



Unite for Dementia

Covid-19 has made it clear just how much we need a nationally coherent approach to the massive dementia challenge facing New Zealand. The number of New Zealanders with dementia is soaring as our population ages - a major problem for families, communities, and our country.



Why? Because:

- Dementia is one of the most serious and costly health challenges facing this country after Covid-19. There is no treatment or cure. The associated per person [annual health and social care costs of dementia](#) exceed those for cancer or heart disease.
- Dementia affects nearly every Kiwi family at some point in some way - nearly four out of five of us. The number of us with dementia will nearly triple by 2050, costing the country around [\\$5 billion a year](#).
- People living with dementia (people with dementia and care partners) have been neglected by successive governments. Our health services and support structures are woefully inadequate, massively underfunded, and largely unsupportive of people living with the condition. It is beyond belief that a group of New Zealanders are so badly forgotten. Even the UN is asking questions.
- The Lancet describes dementia as [“the greatest global challenge for health and social care in the 21st century”](#); the OECD describes it as the [“fastest growing major cause of disability globally”](#). The WHO wants action and has developed an [international plan](#).

Despite dementia’s massive negative impact, New Zealand has no concrete, government-supported national action plan.

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Action the Plan

In light of the urgent need, the dementia sector has pooled its collective knowledge, expertise and experience to prepare a [Dementia Action Plan](#) for our country.

The Plan is targeted. It is coherent and meaningful. It is eminently deliverable by any government. It outlines the services needed and why they are necessary.

It is based on wide consultation including people living with dementia. And it comes with strong support from people living with dementia and the sector.

Now the Plan must be implemented and that requires government commitment and funding. People living with dementia need your help. Only you, our politicians, can make that happen.

We know that Covid-19 means you and your colleagues are dealing with other issues. But once this current crisis is contained, dementia must be a health priority. The situation of Kiwis living with dementia untenable.

Please adopt, fund, and implement the Dementia Action Plan

Key dementia facts and stats

- Around [70,000 people have dementia](#). Numbers grew by 29% between 2011 and 2016, and numbers are growing by over 3,200 per year. The total is [likely to exceed 170,000](#) by 2050. Almost [90% are over 65](#).
- [55% of family or friends caring](#) for a person with dementia report feeling overwhelmed by the person's support needs. [40% of family/whānau dementia care partners](#) have clinically significant depression or anxiety.
- Dementia cost \$1.7 billion pa in 2016 and is likely to reach [\\$5 billion pa by 2050](#). Between now and 2040, economic costs of dementia are likely to be increasing at an average rate of over \$250,000 per day (\$2016).
- Dementia has the potential to overwhelm the health system. Care of older people is likely to account [for 50% of District Health Board \(DHB\) expenditure by 2025/26](#) (almost 20% increase since 2015/16).