Number of people with dementia on the rise

There are more than 425,000 people living with dementia in Australia\(^1\), figures show, with an estimated 250 people developing dementia each day, prompting calls for the individuals, families and carers impacted to turn to Dementia Australia and access support that can empower them to live well.

Dementia Australia CEO Maree McCabe said while there is no cure for dementia, which is the second leading cause of death of Australians and the leading cause of death among Australian women\(^2\), the right support, information and help can make a life-changing difference to people living with the condition.

“There is a perception in the community that nothing can be done following a diagnosis of dementia,” Ms McCabe said.

“However, with an estimated 425,000 Australians living with dementia this year alone, which is expected to soar to 536,000 people by 2025 and more than 1.1 million people by 2056\(^1\), it is vital people understand the right support can make the world of difference to everyone impacted by dementia.

“These figures are cause for concern and we do know we need to make sure we continue to invest in more research to try to find ways to better treat the condition, or find a cure. But in the meantime, we must also make sure the huge number of Australians impacted by dementia are accessing good quality, appropriate support and services.

“Good support and services can help people cope better with the uncertainty and changes that come with dementia. One significant issue Dementia Australia staff often hear following a diagnosis of dementia is how isolating it can be, which can be devastating and debilitating.

“However, the right services can help people reconnect and re-establish relationships with partners, families and friends which can be so important for their emotional well-being. Social engagement and keeping physically and mentally active are also key in contributing to better health and lifestyle outcomes following a diagnosis of dementia.”

Marina Germolus’ son started noticing changes with her memory in 2012 and she was diagnosed with dementia in 2016.

Ms Germolus said reaching out to Dementia Australia for support services has been crucial in enabling her to deal well with her diagnosis and get on with her life, including, importantly, the ability to remain socially active.

“The staff have really understood my needs and what will work for me,” she said.

“They have given me social activity. They have given me respect. They have given me understanding. They have allowed me to be who I am and they have assisted me in realising I am not alone. And those are the most important things.”

Isabelle Burke was 20 when her mother was diagnosed with younger onset dementia, at the age of 54.

“Being so young when mum was diagnosed, I really knew very little about dementia and the impact it was going to have on our lives,” Ms Burke said.

“But through Dementia Australia we have been able to find out what information we needed at every step along the way, which has just made such a difference.

“The support services have allowed me to cope with massive changes in my and my family’s life and to use what can be seen as a crushing diagnosis as a way of coming together to support each other as a family.”

---

\(^1\) The National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling NATSEM (2016) Economic Cost of Dementia in Australia 2016-2056

\(^2\) Australian Bureau of Statistics (2017) Causes of Death, Australia, 2016 (cat. No. 3303.0)
Ms McCabe said support services at the early stage following a diagnosis are also essential. “They enable people to better understand the condition, which helps prepare for the changes that will inevitably come. They can also help people re-engage with life,” Ms McCabe said.

“Dementia Australia – the new voice of Alzheimer’s Australia - has delivered services to more than 1.5 million people living with dementia, their families and carers from across the country over the past 10 years alone – and to many, many more since the organisation started more than 35 years ago.

“Having a trusted, independent source of information people can turn to means that no matter what stage people are at we can assist.

“We are encouraging people to turn to Dementia Australia for support, information, counselling and education. We can also put people in touch with other organisations and partners providing great services across the country.”

Dementia Australia provides essential, expert advice and support services for people living with dementia providing integrated support from pre-diagnosis right through to end-of-life. Dementia Australia’s services are supported by the Australian Government.

To contact Dementia Australia, call the National Dementia Helpline on 1800 100 500 or go to www.dementia.org.au.

Dementia Prevalence Estimates by State 2018

Dementia Australia is the national peak body 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 425,000 people have dementia in Australia. This number is projected to reach more than 1.1 million by 2056. Dementia Australia is the new voice of Alzheimer’s Australia.

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

-Ends-

Media contacts: Sarah Price – 0403 072 140 / Christine Bolt – 0400 004 553 / Anna Townend – 0435 532 214 / Monika Boogs - 0407 019 430

When talking or writing about dementia please refer to Dementia-Friendly Language Guidelines.