



MEDIA RELEASE: 22 MARCH 2022

Combatting Social Isolation and Loneliness in seniors' population with new community initiative 'Hornsby Village Hub'

Hornsby, NSW: A new community-led social connectedness program, the Hornsby Village Hub was launched today in response to the increased prevalence of social isolation and loneliness among seniors.

One in four Australians aged 65 and over (27%) lives alone, with this proportion expected to continue to 2036 [1]. An estimated one in three (33 per cent) Australians reported an episode of loneliness, with 40 per cent of these experiencing more than one episode (figures for 2001-2009) [2].

Recognising this and the health impacts of social isolation and loneliness, particularly for older residents, Sydney North Health Network (SNHN) today launched the Hornsby Village Hub in partnership with the Hornsby Shire Council and community partners including Fusion, Rotary Club of Hornsby District, PCYC, Ku-ring-gai Neighbourhood Centre, Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Hospital, Northern Sydney Local Health District Aboriginal Health Services, IABBV Hindi School, Women's Shed and Ku-ring-gai NSW Police Force.

Sydney North Health Network Chief Executive Officer Lynelle Hales said the Hornsby Village Hub is a community-led initiative aimed at nurturing and supporting seniors as they age, through a connected, Compassionate Community approach.

"Being part of the Hub means members are an active part of their community. Becoming involved in events and social activities, along with having access to workshops and participating in a range of social and cultural activities, means you have greater opportunities to make friends and actively age, so you stay healthy and well," Ms Hales said.

In the Hornsby Local Government Area (LGA) the over 55s population is set to rise by nearly 36 per cent over the next twenty years (there were 45,200 people in this demographic in 2021, which is predicted to increase to 61,375 in 2041 - a 35.79% increase) [3].

Professor Susan Kurrle, an Active Ageing expert, Geriatrician and advisor to 'Old People's Home for 4 Year Olds' social experiment, said at today's launch, social connection is our ability to regularly interact with others in a way that promotes social, emotional and physical health.

"As we age however, some of us may become more socially removed from those around us, which can lead to feelings of loneliness and depression," Prof Kurrle said.

"It's normal to feel lonely at certain times in life, but long periods of loneliness or social isolation can impact our health.

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“Long periods of social isolation can be as bad as smoking, increasing our risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, depression, and premature death.

“As humans, we are pack animals; social connectedness is part of our DNA, we need to be part of something. Being actively involved in community and feeling connected and supported by those around us, is important for everyone, but particularly for older people,” Prof Kurrle said.

Hornsby Shire LGA is one of 12 communities across Australia to establish a seniors Village hub through an Australian Government Department of Social Services grant. The Australian Government has provided Sydney North Health Network with \$335,825 over three years, from 2021-22 to 2023-24, to implement and deliver the Hornsby Village Hub. This is part of \$10 million over 5 years committed to the Seniors Connected program, that will allow organisations to turn clubs, centres and libraries into hubs of activity to help seniors better connect with their local community. www.dss.gov.au

The Hub program will operationalise social connectedness and Active Ageing through a range of activities to improve mental and physical health.

Anyone living or working in the Hornsby LGA, aged 55 and over, or over 50 in our Aboriginal and Torres Strait community, is encouraged to sign up and become a member of the Hornsby Village Hub at today’s event or via the SNHN website at: <https://sydneynorthhealthnetwork.org.au/hornsbyvillagehub/>

-ENDS-

Editor’s notes:

Social isolation is having minimal geographical contact with others, while loneliness is an emotional feeling experienced when losing regular contact with other people. Active Ageing is defined by the World Health Organization as, ‘The process of optimising opportunities for health, participation and security in-order to enhance quality of life as people age’.

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[1] Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Australia’s Welfare 2017,

[2]. Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Social Isolation and Loneliness <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/social-isolation-and-loneliness-covid-pandemic>

[3] Source: NSW: Department of Planning & Environment 2020. 2019 New South Wales State and Local Government Area population and household projections. NSW Planning Department of Planning & Environment, Sydney.