

National Dementia Action Plan 2024-2034

Annual Activity Reporting

First Report (2025) - ACT



Introduction

The [National Dementia Action Plan 2024-2034](#) (Action Plan) provides a comprehensive framework for dementia policy across Australia. The Action Plan outlines a strategic approach to improving the lives and care of people living with dementia, ensuring coordinated efforts across all levels of government.

Annual activity reporting provides information about how jurisdictions are implementing the Action Plan. This first report provides an outline of activity underway aligned to the agreed national priority actions for the first 3 years. The Collective Priority Framework identifies these as:

- Action 3: Empower individuals and communities to minimise risk where they can, and delay onset and progression
- Action 4: Improve dementia diagnosis and post-diagnostic care and support
- Action 8: Improve dementia data, maximise the impact of dementia research and promote innovation.

Sub-actions are included for the priority actions in each report to reflect relevance to work underway. Reported activity may contribute wholly or in part to these sub-actions. Some activities may span more than one high-level action.

Annual reports also provide an opportunity to share information on activities underway for any actions in the Action Plan.

Future reports will provide updates on work in progress, new dementia-related initiatives or changes to existing policies and programs.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) will report on key progress indicators to show how the Action Plan is making a difference to improve outcomes for people living with dementia. This will be publicly tracked and reported through the [National Dementia Action Plan indicators dashboard](#) on the AIHW website.

Activity reporting templates for national priority actions

| ACTIVITY REPORTING – ACT | |
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| Action 3 – Empower individuals and communities to minimise risk where they can, and delay onset and progression. | |
| <u>Relevant sub actions</u> | |
| 3.2 – Encourage activities for a healthy brain, like regular exercise and sports. | |
| 3.3 - Spread the word to all Australians on how to keep the brain healthy and spot dementia signs early. | |
| 3.4 - Work with communities to create specific advice for people at higher risk of dementia. | |
| Rationale for sub-action focus areas | <p>3.2 – Encourage activities for a healthy brain, like regular exercise and sports.</p> <p>ACT Preventative Health Plan 2023-25 is a whole of government plan that aims to reduce the prevalence of chronic disease in the ACT and support good health at all stages of life. The plan’s guiding principles are equity, health at every stage of life, evidence-based policy and innovation. Five priority areas guide the ACT Government’s preventive health action: supporting children and families; enabling active living; increasing healthy eating; reducing risky behaviours and promoting healthy ageing.</p> <p>CBR Next Move: Sport and Recreation Strategy 2023-28 highlights the ACT Government’s priorities for sport and recreation from 2023 to 2028. It identifies strategic pillars and priorities to build sector capability and capacity, a commitment to inclusion and quality experiences, supporting more people to be engaged at all levels, and making available more and better places and spaces to help get people moving.</p> <p>3.3 - Spread the word to all Australians on how to keep the brain healthy and spot dementia signs early.</p> <p>Memory Assessment Service is geriatrician led service providing early diagnosis, treatment, advice and referral services for who may be suffering with early memory changes or possible dementia. People undergo an initial nursing assessment followed by a comprehensive assessment by a geriatrician. The service provides follow-up on the results of the investigations, checking the progress of memory changes over time or to confirm a diagnosis of dementia.</p> <p>General Geriatric Clinic is a geriatrician led service that offer comprehensive geriatric assessment of older people with multiple and complex medical issues including supporting older people with memory decline.</p> <p>3.4 - Work with communities to create specific advice for people at higher risk of dementia</p> <p>Re-envisioning Older Persons Mental Health and Wellbeing in the ACT Strategy 2022-26 The Strategy proposes 25 actions across three priority areas including building mentally</p> |

