DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

DEAKIN INSTITUTE FOR
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
& NUTRITION

Impact Report 2025

Improving health, wellbeing, performance and society through research

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.

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Cover image L-R: Professors Anna Timperio, Matthew Clarke, Michelle Keske, Rachel Huxley and Jo Salmon at the Institute's 10th anniversary celebrations.

Meaningful research, mighty impact

OUR VISION

To enable a healthy and sustainable world through research excellence.

OUR PURPOSE

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
- Preventing and managing chronic conditions
- Healthy active living
- Food, nutrition and health

CROSS DOMAIN THEMES

- Implementation science and translation
- Sustainability
- Digital technologies

DEAKIN CENTRE FOR SPORT RESEARCH

THE BAKER-DEAKIN DEPARTMENT OF LIFESTYLE AND DIABETES

2025 AT A GLANCE

132
ACADEMIC STAFF

451
TOTAL PUBLICATIONS

$6.2m
TOTAL EXTERNAL INCOME*

253
MEDIA HITS

155
PHD STUDENTS

18
PHD COMPLETIONS

5
NEW CATEGORY 1 PROJECTS/FELLOWSHIPS COMMENCED IN 2025

9
CATEGORY 1 PROJECTS/FELLOWSHIPS AWARDED IN 2025**

* Category 1: $3,311,462; Category 2–4: $2,887,903.

** To commence in 2026.

A message from our Director

2025 was a milestone year for our Institute as we celebrated 10 years as a Deakin University research institute.

We proudly reflected on a decade of placing research excellence at the heart of everything we do, and on the sustained performance that has contributed to Deakin's research success and rising global profile.

Our commitment to collaboration, meaningful engagement with key organisations and decision-makers, and solution-focused research has ensured our work makes a difference where it matters most.

We are grateful to everyone who joined our celebrations, and to all those who have supported the Institute throughout its 10-year journey.

The year also brought significant achievements and recognition.

For the seventh time since 2016, our Institute, together with the School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences, was ranked number one in the world for Sports Science Schools in the prestigious ShanghaiRanking's Global Ranking of Sport Science Schools and Departments. Deakin also retained its number one ranking in Australia, a position it has held every year since the rankings began.

Our Deputy Director, Deakin Distinguished Professor Anna Timperio, was recognised for the ninth time since 2015 as a Clarivate Highly Cited Researcher.

Dr Dominique Condo from our Centre for Sport Research received the rare honour of having her TEDxDeakin University Melbourne talk on women in sport selected for the TED global channel, showcasing her research to millions worldwide.

In 2025, we continued to prioritise stakeholder engagement, support early career researchers through our mentoring and Research Excellence programs, and strengthen connections between our researchers and consumers with lived experience.

As this is my final report as Institute Director, I thank our staff, students, Executive team, professional staff and Advisory Board for their support and advice. I am incredibly proud of all we have achieved and delighted to hand over to Professor Anna Timperio as incoming Director, an exceptional colleague and friend.

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

Highlights of 2025

Celebrations mark 10 years as Deakin's first health research institute

The 10th anniversary of the Deakin Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition culminated in a special celebration with those who have shared our commitment to a healthier, thriving society.

Past and present research members, advisory board members, partners, collaborators and colleagues and staff from across the university came together to toast a decade of research excellence.

The milestone was an opportunity to reflect on the institute's achievements as Deakin's first health research institute, and look ahead to a bright future built on the foundations established over the past 10 years.

Number one for sports science for the 7th time

Deakin's School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences and the Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition were once again named the world's leading institutions for sports science in the prestigious ShanghaiRankings Global Ranking of Sports Science Schools and Departments.

The ranking evaluates universities across a number of research performance indicators, including the global impact of their research through citations and the total number of papers published in the world's top 25 per cent of journals.

This is the seventh time Deakin has topped the list globally since 2016. Deakin has also maintained its status as Australia's highest-ranked institution in sport science every year since the rankings began.

National recognition for nutrition science, women's studies: The Australian magazine

Deakin University was named as Australia's leading institution for Nutrition Science for the third consecutive year, with our Institute being a major contributor to this achievement. The award is based on citations in the top 20 journals in the field.

Associate Professor Kim Toffoletti was also featured as the top research leader in the field of feminism and women's studies – one of six Deakin researchers to be recognised as Australian research leaders in their fields.

Deakin plays key role in Lancet UPF series

The Lancet launched a major three-part series on ultra-processed foods (UPFs) and human health, with co-authors Professor Mark Lawrence and Dr Priscila Machado leading much of the Australian media response.

The Lancet Series on Ultra-Processed Foods and Human Health was supported by funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies, with the project funding managed by Deakin University.

The series attracted worldwide media attention, with the 43 international co-authors calling for stronger global and national action to rein in the multi-trillion-dollar ultra-processed food industry.

TedX talk a global hit

A TEDxDeakin Uni Melbourne talk by Dr Dominique Condo (pictured left) exploring the pressures of body image on elite female athletes reached a global audience through TED's channels, including its 44 million subscriber YouTube platform. Dr Condo's talk explored the hidden appearance-based pressures facing elite female athletes and why performance suffers when appearance overshadows capability.

Kids explore adventurous play for research at Scienceworks

Children visiting Melbourne's Scienceworks museum in the July school holidays participated in real-life research as part of a data-gathering exercise to learn more about how adventurous play links with physical activity, cognitive function, motor skills, strength, and balance.

It's the fourth year the Institute has partnered with Museums Victoria to gain valuable insights into aspects of children's physical activity or their nutrition.

More than 2100 children aged 4–12, plus their parents and carers, joined a range of activities including surveys, balance and motor skill tests, as pictured below.
The data gathered is informing several studies to better understand how adventurous play contributes to healthy child development.

Recognising the impact of philanthropy

Deakin Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition research was showcased at a dKin Difference event.

Before an audience of donors, alumni, students, industry partners and community members, Associate Professor Kristy Bolton and Dr Rebecca Lindberg shared their research tackling food insecurity. Institute Director, Professor Jo Salmon and Executive Dean of Health, Professor Rachel Huxley also presented, with four students from the Institute's Research Excellence Program also on hand to share their experiences with guests pre and post the event.

A taste of a research career for high-performing students

In its third year, the Institute's sought-after Research Excellence Program offered 10 high-performing undergraduate students the opportunity to experience a research career.

Selected students received guidance and mentorship from senior researchers for the 12-week program, providing valuable insights into research career pathways. The students participate in hands-on research experiences such as data collection in live projects, lab workshops, team meetings, and the opportunity to develop their own research idea and present it in a conference environment.

The 2025 program was led by Associate Professor Natalie Lander and Dr Lewan Parker.

Encouraging collaborative research through showcase

The Deakin Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition joined two other Deakin institutes, the Institute for Frontier Materials and the Institute for Intelligent Systems, for a research showcase to share expertise and foster connections. Around 35 researchers across the three institutes participated, engaging in presentations and interactive sessions to develop ideas.

Exclusive ABS seminar for Deakin Health researchers

Presenters from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) shared insights from the latest National Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey (NNPAS) Data Release 2025 in a seminar for researchers across the Faculty of Health. The seminar featured an overview of the survey methodology and key findings on nutrition, physical activity, and biomedical data. An initiative of the Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition, the seminar provided valuable evidence to inform health policy and research.

Community outreach

Diabetes expo

Institute researchers participated in Diabetes Victoria's Community Matters mini-expo in the Melbourne suburb of Doncaster. Professor Michelle Keske, Dr Michael Wheeler and PhD student Lisa Becker (pictured below) explained their research and answered questions about how their work helps manage and prevent diabetes. The events are aimed at bringing people touched by diabetes together with organisations that can support them.

Helping people achieve a balanced healthy lifestyle

'The 'Goldilocks' approach to a healthy 24-hour day' was a free community webinar hosted by the Institute together with the Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute. More than 100 people tuned in to hear the latest evidence on the ideal balance of sitting, sleeping, standing and moving over a 24-hour period. Experts and presenters included Professor David Dunstan, Dr Simone Verswijveren and Dr Paddy Dempsey from our Institute, and The Age and Sydney Morning Herald lifestyle health editor, Sarah Berry.

Advancing participation in sport with the Australian Sports Commission

A three-year research partnership between our Institute and the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) aims to strengthen sport participation in Australia.

Associate Professor Helen Brown is one of four researchers across Australia awarded a fellowship with the newly established ASC Play Well Research Unit, an initiative supporting the ASC's national Sport Participation Strategy – Play Well. The unit aims to create safe, welcoming, inclusive and enjoyable sporting environments where everyone has a place.

As the first initiative of its kind in Australia, the Play Well Research Unit brings together researchers, policymakers and sport organisations to improve the way evidence informs decision-making in sport.

Key activities include:

- Translating and implementing knowledge, ensuring research findings are adopted and used in practice effectively and efficiently across the sport sector.
- Evaluating the impact of the Play Well agenda, providing practical insights to guide future directions.
- Building research capacity in the sector through mentoring and support for early career researchers, helping to strengthen the future sport research workforce.

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 that influence participation throughout life.

Associate Professor Brown said it was critical that research moved beyond theory and informed real-world programs and policies that enhance sport participation.

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

Collaboration in action

Working together with external organisations strengthens our research impact.

The organisations we work with actively contribute across the research lifecycle, from shaping research priorities and co-designing projects through to implementation, policy translation and community impact. Our collaborations with government agencies, health services, non-government organisations, industry and community partners ensure our research remains relevant, scalable and responsive to real-world needs.

