



ANNUAL REPORT 2023



LA TROBE
UNIVERSITY

Care Economy
Research Institute

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“By fostering interdisciplinary research, innovative solutions, and impactful partnerships, we aim to illuminate the critical role of care in improving social well-being and economic security.”

FOREWORD

SENIOR DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR RESEARCH AND INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT

As we reflect on the first seven months of operation for the Care Economy Research Institute, I am filled with immense pride and optimism for the vision for CERI and the hard work that has brought us to this point in its development.

La Trobe University’s commitment in establishing this flagship institute underscores our ambition to address a pressing challenge of our time: the Care Economy.

The Care Economy, encompassing both paid and unpaid care work, is a cornerstone of a society that aims to support individuals, families, and communities to thrive regardless of their circumstances. Yet, it often remains undervalued and underrepresented in economic discourse and policy making.

Through the Care Economy Research Institute, we have set out to change this narrative. By fostering interdisciplinary research, innovative solutions, and impactful partnerships, we aim to illuminate the critical role of care in improving social well-being and economic security.

In just seven months, the Institute has made significant strides towards this goal. The CERI team has demonstrated a commitment to advancing knowledge and advocating for positive change, from innovative research projects to meaningful industry engagement.

But this work has only just begun. Looking ahead, the CERI team must continue to push boundaries, challenge assumptions, and champion the cause of care. Together, we have the opportunity to reshape our understanding of the Care Economy and redefine the metrics of success to include the well-being of all members of society.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to everyone who has contributed to the success of the Care Economy Research Institute thus far – our dedicated researchers, supporters, and leaders. Your collective efforts inspire us to strive for excellence and to make a lasting impact on the world around us.

In closing, I invite you to join us on this journey as we continue to unlock the full potential of the Care Economy – for the benefit of individuals, families, and communities everywhere.

Professor Susan Dodds, FAHA

Senior Deputy Vice- and Vice-President
Research and Industry Engagement



DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

This Annual Report marked a critical milestone following the establishment of La Trobe University's \$20 million flagship Care Economy Research Institute (CERI) in June 2023. The Care Economy is Australia's largest and fastest growing industry. Our commitment to advancing research in the Care Economy across the lifecourse remains unwavering, and this annual report encapsulates our team collaborative and collective efforts.

In the face of unprecedented challenges in the care sectors, our multidisciplinary team has made significant strides. From investigating care delivery models to championing the care workforce, CERI has been at the forefront of shaping policies and practices. We've collaborated with industry leaders, policymakers, and consumers to drive innovation and improve the health and well-being of all Australians and drive economic growth.

Some of the key achievements highlighted in the CERI Annual Report:

Research Impact: CERI's research has influenced policy decisions, leading to more sustainable care models and improved outcomes for care participants.

Collaboration: The institute has fostered partnerships with industry leaders, universities, and community organisations, enhancing the impact of their work.

Innovation: CERI's focus on care technology has resulted in innovative solutions, from virtual health platforms to AI-driven care.

Advocacy: The institute actively advocates for the care sectors and care workforce, recognising their essential role and promoting fair working conditions.

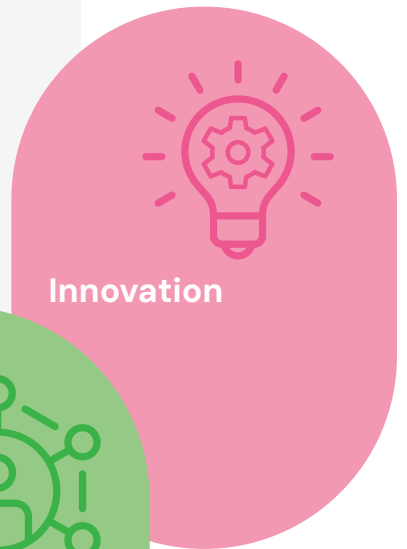
Person-Centred Approach: CERI emphasises care participants' lived experiences, ensuring that care services meet individual needs and preferences.

