

MEALS ON WHEELS JO HESLIN

Jo Heslin, Coordinator of Armidale/Uralla Meals on Wheels Inc., reminds us how important this service is to our community.



H How long has Meals on Wheels been operating in Armidale?

Meals on Wheels has been operating in Armidale and servicing Armidale and Uralla since 1966. Next year is our big 50 year anniversary.

Why is this service so important to our communities?

From its inception over sixty years ago, Meals on Wheels has grown to become a driving force of care in the community. In the course of a year, over 14.8 million meals are delivered by more than 78,700 volunteers to about 53,000 recipients Australia wide in cities, regional and rural areas. Of these, about 4.5 million meals are delivered by 35,000 volunteers in NSW each year. Whilst age and disability may reduce some people's capacity to get out and about, Meals on Wheels help make it possible for them to stay in their homes, where most are happiest, and maintain their independence. Delivery of nutritious meals, social interaction and a friendly check of a client's wellbeing by Meals on Wheels volunteers can help people live the

lives they choose. We currently deliver over 22,000 meals in our Armidale and Uralla region every year, and this number has grown from 13,000 meals just 18 months ago.

Tell us about the recent changes to the Armidale service?

Last year we moved the organisation to its own production kitchen in partnership at the Armidale Showgrounds.

It's a wonderful facility, and we have also continued to accommodate showground users for their individual annual events. Our meals are now cooked fresh every day, and we use as much local produce from local businesses as possible. We also produce a range of frozen meals that can be purchased during business hours. We have partnerships with a number of organisations to further support our local community.

Tilbuster Station (Pathfinders) grow a range of different vegetables for us every year, where disadvantaged young people are participating in a range of agricultural, horticultural and trade skills programmes such as crop and vegetable production, animal husbandry, beef cattle production, fencing, welding, and

building construction. This allows us to change our menu seasonally and ensure we are using the freshest ingredients. Our new facility has a dining room, so we can cater for local community organisations and also deliver catering for other seniors groups and not for profits.

Tell us about your volunteers and what they gain from being a part of this community service ...

It's not only clients whose lives are enhanced by Meals on Wheels. People who give time to Meals on Wheels say volunteering has added a new dimension to their lives. The satisfaction of doing something practical yet personal is reward in itself. This is a comment from a volunteer: "It's a pleasure to deliver a hot nutritious meal to people who are unable to cook a meal or go out. It's an opportunity to provide companionship, as well as a meal. We can also provide feedback to staff about

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their wellbeing. Sometimes we are the only person someone would see."

Do you need more volunteers, and how can readers get involved?

We are fortunate to have a dedicated groups of volunteers, but we are always looking for more assistance.

The commitment can be as little as 1 - 1½ hours per month around lunchtime, bring a friend and having a chat along the way. Come early and have a cuppa in our homely dining room before your deliveries.

We have a number of corporate volunteers, and this is great, as a group of work colleagues can share the monthly roster. All you need to do is complete a short application form, and we can take it from there. There are always opportunities to help in the kitchen, at functions and even a bit of administration.

Thanks Jo.

ARMIDALE URALLA MEALS ON WHEELS

More than just a meal

Meals on Wheels has had a place in the hearts and homes of Australians for now 60 years. Helping the frail older people and younger people with disabilities and their carers stay in their homes where most are happiest is at the heart of the matter.

No doctors referral necessary for clients/ range of meal options available including gluten free & vegetarian, all dietary requirements catered for.

Office hours Monday – Thursday
9am-3pm Fri 9am – 2pm.

PHONE 6772 8970



VOLUNTEER, JOIN NOW AND GIVE BACK TO THE COMMUNITY, YOU'LL BE GLAD YOU DID!