Key highlights

- Led eight government submissions and consultations, helping to inform national discussions on prevention, food security, obesity, healthcare reform and child health.
- Formalised a partnership agreement with Diabetes Victoria, including a Memorandum of Understanding together with the School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences, to create long-term collaboration pathways.
- 535+ policy and practice professionals reached through our webinars and seminars, including a national digital health webinar attended by representatives from government and non-government organisations, health services and industry.
- Multiple collaborations progressed or expanded with health services including Barwon Health, Grampians Health, Western Health, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, Colac Area Health, Mackay Hospital and Kardinia Health.
- Three of our partnership projects recognised as category award winners, and the overall winner at Deakin's Faculty of Health Partnerships in Practice Research Impact Awards.

Engagement activities

Government engagement and advocacy

We worked with government and policy leaders including the Australian Government, Productivity Commission, Department of Health, Treasury, VicHealth and state-based prevention agencies, contributing evidence to policy consultations, strategic reviews and prevention frameworks. These engagements helped position our evidence-based programs to inform national and state approaches to healthy eating, physical activity and chronic disease prevention.

Non-government organisations

Ongoing collaborations with organisations including Diabetes Victoria, Heart Foundation, Cancer Council Victoria, Health and Wellbeing Queensland, ARACY, National Nutrition Foundation and Investment Dialogue for Australian Children have enabled researchers to share emerging evidence, identify priority research questions and co-design strategies for implementation. A significant milestone was the signing of a five-year Memorandum of Understanding between Deakin University and Diabetes Victoria, alongside the School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences, creating a platform for deeper collaboration between the two organisations.

Health services

Strengthening relationships with health services such as Barwon Health, Grampians Health, Colac Area Health and other clinical partners are critical in translating research into practice. Collaborating on research planning, implementation and evaluation is accelerating innovation in areas such as cancer care, digital health and chronic disease management while ensuring research outcomes are directly relevant to health service priorities and patient needs.

Science Meets Parliament

Dr Rebecca Lindberg and Dr Elena George attended Science and Technology Australia's flagship Science Meets Parliament event at Parliament House, Canberra. Both found it an invaluable learning experience.

Making an impact

Evidence in action: Measuring the health and wellbeing impact of Boroondara's leisure and aquatic centres

A seven-year research partnership between the Deakin Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition, YMCA Victoria and the City of Boroondara has helped guide improvements to the city's leisure and aquatic centres for the community's benefit.

The City of Boroondara Leisure and Aquatic Facilities (BLAF) evaluation began in response to a growing recognition that the value of community recreation services extends beyond participation numbers, and should also be assessed on the outcomes they help achieve. Such outcomes include increased physical activity, stronger social connection, improved self-rated health, greater life satisfaction, inclusive access and broader community wellbeing.

Led by Professor Kylie Hesketh, the evaluation has focused on YMCA-managed facilities in Boroondara, including Hawthorn Aquatic and Leisure Centre, Ashburton Pool and Recreation Centre, Kew Recreation Centre, and Boroondara Sports Complex.

Through a combination of annual member surveys and targeted interviews, the evaluation has captured broad trends in member health and wellbeing, while incorporating community perspectives on the factors that support participation, barriers to getting involved, and opportunities to improve access, connection and overall user experience.

Each year, the researchers have explored a different focus area, with interview topics evolving over time to reflect changing community needs and service priorities, including access and inclusion, youth engagement, culturally responsive services, and environmental sustainability.

Since the partnership began in 2019, more than 6,200 survey responses have been collected from BLAF members. Findings consistently show that members report high levels of physical activity, favourable health behaviours, strong wellbeing and meaningful social connection. Between 2020 and 2025, around 81% to 86% of members aged 18 to 64 years met the aerobic physical activity guideline in the previous week, well above Victorian and national estimates.

The findings highlight the role these leisure facilities play in supporting members' physical activity and social connectedness. Many survey respondents reported completing most or all of their weekly physical activity and muscle-strengthening activity at the centres, and attendance contributing to deeper social connections, reinforcing the important role local leisure and aquatic facilities can play in supporting healthier, more connected communities.

In 2025, the research team produced a report sharing evaluation highlights and how the facilities have helped shape the Boroondara community's health, wellbeing and connection.

"The evaluation is not just about measuring outcomes. It is helping translate evidence into action with an ongoing cycle of improvement," Professor Hesketh said.

"Our findings have led to practical improvements across communication, accessibility, inclusive programming, quiet hours, gym floor support, beginner pathways, staff training and facility planning," she said.

Read the report: https://research.deakin.edu.au/ipan/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2026/02/BLAF-Summary-Report-Final-2026.pdf.pdf

New research underway

Sustainable and inclusive physical activity programs for young people

This fellowship focuses not just on getting kids moving, but on making physical activity programs that last, delivering real benefits for all children and young people for life.

Just one in ten Australian adolescents meets the recommended guideline of at least an hour of activity each day. Rates are even lower among girls, young people in disadvantaged areas, and children with disability.

Deakin Distinguished Professor Jo Salmon is leading research to ensure large-scale physical activity programs not only endure over time, but also deliver benefits equitably and sustainably.

She is examining what happens when initiatives are rolled out across schools and communities, and how they can be embedded within education and health systems.

“Good ideas often struggle to survive when funding ends or when they’re taken beyond a small pilot,” Professor Salmon said.

“We want to understand what helps physical activity programs stick, and who they’re really reaching when they scale up.”

Professor Jo Salmon

Closing the access gap

Governments are prioritising physical activity through national health and obesity strategies, but evidence is limited on whether scaling up successful programs can be both sustainable and fair. The risk is that when programs expand, they benefit those who already have resources. This research aims to ensure programs reach the young people who need it most.

About the project

Supported by a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Level 3 Investigator grant, the project is built around three key pillars:

1. **Sustainability** – understanding how initiatives become routine in education and health systems.
2. **Equity** – examining how large-scale programs are adopted and delivered across diverse communities, and whether they work well for priority groups.
3. **Practical tools** – developing innovative tools to track implementation, including apps, text check ins, and digital mapping.

Looking ahead

This work will provide clear evidence on what helps physical activity programs last, how they can be delivered more fairly, and how implementation can be measured more accurately. These insights will support governments, schools and organisations to invest in initiatives that have lasting impact.

Project funding: National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Investigator Grant Leadership Level 3 Fellowship, five years (2025–2029)

Future-proofing Australia's workforce against climate-driven heat stress

The REFRESH project is developing practical, evidence-based solutions to help workers stay safe, healthy and productive in increasingly hot environments.

As Australia's climate continues to warm, protecting workers from extreme heat is becoming an urgent public health and workplace safety priority. Workers in physically demanding industries such as emergency services, construction, agriculture and mining are among those most vulnerable to heat stress. Rising temperatures increase the risk of dehydration, fatigue, heat-related illness and workplace accidents, while also reducing productivity and placing growing pressure on employers and the broader economy.

About the project

Led by Associate Professor Luana Main, REFRESH combines occupational health science with real-world research to identify and evaluate practical strategies that reduce heat strain, improve recovery and support safer work in hot conditions. The research team is testing approaches such as hydration, cooling protocols and recovery strategies tailored to Australian working conditions.

By evaluating these interventions in both laboratory and field settings, researchers aim to generate evidence that can be translated into practical guidance across a range of industries. From improving recovery and reducing fatigue to informing national safety standards, the project aims to better protect Australian workers from the growing impacts of extreme heat.

Making workplaces safer

A key goal of REFRESH is to build long-term workforce resilience. By developing evidence-based frameworks that help people adapt safely to hotter conditions, the project supports workplaces in maintaining safety, performance and productivity as extreme heat events become more frequent.

Findings will help inform occupational health standards, employer practices and national guidance for managing heat stress in physically demanding occupations, reducing both the human and economic impacts of climate change.

"With climate change expected to increase the frequency and intensity of heatwaves, we need to prepare Australia's workforce for the future by developing practical strategies that can change how work is planned and undertaken."

Associate Professor Luana Main

"This project has been designed to translate from laboratory discovery to workplace implementation and ultimately to policy," Associate Professor Main said.

Project funding: National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) 2024 Targeted Call for Research – Climate-related health impacts and effective interventions to improve health outcomes, five years (2025–2029)

Understanding how sex hormones affect skeletal muscle mass and function

This project aims to shed light on why females experience earlier, faster and more severe musculoskeletal decline with age.

Males and females age differently. Although females generally live longer, they often experience poorer health later in life. One area where these differences are particularly evident is skeletal muscle, one of the most sex-biased tissues in the human body.

Age-related declines in muscle mass and function can reduce mobility and independence, increase the risk of chronic disease, and contribute to frailty, falls and fractures.

Meanwhile, differences in sex hormones are a major biological distinction between males and females. While levels of both male and female sex hormones change with age, their specific effects on skeletal muscle mass and function across the lifespan remain poorly understood.

How the project works

This project aims to investigate the role of sex hormones, sex chromosomes and their interactions, in shaping how skeletal muscle ages.

Led by Professor Severine Lamon, the project has two parts. First, the research team is recruiting 125 females aged between 40 and 80 to map the trajectory of skeletal muscle ageing, particularly focusing on the menopausal transition.

"During menopause, sex hormone concentrations, as well as muscle mass, function, and metabolism, undergo profound changes," Professor Lamon said.

