



SENIORS SOCIAL ISOLATION PEAK SERVICES PROGRAM

Seniors Social Isolation Provider Community of Practice (SSIP-CoP)

Minutes of Meeting – Loneliness Awareness Week 2025 Lunch & Learn

Date/Time	Thursday 7 August 2025 (12.00PM – 1.00PM)
Topic	The Heart of Community: Older Volunteers and Everyday Connectors
Location	Encircle Redcliffe Neighbourhood Centre and online via Zoom Join Zoom Meeting Meeting ID 852 8203 4729 Password 953845
Facilitator	Karen Wilson, Executive Officer, Seniors Social Isolation Peak Services Program, Council on the Ageing Queensland
Admin Support	Not available
Guest Speakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celsie Mead, Volunteer Champion, COTA Queensland • Chris Gemmill, Founding Member, Blokes Book Club, Moreton Bay • Kristie McKean, Community Project Officer, Volunteering Queensland
Recording	https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/vqf7hYXiNucfjeAmYleNNu26cYhM MgJ1B5xBslBSulV_k7FlhYpa2Kmi15sFkBuF.dl5QAQ-uKUofQV0F

Attendees – Guests (n = 1)

- Department of Families, Seniors and Disability Services and Child Safety: Jean Lagan, Principal Advisor – Strategy and Reform, Seniors and Carers, Community, Seniors and Carers,

Attendees - SSI funded orgs (n = 11)

Far North Queensland

- Cooktown District Community Centre, 60 & Better Program, Chanelle Oldaker, Program Coordinator, Cooktown District Community Centre
- Proserpine Intergenerational Storytime Program: Sue Evans-Atherton, Program Lead, Whitsunday Regional Council

North Queensland

- Life Without Barriers (Townsville): Stacey Eilers. Care Manager, Townsville & Surrounds, Aged and Community Care, Be Connected Program.

Central Queensland

- Barcaldine 60 & Better Program: Jean Williams, Program Coordinator. Barcaldine Regional Council

South West Queensland

- South Burnett Stronger Together: Deb Melvin, Seniors Community Support Officer, South Burnett CTC, Nanango.

North Coast

- MADCOTA Well Aged Services (Maryborough): Kylie Nitz, Project Coordinator, Maryborough and District Committee of the Ageing.

Brisbane & SEQ

- Connecting Seniors in Southern Downs and Lockyer Valley: Catherine Williams, STAR Community Services.
- Encircle Redcliffe Older Persons Action Program: Jenny Reid, Case Manager, Encircle Redcliffe Neighbourhood Centre
- Seniors Social Connection Service (Maroochy): Diana Bernard, SSCP Case Manager, Relationships Australia Queensland
- World Wellness Group (Brisbane): Ketaki Alate, Social Wellbeing (Healthy Aging) Program Coordinator, Older Persons Social Wellbeing Program
- YMCA Cannon Hill Seniors: Deborah Gliddon, Y-Care (SEQ) Inc

Statewide

- Men's Shed Cassowary Coast (FNQ), Etheridge (NQ), Longreach and Livingstone (CQ), North Burnett (North Coast), and Maranoa, Paroo and Murweh (SWQ): Frank Pearce, Regional Coordinator, Queensland Mens Shed Association (QMSA).

The above list may not represent all attendees, but information gathered from the Zoom meeting from those who put their details in the chat.

