

CoFutures...

STATE OF THE COMMUNITY 2026

THE FUTURE OF HOUSING

A COFUTURES RESEARCH PROJECT



failure
Emergency betrayal
collapse catastrophe
outrage
RENT

FOREWORD

CoFutures...

Housing is not simply about the number of ‘dwellings’ delivered. For communities, home represents security, stability, belonging and fairness. These values run deep, and when challenged, they can give rise to anxiety, frustration and political polarisation.

Through our day-to-day work with communities across Victoria, we regularly encounter strong emotions and competing perspectives around housing. This prompted us to step back and ask: what really influences community perspectives on housing and why does this matter?

As CoFutures turns five this year, this publication marks our first large-scale research project. As a self-initiated project, we had the freedom to explore the issue of housing differently; asking questions that are often avoided, trialling new ways of capturing community sentiments and being even bolder and more creative with the way we present our findings.

Undertaking this research has been an invaluable learning experience for our team. It has reinforced the importance of how questions are asked, how information is shared and the powerful role the media plays in shaping public sentiment towards housing.

Supporting this report are three companion resources that provide further insight behind our research. Visit www.cofutures.com.au for more.

We are excited to share this with you and hope these insights will contribute to a more informed and constructive conversation about housing in Victoria.

A big thank you to everyone who has contributed to this research.



METHOD AND APPROACH

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Youth Workshop

We engaged with 17 young Victorians who joined us on a journey to discuss the past, present and future of housing. They told us about their fears, hopes and aspirations and the role we can all play in helping to make housing more affordable for everyone.



Social Polling

We used a mixture of targeted Meta ads and digital engagement to capture feedback from 150 Victorians about key housing themes: connection, home ownership, building heights, affordability and trade-offs.



Media Analysis

We analysed 200 news articles and social media posts to understand how housing is represented in Victoria's media landscape, and what this reveals about community attitudes and perceptions.

Across 2025 there was a near-universal framing of housing as a 'crisis'.



Media headlines emphasised emergency, collapse or failure.

Social media amplified this with language of outrage, betrayal and catastrophe.

