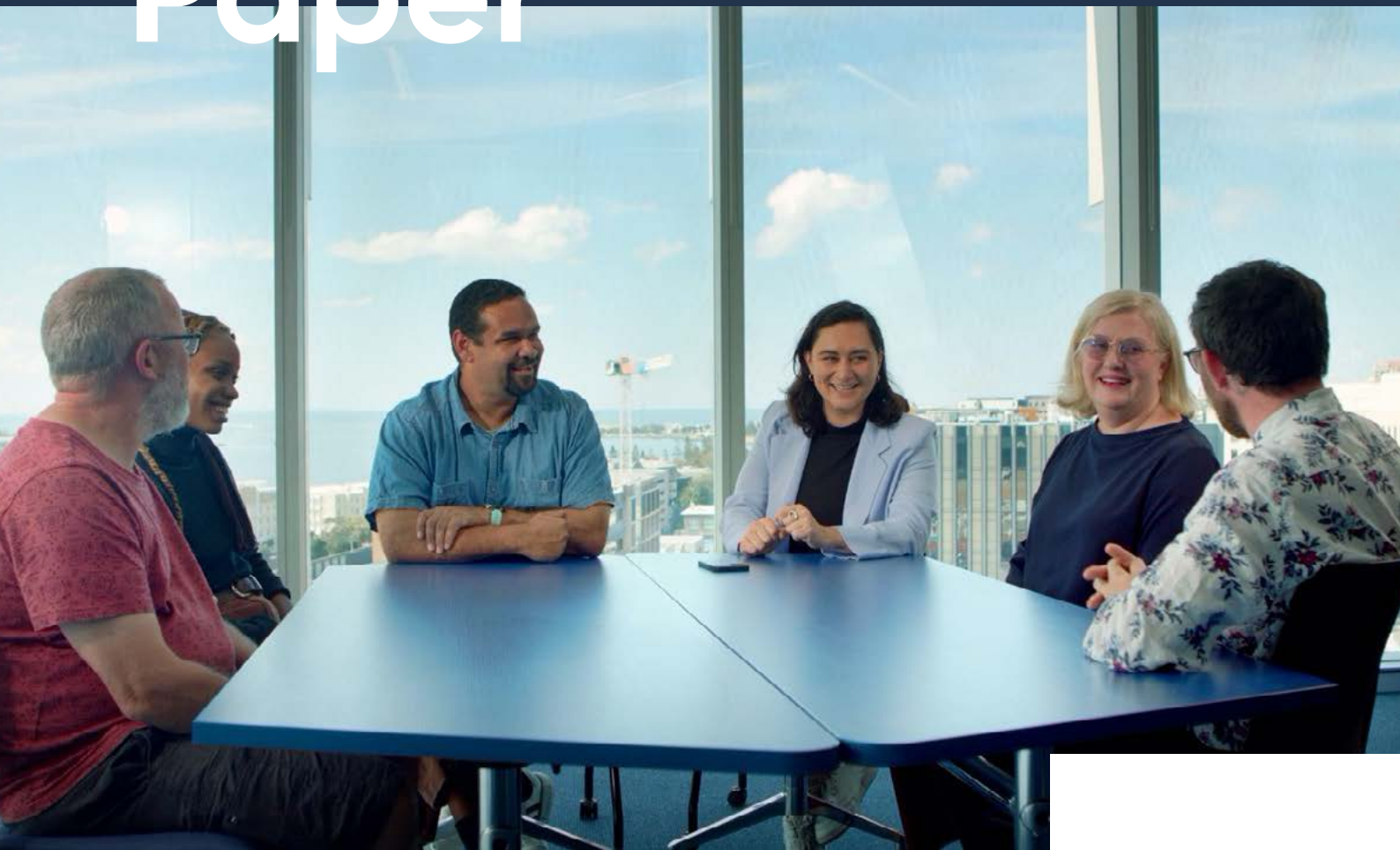


Local Social Discussion Paper



December 2021

newcastle.nsw.gov.au



City of
Newcastle

Welcome

Acknowledgment

City of Newcastle acknowledges that we operate on the grounds of the traditional country of the Awabakal and Worimi peoples.

We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and continuing relationship with the land, and that they are the proud survivors of more than two hundred years of dispossession.

City of Newcastle reiterates its commitment to address disadvantages and attain justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this community.

Smoking ceremony held at the new City Administration Centre building at 12 Stewart Avenue. The ceremony also included; Wakakulang Dance Troupe, Aboriginal catering and a special guest talk by local artist Saretta Fielding.

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Introduction

1.1 The Local Social Strategy

Newcastle is a liveable city with a remarkable natural environment, local economic opportunities, and an increasingly diverse social, cultural and creative foundation that contributes to quality of life. However, as Newcastle undergoes significant growth and change, an increasing number of community members are being left behind, unable to realise their full potential as part of a thriving society.

- Based on engagement, key areas of social concern for the people of Newcastle can be grouped into 4 themes:
- | | |
|----|--|
| 1. | Equity concerns refer to rising living costs; housing unaffordability and insecurity; and inadequate access to transport, social infrastructure and services. |
| 2. | Inclusion concerns refer to inequality of opportunity, particularly within employment and training; discrimination against diverse groups; and limited opportunity to express and connect to culture. |
| 3. | Connection concerns refer to increasing social isolation and disconnection, as well as limited opportunity for participating in and influencing local decisions. |
| 4. | Health concerns refer to health and wellbeing issues, mental ill-health, risk of violence, and safety in the community. |

These concerns and challenges are further exacerbated by the climate emergency, considered humanity's single biggest threat, and the COVID-19 pandemic, both of which disproportionately affect the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our communities.

To respond to these social challenges, City of Newcastle (CN) is renewing our 10-year social strategy, the Local Social Strategy. This will set out our aspirations for a socially just and inclusive city – a place for everyone. The strategy falls under and supports CN's [Community Strategic Plan](#) (CSP)¹, aligns with state and regional plans, and defines CN's social priorities for the next 10 years, including outlining our 4-yearly action plans. This Discussion Paper outlines why Newcastle needs a social strategy, what its key social needs are, and how CN might respond to these needs.

1.2 Why do we need a social strategy?

A social strategy provides a framework for CN and the community to remove barriers to inclusion and equal opportunity; encourage community connection and participation; celebrate our rich social and cultural diversity; and strengthen community health and wellbeing. In working towards this mission, we aim to achieve the vision of a socially just and inclusive place for all.

The Local Social Strategy is for the whole community. However, CN acknowledges that some groups in Newcastle are more likely to be excluded from social, economic and political opportunities due to discrimination and other access barriers. Therefore, this strategy will identify priority communities and groups to be involved in all aspects of Newcastle life.

The Local Social Strategy will help CN meet the social justice requirements placed on councils by the *Local Government Act 1993*, which states: 'Council's long-term community strategic plans must be based on social justice principles and address social issues along with civic leadership, environmental and economic issues'.

¹ City of Newcastle Community Strategic Plan 2030: <https://www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/getmedia/c642bf2e-74df-4eaa-8931-526df94598dc/3119-CSP-Strategy-FINAL-WEB.aspx>

CN has a leadership role to play in achieving our shared vision of a socially just and inclusive Newcastle, but we can't do it alone. We need to work with local communities as equal partners, drawing on their many strengths and assets and supporting them to shape their own futures. We also need to collaborate with dedicated services and organisations across Newcastle to ensure we respond to community needs and aspirations while delivering effective, coordinated actions and initiatives for social justice and inclusion.

1.3 Guiding principles that shape our strategy

Several principles shape our approach to supporting social justice, inclusion and positive social change in our city.

Social justice

Social justice is about fair and just relations between individuals and society. It means making sure that all community members are empowered to make decisions about their lives. We promote social justice in Newcastle by ensuring fair distribution of resources, equal access to services, participation in decision-making and equal rights in all areas, as outlined in these 4 principles:

Equity: Resources are allocated according to need with the aim of achieving more equal outcomes, particularly for those with greater needs or barriers to access.

Access: People have fair access to services, resources and opportunities to improve their quality of life.

Participation: People can fully participate in community life and genuinely influence decisions that affect their lives.

Rights: Human rights are universal – everyone has the right to be treated with respect, equality and dignity. Human rights are the basic freedoms and protections that people are entitled to, including economic, social, cultural and political rights².

Relationships

Relationships are key to inclusive, socially just communities. A relational approach is a way of interacting or communicating that embodies values such as respect, inclusiveness, honesty, compassion, cooperation and humility. However, it is also about the connections between people and the planet. The **Relationist Ethos** is a concept within Aboriginal law, philosophy and culture. It explains that we are all in relationship with other people, but also places great importance on the relationship between the land (Country) and all living and non-living beings. It is these relationships and obligations to each other that form a template for our society³.

For CN, forming strong, respectful and transparent relationships is essential to achieving the desired social outcomes for our communities.

Evidence and innovation

Many community issues require integrated approaches that combine social, economic, demographic, cultural and environmental considerations. When considering local responses to these issues, **evidence-based decision-making** and **innovative practice** are essential principles. Evidence-based needs assessment and prioritisation, as well as meaningful monitoring and evaluation, can help us achieve the desired outcomes for our communities. Innovation in the public sector seeks to create value and impact by responding to public interest, addressing citizens' basic needs, and enhancing efficiency of public services. Continued innovation in our public sector and communities will assist us in adapting and responding to our ever-changing community context and needs⁴.

² NSW OLG (Office of Local Government) 2021

³ Graham, M. (2021), The Relationist Ethos concept is particularly associated with the work of Adjunct Associate Professor Mary Graham, Kombu-merri and Waka Waka person: <https://www.greenprints.org.au/knowledge-base/relationist-ethos/>

⁴ OECD/Eurostat (2018)

Regenerative society

Regenerative means ‘able to or tending to regenerate’ – to regrow or be renewed or restored, especially after being damaged or lost. Regeneration recognises that human and planetary health are deeply interwoven, and actively seeks to enable the flourishing of human and non-human life. To strengthen the regenerative capacity of our communities, we have drawn inspiration from two models: (1) ‘Doughnut Economics’, which refers to a concept linking social needs and planetary boundaries⁵ and (2) the Greenprints approach⁶.