Congratulations to our dedicated staff, students, stakeholders and industry partners who have contributed to our success. Our gratitude goes to Professor Susan Dodds for her vision and leadership, Professor Ashley Franks and the Research Industry Engagement team at La Trobe University for supporting the establishment of the Institute. Together, we continue to build a more sustainable and compassionate Care Economy.

Professor Irene Blackberry

Director, Care Economy Research Institute and Chair, John Richards Centre for Rural Ageing Research

“...CERI has been at the forefront of shaping policies and practices. We’ve collaborated with industry leaders, policymakers, and consumers to drive innovation and improve the health and well-being of all Australians and drive economic growth.”



VISION

Our vision is to improve care participants' health and wellbeing and to drive economic growth across the health and social care sectors.

MISSION

Our mission is to provide an ecosystem and platform for researchers, consumers and industry partners to co-design, transform, and implement the next generation of services across the Care Economy, into an optimal, innovative and equitable 21st century model of care.

UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Our researchers and industry partners are collaborating to deliver against the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Our targets include:

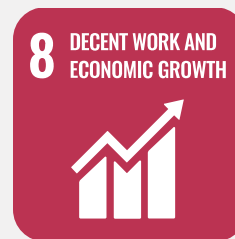


3.4 Reduce premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being.

3.5 Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol.



5.4 Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.



8.2 Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors.



CORE TEAM

At the heart of the Care Economy Research Institute lies a committed team of professionals driving our core initiatives forward. Our diverse staff brings a wealth of expertise across various disciplines, united in our mission to advance research and understanding across the Care Economy.



Kate Syme-Lamont
Research Officer

Irene Blackberry
Director

Makayla Grace
Senior Project Officer

Gayle Erwin
Senior Administration Officer

Stacey Rich
Research Fellow

Clair Overy
Manager

Karen Barclay
Research Officer

The core team also comprises:
Associate Professor Chris Maylea – Partnerships, Community and Industry Engagement
Associate Professor Anne-Marie Laslett – Graduate Research

RESEARCH DOMAINS

49 MEMBERS

RESEARCH SPANS ACROSS THE CARE ECONOMY

DOMAIN LEADS

School of Allied Health, Human Services and Sport



CARE TECHNOLOGY
Driving innovation in care

Professor James Boyd

School of Psychology and Public Health

Rural Health School



CARE WORKFORCE
Championing the workers and volunteers at the heart of care

Professor Meg Morris
Dr Rachel Winterton

Law School

School of Nursing and Midwifery



CARE DELIVERY
Delivering health and social care for all Australians

Professor Leeanne Carey

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Business School



CARE EXPERIENCE
Placing consumers at the heart of care services

Professor Lisa Brophy
Professor Sarah MacLean

School of Computing, Engineering and Mathematical Sciences

School of Education



CARE ECONOMICS, SOCIAL AND POLICY
Delivering health and social care for all Australians

Professor Alex Maritz

CERI BREAKS DOWN SILOS BY BRINGING MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCHERS TOGETHER

SNAPSHOT JUNE - DECEMBER 2023

49 RESEARCHERS
INVOLVED IN CARE ECONOMY
RESEARCH PROJECTS



14 NEW EXTERNAL
GRANTS
RECEIVED



137 ACTIVE CARE
ECONOMY RESEARCH
PROJECTS

172 JOURNAL
ARTICLES
PUBLISHED



TOTAL GRANTS

\$6,314,940

RESEARCH ENGAGEMENT

The Care Economy Research Institute has been championing the Care Economy through a series of webinars and events.

In its first seven months of establishment, CERI has been involved in eight online and live events. Those events include:

The Care Economy Research Institute launch at La Trobe's City Campus in August included a heartfelt discussion of care with AFLW great Moana Hope



A Higher Degree by Research student information session and workshop

AUGUST

NOVEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

Professor Jo Neale from King's College, London, joined us in November to share her 10-year program of work in recovery from alcohol and other drug use.

