

Living Longer, Ageing Well

Investing for older Victorians

2024/25 Budget
Submission



Living longer, ageing well

As Victoria's population ages, we can expect more people to live to a very old age. But the reality is that, on average, each person will spend more than a decade in ill-health. Through continued investment into medical research on ageing, and its translation into better health care models and practices, we can ensure that older Victorians – especially women, who represent a majority of older people – spend less time in hospital; and more time staying active, connected, and living where they want to live.

The National Ageing Research Institute (NARI) is Australia's leading independent, non-profit medical research centre dedicated to ageing, health and aged care research. We specialise in translational research, accelerating change in policy and practice.

Historically, NARI has received almost one third of its revenue from the Victorian Government.

Lapsing funding is currently putting the important work of NARI and the government-initiated, NARI-led Melbourne Ageing Research Collaboration (MARC) in jeopardy.



Our priorities

Our priorities for the 2024/25 Victorian Budget are focused on investing in the health and wellbeing of older Victorians so that, as people live longer, they can age well.

A \$5.5 million investment over 3 years will ensure that the Victorian Government continues to be the preeminent provider of innovative and sustainable health, wellbeing and aged care services that are focused on supporting older Victorians to be the healthiest and safest in the world.



2024/25 Victorian Budget Priorities

PRIORITY

1

Supporting innovation to enable older Victorians to age well

A program of translational research, guided by the professional and personal experience of NARI's well-established community advisory group, will help the Victorian Government, healthcare sector, and wider community enable people to age well, including better support for carers in their vital role keeping Victorians living healthier and at home for longer.

An investment of **\$5.5 million over 3 years** will:

- Fund collaborative translational research projects that focus on preventive measures in empowering older Victorians to age well, including:
 - i. *keeping older Victorians safe in the community* by avoiding preventable falls, reducing emergency department presentations and hospital admissions in regional and sub-regional areas
 - ii. *upskilling Victoria's health workforce* to reduce the risk of adverse events for older people in hospital, improving safe and quality experience of care, supporting earlier discharge and decreasing the incidence of occupational violence and aggression (OVA);
 - iii. *guiding Victoria's implementation of the National Dementia Action Plan* to improve the experience of Victorians living with dementia and their carers
 - iv. *addressing social isolation amongst Victorian carers* from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds
- Strengthen Victoria's medical research workforce capacity building; and
- Drive future financial sustainability for NARI by exploring commercialisation opportunities.

PRIORITY

2

Ensuring a safe, fit-for-purpose environment for translational research into ageing

NARI is presently housed in buildings that are more than 100 years old at Royal Melbourne Hospital (RMH) Royal Park campus. The premises are not suitable for modern workplace accommodation and are no longer compliant with electrical, fire, and other building safety standards – putting our researchers, professional support staff, and visitors to NARI (including volunteers, research participants and visiting national/international academics) at significant risk.

The Victorian Government has an opportunity to secure the long-term future of NARI, the first academic centre in Australia focused on research and ageing, by confirming our tenancy as part of the new Arden Medical Precinct, complementing the new Home-Based Care Hub.

PRIORITY

3

Reforming Victorian Government support to recognise the true cost of medical research

As a member of the Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes (AAMRI), NARI joins the collective request from Victorian-based independent medical research institutes for the Victorian Government to increase the financial assistance available to co-fund critical services that underpin the research conducted in Melbourne's world-leading medical research precincts. Indirect costs – such as data storage and security, practice-change initiatives, and workforce development – are not funded through research grants. Further investment is key to maintaining the end-user benefit for which NARI is renowned.

NARI: making a measurable difference

About NARI

Founded in 1976 the National Ageing Research Institute (NARI) is a Victorian-based independent medical research institute, highly respected across the health, aged care and research sectors in Australia and internationally.

With a strong focus on translational research – from healthy ageing through to end-of-life, across all services and settings – NARI makes a measurable difference to the lives of older people and those who care for them.

Our work

As the national leader in ageing research, we produce tools and resources to influence government policies, improve health and aged care systems and inspire best practice in the care of older people.

Our work is underpinned by effective and meaningful collaboration, engagement and co-design with a range of key stakeholders to understand and respond to identified need. We bring together the expertise of industry leaders, advocacy groups, academics, clinical experts, world-class educators and older people themselves to influence and shape the agenda; providing a bridge between academia,

policy and practice by translating research into accessible evidence and knowledge to enable informed decision-making by government, service providers and clinicians. This has positive health, wellbeing, social, cultural, environmental, and economic impacts for individuals and the Victorian community.

