

**AMA (NSW) CHARITABLE FOUNDATION 2013  
ANNUAL BLACK TIE DINNER**

**NSW PARLIAMENT HOUSE  
SYDNEY**

**OCTOBER 11, 2013**

**ITA BUTTROSE AO, OBE  
NATIONAL PRESIDENT – ALZHEIMER'S AUSTRALIA**

**I AM DELIGHTED TO HAVE BEEN ASKED TO BE GUEST SPEAKER THIS EVENING.**

**I'M ONE OF THOSE PROUD STATISTICS THAT WE HEAR SO MUCH ABOUT THESE DAYS – AN OLDER AUSTRALIAN AND WHAT'S MORE, I'M PLEASED TO BE ONE. AFTER ALL, NOT EVERYONE GETS TO BE OLD. YOU HAVE TO BE LUCKY TO GET TO BE OLD.**

**RAISING ISSUES ABOUT OLDER AUSTRALIANS, TRYING TO DISPEL THE MYTHS OF AGEISM, RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT DEMENTIA, TRYING TO REMOVE THE STIGMA AND SENSE OF SHAME THAT A DIAGNOSIS OFTEN BRINGS WITH IT WERE AMONG THE GOALS I SET MYSELF WHEN I BECAME AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR IN JANUARY.**

**THE PLATFORM THAT THIS WONDERFUL HONOUR AFFORDS ME HAS BEEN INCREDIBLY USEFUL AND I HAVE A VERY BUSY FEW MONTHS PLANNED BETWEEN NOW AND AUSTRALIA DAY 2014 TO MAKE THE MOST OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY AVAILABLE TO ME.**

**LET ME ADD THAT BECOMING AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR IS NOT SOMETHING YOU EVER IMAGINE HAPPENING TO YOU. I AM CONSCIOUS THAT IT IS A HUGE HONOUR AND THAT IM FOLLOWING THE FOOTSTEPS OF SOME OUR COUNTRY'S MOST DISTINGUISHED CITIZENS.**

**THERE'S NO DOUBT, AUSTRALIA'S AGEING POPULATION IS CHANGING OUR WORLD AND OUR EXPECTATIONS OF OLDER AGE. IT USED TO BE THOUGHT YOU WERE FORTUNATE IF YOU LIVED TO SEE YOUR GRANDCHILDREN GROW INTO ADULTS....AND TO SEE GREAT GRANDCHILDREN, A RARE AND UNUSUAL PRIVILEGE.**

**DUE TO RAPID ADVANCES IN MEDICINE AND HYGIENE, AS WELL AS UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO A WORLD CLASS HEALTH SYSTEM IN AUSTRALIA THIS IS NO LONGER THE CASE.**

**AND BECAUSE OF THE WORK MANY OF YOU HERE AND YOUR COLLEAGUES ACROSS AUSTRALIA DO EVERY DAY. AUSTRALIANS ARE NOW COMING TO EXPECT THAT MANY OF THEM WILL LIVE INTO THEIR EIGHTIES, NINETIES AND PERHAPS EVEN FURTHER.**

**AUSTRALIANS OVER THE AGE OF 90 NOW THE FASTEST-GROWING GROUP IN THE POPULATION. THERE ARE AROUND 3000 CENTENARIANS IN AUSTRALIA TODAY AND BY MID CENTURY IT IS EXPECTED THAT THIS FIGURE WILL GROW TO 50,000.**

**BUT LIVING LONGER LIVES ALSO BRINGS WITH IT SOME DIFFICULT CONSEQUENCES – NOT FOR EVERYONE BUT FOR A LOT OF PEOPLE. THERE ARE THE OBVIOUS DOWNSIDES SOME OF WHICH WE SEE EVERY DAY. WITH AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF OLDER PEOPLE COMES GREATER SOCIAL ISOLATION, LONELINESS, DEPRESSION, CHRONIC DISEASE AND OF COURSE, DEMENTIA.**

