



Neighbourhood Centre Survey Results 2020

Queensland Families and Communities Association



Acknowledgements

The Queensland Families and Communities Association (QFCA) wishes to acknowledge the Neighbourhood Centres that participated in this survey and their ongoing desire to enhance the sector across the state.

This report was prepared by Chris Mundy, Sector Development Officer of the QFCA with support from David Perry, Policy and Research Officer of Neighbourhood Houses Victoria (NHVic). The QFCA greatly appreciates the generosity of NHVic and their assistance in launching this initiative in Queensland.



Foreword

Neighbourhood Centres are the beating heart of communities.

Most of us already know this as we have seen Neighbourhood Centres respond to local communities in Queensland for the past 4 decades. Operating as hubs of community development, service navigation, place-based service delivery, social connection, activity groups, education, advocacy, volunteering and much more, our centres are like the “swiss army knife” of human services sector, responding to issues and needs as they evolve in real time.

The challenge for the sector over many years has been trying to measure the good they produce in ways that inform policy makers and funding bodies. Neighbourhood Centre diversity and complex methods have effects on communities that are hard to communicate with words and numbers. With the assistance of Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, the Queensland Families and Communities Association (QFCA) developed a survey for the Queensland Neighbourhood Centre network in 2020. Drawing on the work of NHVic, Deloitte and other ROI studies, this survey is the first of its kind to be used for the Neighbourhood Centre network in Queensland and will now become an ongoing feature of the QFCA's work.

The results contained in this survey report communicates a great deal about the incredible work of Neighbourhood Centres.

We talk about the \$4.08 of social value that goes back into communities from every \$1 of state government funding.

We talk about the 1.8 million visitors that create over \$77 million of social connections.

We talk about the 250 tonnes of emergency food relief we provide worth \$5.8 million in assistance.

And talk about the 2,200 volunteers every week contributing 540,000 hours, worth over \$23 million each year.

We talk about all this because it is all very important and all very true.

But as we talk about all these exciting outcomes, we also want to make it clear that this is not the whole story. Of vital importance are the intangible benefits Neighbourhood Centres provide.

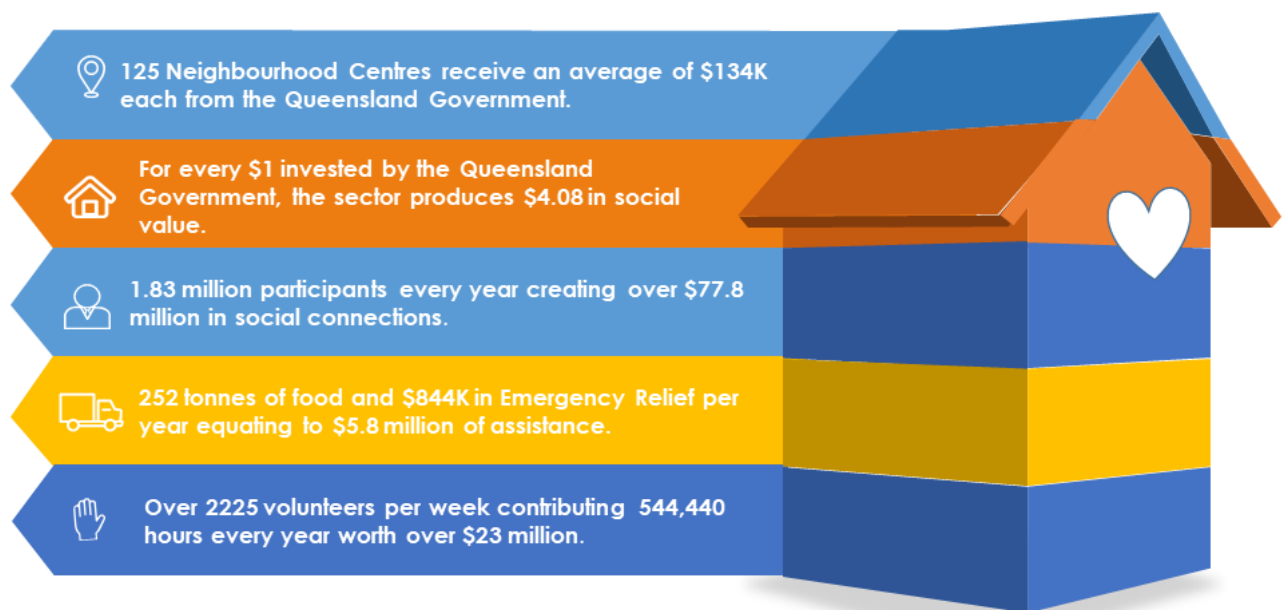
This survey cannot fully measure a warm welcome and community pride, nor can it capture a sense of belonging or local leadership development. It cannot measure a silent community voice that is heard through advocacy. It does not scale increased personal independence. The importance of local governance, community resources, being embedded in neighbourhoods and fostering community resilience cannot be numbered or costed. The power of human connection and neighbourhoods implementing resident-led action is quantifiably intangible. The immediate help offered during a natural or personal disaster has meaning beyond the dollar value of emergency relief.

This survey report communicates very important findings about Queensland's Neighbourhood Centres. But the real value of Neighbourhood Centre work is immeasurable because their beating heart impacts communities and individuals in ways that cannot be captured with words or numbers.



Queensland Neighbourhood Centres

2020 Key Highlights



NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY CENTRES

Neighbourhood Centres have been operating in many western countries since their beginnings as Settlement Houses in the 1880's. The movement of Settlement Houses spread to the United States in the 1890's, playing a key role in the establishment of the modern social work movement. Neighbourhood Centres (or Neighbourhood Houses) began flourishing in Australia during the early 1970's under the Whitlam Government's Australian Assistance Plan alongside Community Development initiatives.



Image: The Neighbourhood Hub, Mackay, Queensland.

As community owned and operated organisations, Neighbourhood Centres spread throughout Queensland in the 1980's. Today there are an estimated 138 Neighbourhood Centres in the state.

The Queensland Government currently funds 125 NCCs (124 in 2019), who provide friendly, localised access to child, family and community services. Funding allocations are distributed evenly to NCCs regardless of size, location, demographic or circumstance. Core funding provides capacity for NCCs to operate and enables access to additional funding from other government and non-government sources for identified opportunities and needs

NCCs are at the heart of local communities, and they are as diverse as the communities they are part of. Yet while the size, governance and funding models of NCCs can vary greatly, there are some core characteristics at the heart of everything NCCs do.

Neighbourhood and community centres:

- each have their own identity, unique to the communities in which they are located
- are accessible to all members of the community and embrace diversity and inclusion



- participate in regional planning and development, forming partnerships for collective impact that improve community outcomes and engage the wider community in solutions
- assist connection to community services and supports
- support individuals to realise their potential and participate in community life
- deliver, auspice and incubate community projects that address local challenges and opportunities
- work with their communities to identify, design and resource local gaps and emerging needs
- enable citizen-led change to build community capacity, resilience, and social capital
- partner with other stakeholders for a collective impact approach to achieving social priorities

NCCs enable the vision of the Queensland Government by increasing the social and economic participation of people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities and strengthening the social and economic wellbeing of communities to help them thrive.

Fostering Resilience

A unique characteristic of NCCs is their whole-of-life approach: no matter what stage of life or situation a community member is facing, Neighbourhood Centres are there for their communities. NCCs work with their communities to address loneliness, isolation and ill-health. Together they build a sense of safety, purpose and belonging. Their early intervention and prevention strategies reduce the need for more intensive, high-cost services.

NCCs are often the first port of call for people experiencing hardship. They offer information, support and emergency relief, along with capacity building activities to grow independence and resilience. Participants may arrive in crisis and, through support and opportunity, emerge as a volunteer or key contributor to their community.

NCCs are also a critical resource in the response to localised emergency events due to their uniquely flexible model. Their ability to rapidly mobilise and adapt supports to meet immediate needs often places them as the human service sector's 'first responder' following social, economic or environmental change in communities such as natural disaster and economic downturn.

