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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

23 March 2022

# **Building stronger communities through connected neighbours**

The Huon Valley Council's Good Neighbour program encourages community members to reach out to their neighbours to build stronger and more empathic communities.

Connecting with our neighbours can have a profound effect on community health and wellbeing, as well as build strong communities," Acting Mayor Sally Doyle said.

"Good neighbours keep an eye out for people in their area, especially those who might be isolated or lonely. This could be an older person, a single parent, people that work away from their families or new residents in the area."

As part of the Good Neighbour program, Council's Community Services team have designed calling cards which are the size of a postcard. On the front of the card is the word 'Hello!', and on the back is the message, 'Just call or text if you get stuck and I'll do my best to help.'.

"A simple hello to a neighbour can help address loneliness and build stronger communities," Cr Doyle said.

"We've put up some banners in the main street of Huonville to draw attention to the program and we've made some films about what being a good neighbour means."

The Good Neighbour program draws inspiration from Relationships Australia's social connection campaign, Neighbour Day (27 March). Neighbour Day aims to

**Communications & Media Officer**

Huon Valley Council

[communications@huonvalley.tas.gov.au](mailto:communications@huonvalley.tas.gov.au)



support and enable sustainable respectful relationships across communities, while also helping to address loneliness across the nation.

Cr Doyle said she is also excited to announce Council's new positive ageing program that aims to connect isolated individuals in the Huon Valley and in turn improve their wellbeing.

The program is known as *Connect & Age Well* and is a grant funded initiative of the Village Hub movement which is Australia wide and supported by the Department of Social Services. The Australian Government has provided the Huon Valley Council's *Connect & Age Well* initiative \$295,000 over three years, from 2021-22 to 2023-24.

*Connect & Age Well* is the first program of the Village Hub movement in Tasmania and it addresses loneliness in the Huon Valley community. This is part of \$10 million over five years the Government has committed to the Seniors Connected program.

"The current global pandemic has taught us that not only does COVID-19 have an impact on our health but so does social isolation and loneliness," Cr Doyle said.

"Surveys undertaken since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic have shown that just over half (54%) of respondents reported that they felt lonelier since the start of the pandemic.

"Positive social connection has been proven to have a profound effect on longevity. Individuals who are more socially connected are happier and healthier.

"It can be overwhelming to know where to start to form new connections or to join programs so that's why we have a dedicated link worker who can assist the community.

"Our Project Officer Sophie Duggan will be a direct link for individuals who would like to connect or re-connect with programs, activities, services and people in the valley."

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The entire Huon Valley population from Grove right down to Lune River can reach out and become a part of this program.

“Sophie will meet with individuals to form a relationship and understand the person’s interests and needs. This is how we can link activities based on the individual’s choice, needs and interests to improve and maintain their overall wellbeing.

“We encourage you to reach out or pass this information onto someone you know who may benefit from the Connect & Age Well program,” Cr Doyle said.

Sophie can be contacted via 6264 0300 or email [hvc@huonvalley.tas.gov.au](mailto:hvc@huonvalley.tas.gov.au)

You can pick up a pack of calling cards from our Customer Service Centre or the Huon Valley Hub.

**For more information: Mayor Bec Enders (03) 6264 0300**