Dementia Australia

Support. Change. Prevention.

NO TIME TO LOSE: A UNITED CALL FOR NATIONAL DEMENTIA REFORM

Communiqué | National Dementia Policy and Advocacy Roundtable | 27 October 2026

More than 440,000 Australians live with dementia in 2026, a number expected to more than double to over one million by 2065 [1]. Today, it's Australia's leading cause of death [1].

On 27 October 2026, representatives from across the dementia, health, aged care and disability sectors, together with Australians with living experience and government officials, came together at Parliament House for the National Dementia Policy and Advocacy Roundtable, convened by Dementia Australia.

Participants agreed the scale of this challenge demands an ambitious, coordinated national response that puts the needs and experiences of Australians living with dementia, their families and carers at its centre.

The National Dementia Action Plan provides an important foundation, but we must now turn ambition into action. Dementia is not an inevitable part of ageing. We have the knowledge, evidence and practical solutions that will help prevent dementia or delay its onset, enable earlier diagnosis, improve equitable access to care and support, and help Australians living with dementia maintain independence and quality of life. We know what needs to be done. We cannot afford to wait.

The Roundtable explored challenges and solutions across six pillars: promoting brain health and dementia risk reduction; earlier, accurate diagnosis; living as well as possible for as long as possible with the right support; caring for carers; workforce capability; and residential care.

Participants prioritised the following practical reforms as the most important and urgent to reduce dementia impact now and in the future.

The Core Need	Practical Reform
Up to 45% of dementia cases could potentially be delayed or prevented [2]. While 90% of Australians are willing to reduce their risk, only one in three feel confident about how to do so [3].	Design and implement a national brain health and dementia risk reduction campaign, tailored to specific population groups and recognising the impact of social determinants of health.
Around half of Australians living with dementia are undiagnosed [4], For those who are, it can take three to five years to receive a diagnosis [4, 5].	Document clear, practical diagnostic pathways for all Australians regardless of age and where they live and raise awareness of the benefits of timely diagnosis within primary care and the general population.

Australians living with dementia and their families need a consistent point of contact to help them navigate and access the right care and support to access support earlier, maintain independence for longer, and avoid reaching crisis point.	Implement a network of dementia care navigators to support timely access to post diagnostic support
Six in 10 Australian carers struggle to find high-quality respite, while more than half face difficulties with affordability and long wait times [6]. Without access to suitable respite, carers miss out on vital breaks, increasing the risk of burnout and making it harder to sustain care at home.	Reimagine respite to make it more accessible, appropriate and affordable for people living with dementia and their carers. As an urgent need and quick win enable cottage respite to be accessed under the Support at Home program.
Funding for residential aged care doesn't consistently reflect the additional time, skills and resources needed to deliver quality dementia care.	Review the adequacy of residential funding allocated through the Australian National Aged Care Classification (AN-ACC) methodology for people living with dementia particularly those with more complex needs.

While no definitive proposals were agreed, there was also support to:

- Ensure there is timely and responsive access to supports across health, disability and aged care for people living with dementia in recognition of the progressive degenerative nature of dementia
- Continue to improve the dementia capability of the health, disability and aged care workforces
- Recognise the economic contribution of informal carers that is underwriting the care economy and ensure the impact on carers is appropriately reflected in carer policy and programs.

Participants collectively call on the Australian Government to work with the sector and people with living experience to act on these priorities through the 2027-28 budget. Australia must better recognise and respond to the needs of Australians living with dementia, their families and carers now and into the future. There is no time to lose.

Endorsed by the following:

- Ageing Australia
- Allied Health Professionals Australia
- Australasian College for Emergency Medicine
- Australian and New Zealand Society for Geriatric Medicine (ANZSGM)
- Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG)

- Australian College of Nursing
- Australian Multicultural Health Collaborative (AMHC)
- Carers Australia
- Centre for Healthy Brain Ageing, University of New South Wales
- Childhood Dementia Initiative
- Council on the Ageing Australia (COTA)
- Dementia Training Australia
- Down Syndrome Australia
- Federation of Ethnic Community Councils Australia (FECCA)
- HammondCare
- Medicines Australia Alzheimer's Disease Special Interest Group
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care Council (NATSIAACC)
- Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN)
- Palliative Care Australia
- Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP)
- Young People In Nursing Homes National Alliance
- Ann Pietsch, Chair of Dementia Australia Advisory Committee & Roundtable Living Experience Representative
- Bill Leane, Dementia Advocate & Roundtable Living Experience Representative
- Deneva Bamber, Dementia Advocate & Roundtable Living Experience Representative
- Rebecca Scouller, Dementia Advocate & Roundtable Living Experience Representative
- Satu Koikkalainen, Dementia Advocate & Roundtable Living Experience Representative

References

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3. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Dementia Awareness Survey*. 2024, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.
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