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Tech buy for SA aged care business



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VALERINA CHANGARATHIL

SOUTH Australian aged-care services provider ECH has bought Melbourne-based smart tech start-up company Billy two years after supporting its growth with a \$5m investment.

Billy's core technology involves remote monitoring sensors that are set up in homes to monitor the daily routine of seniors and alerting family or care staff to any anomalies, which could range from a fridge door not being opened for some time or the increased frequency of visiting the toilet.

ECH on Wednesday announced it had acquired the business and its team for an undisclosed price.

"Technology will undoubtedly play a critical role in supporting Australians as they age particularly those people who wish to remain living independently at home," ECH chief executive Dr David Panter said.

"While it will never replace the personalised approach, the best outcomes for clients will be achieved through tailored and individual care plans combined with cutting-edge technology."

In November 2018, ECH invested \$5m in Billy, saying it was attracted to the technology which supported seniors to stay out of hospitals and live independently in their homes for as long as possible.

ECH's interest in Billy followed its 2014 decision to divest its aged-care facilities to focus on new ways of supported the older population.

"We have seen recently during COVID-19 restrictions how technology can be used to support older people and it's essential we continue to build on this momentum," Dr Panter said.

Victorian brothers Tim and Matt McDougall established Billy in 2016, attracting seed funding of \$1m-plus led by health insurer HCF. Users need to install a smartphone app and pay a monthly subscription fee per kit.

ECH supports more than 15,000 people and employs more than 650 staff to provide services in 1838 independent living units across 109 retirement villages.