# Building social cohesion
A resource for local government

NSW GOVERNMENT

RESILIENT SYDNEY

# Cred
## CONSULTING

**Building social cohesion:
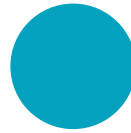A resource for local government**

Prepared by Cred Consulting for the
Department of Premier and Cabinet

July 2022

**Premier and Cabinet acknowledges the
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
peoples as the First People and traditional
custodians of the lands on which we work
and live. We pay our respects to Elders past
and present.**

**The Premier and Cabinet vision for
reconciliation in NSW is stronger
relationships between NSW First Nations
Peoples and the wider community,
built on respect, understanding, and
acknowledgement of the past and its
impact on the present so that we can move
together toward a shared future.**

# Table of contents

# Foreword

NSW is a welcoming and connected society. One which respects the differing views, backgrounds and cultures that make us stronger.

NSW, alongside the rest of the world, has experienced severe shocks and stresses over recent years. The COVID-19 pandemic, fires, floods and other stresses have had an unprecedented impact on our sense of togetherness, our individual and community wellbeing, and our relationships with key institutions.

NSW Government has a deep ongoing commitment to building on the strengths of our communities and continuing to foster and maintain community harmony and connectedness.

The opportunities and challenges to strengthen social cohesion in NSW are as diverse and varied as our communities. Local Governments are well placed to understand the unique dynamics of their communities and to support initiatives and strategies that will foster stronger social cohesion for their local areas.

That is why NSW Government is working together with local government to develop our shared knowledge on how to strengthen social cohesion, what works and why, and to learn from the great practice that is already occurring across NSW and Australia.

I hope you enjoy this resource that was designed in collaboration with local governments, social cohesion experts, and our colleagues across NSW Government working towards a more cohesion and connected NSW.

Pia van de Zandt

Director

Connected Communities

Premier and Cabinet

# About this resource
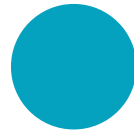
**Building social cohesion: A resource for local government aims to help NSW local governments strengthen social cohesion in their communities.**

Developed in collaboration with local governments from across NSW, this resource provides information, inspiration and tools for local governments that want to:

- Understand the roles of local government in strengthening social cohesion
- Assess social cohesion outcomes within their local government area, and
- Learn from best practice examples of local social cohesion initiatives.

## Why local government?

More than any other level of government, local government can play significant roles in strengthening social cohesion. With deep knowledge and existing connections to their communities, local governments already deliver services that influence social cohesion outcomes, both directly and indirectly.

Building on existing services and working in partnership across government, businesses, services and communities, local councils are well placed to deliver place-based initiatives that address local challenges and build stronger, more resilient communities.

## Linking to the IP&R framework

All NSW local governments must work within the NSW Government's mandatory Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework. As part of this framework, every council is required to prepare an integrated suite of plans that respond to the community's aspirations for the future. The IP&R suite includes the Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program, Operation Plan, Resourcing Strategy and Community Engagement Strategy.

Embedding social cohesion principles within IP&R frameworks is an important tool for driving change. The IP&R suite can help to translate the vision for strengthening social cohesion into specific and achievable actions.

# Starting with Country
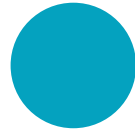
**When thinking about social cohesion, it's important to start with Country and look to the resilience of First Nations peoples.**

Australia's First Nations peoples are the world's oldest continuous living culture. For First Nations peoples, social cohesion is in their identity; it comes from cultural beliefs and knowledge, social connections and the connections with natural landscape, and from cultural responsibilities and obligations.

Susan Moylan-Coombs of The Gaimaragal Group describes how First Nations peoples have always and continue to value social cohesion:

"We are spiritual beings having a human experience in this lifetime. Fundamentally, we are social creatures and we look to find our place and search for a sense of belonging within society and the world.

Being included and feeling included is something that most of you aspire to, and it's something that we, as the original peoples of this place, practice.

We are the oldest living culture on the planet, our DNA predates what you know as Australia and our sophisticated societal structures were one that encouraged inclusion.

We were and are primarily a cohesive mob. People moved as fast as the slowest so when we walked across our homelands, we would travel at the pace of older people, mothers and children so nobody was left behind. People walked as fast as the slowest.

Our kinship systems and rules of behaviour were such that everybody knew their position within the family structure. And rites of passage ceremonies were mechanisms that gave individuals an understanding of their position and role in life. People's contribution to family and community sustained and nourished us. Ancestral spirits and sacred knowledge honoring the source, the Creator, played a significant role in caring for self, caring for Country, and giving meaning and purpose to life."

Resilience is the power and strength of First Nations peoples to deal with challenges and adversity in their lives, particularly the ongoing impacts of colonialism.

First Nations resilience, according to Elders and knowledge holders consulted during the development of the Resilient Sydney Strategy[1] and the Edmund Rice Centre Indigenous Resilience Project[2], stem from:
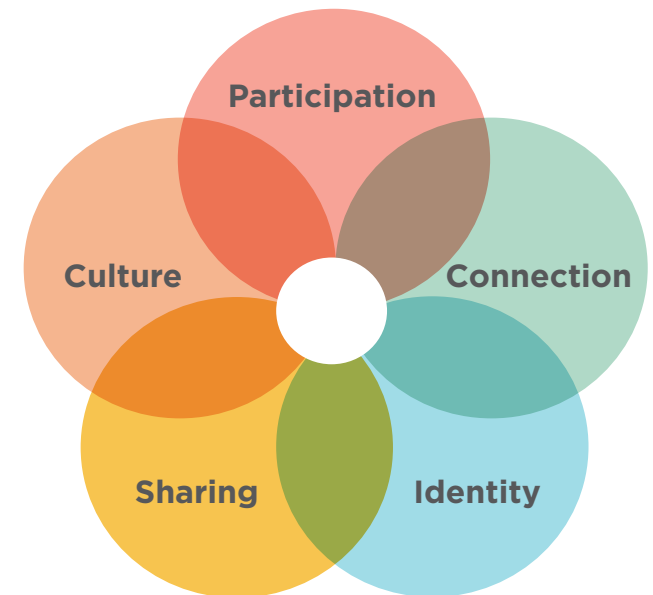


*1. Resilient Sydney and Inside Policy (2018). "Report of Engagement with Indigenous Elders and Community Leaders."*
*2. Edmund Rice Centre. (2019). "Indigenous Resilience Project Report."*

01

# What is social cohesion?

# 1. What is social cohesion?

## What is social cohesion?

Social cohesion can be a tricky concept to define. The Scanlon Foundation defines it as being concerned with:

"the extent of shared values, mutual respect and acceptance of difference, as well as trust between people and trust in institutions".[3]

Social cohesion is about having strong bonds between individuals and institutions within a society, resulting in positive quality of relationships that are rooted in equal and just treatment, respect, and care for one another.

Social cohesion is an important foundation for cooperation towards shared outcomes. It depends on equity and the inclusion of all groups in society. Socially cohesive communities work towards the wellbeing of all members; fight exclusion and marginalisation; create a sense of belonging; promote trust, and provide opportunities for civic participation and upward mobility.

**What we heard from NSW Councils**

We asked over 170 representatives from local councils across NSW which words they would use to define social cohesion. The most common words were: connection, inclusion and belonging.

**Connection**

**Inclusion**

**Belonging**

**The Resilient Cities Network highlights five qualities of social cohesion:**

1. The formation of bonds between individuals, which can lead to a shared sense of identity.

2. The ability of people to relate to one another across societally-enforced divides such as gender, class and ethnicity.

3. The willingness of individuals in a society to participate and engage in their communities to achieve better outcomes for the group.

4. The presence of trust and reciprocity across individuals in a group.

5. The presence of trust in government and institutions.[4]

3. Scanlon Foundation Research Institute. (2021). "What is social cohesion?"
4. Resilient Cities Network. (2019). "Social Cohesion: A Practitioner's Guide to Measurement Challenges and Opportunities."
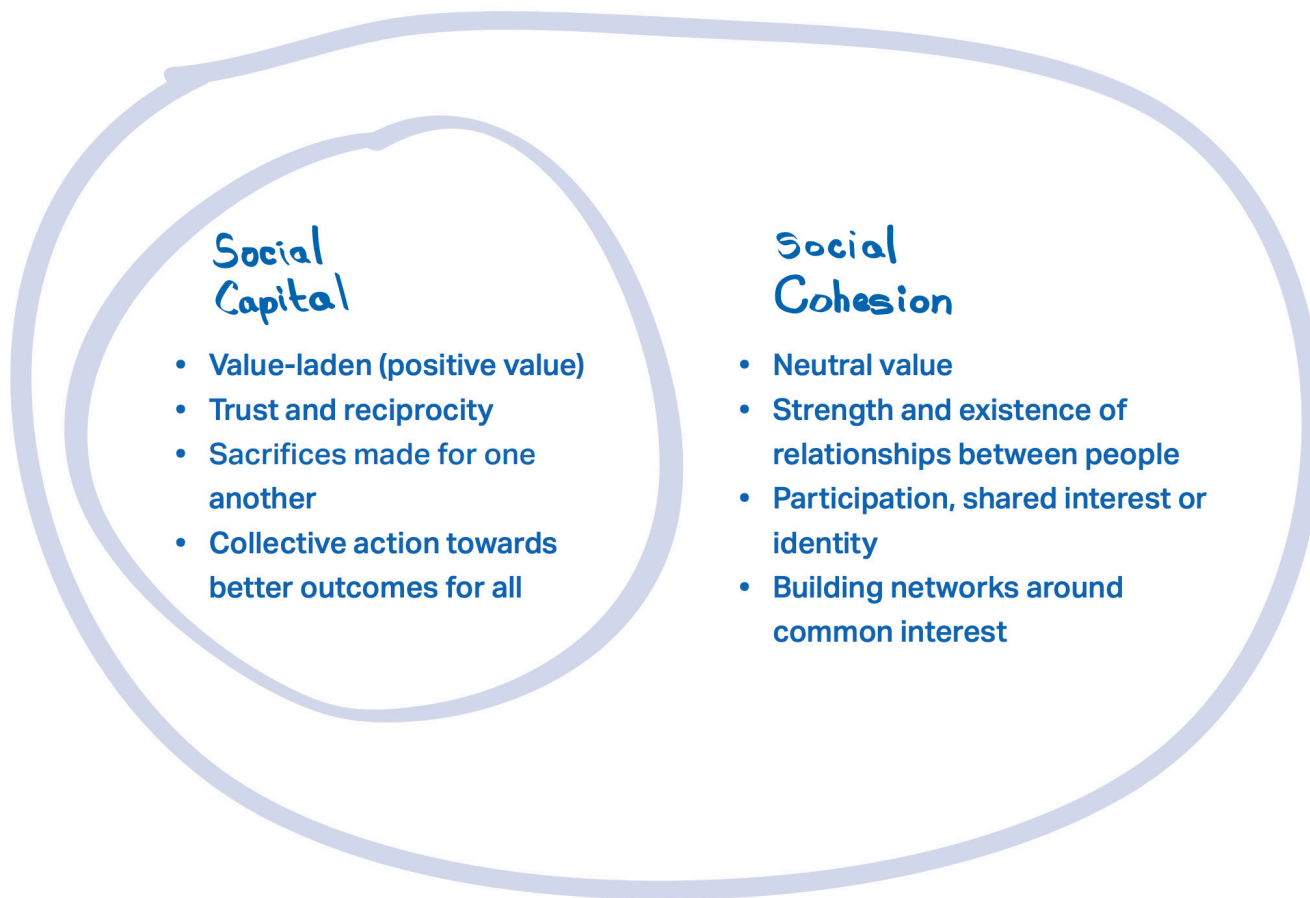
Figure 1 - Social Cohesion or Social Capital? (Source: Resilient Cities Network. (2019). "Social Cohesion: A Practitioner's Guide to Measurement Challenges and Opportunities.")

## Social cohesion and social capital

Social cohesion is a broad concept that includes the idea of social capital. Social capital refers to the many benefits that arise from having strong social connections and networks within communities.

Social capital has three elements that are important to have within a socially cohesive society:

- **"Bonding"** social capital refers to ties between individuals within the same social group, for example based on ethnicity, religion, locality or other interests.
- **"Bridging"** social capital refers to ties between individuals from different social groups with similar levels of socio-economic power.
- **"Linking"** social capital refers to connections between communities and leaders, organisations or governments that allow them to leverage resources, ideas and information.[5]

## Why plan for social cohesion in NSW?

Research indicates the benefits of social cohesion include increased resilience, increased local economic prosperity and improved health outcomes.

Research also shows that connected communities, with strong networks, trust, social spaces and bonds, recover quicker from adversity. Resilient Cities Networks' *Measuring Social Cohesion* notes that:

*"Higher levels of social cohesion and positive social interactions serve to strengthen the overall fabric of the city, allowing communities to bounce back faster and rebuild more efficiently after experiencing major shocks and stresses".*[6]

*6. Resilient Cities Network. (2019). "Social Cohesion: A Practitioner's Guide to Measurement Challenges and Opportunities."*

At the same, a lack of social cohesion, including social divides, marginalisation and inequality, can be a major stress itself and can lead to civil unrest and undermine community wellbeing.

Findings from the Scanlon Foundation's Mapping Social Cohesion Survey suggest that NSW already has a remarkable degree of social cohesion given its diversity, including a consistently high sense of belonging, trust and acceptance of difference.

However, maintaining social cohesion can be an ongoing challenge as communities across NSW continue to grow and change and experience crises such as bushfires, flooding and the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Social cohesion challenges in NSW

We consulted with more than 170 local government representatives to better understand some of the social cohesion challenges facing communities across NSW.

We heard there are a diverse range of challenges for communities, as well as for local government in delivering social cohesion activities.

### Challenges impacting on social cohesion for communities across NSW

- High cost of living and access to affordable housing
- Access to mental health support
- Racism and extremism
- Intolerance of diversity, including age, ability, sexuality, religion and race
- Social and economic impacts of COVID-19
- Language and cultural barriers
- Climate change and recovery from natural disasters
- Domestic and family violence
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Time poor and overworked communities
- Limited digital literacy and digital divide
- Limited public transport as well as large geographic distances in regional areas
- Divide between short and long term residents.

**Our identities and life experiences influence how we interact with our communities and places.**

It's important to consider that some people face more barriers to participating based on age, gender, ability, background and income.

### Challenges facing local government in delivering social cohesion activities

- Access to funding and resources
- Limited understanding of social cohesion at the leadership level
- Reduced capacity and skills due to staff shortages and turnover
- Limited skills and training opportunities
- Impacts of COVID-19 on organising events
- Lack of diverse leadership
- Declining trust and disconnect between government and community
- Engagement with hard-to-reach communities
- Limited public facilities to deliver social cohesion initiatives
- Community resistance to change
- Weak relationships and limited collaboration with local stakeholders
- Lack of coordination between government agencies
- Local services are underfunded and understaffed or not available
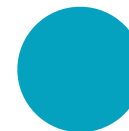- Unaccommodating grant criteria and reporting requirements.

# 02

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLES AND ACTIVITIES

# 2. Local government roles and activities

**This section sets out the roles of local government in strengthening social cohesion and provides examples of activities councils can do to build more cohesive and connected communities.**

## Local government roles

In collaboration with local council representatives across NSW, we've identified six roles that local government can play in strengthening social cohesion. These include:

- Civic engagement and participation
- Social and cultural inclusion
- Leadership, strategy and planning
- Public spaces
- Partnership, collaboration and networks
- Tracking and monitoring

## Activities to build social cohesion

Local councils across NSW are already delivering initiatives that strengthen social cohesion. Varying levels of financial and staff resources impact on the activities they are able to deliver.

Acknowledging those challenges, this section provides examples of activities that local government can do to strengthen social cohesion - from baseline to best practice. The aim is to support councils to assess their existing activities and identify opportunities for new activities responding to their local need. It is a guide only, encouraging progression from baseline to best practice.

## What is baseline to best practice?

| Baseline | Good practice | Better practice | Best practice |
|---|---|---|---|
| ✔ | ✔✔ | ✔✔✔ | ✔✔✔✔ |
| • Lower level of funding and resourcing required | • Progress in place to implement and build on social cohesion activities<br>• Mid level of funding and resourcing required<br>• Begins to incorporate social cohesion activities as business as usual | • Higher level of funding and resourcing required<br>• Social cohesion activities incorporated across most of the organisation | • Higher level of complexity<br>• Higher level of funding and resourcing required<br>• Social cohesion activities incorporated across the organisation |

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLE 1:

# Civic engagement and participation

Communities where everyone has opportunities and feels welcome to participate are more socially cohesive - from access to local services, involvement in local projects, and opportunities to participate in decision-making.

Welcoming Cities[7] research highlights that communities across Australia thrive when there are ample opportunities for citizens to engage and when civic leadership reflects community diversity. Similarly, individuals are more inclined to participate when they feel a sense of belonging and have trust in government bodies.

