

The logo for URBIS, featuring the word "URBIS" in a bold, white, sans-serif font inside a green square frame.

Future Liveable Communities:

Building for the next generation



Prepared by Urbis
2026

Image: Rouse Hill Northern Precinct for Lendlease

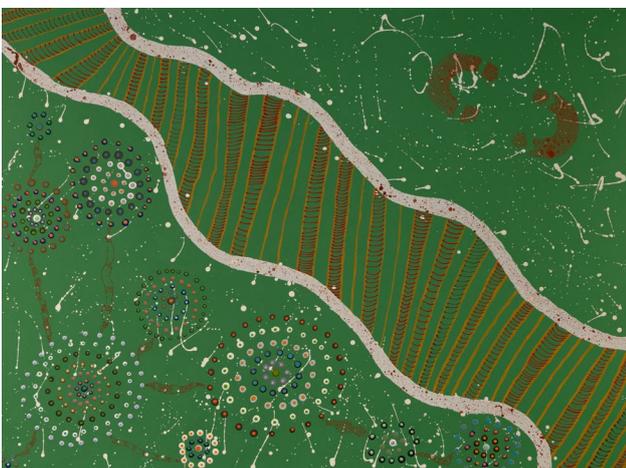
Acknowledgment of Country

Urbis acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands we operate on.

We recognise that First Nations sovereignty was never ceded and respect First Nations peoples continuing connection to these lands, waterways and ecosystems for over 60,000 years.

We pay our respects to First Nations Elders, past and present.

Urbis is committed to incorporating our respect for First Nations cultures, peoples and storytelling in our work across the Country. We are proud to have partnered with Darug Nation artist, **Hayley Pigram**, and to profile her artwork - **Sacred River Dreaming**.



The river is the symbol of the Dreaming and the journey of life. The circles and lines represent people meeting and connections across time and space. When we are working in different places, we can still be connected and work towards the same goal.

How unlocking value in our communities changes the game.

Liveable communities are the future. Typical greenfield residential developments have evolved into master-planned communities underpinned by long-term vision, early provision of amenities, and a smart, sustainable, and resilient mixed-use urban form.

They deliver housing choice and create real, place-led destinations for the Australians who call that community home. Every element – from land use scenarios and transport networks to public spaces – can and should be aligned, funded, and delivered at the right time, so long as early planning, placemaking, and visioning is done right.

It requires planning, design, policy, and stakeholder engagement brought into one integrated, proactive process – rather than responding in isolation to minimum or required criteria. The outcome is connected, functional, and future-ready places where people and businesses thrive.

The following insights – an exploration of the ten elements of liveable communities – are a snapshot of the emerging trends that require early thinking – and how you should think about them.



Michael Webb – Partner, National Liveable Communities Lead

Ten elements of liveable communities

Click the green arrows to navigate.



Principles of placemaking



Green spaces



Designing with Country



Community amenities



Building a local workforce



Transport



Education



Smart, sustainable, and resilient places



Housing choice



Delivery and partnership models

Principles of placemaking

Liveable communities offer a dual challenge and opportunity to bring to life a place with identity, that embeds and honours local story, history, culture, and landscape. Impactful projects utilise the early stages to lock in the elements that will define the community character and market position – not just the physical layout, but the social and cultural DNA. It must answer: why do people want to live here?



1

Position

The first step is to position the project early with a story that resonates with both government and the community. While rooted in history, the place should be expressed in a relevant and contemporary way. The community, local businesses, and other stakeholders should contribute to shaping the place. This storytelling is key to increase government buy-in and encourage future investment in infrastructure.

2

Understand

Understand placemaking as a lever for economic competitiveness. A well-loved, well-used place attracts talent, investment, and visitors. It can shift perceptions of a location and create uplift in land and property values.

Placemaking starts early and is continuous. Activation should start before the first residents move in. Temporary uses on undeveloped parcels – pop-up markets, trial play spaces, community gardens – can test ideas, build local identity, and attract early adopters. This early programming is a low-cost way to seed the culture of the place and give future residents a voice in shaping it.

3

Define

Define metrics so you can measure place outcomes. Metrics should be multi-dimensional and incorporate physical, economic, and social aspects. Think early about how you will collect data to measure place performance.

