

*This template has been prepared to assist you in drafting your submission. The heading and dot points under each provide examples of what to include in your submission.*

Committee Secretary

Community Support and Services Committee

Parliament House

George Street

Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Committee Secretary,

**RE: Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry into Loneliness and Social Isolation.**

[Write an opening paragraph about yourself here]

* *Start by briefly introducing yourself, whether you were born locally or overseas, a bit about your personal circumstances.  Keep the information about yourself general – written submissions are normally published on the parliamentary website.*
* *Confidential details like residential addresses and personal contact details are removed. The committee may also decide not to publish submissions that contain sensitive personal material they deem confidential or they may keep the author’s name confidential. These confidential submissions will still be used by the committee to make decisions.*

*Example: My name is Teresa and I wish to make a submission to the committee about this inquiry as a member of the North Beach Community. I was born in North Beach in Queensland and have lived there my whole life. I am single and have never had any children. I want to share my experience with you of social isolation and how my local Neighbourhood Centre has helped me feel connected and healthy again.*

My Story

[Give an overview of your experience of loneliness and social isolation]

* *Give your experience of loneliness and social isolation.*
* *Offer your own reflections on how you become social isolated.*
* *Examples may include: Farming communities, Seniors, Homeless, CALD, etc.*
* *Also mention how COVID restrictions may have worsened the situation.*

*Example: Around 15 years ago I was employed in a finance firm. I managed investments for a superannuation fund. Work was busy and my social life often revolved around work friends. Following the Global Financial Crisis, I lost my job and could not find other employment. The ongoing difficulty of finding employment weighed heavily on my mind and I became very depressed. Part time employment didn’t provide me with enough income to keep my mortgage payments up to date and the work felt increasingly meaningless. I was forced to sell my house and rent a small unit. I found that as my depression grew, my world would shrink and I’d have less and less to do with other people. After another year or two my health declined further. I began to get high blood pressure.. I then had a big wake up call - my first heart attack at age 55. I was in hospital for 6 weeks and because my employment was only casual, my health issues caused me to lose my job. Last year, my in-person visits to my GP stopped due to COVID 19 restrictions. This was the only one to one contact I had with another human being each week. While my GP offered telehealth, meeting over the phone wasn’t the same. I don’t have internet connected to my house so I did not have video conferencing available to me.*

[Explain how your Neighbourhood Centre helped reduce your loneliness and social isolation]

* *Talk here about how you came to start interacting with the Neighbourhood Centre and the programs they offered to help you feel connected and welcomed.*
* *Talk about the impact this had on your life, including any mental health and physical health benefits.*
* *Share also the increase capacity you had to do things you weren’t able to do while being social isolated.*

*Example:* *As COVID restrictions started to ease, I began to see my GP again face to face. He said that he had recently attended a meeting conducted by the North Beach Neighbourhood Centre with other organisations. The Centre was looking for ways that they could reduce loneliness and social isolation in the area with the help of local organisations. They had been hearing stories of people being very isolated during COVID19 and wanted to hear from more people about what could be done about addressing the problem. My GP asked if I’d be interested in getting a phone call from one of the workers at the centre about my thoughts.*

*The call I took from the centre was one of the hardest phone calls of my life, but the worker from the centre was very kind and understanding. During the course of the call, I found out they weren’t a paid staff member but a volunteer for the centre who had previously felt very alone after their husband died. I told them I lived in a small unit. She invited me to look at the centre’s garden. Before too long, ,I was involved in digging away at the centre’s community garden. Meeting new people was difficult at first, but I found out the centre offered a course called “Overcoming Social Anxiety” where they got a guest psychologist to give a talk about how to have small conversations with other people. I met more and more people at the centre and eventually became a volunteer for the walking group for multicultural women. Today I am the Secretary of North Beach Neighbourhood Centre. My health gradually improved and I became more active which made me feel better about myself and improved my heart condition. I am so thankful for everyone at the Centre as they have always made me feel welcome and have become like a “family” to me. I feel better about myself and feel less depressed.*

[The Name of your local Neighbourhood Centre]

