



Department of Health
Government of Western Australia

Dementia Action Plan

for Western Australia 2003-2006



WA AGED CARE ADVISORY COUNCIL

2003-2006

Message from the Chairperson

On behalf of the WA Aged Care Advisory Council, I am delighted to present the Dementia Action Plan. This is the first of a series of action plans to be developed by the Council, and relates directly to the third goal in the *State Aged Care Plan for Western Australia 2003-2008*, the goal which focuses on designing services to meet the needs of each older person.

The State Aged Care Plan provides high-level, strategic direction. The ongoing task of the Council is to translate these aspirations into action plans which are practical, measurable, and will make a real difference in the journey towards 'getting it right' for older Western Australians.

This Dementia Action Plan directly addresses our State's own needs and at the same time fits well with the National Dementia Strategy. With this action plan, the Council considers it has well and truly met its commitment to advise government about the needs of people with dementia. The Council now urges the government to act. Council will be reviewing progress with keen interest.

It is now acknowledged that dementia will become a massive challenge in the coming decades, and this action plan does not underestimate the needs of all those affected by the condition. The Dementia Action Plan is based on the excellent research work contained in the *Project Report for the State Action Plan for Dementia Care* prepared under the auspices of the Council, supported by Alzheimer's Australia WA, and carried out by the Council's expert Dementia Working Party and the Silver Chain Research Team. That report contains the voices of people with dementia, their families and carers and is a rich and comprehensive source document.

My thanks go to the Council and the Dementia Working Party. I commend this Dementia Action Plan to you, and look forward to welcoming achievements of great benefit.

Dr Penny Flett
Chairperson, WA Aged Care Advisory Council

The need for a Dementia Action Plan

“Dementia” is an inclusive term used to describe a syndrome that can result from a number of diseases of the brain. The most common of these is Alzheimer’s disease, followed by vascular disease, and then by a combination of the two. Illnesses that cause dementia are frequently chronic and result in progressive cognitive deterioration that is disabling and eventually terminal.

Based on Australia-wide numbers, it is estimated that around 17,000 people in Western Australia aged 60 years and over have a moderate or severe dementia condition.¹

As the prevalence rates show, the risk of dementia is highest in very elderly age groups.² As the number and proportion of older people in Western Australia increases, the demand for dementia-specific services and supports will increase proportionately.

Age Group	Prevalence Rate (%)
60-64	0.7
65-69	1.4
70-74	2.8
75-79	5.6
80-84	11.1
85+	23.6

Older people are already an increasing proportion of the Western Australian population. In 1997, people aged 65 years and over comprised 10.5% of 1.7 million people, by 2001, 10.7% of 1.9 million people. Based on data available in 2001, the proportion of the State’s population aged 65 years and over is projected to increase to 12.5% by 2011.

The older population cohort itself is ageing, with people aged 80 years and over comprising 23.7% of all people aged 65 years and over in 1997, 23.4% in 2001, and projected to increase to 25.3%, or 48,100 persons in 2011.³

It seems likely that there are at least 700 to 1,000 new cases of dementia identified in the State each year, although available data makes precise estimates difficult. The difficulty of early accurate diagnosis coupled with the relatively slow progression of the disease means that many people may be unaware that they are in the early stages of the disease.

Over the period 2001 to 2021, based on Western Australian population projections for the 60 years and over age cohort, and no change in prevalence rates, it is estimated that the prevalence of dementia in the population aged 60 years and over will increase by almost 75% on the base figure to approximately 27,500 people.⁴

¹ Bird, M. & Parslow, R. 2001, *Future Directions: consultancy report to the Alzheimer’s Association of Australia*, Centre for Mental Health Research, Canberra.

