

Special report: rethinking lifestyle in aged care

By Jackie Keast on August 17, 2016 in Industry



Residents dress up at Lifeview's Positive Ageing Celebration.

Lifestyle services can have a significant impact on resident health and wellbeing, and as the sector becomes more consumer directed, what providers offer can become a determining factor in financial viability. Jackie Keast reports.

Times are changing

ACH Group also puts lifestyle at the top of its priorities. Its approach is informed by its Good Lives philosophy, which focuses on positive ageing. How this works in practice is twofold, northern region residential services manager Graham Harding tells AAA.

First, there is a focus on healthy ageing. Residents are encouraged to stay active with access to personal trainers and gyms. This not only keeps residents strong and mobile, but also affords them a greater choice.

"If you can't walk, then you don't have access to your environment, and your choices are diminished. So even though it's not essentially what you'd call lifestyle, it's a really important factor in that," says Harding.

Providing as much choice as possible is the second part of the approach. Lifestyle activities are aligned to resident's personal goals and interests, and consistently updated.

"We shouldn't be making assumptions, we should be asking the resident what they want to do," says Harding. "Our lifestyle programs always change based on the people who are residing within our facility."

At ACH, residents have the options of multiple lifestyle activities, several times per day. Harding's two facilities provide more than 300 hours of activities a month, possible through the generous contribution of volunteers.

Many activities are designed to allow residents to continue to contribute and live everyday lives. For example, Harding recently went with residents on a houseboat holiday. Many brought along spouses who don't live in the facility.

An intergenerational program, where childcare or kindergarten centres visit a facility, allows residents to assist in the care of children. The organisation's art program also allows residents to contribute to the facility's physical structure.

"We have these beautiful mosaic arches at one of the sites that were the creation of the residents with our artist-in-residence, and at the moment at Highercombe residents are building an art installation for one of our beautiful courtyard gardens," he says.

"They're contributing to improving the facility, which is really important." Resident artwork is also featured in the South Australian Living Artists Festival each year. Overall, Harding says that lifestyle has to be the most important priority for aged care providers. "When you're talking lifestyle – it's got to be the bit that gives you the bang... the interesting bit that gets you out of bed."



Graham Harding