World Dementia Envoy visits Melbourne

Meet our new National CEO

Still Alice film preview
Alzheimer’s Australia Vic

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About us

Alzheimer’s Australia Vic is the peak body and charity for people living with all forms of dementia. We provide support, information, education and advocate to empower and enable people living with dementia, their families and carers. Alzheimer’s Australia Vic is a member of the Federation of Alzheimer’s Australia.

Our vision is for a society committed to the prevention of dementia, while valuing and supporting people living with dementia.

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WELCOME FROM OUR CEO

Welcome to our autumn edition - the first Memory Matters for 2015! I hope you all had an enjoyable time over the new year holiday period.

I was recently invited by the Victorian State Government Department of Business Development and Innovation to participate in a trade mission to Japan. Tanya Petrovich, our Business Development Manager, joined me in Osaka, where we discussed and promoted our award winning Virtual Dementia Experience™ (VDE). It was extremely heartening to see the high levels of interest in, and enthusiasm about, our technology on a global scale.

For those not aware, the VDE, located in our Perc Walkley Dementia Learning Centre at Parkville, is a world first use of serious games technology. Since its introduction in October 2013, over 1,000 people have participated in the experience and feedback has been incredibly positive. We are definitely on the right track in using this technology to heighten dementia awareness and training, as well as making a significant difference to the quality of care for people living with dementia.

The World Dementia Envoy, Dr Dennis Gillings CBE, experienced the VDE during his visit to Australia in late 2014. Meanwhile, 12 participants of the NAB Accelerate Program visited in January to witness the technology as part of their own Personal Development.

The technology has won numerous awards including, at a global level, the 2014 Asia Pacific Information Communications and Technology Alliance (APICTA) Award for E-Learning. In an exciting development, the Australian Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs has acknowledged our ground-breaking work and has recommended that all states and territories in Australia develop dementia experience installations similar to that at Parkville.

I would like to offer my personal thanks and congratulations to all those who have been involved in the development of this unique and important technology. Our organisation is succeeding in placing dementia care education at the forefront of Victorian healthcare, and the VDE is being globally recognised as a unique and beneficial technology for dementia awareness and training.

We are currently evaluating the technology, in partnership with Swinburne University, to demonstrate the benefits to participants and its success when it comes to initiating practice change. The results are due in April, and will be shared with you in our next edition.

Looking to the future, Alzheimer’s Australia Vic is researching the adaptation of the VDE technology to Oculus Rift, a virtual reality headset which will allow us to make the technology portable. In time, the vision is for this unique technology to become readily available for carers across Australia and, indeed, the world.

I wish to acknowledge several members of our team who are celebrating milestone anniversaries with Alzheimer’s Australia Vic: Jack Sach, General Manager Strategic Initiatives is celebrating 10 years with us, whilst Dr David Sykes, General Manager Learning and Development, Trudy Neal, Montessori Project Officer, Glenda Hipwell, Dementia Consultant, and Carol Dyer, Locum Counsellor, all celebrate five years. Congratulations and thank you for your ongoing dedication to the vital contribution you make to people living with dementia, their carers and families.

I trust you will enjoy this edition of Memory Matters, and I wish everyone a successful and happy 2015.

Maree McCabe
CEO

@MareeMcCabe
Alzheimer’s Australia Vic hosts special Still Alice preview

Many Australians will have recently enjoyed the movie Still Alice, based on the best-selling novel of the same name, starring Golden Globe winner and Oscar nominee Julianne Moore.

The movie brings to light the confronting, compelling and challenging world of younger onset dementia, through the story of 50 year old Alice Howland (Moore), a Harvard Professor, gifted researcher, lecturer and mother of three grown children.

In highlighting the impact of this condition, Still Alice makes a persuasive case for proper support systems and care for those who have received a diagnosis of dementia. In addition, it will lead to greater awareness of the enormous dementia challenge facing the Australian community and particularly those experiencing younger onset dementia.

Alzheimer’s Australia Vic was delighted to be given the opportunity by Icon Film Distribution to host a special advanced screening of the movie as a fundraising event, and over 400 people joined us at Cinema Nova in Carlton.

Catch Still Alice whilst it’s still in cinemas or keep your eyes peeled for the DVD later in the year.

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Cover photo The World Dementia Envoy, Dr Dennis Gillings CBE, Jane Sandow and Rob Trinca, Consumers  Photo: Darren James
World Dementia Envoy’s Melbourne visit

The World Dementia Envoy, Dr Dennis Gillings CBE, visited Australia in late 2014 to discuss how our nation can optimise its role in the global fight against dementia. During his visit, Dr Gillings travelled to Melbourne to present a public lecture entitled “Towards an Action Plan for a Cure for Dementia.”

Over 150 people attended the event on Wednesday 3 December, hosted by the Melbourne Neuroscience Institute, University of Melbourne, the Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health and Alzheimer’s Australia. Dr Gillings also paid a visit to Alzheimer’s Australia Vic in Parkville, where he participated in our Virtual Dementia Experience™ and met with staff and consumers.

Dr Gillings was appointed as World Dementia Envoy by Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, David Cameron, on behalf of the G8 group of nations in February 2014.

