

## February 2023 Newsletter

Our mission is to provide a supportive and informative environment for people with lung conditions and their carers.

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**NEXT MEETING:** Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2023  
10:15 am – 12:00 noon  
Weston Creek Labor Club  
Teesdale Close, Stirling ACT 2611

The March lunch will be held at the Yarralumla Nursery Café; more details below.

### February Meeting and 'Guest Speaker' Val Dempsey - Karen Anabel

- Eighteen members attended. Apologies were Jenny Panell, Chris Moyle, and Helen Cotter.
- New name tags were distributed (kindly organised by Pam Harris and prepared by Terry Hunt).
- The meeting discussed and agreed to lunch dates and times for the next two months:
  - Friday 17 February at the Mawson Club.
  - **Friday 24 March at Yarralumla Nursery Café.**  
RSVP Marilyn Allen (0431 033 825) if you will be attending.
- Marina and Val will be away for the March meeting, so Colette Mommer has offered to chair the meeting.
- Pam reminded us that the 1st COTA EXPO for 2023 will be on 15 March at EPIC. Volunteers so far are Pam, Chris G, Karen, and Val D. We still need more for the afternoon.

**Business done it was over to Val to share her experiences as the 2022 Senior Australian of the Year.**

Val began her talk by providing us with some background.



*'Guest Speaker' Val Dempsey ready to speak to the group.*

Val was born and raised in the capital and is a proud Canberran. She also told us about a deep connection she feels to the indigenous community of our city.

Over the years she has seen Canberra grow immensely, and she commented on the sad loss of our green spaces due to inevitable suburban expansion.

Val has spent 51 years as a member of the St John Ambulance and has worked tirelessly to increase awareness of First Aid through community groups. She shared with us the tragic experience of her daughter's motor vehicle accident which led her to focus on encouraging the community to learn First Aid.

For Val 2022 was both physically and emotionally challenging but well worth the effort. Over the past twelve months she has travelled all over Australia to carry out her duties as Senior Australian of the Year and over that time has been incredibly fortunate to meet an amazing array of wonderful people. Visiting places she would not normally be able to go to and listening to the stories of people she would not normally meet has been an unforgettable experience.

Some of the Australians she had the pleasure of meeting include, **John McCallum, President of National Seniors**, who has advocated strongly to increase the gap by \$4000 of earning capability for those on pensions before it affects their payments; **Sister Ann Gardener**, who is now 92 and has worked her whole adult life supporting the Tiwi Islands community; and **Uncle Bernard**, who has been working on trying to lessen the suicide rate among locals on the islands.

On Christmas Island Val met an array of marvellous locals and heard their stories. She visited Tasmania and travelled all around NSW for St John's helping with their bushfire support team. A highlight was her visit to Lismore while supporting the flood support team - a visit that she found to be both heart breaking and rewarding at the same time.

She had the pleasure of meeting a gentleman who was an award recipient of St John Ambulance for 75 years of service. He was in his nineties and still volunteering.

Val also talked of her fellow recipients of 2022 Awards. She mentioned the amazing work of **Shanna Whan, Local Hero for 2022** working on a program called '*It's OK to Say No*' (to alcohol), **Dr Daniel Nour, Young Australian of the Year for 2022** who when studying in London as a med student, helped a homeless 'bag lady' being ignored in the Underground despite needing help. She asked him why he was helping her when she was invisible to everyone else? When he came home to Australia he started '*Doctors on the Street*'. She also mentioned the amazing down to earth young man, **Dylan Alcott who was the Australian of the Year 2022**. Dylan has been both a role model and advocate for people with a disability.

When in Perth Val met **Craig Hollywood** who started '*Short Back and Sidewalks*' a program that provides homeless people with clean clothes and a haircut to help improve their lives and their chances of acceptance. She also met the lovely lady who started '*Grandparents as Parents*' program in Western Australia. When still in Perth, Val also met nine people with myositis, the same condition as she has, who were all in a wheelchair and had such positive attitudes.

One of her highlights for the year was when she met **Queen Elizabeth II** through a video call and actually spoke to the Queen and told her about her work with the Lismore Relief Team, where she was so welcomed by the community. At that time she could not have expected to be attending the funeral of that very lady, but some months later there she was in Westminster Cathedral chosen as one of 10 'ordinary Australians' to attend Queen's funeral. She shared many anecdotes from her trip.

Finally Val shared a number of photos with us including many from her time in Lismore with the Flood Relief Team. She said that the best part of the year was meeting so many amazing volunteers all over our nation and hearing their wonderful stories.



