



Consumer and Community
Involvement Program



WAHTN

Western Australian Health Translation Network

BRAIN HEALTH AT HOME

Shaping the Future of Cognitive Care

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION SUMMARY REPORT



Prepared By

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2026

MU **Murdoch**
University

School of Information Technology & Centre for Healthy Ageing

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Acknowledgement of Country

The WAHTN CCIP Program acknowledges the Aboriginal people of the many traditional lands and language groups of Western Australia. We acknowledge the wisdom of Aboriginal Elders, both past and present, and pay respect to Aboriginal communities of today.

Acknowledgement of Lived Experience

We acknowledge the importance and expertise of the lived experience voice of health consumers and carers. We recognise their involvement in making a difference in supporting health research and impacting the health and wellbeing of our communities.



BACKGROUND

CaRER-Tech is a collaborative research initiative between the School of Information Technology and the Centre for Healthy Ageing at Murdoch University. The project brings together expertise in digital design and ageing research to explore how technology can support cognitive health in the home.

The CaRER-Tech research team is investigating how structured, home-based digital activities may support cognitive engagement, independence, and wellbeing for older adults, particularly those experiencing changes in memory or thinking.

To support the development of the platform, the research team partnered with the Consumer and Community Involvement Program to facilitate a Community Conversation. This event brought together members of the community with lived experience of memory concerns, cognitive decline or dementia, as well as those who care for and support them. The purpose of the session was to capture insights to inform the design of technology that supports healthy ageing, independence, and connection in everyday life. This was an initial exploratory session, capturing a broad range of perspectives (including carers and individuals with varying levels of cognitive concern).

The information obtained during the Community Conversation will be used to help shape the future of CaRER-Tech, an innovative, home-based cognitive rehabilitation platform designed to support older adults experiencing memory loss, cognitive decline, or dementia. Insights gathered through this process will also inform the continuation of prototype development and future design iterations.



THE CONSUMER AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

The Consumer and Community Involvement Program (CCIPProgram) is dedicated to embedding the voices of consumers and community members in health research. Established as part of the Western Australian Health Translation Network (WAHTN), the program works to ensure that research is shaped by lived experience and addresses real-world health challenges.

At the heart of the CCIPProgram is a team committed to building connections between researchers, consumers, and organisations. This team provides tailored support, guidance, and resources to ensure consumer involvement is an integral part of research design, implementation, and translation.

By championing consumer and community involvement at local, state, and national levels, the CCIPProgram continues to evolve, ensuring that health research is informed, shaped and guided by those with lived experience.



THE RESEARCH TEAM

The CaRER-Tech project is led by Associate Professor Mohd Fairuz Shiratuddin from the School of Information Technology at Murdoch University, in partnership with Professor Hamid Sohrabi from the Centre for Healthy Ageing.

Associate Professor Shiratuddin is a researcher and educator specialising in how emerging technologies can support cognitive health and healthy ageing. His multidisciplinary background spans engineering, design, human–computer interaction, and extended reality (XR), with over two decades of experience developing interactive systems that support learning, performance, and wellbeing. His current research focuses on the use of XR, artificial intelligence, and user-centred design to create accessible technologies for people experiencing memory loss, cognitive decline, dementia, or early Alzheimer’s disease. He leads the design and development of CaRER-Tech and works closely with communities, clinicians, and industry partners to ensure the platform is practical, supportive, and grounded in lived experience.

The project also includes contributions from the School of Information Technology, with team members Kevin Wong, Shri Rai, and Eidlan Bin Mazlan Hanafi supporting the development of the platform.



Associate Professor
Mohd Fairuz Shiratuddin

Professor Hamid Sohrabi is Executive Director of the Health Futures Institute and Director of the Centre for Healthy Ageing at Murdoch University, and Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience. His work focuses on cognitive ageing and dementia, with a strong emphasis on translating research into real-world applications that support individuals and families. Within the CaRER-Tech project, he provides clinical and research leadership to ensure the platform aligns with current understanding of cognitive health and ageing.

Robyn Wright is the consumer representative on the project team, providing lived experience insight to inform the design and development of CaRER-Tech. Her involvement has supported a strong focus on ensuring the platform reflects real-world needs and experiences of individuals and families navigating cognitive change.



Professor Hamid Sohrabi

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION?

