

DR JOAN FAOAGALI AWARD WINNER 2026

Meet Anna Kolpak, winner of the 2026 Dr Joan Faoagali Award



The Dr Joan Faoagali Award was set up by the College to honour Joan in celebration of her life and her considerable contribution to the IPC profession. The winner of the scholarship is awarded FIPC course fees. This year's winner is Anna Kolpak, and we caught up with her to discuss her life and work.

Can you tell us a bit about your current role?

For the last two years I have been working as a Clinical Educator over six residential aged care sites in South Australia.

My role involves developing and delivering training in various forms, to nursing and care staff, to ensure staff understand best practice guidelines, Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards, and organisational policies and work instructions. These learning needs are often identified and guided by quality improvement initiatives, and include dementia care, restrictive practices, medication safety, palliative and end-of-life-care, falls prevention, documentation, recognising clinical deterioration, wound care and infection prevention and control. A big focus is on ensuring staff at all levels understand their role in IPC, especially with standard, additional precaution requirements, isolation practices and antimicrobial stewardship.

Furthermore, I contribute to the orientation of staff, by providing education on safe, person centred and high-quality care, and by assessing knowledge and skills through clinical competencies to ensure safe practice. I thoroughly enjoy supporting staff to improve their skills and knowledge, build confidence and use critical thinking skills in a safe learning environment.

What attracted you to working in aged care?

I have been nursing for thirty years and have gained experience in numerous diverse settings. For the first half of my career, I worked at various hospitals on surgical wards, then moved into Hospital in the Home in the community, where I completed my certificate IV in Training & Assessment. From there I taught Diploma of

Nursing and also worked for a wound company. It was during this time, while visiting students during aged care placements and clients in aged care, that I saw first-hand the great need for education in aged care, and wanted to contribute to making residents' lives better.

What do you think are the particular challenges for IPC in this setting?

IPC in aged care is challenging as residents are susceptible to infection due to their proximity to each other, chronic medical conditions and weakened immune systems. Residents with dementia and challenging behaviours can find it hard to understand and follow infection control guidelines, and high turnover of staff, agency use, and new inexperienced staff to the industry, all impact IPC practice.

What was your experience like doing the Foundations course?

I am thoroughly enjoying the Foundations course. It has exposed me to specialised IPC knowledge and tools, that will greatly assist me with education of staff and resident outcomes. The course is self-paced over six months and easy to navigate, with easy access to amazing resources for all healthcare sectors. Facilitators are very supportive, as are fellow students who provide you with a different perspective of IPC in varying settings.

What would you say to anyone thinking of doing the course?

I would highly recommend this course to anyone working in healthcare. You will gain an understanding of the role of an IPC lead and how to prevent, identify, and manage healthcare infections using IPC frameworks. This will ultimately improve outcomes for your clients by preventing the spread of infection, protecting vulnerable people, yourself and your colleagues.