

Media Release

IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 2020



Program to tackle social isolation

At a time when staying connected with your local community is more important than ever, ACH Group is relaunching its social experiences program in a bid to tackle social isolation and loneliness among older South Australians.

ACH Group's Social Links program provides opportunities for people over the age of 65 years old to keep doing what they love or take up something new. Across its wide range of programs there are opportunities to make new friends and connect over common interests – all in a COVID-safe way.

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

ACH Group's CEO, Frank Weits 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 Weits said the problem had been heightened this year due to periods of self isolation as a measure to stay safe from COVID-19.

"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 core to living a good life" he said.

ACH Group also encourages people to engage in active roles in the wider community such as volunteering their skills and life experience in areas of their expertise. As part of its connected communities purpose, this is a way of bringing people together while promoting social connection and wellbeing.

To mark Social Inclusion Week (November 21 to 29), ACH Group will host a series of free come and try sessions to encourage South Australians to connect and try something new.

Sessions will be drawn from ACH Group's Social Links program, run for people aged 65 and over across South Australia. Sessions are varied and include Sing for Joy choirs, Art in Focus classes, as well as Showtime Movies and more.

Find out more here: <https://achgroup.org.au/group-social-experiences/>

End Media Release

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 1800 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 Kelly Walker on 0417 856 361 or KWalker@ach.org.au.