

# Meet the Speakers & Panellists

Discover the inspiring experts presenting at this year's AFN Summit. Each speaker brings unique insights, research, and experience to advance the conversation on ageing, frailty, and care.



## Professor Simon Bell



Professor Simon Bell is the Director of the Centre for Medicine Use and Safety at Monash University. He is also Adjunct Professor of Geriatric Pharmacotherapy at the University of Eastern Finland. Prior to his current role, he was Associate Professor at the Sansom Institute, University of South Australia, and Research Director at the Kuopio Research Centre of Geriatric Care.

Professor Bell's research focuses on the use of psychotropic and analgesic medications among older adults. He has published over 375 journal articles and secured more than \$55 million in research funding. He was a chief investigator for the NHMRC Cognitive Decline Partnership Centre and NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Frailty and Healthy Ageing. He was Chair of Australia's Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Appropriate Use of Psychotropic Medications in People Living with Dementia and in Residential Aged Care (2023), and is Co-Chair of the new Australian Dementia Guidelines (2026).

Professor Bell serves as Associate Editor for the Journal of Pharmacy Practice and Research and Editorial Board Member for Therapeutic Advances in Drug Safety. He has supervised 17 PhD students to completion internationally and received multiple awards, including the 2023 PSA Victorian Pharmacist of the Year and 2022 JAMDA Morley Award



## Dr Kenji Fujita



Dr Kenji Fujita is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Kolling Institute Ageing and Pharmacology Laboratory, specializing in clinical pharmacology, epidemiology, and big data analytics. With a Doctor of Pharmacy from the University of Sydney, he leads projects to improve medication management for older adults. He co-leads the guidelines and indicators working group at Pharmaceutical Care Network Europe (PCNE) and holds leadership roles in J-HOP and FIP.

His research focuses on frailty assessment, deprescribing, and quality care monitoring. He developed a multidomain frailty index using routinely collected data for older inpatients in NSW, demonstrating high predictive ability for adverse outcomes. His preclinical work uses computational tools to study how medications affect gait, posture, and frailty in aging mice.

Dr Fujita has co-supervised four researchers (two PhD students and two advanced trainees), with three completing their programs. His mentoring has led to peer-reviewed publications and innovations, including a Natural Language Processing model to extract deprescribing recommendations at scale



## Associate Professor Jai Darvall



Associate Professor Jai Darvall is an anaesthetist and intensive care specialist at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. He holds dual appointments at the University of Melbourne as an Associate Professor in the Department of Medical Education, and as an honorary senior fellow in the Department of Critical Care. He is a recognised research leader in frailty within perioperative and critical care, and is heading a research program focused on automated frailty indices in these populations.

A/Prof Darvall's research focuses on frailty in ICU and surgical patients, risk stratification, and improving health outcomes for these vulnerable cohorts. His PhD provided novel insights particularly into the impact of frailty in Intensive Care Units in Australia and New Zealand. He has obtained > \$3mil grant funding as a Chief Investigator, and is currently a Chief Investigator of two Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists' Clinical Trials Network-endorsed multi-centre international trials- the Chewy Trial and SnaPP Trial- in which he leads a frailty substudy investigating the impact of neuromuscular blockade reversal on postoperative pulmonary complications.

In addition to his PhD, A/Prof Darvall holds a Masters in Epidemiology and has received an Emerging Researcher Scholarship from the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists. He currently supervises four PhD students in research projects relating to frailty and perioperative medicine.



## Dr Frederick Graham



Dr Fred Graham (BNurs, PhD) is a Clinical Nurse Consultant and Senior Lecturer and Early Career Research Fellow at the Centre for Health Services Research at the University of Queensland. He is clinical lead of the Dementia and Delirium Nursing Service at Princess Alexandra Hospital, where he has spent over 15 years providing clinical expertise in the care of people with dementia and delirium.

Dr Graham's research focuses on improving care for patients with cognitive impairment through the development of person-centred care models, innovative experiential learning, and environmental design. His PhD research, awarded QUT's Outstanding Doctoral Thesis Award in 2021, explored how hospital nurses recognize pain in cognitively impaired, agitated patients. His work on management of behaviours and psychological symptoms in dementia has been published in top nursing and gerontology journals.

Dr Graham's has received several fellowships and research grants, including the Queensland Health Early Career Nursing Fellowship and the Metro South Health Future Research Leader Fellowship. He is a mentor to emerging researchers and supervises post graduate research candidates at several universities. Fred's impactful work in dementia and delirium care continues to shape both clinical practice, and the future of nursing research.





