

Health and care in aged care

Enhancing quality of care for people living in aged care



“The purpose of the aged care system must be to ensure that older people have an entitlement to high quality aged care and support and that they receive it. Such care and support must be safe and timely and assist older people to live an active, self-determined and meaningful life in a safe and caring environment that allows for dignified living in old age.”

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety (2021) Final Report

The challenge

Many Australians are entering the residential aged care system later in their lives, often at a time when they are frail or have chronic or complex health conditions, including high levels of dementia. **The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety (2021)* called for a person-centred approach** to ensure each person’s physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual needs are met.

Much work still needs to be done to address issues such as **access to care, management of comorbidity and complex conditions, new models of care, and workforce capability and capacity** to ensure our residential aged care system can support people to age healthily.

Aged care in Australia



1 in 3
people experienced **substandard care** in residential aged care and home care services*



190,000+
people **living in Residential Aged Care** in 2023**



1 in 2
people living in residential aged care **have dementia**

Our impact

Research can play a vital role in helping inform Australia’s residential aged care (RAC) sector as it embraces the major changes recommended by the Royal Commission to transform to a person-centred approach, so all residents can live happier and healthier lives.

Through our Living Labs program, we are involved in diverse projects collaborating with residents, staff, RAC providers and families, including **developing better models of care; preventing and managing infection controls; improving communication transfer of a resident’s health needs when they enter hospital; enhancing diagnosis of dementia; and creating a collaborative network bridging research with the sector and community.**

References

* Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, (2021), Aged Care Royal Commission Final Report: Summary, p.80. Available at: <https://www.royalcommission.gov.au/system/files/2021-03/final-report-executive-summary.pdf>

** KPMG Australian aged care sector analysis and report 2024. Available at <https://kpmg.com/au/en/home/insights/2024/06/aged-care-market-analysis>

How the NCHA is impacting change

Some of our leading health and care in aged care researchers and projects



L-R: Prof Helen Rawson, Prof Philip Russo, Dr Katrina Long, A/Prof Nadine Andrew, A/Prof Libby Callaway

Optimising information exchange between residential aged care and hospitals

When aged care residents are transferred to hospital, sharing critical health information is essential for coordinated care. However, many providers struggle with effective data transfer due to inconsistent data quality and inadequate infrastructure.

A key impact: A Digital Health Summary sharing important medical information from residential aged care that is accessible to residents, carers, GPs, aged care staff, paramedics, and hospital staff, facilitating consistent and timely information-sharing.

Residential Aged Care Research Network (RACReN)

Developed in partnership with aged care partners and stakeholders, RACReN provides two-way engagement between researchers and those involved in the residential and community aged care sectors. The network collaborates to identify research priorities, co-produce research and translate evidence-based innovations into practice.

An Australian-first, the network has more than 180 members including aged care providers, peak bodies, consumers, and clinicians.

A key impact: In 2024, RACReN brought together the aged care and research sectors to collaborate on 16 diverse research projects addressing major issues in healthy ageing.

Building capacity to prevent and manage infections in residential aged care (A-PRECISE study)

The leading cause of morbidity and mortality for residents of aged care homes is healthcare-associated infections. With residents and their families, staff, and residential aged care providers, the study is co-designing, testing, and evaluating an electronic surveillance tool and educational resources for staff and consumers to optimise infection control practices.

A key impact: An Australian-first electronic surveillance tool for data collection of healthcare-associated infections in residential aged care.

Environment and behaviour mapping in residential aged care: Evidence to inform built, technology and workforce design

In response to Royal Commission recommendations, this project gathers evidence on design, technology, and workforce strategies to improve outcomes for older Australians in residential aged care. Over four phases, it will identify barriers and develop new guidelines and principles focused on accessibility, inclusivity, and technology integration to enhance care quality.

A key impact: Evidence-informed consumer and industry education resources will be created along with new tools for aged care providers and Government to ensure more effective design standards are implemented.



Looking ahead

Working together through partnerships, collaborations, and investment, we can have a greater impact in transforming health and care for all Australians. Our world-class researchers are creating impactful change by developing innovative solutions to the most pressing issues in healthy ageing.

Connect with us today and help change people's lives!