



The Mt Gravatt and Surrounds Ways to Wellness Social Isolation Project

The Loneliness and Social Isolation Epidemic

Results from a 2018 Australian survey show that:



50% of the respondents felt lonely in the past week



Nearly 33% rarely felt they were part of a group of friends



75% never or seldom have a neighbour to talk to

The COVID-19 pandemic only intensified this feeling of loneliness and social isolation that many members of our community have been feeling. It afflicts people of all ages, genders, and cultural backgrounds.

Loneliness and social isolation have significant consequences for individual health and wellbeing. Studies have shown that it is associated with:



29% increased risk of coronary heart disease



poor mental health



32% increased risk of stroke



26% increased likelihood of mortality

UQ Professor Alex Haslam found that loneliness increases the risk of death even more than alcohol consumption, obesity, lack of physical activity, etc.

Loneliness caused by social isolation carries with it an increase of cost to the health care system with elderly people forced into residential aged care at an earlier stage, and people taking more frequent trips to the doctor, thus placing a greater strain on, and cost to, the health care system. Evidence suggests that people who frequently visit their GPs are often socially isolated and require a social solution alongside a medical solution.

About the Ways to Wellness Social Isolation Project

The Ways to Wellness Social Isolation Project is a free service provided by the Mt Gravatt Community Centre. It uses a **Social Prescribing** approach to help people connect with their local community.

Social Prescribing is a way of linking clients with sources of group support within their community by helping them join a club, participate in social groups and activities, or even an exercise class. It also provides organisations with referral options that can operate alongside existing supports to improve the client's overall wellbeing.

By linking clients with groups and activities which they find meaningful in their community, the project aims to reduce their feelings of loneliness and social isolation, increase their social contacts, improve community cohesion and assist in preventing the negative health consequences of loneliness and social isolation. Furthermore, a community-led approach has the potential to ease the pressure on primary care systems, and at the same time meet the social needs of such individuals within the community.

The Ways to Wellness Program is for clients 16 years old and above who:

- May be new to the area
- May have lost touch with friends and/or family
- May experience barriers to getting out and about
- May feel nervous about meeting new people
- May not know what types of activities are available in their community
- May be experiencing social isolation and loneliness

What suburbs do we cover?

- Mt Gravatt
 - Mt Gravatt East
 - Upper Mt Gravatt
 - Carindale
 - Buranda
 - Carina
 - Mackenzie
 - Mansfield
 - Wishart
 - Macgregor
- Holland Park
 - Holland Park West
 - Greenslopes
 - Coorparoo



If you have patients from nearby suburbs please get in touch!



What does the Community Link Worker do?

Groups across Mt Gravatt and the surrounding suburbs have committed to welcoming new people as part of our network. We do this through our Community Link Worker, Elise Marr, who can help clients identify activities they might be interested in and connect them with local classes, social groups and clubs within the community to help them reach their wellbeing goals.

The Community Link Worker will meet with the client at a place that is convenient to them to learn about their lifestyle and interests and help them engage with local groups and programs. For example, the client is interested in painting—the Community Link Worker can identify painting groups in the area and introduce them to said groups.

Together the Community Link Worker and the client will be able to:

- Explore what is important for the client's life and their wellbeing
- Identify the local activities and social groups the client can benefit from
- Provide support and encouragement to start using services that can help them (which can include the Community Link Worker attending activities with the client or introducing the client to social groups)

The Community Link Worker is:

- Someone to talk to confidentially
- Someone who is practical, helpful and who will not judge
- Someone who can help the client decide what they would like to do to improve their health, wellbeing and independence
- Someone who can find the client social activities that will suit them
- Someone who can give the client support along the way



How do I refer someone?

If you would like to refer someone, or if you know of someone who would like to refer themselves, please contact us via the following:

Email: linkworker@mgcci.org.au
Phone: 07 3343 9833
Mobile: 0491 625 869

If you know anyone who would like more information about the Social Isolation Project, please feel free to give them our contact details.

Our website will also have referral forms you can complete - <https://waystowellness.org.au/>.