

# q community: VILLAGE HUBS

**Independent Living Assessment (ILA), the National Grants Manager for the administration of the Village Hubs Grant Fund is excited to announce that 10 new hubs across Australia have been selected and awarded a share of \$4.7 million funding.**

The Village Hubs Grant Fund is an initiative of the Australian Government's Seniors Connected Program. The Program was designed to alleviate loneliness and social isolation experienced by older Australians. With one in three older Australians living alone, and our increasingly ageing population, their access to resources and support is vital. Some older Australian's face challenges and stresses associated with retirement and ageing, and a large number have reported feelings of loneliness and social isolation. This can, in turn, impact their mental health and wellbeing.

Each hub will be community led and provide opportunities for older people to improve mental and physical health through the benefits of increased community connections. The model operationalises the World Health Organisation's definition of active ageing by allowing people to realise their potential for physical, social and mental wellbeing. ILA will work in partnership with the hubs to deliver a broad array of activities and initiatives in both regional and metro areas to a diverse range of older Australians including Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islanders, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and LGBTQI.

ILA General Manager Andrea Morris says, *"We are really looking forward to working with each of the new Village Hubs to establish a place where older community members can reconnect, meet new people, have fun and socialise, join in activities they may never have tried and ultimately feel less lonely and more connected. ILA is partnering with the new Village Hubs. Our role will focus on guiding each of them during their establishment and then collectively through a community of practice, which is a dedicated place for shared learning and support."*



Andrea believes the Village Hubs will have a positive impact on older Australians experiencing social isolation: *"One in four Australian households is a lone-person household and there is a high proportion of these people who are aged 55 years and over (or Indigenous Australians aged 50 or over) who report loneliness and/or social isolation. The new village hubs will offer a diverse range of initiatives. Their common goal is to provide a place where older people can be involved in joint activities with others, develop new or cement existing friendships, and potentially discover new skills and interests and stronger connections within their local community."*

One of the successful Village Hubs is the Huon Valley Council in Tasmania. They have designed their initiative with a central hub in Huonville, which will connect and support smaller, regional based hubs. This community connector model will focus on members being aware of available resources and support in their area while providing opportunities to build connections and friendships.

Angela Barrington, Huon Valley Council's Manager of Community Development, described the social challenges: *"The area has increasing challenges with loneliness and social isolation due to rising cost of living pressures, chronic health conditions, literacy challenges (including health and digital literacy), and housing insecurity. This combined with the population being spread over a large geographical and rural area, migration of new populations, and an ageing population (over 37% aged over 55) is resulting in older people being unaware of existing programs and activities. The funding will enable Huon Valley Council to employ a dedicated Village Hub link worker that builds the capacity and resilience of community groups through offering face-to-face and personalised connections. This will help build the capacity of community groups to provide accessible localised activities alongside older people."*

The Seniors Connected program will run from 2021-2024 (finishing 30 June 2024). GRAI's Village Hub will be led by and for older LGBTI people, offering multidimensional peer support and service development for the community. An LGBTI Elders' Organising Committee will be established to advise on the Hub activities, and Peer Elders will help provide a one-on-one befriending service for vulnerable and isolated individuals. Work towards creating culturally safe referral pathways and links to mainstream services such as medical, aged care services or housing supports will be developed. For more information about this Hub, please go to:

<https://grai.org.au>