DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

DEAKIN INSTITUTE FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & NUTRITION

10 YEARS

10 YEARS

2016–2025:

Celebrating the Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition

‘One of IPAN’s greatest achievements is translating research findings into practice. This is demonstrated by IPAN’s involvement with policy submissions, guidelines and Commonwealth and State Government strategy documents. IPAN collaborates with health NGOs enabling implementation of evidence-based health promotion programs across Australia. Through IPAN’s Consumer Network people with lived experience of chronic disease are involved ensuring meaningful research is undertaken that makes a difference to people’s lives.

IPAN’s commitment to mentoring and supporting early career researchers is invaluable, helping build research capacity for the future.’

Dr Lyn Roberts AO, Institute Advisory Board Member

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of all the unceded lands, skies and waterways on which we work and meet. We pay our deep respect to the Ancestors and Elders of Wadawurrung Country, Eastern Maar Country and Wurundjeri Country, where Deakin University’s physical campuses are located. We also acknowledge all First Nations Peoples that make contributions to our learning communities.

Foreword

As the first Deakin University research institute within the Faculty of Health, the Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition has been a progressive leader delivering high-quality research outcomes over the past decade.

The Institute's purpose addresses three of Deakin's five research themes – Improving Health and Wellbeing; Creating Smarter Technologies and Enabling a Sustainable World – bringing together a multidisciplinary team of leading researchers from across Deakin to create new knowledge and deliver impact.

Since its establishment, the Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition has been a significant contributor to Deakin University's overall rankings and research achievements, including having four researchers among the very first group of highly cited researchers at Deakin. The Institute's strong national and international reputation for research excellence and collaboration, and for mentoring and developing researchers in their respective fields, has been an inspiration to many other research institutes across the globe. Through its impact on priority areas in health and sport, the Institute is shaping policy and practice, as well as contributing directly to the education of Deakin's nutrition and exercise science students.

As Chair of the Institute's Advisory Board, I'm extremely pleased to have been part of this journey, and I acknowledge the contributions of my fellow Advisory Board members as well as the contributions of the previous Chairs and members of the Advisory Board.

I also recognise the incredibly hard work of the leadership team, the researchers and support staff and know they will continue to build on these achievements into the future.

This special 10-year milestone is a wonderful opportunity to not only reflect on the achievements to date but to look ahead to the future.

My congratulations to everyone within the Institute and their many collaborators and supporters on a successful 10 years.

Deakin Distinguished Professor Matthew Clarke
Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation

'This special 10-year milestone is a wonderful opportunity to not only reflect on the achievements to date but to look ahead to the future.'

Message from our Director

In 2025, we're proud to celebrate 10 years as a Deakin University research institute.

Research excellence is at the core of everything we do, and I have no doubt that this – combined with our strong record of collaboration and being solutions focused – has enhanced our impact over the last decade and driven our success.

As joint Co-Director with Professor David Crawford from day one, and as Director from 2021 to present, I feel incredibly privileged to have had the opportunity to be at the helm of this amazing research institute.

Established in March 2016, our original focus was on building the evidence base for preventative health and finding solutions to address the climbing rates of chronic conditions.

In more recent years, our agenda has expanded to include multidisciplinary research in active living, sport, food and nutrition to solve population and planetary health, performance and system challenges.

Making a difference through research has always been a major focus of our work. This can only be achieved through our strategic engagement with key organisations and decision makers, and we truly value these relationships.

We've also consistently championed our early career researchers in innovative and supportive ways to ensure a strong future for our related fields.

A special thanks to Deakin, the Faculty of Health and in particular to the School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences for the strong support provided over the years.

And to our incredible researchers, students, partners, collaborators and the community for being part of our 10-year journey – thank you.

This booklet celebrates many of our achievements and impact over the past decade. I hope you enjoy reading about our story so far and hope you'll join us for the next 10 years as we continue to shape a healthier, thriving society.

Deakin Distinguished Professor Jo Salmon
Director, Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition

'Research excellence is at the core of everything we do.'

Meaningful research. Mighty impact.

Our **vision** is to enable a healthy and sustainable world through research excellence

Our **purpose** is to conduct multidisciplinary research in active living, sport, food and nutrition to solve population and planetary health, performance and system challenges

Research domains

▶ Biology of health and disease

We characterise and understand the biological mechanisms behind exercise and nutrition and how this impacts health.

▶ Preventing and managing chronic conditions

We develop, implement, evaluate and translate lifestyle-based solutions to prevent and manage chronic conditions.

▶ Healthy active living

We focus on real-world solutions to increase physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviour in the community.

▶ Food, nutrition and health

We develop and use evidence to inform programs and policies to tackle the diverse range of nutrition issues in our community.

Centre for Sport Research

We're focused on influencing practice in sport to enhance the health and performance of people and organisations participating in sports.

The Baker-Deakin Department of Lifestyle and Diabetes

Established to develop effective lifestyle approaches for the prevention and management of diabetes, the Department is a partnership between the Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute and our Institute. It builds on the strong shared history of collaborative research between the two organisations.

Cross domain themes

Our cross domain themes harness expertise and strengthen links across all areas of IPAN research.

- **Implementation science and translation** focuses on effective ways of improving the uptake and use of evidence in practice and methodologies for the design and evaluation of implementation-related research, as well as capacity building opportunities.
- **Sustainability** recognises that food and active living systems that promote healthy eating and active transport have benefits for personal, population and planetary health.
- **Digital technologies** leverages technology to improve physical activity, nutrition and health across the lifespan, and boosts the reach and sustainability of health behaviour interventions.

