Australian Government
Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

Focus on dementia

This document has been released under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) By the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

We are making changes to improve support for people living with dementia at every stage of care

October 2025

Reforming Aged Care

The Australian Government is making positive changes to aged care. These changes – known as the aged care reforms – will improve aged care in Australia now and into the future.

Many of these reforms are in response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. Our vision is to deliver the highest quality person-centred care for older people, where and when they need it.

Through the reforms, people living with dementia and their carers will get the support they need post-diagnosis, so they can stay in their home for longer and get high quality, skilled and dementia-informed aged care services.

Changes include local dementia care pathways to support GP referrals, dementia training for GPs and aged care workers, more early support and outreach services, respite and education for carers, dementia-friendly building design, and minimising the use of restraints.

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Dementia in Australia

Over 400K Australians are **living** with **dementia**

Dementia is the **#1 cause** of **death** in **Australia,** almost 1 in 10 people die from **dementia**

People **hospitalised** for **dementia** stay almost **6 times longer than** the **average** hospital stay

Nearly **2/3** of **Australians** with **dementia** are **women**

Over half the people in **aged care** homes are **living with dementia**

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Initiatives and programs

National Dementia Support Program

The National Dementia Support Program aims to help people living with dementia or experiencing cognitive decline, their carers, and support networks, to understand more about dementia and to support them by:

- empowering them to make informed decisions about the support services they need
- connecting them with appropriate services so they can self-manage and live well with dementia for as long as possible.

The National Dementia Support Program offers support through counselling, education, webinars, special assistance for vulnerable communities, and an online library service.

Support is also available through the **National Dementia Helpline**, a free, confidential phone and email information and support service.

The helpline can be contacted on **1800 100 500** (24/7, 365 days a year) or by email at **helpline@dementia.org.au**

Dementia Friendly Communities

The Dementia Friendly Communities program aims to reduce the stigma surrounding dementia and increase the understanding, awareness, and acceptance of dementia at a community level. The Dementia Friendly Communities program includes the following key components:

- Dementia Friends, and Dementia Friends Hosts, which are empowered and equipped to run awareness raising sessions in their own communities
- Dementia Alliances, sustainable groups of locals which develop action plans to help make their communities dementia friendly
- Community Engagement Grants for local projects which encourage the inclusion and engagement of people living with dementia in their communities
- Support to help community organisations and businesses become more inclusive of people living with dementia and become recognised as dementia friendly.

To find out more visit **health.gov.au/our-work/dementia-friendly-communities**

Primary Health Networks dementia support pathways

Primary Health Networks have developed local dementia support pathways, helping GPs to connect people living with dementia to the additional clinical and local support they need.

Dementia-specific pathways are helping health professionals better support patients at all stages of dementia diagnosis and care.

Pathways include:

- referrals to more specialised assessment and diagnostic services where appropriate
- referrals to post-diagnostic services and supports for people living with dementia, their carers and families.

Primary Health Networks and Dementia Australia have developed resources for people living with dementia, their carers and support networks to understand what help and services are available in their local area.

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Dementia data monitoring

The National Centre for Monitoring Dementia, located at the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare:

- undertakes routine monitoring of dementia in Australia
- addresses existing data gaps
- informs specific policy needs for Australians living with dementia.

New data is now available on:

- dementia as the leading cause of death
- dementia prevalence
- younger onset dementia
- the mental health of people with dementia
- the health and aged care interface for people with dementia.

Dementia Clinical Practice Guidelines

We're funding Monash University to update the Clinical Practice Guidelines and Principles of Care for People with Dementia.

The guidelines will provide evidence-based recommendations for health professionals and carers who provide care and support to people with dementia in community, residential and hospital settings.

Updated guidelines are anticipated to be published in late 2026.

To find out more, visit **monash.edu/medicine/dementia-guidelines**

Dementia, Ageing and Aged Care Mission

The Dementia, Ageing and Aged Care Mission is a Medical Research Future Fund initiative. Under the 10-year investment plan, $185 million will be invested in research between 2018–19 and 2028–29. This research will support older Australians to maintain their health and quality of life, live independently for longer and access care when needed.

National Dementia Action Plan

The National Dementia Action Plan 2024–2034 (Action Plan) is a joint 10-year initiative between the Australian Government and the state and territory governments. It includes 8 high-level actions aimed at increasing dementia awareness, reducing the population's risk of dementia, and driving better coordinated services for people living with dementia, and their families and carers, throughout Australia.

Progress against the Action Plan will be tracked and reported annually through the National Dementia Action Plan indicators dashboard developed by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

The Action Plan provides the opportunity to make genuine and enduring positive changes to improve the quality of life for people in Australia living with dementia.

To find out more, visit
health.gov.au/our-work/national-dementia-action-plan

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Dementia behaviour supports

Person-centred behaviour support strategies can lead to better outcomes for people living with dementia and those who care for them. Free dementia behaviour support services provide additional specialised and personalised help to families, carers and the health and aged care workforce where behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia impact care for a person living with dementia.

Dementia behaviour support services are currently delivered by Dementia Support Australia and their helpline can be accessed 24/7 on **1800 699 799** or by visiting **dementia.com.au**

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Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Service

The Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Service provides support and advice when mild to moderate behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia impact a person's care or quality of life. Trained consultants work in any setting (including community, residential aged care and healthcare settings), anywhere in Australia (including rural and remote locations) and irrespective of the age of the person living with dementia. Their roles are to:

- support service providers and individuals caring for people living with dementia
- help service providers and carers to understand the causes and/or triggers of behaviours
- assist providers and carers to develop strategies that optimise function, reduce pain, support other unmet needs, and improve engagement.

