

# Strong Hearts, Connected Lives:

## The Role of Social and Physical Engagement

### (our local approach)

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Guest: Leigh Robertson – Forget Me Nots – Grafton

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**We would like to show our respect and acknowledge the traditional custodians of these lands.**

**We extend this respect to elders' past, present and emerging, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.**

**We also pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living with dementia and their carers.**



# Our local context

\* *NNSWLHD ageing population is higher than the NSW and national averages*

\* Impact of COVID-19 / floods / cost-of-living pressure / housing insecurity

\* Difficulty accessing exercise / falls prevention programs for people living with dementia or advancing frailty

\* Social isolation is a significant issue for many seniors living locally

\* Lack of ageing well strategic planning across LHD / councils

# Social isolation and loneliness

- Social isolation - state of having a lack of social connections
- Loneliness - subjective feeling of being disconnected
- 28.5% older people 60 years and older experience some degree of loneliness
- Retirement, financial constraint, loss of friends / widowhood, change in living arrangements, decline in health / independence.
- COVID-19 highlighted the vulnerability of older adults



# Impacts of social isolation and loneliness

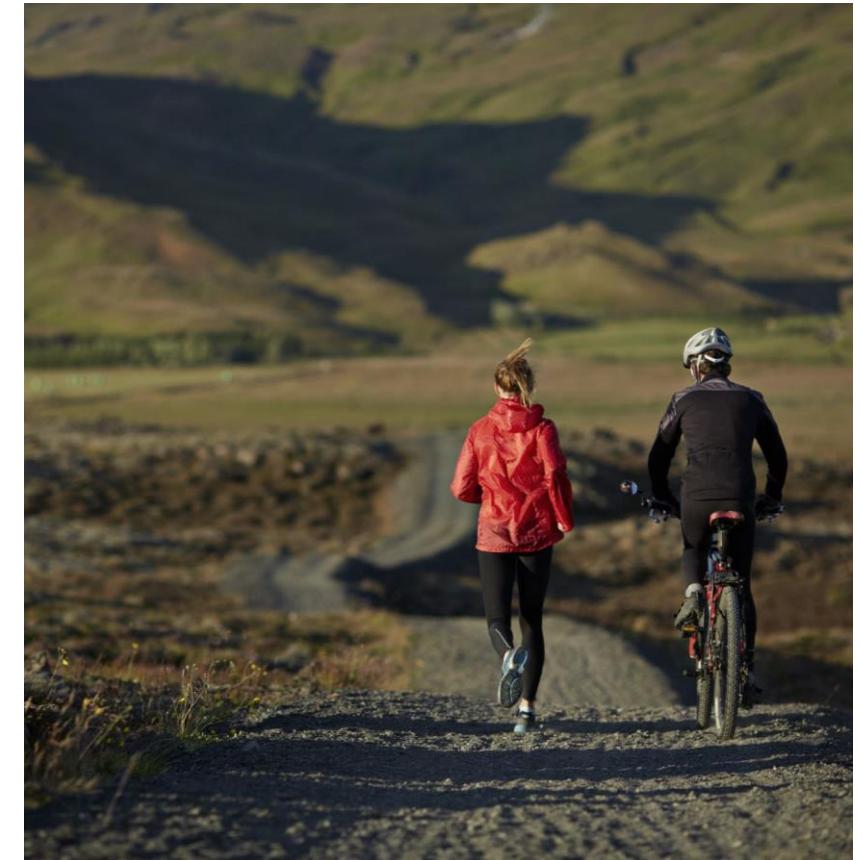
- BOTH = public health concerns
- Linked to serious health issues
  - Heart disease, stroke, diabetes, dementia, depression (bidirectional relationship)
  - Cognitive and functional decline
  - Increased risk of mortality (premature death)
  - Lower quality of life
- In Australia, cost of loneliness is ~ \$2.7 billion annually (aged 55 years or older account for > 1/3 costs)

# Physical activity – what is it?

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‘Physical activity’ is any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure  
(WHO 2022)

- Cleaning & gardening
- Physical labour
- Active transport
- Active recreation
- Exercise



# Importance of physical activity

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Important across the life course

Reduces risk of all-cause mortality, CV mortality, hypertension, cancer, osteoporosis, type 2 diabetes, falls

Improves physical health, mental health / well-being, cognitive health, sleep hygiene

***Supports social connections***

## AUSTRALIA'S PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SEDENTARY BEHAVIOUR GUIDELINES

### Tips and Ideas for Older Australians (65 years and older)

#### What sort of activity should I be doing?

- **Moderate Activities** – for your heart, lungs and blood vessels
- **Strength Activities** – to help maintain bone strength
- **Flexibility Activities** – to help you move more easily
- **Balancing Activities** – to improve your balance and help prevent falls.

