

Professor Michael Bird

Mike Bird is an Australian clinical psychologist with a long interest in alleviating problems associated with ageing. He has worked clinically with a wide range of older people suffering dementia, depression, and anxiety but has made a specialty of complex cases. This includes people with dementia and challenging behaviour, and many other cases where a single diagnosis is meaningless and where multi-disciplinary input is often essential. Many have been in nursing homes, usually working with nursing and care staff as much as with the identified patient.

In clinical research he led the first controlled trial of psychosocial approaches to challenging behaviour in dementia in nursing homes, the national evaluation of an eight week support program for people with dementia and their families, an attempted replication of a support and supervision model developed in Lund (Sweden) for nursing home staff, and an evaluation of the clinical and cost effectiveness of specialist dementia units. He and his team have undertaken many smaller projects, for example taking people with dementia on organized visits to major art galleries, and the research component of a program training volunteers to care for older people who develop delirium whilst in acute care. Other research interests include strain amongst nursing staff caring for people with dementia and running therapy groups in nursing homes.

Mike has also been involved in service development. He was on the first Australian Government Task Force for Ageing, helped set up both an aged mental health service and community services for people with dementia and challenging behaviour in the large rural health area where he worked, and was heavily involved in the first years of a planning group setting up similar services across New South Wales. He has worked at raising the profile of clinical psychology in aging and for many years provided training and supervision for interested students from the Australian National University. Over half these students have gone on to specialise in ageing. Mike was co-founder of a biennial conference for clinical psychologists specialising in ageing; the fourth will take place later this year.

In August this year Mike 'retired' and has just taken up a part-time visiting professorship at Bangor University in the UK.