Equitable civic participation is key to achieving connected and cohesive communities. Local government is well positioned to deliver inclusive civic engagement and to support opportunities for community to participate in community life and decision-making.

*7. Welcoming Cities. (2021) "Putting Out the Welcoming Mat."*

## Challenges and goals

Local councils told us there is declining civic engagement and that representation may not reflect the diversity of its communities. It can also be a challenge to engage with some community members, including people with low digital literacy, people with disability and transient populations.

The goal is to ensure community are engaged and active in local government processes and systems, with community views and aspirations reflected in decision-making.

We know we will have achieved our goal when every community member has the opportunity to be involved in local decision-making.

The table overpage sets out examples of activities local government can do to strengthen civic engagement and participation.

**See pages 35-39 for case studies related to civic engagement and participation.**

## Table 1: Role 1 - Civic engagement and participation

| Baseline ✓ | Good practice ✓✓ | Better practice ✓✓✓ | Best practice ✓✓✓✓ |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Develop and utilise engagement portal on council's external website.<br>• Share information and resources through diverse social media channels and groups.<br>• Create and share accessible communications materials.<br>• Promote volunteerism on council platforms to build social connections. | • Undertake annual surveys to understand communities needs and experiences.<br>• Deliver face to face consultations and work with community to understand suitable times of day and locations to conduct engagement.<br>• Tailor information for target cohorts in a range of formats and make available in different locations, e.g. Easy Read, translation into community languages.<br>• Include information on inclusive ways to engage with different community groups in council's Community Engagement Strategy. | • Ensure participation is accessible, e.g. provide Auslan interpretation and live captioning at meetings and events.<br>• Establish and co-ordinate community (lived experience) advisory committees/ reference groups. | • Use participatory models to determine policy, allocate funding and develop projects.<br>• Deliver mini-publics and people's panels, e.g. Children's Parliaments.<br>• Co-design engagement processes with community.<br>• Build capability of emerging leaders to engage with all levels of government.<br>• Develop communications strategy to effectively communicate about social cohesion and resilience.<br>• Close the loop by reporting back to community on consultation outcomes, and demonstrate how their input impacted decision making. |

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLE 2:

# Social and cultural inclusion

Striving for social and cultural inclusion means ensuring all community members have the opportunity to learn, work and freely engage in community life.

Discrimination is a major barrier to social and cultural inclusion and can impact on access to healthcare, education and recreational activities. Local governments can be proactive in addressing discrimination and establish policies and programs that aim to build inclusive, connected and thriving communities.

Local governments can play a key role in connecting and coordinating with service providers and community organisations to deliver meaningful programs and events, as well as ensuring equitable access to services for all residents.

### Challenges and goals

Local councils told us that some groups may experience exclusion based on age, ability, gender or background, and consequently, encounter inequitable access to programs and services. This can lead to further social isolation.

The goal is for ongoing participation by all community members in programs and events. The goal is also to ensure that community and local organisations are involved in the co-design of programs and services and feel empowered to establish or manage initiatives without council involvement.
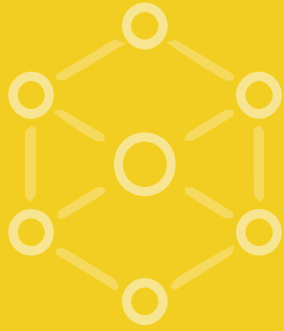
We know we will have achieved our goal when every community member has the opportunity to learn, work and freely engage in community life.

The table overpage sets out examples of activities local government can do to encourage social and cultural inclusion.

**See pages 40-50 for case studies related to social and cultural inclusion.**

## Table 2: Role 2 - Social and cultural inclusion

| Baseline ✔ | Good practice ✔✔ | Better practice ✔✔✔ | Best practice ✔✔✔✔ |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Employ a Community Development worker.<br>• Acknowledge days of significance, e.g. National Sorry Day and International Day of People with Disability.<br>• Deliver council endorsed statements that condemn discrimination in the local community and broader society.<br>• Develop and maintain database of social and cultural groups to improve communications, engagement and collaboration. | • Administer small grants program to support local and sustainable social cohesion initiatives.<br>• Integrate social cohesion criteria into councils existing grant program.<br>• Plan and deliver annual program of local community building activities, e.g. community gardening and social lunches.<br>• Provide internal diversity and inclusion training.<br>• Manage safe and welcoming community facilities that deliver inclusive programs and services for all ages, abilities, genders and cultural diversity, e.g. language classes, digital literacy skills building, intergenerational activities and cultural practices. | • Develop specialist community development roles, e.g. First Nations Engagement officer, Youth officer, Multicultural officer.<br>• Co-ordinate external diversity and inclusion training for community.<br>• Work together with sector partners to deliver inclusive programs and services.<br>• Establish a welcoming program and provide resources for new residents, e.g. bus tour of LGA or online webpage. | • Deliver major events that promote inclusion and social cohesion.<br>• Build community capacity and networks to deliver social cohesion initiatives.<br>• Host community leadership forums to share advice on social cohesion initiatives and improvements.<br>• Update programs and services based on monitoring and evaluation. |

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLE 3:

# Leadership, strategy and planning

Local governments can take a leadership role in supporting social cohesion and resilience outcomes through their IP&R framework by embedding social cohesion objectives in their plans, strategies and policies, including organisational systems and processes.

Councils can also take the lead in developing visions alongside their community and key stakeholders that promote social cohesion. Policies and plans can provide frameworks for fostering inclusive leadership and partnerships with community and key stakeholders.

### Challenges and goals

Local councils told us that many local strategies and plans do not reflect First Nations sovereignty, the diversity of the local place or encourage connections between groups.

The goal is for decision-making that represents the local community and considers stresses (e.g. climate change, housing affordability) that impact on social cohesion. The goal is also to encourage an internal cultural shift where social cohesion is embraced.

We know we will have achieved our goal when social cohesion is embedded in the core business strategy of government, businesses, services and the community.

The table overpage sets out examples of activities local government can do to strengthen leadership, strategy and planning.

See pages 51-59 for case studies related to leadership, strategy and planning.

## Table 3: Role 3 - Leadership, strategy and planning

| Baseline ✔ | Good practice ✔✔ | Better practice ✔✔✔ | Best practice ✔✔✔✔ |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Acknowledge First Nations peoples in all plans and strategies.<br>• Allocate budget and resourcing in council's Delivery Program and Operational Plan for council-run social cohesion initiatives.<br>• Deliver and promote social cohesion campaigns, e.g. Neighbour Day. | • Develop and implement a First Nations Strategy, including First Nations engagement.<br>• Develop and implement a social strategy, e.g. social sustainability strategy, cohesion strategy, social plan.<br>• Provide internal training and learning opportunities for council staff, e.g. universal design training, grant writing workshop, inclusive customer service skills. | • Establish and lead cross-organisational social cohesion steering groups.<br>• Undertake community benefit studies for planning proposals and social and health impact assessments.<br>• Develop and implement targeted strategies, e.g. cultural diversity strategy, youth strategy, resilience strategy.<br>• Advocate for community needs to State and Federal governments. | • Embed Connecting with Country framework in strategic planning and design.<br>• Develop strategies, policies and plans in collaboration with community and local stakeholders.<br>• Undertake review and update of council strategies to ensure consideration of social cohesion and inclusion.<br>• Undertake strategic collaboration with neighbouring councils on social cohesion initiatives.<br>• Work across council teams to improve council systems, processes and plans so everyone sees they have a role to play in social cohesion. |

*"Research increasingly highlights the important role public spaces including public facilities, public open space and streets, play in bringing people together, developing social capital, maintaining quality of life and developing the skills and resilience essential to support communities to thrive – key ingredients to building the social cohesion of a city."*

*- Infrastructure Australia, 2021*

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLE 4:

# Public spaces

Welcoming public spaces, from remote areas and regional towns, to greenfield suburbs, to inner city centres, play a central role in building social cohesion. The COVID-19 lockdowns have highlighted the need to ensure equitable access to quality public open space to support health and wellbeing, including as our cities and regions change and grow.

Local councils can make public spaces more welcoming by planning and designing based on principles of inclusion, diversity and accessibility.

Many councils are exploring opportunities for placemaking and inclusion, from community hubs, to intergenerational parks, to playgrounds and increasingly, our streets. Streets are places where we bump into friends, or make new friends, and one of the few places where we routinely encounter people who are different from us.

## Challenges and goals

Local councils told us that some public spaces are not accessible, or designed and managed to create and sustain connections between people and groups in a place, including vulnerable communities and during emergencies.

The goal is for more welcoming and inclusive public spaces, where community is involved in the design, development and management of public space. The goal is also for local governments to have plans and processes in place to manage social risks and improve health and social cohesion.

We know we will have achieved our goal when our public spaces are welcoming and inclusive for every community member.
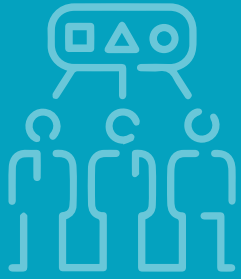
The table overpage sets out examples of activities local government can do to ensure more welcoming public spaces.

**See pages 60-68 for case studies related to public spaces.**

## Table 4: Role 4 - Public Spaces

| Baseline | Good practice | Better practice | Best practice |
|---|---|---|---|
| ✔ | ✔✔ | ✔✔✔ | ✔✔✔✔ |
| • Acknowledge First Nations people and diverse cultures in all council managed places, e.g. working with First Nations community to use First Nations place names.<br><br>• Identify underutilised spaces and places throughout the LGA with potential to transform and deliver social cohesion activities.<br><br>• Waive hire fees or provide in-kind support to community groups for use of council managed public facilities. | • Establish land use controls around public space provision, and the accessibility, size and quality of these places to improve inclusion.<br><br>• Undertake annual review of Public Spaces register to make updates, review fees, promote inclusive community use and list emergency hub/ shelters.<br><br>• Incorporate recommendations from NSW State Government guidelines into design and delivery of council managed places, e.g. *Everyone Can Play Guideline, Connecting with Country Draft Framework* and *Greener Places Design Guide.* | • Provide community facilities and public open spaces that are welcoming, multipurpose and flexible to meet diverse community needs.<br><br>• Provide accessible wayfinding and inclusive community signage in relevant formats and languages, e.g. street signs in community languages and braille.<br><br>• Develop risk register for public assets and programs held in public spaces and undertake review to identify areas for improvements.<br><br>• Conduct internal resilience review across the organisation. | • Develop social infrastructure strategy and implement funded budget items.<br><br>• Activate public spaces with programs and events. |

# Partnership, collaboration and networks

Building social cohesion requires the active support and involvement of various stakeholders. Councils are well positioned to lead partnerships and create opportunities that build longer-term relationships, foster trust among stakeholders and improve communications at local, state and national levels.

Partnerships enable greater outcomes by sharing knowledge and resources. This is particularly important in the case of shock events, such as a pandemic, bushfire or flood, and for local government areas with limited capacity.

Many councils already work together and communicate through Regional Organisations of Council. This partnership approach can be extended to integrate other local organisations through interagencies, working groups and community hubs.

## Challenges and goals

Local councils told us that disconnected networks undermine the ability to share information, develop plans and services that meet community needs, and respond effectively in emergencies.

The goal is for greater collaboration and partnership, ensuring that networks are engaged, connected and prepared for emerging needs and shock events. This will lead to increased social capital and trust between community, council and local stakeholders.

We know we will have achieved our goal when we have strong and trustworthy connections between organisations, and with our communities, and when we work together to maximise our positive social impact.

The table overpage sets out examples of activities local government can do to strengthen partnership, collaboration and networks.

**See pages 69-78 for case studies related to partnership, collaboration and networks.**

## Table 5: Role 5 - Partnership, collaboration and networks

| Baseline | Good practice | Better practice | Best practice |
|---|---|---|---|
| ✔ | ✔✔ | ✔✔✔ | ✔✔✔✔ |
| • Undertake stakeholder mapping to develop and maintain database of local services, social enterprises and government agencies.<br>• Plan and prepare Local Emergency Management Officer (LEMO) to coordinate networks on the ground during crises. | • Introduce social cohesion goals in existing partnership structures.<br>• Organise scenario planning meetings attended by networks to increase community preparedness. | • Partner with community members and cultural leaders to deliver programs and extend the reach of services.<br>• Collaborate with local interagencies and groups to share information and collaborate on issues, barriers to accessing services, facilities, projects and programs for diverse communities. Examples include interfaith networks, multicultural interagencies, or homelessness services committees. | • Host regular forums with local interagencies and networks to share tools, resources and build capacity of council staff and service providers.<br>• Co-locate community services and coordinate multipurpose community hubs.<br>• Nurture relationships and maintain long-term partnerships.<br>• Promote the work of community networks. |

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLE 6:

# Tracking and monitoring

To keep up to date with changing community needs, it is important for local government to analyse and evaluate social cohesion outcomes. Identifying a set of metrics and establishing a baseline is essential to tracking social cohesion over time.

It is in the best interest of local government to track and monitor social cohesion efforts as this ensures resources are allocated efficiently and effectively. Tracking can also help councils identify emerging trends and risks to social cohesion.

Surveys and questionnaires are common methods for establishing baselines and evaluating programs, however there are opportunities for local governments to leverage existing data, for example Census data or facilities utilisation data.

As community life continues to evolve, it is important to check on progress and ensure strategies, plans and projects remain relevant and on track.

## Challenges and goals

Local councils told us there are challenges in accessing quality localised data on social cohesion and community connection needs which can impact on decision-making.

The goal is for evaluation frameworks to be developed for measuring impact, transparent reporting and projecting risks and changing community needs.

We know we will have achieved our goal when we use our evaluation frameworks to inform decision making and there is shared responsibility for social cohesion across all government, businesses, services and the community.

The table overpage sets out examples of activities local government can do to strengthen tracking and monitoring.

**See pages 79-83 for case studies related to tracking and monitoring.**

## Table 6: Role 6 - Tracking and monitoring

| Baseline ✔ | Good practice ✔✔ | Better practice ✔✔✔ | Best practice ✔✔✔✔ |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Report on ABS population changes over time and other demographic and health indicators.<br>• Commit to undertaking regular research to understand the diversity and levels of connections of the local community, including a Social Cohesion or Social Wellbeing Survey.<br>• Develop database of relevant datasets and sources. | • Publish report on annual survey results and highlight priority focus areas.<br>• Review Scanlon Foundation Australian Cohesion Index biennially to understand context of social cohesion in Australia and inform decision-making. | • Collect data from social programs, grants and networks as an evidence base for better decision making.<br>• Report on community and organisational case studies on social cohesion initiatives.<br>• Facilitate focus groups and interviews with community leaders and service providers to help inform decision making.<br>• Perform public space evaluations to assess their ability to promote social cohesion. | • Track and report on social cohesion indicators, including consistent, regular evaluation and reporting of council programs, places and the community to track social inclusion, connection and cohesion.<br>• Build capability of council staff and community organisations to understand evaluation in the context of social cohesion.<br>• Share council social cohesion data with partners to facilitate greater understandings of context of social cohesion within LGAs. |

# 03

## MEASURING SOCIAL COHESION

# 3. Measuring social cohesion

**It's important to measure social cohesion to understand local needs and track progress made over time.**

There are many ways to measure social cohesion. This section provides examples of **indicators** and corresponding **measures** that can be applied by local councils to understand how social cohesion is tracking in their community.

indicators

tracking social cohesion

subjective and objective measures
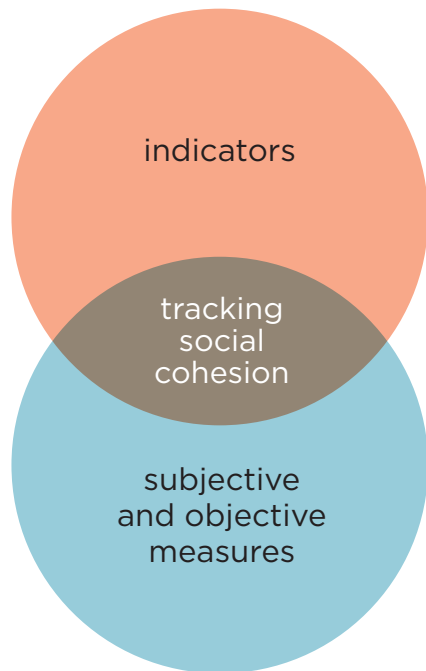
## Indicators

### What is an indicator?

An indicator is a specific and measurable characteristic that can be used to show progress toward achieving specific outcomes.

### What indicators can you use?

Local governments can develop their own place-specific indicators to measure social cohesion. We recommend aligning with the indicators outlined by the Resilient Cities Network[8]:

1. **Trust and reciprocity** - Measures the level of bonding between individuals in society.
2. **Participation and collaboration** - Measures the levels of engagement and investment by individuals in their community.
3. **Heterogeneity of group** - Measures how much people are willing to trust and interact with members outside of political, ethnic, economic, and other identities.
4. **Respect, tolerance and love** - Measures communities' willingness to work toward better outcomes for all, and not just for specific members of the group.
5. **Safety** - The level of safety felt by individuals can serve as a measure for how much they feel like they belong.
6. **Relationships** - Measures the strength and presence of relationships (between individuals, governments and citizens, etc.).
7. **Unrest and change** - The lack of disruption or unrest during times of change is a key indicator of the trust communities have in each other.

