

# Positive Ageing in Hobart – A health and well being focus



# Positive Ageing

The Australian Psychological Society defines positive ageing as:

‘the process of maintaining a positive attitude, feeling good about yourself, keeping fit and healthy, and engaging fully in life as you age’.

Positive Ageing also refers to **a culture of recognising and celebrating** the inclusion of older people in the community, **reducing the barriers** that limit their ability to participate, and valuing their contribution, skills and knowledge.





# What is Mathers House?

Mathers House is funded by the City of Hobart, and sits in the Community and Culture Division and the work is shaped by our Social Inclusion Strategy, Positive Ageing Strategy and Equal Access Strategy.

Mathers House employs:

- 2 full-time staff member
- 2 part-time staff members

And relies on a large team of 65+ volunteers, with approximately 10 people volunteering each day. Volunteer roles include:

- Dining program
- Facilitating programs
- Meet and greet, including support for the information hub
- Hobart Older Person's Reference Group (advisory committee for the City of Hobart, Positive Ageing program and Mathers House)



# What happens @ Mathers House?

Mathers House is a community facility creating opportunities for older people of greater Hobart to connect socially, learn, be creative and be active.

Mathers House offers:

- Physical exercise programs including Zumba, t'ai chi, Pilates, weights and balances
- Music programs such as ukulele and singing
- Book club, scrabble, mah'jong, craft and computer tutoring
- A cafe with home style low cost meals
- Information Sessions -health & well being; access to services
- Volunteering opportunities
- Access to a free community nurse on Thursdays



# More @ Mathers House

Mathers House offers centre based activities Monday to Friday, as well as seasonal favourites including:

- Seasonal feasts
- Wine, Savoury and Song
- A 'Growing Wilder' Program
- Jazz in the Community Orchard
- We also celebrate Seniors Week, and take the opportunity to highlight Adult Learners Week, and recognise Mental Health Week – and the importance of social connection for health and wellbeing. See: **[matherhouse.com.au](http://matherhouse.com.au)**
- We have a brand new Information Hub – access to web based information and referral



# ....how do we do this??

By offering a **peer led program**, the expertise of the community is shared. It is infectious when people volunteer, give to the community and share their expertise – others want to help, and the peer support helps people feel welcome and connected.

We always have time for tea.....

We ensure community leaders or community connectors in the groups to invite and include.....





# Community, culture, and inclusion

- Social isolation is both an invisible and unknown killer.
- Research suggests that social isolation is as harmful as smoking 15 cigarettes or consuming six alcoholic drinks daily.
- Social isolation is more harmful than not exercising, is twice as harmful as obesity and people that are isolated are twice as likely to die a premature death.

# Community, culture, and inclusion

- Social connection is vitally important for all of us at any stage of our lives. It provides us with a sense of belonging, purpose, value, friendship and an important means for support.
- Your social relationships act as “cushion” when tough times fall.



# What does 'social connections' mean?

- Refers to the network of people surrounding a person.
- It means being in contact and having social interactions with somebody whether they be a friend, family member or community member such as a neighbour or a support worker.
- Being socially connected implies there are opportunities to interact with and engage with others regardless of whether or not you want to.



# What are the benefits of being socially connected?

- Improved physical and mental health
- Improved ability to sleep
- Decreased risk of experiencing depression
- Delayed onset and delayed worsening of dementia
- A study found that socially connected women were less impacted by breast cancer and more resilient in their recovery than those who were less socially connected.



# What is social isolation?

Social isolation refers to the lack of social connections, company or community. People can choose to be socially isolated or it can be forced upon them due to their circumstances.

It may also describe a person's geographical remoteness, exclusion from the dominant cultural or language groups, or difficulty in accessing services.



# How does social isolation and loneliness impact upon physical health?

- Decreased energy levels
- Impacted ability to sleep
- Increased likelihood of body pain and headaches
- Loss of appetite
- Increased or decrease in weight
- Worsening of pre-existing medical conditions
- Greater likelihood of rehospitalisation and falls
- Increased likelihood of heart disease and high blood pressure
- Increased risk of stroke
- Increase tendencies of self-destructive or risky lifestyle choices such as smoking, excessive consumption of alcohol and poor diet
- Decreased likelihood of accessing health professionals such as dentists.





