



# The Coalition's Policy to Boost Dementia Research

August 2013

## Key Points

The Coalition will provide a further \$200 million over five years to Australian scientists and medical researchers working on ways to prevent or cure dementia .

Dementia is now the third leading cause of death in Australia and no cure exists. Already over 320,000 Australians live with the disease, including one in four people over the age of 85. A large boost to funding dementia research is vital because without a medical breakthrough nearly one million Australians will have dementia by 2050.

Our commitment will support our dedicated medical scientists in their search for treatment and cure; and give hope and comfort to the 1.2 million Australians currently caring for someone with this illness.

After heart disease, cancer and mental health, dementia is now one of our greatest disease burdens.



## Introduction

The previous Coalition Government led the world in prioritising dementia. In 2004 the Howard government announced that dementia would be made a National Health Priority. In 2005 as Health Minister, Tony Abbott committed \$320 million in that year's budget to help fund the *Dementia Initiative – Making Dementia a National Health Priority*. Furthermore, at the last election the Coalition made a commitment to provide an additional \$50 million over four years to expand this program to include other chronic neurological conditions such as Parkinson's disease.

There are over 320,000 Australians living with dementia and every week 1,700 new cases are added to this total. Alarming, by 2050 nearly 7,500 Australians will be diagnosed with dementia every week.

Dementia is the third leading cause of death in Australia. Despite this, it remains underfunded compared to the research funding allocated to other chronic diseases. For example, in 2012-2013 the National Health and Medical Research Council allocated \$21.5 million to dementia research compared with \$162.4 million on cancer research, \$93.6 million on cardiovascular disease research, \$63 million on diabetes research and \$55.1 million on mental health research.

## The Plan

The Coalition's fight against dementia involves a commitment of \$200 million over five years.

As we already have some of the world's best neurologists and scientists committed to improving treatments, providing early interventions and ultimately arresting dementia, our funding boost will greatly enhance their ability and capacity. Specifically, our boost to funding dementia research will ensure that we can:

1. Dramatically expand capacity in dementia research by supporting our best new researchers to commence work on the key challenges that need to be explored;
2. Prioritise additional funding for dementia research projects in the health and aged care sector;



3. Ensure we make the most of what we already know by translating our research into better care for dementia patients;
4. Invest in vital dementia research infrastructure to allow our scientists to develop the solutions we need.

The Coalition will work with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and the Australian Research Council (ARC) to boost the number of Early Career Research Fellowships, Postgraduate Scholarships, Career Development Scholarships and Future Fellowships for dementia researchers. This will provide great opportunities for our best 'up and coming' scientists to focus on their work and it will significantly boost capacity in the field of dementia research.

The Coalition's plan will provide additional funding for dementia research projects initiated by scientists and researchers. Additional funding will allow specific research to be commissioned to improve clinical treatments and to inform policy.

The \$200 million provided would be quarantined for dementia related research and coordinated through the NHMRC.

Rapid access to the best research will be made available to consumers, health professionals, policy makers and others so that we can get better results more quickly from our research investment.

## The Choice

The Government's proposed aged care reforms make a number of commitments in relation to dementia.

The Coalition welcomes these announcements and our focus is on ensuring they are delivered.

After all, in 2011, this Government reacted to the Coalition's comprehensive mental health plan by announcing a replica policy. The Minister for Aged Care and Mental Health has promised 16 *Early Psychosis Prevention and Intervention Centres* which have not materialised.

The Coalition has a proven track record on delivering on our commitments through good economic management and stable government.



In addition to the Government's commitments on dementia through the *Living Longer, Living Better* reforms, the Coalition makes a further commitment on the essential weapon in combating the growing challenge of dementia – a dramatic escalation in targeted research.

This further builds on the Coalition's strong record of providing a five-fold increase in health and medical research in Government. Research funding for dementia and Alzheimer's Disease increased by over 380 percent between 2000 and 2007, but given the scale of the challenge, more needs to be done.

The Coalition's plan will stimulate, develop and grow the dementia research sector.

The Coalition's plan will put Australia on the front-foot as a world leader in the battle against dementia and Alzheimer's Disease.

## Cost

The Coalition will boost funding for dementia research by \$40 million each year over five years at a total cost of \$200 million.



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For further details of the Coalition's Plan go to  
[www.realsolutions.org.au](http://www.realsolutions.org.au)