Blending quantitative data such as visitation, dwell time, and economic activity with qualitative insights such as community sentiment, inclusivity, and cultural vibrancy allows success measures to be planned early, allowing owners to report back ROI, and inform how placemaking is approached in other communities.

Short-term experiments and evidence-based analysis – such as social impact measurement and cost-benefit studies – also help assess potential communities as an economic and social hub. A dynamic governance structure supports ongoing stakeholder engagement, with performance metrics tracking place economic, social, and environmental outcomes over time. Integrating smart approaches can help provide this evidence base.

Case study

Round Mountain, QLD

Frasers Property

Round Mountain illustrates how early master planning can embed a clear sense of identity and purpose, with landscape and local character shaping both everyday life and long-term value. Walkable villages, connected open space and early activation align physical design with social and environmental intent, demonstrating how placemaking can lock in enduring social, cultural and economic value, giving people a compelling reason to choose, belong, and stay.



Round Mountain brings to life interconnected placemaking.

Designing with Country

Connecting with Country is about building genuine relationships with First Nations peoples, their knowledge systems, and the cultural and spiritual connections they have with land, water, and sky. It's a process of listening, learning, and collaborating to ensure projects respect and reflect the ongoing custodianship of Country.

Designing with Country takes this further by integrating First Nations perspectives, values, and stories into the design process. This can influence everything from site planning and landscape design to materials, circulation, and the way spaces are experienced. It's not just about aesthetics — it's about embedding cultural meaning, ecological care, and long-term stewardship into the built environment.

1

Identify

Identify Aboriginal stakeholders early, including Elders, Traditional Owners and Indigenous organisations connected to the site. Engagement should be agreed collaboratively to respect local customs, governance structures, and timelines. Start with Walking on Country with Traditional Owners, and support with facilitated conversations exploring cultural values, stories, and aspirations associated with Country.

2

Engage

Meaningful and ongoing engagement is active through visioning, concept development, detailed design, and delivery. Cultural mapping can document tangible and intangible heritage, ecological knowledge and significant places, with insights integrated across planning, design, and environmental disciplines. During design development, cultural narratives should inform spatial layouts, landscape strategies, and material choices. Ecological alignment embeds land care practices and Traditional knowledge informs native planting and water-sensitive design. Undertaking collaborative design reviews with Traditional Owners ensures cultural values are embedded throughout.

3

Incorporate

During delivery, cultural integrity should be upheld by including representatives of the Traditional Custodians in governance or advisory roles. This may include the use of Traditional language in naming key public spaces, the integration of art, and the creation of experiences that communicate the site's cultural significance. Cultural competency training should be provided for all project participants.

Prior to completion, long-term stewardship arrangements should be established to ensure ongoing respect for and care of Country. This should include monitoring cultural objectives and supporting community-led events that acknowledge contributions, celebrate milestones, and reflect on outcomes.

Urbis supports the delivery of ***Connecting with Country framework*** processes through close collaboration with specialised First Nations Connecting with Country consultants. In NSW, this is led and carried out by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practitioners, ensuring cultural authority, integrity, and authenticity.

Case study

North Appin, NSW

Private client

The future residential community, located in Sydney's Greater Macarthur Growth Area, will reflect the area's character and protect what matters most - the natural environment, cultural history, and strong local identity. At the outset, a Connecting with Country framework was developed in collaboration with Yerrabingin, embedding Country centred design principles in the landscape and urban design approach early in the process to support an authentic place-led outcome. The residential structure plan, currently in post-exhibition phase, was shaped by the existing native vegetation and riparian corridors, creating a connected network of parks, green linear links and drainage systems.



Walking on Country is the starting point for meaningful engagement.

Building a local workforce

Planning for mixed use must move beyond land use allocation to a deliberate strategy for embedding business activity from day one. Integrating retail, commercial, and service businesses with early residential development helps establish economic momentum, activate centres, and reduce reliance on external employment and services.



1

Consider

Consider mixed-use opportunities early, including zoning. Ensure mixed-use is considered early, including zoning and space for commercial, light industrial, and/or service-based uses alongside residential areas. This helps create local job opportunities close to where people live, reducing commuting needs and supporting a balanced community. Planning for a mix of business types — from small-scale retail and hospitality to professional services and light manufacturing — helps diversify the local economy and build resilience over time.