[Write about how your Neighbourhood Centre in general reduces Loneliness & Social Isolation]

* *How can the Queensland Government’s investment into Neighbourhood Centre programs be leveraged to address social isolation?*
* *List the various programs your centre has and value they offer. Mention social activities, volunteering and the importance of community governance.*
* *Also include any partnerships with other organisations, business, schools, etc which your NCC leverages to address social isolation.*

*Example: The Neighbourhood Centre at North Head runs many social activities that reduce loneliness in our community: Walking group, Surfers without legs, Elderly Circus Club, Star Wars Cosplay groups etc. The centre also hires a hall to many local groups such as the Djembe Drum makers, Heavy Metal Ukulele band and Disco lawn bowls group.*

*Volunteering also plays a major role at the centre and reduces social isolation. Volunteering at the Neighbourhood Centre gave me a sense of purpose and meaning after I had lost employment, but also gave me the opportunity to meet other people and socialise.*

*I have a lot to offer as Secretary on the Management Committee of the centre, not just because of my skills and education, but with my experience of social isolation. I feel like I can have my say into decision making at the centre and that by bringing my perspective everyone will consider other locals who were in the same boat as me.*

Neighbourhood Centres, Loneliness and Social Isolation

[Write why Neighbourhood Centres in general need to be the key focus]

* *Here our argument is that NCC’s should be the most important part of any strategy the Queensland Government has to address loneliness and social isolation.*
* *Say they need more resourcing/funding.*

*Example: Neighbourhood Centres are the most ideal way for the Government to reduce loneliness in local communities. Each community is different so has different things to offer but what all Neighbourhood Centres have in common is that they welcome everyone, regardless of race, age, gender, sexuality, religion, age or social status.*

*But I know the biggest challenge our Neighbourhood Centre faces is with resourcing to do this work. From my experience of being on the committee, I know it takes a lot to run a community centre – bills, wages, catering, insurance, vehicle costs, centre repairs plus the costs of running programs.*

*In considering strategies for reducing loneliness and social isolation in Queensland, the Queensland Government needs to adequately resource centres as the key pieces of social infrastructure they are and can be to reduce loneliness and social isolation. By doing so, the Queensland Government has the opportunity to invest in local solutions rather than roll out a loneliness “campaign” or loneliness “service”.*

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**Conclusion**

[Write a concluding paragraph here]

* Tell them that Neighbourhood Centres are the answer!
* What would you like the Government to do with Neighbourhood Centres?

*Example:* *In May, our Neighbourhood Centre celebrated National Neighbourhood Centre Week. We had a morning tea where we invited along everyone from the community to come and see our centre and get to know us. The motto for Neighbourhood Centre Week in 2021 was “Loneliness – The solution is Community”. If the solution to loneliness is community, Neighbourhood Centres are the ones who bring everyone together to create community. Any strategy to address loneliness and social isolation should ensure that these local, welcoming, place-based organisations are at front and centre, creating vital connection and belonging for all Queenslanders.*

Kind Regards,

*Name*

*Address*

*Email*

*Ph:*

When finished, your submission will look like this example:

Committee Secretary

Community Support and Services Committee

Parliament House

George Street

Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Committee Secretary,

**RE: Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry into Loneliness and Social Isolation.**

My name is Teresa and I wish to make a submission to the committee about this inquiry as a member of the North Beach Community. I was born in North Beach in Queensland and have lived there my whole life. I am single and have never had any children. I want to share my experience with you of social isolation and how my local Neighbourhood Centre has helped me feel connected and healthy again*.*

**My Story**

Around 15 years ago I was employed in a finance firm. I managed investments for a superannuation fund. Work was busy and my social life often revolved around work friends. Following the Global Financial Crisis, I lost my job and could not find other employment. The ongoing difficulty of finding employment weighed heavily on my mind and I became very depressed. Part time employment didn’t provide me with enough income to keep my mortgage payments up to date and the work felt increasingly meaningless. I was forced to sell my house and rent a small unit.

