



# JUST GOOD NEIGHBOURS

How great neighbours can make a huge difference to long-term happiness

When Vicki Fowler feels like a chat or a walk, she knows there is always a friendly neighbour nearby for a catch-up. The resident of Blue Care's Carlyle Gardens Townsville moved to the retirement village last October and has never looked back.

"It's amazing that any time of the day, I can pick up the phone and just walk around to somebody, or they can come to me, and we can have a chat or a cup of tea," she said.

The 71-year-old part-time disability support worker said living in a retirement village meant being surrounded by people who were at the same age and stage of life - and wanted to enjoy it.

"We're just all at the same level at the same time," Ms Fowler said.

"Here you can see each other as much as you like, or as little. There is always someone around. I can't tell you how happy I am here. I'm bursting at the seams."

Ms Fowler is among almost 200,000 Australians who live in a retirement village, a place deliberately designed to support a key pillar of health - social engagement.

Her village, Carlyle Gardens Townsville, is almost a suburb, with about 460 secure and safe homes spread across a landscaped and lush garden setting.

But for Ms Fowler, it is the friends and neighbours she has made that have boosted her life satisfaction.

"Most of us are retired and there are so many social events," she said.

"You can either live a quiet life on your own or you could socialise every day if you wanted to. Every day there's something on, from playing cards to exercise, to a gardening club where you can do some gardening and have a drink."



**THE GOOD LIFE:** Having great neighbours can make a huge difference to your overall happiness and wellbeing, inset below: Vicki Fowler.

social relationships at key transition points in the lifespan, for example in early parenthood, the loss of a spouse or retirement. It is now understood loneliness - especially at these key times - is a major health issue. People who enjoy close relationships with their immediate neighbours often find a higher level of overall life satisfaction and happiness, and lower levels of loneliness.

A recent report commissioned by Relationships Australia found people who developed strong connections with their neighbours were significantly less lonely, even throughout lockdown



periods in 2020.

Relationships Australia chief executive Nick Tebbey said it was critical to nurture these social relationships, especially at times in our lives that we could be susceptible to loneliness.

"We know that social support and connection is a really important part of being human," he said.

This was the big difference for Ms Fowler when she compared it to her previous years living solo. Until late 2020, she lived independently in a waterfront unit she loved, on Townsville's The Strand.

But when she needed some extra medical support, Ms Fowler became concerned about being isolated and alone in the apartment.

There were people around - saying hello at the lifts and so on - but there was little in the way of engagement.

On the day she moved into the village, Ms Fowler was introduced to her neighbours and that was that. She had lots of events to attend and activities to enjoy, as well as time to herself.

"I'm so glad I made the move," she said. "I've just had so much love and friendship and support."

There is growing awareness of the importance of strong

# feel at home

You'll feel like you belong at any of Blue Care's retirement villages. With more than 30 friendly communities across Queensland, you're sure to find a place where you feel at home.

We can't wait to welcome you to Carlyle Gardens Townsville, where retirement living is made easy. **Beautiful homes start from \$296,000\***

\*Price correct at 15/10/2021



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