Embedded in communities

NCCs employ innovative approaches to reaching and engaging people and offer a soft-entry, open-door, accessible gateway to support. NCCs build and maintain relationships and community connections. They may facilitate reconciliation activities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and programs that promote inclusion of culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

While NCCs are usually based from a physical building, the work of centres happens in a wide range of different spaces and locations across communities. This may include active outreach activities, events and meetings.

Local Governance

Reflecting their community-led focus, the majority of NCCs maintain a community owned and managed model, with volunteer committees made up of local representatives. Volunteer Committee and Board members provide professional guidance in governance, risk management and compliance.



Funded NCCs comply with the Human Services Quality Standards. These are based on the following principles:

- *Respecting human rights* - services are planned and delivered in a manner that respects and has regard for the individual's human rights, in keeping with the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- *Social Inclusion* - services are planned and delivered to promote opportunities for people to be included in their communities
- *Participation* - people using services are included in decision-making about the service they receive
- *Choice* – within available resources, people using services have the opportunity to make choices about the services, and where and how they receive them.

The majority of NCCs are registered not-for-profit organisations, and often legal entities in their own right. They may be registered as Incorporated organisations, Company Limited by Guarantee, or auspiced by another legal entity such as a local Council.

Local Resourcing

In-kind community contribution is a significant part of the success of NCCs, with often extensive volunteer hours subsidising the running costs of centres and program delivery. Neighbourhood Centre staff and volunteers are thus highly resourceful. They are often skilled networkers and collaborators able to leverage local assets, skills and support for rapid response to local need or to overcome resource constraints.

NCCs often rely on a diverse mix of funding initiatives. This may include; recurrent and non-recurrent funding from different levels of government; grants; philanthropic funds; corporate sponsorship; and membership fees. Many Centres also generate revenue through initiatives such as social enterprises, fundraising and facilities hire.

Neighbourhood Centre Survey 2020

The Queensland Neighbourhood Centre Survey was the first of its kind to be conducted by the Queensland Families and Communities Association (QFCA). Support for designing, conducting and analysing the survey was provided by Neighbourhood Houses Victoria who have conducted an Annual Survey of their Neighbourhood House network of 400 centres since 2012.

64 Neighbourhood Centres completed the first Queensland Survey representing 46% of the total number of 138 identified Neighbourhood Centres. Participants were asked to provide average results to a range of questions for the 2019 calendar year. 7 respondents partially completed the survey and were omitted from overall state calculations.

6% of the respondents stated they did not receive any core Neighbourhood Centre funding from the Queensland Government. Numerous non-funded centres in addition to the 124 DCDSS funded centres were further identified via QFCA membership or by self-identification through contact from the QFCA. These unfunded centres included:

- YMCA Springfield Lakes Community Centre
- Morris House, Landsborough
- Mooloolah Community Centre
- Glasshouse Mountains Neighbourhood Centre
- Loganlea Community Centre
- ADRA Community Centre



- Northshore Community Centre
- Dimbulah Community Centre
- Clermont Community Housing & other services
- Centacare Community Connections Kingaroy
- St Paul's Community Hub
- Donald Simpson Centre
- Oxenford & Coomera Community Youth Centre
- Dalby Crisis Support Association

When compared with overall sector data, it is estimated that the number of unfunded Neighbourhood Centres in the state makes up 10% of the sector.

Survey data for many of the survey categories was extrapolated to the total number of Neighbourhood Centres in each community demographic. Using these categories it was estimated that the following numbers of Neighbourhood Centres are located in each of these demographics:

53 Metropolitan
 61 Regional (greater than 10000 people)
 14 Rural (3000-10000 people)
 10 Rural (under 3000 people)

138 Total Neighbourhood Centres

Rounding of total values is typically used throughout this report when commenting on relevant datasets.

Neighbourhood Centre Governance

Neighbourhood Centres have traditionally been local community governed organisations throughout their history. 70% of Neighbourhood Centre respondents to the survey were local incorporated associations with a local committee of governance (Figure 1). 11% were local incorporated associations which included committee members outside of the local area. 8% had become companies limited by guarantee while Faith Based Organisations and Local Councils made up 4% and 6% respectively. While faith based organisations and local councils can often bring extra resources to local Neighbourhood Centre operations, a distinctive of the Neighbourhood/Settlement House movement includes local place based, citizen-led community development methodology and practice. Although 1% of respondents stated they did not have a board or committee overseeing their Neighbourhood Centre operations, the actual percentage may be much higher as many faith-based organisations and local councils may also not have a board or management committee overseeing the centre's specific local operations. This trend away from local community based governance models will be tracked in future QFCA annual surveys on a year by year basis.



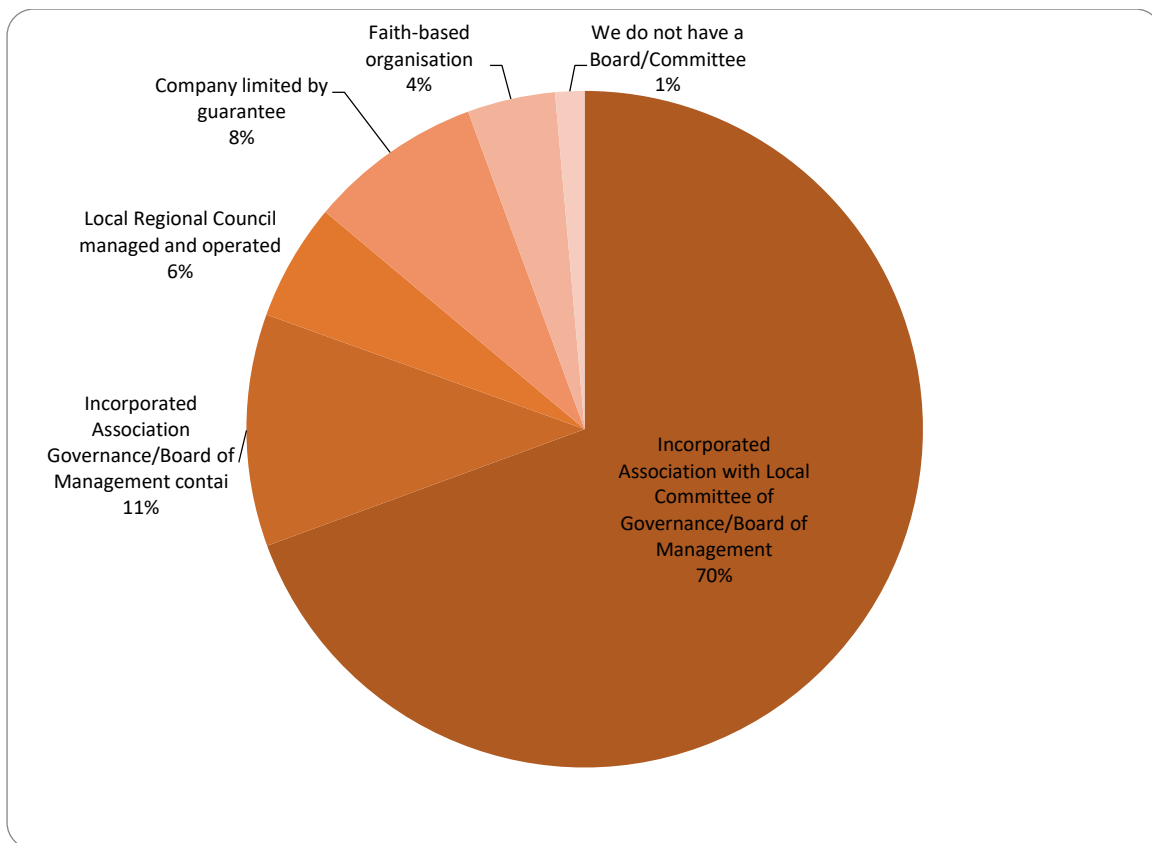


Figure 1 - Type of Governance

In Queensland, Committees/Boards for each Neighbourhood Centre were comprised of 5–12 people who contributed an extrapolated total of 2815 per hours a month to overseeing the operations of their Neighbourhood Centre. An estimated 860 people served on Neighbourhood Centre committees across the state contributing 33,780 hours to Governance over a 12 month period.

68% of Neighbourhood Centre respondents had DGR status, with all members of the QFCA also having access to the national peak body ANHCA's DGR status.

