



**Alzheimer's  
Australia**  
Living with dementia

The Hon. Mark Butler, MP  
Minister for Mental Health and Ageing  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

### **LAMA Evaluation**

Many thanks for releasing the overview of the Dementia Initiative National Evaluation by the LAMA Consortium.

Alzheimer's Australia welcomes the opportunity you have provided to make comments on the Evaluation.

From a consumer perspective, we believe the Evaluation captures well the effectiveness of the different elements of the Dementia Initiative. Both in Australia and overseas, the Initiative represents a landmark in recognition of the issues that people with dementia face in their every day lives.

The response of Alzheimer's Australia to the Evaluation is attached. There are four key issues.

Firstly, the Evaluation is supportive of the work done by Alzheimer's Australia in promoting access to dementia services to meet the needs of Australia's diverse population and recommends the appointment of access officers in each state and territory. This work cannot be sustained if the one off \$2 million grant provided in the current financial year to Alzheimer's Australia is not continued in the next two financial years under the National Dementia Support Program.

Secondly, there is an urgent need to develop a communication strategy within the Initiative. This strategy should both communicate the successes of the Initiative and promote greater awareness of dementia. Alzheimer's Australia believes this could be achieved at reasonably low cost by increased funding for the awareness activities of Alzheimer's Australia through the National Dementia Support Program and funding the national roll out of Mind Your Mind to promote wider understanding of dementia risk reduction.

Thirdly, among the urgent priorities yet to be addressed in health care the most pressing is timely diagnosis. For that reason the issue has centre place in our awareness and advocacy work. The failures of the primary care system are now well documented and action is needed to ensure that the increasing numbers of people with dementia are

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provided with appropriate and timely care. The first step is a commitment to a review involving all stakeholders which identifies the barriers to timely diagnosis and recommends action for overcoming them.

Lastly, the Evaluation draws attention to the need to better coordinate the various elements of the Initiative. Alzheimer's Australia believes the answer is not to rely on new structures but to make better use of existing ones and to achieve coordination by addressing how best to achieve better quality care on the basis of priorities set by consumers. The attached response describes how this approach could be made to work in a cost effective way to promote collaboration between the various elements of the Initiative.

At our first meeting first meeting you said you would advise me on whether we should pursue issues relating to primary care, acute care and dementia risk reduction with you or with the Minister for Health and Ageing. In developing a plan to combat dementia, there is no more important task than achieving a focus in health policy on dementia as a chronic disease and it would be helpful to know which Minister we should approach.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide comments on the Evaluation.

Best wishes



Glenn Rees  
CEO  
Alzheimer's Australia

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