



Faculty of Health
Research News December 2025

Faculty of Health

Research Newsletter December 2025



Faculty of Health

Welcome

[Link](#)

1

Centre and theme updates

National Centre for
Naturopathic Medicine

Centre for Children and
Young People

Mental Health and
Psychosocial Wellbeing

Resilient Ageing
in Supportive
Environments

Physical Activity, Sport
and Exercise Research

[Link](#)

2

Research Outputs

[Link](#)

3

Grant and Award Success Research Program Updates

[Link](#)

4

Engagement and Impact

[Link](#)

5

Faculty Researchers in the Media

[Link](#)

6

Researcher in the Spotlight PhD Candidate in the Spotlight

[Link](#)

7

Updates from the Library

[Link](#)



Welcome

Season's Greetings



As 2025 draws to a close, we extend out warmest wishes for a joyful festive season and a bright New Year. Thank you for your continued support and collaboration-together, we continue to kick goals and achieve remarkable milestones in heath research.

Enjoy reading this issue of the Faculty of Health Research Newsletter, which highlights just some of the achievements, partnerships, and progress that have helped shape an outstanding year for health research at Southern Cross University.

Happy Holidays from the Health Research team at SCU!

Professor Marianne Wallis

Associate Dean (Research)
Faculty of Health





1

Centre updates



National Centre for Naturopathic Medicine

The National Centre for Naturopathic Medicine, led by Professor Jon Wardle, is a world-class Centre for education, research and innovation in health. The Centre was founded in 2020 at Southern Cross University Lismore, established through a generous donation from the Blackmore Foundation. The Centre offers innovative courses, pioneering research programs and professional engagement, and is committed to elevating industry standards, finding solutions to Australia's growing healthcare needs, and educating future leaders in this field.

Centre and theme updates

Centre Update

As the year winds down, we are proud to reflect on the progress made across our research. 2025 has seen the successful completion of several key projects and trials, while also laying the groundwork for exciting new initiatives.

One of the major achievements was the award of a NHMRC Investigator Grant to NCNM's Dr Alana Gall to lead a research program focused on First Peoples' Cultural Medicines in Australian healthcare. Alana's project spans two key areas. The first is embedding Cultural Medicines into Australian health policies to improve cultural safety, health and wellbeing. The second is to protect Cultural Medicine knowledge through research that informs research and development in drug discovery, regulation and intellectual property, to realise the self-determination of First Peoples and their communities. Dr Alana Gall was also awarded an ARC-funded co-design project for an Indigenous STEM learning model, together with researchers from UQ. This research aims to improve Indigenous student engagement in STEM through co-designing with Traditional Owners & community members a learning model, curriculum and place-based resources underpinned by Indigenous knowledges.

The NCNM Clinical Trials Centre (CTC) has successfully completed three major clinical trials in 2025 and has recently launched two additional studies: one focused on Medicinal Cannabis and another exploring a marine-derived product for brain cancer. The CTC continues to be a remarkable success story, and with the opening of its new Pharmacokinetic Trial Unit in 2026, it will further expand its capacity to conduct these groundbreaking studies in-house.

A significant milestone was reached in the [NCNM giving appeal](#). The campaign successfully exceeded its goal of \$100k and raised a total of **\$132,539** in monetary donations fueling vital research and student support and scholarships from over 40 donors. Several industry partners have renewed their commitments, including Vital. ly (Research Futures Scholarship Program), or the Osiecki Family Foundation (Student Scholarships).

NCNM has also finalised an agreement with the Naturopaths & Herbalists Association of Australia (NHAA) who have donated their naturopathic medicine library to NCNM. The library includes approximately 600 naturopathic medicine texts, and plans are now underway to establish a reading room for researchers and students within the NCNM office at the Lismore campus.



NCNM celebrated its first HDR completion. Ilma Imtiaz, who started her PHD studies in 2021 under supervision of Dr Andrea Bugarcic and Dr Janet Schloss, has recently been awarded her doctorate for her work on Bridging Tradition and Innovation in Cancer Research: Systematic Identification of Herbal Anti-Cancer Agents and the Cellular Profiling of Curcumin. Two more PhD have submitted their thesis for examination in 2025, with an anticipated completion date in early 2026.



National Centre for Naturopathic Medicine

Centre and theme updates

As part of the 2025 Natural Products Futures Forum, NCNM conducted its first 3-Minute-Thesis (3MT) competition, whereby HDR students had the opportunity to present their thesis in 3 minutes to the non-specialist audience. The aim of a 3MT is to cultivate students' academic, presentation, and research communication skills. This year's winner was Prisca Deviani Pakan, PhD student at UTS. NCNM also offered HDR students to present their research posters at the 2025 NPFF, and awarded a poster prize. The winner for 2025 was Adam Haysom-MacDowell, PhD student at UTS.

Finally, planning is underway for the 2026 round of the Research Futures Scholarship Program. This year, we have received the biggest number of student applications for any round, and we are currently in the process of selecting students and projects, which will commence in the summer term.

As the holiday season draws near, the NCNM team sends heartfelt wishes for a joyful Christmas and a bright New Year. 2025 has been a year of growth, collaboration, and meaningful progress, and we are deeply thankful for the dedication of our research community. Together, we've achieved milestones that strengthen our field and inspire future innovation. Looking ahead, we are eager to embrace the opportunities that 2026 will bring, new discoveries, deeper partnerships, and research that makes a lasting impact.

HEART Trial

Southern Cross University has finally launched a ground-breaking clinical trial to address climate-related PTSD in the Northern Rivers region. The federally funded HEART trial is testing a stepped-care model to support communities impacted by floods, bushfires, and landslides between 2017 and 2022. Step 1 involves compassion-based group programs using arts and nature to build resilience and reduce self-criticism, while Step 2 (planned for 2026–27) will explore MDMA-assisted therapy for those still experiencing PTSD. Recruitment is currently focused on Lismore and Byron, with sessions running weekly over five weeks. Findings will inform sustainable, large-scale mental health programs for disaster-affected populations across Australia.