Distribution of Neighbourhood Centres Across Queensland

The majority of respondents were Neighbourhood Centres outside of Metropolitan areas making up 64% of survey results (Figure 2). Neighbourhood Centres are the lifeblood of regional and rural Queensland communities where few services exist. 36% of centre respondents were located in Metropolitan areas. Numerous Neighbourhood Centres in populations less than 10 000 offer Centrelink services where no local Centrelink agency exists, with 26.5% of all respondents indicating they provide these services on behalf of the Australian Government.



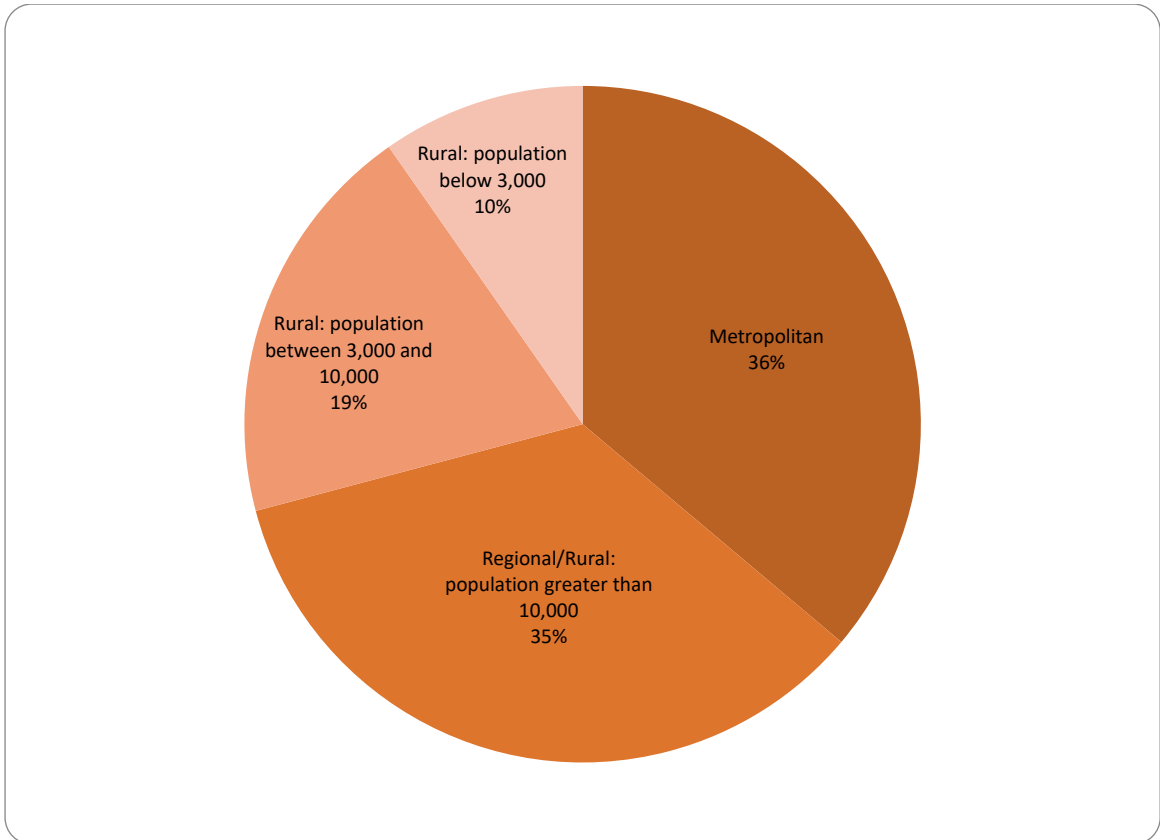


Figure 2 - Location of Centre

Neighbourhood Centre Infrastructure

Almost 40% of Neighbourhood Centre responses were located in buildings owned by the Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors, while 36% are located in buildings owned by local councils (Figure 3). It is of particular interest that a total of 23% of Neighbourhood Centre infrastructure was not owned by local or state Government. 6% are paying commercial rental rates and 10% own their own building. These centres usually do not have access to peppercorn rental rates and overhead costs creating some financial inequality between centres located and not located in Government owned buildings. As of November 2019, 125 Neighbourhood Centres received a base funding amount of \$115,000 from the Queensland Government as a contribution to their overall operations with the average being \$134,369 per centre.





Image: Purpose built Neighbourhood Centre, Hervey Bay

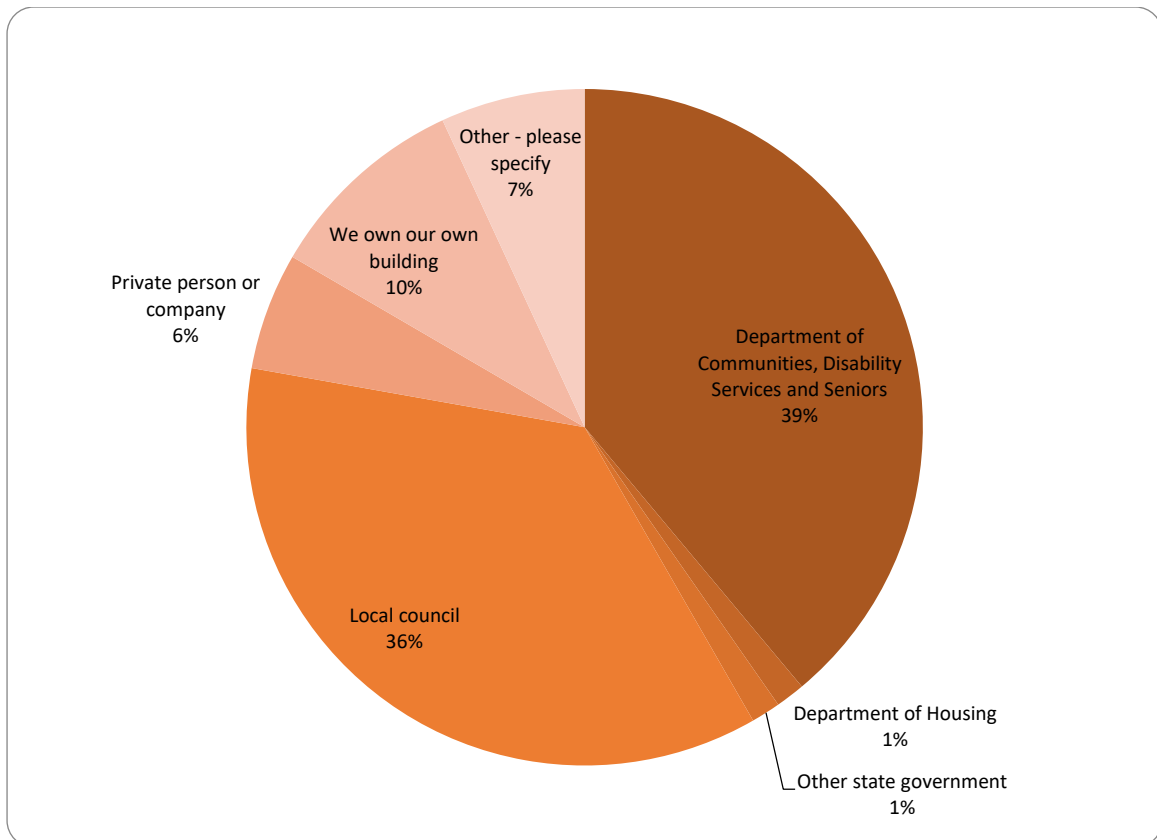


Figure 3 - Site Ownership

Early settlement houses were located in large converted residential housing. It is clear that Neighbourhood Centres in Queensland are now located in a wide variety of establishments (Figure 4). Only 27% of Neighbourhood Centre responses were located in purpose built stand-alone facilities while many others are located in converted houses or flats, shopfronts, hubs or other community infrastructure. Purpose-built centres were primarily located in large regional and metropolitan populations.

