

# AAG SECG NEWSLETTER



**AAG**  
Australian  
Association of  
Gerontology

**SECG**  
Student and  
Early Career  
Group



## Welcome to the October/November AAG SECG Newsletter

IMAGE BY GARRY REYNOLDS FOR THE PICTURE YOURSELF PROJECT

As we head into the final stretch of 2025, I'm excited to share what's been happening with the SECG and look ahead to some incredible opportunities coming your way.

Our state representatives continue to deliver outstanding events across Australia, bringing together students and early career researchers in meaningful ways. The Professional Development team has maintained their excellent webinar series, and the Communications group have been working across the year to bring you these newsletters and blog posts. Thank you to everyone who has participated and shared their insights with the community.

The highlight of our calendar is rapidly approaching! The AAG Conference in Alice Springs this November promises to be an unforgettable experience. The full program is now available and we are excited to join you all in the heart of Australia for what will be an exceptional gathering of gerontology professionals, students, and researchers.

Alice Springs offers a unique setting for our conference, and our Conference team has been working incredibly hard to ensure this event showcases the best of our field while providing valuable networking and learning opportunities. Whether you're presenting your research, attending sessions, or simply connecting with colleagues, this conference represents everything our community stands for.

We look forward to seeing many familiar faces and welcoming new members to our growing community in Alice Springs!

Dr Tricia King - AAG SECG Communications and Prizes Lead

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# AAG & SECG UPDATES

## REGULAR SECG CATCHUPS

### AAG VIC SECG MONTHLY WEBINAR

8th October, Wednesday, 12pm AEST  
via Zoom

AAG Victorian Division SECG are excited to announce the continuation of the AAG VIC SECG monthly webinar series in 2025, building on the success and positive feedback they received.

Similar to last year, the Rapid Fire Presentation will be held as the final session to conclude the webinar series. Presenters, including those who have presented at the monthly webinars, will have the opportunity to showcase their work in a 3-6 minute rapid-fire format, with awards up for grabs for the top presenter. Further details will be shared in due course.

[Visit here for more information.](#)

### AAG CHALLENGING AGEISM SIG PRESENTS: AGE AS A PROXY

15th October, Weds, 12pm AEDT  
via Zoom

Age is often used as a shortcut for decision-making in health and social services, limiting access to care and support. Age-based assumptions can shape pension entitlements, eligibility for disability supports, Home Care packages, and aged care services - reinforcing inequality and restricting choice.

This webinar will explore how age is used as a proxy in key service sectors such as housing, disability, and community care, and the consequences this has for equity.

**REGISTER HERE:**

<https://www.aag.asn.au/EventDetail?EventKey=WEB251015>

## AAG NSW SECG EVENT

### AAG NSW SECG Presents: Building your team for an ECR Grant: Speed Dating Event

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2025  
via Zoom

The NSW Australia Association of Gerontology Student and Early Career Group (NSW AAG SECG) invites you to attend a one-hour online event designed to provide a space for students and ECRs to connect with each other over common research interests/methodologies.

Participants will first hear from a successful ECR grant recipient, who will talk about how they connected with ECRs and formed their research team. Participants also have the opportunity to network with other students and ECRs (in breakout rooms), practice the 'elevator pitch' of their research, and participate in a large group discussion with a Q &A session.

To support strategic networking, all registrants will be asked to complete a short survey prior to the event.

Join us to:

- Learn how to build a student/ECR team for grant applications
- Practice communicating your research interests with others
- Network with other students and ECRs for potential future research collaboration

**REGISTER HERE:**

<https://www.aag.asn.au/EventDetail?EventKey=WEB251014>

### HAVE SOMETHING TO SHARE?

Let us know!



## UPCOMING AAG EVENTS

### AAG TASMANIA PRESENTS: SCIENCE BITES: DISCOVER, DINE, AND BE INSPIRED - LECTURE AND LUNCH

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2025  
Tasmanian School of Medicine

Lectures from 11.30 to 12.30pm  
Lunch from 12.30pm to 1.30pm dine and meet the researchers

Join us for a social lunchtime science event as part of Seniors Week! Enjoy an engaging one-hour lecture session featuring multiple short talks on science, health, and innovation.

