

27 May 2021

**Media Release**

**Overcoming Loneliness through Connection**

The Mental Health Council of Tasmania (MHCT) has today released a report detailing the experience of older Tasmanians during the COVID-19 pandemic. The report is informed by consultations with a range of leaders from peak bodies, service providers and government, and a number of older people across Tasmania. During the discussions, older Tasmanians raised a number of issues that impact their mental wellbeing.

One of the most common experiences raised was social isolation and loneliness, which was compounded under COVID-19 restrictions. Social isolation was especially prevalent for older people living in communities with significantly reduced social engagement, and those in residential care due to many facilities being in protracted lockdown conditions.

MHCT CEO, Connie Digolis, said, "We know that the pandemic has had a significant impact on older Tasmanians, with the restrictions meaning many missed out on the social interaction they rely on to maintain their wellbeing. Also, many older Tasmanians have limited or no access to the technologies that many of us relied upon to stay in touch with friends and family during the lockdowns."

Based on feedback from service providers and older Tasmanians, the MHCT report presents 10 opportunities to support better mental health and wellbeing outcomes for older Tasmanians. One of those opportunities is to facilitate connection with young Tasmanians.

Latrobe High School has a program underway that provides this opportunity for connection, bringing students together with older members of the local community. The program is supported by a recent community grant that was facilitated by MHCT, in partnership with Primary Health Tasmania.

Emma Forbes, Support and Tier 3 Teacher at Latrobe High School, has been organising the program and said it's been great to see the positive impact they're having for students and the participating community members.

"We have already seen wonderful intergenerational relationships being built. Students are demonstrating respect and kindness to the senior citizens and they in return, are developing an understanding of the younger generation and how different it is to be a teenager in the modern world. The students have developed a Facebook page for the club and are now teaching individual club members how to access social media and the benefits."

MHCT encourages communities to connect with older Tasmanians through community groups and local activities. The full report, including the list of all 10 opportunities to better support the mental health and wellbeing outcomes for older Tasmanians, is available via the [MHCT website](#). Tasmanian events and resources can be found online at [www.checkin.org.au](http://www.checkin.org.au).

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**Media Enquiries:** Nick Sullivan

**Phone:** 0405 672 004

**Email:** [nsullivan@mhct.org](mailto:nsullivan@mhct.org)

**Please include the following crisis support services for any story regarding mental health or suicide:**

Lifeline: 13 11 14 [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467 [www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au](http://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au)

beyondblue: 1300 22 4636 [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

**More information on safely reporting on mental illness or suicide can be found at:**

<https://mindframe.org.au/> and <https://www.tascharter.org/>