

Thursday 15 October 2020

## **Grief and trauma support for people impacted by dementia and COVID-19 welcomed**

Dementia Australia has welcomed an announcement by the federal government to invest \$12.4 million in a Grief and Trauma Response Package which will help to ensure support is available for those affected by COVID-19 across the aged care sector.

The package includes access to training for aged care staff in trauma-informed care, including advice on self-care, and post-COVID-19 support for aged care residents living with dementia and those experiencing adverse physical, social and psychological impacts.

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.

"While many members across the community have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, this has disproportionately affected people living with dementia, their families and carers," Ms McCabe said.

"The mental health of people living with dementia is being impacted, along with a decline in cognitive functioning for many, as a result of changes to routine, lack of mental stimulation and social isolation.

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

"With more than two thirds of people in residential aged care living with dementia, the needs of all people living with dementia must be a priority in response to the coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak."

During this pandemic, Dementia Australia has been calling for supports for people living with dementia, their families and carers that will address the mental health challenges they are experiencing, as well as address the trajectory of cognitive decline that people with dementia are experiencing as a result of service changes and social isolation.

"The provision of allied health and mental health services to people living in residential aged care is absolutely vital," Ms McCabe said.

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

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

"We look forward to continuing our work with the federal government to ensure appropriate support and services are provided to those impacted by dementia."

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**

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