

Step-change Cities Partnership
Phase 1 Outcomes Report

Understanding Urban Change Readiness

2023



Acknowledgement of Country

Studio THI is based in Brisbane/Meanjin and we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of this land – the Turrbal and Jagera people. We pay our deep respect to their elders past, present, and emerging, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We recognise their strength and resilience and profound connections to land, sea and community.

Message from our Chair



David Hornery
Chair, Studio THI



Australia stands on the precipice of a monumental challenge: accommodating an estimated additional 10 million residents over the next three decades while striving to achieve climate neutrality. It is a challenge that calls for innovation and resilience.

Our urban sector is up to the task of creating sustainable, equitable cities to accommodate this growth, but it will require a deft hand in managing the transition. Success lies not just in our vision, but crucially, in our approach. We must embrace a significant shift in our urban identity, supported by a leadership style that stands ready to guide and support the multiple interdependent stakeholders involved in urban development.

With this in mind, I am proud to introduce the Step-change Cities Partnership Phase 1 Outcomes Report. This groundbreaking initiative brings together more than 90 practitioners from 14 visionary organisations across Australia, united in our goal to better understand and support communities as they navigate the complexities of urban change.

I would like to commend the leadership of our partners, your dedication and collaboration are the bedrock of our efforts:

Place Partners



Sector Partners



Knowledge Partners



The partnership's inaugural stage has successfully implemented Studio THI's Urban Change Readiness Index. This unique tool has already begun to shine a light on our sector's ability to navigate change and gauge urban change literacy within our communities.

The Index aspires to bridge the gaps and ultimately transform public participation in urban planning. By capturing the diverse values and perspectives of our communities, we foster inclusivity in our decision-making. With the insights from the Index, our urban planners and leaders are better equipped to make informed decisions and shape strategies that meet the unique needs of our diverse communities.

I believe this partnership represents a significant step forward in our journey towards sustainable and equitable urban consolidation and densification and I look forward to the progress we will make together.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'David Hornery'.

David Hornery
Chair, Studio THI

Table of Contents

1	Executive Summary	1
2	Step-change Cities Partnership	7
3	Urban Change Readiness Index	9
4	Findings	16
	4.1 Summary of Index Outcomes	
	4.2 Urban Change Literacy	
	4.3 Place (Re) Attachment	
	4.4 System Actors Capacity and Capability	
	4.5 Index Implementation Reflections	
5	Summary of Insights	54
6	Recommendations & Next Steps	59

1.0

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Achieving sustainable growth in our cities requires a substantial shift from today's urban identity and a leadership approach that readies communities, organisations and stakeholders for urban change.

Studio THI, an independent, not-for-profit urban change management specialist, has developed a suite of tools to boost the readiness of communities undergoing significant urban growth and to help build the transition leadership capabilities of practitioners and elected members.

The Step-change Cities Partnership, a cross-system and multi-state partnership, tests these tools, identifies additional program opportunities and shares knowledge across the sector. The primary aim of the partnership is to gauge the readiness of communities and organisations for significant change and to identify ways to provide them with the knowledge and support required for sustainable growth.

In the first phase, 14 leading organisations from across local and state governments, peak bodies and the private sector supported the implementation of Studio THI's Urban Change Readiness Index in the four partner local government areas (LGAs) of Cairns, Ballarat, Penrith and Hume. This built an evidence-based understanding of community preparedness for transformational urban change. More than 90 practitioners gathered to review the Index results and consider ways to equip themselves, their sector and their organisations for leading change.

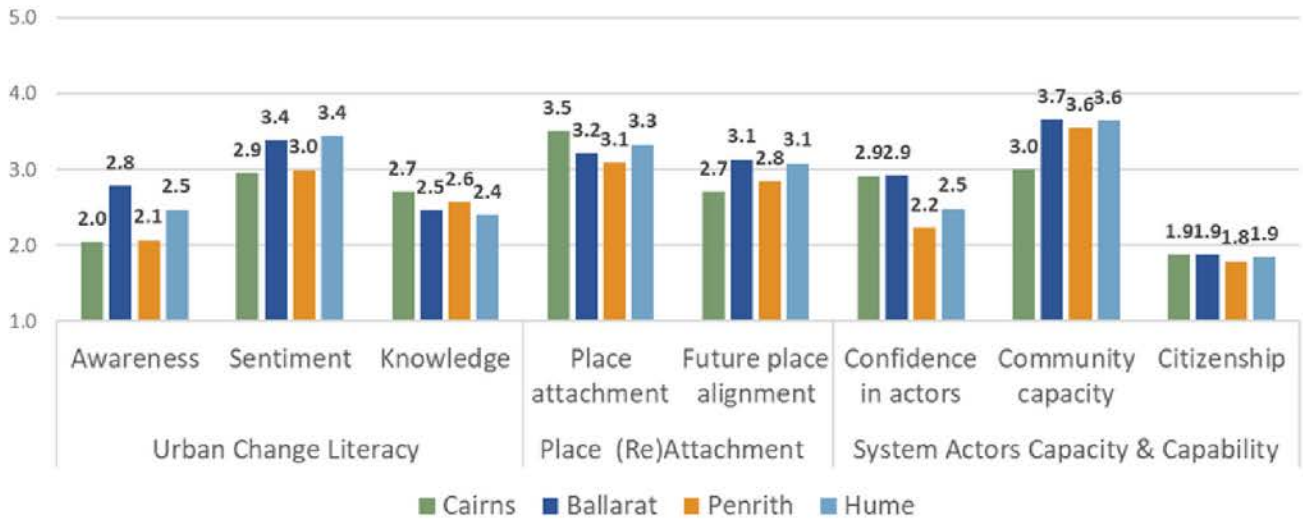
This report provides an overview of the Urban Change Readiness Index, summarises the Index results across the four partner LGAs and concludes with a series of insights and recommendations.

“ By having a detailed understanding of capacity, awareness and acceptance of change across our community, we can take a much more resolved and resolute plan to talk to our stakeholders around specific issues in targeted areas. ”

Ed Johnson, Cairns Regional Council

Overall Index Outcome by LGA

(5 = High readiness, 1 = Low readiness)



Summary of Insights



Readiness Challenge

Our growing communities face an urban change readiness challenge, characterised by a lack of population growth awareness, limited understanding of the need for urban consolidation, minimal participation in urban change discussions and low trust in the urban development system.

- 1 in 2 people were unaware of upcoming growth in their area.
- Only 15% of respondents had participated in urban change discussions in the past three years.
- 1 in 2 people don't perceive any issue with the continued construction of detached houses on the city outskirts.

We need to proactively build awareness of the extent of population growth and the need for urban consolidation.



Shared Strengths

Communities share some strengths to build readiness, including openness to growth and change, support of foundation planning strategies like the 20-minute city, trust in local government leadership and a desire to actively participate in planning to address the needs of future generations.

- 75% of people viewed the 20-minute city concept as important, but only 18% were aware of the concept before completing the survey.
- Majority of people are anxious, excited, or confident about urban change. This points to a community's readiness to explore issues and solutions.
- Residents identified individual and whole of community benefits of urban change more frequently than perceived negative impacts.



Different Priorities

Growing communities have diverse priorities and knowledge gaps which significantly influence the focus of initiatives to build readiness. We need to understand LGA-specific priorities and develop nuanced change responses.



Index Benefits

Implementing the Index specifically for each LGA creates actionable insights, positively shifts community sentiment by up to 57%, builds a transition leadership mindset and frames a tailored change narrative.

Recommendations



Assess Change Readiness

An evidence-based understanding of a community's urban change preparedness should be a key technical study conducted to inform national, state and local policy and planning as well as major projects conducted by the private sector.



Priorities Education

Education initiatives should be the cornerstone of any preparedness strategy and should prioritise community, agency staff and elected member learning. It's crucial that local government leadership has both a technical understanding of sustainable urban development and the necessary skills to lead informed change conversations.



Localise Strategies

The development and implementation of local-level preparedness strategies are critical tools to support urban transition. These strategies should be long-term plans that proactively aim to enhance community and stakeholder knowledge, desire and leadership capabilities for sustainable urban change. Opportunities to improve preparedness should be identified within current and upcoming planning processes and considered a strategic focus for growing communities.



Invest for Local Action

As a sector we need to collectively invest in building our system's urban transition leadership skills, tools and resources to support local-level action. Emerging investment opportunities include:

National Urban Change Readiness Database - An Australia-wide, publicly available evidence base of LGA specific readiness for urban change, providing all stakeholders equal access to a comprehensive understanding of readiness strengths and gaps. Metrics from this data set could be incorporated within future city performance frameworks at the national, state and local level.

Customisable Community Education Resource - A set of community facing content assets that can be utilised to increase awareness of population growth, strengthen understanding of the need for urban consolidation. The base resource set should have the ability to be easily adapted to address specific change challenges and opportunities within each LGA.

Urban Change Leadership Capabilities - Develop an evidence-based understanding of current capability gaps and strengths, and then develop responding practitioner and elected member training programs and supporting tools and resources.

Next steps

Share the results and shape practice

We are encouraging all partners to share the results of this partnership and consider how they might build an evidence-based understanding of their community's and organisation's urban change preparedness. We also encourage the partners to consider how they could support local level preparedness through the development of tools and resources to:

- Increase awareness of the population growth
- Strengthen understanding of the need for urban consolidation
- Develop ownership and understanding of LGA-specific change challenges, benefits and foundation concepts
- Build urban change leadership capabilities in our sector and elected members.

Step-change Cities Partnership Phase 2

The second phase of the Step-change Cities Partnership will focus on building the capabilities of councillors to lead urban change conversations with their communities. Working with partner LGAs, we will develop and pilot a series of education resources councillors can use to proactively engage communities around planning processes. This will be supported by a training program on leading generative change conversations.

2.0

Step-change Cities Partnership

The following section of this report presents an overview of the Step-change Cities Partnership Phase 1 activities and an overview of what this report presents.

Step-change Cities Partnership

Achieving sustainable growth will require a step-change from today's urban identity and a leadership approach that prepares and supports all stakeholders to successfully navigate urban change. It will require the people who live in, plan for, lead and build our cities and suburbs to champion the required vision, guide the changing identity of communities, and focus on creating great places for generations to come.

Studio THI, an independent, not-for-profit urban change management specialist, has developed a suite of sector-leading tools and programs to build:

- Change readiness of communities undergoing significant urban change, and;
- Urban transition leadership capabilities of practitioners and elected members supporting communities through urban consolidation and sustainable change.

Phase 1

The Step-change Cities Partnership is a cross-system and multi-state collaboration that seeks to test and refine Studio THI's tools and programs for building community and organisation urban change capabilities, identify opportunities and share learnings across the sector. The goal of the partnership is to understand how prepared communities and organisations are for transformational change and explore ways in which we can equip them with the knowledge and support they need to navigate the challenges of sustainable growth.

The first phase of the partnership involved 14 leading organisations from across local and state government, peak bodies and the private sector to support the implementation of Studio THI's Urban Change Readiness Index in the four partner local government areas (LGAs) of Cairns, Penrith, Ballarat and Hume. This built an evidence-based understanding of community preparedness for transformational urban change. More than 90 practitioners gathered to review the Index results and consider ways to equip themselves, their sector and their organisations for leading change.

What is in this report?

This report provides an overview of the Urban Change Readiness Index, presents a summary of the Index results across the four participating partner LGAs, presents a series of key insights and concludes with a set of recommendations.

3.0

Urban Change Readiness Index

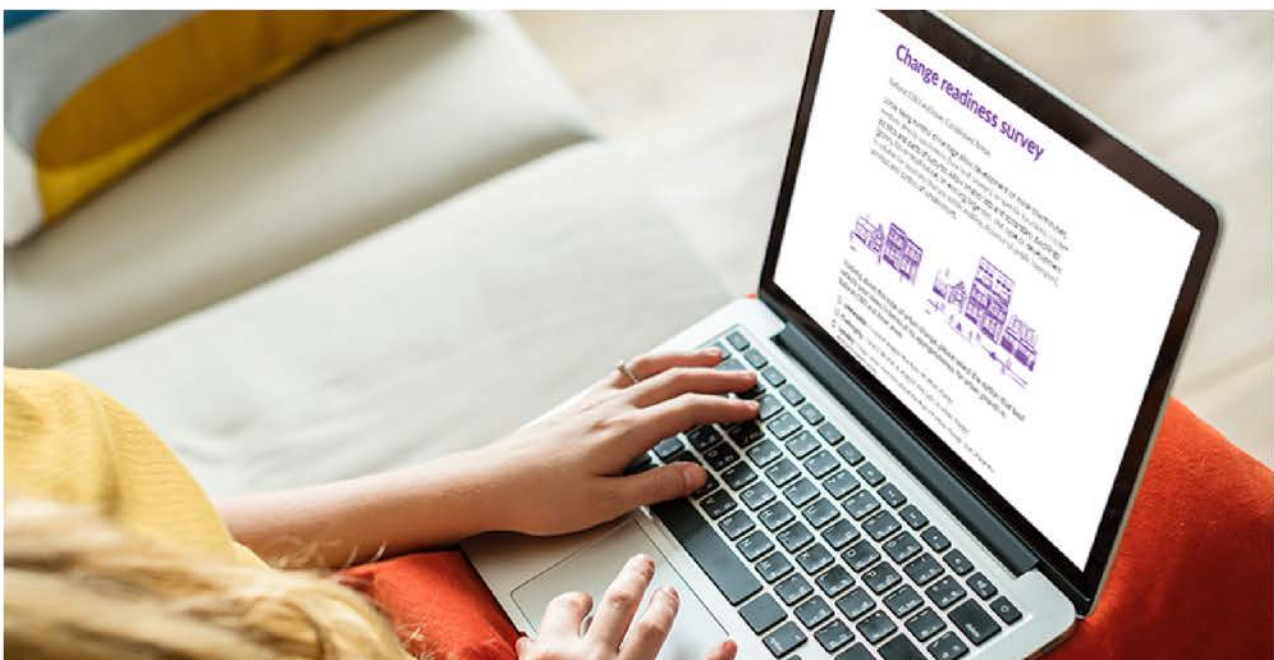
The following section of this report presents an overview of the Urban Change Readiness Index: how it is implemented, what it seeks to understand and how the results can be utilised.

Urban Change Readiness Index

Studio THI's Urban Change Readiness Index builds an evidence-based understanding of a community's preparedness for significant urban change including its level of urban change literacy, sentiment towards likely change scenarios and confidence in the system to manage change well. It provides teams with actionable insights to lead community's through urban change.

How the Index is implemented

Data for the Index is gathered through a 30-minute online community survey that is tailored to explore the specific urban transition themes in a LGA, region or neighbourhood . The survey is distributed to a recruited and incentivised sample of 150-300 community members who live in the LGA and reflect the area's demographic profile including often under-represented community cohorts in public consultation processes (e.g. young people, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, renters and busy families). The survey can be extended to elected officials and LGA staff, providing a 'whole of system' view of readiness.

