

Connecting for Better Health project Loneliness Awareness Week Webinar Agenda

**Wednesday 5 August 2026
12pm – 1pm AEST**

This webinar will highlight recent findings from the Monash University [Connecting for Better Health \(C4BH\) research project](#). Presenters will introduce Loneliness Awareness Week, discuss the relationship between loneliness, social isolation and chronic disease, and showcase the new loneliness and social isolation heat map of Australia. The webinar will also explore findings from research examining community preferences for programs and services designed to reduce loneliness and social isolation.

Time	Agenda Item	Presenter
12.00pm – 12.05pm	Welcome and Acknowledgement of country	Professor Cathy Mihalopoulos
12.05pm – 12.10pm	Loneliness Awareness Week 2026	Ms Sharon Clifford
12.10pm – 12.20pm	Social health dynamics around the onset of long-term health conditions	Dr Fikru Rizal
12.20pm – 12.30pm	Exploring the C4BH loneliness and social isolation heatmap	Professor Arul Earnest
12.30pm – 12.40pm	Community preferences for loneliness intervention features	Ms Sharon Clifford
12.40pm - 12.55pm	Panel Q&A session	All presenters
12.55pm – 1.00pm	Wrap up and evaluation	Professor Cathy Mihalopoulos

Please complete our brief evaluation survey by scanning the QR code below. Thank you.



Presenter profiles



Professor Cathy Mihalopoulos, PhD

Health Economics Group, School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Monash University

Professor Cathy Mihalopoulos is head of the inaugural Health Economics Group within the School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine at Monash University. She is nationally and internationally recognised for her expertise in the use of economic evaluation techniques (both within trial and modelled), particularly within the context of mental health. She has extensive academic teaching experience in health economics and coordinates two Monash University Masters programs. She is a Scientific Advisory Board member of Ending Loneliness Together.



Dr Muhammad Fikru Rizal, PhD

Health Economics Group, School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Monash University

Dr Muhammad Fikru Rizal is a Research Fellow at the Health Economics Group within the School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Monash University. He is a medical doctor by training from Indonesia and holds a PhD in Health Economics from the Centre for Health Economics, Monash Business School. His research focuses on the socio-economic causes and consequences of health and healthcare service use. He has experience applying advanced econometric techniques to large-scale longitudinal and linked datasets, conducting inequality analyses, and performing health economic evaluations.



Professor Arul Earnest, PhD

Biostatistics Unit, School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Monash University

Professor Arul Earnest is a leading academic research biostatistician at the Biostatistics Unit & Deputy Head, Clinical Outcomes Data Reporting and Research Program (CORRP) at the School of Public Health & Preventive Medicine at Monash University. He has authored a successful textbook, three book chapters, and 245 publications in peer-reviewed international medical journals, earning 19 scientific awards and scholarships and his expertise in biostatistics is well-recognised. Professor Earnest collaborates with diverse audiences, including government bodies, non-government entities, patient advocacy groups, professional organisations, and the private sector.



Ms Sharon Clifford, MPH

Health Economics Group, School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Monash University

Ms Sharon Clifford is a Public Health Research Fellow and Project Manager, managing the [Connecting for Better Health project](#), which aims to reduce loneliness and social isolation and improve chronic disease management. With training in public health, psychology, and community development, Sharon is passionate about improving community health outcomes, particularly by addressing loneliness and social isolation. She also contributes to her research work through her volunteer role with the Frankston Social Inclusion Action Group and membership of Ending Loneliness Together.