

MEDIA RELEASE

May 2020

Postcard Pen Pals! An opportunity for older people to reconnect

In a confusing time where older people required to social distance, the Northern Beaches Dementia Alliance and [Your Side Australia](#) have developed an intergenerational program to reconnect older people with our community through a Pen Pal Project.

The Postcard Pen Pals Project matches older people over the age of 65 with children and young people under 18 in the Northern Beaches. Participants are provided with everything they need to write to each other including beautifully designed postcards, envelopes, stamps and a short biography introducing them to their new pen pal. Many of the postcards have been designed by local children in the Northern Beaches.

The Northern Beaches Dementia Alliance have been running intergenerational programs with schools and aged care facilities since 2018 but had to cancel all face-to-face programs as a result of COVID-19. Ilsa Bird, the project manager for the Postcard Pen Pals Project says, "Because we are unable to deliver our programs right now, our desire is to create intergenerational connection while still maintaining social distance. We want children to rediscover the lost art of written communication outside of digital mediums and provide an opportunity for older people to share their life story and wisdom with our kids. It is about bringing joy and being excited to receive a postcard in the mailbox."

Jett Butcher is a 9 year old Northern Beaches boy and is getting ready to send his first postcards. He says, "I'm looking forward to writing postcards because it will show people that someone is thinking about them and that will make them happy."

The program organisers are currently seeking older people in the community and aged care homes to become pen pals with local children in the Northern Beaches. If you are over 65 and you would like to become a pen pal with a local child, or if you would like to register on behalf of someone over 65, email dementiafriendly@yourside.org.au

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PHOTO DOWNLOAD LINK – 9 year old Jett Butcher:

<https://spaces.hightail.com/space/Qjv4ktFuj4>

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The Northern Beaches Dementia Alliance was initiated in 2018 by Ilsa Bird from Your Side Australia. The Alliance consists of aged care, dementia and health care professionals as well as community members, people living with dementia and their carers. The Alliance is currently chaired by Ilsa Bird from Your Side Australia and includes partnerships with Sydney North Primary Health Network, CCNB, RSL LifeCare at Home, Just Better Care and HammondCare at Home.

Your Side Australia is a leading provider of support services for older people, people living with a disability or mental illness and support carers. They are an NDIS and Aged Care Registered Provider based in Sydney.