

Chatterbus

AUTUMN 2021



Formerly known as Easy-Go Connect and Great Community Transport, Active Care Network has been serving the community since 1982.



CEO UPDATE

Ben Jackson
CEO | Active Care Network

Welcome to the Autumn 2021 Edition of Chatterbus.

Just when we thought Christmas was going to give us some respite COVID-19, or 'the rona' as we call it around here, knocked all of our shopping out of the trolley.

"Do you have a mask?" may well be the question of 2021. Active Care Network are encouraging all of our clients to wear masks. We understand that sometimes this may be uncomfortable and inconvenient but masks are critical for keeping our clients safe. As I

write this, masks are still mandatory for clients on community transport. As the advice changes we will always err on the side of safety so until Transport for NSW or the Department of Health give us a clear directive that masks are not required we will ask you "Do you have a mask?" While it is mandatory to wear a mask, there is a 'no mask no transport' rule. Don't panic if you do not have one, all of our vehicles will be supplied with disposable masks and you can have one of those. Please do not reuse them, we have plenty!

Over the summer break my wife found all sorts of gardening jobs for me and if given half a chance she will have all of my weekends full until next Christmas! So for those interested in gardening it is a great time to ask about our upcoming Active Garden Club. Don't worry it doesn't mean you have to mow my lawn, it's just a great opportunity

to learn more about what is happening in your garden this time of year.

I have spoken about our Care and Repair Program before, where Active Care Network will come to you for the nominal fee of \$30 and spend a half an hour helping on your garden or any maintenance that you require and then make you a cuppa tea or coffee and talk about the things that you might need now the world is opening up. We are also pretty keen to hear about how good your kids and grandkids are and showing us the pictures.

Watch out for the new Active Care Network branding on our vehicles, same great drivers and support volunteers, sparkly new logos. Hopefully you will be impressed.

Stay Safe, have a Happy Easter and Keep Travellin'



We now only have ONE phone number 02 4722 3083

OUT OF AREA TRANSPORT

Did you know Active Care Network can take you anywhere within your Local Government Area and beyond when resources permit*.

We are also able to transport our customers to various activities which include;
group activities, medical and hospital appointments, personal business or hairdresser appointments, to visit family or friends, or to go to your local shopping centre, church, café or club!

As a result of changes to the way we deliver our services, we are also making adjustments to the operating times for our **Out of Area** transport.

From **1 April, 2021 Out of Area Transport** times will be adjusted to better serve our community. The new Out of Area operating hours are listed below;

9:00am will be the Earliest arrival time at a destination outside of your local Service Delivery Area.

3.00pm will be the Latest departure time from outside of your local Service Delivery Area

Please note that if you have a pre-existing booking we will endeavour to meet your request.

Out of area transport is organised into zones. Each zone that you cross will incur an additional cost. You will be given an indicative pricing for this at the time of your booking.

Please note that whilst we will make every effort to provide all out of area services, these are also dependent upon the resources we are able to utilise at the time. You can also pay online prior to travel via our website www.activecarenetwork.org.au/clients

COUPLES AND CARER FEES

We understand that some clients require assistance when travelling with us. We also know that people often prefer to travel with a partner. Therefore, we've created a flat \$5 fare for couples and companions. This helps balance the space we have available in vehicles with the needs of all our clients. The couples fare applies when two people travel from the same address to the same destination, but only one person has an appointment.

Individual fares apply:

- For social outings
- When two people are travelling from the same address, both with appointments
- When one person travels to another person's home to meet and travel to the same destination or appointment with Active Care Network.

WE NOW HAVE PAYPAL



Keeping you at the centre of all we do, Active Care Network now have PayPal machines in most of our vehicles. Cash is no longer needed, as there is a quick and easy way to pay for your travel with a debit or credit card.

