

# STAYING CONNECTED

As you are probably aware, social support groups and other community-based activities that bring people together are being reduced due to the risks around spread of COVID-19 (novel corona virus).

We are being asked to practice physical distancing and to stay at home, other than for essential things like:

- to shop for food and other necessary goods and services;
- to access medical services or provide care-giving;
- to attend work or education (where you can't do those things remotely); and
- for exercise.

You may also leave your home in an emergency or if required by law.

## How can you stay connected?

Having a conversation can be a simple but important way to stay connected.

Think about how you can interact with others without putting your health (or theirs) at risk.

Can you speak to your neighbours from over a fence or across balconies?

It is important to be able to hear or see someone to chat whenever you can.



## Use the Phone

Take the initiative to call other people to check in with them regularly.

You could make a contact list of friends, family or neighbours to call and check in daily or every few days or send text messages.



**Central Highlands  
Primary Care  
Partnership**

# Who else can you talk to ?



FriendLine is a national support line for anyone who needs to reconnect or just wants a chat. All conversations with FriendLine are casual and anonymous and friendly volunteers are ready to talk about anything and everything.

**Call 1800 424 287.**

The support line is open on:  
Tuesday to Thursday from 6pm-8pm  
Saturday & Sunday from 2pm-5pm



Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria is the leading not-for-profit organisation representing the interests and rights of people aged 50+ in Victoria.

If you have any questions you can phone their Information Line on **1300 13 50 90**. You can call between Monday to Friday, from 9.30am-4.00pm. Or email them at [askcota@cotavic.org.au](mailto:askcota@cotavic.org.au)



Seniors Online is a Victorian Government website for older Victorians to share news, information on services and how you can get involved.

Find this information on their website at [www.seniorsonline.vic.gov.au](http://www.seniorsonline.vic.gov.au)

Or if you have any questions, you can call them on **1300 797 210** from Monday to Friday (9am- 5pm).

## Disability Information Helpline

The Disability Information Helpline provides information for people with disability who need help because of coronavirus (COVID-19).

You will speak to a person who will listen, find information and/or services to help you. The Helpline can assist families, carers, support workers and services, too. Phone: **1800 643 787 (free call)**

It is available:

- Monday to Friday 8am - 8pm
- Saturday & Sunday 9am - 7pm

The Red Cross can help you connect with people while you are at home.

**TeleYarn:** A social telephone call to provide friendship and connection, including cultural connection for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people.



To speak to someone locally about this service call **0400 113 069**.

**TeleCross Service:** A daily phone call to check on your well-being.

**COVID CONNECT:** A new telephone outreach service to support people who are feeling isolated. Register at [www.connect.redcross.org.au](http://www.connect.redcross.org.au)  
To find out more call the Red Cross on **1300 885 698**.

# Community Visitors Scheme

The Community Visitors Scheme (CVS) is a program that arranges volunteer visits to older people to provide friendship and companionship.

It is usually a face-to-face visiting program however given we are all staying at home they will now be offering support over the phone or via the internet.

The service is available to anyone receiving government-subsidised residential aged care, Home Care Packages or are on the waiting list.

The CVS providers across the Grampians region are:

- **Elders Rights Advocacy**  
Phone: 0427 736 618
- **Aurous- Phone: 1800 287 687**
- **In Great Company (FerosCare)**  
Phone: 1300 736 930

If you receive services under the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP), you may also be able to access the CVS via Aurous Plus. Its a program that provides you with an easy to use mobile device that comes pre-connected to the internet. It includes a weekly chat, via video conferencing, with a volunteer. Call Aurous to see if you are eligible - 1800 287 687.

## How can I be part of this?

You can access this program in a number of ways:

- Your service provider can refer you;
- A friend or family member can contact a provider on your behalf; or
- you can call them yourself.

To find out more about the program and if you have questions, call the CVS Coordinator for Victoria on **1800 042 138**, or email them at [cvs@ms.org.au](mailto:cvs@ms.org.au)

## Or perhaps you could volunteer to call others?



To find out how to become a volunteer, call the CVS Coordinator for Victoria on **03 9845 2729**, or email them at [volunteer@ms.org.au](mailto:volunteer@ms.org.au)

Or you can contact your local Community Visitors Scheme (CVS) provider and ask them.

