Council on the Ageing
Queensland

SENIORS SOCIAL ISOLATION PREVENTION PEAK

Seniors Social Isolation Provider Newsletter — September 2026

Welcome

Welcome to the September edition of the Seniors Social Isolation Provider (SSIP) Newsletter. Supporting older people to stay socially connected is at the heart of everything we do. In this edition, we share sector updates, global news, community stories, grants and funding opportunities, and practical resources to support your work and help strengthen social connection for older Queenslanders.

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We hope you find this edition informative and inspiring as you read through it 😊

A Heartfelt Dedication

On behalf of Council on the Ageing (COTA) Queensland, I would like to dedicate this edition to the memory of Jodi Doe, who sadly passed away following a road accident in August. We honour her life and extend our deepest condolences to Jodi's family, friends and community.

I first met Jodi in 2019 through the Moreton Bay Interagency Network, during her time at Home Instead (now Dovida Brisbane North and Caboolture).

Over the years, I've had the honour of collaborating with Jodi on several projects and events across Moreton Bay. Through those experiences I came to know someone who brought genuine warmth, kindness and light into every space she entered. Jodi had a beautiful way of making people feel valued and connected, and her compassion and generosity left a lasting impression on so many who knew and loved her.

Jodi was an active member of the Moreton Bay Dementia Alliance and facilitator of the Bribie Island Dementia Chit Chat. May the warmth she shared with so many continue to live on in the hearts and memories of all those whose lives she touched and inspire our continued work to strengthen connection, belonging and community for older Queenslanders 💜

SSIP Peak updates

Looking Ahead: Community of Practice

Join us for the next Community of Practice on **Wednesday 23 September** from 2.00pm – 3.00pm. This month's theme is **Dementia and Mental Health Awareness**.

Guest speakers Lyn Buchanan, Community Development Coordinator, Somerset Regional Council and Associate Professor Melissa Taylor, Director, Southern Queensland Rural Health will be talking about **Ageing and Dementia Inclusiveness in Community.** COTA Queensland colleagues Lisa and Jocelyn talk about the funded **mental health and suicide prevention** programs they are leading, and resources under development.

Join the Zoom Meeting
Meeting ID: 826 9755 8292
Passcode: 665823

Final sessions for 2026.

- **28/10/26:** Housing and Homelessness
- **19/11/26:** Men's Mental Health & Wellbeing
- **16/12/26:** Reflection, Gratitude & Care

During 2026, attendance has averaged 15 providers, with access available to the recordings via the SSIP Hub.

Looking ahead to 2027, we want to hear directly from you about what support would be most meaningful for your service. Over the coming months, we'll be arranging 1-to-1 phone calls with you to hear your views and understand your needs. Our aim is to work alongside you to ensure every provider feels heard, respected and supported in a way that reflects their individual context.

SSIP Hub Accessibility

We want to make sure the SSIP Hub is easy and accessible for all providers to use.

Whether you use it regularly, occasionally, or haven't used it yet, we'd love to hear what would make it easier for you.

For example, would you prefer:

- One-to-one support or training
- In-person or online sessions
- Easier access on your mobile, tablet or computer
- Clearer guides or simpler ways to find information
- Another way of accessing or using the Hub that works better for you

Your feedback will help us understand what you need and make the Hub more useful and accessible.

I look forward to exploring this further with you all over the coming months.

Sector News

Seniors Month 2026

October 2026 is the 66th year of Queensland Seniors Month! From 1-31 October we're celebrating older Queenslanders and their ongoing contribution to the state, whether as volunteers or in the workforce, community leaders or carers, grandparents, or advocates.

Throughout the month community groups and organisations are hosting inclusive events and activities throughout the state.

Seniors Month is all about increasing the social connectedness of older people and their communities because we all want to be:

- **Connected** to our communities and the important people in our lives.
- **Cared for** and supported if care and support are needed.
- **Celebrated** as valued community members.

Get Involved in Queensland Seniors Month!

Discover what's happening, explore the Events Calendar or register your own event: https://qldseniorsmonth.org.au/

The **Amplification Kit** has now been released and is also up on the website.

