**Draft news release**

**2019 budget: Change the game for Kiwis living with dementia**One of New Zealand’s greatest health and social challenges is reaching a tipping point, but the Government hasn’t yet run out of time to ensure dementia is a health priority, Alzheimers NZ says.

Chair, Dr Ngaire Dixon, was disappointed the Government dropped the ball on dementia care – much like the last Government – when it left out funding for services and support systems for the rapidly growing number of Kiwis with dementia in May’s Budget.

Should the Government delay taking action, New Zealand will have difficulty making sure people living with dementia can access adequate and consistent levels of support so they can live well, she says.

However, the Government’s 2019 Budget is an opportunity to make a positive difference by beginning the process that will see change for New Zealand’s ever-growing dementia community.

“People living with dementia are amongst New Zealand’s most vulnerable. They are currently being let down by a system that is marginalising them – services for people living with dementia are inadequate, delivered inconsistently across the country, and are of variable quality.

“We know that if dementia is not tackled urgently and effectively at a public health level, many other community wellbeing goals are put at risk.”

Dr Dixon was speaking at the 2018 Alzheimers NZ Conference *Tackling Dementia:* *It’s Everybody’s Business*.

She acknowledged New Zealand has a range of pressing and unmet health needs, but said there are none as likely to have the social and fiscal impact on our country as the rapidly ageing population and the growing numbers of people affected by dementia.

One of Alzheimers NZ’s key messages for Budget 2019 is for Government to start implementing the existing *NZ Framework for Dementia Care*.

Dr Dixon said there are six simple steps that will change the game for New Zealand’s dementia community:

1. Invest in prevention and risk reduction;
2. Intervene early to improve detection, diagnosis and support;
3. Support people to live well;
4. Support family carers to continue to provide care;
5. Build age and dementia friendly communities;
6. And establish indicators, monitor progress, and conduct research.

“It’s not too late to change the game for New Zealanders living with dementia, to put in place the systems, support and services that Kiwis are going to need in coming years, and to reduce the cost burden on the country,” Dr Dixon says.

“Inaction on dementia now means saddling future governments with an unnecessarily large multi-billion-dollar problem.

“We strongly urge the government to seriously consider our proposal as part of Budget 2019.”

**For more information contact Daniel Paul (021) 400-993.** [**Click here**](http://www.alzheimers.org.nz/getattachment/Our-voice/Policy-documents-and-submissions/Alzheimers-NZ-Advice-for-Budget-2019-(1).pdf/) **to view the Alzheimers NZ’s 2019 Budget Advice.**

**Editor’s note:**The Alzheimers NZ Conference is a three-day event of the year for the New Zealand dementia community, attracting leading speakers from the region and globally, harnessing knowledge and insights from a range of sectors.

Dr Ngaire Dixon will commence the conference with a formal welcome on October 25 at 9am and address attendees at The Grand Millennium Hotel, Auckland.