



THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP

Minister for Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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MINISTER WELCOMES ALZHEIMER'S RESEARCH AND REPORTS STRONG FUNDING FOR DEMENTIA IN AUSTRALIA

Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot today welcomed Australian research assisting with the detection of early stage Alzheimer's disease. The findings come half way through a three year study.

Mrs Elliot also expressed her support for dementia research, funding and support, saying the Australian Government is investing **\$320 million over five years** for dementia research and support.

There are more than 200,000 Australians living with dementia including about one in four people aged 85 years and over. This is expected to double in the next 20 years as Australia's population ages.

Dementia affects the lives of nearly one million Australians who are involved in caring for a family member or friend with dementia.

Dementia sufferers also receive care in Australia's 2,870 aged care homes supported by the Rudd Government's record funding of more than \$28.6 billion for residential aged care over the next four years.

Mrs Elliot said: "The AIBL Flagship Study of Ageing aims to improve the understanding of the causes and diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease, examine lifestyle and diet factors that may influence its onset, and help develop preventive strategies."

"This discovery offers new hope in reducing the disabling impact of Alzheimer's on individuals and our community," Mrs Elliot said.

AIBL Flagship Study of Ageing is an initiative of CSIRO, University of Melbourne, Edith Cowan University - Western Australia, Neurosciences Australia and the Mental Health Research Institute of Victoria.

The study is the largest of its type in the world, having now tested more than 1000 people with and without Alzheimer's disease.

The project validates PET (Positron Emission Tomography) scans using Pittsburgh Compound B (PIB) as the earliest available marker for onset of Alzheimer's disease. This means that it could be used to identify individuals who will develop Alzheimer's disease up to 18 months earlier than all currently available diagnostics.

"The Australian Government is committed to improving the quality of life of people living with dementia and those who care for them.

"The Government made and honoured an election commitment to provide ongoing support for the Dementia Initiative by providing funding of more than **\$120 million a year**. This includes:

- \$90 million a year for Extended Aged Care at Home Dementia Packages;
- \$24 million a year for dementia research, prevention early intervention and improved care initiatives, including \$16 million over three years through the *National Health Medical Research Council* and \$7.2 million over three years for the Dementia Collaborative Research Centres; and
- \$7 million for training for aged and community care staff, carers and community workers such as police.

Mrs Elliot has also established a Dementia Advisory Group in March 2008 that will provide the Minister and the Department of Health and Ageing with expert advice regarding monitoring and evaluation of the Dementia Initiative.

At last week's meeting of the Ministerial Conference on Ageing, Mrs Elliot also announced an additional \$2 million in research funding to assist in the study of care and treatment for people with more severe psychogeriatric conditions in aged care homes.

Mrs Elliot said today's news was very exciting as we all hope for the scientific breakthroughs that will identify dementia early and allow it's onset to be delayed or even prevented.

"This is great news for people at risk of Alzheimer's, for the medical practitioners who diagnose and treat them, and for Australian researchers whose work in this area is setting the pace worldwide," Mrs Elliot said.

"Research such as this has huge potential to make a real difference to people at risk of Alzheimer's. I applaud all those involved in the research," Mrs Elliot said.

"The Government will continue to monitor the progress of the research - and will continue to ensure the right care and support is in place for people currently with dementia," Mrs Elliot said.

For more information, contact Mrs Elliot's office on (02) 6277 7280