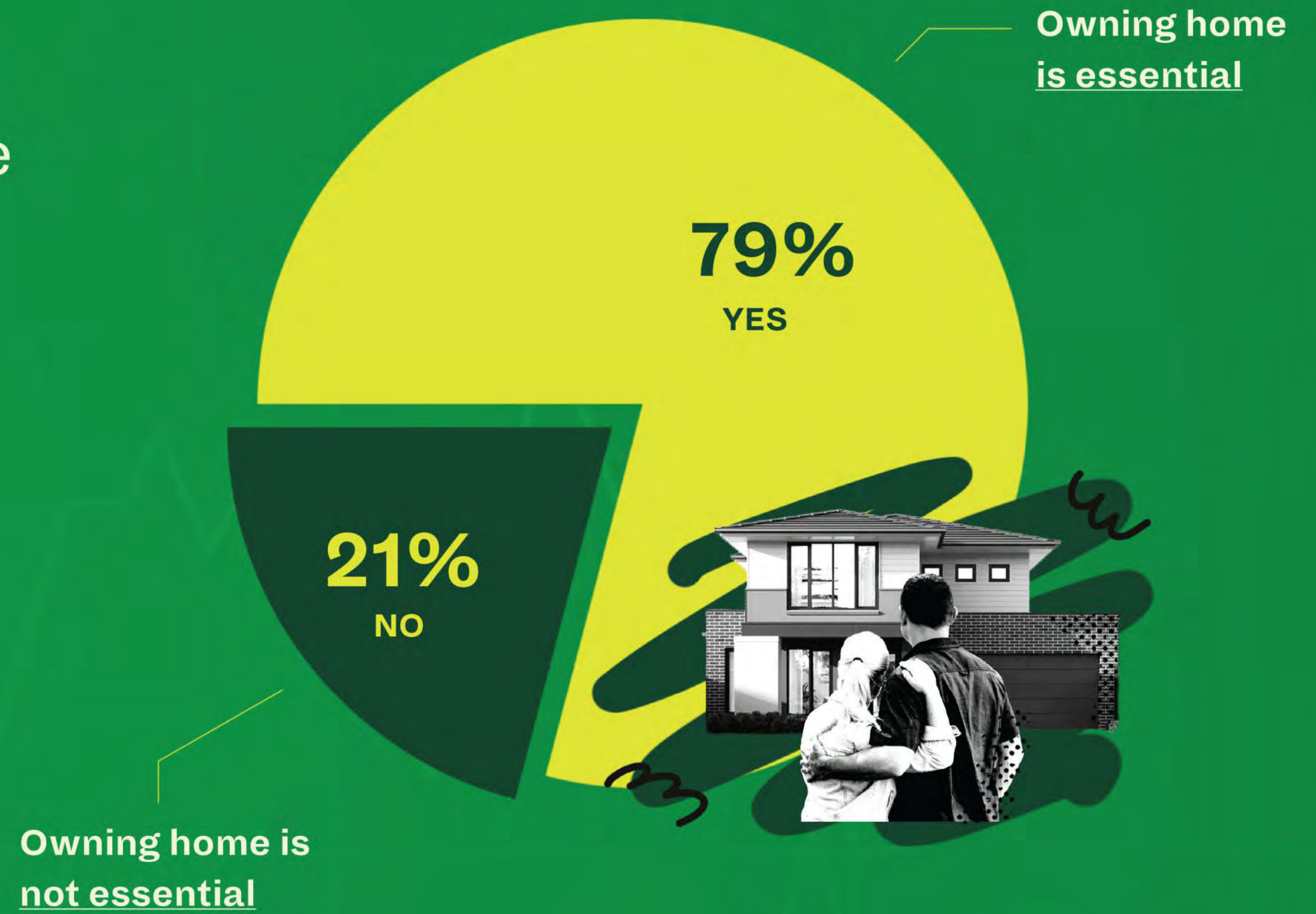


This framing creates a sense of urgency, but also narrows public imagination.

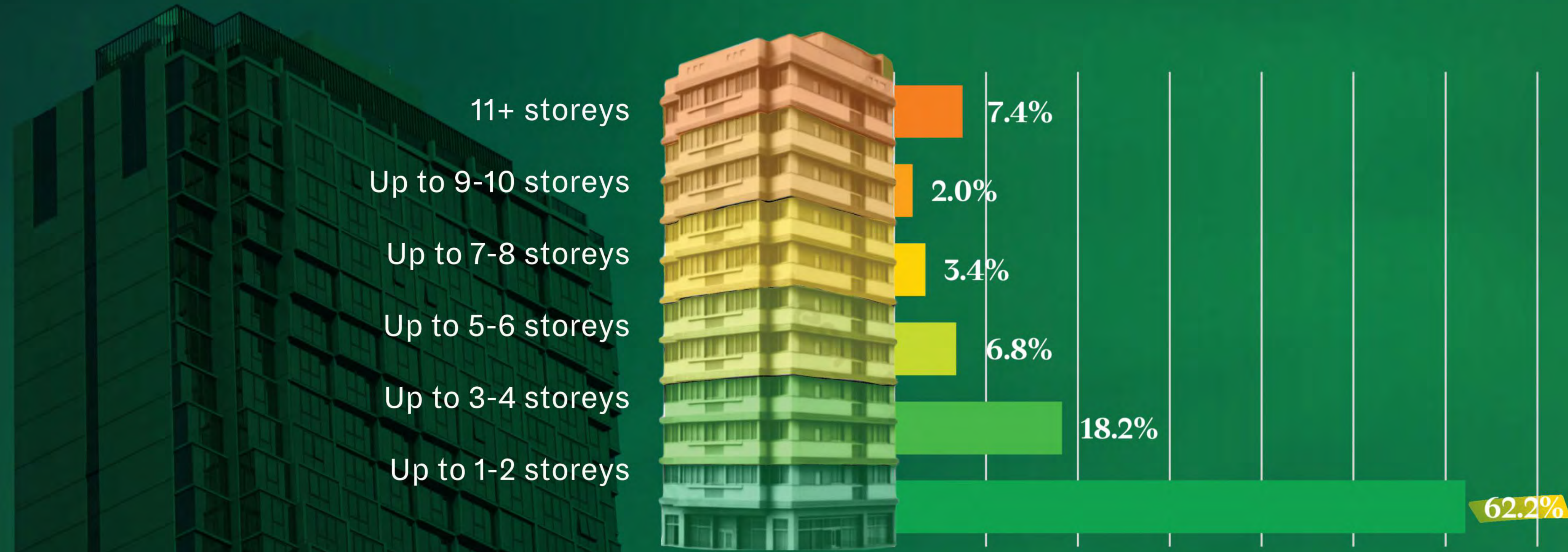


Housing solutions are rarely presented as long-term strategies or structural reforms, but rather as quick fixes or slogans.

