



Innovation,
Applicability and
Transferability

Making Minds Matter

A structured program using Cognitive Stimulation Therapy

Resthaven's Making Minds Matter program uses principles of Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (CST) in structured, evidence-based group therapy with demonstrated positive results for older people with mild to moderate dementia. CST involves group exercises and activities to stimulate thinking, concentration, memory and movement.

Making Minds Matter fits well with Resthaven's wellness and reablement approach as a strategy to improve older people's cognitive function and emotional wellbeing.

In 2019, Resthaven collaborated with the University of South Australia, through their Occupational Therapy Participatory Community Practice (PCP) program, to advance the CST program we had established in some of our community services in 2015.

Following a scoping exercise in late 2018 by Occupational Therapy students, Cassandra Dunn, Aleisha Zamperin and Joanne Zheng, a project plan was established to investigate how CST principles were being applied across Resthaven, and to identify opportunities for improving the structure of programs, and resources for implementation.



The aim of the project was to improve quality of life of older people with dementia through engagement in consistent implementation and evaluation of CST.

The students were rostered across seven sites to review and "stocktake" various group social and therapy programs. They then worked with two specific sites, Resthaven Western Community Services and Resthaven Community Respite Services, to develop, trial and implement staff training, guidelines and resources, and embed CST into service delivery.

Staff involved in the program reported increased confidence in engaging with older people with dementia, with greater understanding of how to modify and moderate activities to match each person's capabilities and energy.

The resulting product is Resthaven's Making Minds Matter program, a structured, tiered program which uses principles of CST to provide guided and meaningful activity with people with mild to moderate dementia.

Resthaven has implemented four levels of the Making Minds Matter program:

- Level 1: Cognitive Stimulation Therapy, a seven week intensive program facilitated by an Occupational Therapist
- Level 2: An ongoing group program, maintaining skills and outcomes achieved during the initial Level 1 program
- Level 3: Using CST principles/activities during social group/respice group programs
- Level 4: Using CST principles/activities on a one to one or small group basis in respice settings and in the client's home.

Project resources include information for staff, activity session plans, and individual activities with structured guidelines for implementation on a one to one basis. These have proved useful with an increased focus on in home activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, with government recommendations for home isolation, especially for older vulnerable people.

The positive outcomes of Making Minds Matter for older people have been:

- Increased social interaction
- Improved alertness, confidence, communication
- Providing a safe activity where people can be engaged, empowered, and challenged while maintaining their dignity
- Providing an opportunity to be creative, have fun and encourage participation
- Promotes physical and mindful activities, based around the person's interests.

