INFRASTRUCTURE FOR SOCIAL CONNECTION
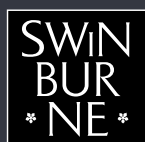
PREPARED FOR THE INNER SOUTH-EAST METROPOLITAN PARTNERSHIP WORKING GROUP

Researching the existing assets for creating social connectedness and identifying interventions

SWIN BUR NE

Social Innovation Research Institute

INNER SOUTH-EAST
METROPOLITAN
PARTNERSHIP

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR SOCIAL CONNECTION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 | Executive Summary

1.1 Background and Project Aims

Social connection is a critical outcome of community-based planning and activity given its ability to positively affect health and wellbeing at the individual and community level. Within communities, people, places, activities and connections are key components in building an infrastructure to maximise the benefits of connection.

This report informs a deeper understanding of key foundations, assets and optimal conditions for social connection within communities from a strengths-based perspective. Specifically, it focuses on social and structural resources of the community, and how they develop a platform to enhance connection outcomes.

We examined public infrastructure places and spaces within four local government areas (LGAs), as well as user experiences, to inform how social infrastructure can best encourage and support pro social connection activities within the community.

To explore social connection we:

- Undertook a review of literature and practice with regards to community connection initiatives,

- Developed and classified groups or types of pro connection places and spaces,

- Mapped both social data and places and spaces to understand the alignment of places and spaces with population characteristics, and

- Undertook focus groups with managers and facilitators of activities, places and spaces to understand perceptions of user experience, and opportunities to enhance the current infrastructure.

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The aims of the project were to:

- Understand what a place-based approach looks like when it comes to reducing social isolation and loneliness and encourage pro social connection

- Leverage an understanding of current pro-connection places and spaces (assets) in the region as well as 'hotspots' for connection

- Provide empirical evidence of community experiences within places and spaces

- Provide a foundation for understanding the breadth and role of places and spaces in the community

- Deliver recommendations for the Inner South East Metropolitan Partnership to advance to government for future initiatives.

1.2 Summary of Findings

We identified close to 2700 examples of pro-connection and pro-integration spaces in the four LGAs - focused on community (or non commercial spaces). These were classified into 32 sub-groups and five operational groups (arts, sports and recreation, community, infrastructure, online).

The findings report and provide cases for a range of types of spaces including learning, problem solving and helping spaces, bumping or incidental spaces, as well as those inclusive to specific age groups.

Maps provide identification of spaces across the LGAs as well as hotspots for pro-social connection, where high density of places existed within each LGA. Hotspots are different in their distribution, density and place makeup across the LGAs. Analysis of mapping for each LGA then extends to highlight cases of alignment between the distribution of places and social data.

Perspectives of user experiences were then collected via focus groups. They identified places, activities and people as critical components of social connection infrastructure. Facilitators noted that social connection was viewed as important, and linked to positive community outcomes. Social connection was often seen as the by-product of pro-connection activities, as opposed to the primary outcome, or roles of those managing places and spaces. There is scope to provide support to groups and places to ensure social connection is embedded as a strategic aim.

Optimal components for social connection include the maximisation of bumping/incidental spaces, facilitation of collaboration across diverse groups or places, developing a sense of ownership and ensuring a balance and choice of formal and informal activities. Barriers were identified relative to design or capacity, via a lack of inclusive practices or personal barriers related to language, technology or confidence.

While organisations had been responsive, COVID-19 restrictions have had significant impacts for groups and spaces. A by-product of COVID was growth in how digital and hybrid spaces contribute to social connection, with facilitators citing benefits related to growth. While this usage is likely to continue, there were concerns over the resourcing of online spaces and risks associated with negative online behaviours. The largest concerns were around inclusive spaces and access for older populations and CALD communities.

1.3 Overview of Recommendations:

Six recommendations from the report are grounded in DJPR strategic outcomes related to building prosperous and liveable regions and precincts, growing vibrant, active and creative communities and fostering a fair and inclusive society.

- Recommendations 1 and 2 present opportunities to expand on key components and outcomes delivered by infrastructure.

- Recommendations 3 and 4 consider initiatives related to online or digital spaces.

- Recommendations 5 and 6 provide guidance for capacity building for social connection infrastructure including processes to inform and capitalise on benefits, best practices and barriers identified in the project.

Recommendations are explained in detail in Part 7, including some examples of operational action steps to build on the recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Enhance Collaboration and Connection Across and Between Diverse Places

Recommendation 2: Prioritise Creation and Maintenance of Incidental and Bumping Spaces

Recommendation 3: Support Accelerating Progress towards Digital Capacity and Online / Hybrid Spaces

Recommendation 4: Embed Digital Inclusion Strategies for Older Age Groups and CALD Communities

Recommendation 5: Develop Resources and Training for Best Practice Social Connection Programming and Place Design

Recommendation 6: Enhance Understanding of User and Community Experience

2 | Introduction

Social connection is fundamentally concerned with interactions between individuals. Connection is represented in the layers of individual social networks, from the small, intimate layers, to wide networks of acquaintances. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the foreground the importance for establishing and maintaining healthy social connections, at the individual, community and societal level.

Past work undertaken by the Inner South-East Metropolitan Partnership spanning four LGAs has focused on social isolation and loneliness. This has included journey mapping and asset maps for specific populations of individuals. Outcomes of this and related work to date have suggested that social connection "is a regional and state issue that is non-discriminatory" and that "experiences can begin or stop as people go through life transitions" (Metropolitan Partnership, 2020). Further detailed was the limited community knowledge and awareness of available support, and reluctance to access services that encompass a "program" framework, pathologising loneliness and social isolation".

The **scope of this project** is determined by:

- a) 'Pro-Social Connection' places (as governed by definitions and typology developed in Part 3):

- b) physical, hybrid and digital spaces, and:

- c) four Local Government Areas governed by four Councils (Bayside City Council, Boroondara City Council, Glen Eira City Council, Stonnington City Council), and

- d) limited to the community or public infrastructure, as opposed to commercial places and spaces.

Expanding on this base, this report progresses towards a deeper understanding of the current state and opportunities within social infrastructure for generating social connection and positive outcomes.

As the setting for the project, **local councils and regions are critical components**, given their links to programs, facilities, venues and services that both indirectly and directly provide settings for social connection. To this end, the aim of the project is to identify the spaces, places and experiences that encourage and facilitate social connection within the Inner South-East Metropolitan Region, and explore and report on the experiences of those who play a critical role in the delivery of services.

Specifically, this report takes a '**pro connection' lens or strengths-based approach** (as opposed to a lens of isolation/loneliness which has been the focus of much work to date). In its transition to inform practice, it has been noted that "social connection and participation are identified within a range of policy documents, however there is no state-wide or regional strategy with a dedicated focus on connected communities and participation" (Metropolitan Partnership, 2020).

By considering **pro-connection places and spaces** and their role in the development of **social infrastructure for connected communities**, the report combines current knowledge on social connection with empirical data including social data, mapping of physical and digital spaces and insights from key stakeholders to provide recommendations.

3 | Background

3.1 Social Connection

Social connection can be described as a person's positive range of relationships with others, from light acquaintances through to friendship and love. The quality of these relationships can have benefits for both individuals and society (Hutcherson, Seppala & Gross, 2008).

"Good social relationships and connections with people around us are vitally important to individual well-being. This is important to national well-being because the strength of these relationships helps generate social values such as trust in others and social cooperation between people and institutions within our communities" (Evans 2015, p. 10-11).

Social connection and social infrastructure are integral aspects of community wellbeing. Research has shown that "those with fewer social connections are more likely to report a range of adverse physical and psychological health outcomes, such as cardiovascular disease and depression" (Farmer et al., 2019, p. 4).

Focusing on the importance of encouraging social connection in people's lives is a strength based approach to addressing loneliness, social isolation and their negative health consequences. In doing so, this "encourages individuals to be mindful of the existing resources that people have, and foregrounds the practical mechanisms necessary to maintain or build on existing connections, such as time and emotional resources" (Farmer et al., 2019, p. 2).

Previous work commissioned by the Australian Red Cross revealed that an individual's sense of belonging to a social group enables people to feel socially connected. Tajfel (1982) explains that a person's social identity is to a great extent grounded in their "knowledge that he [or she] belongs to certain social groups, together with some emotional and value significance to him [or her] of the group membership" (p. 31).

Similarly, Baumeister and Leary (1995) argue that humans are fundamentally motivated by the need to belong which the authors understand as "a strong desire to form and maintain enduring interpersonal attachments' (p. 522). This need to belong is key in understanding human interpersonal behaviour with people commonly seeking at least a small number of regular, positive, long-term, caring relationships.

Social connection is an important feature of community based interventions, having the potential to positively affect health and wellbeing and build resilience. Previous research has shown that "community members with more social connections are better able to communicate in natural disasters, and that communities with higher internal social connectedness have quicker disaster response and recovery rates" (Farmer et al., 2019, p. 5). In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, addressing the negative health consequences of social isolation and building community resilience has never been a more pertinent task.

See Appendix 2 for more detail and background on Social Connection.

3.2 Social Infrastructure and a Place Based Approach to Social Connection

Social infrastructure emerges as an important component of connection and wellbeing outcomes (Davern et al., 2017). Defined as social service needs across the lifespan, they are "essential services that create the material and cultural living conditions for an area" (Davern et al., 2017, p.195).

Social infrastructure can be related to: health; education; childcare; community support agencies; sport and recreation; parks and playgrounds, community development services; housing; employment and training, legal and public safety emergency services; public and community transport; arts and cultural institutions, senior citizen centres or "anywhere that brings people together" (Davern et al., 2017; Temple and Reynolds 2007; Whitzman 2001).

Within this, a **place based approach** is defined as "a collaborative, long-term approach to build thriving communities delivered in a defined geographic location. This approach is ideally characterised by partnering and shared design, shared stewardship, and shared accountability for outcomes and impacts" (Dart, 2018).

See Appendix 3 for more detail on Place Based Approaches as applied to this research.

3.3 Types of Spaces: Physical | Hybrid | Digital

A scoping literature review on spaces and places of social connection identified types of pro-connection places including; physical places such as third places, incidental 'bumping places', ephemeral places and community groups. In addition to these, hybrid or online places can be located as digital spaces .

Name	Description	Evidence of Social Connection
Third Places Places that aren't home or work that allow us to be social, like cafes or libraries	Third places are where people can meet up informally or locations used as meeting places in addition to their primary role Third places include; community gardens and urban farms, ocean swimming location (natural resources in the area), public places such as libraries, churches, shared areas in housing developments, and commercial spaces such as cafes, book stores, cinemas.	"Public, informal gathering places away from home (the first place) and work (the second place) that have facilitated social attachments through spontaneous opportunities for conversation and the sharing of problems as well as elations" (Vaux and Asay., 2019, p.22). Third places are "places that host the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work" (Oldenburg 1999, p. 16).
Bumping Places Places that offer the possibility for incidental interactions, though not specifically designed for connection like local art installations, sculptures or even park benches	Infrastructure such as sidewalks, areas designed for people to bump into each other, parks and playgrounds. Public art e.g. outdoor galleries, installation art, murals.	Locations "designed for people to meet e.g. streets, squares, parks, play areas, village halls, community centres" (Bagnall et al., 2018, p.21). Research has found that repetition encourages social connection, bumping places (as well as third places) allow for repetitive interaction that can either be planned or spontaneous and incidental (Andrews et al., 2015; Wood et al., 2013). Andrews et al. (2015), identified that a higher level of social connectedness was perceived to be related to higher density locations that allowed for 'incidental interactions' with neighbors, or in playgrounds, parks and cafes.

3. Background

Name	Description	Evidence of Social Connection
Ephemeral Places Places that are not permanent but when they occur they allow us to socially connect like events, festivals and street parties	Festivals, events, pop-ups and alternative use of spaces. Temporal in nature, can be a main event plus smaller regular opportunities for connection for participants organising event.	Research has found that festivals helped to "promote social norms by showcasing a common social identity and facilitating a public expression of shared values and by being part of the shared life of a community, including its rituals and traditions" (Mair & Duffy 2018, p. 884).
Community Groups Community groups create places to connect around activities with like-minded people, or people that can support or teach us	Groups found to encourage social connection included; sporting groups, community choirs, education programs, intergenerational art programs and intervention programs for at risk groups.	Research has found that a sense of working together towards a common goal helped to overcome perceived class or racial boundaries (Wilkonson, 2017). "Choir singing is a regular group activity that tends to draw members together as a single entity that must work together to produce a good sound" (Dingle et al., 2012, p. 407)
Online & Hybrid Spaces Online spaces or spaces that are both physical and online allow for alternative ways to connect	Online platforms, such as social media, websites and blogs that allow users to chat or post content. Online spaces can include or integrate emergent technology such as augmented reality games and smart home technology, social media application features such as Facebook groups. Hybrid spaces connect the online and the offline. During COVID-19, we have seen with new online spaces emerging. Examples might include places such as libraries and community houses, who integrate online activities or places, alongside traditionally physical settings or experiences.	Research has found that "social connectedness can be increased by sharing situational information between smart home devices and users. It can also increase perceived social support as the user would see the smart home devices as family members or housemates living in the same space" (Lee et al., 2017, p. 925). "The potential for geo-mapped technologies to directly improve users' social connectedness through the fostering of a sense of belonging and underlines the importance of physical public spaces—not just online ones—in facilitating positive social outcomes" (Vella et al., 2019, p. 600).

3. Background

Literature suggests the above types of spaces are all pro-connection places, that provide the setting for connection. However, certain activities and people are needed to activate and amplyify scope for connection between individuals. Therefore, best practice suggests there needs to be a purpose for people to interact other than to form connections. As such, social connection tends to occur as a by-product in pro- connection places including, but not limited to:

- Play spaces- for adults and children
- Community groups- choirs, sport and leisure activities, community radio stations
- Community gardening and urban farming
- Creating events or festivals
- Art and education programs
- Intervention programs for at risk groups
- Online technology such as Augmented Reality gaming devices and smart home technology

3.4 Framework of Practice for Social Connection

A summary of literature and existing work in pro social connection suggests key principles for building infrastructure for social connection to occur.

These recognise the role of infrastructure and a place based approach as critical, but include aspects of activities and people as connectors to ensure social connection as a **by-product of meaningful place based engagement** can occur.

