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**Kenmore Bridge Club Inc.**

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1st September 2021

Committee Secretary  
Community Support and Services Committee  
Parliament House, George Street  
Brisbane Qld 4000  
By email to: [CSSC@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:CSSC@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Chair and Committee Members

We welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into social isolation and loneliness in Queensland.

This submission is made on behalf of Kenmore Bridge Club Inc (KBC). KBC is one of the larger clubs in Australia and highly respected for its welcoming, inclusive and no fear bridge playing environment. Players are free to arrive on their own without a playing partner and the club guarantees them a game. The Club is 10 years old with membership growing to its current level of 430 within three years of opening. The current facilities are the membership growth barrier.

An important element of many clubs and especially KBC is the need to offer an environment suited to social inclusion. The Club membership has an average age of 72, 70% female, 20% pensioners. With such a membership profile the club faces continued demand for facilities that provide for an inclusive social environment. Such important occasions as Christmas gatherings are limited to 60 (pre-Covid) due to facility restrictions.

**MEMBERSHIP PROFILE**

Current	430
Gender	70% F; 30% M
Average age	72 (youngest 8 eldest 98)
Pensioners	20%
Wheelchair users	Yes
Hard of hearing/visually impaired	Yes

Playing bridge provides both mental stimulation and social engagement. It requires strategic planning, constructive decision-making, brain agility and cooperation with a partner while communicating with a variety of personalities.

Research shows a positive relationship between playing bridge with wellness and longevity. Regularly participating in a mind-active game such as bridge is known to lower the risk of dementia.

Kenmore as a club is known for the camaraderie amongst its members. Their mutual support of one another in many different ways is what makes this club and many others like it so valuable to its members and their quality of life. The club shares a site with two other community groups and there is a fair amount of interaction between the groups.

*“Dr Niklas Steffens and Dr Tegan Cruwys of The University of Queensland School of Psychology have published findings that indicate social groups are vital to longevity and wellbeing.*

*“Retirees reported a 10 per cent drop in quality of life for every group membership they lost after retiring,” Dr Steffens said.*

*“The research also shows that the more groups an individual belongs to in the first few years after they stop working, the lower their risk of death.*

*“For retirees who belonged to two social groups before retirement, their chance of death was two per cent if they maintained the same number of groups for six years afterwards.*

*“For those who lost membership of one group, the risk of death rose to five percent, while those who lost membership of both groups had a 12 per cent chance of dying in the six years that followed.”*

<https://www.uq.edu.au/news/article/2016/02/want-longer-life-join-club>

We will address the committee’s terms of reference in order.

## **1. the nature and extent of the impact of social isolation and loneliness in Queensland, including but not limited to:**

### **a. identification of and consultation with vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals or groups at significant risk across the life course**

Loneliness affects all of us from time to time. Mostly it is a temporary state, but for some people loneliness lingers – and may even become the norm. Research conducted for the Australia Institute in 2005 reported that about 16% of men and women aged 25-44 agreed with the statement “I often feel very lonely”. The deepest levels of loneliness appeared to be experienced by men aged 35-44 and by

women over 75. (Flood, M: Mapping Loneliness in Australia, Australia Institute, 2005, p10-11) [https://australiainstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/DP76\\_8.pdf](https://australiainstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/DP76_8.pdf)

A recent report by Vic Health identifies loneliness as a public health problem affecting two groups in particular: young people aged 15-25 and people older than 75. <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/letter/articles/vh-letter-47-loneliness>

Similar studies in the UK have suggested that around 5 – 16% of people over 65 report feeling lonely all or most of the time. (Campaign to End Loneliness: Measuring Your Impact on Loneliness in Later Life, nd, p9) <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/wp-content/uploads/Loneliness-Measurement-Guidance1.pdf> The implications of loneliness for older people are significant. Feeling lonely has been linked to the risk of an earlier death, depression, dementia and poor self-reported health. (ibid, p5)

### **b. the interplay of COVID-19 with this issue**

The arrival of Covid-19 in 2020 added to the social isolation and loneliness of many of our members as it did for many others in the general population. The informal networks and connections that the members had formed at the club allowed them to make private arrangements with other members to offer mutual support.