These data will be combined with findings from Professor Lamon's previous study involving 192 males and females aged 18–80 to determine how shifts in sex hormone levels contribute to age-related changes in skeletal muscle.

Second, the team will use a unique rat model which separates chromosomal sex (possessing XX or XY chromosomes) from gonadal sex (possessing ovaries or testes). In this system, XX and XY animals can possess either ovaries or testes, where such discrepancy is extremely rare in humans. This allows researchers to distinguish the effects of sex chromosomes from those of sex hormones on muscle ageing.

"We will follow these rats for two years – the equivalent to advanced age in humans – and track changes in muscle health over time," Professor Lamon said.

"This will help us determine whether sex differences in muscle ageing are driven by sex chromosomes, sex hormones, or a combination of both factors."

A better understanding of how female muscle ages

The project addresses a major gap in our understanding that limits the development of sex-specific prevention and treatment for age-related musculoskeletal decline.

"It is just one example of how women's health – and the influence of sex differences more broadly – has been historically overlooked in health and medical research."

"This work will provide critical evidence to guide development of better treatments for age-related muscle loss in older females and males."

Professor Severine Lamon

Project funding: Australian Research Council Discovery Project (DP250100932), four years (2025–2029)

Building the evidence to reduce ultra-processed food consumption

Understanding how ultra-processed foods influence Australians' diets and health is key to developing communication and policy solutions that reduce consumption of these foods.

Ultra processed foods (UPFs) now account for almost half of our dietary intake, with Australians among the highest consumers in the world.

UPFs are strongly linked to poor diet quality and are harmful to the environment. But many people are not aware of the harms of UPFs and Australia currently has no policies specifically designed to reduce consumption of these foods.

Dr Priscila Machado's research aims to give consumers clearer information and to support policymakers to take stronger action on UPFs.

Breaking the project down

For her NHMRC Fellowship, Dr Machado is first building a strong evidence base on the role of UPFs in population dietary behaviours. She is analysing national dietary and health datasets to track UPF consumption over time and across sociodemographic groups to help identify communities with higher exposure and greater risk, for targeted public health action.

Secondly, Dr Machado is exploring Australians' understanding of UPFs and using communication strategies to increase nutrition literacy and public support for policy actions targeting UPFs. She will partner with health organisations to implement a UPFs communication framework, to guide tailored messaging to different audiences.

Finally, Dr Machado will design and test a 'front of pack' warning label to help consumers easily identify UPFs and support broader policy measures, such as taxation of foods with the label.

"The warning label will be a powerful tool to inform consumers about UPFs and help them choose healthier options," she said.

"People deserve clear information about what they're eating and how it affects their health."

Dr Priscila Machado

"At the same time, governments need to take actions to promote a food system that is sustainable and fair. This research will help build that clarity and support those goals on a large scale," she said.

Project funding: National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Investigator Grant Emerging Leadership Level 1 Fellowship (APP2034008), five years (2025–2029)

Plant-based protein for healthy ageing

A new project is investigating how to help older Australians eat more vegetables and plant-based proteins, for both health and sustainability benefits.

As Australians age, increasing vegetable intake and incorporating more plant-based proteins into their diets could support better health while helping create a more sustainable food system. Yet many older adults continue to rely heavily on animal-derived protein and eat relatively few vegetables and other foods from plant sources.

Plants4Age is a collaborative research initiative led by Associate Professor Michael Tieland from the Deakin Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition and Associate Professor Gie Liem from the Deakin Centre for Advanced Food Sciences, supported by Hort Innovation. The project is building evidence on how these dietary changes can support health, in particular muscle health in older adults, and exploring the factors that influence food choices.

The project brings together nutrition, sensory and consumer science to better understand both the health effects of plant-based protein diets and the factors that influence whether older adults are willing and able to adopt them.

What the study involves

The research team has examined existing evidence to understand which plant foods older adults currently consume, how these foods contribute to their overall protein intake, and how plant- and animal-based protein sources are associated with musculoskeletal health in later life.

Alongside this work, consumer and sensory studies are exploring older adults' perceptions and experiences of plant-based protein foods. This research aims to identify the factors that encourage or discourage older adults from incorporating more plant-based protein sources into their diets, including taste, familiarity, preferences and acceptability.

The next phase of the project will involve a randomised controlled trial to directly compare diets with different proportions of plant- and animal-based protein.

The study will investigate whether shifting the balance from animal- towards plant-based protein affects muscle health in older adults, while also examining a range of cardiometabolic health outcomes. Together, the findings will provide important evidence on how more plant-based diets can be adopted while supporting healthy ageing.

Next steps

Associate Professor Michael Tieland said the team was also working with consumers, food providers, growers and health professionals to identify opportunities and challenges in increasing the availability, promotion and consumption of plant-based foods.

"This research will provide insights into how different diets can influence health as people age, while reducing the environmental impact of our diets."

Associate Professor Michael Tieland

Project funding: This project is funded by Hort Innovation, using the vegetable research and development levy and funds from the Australian Government.

Peanut butter – a superfood for older adults?

Could eating natural peanut butter every day for six months help older adults boost their muscle and brain function, nutrition, and decelerate biological ageing?

The world's population is ageing rapidly, with one in seven Australians aged 65 years or older. After age 65, adults can lose up to 50 per cent of their muscle function, while brain functions such as memory and information processing also deteriorate. These changes can make everyday activities more difficult and hinder independence. Poor nutrition can further accelerate declines in muscle and brain function.

Nutrition supplements are often expensive, and their taste and texture may not appeal to older people. Associate Professor Sze-Yen Tan wanted to investigate whether a simple, familiar food such as natural peanut butter could help improve nutrition, muscle and brain function and healthy ageing.

"Peanut butter is versatile, affordable and naturally rich in protein, healthy fats and many other essential nutrients, making it a practical and affordable option for older adults."

Associate Professor Sze-Yen Tan

About the study

The research team conducted a clinical trial of 120 older adults aged 66 to 89 years. Participants were randomly assigned into two groups. One group ate 43 grams of natural peanut butter daily, while the other group continued with their usual diet and activity for 6 months. Researchers measured muscle and brain functions, dietary intake and nutrition status at the beginning and end of the study. DNA samples were also collected to assess biological ageing.

Results

After six months, participants who ate peanut butter completed a sit-to-stand test significantly faster than the participants who did not. Faster performance reflects greater muscle power, which is vital for activities such as rising from a chair, climbing stairs, and reducing falls risk.

Those who ate peanut butter also had higher energy, protein and healthy fat intake than participants who did not. Despite the increase in energy intake, no weight gain or body composition changes were recorded.

Analyses of brain function and biological ageing outcomes are still underway, but early findings suggest potential benefits for brain function.

"Most of the older adults were happy to eat the required quantity of around three tablespoons of peanut butter every day for six months, resulting in high adherence to the study," Associate Professor Tan said. "This suggests it is a practical, age-appropriate strategy to improve nutrition and muscle power of older adults."

Exercise remains one of the most effective ways to maintain muscle function as we age. Combining it with eating peanut butter each day, which also boosts protein intake and muscle power, can deliver even greater health benefits.

Project funding: The Peanut Institute Foundation, two years (2025–2026)

Greening schools to enhance wellbeing

Green spaces are taking root in Victorian schools through an innovative new research project.

Researchers are measuring 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.

Working with industry experts, educators, students and families, the research team have co-designed new green spaces including outdoor play areas, and indoor spaces.

Lead researcher Professor Jenny Veitch is working with four intervention schools – two mainstream and two specialist – while another four schools will not have any co-designed green spaces. This will allow the research team to compare the experiences and outcomes of both groups.

Breathing new life into schools

"This is more than just planting extra trees. We want to understand how green environments can support healthier, more inclusive and connected school communities," Professor Veitch said.

> "Research shows that spending more time in natural environments is linked to better social and emotional wellbeing, more play and physical activity, and improved learning at school."
>
> **Professor Jenny Veitch**

"What makes this project so wonderful is that the new green spaces reflect the ideas of the students themselves, and the school communities they are part of."

She said they would also explore the practicalities and challenges of implementing green spaces into school settings.

What happens next?

The research team will gather data through interviews with staff and industry partners, focus groups with students, co-design workshops, and measures such as physical activity tracking and surveys with parents, staff, and students.

Funded by Hort Innovation Frontiers, the project is delivered in partnership with five industry and peak groups: Nursery and Garden Industry Victoria, TRACT, ecoDynamics, Play Australia and Parks and Leisure Australia.

Project funding: Hort Innovation Frontiers with co-investment from Deakin University, ecoDynamics, Tract consultants, Nursery and Garden Industry Victoria, Play Australia and Parks and Leisure Australia and contributions from the Australian Government.

Using wearable cameras to study how preschoolers engage with screens

As screens become an increasing part of daily life, how are they shaping the learning, communication and wellbeing of preschoolers in this critical stage of development?

With most preschoolers exceeding screen use guidelines and many now using their own devices, Deakin University Postdoctoral Research Fellow Dr Amanda Machell is exploring the contexts in which young children use screens to understand the possible impacts.

It's an area that is under-explored in research, with most studies focused on teens' screen use. But Dr Machell's research has shown that preschool children use screens very differently to adolescents.

To better understand their screen experiences, Dr Machell fitted a small group of preschoolers (aged 2–5 years) with wearable cameras to capture activities from the child's perspective.

