



**Dementia  
Australia®**

# **2023-24 Pre-Budget Submission**

January 2023

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## About Dementia Australia

No matter how you are impacted by dementia or who you are, Dementia Australia is here for you.

We exist to support and empower the over 400,000 Australians living with dementia and more than 1.5 million people involved in their care. Dementia is the second leading cause of death in Australia yet remains one of the most challenging and misunderstood conditions.

Founded by carers more than 35 years ago, today we are the national peak body for people impacted by dementia in Australia.

We involve people impacted by dementia and their experiences in our activities and decision-making, to make sure we are representative of the diverse range of dementia experiences across Australia. We amplify the voices of people impacted by dementia through advocating and sharing stories to help inform and inspire others.

Dementia Australia is the source of trusted information, education and support services. We advocate for positive change for people living with dementia, their families and carers, and support vital research.

We are here to support people impacted by dementia, and to enable them to live as well as possible.

# Introduction

Health and aged care reforms over recent years reflect the Australian Government's understanding that dementia is one of the largest health and social challenges facing Australia and the world. There are an estimated 408,858 Australians living with dementia in 2023<sup>1</sup> and around 1.5 million people involved in their care.<sup>2</sup> Without a significant medical breakthrough, it is estimated there will be almost 840,000 people living with dementia in Australia by 2058.<sup>3</sup> It is the leading cause of death of women in Australia, and the second leading cause of death overall.<sup>4</sup> It is predicted to become the leading cause of death within the next five years.

A significant investment in and focus on dementia has been embedded in budgets and policies, with dementia receiving specific attention in the context of aged care reform, not least through the development of a new, comprehensive National Dementia Action Plan, which has been welcomed by people impacted by dementia and other stakeholders.

The components of Dementia Australia's pre-Budget submission for 2023-24 are intended to complement and strengthen these efforts, while also fulfilling on key elements of Dementia Australia's strategic priorities, which have been clearly and consistently identified by people living with dementia, their families and carers.

As the national peak advocacy organisation for people impacted by dementia, Dementia Australia's 2023-24 pre-budget submission presents proposals founded on our long-standing and ongoing consultation with people living with dementia, their families and carers over recent years as well as our extensive knowledge of the health, aged care, social services and disability sectors.

As already referenced above, our proposals provide solutions to three key priority areas, which have also been highlighted in the National Dementia Action Plan:

- Tackling stigma and discrimination with the continuation and expansion of the Dementia-Friendly Communities program;
- Building the dementia capability of the workforce; and
- Minimising risk, delaying onset and progression through a national dementia risk reduction campaign.

**TOTAL FUNDING SOUGHT: \$22,480,000 over 3 years**

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2023) National Centre for Dementia Monitoring

<sup>2</sup> Based on Dementia Australia's analysis of the following publications – M.Kostas et al. (2017) National Aged Care Workforce Census and Survey – The Aged Care Workforce, 2016, Department of Health; Dementia Australia (2018) Dementia Prevalence Data 2018–2058, commissioned research undertaken by NATSEM, University of Canberra; Alzheimer's Disease International and Karolinska Institute (2018), Global estimates of informal care, Alzheimer's Disease International; Access Economics (2010) Caring Places: planning for aged care and dementia 2010–2050

<sup>3</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2023) National Centre for Dementia Monitoring

<sup>4</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2020) Causes of Death, Australia, 2019 (cat. No. 3303.0)

# 1. Building on the success of the Dementia-Friendly Communities program to tackle community awareness and inclusivity

To help address the stigma and discrimination experienced by people impacted by dementia, and to contribute to the objectives of the National Dementia Action Plan, Dementia Australia proposes a continuation of the existing Dementia-Friendly Communities programme, which has been in operation since 2016.

Dementia Friendly Communities initiatives have gained traction around the world. In Australia, the national Dementia-Friendly Communities program is underpinned by a community development approach in which the program team facilitate and support initiatives across four tiers of dementia-friendly involvement: Dementia Friends, Dementia Alliances and Dementia-Friendly Organisations, and grant-funded Community Engagement Program demonstration projects.

People living with dementia play a central role in all program tiers, from the establishment of Alliances and development of action plans, through to awareness raising activities (including the Dementia Friends program element) and implementation of grassroots dementia-friendly change initiatives.