Current priorities for ageing research include a focus on diversity and inclusion, particularly relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people living in regional and sub-regional areas, the LGBTQI+ community and those from CALD backgrounds, as well as tackling growing societal issues such as an increasing prevalence of elder abuse and challenges in recruiting and retaining a capable and resourced health and aged care workforce to meet the needs of Victoria's ageing population.

Strategically positioned between government, academia, clinicians, industry and the community, NARI is able to support the health and aged care sectors, and community service providers, tackle the challenges they face in the provision of quality care to older people by rapidly translating research into policy and practice.



Key areas of improvement

Improvements to the lives of older people, and those who care for them, have been achieved thanks to translational research conducted by NARI in key areas including:

- Healthy ageing
- Falls and balance
- Continence
- Pain
- Nutrition
- Dementia
- Ageism
- Cultural Diversity
- Carer education and support
- Psychosocial and mental health
- Elder abuse
- Health and aged care systems evaluation
- Evidence-informed model of care development

Our researchers

NARI houses a diverse and accomplished team of researchers who are at the forefront of investigating and addressing the complex challenges associated with ageing. With backgrounds in public health, health administration, anthropology, sociology, nursing, and allied health, the NARI team is driven by an unwavering commitment to improving the lives of older people. Expertise in mixed-methods and co-design allows NARI to tackle deep-seated issues such as discrimination and stigma and the interplay of multiple physical, social, psychological and environmental factors which impact on older people and their families and carers.



CASE STUDY: Melbourne Ageing Research Collaboration (MARC)

In 2014, NARI established the Melbourne Ageing Research Collaboration (MARC) – a unique and innovative model of collaboration between health, community and aged care providers, researchers, universities, advocacy groups and consumers, all of whom have a passionate commitment to improving the lives of older people. It aims to prevent the localised challenges of an ageing population being tackled haphazardly and inefficiently, in isolation, or with duplication of effort.

MARC adopts a co-design approach to ensure rapid and effective translation of research into policy and practice. We seek to improve ageing-related knowledge, skills and understanding among researchers, the health and aged care workforce, policymakers and the general public to ultimately create systemic, sustainable and scalable change.

To date, the NARI-led MARC team has conducted 18 research projects in areas such as dementia, falls and mental health, disseminating information into over 120 care settings. We have also hosted 40 education events and public forums, reaching 4000+ individuals, to highlight ageing-related matters and bridge the divide between research, policy and practice.



Melbourne
Ageing Research
Collaboration



Department
of Health



Western Health

CASE STUDY: Older People in Hospital (OPIH) Toolkit

Developed by NARI in collaboration with the Victorian Department of Health, Victorian health services, academic institutions and peak bodies, the OPIH toolkit provides clinical staff with evidence-based information and hands-on strategies to reduce the risk of harm, support timely discharge and improve health outcomes for older people in hospital.

The online toolkit, hosted on the Victorian Department of Health website, receives approximately 500,000 page-views annually and is accessed by health services, researchers, higher education providers and individuals across Australia as well as internationally.

It consists of 194 individual webpages organised into targeted care areas (including advance care planning, nutrition, pain and palliative care) and features learning modules, factsheets and case studies as well as a range of audio-visual resources.



Person-centre practice



Advance care planning



Assessment



Communication



Mobility, vigour and self-care



Nutrition



Swallowing



Cognition



Delirium



Dementia



Depression



Continence



Medication



Skin Integrity



Pain



A palliative approach to care

The Problem: Cost of our Ageing Population



The cost of our ageing population

The impact of Victoria's ageing population on government and the community is far-reaching.

Challenges for the health sector include the changing health profiles of patients, increased demand on health services, workforce shortages and rising costs. In particular, the expanding group of 'very old' people (aged 85 and over) in Victoria will result in a greater incidence of typical age-related health problems (e.g. arthritis, heart disease, and cancer) presenting to the healthcare system and potentially requiring residential aged care. These pressures will be compounded by the rapidly expanding '65 and over' age-bracket, who are predicted to experience a larger burden of lifestyle-related diseases (e.g. type 2 diabetes) compared to previous cohorts.

Societal changes among the next generation of older people – such as greater understanding and awareness of health issues, and expectations of health services – also pose additional challenges and may influence future models of care and service delivery.

With the number of Victorians aged 60 years and over expected to increase by 60% to 2.3 million people by around 2046, now is the time to invest in the research, policy development and practice change that will ensure that older Victorians spend less time unwell – less time being dependant, admitted to hospital or living in residential care – and more of their life living where they want to be.