The role of the Envoy is to reduce barriers to investment in research, to speed up drug development and to bring together ideas from around the world in order to improve the lives of people living with dementia. The ultimate goal is to find a cure or disease modifying therapy by 2025.

Speaking at the Global Dementia Legacy Event in June 2014, Dr Gillings said: “Let us be an international team, collaborating, sharing knowledge, investing and innovating so that we win the prize of success together.”

Dr Gillings has a prestigious biopharmaceutical background and has worked with a diverse array of health organisations. In addition, he held the role of Professor of Biostatistics at the University of North Carolina and was awarded a CBE in 2004 for services to the pharmaceutical industry. Dr Gillings’ mother lived with dementia for 18 years until her death in 2013.

During his time in Australia, Dr Gillings met with senior Commonwealth Government Ministers, relevant Departments and Agencies, representatives from Alzheimer’s Australia, and people living with a diagnosis of dementia, to discuss how Australia can best contribute to the international effort to find a cure.

The Australian Government’s legacy contribution to dementia research includes a $200 million commitment to dementia research over the next five years, and the establishment of a National Dementia Research Institute. Discussions focused on these initiatives and how they can be maximised to best complement international work.

“Collaborative research at a global level is our best chance at making progress when it comes to the diagnosis, understanding, treatment and prevention of this life limiting disease,” said Graeme Samuel AC, Alzheimer’s Australia National President.

Below  Dr Dennis Gillings CBE meets guests at Alzheimer’s Australia Vic in Parkville  Photo: Darren James
Alzheimer’s Australia farewells Mr Glenn Rees AM and welcomes Ms Carol Bennett

Alzheimer’s Australia Vic hosted a dinner for colleagues from Alzheimer’s Australia offices around the country to farewell National Chief Executive Officer Glenn Rees AM, and pay tribute to his dedicated contribution to the fight against dementia, both nationally and internationally.

“Over the last 15 years of Glenn Rees’ leadership, Alzheimer’s Australia has established itself as a leading consumer advocacy organisation,” said Graeme Samuel AC, Chair of Alzheimer’s Australia. “Glenn helped deliver the Dementia Initiative in 2005; the commitments in the 2012 aged care reforms to quality dementia care; timely diagnosis of dementia; better dementia care in hospitals and dementia risk reduction; and an additional $200 million for dementia research in the 2014 Federal Budget.

“Alzheimer’s Australia is now better positioned through the commitment of its state and territory organisations to provide valued care and support to people living with dementia through the significant funding provided from the Commonwealth. Alzheimer’s Australia wishes Glenn every success in his role as Chair of Alzheimer’s Disease International and in his further work as a consumer advocate.”

After a nationwide executive search and recruitment process, Ms Carol Bennett accepted the position of Chief Executive Officer of Alzheimer’s Australia and commenced her new role just before Christmas, 2014.

“We are delighted to be able to attract a CEO of Ms Bennett’s calibre into this important role,” Mr Samuel said. “Ms Bennett has been a leader in the Australian national health policy area for a number of years. During this time, Carol has been CEO of some of Australia’s leading health organisations including the Consumers Health Forum of Australia, the Australian Rural and Remote Workforce Agencies Group (now Rural Health Workforce Australia) and the Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association. She has also been a consultant to a number of influential health organisations including beyondblue.”

Carol is committed to community and consumer engagement as reflected in her appointments to the International Alliance of Patient Organisations and the National Health and Medical Research Council representing community interests.

“Carol has a reputation for achieving real outcomes in the organisations she has managed and her capacity to work collaboratively with many key stakeholders will be an asset to Alzheimer’s Australia as it continues to forge new opportunities to improve the experiences of Australians living with dementia,” Mr Samuel said.

“Alzheimer’s disease is an important issue for all Australians. We all know someone who has been touched by this disease, and its prevalence is increasing significantly. I am honoured to have this opportunity to build on the great work Alzheimer’s Australia has been doing for the past 15 years under Glenns Rees’ excellent leadership. If we do our job well, we can improve the lives of millions of Australians. I welcome that challenge,” Ms Bennett said.
Shared reading groups – discovering the pleasure of reading aloud, together

Shared reading groups have gained quite a following in the UK, and interest is now rapidly building in Australia. Also known as bibliotherapy, these groups involve older people meeting on a regular basis to share in the pleasure of reading. Anyone can lead a group, although a little practice in reading aloud is helpful. When selecting pieces, think about the particular needs of participants – their background, attention length, language abilities and preference, visual and auditory needs, and so on.

Often shorter pieces with limited numbers of characters, and straightforward plots and language style tend to be more effective than longer or abstract works. Poetry is popular, as it tends to have a lyrical, flowing sound when read aloud. Short works of fiction are also good, as are biographies of well-known people who are contemporaries of the participants.

Anne Vize is the author of ‘Reading in the moment’ – activities and stories to share with adults with dementia which is available through the Alzheimer’s Australia Vic Library, direct from the author at Banksia Publishing banksiapublishing.com or by emailing annevize@gmail.com

Dementia-friendly community in Beechworth

Alzheimer’s Australia Vic, in partnership with the Indigo Health Consortium, has been the recipient of funding through the National Quality Dementia Care Initiative to achieve a dementia-friendly community in the north-east town of Beechworth, Victoria.

