



**CoHousing**  
AUSTRALIA



**BROUGHAM ST**  
**COHOUSING**

# Cohousing

Housing for Environmental Sustainability,  
Climate Adaptation and Resilience

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# Outline of Presentation

- What is Cohousing
- Brougham Street, Eltham Cohousing Community
- **Resource Efficiency and Savings through Shared Amenity**
- **Collective Investment in Sustainable and Renewable Technologies**
- **Social Influence and Pro-Environmental Behaviour**
- **Climate Adaptation and Community Resilience Building Opportunities**



## HOUSING WITH BENEFITS



Blends private homes with shared places



Designed for social interaction & community life



Co-designed with and for residents



Collectively managed by and for residents



Resource sharing to spend less but access more



A good neighbour to the surrounding neighbourhood

The great Australian dream: your own (big) home with a big backyard.

But now we come to realise that a good front door is better than a good back door.

This is true for us as individuals, wanting greater connection and belonging, and at a societal level, creating resilience and well-being.



## Cohousing (Re) Create Community

More than just a place to live

- Provides connection, support, and a real sense of belonging
- Combines private living spaces with shared amenities and a culture of collaboration
- Smaller houses and shared resources means a smaller environmental footprint and more affordable living
- **Presents significant opportunities to strengthen climate adaptation and community resilience**

## 62A Brougham Street, Eltham

- 1.6 acre property in a lush green strip of Eltham
- Frontage remains similar to existing conditions, including parking at the front
- Retains the 25+ year old buildings cafe and shop, and heritage buildings
- 29% of the site in a Urban Flood Zone
- Rear of site in a Bushfire Overlay
- Environmental and landscape Overlays



# Brougham Street Cohousing

- An intergenerational housing project where 20 households are the developers
- Shared common house and heritage listed mud brick studio and shed
- Well designed high quality homes with high environmental performance
- Extensive communal open space and productive gardens allows for prioritising pedestrians and social interactions
- Designed to help live with a lighter footprint
- Only 22% site coverage allows for communal aspects to be respectful of surrounding areas and environmental context





## A Care Mindset

- Creating a space where everyone knows that their voice is worthy and their input is valid; cultivating a space where everyone feels like they belong.
- Respecting the nuances and differences between people, cultures, and identities, with a non-judgemental attitude.
- Having a willingness to learn, grow, and become informed about difference; cultivating a culture of appreciation and informed behaviour towards each other.
- Choosing to remember that we're on the same team creating a common vision.
- Holding compassion for each others circumstances and choosing kindness and respect in communication with each other.
- Being aware of power dynamics, and self-reflecting on our own intersections of privilege.
- Holding a space of fairness and equity for all in our group.
- Choose discussion and discourse over reaction, resentment, and blame.
- Trusting each other and believing that others have the community best intentions in heart.
- Leaning into forgiveness and recognising that we are all doing the best we can with what we have.



## A Courageous Heart

- Being willing to share uncomfortable truths, being willing to be honest about our needs.
- Embracing newness and difference
- Being able to admit when we don't know, don't understand, or when we are feeling vulnerable.
- Being willing to hold ourselves and each other accountable to our group agreements, and visions.



## A Culture Of Connection

- Leaning in during discomfort and conflict.
- Learning and listening to each other with curiosity and a non-judgemental ear.
- Spending time together celebrating each other, showing support, and sharing daily joyful moments.
  - Cultivating a space of belonging and safety.
  - Having patience and trusting in the process.



## A Commitment To Stewardship

- Caring over and maintaining land, ecology, community, and relationships.
- Committing to caring for the land through sustainable practices and ecological awareness.
- Learning and educating ourselves to respond appropriately to the land and community we are in stewardship of.
- Holding ourselves accountable to these commitments and having personal responsibility.



## A Lightness Of Being

- Bringing lightness, play, and joy into daily life and community activity.
- Celebrateing ourselves, eachother, and the earth
- Welcoming flexibility and play even in serious situations.
- Inviting each other into joy and play, making it accessible and welcoming for all.



## A Spirit of Authenticity

- "The daily practice of letting go of who we think we're supposed to be and embracing who we are... the choice to show up and be real." - *Brene Brown*
- Willingness for self inquiry, vulnerability, and talking about difficult things.
- Celebrating each others true selves; fostering safety for self expression.



# Communal Buildings



**Allow for reduced dwelling sizes by providing for communal storage, recreation areas, garden sheds, and workshops to allow for sharing tools and equipment promoting social interaction and lower material consumption.**

# Shared Amenities

- Access to generously shared amenities and common spaces reduces the overall environmental footprint by encouraging collective rather than individual resource use.
- By providing shared indoor areas, individual dwellings sizes can be reduced typically 20% smaller than what's on the market.
- Provide affordability benefits and reduced embodied emissions and operational energy use.
- Guest rooms, laundries, kitchens, dining areas and workspaces separate to residents are typical of cohousing and provide flexibility over time for residents.



