

Music Therapy Program was a wonderful experience!

Fourteen people from the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai area were privileged to participate in a wonderful eight-week Music Therapy Program held in March and April in the McQuoin Park Community Hall, Waitara.

Co-ordinated by Grace Chiundiza, Music Therapist with Alzheimer's Australia NSW, and organised by Mary Clifton, Dementia Advisor for Hornsby Ku-ring-gai, the two-hour sessions were attended by clients, staff and volunteers of Catholic Healthcare's Chantal Dementia Day Cottage.

Singing 'hello'

By the time of their second visit, it was lovely to see the smile on participants' faces as they recognised the opening melody of the 'Hello' song Grace sang to the group every week, identifying each person by name and signalling the commencement of the session. A special farewell song at the conclusion of each session provided cues to the group that the session was coming to an end.

The program evolved over the course of the eight sessions, with Grace incorporating new songs, different percussion instruments and easy-to-follow seated movement each week, to meet the needs, preferences and musical tastes of individuals within the group.

Remembering old favourites

Most group members, aged in their 70s and 80s, knew many of the songs by heart and needed no prompting or song lyrics to help them join in – the playlist included wartime songs, romantic songs from the 30s, 40s and 50s, sorrowful Irish laments, and several Australian folk songs. The beautiful Amazing Grace was a particularly apt favourite for the group.

A couple of men in the group brought their own musical instruments, one a trombone, the other a harmonica, to demonstrate their perfectly retained musical skills, and provided flawless performances!



Members of the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Music Therapy Group enjoy one of the sessions.

Some group members, who now find speaking quite difficult, were also observed singing some old familiar tunes without any trouble – truly remarkable.

Walking frames and sticks were set aside at the end of morning tea, as a space was cleared to dance in a circle to a range of songs – Wimaway, Kiss Me Goodnight Sergeant Major, Ain't She Sweet and many others...

On completion of the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai program, a second six-week series was delivered in the Ryde Hunters Hill area, organised by local Dementia Advisor Roxanne Chant who reported that the reaction of her younger group to the program was just as positive, so we would both like to recommend this worthwhile program.

Mary Clifton
Dementia Advisor, Hornsby Ku-ring-gai

For more details about the Music Therapy Program, please call Alz NSW's Diversional Therapist, Grace Chiundiza on 9888 4206 or email gchiundiza@alznsw.asn.au