I found that as my depression grew, my world would shrink and I’d have less and less to do with other people. After another year or two my health declined further. I began to get high blood pressure. I then had a big wake up call - my first heart attack at age 55. I was in hospital for 6 weeks and because my employment was only casual, my health issues caused me to lose my job.

Last year, my in-person visits to my GP stopped due to COVID 19 restrictions. This was the only one to one contact I had with another human being each week. While my GP offered telehealth, meeting over the phone wasn’t the same. I don’t have internet connected to my house so I did not have video conferencing available to me*.*

As COVID restrictions started to ease, I began to see my GP again face to face. He said that he had recently attended a meeting conducted by the North Beach Neighbourhood Centre with other organisations. The Centre was looking for ways that they could reduce loneliness and social isolation in the area with the help of local organisations. They had been hearing stories of people being very isolated during COVID19 and wanted to hear from more people about what could be done about addressing the problem. My GP asked if I’d be interested in getting a phone call from one of the workers at the centre about my thoughts.

The call I took from the centre was one of the hardest phone calls of my life, but the worker from the centre was very kind and understanding. During the course of the call, I found out they weren’t a paid staff member but a volunteer for the centre who had previously felt very alone after their husband died. I told them I lived in a small unit. She invited me to look at the centre’s garden. Before too long, I was involved in digging away at the centre’s community garden. Meeting new people was difficult at first, but I found out the centre offered a course called “Overcoming Social Anxiety” where they got a guest psychologist to give a talk about how to have small conversations with other people. I met more and more people at the centre and eventually became a volunteer for the walking group for multicultural women.

Today I am the Secretary of North Beach Neighbourhood Centre. My health gradually improved and I became more active which made me feel better about myself and improved my heart condition. I am so thankful for everyone at the Centre as they have always made me feel welcome and have become like a “family” to me. I feel better about myself and feel less depressed.

**North Head Neighbourhood Centre**

The Neighbourhood Centre at North Head runs many social activities that reduce loneliness in our community: Walking group, Surfers without legs, Elderly Circus Club, Star Wars Cosplay groups etc. The centre also hires a hall to many local groups such as the Djembe Drum makers, Heavy Metal Ukulele band and Disco lawn bowls group.

Volunteering also plays a major role at the centre and reduces social isolation. Volunteering at the Neighbourhood Centre gave me a sense of purpose and meaning after I had lost employment, but also gave me the opportunity to meet other people and socialise.

I have a lot to offer as Secretary on the Management Committee of the centre, not just because of my skills and education, but with my experience of social isolation. I feel like I can have my say into decision making at the centre and that by bringing my perspective everyone will consider other locals who were in the same boat as me.

**Neighbourhood Centres, Loneliness and Social Isolation**

Neighbourhood Centres are the most ideal way for the Government to reduce loneliness in local communities. Each community is different so has different things to offer but what all Neighbourhood Centres have in common is that they welcome everyone, regardless of race, age, gender, sexuality, religion, age or social status.

But I know the biggest challenge our Neighbourhood Centre faces is with resourcing to do this work. From my experience of being on the committee, I know it takes a lot to run a community centre – bills, wages, catering, insurance, vehicle costs, centre repairs plus the costs of running programs.

In considering strategies for reducing loneliness and social isolation in Queensland, the Queensland Government needs to adequately resource centres as the key pieces of social infrastructure they are and can be to reduce loneliness and social isolation. By doing so, the Queensland Government has the opportunity to invest in local solutions rather than roll out a loneliness “campaign” or loneliness “service”.

**Conclusion**

In May, our Neighbourhood Centre celebrated National Neighbourhood Centre Week. We had a morning tea where we invited along everyone from the community to come and see our centre and get to know us. The motto for Neighbourhood Centre Week in 2021 was “Loneliness – The solution is Community”. If the solution to loneliness is community, Neighbourhood Centres are the ones who bring everyone together to create community. Any strategy to address loneliness and social isolation should ensure that these local, welcoming, place-based organisations are at front and centre, creating vital connection and belonging for all Queenslanders.

Kind Regards,

Teresa Tissue

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