

Helping a person with dementia travel smoothly on community transport

The following check list may be useful for carers and transport providers:

- If the person needs an escort has one been organised?
- Does the person with dementia have sufficient identification, including an emergency contact, on them?
- Are the person's outer clothing and possessions named?
- Do you know if the person needs assistance with their seat belt, boarding the vehicle or taking their seat?
- Has the person used the bathroom before the trip?
- Do they have access to a bag of essentials they may need such as a comfortable change of clothes, water, snacks and activities? (What is essential will vary from person to person.)
- Is the travel being undertaken during the time of day that is best for the person with dementia?
- Does the person have behavioural issues that are likely to arise during the trip? Is there a plan to cope with these behaviours?

WORKING WITH OTHERS

Support is vital for people with dementia and the help of families, friends and carers can make a positive difference to managing the condition. Ideally CTOs will be able to liaise with the family or carer of the person with dementia and report any significant changes in their symptoms. Communicating with the family of the client will also enable the CTO to become aware of the story of the person with dementia and become informed about aspects of their behaviour that may affect the way they travel. CTOs may also liaise with organisations that can provide support for the person such as the Dementia Advisory Service.



WHERE TO GET FURTHER HELP AND INFORMATION

If someone is identified as having dementia, encourage them to contact sources of support such as their family or doctor. Support is also available for people with dementia and their carers from:

The local Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT). Call **1800 200 422** for information

The Alzheimer's Australia National Dementia Helpline on **1800 100 500**

Alzheimer's Australia NSW on **02 9805 0100** or at **fightdementia.org.au**

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PROVIDING COMMUNITY TRANSPORT TO PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA



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It is probable that there are people travelling on your transport who have dementia. Some of these people will have a diagnosis of dementia, others may not. This brochure provides you with some tips and guidelines on how to assist people travelling on community transport who may have dementia.

Signs of dementia

If you think a person you are dealing with may have dementia, they may display some of the following behaviours.

- Memory loss
- Difficulty performing familiar tasks
- Disorientation to time and place
- Problems with language
- Problems with abstract thinking
- Problems with spatial skills
- Problems misplacing things
- Changes in mood or behaviour.

If you think that someone is exhibiting any of these signs try firstly assessing them for hunger, thirst, pain or tiredness and if the behaviour continues speak with your manager. If it is appropriate, the person's family or emergency contact could be informed or the person could be encouraged to consult a doctor.

Diagnosing dementia

A correct diagnosis is important and can only be made by a doctor. There are a number of conditions that produce symptoms similar to dementia. Diagnosis means that a person can have access to information, support and appropriate treatment.

While there are several symptoms that are common to most people with dementia, the exact symptoms experienced by a person with dementia depend on the areas of the brain that are affected.

Community transport workers and volunteers may find the video *Is It Dementia* useful in helping to recognise the signs of dementia <http://isitdementia.com.au>

TIPS FOR SUPPORTING A PERSON WITH DEMENTIA

Managing the booking process

Techniques that may assist with the booking process include:

- Encourage the client to write the details of the booking in their calendar
- Ring the person to confirm the booking on the day before, on the day, or both
- Ring the person on the day when the transport is reasonably close
- Involve another person, ideally a carer or family member
- Involve an agency such as Neighbour Aid which may provide the person with assistance
- Arrange for a travel escort, this could be done by the person's family or by the provider in discussion with the family and person with dementia.

Communication

- Speak slowly, clearly and directly to the person
- Talk in a gentle, matter of fact way
- Do not appear to be hurried
- Give one message at a time
- Keep sentences short
- Allow plenty of time for what you have said to be understood
- Where appropriate, use body language to demonstrate and reinforce your verbal message
- Keep competing noise and distractions to a minimum.

Assisting the passenger with dementia when travelling

- Be patient
- Allow extra time where possible to allow for delays such as taking time to board
- Avoid arguing with the person with dementia. It is usually more effective to go along with them verbally and incorporate their story into what is happening while proceeding with the original plan
- Avoid asking questions such as 'Do you understand/remember?'
- Make payment arrangements as simple as possible
- Because some people with dementia may become disorientated, it is important they carry appropriate identification
- Be aware of the person's safety when getting out of the vehicle, especially when parking near traffic

- Do not drive alone with a person who is agitated
- Where possible, engage the safety lock to prevent accidental opening of the vehicle door
- Ensure the person with dementia is safely at their destination. For instance if going to day care ensure that the day care worker is present when people alight from the vehicle.

Transport escorts

While many people with dementia have carers who can travel with them on community transport, there are many others who do not have this support. Community transport operators may train employees or volunteers or partner with organisations to provide transport escorts for people with dementia. The role of a travel escort can vary. It may include activities such as:

- Helping the person to get ready
- Travelling with the person
- Accompanying them on their activities such as shopping or going to an appointment
- Providing companionship
- Looking after bags and possessions.

