A new report released by Carers Australia today highlights the urgent need for dementia specific respite care across Australia, Dementia Australia CEO Maree McCabe said today.

The findings, based on a survey conducted by Carers Australia, make it clear that demand for residential respite care is not being met. Respondents identified a range of issues for carers, including not enough residential respite care beds, particularly for high and dementia-specific care needs.

“Seventy percent of people with dementia live in the community, and carers repeatedly identify good respite care as an important support for a sustainable caring relationship,” Ms McCabe said.

“Respite is a crucial factor in supporting people with dementia living in our communities. But as the report notes, current residential respite options are limited, and this shortage is not assisted by the fact that people seeking and waiting for permanent care are often using this respite.

“This is corroborated by Dementia Australia’s own research on the subject which found that more than half of primary carers living with people with dementia have indicated they need more support, and the greatest single unmet area of demand is for respite care.

“Unfortunately, there are few dementia-specific respite services and as the care needs of people living with dementia increase, they are often declined respite options. Many respite services say that they are not staffed to provide care to people who have behavioural symptoms of dementia or to those who are incontinent.”

Dementia Australia supports the recommendations made by Carers Australia in their new report, including requirements for residential care providers to offer some respite care, and incentives to support respite care offerings. Specifically, Dementia Australia recommends a dementia supplement for all forms of respite care, in recognition of the higher costs of caring for a person with dementia.

Ms McCabe said there was a need for a dementia supplement for respite providers, similar to the supplement which was provided within community care.

“This supplement should only be available to services that can demonstrate they have the capacity to care for people with dementia. It will acknowledge the additional costs associated with providing dementia-specific respite and create an incentive for providers to develop these services,” she said.

“The new report highlights the need to do more to support people living with dementia in our communities, and their family and carers. Respite care plays a critical role in providing a break for carers as well as an important opportunity for social engagement for people with dementia.

1 Alzheimer’s Australia 2015. Caring for someone with dementia: The economic, social, and health impacts and evidence based supports for carers. Access online here.
“Respite helps a person receiving care to continue to live at home for as long as possible and ensures their carer’s wellbeing is also supported to ensure they can care for their loved one. From the carer’s perspective, respite provides time away from caring responsibilities to do other activities, knowing the person they care for is receiving quality care. Often respite is essential to ensuring that family members can continue caring for their loved one with dementia at home.”

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**

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