



Alzheimers

New Zealand

Speaking up for dementia: 10 key messages for change

To support our dementia advocacy, we've created 10 key messages, or talking points, that are short, clearly explain our views and offer practical solutions to improve life for people with dementia and their families.

These messages go with our position statements on key dementia issues. Together, they help us speak about what needs to change. You can find the full position statements on our [website](#).

We have used the **PREP formula** to make our messages clear, persuasive, and easy to remember:

- What is your **POINT**?
- Give a **REASON** for it.
- Provide an **EXAMPLE** to illustrate your point/reason.
- Repeat your point using a **PARAPHRASE**.

How to use them:

Use the position statements and key messages when meeting with government, community groups, partner organisations, or speaking to the media or at events. You can choose the messages that best fit your audience and message.

10 key messages

1. [We can no longer afford to ignore dementia as health priority](#)
2. [The number of people living with dementia is increasing](#)
3. [It's getting harder and harder to live decent lives](#)
4. [Tackle dementia now!](#)
5. [Progressively implement and fund the Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan](#)
6. [Reducing dementia-related stress and costs on the health system](#)
7. [Adequate funding for community-based dementia services](#)
8. [NZ Health's Aged Care Funding and Service Models Review misses a trick](#)
9. [Older peoples' health strategy based on an integrated continuum of care](#)
10. [Modifiable risk factors](#)



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PREP 1

We can no longer afford to ignore dementia as health priority

- Point** Dementia really is a health sector priority that can no longer be ignored.
- Reason** It's putting unrelenting and growing pressure on the country's fragile health system. It's clogging up our aged residential care beds, and it's costing New Zealand billions of dollars a year.
- Example** Dementia numbers are expected to [increase by 240 per cent](#) in coming years, costing the country nearly [\\$10 billion a year](#) in inflation-adjusted costs by 2050¹. Government knows all this, but isn't doing anything about it.
- Paraphrase** It's fiscally irresponsible not to do something about the huge dementia challenge facing this country.

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



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PREP 2

The number of people living with dementia is increasing

- Point** It is essential the Government has a plan to deal with the huge social and economic impacts caused by the growing incidence of dementia.
- Reason** Nearly three per cent of all New Zealanders will have dementia by 2050, and apart from the devastating impact on the country's health and aged care systems, the [Dementia Economic Impact Report \(DEIR\)](#) estimates dementia will cost the economy nearly \$10 billion a year by 2050¹.
- Example** By 2050, health care costs are estimated to be \$658 million, social care costs \$3.2 billion, and productivity costs and income support to be \$755 million. If annual inflation at two per cent, which is much less than what it has been in recent times, current costs will quadruple by 2050 to \$10.7 billion.
- Paraphrase** Can New Zealand really afford to continue to ignore dementia? Have we got a spare \$10 billion? Luckily, there is a Plan to mitigate the worst effects of the dementia epidemic (see [PREP 5: The Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan](#)).

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



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PREP 3

It's getting harder and harder to live decent lives

Point	It's getting harder and harder for people with dementia to live decent lives, and the Government is not doing anything about it.
Reason	That's because the health system, starting right at the primary care stage with our GPs, and going all the way thru' to tertiary, aged care and respite, is struggling and under so much pressure. And dementia is the health condition everyone, including our health policymakers, prefer to ignore.
Example	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It's harder now to get a diagnosis.• It's harder to get useful personal care and home help that supports people to live independently at home.• It's harder to get community support from local Alzheimers and dementia organisations.• It's harder to navigate through the increasingly fragmented and under-pressure health system.• It's harder for carers to get a break.• And it's harder to get residential care when it's needed in many parts of the country.
Paraphrase	Government cannot keep kicking the dementia can down the road. Our ageing population is already bringing this problem home to roost, and it will only get harder unless Government steps up (see PREP 5: The Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan and PREP 7: Adequately funding for community-based dementia services).



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PREP 4

Tackle dementia now!

Point	Tackling dementia now will deliver positive political and fiscal outcomes, and benefit many thousands of Kiwi families.
Reason	We know how to reduce dementia incidence, we know how to relieve pressure on the health and aged care systems, we know how to reduce the massive economic cost of dementia.
Example	Progressively implementing and funding the Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan , properly funding community dementia services and creating an older persons' health strategy with an integrated continuum of care would deliver on all three of those goals. Government just needs to get on with it.
Paraphrase	We've got to act now. We can't afford to kick the dementia can down the road any longer.



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PREP 5

Progressively implement and fund the Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan

Point	Government must progressively implement and fund the Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan urgently. The Action Plan is focussed on everyone having equitable access to services, regardless of their age and cultural identity, or where they live.
Reason	Dementia has the very real potential to swamp our fragile health system if steps are not taken now, and cost the country nearly \$10 billion a year by 2050 ¹ . One in four of us will die with dementia. But there is a work-around.
Example	The Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan, which the dementia sector wrote and presented to Government, aims to reduce the number of people living with dementia, provide better and more equitable support for those with dementia now, relieve pressure on the health system and reduce the future cost of dementia to Government.
Paraphrase	It really is a no-brainer that New Zealand needs a proper plan to deal with such a major and problematic health condition that will affect so many of us as we age.

