

Summit 2025

Responses from Associate Minister of Health Hon Casey Costello to unanswered questions at Summit 2025

How are you going to address the government department silos. How are you going to push for change? How will you address prevention?

My focus as the Minister responsible for aged care and seniors is on shifting perspectives of the health system and wider society. For too long the system has been designed and focused on being the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff.

This needs to change. We need a stronger focus on prevention and ageing well. Your groups working across dementia prevention and support are a great example of what works and where we can do more. This isn't just about the health system's work and response. Ageing well means older people have suitable housing. It means they're socially connected. It means they are eating well and exercising. It means they have timely access to healthcare in their communities.

I'm realistic that change won't be immediate, but we need to make a start. Once finalised, the updated Better Later Life Action Plan will begin to support less silo-ism, with actions that cut across agencies that support ageing well.

Alongside the Better Later Life Action Plan, I continue to work alongside my Cabinet colleagues to build on opportunities to better support older New Zealander's access to appropriate health care. This includes making the system easier to navigate and expanding on models of excellent care that exist now, but only in isolation.

When can those who walk with dementia and their whānau expect funding to be accessible? Especially for those with multiple, high and complex healthcare needs? / Will there be adequate funding in place to support those living in the home, eg advocacy services, carer support, community-based dementia services line? / One of the challenges of community support for our older people and the quality of the community support is staffing shortage/quality. Is there going to be an increase in funding for more staff/better supported staff to encourage more people to be able to work in this area and provide quality of care?

I've acknowledged for some time that the current funding model across what I'll call 'aged care' services, isn't fit for purpose. That's a long-standing issue that this Government is going to address. As I mentioned at the conference, I'll be announcing the Government approach soon. Along with that, the Minister of Health and I are committed to making the case for greater funding. I can't guarantee success, but I will be putting forward the best possible case to my colleagues and the public.

Whenever possible, I believe strongly that the ability to age in place is an important component of living well. That means adequate funding for prevention, and care in the home is critical and won't be overlooked.

How can the government support intergenerational education related to healthy ageing?

Seven initiatives started under the previous Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan are underway, with service trials targeting priority populations including Māori, Pacific peoples, rural communities, and those with younger-onset dementia. Key focuses of many of these pilots, and of existing funding for community dementia services, is improving awareness of dementia mate wareware, reducing stigma, and supporting carer education.

But more can be done, and alongside the health system, including community health services, the Office for Seniors can play an important role in supporting education related to healthy ageing. As I've said previously, we need to refocus efforts on supporting people to live well and using every opportunity possible for prevention. Another key – and inexpensive – shift is to make the system easier to navigate so that older people and their families can find the right information and support.