

Media Release

IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Mobi-Mats to roll out at Middleton

ACH Group is the first aged care provider in Australia to buy 'Mobi-Mats' to help residents in a wheelchair or with mobility issues to access the beach.

Mobi-Mats are lightweight non-slip portable pathways that allow people who use wheelchairs or walkers to access the beach. When laid across the sand, the mats create an even surface, creating a safe passage for anyone with mobility issues.

Three of these mats, which when laid out stretch 30 metres, will be rolled out for the first time at Middleton tomorrow thanks to a \$10,000 grant from the ACH Group Foundation for Older Australians. The mats will be stored in an enclosed trailer purchased with a \$3,175 grant from Goolwa Lions Club.

ACH Group's Jane Young saw the mats in action at South Australia's first accessible beach event at Henley Beach in February last year. She thought the mats would allow residents from West Park, ACH Group's residential home at Goolwa, to access the beach.

"We have residents who grew up on and around the beach and who haven't had the opportunity to be on the sand for 20 or 30 years," she said. "We have a former fisherman who is now vision impaired but he is really looking forward to getting back to hear the sound of the waves, smell the ocean and feel the sand."

Ms Young said she hoped to get the residents to the beach at least once a month, if not once a fortnight. The mats would also be used for access to public events.

She said the mats would help promote healthy ageing and encourage people of all abilities to enjoy the beach – something that is important to many Australians. "For many people walking on the sand becomes a real challenge and this makes it so much easier."

The mats will be 'rolled out' for their maiden voyage on Wednesday. Family and friends have been invited to share fish and chips with residents on the beach. Ms Young was in talks with other community groups including a local Learn to Surf school about the possibility of hiring out the mats to other groups in the Fleurieu region.

Research around the world has shown that people who are active and socially connected are happier and have a better sense of wellbeing and overall health, regardless of age or health status. All ACH Group residential care homes embrace a unique 'Healthy Ageing' approach to make it as easy as possible for residents to choose to be active, remain connected and engage in what they love to do every day.

Accessible Beaches Australia launched a campaign in 2016 to encourage more people to use mobility mats with a vision of making most patrolled beaches in Australia wheelchair accessible by 2020. Push Mobility Managing Director Shane Hryhorec said Seacliff Beach was South Australia's only accessible beach, home to a Mobi-Chair Floating Beach Wheelchair and Slat Type Access Platform, soon to be followed by Henley Beach.

"ACH Group is the first aged care provider to purchase these mats for residents, but we have had strong enquiry from around Australia," he said. Find out more:

<https://accessiblebeaches.com/directory/#accessible-beach-directory>

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About The ACH Group Foundation for Older Australians

The Foundation has funded a range of initiatives since its inception in 2002. Each project promotes healthy ageing, independence and wellbeing for older people. Recent projects include The Brain Health Scholarship, awarded to an ACH Group employee working to support people living with dementia, Swing Fit, a golf program for people living with younger onset dementia, a Men's Shed at Port Noarlunga and outdoor gyms at Yankalilla and Rostrevor.

About ACH Group

ACH Group is a not-for-profit aged care organisation that has been offering services to support good lives for older people in South Australia since 1952. As well as accommodation options across Adelaide, the Fleurieu Peninsula and East Melbourne, the group offers a range of health, wellbeing, respite and support services, help at home and social activities. Our 1700 specialist staff and hundreds of volunteers share the belief that older people should be valued and respected, connected to their communities and in control of their lives.

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For further information on Mobi-Mats or Accessible Beaches, contact Shane Hryhorec on 1300 721 328.