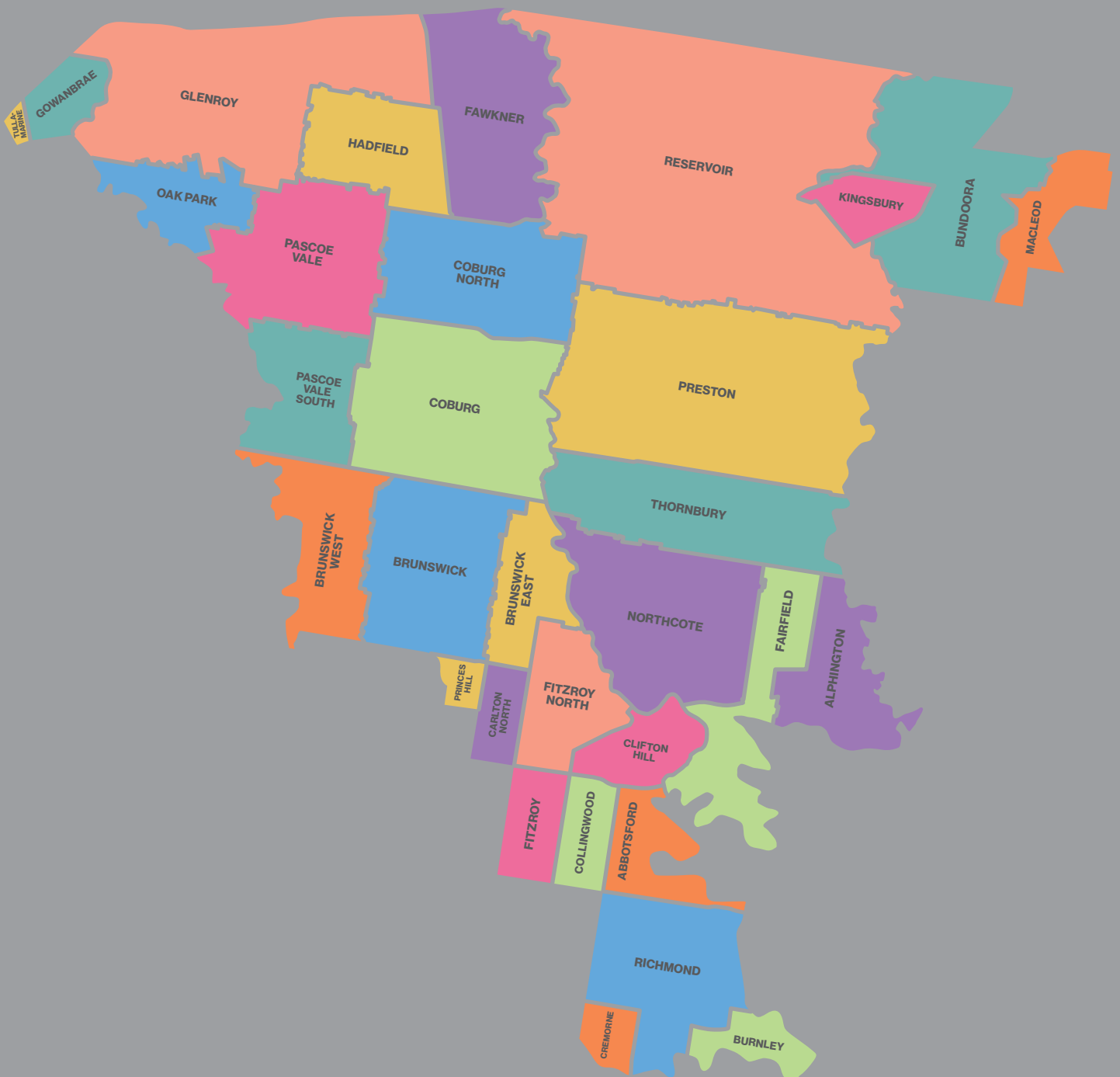


Inner North Report 2022

Who We Want To Be

A Caring Community



About this report

This community project started with an informal meeting of dedicated people interested in making the **Inner North** a better place to live, work and play. The group decided that this could only be done based on a clear understanding of who we are as a community and what we collectively wanted to do to make this a **better place**.

Our first report, "This is Who We Are (2021)" is available [here](#). It paints a picture of a unique place with a long and proud history. It also tells us that there is room for improvement and still much that can be done to make it a better place.

But what? And **where do we focus efforts** first?

The answer to these questions does not come from statistics, or from a survey. It comes from conversations, conversations among people with different perspectives, different vantage points, different understandings.