The John Richards Centre for Rural Ageing Research 2023 Oration in October highlighted the ageing farmers and challenges in farming succession planning.



December saw a panel of Mental Health experts discuss an innovative approach to recovery; Recovery Colleges. The panel included people with lived experience of recovery, academics, students and a co-design expert.



Building Partnerships workshop facilitated by CERl's Associate Director of Partnerships, Community, and Industry Engagement, Professor Chris Maylea.

Christmas drinks to celebrate CERl's first seven months.

DECEMBER

DECEMBER

DECEMBER

NOVEMBER

Public health Journalist, Dr Melissa Sweet, also joined us in November for a discussion with Professor Lawrie Zion about public health concerns arising from the state of the media in Australia.

DECEMBER

A panel of Mental Health experts discuss an innovative approach to recovery; Recovery Colleges. The panel included people with lived experience of recovery, academics, students and a co-design expert.

The Care Economy Research Institute (CERI) has been featured in the media, reflecting its significant impact on discussions surrounding the Care Economy in Australia. On August 29, 2023, 'Mirage News' highlighted the establishment of CERI as Australia's first Care Economy Research Institute, underscoring its pivotal role in addressing and researching critical issues in the sector.

Earlier, on August 10, 2023, ABC Radio National Australia aired a segment focusing on the Care Economy of aged-care facilities and their connection to the country, emphasising the broader implications of CERI's work. In July, CERI was featured in the 'Australian Financial Review' with Director, Irene Blackberry, discussing the substantial job challenges within the Care Economy, bringing attention to the workforce issues that CERI aims to address.

CERI also promotes its members' research and engagement as leaders in their field.

CARE ECONOMY COLLABORATIVE NETWORK

The Care Economy Collaborative Network is a CERl initiative to bring together like-minded researchers and individuals or organisations involved in all aspects of the Care Economy.

The CECN aims to lead the development of cross-sector, co-designed evidence-based solutions to real-world challenges by:

- facilitating connections and collaboration between industry and researchers who have complementary skill sets and/or interest and focus in similar areas.
- strengthening and consolidating the Care Economy knowledge base and generating new ideas for discussion and exploration.
- promoting learning and peer support amongst members and creating opportunities to participate in and co-design research projects.
- expanding understanding and information dissemination throughout the network member base.
- fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment through such things as training, community of practice, webinars, workshops, awareness-raising, and research.
- becoming the go-to place or collaborative hub for all those interested and working in the Care Economy sectors.

WHY COLLABORATE WITH US?

By working together, the Care Economy Collaborative Network will transform how care needs in Australia are addressed.

The benefits of membership in the Care Economy Collaborative Network includes:

- building connections with businesses, service providers, clinicians, academics, and researchers.
- establishing Communities of Practice to address emerging issues, and to share and test novel solutions.
- participating in events, forums, and professional development opportunities be informed about the latest evidence and innovation in care.
- opportunities to participate in collaborative research projects as they arise.

New members are welcome. If you are in industry and are interested in changing care for the better, consider joining the CECN. Use the QR code to register.





LIVED EXPERIENCE ADVISORY GROUP

Work is underway to bring the voice of people with lived experience to the Care Economy Research Institute. In our first seven months, CERl has undertaken a consultation process to develop a Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG). The purpose of the LEAG is to provide strategic advice to CERl's Executive Board and Management Committee on external matters that impact the Institute and the Care Economy sector.

The Lived Experience Advisory Group provides a voice for, and a forum to, represent the needs of people with lived experience across all care sectors. The Advisory Group will feed into discussions on key issues facing the Care Economy sector in Australia and internationally and to provide insight for industry and researchers working with end users.

