

PRESS RELEASE

Deakin University to partner with Inverell's McLean Care to drive change for older drivers through Virtual Reality

Earlier this year, McLean Care® was successful in an application for major Government grant funding, which will enable them to design, develop and trial a ground-breaking, cutting-edge virtual reality (VR) driving simulator for older people aged between 70-80.

This unique and innovative technology may assist older people to keep their driver's licences longer, focussing on the challenges associated with loss of independence and identity experienced by older people when they are faced with having their driver's license revoked, either due to health-related issues or lack of confidence in their own driving.

"McLean Care is committed to ensuring that older people in regional, rural and remote communities have equitable access to services that help them to maintain their health, independence and wellbeing as they age." said Sue Thomson, McLean Care CEO.

"By combining cutting edge technologies such as sensors, virtual reality, and simulation training, we are leading the way in developing technology to support the seniors in their local areas to remain connected to their communities. A supplementary outcome of this technology is the ability to enable consumers and their support networks to have the confidence to make informed choices regarding their independence, as the programme will also include reports and health metric data that can be used by Health Professionals to support decision-making." Ms. Thomson continued.

McLean Care® have named Deakin University as their collaborative partner to develop a world-class state-of-the-art simulator, that will be located in Inverell, and use 3D modelling to build the Inverell township in a virtual world to provide older people aged between 70 – 80 years with real-life driving experience in a safe and supportive environment, with the expected benefit of enabling people to hold their licenses for longer, and enriching their driving experience into the future.

Ben Horan, Director of the CADET Virtual Reality Laboratory at Deakin University said:

"Virtual Reality technologies have matured to the point where we can create realistic training environments. This provides the opportunity to work with McLean Care to fill their identified need for a VR driving simulator, enabling elderly drivers to practice driving in a completely safe virtual environment. It's exciting partnerships like these that allow us to work together to be innovative and really push the boundaries."

Michael Mortimer, Deakin University Research Engineer, continued: "Having just undertaken my PhD in this area (VR), the opportunity to work on this project with McLean Care allows me to put the expertise I've gained to such a good use."

McLean Care® is in the process of renovating a specific virtual reality room at their Inverell facility, to house the technology - it will be state-of-the-art, and will include the development of a passenger

car shell in consultation with Deakin University, to ensure that the experience for the user is as real as possible.

As an organisation, McLean Care® prides itself on their innovative approach to addressing traditionally accepted barriers.

The driving simulator will be developed to allow additional towns and locations to be added to the programme, enabling McLean Care® to replicate across communities not only in NSW, but also nationally and potentially internationally.

For further comment or media opportunities, contact Sue Thomson, McLean Care CEO

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