



SENIORS SOCIAL ISOLATION PEAK SERVICES PROGRAM

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

Minutes of Meeting No. 5 - 2025

Date/Time	Wednesday 19 November 2025 (2.00pm – 3.00pm)
Topic	Showcasing Programs & Activities among the SSI Providers
Location	Zoom Link Meeting ID: 844 835 1855 Passcode: yt4mXr
Facilitator	Karen Wilson, Executive Officer, Seniors Social Isolation Prevention Peak, Council on the Ageing (COTA) Queensland
Admin Support	Matthew Strachan, Admin Assistant, COTA Queensland
Guest Speakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life Without Barriers: Stacey Eilers, Care Manager, Townsville & Surrounds, Aged and Community Care Be Connected Program • Queensland Council for LGBTI Health Riley Naish (he/him), Program Officer, Gurambilbarra (Townsville) • Seniors Adventure Program: Chrissy Gilewicz, Community Development Worker, Port Douglas Neighbourhood Centre
Recording	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XY7WasiJCLg&list=PLVM0Mfv93IZ4WPbsPgvGiLQWwHT7lb_ZC&index=2
Apologies	

Attendees – Guests (n = 2)

- **Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety:** Jean Lagan, A/Manager, Strategy and Reform
- **Lockyer Valley Regional Council:** Neil Meiklejohn, Community Engagement Officer

Attendees – SSI Funded Orgs (n = 14)

Far North Queensland

- **Seniors Adventures Program:** Chrissy Gilewicz and Tracey xxxxxx, Community Development Workers, Port Douglas Neighbourhood Centre

North Queensland

- **Proserpine Intergenerational Storytime Program:** Sue Evans-Atherton, Project Officer, Whitsunday Regional Council

Central Queensland

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

South West Queensland

- **Somerset Seniors Connect: Program** Carole Labran, Communities Team, Tourism & Community Outreach Officer, Somerset Regional Council.
- **The Older Men's, Network (TOMNET):** Shannon Wade, General Manager, Toowoomba

North Coast

- **Noosa Seniors Connect:** Kenzo Sugawara, Community Liaison Officer, Noosa Shire Council


Brisbane

- **Bribie Island Seniors Wellbeing Service:** Michelle Swan-Ridel, Community Engagement Worker, Bribie Island Neighbourhood Centre
- **Older Women's Network Queensland Inc:** Niura Martinez Casas, Coordinator
- **Redcliffe Older Persons Action Program:** Jenny Reid, Case Manager, Encircle Redcliffe Neighbourhood Centre


South East Queensland


- **Ageing Gracefully Program:** Michelle Jaafar, Thriving Multicultural Communities (TMC) Gold Coast
- **Older Persons Action Program (Slacks Creek):** Katherine, Healthy Ageing Hub Coordinator, Kingston East Neighbourhood Centre

Discussion and Actions

	Topic and Key Discussions Points	Actions
1	<p>Welcome and Acknowledgements (Karen Wilson)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledgement of Country (Turrbal and Jagera peoples) • Acknowledgement of lived experiences. • Karen thanked Celsie Mead for her contributions to the 2025 Age Well Stay Connected events • Introduced Guest Speakers. • Joined by Department representative (Jean Lagan) and Lisa Rusten (COTA Queensland Director of Services). • Participants were asked to add their details to the chat for attendance purposes. 	<p>SSI providers to let Karen know if they are not listed under Attendees</p>
2	<p>Peak Updates and Highlights (Karen Wilson)</p> <p> Recording starts at 5.00 mins</p> <p>Karen provided brief updates on recent Peak activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age Well, Stay Connected Townsville Event (3/9/25) • Age Well, Stay Connected Longreach (10/10/25) • Visited Winton 60 & Better and met with members (8/10/25) • Delivered ageism workshop with Brisbane City Council at the Queensland Community Development Conference in Port Douglas (15/16 Oct). • Seniors Month presentation at Encircle Redcliffe Neighbourhood Centre (21 October) • Attended Australian National Loneliness Conference in Melbourne (6/7 November) 	<p>Karen to share reports from all Age Well Stay Connected events on SSIP Hub in Feb 2026</p> <p>Karen to also share key insights from National Loneliness Conference on SSIP Hub in Feb 2026</p>

