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## **Older generation gives back to Fairfield Hospital**

At 91 you would be forgiven for “hanging up your hat” but, not Ellen Dempsey, who has spent a number of years motivating Fairfield Hospital hip replacement patients.

The Bossley Park woman had her first hip replacement in 2000 and it was at her second hip replacement in 2005 when she met Fairfield Hospital Physiotherapy Acute Team Leader Minh Pham who was in charge of the Able and Stable falls prevention program.

“She invited me to come along and do exercises after my surgery as part of Able and Stable, a falls prevention program,” Ms Dempsey said.

“Doing those exercises after my surgery has definitely made me stronger; I’ve had no more falls. The program is proof exercise prevents falls.”

Ms Dempsey said she was always pretty active, having been dubbed “Fairfield Flash” because she was always walking at a pace with her children in tow.

“I was always on the go but I had a couple of silly falls. One was in Barber St, Fairfield at a roundabout which resulted in spinal surgery and another was in my kitchen at home when I tripped over a box,” she said.

“I got a lot out of those sessions with Minh. She is such a lovely lady and is really good at getting the best out of everyone.

“Once I’d finished much of my own program, Minh asked me to come back and motivate others, so I did and I’ve loved every minute of it.”

Twelve years on and Ms Dempsey still attends regular community Able and Stable sessions at Mt Pritchard Community Club to maintain her fitness.

“Nowadays, when I go to the doctor, they tell me how well I am. I put my good health down to my commitment to exercise and I can thank Minh for a lot of that.”

Ms Pham said Ms Dempsey was an integral part of the success of the Able and Stable program at Fairfield Hospital.

“Ellen participated and facilitated with orientating the new participants. She has been an inspiration and, was an important part of our attendance rates being so high, even when they ‘didn’t feel like it’,” she said.

The Able and Stable program at Fairfield Hospital is a multidisciplinary nine-week falls prevention program with a focus on balance and strength training.

The aim is to improve balance, confidence and reduce falls and falls-related injuries among participants and it has paid off, with a reduction in falls incidence by 60 per cent and an increased physical activity level by 50 per cent.