



National Ageing Research Institute Highlights Report

2020/2021

Who we are

The National Ageing Research Institute (NARI) is Australia's leading independent research centre in the area of ageing and aged care research and specializes in translational research to accelerate change in practice and policy. As an independent, not-for-profit medical research institute, NARI has strong international and national links and has recognised expertise and impact in the field of ageing and aged care research.

For more than 45 years, NARI has produced nationally and internationally significant research to improve health outcomes and quality of life for older Australians and carers. Our research team includes public health experts, physiotherapists, psychologists, nurses, sociologists, anthropologists, and social workers, and we partner with geriatricians, psychiatrists, health economists, statisticians and other specialists.

We provide a bridge between academia, policy and practice and act as a conduit for applicable and accessible evidence and knowledge to inform practice and policy. For example, in 2021 NARI was commissioned by the Commonwealth Department of Health to bring together a Round Table of leading researchers in ageing from all around Australia to inform a national agenda of ageing and aged care research.

NARI is self-funded through multiple sources: competitive grant programs, public and private contracts, consultancies and philanthropy and is governed by an independent skills-based board.

NARI acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners of the land on which our offices are located. As a national organisation we recognise the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to lands, waters and communities throughout Australia. We pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders past and present.

In 2020-21, the COVID-19 pandemic, the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, and the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, all shed light on long-standing problems in our health and aged care systems. These problems were shown to hinder older people's rights and ability to maintain optimal health and experience a 'great' old age. During this period, and since, NARI provided evidence and knowledge to guide quality improvements in practice, systems, and policy.

Translation of knowledge to practice is the Achilles' heel of research, often taking decades. The NARI-led Melbourne Ageing Research Collaboration (MARC) is fast-tracking this process through research that is conducted with and for end-users, whether they be health professionals, policy makers, or older people.

NARI is also growing; in the year 2020-2021, NARI established new international collaborations and had a successful year obtaining investigator-driven NHMRC grants, as well as grants from a diverse range of funding sources. We were also very pleased to establish a new stream of international research, led by Associate Professor Tuan Nguyen.



A message from the President

Associate Professor
Michael Murray AM



A message from the Director

**Professor
Briony Dow**

In the face of another year disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, NARI has continued to grow our activity and reach. NARI is proud to have made an ongoing positive impact on the lives of older people, and the capacity of professionals to care for them.

I thank our funders, particularly the Victorian Department of Health, which continues to support our work to improve the health and wellbeing of older people.

NARI's work is underpinned by 5 research-focussed impact objectives:

- Conduct rigorous translational research with and for older people
- Enable and inspire best practice in health and aged care
- Influence government policy by providing the latest evidence
- Build Australia's capacity and ageing research
- Promote accurate information about ageing and older people

During July 2020 to July 2021, NARI undertook and completed many projects which fulfilled one or more of these objectives.

Projects were undertaken through four research divisions – Aged Care, Clinical Gerontology, Social Gerontology, and the Melbourne Ageing Research Collaboration (MARC) – and the Professional Development Unit. This report highlights examples of achievements across these divisions. Despite the restrictions imposed on our work by COVID-19, we are proud to have maintained an effective research program which contributes to and informs health and aged care practice and policy. The projects described below represent some of this work.



Making an impact



Aged Care Director – Dr Joan Ostaszkiewicz

Impact on policy

Aged Care

Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety

NARI made significant contributions to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, undertaking commissioned research and making several submissions. Associate Professor Frances Batchelor appeared before the Commissioner to give evidence on what is needed to prevent falls in aged care, and Dr Joan Ostaszkiewicz highlighted the need for better continence care. NARI's commissioned research explored integrated models for care, health, and housing, and NARI conducted national surveys on quality of care for people living in residential care, and home and respite care. The latter enabled the voice of older people receiving aged care services to be heard, and revealed the shocking extent of sub-standard care. In response to the Final Report, NARI produced a series of position papers that addressed the recommendations of the Royal Commission, and presented these at a symposium at the Australian Association of Gerontology Conference in November 2020.

Lessons learnt from the Victorian COVID-19 experience

In early 2021, NARI conducted a rapid review of literature to identify lessons learnt from the second wave of COVID-19 outbreaks in Victorian aged care services, funded by the Victorian Department of Health. A consistent message across much of the research, and echoed in the Royal Commission's special report, was that the COVID-19 pandemic caught the aged care sector unaware, and brought to light a range of longstanding problems. Foremost among these is the need to build the capacity and skill-base of the aged care workforce. Several areas for potential future research were identified, including the need for research about the preparedness of the residential aged care sector to avoid or minimise COVID-19 outbreaks; organisational characteristics that increase or reduce the risks; workforce issues; residents' access to medical care and allied health; adoption of telehealth; co-ordination with health services and government; and the impact on residents, their families, and staff. The project produced a register of current and ongoing research on COVID-19 in Victorian residential aged care homes. Both offices of the Victorian Minister for Ageing, Disability and Seniors and the Federal Minister for Health and Aged Care were briefed on the findings of this work.



