



Alzheimers New Zealand

Position paper

Progressively implement and fund the Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan 2026-2031

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. The Government can significantly relieve this pressure and reduce health system costs by progressively implementing and funding the [Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan 2026-2031](#).

Five priority actions should be started immediately:

1. Promote brain health
2. Ensure timely and accurate diagnosis and comprehensive management planning for people with dementia
3. Improve community dementia mate wareware support
4. Support formal and informal dementia workforces
5. Provide effective governance.

The Action Plan is about making sure everyone has equitable access to services, no matter their age, 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. Dementia cases are already taking up much-needed and costly hospital and aged residential care beds.

In 2025, around 83,000 New Zealanders are living with dementia. This number is projected to more than double to 170,000 by 2050, costing taxpayers around \$10.65 billion a year by 2050 in inflation-adjusted costs¹.

The background

Currently, three people develop dementia every hour in New Zealand, over 500 a week. With a rapidly ageing population, the number of people with dementia is growing at an unprecedented rate. By 2050, this will rise to four people per hour.

By 2028, one million New Zealanders will be aged 65 years and over. With a rapidly ageing population, the number of people with dementia is growing at an unprecedented rate. Health inequities further complicate this picture; with dementia increasing faster among Māori, Pacific peoples, and Asian communities.

The solution

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

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

¹Assuming annual inflation of two per cent over the next 25 years