# Private space vs. Communal

Front door: the new Aussie Dream

A modern residential building with a communal courtyard. The building features a mix of wood and metal cladding, with balconies and a central courtyard area. People are seen on the balconies and in the courtyard, which is surrounded by trees and greenery. The scene is bright and sunny, suggesting a pleasant outdoor environment.

Minimising private space to provide as much communal open space as possible is a key intentional design decision.

# Communal Open Space

Large communal spaces provide opportunities for shared waste, water and energy infrastructure.

For Brougham Street it's also allowing for an additional 150 trees to be planted.

**Shared outdoor spaces** allow for residents to get together throughout the site. They also provide opportunities for productive communal gardens.

Food production gives residents the opportunity to **share their harvests** and cultivate relationships.

As the community settles and evolves there is opportunity to both expand the productive gardens and **enhance the ecologies** of the site.



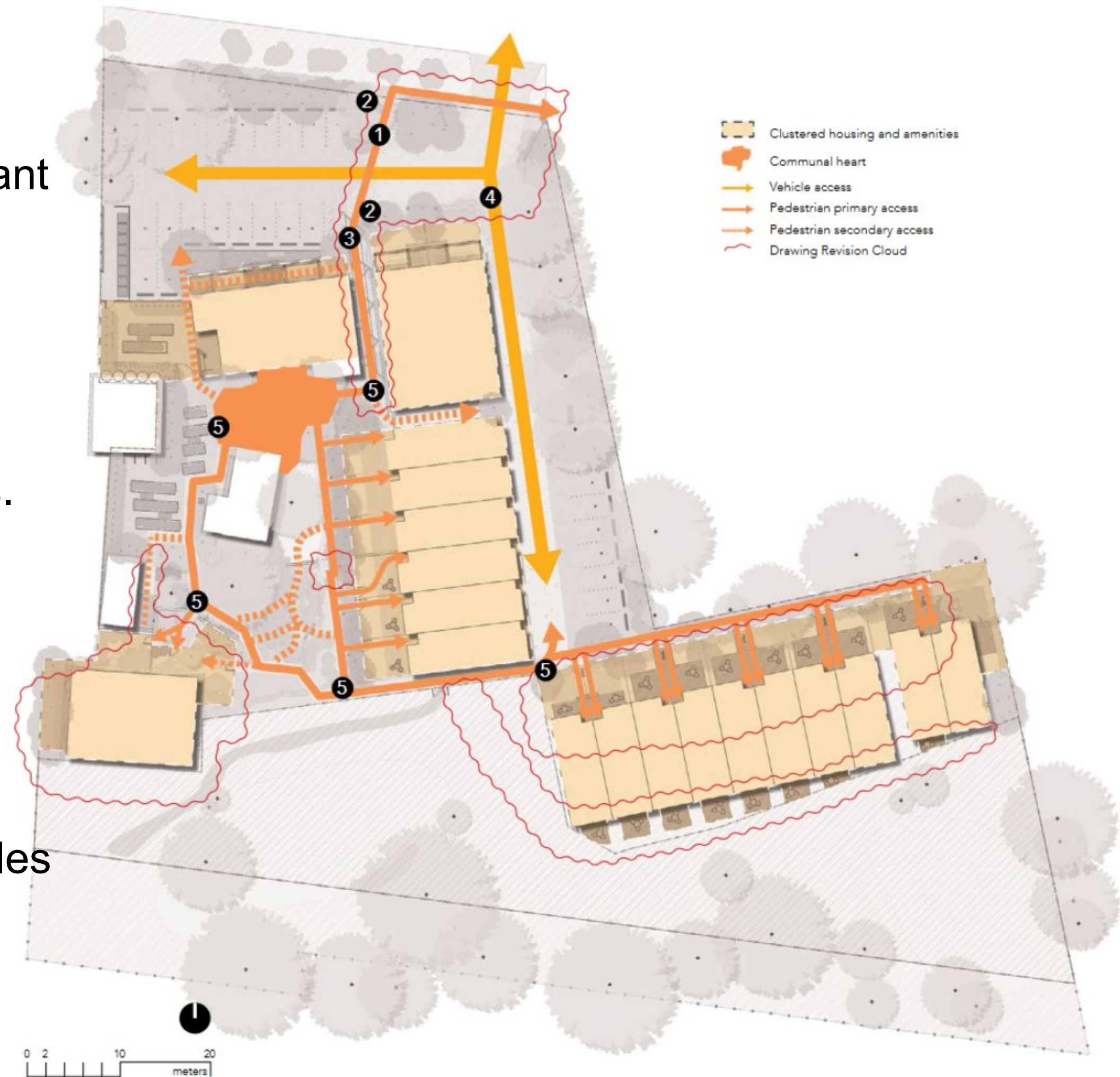
# Car Parking

Car parking at the perimeter is an important intentional design feature.

