

17th August 2021

Ref. EA1-8/2021

Committee Secretary
Community Support and Services Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000
Email: cssc@parliament.qld.gov.au


Dear Sir,

RE: INQUIRY INTO SOCIAL ISOLATION IN QUEENSLAND

The National Council of Women Queensland (NCWQ) is a non-government umbrella organisation with broadly humanitarian and educational objectives and works to improve conditions for women and their families, especially the most vulnerable. The NCWQ represents nearly 40 women's organisations and welcomes the opportunity to comment on this important matter.

This submission has been prepared by the NCWQ Advisers, Deslyn Taylor (Education Adviser), Jennifer Ann Davies (Arts, Letters and Music Adviser), Dr Kathryn Mainstone (Health Adviser), Dr Pat Pepper (State Coordinator, Environment Adviser), Dr Donnell Davis (Habitat Adviser), Tracey Martin (Rural, Regional and Remote Women Adviser) and me.

Yours sincerely,



Chiou See Anderson
President of the National Council of Women Queensland
Email info@ncwq.com.au
Ph: [REDACTED]
www.ncwq.org.au/

INQUIRY INTO SOCIAL ISOLATION IN QUEENSLAND

Executive Summary of Recommendations

The impact of social isolation is widespread. In this submission, the effects on education, domestic abuse, health, well-being, urban design, rural and regional and remote women are addressed and specific recommendations in these areas advocated to alleviate negative aspects.

- Education
- Domestic Abuse
- Health
- Well-Being
- Urban Design
- Rural, Regional and Remote Women

Education

NCWQ recommends that the Queensland Government should:-

- consider **Education** as an **essential service** and put procedures in place to keep schools open if possible. This is really the most effective way of ensuring that the effects on health, education and domestic abuse exacerbated by COVID lockdowns can be addressed.
- Ensure all people working in schools are vaccinated
- Ensure all students are vaccinated if possible
- Ensure Parents are given an introduction on how their children will work online so that they understand and are able to support if this becomes necessary
- Ensure parents/guardians are aware of online dangers including sexual exploitation and cyber-bullying and what they can do to help.

Domestic Abuse Recommendations

NCWQ recommends that the Queensland Government should ensure:-

- That **Law Reform** and **Increased Punishment** for perpetrators become reality.
- That **Specialist Safe Houses or Facilities** for those under threat **be Provided Immediately**.
- That **Specialist Police Services or Teams** be provided to respond to the **Issue at Hand**, to provide **protection and safety without having to wait**.
- That the many **existing organisations** providing counselling services and/or programs have built in specific **Modules on Respect and Resilience** to strengthen clients.
- That there are **revised systems to validate the outcomes** of existing programs, organisations and forms of counselling. Replacing models for measuring outcomes is recommended.

Health Recommendations

NCWQ recommends that the Queensland Government should:-

- Promote education of GPs regarding the risks to the health of the elderly of loneliness and social isolation. Getting them to quickly screen for this using validated screens such as the Berkman-Syme Social Network Index and the UCLA Loneliness Scale would at least make them aware that this is a problem that needs addressing.
- Promote education of GPs regarding what resources in the community are available for them to refer the patients to. It appears that online resources are far more apparent in the US and the UK than they are in Australia. Perhaps this is one thing which the government could fund reasonably easily?
- Increase funding to mental health services across the state by approximately 50%.

Well-being Recommendations

NCWQ recommends that the Queensland Government should: -

- Promote the benefits of volunteering and the many organisations listed on QG website (www.healthdirect.gov.au), Volunteering Queensland (volunteeringqld.org.au), citizen science opportunities (conservationvolunteers.com.au), community gardens.
- Raise the awareness of carers of the above so that they can advise their loved ones or clients appropriately of opportunities in volunteering.
- Support research to identify the drivers influencing the effectiveness of Nature based interventions.
- Support empirical research on the effectiveness of Intergenerational Programs and promote Intergenerational Programs with measurable beneficial effects.

Urban Design Recommendations

NCWQ recommends that Queensland Government proactively provides:

- culturally appropriate **toolkits for our people** tropical and sub-tropical regions to redesign their micro-environments, homes, and communities to prevent and mitigate isolation, loneliness, and mental health impacts
- avenues to work with **local government to enable redesign** of neighbourhoods and cities to optimise social interaction with safety with productivity through
 - community plan enforcement / adherence
 - regional planning to address and fund 'connected communities' and social planning
 - enabling 'building better cities', 'sustainable cities' and 'regenerative urban design'
- a pathway through **Australia National Cabinet** (formerly COAG) to work with the Federal Minister for Cities for funding and systems to accelerate Covid-healthy cities as a fundamental principle for the Olympics 2032 redevelopment

- work in concert with NGOs to multiply positive outcomes for people of all ages, for return on investments in “right to shelter” to address homelessness (i.e. every \$3 per female changed lives)

Rural, Regional and Remote (RRR) Women Issues Recommendations

NCWQ recommends that the Queensland Government should: -

- Develop and co-design tailored solutions with rural and remote communities to support domestic abuse victims.
- Educate health care service providers about rural and remote women fleeing domestic abuse and ensure they have follow-up strategies and introduce mandatory reporting.
- Work with professional services associations in the legal, financial planning and accounting professions to implement and strengthen ethical standards when their advice is or might affect the financial security of RRR women.
- Investigate the extent and impact of control that rural women have on their finances e.g. home ownership or co-ownership, actual control over the structure, job security, work history, superannuation, and their own views on control and influence.
- Encourage a “best practice” approach to volunteering to ensure that volunteering does not further deplete the financial security of RRR women and bolsters their support groups.
- Ensure that government funding for initiatives, events and support services requires partnering with established not-for-profit groups already operating in rural and remote areas.
- Through grant terms ensure that RRR women’s support groups maintain their own ethical and clear operational objectives at Board level for the support of RRR women and have a majority of women and advisors that are based in RRR and that the Australian Bureau of Statistics remoteness index is utilised when identifying RRR areas.
- Ensure the financial sustainability of support groups who work every day to overcome isolation and support RRR women.