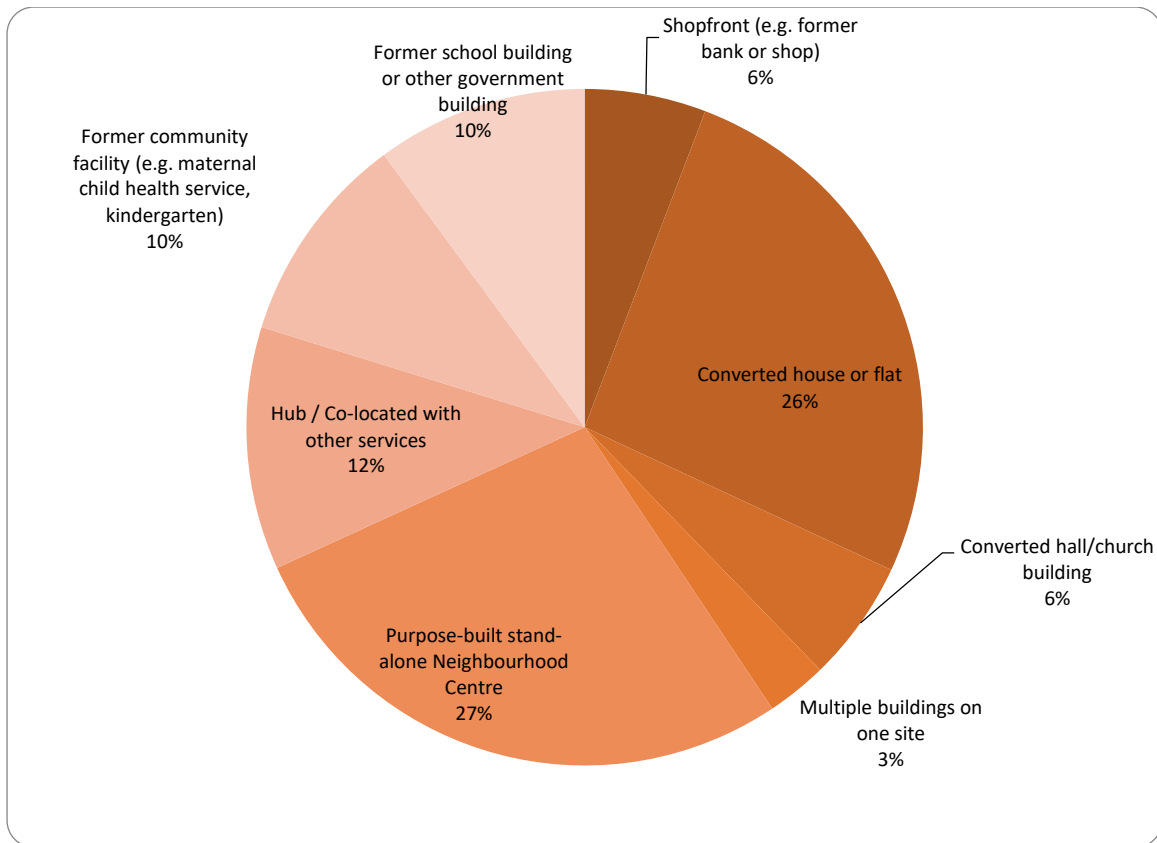


Figure 4 - Type of Building

Other types of Neighbourhood Centre infrastructure was investigated in the study (Figure 5). Many Neighbourhood Centres provide such infrastructure as printing, computer access, phone services, community gardens, small and large meeting rooms to local community members. Centres surveyed provided a total of 3016 hours of individual computer/internet usage to the community each week equating to an average of 47 individual hours per centre per week. Extrapolated to 138 Neighbourhood Centres using the median for each demographic, the total number of hours for the sector is 4809.



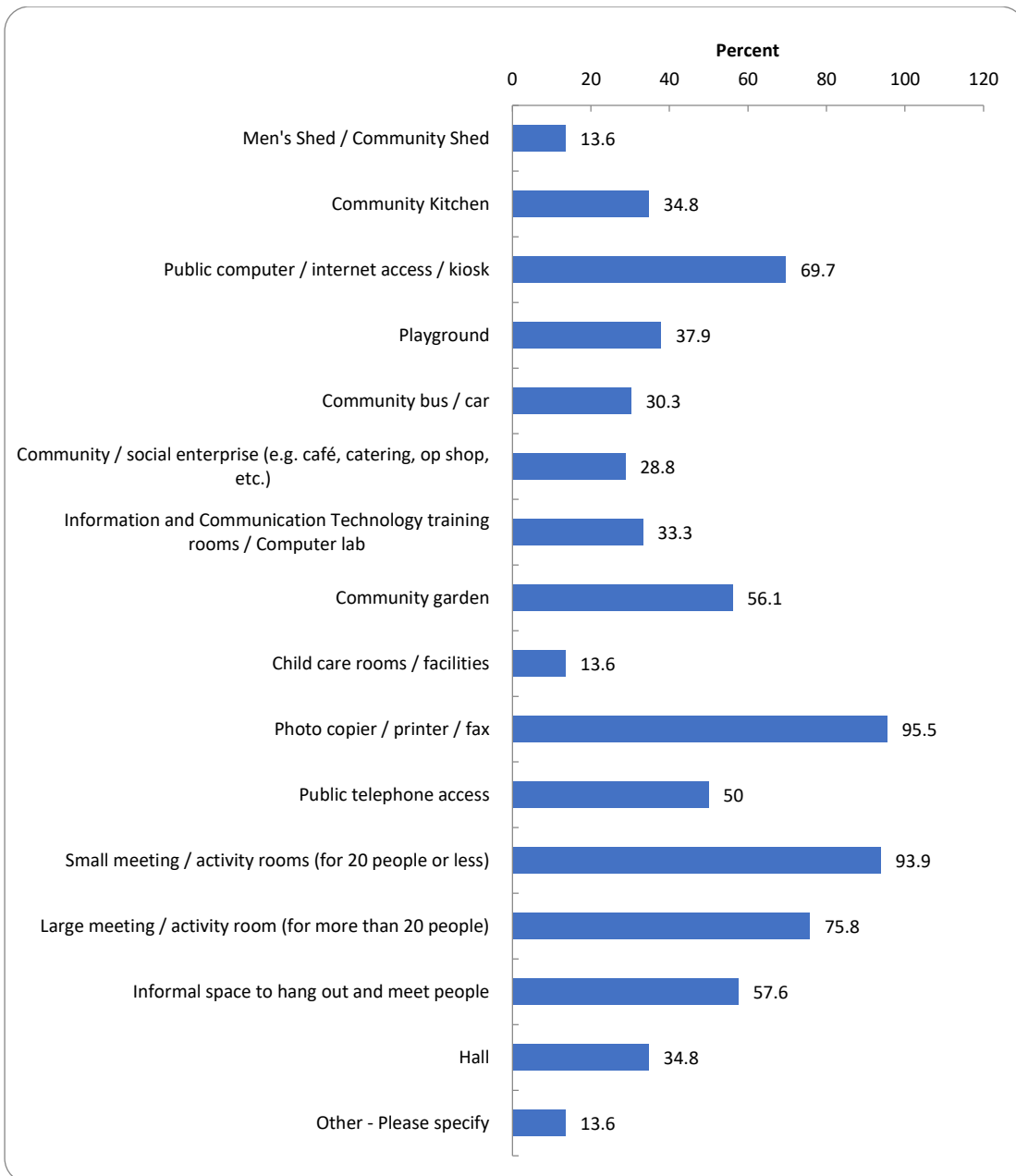


Figure 5 - Additional Infrastructure

In addition to this, Neighbourhood Centres provide their building facilities to many local communities. Data from the survey indicates that local communities made use of Queensland Neighbourhood Centres for an average of 59 hours per week. Using extrapolated data, Neighbourhood Centres in Queensland provided this use of rooms and space to 1522 groups in Queensland per month.

Workforce

Neighbourhood Centre respondents employed a total of 680 staff members. As survey respondents make up 46% of the sector, the estimated overall workforce of 138 Neighbourhood Centres is 973 employees working an extrapolated total of 22,049 hours per week (1,146,548 hours per year).



Neighbourhood Centre Coordinators were in their position for an average of 6.7 years, with the highest being an extraordinary 26 years. Women overwhelmingly make up the majority of managerial positions in the Neighbourhood Centre sector. Participants stated there were a total of 142 people in managerial positions of which 113 were women, representing 79% of all Neighbourhood Centre management.