**THIS CHANGE IN OUR LONGEVITY OFFERS THE NEXT GENERATION THE CHALLENGE TO REDESIGN THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM IN INNOVATIVE WAYS TO IMPROVE SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA.**

**THERE WILL BE A NEED FOR MORE SERVICES FOR GPS, MORE INFORMATION, MORE ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT OPTIONS, MORE TRAINING AND MORE PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT.**

**THE CHALLENGE IS NOT JUST ABOUT MORE SERVICES THOUGH. IT'S ALSO ABOUT MAKING OURSELVES MORE EFFICIENT THROUGH BETTER DESIGN, USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND THINKING OUTSIDE OF THE USUAL FRAMEWORK OF CARE.**

**WE NEED TO GET AUSTRALIANS TO THINK ABOUT DEMENTIA AS A CHRONIC DISEASE AND NOT AS AN INEVITABLE PART OF AGEING. THE RECOGNITION OF DEMENTIA AS A NATIONAL HEALTH PRIORITY AREA LAST YEAR ALONGSIDE CANCER AND HEART DISEASE IS A START.**

**THROUGH OUR FIGHT DEMENTIA CAMPAIGN ADVOCACY WE HAVE, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY, SECURED FUNDING FROM THE FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO IMPROVE TIMELY DIAGNOSIS OF DEMENTIA AND BETTER CARE OF PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA IN HOSPITALS.**

**WE HAVE ALSO BEEN ABLE TO DELIVER THE WORLD'S FIRST PUBLICLY-FUNDED DEMENTIA RISK REDUCTION PROGRAM – *YOUR BRAIN MATTERS*.**

**THE PROGRAM IS CENTRED ON THE CONCEPT THAT IT TAKES FIVE SIMPLE STEPS TO MAXIMISE BRAIN HEALTH. ..**

**1: LOOK AFTER YOUR HEART**

**2: BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE**

**3: MENTALLY CHALLENGE YOUR BRAIN**

**4: FOLLOW A HEALTHY DIET**

**5: ENJOY SOCIAL ACTIVITY**

**MORE RECENTLY, TO SUPPORT THE KEY MESSAGES OF THE PROGRAM, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FITNESS AUSTRALIA, WE LAUNCHED AN EVIDENCE-BASED PAPER THAT REPORTS ON A RANGE OF INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL STUDIES WHICH HAVE EXAMINED THE LINKS BETWEEN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, BRAIN HEALTH AND DEMENTIA RISK.**

THE PAPER REFERS TO A RECENT STUDY THAT ESTIMATED A 25 PER CENT REDUCTION IN PHYSICAL INACTIVITY RATES COULD POTENTIALLY PREVENT NEARLY ONE MILLION CASES OF ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE WORLDWIDE. ONE MILLION CASES AVOIDED SIMPLY BY TAKING UP REGULAR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY!

YOU CAN FIND THIS PAPER AND FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE *YOUR BRAIN MATTERS* PROGRAM AT [YOURBRAINMATTERS.ORG.AU](http://YOURBRAINMATTERS.ORG.AU)

AND THERE ARE COPIES OF THE *5 SIMPLE STEPS* PUBLICATION ON YOUR TABLES. PLEASE TAKE IT WITH YOU.

I ENCOURAGE YOU TO TAKE THESE MESSAGES INTO YOUR SURGERIES AND TO TELL YOUR PATIENTS THE SIMPLE CHANGES THEY CAN MAKE TO HELP THEIR BRAIN HEALTH AS WELL AS THEIR PHYSICAL AND HEART HEALTH.

