



Issue 3, September 2025

## Directors Update

Welcome to the latest issue of the Optimal Ageing newsletter.

This issue is full of exciting developments as we continue to grow our cohort and industry collaborations. We're delighted to welcome Flagstaff Group, our new industry partner, whose work empowering people with disabilities aligns very well with our themes of promoting independence and sustaining connectedness.

We're celebrating the arrival of seven talented PhD and Masters students across Monash and Federation Universities. Also, Professor Wendy Wright, Dean, Graduate Research at Federation University shares her insights on how the ITTC in Optimal Ageing program aligns with Federation University's Co-operative model.

Our inaugural webinar series launches this month, led by Professor Dana Kulić, and we're looking forward to sharing insights from our researchers, Industry Partners, PhD students, Postdoctoral Fellows and Affiliates in the coming months.

There are still opportunities to start new projects and invite new partners to join us. If you have a project idea or know of an industry partner interested in collaborating in our core themes of **enhancing cognition, promoting independence, and sustaining connectedness**, we'd love to hear from you! Just email us at **[optimalageingcentre@monash.edu](mailto:optimalageingcentre@monash.edu)**.

Yen and Dana 🧠🤖

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## Upcoming Event

We're excited to launch our inaugural webinar, presented by Professor Dana Kulić, Director of Monash Robotics and Co-Director of the ITTC in Optimal Ageing. This webinar marks the beginning of a monthly series exploring innovation in ageing.

👉 Register to receive the Zoom link <https://monash.zoom.us/meeting/register/F6bICGLhRKOGptc3HikuUQ>



ARC Industrial Transformation  
Training Centre in Optimal Ageing

### Webinar Invitation

## Monitoring and enhancing mobility

**Presented by Professor Dana Kulić,**

**Director of Monash Robotics, Co-Director of the ARC ITTC in Optimal Ageing, Monash University**

Many older adults experience significant declines in mobility as they age, due to a variety of illnesses including stroke, Parkinson's, arthritis and others. In this talk, I will describe sensors, algorithms and AI-enabled strategies for monitoring and enhancing mobility and independence of older adults.



**Monday 29th September 2025**

**11:00 am - 12:00 noon AEST**



## ARC ITTC in Optimal Ageing is a Perfect Fit for Federation University's Industry-Linked PhD Program



Written by [Professor Wendy Wright](#),  
Dean, Graduate Research,  
Federation University

Federation is the largest education institution in regional Victoria with offerings at both TAFE and University level – the latter of course including the elite PhD degree. Federation is all about transforming lives and enhancing communities. With campuses in Ballarat, Berwick, Gippsland and the Wimmera, all of our programs are connected to industry and community partners via our Co-operative University model.

Federation University's participation in the ARC ITTC brings a commitment to excellence, collaboration and partnership.

### The Co-Op Approach to PhD Research Training

Federation University's co-op PhD program is bridging the divide between academic research and industry practice. Unlike traditional doctoral pathways, the co-op PhD connects candidates directly within partner organisations, enabling them to tackle genuine industry challenges while maintaining rigorous academic standards.

### How the Co-Op Model Works

- ✓ Internships: Candidates spend time working within a partner business, government agency, or community group. This hands-on experience allows them to address research questions that have immediate relevance and impact.
- ✓ Co-supervision: PhD students benefit from the guidance of both a university academic supervisor and an industry mentor, ensuring a balanced perspective and broader professional support network.
- ✓ Co-design: Projects are designed to deliver tangible outcomes for industry partners while advancing scholarly knowledge, equipping graduates with unique insights and practical know-how.

✔ Co-funding: Projects are co-funded by industry and community partners.

✔ Professional Development: The co-op approach emphasises transferable skills—such as project management, communication, and stakeholder engagement—preparing researchers for diverse career pathways in and beyond academia.

Find out more about Federation University's Co-operative model [here](#).

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## Meet our PhD students

With a number of project agreements with our industry partners now in place, we're excited to welcome seven talented PhD and Masters students to Federation and Monash Universities.



**Irushi Ediriweera** [LinkedIn](#)

Federation University

**Project:** Co-development and prototyping of digital tools to enhance wellness, social connectedness and/or self-care of older adult workers.

