



Next year Byron Shire Respite Service turns 30!

During the past 29 years, we've provided support to people of the Byron, Ballina and Lismore shires and enjoyed the company of 100s of clients, their family members, fabulous volunteers and workers. This month we welcomed new Service Manager, Peter Devine to our family. Peter (pictured here with Management Committee President Hanne and Day Program Co-ordinator Sonya) has enjoyed a long career in the community sector and is looking forward to meeting you when next you visit the centre.



The Byron carer

September 2020

Volume 19 Issue 9

www.byronrespite.com.au

Byron Shire Respite Service is located at the Brunswick Valley Community Centre, South Beach Rd, Brunswick Heads.

Our incorporated non-government community based organisation is managed by a local committee and covers the shires of Byron, Ballina and Lismore.

NDIS Registered Provider

Respite care is delivered through our Flexible Respite, Day Respite and Social Support projects, with a person centred enablement approach across the respite continuum.

Telephone Janine on: (02) 6685 1629
or Peter on: (02) 6685 1921

Website: www.byronrespite.com.au

Email: service@byronrespite.com.au



Byron Shire Respite Service acknowledge and pay respect to the Arakwal people of the Bundjalung nation, the traditional owners of the land on which we live and care – and pay respect to the Elders past, present and emerging.

Byron Shire Respite Service Inc. is supported by the Australian Government Department of Health. Visit www.health.gov.au

Although funding for the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) has been provided by the Australian Government, the material contained herein does not necessarily represent the views or policies of the Australian Government.

Dementia affects close to half a million Australians

That number is set double in the next 25 years.

A little support for the many Australians that experience the impact of dementia, can make a huge difference.

Dementia Australia and Byron Shire Respite Service know that people living with dementia can continue to live active and rich lives many years after diagnosis. It is our role as a community to do the best we can to support people living with dementia live well for as long as possible.

Anyone can develop dementia. Dementia doesn't discriminate, but we can change how we respond to and behave around people living with dementia.

Understand more. Know the facts.

Every three seconds, someone in the world develops dementia. Dementia has become the leading cause of death among Australian women, and remains the second leading cause of death across all Australians. If we are to prepare for this increase, it is vital we clear up some of the prevailing misconceptions about dementia.

Visit the Dementia Australia at: <https://www.dementia.org.au>

It is our role as a community to do the best we can to support people living with dementia to live well for as long as possible. One way you as a carer can help our community is to join the Byron Shire Respite Service's Management Committee as the Carer Representative.

The role is currently vacant and your input is invaluable to the organisation, our clients and community. For more details please ring Management Committee President, Hanne Brown on 0400 202 861. More information about the Management Committee and Carer Representative role will appear in next month's newsletter.

Dementia Action Week

21-27 September 2020

A little support makes a lot of difference



Hypersensitivity and dementia

Dementia can sometimes worsen the effects of sensory changes and alter how the person perceives noise, light and touch.

Many people with dementia have a reduced ability to understand their sensory environment as their brain can no longer identify the many different sensations of touch. This is due to a condition called agnosia that affects the five senses and the inability to identify things for what they are.

A person's sensitivity to sound, temperature, light or pain can change over time and even during the course of a day.



For example, the sound of children's playing that might have

previously brought

joy to a person living with dementia might start to cause them distress. Or the person may have an increased sensitivity to pain, causing them to cry out when they are accidentally brushed against or the water temperature in the shower or at the basin changes slightly.

The extreme reactions of a loved-one can be both distressing and frustrating for carers, and although there is little we can do to prevent the problem, there are ways to manage it.

- **Don't surprise the person**—be sure to get their attention first by approaching from the front and make eye contact before touching them.
- **Tell the person what you are going to do** and show

them how you will do it, demonstrating with your own body if possible. For example, start to wash your own hands first, before guiding their hands under a running tap.

Over-Reactions

You may be surprised by the way the person with dementia sometimes reacts strongly to what may seem like a trivial event or setback. They might scream, shout, become agitated, make unreasonable accusations and stubbornly refuse to move. It can be quite disturbing to witness such a violent reaction, particularly when you have no idea what triggered it. You may even feel a little shaky, particularly if the reaction took you by surprise.

However, Alzheimer Europe report that over-reactions, or catastrophic reactions as they are often called, are not caused by you or anyone else. You should therefore try not to feel too disheartened or upset.

You might not be able to prevent these reactions from happening altogether, but there are various precautions you can take which may reduce their frequency.

How to prevent over-reactions

- **Avoid making demands on the person with dementia that they cannot handle** Over-reactions may tend to take you by surprise. Even

seemingly simple tasks, such as putting sugar in a cup or passing a book, may prove too difficult and result in an over-reaction.

- **Try to avoid the person with dementia coming up against situations that they cannot handle.** Common situations include: too many people talking at once, too many questions, problems understanding, being surrounded by too many people or being faced with a difficult task.

- **Look out for signs of stress and avoid triggering an over-reaction.** There is often a few minutes warning before an outburst during which the person with dementia becomes agitated. You may be able to distract them successfully during this time or offer reassurance and prevent the reaction.



- **Try to maintain a simplified, familiar and unstressed environment.** Over-reactions, like other problems such as disorientation or frustration, can often be prevented by maintaining a simple, familiar and unstressed environment. If the person with dementia frequently has over-reactions, it could be that they are finding life increasingly difficult or confusing. You may find that by simplifying the environment and offering more help, it becomes less frequent. It may help to find a

calmer place for the person to sit, cut down on noise and regularly check to see whether they need anything.