International Day of Older Persons 2026

Queensland Seniors Month begins on the United Nations International Day of Older Persons (1 October).

COTA Queensland plays a significant role in celebrating the International Day of Older People on October 1st each year.

In 2026, the theme for this day will be "*The Age of Longevity: Rethinking Systems for Longer Lives*" focusing on how policies can ensure that longer lives are healthier, more productive, financially secure and lived with dignity.

COTA Queensland will continue to advocate for policies and services that improve the quality of life for older people and will coordinate events and activities throughout the state to support this observance.

For more information about COTA Queensland and IDOP 2026, subscribe to our Newsletter, or follow us on Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn.

#OlderPersonsDay #IDOP2026 #InternationalDayOfOlderPersons

Intergenerational Connections

Connecting older Queenslanders and students to support wellbeing, social inclusion and meaningful engagement?

At our February Community of Practice, we were joined by Julie Anderson, Project Lead, The Gateway to Industry Schools Program.

They support 68 schools across Queensland and partner with over 300 industry organisations to expose students to diverse career pathways within community services and other sectors. Students gain exposure to real-world experiences and potential careers in the community sector.

Are you interested in exploring intergenerational activities, bringing together older people and students?

Benefits for older Queenslanders

- Reduce social isolation and foster emotional connection and shared purpose
- Opportunity to share life stories and career experiences
- Feel valued and included in the community
- Access to technology support
- Improved overall wellbeing

Benefits for students

- Develop communication skills and adapt to different styles
- Build emotional intelligence, problem-solving, and employability skills
- Gain experience in following through on commitments
- Exposure to diverse career paths and practical work experiences (e.g., administration, meal preparation, gardening, maintenance)

You are invited to participate at a level that suits your capacity.

For a list of school locations see:
Community Services Gateway Schools

More Information
Contact Julie or Joy

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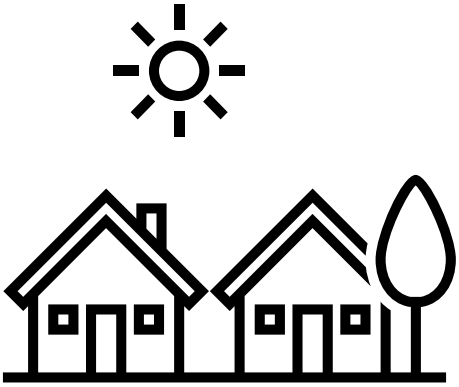
0439 629 596 or Julie.anderson@nds.org.au

Joy Collins, Project Assistant,
Joy.collins@nds.org.au



Know Your Weather, Know Your Risks

The Bureau of Meteorology's annual public safety campaign, **Know Your Weather, Know Your Risk** ran from 24 August to 27 September 2026.

The campaign focused on a different weather hazard each week and aimed to help Australians better understand severe weather risk and prepare for the high-risk weather season. For example, did you know a heatwave isn't just one hot day?

The **Bureau of Meteorology** looks at both day and night temperatures over a few days to work out just how much heat stress a heatwave might cause, and issues warnings up to 4 days ahead, with forecasts covering the week ahead.

What can you do?

- Learn how heatwaves are classified via the BOM Heatwave Knowledge Centre
- Download the free BOM Weather app and turn on warning notifications
- Check in on friends, family or neighbours during hot spells.

Want to learn more?
https://www.bom.gov.au/resou.../learn-and-explore/heatwav...

Just a bit of useful know-how for the warmer months ahead.

Global News

Greater Manchester Ageing Hub

New video: Supporting older people through everyday conversations about resilience

The Greater Manchester Ageing Hub has partnered with Talking About My Generation, an older people's-led newsroom, to produce a new short film exploring what resilience means in later life and why it matters as the UK face more frequent and severe weather events, including heatwaves, cold weather and flooding. Through the voices of older people, the film highlights the challenges some people face and the strengths, knowledge and community connections that help people adapt and respond.

The film is aimed at frontline staff working across health, social care, housing and the VCFSE sector, encouraging them to consider how informal, person-centred conversations can help older people prepare for disruptions, understand available support and stay connected to their communities.

Alongside the video, staff can access practical resources, including the **Talking About Heat and Cold Weather Conversations toolkits**, which provide guidance on communicating extreme weather risks with older people and improving organisational preparedness.

Watch the film and **explore the supporting resources** to consider how everyday conversations can help build resilience in later life

Visit the Ageing Hub to learn more! https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/equalities/ageing-hub

Making Space for Connection: Across Ages and Abilities

West House in Cumbria, North West England, is the leading care and support provider for adults and children with learning disabilities. Their vision is to support people to live a fulfilling life, in the way they want and with the support they choose.

Their enterprises: Grow West, West House Pottery, Café West and Hall Garden provide meaningful training and employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities, while creating welcoming community spaces where everyone can participate, connect and belong.

During a trip to West Cumbria in August, I visited Hall Garden, set within the historic grounds of Workington Hall. The brainchild of Operations Director Lesley Reid, it offers a place to meet, eat, learn and create, bringing people together through its family-friendly café, beautiful gardens, handmade pottery and locally produced gifts.

Hall Garden is much more than a place to visit. It is a social enterprise where people with learning disabilities across all ages can develop skills, confidence and independence through meaningful work and training. And I think there is another important lesson here.

- Social connection can be designed into our communities.
- A garden creates a reason to meet.
- A café creates space for conversation.
- Shared activities bring different generations together.
- Meaningful participation creates purpose and belonging.

People aren't necessarily coming because they've been identified as socially isolated. They're coming for breakfast, coffee and cake, to explore the gardens, browse the pottery or spend time with family. Connection happens along the way.

This is particularly important as our populations age. An age-friendly community shouldn't simply be one that works well for older people. It should be one where people of all ages and abilities can participate, contribute and belong, with opportunities for intergenerational connection to happen naturally.

These everyday interactions can challenge assumptions, reduce stigma and discrimination, build understanding and strengthen the social fabric of a community.

The most connected communities aren't necessarily those with the most programmes. They're the ones that create everyday opportunities for people to meet, contribute and build relationships.

Hall Garden is a wonderful example of how this can happen organically, through a garden, a family-friendly café, creativity, meaningful work and an invitation to spend time together.

Photo by West House. Hall Garden, West Cumbria

State of Ageing Spotlight: Older LBGTQ+ people

Centre for Ageing Better's new State of Ageing Spotlight addresses the invisibility of older LGBTQ+ people in their data and in discussions about the ageing population. The number and percentage of older LGBTQ+ people in England has increased significantly over the last ten years, and numbers of older LGBTQ+ people are set to increase further. Many older LGBTQ+ people have played a vital role in social justice movements, yet often remain overlooked in policy and practice as they age.

This spotlight examines the inequalities they can face in later life, across housing, work, finances, health, care and community connections, indicates how these experiences are shaped by decades of discrimination and sets out recommendations for policy and practice.

For more information

https://ageing-better.org.uk/resources/state-of-ageing-LGBTQ-spotlight

Photo by Karen. Canal St Manchester

Pride, Connection & Belonging

What can Manchester Pride teach us about social connection?

Manchester Village Pride 2026 is a celebration of LGBTQIA+ culture, creativity and community. The event brings together music, performance, spoken word and entertainment, filling the Village streets with colour, energy and a strong sense of community.

For LGBTIQA+ communities, connection can be particularly powerful, creating spaces where people feel seen, accepted, safe and able to be themselves.

The theme for the 2026 parade was "No Place Like Home", drawing on *The Wizard of Oz* and reflecting a homecoming and return to Pride's community roots in Manchester's Gay Village.

Being back in Manchester and attending the reimagined **Village Pride 2026** brought this to life. What stood out was not only the colour and energy of the event, but the way the community came together after the previous organiser collapsed in late 2025. Community organisations, charities, volunteers, businesses and organisations joined forces to make it happen.

Pride is about more than celebration. It is about **visibility, dignity, safety, connection and belonging**.

Seeing organisations across Manchester visibly demonstrate inclusion was a powerful reminder that creating welcoming communities is everyone's responsibility.

As allies, turning up, listening and standing alongside LGBTIQA+ people matters. People don't just need services, they need belonging.

Truly connected, age-friendly communities must also be inclusive communities where everyone feels safe, valued and belongs 💜

Photo by Karen W. Canal Street Manchester

Photo by Karen W: Embracing the '*No Place Like Home*' theme.

Community Stories

Housing that Creates Connection: An Unexpected Find in Chester UK

A lovely, unexpected discovery during a day trip to Chester in August to connect with a former work colleague from the City of Moreton Bay.

While exploring the city, I happened upon Belong Chester, a not-for-profit organisation located close to the railway station that aims to improve the lives of older people through high-quality care, accommodation and community-focused support, including opportunities for intergenerational connection, while continually reinvesting in new ideas and technologies to enhance their wellbeing and quality of life.

Belong has created a vibrant, community-focused environment where older people can live independently or access different levels of care, including nursing and dementia care. Alongside this, the village has spaces designed to bring people together, including a bistro, salon, gardens, creative spaces and even an intergenerational nursery.

I was particularly struck by Belong's philosophy of connecting generations and making the village an active part of the wider community, rather than a place separate from it.

Through strong partnership working, intergenerational experiences are woven into everyday life.

From multi-generational choirs, shared walks along the canal, storytelling, dance workshops, gardening and shared meals, these simple yet meaningful activities create opportunities for people of all ages to connect, learn and enjoy life together.

As someone who works in the seniors social connection space, it was a fascinating and inspiring find, especially as I stumbled across it completely by chance while taking a much-needed wellbeing day.

Sometimes, the best inspiration comes when you least expect it.

Read more about Belong Villages at:
https://www.belong.org.uk/

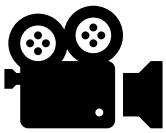
Learning & Development

Words Matter

"... But names can surely hurt you"- How ageism language affects older people

Last week, the **Elder Abuse Action Australia's** Lunch & Learn, "Words Matter," brought together Emeritus Professor Roland Sussex and COTA Queensland's Senior Policy and Research Officer, Stephanie Power, to unpack ageist language and its real impact on older people.

The language we use about ageing and older people can quietly reinforce stereotypes and shape attitudes, often without us even noticing. The session explored the words and expressions that reinforce ageist attitudes, both covertly and overtly, as well as the connection between ageist language and the abuse and mistreatment of older people.



Thank you to everyone who joined us live. If you missed it, or want to revisit the discussion, the recording is now available to watch.

A big thank you to EAAA for including us.

https://eaaa.org.au/event/but-names-can-surely-hurt-you/...

#EAAA
#WordsMatter
#COTAQld
#AgeismAwareness

Help shape the future of grief support

- Are you aged 60 or older?
- Have you experienced the loss of someone close to you?
- Are you currently supporting someone who is nearing the end of life?

QUT and People Tech Revolution are seeking participants for Brisbane co-design workshops exploring **Grief Guide, an AI-supported app** being developed with older Australians.

Share your experiences, ideas and feedback about what would make this tool helpful, compassionate and accessible.

Participants will receive light refreshments and a $25 gift card as a thank you.

Choose one workshop to attend:

- Friday 16 October, 10am–12pm
- Monday 19 October, 11am–1pm

Workshops will be held at the COTA Queensland office in Brisbane.

Read more and register your interest: **https://events.humanitix.com/grief-guide-workshop-co...**

#GriefSupport #COTAQld #OlderAustralians #CoDesign

Artificial Intelligence (AI), Connection and Loneliness

You are invited to the next QCOSS Social Isolation and Loneliness Community of Practice, exploring the benefits and risks of AI tools like ChatGPT in how people seek connection and support, and what it means for practitioners working with people experiencing isolation and loneliness.

You'll hear from researchers and practitioners working at the intersection of AI, mental health and connection, including perspectives on why people are turning to generative AI chatbots for support, how emerging technology can be used to empower people and improve wellbeing, and the ethical questions this raises for practice.

Date: 29 September 2026
Time: 12:00pm–1:00pm
Where: Online via Microsoft Teams

Register: Community of Practice: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Connection and Loneliness - QCOSS

Feel free to share with anyone in your networks who might be interested!

Grants & Funding Opportunities

Seniors Month Grants 2026

The Queensland Government is committed to building age-friendly communities where older people are connected to their community and the people and the services that matter to them; they are supported by world class frontline services when support is needed, and they are celebrated for the contribution they make as carers, workers, volunteers and community leaders.

The Queensland Government partners with Council on the Ageing Queensland to deliver the Age-friendly Seniors Month Grant Program.

In 2026, 12 organisations received funding through the program to deliver initiatives in their local community that work towards an age-friendly Queensland.

All successful grant recipients have now been notified!

See: List of 2026 Grant Recipients

A heartfelt thank you to **everyone who took the time to apply** and share their ideas for creating more connected, inclusive and age-friendly communities for older Queenslanders. We appreciate the commitment and passion reflected in every application.

Aurizon Community Giving Fund

Founded in 2011, this Community Giving Fund provides grants of up to $20,000 to eligible charities across our areas of operation. The Fund has helped over 720 charities with support for projects delivering benefits to local communities in the areas of health and wellbeing, community safety, environment and education.

Read the Guidelines

Aurizon Community Giving Fund Guidelines

YouTube Video
https://youtu.be/GfOCZW1uiTc?si=5T0XcRQiOhcZ3FXm

Community stories

Applications are now open and will close on **Friday 16 October 2026 at 5pm** AEDT.

See: Eligible Grant Locations

For further information

https://www.aurizon.com.au/sustainability/community/community-giving-fund

Resources & Tools

Inspire, Connect and Age Well: A Resource for Multicultural Seniors

The Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland (ECCQ) has released *Inspirational Cards to Keep Ageing Well*, a resource designed to engage older people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds with positive messages about ageing and aged care.

The deck includes 20 cards that encourage conversations about wellbeing, independence, social connection, and accessing support. The cards also recognise the experiences, cultures, and ongoing contributions of older people.

Cards can be ordered through the ECCQ aged care resources website while stocks last. They can be used as conversation starters, engagement tools, or gifts in community, aged care, and health settings.

ECCQ would welcome the opportunity to connect with any SSI providers working directly with multicultural seniors. For further details email: mp@eccq.com.au

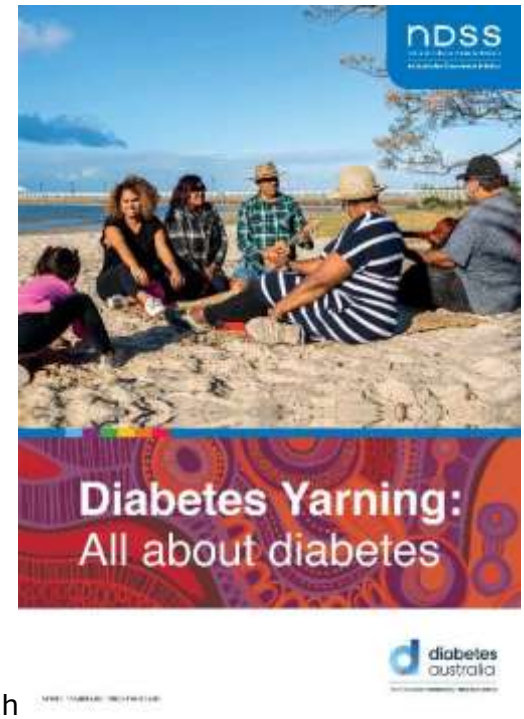
Diabetes Yarning - NDSS

The Diabetes Yarning - All About Diabetes booklet was developed in collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals throughout Queensland and provides information about diabetes.

Information presented in this booklet will provide a foundation for the reader to continue their personal health journey through registering with the NDSS; talking to their local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker or Practitioner, attending workshops, conducting independent research or having discussions with family, friends and community.

Health and wellbeing are closely connected to social connection and a sense of belonging. Resources such as this can support conversations with health workers, family, friends and community, helping people feel informed, supported and connected throughout their health journey.

Interested in finding out more? Click on the image below.



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Events & Key Dates

Queensland Mental Health Week 2026
Build Community, Build Wellbeing

Queensland Mental Health Week (QMHW) runs from Saturday 3 October to Sunday 11 October 2026.

Every year, Queenslanders come together through local events, conversations, and activities to celebrate the importance of positive mental health and wellbeing.

QMHW is a chance for all of us, regardless of our personal experience with mental illness, to reflect on our mental health and the role it plays in everyday life. How we think, feel, and act. How we handle stress, connect with others, and make decisions.

The week coincides with World Mental Health Day on 10 October, observed by communities around the world.

QMHW is funded by the Queensland Government through the Queensland Mental Health Commission and coordinated by the Queensland Alliance for Mental Health (QAMH), in partnership with organisations and communities across the state.

This year's theme, **Build Community, Build Wellbeing**, is an invitation to move beyond awareness and into action. To celebrate the everyday moments of connection that help people feel valued, supported, and like they belong. Because when we Build Community, we Build Wellbeing for everyone.

Get Involved!
https://qldmentalhealthweek.org.au/

Dementia Action Week

21-27 September 2026

Dementia is Australia's leading cause of death, but it's not talked about nearly enough. Almost half a million Australians are living with dementia today and over 1.7 million people are involved in their care.

This Dementia Action Week, we're asking every Australian to help change that, one conversation at a time.

Get Involved!

https://www.dementia.org.au/get-involved/dementia-action-week

Download the Toolkit

https://www.dementia.org.au/your-digital-toolkit

LGBTIQA+ Resources

LGBT+ people and dementia: information, resources & support | Dementia Australia

Add Your Own Photo
This is my why - add your own photo

Further Information & Support
https://www.dementia.org.au/

National Carers Week 2026

National Carers Week | 11 - 17 October 2026

National Carers Week is a time to recognise, celebrate and raise awareness of the more than 3 million Australians who provide unpaid care to a family member or friend.

The 2026 theme, "*Care for a carer: Making carers visible*" shines a light on the invaluable contribution of unpaid carers and encourages all Australians to recognise, support and care for the carers in their families, workplaces and communities.

National Carers Week is an initiative of Carers Australia, funded by the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, and coordinated with the assistance and participation of the National Carer Network.

Learn more about National Carers Week

https://carersweek.com.au/about/

National Loneliness Conference

Ending Loneliness Together is hosting the 2026 National Loneliness Conference on 21–22 October in Melbourne.

This year's theme is *Creating a Culture of Connection Across the Lifespan*.

Hear from leading researchers, practitioners, community leaders and people with lived experience, as they explore what's working, share learnings and discuss where to next.

Day 2 of the Conference includes four streams run in parallel, including Stream 3 - *Staying Connected in Later Life*.

This year features specialised pre-conference workshops and Day 1 will include announcing the winners of the inaugural *Creating a Culture of Connection Awards*, celebrating research and community action across Australia

Explore the Program and Register here

Early bird registrations are still open!

I'll be attending the conference to learn from sector leaders, share ideas and bring back insights and practical learnings that can inform our work.

Key Dates in October 2026

- **1 Oct** — International Day of Older Persons
- **1-31 Oct** — Queensland Seniors Month
- **3-11 Oct** — Queensland Mental Health Week
- **5-11 Oct** — Get Ready Queensland Week 2026
- **11-17 Oct** — National Carers Week
- **10 Oct** — World Mental Health Day
- **19-25 Oct** — Get Online Week

Share a Good News Story!

What's happening in your community that you're proud of?

We love highlighting the amazing work happening in your communities! From creative activities and successful programs to meaningful connections, volunteer contributions and moments that have made a real difference to older people.

Your SSI service strengths, achievements, successes and inspiring moments can help showcase what's possible and inspire other providers across Queensland.

📷 **Send us your story, photos or highlights** and help us celebrate the people, programs and ideas making a difference in our communities.

Email: karen.wilson@cotaqld.org.au

Connect With Us

Have questions or ideas? We'd love to hear from you! Reach out and let us know how we can help.

Contact

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Next Edition

🔔 December 2026

Thank you for taking the time to read this edition of the SSIP Newsletter!