Image: Staff and Volunteers, Emerald Neighbourhood Centre

Women were also highly represented in management committees/boards, with the only exception being the Treasurer position:

Position	Women	Men	Position Does not Exist/Unsure
President	52.2%	37.3%	10.4%
Vice President	34.3%	29.9%	35.8%
Secretary	62.7%	23.9%	13.4%
Treasurer	41.2%	44.1%	14.7%

Community Participation

Neighbourhood Centres in Queensland have high community participation rates. Of all survey respondents, there was a total of 16770 people that visited a Neighbourhood Centre per week with each centre averaging 262 people. Estimating total participation across the state considered the median number of participants for each category of Neighbourhood Centre. Using our sample size, it was estimated that 35 245 Queenslanders visit a Neighbourhood Centre each week equating to 1,832,740 people per year.

54% (980,824) of Neighbourhood Centre visitors participated in programmed activities at the centre.



Neighbourhood Centres were also asked whether they ran community events, festivals or markets. All surveyed participants ran these activities, equating to an overall state total of 159 872 Queenslanders participating in events over a 12 month period. Events also saw a large number of volunteers in attendance with the average centre using 85 volunteers each year for markets, festivals or events and a sector total of 6871 volunteers.

Calculating Community Value of Participation

In 2018, Deloitte Access Economics produced a report¹ that determined a monetary value for the community connection work of Morwell Neighbourhood House. The method, detailed in the report, uses existing research to calculate the contribution of community connection to a Quality-Adjusted-Life-Years (QALYs)². Quality-Adjusted-Life-Years is the most widely used approach for estimating quality of life benefits in economic evaluations³.

The report assumed that 50% of the annual unique visitors to the Neighbourhood House were one off or infrequent for the purpose of their calculations. Appendix C of their report outlines the detail of their method.

Because programmed activities are group activities run over a period of time and therefore not attended in a one-off or infrequent way, using the number of participants per week in different activity types from the Neighbourhood Centre survey allows for a conservative calculation of the numbers of visitors potentially obtaining social connection benefits.

A survey⁴ of over 47,700 Neighbourhood House participants conducted by Neighbourhood Houses Victoria for the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services established benchmark percentages of participants identifying a social connection type benefit for each of the following types of activity:

- Social group
- Exercise/health class
- Support group
- Advice/help
- Childcare/playgroup
- Course or class
- Volunteering/placement
- Job training/ job support

The number of weekly participants in each activity type is multiplied by the relevant percentage of participants that identified "meeting new people/making friends" and/or "spending time with others" as benefits of attending their Neighbourhood Centre in the Victorian research. These two reported benefits are used in the Deloitte calculations and are most strongly associated with participants who identified attending for various programmed activities including, social and support groups, job training and support and other courses and classes.

The value of Neighbourhood Centres increased social connection is calculated by adding together the totals using this formula:

¹ http://www.morwellnh.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/MNH_Social-Impact-Analysis_May-2018_.pdf

² https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/Value_of_Statistical_Life_guidance_note.pdf

³ <https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/illicit-pubs-needle-return-1-rep-toc~illicit-pubs-needle-return-1-rep-5~illicit-pubs-needle-return-1-rep-5-2>

⁴ <https://www.nhvic.org.au/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=e3d8162c-9605-4d31-afce-594aa64a14c7>



Number of participants in each activity type X 1 QALY (\$195,177) X percentage of people identifying a social connection benefit for that activity type X contribution of social connection to a QALY (3.84%) X the extent to which contribution of social connection to a QALY can be attributed to attending the Neighbourhood Centre (28.57%).

The value of Queensland Neighbourhood Centres' increased social connection, extrapolated to 138 centres is **\$42,831,494 million.**

The use of the participants in programmed activities as the basis for the calculation is conservative as it uses a typical weekly attendance figure. The actual total number of participants in programmed activities over a year will be greater as new people participate in activities over the course of a year. In addition, it does not include regular informal attendance i.e. drop ins where relationships are also built and maintained.

Deloitte further calculate the value of increased connection through increased participation in the broader community due to participation at the Neighbourhood Centre for 10% of the participants.



Image: Logan East Neighbourhood Centre

Community Programs

Respondents were asked about involvement of people groups in deciding how programs or activities were being delivered at the centre. It was identified that 72% of Neighbourhood Centres designed programs with Senior Queenslanders above the age of 60 and 37% of Neighbourhood Centres work with younger people between the ages of 13 and 25 (Figure 6). People with disability (41%) and a mental illness (38%) also featured prominently. Multicultural programs were also frequent in Neighbourhood Centres with 38% working with people from cultural or religious groups and 31% of people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait



Islanders. Men aged 45-64 were another stand out demographic at 32%, which may be due to higher rates of homelessness, loneliness and suicidality than other demographics as referred to in wider literatureⁱⁱⁱ. Future surveys will be able to identify trends in decreases and increases in programs determined by these various demographics, indicating potential movements in social trends and Neighbourhood Centre responses to identified needs.