**THE MISSION OF ALZHEIMER'S AUSTRALIA NSW TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT DEMENTIA CAN BE ACHIEVED ONLY WITH THE COOPERATION, SUPPORT AND INSPIRATION OF OUR MEDICAL PROFESSION. MORE THAN ANY OTHER GROUP, I KNOW AMA MEMBERS IN NSW UNDERSTAND THE CHALLENGE OUR COMMUNITIES FACE WITH THE DEMENTIA EPIDEMIC.**

**OFTEN IT IS YOUR MEMBERS WHO ACT AS THE FIRST RESPONDERS FOR THOSE WITH DEMENTIA.**

**IT IS IN YOUR SURGERIES AND CLINICS ACROSS NSW WHERE THE DEVASTATING DRAMAS OF THE DEMENTIA JOURNEY ARE PLAYED OUT. YOU SEE THE GROWING AWARENESS IN THE FACES OF YOUR PATIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES AS THEIR FEARS ARE REALISED.**

**BUT AS DIFFICULT AS THIS IS FOR ALL INVOLVED, THE FIRST STEP IS OF COURSE GETTING A DIAGNOSIS.**



**I'VE HEARD TOO MANY HEART-BREAKING STORIES FROM PEOPLE WHO SPENT YEARS TRYING TO UNDERSTAND WHAT WAS WRONG BEFORE THEY FINALLY RECEIVED A DIAGNOSIS.**

**RESEARCH COMMISSIONED NATIONALLY BY ALZHEIMER'S AUSTRALIA FROM DR DIMITY POND AT NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY HAS FOUND THAT IT OFTEN TAKES AN AVERAGE OF 1.2 YEARS AFTER THE INITIAL CONSULTATION BEFORE A FORMAL DIAGNOSIS IS MADE.**

**THIS DELAY IS NOT JUST AN INCONVENIENCE. FOR CONSUMERS THIS TIME IS SPENT WONDERING WHAT IS WRONG AND NOT BEING ABLE TO PLAN FOR THE FUTURE.**

**AS DISTRESSING AS A DIAGNOSIS IS, I HAVE HEARD MANY TIMES PATIENTS SAY THEY FELT A SENSE OF RELIEF ONCE THEY KNEW THAT SOMETHING WAS WRONG; THAT IT WASN'T THEIR IMAGINATION.**

**I WANT TO EXPRESS MY ADMIRATION AND GRATITUDE FOR THE WORK YOU DO IN CARING FOR PEOPLE DEMENTIA AND TO REMIND YOU THAT WE ARE ALSO HERE TO HELP YOU.**

**ALZHEIMER'S AUSTRALIA NSW PROVIDES A RANGE OF SERVICES THROUGHOUT THIS STATE. I URGE YOU TO LOOK AT OUR SERVICES AND DISCUSS THEM WITH YOUR PATIENTS. IF EVERY PERSON WHO COMES INTO YOUR ROOMS WITH DEMENTIA IS REFERRED TO ALZHEIMER'S AUSTRALIA NSW IT WOULD MAKE SUCH A DIFFERENCE TO THEIR LIVES.**

**WE HAVE OFFICES ACROSS THE STATE – IN PORT MACQUARIE, THE HUNTER AND BEGA – HERE IN SYDNEY AT NORTH RYDE. WE HAVE SMALLER CENTRES AND INDIVIDUAL WORKERS IN WESTERN SYDNEY AND PLACES AS FAR AFIELD AS WAGGA, ORANGE, ARMIDALE AND TWEED HEADS.**

**THE MAIN ENTRY POINT TO OUR SERVICES IS THE NATIONAL DEMENTIA HELPLINE – 1800 100 500 – I KNOW IT OFF BY HEART.**

**WITH JUST A SIMPLE PHONE CALL, YOU AND YOUR PATIENTS CAN RECEIVE HIGH QUALITY UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION ABOUT EVERY ASPECT OF DEMENTIA FROM WELL TRAINED AND QUALIFIED COUNSELLORS.**

**I'VE REFERRED QUITE A FEW PEOPLE TO OUR DEMENTIA HELPLINE IN THE ALMOST THREE YEARS I'VE BEEN NATIONAL PRESIDENT AND EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THEM HAS TOLD ME HOW MUCH THE ADVICE THEY RECEIVED HAS HELPED THEM.**

