42.2 Conceptualising Intergenerational Lived Experience: Integrating Art–Moving–Well-Being across Disciplines, Communities and Cultures

Megan Adams, Geraldine Burke, Nikki Browne, Karan Kent, Kylie Colemans, Laura Alfrey, Aislinn Lalor and Keith Hill

Abstract

Art and movement are motivating forces in, through, and beyond education. As populations age, there is an increasing need to support physical and social well-being. Yet, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a reported exponential increase in feelings of loneliness across generations. Complex challenges require trans-disciplinary solutions, and this paper represents a joint effort within and across disciplines, communities and cultures to find ways to ameliorate this silent epidemic. In this paper, we propose a cross-disciplinary conceptual framework where Aboriginal Artists and Knowledge Holders, Teacher Educators, and Physical and Occupational Therapists come together to explore theoretical and pedagogical insights that encompass intergenerational art–moving–well-being practices, reducing feelings of loneliness and improving social connections across generations. There are two main aims of this paper; first, to better understand current studies that report on integrating art–moving–well-being practices, and the effect this has on health and well-being of intergenerational participants (under 10-year-olds, 20+ year olds

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and 50+ year olds). Second, based on community needs, the long-term aim is to propose a flexible art-moving-well-being conceptual model that is scalable, sustainable and based on social and relational support systems. We propose a model that is flexible and adaptable within and across our local community and beyond. We argue that feelings of loneliness are unique to each individual, and there is a need to connect specific intergenerational programmes with art-moving-well-being practices that readily engage and integrate varied communities and cultures in sustainable ways and thus, contribute to thriving communities.

**Keywords**

art-moving-well-being, Indigenous Knowledge Holders, intergenerational learning, social connections, salutogenesis, Indigenous Artists

**Introduction**

Despite limited government funding for arts-based projects, our long-term goal is to transform, sustain and proclaim the positive intergenerational community benefits of art-moving-well-being practices. In this paper, we conceptualise putting into practice the recently released National Cultural policy (Australian Government 2023) covering the next 5 years (2023–2028) where the focus is on ‘ensuring a place for every story and a story for every place’ (p. 1). Through our intergenerational art-moving-well-being project, we ask: How can we celebrate and story our everyday lives by exploring art and movement across cultures, generations, disciplines and institutions? In the process, we aim to form and sustain community collaborations that enhance social connections and the well-being of all who are involved with the project. In this conceptual paper, we share our in-process thinking as we begin to collaboratively design the project with our research team and partners.

The benefits of using art to promote well-being is becoming increasingly acknowledged (Sonke 2017), especially for those who are lonely and/or have limited social connections and/or mobility. A growing body of research suggests sustained engagement with the arts across generations can enhance feelings of well-being. This is reflected, for example, by the Australian VicHealth ‘Arts Strategy: 2019–2023’ which suggests that ‘(p)articipating in the arts has multiple benefits for health and wellbeing: it reduces social isolation, strengthens community connection and builds self-esteem, as people pursue creative activity alone or in groups’ (2019, 1). We are influenced by the VicHealth strategy which suggests that young peoples’ arts participation is associated with ‘strong social and emotional skills, including better peer interaction and self-confidence’, and that for older people ‘positive cognitive, mood and quality of life outcomes’ are associated with participation in the arts (p. 2).

Our project takes art-moving-well-being as an informing principle, with the concept of movement vital to the project’s conceptualisation. Not only do we hope to shift our thinking through project interactions, but we also aim to move our learning through embodied approaches. We work from the notion that visual art-making is an embodied form of being in the world that often incorporates gentle physical movement. From this position, we envisage that our art-movement...
practices will unfold from hand drawing, printmaking and eco-dyeing, to walking with the land, and with each other, as we harvest seasonal plants and embark on creative practices. In this way, we connect with the land through whole body movement inspired by Indigenous knowledges that draw on Wayapa Wuurrk (work) understandings, of movement that enable ‘an earth connection practice that is based on ancient Indigenous wisdom that focuses on taking care of the Earth as the starting point for creating’ (Wayapa Wuurrk 2021, n.p.). Alongside Wayapa Wuurrk, we aim to connect with contemporary knowledge of movement through Western medical science (through Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy) to explore art–moving–well-being practices as a means to build social connections across generations.

In this article, we begin by developing an understanding of loneliness and sharing studies that have led to enhanced feelings of social connection through a focus on art, movement and intergenerational collaboration. We then present a conceptual framework for ‘art–moving–well-being’ practices, integrating theoretical and pedagogical influences that provide founding ideas. This is brought together by a visual model presented in the conclusion.