Our pulse check revealed that many Victorians believe owning a home is still considered essential to a good life in Australia.



At the same time, most people only want to live next to low-rise buildings.



What is the maximum building height you would be comfortable to live next to?

Housing affordability is more than being able to afford to rent or buy a house.

More often, it's about feeling safe, secure and independent.



For younger Victorians, being able to afford a home to live in is one of their biggest fears for the future.

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Not being able to afford mortgages

What happens to my kids?

Being evicted

However, many people are also willing to give up something to make housing more affordable for others.



MONEY



LUXURY ITEMS

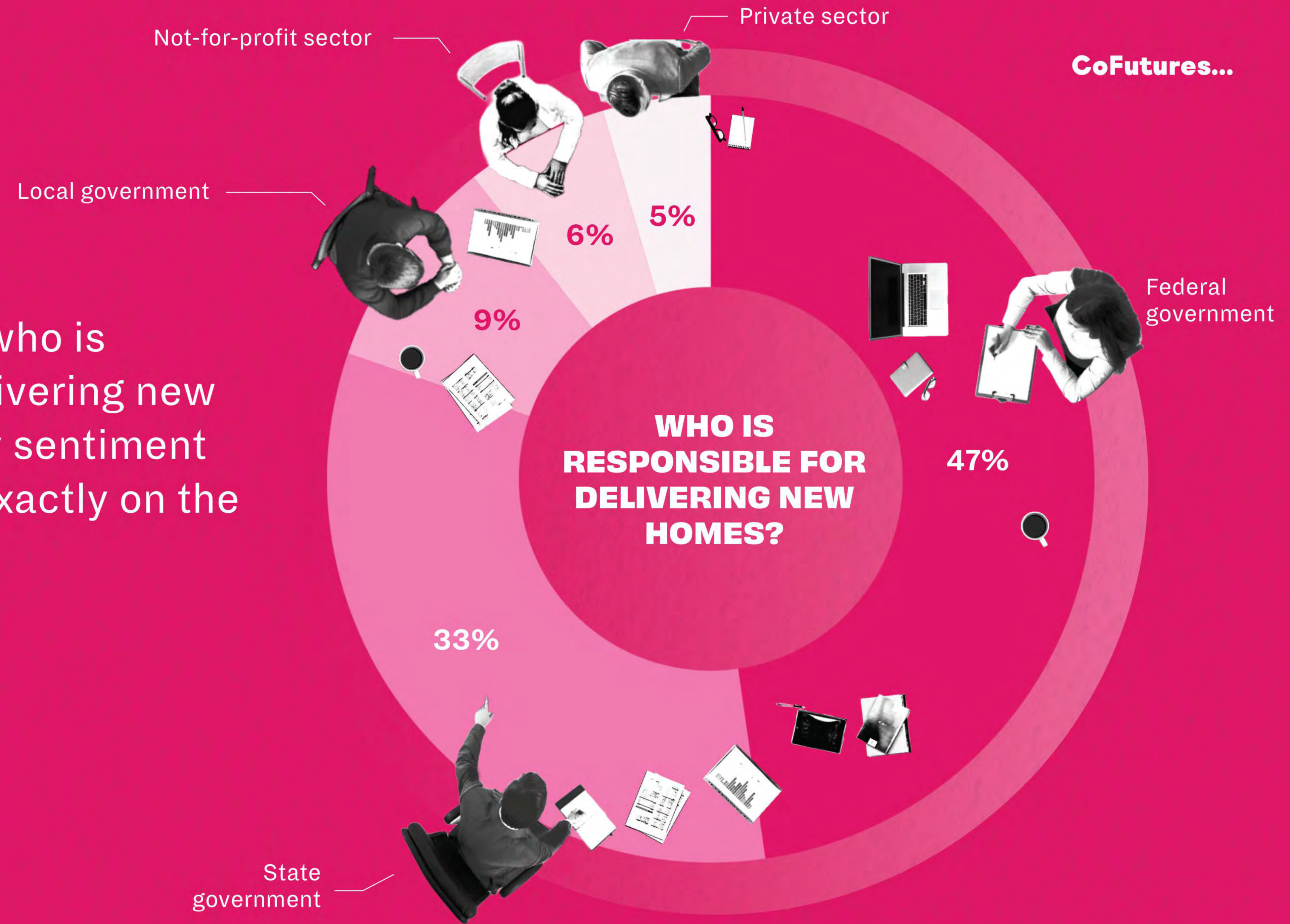


AN EXTRA ROOM



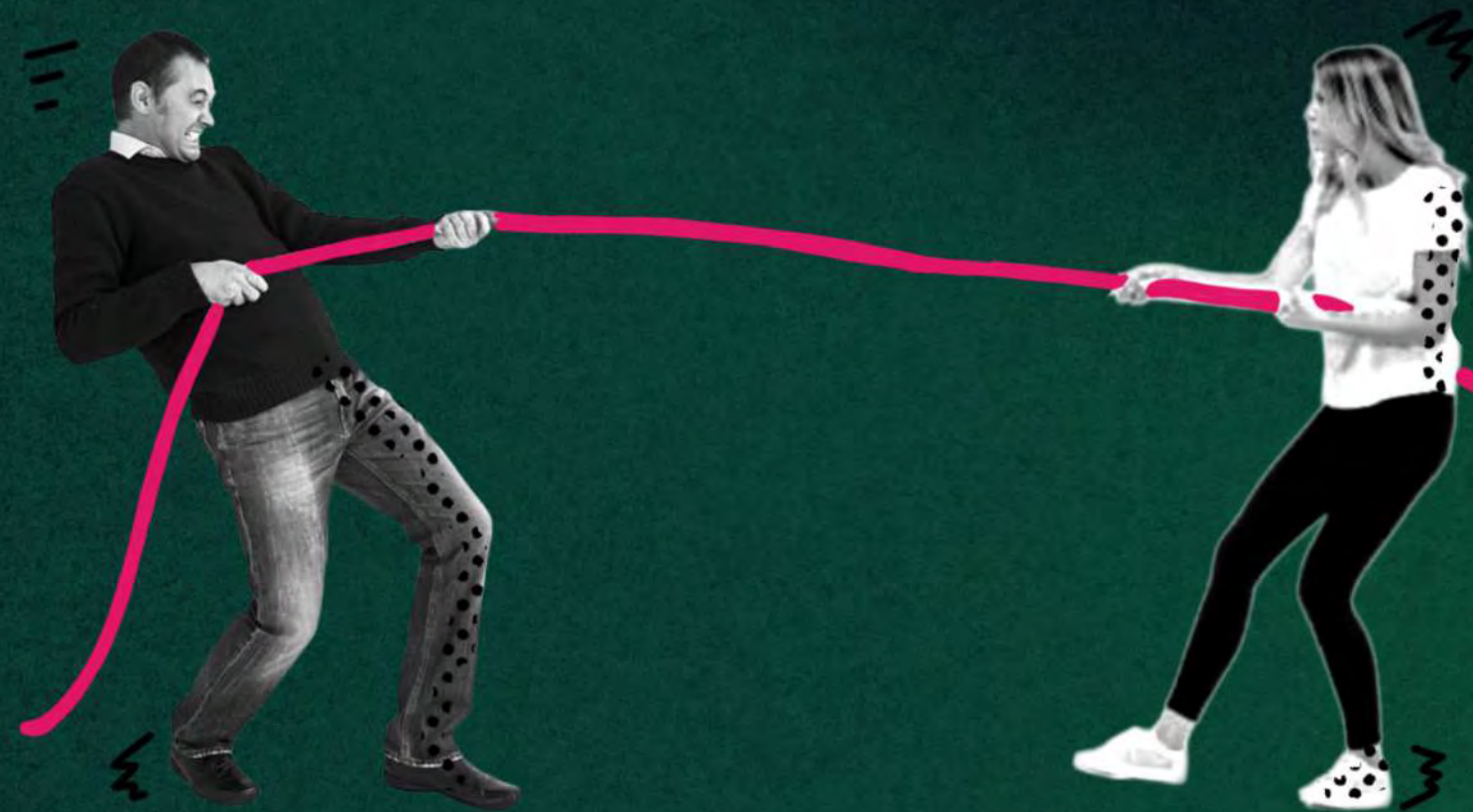
TIME

When it comes to who is responsible for delivering new homes, community sentiment tells us we're not exactly on the same page.



YET

Concern about housing change isn't always opposition...



...often it's fear about impacts, uncertainty or change.



What is clear – when it comes to what people value the most about housing, there is more commonality than difference.



People see shared public spaces like parks, libraries, walking trails and schools, as essential to feeling a sense of home.

