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Media Release

New resources to improve the delivery and navigation of respite services

Two new resources aimed at improving the delivery and navigation of respite services for people living with dementia are now available in time for Easter.

The new resources created by Alzheimer's Australia, in partnership with the University of Wollongong and Carers Australia, aim to promote best practice strategies for respite service providers and to assist people with dementia and their carers to navigate the system.

There are currently 413,106¹ people living with dementia and as this number continues to rise, the need for flexible and quality respite care will increase proportionately. The Alzheimer's Australia [*Flexible Respite Services for People with Dementia and their Carers*](#) resources suggest a new approach to respite care is needed to cater for a growing and diversifying clientele.

Conny and Bryan Gard of Canberra know the importance of quality, flexible respite care.

Bryan was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease two years ago, and attends respite programs aimed at people with younger onset dementia. He attends a day care program for five hours once a week and also attends Greening Australia and The Men's Shed for two hours each once a week.

"Bryan enjoys the social interaction, the company of the other people attending and the variety of activities offered," Mrs Gard said.

"Respite care gives me a chance to do something on my own that I enjoy, attend errands or just to give me a break from my carer role.

"There has only been one occasion where Bryan did not enjoy respite care and knowing how he felt makes it difficult to send him back to that particular environment. I would feel guilty about leaving him if I knew he would not enjoy his time in respite. This experience demonstrated to me how important it is for respite to be flexible to the needs of those attending."

Alzheimer's Australia National CEO, Maree McCabe said "given the number of people with dementia is set to increase to 1.1 million by 2056,¹ these resources are essential to ensure that best practice in respite care is being delivered in the care and support of people with dementia and carers.

"As both the aged care and disability sectors move to consumer-directed and individualised funding models, it is vital that respite services ensure they are flexible and responsive to the needs of people living with dementia, their families and carers.

"It is so important that people living with dementia have access to quality respite services that provide opportunities for social contact as well as physical activity and emotional stimulation. For carers it is essential they take time to look after themselves and know how to access quality and flexible respite services to do so.

"As the Easter period approaches, it is a good time to start a dialogue with family members about the benefits and options for respite," Ms McCabe said.

¹ The National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling NATSEM (2016) *Economic Cost of Dementia in Australia 2016-2056*

Project leader of ReThink Respite, Dr Lyn Phillipson from the University of Wollongong said “gaining access to flexible respite is really important – but it is often difficult for carers to know what is available and to identify services which can really meet their particular needs and those of the person with dementia.

“Resources like these will help carers access information to assist them with understanding and navigating the system. The booklet for service providers will also be useful in promoting best practice strategies to better meet the needs of people with dementia and their carers,” she said.

The new resources are [available](#), for free, on Alzheimer's Australia's website.

Flexible Respite Services for People with Dementia and their Carers was developed as part of the Making Flexible Respite Care a Practical Reality project, supported by the Australian Government through an Aged Care Service Improvement and Healthy Ageing Grants Fund.

Alzheimer's Australia is the charity for people with dementia and their families and carers. As the peak body, it provides advocacy, support services, education and information. An estimated 413,000 people have dementia in Australia. This number is projected to reach more than 1.1 million in 40 years.

National Dementia Helpline: 1800 100 500

An interpreter service is available

(The National Dementia Helpline is an Australian Government Initiative)

Dementia is a National Health Priority Area

www.fightdementia.org.au

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