## Professor Claire Johnson



Professor Claire Johnson has more than 25 years of experience in the health services sector, with a focus on nursing, health services research, and improving end-of-life care. She has worked as a nurse clinician, academic, and researcher, leading efforts to improve the quality and safety of care for people with life-limiting illnesses.

Professor Johnson has helped reshape palliative and end-of-life care policy and practice both in Australia and internationally through her research has focused on improving care outcomes for patients, families, and carers, and she has promotion of shared decision-making in end-of-life care and evaluation of end-of-life care in residential aged care settings.

Formerly the Vivian Bullwinkel Chair of Palliative Care Nursing at Monash University, Professor Johnson is now the Director of the Palliative Aged Care Outcomes Program (PACOP), a national program aimed at improving palliative care in residential aged care.



## Professor Sue Kurrle



Professor Sue Kurrle AO is a leading geriatrician with active clinical roles at Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Hospital in northern Sydney and Batemans Bay Hospital in southern New South Wales. She is the Clinical Network Director for Rehabilitation and Aged Care within the Northern Sydney Local Health District and holds the Curran Chair in Health Care of Older People at the University of Sydney's Faculty of Medicine and Health. She is President Elect of the Australian and New Zealand Society for Geriatric Medicine.

Professor Kurrle's work focuses on dementia, frailty, elder abuse, falls prevention, and intergenerational care programs. She has a strong commitment to improving the care of older adults, particularly those in residential care settings. Her research explores innovative approaches such as intergenerational programs and the involvement of volunteers in managing behaviours and psychological symptoms of dementia. She is dedicated to translating research into clinical practice, ensuring findings lead to tangible improvements in aged care.

Professor Kurrle's expertise and contributions to geriatric medicine have positioned her as a leader in both research and clinical care. Her work has had a profound impact on improving outcomes for older adults, making her a respected figure in the fields of gerontology and aged care.



## Dr Chuan-Whei Lee



Dr Chuan-Whei Lee is a consultant anaesthetist and pain medicine specialist at Royal Melbourne Hospital. She is a staff specialist and joint clinical lead of perioperative medicine in the Department of Anaesthesia and Pain Management, RMH. Dr Lee is also a clinical senior lecturer in the Department of Critical Care at the University of Melbourne and a supervisor of training for the Faculty of Pain Medicine, ANZCA.

Dr Lee's clinical and research interests focus on pain management in older adults, surgery in patients at the end of life, and integrating palliative care concepts into the perioperative period. She was part of the document development group for the Australasian Intercollegiate Guidelines on Care of Patients at the End of Life Who Are Considered for Surgery (PG67 2022).

Dr Lee completed a Masters in Palliative Care in 2018 and continues to contribute to advancing pain management and perioperative care for vulnerable patient populations.



## Professor Yun-Hee Jeon



Professor Yun-Hee Jeon is a registered nurse, academic, and a leading researcher in psychogeriatrics and gerontology. She has a strong focus on improving the health and wellbeing of older people, particularly in dementia and aged care settings. As Professor of Healthy Ageing and Director of StepUp for Research at the University of Sydney, Yun-Hee leads initiatives in public and patient involvement in research, making significant strides in care models for older adults.

Yun-Hee specialises in person-centred care, reablement, and rehabilitation, with a focus on clinical leadership in long-term care. Her work aims to shift care models from impairment-focused to strength-based approaches. She pioneered the University of Sydney's Citizen Science node and StepUp for Dementia Research, improving public and healthcare consumer involvement in dementia, health, and care research.

In 2022, Yun-Hee was named one of the Healthy Ageing 50 leaders by the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing for her work in transforming long-term care. Her leadership continues to shape healthy ageing research and improve outcomes for older populations.



## Ms Megan Kreis



Megan Kreis is a Senior Director at Queensland Health, leading strategic initiatives within the Reform Office of the Strategy, Policy, and Reform Division. With extensive experience in healthcare leadership, Megan focuses on improving healthcare delivery through integrated, value-based care models and fostering partnerships across sectors.

Megan has been instrumental in developing statewide health reform programs aimed at enhancing access to care and promoting wellness. Her work is centred on delivering care closer to home, improving integration across services, and addressing the diverse needs of Queensland's population. Megan was the Project Director for the Year of the Frail Older Person in Metro North Health in 2017, which established a platform for improving care for frail older people in the health service.