*Interested listeners at the February meeting... and multi-tasking on the phone*

**What do you know about COPD?** (Information in this article originally appeared in our September 2020 edition, courtesy of Chris Moyle)

## **DIAGNOSIS**

While there is currently no cure for COPD, research shows that early diagnosis, combined with disease management programs at the early stage of the condition, can improve quality of life, slow progression, reduce mortality and keep people out of hospital.

### **Diagnostic tests for COPD can include:**

Lung function tests (breathing tests). Spirometry is the most common breathing test used to confirm a diagnosis of COPD. The test involves blowing as long and hard as you can into a tube connected to a (spirometry) machine. The machine assesses how well your lungs work by measuring how much air you can inhale, how much you can exhale and how quickly you can exhale. The results will let your doctor know if you have COPD or another lung condition such as asthma.

FEV1 is the amount of air you can forcefully blow out of your lungs in one second. It is an important breathing test measure for airflow obstruction, such as from COPD. Your doctor will compare your FEV1 with standards (called predicted values) for a person without lung conditions, who is of comparable age, gender, and height. From this comparison your doctor will calculate a percentage. This is used to stage COPD as mild, moderate, or severe.

Other tests may include:

- Chest X-ray - takes pictures of the tissues in the lungs and surrounding organs.
- CT Chest - takes more detailed pictures than an X-ray to look at the lungs and surrounding organs.
- Arterial blood gas analysis - a blood test that measures how well your lungs bring oxygen into your blood and remove carbon dioxide.
- Laboratory tests - these are not used to diagnose COPD but may be used to rule out other conditions or to work out the cause of your symptoms.

## TREATMENT

### Can COPD be cured?

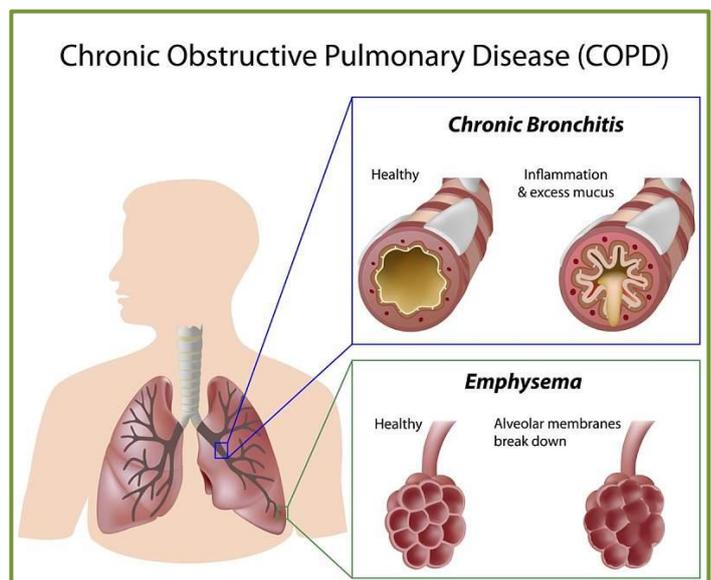
Although the damage to your lungs cannot be reversed, early treatment is important to help improve how you feel. By taking the following steps you can improve your overall quality of life, slow the progression of symptoms, and keep your COPD well managed, including reducing the risk of flare-ups.

### Quit smoking

Not all people with COPD have smoked; however, if you do smoke, quitting is the single most important thing you can do to improve your health and lung function. If you continue to smoke, your health and respiratory symptoms will worsen. The sooner you quit, the better your chances of living well and improving your lung function. Do not feel guilty about having smoked. Most people say they would like to quit and may have tried at least once. Some are successful the first time, but others try many times before they finally give up for good.

A quit plan can help you reflect on why you smoke and your motivations for quitting, and help you choose your preferred 'quit tools'. These can include:

- Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) products.
- Support options such as coaching and/or counselling.
- Other strategies to help you plan for success, such as making changes to your daily routine to reduce the temptation to smoke.



### Stay healthy and active

Studies have shown that people with chronic lung conditions use 25 – 50% more energy than people with normal lung function. This is mostly due to the changes in your lungs, increased work of breathing and using more energy to fight chest infections or flare-ups, which are more common in people with COPD.

There are lots of things you can do to make sure you stay healthy and have energy to do the things you enjoy, including:

- Eat a healthy, nutritious diet
- Be physically active
- Get enough rest and good quality sleep
- Look after your wellbeing by enjoying friends, family, and hobbies
- Practising relaxation techniques can also help reduce feelings of stress or anxiety.