The covid pandemic forced the closure of the club for several weeks. It was eventually able to re-open, but with severely limited capacity. The response of the club was to access an online provider and to develop a program of online bridge sessions for club members. The club offered personalised assistance to those who were unfamiliar with online bridge. The online program has enabled members to continue their association with the club during the lock-down periods and has proven popular – several members have even had a positive experience as they have acquired new online skills.

An online program seems likely to become a permanent component of the KBC offering. Members were in no doubt, however, that they wanted to re-commence face to face bridge as soon as the lockdown restrictions were lifted, demonstrating by their actions that the personal interactions they experienced at the club were a valued element of their membership.

Clubs such as KBC play an important role in helping older people to deal with loneliness. As the results of the study show, they provide access to a community of like-minded people and through them to the wider local community. Being community-based, the barriers to developing a broader social network are less difficult to overcome.

## **2. the causes and drivers of social isolation and loneliness, including those unique to Queensland**

Central to feelings of loneliness is a sense of disconnection from significant individuals and broader social networks. Older people are very likely to experience the kind of social dislocation that can result in their losing touch with key social contacts. They can experience this in many ways:

- The transition to retirement
- Re-location to a new town or city
- Re-location from farm to town
- Downsizing
- Illness/disability of self, partner or friends
- Death of partner or friends
- Living alone
- Financial pressures
- Lack of family nearby
- Release after incarceration
- General limitations of physical and mental capacity due to age.

## **3. the protective factors known to mitigate social isolation and loneliness**

In 1999 the Kenmore Bridge Club (KBC) partnered with a PhD student from the University of Queensland to conduct a study into how the well being of our members was supported through the sense of social identity they gained as a result of their membership of the club. The KBC conducts twelve bridge sessions over six days per week. It has over 400 members, most of whom live within 7km of the clubhouse. The average age is 72. Looked at as a whole, our members would tick each of the causes of social dislocation and loneliness listed above.

The study drew on a large body of research which has been conducted linking social identity – the sense of belonging to a social group built around a common purpose or interest – to benefits in terms of health and wellbeing. The study found that:

- members perceive their participation [in the activities of the club] to be enjoyable, voluntary, informal, and to provide opportunities to mingle with newcomers and diverse people from all walks of life;

- feelings of affiliation were actualized through a collective sense of “us” – in this case as bridge players, club members, and neighbourhood residents;
- participants’ expressions of attachment and commitment were tied to fellow club members rather than to the community space itself;
- shared identification as bridge players and club members led members to want to provide emotional support to others, and to expect such support to be well-received;
- club leaders were recognized as playing an influential role in shaping the club’s identity through policies that supported and promoted norms of inclusion and a sense of caring for “us” as part of and within a local community. (Fong, P et al: “There’s a Bit of a Ripple Effect”: A Social Identity Perspective on the Role of Third-Places and Aging in Place, Environment and Behaviour, vol 53, issue 5, June 2021, pp 540-568)

These various features have made the bridge club a second home for many of its members. As such, it is a place that allows members to feel valued by others and one in which interactions with club members provide them with shared meaning and purpose in their daily lives.

The contribution of the club to helping members overcome feelings of loneliness is best illustrated by the comments of the members themselves, as reported in the study.

Peter, who lives alone, said “the bridge club offers me somewhere to go to meet friends”.

Patricia said “the bridge club opens up so many doors for people”.

Joyce said “When we first moved to this neighbourhood I thought how am I going to meet people? I thought I might really like bridge..... and then I got a flyer in my letterbox”.

Sylvia said “When I lost my husband three years ago, the people at the club were extremely supportive. They’ve helped me through a very difficult situation”.

Judy said “...being a member here, every time I go to the shops it’s ‘hullo Judy’ or ‘hullo such and such’”.

Of course, a bridge club is not everybody’s cup of tea, but as a case study it demonstrates the valuable role a community based group formed around a common interest can play in helping to overcome loneliness in a particular sector of society. While addressing loneliness is not the principal objective of the club, the Committee is very aware of the importance of the social contact that the club

provides, and that for a handful of members it may be their main source of social interaction.

Another important finding by the study was that club members felt a sense of connectedness with other members rather than with the club as a separate entity, and that they used these connections to develop linkages to the wider community.

A third major finding was the importance of the leadership group in establishing a welcoming and supportive atmosphere as a recognisable feature of the club.