Excellence in research

Our key academic achievements over 10 years

#1

Ranked as the number one sports science school in the world six times, and as number one in Australia every year since the rankings began in 2016, according to the prestigious ShanghaiRankings Global Ranking of Sports Science Schools and Departments (together with the School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences).

$45m+

External research funds

1–4

At least one (and up to four) members named as a highly-cited researcher each year, according to Clarivate Highly Cited Researchers list.

3000+

Peer-reviewed journal articles, mostly in high-quality Q1 publications

130+

PhD candidates supervised to successful completion

Our research is consistently recognised as well above world standard, according to the latest Australian Research Council's State of Australian University Research 2018–19: ERA National Report.

‘Deakin’s Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition’s consistent performance over the past decade has been a significant contributor to Deakin’s research success and rise in global rankings. With four researchers named among Deakin’s first ever Highly Cited Researchers, and at least one recognised each year since, the Institute continues to demonstrate world-class impact. Combined with holding the #1 global ranking for sport science schools for several years, these achievements stand as testament to the Institute’s research excellence and leadership.’

Deakin Distinguished Professor Matthew Clarke,
Deputy Vice-Chancellor – Research and Innovation, Chair IPAN Advisory Board

Contributions to Deakin University’s rankings

Our research outputs and excellence contribute significantly to several of Deakin University’s world rankings where research elements form part of the criteria.

QS rankings 2026

Ranked #207 worldwide by the prestigious QS World University Rankings. Criteria include Research and Discovery.

The Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2025

Top 250 Universities in the world and Top 250 worldwide for Medical and Health, and Life Sciences subjects. Criteria include research environment and research quality.

ShanghaiRanking Academic Ranking of World Universities 2025

Top 300 Universities worldwide, and #43 in the world for the subject of public health. Criteria include Highly Cited Researchers and Research Output.

The Australian Research Magazine rankings

Ranked #1 in Australia for Nutrition science in 2024 and 2025. The leading institution in a field is based on the most citations of all papers published in the top 20 journals in that particular field by researchers affiliated with each institution.

We’re proud of our history

The Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition was built on a strong foundation:

- The Centre for Physical Activity and Nutrition Research (C-PAN) was established in 2003
- Became a University Research Priority Area in 2004
- Established as a University Strategic Research Centre in 2010, with 40 researchers
- Designated by Deakin University Council as a Deakin University Research Institute – to become the Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition in 2016 with 56 researchers

Today we have around 130 researchers, six professional staff, an equipment manager, biostatistician and a medical specialist to support our research.

Pictured above, L–R: Emeritus Professor Kylie Ball AM, Deakin Distinguished Professor Anna Timperio, Emeritus Professor David Crawford AM, Deakin Distinguished Professor Jo Salmon.

Of the original founding staff, Deakin Distinguished Professor Jo Salmon is Director and Deakin Distinguished Professor Anna Timperio is a Deputy Director. Emeritus Professors David Crawford AM and Kylie Ball AM are still involved with IPAN in an honorary capacity.

Institute leadership

2016–2020: Co-Directors – Professor David Crawford AM, Professor Jo Salmon

2020–2021: Professor Jo Salmon (Director), Professor Anna Timperio and Professor Sarah McNaughton (Deputy Directors)

2022–current: Professor Jo Salmon (Director), Professors Michelle Keske and Anna Timperio (Deputy Directors).

Pictured below, the 2025 leadership team L–R: Professor Michelle Keske (Deputy Director), Deakin Distinguished Professor Jo Salmon (Director), and Deakin Distinguished Professor Anna Timperio (Deputy Director).

Throughout our 10 year history, we've continued to innovate to grow capacity in the field, connect researchers with policy makers and others who can benefit from research expertise and ensure our research is making a difference.

10 years of the Institute

- Designated by Deakin University Council as a University Research Institute
- Professors David Crawford AM and Jo Salmon appointed Co-Directors
- **Ranked #1** Sport Science School and Department in the world and in Australia
- Professors Jo Salmon, Anna Timperio, David Crawford AM and Kylie Ball AM recognised as Thomson Reuters Highly Cited Researchers
- Established Early to Mid-Career Research Program

2016

2017

- Celebration of our first year as a research institute, as pictured at left: Professors David Crawford and Jo Salmon with former Deakin Vice Chancellor, Professor Jane den Hollander AO (centre)
- **Ranked #1** Sport Science School and Department in the world and in Australia
- Established Researcher in Residence program
- Professors David Crawford AM, Kylie Ball AM and Jo Salmon recognised as Highly Cited Researchers

2018

- **Ranked #3** Sport Science School and Department in the world **and #1** in Australia
- Victorian Education Minister launched the TransformUs program, announcing its availability to all Victorian primary schools
- Developed our first strategic plan
- Professors Jo Salmon and Anna Timperio recognised as Highly Cited Researchers
- Established our four research domains

2019

- Professors Jo Salmon and Anna Timperio recognised as Highly Cited Researchers
- Launched a global UNICEF report on children, food and nutrition at a special World Food Day event hosted by the Institute, together with the School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences
- Established a research sabbatical program

2020

- **Ranked #3** Sport Science School and Department in the world **and #1** in Australia
- Professor Jo Salmon recognised as Highly Cited Researcher
- Re-developed and launched a new website
- The Victorian Government's Department of Health funded implementation support for INFANT, including INFANT training, across Victoria
- Associate Professor Katherine Livingstone selected as a finalist in the Australian Institute for Policy and Science Victorian Tall Poppy Awards

