



SENIORS SOCIAL ISOLATION PEAK SERVICES PROGRAM

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

Summary Notes from Training Workshop – May 2026

Date/Time	Monday 11 May 2026 (2-3pm)
Topic	Mental Health Essentials - fully funded by COTA Queensland through the Queensland Government funded Seniors Social Isolation Prevention Peak
Location	Online via Zoom Meeting ID: 583 023 7811 Passcode: 355755
Facilitator	Delivered by Nic Bloom Pty Ltd
Supported by	Karen Wilson , Executive Officer, Seniors Social Isolation Peak Services Program, Council on the Ageing Queensland
Attendees	<p>COTA Queensland (n = 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lisa Rusten, Director of Services • Marlene Levasseur, Aged Care Navigator (Care Finder) • Celsie Mead, Volunteer Champion <p>SSI Providers (n = 20)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aletia Twist – Mura Kosker Sorority • Alex Pitt - Hinchinbrook Community Support Centre - Seniors Service • Alex Whippy – The Neighbourhood Hub Mackay • Ben O'Rourke – Relationships Australia Queensland • Catherine Cates – Senior Social Connection Program (Maroochy) • Deb Melville – South Burnett Stronger Together • Frank Pearce – Queensland Men's Shed Association • Hayley Kiata - Acacia Ridge 50 and Better Program • Helen Fogarty – Winton 60 & Better Program • Isabelle Fabio - Bidgerdii Elders Social Engagement Program (BESEP) • Jackie Westaff - Hinchinbrook Community Support Centre • Jean Williams – Barcaldine 60 & Better • Jessica Samonte - Centacare – Disability Services – Active Lifestyles • Katherine Yu – World Wellness Group • Kenzo Sugawara– Noosa Seniors Connect • Kerri Anne Lynch – Ipswich 60 & Better • Rosie McCullough - Yeppoon Social Connection Program • Sally Fischer - East Creek Community Centre – Toowoomba • Sharon Curle - Hinchinbrook Community Support Centre - Seniors Service • Tenielle Jennings - Care Balonne Active Seniors Program <p>Unknown Attendees (n = 4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dana Warrior, MJ, Motorola G045G and Z. Davis

Discussion, Key Points and Actions

	Topic and Key Discussions Points	Actions
1	WELCOME AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	
1.1	Karen welcomed participants and introduced Nic Bloom. Karen noted that Nic had presented at the Australia's National Loneliness Conference, which she attended. Nic brings both professional expertise and lived experience, using a practical and interactive approach to learning.	Unknown attendees to confirm attendance
1.2	Acknowledgement of Country delivered by Nic Bloom	
1.3	<p>Why are we here today?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Recognising distress – Major signs and symptoms of concern, and appropriate response strategies <input type="checkbox"/> Communication skills – Verbal, body language, and attitude skills across in-person, online, and phone interactions <input type="checkbox"/> Self-care & boundaries – Prevent compassion fatigue and burnout with sustainable practices and boundary-setting skills <input type="checkbox"/> Post-workshop resources – Mental health and wellbeing support sent via email to reinforce learnings 	
2	MENTAL HEALTH ESSENTIALS	
2.1	<p>Recognising distress</p> <p>Major signs and symptoms of concern, and appropriate response strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People experience mental health distress may Isolate. • Changes in moods and emotional turbulence • Errors, accidents, and memory concentration issues • Physical health issues, feeling tired, sick, headaches, muscle aches, and pains • Sleeping a lot or barely sleeping at all • Moving slowly because of feeling flat and blue or moving quickly because of feeling agitated or in a rush • Lacking self-care and behaviour, conduct or attitude changes <p>The big signs and symptoms: noticeable changes to look out for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low mood, struggling or suddenly bright and bubbly. • Can be representative of them feeling suicidal, or they have a plan to end their life, or are relieved they'll no longer be a burden • They've pulled away from work, social groups or lost weight <p>What can you do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you notice a change, then bring up that change with them • Watch out for the little yellow flags and big red flags • Offer support and offer some intervention • Don't judge a book by its cover – enquire! 	

