



Great food and company

A new solutions in the areas of social isolation, food and nutrition.

THE AUSTRALIAN CENTRE
FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION
**RADICAL
REDESIGN**

Suzie talks about eating lobsters and kangaroo, but most nights she eats tuna on crackers alone.



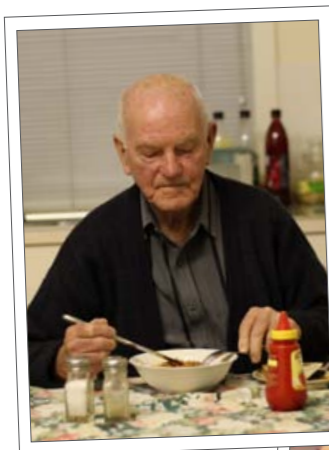
Being and eating alone has a significant negative effect on health

- Feeling alone raises older people's blood pressure more than any other social factor
- Social isolation is the most powerful predictor of whether you'll be alive in 10 years or not
- Eating alone reduces older people's nutritional intake, weakens the immune systems, and increases the risk of falling and breaking bones

"Being lonely in old age will kill you faster than smoking." Online at: <http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/news>
"Nutritional problems in older people". Online at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk>

Suzie wants great food and intelligent conversation. Existing meals services don't deliver either.

90,000 older South Australians live and eat by themselves.

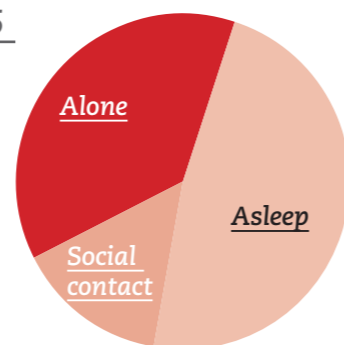


Eddie



Eileen

They spend on average 11.5 hours alone everyday.



Centre based meals

At the centre she'd eat with people she has little in common with - apart from her age.