Doughnut Economics refers to the visual and conceptual framework created by economist Kate Raworth, when she drew the needs of human societies, inside the circular “Planetary Boundaries” diagram, created by Earth System scientists⁷. In her work, she states that humanity’s 21st-century challenge is to meet the needs of all within the means of the planet. In Doughnut Economics, a society and economy is considered prosperous when all 12 social foundations are met, without overshooting any of the nine ecological ceilings. You can see the framework in Figure 1, below.

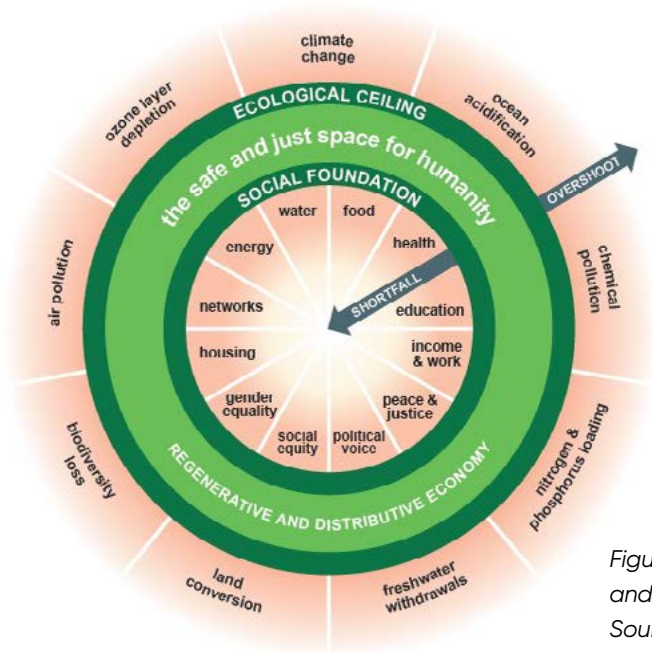


Figure 1. Doughnut of social and planetary boundaries
Source: Kate Raworth (2017)

The Doughnut of social and planetary boundaries has been designed to show the following principles:

1. That no one falls short of life’s essentials, ranging from food and housing to healthcare and political voice – the **social foundation**
2. That we do not overshoot our pressure on Earth’s life-supporting systems, such as a stable climate, sufficient fresh water or fertile soils – **the ecological ceiling**
3. That we find a **safe and just space for humanity** to exist within the green zone of the Doughnut.

Figure 2 presents the Local Social Lens, in which the Doughnut is downscaled to a city or place⁸. Building on the social foundation of the Doughnut, the Local Social Lens proposes 4 priorities and 16 dimensions that are needed for people to thrive. This lens has inspired the framework and name of CN’s Local Social Strategy.

⁵ <https://www.kateraworth.com/doughnut/>
⁶ Greenprints: <https://www.greenprints.org.au/>
⁷ Stockholm Resilience Centre <https://www.stockholmresilience.org/download/18.8615c78125078c8d3380002197/ES-2009-3180.pdf>
⁸ City Portraits Methodology (2020), DEAP (2020), Creating-City-Portraits-Methodology.pdf

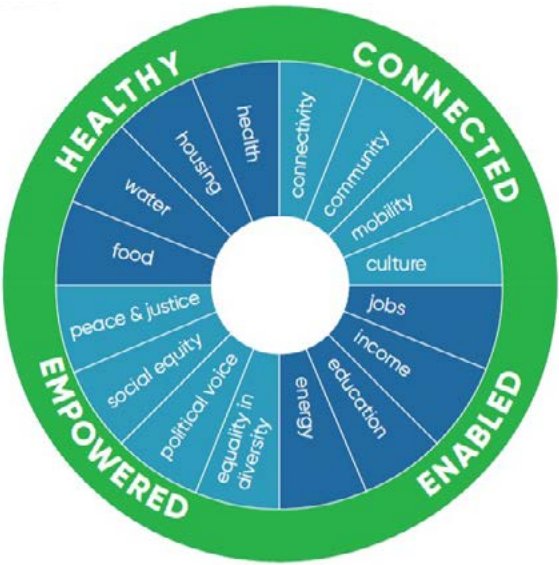


Figure 2. Local Social Lens
Source: Thriving Cities Initiative (2020)




Figure 3. Greenprints Doughnut
Source: Michelle Maloney (2021)

But how can we achieve a regenerative society and ‘live within the Doughnut’? This is where our second model is helpful. The Doughnut helps to frame the goal (for human societies to thrive within planetary boundaries), and the Greenprints approach outlines a process we can use to help us reach our goal.

Greenprints is an Australian-designed system, which provides a step by step approach for communities to achieve equitable societies and regenerative economies, within our ecological boundaries. Greenprints demystifies and connects the many concepts, models and methods that can be used to help us create sustainable and socially just communities.

In addition to the Greenprints steps⁹, Greenprints has its own version of the Doughnut, shown in Figure 3. This version refers to the ecological ceiling and social foundation, but has also added “the things that sustain us physically and spiritually”: our connection to place, including our bioregional foundation and the practice of Caring for Country.



Discussion question

Are there other principles that should be considered to shape the Local Social Strategy and its approach?

<https://www.menti.com/c79wsvxtdh>

⁹ Greenprints Doughnut: https://blog.earthlaws.org.au/2021/10/doughnut-economics-and-the-greenprints-approach/?fbclid=IwAR3HpOf2yla_qOLBbMDgPplQQyy2OqgwEDmowPAqsVVGKJMrPVvjAGSB34I
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1.4 Discussion questions for consideration

Throughout this paper, we will invite the reader to consider several discussion questions. We will seek your feedback on these questions during virtual workshops or via a short survey link. The survey link is included next to each discussion question throughout the Discussion Paper. The discussion questions will be indicated with the following image:



Image: Rising from the Embers, Land and Cultural Festival, Wollotuka Institute, University of Newcastle, May 2021



2. Understanding our communities

Newcastle is Australia’s seventh-largest city. It is increasingly made up of people from diverse ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds, as well as people with diverse social identities and lived experiences. The population of Newcastle is expected to grow and change in the coming 20 years, and with this growth will come many social, economic and environmental changes. This period will also include uncertainty about the recovery from and long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the increasing impact of climate change.

2.1 Demographic overviews and trends

2.1.1 Population and projections

In 2021, the Newcastle Local Government Area (LGA) had an estimated population of 171,307, this is projected to grow to 202,049 by 2041. Reasonably balanced population growth is projected across all age groups, but the largest growth by far will be amongst those aged 70–85 years. The current median age sits at 37 years¹⁰.

An estimated 19,450 new dwellings are needed by 2041 to meet population growth-related demand. The western corridor of the Newcastle LGA, west from Wallsend to the M1 freeway and LGA boundary at Minmi, will have significant greenfield development – largely on greenfield (undeveloped bush land, with up to 4,500 new dwellings accommodating up to 10,000 people built over the next 15–20 years. Urban renewal corridors in Adamstown, Hamilton and Islington will also see increased dwelling densities. In all these locations, services and facilities will be required to respond to increased population size and densities.

