

Services for dementia can be life-changing



MAREE McCABE
DEMENTIA AUSTRALIA CEO

THERE are more than 425,000 people living with dementia in Australia with an estimated 250 people developing dementia each day.

These figures have prompted me to remind individuals, families and carers

impacted to turn to Dementia Australia and access support that can empower them to live well. While there is no cure for dementia – which is the second leading cause of death of Australians and the leading cause of death among Australian women – the right support, information and help can make a life-changing difference to people living with the condition.

Sadly, there is a perception in the community that nothing can be done following a

diagnosis of dementia. However, with an estimated 425,000 Australians living with dementia this year alone – which is expected to soar to 536,000 people by 2025 and more than 1.1 million people by 2056 – it is vital people understand the right support can make the world of difference to everyone impacted by dementia.

We do know we need to make sure we continue to invest in more research to try to find ways to better treat the

condition, or find a cure. But in the meantime, we must also make sure the huge number of Australians impacted by dementia are accessing good quality, appropriate support and services that can help people cope better with the uncertainty and changes that come with dementia.

One significant issue Dementia Australia staff often hear following a diagnosis of dementia is how isolating it can be.

The right services can help

people reconnect and re-establish relationships with partners, families and friends.

Social engagement and keeping physically and mentally active are also key in contributing to better health and lifestyle outcomes following a diagnosis of dementia.

Support services at the early stage following a diagnosis are also essential as they enable people to better understand the condition, which helps prepare for the changes that will

inevitably come. Dementia Australia has delivered services to more than 1.5 million people living with dementia, their families and carers from across the country over the past 10 years alone – and to many, many more since the organisation started more than 35 years ago.

CALL THE NATIONAL DEMENTIA HELPLINE ON 1800 100 500 OR GO TO DEMENTIA.ORG.AU. FOLLOW DEMENTIA AUSTRALIA THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

Nurse a great support

BRAD CROUCH
MEDICAL REPORTER

WHEN Ray Wallis was diagnosed with prostate cancer, then a secondary cancer in the groin, he freely admits it was “a worrying time”.

However, the new prostate cancer specialist nurse at the Royal Adelaide Hospital, Sophie Otto, has provided support and information at a time when it is easy to overlook questions during the stress of seeing specialists.

Ms Otto is only the second prostate specialist nurse in the state, following one at Flinders Medical Centre, providing care co-ordination and a point of contact.

Mr Wallis, 65, of Tickera, on the Yorke Peninsula, had a full health check a year ago that revealed elevated PSA levels, a warning sign of possible prostate cancer.

A biopsy at the RAH found low-level prostate cancer but a follow up PET scan revealed a secondary cancer in the groin.

“It was a bit of a worrying time – you hear cancer and it is a concern,” Mr Wallis says.

“When you speak to the specialists, it is a lot to take in and some questions come to mind later on.

“Sophie has been fantastic in that respect. It is very comforting to know you can ring someone you personally know, ask all the questions



SUPPORT: Patient Ray Wallis with Royal Adelaide Hospital prostate cancer nurse Sophie Otto.

Picture: CALUM ROBERTSON

about treatment – even about things like accommodation when I come to Adelaide.

“It’s wonderful to know I

can just pick up the phone for a chat.”

Ms Otto, a nurse for eight years, previously filled in as

the prostate cancer specialist nurse at FMC for 12 months, after training with the Prostate Cancer Foundation.

“It is a privilege working with men and their families – receiving a diagnosis is a very difficult time,” she says.

Ms Otto says she can give RAH patients evidence-based information about different treatment options, educate them to make informed choices and offer support and reassurance.

Mr Wallis met with urologist

Associate Professor Nick Brook and radiation oncologist Dr Braden Higgs to discuss planned radiation

‘It is very comforting to know you can ring someone you personally know’ – Prostate cancer patient Ray Wallis

treatment.

An application by the two specialists to the Prostate Cancer Foundation won federal funding for the nurse position. Ms Otto is the 29th Commonwealth-funded prostate cancer specialist nurse under the program, which also funds the FMC position.

“This is a huge step forward for our prostate cancer patients,” Prof Brook says.

“We can now provide improved, personalised support to them and work together with them more effectively.”

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men, accounting for 25.5 per cent of the 5476 new male cancers cases diagnosed in South Australia in 2014.



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