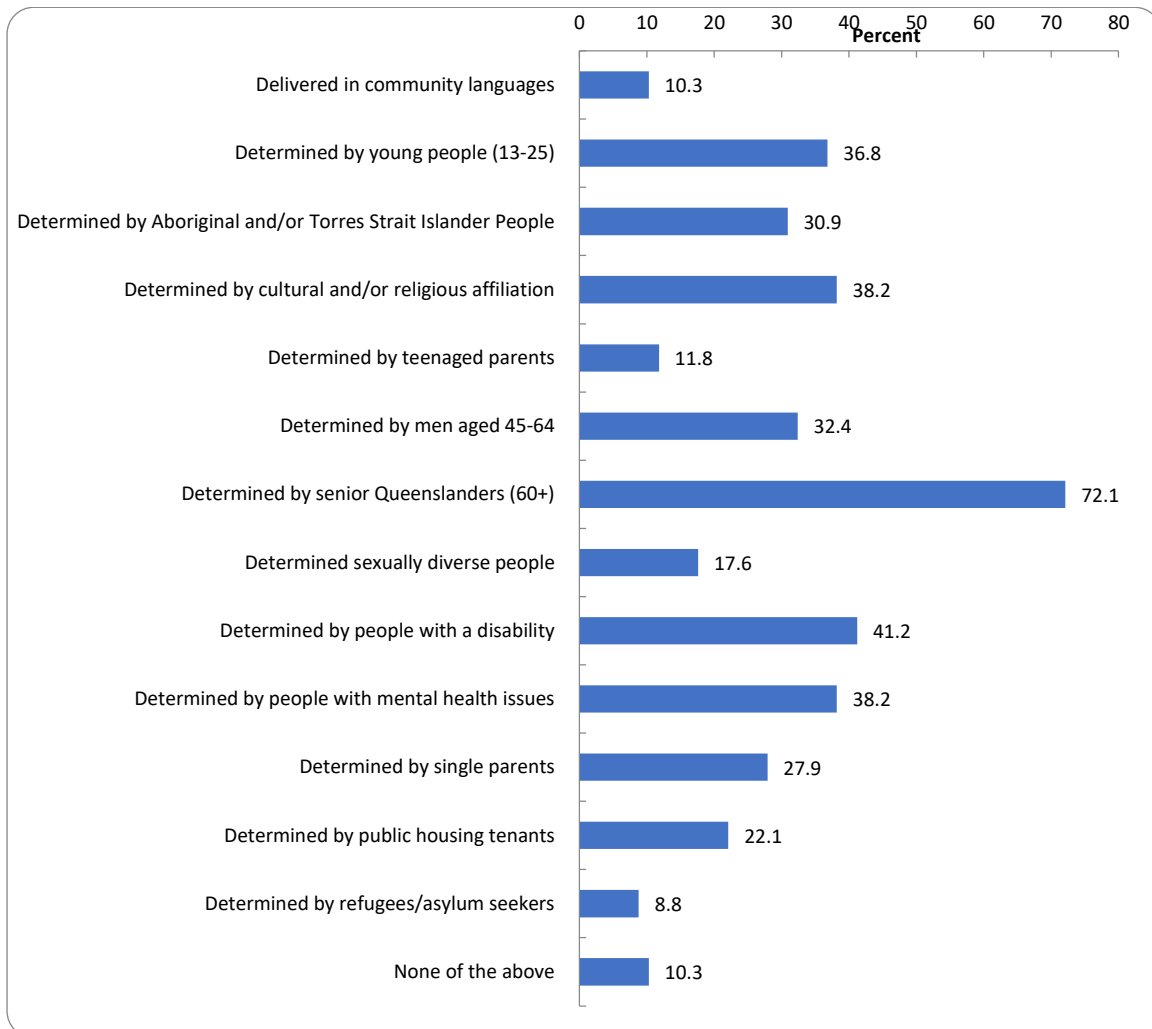


Figure 6 – Programs and Activities determined by



Image: Indigenous Community, Benarrawa Neighbourhood Centre

Services

The diagram below illustrates the extensive support Neighbourhood Centres offer to their communities (Figure 7). 94% of Neighbourhood Centres undertake formal and informal referrals to other services. Service Navigation is a key feature of Neighbourhood Centre work in Queensland and their “no wrong door” approach means that all community members are supported and directed to the services they need. Secondly, 93% of Neighbourhood Centres undertake hall and room hire. This has a two-fold purpose. Neighbourhood Centre facilities are used to host a plethora of community activities and education, increasing social connections and building the capacity of individuals. Secondly, under resourced Neighbourhood Centres are able to hire out their facilities in order to generate further income for the work that they do. This income increases the capacity of Neighbourhood Centres to offer responses to emerging needs where grants funds do not neatly fit with local communities. It is noted that the COVID 19 restrictions limiting the use of community halls had a significant impact on the additional income Neighbourhood Centres were able to generate during 2020, having a flow on effect to local communities.

68% of Neighbourhood Centres were involved in community consultation, demonstrating the place-based nature of centres that respond to specific needs in their own locality. Community advocacy also featured prominently (74%) and has been a key feature of the Settlement House movement since inception. Neighbourhood Centres are also a significant knowledge hub for local communities with 74% offering community information or a citizen's advisory bureau.

The reach of many Neighbourhood Centres spread beyond their immediate vicinity, with a third regularly delivering activities at locations at other towns, suburbs, remote locations or external hubs.



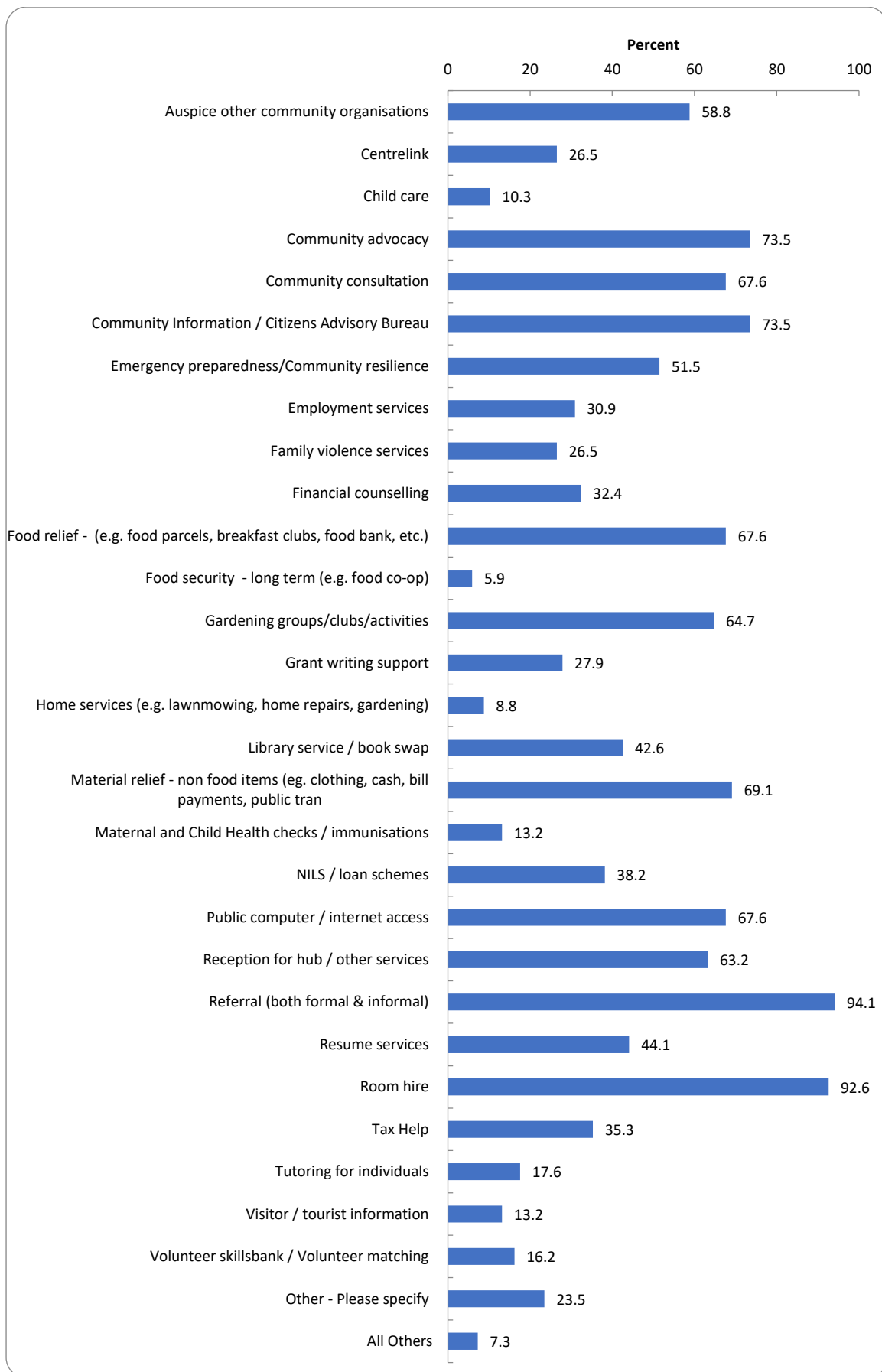


Figure 7 - Programs Provided



The provision of a community lunch was also common amongst Neighbourhood Centres, creating opportunities for social connection by eating food together. 2046 individual lunches were served by respondents in an average month, equating to 24,552 individual lunches served to community members each year.

Emergency Relief

Almost 70% of Neighbourhood Centres are involved in the delivery emergency relief to their communities. 68% are actively giving food relief, while 69% offer other forms of non-food material relief (clothing, cash, bill payments, public transport cards, fuel cards, food vouchers etc). These percentages were identified as much higher than Neighbourhood Houses in Victoria (more than double) reflecting the large role emergency relief is playing in Queensland's Neighbourhood Centre sector. These changes occur in the context of demonstrably inadequate income support for people on Commonwealth allowances, stagnant wage growth and the frequent nature of natural disasters in Queensland including drought, monsoon, bushfires and cyclones.

Surveyed centres delivering Emergency Relief distributed a total of 20760 kg of food per month with the highest distributing 4.5 tonnes of food each month. Centres that distributed non-food material relief distributed a per-month total of:

\$26606 Food Vouchers
\$6953 Fuel Vouchers
\$31813 Bills Relief
\$3605 Cash/Gift Cards
\$1115 Public Transport

Extrapolated to 138 Neighbourhood Centres, the sector across Queensland is estimated to deliver **\$843,984** and **252,636kg** of Emergency relief per year. Participants also recorded the distribution of 1621 frozen meals per month equating to 19,452 meals distributed by the entire sector each year.

Calculating Emergency Relief Value

The value to community of emergency food relief is based on work undertaken by Foodbank in Australia. Their social return on investment analysis⁵ determined that food relief was valued at an average \$20.05 per kilogram of food in 2014 dollars. This valuation included the value of:

- Improved physical health (children)
- Better performance at school (students)
- Better social relationships
- Increased sense of self-worth
- Improved standard of living
- Improved physical health
- Increased emotional wellbeing
- Reduced waste and greenhouse emissions

While the cost of food has increased since 2014, the change in value of the social benefits is unclear. For this reason, we have retained the \$20.05 figure making this a conservative

⁵ <https://www.foodbank.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Foodbank-Hunger-Report-2014.pdf>



evaluation. Using the Foodbank formula, the value of Emergency food relief distributed by the Queensland Neighbourhood sector is **\$5,009,292**.