- **Ranked #1** Sport Science School and Department in the world and in Australia
- Established three cross research domain themes
- Professors Jo Salmon and Anna Timperio recognised as Highly Cited Researchers
- Professor Kylie Hesketh awarded as overall winner in the Australian Institute for Policy and Science Victorian Tall Poppy Awards
- Convened a United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) Dialogue on the role of nutrition science in transforming food systems for health, equity and environmental sustainability, the outcomes of which contributed to a UN Summit to address achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

- **Ranked #1** Sport Science School and Department in the world and in Australia
- Professors Jo Salmon, Anna Timperio and David Dunstan recognised as Highly Cited Researchers
- Established the Baker-Deakin Department of Lifestyle and Diabetes, a collaborative partnership between the Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute and the Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition, for an initial five-year term
- Science in action study on children's nutrition implemented with Scienceworks
- Associate Professor Nicole Kiss selected as a finalist in the Australian Institute for Policy and Science Victorian Tall Poppy Awards

2021

2022

2023

- **Ranked #1** Sport Science School and Department in the world and in Australia
- Established the IPAN Consumer Network
- Implemented the IPAN Research Excellence program
- Science in action study on children's physical activity implemented with Scienceworks
- Associate Professor Rachel Laws selected as a finalist in the Australian Institute for Policy and Science Victorian Tall Poppy Awards
- Professors Jo Salmon and Anna Timperio recognised as Highly Cited Researchers
- Winner of the overall inaugural Deakin Faculty of Health Partnerships in Practice award for the INFANT program, as well as the Influencing policy and practice award
- INFANT program identified in a US Centers for Disease Control-funded review as the strongest international model for wide-spread implementation of a community complementary feeding intervention

2025

- Introduced new Deputy Coordinators of EMCR Development Program, appointing Associate Professors Michael Tieland and Megan Teychenne
- Science in action study on children's physical activity implemented with Scienceworks
- Dr Priscila Machado selected as a finalist in the Australian Institute for Policy and Science Victorian Tall Poppy Awards
- Winner of three Deakin Faculty of Health Partnerships in Practice awards: Mid-career researcher category – Dr Helen Macpherson; Regional and rural research category – Associate Professor Katherine Livingstone; Informing policy and/or practice category – Professor Jo Salmon, as well as the overall award winner for TransformUs
- Professor Mark Lawrence named as the highest ranked nutrition scholar in Australia, and #45 in the world, by scholarly analytics platform ScholarGPS

2024

- Deakin's Centre for Sport Research officially integrated into the Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition, strengthening our capacity in all areas of sport research
- **Ranked #1** Sport Science School and Department in the world and in Australia
- Professor Anna Timperio recognised as Highly Cited Researcher
- Science in action study on children's nutrition implemented with Scienceworks
- Victorian Health Minister launches new INFANT language resources
- Dr Paddy Dempsey selected as a finalist in the Australian Institute for Policy and Science Victorian Tall Poppy Awards
- INFANT program included on the US National Cancer Institute as a recommended evidence-based program to increase healthy eating and reduce screen time for infants from birth to 18 months of age

Ranked as the #1 sports science school in the world six times according to the prestigious ShanghaiRankings Global Ranking of Sports Science Schools and Departments, and as #1 in Australia every year since the rankings began (together with the School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences).

How we're making a difference – some examples

Our researchers have had wide-reaching influence on policy and practice, shaping guidelines, resources, position statements, and evidence-based programs, both in Australia and internationally.

'The Heart Foundation Active Living team is honoured to have collaborated with IPAN over the last 10 years. IPAN has been a trusted partner in research, policy and practice for physical activity. We would like to thank all involved for their contributions to our evaluations and evidence documents for Healthy Active by Design and the Blueprint for an Active Australia. We look forward to continued knowledge sharing and collaborations.'

Elizabeth Calleja, Senior Advisor, Physical Activity, National Heart Foundation of Australia

'For several years, Diabetes Victoria and IPAN have worked side by side to advance diabetes knowledge and care. We've collaborated to enrich prevention programs, support student placements, and develop research projects that make a real difference for people living with or at risk of diabetes. IPAN experts regularly share practical, evidence-based insights our community can apply daily.

Together, we turn research into action, improving care and advocacy for every Victorian affected by diabetes.'

Glen Noonan, CEO, Diabetes Victoria

Improving health in the early years

Our INFANT program is helping families with healthy eating, active play and reduced screen time from the start of their baby's life.

Developed over more than 15 years of research, INFANT is widely recognised as a gold-standard program supporting healthy habits from early life. It reaches parents and carers via existing local early years services, through four professionally facilitated group sessions. Families can access ongoing support through the complementary INFANT app.

So far, more than 17,000 families have benefited from INFANT's evidence-based support on healthy eating, active play and reduced screen time for their babies.

Research shows that children participating in the program consumed 25% fewer sweet snacks, had overall improved diet quality, and spent less time sedentary, watching 25% less television.

INFANT also helps reduces the need for families to seek external health advice. Parents using the app were less likely to see a GP or paediatrician for feeding or growth concerns compared to those receiving usual care. Health economic modelling indicates that wide-scale implementation of INFANT could lead to substantial healthcare savings over a lifetime.