**OUR HELPLINE COUNSELLORS CAN ADVISE ABOUT SYMPTOMS, REFER TO SPECIALIST SERVICES, PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT COMMUNITY OR RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE SERVICES. OUR AIM IS TO EMPOWER BOTH THE PATIENT AND THEIR CARER TO BE INFORMED, AND AS PREPARED AS POSSIBLE FOR THEIR JOURNEY AHEAD.**

**PEOPLE WITH YOUNGER ONSET DEMENTIA WILL BE PUT IN TOUCH WITH A KEY WORKER WHO WILL ASSIST THEM IN NAVIGATING THE SUPPORTS AND SERVICES THROUGHOUT THE DEMENTIA JOURNEY.**

ALZHEIMER'S AUSTRALIA NSW RECENTLY LAUNCHED A NEW GP DEDICATED WEBSITE, [DETECTEARLY.ORG.AU](https://www.detectearly.org.au) TO HIGHLIGHT THE VALUE OF TIMELY DIAGNOSIS AND PROVIDED A LINK TO ITS SERVICES IN THIS STATE.

THE WEBSITE STRESSES THE BENEFITS OF TIMELY DIAGNOSIS ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA. IN OUR VIEW, THE DIFFICULT ISSUES AROUND LOSS OF COGNITIVE CAPACITY MAKE FOR A STRONG CASE FOR TIMELY DIAGNOSIS.

TIMELY DIAGNOSIS EMPOWERS PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA BY ENABLING THEM TO PLAN AHEAD AND GAIN A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE SYMPTOMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE DIAGNOSIS AND THE SUPPORT SERVICES AVAILABLE.

WE'RE VERY PLEASED TO BE WORKING WITH DR ALLAN SHELL AND PROFESSOR HENRY BRODATY FROM THE DEMENTIA COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH CENTRE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NSW ON A NATIONAL PROJECT THAT IS REACHING OUT TO GPs AND PRACTICE NURSES AROUND AUSTRALIA.

**THE PARTICULAR PROJECT WAS SELECTED BY MEMBERS OF OUR CONSUMER DEMENTIA RESEARCH NETWORK AND IS PART OF OUR NATIONAL QUALITY DEMENTIA CARE INITIATIVE, WHICH IS SUPPORTED BY THE JO AND JR WICKING ANZ TRUST AND BUPA CARE SERVICES.**

**WE HAVE CONTRIBUTED MORE THAN \$300,000 FOR THIS PROJECT AND BY THE END OF THIS YEAR, IT WILL HAVE PROVIDED DETAILED ACCREDITED TRAINING ON DEMENTIA ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT IN PERSON AND ONLINE TO MORE THAN 5 PER CENT – OR 1000 – OF AUSTRALIA’S GPS.**

**ALZHEIMER’S AUSTRALIA IS PROUD OF THE FACT THAT ITS NATIONAL ADVOCACY HAS DELIVERED SO MUCH IN THE LAST 10 YEARS. IT HAS BEEN A LONG ROAD SINCE THE HOWARD GOVERNMENT’S DEMENTIA INITIATIVE IN 2005 AND THE COMMONWEALTH, STATE AND TERRITORY HEALTH MINISTERS DECLARING DEMENTIA A NATIONAL HEALTH PRIORITY AREA LAST YEAR.**

**BUT IF WE ARE TO EFFECTIVELY TACKLE THIS DEBILITATING CHRONIC DISEASE AUSTRALIA NEEDS NATIONAL ACTION IN BOTH THE AREAS OF HEALTH AND AGED CARE POLICY. WE NEED OUR HEALTH MINISTERS TO AGREE THAT A NEW NATIONAL ACTION FRAMEWORK ON DEMENTIA IS URGENTLY REQUIRED.**

**THE LAST ONE ENDED IN 2010; IT IS NOW TIME TO MAKE A COMMITMENT TO A NEW ONE.**

**THE NEW GOVERNMENT IN CANBERRA HAS MADE A GOOD START BY COMMITTING TO THE AGED CARE REFORMS AND TO AN ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT OF \$200 MILLION OVER FIVE YEARS TO DEMENTIA RESEARCH.**

