

Friday 30 November 2018

Tic tac toe with a tango twist, virtual fishing with ocean sounds and a classic maze game - all part of new app for A Better Visit

The release of [A Better Visit](#), a new, free, iPad app by Dementia Australia will assist families and loved ones in connecting and communicating when visiting a family member living with dementia. The app is designed to be interactive, stimulating and fun.

Gamer and television presenter, Dementia Australia Ambassador [Stephanie 'Hex' Bendixsen](#) said, through the games in A Better Visit family members of all ages will be empowered to be more engaged when they visit a loved one living with dementia.

"I cared for my mother Wendy, who died earlier this year from dementia and I wish an app like this had been available then because it can be challenging to come up with different things to do and talk about, especially as symptoms progress," Ms Bendixsen said.

"Playing noughts and crosses with some classic songs key to your moves or using the window washing game to reveal images of iconic Australian locations can't help but prompt further conversations or enjoyment of play as a shared experience.

"The games, the sounds and the easy functionality enables people living with dementia to play with you. Anything that helps you bring on a smile is welcome in my book."

Dementia Australia CEO Maree McCabe said family members tell us that often they simply don't know how to communicate and interact with a loved one who has dementia especially as their dementia advances.

"And it may follow that other family members, children and friends start to withdraw and perhaps become less likely to include the person with dementia in everyday activities or schedule in regular visits," Ms McCabe said.

"Over time this social isolation can have a profound impact on the person with dementia and the primary carers.

"A recent [Inclusion and Isolation](#) report by Dementia Australia found that people weren't sure how to talk to someone with dementia. More than 60 per cent of people said they didn't know what to say to someone with dementia.

"By playing the games in the app carers and other family members will be inspired to engage with the person with dementia through the interaction, images and sounds enhancing their enjoyment and discussions."

The development of A Better Visit was sponsored by Lifeview Residential Care which included access to residents for consultation in the development of the app.

Lifeview Residential Care CEO Madeline Gall said the app is different from other products in the market as it was developed in close consultation with people living with dementia and their carers at our homes in Victoria.



“By observing and listening to our residents living with dementia, a team of Swinburne University researchers supported by Dementia Australia, were able to tailor certain elements such as adjustable speeds, include classic songs to prompt toe-tapping and singalongs, and design clear buttons and uncomplicated instructions,” Ms Gall said.

“We are really pleased our residents living with dementia were able to make a contribution to the design of the app which will bring such joy to families for many years to come.

“Our staff observe families visiting and sitting next to their loved one struggling to maintain conversation. Through the stimulation and interaction A Better Visit prompts we would hear more laughter and chatting.

“What’s more we observed after the game play, the resident living with dementia’s mood would be more upbeat and often that positive mood would continue on, even after the families had gone home.”

Ms Bendixsen has volunteered to join Dementia Australia’s Ambassador Program to share her experience of caring for her mother to raise awareness about dementia and to help others to know they are not alone.

“I am delighted to announce Stephanie as a [Dementia Australia Ambassador](#). Stephanie joins our growing list of respected, high profile Australians who are motivated by the impact of dementia in their own lives, to help others and raise much needed awareness in the community about dementia and about our services,” Ms McCabe said.

A Better Visit is available for iPad only and can be downloaded for free at the Appstore.

The app is the latest addition to a range of innovative digital projects developed by Dementia Australia to support people living with dementia and their carers and families.

The app was developed with the support of Lifeview Residential Care and the technical knowhow of the team at Swinburne University Future Self and Design Living Lab.

The app was released during [Social Inclusion Week 2018](#), a national awareness week that aims to help all Australians feel included and valued, giving everyone the opportunity to participate fully in society.

Further information about the app can found at <https://www.dementia.org.au/abettervisit>.

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Dementia Australia is the national peak body and charity for people, of all ages, living with all forms of dementia, their families and carers. It provides advocacy, support services, education and information. An estimated 436,000 people have dementia in Australia. This number is projected to reach almost 1.1 million by 2058. Dementia Australia is the new voice of Alzheimer’s Australia. Dementia Australia’s services are supported by the Australian Government.

National Dementia Helpline 1800 100 500

Interpreter service available

(The National Dementia Helpline is funded by the Australian Government)

Dementia is a National Health Priority Area

www.dementia.org.au

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When talking or writing about dementia please refer to [Dementia Language Guidelines](#).