# Do you need help accessing these services?



## National Relay Service:

- If you are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech impairment, you can use the National Relay Service (NRS).
- A relay call allows you to communicate with a hearing person who is using a phone even if you can't hear or don't use your voice.
- Relay officers help people make and receive phone calls using a variety of options including NRS Chat, SMS Relay, Voice & Video Relay, Captions and TTY.
- You can also make relay calls through the NRS App on your mobile phone.
- For more information, visit [www.healthdirect.gov.au](http://www.healthdirect.gov.au)
- For help, contact **1800 555 660**,  
**SMS 0416 001 350 or TTY 1800 555 630**

## Telephone Interpreters:

- If you are more comfortable having a conversation in a language other than English, you can use the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS).
- It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and is accessible from anywhere in Australia.
- TIS can translate more than 100 languages.
- When you call, an operator will ask you what language you need. The operator will then connect you with an interpreter who speaks your language. You may need to wait for a little while, or the operator may need to call you back when an interpreter is available.
- Once you are speaking with the interpreter, explain to them which service you want to access and the interpreter will call for you.
- Once the service answers the phone, the interpreter will interpret your conversation.
- For more information, visit [www.tisnational.gov.au](http://www.tisnational.gov.au) or call **131 450**

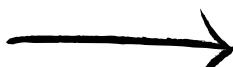


# Social Support Programs

There are a range of Social Support programs available in the community for those who may need help to stay connected. Whilst many organisations are not able to run their usual face-to-face programs by bringing people together in person, they are still able to support people by offering a range of activities, including phone calls and the delivery of activity packs.

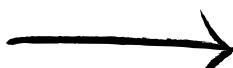
## Where should you go for advice?

Are you over 65 years of age or over 50 years of age if you are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?



Contact My Aged Care on **1800 200 422**, and ask for an assessment to access the Social Support services

Do you have an NDIS Plan?



Contact your Support Coordinator or call your Local Area Coordination Service on **1800 242 696** for advice on local programs and support

Are you under 65 years of age; or under 50 years of age if you are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and do not have an NDIS Plan



Contact these Home and Community Care Program for Younger People (HACC-PYP) providers:

- Ballarat & District Aboriginal Cooperative Ph: 5331 5344
- Ballarat Health Services Ph: 5320 6690
- Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council Ph: 5383 0613
- Centacare Ph: 1300 303 988
- PINARC Disability Support Ph: 5329 1398
- Uniting.Vic.Tas (Ballarat) Ph: 5335 3507
- Moorabool Shire Council Ph: 5366 7100
- Daylesford Neighbourhood Centre Ph: 5348 3569
- Hepburn Shire Council Ph: 5348 2306
- Golden Plains Shire Council Ph: 1300 363 036



The Carer Gateway aims to make the life of carers easier. You are a carer if you are looking after someone with a disability, a medical condition, mental illness or who is frail due to age. You can call the Carer Gateway on **1800 422 737**.

When you call, a trained worker will listen, talk through what you need and help you to find local services and support. This can include help from counsellors and peer support groups to finding respite care, home help and equipment.

# Do you have access to the internet?

We're lucky to live in a digitally connected world. You can connect with others wherever they are, using your phone or computer.

Now's the time to learn new technology & how to use Facetime, Skype or stay connected via social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter

## Do you need help?

If you need some help getting started, your local Neighbourhood House may be able to assist you so give them a call and ask (see page 11 for contact details) or you can call the Be Connected Helpline on **1300 795 897**.

The Be Connected service aims to increase the confidence, skills and online safety of older Australians in using digital technology. Their website has information and interactive training tools and resources for older Australians, their families and peers, and local community organisations.

You can learn the basics of how to connect online, including how to:

- use a digital device
- be safe online
- send emails
- use Facebook and other social media
- shop online;
- and much more.

You can visit their website at [www.beconnected.esafety.gov.au/](http://www.beconnected.esafety.gov.au/)



**Be Connected**  
Every Australian online.



## Video Chat

Once you are online and feeling confident there are many online things for you to do including video calls.

Most smartphones and computers can make and receive video calls, so that you can see and hear the person you're talking to.

If you haven't tried video calling before, Age UK have developed a guide about the different ways to make video calls on different phones. Go to their website at [www.ageuk.org.uk/](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/)

BeConnected also have some online videos & tips to assist on their website: [www.beconnected.esafety.gov.au/](http://www.beconnected.esafety.gov.au/)

Children, grandchildren, friends or neighbours can also be contacted for technical support.