Centre for Children and Young People

The Centre for Children and Young People is led by Professor Anne Graham and has a focus on the rights and wellbeing of children and young people (0–25 years) in the key contexts in which they live their lives – family, school and community.

Centre and theme updates

Celebrating New Research Projects

ARC Linkage Success: Reimagining Belonging and Support for Children in Kinship Care

We're proud to announce a major Australian Research Council Linkage grant led by Professor Lynne McPherson. In partnership with the Centre for Excellence in Therapeutic Care at the Australian Childhood Foundation, this \$579k initiative (matched by community agencies) seeks to generate critical insight into how best to nurture belonging, identity, safety, and wellbeing for children and young people growing up in kinship care arrangements. It responds to a pressing social policy priority, one that calls for approaches grounded in evidence, compassion, and the lived realities of families themselves.

Across Australia, more children are now living in kinship or relative care than in any other form of out-of-home care. This shift marks one of the most significant transformations in child welfare over recent decades. Yet, despite its growing prevalence, kinship care remains under-researched and under-supported. Professor Lynne McPherson is leading the project and said:

"This is an unprecedented opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of children and young people living in kinship care, most often with their grandparents"

Five leading community organisations across NSW and Victoria are partnering with Southern Cross University in this research and include: the Australian Childhood Foundation, Anglicare Victoria, OzChild, AbCare and CASPA. The Australian Childhood Foundation CEO Janise Mitchell said:

"Every child deserves to grow up feeling they belong. Kinship care keeps children connected to family, culture, and love but it also comes with challenges that too often go unseen. This project will shine a light on what helps families stay strong and what systems need to do better."

The study will also maintain a high level of international relevance, with partner investigator Emeritus Professor Robbie Gilligan, from Trinity College Ireland, as a key academic partner.



This research will do more than describe the challenges, it will co-design tangible, practice-ready solutions drawn directly from the voices and experiences of children, young people, and their carers. By elevating lived experience as a source of wisdom, the project aims to inform national policy, reshape practice frameworks, and strengthen the systems that hold kinship families together. Ultimately, this work is about more than care, it is about belonging, continuity, and hope for the next generation of children raised within family networks of love and resilience. The project is set to commence in January 2026.

Read more [here](#).

The research team includes: Professor Lynne McPherson, Professor Stuart Barlo, Dr Kylie Day, Dr Emily Hindman, Dr Antonia Canosa (SCU); Adj A/Professor Janise Mitchell & Dr Kelly Royds (ACF); Professor Kathomi Gatwiri (Flinders University); Emeritus Professor Robbie Gilligan (Trinity College, Dublin).



Centre for Children and Young People

Centre and theme updates



SDVC Seed Grant Success

Culturally Safe Kinship Care Practices (Dr Kylie Day, Professor Lynne McPherson)

Led by Dr Kylie Day, this innovative research project aims to qualify the PACE framework (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy) with kinship care practices. Recognising the systemic challenges faced by kinship carers in Australia, including financial stress and cultural insensitivity within child protection systems, the project seeks to develop culturally safe approaches that honour traditional Indigenous child-rearing practices. The research will involve yarning circles with Aboriginal grandmothers who are kinship carers, encouraging open dialogue and knowledge sharing.

Guided by Indigenous Standpoint Theory and principles of Cultural Sovereignty and governance, the project emphasises community control and aims to produce practical tools and policy recommendations that enhance support for kinship carers. By bridging evidence-based practices with Indigenous wisdom, this research is poised to make a significant impact on child welfare, ensuring that the voices and needs of First Nations families are recognised and addressed.



Child Safeguarding and the Olympic Games (Dr Antonia Canosa and Prof Lynne McPherson)

Led by Dr Antonia Canosa, this research is exploring Australia's efforts to address child protection and safeguarding measures in the preparation for the 2032 Olympic Games in Brisbane, Australia. Mega sporting events like the Olympics can bring excitement and opportunity but they also carry risks for children. Studies have reported rising concerns about abuse within sport and the broader impacts of event planning on children's rights and wellbeing. Given sport's deep cultural significance, it's vital that mega events are designed with child safety at the core. This means putting strong protections in place before, during, and after the Games to ensure all children, whether athletes or local residents, are safe, respected, and supported.

This research is important because it puts children's safety and wellbeing at the centre of planning for one of the world's biggest sporting events. It employs a qualitative approach through key stakeholder interviews to gather insights into the effectiveness of current practices and the perspectives of key decision-makers. This research will contribute to ensuring that Australia meets its ethical responsibilities and creates a safe, inclusive environment for all children and young people involved in or affected by the 2032 Olympic Games.



Centre for Children and Young People

Centre and theme updates

In Good Company? The role of men's social networks in domestic and family violence (Associate Professor Menka Tsantefski)

Led by Associate Professor Menka Tsantefski, this research explores how accountability for men's use of domestic and family violence (DFV) is promoted through legal sanctions, including intervention orders and attendance at mandated men's behaviour change programs (MBCP). Attrition and recidivism in MBCP remain stubbornly high, which indicates continuing risk to adult and child victim-survivors of DFV. Approximately half of the men participating in Australian MBCP commit further DFV within four years of the initial offence. Every man participating in a MBCP is embedded in a social network that either condones violence or potentially supports behaviour change; however, very little is known about the social networks of men who use violence in their intimate relationships and family lives. This project explores women's perspectives on the role of men's social networks in DFV and examines how men's informal networks could be mobilised to support behaviour change and increase the safety of women and children.





Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing

This research theme incorporates a range of disciplines focused on wellness, management of acute and chronic conditions, community development, public health and community health, and builds on SCU's foundations in mental health nursing, allied health, social work, community welfare, exercise science, public health, environmental health and maternal and child health. Health workforce development and health professional education is also a major aspect of this theme.

