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Supporting research is vital



**RICHARD HEARN CEO
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AS WE draw to the end of Dementia Awareness month, it is timely to consider this year's theme: Creating a Dementia-Friendly Nation.

This theme challenges us to become more dementia aware,

creating communities where people with dementia are supported.

Dementia is an illness that is linked to age, although many people live well into their 90s or more and enjoy a rich life without ever being affected by it. For those who develop dementia, it is often a gradual process, unique to each person. For some, the onset can be quite sudden. For a smaller yet significant number of people, onset may be much younger. A

person with dementia may have some awareness of changes in themselves and seek assistance with the support of their partners, family and friends. Others may lack insight into the emerging effects, yet those around them are aware

that things are "not right".

Dementia has a significant impact on an individual's life. It also affects those closest to them, their partner, family members and carers.

There is a great deal we need to learn about dementia and its various forms, and how services can be individualised to maintain quality of life for each person, taking into consideration their circumstances.

Supporting research into dementia is, therefore, very important. An initiative that aims to improve the wellbeing of older people living with dementia is the Rethink Respite project, managed through Alzheimer's Australia

and facilitated by Dr Lyn Phillipson, associate director of the Centre for Health Initiatives at the University of Wollongong.

Resthaven has funded this initiative and seeks to learn from the project's findings, aimed to improve carer knowledge about, attitudes towards and uptake of respite services for carers of people living with dementia.

Projects such as Rethink Respite aim to encourage

carers to access the support and assistance available.

Many people live with dementia and many more care for and support them.

People should seek services and support to assist them in maintaining their quality of life, such as from their GP, Alzheimer's Australia and aged care services, accessed via myagedcare.gov.au.

**CALL THE NATIONAL DEMENTIA
HELPLINE ON 1800 100 500**