The following pages set out examples of subjective and objective measures related to each of these indicators.

8. Resilient Cities Network. (2019). "Social Cohesion: A Practitioners Guide to Measurement Challenges and Opportunities."

## Subjective measures

### What is a subjective measure?

A subjective measure is based on personal opinions, assumptions, interpretations and beliefs. Subjective measurement is commonly done via surveys or focus groups, interviews, logs and observations, and should be considered in relation to the demographic profile of respondents.

There are a number of sources where councils can collect subjective measures, including:

- Australian Cohesion Index (incorporates Scanlon-Monash Index of Social Cohesion)
- Local Government Social Cohesion or Community Wellbeing Surveys. Examples include the City of Parramatta Our City Our Life Survey and City of Sydney Community Wellbeing Indicators 2019.

### What measures can you use?

Examples of subjective measures that local government can use to understand social cohesion in their communities include:

**Table 7: Examples of subjective measures (table continued overpage)**

| Indicator | Subjective measures |
|---|---|
| **1. Trust and reciprocity** | - I trust [council / organisation] all the time / most of the time / never to do the right thing.<br>- Council adequately considers community concerns and views in making decisions.<br>- On a scale of 1 to 10, how friendly would you rate your neighbourhood?<br>- How willing would you be to let your neighbour pick up your mail for you / to come into your house?<br>- Level of agreement statements: The neighbours in our community help each other. I would be willing to help my neighbour. I would like to volunteer in my local community. |

**Table 7: Examples of subjective measures (continued)**

| Indicator | Subjective measures |
|---|---|
| **2. Participation, collaboration and equity** | • I feel that I have the opportunity to participate in (local government) decision-making that affects me.<br>• % signed a petition in the last three years.<br>• There is a good range of community groups and support networks for residents.<br>• Do you feel you have enough opportunities to participate in community events?<br>• Do you feel that you can access the public spaces (e.g. community and cultural facilities, open space and recreation facilities) you need to live a healthy and active life?<br>• Level of agreement statement: People in my neighbourhood can access quality parks and public spaces near to our homes.<br>• Level of resident satisfaction with access to facilities / services / programs.<br>• Level of ability to participate in community life based on cost / affordability.<br>• Do you feel you have enough opportunities to participate in meaningful employment?<br>• Do you feel you have enough opportunities to engage in education to obtain new skills and a qualification? |
| **3. Heterogeneity of group** | • How often do you interact with members of ethnic / racial / socio-economic / political in person (e.g. daily, weekly, monthly, never)? Online?<br>• Level of agreement statement: Cultural diversity makes my local area / city / state / nation stronger?<br>• % experienced discrimination based on skin colour, ethnicity or religion in the last year |
| **4. Respect, tolerance and love** | • Do you feel respected by people in your local area / local government area?<br>• Do you feel respected by authorities in your community? Do you respect them?<br>• How would you rate how comfortable you feel in public places in your local government area?<br>• When you return home at the end of the day, does someone ask you about your day? |

**Table 7: Examples of subjective measures (continued)**

| Indicator | Subjective measures |
|---|---|
| **5. Safety** | • How safe would you rate your neighbourhood? (or a range of questions as agreement statements e.g. I feel safe in my neighbourhood?)<br>• Do you ever feel physically at risk in your neighbourhood/school/workplace?<br>• How would you rate your level of enjoyment in a local public place in the past 6 months?<br>• Level of sense of safety at home during the day / at night.<br>• Level of sense of safety walking alone during the day / at night.<br>• Sense of security in your housing tenure.<br>• # People who could raise $2,000 in two days in an emergency. |
| **6. Relationships** | • How would you rate your sense of belonging in: Australia / NSW / My local government area / My neighbourhood / My street.<br>• Level of agreement statement: I feel part of my community.<br>• Level of agreement statement: My community is harmonious, cohesive and inclusive.<br>• Level of agreement statement: I have positive relationships that help me feel strong and happy?<br>• Level of agreement statement: My neighbourhood feels like home?<br>• Personal wellbeing index: Very unsatisfied to satisfied. |
| **7. Unrest** | • Do you feel like your every day life is disrupted by political / local / environmental events?<br>• How would you rate your quality of life? In the past 6 months has your quality of life improved / declined / stayed the same?<br>• Perception of growth and change in my local area.<br>• I feel prepared to respond in the case of an emergency.<br>• Perception of changing climate/environment. |

## Objective measures

**What is an objective measure?**

An objective measure reflects observation of measurable facts. Objective measurement is commonly done via surveys, logs and administrative data.

**Where do these measures come from?**

There are a number of sources where councils can collect objective measures, including:

- ABS Census of Population and Housing
- ABS National Health Survey
- ABS Life Tables
- NSW Government Public Spaces Evaluation Tool
- AEC Enrolment statistics
- Department of Home Affairs settlement database (LGA specific available on request)
- NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOSCAR) Crime Tool
- NSW Government DPE Heat Vulnerability Index 2018
- Natural Hazards Research Australia Australian Disaster Resilience Index
- Public Health Information Development Unit (PHIDU) Social Health Atlases
- Council collected data, and
- Audit of public spaces, including community and cultural facilities, open space and recreation facilities.

## What measures can you use?

Objective measures that local government can use to understand social cohesion in their communities are summarised in the table opposite.

**Table 8: Examples of objective measures**

| Indicator | Objective measures |
|---|---|
| **Participation and collaboration** | • % of people who volunteer<br>• SEIFA index (of relative disadvantage)<br>• # people who have participated in local community engagement activities in the past 12 months<br>• # households who can access a quality public space within 10 minutes walk from home (increasing or decreasing over time)<br>• Enrolment to vote<br>• % unemployment<br>• % attending university or tertiary education |
| **Heterogeneity of group** | • % born overseas<br>• % recent arrivals to Australia<br>• % speaking a language other than English at home<br>• % not fluent in English<br>• # humanitarian arrivals |
| **Relationships** | • Median age of death<br>• Life expectancy at birth |
| **Safety** | • Recorded offences for crimes against the person<br>• Recorded offences for crimes against property (expressed per 100,000 of population)<br>• Recorded incidents of domestic violence<br>• Female victims of recorded incidents of domestic violence<br>• # people experiencing homelessness<br>• % households in housing/rental stress<br>• SEIFA Index score |
| **Unrest and change** | • % of adults with a mental or behavioural condition<br>• % and # population growth<br>• % high density dwellings<br>• % experiencing housing stress<br>• NSW Heat Vulnerability Index<br>• Australian Disaster Resilience Index |

04

Case Studies

# 4. Case studies

**This section features best practice case studies from Australia and beyond, exemplifying ways in which councils can work towards social cohesion outcomes at the local government level. It includes lessons for local government and links to further resources.**

Case studies have been identified via desktop research of award winning projects and featured initiatives, as well as by recommendation from local council representatives.

Case studies in this section are organised by local government role.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Civic engagement and participation** | There are many ways local councils can remove barriers and encourage greater civic participation. Case studies include councils involving citizens in deliberative and inclusive decision-making processes, as well as connecting residents to accessible information and resources. |
| | **Social and cultural inclusion** | Case studies include programs and services run by local councils and community organisations that champion cultural inclusion, support communities most at risk of social isolation and welcome newcomers to their LGA. |
| | **Leadership, strategy and planning** | Examples of local councils working to address barriers to social cohesion head-on and actively incorporating principles of diversity, resilience and inclusion into their strategies and planning. |
| | **Public spaces** | Case studies highlight welcoming public spaces. They range in scale from small public space interventions to renewal precincts and highlight the importance of a co-design approach, including comprehensive consultation with the community to ensure public spaces embrace diverse cultures, needs and local character. |
| | **Partnership, collaboration and networks** | Examples of local councils working to build partnerships, support community initiatives and increase communications to strengthen social cohesion. |
| | **Tracking and monitoring** | Case studies highlight how data can be leveraged to track progress, understand changing community needs and potential risks to social cohesion. |

# Civic engagement and participation

**Inclusive civic engagement in Cumberland**

**Establishing a citizens' jury to inform strategic plans and a community vision for Bendigo**

**Keeping connected online with CBTV in Canterbury Bankstown**

**Liverpool City Council's 2168 Children's Parliament**

# CASE STUDY:

## Inclusive civic engagement in Cumberland

Cumberland is one of the most culturally diverse local government areas in Australia. In 2018, Cumberland City Council delivered a series of inclusive workshops to inform the development of the Cumberland Cultural Plan. Workshop participants included people from diverse cultural backgrounds who were recruited by Council, having been identified via Council's database of community groups that hire its facilities.

Workshop materials were designed specifically to reflect the diversity of the local area and included visual representations of people from different cultural backgrounds.

Translators, visual cues and tools were provided to enable people with limited English proficiency to participate. The workshops were supported by performances from local musicians with diverse cultural backgrounds who were recruited by Council. One workshop, for example, concluded with North-African drumming and a singalong.

### Principles for inclusive civic engagement

Some principles to consider when engaging with community members from culturally diverse backgrounds (adapted from *Implementing the Principles of Multiculturalism Locally*[1]) include:

- Engage communities early in the process
- Build ongoing relationships and trust by avoiding tokenistic consultation
- Recognise the specific needs of different community groups and offer targeted engagement opportunities
- Promote engagement opportunities through community leaders and champions
- Build the capacity of council staff and the community to engage in an informed way
- Address language issues and consider translation or interpreters, and
- Close the loop and provide participants with information on outcomes.



Participants at Cumberland Cultural Plan workshops in Granville and Wentworthville (Source: Cred Consulting)

*1. Department of Local Government Office of Multicultural Interests (2010). Implementing the Principles of Multiculturalism Locally: A planning guide for Western Australian local governments. Government of Western Australia.*

### Lessons for local government

These workshops were a great success in large part due to Cumberland City Council's existing relationships with local community groups, and exemplifies how local government can tap into existing networks to increase civic participation.

Provision of workshop materials that reflect the cultural diversity of the local community is a good way to ensure participants feel welcome. Offering translated resources, both in community languages and plain English, also supports participation.

# CASE STUDY:

## Establishing a citizens' jury to inform strategic plans and a community vision for Bendigo

The City of Greater Bendigo is a fast-growing region of Victoria with a large urban area. To understand how services could be distributed more equitably across the local government area, Council convened its first Citizens' Jury in 2016.

Citizens' juries are a method of deliberation in which a small group of randomly selected citizens reaches a collective decision or makes a recommendation on a policy issue. The process generally happens over four to 12 weeks.

In the case of Greater Bendigo, the citizens' jury was asked:

"What should Council spend our money on to shape the community's future?"

Invitations were sent to 3,000 residents across the LGA; of those who expressed an interest, 28 citizens – reflecting the broader Bendigo community in terms of age, gender, ratepayer status and locality – were selected for the jury.

The jury also developed a common vision for Greater Bendigo, stating that it would like:

"to see their community develop supported by an active, forward-thinking, resourceful and resourced council."

Jurors met on six occasions and through the deliberative process they made 44 considered recommendations relating to the range and level of services across Greater Bendigo. Of these, nine were endorsed by Council. These included:

- Connect young people in Greater Bendigo with the arts
- Review and evaluate public transport between the city and smaller towns, and
- Pursue the "10-minute neighbourhood" concept.

Council recognises the benefit of engaging citizens in decision-making processes and, as a result, is repeating the process to inform a large strategic planning project.



City of Greater Bendigo

## Citizens Jury - Briefing Booklet

*What should Council spend our money on to shape the community's future?*

May 2016

CITY OF GREATER BENDIGO

Briefing booklet for the citizens' jury (Source: NewDemocracy)

www.newdemocracy.com.au/2016/05/06/city-of-greater-bendigo-citizens-jury/
www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/About/Document-Library/citizens-jury-final-report

### Lessons for local government

Citizens' juries provide an opportunity for greater civic participation in local government planning and decision-making processes. The process supports Council through guidance from a group of residents who have spent an extended period of time becoming 'experts' in a particular topic and discussing and agreeing on collective recommendations. Importantly, carrying out deliberative democratic processes can also help to build public confidence in local government.

## CASE STUDY:

### Keeping connected online with CBTV in Canterbury Bankstown

CBTV is an online hub providing free, accessible and inclusive entertainment and local news. The City of Canterbury Bankstown recently established this digital space to connect the community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Residents can choose from seven channels – Active, Business, Culture, Green, Kids, Community and CBCity – which can be accessed through Facebook and YouTube. Content includes performances, workouts, cooking tutorials, how-tos and news.

The core purpose of CBTV was to keep the community socially connected and engaged during periods of social distancing. It also aimed to support the performing arts and recreation industries that have been hard hit by COVID-19. Local musicians and artists whose employment was impacted by the pandemic were encouraged to contact Council and have their work showcased on CBTV.

"CBTV is an opportunity to give back to those who continually provide much-needed entertainment, even when faced with times like these." - Mayor Khal Asfour

The City of Canterbury Bankstown is the first local council in NSW to set up an online entertainment hub. CBTV is an example of local government responding swiftly to COVID-19 and taking advantage of the digital sphere to provide entertainment and opportunities for participation.

Beyond the pandemic, CBTV will provide a platform for Council to continue to engage digitally with residents and community groups.

Penrith City Council won a 2021 NSW Local Government Excellence Award for a similar program: the Thursday Night Live Lockdown Series, a weekly live stream music event that featured local performers.
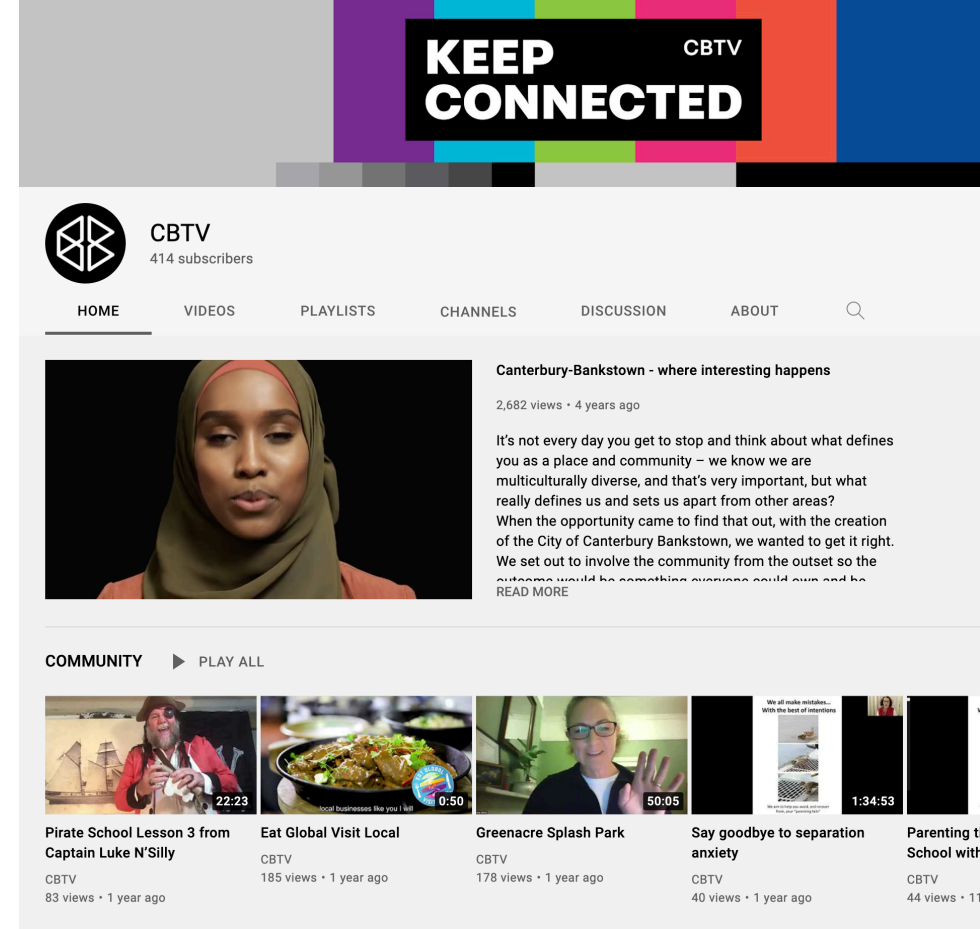


CBTV YouTube homepage (Source: CBTV YouTube)
*www.cbcity.nsw.gov.au/events/cbtv*

### Lessons for local government

Local governments can engage with community groups, entertainers and local businesses to provide enjoyable and accessible online entertainment for residents.