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<p>Communication skills Verbal, body language, and attitude skills across in-person, online, and phone interactions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills and considerations • If by phone, pay specific attention to their breath, tone and pace • Need to approach yourself first and understand how you are emotionally regulating <p>Emotional self-regulation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a person is depressed, they are generally stuck in past • If they are anxious, they are projecting into the future • To self-regulate, counter this with a mindfulness activity, breath work, or by observing the environment • Do something to burn energy, reset and get ready (e.g., swim in ocean) • Advice from a seniors paramedic: Hum a slow song. It slows down the mind, body and breath (e.g., somewhere over the rainbow, what a wonderful world) <p>Concept 1: Generous assumptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ben Crowe - The Imperfects • Ben Crowe • The Perspective Company • A generous assumption is when we assume the best in people and the situation. We assume they are doing the best they can, or there is a reason why they are suffering, or behaving in a certain way • It helps us humanise the other person. • It gives us a compassionate lens on humans. • <i>"When we change the way we look at things, the things we look at change (Wayne Dyer)</i> • Using "I" versus "you" language is important because it keeps the communication grounded in personal experience rather than sounding accusatory or blaming (e.g., "I feel...", "it's my experience...", "this is how it impacted me"). <p>Concept 2: Ask to ask and ask before offering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Ask to ask" means checking in first before going deeper or offering help. For example: <i>"Is it okay if I ask you a few questions about this?"</i> It gives the other person choice and control over the conversation. • "Ask before offering" means you don't assume someone wants advice or solutions. Instead, you first ask what they need. For example: <i>"Would you like some ideas, or do you just want to talk it through?"</i> 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This avoids putting on your hero cape. • Before you start the conversation, ask (e.g., <i>"would it be ok if ...?"</i>, <i>"would you like to...?"</i>, <i>"can we try ...?"</i>). • It ensures you get the person's consent and permission (e.g., <i>"hey is it alright if I ask you more about ..."</i>). Consent at the beginning and throughout. So, ask to ask, before asking questions. • Ask questions before offering your own ideas and solutions • It's all about empowering the individuals <p>Concept 3: Small, simple and one at a time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use questions that gently narrow the focus, such as: • <i>"Of all the things you've just shared, what is one thing that feels most important right now?"</i> • <i>"Is there one part of this that stands out for you?"</i> • <i>"What is one thing I can do to help you with that?"</i>. • <i>"What is one small thing we could do together right now to reduce some of that stress?"</i> <p>Scenarios and Discussion</p> <p>Nic presented two scenarios and attendees engaged in an active and constructive discussion.</p> <p>Scenario 1: Supporting Jack and self-regulation strategies</p> <p>Nic invited participants to explore strategies in preparation for supporting Jack, including self-regulation. Suggestions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practicing box breathing for one minute • Using grounding techniques • Preparation through background research • Speaking with Jack's friends or family (where appropriate) • Engaging the five senses to stay present • Making a cuppa to help ease the intensity of the conversation • Being clear on personal boundaries and referral options <p>Scenario 2: Self-regulation</p> <p>Nic facilitated a discussion on how we could support Jack in the moment, using different strategies. Suggestions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using calm, gentle and open-ended questions such as <i>"Would you like to tell me your story?"</i> and <i>"What has brought you here today?"</i> • If the person is known, beginning with a familiar or shared topic of interest to build rapport. • Using "I", "me", and "my" language to support connection and reduce defensiveness • Allowing space for the person to lead the conversation and identify their own solutions 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasising the importance of a calm, steady start to conversations, with gentle pacing. • Noting that strong engagement at the beginning of a conversation is important, as momentum is often established early and then maintained through supportive interaction. • Using open questions that empower the person rather than directing them. <p>Self-care & boundaries</p> <p>Due to time constraints, this topic was not explored in detail. Nic highlighted the importance of preventing compassion fatigue and burnout through sustainable self-care practices and healthy boundary-setting. The points below capture key discussion themes, plus some additional suggestions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognising personal limits and early signs of stress or fatigue • Setting clear emotional and professional boundaries in conversations • Using reflective practice to debrief and process challenging interactions • Taking brief regulation breaks (e.g. breathing, grounding, stepping away when appropriate) • Knowing when and how to seek support or escalate to supervision or referral pathways • Maintaining balance between supporting others and looking after your own wellbeing • Building small, consistent self-care routines that can be used during and after work • Being intentional about not carrying clients' experiences beyond the interaction <p>See '<i>Post Workshop Resources</i>' below.</p>	
3	POST-WORKSHOP RESOURCES	
	<p>Important Note! Some of the topics discussed during this training workshop may have felt difficult or emotionally challenging. If you would like additional support, please consider reaching out to the support and crisis services listed on the Queensland Mental Health Commission website.</p> <p>Post-workshop resources</p> <p>Nic forwarded some Mental health and wellbeing resources which have now been added to the SSIP Hub</p>	<p>Visit the SSIP Hub 'Resource Library'</p>

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4	FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES	
	<p>Further opportunities</p>  <p>Bespoke Workshops: Leadership, psychosocial risk mitigation, conflict resolution, boundary management, and more</p> <p>Speaking & Events: Keynote speaking, MC and hosting your workplace events or industry conferences</p> <p>Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training</p> <p>Learn how to better understand mental health challenges, practice de-escalation skills, and navigate difficult conversations with clarity</p>	<p>Submit an EOI</p> <p>See upcoming dates</p> <p>Scan QR code</p> <p>OR click this link, nicbloom15@gmail.com, www.nicbloom.com</p>
5	FEEDBACK FORM	
5.1	<p>To support the ongoing delivery of training programs, feedback is essential. Click on the QR code or link below.</p>  <p>OR click on Link to Form Here.</p>	<p>All attendees to complete the Feedback Form</p>
6	CLOSE	
6.1	<p>Karen thanked Nic for presenting and sharing his lived and professional experiences and providers for attending.</p>	

Prepared by Karen Wilson, Executive Officer, Seniors Social Isolation Peak Services Program, Council on the Ageing Queensland at: karen.wilson@cotaqld.org.au