

***Hella***

*Age range: not stated*

Hella (not their real name) had fairly significant and long-term social isolation and anxiety about getting into new groups after moving to Castlemaine several years ago. Having moved to Australia many years prior, Hella's family all resides overseas. Hella was somewhat housebound after a work-related injury, preventing them from working and increasing their isolation during the coronavirus pandemic. Hella was looking for activities they enjoyed that would not hurt their back, and after mentioning they used to play table tennis, a Community Connector found a local table tennis group that played once a week. Hella has attended every table tennis session since their first try! Even attending the club's annual general meeting. Hella also expressed an interest in a local volunteer cooking role, as they used to be a professional chef before their injury. Hella has also been a regular attendee at the weekly Chatty Café and has formed camaraderie and openness with fellow participants. Hella's general practitioner says the program has "rocked their world" and contributed to positive health outcomes in other aspects of Hella's life.

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**Jesse**

Age range: 60s

Jesse (not her real name) is in her 60's and was grieving the loss of her partner of many decades who recently passed away. Jesse had trouble sleeping and found single life quite isolating. Jesse is retired and was volunteering at a local community program a few days a week assisting young people to obtain their qualifications. One day the program shut down, which Jesse described as the "biggest blow of all." This was another loss of social connection, compounding Jesse's experience of loneliness and isolation. Jesse was reluctant at first to contact Get Connected, but said "it was important to be given that referral," and followed through with meeting a Community Connector. After three in person meetings with a Community Connector, Jesse started to attend the Chatty Café, a drop in cuppa and chat session every Monday at a local café as part of the Get Connected program. At the Chatty Café, Jesse talked to a volunteer Welcomer, who shared information about a local swimming class. Jesse signed up for one semester of classes, and at the end decided not to continue as it aggravated a previous injury. Jesse also tried a walking group but found it too slow. Jesse is now a part of two local volunteer driving roles that she discovered through word of mouth, as well as continuing to attend the weekly Chatty Café. Jesse emphasised how the Chatty Cafe has helped fill in her week, saying "Chatty Café is great! A few regulars come along, and new people pop up...it's just been very successful for those that go."

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**Clem**

Age range: 70s

Clem (not his real name) is in his 70's and was referred to Get Connected through the library where he inquired after social groups. Clem initially didn't know where to start in finding these groups. After he met with a Community Connectors, he said he "left the meeting happy that they would be able to lead me somewhere" and that "their care and gentleness made me feel at ease. They left me with a hope that I would be able to find something and that for me was quite important." A Community Connector passed on information about a local free language class, choirs, a weekly yoga class, and a local church. Clem tried the language class and continues to go! Clem has tried the weekly yoga class and a local Tai Chi class also. Clem says, "I'm slowly connecting to activities and finding what I enjoy."

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**Chris**

Age range: 80s

Chris (not his real name) is in his late 80's and is retired from a fulfilling career in the community. Chris expressed his feelings of loss after being unable to continue in this role which gave him meaning and purpose. Chris conveyed he was a bit depressed, and not equipped for much anymore due to his health. Chris was impressed by the commitment of his general practitioner in his concern for his health. After being referred to Get Connected, and meeting three times with a Community Connector Chris said he was "heartened by the contact. I wouldn't have taken the steps myself." Chris identified he would like to write a book, and a Community Connector linked him with a local writing coach that Chris met over a coffee and continues to be in contact with. Chris was also connected to a local choir, and has regularly attended with his partner, saying it was "a positive experience."

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**Courtney**

Age range: 50s

Courtney (not her real name) is in her 50's and recently moved to the Mount Alexander Shire. Courtney has been socially isolated since the move and had yet to create new connections since arriving. Courtney experienced significant injuries in an accident a few years ago, resulting in mental health challenges which are being supported through local services. Courtneys medical practitioner encouraged her to "get out and have coffees," and so referred her to Get Connected. After two in person meetings with a Community Connector, Courtney identified she would like to resume hobbies she enjoyed before her accident. The Community Connector passed on the contact details of a local book club and a local community garden, which Courtney has not yet been able to attend due to medical issues. Courtney took a step towards connection by attending the weekly Chatty Café as part of the Get Connected Program. Courtney reflected "it was good. It's getting me out and talking to people, where I would usually sit at home and loose the plot."

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**Contact:**

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Community Connector

**Link:**

<https://cch.org.au/getconnected/>