Internationally, INFANT has earned recognition. In 2024, the US National Cancer Institute recommended INFANT as an evidence-based program, rating it highly for research integrity and dissemination capability. It is the only program in its database of 207 recommended healthy lifestyle programs that starts from birth. The US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) also endorsed INFANT as 'the strongest model for translating findings from a Randomized Control Trial to widespread community implementation' in their 2023 review of complementary feeding interventions.

INFANT has been implemented in Victoria with the support of a NHMRC Partnership Grant 2019–2025 (APP1161223) in collaboration with nine practice and policy partners. This includes funding for implementation from the Victorian Government Department of Health and VicHealth.

Transforming teaching, inspiring learning

TransformUs is a world-first education and health approach focused on engagement, positive classroom environments and physical activity, backed by more than 15 years of comprehensive scientific research.

Designed to energise classrooms, it empowers schools to create active learning environments for better student engagement, learning and health outcomes.

A trial of 600 primary school students found that students doing TransformUs increased their physical activity, reduced their sedentary behaviour, had lower BMI and waist circumference, and higher vitamin D levels.

Teachers and principals have welcomed TransformUs too – reporting a positive impact on students' time on task and concentration.

TransformUs works by supporting schools and teachers with online professional learning and hundreds of lesson plan resources across maths, science, English, geography and history. Resources are linked to the Australian curriculum and aligned with all state and territory education and wellbeing frameworks.

The program is now available to all Australian primary, secondary and special schools, reaching nearly 900 schools, more than 2500 teachers and 50,000 students so far.

TransformUs has received more than 15 years of research funding, including more than $4 million from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC); VicHealth; Diabetes Australia and the Victorian Department of Education.

Optimising public spaces for better health and wellbeing

Our research exploring how park design can increase park visitation and encourage healthy behaviours is recognised nationally and globally.

Over almost 20 years, we have built a strong evidence base on the factors influencing park use and activity, including identifying the specific features that encourage children, adolescents and older adults to visit parks.

Spending time in parks and green spaces is known to boost happiness, reduce stress, build confidence and foster physical activity and social connections. Despite the benefits, parks are often under-utilised, and most park visitors only engage in low levels of physical activity.

Supported by major funders such as the Australian Research Council (ARC), National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), the Heart Foundation and VicHealth, our research has shaped public health policy and urban design planning. It was featured as 'evidence-based guidance' in the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019–2023, and cited extensively in the Victorian Government's strategic framework for physical activity, Active Victoria 2022–2026.

Our research has informed many policy and practice documents, such as a World Health Organization review of the effectiveness of urban green space interventions and health. Our lead researcher in the field was invited to present expert evidence to a Victorian Parliamentary inquiry into environmental infrastructure for growing populations.

This work has also earned multiple awards over the years, including several Parks and Leisure Australia Awards of Excellence (both national and state).

Our researchers continue to be highly sought after for their expertise in the role of parks as vital spaces for community health, wellbeing, and active living.

Impact snapshots

▶ Physical literacy

The physical, psychological, social and cognitive skills needed to be active – are just as important as learning to read. Over several years, we've worked with the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) on physical literacy including as co-lead in the development of the Australian Physical Literacy Definition and Framework, and leading the development of an innovative pictorial tool to measure children's physical literacy which has been utilised by researchers from 22 countries across 17 language groups.

▶ Australian physical activity and sedentary behaviour guidelines

Our researchers' expertise and research outcomes have informed the original suite and updates of the Australian Government national guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour including 24-hour movement guidelines – birth to 5 years, children and young people (5–17 years), adults (18–64) and older adults (65 years and over).

▶ Vitamin D

We were instrumental in the development of the Vitamin D and health in adults in Australia and New Zealand: a position statement commissioned by the Australian and New Zealand Bone and Mineral Society (ANZBMS) and Osteoporosis Australia (OA). Our research on Vitamin D food composition data has been incorporated into Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ)'s Food Composition Database – Release 3, and for the first time, the Australian Bureau of Statistics are estimating usual vitamin D intake (to include in their reports from the 2023–2024 Australian Health Survey).

▶ Firefighters and cancer

Led the evaluation of available evidence for chronic inflammation as a consequence of occupational exposure, as part of a global International Agency for Research on Cancer working group of 25 experts. The working group classified firefighters' occupational exposure as carcinogenic (IARC Monographs Volume 132, The Lancet Oncology).

▶ Definition of eating occasions/patterns

Our research on eating patterns directly informed international recommendations for a research definition of an eating occasion. The methodology for eating occasions used in our research is the current recommended approach and is cited in a scientific statement from the American Heart Association.

▶ Led the development of the ASA24-Australia

The automated self-administered 24-hour dietary recall system for Australia was developed in collaboration with the US National Cancer Institute. The ASA24 system was developed through a consortium of five Australian organisations, and made possible through funding from an ARC Linkage, Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities grant. The system is free to use by researchers and clinicians, and can be used to collect dietary intake data and obtain nutrient and food group data files.

▶ Cancer-related malnutrition

We led the development of the Clinical Oncology Society of Australia (COSA)'s 2020 position statement on cancer-related malnutrition and sarcopenia. This highly-cited publication has shaped national guidelines and informed clinical practice. Our researchers have also delivered workshops at professional conferences, translating this work to allow health services to support early identification and improved management, for improved outcomes and reduced healthcare costs. In 2024, our researchers also led the development of COSA's implementation toolkit for malnutrition and sarcopenia.