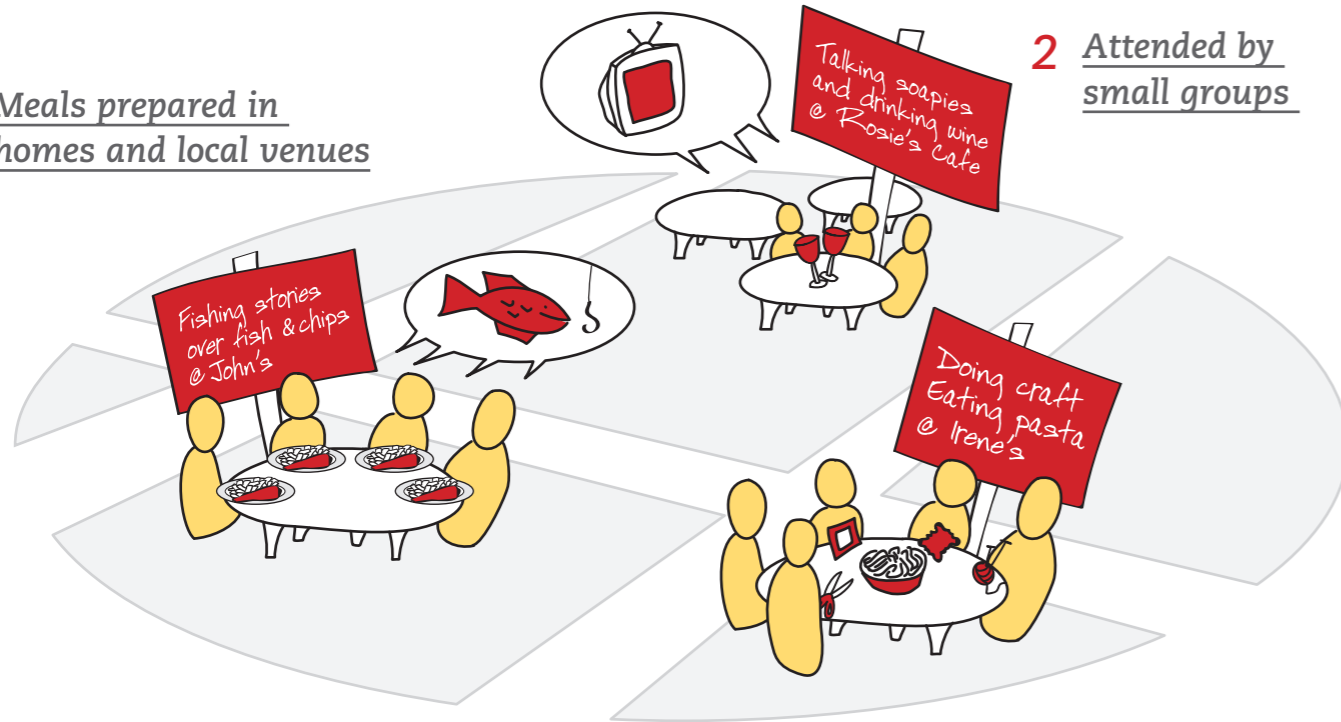


Home meal deliveries

If she got meals delivered she'd have no choice over the food, see a volunteer for less than 2 mins, and still eat alone.

With people like Suzie we've co-designed an alternative eating experience...

1 Meals prepared in homes and local venues



2 Attended by small groups

3 Who share common interests and like the same food



We also found local people and businesses would willingly donate time, food, space and activities to make it happen.

Photo Story
See how Meals with Mates could look ...



The Gathering

MEALS WITH MATES

We believe in...

- Sharing great food and great company
- Building and deepening friendships
- Giving everyone a purpose and role
- Having fun



The solution

Meals with Mates is a system to support the creation of a whole range of Gatherings. These Gatherings are all about bringing people together to enjoy good food and have fun with like minded people who share a common interest.

What's a Host?

Hosts are local people who like eating good food and making new friends - and who organise Gatherings around their interests & passions.

The Gathering

Gatherings are facilitated by a Host and a small group of Mates who share a common interest or love of a particular kind of food. Gatherings happen in a range of venues including Hosts and Mates homes. It's up to the Host and the Mates to decide what they cook and eat, and how often Gatherings happen.

During the Gathering, the Hosts supports the Mates to get to know each other better with the aim of building ongoing friendships. Every Gathering is underpinned by a set of principles.



The Host organises the Gatherings



From a local business



The Convener builds partnerships

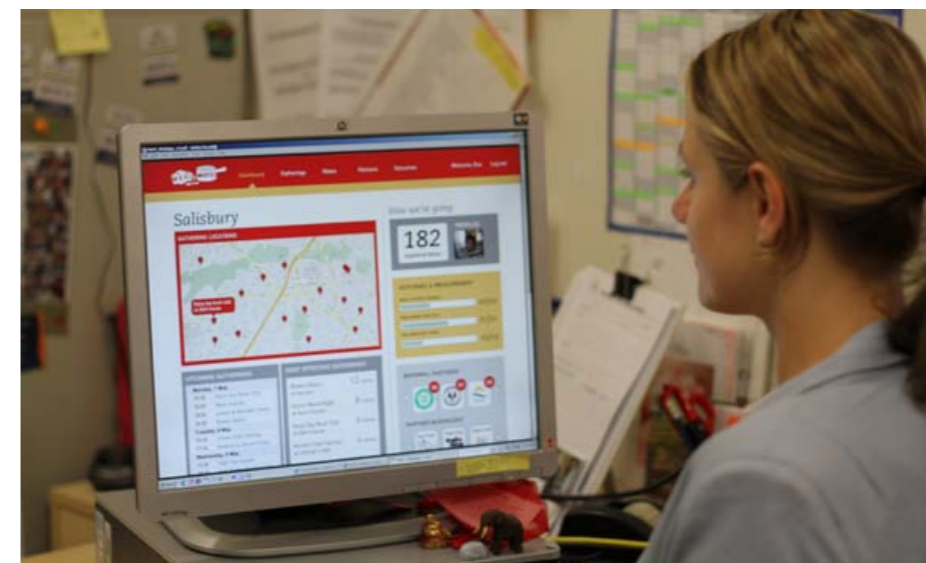


Mates choose Gatherings



From a Mate

Barrier busters for Mates



Supporting Hosts, matching Mates



Host organises the Gathering

Locally based Conveners recruit Hosts through volunteer referral agencies and local recruitment efforts, and work with them to design a Gathering specific to their interests and skills. Hosts receive face-to-face training, and a step-by-step guide book that helps them curate their Gathering so that it's fun, yummy, and intentionally builds ongoing friendships between Mates.

The Mates choose Gatherings

Mates join Meals with Mates and each week receive a menu of the week's Gatherings. Mates choose the gathering they want to go to, or can design their own.

Once they choose a Gathering, Mates receive an invitation. They learn more about what to expect, who will be there, and the things they have in common with fellow Mates.