**Industry Partners:** Flourish Australia, WellAware, City of Ballarat



**Joshua Ee** [LinkedIn](#)

Monash University

**Project:** Care to Sleep: Co-designing a digital sleep intervention for community-dwelling people living with cognitive impairment and their care partner

**Industry Partner:** Cogniant



**Basil George** [LinkedIn](#)

Federation University

**Project:** Bridging the Digital Divide: Co-Designing Digital Literacy Solutions for Ageing Health Workforces and Older Adult Clients

**Industry Partners:** Flourish Australia, WellAware, City of Ballarat



**Shelci Martin** [LinkedIn](#)

Federation University

**Project:** Co-development and prototyping of digital tools to enhance wellness, social connectedness and/or self-care of older adult workforce clients.

**Industry Partners:** Flourish Australia, WellAware, City of Ballarat

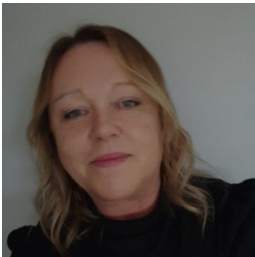


**Deepangika Pillai** [LinkedIn](#)

Monash University

**Project:** Natural Interaction Strategies for Long-Term Robot Use for Elderly Care

**Industry Partner:** Andromeda



**Rachel Sinanan** [LinkedIn](#)

Federation University

**Project:** Development of digital literacy training for older adult workers and their clients

**Industry Partners:** Flourish Australia, WellAware, City of Ballarat



**Gurdeep Singh** [LinkedIn](#)

Monash University

**Project:** Personal Future Health Prediction

**Industry Partner:** Future Wellness Group

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## Meet our Affiliate, Sahaya Jesto

PhD project: Advancing Dementia Care Through Nurse-Centred Education  
Federation University, Supervised by [Professor Michael Olosoji](#)



Sahaya's PhD research addresses a critical gap in aged mental health and aged care settings by focusing on the management of behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD). These symptoms, such as agitation, aggression, depression, and apathy, are common and profoundly affect the quality of life of people living with dementia, while also intensifying caregiver burden and placing complex demands on the healthcare workforce. Nurses are central to dementia care, yet they often face diverse and evolving demands that require ongoing support and tailored professional development.

Through a rigorous mixed-methods and co-design approach, this research seeks to develop a novel, evidence-based educational intervention collaboratively designed with nurses, dementia specialists, and key stakeholders.

Importantly, the research directly responds to the recommendations of the **Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety**, which called for strengthening and supporting the nursing workforce through enhanced training and resources to ensure safe, person-centred, and dignified care. By addressing this national priority, the project aims to build workforce capability, inform policy and practice, and ultimately improve care outcomes for older adults living with dementia in both aged mental health and aged care settings.

Read more about Sahaya [here](#)

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### How to join the ITTC in Optimal Ageing as an Affiliate

As an Affiliate, you'll have access to networking opportunities, invitations to training workshops and industry events, and competitive funding for travel and conferences.

Becoming an Affiliate is easy—just fill out a short application form (linked [here](#)). We'd love to have you join us and be part of our cohort.

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## Welcome to our New Industry Partner



We're very pleased to welcome our new industry partner Flagstaff Group. Partner Investigator, Alison Turner, and Chief Investigator, Dr Elahe Abdi, will be supervising a PhD student to develop a digital tool that will be used to support Flagstaff's clients. Since 1966, The Flagstaff Group has been empowering people with disabilities by creating life skills and employment opportunities in a supportive, inclusive environment. As a registered NDIS provider, Flagstaff operates several social enterprises including print, mail and digital services, commercial laundry services, recycling and secure shredding, glove laundering and group services including grounds maintenance, commercial cleaning, industrial sewing and custom woodwork and carpentry. Flagstaff's NDIS division, Life Choices, offers a number of person-centred life skills pathways and activities for people with a disability.

## Our Industry Partners

We're proud to collaborate with partners across government, peak body, technology development and mental health support sectors, all committed to the health and wellness of the community.



REDENLAB

## Connect with us

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Australian Government  
Australian Research Council