Sarcopenia

Our researchers are recognised internationally as leaders in the prevention, diagnosis and management of sarcopenia, a condition causing loss of muscle mass, strength and function. In a world first project led by researchers from the Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition, the Australian and New Zealand Society for Sarcopenia and Frailty Research released a set of international guidelines designed to improve the clinical management of sarcopenia. The 17 guidelines confirm the preferred method of diagnosis, as well as the importance of exercise and nutrition for prevention and treatment. Based on the guidelines, our team then led the development of a tool to support early detection of poor muscle health. The Australian Muscle Health Monitoring and Management in Primary Care tool is the first of its kind in the world and is now being adopted in primary practices across Australia to screen, assess and manage sarcopenia.

Improving health research gender standards

We participated in a panel informing the first joint National Health and Medical Research-Medical Research Future Fund (NHMRC-MRFF) statement on Sex and Gender in Health and Medical Research. The groundbreaking statement on Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation in Health and Medical Research encourages researchers funded through NHMRC and MRFF to consider characteristics such as sex, gender and sexual orientation in their research.

Nutritional interventions for athletes

We developed evidence-based frameworks on nutritional interventions for high-performance athletes affiliated with Athletics Australia, which have been adopted by athletes and practitioners across different national sporting organisations and Institutes of Sport, and implemented in the lead up to the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

> ‘Many years of collaboration between the Peter Mac Nutrition team and IPAN has built new and fostered existing relationships – all to advance research and clinical care in the field of cancer nutrition. Together, we have amplified knowledge, practices and implementation efforts that have directly impacted and improved outcomes for people with cancer.’
>
> Jenelle Loeliger, Manager, Nutrition and Speech Pathology, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, Victoria

International collaboration

We take a global approach to our research, engaging and collaborating with more than 200 organisations, including the World Health Organization and institutes around the world. Our international collaboration includes joint publications, involvement in funded and unfunded projects, mentoring arrangements, student supervision, research visits and hosting international visitors as well as invited presentations and representation at major international conferences.

Visiting researchers are an important part of our continued growth and innovation through the exchange of ideas and learnings. In the past 10 years, we've hosted more than 140 international visitors. Many of our visitors are awarded funding through a competitive process in their home country based on their research plan and the research environment and support provided by our Institute.

We've also been fortunate to have three Thinkers/ Industry Experts in Residence (TIER), funded through Deakin's Faculty of Health TIER program – embedding senior, high level, strategic thinkers who are leaders in their field.

Two of our researchers – Dr Katherine Downing and Dr Rachel Duckham were awarded highly competitive Endeavour Research Fellowships through the Australian Government Department of Education and Training, to undertake research overseas. This was an exceptional opportunity for these early career researchers to immerse themselves in a new research environment, and establish links with researchers to facilitate ongoing international collaborations.

Over the years, our researchers have supervised many PhD students enrolled in international universities, including through cotutelle arrangements with Deakin, where the student is enrolled and jointly supervised at both universities and spends time at both. In 2022, our Institute was instrumental (through Professor Jenny Veitch) in establishing a cotutelle agreement between Deakin's Faculty of Health and Ghent University, Belgium.

Innovations

Researcher in Residence – building links between researchers and partner organisations

We developed and piloted the Researcher in Residence program in partnership with the Heart Foundation, to bring evidence and research expertise together with project delivery for stronger impact.

Our inaugural Researcher in Residence candidate, Dr Carley Grimes, worked with Heart Foundation colleagues on two initiatives – an NHMRC funded Partnership Project Grant to reduce salt consumption in Victoria, and the VicHealth Salt Reduction Partnership Group.

Evaluation of the pilot demonstrated strong benefits to both the Heart Foundation and the Institute, including building stronger links, better understanding of organisation structures, work areas and processes, as well as capacity building.

Based on the success of the pilot, Post-doctoral fellow Dr Susie Cartledge followed in 2018, supporting the Heart Foundation's health promotion team in the development of a standardised curriculum for cardiac rehabilitation programs.

In 2019, Dr Alison Spence undertook a Researcher in Residence with Nutrition Australia where she worked with the team investigating national recommendations for food provision in early childhood education and care settings.

Dr Penny Love's 2023 Researcher in Residence, also with Nutrition Australia, specifically supported a project providing healthy eating support in long day care centres, funded by the Victorian Government Department of Health.

For her placement at Health and Wellbeing Queensland during 2023–24, Dr Shannon Sahlqvist's research area was physical activity in schools, primarily focusing on identifying best practice 'whole of school' approaches to physical activity promotion and identifying gaps and opportunities to engage with Queensland schools.

Consumer Network – tapping into the power of lived experience

Research is most powerful when it reflects the voices of those it seeks to benefit.

Our Consumer Network, established in 2023, links researchers with consumers to ensure our research is relevant and applicable in the real world.

The Network welcomes people from all backgrounds, with a range of skills, interests and lived experience.

Whether they've experienced life with chronic conditions like heart failure, type 2 diabetes or osteoporosis; or have held health, policy or community roles, Consumer Network members have a strong interest and passion to improve research outcomes.

Our researchers engage Consumer Network members in every aspect of research – including developing early ideas, informing grant applications, providing advice on recruitment strategies, reviewing and commenting on data collection methods, and offering consumer perspectives on research data.

EMCR Development program

Head EMCR Development

- Professor Kylie Ball (2016–2020)
- Professor Sarah McNaughton (2021–2022)
- Professor Michelle Keske (2023–current)

Co-Head/Deputy Coordinator IPAN EMCR program

- Professor Brad Aisbett (2020)
- Associate Professors Megan Teychenne and Mike Tieland (2025–current)

Recognising the importance of supporting our early and mid-career researchers (EMCRs) to build strong future nutrition and physical activity researchers, we introduced an EMCR Development program in 2016.

