

Choice and control.

Two things that people living with dementia are often denied.

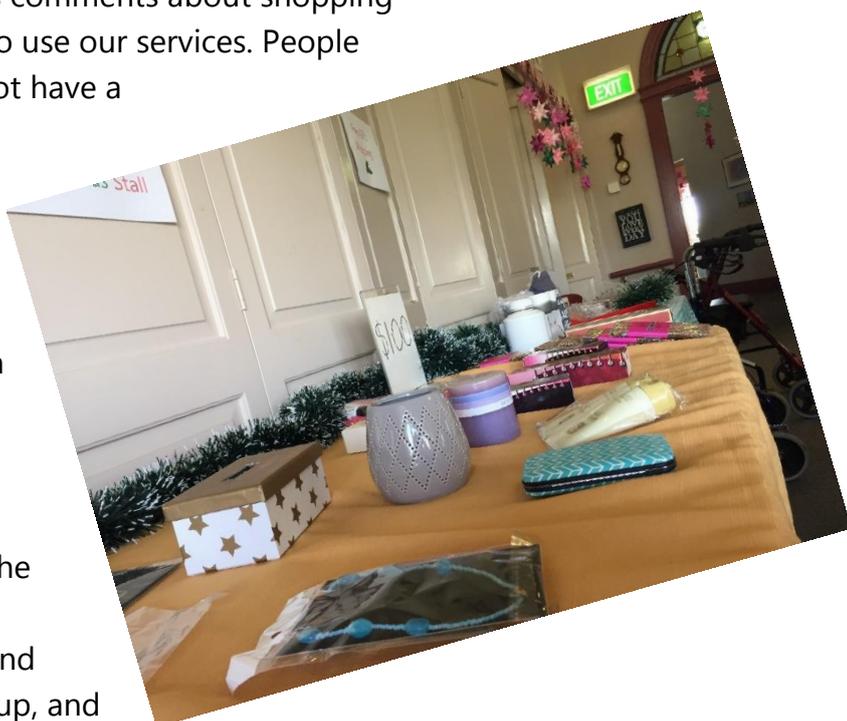
During a ladies' pampering session, one lady with younger onset dementia told us how wonderful it was to be with a group of girlfriends. She went on to tell us that many of her friends had dropped away after her diagnosis, and she missed the simple pleasures of shopping, chatting or having a coffee with other women.

The conversation then took a turn and we were discussing how difficult it was to go shopping when one must be accompanied by a male partner! Women and men typically shop in very different ways – and browsing was not something that this woman (let's call her Jane) was able to do anymore as she is always accompanied by her husband.

Caladenia's staff took this into consideration and came up with two innovative new additions to our programs.

As a staff we realised that Jane's comments about shopping applied to so many of those who use our services. People living with dementia often do not have a chance to shop independently of their families or partners; which makes buying gifts is mostly impossible. Buying gifts, surprising friends and family with that perfect gift is an activity that gives people so much satisfaction and joy.

So... we set up a Christmas Stall. We receive donations through the year, small things like soaps, ornaments, small knick knacks and handcrafted items. A sign went up, and



items were grouped in 50c, \$1 and \$2. A gift wrapping station was also set up, so gifts could be wrapped and a card written, ensuring that even if someone was unable to remember where they got the present – it was labelled and had a better chance of finding its recipient!

As an aside we have found that people want to pay their way. People don't want something for nothing. The experience is devalued if it is not a genuine shopping experience.

Many of those who use our service have taken beautifully wrapped gifts home to put under the tree. We have encouraged independence and allowed people choice and control over a small but important part of their lives.

The second program to grow from that original conversation was a ladies shopping trip. six ladies were invited and were accompanied by two staff. The day started with a coffee, followed by browsing through the shops at one of the smaller shopping centres. Some of the group had lists, and others were content to browse. After lunch the group visited a well-known local second hand shop to browse for bargains.

Jane was asked to have input into the day, and to give feedback at the end of it as it was her idea to start with. She was given choice and control, and was validated for her ideas. An increase in her confidence and self esteem has been evident in the subsequent weeks.