

# Weight off my shoulders

PROJECT READY



## SHARED CARE PROGRAM

Based on a NSW study, this pilot could change lives and provide a sustainable model for rural communities

## 6 WEEKS OF ACTION LEARNING

Chef Leah gives tips on how to pick the best ones

## YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

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## PROJECT SUMMARY

Narrowing the health inequality gap in our low socioeconomic rural community to avoid early, preventable deaths amongst our ageing population due to obesity and poor mental health. Over a six week period we seek to provide people with the knowledge, experience and connections to change behaviours and improve overall wellbeing.

**PROJECT:** Socio-economic disadvantage is the greatest cause of health inequality in our state. Chronic diseases - such as cardiovascular disease, cancers and chronic respiratory illnesses - are the cause of more than three-quarters of these premature deaths and ill health. The four lifestyle behaviours of poor nutrition physical inactivity, smoking and excessive alcohol consumption are important risk factors for many of these diseases, including type 2 diabetes. In fact, poor nutrition and physical inactivity are the principal causes of obesity (currently at 35% for 55-64 year olds).



"Weight off your Shoulders" is a pilot program, based on an exploratory study carried out in seven NSW primary healthcare centres. Unlike that study, this pilot is community-based. It seeks to demonstrate that a lifestyle approach (supported by local health practitioners) to complex health and wellbeing issues, in particular obesity and mental health, can deliver effective results that are:

- More accessible - both financially, geographically and socially
- More sustainable - both in terms of participants maintaining changed behaviours, and in a community's capacity to keep on delivering the program.

Through a community-based collaboration led by Clunes Neighbourhood House in partnership with general practitioners and specialists from the Creswick & Clunes Medical Centre, we seek to provide participants with the knowledge, application, local support and relationships to change health and wellbeing behaviours - and the community connections/networks and experience to maintain those changed behaviours beyond the program. This will include:

- 6 weekly sessions, 120 minutes duration (11.30am-1.30pm)
- sessions include a 60 minute lunch making and eating time slot
- participants will have a finger prick test 1 hour after their meal to check glucose levels

## THE 6 WEEK PROGRAM

### Week 1:

Introduction session: Getting to know one another (Signing confidentiality clause)  
Topic for the day: Food Choices Basics (macronutrients and micronutrients); Activity versus Exercise; Holistic weight loss - a foundation in psychosocial wellbeing

### Week 2:

Topic for the day: Discuss weight loss medications; Ways to improve stress related or comfort food eating; Learning the art and science of mindfulness; Discovering the obstacles to mindfulness; Discuss the importance of good sleep in weight management.

### Week 3:

Topic for the day: Mindfulness practices; Learning to live with and overcome obstacles; Getting familiar with self talk; Structuring your environment to promote weight loss; Discuss strategies to improve activity levels; Determine visiting expert for Week 4.

### Week 4:

Group-led: Discussion to be led by members of the group; Strategies for long term success; Meet the Expert Session 1 - determined by group - what they feel deficient in). Expert is an allied health practitioner (EP, dietician, psychologist, social prescriber, yoga instructor and podiatrist). Determine agenda for week 5.

### Week 5:

Facilitator to take a back seat. Session will be predominantly group led. Discuss items raised for this week, the week before. Determine agenda for week 6.

### Week 6:

Entirely group led session (facilitator onsite but not in meeting aside from lunch). Discuss items raised for week 6 the week before. Discuss long term group support structure.



## SUSTAINABLE & COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAM

How "Weight off your Shoulders" is delivered is key to both its sustainability; and its ability to help participants maintain changed behaviours after the program is over. The costs of the facilitator (as the medical practitioner) are bulk-billed. Known as shared medical appointments these individual medical consultations are carried out sequentially in a group of patients with similar concerns. This significantly reduces the financial barriers associated with operating - and participating - in such a highly customised weight loss program. Such a model is particularly powerful in low socioeconomic communities like Clunes.

Secondly, the program is community-based, making it just one part of a network of support and activities that are available to the community to help people maintain behavioural changes. In Clunes, this ranges from volunteering in our Open House Meals program (food preparation and healthy eating - an extension of the program's lunch component); as well as participation in exercise activities such as the Clunes Trekkers, Yoga or even Circus. By deliberately creating links between these existing community activities and this pilot program, we'll help forge the relationships, experience and social entree to hopefully influence health and wellbeing determinants.



## HOW HAVE YOU INVOLVED THE COMMUNITY IN THIS PROJECT?

This opportunity was identified by local medical practitioners Dr Kevin Lee and Dr Kerry Hewitt. The operational model was developed in consultation with Clunes Neighbourhood House, Creswick & Clunes Medical Centre and the team of volunteers and allied health professionals associated with Clunes weekly Open House Meals (featured on ABC Backroads - (<https://iview.abc.net.au/show/backroads/series/5/video/RF1827V012S00>), yoga and community garden. The weekly Open House Meals program (during times of restrictions) is done by delivery.

