

MEDIA STATEMENT

08 February 2019

Ambassadors touched by dementia go a month without chocolate

Three Perth women who have each been touched by Alzheimer's disease, have vowed to abstain from chocolate during March to raise much needed funds and awareness for Alzheimer's WA.

Ros Thomas, a journalist, columnist and published author, Pippa McManus, a celebrated fashion illustrator and Jessica Bratich Johnson, a handbag designer and former karate champion, have recently been named as the 2019 Ambassadors for the Chocolate Block Challenge.

Both Ros and Pippa have parents living with Alzheimer's disease.

"As a renowned chocoholic I am honoured (if a little apprehensive) to become an Ambassador for Alzheimer's WA's Chocolate Block Challenge," said Ros

"My beautiful mum has had Alzheimer's since 2015. As an only child, I've been caring for her since her diagnosis.

"Those of us on this demanding and emotional journey need to be supported. If my ambassadorship can help other carers I will be delighted."

Pippa agrees.

"In 2001 I lost my gorgeous father Bill McManus to Alzheimer's disease after he battled it for seven years," said Pippa.

"It was heartbreaking watching that charming, smart and hilarious man just slip away.

"In January 2016, 15 years later, my beautiful mother was diagnosed with the same disease.

"Now I'm playing the part that my mother played back then and I am so grateful to Alzheimer's WA for the support I have received.

"They are helping mum live a full and happy life while offering incredible support to me as her carer through workshops, events and most importantly someone to chat to whenever I need information or advice."

Jessica, a self-confessed chocoholic, is taking part in the Chocolate Block for a reason close to her heart.

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“My Nanna, who was one of my most favourite people in this world and who my daughter is named after, lived with dementia,” said Jessica.

“She passed away before she got to meet my kids.

“So I’m taking part to help raise money for other families affected by this disease.”

Alzheimer’s WA CEO Rhonda Parker said funds raised from the Chocolate Block Challenge will be used by Alzheimer’s WA to support and make a positive difference to the lives of people living with dementia in WA.

“There are currently 41,149 people living with dementia in Western Australia,” Ms Parker said.

“This figure is predicted to increase dramatically to over 84,000 people in less than twenty years and almost 150,000 people by 2056.

“Dementia is the leading cause of death of women in Australia, and the second leading cause of death of all Australians and there is currently no cure.”

“I urge everyone who has been touched by dementia to sign up to the Chocolate Block Challenge because every dollar you raise helps ensure we are always here for those living with dementia.

“We believe that everyone deserves to be themselves, to do the things that are important to them, to have freedom and safety, to belong and have meaning and most of all to see joy in their lives as much as they can until the end of their days.

“Your contributions ensure we can continue to provide dementia-specific person-centred care, support and services, which include Respite houses that are safe places to turn to and spend time, special programs that encourage belonging and joy, and raising awareness and reducing stigma by changing negative opinions many have about those living with dementia.”

To register yourself or a team visit www.chocolateblock.com.au or www.facebook.com/chocolateblockchallenge

– Ends –

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Notes to media:

Stories in the media about dementia may prompt concerns or cause distress for audiences and readers. When writing or talking about dementia, please encourage your audience/readers to call our Customer Support line on 1300 66 77 88, a free call, telephone information and support service.

What is appropriate language for talking about dementia and why we need it?

The words used to talk about dementia can have a significant impact on how people with dementia are viewed and treated in our community. In particular, please avoid the use of the word sufferer or suffering – the preferred language is a person/people living with dementia. Please read the [Dementia Language Guidelines](#) that have been developed by people living with dementia and carers.

About Alzheimer's WA

As the dementia experts, Alzheimer's WA works with those living with dementia and the organisations that care and support them, to have the greatest beneficial impact on their dementia journey.

Our client services, advocacy work, training and consultancy programs are based on a philosophy of understanding the lived experience of dementia. We are guided by people living with dementia and our approach views dementia as a holistic experience for the person rather than just a biological illness. Call our Customer Support line on 1300 66 77 88 or visit www.alzheimerswa.org.au.