Building on this, foundational aspects of pro-social connection aligned to this project are described as:

1. Focussing on **critical components** (see below) including: **spaces, places, activities** and **community connectors,** all of which are required for optimising opportunities for social connection

2. Developing a **foundation** of **safe, accessible places that provide a mix** and **choice for community engagement**

3. Ensuring the presence of **'incidental'** or **'bumping'** spaces that allow for meeting new people

4. Facilitating **activities** that include **problem-solving, negotiating** and **working on purposeful tasks** that give best chances for people to meet, build relationships and trust

5. Identifying opportunities to build (new) **collective social identities**; a shared identity of living in the same place is a great place to start to build a shared identity

6. Understanding the outcome of connection is best nurtured as a **by product of other purposeful activities**

A Framework for Social Connection

- CONNECTORS — Community connectors
- ACTIVITIES — Involving problem-solving and negoitating, Helping integrate new people
- SPACES AND PLACES — Formal, Informal, 'bumping' spaces, indoors, outdoors and online
- FOUNDATIONS — Safe and accessible choice of spaces
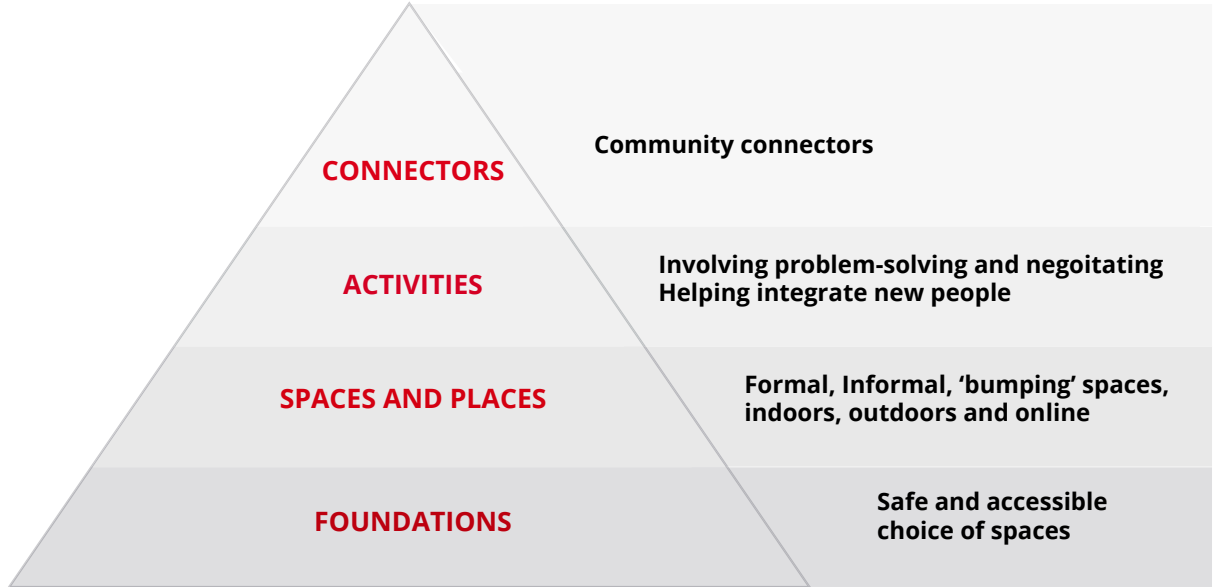
3.5 The COVID-19 Impact on Social Connection

It has been well documented that loneliness and social isolation can cause significant emotional distress and have a negative impact on our health and wellbeing (Holt-Lundstad et al, 2015).

The onset of COVID-19 since March 2020 and resultant enforced social distancing practices, has meant that more people are potentially at risk of the negative effects associated with loneliness and social isolation.

Social isolation refers to the lack of connection between a person and society, whereas loneliness is the gap between social connections and a person's perception of the quality of those relationships (Caccioppo & Caccioppo, 2014). Loneliness and social isolation are often used interchangeably, but social isolation does not have to mean loneliness.

It is important that during the time of COVID-19 restrictions, there is a focus on maintaining social connections even while physically distancing. This is critical, both at an individual and a community level.

During and post COVID-19 it has been evident that people have and will rely more heavily on online platforms and technology in addition to meeting others in physical places in order to connect with one another. Hybrid spaces can connect the online world with the physical world and include emergent technology such as augmented reality games and smart home technology. Similarly, the use of social media application features such as Facebook groups, can help to bridge the gap between the online and offline and create new hybrid spaces for us to strengthen our existing social connections and create new ones.

Given the onset from March 2020 onwards of lockdowns and restrictions for Victoria (inclusive of the four LGAs from this study), the project specifically seeks to provide evidence of the impact of COVID on place based infrastructure, including the development and presence of new online and hybrid spaces and the impact on existing physical infrastructure and communities.

A key task post COVID- 19 will be to explore ways to create and leverage hybrid spaces using the resources and technology that already exist to keep communities connected, healthy and resilient.

3.6 The Inner South East Metropolitan Partnership Region

The South East Metropolitan Partnership Region comprises 4 LGAs.
An overview of the four regions is provided below as background.

LGA (Sq Km)	Bayside (37 Sq Km)	Boroondara (60 Sq Km)	Glen Eira (39 Sq Km)	Stonnington (26 Sq Km)
Suburbs (Postcodes)	Brighton (3186), Brighton East (3187), Hampton (3188), Hampton East (3188), Sandringham (3191), Highett (3190), Black Rock (3193), Cheltenham (3192), Beaumaris (3193)	Ashburton (3147), Balwyn (3103), Balwyn North (3104), Camberwell (3124), Canterbury (3126), Deepdene (3103), Glen Iris (3146), Hawthorn (3122), Hawthorn East (3123), Kew (3101), Kew East (3102), Surrey Hills (3127)	St Kilda East (3183), Elsternwick (3185), Gardenvale (3185), Caulfield South (3162), Caulfield (3162), Caulfield North (3161), Caulfield East (3145), Glen Huntly (3163), Carnegie (3163), Murrumbeena (3163), Ormond(3204), McKinnon (3204), Bentleigh (3204)	South Yarra (3141), Toorak (3142), Prahran (3181), Windsor (3181), Armadale (3143), Malvern (3144), Kooyong (3144), Glen Iris (3146), Malvern East (3145)
June 2016 Population	102912	177276	148583	111606
June 2019 Population	106862	183199	156511	118549
Gender (%)	Male 47.6% / Female 52.4%	Male 47.9% / Female 52.1%	Male 48.4% / Female 51.6%	Male 47.5% / Female 52.5%
Median Age	44	38	37	35
Ave. Children per Family with Children	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.8
Ave. Children per Family	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.5
Ave. People per Household	2.6	2.6	2.5	2.2
Married (%)	54.6%	50.5%	49.4%	38.9%
Currently Attending Educational Institution (%)	29.4%	29.3%	27.8%	28.6%
Graduated High School (%)	73.5%	77.8%	75.3%	77.9%
Born in Australia (%)	69.0%	64.2%	58.3%	60.8%
Religious (%)	64.2%	63.3%	68.8%	63.1%
Unemployed (%)	4.6%	5.6%	5.8%	5.2%
Personal Median Weekly Income ($)	897	869	780	1042
Household Median Weekly Income ($)	2145	2083	1741	1944
Volunteered within the past 12 months (%)	23.9%	26.0%	21.3%	21.4%

Sources: Profile ID (2020); Forecast ID (2020); ABS (2020)

4 | Methodology

Noting a focus on foundational elements per the Framework in Part 3, the research design incorporated multiple elements aligned to key objectives.

The four stages of the project are outlined below. Through these steps we aimed to explore the needs, assets and gaps in pro social connection infrastructure for each of the LGAs, as well as report and translate insights of the users, managers and facilitators of places and spaces in the region.

Typology of Pro-Social Connection Infrastructure ▶ **Social Data Mapping** ▶ **Places and Spaces Asset Mapping** ▶ **User Experiences via Focus Groups and interviews**

Typology of Social Connection Infrastructure

Initially, we operationalised a foundation typology using existing collaborative work and literature. The original typology was developed by drawing on work on social connectedness conducted by the Social Innovation Research Institute and the Australian Red Cross (Farmer, 2019) and VicHealth (2010) and existing categorisations of Social Infrastructure in literature (Davern et al., 2017). We identified four base categories of **operational physical places and spaces** that encourage social connection in the context of Australian LGAs. These were identified as the following:

- Assets, Infrastructure and Natural Spaces
- Community Organisations and Groups
- Public Leisure, Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity
- Arts and Events

These categories helped identify places and spaces in each of the four LGAs that could support social connection. A process of engaging with the project working group then refined the collection and inclusion of data. Data to populate the typology of physical places and spaces was then sourced using the following inputs:

- Publicly available data
- Desk research undertaken by the research group
- Data provided by each local council

In a second step, searches for **online places and spaces** were used to uncover the location of informal connection or incidental sites within the community. By informal we refer to places and spaces where people meet or interact which are outside of known physical infrastructures sites.

Incidental sites are physical sites that may have another primary purpose than fostering social connection. For this reason, our search included connection spaces outside council and community organisation infrastructure.

Overall inputs into the typology generated 2892 assets (2692 physical and 200 digital places and spaces) across 32 sub-groups. These were then classed into both discrete and non-discrete groups for further analysis.

The Outcomes section of the report provides a categorisation of the places and spaces, and analysis of the distribution over the LGAs. We also identify here the different forms of physical places and functions for online places identified in the analysis, aligned with past work on social infrastructure.

Social Data Mapping

To better interpret the mapping of places and spaces, we used Geographic Information System (GIS) Mapping to develop an understanding of where high volumes of potentially at risk individuals may reside withing and across the LGAs.

Leveraging risk areas of social connection identified in past Inner SE Metropolitan Partnerships research (Clear Horizons, 2019), we focused on the mapping of the following variables: Age (Young people, 25 and under / Older persons, 65+) and Lone Households.

We used ABS census data retrieved from each LGAs community demographic resource (https://atlas.id.com.au/boroondara; https://atlas.id.com.au/glen-eira; https://atlas.id.com.au/bayside; https://atlas.id.com.au/stonnington) to generate mapping inputs and variables.

We applied them at the SA1 level across the LGA. Maps were generated to provide a visual assessment identifying where high volumes of individuals were located within each LGA, with identification of the higher risk groups (i.e. those over the age of 65, those under the age of 25, and those living alone/lone households). Visualisations and maps are provided in the Outcomes section for each of the four LGAs.

Places and Spaces Asset Mapping

As the second GIS stage, we mapped all identified places and spaces for pro social connection assets identified in the typology for each of the LGAs.

Mapping was undertaken based on addresses and text-based location information, and were mapped to provide a visual representation of assets for each LGA.

Mapping focused on:

a) identifying the location of identified places and spaces in each LGA:

b) identifying the 'hotspots' for pro-social connection within each LGA:, and

c) identifying where specific forms of places were aligned with higher areas of risk or need (relative to social data mapping).

Outcomes in the following section provide analysis across four maps for each of the LGAs and descriptive analysis. We focused the analysis on both the volume of places and spaces relevant to the social data for each LGA and the identified type or function of social connection assets.
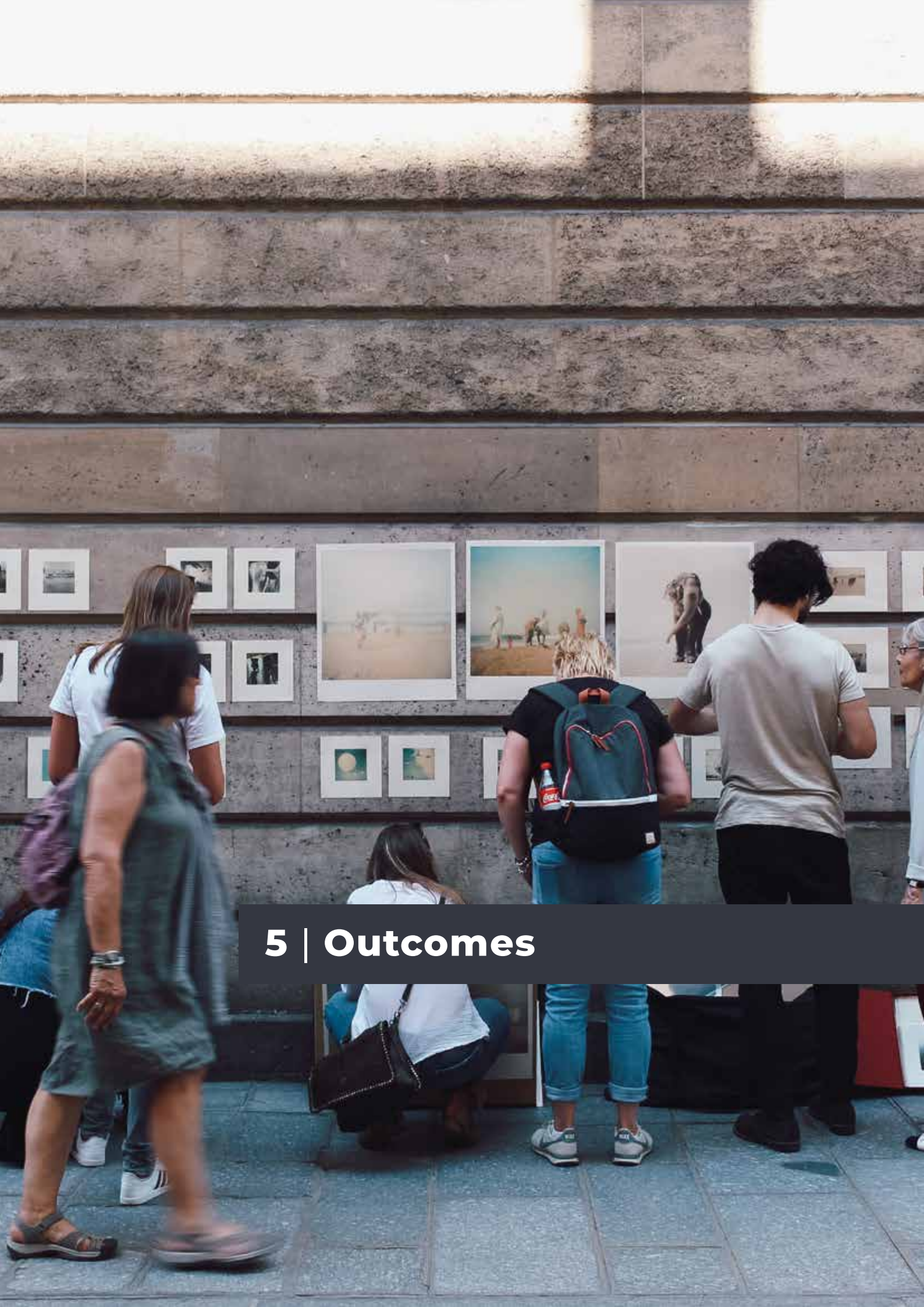
User Experiences - Focus Groups

As a final stage, focus groups were held with managers and facilitators of different types of spaces and places across the four LGAs.

Ethics was acquired via the Swinburne University Human Ethics Committee to govern data collection and use within the research process.

The aim of the focus groups was to enhance understanding of the role and function of places and spaces within the community. Focus Groups were structured in six question areas: background, places and community needs; creating connection; barriers and needs; online or digital spaces; COVID-19 impact and recovery; and amplifying impact and connection.

Focus groups and online interviews included 52 people in total. Respondents were inclusive of all LGAs and the majority of sub groups represented in the data. Thematic coding and analysis was undertaken on the data, and themes and narratives are provided in the outcomes to support results and recommendations.

5 | Outcomes

5.1 Typology for Social Connection

The inputs of the research stage and council input delivered a representation of the physical and online spaces that play a role in social connection infrastructure for each of the four LGAs and communities.

