



**ENDING  
LONELINESS  
TOGETHER**



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## Media Release

### **Loneliness: Australia's silent health emergency**

**Melbourne, 13 February 2023.** To kick off 2023, leading life, health and wellbeing insurer AIA Australia has partnered with Ending Loneliness Together, a national network of organisations and individuals united to address the growing problem of loneliness.

Loneliness is often thought to be an experience that only affects older people or those who are physically isolated. However, it is clear now with robust scientific evidence<sup>1</sup> that loneliness occurs across all ages, genders or demographics.

Before the COVID pandemic, one in four Australians aged 12 to 89 experienced problematic levels of loneliness, equating to five million Australians at any one time.<sup>2</sup> Post the onset of the pandemic, it was estimated that at least one in two Australians have reported feeling lonelier due to reduced social connection.<sup>3</sup>

With loneliness growing in Australia, this presents a looming health challenge requiring urgent attention:<sup>4</sup>

- Loneliness is associated with a 26 per cent greater risk of premature mortality, a 29 per cent increase in the incidence of coronary heart disease and a 32 per cent increase in the risk of stroke
- Lonely older adults have a 58 per cent higher risk of developing dementia compared with their less lonely peers
- Compared with smoking and obesity (recognised as key health issues), loneliness is equivalent to the mortality risk of smoking and exceeds the mortality risk of obesity
- Loneliness increases the odds of having a clinically diagnosed mental disorder (such as depression). Those with severe loneliness are 17 times more likely to have made a suicide attempt in the past 12 months.

Through the new partnership, AIA Australia and Ending Loneliness Together will raise awareness and educate communities about loneliness and its impacts on population health, wellbeing and productivity. In doing this, they hope to lift the stigma of loneliness and increase national recognition of loneliness as a health emergency so that more Australians have access to appropriate support.

Dr Michelle Lim, Chair of Ending Loneliness Together said, "Loneliness affects a significant proportion of our community but is widely misunderstood. While it is normal to feel lonely from time to time, the stigma of loneliness prevents people from opening up and seeking the help they need early. Without a collective national approach to understand, prevent, and reduce loneliness, the physical, social, and mental wellbeing of Australians will suffer. Our

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<sup>1</sup> Ending Loneliness Together. 2020. *Ending Loneliness Together in Australia: White Paper*. Available from: [https://endingloneliness.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Ending-Loneliness-Together-in-Australia\\_Nov20.pdf](https://endingloneliness.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Ending-Loneliness-Together-in-Australia_Nov20.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> As above.

<sup>3</sup> As above

<sup>4</sup> As above

new partnership with AIA Australia will bolster our ability to work collaboratively and reach more Australians to change the trajectory of loneliness at an individual, family and community level.”

Damien Mu, CEO and Managing Director of AIA Australia said, “At AIA Australia, we’re passionate about increasing health awareness and supporting prevention-based activities, so we can help our customers and communities stay well.

“We know that loneliness is a growing issue in Australia and globally and it’s crucial that we raise awareness of this major public health issue. We’re pleased that we can extend our AIA Embrace ecosystem of wellbeing programs and partnerships to now include Ending Loneliness Together. By collaborating, we can drive improved health outcomes for all Australians so they can lead healthier, longer, better lives.”

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### **About AIA Australia**

AIA Australia is a leading life insurance specialist with 50 years’ experience and purpose to make a difference in people’s lives. In 2014 the company launched AIA Vitality, a world leading, science-based health and wellbeing program, to the Australian market. In July 2017, AIA and its partners launched AIA’s health insurance business, now known as AIA Health Insurance.

In 2021, Commlnsure Life was integrated into AIA Australia. The lives of more than 3.7 million Australians are protected and enhanced through AIA Australia’s unique value proposition of life, health and wellbeing. Our vision is to embrace shared value in championing Australia to be the healthiest and best protected nation in the world.

In pursuit of this, AIA Australia has developed AIA Embrace- a comprehensive wellbeing ecosystem of world-class products, programs and partnerships. These are designed to help customers, partners and the broader community to embrace better health and wellbeing.

In offering a broad range of health and wellbeing services to its customers, partners and broader community, AIA is proudly helping people lead healthier, longer, better lives.

AIA Australia has been recognised with multiple awards, including the ANZIIF Life Insurance Company of the Year (2022), Women in Finance Employer of the Year Award (2018 2019), Super Review’s Best Insurer of the Year (2018, 2019), FSC Life Insurance Industry Awards Innovation in Group Life Insurance (2021), Shared Value Awards Corporate Organisation Leading Through Shared Value (2019), Shared Value Awards Organisation of the Year (2020) and Shared Value Project of the Year (2021).

Further information at [www.aia.com.au](http://www.aia.com.au).

### **About Ending Loneliness Together**

Ending Loneliness Together (ELT) is the national Australian organisation working to raise awareness and reduce the negative effects of loneliness and social isolation in our community through evidence-based interventions and advocacy.

Inspired by the work of the UK Campaign to End Loneliness and the growing research evidence of the role of social connection in the prevention of poor health and wellbeing, Ending Loneliness Together draws together knowledge from national and international researchers, along with service delivery expertise from community groups, professional organisations, government agencies, and skilled

volunteers, to effectively address loneliness in Australia.

Further information at [www.endingloneliness.com.au](http://www.endingloneliness.com.au)

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