Centre and theme updates

Towards co-producing a plan for consumer involvement in mental health research

The theme has funded a workshop on co-production to consider the current state of consumer involvement in research and barriers and enablers to achieving progress towards coproduction (co-facilitating the Towards Co-production Workshop on Tuesday 28th October 2025). This workshop has been coproduced within a team of consumer and non-consumer academics in equal numbers. The team includes Louise Whitaker, Associate Professor, Social Work, Brenda Happell, Professor of Mental Health, Cath Roper, Consumer Academic, Centre for Mental Health Nursing, University of Melbourne, and Sam Brhaspati Stott, Independent lived experience researcher and casual academic, Southern Cross University. In the workshop, we explore current levels of consumer participation, using the participation ladder developed by Indigo Daya (2020) and explore strategies for further progress. Our findings will be documented for publication. Please don't hesitate to contact Louise Whitaker (louise.whitaker@scu.edu.au) for more information.

Happell, B., Warner, T., Whitaker, L., Foley, KR, Joffee-Kohn, N., Roper, C., & Stott, SB. (2025). Towards Coproduction in Mental Health Academia: A Cooperative Inquiry. *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*. 34(4):e70108. doi: 10.1111/inm.70108. PMID: 40751013; PMCID: PMC12317046

Research Program on Sexual Wellbeing Conversations in Rehabilitation

Joanne Hilder and her multidisciplinary team, guided by a community and consumer advisory group, are leading an innovative research program aimed at improving sexual wellbeing conversations in rehabilitation settings. Their work focuses on breaking down barriers to their important discussions.

Current projects:

- **Project 1:** A scoping review funded by the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing theme, examining barriers and facilitators for healthcare professionals initiating sexual wellbeing conversations in inpatient rehabilitation. This project is currently in the write-up stage.
- **Project 2:** Funded by the Faculty of Health, this study involves interviews with patients and partners, as well as staff surveys and focus groups, to identify enablers and challenges. Data collection and analysis are underway.
- **Project 3:** A content analysis of Reddit threads exploring lived experiences of sexual wellbeing after brain injury or stroke. Data is currently being collected.
- **Project 4:** Future work will focus on implementing strategies to increase sexual wellbeing conversations in rehabilitation settings, with plans to seek funding.

The program is paving the way for more open, supportive, and informed discussions about sexual wellbeing in healthcare.



Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing

This research theme incorporates a range of disciplines focused on wellness, management of acute and chronic conditions, community development, public health and community health, and builds on SCU's foundations in mental health nursing, allied health, social work, community welfare, exercise science, public health, environmental health and maternal and child health. Health workforce development and health professional education is also a major aspect of this theme.

Centre and theme updates

Co-designing Better Nutrition Care for Critically Ill Patients

Project title: Nutrient 2: Understanding the consumer experience of nutrition care for critically ill adults: An experience based co-design study (MRFF funded)

As part of an MRFF-funded project to improve nutrition care for critically ill patients in intensive care (ICU), A/Prof Rachel Muir, a co-investigator on the study, is working closely with Chief Investigator A/Prof Emma Ridley from Monash University. A/Prof Muir has been leading clinician and consumer interviews, and recently facilitated a co-design workshop with 70 clinicians and consumers in Melbourne in October.

This collaborative work brings together ICU doctors, nurses, dietitians, speech pathologists, and consumers, including former ICU patients and their families. to explore how nutrition practices can be strengthened during ICU admission, throughout recovery on the ward, and after discharge home.

Nutrition is a vital but often overlooked aspect of ICU recovery. This project aims to identify current gaps and challenges in providing optimal nutrition support and to develop patient-centred strategies that combine clinical evidence with lived experience. The findings will contribute to growing evidence on the importance of early, tailored nutrition interventions in critical care, with the potential to improve recovery and long-term outcomes for ICU survivors.

Desiree Kozlowski on ABC Radio National

In October 2025, Associate Professor Desiree Kowlowski was featured as a guest on Life Matters on ABC Radio National. During the 45-minute segment, she discussed the key findings from the National Pleasure Audit, sharing insights into Australians' experiences and attitudes toward pleasure and wellbeing.

This national conversation highlights the importance of Desiree's research in shaping public understanding and promoting evidence-based approaches to wellbeing.

Listen to the full interview here: [Life Matters on ABC Radio National](#)



Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing

This research theme incorporates a range of disciplines focused on wellness, management of acute and chronic conditions, community development, public health and community health, and builds on SCU's foundations in mental health nursing, allied health, social work, community welfare, exercise science, public health, environmental health and maternal and child health. Health workforce development and health professional education is also a major aspect of this theme.

Centre and theme updates

Recent Publications: Peter Hassmen & Barbara Adonteng-Kissi

Peter Hassmen has co-authored a new book published by Springer, focusing on bridging research and real-world impact:

Access the book here:

<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-95433-7>

This work emphasises the practical applications of research beyond academia, contributing to meaningful change in health and wellbeing.

Barbara Adonteng-Kissi has recently published two important papers exploring informal care and support for older people living with chronic life-limiting illnesses in rural Ghana:

- Adonteng-Kissi, B., & Adonteng-Kissi, O. (2025). Family and Community Role in the Provision of Informal Care for Older People Living with Chronic Life-limiting Illnesses in Rural Ghana. *Social Policy and Society*, 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1474746425101048>
- Adonteng-Kissi, B., & Adonteng-Kissi, O. (2025). Support for older people living with chronic life-limiting illnesses in rural Ghana. *Journal of Social Work*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/14680173251357086>



Resilient Ageing in Supportive Environments

RAISE brings together researchers, industry partners and lived experience experts who share an interest in, and commitment to, the wellbeing of older adults and their carers in diverse communities and supportive environments. We recognise the uniqueness, complexity and vulnerability of older adults and carers. Our vision is for all older adults and carers to stay well, have their rights promoted and be connected to their communities and the environment. We are committed to understanding the implications and challenges of climate change and natural disasters, the importance of social connectedness, and the need to provide innovative and sustainable strategies to enhance the wellbeing of older adults and carers.

RAISE aims to positively impact older adults and carers through the implementation of interdisciplinary health, social, environmental and technological initiatives. Impactful partnerships will facilitate a collective approach that enables resilience, adaptation, recovery, hope and ultimately better lives for older people and carers. Older adults and carers will be at the core of everything we do.