Outcomes are presented in the following sections for **physical spaces**, followed by **digital spaces**.

5.1.1 Physical Spaces and Places

The asset mapping identified 32 different sub groups or types of assets classified as pro-connection places and spaces

These were initially represented in four groups, in line with the developed operational typology with 2692 physical spaces and places identified over the four LGAs.

	Bayside (n=682)	Boroondara (n=976)	Glen Eira (n=672)	Stonnington (n=410)	TOTAL (n=2692)
Arts and Events	42 (6%)	35 (4%)	24 (4%)	40 (10%)	141 (5%)
Assets and Infrastructure	44 (6%)	99 (10%)	84 (13%)	45 (11%)	271 (10%)
Community Organisations/Groups	354 (52%)	468 (48%)	253 (41%)	175 (43%)	1250 (46%)
Recreation, Sport and Leisure	242 (35%)	374 (38%)	263 (42%)	150 (37%)	1029 (38%)

Table: Operational Space Types Located per LGA

5. Outcomes

Identification of pro-connection and pro-integration spaces in the community were defined in 32 subgroups.

Physical and online spaces were identified to operational level across the LGAs (equivalent to one space for approximately every 240 people of the population). 46% of these were community groups and organisations, with 38% recreation, sport and leisure places and 5% made up by arts and events places. The remaining 10% was represented by infrastructure.

Space Type	Subgroups
Arts and Events (5%)	Art Centres / Galleries Community Radio Stations Events – Festivals / Street Parties Markets Museums Music / Theatre Organisations Public Art and Sculptures
Assets and Infrastructure (10%)	BBQ/Benches/Seating Libraries Town Hall

Table: Operational Space Types and Sub Groups

5. Outcomes

Space Type	Subgroups
Community Organisations and Groups (46%)	Community Centre / Neighborhood House Community workshops / Classes / Training / Programs Friends of/Environmental Groups Hobbies and Arts Clubs Men's Shed Multicultural Groups Rotary Clubs/RSL/Service Groups/Probus Support Groups Older Adults/Senior Citizens Youth Focused Groups Advocacy Groups (Inc Commerce, Historical, Community) Disability Support Op Shops/Charities/Volunteering Religious Facilities and Programs
Recreation, Sport and Leisure (38%)	BMX/Skate Parks/Off-road bicycle paths Community Gardens Exercise Classes/Groups Leisure Centres /Swimming Pools Playgrounds/Recreation Spaces Public Games/Exercise Spaces Sport Clubs

Table: Operational Space Types and Sub Groups

Recognising there are a number of ways to classify these spaces, sub groups were then coded based on their type of connection to allow a more specific application in the analysis and mapping.

Note these groups were non-discrete, meaning a place could belong to multiple groups.

The following groups were developed:

Space Type (% of total coded to type)	Subgroups
Cost (27%)	Where a **cost was applied to use the activity or space**. Examples include leisure centres, swimming centres, museums and theaters.,
Incidental/Bumping (25%)	Activities or spaces which provided **possibility for incidental interactions, though not specifically designed for connection**. Examples include BBQ areas, public parks, playgrounds, public games and exercise spaces and art galleries.
Inclusive for Over 65 (42%)	Activities or spaces **specifically targeting or inclusive of those over the age of 65**. Examples include senior citizens associations or groups and training or hobby groups
Inclusive for Young (under 25) and Family (41%)	Activities **specifically targeting or inclusive of those under the age of 25 or young families**. Examples include libraries, playgrounds and recreation spaces and child play centres.
Active Space (37%)	Activities or spaces which are were **defined by physical activity or spaces to encourage physical activity**. Examples include leisure centres, sport or active recreation clubs, playgrounds and sporting facilities or courts and exercise classes.
Learning, Problem Solving and Helping (48%)	Activities or spaces **specifically looking at task-related learning, shared activities or trust building.** Examples include advocacy groups, hobbies, arts and language classes and community gardens.
Outdoor and Natural Spaces (20%)	Activities or spaces which are **based outside or in natural spaces**. Examples include BBQ areas, benches and seating, playgrounds, parks and community gardens ,

Table: Space Types
Note: Multiple codes possible for each place, so total does not equal 100%

Space Type	Bayside	Boroondara	Glen Eira	Stonnington
Cost	198 (29%)	381 (39%)	104 (17%)	96 (23%)
Incidental/Bumping	117 (17%)	166 (17%)	216 (35%)	132 (32%)
Older Age Groups	360 (53%)	378 (39%)	294 (47%)	136 (33%)
Younger Age Groups	238 (35%)	355 (36%)	303 (49%)	188 (46%)
Active Space	232 (34%	370 (38%)	255 (41%)	152 (37%)
Learning, Problem Solving and Helping	388 (57%)	477 (49%)	267 (43%)	182 (44%)
Outdoor and Natural Spaces	111 (16%)	153 (16%)	206 (33%)	110 (27%)

Table: Space Types per LGA
Note: Multiple codes possible for each place, so total does not equal 100%

5.1.2 Online Spaces and Places

In addition to Physical Spaces, over 200 online or digital spaces were also identified representative of the various sub groups, and the four LGAs. Online spaces for social connection were identified as

- *Hybrid or extension spaces: Physical places or spaces than have concurrent physical spaces as well or those providing both online and physical interactions*
- *Online spaces: Digital spaces delivering online services or scope for connection only*
- *COVID-19 emergent spaces: New or transitional online spaces providing services in the COVID-19 setting*

Online spaces were found to fulfill a number of often complementary aims and functions.

Assessment of online spaces categorised the following purposes of online spaces:

Purpose	Definition	Operational Aims and Examples
Facilitate Meetings, Events and Activities	A space that assists in the organisation of online and physical events/activities through the generation of awareness and conversation.	• Building awareness of physical and online events/activities • Providing an avenue for event queries and discussion • Aid in the organisation of meet ups, events and activities • Encourage social interaction within the community
Advice/ Recommendations	A space that encourages community members to share knowledge, insights and opinions with the objective of helping others to learn and solve problems	• Encourage community to ask questions and queries • Encourage community to share knowledge/ insights/opinions • Encourage community to discuss relevant topics • Help communities to learn and solve (individual and collective) problems

Table: Assessment of online spaces categories 7-8 purposes of online spaces

Purpose	Definition	Operational Aims and Examples
Information Sharing and Delivery (website extension)	A space that enables efficient and effective communication of relevant information to a targeted and interested audience.	• Information shared by an organisation/ individual relating to that entity's purpose • Provide additional information that isn't available on other platforms (i.e. website) • Provide an interested and targeted community with relevant information • Improve efficiency and effectiveness of communicating relevant information, such as speed and reach of communication. • Enhance audience knowledge in relation to the online space's subject focus
Network / Common Interest	A space that enables people with mutual interests to connect, share information or services, and generate or act upon mutually beneficial opportunities.	• Connect individuals who share a common interest • Facilitate interaction and the exchange of information or services • Provide a space for passionate discussion • Develop professional or social contacts • Identify, generate or act upon common interest opportunities
Buy/Sell/Swap + Commerce / Borrowing	A space that provides the community with a simple, easy to use platform that enables members to trade and borrow items with the objective of generating mutually positive outcomes.	• Help community members trade and borrow items that they desire • Connect like minded community members • Simplify and facilitate the community's ability to Buy/Sell/Swap/Borrow • Improve the livelihoods of community members

Table: Assessment of online spaces categories 7-8 purposes of online spaces

5.2. Case Studies for Spaces and Places of Social Connection

To provide examples of the various places of connection, we present a range of eight case studies below, chosen to represent an array of the groups and practices within the wide social connection infrastructure.

Bumping Space: Carnegie Community Laneway Garden & Gallery

The Carnegie Community Laneway Garden & Gallery is a community organised initiative that started in 2017 by a group of locals who decided to turn a run-down commuter laneway into a community garden and laneway gallery. Planted with propagations from local gardens, community members removed the rubbish and worked with a local artist to install a series of murals and art pieces. Anyone is able to take part in the initiative via the groups Facebook page.

This community initiative is an example of how bumping spaces can be created to encourage social connection to occur through incidental interactions and by working collaboratively to redesign existing spaces.


Link: https://www.facebook. com/CarnegieLaneway/

Hybrid Space: Glen Eira Rocks

Glen Eira Rocks is a Facebook group originally started by Moongala Community House in Bentleigh East. The group invites community members to paint rocks and include the hash tag #GlenEiraRocks with the Facebook sign on the back and hide them in locations such as parks and playgrounds for others to find. Once hidden, the location details are then posted on the Facebook group page. Members who discover the painted rocks, take a photo of it and post the location where they found it and either keep it or re-hide it for someone else to find. The Facebook group has gone viral and spread across Victoria, with the Vic Rocks Facebook group having over 30,000 members.

This initiative is an example of how online application features such as Facebook groups can help to create hybrid spaces of social connection where group members can interact both online and offline in physical spaces by providing a reason for members to interact, so that connection can occur as a by-product.
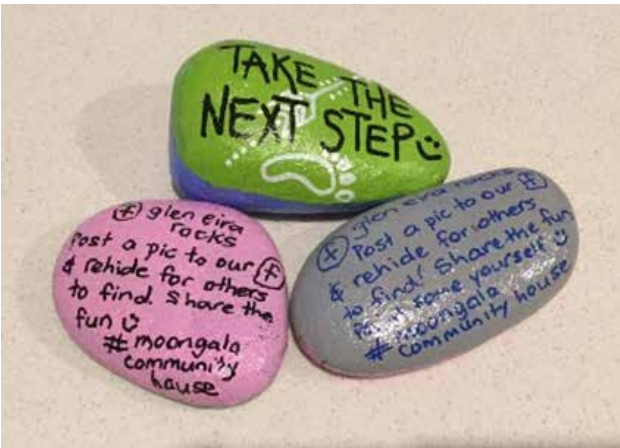
Pro-connection places for young people: FReeZa

The FReeZa program is targeted at young Victorians aged between 12-25. The program provides affordable and accessible music and cultural events for young people in an alcohol, drug and smoke-free environment. FReeZa committees organise live band gigs, dance parties and other activities such as BMX/Skate competitions, Hip Hop showcases, art and short film competitions, DJ dance events, theatre productions and local community, music and youth festivals. In addition to their committees and events FReeZa also runs an online platform through which they engage their community with their activities and local musicians.

FReeZa is a good example of how to connect young people in safe and supervised environments. Important hereby is that they work together, decide and organise activities that they are passionate about.

Link: https://www.youthcentral. vic.gov.au/get-involved/freeza

COVID-19 specific spaces - Stonnington Book chats

Stonnington Book Chats is an initiative started due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequential restrictions in Victoria. The group aims to connect library members to library staff as they share their recommendations from the eLibary along with news and ideas around books and reading. This service is complemented by real time chats about books. Once a fortnight the library organises a book chat following a theme such as 'romance' or 'narrative non-fiction' where participants can share their experiences and recommendations via zoom with like-minded book lovers. Stonnington Book Chats focuses their book recommendations on ebooks and audiobooks available through their services to enable accessibility.

This is a good example of a responsive organisation that was able to quickly adopt to the pandemic. They were able to connect to their members and continue to offer their services in a safe and accessible way

Link: https://www.facebook.com/ groups/stonningtonbookchat

Online Spaces - Stay Connected, Swinburne University

Stay Connected is an initiative to support staff and students during the COVID-19 restrictions. The initiative is based on a series of informal conversations that encourage people to connect and share experiences. The aim is to provide support via practical forms such as how to best structure your workday when working from home, talk about challenges during lockdown, exchange of support opportunities, friendly chatter or simply connecting with others from the Swinburne cohort. The online space offers information on how to connect to others along with other resources intended to provide support through the COVID-19 restrictions such as mental health resources or information on flexible working options.

This is a good example of an initiative targeted at connecting University members via a variety of activities for its diverse cohort. The online catch ups are voluntarily and informal.

LINK: https://www.swinburne. edu.au/intranet/coronavirus- covid-19/stay-connected/

Pro- connection places for older people: Bayside U3A

Bayside U3A is a learning exchange for retired or semi-retired adults, a place where older adults can attend to learn or teach through formal and informal classes, talks and demonstrations. Bayside U3A was the 100th Victorian U3A to be established. Each U3A reflects the needs and interests of its community and offers a wide range of classes and activities, all provided by volunteer tutors. Courses range from 'Introduction to Astrology' to 'Wine Appreciation'.

This initiative is an example of a pro- connection place targeted to older people who are at risk of social isolation. U3A's offer the opportunity for older people to socially connect with others through learning something new or teaching a course for an affordable annual fee.

LINK: https://www.facebook. com/BaysideU3A/

Activated places: ABC Community Garden

The Armadale Baptist Church have used land to create a community garden. The garden is a space for all residents to come together and participate in sustainable gardening and local food growing in Stonnington. The garden provides opportunities for residents to connect, learn and work together through local food production. The Committee designed a Mission Statement to help guide the development of the garden at Armadale Baptist Church. "Our garden promotes wellbeing and resilience for individuals, community and the environment in a shared space where we learn, teach, model, research and discover sustainable, productive and creative living".

This initiative is an example of how community gardens are activated places, where social connection occurs often as by- product through problem solving activities, such as gardening and learning about sustainable practices.

LINK: https://www.facebook. com/ABCCommunityGarden

Integrated places: Brighton Recreational Centre

The Brighton Recreational Centre is a not- for- profit community based organisation which provides a range of educational, cultural and sporting activities to all ages and abilities in their local community. The centre offers over 25 sporting and artistic programs for children and adults, plus a gymnastics program, school holiday programs, squash courts and room hire facilities. Classes at the centre are inclusive and diverse ranging from pottery all abilities classes to fitness for over 50s classes.

This initiative is an example of an integrated place, as the centre is a multipurpose place for a variety of activities, there are opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to interact and socially connect.

LINK: https://www.facebook. com/BrightonRecCentre

5.3 Social Data & Assets Mapping

Outputs for social data and asset mapping are presented concurrently in this section.

Maps are provided to demonstrate the **assets and infrastructure which exists for each of the LGAs** alongside **identification of where potentially high volumes of a particular group of the population** reside.

This mapping includes **visual identification of hotspots** to identify where high density of places or spaces exist for the LGA.

