

Promoting brain health with older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples



THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

Welcome to our October 2025 Newsletter

The OnTRACK CRE is dedicated to delivering a comprehensive program of dementia research and translation leading to evidence based, community informed, culturally safe care and improved health and well-being outcomes for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples, their families, carers and communities. We've been very busy this year developing projects across all three of our major themes. We are excited to share updates on a few of our projects.

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Acknowledgement of Country



OnTRACK acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of Country and that sovereignty has never been ceded. We recognise the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples, communities and cultures and the past and continuing contributions of sophisticated Aboriginal knowledges. OnTRACK pays our deep respect to Elders past and present as the custodians of cultural knowledges.



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OnTRACK Biomarker Workshop



Part of the research program delivered by Theme 1, Dementia risk reduction, prevention and diagnosis, aims to develop guidelines to inform culturally safe and ethical biomarker and genomic dementia research. The OnTRACK team hosted a Biomarker workshop in March to inform the development of the guidelines.

Image:
OnTRACK Biomarker Workshop:
OnTRACK team and workshop
participants

This collaborative, one-day workshop brought together researchers, health professionals, Elders and community members to adapt and ratify elements of existing guidelines for culturally safe biomarker and genomic research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be applied to dementia research. The day began with a series of presentations to describe our previous Theme 1 work and to provide foundational information to guide discussions. This was followed by facilitated small group discussions where participants provided input, feedback and guidance across four framework domains.

Outcomes from the workshop will inform a new set of guidelines for culturally safe dementia biomarker and genetic research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, that are currently being drafted in collaboration with the OnTRACK Community Reference Group. A warm thank you to all workshop participants. Your knowledge and expertise are invaluable in shaping a framework that ensures dementia research respects and reflects the values, needs, and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.





OnTRACK CRE Meeting

The OnTRACK CRE brings together a large network of researchers and students working in Indigenous dementia research nationally and internationally. With our members spread so far and wide, it's a rare occasion that the whole OnTRACK team manages to get together in the same room!

Last march we managed to do just that. CRE members from across Australia flew to Naarm/Melbourne to participate in a day-long meeting. Investigators from each theme gave updates and discussed planned research projects. This was also a chance for members from different themes to bring critical questions to the wider group for discussion, to share and learn from each other and to offer opportunities

for mentorship and growth to fellow researchers. The learnings from this meeting were invaluable to developing a CREwide plan for future research, and most importantly, strategies for translating our cumulative research into policy and practice.

Many thanks to everyone who took the time to travel down to Naarm/Melbourne. We hope to see everyone all together again soon!



Out Proud 'n' Blak Yarn Up

The OnTRACK CRE also supports research projects that extend beyond the scope of its three major themes. Out Proud 'n' Blak is an exploratory qualitative research project which addresses the need for research on Aboriginal Rainbow Elders' experiences of discrimination, ageism and racism when accessing Australian health care services. The project was led by **OnTRACK Aboriginal Research Officer Harold Douglas**, a proud Gonnai Rainbow Elder, and informed

by his own personal journey with the health care system.

Out Proud 'n' Blak aims to give voice to Aboriginal Rainbow Elders' experiences of discrimination, ageism and racism experienced in healthcare practices and to consult with Aboriginal Rainbow Elders on how healthcare services can be more inclusive and safer for their community. Participants' personal stories and journeys with the Australian health system have been used to inform the development of

recommendations to improve health care experiences for Aboriginal Rainbow Elders.

In August, Out Proud 'n' Blak held a Yarn Up with participating Elders, to give a project update, and receive feedback on the developed health care recommendations. A big thank you to the Elders who attended, and to the Aboriginal Rainbow community more widely, who have actively contributed to this study as co-researchers. Thank you for sharing your stories with us.





Out Proud 'n' Blak Yarn Up cont.

Image:
Yarn Up with Out Proud 'n' Blak Elders





Introducing the OnTRACK Community Reference Group (CRG)

The OnTRACK Community Reference Group (CRG) is made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and experienced researchers and ensures the values and practices of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their families and communities are upheld in the CRE. The CRG provides essential cultural guidance to all phases of our research. Over the next few issues, we will be introducing you to all of our CRG members!