The Lived Experience Advisory Group will:

- provide a consultative mechanism for the Institute on diverse matters, projects, policies, and engagement related to the Care Economy and end users.
- advise on opportunities to extend impact of research, dissemination and translation of findings and make recommendations on access, experience, safety, and quality.
- provide guidance, leadership and oversight to researchers and on research approaches and strategies that are responsive to end user needs, and that is consistent with best practice.
- promote the voice of end users having equitable access and outcome when engaging with the Care Economy.

The Care Economy Research Institute invites individuals with lived experience, carers and consumers to join this vital group. If you are interested in becoming a member of the LEAG, please email ceri@latrobe.edu.au

THE DOCTOR WILL (VIRTUALLY) SEE YOU NOW

The U-Serve research study is bringing about a telehealth revolution with its integration of augmented reality “Smart Glasses” into services like a virtual Emergency Department (ED). These cutting-edge devices enhance virtual consultations by giving clinicians a first-person view of patients, and their advanced features improve overall teleconsultation capabilities which transforms the possibility of patient care for those in remote and regional communities, or those unable to travel to an existing service.

Project title:	Supporting Urgent care and Residential aged caRe using a Virtual ED: U-SERVE study
Chief Investigators:	Professor James Boyd Associate Professor Adam Semciw
Timeline:	2023 to 2024
Location:	Victoria
Study population:	Urgent Care Centre treating physicians, Virtual Emergency Department triaging clinicians, Urgent Care Centre patients
Partners:	Northern Health; NCN Health; Kyabram District Health Service; NHN Health
Funding:	La Trobe University MRFF Kick Starter Scheme



Project member demonstrates how augmented reality can be used for remote medical exams. (ABC News: Norman Hermant)



CONTEXT

In Australia, population growth and demand for emergency services is outstripping the current infrastructure, driving a need for the creative delivery of these services when and where they are needed the most. Virtual emergency departments are one option to get services to people who due to mobility or geographical isolation may not be able to access an ED. Until now, these virtual EDs have relied on nurses examining patients while holding a camera and doubling as the eyes and ears of a clinician located elsewhere. However, these new “Smart Glasses” are the next step in the evolution of the virtual ED: incorporating a high-resolution camera, microphone and speakers so that the clinician feels like they are in the room with their patient. These devices also feature all the latest cyber security safeguards required to protect patient data and confidentiality.



APPROACH

Existing telehealth services, such as the Virtual Victorian Emergency Department Service (VVED), have demonstrated the effectiveness and efficiency of virtual EDs for both patients and healthcare providers. Evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates both reduced patient travel and wait times and increased access to a variety of services resulting in overall increased patient satisfaction and better care outcomes. With these benefits in mind, the VVED approached La Trobe University to explore other digital health solutions. “Smart Glasses” are the next iteration of improving the virtual consultation process, allowing nurses to examine a patient with their hands free. The U-SERVE project is assessing how these “Smart Glasses” can be used in the VVED at rural Urgent Care Centres (UCC), as well as identifying how clinicians and patients feel about their use and the role they have in determining care outcomes.



OUTCOMES

The research team is currently investigating a range of options for “Smart Glasses” and once a suitable option is identified, participating UCCs will begin trialing their use in patient interactions. Our research team will conduct focus groups and interviews to determine how feasible and acceptable these “Smart Glasses” are for virtual triaging. The phase two feasibility evaluation of testing by the UCCs is due for completion by the end of 2024.

“This is going to improve care, not just for patients in aged care. This is going to improve care for patients in remote and rural settings where there really [are] staffing deficits at the moment.”

Victorian Virtual Emergency Department, Dr Loren Sher



IN YOUR RIGHT MIND: STATE USE OF COMMUNITY TREATMENT ORDERS

FACTORS is the first study of its kind to assess the implications and impact of how the law is used to enforce psychiatric treatment in Australian communities through Community Treatment Orders (CTOs). FACTORS brings together experts from various research fields to study the effect of restrictive practices on the international and human rights of communities, particularly those who identify as culturally and linguistically diverse.