A comprehensive program included matched mentoring, supported writing sessions for publications, grant application sessions, and extensive professional development designed to build confidence and skills.

To build capacity, a committee was established in 2018 providing EMCRs with the experience of planning and coordinating professional development activities to meet their needs. A new fellowship sabbatical was piloted in 2019 to allow EMCRs to focus solely on their research for one trimester. This successful initiative also ran in 2020.

In 2023, we introduced the IPAN Research Excellence program. In the same year, the annual IPAN EMCR day was launched to facilitate networking and learning together. This was expanded in 2024 with an EMCR conference/showcase day for EMCRs to present their research and initiate collaborations.

As well as supporting our EMCRs, we have recognised the need to support senior researchers to both mentor more junior researchers and to manage their own work-life balance to maintain success and career satisfaction.

Our EMCR development program continues to evolve adapting to changing needs, with a supportive and inclusive culture remaining the cornerstone of our approach.

Research Excellence Program

Introduced in 2023, the Research Excellence Program is a sought-after initiative offering selected high-performing undergraduate students with the opportunity to experience a research career.

Senior researchers developed the program to showcase what a research career looks like and give valuable insights into diverse career pathways.

Led by Associate Professor Natalie Lander and Dr Lewan Parker, the program is held each year and allows students to participate in hands-on research experiences such as team meetings, data collection in live research projects, lab workshops, the opportunity to develop their own research idea and present in a conference environment.

To date, 28 students have participated in the program.

'It's hard to put into words what my time in IPAN's Research Excellence Program (IREP) meant (and still means) to me, because it was so many things: inspiring, challenging, rewarding … I could go on and on. So, what I will say is this: it completely changed my plans for the future. I now intend to dive headfirst into a career in research.'

Casey Power – Deakin student

Our Advisory Board

The Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition Advisory Board was established and met for the first time in 2017, with Deakin's then-Vice-Chancellor, Professor Jane den Hollander AO, the inaugural Chair.

We are deeply grateful to the many individuals, both within and beyond Deakin, who have generously shared their time, expertise, and support in helping us achieve our success on our Advisory Board. In particular, we acknowledge three long-standing contributors – two of whom have served on our Advisory Board since the Institute's inception and were also involved in its precursor – the Centre for Physical Activity and Nutrition Research Advisory Committee. A very special and heartfelt thanks to Professor Matthew Gillespie AM, Dr Lyn Roberts AO, and Ms Kellie-Ann Jolly.

IPAN Advisory Board membership 2017–current

Deakin University members

- Professor Jane den Hollander AO, Inaugural Chair 2017
- Professor Peter Hodgson, Chair 2017–July 2018
- Professor Joe Graffam, Acting Chair July–November 2018
- Professor Julie Owens, Chair 2019–July 2023
- Professor Matthew Clarke, Chair October 2023–current
- Professor Brendan Crotty, 2017–May 2019
- Professor Rachel Huxley, October 2019–current
- Professor Trish Livingston, 2017–2021
- Professor Peter Enticott, 2021–2023
- Professor Matthew Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, 2024–current
- Dr Ben Spincer, 2019–2021
- Mr Ross Mahon, 2021–2023
- Ms Amy Hunter, 2024–current
- Dr David Halliwell, 2024–current

External members

- Professor Amanda Thrift, 2017–2019
- Dr Christina Pollard, 2017–2019
- Ms Wendy Gillett, 2017–2019
- Ms Kellie Ann Jolly, 2017–2023
- Dr Lyn Roberts AO, 2017–current
- Professor Matthew Gillespie AM, 2017–current
- Ms Mel Chisholm, 2020–current
- Mr Peter McCue, 2020–current
- Mr Terry Slevin, 2020–current
- Mr Rodney Siegel, 2024–2025
- Dr Simone Nalatu, 2025–current

Significant awards and accolades

Over the past decade, our researchers have received multiple awards. There are too many to include here but selected ones are highlighted below.

Highly cited researchers – 2016–2024

The Highly Cited Researchers list represents researchers ranked in the top 1% worldwide. Our Highly Cited researchers include:

- Professor David Crawford AM 2016–2017
- Professor Kylie Ball AM 2016–2017
- Professor Jo Salmon 2016–2023
- Professor Anna Timperio 2016, 2018–2019, 2021–2024
- Professor David Dunstan 2022

Victorian Tall Poppy Awards – 2020–2025

We've had six researchers selected as finalists in the prestigious Australian Institute for Policy and Science Victorian Tall Poppy Awards, with Professor Kylie Hesketh selected as the overall Victorian Tall Poppy of the year in 2021. Other finalists included Associate Professor Katherine Livingstone (2020), Associate Professor Nicole Kiss (2022), Associate Professor Rachel Laws (2023), Dr Paddy Dempsey (2024) and Dr Priscila Machado (2025).

Council of Academic Public Health Institutions Australasia (CAPHIA) awards

- 2016 award for excellence and innovation in public health team research – led by Professor Karen Campbell
- 2018 President's award: Enhancing the public health workforce through mentoring – Professor Kylie Ball
- 2020 award for excellence and innovation in public health team research – led by Professor Jo Salmon

Other

- 2019 – Dr Rebecca Leech selected as a finalist in the Victorian Premier's award for health and medical research
- 2021 – Professor Lisa Barnett selected as a finalist in the Engagement Australia 2021 Excellence Awards in the category of Outstanding Engagement for Research Impact
- 2024 – INFANT finalist in Victorian Public Healthcare Awards Category 11 – Excellence in multicultural community health
- 2025 – TransformUs selected as a finalist in the Engagement Australia 2025 Excellence Awards in the category of Outstanding Engagement for Research Impact

Looking to the future

Our work remains critical to address many of today's health and societal challenges.