Centre and theme updates

Co-design of an implementation strategy for postoperative Coronary Artery Bypass Grafting (CABG) care: A multi-method study

Ms Nasrawi's research focuses on improving postoperative care during Phase 1 Cardiac Rehabilitation for adults recovering from cardiac surgery, particularly coronary artery bypass grafting (CABG). This area is increasingly recognised in clinical practice and health policy due to its potential to improve patient outcomes and reduce strain on the healthcare system. Her work is grounded in implementation science and guided by Participatory Action Research (PAR), ensuring it remains responsive to real-world clinical challenges.

The research addresses questions raised by healthcare professionals including nurses, surgical teams and allied health staff, while also responding to the needs of patients and their carers. It promotes individualised care approaches that support recovery and wellbeing, helping to reduce the burden of recovery after heart disease, one of the leading causes of death worldwide.

By integrating clinical insights with patient-centred perspectives, Ms Nasrawi's work bridges the gap between evidence and practice. It aligns with national and international priorities to improve surgical outcomes, reduce hospital readmissions and enhance early rehabilitation. Ultimately, this research contributes to strengthening cardiac care pathways and ensuring that postoperative support is both effective and tailored to the needs of diverse patient populations.

In 2025, Dima has contributed meaningfully to cardiovascular nursing through two key achievements. Firstly, she led and published as first author in **Australian Critical Care Journal**, a highly regarded international Q1 journal. This observational study explored postoperative care pathways for patients following coronary artery bypass grafting (CABG) surgery. The findings provide valuable evidence to inform clinical practice and improve patient outcomes in critical care settings.



Secondly, she presented a poster at the Association of Cardiovascular Nursing and Allied Professionals (ACNAP) Congress in France. This presentation shared insights into the experiences of patients, carers, and healthcare professionals engaging with Phase 1 cardiac rehabilitation post-CABG. It highlighted the importance of person-centred care and multidisciplinary collaboration in cardiac recovery. Ms Nasrawi is currently an active member of the Cardiac surgery international Nursing and allied professional research network (CONNECT). This international network brings together nursing and allied health researchers to explore and advance evidence-based practices in cardiac surgery care. Through CONNECT, Mrs Nasrawi contributes to collaborative research efforts aimed at improving clinical outcomes, enhancing patient experiences and strengthening global knowledge exchange in cardiovascular nursing.

Publications:

Nasrawi, D., Latimer, S., Massey, D., & Gillespie, B. M. (2022). Delivery, barriers, and enablers to patient participation in inpatient cardiac rehabilitation following cardiac surgery: An integrative review. *Australian Critical Care*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aucc.2022.01.007>

Nasrawi, D., Latimer, S., Massey, D., & Gillespie, B. M. (2025). **Postoperative care pathways for patients following coronary artery bypass grafting surgery: An observational study**. **Australian Critical Care**, 38(4), 101234. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aucc.2025.101234>

Nasrawi, D., Latimer, S., Massey, D., & Gillespie, B. M. (2025). **Postoperative care pathway with phase 1 cardiac rehabilitation...** Poster presented at ACNAP Congress, 12–14 June 2025, Sophia-Antipolis, France.



Resilient Ageing in Supportive Environments

Centre and theme updates

Clinical leadership and the ethics of care: An exploration of meaning and practice in residential aged care.

Over the past decade, reports of neglect and abuse have highlighted many of the systemic care concerns and failures in residential aged care (RAC) in Australia. The largest of these was the Royal Commission. An alarming theme that was presented many times throughout the Royal Commission hearings was that staff, family members, and residents were often aware of care failures or care concerns; however, they felt powerless to speak up about these. The Royal Commission's final report provided numerous recommendations, focusing on how care could be improved, including processes to encourage the raising of concerns. However, there was limited consideration given to the important role of the Registered Nurse (RN) working in RAC and the impact they can have as the clinical leader on ethical care practices and providing a voice to those who may feel powerless.

Katrina Austen's PhD study examines how the RN in RAC can influence, enable, and promote other staff, residents, and families to raise care concerns, thereby reducing the likelihood of poor practices becoming accepted and normalised within RAC. The first phase of this study explored RNs' knowledge of poor practices, their ability to speak up or raise concerns about these practices, and how this was influenced by their understanding of the ethics of care. Findings from this phase have highlighted the importance of RNs developing strong ethical principles about care, as these form the basis for ensuring high standards of accepted practices and provide the RN with the courage to raise care concerns.



The second phase will be completed in 2026. This phase focuses on the experiences of other residential aged care staff and family members in raising care concerns within RAC facilities. It is anticipated that the findings from this research will provide strategies for RNs, as the clinical and ethical leaders of RAC, to develop the courage to raise care concerns as needed, thereby reducing poor practices that become normalised. To date, Katrina has had one publication from this study in the Journal of Clinical of Nursing. This article presented her findings from the scoping review that was completed on this topic before commencing data collection.

Publications

Austen, K., Hutchinson, M., & Hurley, J. (2024). Promoting speaking up behaviours among nurses working in the care for older people: A scoping review. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 33(10), 3854–3868. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.17199>



Resilient Ageing in Supportive Environments

Centre and theme updates

Shine On

Shine On Wollumbin is a singing and socialising group for adults aged 65 and above, hosted by the Condong Bowling Club and supported by Southern Cross University. Inspired by the success of its sister initiative, The Beating Hearts of Lismore, the group brings people in Murwillumbah and the surrounding areas together through the joy of music.

Shine On Wollumbin meets every Wednesday for 1.5 hours and is free - including a 30-minute morning tea. Each session is made special by our wonderful volunteer musicians and helpers, alongside Southern Cross University students from a range of healthcare disciplines. These students play a key role by leading gentle exercises, sharing their knowledge, and ensuring every participant feels welcomed and included.

At its heart, Shine On Wollumbin promotes healthy ageing and social connection, celebrating the importance of an active lifestyle and meaningful community engagement. A thoroughly inclusive environment for people of all abilities, the name itself reflects our message, shining at any age!