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3	<p>Guest Speaker: Stacey Eilers, Life Without Barriers (Townsville) – SSI Provider</p> <p>Topic: Older People Experiencing Social Isolation</p> <p>Overview: Life Without Barriers delivers the <i>Be Connected</i> program, supporting older people (60+, or 50+ for First Nations) to stay socially connected, engaged, and confident. The program is person-centred, flexible, and 12 weeks long, including goal setting, individual and group activities, community events, and ongoing support from Care Coordinators and Support Workers. Partnerships with local organisations ensure complementary, not duplicated, supports.</p> <p>Participants: Those at risk of social isolation, including older men living alone, people over 80, those in rental or aged care, older carers, CALD communities, and residents in rural/remote areas.</p> <p>Program Approach: Guided by principles of empowerment, cultural respect, holistic care, and strengths-based engagement. Focuses on understanding individual stories, building trust, and taking small steps to foster belonging.</p> <p>Successes: Achieving goals that seemed out of reach (reconnecting with hobbies, attending events), building confidence and friendships, and creating smooth pathways for sustained connection beyond the program.</p> <p>Challenges: Complex barriers such as transport, cost of living, declining mobility, caring responsibilities, hesitancy to engage, and balancing high demand with program capacity.</p> <p>Key Messages: Connection is not one-size-fits-all; trust, patience, and listening are as important as action. Collaboration across services creates sustainable pathways for engagement.</p> <p>Reflections from Age Well Stay Connected: Importance of meaningful, safe, and welcoming activities; embedding older people’s input; small actions often have the biggest impact; and ongoing collaboration strengthens outcomes.</p>	<p> Recording starts at 26:11</p>
4	<p>Guest Speaker: Riley Naish, Queensland Council for LGBTI Health, Townsville</p> <p>Topic: LGBTI Seniors Visiting Service</p> <p>Overview: Riley runs the LGBTI Sister Girl and Brother Boy community visiting service, acknowledging the lands of members present and speaking on the program’s regional coverage and benefits of the <i>Age Well Stay Connected</i> event.</p>	<p> Recording starts at 38:59</p>

Topic and Key Discussions Points	Actions
<p>Participant Experiences: LGBTI Elders often face higher rates of loneliness and social isolation, and lower wellbeing, due to historical and ongoing discrimination. Their experiences can continue into aged care, home environments, and everyday social interactions.</p> <p>Program Approach: Funded through the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme, the program matches older LGBTI individuals with trained LGBTI volunteers. Weekly visits—such as coffee chats, walks, and storytelling—provide companionship, rebuild trust, reduce loneliness, and affirm participants’ value and belonging in the community.</p> <p>Impact of Age Well Stay Connected: The event increased visibility of older LGBTI people, fostered connections with allies and providers, and led to new referrals for the visiting service. Participants engaged with QC’s monthly morning tea, and ongoing partnerships (e.g., with Life Without Barriers) support sector-wide training and inclusive practice. Riley continues to follow up on actions arising from the event.</p>	<p>Website Queensland Council for LGBTI Health</p>
<p>5 Guest Speaker: Chrissy and Tracey, Community Development Workers, Port Douglas Community Centre (SSI Provider)</p> <p>Topic: Seniors Adventures Program</p> <p>Overview: The Neighbourhood Centre has run the <i>Seniors Adventures Program</i> for 12 months, engaging local seniors through monthly excursions to local attractions (e.g., Mossman Cultural Centre, Tablelands, Cairns Aquarium) on the third Thursday of each month. Trips are heavily subsidised (\$10 commitment fee), with program staff including Chrissy, Geoff, and Tracey providing a mix of guidance and intergenerational support. Participant input has strongly shaped the program.</p> <p>Challenges and Opportunities: Demand exceeds current capacity due to shuttle bus limits (10 people per trip), with a waitlist in place. A grant-funded loan vehicle will allow an additional four participants per month over 12 months. Plans are underway to expand weekly drop-in coffee and cake sessions, introduce a monthly “lunch with friends,” and improve facilities (air-conditioning for larger meeting spaces).</p> <p>Scheduling and Promotions: Participation is tracked to ensure fairness, with flexibility for individuals facing personal challenges. Events are not publicly scheduled to manage demand for popular activities.</p> <p>Successes and Highlights: Program momentum has increased, with positive community feedback, strong participation, and genuine friendships forming through social interactions.</p>	<p> Recording starts at 46.00</p> <p>Connection opportunities identified with Michelle Swan-Ridel, Sue-Evans Atherton and Naira Martinez Casas.</p> <p>Contact Details Christine Gilewicz, Port Douglas Community Service Network T. 07 4099 5518 Email: cdw1@pdnc.org.au</p>

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	Looking Ahead: The program aims to increase participant numbers, continue refining activities, and a loan vehicle will support this for 12 months, adding an extra 4 people a month to the activities.	
6	Q&A Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carole Labram, Somerset Seniors Program raised a question about involving more older men in programs. Chrissy said that male participation is increasing, and activities are promoted through men's breakfast club. They are keeping it informal, decks of cards, crib board scrabble etc, in the hope of identifying activities men may enjoy. Karen encouraged everyone to drop more questions into the chat, including contact details. 	 Recording starts at 57.35 mins Karen to upload insights from <i>Age Well Stay Connected Events</i> on engaging older men on the SSIP Hub in early 2026
7	Close and Date of Next meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider an informal catch-up before the end-of-year break (not progressed due to other priorities). Karen to circulate 2026 Community of Practice dates in mid-January 2026 	Karen to circulate 2026 dates in mid-Jan

Minutes drafted by Matthew Strachan, Administration Assistant/Program Support, Council on the Ageing (COTA) Queensland

Minutes reviewed and finalised by Karen Wilson, Executive Officer, Seniors Social Isolation Peak Services Program. Council on the Ageing (COTA) Queensland.

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Date finalised: 15 January 2026