

COMING TOGETHER: A PHOTOVOICE EXHIBITION

These images come from a photovoice study about community, care, and connection. Community members, service providers, and health practitioners were invited to photograph what helps people feel connected to their communities and what gets in the way. Each picture is a small witness. Together they map how community exists in everyday places.

Photovoice is a research method that hands the camera to participants so they can show, rather than simply tell, their experience. The photographs were discussed in interviews and group conversations. Researchers then analysed these stories to identify common themes across many voices.

Alongside each photograph you will find a short poem or piece of prose written by researcher and writer Dr Simon-Peter Telford. These writings are a type of research called “creative analytical practice”. After the interviews were thematically analysed, the writing was created to communicate a collective story. Creative writing allows research findings to be felt as well as understood, translating research evidence into human experience.

This exhibition sits within a social prescribing project, which explores how health and wellbeing are shaped not only by medical care but by connection: groups, creativity, shared spaces, and relationships. The photographs show the conditions that make these connections possible, and the barriers that need to be overcome – collectively.

You are invited to enjoy slowly; feel, don't just think. Read the words beside the images. Notice which scenes feel familiar. Reflect on your own experience.

The research asks a simple question with a complicated answer:

What helps a person feel part of a community?

Every image here is part of that answer.

Dr Simon-Peter Telford





locked gates rust faster
than the children grow
some slides of concrete
others are of gold

playgrounds built from memories
stand the test of time
wrapped in softly spoken words
connected by threads like gossamer

in a great nest of seesaws and swings
we sit and know of the day
when they too will dive through clouds
and build flocks of their own

what they see is a story unravelling
our hands on the pen draw lines
marking out the boundaries of life
like great trenches in the earth

will they lead us across this map
will they take us under their wings
will they fly if they see us flying
who will show them the way

?

inheritance



entangled

from blade to blade	in an endless hunger
a tickling of flame burning and curling	leaving behind scorched and blackened soil
that which cannot move	and promises of potential
out of its path	of a possible springing green shoot
laying waste to our best intentions	of life being made anew through salted rain and gritted teeth
impulsive	waiting for the next ember to form
unknowing	and start fresh
an erratic smouldering that resists contemplation	an unending convulsion
but instead, is driven on by the chaos	that shakes free the repetition of days
the uncontrollable	bathing in smoke and clouding the eyes
halting the hopes and dreams of living things	that strain to see
whipped up in a twirling spinning dance	the coming
the ruffles of bright orange reaching out and consuming	of a new dawn



equilibrium

Many hands make light work, but gentle hands are needed to build a house of cards. Stable breath. Together we pick the right piece, feel its weight and place it with a soft touch.

Our eyes strain as we resist the urge to blink. We swallow exhaustion, exhale intent. The stories that each card tells swim amongst the deck, holding years that are pressed down into paper like a rose pressed into a book. Some cards are bent and others are stamped with the ticking of a clock.

Is fragility a failure, or is it a reality that shows the beauty of a stained-glass window? Rebuilding becomes a ritual. Trust becomes the beams that hold us in their precarity because we know that steel is too harsh. What cards will you show today? What remains in your hand?

undulation

we take a moment
hear the sea roll in
smell the salt crystalise in the air
and feel the sun's golden touch on our skin

the blue horizon is an endless streak of paint
which blends into the sky overhead
it swallows our entire being
a dazzling refraction in the shining water

in that moment we are light
we are joined
just like the countless grains of sand
so too have countless eyes watched

the sun rise and set over the waves
countless lives building together
making castles in the sand
having the seaweed wrap around our
ankles as we run in shallows together

the shore reminds us all
that we are like the fish
that swim in schools
all in this together