We listened to accounts of thousands of conversations taking place all over our community. How we did this is described on the next page.

The report shows the results from those thousands of conversations right across the Inner North. It identifies the things we **could** do and highlights the things we **should** do – **the community's own priorities**.

Now we all need to have the conversation about how we can make a start and continue the proud journey of making the Inner North as good a place as it can be.

Enjoy the conversation and the journey.

Kevin Sharp, Project Guide
kevin@jump-start.com.au

Acknowledgement of Country

The producers of this report acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung People who are the Traditional Owners of the Land. We recognise their continuing connection to Land, Water and Culture. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.



About the community's priorities

61 people in every 10,000 are experiencing homelessness

That's... **2,581 people**

AND

50% have had a **mental health problem** in the last 12 months

In some **Inner North** suburbs:

24% of all people are **in poverty**

AND

Children from **poor households** are **3.3X more likely** to experience **poverty** as an adult

1 in 3 women have experienced **physical violence**

AND

27.7% **won't walk alone** after dark because they **feel unsafe**

The average cost of housing in Melbourne

up by **↑16.3%** in 12 months

AND

Average rent up **↑19.9%** in 5 years

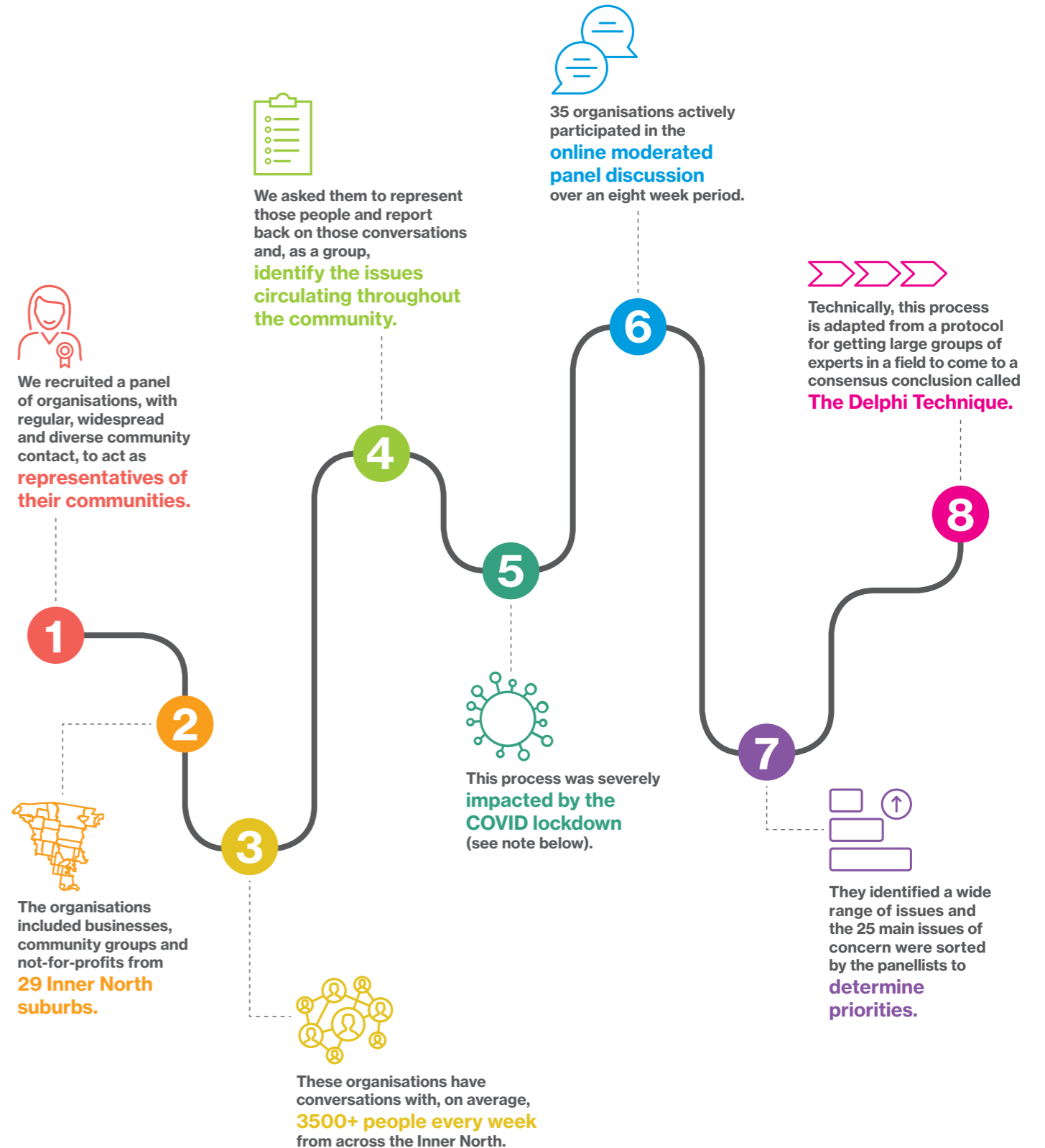
For many, housing is **no longer affordable**

