



# Community Activation and Social Isolation Initiative

Supporting social connection: Information for stakeholders – 24 July 2020

## What is the Community Activation and Social Isolation initiative?

Meaningful connections between people are really important for good health and wellbeing. The Victorian Government's new **Community Activation and Social Isolation (CASI)** initiative helps people who might be feeling lonely or have lost their regular networks during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. CASI aims to help these people build social connections and networks of support in their local communities.

There are two parts to the initiative:

1. People can now call the **coronavirus (COVID-19) hotline on 1800 675 398** to receive emotional support if they are feeling lonely or disconnected as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19). The Australian Red Cross is the Victorian Government's partner in providing this support.
2. If they are interested, people can also be linked into a **community connector** in their local government area. This person will help connect them with local organisations who can provide ongoing emotional, practical or social support.

## Who is CASI for?

CASI is for anyone who would benefit from being connected into their local community and linked into practical, emotional or social support. It's particularly aimed at people who don't have many social connections or informal supports, or those who have them but can't access them during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

## What support does the coronavirus (COVID-19) hotline provide?

Through the coronavirus (COVID-19) hotline, callers will be connected to friendly Australian Red Cross volunteers. These volunteers are trained in psychological first aid and can provide emotional support to callers who may be anxious or just need to talk about why they're feeling lonely or disconnected. Volunteers support callers to talk through their needs and, if the caller would like, the volunteer can link them to their local community connector.

## What support does the community connector provide?

Community connectors are people in organisations with good networks across and insights into their community. They work to 'map' what sorts of practical, emotional and social supports are available in their community, and then 'wrap' those supports around people seeking help.

The supports themselves can be provided by a range of organisations, including multicultural organisations, universities of the third age, neighbourhood houses, men's sheds and volunteer groups. Support generally falls into three categories:

- **Emotional support** such as regular chats with a like-minded local.
- **Practical help** such as running errands or helping people to video chat with friends and family.
- **Social activities** such as linking into online book clubs, fitness groups or volunteering opportunities.

## How do people access CASI?

People can call the Victorian Government's coronavirus (COVID-19) hotline on **1800 675 398** and press 3 to speak to an Australian Red Cross volunteer **Or connect directly with their local community connector - Uniting Wimmera** on 1800 195 114.

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