



# READING GROUPS

## HELP DEMENTIA PATIENTS RECAPTURE LOST MEMORIES

*In this report STEPHEN HARRIS looks at how reading poetry can help to counter the symptoms of dementia.*

Bundaberg Regional Libraries has initiated a shared reading program with dementia affected residents of the Bundaberg Gracie Dixon Respite Centre. This program draws on current

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research from the UK that has found reciting poems to dementia patients, and facilitating discussion afterwards, aids recollection and communication of memories. Additionally, it assists participants to counter dementia symptoms through building confidence and conversation with others in a social setting.

The program runs twice a week with up to 15 participants. Each session is conducted by a librarian and two aged care students over 45 minutes. Four short poems, with relatable content and themes, are distributed to participants on a single page handout. The poems are then read aloud with ensuing questions posed to stimulate discussion.

The capacity of this program to reach out and positively impact on those battling dementia is unmistakable. Recital of Joseph Tishler's *The Yachts of Hobart* brought to the surface personal stories of fishing trips, Tasmanian holidays, and the boat journey that brought one participant to Australia as a migrant from Italy. The conversations generated from this shared poetry reading attest to the richness of the program for participants and facilitators alike. 🌸

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