

Club 'about mates, not dates'

By KAROLINE TUCKEY

A club for singles to get together to get more out of single life is extending its reach to the Hutt Valley.

The SaRC club – which stands for Singles are Really Cool – began in Wellington in 2009, and has been steadily growing to include members from further afield.

Founder and director Hilary Combes says there are about 700 people associated with SaRC, and about 10 per cent of the social club's members call Lower Hutt home, a number she's keen to see grow.

She plans to hold more events here, and as local membership grows she hopes members will also begin hosting their own events here.

SaRC is different from other singles clubs in that the focus is on celebrating single life rather than providing opportunities to meet a romantic partner, Miss Combes says.

"SaRC challenges stereotypes that singles are sad, lonely and desperate for a date.

"Our members enjoy their single lives – we have some really cool people doing some really cool stuff."

Even though one third of adult New Zealanders are not in a relationship, being single can make you a square peg in a round



hole, she says. Entertainment and travel deals are often geared for couples, and going to the theatre by yourself just isn't as enjoyable, Miss Combes says.

There can also be pressure from family or friends to find a partner.

"We say 'it's about mates, not dates', and people really like that.

"People like the fact that they don't feel under pressure, they can just be themselves and they don't have to get dolled up, and we talk about the weirdest, waviest things."

The group has a wide range of ages and backgrounds, with "a mixture of those who have been single for a long time, those that

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Hilary Combes
founder and director

have just come out of a relationship and don't want to get back into one, people who are new to an area and people who are just looking for friends," she says.

Miss Combes organises eight social club events a month, from theatre and gallery visits to windsurfing and whitewater rafting and Sunday brunches, cafe visits and roast dinners.

SETS OF ONE:
Hilary Combes says people socialising in singles' clubs often feel more relaxed about being themselves, which makes for great company and great conversation.

A sub group within SaRC has also formed for members under 40, and Miss Combes is also working on a side project called Simply Social for people with partners who would like to join a similar social club.

The SaRC network also includes a blog and news relating to living as a single in the Wellington area.

Many good friendships have been formed through the club, Miss Combes says.

"We try to have something for everyone to get involved with and have lots of fun."

More information is available about SaRC at www.sarc.co.nz