

MEDIA RELEASE

Older people embrace health and wellbeing

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Six times a week, a large room in the Wonthaggi RSL is transformed into a hub of activity as older people embrace a regime to improve their health and wellbeing as they age.

People from 65 to their early 90s are taking part in the free classes, funded by Gippsland Primary Health Network as part of its early intervention initiative and delivered by *MyPhysio* Spinal and Sports Injury Clinic, a *physiotherapy* and rehabilitation clinic based in *Wonthaggi*.

The classes are so popular there are waiting lists with participants coming from neighbouring towns as well as Wonthaggi. People can choose from three classes, delivered twice a week - the 'Strong and Stable' class, the 'Falls and Prevention' and 'Glad' class for people with osteoarthritis, hip and knee problems.

Early intervention is a national PHN priority area and Gippsland PHN has received funding from the Australian Department of Health and Ageing to support senior Australians to live at home for as long as possible with the support of activities and models of care for chronic disease management.

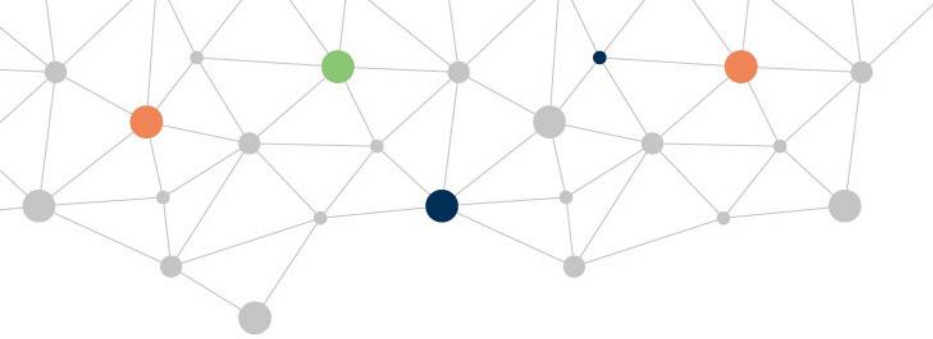
Gippsland PHN Chief Executive Officer, Amanda Proposch said the organisation's [Health Needs Assessment](#) included information relating to the over 65 year population and assisted with defining areas for potential commissioned work.

"It is estimated that 23.6% of the Gippsland population are aged 65 years or older, compared to 15.8% in Victoria," Ms Proposch said. "An even higher proportion of the Bass Coast population (28.7%) is aged 65 years or older.

"By 2030, 28.1% of the Gippsland population is expected to be aged 65 years or older with Bass Coast reaching 33.5% compared to 17.1% in Victoria.

"We know it is more important than ever to have services and models of care in place to promote healthy ageing and reduce pressure on local health services."

MyPhysio owner, Pryianka Gupta, is thrilled with the community response in Bass Coast and has found the program is providing the extra benefit of increasing social connection.



“Participants are seeing an improvement in their general health as well as their flexibility,” Ms Gupta said. “Those with joint stiffness and pain have noticed an improvement while others find regular stretching has made a difference to their mobility.

“A great side-benefit is that people who may have previously felt isolated are now making new friends. Quite a few catch up for a coffee and chat after their class.”

Here’s what some of the participants say:

Barbara, 69: “I’ve had multiple joint replacements and my fitness is not good. I enjoy being part of a controlled group and the friendships I’ve made.”

Wendy, 72: “I’ve always been physically active; I’m a Melbourne University graduate of health and physical education so I know it’s important to stay fit and supple. I live on my own so I enjoy the new friendships too.”

Maureen, 77: “I have lung trouble and bad legs. The classes have been especially great for my lungs. My mental and physical health have improved as well as my confidence.”

Alan, 79: “I’ve got crook knees from being a runner and a footy umpire. The classes are helping and the social side of the classes is an extra advantage.”

Carolyn, mid 60s and father Ronald, 85: “I was nursing my husband. When he died, I realised I needed to get fitter and the classes helped me lose weight too. Dad really needed to exercise. It’s great we can come together.”

Marj, 77: “I was diagnosed with Parkinson’s last year. It frightened me and I realised I needed to improve my balance, coordination and strength. I also enjoy the social side of the classes.”

Lesley, 69: “I have a balance problem. The classes keep me fitter and are not too strenuous. I do volunteer work so it is important to stay healthy.”

Brian, 83: “I have back issues and I like how our instructor keeps us moving. I want a healthy body and a healthy heart.”

To find out more about Gippsland PHN’s early intervention activities, go to the [website](#).

Captions: Participants in the healthy ageing classes at Wonthaggi RSL.

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