**Setting the Context for Strength-Based Art–Moving–Well-Being Practices**

Our focus is strength based, in that we deliberately forge intergenerational connections across disciplines and varied community groups through art–moving–well-being practices. We recognise loneliness and lack of social connection can limit a sense of well-being. Worldwide, these feelings have become more prevalent since the COVID-19 lockdowns of 2020–2022 (see for e.g., Gabarrell-Pascuet et al. 2023; Naemiratch et al. 2022). The OECD has put forward a definition of loneliness as a ‘subjective emotional state, characterised by a longing for human contact’ (2021, 2). More generally, loneliness is a perceived difference between the actual and the desired level of socialising (Gerst-Emerson & Jayawardhana 2015), which affects people in various ways, and can last for short or long periods of time. Studies have indicated the effects of loneliness result in significant public health concerns among both elders (Gerst-Emerson & Jayawardhana 2015) and our youth (Eccles & Qualter 2021). Chronic loneliness, for example, has been linked to various health and well-being concerns such as reduced general health, including depression and anxiety, a higher risk of mortality, and reduced academic performance (OECD 2021). Similarly, in Australia, loneliness associated with poor health has been estimated to cost up to $2.7 billion yearly (Duncan et al. 2021). This is a significant economic cost for society, which when combined with the personal and social consequences of loneliness, makes a compelling case for policymakers to take notice.

Research suggests that working intergenerationally can have a range of benefits, not least the challenging of stereotypes (Alfrey et al. 2020; Robinson & Howatson-Jones 2014). In reviewing children’s views of older people, Robinson & Howatson-Jones (2014) make the point that familiarity is an important factor in children developing positive attitudes towards adults. Intergenerational activities where children and adults become familiar with each other through shared activities contribute to children seeing ‘... older people as empathetic, knowledgeable and skilled’ (Robinson & Howatson-Jones 2014, 306). Furthermore, scholarship in
this area suggests that intergenerational, community and art-based approaches to learning about health, well-being and movement can allow for rich inquiry (O’Connor et al. 2019).

There are benefits and positive changes in a person’s life when their well-being improves, including changes in physical and mental health, and social relations, alongside work and academic performance (Kansky & Diener 2017). A recent scoping review, while not specifically focused on movement, recognises the benefits of not only receptive, but also active engagement in art, particularly within health and nursing areas for older adults (Vaartio-Rajalin et al. 2021). While Vaartio-Rajalin et al. (2021) highlight the various aspects of active art, including the development of new skills, enabling meaningful engagement and participation, to enhance and support collaboration between individuals. Another review, that focuses on movements underlying the acquisition of skills in performing arts, exercise and sports, further highlights the importance of naturalistic approaches to movement with associated benefits to cognition, physical and mental health, as well as social connectedness (Tomporowski & Pesce 2019).

It seems that programmes aiming to improve well-being are varied, some propose passive interventions in the surrounding environment such as positioning participants towards windows that focus on views of gardens or plants, improving surrounding natural light, introducing soothing music or situating artworks in hospital rooms (Iyendo & Alibaba 2014). Other studies include a wider scope, such as reviewing the benefits of community radio programmes. Order (2017), for example, outlines the potential benefits on well-being that community radio programmes may foster by connecting diverse communities within society that are less visible in the mainstream media through volunteering, participation and ways to socialise. As we start our literature review, we note a gap in connecting art–moving–well-being within intergenerational projects. There are limited studies (notable exception Burke et al. 2021) that provide a joint understanding within and across disciplines, communities and cultures that locate ways to lessen loneliness and increase social connections.

What Can Art Offer our Intergenerational Project?

Art–well-being practices across age groups are gaining in popularity and are understood as ‘art-making and intergenerational learning that strengthens community and enhances health and well-being across school and community based educational contexts’ (Burke et al. 2021, 1). In their study, Burke et al. (2021) demonstrated how intergenerational, art-based-movement pedagogies can reduce stereotypes and promote intergenerational connections, thus reducing feelings of loneliness and improving feelings of social connectedness. This current conceptual paper further extends the theoretical grounding of pedagogy previously explored through art–well-being practices.

Our project renders (LeBlanc & Irwin 2019) together the concepts of intergenerational art–moving–well-being through an a/r/tographic perspective. As such, we explore the metaphorical and living inquiries that the concept art–moving–well-being suggest. This opens up new meanings and possibilities for our interdisciplinary research. Each practice within the term art–moving–well-being is explained as a contiguous concept (at the same time both separate and connected) (Irwin & De
Cosson 2004). As this is a conceptual paper, we understand that these terms will shift and grow as we explore the project empirically.

