



MEDIA RELEASE

12 APRIL 2018

icare ENGAGES LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO TACKLE SOCIAL ISOLATION

Ufirst, a social and community research initiative of icare (the NSW government's insurance and care provider), is hosting public workshops in Newcastle and Orange in May to address social isolation.

Bringing together members of the local community, the workshops aim to develop practical solutions to restore social connections for those who have been isolated from their community by worklessness because of a workplace injury or road accident.

"Social isolation, and its ripple effect on the family of an injured person, their community and the economy, is a complex issue that requires whole-of-community solutions," said icare General Manager, Health & Community Engagement, Eugene McGarrell

"We know we all have a role to play in tackling this problem. Community organisations and local businesses have a key role in creating the right environment for individuals to connect to work and the community.

"That is why we are inviting members of these communities, thought leaders, local business-owners and people with a lived experience of injury to register for these events.

"We've chosen to go right to the source and ask locals to help us solve this problem for those who are isolated in their community because of a workplace injury or road accident, or as a carer of an injured person," he said.

"Last year, over 2900 people were injured in workplaces in Newcastle, while more than 400 injury claims were made in Orange. These injured employees took an average of 26 days to return to work. However, in some cases, people were unable to return to work for more than three months.

"The longer people are away from work, the greater their risk of social isolation and the likelihood of the onset of further mental health issues, which can delay recovery.

"We know that social connections and relationships within communities are linked to positive physical and mental health. A change in circumstances, like a severe workplace injury, or disability because of road accident can suddenly take away these connections, leaving the injured person at risk of isolation, loneliness and depression.

"These events are about sharing the research we have gathered to date about social isolation for those living with injury, and identifying with the community what has and has not worked in the past.

"We hope to generate new ideas and solutions that will help people in Newcastle and Orange remain connected to their community in the event of an injury, or restore the social connections of those already living with an injury in the region who are experiencing social isolation," Mr McGarrell said.

The workshops will take place on Thursday 3 May 2018, at the Harbourview Function Centre, 150 Wharf Rd, Newcastle and Wednesday 9 May 2018 at the Orange Ex-Services Club, 231-243 Anson St, Orange.

Interested community members can find out more information about the events and register their interest at: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/o/ufirst-11095462338>

For further information, contact Tracie-Lee Cullen at tracie-lee.cullen@icare.nsw.gov.au

Ufirst is a social research initiative of icare that connects with communities, at home and at work, to identify issues that are important to the community. Led by icare's Head of Research for Health & Community [Dr Caroline Howe](#), Ufirst uses this knowledge to find new strategies, concepts and ideas that meet the social needs of communities.

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About icare: icare (Insurance & Care NSW) is the insurance and care provider for NSW.

We insure 3.7 million workers, motorists and builders and 296,000 employers. For more information, visit: www.icare.nsw.gov.au

