

NEWS RELEASE

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Virtual art exhibition ‘This is Us’ keeping people connected amid pandemic’s social isolation

Social distancing and physical isolation might be the norm to slow the coronavirus, but maintaining social connections during the pandemic is key to keeping mental health positive.

Gold Coast local mental health professionals, Primary & Community Care Services (PCCS), have taken their art exhibition ‘This is Us’ online to continue to engage with people and maintain morale.

The virtual exhibition, which goes live on Friday, 8 May is proudly endorsed by Minister for the National Disability and Insurance Scheme (NDIS), Stuart Robert, and Federal Member for Moncrieff, Angie Bell.

“As we know one of the biggest risks for mental ill-health is social isolation, so continuing with the launch of our art show is very important to us and to the people who created these beautiful and expressive pieces,” says PCCS CEO, Dr J.R. Baker.

‘This is Us’ is the culmination of weekly art classes that also actively foster social connections for people with psychosocial disabilities such as depression, anxiety and other long-term mental health conditions.

Late last year, Minister Robert released a plan to improve the NDIS which included focusing on market innovation and improved long-term outcomes for people with disability and he is honoured to present the artworks produced during the innovative Plus Social program run by PCCS.

“Programs like this are designed to ensure people with disability are getting the best opportunity to participate in their communities,” Minister Robert said. “Everyone should be afforded the same opportunity to play a meaningful role in their community and the Plus Social program is another way we’re empowering people with disability to do just that.

“I’d like to congratulate all the participants and look forward to seeing the positive impact this program will have in better supporting people with a disability on the Gold Coast.”

Federal Member for Moncrieff, Angie Bell, applauded the work of PCCS in delivering essential mental health services to the community.

“It has never been so important to look after our mental health. By staying at home we are saving lives, however being isolated can be lonely, which is why I am pleased PCCS is using technology to ensure we all stay connected and occupied during these tough times,” she said.



“I know the artists have been working hard to bring their pieces together, so I commend them on their work and wish them all the best for the exhibition.”

PCCS launched Plus Social on the Gold Coast in July 2018 in conjunction with the Gold Coast Primary Health Network (GCPHN) and has seen hundreds of local residents through the program to date.

“GCPHN CEO Matt Carrodus said the Plus Social is program is changing lives for Gold Coast residents and their families.

“This service is about linking people living with a mental illness to the support services they need including health, housing and employment, to build resilience and confidence and assist in their recovery,” Mr Carrodus said.

“This artwork program is an innovative and exciting way to connect participants during this particularly challenging time with COVID-19.

“Referrals into the program are still being accepted and we encourage those with a severe or persistent mental illness in need of support, to contact their GP to discuss their suitability for a referral.”

The artworks were produced during weekly Chill Art group activities. Chill Art is just one of the many social prescribing groups PCCS run to build resilience, counter social isolation and encourage a greater sense of wellbeing for those living with mental ill health.

PCCS utilises a social prescribing approach across a variety of programs all aimed at improving wellbeing. GPs can use social prescribing to help people meet a range of non-medical needs, such as social isolation, by *prescribing* social activities to increase wellbeing.

PCCS CEO, Dr J.R. Baker, says, “Social factors are often overlooked when evaluating someone’s health. But our brains are actually wired to crave connections. When our mental health suffers, people often isolate themselves and this just exacerbates their mental health issues.”

‘This is Us’ is live online from 8 May at [ThisIsUs.gallery](https://thisisus.gallery) . Most artworks are for sale with proceeds going directly to our artists.

Find us on Facebook @primaryandcommunitycareservices or visit our website gc.pccs.org.au for more information on Gold Coast programs, activity groups and referrals.

For more information on the This is Us exhibition, contact PCCS General Manager Operations Daniel D’Appio on 0421 155 659 or 02 9477 8700.





About Primary & Community Care Services Limited

Primary & Community Care Services (PCCS) is a local health organisation working to make it easier for people to access the health and community services they need. We are the Australian leaders in social prescribing. To ensure we're delivering what the community needs, PCCS is identifying where health gaps are by talking to healthcare professionals, local councils, community groups and individuals. PCCS is a non-government, not-for-profit organisation and charity focused on driving positive outcomes in the health and welfare sectors. We provide access to community-based services that include occupational therapy, nursing, physiotherapy, social work, care coordination and psychological support as well as being a provider of choice for NDIS participants across and NSW and QLD.

About social prescribing

Social prescribing is at the core of our programs. It can help address social barriers that are impacting wellbeing and quality of life. In this way it complements the medical care a person already receives.

The benefits from social prescribing include:

- Improved general health, wellbeing and mood
- Increased confidence, self-esteem and skills
- Enabling reconnection to and expansion of social/support networks
- Reduced feelings of loneliness and isolation
- Reduced medication usage.

