



Mallee Track Health & Community Service

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MEDIA RELEASE

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CUPPAS, CHATS, CARDS AND CRAFT ARE BACK!

ELIGIBLE residents across the Mallee Track catchment are once again enjoying stronger social and community connections with the return of Mallee Track Health and Community Service Social Support Groups.

Social Support Groups (often better known as Planned Activity Groups) were put on hold due to COVID-19, but MTHCS chief executive officer Lois O'Callaghan said the groups are now making a welcome return to their face-to-face format.

"Our Social Support Groups run planned activities each week in community venues across the MTHCS catchment area, specifically aimed at getting our participants out of the house and socialising," Ms O'Callaghan said.

"The participants enjoy morning and afternoon tea and lunch and activities include games, cards, brain activities and various crafts, and Meet and Eat groups every month for a trip to a nearby pub or restaurant.

"We really encourage our group members to get involved in the planning of activities, and to put forward their own suggestions of things they enjoy."

MTHCS Community and Social Support Manager Nadiene Lynch said the programs in Murrayville, Ouyen, Underbool, Sea Lake, Speed and Woomelang were "sorely missed" by both participants and staff.

"For many people across the Mallee Track catchment, the Social Support Groups are an interaction they look forward to every week, it's an outing that they may not have otherwise," she said.

"Social and community connections are an extremely high priority for MTHCS in supporting the physical and emotional wellbeing of our community members who are older or living with a disability.

"The groups are fantastic in restoring and strengthening networks and creating important community connections, and they were sorely missed, but we were only comfortable with getting them back up and running when it was safe to do so."

Ms Lynch said for those who may not like to attend group-based social support programs, an alternative can be provided in their own homes.

"We understand that group-based activities aren't for everyone, but social interaction is important for everyone, so our Friendly Visiting program caters for this," she said.

"It matches volunteers with people who live at home and would like someone to chat to. It might also be to give them a hand with their pets, help them on outings or be able to see a health professional. It's just another way of ensuring people across the Mallee Track stay connected."

Anyone interested in being part of the program can register with My Aged Care on 1800 200 422 – and community members needing to register can contact MTHCS on 50921111. **Ends.**

For interviews or further information contact MTHCS CEO Lois O'Callaghan (03) 5092 1111