The fundamental point to come out of this study is that the best antidote to loneliness is a sense of belonging, of being recognised and valued as part of a group. This applies whether it is a bridge club, a brass band or a bikie gang.

#### **4. the benefits of addressing social isolation and loneliness, examples of successful initiatives undertaken nationally and internationally and how to measure social isolation and loneliness in Queensland to determine if implemented strategies are effective**

Use some of the excellent expertise that has already been developed in our own State. Health costs all around the world are skyrocketing and the COVID-19 experience should have taught us the value of cohesive communities.

Governments tend to look at budgets in silos as departmental budgets. This is short sighted and does nothing to account for expenditure in one department that may lead to savings in another. The costs of servicing mental health and issues presented by an ageing population are enormous and growing. Budgets for community services are always seen as nice to have but not essential. This needs to change. Expenditure in one area will lead to multiples of savings in another and a decrease in the overall costs.

From an article “Scaffolding a Stronger Society” by Catherine Haslam from the School of Psychology, University of Queensland [REDACTED] in The Psychologist May 2018

*“Social isolation touches all our lives and knows no bounds. It affects the young and old, the rich and poor, and those who are in good and ill health. It also places huge pressures on health services – estimates suggest that around 10 per cent of adults suffer from its debilitating consequences, and that GPs spend around 20 per cent of their time dealing with non-health problems with two thirds of their clients raising issues of social isolation (Caper & Plunkett, 2015)*

*The experience of social isolation and disconnection is common across a range of health conditions and contexts. It is a consequence, for example, of social*

*disadvantage, mental health difficulties, addiction, pain, brain injury, trauma and ageing. At a time when people need them the most, social isolation robs them of the resources that flow from belonging to social groups. This is because social group belonging – and the sense of internalised social identity that this provides – has been shown to be a key source of self-esteem, feelings of control, access to social support, and a sense of purpose and meaning. As we see it then, social identity capital is the key outcome that interventions to tackle social isolation need to deliver.*

*The G4H programme is structured around five modules:*

- *Schooling:* Raising awareness of the value of groups for health and of ways to harness this.
- *Scoping:* Developing social maps to identify existing connections and areas for social growth.
- *Sourcing:* Training skills to maintain and utilise existing networks and reconnect with valued groups.
- *Scaffolding:* Using the group as a platform for new social connections and to train effective engagement.
- *Sustaining:* Reinforcing key messages and troubleshooting (held one month later as a booster session). “

[The Psychologist\\_May 2018A.pdf](#)

There are also savings to be made by tapping into community networks that allow people to support one another in informal ways.

**5. how current investment by the Queensland Government, other levels of government, the non-government, corporate and other sectors may be leveraged to prevent, mitigate and address the drivers and impacts of social isolation and loneliness across Queensland, including:**

- a. services and programs such as health and mental health, transport, housing, education, employment and training, sport and recreation, community services and facilities, digital inclusion, volunteering, the arts and culture, community development, and planning for accessible, inclusive and connected communities**



How do we encourage/promote these community based organisations?

- Provision of community spaces – spaces designed with flexibility to accommodate multiple tenancies each with its own requirements as far as floor space, storage space and occupancy time and capable of re-assignment as community interests change eg Brookfield Show ground.
- Provision of facilitators at a local government level to work with local groups to help them set up viable interest groups

A community hub was created at Mt Ommaney but it is not fully supported by the community. There is no full time organisation using it and so the centre lacks a feeling of activity and vibrancy.

The extensive use of the BCC Library and its facilities in Kenmore shows just how much community infrastructure is valued and utilised in Kenmore. Investment in a community hub has been promised by the BCC for over 15 years.

KBC has been working towards the creation of a community hub in Kenmore for well over five years. The hub we envisage will perhaps be unique with a full time 24/7 buzzing bridge club at its centre. From the bridge players other groups will be a spin off to use other parts of the buildings. We already share our present site with Ewaste, an electronic recycling facility that works with disabled youth and a Shed West Men's shed.

We would like to see a hub that included many organisations with many different interests and services, including social services. It would need to be accessible to public transport and preferably be close to other major services. Our idea is to have an active site that feels safe and inviting for local residents that has a bit of an interesting buzz about the place. It could for example include a garden club which may be responsible as a club for creating an interesting, visually pleasing and healthy outdoors area. It needs to be a facility where the community feels you could get advice about social benefits on the same site you can do art classes or motor bike repairs.