How to cope with an over-reaction

When an over-reaction occurs, there is little you can do to stop it, but you may be able to avoid aggravating the situation. Remain calm and speak gently to the person and they may gradually calm down. You could also try to gently hold their hand or put your arm around them. Of course, this is often extremely difficult if they are shouting and screaming abuse at you.

Look after yourself

Although it is easy to say that the reaction is the result of the disease and is not personal, that may not stop you from losing your temper or responding angrily. If this happens, try not to dwell on it or feel guilty. The person with dementia will probably forget about it soon after. But if it happens regularly or you often feel that it is going to, it would be a good idea to contact your doctor. A doctor can check whether there is a physical problem such as pain, infection or discomfort, which might be leading to the reaction and can be treated.

It may also help to speak to someone who knows your loved-one well or other carers or care workers who may have their own strategies to cope with similar situations when caring for people with dementia.

To view or download the original transcript of this article, please visit Alzheimer Europe at: <https://www.alzheimer-europe.org/Living-with-dementia/Caring-for-someone-with-dementia/Changes-in-mood/Over-reaction#fragment1>



Need support?

- **Carer Gateway** telephone: 1800 422 737 for information about planned & emergency respite & other carer supports. www.carergateway.gov.au

- **Australian Government Department of Health** For more information about COVID-19 call the Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080 or www.health.gov.au

- **My Aged Care** telephone: 1800 200 422 for information about the Australian Government's aged care system and services. www.myagedcare.gov.au

If you require emergency respite, please call the Carer Gateway: 1800 422 737

- **Telephone Janine at Byron Shire Respite Service to discuss your role as a carer.** telephone: 02) 6685 1619
- **National Dementia Helpline** telephone: 1800 100 500
- **Carers Counselling Service** telephone: 02) 6628 6416
- **Carers NSW** telephone: 1800 242 636
- **Sandra Kimball Counselling** telephone: 0458 175 962
- **National Continence Helpline** telephone: 1800 330 066
- **NSW Elder Abuse Helpline** telephone: 1800 628 221

Aids:

- **Byron Ballina Home Maintenance and Modification Service 1/65 Centennial Circuit, Byron Bay** telephone: 02) 6685 7312
- **Lismore Home Maintenance and Modification Service 43 Habib Dr, South Lismore** telephone: 02) 6622 2323
- **Bright Sky Cards for Continence Aids Payment Scheme (CAPS)** telephone: 1300 886 601

Need Transport?

- **Byron Shire Respite Service** can assist with transport to medical appointments. Telephone Janine: 02) 6685 1629
- **Byron Shire Limousines** telephone: 02) 6685 5008 Travel for medical appointments free with travel voucher or for Veteran and Widow Gold Card holders
- **Brunswick Limousines** telephone David on: 0412 855 747
- **Tweed Byron Ballina Community Transport** telephone: 1300 875 895 Tweed Byron Ballina Community Transport provide transport to medical appointments, weekly & fortnightly shopping outings & monthly social outings. The service is funded to support older people living at home independently or have a permanent disability or Indigenous Australians aged over 50 years. Phone Kathryn in the Byron office on: 1300 875 895 for transport to medical appointments or Amanda for any shopping bus or social bus enquiries.



How stigma and ignorance in our community affects people living with dementia

Some stigma around dementia exists due to the lack of public awareness and understanding of the disease. Research undertaken by Dementia Australia in the broader community shows that there is a prevailing attitude that people living with dementia are overwhelmingly very old, frail and living in care.

In another 2016 study by Dementia Australia, people with dementia were shown to commonly experience social isolation, which can put them at risk of becoming lonely.

Chronic loneliness can lead to poor mental and physical health. This has been reinforced by consultation with advocates where their experiences confirm that once diagnosed with dementia there is a perception that they have a complete loss of function and independence.

Misconceptions can lead to judgements about the capacity of a person living with dementia and cause significant discrimination.

#LetsTalkAboutDementia
#WorldAlzMonth
www.worldalzmonth.org

September 21st is World Alzheimer's Day

World Alzheimer's Month is the international campaign by Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI) every September to raise awareness and challenge the stigma that surrounds dementia.

World Alzheimer's Month was launched in 2012.

World Alzheimer's Day is on 21 September each year.

2 out of every 3 people globally believe there is little or no understanding of dementia in their countries. The impact of World Alzheimer's Month is growing, but the stigmatisation and misinformation that surrounds dementia remains a global problem that requires global action.



Dementia-friendly communities

To start building a dementia-friendly community, it helps to learn what it is like to live with dementia. A good way to do this is by signing up to become a Dementia Friend. The free online Dementia Friends program is a series of short online videos designed to help you learn more about dementia, learn about the challenges faced by people living with dementia and learn how to help people with dementia remain connected. Visit: <https://www.dementiafriendly.org.au>



Every day is the day to ask, "Are you OK?" if someone in your world is struggling with life's ups and downs.

2020 has been a challenging year for many and circumstances have made it even more important for us all to stay connected and, for those who are able, be willing to support those around us.

Ever wondered what to ask?

R U OK? works to provide all Australians with the resources and confidence they need to navigate a conversation with someone who might be struggling and guidance on how to connect them to appropriate support if they need it. Learn what to say after R U OK? and find conversation tips on the ruok website and in 'Your guide to what to say after R U OK?' which you can download or read online at: www.ruok.org.au/how-to-ask

A conversation could change a life