



Digital Technologies in the Australian aged care sector:  
a national project experience.

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## The storyline of this session..

1. A national project to support palliative care in aged care

*why palliative care? why technology??*

2. Innovative palliative care technologies making a difference in aged care

*Digital dashboard & an app!*

3. Integration > implementation > and beyond.....

*Experiences and the learnings*

## But first- what is Palliative care???

Palliative care

...an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families who are facing problems associated with life-threatening illness. (World Health Organisation, 2020)

Palliative care is not just care provided in the final stages of life. Sometimes palliative care can be of benefit for a person at their initial diagnosis of a life-limiting condition... (Palliative care Australia, n.d.)



## Care at the end of life matters, because.....

Life has  
100%  
mortality  
rate

Death is part  
of life for ALL  
OF US

Aging  
population

Getting older  
and living  
longer.



## End of Life Direction for Aged Care[ELDAC] Project

ELDAC provides information, guidance, and resources to health professionals and aged care workers to support palliative care and advance care planning to improve the care of older Australians.

<https://www.eldac.com.au>



**Five streams of activities → One of which is 'Technology and Innovation'**

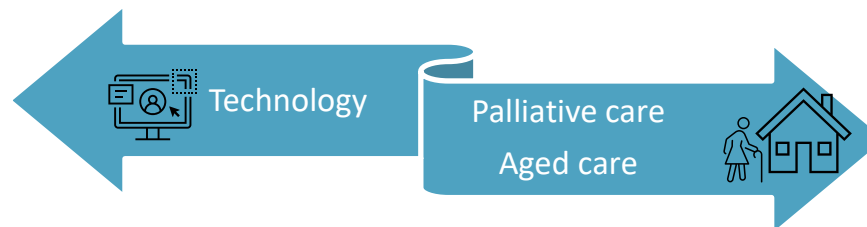
## ELDAC Technology and Innovation

- T& I team is located at Flinders University, Adelaide [South Australia]



- Developing, testing and implementing technology solutions to assist the Australian aged care sector in providing quality palliative and end of life care.

But you may ask:

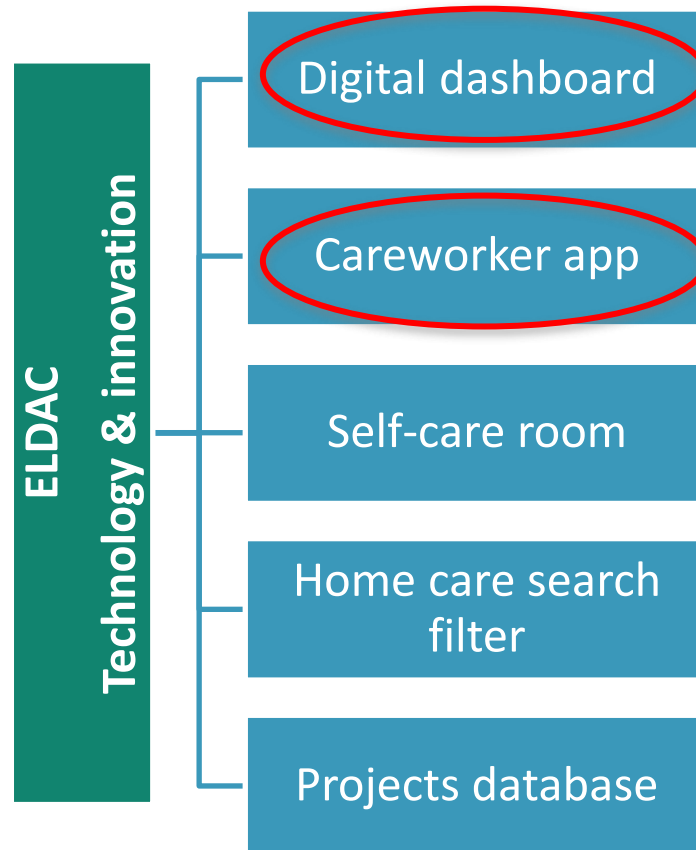


## Why consider technology to support aged care?

### Aged care sector:

- Huge demand- Over 3.5 million older Australians will require some form of aged care service by 2050.
- Resource intensive- need for hands on regular/daily care + workforce shortages.
- Intersection with death and dying: Aged care sector provides support to a lot of older people who are in the last year of life. Almost half over 65 year old Australians die in the residential aged care setting.
- Technology proliferation- Digital technologies are increasingly utilized in the aged care setting- supportive technologies, communication aids, learning and education, clinical data management platforms etc.

