

Service Announcement

December 2024

New service builds strength and confidence of older adults to live independently

South Western Sydney PHN (SWSPHN) has commissioned Catholic Healthcare to begin delivering the Stepping On program to older adults in the region in January.

The free, seven-week program is for South Western Sydney residents who are aged 65 and over, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults aged 45 and over.

It aims to equip participants with the knowledge, strength and confidence to prevent falls, stay active and remain independent.

SWSPHN Chief Executive Officer, Dr Keith McDonald PhD, said the program was developed in response to Australia's ageing population.

It is projected that by 2066 older people will represent between 21 per cent and 23 per cent of Australia's total population.

"Stepping On is among the early intervention initiatives the Department of Health and Aged Care has focused on to support senior Australians to age in a healthy way and to delay entry into aged care," Dr McDonald said.

Fall-related injuries among older people is a major public health concern, with more than 114 people aged 65 and over admitted to NSW hospitals after a fall each day. Falls contribute to 1,200 deaths each year.

In South Western Sydney, falls-related injuries more than doubled between 2010-2021. The number of older people affected by falls is projected to increase by 51.4 per cent by 2031, with the highest increases expected in Camden (151 per cent) and Liverpool (62 per cent).

Campbelltown has the highest fall-related injury hospitalisations in the region.

Dr McDonald said older people in our region would be well served by Catholic Healthcare which delivered the Stepping On program in a number of locations across NSW.

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This service is supported by funding from the Australian Government through the PHN program.

South Western Sydney PHN is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting general practitioners, practice nurses and other primary health providers to deliver the best possible care for their patients. Our aim is to improve access to quality local healthcare for all residents living in the Bankstown, Fairfield, Liverpool, Campbelltown, Camden, Wollondilly and Wingecarribee LGAs. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, water and skies of South Western Sydney, the Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra peoples, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

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“SWSPHN looks forward to working with Catholic Healthcare to ensure older people in our communities are able to remain healthy, independent and in their homes,” he said.

Catholic Healthcare Chief Communities Officer, Therese Adami, said: “Catholic Healthcare is committed to supporting older people to lead happier, healthier lives. We are proud to be offering the Stepping On falls prevention program to residents in South Western Sydney.”

Stepping On involves weekly sessions for seven weeks and follow-up/booster sessions, with content ranging from balance and strength exercises, home hazard solutions, community safety, safe footwear and medication management.

It is appropriate for older people who: have had a fall in the past year or have a fear of falling; are living independently with or without a walking stick; able to speak conversational English or the language in which the group is facilitated.

Catholic Healthcare will deliver the Stepping On program across our region, which includes Bankstown, Liverpool, Fairfield, Campbelltown, Camden, Wollondilly and Wingecarribee local government areas.

Media Enquiries:

Michelle Pozo
Media and Communications Officer
T: 4632 3020

Office Address:

Level 2, 1 Bolger St,
Campbelltown NSW 2560

Mailing Address:

PO Box 90
Macarthur Sq NSW 2560

P: 4632 3000
F: 4625 9466
E: enquiries@swsphn.com.au
W: swsphn.com.au
ABN 74 605 441 067