Project title:	Factors Affecting Community Treatment Orders Research Study (FACTORS)
Chief Investigators:	Professor Lisa Brophy Associate Professor Chris Maylea
Timeline:	June 2023 to December 2025
Location:	Australia nationally
Study population:	Clinical mental health services, consumers and carers across Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia
Partners:	University of Melbourne, University of Sydney, University of Queensland, RMIT, Flinders University
Funding:	Australian Research Council





CONTEXT

In Australia, the use of Community Treatment Orders (CTOs) is notably higher than in other countries, and research indicates that this approach disproportionately affects minority communities. People who have experienced CTOs express concerns about the trauma associated with coercive actions, and investigations reveal a prevailing culture of emphasising risk in clinical decisions regarding a person's capacity.

Despite Australia being one of the leading countries in the world in terms of CTO application, there is a scarcity of knowledge and evidence to explain why and when coercive actions are taken. The lack of comprehensive data makes it challenging to understand how forced treatments vary, raising the risk of inequitable and unnecessary application of CTOs. It's crucial to address this gap in information to ensure fair and justified use of these measures.



APPROACH

FACTORS enhances longstanding research partnerships and has given rise to the largest study of CTO use in Australia. The project brings together lawyers, social workers, psychiatry academics and ethicists with people informed by their lived experience as consumers and carers. By taking a multi-disciplinary approach, this project aims to determine the drivers underpinning the use of legal orders to enforce psychiatric treatment. FACTORS is comparing the legislative criteria and policy context across jurisdictions as well as analysing the socio-demographic and clinical features of people on CTOs across Australia. This will pinpoint the variations across jurisdictions and identify services that are both high- and low-end users of CTOs. The expected results mean that the project team will be able to recommend improvements in systems, policy and law with the aim to reduce overall the use of coercive, corrective actions, and protect the rights of people accessing mental health care.



OUTCOMES

The team have acquired administrative health data and completed law and policy analysis across jurisdictions. They have also established two advisory panels: the Lived Experience Advisory Panel and the International Advisory Panel. These advisory panels are guiding the project team on the realities faced by individuals affected by CTOs and are shaping research methodologies providing valuable insights into relevant mental health policies and legal contexts globally. In 2024, the FACTORS team will share their findings with a global audience at an international symposium and will keep contributing to the conversation around the implications that CTOs have for human rights.

“This research will make a difference and stop the violation of human rights still taking place in plain view posing as health options.”

Mental health advocate, Australia

“It is an important topic and project and will support advocacy and policy reform.”