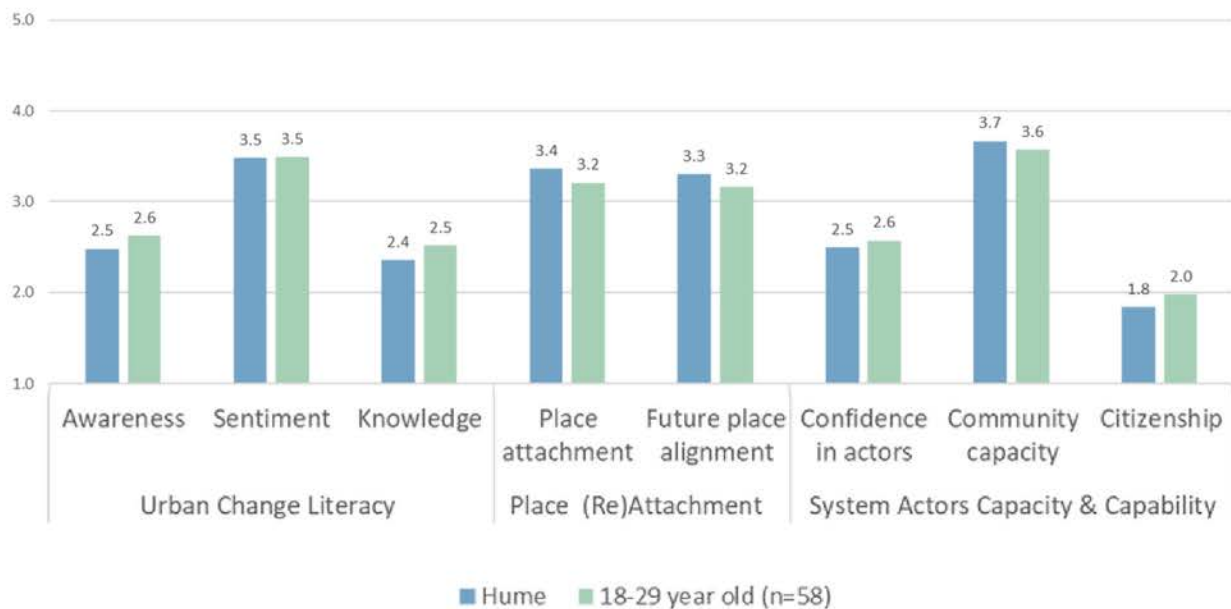


Using the Index results

The results of the survey are translated into the Urban Change Readiness Index. This can be segmented by audience and geography (suburb level or lower). The data is analysed to define essential preparedness and urban transition themes including:

- Urban change literacy strength and gaps in the community
- Perceptions of the priority challenges and benefits of urban growth
- Responses to urban consolidation and likely future scenarios
- Key opportunities to better prepare communities for urban transformation - within a current or upcoming planning process and or broader corporate strategy development

Example Index data segment - Hume overall Index level compare to Hume 18-29 year old Index



Insights can be utilised to develop strategies and initiatives to:

- Build community knowledge on sustainable urban growth
- Boost community understanding and ownership of the need for a step-change agenda
- Increase community participation in the urban transformation journey and support communities to better navigate change
- Enable informed decision-making on sustainable and equitable urban consolidation and densification outcomes

What does the Index seek to understand?

The Urban Change Readiness Index is underpinned by contemporary theory and practice in change management and transition leadership, urban psychology and place attachment, sustainable urban development, citizenship theory and quantitative and qualitative community research.

The Index seeks to understand a community's readiness for the major urban change including its understanding of the drivers for growth and change, knowledge of the challenges and benefits of sustainable urban change, and the ability to lead, or participate in, generative conversations on future focused urban solutions. The Index comprises three Domains and eight Indicators, with performance measured through the community's responses to key questions within the survey.

Domain #1 Urban Change Literacy

Level of urban change awareness, sentiment towards anticipated growth and knowledge of sustainable urban change concepts, challenges and benefits.

Indicator # 1.1
Awareness

Indicator # 1.2
Sentiment

Indicator # 1.3
Knowledge

Domain #2 Place (Re) Attachment

Level of place attachment and responses to potential future urban change scenarios.

Indicator # 2.1
Attachment

Indicator # 2.2
Future Place Alignment

Domain #3 System Actors Capacity and Capability

Confidence in the system to manage change well and collaborate on transition challenges.

Indicator # 3.1
Confidence in actors

Indicator # 3.2
Community Capacity

Indicator # 3.3
Citizenship

A detailed overview of each Domain and the associated Indicators is provided in the remainder of this section of the report.

Domain # 1

Urban Change Literacy

Level of urban change awareness, sentiment towards anticipated growth and knowledge of sustainable urban change concepts, challenges and benefits.

Why this is important

Urban change literacy is the degree to which individuals have the ability to find, understand and participate in discussion about sustainable urban futures. People with higher levels of change literacy are more likely to make informed decisions that are supportive of urban consolidation and sustainable growth management.

Indicator #1.1

Awareness

Assesses the level of awareness of the anticipated population growth in an LGA.

Indicator #1.2

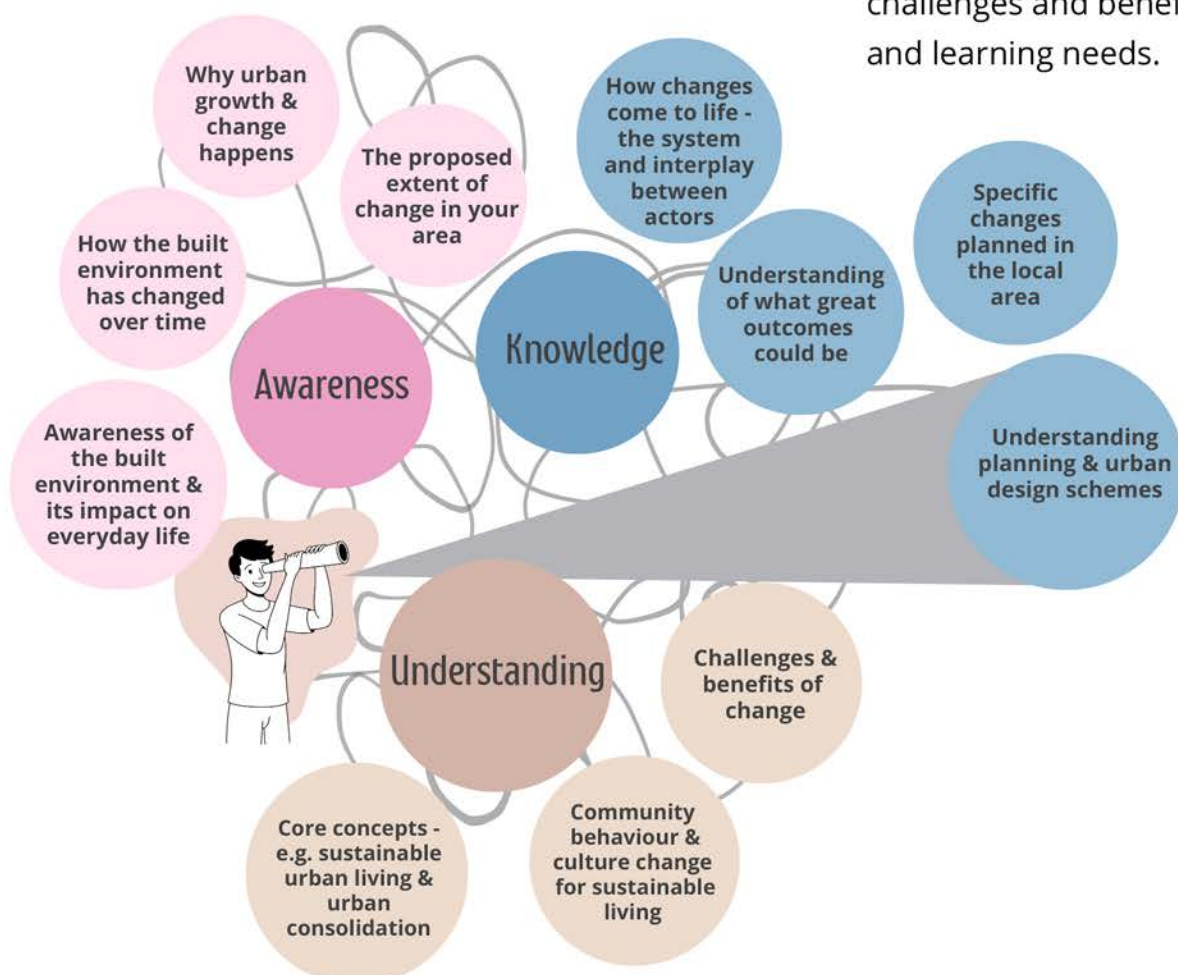
Sentiment

Gauges feelings about projected population growth and the level of support for urban change.

Indicator #1.3

Knowledge

Explores views on urban consolidation, understanding of sustainable urban development, priority challenges and benefits, and learning needs.



Domain # 2

Place (Re) Attachment

Level of place attachment and responses to potential future urban change scenarios.

Why this is important

Place attachment is critical to the social and emotional wellbeing of communities. It is likely that urban consolidation will result in changes to the urban identity of our neighbourhoods and it is important to understand how a proposed change may impact a community's attachment.

Indicator #2.1

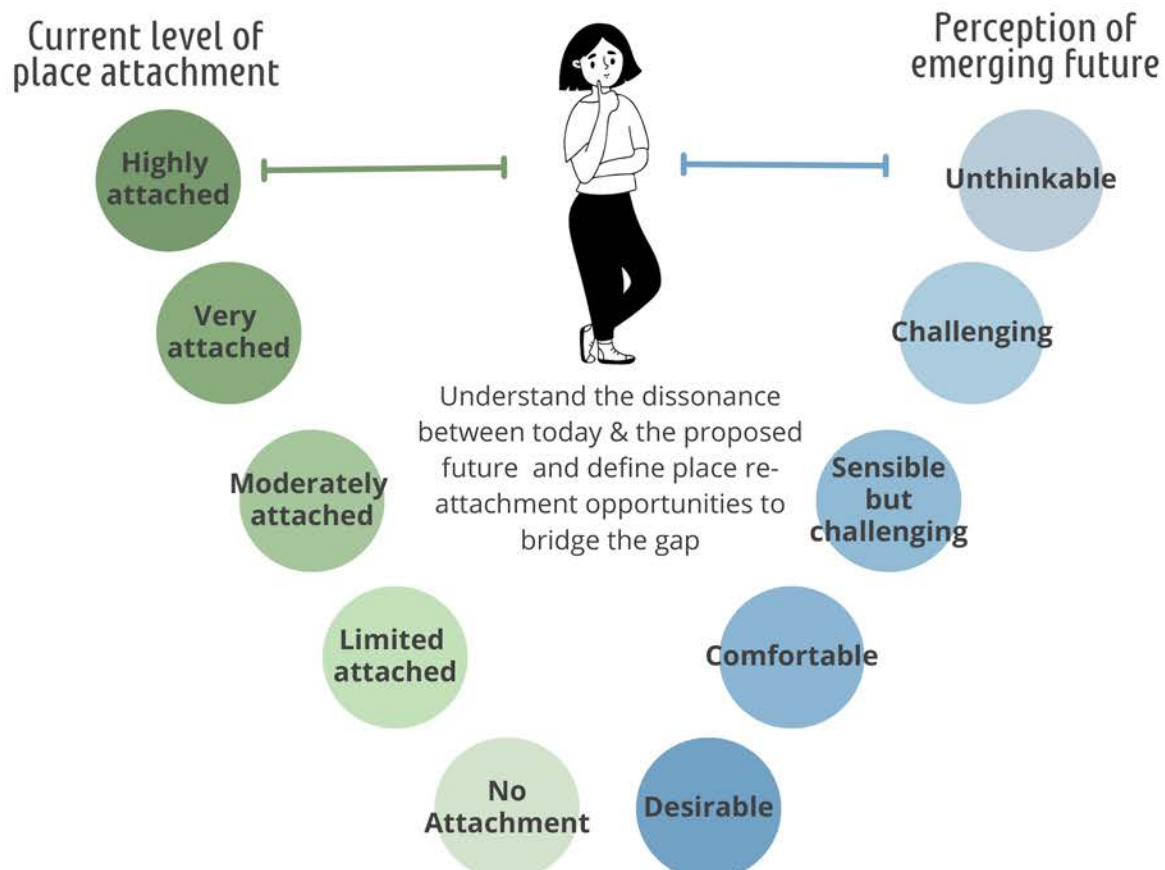
Attachment

Evaluates social and emotional connection to their community and its look, feel and experience.

Indicator #2.2

Future place alignment

Establishes perceptions of future urban change scenarios within the LGA and in their own neighbourhood.



Domain # 3

System Actors Capacity and Capability

Confidence in the system to manage change well and collaborate on transition challenges.

Why this is important

Urban change occurs in a complex system of stakeholders including government, developers, elected members and community. Trust in the system's ability to plan and implement urban change to the benefit of all and future generations is critical to the success of sustainable urban transformation. Also critical is a community's and individual's ability to manage change well and participate in a change as future conscious citizens.

Indicator #3.1

Confidence in actors

Assesses the degree of trust in the urban system to manage change well.

Indicator #3.2

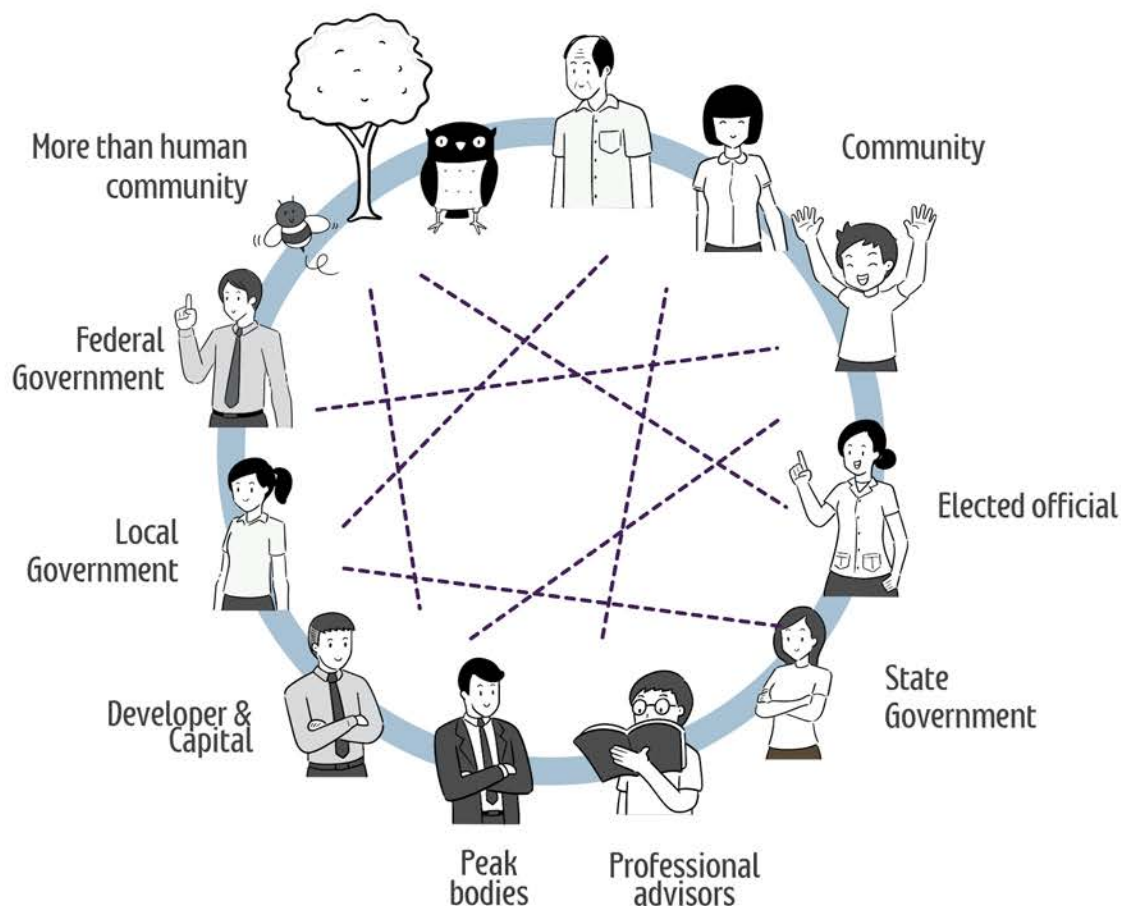
Community capacity

Measures the capability of the community to manage change well.