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| | <p>healthy communities for all older Canberrans, enhancing the lives and experiences of older Canberrans with mental illness and improving structural and system capacity to respond to the needs of older Canberrans requiring mental health care. Actions include research and scoping initiatives to further our knowledge on emerging needs, piloting new initiatives and enhancing knowledge and coordination across existing services to better support the mental health needs of older Canberrans. The Strategy seeks to improve coordination between the intersections of mental health and wellbeing and ageing and to provide a focussed lens on efforts to improve supports for this priority population. This focussed and coordinated response is anticipated to be an important step towards improving the mental health and wellbeing outcomes for older people in the ACT.</p> <p>Libraries ACT: Imagine 2030 is a co-design approach Libraries ACT undertook to develop a strategy to guide the future. This strategy will guide the forward planning, delivery, and management of library services, ensuring ACT libraries are an accessible space for inspiring, belonging, connecting and lifelong learning. Accessibility, collaboration, integrating services and experiences and enabling lifelong learning are part of this strategy that reduces social isolation and ensures the whole community can access the best possible information.</p> <p>Older Persons Mental Health Community Teams has a multidisciplinary team of psychiatrists, nurses and allied health staff who offer services to predominantly older people experiencing moderate to severe symptoms of, or impacts from, their mental illness or suspected mental illness. The age criteria is flexible and includes individuals diagnosed with younger onset dementia.</p> |
| <p>Achievements and insights</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Libraries ACT: Imagine 2030 has published a report on the strategy, feedback and next steps. 2. Following the cessation of the Re-envisioning Older Person’s Mental Health and Wellbeing in the ACT Strategy 2022-26, the Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Division has continued to build connections and work in partnership with peak bodies and other organisations across sectors to enhance the mental health of the community through whole-of-government and whole-of-community activities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For example, the Division provided a grant to A Gender Agenda to deliver up to ten training sessions of gender affirming mental health care. A Gender Agenda advised that all their gender affirming care training included a component specifically on older people. • There has been a renewed focus on Suicide Prevention planning in the ACT, and nationally, which includes a focus on supporting the needs of older people. The Division is participating in the ACT Region Suicide Prevention Community Collaborative, and with other members (e.g. Coalition of the Ageing - COTA) will continue to ensure there is a focus on the needs of older Canberrans. Existing suicide prevention programs are accessible to all Canberrans (e.g. Question Persuade Refer) or improve the care experience for all Canberrans (e.g. <i>Connecting with People</i> training). <i>Connecting with People</i> training is being expanding into the community sector, where it will have a greater impact, including on older persons. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Division also supported Australian National University (ANU) medical students in writing scoping reviews, including one examining pathways into homelessness among older women in Australia, and another exploring the wellbeing outcomes of intergenerational engagement programs involving older adults and young people. • In addition, the Division is currently working with Monash University to undertake economic modelling in relation to a friend enrichment program targeting older people to support social isolation and loneliness. The outcome of this will help inform future initiatives to support the promotion and prevention of mental health to support the community. |
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ACTIVITY REPORTING – ACT

Action 4 – Improve dementia diagnosis and post-diagnostic care and support.

Relevant sub actions:

4.3. Make clear pathways for dementia testing and diagnosis and find the best way to do it.

4.7 - Better care planning and coordination for people with dementia and their carers, including tailored approaches for First Nations people, those from different cultures and other groups.