Findings

The observational study provided insights into the context of screen use, including the content the preschoolers engaged with, whether they viewed screens alone or with others, and the type of devices used.

The findings showed that screen time in this age group was characterised predominantly by program viewing on TV screens in the lounge room. Programs scored low for educational value and approximately a third of programs were classified as appropriate at a higher age than the preschoolers.

The study findings are contributing to the broader research program, which is examining how different screen use contexts are associated with communication skills and social-emotional development, including potential benefits and harms. Dr Machell is also exploring the role parents play in children's screen use – for example, whether they are allowing screen use to help with learning or to keep children occupied.

"Most screen use research focuses on the negatives associated with excess screen time, but there may also be some positives."

Dr Amanda Machell

What's next?

She is using evidence from previous trials, parent surveys, and consultations with experts, families and researchers to identify practical strategies for parents to promote healthier screen use for their young children.

"Thinking about screen time in terms of duration of use leads us to classify it as either 'good' or 'bad' – but context is important to consider," she said.

"Parents are looking for guidance beyond the amount of screen time, to understand how and what they can do to promote healthy screen use," she said.

Project funding: Deakin University Postdoctoral Research Fellowship, three years (2025–2028)

Building exercise pathways beyond the emergency department

Access to exercise physiology services can support recovery after an emergency department visit – this project is exploring how to make it happen.

Many people leave hospital emergency departments after their immediate medical needs have been addressed, but without structured support on how to recover, stay active and manage their long-term health.

Exercise can play an important role in recovery, helping people regain function and reduce their risk of ongoing health issues – but busy emergency departments have limited capacity to provide personalised exercise advice at time of discharge.

What is being done?

To address this need, Dr Niamh Mundell is leading EPIC-ED (Embedding referral to Exercise Physiology in the Community from the Emergency Department), a program aiming to develop practical pathways to connect emergency department patients with exercise physiology support.

As part of her Deakin University Postdoctoral Research Fellowship, Dr Mundell has been working with emergency department staff, patients, exercise physiologists and health service partners to transform post-discharge care.

Through this collaborative work she has mapped the current system, identified key needs and priorities, and co-designed and tested practical solutions.

In a feasibility study involving 50 patients at Box Hill Hospital, Dr Mundell tested a new emergency department-initiated pathway. One group of patients was offered a telehealth exercise physiology consultation, while a control group was provided with written information. The study results are being analysed to assess patient and health service outcomes, implementation findings and cost of the pathway approach.

A second qualitative study also examined what patients, emergency clinicians and community exercise physiologists need for referral pathways to work in practice.

What impact will the project have?

The program will be particularly important for people living with chronic conditions, multiple health issues, or barriers to accessing care.

It also has potential for broader implementation and adaptation across other patient groups and health services, including mental health.

"An emergency department visit can be an important opportunity to connect people with support beyond the hospital door. We want to build a practical, safe pathway that is centred on what patients and clinicians need."

Dr Niamh Mundell

Project funding: Deakin University Postdoctoral Research Fellowship, three years (2025–2028)

Research making headlines

Public interest in the Institute's research was evident, with several high-profile studies making the news.

Media highlights

Institute researchers engaged in both proactive and reactive media, ensuring that their expertise is shared across a broad audience. Some of the Deakin-generated stories in 2025 included:

Testing how salt impacts female endurance athletes' performance

Research finding female endurance athletes cycled 1.5 minutes faster after taking salt tablets with fluid, compared to those who took placebo, received prominent coverage across News Ltd papers and ABC. The study was led by PhD researcher Lilia Convit, who is supervised by Dr Rhiannon Snipe.

Schoolkids eating too much ultra-processed food

A study finding that children aged between 8 and 12 were getting nearly half of their daily energy intake from foods such as packaged snacks, sugary drinks and fast food generated strong public interest, with national News Ltd coverage leading to television and radio interviews with lead researcher Dr Carley Grimes.

253 MEDIA HITS

5 CONVERSATION ARTICLES

6 PODCAST GUEST APPEARANCES

5 INTERVIEWS ON ABC COUNTRY HOUR

Moving the next generation

A world-first AI tool that improves foundational motor skills in children was featured on Nine News. The tool's development was led by Associate Professor Natalie Lander, in collaboration with the Deakin Institute for Intelligent Systems and in partnership with the Victorian Government.

Awards

- Throughout 2025, our researchers earned numerous awards and honours celebrating their achievements.
  - For the ninth time, Deputy Director Professor Anna Timperio (pictured below) was named as a Clarivate Highly Cited Researcher™. This prestigious honour recognises researchers in the top 0.1% in their fields globally.
  - Professor Jo Salmon, together with a large team of collaborators and external partners across the education, health, and sport sectors, received Engagement Australia's Excellence award for Outstanding Engagement for Research Impact for the TransformUs program. The national awards focus on outstanding nation-building initiatives, demonstrating far-reaching impact and innovation. TransformUs was one of eight category winners from 35 finalists.
  - Dr Priscila Machado was announced as a 2025 Victorian Young Tall Poppy by the Australian Institute of Policy and Science, a prestigious award which honours up-and-coming scientists who combine world-class research with an enthusiastic commitment to communicating science.
  - As the highest-ranked project in FightMND's 2025 funding round, Professor Aaron Russell was presented with the Dr Ian Davis Grant by FightMND CEO Matt Tilley (pictured above).
  - Co-founder of the Institute, Emeritus Professor David Crawford, received the highest honour of the International Society of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity (ISBNPA). The Tom Baranowski Lifetime Achievement Award recognises individuals who have made outstanding and sustained contributions to behavioural nutrition and physical activity.
  - Professor Mark Lawrence was named the highest ranked nutrition scholar in Australia, and 45th in the world, by scholarly analytics platform ScholarGPS.
  - Dr Amelia Carr was awarded the title of Fellow of the European College of Sport Science (ECSS) recognising her significant contribution to the development of sport science.
  - Associate Professor Nicole Kiss was appointed a Fellow of Dietitians Australia.
  - The INFANT (Infant Feeding Active Play and Nutrition program) team received the Deakin Vice-Chancellor's Award for Research impact.

Pictured above, three category winners (L–R): Professor Jo Salmon, Associate Professor Katherine Livingstone, and Dr Helen Macpherson.

Deakin Faculty of Health Partnerships in Practice Awards

The Institute enjoyed multiple successes at Deakin's Faculty of Health Partnerships in Practice Research Impact Awards, with three category awards presented to Institute members, together with their research partners from across community, NGOs and government.

As well as winning their category award, the TransformUs team led by Deakin Distinguished Professor Jo Salmon took out the overall prize on the night.

The awards celebrate partnership research from across the faculty, with prizes awarded for partnerships that have delivered the greatest impact.

Award-winning collaborations

Mid-career researcher category winner

Dr Helen Macpherson with Dementia Australia – *Implementing self-monitoring of cognitive function into primary health care: a new approach for dementia detection*.

Regional and Rural research category winner

Associate Professor Katherine Livingstone with the City of Greater Bendigo & Heart Foundation Australia – *Veg4Me: supporting regional and rural communities to eat more vegetables*.

Informing policy and/or practice category winner

Professor Jo Salmon with the Victorian Government Department of Education and over 30 other state, national and international partners – *Partnering with the education, health and sport sectors to scale TransformUs nationally*.

Pictured below, the overall winning TransformUs team (L–R back row): Dr Ana Maria Contardo Ayala; Rob Malpeli from Peak Phys Ed; Associate Professor Natalie Lander; Professor Jo Salmon; Jacqui Della Gatta; Professor Anna Timperio; and Ernestine Thompson. Front: Jess Orr and Sam Lai.

International engagement

Our members collaborated with more than 100 international organisations and institutes, through research partnerships, keynote presentations, collaborative projects and visiting academics.