Discussion Points by Agenda Item

1	Welcome and Acknowledgements <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acknowledgement of Country (Gubbi Gubbi and Ningy Ningy peoples of the Redcliffe Peninsula).• Karen acknowledged the lived experiences of older people, including those with mental health challenges.• Karen welcomed everyone to the Loneliness Awareness Week edition of the Community of Practice.• Today's meeting was held at Encircle Redcliffe Neighbourhood Centre, co-hosted with Jenny Reid, Case Manager, Older Persons Action Program.	
2	Purpose of the Session <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Celebrate older volunteers and informal community connectors and acknowledge the important role they play in supporting others.• Karen and Jenny reported they'd attended the launch of a new initiative — the <i>Cancel Loneliness</i> campaign led by the <u>Band of Brothers in Redcliffe</u> (Moreton Bay) that morning, and shared some insights from the event.• The campaign tackles loneliness across all ages, encouraging community members, businesses, and workplaces to act as advocates.	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources: advocate packs and brochures guiding conversations and emphasising loneliness can be addressed ‘<i>one moment, one person, one conversation at a time</i>’. • Supports local initiatives: to reduce social isolation and complements programs like the Older Persons Action Program at Encircle Redcliffe Neighbourhood Centre and the National ‘<u>Ending Loneliness Together</u>’. • The campaign highlights the importance of local connections and offers practical tools to help people stay socially connected. <p>Learn more and view resources (including conversation starters): https://bandofbrothers.org.au/index.php/cancel-loneliness/</p> <p>See Article: https://bandofbrothers.org.au/index.php/2025/08/01/campaign-aligned-to-loneliness-week/</p>	
3	<p>Reflections from a Volunteer Champion – Celsie's Story</p> <p>A summary of key insights shared by Celsie is provided below.</p> <p>Tell us a little about yourself and how you first got involved in volunteering?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteering keeps me socially connected and enables me to help others connect within their communities. • Grew up on a remote CQ property in the 1950s–60s, one of five children, with limited social opportunities. • Social life included monthly country dances and Friday night movies, fostering community connections. • Parents were active in community: mother in CWA, father in school, church, and local sports. • Mother helped create the first autobiographic recipe book in their town, with proceeds supporting the community. • Credits her parents as role models and continues their legacy through volunteering. <p>In what ways has volunteering helped you or others you know stay socially connected?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteering helps me and other older people feel included, safe, and socially connected. • Served over 10 years as a Red Cross Telecross caller, often providing older people’s only daily social contact. • Volunteering brings personal fulfillment, purpose, and connection, especially after personal loss. • Work with colleagues who value older people’s contributions in society. • Runs the Seniors Program at local Neighbourhood Centre, fostering connection through social activities, guest speakers, and recently a book club. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly meetings encourage discussion, learning, and new friendships, helping reduce isolation and loneliness. <p>Through volunteering, have you formed any unexpected friendships or connections that have stayed with you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six years working with Karen, encouraging me to step outside my comfort zone and use my lived experience to advocate for older people. • Through engaging older people in conversation, identified barriers to social connection and explored potential solutions, while gaining knowledge to share within the community. • COTA's inclusive approach, valuing feedback and lived experience, supports personal and professional growth, fosters intergenerational equity, and strengthens friendship and collaboration. <p>Karen thanked Celsie for her contribution, noting she began volunteering through a Peer Navigator Pilot Program with Moreton Bay Library during the pandemic.</p> <p>Q&A. What keeps you motivated to volunteer? Celsie's response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bringing older people together, connecting them with programs and services where they feel safe, supported, and socially engaged. • Finding fulfillment and purpose in seeing participants benefit, build friendships, and return for further involvement. 	
4	<p>The Power of Community Connectors – Chris' Story</p> <p>A summary of key insights shared by Chris is provided below.</p> <p>Can you tell us a bit about yourself and what inspired you to start connecting with others in your community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moved to Brisbane and experienced severe loneliness after marital split and again after a brain injury forced early retirement. • Lost good friends over the years and struggled to establish social connections. • Joined a local church discussion group, forming a meaningful friendship that lasted four years until friend passed away. • Became a foundation member of a local men’s book club, organising meetings and books; the club now has 14–15 members and is growing, with discussions held monthly at the local library. • Participates in community activities to stay socially connected, including a council-supported cycling group, yoga, Pilates, and U3A card games. • Emphasised the importance of creating social opportunities for men and maintaining active engagement in the community despite personal challenges. 	

	<p>What kinds of things do you do to help people in your community feel more connected or supported?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organises a men’s book club that meets monthly and hosts a bi-monthly lunch at the local RSL, fostering social connection and support among members. • Maintains contact with members who are unwell or isolated, visiting them at home or in hospital to ensure they feel included and cared for. • Actively connects people with other community groups and activities, such as cycling, men’s shed, and online safety events, helping newcomers establish friendships and stay engaged. • His approach emphasises showing up, checking in on people, and linking them with supportive networks, creating an expanding web of social connections in the Redcliffe community. 	
5	<p>Q&A Summary</p> <p>Connectors like Celsie and Chris exist across the state in various networks and groups, but they can be hard to identify. They aren’t always outgoing and may even be introverted, and while many people act as connectors, finding them can be challenging.</p>	
6	<p>Seniors Volunteering and Volunteer Ambassador Program - Kristie McKean, Volunteering Queensland (VQ)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Seniors Volunteering Project was established following research into social isolation and loneliness among older Queenslanders. • The project aims to engage older Australians, who have a wealth of life experiences, in meaningful volunteer roles that allow them to contribute their skills and wisdom while building social connections and networks within their communities. • Volunteering provides both a sense of purpose and an opportunity to connect with others, particularly for those who are new to an area or socially isolated. • As part of the project, two pilot areas support Volunteer Ambassadors, seniors who act as community connectors. • Ambassadors assist potential volunteers by guiding them through the volunteering process, connecting them to suitable roles (including remote or home-based opportunities), and providing hands-on support as needed. They also engage with volunteer-involving organisations to raise awareness of opportunities and build partnerships. • The project additionally supports organisations with advice on volunteer management, recruitment, and communications, aiming to create inclusive, well-supported volunteer environments. 	
7	<p>Q&A Summary - Volunteering Queensland</p> <p>Volunteering Queensland provides tailored support for volunteers through “Get into Volunteering” sessions, covering the volunteer journey, role selection, screening, and benefits. They also offer online courses and “lunch and learn” sessions for organisations, with practical guidance available for anyone starting or navigating volunteering.</p>	<p>Volunteering Queensland – Volunteering Queensland</p>

	<p>Contact</p> <p>Kristie McKean, Community Project Officer. E: Kristie.McKean@volunteeringqld.org.au</p> <p>Kristie will be running a session in Hervey Bay on Monday 29 September for local SSI-providers.</p> <p>Kristie confirmed that, while the pilot is currently running in two areas, State Ambassadors based in Brisbane support queries from other locations. The project is gathering information to explore expanding into a broader statewide model, creating volunteering hubs across Queensland to connect volunteers with roles and support local volunteer-involving organisations.</p>	<p>Karen to send out details of VQ session.</p>
8	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday 17 September (2-3pm) via Zoom. Program Connection opportunity. 	

Prepared by

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