Severe Behaviour Response Teams

Approved residential aged care providers can request assistance from Severe Behaviour Response Teams to address the needs of people living with severe behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia.

Severe Behaviour Response Teams will partner with the care network to:

- understand the causes that led to changes in behaviour and develop tailored care plans which can inform behaviour support plans
- increase staff knowledge through modelling strategies
- provide ongoing guidance to implement recommendations.

Specialist dementia care

The Specialist Dementia Care Program supports people with very severe behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia, where their support needs cannot be met in a residential aged care facility. The program enables specialised care for people living with dementia in circumstances where the:

- person has very severe dementia complicated by physical aggression or other behaviours
- person's residential care facility or carers cannot manage the behaviours, even with help from other services.

Small group care is provided in a cottage-like, dementia-friendly environment in which people living with dementia receive:

- personalised, goal-focused care from staff with dementia training
- support from specialist clinical services.

The Specialist Dementia Care Program is a transitional program which aims to reduce or stabilise behavioural symptoms of dementia within 12 months, on average.

The program aims to work with residential aged care providers to:

- provide support for people living with dementia to transition in and out of residential care as needed
- develop best-practice care, without restraints, in a dementia-friendly environment
- support people to move into less intensive care settings when they no longer need care through the program
- work alongside state and territory government services and behaviour support services
- improve quality of life for people living with very severe behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia.

To find out more, visit
health.gov.au/our-work/specialist-dementia-care-program-sdcp

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Hospital to Aged Care Dementia Support Program

The Hospital to Aged Care Dementia Support Program helps older people living with dementia transition from hospital into residential aged care or home with aged care support. The program supports hospital and aged care staff, the older person and their family or carers:

- during their hospital stay
- when transitioning out of hospital
- following hospital discharge into an aged care supported environment for up to 3 months.

Dementia Support Australia is delivering the program on behalf of the Australian Government in 11 locations, with a presence in every state and territory. Staff in participating hospitals can refer eligible hospital patients to the program. To find out more, visit **health.gov.au/our-work/hacdsp**

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Dementia training

Dementia Training Australia is upskilling aged care and health workers in dementia care, by offering free training and resources, including:

- accredited vocational level dementia care training courses free to eligible care workers
- continuing professional development training on dementia assessment, diagnosis and management to GPs, nurses, pharmacists, psychologists, specialists, allied health and other relevant professionals
- on-site training to aged care providers including, where appropriate, dementia skills and environment audit followed by a tailored training package
- communities of practice and advanced training opportunities to help dementia care leaders share and embed best practice and build local leadership in dementia care for personal care workers
- an online training portal to complement face-to-face training delivery.

The new National Dementia Training and Education Standards Framework provides a comprehensive guide to understanding key learning areas and desired outcomes from dementia education across a broad range of education settings.

The framework supports accessible and consistent education and training pathways to help users to navigate dementia training and find high-quality training that is targeted to their specific learning needs.

Additional training on managing changed behaviour is also available. This includes the Changed Behaviour Toolkit, which focusses on best practice approaches with an emphasis on the person behind the behaviour, as well as specific changed behaviour and psychological symptoms.

For further information about training, education and resources, visit **dta.com.au**

Improving respite care for people living with dementia and their carers

This program aims to support carers and families caring for a person living with dementia through access to dementia-specific respite support services, which improve:

- the quality and experience of respite care for the person living with dementia and their carers
- carer wellbeing
- care planning for people with dementia and their carers and improve transitions between their home and place of respite.

The program is underway in all states and territories, and is delivering:

- carer education and wellbeing
- innovative approaches to improving the quality and experience of respite care for people with dementia
- improved respite care planning for people with dementia
- increased capability of aged care providers to deliver quality, dementia-specific respite care.

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Under this program, the University of Tasmania, supported by Dementia Support Australia, also offers training to aged care workers to improve their understanding of the respite needs of people living with dementia and their carers.

The Dementia Respite Education and Mentoring (DREAM) project adopts a new, innovative and flexible approach to respite training, offering a Community of Practice and coaching to aged care providers.

To find out more, visit **health.gov.au/our-work/improving-respite-care-for-people-living-with-dementia-and-their-carers**

National Aged Care Design Principles and Guidelines

On 1 July 2024, the Australian Government introduced National Aged Care Design Principles and Guidelines to improve quality of life for older people living in residential aged care.

The Principles and Guidelines will support older people living in aged care homes by encouraging aged care providers and design experts to create more home-like environments. Older people, especially those living with dementia, will benefit from well-designed accommodation that creates a sense of home, provides access to the outdoors and connection with the community.

The Principles and Guidelines will help to create environments that:

- maintain a person's health and wellbeing
- support a sense of identity, dignity and belonging
- help people to stay independent as they age.

To find out more, visit **health.gov.au/our-work/improving-accommodation-in-residential-aged-care**

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More information

Find out more about what we're doing to support people living with dementia, their carers and families by visiting

health.gov.au/dementia

Join our mailing list and stay up to date with issues affecting the aged care sector at

health.gov.au/aged-care-newsletter-subscribe

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