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People living with dementia find joy with customised technology

Dementia Australia has found people living with dementia and their carers can benefit from technology when it is customised to meet their unique needs and goals.

Maree McCabe, CEO Dementia Australia said the finding came from a Dementia Australia two-year study into how technology can be tailored to support people living with dementia.

“Dementia Australia’s study discovered that there are benefits to asking what problems or frustrations a person living with dementia is experiencing and then exploring how technology can be customised to address these concerns,” Ms McCabe said.

“Sometimes off-the-shelf technology like apps and augmented reality headsets are not appropriate for people living with dementia. For example, the headset may be too heavy to wear or disorientating.

“Through the study, Dementia Australia was able to explore how we can modify technology such as apps, smart-home devices and iPads so they can be of the most use possible to people living with dementia and their carers.”

Almost 30 people living with dementia or mild cognitive impairment participated in the study. Each participant was questioned about their everyday frustrations and ideas they had for improving their quality of life. All participants then received personalised technology to help address their challenges or to help them achieve their goals.

This included building apps to help make playing music and audiobooks more accessible and dementia-friendly. One tailored solution was placing a GPS tracker on a participant’s pet dog who never leaves their side so family would know the location of both owner and dog in case of emergency.

Through the project, one participant, Rob Riddoch has found improvement in his quality of life through the introduction of an iPad and an Alexa virtual assistant to help with daily reminders.

“The reminders on my iPad include all of my appointments and activities, and because it is visual, I don’t have to think about it, I just get reminded,” Rob said.

“The more you can do with technology, the less others need to do. That element works well for me and for others.”

The study project was funded by the Australian Commonwealth Government Dementia and Aged Care Services (DACs) Fund. DACs supports emerging priorities and challenges in aged care, focusing on areas such as dementia.

The project was presented by Dementia Australia at the [Alzheimer’s Association International Conference](#) in Los Angeles in July 2019.



Dementia Australia is the source of trusted information, education and services for the estimated half a million Australians living with dementia, and the almost 1.6 million people involved in their care. We advocate for positive change and support vital research. We are here to support people impacted by dementia, and to enable them to live as well as possible. No matter how you are impacted by dementia or who you are, we are here for you.

For support, please contact the **National Dementia Helpline on 1800 100 500**. An interpreter service is available and the Helpline is open 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday excluding public holidays. The National Dementia Helpline is funded by the Australian Government. People looking for information can also visit **dementia.org.au**

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When talking or writing about dementia please refer to [Dementia-Friendly Language Guidelines](#).