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The Virtual Forest interactive game recognised at the ITAC 2018 Awards

Dementia Australia has received a high commendation at the ITAC 2018 Awards for *Best solution that provides ongoing independence*. This is in recognition of the The Virtual Forest[™], a peaceful and enjoyable, immersive environment designed specifically to improve the quality of life for people living with dementia.

In collaboration with Lifeview Residential Care and their residents, Dementia Australia co-designed this experience to bring joy and happiness to people living with dementia in residential care. It features an expansive park-like setting with interactive elements users can control through natural, easy motions.

The theme of the ITAC 2018 Awards, *Co-Designing our Digital Future*, emphasises the importance of assistive technology supporting service quality and independence. It brought together IT leaders across the globe, from fields including community care, medication management, assistive technologies and offsite information systems delivery.

Dementia Australia Business Innovation Manager, Dr Tanya Petrovich said she was delighted with the recognition from ITAC, as the tool had already received overwhelmingly positive feedback since its release in December 2016.

"The objective was to develop a virtual environment that would engage the user in a calm environment that would also encourage reminiscence between the carer and the person living with dementia," said Dr Petrovich.

"It creates unique opportunities for participation, promotes social interaction, reduces restlessness and encourages upper limb movement. By opening up communication and connection between the person living with dementia and their carer, a better quality visit is experienced for all involved."

An evaluation by Griffith University showed it to be successful in fostering engagement and enjoyment. Lifeview Residential Care also conducted an evaluation which showed that the use of antipsychotic medications could be reduced with the use of The Virtual Forest[™].

Dementia Australia is leading the way in using virtual reality (VR) as a powerful tool for education in Aged Care, with the multi-award winning Virtual Dementia Experience[™], and more recently the Educational Dementia Immersive Experience (EDIE). For more information on how Dementia Australia are using technology to improve the lives of people living with dementia go to <https://dementialearning.org.au/technology/>.

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Dementia Australia is the national peak body and charity for people, of all ages, living with all forms of dementia, their families and carers. It provides advocacy, support services, education and information. An estimated 436,000 people have dementia in Australia. This number is projected to reach almost 1.1 million by 2058. Dementia Australia is the new voice of Alzheimer's Australia. Dementia Australia's services are supported by the Australian Government.

National Dementia Helpline 1800 100 500

Interpreter service available

(The National Dementia Helpline is an Australian Government Initiative)

Dementia is a National Health Priority Area

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