



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

Private Members' Statements

9 May 2017

DEMENTIA

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) (21:08): There is no cure for Alzheimer's disease or dementia. However, research over the last decade gives hope for dementia prevention. In particular, a growing body of research suggests that a number of lifestyle and health factors may help to reduce one's risk of dementia. In addition to tackling risk before the development of dementia, there is also evidence that lifestyle factors such as physical activity, cognitive stimulation and nutrition can improve cognition, mood, behaviour and related outcomes for people living with dementia. Right now, there are approximately 413,000 Australians living with dementia and 291,000 people providing care, either in the community or in care accommodation.

In 2056 the number of Australians living with dementia is expected to be 1,100,000 and their carers could number 776,000. The numbers are staggering. In the Hunter alone more than 23,850 people are suffering and around 1,700 sufferers are in my electorate of Wallsend. In the absence of a significant medical breakthrough that number is expected to more than double to 3,500 in Wallsend by 2056. This year it is estimated that dementia will cost Australia more than \$14 billion. This is projected to be \$36.85 billion a year by 2056. Dementia will cost a massive \$1.033 trillion over the next 40 years.

Dementia is the second leading cause of death in Australians, contributing to 5.4 per cent of all deaths in males and 10.6 per cent of all deaths in females each year. Reducing the annual age-sex specific incidence rates for dementia in people aged 65 years and over by 5 per cent would lead to a 7 per cent reduction in the number of people with dementia in the population by 2025 and a 24 per cent reduction by 2056. As a result, there would be nearly 36,400 fewer people with dementia in 2025 and almost 261,000 fewer people by 2056 compared with the current projections of prevalence of dementia over the next 40 years. As a community we must continue to invest in dementia research and dementia risk reduction programs, as well as working to improve the lives of people living with dementia.

We cannot ignore the significant impact of this insidious disease on people living with dementia, their carers and families, the health and aged care systems and the Australian economy as a whole. Alzheimer's Australia does an incredible job in providing services to those affected by dementia, their families and carers. In the Wallsend electorate, the Hunter Medical Research Institute [HMRI] has been working to improve dementia care and outcomes. The experienced multidisciplinary team is looking at improving the health and quality of life for people with dementia and their carers and I thank the institute for that. Laureate Professor Sanson-Fisher from the University of Newcastle, who is leading the team, said

Dementia is a disease with a huge social, economic and disability burden, with increasing prevalence as the Australian population ages. Unfortunately, many people with dementia have unmet needs relating to personal and home safety, medical care, and legal issues.

Their carers also have trouble with resources, mental and general health, and their own health care.

Professor Kichu Nair, Senior Staff Specialist of Geriatric Medicine and Director of Medical Professional Development at John Hunter Hospital, agrees and said:

Dementia is closer to all of us than we want to believe.

We must continue to look at ways to further fund dementia services and research in the Wallsend electorate. There is no time to waste; it is now time to take action.