



Media Release

15 February 2022

Free Support for Lonely, Isolated and Grieving People of the Douglas Shire

The recent Queensland Government Report into social isolation and loneliness in Queensland showed loneliness and isolation can be as harmful to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, with one report showing lonely individuals have a 64% increased chance of developing clinical dementia.

And while 4 in 10 Australians regularly feel lonely, and more than half feel they lack companionship, submissions into the Inquiry suggest living in regional and remote areas creates a superset of contributing factors including lack of transport, poor internet connections and being perceived as 'different' or not a 'local' by others in the community¹.

This week sees the launch of a new service dedicated to addressing loneliness and social isolation in the Douglas Shire thanks to a partnership between The Tin Shed and Griefline.

The roll-out of the 'Care-to-Call' program in Port Douglas and Mossman is being overseen by a committee including representatives from Griefline, The Tin Shed, the Port Douglas Community Service Network, Mossman Support Services, U3A and FNQ Family Therapy.

The program is based on a 3 pillar framework;

1. a 'befriending' component, where service-seekers are 'befriended' by a 'Carepal' volunteer through a weekly chat over a 12-week period.
2. a 'social prescribing' component, where the Carepal collaborates with their 'Callpal' (service-seeker) to identify community engagements best suited to them and supports them to get involved.
3. an 'awareness' component aimed at educating the population about loneliness and isolation to break down the stigma attached to it.

All Carepals supporting the Care-to-Call Douglas Shire program will be sourced from an interstate pool.

After hearing about the success of the pilot program in Victoria, General Manager of The Tin Shed, Kyle Livingston secured funding from The Tin Shed Board and set about raising awareness of the program throughout the community. "The beauty of this service is that it gives locals the opportunity to 'befriend' someone who lives outside of the region, someone they can fully open up to without fear of their history, troubles or fears being repeated back to others in the community", says Kyle.

The Social Prescribing process will be spearheaded by local Community Connections Liaison volunteers, who will identify community engagement opportunities (whether online or

¹ Inquiry into social isolation and loneliness in Queensland, Report No. 14, 57th Parliament Community Support and Services Committee December 2021

in-person), that promote connection with others, such as those run by the Cairns U3A Douglas Shire Branch and the Port Douglas Neighborhood Centre.

“Care-to-Call is a welcome addition to the resources available in the area to tackle loneliness and isolation. The program aligns perfectly with Neighborhood Centre’s goals of fostering connection, belonging, participation and inclusion², says Emma Travers, Manager of Port Douglas Community Services Network., “We’re looking forward to working with the Community Connections Liaisons to offer our range of activities that suit the unique passions, needs and abilities of local service-seekers.”

Louisa Smith, Chief Marketing Officer of Griefline is pleased to commence intake, “We have trained Carepals eager to get connected to the people of the Douglas Shire. Referrals are being taken via an application form on the [Griefline website](#). So, whether you’re a professional who’d like to refer a client or feel like it may be the answer to your own feelings of loneliness, then we warmly welcome you to sign up now.”

For more information and to register for **Care to Call** go to; <https://griefline.org.au/get-help/care-to-call/>

For those experiencing grief and loss – whether through bereavement or the loss of something dear to you – Griefline also welcomes the people of the Douglas Shire to access their free services;

- Griefline’s Online Resource Hub has a wealth of information on grief and loss along with coping strategies and tools. Find it here at www.griefline.org.au
- Griefline’s free anonymous Helpline is available to anyone over the age of 18, between 6am and midnight, 365 days a year. Call 1300 845 745.
- Griefline’s Online Forums are accessible to anyone over 18 with topics including Loss of a Loved One, Personal Relationships, and Stressful or Traumatic Events. Register via the website: <https://griefline.org.au/forums>

About us

For over thirty years Griefline has ensured people are not alone in their darkest hours. The services provided by Griefline exist to support people in their grief by providing space for them to be heard without judgement or labels, and offer hope and healing after loss.

We listen – our compassionate telephone volunteers are available 365 days a year.
We connect – through our supportive online community and forums.
We empower – with 24/7 access to tools, wellbeing practices and coping strategies.

The service we provide is only made possible by the selfless efforts of our volunteer counsellors. Our volunteers come from all over Australia and from a variety of backgrounds and abilities.

The grief and loss support services we offer are developed in response to the issues raised on our helpline, which paint a snapshot of the challenges affecting the mental health of our community.

Our vision is to lead and inspire the national mental wellbeing industry in finding collaborative ways to prevent the escalation of mental ill-health as a result of loss and grief.

² Em James (General Manager, QFCA, QFCA Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry into Loneliness and Social Isolation in Queensland 18 August, 2021.

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Contact

For further media information contact:

Griefline Chief Marketing Officer Louisa Smith 0405755737