

Toolkit for Businesses

Simple tips to make your business or organisation more dementia-friendly

What is Dementia?

Dementia describes a collection of symptoms that are caused by disorders affecting the brain. It is not one specific disease.

Dementia affects thinking, behaviour and the ability to perform everyday tasks.

Act Now for a Dementia-Friendly Future

Imagine being treated differently just because you have been diagnosed with a disease like cancer or diabetes.

This is often the reality for people living with dementia, their families and carers.

Dementia Australia research shows 81 per cent¹ of those with a loved one living with dementia felt that people in shops, cafes and restaurants treated people with dementia differently.

That's why we're encouraging everyone to take a few simple actions to create a dementia-friendly future for all Australians.

A dementia-friendly future is a future that is better for everyone in the community.

¹ dementia.org.au/sites/default/files/2020-09/Dementia-and-discrimination-survey-results-infographic.pdf

3 steps to creating a more dementia-friendly business

Step 1 – Identify a dementia champion for your business

Step 2 – Engage colleagues and your community

Step 3 – Implement and sustain change

Step 1 – Identify a dementia champion for your business

The first step is to find a champion within your business, regardless of department or level of seniority.

As a Dementia Champion, you could:

- Start the conversation with others in the organisation. Ask how the business is supporting people living with dementia, their families and carers, and people with diverse needs more broadly.
- Consider the benefits to your business of being proactive in the short-term and how measures can be embedded into longer-term planning.
- Evaluate how people impacted by dementia are accessing and using your products or services, and if there is anything you can change to make their experience better.
- Review existing policies and frameworks for references to dementia, such as a disability access and inclusion plan.
- Ask for dementia to be added as a standing item to relevant meetings.
- Consider referring to dementia in management plans and report on initiatives to executives on a regular basis.

Step 2 – Engage colleagues and your community

The second step is engagement with others in your business and with the broader community.

You could:

- Talk to your colleagues to build interest in becoming a dementia-friendly business.
- Talk to customers and clients living with dementia, their families, and carers about what is important to them and how they can connect meaningfully with your organisation.
- Find out if there is a local **Dementia Alliance** in your area that would be willing to meet with you and discuss ways your business can support people living with dementia.

- Consider making information about dementia available to staff as part of induction processes.
- Consult with people living with dementia, their families, and carers - Consider establishing new or separate engagement processes for people living with dementia if existing mechanisms are not suitable (for example, consider undertaking one-on-one consultations, community surveys or phone interviews). You can find more about how to do this in our guide **Half the Story**.
- Consider making consultations with members of the community with diverse needs normal practice.

Step 3 – Implement and sustain change

The third step is to find ways to implement your plans and create sustainable changes within the business.

You could:

- Access free or low-cost existing tools and services to educate staff about dementia such as the free **Dementia Friends** program.
- Consider working in partnership with your local council, community groups or sports clubs to support the social engagement of people living with dementia.
- Consider implementing a formal review process to measure progress.
- Consider reviewing HR policies and procedures to ensure there are flexible work arrangements for employees diagnosed with dementia or caring for someone living with dementia.
- Review content on your website, in your storefront and any public-facing printed materials to make sure it is accessible for people with disabilities, including dementia.
- Consider the capacity of your business to provide services that directly engage people living with dementia (such as products, programs or activity groups designed to be inclusive of people living with dementia).

Tips for the physical environment

- Use unambiguous seating design (for example, chairs should look like chairs)
- Use high-contrast design features (for example, in a public restroom consider different coloured toilet seats, distinctive buttons for flushing and signage on the inside of the exit door to differentiate it from a toilet cubicle door)
- Avoid sudden changes in light level since shadows can be confusing
- Use clear signage that allows for line-of-sight orientation, and which uses words and pictures
- Consider inclusion of 'quiet spaces' in refurbishments and new buildings



Ready to take the next step?

If your business or organisation has **already made progress** in becoming dementia-friendly, you might consider becoming a recognised Dementia-Friendly Organisation through Dementia Australia.

To find out more, visit the Dementia-Friendly Communities website: dementiafriendly.org.au