

Media Release

ONE MILLION AUSTRALIANS FORGOTTEN IN THE FEDERAL BUDGET

Alzheimer's Australia expressed great disappointment that the Federal Budget did nothing to address the dementia epidemic and the impact it already has on one million Australians, both people with dementia and their families and carers.

"It is clear that dementia as the major chronic disease of this century is not on the radar of those responsible for health policy. Dementia has been neglected in the COAG discussions and ignored again in the 2010/11 Budget," said Glenn Rees, CEO, Alzheimer's Australia.

It is a matter of concern for Mr Rees that although over one million Australians will have dementia by the middle of this century, no initiatives were being taken by the Rudd Government to reduce the future numbers of people with dementia.

"A dementia free life is only possible by investment in medical research and dementia risk reduction and neither was a feature of Government policy".

In its budget submission ***Dementia: Facing the Epidemic***, Alzheimer's Australia had pointed to the gaps in the current Dementia Initiative in respect of awareness, primary care, and cutting edge dementia research into the cause of dementia and risk reduction. None of these have received attention in the COAG process or the budget.

"Not only have there been no additional resources to build on the Dementia Initiative, but the priorities and gaps in the present program have been ignored in the Budget".

The Dementia Initiative in the 2005 Budget had laid the basis for some optimism for those living with dementia and that an opportunity would be taken by successive Governments to address the dementia epidemic. The Initiative has resulted in effective action in respect of high care community packages, training, dementia care research and support through the National Dementia Support Program administered by Alzheimer's Australia.

"More is needed now though. There were 204,900 people with dementia in 2005, currently there are over 257,000 and it is projected to grow to over 317,000 by 2015."

"It is hard to know why those responsible for health policy did not rank dementia alongside other chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes and obesity. For families and carers struggling in the community to support those with dementia, the budget is a scant recognition of the efforts they are making or of the impact that dementia will have on families and carers of the future".

For interviews with Glenn Rees, CEO, Alzheimer's Australia please contact Tegan McGrath on 02 6278 8924 or 0407 232 212.

Dementia: Facing the Epidemic can be downloaded at www.alzheimers.org.au