# Socialising Online

You can socialise with others online by joining in group discussion via online forums or you can participate in a one-on-one chat with someone. The online conversations are in the form of typed messages rather than talking.

**Friendline**, mentioned previously, also has an online chat service. If you are feeling a bit shy, you can connect with one of their volunteers via the internet and type messages to each other.

The online chat service is open on Tuesday - Thursday from 1pm- 4pm.

To join in, you can visit their website - [www.friendline.org.au/](http://www.friendline.org.au/)

**The Carer Gateway** also has a Community Forum. The Carer Forum provides a safe, anonymous space to connect with other carers and support each other. To join, visit [www.forum.carergateway.gov.au/s/](http://www.forum.carergateway.gov.au/s/)

And **Beyond Blue** also has a number of online forums connecting people to support each other's mental health & well-being. Visit [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)



## Games & Online classes

*Do you enjoy playing games?*

Seniors Online Victoria & Be Connected have links to a number of games including trivia, crosswords & games for your smart phone. You can access them here:

[www.seniorsonline.vic.gov.au/](http://www.seniorsonline.vic.gov.au/)  
[www.beconnected.esafety.gov.au](http://www.beconnected.esafety.gov.au)

You can also connect with others whilst playing games online.

One of the most popular games to play right now is Words with Friends. It's online scrabble where you can play against others. To find out more visit [www.zynga.com/games/words-with-friends-2](http://www.zynga.com/games/words-with-friends-2)

Add it as an App on your smart phone too.

Look for this icon:



# Online classes

University of the Third Age (U3A) is a learning cooperative of older people which encourages healthy ageing by enabling members to share educational, creative and leisure activities. Some groups have social media pages or may deliver classes online.

To find your local group contact U3A Victoria on **03 9670 3659** or email [info@u3avictoria.com.au](mailto:info@u3avictoria.com.au)



## Exercise classes

While most physical activity classes are not running at the moment, lots of places are offering exercise classes online.

You can search the internet for video classes. YouTube has quite a few.



### Here are some to try:

Here's a link to a video showing a number of seated exercises to get you started.

[www.youtube.com/watch?  
v=8BcPHWGQO44](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8BcPHWGQO44)

Or you could try a 7-minute gentle yoga standing video -

[www.youtube.com/watch?  
v=NDLad2vOHkU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NDLad2vOHkU)

## More options

### Active Seniors:

This is a program run out of Sydney. They usually offer face to face classes focussed on improving quality of life, energy levels and vitality but they also have some free exercise videos you can do at home focussed on strength and stability. The videos are available at [www.activeseniors.net.au/](http://www.activeseniors.net.au/)

The **Council of the Ageing (COTA)** website also has information on exercising at home, among other things. Visit [www.cotavic.org.au/](http://www.cotavic.org.au/)

The team at **Ballarat Community Health** are also sharing exercise videos on their social media pages and their website. You can find the videos here - [www.bchc.org.au/](http://www.bchc.org.au/)



# Social networking

Social networks are websites you can use to connect with friends, family and other people you have something in common with. You can use social networks to keep in touch with friends and send messages and images.



## Facebook

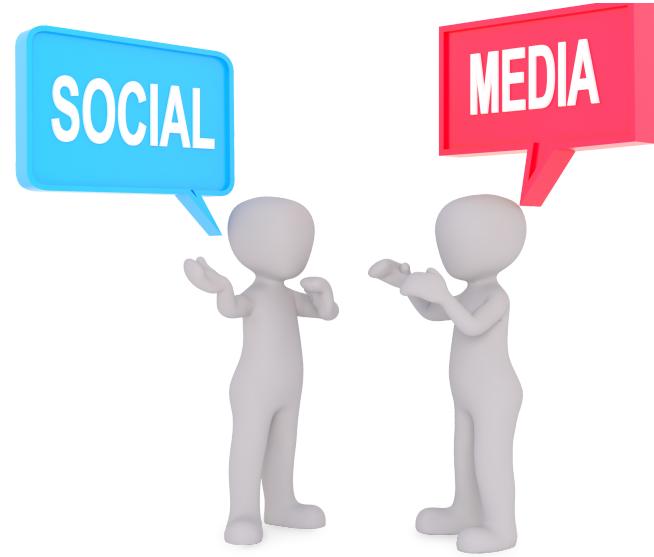
Facebook is one of the most popular social networking / social media sites. It allows you to connect with family, friends and other people all over the world. You may even find old school friends to connect with!

