

Community Support and Services Committee

From: Hyahno Moser [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 3 August 2021 6:11 AM
To: Community Support and Services Committee; Mansfield Electorate Office
Subject: Social Isolation and Loneliness Inquiry - Submission Logan Together and Australian Institute of Play
Attachments: Submission Loneliness QLD Parliament Logan Together & Australian Institute of Play .pdf

Dear Community Support and Services Committee

Thank you for your inquiry into loneliness and social isolation. Thank you for the opportunity you have provided for me to discuss this topic. This is an issue that I personally have been watching grow over the past 7 years across the Queensland community.

The fast-paced nature of our society and the ensuing social changes have resulted in a growing reduction of children's horizons, reducing most children to indoor environments, resulting in increasing amounts of children feeling lonely and isolated, and unable to test, trial and build the social skills necessary to support a healthy childhood.

Below is our submission into this very important inquiry and I look forward to this issue being brought to light and addressed. Children are growing up fast and need us to act with urgency.

1. Please watch this short video from some of the Children of Logan we represent in this submission. Loneliness and Isolation are prevalent issues these children raise. <https://youtu.be/bsSOwdf63f8>
2. We invite the overseeing Committee to visit the Woodridge Neighbourhood Play Network and come meet these children and see the magic unfolding.
3. We invite you to attend the [2021 Childhood Summit](#) and hear directly from the children and community
4. We extend the opportunity to present our findings directly to the overseeing committee. We would welcome further opportunity to expand on the learning from the most recent project in Woodridge by providing support to help other developing Neighbourhood Play networks.

Thanks again and talk soon

Hyahno Moser

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Logan Together pays respect to the Traditional Owners and custodians of the Land on which our community lives, works and plays, the Yugambeh and the Yuggera people. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and seek their guidance and wisdom to ensure all children get the best start in life. We extend our respect to all Elders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Logan and across Australia and commit to putting into action the [ChangeFest Statement 2018](#) in our everyday practice.



Submission: Inquiry into social isolation and loneliness in Queensland - On Behalf of Children in Logan

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About Logan Together and the Queensland State Government:

Logan Together is a place-based initiative and Collective Impact Community Development model aimed at taking a coordinated approach to tackle the health and wellbeing concerns of children aged 0 to 8 in Logan. This is done in many ways, including supporting children's physical literacy and physical development through enhancing conditions and opportunities for Play (the work of childhood).

In 2020 Logan Together partnered with Queensland Government's Department of Sport and Recreation to deliver on the Queensland Government's new strategy '*Activate*' and the correlating new place-based approach to increase movement and physical activity in children, called '*Community Active Partnership*'. The aim was to co-create solutions with the community and support community to take the lead in addressing the health concerns for their children.

Logan Together long-term plans to address the play-deficits for Logan children have resulted in local community members teaming up with play-focused professionals in forming The Australian Institute of Play a not-for-profit charity. The vision is: **LOCAL PLAY, EVERY DAY**

About the Australian Institute of Play (AIP):

AIP purpose is to promote, enable and protect Australian children's right to play and to support children to have a voice for their play, especially where they live. The organisation aims to secure child-led free play to build resilience and wellbeing for and with children, where play is not a privilege. Evidence demonstrates that play is many things to children, including an intervention tool for health, wellbeing, efficacy, and life satisfaction.

Inquiry Position Statement:

Social researcher Hugh Mackay (2021) has highlighted that the greatest punishment for humans is social isolation and solitary confinement. The recent, on the groundwork of the Logan Together has cemented in our minds the importance of neighbourhoods for our children. Being able to play every day with local families creates strong connections between children and adults. In a world where alarming rates of child obesity, decline of physical activity, mental illness, screen addiction and family violence are present, the importance of supporting strong relationships and building local communities street by street has never been more pressing.