2

Support

Support local procurement and business participation during construction. Engage with local suppliers, contractors, and service providers from the outset. This not only boosts the local economy during the build phase but also helps establish relationships that can continue into the operational life of the development and bolsters local support and investment in the community's success.

3

Plan

Plan for skills alignment and workforce readiness. Work with local councils, training providers, and industry groups to understand the skills profile of the local population, planning the business and industry that will succeed in the community. Phasing development is another key consideration. Employment spaces should be delivered in step with residential growth so that job opportunities expand as the population increases. This helps maintain economic momentum and ensures new residents can find work locally from the early stages of the community's life.

Case study

Alkimos Central, WA

DevelopmentWA

Alkimos Central is a new transit-based Urban Centre designed to deliver infrastructure and amenity from day one. The development includes a town centre, an integrated (below grade) train station, civic and community facilities, employment uses and a diverse mix of housing. By co-locating retail services, jobs and homes within a single, well-integrated centre, the plan supports the growth of a local workforce. The design also thoughtfully responds to the site's natural dunal system and Aboriginal cultural significance, embedding place identity and environmental sensitivity at its core.

[Read more about this project](#)



Delivering public transport, amenity and employment day one.

Education

Schools and early learning centres are often described as the heart of a community. When integrated into the early planning of new communities, they play a pivotal role in anchoring developments as strong, cohesive, and sustainable communities.

Well-planned and well-located education facilities, whether public or private, enhance communities by attracting diverse populations, anchoring social connection and local identity, and critically support an uplift in learning and social outcomes.



1

Location

The location of a school, early learning centre or any educational facility within a new community is critical. Key site selection criteria include accessibility to walking, cycling and transport networks, distance to planned open green space and adequate land to allow for future growth are crucial, as well as environmental considerations like biodiversity and flooding.

2

Pacing

The staged delivery of education infrastructure should match the pace of residential development and the resulting population growth. When successfully factored into delivery planning, education facilities can act as a draw card for home buyers, but opening must be factored in to meet demand without operating under capacity for long periods. By undertaking detailed forecasting for the immediate community, and looking at surrounding community capacity, developers can work with government agencies, private operators and local councils to ensure that delivery is appropriately staged.

3

Flexibility

Education infrastructure should incorporate flexibility to allow for expansion or adaptation as the community grows and changes, including multi-purpose spaces and adaptable learning environments. In greenfield areas, schools often play a broader social and community role, so planning should ensure facilities can be used beyond school hours for sport, recreation, and community events. This provides social connection beyond the school community and can deliver community infrastructure such as pools and performing arts spaces. This may provide alternative income to assist with running and maintenance costs.

Case study

Rowan Village, NSW

DevCore Property Group

Urbis has worked closely with DevCore on the rezoning and concept approval for Rowan Village in Wagga Wagga, a master-planned community of over 2,100 dwellings. A key outcome has been collaboration with Council and NSW School Infrastructure to locate a future primary school at the community heart. Co-located with the Village Centre and district park, the walkable hub will support everyday needs through retail, commercial, childcare and hospitality uses, with strong public and active transport connections.



Rowan Village is a centrally located community, designed to be a vibrant and welcoming hub.

Housing choice

Housing typologies are more than just product or built form. They are foundational to the success of an appealing, inclusive, connected community. Considering typologies early needs to incorporate market demographic and demand, affordability, and emerging models and delivery mechanisms such as Build-to-Rent (BTR), co-living, modular, and land lease. The approach must be considered and validated early while maintaining responsiveness to the development of the design and the community.

1

Diversify

Diversify typologies and models. Integrate a mix of housing types — including Build-to-Rent, modular construction, terraces, and urban village models — to address affordability, density, and lifestyle needs. Draw on national best practice and market leaders to explore alternate typologies that respond to local market conditions and deliver at speed, and are cost-efficient without compromising quality.

2

Social infrastructure

Approach housing as social infrastructure. Plan housing within walkable catchments of schools, health services, and local centres, co-locating with community facilities such as libraries, health precincts, and shared spaces. This approach fosters daily interaction, strengthens community ownership and safety, and supports social cohesion in both high-density and greenfield settings.

3

Urban villages

Envision the urban village early. This placemaking drives the development of all integrated aspects of the liveable community, including the diversity and mix of housing typologies. Streetscapes, green spaces, and community facilities are designed upfront to create walkable, vibrant neighbourhoods, while stakeholder alignment and governance keep delivery on track.

