

AUGUST 2021

A newsletter for people
interested in overcoming
loneliness, particularly
in South Australia

Not Alone

EDITION 1

Welcome to a somewhat experimental 'newsletter' intended to help bring together current information relevant to efforts to overcome loneliness in South Australia.

This occasional update is shared with participants from an Overcoming Loneliness workshop held in March 2021 who indicated an interest in sharing emails and keeping in touch with each other. Others are able to join the email group by contacting Mark Henley at MarkH@unitingcommunities.org

The newsletter / update will probably be produced on about a quarterly basis and can be shared with anyone who may be interested. Feel free to share your own updates. Feedback is also appreciated about the topics covered and information included, in particular what is most helpful and what is least helpful?

Don't leave loneliness alone.



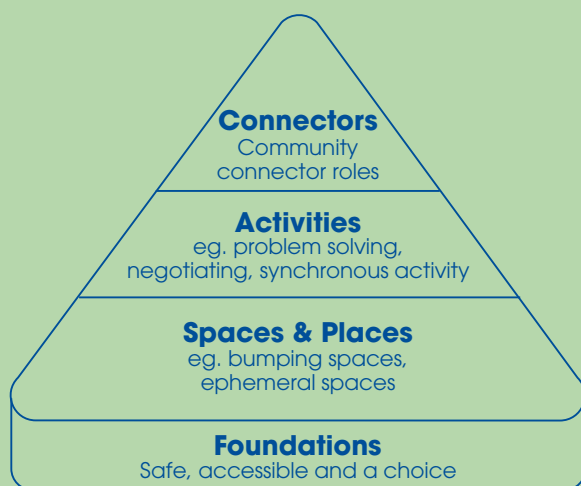


What's happening in Australia?

A model for considering response to Loneliness

To provide some focus for action orientated responses to loneliness, a two part schema for action is proposed that firstly recognises that the age groups reporting highest levels of loneliness and isolation are young people 18-25, people aged 50-55 and people over 75 years.

The second part of the schema is the Swinburne Social Innovation Research Institute (2020) Community Social Connection Infrastructure



Framework. (swinburne.edu.au/research/institutes/social-innovation/social-connection/)

This framework proposes 4 levels of response

The workshop indicated strong support for this framework, particularly the notion of "Connectors," people to help identify and 'connect' people who are unlikely to be able to overcome loneliness on their own.

Aged Care Royal Commission

There is quite a bit of discussion about social isolation in the Final Report and Recommendation 33 is specifically about overcoming loneliness:

Recommendation 33: Social supports category

"From 1 July 2022, the Australian Government should implement a social supports category within the aged care program that:

- provides supports that reduce and prevent social isolation and loneliness among older people
- can be coordinated to the greatest practicable extent in each location with services and activities provided by local government, community organisations and business designed to enhance the wellbeing of older people
- includes centre-based day care and the social support, delivered meals and transport service types from the Commonwealth Home Support Programme
- is grant funded."

This recommendation would appear to pick up the notion of "Connectors" and recognise the merits of providing funding to employ them. Please share your knowledge or experience in responding to this recommendation.

Ending Loneliness together - Australian National campaign

"We're a national network of organisations who have come together to address the growing problem of loneliness in people living in Australia."

<https://endingloneliness.com.au/>

What's happening in South Australia?



Community Centre's SA

Community Centres SA continues to have loneliness as one of their core areas of activity.

One of their actions is the Loneliness Cure Award.

They say "this award was created by us in conjunction with the Community Achievement Awards on behalf of Awards Australia, to tackle the growing epidemic of social isolation and to celebrate the power of community connectedness.

We are aware that there are so many organisations, groups and community centres that are fabulous at bringing the community together and creating connections that value, support and nurture a person's values, their voice and experiences. We recognise that your actions are helping to cure social isolation and The Loneliness Cure Award is part of us recognising your brilliant work."

Find out more at
www.communitycentressa.asn.au/the-loneliness-cure-2021

COTA SA's Connection Project

COTA SA is piloting a 'community connectors' program called COTA Social Connections.

We are using a peer volunteer model to support older people experiencing loneliness or isolation to strengthen their social connections.

As people age they are more likely to go through transitions and losses that impact on

their social connections and networks. These include retirement, loss of driving licence, death of partner, relatives or friends, illness or disability, or becoming a carer for a loved one.

These losses can leave people with a lack of social connections and supports. Creating new social connections provides the possibility of social interaction, enjoyment and new friendships while also pursuing personal goals such as fitness or giving back via volunteering.

Older people who would like support to identify and connect with opportunities can do this over a flexible amount of time with a peer volunteer. This project is funded by The Adelaide Primary Health Network to improve the wellbeing of older people after COVID.

For more information contact Rachel Telfer, Project Coordinator, COTA SA, rtelfer@cotasa.org.au, P: 8224 5510.

Loneliness and Isolation in SA – recent data.

