**Dementia Australia’s Meet the Ministers webinar held on 13 October 2022 - Response to Questions**

**Dementia Specific Q&As**

1. How are universal human rights being applied in the aged care reforms?

There are significant aged care reforms underway in Australia in response to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Safety and Quality to transform aged care so that it meets the needs of older Australians and their families, now and in the future. Work is currently progressing on a new *Aged Care Act* which will adopt a rights-based approach, and place older Australians and their needs at the centre of a new aged care framework.

1. When will the consultations for the new National Dementia Action Plan begin and how can the community get involved – especially in rural and remote areas?

The consultation is currently underway for the National Dementia Action Plan and will close on 31 January 2023. To have your say on the Action Plan:

* You can visit the Department of Health and Aged Care’s (the department’s) Consultation Hub at <https://agedcareengagement.health.gov.au/> to complete the online survey
* Calling 1800 565 789 for more information or get hard copies of the consultation paper
* Sending us your thoughts by:
  + email to [dementiaplan@health.gov.au](mailto:dementiaplan@health.gov.au) or
  + post to National Dementia Action Plan  
    MDP 765, GPO Box 9848, CANBERRA ACT 2601
* Translating and interpreting services are available by calling (TIS) 131 450.
* These options are available to all Australians no matter where they live.

1. When will the National Dementia Action Plan be released?

The final National Dementia Action Plan is expected to be agreed by all Commonwealth and state and territory governments in mid-2023. It is anticipated that the Action Plan, together with an agreed Implementation Blueprint will be publicly released in early 2024.

1. What is the government doing about embedding brain health information and programs for people of all ages across lifecycles (e.g. in schools and later in life)?

Delivering better health and wellbeing outcomes for all Australians is a priority for the Australian Government. The Government acknowledges the need for a coordinated approach to ensure both responsibility and accountability for the wellbeing, education and development of Australia’s children across government. Two key platforms for supporting this are the Early Years Strategy being developed and the National Action Plan for the Health of Children and Young People 2020-2030.

When it comes to dementia, ‘brain health’ is about taking a whole of life-course approach, including prevention and reducing risk factors.

1. Why doesn't dementia have a joined-up health response like cancer and why aren’t services like Memory Clinics that are in NSW and VIC replicated around the country?

All levels of government have some responsibility to provide support services and systems of care to all Australians. For example, the Australian Government and state and territory governments are all involved in funding, delivering and/or regulating systems for older Australians including people living with dementia. The delivery of public system memory clinics are a state and territory responsibility. However, the Australian Government and state and territory governments are working together to provide clearer pathways for people living with dementia. In responding to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, the Australian Government has committed a number of measures to improve the lives of people living with dementia across assessment, diagnosis and post diagnostic support. This includes working with state and territory governments to better integrate dementia supports in the context of a new National Dementia Action Plan.

1. What measures are in place to ensure people living with dementia are appropriately supported in hospitals?

The National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards set out actions to ensure that hospitals provide appropriate care and support for all patients including people with cognitive impairment, and/or dementia. The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care also provides information and resources for hospitals regarding caring for people living with dementia.

State and territory governments also deliver Geriatric Evaluation and Management (GEM), which is hospital delivered subacute care in which the primary clinical purpose or treatment goal is improving the functioning of a person with multidimensional needs. These needs are associated with medical conditions related to ageing, including the management of cognitive impairment. GEM is managed by a clinician with special expertise in geriatric medicine and care. A number of hospitals also have dementia specific units to provide specialised care for patients experiencing severe or extreme BPSD.

1. How is the government planning to improve the lives of people living with dementia and family carers from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and First Nations communities?

The Australian Government is committed to improving the lives of all Australians living with dementia, their family and carers, including First Nations Australians and those from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. To inform the development of the National Dementia Action Plan, the Department is continuing to consult with First Nations and CALD people living with dementia, their families and carers, as well as organisations and peak bodies that represent and support them. This includes the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care Council (NATSIAACC).

1. How is the government planning to improve the lives of people living with younger onset dementia (under the age of 65) and their family carers?

People with younger onset dementia and their carers and family members are included in all the services provided under the National Dementia Support Program (NDSP). From 2022-23, the NDSP is increasing its focus on providing support specifically for people with younger onset dementia, and their carers and family members, with Dementia Australia developing a tailored younger onset dementia family engagement service to offer support, education, and counselling for families of people living with younger onset dementia. Dementia Australia will also offer a version of their expanded Memory Lane Café initiative specifically focused on people with younger onset dementia.