Specific **mapping of social data** focused on variables known to present as high risk within the Australian population, as well as those who have been a focus of past research undertaken by the Inner South East Metropolitan Partnership. Maps are presented for each LGA with the following focus:

• High volume of population over 65 years combined with targeted or inclusive spaces for over 65 age groups

• High volume of population members aged 18-25 combined with targeted or inclusive spaces for under 25 age groups and families

• High volume of lone households or people living alone combined with incidental or bumping spaces

Boroondara

Figure: All Places and Spaces by Operational Group
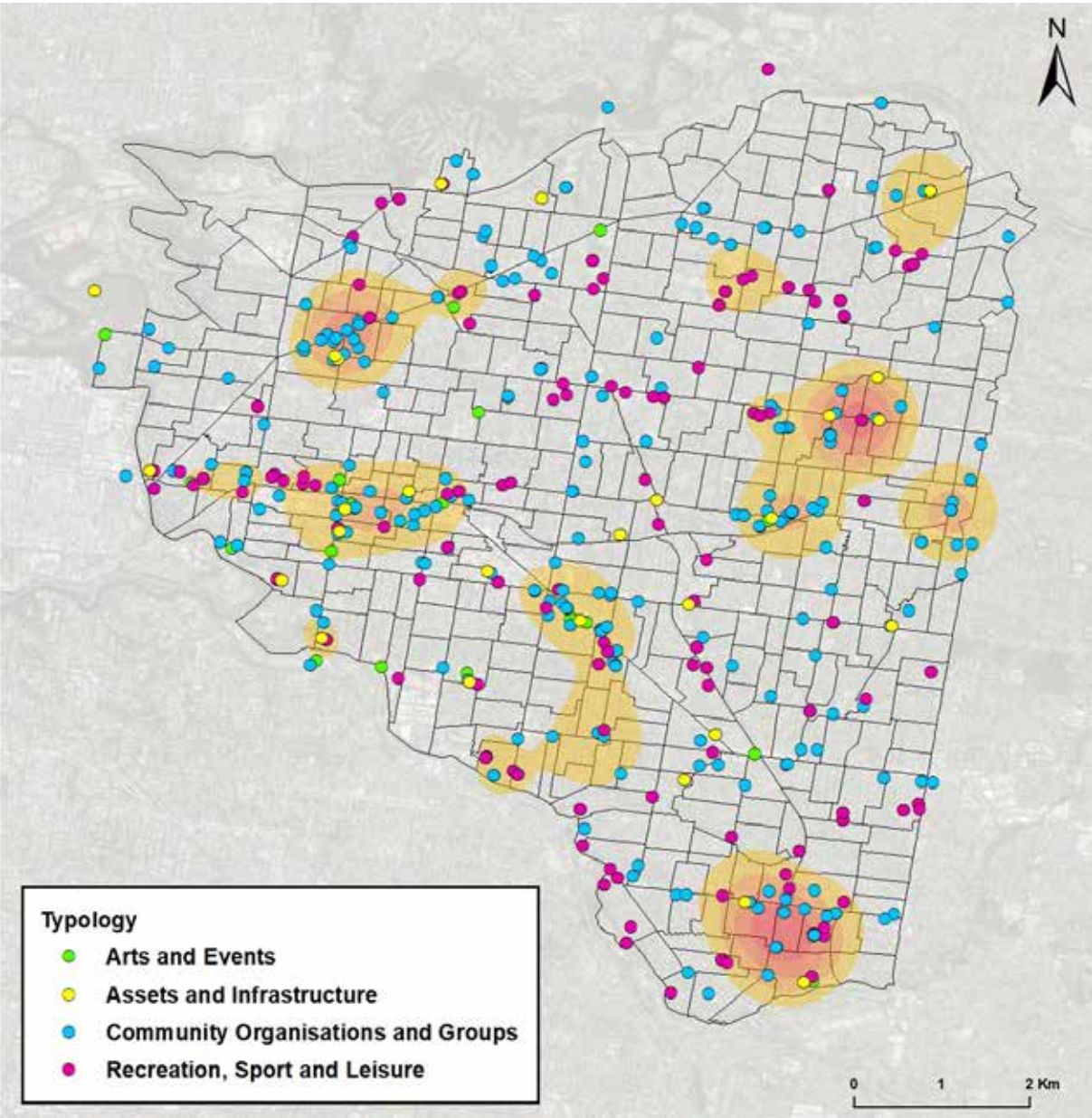
Population: 177,276 (60 sq Km)	Located
Arts and Events	35
Assets and Infrastructure	99
Community Organisations/Groups	468
Recreation, Sport and Leisure	374
Bumping Spaces	166
Inclusive (65+)	378
Inclusive (Young/Family)	355
Learning, Problem Solving	477

Hotspots:

- Glenferrie Road/ Burwood Road Hawthorn – dense mix of recreation, sport and leisure / community groups

- Ashburton – high volume of community groups and recreations sport and leisure – few arts and events
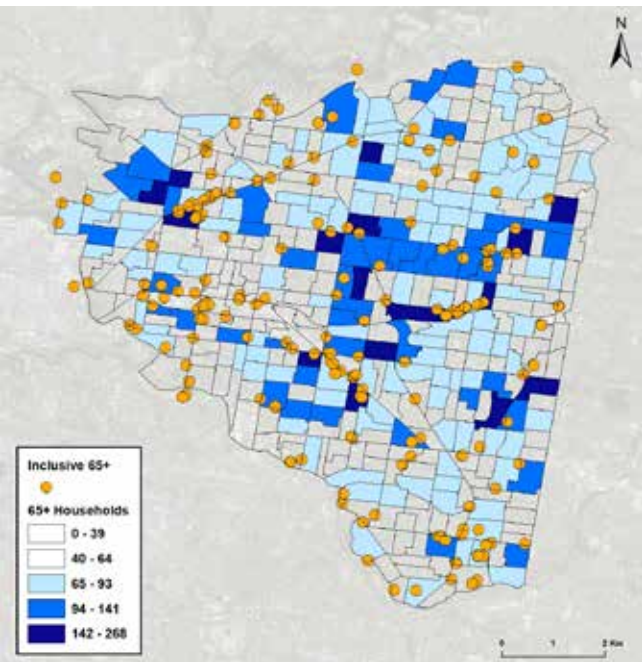
- High Street Kew – high volume of community groups

Figure: High Volume (Over 65) and Inclusive Spaces (Over 65s)

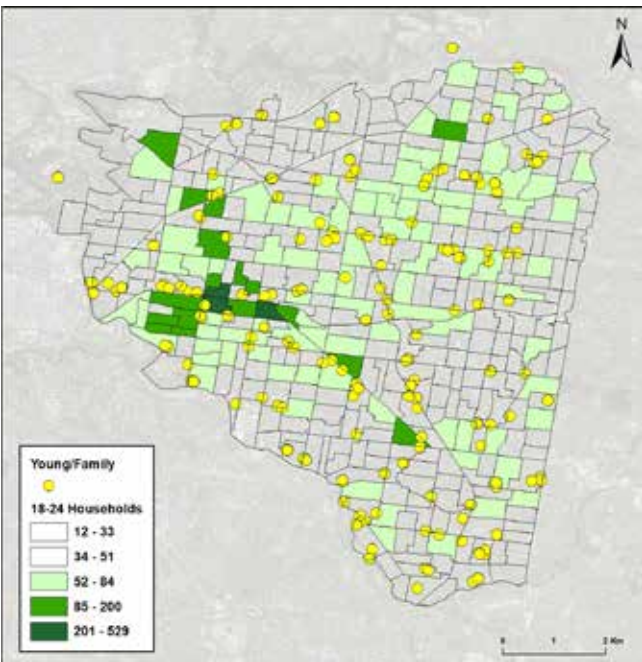Figure: High Volume (Under 25) and Inclusive Spaces (Young/Families)

Figure: High Volume of Lone Households and Incidental/Bumping Spaces

Notes:

Servicing the main cluster of people over 65 around Balwyn and Camberwell, are a number of activities that are inclusive for older people

Clustering of activities are around main shopping strips in most cases.

For young people and young families there is a cluster of activities along the Alamein train line which is great for accessibility through public transport

In Balwyn North there is a cluster of both 65+ and 25 and under residents – there is an opportunity here for intergenerational activities for social connection

Where there are clusters of lone households there are also clusters of bumping spaces – can these be better leveraged to encourage more incidental connections particularly for lone households to participate

Interactive versions of the maps and detailed analysis has been provided to each LGA/ Council as part of the project.
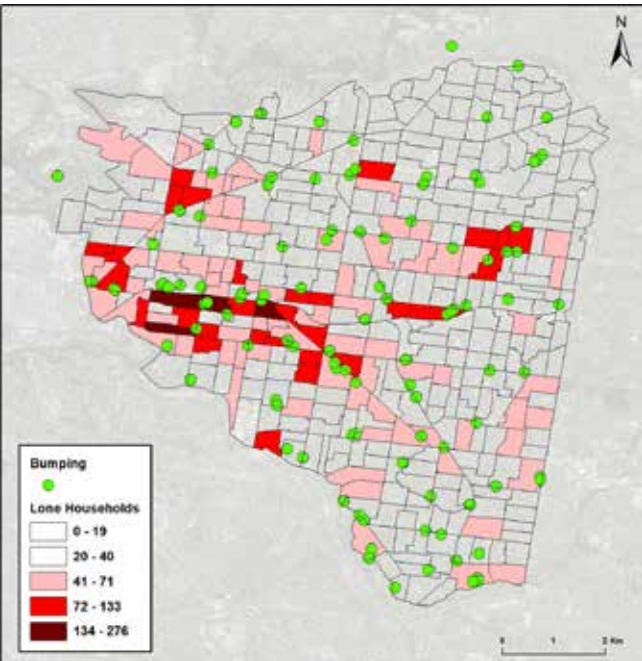
Bayside
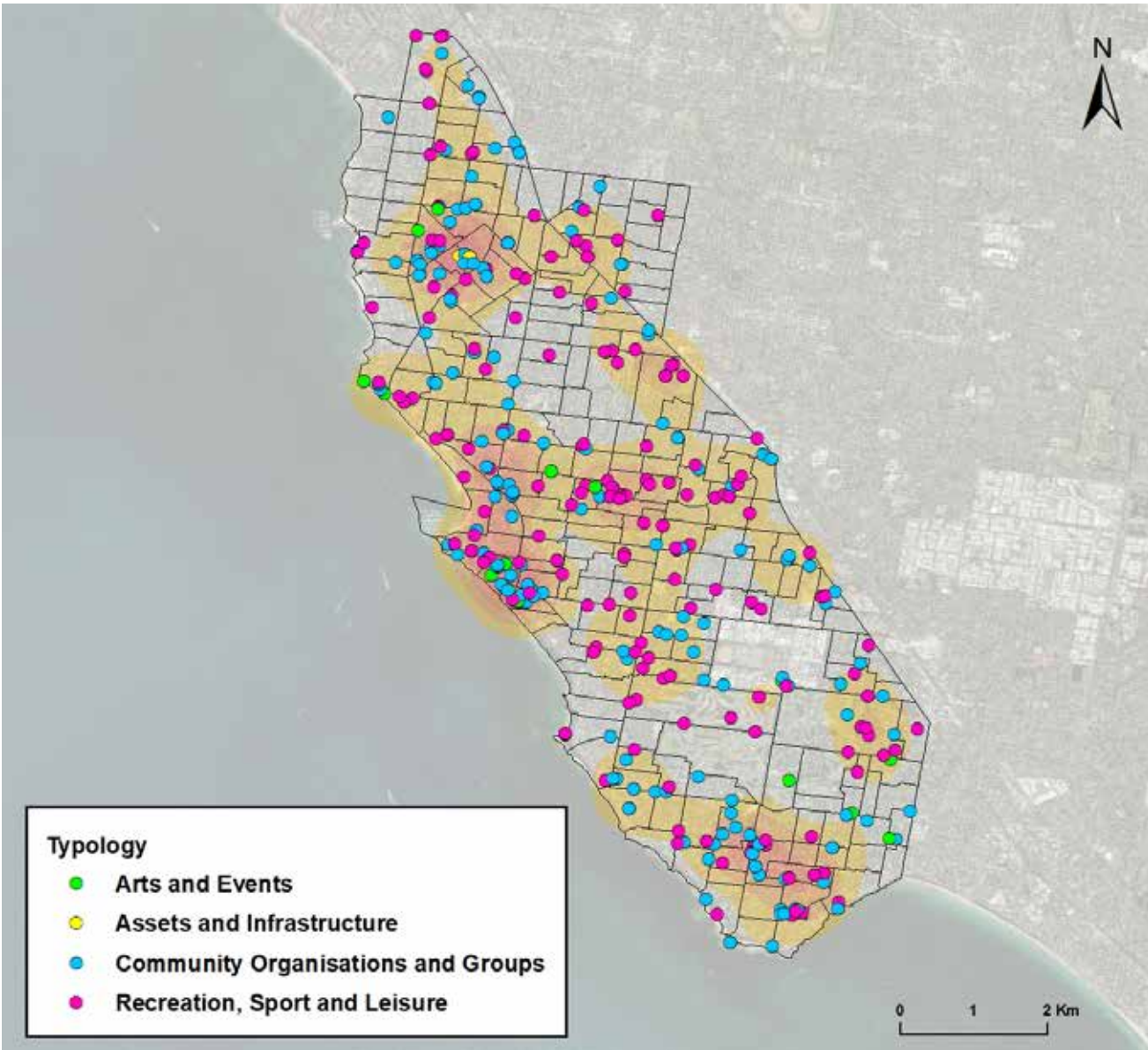
Figure: All Places and Spaces by Operational Group

Population: 102,912 (37 sq Km)	Located
Arts and Events	42
Assets and Infrastructure	44
Community Organisations/Groups	354
Recreation, Sport and Leisure	242
Bumping Spaces	117
Inclusive (65+)	360
Inclusive (Young/Family)	238
Learning, Problem Solving	388

Hotspots:

- Sandringham Beach – community organisations and recreation sport and leisure most dense

- Brighton – predominantly community organisations with a few recreational and arts spaces

- Beaumaris – community organisations and recreational spaces – arts spaces located away from the main cluster
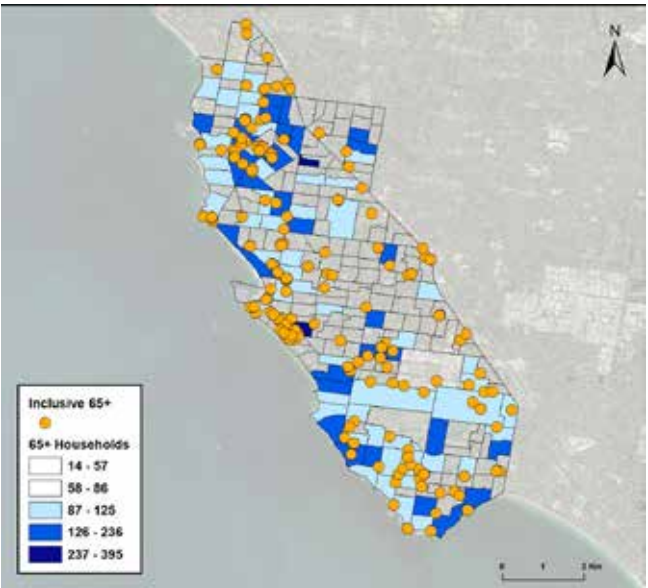
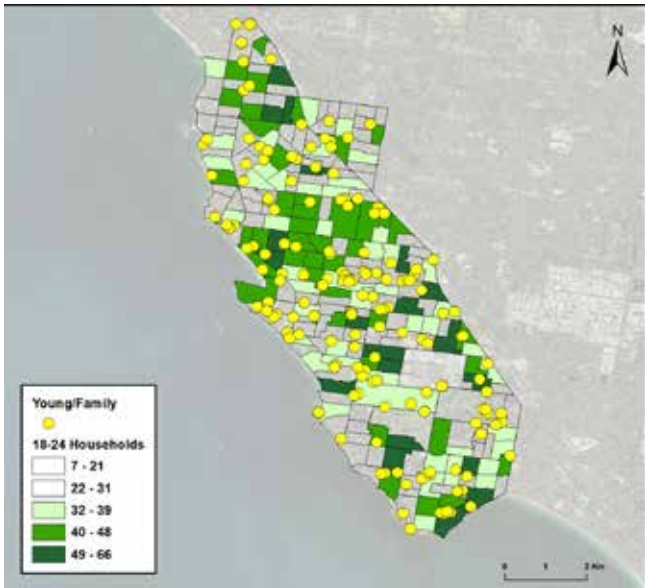Figure: High Volume (Over 65) and Inclusive Spaces (Over 65s)

Figure: High Volume (Under 25) and Inclusive Spaces (Young/Families)

Figure: High Volume of Lone Households and Incidental/Bumping Spaces

Notes:

The clusters of young people under 25 and those over 65 in Beaumaris suggest there is potential here for engagement between intergenerational spaces to support social connection

Beaumaris also has a good proportion of bumping spaces. It is possible these can be leveraged to support engagement spanning lone households, older residents and under 25s

Areas that have large numbers of people under 25 are serviced with activities catering to young people and families within walking distance

Interactive versions of the maps and detailed analysis has been provided to each LGA/Council as part of the project.