There will be presentations from:

- Dr Suanne Lawrence
- Dr Cassandra Thomson
- Dr Sharn Perry
- Bridget Biswas
- Maria Hobbs

Hear from passionate researchers as they share the latest insights into healthy ageing, design for wellbeing, and the fascinating science behind everyday things.

After the talks, stick around lunch and for a **"Meet the Researchers"** session, your chance to chat with researchers, scientists, and experts, ask questions, and explore how research is shaping a better future for all ages.

This event is a perfect blend of good food, good company, and great ideas, all designed to inspire curiosity and lifelong learning.

This event is free, and a light lunch will be provided.

**REGISTER HERE:**

<https://www.aag.asn.au/EventDetail?EventKey=TAS251014>

# THE 58<sup>th</sup> AAG CONFERENCE

An update from Dr Danielle Cave,  
Lead SECG Conference and Events



The 2025 AAG Conference is fast approaching and there are several conference events that have been designed specifically for our SECG members. These events include the SECG Pre Conference Workshop, Lunch with the Stars, Social Dinner, Chat with the Expert and the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

The SECG Pre Conference Workshop is on Tuesday November 11th from 12:45-2:45pm. The topic is *From PhD to postdoc: Strategic career planning for emerging researchers in gerontology* and the workshop will be facilitated by Dr Alice Pashley (University of Canberra) and Dr Danielle Cave (University of the Sunshine Coast). Hear from early career professionals working in diverse fields of gerontology and map out your strategic career plan, including your career goals and the actions you need to take to achieve them.

The SECG Social Dinner is on Wednesday November 12th from 7:00pm at [Epilogue Lounge & Rooftop Bar](#), which is a 30-minute walk/5-minute drive from the conference venue at 1/58 Todd St, Alice Springs. All student and early career professionals are welcome, no RSVP required. Meet outside the Alice Springs Convention Centre at 6:30pm where we can walk to the venue together or meet us at the venue.

For more information on all the SECG events at the conference, please refer to the SECG Events page on the conference website: <https://www.aagconference.asn.au/program/secg-events>

# NEW DOCTOR... DR CIARA TREACY

**Thesis Title** - Executive Functioning and Brain Ageing: Investigating the MRI-Assessed Neurobiology Subservicing Sustained Attention and Inhibitory Sub-Components in Healthy Older Adults

**Undertaken At** – The University of the Sunshine Coast, Thompson Institute

**Date Completed** – My doctoral thesis was conferred on the 12th of June 2025



**Quick Overview** - My PhD set out to address a key gap in ageing research: understanding the brain mechanisms underpinning normal cognitive ageing. This understanding is essential if we are to prevent or slow cognitive decline and support people to age well and remain independent for as long as possible. I focused on sustained attention and inhibitory sub-components, two executive functions vital for goal-directed behaviour and everyday independence. Using structural MRI (sMRI) and magnetic resonance spectroscopy (MRS), I explored how brain structure and neurochemistry relate to these functions in healthy adults aged 50+. Here are the key findings:

*Behavioural results:* Sustained attention and inhibition are impacted by the ageing process – so they represent important cognitive domains to maintain as we grow older. Inhibitory processes mediate the relationship between age and sustained attention (in other words, age-related changes in inhibitory functioning also have an impact on our ability to sustain attention). This underlines the close behavioural interplay between these cognitive domains during ageing. *Neurobiological results:* Age-related structural brain changes (e.g. volumetric reductions in grey and white matter) mediate the relationship between age and sustained attention performance – brain tissue volumes may be important factors in sustained attention over the course of normal ageing. Neurochemical concentrations (GABA+ and Glx) remained stable with age, though greater concentrations of Glx in the sensorimotor cortex may support response inhibition (Glx, a combination of glutamate and glutamine, represents a useful indicator of excitatory activity in the brain, and the sensorimotor cortex is a brain region responsible for processing sensory information and coordinating motor output). Together, these findings help clarify inconsistencies in the ageing literature and deepen our understanding of brain-behavioural interactions during healthy ageing. They also highlight potential neurobiological markers for identifying individuals at risk of experiencing accelerated decline, prompting future longitudinal research.