INQUIRY INTO SOCIAL ISOLATION IN QUEENSLAND

Education and the Digital Divide:

“Many parents are worried the disruptions of COVID lockdowns and school closures may affect their children’s mental health and development.”

Impact of Social Isolation may differ depending on the child’s situation. It can be exacerbated by:-

- Living in medium or high density with limited access to outdoor play space
- Only children having to rely on their parents to play and help with school tasks
- Not all students having access to computers, webcams, microphones and a fast Internet connection. All of these are needed to facilitate online learning and maintain social contact with friends
- Situations where English is a second language and online learning materials are in English which could increase stress
- Children and parents with hearing or other disabilities relying on online material not designed to cater to these students.
- The inability to do practical activities e.g. sport, Science Lab, Dance etc which cannot be done during lockdowns and these are very important social activities for many children

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

“In June 2020, in the context of COVID-19, a group of researchers in the UK [reviewed 80 studies](#) to find how social isolation and loneliness could impact the mental health of previously healthy children. They found social isolation increased the risk of depression and possibly anxiety, **and these effects could last several years.**”

This would then have an ongoing effect on the child’s state of mind and ability to concentrate on education.

(<https://thesector.com.au/2021/01/15/are-the-kids-alright-social-isolation-can-take-a-toll-but-play-can-help/>)

Another study by OECD

“The COVID-19 pandemic is harming health, social and material well-being of children worldwide, with the **poorest children**, including homeless children and children in detention, hit hardest. School closures, social distancing and confinement increase the risk of **poor nutrition** among children, their **exposure to domestic violence**, increase their anxiety and stress, and reduce access to vital family and care services. Widespread digitalisation mitigates the education loss caused by school-closures, but the poorest children are least likely to live in good home-learning environments with internet connection. Furthermore, **increased unsupervised on-line internet use has magnified issues around sexual exploitation and cyber-bullying.**”

(<https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/combating-covid-19-s-effect-on-children-2e1f3b2f/>)

If a child is malnourished, stressed, lonely and socially isolated they cannot learn successfully.

Loneliness and isolation are particularly difficult for children and leads to anxiety and depression which could last for years. This would have an ongoing effect on the child’s state of mind and ability to concentrate on education. The most successful approach to easing this problem is to keep schools open and operating providing a safe and supportive environment and encouraging

children's social development and mental well-being.

Recommendation

The Queensland Government

- consider **Education** as an **essential service** and put procedures in place to keep schools open if possible. This is really the most effective way of ensuring that the effects on health, education and domestic abuse exacerbated by COVID lockdowns can be addressed
- Ensure all people working in schools are vaccinated
- Ensure all students are vaccinated if possible
- Ensure Parents are given an introduction on how their children will work online so that they understand and are in a position to support if this becomes necessary
- Ensure parents/guardians are aware of online dangers including sexual exploitation and cyber-bullying and what they can do to help.

Deslyn Taylor (Education Advisor Qld)
M Ed.(QUT), B.A. (U.Q); Grad. Dip. Comp.Ed. (Q

Domestic Abuse

Responses throughout COVID have been varied, creative and helpful. Predominantly electronic media, teleconferencing and Televisitor schemes (info@itccovid.org) supported great numbers of isolated citizens to some degree. **Arts, Letters and Music** suffered, particularly performers, support crews, visual artists and musicians who are not considered "essential workers" so financial difficulties were added to those of social distancing and isolation. **Voices from the world of Arts/Letters/Music continue to work with the goal of PROTECTING WOMEN AND CHILDREN.** (National Council of Women Queensland Inc., National Council of Women Australia, International Council of Women, United Nations). The voices, however, need **SAFE PLACES TO TELL THEIR STORY and STRONG PROGRAMS TO REINFORCE RESPECT AND RESILIENCE!** **The Lebanese Council of Women** is currently focussing on social and emotional intelligence to support women and girls to cope in tough situations. (ECICW GA 27 May 2021).

The COVID pandemic has revealed existing and increasing examples of Social Isolation, with particular, repeated state, national and global concerns raised about domestic abuse. The **NATURE and extent of the IMPACT of domestic abuse** cannot be underestimated, as writer **Jess Hill** has stated. Replacing the term 'domestic violence' with 'domestic abuse' was critical "...because in some of the worst abusive relationships, physical violence is rare, minor or barely present." ('See What You Made Me Do: Power, Control and Domestic Abuse' Jess Hill: Black Inc. www.blackincbooks.com: 2019) Enforced poverty, coercive control, and **deliberate isolation** are factors. **Enforced poverty** exists when the 'perceived' breadwinner withholds income and a partner has to work, pay the bills, and take care of the children and household. Differently, in **Ingham**, in North Queensland, coercive control is 'driven' by the cultural mores of a patriarchal society, and numbers of young women feel trapped, housebound; are not 'allowed' to work and not 'allowed' to have their own bank account. (Personal Interviews June 2021) These young women are not visibly

'isolated and lonely' in the traditional sense of the words, as they may have a home, furnishings, food and other things that a person struggling with alternate abuses may not – however, they ARE lonely, they ARE isolated from the freedoms that many enjoy and their homes are not necessarily SAFE. **Information on other elements of domestic abuse as a driver for social isolation, loneliness and poverty was sent to the Honourable Di Farmer MP and a response indicating delivery of 140 recommendations was received on 29 April 2020. Your ref: MO/ID# 5770; CSYW 01737-2020.**

There also exist the elderly, ill, rural, remote dwellers – (boats, trawlers, Circus, the Brethren: Distance Ed/Education Qld.); variations in support systems for migrants and refugees – African community members have greater numbers, and greater cash flow but the Hmong refugees are quieter, poorer and fewer in numbers, and had low literacy levels in their mother tongue, so are more isolated and the elders are often very lonely. (Cairns African Association/Yang, Chang, Xiong 2002). Our Australian Indigenous Women in local and remote communities suffer. **Safe Houses, genuine communal UNDERSTANDING of the nature of suffering/isolation, Literacy and Resilience Training** are distinct protective factors.