Photo: Leanne White (Healthy Ageing Health Promotion Officer, NNSW Health), Michelle Bissett, Donna Wilson, Christina Aggar, Erin Davis



Physical Activity, Sport and Exercise Research

This theme focuses on physical activity and sports performance. It also links with social, psychological, biomedical and biomechanical researchers in the service of illness and injury prevention, sports and human performance, physical fitness promotion and chronic illness management.

Centre and theme updates



Extended Movember Partnership

Dr Dylan Poulus has secured an additional \$15,000 in funding from Movember, extending SCU's partnership focused on mental health in esports. This new project will advance the development and implementation of international mental health guidelines for esports. In November, Dylan will represent both Movember and Southern Cross University in London, convening a world-first committee of global experts and industry leaders to collaboratively draft the guidelines and shape best-practice mental health support across the esports ecosystem.



Presentation to the Heart Foundation

Dr Melanie Clarke was invited to deliver a presentation at the Heart Foundation and NSW Cardiovascular Research Network Symposium in Armidale in October. As a representative of Southern Cross University and a member of the Network's Rising Star Committee, Mel presented her growing program of research exploring the cardiovascular outcomes of physical activity and goal setting to an audience of researchers, clinicians, and cardiovascular health advocates.



Physical Activity, Sport and Exercise Research

This theme focuses on physical activity and sports performance. It also links with social, psychological, biomedical and biomechanical researchers in the service of illness and injury prevention, sports and human performance, physical fitness promotion and chronic illness management.

Centre and theme updates

Presentation to the Australian Institute of Sport's Performance Psychology Network

Dr Scott Goddard and PhD student Joseph Greer presented to the AIS Performance Psychology Network in October. The focus of the presentation was on the psychological states underlying exceptional performances – which is the topic of Joe's PhD and which Scott received his PhD in as well. The presentation aimed to introduce AIS performance psychologists to the latest research on the psychological states underlying exceptional performances, as well as discussing opportunities to integrate latest research into their practice. Joe reflected that: "The presentation went really well and builds upon our ongoing collaboration with the AIS. It was great to see how the applied sport psychologists engaged with our latest findings and provided thoughtful insights into how our research can inform their practice and support Australia's leading athletes."





2

Research Outputs

Publications

Publications

In September to November 2025 Faculty of Health Researchers have recorded 73 research publications. Most in Q1 highly cited journals.





3

**Grant and Award Success
Research Project Updates**



Grant and Award Success

Grant success

Successful external funding

The period from September to November 2025 has seen great grant success for FoH staff. A total of almost \$3.3m in external competitive funding was awarded in this period.

Two of the largest grants were to support our First Nations researchers Dr Marilyn Clarke and Dr Alana Gall

Bayes, J., Cashin, A., Schloss, J (2025). The effect of Mediterranean diet on the symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress in autistic adults. Jacka Foundation for Natural Therapies Limited, Southern Cross University. \$50,000.

Buchan, J (2025). Donation from Council of Heads of Exercise, Sport and Movement Sciences. Council of Heads of Exercise, Sport and Movement Sciences. \$5,000.

Furness, L (2025). Translating Research into Practice. James Cook University. \$20,831.

Grace, S (2025). Donation: Kristy Greenwood’s Research Project: Osteopathic Manual Therapy for Infants with Breastfeeding Difficulty. Kiddies Dental Care. \$2,000.

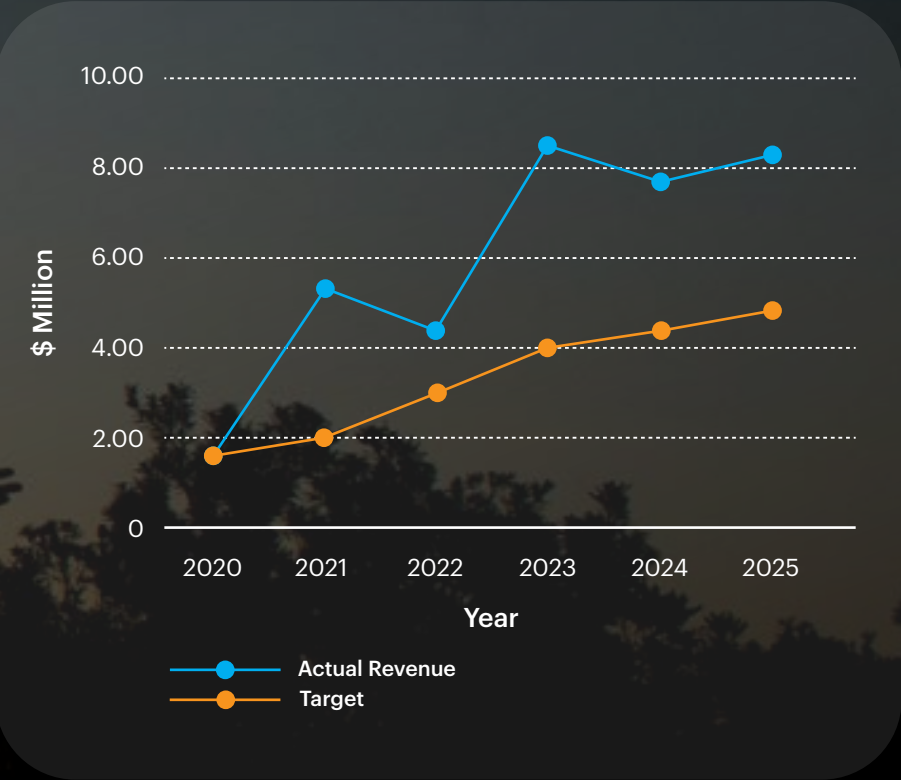
Hurley, J., Happell, B., Yoxall, J. (2025). Variation: The Lighthouse Program #9773. The Peregrine Centre. \$39,911.

McPherson, L., Day, K., Hindman, E (2025). Evaluation of NSW OurSPACE program. Australian Childhood Foundation. \$127,791.