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| <p>Rationale for sub-action focus areas</p> | <p>4.3. Make clear pathways for dementia testing and diagnosis and find the best way to do it.</p> <p>Memory Assessment Service is geriatrician led service providing early diagnosis, treatment, advice and referral services for who may be suffering with early memory changes or possible dementia. As part of the service initial nursing assessment followed by a comprehensive assessment would be conducted with the outcome of providing an appropriate management plan.</p> <p>4.7 - Better care planning and coordination for people with dementia and their carers, including tailored approaches for First Nations people, those from different cultures and other groups</p> <p>The Sustainable Personalised Interventions for Cognition, Care and Engagement (SPICE) program is a 10-week therapeutic intervention for people living with dementia and their carers that combines multiple evidence-based components. The program includes cognitive stimulation therapy through a group activity program, home visits by an occupational therapist, appointments with a dietitian, including a comprehensive nutritional assessment, and tailored physical activities. The SPICE program aims to provide participants with a toolkit of strategies and resources for the future. The program aims to tackle social isolation and mental health challenges for both people with dementia and their care partners. The SPICE program fills a critical gap in dementia care for people living in the ACT and provides a post-diagnostic pathway to optimise health and wellbeing, and connection to health social and community services. Revision</p> |
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| | <p>of the program structure enabled an increased number of dyads to participate in the program in 2025 to 61.</p> <p>Falls and Falls Injury Prevention Program People living with dementia experience significantly higher fall risk compared with cognitively intact older adults¹. This is due to a combination of neurological, physical, behavioural, and environmental factors. This program helps people who have experienced falls or are looking for ways to minimise their risk of falling, including a fear of falling. The Falls and Falls Injury Prevention Clinic can assess people to identify their personal risk factors for falling. People are provided with individual advice, information and activities to reduce their risk of falling. This might include engaging in exercises, undertaking a home assessment to ensure the home is set-up safely, and referrals to other specialised health care providers.</p> <p>Older Persons Mental Health Community Teams support care planning and interventions to people who are 65 years old or older and living in their own home (or a nursing home) who are experiencing a moderate to severe mental illness. This team is a multidisciplinary team of psychiatrists, nurses and allied health staff offering services to older people experiencing moderate to severe symptoms of, or impacts from, their mental illness or suspected mental illness. Mental health and dementia in later life are deeply intertwined. While dementia is a neurocognitive disorder, many mental health conditions (especially depression, anxiety, loneliness, and social isolation) significantly influence dementia risk, symptom expression, progression, and overall wellbeing.</p> |
| <p>Work underway</p> | <p>In October 2025, the SPICE@Home pilot study of an at-home rehabilitation intervention for people with dementia commenced. This pilot trial is in response to an identified need for dementia rehabilitation for people experiencing barriers to accessing allied health and support services in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). It has been co-designed with consumers to ensure it meets the needs of end users.</p> |
| <p>Achievements and insights</p> | <p>There has been a range of media on the positive outcomes of the SPICE programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groundbreaking program proves effective in enhancing dementia care in Canberra, The RiotAct 2023 • A pilot program for helping people with dementia continue to live at home has seen promising results from its initial work, WIN News Canberra Facebook, News bulletin 2023 • SPICE extends quality of life for Canberrans with dementia, Canberra Daily, 2023 • University of Canberra’s SPICE program helps dementia patients and carers, The Canberra Times 2023 <p><u>Peer reviewed journal articles for the SPICE program include:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mulhall S., Gibson D., Longley WA., D’Cunha NM. Improving access to cognitive interventions for people with dementia in Australian community-based settings. Australasian Journal on Ageing, 16 Feb 2026. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajag.70140 • Gibson, D., Mulhall, S., Chau, A., Chelberg, GR., Wiseman, L., Isbel, S., Bail, K., D’Cunha, NM. ‘Changing patterns of referrals in response to a multicomponent rehabilitation program for people with dementia and their care partners. Australasian Journal on Ageing, 22 Sept 2025: 44(3),1-5. 10.1111/ajag.70096 |

¹ [Fall Prevention Strategies for Dementia Patients: A Comprehensive Approach to Safety and Support - Fall Prevention Foundation](#)

