

Chatterbus

WINTER2021



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

Hi Everyone

It's as close to normal as it has been in a while. We have our buses full but we are still wearing masks. I have made my doctor's appointment to have my COVID vaccination and I am really interested in how many of our clients have also had the jab. Whilst it is not mandatory information to provide we will start to ask whether you have had the COVID jab. It will help us make decisions about when we stop making masks mandatory and allow singing on the buses. Everyone sings on the bus don't they?

During May we are being extremely vigilant about how we can improve our response times to our clients. We are being let down by our phone system with poor quality lines and voicemails going missing and we are desperately trying to resolve that. Please be patient with us. When you have called and not got through please be patient and call again. When you leave a message and we don't get back to you within 24 hours please let us know. We want to do better and I am hoping that you can help us by letting us know where the problem lies. Is it more staff and volunteers? Is it a better phone system? Or do we have to improve our procedures and systems? So I do want to hear your feedback.

If in doubt please email welcome@activecarenetwork.org.au and mark it attention to the CEO.

We do have some exciting new projects coming up at Active Care Network. Look out for our Community Conversations where we want to connect better with our community. Also we will shortly have the Home Support Team delivering Home Modifications and Domestic Assistance as new services to our clients. I don't want to say too much yet but we are also working on Overnights as a new Transport offering. Did someone say Floriade?

I had a great time on my first social outing this year with my new friends Joan, Pat and Daphne. Had a great chat over scones and jam and we almost made Pam our Client Support Volunteers shed a tear because we loved her so much. I did miss Leslie though because I do owe her lunch from the Christmas Party Raffle. Book soon Leslie!

Stay Safe and Keep Travellin'



We now only have ONE phone number **02 4722 3083**

BE A PART OF OUR COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Active Care Network prides itself on its values which are; Innovation, Integrity, Reliability, Respect, Service, and Trust.

For Active Care Network to meet these values it is critical for us to understand what is important to our community and the people we serve. So that we can better understand what matters to you, we would like to have a short conversation with you about the aspirations you have for your community. Gaining these important insights will enable us to deliver a service and programs that better suit your individual needs and those of your community.

Active Care Network has a goal to speak with every one of our clients in the next year. In having a conversation with us you we will have an opportunity to talk about the community you want to be a part of and, importantly, you will also have a longer term influence on how we better deliver our service and programs.

Our preference is to have a friendly, in-person conversation with you and so we have organised six free events that you can participate in. The transport will be free and there will be some lunch specials available at the venues so you can grab a bite before or after the event.

Normally we would ask that you book no more than the month in advance, however because these conversations are one of the most important things we will do this year you may book as far in advance as you like in this instance. We want to make sure we accommodate as many people as we can.

In July we will do the events in Blacktown LGA - Thursday 22nd and Friday 23rd July.

In August we will do the events in Penrith LGA - Wednesday 18th and Friday 20th August.

In September we will do the events in the Blue Mountains LGA - Monday 13th and Wednesday 15th September. See overleaf for booking details.

However we are limited in the time we have to gather this information so we may have to speak to you on the phone. The conversation will take approximately 10 minutes. There are four simple questions that will take you as little or as much time to answer as you would like, depending on how much detail you wish to provide us with.

We look forward to the opportunity to speak to you soon.



TAP AND PAY ON ACTIVE CARE NETWORK VEHICLES

Over the last year we have offered PayPal Here card readers on Active Care Network vehicles for you to be able to pay your fares without using cash. This has been enthusiastically taken up by many clients and we are happy to offer you as many payment options as we can: cash, payment over the phone, payment via our website, payment into our bank account, cheques and tap and pay on vehicles.

We will be changing our tap and pay system in the coming months as PayPal Here, our current system, is being discontinued. You will still be able to use your credit and debit cards on the vehicles and we hope to be able to introduce more services as time goes on. The only difference will be the look of the card reader.

TRANSPORT BOOKINGS

Active Care Network wishes to advise you that some slight changes will be made to the way you book transport services. Please take time to read the following.

Bookings:

- The Active Care Network office accepts transport bookings between the hours of 9:00am and 4:00pm Monday to Friday.
- A minimum of one weeks notice is recommended for all booking requests and bookings can be made up to a maximum of one month in advance.
- Active Care Network makes every effort to accommodate all transport requests, however making a booking does not guarantee transport will be available. Transport is dependent upon availability of resources, especially for out of area transport.
- Active Care Network is not an emergency service so please make bookings in a timely manner.
- Please advise our office when booking if a support person (i.e. carer, spouse or friend) is travelling with you, so that seating can be correctly allocated.

Ongoing bookings:

- Bookings are not automatically renewed by staff and generally 'standing bookings' will not be accepted (errors can occur when changes are made).
- Clients are encouraged to contact our office to re-book their regular transports on a monthly basis.