Social work academic, Monash University

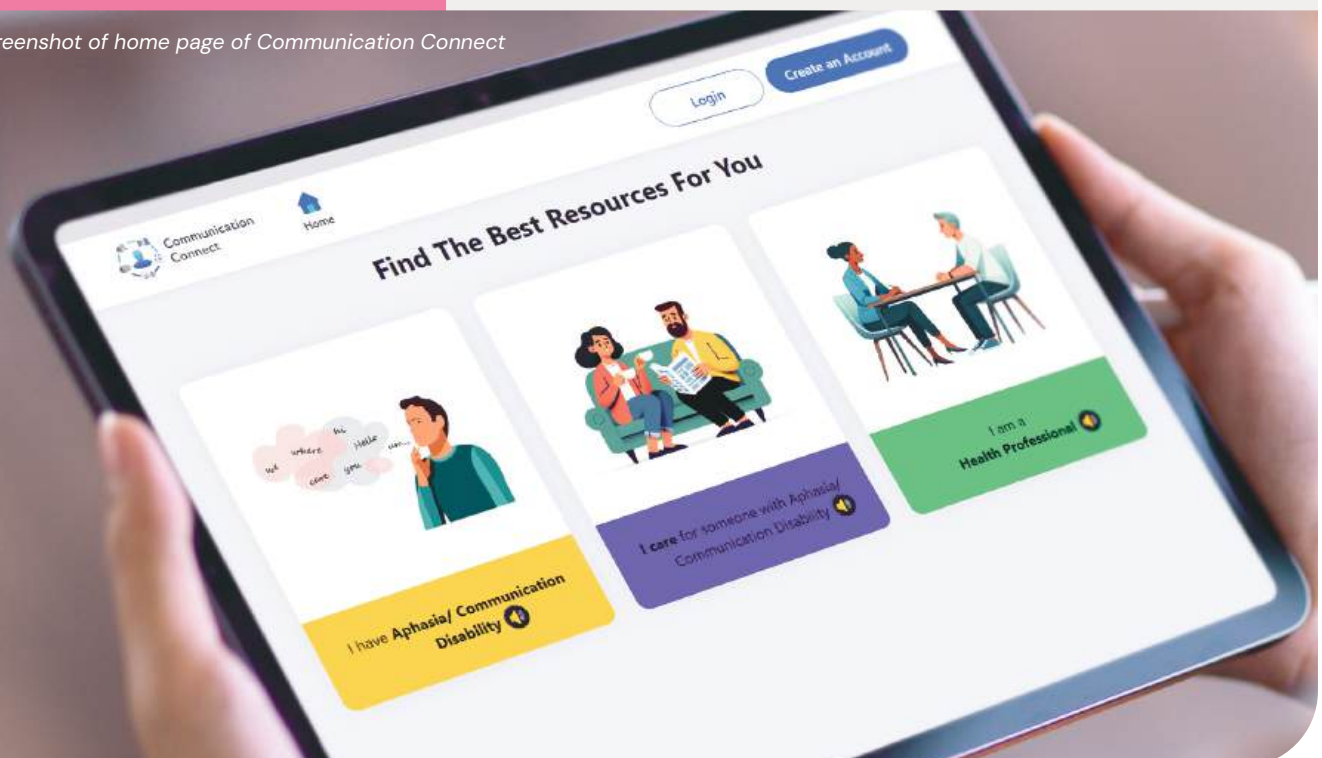


CONNECT AND THRIVE: CREATING A SUPPORTING ECOSYSTEM FOR THOSE WITH COMMUNICATION DISABILITIES

Approximately 250,000 Australians live with communication disabilities from stroke and traumatic brain injury. This affects every aspect of daily life, including their mental health, employment, social participation and family functioning. Without easily navigable support, stroke survivors and carers describe a “daunting black hole” and becoming “lost in the system.” Communication Connect is a comprehensive solution to living with a communication disability; providing rehabilitation, support and self-management.

Project title:	Communication Connect
Chief Investigators:	Professor Miranda Rose, Professor Daminda Alahakoon, Associate Professor Dana Wong, Associate Professor Annie Hill
Timeline:	2021 to 2025
Location:	Bendigo, Sydney and Brisbane
Study population:	People with communication disabilities from stroke or brain injury and health professionals
Partners:	Bendigo Health; Royal Rehab, Sydney; Metro North Health and Metro South Health, Brisbane
Funding:	National Health and Medical Research Council

Screenshot of home page of Communication Connect





CONTEXT

People with communication disabilities often don't receive the long-term services and support they need once they leave hospital, which negatively impacts their recovery and quality of life for both the individual and their family. Survivors of stroke or traumatic brain injuries are typically funded for a short period of rehabilitation and then discharged into the community, which is at odds with their need for long-term, ongoing care. Previous research has not been integrated with or translated into clinical, community and self-managed care. Little has also been previously achieved to harness available technology to support survivors and carers for the emotional challenges of recovery. Communication Connect addresses head on these challenges such as a lack of person-centred care, support for carers and tackling the impacts of mental health and psychological well-being for survivors and their families.