Car parking provision is both expensive and land hungry and all too often works against other more important social, affordability and environmental outcomes.

Brougham Street has 30% site coverage allowing for pedestrian pathways to facilitate high accessibility, social interaction, and passive surveillance.

Many cohousing communities treat vehicles as shared resources, reducing the total number of cars required.



# Investment into Sustainable and Renewable Technologies

- Co-design means environmentally sustainable design can be incorporated through coordinated, community-led decision making.
- Planning at a collective scale facilitates enhanced energy independence and climate resilience while lowering greenhouse gas emissions and long-term energy costs.
- Increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events heighten community vulnerability to outages due to reliance on centralised energy systems.
- Local renewable energy generation and storage reduce dependence.



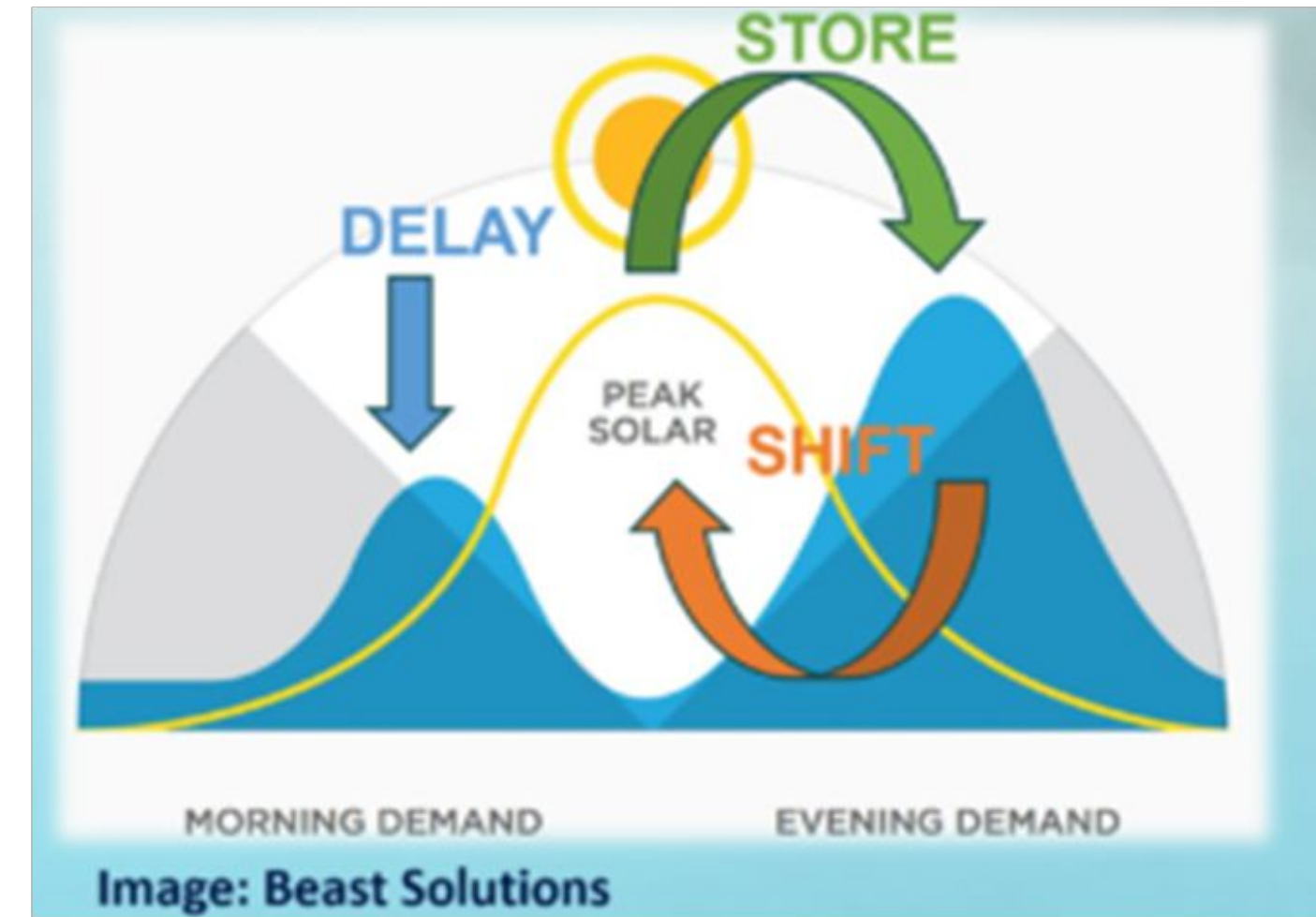
Urban Coup, co-housing



Mitsubishi Outlander PHEV (Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle)