Some existing Protective Factors address geography, housing, social positioning, Illiteracy, poverty, hunger, coercion, violence, sexual abuse, job loss, illness, ageing, accidents and racial differences. Data is compiled by organisations, including the OECD, Relationships Australia and TAFE colleges. Clients, however, recorded by Relationships Australia, TAFE colleges and Community Care links etc. are often forced by existing laws, rules, and/or outsourced counsellors to attend sessions. This differs greatly, from a Yarning Centre or Safe House, where people can talk safely and comfortably and not be forced by socio-legal systems and rules. **New programs run by PCYC help youth from remote and local areas to rebuild self-confidence and resilience, using sport, fitness training, outdoor activities and boxing. A new, free program for women who have been or likely to be experiencing domestic and family violence. RUBY can link participants into existing local services for support, information, referrals and resources. tara.white@pcyc.org.au**

Argentina and Brazil implemented revised laws and constitutional change to provide POLICE STATIONS FOR WOMEN. www.bbc.com 2020 (NCWQ/NCWA). **France** continues to engage in the "Grenelle of Domestic Violence" with the High Court. (GREVIO Nov 2019: ICW). The Conseil National des Femmes Francaises continues to reiterate the terms of **The Istanbul Convention of 11 May 2020** – protesting against femicide **in Poland and Turkey.** www.cnff.fr **Ukraine's** data reveals the most significant violence throughout COVID is against young girls and boys. (Lyudmyla Porokhnak NCWUkraine 25 May 2021). **Belgium** highlights the tragic issue of FEMICIDE yet again. (Magda de Meyer: ICW/European Women's Lobby Brussels. 2020/2021). **IN AUSTRALIA ..one Woman a week is killed by a man she's been intimate with."**(Jess Hill: See What You Made Me Do:p.2) **We do not hear the word 'femicide' here, yet it exists. Canberra's SLEEP BUS** is a healthy example of protection WHEN IT IS NEEDED – although this utility has been thwarted throughout Covid. (NCWA 2021). **Tunisia** currently works hard to support and protect women and families in rural areas.(ICW 2021). **Turkey** continues online support to combat isolation with classes including Pottery, Painting, Languages and Literacy learning.(ICW 2021). **Israel** currently experiences another wave of COVID-19 with **many Israeli and Palestinian children** in hospital suffering from the Delta strain. (Hedva Bachrach: Israel ICW: 20 June 2021). **Malta, Indonesia, Fiji** and others suffer new Covid Crisis.(Violet Caruana 17/7/21: BBC 16/7/21) Women stand together for protection and support in this dire crisis.

Recommendations:

- That LAW REFORM and INCREASED PUNISHMENT for perpetrators become reality and not 'just' recommendations waiting for action.(Ref: Response from Hon Di Farmer MP/Joint Select Committee to inquire into family law, chaired by Hon Kevin Andrews MP/ Pauline

Hanson: 14 June 2021:

[www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Family_Law_System/Family Law.](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Family_Law_System/Family_Law.))

- That **SPECIALIST SAFE HOUSES or FACILITIES** for those under threat, beaten, bleeding, locked out of their homes and under further threat **BE PROVIDED IMMEDIATELY.**
- That **SPECIALIST POLICE SERVICES or TEAMS** be provided to respond to the **ISSUE AT HAND**, to provide protection and safety without having to wait for dictates from an already long winded and congested family law system. **SPECIALIST POLICE FACILITIES ARE POSSIBLE***
- That the many **existing organisations** providing counselling services and/or programs have built in specific **MODULES ON RESPECT AND RESILIENCE** to strengthen clients. Many services, particularly counselling, weaken clients and this prohibits resilience and independence. (further information and data can be provided for this.)
- That there are **revised systems to validate the outcomes** of existing programs, organisations and forms of counselling. More Funding does not always generate success, particularly in addressing social isolation and loneliness. Replacing models for measuring outcomes is recommended.

Jennifer Ann DAVIES – Advisor Arts/Letters/Music- National Council of Women Queensland Advisor Arts/Letters International Council of Women/Teacher/Trainer/Journalist/Comm Dec: Attorney General Queensland/Writer/International Poet/Counsellor Migrant Women/BA JCU/Post Grad Dip Ed.UQ/Marketing USQ.

Health:

That social isolation in old age significantly increases the risk of an early death has been accepted for some time e.g. a longitudinal study of ageing in the UK assessing the risk of death of 6,500 men and women aged 52 and older from 2004 to 2012, found that “socially isolated seniors have an increased risk of early death regardless of their health and demographic background, whereas the link between loneliness and early death exists only for participants with underlying mental or physical concerns Although both isolation and loneliness impair quality of life and well-being, efforts to reduce isolation are likely to be more relevant to mortality”

[Steptoe, A, Shankar, A, Demakakos, P and J Wardle \(2013\) Social isolation, loneliness, and mortality. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences Mar13, 201219686; DOI: 10.1073/pnas.1219686110; https://theconversation.com/social-isolation-trumps-loneliness-as-early-death-indicator-in-old-age-13069](#)

Another study based on 6,123 women and 5,110 men aged 50+ from the English Longitudinal Study of Aging (ELSA) found that the association between social isolation and memory decline arises because social isolation is associated with increased memory decline rather than poor memory leading to increases in social isolation.

[J Gerontol B Psychol Sci Soc Sci, 2020, Vol. 75, No. 2, 367–376 doi:10.1093/geronb/gbz152](#)

A 2013 study, measuring cognitive function at two time points in a cohort of more than 6,000 older individuals taking part in the ELSA found people who reported having fewer social contacts and activities at the beginning of the study, showed greater decline in cognitive function, as measured by verbal fluency and memory recall tasks, after four years.

<https://www.the-scientist.com/features/how-social-isolation-affects-the-brain-67701>

However social isolation can have a detrimental effect not only on the elderly but all ages. The National Youth Mental Health Foundation surveyed 3,575 young people who received services at a headspace centre between 25th May and 5th June 2020 about the impact of COVID-19 on their current mental health and well-being. 74% reported that their mental health was worse since the outbreak of COVID-19 and gave a number of reasons including the loss of routine, social isolation, relationship issues, and anxiety over education / job or health concerns related to COVID-19.

<https://headspace.org.au/assets/Uploads/COVID-Client-Impact-Report-FINAL-11-8-20.pdf>

For those who are experiencing social isolation, a doctor's appointment may represent a unique opportunity to identify people who may be at risk and to start the process of intervention.

