

Conversations About Care

THE RIGHT TO BE HEARD

aged care workers are equipped with the resources and training they need to help raise the voiceSM

LIVED EXPERIENCE IS AT THE HEART OF THE PROJECT

Now in its second year, the five year 'Conversations about Care' project is using a method called Experience-Based Co-Design to explore the experiences of people who receive and provide aged care services. To date, UQ and doctoral researchers Dr Michelle King, Dr Asmita Manchha, Dr Zhang Ng and PhD candidate Bridget Burton have conducted 60 interviews in community and residential aged care services across metropolitan, regional and remote areas of Australia.

The insights gained from these interviews are informing the co-design of a multi-component intervention, comprising:

- A tool for providing communication support needs
- Web-based communication partner training for aged care workers
- Picture-based resources to support conversations about care and
- Guidelines for 'communicator friendly' care planning, feedback and complaints resolution, and support for decision-making.

With the support of a UQ student, PhD candidate Bridget Burton has heard first-hand the difference that good communication can make to the lives of older Australians.

Many older Australians who receive aged care services have unmet communication needs, placing them at risk of poor health, adverse events, and even abuse and neglect. With the support of a \$2 million grant from the Medical Research Future Fund Dementia, Ageing, and Aged Care Mission, Associate Professor Sarah Wallace and her team from UQ's Queensland Aphasia Research Centre are working to co-design, implement, and evaluate an interdisciplinary, multi-component intervention to support better communication in aged care.

"Communication is a human right and a human need. Our National Aged Care Quality Standards state that consumers must be supported to participate in decisions, care planning, decision-making, feedback and complaints, irrespective of ability." Associate Professor Wallace says.

"But it can be very difficult to express a decision, raise a concern or make a complaint when you have difficulty communicating. Through our research, we are working to ensure that all older Australians have a voice and that

Researchers from The University of Queensland (UQ) are starting a conversation about communication in aged care.

COMMUNICATION IS A HUMAN RIGHT

Almost one million older Australians have a communication disorder that affects their ability to understand and to be understood. Communication is how we send and receive information. It occurs most often through speech, listening, reading and writing, but also through gesture, behaviour, facial expressions and touch. Communication is integral to healthy and active ageing. It allows us to connect with other people, express our preferences and decisions, and critically, to tell others when something is wrong.

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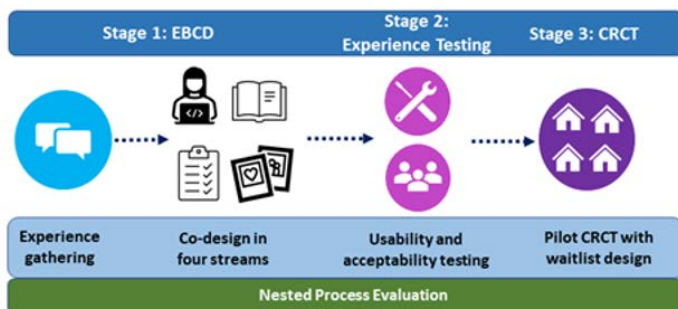
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Lived and Living Experience Advisory Group members Sarah Wallis and Gemma Darling share their perspectives at the project planning day.

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Communication is how we express our needs, feelings, and choices and how we tell someone that something is wrong. More than 400,000 older Australians need support with their communication.



Conversations about Care is a five year project **co-designing interventions** to support communication for people using aged care services in Australia. It has five aims:

- o **Understanding** key conversations and communication support needs in aged care
- o Developing a tool to **identify communication support needs** of people using aged care services
- o Building **training in communication partner skills** for the aged care workforce
- o Embedding communication support in aged care by **developing guidelines** for communication, decision-making, and feedback and complaints, including the investigation of complaints
- o **Evaluating the effectiveness** and implementation of each intervention



The **Conversations About Care** team is led by Associate Professor Sarah Wallace, with post-doctoral researchers Dr Michelle King and Dr Asmita Manchha, and PhD candidate Bridget Burton. The project is funded by a 5-year Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) Dementia, Ageing and Aged Care grant. If you are interested in finding out more, contact the team at conversationsaboutcareproject@uq.edu.au to be added to our newsletter.