If you have not come across Facebook, here is a video you can watch on how to set up Facebook -  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=eo5t0Eeq-KQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eo5t0Eeq-KQ)

The Be Connected website also provides guidance on Facebook including how to set up an account and how to use it and important privacy settings.

[www.beconnected.esafety.gov.au/](http://www.beconnected.esafety.gov.au/)

The Be Connected website also has a number of useful tip sheets that can be printed in hard copy to make it easier to read.



## You can also join Facebook groups.

These groups are set up by Facebook Users who are interested in sharing information or connecting with other people with similar interests.

There are so many different types of groups and may include local libraries, crafting groups, gardening & horticulture groups, Buy, Swap & Sell groups, recipe sites, book review groups, healthy living and well-being groups, men shed groups etc.

You can also keep up to date with national and local news by following the ABC and other news Facebook pages. Or sign up to events or online exercise classes or join in choirs. The opportunities are endless!

You can search for things that interest you once you have a Facebook account.

# Local Facebook Groups

Here are some ideas of local groups to get you started. You can search for them once you have a Facebook (FB) account.

- **U3A groups** - U3A Ballarat, U3A Hepburn Shire. There are U3A groups all over the world! They are sharing lots of ideas to keep people engaged.
- **Local libraries** - Ballarat Libraries, Moorabool Libraries & Hepburn Libraries
- **Neighbourhood Houses** - Creswick Neighbourhood Centre, Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre, & Ballarat East Neighbourhood Centre, Haddon Community Learning Centre, Darley Neighbourhood House & Learning Centre
- Most **local governments** have pages so you can keep up to date with activities and ideas - City of Ballarat, Golden Plains Shire, Moorabool Shire & Hepburn Shire
- There are music groups like Ballarat Ukulele Group & Craft groups such as Ballarat Crafters
- **Local Community Health** - Ballarat Community Health, Hepburn Health
- **Men's Sheds** - [www.facebook.com/groups/376075325824722/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/376075325824722/)
- **Gardening** - The Ballarat Backyard Gardener & Bacchus Marsh Gardeners

## Other ideas to keep you entertained

- The Victorian Government has released a new website - ***Victoria Together***. It is an online hub to connect Victorians to digital experiences and activities. It includes access to Victoria's Zoos and Museums as well as local music, comedy and theatre and lots of other great ideas to keep us entertained and connected. Explore all the options at [www.together.vic.gov.au/](http://www.together.vic.gov.au/)
- The Guardian online newspaper has put together a list of the 10 of the world's best **virtual museum and art gallery tours**. Visit [www.theguardian.com/](http://www.theguardian.com/) for more information
- 
- **Sydney Opera House** has launched a new digital initiative called From Our House to Yours. Free videos are being shared to watch concerts, comedy panels & more. Visit their website at [www.sydneyoperahouse.com/digital.html](http://www.sydneyoperahouse.com/digital.html)
- You could also try guided meditations - [www.insighttimer.com/](http://www.insighttimer.com/)

# Neighbourhood Houses

Neighbourhood Houses are another great place to connect with others. They bring people together to connect, learn and contribute in their local community through social, educational, recreational and support activities. They may even be able to help you with accessing the internet.



These activities are often in person but Neighbourhood Houses are adapting so that they can continue to support our local communities during this time.

There are Neighbourhood Houses all over Victoria and we have many across our region. To search in your area visit - [www.nhvic.org.au/neighbourhoodhouses/](http://www.nhvic.org.au/neighbourhoodhouses/)

## Ballarat LGA:

- Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre Ph: 5329 3273
- Ballarat North Neighbourhood House Ph: 5329 1101
- Ballarat East Neighbourhood House Ph: 0428 775 945
- Wendouree Neighbourhood Centre Ph: 5339 5069

## Golden Plains LGA:

- Haddon Community Learning Centre Ph: 5342 7050
- Meredith Community Centre Ph: 5286 0700

## Hepburn LGA:

- Clunes Neighbourhood House Ph: 5345 4078
- Daylesford Neighbourhood Centre Ph: 5348 3569
- Trentham Neighbourhood Centre Ph: 5424 1354
- Creswick Neighbourhood Centre Ph: 5345 2356