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



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PREP 6

Reducing dementia-related stress and costs on the health system

Point	We can keep people with dementia out of hospital beds and out of the costly health and aged care systems for longer if Government invests in the Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan and properly funds community dementia support services. But so far, Government has failed to do that.
Reason	A key plank of the Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan are actions designed to reduce the number of New Zealanders who develop dementia. Also, community-based dementia services keep people with dementia out of expensive hospital and aged care facilities, and living at home, for longer.
Example	Reducing dementia incidence reduces stress on hospitals - people with dementia stay in hospitals nearly twice as long as other patients , occupying beds needed for acute care. And, if Government funded community-based services properly, they could cater for thousands of people who currently default to hospitals, emergency departments and aged residential care.
Paraphrase	So, there are steps Government can invest in right now to reduce the enormous costs and pressures dementia generates for the health system. We just need Government to take action.



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PREP 7

Adequate funding for community-based dementia services

Point	Government must invest in the woefully under-funded community-based dementia services so they can relieve pressure on the more expensive health system. Funding these services is a priority in the Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan and taking action now would make a big difference.
Reason	These are critical services for people living with dementia, their families and care partners, but many of them are struggling to survive because of severe, long-term under-funding. They can't cater to the existing demand, never mind what's coming down the track with our ageing population.
Example	We estimate some 30,000 people with dementia - the size of Queenstown - can't get the community support they need right now. Without adequate community support, families struggle and carers experience increased stress and mental health challenges. Community-based services, which cost just \$11.11 a day , are far cheaper than expensive hospital and aged residential care.
Paraphrase	It's imperative to properly fund these community-based dementia services now. It's an investment that will reduce costs across the health system.



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PREP 8

NZ Health's Aged Care Funding and Service Models Review misses a trick

Point	Health NZ's Aged Care Funding and Service Models Review missed the mark when it comes to finding holistic and sustainable wellbeing solutions to the problem of New Zealand's rapidly ageing population. Government needs to broaden this remit to focus on how we can create a workable continuum of care for older New Zealanders (see PREP 9: Older people's health strategy based on an integrated continuum of care).
Reason	Health NZ's Aged Care Funding and Service Models Review has not tackled these issues. It focused almost entirely on the aged residential, and home and community support sector. This ignores the many other steps in the dementia 'pipeline' where there are options to reduce pressure on the system.
Example	Key transition points for older people between the health and aged care sectors are totally disconnected. Even within the same sector transition points are disjointed. It is therefore hugely hard to navigate the systems and get the right care and support when you need it.
Paraphrase	We need an integrated aged care health plan that addresses those concerns. Because there is going to be a lot of us on that aged care health journey very soon.



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PREP 9

Older peoples' health strategy based on an integrated continuum of care

Point	New Zealand really needs a bespoke health strategy to deal with our rapidly ageing population.
Reason	In just a decade, more than one in five New Zealanders will be aged 65 years or over, approximately 1.2 million people. It's well known that older people are the biggest users of the health system, which cannot cope as it is. It's certainly not geared-up or prepared for the significant extra demand New Zealand's ageing population will create.
Example	<p>An effective strategy would provide good quality, integrated and accessible services across the health and aged care continuum, from community services to the aged residential care and end-of-life sectors. It would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ An independent, evidence-based pricing structure which covers the entire system.➤ Sector involvement and support both providers and the workforce.➤ An independent task force, with bipartisan political representation and sector input, to design, implement and monitor the impact of the changes that are needed in our aged care sector.
Paraphrase	New Zealand must take a holistic view of our health and aged care systems and invest in an older persons' health strategy based on an integrated continuum of care. Successive Governments have ignored this issue for too long, and now it has become a crisis.



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PREP 10

Modifiable risk factors

Point	Government could take steps now to reduce the dementia risk for thousands of New Zealanders.
Reason	There are 14 modifiable lifestyle factors that can increase or decrease your risk of developing dementia. Government knows what they are and how to manage them to reduce the risk. And there is research that indicates social disadvantage and poverty are the main contributors to dementia risk.
Example	The Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan stresses the need for population-level health programmes that promote brain-healthy lifestyle choices (physical activity, healthy nutrition, and reduced smoking and drinking, etc). These programmes also reach and benefit people living in deprived circumstances, including Māori and Pacific peoples, who are 60 per cent more likely to develop dementia than people living in least deprived areas.
Paraphrase	There are things Government can do to minimise the dementia risk, especially for our most vulnerable. Implementing the Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan and addressing poverty and social deprivation would be major factors.