Try to include at least one activity from each group.

#### Moderate Activities

##### Do 30 minutes of activity from this group on most days

- Brisk walking
- Continuous swimming
- Golf (no cart)
- Aerobics
- Cycling
- Washing the car
- Walking the dog
- Yard and garden work
- Tennis
- Water aerobics
- Dancing
- Mopping and vacuuming

#### Strength Activities

##### Do specific strength exercises two or three times a week

- Weight, strength or resistance training exercises.
- Lifting and carrying (eg groceries or small children)
- Climbing stairs (instead of taking the lift or escalator)
- Moderate yard work (eg digging and shifting soil)
- Calisthenics (eg push-ups and sit-ups)

#### Flexibility

- Tai Chi
- Bowls (indoor and outdoor)
- Mopping, vacuuming
- Stretching exercises
- Yoga
- Dancing

#### Balancing Activities

- Side leg raises
- Half squats
- Heel raises

Make your move – Sit less – Be active for life!



## AUSTRALIA'S PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SEDENTARY BEHAVIOUR GUIDELINES

### Tips for improving flexibility, balance and strength

Try to do some form of stretching every day – even if it is only while you are watching TV. Make a specific time each day to do these exercises, or fit them in whenever you can – for example – while waiting for the kettle to boil. If you can, also try to reduce the time you spend sitting for long periods.

- **Stand up and sit down (or chair raise) (for strength and balance)**  
Sit on a chair with your feet flat on the floor and slightly apart. Try to keep your back and shoulders straight throughout this exercise. Slowly stand up, trying not to use your hands (or as little as possible). Slowly sit back down and pause. Do this 8-15 times.

- **Shoulder roll (for flexibility)**

Using a gentle circular motion, hunch your shoulders upwards, backwards, downwards and forwards. Do this slowly 5 times, then reverse the direction.

- **Knee lifts (for strength)**

Sit back in your chair with your back straight. Bend your knee and lift your left leg towards your chest. Hold for a few seconds then lower slowly. Do this 8 – 10 times with each leg.

- **Heels up toes up (for flexibility)**

While seated, start with feet flat on the floor and lift heels as high as you can, keeping the balls of your feet on the floor. Slowly lower heels until feet are flat, then lift toes until they point upwards. Repeat these up and down movements for 30 seconds.

- **Side leg raises (to improve both strength and balance)**

Stand sideways to the bench and hold on with your right hand to support yourself. Slowly take your left leg out to your left side. Keep your back and both legs straight. Hold the position for one second then slowly lower. Repeat 8 times at first, increasing to 15. Turn around and hold on with your left hand while you raise your right leg.

- **Half squats (to improve leg strength)**

Stand facing the bench with your feet apart (about shoulder width), feet facing forward and holding on with both hands. Leaning very slightly forward, but keeping your back straight, slowly bend both legs, keeping your knees over your feet. Do not go down too far. As you return to the up position, squeeze your buttocks together as if there is a \$5 note between them that you don't want to drop. Repeat 8 times at first, increasing to 15.

- **Heel raises (for strength and balance)**

Stand sideways to the bench, feet apart (shoulder width) holding on with one hand to support yourself. Slowly rise up on to your toes, hold for one second and lower again. Do this 8 times to begin with, increasing to 15. Make sure your movements are not rushed.

Make your move – Sit less – Be active for life!



