

Social Issues

Clarity of Concept

Social issues are concerned with quality of life and community health and wellbeing. Cultural issues are concerned with our values, aspirations, beliefs and creative expression. Logan City Council's role in relation to social and cultural issues is to provide community services that support strong community networks and participation, social justice and a sustainable living environment. Social and cultural issues emerge when people on low incomes, indigenous people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with disabilities, older people or women, experience disadvantage accessing health and community services.

Where are we now?

Logan City's population is approximately 170,000, and is growing at around 0.2% per annum. Couple families with children represent almost half of the family groups in Logan, one parent families represent one fifth, and people living alone represent 6.2% of the population.

Indigenous Australians accounted for 2.4% of Logan City's population in 2001. The first people were from two major language groups, the Yugambeh and the Jaggera. While the percentage of Indigenous people within Logan is equal to the Australian average, the Indigenous population in the Logan suburbs of Woodridge and Kingston is more than twice the Australian average. Other suburbs also maintain a high percentage of Indigenous people including Logan Central, Loganlea, Slacks Creek and Marsden. Indigenous Australians continue to remain one of the most disadvantaged groups within the community and are over represented in many health and social disadvantage indicators including life expectancy, disability, year 12 retention rates, unemployment, suicide, income levels, victim of crime rates, home ownership and imprisonment.

The number of people in Logan City who were born overseas was 24.9%. Logan is clearly a multicultural city and the steady trend seems set to continue. The highest ranking birthplace countries of people who were born overseas were New Zealand (6.8%), the United Kingdom (6.5%), Philippines (0.6%), Germany (0.6%) and South Africa (0.5%).

Access to education facilities is good and the development of the Logan Griffith University and Logan TAFE has provided a great resource for the City. Provision for access to technology and its benefits for employment, learning and connections needs to be increased. Access to health services can be problematic, particularly for the 7.6% of households who do not have a vehicle of any type. Minority groups' access to community options is also limited.

Problem gambling, mostly attributed to gaming machines, is trending upwards within the city and is responsible for social and economic harm, including financial

distress, family and relationship issues, and employment and legal issues amongst other concerns. The Queensland Household Gambling Survey 2003-2004 indicated that Logan has the highest percentage of problem gamblers of all 30 regions in Queensland. In the 2004-2005 financial year, funds lost per adult and per machine in Logan were extremely high when compared to other South-East Queensland local governments areas. On the other hand, gaming machines are a source of revenue for non-profit groups, especially sporting clubs. Under their charter, the profits must be spent on facilities and programs which directly benefit the community.

Some of the ambiguities we are experiencing are that while the economy is doing well, many seem not to be sharing in the benefits; we are diverse but not divisive; we are great consumers of technology but not dominated by it; people's connection to social groups is declining, as are levels of trust in and across all institutions.

Logan people generally share values such as affordability of lifestyle and living standards, love of the natural environment and honouring diversity. Affordability of living and housing in Logan is one of the top values of living in the city and Logan's parkland and recreational resources provide great settings for community building. Of all private dwellings, separate houses represent 81.6%, many of which are 3 bedrooms. The proportion of occupied private dwelling owned or being purchased was 62.3% with the proportion being rented at 33.1%.

Logan's relative liveability attracts new community members at a rate of around 6000 people each year, since the 1996 Census. In 2001, the unemployment rate was 10.1%. 28.4% of all people aged 15 years and over were earning less than \$200 a week, while 1.4% earned more than \$1,500 a week.

Forces of Change

Gradual Social Change

Nationally, the most significant socio-cultural issue we are experiencing is the changing view towards marriage and to our understanding of the meaning of family. Combined with a high divorce rate, we are experiencing the lowest birth rate and marriage rate for 100 years. In addition, there is a trend towards delayed parenting or choosing not to have children at all.

Changes in work patterns and participation have seen more people, particularly, a much greater proportion of mothers working outside the home, either in full or part time capacity. These trends result in reduced community participation and greater disconnect from local communities due to increased working hours and greater mobility.

These factors are changing the way in which we choose to live. The incidence of people living alone or just with one other person is rapidly increasing. The most common household type is a couple. By 2006, the single person household will be the most common household type in Australia.

Population Change

While population growth rates in Logan City are not projected to be as high as other local areas in SEQ, Logan is well-positioned to consolidate on growth in the corridor between Brisbane and the Gold Coast. Logan's future will be shaped by its response to population trends, particularly ageing, birthrates and net migration and how to attract and build on the local labour force and skill base age groups.

