



Technology

Real time translation technologies, including handheld receivers, staff worn earbuds, translation glasses and related communication tools, to support everyday communication in residential aged care.

Researcher

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What this is

The Listening Link is a small, practical pilot exploring how real time AI translation technologies may be used to support everyday communication in residential aged care. The project is being developed through two related lenses.

The first is a **resident lens**, focused on communication with culturally and linguistically diverse residents, particularly where language barriers affect dignity, inclusion, reassurance and everyday care.

The second is a **staff lens**, focused on culturally and linguistically diverse staff working in English dominant care environments, where communication strain may affect confidence, inclusion and day to day workflow.

Together, these two lenses position communication as both a resident care issue and a workforce issue.

Why it matters

Communication barriers in residential aged care can affect both residents and staff.

For residents, reduced access to meaningful communication may contribute to distress, misunderstanding, social isolation and reduced participation in everyday care. This may be especially relevant for residents living with dementia related language regression, stroke related communication changes or cognitive impairment.

For staff, communication strain may affect confidence, inclusion, workflow and the quality of routine interaction, particularly where staff are working across language difference in fast paced care environments.

The Listening Link responds to the everyday communication gap where interpreters remain essential for complex, formal or high-risk communication, but are not routinely available for spontaneous low risk interactions. The project is not designed to replace interpreters. It is designed to test whether translation technologies can provide an additional practical layer of support in routine care.

Current status of the project

The Listening Link has received Project Support through ARIIA, Aged Care Research and Industry Innovation Australia, and QUT Human Research Ethics approval #10933. A Brisbane partner site has been secured for current pilot development and implementation planning. I am currently inviting additional provider partnerships for 2027 implementation and expansion, subject to ethics and organisational governance approvals.

Invitation to residential aged care providers

I am currently inviting expressions of interest from residential aged care providers with a strong cohort of culturally and linguistically diverse residents to explore participation in a time limited micro pilot and possible future partnership.

Depending on site priorities and feasibility, the pilot may focus on:

- communication support for culturally and linguistically diverse residents
- communication support for culturally and linguistically diverse staff
- or a combination of both, where appropriate and approved

Involvement can be as light touch or as collaborative as the service prefers. This may include contributing to co design and planning or reviewing a ready to use model and participating in implementation.

A simple partnership model

I will work with a nominated staff member who acts as the **Listening Link Site Champion**. This person will be the primary liaison for practical coordination and staff communication. The role could suit a Social Worker, Clinical Care Manager, RN Team Leader, Quality Lead, Lifestyle Coordinator, Educator, or another staff member with strong site knowledge.

What the micro pilot could look like

A micro pilot would run for approximately four weeks and involve a small group of staff across mixed roles. Depending on the agreed site focus, staff may use the translation technologies:

- during routine low risk interactions with culturally and linguistically diverse residents
- in staff focused communication contexts where language difference affects confidence, workflow or inclusion
- or across both contexts, where feasible and ethically approved

Technologies may include handheld receivers, staff worn earbuds, translation glasses and related communication tools. The model is designed to complement interpreters, not replace them.

Governance, safety and ethics

This pilot involves the collection of deidentified staff feedback and evaluation data, so ethics approval and organisational governance processes will apply.

Queensland University of Technology's University Human Research Ethics Committee oversees human research to ensure it aligns with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. The Listening Link has received QUT Human Research Ethics approval #10933. Partner organisations may also have their own research governance, ICT, privacy and approval requirements, and I am willing to work within these processes.

What the partner would contribute

The provider would support identification of a suitable site and staff participants, assist with internal governance and consent pathways, enable staff participation and feedback, and support practical implementation and evaluation activities.

What the partner receives

Partners receive early access to translation technologies and a culturally responsive implementation model that may support service improvement. Potential benefits may include:

- clearer everyday communication
- reduced distress or misunderstanding linked to language barriers
- practical workforce resources
- stronger staff support in communication across language difference
- evaluation findings that may support future funding applications
- a clearer point of difference as a culturally responsive provider

Depending on the site focus, the pilot may also contribute to staff confidence, retention, family trust and overall service responsiveness.

About delivery and support

On site engagement will be undertaken by me in coordination with the nominated Listening Link Site Champion. The approach is designed to be low disruption, with planning and documentation completed off site wherever possible and site contact scheduled at times that suit the service. The project is conducted under academic supervision through Queensland University of Technology, and provider involvement in co design can be as light touch or as collaborative as the service prefers.

Full protocol

A full research protocol is available upon request for governance and research teams.

Next steps

If you are open to a brief conversation or demonstration of the chosen technology, I would welcome a short meeting to discuss feasibility, site suitability and the level of involvement that would work best for your service.

