

QCA Submission Guide for Organisational Submissions
Inquiry into Social Isolation and Loneliness in Queensland

The closing date for written submissions is
5:00pm, Wednesday 18 August 2021

1. Background/Summary of the Inquiry

In 2020 our Alliance won a commitment from the Premier to develop a statewide strategy to address social isolation and loneliness, starting with a Parliamentary Inquiry in 2021. The Queensland Parliament has set up that inquiry and is ready to hear from the public.

On 27 May 2021, the Legislative Assembly agreed to a motion that the Community Support and Services Committee inquire into and report on social isolation and loneliness in Queensland (the Inquiry). The committee is required to report to the Legislative Assembly by Monday 6 December 2021.

2. Formalities of Making a Submission

The committee invites submissions addressing any aspect of the terms of reference, from all interested parties. You can get more information about the terms of reference that the committee will investigate and report on here: [Queensland Parliament](#).

Guidelines for making a submission to a parliamentary committee are available here: [Guide to making a submission](#). Please ensure your submission meets these requirements.

Submissions should be sent to:

Email: CSSC@parliament.qld.gov.au **AND;**
kira@qldcommunityalliance.org
Committee Secretary
Community Support and Services Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Submissions from an organisation should include:

- The author's name and signature (signature is not required if it is sent via an email)
- mailing address **or** email address and
- daytime telephone number.
- If the submission is made on behalf of an organisation, the level of approval (e.g. a local branch, executive committee or national organisation).

Please ensure your submission includes the above forms of identification or it may not be considered by the committee.

You can also make video and audio submissions. This option has been introduced at the Alliance's request so that you can better engage the voice of people who are isolated. The committee's resources on this can be found [online here](#).

3. To consider for inclusion

We expect that Alliance member organisations will be quite diverse in the depth and resourcing of their submissions. Some members will make a simple submission to support the work of other Alliance members. Others will be large organisations where this directly affects their core business and they will have deeply researched positions. Both of these are valuable contributions, as is anything in between.

We ask all member organisations to consider including some common points and recommendations.

3(a) Addressing the terms of reference for the Inquiry are that the committee inquire into and report on.

The Committee will deliver their final report under each item of the terms of reference. So we encourage you to make your submission in that format.

We have included items of the terms of reference in the template below (highlighted in bold). Please feel free to write any relevant information underneath that you feel will address the specific term of reference. If any are not relevant to your organisation you can delete those and simply focus on the areas that are relevant

3(b) Common Points

We invite you to consider making the following common points in your submission:

- The health risk of social isolation and disconnection is greater than the threat of smoking, poor diet, and lack of exercise.
- Social Isolation doesn't only affect older people. We want to acknowledge the impact of isolation on older people, but also capture the other groups of people who also experience this. It's important to also talk about:
 - Transition points - ie finishing high school, moving house/home, changing job.
 - Disruption events - ie becoming a carer, losing a loved one.
- Social isolation can best be addressed by communal and social solutions. i.e see references to the "social cure" research below.
- It is important to consider 'how' services are delivered and not just 'what' services are delivered and the incorporation of neighbourhood approaches and asset-based community development in developing strategies.

3(c) Common Recommendations

We have 5 common recommendations that we ask member organisations to make. You may also make your own specific recommendations. These four common recommendations are summarised here, they are further developed in the template below:

- **The Social Cure** - research by University of Queensland should be a central underpinning of the new state-wide strategy.
- **Expand Ways to Wellness or Social Prescribing Approaches** – social prescribing should be a key pillar of the strategy, with Ways to Wellness in Mt Gravatt a world leading model.
- **Increase base funding for Community Neighbourhood Centres** - effective community neighbourhood centres reduce social isolation right across a local

community. They form the right type of relationships at the right scale. However they currently receive an effective funding cut each year. They need to be considered frontline services and funded accordingly.

- **Involve cultural community leaders from first nations and multicultural communities in leadership and co-design of relevant initiatives** – specific initiatives will be needed in these communities, and their leaders should be engaged and funded to design effective approaches.
- **Creation of a ministerial portfolio for social isolation and loneliness** to prioritise the issue within the political agenda.

3(d) Details about your organisation

As well as making these points, there are some important facts about your organisation that the Committee will likely find persuasive. In your submission, be sure to raise the issues you work on, membership, community/cause you represent, services you provide, or advocacy you do.

4. Template Submission

We've prepared this template below for you to use. Please edit and adapt as necessary. You are also welcome to distribute it to other organisations that may wish to participate in the inquiry.

If you need any assistance please contact socialisolation@qldcommunityalliance.org

Organisation
Address
Phone Number

Committee Secretary
Community Support and Services Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Submission to the Inquiry into social isolation and loneliness in Queensland

XX Date

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback for the Inquiry into Social Isolation and loneliness in Queensland.