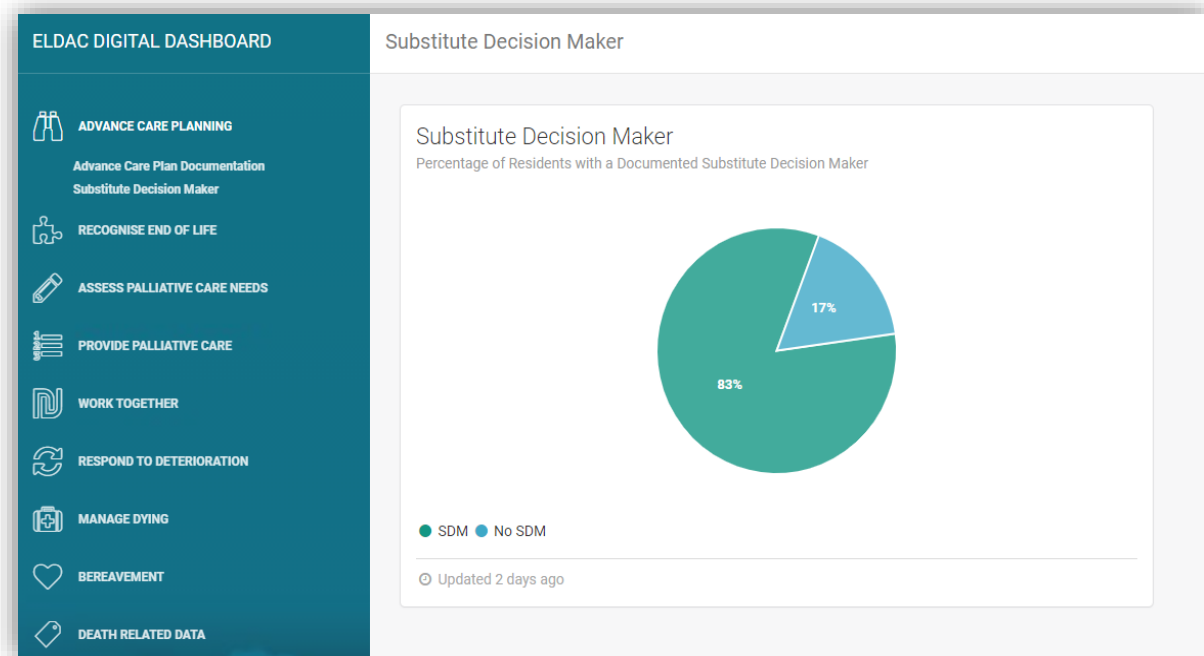
## Facilitating Palliative care with technology





## The Dashboard example

A technology that integrates within a service's clinical data management system & provides framework for quality EOL care planning and provisioning.





## Strengths of the ELDAC Digital Dashboard

**Adaptable:** Works with the tools, processes and mechanisms of care already in place at a service/IT system level.

**Not a stand-alone technology:** Seamless integration into existing clinical data management system.

**Evidence based product:** Based on relevant aged care policy, guidelines and end of life care evidence.

**No duplicate data entry:** Dashboard uses data that is collected within the service's IT system, so no need to feed data.

**Realtime update:** No need to wait to view care summaries and prom



## ELDAC Digital Dashboard- Meaningful Impact!

Post prototype release > integration into 4 IT groups' system

15 Residential aged care sites had access to the integrated dashboard.

### **The ELDAC Digital Dashboard Implementation [EDDI] Study June-December 2020**

- A three-month implementation evaluation study across fourteen residential aged care sites.
- Each site supported by the study team, and a site based 'Dashboard Champion' to ensure appropriate access and use of the dashboard by all relevant site staff.
- 72 staff consented, 57 took part in the focus groups and/or the interviews.