International visitors

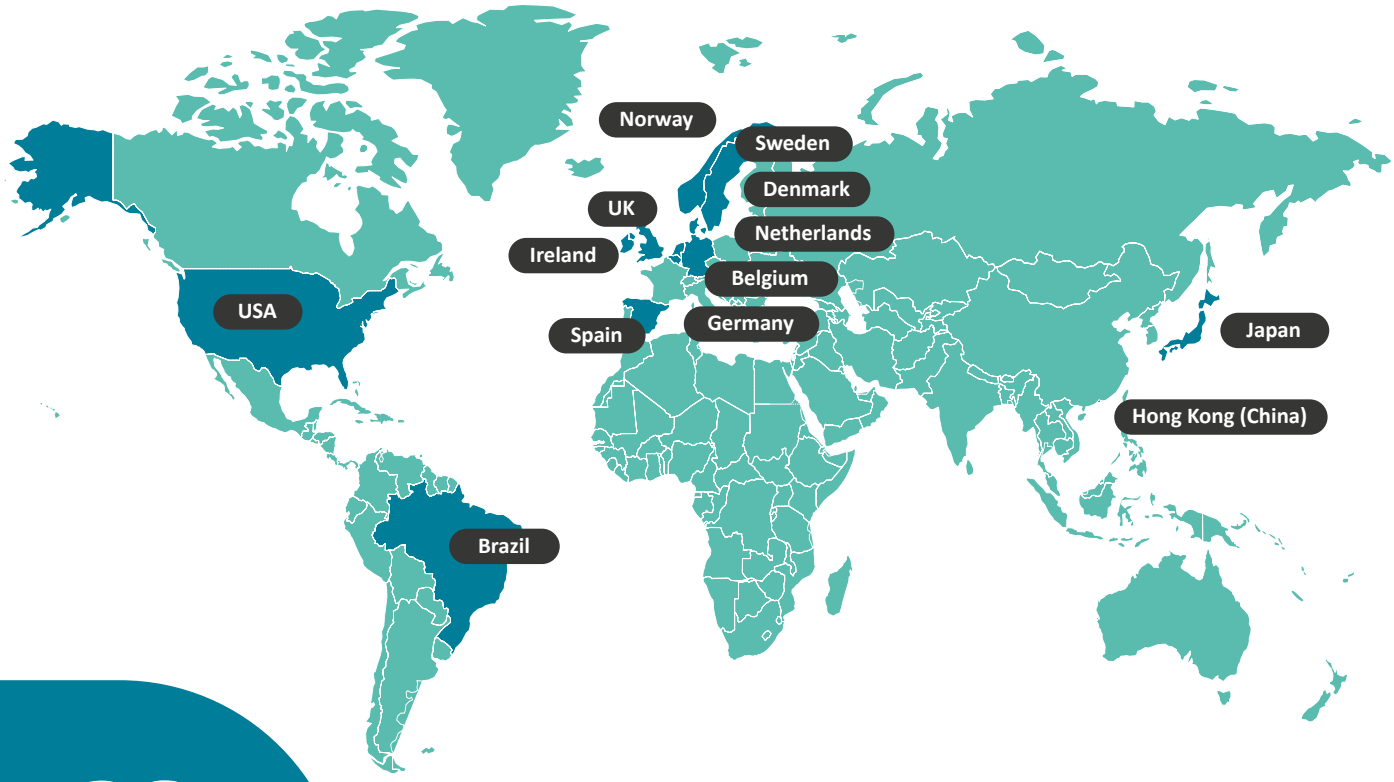
Hosting international academics and graduate researchers strengthens global research collaborations, brings new perspectives to our work, and creates opportunities to enrich our research.

Invited presentations

Researchers delivered invited presentations at multiple international meetings. Some of these included:

- 7th Assembly of the International Motor Development Research Consortium (IMDRC), Brazil
- International Network of Time-Use Epidemiologists (INTUE) Conference, New Zealand
- International Society for Behavioural Nutrition and Physical Activity, New Zealand
- 7th International Coaching Conference, Norway

Visiting international researchers in 2025



29
TOTAL INTERNATIONAL VISITORS

13
COUNTRIES REPRESENTED

Growing international momentum for sustainable food systems

Professor Mark Lawrence continued to strengthen international engagement and leadership in sustainable food systems and ultra-processed foods.

He was an invited speaker at the Royal Swedish Society of Sciences meeting on Planetary health, where he presented his research on ultra-processed foods. During the visit, he gave an invited speech on healthy and sustainable diets at the Planetary Health Evening, a science event at Tekniska Museet.

Professor Lawrence also contributed to the International Union of Nutritional Sciences (IUNS) – International Congress of Nutrition in Paris, where he delivered an invited special lecture on 'Ultra-processed foods and sustainable food systems' and presented in two symposia:

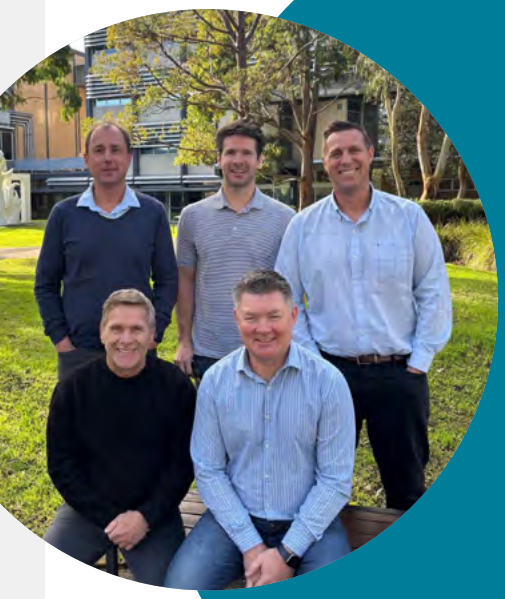
- Sustainable diets – Where from and where to? (The IUNS' Sustainable Diets Taskforce symposium)
- Unique challenges and opportunities for sustainable diets and food systems in Oceania' (A symposium organised by Nutrition societies across Oceania.)

This international activity was further strengthened by Professor Lawrence's success with gaining support to establish the IUNS Taskforce on Ultra-processed foods, which he will Chair for the next four years.

Sharing healthy ageing expertise across the globe

Recognised for his expertise in exercise and ageing, Professor Robin Daly was a sought-after international speaker, including:

- Delivering the keynote Pat Patterson Memorial Lecture at the British Menopause Society's 34th Annual Scientific Conference on evidence for the role of exercise and nutrition during menopause in the era of incretin-based weight loss therapy.
- Addressing the Barmelweid Academy in Switzerland seminar on 'Resistance training for longevity: unlocking muscle health in older adults'.
- Giving a plenary lecture on exercise and bone health at the 9th Asia-Pacific Bone Health Conference in Tokyo.



Thinker in Residence

Professor Matthew Buman, Professor and Director of Precision Health Research Initiatives in the College of Health Solutions at Arizona State University, visited for six weeks as part of the Faculty of Health's Thinker in Residence program. An internationally recognised behavioural scientist, Professor Buman's interdisciplinary expertise includes public health, medicine and exercise science.

During his visit, Professor Buman engaged with colleagues across the Faculty of Health, generously sharing his expertise. He delivered an Early to Mid-Career Researcher seminar on tips for building a pipeline of grants and papers, and provided the keynote presentation for the Baker-Deakin Department of Lifestyle and Diabetes symposium, speaking about developing effective digital health technologies through cross-sector collaboration and design thinking.

He also headlined a well-attended webinar hosted by our Institute exploring the different ways digital technology can support healthy living. His visit provided valuable opportunities for connection, discussion and knowledge-sharing across the Faculty.

Pictured above: Back row L–R: Professor Robin Daly, Dr Paddy Dempsey, and Professor Matthew Buman. Front row L–R: Professors Ralph Maddison and David Dunstan.

Spotlight on Ghent

The Institute's long-standing collaborations with Belgium's Ghent University continued, led by Professor Jenny Veitch. Highlights included:

- Two cotutelle students successfully completing their PhDs, with Professor Veitch attending their final oral defences at Ghent University.
- A research visit by Ghent University Master's student Enid Martin ahead of the commencement of her cotutelle PhD later in the year.
- Ongoing collaboration through two Ghent University-led grants involving Professor Anna Timperio and Professor Veitch.

Leadership

DIRECTOR

Deakin Distinguished Professor Jo Salmon

DEPUTY DIRECTORS

Deakin Distinguished Professor Anna Timperio and Professor Michelle Keske

DOMAIN COORDINATORS

Biology of health and disease
Professor Aaron Russell and Dr Gunveen Kaur

Preventing and managing chronic conditions
Associate Professor Megan Teychenne (until May), Dr Paddy Dempsey (from June) and Dr Sze-Yen Tan

Healthy active living
Professor Kylie Hesketh and Associate Professor Luana Main

Food, nutrition and health
Dr Catherine Milte (until November), Professor Welma Stonehouse (from December) and Dr Penny Love