Glen Eira

Figure: All Places and Spaces by Operational Group
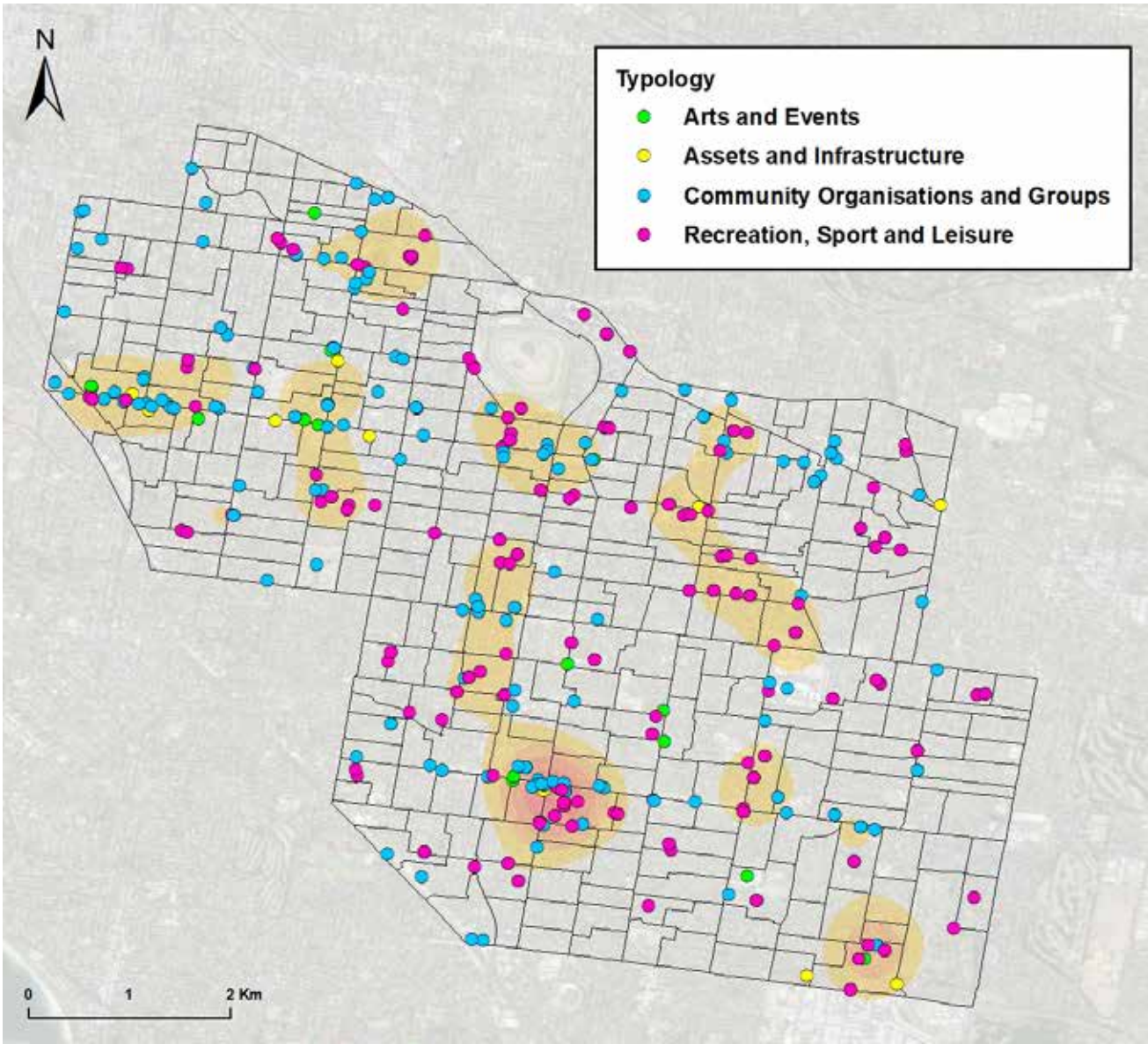
Population: 148,583 (39 sq Km)	Located
Arts and Events	24
Assets and Infrastructure	84
Community Organisations/Groups	254
Recreation, Sport and Leisure	263
Bumping Spaces	216
Inclusive (65+)	294
Inclusive (Young/Family)	303
Learning, Problem Solving	267

Hotspots:

- Carnegie cluster is mainly sport and recreation
- Bentleigh cluster has a mix of community organisations and groups and recreation sports and leisure, as well as arts
- The Elsternwick cluster is predominantly community organisations and groups

Figure: High Volume (Over 65) and Inclusive Spaces (Over 65s)

Figure: High Volume (Under 25) and Inclusive Spaces (Young/Families)
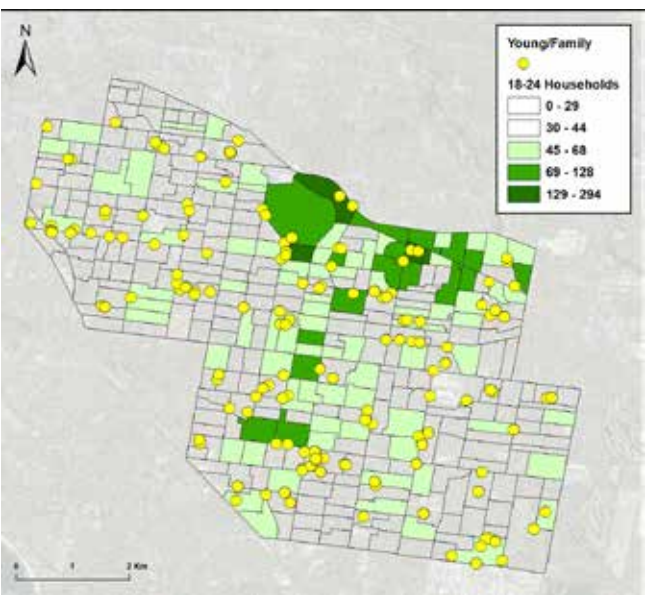
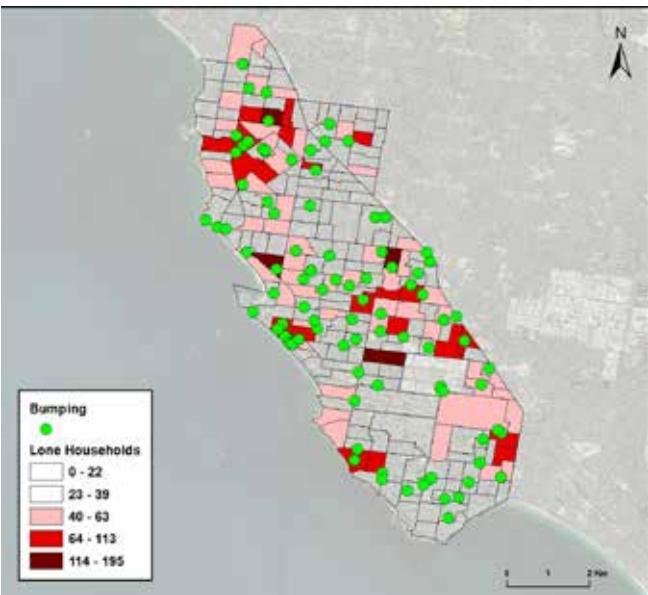Figure: High Volume of Lone Households and Incidental/Bumping Spaces

Notes:

There is a density of 65+ households in the North Caulfield / Elsternwick area that is serviced by a large number of activities within walking distance.

The older residents around Bentleigh / Bentleigh East have less access to activities within walking distance, they do have a few bumping spaces and there is a density of sport and recreation within this area.

The North Road/Grange Road and Carnegie areas have a high density of lone households, though seem to have limited access to bumping spaces. However, as these are both within commercial areas and community hubs with lots of cafes, restaurants and stores it is not unreasonable to assume that these third spaces will provide opportunities for social connection.

Interactive versions of the maps and detailed analysis has been provided to each LGA/ Council as part of the project.

Stonnington
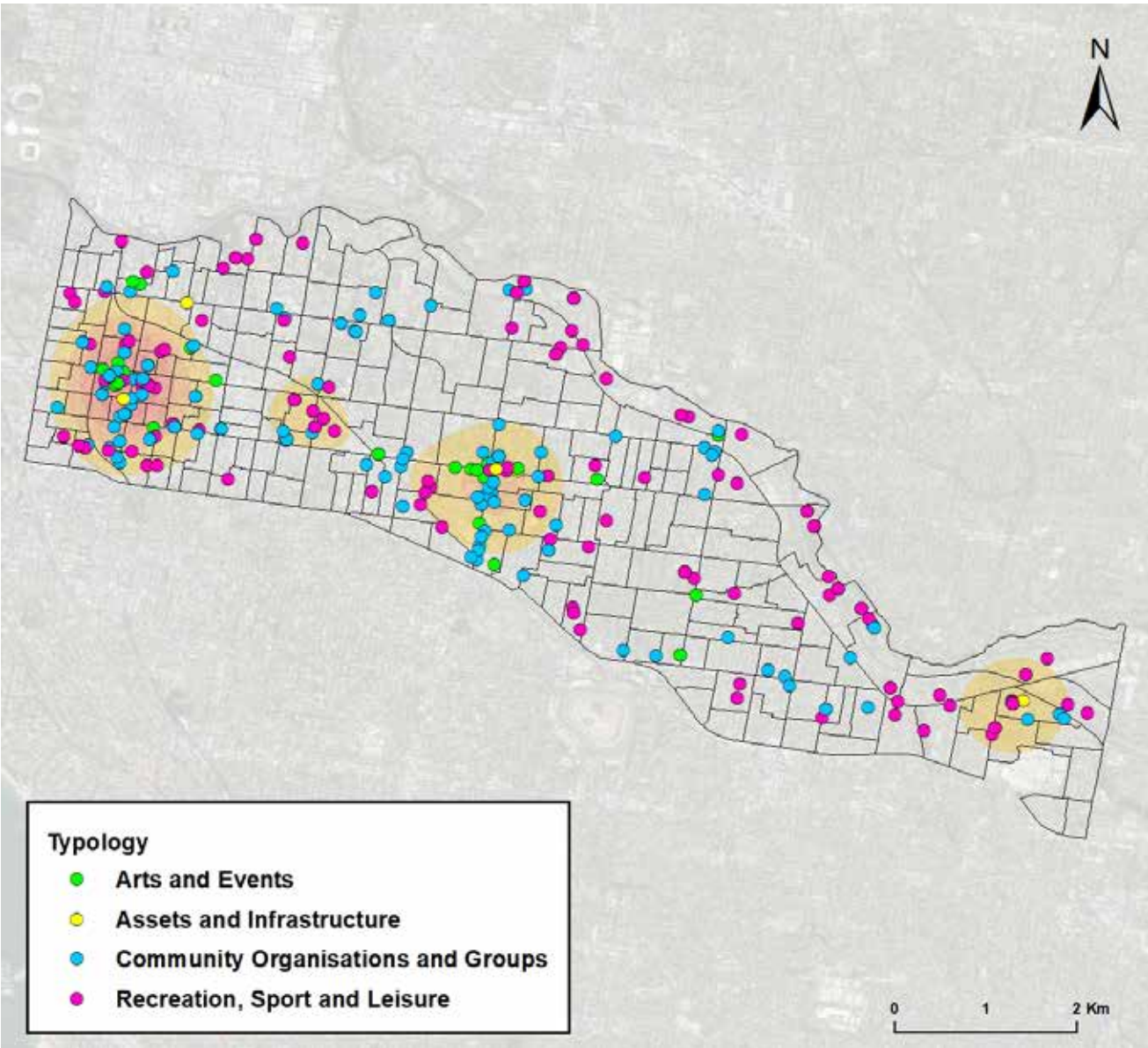
Figure: All Places and Spaces by Operational Group

Population: 116,606 (26 sq Km)	Located
Arts and Events	40
Assets and Infrastructure	45
Community Organisations/Groups	175
Recreation, Sport and Leisure	150
Bumping Spaces	132
Inclusive (65+)	136
Inclusive (Young/Family)	188
Learning, Problem Solving	182

Hotspots:

- Prahran has a strong mix of community organsiations and groups, recreation sport and leisure and arts and events

- Malvern is predominantly community organisations and groups, and arts and events

- East Malvern (Chadstone Shopping Area) is predominantly recreation spot and leisure, with no arts or events.

