

SESSION FOUR.

SUSTAINING THE ADVANTAGE – SUPPORTING STRONG CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

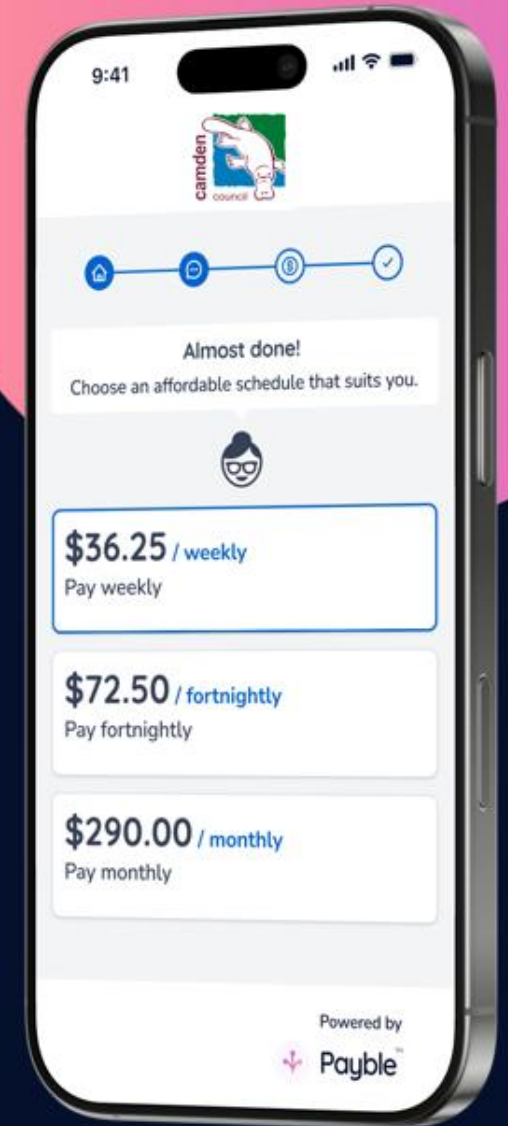
PROGRAM
PARTNER

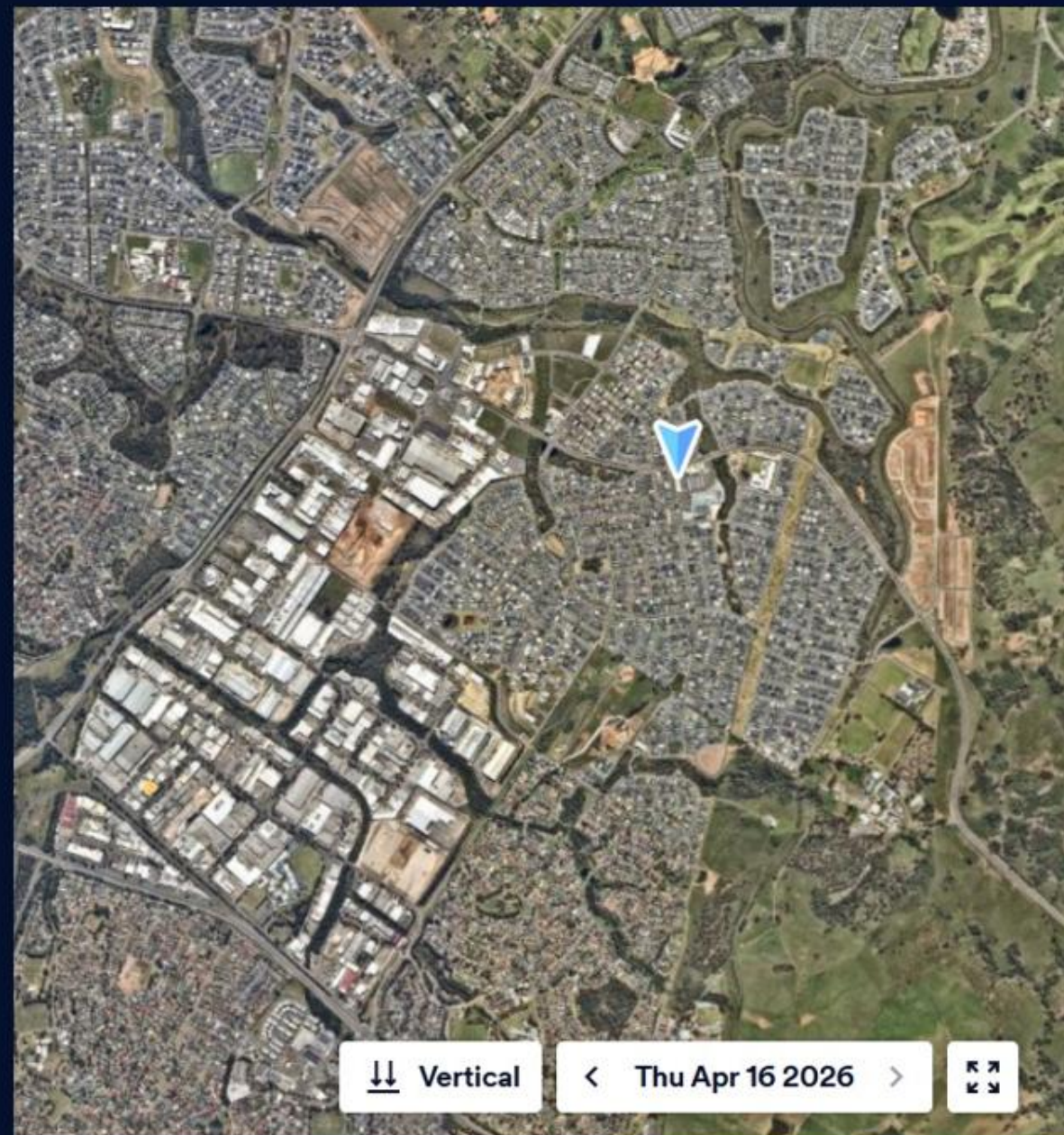
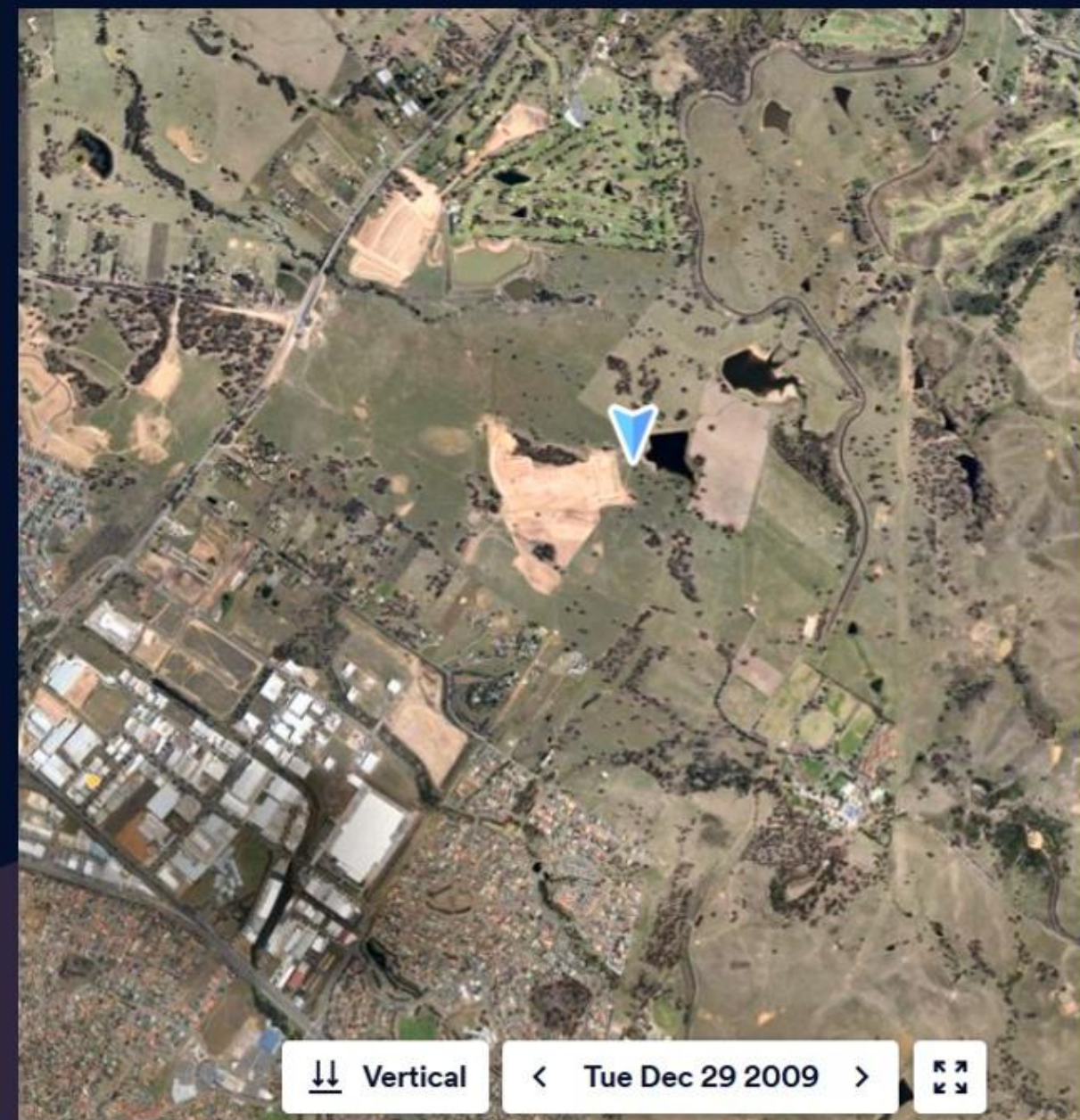
RPM²

