

# NEWS RELEASE



An Australian Government Initiative

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## Life changing mental health support for Gold Coast aged care residents

Gold Coast aged care residents can now access free mental health programs providing personal mental health support for conditions such as anxiety and depression.

Recognised as a national priority by the Australian Government Department of Health, \$1.5 million in funding has been made available to the Gold Coast Primary Health Network (GCPHN) over three years, to provide psychological support at Gold Coast residential aged care facilities.

Mental health services are not routinely available for older people living in aged care facilities, but recent figures show that approximately 39 per cent of all permanent aged care residents are living with mild to moderate depression.

GCPHN CEO Matt Carrodus said a range of individual and group sessions, by trained mental health professionals, are helping to change lives.

“Many residents in aged care may experience anxiety and depression due to issues including ill health, loneliness, grief and often at key transitional times such when they move into residential aged care,” Mr Carrodus said.

“The benefits for residents include mood improvements, reduction in anxiety and stress and increased ability to cope with life changes.”

Seventy-four-year-old Shirley Mansell says the program has helped her to regain her mental strength. “I think it’s marvellous. It’s helped a lot. We talk every week, it’s great.”

She credits the support from her mental health practitioner and the staff at her residential aged care facility, Arcare Pimpama, for helping her to focus on the future, and a few weeks ago she realised a childhood dream and was able to swim with the dolphins.

GCPHN has commissioned the organisation, Change Futures, to provide the psychological services, which are now currently available in 28 aged care facilities. It’s hoped this will be expanded to all facilities on the Gold Coast within three years.

Executive Director of Change Futures, Julie Aganoff, said one of the biggest issues facing residents is difficulty adjusting to the changes that a move into aged care can bring.

“Many people experience a great sense of loss because of this. If untreated, this can lead to more serious mental health issues, so we like to connect with residents right from the beginning.”

To access the new services, individuals can contact Change Futures or referrals can be accepted from family, facility managers, nurses, doctors, psychologists and psychiatrists.

For referrals or information phone: 07 5648 0424 or email: [racmentalhealth@changeutures.org.au](mailto:racmentalhealth@changeutures.org.au)

For further details visit: [www.gcphn.org.au/GCMH-aged-care](http://www.gcphn.org.au/GCMH-aged-care)