**Hardest Part** - Like most PhD-ers will tell you, the hardest part was navigating the constantly shifting scope and direction of my project. Supervisors moved on, our design had to change, and I sometimes felt like an imposter under the extra pressure of limited time. Whilst change and logistics was tough to navigate at times, learning to adapt and persist through these challenges made me a more resilient researcher, a soft skill that goes a very long way!

**Best Part** - The highlight? Wearing the floppy hat at graduation! That moment, after years of hard work and uncertainty, was unmatched. Another huge milestone was publishing my first, first-author paper. It made me realise that being a researcher wasn't some far-fetched, out of reach goal; it was something I was already doing. By the end, I had four, first-author publications, something I never could have imagined just a few years ago.

**Top Tips for PhD Candidates** – Here's my main pieces of advice:

Get passionate about your project - it makes the tough days easier. Embrace the Gantt chart early; time management can make or break the journey. Take ownership, be punctual, and plan ahead. Even if the goalposts move (and they will), you'll always be better off for having a clear, well-thought-out plan.



## AIIP Intergenerational Awards 2026

Are you involved in intergenerational practice, programs or research? The Australian Institute of Intergenerational Practice (AIIP) Awards 2026 celebrate excellence, leadership, and innovation in the field. These awards shine a light on the people, programs, and research driving meaningful connections across generations, strengthening communities, and shaping a more inclusive future.

Applications close **31 October 2025**.

To find out more and apply, visit the [AIIP webpage](#).

## Help build Australia's social prescribing directory!

ASPIRE's online social prescribing directory will make it easier for healthcare professionals, trusted individuals in the community, and community members to connect with programs that support health and wellbeing in a holistic way. By centralising access, ASPIRE is helping to remove barriers and make it easier to discover social prescribing programs across Australia.

☛ If your organisation offers social prescribing programs, please complete this short survey by Friday, 24 October [here](#).



## Seeking volunteers to participate in Social Frailty Research Project

- Join our study on social frailty among older Southeast Asian migrants in Australia.
- Help us develop a culturally sensitive tool to improve wellbeing & support services.

**Who can participate?** Southeast Asian migrants, aged 40 or older, living in Australia

**What do you need to do?** Join **ONE** or **ALL** following project activities:

- A one-hour interview to share your understanding & experiences of social frailty.
- A focus group discussion to reach a consensus on the social frailty index.
- An online survey to test and validate the Index.

### Incentives?

- Interview & focus group discussion (**\$20 gift voucher**)
- Online survey (**entering a draw to win one of five \$50 gift vouchers**)

### Interested?

Fill out the form: [here](#)  
Or email us at:  
[thihien.nguyen@ecu.edu.au](mailto:thihien.nguyen@ecu.edu.au)

## SECG ON SOCIAL MEDIA



### FACEBOOK

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/143911358969670/>

### LINKEDIN

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/13564197>

### AAG on X

<https://twitter.com/gerontologyau> – use #AAGSECG for SECG news

### SECG BLOGS

<https://aag.asn.au/Web/Stay-Informed/SECG-Blogs.aspx>

### SECG on AAG WEBSITE

<https://aag.asn.au/Web/Web/Connect-Now/Network/student-and-early-career-group-secg-2.aspx>

## Have something to share?

If you want to contribute to any of the sections or have or have something to share we'd love to hear from you!

The newsletter relies on your content to make it great - so let's make it great!



[https://uniofsunshinecoast.syd1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_a3Rqs7viisTqoPc](https://uniofsunshinecoast.syd1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_a3Rqs7viisTqoPc)  
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