 **TERRALYTICS**

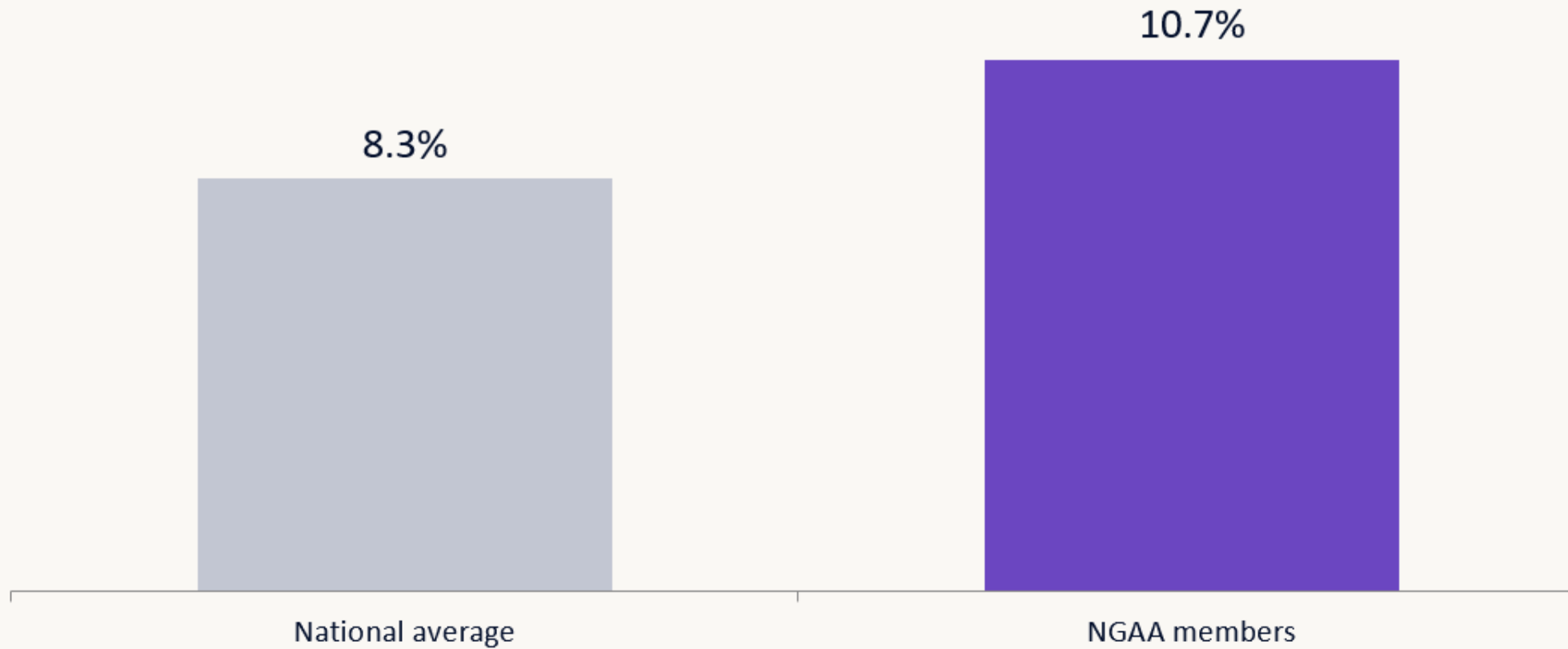


Council Payments designed for the PEOPLE THAT PAY THEM.





Our National Arrears Report shows arrears target growth areas



PROOF IT IS FIXABLE

Two Victorian councils buck the trend

Whitehorse City Council

\$5.7M

recovered in arrears in a single year, at a 95% collection rate

- **Over \$110,000 per year** saved in transaction fees
- **\$75,000 per year** saved on debt-collection fees

Greater Dandenong

85%

of ratepayers on a plan paid their debt by end of financial year

- **1,000+ plans** onboarded with zero officer involvement
- **One schedule** arrears + current rates combined, stops escalation

What a Ratepayer first experience can provide

1

PREVENTION IS THE CURE

Stop arrears before they happen.

By ensuring every ratepayer has an experience to pay rates as easy as easy as possible and when they need help a personalised journey that journey that works for them rather than penalties and debt collection collection action.

2

BOOST PRE COLLECTIONS & REDUCE COST

Currently ratepayers pay you when they want to. Flip the script.

Make them pay you in advance of the due date. And at the same time reduce your cost on transactions.

3

GIVE RATEPAYERS AN EXPERIENCE THAT IS EASY

Get upwards of 20% usage in the first year just like at Wanneroo and Casey, and a ratepayer rating of 4.7 / 5 for the interaction.



OFFICIAL

BOOK A TIME TO CHAT

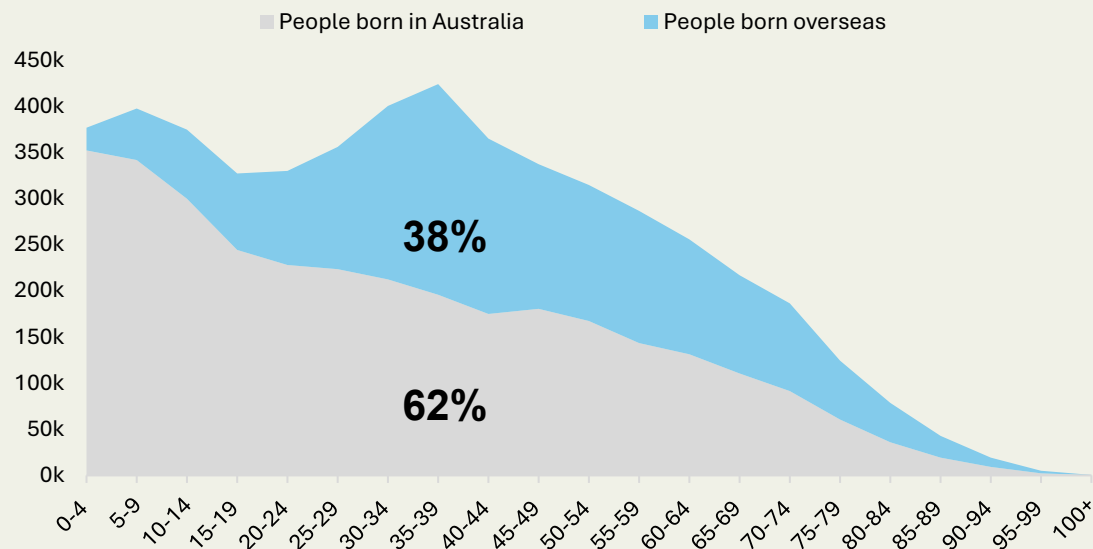


BRONWEN CLARK
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
NATIONAL GROWTH AREAS ALLIANCE



DIVERSITY

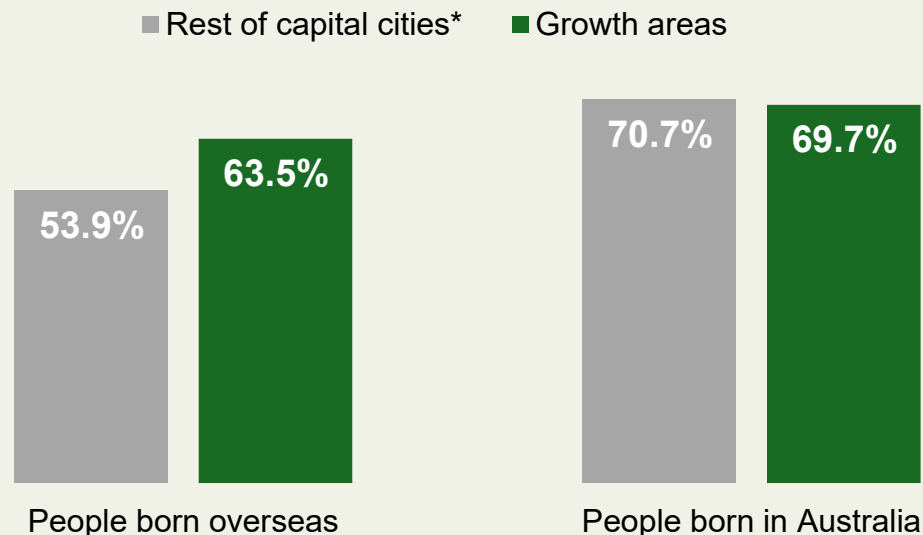
Growth area population by age, 2021



Growth areas are diverse communities that provide long-term homes for people born overseas

- People born overseas contribute economically and socially to growth areas, making up 38% of the population and 44% of working age people.
- The share of total population has increased from 37% since 2016, while the share of working age people has decreased from 47%, reflecting the departure of some working age people in 2020-21 due to COVID-19.