## ELDAC Digital Dashboard- Meaningful Impact!

### What did we find out?

The ELDAC Digital dashboard provides an opportunity to support existing work processes.

The dashboard presented a useful mechanism to prompt clinical actions, track care needs and enable reporting to management.

The Dashboard helped nurses organise end of life care of their older residents.



## The Careworker App

Careworkers/personal support workers/personal care assistants/community support workers

- These are the group of care providers that are most heavily involved in day to day care giving roles in the aged care sector.
  - Unlicensed
  - Very little training in end of life or palliative care context.
  - Spends most amount of time with the older person in care interactions

**OPPORTUNITY**

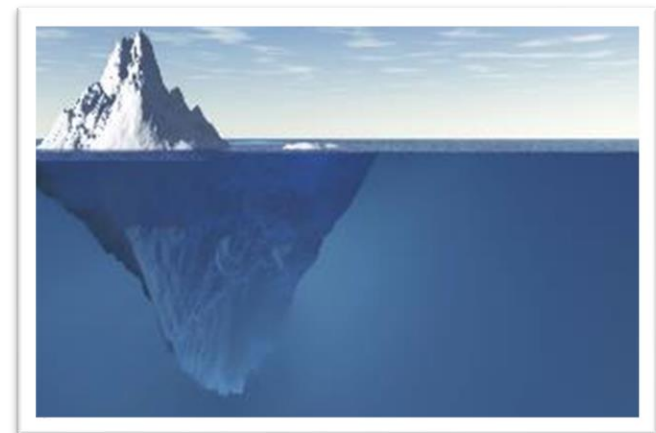
- Support this workforce in identifying and understanding their clients' palliative and end of life care needs and reporting it to their relevant channels.

## The Careworker App

Aim: develop and evaluate an app that could support Australian aged care support workers (care workers) in caring for older Australians approaching the end of life in the home care setting.

- Currently in building process

But the technical build is just the tip of the iceberg



# What underpins the careworker app build

## 1. Understanding the App landscape:

- Evidence on apps for care workers [systematic review of peer reviewed evidence]
- App markets – What is out there? [Systematic review of apps]

