



Alzheimers New Zealand

Position paper

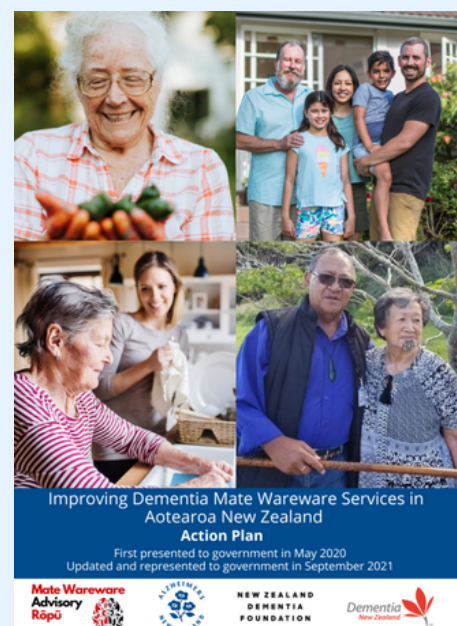
Progressively implement and fund the Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan

Our position

Dementia is a health sector priority that is creating unsustainable pressure on the hospital and wider health system. It can no longer be ignored. Government can significantly relieve this pressure, and reduce health system costs, by progressively implementing and funding the Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan, starting with three immediate priority actions:

- Ensure New Zealanders with dementia get a timely diagnosis and dementia management planning in the primary care system.
- Provide better support for the dementia workforce.
- Invest in population brain health programmes which address the 14 modifiable risk factors for dementia and encourage healthy lifestyle choices to help reduce the number of people living with dementia in future.

The Action Plan is focussed on everyone having equitable access to services, regardless of their age and cultural identity, or where they live.



The problem

New Zealand is facing a major and rapid growth in dementia numbers that is putting unrelenting and growing pressure on the country's fragile health system; it is already taking up much-needed and costly hospital and aged residential care beds and it costs New Zealand taxpayers billions of dollars a year – nearly \$10 billion a year in inflation-adjusted costs by 2050¹, by which time we can expect a 240 per cent increase in dementia cases.

The background

Around one million New Zealanders will be aged 65 years and over in 2028. With a rapidly aging population, the number of people living with dementia is also growing at an unprecedented rate. Dementia cases will increase from an estimated 100,000 now to over 200,000 in 2050. Health inequities further complicate this picture; the number of people living with dementia will increase at a faster rate in Māori, Pacific Peoples, and Asian communities.

The solution

Progressively implementing and funding the Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan, with a focus on those three priority actions, will help to:

- Deliver positive political/fiscal outcomes for Government
- Relieve pressure on the health system
- Reduce the number of people living with dementia
- Provide better and more equitable support for those with dementia now and benefit many thousands of Kiwi families
- Reduce the future cost of dementia to Government.

¹ Based on the [DEIR 2020](#) and assuming annual inflation of two per cent over the next 25 years