Megan currently leads key reform programs at Queensland Health, focusing on creating a sustainable and resilient healthcare system. Her work contributes to shaping a future-ready health system that ensures high-quality, equitable care for all Queenslanders.



## Dr Ebony Lewis



Dr Ebony Lewis is an early-career researcher at UNSW. She has clinical experience in geriatric assessment and gerontology research, with a focus on improving end-of-life care experience for older adults, carers, and clinicians.

Dr Lewis's research focuses on frailty and its impact on older adults, and she leads several projects aimed at supporting ageing well and improving frailty management. Her work with Aboriginal communities provides critical insights into culturally appropriate perspectives on frailty and older adult care.

Dr Lewis's completed a PhD through the Faculty of Medicine at UNSW in 2024 and was awarded a UNSW Indigenous Scientia Fellowship. She is the convenor of the Aboriginal health and wellbeing specialisation at the School of Populations Health where she contributes to teaching and research in healthy ageing.





## Ms Kate Lloyd



Kate Lloyd is a health systems leader with 15+ years expertise in health care redesign. Starting her career in investment banking Kate retrained as a health economist. Driven by personal patient experiences, she joined NSW Health to drive change for a better system for all.

In her current role Kate leads a portfolio of clinical areas, including Aged Health and Frailty. As a statewide lead she is responsible for connecting researchers and clinicians to support scale and spread of individual research programs.

Kate was instrumental in the establishment of the time-limited NSW Frailty Taskforce which developed resources for clinicians caring for people living with frailty. These include clinician resources for [screening and assessment](#), [progressive resistance training](#), [medication reviews](#), a consumer resource for [healthy eating to stay strong and independent](#) and shared decision-making resource for [older people living with frailty considering surgery](#).



## Professor Kenneth Rockwood



Professor Kenneth Rockwood is a world-renowned geriatrician and researcher, widely recognized for his pioneering work in frailty, dementia, and ageing. With over 600 peer-reviewed publications, he has significantly advanced the understanding of frailty, risk management, and improving patient outcomes in healthcare. His innovative approaches have shaped clinical practices and policies worldwide.

Professor Rockwood developed the Frailty Index, a groundbreaking tool for assessing biological ageing and predicting health outcomes. His research has influenced global guidelines on frailty care, integrating personalized approaches into geriatrics. He has led major international collaborations focused on frailty assessment, dementia care, and multimorbidity management.

A Professor of Geriatric Medicine at Dalhousie University, Professor Rockwood has mentored numerous researchers and clinicians, shaping the next generation of geriatric specialists. His work has earned prestigious awards and recognition, reflecting his lasting impact on ageing research and healthcare innovation.



## Mr Nick Seamann



Mr Nick Seamann is an architect and area specialist in aged care environments. His work bridges practice, training and strategic consulting roles. As the Environments Specialist at Dementia Training Australia, he leads national initiatives to develop and implement workforce training to help create more supportive environments in aged care homes.

As Managing Director of Constructive Dialogue Architects, Mr Seamann oversees a firm that focuses on aged care, remote Aboriginal health, and social services. His work includes new building developments, renovations, and strategic review of care home infrastructure. He is also a lead author of the National Aged Care Design Principles and Guidelines for the Department of Health and Aged Care.

Mr Seamann is committed to improving the built environment in aged care and health services, working on projects that enhance care outcomes and workforce capabilities.



## Professor Brendan McCormack



Professor Brendan McCormack is the Head of School and Dean of The Susan Wakil School of Nursing and Midwifery in the Faculty of Medicine and Health, at the University of Sydney. He also holds honorary positions and professorial roles at multiple universities worldwide.

Professor McCormack's research focuses on person-centred practice, with 33 years of experience developing models, theories, and frameworks adopted globally. His work, particularly in gerontological nursing, has been implemented in clinical settings and healthcare curricula across 28 countries.

He has published >700 published outputs, including 14 books, and 310 peer-reviewed papers. Professor McCormack is a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing, European Academy of Nursing Science, Royal College of Nursing (UK), and Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. He was awarded the Sigma Theta Tau International 'International Nurse Researcher Hall of Fame' in 2014 and listed among the 3000 most influential researchers globally by Thomson Reuters.



## Dr Thilo Schuler



Dr Thilo Schuler a practicing medical doctor with 10 years' experience in Radiation Oncology and a long track record of successfully implementing digital health projects that drive innovation in clinical research and practice. He works at Royal North Shore Hospital (RNSH) in Sydney and his passion to improve cancer care with digital health has led him to pursue a PhD in clinical informatics at the Australian Institute of Health Innovation.