Recommendations: -

The Queensland Government:

- Promote education of GPs regarding the risks to the health of the elderly of loneliness and social isolation. Getting them to quickly screen for this using validated screens such as the Berkman-Syme Social Network Index and the UCLA Loneliness Scale would at least make them aware that this is a problem that needs addressing.
- Promote education of GPs regarding what resources in the community are available for them to refer the patients to. It appears that online resources are far more apparent in the US and the UK than they are in Australia. Perhaps this is one thing which the government could fund reasonably easily?
- Increase funding to mental health services across the state by approximately 50%.

Dr Kathryn Mainstone, NCWQ Health Advisor, MBBS(Qld), DRCOG, FRACGP

Well-being

Measures e.g., nature-based intervention, intergenerational programmes and volunteering, being taken both here and/or overseas, which might change behaviour and improve physical, mental and social health and well-being are considered.

Volunteering: In a study of 3,740 people aged State Pension Age and over from ELSA, the researchers found the beneficial effects of volunteering appeared to stop when respondents stopped volunteering. Also, those who participated in higher numbers of activities and who felt appreciated for their work received the best outcomes, regardless of whether the activities were classed as formal or informal,

[*Matthews, K and J Nazroo \(2020\) The impact of Volunteering and Its Characteristics on Wellbeing After State Pension Age: Longitudinal Evidence From the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing. J Gerontol B Psychol Sci Soc Sci, 2021, Vol. 76, No. 3, 632–641 doi:10.1093/geronb/gbaa146*](#)

In addition to providing a benefit to the community there are many benefits for the volunteer personally.

<https://volunteeringqld.org.au/volunteers/benefits-of-volunteering/>;
<https://www.wcsu.edu/community-engagement/benefits-of-volunteering/>;
[https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/benefits-of-volunteering e.g.](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/benefits-of-volunteering-e.g.)

- better physical and mental health by increasing self-confidence, combating depression and helping the volunteer to stay physically healthy (lessen symptoms of chronic pain or heart disease).
- making new friends and contacts by committing to a shared activity
- gaining work experience and learning new skills

Listed on the Queensland Government website are many areas and programs where volunteers can perform a useful service to the community and experience the above beneficial affects

<https://www.qld.gov.au/community/community-organisations-volunteering/volunteering> e.g.

- community services e.g. mentoring young people or providing companionship to socially isolated people in nursing homes
- Online volunteering e.g. assisting the State Library to collect digitised photographs, newspapers and documents online.
- Conservation e.g. helping to care and rehabilitate injured and sick wildlife; as a Citizen Science volunteer gathering observations and data to share with researchers. (citizen science opportunities are accessible online and on the ground as part of *Conservation Volunteers Australia's* long-term initiatives supporting Australian native habitat, threatened species, and building biodiversity)

<https://conservationvolunteers.com.au/citizen-science/>

The difficulty, of course, is convincing a depressed or socially isolated person to volunteer and use Volunteering Queensland's register of the volunteering opportunities of organisations and profiles of volunteers. Volunteering Queensland oversee more than 10,000 referrals each year.

<https://volunteeringqld.org.au>

Nature based interventions (NBIs) can change behaviour and promote improved physical, mental and social health and well-being. Shanahan *et al* identified 27NBIs at preventing illness, promoting well-being and treating specific physical, mental or social health and well-being conditions. They categorized the NBIs into those that change

- the environment in which people live, work, learn, recreate or heal (e.g. the provision of gardens in hospitals or parks in cities) and
- behaviour (e.g. engaging people through organized programmes or other activities).

They also noted the range of factors (such as socioeconomic variation) would influence the extent to which these interventions succeed and recommended research to identify the drivers influencing the effectiveness of NBIs.

[Shanahan D.F., Astell-Burt T., Barber E.A., Brymer E., Cox D.T.C., Dean J., Depledge M., Fuller R.A., Hartig T., Irvine K.N., Jones A., Kikillus H., Lovell R., Mitchell R., Niemelä J., Nieuwenhuijsen M., Pretty J., Townsend M., van Heezik Y., Warber S. and K.J. Gaston. \(2019\) Nature-Based Interventions for Improving Health and Wellbeing: The Purpose, the People and the Outcomes. *Sports* 2019, 7, 141; doi: 10.3390/sports7060141 \[www.mdpi.com/journal/sports\]\(http://www.mdpi.com/journal/sports\)](#)

Community gardens: Social connection can be enhanced by participants helping each other with gardening tasks, and meeting new people and engaging in conversation, as evidenced by a study of the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney's Community Greening program with Western Sydney University <https://www.rbg Syd.nsw.gov.au>

[Stories New research reveals the extraordinary benefits of community gardens](#)

Intergenerational Programs

An intergenerational playgroup program (IPP): Older people and people with dementia in aged care facilities and child carers (parents, grandparents or nannies) and children aged 0–4 years old who attend playgroup at the facility participated in an IPP. The pre-test post-test results revealed a

declining trend in one scale only (energy/fatigue) and no significant differences in a depression assessment tool specifically designed for older people. The IPP provided meaningful activities to all participants. Aged care residents had something to do while child carers were delighted to watch the growth and development of the child/children they brought to the IPP. The researchers considered the IPP a successful innovative intergenerational program intervention where older people and people with dementia interacted and connected with a number of people from different generations. [Skropeta C.M., Colvin a. and S. Sladen. BMC Geriatrics 2014, 14:109](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-014-0109-1)
<http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2318/14/109>

Life Story Encounter Program (LSEP): Unfavourable views of old people by the young and vice versa can inhibit intergenerational contact, which, in turn, reinforces negative cross-generational age stereotyping (CGAS). In a Life Story Encounter Program (LSEP) study which brought together secondary school students and nursing home residents to share ideas about existential questions of life e.g., about one's core experiences, future plans, and personal values, participants of both generations showed more favourable CGAS immediately after, but also 3 months after the program ended than a control group with no LSEP participation. The researchers considered these LSEP-driven short- and long-term effects on CGAS could be partially explained by the feeling of comfort with and the experience of learning from the other generation. They stressed the importance of intergenerational programs in countries where the number and proportion of older persons in the population is increasing and the socio-spatial separation of the generations is deepening. [Kranz D, Thomas NM and Hofer J \(2021\) Changes in Age Stereotypes in Adolescent and Older Participants of an Intergenerational Encounter Program. Front. Psychol. 12:658797. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.658797](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.658797)

