

ACH GROUP PARTNERSHIP PRESENTATION

Care and connections

Having regular help and support is not only helping Ivy Clark stay in her own home for longer – it's also about new friendships that have proven invaluable during months of social isolation, writes LYNN CAMERON

For Ivy Clark, it's about more than having someone come in once a fortnight to clean her home or help her with the heavy shopping – it's about staying connected and staying in the home she has lived in for almost four decades.

After breaking her hip in a nasty fall two years ago, Clark was approved for a level two Home Care Package through the Federal Government's My Aged Care program. Since April 2020, she has used been using her funding to access cleaning, shopping, and social support from ACH Group, a leading home care package provider that has been supporting older people in SA for more than 68

years with fully trained and vetted staff.

"I want to stay at home for as long as possible," says Clark, 88. "I don't want to go into care – I think it would be the worst thing for me. It's important for me to still manage my own accounts and affairs, and think for myself. I'm still learning new things."

That learning includes getting to grips with new technology, with funding for support in this area also covered by her Home Care Package. "Someone from ACH Group comes to help every two weeks with that too," Clark says. "She's helped me set up my smart TV and my Facebook account."

Social media proved a lifeline

to Clark during the coronavirus lockdowns of 2020, when none of her four children or eight grandchildren could visit. "I joined when the virus came so I could keep tabs on some of my grandchildren," she says. "With COVID I found it very isolating – I wasn't supposed to have people in my house. In desperation I would make a pot of coffee, take it outside and put it on Facebook: '10.30am, cheese, biscuits and coffee while isolating in my backyard'."

Clark also used technology to maintain cyber contact with her church group, but it was the physical visits from her ACH Group support team that helped keep her going. "I love interacting with people so last year was really testing – you can message and talk on the phone but it's not as good as being face-to-face," she says. "My cleaner and shopping ladies are just wonderful – there's a 20-30-year age

difference but we seem to be on the same wavelength.

"My cleaning lady does her chores then it's time for a coffee and chat, and with my shopping lady we get through the shopping as quickly as possible then go to the baker for a toastie and a coffee. So I not only get the help, I get the social interaction which I really hang out for."

With issues with her balance, Clark, who turns 89 in March, uses a walker to get around outside her home but still enjoys staying active. "I bought a Fitbit for Christmas and I can measure my steps and if I'm not doing enough exercise, get out of my chair and move," she says. "And I'm still driving, so I can go and do a bit of shopping myself or catch up with friends. That's what gives me a bit of independence still."

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