

Dementia Friendly Kiama

Pilot Project Evaluation 2016



The Dementia-friendly Kiama pilot project commenced in June 2014 as a partnership between the University of Wollongong, Kiama Municipal Council, Alzheimer's Australia and the Kiama community.

Background

In October 2014, the Dementia Advisory Group (consisting of people living with dementia and their carers) and Dementia Alliance (including members of the Advisory Group, representatives from organisations and interested individuals) were formed.

These groups reviewed formative research conducted by the University of Wollongong in 2014 and developed an Action Plan.

The aims of the Action Plan were to:

- Support people with dementia to have a central role in the project
- Support people with dementia to maintain active involvement in the community
- Increase awareness and reduce the stigma of dementia
- Provide general and specific education and training about dementia in the community
- Improve the accessibility of the physical environment in and around Kiama for people living with dementia.

Evaluation Research

A range of research was undertaken to monitor and evaluate the project over the two year pilot phase including:

- Process evaluation and monitoring of activities
- Interviews and surveys with people with dementia and their carers (2014 and 2016)
- Consultation with the Dementia Advisory Group and the Dementia Alliance
- Conduct of two community surveys (2014 and 2016)
- Conduct of two business/community organisation surveys (2014 and 2016).

Achievements

Empowerment and inclusion of people living with dementia was considered one of the pilot project's most important achievements.

People with dementia and their carers expanded their role to include advocacy and peer support, training and community education, and networking with local organisations.

They represented the project on council committees and were spokespeople at community events and national and international forums.



'It has been about empowering people with dementia to be actively and proactively leading this project and steering it so therefore it is not a bunch of professionals doing it for other people, it is people with dementia and their supporters leading.'
Dementia Alliance member.



Information and Awareness

A range of new information resources were developed for people living with dementia and their carers including the Dementia Illawarra Shoalhaven website with dementia news and a local calendar of events, and the OurPlace Kiama website.

Over two years more than one thousand people from the Kiama local government area participated in community education and awareness raising activities offered via a number of mediums.

Information sessions and Dementia Friends training (pictured above) improved the capacity of individuals and representatives from community organisations to be inclusive of people living with dementia.

'I think people are more aware and more caring in Kiama because of the dementia awareness. I think that's got to be probably the number one thing that's so important.'
Carer.



Social Inclusion

Monthly social outings (pictured below) were convened by the Dementia Advisory group and several other inclusive events were held at Kiama library.

The project has provided opportunities for social engagement and enabled participation in decision making for people living with dementia as well as their carers.

Community Attitudes

Community responses to the 2016 survey (compared to 2014) showed significantly higher agreement with regards to the statements:

- 'People with dementia participate in a wide variety of activities and interests'
- 'It is easy to find out about dementia-friendly services or organisations in Kiama'.

This suggests that project activities have contributed to improved understanding and more positive attitudes with regards to the capabilities of people living with dementia at a whole of community level.

Community survey respondents who attended an information session or educational event also reported significantly less negative views about how they themselves would feel if they were diagnosed with dementia (compared with respondents who did not attend an event).

The direct involvement of people living with dementia as spokespeople and educators at all informational events was critical to improving positive attitudes and reducing the stigma associated with dementia.

'It could affect anyone and we, as a community, not only need to be aware of it but also conscious of supporting people either individually or ensuring that the environment and the community we live in supports people living with dementia.'

Carer.

Local Businesses and Community Organisations

A large number of local businesses and community organisations were provided information and resources as part of the project, with tailored presentations delivered to more than twelve groups.

A variety of resources were made available including the Alzheimer's Australia Business Toolkit, the Environmental Assessment Tool (piloted at three Kiama organisations), and a seminar hosted by the Kiama Chamber of Commerce.

People living with dementia and their carers who participated in interviews and surveys in 2016 reported improved positive attitudes of staff and increased support by local businesses, including positive experiences in cafés.

There are ongoing opportunities to liaise with local businesses and use additional resources including the Dementia-friendly Café Toolkit, and establishing buddy programs where people living with dementia are supported to continue participation or volunteering with community service organisations.

'We do want to support people, like the Dementia Friends. Ideally we want to have someone who is a dementia buddy or similar so that if people still want to be involved [we can accommodate that].'
Community Organisation Representative.

The Physical Environment

People with dementia and their carers in the Kiama local government area participated in the development of the world first Dementia-friendly Communities Environmental Assessment Tool.

One member of the Dementia Alliance was also provided with a place on the Disability and Access Committee of the Kiama Council to advocate for changes to improve access for people with dementia.

Two community organisations that utilised the Alzheimer's Australia Dementia-friendly Business Toolkit made changes to improve accessibility of their buildings for people living with dementia.

Ongoing priorities in the physical environment include improvements to: signage on bus stops and public toilets; pedestrian crossings; and public transport.

Recognition and Awards

The project was recognised by the Dementia Alliance International as a gold-standard approach to developing Dementia-friendly Communities because of the establishment of and leadership by the Dementia Advisory Group.

Kiama Council received a National Award for Local Government in the Disability Access and Inclusion category (2016) and was recognised by the World Health Organisation at the 7th Global Conference of the Alliance for Healthy Cities for its commitment to the creation of a Dementia-friendly Kiama (pictured below).





The Next Steps

The project has now entered the second phase, with the aim of moving from 'dementia-friendly' to 'dementia enabling'. This has been supported by grants from local business, charities and an Illawarra Retirement Trust Foundation grant.

It is hoped the project will continue its successful education program targeting diverse groups, and provide ongoing social inclusion via community events and activities arranged by the Dementia Advisory Group.

To ensure the sustainability of the project, additional avenues for funding are required. It is a priority to continue to engage people living with dementia, and increase membership of the Dementia Advisory Group, to ensure people living with dementia and their carers continue to lead the project. Long-term commitment from local government is also critical.

'[Success is] the progressive realisation of meaningful and significant goals, not the endpoint. The pathway to a dementia-friendly community is a journey without end, not an end without a journey'

Dennis Frost, Dementia Advisory Group.

Resources:

For information about dementia activities in Kiama and surrounds visit:

- Dementia Friendly Kiama Project at Kiama Municipal Council:
www.kiama.nsw.gov.au
- Kiama's Dementia Advisory Group:
www.southerndag.org
- Dementia Illawarra Shoalhaven website:
www.dementias.com
- Local maps with dementia-friendly places: www.ourplacemap.com
- Environmental audit tool:
www.enablingenvironments.com.au

Contacts

For further information about the Dementia-friendly Kiama Project or to get involved please contact the Dementia-friendly Project Officer, Kiama Municipal Council
Email: council@kiama.nsw.gov.au
Tel: 02 4232 0444

For further information about the research please contact Dr Lyn Phillipson, University of Wollongong
Email: lphillip@uow.edu.au
Tel: 02 4221 4773

