



An environmental scan summary:

# Australian social isolation resources

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## Key Points

- A desktop environmental scan identified a total of 26 Australian resources on social isolation of potential relevance to the Australian aged care sector (home and residential or long-term care).
- These resources were for a range of audiences including older people and their families, aged care workers, and service providers and managers.
- The resources found focused on developing awareness of the impact of social isolation, ways to be socially connected, volunteer opportunities to provide social support to older people, use of technology to connect with family and friends, and various social activities for the older people to engage in to be socially connected.
- None of the resources addressed diverse older populations.

## Background

The aim of this desktop environmental scan was to identify existing Australian tools and resources on social isolation for people working in the aged care sector. This report presents the methods and findings of a preliminary scan completed by the Knowledge and Implementation Hub team.

## Methods

The environmental scan followed a structured method for identifying resources. This included a defined search strategy and eligibility checking against inclusion criteria. These processes are explained in further detail below.

## Search strategy

The scan adopted a two-pronged approach to identifying relevant resources.

## Google Advanced searches

Structured searches for Australian aged care resources with a focus on social isolation were conducted first in May and updated in July 2022 using the Advanced Search version of Google (Chrome browser in incognito mode to avoid previous search history impacting results). Searches for aged care resources were run to identify webpages, websites, PDFs and other resources originating from Australia, including each of its states and territories.

The search was structured as follows:

- The search terms aged care resources and social isolation were entered in the advanced Google search box.
- Australia was selected from the Region drop-down menu.
- The search was run with and without the PDF file type limit.

For each search run in Google Advanced, we aimed to retrieve and review the first 50 relevant resources.

## Scanning social isolation organisation websites

A list of key organisations was compiled for more targeted searching. Organisations were identified during the scan process or were already known to the researcher group. They included:

- Department of Health and Aged Care: [www.health.gov.au/health-topics/aged-care](http://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/aged-care)
- My Aged Care: [www.myagedcare.gov.au](http://www.myagedcare.gov.au)
- COTA: [www.cota.org.au](http://www.cota.org.au)
- Australian Association of Gerontology: Grey Literature Library: [www.aag.asn.au/education/aag-grey-literature-library](http://www.aag.asn.au/education/aag-grey-literature-library)
- Australian Ageing Agenda: [www.australianageingagenda.com.au](http://www.australianageingagenda.com.au)
- Opal HealthCare: [www.opalhealthcare.com.au](http://www.opalhealthcare.com.au)
- Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission: [www.agedcarequality.gov.au](http://www.agedcarequality.gov.au)
- Older Persons Advocacy Network: <https://opan.org.au>

## Eligibility criteria

Resources were considered for inclusion if they:

- Were available online or could be ordered online (e.g., kit), providing the resource was free of charge.

- Provided training or educational information on social isolation, either in home care or the residential aged care setting.
- Met criteria for website quality including authority (government sites) and currency.

## Data extraction

The following data fields were captured for included resources:

- Provider/author of resource
- Resource title
- URL
- Description of resource(s)
- Audience
- Resource type
- Year published

## Results

All searches together returned 26 resources on the social isolation of older people in aged care settings (home and residential or long-term care).

## Target audience

It was found from mapping the resources by target audience that there are multiple populations to consider when providing information about social isolation. The following populations were identified within the Australian context:

- Older people
- Family of the older person
- Aged care workers
- Service providers
- Policy makers
- Managers

## Types of resources found

Different types of resources were identified including webpages, blogs, articles, reports, guidelines, and information sheets providing tips on how to reduce the social isolation of older people. Most resources were intended for more than one audience (e.g., service providers, older people and their families, and aged care workers).

Most of the resources sought to raise awareness of the impact of social isolation, provide techniques to improve social connectedness and highlight opportunities for volunteers to provide social support to older people in aged care. Some described ways to use technology to connect people, and various social activities to promote social connectedness. No resources targeted specific groups of older people like those from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) populations.

## Ongoing research projects

A few projects currently being conducted in social isolation among older people in aged care were identified. These projects are led by experts in the area and based in universities and research centres including Monash University, Bolton Clarke, and the National Ageing Research Institute.

## Conclusion

Social isolation is negatively impacting older peoples' lives, especially their health. The resources identified by this environmental scan may help those working in the aged care sector to identify and support those people in their care experiencing social isolation. However, we note the lack of resources focused on the issue for some of the more diverse populations of older people in aged care.

This summary report describes the initial process used to identify resources capable of informing, training, educating, or generally supporting the aged care sector in its work. This is the first part of an ongoing process to build the resources of the Knowledge Hub. We will repeat the scan process on a scheduled basis to ensure new resources are identified and included so that Hub content remains relevant to the sector's needs.

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ARIIA was established as an independent, not-for-profit organisation, set up to lead the advancement of the aged care workforce capability by promoting and facilitating innovation and research to improve the quality of aged care for all Australians.

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