



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



Improving Wellness in Launceston's ageing Bhutanese Community

Community Connections Weekly Program February & March 2016

Four weekly sessions of the Community Connections program were held in February. Ten participants attended on the 3 February, nineteen on the 10 February, nineteen on the 17 February, and twenty-one on 24 February.

On 3 and 10 February, volunteers Wayne Lim and Sheena Lui gave English lessons to the group during part of these sessions. As Sheena Lui has Type 1 diabetes, they structured their lesson on 3 February from Sheena's first hand experience of living with this condition as the group were very interested in learning about Diabetes and becoming familiar with key words in English on this topic. On the 10 February Wayne and Sheena added a practical dimension to this topic by taking group members to the nearby supermarket where they identified foods that were beneficial in combatting diabetes and those that were not. This gave the group had an opportunity to learn the English names for a variety of food and produce.

At the 17 February session the group enjoyed their time chatting with each other and playing cards. Support workers will get other games they enjoy for the group to use, such as Chinese Checkers and Ludo.

On the 24 February CCNESB volunteer Breanna Hancock joined the group. As it was raining, she brought in some of the books she had used in her eco-tourism course books to introduce the group to local animal and plant life found in Tasmania.

On the 2 March, twenty-one group participants spent the session at the Punchbowl Reserve. The weather was perfect for a picnic and a visit to the Punchbowl Community Garden, where local resident and gardener Kevin Kiel talked to them about how the 120 plots were managed before taking the group on a tour of the garden. After the picnic lunch, Breanna Hancock presented a talk about the bird life inhabiting the Punchbowl Reserve.



Community Connection gathering,
Migrant Resource Centre1, Haig St
Mowbray, 7 February 2016

L: Lachhi Maya Rai with Community Garden host, local resident, Kevin Kiel. Punchbowl Excursion, 2 March 2016

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Community Connections Weekly Program

At the weekly meeting on the 24 February, group members were asked to share what they thought of the Community Connections program.

'These gatherings are very good for older people to come together and share things. I am 84 and I am very happy meeting people of similar age. Before, the stress increases because we are not doing anything. Some of us can't read because we can't see well. Here we forget our stresses and time passes easily. The opportunity to meet once a week is very helpful. It keeps us active and alert.'

Damanta Phu Yel, 24 February 2016



'Everyone is enjoying coming together. It is lovely to have an opportunity to socialise with each other and share a meal and play games together. It would be wonderful if we could all come together to cook and have others join us for a meal to share the food we prepare. I would also like to visit more beautiful gardens [like the National Rose Garden at Woolmers Estate, Longford, Pilot Day Excursion, 17 November 2015].'

Nir Mala Kuikel, 24 February 2016

(Nir Mala Kuikel with volunteer Breanna Hancock, Punchbowl Community Gardens, 2 March 2016)



'Before these weekly sessions people had no opportunity to meet other people in our community because we are not living close together. We were feeling sleepy all the time. Now we feel active, fresh and are having fun. It is good to meet new people and see different places and learn about their history. I really liked watching the shearing and seeing how that was done here [Pilot Day Excursion, 17 November 2015]. When I went to the Lilydale Falls [Day Excursion 16 February 2016] I felt like I was back in Bhutan. My father kept cattle in that kind of forest and I felt lucky to be in Australia. It was wonderful to feel similarities to my homeland both at Lilydale Falls and on the winding road [The Sidling] from Scottsdale to Launceston, which is also very like the winding road from southern to northern Bhutan.'

Lok Nath Subedi, 24 February 2016

(Lok Nath Subedi with local gardener, Wolf Borgis, Punchbowl Community Garden, Launceston, 2 March 2016)

Punchbowl Reserve Excursion 2 March 2016



Lila Ram Basnet, Kevin Kiel, Lok Nath Subedi & Ganga Ram Acharya, Punchbowl Community Gardens

Although the Community Connections program has a monthly day excursion, the 12-seater bus limits the number of participants on these days to around 8-9 people, depending on the number of staff supervising. As the Sudanese Community are delighted to lend the group their Community bus, where possible excursions to nearby sites will also be arranged for the weekly group; workers will transport extra people in their cars.

On 2 March the group visited the Punchbowl Reserve for a picnic and toured the Punchbowl's Community Garden with local resident and gardener, Kevin Kiel. The group were delighted to meet their host and discover that he is turning 90 this year, making him older than they were, but still an active gardener! The visit stimulated a lot of discussion. Some group members fondly recalled how their parents and grandparents had tended vegetable gardens in Bhutan. While some group members, like Lila Ram Basnet, have established vegetable gardens at their new homes in Launceston; others felt inspired to create their own. Now that they have an opportunity to meet weekly, they thought when they see each other they could exchange seeds and advice on what should be planted when in the southern hemisphere, as opposed to their northern homelands.



Kevin Kiel showing a zucchini that is now a marrow



Hari Lal Kuikel with a butternut pumpkin

Community Connections Weekly gathering



Collecting parsnip seeds

Tony, a local gardener at the Punchbowl Community Garden, invited the group to take some of his parsnip seeds. He told them that they were from seeds he had brought from Deloraine and planted ten years ago. The Bhutanese told him that they ate these seeds to remove stomach gas.



Inspecting beans

L-R: local gardener Kevin Kiel with Damanta Phu Yel & Bhutanese Support Worker Bikash Acharya



Admiring dahlias

L-R: Uma Devi Acharya, Damanta Phu Yel & Biva Maya Rai