

Connect for better health

The connections we make with others outside of our immediate family have an enormously positive impact on our mental health and emotional wellbeing. Having people to talk to, share common experiences with, even just knowing there's something to look forward to on the weekly calendar can make us feel happy, secure and supported.

Disconnection often happens as we age. Changes in physical health and personal circumstances, like the loss of a partner, or a health condition that makes it difficult to drive, can lead to people losing their sense of belonging, but it can happen at any time in life.

According to the Department of Health around one-third of Australian adults aren't involved in any social or community groups; missing out on those wonderful opportunities for connection and support.

Thankfully, there are plenty of things you can do to expand and strengthen your social networks in our community.

The Adult Day Service at Castlemaine Health provides a range of group activities designed to help people make friends and connections. They run programs daily for people who are frail and aged, for younger people with disabilities and for carers. The focus is on enhancing daily living skills and providing physical, intellectual, emotional and social stimulation.

Steve Bell is an Adult Day Service support worker and the man behind some of the service's more innovative programs, including Friday Explorers and the newly launched, Kiss the Kitty, a weekly LGBTIQ carpet bowls program.

He says there's a common misconception that the programs are only for the most elderly in the community and are about quiet, centre-based activities like knitting and afternoon tea.

"While art and craft often features on the weekly calendar, the program is far more diverse and active," says Steve.

"We have regular strength training sessions, nights and weekends away, outings, lunches, shopping trips and mystery tours. Twice a week The Out and Out Club provides evening social activities for young adults with disabilities."

“Friday Explorers is a great for example of a weekly



Brian and Ken enjoy a scenic walk.

activity we run for active seniors,” he says.

"We take people out for the day to different places around the region where they can discover a new point of interest, maybe revisit a spot they used to frequent; even just have a picnic on the river or go out to dinner." Steve says people often have this idea that 'it's a program for old people and I'm not old enough yet'.

"We'd really encourage anyone to come along and try a few sessions, there's no need to make a regular commitment. We think you'll be very pleasantly surprised."

Sound like something you'd like to try?

For the seniors program you'll need a My Aged Care referral, or a referral from a case manager. If you're not sure how to get the ball rolling with this, give us a call and we can help.

Contact the Adult Day Service on 03 5471 3566.



Joyce pats a kangaroo during a visit to a wildlife park.



Indoor bowls fun on a Monday in Wesley Hill.

Adult Day Service Q & A

Q: Is there a cost for activities?

A: There is a small cost for most activities. This covers things like transport and food. There are extra costs for outings and trips but these are clearly explained when you register.

Q: How do you choose the activities?

A: One of the things that makes the programs so engaging is that the clients drive the activities. Our planning starts with us asking clients what they would like to do. Then we put together a new program, doing our best to accommodate those ideas.”

Kiss the Kitty

The Adult Day Service recently launched, Kiss the Kitty, a new indoor carpet bowls event for the LG-BTIQ community, with no age or ability limitations. In the game of bowls it's the person who manages to get closest to the small ball or 'kitty' who wins the round.

"Funding was made available late last year for us to develop an activity for a group we thought could benefit from some social support and inclusion in a safe and understanding environment," says Steve. "Carpet bowls is a fun and easy activity and the response from the LGBTIQ community has been fantastic."

From March 2020 Kiss the Kitty will be a regular weekly event. No registrations are needed for the first session. Just turn up and have some fun.

When: 12.45pm to 2.15pm Mondays

Where: Wesley Hill Market Hall

Like to get involved? Contact the Adult Day Service on 03 5471 3566.