Aunty Diane Cadet-James

Diane Cadet-James is a member of the Gugu Badhun nation of the Valley of Lagoons in North Queensland. Her lived experience as an Aboriginal person in conjunction with qualifications and experience working in the Indigenous sector informs her approach to working to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Diane has a background in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, supporting students to reach their full potential and families to navigate the system. Her other interests lie in research, working with groups and communities to ensure appropriate research protocols are in place and assisting researchers to engage respectfully and ethically with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the research process. Currently she is part of the Healthy Ageing Research Team undertaking a project to better understand what healthy ageing means for Torres Strait Islanders.





Aunty Gail Daylight



Gail Daylight is a proud and strong Kamilaroi woman. She started working at the Aboriginal Medical Service in Redfern in 1978 as a receptionist and worked her way up to Dental Coordinator. Since, she has had senior roles in the public sector, local government, the Department of Education and Training and NSW Health.

Gail was elected by the Sydney Aboriginal Community as an Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Commission Councillor and in 2012 she was inducted into the NSW Aboriginal Health Hall of Fame at the NSW Aboriginal Health Awards. This award was presented to her by the Minister and was in recognition for over 30 years of service to Aboriginal Health.

Gail has a passion for Aboriginal affairs and helping others. Since retiring in 2015, Gail has been involved with the Jimmy Little Foundation, NeuRA (Neuroscience Research Australia), Stepping Stones House and the Aboriginal Medical Service, Redfern. Gail enjoys reading, quilting and spending time with her grandson, Isaiah.



Researcher Spotlight: Teresa Leon



A warm welcome to Teresa Leon, who joined OnTRACK in June, working with Dr Jo Hughson and other OnTRACK team members in Theme 3, Dementia Literacy and Health Communication.

Together with Jo, she is currently working on a literature review and helping to coordinate community yarning circles around Australia. These yarns will inform new dementia communication guidelines that place Indigenous knowledge and ways of learning at their core. Her research interests are deeply connected to dementia prevention in First Nations communities, with a strong focus on health literacy and equitable access to culturally safe supports.

As a current 2025 Atlantic Fellow for Social Equity, Teresa is completing a Master of Social Change Leadership while co-designing her project Nguluman Woman: Strong Mind, Strong Spirit. Proposed as a pilot on Darumbal Country in Rockhampton,

Nguluman aims to support dementia prevention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in their 40s and 50s. The program draws on protective factors such as intergenerational learning, cultural medicines, mindfulness and self-regulation practices, and opportunities to strengthen community connections as a way of addressing loneliness and protecting brain health. The vision is for Nguluman to grow into a model that other community-controlled health services across Australia can adapt for their own contexts.

Teresa came to research later in life, after spending most of her career working with community at a grassroots level. She is a Worimi woman from beautiful saltwater Country and now lives on Gubbi Gubbi Country on

the Sunshine Coast with her partner and their fur babies. Her journey has been anything but ordinary - she has worked as a surf lifesaver, graphic designer and train driver before moving into public health, community engagement and education. Alongside her role with OnTRACK, Teresa also works with Queensland Health on the Let's End Rheumatic Heart Disease Together program, and with OneBridge to strengthen cultural awareness and support for frontline health staff working with vulnerable populations. Teresa looks forward to bringing her creativity and community experience to OnTRACK!

Left Image:
In Woorabinda community co-designing localised rheumatic heart disease (RHD) resources

Right Image:
Atlantic Fellowship for Social Equity, University of Melbourne: Teresa, Aunty Jackie Huggins, Uncle Daryle Rigney and Fijian Fellow, Kalesi Volatabu





Conference and Travel Grant Recipient: Lauren Poulos

The OnTRACK Conference and Travel Grant support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, researchers and/or clinicians to participate in the International Indigenous Dementia Research Network (IIDRN) Conference, held annually in Hawai'i, to gain leadership skills, network with other researchers and clinicians, share knowledge, inspire and learn from others, and see new places.


Congratulations to Lauren Poulos, recipient of the OnTRACK Conference and Travel Grant for 2025.

Lauren is a Biripi Aboriginal Project Coordinator within the Aboriginal Health and Ageing Program at Neuroscience Research Australia (NeuRA) in New South Wales. At NeuRA, Lauren has coordinated the Caring for Spirit project and NeuRA's role in the Let's CHAT Dementia project. She is also an investigator in the Warming the Ground initiative, a co-designed

project with Indigenous communities, which focused on strengths-based, culturally appropriate protective factors to reduce dementia risk. Lauren is deeply committed to the mission of the OnTRACK CRE for the delivery of evidence-based, community-informed and culturally safe care to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

From creating culturally safe and respectful online evidence-informed resources

for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to engaging with Elders and integrating feedback, Lauren has been instrumental in NeuRA's initiatives and projects. With the support of OnTRACK and NeuRA, Lauren will travel to the IIDRN Conference this year to present findings from her project 'Weaving threads of intention - the creative force of cultural story telling'.