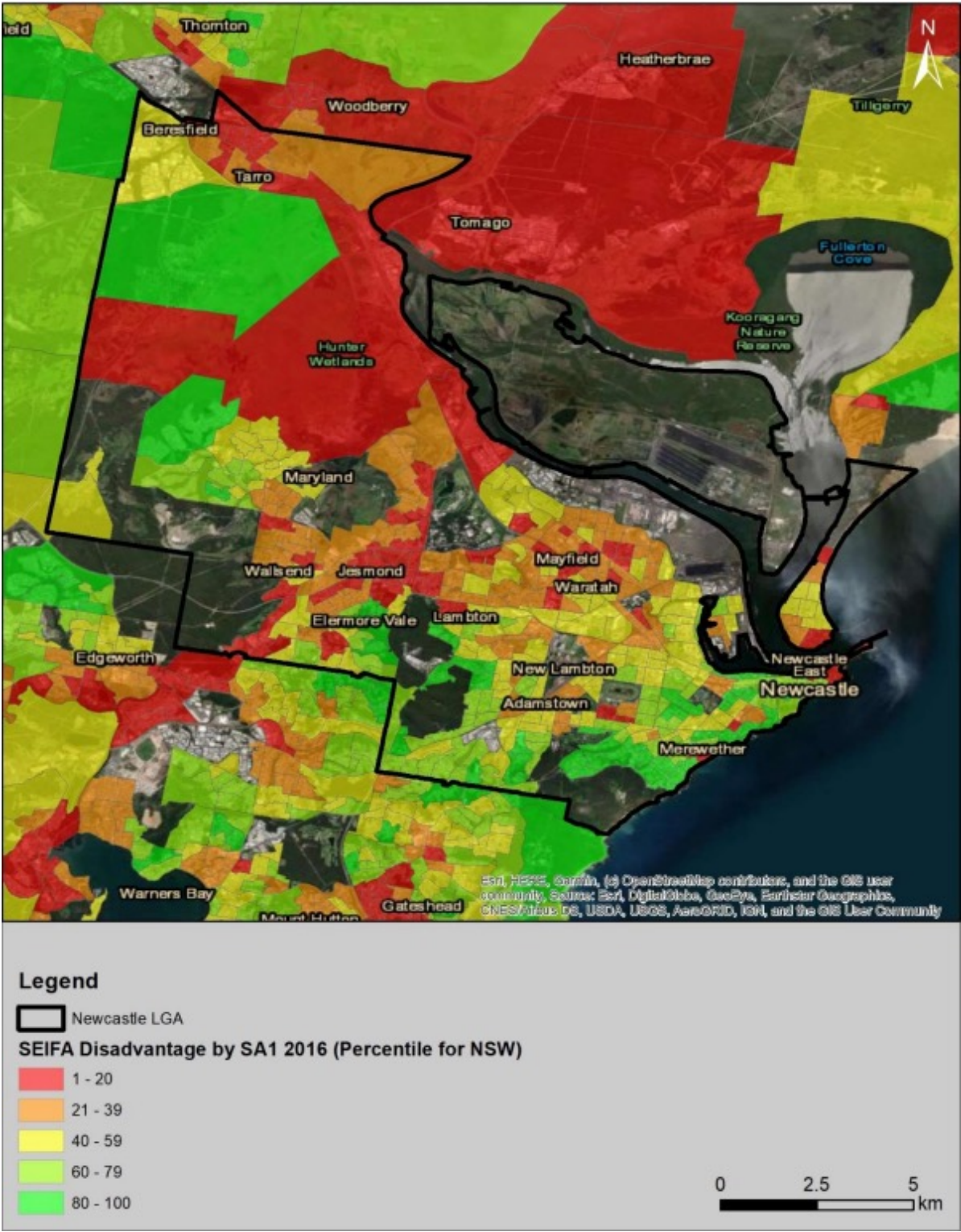
2.1.2 Socio-economic disadvantage

As part of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2016) Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas Census (SEIFA), the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage provides a weighted index of community disadvantage on 17 indicators generally associated with social wellbeing. The SEIFA Index of Education and Occupation brings together a range of indicators associated with a community’s educational and occupational wellbeing. Overall, Newcastle has a relatively positive profile on each of these indicators. It was in the least disadvantaged 33% of LGAs in Australia, and in the upper 18% of LGAs for educational and occupational status in 2016. However, there are some very disadvantaged areas in each of these measures of community wellbeing – particularly Beresfield–Hexham SA2 (Statistical Area Level 2), which is in the most disadvantaged 8% of SA2s in Australia and the lowest 2% of areas for education and occupational status; and Shortland–Jesmond SA2, which is in the most disadvantaged 9% of SA2s in Australia and the lowest 38% of areas for education and occupational status.

Other relatively disadvantaged areas were the Stockton area and the SA2s of Mayfield–Warabrook, Wallsend–Elernmore Vale and Waratah–North Lambton, which were all in the most disadvantaged one-third of areas in Australia. Figure 4 below maps this SEIFA disadvantage across the LGA. These areas of more severe disadvantage are generally associated with high concentrations of social housing; older and generally higher-density private rental housing; concentrations of older people, including those previously employed in lower income employment; and/or younger age profiles, high rates of unemployment and low educational achievement¹¹.

¹⁰ id. Consulting (2018), City of Newcastle Population and Household Forecasts 2016 to 2041
¹¹ Judith Stubbs and Associates, 2021

Figure 4. SEIFA Disadvantage for City of Newcastle by SA1



Source: Judith Stubbs & Associates 2021, based on data from ABS 2016 Census

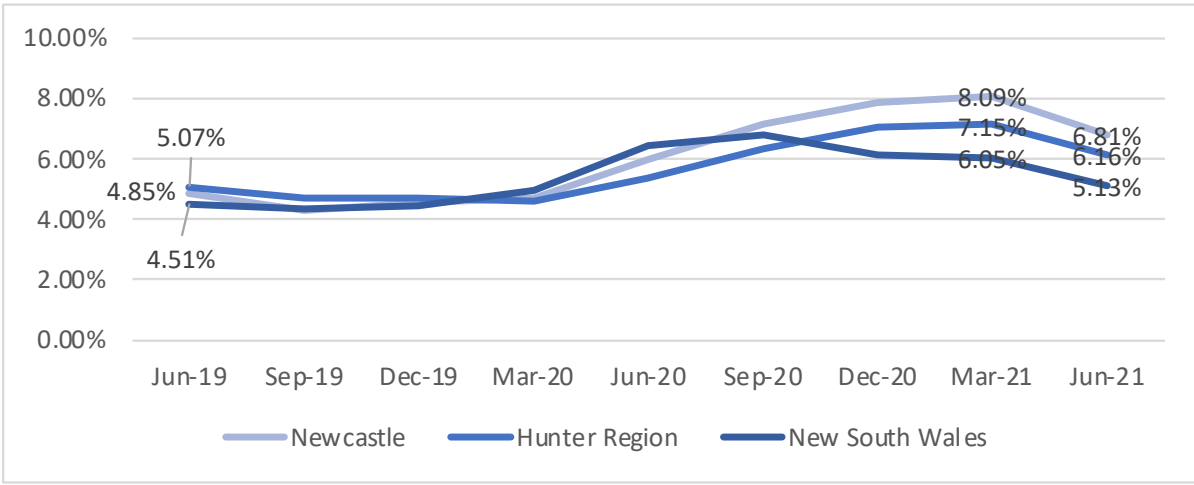
2.1.3 Employment and education

In terms of the LGA's educational profile, Year 12 completion rates were considerably higher than the rest of NSW, and a much higher proportion of people had degree or higher post-secondary qualifications. However, as noted above, there were several areas where post-secondary qualifications were much lower than average, as reflected in the SEIFA Education and Occupation measure.

In line with its younger age profile and increased employment opportunities related to its role as a major urban centre, Newcastle had a higher-than-average labour force participation rate, and a positive increase in both the size of the labour force and participation rate over the decade to 2016. However, unemployment was higher than the rest of NSW in 2016 (7.4% compared to 6.6%). There were particularly high rates of unemployment in the SA2s of Shortland–Jesmond (15.9%) and Beresfield–Hexham (11.3%), which, as noted, are particularly disadvantaged areas¹².

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic can be seen in the rapid increase in unemployment from March 2020, with unemployment at 8.09% in March 2021. There has been evidence of a downward trend, with unemployment at 6.81% in June 2021, but this is still higher than pre-pandemic rates and above the NSW average. Some geographic areas in the LGA are experiencing higher rates of unemployment, and younger people have been particularly affected.

Figure 5. Unemployment in Newcastle from June 2019 to June 2021



Source: REMPLAN, City of Newcastle Economy Profile

¹² Judith Stubbs and Associates, 2021

2.2 Our priority communities and groups

CN acknowledges that some groups in Newcastle are more likely to be excluded from social, economic and political opportunities due to discrimination and other access barriers. Therefore, this strategy includes a focus on enabling priority communities and groups to be involved in all aspects of life in Newcastle.

We also recognise that people’s social identities, social positions and lived experiences are complex. Our priority groups often experience multiple forms of discrimination and oppression (such as racism, sexism, ableism and homophobia). This means we need to take an intersectional approach to promoting social justice and inclusion in Newcastle.

The following communities have been identified as priority groups in our LGA¹³:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

In 2016, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up 3.5% of Newcastle LGA’s total population, with the NSW average sitting at 2.5%. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have been identified as a priority group for CN as they continue to experience significant socio-economic disadvantage when compared to the general population of Newcastle. In 2016, the unemployment rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Newcastle was 15% (7% for general population); 11% had a degree or higher (25% for general population); and the average weekly income was 31% less than the general population.






More information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Newcastle can be found under our Community Profile [on our website](#).

Socio-economically disadvantaged and newly vulnerable communities

The SEIFA Disadvantage measure presented in Figure 4 shows that the Newcastle LGA scores relatively well. However, there are some very disadvantaged geographic areas, particularly in the western suburbs of the LGA. In 2016, the ‘lowest’ and ‘medium lowest’¹⁴ household income quartiles made up 54% of all households with income in Newcastle. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is also an emergence of ‘newly vulnerable’ community members who are experiencing housing, food and income insecurity for the first times in their lives. A study by Good Shepherd and Roy Morgan estimates that about 25% of Australians aged 14 and above, and 40% of working Australians, have seen negative employment impacts from COVID-19, in turn affecting their household finances¹⁵. Considering this, people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage and newly vulnerable communities are priority groups for CN.







More information about people experiencing homelessness and insecure housing in Newcastle can be found under our Community Profile [on our website](#).

People with disability

In 2016, 5.9% of the Newcastle LGA population was estimated to be living with disability, as reported by the census. However, in 2018, 17% of the NSW population had a ‘reported disability’, which suggests that the number of people with disability in Newcastle may be higher. A disability is any condition that restricts a person’s mental, sensory or mobility functions; almost 90% of disabilities are not visible. People with disability are a priority group for CN as they experience significant socio-economic disadvantage compared to the general population. In Newcastle in 2016, the unemployment rate for people with disability was 17.7% (7% for general population); 6.1% had a degree or higher (25% for general population); and the average weekly income was 39% less than the general population.







More information about people with lived experience of disability in Newcastle can be found under our Community Profile [on our website](#).

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities

In 2016, 14% of Newcastle residents were born overseas and 10% spoke a language other than English at home. Across the LGA, 134 different languages were spoken in homes. The most widely spoken languages were Mandarin, Macedonian, Italian, Greek and Arabic. However, the languages spoken with the greatest need for translation included Arabic, Swahili, Persian/Dari and Tibetan. CALD communities have been identified as a priority group as they experience socio-economic disadvantage. In Newcastle in 2016, of those CALD people who speak English ‘not well’ or ‘not at all’, 70% were not in the labour force and 11% had a degree or higher (25% for general population). Newcastle is a well-known humanitarian resettlement region, welcoming on average 320 – 350 people a year in the Newcastle region. Recently, 74 Afghani families have been resettled in Newcastle, and will require support to ensure they are welcomed and integrated into our city.







More information about Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities in Newcastle can be found under our Community Profile [on our website](#).

LGBTIQA+ communities

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer and Asexual (LGBTIQA+) people and communities are a diverse and often underrepresented population within Australia. Unfortunately, there is a lack of detailed population-level data for LGBTIQA+ communities across Australia, which makes it difficult to appropriately respond to the needs of these communities. It is estimated that up to 11% of Australians may have a diverse sexual orientation, sex or gender identity. In Newcastle, this equates to 20,000 people. LGBTIQA+ communities are a priority group for CN due to the mental health, social isolation and community safety disadvantages they experience. LGBTIQA+ people are 3 times more likely to have considered suicide in the last 12 months¹⁶ and 44% of LGBTIQA+ people usually hide their gender or sexuality in public.






More information about people of diverse genders and sexualities in Newcastle can be found under our Community Profile [on our website](#).