Online hubs may be of particular benefit to regional communities with limited live entertainment opportunities and greater risk of social isolation.

# CASE STUDY:

## Liverpool City Council's 2168 Children's Parliament

Liverpool City Council, in partnership with Mission Australia's Miller Pathways, launched the 2168 Children's Parliament in 2017 in an effort to address the civic participation of children.

According to Mission Australia, children and young people are the focus of many early intervention efforts, but they are rarely engaged in the decision-making processes that impact their lives.

The 2168 Children's Parliament gives children aged nine to 12, who live in the 2168 postcode, an opportunity to express their aspirations and ambitions for the local community.

Each year 40 parliamentarians from 10 schools in the Liverpool LGA are engaged in the program. They participate in parliamentary sittings in the Liverpool City Council Chamber and have the opportunity to address the Mayor and Council officers with issues raised by their school peers. During these sittings, Council representatives respond to the issues identified by the children.

Inspired by the Scottish Children's Parliament, the program aims to build children's capacity to engage in civic life and increase their knowledge and understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Additional workshops are organised throughout the program, focusing on issues such as gender equality, environmental sustainability, leadership and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### Lessons for local government

The 2168 Children's Parliament has been operating for five years and provides a best practice example of how local government can include children in strategy development and planning processes.

Children's Parliaments provide a space for children to learn about governance and engage in child and youth advocacy. Importantly, they provide a forum in which children can express their perspectives and be heard by adults.



Members of the 2168 Children's Parliament learning about UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Source: Liverpool City Council)

*www.liverpool.nsw.gov.au/community/2168-childrens-parliament*
*www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/policy-submissions/other/728-mission-australia-submission-on-alcohol-and-drug-strategy*
*www.childrensparliament.org.uk/*

# Social and cultural inclusion

Murama Healing Space and Dance
Ground on Wangal Country

Online Multicultural Welcome Hub
on the Sunshine Coast

Connecting newcomers with SSI's
The Welcome Project

Connecting new residents to
information about local services

Building cultural tolerance with
young people in Burwood

Behind This Smile community art
project in Hobsons Bay

Mentoring young people
through Midnight Basketball

Supporting First Nations through
early childhood education
centres from Penrith to Forbes

Volunteer-run classes and
social activities at the MOSAIC
Multicultural Centre in Chatswood

Celebrating Ramadan from dawn
to dusk in Lakemba

# CASE STUDY:

## Murama Healing Space and Dance Ground on Wangal Country

Murama Healing Space and Dance Ground (Murama) at Sydney Olympic Park is an Aboriginal-led hub for local, regional and international Indigenous arts, learning and collaboration. It is intended to be a gathering place for First Nations communities and to give visitors and the local community a better understanding of the area's First Nations history.

It is run by the Murama Cultural Council in partnership with the Sydney Olympic Park Authority. The development of Murama was made possible by grants from Create NSW's Western Sydney Making Spaces Initiative and the now-defunct NSW Office of Environment and Heritage's Heritage Near Me program.

Dr John Hunter, Murama's Coordinator, says:

"This is an inclusive and peaceful space where First Nations peoples can learn, lead, and share culture. It will be a gathering place for the entire community, and a place to celebrate the rich Indigenous culture of Sydney Olympic Park with greater Sydney"

At Murama, there is a focus on young people. Local First Nations youth are regularly engaged in programs such as the Murama Youth Summit and Youth Gatherings, which aim to connect or reconnect young people with local Elders and First Nations cultures, and inspire them to use this connection as an opportunity to grow their leadership skills. The young people are encouraged to become role models and mentors in their schools and the broader community.

Murama provides First Nations communities with a safe place to gather and participate in cultural and spiritual activities, and is also available for meetings and community events, Healing Camp programs, school excursions, and arts and cultural awareness programs.

Murama won the 2020 National Landscape Architecture Award for Community Contribution and is a best practice example of government bodies and First Nations communities working together.



Murama Healing Space and Dance Ground at Sydney Olympic Park (Source: Murama Cultural Council)
*www.sydneyolympicpark.com.au/News/Murama-Dance-Grounds-launch*

### Lessons for local government

Local government can provide spaces for First Nations communities to gather and practise cultural and spiritual activities. Councils can also provide funding to support First Nations programs, including those focused on young people and cultural awareness.

# CASE STUDY:

## Online Multicultural Welcome Hub on the Sunshine Coast

The Sunshine Coast Council has launched a one-stop web portal that provides new migrants with essential information. It aims to make new residents feel welcome and connect them with services and their community.

Accessed via the Multicultural Welcome Hub, the *Sunshine Coast Multicultural Handbook and Directory* provides a quick and easy way for migrants to tap into information about a suite of topics, including health, education and transport, and offers helpful tips on forming connections in a new community.

The Hub also features the personal stories of migrants who have relocated from countries around the globe, including Tibet, Kenya, Thailand and Germany. They speak of the challenges, joys and opportunities they experienced when moving to a new community.
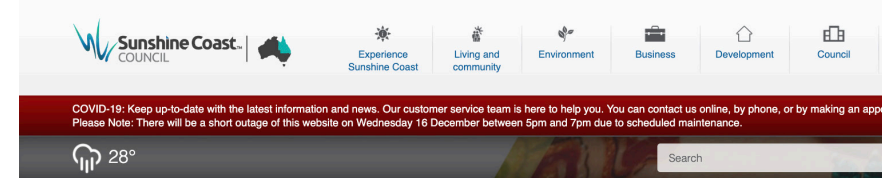
Sunshine Coast Council Mayor Mark Jamieson said the Hub resources seek to promote the Sunshine Coast as a welcoming and inclusive place for new migrants, contributing to a sense of belonging and enabling access to opportunities, services and connections.

The Hub was created in partnership with community centres, service providers, agencies, government departments and the community, with the Sunshine Coast Multicultural Advisory Group providing strategic oversight.

### Lessons for local government

Local governments are a trusted source and can play an important role in connecting new migrants to information, resources and services. An online hub can improve the accessibility of information and is available 24/7, which means people can access it in their own time and at their own pace, potentially even before moving to Australia.

There may be opportunities for councils to expand their existing website content to support new migrants; this could be in the form of increased directory-style links or tailored content. It could include a list of places of worship, as well as events organised by community groups.



Sunshine Coast Council's Multicultural Welcome Hub (Source: Sunshine Coast Council)

*www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/multicultural*

# CASE STUDY:

## Connecting newcomers with SSI's The Welcome Project

The Welcome Project, formerly Welcome2Sydney Project, is a community engagement program developed by Settlement Services International (SSI), a community-based not for profit organisation. Initially supported by the City of Sydney, the pilot projects' success has seen the program expand across Metropolitan Sydney and to regional locations in NSW.

The Welcome Project connects newcomers with everyday Australians, aiming to foster a sense of belonging and inclusion for newly arrived people. Newcomers have the opportunity to create friendships, build social connections and bridge the cultural divide as they settle into their new home.

The Welcome Project not only helps newcomers, it is an opportunity for longer-term residents to contribute to their community by volunteering.

Volunteers are recruited, vetted and trained as guides and mentors, and then linked to SSI clients or migrant resource centres. The project is unique in that there is no eligibility requirement for newcomers and that activities are tailored according to the interests of the volunteer and newly arrived person. For example, someone who enjoys plants may visit the Royal Botanic Garden in Sydney, while others may go to the beach or attend events for the LGBTQ+ community.

SSI emphasise that programs such as The Welcome Project help to reduce fear in newcomers and build understanding within communities (i.e. new and longer-term residents). They provide opportunities for intercultural exchange and for migrants to learn about local knowledge, including First Nations cultures.

The Welcome Project was awarded Highly Commended at Western Sydney's 2020 ZEST Awards and has featured in the UNHCR Integration Handbook.



Newcomers go on an excursion to Sydney Harbour (Source: Settlement Services International)

*www.ssi.org.au/services/community-engagement/welcome-project*

### Lessons for local government

Building connections between newcomers and Australians is essential for integration and the social and economic participation of newly arrived people.

The Welcome Project offers a framework that can be expanded and/or replicated by local governments across NSW. Councils can reach out to Settlement Services International and establish partnerships with their local migrant resource centre, as well as local residents, to introduce newcomers to sites of interest, local culture and services.

# CASE STUDY:

## Connecting new residents to information about local services



Discover Cumberland bus tour (Source: Cumberland City)

*www.cumberland.nsw.gov.au/news/local-residents-encouraged-discover-cumberland*
*www.iap2.org.au/awards/2019-core-values-awards/*

### Liverpool City Council's Discovery Tour program

Liverpool City Council provides information and tours in and around Liverpool for newly arrived migrants and refugees, as well as established communities, ageing populations and school groups, as part of the operational delivery of its Multicultural Strategy.

Discovery Tours are tailored to the needs and interests of the group and cover various council facilities, including the Customer Service Centre, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, libraries, parks, children's services, Liverpool Museum and other places of interest. Tours also provide participants with information about Council services such as recycling, household clean-ups and facilities hire.

Evaluation of the Discovery Tour program by Liverpool City

Council found the program has helped to promote a sense of belonging, increase knowledge and understanding of Council and its services, and increase community confidence in accessing services and facilities.

### Discover Cumberland community education program

Discover Cumberland is a free civic-education program developed in response to ongoing consultation with local residents, schools and community organisations. The program aims to meet the needs of residents from culturally diverse backgrounds by raising awareness of council services and processes, and encouraging civic participation.

Groups of residents participate in experiential learning through interactive workshops and bus tours led by bilingual community educators.

The program is also pioneering a new way of engaging and communicating with newly arrived migrants and other residents with migrant backgrounds. By recruiting and training six bilingual Community Educators, Council is working to overcome communication barriers that prevent residents from knowing about or accessing Council services and has used community networks to target the program's promotion at newly arrived and migrant residents.

### Lessons for local government

Research shows that welcoming people and providing a pathway to local services has a significant effect on feelings of belonging.

Tours and community workshops are an effective way to provide information and develop relationships between councils and diverse community groups.

Programs such as this can also help to build the capacity of local volunteers, seniors and champions. Local government can leverage and build capacity within the community by upskilling community educators.

# CASE STUDY:

## Building cultural tolerance with young people in Burwood

In 2013, Burwood Council launched the Different People Different Voices Project, which aimed to build cultural tolerance using resources created by young people for young people. The project resulted in the creation of a board game that was developed in collaboration with young people at local schools.

The project targeted Years 7 to 9 and aimed to raise awareness of the problems associated with cultural bullying. Youth leaders from schools in Sydney's Western Suburbs were recruited to present the game to their classmates.

The game has three versions for different geographical regions and players gain ground by correctly answering questions on topics such as emerging communities and the impacts of racism and cultural isolation, as well as discussions about real-life bullying scenarios.

After a two-year phased implementation, 77% of students surveyed said it helped them understand the link between cultural intolerance and violent extremist behaviour.

The project was funded federally by a Building Community Resilience Grant and the game's initial roll-out was overseen by a steering committee with representatives from a variety of agencies, including NSW Police and Multicultural NSW.

### Lessons for local government

Local schools are a great place to raise awareness of cultural tolerance amongst young people, and there may be a flow-on effect to the students' friends and families. This project was successful because it was created by young people for young people and it was grounded in the local context. Councils' Youth Development teams could develop and deliver similar localised projects across their LGAs to improve cultural tolerance amongst young people.
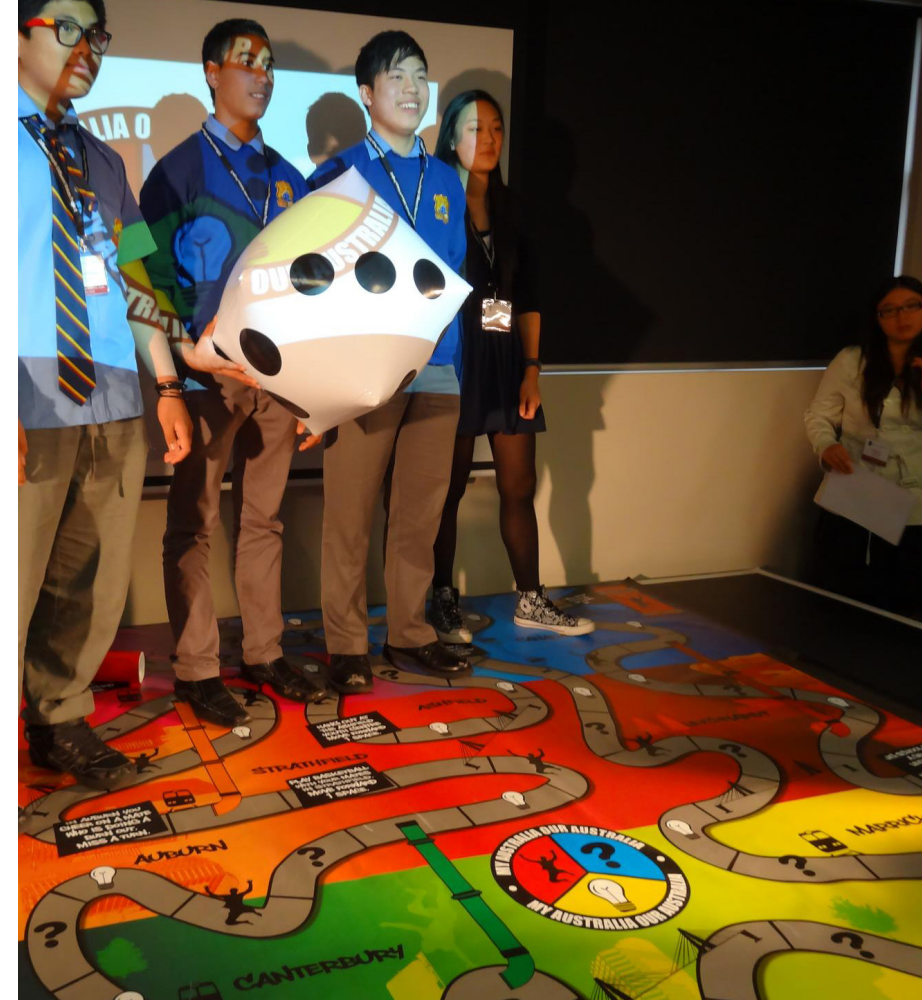
Burwood school students at the launch of the game (Source: Cred Consulting)

*www.thepointmagazine.com.au/post.php?s=2014-12-05-cultural-bullying-in-the-playground-not-our-game*

# CASE STUDY:

## Mentoring young people through Midnight Basketball

Midnight Basketball is a late-night social basketball tournament run on Fridays and Saturdays for young people aged 12 to 18. Held at local basketball stadiums, the program runs for eight weeks each year.

Young people receive a nutritious dinner and participate in mentoring and skill-building sessions as part of the program. They are also given a free bus ride home at the end of the night.

Midnight Basketball is a community-driven social inclusion program. It is dependent on volunteers and other community stakeholders, including councils, youth services, schools and local businesses, which offer their expertise and mentoring skills.

The program is run in a number of localities across NSW, including Liverpool, Bankstown, Griffith and Taree, and provides a structured and supportive environment where young people can socialise, have fun and build confidence.

Importantly, Midnight Basketball is a late-night social activity free from alcohol.

A study by UNSW's National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre found that Midnight Basketball led to a significant reduction in alcohol-related harm, as well as an improvement in the perception of community wellbeing and safety, in a remote Aboriginal community in Griffith.

### Lessons for local government

Council facilities, such as sports halls and community centres, are often underutilised outside of regular work hours. Local government can establish partnerships with service providers, such as Midnight Basketball Australia, to activate programs for young people in underutilised community facilities and spaces.



Midnight Basketball in Liverpool (Source: Midnight Basketball Australia)

*www.midnightbasketball.org.au/*
*https://ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au/news/midnight-basketball-tackle-drug-and-alcohol-problems-rural-indigenous-communities*

# CASE STUDY:

## Behind This Smile community art project in Hobsons Bay

The Behind This Smile community art project was developed as part of the "Racism. It Stops with Me" campaign. It aimed to challenge cultural stereotypes and promote the value of cultural diversity in Hobsons Bay.

The project involved local residents from culturally diverse backgrounds, who shared their stories and had their portraits taken. It endeavoured to start a positive conversation about the impact of racism on individuals and resulted in artworks that reflect the diverse cultural histories of the Hobsons Bay area.

The stories and portraits are displayed at five Hobsons Bay City Council facilities, including libraries and community hubs, and on Council flags. There is also an official project website where people can read in-depth stories about each individual.

In addition to this project, Hobsons Bay Libraries partnered with Council's Community Development team to publish the book *Journeys to Australia: From One Home to Another.* The book is a collection of stories from residents of Hobsons Bay, who arrived in Australia between 1950 and 2012, and it describes their experiences of migrating and adapting to a new country and culture.

The book can be downloaded for free from Council's website or purchased from Hobsons Bay library branches.