A Community Conversation is an event using an abridged version of the Word Café Method[1] and allows for the facilitation of informal, open conversations around a specific topic of importance. This method allows researchers to informally obtain a range of communal ideas from a group of people with lived experience around a particular topic specified prior to the event.[2],[3] Additionally, a Community Conversation provides an opportunity for attendees to reflect upon their own relevant experiences and contribute in meaningful discussions within a safe and comfortable space.



[1] Brown, J., & Isaacs, D. (2005). *The World Café : Shaping our futures through conversations that matter*. Barrett-Koehler

[2] Chieh-Ling Yang, Delphine Labbé, Brodie M. Sakakibara, Janneke Vissers & Marie-Louise Bird (2022) World Café- a community conversation: a Canadian perspective on stroke survivors needs for community integration, *Topics in Stroke Rehabilitation*, 29:5, 392- 400.

[3] Carter, E. W., Schutz, M. A., Gajjar, S. A., Maves, E. A., Bumble, J. L., & McMillan, E. D. (2021). Using Community Conversations to Inform Transition Education in Rural Communities. *The Journal of Special Education*, 55(3), 131–142.

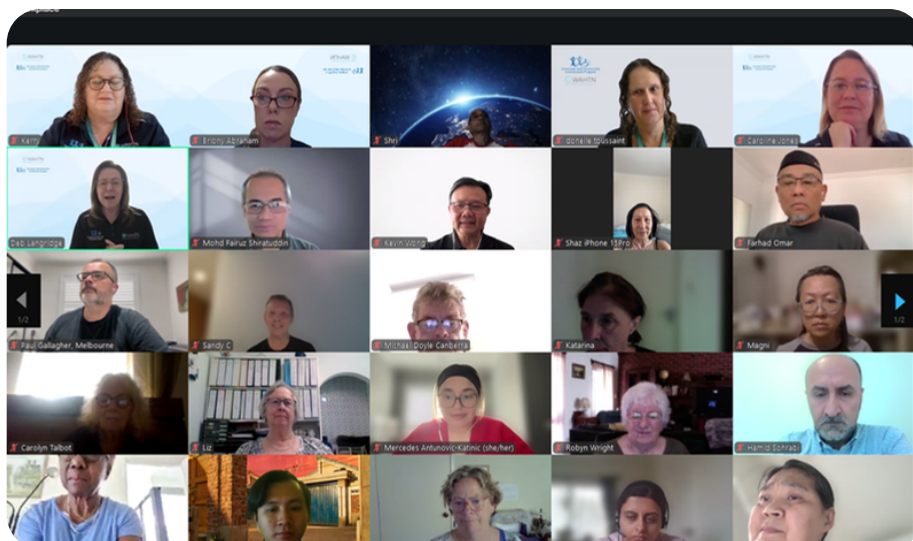
ABOUT THE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

The Community Conversation was held online on 11 March 2026, and included 20 Consumers from Australia and five members of the Consumer and Community Involvement Program. Six members of the Research Team from Murdoch University who presented an overview of their project and acted as scribes for the breakout rooms.

What are the biggest challenges using technology to improve your memory or thinking ability at home?

What would make it easier for you (or someone you care for) to start using a tool like this technology and keep using it? What would make it hard for you?

What would you change to make this technology easier to use, more enjoyable, interesting, challenging and suitable for people aged 60–75 with possible memory or thinking concerns?



PROMOTION

The Research Team worked closely with the CCIP Program to recruit members of the Australian community who had lived experience of memory concerns, cognitive decline, dementia, or supporting someone with these experiences to hear their thoughts on how technology like CaRER-Tech could support cognitive health and independence at home. We shared promotional communications across multiple channels to support recruitment and reach a diverse group of consumers.

Flyers and social media posts (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn) were posted and circulated across relevant networks, including consumer networks, health service providers, and community groups. Promotion targeted older adults concerned about memory or thinking changes, people living with cognitive decline or dementia, carers and family members, and those who identify as being at risk due to family history.



CONNECTING COMMUNITIES FOR COGNITIVE HEALTH

Join us for an online Community Conversation to help shape the future of CaRER-Tech; an innovative, home-based cognitive support platform designed to support older adults who are concerned about or experiencing memory loss, cognitive decline or early dementia.

In this interactive online session, you will have the opportunity to share your experiences and ideas. Your insights will directly guide how CaRER-Tech is designed to be accessible, practical, and meaningful for older adults living at home and for those who care for them. Together, we can make a real difference in creating technology that may support healthy ageing and independence.

