

### Helping make the Coast a Compassionate Community

Residents of the Sunshine Coast will soon play a stronger role in the care and support of people at the end of life, with the local launch of the global Compassionate Communities initiative this week.

Funded by primary healthcare organisation Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN, Compassionate Communities aims to improve the ageing and end of life experience for people by empowering everyday citizens to draw upon their existing knowledge and networks.

PHN CEO Pattie Hudson said social approaches like this to palliative and end of life care, and to grief and bereavement, were a proven way to build strength and resilience in communities, and were growing in popularity around the world.

“We know that when people are nearing or at the end of their lives, they as well as their families, friends and carers, often experience a sense of fear, sadness and isolation,” Ms Hudson said.

“Creating Compassionate Communities is a way of connecting those people with accessible ways to improve their social, emotional and even physical wellbeing.

“This initiative builds on the work of our local community palliative care providers who have championed these principles over many years; we are delighted to strengthen such connections on the Sunshine Coast.”

The growth of the Compassionate Communities project in Australia is courtesy of The Groundswell Project, who run educational workshops, develop innovative programs and advocate for a better end of life experience for all.

Their Community Connector program activates everyday citizens to draw upon their knowledge of local services and groups to play a stronger, more confident role, in the care and support of people with life-limiting illnesses, at the end of life, or those who are bereaved and grieving.

Groundswell’s CEO Jessie Williams said the organisation has received an overwhelming response to a call out for participants for their ‘train the trainer’ training program running across the region.

“More than two hundred people have responded to our invitation to become Lead Community Connectors,” Ms Williams said.

“Lead connectors are typically community minded individuals, often retired professionals, health or community service professionals, caregivers, community leaders, or religious leaders who are passionate about contributing to the community and planning well in the face of ageing, declining health and end of life.

“They can identify and signpost others to groups, services and other supports that either formally or informally address end of life care, grief and bereavement, like palliative care, hospice care, support groups, social clubs and community services.”

A total of nine Train-the-Trainer Lead Community Connectors’ workshops will be held across Central Queensland, Wide Bay and Sunshine Coast between now and June.

The Compassionate Communities initiative will be formally launched this Thursday 22 April at 6.00pm at Maroochydore RSL Club.

Everyone is welcome.

*This project is funded under the Greater Choices for At Home Palliative Care measure of the Department of Health.*

**For more information contact: Jasmin Midgley, Senior Media and Communications Officer, Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN on 0451 300 050.**

ENDS