Preventable falls placing Victorian hospitals under pressure

Each year, one-third of people aged over 65 years experiences a fall. 1 in 10 have multiple falls. Despite efforts to prevent falls in high-risk settings, including in the community, hospitals and residential aged care, the rates of death and hospitalisation due to falls-related injury continues to rise, especially among female Victorians aged 65 years and over.

Falls cause unintentional injuries, disability, and death among older Victorians, with 30% of falls resulting in injuries that require medical attention. In 2018-19, Australia spent \$4.3 billion on hospital costs, general practitioners, allied health, pharmaceuticals, and other medical services, to treat injuries due to falls.

Without the translation of evidence-based interventions into practice to prevent and reduce falls in Victoria, these costs are expected to increase exponentially as the population ages.

Challenges in caring for older Victorians living with dementia

Direct cost expenditure for people living with dementia in Victoria is currently more than \$2 billion. This is forecast to rise to over \$6 billion over the next 30 years.

While people living with dementia are 20% more likely to visit an emergency department than those without dementia, evidence suggests there is a lack of gerontology skills and understanding of dementia in the hospital setting. Clinicians report feeling challenged by the additional time and resources needed to manage this patient population. This results in poorer patient outcomes and additional costs to the health system.

With the number of Victorians with dementia increasing, it is imperative that government expenditure is efficiently allocated to research-backed interventions with the highest impact.

1

PRIORITY

Supporting innovation to enable older Victorians to age well

i. Collaborative translational research projects bridging the gap between evidence and practical application

NARI will build on the strategic research previously funded by the Victorian Government Department of Health, to support better coordination between Victorian health and aged care services, older people and their carers – enhancing the health and overall wellbeing of older Victorians. By leveraging our existing partnerships, NARI's proposed research program is uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between proven evidence and practical applications, ensuring that the latest advancements in research and evidence-based practice can directly benefit Victoria's ageing community.

A 3-year program of work across four streams will focus on preventive measures that will empower older people to age well and maintain their independence, reducing the burden on Victoria's health system and easing demand on residential aged care:



Staying Strong, Staying Steady, Staying Safe will increase participation of older people living in regional and sub-regional areas who are at risk of falling, and/or have experienced a recent fall, in evidence-based falls prevention programs.

This initiative will contribute to reducing the rates of emergency department presentations and hospital admissions due to falls among older Victorians.



Engaging, Educating and Empowering our Hospital Workforce will address the challenges associated with managing the acute care needs of Victoria's ageing population, including patients with behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD).

Upskilling Victoria's nursing, medical, and allied health workforce will reduce the risk of adverse events for older Victorians in hospital, support earlier discharge, improve patient experience and decrease the incidence of OVA.



Improving the Experience of People Living with Dementia will support Victoria's implementation of the Australian Government's National Dementia Action Plan.

NARI will develop, implement, and evaluate practical actions within the Victorian setting, based on those to be identified through the National Dementia Action Plan, to improve the experience of Victorians living with dementia, and that of their carers.



Caring for Carers will translate NARI's research and reduce the social isolation experienced by older carers from CALD backgrounds.

This initiative will improve the mental health and wellbeing of older Victorians who are caring for another person through evidence-based programs harnessing the impact of physical activity, peer support, and digital technologies.

ii. Medical research workforce capacity building

NARI plays a pivotal role enhancing the research capacity of the academic and health workforce, nurturing the next generation of Victoria's best and brightest researchers and clinicians through undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD student supervision; mentorship; and education programs. We also improve ageing-related knowledge, skills, and understanding among local researchers and Victoria's health workforce through the MARC model which delivers an annual symposium, professional development seminars, and public forums. NARI's MARC team also provide advice to Department of Health, and Victorian health services, through steering group meetings and project collaborations, resulting in better clinical care.

Funding to support medical research workforce capacity building will enable NARI to continue to foster the development of well-rounded scholars and clinicians able to tackle the complex, real-world issues facing older people, and have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of older Victorians. Additionally, it will assist the Victorian Government in its delivery of the *Health and Medical Research Strategy: 2022-2032*, including priorities to: "attract and prepare the next generation of researchers, retain talent through cross-disciplinary collaboration, and maintain – in NARI – a culturally inclusive institute that is also a model for gender equality in the medical research sector".

iii. Building financial sustainability

NARI recently commissioned work to identify opportunities to diversify its income through education and training, research, philanthropy, and other revenue streams. The long-term objective is that we evolve to generate 20% of our operating funds from commercial sources, an estimated \$1.2 million per annum.