Clinical Gerontology – Director
Associate Professor Frances Batchelor

Impact on practice

Clinical Gerontology

Falls service directory

Specialist falls prevention services have been shown to prevent and reduce falls in older people living in the community. Despite this, difficulty navigating health service information and identifying appropriate care providers can limit access to these resources. The Victorian Falls and Balance Service Directory – led by Associate Professor Frances Batchelor and developed by NARI in collaboration with the Victorian Department of Health, clinicians, and consumers – contains operational information regarding 100 outpatient and ambulatory clinics and programs across Victoria that target falls and balance assessment, intervention, and prevention. It provides a centralised and accessible resource for referring health professionals, as well as older people themselves, regarding service availability and eligibility.

ENJOY

The ENJOY project was the winner of the 2021 Victorian and Tasmanian Parks and Leisure Australia Research Award. Professor Pazit Levinger and her team have successfully designed exercise parks for older people, providing age-friendly outdoor spaces that enable and encourage safe social and physical activity. The parks have proven to be very popular, and are available in a number of local council areas in Victoria with further councils also interested in adopting these in their municipalities.

A transformative approach to continence care in residential aged care homes

‘Every continence care interaction is an opportunity to uphold or diminish a person’s dignity.’

Evidence-based, person-centred care that is safe, responsive to an aged care resident’s individual needs, optimises their functional abilities, and protects their dignity, is core to a new transformative approach to continence care in residential aged care homes. The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety heard compelling first-hand evidence that the quality of continence care in residential aged care homes does not align with community expectations. In response, the Continence Foundation of Australia commissioned NARI to co-design a model of continence care to guide best practice, this work was led by Dr Joan Osastzkiewicz. The model – [Continence SMART Care](#) – was designed in consultation with relatives of people living in residential aged care homes, and people working in residential aged care homes. It was overseen by a project advisory group, which consisted of consumers and representatives from the Australian Government Department of Health, the Continence Foundation of Australia, aged care advocacy groups, aged care providers, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, and clinicians and experts in aged care.



Enable and inspire best practice in the health and aged care workforce

Professional Development and Education program

Throughout the pandemic, NARI has continued to deliver quality professional development to aged care and health professionals by shifting our entire education program online. In 2020-21, we delivered 40 seminars, 6 professional development workshops, 2 public lectures, and supervised approximately 50 students. As our reach expanded we collectively had over 2,000 people attend our events across Australia, including those living interstate and in regional and remote areas. Notably, in September 2020, NARI hosted an online public lecture on dementia prevention delivered by world renowned expert, Professor Gill Livingston, and attended virtually by over 500 members of the public.



Social Gerontology - Director
Professor Bianca Brijnath



Promote accurate information about ageing and older people

Social Gerontology

E-DIVA

Over 90 per cent of people with dementia living in the community are cared for by family members. This provision of care often creates stress, deterioration in mental and physical health, and loss of productivity and income for family carers. Funded by the NHMRC, and led by Associate Professor Tuan Nguyen, the e-DiVA study aims to empower Dementia Carers with an iSupport Virtual Assistant tool, and evaluate the tool through a randomised control trial in four countries: Australia, Indonesia, Vietnam and New Zealand.

MINDSET

NHMRC funded, the MINDSET project is a partnership between researchers, healthcare providers, and interpreters, and aims to co-design and trial training to increase interpreter's ability to facilitate cognitive assessments for dementia. Led by Professor Bianca Brijnath, the training will eventually be available to every interpreter in Australia as part of the NAATI accreditation and professional development program, and is intended to increase timely dementia diagnoses in multicultural communities.

Conducting translational research with and for older people

Melbourne Ageing Research Collaboration (MARC)

Recognising prolonged grief

The first MARC mental health project on grief in older people has developed into one of the largest and most creative MARC studies so far. Led by Dr Katrin Gerber, The project consists of a nationwide survey of 633 bereaved older adults, 33 in-depth interviews with older people and primary care staff, as well as a series of grief poems, illustrations and recordings created from the interview transcripts.

Survey data collected throughout the project revealed that 21 per cent of bereaved older adults met the criteria for prolonged grief disorder, showing higher levels of loneliness and lower quality of life than older Australians in the general population. The innovative use of art and poetry highlights the need to provide tailored support and challenge the notion that grief has an expiry date.