Reviews of intergenerational program (IGP)s: In a systematic review of IGPs focusing on the program design and objectives as well as in outcomes, Matin *et al* found programs have enriched the lives of both children and older people. For the children, there was evidence of higher self-esteem, better academic performance, improved social skills, increased motivation to learn and more positive attitudes toward themselves and older adults. For older adults, there was evidence of more productive use of time, reaffirmation of value, greater satisfaction with life, improved cognitive function, improved mental and physical health, and improved self-esteem. But there was considerable diversity in the design of studies and in the program's effectiveness evaluation. They concluded more investigation into the evaluation, implications, and knowledge of participants' motivations was needed and more randomized design studies are required to support researchers and practitioners in the development of future intergenerational programs. [Teresa Martins, Luís Midão, Silvia Martínez Veiga, Lisa Dequech, Grazyna Busse, Mariola Bertram, Alix McDonald, Gemma Gilliland, Carmen Orte, Marga Vives & Elísio Costa \(2019\) Intergenerational Programs Review: Study Design and Characteristics of Intervention, Outcomes, and Effectiveness, Journal of Intergenerational Relationships, 17:1, 93-109, https://doi.org/10.1080/15350770.2018.1500333](https://doi.org/10.1080/15350770.2018.1500333)

In another a systematic review identifying the benefits for school-age children and older people aged 60 years or over, Giraudeau & Bailly found significant differences in positive attitudes, behaviours, confidence, and competence for the children, and significant differences in mental and physical health, and quality of life for older adults. However, those benefits were not systematic. They observed that while there are a large number of IGP studies, they were mostly descriptive (implementation of programs, activities, comments on activities, etc.) and do not evaluate the effects on the intergenerational relationships (with no defined outcomes). Among their recommendations for future IGPs and research on these programs Giraudeau & Bailly stress studies should include detailed information about the participants (age and gender of all participants, health status and place of residence of the older people, and characteristics of children, including their perception of older people), the motivations of the participants (how they are informed and prepared to participate in the IGP), the quality of interactions (number, duration, and frequency). [Caroline Giraudeau & Nathalie Bailly Intergenerational programs: What can school-age children](https://doi.org/10.1080/15350770.2018.1500333)

and older people expect from them? A systematic review (2019) European Journal of Ageing 16:363–376 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10433-018-00497-4>

Recommendations:-

The Queensland Government

- Promote the benefits of volunteering and the many organisations listed on QG website (www.healthdirect.gov.au), Volunteering Queensland (volunteeringqld.org.au), citizen science opportunities (conservationvolunteers.com.au), community gardens.
- Raise the awareness of carers of the above so that they can advise their loved ones or clients appropriately of opportunities in volunteering.
- Support research to identify the drivers influencing the effectiveness of Nature based interventions.
- Support empirical research on the effectiveness of Intergenerational Programs and promote Intergenerational Programs with measurable beneficial effects.

Dr Pat Pepper, NCWQ State Coordinator, NCWQ Environment Adviser, PhD.

Ngullingi - Urban Design

Designing our homes, neighbourhoods and cities to mitigate isolation

Isolation is defined generally as ‘separation, segregation or quarantine’. Urban Design can be described as the physical, functional and aesthetic structures that enable people to engage with each other to feel a ‘sense of belonging’ and to feel ‘sense of place’ in their environment. This report recommends 4 actions for Queensland Parliamentary Committee, as part of a joint submission.

I address options for designing to prevent and mitigate the impacts of forced or voluntary isolation, in several scales and across generations. There are different needs for children, youth, families and the ageing populations. **A special category is the Homeless.** Some of these have been addressed in UD4P Urban Design for Pandemics Series in NCWQ quarterly reports, but the matter of loneliness can be structurally considered as well. However, much can be done at community level (tactical) while others must call upon all levels of governments to cooperate to deliver long-term infrastructure for wellbeing. With the announcement of the 2032 Olympics for South East Queensland region, there is an impetus to design-in proven features to prevent and mitigate isolation for current and future generations.

In our own homes, there are many things we can do to address the feeling of comfort, accessibility, cohesion, and peace without feeling forcibly detained. There are **10 principles**(CDI: 2015) to guide us, but generally the person-focus has many variables, but only one selfish perspective of success. Different ages require different options, where children need to connect and get physical, youth need communications, single adults need exercise and socialising, families need own space balanced with connection, while the ageing may require all of the above depending on their health and housing. This brings a suite of possible tools for decision-making for interior, neighbourhood and city-wide planners.

In our homes, we desire a place of comfort, sanctuary, elegant enough for virtual gatherings, but functional enough to operate a business by zoom from home. We adapt our homes for all work, rest and play. We seek a balance of silence and noise, balancing smells of home-cooking and cleanliness (without wet dog or dead sox), scenery like warm textures blended with smooth tabletops (inviting creativity), television, laptops, radios, podcasts, concerts, and in some cases photos, murals, shrines and quiet spots. But none of these micro-level designs meet the need for play and exercise. Without that balance, we are vulnerable to mental health impacts.