46% of the adult population will experience a **mental disorder** at some time in their lives

AND

Only 1 in 3 of them will **access mental health services**

How we organised and accessed 1000's of community conversations



The COVID Impact

In total, 74 organisations signed up for this process but it was severely impacted by the COVID lockdown and half of the organisations who signed up were unable to proceed. However, 35 organisations actively participated in the online moderated panel discussion over an eight week period. They displayed such enthusiasm and generated such diversity of information that we continued the project as a trial for wider participation in the future.

The 25 major topics of concern



The Wealth Gap

- Access to basics for living
- Support for those facing poverty
- Disconnection and low social cohesion



Housing

- Cost of housing ownership and rental
- Homelessness and access to housing
- Urban density and residential overcrowding



Health and Wellness

- Accessing and navigating the healthcare system
- Alcoholism and drug abuse
- Access to appropriate food
- Access to mental health care



Learning

- Navigating the education system
- Options to learn while working



Work

- Underemployment
- Youth unemployment
- Support for small business
- Employment barriers



Environment

- Waste management
- Connection with nature and the environment
- Green space
- Traffic congestion



Safety and Security

- Violence against women
- Safe public spaces



Culture and Community

- Access to arts and entertainment
- Sporting options
- Language barriers to full community participation

The priorities

What to do first and where to concentrate resources?
Our community says, **“Start at the top of the list!”**

Highest priority

- Homelessness and access to housing
- Support for those facing poverty
- Cost of housing ownership and rental
- Violence against women
- Access to mental health care

High priority

- Access to basics for living
- Youth unemployment
- Safe public spaces
- Employment barriers
- Waste management
- Urban density and residential overcrowding
- Accessing and navigating the healthcare system

Moderate priority

- Traffic congestion
- Underemployment
- Alcoholism and drug abuse
- Access to appropriate food
- Language barriers to full community participation
- Disconnection and low social cohesion
- Support for small business

Lower priority

- Green space
- Navigating the education system
- Options to learn while working
- Connection with nature and the environment
- Access to arts and entertainment
- Sporting options

The top priorities in detail

Our process

- 1 Community conversations generated **48 topics**
- 2 This included **25 major topics** of concern
- 3 The panel sorted these 25 into **priority order**
- 4 The **top 5** are shown here – with actual quotes from the conversations

2 Support for those facing poverty

"Many of these people (**migrants, refugees**) have strong skills but I have met as delivery drivers, Uber drivers and have assisted to get their food handling certification so they can work in kebab shops. But it's **demoralising** and forces families into **poverty**."

"Technology is increasingly important, particularly through COVID, and **many struggle to afford to access and pay** for these services. This has **direct impact on access** to education, employment and other services, particularly government services online."

"Poverty affects every aspect of quality of life. **People treat you differently** and make the assumption you are choosing to live the way you do, which is a **false assumption**."

"Families accessing **food relief** and increases in support requests (housing, material aid). Their decision making is centred around the **next payment**."

"Many rely on government payments which **do not cover the bare essentials**. Having to decide what bills are paid or if you can afford decent food is a challenge for many."

1 Homelessness and access to housing

"Difficult to access public housing and the quality of the housing is **under par**."

"Waiting lists for housing can extend into **decades long waits** and many succumb before getting suitable accommodation."

"The *Kids Under Cover* Studio Program focusses on intervening early and preventing the young person entering **homelessness** and keep them connected to family/carers and engaged with education.

Homelessness does not mean rooflessness. But if there's no intervention, they tend to progress to another form of homelessness, **couch-surfing**, which can **spiral** into other forms of homelessness such as **crisis accommodation**, or **rough sleeping**.

Young people exiting the care system are particularly **vulnerable** to homelessness."

"Housing commission in this area has a wait time minimum of **more than ten years**."

"People have **NO money left** after rent for food, utilities and especially medications. Many are contemplating homelessness because it is their **only option**."