The Australian Government has also committed to developing a new National Carer Strategy during this term of Government. The Strategy will provide an opportunity to develop a nationally consistent and committed agenda for Australia’s unpaid carers to support them in their caring role, including those caring for people with dementia. Public consultation to inform development of the Strategy is expected to commence in the first half of 2023.

The care and support needs of people with younger onset dementia, their carers and families will be specifically targeted within the new National Dementia Action Plan. The 10-year time frame of the Action Plan will have a future focus to carefully monitor new developments in dementia diagnosis and treatment, to better support the specific needs of people living with younger onset dementia.

Depending on individual circumstances, people with younger onset dementia may also be eligible for support under the National Disability Insurance Scheme. More information on eligibility can be found at <https://www.ndis.gov.au/applying-access-ndis/am-i-eligible>.

1. What is the Department’s plan in terms of supporting dementia research in Australia?

The Department is investing $185 million over ten years (2018–19 to 2028–29) in its Dementia, Ageing and Aged Care Mission (the Mission) research initiative, under the Medical Research Future Fund, to support older Australians to maintain their health and quality of life as they age, live independently for longer, and access quality care when they need it. The Mission will generate measurable improvements for those living with dementia and improve care for older Australians across all care settings. Improving dementia data and maximising the impact of dementia research and innovation will further developed in the context of the National Dementia Action Plan.

1. How is the government planning to improve the lives of carers of people living with dementia?

The Royal Commission highlighted the need for improved support for carers of people living with dementia. In recognition of the important role of carers, the National Dementia Action Plan will aim to drive improvements to services, systems and not only for people living with dementia, but also their carers. Supporting carers of people living with dementia is a key focus of the National Dementia Action Plan, and carers and families have and continue to be engaged in its development.

The Department is also making changes to improve the quality and experience of respite care for people living with dementia and their carers through a new grant program: *Improving respite care for people living with dementia and their carers*. The program has a particular focus on delivering:

* Carer education and wellbeing
* Innovative approaches to improving the quality and experience of respite care
* Improving respite care planning for people with dementia
* Building the capability of aged care providers to deliver quality respite care

HammondCare (through Dementia Support Australia) is delivering the first stage of the program, called [Staying at Home](https://www.dementia.com.au/dsa-staying-at-home?hsLang=en). HammondCare commenced delivery of the program in July 2022.

A broader, second stage grant opportunity opened mid-November. The grant provides total funding of up to $61.63 million over four years to increase support to informal carers and families caring for a person living with dementia, through access to dementia–specific respite services. This grant opportunity supports the delivery of innovative models of respite care and respite care planning, particularly for overnight respite stays that meet the unique needs of people living with dementia and their carers. For more information, visit the [GrantConnect](https://www.grants.gov.au/Go/Show?GoUuid=3b47f352-d970-4449-b1af-23f95cb93a3e) website.

The Government is committed to improving access to respite care and has implemented measures to accommodate respite care within residential aged care settings. From 1 October 2022, approved providers of residential care can use any of their allocated places to provide residential respite care to approved respite care recipients. Residential respite is available for up to 63 days of subsidised care in a financial year. Information about residential respite care is available on the Department’s website at: <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/an-acc/providers/respite-care-subsidies>.

1. How is the government planning to improve the lives of people living with dementia and family carers through post-diagnostic services and enablement?

In addition to these developments, the Australian Government has a broad range of programs that aim to improve the lives of people living with dementia, their carers and families, including the NDSP, which provides support to people living with dementia and their carers, families and friends. Delivered through Dementia Australia, the NDSP is the Australian Government’s principal dementia support program, providing dementia information, education, counselling, and group support activities.

Dementia Australia can provide support services both online and in person in several locations. The National Dementia Helpline can be contacted at: 1800 100 500 and operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week (except public holidays). You can also email at [[helpline@dementia.org.au](mailto:helpline@dementia.org.au)](mailto:helpline@dementia.org.au) or visit Dementia Australia’s national dementia website at [[https://www.dementia.org.au](https://www.dementia.org.au/)](https://www.dementia.org.au/). This website offers information and resources, including Dementia Australia’s library service, and links to group and individual counselling, peer support groups, and support services in each state and territory.