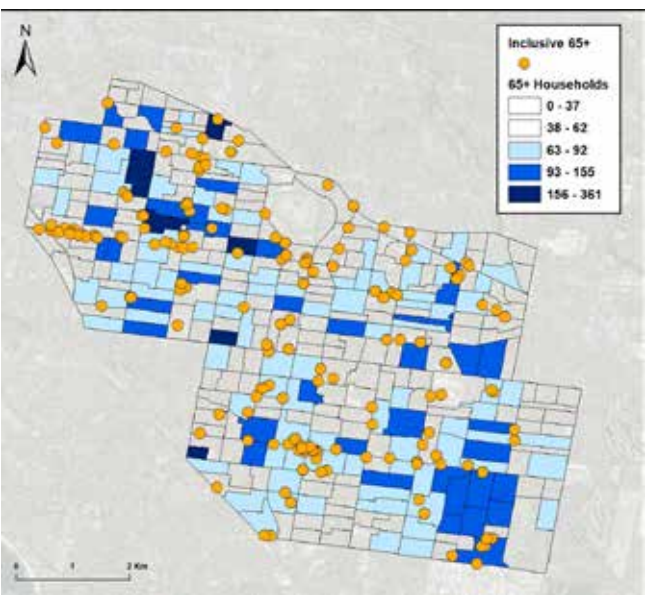- Toorak has few recreational spaces and only a number of community organisations and groups

Figure: High Volume (Over 65) and Inclusive Spaces (Over 65s)
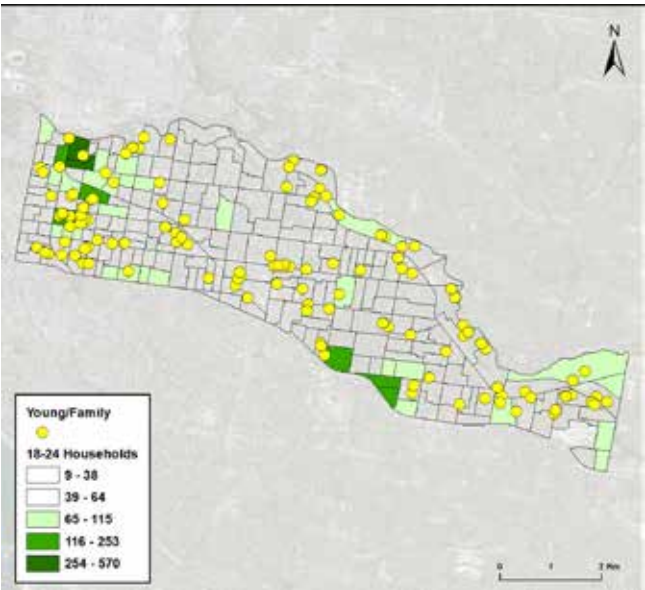
Figure: High Volume (Under 25) and Inclusive Spaces (Young/Families)
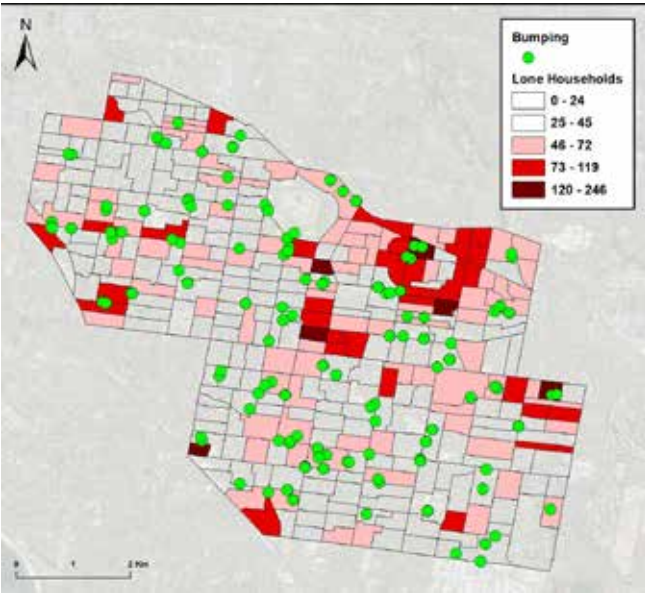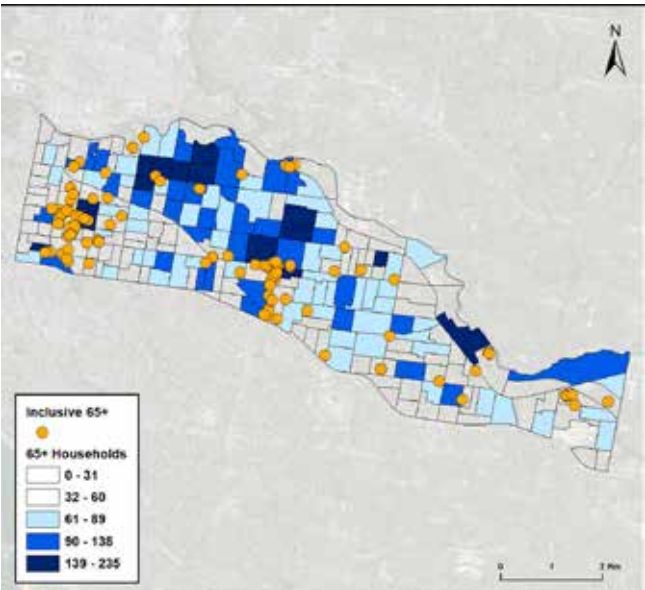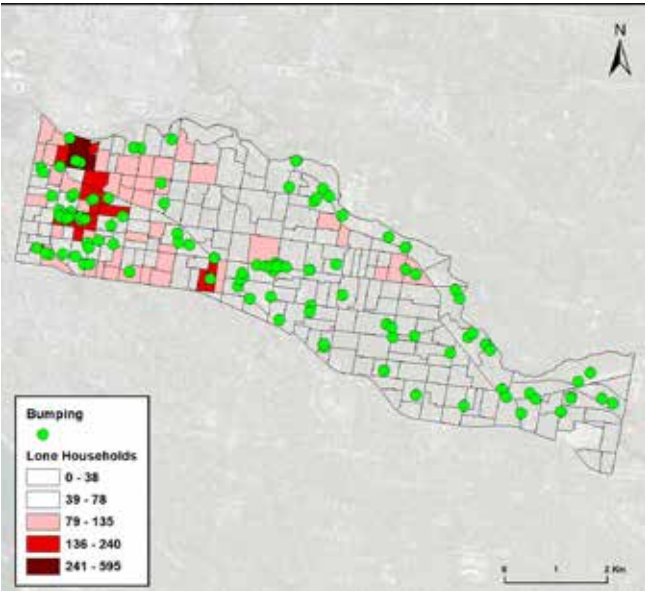

Figure: High Volume of Lone Households and Incidental/Bumping Spaces

Notes:

Many areas that have a high density of older people do not seem to be in walking distance (within 1km) of a choice of activities that support social connection for that group.

There is a high density of activities around Commercial Rd Prahran and Glenferrie Rd Malvern, however the rest of the area has limited, dispersed activities within the identified listings. Considering areas to the south east of the LGA (Malvern East) and north (Toorak) are bounded by the Yarra River, the M1 and the Princes Hwy, consideration needs to be given how these residents could have better walkable access to more activities that are inclusive for older adults.

There is a distinct lack of bumping spaces in Toorak. This has implications for not only lone households but also the older adults and younger people that live in the area. Though the area has lots of cafes, restaurants and stores, and it is not unreasonable to assume that these third spaces will provide opportunities for social connection. Bumping and incidental spaces would provide a no cost alternative for social connection which may be currently lacking.

Mapping commercial third spaces for social connection, the Chadstone Shopping Centre in Malvern East could provide a means of social connection for diverse groups, in a range of ways.

Interactive versions of the maps and detailed analysis has been provided to each LGA/Council as part of the project.

5.4 User Experiences Focus Groups

Overarching findings from the semi structured focus groups are presented in the following section. Six themes are presented and supported by quotes and narratives where possible.

Theme 1: Social Connection

There is broad community representation in pro-connection places and activities

- In line with the range of assets identified in LGA mapping, the target communities of places and activities were broad and diverse

- Many places represent specific interest groups or communities (e.g. people with a disability, CALD communities; specific age groups; cultural groups) while others provided services that spanned intergenerational or inter-class/inter-cultural boundaries

- Overall, there was a need for greater communication and interaction across groups, to leverage connection between and across groups of the community.

- Multipurpose or shared spaces and bumping spaces provided optimal scope for diverse interactions and connection.

Social Connection is seen as important and linked to positive community outcomes

Contribution to social connection was articulated by most participants. For example, at an overall level, facilitators recognised their role in providing activities and services that

> *"...help with physical and social wellbeing. Many of our members are socially isolated, (so) for many this is their reason to get up. We assist with the social isolation that many of our members are experiencing right now"*

In particular for communities, the importance of pro-social connection places and activities within them was seen as: "the glue that keeps (people) together".

Social connection is the by-product as opposed to the primary role or consideration

While social connection was articulated by participants, respondents conceptualised it as a by-product or secondary outcome. In this sense, social connection was an operational outcome, as opposed to the primary or strategic consideration of the place or space. However, some groups, including those focused on the older population, reflected that although social connection is a by-product it is more important than any 'primary product'.

Notably, many facilitators or managers of spaces are volunteers, hence are focused more on operational delivery, than the strategic design for pro-connection. Therefore, opportunities exist to more prominently consider pro-connection in the design of places, activities and meaningful collaboration within and between places and groups.

Theme 2: Creating Connection and Connection Types

Within places and spaces, facilitators observe connection through various activities and interactions. These include:

Task or problem solving activities:

Opportunities for learning (e.g. classes) and problem solving tasks were seen as providing meaningful sources of engagement for individuals within places. For example:

> "...working bees bring people together via common tasks within place of connection"

> "...the community house runs a lot of classes which helps to connect people"

Prominent examples were also provided for community gardening where 'picking vegetables' or 'buddy' programs partnering experienced gardeners and non-experienced gardeners facilitated connection in an informal setting, or with tasks wher there was limited complexity.

> "Connection has been a wonderful bi-product". In order to be a member of the garden, you have to be a local in the neighbourhood. It's a great way to meet your neighbours. It feels serendipitous to bump into someone in the garden"

Cultural sharing and events:

Shared cultural experiences or celebration of shared identity are key components of connection and belonging. A prominent example here was sharing food together where gatherings such as BBQs, morning and afternoon teas provided a pivotal opportunity for connection with the mix of activities and spaces:

> "There is a smaller group that meet up ... and at the end of the day they all have some cake together and this brings people together. Food brings people together and allows them to interact"

> "Food and events around them is a great way to check in with vulnerable people to see if they are having issues with housing"

Informal opportunities prior to these organised events provided further scope for incidental connection:

> "Community lunches are held regularly and there is a community transport bus that gives people the opportunity to interact with each other

Learning and Artistic Practices:

Art, painting and dancing were examples of how people gathered and shared experiences:

> "...(people) ... come to learn performance art and they open up to the rest of the group. I hope the council understands the importance of performance arts for wellbeing. Dance as a means for healing and connection"

> "...people come not just for art but also the social connection that the classes provide and the spaces itself. Being there physically gives them space to engage with art. Practicing art at home can be much harder due to distraction and discipline and lack of inspiration"

Informal activities were suggested to work well with "connection facilitated through the drop in centre, activities and classes at the neighbourhood house "

Shared Interests and Advocacy:

Likewise, common interests and related activities provided a base for connection. For example, those with an interest in the natural environment or concerns were seen to use this interest as a base:

> "...people come for the relationship that nature provides and to learn more about the environment and then they start to interact through this".

Theme 3: Optimal Components for Connection

Bumping/incidental spaces

The presence and utilisation of bumping spaces were seen as critical to encourage and leverage more incidental interaction

This was reflected for a range of spaces including entrance areas of community houses, kitchen spaces or cafes.

"Sometimes people meet up for coffee after the class, seeing people connect is common at the house (and a joy for facilitators)"

Gardens were seen as a bumping space that facilitated informal interactions:

"People walking through the garden will stop and have a conversation and inquire about something with the gardeners. The garden also fosters relationships with other community organisations and local businesses, people meet people and develop friendships outside of the garden with them"

In such cases, these spaces were critical as they allowed meeting that wouldn't happen outside of the incidental interactions created by the space.

Cross Group Interaction

Connection was seen as most effective when it included interactions of distinct or different sections or subsections of the community. This was evident in two areas in the focus group reflections:

First, **connection could be facilitated within the activities of single groups or places** where groups offer activities that engage diverse sub sections of the community concurrently:

Examples included:

- Intergenerational connection where a range of different classes were offered to share cultural experiences (including celebrations or movie nights)

- Interactions between disabled people and non- disabled people via the development of an inclusive space with a range of people

- Community gardens that facilitated connection between various socio-economic groups and people passing by. Light physical activities and recreation were also seen to attract people of various backgrounds.

- Libraries (council operated and others) were seen as diverse and inclusive spaces of connection.

Specific examples also included:

"...we have an intergenerational mix of early 20's to 80's interacting with each other through the group"

"(public speaking training engages) ...people from a diversity of class backgrounds e.g. lawyers interacting with tradespeople through the group"

"...dads and kids do activities together that facilitate connection with other families. There is a BBQ afterwards that facilitates interaction and connection"

Second, scope for connection could be amplified via the **interaction within multipurpose spaces or coordinated activities** across and between groups and spaces

This included where spaces and groups interacted on joint activities to promote "connection amongst various age groups". An example was where gardens and hobby groups provided exchanges of activities:

"We have a relationship with other community organisations such as the local Men's Shed that build plant boxes"

Scheduling in multipurpose spaces was a prominent component:

"Children's ballet and exercise for older adults (are) scheduled at the same time. This allows for interaction between groups"

Opportunities for further development or collaboration were prominent here. For example, services and places noted a need to promote and communicate its services to specific groups offer access. Greater networking or coordinated interaction was a clear opportunity from respondents.

Sense of Ownership

Ownership of spaces, even when used in a temporary capacity strengthened commitment, pride and outcomes of places and spaces.

"...(within) this community centre, ...the participants themselves have a sense of ownership. I think that matters, you know, because they say "we can't wait to come back into our centre", It's their terminology, not ours. So I think that matters"

"...people need a sense of ownership of the space. Each of the community groups feels like they own it, they leave things in the room, in lockers and refer to as "their space". Local people, using a local space. When they come in they feel like they are coming home, it gives them a sense of belonging"

The pro-connection by-product of this sense of ownership was facilitated as users would welcome new people into the place "as if it would be their home. They go and introduce themselves and invite them in".

Balance/Mix of Formal and Informal Activities

The presence of **purposeful or meaningful activities** was seen as an important component to create meaningful interactions and connection. This was particularly the case for new people to a place or activity.

Respondents noted the likelihood of returning to a shared space (e.g., community house) was enhanced if people identified a skill that they could share or use for benefit

A challenge for effective connection was the need to build confidence within users, with respondents identifying that people needed "a lot of support to connect".

"As a pre-curser to connection, we provide the support by building people's confidence so that they are able to make social connections"

Here, less formal activities provided opportunities to connect. This could be facilitated via i**nformal activities like** morning tea in open spaces that allow people to connect. Likewise, low task orientation associated with engagement with places were seen as an important balance.

"...we often find that the activities that we can deliver outside (are effective) ...so in our garden, with people just wandering through and picking some veggies, or just having a cup of coffee outside or doing something like that "

"...those less formal opportunities are often really good for our cohort, because it's like there's nothing required, they don't have to do anything, they can just stay there and enjoy the surroundings."

Other Aspects mentioned

Connectors

"People who come through the doors return if they have a reason to; for example if they have engaged with someone there in a meaningful way"

Change of Approach

"Years back the club had declining numbers. Then three or four women 'took over' which revitalised the club and changed its focus. Now numbers are growing"

Design/Environment

"The building itself is a nice physical space that attracts people by its design, with a great community garden"

Theme 4: Barriers

Design or Capacity of Space

As a major theme, respondents recognised the need for **adequate bumping or incidental spaces** to be a part of the existing designs of places

"Although the classes facilitate connection there needs to be another 'free space' where people can interact after the classes"

This creates a perceived need for café space or similar, but building licenses and policies are seen as restrictive and don't allow for adjustments. Pop up or alternative usage of existing spaces are often being explored, but difficult to embed within infrastructure.