## Moorabool LGA:

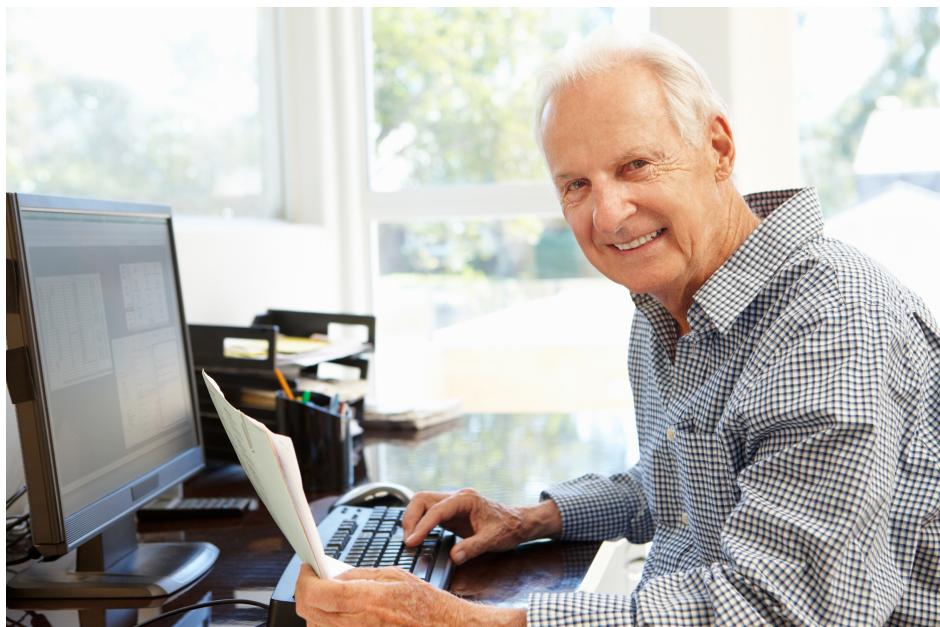
- Bacchus Marsh Community College Ph: 5367 1061
- Ballan & District Community House & Adult Education Centre Ph: 5368 1934
- Darley Neighbourhood House & Learning Centre Ph: 5367 4390

Many Neighbourhood Houses have Facebook pages to keep people connected as well as websites sharing great resources. For example, the Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre website has some Boredom Busters and Well-being Tips.

Visit their website at [www.ballaratnc.org.au/](http://www.ballaratnc.org.au/)

## Online safety tips

- It's important to know how to stay safe when online and using the internet.
- Don't believe everything you read on the internet. Anyone can set up a website and publish information on the internet.
- It's important to question what you see and to check the source of the information. Ensure it is a reliable and trusted source, for example, the ABC news, the AFL website or the local WIN News website.
- For some online safety tips, you can visit the Australian E-Safety Commissioner's website - [www.esafety.gov.au/](http://www.esafety.gov.au/)
- The site provides advice on safe passwords, paying safely online, downloading documents and online abuse and scams.
- You can also attend a webinar presentation where information on online safety is shared with an audience over the internet. You can watch from home. The eSafety Commissioner is hosting these free webinars to help older Australians stay safer online. Book at [www.beconnected.esafety.gov.au/](http://www.beconnected.esafety.gov.au/)



# Mental Health Support

It's natural for people to feel a range of emotions in our current situation, such as stress, worry, anxiety, boredom or low mood. If you're feeling overwhelmed you can access support by calling:



**Beyondblue** - Mental health information and support for all Victorians Ph: 1300 224 636



**Lifeline** - A crisis support service offering short term support at any time for people who are having difficulty coping or staying safe

Ph: 13 11 14



**Mensline Australia** - Telephone and online support and information service for Australian men Ph: 1300 78 99 78



**Switchboard Victoria** - Telephone and web counselling, information, and referral service for LGBTQI people  
Ph: 1800 184 527



**Open Arms** – Veterans & Family Counselling Ph: 1800 011 046



**Suicide Call Back Service** - mental health support & call back service.  
Ph: 1300 659 467



**1800 RESPECT** - A national sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service Ph: 1800 737 732



**Carer Gateway Counselling Service** is a free service for carers.

Ph: 1800 422 737



**Relationships Australia Vic**: Specialist family & relationship services. Call the Ballarat office on 5337 9222

## Helpful Websites & Forums:

The Head to Health website has some great resources and links to [www.headtohealth.gov.au/](http://www.headtohealth.gov.au/)

And Beyond Blue has online forums:

- [www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/looking-after-your-mental-health](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/looking-after-your-mental-health)
- [www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/online-forums](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/online-forums)