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**PAGE TITLE: OUR MOUNTAINS COMMUNITY**

## **Are you over 65 and ‘Standing Strong’?**

With all the restrictions we have had on our daily lives over the last year, it has been more difficult, but more important than ever, to find safe ways of keeping fit and healthy, especially for people over 65.

The ‘Healthy Elders Active Living’ (HEAL) Team from Belong Blue Mountains Community and Neighbourhood Services has developed a group exercise class called ‘Standing Strong’ that is run by experienced physiotherapists and specifically designed for people over 65 years of age to develop strength, balance and mobility in a friendly, social and a very COVID-Safe environment.

“We started running the Standing Strong class with our physiotherapists in Lawson in October last year” said Christine Baird, HEAL Project Manager. “The feedback was so positive, we had more and more people wanting to join. It was clear that there was a need for this type of support and that people were really benefiting from the classes. We are now running multiple classes across the Mountains in Blaxland, Lawson and Katoomba starting from February, and these classes are already almost full.”

Adam Wilkes is one of the HEAL physiotherapists who run the Standing Strong classes. “This is not a generic strength and balance program - it has been designed so that exercise becomes accessible to those who may feel out of their comfort zone when it comes to group fitness.” said Mr Wilkes. “It starts where people are at, then builds on foundational movement skills that allow strengthening exercises to be performed with safe and effective technique. We empower participants to make exercise a lifelong habit, so that all the benefits of moving well are maintained in the long-term. That is, we learn to ‘Stand Strong’ together.”

The classes are aimed at enabling participants to achieve their goals at home and in their community. The techniques used are based on the latest best practice theories for forming positive, long-term exercise habits. In addition to a weekly work-out, participants learn how to integrate exercise and movement into their day-to-day lives.

“I’m coming to the classes to help me get back on my feet and to improve my balance after several months of not being able to participate in exercise last year” said Marie Hurley who has signed up for Standing Strong. Another new participant, Patricia Barret, said “I want to come to get fit and increase my activity, and to meet new people.”

Term 1 classes will start in the first week of February 2021 in Blaxland, Lawson and Katoomba with different classes tailored to different levels of mobility and fitness, from first time exercisers through to those who have completed regular strength and balance classes. The class price has been heavily subsidised so more people are able access high-quality, ongoing support. The cost is \$50 per term. Strict COVID-Safe practices will be implemented. Places are limited.

If you, or someone you know, would like to join a ‘Standing Strong’ class or find out more about the HEAL ‘Healthy Elders Active Living’ Program. Please call Eddie at Belong Blue Mountains on 0403 880 560, email

[HEAL@belongbm.org.au](mailto:HEAL@belongbm.org.au) or go to [www.belongbm.org.au/heal](http://www.belongbm.org.au/heal)



Local residents Marie Hurley and Patricia Barret warming up for their Standing Strong class at the Belong Blue Mountains Lower Mountains Neighbourhood Centre, Blaxland.

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