

FUN AND GAMES TO BEAT LONELINESS

31 October 2019

A group of Mandurah seniors taking part in a new project to address loneliness and social isolation, connected with their community by competing at the Aged Care Games in Waroona last week.

Mandy, Barbara, Geoff, Del, Alan and Judy are all taking part in the Out and About program, part of a two-year pilot project in Mandurah helping older people to become and remain connected to society through overcoming barriers to accessing community services.

Dubbed the 'Out and About Outlaws', the team was entered by Chorus, the community organisation delivering the program, as an opportunity to have some fun and connect with new people in a team environment.

Mandy said although she was a bit hesitant at first, she really enjoyed herself on the day.

"It's lovely when you don't go out much to have an opportunity to get out and meet new people and reconnect with the outside world, Mandy said.

"I bless the day that Lisa and Janet from Chorus came into my life."

Chorus has been funded by WA Primary Health Alliance to design, develop and implement the Out and About program in the Perth South Primary Health Network.

WA Primary Health Alliance General Manager Mark Cockayne says the Australian Government is focusing on reducing social isolation as it contributes to a range of risks that impact on mental health and wellbeing.

"People who are lonely are up to 60% more likely to use emergency services and twice as likely to be admitted to aged care services¹," Mr Cockayne said.

"Helping older people to overcome barriers to accessing community services can reduce their social isolation and positively impact their overall health journey."

Chorus CEO Dan Minchin says the trial program will look at helping older people to tap into the compassion that already exists in their community and give them back some power in their own lives.

"Out and About is not about pushing services or support or models into the community, it's about inviting people to empower themselves to get involved in their community and work together to develop their own kind of connections," Mr Minchin said.

The Australian Department of Health selected two PHNs to trial innovative approaches to address loneliness and social isolation amongst older Australians. Perth South PHN was selected as a pilot site and commenced the Out and About program from 1 July.

WA Primary Health Alliance is working in partnership with The Australian College of Mental Health Nurses, The Australian Health Services Research Institute and Nepean Blue

Mountains PHN to design a model of care to reduce the detrimental health and mental health impacts of social isolation.

This activity has been made possible through funding provided by the Australian Government under the PHN Program.

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About Us: WA Primary Health Alliance shapes, strengthens and sustains a health system that works for people. As the operator of WA's three Primary Health Networks – part of the Australian Government national PHN program – we plan, guide and direct investment towards important primary healthcare services. Our state-wide structure and strong partnerships give us an opportunity to shape a health system fit for the future. By partnering with GPs, allied health professionals, service providers, government and community, we deliver better health, together. For more information, visit www.wapha.org.au

Reference:

1. Franklin, A Tranter, B (2011). 'AHURI Essay Housing, loneliness and health', Australian Institute of Housing And urban Research Institute, AHURI Final Report no. 164, 6

Photo caption: Mandy (right), competing with the rest of the Out and About Outlaws