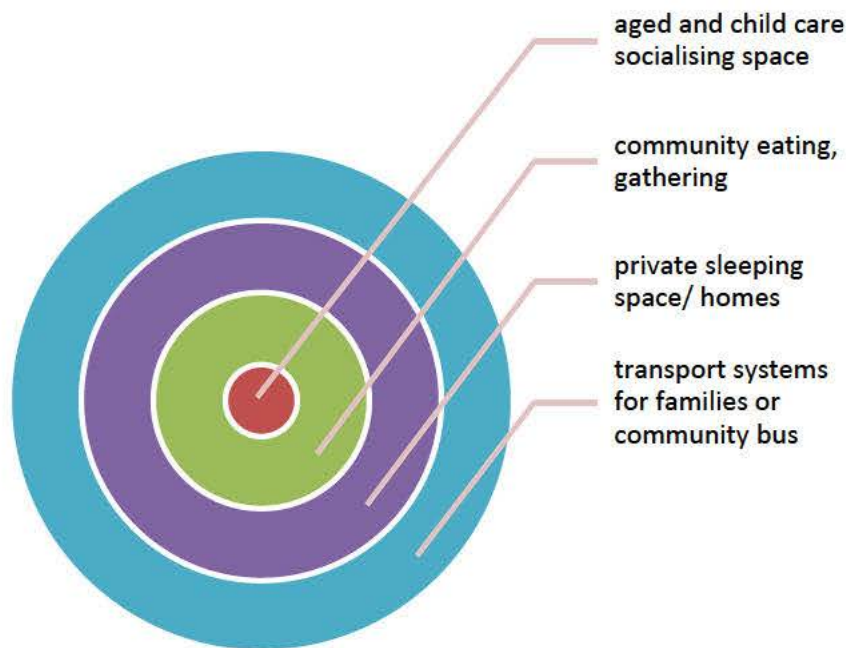
<https://www.urbandesignmentalhealth.com/edition-6.html>

In Queensland and Australia generally, we appreciate the outdoors for exercise, whether it is a backyard, the cul-de-sac, a local park, a sporting field, boulevard, shade trees, the local creek, walking tracks or bike paths, all in close proximity to our homes.

Tactical urbanism is the term used for another scale, and many countries have culturally appropriate responses. Toolkits address: urban massage, urban acupuncture, greening the carpark, repurposing public realm, widening walkways, reassigning streets to pedestrian parades or bikeways, so that social distancing is achievable, generally making the local neighbourhood inviting to exercise and feel alive as we interact with natural ecosystems (especially bird song, wind in the trees, fresh air smells, beaches, waterways, ponds, and perhaps quiet without engine noises.) This embraces **streets for kids** design guidelines. According to Commonwealth Human Ecology Council, statins found in natural ecosystems rate highly as human health benefits that have been monetised to calculate the value of nature towards wellbeing. SDG 3 (World Economic Forum, Australian Institute of landscape Architects, International Architects, Ecosystems Services Association, Commonwealth Human Ecology Council). <https://globaldesigningcities.org/wp-content/uploads/guides/designing-streets-for-kids.pdf> Similarly, rights of the older person should be considered for elderly, disabled, and temporarily impaired to participate.



Neighbourhood level could include built for purpose co-housing models practiced since 1970s in Australia, and since forever in indigenous communities across the Pacific countries. In summary: principles are interactive gathering by chance and by design between all generations. The safe spaces for watching over older and younger generations are in the middle. All areas are walkable. The only dangerous activity is on the outer perimeter with building projects or transport systems, where adults participate. Examples are: Hammerby Sweden, NASA city USA, Freiberg Germany, and 13 Co-housing systems in Queensland. (AIA: 2016) (FoSEQ 2012)



This may look different from where you live in an apartment or stand-alone house. However, inside our homes we can reflect these same philosophies.

City-wide approaches require interaction of all levels of governments, because built infrastructure - to enable better natural infrastructure – requires integrated planning. The Australian Housing Urban Research Institute (AHURI) articulates systems for this **government cooperation**. According to Charles Montgomery, there are 9 aspects for a 'Happy City'. In his prior work on social disconnection, there are 10 sets of toolkits.

However, in Australia, we may learn from our nearer neighbours about regenerative cities (UN Habitat), rewilding cities (Attenborough), 'more -than-human' cities (QUT) and Singapore tropical cities approach to managing density, Covid-wellbeing, productivity, environmental stewardship, climate change and human rights. With changing climate patterns, the tropical urban design lab is more relevant to more Queensland residents (Northern Australia & JCU) along with Subtropical Design (QUT).



Homelessness and Isolation are often synonymous.

In Federal budgets this year, homelessness was a loud noise that did not receive enough attention, as explained by National Foundation for Women's Budget Gender Analysis. Although, every dollar invested into social housing boosts GDP by \$1.30. <https://nfaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Housing.pdf>

*The ability to access safe, secure and appropriate housing is an especially significant issue for women who have lower average incomes and less savings and superannuation than men. Nationally, while **young adults (60 per cent female)** are the predominant clients of specialist homeless services, **245,000 women aged 55 and over**, and **430,000 women aged 45 years and over are at risk of homelessness**. Women aged 45-55 have nearly double the risk of homelessness compared to men and older women who rent have more than two times the risk of homelessness as those with a mortgage. Women are also at higher risk of losing their housing due to domestic violence, rates of which have increased since COVID-19.*

In the Queensland budget, QCOSS analysis reports:

Establishment of a \$1 billion Housing Investment Fund to drive new supply to support current and future housing need. Returns of \$160 million over 4 years are anticipated from the Fund. The Housing and Homelessness Action Plan provides \$1.9 billion over 4 years to boost housing supply and increase housing and homelessness support across Queensland. This comprises:

- *\$1.8 billion of expenditure over 4 years to increase the supply of social housing and upgrade the existing social housing property portfolio (comprising \$60 million over 2 years, with \$30 million in 2021–22, to fast-track immediate social housing projects and initiatives and prepare a pipeline of work for future years)*
- *\$94.9 million over 4 years, with \$23.7 million in 2021–22, to support the housing and homelessness service system and deliver better outcomes for Queenslanders (\$20 million over 4 years to expand domestic and family violence support services;*
- *\$20 million over 4 years for homelessness initiatives including through head-leases and crisis housing and supports;*
- *\$54.9 million over 4 years to fund essential continuing services delivered through the First Housing Action Plan)*

<https://www.qcoss.org.au/publication/report-gender-impact-analysis-of-the-qld-budget-2021-2022/>

It is imperative to design-in these important features to prevent and mitigate isolation. Q Shelter is active in this space. I interviewed Carina, PhD candidate for youth and homelessness, to discover the more. This is worthy of its own report. The 'Right to Shelter' is an article from the UN Human Rights Declaration in 1948.