Melbourne Ageing Research Collaboration (MARC) –
Director and Deputy Director (NARI) Debra O'Connor

Building Australia's capacity in ageing research

MARC Annual Symposium

Each year, MARC convenes a symposium to examine current and emerging issues in ageing and aged care. In 2020, the sixth symposium was delivered in a webinar format, focussed on the theme ***From Cells to Society - The most recent trends in research in ageing***. Internationally renowned speakers presented on topics ranging from preventing cellular senescence, to an overview of key risk domains for cognitive decline and dementia, taking a life-course approach.

Responding to the impact of COVID-19 on older people and the workforce

NARI continued to investigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing of older Australians. Older people reported feeling cautious about COVID-19, and vigilant observers of protective behaviours. Despite approving of public health guidelines and lockdown measures, participants raised concerns about weakening social ties and social isolation, as well as economic, familial, and psychological stress. Most participants nonetheless regarded themselves as 'fortunate': they saw being older as affording them financial and familial stability, which insulated them from the worst impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. NARI co-designed tip sheets for older people to help them manage during the extended Victorian lockdowns and drew attention to the mental health impact of the outbreaks and deaths in residential aged care on front-line staff.

COVID-19 Survival tips developed with and for older Australians

Looking after your health conditions

People aged 70 years and over are at greater risk of more serious illness if they are infected with COVID-19. And they are likely to have to self-isolate for longer than younger age groups. For this reason the team at NARI, with input from our research volunteers, has developed a series of tip sheets. This one is about managing your health conditions.

It is important to follow the [Government's recommendations](#) to minimise spread of the COVID-19 virus, and to care for yourself and your loved ones. However, here is some extra things you should do:

Managing your medications

You have an up-to-date list of all your medications, and keep taking them.

Your prescriptions are up to date and you have a 2-4 week supply of all the medications you need, but pain relief - sticking may mean others may not.

Over 70 you can get prescriptions filled and medications delivered to your home for free by Australia's Pharmaceutical Services.

Touch with your GP

You will still be working and you may be able to organise a phone or on-line consultation rather than visiting your GP.

It is important to contact your GP if you have any concerns. Your health is important.

Professionals prioritise the welfare of patients and will not put you at risk. Keep your planned appointments.

Ensure you get your flu vaccination. It is available through pharmacists and GPs.

Need blood tests, Medicare rebates are now available which may allow you to have this service conducted at your own home. Speak to your GP about referring you for this service.

"Prepare a weekly pill box, that way you can see when to reorder medication."

- Edith

COVID-19 Survival tips developed with and for older Australians

Keeping engaged

People aged 70 years and over are at greater risk of more serious illness if they are infected with COVID-19. And they are likely to have to self-isolate for longer than younger age groups. For this reason the team at NARI, with input from our research volunteers, has developed a series of tip sheets. This one is about keeping engaged.

It is important to follow the [Government's recommendations](#) to minimise spread of the COVID-19 virus, and to care for yourself and your loved ones. However, here is more information on what you can do to keep engaged.

Why it is important to keep engaged

We all need to keep in contact with others and perhaps, more importantly, maintain our opportunities to contribute to the wellbeing of others.

Many of the activities we engage in as volunteers, carers, family members, friends and workers, are more difficult at present, but there are still ways we can keep engaged.

How to keep engaged during COVID-19

- The most obvious and foolproof way is by phone - almost everyone has a phone and knows how to use it. Older people in residential care or isolated neighbours can still be contacted by phone as can family members and friends - it is a good way to keep in touch.
- On-line platforms, such as Zoom and Skype, are great ways to keep in touch with family and friends, and to keep up work or volunteer activities. These platforms allow you to see and talk to other people using a video call. Zoom and Skype can be used on any device that has internet connection, including computers, tablets such as iPads, and smart phones (such as iPhones). You can buy a suitable device on-line if you don't have one already. Make it a project to get to know how to use these platforms and devices - if you don't know already - see contact details on the next page.
- If you don't have an internet connection, or ask your friends and family what internet provider they use, the next page.
- Writing letters is another excellent way to keep in touch - Australia Post is still operating and receiving letters is always a joy, especially when it is not a bill! Consider including a photo as a way of connecting. You can also still send parcels.

"Don't forget to phone old friends and relations now and then to see how they are managing. There are often only once a year contacts at Christmas, so it's a good thing to do."

