



Marjorie McCarrick (85) and 'Mr Phoenix'. Looking on is Shirley Coops (87). Picture: Bruce Hunt

Spreading joy where he goes

EACH Wednesday, Mr Phoenix has a date with several women in Wanneroo. His weekly visit is eagerly awaited by the ladies – and indeed the gentlemen.

For Mr Phoenix is a nine-year-old, 65kg Newfoundland dog and his weekly call is to the residents of Regents Garden Residential Care Resort in Wanneroo.

The handsome dog and his owner Patrisha Ranson, of Quinns Rocks, have been visiting the care-of-the-aged facility for more than a year as part of

a voluntary pet therapy program for residents.

“His regular visits are eagerly anticipated by the residents and he always announces his arrival with a couple of loud woofs,” occupational therapist Rochelle Stalls said.

Rochelle, who initiated the visits through Animal Companions, a non-profit organisation, is convinced Mr Phoenix promotes improved physical, social, emotional and cognitive function, and generally enhances the quality of life of the people he visits.

She and Mr Phoenix are just one unit of almost 100 accredited volunteer teams in WA visiting people in nursing homes, hospitals, schools, prisons and other facilities.

Mr Phoenix, “daddy” of 10 recently born puppies, is kept on a strict diet by his owner, who is also a well-known Newfoundland breeder.

But on Sunday mornings he gets spoilt with hash browns, bacon and eggs.

Who said it's a dogs life?

Bruce Hunt