

Call for six new dementia-friendly communities

Alzheimer's Australia Victoria is seeking funding to establish at least six dementia-friendly communities across the state over the next three years. This follows the launch of its White Paper in June, outlining the social and economic advantages of dementia-friendly communities.

Port Macquarie and Kiama in NSW have had dementia-friendly community projects running since 2013, while pilot projects are planned or underway in Darwin (NT), Holdfast Bay (SA) and Bribie Island (Qld). Beechworth, in Victoria's north, is the first Victorian pilot site exploring dementia-friendly principles, with a local dementia alliance spearheading its action plan. Kiama's Dementia Advisory Group and Dementia Alliance recently finalised and are promoting that town's dementia-friendly action plan, which includes community education and awareness-raising activities and creating dementia-friendly businesses.

The Alzheimer's Australia White Paper outlines the social and economic benefits of dementia-friendly communities to people, business, tourism and the health budget.

It also explains what makes a dementia-friendly community and how people, organisations and public spaces can become more dementia-friendly.

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\$7000 National Dementia Essay Competition targets students

Australia's first National Dementia Essay Competition opens in September during Dementia Awareness Month, with over \$7000 in prizes on offer, to encourage more university students to consider dementia care as a career choice.

The competition is being run by Australia's Dementia Training Study Centres, with support from Alzheimer's Australia and the *Australian Journal of Dementia Care* (AJDC).

A dementia-friendly nation

In keeping with the theme of this year's Alzheimer's Australia Dementia Awareness Month – 'Creating a Dementia-Friendly Nation' – entrants will be invited to submit an essay explaining how their discipline can contribute to creating a dementia-friendly nation. The goal of this year's Dementia Awareness Month is to encourage Australians to become dementia-aware, have a better understanding of what it is like for a person to live with dementia, and ultimately be encouraged to create communities where people with dementia are supported to live a high-quality life with meaning, purpose and value.

"The aim of the essay competition is to attract interest from students from a wide range of disciplines, as almost every profession has a role to play in creating dementia-friendly communities," said NSW/ACT Dementia Training Study Centre Director and AJDC Executive Editor Professor Richard Fleming.

Carol Bennett, CEO of Alzheimer's Australia, said: "It



Carol Bennett & Richard Fleming

is great to see organisations and individuals placing an importance on being dementia friendly. We are incredibly excited to be involved in this project, and hope that it sparks conversations on the practical and simple things people can do in their communities to be inclusive of people living with dementia and their families and carers."

Career opportunities

Professor Fleming said the competition was part of a wider strategy by Australia's five Dementia Training Study Centres designed to encourage more young professionals to choose dementia care as a career.

"We need to attract more high-calibre professionals to work in aged care generally and the care of people with dementia in particular," Professor Fleming said.

"Many just don't consider dementia care as a dynamic career. However, those of us who work in this field know that, despite the frustrations, it can be deeply satisfying and provides challenges that take all our professional expertise to solve.

"One of the reasons so few professionals are choosing the care of people with dementia as a career is that there are limited opportunities for them to become

aware of, and think about, the opportunities during their undergraduate years.

"We need more bright young minds grappling with the issues surrounding the care of people with dementia. The first step is to get their attention. The DTSCs' Australian National Dementia Essay Competition is one way to do this," Professor Fleming said.

Entry details

The National Dementia Essay Competition is open to all second and third year undergraduate students enrolled in an Australian university, including those working in health or aged care. Entry details are available at www.dtsc.com.au/dementia-essay/

Entries will be accepted from 1 September to 30 September 2015, with the winners announced in the February/March 2016 issue of AJDC and on the DTSC website at www.dtsc.com.au

Prizes

Major prizes of \$2000 (first prize), \$1000 (second) and \$500 (third) will be awarded to three second-year students and three third-year students. The first 100 people to submit an essay will receive a complimentary one-year subscription to the *Australian Journal of Dementia Care* and the Schools of the winning students will receive a one-year subscription to the journal.

Specialist prizes will also be awarded. Organisations or individuals interested in sponsoring one of the specialist prizes can email dementia-essay@uow.edu.au for more information.

Art program evaluation

The Art Gallery of NSW has commissioned a formal evaluation of its expanded Art and Dementia program this year. Dr Gail Kenning, a Research Associate at the University of Technology Sydney, will examine the number and frequency of visitors in the program and individuals' responses to the experience of being in the gallery, looking at and talking about the art works. The program includes weekly group sessions in the gallery for people with dementia and carers and outreach visits to organisations supporting people with dementia. Dr Kenning said the qualitative study will draw on the experiences of a range of people associated with the program including those with dementia, their families, friends and carers. The findings are expected to be published in November or December this year.