"I'm seeing an **increase in homelessness** or couch surfing."

"Seems like there is an **increase in homelessness**."

"Homelessness and not having access for overnight stays is a **barrier**. Some can't get into places because they are full."

3 Cost of housing ownership and rental

"Government rent assistance at its maximum payment is less than 5% of a government benefit yet many are expected to use 60 to 70% of their benefits or income on rent, **leaving very little for anything else**."

"Affordable housing is **non-existent**. Many overseas investors buy properties from deceased estates and let them become derelict in order to demolish them and build **dog box units** and charge a **small fortune** as rent for them."

"Property prices are **ridiculously inaccessible** throughout the inner north. Even areas further north such as Reservoir and Fawkner, where rent is still moderately affordable, but property prices are **already incredibly high**. As a consequence, property ends up in the **hands of investors** for whom the priority is a financial return and whose personal risk is very low."

"Housing prices are a bit of a **concern**."

"People simply cannot pay rent. It's **frightening**."

"Housing prices are **out of control** in most suburbs. There is always someone with more money than you who can afford it, which is a bugger as the **price goes up**."

"The newcomers in Moreland are often **over mortgaged**, causing similar **problems** and this will influence their choice of schools, sport clubs and recreation."

The top priorities in detail (continued)

4 Violence against women

"Family violence is a massive one and feeling safe in their own homes. It exacerbates how people are feeling about the pandemic."

"Have to be **really careful** where you go. My daughter wants to jog along Merri Creek and I had to explain to her that there might be **illegal gatherings in hidden places** that can't be seen, beautiful spaces that we have are **not lit well enough** to be safe at night. Particularly for women."

"There are issues of **safety for women at night**. If you treat it as law and order you might have to put extra lights in. What also makes a street safer is **human activity**."

"**Mental health** feeds into family violence. There are times where we're speaking to individuals, recommending they do some self care to look after mental wellbeing and feel better. But then they **say 'no' because of fear** (of domestic violence)."

"We definitely have clients that are experiencing **domestic violence**."

"There are some issues in the Islamic community and **women feeling safe**."

"**Women feeling secure** when you go out is a **large issue**. It is more of a concern here in the **Inner north**. When you go to other areas you see the differences there."

5 Access to mental health care

"In **young people** access to mental health services when indicated. A supportive school community such as the **Rotary Next Step** project at Collingwood College, is important. It's **critical** these initiatives are **supported** as they make a difference."

"**Lack of understanding** related to mental health – those who do not understand mental health and the **stigma** need additional education to **break down barriers**."

"Support within the school is **at capacity** and access to external support has **waiting lists** of up to 12 months. Students have been advised to attend emergency departments if in need of urgent support. If students are unable to access appropriate support they **increase the risk of disengagement** with school and potential increase in risk factors. This has the potential to **impact quality of life** if there is an increase in drug, alcohol or other anti social behaviours (e.g. graffiti)."