Play by definition is self-directed, free chosen, autonomous, and intrinsically motivated. Today, children's opportunities to engage in this of play is in decline. When children start to disappear from or are marginalised from spaces that make up everyday life in our society – it is of deep concern. The causes are diverse and complex reaching into education, health, psychology, environment, geography, design, and sociology (S.A. Alexander et al., 2014). Consequently, serious cardio-metabolic disorders and mental health issues have been on the rise in adolescence and early adulthood (Herrington & Brussoni, 2015; Sallis, Prochaska & Taylor, 2000; Salmon, Owen, Crawford, Bauman, & Sallis, 2003; Tremblay et al., 2015).

Children's play is central to human and cultural development. It is the activity built into our species to shape growing brains and bodies for adulthood, it supports immediate health and wellbeing of the child's brain and body (Gray, 2011). When children can play where they live every day, the positive ripples for the whole community are immense. Supporting communities, street by street, where there are appropriate conditions is a powerful, low cost, empowering and simple tool for combating loneliness and social isolation.

Inquiry Term of Reference:

- the nature and extent of the impact of social isolation and loneliness in Queensland, including but not limited to:
 - identification of and consultation with vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals or groups at significant risk across the life course
 - the interplay of COVID-19 with this issue

The unprecedented circumstances of the pandemic and lockdowns across the country has no doubt had impacted families and children in a myriad of ways and given us all an immediate experience of social isolation. The Royal Children's Hospital's '[National Child Health Poll](#)' in 2020 found that more than one-third of parents reported that the pandemic has had negative consequences on their children's mental health. Given the changes to society for children (rise of both parents working, access to more prevalent childcare, introduction of compulsory Prep year, rise of technology use), there is a coinciding decrease in the amount of free play that children participate in. Loneliness and social isolation in children can have a long-term impact on their further life success. Given the difficulties of obtaining data from children, statistical information about their experience of loneliness and isolation is an area for improvement.

<https://theconversation.com/are-the-kids-alright-social-isolation-can-take-a-toll-but-play-can-help-146023>

- the causes and drivers of social isolation and loneliness, including those unique to Queensland

The Australian Institute for Health and Welfare lists the following as causes of social isolation and loneliness. We have adapted these specifically to focus on children.

- Disconnection from community, impact of family circumstances (economic and relationship), emotional neglect, transitions in life (i.e., change of schools), stigma of loneliness, safety concerns for children playing in the neighbourhood, personal disability, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/social-isolation-and-loneliness>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7375781/>

From the work conducted in the neighbourhoods with these programs so far, Logan Together and Australian Institute of Play is aware that the concern of adults is a barrier for children being able to play where they live. Parents voice concern about road safety, not knowing their neighbours and the impact of competing time priorities (working and not being home after school, extra-curricular activities). Once the relationships are built over time, trust grows in the street between the adults, and this has positive flow on effects for the local children.

- the protective factors known to mitigate social isolation and loneliness

“Play is the way children make sense of the world in which they live!” Maxim Gorky
Being able to play supports child development and the development of a strong sense of belonging and relationships with peers and adults. Supporting children to be able to play every day, where they live is a key protective factor for mitigating social isolation and loneliness.

Neighbourhood Play Networks

The voices of the children captured below are from those who took part in a 6month facilitated program aimed to rebuild connections and trust in one neighbourhood. The transformation has been phenomenal and healing for all involved.

During the exit interviews for the Neighbourhood Play Network sessions, the children had the following to say when asked (a selection of responses, full clip below):

What three words would you use to describe your neighbourhood?

Fun, playful	Not boring	Honest
Amazing	Loud	Healthy, Physical, and social
Wonderful	Lots of noise helping people	Happy and interesting
Exciting	Helping because people help	

Before the Neighbourhood Play Network, what three words would use to describe your neighbourhood?

Trashy	Boring	Unsafe
Busy	Sleepy, used to be very sleepy	Scary
Uncool	Sad	

What is better indoors or Outdoors?

Outdoors because you get more vitamins from the sun

Outside because there are so many people here know and we know each other
Have someone to comfort you when you are lonely.
Have friends.

How do you feel about your neighbourhood now?

I feel excited

It is getting better, getting to meet people.,

Happy. It is more comfortable for me now because I know everyone If something bad happened around the street, I know people who could help me

It is adventurous and it is heart-warming.