Funding to build financial sustainability will enable NARI to scope and develop new revenue-generating programs for a sustainable future, including:

- A co-ordinated *health and aged care consultancy* service to improve the delivery of evidence-based practice in health, aged care and community services; and
- Development of an '*age-friendly*' *workplace certification tick* to validate and promote quality practice in supporting Australia's ageing population to remain in the workforce.

	(\$m)	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total
Translational research projects		1.1	1.3	1.3	-	3.7
Medical research workforce capacity building		0.3	0.3	0.3	-	0.9
Building financial sustainability		0.4	0.25	0.25	-	0.9
Total		1.8	1.85	1.85	-	5.5

2

PRIORITY

Ensuring a safe, fit-for-purpose environment for translational research into ageing

I. Existing premises are hazardous

NARI is presently housed across several buildings within the RMH Royal Park campus on a peppercorn lease. Some these buildings are more than 100 years old.

An assessment completed in June 2023 by independent expert workplace architectural consultancy, Marchese Partners, found the current premises are not suitable for modern workplace accommodation and are no longer compliant with electrical, fire, and other building safety standards. This puts NARI researchers, professional support services staff and visitors (including volunteers, research participants and visiting national/international academics) at significant risk.



RMH Royal Park Campus – NARI’s current tenancy

ii. The future of ageing research at Arden

The Victorian Government has an opportunity to secure the long-term future of Victoria’s world-class ageing research institute by confirming a tenancy for NARI as part of the new Arden Medical Precinct. A permanent home for NARI at Arden will support the new Home-Based Care Hub and back further collaboration with health and research partners to work on ways to better integrate teaching, training, and research with the care of older Victorians. This lease would be on substantially similar terms to the present agreement.

Whilst NARI has been heavily involved in the consultation and planning processes, a formal decision is yet to be confirmed to make this budget neutral investment in the research needed to support Victoria’s ageing population.



Proposed premises at the Arden Precinct

	(\$m)	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	TEI
NARI Arden Campus		-	-	-	-	TBC
Offset: RMH/RWH redevelopment						(2,338,000)
Total						0.0

3

PRIORITY

Reforming Victorian Government support to recognise the true cost of medical research

A significant challenge facing NARI and all independent medical research institutes in Victoria is the increasing difficulty of meeting the rapidly rising ‘indirect costs’ of research.

These costs – for things like consumer engagement, data storage and security, and translation including practice-change initiatives and workforce development – are not funded by research grants. However, they are essential to the delivery of the high-calibre research and the end-user benefit for which NARI is renowned.

NARI joins the AAMRI collective request from Victorian-based research entities to increase the Victorian Government funding available to independent medical research institutes by \$20 million per annum, building on the existing Operational Infrastructure Support (OIS) Program to co-fund critical services that support research to be conducted in Melbourne’s world-leading medical research precincts.

Bridging the gap between research grant funding and the true economic cost of research will allow Victoria to continue to lead the nation and remain globally competitive.



“For NARI, which has relatively recently been eligible for inclusion (since 2017), OIS funding has enabled us to grow our activities, impact and reach – more than doubling our research

income and capacity over that time. It has enabled retention of talented staff, further sophistication of research governance and management, increased ability to respond to national and international research opportunities, including the MRFF Missions and further development of our consumer engagement and knowledge translation platforms. OIS has enabled NARI, as a Victorian based institute, to lead collaboration and capacity building in ageing related research.”

Briony Dow, Director,
National Ageing Research Institute (NARI)



CASE STUDY:

Consumer-engagement in research delivers better care at home for Victorians living with dementia

70% of Australians with dementia currently live in the community. The quality of care they receive directly influences their capacity to remain living in their own home. But there is limited evidence-based support for effective models or interventions of home care.

The ‘Promoting Independence Through quality dementia Care at Home’ project (PITCH) sought to change that. NARI worked with people living with dementia, family carers, home care workers, managers, and researchers, to develop a dementia specialist training program for home care workers. The final training program was informed by consumer experiences of both receiving and delivering home care.

Through the PITCH project, NARI also developed a best practice model on how to facilitate the involvement of people living with dementia in translational research projects. The unique insights into the enablers and challenges of co-design with people living with dementia will make it easier for their voices to be heard in future and foster a better understanding of the conditions and requirements they have in order to help implement ideas.

Consumer engagement, and the dissemination of findings through industry conferences, webinars, and professional publications, are all indirect costs borne by NARI. The ability to change practice and improve the care of Victorians living at home with dementia is at risk without the support of government.



For further information regarding this submission, or to discuss the work of NARI and MARC, please contact NARI Director, Professor Briony Dow, on 0400 261 206 or via e-mail at b.dow@nari.edu.au.

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