CROSS DOMAIN THEME LEADERS

Implementation science and translation
Associate Professor Harriet Koorts

Sustainability
Professor Mark Lawrence and Dr Shannon Sahlqvist

Digital technologies
Professor Ralph Maddison

HEAD, EMCR DEVELOPMENT

Professor Michelle Keske

DEPUTY COORDINATORS OF EMCR DEVELOPMENT

Associate Professors Michael Tieland and Megan Teychenne

HEAD, BAKER-DEAKIN DEPARTMENT OF LIFESTYLE AND DIABETES

Professor David Dunstan

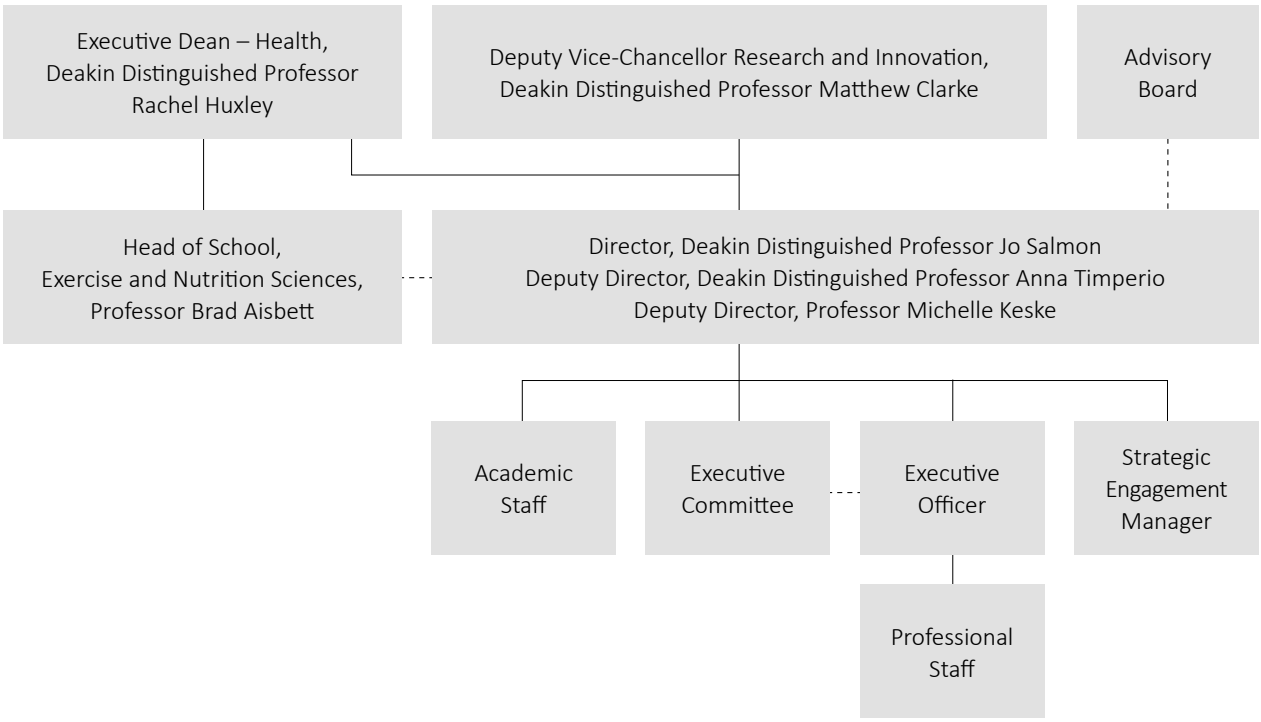
COORDINATORS, CENTRE FOR SPORT RESEARCH

Associate Professor Steve Swanson, Dr Dominique Condo and Associate Professor Lyndell Bruce

Pictured left: Our leadership team, L–R: Professors Anna Timperio, Jo Salmon and Michelle Keske.

Board and governance

ORGANISATIONAL CHART



INSTITUTE EXECUTIVE

Deakin Distinguished Professor Jo Salmon	Deakin Distinguished Professor Anna Timperio	Professor Michelle Keske
Professor Brad Aisbett	Professor Clinton Bruce	Professor David Dunstan
Professor Aaron Russell	Associate Professor Luana Main	Associate Professor Steve Swanson
Associate Professor Lyndell Bruce	Dr Gunveen Kaur	Dr Catherine Milte
Dr Sze-Yen Tan	Ms Cathy Cooper	Ms Ernestine Thompson

Advisory board

The Institute's Advisory Board remained active until October 2025, when it was dissolved as Deakin University moved to a new governance structure that brings all Health research institutes together under a single Advisory Board. We are deeply grateful to our Advisory Board members for their generous contributions and support over the past year, and to several members for their valued service over many years.

Members

Deakin Distinguished Professor Matthew Clarke (Chair) – Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation at Deakin University

Deakin Distinguished Professor Rachel Huxley – Executive Dean, Faculty of Health at Deakin University

Professor Matthew Fuller-Tyszkiewicz – Associate Dean for Research and Impact, Faculty of Health at Deakin University

Dr David Halliwell – Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Partnerships at Deakin University

Ms Amy Hunter – Executive Director Research Business Development and Commercialisation at Deakin University

Professor Matthew Gillespie (AM) – Vice-Provost (Academic Affairs) at Monash University

Dr Lyn Roberts (AO) – Director, LR and Associates, Deputy Chancellor and Deakin University Council member

Ms Melanie Chisholm – Senior Manager, Population Health and North Eastern Public Health Unit

Mr Peter McCue – NSW Office of Sport

Dr Simone Nalatu – Director – Equity and Communities at Health and Wellbeing Queensland

Mr Rodney Siegel (until May 2025) – National Physiology Network Led at the Australian Institute of Sport and Performance Science Manager at the Victorian Institute of Sport

Mr Terry Slevin – Chief Executive Officer for the Public Health Association of Australia

Academic staff

Professor Brad Aisbett
Dr Giselle Allsopp
Dr Lauren Arundell
Dr Zoe Avner
Dr Brenton Baguley
Dr Jordan Bakhsh
Professor Lisa Barnett
Dr Jonas Benjamim
Dr Bianca Bernardo
Dr Andrew Betik
Professor Lucinda Black
Associate Professor Kristy Bolton
Dr Jason Bonacci
Associate Professor Alison Booth
Dr Elizabeth Bradshaw
Dr Barbara Brayner
Dr David Broadbent
Associate Professor Helen Brown
Professor Clinton Bruce
Associate Professor Lyndell Bruce
Dr Alissa Burnett
Dr Johannes Carl (Left 1 Oct 2025)
Dr Amelia Carr
Dr Dominique Condo
Dr Ana Maria Contardo Ayala
Dr Annie Curtis
Dr Jack Dalla Via
Professor Robin Daly
Dr Paddy Dempsey
Dr Emily Denniss
Dr Suzanne Dixon-Suen
Dr Katherine Downing
Dr Eric Drinkwater
Dr Ellie Dunlop
Professor David Dunstan
Associate Professor Dan Dwyer
Dr Simon Feros
Dr Aaron Fox
Professor Steve Fraser
Dr Hunter Fujak
Dr Jackson Fyfe
Dr Elena George
Dr Carley Grimes
Dr Lee Hamilton
Professor Kylie Hesketh
Dr Jeew Hettiarachchi
Dr Danielle Hiam
Dr Samantha Hoffman
Associate Professor Kirsten Howlett
Dr Jill Hnatiuk
Dr Paul Jansons
Dr Alethea Jerebine
Dr Gunveen Kaur
Dr Claire Kenneally-Dabrowski
Professor Michelle Keske
Associate Professor Nicole Kiss
Dr Aden Kittel
Associate Professor Harriet Koorts
Associate Professor Greg Kowalski
Dr Katie Lacy
Professor Severine Lamon
Associate Professor Natalie Lander
Professor Mark Lawrence
Associate Professor Rachel Laws
Dr Matt Lee
Dr Tracy Lee
Dr Rebecca Leech
Dr Rebecca Lindberg
Associate Professor Katherine Livingstone
Dr Penny Love
Dr Jiani Ma
Dr Priscila Machado
Dr Amanda Machell
Dr Helen Macpherson
Professor Ralph Maddison
Associate Professor Luana Main
Dr Claire Margerison
Dr Shaun Mason
Dr Hajar Mazahery
Dr Emiliano Mazzoli
Dr Jennifer McCann
Dr Matthew McKenzie
Dr Joshua McLeod
Dr Jakub Mesinovic
Dr Clint Miller
Dr Catherine Milte
Dr Niamh Mundell
Dr Janandani Nanayakkara
Dr Jodie Palmer
Dr Lewan Parker
Dr Susan Paudel (Left Sept 2025)
Professor Pamm Phillips
Professor Judi Porter
Dr Jonathan Rawstorn
Dr Spencer Roberts
Dr Jonathan Robertson
Associate Professor Katie Rowe
Professor Aaron Russell
Dr Georgie Russell
Dr Shannon Sahlqvist
Deakin Distinguished Professor Jo Salmon
Associate Professor Natalie Saunders
Associate Professor David Scott
Associate Professor Chris Shaw
Professor David Shilbury (Retired Aug 2025)
Dr Rhiannon Snipe
Dr Alison Spence
Professor Welma Stonehouse
Associate Professor Claudia Strugnell (Left June 2025)
Associate Professor Steve Swanson
Associate Professor Ewa Szymlek-Gay
Dr Jamie Tait
Dr Sze-Yen Tan
Dr Teketo Tegegne
Associate Professor Megan Teychenne
Associate Professor Michael Tieland
Deakin Distinguished Professor Anna Timperio
Associate Professor Kim Toffoletti
Associate Professor Susan Torres
Dr Danielle Trowell
Dr Anne Turner
Dr Tola Ushula
Dr Paige van der Pligt (Left June 2025)
Professor Jenny Veitch
Dr Simone Verswijveren
Professor Glenn Wadley
Dr Anthony Walsh
Associate Professor Stuart Warmington
Dr Kim Way
Dr Michael Wheeler
Dr Kate Wingrove
Dr Yuxin Zhang