EXPERIENCE REQUIRED:

- People aged 60+ years who have serious concerns about memory and other cognitive abilities.
- People living with cognitive decline, dementia, or ageing-related cognitive challenges.
- Carers of loved ones with dementia
- People who feel at risk of cognitive decline/dementia (i.e. family history)

An \$80 honorarium is offered to attendees.

DATE:	Wednesday, 11 March 2026
TIME:	10am - 12pm (AWST) 1pm to 3pm (AEDT)
LOCATION:	Online

Find out more & submit your EOI to attend: <https://bit.ly/4pe08BB>

SCAN ME



WAHTN
Western Australian Health Transition Network

 Consumer and Community Involvement Program

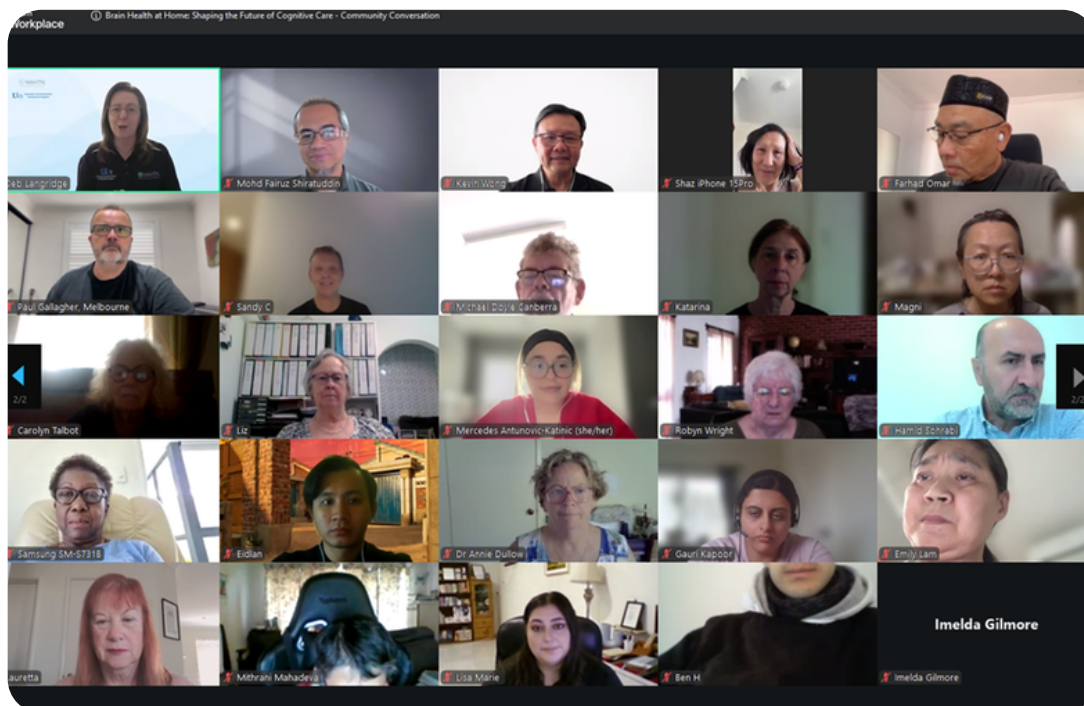
MU Murdoch University
School of Information Technology & Centre for Healthy Ageing

AGENDA

9.45am	Join online via Zoom	All
10.00am	Welcome - Acknowledgement of Country & Acknowledgement of Lived Experience - Welcome to the workshop - Introductions	Deb Langridge
10.10am	Presentation	A/Prof Mohd Fairuz Shiratuddin
10.25am	Process of the morning	Deb Langridge
10.30am	Question 1: What would make it easier for you (or someone you care for) to start using a tool like this technology and keep using it? What would make it hard for you?	All
10.50am	Question 2: What are the biggest challenges using technology to improve your memory or thinking ability at home?	All
11.10am	Question 3: What would you change to make this technology easier to use, more enjoyable, interesting, challenging and suitable for people aged 60–75 with possible memory or thinking concerns?	All
11.30am	Room facilitator feedback	Table facilitators
11.45am	Next Steps	All
11.55am	Evaluation & Honorarium information	All
12pm	Close	

STRUCTURE AND PROCESS

Attendees joined the Community Conversation online. They were introduced to the CARER-Tech research team and the Consumer and Community Involvement Program before being sent to one of 3 breakout rooms.



Each breakout room had a room facilitator from the CCIP Program to assist attendees and guide them through the questions and discussions. Each room also had a scribe from the CARER-Tech research team to record the feedback provided by the attendees.

