



## NATIONAL DEMENTIA AWARENESS MONTH

### Members' Statements

### 7 September 2006

**Ms GRIERSON (Newcastle)** (9.36 am)—Tomorrow, 8 September, marks the beginning of National Dementia Awareness Month. This year commemorates 100 years since the German physician, Alois Alzheimer, first described the condition we now know as Alzheimer's disease. As part of this centenary, Alzheimer's Australia has produced a special publication entitled *100 years of Alzheimer's—towards a world without dementia*, which uses a time line to chart the major developments in our understanding of this potentially debilitating condition.

Senator Marise Payne and I, as co-conveners of Parliamentary Friends of Dementia, have circulated this publication to all members of parliament this week along with an invitation to attend a special briefing in Parliament House by one of the world's leading dementia researchers, Professor Marilyn Albert, next Tuesday. I encourage all members and senators to attend. Marilyn Albert is a professor of neurology and the director of cognitive neuroscience at John Hopkins University in the United States. She has co-authored more than 150 publications, including the best selling book *Keep Your Brain Young*, which she co-wrote with her husband, Professor Guy McKhann.

Professor Albert's main focus of research is mapping how changes in behaviour correlate with changes in brain structure and how this helps our understanding of dementia. The theme for this year's Dementia Awareness Month is 'No time to lose', an appropriate theme. There is an estimated 212,000 people in Australia with the condition, and by 2050 this number is projected to increase to 730,000. In 2006 it is estimated that there will be 54,000 new cases of dementia, so there really is no time to lose.

For people living with dementia, their families and carers and for those who are at risk, this year's theme is a call for urgent action by governments and communities everywhere to improve the care and treatment of people with dementia, to increase funding for medical research and to encourage healthy lifestyles and habits to reduce the incidence of dementia. Alzheimer's Australia will tomorrow launch a community education program and a consumer focus booklet called *Mind your mind*, a user's guide to dementia risk reduction. This program offers advice and strategies—which, of course, we could all benefit

from—to help consumers understand how they can reduce their risk of dementia in later life and promote brain health. It continues the excellent work that the Mind Your Mind signpost program began 12 months ago.

Excellent work is being carried out across Australia at the community level. I want to draw attention to the work of the Hunter Network of Alzheimer's Australia New South Wales. In partnership with Rotary group district 9670, the Hunter Network has raised more than \$260,000 to establish a dementia resource centre in Newcastle. Alzheimer's Australia NSW matched that funding, and this new total of \$520,000 has allowed them to purchase a building, but there is much work to be done. I call on the Commonwealth government to uphold the promise by the former Minister for Aged Care, Bronwyn Bishop, in 2001, to help fund a dementia resource centre in Newcastle.