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News

# Wellness my Way: A big-picture approach to health in remote Queensland

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*Penny West, a participant of the Wellness my Way Program. (Supplied)*

Living remotely can make looking after your health harder – something Wallumbilla resident Penny West knows all too well.



Penny, 56, joined the Wellness my Way program last year after wanting a clearer, more holistic view of her health while living and working in South West Queensland.

A Program Support Officer with Queensland Health's Tackling Regional Diversity Through Connected Communities (TRACC) program, Penny supports Regional Adversity Clinicians across the South West Hospital and Health Service district to deliver initiatives that promote resilience and connectedness in local communities.

Despite working in health, Penny said accessing services while living remotely can be challenging.

'I wanted a big-picture look at my health – especially around fatigue, strength ... all the changes that are a part of my stage of life.'

Wellness my Way is a joint initiative of Health and Wellbeing Queensland, South West Hospital and Health Service, Queensland Health's Health Contact Centre and The Health and Wellbeing Centre for Research Innovation at The University of Queensland.

The free program starts with an online or phone health assessment that looks at risk factors for chronic disease such as diet, physical activity, alcohol, smoking and mental health. Participants then receive follow-up support from a telephone health coach to develop a personalised plan and connect to local programs.

Penny said she had been interested in the program for some time, but it was a recommendation from a colleague that prompted her to sign up.

'The assessment was straightforward, and the coaching conversation was excellent,' she said.

Penny was referred to services available in her local area to support her ongoing health goals. She has now been meeting regularly with a health coach through the 'My Health for life' program.

'Meeting regularly with my (My health for life) coach has helped me clarify my goals and take them seriously. It's felt supportive and practical – not overwhelming.'

With health services often stretched in rural areas, Penny found having another way to access support made all the difference.

'Wellness my Way gives people like me a chance to take control of our health without any barriers.'

Since joining the program, Penny said she had noticed improved energy levels, better routines around diet and exercise, and a greater sense of control over her health.



'I feel clearer about what I need to do and why,' she said.

'For my mental health especially, it's confirmed that I'm on the right track.'

As a mother and hopeful future grandmother, Penny said her motivation to stay healthy was about living well for the long-term.

'I want to live long and well – to get strong now so I'm not weighed down by preventable diseases later in life,' she said.

'And if I'm lucky enough to become a grandmother one day, I want to be up to the job.'

Penny said Wellness my Way's preventive, holistic approach made it a valuable resource for people living in regional and remote communities.

'It's fantastic to have someone take a whole-of-me view of my health,' she said.

The connection to programs and support has helped Penny stay accountable and motivated.

'It's a great resource for our region,' she said.

Wellness my Way is open to residents of South West Queensland, including Charleville, Roma, Cunnamulla and St George.

To complete the free online health check and get connected to support near you, visit [www.hw.qld.gov.au/wellnessmyway](http://www.hw.qld.gov.au/wellnessmyway).

People can also take the health check over the phone by calling 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84) and asking for the 'Way to Wellness' service (Monday–Friday, 8am–8pm).