The Government has also committed Commonwealth funded to behavioural support programs delivered by Dementia Support Australia help carers and family members understand and manage the behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia. The Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Service (DBMAS) provides support and advice when behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia impact a person’s care or quality of life. Trained consultants work in community, residential aged care, acute and primary care settings to:

* Support service providers and individuals caring for people living with dementia
* help providers and carers to understand the causes and/or triggers of behaviours
* assist providers and carers to develop strategies that optimise function, reduce pain, support other unmet needs, and improve engagement

The Department recently implemented a My Aged Care referral system for carers, to facilitate a call back from either Dementia Australia’s National Dementia Helpline or the DSS Carer Gateway, should the carer request it. Dementia Australia would contact the carer to discuss their requirements and connect them and the person they’re caring for to early intervention support services, depending on their level of need. Should the carer not require additional support at that time, Dementia Australia would, with permission, contact them at a later date to discuss any change in their requirements.

1. How is the government planning to improve the lives of people living with dementia and family carers through improved and increased access to palliative care?

The Australian Government provides investment in palliative care at a national level, underpinned by the National Palliative Care Strategy and Implementation Plan. All state and territory governments and the Commonwealth have agreed to the goals of the National Palliative Care Strategy and are implementing these through the action areas of the Implementation Plan.

One of the action items of the Implementation Plan is to increase access to palliative care, particularly underserved populations. The Government remains committed to this action and currently funds several National Palliative Care Projects that focus on building capability and capacity of the health workforce to provide palliative care to all Australians, including assisting people living with dementia.

Palliative care coordination across the health and aged care systems is also being improved through the aged care reforms. The reforms are assisting to create linkages between local hospitals, GPs, palliative care services and aged care providers (including residential care) to improve access to quality palliative care for older people.

Older Australians, including those with dementia, living in residential aged care are supported through the Comprehensive Palliative Care in Aged Care measure. The measure is being implemented through a matched funding model with all jurisdictions to support the development of innovative and advanced ways to improve palliative and end-of-life service provision and care coordination for older people living in residential aged care. This includes those residents with complex conditions, such as dementia.

The Australian Government is also funding the Greater Choice for At Home Palliative Care (GCfAHPC) through the 31 Primary Health Networks (PHN) throughout Australia to implement locally tailored initiatives to improve access to palliative care at home for all Australians diagnosed with a life-limiting illness, including those with dementia and those living in residential aged care. Activities can include facilitating improved access to quality palliative and end of life care at home, building workforce capacity, linking end-of-life care systems and services, and improving community awareness of available palliative care services.

The End-of-Life Directions for Aged Care project aims to improve the palliative care skills and advance care planning expertise of aged care providers and GPs providing health care.

End-of-life and palliative care and support will be considered in the context of the National Dementia Action Plan.

1. When will the government make dementia education compulsory for all aged care staff and managers?

The Australian Government recognises the need to have appropriately trained health care workers, to ensure that all people living with dementia receive appropriate and quality care. As proposed by the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, the Government is currently reviewing the Aged Care Quality Standards. This will look to strengthen the requirements in relation to dementia and will provide a further opportunity to ensure that workers are trained appropriately to care for people living with dementia.

In November 2022, Skills Ministers endorsed the revised Certificate III in Individual support, the most popular course for Aged Care Workers. The revised package now includes *CHCAGE011 – Provide support to people living with dementia*, which will further strengthen the ability of aged care workers to provide quality support to those living with dementia and their families. The update must be applied by all RTOs by November 2023.

To further ensure the that aged care workers have the appropriate skills and knowledge to better support people living with dementia, the Government has also funded the Dementia Training Program (the program). This program provides training for the aged and health care sectors to improve the quality of care given to people living with dementia. Delivered by Dementia Training Australia, the program offers a national approach to education, upskilling, and professional development in dementia care. The program includes free accredited vocational or foundation training for aged care workers and continuing professional development training on recognising, diagnosing and managing dementia for GPs, nurses, pharmacists, psychologists, specialists, allied health and other professionals. Tailored onsite training is also offered to aged care providers and is informed through a dementia skills assessment of the service.

Mandatory workforce education on dementia will be considered in the context of the National Dementia Action plan.

