

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



UTAS plays leading role in EU project to help people age with dignity

The quality of life for older people will be enhanced as a result of a new European Union project involving the University of Tasmania.

Dr Liz Cummings, a Research Fellow with the UTAS School of Computing and Information Systems, and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) Professor Paddy Nixon are part of a project which seeks to unleash the potential of technology as a vehicle to enable people to achieve their full capacity.

Queen's University Belfast, the University of Amsterdam and Portugal's Institute for the Development of New Technologies are also represented in the Bridging Research in Ageing and Information Technology Development (BRAID) consortium. BRAID has now produced the roadmap which will guide future European Commission research on ICT and active ageing.

Migratory patterns within Europe have resulted in the movement of largely young people from rural to urban areas and to more affluent states. This has resulted in the reduction of traditional extended family structures and community cohesion, and the growth in the perception of isolation and loneliness.

At the same time birth rates have been decreasing, with the result that the proportion of the population aged 65 years and older is rapidly increasing.

This phenomenon is also happening in Australia - by 2050, there will be only 2.7 working-age Australians for every one aged 65 or more.

Tasmania currently has the oldest population of any state or territory, with a median age of 40 years. It has also experienced the largest growth in median age over the last 20 years, accelerated by the emigration of young Tasmanians to the mainland.

"The BRAID roadmap is focused on four life settings – independent living, health and care in life, occupation in life and recreation in life," Prof Nixon explains, "and describes how ICT can be best employed to enable people to remain in their homes and communities".

"It will underpin all EU funding in this area over the next decade."

Prof Nixon said the BRAID project is yet another example of how UTAS is part of global networks driving the international research agenda.

Workshops involving older people, policy makers and international experts were held in five different European countries and a sixth was staged in Melbourne, where BRAID hosted an international conference last October in collaboration with the Institute for Broadband Enabled Society at University of Melbourne.

UTAS was the lead partner in the establishment of the BRAID project web site; the community portal; all the engagement and dissemination activities; and the report on recommendations for international cooperation.

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