

An Unfolding Story in Clunes

Unexpected opportunities come to fruition

Collaboration as part of the Living and Ageing Well in Hepburn project between Central Highlands Rural Health (CHRH), the local neighbourhood houses and community groups has seen unexpected opportunities come to fruition.

In Clunes, the idea of participating in an event where we could collaborate and explore each of our teams' strengths and commitment to the community all came together at the local show in November 2023 – the first major 'in the field' collaboration between the three main project partners. CHRH attended the Clunes show, sharing space in a pavilion with Clunes Neighbourhood House, Attitude. Ageing Well in Clunes and numerous local groups.

The theme for the pavilion was 'Have you thought about ...?' which was well supported by all collaborators. Feedback by other stall holders and community members was consistently around appreciating the local health service being visible, engaged and approachable at this community event. Having 'thought about' the positive comments received, it is obvious the community trust and connection with the health service was enhanced by this participation.

During the show event, CHRH's Exercise Physiologist hosted a stall with the local community exercise instructor to provide information around physical wellbeing. As the local health service in Clunes, we were aware that while the local community required activity and physical wellbeing there was limited space to run a gym. Immediately following the Show event, our Exercise Physiologist attended the community exercise group, which in turn led to CHRH's gym space being made available to community members (under supervision) where they had previously not had access to a gym in town.

Another important unforeseen opportunity to come out of this collaborative healthy ageing hub project is also about to pay dividends for our social support group. Our current social support group at Clunes Health has had an increasing number of clients with a dementia diagnosis. In discussion with the broader community at the show and throughout this project, it was found that there are quite high numbers locally and so we are now looking to establish a sensory garden at Clunes Health to help social interaction and carer support.

But the story doesn't end here. Through this collaboration we have now also connected with Wesley College to look at some intergenerational programs between students at the local Year 9 Campus and our social support clients that would be of great benefit to all - watch this space!

Prepared by Di Connor, Central Highlands Rural Health project officer

