

Key Takeaways – SME Chat Dementia Australia

Dementia is caused by a variety of conditions including Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia, frontotemporal dementia, and Lewy body dementia.

Is a decline from a previous baseline, affecting two cognitive domains, which affects function. Reversible causes need to be excluded.

Up to 90% of dementia patients will have some form of BPSD during the course of their illness, and the prevalence increases with the severity of the disease, such as:

- aggression
- agitation
- depression or anxiety
- sleep disorders e.g., insomnia
- verbal agitation, vocally disruptive behaviour, repetitive questions or verbalisations
- inappropriate sexual behaviour
- wandering
- psychosis e.g., hallucinations, paranoid delusions.

These symptoms are responsible for more carer stress, institutionalisation, and use of healthcare resources than the cognitive symptoms of dementia.

Appropriate management can have a significant effect on the quality of life of both the patient and the carer.

Supporting WQ HealthPathways:

- [Cognitive Impairment and Dementia](#)
- [Dementia Support Services](#)

SME

Dana Haywood, Team Leader Client Services at Dementia Australia

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About Dementia Australia

Dementia Australia is the national peak body for people living with dementia, their families and carers. We provide:

- **Information, education and support services**
- **Counselling and care navigation**
- **Advocacy and awareness-raising**
- **Training for health professionals**
- **Programs that amplify the voices of people living with dementia**

Although we have only three offices in Queensland (Brisbane, Gold Coast and Cairns), most services are now available **nationwide via phone or video**, ensuring equitable access for regional and remote communities.

Key Services for Your Patients

1. National Dementia Helpline – 24/7

People can call anytime for:

- Dementia information
- Emotional support
- Advice on services and practical strategies
- Signposting to local supports

We also offer **webchat and email** options.

2. Individual Support Program

One-on-one support with a Dementia Support Specialist (nursing and social work backgrounds).

We assist with:

- Understanding the diagnosis
- Navigating My Aged Care
- Centrelink / Services Australia processes
- Practical strategies for day-to-day challenges
- Planning ahead

This support is available to:

- People living with dementia
- Families and care partners (together or independently)

3. Counselling

Free, dementia-specific counselling delivered via phone or video.

Available to:

- People living with dementia

- Carers and family members

Sessions are offered in blocks, with the ability to re-engage when needed.

We also have dedicated **Younger Onset Dementia family counselling** for those under 65.

4. Education Programs

We run a national calendar of **live, interactive online education**, covering topics such as:

- Understanding dementia
- Behaviour changes
- Communication
- Driving
- Caring in the later stages
- We also run **multi-week group programs**:
- *Living with Dementia* (for the person and their carer)
- *Living Well with Dementia* (for the person only)
- *MCI – Thinking Ahead* (practical strategies when living with mild cognitive impairment)

5. Peer Support

- **Carer support groups** (phone and online)
- **Connecting Peers Program** – one-to-one matching with a trained volunteer peer in a similar situation
 - Particularly valuable for people who don't enjoy group settings

6. Carer Gateway Collaboration

We partner with Carer Gateway/Wellways to deliver:

- Counselling
- Coaching
- Carer education
- The *EDIE* Virtual Reality experience—an immersive learning tool that helps carers understand the lived experience of dementia.

Travel funding is available for some regional delivery.

7. Dementia Australia Library

The world's largest publicly accessible dementia library—free to join.

Includes:

- Books
- eResources
- Curated reading lists
- Postal loan service

A great resource for people who prefer physical books.

8. [Dementia Guide](#) + [Younger Onset Dementia Guide](#)

Both available:

- Free by post
- Online as PDF
- Audio format

Bulk orders can be arranged (postage fees may apply).

9. GP Referrer Kit

[Available to order online](#). It includes:

- Services guide
- Dementia support services poster
- Referral script pad
- [Dementia Guide](#)
- Carer information cards

Referral Process

People can be referred via:

- The 24/7 helpline
- [Our website](#)
- A health professional referral (with consent)

After referral, a Dementia Support Specialist contacts the person to understand their needs and connect them with the right combination of supports.

We do not require a formal diagnosis to begin providing support.

Common Referral Errors

- Referring without the person's consent
- The person is unaware a referral has been made
- Not specifying the primary contact (often the carer)
- Minimal information provided

More detail helps us tailor support, but we will always follow up to clarify.

How GPs Can Help

The two main things we wish every GP knew:

- **We exist—and most of our services are free and available virtually across**

Australia.

- **We are non-clinical.**

We provide information, strategies and system navigation—but not medical advice.

Early referral improves outcomes and reduces carer stress. People frequently tell us:

“I wish I had known about Dementia Australia earlier.”

Regional and Remote Barriers

Common challenges include:

- Limited awareness of non-clinical support
- Stigma around dementia
- Hesitancy to seek help locally
- Carer burnout due to isolation

You can help by:

- Reassuring patients that our services are private, confidential and free
- Encouraging early engagement
- Supporting carers as well as the person with dementia

We also deliver **Brain Hubs** throughout Queensland.

We are hoping to run one in **Mount Isa and Cloncurry in June next year.**

Q&A

- **“Dementia is the leading cause of death. Why don’t people see it as a palliative condition?”**

You're right—dementia *is* a progressive, terminal disease, and the palliative care framing is still poorly understood.

Our counsellors work extensively with:

- Anticipatory grief
- Adjustment to loss
- Future planning
- Preparing families for the later stages

We also run *Caring in the Later Stages*, which helps carers understand what to expect and how to prioritise comfort and quality of life. We aim to be realistic and sensitive so that families are not blindsided by the end-of-life phase.

- **“Carer burnout is huge, especially when people refuse residential care. How do you help?”**

Carer burnout is a major issue, especially in rural areas where placement options are limited.

We support carers by:

- Providing counselling
- Helping them explore respite and residential care options
- Online programs like *Considering Residential Care*
- Linking them with My Aged Care supports
- Encouraging boundaries and realistic expectations

There is a well-known statistic that **carers of people with dementia have a higher mortality risk than the people they care for**, due to exhaustion and neglected health. Supporting carers early makes a measurable difference.

- **“Do you provide online education?”**

Yes—almost all our education is available online, live, and interactive. The events calendar on our website lists all upcoming sessions.

- **“What about Dementia Support Australia (DSA)?”**

DSA is an excellent complementary service specialising in behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia. They can travel to rural and remote areas and provide behavioural recommendations, including medication review in certain cases. We work closely with them.

- **“Does Voluntary Assisted Dying impact your work?”**

VAD laws vary, but in Queensland **dementia currently does not meet eligibility criteria**. Many people living with dementia advocate for change, but as it stands, it is not an available option.

- **“Do you help with medications?”**

We don’t provide clinical or medication advice.

We direct people back to their GP or specialist for that, though DSA can support with behavioural medication reviews.

- **“What about the new dementia medications?”**

There are several emerging therapies focused on slowing progression.

We encourage people to discuss suitability, risks and expectations with their treating specialist, as these medications are not appropriate for everyone and benefits vary.