Behind This Smile community art project (Source: Wendy Murray)
*www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/Community/Community-services/Multicultural/Behind-this-Smile*

### Lessons for local government

This is an example of how community-based art practices and ethical storytelling can instil a sense of belonging in people from diverse backgrounds and encourage conversations about the importance of community harmony.

By harnessing the stories of local residents, and with relatively low-cost interventions in the public domain (such as council flags or decals at libraries and community hubs), local government can make positive diversity more visible in the community.

# CASE STUDY:

## Supporting First Nations through early childhood education centres from Penrith to Forbes



Display at Explore & Develop Penrith South (Source: Explore & Develop Penrith South)

*www.narragunnawali.org.au/*

### Forbes Preschool

One of the key focus areas for Forbes Preschool in the past decade has been to develop respectful and collaborative relationships with local community, local council, and the local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG).

Located in Central West NSW, Forbes Preschool organises a pop-up preschool for First Nations families and carers who do not engage regularly with children's services. Taking preschool learning experiences out to community rather than relying on community members to come into the preschool has been key to connecting with and supporting First Nations families.

At Forces Preschool, all staff receive extensive cultural awareness training from local organisations and community members. By employing First Nations staff members, reaching out to the community and creating a welcoming and "everybody belongs" culture, Forbes Preschool have increased attendance of First Nations children.

### Explore and Develop Penrith South

In 2016, Explore and Develop Penrith South developed a Reconciliation Action Plan as an impetus to improve the knowledge of their educators and immerse their children in First Nations culture.

The early childhood education centre developed a working group and partnered with Muru Mittigar - a local Aboriginal community centre - and local knowledge holders to run workshops and build cultural understanding for both the educators and children.

The early childhood education centre employs First Nations educators and gives an Acknowledgement of Country each day.

Since embedding learning about First Nations into the curriculum, educators have seen a change in attitude from families, with many parents now wanting to become involved in activities and local initiatives.

### Lessons for local government

Many councils are involved in enabling the provision of early childhood education and care, including through land use planning and leasing of council premises. Many councils are direct providers of long day care, playgroups, targeted early intervention programs, vacation care and outside-of-school-hours care.

Local governments can build the cultural competence of educators, employ First Nations educators and partner with local knowledge holders and First Nations community centres to embed First Nations learning and create inclusive and welcoming early childhood education centres.

# CASE STUDY:

## Volunteer-run classes and social activities at the MOSAIC Multicultural Centre in Chatswood

Willoughby City Council's MOSAIC Multicultural Centre has been in operation for over 25 years. It offers a wide range of activities and classes targeted at local residents and culturally and linguistically diverse community groups in Sydney's Lower North Shore.

Weekly activities include English and community language classes, excursions, technology classes for seniors and leisure activities, such as tai chi, Japanese folk dancing and calligraphy classes. Program brochures are available in a number of community languages, including simplified Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Italian.

MOSAIC also runs school holidays programs and special events including an end of year celebration and the annual Emerge Arts and Cultural Festival.

This community facility aims to bring residents together, provide support and promote the sharing of different cultures and interests. MOSAIC also plays a pivotal role in distributing essential information to residents in community languages.

More than 100 volunteers help to run the programs and activities at the MOSAIC Multicultural Centre. In 2021, Ms Tang was awarded Senior Volunteer of the Year in the NSW Volunteer of the Year Award. The 92 year old resident has been volunteering with MOSAIC for 27 years and continues to run three classes per week. This is a testament to the positive community connection that MOSAIC brings to the community.



Volunteer meeting takes place at Willoughby City Council's MOSAIC Multicultural Centre (Source: Willoughby City Council)

*www.willoughby.nsw.gov.au/Council/Venues/MOSAIC-Multicultural-Centre*

### Lessons for local government

This is a best practice example of how community hubs, or multicultural centres, can provide low cost programs and activities to local residents and bring people together. They are places where people from many different walks of life can meet, work, share and learn in a safe and supportive environment.

Community centres, such as the MOSAIC Multicultural Centre, also provide a platform for community members to volunteer and contribute to their local community.

Local governments can manage public spaces for community members to meet and organise social activities, helping to build social capital in their local community.

Services and programs can be tailored to the local demographic, and festivals and activities can be organised to promote cross-cultural learning and appreciation of diverse cultures.

# CASE STUDY:

## Celebrating Ramadan from dawn to dusk in Lakemba

During Ramadan each year, food vendors and traditional clothing stalls turn Lakemba's Haldon Street into a vibrant market - Ramadan Nights Lakemba - every evening from dusk to dawn.

The month of Ramadan is marked by people of the Muslim faith fasting throughout the daylight hours. At the end of the day, they gather for Iftar, the evening meal to break their fast.

Ramadan Nights Lakemba began when local resident, Yassr Elyatim, set up a small barbeque stand on Haldon Street during Ramadan more than 10 years ago. Dozens of market stalls followed suit, and as the market began to grow, City of Canterbury-Bankstown Council stepped in to make the event safer by closing roads on the weekends, providing rubbish collection and traffic control.

In 2017, Council took over management of the night market, becoming the city's largest annual multicultural event and street food festival.

The night market attracts up to 30,000 people each night and provides an opportunity for residents and visitors alike to experience traditional cuisines from countries such as Syria, Lebanon, India and Burma.

With almost 60 per cent of Lakemba's residents identifying as Muslim, this event is a reflection Canterbury-Bankstown's demographic. While the night market remains a place for the Muslim community to break their fast, the event is also celebrated as a way for people to come together and promote harmony. Deputy Mayor, Bilal El-Hayek, states:

"It unites people from all religious beliefs and from across, not only [Sydney], but from interstate and overseas. We see families flying in to stay with their relatives, just to join in the month-long celebrations."

More than 30,000 people visit Ramadan Nights Lakemba each night (Source: City of Canterbury Bankstown)

*www.cbcity.nsw.gov.au/events/ramadan-nights-lakemba*

Attendees are recommended to arrive by public transport. In addition, Council organise a free shuttle bus to transport people in surrounding suburbs, running from 6.30pm to 2am each night.

The month-long event is also of great benefit to local businesses, which experience a boom in trade from increased visitation and foot traffic to the area.

### Lessons for local government

Major events and food festivals can offer a cultural experience and promote understanding and celebration of diverse cultures and faiths.

Ramadan Nights Lakemba is a best practice example of local government supporting and building upon a community-led initiative. Councils can support and expand on local initiatives, ensuring events are reflective of their communities and foster inclusion and connection.

# Leadership, strategy and planning

City of Sydney's Local Strategic Planning Statement

Youth shaping decisions for youth on NSW's Central Coast

Waverley's Cultural Diversity Strategy

Building inclusion with a Diversity Champion network in Stirling

Goulburn Mulwaree's Social Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan

Local Government Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum

Yarra City Council's Social Justice Charter

Building culturally inclusive sporting clubs and programs in Greater Bendigo
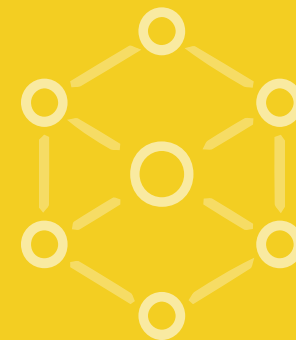
## CASE STUDY:

## City of Sydney's Local Strategic Planning Statement

City Plan 2036 is the City of Sydney's Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS). It sets out a 20-year land-use vision, balancing the need for housing and economic activity with protecting and enhancing local character, heritage and public spaces, while also supporting social wellbeing and social cohesion in a growing and increasingly dense and diverse community.

The LSPS prioritises supporting community wellbeing through public and communal (within residential development) social infrastructure. This means allowing for quality public open spaces and onsite communal spaces that are close to where people live and provide opportunities for social connection.

Two LSPS priorities that specifically support social cohesion outcomes include:

**1. Supporting community wellbeing with social infrastructure**

This priority considers the central role open space and social infrastructure play in health, wellbeing and liveability. Actions relating to social cohesion include:

- All residents and workers are to be within 400m of quality, functional open space
- Plan to increase public open space provision to meet or exceed 15% of the City's total land area
- Minor urban renewal areas and individual sites are to provide between 9 and 15% of the land as public open space in a consolidated and accessible location, with high-density projects delivering 15%, and
- At least 15% of the site area of NSW Government urban renewal projects and major urban renewal projects are to be delivered as public open space in a consolidated and accessible location.


Residents enjoying green space in Green Square (Source: City of Sydney)

**2. A creative and socially connected city**

The City's approach to the social and cultural life of its communities is guided by a Social Sustainability Policy and Action Plan and a Cultural Policy and Action Plan. An action that supports creative and connected communities includes:

- Encourage the inclusion of soundproof music practice rooms and communal rooms for entertainment and sharing tools, domestic equipment and children's toys in high density housing developments and plan for the inclusion of such spaces in NSW Government projects and major urban renewal precincts.

**Lessons for local government**

Local government can directly influence social cohesion outcomes through overarching community and land-use plans. Controls can be included in the LSPS that encourage social wellbeing, including the provision of adequate social infrastructure and communal spaces in private developments.

# CASE STUDY:
## Youth shaping decisions for youth on NSW's Central Coast

### Y4Y Action Team

Central Coast Council has established the Youth For Youth (Y4Y) Action Team, a group of 12 young people who champion youth-led initiatives across the LGA. Y4Y aims to create a direct link between Council and young people, providing a youth perspective on Council's policies, planning and programs. The program is open to people aged 14 to 24 and includes a three-day leadership camp where participants develop advocacy skills and knowledge of social issues.

Y4Y developed and delivers an annual youth forum, organises youth events throughout the year, initiated Council's Sustainability Starts With You campaign and played a key role in the development of Council's first youth strategy.

### Youth strategy

There are more than 50,000 young people aged 12 to 24 living in the Central Coast region, which represents around 14.9% of the total population.

Council collaborated with Y4Y and consulted more than 1,600 young people to develop its first youth strategy, which provides strategic direction for the delivery of youth services, programs, activities and events.

A key priority of Council was to ensure that the concerns and visions of young people were included in the strategy; this entailed a comprehensive engagement process, including an online survey, intercept surveys, school workshops and consultation with youth services.

The strategy is designed to be accessible and appeal to young people, and includes a pastel colour palette, infographics, images and accessible language.

Cover of Central Coast Council's *Youth Strategy 2019-2024* (Source: Central Coast Council)

*www.centralcoast.nsw.gov.au/residents/support-programs/young-people*
*www.facebook.com/Y4YCC/*

### Lessons for local government

Young people are the focus of many social inclusion and wellbeing programs, however there are limited opportunities for them to engage in decision-making processes.

The Central Coast's Y4Y Action Team and youth strategy provides a best practice example of how local government can include the perspectives of young people in council strategies and planning processes, and also work with young people to deliver actions.

Training and mentoring workshops run by councils can also help to develop young people's understanding of local government and decision-making processes.

# CASE STUDY:

## Waverley's Cultural Diversity Strategy

Waverley is one of the most highly visited LGAs in Australia, welcoming visitors from many different cultural backgrounds. Almost 40% of Waverley residents were born overseas and 21% speak a language other than English at home.

The Waverley Cultural Diversity Strategy 2021-2031 outlines Waverley Council's commitment to building an inclusive community for people of all cultural backgrounds.

The Strategy sets out a vision and road map for Council, partners and citizens to work together to build and maintain a welcoming and cohesive community. Importantly, this Strategy recognises that recent global trends and movements have implications for the Waverley community, including rising polarisation and intolerance.

Waverley's Cultural Diversity Strategy was developed in collaboration with the community and expert stakeholders, including Council's Multicultural Advisory Committee. In total, more than 170 people contributed their feedback.

The Strategy considers residents and visitors, and includes five focus areas, as follows:

1. Leadership and planning
2. Connected and welcoming
3. No place for racism
4. Inclusion and equity, and
5. Unlocking opportunities.

An internal project control group was established to develop the Strategy and champion it across all Council business units.



**WAVERLEY CULTURAL DIVERSITY STRATEGY 2021-2031**

Cover of Waverley Council's *Cultural Diversity Strategy 2021-2031* (Source: Waverley Council)

*www.waverley.nsw.gov.au/community/cultural_diversity*

### Lessons for local government

There is an increasing focus on the role of local government in planning for culturally diverse communities. The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted local government's duty of care and responsibility to support people of all ages, abilities and cultural backgrounds.

Many councils already carry out initiatives for culturally diverse communities, such as convening a Multicultural Advisory Committee, employing a Community Development Officer, translating key information and maintaining a community language collection at their libraries.

The development of a cultural diversity strategy provides a road map for local governments, guiding future decision-making and planning for inclusive and cohesive communities.

# CASE STUDY:

## Building inclusion with a Diversity Champion network in Stirling

A challenge in executing cultural diversity policies for local governments across Australia is that the responsibility often lies with one Community Development team that has limited resourcing and capacity to deliver a broad suite of strategies.

To address this issue, City of Stirling recently adopted a council-wide Diversity Champion initiative, whereby staff from across the whole organisation are involved in implementing diversity and inclusion strategies. This is in stark contrast to the former approach, where cultural competency training was optional and arranged for staff on an "as required" basis.

City of Stirling Diversity Champions receive specialist training from Community Development staff, which covers awareness raising, skills development and information sharing across council teams.

Once embedded in each business unit, Diversity Champions help to:

- Coordinate formal and informal opportunities for staff to build cultural awareness and celebrate diversity
- Support colleagues to troubleshoot challenges that may arise when working in cross-cultural contexts
- Deliver short, interactive cross-cultural learning experiences to teams
- Develop and maintain an online cultural diversity knowledge portal
- Identify which staff need to know how to use interpreter services
- Encourage and support staff to use interpreter services, and
- Find ways to obtain feedback from culturally diverse communities to enhance the way services are delivered.

This initiative won the 2019 Australian Migration and Settlement Award for Excellence in Local Government.



Diversity Champions at the City of Stirling (Source: City of Stirling)
www.welcomingcities.org.au/engaging-diverse-communities-is-everyones-job/
www.kaleidoscopeinitiative.com.au/cityofstirling/

### Lessons for local government

Diversity Champion initiatives have been successful in sectors such as banking and higher education, helping organisations to employ inclusive practices and to harness and leverage the talents and ideas of a diverse workforce. Local governments can explore a similar initiative with a focus on social cohesion and community resilience.

# CASE STUDY:
## Goulburn Mulwaree's Social Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan

Goulburn Mulwaree Council developed its first social plan in 2019 to guide community programs and services, as well as the development of community-focused places and spaces. The Goulburn Mulwaree Social Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan sets out a 10-year road map and was informed by extensive community engagement, demographic analysis and best practice research.

The Strategy identifies key social needs and includes actions that respond to the regional context of Goulburn Mulwaree.

Goulburn Mulwaree Council states:

"By placing peoples' wellbeing at the heart of our planning and decision-making, we can work to support and create a community that is informed, confident and able to 'participate' in civic life and has a strong sense of hope for future generations."

Objectives in the Strategy that specifically support social cohesion outcomes include:

**1. Create strong bonds between community members and community groups**

- We acknowledge and embed local Aboriginal cultures and stories within our community, and
- We increase social connectedness across the wider community.

**2. Increase the skills and capacity of our community**

- We will build mutual respect by sharing skills and knowledge across our generations, and
- We will engage more with our community to inform better decision- making and build strong and trusted relationships with the community.

**3. Improve health and wellbeing outcomes for all in our community**

- We have a supportive environment around our mental health, and
- Our community is resilient to climate impacts.



Colour Me Fun Run in Goulburn (Source: Danny Scott Photography)
www.goulburn.nsw.gov.au/Development/Plans-Strategies

### Lessons for local government
Local government can encourage social cohesion outcomes through a social plan. Actions can be included in the social plan that encourage community connectedness, resilience and wellbeing, including through the delivery of programs that foster skills and knowledge sharing.

A social plan can also provide a resource for local government to advocate on issues that may be out of a council's delivery scope.

# CASE STUDY:
## Local Government Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum

The Local Government Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum was initiated by the City of Greater Dandenong Council in 2018 in response to proposed Federal Government cuts to the Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) program.

Funding changes to SRSS would cut income and case management support for more than 8,000 people seeking asylum and, in turn, increase demand for materials and resources at the local government level.

Following an SRSS Mayoral Roundtable held to discuss joint advocacy against the SRSS changes, a group of Victorian councils formed the Local Government Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum.

The group now coordinates state-wide advocacy on a range of issues relating to people seeking asylum. For example, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the Taskforce proposed sending an open letter to Prime Minister Scott Morrison asking that asylum seekers receive access to JobKeeper, JobSeeker and Medicare, and asked councils across Australia to confirm their support for the letter.

The Taskforce has grown to include Executive Members from ten councils who meet monthly and act as a steering group. In addition, 29 councils across Victoria, NSW and Tasmania are involved as General Members or Supporters and take an active role in Taskforce activities and resourcing.