Late notice – bookings:

- Active Care Network understand that clients may occasionally receive late notification from their medical providers or forget to book.

• Every effort will be made to accommodate your request. However, services may not be provided if the necessary resources are not available.

- Active Care Network will advise you if transport cannot be provided.

Notifications:

- You will receive an automated call advising of your pick and return time, on the working day prior to your booking.
- If your answering machine is not working or you have not received a call please contact the office after 2:00pm if you wish to check timing.
- Times provided may vary by up to 30 minutes early for inward journeys or up to 30 minutes late for return journeys. This may be due to cancellations, traffic, weather and unforeseen circumstances.
- Clients are asked to be ready to leave their home when the driver arrives. Please remain inside in case we need to contact you.
- For return journey if you have a mobile phone please have it available in case we need to contact you.

Cancellations and changes

Please contact our office as soon as possible if you (and your support person) no longer require transport or need to make changes to your upcoming booking


Messages

When leaving a phone message please clearly state your name, phone number and address.

Your patience and understanding is appreciated.

Chatterbox is our new interview style article which showcases some great local community services, as well as giving you an insight into why they do what they do!

And this issue's chatterbox is **Ditte Kozak!** Ditte is the General Manager of Nepean Food Services (NFS) Meals on Wheels.

 : "So Ditte, I think we should dive right in to this interview, is that okay with you?"


Ditte: "Yes, let's do it!"

 : "Nepean Food Services is a great organisation which assists many elderly and disabled people in the Nepean area. Can you tell me what drives you to do the job you do?"

Ditte: "Hi Everyone, I have been working in this sector for over 25 years and have a great passion for providing the local supports for the aged and people living with a disability in our community. It provides me with great satisfaction thinking that I can in some way assist our consumers in living the best life possible".


 : "Why is good nutrition so important for older people and those living with disability?"

Ditte: "Increasingly, evidence indicates that good nutrition is a key factor associated with good mental health and healthy ageing. Food in most families, groups and communities is a strong connector and is critical to good holistic health, both physical and mental. Food is a very important binder which brings us together as a community, building and strengthening community well-being".

 : "Aside from NFS there are other meal providers around who are also offering to service elderly people (particularly on Home Care Packages or younger people on the NDIS). Why is NFS a better option for them?"

Ditte: "The major difference from other food suppliers is that Nepean Food Services is supported by over 90 volunteers who deliver food, will pack it in your freezer and in some cases heat up the meals. The volunteers are also able to do well-being checks on our clients whilst delivering the meals. Our meals also have very high nutrition content with most of our suppliers following the Nutritional Guidelines for Ageing and our meals are also particularly high in protein.


Home Care package providers are also able to utilise our services by purchasing our meals at a cheaper rate and then this leaves more money in the client's package for other supports".

 : "If you had one piece of advice for anyone thinking about using your services what would it be?"


Ditte: "At Nepean Food Services we pride ourselves on our customer service and can assist anyone wanting to maintain their independent lifestyle through a range of innovative food related local supports. Our meals are quality meals that we source through seven different suppliers, so there is always something for everyone. We can also provide for special dietary requirements such as gluten free, cut up, puree and also culturally appropriate meals are available".

 : "Other than receiving a healthy hot meal from NFS, what other benefits do clients get?"

Ditte: "We can provide a range of activities to bring people together who might otherwise be isolated, such as community restaurants and group luncheons and outings. Because Covid restrictions have eased, we are now ramping up our different activities so that people can connect and build friendships over a meal".

 : "How does someone go about becoming a client of your service?"

Ditte: All you have to do is ring Nepean Food Services and one of our receptionists will assist you in any way possible. Our phone number is (02) 47337200".

 : "Thank you for your time Ditte, it was great speaking to you today and I am sure that our clients will also find what you and NFS does to be interesting as well as educational!"



ACTIVE REPAIR PROGRAM

In June 2020 Penrith City Council launched the "COVID-19 Community Recovery Fund" as a one-off program to support local organisations to address community needs as we moved forward into recovery from the social effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The stated objectives of the fund were to:

- to support local organisations in quickly responding to emerging needs and deliver flexible activities/services
- to support local organisations in building resilience as Penrith's communities experience the longer-term social effects of COVID-19 pandemic and as government restrictions around physical distancing are rolled back.