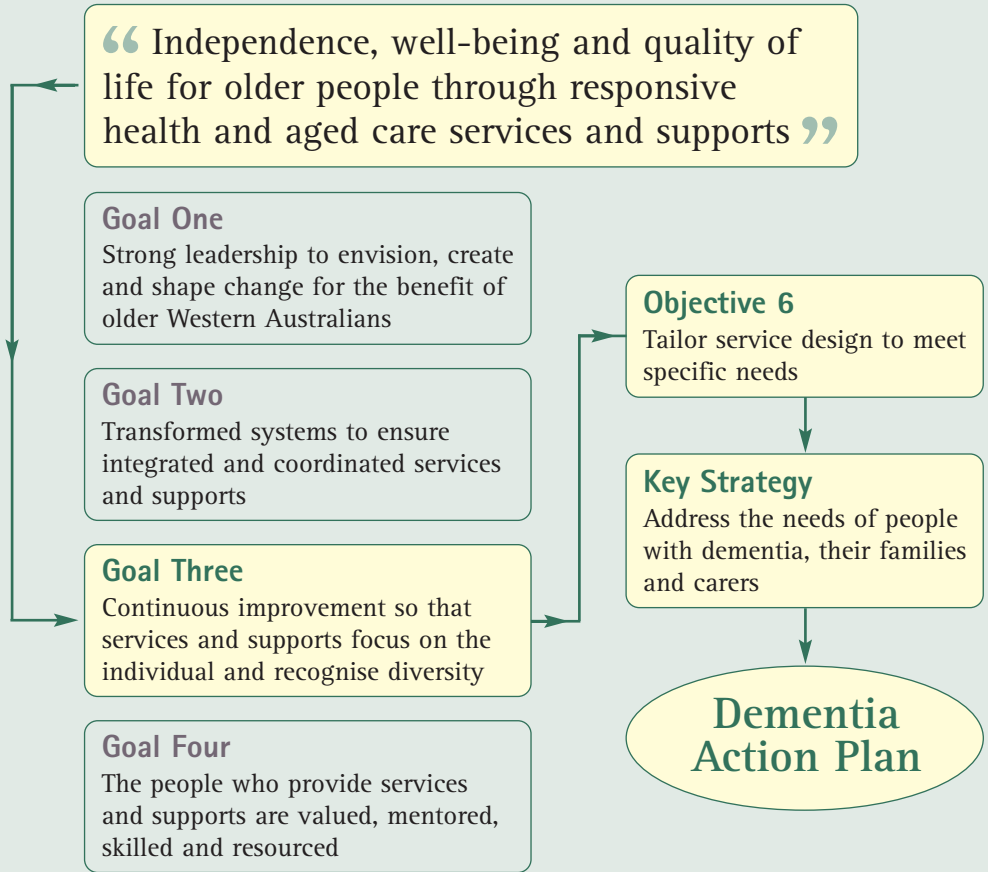
² Henderson, A.S. & Jorm, A.F. 1998, *Dementia in Australia*, Aged and Community Care Service Development and Evaluation Reports, No.35, AGPS, Canberra.

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2000, *Population Projections Australia 1999-2021*, Cat. no. 3222.0, ABS, Canberra.

⁴ Bird, M. & Parslow, R., op. cit.

The Dementia Action Plan fits within the strategic framework of the *State Aged Care Plan for Western Australia 2003-2008* and aligns with its Vision, Values and Goals:

Vision



Values

- Aged care is about the person, both the individual and their family (of origin, or choice) and carers and is built on participation and respect
- Aged care is positive and enabling with service delivery based on flexibility and choice
- Equity and inclusion are fundamental
- Quality systems are fundamental

Developing the Dementia Action Plan

In early 2002, the Minister for Health established the WA Aged Care Advisory Council to provide ongoing advice to government on health and related aged care services for older people in Western Australia. As a priority term of reference, the Council was required to “develop a State Aged Care Plan, including an action plan for dementia care, for the State’s ongoing involvement in the provision of health and related aged care services to the older population of Western Australia.”

A Dementia Working Party, with Frank Schaper, Chief Executive Officer, Alzheimer’s Australia WA Ltd as Convenor, was set up under the auspices of the Council to develop a draft Dementia Action Plan. The members of the Dementia Working Party included Professor Leon Flicker, Chair of Geriatric Medicine, University of Western Australia, Dr Peter Goldswain, Medical Director, Rehabilitation, Aged and Continuing Care Directorate, Department of Health, Dr Nicola Lautenschlager, School of Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences, and Helen Attrill, Executive Director, Aged and Community Services WA.

The Silver Chain Research Team, led by Dr Gill Lewin, Research Manager, was contracted to assist the Dementia Working Party in the collection and collation of research information.