### Back Your Neighbour campaign

The Taskforce's key advocacy mechanism is the Back Your Neighbour campaign, which sees 34 councils and 27



Members of the Local Government Mayoral Taskforce (Source: City of Greater Dandenong Council)

*www.greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au/greater-dandenong-council-advocacy-and-practical-response-changes-federal-status-resolution*
*www.backyourneighbour.com.au/*

organisations working together and advocating for additional funding to ensure local support services and councils can provide access to people who are waiting for their refugee status to be finalised.

This campaign symbolises a unified approach, with councils across the east coast of Australia, along with community ambassadors, advocating to have financial and support services reinstated for refugees and asylum seekers.

### Lessons for local government
Strengthening social cohesion requires the collaboration of a range of stakeholders, including government. Local government can take the lead in establishing specialised social cohesion committees, such as a taskforce or interagency, to collaborate and advocate on issues that relate and may impact on social cohesion.

# CASE STUDY:
## Yarra City Council's Social Justice Charter

In 2020, Yarra City Council launched its Social Justice Charter. It acts as an umbrella document for all future plans, policies and frameworks at Yarra City Council, and provides a lens which will guide the development of policies, processes and programs.

The Charter aims to protect the whole community's human rights, especially people most at risk of discrimination - including First Nations peoples, LGBTQIA+ people, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people with disability and people experiencing homelessness - and ensures that the human rights-based approach employed by Yarra City Council is formalised.

In the development of the Social Justice Charter, Council undertook consultations with community, stakeholders and Council staff. Community members were asked what social justice means to them and how these principles should be incorporated to guide policy making.

The four social justice principles that emerged from community consultation include:

- Access – making sure services, facilities and programs are accessible and can be used by everyone
- Equity – ensuring everyone is treated equally and has access to the same resources
- Rights – protecting the community's human rights
- Participation – making sure everyone's voice is heard.

Other councils with a Social Justice Charter include Noosa Council, Brimbank City Council and Hume City Council.



*Aboriginal Lives Matter* mural by Wurundjeri artist Ky-ya Nicholson-Ward installed in Peel Street Park, Collingwood. (Source: Yarra City Council)

*www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/about-us/council-information/social-justice-charter*

### Lessons for local government
Many councils employ social justice principles and advocate for community wellbeing. Councils can develop a Social Justice Charter to formalise the commitment and embed social justice principles into local government policies, strategies, plans, programs and services.

## CASE STUDY:
### Building culturally inclusive sporting clubs and programs in Greater Bendigo

The City of Greater Bendigo is the first local government in Australia to be accredited as a Welcoming City by the Welcoming Cities Network, a national network of councils who are committed to an Australia where everyone can belong and participate.

Through a thorough process of community consultation, the City developed its first Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Plan in 2016. The Plan endeavours to lay strong foundations so all residents, regardless of cultural background, have equal opportunities to participate in the community free from discrimination and fulfil their cultural and religious human rights.

Part of this response includes strategic partnerships with local organisations, advocating for inclusion amongst local businesses and community groups, and facilitating the growth and flourishing of diverse communities in Greater Bendigo.

Some initiatives that have been undertaken in the past few years include establishment of the Intercultural Ambassadors program, Community Harmony project and Building Culturally Inclusive Sporting Clubs program.

A range of training has occurred throughout the community and a number of important educational videos and information has been produced.

Council has also prepared a number of resources for local community groups, service providers and businesses, including:

- Greater Bendigo Welcome Resource (for new residents)
- Community Connection booklet
- Cultural diversity and volunteering in Greater Bendigo
- Building Culturally Inclusive Sporting Clubs and Programs in Greater Bendigo

### Lessons for local government

Bendigo has invested significant resources into fostering and promoting cultural diversity over the past years. Their approach illustrates the role that councils can play in developing community capacity and awareness through various resources, partnerships and campaigns.



The cover of City of Greater Bendigo's Welcome to Greater Bendigo resource for new residents.
(Source: City of Greater Bendigo)

*www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/Services/Community-and-Care/Cultural-diversity*

# Public spaces

**Engaging and reflecting diverse communities in Copenhagen**

**#RacismNotWelcome street signs in the Inner West**

**Designing with Country in Perth and Sydney**

**Community-led precinct placemaking in Sydney's Inner West**

**Play streets from Amsterdam to Sydney**

**Building strong communities through street festivals in Barcelona**

**Afghan Bazaar Cultural Precinct in Dandenong**

**Small-scale activations from Surry Hills to Bankstown**

## CASE STUDY:

## Engaging and reflecting diverse communities in Copenhagen

Superkilen Park is a large urban park in Copenhagen. The design process was one of "extreme participation" and engagement with local residents, who make up the most culturally diverse community in Denmark.

People living in the vicinity were involved in the process of choosing objects to be placed in three different areas of the park. Some community members were selected to travel to a country of their choice to follow a specific story or memory, which was then represented within the park. Items from abroad included a boxing ring from Thailand, a sound system from Jamaica and Moroccan fountains. More than 50 nationalities are represented in the multipurpose and intergenerational public space.

Along with the symbols scattered throughout the park, there are features designed to facilitate social interaction, including coal BBQs for large family gatherings, outdoor gym equipment, skate-friendly seating and places for play for children and adults

alike. This has created an activated park that provides a place for meaningful intercultural dialogue.

The process has resulted in a fantastic urban open space that celebrates the multicultural character of the neighbourhood and welcomes people at all times of the day and year.

### Lessons for local government

There are opportunities to engage community members from culturally diverse backgrounds in the design of public spaces and to provide features that support people to meet and interact, such as large BBQ facilities suitable for families, comfortable seating areas and multicultural public art and multilingual signage.

Local government can co-design public spaces in partnership with the community to ensure diverse needs are considered.





Superkilen Park, Copenhagen (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

## CASE STUDY:

## #RacismNotWelcome street signs in the Inner West

In 2020, Inner West Council endorsed a motion to roll out the Inner West Multicultural Network's (IWMN) Racism Not Welcome initiative, which involved the installation of new street signs in areas with high pedestrian traffic.

The anti-racism campaign is a response to a rise in racist attacks on Inner West community members, with further evidence published by the Asian Australian Alliance, University of Technology Sydney and UNSW highlighting an increase in racist attacks during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The aim of the initiative is to call out racism and start a conversation while helping to ensure the Inner West is a place where people feel a sense of belonging and inclusion.

Council endorsed the following motion, which included the following:

• Note both the alarming rise in local incidents of racism and those which occur outside of Australia

• Endorses the Racism Not Welcome campaign developed by the IWMN, of which Inner West Council is a member

• Supports the instalment of up to 40 #RacismNotWelcome street signs in key locations around the Inner West as part of this campaign, and

• Works with the IMWN to install the #RacismNotWelcome street signs, acknowledging the Network's allocated $9,000 budget.

The first sign was erected at Addison Road Community Centre in Marrickville, a busy community hub. Other notable street sign locations include the Marrickville Metro Shopping Centre, Camperdown Memorial Rest Park and Dawn Fraser Baths.

Inner West Council also hosts an annual Anti-Racism Film Festival with entries from residents, community groups and schools.



Installation of the #RacismNotWelcome street sign at Addison Road Community Centre (Source: Pauline Lockie)
*www.racismnotwelcome.com/*

**Lessons for local government**

This project is a good example of how small interventions in the public domain can help to increase the sense of belonging and inclusion within a community. This case study is also an example of local government backing a community-led initiative. Councils can support anti-racism campaigns driven by local communities and organisations.

## CASE STUDY:
## Designing with Country in Perth and Sydney

### Connecting with Country, Government Architect NSW

The Government Architect NSW's Connecting with Country Draft Framework provides directions for developing connections with Country that can inform the planning, design and delivery of built environment projects.

It is accompanied by a *Designing with Country* discussion paper that encourages stakeholders to respond to First Nations' cultural connections to Country when designing and planning new projects. Importantly, the discussion paper notes that designing with Country is not possible without engaging and, most crucially, being guided by First Nations communities and recognised knowledge holders.

### Yagan Square, Perth

Yagan Square is a public entertainment precinct named after a Whadjuk Noongar leader. It was created in close collaboration with the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea

Council and the Whadjuk Working Party to ensure the design reflects and celebrates Whadjuk Noongar culture. The precinct includes public art that shares the stories of local First Nations peoples and features flora from the region.

### Midjuburi Meeting Rooms, Inner West Sydney

The Midjuburi Meeting Rooms (formerly Steel Park Community Rooms) are located in a small two-storey building at the entrance to the PCYC in Marrickville. The building was completed in November 2019 and was designed for, and in collaboration with, the local First Nations community.

There are two rooms available for hire, each 25m$^2$. Hire of the facility is free for First Nations peoples. Murals on the outside of the building were completed by an Aboriginal artist, which has increased the visibility of First Nations cultures in the area and contributed to a sense of place. An outside seating area allows for casual gathering and socialising.



Midjuburi Meeting Room, Steel Park, Inner West Sydney (Source: Cred Consulting)

*www.governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au/projects/designing-with-country*
*www.landezine-award.com/yagan-square/*

### Lessons for local government

Local governments can consider the best practice principles in *Designing with Country* to ensure designs and upgrades to public spaces are inclusive and embrace First Nations cultures.

**CASE STUDY:**

## Community-led precinct placemaking in Sydney's Inner West

Through the creation of a Little Greece precinct in Marrickville and Dulwich Hill, Inner West Council has formally recognised and celebrated the contribution of the Greek community to the area.

Inner West Mayor Darcy Byrne announced the decision on Twitter in April 2020, stating: "this is an act of symbolic recognition and respect for the incredible contributions that Greek migrants have made to the Inner West". He went on to add that, as a result of this contribution, the Inner West is the "birthplace of Australian multiculturalism".

Greek businesses and experiences in the area were particularly popular in the 1960s, with the Hellenic Art Theatre in Marrickville regarded by many as a cornerstone of the Greek Australian community. Identification of key landmarks and cultural experiences informed the general location of the precinct, which was warmly welcomed by the Greek Australian public.

Council's plan for the precinct was followed by a community engagement opportunity in which identified stakeholders were invited to share their thoughts on the name and proposed location of the precinct. Those encouraged to participate included individuals of Greek heritage, local residents and others with a connection to the area.

Questions asked at the engagement included:

- What is an appropriate name for the precinct?
- What are key sites of Greek heritage that will create our boundary for the precinct?
- How can we identify and showcase the precinct?

Council made available an interactive map to facilitate responses to the second question.

Greek business owners in Dulwich Hill (Source: Inner West Council)

*/www.sbs.com.au/news/an-area-of-sydney-is-being-renamed-little-athens-in-honour-of-greek-australians*

### Lessons for local government

In many LGAs there is a strong community desire for more cultural heritage interpretation, particularly interpretation that reflects First Nations experiences and waves of migration to the area. This case study is a great example of precinct-based planning that is informed by extensive and place-based community engagement.

# CASE STUDY:
## Play streets from Amsterdam to Sydney

### Potgieterstraat in Amsterdam

This project, undertaken by Carve.nl, removed traffic and parking from a busy street in inner Amsterdam to turn the street into a "positive urban beacon". This involved the creation of an interactive playground, comfortable seating and a kiosk. The space has become a hub for the community, encouraging neighbourhood interaction in a highly urbanised area.

The playground features a mounded landscape with play objects integrated and materialised in black rubber. The play objects range from trampolines to water sprayers. The rubber can also be used as a drawing surface and invites children to run, jump and fall, thanks to its soft feel and noise-reducing qualities.

### Play street programs in Australia

Over the past three years, play street programs have been trialled by a number of councils in NSW and Victoria, including Sydney's Inner West Council and North Sydney Council.

Participating streets were temporarily closed to through traffic so neighbours could come together and play outside.

Port Phillip City Council has trialled a play streets program by temporarily closing streets in two suburbs. Activities were organised by Council to encourage families to use the transformed public space, including a sausage sizzle, live music and games.



Play street on Potgieterstraat, Amsterdam (Source: Carve.nl)

*www.playstreetsaustralia.com/*

### Lessons for local government

Play streets create new opportunities for socialising and can be particularly beneficial for children living in apartments or with little space to play.

Play streets are typically organised and stewarded by residents, however local government can support these initiatives by closing streets to through traffic and consulting with the community.

For temporary play street activations, councils can develop a play street policy, allowing residents to apply for regular play street sessions.

# CASE STUDY:

## Building strong communities through street festivals in Barcelona

The neighbourhood of Gràcia hosts the Festa Major de Gràcia over one week each year. Streets and squares are decorated by residents, transforming the neighbourhood into a vibrant streetscape.

The festival is coordinated by the Fundació Festa Major de Gràcia, which is made up of residents' associations. Each association is responsible for decorating a street or square and organising cultural activities such as dancing, concerts, workshops or communal meals.

Barcelona City Council (Ajuntament de Barcelona) supports the festival by providing spaces year-round for neighbourhood groups to plan, rehearse performances and store festival materials. These spaces range from garages to cultural centres. Council also closes the streets to cars and provides additional street cleaning throughout the festival period.

Gràcia's Festa Major is an example of the community coming together to celebrate the neighbourhood

and popular culture, and in addition, provides an opportunity for residents to engage in civic coordination. For example, local residents, shops and bars gather waste materials in the months leading up to the festival, which are then transformed into street decorations.

The Festa Major de Gràcia is now one of the most popular events in Barcelona and similar models of festival organising have been adopted by neighbourhoods across the city.

### Lessons for local government

Festivals and community events can help to foster a local identity and sense of belonging. They can also provide opportunities for intergenerational collaboration and the sharing of culture.

Local governments can provide opportunities and support for residents' associations and community groups to coordinate their own festivals and events.



Decorated streets in Gràcia (Source: Ajuntament de Barcelona)
*https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/gracia/ca*
*www.festamajordegracia.cat/*

# CASE STUDY:

## Afghan Bazaar Cultural Precinct in Dandenong

The City of Greater Dandenong and Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship have invested significantly in enhancements to the Afghan Bazaar Cultural Precinct on Thomas Street. It is hoped the Precinct will recast the street as a venue for public life, promoting community identity, unity and pride.

The Precinct has been designed to create an emblematic urban streetscape that is integrated in and responsive to the diverse cultures of the local and broader Afghan community. It has a distinct visual character that enlivens the street, encouraging community gathering.

Comprehensive community consultation underpinned the planning and design. The consultation highlighted the diversity within Dandenong's Afghan population and focused on the sharing of ideas and aspirations to develop a design framework with community-endorsed themes that would support social unity. Key priorities that emerged from the consultation included artistic expression, the colour blue, a centrepiece and celebration of Afghan culture.

Cassandra Chilton, Senior Associate at Hassell architecture firm, says:

"The community consultation allowed us to understand the way people used the existing space and how it could better accommodate specific cultural requirements. For example, the custom seating we've designed reinterprets the traditional Arabic 'suffah', or dais, for the urban Australian context. This allows the community to socialise in familiar ways."

The Afghan Bazaar project recognises the role that cultural and artistic expression plays in defining the visual identity and liveability of a place. The Precinct celebrates the street as an important space, not just for movement and commercial exchange, but also for the social and cultural encounters that are so important to daily life.



Afghan Bazaar Cultural Precinct in Dandenong (Photo: Mark Wilson)

*www.archdaily.com/637568/afghan-bazaar-cultural-precinct-hassell*

### Lessons for local government

This best practice example highlights multiple positive social outcomes, including an improved and more comfortable street that encourages social interaction, as well as the impact of co-designing with and celebrating the local Afghan community.

Local government can take a co-design approach to public space planning and design. Improvements to streetscapes or plazas can reflect cultural diversity and local identity.

# CASE STUDY:

## Small-scale activations from Surry Hills to Bankstown

### Rainbow crossings in the City of Sydney

The City of Sydney has painted rainbow footpaths and crossings in a number of locations throughout the city that have close links with the LGBTIQA+ community. Among the most recent projects is a 90m rainbow footpath at Prince Alfred Park in Surry Hills.

The rainbow pathways represent the progress made towards marriage equality and the City's continuous effort to improve safety and a sense of belonging for the LGBTIQA+ community.

### Pause pods in Bankstown

Pause pods are bespoke masonry concrete blocks that come as blank canvases and are painted by local artists in collaboration with the community.

The City of Canterbury Bankstown introduced pause pods in five locations, including Bankstown Arts Centre, North Terrace, South Terrace and Chapel Street. Bankstown Arts

Centre worked closely with Sydney-based artists to facilitate "art jams" in which the pause pods were painted with members of the community.

Pause pods encourage community connection, sharing and engagement. The streamlined flow and movement of pedestrians through city streets and plazas means there are fewer opportunities for people to stop and interact. Pause pods provide a place to informally meet, socialise and gather. They are cost effective, programmable and durable, and can be relocated as streets shift and change.

### Lessons for local government

Rainbow pathways and pause pods are examples of space activations on a small scale. Both are cost-effective ways to reflect local character and provide opportunities for informal socialisation.

Representing local character can help to increase a sense of belonging and safety, both necessary elements in building social cohesion.