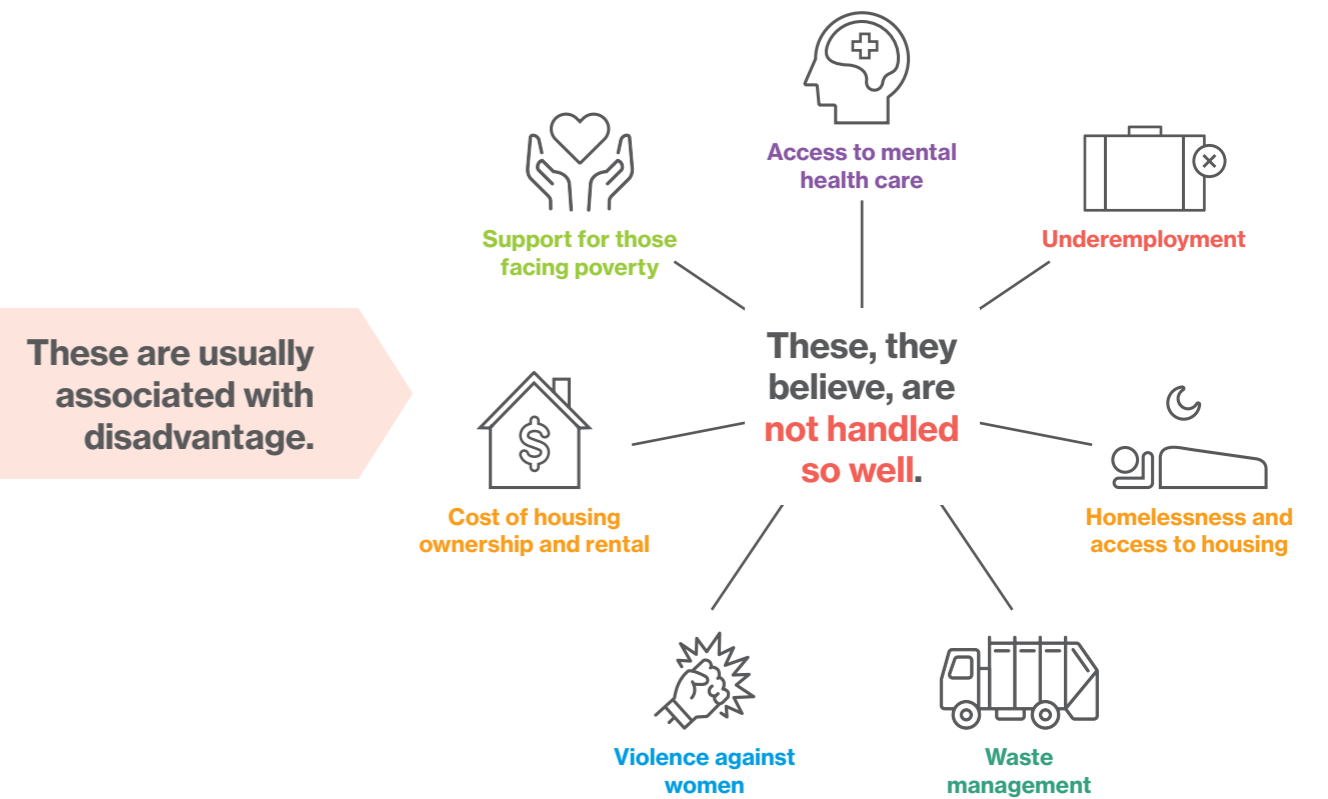
"**Mental health** is a big issue – **demand is increasing**."

"It is a problem for the **asylum community** especially Afghan migrants. There is a **lack of mental health support** for them."

"Mental health is the **biggest issue**."

"Definitely with Fawkner's diverse community the **cultural barriers** (to accessing mental health support) are real."

Life in the Inner North



We have both prosperity and disadvantage in the Inner North

The community conversations generated 48 topics...



The Wealth Gap

- Access to basics for living
- Cost of living
- Housing affordability
- Support for those facing poverty
- Disconnection and low social cohesion



Housing

- Urban density and residential overcrowding
- Cost of housing ownership and rental
- Homelessness and access to housing
- Housing gentrification
- Access to entry level housing
- Housing quality



Health and Wellness

- Loneliness and isolation
- Accessing and navigating the healthcare system
- Alcoholism and drug abuse
- Access to appropriate food
- Cost of healthcare
- Access to mental health care
- Obesity and lack of fitness



Learning

- Access to technology for education
- Cost of education
- Options to learn while working
- Education disengagement
- Navigating the education system
- Opportunities to access education



Work

- Employment barriers
- Recognition of international qualifications
- Underemployment
- Youth unemployment
- Changing nature of work
- Support for small business



Environment

- Waste management
- Awareness of bio-diversity and ecology
- Awareness of climate change and environment
- Green space
- Use of disposable goods
- Traffic congestion
- Connection with nature and the environment



Safety and Security

- Safe public spaces
- Community safety
- Social safety
- Violence against women
- Safe public transport
- Safe roads



Culture and Community

- Access to arts and entertainment
- Variety of arts and entertainment
- Sporting options
- Language barriers to full community participation
- Recognition and support for minority needs

THANKS TO:



A special thank you to all the businesses, not for profits and community groups who acted as our eyes and ears on the ground and contributed so generously during difficult times. If this report tells us anything it is that we have a caring community in the Inner North.



The Project Guides

Kevin, Ben, Carolyn, Craig, Lee, Kerryn and Michael



Data Wrangler

Kelly
(Third Measure)



Conversation Manager

Monica
(Bastion Insights)



Picture Magic

Annie
(Annietworks)

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS:



Ben

Email: BRodgers@innernorthfoundation.org.au
Phone: (03) 8689 1967

For an online copy of this report click [HERE](#)

This report is just the start.

Now we need people to have new conversations about how everyone can help by addressing these issues.

Something local can be done about every one of them – we just need you to look for improvements together.

Find out more [HERE](#)

Together, we can make this an **even better place to be.**

Thanks to our sponsors:



Proudly supported by