¹³ Information for ‘Our priority communities and groups’ has been sourced from Fallding (2021), ‘A demographic profile of diverse communities within the City of Newcastle’ and the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 Census, unless specified otherwise.
¹⁴ ‘Lowest’ quartile of household income is \$0 to \$750/week and ‘medium lowest’ quartile of household income is \$751 to \$1,481/week
¹⁵ Good Shepherd and Roy Morgan (2021), ‘New Vulnerable Research’: <https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2021-10/apo-nid314651.pdf>

¹⁶ Hill, A. O., Bourne, A., McNair, R., Carman, M. & Lyons, A. (2020). Private Lives 3: The health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ people in Australia. ARCSHS Monograph Series No. 122. Melbourne, Australia: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University

Older people

In 2019, it was estimated that people aged 60 years and over made up 21% of the Newcastle LGA population. Older people are a priority group for CN as our community is ageing – there will be a 36% increase in people over the age of 60 years in the Newcastle LGA by 2041. To ensure older people are provided with the same opportunities as younger people to remain physically, intellectually and socially active, age-friendly infrastructure, services and support will need to be planned for and provided.




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More information about people of diverse genders and sexualities in Newcastle can be found under our Community Profile [on our website](#).

Young people and children

Babies and pre-schoolers (1–5 years), children at school (5–17 years) and young people (15–24 years) currently make up 43% of the Newcastle population, and numbers are predicted to increase until 2041. Children and young people are priority groups for CN as supporting our youngest community members from an early age provides them with the best opportunity to live healthy, productive and enjoyable lives. Children are prioritised by CN in terms of lifelong learning, and young people are supported in terms of employment, training and civic engagement, particularly considering that youth unemployment approached 20% in September 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



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More information about people of diverse genders and sexualities in Newcastle can be found under our Community Profile [on our website](#).

Women and men- areas of identified risk

People who identify as women and men are considered priority groups for CN due to specific vulnerabilities they experience. The COVID-19 pandemic has particularly affected women due to the adverse impact on industries in which women predominantly work, the casualised nature of much of the paid work women undertake¹⁷, and housing insecurity faced by older women. Women are also at a greater risk of domestic and family violence (D&FV); in the year to June 2021 in Newcastle, 75% of domestic assault victims identified as women¹⁸. Addressing toxic masculinity and the mental health of people who identify as men is a priority for our community. Men are 3–4 times more likely to take their own life than women¹⁹, and a recent study found that young Australian men’s belief in rigid masculine stereotypes has a stronger impact than other factors (including their education levels, where they live or their cultural heritage) on whether they will use violence, sexually harass women or experience mental ill-health themselves²⁰.



Discussion question

Are any priority community groups missing? If yes, please outline which groups and why.

<https://www.menti.com/d4bv6jo3tu>

2.3 Our role

Many of the social issues and concerns facing Newcastle are complex and beyond the direct control and influence of CN, meaning we need to work with our community and a range of stakeholders to ensure our collective wellbeing. Depending on the activity being undertaken, CN’s role is to deliver, partner and/or advocate.

Deliver

CN delivers a wide range of programs and services including waste collection, libraries, childcare, maintenance of local roads and public spaces, recreation facilities and programs, community support, special events and regulatory functions.

Partner

There are areas in which CN has partial or shared responsibility or influence. CN builds strategic partnerships with federal and state government agencies, the private sector, the community sector and a range of other stakeholders whose work will contribute to delivering our long-term priorities.

Advocate

A wide range of issues important to the community sits outside CN’s control. CN gives a voice to the needs and aspirations of the community by advocating for changes in policy and action at relevant levels of government and industry.

The priority social needs of Newcastle communities will be outlined in the following section of this Discussion Paper. For each issue identified, CN’s role in delivering, partnering or advocating will be noted.

Image: Multicultural Neighbourhood Centre Services Expo, May 2021



¹⁷ Dawson, E. (2020, September 4). Anti-poverty Week podcast recording. (D. Cox, Interviewer)
¹⁸ BOCSAR (2021). NSW Crime Tool: <http://crimetool.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/bocsar/>
¹⁹ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/fe61104-dbe5-4f91-bdb2-fc50f7c55177/Suicide-self-harm-monitoring-Data.pdf.aspx?inline=true>
²⁰ <https://jss.org.au/what-we-do/the-mens-project/unpacking-the-man-box/>

3. Social challenges in Newcastle

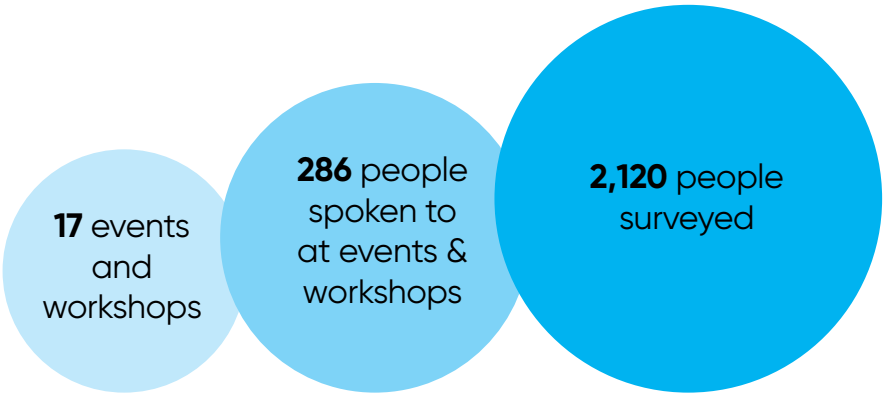
CN has developed a social needs assessment for Newcastle, with the findings grouped into 4 themes: equity, inclusion, connection and health. This assessment is based on the following evidence:

Consultation with community and key community stakeholders – 286 people	Secondary research, literature and evidence from Australia and globally
Online (1,720 respondents) and face-to-face (400 respondents) social surveys	Local social, demographic, economic and environmental trends within Newcastle ²¹
Primary research within a single Newcastle community services sector network using Social Network Analysis – 36 participants	Global social, demographic, economic and environmental trends likely to impact Newcastle in the future
Use of PowerBI dashboard developed by CN Corporate Planning team to analysis and visualize over 2,200 data points from the online and face-to-face social surveys	

As part of the community engagement for the Local Social Strategy, the CN project team spoke to 286 people at 17 events and workshops. Priority community groups were targeted, with workshops and events designed to ensure the inclusion of the following groups:

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities, including refugees	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
People from low socio-economic backgrounds	Disability community
LGBTIQA+ communities	Older people
Youth	

Community feedback was captured via 2 surveys between June and September 2021. The online survey explored community participation, access to services, wellbeing, safety, and perceptions around social matters and social justice issues. The face-to-face survey explored social matters and participation in the community. In total, 2,120 people provided their views (online survey = 1,720 and face-to-face survey = 400). A representative sample of diverse groups responded to the survey, including LGBTIQA+ communities, younger people, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. A full report on the community engagement, including surveys, can be accessed [here](#).



3.1 Equity challenges

3.1.1 Housing affordability and insecure housing

Housing affordability and insecure housing is by far the greatest social issue concerning the people of Newcastle. Of the 2,120 respondents from the Local Social community surveys, 53% reported that affordable and inclusive housing is the biggest social issue in Newcastle, with 51% of online survey respondents (1,720 people) saying it is difficult or very difficult to access affordable housing. While housing was an issue for all respondents, those aged 70+ years generally found it easy or very easy to find housing, while younger people, LGBTIQA+ communities, people with disability and CALD communities had the most difficulty accessing affordable housing.

'Lack of regulation of the housing market has resulted in rental prices and purchase prices skyrocketing. I'm 33 with a decent full-time job but owning a home is not a reality.'
(Survey respondent)

For Newcastle, stable and affordable housing plays a critical role in the health and wellbeing of families and individuals. Housing is considered to be 'affordable' when households pay less than 30% of their gross household income on housing costs (renting or purchase). 'Social housing' is secure and affordable rental housing for people on low incomes with housing needs. It includes public and community housing. While the provision of social and affordable housing has traditionally been the domain of the state government, local government can play a role in policy, advocacy, land use, and planning controls and guidelines, as well as property and levy programs to aid the delivery of affordable housing. However, everything we do must be done in partnership, as it is impossible for local governments to solely respond to the complexity of the housing challenge.

²¹ Sources include: Australian Bureau of Statistics, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Bureau of Meteorology and Australian Institute for Health & Welfare

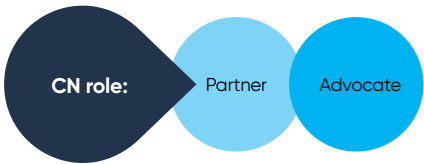
Current social and affordable housing needs in Newcastle:

10,700 housing-stressed households ²²
4,780 social housing properties (public and community) understood to be fully occupied → a waitlist of 1,179 approved households on the NSW Social Housing Register
7,000–7,500 affordable houses required by 2041 → 139 delivered to date ²³

In regional NSW, Newcastle (and Lake Macquarie SA4) has the highest level of projected unmet social housing need until 2036, and the second highest existing unmet need.

Further to the social housing demand, there is evidence of increasing homelessness locally. Equity Economics research on the impact of the COVID-19 recession estimated that ‘experiences in homelessness’ across Newcastle (and Lake Macquarie SA4) would increase by 40.5%, or around 470 people, based on the report’s June 2021 homelessness estimates of 1,624 people in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie²⁴. Additionally, people ‘at risk of homelessness’ in the area were estimated at just over 6,000 in June 2021. The report notes that this reflects the combination of larger populations of at-risk individuals and local increases in unemployment.

Rising wait times of approved NSW Social Housing applicants in Newcastle are another challenge²⁵. Of the 1,179 general and 96 priority approved applications for the Newcastle area as of June 30, 2020, wait times are between 5 years (for any form of social housing) and more than 10 years (for larger or specific-need properties).



3.1.2 Rising living costs

Concerns regarding rising living costs in Newcastle were reported by survey respondents. This included the cost of housing and rentals, but also referred to other living costs such as transport, food and health services, and the linkage with inadequate wages. From the online survey, most respondents were satisfied with their standard of living (66%); however, non-binary respondents had the lowest level of satisfaction (37%), followed by people with disability (42%) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (43%). When asked about satisfaction with future security (financial, housing, employment), only 42% of respondents were satisfied.

