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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **VILLAGE HUBS TO ADDRESS SOCIAL ISOLATION IN THE HUON VALLEY**

The Huon Valley is one of 10 municipal areas around Australia that will set up a Village Hub with the aim of addressing loneliness and social isolation.

Mayor Bec Elders said she is thrilled that the Huon Valley was a successful recipient of the Village Hubs Grants Fund, an initiative of the Australia Government's Seniors Connected Program.

"The Village Hub aims to support active ageing in the Valley by building the community's capacity to bring older Australians together through a range of local social, physical, learning, arts and cultural activities," Mayor Enders said.

"There are so many wonderful activities happening all throughout the Huon Valley but there is the issue of reaching out to those most vulnerable to loneliness, marginalisation and social isolation and making sure they know about what's on offer and making the events and activities easily accessible."

The funding will enable Huon Valley Council to employ a dedicated Village Hub link worker that builds the capacity and resilience of community groups through offering face-to-face and personalised services. The worker will facilitate referrals, community activities and take the time to support older people to improve their confidence and overcome barriers to increase connection.

"This is critical to long term engagement with our older people in the Valley and will support building resilience and strong connections throughout the region," Mayor Enders said.

The Huon Valley area has increasing challenges with loneliness and social isolation due to a whole range of reasons such as rising cost of living pressures, chronic health conditions, literacy challenges (including health and digital literacy), and housing insecurity. This combined with the population being spread over a large geographical and rural area, migration of new populations, and an aging population (over 37% over 55) is resulting in older people being unaware of existing programs and activities.

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“This new connecting model means that groups can develop networks with each other that will increasing the opportunity to link in with more isolated older people, increase inclusion in activities, reduce isolation and loneliness and help to build resilience,” Mayor Enders said.

The Council developed its Village Hub model in consultation with the Huon Valley Positive Ageing Working group.

**For more information: Mayor Bec Enders (03) 6264 0300**