Home ownership rates by birthplace, 2021

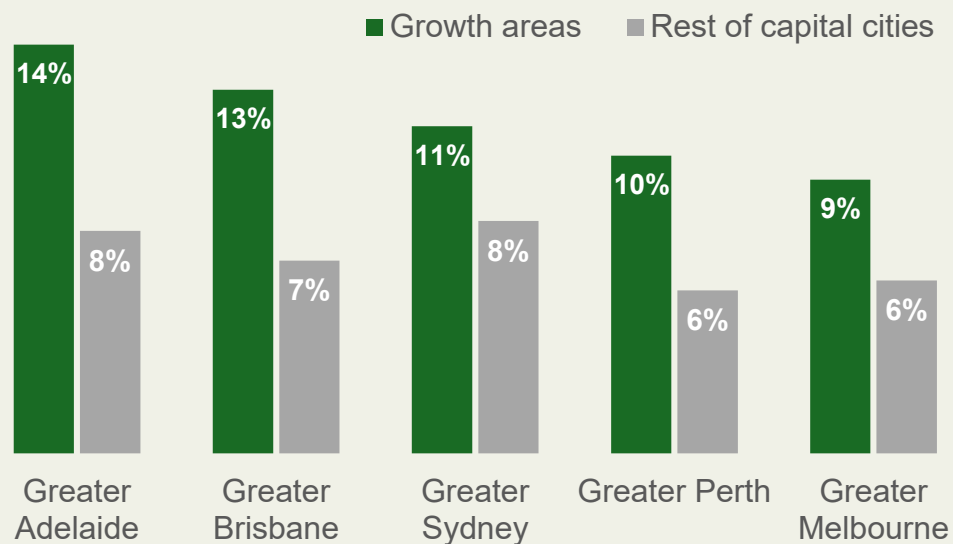


- People born overseas who live in growth areas are more likely to own their own home than overseas-born people in other parts of capital cities. This difference is not evident among people born in Australia.
- While often having lived elsewhere in cities when they first arrive in Australia, many people born overseas are attracted to growth areas by home ownership opportunities, family ties and a sense of community.

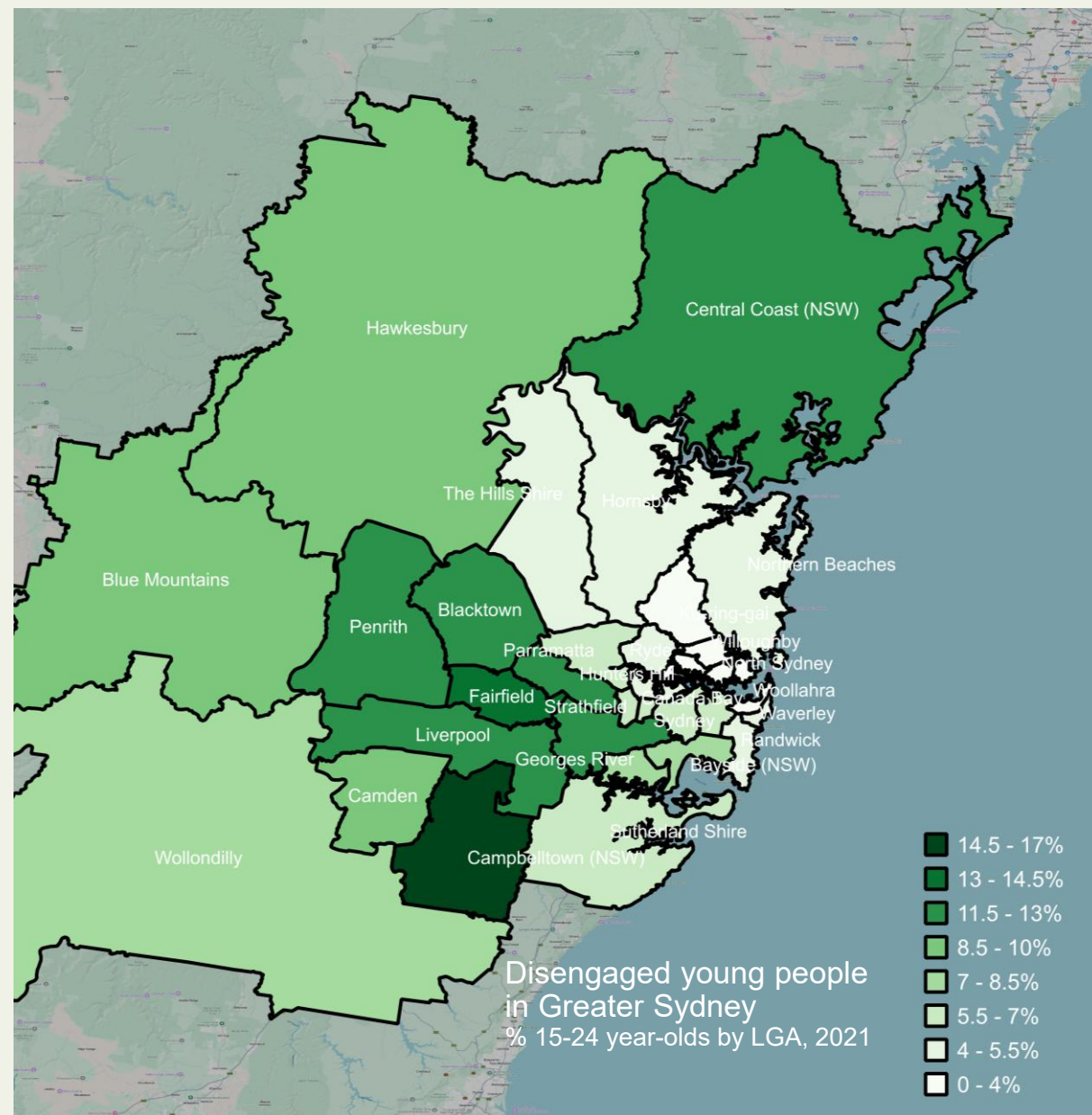
*Rest of capital cities includes non-growth area LGAs in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth.

YOUNG PEOPLE

If the rate of youth engagement was equal across our capital cities, **26,500 more young people from growth areas** would be working or studying in 2021.

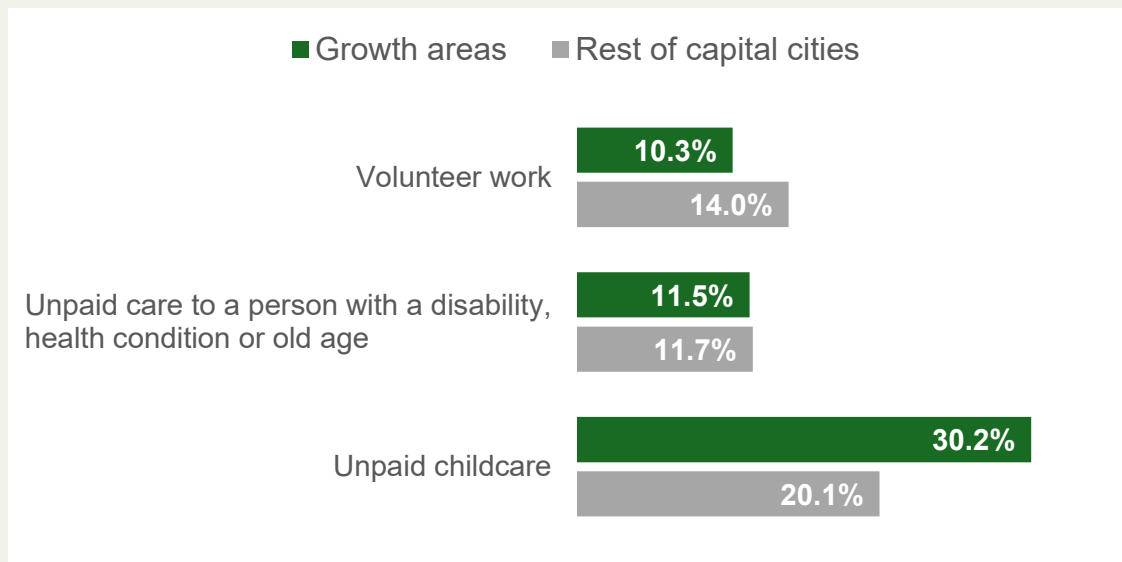


Source: ABS 2021, Census of population and housing



COMMUNITY COHESION

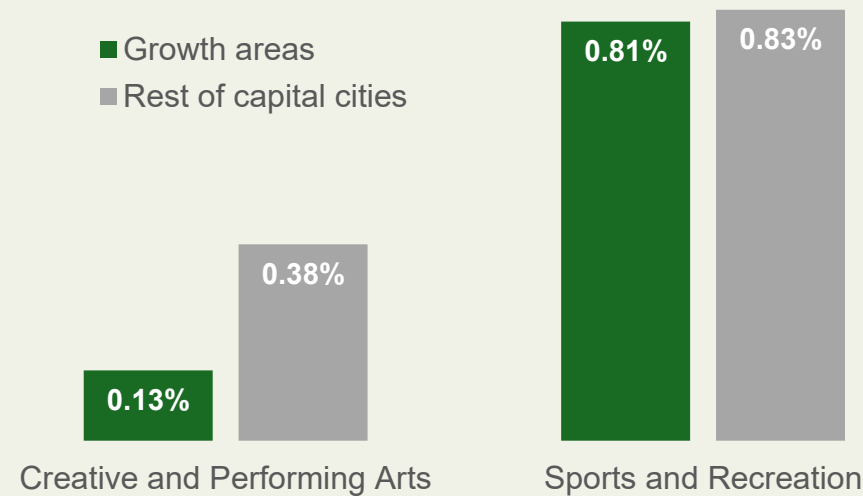
People aged 15+ doing unpaid work and care, 2021



Growth areas have potential for even greater social activity and connection

- Undertaking voluntary work or providing unpaid care, as well as participating in local cultural and recreational activities, builds social connection and wellbeing (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2025).
- Around 420,000 growth area residents undertook volunteer work with an organisation in 2021, while almost one-third of people aged 15+ provided unpaid childcare.