In 2019-2020 one community group changed lives for over 50,000 families and females, by investing \$153,000 with time, expertise, and in-kind support. This return-on-investment is outstanding and should be a benchmark for governments to aspire towards. (Sorooptimists AGM 2021) With every \$3 positively impacting security for a girl or family, this return on investment should be a benchmark for government funds as well. The multiplier effect of having government programs working in concert with NGO is vital for creating lasting change. For transparency, long-term participation models with voice for **decisions, participatory budgeting and evaluation** of government programs is highly

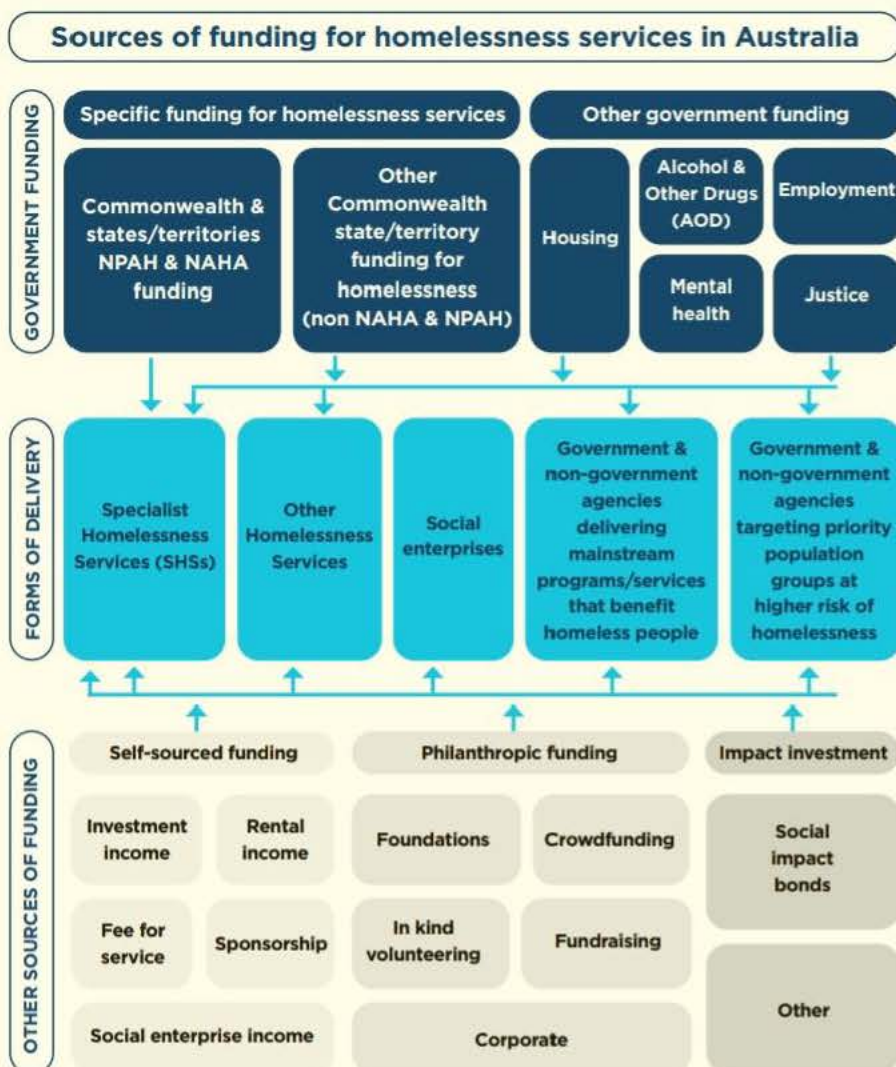
recommended. The following diagram shows how funding addresses homelessness from the McKell Institute policy forum on homelessness. Savings to Government by Provision Secure Housing

Scenario 2020	A	B	C
10 years savings (250,000 dwellings)	\$5,385,939,367	\$8,617,502,987	\$10,771,878,734
First term savings (20,000 dwellings)	\$260,749,213	\$417,198,741	\$521,498,427
Percentage of individuals moving from crisis accommodation or homelessness	50%	80%	100%

These savings assume that: 1) there are 1.8 persons per dwelling and 2) savings commence one year after construction begins. [Get the data](#) Created with [Datawrapper](#)

The last diagram is the role of each level of government in decision-making and implementation modes. (AHURI: 2021) This helps NGOs to navigate what is possible for strategically addressing our isolation problems in Queensland.

FIGURE 6 FUNDING STRUCTURE FOR SHS¹⁰²





Recommendations:

NCWQ recommends that Queensland Government proactively provides:

- culturally appropriate **toolkits for our people** tropical and sub-tropical regions to redesign their micro-environments, homes, and communities to prevent and mitigate isolation, loneliness, and mental health impacts
- avenues to work with **local government to enable redesign** of neighbourhoods and cities to optimise social interaction with safety with productivity through
 - community plan enforcement / adherence
 - regional planning to address and fund 'connected communities' and social planning
 - enabling 'building better cities', 'sustainable cities' and 'regenerative urban design'
- a pathway through **Australia National Cabinet** (formerly COAG) to work with the Federal Minister for Cities for funding and systems to accelerate Covid-healthy cities as a fundamental principle for the Olympics 2032 redevelopment
- work in concert with NGOs to multiply positive outcomes for people of all ages, for return on investments in "right to shelter" to address homelessness (i.e. every \$3 per female changed lives)

Ngullingi means us or together in Yugambeh language. I write this on Yagaurpul land with respect to elders who cared for this country.

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Dr Donnell Davis

BBus, ASA CPA (audit), Post Grad Public Policy, Masters Env Mmt, Doctorate Professional Studies

Rural, Regional and Remote (RRR) Women and Social Isolation Issues:

Domestic Abuse can be exacerbated in rural areas with coercive, financial and emotional abuse thriving in social isolation. Rural and remote women should be recognised as a high 'at risk' group across all form of domestic violence and abuse, due to the enhanced risk and limited access to support services due to distance. Tailored solutions developed and co-designed in rural and remote communities that support the victims, and their ongoing employment and child schooling are needed. These services need to be delivered in a way that reaches the women. Existing counselling online and/or telephone services of support need to be further strengthened with technical and hardware support made available if required. Local service providers need to be educated about the heightened risks of social isolation and their professional duty should include inquiring about the mental health well-being, safety and support being utilised by people suffering social isolation. Also there needs to be follow up by mental health services across at-risk communities including rural and remote women and their families.