Indicator #3.3

Citizenship

Identifies the level of community participation and views on future urban planning.



4.0

Findings

The following section of this report presents a detailed summary of the Index findings as follows:

4.1 Summary of Index Outcomes

4.2 Urban Change Literacy

4.3 Place (Re) Attachment

4.4 System Actors' Capacity & Capability

4.5 Index Implementation Reflections

4.1

Summary of Index Outcomes

The following section of this report presents an overview of:

- Urban Change Context by LGA
- Participant Overview by LGA
- Overall Index Outcomes by LGA
- Summary of Key Findings by Domain

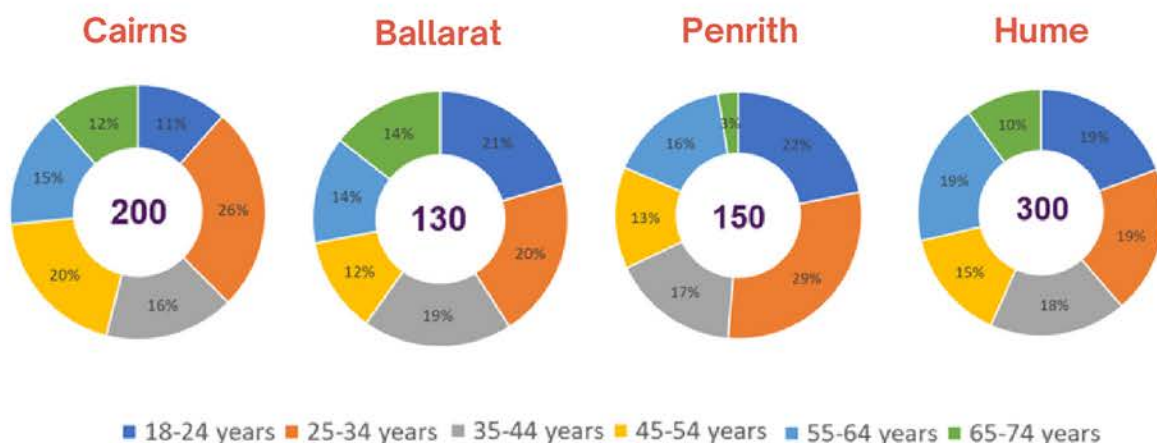
Urban Change Context by LGA

Partner LGAs of Cairns, Ballarat, Penrith and Hume are all experiencing growth and change at different scales. The following table provides a brief overview of each LGA and its growth context.

	Cairns Regional Council QLD	Hume City Council VIC	Penrith City Council NSW	Ballarat City Council VIC
	Regional city and international destination in Far North Queensland	Outer metropolitan growth area, centre for manufacturing, national and international logistics	Outer metropolitan growth area, new investment in infrastructure including Australia's largest airport	Historic regional centre servicing over 300,000 people, expansion of health and education
Current population	168,000	243,901	217,465	113,763
Growth	+90,000	+150,000	+53,000	+50,000

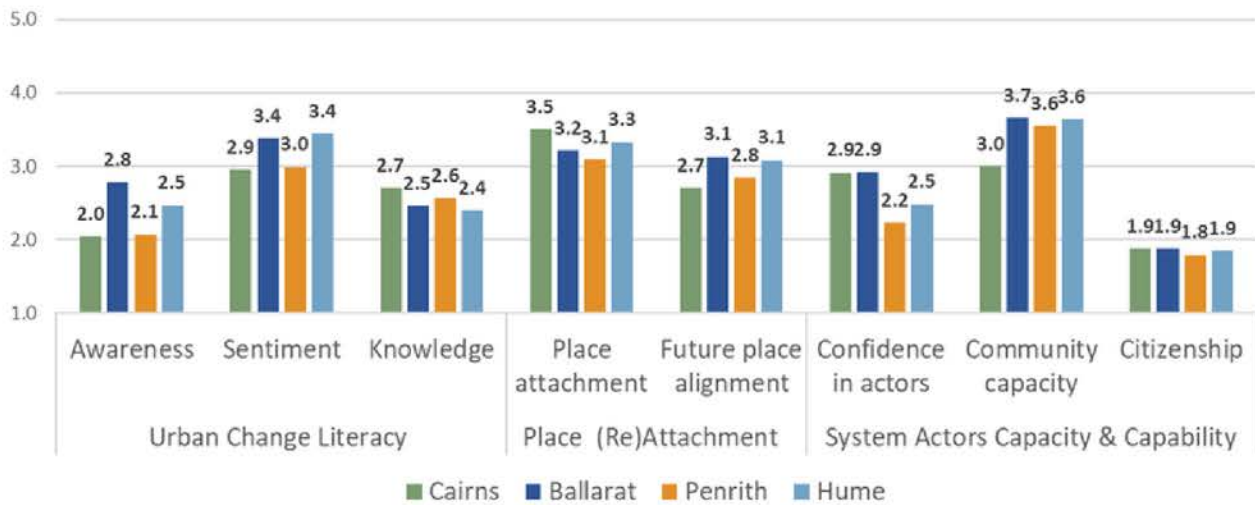
Participant overview by LGA

The community survey (tailored to explore each LGA's urban transition themes) was distributed to a recruited and incentivised sample of 130-300 community members who live in the LGA and reflect the area's demographic profile. The recruitment specifically includes often under-represented community cohorts in public consultations processes (e.g. young people, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and renters). The sample size for each LGA was determined in partnership with the LGA teams and is based on the size of the city's current population and anticipated future growth.



Overall Index outcomes

Survey results were translated into a score for each indicator in the Urban Change Readiness Index for each LGA. (5 = High readiness, 1 = Low readiness).



Summary of Key Findings by Domain

Urban Change Literacy Findings

Awareness

Communities are unaware of the extent of change planned for their local area with our research showing that over half the people surveyed don't know about upcoming changes in their community.

Sentiment

Overall, communities are open to change, with a minimum of 60% of participants across each LGA expressing varying degrees of support for urban change aimed at accommodating population growth.

Knowledge

There is a significant knowledge gap about the need for urban consolidation and the strategies used to achieve this. More than 50% of respondents didn't perceive any issue with the construction of detached houses on the city outskirts. Only 18% of participants were aware of city growth management strategies such as the 20-minute city concept. Growing communities have diverse priorities and knowledge gaps, which significantly influence the focus of initiatives to build readiness. The Index results reveal that each LGA has its own perspective on potential benefits, challenges and topics they'd like to know more about.

Place (re) attachment Findings

Attachment

The research found a moderate level of attachment within all LGAs. No or limited attachment levels across all LGAs were significant, ranging from 15-25%.

Future Place Alignment

Overall, communities view future scenarios as 'sensible but challenging'. There was a general view that the future scenarios were 'sensible but challenging' to 'challenging' for both the LGA area and the respondent's neighbourhood. Interestingly, across many of the LGAs, the number of participants who viewed the scenarios as 'comfortable' or 'desirable' often exceeded the number of participants who viewed the scenario as 'unthinkable'.

System Actors Capability & Capacity Findings

Trust

The research found that trust in the urban change system is low across all stakeholders, with councillors and local government generally being the most trusted actors.

Citizenship

The community wants urban change to address their needs, the needs of others and those of future generations. However, there's a noticeable lack of participation in discussions, with less than 15% of participants taking part in urban change conversations in the past 3 years.

4.2

Urban Change Literacy

Urban Change Literacy measures the level of urban change awareness, sentiment towards anticipated growth and knowledge of sustainable urban change concepts, challenges and benefits.

Urban change literacy is the degree to which individuals have the ability to find, understand and participate in discussion about sustainable urban futures. People with higher levels of change literacy are more likely to make informed decisions that are supportive of urban consolidation and sustainable growth management.

The following section of this report presents a **summary of this domain's key findings** and a detailed analysis of the results for each indicator - **Awareness, Sentiment and Knowledge**.

Summary of Domain Findings

Lack of Awareness of Urban Change

Communities are unaware of the extent of planned changes with the research showing more than half of those surveyed didn't know about upcoming changes in their area.

Open to Change

Communities are open to urban change. A minimum of 60% of participants across each LGA expressed varying degrees of support for urban changes to accommodate population growth. The majority of participants are anxious, excited and confident about urban change. These are all feelings where people are able to constructively explore issues and solutions, and points to a community's readiness for change conversations.

Limited Understanding of Urban Consolidation and Supporting Strategies

There is a significant knowledge gap about the need for urban consolidation and the strategies used to achieve this. More than 50% of respondents don't perceive any issue with the construction of detached houses on the city outskirts. Only 18% of participants were aware of the foundation planning strategies, such as the 20-minute city concept. Though initially unfamiliar with these strategies, almost all participants considered them important and appealing after they were presented in the survey.

Different Priorities and Knowledge Gaps

Growing communities have diverse priorities and knowledge gaps which significantly influence the focus of initiatives to build readiness. The Index results reveal that each LGA has its own perspective on potential benefits, challenges and topics they'd like to know more about. For example, while all LGAs prioritised vibrancy, economic development and improved access to services, Hume prioritised infrastructure utilisation, Cairns championed active/public transport and climate-smart buildings, and Ballarat sought the protection of heritage identity. Significantly only Penrith highlighted improved housing choice as a priority.

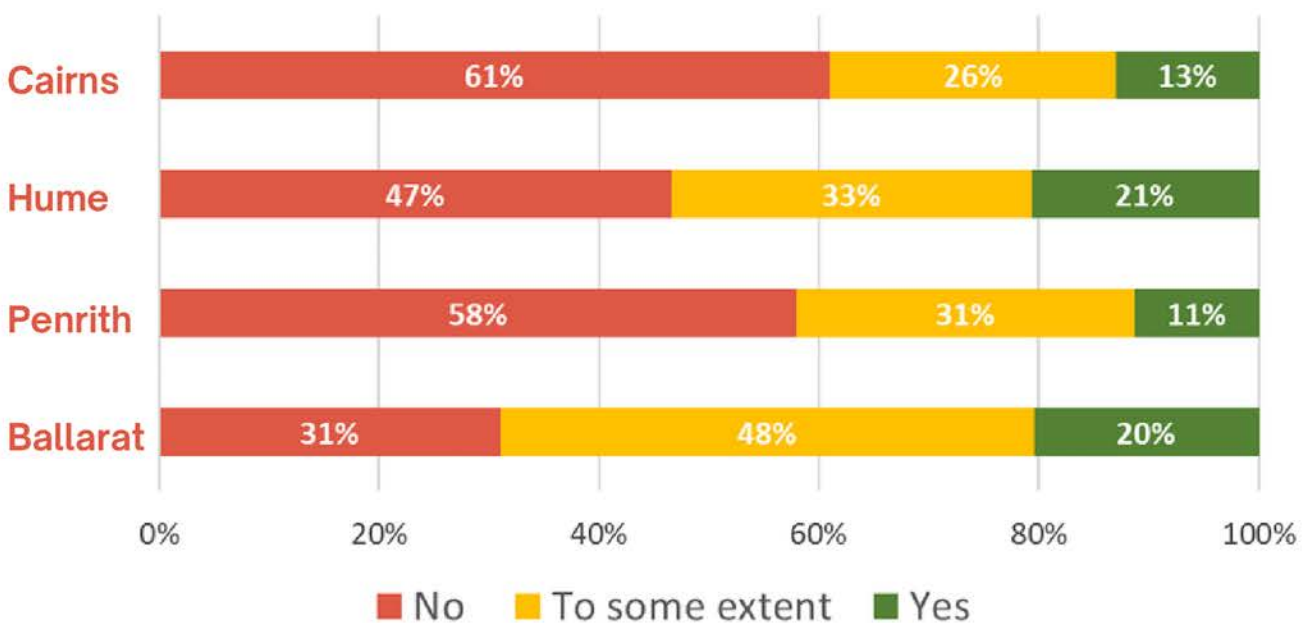
Indicator #1.1 - Awareness

This determines the level of understanding around the anticipated population growth in an LGA.

One measure is utilised - the community's level of awareness of their LGA's projected population growth.

Survey findings reveal that most community members possess either limited or moderate awareness about the projected population growth in their area. Without a clear grasp of the projected population increase that councils are required to plan for, it is difficult for residents to appreciate the scale of change in their city and recognise the need for change.

Awareness of your city's projected growth before doing this survey



Indicator #1.2 Sentiment

Sentiment gauges how participants feel about the projected population growth and the level of support for urban change.

Two key measures were used to determine sentiment - feelings towards population growth and urban change, and level of support for urban change.

Feelings towards projected population growth

Feelings towards projected population growth differ markedly between LGAs.

Anxiety was the most prevalent emotion in Cairns (48%) and Penrith (40%). In Hume, the majority of participants felt excited and confident (51%) while anxiety was at 33.3%. In Ballarat, excitement and confidence were also the dominant sentiments (43.2%) with anxiety at 34.1%. Significantly the majority of participants are anxious, excited and confident about urban change. These are all feelings where people are able to constructively explore issues and solutions, and points to a community's readiness for change conversations.

Fearful & Angry



15.5%
Cairns

10.7%
Hume

16%
Penrith

8.3%
Ballarat

Anxious



48%
Cairns

33.3%
Hume

40%
Penrith

34.1%
Ballarat

Excited & Confident



36%
Cairns

51%
Hume

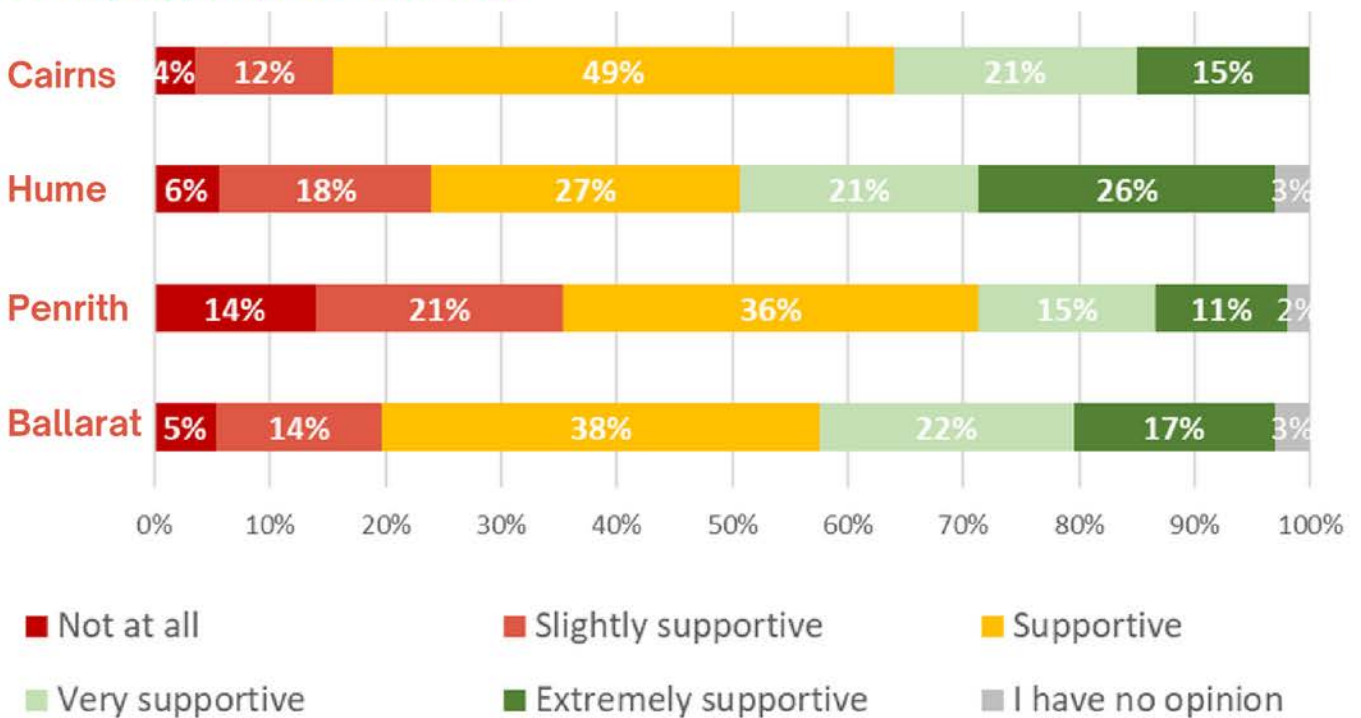
36%
Penrith

43.2%
Ballarat

Level of support for urban change

Despite varying anxiety levels or excitement about projected population growth across different LGAs, the research shows that most stakeholders support urban change to accommodate growth sustainably. In every LGA, the majority of residents were either supportive, very supportive or extremely supportive of change to accommodate population growth. Significantly few residents were not at all supportive of urban change, with Penrith the highest at 14%. This suggests that even when faced with concerns about future population growth, people generally recognise the need for urban development and are willing to support changes that promote sustainable growth.

