

Media Release

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Hornsby Village Hub is a Lifeline Against Social Isolation Amongst Older Australians

A lack of social connection can increase a person's risk of premature death as much as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a dayⁱ- with most Australians experiencing loneliness at some point in their lives it is those aged over 75 who are more likely to be lonely than any other age group.ⁱⁱ

Created to address social isolation and loneliness amongst over 55s in the Hornsby Local Government Area (LGA) the Hornsby Village Hub has become a lifeline against social isolation amongst older Australians in the community.

Since its inception last year, the Hornsby Village Hub has helped to improve the wellbeing of its 200 members.

"The Hornsby Village Hub demonstrates how community-led programs can make a real difference to the lives of older people. By providing opportunities for social connection and engagement, the Hub is helping to combat loneliness and isolation, and improve the health and well-being of older people in the Hornsby community." said Brooke Grimsted, Community Connections Officer at Sydney North Health Network.

Through free membership to the Hornsby Village Hub older Australians get access to community events, social and cultural activities, healthy ageing workshops and are supported to create new community-led groups.

Anyone aged 55 years or over (or aged over 50 years for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people) living or working in the Hornsby LGA is invited to become a Hornsby Village Hub member - membership is completely free.

Justine (aged 67) is from Hornsby and joined the Hornsby Village Hub when it was launched back in 2021.

Justine describes her lifestyle before joining the Hornsby Village Hub as being 'sedentary' and lacking social engagement, but since becoming a member Justine explains that her life has become more interesting, and she feels a greater sense of community connection.

Justine said, "It's very gratifying knowing the local council is involved, and that we older folk are accepted as part of the community. The many excellent opportunities provided by the Hub to help us are greatly appreciated. The educational and social, activities provided are a real highlight of our lives,".

Helena is 70 years old and a retired teacher. She has been living in Hornsby for the past 47 years and joined Hornsby Village Hub earlier this year. Helena credits the Hub with nurturing her creativity through art classes and allowing her to expand her circle of friends.

"I felt increasingly stifled and thought that I needed to do something a bit creative and learn a new skill. Although the art classes have been the only activity, I have been able to attend due to family commitments, it has had a wonderful impact on my life. I have made new friends from the Hornsby community, and it has provided me with a very welcome distraction for a few hours each fortnight... classes have been life changing for me!".

At 62 years of age, **Anne-Marie** started to think about her retirement options and ways to stay engaged with her local community. She joined Hornsby Village Hub earlier this year and lives in Arcadia.

Anne-Marie said 'the Hub is a fabulous way to find out what's happening... There are many options, no matter what your interests or ability, to join in, meet people, and try something new.'

ⁱ Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community

ⁱⁱ www.ausmed.com.au/cpd/articles/loneliness-and-social-isolation-aged-care

ABOUT: Hornsby Village Hub www.snhn.org.au/hornsby-village-hub

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 of \$10 million over 5 years. The Hub was established by Sydney North Health Network in partnership with Hornsby Shire Council and community partners, 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.

ABOUT: Sydney North Health Network www.snhn.org.au

The Northern Sydney Primary Health Network, operated by the Sydney North Health Network – a not-for-profit organisation – is one of 31 Primary Health Networks (PHNs) established by the Australian Government to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of medical services for the community. Our focus is on patients who are at risk of poor health outcomes. We work to improve the coordination of their care, so they receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

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