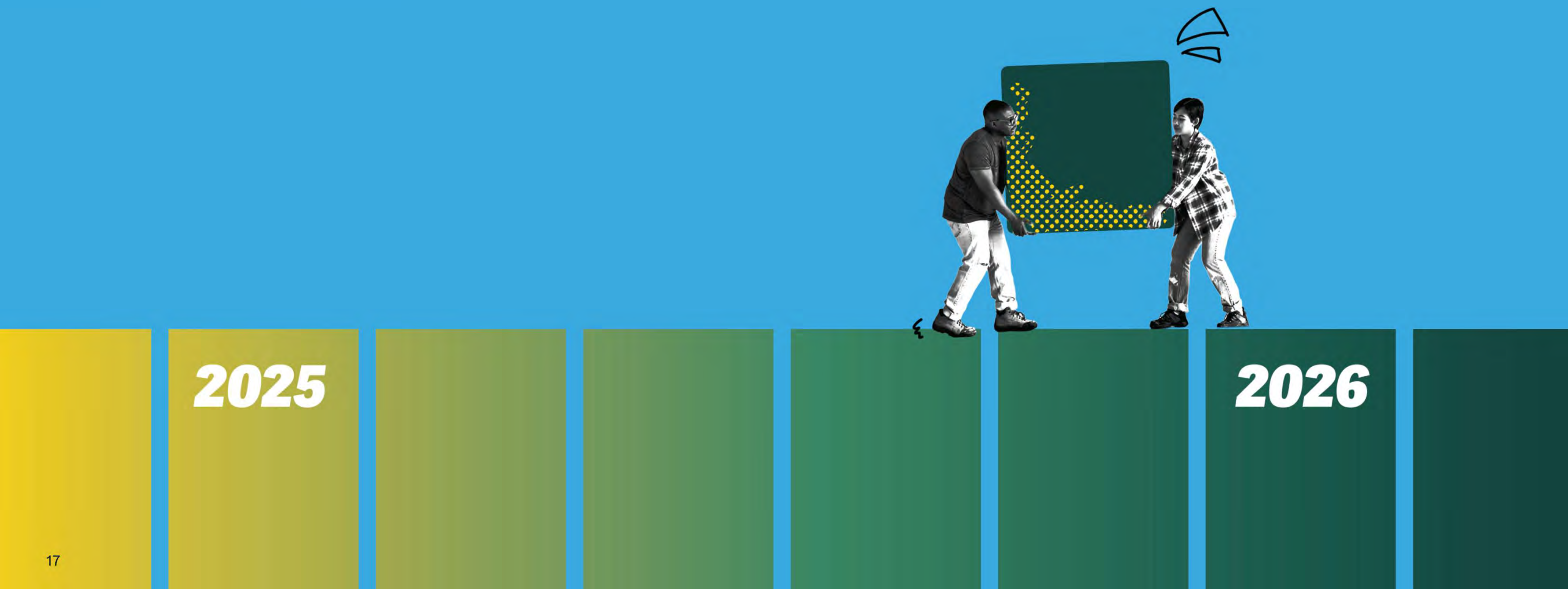




Housing conversations are deeply personal. They are shaped by lived experience and emotion, not neatly contained within policy categories or departmental boundaries.



So, here are 5 things we can do differently in 2026...



01

HOLD SPACE FOR EMOTION AND EVIDENCE

As influencers and shapers of policy, we can create safe spaces for dialogue and frame engagement around community values and aspirations, rather than binary 'yes' or 'no' discussions.





02

BUILD TRUST AND UNDERSTANDING THROUGH CLARITY

Be transparent about what can and cannot be controlled, and communicate trade-offs openly. Engagement with your community is an opportunity to build literacy around housing change, so people can understand the wider system.

LEAD WITH EMPATHY

Housing security affects everyone. Whether someone fears eviction, mortgage arrears or loss of neighbourhood identity, everyone is talking about security - just in different forms. Community voices provide evidence to push for systemic reforms.



04

REFLECT LOCAL VOICES IN POLICY CHANGE



Many structural drivers of housing stress lie outside local control. Integrate human stories with evidence to show that both lived experience and data matter. Use this to advocate for reforms at higher tiers of government, for example around rental regulation, investor incentives and affordable housing provision.

DON'T FORGET, THE SMALL THINGS REALLY MATTER

Housing is more than just a place to sleep. It's also about how a place feels. Infrastructure like public toilets, lighting and trees create places where everyone can participate with dignity.



GET IN TOUCH

Interested in what this means for your project or community?

Let's connect!

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