Barrier busters for mates

Mates can also choose barrier busters provided by local business and Mates. Barrier busters may include other Mates helping with lifts, businesses providing discounts on haircuts, local Op Shops helping pick out a new outfit or pre Gathering meet and greets with other Mates.

The Convener builds partnerships

The local Convener role sits within a caretaker organisation eg a council, meal delivery service or home based service provider. Conveners develop partnerships with local organisations to refer mates, provide barrier busters, and offer discounts on food, equipment and venue hire. The Convener records donated resources in an easy-to-use online database so Hosts have a ready pool of resources they can draw on to make their Gathering a success.

Supporting Hosts, matching Mates

Conveners play a key role in training and supporting Hosts to create and run Gatherings. and in Matching Mates to Gatherings and each other.

Mates develop profiles detailing their preferences, and are introduced to the kinds of Gatherings they might like. The intentional nature of this matching process not only links Mates to Gatherings and to each other, it has the flexibility and variety of offerings to appeal to a larger number of people than traditional social offerings.



Why is it needed?

Suzie is 52 and living with a brain tumour. Great living to Suzie is eating lobster and kangaroo, and having intelligent conversation. Daily living for Suzie is eating tuna on crackers, twice a day, alone. She drinks heavily to pass the time.

Suzie lives across the street from an older people's activity centre. She can't find intelligent conversation there. Suzie is eligible for Meals on Wheels. But Meals on Wheels wouldn't be much different than tuna on crackers. She'd still eat alone.



Services further isolate Suzie

People like Suzie who are living alone and need help to stay at home are too often further isolated from their networks. Meals are prepared and delivered, a carer comes and gets the shopping done, other carers might drop by to get the bills paid.

Suzie isn't the only one.

In South Australia, 35% of older people are living alone. That's 90,000 people. On average, people aged 65+ spend 74% of their waking hours alone. That's around 11.5 hrs.¹ Yes, there are community groups and social offerings for seniors, but take-up is low. In the City of Salisbury - a council recognised for its extensive social and recreation programs - participation is only around 13% of the over 65 population.² There's little evidence to suggest that participation in existing social and recreation programs improves outcomes. We know from the research that older people must perceive the activity to be meaningful in order to have a positive effect on health and wellbeing.³

1 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2009). *Living Alone*. Online at: <http://www.abs.gov.au/>
 2 City of Salisbury. (2011). *Healthy Ageing Divisional Report*.
 3 Fiorillo, D. and Sabatini, F. (2011). *Quality and quantity: the role of social interactions in individual health*. Online at: <http://www.york.ac.uk/>

Not everyone who lives alone feels alone

Another of the 90,000 older people living alone in South Australia is Irene. She connects with people who share common interests and enjoys at least 4 meals with others per week. When getting together with her friends, good food and drink play a strong and consistent role. Irene is a positive deviant and an untapped resource.



Meals with Mates finds people like Irene and supports them to host small Gatherings where people like Suzie can eat great food, build new social networks, and spend less time eating alone.

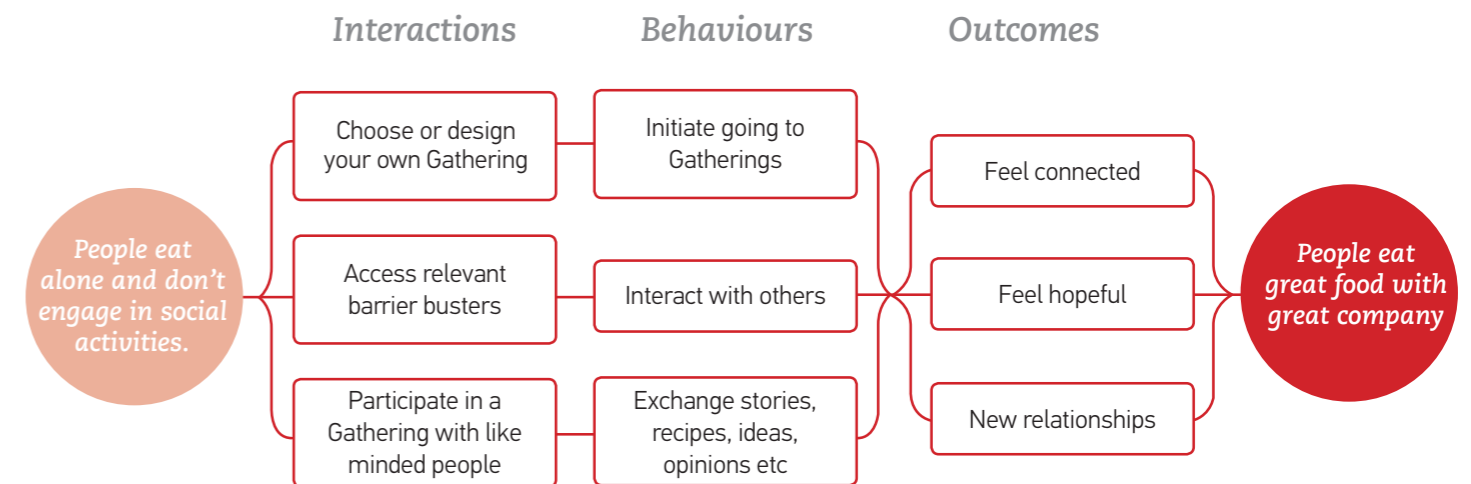
What is Meals with Mates?

