead from 2021. The award was presented to Keith at the recent AAG conference hosted in Alice Springs in November 2025. While Keith has stepped down from this role with AAG, he remains strongly involved with AAG and his ongoing commitment as Co-Chair to the delivery of the 2030 International Association of Gerontology & Geriatrics (IAGG) World Congress to be held in Sydney, Australia. If you'd like to know more about this event, please [select here](#).



## George's Gymnastics Program - Sir John Monash Awards

At the recent [City of Monash 2025 'Sir John Monash' awards ceremony](#), the Director of RAIL, Associate Professor Tarsh Brusco, was awarded Volunteer of the Year for her groundbreaking program, [George's Gymnastics Program](#). She also claimed the awards' highest honour, the Sir John Monash award for Outstanding Leadership.

[George's Gymnastics Program](#) is a 5-week inclusive gymnastics program for primary school children with a disability (aged 5-12). The program is hosted on site at Waverley Gymnastics Centre in Oakleigh, during school hours, and run by qualified Gymnastics Coaches and Monash University physiotherapy students.

The program commenced in 2022 as a partnership between Monash University, Waverley Gymnastics Centre and Vermont South Special School, and over the last few years, the program has expanded to include seven Victorian Special Schools, with free access to inclusive gymnastics classes for over 200 children.

[Waverley Gymnastics Centre](#) was also recognised at the City of Monash 2025 Sir John Monash award ceremony for their dedication and delivery of the program over the last three years, and received the award for Outstanding Advocate of People with Disabilities.



## Monash University School of Primary and Allied Health Care - Research impact award



RAIL team member Dr Em Bould (they/them) was awarded the School of Primary and Allied Health Care - Research impact award for their project titled "Pilot and evaluation of the Pets and People program – an animal-assisted activity program to support intergenerational and intercultural community connections to reduce loneliness and social isolation". You can [select here to read the paper](#), or [select here to watch a short video summary of the paper](#).

## "Ageing at the Centre"- Australian Association of Gerontology national conference

The RAIL Research Centre had its usual strong presence at the Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG) National Conference in Mparntwe (Alice Springs) (November 11th-

14th). With the conference theme “Ageing at the Centre”, a broad range of our ageing related projects were presented by staff, including Aislinn Lalor (sleep management in palliative care), Aislinn Lalor and Raphaelle Guerbaai (the interactive Ciao! Program to build social connectedness in residential care), Christina Ekegren (the Smart Ward, using technology to improve care of hospitalised older people), and Keith Hill (physical activity for people living with dementia). Results from one of RAIL’s earlier seed grants were also presented by Dr Marcelo Maghidman, from Social Work. Angel Lee had several posters of her research, and Lisa Licciardi also attended and helped with the exhibition booth, which promoted many of the team’s recent research publications, as well as co-authoring a poster with Aislinn Lalor of preliminary findings from the Carer Health and Wellbeing Service.

Keith was also invited to be part of the AAG Student and Early Career Group’s Chat with the Experts at their booth during one of the breaks, discussing challenges and solutions for early career researchers.

Several other Monash School of Primary and Allied Health Care staff also presented. The AAG conference is always an excellent forum for hearing and seeing the latest in ageing research, practice and education, but is also renowned for its wonderful dinner dance. This year’s was spectacular, held outdoors in a beautiful desert area about 15km from Alice Springs. Next year’s AAG conference is in Melbourne, so make sure to mark it in your diary (10th-13th November).



### **Future Conversations podcast "Ageing in Malaysia Addressing Challenges and Embracing Opportunities"**

In May 2025, RAIL researcher and former inaugural Director Professor Keith Hill travelled to Malaysia to undertake a range of collaborative activities including a podcast episode of the Future Conversations hosted by Monash University Malaysia titled "Ageing in Malaysia Addressing Challenges and Embracing Opportunities".

[Select here](#) to learn more about this Future Conversations episode and [select here](#) to watch the video.



**New resource – Staying Active with Dementia booklet**

The Staying Active with Dementia booklet is a guide developed for people living with dementia and their families, friends and/or key supporters. Co-designed by Monash University researchers and lived experience experts, this new resource provides information, key considerations and useful contact details in relation to physical activity and dementia. The evidence-based booklet is an output connected to the Changing the Focus Program – a project lead by researchers from the RAIL Research Centre that uses a shared decision support tool to facilitate collaborative discussions between a research physiotherapist, a person living with dementia and their care partner. Such discussions take place during initial meetings to enable tailored selection of physical activity options. Key aspects of the Changing the Focus program have been selected and provided in the booklet to facilitate access to the information for people outside the program.