Externally funded research projects in 2025

	Project team	Project title	Funding scheme
1.	**Barnett LM**, Rosenberg M, Derbyshire A, **Arundell L**, **Mazzoli E**, **Salmon J**	Implementation of a physical literacy tool in schools	Healthway, WA Health
2.	**Black L**, Tilbrook D, Nannup N, Begley A, Collins F, Rawson T, Cunningham J	Promoting vitamin D sufficiency among Aboriginal people through dietary strategies and safe sun exposure	NHMRC Ideas Grant
3.	**Black L**, Jacky J, Tilbrook D, Nannup N, Michie C, Farrant B, **Dunlop E**, Begley A, Ilich N, Shepherd C	Connecting with Country: promoting healthy eating and bush tucker for chronic disease prevention	MRFF Indigenous Health Research
4.	**Black L**, Taylor B, Pereira G	Elucidating the role of diet in multiple sclerosis to improve disease outcomes	US National Multiple Sclerosis Society
5.	**Bolton K**, **Lindberg R**, Brown V	It takes a village: a neighbourhood approach to improve health and wellbeing	VicHealth Impact Research Grants
6.	**Broadbent D**, **Timperio A**, **Bruce L**, Hoang T	The development of a 360-degree video-based Situation Awareness Test for cyclists	National Road Safety Action Grants Program
7.	**Daly R**, Bennell K, **Scott D**, Ebeling P, Maier A, Giangregorio L, Hinman R, Watts J, **Koorts H**, McNaughton SA. AI's: **Milte C**, Gianoudis J, **Rawstorn J**, Orellana L, **Maddison R**	TeleFFIT – A personalised, telehealth exercise and lifestyle risk factor management program to reduce falls and fracture risk in older adults: A 12-month hybrid effectiveness-implementation trial	MRFF Preventive and Public Health Research Initiative
8.	**Hamilton L**, Walder K, **Allsopp G**, **Shaw C**, **Kowalski G**, **Bruce C**, Wright C, **Snipe R**	Can dietary supplementation with Krill Oil improve ME/CFS symptoms	The Mason Foundation National Medical Program
9.	**Hamilton L**, Huschtscha Z, **Tieland M**, **Tan SY**, **Fyfe J**, **Allsopp G**, **Bruce C**, **Kowalski G**, **Mason S**, **Feros S**, **Snipe R**	ALMOND ProFIT-PM – Almond protein powder to enhance fitness training adaptations in postmenopausal women	Almond Board of California
10.	**Hamilton L**, **Daly R**, **Tan SY**, **Snipe R**, **Hoffman S, Condo D**, **Roberts S**	EggPro-Sleep PM: Egg protein pm for improved sleep during perimenopause	Australian Eggs
11.	**Hesketh K**, **Laws R**, **Love P**, **Koorts H**, Markides B, **Salmon J**, Zheng M, **Downing K**, Brown V, Orellana L, **Spence A**	A nutrition and movement behaviour intervention for toddlers: efficacy, cost effectiveness and scale-up pathways	MRFF Maternal Health and Healthy Lifestyles
12.	**Keske M**, Marwick T, **Parker L**, **Maddison R**	Novel therapy for improving exercise tolerance and glycaemic regulation in type 2 diabetes associated HFpEF	National Heart Foundation of Australia – Vanguard Grant

EXTERNALLY FUNDED RESEARCH PROJECTS IN 2025

	Project team	Project title	Funding scheme
13.	**Keske M**, **Wadley G**, **Betik A**, **Parker L**, **Kaur G**	Home-based vascular therapy for improving exercise tolerance and glycaemia in type 2 diabetes	Diabetes Australia Research Program
14.	**Keske M**, Marwick T, Levinger I, **Salmon J**, **Wadley G**, **Parker L**, Abbott G	Early detection of insulin-resistance with a mixed meal challenge – The REFINE study	MRFF 2022 Cardiovascular Health Mission
15.	**Kiss N**, Bauer J, Prado C, Alston L, Hutchinson A, Denehy L, Loeliger J, Edbrooke L, Ugalde A, Orellana L, Gao L, Hardcastle N, **Baguley B**, Moodie L, Sharma S. **AI: Daly R**	Revolutionising sarcopenia care for people living with cancer: Establishing effective screening and referral pathways into evidence-based treatment in rural and specialist cancer services	MRFF 2023 Clinician Researchers Initiative: Applied Research in Health Grant
16.	**Lamon S**, Harley V, Eynon N, **Scott D**, O'Bryan S, Ziemann M	Understanding the role of sex in ageing muscle	ARC Discovery Project
17.	**Laws R**, **Campbell K**, **Hesketh K**, Denney-Wilson E, Moodie M, **Koorts H**, Ong KL, Orellana L, **Love P**, Browne J	Evaluating real-world implementation of an evidence-based program addressing lifestyle behaviours from the start of life	NHMRC Partnership Grant
18.	**Maddison R**, Vasa R, Atherton J, Oldenburg B, Kostakos V, Dingler T, **Rawstorn J**, Kwasnicka D	Harnessing information technology to improve self-management behaviours and health outcome in people with heart failure: A smarthome ecosystem Living Lab Study	NHMRC Ideas Grant
19.	**Maddison R**, Sullivan C, Oldenburg B, Woods L, **Zhang Y**, Atherton J, Driscoll A, Spinks J, Vasa R, Abbott G, **Rawstorn J**, **Koorts H**, Oqueli R	Digital-enabled solutions to support healthcare delivery: Transforming outcomes for heart failure in Australia (SMART; Self-Management and Remote Technologies)	MRFF 2023 Cardiovascular Health Mission
20.	**Main L**, Kenny G, Lee B, **Aisbett B**, Banks S, **Carr A**, Lum J	REFRESH: Resilience enhancement for workers' fatigue, recovery and safety in the heat	NHMRC 2024 TCR Climate-related health impacts and effective interventions to improve health outcomes
21.	**Parker L**, **Keske M**, Marwick T, Nikolaidis M	Antioxidant deficiency screening and personalised antioxidant prescription as an accessible and cost-effective treatment for cardiovascular dysfunction and insulin resistance	National Heart Foundation of Australia – Vanguard Grant
22.	**Russell A**, Walker A, Wright D	Evaluation of a novel inducible muscle-specific TDP-43 mouse model of ALS	FightMND Impact Grant

EXTERNALLY FUNDED RESEARCH PROJECTS IN 2025

	Project team	Project title	Funding scheme
23.	**Snipe R**, **Brown H**, **Carr A**, **Main L**, **Bruce L**, **Lamon S**	Menstruation matters for participation in sport and active recreation	Victorian Government, Office for Women in Sport Recreation: Change our Game Research Program Grant
24.	**Strugnell C**, **Salmon J**, **Lander N**, **Booth A**, **Bolton K**, Yoong S, Gaskin C, Brown A, Jackson M, Allender S	TransformUs – Wellbeing	VicHealth Impact Research Grants
25.	**Swanson S**, **Robertson J**, Olive L, **Lamon S**, **Rowe K**, Dunn M, Piatkowski T	Beyond injury recovery: How performance support practitioners collaborate to facilitate holistic athlete wellbeing during the return to play journey	Australian Institute of Sport
26.	**Tan SY**, **Daly R**, **George E**, Georgousopoulou E	Peanut butter as a strategy to improve older adults' physical capacity	The Peanut Institute Foundation
27.	**Tan SY**, **George E**, **Daly R**, **Hettiarachchi J**, **Mason S**	Peanut butter, telomere length, and functional capacity of older adults	The Peanut Institute Foundation
28.	**Tieland M** and Liem G **(co-leads)**, **Daly R**, Keast R, **Livingstone K**, Lewin S	Plant based protein for sustainability and healthy ageing	Hort Innovation
29.	**Verswijveren S**	Moving together: How movement behaviours of young children and their parents shape their long-term health	Jack Brockhoff Foundation, Bold Futures Early Career Medical Research Grant
30.	**Wadley G**, **Mason S**, Abbott G, Lemoh C, Wong J, Thong E, **van der Pligt P**, Lu Z	Vitamin C treatment to aid the healing of foot ulcers in people with diabetes: a randomised, placebo-controlled double-blind trial	Diabetes Australia Research Program

Deakin Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition academics are indicated in bold.

Externally funded research fellowships in 2025

Staff member	Project Name	Funding Scheme
Arundell L	RECONNECT ME: REgaining CONtrol of childreN's EleCTronic Media	Australian Research Council Discovery Early Career Research Award
Baguley B	The PRO-Health Program: A co-designed remote-delivered PROstate-cancer specific healthy eating exercise weight loss program for men treated with androgen deprivation therapy	Victorian Cancer Agency Early Career Research Fellowship
Brown H	Deakin University and ASC collaboration to optimise the implementation of the Play Well Research Unit deliverables	Australian Sports Commission
Hesketh K	Early childhood physical activity and sedentary behaviour interventions to optimise heart health trajectories	National Heart Foundation of Australia Future Leader Fellowship
Lamon S	Understanding the determinants of age-related muscle wasting in females	Australian Research Council Future Fellowship
Lander N	TransformUs Higher Ed: Developing confident, 'classroom-ready' graduates	Australian Research Council Discovery Early Career Research Award
Machado P	Responding to the burden of chronic diseases attributable to ultra-processed foods in Australia	NHMRC Investigator Grant Emerging Leadership Level 1 Fellowship
Salmon J	Improving sustainability and equity of youth physical activity initiatives at scale	NHMRC Investigator Grant Leadership Level 3 Fellowship
Teychenne M	Informing the development and real-world translation of a home-based physical activity intervention for improving postnatal mental health	NHMRC Investigator Grant Emerging Leadership Level 1 Fellowship

