

18.08.21

Submission – An Individual Experience.

My individual experiences based upon the following points are:

1. *What has been your experience of being socially isolated or lonely? What were the circumstances around becoming socially isolated or lonely?*

I have experienced two main forms of isolation over the past few years.

My wife passed away late 2017 & i found myself isolated from a normal full life that we had enjoyed for some 40 plus years. Whilst i had wonderful family & friend support, the isolation that comes from such a situation & uncertainty as to where to turn to is almost deafening.

Secondly, the isolation that has come with Covid over the past 18 months has been awkward at times. This position has been highlighted for me as i had recently become widowed & i also retired early 2020.

2. *What sort of support do you think would be helpful to you when you are experiencing loneliness and isolation? Has anything you tried worked to reduce feelings of isolation? This can be any kind of support eg Family, Friends, Community, Government support, guidance, advice etc?*

Over the past few years i have used & relied upon my family & friends to help me in my times of need. Having had counselling to assist me after losing my wife has enabled me to be better equipped to handle my needs in general. I am not really aware of Government support that may be available, which may in part be my laziness, but it may also be that such support should be more readily advertised.

I used counselling for a few years after my wife died to assist with grief & the isolation of lifestyle that comes with such a loss. I hasten to add that being able to access quality counselling since Covid has taken such a hold has been difficult at best – the severe increase in demand for these services is now well out of control, & sadly the huge increase in mental health issues will linger for many years to come.

3. *Do you feel there are barriers to overcoming feelings of social isolation and loneliness? If so, can you explain what they are for you? Please write as many as you like and it can be any kind of barrier you feel such as personal, social, technology, cost, access.*

As mentioned, in the past few years i've experienced becoming widowed & Covid. My feelings of loss have been magnified by Covid.

Not knowing where to readily turn to for support or what is actually available is a challenge. I know 'Google & other online facilities' can provide many answers, but that doesn't always give the required or sought after answer.

Perhaps a Government or public entity could collate what support services are currently available & importantly some detail about each service. Then services could be created for what may be missing – i consider this Alliance is heading in this direction?

4. Did the COVID-19 pandemic affect you and your situation with social isolation and loneliness? Can you explain how it affected you?

As mentioned in 1. above, i've experienced two main circumstances, becoming widowed & Covid which were not part of my proposed lead up to retirement. I consider Covid has simply highlighted my loss & the associated feelings of isolation & loneliness.

Covid has brought many mixed issues & feelings to our lives – yet we are having to deal with this on our own, as i feel the various Government bodies are not equipped to assist people in this area.

On top of this the number of plans that i have had to change, cancel or defer as a result of Covid has made life uncomfortable, as it feels like we may never regain the freedom we had prior Covid! This is compounded by current State Government controls which aren't even uniform across the country. And yet, i haven't lost a business or a job as a result of Covid as numerous people have done, but what this means to me is that Government has no clear understanding at all of what impact they are inflicting on we taxpayers, which simply adds to the feeling of desperation, isolation & loneliness.

5. Are there any other experiences you'd like to share?

I am fortunate to be a self-funded retiree, but that means i pay for everything. I am attempting to create a program to assist cares & patients of cancer – but at the moment that feeling of isolation is high due to the changing uncertainty of Covid & the impacts on society.

Martin Connah

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