

GROWING LOCAL CARE: TAMBELLUP'S STAYING IN PLACE JOURNEY

Where We Started

The Tambellup Community Resource Centre (CRC) commenced the Staying in Place (SiP) Program in late 2023.

The program began with just one client and was initially seen as another way the CRC could support older residents to remain living in their homes and connected to their community. At the time, there was little focus on income generation; the primary motivation was meeting an emerging local need. As one client later reflected:

“ *It has made a big difference for us*
— Tambellup Staying in Place Client

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In hindsight, the CRC took a leap of faith. The decision to proceed was driven by a strong sense of community responsibility, without fully understanding the level of time, coordination, and knowledge required for the program to develop and succeed.

The early stages were particularly challenging. The Centre Coordinator who initiated the program had left, and a new Centre Coordinator, still learning the broader responsibilities of the role, was also required to quickly become familiar with aged care systems, home care packages, and the complexities of supporting older residents to remain living locally.

Growth was slow and incremental. For a period, the program supported only one client and did not launch with much visibility or momentum. Instead, it was something that was quietly developed in the background. A second client later joined, expressing a desire to “give a local program a go,” signalling early community trust in the concept.

A key turning point came when the CRC successfully applied for funding to employ a dedicated Staying in Place Coordinator. This allowed the program to receive the focused attention it required and ensured that clients were supported with consistency, quality, and care. Clients began sharing feedback such as, “*Local help has made everything much easier,*” reinforcing that the program was filling a genuine gap.

Since then, the program has continued to grow slowly but steadily. Much of this growth has occurred through word of mouth within the community. At times, progress has felt

like three steps forward and one step back, an expected reality in a program where clients' needs change, assessment and outcome waiting times are often upwards of 6 months, some transition to residential care, and others pass away.



Tambellup Community Resource Centre

“Local help has made everything much easier”
— Staying in Place Client



Where We Are Now

Two years on, the Staying in Place Program currently supports four clients, an achievement the CRC is proud of. Over the life of the program, we have supported more community members; however, some have since passed away or transitioned out of the program due to changing care needs. Their involvement remains an important part of the program's story and growth.

As the program has matured, it has increasingly been recognised as a social enterprise: a service that delivers social impact while also generating income to support its ongoing operation. Following the initial funding received to kickstart the program which has now been fully utilised, the Staying in Place Program generates income that directly supports

the employment of the Staying in Place Coordinator. Client numbers now directly influence the number of hours worked, strengthening the program's long-term sustainability.

The program is also creating meaningful local work opportunities. Casual support through the program has provided flexible, community-based work for locals. As one support worker explains:

“It has allowed me to have a small, extra income.
I like the flexibility of the support work and being able to choose my clients.”
— Mable Support Worker

Support workers can offer a wide range of services without formal qualifications being required, including transport, food preparation, social outings and visits, cleaning, and gardening. Locals can also put their training and qualifications to use, with other services including personal care and some nursing duties. One worker shared:

“I offer transport, food prep, social outings/visits, cleaning, and gardening.
I can form good relationships with clients. We can see if our personalities match. This is emotionally beneficial for both of us.”
— Staying in Place Support Worker

The program has also opened doors to broader opportunities. As noted by a support worker:

“It has opened up more casual work opportunities I wouldn't otherwise know about through Mable and HireUp platforms.”
— Staying in Place Support Worker

Importantly, the program has built a strong reputation within the community. Locals are increasingly recognising when friends or neighbours may need additional support and are approaching the CRC or the Staying in Place Coordinator for guidance. This reflects the trust, visibility, and credibility the program has developed at a grassroots level. As one client shared:

“We appreciate having somebody local who we can easily visit and speak to.”
“We wouldn't be able to maintain our home or garden without the service.”
— Staying in Place Client

Today, Staying in Place is not only supporting older residents to remain living locally; it is also strengthening community connections, building local workforce capacity, and contributing to the financial sustainability of the CRC.



A support worker and the Tambellup Staying in Place Coordinator

Where We Want To Go

Looking ahead, our priority is to ensure the Staying in Place Program is sustainable, continues to provide value for money for clients, and delivers high-quality, person-centred care.

As the program continues to grow, we aim for it to generate income that can be reinvested back into the community through expanded Staying in Place activities and supports. Our vision extends beyond supporting older residents alone, encompassing the broader care workforce and the wider community. Future aspirations include expanding local support services such as a community-based meals program, providing training and upskilling opportunities for support workers, and delivering whole-of-community events and initiatives that strengthen connection and wellbeing.

However, the aged care landscape is evolving, with new reforms likely to affect how clients access services and how care packages are allocated. These changes may influence future client numbers, package uptake, and the overall viability of small, place-based programs such as Staying in Place. To remain sustainable, the CRC will need to be flexible and responsive, adapting to policy shifts while continuing to meet local need. This may involve diversifying services, strengthening partnerships, or exploring alternative delivery models to ensure the program remains both financially sustainable and community-led.

Importantly, while the program provides employment opportunities, financial return is not the only motivator for support workers. Many are driven by a desire to give back to their community, assisting with voluntary gardening or small tasks simply because they value helping their neighbours remain living at home.

Ultimately, the Staying in Place Program is about enabling people to remain living in their community with dignity, choice, and connection, while simultaneously building local capacity, and long-term community resilience.



A Staying in Place Group Photo!