## 2. Understanding the needs of our end users

- Interviews with careworkers

## 3. Rigorous build process

- Co-design process
- User testing exercise



**Technical build**



## Next steps

App build finalisation

Deployment to App markets

App Promotion

Evaluation of the app use

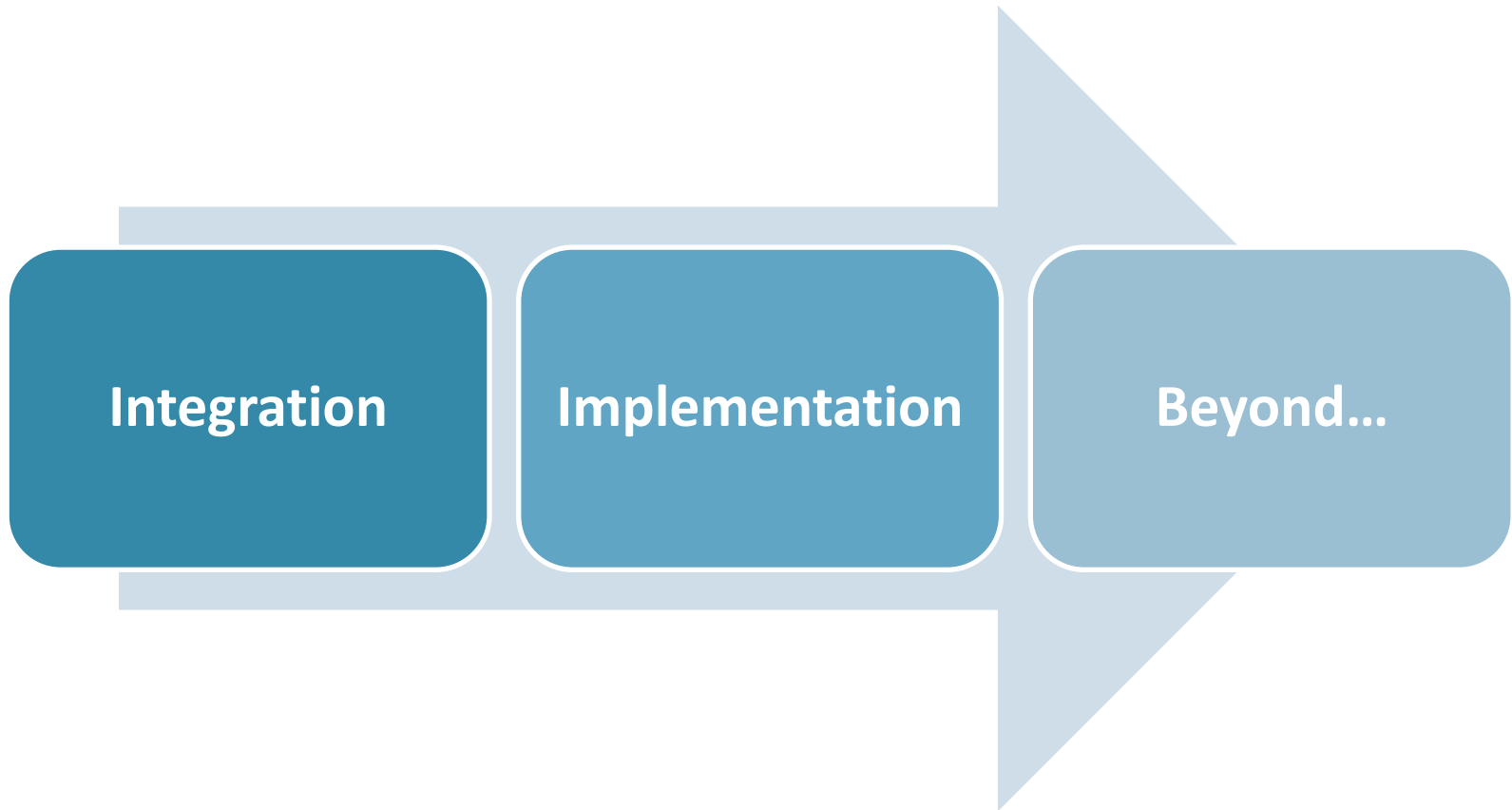




## Value adds of the careworker app

- Support for interactions at the point of care when caring for someone who is in the last year of life.
- Interactive- Actionable tips NOT JUST content to read.
- Links to resources for further education and support.
- Support for self-care.

## Technology: The Product Vs The Process



## Integration > Implementation > & beyond...

### Access and Adoption

- Are the end users in control of the integration process? [Access]
  - How do we get the buy in from the integrators?
- Is the sector ready for this? Palliative and end of life care? Technology approaches?
- Is there a need for implementation support?

### Encouraging widespread uptake

- Navigating access to, and conversations with, the right set of people-technology integrators, leadership team with interest in technology at the service level etc.

## Lessons learned from the Dashboard experience

### Integration and implementation

- Collaboration with the IT and the aged care sector crucial- IT system level integration + service level [mid-layer] integration successful.
- Technology should work alongside work processes that are in place- Terms and terminologies, roles and hierarchies, reporting and documenting practices etc.
- Having a service/site level champion when implementing a new technology is very useful.
- The timeframe to progress from ‘interested’ to ‘integrated’ could be very long- need to keep the flame of interest going in the meantime.

## Lessons learned from the Dashboard experience

### Feedback from the sector

- A Palliative care digital dashboard is a welcome addition to the Australian aged care sector's technology offerings.
- Dashboard helped the aged care services organise their end of life care practices.
- There is ongoing interest from the aged care sector on the dashboard
  - Seeking digital demonstration(s) and scoping out ways to have access to it.

Conversations with aged care IT sector regarding integration is also occurring.

## Concluding thoughts

**Where to from here for technology in aged care?**

"Nothing is more  
powerful than an idea  
whose time has come."

~ Victor Hugo



**Thank you and questions**