

28 September 2016

Senses Australia is set to celebrate International Day of Older Persons – 1 October 2016

International Day of Older Persons on Saturday, 1 October 2016 will give Senses Australia, a leading disability service provider, the opportunity to raise awareness of issues facing people who are older, as well as an opportunity to reflect and acknowledge older Australians in our community and how they have helped shape our country.

Matthew Wittorff, Senses Australia's Manager Deafblind Services says Senses Australia provides services to people of all ages, for all people with disability and has done so for more than 120 years.

"We all know, that with age, our health can deteriorate. As people age, many experience the onset of vision and or hearing loss, it can be an isolating disability for our growing ageing population, but something can be done about it.

"Senses Australia's Deafblind Service is here to help – we provide support, information, advice and equipment, which can help a person overcome difficulties they may be experiencing when their vision and/or hearing deteriorates at a later stage in their life," says Matthew.

Senses Australia is also in the midst of conducting an Australia wide research project, 'Ending the Isolation', which will assist people working in the aged care sector to identify when a person has a combination of a vision and hearing impairment.

Dr Meredith Prain, Research Assistant says through the 'Ending the Isolation' project, Senses Australia will create resources for people working in the aged care industry so they can support older Australians that receive care and give them the support they need.

"A study by Dyke (2013) identified nearly 100,000 people in Australia have both a vision and hearing impairment. The study also identified 67% of these individuals were over the age of 75 years.

"Another Australian study by Schneider et al. (2012) reported prevalence of 27% in individuals aged 80 or older. This number is staggering and it is unclear that this population is effectively supported," says Dr Prain.

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“Thanks to funding from the Commonwealth Government’s Department of Health, this project will undertake significant research with the help of people receiving services from aged care providers in Western Australia. Findings will assist in developing resources as well as information packages, which will be available to the aged care sector nationwide.

“We are currently recruiting people who work in aged care facilities to take part in interviews about working with older adults with dual sensory loss. We are also recruiting people with over 10 years’ experience working in the aged care sector to participate in an expert panel to determine questions for a screening tool,” says Dr Prain.

Senses Australia is also proud to be the host of the 10th National Deafblind Conference on behalf of the Australian Deafblind Council from Wednesday, 16 November 2016 to Thursday, 17 November 2016.

“We are fortunate to have Dr Walter Wittich, Assistant Professor at the School of Optometry at the University of Montreal, Quebec as a key-note speaker at the 10th National Deafblind Conference. Dr Wittich conducts research in dual sensory impairment and acquired deafblindness, so this is a unique professional development opportunity to those working in the aged care sector”, says Matthew.

To find out more about Senses Australia’s Deafblind Information service or the ‘Ending the Isolation’ project, visit www.senses.org.au or call 9473 5400. To find out more about the 10th National Deafblind Conference visit <http://www.deafblind2016.com.au>

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