

**Who will care for me as I age?**

**Who will care for my children so I can go to work?**

**Who will support me so that I can participate fully in life?**

**How can we help the carers?**

**How can we guarantee quality and safety of care into the future?**

**Can technology improve care *and* reduce costs?**

***\$129 million Care Economy Cooperative Research Centre starts work today.***

Wednesday, 26 November 2025, Melbourne

Australians expect and deserve high quality care from birth to death. But the costs and demands for care are growing, and the workforce is not keeping up. We need to rebuild the care economy to future-proof our way of life.

The national Care Economy Cooperative Research Centre starts work on this challenge today, with 56 partners and a \$129 million budget, including \$35 million in Australian Government support.

The ten-year mission is to transform the \$327 billion care economy delivering services from birth to death, including early childhood education and care, disability support, aged care, mental health care, family services and other community services.

Headquartered at La Trobe University in Bundoora, the CRC comprises 56 partners: five universities (La Trobe, Griffith, James Cook University, Macquarie, and Sydney); health care agencies including Gold Coast Health, Tropical Australian Academic Health Centre partners and the Northern Adelaide Local Health Network; health and technology companies such as Sleepite, Butterfly Healthcare, Global Health, Optus and Choice Aged Care; and essential care providers including G8 Education, Uniting Vic Tas, Key Assets Australia, Hammondcare, Silverchain and Neami National.

Care Economy CRC Managing Director and CEO Carmela Sergi said: “We know that high quality care will enable us all to live independent lives and participate fully in the community and contribute to the economy.

“But we also know that the care economy is facing huge challenges. Demand is increasing. Care is getting more complex with co-occurring conditions. And vulnerable communities, particularly in rural and regional areas, are being impacted by care workforce shortages and low or no service availability.”

Carmela stressed the importance of user-centred outcomes, with the CRC’s research programs directly answering challenges identified by the care services, the care workforce as well as those receiving care.

“This is not about developing technology for technology’s sake,” she said., “We want to improve productivity of care services, and technology must also be adopted by the workforce to be effective.

“That’s why our research will solve problems of both care services and care participants. We will help the workforce with tools and skills to use the technology so that we can have an impact on care outcomes.”

Researchers drawn from education, nursing, technology, allied health and other fields will work directly with leaders, carers and end users to develop the evidence base and lead transformation through:

## Technology Solutions

- Fast-track assistive technologies for safe, effective quality care, such as environmental and personal monitoring devices and sensors, social robotics, and assistive robotics to reduce manual labour tasks.
- Co-design mobile and desktop applications, chatbot platforms, and augmented/virtual reality interfaces that interact with care devices, inform care workers and participants, and reduce administrative burden.

## Data Solutions

- Connected information systems that safely exchange health and care data across the sector, removing silos, and using AI to improve outcomes for patients and carers.
- Care navigation and decision support tools that guide workers and participants through care systems.
- Data sandboxes that allow technology product research and development while protecting patient privacy.

## Workforce Innovation

- Design and train an adaptable, future-ready workforce, empowering care workers with new models of care delivery, career pathways and workplace satisfaction including:
  - Map care services today.
  - Design, pilot and evaluate training resources to upskill the workforce.
  - Trial, evaluate and roll out scalable technology supported innovations across the care economy.

CRC Research Director Professor Irene Blackberry said the research programs will not only drive improvements in quality, contemporary care but urgently reframe understanding of the sector as Australia's largest employer.

"Today, the sector is an unwieldy and expensive mix of multiple bodies and organisations, with too much duplication and little communication between the silos," Irene said.

"But the Care Economy CRC can be a trailblazer for economic productivity and socio-economic reform, positioning Australia as a global leader in exportable care services, models, training and technologies."

Today, the care economy has an annual turnover of \$327 billion and employs about 1.8 million people (over 15 per cent of the workforce) of which around 80 per cent are female. Challenges include chronic workforce shortages, low productivity, low pay and gender disparities, and poor technology uptake.

Carmela said reform of the care sector to date had largely been reactive, driven by crisis and Royal Commissions: "Care work is an essential, although often invisible contributor to Australia's socio-economic growth, and this has to change. Unfortunately, the care economy has been seen as a welfare system and a drain on the economy, when in fact it is the nation's single biggest and fastest growing employer – growing at three times the rate of total national employment, making its performance fundamental to lifting Australia's overall national productivity."

The Care Economy CRC research program leads are:

- **Technology Solutions** - [Professor Aniruddha Desai](#)
- **Data Solutions** - [Professor Adam Dunn](#)
- **Workforce Innovation** - [Professor Sarah Larkins](#)

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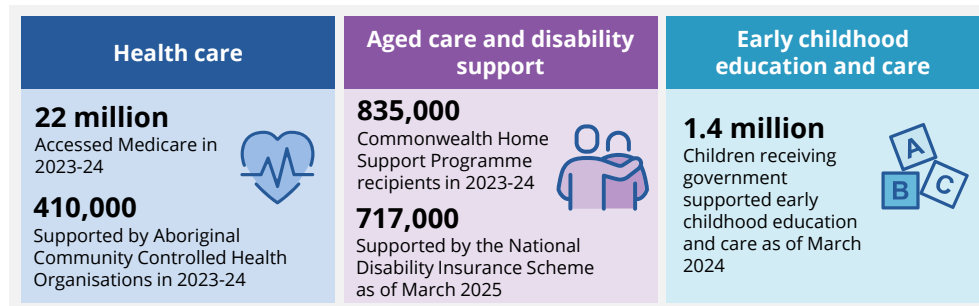
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## What is the Care Economy



Source: Productivity Commission

## About the Care Economy CRC

A partnership of 56 organisations, the Care Economy CRC brings together researchers, technologists and care service providers to co-develop, customise, implement, and commercialise new technologies, data solutions and models of care which will collectively improve care outcomes for Australians. The centre has been awarded \$35 million in federal funding and is projected to deliver more than \$1.4 billion in direct benefits over the next 15 years. It is headquartered in Melbourne at La Trobe University's Research and Innovation Precinct.

## Comments from the Care Economy CRC research program leads

### Research Program Lead, Technology Solutions - [Professor Aniruddha Desai](#)

Professor Desai said: "The care economy faces a critical challenge: limited capacity to innovate and adopt technology. Care providers are deeply focused on urgent needs, leaving little time or resources for transformative change. Yet these challenges cannot be solved by simply increasing service volume or expenditure. Technology offers a pathway to reimagine care – - enabling scalable, people-centred solutions. Through co-design and development of mobile and desktop applications, intelligent chatbot platforms, and immersive augmented and virtual reality experiences integrated with sensors, wearables, and robotics, we can create a future where technology enhances care and improves lives."

### Research Program Lead, Data Solutions - [Professor Adam Dunn](#)

Professor Dunn said: "Data solutions and insights have the potential to improve care outcomes; reduce administrative burden on care workers; prevent fraud; increase efficiency of service delivery; and improve coordination as care participants move between different care providers and sectors. Research will also be undertaken into AI-enabled care decision making to reduce administrative wastage across the care sector."

### Research Program Lead, Workforce Innovation - [Professor Sarah Larkins](#)

Professor Larkins said: "We will ensure research is co-designed with the care industry – not a build it and they will come approach. This will help us move beyond pilots to solve real-world challenges now and into the future. Our priority is to develop workforce capability for technology-enabled care delivery and optimal work-flow systems, always keeping the focus on end users. We will identify and address digital literacy gaps, investigate value of new credentialing and training approaches, flexible career pathways, and attraction and retention initiatives to address workforce shortages, especially in thin markets."