

Friday 2 October 2020

Royal Commission COVID-19 report welcomed yet more needed for people living with dementia

Dementia Australia has welcomed a special report on the COVID-19 pandemic in aged care from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

Dementia Australia CEO Maree McCabe said the physical and mental health impacts of COVID-19 on people living with dementia has been and continues to be significant – this is deeply concerning.

“Recent dementia prevalence data suggests that over two thirds of all people living in residential aged care have moderate to severe cognitive impairment¹,” Ms McCabe said.

“Dementia Australia supports the recommendations outlined in the Royal Commission’s report.

“Dementia Australia has been consistently calling for health and aged care providers to work together to maintain visits and engagement with people living with dementia during this unprecedented time of enforced and extended periods of isolation.

“People living with dementia are some of the most vulnerable people in our community during this pandemic.

“If engagement is reduced for people with dementia, the loss of cognitive function can escalate. Over time these are losses that most people will not regain.

“For people living in residential aged care, involving families in their care to actively plan for different forms of engagement and methods of communication is crucial.

“The provision of allied health and mental health services to people living in residential aged care is absolutely vital.

“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.

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

“While a national aged care plan for COVID-19 is essential, it is imperative that there are dementia-specific mechanisms within the broader actions – otherwise we will not see the changes needed.

“Within this national plan, there should be a requirement for mandatory dementia training for everyone working in aged care or the health sector.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the longstanding systemic gaps in dementia care.



“We know from our research and from what consumers share with us - if you get dementia care right you get quality care for all.

“I hope the federal government responds to our concerns in the budget announcement next week by funding the initiatives outlined in the [Dementia Australia’s 2020-21 Federal Pre-Budget Submission](#).

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

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](#).

¹ Aged Care Royal Commission - [Research Paper 8 – International and National Quality and Safety Indicators for Aged Care](#)