Over the next 10 years, we aim to give more children a healthy start to life, to advance evidence and programs for healthier ageing, and reduce chronic disease in our community. We'll turn our research into action through translation and implementation, and continue exploring new applications for digital technology to improve access to better health. We're generating evidence to promote sustainable diets and food and environment systems to influence policy and practice. We'll build on our reputation for excellence in all aspects of sport research, from participation to performance.

Our research will continue to focus on creating benefits for both people and the planet.

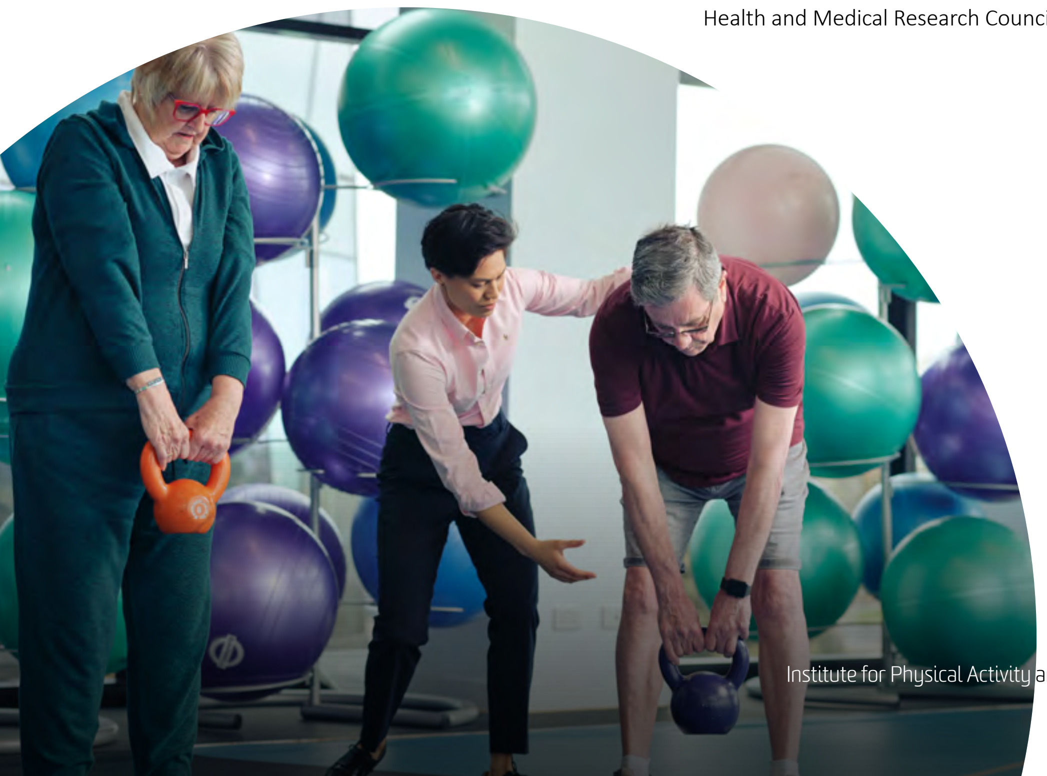
Some key areas of research include:

▶ TeleFFIT

Our team is using physical activity, nutrition and the latest digital technology to enable people to lead independent lives for longer, with stronger bone and muscle and fewer chronic diseases. Supported by the Australian Government's Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF), TeleFFIT is a new model of personalised healthcare delivery designed to prevent falls and fractures in older adults.

▶ SmartHeart

Developed with a team of industry and multi-disciplinary research experts, this program uses a system of the latest connective technologies to support people with heart failure to self-manage their condition at home, allowing for personalised management and monitoring to improve quality of life and reduce the need for hospitalisation. The program of research has received funding from the Australian Government's National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).



Toddler health

Developed by researchers behind the world-leading INFANT program, Let's Grow focuses on the challenging toddler years, supporting parents with their toddlers' active play, sedentary/screen time, nutrition and sleep. Let's Grow has received MRFF and NHMRC funding.

Connecting with Country

This project explores the nutritional benefits of traditional foods and seasonal eating of Aboriginal people living in the Kimberley. Aboriginal-governed and led, this MRFF project seeks to provide resources to promote healthy eating and seasonal consumption of traditional foods in these communities.

Insulin resistance test

Our researchers have developed and are testing a new low-cost, simple diagnostic test in the form of a mixed nutrient flavoured milk drink, to make it easier for doctors to screen for insulin resistance. If successful, the test could be an important tool to prevent many people going on to develop chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke. The project is supported by the Australian Government's MRFF.

'Working with Deakin IPAN over the past six years has been an absolute pleasure. The collaboration has delivered meaningful outcomes for our communities, underpinned by professionalism, innovation, and shared values. We're proud of what we've achieved together and look forward to continuing this impactful partnership.'

Nathan Costin, Chief Customer Officer, YMCA Victoria

Female muscle ageing

This major study is the first to thoroughly investigate the process of muscle ageing in both sexes, to understand the difference between female and male muscle ageing. By mapping female muscle ageing across the lifespan, the project aims to fill a major knowledge gap in female biology. The project is supported by an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship.