[Include details about your organisation here, including where you're based, issues you work on, membership, community/cause you represent, services you provide, advocacy you do.]

We applaud the intention of this Inquiry to identify the nature and extent of the impact of social isolation and loneliness, and the role, scope and priorities of a state-wide strategy to address social isolation and loneliness. We recognise that this inquiry has been initiated in response to grass-roots process of community listening and community organising.

Response to Terms of Reference

We would like to share our views, knowledge and recommendations on this issue in accordance with the terms of reference stated in the submission guidelines:

A. The nature and extent of the impact of social isolation and loneliness in Queensland, including but not limited to:

- **identification of and consultation with vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals or groups at significant risk across the life course**
- **the interplay of COVID-19 with this issue**

[Include details about your organisation's experience with individuals or groups that experience social isolation and loneliness. What impact this issue had on the wider community. The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on your organisation in regard to dealing with social isolation and loneliness]

B. The causes and drivers of social isolation and loneliness, including those unique to Queensland

[Include What the drivers and causes of social isolation and loneliness are in the individuals or groups you interact with. Include any drivers and causes that may be caused by the local or State wide environment, please mention if there is anything you feel is specific to Queensland. Examples could be urban or regional matters, legislation or policies]

C. The protective factors known to mitigate social isolation and loneliness

[List any factors that prevent or protect people from becoming socially isolated and/or lonely. Provide any evidence of your findings if possible.]

D. 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.

[Include details of any successful projects or initiatives your organisation knows of, or undertaken that have helped measure, prevent, mitigate and address the drivers and impacts of social isolation and loneliness. The impacts has this had on individuals and communities?]

E. 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:

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

[Include details of any current initiatives that you feel could be expanded or modified to address the drivers and impacts of social isolation and loneliness across Queensland.

Explain how these might be implemented. Please refer to the above examples of services and programs]

Recommendations

[Name of your organisation] support the following recommendations for the Inquiry:

[You may wish to add recommendations specific to your own organisation, as well as the common recommendations below which we ask Alliance member organisations to include]

a. The Social Cure

We recommend that the research by University of Queensland's School of Psychology around "Social Cure" should be the central reference point and underpinning of the new Queensland State-wide strategy to address social isolation and loneliness.

This research is brought together in "*The New Psychology of Health: Unlocking the Social Cure*"

In addition to this book we refer the committee to a summary and further detailed references at: <https://stories.uq.edu.au/research/impact/2020/a-social-cure-for-better-health/>

This research includes social prescribing and "Groups for Health" as evidence-based interventions.

b. Expand Ways to Wellness

The Ways to Wellness program is a world-leading social prescribing network in the Mount Gravatt area of Brisbane. It has been developed through a community organising process led by the Qld Community Alliance in collaboration with University of Queensland, and funded by the Queensland Government.

We submit that social prescribing should be developed as a key pillar of the Queensland State-wide strategy to address social isolation and loneliness. Ways to Wellness builds upon the experience of social prescribing overseas by more deeply linking health providers, community initiatives, and isolated people.

Further information can be obtained from Mt Gravatt Community Centre which coordinates the project.

- **Increase base funding for Community Neighbourhood Centres**

We submit that Community Neighbourhood Centres be considered as key social infrastructure, which should play a central role in Queensland State-wide strategy to address social isolation and loneliness.

Effective community neighbourhood centres reduce social isolation right across a local community. They build exactly the type of group relationships proven to strengthen social identity and therefore reduce social isolation. They are the right scale to build these relationships in ways that address local needs and local nuances for local communities.

Despite this, Community Neighbourhood Centres only receive a yearly average of \$134,000 in Neighbourhood Centre funding per centre from the Queensland Government. This has not increased over several decades, effectively amounting to a cut in local services, programs and support to our local communities every year as centres are asked to do more with less.

We recommend that Community Neighbourhood Centres be considered as frontline services, and that their funding be increased accordingly.

c. Involve cultural community leaders from first nations and multicultural communities in leadership and co-design of relevant initiatives

We submit that there will need to be particular approaches used in first nations communities and multicultural communities. The Queensland Government should engage community leaders in these areas as agents of leadership who co-design effective initiatives. Community leaders and community associations should be funded adequately to do this work.

d. Creation of a ministerial portfolio for social isolation and loneliness

We encourage the creation of a ministerial portfolio which will help to maintain this issue as a priority issue on the political agenda. This will help strengthen state government action, provide a platform for federal lobbying, and raise media and public awareness.

e. Community Hearings

We encourage the committee to conduct community hearings hosted by civil society organisations (charities, ethnic associations, faith organisations, unions) that are engaged on

the issues of social isolation and loneliness. It is important that the committee hear directly from people who are isolated and lonely, which is difficult in a written format or through centralised hearings.