Munro, N. (2025) INCLUDE (INterprofessional Coaching to Enhance Language and Learning in Secondary Classrooms Using Digital Education for Teachers. Karolinska Institutet \$127,791

Poulus, D (2025). Schedule of Work 5 – Movember Esports Mental Health Guidelines. Movember Foundation. \$13,560.

We have been provided with more accurate data about FoH research grant success over the last few years and the figures are even better than previously reported. We have far exceeded our stretch goals for the last three years! An amazing effort by all which has resulted in the FoH being awarded extra research income to assist with research equipment purchases!!





Research Project Updates

Research Project Updates

SISTABIRTH Birthing on Country, Revitalisation of Cultural Practices - Connecting Jarjums to Country – Smoking Ceremony

As part of the SISTABIRTH Birthing on Country project with Southern Cross University, Bullinah Aboriginal Health Service hosted a Connecting Jarjums to Country Smoking Ceremony on Monday, 20 October 2025, at Missingham Park in Ballina. The event was held to revitalise and strengthen traditional cultural practices connected to birth, belonging, and community. Fifteen families came together in a heartfelt celebration of culture and connection. Guided by respected female Bundjalung Elders, the ceremony honoured the jarjums through dance, smoking, and ochre, grounding them in the strength and wisdom of Country. The smell of smoke drifted through the air, reminding us of the deep cultural significance of nurturing and protecting cultural practices for the next generation. For many families, the ceremony was both emotional and empowering, a return to cultural ways of welcoming and strengthening jarjums within their community. The event reflected the core purpose of SISTABIRTH: to revitalise and embed cultural knowledge and practices in maternity and early life care, ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families can connect to culture from the very beginning of life. The day highlighted the importance of community-led healing and the continued resilience of cultural practices that have supported generations. The smiles, laughter, and sense of belonging shared by families spoke to the strength that comes from being together on Country. The Elders, families, and Bullinah staff all helped bring this special day to life, walking together to honour culture, celebrate community, and connect our jarjums to Country. The ceremony received significant attention both locally and beyond. It was featured by ABC Radio North Coast and ABC News Online.

[ABC North Coast Radio](#) - go to 2:18:50 to hear the story.

[ABC News Online](#)





Research Project Updates

Research Project Updates

WeCare Research Project: Final Meeting of the Indian Advisory Panel

September 26th, 2025, was the final meeting of the Indian Advisory Panel for the WeCare Research Project. Funded by an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant, the WeCare project, led by Associate Professor Gail Moloney from Psychology in the Faculty of Health, aims to increase understanding about Australia's organ donation system and increase registration on the Australian Organ Donor Register among culturally diverse communities. The Indian Advisory Panel, pictured above, co-created interactive dialogical videos that address common questions and concerns about organ donation and registration, tailored specifically to the Indian community and disseminated through the Indian community. The videos were scripted, acted in, filmed, evaluated, and disseminated by the members of the Indian Advisory Panel.

The overall aim of the research project is to co-create a model that can be rolled out with other culturally diverse communities in NSW. The project involves co-creating interactive dialogical videos and a community diffusion strategy with the Indian, Bangladeshi and Lebanese communities in Sydney, through Community Advisory Panels, and a three-stage, tiered design where each stage informs the next stage. The project partners on the ARC Linkage project are the NSW Organ and Tissue Donation Service, the SWS Organ and Tissue Steering Committee, Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur (SRMD), and the University of Melbourne.

If you would like to know more about this research, please contact Gail Moloney, gail.moloney@scu.edu.au



Left to right: Dr Ramanathan Lakshmanan, Senthil Ramalingam, Meenakshi Lakshmanan, Swetha Adaikalavan, Maddison Norton (SCU), Juliet Howe (SCU), Anagan Babu, Nipaa Avalani Vora, Dr Michael Sutherland, Dr Dhaval Ghelanit, Bhavini Doshi, A/Prof Gail Moloney, Chetna Shah, Vicki Harding (Prof Marie Hutchinson SCU)



4

**Engagement
and Impact**



Engagement and Impact

Sunscreen Under the Microscope: SCU's Evidence-Based Insights Attract Global Attention

An article published in The Conversation by Southern Cross University's Dr Nela Rosic, Adj A/Prof Michael Stapelberg and A/Prof Mike Climstein titled "Does my sunscreen actually work? Here's what's behind the latest SPF concerns", has attracted remarkable global attention since its release in early October 2025. The piece unpacks recent questions around sunscreen efficacy, the science of SPF testing, and what consumers should know about product labelling, water resistance and ultraviolet protection.

The article's evidence-based yet accessible approach resonated widely, prompting syndication and interviews across major international outlets. Within days, it was republished or referenced by Yahoo News, The Indian Express, Press Trust of India, and several regional news platforms in the United States, United Kingdom, and New Zealand. The article was also featured in Southern Cross University official news site, celebrating the Faculty's growing impact in public-facing science communication.

Dr Rosic completed five national and international radio interviews discussing the findings and implications for sun safety:

- ABC Drive NSW
- ABC Radio Perth
- Radio New Zealand
- Radio Sydney FM 2GB Afternoons with Michael McLaren
- Plus extensive online coverage through Yahoo News, The Indian Express, SCU News, and Press Trust of India.

This widespread engagement highlights both the public appetite for reliable health communication and the growing recognition of Southern Cross University researchers as trusted voices in applied health science. Dr Rosic's work bridges molecular biology, environmental exposure, and dermatological health, providing critical insights into sunscreen formulation and consumer protection.

The article continues to generate discussion across traditional and digital media platforms worldwide, reinforcing SCU's commitment to translational research that informs public understanding and improves community wellbeing.

[Read the full article in The Conversation](#)



Engagement and Impact

SCU Researchers Contribute to Conversations on AI and Ageing

Dr Louise Horstmanshof recently presented at The Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG) NSW symposium, *AI and digital technology - the Dream or the Nightmare?*, held on 3 October 2025 at Newcastle University. Her presentation, *A Comparison Between Human and Generative AI Decision Making Attributes in Complex Health Services*, explored the evolving role of AI in healthcare. Louise also contributed to the events as part of the organising team and delivered a creative, fit-for-purpose presentation on using AI to generate a professional headshot.

