



3 English St.
PO Box 124
Malanda QLD 4885
Phone: 07 4096 6634
ABN: 18 743 735 011

Website: www.echoes.org.au
Facebook: ECHO Malanda

Dear Secretary,

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

The ECHO Empowering Services Neighbourhood House 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.

ECHO Empowering Services is a funded social service provider based in Malanda Queensland. We are a place-based service governed by a local elected Committee of Management and have been serving the South-East Atherton Tablelands for 30 years. ECHO Empowering Services exists to support the community's disadvantaged, frail, aged and younger people to maintain their dignity and independence (our mission).

ECHO is the funded neighbourhood house for our area and provide:

- Individual and family community support services;
- Emergency relief and financial aid;
- Community transport;
- Events, activities and workshops;
- In-home aged care services;
- and host local community groups and visiting social service organisations

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:



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- **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 'Donna Cifuentes', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Donna Cifuentes

Community Engagement & Development Coordinator

ECHO Empowering Services Neighbourhood House

3 English Street

[Redacted address line]

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