It is clear however that when Emergency Relief is offered through a Neighbourhood Centre, a holistic approach is being offered and financially disadvantaged groups are being offered financial counselling, budgeting, NLS loans and employment support. An extrapolated total of 40500 people per year visit Neighbourhood Centres for job training and support with an estimated 2448 resumes being supported to assist community members with finding employment.

Support for Community Groups

Partnerships with local businesses, faith based organisations, schools, Local Government and other community services are a key part of Neighbourhood Centre work. Queensland's Neighbourhood Centres have a total of 1656 partnerships with other stakeholders with an average of 12 partnerships per centre. This enables Neighbourhood Centres to be holders of local knowledge about localities that is an incredible resource in the community sector.

Neighbourhood Centre facilities are often used by many other community groups, with the average centre hosting rooms to 11-13 groups per month. Extrapolated to 138 Neighbourhood Centres, the sector opens its doors to around 1522 community groups across Queensland per month. In addition to this, a further 661 community groups are supported in local communities in per month by Neighbourhood Centres through other means.

Queensland Neighbourhood Centres auspice many other local community organisations in localities (134 groups per month overall). Auspicing involves the Neighbourhood Centre receiving the funds on behalf of that group or provides Public Liability Insurance for the group. These groups included recreational groups, playgroups, self-help groups and groups focused on physical and mental health. Such groups further leverage community connections and increase the capacity of many other local community based organisations that lack formal governance structures.



Image: Celebrating Neighbour Day

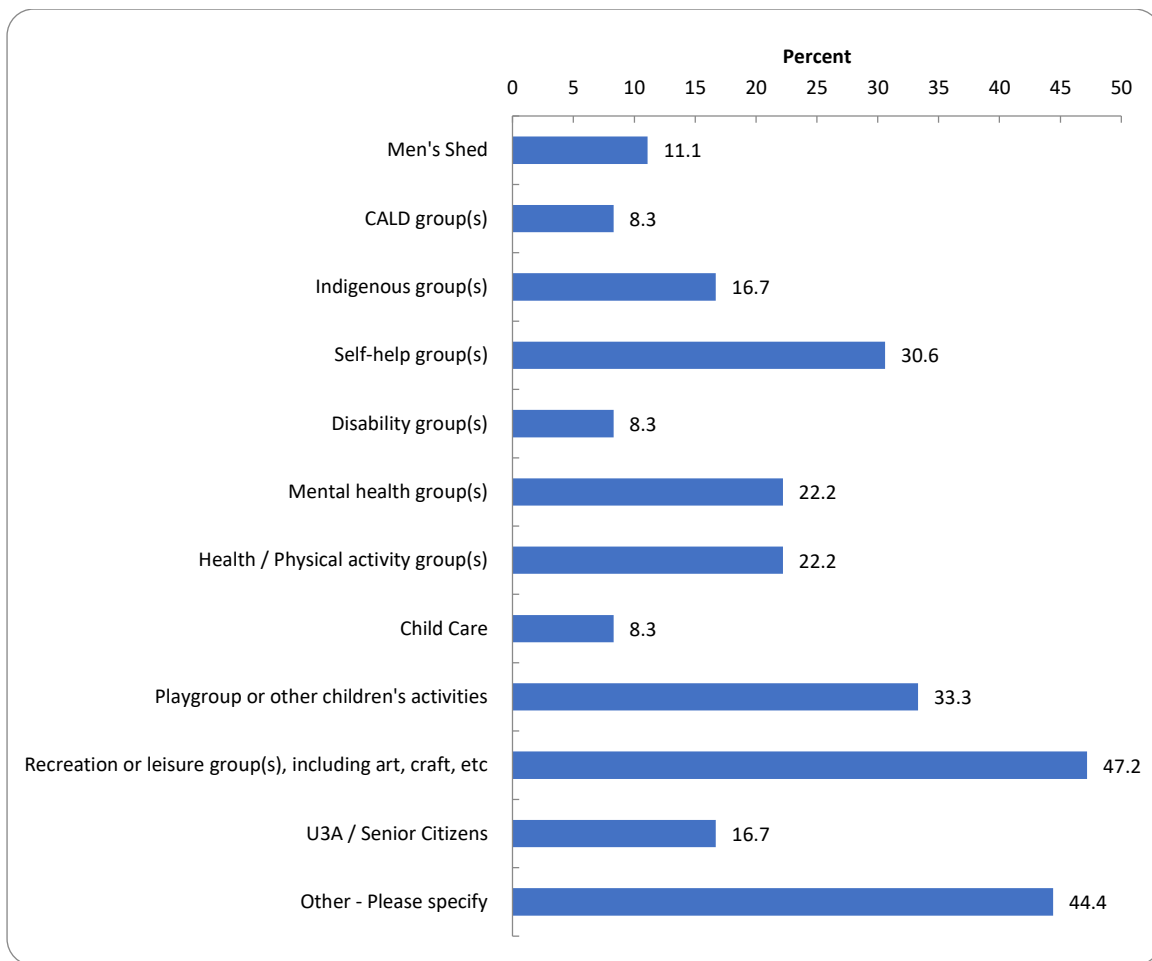


Figure 8 - Groups Auspiced

Volunteering

Neighbourhood Centres could not operate at the capacity they do without volunteers from the local community contributing their time to assist others. An average of 19 people volunteered per week at Neighbourhood Centres with the total number of surveyed participants being 1236 people. Extrapolated to 138 Neighbourhood Centres the total figure of people volunteering at Neighbourhood Centres per week is 2255 people. Neighbourhood Centres indicated that their volunteers contributed an average total of 77.7 hours per week to the organisation (not including governance and management committee hours). This equates to 544 440 hours of volunteer contributions to the overall sector per year.

Calculating Volunteer Value

Volunteering value is based on the replacement cost of volunteers' labour. This is valued at \$42.99 per hour. This is based on the method recommended by Our Community⁶ which uses the ABS average weekly earnings per hour as of May 2019⁷.

⁶ <https://www.fundingcentre.com.au/help/valuing-volunteer-labour>

⁷ <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6302.0>



The estimated annual economic value of volunteers to Neighbourhood Centres operations in Queensland is **\$23,405,475.60**.

This is a conservative valuation. For example, it does not include the value of the services provided as a result of volunteering or the contribution to the economy and taxation from participating in volunteering, e.g. cost of travel to the place of volunteering.

Projects

Neighbourhood Centres in Queensland directly operate 1131 projects per year, an average of 8 per centre in all 138. The most notable of these projects was *Skilling Queenslanders for Work* in which 15 respondents delivered almost \$2 million worth of programming. Neighbourhood Centres are highly active in seeking extra funds to operate their organisations and programs with approximately 1017 funding applications made every year by the sector.

In addition to operating projects, Neighbourhood Centres in Queensland participate in 640 projects managed by external organisations.

Resourcing

Research conducted by Griffith University in 2019ⁱⁱⁱ demonstrates that Neighbourhood Centres in Queensland are able to significantly leverage core operational funding from the DCDSS. In the year ending June 2018, 63 Queensland Neighbourhood Centres that provided audited reports to the ACNC produced \$91,105,028 worth of gross income. These Neighbourhood Centres received a total of \$8,301,709 in core operational funding from the DCDSS. This study demonstrated that funding from the Queensland Government represents only 9% of overall Neighbourhood Centre income. Neighbourhood Centres were able to leverage 11 times the amount of income provided by the Queensland Government through other grants, events, activities, hall hire, donations or social enterprises.

Centres received an average of \$134,396 each from the DCDSS as a contribution towards their operating costs with each centre receiving a base funding amount of \$115,000. Some centres directly servicing clients affected by natural disasters are also granted additional amounts to respond to local recovery efforts. Whilst many centres take pride in community ownership and autonomy as independent organisations the overwhelming majority consider themselves as highly under resourced and stretched beyond their limits.