Facilitators presented 3 questions to the Consumers in each room:

- What would make it easier for you (or someone you care for) to start using a tool like this technology and keep using it? What would make it hard for you?
- What are the biggest challenges using technology to improve your memory or thinking ability at home?
- What would you change to make this technology easier to use, more enjoyable, interesting, challenging and suitable for people aged 60–75 with possible memory or thinking concerns?

Each question was allocated 20 minutes for discussion. The comments, feedback and suggestions were all captured by each scribe and are presented in the following pages of this report.

KEY INSIGHTS OF THE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION



Simplicity is not optional, it is foundational

Consumers consistently identified complexity as a barrier to both starting and sustaining use, including logins, navigation, instructions, and device requirements. Confidence with technology is often low or declining, and any friction at the outset leads to disengagement. The expectation is for intuitive, first-time use with minimal steps, clear guidance, and the ability to learn by doing. As cognitive and physical capacity changes over time, the platform must become easier to use, not more complex.



The purpose and benefits must be clear, meaningful, and personally relevant

Consumers emphasised the need to understand why the tool is worth using. Clear, plain language explanations of benefits, along with visible feedback on progress and outcomes, are essential. Engagement is more likely when activities feel meaningful and connected to real life, such as daily routines, hobbies, or past interests. Without a clear sense of purpose or benefit, there is little motivation to return.



One size will not fit all - personalisation and adaptability are critical

Consumers highlighted significant variation in cognitive ability, physical capacity, cultural background, language, and life experience. Flexibility in access and use is essential, including language options, input methods, pacing, and content. Personalisation, such as tailoring activities to interests, life history, or stage of cognitive change, is key to maintaining engagement and relevance. Standardised approaches risk being too difficult, too simplistic, or culturally inappropriate.



Technology must support, not replace, human connection and care

Consumers were clear that technology cannot replace human interaction. Carers play a critical role in supporting use and shaping the experience, and need to be considered in the design. The platform should support relationships, shared use, and social connection, contributing to quality of life rather than functioning as a standalone or purely clinical tool.

KEY THEMES OF THE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Theme	Consumer Comments
Ease of use and simplicity	• “Less complicated tech can be more helpful than using smart mobile phones that are already difficult to us” • “Simple way to access it. easy navigation. not complex sign in process” • “Must be very easy to use from Day 1, and get easier for folks who actually are losing function, not more of a challenge.”
Access and affordability	• “Not everyone Has Phones /iPad that is Up-to-date with Games !” • “Cost is a barrier” • “May depend on having the device charged (some family member have no mobile phone or only use a home phone and don’t have a computer)”
Carer support and involvement	• “Need to educate the carer on how to use the platform” • “Carer also needs to have the ability to manage the activities for the caree” • “Need to focus on educating the carer, as this is essential as needs to be familiar with the platform and be comfortable to answer any question”
Clarity of purpose and benefit	• “Must tell us why we are doing these games and how it helps preventing dementia” • “Clear benefits of the tasks to the patients. Why am I doing this task? How will it benefit me?” • “need to know benefit, otherwise not going to come back.”
Accessibility and inclusivity	• “Having other languages will be very important as not everyone can do such games in English” • “People with hand movement difficulties may not have their cognition tested accurately” • “A senior-friendly system usually needs: · larger text · higher contrast · fewer choices at once · one-task-at-a-time navigation”
Dignity and age-appropriateness	• “Use games that are more suitable and appropriate for our age as we are not children!” • “Thought was in kindergarten.” • “Don't make the system for toddlers, don't demean someone. Users are senior adults.”

KEY THEMES OF THE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Theme	Consumer Comments
Personalisation and relevance	• “Use personal interests to have us more engaged” • “In terms of personalisation... activities that a person has been interested in the past eg. horses, gardening, shopping” • “Allow them to upload photos, music and video to trigger their memory”
Motivation and engagement	• “History and scores recorded, rewards a motivator – outcome important” • “I’m also motivated by an indication of what I’ve achieved in a particular session” • “Reward and feeling of achievement or entertained, fun aspect”
Human connection vs technology	• “tech can work only to a certain point... need human touch and experience, human relationship” • “want a human to speak to.” • “Shouldn't replace social stimulation.”
Technical barriers, confidence and first-use experience	• “I’m not very technically inclined” • “barely use a phone, don't have a computer. don't know how to use this tech.” • “Some of the potential users are unfamiliar with modern day devices”

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

ATTENDEE INSIGHTS

The following pages contain the responses and thoughts shared by attendees at the Community Conversation.

