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‘Hornsby Village Hub’ celebrates its 1-year anniversary and enhances social connection to improve health and wellbeing for older Australians

Hornsby, NSW: One year since the launch of the Hornsby Village Hub on 22 March 2022, older Australians who live or work in Hornsby and have participated in the community-led social connectedness program are sharing insights into how it is improving their health and wellbeing.

Since its inception, 170 people have signed up to become a part of the Hornsby Village Hub, which provides participants with access to community groups, active ageing activities and health literacy talks at no financial cost. In its short time, the Hub has increased opportunities for social connection with over 100 events and activities including coffee mornings, gentle chair yoga, digital technology classes, health literacy talks, and board game groups held in and around the Hornsby Shire.

1 in 4 Australians aged 65 and over lives alone,¹ and many older Australians face health issues that make them less inclined to get out and about. The Hornsby Village Hub was designed to bring people aged 55 years and over together to improve social connection and support active ageing while tackling social isolation and loneliness.

Loneliness is a growing global public health emergency and enormously impacts our physical and mental health, education, productivity, and overall happiness and wellbeing. In people aged 50 and older, for example, chronic loneliness is associated with an 80% greater risk of death than those who report loneliness experienced within a situational context (56%).²

One participant of the program shared the positive effects the Hub has had on her quality of life, relationship and mental health.

“My husband and I have found joining the Hub very positive. It has improved our relationship and quality of life. Being part of the coffee groups, card-making, dancing, Zumba, and the relaxation techniques including yoga, mindfulness and body scan techniques, have all been great for my mental health,” said Jane Pritchard.

Hub member Sue Hutchinson also shared her positive experience with the Hub: “Everyone I have met is so happy with the initiative created and just so pleased to meet new people whilst enjoying a range of new and varied experiences,” she said.

Recognising the health impacts of social isolation and loneliness, Sydney North Health Network launched the Hornsby Village Hub in 2022 in partnership with the Hornsby Shire Council and community partners, Fusion, Rotary Club of Hornsby District, PCYC, Ku-ring-gai Neighbourhood Centre, Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Hospital, Northern Sydney Local Health District Aboriginal Health Services, IABBV Hindi School, Women’s Shed and Ku-ring-gai NSW Police Force. The Hub is a community-led initiative aimed

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at nurturing and supporting people as they age through a connected 'Compassionate Community' approach.

"A huge part of ageing well is the opportunity to participate in events and social and cultural activities, which also gives you chance to make friends. When you age well, you stay healthy and engaged with life, which is so critical," says Hornsby Village Hub Spokesperson Brooke Grimsted, Community Connections Officer.

Hornsby Shire LGA is one of 12 communities across Australia to establish a Seniors Village Hub through an Australian Government Department of Social Services grant.

Anyone living or working in the Hornsby LGA, aged 55 and over, or over 50 in our Aboriginal and Torres Strait community, is encouraged to sign up and become a member at:

<https://sydneynorthhealthnetwork.org.au/hornsbyvillagehub/>

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Editor's notes:

The Australian Government has provided Sydney North Health Network \$335,825 over three years, from 2021-22 to 2023-24, to implement and deliver the Hornsby Village Hub. This is part of \$10 million over five years committed to the Seniors Connected program, allowing organisations to turn clubs, centres and libraries into hubs of activity to help seniors better connect with their local community. www.dss.gov.au

[1] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2017). Australia's Welfare 2017. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/d18a1d2b-692c-42bf-81e2-47cd54c51e8d/aihw-australias-welfare-2017-chapter5-1.pdf.aspx>

[2] Ending Loneliness Together (2020). Ending Loneliness Together in Australia. <https://endingloneliness.com.au/news-events/ending-loneliness-together-in-australia-white-paper/>

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