How many kids do you know in the street now?

Multiple

About 12 maybe more

What has been the best part about the Neighbourhood Play network

I got to meet new people and have more friends

We have other kids to play with, so you are not lonely

You can play every day, sometimes after school and sometimes before school

Why is it good for you to have a neighbourhood full of children?

We used to just stay indoors all the time and now it is just interesting to come outside and not be on technology and stuff.

I have someone to talk to with my personal stuff.

You can rest your eyes and come outside and be active and healthy.

You need friends not to be lonely

You can hang out with each other and play.

If this were all to stop tomorrow, what would that mean to you?

I would protest. We are children, we need friends. We just need people there to support us
I would still play.

I wouldn't listen.

I wouldn't be able to see people anymore

I would be sad.

Disaster.

It is our street; you can't make up the rules for what we want to do.

<https://youtu.be/bsSOwdf63f8>

- the benefits of addressing social isolation and loneliness, examples of successful initiatives undertaken nationally and internationally and how to measure social isolation and loneliness in Queensland to determine if implemented strategies are effective
- how current investment by the Queensland Government, other levels of government, the non-government, corporate and other sectors may be leveraged to prevent,

mitigate and address the drivers and impacts of social isolation and loneliness across Queensland, including:

- services and programs such as health and mental health, transport, housing, education, employment and training, sport and recreation, community services and facilities, digital inclusion, volunteering, the arts and culture, community development, and planning for accessible, inclusive and connected communities
- targeted support to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and those most at risk

Support from the QLD Government since 2014 via Nature Play QLD led to the beginning of a state-wide advocacy program for play as well as the development of the Neighbourhood Play Project. This culminated in the creation of a documentary that has been view tens of thousands of times, in over 39 different countries focussed on following a process with two neighbourhoods in Caboolture/Wamuran. The film and more about the project can be found here: <https://natureplayqld.org.au/the-neighbourhood-play-project>

Following on from this work Logan Together has further refined the community process and continued along the same lines to work more extensively within communities of Kingston, Woodridge and Eagleby.

Additionally, Logan Together and the AIP are committed to the place-based approach and codesign methods associated with delivering the logan-wide Play-Action Plans. These plans have many strategies and deliverables. The plans are focused on building capacity of the community to support children and their play long-term, delivering immediate play opportunities for Logan children and families, consistently consulting children on their play-needs, shaping high quality play environments, evaluating, and collecting data to support future directions staying relevant and well as building opportunities for children street by street.

Actions from here:

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2. We invite the overseeing Committee to visit the Woodridge Neighbourhood Play Network and come meet these children and see the magic unfolding.
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Future solutions could involve:

- Facilitation of more Neighbourhood Play Networks to grow and build momentum in the local communities

- Significant campaigns to increase the common understanding of the value of play for children as protective factors for many health areas including mental health, addressing isolation and loneliness.
- Creation of free resources for use by parents facilitating neighbourhood play
- Creation of targeted place-based child-centric adventure play areas, open during child play times, staffed with qualified Playworkers
- Partnerships with local councils to support this work on the ground
- Partnerships with Universities to gather further data regarding the benefits of local play to help inform and support initiatives

- the role, scope and priorities of a state-wide strategy to address social isolation and loneliness, considering interactions with existing Queensland and national strategies.

Reflecting the AIP's commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, we would welcome further development of a state-wide strategy that included children as well as adults to address social isolation and loneliness. This strategy should specifically acknowledge a child's right to play to mitigate against loneliness and social isolation. Addressing children specifically would show that Australia is leading the way and valuing the importance of play to help combat this growing problem.

ABC Story - <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-07-07/logan-children-playing-outside-in-neighborhood-first/100268152>

The Project story - <https://www.facebook.com/TheProjectTV/videos/979299752836902>

Logan Together and the AIP supports consideration of the Productivity Commission's 2020 'Mental Health Report' which highlighted that social isolation and loneliness can impact anyone, at any time and outlined taking a preventative, early intervention, and treatment approach.

https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-05/171663_ending_loneliness_together.pdf

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Lodged by:

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