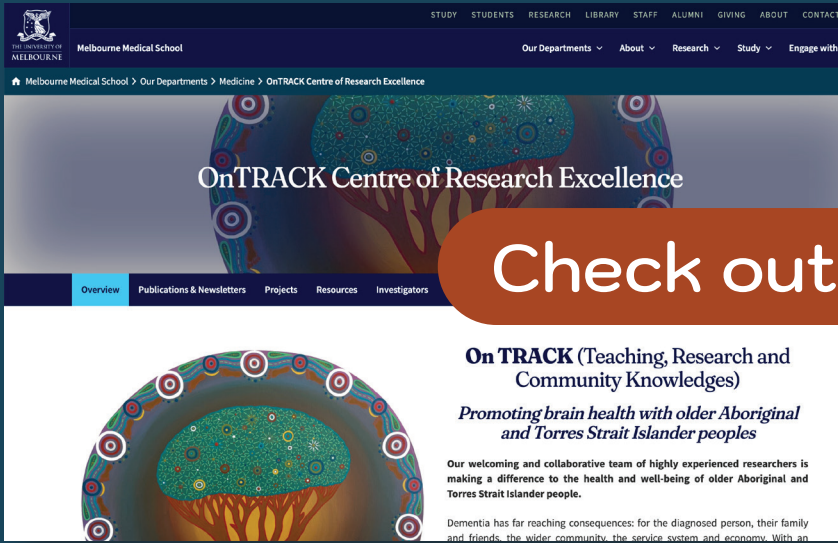


Upcoming Events

Our OnTRACK team members and researchers are excited to be attending and presenting at a number of conferences over the coming months. Check out upcoming conferences below!

<p>National Allied Health Conference</p>	<p>The National Allied Health Conference provides an opportunity for allied health professionals across Australia to showcase their work, engage in networking, critical thought and discussion to encourage innovation in clinical practice, research and service delivery. This year's conference will explore the theme "Empowering Lives, Shaping Healthcare".</p> <p>https://nahc.com.au</p>	<p>11th - 14th of August 2025, Adelaide, Australia</p>
<p>Advance Care Planning (ACP) Conference</p>	<p>ACP-i 2025 provides a space for sharing ideas and making connections. This year's theme "Are we there yet?" aims to embrace ACP journeys towards person and family-centred care, interweaving advance care planning best practices and research through cultural, personal, organisational and societal lenses. Providing grassroots perspectives from consumers and health professionals, this year's conference will share stories and diverse lived experiences, exploring approaches to advance care planning in a culturally safe and inclusive environment, with attention to Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and global First Nations communities.</p> <p>https://www.acp-i2025.org</p>	<p>24th - 26th of September, Gold Coast, Australia</p>
<p>International Indigenous Dementia Research (IIDRN) Conference</p>	<p>Bringing together leading scientists, policy makers, Indigenous Elders, Indigenous communities and organisations, people living with dementia and trainees, the IIDRN aims to advance research in the area of Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD) in Indigenous populations worldwide. Other aims include supporting collaboration, career development, and relationship building to grow the scientific community to address the increasing dementia disparities in Indigenous populations.</p> <p>https://www.iidrn.org/conference</p>	<p>20th-23rd of October 2025, Honolulu, Hawai'i</p>
<p>Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG) Conference</p>	<p>The AAG Conference provides attendees with the opportunity to network and learn from the expertise and experience of other professionals working in gerontology. This year's theme "Ageing at the Centre" invites attendees to view ageing at the centre of our communities, our practice, our policies, our environment and our lives. It aims to explore fresh ideas and work differently to improve the experience of ageing through connecting research, policy and practice.</p> <p>https://www.aagconference.asn.au</p>	<p>11th-14th of November 2025, Alice Springs, Australia</p>





Check out our Website

The OnTRACK website is live and running!

<https://medicine.unimelb.edu.au/ontrack>

Scan the QR code for more information about our research, projects, team, and resources.

Instructions for scanning the QR Code

1. Open your phone camera
2. To scan, steadily point your camera at the QR code
3. Wait until a link or notification appears on your screen
4. Tap the link to open, this will then bring you to our OnTRACK homepage website



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