

Friday 27 March 2020

Contact us - Dementia Australia calls for people impacted by dementia to reach out for support

At this unprecedented time, Dementia Australia is encouraging all people impacted by dementia to reach out for support and information when they need it.

Dementia Australia Acting CEO Anthony Boffa said as the health, social and economic consequences of coronavirus (COVID-19) play out, it is important to stay connected.

"This includes the more than 70 per cent of people with dementia living in the community who are staying in their homes, along with all Australians, to minimise the spread of the virus," Mr Boffa said.

"Remember you are not alone and support is available. Our National Dementia Helpline is continuing to operate as usual, so please get in touch as questions and concerns arise, on 1800 100 500 or visit dementia.org.au for webchat, resources and information in other languages.

"We remain committed to providing services and supports during this difficult time even if, on a practical level, that may look a bit different in the coming weeks. Clients who access a service that will be postponed or changed will be contacted by our staff."

Dementia Australia's specialist Client Services team is available to talk through the multitude of questions and scenarios that might further impact people living with dementia, their families and carers at this time. Some of the things to consider are:

Being extra vigilant with monitoring general health and wellbeing

It is important for people to make sure they have supports in place, online and home-based activities planned, and regular phone or video catch ups with families and friends. If help is needed with shopping or understanding new technology with video calls or tele-health appointments in the coming weeks, seeking that help now is wise to avoid potential stress or delays when the appointment occurs.

Being mindful of the impact of changes in routine and dynamics in the home

With entire households at home, people living with dementia and their primary carers may be adapting to different noise levels, activities and stimulus. Including the person with dementia in activities might be a welcome change or the opposite - a designated quiet room or space might also be useful. The needs and capacity of the person living with dementia should be considered and wherever possible the person should be included in any discussions, activities and planning.

Being mindful of the potential for heightened levels of stress and anxiety

People living with dementia, depending on their symptoms and the progression of the disease, will have varying levels of understanding of the changing situation with COVID-19. This may be heightened if they have limited communication skills or inability to fully express themselves. Frustrations and anxiety may result. Talking through plans, planning ahead with engaging activities, displaying the information on calendars or kitchen noticeboards will provide some certainty for a person living with dementia about the plans and timings for each day.

"People living with dementia are one of the most vulnerable groups in society at this time," Mr Boffa said.

"These are unpredictable times that are disruptive and turbulent. They can create even more uncertainty for people living with dementia so we must be alert to these situations that can cause heightened risks.

“We are here to support the 459,000 Australians living with dementia and the 1.6 million people involved in their care.”

For more information and suggestions on how to better support all people impacted by dementia in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) visit <https://www.dementia.org.au/an-update-from-dementia-australia>.

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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 459,000 people have dementia in Australia. This number is projected to reach almost 1.1 million by 2058. Dementia Australia’s services are supported by the Australian Government.

National Dementia Helpline 1800 100 500

Interpreter service available

(The National Dementia Helpline is an Australian Government Initiative)

Dementia is a National Health Priority Area

www.dementia.org.au

Media contacts: Christine Bolt, National GM Communications, Corporate Communications, 0400 004 553,

Christine.Bolt@dementia.org.au | Gabrielle Prabhu, Media & Communications Manager, 0447 253 583,

Gabrielle.Prabhu@dementia.org.au

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