**Aged Care Specific Q&As**

1. What will the new home care support model look like? Will it increase the access to home care packages?

The Australian Government is reforming the aged care system to improve the care delivered to older Australians. This includes the investment of an additional $2.5 billion to ensure older Australians receive the aged care they need. In line with the Royal Commission recommendations, the Government is developing a new in-home aged care program, which will begin on 1 July 2024. The new program will replace the Commonwealth Home Support Programme, Home Care Packages, Residential Respite referrals and Short-Term Restorative Care.

The Government committed that people supported through existing Commonwealth-funded aged-care programs will not lose any existing services under the new program. The new in-home aged care program should:

* Be simple to access and understand, with one assessment process
* Give people timely access to the safe and high-quality services they need
* Give people real choice and control in determining the services they receive
* Have fair and transparent fees that direct funds to delivering high quality care
* The indicative model brings together the existing in-home aged care programs and addresses concerns raised by the Royal Commission and through consultations

More information on the proposed model, information from previous consultations, and questions regarding the final program design is available in the discussion paper *A New Program for In-Home Aged Care*, available at: [www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/a-new-program-for-in-home-aged-care-discussion-paper](http://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/a-new-program-for-in-home-aged-care-discussion-paper).

Extensive consultations are continuing with older Australians, their families and carers, service providers and aged care advocates to inform the design of the new program. You can register your interest and stay up to date on these consultations through the Aged Care Engagement Hub, available at: agedcareengagement.health.gov.au/get-involved/.

1. How can we improve the uptake of innovative technologies to augment workforce in aged care?

The Government has provided $34 million in funding for a three-year period to support the establishment of Aged Care Research & Industry Innovation Australia (ARIIA). ARIIA is an independent, not-for-profit organisation, set up to lead the advancement of the aged care workforce capability by promoting and facilitating innovation and research to improve the quality of aged care for all Australians. ARIIA aims to increase the aged care workforce capability and capacity to adopt and embed evidence-based practice across the aged care sector. This includes growth in the use of products and technologies to improve aged care service delivery.

They have several initiatives underway to facilitate the take-up of innovation including a Knowledge and Implementation Hub, a trusted, independent source of information that presents research evidence in lay language to provide an up-to-date, reliable, evidence-based guide to inform and support innovation and change in the aged care sector and beyond.

There is also an Innovator Training Program for the aged care workforce, the Aged Care Partnering Program, which is an incubator to progress scalable projects, the Innovator Network Program that connects Aged Care sector workers, and the Grants program. The Grants Program is open to all eligible applicants who wish to contribute to the aged care sector’s workforce capability and capacity by implementing evidence-based research findings that will lead to scalable and translatable solutions and improvements in service delivery, adoption of technology and quality of care. More information about ARIIA can be found on their website at: [www.ariia.org.au](http://www.ariia.org.au/).

1. Will there be a focus on equity of pay for aged care and disability workforce?

The Department of Health and Aged Care is aware that many disability support workers earn substantially more than aged care workers, undertaking similar work. While disability support is challenging and rewarding work, aged care workers also deserve a real pay rise that fairly remunerates them for their labour. The Fair Work Commission (FWC) is currently considering a work value case for the aged care sector. As part of this process, the FWC recently announced a 15 per cent interim increase for direct care workers. This will be an important step in closing the gap between disability support and aged care wages.

The Government has committed to funding the outcome of the case. The Government has also introduced legislation to the Parliament to introduce Care and Community Sector and Pay Equity Panels to the FWC, to strengthen their expertise on care sector and feminised work.

1. How is government retaining staff and attracting new workers to aged care locally and internationally?

The Australian Government is committed to building, training and supporting our aged care workforce to deliver high quality care for older Australians. Aged care workers should be valued and recognised for the complex care and critical services they provide.

To support the attraction and retention, the Government is committed to supporting a real pay rise for workers. The Fair Work Commission recently made a decision in support of an interim 15 per cent increase to minimum wages for direct care workers. These workers include registered nurses, enrolled nurses, assistants in nursing, home care workers and personal care workers. This interim increase is the first stage in a three-stage process set out by the Fair Work Commission. The future process will consider increases for other workers including administrative and support staff, alongside further increases for direct care workers above 15 per cent on work value grounds. The Government will continue working collaboratively with all parties to get a pay rise into workers’ pockets as soon as possible.

