

## **DEMENTIA CARE 2009 – 2010 BUDGET SUBMISSION: ALZHEIMER'S AUSTRALIA**

### **Priority for Aged Care**

A sustainable aged care system providing quality aged care is integral to quality of life for people with dementia and their family carers. In 2009 there will be an estimated 235,000 people with dementia with over 1,000 new cases a week.<sup>1</sup>

No priority was established for aged care in the 2008 Election process and the approach of the Rudd Government has been, with the exception of a few welcome initiatives such as transition care and zero interest rate loans, essentially to continue the policy and funding approach of the previous Government. There are serious concerns about the prospect of a deteriorating quality of aged and a broad consensus on the need for change among service provider and consumer groups.<sup>2 3</sup> From the perspective of people with dementia and their family carers it is recommended that:

- Community care be reformed and restructured without delay so that care is available to respond to a range of needs, without inflexible program boundaries.
- Priority should be given to increasing community care services with the objective of doubling funding on community care over 5 years from its current level of about \$2 billion to \$4 billion.
- The number of Dementia Extended Aged Care at Home packages be doubled (there are only 2,000 packages across Australia but an estimated 20-30000 who might benefit).
- Trial consumer directed care to provide people with dementia and their family carers with the option of taking control over their lives through individualised budgets for tailored services, to be administered by service providers.
- Introduce a sustainable capital system for residential care.
- Introduce new indexation arrangements for residential and community care services that reflect increasing costs so that the value of the funds available are not diminished over time.<sup>4 5</sup>

### **The Dementia Initiative – Making Dementia a National Health Priority**

Alzheimer's Australia welcomes the commitment made by the Rudd Labor Government to "provide ongoing support for the Dementia Initiative" and to support "increased research into dementia: investments in treatment and care; and support for health care workers (including aged care workers) who are involved in caring for and treating Australians with dementia".<sup>6</sup> Alzheimer's Australia recognises that the timing of the evaluation of the Dementia Initiative in May will result in decisions on future additional funding of the Initiative in the 2010 Budget. Meanwhile, the National Dementia Support Program is due for renewal on 1 July 2009 and the funding has not been increased over the last 3 years despite the increasing numbers of people with dementia. It is requested that from 1 July 2009 the Alzheimer's Australia contract for the National

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<sup>1</sup> Access Economics "Dementia Estimates and Projections: All States and Territories" (Report for Alzheimer's Australia, 2005) available at [www.alzheimers.org.au/upload/EstimatesProjectionsNational.pdf](http://www.alzheimers.org.au/upload/EstimatesProjectionsNational.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Catholic Health Australia "Aged Care Policy Blueprint for 2020" available at [www.cha.org.au](http://www.cha.org.au)

<sup>3</sup> Productivity Commission research paper "Trends in Aged Care Services: Some Applications", September 2008 available at [www.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/83380/aged-care-trends.pdf](http://www.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/83380/aged-care-trends.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Footnote for submission from Alzheimer's Australia to the National Health and Hospital Reform Commission available at: [www.alzheimers.org.au/upload/HealthHospitalReformMay08.pdf](http://www.alzheimers.org.au/upload/HealthHospitalReformMay08.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> National Dementia Manifesto 2007-2010, Alzheimer's Australia National Consumer Committee 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Media Release "2007 Dementia Awareness Month", 18 September 2007, issued by the Shadow Ministers for Health and Ageing available at [www.alzheimers.org.au/upload/MRRoxon18Sept07.pdf](http://www.alzheimers.org.au/upload/MRRoxon18Sept07.pdf)

Dementia Support Program (NDSP) is renewed with funding of \$10 million for 12 months, an increase of \$1.7m to reflect growth in numbers of people with dementia, unmet demand for services and increased costs. To avoid interruption of services and loss of expert staff urgent decisions are needed on funding of NDSP after 1 July 2009.

### **Recognise that dementia is a health issue as well as an aged care issue**

People with dementia and their families and carers use a significant quantity of health services, including GPs, hospitals, pharmaceuticals, State mental health services, as well as aged care services. Yet, there is little recognition that dementia is a health issue as well as an aged care issue. The reviews commissioned by Government in respect of health prevention and primary care may provide an opportunity to redress this deficit in health policy, but history is not encouraging. It is strongly recommended that the time is long overdue for action to be taken in respect of:

- A substantial and increased investment in dementia research on cause, cure and care to \$35 million per annum.<sup>7</sup>
- Inclusion of dementia in national prevention awareness programs based on the **Mind Your Mind**® Program risk reduction program developed by Alzheimer's Australia. A detailed proposal is attached. Trust funding for this program terminates at 1 July 2009.
- Measures to require GPs to undertake training in respect of dementia and for there to be incentives and specialist support to enable GPs to more effectively diagnose and manage dementia.

Of all the heartbreaking stories that are told by people with dementia and their carers, the most touching are those that concern the years it may take for a diagnosis of dementia to be made and the confusion that results from misdiagnosis of dementia as depression or other chronic diseases. Misdiagnosis and delay has a very negative impact on families and increases the burden on both health and social services.

### **Younger onset dementia**

People with younger onset dementia and their family carers have unique and complex needs due to their stage of life. They may be bringing up children, financially supporting a family and have life expectations which they need to dramatically revise.

There are about 10,000 Australians under 65 with dementia. There will be a Summit at Parliament House of younger people with dementia and their family carers from across Australia in February to document the issues that face them and confirm the priority actions that will improve their quality of life. Among the most important of these is access to appropriate age services, including community care and residential care. Younger people with dementia are often physically strong and healthy, and require an environment that is appropriate to their age, interests and social relationships. It is recommended that \$10 million should be provided over 3 years to develop services for people with younger onset dementia, including appropriate day care and respite care and cluster accommodation in residential care facilities for existing dementia care networks and services.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Professor Brodaty et al, "Australian Dementia Research: Current Status, Future Directions?", a report for Alzheimer's Australia, June 2008 available at: <http://www.alzheimers.org.au/upload/DementiaResearchJune08.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Submission from Alzheimer's Australia to the National Health and Hospital Reform Commission available at: [www.alzheimers.org.au/upload/HealthHospitalReformMay08.pdf](http://www.alzheimers.org.au/upload/HealthHospitalReformMay08.pdf)