# Physical activity public health priority

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National recommendations  
not being met across all age  
groups



Physical **'inactivity'**  
increases over the age of  
65 years



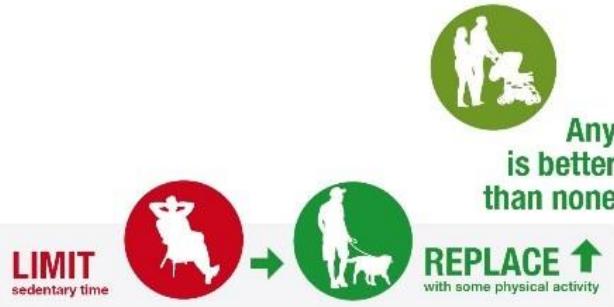
ABS data 2022: 89%  
adults 65 years and over  
were insufficiently active



'Inactivity' is the ninth  
leading preventable  
cause of ill health /  
premature death

## Every Move Counts

Being active regularly has significant health benefits for your heart, bodies and minds, whether you're walking, wheeling or cycling, dancing, doing sport or playing with your kids.



# Every Move Counts

WHO Guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour

- Emphasizes that everyone, of all ages and abilities, can be physically active and that ***every type of movement counts***
- This philosophy addresses 'inactivity' at all ages

# Tackling physical inactivity and social isolation

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# Physical activity and social connection has a mutual benefit

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**Physical activity** should be emphasised for **its ability to enhance** mental wellbeing, **social connection**, independence, and quality of life.

Physical activity programs for older adults are recommended to include a social element to foster social connection.



# Social exercise fosters social connection



Group settings increases social interaction



Provides sense of community



Shared common goals



Increases motivation



Increases confidence

# Physical activity and social connection correlation

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While physical activity can increase social connection, social connection in the first place can be what leads to people being more physically active.

Activities like social prescribing may help those not already socially connected to engage in physical activity.



# Social prescribing

Social prescribing involves health professionals referring older adults to non-medical, community-based activities, to improve well-being and address loneliness

- Support groups e.g. Parkinson's support group / Dementia Inclusive Ballina / DOS
- Exercise classes
- Day clubs
- Community gardening
- Walking groups
- ..... and social singing groups

# Our regional approach

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- Forget Me Nots – founding group - Grafton (est 2018)
- Beating Hearts of Lismore (est 2023)
  - Connecting Seniors Grant Program 2025 – NSW Government
- Shine On Wollumbin (est 2025)



- FREE weekly gathering at Lismore Heights Bowling Club
- Volunteer led ~ 15 volunteers
- 60-80 regular attendees
- Intergenerational component
- Avenue for grants / support local hospital
- Targeting older people with social isolation, chronic age-related conditions
- Facebook: 1500 followers / 150 000 views monthly
- Fosters family connection local / interstate
- Platform for healthy ageing messaging
- Forward planning messaging – e.g. My Aged Care / Home Care supports / Advance Care Planning



## Other social exercise initiatives

- **Dance / Falls Prevention – Gather and Move**
  - Lismore, DCJ grant
  - Current training underway for additional groups across LHD
  - Gold Moves Australia uses evidence informed dance to promote physical and cognitive activity + social connection
  - RIPE project – qualitative outcomes established in quality of life / well-being. Quantitative data soon to be released re: benefits in falls prevention
  - [Gold Moves Australia presents DANCE to THRIVE on Vimeo](#)



# Other local social exercise initiatives

- **Heart Foundation walking groups**
  - Free
  - Lismore / Pottsville and soon Suffolk Park
  - Heart foundation walking groups do foster social connection in combination with exercise
  - Seeking additional volunteer walk leaders
  - [Leanne.White1@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Leanne.White1@health.nsw.gov.au)



# Where to find this information?

A photograph of a woman with short brown hair, wearing a dark blue t-shirt and a necklace, smiling while sitting on a large blue exercise ball. Her arms are extended outwards to the sides. In the background, another person is visible in a white shirt.

**NSW**  
GOVERNMENT

Active and Healthy

Healthy living   Preventing falls   Be inspired   FAQ   Contact us

Search... 

Welcome to  
**Active and Healthy**

Information for older Australians, health professionals and exercise program providers

As we get older, healthy eating and being active can help us stay independent and have better health. Find helpful information and exercise programs to support healthy ageing for people living in NSW.

[Find an Exercise Program](#)

<https://www.activeandhealthy.nsw.gov.au/>

# Quick word from Bob...

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LET'S SING &  
MOVE!