Respondents also noted **limited space,** with people on waiting lists due to lack of space

"(Group) offers lifetime learning where its members form very strong connections. There is a rapidly growing demand for our classes and we need more accommodation so we can expand"

Further, spaces were seen as **not being 'inviting enough'** with *"the building itself is not very inviting from the outside"*

Related to this, managers of spaces noted a need to **be aware of and influence the perception of existing spaces, including perceived inclusivity of spaces**. Respondents commonly noted the need to break down perceived barriers relating to class of certain spaces. For example, in the arts or museum setting, facilitators were aware that:

"people are 'scared' as they think a museum is not for them, or that they have to learn something and this can embed as a class barrier"

Barriers to Personal Involvement

A lack of inclusive practices was viewed as a barrier for some spaces. Here, 'toxic masculinity associated with spaces, including online spaces' was seen as an issue.

In particular, a lack of support was hindering the ability of a club to attract and retain girls. In particular, online spaces were seen to be difficult because of culture of toxic masculinity. The ability to recruit or engage younger people (e.g. RSLs attracting young veterans) was seen as problematic in advancing the connection for specific groups.

Language as a barrier to connection was noted in multiple settings. It was noted that activities and connection around music was one way to overcome language barriers.

Technology barriers were also noted, with respondents noting 'not everyone has a full internet package at home'

Further, facilitators noted an issue with a lack of understanding in how to quickly build connection with people with **mental/physical health** issues.

Confidence building was also noted as a personal barrier to greater connection outcomes:

"We often notice with a lot of our participants, people really lack a lot of confidence in terms of connecting and they need a lot of support to really connect with other people"

COVID-19 restrictions

Predictably, the COVID-19 restrictions provided a heavily referenced limitation in the current environment. The lack of social connection in physical settings was noted:

"social connection is so much harder without physical places - you are not sharing a giggle with someone"

Where online interactions had played a role, there remained limitations:

"Zoom does not compare as the interaction between people is lost, many members don't want to use Zoom or don't have the technology.

This was particularly an issue for older population segments or groups, where it was comprehensively noted: "online learning prevents social connection for older people"

Theme 5: Digital Spaces and Engagement

Benefits and Growth

The transition to online, while forced for some given the COVID setting, had been embraced by many and provided scope for growth of their program and outcomes:

> *"Everything is online now, we have had concerts, language classes- everything is now delivered online"*

> *"Some classes doubled in participants - many others have the same amount of members as they did before COVID-19"*

Greater opportunities were seen to be provided via the shift to online spaces. For example, online or digital spaces were seen to make it more convenient for people to attend classes:

> *"(transitioning to online) ...opened up more opportunities for attendance of activities. There is now a weekly program of activities, podcasts and social media"*

> *"60% of our members said that they were happy to do the talks online as it made it easier for them to attend. They were usually in the evenings and this was previously more difficult for families"*

Scope to expand was also facilitated growth beyond the local market or community:

> *"The convenience level for everyone has been really good, we have people from all over the world now able to participate in our classes. There are benefits to moving some things online- we are definitely going to continue having an online component moving forward"*

Lack of connection

However, online transition was not as functional or easy for all cohorts or programs. For example, art classes or performances such as dancing and painting were less effective as a result of transition.

> *"...group members aren't able to be inspired by other people on the classroom around them. Isolation has meant that people don't have the motivation to make art."*

Some groups had, in fact not moved online:

> *"...our members are just waiting to be able to return to the place so that they can chat, eat and dance together!"*

While online learning had provided continuity or a 'stop gap'. It was not seen to be able to address social isolation or socialisation of people given a lack of incidental spaces/bumping spaces online

> *"Social connection occurs through learning in physical place and then can exist outside of the boundaries of the classroom"*

> *"Friendships are borne out of the classes and people meeting up after and some walk their dogs together"*

Where online connection had not been possible, offline transition to maintain connection was facilitated via telephone services (calls to older members), newsletters to connect with members, competitions and other means of engagement

Some organisations were able to continue to offer some level of services. For example, people could still walk through community garden and connect with others.

Other Barriers:

Three other main barriers were prominent in comments regarding digital transition:

In particular for older populations, it was noted there was a **lack of inclusivity**. This was particularly the case in larger organisations where there are many members, making it hard to help older people to transition online. Confounding this issue, some older cohorts were also seen to lack interest in online spaces.

The **risk associated with managing online spaces** is also a concern. Respondents noted bullying and negative or anti-social online behaviour in the transition to online spaces and issues with need to moderate online spaces.

Further, while Zoom delivery was efficient, the delivery of services online created **substantial pressures on tutors or staff** and provided a need to refocus **limited resources** of organisations.

Theme 6: Impact of COVID-19

The **impact of COVID-19 for groups and spaces** was clear and included aspects of less membership, significant drops in student intakes and concerns for next year or the future of groups and spaces.

The **impact on users or members** included the 'lack of connection and emotions of being involved" in activities, lack of motivation for members of the community, or feelings that 'connection was lost' amongst members during the shift to online technology.

In sum, facilitators were acutely aware that many of their users were already isolated prior to the shutdown. Increased **isolation due to COVID was most critical for older groups**. For example, groups providing support to vulnerable veterans saw the impact of COVID as particularly negative as "they have lost touch".

Restart as an opportunity

Respondents noted some members were more resilient than others over this time, but that **organisations were responsive and finding ways to change their service so that they can still deliver it.**

The lack of connection and wanting to come back had clearly been expressed by users.

As part of the response, facilitators noted they would:

- offer "hybrid classes" in the future (e.g. some students in the physical space, some will "Zoom in") Cited examples of this transition to hybrid included reading groups and choir groups.

- use blended learning moving forward (offering both online and offline teaching) for both courses and for activities

This creates a specific need to provide support for community groups as they continue online activities given the risks and inclusivity issues noted above (Theme 5).

Summary of Themes

CONNECTORS

ACTIVITIES

SPACES AND PLACES

FOUNDATIONS
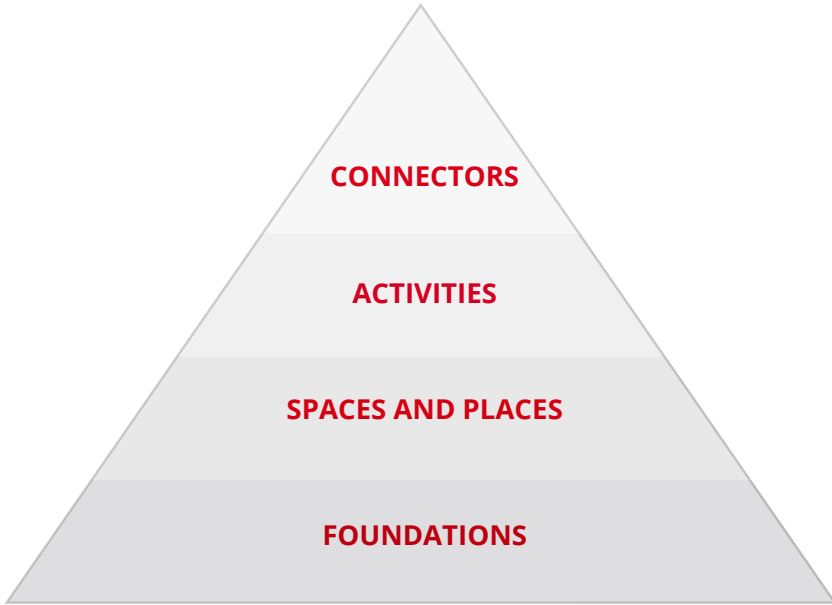
Barriers

- Connection is hindered by:
- Design and capacity of spaces
- Lack of connection via online and hybrid settings
- Personal Barriers (e.g. language, technology, confidence)
- Pressure on facilitators and connectors

Facilitators

Connection is optimised when:

- Bumping/Incidental Spaces are maximsied and accessible
- Cross group collaboration is evident
- There is a developed sense of ownership of spaces
- A balanced choice of spaces and actitivies is available

Opportunities

- Increased collaboration across diverse spaces and groups
- Increaed capacity for hybrid spaces
- Focus on accelarting digital capacity to benfit inclusion
- Develop training and resources for best practice and strategic design
- Embed deeper and more accessible understandings of user experiences
- Increase capacity to access, integrate and retain new users,
- Identify and leverage key people as community connectors
- Develop a sence of ownership and sustainabilty within community infrastructure

6 | Summary of Findings

6. Summary of Findings

Typology and Asset Mapping

- Identification of pro-connection and pro-integration spaces in the community was defined in 32 groups.

- 2792 physical and online spaces (focused on public infrastructure) were identified to operational level (arts, sports and recreation, community, infrastructure, online) across the LGAs. This is equivalent to one for every 240 people of the population. 46% of these were community groups and organisations, with 38% recreation, sport and leisure places and 5% made up by arts and events places. The remaining 10% was represented by infrastructure places.

- In addition, 48% were classified as learning, problem solving and helping spaces, 25% were bumping or incidental spaces, 43% were inclusive to over 65 age groups and 41% were inclusive

for younger people and families (Note: places here could be mapped to multiple categories)

- Maps provided identification of the spaces across the LGAs, with identification of hotspots for pro-social connection that can be profiled for the LGA or partnership. Hotspots are different in their distribution, density and place makeup across the LGAs

- Mapping highlights cases of alignment and opportunity between space distribution and social data. This means supported needs of communities are well provided for within existing infrastructure. In some areas, mapping provides initial evidence of opportunities for greater capital or infrastructure investment.

As part of the project, councils have been provided with interactive maps, as well as further, specific analysis and recommendations on their individual maps.

6. Summary of Findings

Focus Groups

- Facilitators of places and spaces provided broad community representation via pro-connection places and activities. Aligned with the conceptual framework (p. 19), a combination of places, activities and people are critical components of social connection infrastructure.

- Social connection was linked to positive community outcomes. Social connection was seen as a by-product as opposed to the primary role of places.

- Facilitators observe and articulate connection through various activities and interactions including: task or problem solving activities; cultural events and sharing: learning and artistic practices: shared interests and advocacy.

- Optimal components for place-based social connection include the maximisation of bumping/incidental spaces, facilitation of group collaboration or interaction across different types of community groups or places, developing a sense of ownership and ensuring a balance and choice of formal and informal activities exist.

- Barriers were identified relative to design or capacity of spaces, lack of inclusive practices or personal barriers related to language, technology or confidence.

- While organisations were responsive and finding ways to change their services, COVID-19 restrictions were cited, with significant impacts for groups and spaces as well as users or members. The restart provides a significant opportunity for connection and for the existing infrastructure to play a critical role

- A by-product of COVID was growth in how digital and hybrid spaces contribute to social connection, with facilitators citing benefits related to growth. Online operations are limited given a lack of physical connection and context within interactions. There were concerns over the resourcing of online spaces and risks associated with negative online behaviours. The largest concern was around inclusive spaces and access for older populations, with this a significant need.

7 | Recommendations

7. Recommendations

Recommendations are grounded in DJPR strategic outcomes related to;

    a) building prosperous and liveable regions and precincts;

    b) growing vibrant, active and creative communities: and

    c) fostering a fair and inclusive society.

The following recommendations identify initiatives
and actions based on findings from the report.

- Recommendations 1 and 2 present opportunities to leverage components within social connection infrastructure.

- Recommendations 3 and 4 consider online or digital spaces.

- Recommendations 5 and 6 provide guidance for capacity building including processes to capitalise on best practices and barriers identified in the project.

Recommendation 1

Enhance Collaboration and Connection Across and Between Diverse Places

Social connection occurs best when people from different spaces, groups or backgrounds interact.

Findings demonstrate opportunities to improve social connection outcomes by developing increased collaboration across spaces that serve diverse groups of people.

Some examples of collaboration can include:

- design of services or activities that engage diverse groups (e.g. both young and older groups concurrently)
- cross promotion of services and venue visits across groups
- activities that link 'community resource chains' (e.g. where the boxes for a community garden are built, designed or decorated by other community craft or arts groups)

Practically, this can be assisted by the creation of hubs or workshops to encourage greater exchange and collaboration. This process will also encourage networking between community connectors.

In encouraging interactions between diverse groups, consideration should be given to how this can be incentivised. For example, priority for support or funding could be given to community groups that demonstrate scope for meaningful interaction between diverse groups.

Recommendation 2

Prioritise Creation and Maintenance of Incidental and Bumping Spaces

The value of incidental or bumping spaces, from a small kitchen or lobby, to cafes or open public places are recognised and embedded in planning for spaces and infrastructure.

However, the COVID recovery period will deliver challenges for existing infrastructure including reduced operational capacity for indoor venues and higher perceived risk from users.

In short, incidental spaces will remain important, but will be more difficult to manage and use as spaces for community engagement.

Therefore, it is critical that maximum support is provided to community use of new and existing incidental spaces.

This may be encouraged via:

- applying flexibility to policy or practices to encourage creative utilisation of existing spaces

- seeking or incentivising re-design or conversion to create new spaces (e.g. Parklet or 'pop-up' places) that allow creative use, increase capacity and adhere to distancing requirements.

Recommendation 3

Support Accelerating Progress towards Digital Capacity and Online / Hybrid Spaces

There have been substantial gains in the delivery of online services linked to community connection in the last six months.

Opportunities exist to support the continued utilisation of these delivery methods by community groups.

Specific needs for support to assist community groups include assistance with:

- resource development (creation of tools, videos etc used in online delivery)

- platforms for delivery of hybrid or blended forms of courses and programs

- understanding how connection can take place within safe and inclusive online settings

Moving forward, example activities could include:

- training for resource development, delivery and 'designing online for connection'

- running workshops or showcases to design, test or promote initiatives to incorporate meaningful connection

Recommendation 4

Embed Digital Inclusion Strategies for Older Age Groups and CALD Communities

In addition to the transition to online spaces, there is clear concern over the lack of capacity to provide services to the population equally.

In particular, a major concern with the transition to online delivery was for older people and CALD communities.

Therefore, there exists a need for:

- provision of easy to access platforms and programs

- deeper understanding of the barriers and solutions for online engagement by older populations

- support for larger organisations who find it difficult to support on boarding of large groups of older users

- training for resource development, delivery and 'designing online for connection'

Recommendation 5

Develop Resources and Training for Best Practice Programming and Place Design

Findings articulated optimal conditions and barriers for social connection. To improve effectiveness, it is recommended these conditions and barriers become more prominent in planning and operationalisation of community programs and activities.

While councils provide existing support, more structured assistance can enhance:

- understanding, sharing and adoption of best practices

- strategic approaches to place management

A focus should be on providing opportunities to up skill managers and volunteers. This may be done via training or provision of resources such as kits, templates, cases or plans that improve:

- design of physical spaces and/or programs,

- the ability to develop confidence within users,

- the ability to integrate and retain new users,

- strategies for cross-group collaboration,

- the creation and sharing of a sense of ownership within places: and,

- the identification of key people as community connectors

Noting the high reliance on volunteers within the infrastructure, training or resources should focus on providing and embedding sustainable practices across and within community assets and groups.

