

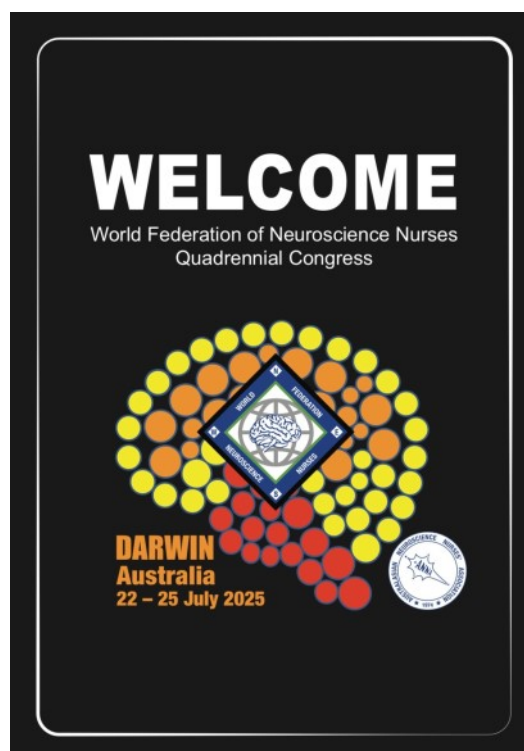
Report from the 13th WFNN Quadrennial Congress

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Report from the 14th WFNN Quadrennial Congress

Darwin Convention Centre, Darwin, Australia · July 22–25, 2025

Theme: *Create · Imagine · Inspire · Discover*

The 13th World Federation of Neuroscience Nurses (WFNN) Quadrennial Congress brought together more than 200 delegates representing 21 countries at the Darwin Convention Centre, Australia, from July 22–25, 2025. Hosted by the Australasian Neuroscience Nurses' Association (ANNA), the Congress celebrated the theme *Create · Imagine · Inspire · Discover*, with a rich and varied program designed to connect colleagues, spark ideas, and advance neuroscience nursing practice across diverse healthcare systems.

About the WFNN:

The WFNN is the leading international body promoting excellence in neuroscience nursing worldwide. Through fostering collaboration and sharing of expertise, the Federation provides a vital plat-

form for the exchange of knowledge, encouragement of research, and elevation of education and leadership standards. Its flagship World Congress, held every four years, is regarded as the premier global meeting point for neuroscience nurses seeking to enhance clinical care, strengthen professional networks, and contribute to shaping the future of the specialty.

A Memorable Welcome:

The Congress opened with a profound cultural experience. Delegates were invited to take part in an **Aboriginal Smoking Ceremony**, a cleansing ritual using native plants led by community leader Trent with his niece and nephew. Passing through the aromatic smoke was a symbolic invitation to approach the meeting with open hearts and minds.

A **Welcome to Country** followed, acknowledging the Larrakia people as the Traditional Custodians of the Darwin region. This powerful moment of respect and inclusion set the tone for the Congress.

The official opening ceremony featured addresses from:

Vicki Evans, Local Chair, WFNN 2025

Diane Lear, ANNA President

Cathy Cartwright, WFNN President

Together, they reflected on the importance of global collaboration in strengthening neuroscience nursing. A highlight of the opening was the official welcome by **Her Excellency, The Honourable Sam Mostyn AC, Governor General of Australia**, who spoke with warmth and genuine appreciation of the role of neuroscience nurses in improving patient lives.

Keynote Perspectives:

The opening keynote, “**Elevating Stroke Care**”, was delivered by **Dr Zoe Scofield** of the Royal Flying Doctor Service. She explored the challenges of providing acute stroke care across Australia’s vast and often isolated regions, presenting innovative solutions developed by the **Australian Stroke Alliance**. Central to her talk was the development of a portable CT scanner that can differentiate between haemorrhagic and ischaemic strokes. This breakthrough, transportable by road or air, is transforming emergency stroke care in remote settings and ensuring that timely, life-saving interventions are more accessible.

Dr Scofield also addressed broader issues within nursing practice, including scope of practice restrictions and institutional resistance to change. She urged nurses to remain adaptable, persistent, and creative in order to dismantle barriers and improve outcomes for patients.

Another early session took a very different focus, highlighting the **neurotoxins of Australia’s native fauna**. Delegates were introduced to the lethal capabilities of the inland taipan (the world’s deadliest snake), the funnel-web spider, box jellyfish, Irukandji jellyfish, blue-ringed octopus, and even the venomous platypus. This fascinating presentation reminded visitors of the respect due to the local wildlife—and reinforced which creatures were best admired from a distance during their stay in Darwin.

