

Together we will create our...



BOLD FUTURE – Trends and issues

Our Community Future

A sense of 'community' lies at the centre of a strong, vibrant and safe society. This makes it a vital issue for us all. Social networks, trust, respect for diversity and a commitment to improving social conditions - along with quality social infrastructure like schools, pools, parks and libraries - are said to be the 'glue' that holds our communities together.

In large, growing metropolises like the Gold Coast it can be difficult to create a sense of community. Some people believe they don't have the energy or the time to participate in community life. Others claim that even if they did, citizens have neither the resources nor the opportunities given to them to get involved, influence local decisions, and make a difference in improving their communities and living conditions.

Trends and issues

For all their diversity, modern cities and communities, both here in Australia and overseas, are being impacted by very similar trends and issues. These trends and issues present both opportunities and challenges for community building. Among some of the important trends are:

- an aging population that is living longer and experiencing higher levels of disability
- increasing immigration, diversity and residential mobility
- population growth together with suburbanisation/ sprawl and accompanying demands on physical and social spaces for interacting (for example, parks, libraries, public pools and integrated schools and community centres)
- redefinition of the family and role of family, with single-parent and single-person households showing significant growth
- increasing concern over security and safety issues (terrorist attacks, pandemics and other natural disasters, crime, graffiti and other anti-social behaviour) and
- growing public demand for greater transparency/ accountability levels on the part of institutions and governments.

As a result, issues facing local government and their communities are becoming increasingly complex and difficult to solve, with no one agency appearing capable of solving these issues alone.

Despite being handed increasing responsibilities, local government remains the least financially resourced level of government to solve these issues.

By both national and international standards, Gold Coasters enjoy a high standard of living and quality of life. The often depicted image of the Gold Coast as a 'millionaires' playground' is far from reality for a growing section of the community who are struggling to keep up with rising living costs.

The Gold Coast now has the fifth poorest housing affordability of any region in Australia. From one viewpoint, rising housing costs are a sign that the city continues to be a place where people desire to live. However, higher housing costs diminish the quality of life on the Gold Coast for many families struggling with rent and mortgage payments.

Gold Coasters are fortunate to live in a city that is safer than most other major centres around the world. However, despite police statistics to the contrary, some people believe that the city is less safe now compared with five years ago. Crime levels directly impact on resident's quality of life and sense of well-being. Often, even the perception of crime can have a negative effect within the community, limiting people's participation in physical and social activities and contributing to longer-term problems such as obesity and social isolation.

Our city is one of the fastest growing in the country. An additional 250,000 people are expected to move here over the next 20 years. Our future population will include two distinct groups - large numbers of older people located across the city and large numbers of young families in newly developing areas. Many of our new families and senior residents will have high support needs.

To remain a place where people want to live, the city will need to meet the growing and increasingly diverse community needs



of existing and future residents. It will need to be safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, offer equality of opportunity, a range of housing types and good services for all.

Also required are social spaces which enable people to interact, socialise, learn, and remain active and healthy as well as develop a sense of shared understanding and purpose.

Resolving complex community issues involves not only the three levels of government – state, federal and local - but also communities, not-for-profit organisations and businesses.

Getting the three levels of government to better recognize the interdependence of what they do and working more effectively to resolve community issues will be vital. As well, the capacity of local communities will need to be built and citizens encouraged to take a more active role in shaping their city and their future.

Here are some questions for you to think about.

What help do new people to the Gold Coast need when they arrive? What help do existing residents need to cope with change in their community?

What do we need to do to make our city easier for seniors, people with disabilities and families with children in strollers to get around?

How can organisations such as Council capture the knowledge, ideas and solutions to contemporary living problems that lie untapped in the community?

What creates a community where people feel a strong bond towards one another and are motivated to work together to enhance and improve their city?

What do we need to do to make our city safer, healthier, more inclusive and welcoming of diversity?

How should the Council respond to the problem of housing affordability?

How can the levels of government together with non-profit organisations and the private sector, work collaboratively to provide infrastructure and services in the social and community area?

'Democracy is not a spectator sport. Democracy is about the participation of citizens. It is a journey where diversity is celebrated, the public good is negotiated, and intense deliberation and dialogue are conducted. It is about being involved.'

M Wyman

Learning to Engage.

'We don't need more tolerance of immigrants, 'ethnics', 'illegals', Muslims, Aborigines, refugees or any other minority groups; what we need is more curiosity. We need to master the art of getting to know each other better.'

Hugh McKay

Australian Psychologist, Social Researcher and Writer.

'Communities that view their citizens as their greatest asset and invest in the development of their full potential are those that will have the capacity to effectively compete in the global political, social and economic arena.'

David Littrell



GCCC 4174

'If I were asked about what to do about the level of insecurity and anxiety in contemporary Australian society, I wouldn't start with politics and I wouldn't say too much about terrorism. I'd suggest as a first step, that you invite the neighbours over for a drink this weekend. Today a drink, tomorrow a barbeque, pretty soon, a community.'

Hugh Mackay

Australian Psychologist, Social Researcher and Writer