



UNIVERSITY of
TASMANIA

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Community campaign delivers DIGnity in rural Tasmania

The University of Tasmania's Centre for Rural Health is leading a community-based project that is helping reduce isolation and improve health and wellbeing.

DIGnity is a successful community garden initiative providing residents in the State's South-East with opportunities to engage in positive social interaction, gentle exercise and healthy eating.

Centre for Rural Health Researcher Dr Pauline Marsh said the initiative supported locals to overcome physical, cognitive and emotional barriers to good health.

"DIGnity builds on the existing health benefits of community gardens, but makes them more inclusive and accessible for all people," Dr Marsh said.

"The DIGnity team supports people living at home with dementia, who are from residential aged care or socially isolated for any reason to join in with their local community.

"The gardens offer onsite professional support and are staffed by an occupational therapist, mental health counsellor, fibre artist, social researcher, garden coordinators and many volunteers.

"Community members of all ages can participate in various activities which include connecting with nature, meeting new people, basket-weaving or helping make a shared lunch using harvested ingredients.

"The name DIGnity was inspired from the concept 'dignity of risk', which is used by some health advocates to articulate that it is a normal part of life to take risks.

"Sometimes people are denied that opportunity. Our program adheres to the idea that there is dignity in risk, and provides low-levels of risk that help people feel human and restore their dignity."

DIGNity was established in late 2016 with a grant from the Tasmanian Community Fund, allowing the Centre for Rural Health to roll out the program at Neighbourhood House gardens in Nubeena, Dunalley and Dodges Ferry.

A crowdfunding campaign has been underway to support its continuation, with the State Government also committing a further \$70,000 over the next two years.

“The initial funding enabled DIGnity to become a well-established and successful model of nature-based preventative healthcare,” Dr Marsh said.

“The crowdfunding campaign and government support will help us expand this wellbeing project and allow its continuation throughout autumn while providing a good base for it to extend over the next two years.

“All additional funds raised will go towards the program and allow us to run even more sessions.”

DIGNity is also supported by community provider partnerships, with between 10-40 residents of all ages attending sessions across participating gardens.

More information about the DIGnity crowdfunding campaign can be found here:
<https://www.communities.bendigobank.com.au/projects/dignity>

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