

Media release

Tuesday 7 November 2023

Free exercise program supports healthy ageing

A free strength-based exercise program is now available to support older Tasmanians living with long-term health conditions.

Primary Health Tasmania (Tasmania PHN) has commissioned Tasmanian-based organisation Healthy Business to deliver the Exercise Treatment Program in several areas across the state, including a large number of rural locations.

Primary Health Tasmania spokesperson Susan Powell says making sure older Tasmanians have access to quality primary health care is a priority for Primary Health Tasmania.

“Healthy Business has an impressive track record of delivering strength-based group exercise programs in Tasmania, with participants increasing their activity levels and experiencing better overall health and quality of life,” she says.

“And programs like this provide an important opportunity for social connection, so there are benefits for wellbeing as well as physical health.”

The Federal Member for Lyons, Brian Mitchell MP, says the program has been made possible thanks to ‘healthy ageing’ funding from the Australian Government.

“This program is about empowering older people with chronic conditions to stay as healthy as possible, which means they have more chance of living independently in the community – with the added benefit of reducing hospital admissions,” he says.

“It’s also in line with national primary care reform goals for better access to locally delivered care in an integrated way, with general practice and allied health services working closely together.”

The 14-week course targets people who have – or are at risk of developing – chronic (long-term) health conditions, and are:

- aged 60 or older, or
- an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person aged 45 or older.

People can self-refer into this program (with health clearance from a health professional), or their GP or other health professional can refer.

Healthy Business CEO Steve McCullagh says program participants are guided through individually tailored exercises at the weekly sessions, where allied health professionals also provide healthy living advice. At the end of the course, their progress is measured and they receive advice about how to keep active and healthy moving forward.

“We find this formula has been really successful in increasing people’s confidence and ability to lead active, healthy lives,” he says.

“This program is free, people can self-refer, and there are currently no waiting lists – so I’d encourage people who meet the criteria to get in touch.”

Evandale is one of the locations the program is available, and local GP Dr Vasuki Annamalai welcomes the new addition to the local health service landscape.

Dr Annamalai and her husband Darren Bowkett – a registered nurse – opened the Evandale General Practice in August this year. After many years working in rural and regional areas interstate, they know the challenges that can come with accessing health services when choosing to live in a small community.

“Attracting health services to regional areas can be really difficult, whether it’s services based in the community or visiting services,” Dr Annamalai says.

“Where they do exist, it’s really important they collaborate to get the best results for people, and we are looking forward to working with Healthy Business to support our local community.”

The Exercise Treatment Program is available in the following areas:

- Brighton local government area (LGA)
- Burnie LGA
- Central Coast LGA
- Circular Head LGA
- Clarence LGA
- Deloraine
- Devonport LGA
- Evandale
- Kentish LGA
- King Island LGA
- Latrobe LGA
- Longford
- Perth
- Sorell LGA
- West Coast LGA
- Westbury
- Wynyard-Waratah LGA

More information is available at exercisetreatmentprogram.com.au

Primary Health Tasmania (Tasmania PHN) is a non-government, not-for-profit organisation working to connect care and keep Tasmanians well and out of hospital. It was established under the Australian Government’s Primary Health Networks Program to support and enable a coordinated, primary care-focused health system.

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