

Media Release

IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 2018



Program to tackle social isolation

ACH Group is rolling out a new program in a bid to tackle social isolation and loneliness among older South Australians.

The ACH Group Resident Engagement Program is encouraging residents to engage in active roles in the wider community such as volunteering their skills and life experience in areas of their expertise. The program also engages the wider community to connect with residents as a way of bringing people together while promoting social connection and wellbeing.

The program coincides with the release of the *Australian Loneliness Report* (<https://psychweek.org.au/loneliness-study/>) which found people with higher levels of loneliness reported more physical health symptoms including colds and infections, headaches, sleeping difficulties and stomach complaints.

ACH Group's Paul Harris said loneliness among older people was emerging as a global epidemic of our times due to the way we live and the growing ageing population.

Mr Harris said the problem had been recognised in the UK where a Minister for Loneliness had been appointed this year.

"Greater numbers of older people in Australia – up to one third - are now living with loneliness and don't seek help," he said. "Loneliness has the same effect on health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day and directly impacts our wellbeing and longevity. It is about the quality of our social bonds rather than the number of acquaintances we have and is 100 per cent preventable by staying connected, having good friendships and keeping valued roles in life. Maintaining good relationships, making a difference, and belonging to community are in fact the best retirement plan around."

ACH Group's Resident Engagement Program is being rolled out across ACH Group's retirement living locations across South Australia and Victoria.

Another initiative that addresses loneliness is a Telephone Club run by ACH Group and Uniting Care Wesley Bowden. Residents from ACH Group residential care home Kapara at Glenelg volunteer their time to phone elderly and isolated people in the community for a chat twice a week.

To mark Social Inclusion Week (November 24 to Dec 2), ACH Group will host a series of free come and try workshops to encourage South Australians to connect and try something new.

Workshops will be drawn from ACH Group's Social Links program, run for people aged 60 and over across South Australia. Groups are varied and include 'Just Blokes' groups, op shop tours, Sing for Joy choirs, art, exercise and book groups, as well as computing skills, fishing and more.

Find out more here: <https://achgroup.org.au/discover-and-explore/social-activities/>

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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.

For further information or comment, please contact Anna Randell on (08) 8159 3632, 0417 856 361 or ARandell@ach.org.au.