



11 April 2002

Media Statement

Dementia care improvements underway

New contracts being negotiated between the Ministry of Health and aged care providers will address the key recommendations in an independent report on dementia care, Associate Health Minister Ruth Dyson said today.

Releasing the report and the Ministry of Health's response, Ms Dyson said that people with dementia were very vulnerable and it was essential they received the best possible care and support.

"I agree with the report's assessment of the impact of dementia on people's lives, and on the subsequent importance of early diagnosis, appropriate intervention, an active partnership between family carers and professionals, and high quality residential care."

Ms Dyson said that new aged residential care contracts, which were expected to be finalised by 1 June 2002, would address the key issues raised in the report.

"The new contracts will improve the quality of residential care for people with dementia, with strengthened provisions for training, staffing levels, use of medication and restraint, and auditing and monitoring of facilities. They will ensure national consistency of services, and will specify a number of other improvements, including that a trained staff member must be on duty in every dementia unit for 24 hours a day."

Ruth Dyson said increased funding for residential care facilities would also help to improve the quality of care for people with dementia.

"In December 2001, the government injected an additional \$12.6 million into aged residential care. Further funding increases are expected later this year."

Ruth Dyson thanked the working party set up to develop the report for their efforts on behalf of people with dementia, their families and carers. The report was compiled by Wellington public health physician, Dr Hazel Lewis. Other members of the working party included service providers, health professionals and representatives from the aged care sector.

Copies of the report, 'Dementia in New Zealand: Improving Quality in Residential Care', and the Ministry of Health's response are available from the Ministry of Health, PO Box 5013, Wellington, phone 04 496 2061, or on the ministry's website, www.moh.govt.nz under 'publications'.

Contact Pip Desmond, press secretary, (04) 471 9258, 025 575 894