Case study

Aura, QLD

Stockland

Aura is one of Stockland’s most significant community developments. It is Australia’s largest master-planned community (in single ownership) and the nation’s largest six-star Green Star community. The development delivers genuine housing choice while embedding sustainability at its core, anchored by next-generation innovated product, and carefully crafted public realms and landscape identity. Aura is a future-focused residential community brought to life.

[Read more about this project](#)



Aura delivers housing choice via its urban villages.

Increasing demand for single-family rental model

66%

of Australians own their own home

*Down from 70% in 2006 (ABS)

1.2%

Residential vacancy rate

*September 2025 - National (SQM)

7,046,800

Australians rent their own home

*Up from 4,770,050 in 2006 (ABS)

39,175

National dwelling shortfall

*2024-2029 (NHSAC)

Green spaces

Green amenity is not just a critical feature of a liveable community. It is a strategic investment delivering economic, social, and environmental returns. Using proven design principles, new developments often integrate biodiversity corridors, water-sensitive urban design, and quality public spaces to build resilient communities.



1

Emphasise

See green amenity as a core value proposition. Green spaces are not simply aesthetic additions – they are central to creating healthy, attractive, and resilient communities. Well-designed green infrastructure can recover the additional development cost by increasing property value, attract investment, and improve resident satisfaction. Independent data quantifies the economic savings from improved health outcomes, reduced heat island effects, and enhanced storm water management.

2

Embed

Embed principles into practice. The design principles developed through projects such as **Stockland's Aura Innovation Precinct** are now being embedded into new residential greenfield developments such as Round Mountain. These principles move beyond basic turf and tree planting, to create integrated systems that combine biodiversity corridors, water sensitive urban design, and high-quality public spaces. Collaboration across disciplines ensures that ecological, social, and economic benefits are considered together.

3

Restore

Make environmental restoration a part of the community. Restored waterways, wetlands, and biodiversity corridors are designed to be both ecological assets and valued public spaces, connecting neighbourhoods and encouraging active lifestyles. These elements are tracked and benchmarked through tools that can measure health, well-being, and environmental outcomes. By capturing and reporting on these metrics, tangible benefits can be exhibited to stakeholders – from improved biodiversity and water quality to increased resident engagement and satisfaction. This evidence-based approach strengthens the case for investment and differentiates our projects from standard master-planned communities.

Green spaces in Australian master-planned developments have driven price premiums up to 34%, rent premiums up to 65% and capital growth up to 30%.

Source: Urbis 2024

Case study

Everleigh, QLD

Mirvac

Everleigh is planned as a master-planned community where an extensive network of regional, conservation, local and linear parks forms the backbone of daily life and community identity. With more than 38 per cent of the site dedicated to open space, the project demonstrates how well-designed green amenity functions as a strategic investment, supporting well-being, encouraging active lifestyles, restoring natural systems and creating long-term social, environmental, and economic value.

[Read more about this project](#)



Everleigh has been designed to optimise green spaces, integrating local parks seamlessly into the community.

Community amenities

When planned strategically, community amenities become one of the most powerful drivers of both community well-being and commercial success. Thinking beyond compliance and benchmarks enables developers to activate amenities – particularly parks, playgrounds, and early community infrastructure – to shape behaviour, build identity, and create long-lasting value from the outset.



1

Strategise

Benchmarks are a baseline, not a strategy.

Planning long-lasting, impactful community amenities requires strategy, long-term thinking, and considering the needs and experience of the residents – instead of taking a compliance-based approach, relying only on minimum sqm rates, population triggers, or minimum standards. Strategic thinking and understanding the needs of the community influences the definition, character, delivery, placement, activation, and integration of how the amenities shape the community, from public swimming pools and libraries to award-winning playgrounds. Community levies can also help pay for their upkeep.

2

Power of play

Locating these amenities so they are visible, safe and walkable is critical. Highly visible spaces feel welcoming and reinforce social norms around shared use and care. Walkable access supports daily, incidental use rather than occasional visits, embedding play and recreation into everyday routines. This is particularly important for families, older residents and people without easy access to private open space.