APPROACH

Communication Connect aims to alleviate the difficulties that people living with communication disabilities encounter by creating an online support network and resource repository that encourages self-sufficiency and eases carer burden. The lived experience of survivors and caregivers alongside expertise from healthcare professionals from Bendigo Health, Royal Rehab and Metro North and South Health has enabled the co-design of a range of solutions to common challenges. The development of the AI application was complemented by in depth solution generation workshops across all sites ensuring that real priorities were addressed. These solutions are to be housed in single web-based, artificial intelligence-enabled portal, carefully designed to be communicative, accessible and a user-friendly space to access tools such as carer resources, peer support, rehabilitation services, and mental health and well-being support.

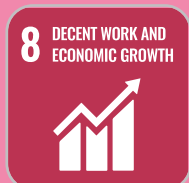


OUTCOMES

The development of the Communication Connect platform is nearing completion and will be ready for trial in the second half of 2024. It incorporates a portal for carers with an online module that guides them through helpful coping strategies; an interactive self-assessment tool for clinicians to determine just how person-centred their care is and suggestions for improvements; and a Mood Tracker app that allows survivors to rate their emotions using visual representations rather than text. Following the trial of the platform, the aim is to scale up the number of users and locations where it is offered, eventually becoming a clearinghouse for other resources that are being developed and a go-to platform for people with communication disabilities, their families and their health professionals.

"It's a great large-scale study and Bendigo Health is the only regional and only Victorian site to take part. The team of researchers is phenomenal and it's an amazing opportunity for our speech pathology and the community."

Bendigo Health Speech Pathology and Audiology manager, Tracy Sheldrick



IMPLEMENTING THE INDIGO 4MS IN RURAL PRIMARY CARE TO IMPROVE COMPREHENSIVE CARE PLANNING FOR OLDER PEOPLE

This project aims to evaluate the effectiveness and implementation of the Indigo 4Ms Tool in improving comprehensive care planning for older people. The Indigo 4Ms Tool is a cognitive aid co-designed by rural community, health, and aged care stakeholders. It structures conversations between older people and health clinicians to address evidence-based, prevention-oriented actions across four multi-disciplinary areas of health care (What matters, medications, mobility, and mental health). The tool is based on the Institute for Health Improvement's 4Ms and the World Health Organisation's Integrated Care for Older People guidelines and modified for use in Australian rural settings.

Project title:

Implementing the Indigo 4Ms in rural primary care to improve comprehensive care planning for older people

Chief Investigators:

Dr Rachel Winterton
Dr Kathleen Brasher
Dr Mark Ashcroft

Timeline:

July 2023 – June 2026

Location:

North East Victoria

Study population:

Rural health services, primary health care clinicians and older people across rural communities in north-east Victoria

Partners:

Beechworth Health Service, Tallangatta Health Service, Corryong Health, Gateway Health, Alpine Health, Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care

Funding:

Department of Health and Aged Care





CONTEXT

The role of integrated care in addressing older people's health and social care needs is promoted across global policy contexts. In rural settings, this is important given ongoing challenges associated with service availability, and heightened rates of potentially preventable hospitalisations, chronic disease and injury. While integrated age-friendly care frameworks are gaining traction across international contexts, these models of care were commonly developed and are delivered in urban, acute health systems. Less is known about how integrated, age-friendly health care can be provided in the Australian rural policy and practice context.



APPROACH

The Indigo 4Ms Tool will be implemented in diverse primary care settings across five rural health services across north-east Victoria. An implementation plan, informed by implementation science and quality improvement, will be executed in these settings. Primary care clinicians will be provided with education and support to use the tool in care planning with older people who receive their services.



OUTCOMES

It is anticipated that implementing the Indigo 4Ms will improve comprehensive care planning for older people, extend health workforce scope of practice and deliver economic benefits when compared with usual care. The success of the project in meeting these outcomes will be assessed through a comprehensive evaluation process, which will also identify strategies that enhance implementation of the Indigo 4Ms tool that can be applied to other settings.