‘As the world grows more expensive, our wages stagnate. Nothing is affordable. Not rent, sport or tertiary education. All of which are in high demand, implicating a cut in costs. Where is it?’
(Survey respondent)

While Newcastle has relatively low levels of socio-economic disadvantage, there are significant differences across the LGA (as outlined in section 3.1.2), showing that high levels of disadvantage are experienced in some geographic areas and demographic groups.

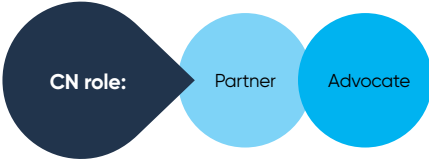
²² JSA (2021). If a household is paying more than 30% of their gross household income on housing costs, they are considered to be ‘housing-stressed households’.

²³ City of Newcastle (2020), City of Newcastle Local Housing Strategy

²⁴ Equity Economics (November 2020), ‘A Wave of Disadvantage Across NSW: Impacts of Covid 19 Recession Report’, accessed at the following weblink: https://www.ncoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/A-WAVE-OF-DISADVANTAGE-–COVID-19_Final.pdf

²⁵ NSW Government Communities and Justice (2018), ‘Waiting Times for Social Housing’, accessed at the following weblink: <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/applying-assistance/waiting-times>

The COVID-19 pandemic has further impacted those disadvantaged groups, with newly vulnerable community members experiencing housing, financial and food insecurity for the first time. According to the Foodbank Hunger Report (2021), more than 1 in 6 adults in Australia can be categorised as ‘severely food insecure’, meaning they experience multiple disruptions to their eating patterns and often have to reduce their food intake. Concerningly, 1 in 3 of these people are experiencing this vulnerability for the first time due to COVID-19²⁶.



3.1.3 Access to social infrastructure

Social infrastructure refers to the facilities, spaces, services and networks that support the quality of life and wellbeing of our communities²⁷. This includes ‘hard infrastructure’ such as facilities or physical structures (e.g. community centres, libraries, hospitals, schools, parks, sports fields etc.), where ‘soft infrastructure’ such as social, cultural and recreational services, programs and activities are often delivered.

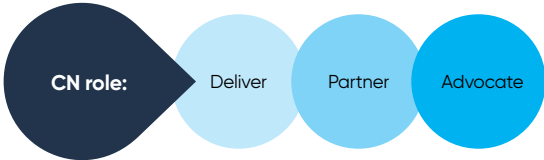
From the online survey, 77% of respondents reported easy access to libraries, and this was consistent across community groups. However, only 38% reported easy access to community centres and spaces, with non-binary people (17%) and people with disability (19%) finding access most difficult. According to community members, priorities to increase the shared use and enjoyment of community facilities, services, public open spaces and recreation facilities include: equitable access to and inclusion in those facilities; affordable and well-maintained spaces; and flexible, multi-purpose spaces that cater to a range of users and interest groups.

‘[There is] disparity in the quality of public facilities available between poorer and wealthier parts of the city.’
(Survey respondent)

Access to health, aged care and social support services was of concern to survey respondents. An increase in demand for these services over the past 5 years has been linked to increasing disadvantage (including unemployment); an ageing population and increasing social isolation; and improved communications and promotion of services²⁸. In terms of healthcare, 59% of online survey respondents found it easy to access services; however, this was harder for non-binary people (38%) and people with disability (46%).

Some barriers to access include the geographic distribution of services, with more services located in the city centre rather than the western suburbs, and a perceived lack of connected, accessible and affordable transport that further exacerbates the issue. For LGBTIQ+, CALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, a primary barrier was a perceived lack of culturally appropriate, safe and inclusive social services, including dedicated spaces for these community groups. Limited directional signage indicating key landmarks and facilities (e.g. libraries, toilets) was seen as another challenge to accessing social infrastructure.

‘More safe places for queer people. A safe space for young queer adults to go. Newcastle doesn’t even have a gay/queer bar anymore.’
(Survey respondent)



²⁶ Foodbank Hunger Report (2021): <https://reports.foodbank.org.au/>

²⁷ Infrastructure Australia (Australian Infrastructure Audit, Aug 2019)

²⁸ CN (2021), Newcastle Social Infrastructure Strategy, Needs Assessment Report

3.2 Inclusion challenges

3.2.1 Inequality of opportunity

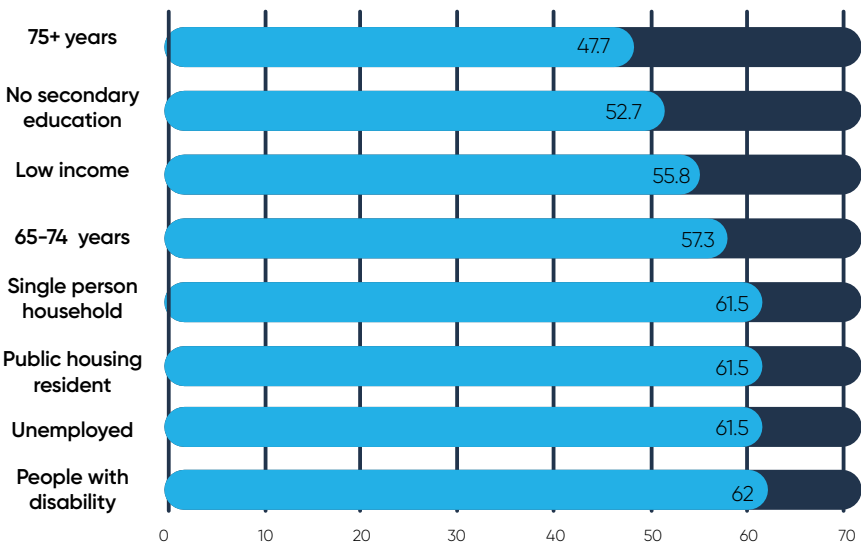
Across both Local Social surveys (2,120 respondents), access to meaningful and fairly paid employment was the third greatest social concern (11%). Concerns were related to job opportunities, job security and the future job market. People with disability, non-binary people and LGBTIQA+ communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, younger people, and CALD communities were particularly concerned about, and impacted by, access to meaningful and fairly paid employment.

'Casualisation of the workforce – I work, but not enough hours. My children work casually and can't get a home loan.'
(Survey respondent)

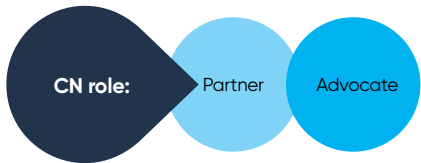
'Access to diverse, high value work opportunities. Living in Newcastle is still a sacrifice career-wise when compared to metro cities.'
(Survey respondent)

While access to learning and education opportunities was perceived as easy for most online survey respondents (51%), non-binary people, people with disability and CALD communities found it slightly harder (33%, 40% and 43% respectively).

Another key aspect of equal opportunity, and a key challenge facing Australians, is digital inclusion, with digital transformation being experienced in many aspects of economic and social life. In 2021, the Newcastle LGA scored 69.0 in the Australian Digital Inclusion Index²⁹, below the national average of 71 and the City of Sydney score of 83. However, key groups in our community are being left behind digitally, with some scoring up to 20 points lower than the Newcastle average. These groups are shown in³⁰.



Source: Australian Digital Inclusion Index



²⁹ The Australian Digital Inclusion Index uses survey data to measure digital inclusion across three dimensions of access, affordability, and digital ability.
³⁰ Australian Digital Inclusion Index – Data Dashboard: <https://www.digitalinclusionindex.org.au/interactive-data-dashboards/>

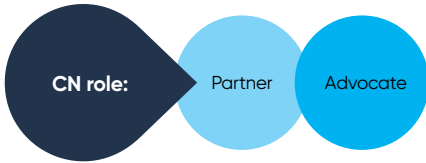
3.2.2 Discrimination

Discrimination based on race, origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, age and ability was identified as an issue within the communities of Newcastle. Discrimination was seen as both overt (e.g. physical and verbal abuse) and hidden (e.g. discriminatory workplace policies). While values of respect and fairness are at the heart of Australia's culture, one in 4 Australians experience major discrimination through unfair policy, law, treatment or practices³¹.

In Newcastle, a broad range of community members and stakeholders expressed concern about race-based and place-of-origin discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and multicultural communities impacting their economic, cultural and social life. Discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation was seen to exclude these communities from equal access to services, facilities and workplaces. Exclusion from economic and social life was also felt by older people and people with disability, with the accessibility of the built environment of particular concern.

'Diversity – Newcastle does not have a very diverse population, and this often manifests with exclusionary behaviour, if not outright discrimination.'
(Survey respondent)

'Access to change tables/hoists in disability toilets. Without these basic amenities these people won't go to events or Newcastle at all.'
(Survey respondent)

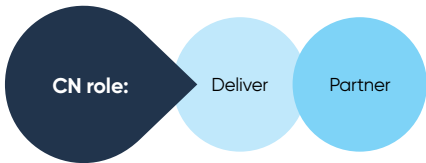


3.2.3 Limited opportunity to express and connect to culture

A broad range of community members and stakeholders expressed concern about the limited opportunity to express and connect to the diverse cultures that exist in Newcastle. This referred to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures, multicultural communities' cultures, and artistic, intellectual and creative expression. If diverse cultures, identities and experiences are not welcomed, it can lead to people feeling excluded and experiencing a limited sense of belonging. Initiatives that embrace diversity through reconciliation activities, celebrate the richness of our diverse cultures and lived experiences, and strive to inform and educate our communities were welcomed.