Reference: COPD THE BASICS – Lung Foundation Australia <https://lungfoundation.com.au/>

## Another Wiggles tale - Chris Moyle

A while ago in one doctor's waiting room, I was feeling bored with the long wait. Then two women and young girl arrived who sat talking together. The youngster couldn't sit still and was up dancing around. I couldn't help but notice her sparkling pink shoes with a motif on each toe.

'They're pretty shoes,' I said. 'Who's that on your shoes?'  
'Minnie Mouse,' the child replied, and then, 'My name's Emma.'  
It seemed appropriate to give compliments. 'That's a nice name,' I said. 'How old are you?'

She held up four fingers. 'Four. But I be FIVE soon.' Then, sadly, she told me her dad had gone away....and 'Have you got a dad?'

'Yes,' I said, as at that stage he was still alive.

'What's his name?'

'Geoff,' I replied. Her eyes lit up.

'That's The Wiggles,' she said with enthusiasm. Then she regaled me with the plans for her upcoming birthday party. There would be streamers, balloons, and cakes.

'Does Geoff sing?' she asked.

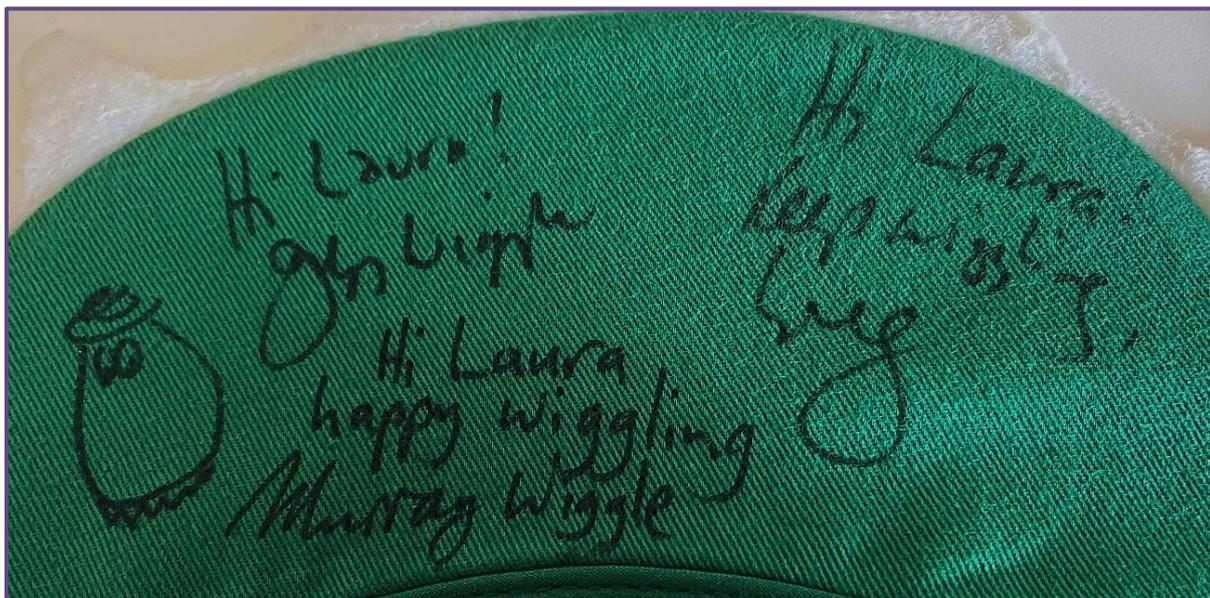
'He might,' I said. This was exciting. 'I want you to come to my party,' she announced, 'and bring Geoff!'



The two women were still talking, and not once did they appear to check me out, lest I be a paedophile.

I was quite touched by this invitation but couldn't follow up on it as I was called into the GP's room. However, I'm sure that if I should see young Emma again and her invitation still stands, perhaps for her sixth or seventh birthday party, she'll be delighted to know there's another Geoff who, unlike my father, actually knows who the Wiggles are, is a big fan and even knows their songs.

Actually I doubt I'll see Emma again, or she'll even remember me, but it does seem that with the name Geoff (or Jeff) you'll be a sure-fire hit with the kids.



