**People with dementia obviously don’t count**

Despite knowing all the consequences, this government is totally ignoring the needs of New Zealand’s rapidly-growing dementia community, Alzheimers NZ says.

“It’s touted as the Wellbeing Budget, but it seems your wellbeing doesn’t count if you’ve got dementia,” says Alzheimers chief executive, Catherine Hall.

Hall says the thousands of New Zealanders living with dementia are some of the most vulnerable in the country, yet successive governments, including this one, which positions itself as an empathetic administration, continue to totally ignore them.

“This government knows the massive and rapidly-rising extent of the problem, they know the human impact and the fiscal cost, yet, when they have the opportunity, they do absolutely nothing to address the many, varied and series challenges facing those people living with dementia, and their care partners.

“It seems that this government, like those before it, would like to pretend the dementia challenge doesn’t exist.

“Well one day soon, one government is going to be in for a very rude and very painful shock when the full impact of this difficult condition makes itself felt on the heath sector.”

Hall said dementia is one of the most serious healthcare problems facing this country and it is very economically and socially expensive.

The annual costs of supporting people with dementia are about the same as the combined annual costs of supporting people with cancer, heart disease and stroke.

Despite this, no additional investment has been directed at specialist services for people with dementia for more than 10 years and none is projected, despite the fact the number of New Zealanders living with the condition is expected to triple in the next 30 years.

Unless things are done differently, the cost of dementia to New Zealand will be around $5 billion per year by 2050.

“There are two practical solutions already on the table,” Hall says.

“There’s the NZ Framework for Dementia Care, drafted by the previous government and which both they and this government have chosen to largely ignore, and there’s a very simple, six step plan that Alzheimers NZ developed and that would have an immediate impact, both on the quality of life of people living with dementia and the rising fiscal cost.

“Have they ignored us? Yes. Why? Who knows? Maybe people with dementia aren’t considered important enough for government. They don’t seem to count in any policy debate.”

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