Top: Pause pods are enjoyed by community members in Bankstown (Source: Cred Consulting) Bottom: Rainbow pathway at Prince Alfred Park, Surry Hills (Source: City of Sydney)

*www.pausepods.com/*

# Partnership, collaboration and networks

Recruiting neighbourhood vaccination ambassadors in Toronto

Creating a "collaborative community" of services at Epping Community Services Hub

Employment support for new migrants through the Kaleidoscope Mentoring Program in Stirling

Council statements on community diversity and harmony

Establishing an interfaith network in Shepparton

Harnessing community translations in Cumberland

Partnering to provide food relief through the COVID-19 pandemic in Fairfield

Neighbourhood Care Network in the Bellingen Shire

A collaborative approach to mental health intervention from New England to the Northern Beaches

## CASE STUDY:

## Recruiting neighbourhood vaccination ambassadors in Toronto

To address lagging COVID-19 vaccination rates in neighbourhoods across Toronto in Canada, the City of Toronto initiated Vaccine Engagement teams.

A key part of the Vaccine Engagement teams' work has been to recruit 280 Resident Ambassadors; these are trusted leaders in communities throughout the city who have on-the-ground experience, relationships and networks. Ambassadors collaborate with community service providers to reach out to marginalised community members and provide information about vaccination options.

The Vaccine Ambassador program builds on a COVID-19 Targeted Equity Action Plan and Community Cluster Program, which aims to enhance the City's equity measures and support residents who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

Language barriers and a lack of trust in government were identified as major obstacles to vaccination uptake. The Vaccine Ambassador program aimed to reduce these by connecting newly arrived and vulnerable residents with Ambassadors who may have similar lived experience or speak their language.

Toronto Public Health states that Vaccine Engagement teams:

"have been an effective and customised approach to connecting with people in their own community, in their language, in a culturally relevant manner, to help remove barriers that are keeping residents from being vaccinated, including vaccine hesitancy."



A Community Ambassador in Scarborough, Toronto (Source: The Local / Jennifer Su)

https://thelocal.to/community-ambassadors-are-the-link-to-torontos-unvaccinated-populations/

### Lessons for local government

This is a best practice example of local government and health agencies working in partnership with residents to reduce language barriers, counter misinformation and build trust.

Local governments can work with community leaders to better reach vulnerable community members, including newly arrived migrants and people sleeping rough. By establishing relations in advance, local government can leverage its networks in emergency events and multi-scenario crises.

## CASE STUDY:
## Creating a "collaborative community" of services at Epping Community Services Hub

Great community facilities are more than just a space to get together and deliver services: they can be a catalyst for change, new connections and collaboration, offering a range of community benefits.

In 2016, the City of Whittlesea in Victoria opened Epping Community Services Hub in partnership with several social enterprise organisations. The Hub is home to many services for the local community, including disability support, multicultural services, employment help and emergency relief.

The Hub's core purpose is to improve service delivery to the Epping community by co-locating providers in a single facility and encouraging collaboration and innovation between the partner organisations. The facility currently houses 21 organisations, who deliver 50 programs to the local community.

It is located in a welcoming, accessible and family-friendly building close to public transport, and includes a computer hub and social enterprise cafe providing work experience opportunities for clients.

Key to the success of the project has been a common vision shared by the City and the Hub's lead tenant, the Brotherhood of St Laurence; in addition to co-locating services, both parties strive to create a space that catalyses collaboration.

The Hub applies a service model that recognises the following three communities:

- The "collaborative community": services and staff who work in the building
- The "engaged community": those who participate in programs run from the Hub, and
- The "connected community": all City of Whittlesea residents.



Chancez Cafe, a social enterprise cafe located in the Epping Community Services Hub (Source: Cred Consulting)
www.eppingcommunityserviceshub.org.au/

Where appropriate, tenant organisations jointly plan, develop and deliver projects and services that benefit both the partnership and the community.

"We actively pursue higher levels of connectedness and togetherness among our networks, also known as network cohesion."
- Epping Community Services Hub

### Lessons for local government
Local governments can support network cohesion and increase collaboration between service providers by co-locating community services.

A hub also enables community members to access a range of community services in one place. This is particularly beneficial for people who travel by public transport, bicycle or on foot.

# CASE STUDY:
## Employment support for new migrants through the Kaleidoscope Mentoring Program in Stirling

The City of Stirling's Kaleidoscope Initiative aims to harness the economic benefits of the City's diverse population. It helps newcomers to Australia secure employment in their field of expertise and supports employers to become part of the Initiative. KI was awarded the Multicultural Australia – Cohesive Communities Award at the 2019 National Awards for Local Government.

This project was developed in partnership with the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council and is funded by the Government of Western Australia's Office of Multicultural Interests through the Local Projects, Local Jobs program. It assists prospective employees and employers by offering information, resources and business support, along with networking and business connection opportunities.

In particular, the Kaleidoscope Mentoring Program helps skilled newcomers improve their employment potential by matching them with mentors from their industry or occupation.

Each KMP cycle runs for three months, during which the mentors and mentee work together for a minimum of 18 hours or 1.5 hours each week.

In addition to the mentoring program, KI runs a variety of workshops and networking events in partnership with community and professional organisations.

### Lessons for local government

Economic participation plays an important role in building socially cohesive communities. Increasing economic participation can also benefit local government by boosting business development and cultural diversity in both the workplace and the community.

Councils can explore opportunities and develop programs that connect job seekers with local employers.



Participants of the Kaleidoscope Mentoring Program
(Source: Kaleidoscope Initiative)

*www.kaleidoscopeinitiative.com.au/*

## CASE STUDY:
## Council statements on community diversity and harmony

### Declaration on Cultural and Religious Harmony in Liverpool

In the wake of the tragedy of the Christchurch massacre of Muslims in March 2019, Liverpool City Council, in conjunction with the Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre, brought together faith leaders, community leaders and community members to circulate and sign a Declaration on Cultural and Religious Harmony. The event was held on Harmony Day, Australia's recognition of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

### Uluru Statement from the Heart

Randwick City Council is one of several councils that have strongly supported a national referendum to formally recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Australian Constitution, as well as the key principles of the Uluru Statement from the Heart (the Statement calls for Indigenous constitutional recognition and the establishment of a Makarrata Commission to facilitate agreement-

making between government and First Nations agencies).

Council has resolved to write to the Prime Minister, the Federal Leader of the Opposition, the Premier of NSW, the NSW Opposition Leader, local Federal and State MPs, the President of Local Government NSW and the La Perouse Local Aboriginal Land Council to express its position.

### Walk for Respect in Waverley

Waverley Council continues to take a strong stand when it comes to all forms of discrimination and has previously issued statements condemning racism and anti-Semitism in the community, as well as incendiary motions in national politics.

In December 2018, Council resolved to fund Walk for Respect, an event held to recognise harmony and diversity in the community, to promote awareness of multiculturalism and reject racism. Waverley is also a Refugee Welcome Zone and a member of the Welcoming Cities network.



Waverley Council's Walk for Respect promotional poster (Source: Waverley Council)

### Lessons for local government

It is not uncommon for local government to take a public stand against racism and discrimination in the local community and broader society. This practice reinforces the values upheld by the council and sends an important message to the community, including those who may be victims of discriminatory behaviour or attitudes.

## CASE STUDY:
## Establishing an interfaith network in Shepparton

The Shepparton Interfaith Network evolved from inter-religious work undertaken by the Shepparton InterChurch Committee in 2010. Greater Shepparton City Council has identified the Network as a key agency to partner with to deliver the actions of Council's *Multicultural Strategy 2019-2022*.

Interfaith networks consist of various cultural and religious faiths. They aim to understand difference and promote and strengthen mutual respect, harmony, community participation and wellbeing.

The Shepparton Interfaith Network organises bimonthly interfaith meetings for members and partners with local organisations to improve interfaith dialogue and cross-cultural understanding. The Network has played a key role in supporting newly arrived migrants in the Goulburn Valley.

The Network also provides public education on culture and religion to improve people's knowledge and understanding of faith. It promotes and celebrates important cultural and religious dates, including Lunar New Year, Eid al-Fitr and Iftaar.

In addition, the Network provides community tours of places of worship and school education programs, and links people to community services in the Goulburn Valley.

### Lessons for local government

Local government can support interfaith networks to strengthen interfaith dialogue within the community. This support could include:

- Facilitating the development of interfaith networks through a partnership approach
- Providing practical support such as venues, transport, administration assistance and information dissemination
- Hosting and promoting interfaith network information on council websites, and
- Supporting an Interfaith Advisory Committee, gatherings, community events and festivals.



Committee members of the Shepparton Interfaith Network (Source: Shepparton Interfaith Network)

*www.sheppartoninterfaith.org.au/*
*www.greatershepparton.com.au/community/diversity/strategies-policies-and-campaigns#section-multicultural-strategy*

# CASE STUDY:
## Harnessing community translations in Cumberland

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the important role local government can play in partnering with community stakeholders to provide culturally appropriate and targeted information, particularly for residents with limited English proficiency.

A COVID-19 cluster in Berala, part of the Cumberland City Council area, saw Council act quickly and work with community leaders to establish multicultural communication strategies and language translations with community leaders. This was seen as critical to containing the spread of the virus in a suburb where English is a second language for more than 75% of residents.

According to ABC News, Cumberland City Council issued letters to more than 240,000 residents with NSW Health advice translated into 10 languages, including Mandarin, Cantonese, simplified Chinese, formal Arabic, Korean, Turkish, Farsi-Dari, Vietnamese, Tamil and Greek. These letters were also made available on Council's webpage, with links to other translated materials from NSW Health, including posters, graphics, videos and fact sheets. Council said it made a significant effort to provide correct translations, as Federal and Victorian governments were criticised in 2020 for translation errors in their coronavirus materials.

### Lessons for local government

This case study provides an excellent example of local government collaborating with community leaders from culturally diverse backgrounds and multicultural organisations to ensure the diverse needs of the community are understood and responded to in a time of crisis.

Councils can develop strong networks with community leaders and, when necessary, assist these leaders in passing on key information to their communities. Councils can also utilise these networks to crowdsource language translations and distribute materials.



Community leaders in Berala help to control a coronavirus outbreak (Source: Australian Afghan Hassanian Youth Association)

*www.abc.net.au/news/2021-01-06/inside-the-fight-to-contain-berala-coronavirus-outbreak/13034292*

# CASE STUDY:
## Partnering to provide food relief through the COVID-19 pandemic in Fairfield

In 2021, the Fairfield LGA was subject to a hard lockdown in response to the spread of COVID-19. While many facilities were closed and service providers faced increasing challenges, there was an increasing demand for community services including food relief and children's services.

In response, Fairfield City Council began making meals for community members facing hardship during the extended COVID-19 lockdown. The new initiative included staff from Council's early education and care services who prepared a range of meals including specific meals for cultural diets, vegetarian foods and pureed food for children, catering for residents who are isolated, disadvantaged, or have no support.

Council partnered with local not for profit and community organisations to distribute the meals, including the Parks CommunityNetwork, Community First Step, CORE Community Services and Woodville Alliance.

Fairfield City Council have also developed the Community Wellbeing Support Card, a resource that includes a low cost and free meal directory.

Other local governments commended for coordinating with local supermarkets and not for profit organisations to deliver food relief through the pandemic include Maitland City Council. City of Canterbury-Bankstown, Cumberland City Council, Northern Beaches Council and the City of Sydney.



The Parks Community Network prepare food packages to be distributed (Source: The Parks Community Network)

*https://thesector.com.au/2021/07/30/fairfield-city-council-ecec-services-pivot-to-support-community-with-cooking-help/*

### Lessons for local government

Councils can collaborate with local service providers, not for profit and community organisations to extend the reach of services to vulnerable and harder to reach community members. This approach requires a good understanding of the services that operate in the local government area, as well as strong connections to community members.

Councils can develop partnerships with supermarkets to divert food destined for landfill toward people in need of food relief.

This case study also exemplifies how community facilities, including early education and childcare centres, can be re-purposed to accommodate additional community services.

## CASE STUDY:
## Building community resilience through the Neighbourhood Care Network in the Bellingen Shire

The Neighbourhood Care Network (NCN) was established as a community driven crisis response to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. Inspired by COVID-19 Mutual Aid UK, a group of residents convened to deliver community aid and improve communications between neighbours in emergency situations.

With support from Bellingen Shire Council, NCN carried out a shire-wide letterbox drop, and within six weeks, 660 people had registered to the network. Fifty-four local groups were formed to develop a network of hyper-local community groups.

A key aim of NCN is to develop communications mechanisms and disseminate timely and reliable information when local emergencies occur. Through the COVID-19 pandemic, text messages summarising COVID-19 information, lockdown alerts, places of concern and mandatory requirements were sent regularly, seeing a total of 39,616 texts sent to 902 people across the mid-north coast in September 2021. Text messages are also sent when road closures and localised flooding occurs.

In support of their work, Council invited the NCN to operate out of the Bellingen Youth Hub while it was closed due to the pandemic. A few weeks later, Council established the Connections Centre within the same facility, which has become a central point of contact for residents to access up to date information and learn about social services available to them.

The NCN is supported by Bellingen Shire Council through the Bellingen Shire Disaster Recovery and Resilience Program, and the North Coast Primary Health Network's Bushfire Recovery Community Grants Program.



Volunteers of Bellingen Shire's Neighbourhood Care Network (Source: Neighbourbood Care Network / Time Page)

*www.neighbourhoodcarenetwork.org.au/*
*www.bellingenshireconnects.com.au/*

### Lessons for local government

A large component of community resilience is building connections and networks between community stakeholders. Community leadership and localised communications networks can be fostered when local government support grassroots initiatives. This case study exemplifies how councils can prepare and supporting local networks when opportunities arise.

Ways in which local government can support community networks include providing spaces and platforms for organising, using databases to spread the message via eDM or letter box drops, and developing campaigns that back their work.

# CASE STUDY:

## A collaborative approach to mental health intervention from New England to the Northern Beaches

**We-Yarn workshops for First Nations communities**

Research by the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health (CRRMH) finds that the rate of suicide in rural and regional Australia is growing more rapidly than in cities.

With suicide rates in First Nations people double that of non-Indigenous people, CRRMH worked in partnership with First Nations health providers to develop the first suicide awareness and prevention program to be delivered on Country.

We-Yarn is a culturally appropriate suicide prevention workshop for First Nations people. It was created in consultation with First Nations health and service providers, as well as First Nations communities in New England North West NSW.

Since its inception, 360 First Nations people have been trained in suicide prevention as part of the We-Yarn program.

**Northern Beaches Suicide Response Action Plan**

In 2018, Northern Beaches Council's Community Safety Committee resolved to form a Working Group to address growing concerns in the community about deaths by suicide on the Northern Beaches.

The Suicide Response Steering Group (SRSG) aims to play a lead role in developing, coordinating and communicating the Northern Beaches Suicide Response Action Plan, and to drive its implementation and evaluation.

Together with NSW Police, health authorities, local service groups and the community, SRSG ensures there is a coordinated and collaborative
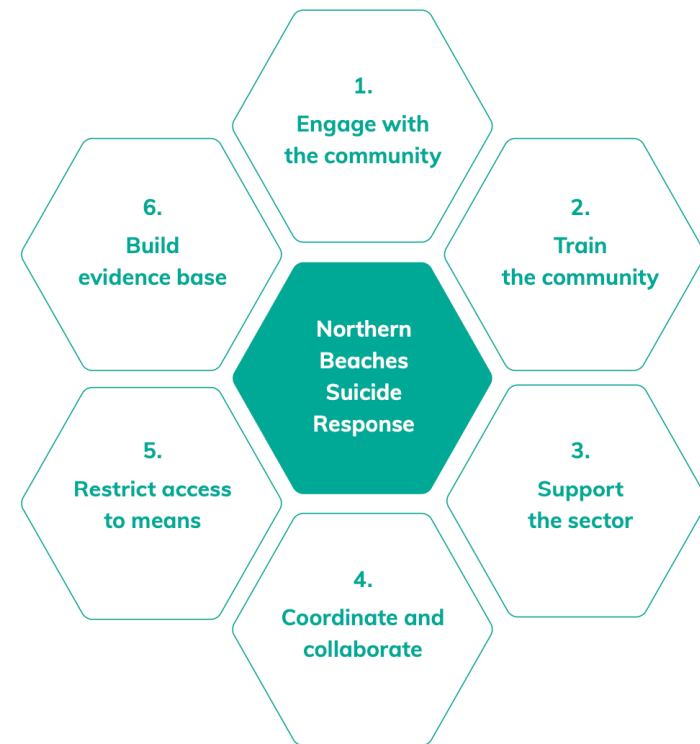


Goals of the Northern Beaches Suicide Response
(Source: Northern Beaches Council)

*www.crrmh.com.au/research/research-publications/2016-2017research-publications/*
*www.northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au/community/safety-and-wellbeing/suicide-prevention*

response to address suicide on the Northern Beaches.

