

Addressing Social Isolation and Loneliness:

INSIGHTS AND PERSPECTIVES
THROUGH RESEARCH AND EVALUATION.



Griffith University | South Bank Campus
Monday 6th April 2020 | 12pm - 6pm

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS AND ABSTRACTS:



SANDY BLACKBURN-WRIGHT **FOUNDER & MANAGING DIRECTOR | SOCIAL OUTCOMES**

Thought leader and social innovator, Sandy has worked across all three sectors to create positive change, both locally and internationally over the last 35 years. She is the founder and Managing Director of Social Outcomes, a for purpose business that specialises in researching, designing for, implementing, financing and measuring impact. Sandy has served on the Australian Advisory Board to the Social Impact Investment Global Steering Group since its inception in 2013, is a Non-Executive Director of the Hand Heart Pocket Foundation in Queensland, sits on the advisory

board of QUT's Australian Centre for NFP and Philanthropic Studies, and is an industry fellow at Griffith University's Centre for Sustainable Enterprises. She was also a founding Director on the board of the Community Service Industry Alliance and served on the federal government's Not For Profit Reform Council.

Sandy has the ability to build bridges between the social and the financial after 15 years in international development in southern Africa and 10 years at senior levels in banking and professional services in Australia, with her last corporate role as Head of Social Innovation for Westpac.

Sandy is also an experienced facilitator, a best-selling author and sought after public speaker.

SOCIAL ISOLATION RISING - CAUSES, COSTS AND CONSEQUENCES

Like in most western societies, Australia is seeing a rise in the levels of social isolation experienced by a wide range of people. We are only now beginning to understand the impact on the physical and mental health and wellbeing that social isolation has on an individual and the community more broadly.

We are also seeing a growing evidence base for a healthy social support structure being a strongly protective factor for future adverse outcomes for individuals at risk. But have we forgotten how to create and maintain community and if we have, how do we build that muscle again?



ROB DONOVAN

CEO | RJD CONSULTING

Rob Donovan (PhD Psychology) is Adjunct Professor in the School of Human Sciences at the University of Western Australia and Founder of the Act-Belong-Commit campaign. After a career in market research he returned to academia in the early 1990s. He has taught in US and Australian university business schools.

He has conducted research and program development across a broad range of health and social policy areas, including alcohol, tobacco and drugs, physical activity and the built environment, early childhood & parenting, child abuse, domestic violence, racism, doping in sport, suicide prevention and mental health promotion. He has provided expert witness testimony on the marketing practices of the tobacco, asbestos and pharmaceutical industries, and has served on many state and national committees on a variety of topics.

THE DEAFENING SOUNDS OF LONELINESS

Unless you have deliberately chosen to avoid headlines, news flashes, tweets, likes and whatever, I presume you have noticed that “loneliness” is being touted by commentators and politicians in both the new and old media as almost akin in ‘wow factor’ to the discovery of penicillin in 1928 (or even to the discovery of the Americas in 1492). And now we have a rash (or should that be an irritating rash) of behavioural scientists with concerned expressions on their faces and sombreness in their voices proclaiming loneliness as the “next public health epidemic”, thus declaring in all seriousness that this is a ‘newly discovered’ contagious disease spreading unseen amongst us with likely even more deadly effects than the Black Death and the Great Plague combined.

But is that really so? Do we really need a separate ‘Minister for Loneliness’? [And shouldn’t that be a ‘Minister for Connectedness’ anyway?] Well, no we don’t need such ministers. What we actually need is narrow-minded Ministers for Health to broaden their understanding of Health to include Mental Health and to promote positive mental health in the same way as we promote physical health.



JOAN YOUNG

GLOBAL HEAD OF SYNDICATED PRODUCTS AT KANTAR PUBLIC DIVISION

Joan has dedicated her career to working with government agencies to deliver better social outcomes and more efficient and effective government. Her focus is on adding value to research and consultancy. She plays an active role in key projects and provides strategic consultancy to organisations seeking to create effective policy, communications, services, products and programmes.

Joan is a recognised and award-winning social marketing researcher and evaluator, facilitator and speaker, both in Australia and internationally, including most recent winner of the Best Practitioner Paper Award at the World Social Marketing Conference. "

THE REBELION IS COMING

As an industry we pride ourselves on making a difference via an in-depth understanding of human behaviour. We have the unique ability to go beyond describing “what” people do, to uncovering “why” they do it. Traditionally, we have limited our investigation of the what’s and why’s to the past and the present. This paper challenges us to broaden our scope, to extend ourselves and our thinking and to use our unique understanding of humanity to predict the future.

