



PRESIDENTS NEWLETTER CONTRIBUTION

It is common knowledge when our organisation, Nerang Community Respite Care, decided to update its image and 're-brand" there was a lot of discussion on what the new name should be. It seemed like hundreds of names were considered, analysed, discussed and in turn rejected before LIBERTY Community Connect was finally agreed as the name which should be adopted.

Although the emphasis in the new title centres on the name LIBERTY there is little doubt that Community Connect, which forms a part of our name, plays a major role in our organisational values and therefore forms a major consideration in the future of the organisation moving forward.

There have been numerous studies and research which has highlighted the sharp decline in people's connection to their community which has been caused by a number of reasons. This lack of connection has a major impact on peoples lives which has been recognised by Liberty and a reason why its importance has been incorporated into Liberty's name and work.

There are large numbers of people in our community who are vulnerable to becoming socially isolated and lonely due to loss of friends and family, lack of mobility or lack of income which can all lead to a lack of meaningful support being available and/or being able to be accessed by people who need it most. This social isolation and loneliness also potentially impacts upon individuals' quality of life and can adversely affect people's health which in turn can increase their reliance on health care and social care services because of:

- Increased vulnerability to mental illness
- Risk of depression and loss of individual self esteem
- Addiction of various forms (e.g. prescription medication)
- Decreases in the feeling of vitality
- Increase in the risk of chronic illness
- Frequent bouts of sickness such as flu's and colds

Studies has also identified those people who experience social isolation also have shorter life spans when compared to persons who are connected to their communities.

These issues place increased pressure of our health care system especially as our population ages and the number of people with some form of disability increases. With the increased reliance on services there is an increase in the cost to the community which is not sustainable long term without significant preventative measures being implemented.

As a result Liberty has identified community connection as one area in which we can make a significant contribution to addressing these issues. This has been achieved by giving our clients opportunities and options to connect to their communities by developing activities to enable clients to experience and participate in various community activities as well as opportunities to socialize with a wide range of community members.

We have also developed a strong volunteer culture whereby volunteers have been able to provide their vast range of skills and expertise to help Liberty achieve success in areas where without their help we would not be able to provide the services to the level required. These volunteering opportunities have also given volunteers the chance to also connect back into the community so not only clients and Liberty are benefiting but also the volunteers themselves. A real win win situation!

And finally, on behalf of the management committee, I would like to congratulate Jo on her 25th anniversary at Liberty Community Connect.

Jo's vision and leadership has enabled the organisation to develop and evolve so that Liberty Community Connect is now a leader in the sector and is positioned to meet the future opportunities and challenges.

Vitay Kaitinis

President

Liberty Community Connect Management Committee