

Stories of Active Volunteering

Planned Activity Groups

Around 470 organisations in Victoria provide Home and Community Care services to their local community. Most include Planned Activity Groups. Volunteers are a vital support in Planned Activity Groups (PAG) across Victoria.

What are PAGs doing to assist people to stay active and independent?

The aim of PAGs has always been to provide a social occasion for clients – a chance to get out, have a cuppa or a meal with familiar friends.

Long-term volunteers may have noticed some new directions in PAGs over recent years. With a greater emphasis on assisting people to be as active and independent as possible, PAGs have been making some changes – ‘small’ changes such as encouraging people to get their own cup of tea, rather than being served, and ‘big’ changes such as new activities or classes.



How can volunteers assist PAG clients to stay active and independent?

Volunteers in Planned Activity Groups can:

- Spend time in active conversation with people in the group – really finding out about their life and their interests.

- 'Walk beside' people – to give them confidence to do something they might not do otherwise.
- Encourage people when you see them 'having a go'.
- Chat to people who may seem withdrawn – loneliness is a major issue for older people, and having a friendly volunteer to chat to can make a huge difference.
- Be patient – if the person just needs some time to do something, hang in there and let them finish – whether that be finishing the crossword or finishing a sentence.

What are some handy hints for volunteers?

- Stop and look first! Before you step in to do something for someone in the group, ask questions like: *Are you okay to do ...? Would you like me to ... (stay nearby? Give you my elbow to hang on?)*
- Check your language. The way we ask questions can be really important. Change questions from: *'Would you like me to do this for you?'* to *'Would you like to do this? Do you need any help from me?'* or *'Let's do this together.'*

- Observe people in the group and give them feedback. You may be one of the few people who sees this person regularly. Let them know you can see them having a go. Just acknowledge them as a person.
- Find common interests or experiences so that people in the group can make new connections. *'Have you got a new grandchild...so has Shirley...'* *'Charlie, didn't you go to boarding school too?'* *'Didn't you work in a library Ted?'*
- Check with your coordinator and other staff. What do they recommend for each group member?
- Observe staff – What are some of the things staff say to group members?

Key Messages

- One of the greatest gifts volunteers provide is time to be beside the client. Take your time and really provide support for people to do things for themselves.
- Support people to do what they can do.
- Assist people with what they can't do.
- Be patient!
- Be positive!