QUESTION 1

WHAT WOULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR YOU (OR SOMEONE YOU CARE FOR) TO START USING A TOOL LIKE THIS TECHNOLOGY AND KEEP USING IT? WHAT WOULD MAKE IT HARD FOR YOU?

PROMPTS:

- Cost
- Devices / access
- Internet
- Set-up / installation
- Log-in / Passwords
- Tech confidence
- Learning curve
- Vision / hearing
- Fatigue
- Environment
- Privacy
- Data security
- Fear of mistakes / anxiety
- Frustration
- Previous experiences
- Tech 'breaking'

Consumers described their experience with starting and sustaining use of the technology as shaped by how easy it is to access, understand, and incorporate into everyday life. A consistent and strong message across all rooms was that the point of getting started is where many people disengage, with any difficulty at this stage acting as a key barrier to uptake. Across all rooms, there was a consistent emphasis on reducing complexity, supporting both the person and their carer, and ensuring the technology feels relevant, accessible, and worthwhile. If the initial experience is difficult or unclear, consumers indicated they are likely to disengage quickly.

Discussions reflected a mix of practical and personal barriers. Consumers spoke about challenges with internet access, device limitations, and navigating platforms, alongside low confidence with technology, physical limitations, and reduced motivation. There was also a strong focus on the importance of clear purpose, with consumers wanting to understand why they are using the tool and how it will help. At the same time, there was interest in making the experience engaging and enjoyable, with encouragement, rewards, and opportunities for social connection supporting ongoing use.

QUESTION 1 (CONT)

Ease of access and simplicity

Consumers consistently highlighted that the platform must be simple and intuitive from the outset. There was a strong sense that “any difficulty to start can be discouraging elderly”, with frustration arising when users are required to read too much, navigate multiple steps, or manage logins and passwords. Several consumers noted that “less complicated tech can be more helpful than using smart mobile phones that are already difficult to us”, and that access should be as seamless as possible, ideally “always on” without repeated sign-in requirements. There was also a clear preference for options that do not rely on continuous internet access, with offline capability and portability seen as important to enabling both initial access and ongoing use. There was also discussion about compatibility with simpler devices and not assuming users are comfortable with newer technologies. Overall, simplicity was not framed as a preference but as essential to both initial uptake and continued use.

Support for carers is essential

Across all discussions, the role of carers was described as central to enabling engagement with the technology. Consumers noted that carers need to be confident in using the platform themselves in order to support others, with repeated references to the need to “educate the carer on how to use the platform” and provide “very clear instructions to carer on what to do”. There was also an expectation that carers would need to manage or guide activities, particularly where the person using the tool has cognitive decline or low motivation. Without this support, consumers indicated that the technology may not be used consistently or at all.

Accessibility and inclusion

Consumers described a wide range of accessibility needs that extend beyond cognition. Physical limitations such as difficulties with “finger, hand, eye, hearing problems not brain problems” were identified as significant barriers to use. There was strong emphasis on the need for larger fonts, clearer visuals, sound-based or voice-activated instructions, and options that do not rely solely on fine motor skills or reading ability. Language was also a key issue, with consumers stating that “having other languages will be very important as not everyone can do such games in English”. Access to devices and internet connectivity was another barrier, with recognition that “not everyone has phones/iPad that is up-to-date” and that some people rely on basic phones or do not have access to computers. These discussions highlighted the need for inclusive design that accommodates a broad range of abilities, backgrounds, and circumstances.

Clarity of purpose and benefit

A consistent theme across all groups was the need to clearly communicate the purpose and value of the technology. Consumers questioned “why we are doing these games and how it helps preventing dementia” and emphasised the importance of understanding “what is going on” and “what are the worthwhile results”. Without this clarity, there was little motivation to begin or continue using the tool. There was also interest in feedback mechanisms that show progress or outcomes over time, helping users to see that their effort is meaningful. Trust in the value of the tool was also influenced by external validation, with suggestions that endorsement from a GP, allied health professional, or trusted peer could support uptake.

QUESTION 1 (CONT)

Motivation, encouragement and engagement

Consumers described the importance of making the experience enjoyable and motivating, rather than frustrating or effortful. Positive reinforcement was seen as important, with suggestions such as encouragement, rewards, and feedback like “Good job! you beat your score!”. Tracking progress, recording scores, and providing visible outcomes were all identified as ways to support motivation. At the same time, there was a need to avoid discouragement, particularly where tasks are difficult or time-consuming. Consumers noted that engagement is more likely when activities are “fun”, visually appealing, and provide a sense of achievement.