Dr Schuler's research evolves around the translation of patient-generated data into routine oncology care workflows to optimally support cancer patients and their families.

Feature projects are:

1. Department-wide electronic patient-reported outcome (ePRO) survey roll out with >20k ePROs collected since 2019 including as part of 3 in-house randomised trials.
2. Using ePROs to collect real-world evidence about simulation-free radiotherapy a novel paradigm pioneered at RNSH.
3. Innovative wearable sensor (WS) research including collection of baseline WS signals from over 700 routine care patients

Besides his medical degree Dr. Schuler holds a Master's in health informatics and is completing a PhD in clinical informatics. Recently he led a successful application to secure 200k funding to implement ePRO-based frailty screening (<https://thiloschuler.me/>).



## Professor Cathie Sherrington



Professor Cathie Sherrington FAHMS, FACP, PhD, MPH, BAppSc (Physio) is a Professor at the Sydney School of Public Health, The University of Sydney. She leads the Physical Activity, Ageing and Disability Research Stream, comprising 36 researchers, within the Institute for Musculoskeletal Health, a partnership between the University of Sydney and Sydney Local Health District. Professor Sherrington is also the Deputy Director of the Institute.

Professor Sherrington's research focuses on promoting physical activity and preventing falls in older adults and people with chronic disabling conditions. She has authored over 370 refereed journal articles, including reports of 47 clinical trials, 18 of which were funded by NHMRC, and 26 systematic reviews. Her contributions have made a significant impact in the fields of falls prevention and mobility.

Professor Sherrington is ranked #3 worldwide by Scopus in the area of "independent living/falls" and by Expertscape for "accident falls." She is a Fellow of both the Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences and the Australian College of Physiotherapists.







## Professor Velandai Srikanth



Professor Velandai Srikanth is a Specialist Geriatrician and Professor of Medicine at Peninsula Health/Monash University, Melbourne, and the Director of the National Centre for Healthy Ageing (ncha.org.au).

His personal research is focused on dementia, gait and cognition, and the intersection of brain ageing, cerebrovascular and metabolic health and cognitive decline. He has actively collaborated with others in the study of frailty. He leads the development of new ways to detect clinical concepts relevant to Geriatric Medicine (dementia, delirium, frailty) using structured and unstructured data from electronic health records. He is co-chair for the current Review and Update of the 2016 Clinical Practice Guidelines and Principles of Care for People with Dementia.



## Professor Renuka Visvanathan



Professor Renuka Visvanathan is an internationally recognised expert in Healthy Ageing and Frailty, specialising in improving the health and quality of life of frail older adults and individuals with dementia. In 2022, she was recognised as one of the HealthyAgeing50, leaders transforming the world to be a better place to grow older, as part of a UN Decade of Healthy Ageing initiative. She was previously a board member for Resthaven Inc. for almost a decade. She is currently the head of department for the Aged and Extended Care Services at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Central Adelaide Local Health Network.

Professor Visvanathan has led several key initiatives, including the NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Frailty and Healthy Ageing (2015-2022), which focused on improving clinical care for older individuals and she was a chief investigator to the project that initiated the Registry of Senior Australians.

Professor Visvanathan holds numerous qualifications, including a PhD, and has contributed extensively to academic and professional bodies. She serves as Associate Editor for the Journal of Frailty and Ageing. She is a current member of the World Health Organisation's Clinical Consortium of Healthy Ageing and Global Long Term Care Network.



## Dr Ida Tornvall



Dr Ida Tornvall is a Research Manager at The University of Queensland's Centre for Health Services Research (UQCHSR). Her background is in Public Health and Media & Communication, and she completed her PhD at UQCHSR in 2024. Her thesis investigated the feasibility of an mHealth-supported model of care for people with complex type 2 diabetes in regional, rural, and remote Queensland.

Dr Tornvall currently leads an NHMRC-funded Partnership Project that aims to develop and integrate a digital frailty index into hospital systems to enable frailty-informed decision-making for treatments and care options.



## Professor Elizabeth Whiting



Professor Elizabeth Whiting is a geriatrician and general physician at The Prince Charles Hospital (TPCH). After completing her medical training at Trinity College Dublin, she moved to Australia, where she finished her physician training in Brisbane. She served as Director of Internal Medicine at TPCH and Executive Director of Clinical Services at Metro North Hospital and Health Service.

