CRE

OPTIMISING CARE IN THE HOME FOR OLDER AUSTRALIANS

Centre of Research Excellence



NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to the first newsletter from the Centre of Research Excellence (CRE) in Optimising Care in the Home for Older Australians, funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and based at Flinders University.

Led by Professor Gillian Harvey with research partners from Flinders University, National Ageing Research Institute (NARI), the Registry of Senior Australians (ROSA), and Silverchain, our CRE brings together researchers, older people, carers, health and aged care professionals, service providers and policy makers to address critical gaps in knowledge about the care needs of older Austalians living at home

Background to our research

What is a Centre of Research Excellence?

- $3 million NHMRC funding for 5 years
- Supports collaborative research aimed at improving health outcomes, translating research into policy and practice, and developing research capacity



CRE investigators and staff, February 2026

Current challenges in aged care:

- People aged 85+ projected to be more than one million by 2042
- Over 70% receive government funded care
- The aged care system is reactive, responding to problems such as falls, frailty, loss of independence *after* they've occurred
- Less focus on delaying or preventing problems, which increases pressure on the health system
- Older people receiving long-term home care are higher users of health care than those in residential care, including acute hospital services, emergency department presentations, and potentially avoidable hospital admissions

Addressing these challenges requires a stronger evidence base about how care can best be delivered in the home. The CRE was established to help meet this need. Our research focuses on helping people in receipt of Commonwealth funded home support to remain living well at home for as long as possible.

Through four interconnected streams of work we will explore, implement and evaluate innovative solutions to address current and future challenges, generating evidence and examining how that evidence can successfully be translated into the health and aged care systems.



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Seed funding

We are excited to be able to offer seed funding for small projects that demonstrate feasibility of solutions to identified problems in providing care to older Australians living at home.



Our first round of funding is planned for early 2027. If you're interested, check our website, follow us on socials and sign up to our network to ensure you don't miss this opportunity.

Further seed funding rounds will be offered later in the life of the CRE, so watch this space!

What's shaping our sector?

The CRE's work is being done in the context of major policy changes occurring in Australia. Aged care is increasingly delivered in people's homes rather than residential facilities, reflecting older people's strong preference to remain independent for as long as possible, and government policy.

Significant policy reforms in aged care include the new Aged Care Act and the Support at Home program, which provides long-term aged care at home, both of which were introduced in November 2025. The Support at Home program has been the subject of ongoing critique and investigation, particularly around the design and implementation of the single assessment system, which acts as a gateway to aged care service provisions. Initial plans to integrate the Commonwealth Health Support Program (CHSP) into Support at Home have also been revised, with an agreement that the current CHSP program should be continued until at least June 2029.

Amidst this changing policy context, it is vital to keep examining, tracking and improving the experiences of older people who depend upon the aged care system.



Spotlight on: Professor Tracy Comans



Professor Comans is the Director of CRE partner, the National Ageing Research Institute (NARI). As the national leader in ageing research, NARI produces research evidence to improve and promote best practice in the health and aged care systems. NARI also engages in policy and advocacy, and educational work. Tracy is also Professor in the School of Public Health, University of Queensland and Honorary Professor, University of Melbourne.

Tracy is a physiotherapist with over 20 years' experience in hospital and community settings working in geriatric and rehabilitation physiotherapy with embedded research. She also has extensive experience as an academic health economist. With a unique perspective spanning clinical practice, evidence, and policy, Tracy works closely with industry, people with lived experience, and health care providers to develop a program of work focused on improving the quality of aged care services. She has been instrumental in shaping aged care policy, including informing and influencing implementation of the Aged Care Royal Commission recommendations and advancements in reporting of the quality of aged care services.

Tracy co-leads key CRE work developing methods for aged care policy evaluation which will enable real-time feedback across both the health and aged care sectors as the significant aged care policy changes in Australia are rolled out.



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CRE launch event highlights

On 1 October 2026, the CRE was officially launched at the Health and Medical Research Building at Flinders University. The event brought together more than 80 attendees in person and over 30 online, reflecting the strong interest in improving care for older Australians living at home.

We were honoured to have Ms Louise Miller-Frost, Federal Member for Boothby open the event, representing the Federal Minister for Health and Ageing. We were also honoured to have Mr Ian Yates, Chair of the Flinders Ageing Alliance Advisory Council and former Inspector General of Aged Care present a keynote address.



Ms Louise Miller-Frost opening the afternoon

The event provided an opportunity to introduce members of the CRE research team, outline the planned program of work and discuss opportunities for collaboration and involvement.



Mr Ian Yates presenting the key note address

A highlight of the event was the panel discussion facilitated by Professor Tracy Comans, Director of the National Ageing Research Institute.

The insightful discussion explored the question: **How do we reshape aged care to better support people to age well in the community?** The panel included members of the CRE's external advisory board from Ageing Australia, Multicultural Aged Care SA, Flinders Ageing Alliance, the Older Persons' Advocacy Network, and SA Health. Key discussion points included:

- making better use of funding
- improving access to services regardless of location
- simplifying the aged care system
- ensuring equitable and culturally appropriate services and information
- the role of aged care providers, primary care, and the NDIS in supporting aged care system reform
- ensuring that older people are at the centre of care.



Prof Tracy Comans faciliating the panel discussion



Prof Gill Harvey introducing the CRE research collaborative



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Flinders University
NARI NATIONAL AGEING RESEARCH INSTITUTE
Bringing research to life
ROSA REGISTRY OF SENIOR AUSTRALIANS
DEAKIN UNIVERSITY
silverchain

Opportunities to get involved

Melbourne Aged Care Collaborative/CRE Research in Ageing Skills Workshop

When: Wednesday 18 November 2026
Time: 12.30 - 4.40pm
Where: National Ageing Research Institute, Parkville Victoria

Melbourne Ageing Research Collaboration (MARC) in partnership with our CRE are conducting a workshop about the important aspects of conducting research with older people. This workshop will include members of the National Ageing Research Institute (NARI) Community Advisory Panel and provide opportunities for those new to research in ageing, including older people, practitioners/clinicians, academics and policy makers.
Find out more and register for this workshop: **NARI/CRE Research in Ageing Workshop**

CRE Fellowships

Funding for several fellowships is one of our key initiatives towards building research translation capacity.

Clinical/practitioner researcher fellowships will provide clinicians and practitioners with opportunities to work within CRE teams, participate in CRE training and mentoring events and, if relevant, receive supervision for a Masters research degree.

Policy fellowships will be offered to researchers affiliated with the CRE who have an interest in policy analysis, translation, and communicating research findings in a compelling and accessible way to influence policy decisions.

Editorial fellowships will be available, working with the Medical Journal of Australia for researchers interested in learning skills in publication and science communication.

Fellowship opportunities will be advertised via our website.

CRE Indigenous Scholarship

The purpose of this scholarship is to enable an Indigenous student to undertake a program of study that will contribute to the CRE research initiatives to improve home care for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Further information can be found here **CRE Indigenous Scholarship**