# How does social isolation and loneliness impact upon mental health?

- Increased risk of depression and anxiety
- Increased risk of experiencing negative emotions such as: feeling worthless, frustrated, without purpose, hopeless, angry and suicidal.
- Increased likelihood of the onset or worsening of dementia as well as general decline in cognitive abilities.
- Men in particular have a heightened risk of suicide



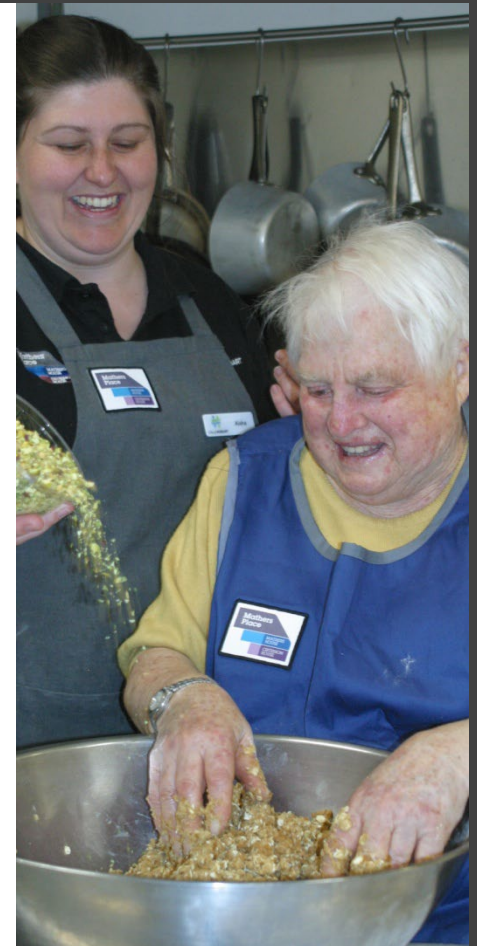
# How many people experience social isolation and loneliness?

- Social isolation and loneliness are reported to be more common among older populations than any other age group.
- It is not known how many people experience social isolation and loneliness but national and international studies estimate it impacts up to 43% of older people.
- As the older population is mostly female it is women who make up the largest proportion of individuals who experience social isolation and loneliness.
- However, it is men who are more likely to experience severe social isolation and loneliness than women.



# What are the risk factors for social isolation and loneliness?

- Experiencing illness
- Living with impaired vision and hearing
- Limited mobility
- Limited transport and loss of drivers licence
- Living with poverty and the absence of affordable activities
- Becoming widowed, a loss of friends and/or family members
- Living in a remote location
- Living with a disability
- Living with a mental illness
- Being a carer
- Being a person from a culturally and linguistically diverse background
- Being a person who is Aboriginal
- Being a person who is LGBTIQ
- Living alone does not necessarily equate to loneliness and social isolation.



# Tasmania and Hobart

- Tasmania has the country's fastest ageing population with over 20% of the state made up of people aged 60 years+.
- 18.9 % of people living in Hobart are aged 65 years + and this is expected to increase to make up almost a quarter of the city's population by 2056. Therefore, increasing the rates of social isolation and loneliness present in the community.
- Tasmania suffers from the poorest rates of health than any state in Australia.
- Tasmania has the highest rates of death, disease, mental illness and risk-taking behaviour, such as poor diet and smoking.
- Approximately 55% of people aged 65 years + live with a disability making Tasmania the state with the highest rate of older people living with a disability.