Yes, we can see social change happening right before our eyes. We can measure changes in attitudes and detect an increasing number of people feeling cynical, disengaged, disappointed and increasingly angry about leaders, organisations and brands they used to trust. But it is not good enough to observe the present and compare it to the past. In fact, if this is where we play, we are behind the eight ball and we will not be able to defend our Trusted Advisor territory. Our attempts to remain relevant will fail if our frame of reference continues to be using what is known (the past and the present) rather than using this knowledge to help predict the unknown (the future).

Clients are increasingly calling on us to help them navigate this unknown territory. Other industries are rising to the occasion – think creative agencies and universities. To prosper in tomorrow’s world our call to the Social and Market Research Industries is to play a Bigger Game.

We will share a framework for understanding the cycle of change in the values of society over time. It predicted Trump, Brexit and the current shift away from conformity into a time of rebellion not seen since the 1960s and 1970s. It also predicts that if governments, organisations and brands do not recognise this new, rebellious view and alter behaviour accordingly, they will not survive. And that includes us.

The stakes are high. The Rebellion is Coming!



DR NORA AMATH
NATIONAL MANAGER OF REFUGEE SETTLEMENT AND THE CAMS
STATEWIDE COORDINATOR, ISLAMIC WOMEN’S ASSOCIATION OF
AUSTRALIA (IWAA)

Dr Nora Amath is a sociologist and community developer whose research focuses on multiculturalism, social inclusion, diversity, leadership and community development. She is the author of *The Phenomenology of Community Activism* and her writings have also appeared in several edited volumes and journals. Nora is an adjunct Research Fellow at Griffith University and also works at the Islamic Women’s Association of Australia (IWAA) as the National Manager of Refugee Settlement and the CAMS Statewide Coordinator.

Nora has strong connections to the community across a number of areas, including youth, women and multi-faith groups, and is a member of the Minister’s Queensland Multicultural Advisory Council. She is the founder and/or chair of a number of different organisations focussed on supporting people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including founding a domestic violence shelter. Nora has received many awards for her efforts. In 2006, she received the prestigious award of Australian Muslim Woman of the Year. In 2007 and again in 2012, she received the Australia Day Community Awards. In 2017 she was a finalist in the Australian of the Year Awards. Most significantly she is a mother of 3 children aged 21, 19 and 17.

CREATING PATHWAYS TO SOCIAL INCLUSION: THE CASE STUDY OF IWAA

Utilising case study methodology, this presentation explores the complex issues of social inclusion and the Australian Muslim communities. While many reports and studies provide pragmatic suggestions on how to work towards the social inclusion of Australian Muslims, the concentration on these suggestions tend to focus on how the government can provide these solutions. What is lacking in the literature is the recognition of the Australian Muslim community’s role and agency in initiating and executing the programs needed to address such issues of social exclusion.

The case study of the Islamic Women’s Association of Australia (IWAA) demonstrates that Australian Muslim civil society organisations are proactively engaging with their communities to ensure that they are responding appropriately to these issues. Moreover, they are creating pathways and access for Australian Muslims to better participate, engage in and contribute to the wider society.

IWAA uses research methods and findings to inform community engagement approaches to address these complex issues. This session will share practical case studies on the methodologies adopted and some of the findings and responses IWAA have initiated based on their formative work.



ROSS WILLIAMS

2%ERS ADVISORY SERVICE (FREELANCE CONSULTANT)

Ross Williams is a proud Senior Leader in the community and a very proud member of the Bindal/Juru of the Townsville to Bowen region and the Islands of Erub and Mer in the Torres Straits.

Ross has decades of experience working with traditional owner groups, government and non-government organisations throughout Queensland, Australia and internationally on Indigenous and environmental, social, cultural, economic and wellbeing projects and programs as facilitator, advisor and/or evaluator.

His recent work includes leading the evaluation of the Commonwealth Games Reconciliation Plan, the evaluation of the Cape York Peninsular Aboriginal Land joint management program, the transfer of primary health care program from the state government to Apunipima Cape York Health Service and worked on projects for beyond-blue, evaluation of the Jail to Job initiative, Lifeline and PHN's on social determinates and service provisions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

Ross also has 30 years of involvement in youth suicide prevention and resilience programs for and with youth. He is Co-chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Implementation Group for the National Suicide Prevention Trial and a member of the Primary Healthcare (Brisbane north) Network Suicide Prevention Strategic Partnership Group.