- Edith

COVID-19 Survival tips developed with and for older Australians

Keep moving: How to stay active and healthy

People aged 70 years and over are at greater risk of more serious illness if they are infected with COVID-19. And they are likely to have to self-isolate for longer than younger age groups. For this reason the team at NARI, with input from our research volunteers, has developed a series of tip sheets. This one is about keeping active.

It is important to follow the [Government's recommendations](#) to minimise spread of the COVID-19 virus, and to care for yourself and your loved ones.

COVID-19 restrictions may have affected your regular shopping and meal routines, but there are many resources available to help ensure you are able to get the food, medication and supplies you need.

Can I go shopping?

The Australian Government strongly recommends everyone over the age of 70 stay home and limit contact with others as much as possible. You may continue to shop for essentials if it is not possible for someone else to assist you, however you are encouraged to consider online ordering and home delivery options (see more information below).

If you must go shopping, aim to make trips as infrequent as possible. This means shopping for multiple items in one trip, not making several trips for individual items.

Only one person can go shopping with you unless you all live in the same household. It is also important to maintain a physical distance of at least 1.5 metres from all other people where possible.

Volunteers to pay using contactless methods (such as tapping your card) to avoid handling cash.

Remember to pay using contactless methods (such as tapping your card) to avoid handling cash.

COVID-19 Survival tips developed with and for older Australians

Looking after your mental wellbeing

People aged 70 years and over are at greater risk of more serious illness if they are infected with COVID-19. And they are likely to have to self-isolate for longer than younger age groups. For this reason the team at NARI, with input from our research volunteers, has developed a series of tip sheets. This one is about looking after your mental wellbeing.

It is important to follow the [Government's recommendations](#) to minimise spread of the COVID-19 virus, and to care for yourself and your loved ones. Here are some things you can do:

How you might be feeling

If you are staying home to protect yourself from exposure to the COVID-19 virus, then you are probably in self-isolation. This means you may be missing contact with your grandchildren and other family, and missing the activities you normally do outside your home.

It is normal to feel bored, frustrated, stressed and a little bit anxious during these challenging times, and perhaps lost without your daily routine.

Fortunately, there are many things you can do to stay well and positive during this time.

How to stay well and positive

- Get your facts from a reliable source: The Government's [Coronavirus health alert](#) is the best source of up-to-date information on coronavirus.
- Take time to switch off: While it's good to keep informed, taking breaks from news updates on the coronavirus outbreak is important. Switching off for a while and/or television to focus on things you enjoy may help you manage feelings of stress.
- Look after your physical health: Remember to stay active, even at home. If possible, go for a walk. You can exercise with members of your family or one other person if you keep a 1.5 metre distance (two arms lengths). It is also important to eat nutritious food and make sure you get enough sleep.
- Check out NARI's resources on keeping active and eating well during the outbreak.
- Physical distancing, not social distancing: Keep in touch with family and friends by phone, mail, or the internet. Visit [Volunteering](#) for tips on how to connect through video.
- Structure your day around meaningful activities: Plan your day and include activities such as gardening, reading, crafts, playing an instrument, creative writing and rearranging your family tree!

"Find fun things to do - a picnic lunch on a rug on the veranda or back garden. Use photos to relive holidays - a different holiday every week."

- Edith

COVID-19 Survival tips developed with and for older Australians

Tips and resources for shopping, meals and food

People aged 70 years and over are at greater risk of more serious illness if they are infected with COVID-19. And they are likely to have to self-isolate for longer than younger age groups. For this reason the team at NARI, with input from our research volunteers, has developed a series of tip sheets. This one is about shopping.

It is important to follow the [Government's recommendations](#) to minimise spread of the COVID-19 virus, and to care for yourself and your loved ones.

COVID-19 restrictions may have affected your regular shopping and meal routines, but there are many resources available to help ensure you are able to get the food, medication and supplies you need.

Can I go shopping?

The Australian Government strongly recommends everyone over the age of 70 stay home and limit contact with others as much as possible. You may continue to shop for essentials if it is not possible for someone else to assist you, however you are encouraged to consider online ordering and home delivery options (see more information below).

If you must go shopping, aim to make trips as infrequent as possible. This means shopping for multiple items in one trip, not making several trips for individual items.

Only one person can go shopping with you unless you all live in the same household. It is also important to maintain a physical distance of at least 1.5 metres from all other people where possible.

Volunteers to pay using contactless methods (such as tapping your card) to avoid handling cash.

Remember to pay using contactless methods (such as tapping your card) to avoid handling cash.

Collaboration and Engagement

Collaboration and engagement

NARI has affiliation agreements with University of Melbourne and Deakin University, and collaborates with many national and international universities. NARI is also a member of the Melbourne Academic Centre for Health (MACH) and affiliated with the Western Alliance.

