

## Talking History comes to Yankalilla

'Memory boxes' of dolls, comics, cooking utensils, games and tools generated lively conversations at a Talking History Together workshop at Yankalilla last month. (Sept 27)

Presented as part of the Flourishing in the Fleurieu Festival, the workshop brought together residents from ACH Group's Yankalilla Centre, families of people living with dementia, local museum members and volunteers.

History Trust of South Australia Community History Officer Pauline Cockrill joined ACH Group Dementia Consultant Jodie Roberts to host the discussion and workshop, inviting members of the community to learn and practice conversation skills using 'reminiscence'.

"Reminiscence therapy is an important tool that can help people living with memory loss and dementia to communicate," Ms Roberts said. "When dementia progresses it can be challenging for family and friends because it can be difficult to know what to talk about, because they may not be able to engage in conversation about the present due to short term memory loss. By using family heirlooms, such as photos or historical items, a person with dementia can tap into long term memories that often remain intact until the later stages of dementia. This makes it easier for them to initiate and engage in conversation."

Ms Roberts said while short term memory loss was often an early symptom of dementia, long term memory could remain intact until quite late in the disease.

"Recalling these long term memories is using the strength of a person with dementia," she said. "The person feels valued, finds a sense of themselves and their life accomplishments, which increases their quality of life."

Ms Roberts said it was important not to ask the person with dementia to recall specific events or memories as this could cause stress.

"It's best to use objects to reminisce together, which in turn can prompt memories and organic conversation."

Ms Cockrill said many of the world's museums are now taking historic objects out into communities to enable people to use them as conversation starters.

"Research on these techniques affirms the positive effects it has on wellbeing for people of all ages," she said.

The History Trust of SA puts together memory boxes with themed historical objects which it loans on request.

John Amos, of Normanville, came along to the talk with his wife Valerie, who is living with dementia and Parkinson's and is a resident of ACH Group's Yankalilla Centre.

"I thoroughly enjoyed it – it was interesting to find out more about how people with dementia can still recall things from the past," he said. "I would like to see more events like this, because we all need to know more about dementia."

*Caption: Yankalilla resident John Amos shares an antique silver sugar bowl with his wife Valerie, who is living with dementia and Parkinson's disease.*

\*End Media Release\*

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### **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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