Relevance and appropriateness

There was concern that the current format of activities may not feel appropriate for the intended audience. Consumers questioned whether the tool was designed for “dementia patients or normal people” and noted that some activities felt more suited to children than adults. There was a clear expectation that content should be age-appropriate, respectful, and aligned with adult experiences. Discussions also highlighted the importance of tailoring activities to different abilities and stages, rather than assuming a single user group.

Social connection and support

Some consumers highlighted the importance of social context in supporting engagement. There was interest in features that “promote social engagement” or allow shared experiences, such as multiplayer activities or involvement from carers, friends, or health professionals. Word-of-mouth recommendations and encouragement from trusted people were also seen as influential in supporting uptake. This suggests that social connection may play a role in both motivating and sustaining use.

Routine, reminders and ongoing use

Consumers discussed the importance of integrating the technology into daily routines to support ongoing use. Suggestions included making it “part of a routine”, using notifications or prompts, and providing visual indicators of completion such as calendars or progress tracking. At the same time, there was recognition that routines need to be flexible, with consideration of fatigue, attention, and changing capacity. Features such as offline access and portability were also seen as important in supporting consistent use across different contexts.

QUESTION 2

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES USING TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE YOUR MEMORY OR THINKING ABILITY AT HOME?

PROMPTS:

- Motivation
- Routine / habits
- Reminders
- Time
- Competing priorities
- Support
- Carer / family support
- Ease of use
- Flexibility
- Progress feedback
- Early wins
- Relevance
- Enjoyment
- Confidence
- Drop-off points

Consumers described their experience with using technology at home to support memory or thinking as often challenging, particularly where there are barriers related to confidence, access, physical ability, and relevance. Across all rooms, discussions reflected a tension between recognising the potential value of technology and the practical difficulties in using it in everyday life. For many, technology was seen as helpful in theory, but difficult to use consistently without support.

Consumers spoke about low familiarity with devices, declining physical and cognitive capacity, and frustration when technology is not intuitive. There was also a strong focus on the emotional response to technology, including feeling discouraged, overwhelmed, or disengaged when the experience is not positive. Some consumers also expressed that technology may not be appropriate or appealing for everyone, with a preference for more familiar or non-digital approaches in some cases. Importantly, consumers highlighted that technology should support quality of life and not replace human interaction, with some questioning whether current approaches are too focused on testing rather than meaningful support.

Low confidence and familiarity with technology

A significant barrier identified across all groups was limited confidence and experience with using technology. Consumers described themselves as “not very technically inclined” and noted that “some of the potential users are unfamiliar with modern day devices”. For some, this extended to having minimal exposure to technology, with comments such as “barely use a phone, don't have a computer. don't know how to use this tech”. This lack of familiarity makes it difficult to engage with platforms, particularly where instructions are complex or assumptions are made about prior knowledge.

QUESTION 2 (CONT)

Physical and functional limitations

Consumers highlighted that physical limitations can significantly impact the ability to use technology, independent of cognitive ability. Difficulties with dexterity, vision, and hearing were frequently raised, with comments about “problems with fingers, dexterity”, “keyboard not friendly to older people”, and challenges with reading text or interacting with screens. There was concern that these barriers may prevent accurate engagement or lead to frustration, particularly where platforms rely heavily on fine motor skills or visual input.

Complexity and usability issues

Technology that is complex or poorly designed was seen as a major barrier to use. Consumers described challenges with navigation, instructions, and overall usability, noting that systems must be “very easy to use from Day 1” and should not “feel like a computer program”. Where platforms are too complex, there is a risk that they are perceived as a “nuisance rather than useful tool”. Concerns about online safety and security were also raised, including awareness of scams and the need to feel confident that the platform is safe to use. There was also discussion about negative experiences where technology creates frustration, leading to disengagement and a reluctance to try again.

Access barriers: devices, internet and cost

Access to appropriate devices and internet connectivity was identified as a key challenge. Consumers noted that not everyone has access to up-to-date devices or reliable internet, with references to the cost of purchasing equipment and the need for compatibility across platforms. Financial barriers were also raised, with recognition that without support, some people may be excluded from using the technology altogether. This reinforces the importance of considering affordability and accessibility in implementation.