PRESENTATION TITLE: FIRST NATIONS YOUTH SUICIDES- CAUSE AND EFFECT

Humans are social creatures. Our need to connect with others is deeply hardwired within our DNA. Social isolation is undoubtedly on the rise across the world. In our own back yard, there are vulnerable groups which are more at risk to the negative effects of social and family dislocation, fragmentation and isolation – namely our First Nations peoples.

Youth Suicide rates across Australia continue to rise with one in four Aboriginal children's deaths are by suicide. In the first three weeks of January 2019, five Aboriginal youth took their own lives, a sixth following a suspected suicide attempt.

Amongst all the trauma there are many people across Australia trying to effect change whilst dealing with the long-term consequences of colonisation leading to intergenerational traumas, socio-economic disadvantage, poverty and enduring racism. In this discussion Ross will draw on decades of experience, research and learnings to talk about what are some of those social determinates and environment factors that brings about social isolation and a sense of disconnection from society and their own communal support structures. This discussion will also tackle the uncomfortable issues of racial discrimination and intergenerational trauma, and how that plays a part in First Nations children reaching the deep fog of alienation, loneliness and despair.



KATHY BENSON

CHIEF CLIENT OFFICER, IPSOS ANZ

Kathy has more than 28 years experience working in the field of marketing, brand, and communications - delivering insights and strategic advice to client organisations across a variety of industries.

Kathy has held the Australian Market and Social Research Society's professional accreditation of QPMR (Qualified Practicing Market Researcher) since its introduction in 2002 and conducts both quantitative and qualitative research combining advanced research capability with strong strategy skills specialising in brand strategy research, consumer sentiment, customer experience and business, community and stakeholder engagement. Kathy has directed many large-scale and complex studies for clients across CPG and FMCG, telecommunications, financial services, entertainment and tourism, retail, education, infrastructure and transport.

Kathy has a Bachelor of Business, and a Master of Marketing from Queensland University of Technology. Kathy is a strategic researcher who specialises in assisting companies and brands to stay in sync with consumers and abreast of the latest consumer trends and innovations.

SOCIAL COHESION AND SOCIAL FRAGMENTATION: THE DICHOTOMY OF MODERN LIFE

The rapid advancement of technology is making us more connected than ever. By 2020 there will be close to seven times the number of connected devices as people on the planet (www.pwc.co.uk/issues/megatrends/technological-breakthroughs.html) and yet 1 in 4 Australians report feeling lonely at least one day a week with experts warning of a “loneliness epidemic” (<http://www.abc.net.au/life/social-isolation-why-are-we-so-lonely/10493414>). The very technology that is making us the most socially connected era in history, that is connecting us globally and breaking down barriers, is also changing the way we work, live and play in a way that is undermining our social wellbeing.

In the emerging post-demographic and post-trust world, Ipsos examines a range of social issues in its latest worldwide trends monitor finding that:

- Uncertainty is the new normal
- Old paradigms no longer explain who we are and what we will do
- Empowered consumers are turning to each other
- Our social attitudes are getting more and less liberal
- Community is being redefined
- And benevolence is the latest status symbol.

Drawing on the latest Ipsos global trends research, this presentation will provide a thought-provoking analysis of the dichotomous and conflicting social trends dominating our world.



CAIT WILDMAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONER COMMUNIFY QLD

Cait is an accomplished teacher, community development practitioner, director, sales expert and co-author of the internationally acclaimed business novel *Diary of a Naked Salesman -The Art of Selling*. She was also founder and CEO of the NGO Second Chance Foundation, specialising in social reform and employment for people with criminal records, before at 51 years of age, she swapped her secure job as CEO for a backpack full of hopes and uncertainties to chase her dream.

Cait has a natural ability to motivate as she draws on her sales experience and own life experiences and inspires courage to unlock the power of peoples' dreams.

For the past decade Cait has worked as a Community Development Practitioner at Community Qld, working with local community to develop programs that will enhance lifestyles, teaching English skills to those with English as second language and supporting cultural exchange for new arrivals and refugees.

Cait recently accepted an award for promoting Muslim and Non Muslim Understanding.

IT TAKES A BENCH TO FIGHT LONELINESS & SOCIAL ISOLATION!

Workshop supported by Kavita Gonsalves(QUT) and Sam McGeown (Village Church)

Community QLD, QUT Design Lab and Village Church are working together to take on the problem of loneliness and social isolation in the Kelvin Grove Urban Village (KGUV). And it all starts with a bench!

The “Chatty Bench” project is a hybrid (physical and digital) placemaking experience, where many benches along Musk Avenue and other key community spaces in KGUV have been designed to become points of engagement and interaction between strangers and community members and the stage for developing a location-based digital game which engages residents as co-designers.