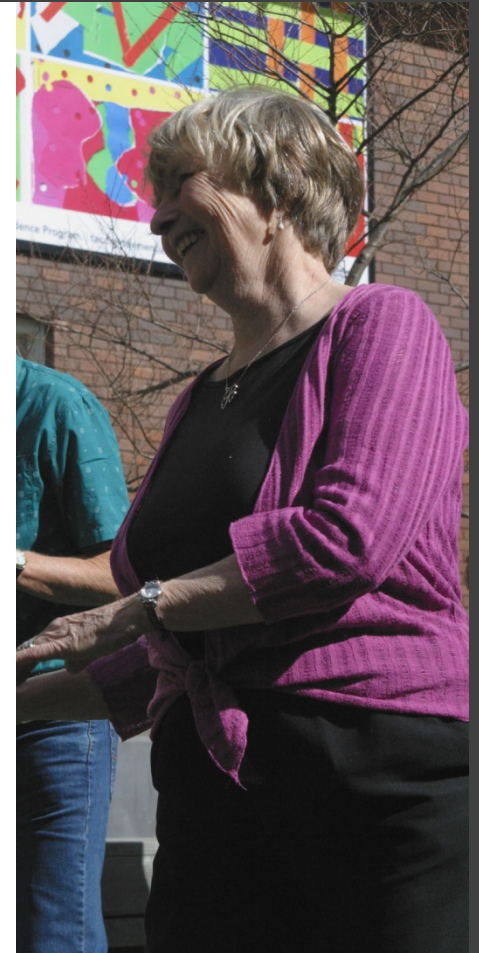
# Maureen's Story

Retired 8 years ago and was looking for activities.

Found Mathers House.

Got involved with the Hobart Older Persons  
Reference Group by invitation.

Programs were limited at Mathers House but  
developing.



# Maureen's Story

A new program started with Zumba. In the beginning only 4 – 5 people this program is now escalated to 25 + people each week.

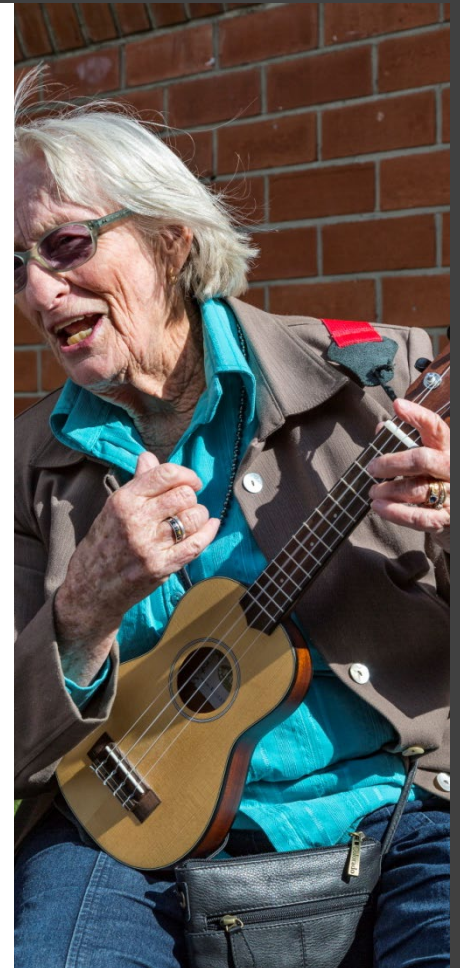
Within a couple of years, the program leader saw the opportunity to further develop the physical movement opportunities. Broadway boogie was born!



# Maureen's story

Now I'm more involved at Mathers House – we help with social afternoons, and take a lead in music and dance afternoons, functions such as Melbourne Cup.

Mathers House has given me and my husband things to be involved in.....it gets us out of the house. I know the benefit for him, us both, and others.



# Barbie's Story

I wanted to sing – but found Mathers through a line dancing group.

I met with Danielle and we discussed getting a singing group together.

Danielle invited me to the Hobart Older Persons Reference Group.....my involvement has snow balled from there!





# Barbie's story

My involvement at Mathers House has changed my life by being with similar minded people, and being able to find other people to come who may need the social connection more than me.

Seeing the development of different people due to the social connection through the activities is really positive for all of us.



# Barbie's Story

I really enjoy seeing people blossom!

I really value like minded people and reaching out to others.



Social Connection is good for you –  
we are stronger together