Case study

Olivine, VIC

Mirvac

Olivine is planned as a complete community where schools, parks, open space and community facilities are embedded early to support daily life and well-being. Through strategic planning and collaboration with Council and delivery partners, the project demonstrates how well located and activated amenities can build identity, encourage early use and create lasting social and commercial value. It will deliver around 4,500 homes across five precincts, offering diverse housing types that maximise green space, and access to town centres.

[Read more about this project](#)



3

Innovate

Innovative amenities can be commercial.

Upfront investment in community infrastructure can accelerate sales, differentiate projects in competitive markets, and support premium outcomes. Case studies consistently show that early activation of amenities reduces risk and strengthens both community and financial performance.

By establishing use, identity and footfall from the outset, early delivery builds confidence for purchasers, investors and partners.

Dwellings within proximity to neighbourhood amenity attract a price premium of ~16%.

Source: Urbis 2022



Gumnut Park Adventure Playground, Olivine, VIC. ©Mirvac.

Transport

Our approach to liveable communities prioritises early, people-centred transport planning, practical, evidence-based solutions, and future-ready infrastructure. Together, these ensure that new communities are not only functional from day one but adaptable and resilient for decades to come.



1

People-focused

People-centred transport planning. We consider the full spectrum of travel, from short local trips to longer-distance movement, enabling us to make sustainable transport viable from the outset – whether that’s through dedicated bus ways, separate and shaded cycle networks, or local mobility hubs with bike share, EV charging, and parcel lockers. Embedding these elements early creates a genuine point of difference in the market and delivers communities that are attractive, inclusive, and easy and safe to navigate.

2

Plan

Plan with data-based pragmatism. Combine a clear vision for the future with the practical steps needed to get there, using robust datasets, demographic projections and lessons from past projects to inform every recommendation. Tailor assessment of transport impacts to the needs of each site, rather than relying on generic templates, and integrate active transport planning, public transport service design, traffic engineering, and real-world data sets (including human movement data) into a singular approach.

3

Activate

Activate early. From electric vehicle charging to micro mobility and emerging transport technologies, building in the right space, infrastructure and flexibility from the outset helps activate communities and support sustainable travel. Outputs should reflect urban design and landscape architecture best practice, so transport solutions work with the local environment and climate. A staged approach to delivery balances immediate needs with long-term adaptability, allowing communities to evolve as technology and travel behaviours change. This future-proofing supports sustainability and resilience, while maximising return on investment by avoiding costly retrofits over time.

Case study

Gagalba Lakes, QLD

Stockland

Stockland worked closely with Urbis to develop the transport network and masterplan for various precincts within Aura, with the most recent focus on the design and delivery of the Gagalba suburb to elevate the world-class active transport network for residents and visitors. Blending engineering best practice with high-quality amenity, the network is designed to attract all users while integrating seamlessly with the wider Aura precincts and expanding on the existing network. This included connection to Aura’s Veloway – a dedicated off-road cycling spine linking neighbourhoods, schools, and the town centre to support safe everyday travel.

[Read more about this project](#)



Veloway cycle infrastructure prioritised across the community.

Smart, sustainable, and resilient places

Sustainability is not an “add-on”. It is a fundamental lens through which we plan, design and shape future places. Going beyond minimum compliance to integrate environmental, social, and economic principles at the outset, aligning them with smart infrastructure planning. When approached this way, climate-responsive design, future-ready infrastructure and measurable outcomes work together as an integrated smart and sustainable vision that drives long-term value, resilience and liveability.

1

Consider

Climate sensitive and sustainable design.

Design with climate, comfort, and biodiversity as core drivers - creating places that are cooler, greener and more resilient to extreme weather, while enhancing liveability and accessibility. Incorporate blue-green networks, rewilding initiatives and biodiversity corridors that reconnect people with nature and strengthen ecological systems at a precinct scale.

Integrate renewable energy, battery storage, water-sensitive urban design and circular economy principles, to reduce emissions, lower operating costs and improve resilience. Leading projects such as Aura demonstrate how climate-responsive design can deliver communities that are comfortable and inclusive, energy-positive, resource-efficient and future-ready.

2

Future-proof

Future-proof digital infrastructure. Digital infrastructure is critical to liveability – as essential as roads, water, and power. Without it, communities risk becoming “digital deserts” that are excluded from the digital economy and the opportunities it enables.

