

Media Release

INVEST IN PREVENTATIVE HEALTH TO COMBAT DEMENTIA EPIDEMIC

- Incorporate dementia into existing health programs that combat heart disease, diabetes and obesity
- Urgently invest in research to find the cause of dementia and delay the onset
- Fund the Alzheimer's Australia **Mind Your Mind**[®] program to promote awareness of dementia risk reduction

Alzheimer's Australia has today called on both major parties to urgently commit to a National Dementia Preventative Health Strategy to reduce the projected 1 million Australians who will have dementia by 2050.

Alzheimer's Australia CEO Glenn Rees said many Australians feared developing dementia as they age.

"A recent survey undertaken by Bupa Care Services found that four out of five Australians over 50 years of age have this fear," Mr Rees said.

"Dementia develops many years before diagnosis. The opportunity is there for Australians to possibly reduce their risk of dementia.

"Around 50% of Australians are unaware that they may be able to reduce their risk of dementia. That could be by, for example, reducing their high blood pressure or high cholesterol levels."

"The Australian Government must frame a public preventative health policy that recognises the link between lifestyle and the risk of developing chronic illness, including dementia. Australians should be clearly informed that their lifestyle choices affect their physical health and their brain health."

Alzheimer's Australia today released a discussion paper, *Towards a National Dementia Preventative Health Strategy*, which outlines the urgent need for a national preventative health campaign.

Mind Your Mind[®] is Alzheimer's Australia's dementia risk reduction program that promotes awareness among Australians on how they may be able to reduce their risk of dementia through lifestyle behaviours.

"We are seeking \$4.5 million over three years to roll out **Mind Your Mind**[®] nationally. This is a small price to pay to raise awareness and educate Australians about dementia risk reduction," Mr Rees said.

“With the cost of dementia care set to outstrip any other health condition, the new strategy not only makes sense in terms of reducing the numbers of people with dementia, but also because of the potential impact on the health care budget.

“Australia and other countries have responded to the fear of cancer by an attitude of ‘let’s beat it’ through considerable investment in medical research. The same positive attitude is necessary to address the dementia epidemic.”

Dementia research is grossly underfunded in Australia relative to other chronic diseases. Increased research funding is needed to identify those most at risk of dementia and to develop medical interventions that would modify the progression of the disease.

“Australia was the first country in the world to give dementia a national profile with the implementation of the 2005 Dementia Initiative: Making Dementia a National Health Priority,” Mr Rees said.

“This is another way for Australia to take leadership.”

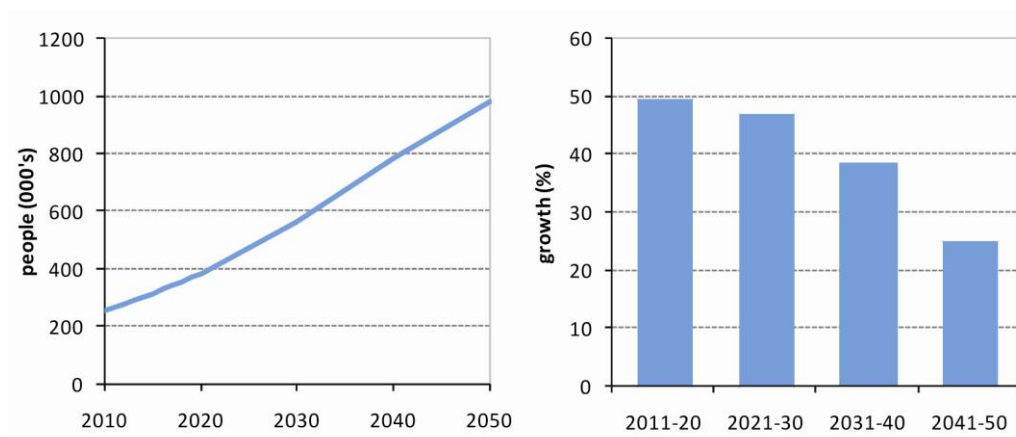
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For interviews with Glenn Rees, CEO, Alzheimer’s Australia or Professor Kaarin Anstey, Director of the Ageing Research Unit at the Centre for Mental Health Research, Australian National University, please contact Tegan McGrath on 0407 232 212 or (02) 6278 8924.

Towards National Dementia Preventative Health Strategy is available at:
www.alzheimers.org.au

Bupa’s 1st National Aged Care Consumer Survey is available at:
<http://www.bupacare.com.au/>

Dementia Data

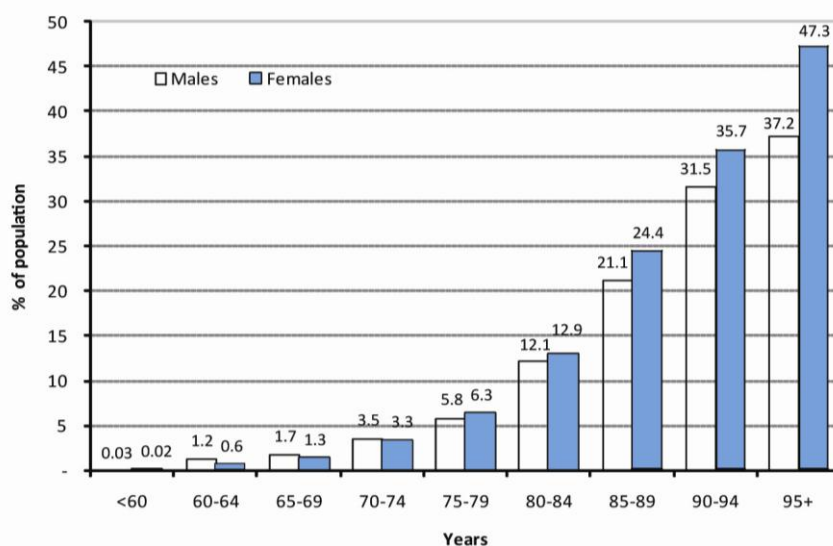


Growth in number of Australians with dementia

Source: Access Economics, *Caring places: planning for aged care and dementia 2010-2050, Volume 1.*

- There are currently around 250,000 people with dementia in Australia.
- By 2050 this will increase to around 1,000,000.
- There are around 1 million family carers of people with dementia.
- It is estimated that there will be more than 75,000 new cases of dementia this year.
- By 2050 this will increase to around 380,000.
- By 2060 spending on dementia is set to outstrip any other health condition.

Risk of dementia by age



Source: Access Economics, *Caring places: planning for aged care and dementia 2010-2050, Volume 1.*

- Dementia is the leading cause of disability in Australians over 65 years.
- Dementia is the third largest underlying cause of death.
- In 2008, about one in eight or 20,000 people died with dementia.
- **By 2020 there will be around 75,000 baby boomers with dementia.**