**News release**

**Significant healthcare challenge ignored in Budget**

Alzheimers NZ is disappointed the Budget does not include enhanced specialist dementia services for the many thousands of Kiwis who have dementia.

“Dementia is already one of this country’s greatest healthcare challenges and its impact is only going to get worse. It’s imperative the government acts quickly and decisively to invest in the support services needed urgently by people affected by dementia,” said chief executive, Catherine Hall.

There are over 60,000 New Zealanders estimated to be living with dementia and that number is set to triple to over 170,000 by 2050.

They all rely on a variety of community and home-based services provided by Alzheimers organisations around the country, but the government only funds, on average, about 30 percent of the costs of providing those services.

“New Zealand simply cannot afford to do nothing about this issue and the sooner government realises that and actually does something constructive the better it will be, both for the four out of five Kiwis affected by dementia and for Vote Health.”

A recent economic impact report commissioned by Alzheimers NZ shows that dementia already costs the country some $1.7 billion year. That annual cost will jump to nearly $5 billion by 2050.

The report also says that funding and implementing new models of care would significantly improve the quality of life for people living with dementia and it would achieve cost benefit ratios of 6.6 times the level of investment needed.

“That’s why we are so disappointed this Budget does not consider and take steps to address the impacts of the major dementia challenge facing New Zealand,” Ms Hall said.

“Government needs to take action urgently. For every year of delay there is extra cost on the health system and it means thousands and thousands of Kiwis suffer a reduced quality of life.”

Ms Hall hopes the government takes the opportunity presented by the Mental Health Review to address the issue of dementia.

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