It is imperative that the momentum and success of the Dementia-Friendly Communities program is not lost. Continuation and expansion of the program will be critical to the success of the National Dementia Action Plan through a unique focus on building the capacity of local communities to be more inclusive and understanding of dementia.

Dementia Australia therefore seeks funding for a further three years to ensure the growth, development, and sustainability of current and future Dementia-Friendly Communities initiatives.

The key benefits of ongoing funding for this program will be:

- Ensuring the continuation of local dementia awareness and inclusion initiatives;
- Supporting new and emerging dementia-friendly communities;
- Increasing the number of Dementia Friends, Dementia Alliances and Dementia-Friendly Organisations; and
- Building the capacity of the Dementia-Friendly Communities program team to empower people living with dementia and support their involvement in dementia-friendly initiatives.

## 2. Continuing to build dementia capability in our workforce

The capability of the aged care, disability and health care workforce continues to be of great importance to people impacted by dementia and is a vital component of quality dementia care. The National Dementia Action Plan reinforces that dementia education for aged care staff and health professionals is not sufficient. Dementia Australia has been advocating for compulsory dementia education for all aged care staff and other initiatives to build the capability of the workforce for several years.

Although funding has been allocated to education of the aged care workforce as part of the response to the recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, more is required to ensure that all the workforce is equipped and supported to provide quality dementia care.

To ensure the investment in dementia education of the workforce leads to improved practice, Dementia Australia seeks a commitment from Government to increase the level of dementia capability through funding for a mentoring and micro skills program for the aged care workforce. A mentoring program combined with micro learning will enable the education to be applied to practice. The program has been designed to have targeted contact hours given the staff shortages in the sector affecting the capacity of providers to release staff to attend training.

The key benefits of this program will be:

- Building the capacity of staff to embed practice change into their day-to-day work;
- Improving the consistency of quality dementia care delivered; and
- Creating learning environments that are flexible to the needs of the workforce.

### **3. Minimising the risk of dementia through a revitalised risk reduction initiative**

Although many of the risk factors for dementia are the same as for other chronic diseases, there is still limited community understanding that people can reduce their risk or delay the onset of dementia through ‘brain healthy’ choices across the life cycle. Mainstream messaging around preventative health does not seem to have had enough of an impact to encourage communities to be brain healthy and focus on what they can do to reduce their risk of developing dementia.

Dementia Australia (as Alzheimer’s Australia) has in the past been funded to provide risk reduction activities, including the Your Brain Matters (YBM) program and an associated app called BrainyApp.

The YBM program developed a portfolio of public communication and tailored educational products, all of which encouraged better awareness of brain health. In addition, the BrainyApp tool allowed users to complete a brain health survey, which asked questions about current physical, social and mental activity, cardiovascular health, diet, smoking and drinking habits. The brain-heart health score achieved indicated how brain healthy the users’ lifestyle was and particular areas for improvement were highlighted. Users could then engage in activities to improve in areas that may be increasing their dementia risk. If users recorded sufficient activities according to recommendations for dementia risk reduction, their brain-heart health score improved over time. Users could also read and share facts about dementia, the brain and how to keep their brain healthy.

Although Dementia Australia is not seeking to replicate this previous program, we do propose to take the learnings from its previous iteration and combine them with updated risk reduction research, contemporary consumer experience and intelligence from our National Dementia Support Program and BrainTrack app to create a revitalised, refreshed risk reduction package.

Arguably the timing for this is crucial, given the level of focus on improving the system to facilitate a timelier diagnosis and streamlining post-diagnostic supports. Given the healthcare system is already at capacity, it is equally important that we begin to embed a stronger community awareness of brain health and how to reduce the risk of developing dementia in the first place.

As such, Dementia Australia seeks funding for a national dementia risk reduction initiative to improve community understanding of dementia risk factors and support Australians to reduce their own individual risk and/or delay the onset of dementia. The key benefits of this risk reduction initiative will be:

- Increasing public awareness of dementia and risk reduction measures;

- Potentially delaying the onset of dementia and thereby reducing the cost of dementia to the Australian economy; and
- Improving the general and brain health of Australians.

For further information about Dementia Australia's submission or for any other queries, please contact Dr Kaele Stokes, Executive Director Advocacy and Research at [kaele.stokes@dementia.org.au](mailto:kaele.stokes@dementia.org.au) or ph. 0418 543 600.