



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 papers. Together, they help us speak about what needs to change. You can find the full position papers 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 papers 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](#)
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. [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

Point	Dementia really is a health sector problem 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 costing New Zealand billions of dollars a year.
Example	In just 25 years, the number of New Zealanders living with dementia will <u>more than double</u> ; from 83,000 in 2025 to 170,000 in 2050. By then, dementia will cost the country <u>\$10.65 billion a year</u> ¹ . Government knows all this, but isn't doing anything about it.
Paraphrase	Failing to address the dementia challenge is fiscally irresponsible and unsustainable.

¹ 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** The Government must have a plan to deal with the huge social and economic impacts caused by the growing incidence of dementia.
- Reason** [Three people develop dementia every hour](#) in New Zealand in 2025, over 500 a week, rising to four people per hour by 2050. By then, nearly three per cent of the population will be living with dementia. The impact is far reaching, affecting young and old, rich and poor, urban and rural. Apart from the devastating impact on the country's health and aged care systems, dementia will cost the economy \$10.65 billion a year by 2050¹.
- Example** Dementia already costs New Zealand \$3.2 billion in 2025. If annual inflation is at two per cent, which is much less than what it has been in recent times, costs will increase to \$10.65 billion a year in 2050¹. The biggest costs come from hospital stays, aged residential care, and the care families provide at home. In addition, family and friends provide 62.5 million hours of unpaid care for people with dementia each year, [valued at \\$1.68 billion](#).
- Paraphrase** Can New Zealand really afford to continue to ignore dementia? Luckily, there is a plan to mitigate the worst effects of this problem (see [PREP 5: The Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan 2026-2031](#)).

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. 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 supports to live independently.• It's harder to get support from local Alzheimers and Dementia organisations.• It's harder to navigate through the increasingly fragmented and under-pressure health system.• It's harder to get help that works – culturally responsive, or age appropriate, that is relevant to life and family situations.• 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 2026-2031 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 2016-2031 , 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

Implement and fund the Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan

Point	Government urgently needs to start implementing and funding the Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan 2026-2031 . The Action Plan focuses on everyone having equitable access to services, no matter 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 \$10.65 billion a year by 2050 ¹ . One in four of us will die with dementia, but there is way forward.
Example	The Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan 2026-2031 sets out five immediate priority areas to address the dementia challenge over the coming five years. It aims to improve the wellbeing of people with dementia and their families, reduce the number of people with dementia and reduce the impact of the condition on the health system.
Paraphrase	We have plan to improve the lives of people living with dementia, we just next the Government to step up and implement it.

¹ 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 the costly health and aged care systems for longer if Government invests in the [Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan 2026-2031](#) and properly funds community-based dementia 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 and reduce the impact of the condition. Community-based dementia services keep people with dementia out of expensive hospital and aged care facilities, and living at home, for longer. And support tailored to the individual life stage and circumstances would help people stay well and working for longer, maintaining financial independence and reducing cost to the health system.
- Example** People with dementia stay in hospitals [nearly twice as long as other patients](#), taking up beds needed for acute care. If Government funded community-based services properly, they could support 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	We urge the Government to invest in the severely 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 2026-2031 , and taking action now would make a big difference.
Reason	Community-based dementia services provide critical support for people 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 meet the existing demand, never mind what's coming down the track with our ageing population. Providing adequate funding for these services will allow them to provide care to thousands of New Zealanders, support families and carer partners, keep people at home longer, prevent crises, free up hospital beds, and reduce costs.
Example	<p>We estimate some 37,600 people with dementia¹ can't get the community support they need right now. Without adequate community-based support, families struggle and carers experience increased stress and mental health challenges, and people with dementia may decline faster, leading to more hospital visits and greater demand on already overwhelmed hospitals.</p> <p>If properly funded, community-based dementia services would cost just \$11.11 a day, and are a cost-effective option sitting alongside the more expensive hospital and aged residential care services.</p>
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.

¹ Of the 83,000 people estimated to have dementia in 2025, 11,000 (13 per cent) people receive services from local Alzheimers and Dementia organisations, 25,000 (30 per cent) are in residential care, and it is assumed 20 per cent are able to pay for their services and/or receive support from one of the other programmes. This leaves an estimated 37,600 without support.



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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 New Zealanders affected by dementia (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 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 dementia 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 2028, one in five New Zealanders will be aged 65 years or over, approximately one million people. Older people are the biggest users of the health system, which is already struggling and unprepared 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.
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 how to manage them to reduce the risk. Social disadvantage and poverty are the main contributors: people in New Zealand's most deprived areas have up to a 53 per cent higher risk than those in the least deprived areas. Population health programmes can help reduce this risk, especially for those living in deprived communities.
Example	Priority action one in the Dementia Mate Wareware Action Plan 2026-2031 focuses on promoting brain health. For every 10 people who develop dementia in the most deprived areas, only about 6 or 7 do so in the least deprived areas. Reducing dementia risk factors by 25 per cent could prevent around 6,000 cases and save \$225 million over 20 years.
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 are key.