3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



GREENCONNECT DEMENTIA RESPITE PROJECT

GreenConnect Dementia Respite Project is pioneering innovative dementia respite care in the Loddon-Mallee regions, offering nature-based activities, and accommodation within dementia-inclusive settings outside traditional respite accommodation in residential aged care facilities. This groundbreaking initiative is led by a consortium of organisations dedicated to enhancing respite services for individuals with dementia in rural and regional Victoria and their carers by integrating natural environments and green spaces.

Project title:	The GreenConnect Dementia Respite Project: An Innovative Respite Care for People with Dementia and their Caregivers
Chief Investigators:	Dr Tshepo Rasekaba Professor Irene Blackberry Associate Professor Sean MacDermott
Timeline:	May 2023 to June 2026
Location:	Loddon Mallee region of Victoria, Australia
Study population:	People living with early-stage dementia and their carers across Loddon Mallee Region from Bendigo and Heathcote to Mildura and Merbein in Victoria.
Partners:	Heathcote Dementia Alliance, Heathcote Health, Princes Court Ltd and Rural Care Australia Ltd.
Funding:	Department of Health and Aged Care

GreenConnect clients on excursion to local nature reserve.





CONTEXT

Many people with dementia live in the community until they require advanced care. Family and friends often become primary informal carers. As dementia progresses, care becomes more demanding, affecting the quality of life and increasing the burden of care. Respite services provide relief for the person with dementia and carer dyads. However, current respite services in Australia mainly residential aged care respite. Experts advocate for incorporating green care respite, involving nature and green environments, into person-centred care interventions as it has been shown to significantly improve the wellbeing of individuals, including people with dementia. Carers also benefit from rest from caring responsibilities, opportunities for social connections, and participation in meaningful activities while having reassurance about their loved one's wellbeing. Despite its positive impact on wellbeing, evidence green care in dementia is limited regarding its ability to delay permanent residential care entry for the people with dementia. A first for the Loddon-Mallee regions, The GreenConnect Dementia Respite Project is an innovative pilot project aiming to improve the quality of life for people with dementia, to reduce the burden of care for carers, and enhance the respite experiences through nature-based activities and accommodation, all within dementia-inclusive environments. Targeting carers and people who are in the early stages of dementia, the GreenConnect Dementia Respite Project responds to gaps in current short- and long-term respite care services and day activities by providing support and respite experiences outside residential aged care facilities, tailored to individual's needs.



APPROACH

The GreenConnect Dementia Respite Project's care model is shaped by a co-design research approach, conducted during the formative stages through focus groups with formal and informal carers of people with dementia and workshop with the Project Steering Group comprises research academics, dementia researchers, community members, representation from indigenous organisations, LGBTIQ+ agencies, peak bodies and the project consortium members. This model of care considers various elements such as patient and carer needs, resources, and desired outcomes. It draws from the principles and key components of person-centred approaches, collaborative and continuous care, personnel and stakeholder training, screening and assessment/diagnosis, care planning, diverse green care-themed respite activities to foster care partners' choice, and robust evaluation. A mixed-method approach, including quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, and focus group discussions, will be used to evaluate the Project, guided by the RE-AIM (Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation and Maintenance) framework.



OUTCOMES

The formative co-design phase of the project completed in January 2024 and the project was officially launched in April 2024. A La Trobe team from the John Richards Centre for Rural Ageing Research and the Care Economy Research Institute have led the development of and will carry out a RE-AIM guided project evaluation framework of the GreenConnect Dementia Respite Project will be evaluated using the RE-AIM framework. Project formative work team will be presented at four national and international ageing and dementia conferences in Australia and overseas in the last half of 2024. Additionally, a manuscript based on the co-design work is under development for a peer-reviewed journal publication.





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CERI acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of this land where we work and live. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present. Always was, always will be.



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