Language, culture and health literacy

Consumers described challenges related to language and understanding, particularly for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. There were concerns that information may not translate well, and that complex instructions in English can be difficult to follow. In many cases, carers were required to interpret or translate information, adding to their role and increasing the burden of supporting technology use. One consumer noted the need to translate information for family members, highlighting the additional burden this creates. These discussions emphasised the importance of clear, simple language and culturally appropriate design.

QUESTION 2 (CONT)

Relevance and age-appropriateness, interest and engagement

Maintaining interest and engagement was identified as a challenge, particularly where activities are not meaningful or relatable. Consumers noted that some tasks felt repetitive, frustrating, or disconnected from real life, making it difficult to stay engaged. There was a preference for activities that are enjoyable, relevant, and connected to everyday experiences, with suggestions such as practical tasks or games that reflect daily routines. There were also strong reactions where activities were perceived as childish or inappropriate, with some consumers feeling that the content was “insulting” or did not respect them as adults. Without this relevance, technology is unlikely to be used consistently.

Emotional response and frustration

Consumers described a range of emotional responses to using technology, including frustration, discouragement, and fatigue. Experiences of difficulty or failure can lead to negative associations, making it harder to re-engage. There was also recognition that fatigue and fluctuating capacity can impact ability to use technology at different times. Ensuring that the experience is supportive, not overwhelming, was seen as critical to maintaining engagement.

Need for human support and connection

A strong theme across discussions was that technology cannot replace human interaction. Consumers emphasised the importance of “human touch and experience, human relationship”, noting that technology “can work only to a certain point”. There was a preference for support that includes personal interaction, guidance, and reassurance, particularly for those who are less confident or have more complex needs. Technology was seen as a supplement to, rather than a replacement for, human care and connection.

Perception of purpose: testing vs supporting

Some consumers questioned whether the technology is designed to support wellbeing or simply test cognitive ability. There were concerns that current approaches feel “too much objective cognitive testing” and do not contribute to quality of life. This distinction is important, as consumers indicated a preference for tools that provide meaningful support, enjoyment, and engagement, rather than focusing solely on assessment.

QUESTION 3

WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE TO MAKE THIS TECHNOLOGY EASIER TO USE, MORE ENJOYABLE, INTERESTING, CHALLENGING AND SUITABLE FOR PEOPLE AGED 60–75 WITH POSSIBLE MEMORY OR THINKING CONCERNS?

PROMPTS:

- Text size / readability
- Buttons / touch targets
- Navigation
- Plain language
- Visuals / audio
- Accessibility
- Personalisation
- Interests / relevance
- Variety
- Challenge level
- Progress tracking
- Feedback
- Pacing
- Session length
- Social features
- Human support

Consumers described a wide range of changes that would improve the usability, relevance, and overall experience of the technology. Across all rooms, there was a strong emphasis on moving away from generic or child-like formats toward something more respectful, engaging, and tailored to adult users. Discussions reflected a desire for the technology to feel meaningful, personalised, and aligned with real life, while remaining simple and accessible.

Consumers also highlighted that improvements are needed not only in how the technology functions, but in how it feels to use. This included concerns about dignity, relevance, and whether the platform supports wellbeing rather than simply testing ability. There was a clear expectation that the technology should adapt to the user, rather than expecting the user to adapt to the technology.

Dignity, respect and age-appropriate design

A strong and consistent message was that the technology must be designed with respect for adult users. Many consumers felt that existing activities were inappropriate, with comments such as “we are not children” and references to feeling like they were “in kindergarten”. There was concern that certain activities felt too simplistic or not sufficiently age-appropriate, particularly in terms of graphics and overall design. Some games were described as “child like” or “disrespectful”, which undermined engagement and reduced willingness to use the platform. Consumers emphasised that design, language, imagery, and interactions must reflect adult life experience and maintain dignity.

QUESTION 3 (CONT)

Personalisation and meaningful content

Consumers expressed a clear preference for content that is personalised and meaningful. There was strong interest in tailoring activities to individual interests, life history, and preferences, such as gardening, music, travel, or past occupations. Suggestions included the ability to “upload photos, music and video to trigger their memory” and to connect activities to familiar experiences. Personalisation was seen as central to engagement, with recognition that what is meaningful will differ between individuals and across stages of cognitive change.