side by side



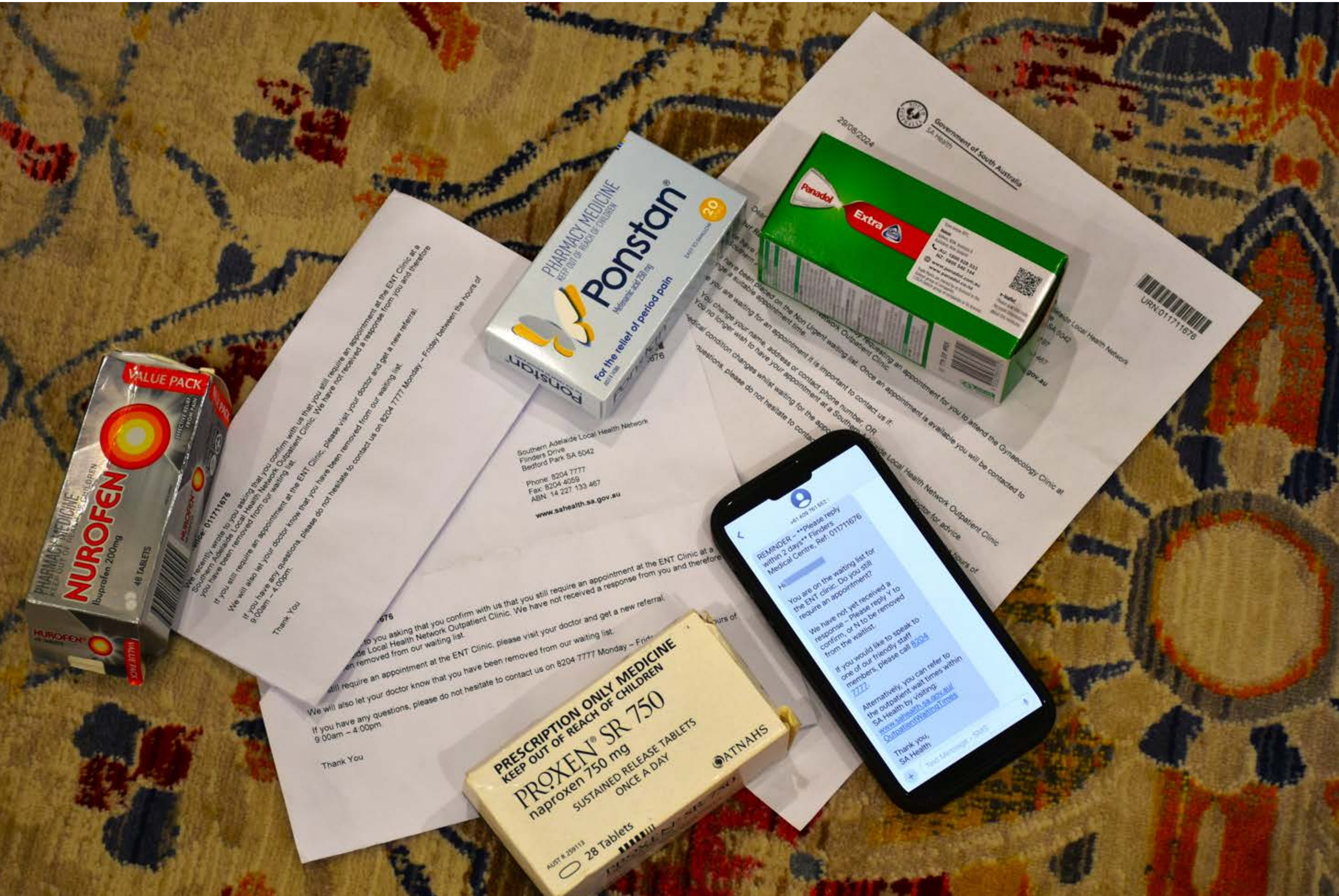
pang

how susceptible are the laws of physics?
how can the whole world shrink down to these four walls?
like ghosts drifting through an endless maze
our footsteps make silent sounds of pain

whether it be a stumbling shuffle to the front door
or the odyssey of a thousand steps through thorns
to find a table and chair in some café
to meet with a hand that holds on tight

clasping fingers slick with tears
are we not deserving of life's little treasures?
we hold on together and hold out for hope
that like lighthouses on some misty shore

we may turn our eyes to the horizon
on our search to land on warmer sands
to feel the sun on our glistening skin
and find a place where we belong



rhizome



a flower blooming is a beautiful thing
a little miracle of petals and colour
how quickly these miracles can fade
these splashes of splendour rise and fall

and how little do we see under the soil
the roots and tendrils working hard
like an industrial machine
stretching out and absorbing

it is a hidden world
opaque in its mysteries
and to expose the roots
brings a tumbling vulnerability

who, then, are the gardeners
that can peer into the incubating soil?
how do they tend to
these fragile heartstrings?

to hold a seed in one's hand
to feel the joys and aches
to wrangle the ropes of an ecosystem
with a caring and gentle touch

with roots, nothing is wasted
every limb has a purpose
and if the flower does not bloom
there is always next spring

Movement is good for the body and the mind but sometimes I feel so exhausted. I've worn deep grooves into my shoes and although I know I can buy another pair, I also know that those too will crumble.