Level of support for urban change



Indicator #1.3 - Knowledge

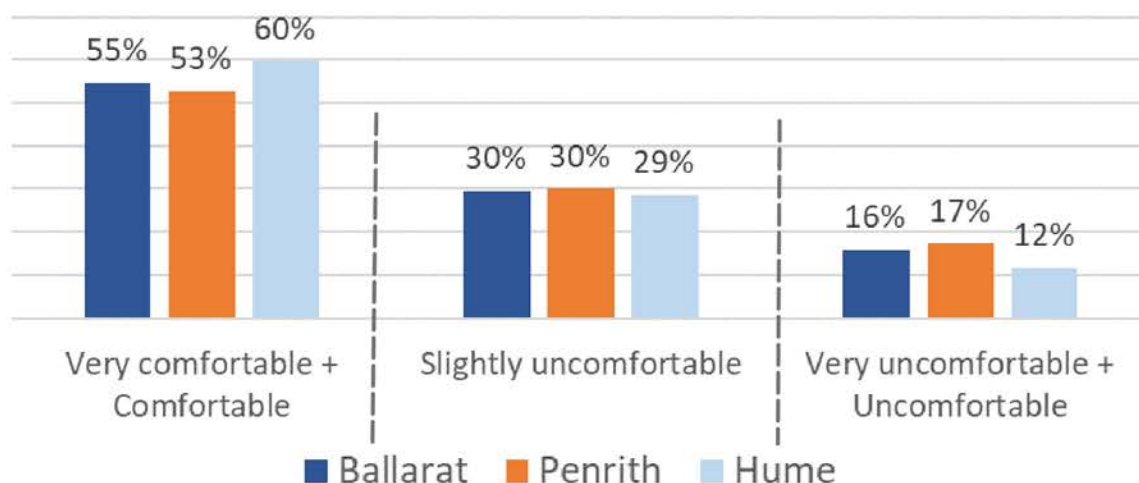
Explores views on urban consolidation, understanding of sustainable urban development, priority challenges and benefits, and learning needs.

The survey explores four areas to understand a community's knowledge around sustainable urban growth including - understanding of the need for urban consolidation, knowledge of foundation concepts shaping future strategies, challenges and benefits of change and what the community would like to know more about.

Urban consolidation mandate ¹

There's a significant knowledge gap about the need for urban consolidation, with over half of the respondents indicating they don't perceive any issue with the continued construction of mostly detached houses on the city outskirts. Change management theory and practice identifies that without awareness of a problem, individuals are less likely to change. This demonstrates that unless proactive efforts are made to educate people about the challenges of urban growth and the need for urban consolidation, individuals do not perceive any problems with continuing current practices.

Comfort level with accommodating growth through predominately detached houses on the city outskirts



Limited knowledge of sustainable growth

Moderate knowledge of sustainable growth

High knowledge of sustainable growth

¹ This question was not included in Cairns Regional Council implementation due to the pilot nature of the earlier survey version

“

Isn't that the norm? I feel safe with that

Hume resident, limited knowledge ”

“

If it ain't broke don't fix it. Leave the established neighbourhoods alone

Penrith resident, limited knowledge ”

“

There's no room within the 'central' area of Ballarat to house a significant number of new residents

Ballarat resident, limited knowledge ”

“

Urban sprawl will lead to the detriment of Ballarat. We need more well-considered apartment buildings to deal with the rise in population

Ballarat resident, high knowledge ”

“

Mostly detached housing will not meet population needs, and will put undue strain on the environment. Medium and higher density is part of the solution, and it needs to be done without creating any social or environmental issues

Penrith resident, high knowledge ”

“

Lack of options available that are suitable for my 64-year-old mum, with most things having three bedrooms or two storeys

Hume resident, high knowledge ”

“

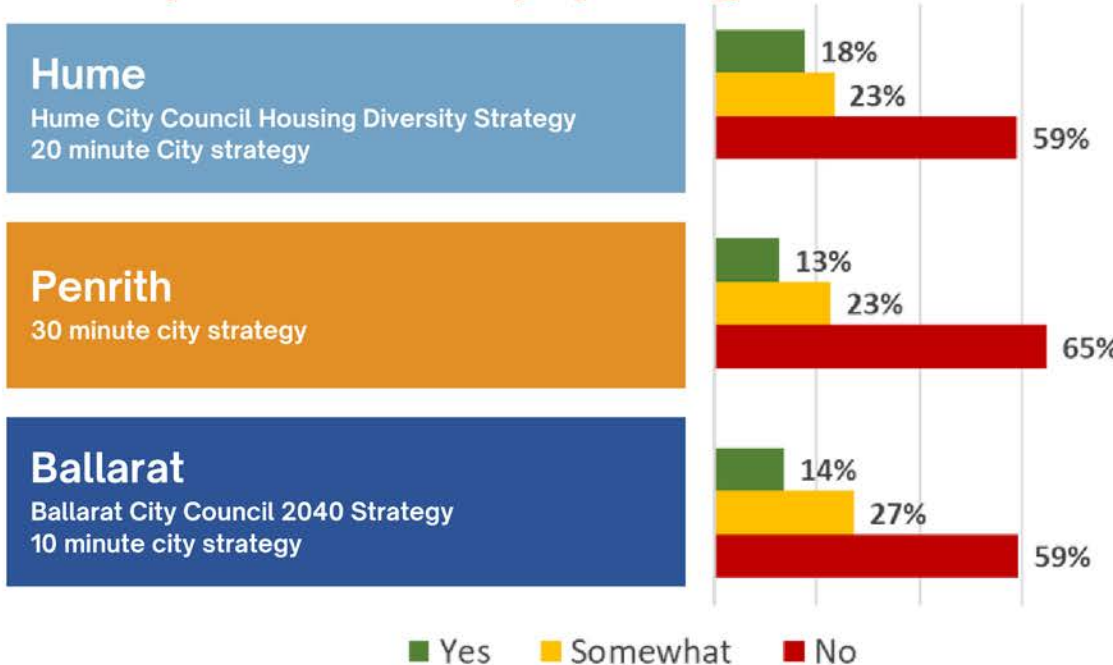
Young first-home buyers are somewhat limited to building a big house on a relatively small block. It would be great to normalise smaller homes, townhouses etc to make housing more affordable.

Ballarat resident, high knowledge ”

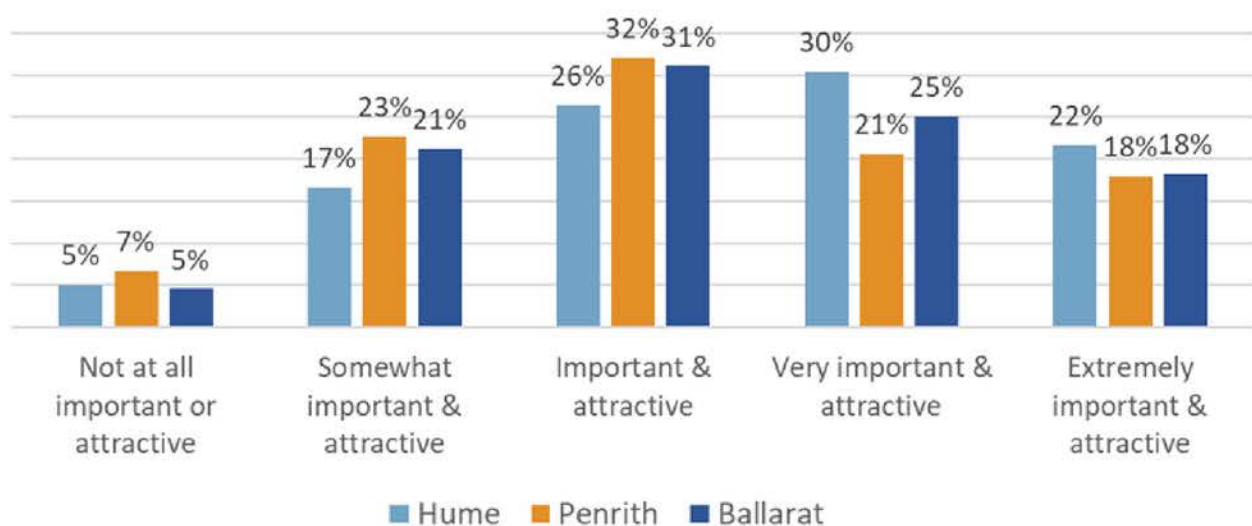
Foundation Concepts and Strategies ²

In Ballarat, Penrith and Hume, residents were asked if they were aware of their city's foundation strategies for urban growth, focusing on each city's version of the 20-minute city concept. Most participants were not familiar with these strategies. However, once presented with an overview in the survey, nearly all participants considered the concepts to be between "important and attractive", to "extremely important and attractive". The research indicates that increasing awareness and understanding of concepts like the 20-minute city will lead to broader support for the types of urban change many LGAs are trying to progress. It should be noted that this research was conducted at the height of media discussion on the 20-minute city conspiracy theory debate.

Community's awareness on LGA specific strategy



Community's perception on the LGA specific strategy



² This question was not included in Cairns Regional Council implementation due to the pilot nature of the earlier survey version

Challenges

All participants across the four LGAs identified traffic, parking and congestion and increased demand on services and infrastructure as being in the top three urban growth challenges. However, there were some differences. Ballarat was primarily concerned about the impact of growth on the area's current look and feel (heritage), while those from Hume and Cairns prioritised the preservation of trees and the natural landscape. Ballarat, Cairns and Hume were also concerned about the potential impact of urban growth on the cost of living. This suggests that while addressing common challenges is essential, it is also crucial to address the unique concerns of each area.

<i>Priority Challenges</i>	Cairns	Hume	Penrith	Ballarat
Traffic, parking & congestion	1	3	1	2
Demand on services & infrastructure	2	2	2	3
Removal of trees & natural landscape	3	1	2	
Impact on the look & feel I like today		5	3	1
Effect the experience of my home	5		4	
Cost of retail & services increases	4		5	4
Property values increase	4			5
Not delivering housing choice		4		

Benefits

Participants from all LGAs included easy access to essential amenities, promoting economic development and creating a more vibrant and interesting place to live in their top four benefits of urban growth.

Cairns participants emphasised the enhancement of public and active transport as their top priority while Hume participants were particularly interested in the advantages of efficiently utilising the region's infrastructure.

Interestingly, housing diversity and choice was only prioritised in Penrith despite this being an objective and key message in all of the participating LGAs.

These differences in priorities highlight the nuanced expectations and aspirations residents have for their communities as they think about urban growth.

<i>Priority Benefits</i>	Cairns	Hume	Penrith	Ballarat
Access to everything I need close to home	4	3	1	3
Supports economic development	2	4	2	1
Enhances public & active transport	1	5	3	
More vibrant & interesting place to live	3	1	4	2
Housing choice & diversity			5	
Better use of region's infrastructure		2		4
Opportunity for climate smart buildings	5	5		5

Communities would like to know more about ...

It is important to understand what community members would like to know more about in regards to urban change. Participants from all LGAs want to know more about the specific changes taking place in their community, the core concepts that guide the planning and accommodation of urban growth and how to live more sustainably. Examples of successful outcomes were also highly sought after by those from Penrith, Ballarat and Cairns. Hume participants were primarily interested in understanding the perspectives of other community members who held different views from their own.

While the results indicate some convergent information needs, the specific focus of interest must be nuanced by locations. For example, Hume residents are more interested in understanding diverse perspectives from their fellow community members while Ballarat, Cairns and Penrith residents value learning from successful outcomes. These differences in priorities among locations demonstrate a desire for tailored information and engagement in the urban planning process that is specific to each community's unique context.

<i>Like to know more about...</i>	Cairns	Hume	Penrith	Ballarat
Changes taking place in my community	1	2	1	1
Core concepts to determine where & how growth is accommodated	5	3	5	2
Examples of great outcomes	2		2	3
Views of others in my community who are not like me		1	4	4
Living a more sustainable lifestyle	3	4	3	5
How urban development happens	4	5		

4.3

Place (Re) Attachment

Place (re) attachment measures the current level of place attachment and responses to potential future urban change scenarios.

Place attachment is critical to the social and emotional well-being of communities. Urban consolidation will result in changes to the urban identity of our neighbourhoods and it is important to understand how a proposed change may impact a community's attachment. The Place (re) attachment domain identifies a community's current level of place attachment, explores their views on three likely urban change scenarios and assesses the level of the potential impact on attachment.

The following section of this report presents a summary of this domain's key findings and a detailed analysis of the results for each indicator - **Attachment** and **Future Place Alignment**.