Aging population

More than 50 percent of the City's population is currently younger than 37 years, but is expected to decrease (0-14 years by 12.5%) in 2026, while the number of older people (65 years and over) is expected to increase by 294% in 2026.

Multiculturalism

Much is made of Logan City's multiculturalism. Built on sustained immigration, the City's ability to sustain population growth levels and social cohesion will depend on its ability to retain and attract some age groups. Depending on our reaction to globalisation, will our sense of shared values be diluted and will we be more citizens of the world, more 'Americanised', or conversely, regress into a protectionist and isolationist policy?

Individualism

The key driver behind increased individualism seems to be increased personal wealth and consequent independence. Should this economic freedom be curtailed, it is conceivable that the value of individualism will diminish in prominence and be replaced by a stronger sense of caring for others and stronger sense of community.

Social Disparity

Logan, like most of Australia, has enjoyed increasing prosperity but this has been accompanied by relatively high levels of unemployment and increasing numbers of households living below the poverty line. As the gap between the haves and the have-nots widens financially and in a range of other areas including education, employment and health, greater stress is placed on community networks and services.

Public Health

A prosperous society and technological advances should mean improvements in medical science and our overall health and wellbeing. In spite of this increasing wealth and opportunity, there are unprecedented rises in a range of indicators of poor health and wellbeing - not just in adults, but in children too. The prevalence of diabetes, obesity, asthma, mental health and behavioural problems are having a critical effect on health and welfare services.

As the responsibility for welfare passes to the individual, voluntary and community organisations and lower levels of funding/resourcing for services mean people are more vulnerable at critical life stages, eg. early childhood, adolescence, transition to work, unemployment or retirement, and ageing people.

Lifestyle

The nature of how we live will continue to change as a result of changes in technology and increases in choice associated with it. There will be a greater

focus on individualism, indoor living, requirements for larger indoor living space (regardless of decreasing numbers/household), increasing expectations of performance. The amount of time available for personal space will continue to diminish, leading to (for those who can afford it) a downshift in lifestyle or increasing community anticipation regarding the loss of neighbourliness, security and community cohesion.

Trends and Assumptions

- Gradual shift in societal views of marriage and family and increase in individualism;
- Social isolation increases with population turnover and high numbers of people living alone;
- Population will age at a slower rate than other Queensland areas; but there will still be increased demand for health services resulting from the City's ageing population;
- People are more likely to identify with a suburb, between Brisbane and the Gold Coast, or with Logan generally;
- Decreased community investment and involvement in voluntary work and community activities;
- Increased pressure on community services and facilities due to decline in volunteering, particularly women, entering the workforce;
- Major implications for Council in the provision of suitable housing options;
- Unemployment rate is high and percentage of residents living and working in Logan is still very low in comparison to other local areas;
- Shared values of egalitarianism and respect for diversity;
- Blurring of boundaries between communities.

Where might we be in 2026?

The advent of globalisation and new technologies have changed the way we work, live and interact. Societal boundaries are collapsing. The emergence of city centres as sites of recreation, entertainment and residence, rather than work and the role of the home as a base for work have changed the shape of and kind of places we live and work in.

As society has changed, so have the characteristics of social exclusion. The lack of computer skills and/or access to technology have become powerful drivers of social exclusion. Changing labour market conditions are excluding young people with low educational attainment and new forms of exclusion have emerged. There are more older people and lone parents, whose support needs are different. Poverty is persistent and in some areas increasing.

The ageing population and increasing numbers of residents from interstate and overseas present new challenges and opportunities. We are endeavouring to protect and enhance Logan's values and build an inclusive and participatory culture.

Sports, arts, community events, social networks and consultative decision-making add richness to Logan's lifestyle and creativity. The expression of cultural values is contingent upon the availability of facilities such as artistic workshop venues and performance areas. In providing recreation and restoration for families, groups and individuals, the environment is also an integral element in Logan's sense of place.

There is broad recognition that the most important future capacity of our society lies in the development of the next generation of people. With sufficient investment in child development, education, health, housing, family support and community development, there are substantial long-term benefits for the community. People share demographic values and commonalities where they interact beyond geographical boundaries. Egalitarian values have managed to resist the dominance and stresses of the market economy (and its emphasis on individual goals) over local, shared interests.

A vibrant city is more attractive to live and work in. Many industries, particularly based in IT, increasingly draw upon skills developed within cultural centres to produce more innovative and improved products. Festivals, streetscapes, parks, public spaces and buildings all communicate who we are and what we value. These developments are invaluable in terms of our sense of identity and social cohesion.

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