



# Multicultural Services

# Hen Friends

**The Power of Chickens to improve health and wellbeing of Bhutanese elders.**



## Project overview

- Chicken keeping project aims to promote health and wellbeing and reduce social isolation amongst Bhutanese Elders in Cairns
- Based on key learnings from a project in the UK called 'HenPower,' which was established to promote health and wellbeing and reduce social isolation amongst disengaged older people living in residential homes



## Key Achievements So Far...

- Coop has been established at Mercy Place, Woree, with 2 “friendly hens” (Curious Georgia and Sofia Le Hen)
- Residents regularly care for the hens – resident “chicken whisperer” Gail tends to the hens on a regular basis and encourages other residents to interact with them
- 3 sharing days held so far, including participation of 17 Bhutanese elders and 22 residents



# Sharing day 1 – making chicken ornaments



# What makes Hen Friends innovative?

- Uses animals (chickens) as a platform to bring people from different backgrounds together
- Builds on previous experience/ skills of Bhutanese elders in farming and chicken keeping
- Brings out nurturing qualities of elders and residents
- Opportunities to extend to other groups in the community e.g. schools



# Sharing day 2 – chicken bingo and colouring

Residents helped Bhutanese elders to cross off Bingo words

And we  
have a  
**WINNER!**



# Challenges and how we overcame them

- It was difficult to find a home for the chickens in an accessible location - limited options in terms of nursing homes in Cairns
- After 2 months there was a problem with one of the residents with dementia chasing the chickens with a stick - coop had to be relocated
- We were able to find a new home for the chickens at Mercy Place, Woree



# Sharing day 3 – chicken dance & Bhutanese dancing

Residents enjoyed learning about Bhutanese culture



# Recommendations

- Don't underestimate the power of chickens!
- Find a project partner (nursing home) who is committed to long term benefits of the project
- Persistence – may take time for participants and residents to warm up to the chickens
- Be creative – opportunities to link with other community groups e.g. schools



## Some comments

- “I don’t have any family in Cairns. I come from a farming background so the hens have given me something to do. I take care of them and I help the other residents to interact with them.” (Gail, resident)
- “This place is good. The hens are happy, the residents are friendly and we are happy too.” (Bhutanese elders)



# Thank You



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