



**Australian
Recreational
Therapy
Association**



WORLD LEISURE
Centre of Excellence

2026 Hybrid Conference



Day 1- Thursday, September 17th

Time	Presentation	Details
8.30 – 8.50	Registration	Open meet and greet
Hybrid	Logging On & Open mic	Troubleshooting any tech issues
8.50 – 9.00	Charlise Bennett	Welcome and housekeeping
Westmead	ARTA President	Acknowledgement of Country
9.00 – 10.00	Keynote Speaker	Drawn to psychiatry by the complexity of psychopathology and the profound ways mental illness can affect every aspect of a person's life, Dr. Angelique is particularly passionate about holistic, multidisciplinary approaches to care. She values psychiatry's focus on understanding the whole person—not only their symptoms, but also their daily functioning, relationships, supports, and personal goals. Dr. Angelique will share her experiences working with inpatient rehabilitation settings, highlighting the impact of therapeutic recreation and multidisciplinary interventions on patient recovery. Through clinical case examples and reflections from different clinical environments, she will explore how meaningful engagement and recovery-oriented care can support individuals in rebuilding identity, function, and quality of life.
Virtual	Dr Angelique Souma	
		
10.00 – 10.15	Omar Al-Dabbas	Poetry in Mental Health
Westmead		
10.15 – 10.45	Networking and Morning Tea 30 minutes	
10.45 – 11.30	Shay Dawson	Introducing the Life Spaces Practice Model for Recreational Therapy

Virtual		
11.30 - 12.15 Westmead	Ross Bell	Blunted Tools: Navigating Moral Distress on the Frontlines of Australian Aged Care
12.15 – 12.30 Virtual	Cherry Sin Yin Hau	Challenges of Working as an Independent Diversional Therapist in Rural Setting
12.30 - 12.45 Westmead	Renee Rizzo	Diana Retiring from ARTA
12.45 – 1.30	Networking and Lunch 45 minutes	
1.30 – 2.00 Westmead	Shane	Neurons VR
2.00 – 2.45 Westmead	Lesley Fox	Creative Joy: One Language, Many Dialects – Advancing Practice Through Therapeutic Art and Mindfulness
2.45 – 3.00	Tamia Hawkins	Good Vibrations: Intentional Music Use to Strengthen Connection and Wellbeing.
3.00 – 3.15	Afternoon Tea 15 minutes	
3.15 – 4.00 Westmead	Taleah Critchley	Evaluating Virtual Reality as a Recreational Therapy Led Intervention for Pain Management in Community Based Practice
4.00 – 4.15	Emma Fischer	Finding Recreation Therapy Beyond Healthcare
4.15 – 4.30 Westmead	ARTA board Questions to the board	Current local and global RT information from the board.
4.30	Close	

Day 2- Friday, September 18th

Time	Presenter	Details
8.30 – 8.55 Hybrid	Registration Logging On & Open mic	Open meet and greet Troubleshooting any tech issues
8.55 – 9.00 Introduction	Renee Smith ARTA Vice President	Welcome and housekeeping Introduction of Keynote Speaker
9.00 – 10.00 Virtual	Keynote Speaker Susan Purrington 	This keynote explores AI in recreational therapy as both a limit and an opportunity. As a <i>limit</i>, AI clarifies our value: the things algorithms cannot do. Being present, improvising joy, holding space for meaning, the distinguishing characteristics that define our profession and anchor our claim to a seat at the table. As an <i>opportunity</i>, AI offers new ways to document outcomes, strengthen our evidence base, personalise interventions, and enable practitioners to spend more time doing what only humans can. Drawing on this tension, we will consider how recreational therapists can wield AI deliberately; using it to amplify, not replace, our professional voice. The future of our influence depends not on resisting technology, but on knowing exactly where it stops and our humanity begins.
10.00 – 10.45 Westmead	Jody Asquith & Danielle Anderson	The Waggiest Wellness Team: Two models of Canine-Assisted Recreational Therapy practice.
10.45 – 11.15	Networking and Morning Tea 30 minutes	
11.15 – 12.00 Westmead	Catherine Meredith	From the Foundation of Influence: Advancing Our Professional Voice through People, Place and Purpose.

11.45 – 12.30 Westmead	Arianne Reis & Nicole Peel	Providing Clinical Placements: Knowledge and Skills
12.30 – 1.15 Westmead	Sharron Tancred, Gregor Poole & Prof Klaus Veil	Advancing Recreational Therapists' Effectiveness/Influence in Residential Dementia Care through Art-Based Technologies
1.15 – 2.00	Lunch and networking 45 minutes	
2.00 – 2.45	Alison Harrington	From Evidence to Engagement: A CST- Informed Digital Activity program for Aged Care, Co-Developed with a Neuroscientist and Pilot Tested with Aged Care Homes
2.45 – 3.15	Kylie Samorowski	Recreational Therapy in Libraries: A Haven Beyond Books
3.15 – 3.30		Award for Excellence Student Presenter Award RT Annual theme for 2026
3.30	Formal closing of the conference	