The research scope encompassed the major issues in dementia in Western Australia as perceived by key stakeholders including people with dementia, their families and carers and people actively engaged in service delivery, how such issues were being approached nationally and internationally, and the range of services currently available across the State. A variety of research methods were used including an environmental scan, a client/carer survey, written submissions from key stakeholders including consumers and the wider community, focus groups, interviews and a telephone audit.

The research findings were presented individually for 10 action areas, namely:

- Community awareness
- Early diagnosis and intervention
- Knowledge/education/training
- Support of informal care-givers
- Service delivery – funding, access and equity across the continuum
- Acute care
- Accommodation options
- Protection of rights and interests
- Respite
- Research

The Dementia Working Party finalised the *Project Report for the State Action Plan for Dementia Care* in June 2003. The report was presented to the WA Aged Care Advisory Council which examined the research findings and consolidated them into the *Dementia Action Plan for Western Australia 2003-2006*.

Community awareness

Aim To improve public awareness of dementia through community education and access to information

Actions

- Promote and participate in initiatives to increase public awareness and understanding of dementia, demystify the causes of dementia, and engender a positive image of people with dementia
- Provide accurate information about the benefits of early diagnosis and intervention and how to identify early warning signs
- Provide accurate and easily accessible information about dementia services and their entry points

Outcomes

- The community is well-informed about dementia and communities are more inclusive and supportive of people with dementia, their families and carers
- The community is well-informed about the early signs of dementia and people with dementia are accessing early diagnosis, assessment and treatment
- People with dementia, their families and carers are well-informed about the range of services available and know how to access them

Community support services

Aim To improve community-based services and supports for people with dementia, their families and carers

Actions

- Provide information, training and ongoing support for carers of people with dementia which is responsive to carers' needs
- Provide a broad range of flexible respite services responsive to carer need and causing least disruption to the person with dementia and his or her level of functioning
- Develop and provide flexible dementia-specific packages of care for people with dementia who are living in the community including people living alone and people with dementia-related challenging behaviours
- Involve the person with dementia and their advocate and/or carer in planning for future care needs

Outcomes

- Informal carers of people with dementia are well-informed, appropriately skilled and supported for the duration of the dementia process
- Carers have access to a flexible range of respite options that minimise disruption to the person with dementia
- People with dementia including those living alone and those with dementia-related challenging behaviours are enabled to live in the community for as long as possible
- The individual choices made by people with dementia about their future care needs are known, honoured and respected

Early diagnosis and intervention

Aim To facilitate early diagnosis and timely assessment and intervention for people with dementia

Actions

- Adopt a public health approach to dementia encompassing information, prevention, screening, etc to raise awareness and facilitate early diagnosis and intervention
- Support educational initiatives to improve professional recognition of the early signs and symptoms of dementia and awareness of appropriate assessment and referral practices
- Enhance skills in early diagnosis, assessment and ongoing treatment of people with dementia in targeted special needs groups, with particular attention to people residing in rural and remote areas who may be disadvantaged by distance

Outcomes

- A public health policy framework enables people with dementia, their families and carers to benefit from timely diagnosis, assessment and intervention
- Health professionals, especially general practitioners, recognise the early signs and symptoms of dementia and implement appropriate assessment and referral practices
- People with dementia in targeted special needs groups and people who live in rural and remote areas are diagnosed and assessed at the earliest possible stage of the disease and receive appropriate ongoing treatment

Acute care and primary care

Aim To support continual improvement in the management of people with dementia in acute care and primary care settings

Actions

- Support education and training for acute care and primary care staff to improve understanding of dementia and improve dementia-specific communication skills
- Promote the adoption of improved management practices in acute care and primary care settings for people with dementia-related challenging behaviours
- Facilitate the development of dementia-specific admission and discharge procedures and dementia-specific care plans supported by good information exchange between relevant parties

Outcomes

- People who deliver services in acute care and primary care settings recognise and are responsive to the special needs of people with dementia
- Acute care and primary care settings are “dementia-friendly” with appropriate management practices for people with dementia-related challenging behaviours
- People with dementia benefit from dementia-specific clinical management including admission and discharge planning and ongoing care planning appropriate to individual needs

Education and training

Aim To improve the quality of care through dementia-specific professional development, education and training

Actions

- Develop dementia-specific vocational, under-graduate, post graduate and specialist education and training for health professionals
- Provide opportunities to assist the take-up of dementia-related education and training opportunities in the health and aged care sectors

