



29 May 2024

Tēnā koutou

Alzheimers New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the recommendations from New Zealand's fourth Universal Periodic Review at the Human Rights Council.

Alzheimers NZ is a lead organisation at a national level representing people and their families living with dementia. Our role includes raising awareness of dementia, providing information and resources, advocating for high quality services, providing practical tools to support a dementia friendly NZ, and promoting research.

Alzheimers NZ supports recommendations in the Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, particularly recommendations that aim to reduce disparities in health for persons with disabilities including indigenous rights and ethnic minorities. These recommendations align with our submission to the UPR platform for New Zealand 2023 which highlighted the issues of:

- a. Inadequate health care services for people with dementia and older people.
- b. Lack of national data as a barrier to understand the scope of the dementia problem.

## Issues

Dementia is a major issue for NZ. There is no cure, and none is currently on the horizon. People with dementia are protected by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities because dementia is a major cause of disability and dependency influenced by symptoms, environments, discrimination, and inequality.

New Zealand has an ageing population and ageing is the most significant risk factor for dementia. Due to an ageing population, the number of people with dementia is increasing. The dementia case will increase by 240 per cent in 30 years, to approximately 170,000 in 2050. The increase is more significant among Māori, Pacific Peoples and Asian communities who experience earlier onset of this health condition.

Older people, including people with dementia, are the largest users of our health system. But the current health services for older people are inadequate. Services are fragmented, inconsistent, inequitable, and often underfunded. Only 20-50 per cent of people with dementia received a formal diagnosis and approximately 30,000 people with dementia

cannot get the support they need. Access to services is even more inequitable for Māori, Pacific People, and Asian communities.

The rights and needs of people with dementia are often overlooked because of stigma and dementia being under-recognised and underdiagnosed. The lack of a national data collection on dementia also affects our understanding of how dementia impacts on the social and welfare of people affected by this health condition, the supply and demand of services, and people's ability to access human rights.

### **Recommendations**

Alzheimers NZ recommends that the NZ Government supports the recommendations in the Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review aiming to reduce disparities in health for persons with disabilities.

We also recommend the NZ Government to establish a **coordinated health care strategy for older people including people with dementia to connect the health system and community support services**. This includes providing funding and implementing the Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan. These actions **will contribute to improving accessibility, achieving equitable health outcomes, reducing stigma, and protecting the human rights of people with dementia**.

Ngā mihi nui

Catherine Hall  
Chief Executive