- Art is understood as a form of cultural, ecological and socially engaged practice (Springgay et al. 2008; TATE n.d.) that brings participants together through the process, product and event of being and creating with each other and the land. As the art and movement practices are led by Aboriginal artists, we are guided by Kennedy et al. (2016) which aims to facilitate accurate and respectful representation of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in art, design and associated media. Our project aims to engage with Indigenous art practice to foster open-thinking, deep listening and respectful exchange. Indigenous artists are integral to this project and will be involved with conceptualising, putting into practice and leading the proposed art-based activities, alongside guiding the reflective process. The Indigenous artists will guide, and share content, knowledge and understandings that emerge from the project. We also call on the interconnected pillars of the Australian Government’s National Cultural Policy (2023) Revive: A place for every story, A story for every place to recognise and respect the foundational centrality of Indigenous knowledge in Australian arts, culture and arts education. We aim to acknowledge the importance of nurturing and celebrating artists as workers and talented creators as well as the importance of Indigenous artists actively guiding the creation, communication and sharing of content and emerging knowledge. Furthermore, our project supports the uniqueness, diversity and capacity of all project participants to work together as art makers contributing to creating, protecting and communicating culture. With this goes our intention to generate the opportunity to create new artwork, support and inspire emerging artists (across all age groups), and learn how to protect and conserve cultural heritage. Our project also aims to build relational practice through art. Using our everyday experiences to determine creative moments and to share our stories, we are taking the world on the move (Bourriard 1998). At the same time, we look to notions of art-care practices (Bickel & Fisher 2023) where art brings people together in ways that enable them to gift their learning with each other as an act of care. As such, the project artists and research team embrace art as both a means for participants to create artwork relevant to their lives and as a means to discuss and raise awareness about intergenerational and Indigenous knowledge. While putting into practice art skills and physical movement, conversations will be encouraged around issues of loneliness and how to make community connections, foster lifelong learning and well-being.

- Moving is conceptualised as being about the flow of thought and the embodied movement of physical beings. Movement can also bring forth affective ways of being in the world (Snowber 2012). For instance, shifts in attitude and thinking can occur as a consequence of art—well-being activities that encourage movement with the local place. For example, the Wayapa Wuurrk (see: https://wayapa.com/) movement and well-being practices that will be undertaken in this project explore Indigenous connections to Country as an innate part of the movement experience. Our creative engagement with place may lead us towards a more affective connection with the land. Working across disciplines and generations can also provoke movement in the ways in which we consider shifting thought and shifting bodies. This may enable transpedagogical (Helguerra 2011) learning within our social practice that ‘blend[s] educational processes and art-
making’ (p. 77) in ways that move away from conventional art and educational experiences. In this space, moments of art–moving–well-being can challenge our taken-for-granted, often siloed and age-stage approaches to modern life and educational practice.

- **Well-being**: is conceived as habits that draw out feelings of wellness through socially engaged art and movement practices; by doing, saying, relating and creating together, generations may draw from a deep well of shared knowledge that we can readily call on and express through art and movement. By developing creative capabilities (de Bruin & Harris 2017) across our lives, we build a repertoire from which to make meaning. Art–moving–well-being is ever present with the capacity for us to flourish through the expression of our creative agency.

- **Being-with** is also a concept that features in our project. It enables us to interweave participants with place, and each other, across institutional and trans/disiplinary boundaries, as co-creative artists, researchers and teachers. As such, our art–well-being practices open the possibility to be present within a strengths-based ethics of care across generations.

We now move to explore the role of movement practices in existing intergenerational programmes.

### Role of Movement Practices and What Movement Can Offer to Intergenerational Projects

In the context of health and well-being across the lifespan, movement is a critical element that enables meaningful activity, participation and engagement. From a health perspective, movement is often considered as ‘physical activity’, defined as ‘any large muscle movement that expends energy …’ (Bauman 2004, 2). Opportunities for physical activity are diverse, and include formal approaches (e.g. exercise programmes and sports, such as gym training, group or home exercise programmes, or tai-chi) as well as informal or incidental physical activity (movements inducing energy expenditure associated with other purposes, such as gardening, walking in a park to enjoy nature or taking stairs instead of an elevator). Across all ages, moderate proportions of the population do not meet recommended guidelines for sufficient physical activity to maintain or improve health, with the lowest level of physical activity participation being among young children (70% of those aged 2–17 years are insufficiently active to maintain health) and older people (75% undertake insufficient physical activity to maintain health) (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2018). These statistics are important to our project as we aim to encourage incidental movement as a creative endeavour within the ‘We are Well’ activities through Wayapa Wuurrk and walking with the land. We aim for these activities to be taken up as an ongoing enterprise by project participant groups who are overrepresented by the statistics put forward by Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2018).

