



Wednesday 27 June 2018

## **The Veronicas raise their voices as Dementia Australia Ambassadors**

Internationally-renowned music artists Jessica and Lisa Origliasso of The Veronicas will be named Dementia Australia's newest Ambassadors at an event at Parliament House in Canberra today.

Dementia Australia CEO Maree McCabe has welcomed Jessica and Lisa as Dementia Australia Ambassadors.

"Sharing their personal experience to help raise awareness and advocate for the more than 425,000 Australians living with dementia, their families and carers in Australia is inspiring and we thank them for their generosity," Ms McCabe said.

"The lack of understanding about dementia in the community and impacts on the quality of life and healthcare outcomes for people living with dementia, their families and carers.

"For Jessica and Lisa to speak out about their family's experience is a powerful way of raising awareness and understanding of dementia. We are so grateful for their support and delighted to have them on board as Ambassadors."

Like many other Australians, Jessica and Lisa's family has been impacted by the disease, with their mother having been recently diagnosed with dementia.

"Until we went through this with our mum and started talking to others about dementia, we had no idea of the enormity of the issue and just how many other people are going through what our family is, every day," Jessica and Lisa said.

"After four years of misdiagnosis, we were heartbroken when we received the diagnosis and found it difficult to find information about what was going on. We felt so powerless.

"But by talking openly about it, and sharing our story, we hope we can let others know they are not alone and that there is help and support available.

"For anyone who is either diagnosed with dementia, or who has a loved one who has a diagnosis with dementia, and you don't know where to turn, a really good starting point is calling Dementia Australia on the National Dementia Helpline on 1800 100 500."

Jessica and Lisa will be joined by Ita Buttrose AO OBE, one of Dementia Australia's longest-serving Ambassadors, at the Parliamentary Friends of Dementia meeting, along with Ms McCabe, and people living dementia and carers, where they will be encouraging Members of Parliament to become a Dementia Friend.

"The Dementia Friends program is a social movement to help build awareness of dementia among the community," Ms Buttrose said.

"People living with dementia tell us that that a lack of knowledge or understanding of the condition among the general public and how it can impact people can be really quite isolating.

"When you sign up to become a Dementia Friend, you hear directly from people with dementia about what dementia is, how the condition impacts them and the small changes that can have a big impact on making a community more dementia-friendly.

“A better understanding of dementia will empower people to do small, everyday things that can make a big difference to someone with dementia.”

Peter Gill who is living with dementia said he felt shocked and ashamed when he learned he had Alzheimer's disease.

“Very quickly, I realised there is no shame involved, my ignorance had lead me to feel that way,” Mr Gill said.

“Today's event highlights the necessity to make our community very aware of dementia and its many guises.”

Janice Hodgson, who cares for her husband Fred, will share why the Dementia Friends program is important to her and all people impacted by dementia.

“We know there is no cure. Stigma and shame are still prevalent, but becoming a Dementia Friend helps educate the public to bring change in our communities,” Mrs Hodgson said.

“This Dementia Friends Campaign is an important part of the jigsaw in developing Dementia-Friendly Communities and giving Fred and the almost half a million others like him a sense of belonging, a sense of worth, a sense that we care.”

Dementia Australia is encouraging all Members of Parliaments across the country to become a Dementia Friend at [www.dementiafriendly.org.au](http://www.dementiafriendly.org.au).

Dementia Australia is the national peak body and charity for people, of all ages, living with all forms of dementia, their families and carers. It provides advocacy, support services, education and information. An estimated 425,000 people have dementia in Australia. This number is projected to reach more than 1.1 million by 2056. Dementia Australia is the new voice of Alzheimer's Australia. Dementia Australia's services are supported by the Australian Government.

**National Dementia Helpline 1800 100 500**

**Interpreter service available**

(The National Dementia Helpline is an Australian Government Initiative)

**Dementia is a National Health Priority Area**

[www.dementia.org.au](http://www.dementia.org.au)

-Ends-

**Media contacts:** Sarah Price 0403 072 140, [sarah.price@dementia.org.au](mailto:sarah.price@dementia.org.au) | Christine Bolt 0400 004 553, [christine.bolt@dementia.org.au](mailto:christine.bolt@dementia.org.au)

When talking or writing about dementia please refer to [Dementia Language Guidelines](#).