Forty-eight patients today, and tomorrow is booked out too.

My biggest fear is getting to that point, as happens so many times, when I look into my patient's eyes, and I don't know how to help them. A throat infection is easy, another broken toe.

"I feel like I have no one and I just feel so alone..."

What can I do to change that?

"I have a specialist appointment, but the taxi didn't come last time..."

How can I help?

"My wife died three weeks ago, and I don't know how to pay the bills..."

I am so sorry.

It hurts to see them hurting, and it hurts when I cannot help. My job is to help, and not only that, I want to help, but I just don't know how I can. So, I take my lunch break off, and I drive that patient home. I spend my weekend looking into some referral options.

I look down at my shoes, and my sole is wearing thin.

Sometimes I feel alone. Sometimes I don't feel good enough.

I wonder if I belong...

But then sometimes it all just works. I feel like I'm helping where I can.

When you come in again, you'll see me smiling and we will work together to help because that's what I'm here for, that's who I am.



essence



kiln

community is a plate of food
shared between those we love
community stretches out into the streets
crosses over fences
and walks down sidewalks
floating on the smells of oil, garlic, fresh bread
ringing through the creaking of corks
or the flowing streams of clear water
poured into many glasses
and raised to mouths that speak words
of generosity
community is a shared experience
of a common language
nurturing and nourishing



What is in a name, a country, a nation? I carry many stories within me, many journeys across many seas.

I find myself stretched across identities, in a gliding dance over and under and through in a dizzying and breathtaking spin that lifts me higher into the air. I am held by solid arms, like being passed over a crowd I feel the warmth and security of each palm as it presses against me and passes me to the next.

It is only I that can know the moves that are to come. Sometimes they are like a song that played in a summer now long gone, a fading record that sings out from the back patio and I strain my ears to pick the notes. Other times it is a roaring wave of thumping bass that beats through my day and through my mind.