Outcomes

- Vocational and university-based education and training courses include relevant dementia-specific course components
- The health and aged care workforce is appropriately educated and trained in dementia-specific competencies

Research and policy development

Aim To identify and develop appropriate research-based policy responses to the needs of people with dementia, their families and carers

Actions

- Raise the profile of dementia as a State priority health issue
- Promote increased funding and research effort in dementia research
- Increase partnerships between agencies, both government and non-government for whom people with dementia and their carers are a target population
- Support the development of innovative dementia-specific accommodation options
- Support the development of innovative service delivery models including those adopting emerging technologies to minimise the disadvantage of distance and isolation

Outcomes

- Dementia is an adequately-funded State priority health issue
- Priority-based dementia research is adequately funded
- People with dementia, their families and carers benefit from a collaborative approach to policy development
- The development of innovative dementia-specific accommodation options is informed by a strong research base
- People with dementia, their families and carers, including people disadvantaged by geographic or other isolation, benefit from innovative models of service delivery

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Actions for Implementation

Actions		Opportunities	Phased Implementation		
			2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Community Awareness	Promote and participate in initiatives to increase community awareness and understanding of dementia	Target opportunities in the Home and Community Care (HACC) Program growth funding cycle	Development	Implementation	Ongoing Activities
	Provide accurate information about the benefits of early diagnosis and intervention and how to identify early warning signs				
	Provide accurate and easily accessible information about dementia services and their entry points				
Community Support Services	Provide information, training and ongoing support for carers	Target opportunities in the Home and Community Care (HACC) Program growth funding cycle	Development	Implementation	Ongoing Activities
	Provide a broad range of flexible respite services responsive to carer need				
	Develop and provide flexible dementia-specific packages of care for people living in the community including people living alone and people with challenging behaviours				
	Involve the person with dementia and their advocate and/or carer in planning for future care needs		Development	Development	
Early Diagnosis & Intervention	Adopt a public health approach to dementia to raise awareness and facilitate early diagnosis and intervention	Include dementia-specific issues in the development of policy frameworks (such as chronic disease management)		Development	Development
	Support educational initiatives to improve professional recognition of early warning signs and symptoms and awareness of assessment and referral practices	Develop a Department of Health Business Case to target opportunities for specific funding for dementia services in metropolitan and rural areas	Development	Implementation	Implementation
	Enhance skills in early diagnosis, assessment and ongoing treatment of people in special needs groups including people disadvantaged by distance and isolation				
Acute Care & Primary Care	Support dementia-specific education and training for acute and primary care staff	Target opportunities in the Home and Community Care (HACC) Program growth funding cycle	Development	Implementation	Ongoing Activities
	Promote the adoption of improved management practices in acute and primary care settings for people with dementia-related challenging behaviours	Commission work from clinicians through the Clinical Advisory Committee	Development	Implementation	Ongoing Activities
	Facilitate the development of dementia-specific admission and discharge procedures and care planning				
Education & Training	Develop dementia-specific vocational, undergraduate, post graduate and specialist education and training for health professionals	Target opportunities for the Department of Health to support the development of dementia-specific course components		Development	Development
	Provide opportunities to assist the take-up of dementia-related education and training opportunities in the health and aged care sector	Promote Department of Health liaison with the aged care sector and investigate opportunities to fund scholarships and similar initiatives			Development
Research & Policy Development	Raise the profile of dementia as a State priority health issue	Release, promote and implement the Dementia Action Plan	Implementation	Implementation	Implementation
	Promote increased funding and research effort in dementia research	Support relevant applications for NHMRC funding	Ongoing Activities	Ongoing Activities	Ongoing Activities
	Increase partnerships between agencies, both government and non-government, for whom people with dementia, their families and carers are a target population	Include dementia issues in consultations to inform policy development and planning		Development	Implementation
	Support the development of innovative dementia-specific accommodation options	Target opportunities for the Department of Health to liaise with the Australian Government and service providers to develop dementia-specific accommodation options		Development	Development
	Support the development of innovative service delivery models including those adopting emerging technologies to minimise the disadvantage of distance and isolation	Target opportunities for the Department of Health to liaise with the Australian Government and service providers to develop innovative service delivery models		Development	Development

Colour Key Development Implementation Ongoing Activities

WA Aged Care Advisory Council

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