'More cultural events. We need an Awabakal and Worimi cultural centre where there are activities, tours, and information. Not just for tourism but for our mob too.'
(Survey respondent)

'Moving past monoculture. We need to welcome all nationalities to create a vibrant, diverse population full of cultural richness if we want to become truly cosmopolitan.'
(Survey respondent)



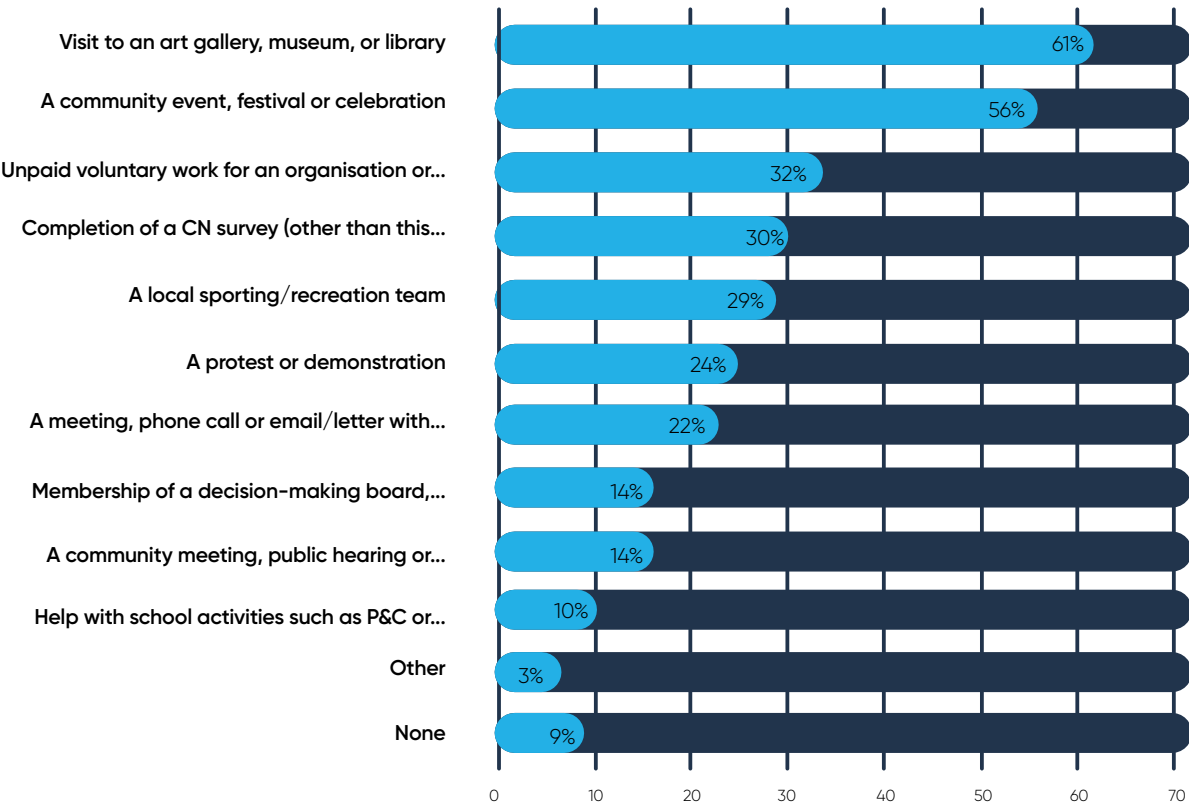
³¹ Australian Social Inclusion Index: <https://inclusive-australia.s3.amazonaws.com/files/Inclusive-Australia-2020-21-Social-Inclusion-Index-m>

3.3 Connection challenges

3.3.1 Community participation

Participation in community life is an essential aspect of individual wellbeing and social connection, leading to greater social cohesion. In Newcastle, visiting an art gallery, museum or library (61%) and attending a community event, festival or celebration (56%) were the top activities reported by respondents to the online survey.

Figure 7. Community participation – Online survey, total sample = 1,720

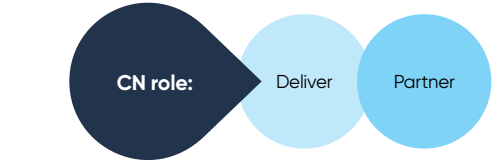


Respondents who identified as a non-binary or as part of the LGBTIQ+ community were more likely than other groups to have attended a community event, festival or celebration, or to have taken part in a protest or demonstration, but were less likely to be part of a local sporting team. Respondents with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage were, on average, slightly less likely to participate in the community activities included in the survey.

In terms of barriers to community participation, lack of time due to other commitments was the most common barrier cited, both overall and by most key groups. Respondents who identified as non-binary and those in the LGBTIQ+ community tended to report more barriers than other key groups, particularly feeling unsafe or uncomfortable attending community activities (44% and 28% respectively, vs 15% overall). People with disability also reported more barriers, though these were related to concerns for health and wellbeing (52% vs 22% overall), difficulty accessing venues (26% vs 10%), and transport issues (21% vs 8%). Barriers to participation in community activities reduce with age, with younger respondents citing more barriers than older respondents.

'Events that are inclusive. Accepting all individuals from all environments, e.g. celebrating all cultures, affordability of events, accessibility of events through adequate transport.'
(Survey respondent)

'Lack of community activities and inclusive space for LGBTIQ+ and non-binary people. Understanding about non-binary pronouns and how to address gender diverse people and other appropriate services.'
(Survey respondent)

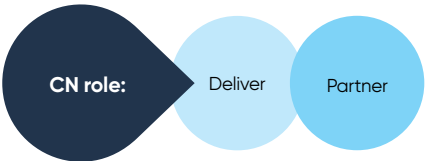


3.3.2 Access to information and influence in local decisions

For some community groups, gaps in access to information and news have been identified throughout the COVID-19 pandemic response, with vulnerable groups particularly excluded due to the reliance on electronic and virtual access to information. Access to information plays a pivotal role in sustainable communities as it improves people's social, economic and political integration within their communities³².

Access to information assists community members in knowing what community activities, workshops and events are available, leading to better social and economic integration. At present, 27% of online survey respondents reported difficulty in finding information about available activities and programs as a key barrier to participation. Information related to local planning and issues assists communities' political integration through involvement in local decisions. At present, community members and stakeholders reported limited participation in local decision-making and civic engagement, with only 14% of online survey respondents taking part in local decision-making boards or committees, community meetings, public hearings or discussions.

'Creating an inclusive, safe and connected community. Connected to decision-makers who will listen to us... We're all in this together, let's listen to everybody.'
(Survey respondent)



3.3.3 Social isolation and loneliness

Social isolation and loneliness can be harmful to both mental and physical health. With 29% of people living alone in Newcastle³³, social isolation is fast becoming a major challenge to ensuring connection to and inclusion in the wider community. A range of community members and stakeholders highlighted this as a key issue in Newcastle.

Risk factors for social isolation and loneliness include living alone, not being in a relationship, being unemployed, receiving income support, and lack of satisfaction with one's financial situation³⁴. Social isolation varies across age groups, with loneliness tending to be more common in young adults, males, those living alone, and those with children, either singly or in a couple³⁵. Studies investigating the relationship between age and loneliness often have contradictory findings, with some finding higher levels of loneliness among older people while others find lower levels; this may be linked to relationship status³⁶. Many people reported experiences of social isolation and loneliness during COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. Although most regions of Australia reported improvements as lockdown measures began to ease, COVID-19 has highlighted how vulnerable our communities can be in the face of such shocks.

³² UNESCO (2020), "Access to Information in Times of Crisis": <https://en.unesco.org/themes/access-information>

³³ .idcommunity, ABS (2016): <https://profile.id.com.au/newcastle/household-size>

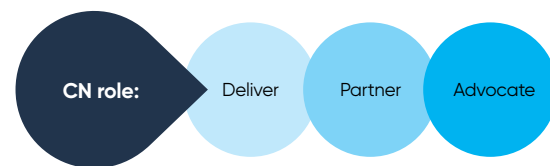
³⁴ Flood (2005); Lauder et al. (2004); Relationships Australia (2011); Baker (2012)

³⁵ Baker (2012)

³⁶ Relationships Australia (2018)

'Social isolation in all its forms continues to impact on the wellbeing of our communities and people. This includes welcoming diversity [in all its people] – we are past just acceptance...'

(Survey respondent)



3.4 Health challenges

3.4.1 Health and wellbeing

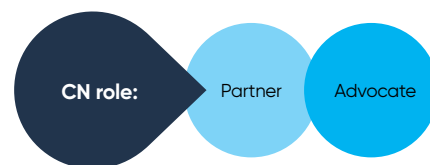
In Newcastle, and across Australia, mental ill-health and declining trends in physical health are a major public health issue. Increased demand for mental health services and concerning rates of suicide amongst younger populations have been observed. In 2019–2020, 11.2% of the Australian population received Medicare-subsidised mental health services (an increase of 6% since 2009–2010); in Newcastle, this was close to 19% of the population. In Australia, the leading cause of death for people aged 15–44 was suicide, which is reflected in the Newcastle context as well.

A trend towards less active and less healthy lifestyles has led to health and wellbeing issues. Overweight and obesity is a major public health issue and a leading risk factor for ill health in Australia. Across the country, 67% of adults over the age of 18 years are overweight or obese, with the Hunter New England and Central Coast Primary Health Network reporting 69% of the adult population as overweight or obese³⁷.

Respondents to Local Social online and short surveys reported mental health and physical health as the second (19% of respondents) and fourth (6% of respondents) key areas of social concern. This was greater amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and CALD respondents, who reported mental and physical health as the top areas of concern. Common issues included timely access, limited availability of services (particularly specialist mental health services), and cost.

'Access to mental health services. Psychologists are too expensive therefore not accessed when required.'

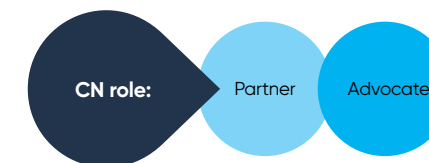
(Survey respondent)



3.4.2 Social dimensions of climate change and crisis events

Climate change and crisis events such as COVID-19 challenge the health and wellbeing of Australians and the capacity of health and social support systems to respond. We know our climate is changing, with impacts in the form of rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns and higher frequency of bushfires, as well as rising sea levels and temperatures and ocean acidification. There are strong relationships between the quality of the environment (air, water and food systems) and physical and mental health and wellbeing. These relationships need attention as we continue to adapt to climate change and crisis events, and consideration of the social domain is essential.

