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 **21 August 2018**

**Health sector calls on all politicians to stand with community health**

Rosemary is grateful for the care and support provided to her three years ago by her local community health service, Link Health and Community.

Rosemary is a 48-year-old woman with multiple chronic health conditions including rheumatoid arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, fibromyalgia, type 2 diabetes and other related issues. She cannot work in a regular job as her symptoms fluctuate and she needs to attend her medical appointments.

Enter Link Health and Community (Link HC). One of 29 registered community health services across Victoria that deliver comprehensive ‘wrap-around’ health services to the local community.

*“I was referred to a program called diabetes support group and a range of other services, that changed my life,”* says Rosemary.

*“I initially had several sessions with a diabetes educator to help me find ways to better manage my condition. I joined the diabetes support group, which is wonderful and still attend. I’ve also participated in Link HC’s hydrotherapy and Prescribed Exercise Programs (PEP). I especially love PEP as the physios and exercise physiologists have tailored a program to suit my abilities and they monitor us during each session.”*

Accessible to all Victorians, the state’s community health services deliver primary health, human services and community-based support that meet local community needs including localised responses to social and health issues.

Since Wednesday 15th August, community health services across the state are launching ‘We stand with community health’ a campaign calling on all political parties to take action to leverage and support community health for the benefit of communities and the broader health system.

Link HC’s Chief Executive, Phil Moran says that community health plays a crucial role in plugging gaps in the health system and keeping people out of overburdened hospital emergency departments.

*“With a highly skilled health workforce and existing ties to the Victorian Government, community health is well placed to release even more pressure from public hospitals. Unfortunately, these opportunities have not been taken, and the platform is gradually being weakened by enforced competition and funding cuts, and now is the time to act and leverage this unique platform to the benefit of all Victorians,”* says Phil.

Link HC provides crucial services to the local community ranging from dental, allied health, counselling, NDIS Early Childhood Early Intervention and access to general practitioners.

Chief Executive of the Victorian Healthcare Association, Tom Symondson, says community health is calling on politicians to pledge their support for a number of actions and use this opportunity to take people out of emergency departments and off outpatient waitlists.

*“What we call for today is for politicians to pledge to support a number of very achievable actions such as investment in hospital diversion projects, a dedicated infrastructure fund and funding that keeps pace with an ever-increasing demand, so these services can continue their important role in community.”*

Mr Symondson says that government commitment to these ‘asks’ would enable community health services to provide an even stronger health safety net for vulnerable Victorians, such as those who are experiencing family violence and those who can’t get the help they need anywhere else.

Other health professionals that Rosemary has seen at Link HC include a podiatrist, dentist, GP, dietician and a psychologist. She now volunteers on one of Link HC’s committees as a consumer representative where she plays a pivotal part in providing feedback to Link HC’s marketing campaigns and collateral.

*“I really appreciate all the support I’ve been given over the years from all the staff I’ve met at Link, they are always friendly and very professional. As I am on a tight budget and have a Health Care Card, their low fees also help to make their services far more accessible to me and others like me.”*

– Ends –

For campaign details and to make the pledge go to: [www.standwithcommunityhealth.com.au](http://www.standwithcommunityhealth.com.au)

Join the conversation on social media with: #standwithcommunityhealth

*Above: Rosemary grateful for the ongoing care and support provided by Link HC*

**About Link Health and Community**

Link Health and Community is a not-for-profit organisation that provides medical, health and support services to improve the health and wellbeing of people in the east and south-east of Melbourne and eastern Victoria.[www.linkhc.org.au](http://www.linkhc.org.au)

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