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bull, C., Low, E., Holloway, H., Kellett, J., Roberts, E., Chelberg, G., Wiseman, L., Chau, A., Mitterfellner, R., Isbel, S., Bail, K., Gibson, D., & D’Cunha, N. M. (2025). Exploring the Role of a Dietitian in an Early Intervention Program for People With Dementia and Their Care Partners: A Composite Case Series. <i>Journal of Applied Gerontology</i>, 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1177/07334648251338302 • D’Cunha, N. M., Chelberg, G., Huang, I., Tabatabaei-Jafari, H., Bagheri, N., Bail, K., Gibson, D., Isbel, S., Wiseman, L., Chowdhury, P., Furst, M. A., Sachdev, P. S., & Salvador-Carulla, L. (2025). Exploring dementia service gaps and barriers in the Australian Capital Territory: a qualitative study. <i>Australian Journal of Primary Health</i>, 31(2), 1-10. Article PY24174. https://doi.org/10.1071/PY24174 • D’Cunha, N. M., Chelberg, G., Holloway, H., Wiseman, L., Fearon, A., Kellett, J., Isbel, S., Bail, K., Huang, I., & Gibson, D. (2025). Pilot of a multicomponent program for people with dementia and their care partners: Health services staff expectations, experiences and observations. <i>Dementia</i>, 1-21. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/39813161/ • D’Cunha, N. M., Bennett, M., Mitterfellner, R., Brennan, R., Wiseman, L., Isbel, S., Bail, K., Barrett, L., Rutherford, K., Huang, I., & Gibson, D. (2023). Preliminary Findings of an Active Multicomponent Lifestyle Intervention for People with Dementia and Their Carers: Mixed Methods Study. <i>Health and Social Care in the Community</i>, 2023, 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1155/2023/5395080 |
| <p>Strategic collaboration and partnerships</p> | <p>The SPICE program is a Canberra Health Services and University of Canberra Centre for Ageing Research and Translation (CARAT) collaboration to deliver the program in the ACT. The funding for the program was provided by Commonwealth Government from 2025 under the Supporting Older Australians Federation Funding Agreement.</p> <p>The SPICE@Home Program is a collaboration between Canberra Health Services and the University of Canberra. It is supported by funding from the ACT Health Research and Innovation Fellowship and is being delivered as a pilot project. The pilot runs for 12 months and commenced in October 2025.</p> |

ACTIVITY REPORTING – ACT

Action 8 – Improve dementia data, maximise the impact of dementia research and promote innovation.

Relevant sub actions:

8.1. Encourage investment in research on preventing dementia, diagnosing it early, treating it, and giving all-around care for all types of dementia.

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| <p>Rationale for sub-action focus areas</p> | <p>8.1. Encourage investment in research on preventing dementia, diagnosing it early, treating it, and giving all-around care for all types of dementia.</p> <p>The Dementia Health Experts Network - A pre-feasibility/scoping study was completed with the Dementia Health Experts Network to guide future service planning for people living with dementia and experiencing severe to extreme changed behaviours. This includes various research projects with a focus on consumers, carers and health professionals and a dementia technical document with data analysis.</p> |
| <p>Work underway</p> | <p>The Dementia Health Experts Network has developed an evidence-based framework for dementia care: how the ACT health system cares for older people living with dementia and experiencing changed behaviours and supports their careers. The ACT Health and Community Services Directorate is developing an evidence-based framework for how the ACT health system cares for older people living with dementia and experiencing changed behaviours and supports their careers. The aim of these frameworks allow for a co-design evidence-based health system for older Canberrans experiencing behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia including their unique safety and functional needs when in hospital and in the community inclusive of residential aged care homes.</p> |
| <p>Achievements and insights</p> | <p><u>SPICE research activity includes the following peer reviewed journal articles:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mulhall S., Gibson D., Longley WA., D’Cunha NM. Improving access to cognitive interventions for people with dementia in Australian community-based settings. Australasian Journal on Ageing, 16 Feb 2026. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajag.70140 • Gibson, D., Mulhall, S., Chau, A., Chelberg, GR., Wiseman, L., Isbel, S., Bail, K., D’Cunha, NM. ‘Changing patterns of referrals in response to a multicomponent rehabilitation program for people with dementia and their care partners. Australasian Journal on Ageing, 22 Sept 2025: 44(3),1-5. 10.1111/ajag.70096 • Bull, C., Low, E., Holloway, H., Kellett, J., Roberts, E., Chelberg, G., Wiseman, L., Chau, A., Mitterfellner, R., Isbel, S., Bail, K., Gibson, D., & D’Cunha, N. M. (2025). Exploring the Role of a Dietitian in an Early Intervention Program for People With Dementia and Their Care Partners: A Composite Case Series. Journal of Applied Gerontology, 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1177/07334648251338302 • D’Cunha, N. M., Chelberg, G., Huang, I., Tabatabaei-Jafari, H., Bagheri, N., Bail, K., Gibson, D., Isbel, S., Wiseman, L., Chowdhury, P., Furst, M. A., Sachdev, P. S., & Salvador-Carulla, L. (2025). Exploring dementia service gaps and barriers in the Australian Capital Territory: a qualitative study. Australian Journal of Primary Health, 31(2), 1-10. Article PY24174. https://doi.org/10.1071/PY24174 • D’Cunha, N. M., Chelberg, G., Holloway, H., Wiseman, L., Fearon, A., Kellett, J., Isbel, S., Bail, K., Huang, I., & Gibson, D. (2025). Pilot of a multicomponent program for people with dementia and their care partners: Health services staff expectations, experiences and observations. Dementia, 1-21. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/39813161/ • D’Cunha, N. M., Bennett, M., Mitterfellner, R., Brennan, R., Wiseman, L., |