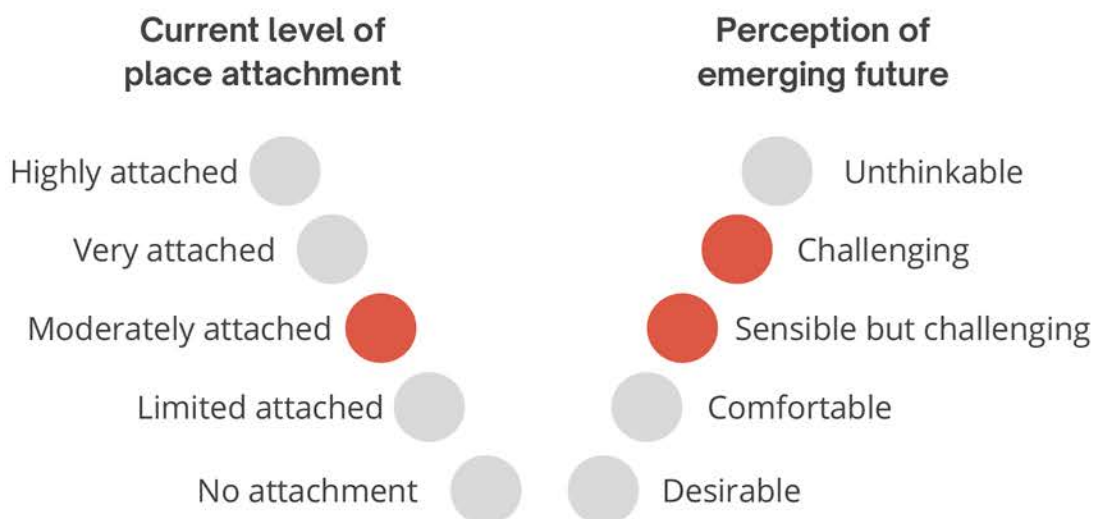
Summary of Domain Findings

Key insights from across the LGAs include:

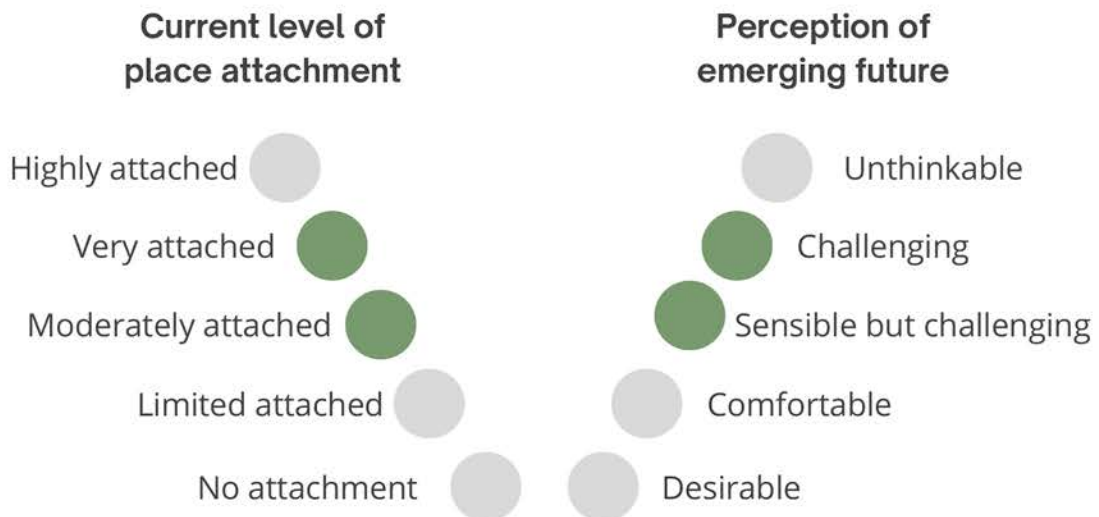
- Overall moderate level of place attachment was the most selected in Cairns, Ballarat and Penrith. Very to highly attached ranged from 50% in Hume to 33% in Penrith. No or limited attachment levels across all LGAs was significant, ranging from 15-25%.
- A general view that the future urban change scenarios were 'sensible but challenging' to 'challenging' for both the LGA and the respondent's local area. Interestingly, across many of the LGAs, the number of participants who viewed the scenarios as 'comfortable' or 'desirable' often exceeded the number of participants who viewed the scenario as 'unthinkable'.

These results were a surprise to most project teams who had assumed their communities' were highly attached to their local area and had expected the community to view the urban change scenarios as 'unthinkable'. By this point in the survey, participants had been provided with educational content on the need for urban consolidation and explored its benefits and challenges.

Overall place (re) attachment outcome across LGAs

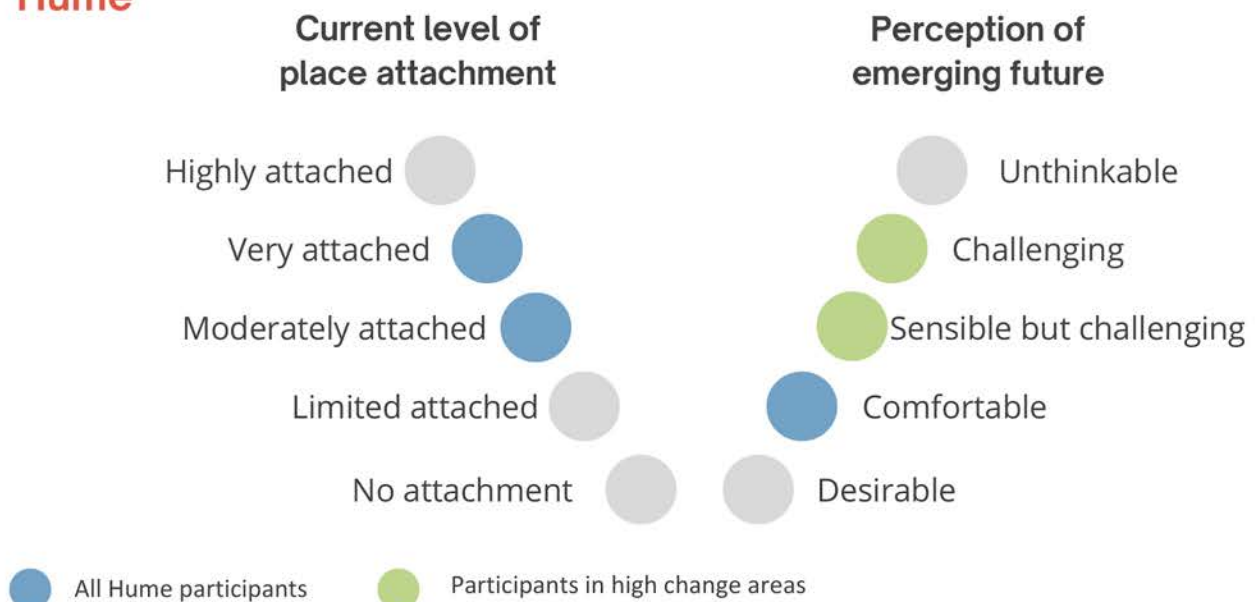


Cairns



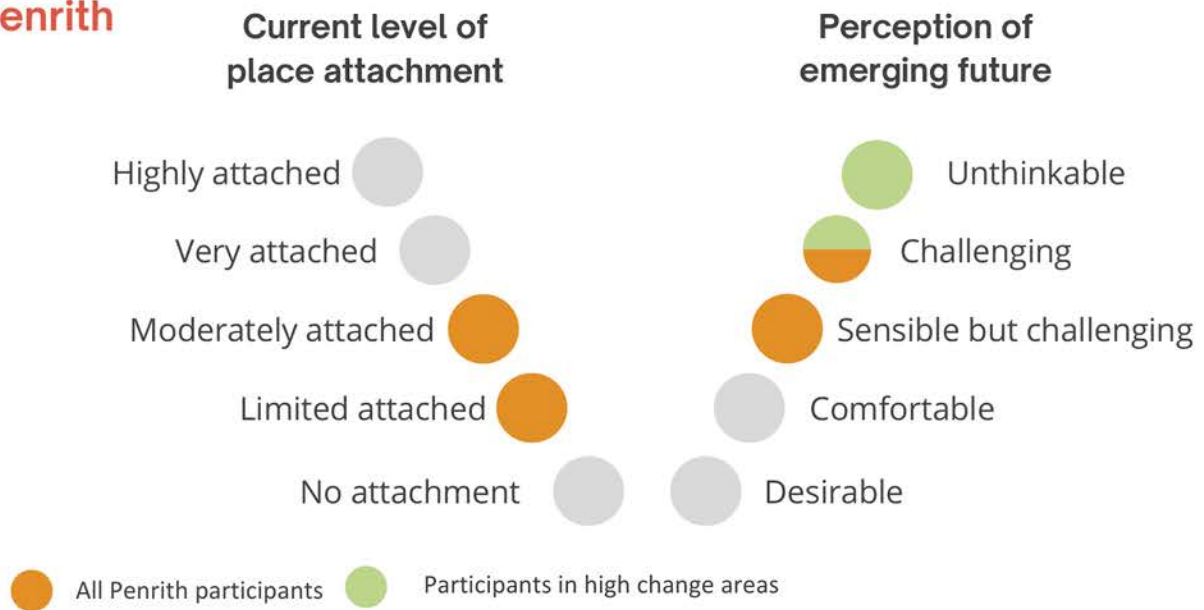
Cairns residents expressed a moderate to high level of place attachment and understood the need for urban consolidation to protect natural assets. Overall they viewed the future scenarios as 'sensible but challenging' to 'challenging' and were seeking a greater understanding of what the look, feel and experience would be of a future-ready tropical neighbourhood in Cairns.

Hume



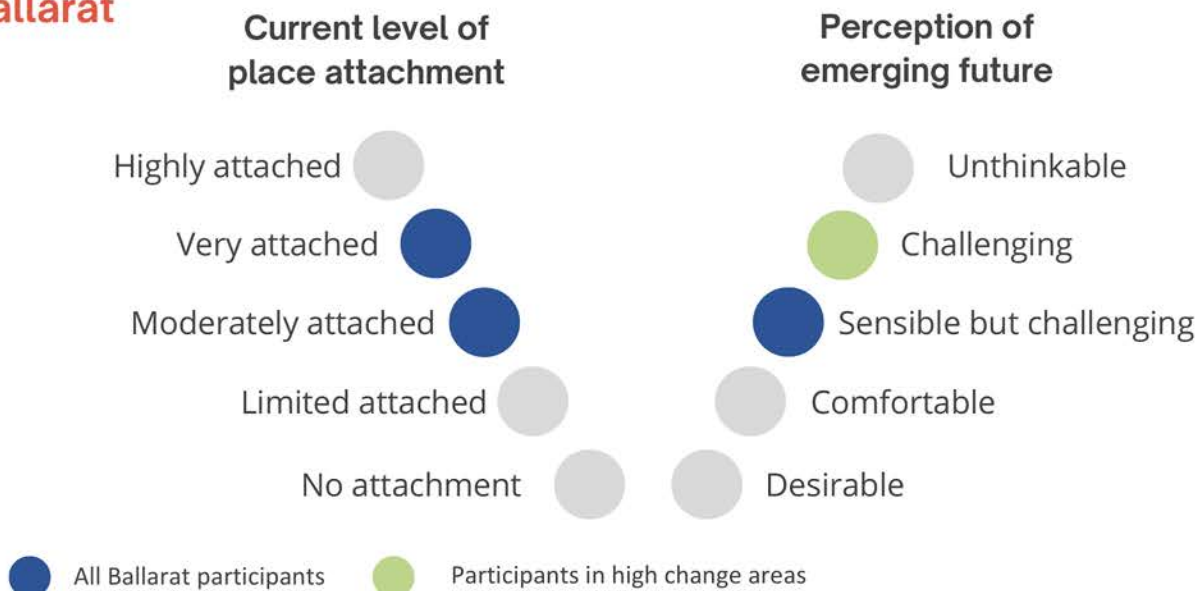
Hume residents expressed moderate to high levels of place attachment and viewed the future scenarios overall as 'comfortable'. However, the high change areas that indicated urban infill and consolidation in established neighbourhoods were viewed as 'sensible but challenging' to 'challenging'. To help the community navigate change in Hume a greater awareness of the city's need for both greenfield and urban infill development in established areas will be important.

Penrith



Penrith residents had a moderate to limited attachment to their local area and found projected urban changes to range from 'sensible but challenging' to 'challenging'. Transit-oriented development proposals were seen as 'challenging' to 'unthinkable'. Penrith traditionally attracts young families and participants assumed this would continue, believing these families may not like apartment living. It is crucial to help current residents understand potential differences in preferences of future residents.

Ballarat



Ballarat residents expressed a moderate to high level of place attachment and viewed the future scenarios as 'sensible but challenging'. Where future scenarios indicated urban infill in areas with a depth of heritage buildings, responses to scenarios moved to 'challenging'. Building understanding of the need for urban consolidation and showcasing examples of how heritage assets can be sensitively incorporated into a higher density urban environment will be important.

Place (Re) Attachment

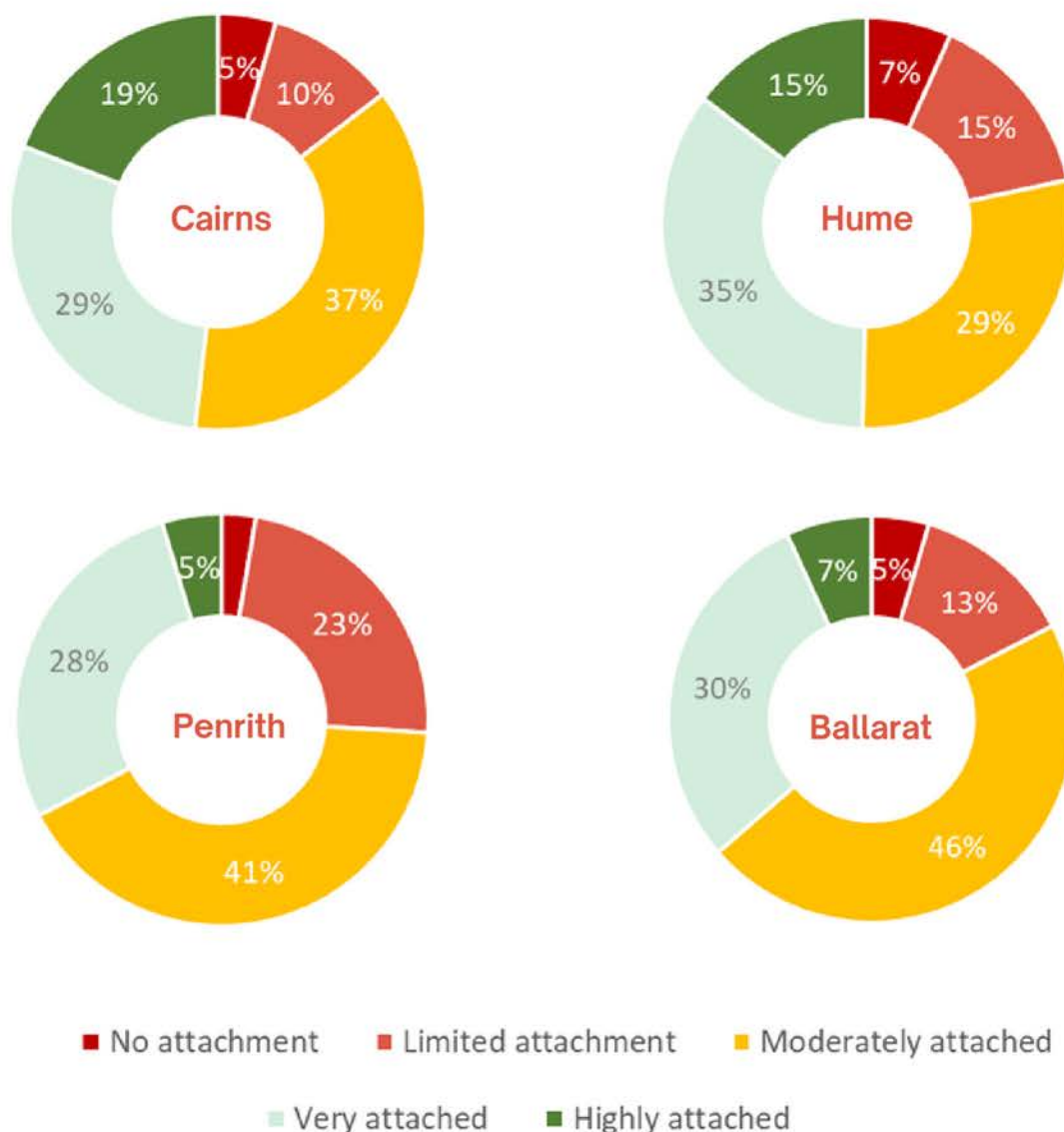
Indicator #2.1 Attachment

Evaluates the current level of connection to the local area and views on its performance as a great place.