Decades of evidence suggest that engaging in moderate intensity physical activity on most days of the week can promote positive health outcomes for older adults (e.g., Li et al. 2005). There is also substantial evidence suggesting that regular physical activity can also prompt other benefits such as increased psychological well-being (Vella et al. 2023). Focusing on intergenerational physical activity in particular, Mahmood et al. (2012) shared an example of intergenerational gardening
and highlighted that ‘senior citizens who may no longer be part of the workforce can...share their knowledge with younger generations of parents and children. Even when people with low levels of physical activity commence moving, it is often short-lived, with limited longer-term sustainability (Lopes et al. 2021). Novel approaches are needed to engage people across the lifespan to commence and sustain all types of movement in the longer term. Approaches combining movement with opportunities for personal development (e.g. art), social interaction (e.g., group activities) and that provide intergenerational opportunities, may be able to address some of the barriers to sustained improvements in physical participation.

**Intergenerational Therapies and Interventions that Target Loneliness**

The OECD (2021) has recognised a need to connect specific therapies and interventions that target loneliness. Other well-known examples include the Australian Broadcasting Committees (ABC), *Old people’s homes for four-year-olds*. The social experiment brought together 4-year-olds and aged people to better understand whether or not consistent intergenerational interactions would improve the health and well-being of the aged care residents and the learning of the 4-year-olds. The two groups regularly interacted and completed activities together, the focus was on encouraging movement, interaction, learning and happiness (ABC 2019). A similar programme brought together residents in a nursing home (74- to 93-year-olds) with teenagers (14- to 16-year-olds) (McDonald 2022). Prior to the experiment, both groups reported feelings of chronic loneliness. It was found that through participating in activities and conversing, strong connections were made between individuals in the different age groups which lessened the feelings of loneliness in both groups (McDonald 2022). Our project, although in some respects similar to the *Old people’s homes for four-year-olds*, aims to be self-sustaining by upskilling participants in leadership, networking and in developing social contacts by bringing together school children, preservice teachers, occupational therapy and physiotherapy students and the active seniors from the University of the Third Age.

**Theoretical Positioning**

The aim of the study is to investigate an intergenerational art–moving–well-being project through an a/r/tographic lens. This positions participants relationally as artists (who make artwork in relation to movement–well-being), researchers (who explore aspects of movement–well-being through their art and movement), and teachers (who teach others about their movement–well-being practices through community connections). Our approach is to acknowledge that each partner and participant is able to provide assets and/or support for positive practices and that participants can gain agency by taking on the contiguous (separate and/or together) roles of artists, researchers and teachers at any age or stage in their lives. The aim is to connect salutogenesis, (supporting ‘healthese instead of ‘disease’) (Vinje et al. 2016) and art–moving–well-being practices as a theoretical lens to explore ways intergenerational and intercultural partnerships may improve loneliness and social connectedness across generations, communities and cultures.
To understand how each participant group works relationally, we draw on Edwards’s (2017) three interwoven theoretical concepts of ‘relational expertise’, ‘common knowledge’ and ‘relational agency’. These concepts will help us analyse how each group works relationally both in and across art–moving–well-being practices as we begin to reveal each participant’s contribution.

- **Relational expertise** is understood as ‘what matters,’ or the motives of all parties, and drawing out explicitly about what matters for oneself and agreeing on what is important for all involved (Rickinson & Edwards 2021).

- **Common knowledge** concerns what motivates the self and others to act in particular ways (Edwards 2017). For example, a researcher might be concerned about the outcomes of the research and the impact into the future, whereas Indigenous artists and knowledge holders may be interested in what is happening in the moment and in drawing out cultural and well-being connections. When each person knows ‘what matters’ to the other, this knowledge may become a resource for interpreting, both constraining and enabling processes, and planning joint actions and collaborating on ways forward that work for all.

- **Relational agency** is where ‘individuals are able to participate in the unfolding of joint purposeful work’ (Edwards & Hedegaard 2021, 10). Relational agency is working with different groups and drawing on the strengths of individuals as problems require solving (Rickinson & Edwards 2021). Working across disciplines, communities and cultures requires commitment to collaborate and in particular work relationally with others.