Currently the majority of government grants are offered for sport and recreation groups and health agencies. There is much less support – physical, financial and advisory – for community groups and organisations that, like KBC, make a valuable contribution to the wellbeing of their community.

The Kenmore community has been begging all levels of government for over 20 years for a community centre. The importance of a community centre is in it being a complete facility that provides integration of the user groups through common



areas, in encouraging community spirit, and in providing opportunity and exposure to the many activities of other organisations. It should be a place that the community has general knowledge of, is proud of, and wishes to visit.

**b. targeted support to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and those most at risk**

From the Hilda Report we know that there are more 55-64 (65%) on Newstart than those aged 25 to 34 and 26% of older Australians experience poverty. Brisbane is the second most expensive city in which to live in Australia. We believe there are a lot of asset rich expenditure poor people living in the older group in various areas in the city. Disadvantaged groups are not always easily identifiable nor are they necessarily living together in areas that are readily perceived as disadvantaged.

We would also mention that older women are a group that are increasingly featuring in statistics of disadvantaged groups. A lot of elderly women need to feel safe and welcomed to confidently enjoy external activities.

Based on our community demographics, our Centre could cater for:

- Over 55s – indoor activities (bridge, Mahjong, carpet bowls, courses run by U3A, Probus Clubs etc)
- Families: – Mother's Groups, Play groups, Breast feeding Assoc, Parenting Education, Boy's brigade, Computer groups, Bridge for youth, Crisis Intervention...
- New Arrivals: - English classes, settlement support groups, Multicultural Group
- Disabled: - EWaste Connections (social enterprise providing skills, support & friendship through electronic waste recycling)
- Mental health: - Suicide education & prevention network, Mental Health Counselling
- Fitness & Wellbeing: - Yoga, Tai Chi, Health Education
- Meetings for clubs and associations: Rotary, Art Group, Probus, Kenmore National Seniors, View Club, Kenmore and District Historical Society, League of Extraordinary Gamers, Schoolhouse Quilters Kenmore, The Bach Society of Qld, Indooroopilly Garden Club, Bushcare Groups, Japanese Buddhists and many more that the Kenmore Library do not have enough facilities for

**6. the role, scope and priorities of a state-wide strategy to address social isolation and loneliness, considering interactions with existing Queensland and national strategies.**

You could start by the recognition of the game of bridge as a sport and recreation for bridge clubs. This would allow our organisation access to government grants and funding that is presently denied to us. In 2015 a petition was made to the Queensland Parliament for this purpose but was refused. We would not be the only community organisation in the predicament and would ask that the State Government look at its present grant and funding arrangements. The details are as follows:

### **Recognition of the game of Bridge as a sport and recreation for Bridge Clubs Petition 2015**

*Queensland residents draws to the attention of the House that there is a need for the guidelines/definitions for the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing to be amended to allow recognition of the game of Bridge as a sport and recreation for Bridge Clubs which are affiliated with the Australian Bridge Federation and the Queensland Bridge Association.*

*The department will not consider grant applications from Bridge Clubs and/or Queensland Bridge Association because by the terms of their current definitions they have determined that these not-for-profit organisations are not recognised as a sport or a recreation.*

*The International Olympic Committee has recognised the World Bridge Federation as a sport organisation and as such is subject to the same regulatory environment as any other Olympic sport. Bridge was a demonstration sport at the 2002 Winter Olympic Games.*

*Although Bridge provides only minimum physical exertion, it does provide a mentally challenging socially interactive activity which provides a human activity for the purpose of relaxation, health wellbeing and enjoyment. Medical research suggests that Bridge may help in reducing the occurrence of dementia. Physical fitness is required to compete at a high level in major competitions over several days.*

*Your petitioners, therefore, request the House to allow for Bridge organisations to be recognised as a Sport and Recreation to allow them on equal opportunity to submit grant applications which are administered by the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing.*

Signed:\_\_\_\_\_

Date:\_\_\_\_\_



Hon Bill Byrne MP  
Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries  
Minister for Sport and Racing

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Our Ref: CTS 05810/15

**14 APR 2015**

Mr Neil Laurie  
The Clerk of the Parliament  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 30 March 2015 enclosing copies of Petition Numbers 2329-14, 2363-15, and 2364-15 lodged in the Queensland Legislative Assembly on 26 March 2015.