In addition, Louise served on the organising committee for the Dementia Inclusive Ballina Alliance Symposium, held on 17 October 2025, where she delivered the closing remarks. Associate Professor Sabrina Pit also participated, moderating a panel discussion on *Young Onset Dementia*. Southern Cross University was proud to sponsor the event, with two complementary tickets awarded to staff member Erin Davis and student Samantha Evans.

Louise's psychology honours student, Amanda Bos will present at the Australian Psychological Society - Psychology and Ageing Conference in Brisbane at the end of November. Amanda will share findings from her 2025 honours project *Exploring the Social Splash: Aqua Fitness as a Pathway to Social Connection and Well-Being for Older Adults*.



Engagement and Impact

Social Prescribing and Younger Onset Dementia

At the Dementia Inclusive Ballina Annual Symposium 2025, held on 17 October 2025 at the Ballina RSL Club, 120 people living with dementia, carers, and health and social care professionals gathered to explore the theme “Optimising Health and Well-Being through Social Prescribing and Connectedness.” The Symposium also featured our Younger Onset Dementia Expert Panel facilitated by A/Prof Sabrina Pit, Associate Professor Social Prescribing and Integrated Care, Southern Cross University, that brought together lived experience, carer, health, and support perspectives.

The discussion provided attendees with valuable insights into the experiences of people living with younger onset dementia, their carers, and the professionals who support them. Themes included:

- A strong focus was placed on social prescribing, connecting people with YOD and their carers to meaningful, community-based social, creative, and physical activities that promote wellbeing and connection.
- NDIS Support Workers are helping people living with YOD to stay socially active and connected
- The Panel called again for the establishment and funding of specific Dementia Care Navigators.

- The Panel also issued a call to recognise and celebrate Younger Onset Dementia Awareness Day (YoD Day), encouraging local organisations and communities to join the international movement on 24 October each year, a day to raise awareness, reduce stigma, improve social connections and champion change.
- Attendees also contributed to mapping local social and community activities across the Northern Rivers for all people living with dementia. This resource initiative will be shared with conference attendees and local providers, inform regional social prescribing pathways and strengthen dementia-inclusive opportunities.



Engagement and Impact

Inaugural Younger Onset Dementia Awareness Day 24 October 2025

On 24 October 2025, Dementia Inclusive Ballina, New South Wales, proudly hosted Australia's inaugural Younger Onset Dementia Awareness Day (#YODA) at Summerland Farm, Alstonville, NSW, joining forces with Dementia Forward UK, who first launched the initiative in 2022.

The day brought people living with YOD, carers, professionals, and community members together to raise awareness, share lived experiences, and celebrate social connection, reflecting the growing international movement to recognise and support people living with younger onset dementia. The event reflects the principles of social prescribing, highlighting how community participation and inclusion can support wellbeing alongside clinical care.

- With now two countries united in this cause, the vision is to expand #YODay #YODA into an Australian-wide and global collaboration in 2026 and beyond.
- Conversations are already in progress with Western Australia and Victoria to grow our #YODay #YODA footprint for 24 October 2026. Please mark the event in your diaries.
- We warmly invite people and organisations and regions to join us next year in celebrating and championing this important initiative.

Contact: A/Prof Sabrina Pit
Associate Professor Social Prescribing and Integrated Care
Faculty of Health, Southern Cross University
Conjoint, Primary and Community Care Services

admin@DementiaInclusiveBallina.org.au or sabrina.pit@scu.edu.au

Follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#) to stay up-to-date for 2026 events and connections.



Source: ChatGPT 5.0 Image Nov 10, 2025, 03_42_00 PM



5

**Faculty Researchers
in the Media**



Faculty of Health
Research News December 2025

Faculty Researchers in the Media

Faculty Researchers in the Media

Groundbreaking research to tackle climate-related PTSD in Northern Rivers seeks participants

Dr Janet Schloss. Southern Cross University News. 6 November 2025

<https://www.scu.edu.au/news/2025/climate-related-ptsd-trial-seeks-participants/>

Clinical trial to focus on art and nature to overcome PTSD from disasters

Dr Janet Schloss. Lismore Times. 23 November 2025

<https://timesnewsgroup.com.au/lismoretimes/news/clinical-trial-to-focus-on-art-and-nature-to-overcome-ptsd-from-disasters/>

What is 'ear seeding', the TikTok trend said to treat stress and fatigue?

Professor Jon Wardle. The Conversation. 1 October 2025

<https://theconversation.com/what-is-ear-seeding-the-tiktok-trend-said-to-treat-stress-and-fatigue-265572>

Racism in the health sector can kill, research shows. What can be done to save lives?

Dr Alana Gall. SBS News. 2 September 2025

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/racism-impacting-health-sector-research-shows/dcyng1gmq>



6

Researcher in the Spotlight
PhD Candidate in the Spotlight



Researcher in the Spotlight

Researcher in the Spotlight

Professor Lainie Cameron

Lainie Cameron is an osteopath and exercise physiologist. Her research spans both clinical disciplines, exploring exercise and manual therapy interventions across rheumatological conditions. She has contributed to several Cochrane systematic reviews as well as the development of clinical guidelines, and emphasises the use of these evidence-based resources for informing clinical decision-making. Lainie is currently collaborating with three Cochrane review teams on systematic reviews of exercise, physical, and manual therapies for hypertension, systemic sclerosis, and low back pain.

In the past few years, Lainie has expanded her research and her clinical practice into working with animals, particularly dogs and horses, covering both the osteopathic treatment of animals, and the engagement of dogs and horses as therapy animals alongside human clinicians.



Images: Bella, Lainie's therapy dog, at work and at play.



