

News release

Urgent support needed for people living with dementia

Government must implement the New Zealand Framework for Dementia Care urgently and in full, says the organisation that supports people living with dementia.

Releasing the organisation's official briefing to the incoming minister, Alzheimers NZ chief executive, Catherine Hall, says dementia is one of New Zealand's biggest healthcare issues and affects four out of five Kiwis.

She says government must act now to implement the Framework in full because it outlines sensible and urgently-needed steps that will mitigate some of the long-term impacts dementia will have on New Zealand society. The Framework was prepared by the National government in 2013.

She says the number of people directly impacted by dementia is expected to triple to nearly 170,000 by 2050 and annual costs will reach nearly \$5 billion unless something is done now.

"Research indicates that for every dollar invested now in supporting people affected by dementia, government will reap a nearly \$7 return.

"As a country we can't afford to do nothing about the dementia challenge, and we need to take steps urgently."

Alzheimers NZ's recommendations about enhanced support for people living with dementia involve four key initiatives that are outlined in the Framework and which Ms Hall wants to see funded in Budget 2018. These are:

- Extend existing preventative approaches to obesity, diabetes, and cardio-vascular disease to include middle aged and older adults by including information that will reduce the risk or delay the onset of dementia.
- Create the 'navigator services' outlined in the Framework.
- Provide 12 months of post-diagnostic support for people diagnosed with dementia, and their family / whānau and care partners.
- Produce high quality hard copy information to support people diagnosed with dementia, and their family / whānau.

Other measures Alzheimers NZ wants in place include:

- Promoting and creating a dementia-friendly New Zealand, including through a national public awareness programme.
- Ensuring care partners can take planned breaks and support their own health by having access to a range of respite care options.
- Following the WHO recommendation to "collect and use the necessary data on epidemiology, care and resources relating to dementia [in New Zealand] in order to implement relevant policies and plans".

Ms Hall wants government to work alongside non-government organisations to fully implement the Dementia Framework.

She says government funding is needed, but the NGO sector will bring additional funds, volunteers, solutions, and community knowledge and contacts that will be vital to provide services 'on the ground'.

“This is an international problem, and other countries are actively focussed on tackling the issue with a range of initiatives.

“New Zealand, however, is lagging well behind and we need to act now or, as a country, we will face major personal, societal and fiscal impacts.”

For further information contact Daniel Paul (021) 400-993.

For a copy of the Alzheimers NZ BIM please [click here](#) or visit www.alzheimers.org.nz

Alzheimers NZ is the lead organisation at a national level representing people living with dementia. Its role and that of local Alzheimers organisations is:

- To actively support New Zealanders living with dementia on a day-to-day basis by providing in-community information, support and advice.
- To source high quality information and resources about dementia and its impact that assists policymakers to make informed decisions about how best to deal with what is the biggest threat to our healthcare system.
- To help build a dementia-friendly New Zealand.