Cancer-related sarcopenia

In partnership with several health services and universities and supported by MRFF, our researchers are leading the development of a tool to rapidly identify and treat people who have low muscle mass (sarcopenia) as a result of cancer. Cancer-related sarcopenia affects 30–50 per cent of people with cancer, leading to reduced capacity to tolerate treatment and contributing to reduced survival rates.

Moving the next generation

With support from the Victorian Government, a new artificial intelligence tool developed by our researchers together with Deakin's Institute for Intelligent Systems Research and Innovation is helping teachers and coaches build important motor skills in young children. The world-first video-based assessment platform is a simple and cost-effective way to support improvements in foundational skills like hopping, jumping, skipping, throwing, kicking and catching a ball.

Transforming pre-service teacher education

Funded by an Australian Research Council Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA), the TransformUs Higher Ed project aims to equip future teachers with the skills needed for more engaged classrooms and better learning and health outcomes for students.

Improving food skills and resources

Our researchers are working with local communities in the Geelong region to explore ways of improving food literacy and access to healthy and nutritious food. In a project supported by VicHealth, the research team co-designed, pilot-tested and implemented evidence-based strategies to help support the community's access to healthy and affordable food, improve food literacy and boost wellbeing.

Ultra-processed foods

Eating too many ultra-processed foods (UPFs) is harmful to health. Our researchers are developing a framework to guide public health organisations such as the Heart Foundation, which is supporting the project, to develop messages to raise awareness about UPFs and their impacts on our health and the environment. We're also leading an International Union of Nutritional Sciences Taskforce, bringing together key individuals and organisations from across the globe, to tackle ultra-processed foods over the next four years.

Motor neurone disease (MND)

We are making promising inroads to understanding the role of skeletal muscle in the onset and progression of MND. Our researchers are developing a pre-clinical mouse model that will represent about 90% of all human MND cases and is the first to specifically target muscle. Funded by FightMND, the model will allow researchers to investigate the mechanisms that contribute to MND onset and progression, as well as explore potential avenues for new therapies and treatments.

Improving vegetable consumption

Australians aren't eating enough vegetables for health. Our researchers developed an app to improve vegetable consumption in young adults living in rural areas, and are now exploring ways to value add to the app. We're also working in secondary schools to promote vegetable intake; and we're building an evidence base on the benefits of plant-based diets for muscle health in older adults to help support a sustainable future.

Turning schools green

We're leading an innovative project to understand how exposure to spaces filled with plants and trees at primary schools can enhance wellbeing, nature connection, physical activity, and engagement for students and staff. The project is co-funded by Hort Innovation Frontiers and delivered in partnership with five industry and peak groups.

Cutting-edge sport research

Our researchers are exploring the effects of head impacts in sports to better understand and protect against potentially harmful brain injuries in high-impact sports. We're also working to boost inclusion in sport and address barriers to participation – in particular, to engage more women and girls at all levels of sport and recreation by tackling issues such as racism, gender diversity in community sporting clubs, and barriers to participation associated with menstruation.
For high performance athletes, we're leading research to improve athlete wellbeing and support structures, developing guidelines to enhance sport performance, and improving governance in sporting organisations.

Partnering with the Australian Sports Commission (ASC)

Through a three-year research partnership with the Australian Sports Commission (ASC), we're working to strengthen sport participation in Australia.

Alongside colleagues from the University of Newcastle and the University of Sydney, Associate Professor Helen Brown is contributing to the newly established ASC Play Well Research Unit, a national initiative to understand and address the barriers, benefits and enablers of sport participation.

The Play Well Research Unit (PWRU) is the first of its kind in Australia and aligns with the national Sport Participation Strategy – Play Well.

Our contribution to the PWRU centres on evidence-informed decision making around policy, leadership and the delivery of sport to ensure that Play Well strategies have the greatest potential to provide safe, welcoming, inclusive and fun sporting experiences for all Australians.

Key activities include:

- Translation and implementation of knowledge ensuring the research findings are adopted and used in practice effectively and efficiently.
- Evaluation of the impact of the Play Well agenda, providing actionable insights to guide future directions
- Mentoring early career academics in sport related research and enhancing research capability across the sport sector.

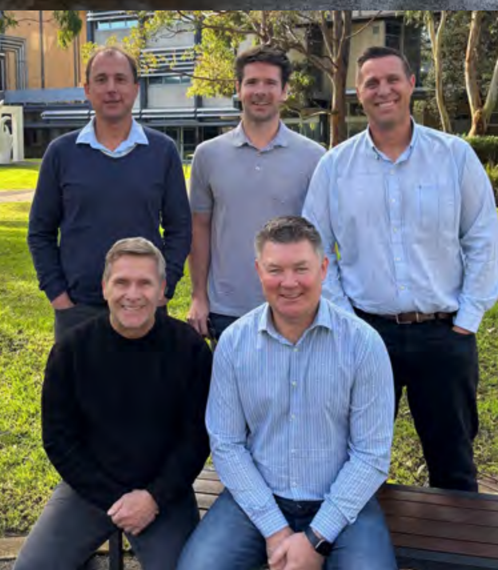
Future research will explore the participant journey through sport, including transitions from school to community clubs, the experiences of multicultural and diverse populations, and the barriers and enablers to participation.

Through this partnership we are building a more connected, equitable and sustainable sport ecosystem, and encouraging lifelong involvement in sport.


IPAN


WISC


to local levels



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