Through MARC, NARI has formal agreements with universities, hospitals, aged care services, primary health, and advocacy groups to work collectively across an agreed program of work. NARI also has an agreement with the Sax Institute in New South Wales to further applied and evidence-based translational research in policy and practice.

Most of NARI's research is undertaken in collaboration with other stakeholders and end users. This year, in the dementia research programs alone, NARI has 58 Australian and 37 international collaborators, including 7 government agencies, 37 universities, 6 research organisations, 12 peak bodies, 19 healthcare organisations, and 14 aged and community care services. Collaboration is vital to enable us to be better at what we do.

NARI is particularly eager to ensure that the voices of older people in the community, hospitals, or residents in aged care are heard and respected. An increasing number of NARI's research projects involve co-design and co-production with older people or end users from the commencement of the project.



91
publications

12 conference papers
71 journal articles
3 magazine articles
5 reports



44
presentations



5
interviews

1 podcast

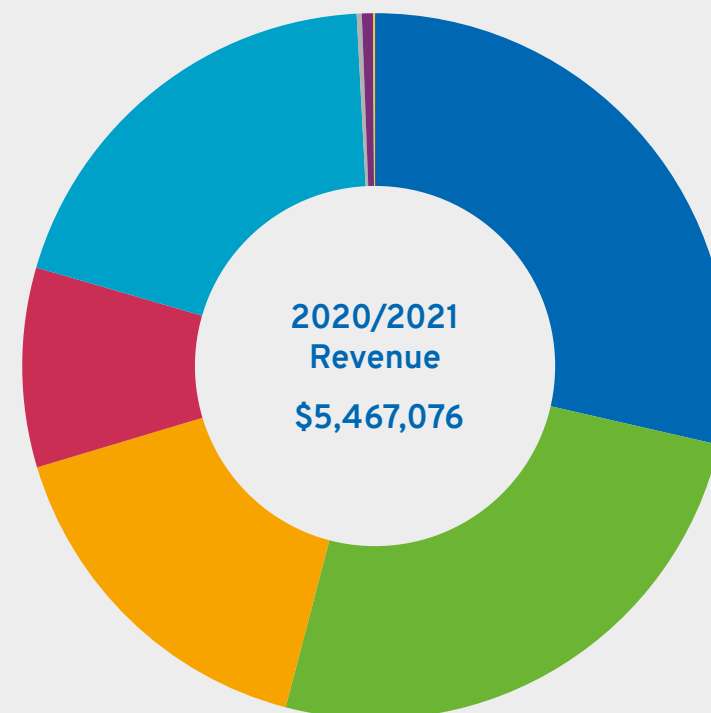
Financial Performance

Revenue	2021	2020
Victorian state government grants and contracts	\$1,562,730	\$1,440,441
Commonwealth government grants and contracts	\$1,393,675	\$2,615,371
Commonwealth government Covid-19 assistance	\$890,300	\$185,000
Other contract research	\$499,832	\$265,674
Philanthropic grants and contracts	\$1,075,028	\$1,069,120
Education and training	\$12,819	\$37,470
Interest and miscellaneous	\$27,588	\$96,490
Donations	\$5,104	\$63,569
Total Revenue	\$5,467,076	\$5,773,135
Expenditure		
Employee benefits	\$4,217,723	\$3,929,257
Project costs	\$617,338	\$1,047,670
Research support	\$487,880	\$503,741
Other expenses	\$228,884	\$380,597
Total Expenditure	\$5,551,825	\$5,861,265
Surplus (deficit) for the year	\$(84,749)	\$(88,130)

The operating result in both years has been impacted adversely by the adoption of AASB 16 Lease and AASB 1058 Income of Not-for-Profit Entities which require the company to recognise a Right of Use Lease asset for a peppercorn lease, and then amortise that lease over its term.

Revenue Share

- Victorian state government grants and contracts
- Commonwealth government grants and contracts
- Commonwealth government Covid-19 assistance
- Other contract research
- Philanthropic grants and contracts
- Education and training
- Interest and miscellaneous
- Donations







34 - 54 Poplar Road (via Gate 4)
Parkville, Victoria, 3052

PO Box 2127 Royal Melbourne
Hospital, Victoria, 3050

Tel: +61 3 8387 2305
Email: info@nari.edu.au
Web: www.nari.net.au

ABN: 71 154 866 047

Affiliated with the University of Melbourne
and The Royal Melbourne Hospital

 **Facebook:** NatAgeingResearch

 **Twitter:** @NAgeingRI

 **LinkedIn:** National-Ageing-Research-Institute