In conclusion, by bringing our thoughts together and presenting a flexible art–moving–well-being conceptual model (see Figure 1) that we aim to make scalable, sustainable and based on social and relational support systems. The support systems initially rely on Indigenous Knowledge Holders and Artists alongside transdisciplinary experts (Teacher Educators from a Faculty of Education, and Health Educators from the School of Allied Health) coming together and sharing their art–moving–well-being practices with novice participants (Preservice teachers, Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Students, University of the Third Age Seniors and Primary School Children). Through an a/r/tographic lens participants will become artists (who make artwork in relation to movement–well-being), researchers (who explore aspects of movement–well-being through their art and movement) and teachers (who teach others about their movement–well-being practices through community connections). As participants contribute to art–moving–well-being practices, it is hoped they will build social connections and leadership skills (which will be taught explicitly) so that this project moves beyond a conceptual idea and springs to life, first as a pilot project and then grows to encompass varied cultures and communities. We now bring together our art-moving-well-being project in a conceptual represented in Figure 1. The dotted lines bounding each shape in Figure 1 are deliberately porous to highlight the dynamic and fluid thinking, and flexibility required when bringing together groups within and across disciplines, communities and cultures.

The three intersecting circles positioned within the field of participants indicate how art, moving and well-being are often conceptualised as separate practices, each in their siloed space; and yet, all with the potential to be brought together. As the circles unite, the in-between spaces acknowledge the value of intersecting practices, for example., art–moving, art–well-being and moving–well-
being. And then, finally, the concept of art–moving–well-being as positioned in the centre of Figure 1, brings all of the previously discussed practices together, and in so doing presents a theoretically rich conceptualisation of all elements. In forging a community of practice through art–moving–well-being participants celebrate and gift to one another their intergenerational insights and storied experiences. In the process, the project will be understood by weaving together a/r/tographic sensibilities, 'relational expertise', 'common knowledge', 'relational agency and salutogenic perspectives.

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Megan Adams is an Associate Professor and Graduate Research Lead (GRL) in the School of Curriculum, Teaching and Inclusive Education (CTI). As a qualified teacher, Megan has extensive experience in Australian and international educational contexts ranging from pre-kindergarten to the tertiary level. Megan’s research interest has a focus on inclusion and diversity, and in particular she is working towards understanding ways to reduce education inequalities for marginalised groups. One of her current research projects involves working...
with preservice teachers and their transitions into the teaching profession, and ways to support diverse learners in their school classrooms. Megan also works with school leadership and teachers (locally and internationally) to understand different perspectives concerning the recent and rapid changes in education and how this affects professional learning of teachers and in turn learners. Contact address: Monash University Level 2, Building 92, Clayton Campus 19 Ancora Imparo Way, Monash University, VIC 3800, Australia. Email: megan.adams@monash.edu

Dr Geraldine Burke is a Senior Lecturer and an artist, a researcher and a teacher-educator lecturing in visual and creative arts education at Monash University (Melbourne and Singapore). She is passionate about art-based educational research and how it can be employed to explore issues of our time. Her research engages with artistic practice, pedagogy and community projects. Her Master’s in Art and Design (by exhibition and exegesis) and her PhD (through an art-based photo book and exegesis) have led to an enduring interest in non-traditional research through creative genres. Geraldine is currently a co-leader of the Art-Creativity-Education Faculty Research Group at Monash Faculty of Education and teaches creative art units in early childhood and primary education at Undergraduate and Master’s levels. This sees Geraldine include Art-Reach experiences with kindergarten/school children, pre-service teachers, seniors and cultural institutions as a means to build vibrant social and ecological connections through art. Contact address: Faculty of Education, Monash University, Peninsula Campus, 47 - 49 Moorooduc Hwy, Frankston, VIC 3199, Australia. Email: Geraldine.burke@monash.edu

