

Ageing well on the Fleurieu

MICHAEL SIMMONS

THE Fleurieu Neighbourhood Network, an initiative powered by COTA SA, offers the opportunity for older South Australians who live in the Southern Fleurieu Peninsula to age well in their own community.

The Fleurieu is home to the oldest population in South Australia. Around 61 per cent of Southern Fleurieu's population is aged over 50 years, with approximately 20 per cent of older people living alone.

Covering areas including Goolwa, Victor Harbor, Port Elliot, Middleton, Hindmarsh Island, Encounter Bay, McCracken and Hayborough, the Fleurieu Neighbourhood Network program aims to provide opportunities for locals to connect, be active, share interests and ultimately support each other.

The program offers peer-to-peer volunteering and support, ageing well activities including walking groups and book clubs, community events, as well as information and support to access services.

Fleurieu Neighbourhood Network Manager Jill Mitchell said it was a great way for older people in regional areas like the Fleurieu to come together, form new relationships and bond with the wider community.

"The program is something truly unique in the region and is a wonderful way to support those in the community who are experiencing social isolation, especially as many older people relocate to the area in their retirement," Jill said.

"Research shows that being connected with others is important for physical and mental wellbeing and the program recognises that through mutual support, older people can enhance their lives and age well with each other,



GREAT TO BE ALIVE: Anne Lister, Marg Tunbridge and Diedre Nieuwenhuis making a splash at Port Elliot's Horseshoe Bay.

promoting positive ageing."

One of the most popular activities includes Strollin' on the River, which is aimed at people who love the camaraderie of a walking group, but with a slower walking pace.

Leaving from the Goolwa Regatta Yacht Club every Wednesday at 10.30am, participants walk along the river path and enjoy a leisurely stroll with other members.

"The walking group has been very well

received with all who have participated recently," Jill said.

"We even had two women who participated for the first time, bursting into happy tears when they finished because they were overjoyed to get out of the house and interact with others in the community — it was really beautiful to see.

"There is now strong interest in starting walking groups in other locations across the Fleurieu, which we will start considering in the new year."

The Fleurieu Neighbourhood Network has also recently launched a new initiative for members to create a list of 50 things that they want to do before they turn 100, encouraging people to explore the region and have fun with their neighbours.

"This new initiative is a great way to bring the community together and encourage older South Australians to get out and explore the Fleurieu. Whether you enjoy a pie from the local bakery, exploring rock pools, or heritage walks, it's an opportunity for people to get together and create memories that last for years," Jill said.

Members of the Fleurieu Neighbourhood Network can also join a book club that meets at Victor Harbor Library to discuss and share reading material, but also hosting seminars and information sessions about ageing well and how to navigate My Aged Care.

Membership is completely free and open to all older people living in the region, with the opportunity to also be involved in shaping the program and the activities it runs.

To become a member of the Fleurieu

Neighbourhood Network, complete the membership form or call 1800 182 324.

Fleurieu Neighbourhood Network is part of a network of Village Hubs across the world, including Australia. All hubs are unique yet share a common purpose of positive ageing, recognising that through mutual support we can enhance our lives.

The program harnesses the strengths, energy, and passion of older people to create a grassroots, community-owned and led movement that will improve the ageing experience for themselves and their peers.

The programs, activities, and services offered by the Hub build on existing relationships and build new connections between older people, providing opportunities for them to contribute and support others who may need support.

COTA SA's village hub — the Fleurieu Neighbourhood Network — is made possible with funding from the Commonwealth Government through the Seniors Connected program, running 2021-2024.

The program incorporates COTA SA's Goolwa Victor Harbor Advisory Group, a group that was established three years ago to assist with advocating on behalf of the southern Fleurieu community, which boasts one of the largest percentages of residents aged over 65, in Australia.

COTA (Council on the Ageing) SA is an older people's movement and the peak body that represents the rights, interests and futures of the more than 698,000 South Australians aged 50 plus.

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