**News release**

*Embargoed until 6.00am September 21 (NZT)*

*World Alzheimers Report 2018 to be released 00.01, September 21 (northern hemisphere time)*

**Government is dropping the ball on dementia care and support**

The government needs to do more and do better for New Zealanders affected by dementia, says Alzheimers NZ.

Chief executive, Catherine Hall, says services and support systems for the rapidly growing number of Kiwis with dementia are woefully inadequate and more needs to be done urgently

“As a country we are soon going to have a major problem on our hands unless government takes action now to make sure people living with dementia can access appropriate and consistent levels of support to help them live well.

“This government, like the last one, is dropping the ball on dementia care.”

September 21 is World Alzheimers Day and Ms Hall was speaking ahead of the launch tomorrow (northern hemisphere time) of the Alzheimers Disease International *World Alzheimers Report 2018*.

The report looks at exciting new work in the field of research into dementia and it underlines the significant need internationally for increased dementia research funding.

“More research is definitely needed, but the immediate problem for our country is how best to actually support people living with dementia,” Ms Hall said.

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

“Dementia is economically and socially expensive compared to other conditions. Costs associated with supporting a person with dementia are close to the combined costs of cancer, heart disease and stroke.

“But what’s often ignored or overlooked is the human cost.

“The human toll is enormous, but it, like the fiscal impact, can be mitigated by having in place appropriate support and care structures that enable people living with dementia to live independently and as well as possible, for as long as possible.”

Alzheimers NZ is urging the government to fully implement the NZ Framework for Dementia Care that was prepared in 2013 but which has since been largely ignored.

“The Framework provides a simple pathway to help tackle dementia and to actively and properly support New Zealanders living with dementia. Investing in the Framework now will significantly reduce the long-run costs of doing nothing.

“For government to ignore dementia as a major health priority is ill-advised at best and irresponsible at worst.”

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

Interviews can be arranged with:

* Alzheimers NZ CEO, Catherine Hall
* Clinical Senior Lecturer at the Dept of Psychological Medicine at Otago Uni, Dr Matthew Croucher
* A New Zealander who has dementia, and who is happy to talk about his personal experience and about both the need for research and the need for services and support for people like himself.