Externally funded research collaborations in 2025

Project team	Lead institute	Project title	Funding scheme
Baur L, **Hesketh K**, Golley R, Wen LM, **Laws R**, Hayes A, **Campbell K**, Denney-Wilson E, Brown V, Seidler AL. AI's 10 including **Love P**	University of Sydney	Centre of Research Excellence in the Early Prevention of Obesity in Childhood-Translate: (EPOCH-Translate)	NHMRC Centres of Research Excellence
Belavy DL, Owen P, **Miller CT**, **Mundell NL** and the Pain, Action and Interference (PAIN) Scientific Research Network (Consists of 5 Flemish and 15 foreign partners)	Ghent University	Scientific Research Network in Pain, Action and INterference (PAIN)	Research Foundation Flanders (FWO), Belgium: Scientific Research Network Grant
Bell C, Whelan J, Allender S, Wolfenden L, Nichols M, Brown V, Yoong SL, Orellana L, **Bolton K**. **AI: Love P**	Deakin University	Systems Thinking with Active Implementation Research (STAIR) to prevent childhood obesity: an effectiveness implementation trial	NHMRC Partnership Grant
Bondonno C, Sim M, Laws S, Bucks R, Schousboe J, Shultz C, Woodman R, Dimmock J, Hodgson J, Lewis J. AI: **Daly R**	Edith Cowan University	Getting to the heart of healthy ageing: a behaviour change program to promote dietary pattern changes	MRFF Dementia, Ageing and Aged Care Mission
Bondonno C, Lundberg J, Tjonneland A, Croft K, Kyro C, Bondonno N. **AI's**: 10 including **Daly RM**	Edith Cowan University	The nitrate debate: does dietary source determine health impact?	NHMRC Ideas Grant
Cleland V, Greaves SP, Jose K, Blizzard CL, **Timperio A**, Stafford L	Menzies Research Institute, University of Tasmania	Improving cardiovascular health through increased transport-related physical activity: A co-designed randomised controlled trial	MRFF 2021 Cardiovascular Health Mission
Cooke M, **Main L**	LaTrobe University	Impact of heat stress on the human gut microbiota-brain axis: Implications for operational performance and readiness	Defence Science Institute Collaborative Grant
Daley A, Thursfield C, Jolly K, Yates T, Mutrie N, Biddle S, **Maddison R**	Loughborough University, UK	'Snacktivity' to promote physical activity and reduce future risk of disease in the population	National Institute Health Research – NIHR

EXTERNALLY FUNDED RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS IN 2025

Project team	Lead institute	Project title	Funding scheme
Davies M, Yates T, Stensel D. **AI: Dempsey P**	University of Leicester, UK	Leicester Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) Infrastructure Grant	National Institute Health Research – NIHR
Denehy L, Cavalheri V, Edbrooke L, Granger C, **Kiss N**, Ritchie D, Short C	University of Melbourne	Rehabilitation after bone marrow transplant to improve patient outcomes. The REBOOT study	World Cancer Research Fund International Regular Grant Programme
Dixon H, **McCann J**, Kelly B, Taillie L, Morely B, Haynes A, Wakefield M, Silva M, Skouteris H, Rhodes A	Cancer Council Victoria	Improved labelling of ready-made infant and toddler foods to empower healthier parental choices: a scalable policy intervention	MRFF – 2021 Maternal Health and Healthy Lifestyles
Dodd J, Poprzeczny A, Louise J, Keir A, Pham C, **Laws R**, Briley A, Turnbull D, **Campbell K**. AI: Goold J, Chen R	University of Adelaide	The Begin Better Randomised Trial	MRFF Preventive and Public Health Research Grant
Dunn M, Hening A, Andreasson J, Piatkowski T, **Robertson J**, **Lamon S**	Deakin University	Performance and image enhancing drug use among women: Investigating the role support personnel have in facilitating or preventing use	World anti-Doping Agency (WADA) Social Science Research Grant Program
Grech L, Zengin A, Sim M, Allan M, **Jansons P**, Beck B, Ebeling P, O'Maley T, Le-Kavanagh L, Butler E, Kermode A, **Scott D**, John N, **Mesinovic J**, Herschtal A	Monash University	A clinician-led feasibility, acceptability and pilot efficacy intervention to improve bone health and muscle strength in people with multiple sclerosis	MRFF Clinician Researchers Initiative: Applied Research in Health Grant
Healy G, Jung M, Gomersall S, Goode A, **Dunstan D**	University of Queensland	Small steps for big changes: Implementing an evidence-based diabetes prevention program into diverse urban communities	NHMRC-CIHR Healthy Cities Implementation Science Team Grant Scheme
Hutchinson A, **Macpherson H**, Bucknall T, Vasa R, Redley B, Rivera Villicana J, Orellana L, Mouzakis K	Deakin University	Implementing innovative technology promoting self-awareness of brain health and self-determination in obtaining a timely dementia diagnosis	MRFF Dementia, Ageing and Aged Care Mission

EXTERNALLY FUNDED RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS IN 2025

Project team	Lead institute	Project title	Funding scheme
Kwasnicka D, **Rawstorn J**, Naccarella L, Lau A, O'Hallaran P, Wadley G, McVeigh J, Thompson C, Quested E, **Maddison R**, Robinson S, Sinnott R, Tiedemann A	University of Melbourne	ConnectUp: Citizen Science informed online platform to increase social connection, physical health, and mental wellbeing in people with disability and their carers	MRFF Consumer-Led Research Grant
Landen S, **Lamon S**	Monash University	A genetic approach to understand sex differences in musculoskeletal ageing	Sir Edward Dunlop Medical Research Foundation
Lubans D, **Salmon J**, Smith J, Morgan P, Sutherland R, Penney D, Scott J, Kennedy S	University of Newcastle	Optimising the implementation of an evidence-based school program to engage adolescents in muscle-strengthening activities consistent with national guidelines	NHMRC Partnership Grant
Morrison D, O'Neal D, Bogrin S, **Kowalski G**, **Bruce C**, Smart C, Zaharieva D.	University of Melbourne, St Vincent's Hospital	Protein intervention to minimise exercise-induced hypoglycemia in people with type 1 diabetes	Helmsley Charitable Trust – Type 1 Diabetes
Oldenburg B, **Maddison R**, Kostakos V, Boyle D, Borland R, Lau A, Furler J, Scuffham P, Abraham C, Taylor CB	University of Melbourne	Centre of Research Excellence in Interactive Digital Technology to Transform Australia's Chronic Disease Outcomes	NHMRC Centres of Research Excellence
O'Reilly S, **Laws R**, Skinner T, Norman J, Teede H, Anderson J, Campoy C, Evans J, Terkildsen H, **Campbell K**, Versace V	University College Dublin	Implementation Action to prevent Diabetes from Bump 2 Baby (IMPACT DIABETES B2B): a low-resource system of care intervention for appropriate gestational weight gain and improved postnatal outcomes	Horizon 2020 European Commission
Pipingas A, Murphy K, Itsiopoulos C, Kingsley M, Scholey A, **Macpherson H**, Segal L, Breckon J, Minihane A	Swinburne University	Mediterranean diet and exercise to reduce cognitive decline and dementia risks in independently living older Australians: the MedWalk randomised controlled trial	NHMRC Boosting Dementia Research

EXTERNALLY FUNDED RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS IN 2025

Project team	Lead institute	Project title	Funding scheme
Price T, Wardill H, Yeung D, Crawford G, Bowen J, Shakib S, Smid S, Ludbrook G, Zannettino A, Whetton S. AI's: Boublik J, Marker J, **Kiss N**, Costello S, Louise J, Saman K	University of Adelaide	The CANnabinoids for CANcer Therapy (CANCAN) Trial	MRFF-Emerging Priorities and Consumer Driven Research – 2020 Medicinal Cannabis Clinical Trials
Reed J, **Way K**, Wells GA, Parkash R, Dorian P, Poirier P, Andrade J, Birnie DH, Pipe AL, Tulloch HE, Blanchard C, Oh P, Prince SA, Edwards J	University of Ottawa, CA	A multi-site population health study evaluating the physical activity levels of patients with atrial fibrillation (CANSURVEY-AF)	Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)
Russell C, Bell C, **Livingstone K**, Hadjikakou M, Anantha-pavan J, Stead V, **Love P**, Blake M, **Wingrove K**, Nguyen P	Deakin University	Co-designing healthy, equitable and sustainable rural fruit and vegetable distribution	VicHealth Impact Research Grants
Silva M, **Laws R**, Moreno-Betancur M, Dashper S, Zheng M, Hall M, Burgner D, Singh A, Kilpatrick N, Le Cao KA. AI: **Campbell K**	MCRI & Melbourne Dental School, University of Melbourne	Infant2Child: Optimising nutrition in early life to reduce childhood dental caries	MRFF 2020 Maternal Health and First 2000 Days, Early Childhood, and Exercise and Nutrition
Ugalde A, Short C, Yoong S, Hart N, Gunn K, Bergin R, Shee AW, Boltong A, Rhee J, Karikios D, **Kiss N**, Crawford-Williams F, Leigh L, Chapman A, Gao L	Deakin University	Driving equitable cancer outcomes across Australia: Establishing a nationally scalable model to embed best practice cancer guidelines into rural health services	MRFF 2023 Early to Mid-Career Researchers Grant
Walder K, Berk M, Bortolasci C, McGee S, **Bruce C**, Marx W	Deakin University	Using 'omics to unravel the patho-physiology and repurpose drugs to treat ME/CFS	NHMRC Targeted Call for Research into Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME)/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS)
Walker A, Morsch M, Brown-Wright H, Lisowski L, **Russell A**, Della Gatta P	University of Queensland	New viral-mediated TDP-43 mouse models of MND	Fight MND Impact Grant
Westrupp E, Fuller-Tyszkiewicz M, Thomas J, Angelova M, Havighurst S, Evans S, Olive S, O'Shea M, Bates M, Kehoe C. **AI: Hesketh KD**	Deakin University	Improving parent and child emotion regulation in early childhood to reduce population rates of child mental illness	NHMRC Ideas Grant

Deakin Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition academics are indicated in bold.

Thank you

We are grateful to our exceptional staff, academic colleagues, Consumer Network members, supporters and collaborators, whose contributions underpin everything we do.

Thank you for partnering with us throughout 2025. Your ongoing support enables us to continue making a meaningful contribution to a healthier, more active and sustainable future.

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