

Greater Adelaide Regional Plan Discussion Paper

Dementia Australia Submission 6 November 2023

Dementia Australia

Dementia Australia is the peak dementia advocacy organisation in Australia.

Our organisation engages with people with dementia, their families and carers in our activities, planning, policy and decision-making, ensuring we capture the diversity of the living experience of dementia across Australia.

Our advocacy amplifies the voices of people living with dementia by sharing their stories and helping inform and inspire others. As the trusted source of information, education and support services, we advocate for positive change for people living with dementia, their families and carers, and support vital research across a range of dementia-related fields.

Dementia in Australia

Dementia is the term used to describe the symptoms of a large group of complex neurocognitive conditions which cause progressive decline in a person's functioning.

Dementia is not just memory loss - symptoms can also include changes in speech, reasoning, visuospatial abilities, emotional responses, social skills and physical functioning. There are many types of dementia, including Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia, frontotemporal dementia and Lewy body disease.

Dementia is one of the largest health and social challenges facing Australia and the world. In 2023, it is estimated there are more than 400,000 people living with all forms of dementia in Australia. This number will continue to grow to more than 800,000 by 2058.¹

In February, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare released data showing dementia is now the leading cause of disease burden among Australians aged 65 and over. Dementia is the second leading cause of death for Australians and the leading cause of death of women.²

¹ AIHW (2023) *Dementia in Australia*. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/dementia/dementia-in-aus/contents/summary>

² AIHW (2023) *Dementia in Australia, Summary, Impact* <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/dementia/dementia-in-aus/contents/summary>

People living with dementia in South Australia

Dementia is a cognitive disability which affects people of all ages, causing difficulties with thinking, memory and behaviour. People with cognitive disability may have challenges with remembering, learning, concentrating, decision-making, attention, communication and problem-solving, among other difficulties.

There are estimated to be more than 33,300 people living with all forms of dementia in South Australia and this is expected to increase to more than 55,000 by 2058.³

Dementia does not just affect older people. There are thought to be around 2,000 people living with younger onset dementia in South Australia, which is dementia diagnosed under the age of 65. There are also children living with dementia.

Around 70% of people living with dementia live in the community, rather than in residential facilities⁴. Most people want to remain living in their own homes as they age, and there is a growing trend towards supporting people to age in place, in their communities.

Many people with younger onset dementia live at home with their families. They may be parents, continue to work and to be involved in community activities. Our infrastructure needs to support people with cognitive or neurological disabilities, and older people, to continue to live in their own homes in their communities.

Our changing demographics mean that we need a shift in how we plan for ageing and dementia in the Greater Adelaide Region. We need to enable innovative solutions which embed dementia-friendly built design, community engagement and access to transport and services. We also need to examine new housing models to support people to age in place in their communities, or remain at home if their care needs increase.

Dementia Australia is grateful for the opportunity to respond to the Greater Adelaide Regional Plan Discussion Paper and supports a focus on more equitable and socially cohesive communities.

People living with dementia in outlying areas

Equitable and socially cohesive communities for people living with dementia and their carers means infrastructure and built design which facilitates community engagement, accessible transport, suitable housing, and access to health and wellbeing services.

Dementia Australia's community development teams find that the need for greater investment in infrastructure to achieve health and wellbeing outcomes is particularly acute in regional areas.

Although this Plan focuses on the Greater Adelaide Region, we note that people with dementia living in outlying areas of the Greater Adelaide Region including Murray Bridge, the Fleurieu Peninsula, Northern Plains and Barossa will have higher needs for the development of

³ Dementia Australia (2023) [Dementia in Australia 2023-2058 – Dementia Prevalence Data Estimates and Projections.](#)

⁴ AIHW (2023) [Dementia in Australia, Prevalence of Dementia.](#)

infrastructure to support equitable access to the community and wellbeing outcomes than those in metropolitan areas.

People living in regional areas also have more difficulty remaining in their communities as they age or if they develop increased care needs due to progression of dementia, because there are fewer residential care options available locally.