Share of total jobs in Creative and Performing Arts and Sports and Recreation, 2021



- Jobs provided in the Creative and Performing Arts and Sports and Recreation sectors provide one indicator of the availability of associated facilities for community members.
- Across Australia's growth areas, approximately 14,800 jobs were in these sectors, or 0.9% of total jobs located in growth areas. This compares to a rate of 1.2% across the rest of capital cities. The difference in the provision of Creative and Performing Arts jobs is most significant, with the rest of capital cities having around three times the share of jobs in this sector compared to growth areas.

COUNCILLOR ALLY WATSON

DEPUTY MAYOR, CITY OF HUME
NGAA STRATEGIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE



The Competitive Advantage of Belonging

How designing for social connection could pay dividends

Professor Jane Farmer
Swinburne University of Technology



**I pay my respects to
the traditional
custodians of the
unceded lands on which
we work, live and play,
and acknowledge their
Elders, past and
present**





This dog-park is the only place I've been able to meet people since moving here.

Where I used to live overseas, you could go to little pubs, a shop and a café.

But here there's nothing. It makes me want to move.

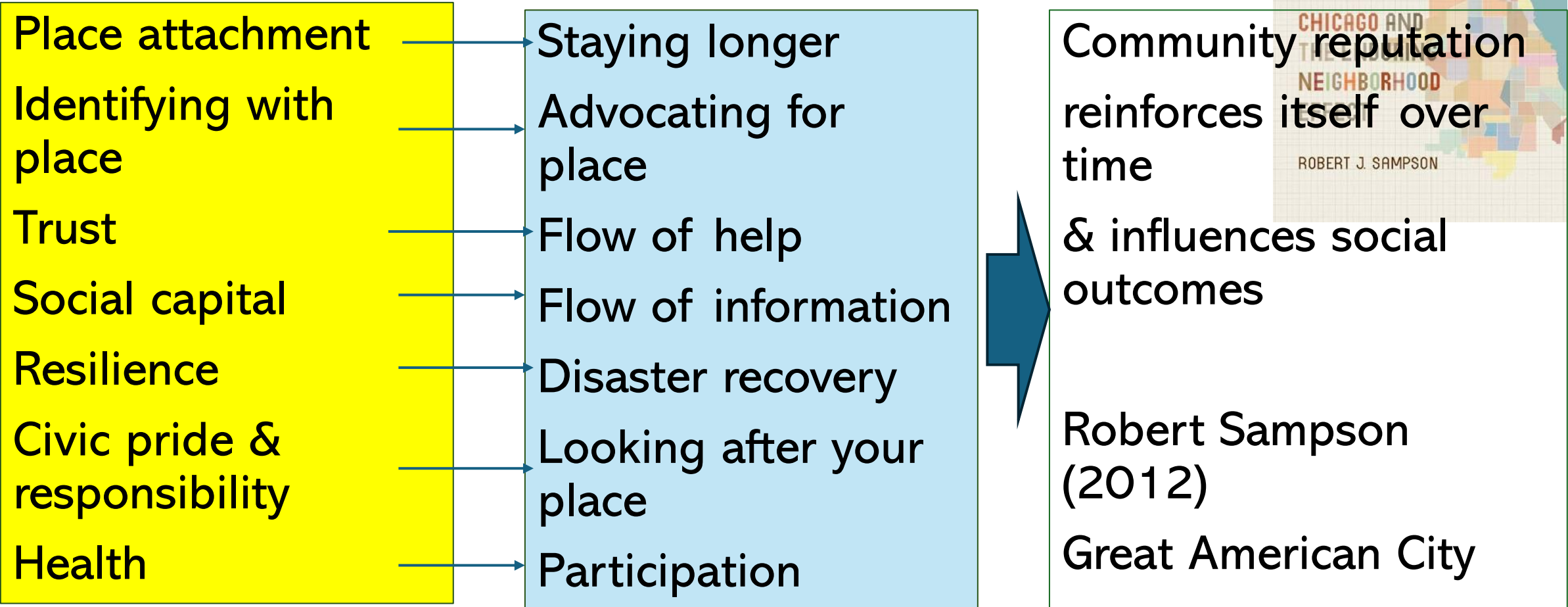
Sally (in her 30s)

Helping people to belong is vital

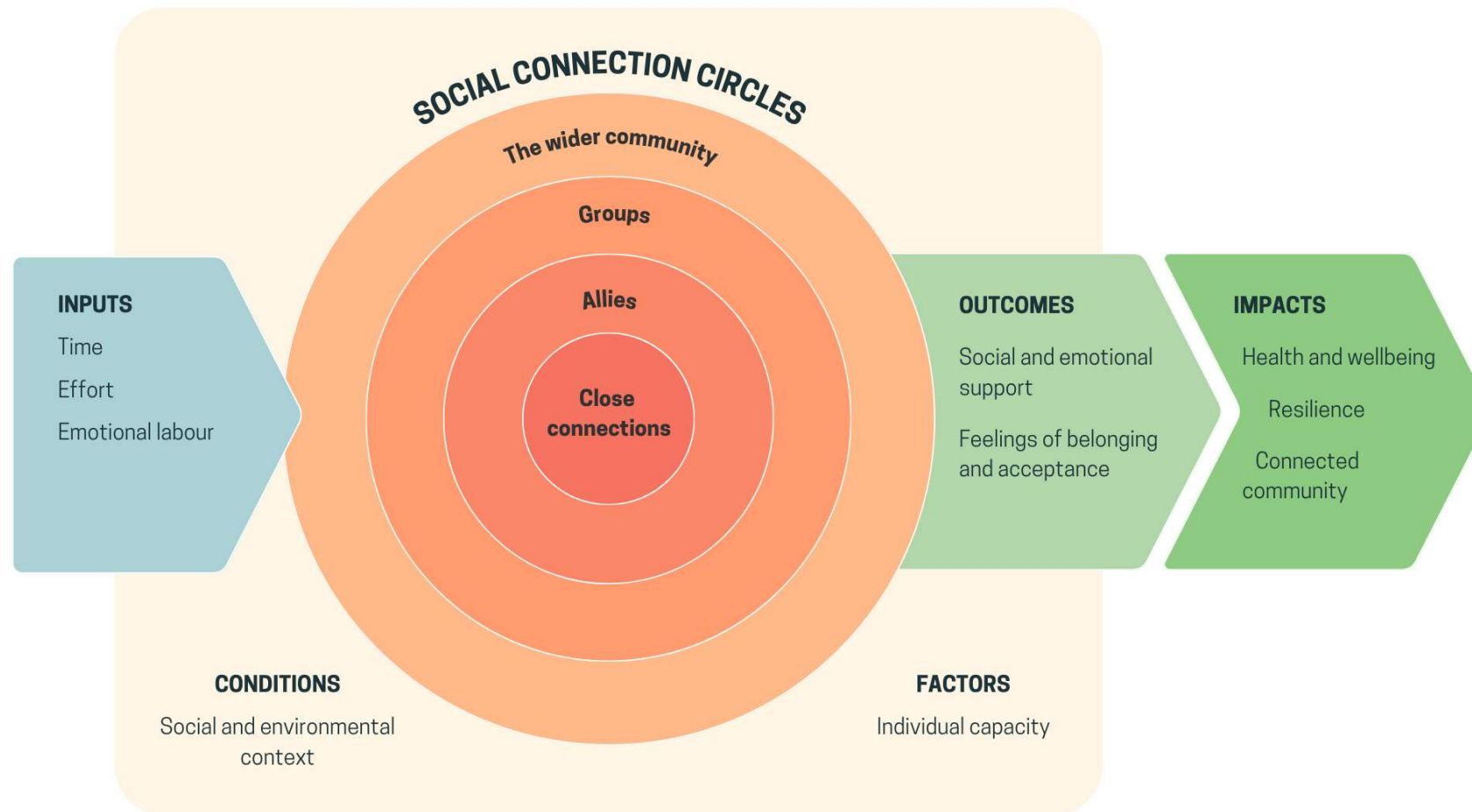


- Place attachment
- Identifying with place
- Trust
- Social capital
- Resilience
- Civic pride & responsibility
- Health

Belonging and great the best places to live and work



What is Social Connection?