In these times where COVID spreads quickly over surfaces, some services will become cashless. If you want help moving to cashless - ask us how.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS COMING TO ACTIVE CARE NETWORK

Too many organisations are turned inward, focused—often unintentionally—on themselves and their organisations at the expense of their communities. Turning Outward is rooted in five big ideas:

- A Focus on Impact and Belief
- Community Ownership
- The Story a Community Tells Itself
- Strategies that Fit the Community
- A Sustainable Enabling Environment

You can find out more at this website: <https://theharwoodinstitute.org/practice>

During January Active Care Network has embarked on training staff and volunteers on how to Turn Outward towards our communities and conduct Community Conversations. Community Conversations are an opportunity to understand the aspirations of our community members. Active Care Network will start doing a simple questionnaire called an Ask Exercise with our clients on our buses as the first step in having Community Conversations. It is a pretty simple thing to do and only takes about 10 or 15 minutes.

We will ask:

1. What kind of community do you want to live in?
2. Why is that important to you?
3. How is that different from how you see things now?
4. What are some of the things that need to happen to create that kind of change?

These are really important questions to us and we look forward to hearing your responses.

Ben Jackson CEO

WELLBEING THROUGH GARDENING

Even with the ups and downs of things like the COVID – 19 pandemic it's great to know that you can still garden and that it's good for your brain and body.

Gardening brings with it many physical and mental health benefits, and it can also add a little joy to our lives. We have listed some of the benefits of gardening for you here, as well as some **expert tips** to help you.

The benefits of gardening;

1. **Exercise benefits** – planting and removing weeds helps you to burn up to 400 calories per hour!
2. **Improving muscle strength** – Digging, pulling weeds out or shoveling soil helps to build on your muscle strength.
3. **Vitamin D** – As we age we may have vitamin D deficiency without even knowing this. Vitamin D is important for helping your body to absorb calcium and build bone density. Some vitamin D is found within certain foods that we eat, however, the main way that we get our vitamin D involves some sun exposure on our skin.
4. **Reducing you stress levels** –Gardening decreases the levels of the stress hormone cortisol in your blood stream and it increases your levels of serotonin which naturally improves your mood.
5. **Coordination** – Gardening helps with coordination as we undertake a range of tasks in the garden.
6. **Mental Health benefits** – Research has proven that regular gardening lowers your chance of developing Alzheimer's disease as well as boosting your brain's ability to

engage in complex tasks such as problem solving.

7. **Purpose, responsibility and achievement** – Gardening gives you a sense of purpose as well as a level of responsibility and achievement from growing your own plants.
8. **Sensory benefits** –Flowers can look and smell great. If you grow herbs and vegetables they can also taste great. They are fresh and packed full of goodness!
9. **Flexibility** – Through some bending and stretching gardening is a great way of maintaining and even improving your flexibility.
10. **Maintaining independence** – Considering all of the evidence regarding the benefits of gardening, it is no wonder that it also helps you to you maintain your independence as it assists in improving your physical and mental strength and resilience.
11. **Social benefits** – If you have the opportunity to become involved in a community garden or a garden club you can also benefit from the opportunity to meet people who share the same interest as you do.

EXPERT TIP Remember there are physical and mental requirements to undertake gardening safely. We recommend that you check with your Doctor before beginning and get the all clear to continue.

1. **Wear the right clothes and shoes** – Put on sunscreen; in particularly in summer where there is a greater chance of getting sunburnt. If you burn easily cover up with long sleeves and a hat. Also don't forget your sunglasses to protect your eyes.
2. **Drink plenty of water** – as we age many of us don't drink enough fluids to keep properly hydrated. So ensure you are keeping your fluids up, particularly when it is hotter outside.
3. **Regular breaks** – take regular breaks whilst you are gardening. Give yourself a chance to rest and don't forget to take your regular medications.
4. **Wear gloves** – gloves give you a better chance of not being bitten or stung on the hands by spiders or insects. Gloves also protect you from other potential hazards whilst gardening. Gloves also stop direct exposure to the soil, lessening the risk of infections.
5. **Gardening tools** – the right tools make gardening much easier, however, put tools away when you are finished. Don't make them into trip hazards by leaving them in the way. **Remember!** Be very careful using power tools! If you don't feel confident or safe using a particular tool don't use it rather than potentially injuring yourself or someone else.



- 6. Sitting or kneeling** – If you don't have a raised type garden bed then a small stool or, better still, a kneeling stool can make it more comfortable to work.
- 7. Don't overdo it** – Don't take on too much in your gardening. Be realistic in terms of the size of the garden you want to cultivate. Also, remember that if something is heavy don't attempt to lift it without assistance. If the item you are lifting can be broken up (such as a large bag of potting mix), do this and then lift it a bit at a time. If the day becomes too hot or you are feeling tired take a break and come back to your work at a later time.