Meals with Mates is a system to support the creation of a whole range of Gatherings. These Gatherings are all about bringing people together to enjoy good food and have fun with like minded people who share a common interest.

Each Gathering is unique. They can happen in a whole range of spaces, anything from a backyard or living room to the local cafe, pub or restaurant. It's up to the Host and the Mates to decide how frequently the Gatherings occur. The common interest that brings people together could be virtually anything - a love of the same kind of food, a favourite TV show, a hobby, a past experience. Meals with Mates' matching process makes it easy for Hosts and Mates to find and connect around that shared interest.

All Gatherings are underpinned by a common set of principles. These principles help ensure Meals with Mates Gatherings look and feel different than existing social offerings

How does it create change?



What is it?

1. Activate partnerships

Meals with Mates HQ undertakes outreach: activating partnerships across a local area that has been selected by HQ based on local partner interest and fit. Partners would include local businesses - like cafes, taxi companies, video stores and beauty salons - as well as organisations - like TAFE, meal delivery services or Council. Partners would provide either discounts, or a new supply of support for Gatherings like Hospitality students.

2. Activate Convenors

Meals with Mates HQ recruits people to the Convenor role. Convenors are trained by HQ in Host recruitment and support, and learn how to catalyse local businesses and sign-up new partners.

3. Activate Hosts

Convenors recruit Hosts through volunteer agencies and local recruitment strategies. Convenors work with Hosts to identify their interests and skill sets. Convenors run face-to-face training for small groups of Hosts. Training focusses on how to intentionally curate Gatherings so

they build friendships between Mates that last beyond Gatherings. Hosts receive a step-by-step guide book for reference, and have access to an online system where they can track Gatherings, discounts and partnerships.

4. Activate Mates

Hosts recruit Mates through partnerships established with local meal delivery organisations, services, and clubs. Mates can browse Gatherings happening locally and by interest on the Meals with Mates online system. Mates can also chat in person with Hosts to design a Gathering that suits their interests. Hosts connect Mates with barrier busting help like transport, hairdressing or second-hand clothes in preparation for Gatherings.

5. Support Gatherings

Hosts liaise with partners to arrange what's needed for each Gathering: food, discounted deals, locations and materials that match Mates interests - like horror films or Italian speciality items. Hosts bring together these resources to host Gatherings and apply their training to facilitate lasting relationships between Mates.

Points of difference

Supporting new Gatherings

Existing meals services focus on food preparation and distribution - at a canteen or through home delivery. Meals with Mates focuses on supporting Hosts. Hosts then go on to co-ordinate food preparation and Gatherings themselves.

Widening options

At best, meal services provide a limited choice of venue and menu. At worst, they provide none. The distributed nature of Meals with Mates supports a wider choice over menu, venue, activity and the people you eat with.

Activating resources

Meals on Mates activates resources in the community - establishing partnerships with local businesses to support gatherings via in-kind donations, reduced prices and special offers. TAFE cookery students may provide assistance to Gatherings by working with Hosts and Mates to prepare yummy meals.

