



GROWTH

Groups and Relationships to Optimise Wellbeing and Health

Social isolation touches all our lives and knows no bounds. It affects the young and old, the rich and poor, and those who are in good and ill health. It also places huge pressures on health services – estimates suggest that around 10 per cent of adults suffer from its debilitating consequences, and that GPs spend around 20 per cent of their time dealing with non-health problems with two thirds of their clients raising issues of social isolation (Caper & Plunkett, 2015).

In Australia, one in four people are lonely, and it is especially problematic for two groups – young people who are transitioning into adulthood, and older people who experience later life transitions that put them at increased risk of chronic disease and disability.

Current approaches to loneliness treat its symptoms or consequences (e.g., depression, addiction), and many clinical approaches targeting these symptoms alone have limited efficacy.

Time for a new approach

The GROWTH program targets the prevention and management of loneliness, and will pioneer a new integrated, sustainable community-focused approach that leverages UQ's intervention program, GROUPS 4 HEALTH (G4H), in ways that help people to optimise and manage their access and use of existing community resources (e.g., social prescribing initiatives).

Working with academic and community partners who support young people and older adults GROWTH aims to empower people to manage loneliness when it presents, but also to prevent its occurrence which is needed to reduce the health burden and cost of loneliness at scale.

Our Partners

Our service partners provide community, healthcare or educational services to young and older people; many of whom are at risk of, or experiencing, loneliness.

ACT Education Directorate: An innovator of educational practice serving multiple schools across the Territory. A current priority is to enhance student well-being and establish more comprehensive models to identify and support young people at risk.

Australian National University: Our academic partner ANU is an established research collaborator and consultant in ACT Education with closely aligned research expertise on social connectedness.

Ballycara: Positively influences the lives of older Australians through supporting Wellness, HomeCare, Short-Term Restorative Care, Retirement Living, and Residential Care. They support on average 1300 people per month across their outlets.

Bolton Clarke: A national aged care provider focused on keeping people in their communities. The Bolton Clarke Research Institute informs all service delivery including home-based nursing and allied health, personal care, residential and respite care, retirement living, social well-being, and homelessness support.

Lives Lived Well: A lead agency for young people with mental health, alcohol and other drug problems; offering advice, counselling, outreach, residential and day treatment, and healthy living programs.

Relationships Australia: A leading provider of relationship support services for children, adults, couples, families, and communities. They provide counselling, family violence, dispute resolution and mediation services, mental health services, and a range of family and community support and education programs.

The Salvation Army: The Salvation Army provides services to people experiencing poverty and disadvantage, homelessness, addiction, family violence and requiring youth support in the community; focusing on the physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of people.

Southern Queensland Rural Health (SQRH): A Commonwealth-funded University Department of Rural Health. SQRH is a collaboration between UQ, UniSQ, Darling Downs Health and South West Hospital and Health Service, supporting the development of a rural nursing, midwifery and allied health professional workforce.

Further Queries

Professor Catherine Haslam,
 Program Lead
 E c.haslam@uq.edu.au

Facts at a Glance

Through the Vice-Chancellor's **Health Research Accelerator (HERA)** initiative, the University of Queensland (UQ) is investing in a new health and medical research model and capabilities to address the most pressing health and medical research challenges of our time.



\$50M

UQ commitment to the HERA Programs to recruit outstanding researchers



115+

UQ researchers and collaborations



75+

Partner organisations involved in one or more HERA program



9

UQ Faculties and Institutes contributing expertise



7

HERA programs of Research and Innovation