It is anticipated that participants in this pilot are likely to connect closely with the Open House Meals program as the coordinator of this activity will also be the lunch garden to plate trainer for this pilot. During COVID-19 restrictions (which could fluctuate until such time as there is a vaccine) Open House Meals switched to deliveries. This ensures that even in the most unusual of times, participants in this pilot will have an opportunity to maintain support networks linked to healthy nutrition. Clunes Neighbourhood House ([www.clunesnh.org](http://www.clunesnh.org)) is a community led organisation with more than 37 volunteers involved in its operations each week.

During COVID-19 Clunes Neighbourhood House has been able to pivot, working each week with a core team of 18 volunteers who fulfil a range of diverse activities including gardening, cooking, book and food deliveries, safe exercise. graphic design and a COVID-19 photographic project called Laughter Lines (targeting the 60+ age group).

The pilot will involve (at a minimum) three organisational partners - Clunes Neighbourhood House, Creswick & Clunes Medical Centre and Hepburn Shire Council.



## HOW DO YOU KNOW THERE IS A NEED?

Socioeconomic disadvantage is the greatest cause of health inequality in Victoria (see: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/health-wellbeing-status-victoria>). Unfortunately, Clunes is the third lowest socioeconomic postcode in Victoria with an unemployment level of 9% (even prior to COVID-19). Of the 2000 plus residents in our community, the median age is 51 years. Statistics show that on average, more than 35% of men and women aged 55- 64 years are obese, are likely to suffer from one or two chronic diseases and as such are at risk of early, preventable death.

Over the past decade access to local health services (both financially and physically) has deteriorated. Services are restricted, demand is high, costs apply (despite the availability of bulk billing for some options) and public transport options to access health or allied health practitioners in other areas is limited. It is anticipated that the economic impact of COVID-19 will only further exacerbate these barriers. This is of growing concern for medical health practitioners and specialists such as Dr Kevin Lee



and Dr Kerry Hewitt who regularly see patients in Clunes who could avoid chronic disease and early, preventable death through a program of this nature. Following the success of the NSW shared care study, Dr Kevin Lee then approached Clunes Neighbourhood House to advocate for the development of a pilot program in Clunes in order to find a sustainable way to meet, what he believes (and statistics support) is a growing area of need.

## WHAT DIFFERENCE ARE YOU HOPING YOUR PROJECT WILL MAKE IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

Our intent is to provide an active earning example of a wellbeing economy approach in Clunes at a critical time in the community's understanding and adoption of wellbeing practices to build resilience and improve health. As such, the pilot will include a two-fold evaluation - both clinical and community, capacity building.

Dr Kevin Lee, MBBS (Hon), BSc (Hon) MMH FRACP PhD as both the facilitator and medical practitioner will monitor participants'

cholesterol profile, blood pressure, glucose, liver function and hormonal profile as well as psychological parameters using established clinical questionnaires. Dr Lee is also an award winning medical researcher with Monash University. Abnormalities in any of the measured outcomes will be managed as per standard clinical practice. These parameters

will be measured again in a years time to see if the benefits of the "Weight off our Shoulders" are maintained.

Health Futures Australia ([www.healthfutures.org.au](http://www.healthfutures.org.au)) will assist Clunes Neighbourhood House map the sustainability of the pilot's operational model in order for it to continue on an ongoing basis beyond the funding period - and be replicated by others. Through a series of deep dive interviews, Health Futures Australia will assist Clunes Neighbourhood House demonstrate that a collaborative, community based project

can positively change the determinants that shape a person's health and wellbeing.

Headed by public and population health leaders Dr Shelley Bowen and Professor Rob Moodie AM, the Health Futures team is leading thinking in reimagining investment in prevention and redesigning systems for wellbeing. Separate to this program (commenced in August 2020), Health Futures Australia has partnered with Clunes Neighbourhood House to establish a Clunes Wellbeing Lab to build community leadership and strategy to guide a resilient wellbeing future for all. If this grant application is successful, "Weight off your Shoulders" will be the first applied example of how lives can be changed - and health inequalities reduced - through clever collaboration.



## WHEN WILL THIS PROJECT HAPPEN?

This pilot program will commence in late January 2021 and will run for 6 weeks.

Evaluation report will be delivered in March 2021.

**BUDGET : \$13,850 + GST.**

\$7710 for the facilitator and chef/instructor for the applied 'garden to plate' style cooking session each week, including 6 train the trainer sessions for our Open House Meals co-ordinator/s. Balance marketing, food/materials and evaluation.