

**INQUIRY INTO PREVALENCE, CAUSES AND IMPACTS OF  
LONELINESS IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

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Partially  
Confidential

Loneliness has reached epidemic levels in Australia, with both younger and older populations affected, though for different reasons. Several key factors contribute to the growing loneliness crisis.

### Causes of the Loneliness Epidemic

**Digital Interaction and Social Media:** Younger Australians, particularly those aged 15-24, are the most affected by loneliness today. The rise of smartphones and heavy social media usage have contributed to a shift from in-person connections to online ones. While digital platforms offer convenience, they often foster shallow interactions, reducing meaningful social experiences and emotional connection **【12】** .

**Impact of COVID-19:** The pandemic exacerbated isolation for people across age groups, especially those already vulnerable to loneliness. Lockdowns deprived many of face-to-face interactions, social routines, and opportunities to develop critical social skills, leaving a lasting impact on young people and children **【12】** .

**Changes in Living Arrangements and Social Norms:** Australia has seen a decline in intergenerational living and community resources, particularly in rural areas. With more people living alone, there are fewer opportunities for organic social interactions. This trend is especially challenging for older adults, many of whom experience bereavement or relocation, increasing isolation **【11】 【12】** .

**Exhaustion and Information Overload:** Many young people feel overwhelmed by the constant flow of information and choices they encounter online, leading to emotional fatigue and detachment from real-world social opportunities. This adds to their struggle to maintain healthy social connections and reinforces a sense of loneliness **【12】** .

### Solutions to Address Loneliness

To combat loneliness, a multi-pronged approach is needed:

**Promote In-Person Connections:** Encouraging activities that bring people together in meaningful ways—like social clubs, volunteering, and community events—can help foster deeper connections. Targeted programs for different age groups, such as skills development for young people and group activities for older adults, have shown promise **【11】** .

**Address the Negative Impact of Social Media:** Teaching young people to balance online interactions with offline activities is critical. Reducing screen time and promoting face-to-face interaction can help restore essential social skills and emotional well-being **【12】** .

Community Infrastructure and Support: Investing in local spaces like libraries, community centres, and transportation can create more opportunities for social interaction, particularly in rural or isolated areas. Policies that support affordable housing and intergenerational living could also reduce social fragmentation **【11】** .

Tailored Interventions: There is no one-size-fits-all solution to loneliness. Programs need to be adapted to individual needs, taking into account factors like age, cultural background, and lifestyle. For example, leisure activities like gardening, therapy programs, and befriending initiatives have been successful in reducing loneliness among older adults **【11】** .

In summary, addressing Australia's loneliness epidemic requires both societal and individual efforts. Promoting social activities, balancing technology use, and creating inclusive community spaces can help reverse the trend and foster a more connected society.

**【11】** refers to data I pulled from a government or community report addressing loneliness.

**【12】** points to an analysis by the RACGP (Royal Australian College of General Practitioners), explaining loneliness among young Australians.