



TRANSPORT

Many older people are no longer able or allowed to drive. This is one of the main challenges they face when wanting to join groups and take part in activities. Some elderly people, particularly if they are newly-arrived or frail, may not be comfortable using public transport.

This problem is particularly acute for people who wish to join an ethno-specific Social Support Group. Such groups may be the only one in their local area and have long waiting lists, with no local alternative for people with low English proficiency. The more accessible the group is by public transport, the more attractive they may be to an elderly person.

For others, who may be one of few representatives of their community in their local area, there may not be an ethno-specific group nearby. This is the case for small and emerging communities, or those with few elderly members. New arrivals tend to settle in areas where they join existing, more settled communities – Chinese in the East, Arabic-speakers in Hume, Persian in Manningham, Cambodian in Springvale ... For those isolated community members, the choice to join an ethno-specific group may not be available.

It is well known that isolation is a major cause of depression in older people. This can be isolation from society as a whole, or from their

linguistic and cultural group – a community of people who understands them and their roots. Lack of available, affordable transport contributes to isolation, and many SSGs lack the funds to provide transport themselves. Addressing this issue requires creativity, good networks and strong partnerships.

Tips

- Discuss options with the person's family and carer
- Explore the possibility of the family/carer of another group member picking up the person and providing 'car pooling'.
- Establish or consolidate partnerships with volunteer transport organisations (see case study and 'Recommended resources' below). A two-way partnership could include volunteer transport organisations identifying current CALD people using their transport service who are socially isolated and may benefit from a referral to your SSG.

- Investigate if there are community groups that provide transport or hire their mini-bus. This may include RSL clubs, churches, etc. Access & Support Workers may be able to help with information about this.
- Approach your Local Council to enquire about access to mini-buses and other forms of transport for older people.
- Support SSG participants to use public transport, increasing their confidence in making their way to the SSG on their own.

Who needs to be involved

- Organisations, in order to source and allocate financial support to provide transport
- Access & Support workers, who know what is available in the community and think creatively
- Local Councils

Case Study 1 - Thinking outside the box

Access & Support worker Emily works with an elderly Iranian woman, who lives near Box Hill. She was able to find an Iranian group for her. All the group members were men – traditionally, older Iranian women tend to be at home looking after their grandchildren, and it is common that only men access social activities. The elderly woman went to the group once, saw all the men playing backgammon, and never went again.

Emily then approached a Ba'hai group in the LGA, who was happy to welcome the client. Most Ba'hai groups have Farsi speakers, and there are Ba'hai groups in most suburbs. The activities that the client attends have no religious component, and are purely social.

Emily has placed clients in different Ba'hai groups: They are very accepting of people of all religions, and they have members everywhere who are happy to pick people up if they require transport'.

Case Study 2 - Uniting Care East Burwood's partnership with Bridges

When Uniting Care East Burwood first started working with Salaginto, a small group of Filipino Seniors ('Salaginto' is the Filipino for 'beetle'), the group was able to come to the Uniting Care premises thanks to a bus belonging to Bridges Connecting Communities (Knox Community Volunteers at the time). The partnership between the Migrant Information Centre, the Filipino group and Uniting Care saw Salaginto meet fortnightly in East Burwood and integrate with existing group clients.

A couple of years later, funds for transport ran out as the Migrant Information Centre was no longer funded to assist Salaginto. As the Filipino seniors wished to continue attending the Positive Living Group, Uniting Care negotiated with Bridges Connecting Communities (see link to website below) to continue using their transport at Uniting Care's cost, as part of their Home and Community Care funding. The fortnightly visits have continued ever since.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- Organisations providing volunteer Transport in the East: <http://www.bridgescc.com.au/transport.html> - A team of volunteer drivers provide door-to-door transport for eligible residents (including to attend social support activities) when other transport options are unavailable or unsuitable
- <http://sev.org.au/transport/> - South East Volunteers provides transport for elderly people, and younger people who have a disability and their carers residing in the City of Monash.
- <http://easternvolunteers.org.au/transport/> - Eastern Volunteers has a team of over 120 volunteer drivers providing transport assistance to the elderly and people with disabilities.
- <http://www.miceastmelb.com.au/> - The Migrant Information Centre (East Melbourne) provides a range of services for migrants and refugees living in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne

The EMR Alliance is supported by the Victorian Government and supported by the Australian Government Department of Health. Visit the Department of Health website (<http://www.health.gov.au/>) for more information. Disclaimer: Although funding for this resource has been provided by the Australian Government, the material contained herein does not necessarily represent the views or policies of the Australian Government.