Place attachment is assessed in two ways - overall place attachment and the local area's performance as a great place to live today.

Overall Place Attachment

Overall moderate level of place attachment was the most selected in Cairns, Ballarat and Penrith. Very to highly attached ranged from 50% in Hume to 33% in Penrith. No or limited attachment levels across all LGAs was significant, ranging from 15-25%.



Local Area Performance

Overall, participants felt that their communities performed well. The highest-rated criteria of these communities were their inclusivity towards people from diverse backgrounds, availability of interconnected parks, walking and cycling routes, and convenient access to essential amenities. The criteria rated lowest were safety during both day and night, diversity in housing options and the affordability of housing for both renters and buyers in the local area.

<i>Top performing criteria</i>	Cairns	Hume	Penrith	Ballarat
Connected network of parks, walking and cycle routes	3	2	2	1
Welcoming to people from all walks of life	2	1	1	2
I have access to everything I need within close proximity to home	1	2	2	3
I'm proud to live in this local area			2	3
Amenities that support community life		2	3	
<i>Lowest performing criteria</i>	Cairns	Hume	Penrith	Ballarat
I feel safe - day or night				
Range of housing choices / options				
My local area is affordable - purchase or rent				
Great education opportunities - childcare through to high school				

Indicator #2.2 Future Place Alignment

Establishes perceptions of future urban change scenarios within the LGA and in a participant's neighbourhood.

To explore the community's views on the potential urban futures in their city, participants were presented with a series of likely urban change scenarios that reflect the types of development that could occur across their city.

These scenarios were expressed in a series of before and after sketches and brief text to describe the types of urban outcomes this scenario would support. Participants were asked to reflect on their views of this scenario occurring in their LGA and, where relevant, their local neighbourhood.

Summary of Future Place Alignment Insights

Across the LGAs participants generally viewed the future urban change scenarios as 'sensible but challenging' for both the LGA and their neighbourhood. Across many of the LGAs the number of participants who viewed the scenarios as 'comfortable' or 'desirable' often exceeded the number of participants who viewed the scenario as 'unthinkable'.

Hume residents were overall more supportive of the future scenarios than other LGAs, with all three scenarios having a higher number of participants viewing them as 'comfortable' and 'desirable'. Penrith's residents found most of the scenarios more challenging to consider in their LGA and local area than other LGAs, having a smaller proportion of participants across all scenarios indicating 'comfortable' or 'desirable'.

These results were a surprise to most project teams who had expected the community to view the urban change scenarios as 'unthinkable'. By this point in the survey, participants had been provided with educational content on the need for urban consolidation and explored its benefits and challenges.

The following pages in this section present a detailed overview of the results from the 3 scenarios across the 4 LGAs.

Scenario #1 Findings

'Next generation' greenfield + increased density in established areas

(e.g. smaller lots, dividing larger blocks, duplexes and secondary dwellings)

Cairns

Participants viewed this scenario as 'sensible but challenging' in their LGA (43%) and in their local area (41%). 20% of participants viewed this scenario as 'comfortable' and 'desirable' in their local area, compared to 14%, who found it 'unthinkable'.



Hume

This scenario was overwhelmingly viewed by participants as 'comfortable' and 'desirable' in both their LGA (43.3%) and in their local area (58.6%).



Penrith

Overall, participants viewed this scenario as 'sensible but challenging' in both their LGA (44.7%) and in their local area (47.5%).

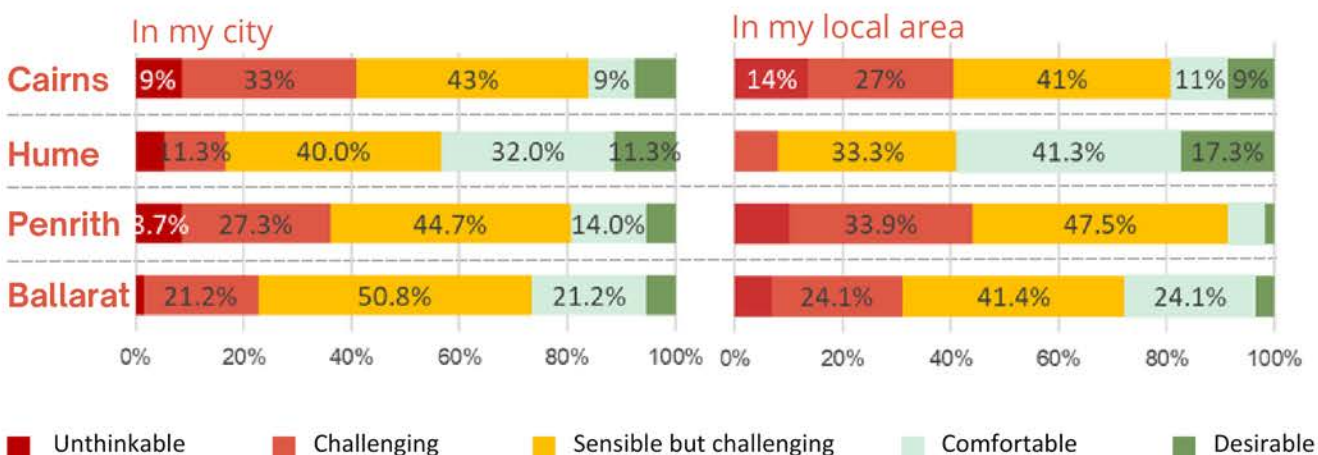


Ballarat

Participants viewed this scenario as 'sensible but challenging' in their LGA (50.8%) and in their local area (41.4%). 26% of participants viewed this scenario as 'comfortable' and 'desirable' in their local area when compared to 8% who found this concept 'unthinkable'.



Participants response to change scenario #1



Scenario #2 Findings

Townhouses and low rise apartments in established areas

Cairns

This scenario was viewed by participants as 'sensible but challenging' in their LGA (36%) and 'challenging' in their local area (36%). Interestingly, 'comfortable' and 'desirable' accounted for 18% of respondents, almost equal to the percentage of participants who viewed this scenario as 'unthinkable' in their local area.



Hume

This scenario was overwhelmingly viewed by participants as 'comfortable' and 'desirable' in both their LGA (44%) and in their local area (64%). Interestingly participants expressed a greater desire of support for this outcome in their local area.



Penrith

This scenario was viewed by participants as 'sensible but challenging' in their LGA (40%) and 'challenging' in their local area (37%).

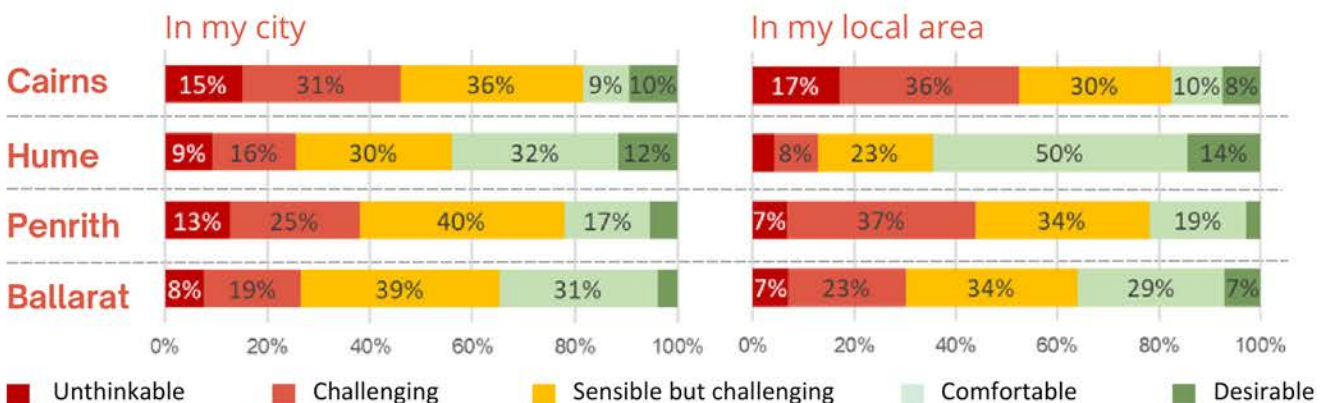


Ballarat

Overall this scenario was viewed by participants as 'comfortable' and 'desirable' (LGA 33% and their local area 36%) and 'sensible but challenging' (LGA 39% and local area 34%). Only a small percentage of participants viewed this scenario as 'unthinkable' (8% in LGA and 7% in their local area).



Participants response to change scenario #2

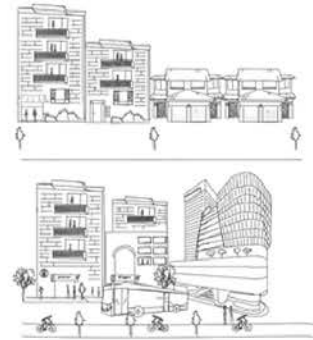


Scenario #3 Findings

Higher density around major nodes

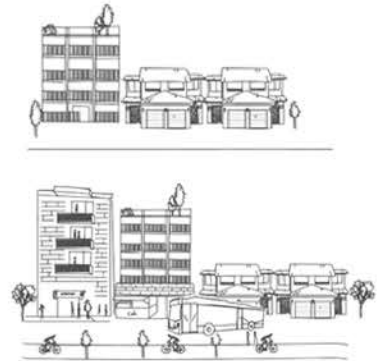
Cairns

'Residents viewed this scenario as 'sensible but challenging' and 'challenging' in their LGA (53%) and their local area (52%). This scenario was also viewed positively, with 31% of participants indicating that this scenario was 'comfortable' or 'desirable' in their local area



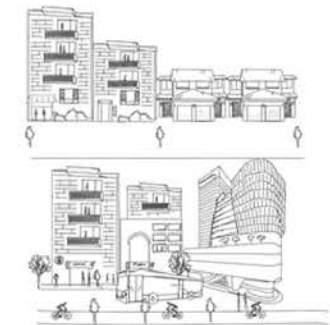
Hume

This scenario was viewed by participants as 'comfortable' and 'desirable' in the LGA, and 'sensible but challenging' in their Local Area (32%). This scenario also received Hume's highest number of respondents finding the outcome 'unthinkable' (15%) or 'challenging' (23%) in their local area.



Penrith

Overall this scenario was viewed by participants as 'sensible but challenging' to 'challenging'. It also registered the highest level of 'unthinkable' across all scenarios in Penrith (LGA 19% and in their local area 15%).

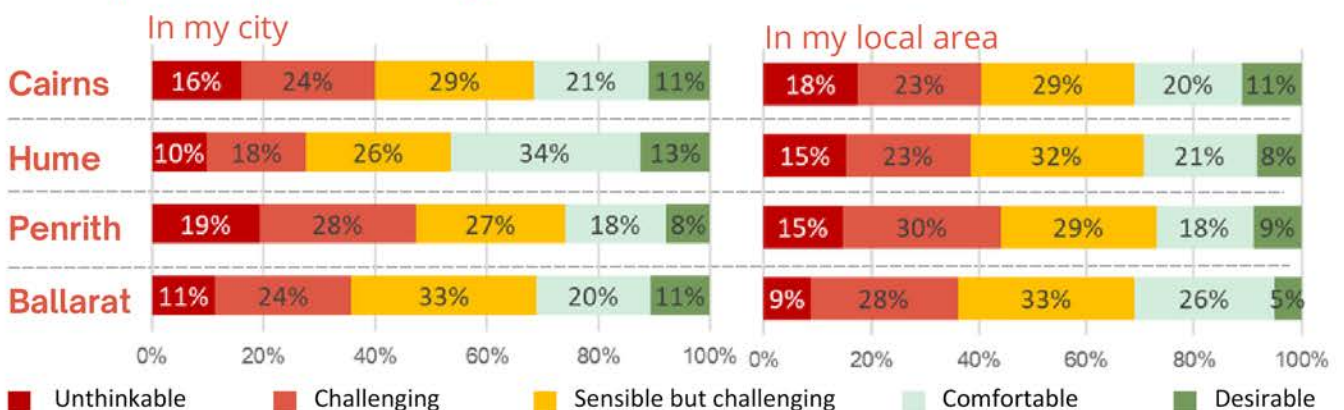


Ballarat

Overall residents viewed this scenario as 'sensible but challenging' in both the LGA (33%) and their local area (33%). Interestingly this scenario also had almost equal proportions of the community viewing this scenario as 'comfortable' and 'desirable' (LGA 31% and local area 31%).



Participants response to change scenario #3



4.4

System Actors Capacity & Capability

System Actors Capacity and Capability measures confidence in the system to manage change and collaborate on transition challenges.

Urban change occurs in a complex system of stakeholders, including government, developers, elected members and the community. Trust in the system's ability to plan and implement urban change to the benefit of all and future generations is critical to the success of sustainable urban transformation. Also critical is a community's ability to manage change well and an individual's participation in a change process as future-conscious citizens. These three factors are explored in the System Actors Capacity and Capability Domain.

The following section of this report presents a summary of this domain's key findings and a detailed analysis of the results for each indicator - **Confidence in Actors**, **Community Capacity** and **Citizenship**.

Summary of Domain Findings

Across the regions, trust in urban transformation lies with local elected representatives and local authorities. As the community's most trusted actor in the urban change system, it's crucial that they have both a technical understanding of sustainable urban development and the necessary skills to lead informed change conversations.

Communities believe they can manage change well and they want to see planning for growth to address their needs, the needs of others and those of future generations. However, there's a noticeable lack of participation in discussions, with less than 15% of participants taking part in urban change conversations in the past 3 years.

Indicator #3.1 Confidence in Actors

Assesses the degree of trust in the urban system to manage change well.

This is explored through two factors - trust in actors and perceptions of who benefits from urban change.

Trust

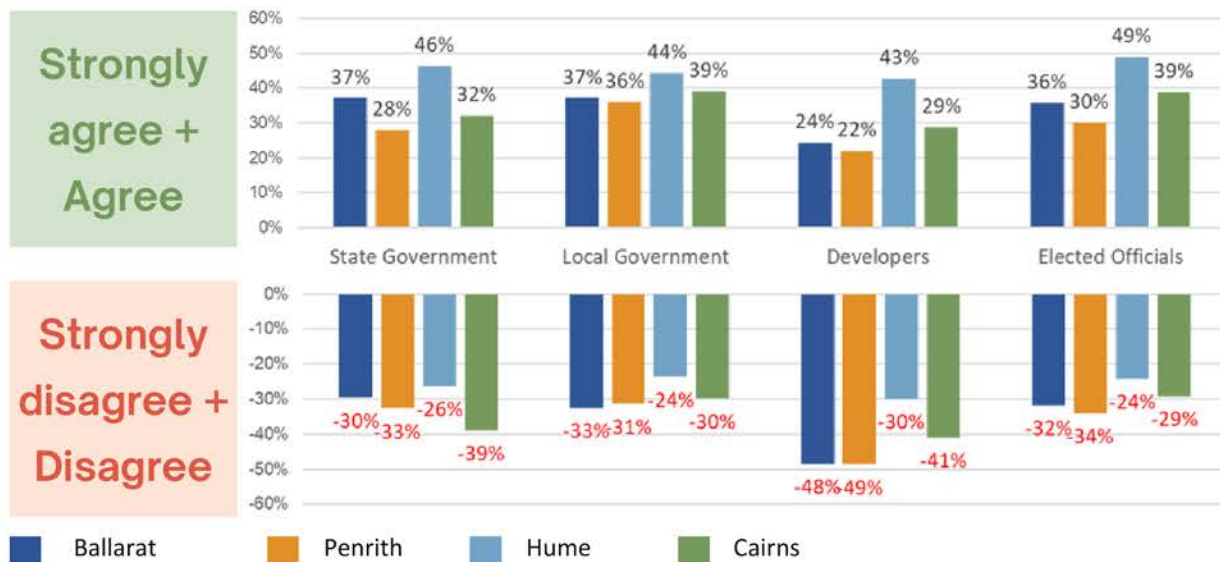
Overall trust in the urban change system is low across all stakeholders, with councillors (Cairns 39%, Hume 49%, Penrith 30%, Ballarat 36%) and local government (Cairns 39%, Hume 44%, Penrith 36%, Ballarat 37%) generally being the most trusted actors. State government confidence was highest in Hume and Ballarat.