Particular attention should be given to vulnerable communities. Adaptation must be inclusive and account for the underlying factors that contribute to vulnerability, such as issues related to geography, culture, age, gender, diversity, disability and socio-economic status. For example, heatwaves can disproportionately impact the elderly, children, outdoor workers, and those suffering from chronic disease. Around Australia, many local governments, including Newcastle, have heatwave plans in place that clarify responsibilities and outline measures for enhancing long-term community resilience³⁸. As part of the recent community engagement for the Newcastle 2040 CSP, over 5,000 pieces of feedback were collected, with environment a high priority, specifically stronger action on climate change. (21% of respondents), highlighting the need to act.

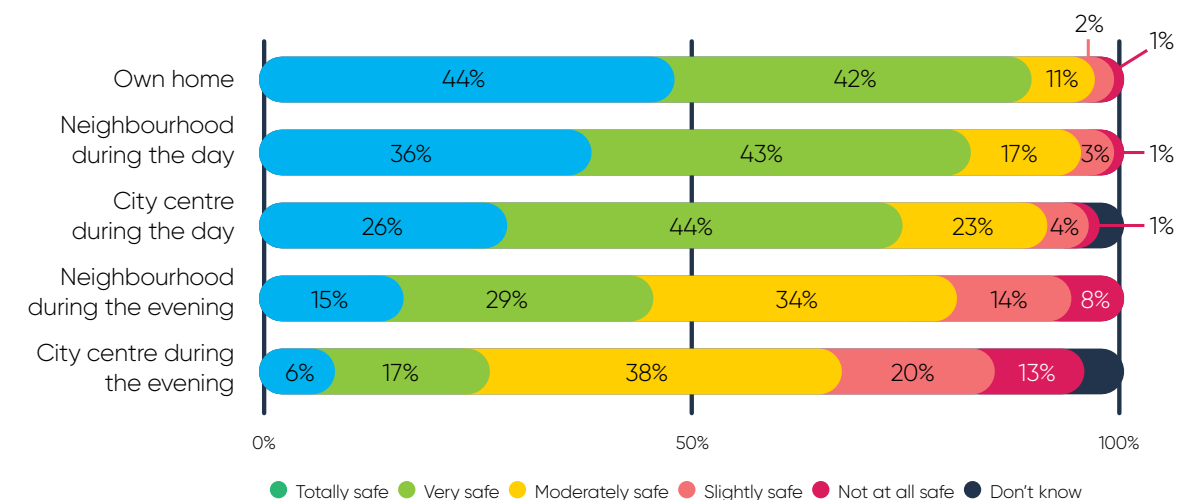


3.4.3 Community safety

Community safety is a complex issue, and no single agency is able to tackle it alone. CN collaborates with a wide range of stakeholders to implement strategies for improving safety in our city and community. This section presents community perceptions of safety, a summary of crime data in Newcastle, and key community safety concerns.

Community members who responded to the online survey were asked about their safety perceptions and to rate how safe they felt in a variety of locations, using a 5-point scale from 'totally safe' to 'not at all safe'. Results are presented in .

Figure 8. Safety perceptions – Online survey, total sample = 1,720



Overall, most respondents felt safe at home (86% totally or very safe), in their neighbourhood during the day (79%), and in the city centre during the day (70%). People felt less safe at night, both in their own neighbourhood (44%) and in the city centre (23%). Analysis by key groups reveals people who identified as non-binary feel the least safe overall, particularly in the city centre during the day (49% totally or very safe vs 70% all respondents), and in their own neighbourhoods during the day (65% vs 79%). Older respondents (70+ years) felt less safe in the city centre than other groups, both at night and during the day, and people with disability also had weaker safety perceptions overall than most other groups.

³⁷ Australian Institute for Health and Welfare (2020), Overweight and obesity: an interactive insight

³⁸ Australian Government (2021), National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy, 2021–2025

'Safety and security in the city at all times of day and night – more diverse use of space at night to provide passive surveillance and security.'
(Survey respondent)

'Toxic masculinity and the violence it brings. Making much of the city unsafe for women and LGBTQI people. It dominates most spaces in Newcastle, creating an unsafe monoculture.'
(Survey respondent)

A summary of crime data and trends in the Newcastle LGA is presented in below. Most crime categories in the Newcastle LGA are trending downwards or are stable over the 5-year period between July 2016 to June 2021, with the exception of breaching bail conditions, which has increased. However, it is important to note that for 9 of the 14 crime categories reported, Newcastle ranks in the top 20 out of 120 LGAs in NSW in terms of the rate of offending. Furthermore, there are 5 crime categories in which Newcastle experienced a higher rate of offending than that of the NSW average in 2021.

Figure 9. Newcastle LGA local crime categories and trends in 2021

No.	Offence type	Number of incidents	Our ranking out of 120 LGAs	Rate of offense compared to NSW (per 100,000 population) ³⁹	2-year trend	5-year trend
1	Malicious damage to property	1,956	21	1.8	Stable	-4.4%
2	Steal from motor vehicle	1,439	7	2.4	Stable	-10.2%
3	Fraud	1,417	4	1.5	-8.8%	Stable
4	Breach bail conditions	1,378	25	1.3	Stable	+4%
5	Non-domestic violence-related assault	1,166	12	1.8	Stable	Stable
6	Break and enter dwelling	858	17	2.2	Stable	Stable
7	Steal from retail store	769	8	1.8	Stable	Stable
8	Domestic violence-related assault	674	64	1.0	Stable	Stable
9	Motor vehicle theft	520	10	2.2	Stable	Stable
10	Alcohol-related assault	418	17	2.3	Stable	-5.6%
11	Sexual assault	256	29	1.6	Stable	Stable
12	Steal from person	80	12	1.9	Stable	-17.7%
13	Alcohol-related offensive conduct	60	35	1.7	Stable	-10.6%
14	Robbery without a weapon	50	3	2.1	Stable	Stable

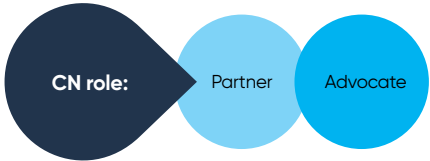
Source: NSW BOCSAR (Bureau of Crimes Statistics and Research)


³⁹ The ratio to NSW rate statistics is a comparison of an NSW regional rate per 100,000 population to the NSW rate per 100,000 population. A ratio of one indicates parity with the NSW rate. Ratios indicating double the NSW rate (or more) before rounding are highlighted in red.

3.4.3 Community safety

Two key areas of concern were raised by community members and stakeholders throughout the engagement: domestic and family violence (D&FV) and drug- and alcohol-related crime. Several D&FV issues were identified, including a lack of availability of services such as crisis and support accommodation; a lack of safety for victims in public spaces; and the increase in vulnerability of women in becoming homeless due to leaving abusive home environments. In the Newcastle LGA, there are roughly 13 reported domestic violence incidents reported per week, 674 incidents over 2020 – 2021. These issues were further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as a significant proportion of women experienced first-time and escalating violence, which many women attributed to factors associated with the pandemic⁴⁰.

Drug- and alcohol-related issues occurring in public spaces were identified as another concern by community members and stakeholders. Alcohol was considered a contributor to other challenges including assaults, robberies, people consuming alcohol in public spaces (both during the day and at night), and alcohol addiction. Concerns were also raised regarding the presence of drugs within the community, including people supplying drugs in public spaces, the prevalence of addiction, and the impact of drug addiction on both mental health outcomes and crime rates.





Discussion question

Have we included the priority social issues and concerns affecting our communities in Newcastle? What is missing?

<https://www.menti.com/k7ngzaj889>

⁴⁰ Boxall, H., & Morgan, A. (2021). Intimate partner violence during the COVID-19 pandemic: A survey of women in Australia (Research report, 03/2021). ANROWS.: <https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2021-10/apo-nid314517.pdf> Local Social Discussion Paper 26

4. How to make the Local Social Strategy a reality

4.1 What makes our communities feel supported and included?

In both community surveys, respondents were asked what helps them to feel supported and included in their community in an open-ended question. Results are summarised in the word cloud of below.

Figure 10. Feeling supported and included in the community – short survey and online survey, total respondents = 2,120