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| | <p>Isbel, S., Bail, K., Barrett, L., Rutherford, K., Huang, I., & Gibson, D. (2023). Preliminary Findings of an Active Multicomponent Lifestyle Intervention for People with Dementia and Their Carers: Mixed Methods Study. <i>Health and Social Care in the Community</i>, 2023, 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1155/2023/5395080</p> |
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Other activities underway

Governments undertake activities across the breadth of the Action Plan. The table below provides an opportunity to showcase any activities that support the Action Plan’s broader actions, in addition to the identified priority actions.

| ACTIVITY REPORTING – State/Territory | | |
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| OTHER ACTIVITIES UNDERWAY (if applicable) | | |
| NDAP Action(s)/sub-action(s) | Activity | Achievements and Insights |
| 2.4 Make public places and services more welcoming for people with dementia. This means changing how buildings and spaces are designed and how services are provided, so people with dementia can join in more easily. | Dementia Movie Screening Event | <p>The 2023-2024 Budget announced an investment of \$90,000 to see the ACT host Australia’s first dedicated program of dementia-friendly film screenings. The ACT Government contracted the University of NSW (UNSW) (Sydney) to lead this program, which is set to continue to 30 June 2027.</p> <p><i>A Day at the Movies</i> is designed for the enjoyment and comfort of people living with dementia and their families, friends, carers and companions.</p> <p>Events are tailored for people with dementia. Features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendly staff trained by Dementia Australia; • Films selected in line with dementia-friendly screening guidelines and informed by community input; • Low-level lighting for the duration of the screening; • Additional wayfinding and signage; • Reduced sound levels in the cinema; • A designated quiet space for guests to rest or relax; • A 10-minute intermission to stretch and refresh; • Pre- and post-screening refreshments, offering guests an opportunity to relax and socialise. • Carers receive a free ticket, courtesy of Carers ACT. <p>Three dementia-friendly film screenings were held in 2025, with a total of 124 tickets sold - averaging 41 people per session.</p> |

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| <p>5.5 Offer better services for people with dementia who have more serious mood or behaviour changes, with more care options in residential homes or different kinds of care.</p> | <p>Dementia Village</p> | <p>Insights</p> <p>ACT Government released Block 14 section 99 Curtin to develop a facility for people living with dementia. HammondCare has been selected by the ACT Government to develop dementia village. This facility will be a purpose-built to support people living with dementia in a familiar and enabling environment. The Curtin Dementia Care Village will feature:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 homelike cottages offering 90 single rooms with ensuites; • Domestic-style kitchens and generous living areas with safe access to outdoor gardens; and • Discreet placement of clinical and operational areas to maintain a familiar, residential feel. <p>Subject to approvals, construction is expected to commence in late 2027, with completion forecast for 2030.</p> |
| <p>7.3 Offer training for family doctors, nurses, and other health professionals, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners to help them give better care to people with dementia and their carers.</p> | <p>Specialist Dementia Care Program</p> | <p>ACT has two specialist dementia care units (i.e., Wilkinson lodge and Richards Cottage) at Uniting Mirinjani, Eabrai Lodge Weston ACT.</p> <p>Over last eight to 10 months in 2025 an advance trainee in Geriatric Medicine had presented teaching sessions on common clinical scenarios to nursing/other staff based at Eabrai, which was well received.</p> |