Preparing your garden:

Determine what you want to grow and what you need to set up. It doesn't matter if you only have a balcony, window box or only the inside of your house you can still garden. Outside raised garden beds (you can buy these at hardware stores & retail outlets) make tending to your garden much easier and this gets you away from needing to bend or kneel to tend to your plants.

Preparation is everything!

Before you plant anything, prepare your soil by digging in compost and manure so your plants will have the nutrients they need to grow. Easier still, you can use liquid fertilizer or pellets! Also, make sure the soil is well watered. Then cover your garden beds in a layer of mulch to help retain moisture.

EXPERT TIP Make sure that you have **everything you need ready before beginning your garden.** E.g. soil (for pots or raised beds), mulch, fertiliser, pots, stakes for tomatoes, etc. Do you need any other garden tools or equipment (such as a watering can) before you can start.

Your Spring Gardening Guide:

Now is a wonderful time to get

planting! Below is a guide, courtesy of **The Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney**, on what to plant during spring.

In the vegetable garden:

Beetroot, capsicum, choko, cucumber, dwarf beans, eggplants, Jerusalem artichoke, lettuce, okra, pumpkin, radish, spinach, spring onions, squash, sweet corn, sweet potato, strawberry, tomato, watermelon and zucchini.

Trees, shrubs and climbers to plant:

Bougainvillea, citrus, frangipani, ginger, hibiscus, mulberry, paw paw, passion fruit, plumbago, pomegranate and tamaril.

Natives and succulents:

You can create some local habitat with native plants. Succulents are also generally easy to grow and like natives need far less water as well as being able to take summer heat.

Herbs:

Parsley, basil, Dill, Mint, Marjoram, Coriander, and Thyme.

EXPERT TIP Herbs will grow well in pots or a window box. Herbs will even grow in a pot in your house as long as they are getting sunlight or artificial lighting.

Annuals and perennials for your flower garden:

California poppy, chrysanthemum, dahlia, gerbera, marigold, nasturtium, petunia, portulaca, verbena and zinnia.

Indoor plants:

If you don't have space outside or it is too much of a challenge for you, consider getting some indoor plants.

Pests and diseases:

Where possible it's best to tend to your plants (particularly those you plan to eat) with more natural treatments. Pests can often be kept out with physical barriers, for

example netting will stop birds.

Seeds or seedlings?

Seeds are inexpensive, however there is far more involved in getting your plants to maturity. Seedlings are generally easier to grow and if you are able to pay more you will have a head start in your garden. In the end it will depend on your budget and your personal choice.

How Active Care Network can help you with your garden

As you may have read in this newsletter, Active Care Network has been offering the services of our Gardening and Maintenance Team to operate our **'Active Care and Repair Garden Plus'** program assisting elderly and disabled people at home with maintaining their gardens. At present you can access this program and get a half hour service for just \$30! Also, we are currently working on establishing a **Garden Club** in the Penrith area. We hope in the future to set up similar clubs in Blacktown and The Blue Mountains.

Further information on gardening:

A local nursery or hardware store can be a good source of information and supplies. Also listed below is a couple of websites that may be of help;

The Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney
www.anbg.gov.au/gardens

Sustainable Gardening Australia
www.sgaonline.org.au/community-resources

Don't forget that gardening books can also provide a comprehensive range of helpful information.

If you need more help with maintaining or preparing your garden then call our **Gardening and Maintenance team on (02) 4722 3083** they will be happy to come out and give you a quote. Finally enjoy your gardening and all of its benefits!

GARDENING AND MAINTENANCE

Since the launch of our new service in July 2020 our services have been gradually growing across the 3 Local Government Areas of Blacktown, Penrith and the Blue Mountains. The team is led by a qualified Horticultural professional Pat Mc Gavin and the other staff members include Stephen Lemmer (Gardener) and Emma Burns (Client Services).