Uniting Communities has been tracking the extent of loneliness and isolation in SA through regular surveys of 4 standard questions:

1. **How often do you feel lonely?**

2. **How often do you feel that you lack companionship?**

3. **How often do you feel left out?**

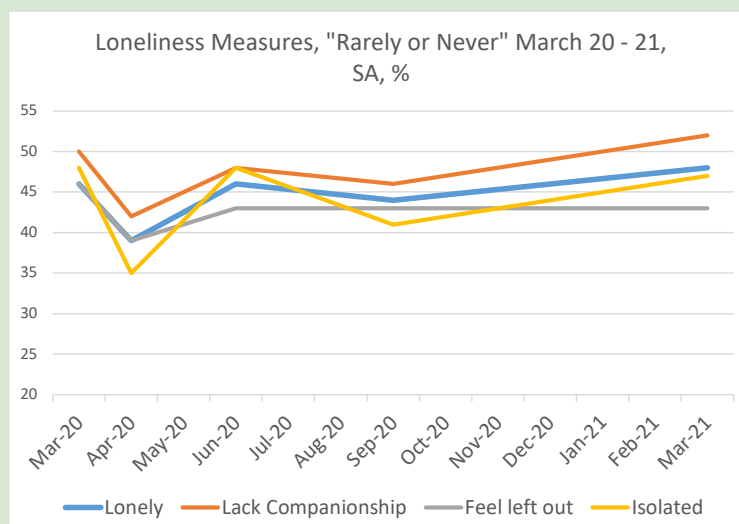
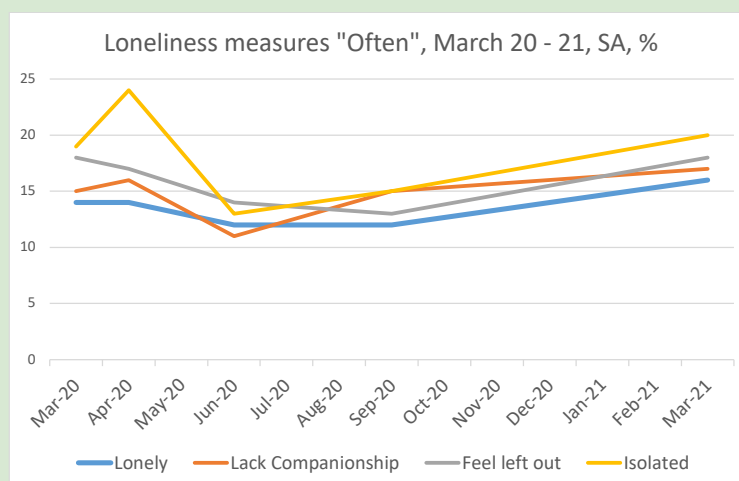
4. **How often do you feel isolated from others?**

Responses to all 4 questions can be “Hardly ever or never”, “Some of the time” or “Often”

The 5th survey conducted in late March 2021 reveals:

- Across most measures, the proportion of people experiencing loneliness feelings ‘sometimes’ has largely positively shifted to ‘hardly ever or never’.
- Though this trend was reversed in regional SA
- Three of the four measures, including “how often do you feel lonely?” had the highest response rate for any of the 5 surveys, that commenced in March 2020.
- Consistent with previous surveys, those with lower incomes are more likely to experience feelings of loneliness more often.

The following two graphs plot the responses for “Often” and “Hardly ever or never” for the 4 questions over the 5 surveys, March, April, June and September in 2020 and March 2021.





What's Happening beyond Australia?

Campaign to End Loneliness UK

One of the longer established national campaigns to overcome loneliness is out of the UK.

They describe themselves as follows:

"The Campaign to End Loneliness believes that nobody who wants company should be without it. Loneliness affects people of all ages and backgrounds and touches the lives of millions. It causes real emotional pain and can impact on physical and mental health. It has an economic cost – in the additional health and care services that are needed by people who are lonely, and the missed contributions that people who are unable to connect could make in their communities.

We work to ensure that:

1. People most at risk of loneliness are reached and supported
2. Services and activities are more effective at addressing loneliness
3. A wider range of loneliness services and activities are developed"

www.campaigntoendloneliness.org

Helen Clark Foundation, New Zealand

The Helen Clark Foundation is based in Auckland and has recently released a report exploring pandemic related loneliness in Aotearoa New Zealand, "STILL ALONE TOGETHER." The website summarises the report as follows:

"April 2021: Following on from our report on lockdown loneliness last year, Deputy Director and WSP in New Zealand Fellow Holly Walker has completed a 2021 update. The new report draws upon new statistics, and highlights the disproportionate loneliness felt by disabled people in Aotearoa New Zealand. The report also looks at how loneliness changed as the nation came out of Level 4 lockdown, and the progress made against the recommendations made in the original paper."

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KAJoLNde4EQgGfQfZYHvKhrff1pII8UP/view>

Reports and Resources

Noreena Hertz at Adelaide Writers Week, 2021

Noreena Hertz has written the book "The Lonely Century" that was released last year. Hon Professor Hertz was a video presenter at the Adelaide Writers Week this year and this link is to a recording of her presentation, its interesting viewing.

<https://soundcloud.com/adelaide-festival/thurs-4th-march-east-stage-5pm-the-lonely-century?in=adelaide-festival/sets/aww21-audio-guide>

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

The following link is to a summary about issues impacting older people, including isolation and elder abuse

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/d18a1d2b-692c-42bf-81e2-47cd54c51e8d/aihw-australias-welfare-2017-chapter5-1.pdf.aspx>

The Australia Institute

Ending Loneliness on Australia Institute TV, 19th May.

Loneliness is a significant public health and policy challenge, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Please join us for a conversation about how we can work together to end loneliness, as well as new research from the Helen Clark Foundation.

Presenters are Andrew Giles MP, Shadow Minister for Cities and Urban Infrastructure and co-Chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Ending Loneliness, Holly Walker Deputy Director of the Helen Clark Foundation and hosted by Ebony Bennett, Deputy Director, The Australia Institute.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ifshEtnqy0

Overcoming Loneliness in South Australia research report developed by Uniting Communities, November 2020.

Report available at www.unitingcommunities.org/loneliness

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www.unitingcommunities.org/loneliness

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