



Douglas Shire Community Services Association Ltd T/A

Mossman Support Services

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ACN 603 136 42917th August 2021

Dear Secretary,

Re: Neighbourhood Centres and the Parliamentary Inquiry into Loneliness and Social Isolation

The Douglas Shire Community Services Association Ltd T/A Mossman Support Services is one of 140 Neighbourhood and Community Centres (NCC's) around Queensland responding to loneliness and social isolation in our local communities. Neighbourhood Centres are place-based social infrastructure that foster connection, belonging, participation and inclusion.

Neighbourhood Centres welcome everyone, regardless of race, gender, sexuality, religion, age or social status and by their very nature build connections between individuals and organisations, particularly those who are isolated, vulnerable and disenfranchised.

Our centre offers many opportunities for social connectedness including –

- Weekly community lunch – prepared and served by Volunteers it is a great space to connect, enjoy a home cooked meal and meet other people. The lunch has been in operation since 2010 and is a very successful programme with over 1,324 meals being prepared and served.
- Opportunity to connect with others whilst accessing weekly Oz Harvest and daily food rescue. Food is 'Freely' available to access at any time, subject to availability, which provides regular opportunity for people to connect with services and support and enjoy the social connectedness and camaraderie that flows from regular contact.
- Our emergency relief programme is available twice a week and this is an extremely important leverage to connect individuals and families to our community development programmes and support services.
- Mossman Men's Shed is open three days a week and is an excellent way to connect and share knowledge, skills, companionship and having a yarn with other men. This is especially important for men who are feeling lonely, disadvantaged or are new to the area.
- Art and Craft group is held weekly, a free activity in a relaxed and small group – guidance and materials provided. This group has been functioning for over 10 years and is an excellent way to engage with others whilst creating and learning new skills in a small and respectful environment.
- Sewing group to make 'Boomerang Bags' – sewing to make a change, everything starts at grass roots levels, and this is our Community Centres way to contribute and make a difference to the 'single use plastic' campaign. This group is delivered by a Volunteer Coordinator who shares skills and provides guidance.
- Community Garden Programme – The community garden is a great place to socially connect and have conversations about points of interest in a garden setting. We have volunteering opportunities in the garden which flow over into the Community Kitchen where volunteers collaborate, share skills and knowledge.
- Over the past 13 years our Service has coordinated and hosted a 'Community Christmas Day Lunch' for community. This has become an important calendar event for individuals and families who are lonely, disadvantaged, vulnerable and want a place to be on Christmas Day.
- Our Service also holds regular functions and events which are dedicated to groups i.e., celebration of Volunteers, Seniors etc.

In considering how to reduce loneliness and social isolation in Queensland, the Queensland Government needs to adequately resource Neighbourhood Centres as the key pieces of social infrastructure they are.

Our centre supports the Queensland Families and Communities Association (QFCA) submission to this inquiry. QFCA is the peak body of Neighbourhood Centres in Queensland and recommend:

- **Increase Neighbourhood Centre Investment** to a minimum of 2.5 workers plus overheads per centre to ensure adequate resourcing of place-based pro-connection responses
- **Strength Based Awareness Campaign emphasising the key role of NCC's**, creating increased awareness of centres as hubs of connection for social isolated individuals
- **Enhance Neighbourhood Centre Digital and Physical Infrastructure** to connect isolated individuals in communities using hybrid online and in-person methods
- **Resource QFCA to deliver additional NCC sector support** including implementing a NCC Reporting Framework which measures social isolation and loneliness.

Additional resourcing by the Queensland Government can further enhance the Neighbourhood Centre sector's capacity to invest in community-led, place-based solutions to the problem of loneliness and social isolation in our state.

Kind regards



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Mossman Support Services
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Endorsed by –

Heather Taylor, Manager, Mossman Support Services