This project - ‘Changing our Minds about People Whose Minds are Changing’ – has grown out of an extraordinary vision and commitment by the Indigo Health Consortium to incorporate dementia-friendly and age-friendly principles into Beechworth. At the heart of this initiative is the recognition that people with dementia want purpose and meaning in their lives. They want to continue to participate in everyday activities and should be enabled to do so with the support and understanding of their communities.

The Indigo Health Consortium includes Indigo Shire Council, Beechworth Health Service, Indigo North Health and Yackandandah Health. These key partners, along with a number of consumers, universities (Charles Sturt and La Trobe), community organisations, and Alzheimer’s Australia Vic will form a Local Dementia Alliance that will steer the progress of this project. In addition, members of Alzheimer’s Australia Vic’s Consumer Advisory Committee will support the Alliance in undertaking community consultations at the commencement and conclusion of the initiative.

Key aims of the project include:

- Developing a local action plan for Beechworth and its surrounds;
- Establishing new formal and informal support networks for people with dementia and their carers;
- Delivering a community education program which is focused on reducing stigma and discrimination associated with dementia; and
- Implementing a series of practical innovations that will effect change within Indigo Shire Council and two local businesses/organisations.

The Changing our Minds initiative presents huge opportunities not only for the Beechworth community, but for all Victorian communities to create and live within inclusive societies that support, understand and encourage people to live well with dementia. We will keep you posted as the project progresses.

Alzheimer’s Australia 2015 Consumer Summit

Alzheimer’s Australia is preparing to host a National Consumer Summit from 3-4 March at Parliament House in Canberra, bringing together people living with dementia and family carers from across Australia to share their experiences.

The objective is to identify from the consumer perspective what programs and services are working well, and what needs to be improved in order to provide people with dementia and their carers with better support. Identifying consumer priorities is imperative as we are currently in the midst of implementation of major reforms in both aged care and disability, which will have a significant impact on how people with dementia and their families are supported in the future.

The format of the Summit includes speakers, a panel discussion and a workshop session. A communiqué will be developed and shared with Ministers on both political sides, providing concise recommendations on how dementia policy and services can be improved. Alzheimer’s Australia will also use this document to inform its advocacy and strategic planning.

We look forward to sharing details on the Summit with you in our next edition.
Alzheimer’s Disease International Conference coming to Australia

The 30th International Conference of Alzheimer’s Disease International will take place in Perth from 15-18 April.

Care, Cure and the Dementia Experience - A Global Challenge, hosted in partnership with Alzheimer’s Australia, will be one of the world’s largest and most important conferences on dementia. More than 1,500 delegates from over 60 countries are expected to attend. Delegates include medical professionals and researchers, people living with dementia, their families and carers, and members of the community with an interest in dementia. The conference programme will be diverse with dynamic presentations, workshops, and exhibits covering research, advocacy and care. It will offer an opportunity for people living with dementia to come together, share stories, have their voices heard, and provide inspiration. For more information or to register visit alzint.org

Homelessness workshops

This March Alzheimer’s Australia Vic, in collaboration with the City of Casey and Glen Eira City Council, will provide two free dementia workshops for the homelessness sector. The events will provide dementia awareness for staff supporting homeless people or those at risk of homelessness.

The aim of the sessions is for the participant to gain knowledge of dementia, learn practical strategies in effective communication, and information on how to provide person-centred care for the person living with cognitive impairment.

The Glen Eira event will take place on Wednesday 18 March at Ashley Ricketson Centre, Caulfield Hospital. The City of Casey event will take place on Friday 20 March at Civic Centre Council Chambers in Narre Warren.

For more information contact Claire Emmanuel on 03 9816 5794 or claire.emmanuel@alzheimers.org.au

Let’s Talk About Sex

The inaugural Let’s Talk About Sex conference aims to challenge many of the assumptions, taboos and stereotypes when it comes to older people and sexual intimacy. The failure to acknowledge sexuality and ageing has left many older people deprived of their right to a satisfying and fulfilling sex life.

Alzheimer’s Australia Vic and COTA (Council on the Ageing) Victoria will host the international event from 8-9 September at the Pullman Hotel, 192 Wellington Parade, Melbourne.

The reality associated with the ageing population means that seizing the opportunity to discuss what it means to ‘age well’ has never been more important.

The risk of developing dementia increases with age, and the topic of dementia and intimacy will be a key area of focus throughout the conference.

A comprehensive programme will include internationally acclaimed speakers from medical and allied health, education, government and aged care sectors who will provide a high level of education and engaging discussion on this important topic.

Alzheimer’s Australia Vic invites you to join the conversation to reduce the stigma, while acknowledging and respecting intimacy as we age. For more information visit ltas2015.com
Virtual Dementia Experience™ wins international award

In Jakarta, Alzheimer’s Australia Vic’s Virtual Dementia Experience™ (VDE), located at the Perc Walkley Dementia Learning Centre in Parkville, was awarded the international 2014 Asia Pacific Information Communications and Technology Alliance (APICTA) Award for Education E-Learning.

The experience is a world first use of serious games technology aiming to transform dementia care education to improve the quality of life for people living with dementia. The award was presented at a ceremony to honour organisations and individuals at the cutting-edge of technology innovation in the Asia Pacific region.

