**News release: Dementia ‘finally recognised’ under Labour**

Labour’s election 2020 health policy has got the cautious support of Alzheimers NZ which says it’s the first political party to ‘finally recognise’ dementia as a major health challenge for the country.

Labour’s policy says the party will ‘work with the (dementia) sector to implement the Dementia Action plan with a focus on prevention, support for whanau to navigate support services, building community acceptance, and strengthening capability in the sector’.

The dementia sector drafted the Dementia Action Plan as a blueprint for a government response to the rapidly growing number of New Zealanders being diagnosed with dementia

Alzheimers NZ chief executive Catherine Hall says successive governments have ignored the dementia facing New Zealand “so it’s good to see Labour begin to address the issue.

“Their policy is certainly a good start and we’re cautiously optimistic it will translate to action, but what the thousands of New Zealand living with dementia actually need now is a firm commitment to actually fund and implement the plan.

“We need to see dollars set aside and timelines confirmed.”

There are approximately 70,000 New Zealanders living with dementia and that number is expected to nearly triple in coming years as our population ages.

As of now, there is no national response plan to deal with dementia, which is a major health issue that Ms Hall labels the most serious after Covid-19.

She says other positives in Labour’s policy is the promise to establish an Aged Care Commissioner as an independent, formal watchdog across the aged care sector, and the promise to implement recommendations from the Health and Disability Review.

“These are also much-needed and long-overdue initiatives that will benefit thousands of people affected by dementia and their care partners.”

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