# ROUNDS:

Bella Mamma, Bella Mam ma, hey (2x)

Bella Mamma, Bella Mamma, Bella Mamma,  
Bella Mamma

Bella Mamma, Bella Mamma, hey

# ROUNDS:

Down the river and down the river and down the river  
we go, we go

Down the river and down the river and down the Ohio

Viva la viva la viva la more (2x)

Viva la more, viva la more

Viva la company

**Sway**

*IF ABLE, PLEASE STAND*

# Que Sera Sera

When I was just a little girl,  
I asked my mother, what will I be?  
Will I be pretty? Will I be rich?  
Here's what she said to me.

***CHORUS: Que sera, sera  
Whatever will be, will be.  
The future's not ours to see  
Que sera, sera. What will be, will be.***

# Que Sera Sera

When I was young, I fell in love,  
I asked my sweetheart, what will I be?  
Will we have rainbows, day after day?  
Here's what my sweetheart said.

***CHORUS: Que sera, sera***

***Whatever will be, will be.***

***The future's not ours to see***

***Que sera, sera. What will be, will be***

# Que Sera Sera

Now I have children of my own,  
They ask their mother, what will I be?  
Will I be handsome, will I be rich?  
I tell them tenderly.

***CHORUS: Que sera, sera***  
***Whatever will be, will be.***  
***The future's not ours to see***  
***Que sera, sera. What will be, will be***

# You are my sunshine

## **CHORUS**

**You are my sunshine, my only sunshine**

**You make me happy, when skies are grey.**

**You'll never know dear how much I love you,**

**Please don't take my sunshine away.**

The other night, dear, as I lay sleeping,

I dreamt I held you in my arms.

When I awoke, dear, I was mistaken,

So I hung my head and cried.

## **CHORUS**

# You are my sunshine

I'll always love you and make you happy

If you will only say the same.

But if you leave me, for another

You'll regret it all one day.

## ***CHORUS***

**You are my sunshine, my only sunshine**

**You make me happy, when skies are grey.**

**You'll never know dear how much I love you,**

**Please don't take my sunshine away**

**Please don't take my sunshine away**

# Dancing Queen

*IF ABLE, PLEASE STAND*

# I've been working on the railroad

I've been workin' on the railroad

    All the live long day

I've been workin' on the railroad

    Just to pass the time of day

Can't you hear the whistle blowing?

    Rise up so early in the morn

Can't you hear the whistle blowing?

# I've been working on the railroad

Dinah, blow your horn.

Dinah won't you blow, Dinah won't you blow

Dinah won't you blow your horn, your horn.

Dinah won't you blow, Dinah won't you blow

Dinah won't you blow your horn

Someone's in the kitchen with Dinah

Someone's in the kitchen, I know, I know

Someone's in the kitchen with Dinah

Strumming on the ol' banjo.

# I've been working on the railroad

Fee, fi, fiddleee i o, (strum your banjo)

Fee, fi, fiddleee i o,

Fee, fi, fiddleee i o, strumming on the ol' banjo.

Fee, plank, fi, plonk, fiddleee i o, plonk (clap on 'plank')

Fee, plank, fi, plonk, fiddleee i o, plonk

Fee, plank, fi, plonk, fiddleee i o, plonk, strumming on the ol'  
banjo.

**Stop in the name of love**

*IF ABLE, PLEASE STAND*

# Have a beer with Duncan

I love to have a beer with ..... .

I love to have a beer with ... .

We drink in moderation

And we never ever ever get rollin' drunk

We drink at the Town and Country

Where the atmosphere is great

I love to have a beer with ..... .

'Cause ..... me mate, yeah

# Have a beer with Duncan

I love to have a beer with ..... .

I love to have a beer with ... .

We drink in moderation

And it doesn't really matter if he brings his doll

We drink at the Town and Country

Where the atmosphere is great

I love to have a beer with ..... .

'Cause ..... me mate, mm-mm-mm

# Have a beer with Duncan

I love to have a beer with ..... .

Oh I love to have a beer with ... .

We drink in moderation

And he drives me home in his big old Chev.

We drink at the Town and Country

Where the atmosphere is great

I love to have a beer with ..... .

'Cause ..... me mate

# What a wonderful world

*IF ABLE, PLEASE STAND*

Thank You...

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