The VDE was assessed by judges from China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Pakistan and Vietnam. The APICTA recognises the achievements of ICT professionals across the Asia Pacific region.

“As the peak body in Victoria we are very honoured to have received the international APICTA Education E-Learning Category that demonstrates our commitment to improving healthcare outcomes for our community,” Maree McCabe, CEO Alzheimer’s Australia Vic said.

“Alzheimer’s Australia Vic is dedicated to bringing plans, innovations and best practices into reality and the example of our Victorian team’s Virtual Dementia Experience has succeeded in putting dementia care education at the forefront of Victorian healthcare.”

The Virtual Dementia Experience™ is scheduled for 19 March, 15 April and 5 May. To book, contact the Learning and Development team on 03 9816 5708 or vic.education@alzheimers.org.au.

Are you at risk of getting dementia and what can you do about it?

Few people know that dementia has links with other chronic diseases like heart disease and Type 2 diabetes. Researchers and health professionals confirm this now warrants greater attention. At the forthcoming Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute Perspectives event, Professor Serge Gauthier, international dementia expert and Director of the Alzheimer’s Disease Research Unit at the Centre for Studies in Ageing at McGill University in Canada, will discuss why prevention is our best investment.

The event will take place on Monday 20 April at AMREP Lecture Theatre, Commercial Road, Melbourne.

Call 1300 728 900 or email events@bakeridi.edu.au for more information.

Income Stream Reviews go online

It is time for Centrelink customers to complete an Income Stream Review. The quickest and easiest way to do this is online through myGov or by using the One Time Access Code (OTAC) provided in the Income Stream Review letter.

Using myGov, customers and their nominees can access their Centrelink account online. Once they log on to their account, they can go to the ‘Reminders’ section and select the ‘review reminder’. This will take them through the process step-by-step.

If a customer doesn’t have a myGov account, they can create one at my.gov.au. They can then link their Centrelink online account to myGov by selecting ‘Services’ and then the ‘link’ icon.

The OTAC allows people who cannot use their myGov account, or who have a nominated third party to act on their behalf, to complete the review online by visiting humanservices.gov.au/incomestreamreviews.

If a customer needs help completing the review online, they can visit humanservices.gov.au/onlineguides or call Centrelink on 132 300. They will need to make sure they have all the information about their Income Stream products ready.

For more information about Income Stream Reviews, go to humanservices.gov.au/incomestreamreviews.

Seeking healthy seniors for clinical research study on cognitive health

Mild cognitive impairment (MCI) due to Alzheimer’s disease (AD) refers to the early phase of AD in which an otherwise healthy-minded person experiences a gradual, progressive decline in thinking ability. This decline is significant enough to be noticed but not severe enough to interfere with daily life or the ability to function independently.

The TOMMORROW Study seeks to learn more about the genetic risk for developing MCI due to AD and whether an investigational medication might prove effective in delaying the first symptoms of this condition.

You may be eligible to participate in this important study if you are 65 to 83 years of age and in good physical and mental health.

Call 03 9496 2421 or visit tommorrowstudy.com.
PARO the baby harp seal

PARO is a therapeutic interactive robot (pictured above) in the form of a baby harp seal, developed in Japan to respond to touch, light, sound, temperature and positioning. PARO has been shown to have a positive psychological effect on patients, improving their relaxation and motivation. It can also improve the socialisation of patients with each other, and with caregivers. PARO responds to sound and can even learn common words over time, such as its chosen name.

Jane Wright, Lifestyle and Wellness Coordinator Aurrum Aged Care said: “The benefits of PARO have exceeded our expectations. Behaviours of concern have de-escalated, such as verbal aggression, loneliness and anxiety. This has resulted in a much calmer environment for all residents. Residents are also communicating with one another about their PARO experiences. Residents at Aurrum are delighted to have PARO in their lives, as are the staff and the results speak for themselves.”

Alzheimer’s Australia Vic is now lending PARO to facilities to test with their residents. For more information contact Phoebe Lindsay on 03 9816 5750 or phoebe.lindsay@alzheimers.org.au

Freemasons grant

Alzheimer’s Australia Vic was delighted to receive a grant of $8,000 from the Freemasons Public Charitable Foundation. The grant will enable the organisation to purchase example sets of assistive devices for its regional hubs in Ballarat, Bendigo, Drouin and Geelong.

Assistive devices allow an individual to perform a task they would otherwise be unable to carry out, and/or increase the ease and safety with which the task can be performed. Everyday items such as clocks, toilet seats and crockery can be subtly enhanced to make them more user-friendly for a person living with dementia.

In purchasing these items, the benefits of such devices will be demonstrated by Alzheimer’s Australia Vic’s facilitators during Family Information Sessions.

Become a dementia champion for your organisation

Alzheimer’s Australia Vic is about to commence its 2015 10341NAT Certificate IV in Dementia Practice – a 12-month accredited program in dementia care. With 14 units covered across 11 workshops throughout the year, you will gain a breadth of knowledge and the skills to support quality care and service provision for people living with dementia.

The qualification is for staff supporting people with dementia both in a residential and community setting.

“Certificate IV in Dementia Practice has given me the skills and knowledge to implement practical strategies in my workplace, to better care for our patients living with dementia in the acute care setting. Other staff were very keen to hear about and take on board my learnings which have, as a result, been of benefit to the whole team,” Jacqueline Sinnott, Epworth Freemasons Hospital Nurse Unit Manager said.