The Government is delivering a range of solutions to boost workforce numbers including, funding the Workforce Advisory Service, which provides free and confidential advice to support providers to develop and apply best practice workforce planning approaches and significant investment in fee-free TAFE and an extra 20,000 university places to support an increase in COVID-19 impacted professions, such as nursing.

The Government also funds the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme, which supports personal care workers from the Pacific to undertake aged care training and work in non-metropolitan areas experiencing labour shortages. The aged care expansion of the PALM Scheme will see an additional 500 workers complete the Certificate III Individual Support and commence work in Australia by the end of 2023. The Government is also actively exploring migration settings to streamline pathways to bring in quality aged care workers.

The Department of Health and Aged Care has been running a series of employer engagement webinars and has recently hosted two in partnership with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations on attracting workers into aged care and expanding the aged care workforce through Australian Apprenticeships. The recordings are available at [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au/) using the search term “employer engagement webinars”.

1. Is it against the law for aged care providers to use any form of restrictive practices?

Restrictive practices should only ever be used as a last resort; however, aged care laws do recognise that on occasions, restraints will be required to safely support a care recipient and prevent harm to themselves or others. As such, the use of restrictive practices in residential aged care, is not prohibited or illegal providing that all the robust requirements are met, and the relevant laws are followed. Strengthened requirements for the use of restrictive practices in residential aged care came into effect on 1 July 2021. Approved providers must meet all requirements for the use of a restrictive practice as set out in the *Quality of Care Principles 2014.*

In addition to the requirements listed above, any care recipient or their representative must provide informed consent to the use of the restrictive practice based on the need, potential risks, benefits, and alternatives trialled. The consent must be based on clearly stipulated conditions such as whether the restrictive practice (or alternative) is for temporary use or only used at certain times (e.g. only at night). Each circumstance does need to be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the primary purpose of the practice and the health and safety of others.

Further details on the requirements for the use of restrictive practices can be found on the Department of Health and Aged Care website [www.health.gov.au/health-topics/aged-care/providing-aged-care-services/working-in-aged-care/restrictive-practices-in-aged-care-a-last-resort](https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/aged-care/providing-aged-care-services/working-in-aged-care/restrictive-practices-in-aged-care-a-last-resort) and the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission’s website [www.agedcarequality.gov.au/consumers/minimising-restrictive-practices](http://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/consumers/minimising-restrictive-practices)

1. How will government ensure aged care staffing levels provide quality residential aged care?

Staffing is critical to being able to provide quality care to residents. Ensuring every aged care service has a registered nurse on site 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by July 2023, and improving care by having more carers with more time to care are key components of the Government’s plan to improve aged care.

Care minutes represent the minimum direct care time approved residential aged care services will be required to provide to residents through registered nurses (RNs), enrolled nurses (ENs), and personal care workers (PCWs). It is important to note that approved providers remain responsible for ensuring they have sufficient staff on duty to always meet the care needs of residents, as required by their obligations under the *Aged Care Act 1997* (the Act) and the associated Aged Care Quality Standards (Quality Standards).

The Australian Government is introducing care minutes targets in stages:

* From 1 October 2022, providers are funded to meet an initial target of a sector average of 200 minutes per resident per day, including a minimum of 40 minutes of RN time per day.
* From 1 October 2023, the sector average of 200 minutes per resident per day, including a minimum of 40 minutes of RN time per day becomes mandatory.
* From 1 October 2024, a mandatory minimum of a sector average of 215 minutes per resident per day (including a minimum of 44 minutes of RN time per day.

1. Has the AN-ACC been reviewed for effectiveness?

The Government has implemented the AN-ACC tool as designed by the University of Wollongong during the Resource Utilisation and Classification Study (RUCS). The RUCS found that casemix models typically provide a greater degree of flexibility to match funding and care requirements to differing levels of need, compared with staff ratio models. The AN‑ACC funding model will enable care minutes to be adjusted according to an independent assessment of individual resident care needs. From a practical perspective, this means that average care minute targets will vary between facilities and change over time as the resident care needs change.

Any evaluation of the AN-ACC tool moving forward will be considered by the Department in the future at a time yet to be determined. Any proposed changes would be undertaken with consultation with key stakeholders.