The petitions, lodged on behalf of Bridge clubs by Elizabeth Gibson (Northern Suburbs Bridge Club), to the Honourable Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland, request that the House allow Bridge to be recognised as a sport or recreation activity for the purpose of being eligible for funding under the Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing (the department).

In 2010, the Queensland Government department responsible for sport at the time made a decision the activity of Bridge did not comply with definitions of sport and active recreation held by the department and were therefore ineligible for funding support. Physically active recreation activities are those engaged in for the purpose of relaxation, health and wellbeing or enjoyment with the primary activity requiring physical exertion, and the primary focus on human activity.

This position was later confirmed by similar definitions adopted under the National Sport and Active Recreation Framework. The department also takes guidance from the national system and the recognition process of the leading agency for sport in Australia – The Australian Sports Commission (ASC), noting that no national bridge association is currently recognised by the ASC.

The ASC has a long established definition and criteria for recognising which activities are defined as sport and which sporting bodies are recognised by the ASC as a National Sporting Organisation (NSO). The ASC defines sport as: *'A human activity capable of achieving a result requiring physical exertion and/or physical skill which, by its nature and organisation, is competitive and is generally accepted as being a sport'*. The ASC maintains the final authority for determining if an activity meets the definition of a sport at the national level.

I understand the ASC reviewed the national recognition system and processes. The review was conducted from 2009 to 2013 and included:

- a survey of all State/Territory Departments of Sport and Recreation;
- comparison with the NSO recognition system in other countries, including UK, Canada and New Zealand;
- consultation with ASC programs/areas which have a close working relationship with NSOs; and
- consultation with the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority.

I am advised these definitions remain current in 2015 and therefore the departmental position on the eligibility of Bridge is unchanged.

I hope this information has been of assistance to you. Should you have any further enquiries, please contact Mr Elliot Stein, Chief of Staff in my office, on telephone [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely



**The Honourable Bill Byrne MP**  
**Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries**  
**Minister for Sport and Racing**  
**Member for Rockhampton**

KBC is an example of an organisation that can be used as a way of leveraging organisations that presently exist to create a real feeling of community in an area. Government cannot create a sense of community but it can assist by providing help when community organisations request it. Community lead initiatives need to be supported by Government in ways that will be determined by those individual communities.

## **Summary**

The KBC provides a valuable service to a community of over 400 people in the western suburbs of Brisbane. Although not its primary purpose, the club is aware of the importance of the social contact that it provides, and that for a handful of members it may be their main source of social interaction. The social and health problems associated with loneliness are now well recognised. Local, community driven organisations, such as KBC, offer an effective and low cost solution to some of these problems. By providing modest levels of support for community organisations and community hubs significant savings in other areas, notably physical and mental health, are possible.

Should you require any further information I can be contacted on [REDACTED]

We would appreciate the opportunity to appear before the Committee at the Public Hearing.

Yours sincerely  
Elizabeth Handley  
President  
Kenmore Bridge Club Inc

## References:

### **The Psychologist May 2018**

The British Psychological Society  
48 Princess Road East Leicester LE1 7DR

### **Flood, M: Mapping Loneliness in Australia**, Australia Institute, 2005, p10-11

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**Campaign to End Loneliness: Measuring Your Impact on Loneliness in Later Life**, nd, p9 <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/wp-content/uploads/Loneliness-Measurement-Guidance1.pdf>..

**There's a Bit of a Ripple Effect": A Social Identity Perspective on the Role of Third-Places and Aging in Place, Environment and Behaviour**, Fong, P et al: vol 53, issue 5, June 2021, pp 540-568

### **Social Science & Medicine 98 (2013) 179 - 186**

Social group memberships protect against future depression, alleviate depression symptoms and prevent depression relapse

Tegan Cruwys<sup>\*</sup>, Genevieve A. Dingle, Catherine Haslam, S. Alexander Haslam, Jolanda Jetten, Thomas A. Morton

Ending Loneliness Together, "**Kindness: a Cure for Loneliness?**" by sociologist Hugh Mackay.

<https://endingloneliness.com.au/kindness-a-cure-for-loneliness/>

### **Want a longer life? Join the club**

<https://www.uq.edu.au/news/article/2016/02/want-longer-life-join-club>

UQ news media release feb16A.pdf