There is still time to enrol in the 2015 Parkville course. For more information contact Mary-Lou Doswell on 03 9816 5797

Above Dr John Maynard, Freemasons Victoria Public Charitable Foundation and Maree McCabe, CEO Alzheimer’s Australia Vic
Ray Morgan, 62, is a retired Police Superintendent from Hastings who was diagnosed with younger onset dementia in February 2014. Ray is one of an estimated 65,000 Australians with dementia who lives alone. In 2015, a team from the Dementia Collaborative Research Centre will commence a study looking at the particular issues faced by Australians with dementia who live alone.

“In lots of ways, I think it’s better for me that I live alone, because I have to find ways of doing things for myself. Everything from buying my own food, going to the bank and paying my bills – all of these activities help to keep my mind and body active and are beneficial to my brain health. At the same time, if I had somebody doing everything for me 24/7, I think we would probably both find it very frustrating and I think my rate of decline would increase.

During my time with the police, I relied heavily upon systems and routine. This has served me well since my diagnosis. Anything I have to do, I write on a piece of paper and put it down by the front door. This means every time I go in and out of the house, I’ll see those pieces of paper and know those things need to be attended to.

One activity that I find particularly difficult is withdrawing money from the ATM. I often become confused with the process. To overcome this, I have started visiting the ATM twice as often, withdrawing half the usual amount of money each time. I believe that by using the ATM more often, I am more likely to remember the process.

I also make a big effort to stay socially engaged. Each Monday, I attend a planned activity group for people living with younger onset dementia with Brotherhood of St Laurence. I like to call them my ‘support group’. I try to remain stimulated by making sure I go out at least twice each week to busy places such as shopping centres or Melbourne CBD.

To begin with, giving up driving was one of the things I found most difficult. I overcame this by finding other ways to get around, using cabs and public transport. Again, I think the planning involved can only be a good thing for my brain health.

I often go on what I like to call my ‘Happy Walks’ – these are long walks during which I try only to think positive thoughts. I have found the most important thing is to have a positive outlook on life. It makes such a big difference.”

How can I make the most of a visit with my loved one who is living with dementia?

Visiting family and friends with dementia is important for their emotional wellbeing. However, people with dementia are sometimes unable to initiate activities or ‘entertain’ their visitors. We all have high and low energy days and your friend or family member may be tired the day you visit. While things may not go as you had planned, remember your visit is still important – for you and the person you are visiting.

You can engage the person you’re visiting by taking a magazine or newspaper with you. Read aloud interesting articles or do a quiz together. Bring flowers, a favourite food treat, or old photos or postcards. This then becomes an activity which helps with stimulation and reminiscence. Work together to write a letter to your mutual friends or family - this can help nourish and maintain important links in their life.

Try to say and do the same things on arrival and departure at each visit. This will help establish a visiting ritual and add a sense of structure for your relative or friend. Introducing yourself on arrival will reduce their anxiety as you remind them of your name and connection to them.

Consider doing tasks. Sew labels on clothing, assist with food and fluids, or take the person you are visiting for a walk. This will not only benefit the person you are visiting, but will also maintain your vital role, and help you to feel useful and important.

Why not take an animal or your pet with you? A visit from a well-loved pet can improve the emotional health and wellbeing of your friend or relative. If visiting a residential care facility, speak to staff before taking your pet with you.

Know that your visit makes a difference. Research suggests that people living in residential care need emotional support for their well-being and are less likely to be depressed when they have regular weekly visitors. If necessary, talk to someone. There are many issues around changing roles and grief that affect families, friends and carers of people with dementia. It is very important to take care of yourself.
Regional Round Up

Across Victoria

Alzheimer’s Australia Vic’s regional offices and staff are located in Geelong, Ballarat, Drouin, Bendigo, Warrnambool, Mildura, Albury, Shepparton, Lakes Entrance and Cowes. Our staff within these regional areas welcome your contact through the National Dementia Helpline on 1800 100 500.

In Mildura and Bendigo, Alzheimer’s Australia Vic held two successful Christmas lunches for people living with dementia and their carers in December. Around 40 people attended the Mildura lunch at Merbin, and around 30 people attended the event at Bendigo RSL. The events provided opportunities for guests to socialise and celebrate the festive season in a relaxed environment.

In Lakes Entrance, Alzheimer’s Australia Vic is currently running a very successful carer stress program, facilitated by Denise Wissmann, Senior Clinician and Program Leader, and Diane Scott, Counsellor − Gippsland. The eight week program of two hour sessions commenced in January, and gives carers the opportunity to socialise together, discuss what might be causing them stress, and provide mechanisms to support them in working through those stressful times.

November saw a good turnout for the Considering Residential Care session held at the Alzheimer’s Australia Vic Ballarat office. Facilitated by Mary Slater, Dementia Consultant − Grampians, and Simon Harvest, Counsellor, people attending benefited from practical and emotional advice and support. Participants commented they left with answers on a range of complex questions that surround this momentous decision making time.