Nikki Browne, First Nations learning and Programs manager, McClelland Sculpture Park and Gallery. Nikki is a First Nations Bidjara artist and educator with many years of experience. Living on Wurundjeri country in Healesville and working on Bunurong, Boon-Wurrung country at McClelland. Nikki’s Mob is from Carnarvon Gorge in Queensland. Her Arts and Education practice is inspired by her love of Country, environment, wildlife, culture and education. Nikki engages the viewer with spiritual stories that connect to environmental issues. Nikki’s artwork conveys a great passion for the protection of Country and culture. Nikki is currently part of a travelling exhibition, exhibiting work created through the black Design Program at Koorie Heritage trust with 10 other talented Aboriginal Artists from across Victoria, exhibition title “Layers of Blak”. Nikki is driven to create a culturally safe place for all Mob and community to come together through Arts and Education. Through her arts practice and education she is a voice for change by addressing issues impacting the environment and our vastly growing endangered species crisis. Nikki takes inspiration from her Grandmother Heather Williams (née Prince), her Mother Jean Browne, and her son Ronan Howard. Throughout her life they we were always out on Country talking about the beauty and importance of respecting and nurturing the country around them and being guided by our ancestors.

Karan Kent, Independent Artist. Yimba Yumba - in sync with nature. Karan is a proud Bidjara women from her mother’s side with strong Irish ancestry. Karan was born onto Wurundjeri lands (Warrandyte) and by her early teens moved across the river to Boonwurrung lands where she married and raised a family and has lived for the past 50+ years. Karan has 30+ years experience in Community Development having worked in local governments, Aboriginal health sectors and for Not-for-profit organisations. At the age of 60 Karan left her professional career to refuel the fire and passion in her belly of combining her professional and life skills to build her own business, Yimba Yumba where she finds passion through the art of sharing the modality of Wayapa Wuurrrk an Aboriginal Earth connection.
and mindfulness practice, delivering her services to all cohorts across community, particularly in the Early Learning Years and education sectors. Karan’s community obligations are shared as one of the founding members of Nairm Marr Djambana (Frankston Aboriginal Gathering Place) Co-Chair of the LAECG (Local Aboriginal Educational Consultative group) Co-Chair of Dhelk Dja South Metro and as an Elder Respected person on Koori Courts.

Kylie Colemane, Independent Artist. Proud Darug and Wiradjuri First Nations person based on the Mornington Peninsula, Victoria, Australia. Diploma qualified Nature Based Therapist, Diploma qualified Wayapa Wururrk Practitioner, Shinrin Yoku Facilitator, Native Plant Educator involved in LEAP Program (Landcare Environment Action program) having completed a Traineeship in Land management associated with; (DEET, National Parks & Soil Conservation Departments), Tafe Certification in Childcare (certificate 1, 2 & 3), Lifestyle Coach, (IICT, ANTA, AABT, FBA Certified).

Laura Alfrey, Faculty of Education, Monash University. Dr Laura Alfrey’s research leads to the transformation of education and health policy and practice in primary, secondary, tertiary and community settings in Australia and beyond. Her work extends the sub-discipline of HPE by supporting those within it to understand and create evidence-based alternatives to historically-rooted and mis-educative practices. As such, her work has a keen focus on policy and professional learning that supports exemplary education. She has published widely in top-ranking international journals including Sport, Education and Society, Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy, European Physical Education Review and Health and Place.

Aislinn Lalor’s occupational therapy background has included teaching at Monash University since 2009, and clinical work in acute aged mental health and community health positions prior to undertaking her PhD regarding sleep quality of older adults in 2013. Her teaching has included opportunities to develop and deliver curriculum at Princess Nora Bint Abdul Rahman University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and development and delivery of a collaborative interprofessional international health immersion program in Vietnam and Cambodia. Aislinn is currently also a part-time Research Fellow with the Rehabilitation, Ageing, and Independent Living (RAIL) Research Centre at Monash University in conjunction with the National Centre for Healthy Ageing. Keith Hill, Rehabilitation Ageing and Independent Living (RAIL) Research Centre, Monash University. Dr Keith Hill is the inaugural Director of the Rehabilitation, Ageing and Independent Living (RAIL) Research Centre at Monash University (commenced July 2019). Prior to this he was Head of the School of Physiotherapy and Exercise Science at Curtin University for 6.5 years, and Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor of the Faculty of Health Sciences at Curtin for 1 year. He is a physiotherapist and senior researcher, with particular expertise in falls prevention, exercise for older people, ageing and rehabilitation.

Keith Hill is the inaugural Director of the Rehabilitation, Ageing and Independent Living (RAIL) Research Centre at Monash University (commenced July 2019). Prior to this he was Head of the School of Physiotherapy and Exercise Science at Curtin University for 6.5 years, and Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor of the Faculty of Health Sciences at Curtin for 1 year. He is a physiotherapist and senior researcher, with particular expertise in falls prevention, exercise for older people, ageing and rehabilitation. Email: keith.hill@monash.edu
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