

GLOBAL CHALLENGES

Living Well Longer: Dementia Friendly Communities



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Project Highlights

- Collaboration with Alzheimer's Australia and Kiama Municipal Council
- Winner of National Award for Local Government in Disability Access and Inclusion
- Awarded 2 Alzheimer's Australia Dementia Research Foundation Grants
- Developed Dementia Friendly Audit Tool
- Vice-Chancellor's Award for Interdisciplinary Research 2015

As we move further into the 21st century, our population continues to age at a rapid rate. This presents a myriad of consequences for society, among them the associated rise in age-related illnesses.

The incidence of dementia is expected to escalate significantly in coming decades, climbing to approximately one million people in Australia in 2050.

An interdisciplinary team of researchers are working to create dementia-friendly communities that change the way people with the disease interact within their physical, social, and cultural environments.

The project was piloted in Kiama, a town on the south coast of New South Wales with a high level of post-retirement aged residents. A small community of 13,000 people, Kiama embraced the dementia-friendly initiative, and for the researchers, the level of engagement from across the community was essential to achieving their aims.

Drawing from various disciplines including experts in public health, human geography, psychology and social marketing, the project examines ways to improve access to shops, banks, and buildings; crosswalks and use of roads and pathways; way finding and signage; as well as social interaction and technology to support active participation of people with dementia. It has also led to the development of two websites for people with dementia and their carers.

The success of the Kiama initiative demonstrates the ability of communities to adapt and respond to the challenges posed by an ageing society, a problem facing developing nations around the world. "By creating communities where people understand dementia, we are enabling those with dementia to live in their communities with meaning, purpose, and quality of life" said lead researcher Dr Lyn Phillipson.

DISCIPLINES:

- Public Health
- Human Geography
- Psychology
- Social Marketing

LOCATION:

- Kiama, Australia

CONTACT

 globalchallenges.uow.edu.au

 globalchallenges@uow.edu.au

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