**ALZHEIMER'S AUSTRALIA HAS BEEN CALLING FOR THIS FOR MORE THAN TWO YEARS THROUGH OUR FIGHT DEMENTIA CAMPAIGN. WE ARE ENCOURAGED BY THE REALISATION THAT THE POLITICIANS ARE LISTENING.**

THE EXTRA FUNDING WILL BE DISTRIBUTED THROUGH THE NHMRC AND I LONG WITH MY ALZHEIMER'S AUSTRALIA COLLEAGUES HAVE MET WITH WARWICK ANDERSON, THE CEO OF THE NHMRC, TO DISCUSS THE BEST WAYS ABOUT GOING ABOUT THIS.

WE ALL AGREE NEW THINKING ON HOW TO TACKLE DEMENTIA IS REQUIRED. ALZHEIMER'S AUSTRALIA BELIEVES THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW NATIONAL DEMENTIA INSTITUTE WOULD CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO TACKLING DEMENTIA AND BRINGING TOGETHER LEADING THINKERS FROM FIELDS SUCH AS IMMUNOLOGY, DIABETES AND CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE.

ALL TOO OFTEN RESEARCH, INCLUDING THAT DONE IN THE FIELD OF DEMENTIA, IS CONSTRAINED WHEN THE OBJECTIVE SHOULD BE TO ENSURE DIFFERENT DISCIPLINES CAN CONTRIBUTE TO WHAT IS ONE OF THE MAJOR MEDICAL CHALLENGES OF THIS CENTURY.

A NEW NATIONAL DEMENTIA INSTITUTE WOULD PROVIDE THE OPPORTUNITY TO LIFT THE PROFILE OF DEMENTIA RESEARCH AND ENCOURAGE THE ENTRANCE OF NEW RESEARCHERS TO A FIELD THAT HAS BEEN SADLY NEGLECTED.

**IN THE MEANTIME HOWEVER, THERE IS STILL SO MUCH TO DO. FOR YOUNGER PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA THE NEW NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME HOLDS OUT HOPE THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME THEY WILL BE ABLE TO RECEIVE AGE APPROPRIATE SERVICES AND SUPPORT.**

**IF THE TASK AT TIMES SEEM TO BE DAUNTING THE STORIES OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA ARE ENOUGH TO PERSUADE US TO BE POSITIVE BECAUSE WE KNOW WHAT A MASSIVE DIFFERENCE ACCESS TO SERVICES AND SUPPORT THAT RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF THE INDIVIDUAL WITH DEMENTIA AND THEIR FAMILY CARER, CAN MAKE.**

**THERE IS A VAST DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE STORIES OF CONSUMERS WHO GET LINKED INTO SERVICES EARLY AFTER DIAGNOSIS AND THOSE WHO STRUGGLE TO GET ACCESS TO SERVICES UNTIL THEY REACH A CRISIS.**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING CARE AND SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA. IN PARTICULAR, THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY TONIGHT. PLEASE BE ASSURED THAT WE STRETCH OUR DOLLARS AS FAR AS WE CAN.**



**YOUR DONATION THIS EVENING TO SUPPORT THE WORK OF ALZHEIMER'S AUSTRALIA NSW WILL MEAN THAT MANY PEOPLE AND FAMILIES IMPACTED BY DEMENTIA IN THIS STATE WILL HAVE ACCESS TO SERVICES THEY SO DESPERATELY NEED.**

**WE LOOK FORWARD TO CONTINUE WORKING WITH YOU AND OTHER SERVICE PROVIDERS, AS WELL AS THE NATIONAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS TO MAKE NECESSARY CHANGES TO OUR HEALTH AND AGED CARE SYSTEM AND SO OFFER A BETTER FUTURE TO PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA AND THEIR CARERS.**

**THANK YOU.**