GPs and emergency services staff and nurses should be educated to the indicators and risk associated with rural and remote women seeking support and intervention to address social isolation for themselves and their families, when fleeing domestic violence and other forms of abuse and ensure those health care service providers have strategies to offer and a follow up mechanism for these women. They need to understand what a rural and remote woman suffering financial abuse, leaving a perpetrator, and travelling for two days across the State, looks like when she attends an emergency department at 2 am asking for assistance with a sick child, suffering from exhaustion whilst alone and in transit fleeing abuse during lockdown. These indicators are being missed by primary health care providers with criticism levelled at the mother for seeking assistance at 2:00am. Fleeing domestic abuse during lock-down is one of the exemptions to travel – this needs to be taught and highlighted with support offered by emergency services. Reporting should be mandatory.

Suitability and availability of professional services is another issue. Government must work with the professional services associations in the legal, financial planning and accounting professions to

implement and strengthen their ethical standards when advising clients. Clear documentation of the circumstances of all affected parties together with a mandatory written warnings should be given to clients (not just the paying client by certified mail or in-person) when particular courses of legal and accounting structures are used that may enable, exacerbate or over time lead to financial insecurity, financial control and the unfair treatment of women and their children, particularly in the fields of succession and estate planning. Such written warnings and advice by the professional services advisor to all potentially affected parties (in the household or further afield) would highlight key risk areas such as limited opportunities for those affected being able to off-set financial insecurity due to their location – limited job opportunities, fewer support services, free work being undertaken within a family business, limited earning capacity over time due to child rearing or supporting a ‘family’ business, promises of financial support made and the entrenched and long-term unequal bargaining and negotiating power that is/may be being demonstrated when financial and accounting decisions and arrangements are being made that affect these women on succession or estate planning. Not having at least part financial control over one’s home is a key indicator of financial control, potentially financial abuse and long-term financial insecurity for women in rural and remote areas. Professional advisors should have a duty to issues mandatory and in some cases ‘specific’ warnings to all affected parties and it should be part of their professional training and ongoing ethical obligations.

There is a need to investigate the number and impact on women in rural and remote areas and the degree to which, if any, they personally have financial control over the shelter of themselves and their children, in particular in agricultural areas and the links this may have to financial abuse, coercive control and long-term social isolation due to not being financially able to move closer to support and services, even to the local town which is also likely to be depleted of services, employment, childcare and safe and affordable housing.

Volunteering is part of rural women’s DNA, supports to overcome isolation and builds connection and could be better utilised by

- Encouraging a ‘best-practice’ approach to volunteering (Volunteering QLD) e.g. expenses, training induction etc and structured programs to ensure the best experience for volunteers so that they are not exhausted or used in place of developing necessary and permanent social programs. Funding needs to be focused in this area to assist not-for-profits and other groups to develop and maintain their volunteering programs which underpin the sustainability of important community groups. The role of volunteering keeps many rural and remote areas operating – supporting ‘best practice’ volunteering and organisations that rely on volunteers, is essential. Actual funding is required – despite the good resources of volunteering QLD.
- Putting in place strategies to promote online engagement in volunteering, including during the planning and development phase of programs. Support would be needed with software and hardware in some instances and programs being required/encouraged to offer on-line options for joining by Zoom or otherwise.

Targeted Funding & Operational Matters: There must be a requirement of partnering with established groups already operating on a not-for-profit and charity basis in rural and remote areas. Partnering with existing providers of similar programs who are embedded in RRR – who operate state-wide, not just local groups, is essential. The sustainability of support groups who work every day to overcome isolation and support RRR women must be a government priority. **The existing RRR women’s groups that operate state-wide are increasingly financially unsustainable**

Importantly, RRR women’s support groups must ensure their own ethical and clear operation at Board level for the support of RRR women such that efforts needs to be made to support the payment of sitting fees and fully covering Board expenses (this may also need to be included in the

scope of some grants). This is essential to ensure that strategic decisions and Board focus remains on the constitutional objectives and RRR women. Further, many women who volunteer on these Board may be in financial distress themselves and ensuring they are paid sitting fees is essential for their own financial stability. Contributing to poor financial instability of RRR women as women serve on their own RRR support group – is non-sensical and government policy should not allow this to happen.

Accurately Categorising & Analysing RRR Women: The Australian Bureau of Statistics remoteness index should be utilised to identify RRR areas for funding. For example, funding for women's domestic violence or other support when those 'regional areas' are classified metropolitan – is misleading (if this is occurring) and leaves rural and remote women without support which there is a perception of RRR areas being supported. Seeking a 'regional' classification garners more funding. We would also ask that other key indicators such as women on boards statistics for QLD also be broken down by the ABS remoteness index so that we can see if women in rural and remote areas have parity with metropolitan women and what work may need to be done.

Recommendations

The Queensland Government: -

- Develop and co-design tailored solutions with rural and remote communities to support the domestic abuse victims.
- Educate health care service providers about rural and remote women fleeing domestic abuse and ensure they have follow-up strategies and introduce mandatory reporting.
- Work with professional services associations in the legal, financial planning and accounting professions to implement and strengthen ethical standards when their advice is or might affect the financial security of RRR women.
- Investigate the extent and impact of control that rural women have on their finances e.g. home ownership or co-ownership, actual control over the structure, job security, work history, superannuation, and their own views on control and influence.
- Encourage a “best practice” approach to volunteering to ensure that volunteering does not further deplete the financial security of RRR women and bolsters their support groups.
- Ensure that government funding for initiatives, events and support services requires partnering with established not-for-profit groups already operating in rural and remote areas.
- Through grant terms ensure that RRR women's support groups maintain their own ethical and clear operational objectives at Board level for the support of RRR women, have a majority of women and advisors that are based in RRR, and that the Australian Bureau of Statistics remoteness index is utilised when identifying RRR areas.
- Ensure the financial sustainability of support groups who work every day to overcome isolation and support RRR women.

