

# Introducing ...



**Local Friends** provides friendship and support to older people in the Mandurah area who live alone.

It has been started by Dr Sheila Twine who says “ *We all know that many older people are living alone. Our governments are keen for people to ‘age in place’ and most of us want to stay in our own homes for as long as possible. While this is a good policy, it has a down side - loneliness and isolation.*

*‘As we reach our 80s and 90s, we experience the sadness of many of our friends passing away. Some people don’t have any family at all; many have families spread over the globe. And even if family members are ‘simply down the track’ in Busselton for example, travel may be difficult for those who aren’t able to drive any more. This all makes for a ‘disconnect’ with families and indeed, the community.’*

## Background

A little over eighteen months ago, David Smeeton, a director of Palliative Care WA, had been keen to start up some kind of local organisation to get people involved in a ‘Compassionate Community’.

Sadly, David died before he was able to fulfill his ambition, but at his funeral in January 2020, Sheila Twine made a pledge to his memory and made the plea for the establishment of a steering group to forward his vision. Mandurah Mayor, Rhys Williams said, “Yes, Mandurah can do this” and then promised support from his staff. A name was devised for the organisation, the promised support was forthcoming in full measure, and Local Friends was up and running. Well, if not actually running, at least up and tottering!

## Setting up the Fledgling Organisation

Firstly, a steering committee was established comprising - Dr Sheila Twine, Paddi Creevey (Chair, Peel Development Commission), Lisa Gardiner (Manager, Mandurah Seniors Centre), Nicky Hooper (President, Zonta Club of Peel), Lana Glogowski (CEO Palliative Care WA), Tangea Tansley (Founder Member, POOPS WA), Vicki Barry (Advance Care Planning, Palliative Care WA), Ellie Stevenson (Senior Nurse, Home Instead Senior Care), Vicki Pollard (Manager, Peel Volunteer Resource Centre), Amanda Burton (Manager, Electorate Office of Zak Kirkup), Lynda Donovan (Coordinator, Margaret River Angels), Pippa Gauden (Capacity Building, City of Mandurah), Nick Benson (Community Development, City of Mandurah), Charmaine Prinz (Befriend), Lisa Quigley and Janet Roos (Chorus), Dr Vivian Dempsy (Dynamic Doctors Group, Greenfields), Dr Jacqui Sutton (Peelwood Family Practice, Halls Head).

During the Covid-19 lock down of March, April and May 2020, this committee set up all the necessary documentation and policies to give the project a firm foundation. An Auspice was arranged with Peel Volunteer Resource Centre (PVRC), which also holds its Public Liability Insurance and Police Clearance details.



## Finance

Donations were generously given by *The Restart Mandurah Grant* and *Mayday* which enabled initial necessary expenditure.

## How Local Friends Works

Initially, doctors and retirement villages in the two pilot areas of Halls Head / Erskine and Greenfields were approached to identify lonely and isolated elderly people wanting a friend and social support. Now though, most referrals are coming from word-of-mouth and care workers. It has been so successful that the initial pilot areas have spread from Dawesville to Barrigup.

Volunteer Coordinators induct the new Home Visiting Volunteers, explain their 'job description' and get the necessary privacy and confidentiality documentation signed. Once Police Clearances have been issued, coordinators can match the volunteers with their new older 'friends'. Great care is taken with the matching process and, when completed, volunteers visit their older friends regularly at specific times and provide friendship and support.

## Where We Are Now

Currently, twenty-six (26) volunteers have completed all their necessary paperwork and have their Police Clearances. Having been referred, fourteen (14) lonely people are now being visited on a regular basis.

Volunteers maintain comprehensive log books of visits. These, together with anecdotal data and feedback provide hard data for evaluation and will be collated and analysed to provide an evidence base of how Local Friends is progressing.

## Promotion

- A website has been designed by Western Web Design to spread awareness of Local Friends - **[www.localfriends.org.au](http://www.localfriends.org.au)**
- A facebook page will enable volunteers, friends and any interested parties to keep in touch
- Talks are being given to Groups such as Probus, Rotary, Independent Retirees, U3A and other seniors groups to publicise Local Friends
- Items of special interest will be forwarded to the press together with photos as appropriate

## Forward Planning

- Incorporation of the organisation will proceed in the new financial year of 2021 / 2022
- Training sessions and get-togethers for volunteers will be on-going
- Regular liaison with other support groups and organisations will be initiated and maintained
- A regular newsletter for volunteers and their older friends will be initiated
- At the end of the first twelve months, it is planned to initiate the David Smeeton Award for Excellence which will be presented each year to the volunteer who has best reflected the values and ethos of Local Friends

---

**More Information -** Dr Sheila Twine, Chair and Founder

**E-mail:** [sheila@localfriends.org.au](mailto:sheila@localfriends.org.au)     **Mobile:** 0417 357 352

