

Media Release

Ita Buttrose President Elect for Alzheimer's Australia

Today Alzheimer's Australia announced that Ita Buttrose AO, OBE has agreed to take on the role of President of the organisation.

Ita Buttrose has been involved with Alzheimer's Australia for some time now, beginning on the NSW Advisory Committee and becoming an Alzheimer's Australia NSW Ambassador last September.

Ita Buttrose's father had dementia and she knows all too well the many issues that caring for a person with dementia presents.

"I cared for my father when he was diagnosed and was fortunate enough to care for him at home until he died," said Ms Buttrose.

"I shared many times of laughter, sadness and tears with both my father and family while caring for him and I understand the additional pressures on family carers who are caring for someone with dementia."

The appointment comes at an exciting and challenging time for the organisation, which is determined to put the dementia epidemic at the forefront of aged care reform.

"The Productivity Commission's draft report on aged care did not adequately acknowledge dementia as the core business of aged care and the need for more community and residential care places," said Ms Buttrose.

"The dementia epidemic is already driving the need for growth in residential and community care places.

"A comprehensive plan is needed to respond to the dementia epidemic."

Currently there are 269,000 Australians living with dementia and this will increase to almost 1 million by 2050.

"It is an immense pleasure to welcome Ita on board in the fight against dementia," said Glenn Rees, CEO, Alzheimer's Australia.

"Her support and work for the organisation will benefit all those living dementia and caring for someone with dementia."

Ita Buttrose will be attending the Michael Parkinson Fundraiser Lunch for Alzheimer's Australia NSW in Sydney on Friday 25 February.

For interviews with Ita Buttrose or Glenn Rees please contact Tegan McGrath on 02 6278 8924 or 0407 232 212.

Key facts and statistics

- An estimated 269,000¹ Australians currently live with dementia
- Without a significant medical breakthrough, that is expected to soar to about 981,000 by 2050¹
- Each week, there are 1500 new cases of dementia in Australia. That is expected to grow to 7,400 new cases each week by 2050²
- Dementia is the third leading cause of death in Australia, after heart disease and stroke³
- One in four people over the age of 85 have dementia
- Dementia is fatal and, as yet, there is no cure
- Dementia has an impact on every part of the health and care system
- The total estimated worldwide costs of dementia were US\$604 billion in 2010⁴
- These costs account for about 1% of the world's gross domestic product
- If dementia were a country, it would be the world's 18th largest economy
- If it were a company, it would be the world's largest, exceeding Wal-Mart (US\$414 billion) and Exxon Mobil (US\$311 billion)
- Australia faces a shortage of more than 150,000 paid and unpaid carers for people with dementia by 2029⁵
- The cost of replacing all family carers with paid carers is estimated at \$5.5 billion per annum⁵
- Dementia will become the third greatest source of health and residential aged care spending within two decades. These costs alone will be around 1% of GDP
- By the 2060s, spending on dementia is set to outstrip that of any other health condition. It is projected to be \$83 billion (in 2006-07 dollars), and will represent around 11% of the entire health and residential aged care sector spending
- Dementia is already the single greatest cause of disability in older Australians (aged 65 years or older)

What is dementia?

Dementia is the term used to describe the symptoms of a large group of illnesses which cause a progressive decline in a person's functioning. It is a broad term used to describe a loss of memory, intellect, rationality, social skills and physical functioning. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia, accounting for between 50 – 70% of all dementia cases.

Dementia can happen to anybody, but it is more common after the age of 65. However, people in their 30s, 40s and 50s can also have dementia.

***Alzheimer's Australia** is the peak body for people with dementia and their families and carers. It provides advocacy, support services, education and information.*

National Dementia Helpline: 1800 100 500

(The National Dementia Helpline is an Australian Government Initiative)

Dementia is a National Health Priority

www.alzheimers.org.au

¹ Caring Places: Planning for Aged Care and Dementia 2010 – 2050, Access Economics, July 2010

² Keeping Dementia Front of Mind: Incidence and prevalence 2009 – 2050, Access Economics, August 2009

³ Causes of Death, Australia, 2008, Australian Bureau of Statistics, March 2010

⁴ World Alzheimer Report 2010, The Global Economic Impact of Dementia, Alzheimer's Disease International, 21 September 2010

⁵ Making Choices, Future Dementia Care: Projections, Problems and Preferences, Access Economics, May 2009