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## KENSINGTON

# Course a step up for brain health

## Dementia class first for school

**Melissa Seiler**

KENSINGTON Public School students have become the first to take part in a program teaching children about dementia.

The Kids4Dementia program for 9 to 12-year-olds was developed by Dr Jess Baker from The Centre for Healthy Brain Ageing (CHeBA) at the University of NSW.

There are 413,000 Australians living with dementia and that number is expected to triple by 2050.

The students learnt about what causes dementia, how it feels to have dementia, that it is OK to talk about dementia and how to keep the brain healthy.

Stage 3 relieving principal Ryan O'Connor said the children engaged well with the videos and activities.

"Upon completion of the program, students had a greater understanding of the disease of dementia, its effect on individuals and families, and how to keep their brains healthy throughout their lives," Mr O'Connor said.

CHeBA is now working to fulfil Dr Baker's goal of enlisting 30 NSW schools to roll out the Kids4Dementia program, and ultimately for it to become part of the primary school curriculum.



**Alex Lamont, 9, and his mother Sally Matthews. Picture: John Appleyard**

"Educating children about dementia is the foundation for a dementia-friendly society," Dr Baker said.

To generate funds to support the program, a team of 30 have so far signed up to participate in this year's Sydney Running Festival on September 17.

Among them are Coogee Public School student Alex Lamont, 9, and mum Sally Matthews.

Alex's paternal grandfather Davy was recently diagnosed with dementia.

"We were running three times a week together to try and be a bit healthier, so (the event) is a good way to support the cause in terms of dementia, and also as a focus for us on our brain health," Ms Matthews said.

• **To get involved email Heidi Douglass at CHeBAh.douglass@unsw.edu.au or call 9382 3398**