

Wednesday 14 April 2021

Dementia care is personal... It's about all of us.

In an address to the National Press Club in Canberra today - titled "Dementia is not about them - it is about you and me!" - Dementia Australia Chair Professor Graeme Samuel AC will share his personal experience of dementia - the anguish, bewilderment, frustration and torment experienced by his mother as she descended into the abyss of this insidious disease.

He will be commenting upon the disgraceful treatment of our aged population, particularly in residential aged care homes exposed by the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety's Final Report: Care, Dignity and Respect.

He will call on the federal government to commit to making a difference to the experience of Australians impacted by dementia.

He will be presenting Dementia Australia's plan for the future of quality dementia care - "A Roadmap for quality dementia care – achievable, sustainable and transformational - and absolutely essential."

"Based on current statistics, it seems inevitable that every single family in this country will at some stage experience the torment and distress of a loved one being overtaken by dementia," Professor Samuel will say in his address.

"With around 70 per cent of Australians living in residential aged care having some form of cognitive impairment, their families face enormous difficulties in providing support for relatives struggling with the memory loss and behavioural changes that accompany the disease."

Professor Samuel will note that dementia is one of the largest health and social challenges facing Australia and the world – it is also one of the least recognised or understood.

"In economic terms alone, dementia costs the economy more than \$6 billion in healthcare and loss of productivity every year," Professor Samuel will say.

"There needs to be continued focus on three priorities: research, dementia friendly communities and quality of care.

"That's why Dementia Australia is working closely with government and major philanthropists to bring about genuine global collaboration amongst researchers and clinicians in this area, to ensure that scarce research funds are applied to their most productive uses."

"We need to set up systems to ensure timely access to diagnosis, and a direct and clear pathway to early and ongoing supports and treatment services," Professor Samuel will say.

"We must train our workers and develop and embed a set of robust, evidence based and practice informed dementia friendly design standards.

"The government has a responsibility to let every Australian impacted by dementia know that support for them to remain in their home is available and appropriate, and if they move into residential aged care that they will receive the care, dignity and respect they deserve."



“I call on every member of Parliament to remember this is not only about people currently impacted by dementia – it is also about what the future holds for all of us,” Professor Samuel will say.

His presentation will be personal, at times emotional and confronting. But by putting the human back into policy-speak he hopes to demonstrate why implementing the Roadmap is absolutely essential for the future of all us.

Professor Samuel’s speech is available [here](#).

Dementia Australia’s Integrated Roadmap for Quality Dementia Care is available [here](#).

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](#).