kindred

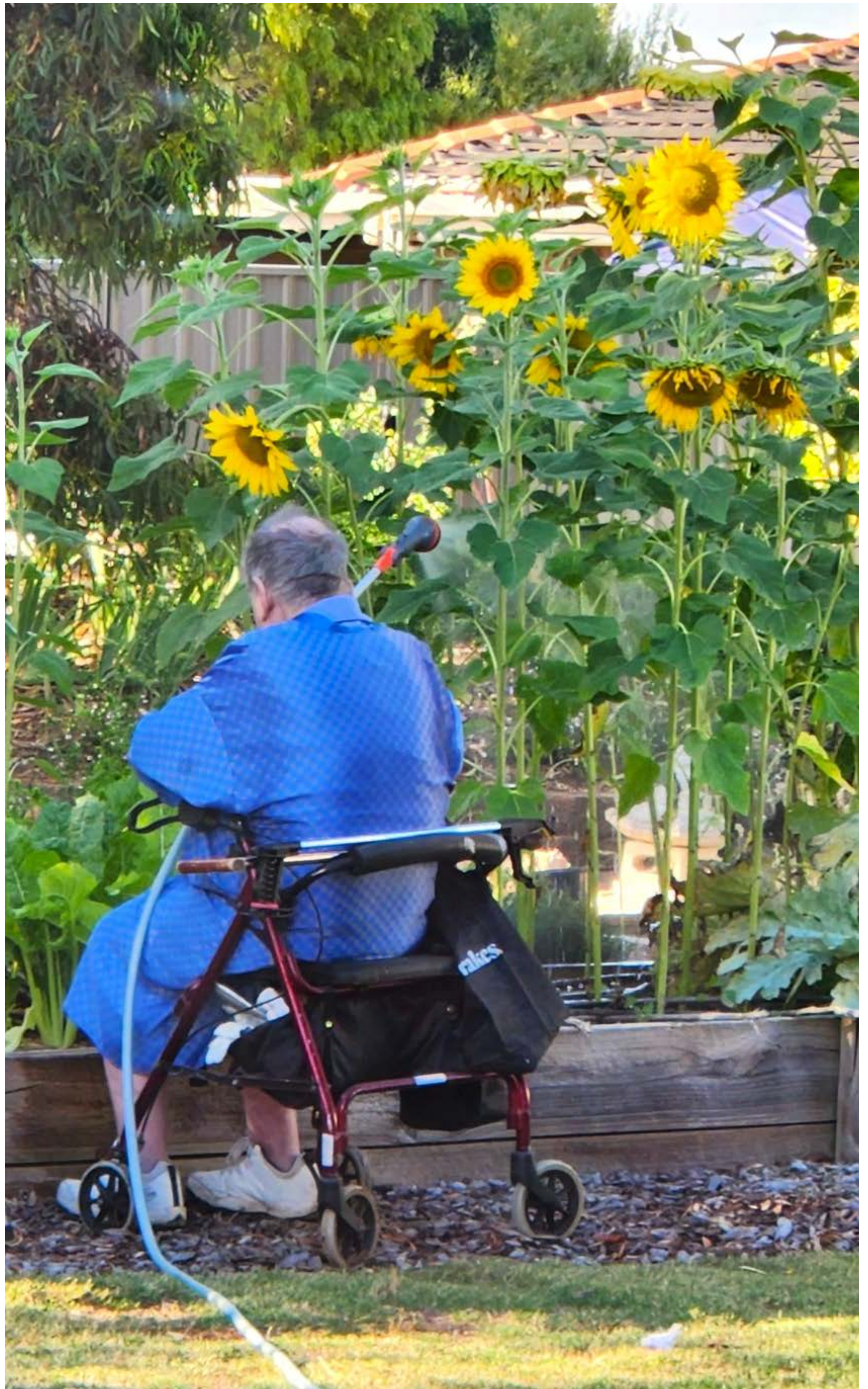
My feet make the movements I have performed a thousand times, and I am joined by others who move at their own rhythms. Together we bend and move, sharing one breath and one common energy that flows up from the boards and into our legs and hearts. Though I may not know their dance, I smile at their elegance. Though they may not know mine, they applaud as I leap.

And as I leap so too do my thoughts, settling amongst those who have not been given the chance to join in our performance, those who have not shared their spirit, those who have not been allowed and my feet falter as I feel the sorrow of not feeling their songs, not breathing one breath.

And so, I move along the aisles and up through the doors and out into the streets with their lamps glowing in fuzzy softness and I continue my dance on the sidewalk, across the grass and into a searching that will take me to someone who is waiting to spin and collide and dip and leap with me.

wisdom

i love them so much
each wrinkle that etches its way
through their skin
every memory that is held in every
grey hair on their head
all the ways in which they have
loved me over all these years
i can never thank them enough
for all they have done
even in those twilights years
they still press on
they water their gardens
that feed our souls
and we turn on the tap because
their hands shake
just as they have shaken hands
with countless others
and laughed and cried together
so that we could learn
to laugh and cry
to share a cup of tea
to have them hold us in their wisdom
so, we mustn't forget
that they are still here with us
because one day they will no longer
bring a smile to our lips
or a tear to our eye
just as we too will see
the lines of laughter
get deeper in our skin
and our hair will grey and disappear
we too will water the garden
for those who will take us there



ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Across Australia, many people experience loneliness, social isolation, and difficulty navigating the supports and activities available in their communities. At the same time, healthcare providers, local governments, community organisations are working to strengthen health, social connection and wellbeing – but these efforts are often fragmented or hard for people in the community to access. Social prescribing is an approach that responds to this challenge by connecting people from healthcare to non-clinical supports, focusing on strengthening connections between people, services, and community resources to support wellbeing.

At Flinders, researchers from the Centre for Social Impact and the Caring Futures Institute are leading an Australian Research Council funded Linkage project (LP240100242) that brings together state and local government, healthcare, social and community partners to co-design and evaluate a locally embedded social prescribing model for Southern Adelaide.

The Social Prescribing: Photovoice Exhibition showcases key findings on what helps and hinders community connection and access to community support.

Research Team:

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Project Partners:



You can read more about the project, partners, and team by scanning the QR code below and visiting our website:

