Community Conversation

Understanding the Impacts of

Loneliness and Isolation
WHAT IS A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

• Community conversations provide a safe place where people in our community can come together to talk about their aspirations, concerns and how they want their community to move forward.

• The typical community conversation has about 8–15 participants and lasts anywhere from 90 minutes to two hours.

• We base our approach on The Harwood Institute model and we have been leading these conversations for over 10 years.
## PUBLIC VERSUS EXPERT KNOWLEDGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPERT KNOWLEDGE</th>
<th>PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expert knowledge comes from expert or professional analysis. It often includes data, demographic and market studies, evidence-based decision making and best practices. It is usually presented in expert or professional language</td>
<td>Public knowledge comes only from engaging in conversation with people in a community. Only the people within the community themselves can tell us their aspirations, concerns and how they see different facets of their community. It is usually in plain language that everyone can understand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHAT PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE HELPS US TO DO

- Understand the context of people’s lives
- Focuses our work and decisions in what matters to people
- Identify key issues of concern to people in language that people themselves use
- Uncover and generate a sense of common purpose for action in the community
- Set realistic goals for moving ahead and making change
- Make one’s work more relevant and more impactful within the community
EXPERT KNOWLEDGE

Loneliness;

- is as harmful as smoking 15 cigarettes a day;
- is worse for a person's health than obesity;
- increases the risk of early death by up to 32%.

Source: Brigham Young University, Utah in the United States, 2017

- Australian Red Cross says that their research and practice indicates that half of Australians experience loneliness
DEFINING LONELINESS AND ISOLATION

• Social isolation is a term often used interchangeably with loneliness, but while the two are closely related, they do not necessarily mean the same thing.

• While the terms may have slightly different meanings, both can be painful experiences and have a harmful impact on the individual.
SOCIAL ISOLATION

• Social isolation describes the absence of social contact and can lead to loneliness. It is a state of being cut off from normal social networks, which can be triggered by factors such as loss of mobility, unemployment, or health issues.

• Isolation can involve staying at home for lengthy periods of time, having no access to services or community involvement, and little or no communication with friends, family, and acquaintances.
LONELINESS

- Loneliness has been defined in different ways.
- A common definition is “A state of solitude or being alone”.
- “Loneliness is not necessarily about being alone.
- Instead, “it is the perception of being alone and isolated that matters most”
- Loneliness is a State of Mind
WHO IS MOST VULNERABLE?

- While loneliness can impact anyone at any time, some factors put people at higher risk.

- The feeling of loneliness is often brought on by social isolation, however this isn’t the only risk factor. Others include:

- **Living alone.** A quarter of Australians aged over 65 live alone, including *almost a third of women aged over 65*.

- **The recent death of a loved one.** The *death of a family member*, spouse, pet or someone who lived in the same house, may trigger feelings of loneliness.

- **Health issues.** *These can be disruptive to regular routines or leave a person housebound and immobile.* Losing independence can often precede loneliness.

- **Rural and urban living.** In rural areas, *long distances and reduced mobility can become a contributing factor to loneliness* as people age. In urban areas, a high turnover of residents can lead to a loss of community and connectedness.
A FEW FACTS

• This region is 899 sq kilometers.
• There are 759 per 100,000 alcohol attributable hospitalisations, higher than the NSW rate (672 per 100,000).
• Total population of 920,000.
• Almost 16% of population are aged 65+.
• In greater Sydney the average of lone households is 20.4% of the population.
• Northern Sydney the average is 32.4%.
• Northern Beaches is 20.7%.
• Ryde is 22%.