

Election 2014

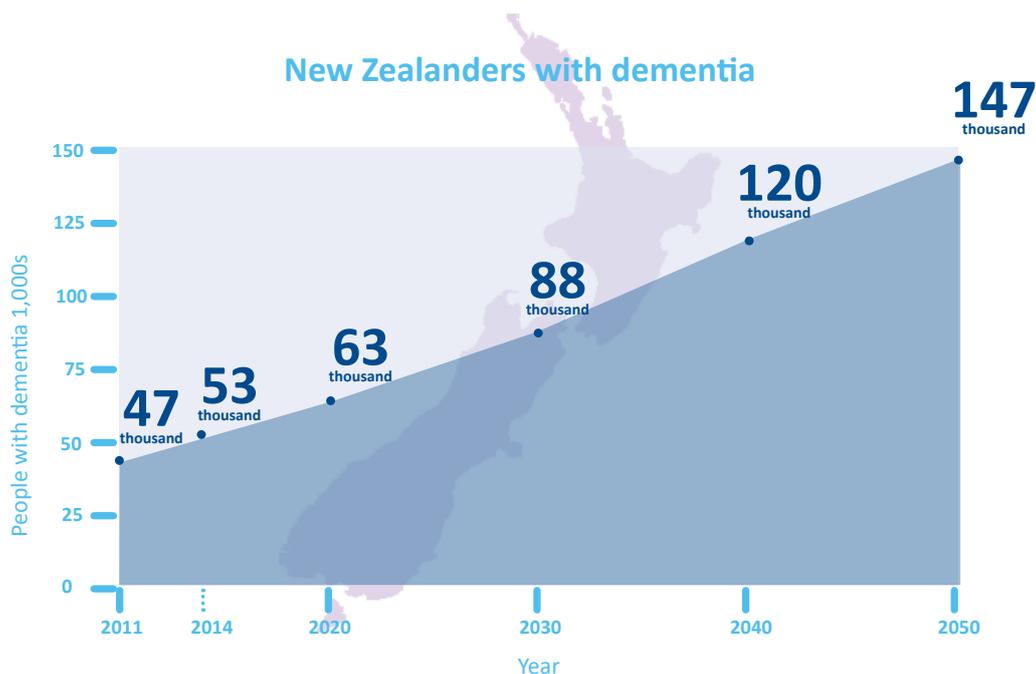
Briefing Paper



Alzheimers NZ is calling for a collaborative effort to respond to the challenge that dementia presents – for our people, our communities, and our economy.

Dementia is one of New Zealand's most significant and growing healthcare challenges

We estimate that there are currently around 50,000 New Zealanders living with dementia and we expect that number to triple to around 150,000 by 2050 as the population ages. And that is just the tip of the iceberg; each person with dementia is surrounded by family, friends and whānau also affected by their diagnosis.



Concerted collaborative effort is needed across the system (government, private providers and the not-for-profit sector) to meet this challenge, reduce the impact of dementia on individuals, families and communities, and work towards a world without dementia.

Urgent action is needed:

1. To build a dementia friendly New Zealand
2. To lift the quality of care and support that people affected by dementia receive
3. To strengthen community and home-based support for people affected by dementia
4. For more investment in research.

And, as we have done in so many other fields, showing that New Zealand has both the heart and capacity to take a leadership role in responding to the challenge that dementia presents.

Building a dementia friendly NZ

The findings of the 2012 World Alzheimer Report *Overcoming the stigma of dementia* tell us that stigma is one of the most devastating experiences for people affected by dementia. People must feel free to seek help without shame or fear of the consequences. The stigma associated with dementia can stop people from identifying their symptoms, can be a barrier to them seeking help, and can isolate them from their family and friends.

We must build a culture where our communities are working positively and proactively to understand and accept people living with dementia so they have real opportunities for participation and can live well with dementia.

What Alzheimers NZ wants:

- NZ communities to understand and accept people affected by dementia.

