**Release for the Blenheim Sun and Marlborough Express**

Picton Library and Service Centre Waitohi Whare Mātauranga has become the first library and service centre in New Zealand to be formally recognised by Alzheimers NZ as Working to be Dementia Friendly.

The formal recognition by Alzheimers NZ was made at a celebration event at the venue on May 21.

Alzheimers NZ chief executive, Catherine Hall, said being recognised as Working to be Dementia Friendly is a major achievement.

She said the number of New Zealanders with dementia is expected to nearly triple in coming years, making the condition one of the country’s most serious healthcare challenges and a major threat to the existing healthcare system.

“The sad fact is, if you are diagnosed with dementia, you are very likely to encounter stigma, fear and misunderstanding about dementia.

“At a time when you need them the most – the people around you, including your whānau and friends, very often drop away from you.

“Most people diagnosed with dementia live at home in their local community for most of their time with the condition, and they need our help.

“That’s why it’s so important that we do all we can to make New Zealand a more dementia friendly society, one that’s more accepting and understanding of people living with dementia.

“And it’s very pleasing to see the Picton Library and Service Centre Waitohi Whare Mātauranga commit so positively and so strongly to that cause.

“Libraries and service centres are important community facilities. By working to become dementia friendly you are helping to make the dementia journey a little easier, more inclusive and supported for people living with dementia in your community.”

The librarian/customer service supervisor at Picton Library and Service Centre Waitohi Whare Mātauranga, Elisabeth Marrow, said they engaged in Alzheimers NZ’s Dementia Friendly Recognition Programme, facilitated by an Alzheimers Marlborough staff member, to ensure they could better meet the needs of their community members who live with dementia.

“We know that more and more people in our community are being diagnosed with dementia and, as the community heart, we need to reflect those needs.

“By working to be dementia friendly we are helping to create more user-friendly facilities for this very important group of people.”

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Ms Hall said she sincerely hopes their leadership in this space “will motivate your colleagues in libraries across the country to get on board with the dementia friendly conversation too.”

Alzheimers NZ runs the [Dementia Friendly Recognition Programme](https://www.alzheimers.org.nz/get-involved/a-dementia-friendly-nz/dementia-friendly-recognition-programme), aimed at businesses and organisations that want to achieve formal dementia friendly status, and [Dementia Friends](https://demfriendsnz.firebaseapp.com/#/home), a short free online education programme for anyone to do and start learning about dementia and how they can help. Alzheimers NZ also offers a [Dementia Friendly Communities](https://www.alzheimers.org.nz/dementia-friendly-nz/dementia-friendly-communities) programme.

For more information contact Daniel Paul (021) 400-993

Editor’s note:

Alzheimers Marlborough have 2 groups that use the Picton Library on a monthly basis. They are:

* Ladies Café Club travel through to Picton and enjoy a cuppa or lunch and then attend the Book Club. This group comprises ladies with early onset dementia. The kind library staff tell them about new books, or they listen to a reading or two. There is quite a bit of laughter during this meeting 😊
* The Picton Café group meets on the 3rd Friday of the month, in the Picton Library. This is an outreach Support Group for People Living with Dementia and their Carers/Family. They enjoy a cuppa and a chat, that can range for cheese to rugby.