Ethnography, co-design workshops, game software design and digital media all feature in the implementation approach. Plans also include project evaluation and dissemination of outcomes.

During this session Cait and fellow members of the project team will share the genesis of the “Chatty Bench” project, outline the process and key role ethnography, collaboration and co-design methodologies have played in the design and delivery of the project, and identify some of the challenges and general lessons learnt to date about the development, implementation and evaluation of the “Chatty Bench” project.



FIONA BURNETT
SENIOR CONSULTANT, KANTAR, PUBLIC DIVISION

Fiona has nearly 20 years' market research industry experience, as both a research buyer and supplier in Australia and Germany. She is highly experienced in the application of both qualitative and quantitative techniques across a wide-variety of subject areas in the social issues arena. As a lead qualitative researcher on health topics at Kantar, Public Division she has worked closely with Queensland Health exploring a range of topics including maternity services, children's health services,

obesity, and mental wellbeing.

SIMONE BENNETT
PRINCIPAL MARKET RESEARCH ADVISOR, QUEENSLAND HEALTH

Over 15 years' experience in research, customer experience and strategy in public and private internal market research teams. Simone is currently focusing on preventative health issues, behaviour change and social marketing evaluation as a member of Queensland Health's Strategic Communications Branch. Understanding consumers behaviours, needs, attitudes and motivations is an essential part of the branch's behaviour change and social marketing activity.



LEARNING FROM THE MENTAL WELLBEING OF QUEENSLANDERS

There are known links between social isolation and poorer health outcomes, such as higher rates of depression. Queensland Health has identified mental health and wellbeing as a priority health topic.

Mental wellbeing is an area that has traditionally received less focus, however can help prevent behavioural and mental health problems, can act as a buffer to the risk of mental illness, and is foundational for a wide range of other health benefits, and in preventing social isolation.

Kantar, Public Division and Queensland Health's Strategic Communications Branch will present a joint case study on a body of research that explored the mental wellbeing of Queenslanders including:

- Why it's important to talk about mental wellbeing, not mental health
- Who is most at risk, with a particular focus on regional communities
- How research informed a communications strategy to engage with Queenslanders about this topic.



BRETT LEAVY
MANAGING DIRECTOR
VIRTUAL SONGLINES, BILBIE VIRTUAL LAB

Brett Leavy is a First Nations, Digital Aboriginal and descends from the Kooma people whose traditional country is bordered by St George in the east, Cunnamulla in the west, north by the town of Mitchell and south to the QLD/NSW border. Brett's dedicated his working life to cultural knowledge recording and the industry of communications. His digital work seeks to represent the arts, cultural stories, heritage, traditional knowledge and histories of First Nation people using new,

immersive and interactive technologies.

For over three few decades, Brett's researched how to "build a time machine" to take people back to places where the traditional knowledge of First Nations people originated. Guided by Traditional Owners, anthropologists, archaeologists, botanists and the interactive games industry, he is inspired to create entertaining and engaging systems to represent the interactions between first settlers and traditional peoples.

<https://www.virtualsonglines.org/>



TODD MACDONALD **ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND CEO OF** **LA BOITE THEATRE COMPANY**

Todd is Artistic Director and CEO of La Boite Theatre Company. Since completing NIDA acting training in 1994, Todd has worked extensively across the theatre, film, television and voice-over industries, including acting roles in familiar TV shows such as Neighbours (and more), co-founding the award winning venue and production company The Store Room Theatre in Melbourne, touring internationally, premiering

at the Brisbane Festival and working with the Queensland Theatre Company.

Through his work Todd likes to nurture the incredible capacity art has to evolve empathy and allow people to hear and see another point of view.

REFLECTION ON THE OPEN HOMES PROJECT BY JEFFREY TAN

With the ever changing demographics of population and evolving culture of urban cities how do people connect with each other? Collaboration is a very important urban social skill in our complex socially connected society. Although we can get connected quickly with less barriers, how much do we know the other? How do we communicate?

Open Homes is a special intimate theatre project that invites ordinary, everyday people (both residents and audiences) to connect, open their minds, their hearts and their homes to share stories about their lived experiences. Who are they? Why do they do what they do? What is important for us? Collaboration requires listening deeply, discovering similarities and highlighting differences. The project was created in Singapore in 2015 before coming to Brisbane.

This session will share case studies and impacts the project has been found to have on participants and audiences alike and reflect on what this may mean for addressing the broader issue of social isolation in this community.



