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## Media Release

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### Time Travelling with Technology Google Liquid Galaxy, Reminiscence Therapy and Dementia

Dementia is the third leading cause of death in Australia.

The condition affects more than 350,000 people nationwide and it is the single greatest cause of disability in Australians over the age of 65. There is no cure.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, without an urgent medical breakthrough, the number of people with dementia in the country is expected to grow to almost 900,000 in 2050.

In light of these statistics, Western Sydney researchers are getting on board to find a solution.

The MARCS Institute for Brain, Behaviour and Development at Western Sydney University, in collaboration with BaptistCare, is investigating the benefits of immersive technology in dementia care and cognitive decline in the ageing community.

Google Liquid Galaxy displays are being used as part of a six-week program of “Reminiscence Therapy”, whereby researchers use applications like Google Maps and Street View to steer a course through a series of landmarks to trigger memories and emotions in people with dementia, and seniors who may have experienced some long-term memory loss.

Cognitive psychologist from the MARCS Institute, Professor Kate Stevens, said the research goal was to assess if there were additional benefits of Reminiscence Therapy when coupled with the high tech immersive experience.

“Reminiscence Therapy involves using personal triggers, such as music, images or objects to recall life events and experiences,” she said.

“Some long-term memories may be intact and the triggers should help participants to recall past times that can be shared with family and carers.

“We want to explore how we can improve the quality of life, not only for Australians living with dementia and their carers, but also the ageing Australian population.

“This form of therapy provides an opportunity for participants to talk about their memories, with the added bonus of effectively promoting communication, reducing social isolation, improving mood, and helping to sustain relationships.”

Two research studies are being conducted at the BaptistCare Yallambi Centre and the BaptistCare Waldock Centre in Carlingford where the Google Liquid Display technology has been set up.

The set up includes realistic 2D and 3D visual environments used to intensify both the experience and effectiveness of the therapy.

Wrap around screens display still and moving images in high definition to elicit a sense of travel for the participants who feel as they are travelling through space and time.

The experience is non-invasive, enjoyable and engaging.



Acting Residential Manager for BaptistCare Yallambi, Caroline Gray, said the organisation was committed to exploring innovative approaches to dementia and aged care to improve the quality of life for residents and carers.

“From new technology to creative and artistic programs, we regularly use and evaluate new activities and research that may offer benefits for the day to day well-being of our residents,” she said.

Ms Gray said early observations indicated that this new form of Reminiscence Therapy may encourage some residents who were at risk of cognitive decline or living with dementia to engage in more social activity than usual.

“Following the therapy sessions, we noticed an increase in some of our residents’ willingness to engage socially around the centre.

“Some of our more withdrawn residents have been happy to remain in social areas and chat with other residents after therapy, so it is really pleasing to see that they are enjoying the experience.”

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### Project details

The *Time Travelling with Technology* project is a joint collaboration between The MARCS Institute for Brain, Behaviour and Development at Western Sydney University and BaptistCare.

The lead investigator on this project is Professor Kate Stevens, with associate investigators Professor Deborah Parker and Andrew Leahy.

This research has been funded by the Dementia Collaborative Research Centres for a 12 month period.

### For more information

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