Negative sentiment was highest towards developers across all cities, with 48% in Ballarat, 49% in Penrith, 30% in Hume, and 41% in Cairns. Interestingly, developers in Hume also received a higher level of support than other cities (43%).

Interestingly, many participants across all LGAs selected 'neutral' for trust across all stakeholders. This indicates that it may be useful to build community's understanding of how the system works, the role of each agency and what they can and can't influence.

As the community's most trusted actor in the urban change system, it's crucial that local government leadership have both a technical understanding of sustainable urban development and the necessary skills to lead informed change conversations.

Participants response to trust in actors



Perceptions of who benefits

Exploring a community's views of who has benefited or been impacted by urban change thus far helps create a more holistic understanding of trust in the process and outcomes.

All LGAs (aside from Penrith) identified significantly higher personal and community benefits from recent urban development than negative impacts.

In Penrith, while 36% feel the community has been negatively impacted, 31% can identify the personal benefits they've received from the area's transformation. They also believe newcomers have benefited most from these changes (28%).

The Hume area painted a different picture. Here people strongly felt that they had personally benefited from the area's growth and change (30%) and that these benefits extended to the entire community (21%).

The situation in Cairns is unique. A significant number of residents indicated they have been unaffected by the growth (35%). Interestingly, the perception leans more towards the community gaining benefits rather than individuals. Cairns also stands out due to a common belief that developers have primarily benefitted from the changes — a viewpoint that is not echoed in the other areas.

In Ballarat, there is a consensus that change has been mutually beneficial — to individuals and the community. Participants believe they and their community have experienced the advantages of transformation in equal measure.

Despite the low level of trust, when prompted, residents can identify individual and whole of community benefits from urban change. This potentially indicates that by increasing the visibility of benefits, there may be an increase in system trust.

Who benefits ³



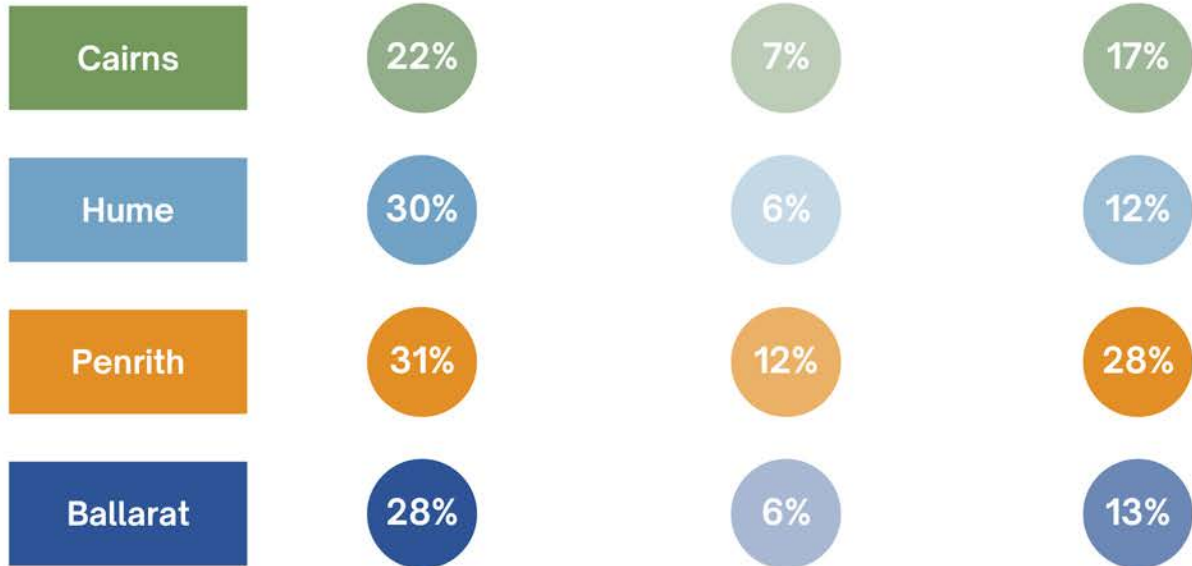
I have personally benefited



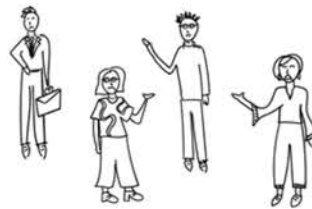
I have been negatively affected



Most benefits are felt by new residents



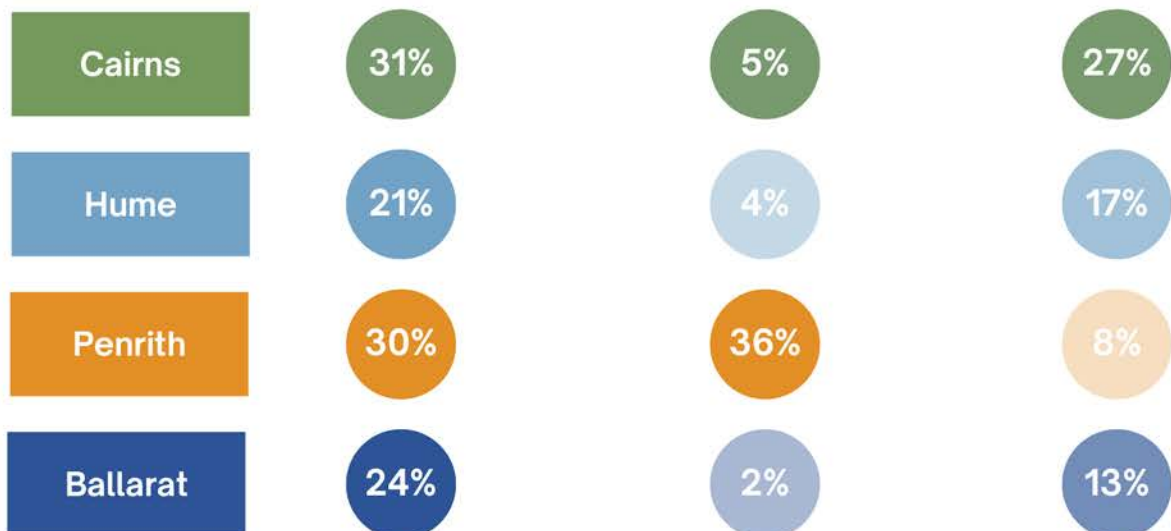
Whole community has benefited



Whole community has been negatively impacted



Most benefits have gone to private developer



³ Participants were able to select more than one option. The percentage is calculated based on the number of participants who selected that option in each LGA.

Indicator #3.2 Community Capacity

Community capacity measures the capability of the community to manage change well.

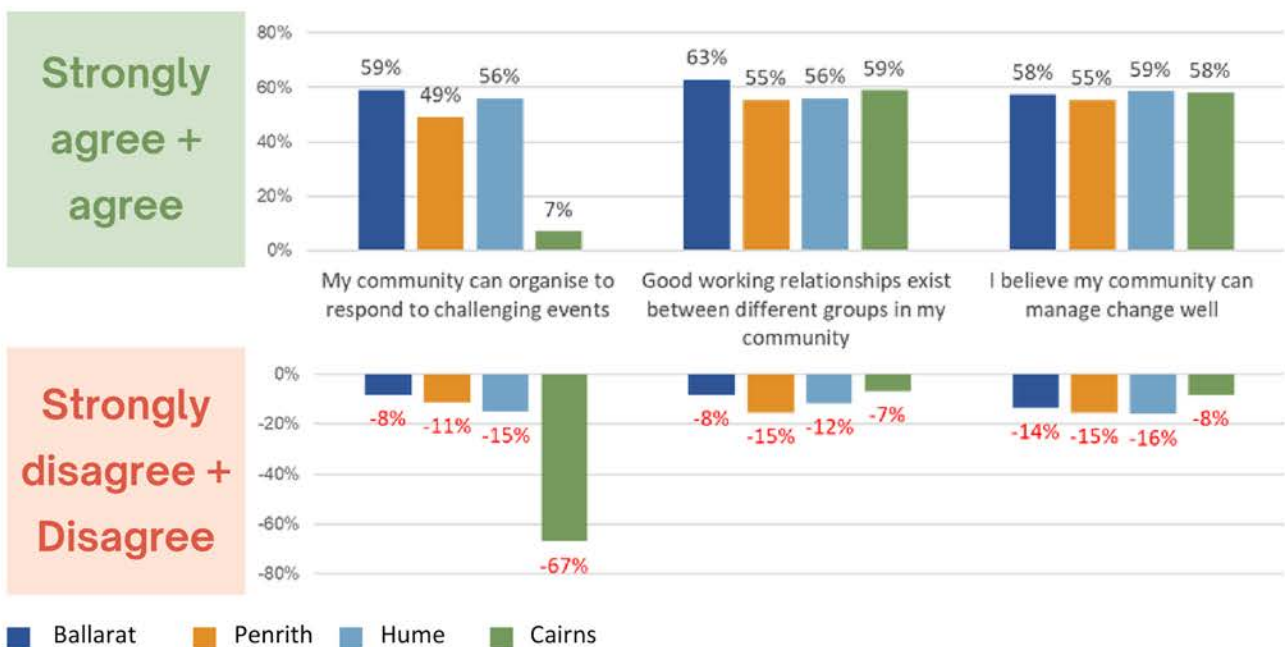
This is explored through three factors - the community's perceptions of its ability to organise and respond to challenging events, the depth of relationships within the community and perceptions of the community's overall ability to manage change well.

Overall, the community's self-belief is robust in all the LGAs. In Ballarat, a majority of respondents (59%) believe that their community can respond to challenging events. Penrith and Hume follow closely at 49% and 56%, respectively. However Cairns is an outlier, with only 7% confidence. The Cairns project team expressed the view that this may have been due to the challenges experienced during a flood event that occurred just before the survey's implementation.

Confidence in the existence of good working relationships between different community groups is highest in Ballarat (63%), closely followed by Cairns (59%), Hume (56%), and Penrith (55%).

When asked about their belief in the community's ability to manage change well, respondents in Hume led with 59%, followed by Ballarat (58%), Cairns (58%), and Penrith (55%).

Participants' perceptions of community ability to respond to change



Indicator #3.3 Citizenship

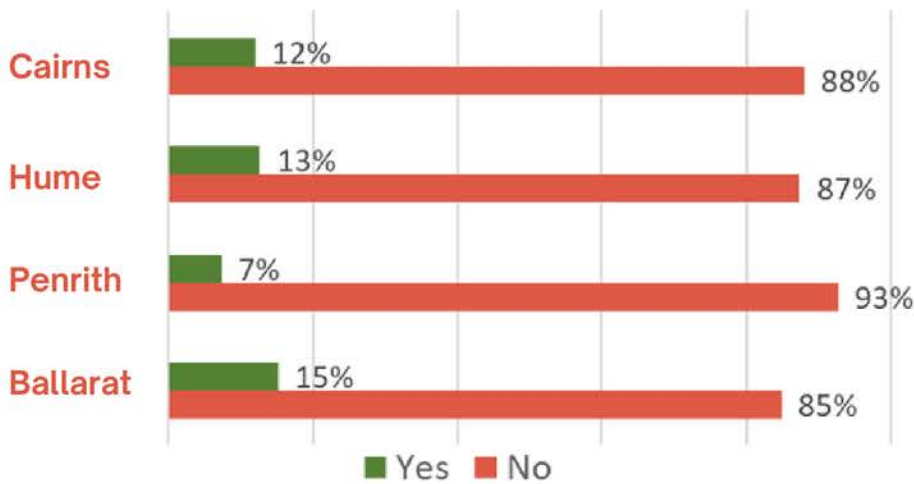
Identifies the level of community participation and views on future urban planning.

Citizenship was explored through two factors - the community's level of participation in urban change conversations and their views on planning for future growth.

Participation

When it comes to participation in community forums on urban development over the past three years, the figures across Cairns, Hume, Penrith, and Ballarat reveal relatively low engagement. Participation rates range from 7% in Penrith, slightly higher at 12% in Cairns and 13% in Hume, to a peak of 15% in Ballarat.

Participant involvement in community forum in the last three years



Key focus of urban change outcomes

Overall, participants wanted planning for future growth to consider their needs, the needs of others in their community and the needs of future generations.

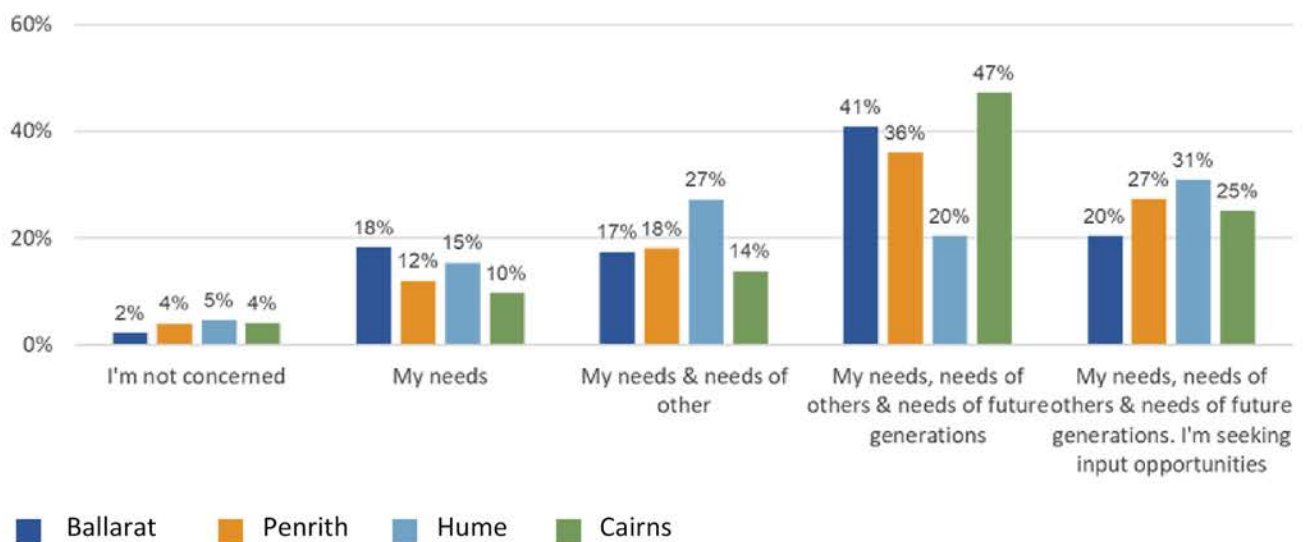
The most self-focused view, reflecting concern only for personal needs was highest in Ballarat (18%), followed by Hume (15%), Penrith (12%) and Cairns (10%).