It has previously been noted that some 14 Queensland Neighbourhood Centres do not receive any core operational funding from the DCDSS. These centres are run by local communities using volunteers or grants funding from various other Government or Philanthropic organisations. Of surveyed participants, a disparity was also recognised between gross incomes of Neighbourhood Centres by demographic category:

	Median Gross Income	Average Gross Income
Metropolitan	\$276,393	\$1,107,789
Regional/Rural (population above 10,000)	\$296,361	\$754,048
Rural (population between 3000 & 10,000)	\$492,113	\$623,189
Rural (population below 3000)	\$194,476	\$442,436



The lowest median and average gross incomes are experienced by Neighbourhood Centres in remote areas of Queensland with low population sizes. Neighbourhood Centres in regional and large rural demographics not only conduct Neighbourhood Centre activities, but often act as agencies for other services due to these services not being locally available. Whilst Metropolitan Neighbourhood Centres appear to have a moderate median gross income compared with regional centres, it is noted that the two respondents with the highest levels of income (exceeding \$7million) were located in the Greater Brisbane Region. The average gross income of Metropolitan Centres was \$1,107,789.

Calculating Overall Community Value

Extra funding for housing, counselling and family support service delivery is a unique phenomenon in Queensland's Neighbourhood Centre network compared with Neighbourhood Houses in other Australian states which presented as a challenge for calculation of overall sector returns. Case Management forms of service delivery produce higher individual outcomes however do not always affect social connection outcomes. This makes Social Return on Investment (SROI) studies more challenging in the Queensland environment as a variety of social outcome calculators are required for the different programs Neighbourhood Centres offer. For the purposes of this report, community values were compared with DCDSS funding as the purpose of this funding program specifically targets core Neighbourhood Centre activities such as Service Navigation, Social Connection and Community Development.

Community Value from Participation, Volunteering, Emergency Relief and services such as Resume production was combined and extrapolated to 138 funded and unfunded Neighbourhood Centres. It was estimated that the total community value of the entire Neighbourhood Centre network in Queensland is **\$77,800,781**.

A social return on Investment was calculated for the 61 survey participants that were funded by the DCDSS Neighbourhood Centre program. This method of calculation compared the overall value of these Neighbourhood Centres with the level of centre funding allocated by the State Government. Overall centres returned at least **\$4.08** of social value for every dollar invested by the DCDSS into the Neighbourhood Centre program.

Future Funding

When asked what Neighbourhood Centres would do if they received extra funding they indicated these funds would be spent on the following community programs. Health and wellbeing activities (87%) were high in accordance with Goal 3 of the United Nations Sustainable Development goals. Social Connection activities were also indicated by 74% of Neighbourhood Centres and are particularly pertinent in an environment of chronic loneliness and isolation as identified in other literature.⁸

⁸ <https://psychweek.org.au/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Psychology-Week-2018-Australian-Loneliness-Report-1.pdf>



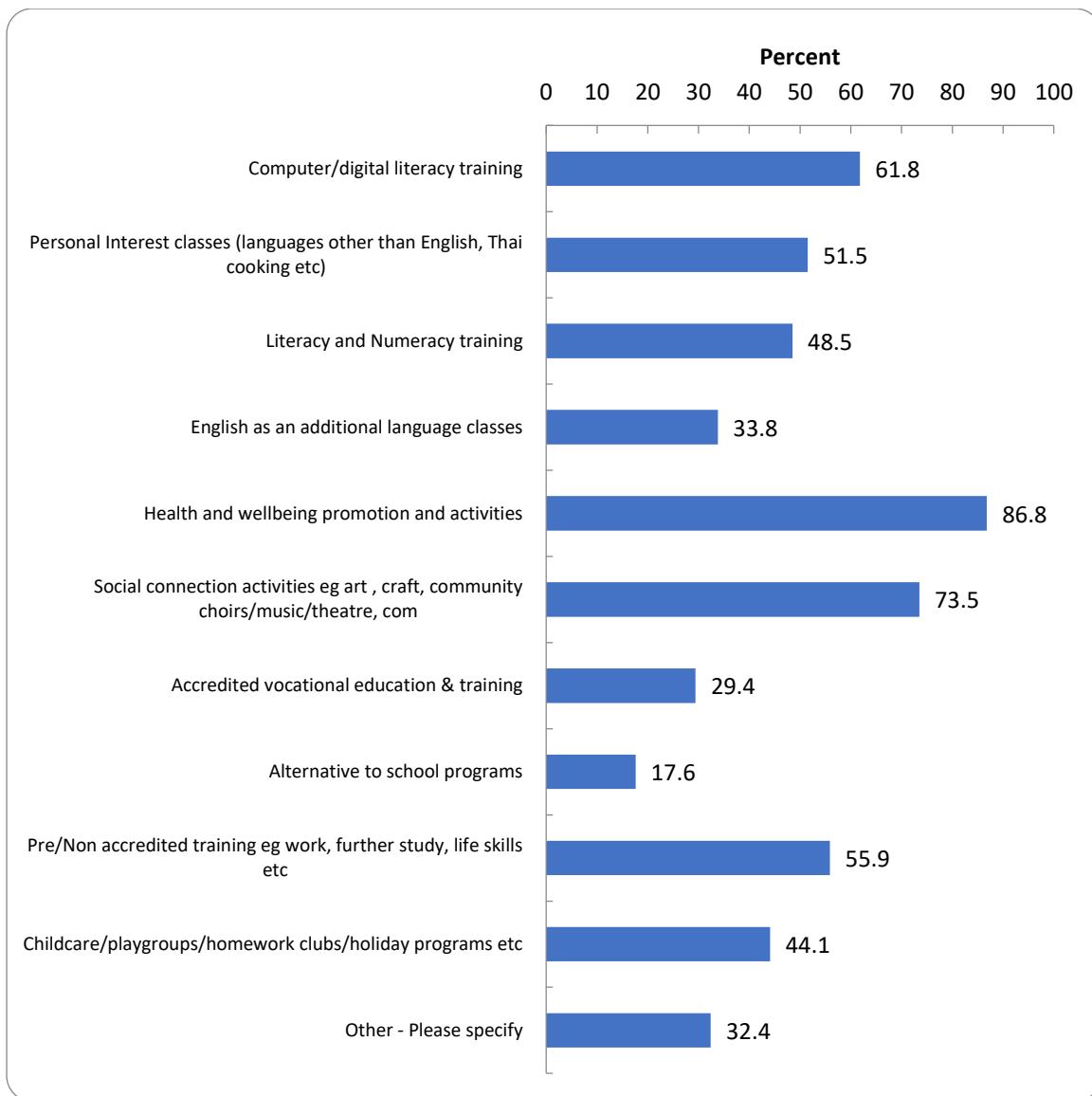


Figure 9 - Funding Aspirations

Further Research

It is anticipated that in similar fashion to other state peak bodies, the QFCA Neighbourhood Centre Survey will become an annual future of the QFCA's ongoing work in developing the sector. These findings can be aggregated with data from ANHCA to identify overall nationwide trends in Neighbourhood Centres/Houses across Australia. Further analysis can also be undertaken of the data extracted from the 2020 survey, identifying which marginalised people groups attend various types of Neighbourhood Centre programs. In addition, data can be identified based on community size creating an opportunity for comparative modelling of Metropolitan, Regional and Rural Neighbourhood Centres. Various additional economic and social benefits of Neighbourhood Centres can also be calculated using further SROI methodology. Future studies should identify and quantify the variety of additional services Neighbourhood Centres are offering in Queensland which attract funding from a number of primary sources.



For more information about Queensland's Neighbourhood Centres please contact:

Em James
General Manager: gm@qfca.org.au
Queensland Families and Communities Association

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End Notes

ⁱ Arnautovska, Urska & Sveticic, J & De Leo, Diego. (2014). What differentiates homeless persons who died by suicide from other suicides in Australia? A comparative analysis using a unique mortality register. *Social psychiatry and psychiatric epidemiology*. 49. 583-589. 10.1007/s00127-013-0774-z.

ⁱⁱ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2019). Social isolation and loneliness. Australian Government. Accessed 17th September 2020: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/social-isolation-and-loneliness>

ⁱⁱⁱ Policy Innovation Hub. (2019). Neighbourhood and Community Centre Investment: Analysis, Financial Modelling and Advice. Griffith University, Brisbane.- *Unpublished*.