Dimensions of social connection

1. Structural and measurable aspects

- No. of different types of contacts; frequency seen; in-person/online; for how long

2. Functional or supportive resources aspects

- Social support, physical help, emotional help, resources

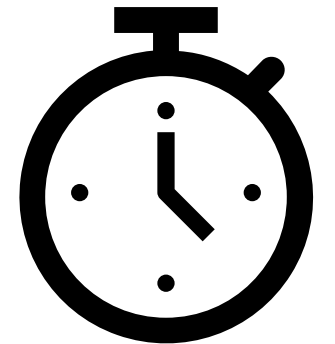
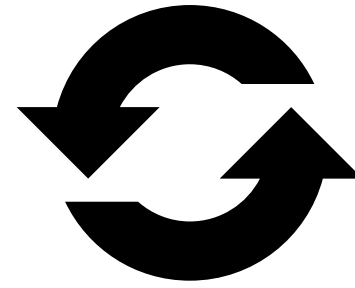
3. Affective or feelings dimension

- Belonging, acceptance, security/safety

4. Quality (positive to negative) dimension (includes stability of relationships)

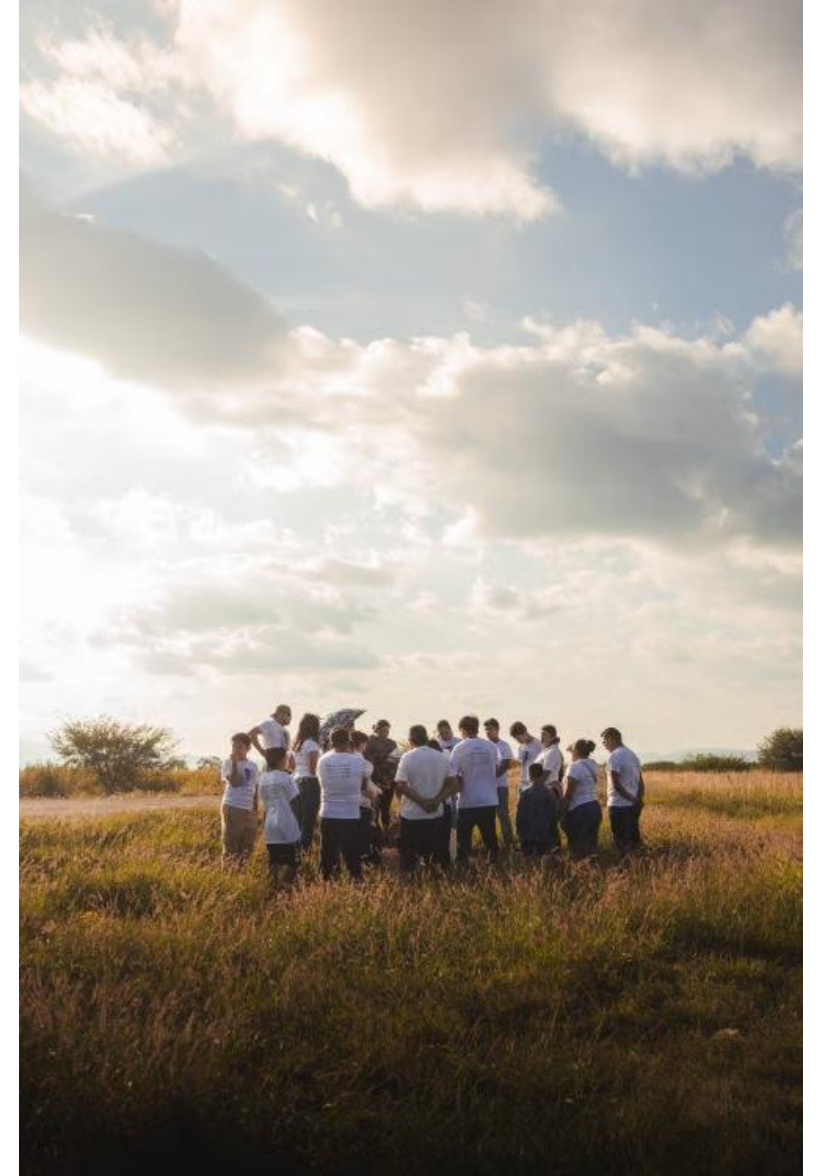
What makes people connect?

**Time and
Repetition
in (Local) Place**



What makes people take time and go back?

- **Attractive** places you feel safe & welcome
 - Parks, community centres, libraries
- Places **in between**
 - Pavements, nature strips, trails
- Places you **meet** or **bump into** others
 - School gates, neighbourhood house, learning, café, shop, nice gardens
- **Waiting and queuing** spaces
 - Where you are hanging around in a common cause
- **Places you want to be & go back to**
- **Places that are distinctive**



Belonging won't happen without infrastructure



People

‘Tactfully pushy’ people that help people to come together (community connectors)

Activities

Activities that help people to interact easily

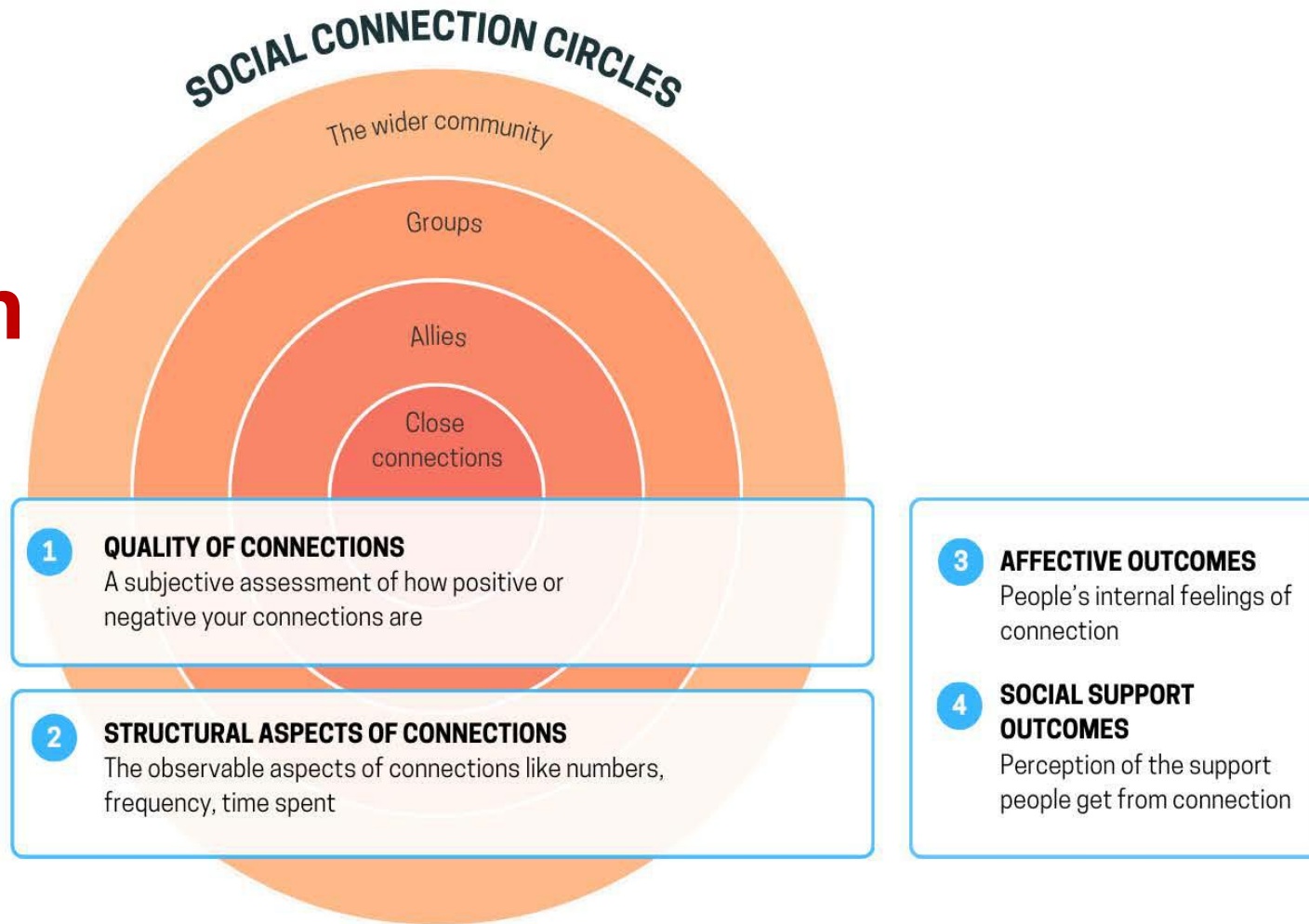
Places

Places where people bump into each other, see the same people regularly

Foundations

Safe, attractive, accessible, choice of places

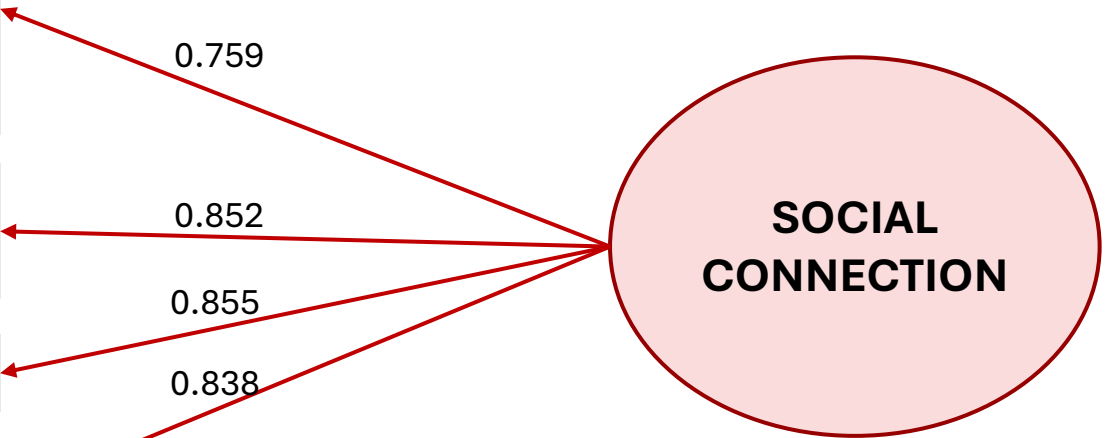
Measuring social connection



Short Form SIRI-SC CFA

Overall, how satisfied are you with:

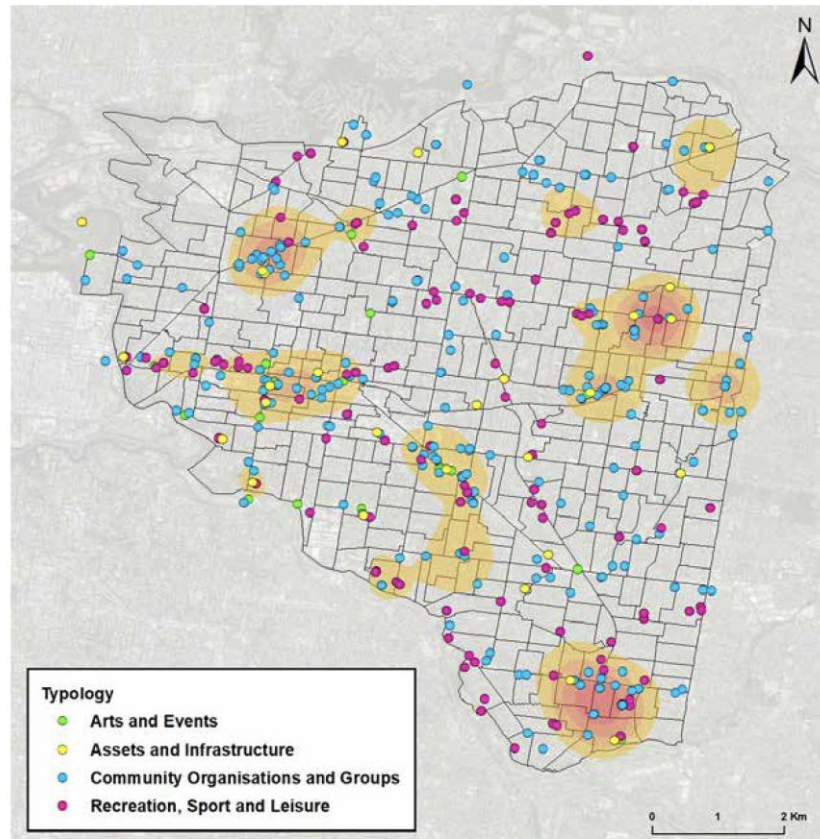
- The number of people in your social network (e.g. friends, family, co-workers, known community members) and the amount of social interactions you have?
- The various types of support available through the people in your social network?
- How positive your relationships are?
- How connected you feel?



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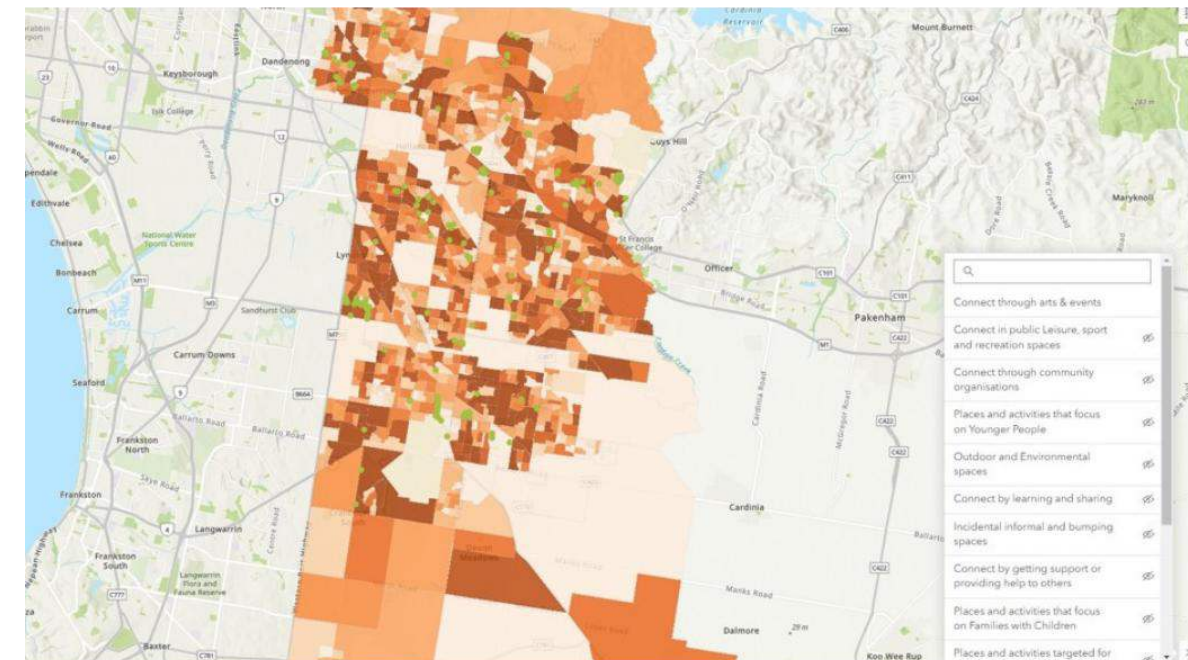
Map social connection in relation to community infrastructure



Infrastructure hotspots



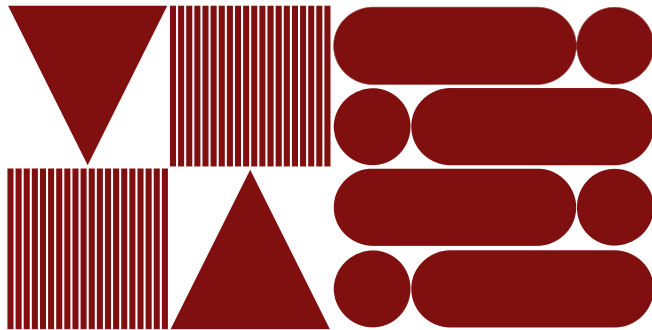
Front facing public portal



EVALUATION & MEASUREMENT

MEASURING SOCIAL CONNECTION

SOCIAL INNOVATION
RESEARCH INSTITUTE'S
SOCIAL CONNECTION
MEASUREMENT (SIRI-SCM)
TOOLKIT



Jayme Verhagen, Adam Karg, Diane Sivasubramaniam,
Carleigh Yeomans, Jane Farmer, and Tracy De Cotta

Social Connection Program Evaluation Toolkit

www.social-connection.au



Tracy De Cotta, Jayme Verhagen, Jane Farmer, Adam
Karg, Diane Sivasubramaniam, Milovan Savic, Callan
Rowe

7 keys to connection



7 Keys to Local Social Connection

Social isolation and loneliness are significant community challenges, with clear impacts on health and wellbeing. These effects are particularly pronounced among people experiencing disadvantage and stigma, further contributing to health inequities.

These 7 keys to connection are drawn directly from the findings of the Activating Social Connection in Australia Project*. They combine research evidence and community feedback from residents of Melbourne's urban fringe and outer metropolitan areas, including First Nations people, to provide a practical list for organisations and groups working to strengthen social connection in local areas.

	What this means	What this could look like
1 Places to meet 	Safe, welcoming local places where people can gather and interact with others from their neighbourhood or community.	Local cafes, corner shops, parks, leisure centres, community hubs, sport clubs, and neighbourhood houses.
2 Connector people 	Community connectors and facilitators actively help people meet each other. They create an inclusive environment for all community members, including those new to the area or speaking languages other than English.	Volunteers or staff from local organisations, welcome coordinators, cultural liaison officers, social prescribing link workers.
3 Groups that foster belonging 	Activities and groups centred around shared interests, offering regular opportunities to meet and participate in different ways.	Community sports clubs, churches with services or online groups, and environmental or cultural organisations offering volunteering, workshops, or family-friendly events.

1 Places to meet



Safe, welcoming local places where people can gather and interact with others from their neighbourhood or community.

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2 Connector people



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Community sports clubs, churches with services or online groups, and environmental or cultural organisations offering volunteering, workshops, or family-friendly events.

4 Problem-solving sessions



Regular local sessions that use problem-solving to connect people - working together on shared challenges creates organic connections.