Our Gardening and Home Maintenance services include:

- **Gardening and Lawn care**
- **Minor external home projects and landscaping**
- **Property and home maintenance**
- **Minor home modifications**

If you would like to speak with our Gardening and Maintenance Team or would like a free quote, please contact us directly on **(02) 4708 9439**.



ACTIVE CARE AND REPAIR PROGRAM

In December we introduced the Active Care and Repair Program as part of our Home Support Services. The Care and Repair program is for our Clients who have become especially disconnected during COVID. A number of Clients have been able to access these services. For example, Pat, Steve and Gordon recently assisted a Client for half a day at her home undertaking yard maintenance and repairs and to do a clean-up of the contents shed in her back yard ready for a Council pick-up.



accompany the program. Led by professional gardening staff, we will aim to create a dynamic program that crosses multiple platforms including practical gardening at the Nursery in Penrith, social outings to community and public gardens as well as work at the Clients own gardens.

The Active Care Gardening Club annual structured program will include:

1. **Regular weekly Gardening Club meetings at the Nursery in Penrith facilitated by our Gardening and Maintenance Team**
2. **Monthly Wellbeing and Education programs facilitated by internal and external facilitators**
3. **Gardening Outings to local Gardens and reserves and other places of interest (eg Botanical Gardens)**
4. **At least one scheduled trip to regional gardening events such as the Bowral Tulip Festival and Floriade in Canberra**

For further information about this exciting new program and when the Active Gardening Club will commence, please contact Emma Burns on **(02) 4708 9439**.

HOME SUPPORT

On the back of our successful launch of our Gardening and Maintenance Team, Active Care Network will shortly be launching its Home Support Team. While the Gardening and Maintenance Team mostly take care of the outside of your home, the Home Support Team will take care of you inside your home helping you with cleaning, shopping and cooking.

If you would like to register your interest in our Home Care Services call us on 02 4722 3083 and ask for Emma.

GARDENING CLUB

We have been in discussions with Penrith City Council about establishing a Garden Club as a joint venture at the Council's Nursery and Administration facility in Penrith. The overall objectives for the Active Garden Club will be to provide older people and people living with a disability with a shared and regular practical experience of gardening, whilst providing them with all the associated social, health, personal wellbeing benefits that would

HELP LINE

Mental health assistance

Beyond Blue – 1800 512 348

<https://online.beyondblue.org.au>

Lifeline – 13 11 14

Head to Health – www.headtohealth.gov.au

Counselling support

Free ongoing counselling support contact your Doctor

to discuss your needs and they may be able to refer you to see a mental health professional. These sessions may be covered under a subsidy through Medicare.

Physical Health and exercise

Heart Foundation Walking – Active Mind Active Brain

www.heartfoundation.org.au/walking

Phone: 1300 36 27 87

Elder Abuse Help Line

1800 353 374. However, please note: if you are feeling unsafe or concerned you or someone else or may be harmed, call – **000**.

Where **English is not your first language** the Translating and Interpreting Service is available on **131 450**.

Planning Ahead Tools for future legal, health and financial decisions

NSW Office for Ageing and NSW Public Guardian
1300 887 529

Aged Care Rights and Resources

The Aged Care Rights Service
www.tars.com.au

Aged Care Information Line – 1800 500 853

LGBTI Services

Programs and Resources for LGBTI Ageing

ACON – www.acon.org.au/home

Local Council contacts

Blacktown Council – (02) 9839 6000

Penrith Council – (02) 4732 7777

The Blue Mountains Council – (02) 4723 5000

Further information

If you would like any further information on anything written here or if you would like to book transport or gardening services through Active Care Network please **call us on (02) 4722 3083**.

WE VALUE YOUR FEEDBACK

Active Care Network is committed to continuously improving and developing the services we can offer our community. As we develop new initiatives we would value your feedback.

Over the coming weeks one of our friendly staff members will be calling our clients to ask for their feedback about the new wellbeing programs that we are planning to offer. To help us perfect these programs we will be asking you a few questions.

These questions should only take 10 minutes of your time. Your feedback will help ensure we are offering relevant and engaging programs as well as giving you an opportunity to suggest other wellbeing projects that engage your interests.

It is important to Active Care Network that we are supporting our clients in ways that nurture their independence and wellbeing.

We appreciate your time and contribution to improving our service.

Thank You!

