



17/08/2021

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

Dear Secretary,

The Mareeba Community Centre 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 multiple services to community. These include but aren't limited to information, advice and referrals, food relief, a work for the dole program, financial assistance, free computer usage, form filling, self-help groups or information sessions and medical transport for the elderly and disadvantaged. Additional to these services, run directly through the funding received for the Neighbourhood Centre program, our Centre also provides three different child protection oriented programs, Emergency Relief, No Interest Loans Scheme and much more.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julie Theakston', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Julie Theakston  
Manager