Local problem-solving sessions where people come together to work on shared challenges - from improving public spaces to creating art.

5 Food sharing events



Food can bring people together naturally through shared meals and cooking experiences.

Food swaps, cultural cooking sessions, community lunches, shared meals, multicultural food events.

6 Social media and digital tools



Using digital tools to connect with residents who find it difficult to participate in person due to work commitments or long commutes.

Social media groups, online community forums, virtual meetups, digital neighbourhood networks, hybrid events.

7 Accessible communication



Making local activities visible and accessible through multiple communication channels.

Local Good Karma pages, residents' online groups, community noticeboards, building notices, local newsletters.

OFFICIAL

PRIMERS

www.social-connection.au

SOCIAL CONNECTION 101

2025 REVISED EDITION



Jane Farmer, Tracy De Cotta, Milovan Savic, Callan Rowe, Jayme Verhagen, Diane Sivasubramaniam, Adam Karg, Anthony McCosker, Andrew Butt, Annette Kroen and Ben Shaw



DIGITAL SOCIAL CONNECTION 101

A Primer on Fostering Healthy Online
Connections



Milovan Savic, Jane Farmer, Tracy De Cotta, Sharon Parkinson, Anthony McCosker



PLACEMAKING FOR SOCIAL CONNECTION 101

A RESOURCE FOR PLANNERS,
DESIGNERS, DEVELOPERS AND
COMMUNITY CREATORS



TRACY DE COTTA, JANE FARMER, ANNETTE KROEN, MILOVAN SAVIC &
ANDREW BUTT



QUESTIONS

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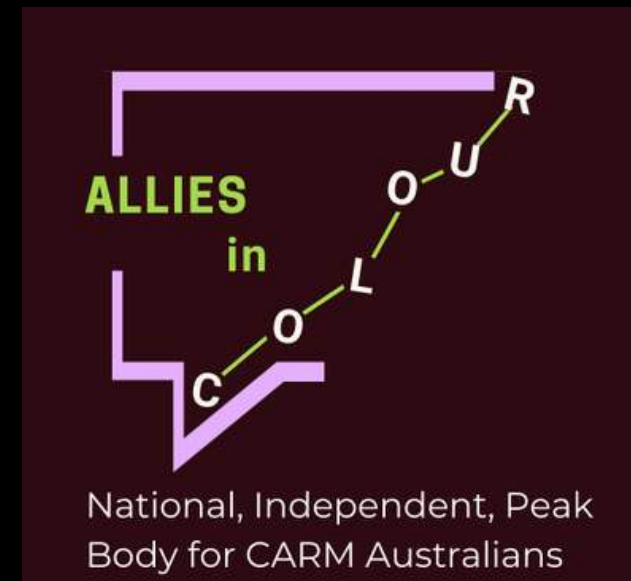


BEYOND CONSULTATION

Building Civic Capability Infrastructure for Australia's Growth Areas

OUR MULTICULTURAL ORG STRUCTURE

Multicultural Politics
and Civic Capability



National, Independent,
Multicultural Peak Body

RESEARCH
AND
NETWORKING
EVENTS



Multicultural
governance
capability

OUR MULTICULTURAL INITIATIVES

- **State of Multicultural Affairs (SOMA) 2026**
 - Invite-only, Ministerial de-briefing
- **Multicultural WHIP - Women Hustling in Politics**
 - Multicultural women political training program - simulation based.
- **National Civic voting infrastructure**
- **Australian Civic Excellence (ACE) Program**
 - Civic capability infrastructure for government
- **Multicultural Youth Engagement Program**
 - Youth internship program/advisory council

WE'VE BUILT INFRASTRUCTURE FOR ALMOST EVERYTHING



✓ **TRANSPORT**



✓ **DIGITAL**



✓ **INNOVATION**



✓ **HEALTH**



DEMOCRACY?

MORE PEOPLE ARE MOVING INTO NEW GROWTH AREAS



Council builds:

- ☒ Roads
- ☒ Parks
- ☒ Libraries
- ☒ Community centres

The Common Question:

“How will these residents participate in shaping this place?”

INTRODUCING CIVIC CAPABILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Civic Capability Infrastructure is the governance infrastructure that enables institutions to continuously develop, connect and utilise community capability in public decision-making.



What this is NOT:

Not another consultation method

Not a replacement for advisory committees

Not a criticism of the engagement work councils already do



Rather, it asks:

How do we connect all of these activities into a system where community capability grows over time?



THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CAPABILITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

“Civic capability is the capacity of people. Civic Capability Infrastructure is the system that allows that capacity to matter.”

CIVIC CAPABILITY (Belongs to people)

- Community leadership programs
- Council education sessions
- Workshops
- Advisory opportunities

CIVIC CAPABILITY INFRASTRUCTURE (Belongs to the System)

- Where does it go?
- How does it connect to decision-making?
- How does it grow?
- How does the institution learn from it?

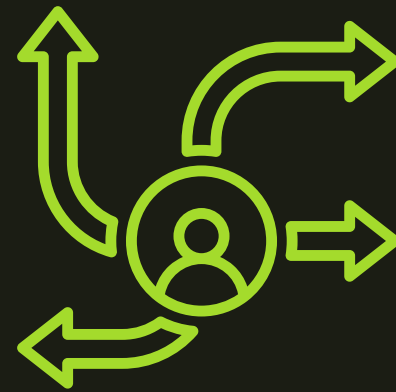
THE 4 COMPONENTS OF CIVIC CAPABILITY

INFRASTRUCTURE



CAPABILITY

Do people understand how decisions are made, and how they can contribute?



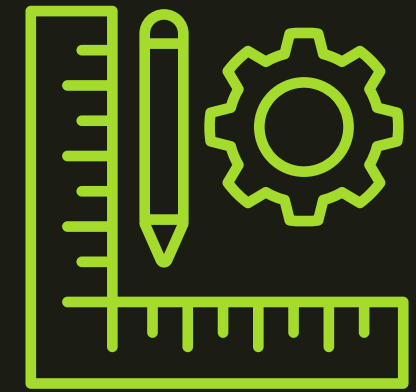
PATHWAYS

Are there clear routes from participation into influence?



LEADERSHIP

Are people developing the confidence and skills to contribute?



MEASUREMENT

Do institutions know whether civic capability is increasing?

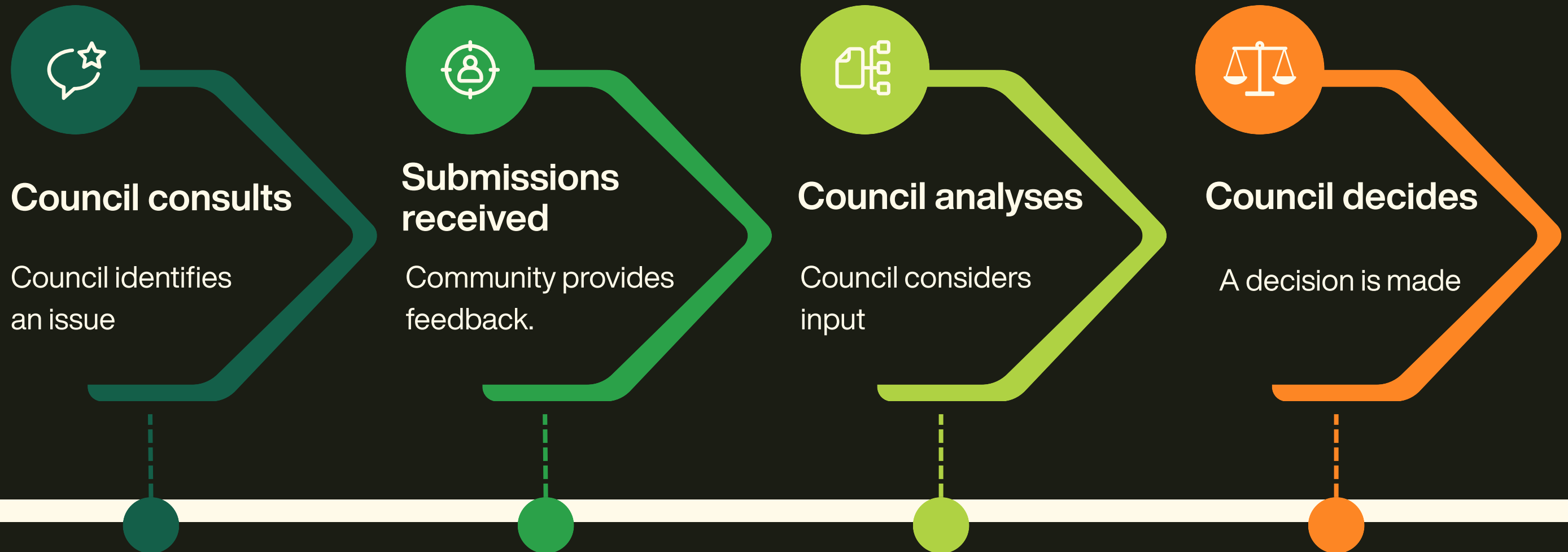
FROM ENGAGEMENT DATA TO CIVIC CAPABILITY DATA