When considering both personal needs and the needs of others, Hume led with 27%, trailed by Penrith and Ballarat (18% and 17% respectively) and Cairns at 14%.

Interestingly, when extending the scope to include the needs of future generations, Cairns residents showed the highest concern (47%), followed closely by Ballarat (41%), then Penrith (36%) and Hume (20%).

The desire to actively seek input opportunities to address the needs of self, others and future generations was most prevalent in Hume (31%), followed by Penrith (27%), Cairns (25%) and Ballarat (20%).

Participant reflection on future growth key considerations



4.5

Index Implementation Reflections

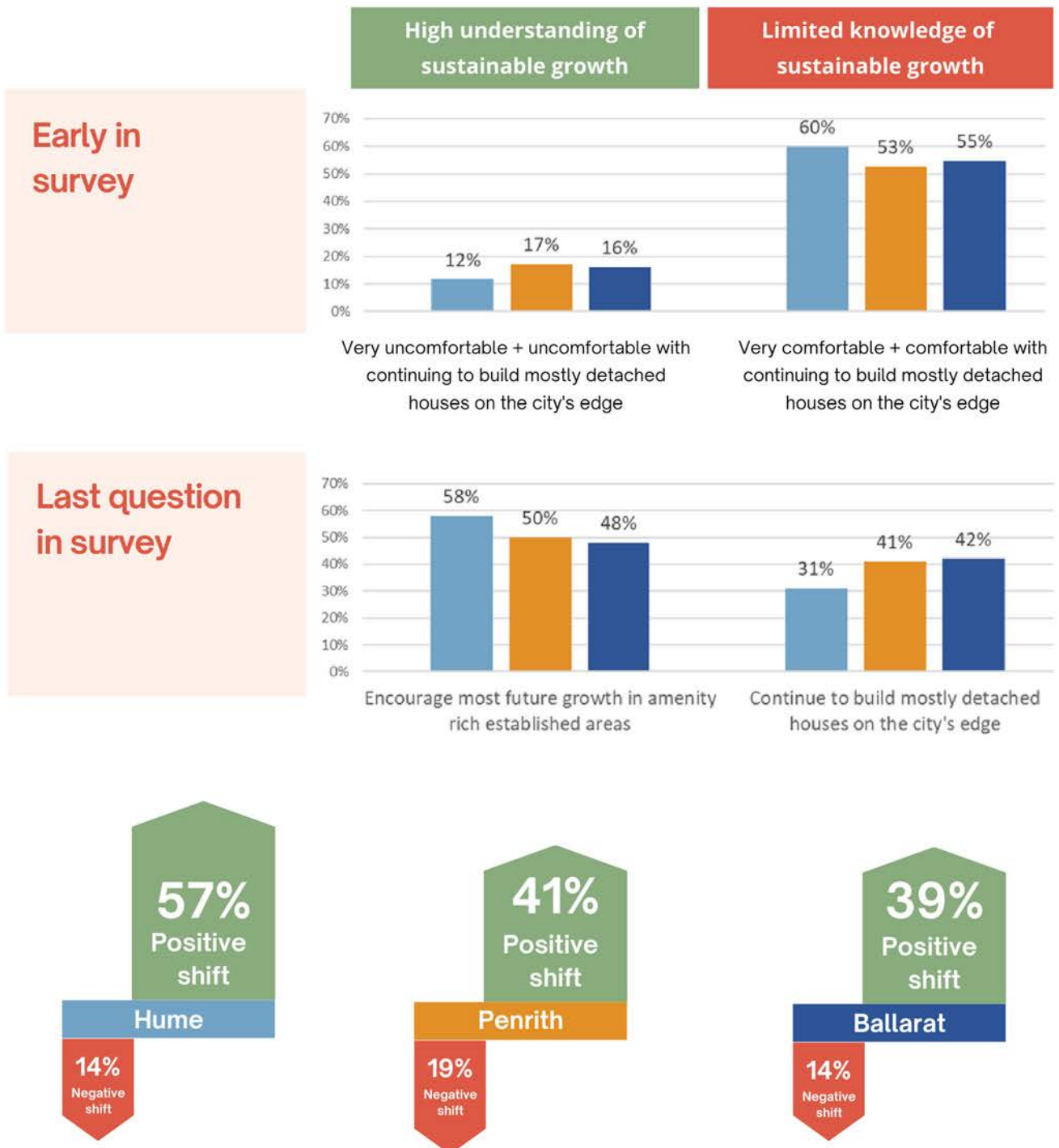
Observations and insights from implementing the Index with partner LGAs

Phase 1 of the Step-change Cities Partnership included the implementation of Studio THI's Urban Change Readiness Index with 4 partner LGAs. Throughout implementation, Studio THI and LGA teams reflected on the process of implementing the Index, discussed the implications of results and explored lessons learnt.

The key insights from these reflections are summarised in the following section of this report.

Shift in Community Sentiment ⁴

The Index survey gauges community sentiment towards urban consolidation at the start and end of the questionnaire with substantial education about each LGA's urban change agenda in between. This enabled the project team to identify any shift in sentiment resulting from completing the survey. We recorded up to a 57% positive shift in sentiment towards urban consolidation. This highlights a key benefit of the Index methodology. By including well-structured and LGA-specific educational content within the community survey we are able to significantly influence sentiment while generating valuable insights.



⁴ This question was not included in Cairns Regional Council implementation due to the pilot nature of the earlier survey version

Whole-of-community View

The Index gathers a wide range of community opinions which helps gain a deeper understanding of a community's urban change needs and issues. All LGA teams emphasised the significance of having an evidence-based understanding of their entire community's views on change and how this could enhance decision-making. Although some queries were raised about the validity of results due to the sample size, it was recognised that the Index still provided more evidence than current processes.

Transition Leadership Mindset

Implementing the Index triggered broader conversations within partner organisations about how they could apply change management disciplines to urban change. The Index results highlight the need for the urban sector to address the subjective aspects of change, such as increasing awareness and ownership of the need for urban consolidation, and building trust in the system. This requires the sector to consider how change management disciplines can be built into established planning and development processes as well as broader government and community programs.

Organisation involvement builds capability

The LGAs that engaged their councillors and staff in the implementation of the Index noted a shift in their conversations, becoming more focused on finding opportunities to build community preparedness. The following implementation activities were noted as being critical in supporting this shift:

- Participation in defining the criteria for participant recruitment (highlighting overlooked audiences in their current processes)
- Completing the survey themselves
- Participating in cross-department preparedness workshops

Actionable Insights

Participating LGAs are now using the insights to formulate responsive change initiatives. This includes initiatives such as Councillor Training Programs, Community Education Programs (targeting specific urban change literacy needs), establishing Community Panels or MiniPublics to inform planning processes and the development of Urban Transition Strategies integrated with corporate plans.

Customised Change Narrative

Customising the Index survey for each LGA resulted in the development of a consolidated urban change narrative and educational content. This has now proven to be a resource teams can draw on for engagement and education programs with community members, staff and councillors.

5.0

Summary of Insights

The following section of this report presents a summary of the key insights identified through the implementation of the Urban Change Readiness Index in the four LGAs.

Summary of Insights



Readiness Challenge

We have an urban change readiness challenge in our growing communities. We need to proactively build awareness of the need for urban consolidation.

Lack of Awareness of Urban Change

Communities are unaware of the extent of change planned for their local area, with our research showing that over half the people surveyed don't know about upcoming changes in their community.

Limited Understanding of the Need for Urban Consolidation

There's a significant knowledge gap about the need for urban consolidation and the strategies that local government authorities are implementing to achieve this. Over half of the respondents don't perceive any issue with the continued construction of detached houses on the city outskirts. Only 18% of participants know foundation planning strategies, such as the 20-minute city concept.

Low Participation in Urban Discussions

The level of community engagement in urban planning discussions is low. Only 15% of respondents have participated in local urban change discussions in the past three years.

Low Trust

There is a notable lack of trust in the system's ability to effectively manage urban change.



Shared Strengths

Communities have some shared strengths to build readiness.

Open to Change

According to our survey, communities are becoming more open to urban change as a response to population growth. A minimum of 60% of participants across each LGA expressed varying degrees of support for urban change to accommodate population growth.

Despite the low level of trust, when prompted, residents can identify individual and whole of community benefits enabled by urban change. This potentially indicates that by increasing the visibility of benefits, there may be an increase in system trust.

Future Conscious

Our study reveals a strong desire among community members to be forward-thinking citizens. They want growth planning to consider their needs and those of others, future generations and the city's sustainability. They recognise that well-executed changes can bring personal benefits and enhance the entire community.

Endorse Foundation Strategies

Though initially unfamiliar with growth management strategies like the 20-minute city, most participants considered these concepts important and appealing after they were presented in the Index survey. Almost all participants rated these strategies from "important and attractive" to "extremely important and attractive."

Trust in Local Leadership

Our research indicates that councillors are the most trusted figures in urban change followed closely by local government. To guide communities through urban change effectively, it is crucial that local government leadership have both a technical understanding of sustainable urban development and the necessary skills to lead informed change conversations.



Different Priorities

We need to understand LGA-specific priorities and develop nuanced change responses.

Priorities and Knowledge Gaps

Growing communities have diverse priorities and knowledge gaps which significantly influence the focus of initiatives to build readiness. The Index results reveal that each LGA has its own perspective on potential benefits, challenges and topics they would like to know more about.



Index Benefits

Implementing the Index specifically for each LGA creates actionable insights, positively shifts community sentiment by up to 57%, builds a transition leadership mindset and frames a tailored change narrative.

Shifting Sentiment

The Index survey gauges community sentiment towards urban consolidation at the start and end of the questionnaire, with a substantial urban change education segment in between. After completing the 30-minute survey, we recorded up to a 57% positive sentiment shift towards urban consolidation. This highlights a key benefit of the Index methodology. By including well-structured and LGA-specific educational content within the community survey we are able to significantly influence sentiment while generating valuable insights.

Transition Leadership Mindset

Implementing the Index sparked wider discussions among partner organisations about applying change management strategies to urban transformation. The Index results highlighted the need to address subjective aspects of change within established planning and development processes as well as ongoing government and community programs.

Actionable Insights Shape Approaches

The Index proactively collects diverse community views and fosters a deeper understanding of urban growth needs and concerns. Participating LGAs use these insights to formulate responsive change strategies. This includes progressing initiatives such as Councillor Training Programs, Community Education Programs (targeting specific urban change literacy needs) and establishing Community Panels or MiniPublics to inform planning processes.

Building a Customised Change Narrative

Tailoring the Index survey to each LGA results in a consolidated content resource for ongoing engagement and awareness programs involving the community, staff and councillors. The final survey serves as a content resource that communicates a consolidated urban change narrative specific to each LGA and outlines foundational educational components.

6.0

Recommendations & Next steps

The following section of this report presents a series of recommendations for sector consideration and summarises the proposed next steps for the Step-change Cities Partnership.

Recommendations



Assess Change Readiness

An evidence-based understanding of a community's urban change preparedness should be a key technical study conducted to inform national, state and local policy and planning as well as major projects conducted by the private sector.

Importance of Understanding Preparedness

While our sector routinely conducts housing, transport, environmental, neighbourhood character and social analysis studies to guide plan development, there is a noticeable lack of investment in creating an evidence-based understanding of a community's readiness for urban change. This understanding is crucial for developing proactive strategies to enhance community capacity to navigate change and should be viewed as a key technical study needed to inform policy, planning and major project master plans.

An Example Methodology

The Urban Change Readiness Index is a proven quick-to-implement process that creates an evidence-based understanding of a community's urban change-preparedness, providing teams with actionable insights while positively shifting community sentiment towards urban consolidation. The Index could be considered as an appropriate methodology to incorporate into future processes.

“

It is amazing that across three states and thousands of kilometres, there are such similarities, but enough nuances to show the importance of a tailored approach.”

Andy Johnson, Manager City Strategy at Hume City Council



Localise Strategies

The development and implementation of local-level preparedness strategies will be a critical tool to support urban transition.

Need for Specific Strategies

The significant variations in preparedness themes across different LGAs underscore the need for location or project-specific change management strategies. These strategies should be long-term plans that proactively aim to enhance community and stakeholder knowledge, desire and leadership capabilities for sustainable urban change.

Role of Local Government and Councillors

Local government and councillors have a crucial role in guiding communities through urban change. For a successful outcome, it is essential to embed Preparedness Strategies across entire organisations and build the transition leadership capabilities of local government.

Ongoing Focus on Preparedness

Opportunities to improve preparedness should be identified within current and upcoming planning processes and considered a strategic focus for growing local government organisations. This focus should be continuous and multi-dimensional to ensure sustainable urban change.



Change Through Education

Education initiatives should be the cornerstone of any preparedness strategy.

Prioritise Learning

The critical role of education in helping people navigate change is well documented in change management theory and was reinforced in the key findings of the Index. Future Preparedness Strategies should prioritise community, staff and elected member education that focus on:

- Increasing awareness of the population growth
- Strengthening understanding of the need for urban consolidation
- Developing ownership and understanding of LGA-specific change challenges, benefits and foundation concepts shaping the future
- Building urban change leadership capabilities



Collective Investment for Local Action

As a sector we need to invest in building our system's skills, tools and resources to support local level action.

Local Government Challenges

Local governments play a crucial role in guiding communities through urban change. However, their resources and budgets, mainly devoted to service delivery, often limit their capacity to develop and implement new approaches to urban change.

Collaborative Efforts

Federal and state governments, private developers, peak bodies and non-profit organisations are well positioned to collaboratively invest in, resource and pilot new urban change initiatives in partnership with local governments.

Emerging Investment Opportunities

National Urban Change Readiness Database

This database would contain Australia-wide, publicly available evidence of LGA specific readiness for urban change. It would give all stakeholders equal access to a comprehensive understanding of community readiness strengths and gaps. Each stakeholder could develop evidence-based responses that align with their role, remit and influence area. This national dataset would allow the sector to form a baseline understanding of change readiness in growing communities and enable benchmarking between comparable communities. Metrics from this data set could be incorporated within future city performance frameworks at the national, state and local level.

Customisable Community Education Resources

These resources should be designed to be easily adapted to address specific urban change challenges and opportunities within each LGA.

Urban Change Leadership Capabilities

This involves creating an evidence-based understanding of capability gaps and strengths, practitioner and elected member training programs, strategy templates and examples, program case studies and implementation guides, and cross-system and multi-state communities of practice.

Next steps

Share the results and shape practice

We are encouraging all partners to share the results of this partnership and consider how they might build an evidence-based understanding of their community's and organisation's urban change preparedness. We also encourage the partners to consider how they could support local level preparedness through the development of tools and resources to:

- Increase awareness of the population growth
- Strengthen understanding of the need for urban consolidation
- Develop ownership and understanding of LGA-specific change challenges, benefits and foundation concepts
- Build urban change leadership capabilities in our sector and elected members.

Step-change Cities Partnership Phase 2

The second phase of the Step-change Cities Partnership will focus on building the capabilities of councillors to lead urban change conversations with their communities. Working with partner LGAs, we will develop and pilot a series of education resources councillors can use to proactively engage communities around planning processes. This will be supported by a training program on leading generative change conversations.

Thank you

to our sector-leading partners

Place Partners



Sector Partners



Greater Cities
Commission



Suburban Land
Agency



Knowledge Partners



ARUP