Embed high-quality digital connectivity from the outset, guided by minimum deployment principles that deliver maximum effectiveness. This includes integrating technology to improve safety, amenity, transport efficiency and resilience, while ensuring it supports – rather than dictates – the community’s needs. Examples like the Western Sydney Aerotropolis shows how progressive planning frameworks can set a higher baseline for both physical and digital infrastructure, creating a platform for innovation and growth.

3

Ecosystem approach

Adopt an ecosystem approach. Sustainability and smart infrastructure deliver the greatest value when they are a single, integrated system. Define what success looks like upfront, quantify the benefits, and measure performance over time across energy use, emissions, biodiversity and digital service quality outcomes.

Clearly distinguish between what can be directly controlled and what relies on policy, market settings or partnerships. This enables the development of realistic, staged pathways to delivery – reducing risk, unlocking investment, and strengthening the business case.



Read the Urbis and nbn co report, *Accelerating Smarter Development*

Smart, sustainable places are created when digital technologies, ESG principles and place planning are integrated early. Informed by national consultation, this prospectus shows how early investment in data, connectivity and intelligent systems improves infrastructure performance and delivers measurable social and environmental outcomes, supporting resilient, future-ready communities.

[Read more about this project](#)



Delivery and partnership models

Delivering great places requires more than good design – it depends on the right vision, partnerships, and governance from the outset. Increasingly, successful developments are those that identify the right mix of uses early, working with institutional partners from outset to delivery, and adopt flexible models such as land lease, Build-to-Rent (BTR) and joint ventures.

Just as important is establishing clear stewardship arrangements for assets that may not ultimately be owned by council. By aligning delivery models with long-term place management, communities can be activated early and supported to evolve over time, ensuring both social value and commercial resilience.



1

Envision

Successful community infrastructure delivery begins with a clear vision for uses and partnerships that de-risk delivery.

Early engagement with education providers, health services, anchor tenants, and authorities helps shape staging decisions and establish clear funding, delivery, and long-term management frameworks. Understanding partner needs around timing, tenure, governance, and commercial settings is critical to viable day-one outcomes. This approach enables works-in-kind and innovative funding solutions that maximise public benefit, support the local area and enhance development appeal.

2

Utilise

Use flexible governance and delivery models to unlock outcomes. Traditional ownership and delivery models are no longer sufficient on their own. Land lease, Build-to-Rent (BTR), joint ventures and partnership models can enable earlier delivery of housing and community infrastructure while managing risk and capital exposure. Just as importantly, governance arrangements must be resolved early, particularly where assets will not ultimately be owned by council. Clear stewardship models allow places to function well before formal handover.

3

Steward

Activate and steward places so they can evolve over time. Great places require ongoing management, not just good design. A place management entity – often developer led in the early years – can activate public spaces, curate events and respond to changing community needs. This approach ensures the “software” of a place keeps pace with its “hardware”, allowing communities to reinvent themselves as they grow. Urbis’ place-led approach recognises that long term value is created through continuous activation, adaptation and care.

Case study

Coral Cove, QLD

DevCore Property Group

The Coral Cove redevelopment is planned as an integrated tourism and residential community that combines leisure, accommodation, retail and diverse housing within a single, well-structured master plan. The project demonstrates how a clear vision, supported by early partnerships, flexible delivery models and defined stewardship arrangements, can de-risk delivery while enabling long-term place management and evolution.

[Read more about this project](#)



Aerial of the residential and tourism precinct at Coral Cove, QLD.

National *leadership team*

Urbis' Liveable Communities leadership team is supported by a national, multidisciplinary team of 200+ Liveable Communities designers, planners, research specialists and advisers, who provide practical expertise, advice, and delivery support. Reach out below.

Regional Leads



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Shaping cities and communities *for a better future*

From inspiration to implementation, we create communities and places that address the complex needs of society.

Our approach to liveability extends beyond the built environment and involves sustainable, ethical, commercial, social and natural elements.

Our team of experts, partners and clients come from various sectors and regions around the world, working seamlessly to tackle opportunities from all angles turning them into transformative and lasting change.

900⁺

Professional staff

8

Offices internationally

60⁺

Years experience

Our impact

Our experience spans over 100+ greenfield projects nationally.

We've delivered approximately ~20,000 hectares of land for new communities. That equates to roughly the size of Canberra, the capital city of Australia.

Our teams have enabled homes for ~400,000 people.