The Northern Beaches Suicide Response has improved safety in key locations, delivered targeted suicide intervention training to over 400 community members and 40 police. Most importantly, suicide rates between 2018 and 2019 decreased by almost a third, following implementation of the response.

**Lessons for local government**

These case studies provide excellent examples of various stakeholders, including councils, service providers, government agencies and community leaders, working together to tackle suicide prevention and deliver support services.

# Tracking and monitoring

**Measuring social cohesion in Sydney and Stirling**

**Tracking social sustainability in City of Parramatta**

**VicHealth's Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity program**

**Understanding community perceptions of space in Wollongong**

# CASE STUDY:

## Measuring social cohesion in Sydney and Stirling

**Community Wellbeing Indicators, City of Sydney**

The City of Sydney uses a Community Wellbeing Indicators framework to measure its progress towards social cohesion every four years.

It includes questions about community connectedness, inclusiveness, trust and volunteering. It also includes a specific question aimed at understanding community attitudes to cultural diversity, shown below:

*Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "It is a good thing for a society to be made up of people from different cultures and communities."*

Comparing responses to the same questions over time offers insights into trends and may help the City determine where to focus its energy and resources.

**Evaluating social cohesion programs, City of Stirling**

The City of Stirling ran the CALD

Youth Sport and Recreation Project from 2006 to 2009. The Project aimed to engage young people in organised sport, recreation and leisure activities, particularly young people with an African, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background.

The project was evaluated by the Social Justice Research Centre at Edith Cowan University. Baseline data was collated at the start of the program via a questionnaire issued to sporting clubs, interviews with key stakeholders and an audit of participation record-keeping processes. Data was also collected during the project via interviews with the same stakeholders, as well as participants and the clubs' leadership teams.

The evaluation found that whilst the project achieved increased participation in sport, recreation and leisure activities amongst the targeted groups, barriers to participation remained, especially for young women.



Cover page of the City of Sydney's *Community Wellbeing Indicators 2019* report
www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/surveys-case-studies-reports/community-indicators-report
https://opus.lib.uts.edu.au/html/10453/120647/outcomes.html#s4

### Lessons for local government
Local governments can establish social cohesion indicators and measures that enable outcomes to be measured over time.

## CASE STUDY:

### Tracking social sustainability in City of Parramatta

**Socially Sustainable Parramatta Framework**

In 2017, City of Parramatta Council adopted its Socially Sustainable Parramatta Framework (the SSPF). The SSPF outlines specific ways that the opportunity for growth can be shared equitably for residents and visitors in the Parramatta LGA.

The SSPF is comprised of eight goals relating to social, economic and environmental wellbeing. These include:

- Children are our future
- Diverse, affordable homes for everyone
- All people can learn, share and grow
- All people can access a job that enables them to live with dignity and security
- Green, inclusive and safe places to share
- All people can live healthy, active lives
- We trust each other, are welcoming, and feel good about being here together, and
- We lead by example.

**The SSPF Indicator Framework**

An action in the SSPF is "to develop measures and targets for evaluating the impact of the SSPF." Council developed an Indicator Framework (the IF) to support the measurement of the SSPF's progress and to track social sustainability in Parramatta over time.

The indicators were developed by Council's Social Outcomes Team and key internal stakeholders over a six month period with support from Think Impact. The IF aims to develop a baseline data set to evaluate the SSPF and report on progress every three years.

The indicators are structured around five aspects, including subjective and objective measures 'Our City' and 'My Life', as well as Council indicators. This results in a set of complementary indicators that measure both the community's thoughts and Council's impacts.

The IF relies on quality data from a range of sources, including internal data (e.g. 'Our City My Life' biennial survey, existing and commisioned data) and external data.



# SOCIALLY SUSTAINABLE PARRAMATTA FRAMEWORK

## SHARING THE BENEFITS OF GROWTH FOR ALL

**CITY OF PARRAMATTA**

Cover page of the City of Parramatta's *draft Socially Sustainable Parramatta Framework* report (Source: City of Parramatta)

*www.cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au/living/socially-sustainable-parramatta*

**Lessons for local government**

Establishing a baseline, measures and indicators helps to evaluate the extent to which investment in social cohesion activities is effective. Regular monitoring and evaluation also allows council to make evidence-based decisions.

## CASE STUDY:

### VicHealth's Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity program

A 2007 VicHealth study found that interpersonal and systemic race-based discrimination continued to exist in Australia and had a detrimental effect on the health and wellbeing of First Nations peoples, as well as individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The study identified local government as a key organisation for addressing race-based discrimination due to its ability to serve as a coordinator and to engage with organisations throughout the community.

#### Development of diversity assessment tools and guides

In 2009, VicHealth established a place-based pilot partnership program, Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity (LEAD), with two councils: Greater Shepparton City Council and the City of Whittlesea. A number of resources were developed as part of the program, including self-assessment tools and implementation guides. LEAD resources include:

- Staff experience survey to capture staff attitudes and experiences of race-based discrimination and diversity
- Self-assessment and review of current policy and internal systems
- Action plans
- Pro-diversity training
- See Beyond Race community awareness campaign
- Workplace Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Assessment Tool, and
- School-based assessment tools.

#### Workplace Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Assessment Tool

This Tool was designed to help councils examine internal workplace and employee policies, practices, resources and communications. The Tool can help to identify key organisational strengths, as well as opportunities for learning and improvement.

**Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity (LEAD)**
Workplace diversity and anti-discrimination assessment tool

vichealth.vic.gov.au

♥ VicHealth™

Cover page of LEAD Workplace Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Assessment Tool (Source: VicHealth)

*www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/programs-and-projects/localities-embracing-and-accepting-diversity*
*www.scribd.com/document/487676738/VH-LEAD-Toolkit-workplaces-FORM*

#### Lessons for local government

Local government systems, policies and processes can become outdated and inadvertently discriminate against minority groups, which can in turn affect social cohesion. Councils can prevent this by evaluating and monitoring organisational policies and systems on a regular basis. The tools developed as part of the LEAD program may be used by other councils to measure discrimination and identify ways the council can proactively promote diversity across council roles.

# CASE STUDY:

## Understanding community perceptions of space in Wollongong



Artistic impression of the Lower Crown Arts Precinct from *A City for People* (Source: McGregor Coxall)

### Public Spaces Public Life studies

The Public Spaces Public Life (PSPL) study developed by Gehl Architects is a tool used to collect data and understand the quality and character of public spaces, including how people use and interact with these spaces.

PSPL provides information on where people choose to walk and stay, either as part of their daily activities or for recreational purposes. People spending time in a space – recorded as "staying activities" – is a good indicator of the quality of the urban space and potential for social connection. Information from a PSPL study can help to inform future decisions about which streets and city spaces can be improved to foster social interaction.

PSPL studies have been carried out in Copenhagen every 10 years over the past 40 years

and clearly document the gradual change from a car-oriented city to one of the most liveable cities globally. PSPL studies have also been conducted in New York, London and Perth, as well as regional cities in Australia, the United Kingdom and Scandinavia.

### Applying the tool in Wollongong

In 2014, the Wollongong City Council partnered with Gehl Architects to undertake a PSPL study of Wollongong's CBD.

Through fieldwork and desktop research, more than 60 data sets were collected and analysed. This included quality assessments of streets and buildings, as well as data on traffic planning, urban planning, parks, recreation, the community and cultural and economic developments.

A taskforce of Council staff was established to collect this data. The degree of staff involvement

resulted in great ownership of the project and increased staff members' understanding of the city and research methodologies. The PSPL study helped identify key challenges for Wollongong, including a need to further realise the city's rich heritage.

The data served as a guiding tool for the strategies and schematic projects presented in *A City for People: Wollongong Public Spaces Public Life 2016* and, importantly, has formed a baseline from which Wollongong City Council can measure change over time.

### Lessons for local government

Local government can leverage data obtained through field work and desktop research to better understand how the community uses public spaces, including:

- Analysing qualitative aspects of public space
- Understanding people's perceptions of a space
- Identifying areas for improvement in public spaces, and
- Establishing benchmarks that can be measured over time.

Understanding the interests of the public and how people use space can support decision-making processes and the building of people-focused cities centred on social cohesion.

# Further reading

The Australian Human Rights Commission. *Building Social Cohesion in our Communities*.

City Futures Research Centre. *Who lives in higher density apartments?*

Edmund Rice Centre. First Nations Resilience Project.

Government Architect New South Wales. *Draft Connecting with Country Framework.*

Government Architect New South Wales. *Greener Places Design Guide.*

Government Architect New South Wales. Everyone Can Play.

Greater Cities Commission. Dashboard: A resilient city.

Greater Sydney Commission. *Greater Sydney's Social Capital: It's Nature and Value*.

Islamophobia Register Australia. *Islamophobia in Australia Report 2018-19.*

NSW Government Department of Planning and Envrionment. Evaluation Tool for Public Space and Public Life.

Resilient Cities Network. *Social Cohesion: A Practitioners' Guide to Measurement Challenges and Opportunities.*

Resilient Cities Network and City of Sydney. *Resilient Sydney Strategy 2018.*

Scanlon Foundation Research Institute. *Mapping Social Cohesion 2021.*

Scanlon Foundation Research Institute. Australian Cohesion Index.

Scanlon Foundation Research Institute. *What is social cohesion?*

UTS Open. Measuring Social Impact: Part 1 & Part 2 (Short online course).

Welcoming Cities. *Putting out the welcoming mat: A guide for creating welcoming cities.*

# A1

## Appendix 1:
## Social cohesion
## indicators and measures

## Table A1: Social cohesion indicators and measures

| Baseline | Good practice | Better practice | Best practice |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Role 1: Civic engagement and participation** | | | |
| • Develop and utilise engagement portal on council's external website.<br>• Share information and resources through diverse social media channels and groups.<br>• Create and share accessible communications materials.<br>• Promote volunteerism on council platforms to build social connections. | • Undertake annual surveys to understand communities needs and experiences.<br>• Deliver face to face consultations, and work with community to understand suitable times of day and locations to conduct engagement.<br>• Tailor information for target cohorts in a range of formats and make available in different locations, e.g. Easy Read, translation into community languages.<br>• Include information on inclusive ways to engage with different community groups in council's Community Engagement Strategy. | • Ensure participation is accessible, e.g. provide Auslan interpretation and live captioning at meetings and events.<br>• Establish and co-ordinate community (lived experience) advisory committees/ panels. | • Deliver mini-publics and people's panels, e.g. Children's Parliaments.<br>• Use participatory models to determine policy, allocate funding and develop projects.<br>• Co-design engagement processes with community.<br>• Build capability of emerging leaders to engage with all levels of government.<br>• Develop communications strategy to effectively communicate about social cohesion and connected communities.<br>• Close the loop by reporting back to community on consultation outcomes, and demonstrate how their input impacted decision making. |

| Baseline | Good practice | Better practice | Best practice |
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| **Role 2: Social and cultural inclusion** | | | |
| • Employ a Community Development worker.<br>• Acknowledge days of significance, e.g. National Sorry Day and International Day of People with Disability.<br>• Deliver council endorsed statements that condemn discrimination in the local community and broader society.<br>• Develop and maintain database of social and cultural groups to improve communications, engagement and collaboration. | • Administer small grants program to support local and sustainable social cohesion initiatives.<br>• Integrate social cohesion criteria into councils existing grant program.<br>• Plan and deliver annual program of local community building activities, e.g. community gardening and social lunches.<br>• Provide internal diversity and inclusion training.<br>• Manage safe and welcoming community facilities that deliver inclusive programs and services for all ages, abilities, genders and cultural diversity, e.g. language classes, digital literacy skills building, intergenerational activities and cultural practices. | • Develop specialist community development roles, e.g. First Nations Engagement officer, Youth officer, Multicultural officer.<br>• Co-ordinate external diversity and inclusion training for community.<br>• Work together with sector partners to deliver inclusive programs and services.<br>• Establish a welcoming program and provide resources for new residents, e.g. bus tour of LGA or online webpage. | • Deliver major events that promote inclusion and social cohesion.<br>• Build community capacity and networks to deliver social cohesion initiatives.<br>• Host community leadership forums to share advice on social cohesion initiatives and improvements.<br>• Update programs and services based on monitoring and evaluation. |

| Baseline | Good practice | Better practice | Best practice |
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| **Role 3: Leadership, strategy and planning** | | | |
| • Acknowledge First Nations peoples in all plans and strategies.<br>• Allocate budget and resourcing in council's Delivery Program and Operational Plan for council-run social cohesion initiatives.<br>• Deliver and promote social cohesion campaigns, e.g. Neighbour Day. | • Develop and implement a First Nations Strategy, including First Nations engagement.<br>• Develop and implement a social strategy, e.g. social sustainability strategy, cohesion strategy, social plan.<br>• Provide internal training and learning opportunities for council staff, e.g. universal design training, grant writing workshop, inclusive customer service skills. | • Establish and lead cross-organisational social cohesion steering groups.<br>• Undertake community benefit studies for planning proposals and social and health impact assessments.<br>• Develop and implement targeted strategies, e.g. cultural diversity strategy, youth strategy, resilience strategy.<br>• Advocate for community needs to State and Federal governments. | • Embed Connecting with Country framework in strategic planning and design.<br>• Develop strategies, policies and plans in collaboration with community and local stakeholders.<br>• Undertake review and update of council strategies to ensure consideration of social cohesion and inclusion.<br>• Undertake strategic collaboration with neighbouring councils on social cohesion initiatives.<br>• Work across council teams to improve council systems, processes and plans so everyone sees they have a role to play in social cohesion. |

| Baseline | Good practice | Better practice | Best practice |
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| **Role 4: Public spaces** | | | |
| • Acknowledge First Nations people and diverse cultures in all council managed places, e.g. working with First Nations community to use First Nations place names.<br>• Identify underutilised spaces and places throughout the LGA with potential to transform and deliver social cohesion activities.<br>• Waive hire fees or provide in-kind support to community groups for use of council managed public facilities. | • Establish land use controls around public space provision, and the accessibility, size and quality of these places to improve inclusion.<br>• Undertake annual review of Public Spaces register to make updates, review fees, promote inclusive community use and list emergency hub/shelters.<br>• Incorporate recommendations from NSW State Government guidelines into design and delivery of council managed places, e.g. Everyone Can Play Guideline, Connecting with Country Draft Framework and Greener Places Design Guide. | • Provide community facilities and public open spaces that are welcoming, multipurpose and flexible to meet diverse community needs.<br>• Provide accessible wayfinding and inclusive community signage in relevant formats and languages, e.g. street signs in community languages and braille.<br>• Develop risk register for public assets and programs held in public spaces and undertake review to identify areas for improvements.<br>• Conduct internal resilience review across the organisation. | • Develop social infrastructure strategy and implement funded budget items.<br>• Activate public spaces with programs and events. |

| Baseline | Good practice | Better practice | Best practice |
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| **Role 5: Partnership, collaboration and networks** | | | |
| • Undertake stakeholder mapping to develop and maintain database of local services, social enterprises and government agencies.<br>• Plan and prepare Local Emergency Management Officer (LEMO) to coordinate networks on the ground during crises. | • Introduce social cohesion goals in existing partnership structures.<br>• Organise scenario planning meetings attended by networks to increase community preparedness. | • Partner with community members and cultural leaders to deliver programs and extend the reach of services.<br>• Collaborate with local interagencies and groups to share information and collaborate on issues, barriers to accessing services, facilities, projects and programs for diverse communities. Examples include interfaith networks, multicultural interagencies, or homelessness services committees. | • Host regular forums with local interagencies and networks to share tools, resources and build capacity of council staff and service providers.<br>• Co-locate community services and coordinate multipurpose community hubs.<br>• Nurture relationships and maintain long-term partnerships.<br>• Promote the work of community networks. |

| Baseline | Good practice | Better practice | Best practice |
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| **Role 6: Tracking and monitoring** | | | |
| • Report on ABS population changes over time and other demographic and health indicators.<br>• Commit to undertaking regular research to understand the diversity and levels of connections of the local community, including a Social Cohesion or Social Wellbeing Survey.<br>• Develop database of relevant datasets and sources. | • Publish report on annual survey results and highlight priority focus areas.<br>• Review Scanlon Foundation Australian Cohesion Index biennially to understand context of social cohesion in Australia and inform decision-making. | • Collect data from social programs, grants and networks as an evidence base for better decision making.<br>• Report on community and organisational case studies on social cohesion initiatives.<br>• Facilitate focus groups and interviews with community leaders and service providers to help inform decision making.<br>• Perform public space evaluations to assess their ability to promote social cohesion. | • Track and report on social cohesion indicators, including consistent, regular evaluation and reporting of council programs, places and the community to track social inclusion, connection and cohesion.<br>• Build capability of council staff and community organisations to understand evaluation in the context of social cohesion.<br>• Share council social cohesion data with partners to facilitate greater understandings of context of social cohesion within LGAs. |