Alzheimer’s Australia Vic’s Living With Memory Loss Program was facilitated in Horsham in late 2014 at Barkuma House Men’s Shed. Seventeen participants had exposure to a range of topics focusing on how best to look after themselves, as well as symptoms and diagnosis. An informative question and answer session was conducted with Associate Professor Mark Yates. The program ran over four days with a follow up session several weeks later.

In Geelong, eight people living with younger onset dementia and their carers and family members attended the first Alzheimer’s Australia Vic younger onset dementia ‘Life Book’ group at the Barwon Health Carer Respite Centre (BHCRC) in Newcomb. The group was a six week series of two hour sessions in November 2014, co-facilitated by Jane Jordan, Younger Onset Dementia Key Worker, and BHCRC staff. Participants brought along photos and personal memorabilia which they arranged in display folders, creating a wonderful celebration of the life of the person with dementia, and a resource for conversation with family, friends and others in formal care settings.

9 into 6

Place the 9 letters below the box into the 3x3 grid to make six valid five letter words. This puzzle is aimed at working areas of language, learning, reasoning, and problem solving to help exercise your cognitive abilities.

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Created by Ric Allport – www.brainfoodfactory.com – Challenge your Brain
Sign up for our free monthly brain exercise e-magazine

The Detect Early website provides resources and tools to help healthcare professionals make a real difference to the lives of people with dementia and their carers.
detectearly.org.au
Despite new knowledge about early signs, dementia remains under-recognised

The early signs of dementia can be difficult to identify, but evidence suggests that earlier diagnosis can be beneficial. Three new studies, recently published in the journal Neurology, show that while understanding of the earliest symptoms of dementia is increasing, only about half of those people experiencing dementia symptoms have had a clinical assessment of their cognitive problems.

Half of people living with dementia have never seen a doctor about it

Researchers at the University of Michigan assessed 845 people aged 70 and over for dementia, and asked whether they had ever had a clinical evaluation of their cognitive abilities. Of the 297 participants who met criteria for a diagnosis of dementia, only 45 percent had been tested by a doctor for cognitive problems. People with more severe dementia were more likely to have been assessed by a doctor than those with milder symptoms. These findings suggest that many people with dementia, particularly those in the early stages, are missing out on treatment, care and planning that can improve quality of life.

The researchers also found that people with dementia who were married were 2.6 times more likely to have been assessed by a doctor than those who were single. Perhaps spouses are more likely to raise concerns, or people living alone may be worried about losing their independence and, therefore, reluctant to discuss their problems with a doctor.

These findings are consistent with other research suggesting that only around half of those living with dementia have been medically assessed and diagnosed. Routine dementia screening for healthy older people is currently not recommended, as it can lead to false positive results and unnecessary anxiety. But those experiencing memory or thinking problems can benefit from medical assessment, because early diagnosis enables earlier treatment and better planning.

Changes in mood and behaviour may occur in the earliest stages of dementia

Declining memory and thinking skills are usually considered the earliest indication of dementia. A new study suggests that behavioural and mood changes may also occur in the very early stages, even before cognitive impairment becomes evident. Researchers at Washington University followed up 2,416 people aged 50 and over, who were all cognitively healthy at the beginning of the study. They found that symptoms of depression, anxiety, irritability, apathy and appetite changes were more likely to occur earlier in those who subsequently developed dementia.

This study adds to a growing body of evidence that Alzheimer’s disease, the most common cause of dementia, develops over many years and that early symptoms involve more than just memory loss. Unexplainable changes in mood and behaviour could also signal the development of dementia.

The researchers found that symptoms of depression increased with ageing, but were twice as likely in those later diagnosed with dementia. More research is needed to clarify the relationship between depression and dementia. People who are developing cognitive problems may become anxious or depressed about this. It is also possible that the processes that damage brain cells in Alzheimer’s disease contribute to depression and other psychological problems.

Subjective memory complaints may predict dementia

Researchers at the University of Kentucky followed up 531 people aged 60 and over, who were cognitively healthy at the beginning of the study. Every year, participants underwent cognitive testing and were asked whether they were concerned about memory changes since their last visit. 55 percent reported memory concerns, and they were 2.8 times more likely than those who did not to be subsequently diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment (MCI) or dementia. From the time subjective memory complaints were reported, MCI was diagnosed an average of 9 years later, and dementia was diagnosed an average of 12 years later.

The researchers also examined the brains of the 243 participants who died before the study was completed. Even if they were not given a diagnosis of MCI or dementia, those who complained about their memories were more likely to have brain changes associated with Alzheimer’s disease than those without memory concerns.

These findings add to evidence that memory complaints are common among older adults which sometimes indicate future problems, and suggest that doctors should take these complaints seriously. However, it is important to be aware that memory complaints are not an immediate cause for alarm, since impairment could be many years away, and having memory concerns does not mean that dementia will eventually develop.
A brain-healthy 2015

Is your New Year’s resolution to live healthier? At the start of a new year we often reflect on the past, and more importantly, think forward to the coming year. It’s a time we consider the changes we want (or need) to make.

Maintaining a healthy life is important to everyone, and tops the list of resolutions. However, when it comes to our health, we generally think from the neck down. We never really stop to consider the health of our brains. Keeping our brain healthy is essential for living a fulfilling, healthy and long life. It plays a critical role in everything we do: thinking, feeling, remembering, working, playing, and even sleeping.