Recommendation 6

Enhance Understanding of User and Community Experience

This study has provided insights into the community places that encourage social connection, and the experiences of people who manage and run community places and groups.

In addition to these experiences, a deeper understanding of perspectives of community members making decisions to use places and spaces would assist in informing structures and programs within social infrastructure.

A continuing focus is recommended on engaging users and non-users of spaces to understand:

• current needs and interests

• barriers to engaging with social infrastructure

• what other spaces are prominently used (including third spaces or commercial spaces such as cafes, restaurants or meeting places)

Existing data from councils could be utilised, or new forms could be incorporated. Data may include location data or geographic mapping, monitoring or tracking activity or survey methods (using a central process across multiple councils).

Insights should seek to provide:

• deeper understanding of the activities, places and interactions that are valued by community members,

• support for strategies to ensure community members can be attracted and retained by community groups,

• a base of evidence for future capital and infrastructure decisions.

7. Recommendations

Recommendations to Action Table

The following table extends to some operational options for short and medium-longer term actions aligned with the six provided recommendations.

Recommendations	Key Question	Short Term Sample Actions	Medium-Longer Term Sample Actions
Recommendation 1: **Enhance Collaboration and Connection Across and Between Diverse Places**	*How can networking, reciprocity and partnership be facilitated across diverse groups?*	• Online 'service exchange' between community groups • Facilitate 'meet ups' to share needs, ideas and find ways to collaborate • Develop newsletter/communication platform for community places	• Funding round to incentivise initiatives that embed cross-group collaboration • Engage digital, hyperlocal community building platform that can support community connections, activities and leadership (e.g Paper Plain Stockdale Project) • Identify and showcase community connectors to encourage reciprocity and partnership
Recommendation 2: **Prioritise Creation and Maintenance of Incidental and Bumping Spaces**	*How can be the volume and use of incidental and bumping spaces be maximised*	• Encourage experiential urban interactions that support or bring forward re-purposing of space for outdoor seating, greenery, bike parking as new public spaces (e.g. Moreland 'parklet' program) • Facilitate the use of public-owned spaces during 'off' times as public space for low to no cost 'pop up' events • Leverage existing placemaking frameworks in LGAs to encourage creative sites for social connection	• Identify and expand current bumping spaces that exist in the community or activate dormant spaces (e.g. nature strips, smaller streets) for events or street interventions through 'tactical urbanism' • Review of local laws and permit processes with an eye to social connection (e.g. can simple barriers to safe incidental spaces be removed?) • Ensure incidental and bumping space allocation is embedded in planning for new and existing planning and placemaking frameworks
Recommendation 3: **Support Accelerating Progress towards Digital Capacity and Online / Hybrid Spaces**	*How can digital acceleration be used to amplify connection as a 'by-product' via hybrid spaces?*	• Development of guidelines for creating safe and inclusive online spaces • Create and deliver workshops to community groups on designing and developing online or hybrid courses that encourage networking and connection • Setting up support/debrief group for 'challenges in online spaces'	• Create physical bumping spaces for those who choose to continue online classes (e.g. a schedule that is mainly online but has a physical class fortnightly once restrictions are eased) • Develop risk assessment documents for safe/inclusive online spaces for community groups • Promote and support peer to peer training at community and neighbourhood houses across community groups

7. Recommendations

Recommendations	Key Question	Short Term Sample Actions	Medium-Longer Term Sample Actions
Recommendation 4: **Embed Digital Inclusion Strategies for Older Age Groups and CALD Communities**	*How can online settings be made inclusive and maximise value for all groups?*	• Support community groups, neighbourhood houses and community houses to offer peer to peer training in online spaces such as Zoom, social media, email and website navigation • Build a register with volunteers who call community members that register for a 'welfare' check.	• Application of existing programs and policy in digital literacy for older Australians (e.g. Be Connected, Home Care, Digital Mentoring) and interventions that enhance self-esteem and personal control (e.g. Sander et al., 2005) • Identifying tech savvy senior community members and train them to train others in using technology. (e.g. tech community connectors)
Recommendation 5: **Embed Best Practice Social Connection Programming & Place Management**	*How can best practice in program and place design be built, captured and shared?*	• Develop resources and training for community managers and volunteers around specific themes or barriers. Modules may include: 'place design' 'program audits' 'enhancing cross-group collaboration' 'building user confidence', 'creating ownership of spaces' • Pilot and evaluate short courses with a small number of places and community groups • Develop showcase for '2020' innovations from places and groups in the region	• Transform best practice to online case library • Facilitate 'meet ups' between different groups to share needs, ideas and find ways to collaborate • Ongoing delivery of resources and support to encourage best practice and capture of IP within existing places to overcome limitations of facilitator turnover and high volunteer reliance
Recommendation 6: **Enhance Understanding of User and Community Needs and Experiences**	*How can a deeper understanding of community needs and behaviours be embedded to assist social infrastructure development?*	• Consider how exisiting data sources can be made available to groups and spaces to support recruitment and retention activity • Undertake measurement via social media/listening, location/activity, traffic measurement or via survey methods to understand needs, barriers and behaviours of the community	• Approach universities/educators that offer urban planning, to embed place assessments and launch experimental placemaking projects for social connection as part of courses, turning the LGA or a specific site into a studio • Re-focus or workshop key measures to conceptualise and support the measurement of 'socialisation' and 'connection' (as is done for traffic, congestion, activity and other measures)

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8. Appendix

8.1 Types of Groups

Group 1: Arts and Events	
Art Centres / Galleries	All collective Art Centres, Galleries and Studios with the primary purpose of exhibiting art. Examples include; the Bayside Gallery, the Hawthorn Arts Centre and Manyung Gallery Malvern.
Community Radio Stations	Community Radio stations including Southern FM, Golden Days Radio, J-Air, and more.
Events – Festivals / Street Parties	Community Events such as Music Festivals, Christmas Carols, Food and Wine Festivals, Skate Park Competitions, Exercise related activities. Examples include; Remembrance Day Ceremony, Party in the Park at Princes Park and Carols at Como Park.
Markets	All collective Markets including Farmers markets, Sunday markets and Craft markets. Examples include; the Sandringham Village Craft Market, the Camberwell Sunday Market and the Bayside Farmers Market.
Museums	All collective Museums including, war memorials, art museums, religious museums, historical centres, and children's museums. Examples include; the Melbourne Tram Museum, the Stonnington History Centre and the Jewish Holocaust Centre.
Music / Theatre Organisations	All collective Music and Theatre Organisations such as orchestras, choirs, bands, theatre companies and performing arts companies. Examples include; the Malvern Theatre Company, the Mosaic Community Choir and the Bayside Chamber Orchestra.
Public Art and Sculptures	All collective Public Art displays such as murals, sculptures, and spaces. Examples include; the Hartwell Shopping Centre Mural and the Auburn Village Mural.

Group 2: Assets and Infrastructure	
BBQ/Benches/Seating	All collective BBQ areas, Benches and Seating located within public spaces such as parks, reserves and community gardens.
Libraries	All collective Libraries such as traditional Libraries, toy Libraries and culture specific Libraries. Examples include; the Kew Library, the Carnegie Toy Library and the Jewish Cultural Centre and National Library.
Town Hall	All collective Town Halls including the Brighton Town Hall, Glen Eira Town Hall, and Malvern Town Hall.

8. Appendix

Group 3: Community Organisations and Groups	
Community Centre / Neighbourhood House	All collective Community Centres and Neighbourhood Houses such as Community Centres, Activity Centres, Cultural Centres, Learning Centres, Neighbourhood Centres and Community Houses. Examples include; the Ashburton Community Centre, the Caulfield South Community House and the Phoenix Park Neighbourhood House.
Community workshops / Classes / Training / Programs	All collective Community Workshops, Classes, Training and Programs in the space of child playgroups, Arts and Crafts, U3As, Literature, Parenting, Homework Support, Cooking, Music and Language. Examples include; Ukulele for Beginners, U3A Moorleigh, First Parents Group - Hawthorn and the Bayside Gallery Arts Learning Program.
Friends of/Environmental Groups	Friends of and Environmental Groups created with the purpose of caring for the environment and local historic structures. Examples include; Friends of parks, reserves, creeks, beaches, historic houses and cemeteries, as well as conservation councils, preservation associations and climate action networks.
Hobbies and Arts Clubs	All collective interest groups in the space of Arts and Crafts, Gardening/Plants, Games, Pets, Literature (incl. book clubs), Brewing, and the like. Examples include; Bay Quilters, the Bayside Dog Owners Group, the Hawthorn Artists Society and The Ashy Bookclub.
Men's Shed	All collective Men's Sheds including the Brighton Bayside Men's Shed, the Hawthorn Men's Shed, the East Malvern Men's Shed, and more.
Multicultural Groups	All collective Multicultural Groups from varying nationalities and religious backgrounds such as Greek Orthodox, Jewish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Armenian, Indian and many more.
Rotary Clubs/RSL/Service Groups/ Probus	All collective Rotary Clubs, RSLs, Service Groups and Probus Clubs including the Rotary Club of Bayside, the Hawthorn RSL, the Carnegie Lions Club, and many more.
Support Groups	All collective Support Groups in the space of Mental Illness, Physical Illness, Trauma, Alcohol and Substance Abuse, Parenting, and more. Examples include; the Youth Substance Abuse Service, the Men's Carers Group and Dads in Distress.

8. Appendix

Older Adults/Senior Citizens	All collective Groups, Services, Programs and Facilities focussed on improving the wellbeing of Older Adults, such as Senior Citizens Centres, Seniors Groups and Senior Citizen Clubs. Examples include; the Kew Senior Citizens Centre, the Greek Senior Citizens Association of Moorabbin and the East Bentleigh Senior Citizens Club.
Youth Focussed Groups	All collective Youth Focussed Groups such as Youth Clubs, Youth Centres, Scouts and Guides, and many more. Examples include; the Highett Youth Club, the Bentleigh Girl Guides and the Boroondara Youth Hub.
Advocacy Groups (Inc Commerce, Historical, Community)	All collective Advocacy Groups in the space of Commerce, Transport, History and Community. Examples Include; the Brighton South End Traders' Association, the Glen Eira Residents' Association and the Sandringham Bicycle Users' Group.
Disability Support	All collective Support programs, services and facilities designed for improving the wellbeing of the Disabled members of the community. Examples include; BAM Allstars All Abilities, MOIRA Disability and Youth Services and Bayley House.
Op Shops/Charities/Volunteering	All collective Opportunity Shops, Charities and Volunteer Organisations including the Salvos Store - Kew, Vision Australia, The Australian Animal Protection Society Op Shop, and many more.
Religious Facilities and Programs	All collective Religious Facilities and Programs such as Churches, Parishes, Religious Centres, Monasteries, Congregations, Institutes and Associations. Examples include; the Bentleigh Uniting Church, the Chabad House of Glen Eira and the Jehovah's Witnesses - Hawthorn Congregation.

8. Appendix

Group 4: Recreation, Sport and Leisure	
BMX/Skate Parks/Off-road bicycle paths	Wheeled recreation facilities such as BMX Tracks, Skate Parks, and Off-road bicycle paths. Examples include; the Royal Avenue Park Skate Bowl and Hill 'n' Dale Park.
Community Gardens	All collective Community Gardens including the Canterbury Gardens, the Brighton Town Hall Gardens, and many more.
Exercise Classes/Groups	All collective Exercise Classes and Groups encompassing Dance, Yoga, Tai Chi, Walking, Cycling, Yoga, etc. Examples include; the U3A Hawthorn Walkers Club, Dancing with Confidence and the Brighton Dance Academy.
Leisure Centres /Swimming Pools	Leisure Centres and Swimming Pools, such as Health Clubs, Fitness Centres, Recreation Centres, Sports Complexes and Swim Centres. Examples include; the Harold Holt Swim Centre, the Kew Recreation Centre and the Brighton Baths Health Club.
Playgrounds/Recreation Spaces	All collective Playgrounds and Recreation Spaces within parks, reserves, and community gardens such as Como Park, Prahran Square, and many more.
Public Games/Exercise Spaces	Public Games and Exercise Spaces such as Netball Facilities, Hit-Up Walls, Exercise Equipment and Basketball Rings within parks, reserves, and community gardens such as Princes Park, Greythorn Park, and many more.
Sport Clubs	A wide range of different Sport Clubs such as, Tennis, Football, Netball, Soccer, Yachting, Bowls, Golf, Cricket, Life Saving etc. Examples include; the Brighton Golf Club, the Kew Junior Football Club and the Glenhuntly Athletic Club.

8.2 Social Connection Circles

Social Connection Circles

Humans build their social connections in similar ways, through varying layers depending on measures of time and emotional attachment (Dunbar & Spoors, 1995). These layers can be identified as social connection circles, and are typically patterned into an "ideal type" of 5:15:50:150 with fewer connections in our intimate circles and more connections in our wider and less intimate circle.

Those in our innermost circle of social connection include approximately five people and make up our primary support network. These connections are made up of those who we are most likely to seek advice from, receive emotional comfort and are the people in our lives who are the most likely to assist us in times of distress (Farmer et al., 2019).

The next layer is made up of our 'close and useful connections' which includes approximately 15 people. Next follows our 'tribe' which contains about 50 people we feel a sense of belonging to and lastly our wider and less intimate circle of acquaintances, consisting of approximately 150 people.

Social connection circles have been found to exist in studies on medieval villages, hunting tribes and army units, with all of these groups being organised in a similar pattern of numbers (Dunbar & Spoors, 1995). Critically, spaces and places of social connection now also exist online, with our connection capacity increased. Hybrid reality studies have shown that the same pattern of layering can be found in social media networks, online computer gaming communities, and in mobile phone records (MacCarron et al., 2016).

8.3 Place Based Approach

**A Place Based Approach
to Social Connection**

To implement a place based approach to social connection within the four local government areas, the project design sought to identify the various places, spaces and activities that encourage social connection. We defined 'place' as "spaces which people have made meaningful" (Bagnall et al., 2018, p. 20; Cresswell, 2004, p. 7). Similarly, Bagnall et al. refers to Tuan (1977): "What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value... if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place" (Tuan, 1977, p. 6).

Research has highlighted the link between the physical environment and social relationships with the potential for policy action. The Legatum report on wellbeing and policy references a "magic formula" as an environment where there are easy opportunities for social interaction that allow the ability for people to choose when, who and where we meet" (Halpern 1995).

Similarly, Bagnall et al. (2018) referring to Eicher and Kawaki (2011) states that "the way we design and build the physical environment can have a great impact on the formation and/or maintenance of social relations" (Bagnall et al., 2018, p. 19). There are some spaces and places that encourage incidental interactions to occur, these 'bumping places' are places that allow individuals to literally bump into one another. As Bagnall and colleagues argue there are "some places that seem to be designed with the intention to offer opportunities for individuals and groups to interact hence for social relations to form" (Bagnall et al., 2018, p. 19)

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR SOCIAL CONNECTION

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