

Local volunteers acknowledged as demand for services grow

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National Seniors Australia (NSA) has acknowledged volunteers of the Kilkivan & District Community Care Association Inc (KDCCAI) for their work to improve the experience of ageing for local residents as the two organisations come together to raise support for KDCCAI's Rise & Shine Ageing in Place project – a volunteer-led ageing in place project for rural communities, grown from the grass roots in response to missing service delivery and infrastructure.

"As people age and their needs change, practical support and staying connected to family, friends, and community becomes incredibly important," said NSA General Manager Ms Pauline Mason.

"For some people who live in regional and rural communities, like Kilkivan, ageing and changing needs often come with the heartbreaking relocation to bigger towns with the necessary supports and accommodation smaller towns lack.

"Through the establishment of a seniors social and community hub, provision of a community transport service – the KilkiVAN, and assistance with support at home services, the dedicated KDCCAI volunteers have helped many older residents to remain in their own community as they age.

"With three of four pillars achieved, KDCCAI is now focused on securing the funding to build transitional accommodation to help older residents down-size locally into one-bedroom rental homes and for those with higher needs, move into shared accommodation with greater supervision. NSA is pleased to support KDCCAI as it works to raise the vital funds to see this much-needed accommodation come to life.

"Of course, none of this would be possible without the vision and commitment of KDCCAI Founder and President, Ms Rosie Fitzgerald, who established KDCCAI in 2019. Much of the progress in Kilkivan is due to Rosie's steadfast resolve that older people should be able to age in the place they call home."

Ms Fitzgerald said it has been a privilege to assist community members she holds so dear and strongly believes that addressing the local deficiencies at the source will result in far better and more cost-effective outcomes that benefit all.

"Moving seniors from their home, against their will – especially those living with dementia, can adversely impact their mental health while also increasing the level of care required elsewhere," Ms Fitzgerald said.

"Many rural communities are similar to Kilkivan with a higher-than-average cohort of older residents, few services, a lack of public transport, and many older residents with little or no close

family support. Add to this, cost-of-living pressures and limited housing options, and our proposed ageing-in-place model becomes not only necessary, but urgent.

"Too often policy makers see aged-related issues through the lens of an urban resident. But not all people live in highly urbanised areas. Rural Australians have rights. Ensuring these rights are met and their needs delivered requires a very different model than one that seems to fit the majority.

"I thank NSA for its support as well as Kilkivan's wonderful local community members – many of whom have supported me and KDCCAI for more than seven years. As a community, we have a collective need and vision to see our older residents better supported – it's time we turn that vision into a reality!"

It is a cause shared and championed by NSA Founder, Mr Everaldo Compton AO, who would like to see the Kilkivan model of care replicated in rural communities across Australia.

"Too many people who live in rural communities are forced to move as they age. This shouldn't be the case. It is fundamentally wrong and we have to fix it," Mr Compton said.

"We need all levels of government – from local to federal, to invest in and support older Australians in rural communities, just as they do older Australians in metropolitan areas, to help them to live longer and better lives in the place they call home.

"After seven years of KDCCAI's hard work, it is time for Kilkivan to deliver transitional accommodation. KDCCAI is ready, the Kilkivan community is ready. The nation is ready. Now, let's make it happen!"

Ms Mason said when once upon a time residents would have relocated from the community they know and love, many have been able to stay – all thanks to the efforts of dedicated KDCCAI volunteers and the vision of its equally dedicated President, Rosie Fitzgerald.

"For seven years KDCCAI volunteers have supported residents to age in place – it's now time for the broader community to support the KDCCAI!" Ms Mason said.

For more information please visit kilkivancare.com.au

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