THE HON MARK BUTLER MP
Minister for Mental Health and Ageing
Minister for Housing and Homelessness
Minister for Social Inclusion
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Mental Health Reform

MEDIA RELEASE

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AUSTRALIAN FIRST: $25 MILLION NATIONAL CENTRE FOR COGNITIVE DECLINE OPENED

Minister for Mental Health and Ageing Mark Butler will today launch Australia’s first Partnership Centre that will address the complex problems faced by older people with cognitive decline, including dementia.

Mr Butler said by 2050 it was estimated that 3.5 million Australians will need aged care services and the majority will be living with cognitive decline, almost a quarter of whom will have dementia.

“By 2050 around one million Australians will have dementia making it one of the greatest health challenges we’ve ever faced,” Mr Butler said.

“The Government is investing in this Centre to help people living with cognitive decline remain in the community living productive lives for as long as possible. And for those who are unable to do so it will also improve their experience of living in residential aged care facilities.”

Mr Butler said the Government had developed the Centre through the National Health and Medical Research Council and with partners from the NGO sector – Brightwater Care Group (WA), HammondCare (NSW), Helping Hand Aged Care (SA) and Alzheimer’s Australia.

“Together the team will undertake essential work that will help to improve the planning of aged care services, responsible medication management, quality use of medicines and the development of new models of respite care.”

“We want to make sure the world’s best research informs the world’s best care and support for people with cognitive decline here in Australia.”

Mr Butler said most older Australians had indicated a very clear preference to remain living in their home as long as possible: “so we need innovative solutions that will make that possible, even when someone is experiencing dementia or another type of cognitive decline.”

“Of course, it is equally important that we strive continually to improve the quality of life for those in residential aged care facilities.”

Alzheimer’s Australia CEO Glenn Rees said the new Centre would develop much-needed strategies to improve the quality of dementia care services.
“This new Centre brings together consumers, researchers and aged care providers. It is a partnership that will help us to drive improvements by making sure that research results in real changes in practice, right across Australia.”

HammondCare Chief Executive Dr Stephen Judd said it heralded a new approach to research, in that the needs of the sector would drive the research program.

“The funding partners have identified key concerns within providing the best possible care for older Australians and these will be addressed in the research program, developed by Associate Professor Sue Kurrle and the Investigator Team,” Dr Judd said.

CEO of Brightwater Care Group, Dr Penny Flett said “dementia is one of the biggest challenges being faced by the aged care Industry and families all over Australia so we consider it a great privilege to be part of this significant research collaboration.”

And Helping Hand Chief Executive Ian Hardy said the great strength of the Centre was its “focus on those key factors which affect the quality of life of those living with dementia, whether in the community or in residential care, and their families.”

NHMRC CEO Professor Warwick Anderson was pleased to see the involvement of four key non-government organisations in helping to fund and guide the work of the Centre.

“Researchers and health decision makers will collaborate so the Centre’s work is tailored to address the health system’s needs and realities,” he said.

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