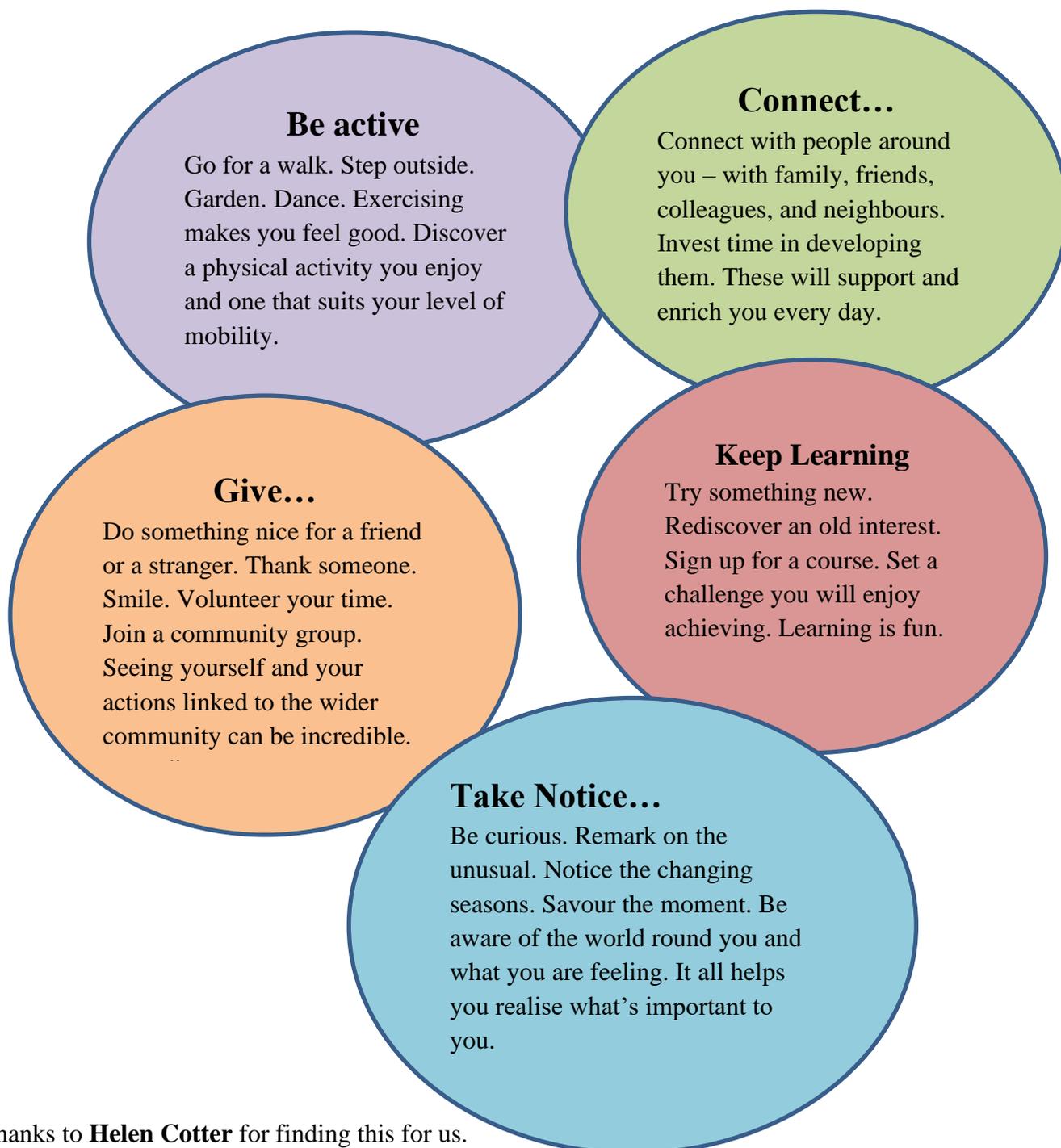
Wiggles merchandise (a Dorothy the Dinosaur cap) signed by Jeff, Murray, and Greg

**Editor's Note:** It appears that Emma was a fan of the original Wiggles as there was no mention of the fact that she had the same name as Emma, the recently retired yellow Wiggle. Jeff (the purple Wiggle) who is now well into his 60s is no longer a full time member of the band. Indeed *Wake Up Jeff!* had to become *Wake Up Lachy!* No doubt like many children (and parents) of the 1990s she knew that nothing beats the original Wiggles.

## Five ways to wellbeing

Finding it hard to breathe whenever you do anything? This can get you down. It's easy to do less and less and to become isolated. Here are five things that can help. Taking the first step to do something new is always the most difficult.

From: *Managing Breathlessness in Clinical Practice* by S Booth et al



Thanks to **Helen Cotter** for finding this for us.