Most of us know what we should do to improve our everyday health. The good thing is, many of the things that keep our heart and body healthy are also good for our brain. Keeping your blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar, and weight at healthy levels is good for heart and brain health.

Start the year on a good foot and take a step towards good brain health by having a general health check. Even if you feel fine, it’s important to have your cholesterol, blood pressure, blood sugar and weight regularly checked.

Your Brain Matters, Alzheimer’s Australia’s brain health program, outlines the steps you can take in your everyday life to improve the health of your brain, body and heart, in the 5 Simple Steps to Maximise Your Brain Health.

Your Story Matters

Alzheimer’s Australia has launched Your Story Matters, an Australian-first dementia risk reduction program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) communities, in response to growing dementia prevalence. Resources have been developed to encourage conversations and prevention within ATSI communities.

The resources include culturally relevant brochures, and a video presented by respected members of Aboriginal communities, including Shari Sebbens from the hit film The Sapphires. There are three videos, a booklet, poster and small DL-sized card.

All are available as a free download at yourbrainmatters.org.au/your-story-matters

For more information on living a brain healthy lifestyle go to yourbrainmatters.org.au

Your Brain Matters is supported by funding from the Australian Government under the Chronic Disease Prevention and Service Improvement Fund.
FREE PUBLIC SEMINAR

HOW DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY IS YOUR HOME?

Join us to examine some simple and practical design solutions that you can implement in your own home to create a dementia-friendly environment.

Learn how elements such as lighting, sound and colour can be effectively used to create a calm and enabling environment. The implementation of which, may make a significant difference to the quality of life and well-being for a person living with dementia.

This seminar is suitable for the general community which may also include health professionals, family carers and people with dementia.

WEDNESDAY 15 APRIL 2015

Caulfield Park Pavilion
Balaclava Rd, Caulfield 3162

3.00pm - 4.30pm
Refreshments served at 2:45pm

Please note: This event requires a minimum number of attendees to proceed

This event is funded by the Australian Government

BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL BY FRIDAY 10 APRIL 2015

PHONE 03 9816 5708

ONLINE caulfield.eventarc.com/26264

2015 SESSIONS COMING SOON

March
11

March
27

March
26

Activity programs based on the Montessori method
An introduction to the Montessori approach demonstrating the creation and presentation of meaningful activities for people living with dementia.

Volunteer companions
Learn how dementia can impact on a person’s physical and psychological well-being and what you, as a friend or volunteer companion, can do to maintain the friendship.

Virtual Dementia Experience
An interactive environment intended as an experiential learning exercise for professional carers.

For information and bookings call 03 9816 5708 or email vic.education@alzheimers.org.au
Still Alice

Following the release of the film adaptation of the book Still Alice, why not borrow the New York Times bestselling novel from our library?

An engaging read, Alice Howland is proud of the life she has worked so hard to build. At 50 years old, she’s a cognitive psychology professor at Harvard and a world-renowned expert in linguistics with a successful husband and three grown children. Diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease, Alice discovers that her worth is comprised of more than her ability to remember.

Iris: a memoir of Iris Murdoch

John Bayley  (1998)

As told by her unlikely soulmate, husband John Bayley, Iris first became known as a brilliant young scholar at Oxford whose boundless spirit dazzled those around her. During her remarkable career as a novelist and philosopher, she continued to prove herself a woman ahead of her time. Even in later life, as age and illness robbed Iris of her remarkable gifts, nothing could diminish her immense influence or weaken the bond with her devoted husband.

Brought to the screen with both Judi Dench and Kate Winslet in the role of Iris, the DVD Iris can also be borrowed from the library.

Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage

Alice Munro (2002)

The Bear Came Over The Mountain is a short story by Nobel Prize in Literature winner, Alice Munro. It describes the generosity and grace with which a husband accommodates the blossoming romance that his wife, a person with dementia, enjoys with a fellow nursing-home resident. The short story is published in the collection Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage.

The moving film production of this story is titled Away from Her and is also available for loan.

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A Trek to Remember

Alzheimer’s Australia Vic is delighted to introduce A Trek to Remember, which will take place from 26 October to 9 November, 2015.

Alzheimer’s Australia Vic has partnered with Huma Charity Challenge – a division of World Expeditions – to bring you the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity of trekking through Nepal whilst at the same time raising funds.

The trip will include stunning views of the Annapurna range, a trek to the Mardi Himal base camp and a visit to Alzheimer’s and Related Dementia Society (ARDS) Nepal.

For more information please contact Kristin Marshall, Alzheimer’s Australia Vic Community Fundraising Officer on 03 9816 5746.

Run Melbourne

The Age Run Melbourne is sprinting back to the city! It’s a great way to promote healthy living and fitness, participate in a major community event, and help raise a target of $50,000 for Alzheimer’s Australia Vic.

This year, the Alzheimer’s Australia Vic team is dubbed The Memory Joggers, and are a social and inclusive group of runners, joggers and walkers of all standards, united to participate in the major running/walking events in and around Melbourne. The team is motivated to raise money for Alzheimer’s Australia Vic and increase awareness of dementia in the community.