The Greater Adelaide Regional Plan should consider strategic approaches to housing models to provide a greater range of options to support people to remain at home in their communities, as they age or if their care needs increase. This could include regulations which facilitate 'granny flat' or small house models or other adaptations to existing premises. It could also include purpose-built housing stock in local community areas that can meet the housing needs of people living with dementia and their families.

Approaches to development of outlying areas of the Greater Adelaide Region should also consider planning for expansion of housing supply for the health and care workforce required to deliver services in these areas to support people to age in place.

Dementia-Friendly Communities

Dementia Australia works towards to the creation of dementia-friendly communities. Dementia-friendly communities are places where people living with dementia are supported to live a high quality of life with meaning, purpose and value. They are places where people with dementia are understood, respected and supported, and confident they can contribute to community life.

Dementia progressively impacts on people's cognition, thinking, mobility, emotional and social skills. In a dementia-friendly community people will be aware of and understand dementia, people with dementia will feel included and involved, and they will have choice and control over their day to day lives.⁵

Dementia Australia's research has found that people living with dementia and their carers are significantly more lonely than other members of the general public. People living with dementia want our communities to be more dementia-friendly, and to them to continue to live well and to be involved in the activities they enjoyed before diagnosis.⁶

Dementia-friendly communities aim to improve access to social engagement, health and care services to enable people living with dementia to continue living at home. This includes the physical environment, such as signage, lighting and colours, and access to convenient transport.⁷

There are many features of built design that can make the community more dementia-friendly.⁸ These features include:

- Affordable, accessible transport.
- Conveniently located community venues.
- Public areas and parklands being clean, well-kept, and pleasant.

⁵ Dementia Australia (2014) [A Guide to Becoming a Dementia-Friendly Community.](#)

⁶ Dementia Australia (2019) [Creating Dementia-Friendly Communities – Community Toolkit.](#)

⁷ Dementia Australia (2019) [Creating Dementia-Friendly Communities – Community Toolkit.](#)

⁸ Dementia Australia (2019) [Creating Dementia-Friendly Communities – Community Toolkit.](#)

- Plentiful outdoor seating which is safe and well maintained.
- Undercover areas in parklands to ensure accessibility in all weather conditions.
- Footpaths being wide, level where possible, non-slip, well maintained and free of obstructions.
- Bicycle paths being separate from footpaths and pedestrian walkways.
- Adequate number of pedestrian crossings which are functional for people with different levels and types of disability, with non-slip markings, visual and audio cues and sufficient crossing times.
- Visual landmarks in place to assist with wayfinding, such as garden beds, murals, water fountains and features.
- Adequate and evenly distributed street lighting to assist those with dementia and lower visual acuity.
- Level changes are clearly marked and well lit, with handrails and non-slip, non-glare surfaces.
- Building entrances being clearly visible and obvious.
- Buildings being well-signed outside and inside, with sufficient seating and toilets, accessible elevators, ramps, railings and stairs, and non-slip floors.
- Indoor and outdoor public toilets being well-maintained, clean, accessible and adequate in number with appropriate signage.
- Bus shelters having enclosed and adequate seating.
- Street clutter including excessive signage, music, advertisements and bollards being minimal.
- Background noise being minimal with acoustic barriers such as trees, hedges and fencing in place, and grass rather than hard surfaces.
- Signs having large graphics and symbols in clear colour contrast to the background, preferably dark lettering on a light background.
- Signs having non-glare lighting and non-reflective coverings.
- Quiet space being available for someone who might be anxious or confused.

Thank you for considering our submission to the Greater Adelaide Regional Plan Discussion Paper. We have a dedicated policy and community development staff in South Australia and would be happy to discuss any of these issues with you in more detail. The Dementia Australia Policy team can be contacted on [**policyteam@dementia.org.au**](mailto:policyteam@dementia.org.au)

More information about dementia-friendly communities is available at [**dementia.org.au**](https://dementia.org.au) and [**dementiafriendly.org.au**](https://dementiafriendly.org.au).