Professor Whiting is dedicated to medical education and has chaired several key committees, including the Advanced Training Committee for Geriatric Medicine and the Adult Medicine Clinical Examination Committee of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians. She also chaired the Geriatric Medicine Education and Training Committee of the Australian and New Zealand Society for Geriatric Medicine. She led the Queensland Health Frail Older Person Collaborative, which introduced statewide models of care for older people in emergency departments, inpatient wards, and Residential Aged Care Facilities.

Professor Whiting has made significant contributions to the development of geriatric medicine in Australia, including the design and implementation of educational frameworks for geriatric trainees. She has also published in the field, contributing to evidence-based practices that enhance the quality of care for older patients across various healthcare settings.



# Meet the CRE Seed Grant Recipients

Meet the CRE Seed Grant Recipients from 2024 and 2025, recognised for their research excellence and contributions to advancing clinical practice



**Ms Katie Arnott**



Katie Arnott, Senior Occupational Therapist at Princess Alexandra Hospital, brings a wealth of experience in developing patient-centered health solutions. Her leadership in co-designing allied health clinical pathways is particularly impactful for frail vascular surgical patients, where her expertise drives improvements in patient care.

Katie's groundbreaking research addresses the critical need to adapt health pathways in response to workforce challenges, aging populations, and recent global events. By partnering with patients, clinicians and other stakeholders, Katie will develop a rich understanding of patient journeys and experiences of frailty in the vascular surgical population. This will enable the development of innovative and acceptable approaches to improving allied health pathways and outcomes after vascular surgery.

This project represents the first step in a long-term research program dedicated to advancing perioperative allied health assessment and intervention. Katie's work in this field is paving the way for evidence-based changes in clinical pathways that could significantly enhance the quality of care for frail vascular surgery patients, contributing valuable insights to both clinical practice and academic knowledge.



**Dr Nicola Straiton**



Dr Nicola Straiton is a Senior Research Fellow at the Nursing Research Institute, with expertise in cardiovascular disease, implementation science, and digital health. She leads collaborative research to enhance the translation of evidence into practice and build research capacity for clinician researchers.

Nicola's research focuses on improving outcomes for people with heart disease and frailty and exploring ways to translate evidence into practice more effectively and efficiently. She completed her Doctor of Philosophy (Nursing) at The University of Sydney in 2023. She is currently leading a national clinical trial across 10 Australian hospitals to implement and evaluate an evidence-based Frailty Response Program, supporting frail adults with heart valve disease undergoing elective surgery.

Nicola co-leads the Maridulu Budyari Gumal (SPHERE) nursing and midwifery implementation science academy early mid-career researcher group. This initiative aims to increase the number of funded collaborative research projects led by nurses and midwives. Her work contributes to the growing body of knowledge on translating evidence into practice and advancing patient care in the cardiovascular field.



**Dr David Carroll**



Dr David Carroll, Geriatric Medicine Registrar at NT Health, is at the forefront of improving care for frail patients through innovative solutions in resource-limited settings. His leadership in implementing Front Door Frailty Services (FDF) demonstrates a commitment to delivering high-quality, timely care in an environment with unique challenges.

David's research focuses on how FDF services can improve patient outcomes in regions with limited resources. As the Northern Territory (NT) faces an aging population and a shortage of community services, David's project is addressing a critical gap by introducing comprehensive geriatric assessments at emergency department admissions, with integrated support from medical, nursing, and allied health teams.

This pioneering project seeks to demonstrate that Front Door Frailty Services can reduce unnecessary hospital admissions and complications, enhancing care for frail individuals in NT. David's work contributes to the growing body of knowledge on how geriatric interventions can be effectively applied in settings with limited resources, driving both clinical and academic advancements.



**Ms Melinda Williamson**



Melinda Williamson is an ED occupational therapist with over 15 years of experience, across Australia and London. She is current a PhD candidate investigating the health and system outcome of an early allied health frailty service for older adults attending the ED.

Mel has a passion for acute care of older adults attending the ED. Her research and publications have focused on the care of older adults in the emergency department, exploring adherence to falls guideline care, frailty identification and management and patient activation. Whilst working in London, Mel worked with NHS England & NHS Improvement to establish an online frailty education program for health and social care staff and carers.

In 2022, Mel's PhD was chosen as one of the first Western Australian government awarded clinician researcher training scholarships. Her work to date has resulted in grant funding, research poster presentations and publications in peer reviewed journals.

