



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW ONLINE INITIATIVE TO SUPPORT OLDER LGBTQ+ PEOPLE REMAIN ACTIVE AND CONNECTED

Strengthening and supporting the physical health of older LGBTQ+ people and addressing unique issues impacting their overall wellbeing lies at the heart of a new program from ACON, NSW's leading LGBTQ health organisation, in partnership with Gymnastics NSW.

Bringing together Gymnastics NSW's 'Fitter For Life' program and two ACON programs, Pride in Sport and the LOVE Project, the new initiative called 'Fitter For Life & LOVE' aims to address factors which have led to a disconnection from organised physical activity by older LGBTQ+ people 55 and over in NSW.

"We know from both research and our work with older people in our communities that many face unique challenges in accessing healthcare and organised sport. Given the link between positive health and physical activity, this is unsurprisingly evidenced by older LGBTQ+ people's disproportionate rates of chronic disease, including heart disease," ACON CEO Nicolas Parkhill said.

Studies have demonstrated the negative health impacts that discrimination and prejudice experienced by many LGBTQ+ people have had on them over their lifetimes. This is compounded by a general disconnect from organised sport and physical activity, in addition to adverse health outcomes demonstrated across the LGBTQ+ population as a result of discrimination.

"Gymnastics NSW believe that everyone of all ages and stages has the right to participate. We are honoured to be part of a collaboration with so many highly respected organisations to promote healthy hearts, minds and bodies," Gymnastics NSW Business Operations Manager Kait Carter said.

Australian Physiotherapy Association LGBTIQ+ Advisory Panel Chair Dr Megan Ross said: "This program is a great way for people to try a new activity, participate in health promoting behaviours in their own space, at their own pace. Our involvement in this project is just one of the many ways the Australian Physiotherapy Association is supporting our members to provide evidence-based, leading practice affirming care to the LGBTQ+ community."

ACON Ageing Program Coordinator Russ Gluyas said that Fitter For Life & LOVE will support older LGBTQ+ in improving and maintaining their health and wellbeing through increased physical exercise and community connection.

"Participants will engage in this fabulous, tailored exercise class from the safety and comfort of their home - and will have the opportunity to increase online connections, access professional support from Gymnastics NSW Fitter For Life clubs and learn more about the LOVE Project," Gluyas said.

"Including a community icon, peer leader or celebrity drag personality as a program facilitator also encourages participation among a population who may be reluctant to take part. It's a LGBTQ+ inclusive, fun, social and healthy innovation."

Pride in Sport National Program Manager, Beau Newell said: "The Fitter For Life program has been developed by Gymnastics NSW, adopted by Gymnastics Australia and endorsed by the Australian Physiotherapy Association. Sessions include activities for participants with strength and mobility limitations or who are recovering from illness, injury or surgery. Everyone is welcome and anyone can participate, which is crucial to older people in our communities feeling included and connected."

Fitter for Life & LOVE is funded by the Heart Foundation Innovation Grant.

For more information visit: gymnsw.org.au/heartsmart

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