So, no matter if you are a first time walker or a seasoned marathon runner, consider joining The Memory Joggers and support Alzheimer’s Australia Vic in Run Melbourne 2015 on 26 July.

Register for Run Melbourne at runmelbourne.com.au and select Memory Joggers as your team or contact Georgia at memoryjoggers@outlook.com to receive an invitation via email.

Memory Walk & Jog

Memory Walk & Jog is back for 2015!

With over $100,000 raised at our inaugural event in Geelong last year, we are excited to announce that we are expanding future events into other parts of Victoria in 2015. Keep an eye on memorywalk.com.au for upcoming dates and locations.
Why you need a Will

A Will is a very important and personal legal document. Every adult should have a Will. Surprisingly, about half of all Australians do not. A Will ensures your personal wishes after your passing will be honoured. It is also the first step in supporting the people and causes you love and care about. Ideally you should consult a legal advisor, such as a solicitor or trustee, to ensure your Will is legally valid and professionally administered.

If you die without a Will your property will be distributed by a court-appointed administrator and divided among your surviving spouse, children, and possibly other relatives in whatever manner the law in your state or territory specifies. Additionally, if you have no relatives, your property will go to your resident state or territory rather than to a family member, friend or charity of your choice. It is important to review your Will regularly.

Key milestones when you should update your Will include:
- Marriage
- Birth of children or grandchildren
- Separation or divorce
- Change of financial circumstances
- A death in the family

For your free copy of our Will Instruction Booklet, information about bequests, or a confidential discussion please contact Natalie Sikora on 03 9816 5776 or natalie.sikora@alzheimers.org.au

10 TIPS WHEN MAKING YOUR WILL

1. Include your full name (and any others you may use);
2. Choose your executors wisely. This is a time-consuming and difficult role;
3. Identify beneficiaries by name and relationship;
4. Consider how assets are owned – jointly, solely, etc;
5. Bear in mind how debts are to be paid e.g. credit card, mortgage, utilities;
6. Consider what happens if a beneficiary dies before you;
7. Appoint a guardian for children under 18 years;
8. If you exclude a spouse or child from your Will, record your reason for doing so;
9. When signing your Will ensure it is dated and witnessed by two witnesses;
10. Make sure you store your Will in a safe and secure place and let someone know.
Focus on Social

Volunteers Christmas Party
In December, Alzheimer’s Australia Vic acknowledged the generous contribution of its valued volunteers with a beautiful Christmas garden party held at the organisation’s Riversdale Road, Hawthorn site.
Photos: Jo Iorlano

Diabetes Kit Launch
Alzheimer’s Australia Vic launched a Dementia and Diabetes Toolkit on World Diabetes Day, 14 November 2014, to support the estimated one in five older Australians with diabetes who have an increased risk of developing cognitive impairment or dementia. The kit is available for download at bit.ly/alzvicdiabeteskit
FOCUS ON SOCIAL

Dementia: Understanding to Action community roadshow

More than 200 attendees from across the state attended our Dementia: Understanding to Action roadshow – a free, information-packed community event held in three locations across Victoria: Hastings, Williamstown and Melbourne. The events were generously sponsored by ExxonMobil Australia.

NAB visit

In January, Alzheimer’s Australia Vic hosted 12 members of the NAB Accelerate Program at the Perc Walkley Dementia Learning Centre in Parkville where they learned about dementia, the services and resources the organisation offers, and participated in the Virtual Dementia Experience™.

Annual General Meeting

Alzheimer’s Australia Vic’s 31st AGM was held on Wednesday 26 November. This was followed by the 2nd AGM of the Alzheimer’s Australia Dementia Research Foundation – Victoria. Photos: Ari Hatzis
A BEQUEST TO ALZHEIMER’S WILL SAVE AUSTRALIA
FIGHTDEMENTIA.ORG.AU/VIC

Together we can save the ‘bestest’ hugs ever given

Dementia is the third leading cause of death in Australia. There is no cure.
By leaving a gift in your Will you can make a difference.

Make your legacy a future without dementia

For a confidential discussion or a copy of our bequest kit, call 03 9816 5776 or email vic.bequests@alzheimers.org.au

Please accept my donation of $ __________________________

☐ My cheque is enclosed OR ☐ Please debit my credit card

Please debit the above amount from my credit card:
☐ Monthly ☐ Quarterly ☐ Half yearly ☐ This time only

Card details
☐ Mastercard ☐ VISA ☐ AMEX ☐ Diners

Expiry date __________________________ CCV __________________________

Cardholder’s name __________________________

Signed __________________________

☐ I would like to find out more about making a bequest to Alzheimer’s Australia Vic
☐ I have already included a gift to Alzheimer’s Australia Vic in my Will
☐ Please contact me about organising my own fundraising event
☐ I would like more information about becoming a member

Please send your donation to:
Alzheimer’s Australia Vic
Locked Bag 3001, Hawthorn 3122

For more information contact:
Telephone 03 9815 7800 Facsimile 03 9815 7801

Improving the lives of people with dementia is important to me.

Title __________________________ First Name __________________________

Family Name __________________________

Organisation (if applicable) __________________________

Address __________________________ Postcode __________________________

Telephone __________________________ Mobile __________________________

Email __________________________

Donations of $2 or more to Alzheimer’s Australia Vic are tax deductible.