SAM ROBINSON **NATIONAL NEIGHBOUR DAY CAMPAIGN MANAGER |** **RELATIONSHIPS AUSTRALIA**

Sam has worked in policing, training and education, and the not for profit sector. As School Director for Outward Bound (in South Africa and Australia), Sam designed and delivered guided discovery learning programs in the outdoors for both young people and adults. As Corporate and Government Affairs Manager for Conservation Volunteers Australia, she facilitated partnerships and created programs, connecting people with the environment and each other, through volunteering. As National Neighbour Day Campaign Manager Sam brings together people, resources, and organisations to help grow stronger, connected communities year round.

CREATING CONNECTIONS – WHAT NEIGHBOURS CAN DO

Australia is in the midst of a loneliness crisis, with many in our population experiencing a deficit of social connection, Australians are increasingly time poor, less time for community engagement and neighbourhood connection. Fewer people know and interact with their neighbours and are members of community groups.

Relationships Australia is the home of Neighbour Day, Australia's annual celebration of community, encouraging people to connect with those who live in their neighbourhood. Neighbour Day flips the loneliness discussion to encourage Australians to focus on the importance of belonging – to start people thinking about how they can put their energy into creating positive and meaningful social connections with people outside of their normal groups and relationships.

Sam will share findings from recent research and experience, tap into the 'hive mind' to discuss what meaningful social connection and inclusion looks like - and look at how we can achieve this together in our neighbourhoods.



KARYN WALSH **CEO MICAH PROJECTS**

Karyn is CEO of Micah Projects, a not-for-profit providing services across Brisbane to over 6,000 people experiencing poverty, domestic and family violence, social isolation and many experiences of adversity and trauma impacting on their health, wellbeing and community participation. Micah Projects works with people across Queensland. Karyn has worked in the community services sector for over 40 years in direct service delivery, management, governance, collective and collaborative work.

ANNETTE GILLESPIE **BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MICAH PROJECTS**

Annette Gillespie has 30 years in hospitality including venue and event management, culminating in the ownership and operation of two Brisbane restaurants. Her role with Micah Projects incorporates business development, management of the cafes and responsibility for training through Skilling Queenslanders for Work funding. Annette has managed and developed the program from a 12 week theory-based TAFE course and created the 20 week paid traineeship model which provides hands-on experience, better access to Micah Projects support services and improved social skills.



BREAKING SOCIAL ISOLATION, BUILDING COMMUNITY **AN EVALUATION OF THE HOPE ST CAFÉ SOCIAL ENTERPRISE, MICAH PROJECTS.**

Micah Projects has invested in the development of a social enterprise to ensure the social inclusion of people who experience social isolation and or barriers to employment and training. The social enterprises were funded by an investment by the Micah Projects Ltd Board, the Queensland Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, the Skilling Queenslanders for Work Program, the Ian Potter Foundation, community and philanthropic donations. The seed of social enterprise was planted after the completion of Brisbane Common Ground in Hope Street, South Brisbane to engage tenants in meaningful activity and potential income streams. The Hope on Boundary Café opened its doors in West End in 2016 with the second café opening in 2017, a tenancy of Brisbane Common Ground. The cafes have a two pronged approach – delivering funded training programs geared toward employment and a community volunteer and engagement program aimed at breaking social isolation through connection to community and meaningful activity. The presentation will incorporate the program logic, reflections and findings from an evaluation undertaken by Dr Ingrid Burkett.



SAMEER DESHPANDE **ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR (SOCIAL MARKETING)** **ACTING DIRECTOR (SOCIAL MARKETING @ GRIFFITH)**

Sameer Deshpande (Ph.D., University of Wisconsin-Madison) is an Associate Professor and Acting Director of Social Marketing @ Griffith at Griffith University, Australia. Sameer also serves as the Editor-in-Chief of *Social Marketing Quarterly*. Prior to joining Griffith University, Sameer worked at the University of Lethbridge, Canada and National University of Singapore. Sameer conducts research in social marketing. In that regard, he has published and presented in over 100 peer reviewed publications, book chapters, and leading international conferences. Sameer co-authored with Nancy Lee in 2013, *Social Marketing in India*. Over 20 years, Sameer has also trained, taught, advised, and consulted with students, government, corporate, and non-profit organisations in Canada, U.S., Australia, India, and Singapore. Sameer has conducted research or helped design interventions to promote alternative rides under alcohol influence, alcohol abstinence during pregnancy, hand hygiene among healthcare workers, family time together during meals, contraceptives to plan family, physical activity, and healthy diet.

ADOPTING MARKETING STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THE SOCIAL ISOLATION CHALLENGE

DETAILS TO FOLLOW SHORTLY