Supporting social connection through coronavirus (COVID-19)

Information for individuals – 24 July 2020

Are you feeling lonely or socially disconnected?

You are not alone. For many Victorians, physical distancing and social or work-related restrictions have led to feelings of loneliness and disconnection. For people who were already feeling lonely or isolated before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, it's been even harder to get help.

All of us need social connection to feel happy and well. We also need people we can turn to when we need help. That's why it is important to reach out if you feel lonely or disconnected.

You can get help on the phone and from your community

If you are experiencing loneliness or social disconnection due to coronavirus (COVID-19), you can receive support from the Australian Red Cross and local community organisations with just one call to the coronavirus (COVID-19) hotline on **1800 675 398**.

This help is provided as part of the Victorian Government's Community Activation and Social Isolation initiative.

What happens when I call the coronavirus (COVID-19) hotline?

Your call will be answered by a caring Australian Red Cross volunteer who will speak to you about your needs and the help that could make you feel more connected. They can also provide a friendly ear if you are distressed or anxious.

If you would like, the volunteer can put you in touch with a community connector in your area. This person will arrange for you to get the help you need safely and locally.

What help can I get from the community connector?

Your local 'community connector' will call you to organise supports available in your local area. The supports themselves can be provided from a range of organisations such as multicultural organisations, universities of the third age, neighbourhood houses, men's sheds and volunteer groups to name a few. They might include:

- **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.

Am I eligible?

This initiative is available to all Victorians.

How do I get help?

You can call the **coronavirus (COVID-19) hotline on 1800 675 398** and press 3 to speak to an Australian Red Cross volunteer to get the help and support you need or call your local Community Connector at Uniting Wimmera on 1800 195 114.

To receive this publication in an accessible format phone 1300 651 160 using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or email Emergency Management Communications <em.comms@dhhs.vic.gov.au>.

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