



**Alzheimer's  
Australia**  
Living with dementia

The Hon. Mark Butler, MP  
Minister for Mental Health and Ageing  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

### **Alzheimer's Australia: 2011 Federal Budget**

I have pleasure in providing you with the Alzheimer's Australia 2011 Budget submission.

Alzheimer's Australia is seeking to achieve two outcomes in the 2011 budget.

1. A long term commitment to the staged reform of aged care with increased funding.
2. Additional funding of \$179 million over three years to address the priorities and gaps in the Dementia Initiative.

The interim report of the Productivity Commission in December will provide the basis for further commentary on aged care reform and funding. Dementia should also be front of mind in the Governments commitment and implementation to reform in other key areas including primary care, hospitals, mental health, disabilities and health prevention.

A first step to a more dementia friendly society in our view is a whole of government approach to dementia that recognises the need for action beyond the aged care system including in health services, transport and housing. The starting point is greater sensitivity and awareness in the health system to the needs of people with dementia including in primary care, acute care, dementia risk reduction and dementia research. We will not achieve a dementia friendly society until the government approaches dementia as it would any other chronic disease within a public health framework that includes timely diagnosis, best practice management, risk reduction and research.

With that in mind, the priorities identified in the attached budget submission flow from the views expressed by consumers and the outcome of the LAMA Evaluation.

First, additional funding is needed to promote greater awareness of dementia and to reduce stigma. We propose that this should be done through the National Dementia Support Program as Alzheimer's Australia has demonstrated the cost effectiveness of NDSP funded awareness activities based on the development of intellectual capital, coordination of national and state and territory activities and a well used website. This activity should be complemented by funding, through the NDSP, the national roll out of the **Mind Your Mind**<sup>®</sup> public education risk reduction program.

#### **Alzheimer's Australia (National Office)**

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Secondly, to acknowledge for the first time that the health outcomes being achieved for people with dementia in primary care and acute care are not acceptable. The proposals in respect of primary and acute care in the submission are modest but would have considerable impact in the longer term in achieving timely diagnosis of dementia and making hospitals less dangerous places for people with dementia.

Thirdly, if Australia is to combat the dementia epidemic there is a need for greater investment in dementia research and knowledge translation driven by consumer priorities. There has been no rebuttal of the view we have expressed that dementia research is grossly under-funded in relation to other chronic diseases.

Fourthly, there is a need to link funding for the National Dementia Support Program to the growing numbers of people with dementia. This submission also seeks a continuation of \$2 million to support the work of Alzheimer's Australia with special groups and important program infrastructure including data collection and the website. Without this funding, Alzheimer's Australia will be unable to provide important services to special groups.

Lastly, there is the opportunity to strengthen coordination of the various elements of the Dementia Initiative. Alzheimer's Australia recommends that more effective coordination could be achieved by making better use of existing structures and focusing on how best to achieve better quality care in response to priorities set by consumers. The Budget submission describes how this approach could be made to work in a cost effective way.

Over the last decade the partnership between Alzheimer's Australia and the Commonwealth Government has resulted in Australia being a world leader in dementia policy and service development. Without Government support the work of Alzheimer's Australia would not be possible. Equally, I hope you will agree, that Government benefits considerably in terms of policy input and intellectual capital from the work of Alzheimer's Australia, including through its consumer advocacy network.

I should be grateful to have the opportunity of discussing this submission with you at the earliest opportunity. I can be contacted on (02) 6254 4233.

Thank you for your interest and support.

Yours sincerely



Glenn Rees  
CEO  
Alzheimer's Australia

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