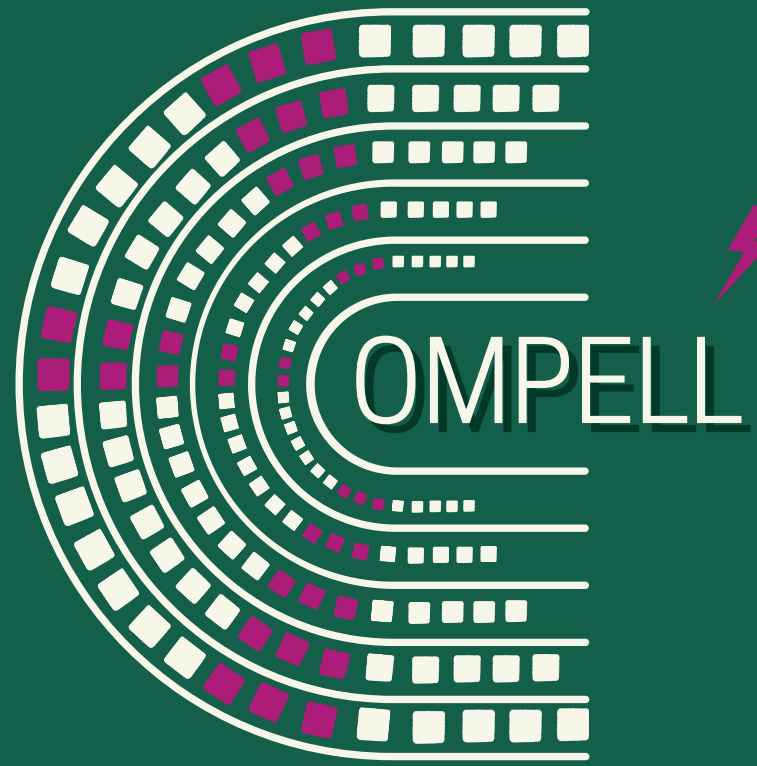
What we measure today:

- How many people attended?
- How many submissions were received?
- How many consultations occurred?



TRADITIONAL CONSULTATION





CENTRE OF MULTICULTURAL
POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT,
LITERACY, AND LEADERSHIP

AUSTRALIAN CIVIC EXCELLENCE (ACE) LEADERSHIP PROGRAM 2026

Non-citizens can apply!

*Building Australia's Civic Capability Infrastructure.
Certified Civic Capability. Verified Governance Pathways.*

CIVIC CAPABILITY INFRASTRUCTURE IN PRACTICE

01

NEW CITIZENS & 18 YEAR
OLDS

02

MIGRANTS AND NEWLY
SETTLED RESIDENTS

ACE
LEADERSHIP
PROGRAM

GOVERNANCE /
ADVISORY ROLES

POLITICS - STAFFERS/ADVISORS/
POLITICAL CANDIDATES

AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC
SERVICE

DATA

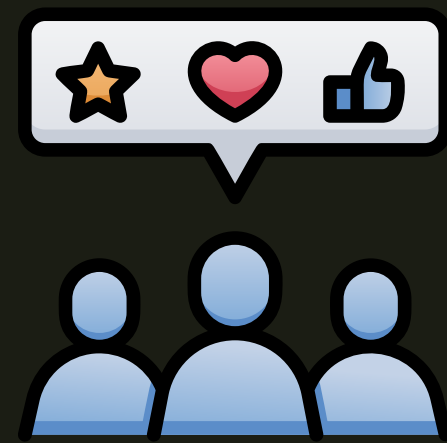




BENEFITS TO THE GOVERNMENT



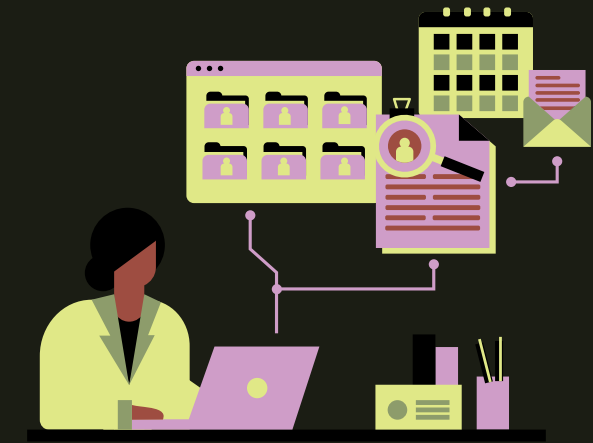
A pipeline of
Improved
cross-cultural
advisory
capacity



Better-informed
public engagement
and representation
in policy advisory
roles



Reduced cost of
civic
disengagement



A resource for
future policy
advisors and
public servants

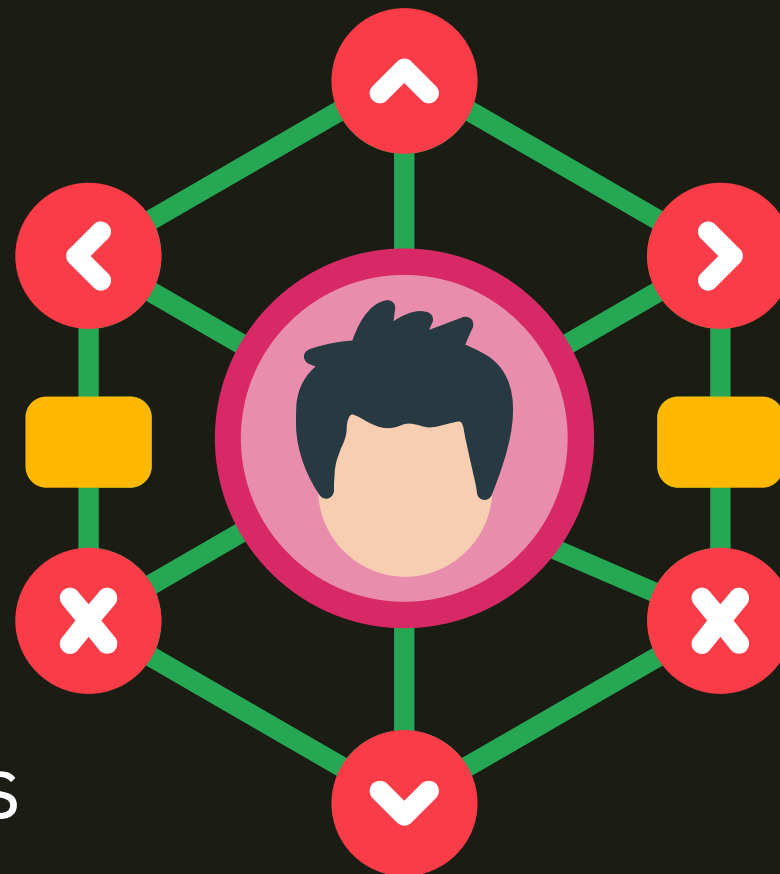
BENEFITS TO RESIDENTS

Greater trust between multicultural communities and institutions

Increased multicultural/
diverse representation in
decision-making

Improved public narratives
about diversity

Stronger networks for
public problem-solving



LOCAL COUNCIL - CIVIC CAPABILITY INFRASTRUCTURE



01

NEW CITIZENS & 18 YEAR
OLDS

02

MIGRANTS AND NEWLY
SETTLED RESIDENTS

ACE LEADERSHIP
PROGRAM

LOCAL COUNCIL
GOVERNANCE /
ADVISORY ROLES



Civic Capability
Assessment



Community
Governance
Pathways



Resident
Governance
Registers

GROWTH AREAS NEED GROWTH DEMOCRACIES

**CIVIC CAPABILITY
INFRASTRUCTURE**
(undeveloped)

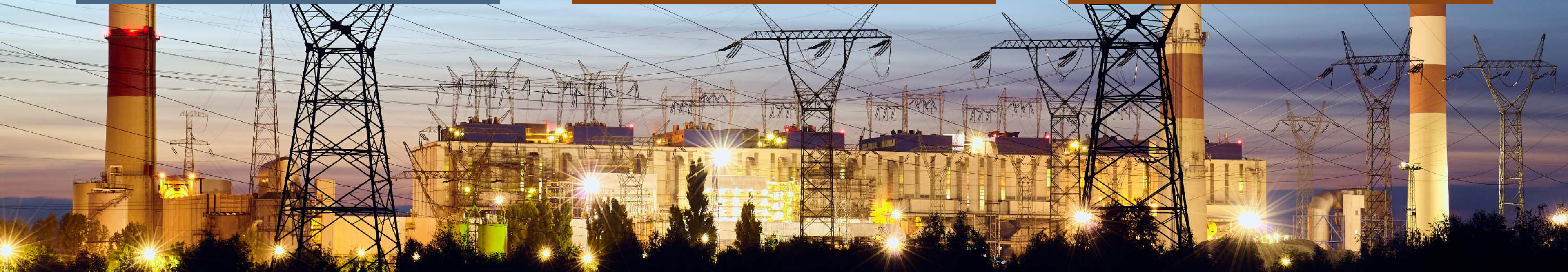
Allows communities to
participate meaningfully

**ENGAGEMENT /
PARTICIPATION
INFRASTRUCTURE**

Allows institutions to
hear communities

**PHYSICAL
INFRASTRUCTURE**

Allows communities to
function





THANK YOU

Building Civic Capability Infrastructure for Australia's Growth Areas