[Select here](#) to learn more about this project funded through the National Centre for Healthy Ageing Living Labs program with support from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, and select the image below to access the booklet.



MONASH  
REHABILITATION  
AGEING AND  
INDEPENDENT LIVING  
(RAIL) RESEARCH CENTRE

**Staying Active with Dementia**

A guide for people living with dementia and their families, friends and/or key supporters



Image above: A group of people participating in a seated strength program.



## RAIL Early - Mid Career Researcher Seed Grant – Outcomes from a previously funded project

In the past years, the RAIL Research Centre funded a number of seed grants to early / mid-career researchers. These research grants are designed to support early-mid career researchers by funding and piloting quality research projects on a competitive basis. We are pleased to report in this eBulletin the outcomes of one grant from the 2024 round that was recently completed.

### **Pilot evaluation of a telehealth adaptation of the i-RECOVER interdisciplinary intervention for persisting post-concussion symptoms after mild traumatic brain injury**

**Lead investigator:** Stephanie Antonopoulos (School of Psychological Sciences, Monash University)

**Other investigators:** McKay A, Ponsford J, Davies K, Brennan J, Harvey P, Brusco N, Whittaker S, Drummond S, Willmott C.



**Background:** Persisting post-concussion symptoms (pPCS) affect ~30% of individuals after mild traumatic brain injury, yet interdisciplinary treatment remains difficult to access in non-metropolitan Australia. Telehealth-based care may improve equity. We adapted our previously piloted Interdisciplinary Rehabilitation for Concussion Recovery (i-RECOVER) for telehealth delivery.

**Method:** Thirteen adults (62% female; Mage = 43.3 ± 15.51 years; days post-injury = 581 ± 629.19) completed a non-concurrent multiple-baseline single-case design, randomised to 2-, 3-, or 4-week baselines before a 12-week interdisciplinary neuropsychology, physiotherapy, and medical intervention. Feasibility was assessed via recruitment, retention, adherence, fidelity, and adverse events. Outcomes included pPCS severity, functional improvement, mood, fatigue, sleep, and physical functioning, analysed descriptively, visually, and using Tau-U.

**Results:** Telehealth delivery was feasible. Over half (7/13) showed clinically and statistically meaningful reductions in pPCS and most (10/13) achieved at least one functional goal.

**Conclusions:** As the first global evaluation of interdisciplinary concussion care via telehealth, findings support feasibility and potential efficacy of i-RECOVER. A second phase trial funded by a recently secured Medical Research Future Fund grant will seek to establish treatment efficacy and moderators to improvement. This research will be published in a peer-reviewed journal and presented at international conferences.

## Happy retirement and thanks to Professor David Copolov AO

Professor David Copolov AO, has had a number of senior roles at Monash University, including being Pro Vice-Chancellor, Major Campuses and Student Engagement at Monash University, which included a key role in supporting the growth and development of Peninsula Campus. In this role with Peninsula Campus, David has provided exceptional advice and support to the RAIL Research Centre, since the initial stages of development when Professor Keith Hill came to Monash to establish the Centre in 2019. David has always been available for a chat, and was always able to provide relevant linkages for the Centre through his very strong community networks and engagement. David was an active contributor to the Internal Advisory Board for the RAIL Research Centre, and regularly attended and MC'ed a number of our events. He was very actively engaged with RAIL Research Centre activities and staff, and has contributed strongly to the current positioning of RAIL as a strong and vibrant nationally and internationally recognised Centre.

As David progresses to this next phase of his life, the RAIL Research Centre take this opportunity to thank him for his support and friendship; and wish him a wonderful transition to life after Monash.



From left to right: A/Prof Libby Callaway, Prof Kelly Bowles, Prof David Copolov AO, Prof Ellie Fossey, A/Prof Tarsh Brusco and Prof Keith Hill

## Other news and resources



### Community Care Review - Article from a member of our RAIL network

[Select here](#) to read a great article published in the Community Care Review magazine titled “Culturally appropriate care is essential, not an extra” by a member of our RAIL network, Danijela.



### Toolkit for engaging with people with disability in evaluation

As part of the current Australian Disability Strategy, a new toolkit for engaging with people with disability in evaluation has been recently released by the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.

[Select here](#) to learn more and to review the toolkit and other documents.



## International campaign on employment of people with Downs Syndrome

[Select here](#) to view the Hiring Chain international campaign on open employment for people with Downs Syndrome. The campaign offers the viewers the possibility to connect with organisations in their country to explore opportunities to employ people with Downs Syndrome in their business.

### Member and Partner contributions

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

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/>

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