Lifting the quality of care and support

The 2013 World Alzheimer Report *Journey of Caring: an analysis of long term care for dementia* issued a challenge to us all to lift the quality of care for people affected by dementia. The report also tells us that long term care is mainly about care for people with dementia (often alongside other conditions):

- Around half of all older people needing care are likely to be living with the effects of dementia
- Dementia and cognitive impairment are the leading contributors to people shifting from the community into residential care
- People with dementia need more personal care, more supervision, and their needs start early in the course of the condition and change as the dementia progresses.

This reality means that we as a country have to lift our game in order to meet the specific needs of people with dementia, and relieve the considerable pressure dementia will continue to create for our family/whānau.

What Alzheimers NZ wants:

- Responsive primary healthcare professionals providing timely diagnosis and ongoing support
- A valued, supported and trained workforce working with people affected by dementia
- Consistently high quality services to be available – with a strong focus on quality of life
- Integration and coordination of care and support services
- Readily accessible and clear information about the incidence and prevalence of dementia in NZ, and about the quality and impact of the services being delivered.

Strengthening the community and home based support

There is an urgent need to strengthen the community-based support services that help people to remain in their own home for as long as is right for them. Most people with dementia are living at home now and will continue to do so. The services that support them – and their family/whānau - are under increasing pressure and struggling to meet the growing demand.

What Alzheimers NZ wants:

- Sufficient services to meet the need, and for those services to be tailored and flexible
- Good quality education and support services - both for people with dementia and family/whānau
- Flexible, tailored and affordable respite services that provide meaningful opportunities for breaks for the family/whānau members who are directly supporting people with dementia.

More investment in research

If New Zealand is to do better, and plan better for the future, we need to know more about dementia and the way that it is occurring in and affecting our people and our communities. There has recently been funding for research in this area through the new Brain Research NZ, but more is needed. We need to learn more about what works to best support people affected by dementia, as well as more about prevention, treatment and management.

What Alzheimers NZ wants:

- More investment in research into dementia in NZ.

A leadership role

The Dementia Economic Impact report (2011) suggested the cost of dementia to New Zealand in 2011 was almost \$1b per annum. This includes the direct costs of medical care; the direct costs of social care; and the indirect costs of the care and support provided by family/whānau.

We also know it is likely that only around half of the people with dementia currently have a diagnosis and are receiving support – and even now, support services are struggling to meet the need.

There has been steady progress made in New Zealand in recent years in the efforts to respond to the challenge of dementia, with investment through recent Budgets, and with the launch of the New Zealand Framework for Dementia Care and the rollout of dementia care pathways.

Alzheimers NZ has also recently launched *Dementia: A Strategic Framework* which challenges all organisations in the dementia community to focus on five goals and the shared vision of 'towards a world without dementia'.

There has also been an unprecedented global focus on dementia in recent months: December last year saw the first ever G8 Summit focused entirely on dementia; in February this year, the UK Government appointed Dr Dennis Gillings as the World Dementia Envoy; and in April the UK Government appointed the World Dementia Council – an international group of eminent and influential people – to support the Envoy. There is a call now for countries outside the (now) G7 to take up the challenge.

But more is needed. We need a National Strategy for Dementia – to shape the way NZ responds to the challenge of dementia in the future, and build the resources and capability to respond to the changing demand.

We also need to recognise that dementia does not only affect older people, and that there are close links between dementia services and the other services that deal with chronic healthcare challenges. We need to rationalise the funding arrangements across these services so we have more coordinated and better integrated services in this area of burgeoning demand.

What Alzheimers NZ wants:

- A New Zealand Strategy for Dementia
- Dementia recognised in New Zealand as a chronic noncommunicable condition
- New Zealand to join and be an active member of the Global Alzheimer's and Dementia Action Alliance.



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uestions for political parties

- What will you do to promote and support a New Zealand Dementia Strategy?
- What will you do to encourage and promote a dementia-friendly NZ?
- What will you do to strengthen community and home-based support for people affected by dementia?
- What will you do to lift the quality of care and support for people affected by dementia?
- How will you increase the investment in research into dementia?
- How will you establish New Zealand's leadership role in respect of dementia?