Active Care Network had established a number of Client Wellbeing programs during 2020 including:

- Establishing a Client Engagement team which contacted all of our clients by telephone on a number of occasions to 'check in' with them to ensure that they were coping, and to ask if there was anything we could follow up with on their behalf, such as grocery shopping or meals-on-wheels.
- Many of our Clients expressed the need for help with their gardens and lawns as they had concerns about going outside of their homes during the pandemic. In answer to this Active Care Network was able to provide a short-term gardening and lawns service for them utilising our Community Transport Drivers, this service was subsidised heavily by Active Care Network and all that people were asked to contribute was a gold coin donation. This service greatly assisted many of our clients and they regularly commented that they were happy that the work was undertaken by people that they knew and trusted. A key outcome of responding to this identified client need was that Active Care Network went on to establish a Home Services team in August 2020 with the initial focus on providing Gardening and Lawn Care services.

Active Care Network was grateful to receive a grant under the Penrith City Council COVID-19 Community Recovery Fund. The funds were used to extend and broaden our gardening and lawns

services to clients through the establishment of our 'Care and Repair' program. This innovative program adds a social investment element to this service which may be as simple as spending time with the clients over a cup of tea and listening to what is important to them. The Care and Repair program has provided much needed care and assistance to many older Australians who had become especially disconnected from family, friends and their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of 54 clients have been able to access the program to date.

"The main difference for me is that they actually care about helping and that has been quite comforting during this time".

80 year old, Penrith resident, and long term client of Active Care Network, Rhonda** has been quite isolated from family and friends during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Care and Repair is wonderful, we have work done around our home, the social interaction is also great, Bill loves having a chat to Pat and Steve, they are lovely boys".*

Mary and Bill** are 90 and 93 years old respectively, they have resided in Penrith for 67 years and they are at a point where home and garden maintenance is proving very difficult for them without assistance. Mary told Active Care Network that she feels the social interaction element of 'Care and Repair' is particularly good for Bill, as he is at a point where he no longer has any male friends left.

**Pat and Steve are our Garden and maintenance team members. **Names have been changed for purpose of this article.*



ACTIVE GARDENING CLUB

As outlined in the last edition of Chatterbus, we have been in discussions with Penrith City Council to establish a Gardening Club for our Clients and members of the local Penrith Community. We are very pleased to announce that in partnership with Penrith City Council the new Active Care Gardening Club will be launched on the 22nd of July and will be open to all our Clients and members of the local Penrith Community. The Active Care Gardening Club weekly program will include:

1. Regular weekly Gardening Club meetings at the Penrith City Council Nursery located at 2151A Castlereagh Road, Penrith.
2. Monthly Wellbeing and Education programs facilitated by internal and external facilitators
3. Gardening Club outings to local Gardens and Parks and other places of interest.
4. Six monthly scheduled overnight trips to regional gardening events such as the Tulip Festival in Bowral and Floriade in Canberra

The key components of the Active Care Gardening club include the following:

1. The Gardening Club will initially operate 1 day each week until the end of October on Friday mornings from 10:00am to 1:00pm, and 2 mornings each week from early November.
2. Location: Penrith City Council Nursery at 2151A Castlereagh Road, Penrith.
3. All of our Clients and members of the local Community are welcome to join the Gardening Club.
4. There will be a mix of activities at the Nursery and at other locations which will be set out on the 6 monthly timetable.
5. The Gardening Club will be led by a qualified Horticulturalist and the weekly programs facilitated by experienced Volunteers with regular input from the Staff of Active Care Network and Penrith City Council.

The initial Active Care Gardening Club timetable to the end of October is JULY 2021

1. 23rd (Friday) Launch of the Gardening Club at the Penrith City Council Nursery at 2151A Castlereagh Road, Penrith.
2. 30th (Friday) First Friday group Gardening Club meeting and celebrating World Tree Day.

AUGUST 2021

3. 6th (Friday) Gardening Club activities at the Nursery.
4. 13th (Friday) Wellbeing and Education Program
5. 20th (Friday) Bush Regeneration with the Bellbird Program (Penrith City Council).
6. 27th (Friday) Gardening Club Activities at the Nursery.

SEPTEMBER 2021

7. 3rd (Friday) Gardening Club activities and Gardenia growing Presentation by the Nursery Staff.
8. 10th (Friday) Wellbeing and Education Program
9. 17th (Friday) Gardening Club Activities at the Nursery.
10. 21st (Tuesday) to 23rd (Thursday) 3 Day combined Tour and visit to the Floriade in Canberra.

NB: Further information is outlined in this edition of Chatterbus in the Social Outings Section

OCTOBER 2021

11. 1st (Friday) Gardening Club Activities at the Nursery.
12. 8th (Friday) Wellness and Education Program
13. 15th (Friday) social visit to regional gardens.
14. 22nd (Friday) Garden Club Activities at the Nursery.
15. 29th (Friday) Garden Club Activities at the Nursery .

The Active Care Gardening Club is open to all of our Clients and members of the Penrith local community. For further information about this exciting new program and how to become involved as a member of the Active Care Gardening Club, please contact Emma Burns on (02) 4708 9439

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!

