

Saturday 10 October 2020

## **Mental health needs of people living with dementia, their families and carers a focus for World Mental Health Day**

On World Mental Health Day, Dementia Australia is calling on the federal government and the health and aged care sectors to ensure the mental health needs of people living with dementia, their families and carers are sufficiently met.

Dementia Australia CEO Maree McCabe said this year's unprecedented social distancing measures and restrictions due to COVID-19 have had significant and unintended consequences on people living with dementia, their families and carers.

"The mental health of people living with dementia is being significantly impacted due to the measures put in place to minimise the spread of COVID-19, resulting in a decline in cognitive functioning and the loss of abilities that many people living with dementia will be unable to restore," Ms McCabe said.

"There is also a subsequent flow-on impact for carers and Dementia Australia has experienced an increase in demand for support as a result.

"It is vital to ensure people living with dementia, their families and carers have access to outreach and early intervention support, online social support and quality care in residential aged care facilities.

"Informal carers of people with dementia have reported increased anxiety and stress.

"People living with dementia have shared their fears about experiencing cognitive decline as a result of service changes and social isolation.

"This impact of lack of access to services and social interaction contributing to the rate of cognitive decline has been found through research as well as in feedback from people living with dementia, families and carers.

"The provision of allied health and mental health services to people living in the community and in residential aged care is absolutely crucial.

"This must be a significant focus to ensure the mental health of both people living with dementia and carers is a priority going forward.

"Urgent action is needed now to ensure quality care for the almost half a million people living with dementia, and for families and carers.

"For those wanting to reach out for support or just a chat to check-in please call the National Dementia Helpline on 1800 100 500 or email [helpline@dementia.org.au](mailto:helpline@dementia.org.au)."

Dementia Australia is the source of trusted information, education and services for the estimated half a million Australians living with dementia, and the almost 1.6 million people involved in their care. We advocate for positive change and support vital research. We are here to support people impacted by dementia, and to enable them to live as well as possible. No matter how you are impacted by dementia or who you are, we are here for you.

For support, please contact the **National Dementia Helpline on 1800 100 500**. An interpreter service is available and the Helpline is open 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday excluding public holidays. The National Dementia Helpline is funded by the Australian Government. People looking for information can also visit [dementia.org.au](http://dementia.org.au)

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

