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A national call to action: it's time to renew and rebuild social connection.

Global experts will gather in Parliament House today with a message for all Australians: it's time to renew connection and rebuild relationships.

Ending Loneliness Together is launching their second White Paper which focuses on social connection to accelerate social recovery.

Loneliness and social isolation have had a significant impact on people throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. New research from *Ending Loneliness Together* shows that the health, social and economic consequences of the pandemic will be felt for many years to come and we need to act now to accelerate social recovery.

The group proposes four simple actions that the Federal Government can take to accelerate social recovery as we move towards a different phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 1) To build a strategic framework to promote meaningful social connection
- 2) To strengthen our workforce capacity across all sectors to address loneliness
- 3) To empower our community to help each other
- 4) To invest in Australian-based scientific research in order to rapidly translate what works into practice and policy

The White Paper will be launched in Parliament House on August 4th by Hon Andrew Giles MP who has been passionate about addressing the issue of chronic loneliness for many years. Minister Giles is joined by Co-Chair Mrs Bridget Archer MP, a passionate advocate for community connection. It is the second event being hosted by the Parliamentary Friends of Ending Loneliness.

This event will also be addressed by Dr Vivek Murthy, the current United States Surgeon General, and Dr Etienne Krug, the Director of the Social Determinants of Health, World Health Organization.

"Loneliness and social isolation became an issue that almost everyone experienced during the pandemic so much so that there has been increased focus on the issue across the globe" said Chairperson and Scientific Chair, Dr Michelle Lim, Australia's leading scientific expert on loneliness.

"Both loneliness and social isolation lead to poorer health, social, and economic outcomes for society. There is no better time to consider what we can do in Australia to recover socially and to rebuild stronger communities"

"The health, social, and economic consequences of COVID-19 pandemic will be seen for many years to come. To accelerate our recovery, we have to rebuild and reconnect with our friends, family, colleagues, and our community. We also need to ensure we are supported in building new

relationships and maintaining them. This will ensure that we thrive and flourish – and not just survive.”

Prof John Pollaers OAM, the Advisory Chair, who led a national leaders roundtable at the National Press Club earlier this year says:

Loneliness affects all sectors – from business to community. Based on the estimated economic costs of loneliness, we cannot afford ignore the issue and hope it goes away. Global action is underway, and Australia will be left behind if it does not have a clear strategy forward.

Minister Andrew Giles, who co-chairs the Parliamentary Friends of Ending Loneliness says:

The COVID-19 pandemic only exacerbated the loneliness that was experienced by many Australians. It is clear there is no quick fix or simple solution that can resolve loneliness because Australians are so diverse. But we can start somewhere - we can unite and work across all sectors, taking on a comprehensive approach to resolving this critical issue.

Bridget Archer MP, Member for Bass, who also co-chairs the Parliamentary Friends of Ending Loneliness says:

Loneliness is a very misunderstood state – it can be silent but distressing. And worryingly not obvious to others. So effective action requires us to have consensus understanding of what it is, how to resolve it, and how to effectively help others who are at risk of distressing or persistent loneliness. We can take a preventative approach by addressing it early before it leads to poorer physical and mental health. This can in turn reduce the burden on our health, community, and business sectors.

Ending Loneliness Together is a registered charity created by a national network of universities and industry partners to address chronic loneliness in Australia. Through a collaborative approach, their aim is to raise awareness of loneliness as an important social, health and economic problem, harness and learn from lived experiences of loneliness, and build the evidence base and tools necessary to tackle.

Join the movement to combat loneliness together in Australia.

UnitingCare Australia is a founding member of the Ending Loneliness Together Collaboration

Go to www.endingloneliness.com.au for ways to get involved, including through making a donation, becoming a member, or through partnering with Ending Loneliness Together and join in a coordinated national response.

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