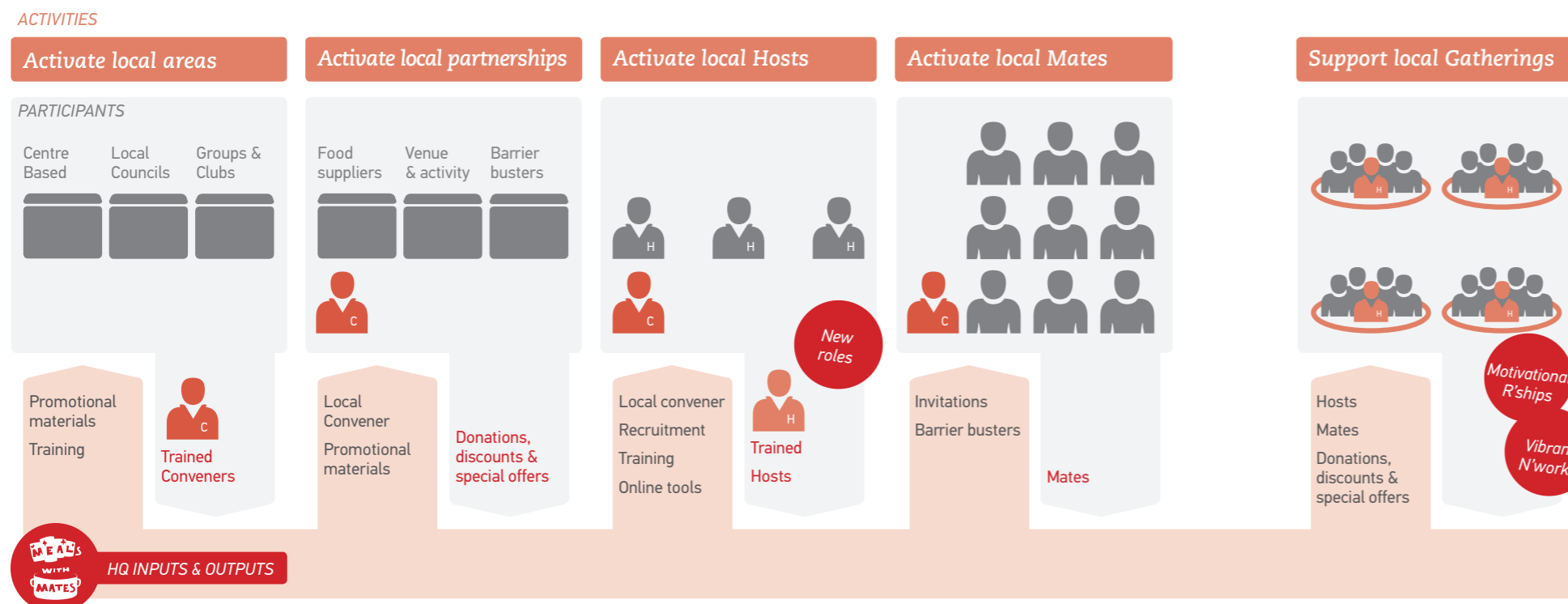
Busting barriers

Existing services do little to overcome the barriers many isolated people have to getting out of the house and meeting new people. Meals with Mates does - again by negotiating partnerships with local organisations that lead to reduced prices and special offers. Barrier busters may include a visit from a mobile beautician to overcome concern about appearance, carpooling, scooter rental, or borrowing furniture to host an event in the backyard.

Complementing existing meal services

Meals with Mates will establish co-branding partnerships at a regional and local level with key government, not-for-profit and private meal delivery organisations. Meals with Mates enables these organisations to give existing clients a new social offering, without the cost of having to run any new activities.

The Meals with Mates platform



Where to from here?

Things we know from co-design

The Meals with Mates concept is the result of two months of co-design with people in Salisbury and Unley. We learnt:

- People who lived alone were attracted to the offer of meeting like-minded people.
- Current meal delivery recipients liked the idea of having more choice over what they could eat, where, and when.
- Isolated people are attracted to Meals with Mates.
- People find the Convener role exciting, and would volunteer to do it.
- Local business were attracted to providing various kinds of support to enable Meals with Mates. They liked the multiple ways they could contribute.

Questions to answer next by prototyping

The next stage in the development of the solution is to build and run a small version of the Meals with Mates platform to answer the most important questions.

Questions to be answered through prototyping Gatherings:

- What make great Gatherings that build friendships?
- How do we best overcome barriers to participation?
- To what degree can we raise resources from local businesses and organisations?
- How do we best train and support Hosts?
- What frequency will meals be hosted?
- What will Mates pay to be part of Meals with Mates?
- Can existing organisations deliver Meals with Mates?

How you can help

We are looking to build the partnerships that would enable us to prototype Meals with Mates over a 12 week period. This would give us the time to develop interactions that could create change and identify the best systems to scale the solution.

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