Simplicity, flexibility and control

Consumers reinforced the need for simple, flexible design that allows users to engage at their own pace. Features such as the ability to pause, return to where they left off, and choose session length were seen as important. There was a preference for short, manageable timeframes, with suggestions such as 5–15 minute sessions that can be built upon over time. Fatigue and fluctuating capacity were important considerations, with the need to design interactions that do not overwhelm users or require sustained concentration beyond their capability. Consumers also highlighted the importance of repetition, while recognising that variation may be needed to maintain interest. Overall, there was a clear expectation that the platform should adapt to the user’s capacity and preferences.

Improved usability and interaction design

Consumers identified several areas where usability could be improved, including navigation, input methods, and overall user experience. There was interest in alternatives to keyboard and mouse, such as touchscreens, pens, or other interactive tools. Suggestions also included clearer instructions, better visual design, and more intuitive interfaces. There was also feedback that the platform felt outdated or “too much 90’s”, with a preference for a more modern, contemporary design that reflects current expectations of digital tools.

Motivation, rewards and positive feedback

Consumers described the importance of motivation and positive reinforcement in supporting ongoing use. Suggestions included tracking progress, saving scores, unlocking new activities, and providing encouraging feedback. Rewards, achievements, and visible progress were seen as ways to create a sense of accomplishment and encourage return use. At the same time, there was a preference to avoid failure-based approaches, with an emphasis on building confidence rather than highlighting errors.

QUESTION 3 (CONT)

Social interaction and shared experiences

There was strong interest in incorporating social elements into the platform. Consumers suggested options for group activities, multiplayer games, and shared experiences between patients and carers. These features were seen as supporting motivation, connection, and enjoyment. There was also recognition that shared activities can strengthen relationships and provide additional support for engagement.

Cultural relevance and inclusivity

Consumers highlighted the importance of ensuring the platform is culturally inclusive and relevant to diverse users. This included offering multiple languages, incorporating culturally relevant content such as music and activities from different eras and backgrounds, and recognising the needs of Aboriginal communities. There was also emphasis on respecting individual identity and experience, rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach.

Human-like interaction and companionship

Some consumers suggested incorporating more human-like elements into the technology, such as avatars, voice interaction, or even robotic assistance. There was interest in moving beyond a “typical screen and keyboard” experience toward something that feels more relational. Comments such as wanting “a human to speak to” and suggestions of a “cognitive wellbeing companion” reflect a desire for interaction that feels supportive and engaging, rather than purely transactional. This reflects a broader shift in expectation, from a game-based platform toward a tool that supports wellbeing, companionship, and ongoing engagement in a more meaningful way.

Focus on meaningful activity and quality of life

Consumers emphasised that the technology should go beyond games and cognitive testing to support meaningful activity and quality of life. Suggestions included activities linked to daily living, such as shopping or cooking, as well as reminiscence-based experiences and creative tasks. There was a clear message that the platform should “give meaningful activity” and support dignity, autonomy, and wellbeing, rather than focusing solely on cognitive performance. This reinforces the importance of designing the platform to support real-world relevance and lived experience, rather than abstract or purely task-based interaction.

EVENT SUMMARY



The Community Conversation provided a rich and focused discussion, allowing researchers to explore the lived experiences of people navigating memory concerns, cognitive decline, or dementia, as well as those who care for and support them. The breadth of insights shared across the three discussion areas highlighted both the potential of technology to support cognitive health at home and the practical and emotional challenges that influence its use.

Consumers described a range of real-world barriers, including low confidence with technology, physical and cognitive limitations, and difficulties with access, usability, and relevance. At the same time, there was strong interest in the potential of technology to support independence, routine, and engagement, provided it is simple, meaningful, and designed with the user in mind. The importance of dignity, personalisation, and human connection emerged consistently throughout the discussions, reinforcing that technology must align with people's lived experiences rather than expecting users to adapt to it.

Attendees found the session valuable, with many expressing appreciation for the opportunity to contribute directly to research, hear from others with similar experiences, and share their perspectives in a supportive environment. There was clear interest in ongoing involvement, reflecting the value placed on being part of shaping solutions that may impact their own lives and communities.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR THIS PROJECT?

The insights from the Community Conversation will be used to refine the design and development of CaRER-Tech, ensuring the platform reflects consumer priorities, including simplicity, meaningful use, personalisation, and support for human connection.

These findings will inform the next phase of prototype development, with further involvement from Murdoch University students to support ongoing design and refinement. This session provided a broad foundation, and a more targeted follow-up session is planned.

Consumer and community involvement will continue to be embedded throughout the project, including opportunities to test future iterations and provide feedback as the platform evolves.

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