Scientific Program:

Over four days, the program offered a stimulating blend of lectures, symposia, workshops, and debates, spanning the full spectrum of neuroscience nursing. Among the highlights were:

Correlative Neuro-anatomy demonstrated by Linda Littlejohns using the Anatomage computer, offering delegates an innovative tool for teaching and understanding brain structures.

Epilepsy Care sessions showcasing advances in nursing interventions and patient-centred management.

Specialist Nursing Roles in Australia, including nurse-led clinics for patients with Parkinson's disease and motor neurone disease, many of which serve rural and remote communities.

Glasgow Coma Scale (GCS) Education: the introduction of an international standardised approach to GCS assessment.

Dementia Care: examining policy frameworks and strategies for enhancing support for patients and families.

PhD Research Spotlight: Dr Ole Abildgaard (Denmark) discussed transition clinics for adolescents with epilepsy moving into adult services.

Pupillary Assessment Debate: a lively discussion around the role of technology in improving accuracy.

One of the most moving sessions was on **Brain Donation**. **Monica Clarke (AUS), Clinical Nurse Consultant**, described her work supporting families through the process of donating their loved one's brain for research. She outlined her role in providing guidance, coordinating logistics, and facilitating communication between families and the scientific community. The work of the **Brain Bank** was highlighted, contributing to studies in multiple sclerosis, sports-related injuries, neurological conditions in veterans, and chronic traumatic encephalopathy. Families receive a detailed neuropathology report within 6–9 months, giving not only scientific benefit but also personal closure and comfort in knowing their loved one's legacy endures.

Social Highlights:

The social program was an integral part of the Congress, creating opportunities for delegates to connect informally while experiencing the unique culture of Darwin.

The **Welcome Reception at Crocosaurus Cove** offered both networking and close encounters with some of the world's largest crocodiles—a fittingly unforgettable start to the event.

A visit to the **Royal Flying Doctor Service base** provided valuable insights into the scope and scale of this essential service, which delivers emergency and routine healthcare to some of the most remote communities in Australia.

The **Mindil Beach Sunset Market** showcased Darwin's vibrant culture, with more than 300 stalls offering an array of international foods, Aboriginal art and craft, live music, and entertainment ranging

from magicians to tarot readers. The evening concluded with one of Darwin's spectacular tropical sunsets, a breathtaking backdrop that delegates will long remember.

Awards and Achievements:

The Congress concluded with the recognition of outstanding contributions:

Best Poster Award: *Hitomi Yoshida (Japan)* for her work on *Supporting Ethical Decision-Making for Elderly Stroke Patients with Complex Medical Needs*.

Best Oral Presentation Award: *Catherine Tverdal (Norway)* for her research on *Traumatic Brain Injury: Trends in an Aging Population*.

The most prestigious honour of the event, the **DAISY Award for International Neuroscience Nurse Leadership**, was presented to **Caroline Woon (New Zealand)**, Clinical Nurse Specialist in Neurosurgery at Wellington Hospital. This global recognition celebrates nurses who demonstrate extraordinary clinical skill, leadership, mentorship, and compassion. Caroline's career spans education, policy, research, and direct patient care, and she continues to influence neuroscience nursing practice in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally. Her award was warmly celebrated by colleagues and served as an inspiring highlight of the Congress.

Reflections and Future Directions:

The Darwin Congress was a resounding success, marked by high-quality scientific content, cultural enrichment, and the strengthening of international networks. Delegates left invigorated, carrying with them fresh insights, renewed enthusiasm, and a shared commitment to applying the spirit of *Create · Imagine · Inspire · Discover* in their practice.

Much of the success can be attributed to the exceptional organisation of ANNA, WFNN, AA&P, and the dedicated team at the **Darwin Convention Centre**. Their professionalism, attention to detail, and warm hospitality ensured a smooth and memorable experience for all who attended.

Sponsors were gratefully acknowledged for their support –

Gold & Breakfast Session Sponsor: UCB.

Silver Sponsors: AbbVie, Integra, NeurOptics.

Other: Natus, Parkinson's Australia, University of Tasmania, Aero Healthcare, American Association of Neuroscience Nurses, Dr Woof.

As the Congress closed, attention turned to the future: the next WFNN Congress will be hosted by the Canadian Association of Neuroscience Nurses in Quebec, from **August 23–29, 2029**. Delegates departed Darwin with a strong sense of anticipation for the opportunities that lie ahead for neuroscience nursing worldwide.

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