

## Getting involved in your community – a pathway to meeting new people, getting known and creating meaningful roles

Hi my name is Graeme and I'm a man who is in his 40's, I live in my own home, I love to meet new people, I love live music, watching sport, particularly rugby league and cricket and I play a bit of cricket too with a local club. One of my passions is aeroplanes – I'm fascinated with everything about them and I know all the factual information that goes with them.

I have been living in my local community for a number of years now and although I know quite a few people through neighbours, the gym, playing cricket and shopping locally I still think it was important for me to have more opportunities to get to know people and also give back to the community I live in. This all helps me to feel less isolated and lonely and to also keep me safe.

Sometimes it is hard to try new things; everyone hates change or being pushed out of their comfort zones – including me but I find that with the right supports, giving something new a try or a go is great fun and can be a great way of meeting new people, making new friends and it gives you a sense of purpose, especially if you are giving back, contributing or have a role to play!

Below are my top tips for you and your supports to think about when getting involved in your community:

- 1. Start by looking at your interests, what do you love doing?** You are more likely to connect with people and be keen to try something new when you have a passion for it. For me this was around aeroplanes and bushwalking. If you are not sure what you are passionate about then it is still important to give things a try and if you don't like it after a few times then try something else.
- 2. Do some research – there is a lot happening out there you just have to look.** Community noticeboards, council websites, websites such as Meet Up, Volunteering Australia, local newspapers, TAFE's, Community Colleges and Libraries are all great places to look for what is happening in your local community. If you know what you are interested in then do a search on the internet and also your area and see what pops up!
- 3. Think about the supports you might need.** Perhaps you need someone to help you with the research, finding out more and coming along with you. If you have paid supports then it's a great thing for them to be supporting you with the research, rather than just going out for coffee or the movies together. I had a support person help me around my passion of aeroplanes. They helped me do some research on the internet and also call up a few Air League Clubs to make some initial enquiries. The support person then came with me to some of the meetings – they weren't there to babysit me but to assist me to learn, meet new people and to help me understand what role I played and contributions I made. Once I felt confident enough they started coming less and less and I eventually went by myself. If you don't have any paid support perhaps a family member or friend can help support you.
- 4. Think about a role you can have as part of getting involved in your community.** Having a role such as volunteering (for your local council, local clubs), being an active member of a

club or society, at your church helping serve tea and coffee, being an avid sports fan and live music goer helps you connect more to people. People are then more likely to come up and say hello and get to know you and more about your role. The roles you have become your sense of identity and helps you find and connect more to others.

For me a role that we looked for was volunteering for my local Air League – again it was focused on something I am passionate about but also about providing me with a better opportunity to connect with people. My role and title is the Equipment Officer, I help out with making sure the cadets are wearing the correct uniform and I help set up for the meetings along with helping with the activities. Some roles are more active than others – sometimes you play a big part and are helping out a lot, other times you are less active like being a gym member – it is good to have a variety of roles.

Another role I am working on is a bushwalker. I have joined a community group that I found through Meet Up who are also passionate about bushwalking. I love walking and live in an area where there are great bush walks. If I go bushwalking on a regular basis with other people who enjoy bushwalking, then I feel I am more likely to get to know everyone and more likely to make some friends.

For more information about roles and connecting to your community please visit:

[www.resourcingfamilies.org.au](http://www.resourcingfamilies.org.au)

[www.family-advocacy.com](http://www.family-advocacy.com)

[www.mychoicematters.com](http://www.mychoicematters.com)