



The Hon Ken Wyatt AM, MP

**Minister for Aged Care
Minister for Indigenous Health
Member for Hasluck**

MEDIA RELEASE

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Care Alert: Reach Out To Reduce Loneliness This Christmas

The Minister for Aged Care, Ken Wyatt AM today launched a national campaign to reduce loneliness this festive season, revealing he recently visited an aged care home where, year-round, none of the residents receive visitors.

“This is a particularly distressing situation, despite the best efforts of the aged care staff,” Minister Wyatt said.

“I have previously raised concerns that up to 40 per cent of aged care residents receive no visitors but 100 per cent is completely unacceptable.

“So more than ever this Christmas, I am asking all Australians to reach out to people in residential aged care and relatives, friends, and community members everywhere in need of company.”

The Minister’s plea comes at the launch of the Australian Red Cross’s Season of Belonging campaign, with the results of a Red Cross survey highlighting the extent of loneliness in Australia.

“The survey indicated that up to a quarter of us are lonely some or almost all of the time,” said Minister Wyatt.

“This equates to up to 5.6 million people, with men over the age of 55 the most likely to feel the impact of loneliness, after divorces or separations. Young men aged 18 to 34 are the most likely to feel lonely.

“I believe Australia is a caring society but as our lives have become busier, we have left too many people behind.

The Season of Belonging campaign encourages us to take five steps this Christmas:

- Meet neighbours
- Volunteer
- Say hello to someone new in the neighbourhood
- Check on someone who may be in trouble
- Be kind on social media

Minister Wyatt said campaigns such as this are vitally important to ensuring people are not forgotten this Christmas.

Research by aged care provider Southern Cross Care found that between 60 and 70 per cent of home care clients experienced loneliness, with the organisation now providing special training for staff and offering more than 200 volunteers to give support.

“As the new Red Cross campaign recommends, volunteering is a particularly valuable way to help reduce community isolation,” Minister Wyatt said.

“I’m also proud the Turnbull Government provides practical support for senior Australians who may be experiencing loneliness, with \$17.2 million for the Community Visitors Scheme this financial year.

“The role of a volunteer in this Scheme is simply to be a friend to someone. Our need for love, company, compassion, family and friends does not diminish as we age.

“It’s up to all of us to show people, especially senior Australians, that we care and value them, by being there as much as we can.”

For more information and to find ways to tackle loneliness in your community, visit www.redcross.org.au/act

To get involved with the Community Visitors Scheme, visit <https://agedcare.health.gov.au/older-people-their-families-and-carers/community-visitors-scheme>

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