PhD Candidate in the Spotlight

Researcher in the Spotlight



Esario Daguman

Esario Daguman

Esario (/e'sarjo/ or sounds like eh · sah · ree · oh) is a third-year PhD student evaluating the *Safe Steps for De-escalation*. Safe Steps is a structured approach for therapeutic responding to emotional activation, troubling behaviours, and interpersonal conflict. It was implemented in public acute mental health units across New South Wales, Australia, with the support of co-designed training on the approach and restrictive practice reviews. Esario intends to understand *if* and *how* such a structured approach works in reducing restrictive practices, such as seclusion, physical restraint, and as-needed intramuscular injections of psychotropics. He is also exploring what would sustain its effective and competent provision.

Esario's interest in therapeutic responding began during his volunteer work as a student peer counsellor in the Philippines, which socialised him into a multiple-model health perspective and has concerned him with individual-level answers to systemic issues. His global rewards stints in the United Arab Emirates have informed his belief that research needs to be open and methodologically robust. His helpline counselling experience and master's research on personal recovery and mental health stigma in Aotearoa New Zealand and the United Kingdom have influenced him to defer to the wisdom, aspirations, and self-righting capacities of people with mental ill-health when providing support.

With the guidance and support of his supervisors, Professor Emerita Marie Hutchinson, Adjunct Professor Richard Lakeman, Associate Professor Jacqui Yoxall, and the implementation team behind Safe Steps, Esario has published six papers for his PhD thus far. The first five of these papers provide support for the structure, progression, underlying values, initial effectiveness, and evaluability of the Safe Steps. In his recent paper ([see this link](#)), he reported that the structured approach can lower the rate of restrictive practices in three implementation units, including the rate of as-needed intramuscular injections of psychotropics, compared to three control sites. At the same time, he found that no one de-escalation technique could be considered 'the' active ingredient behind successful de-escalation. He further found that less restrictive responses during mental health crises are more likely when people who respond to escalations are empowered to exercise their authentic voice. He invites readers to explore his forthcoming papers, which examine what sustains the competent provision of de-escalation intervention.

Esario hopes that the growing evidence for the importance and effectiveness of the Safe Steps will encourage mental health services and funders to act on research that confronts inequitable systems, which perpetuate invariant and adversarial solutions within and beyond acute mental health units.



7

Updates from the Library



Updates from the Library

Updates from the Library

AI Tools for Smarter Literature Scoping and Citation Mapping

Exploring research topics and understanding how ideas connect can feel overwhelming. Tools like Research Rabbit and Undermind are making the process of scoping and visualizing research networks more intuitive and efficient.

Why use AI-powered citation tools?

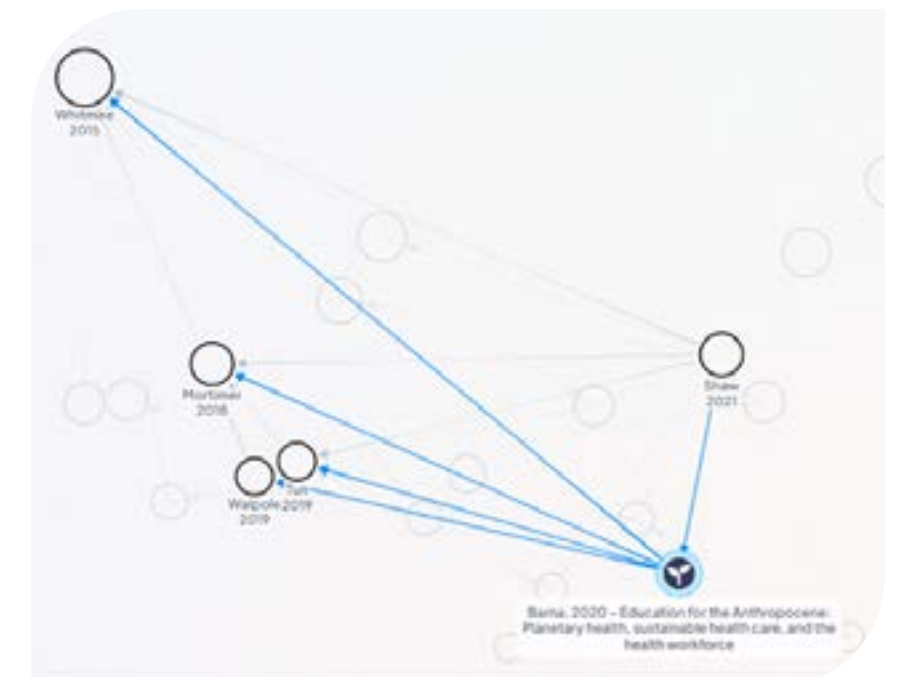
Traditional database searching often gives you a static list of results. AI tools go further by helping you map relationships between papers, authors, and concepts, creating dynamic citation networks that reveal patterns and gaps in the literature. This is particularly valuable when entering a new research area or preparing reviews.

Research Rabbit allows you to build collections of papers and then explore related works visually. You can see how authors and topics cluster, which can spark new ideas or collaborations. Similarly, Undermind uses your responses to tailored questions, and AI-driven recommendations, to surface relevant articles you might miss with keyword searches alone, helping you stay ahead of emerging trends.

For health researchers, these tools can save hours of manual searching and provide a clearer picture of the evidence base. They complement—not replace—traditional databases and critical appraisal skills, but they offer a powerful starting point for deeper inquiry.

Tips for Getting Started (Research Rabbit)

1. Create an account most platforms offer free tiers suitable for individual researchers.
2. Start with a seed paper: Enter a DOI to generate related works and citation networks.
3. Build collections: Group papers by theme or project to keep your exploration organized.
4. Explore visual maps: Use the network view to identify influential authors, clusters, and gaps.
5. Combine with traditional searches: These tools are best used alongside databases like Medline or Scopus for comprehensive coverage.
6. Stay curious: Follow citation trails and recommended papers to uncover emerging research directions.





Share your research success with us

Do you have a news item to share with the Faculty of Health and the wider community? If so, we would love to hear and promote your research achievements within the Faculty.

Please email your research achievements to
healthresearch@scu.edu.au

Disclaimer

The information in this publication was correct at the time of publishing December 2025. To the extent permitted by law, SCU excludes all liability arising from the use or, or reliance on the information contained in this publication. SCU claims copyright ownership of all information in the brochure, unless expressly stated otherwise.