



MEDIA RELEASE

Loneliness is one of the most pressing issues facing older Australians today and is one of the key topics to be discussed at this year's 42nd National Conference of the Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG) to be held in Canberra later this month.

The steps to identifying and treating loneliness is one of the key themes to be discussed at the conference with the latest findings from a current research project to be presented by Megan Corlis from Helping Hand.

"One of the central findings from this research, albeit preliminary, is that most older people experience what we call 'temporal loneliness' that is, they don't feel lonely all the time just at certain times of the day," Ms Corlis said.

"For these people, a monthly dinner dance or bingo night is not enough to help them overcome loneliness so more needs to be done".

One method the research has identified is through the use of social networking sites such as Australian-based About My Age (www.aboutmyage.com).

"Older Australians aren't interested in posting photos online or quick status updates. For them, a post is more likely to be like that of a letter with more detail and words," she said.

"Facebook is rarely going to appeal to older people. They prefer to network with people of their own generation, that's where sites such as About My Age are attractive".

Ms Corlis said one of the ways to overcome older Australians reluctance to go online was to teach them computer skills on their own computer in their own home.

"One of the key strategies to help older people overcome loneliness is to get them online and the best way to do that is to sit with them one-on-one and walk them through the steps; a one hour workshop at a neighbourhood centre is not going to be much use to them," she said.

The theme for this year's 42nd National AAG conference is 'Translation and Transformation'. The conference will be held at the National Convention Centre in Canberra over a three-day period commencing Wednesday, November 25. The Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing is the platinum sponsor of the conference.

The conference will be opened by the Association's patron, The Governor-General Ms Quentin Bryce AC and will be attended by the Minister for Ageing, the Hon. Justine Elliot and keynote speaker, Professor George Rebok from the John Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland USA.

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For more information on the 42nd National Conference of the AAG please go to www.aagnationalconference.com For media enquiries, or to arrange an interview, please contact Matt Mitchell on 0431 980 365 or matt@mitchellpr.com.au