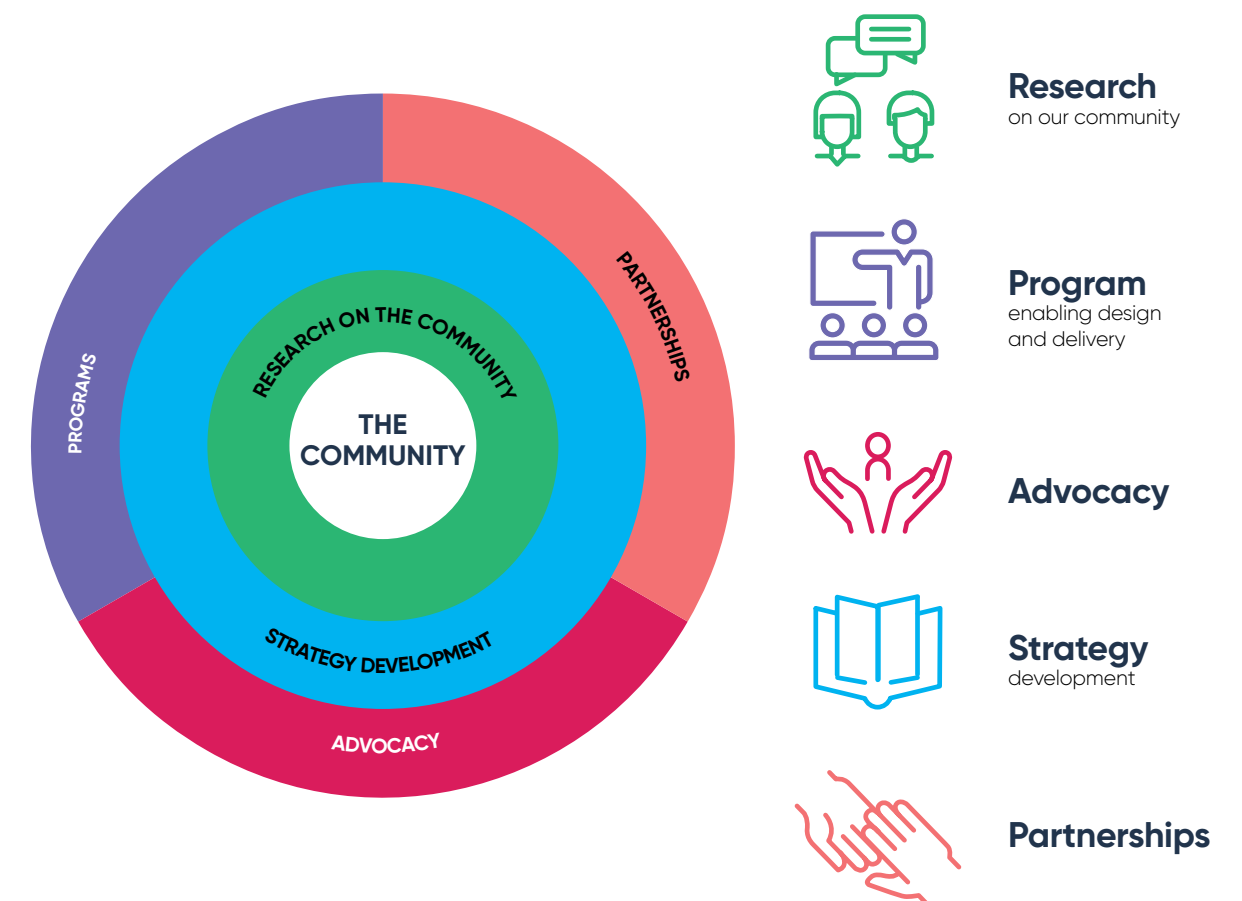


The most common word to emerge in responses was community (703 mentions). This was most often expressed as community groups (105), community events and activities (115), and local community (18). The next most common word was neighbours (431). This was most often articulated as good or great neighbours (270). This was followed by access (313), which was expressed as access to health and social services (57) and easy access to facilities and services in general (25). People came through with 260 mentions, which related mainly to nice or friendly people (19) and new people (8). Events also came through strongly (253), with several mentions of community events (100).

4.2 The role of CN in the social domain and its partners

While CN will take a lead role in the implementation of the Local Social Strategy, responsibility for achieving our long-term goals rests with all levels of government, community organisations, businesses and individuals. CN has various roles including to deliver, partner and/or advocate as outlined in section 2.3 of this Discussion Paper. Our objective is to build a more socially just and inclusive Newcastle by working with the community and empowering it to take collective action on identified and priority social issues. Importantly, monitoring, evaluation and learning frameworks will be embedded into the Local Social Strategy to track progress towards these goals. Figure 11 provides an overview of CN's roles in the social domain.

Figure 11. CN's roles in the social domain



4.3 Emerging priorities and objectives for the Local Social Strategy

In response to the social needs identified through the strategy development to date, the diagram below presents a draft overview of the priorities, objectives and principles of the Local Social Strategy.

At the centre of all we do are our people and our planet. Key principles of social justice, relationships and regenerative practice, as well as evidence-based decision-making and innovative practice, inform the strategic approach (outlined in section 2.3). The 4 proposed priorities are equitable, inclusive, connected and healthy communities, with 4 objectives under each priority.

Please note: These priorities, objectives and principles are intended for further discussion as part of the community engagement process and are not yet finalised. Furthermore, this Discussion Paper does not propose the detailed strategies, actions and projects that will respond to the priorities and objectives. These will be outlined in the Action Plan of the Local Social Strategy document once we have received community feedback on this Discussion Paper.



Priority 1: Equitable communities

VISION: Support access to affordable, sustainable and inclusive housing, services, programs and facilities to improve quality of life and the strength of our community.

To achieve this vision, 4 draft objectives (which require further development through community engagement) have been articulated:

- 1.1 Advocate and support access to affordable, sustainable and inclusive housing
- 1.2 Support access to essential services such as transport, health and social services
- 1.3 Work towards the equitable distribution of resources such as income, digital access and social infrastructure
- 1.4 Provide access to community programs that respond to identified needs in our communities.

Priority 2: Inclusive communities

VISION: Recognise, acknowledge and celebrate the Awabakal and Worimi peoples’ strength, resilience and living culture. Champion inclusion across our community so that everyone is supported, valued and respected.

To achieve this vision, 4 draft objectives (which require further development through community engagement) have been articulated:

- 2.1 Support connection and expression of culture, particularly in our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) communities and CALD communities
- 2.2 Work towards equality of opportunity, including employment, training and digital inclusion
- 2.3 Celebrate diversity, creating a sense of belonging and welcome in our communities
- 2.4 Combat discrimination through respect, education and commitment to change.

Priority 3: Connected communities

VISION: Support diverse communities to build strong social and cultural connections through tolerance, participation and inclusion, so that everyone feels welcome in Newcastle and enjoys a sense of belonging and place.

To achieve this vision, 4 draft objectives (which require further development through community engagement) have been articulated:

- 3.1 Facilitate creative, innovative community-led and informed participation
- 3.2 Encourage and support social connection
- 3.3 Enable political voice through local democracy and active citizenship
- 3.4 Facilitate access to information for community participation and civic engagement.

Priority 4: Healthy communities

VISION: Promote and support active and healthy communities that have strong physical, mental and spiritual health and feel safe and secure in the city.

To achieve this vision, 4 draft objectives (which require further development through community engagement) have been articulated:

- 4.1 Support the health and wellbeing of our communities
- 4.2 Enable an active lifestyle
- 4.3 Contribute to community safety
- 4.4 Facilitate community resilience and adaptation in the face of climate change and crises (e.g. COVID-19 pandemic).



Discussion question

Are the draft Local Social Strategy priorities and objectives, which seek to respond to the key social needs in Newcastle, moving in the right direction? Why or why not, and what is missing (noting that Action Planning will occur in the next phase of strategy development)?

<https://www.menti.com/tm31rvhih6>

4.4 Finalisation of the Local Social Strategy

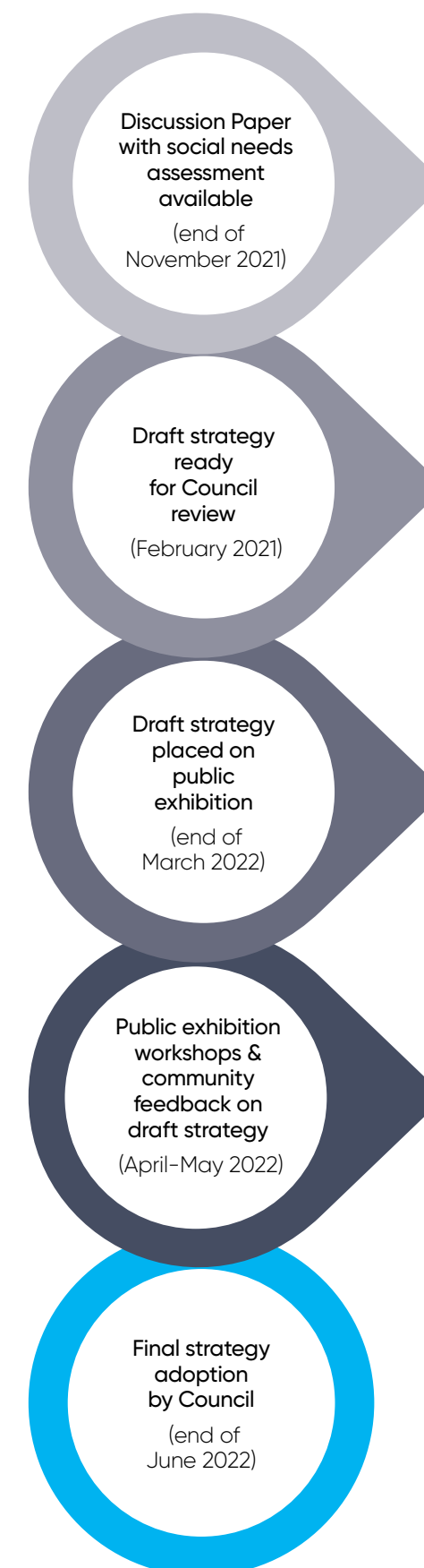


Image: Rising from the Embers, Land and Cultural Festival, Wollotuka Institute, University of Newcastle, May 2021

Annex

A. Definitions and key terminology

Diversity: Diversity in its broadest sense refers to the many ways in which people all differ, such as culture language, ethnicity, faith and beliefs, gender, age, ability, sexuality, gender identity, class, socio-economic status, income, education level, occupation, caring responsibility and where we live. These attributes help define who we are, our own experience and how the world sees us. They make up the various facets of an individual's identity.

Human rights: Derived from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as adopted by United Nations in 1948. It is about recognising the inherent dignity of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. Human rights are universal, to be enjoyed by all people, no matter who they are or where they live.

Intersectionality: Refers to a way of seeing people's experiences as shaped by (but not limited to) their individual characteristics such as age, race, socio-economic background, religion, sex, gender, sexuality and more. This overlap or combination of characteristics makes up a person's unique identity. Intersectionality recognises that people's lives and experiences are shaped and influenced by this diversity of characteristics and experiences – resulting in power and privilege for some people and discrimination and oppression for others. While some people may have added layers of power and privilege due to characteristics such as gender and race, others experience compounding layers of discrimination.

Social capital: Social relations that have productive benefits for the community. It is an outcome of community engagement and community capacity building processes. Elevated levels of social capital assists in the creation of social cohesion and reduce inequalities in communities.

Social cohesion: A socially cohesive community is one where people from all backgrounds are welcome, valued and have a sense of belonging. Cohesive communities are also safe, resilient and share a sense of solidarity.

Social inclusion: Social inclusion is a universal human aspiration. It means being included in the life of the community around you, with full access to the opportunities and resources available, having a sense of belonging and feeling respected and valued for who you are. It has positive flow-on effects on individual and community health and wellbeing. Human rights are fundamental to overcoming discrimination and promoting inclusion.

Image: 'Count Us In' Festival, March 2021



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Figure 5. Unemployment in Newcastle from June 2019 to June 2021



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