BYD Dolphin EV (Fully Electric Vehicle)



**Shared costs and decision-making capacity make it more viable to implement shared solar installations and technologies such battery storage systems, shared cars and supporting EVs.**

# Social Influence and Pro-Environmental Behaviour

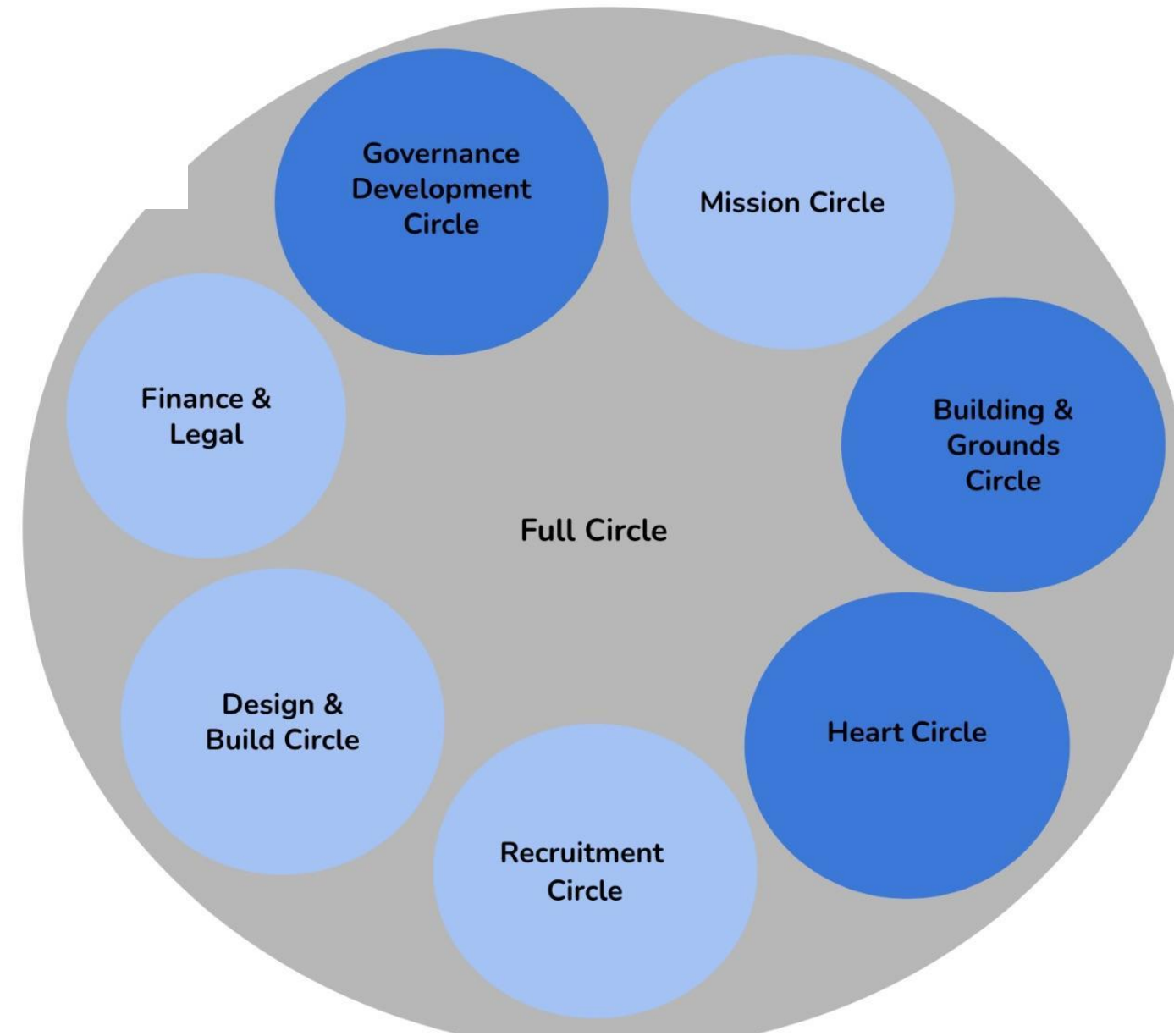
- Cohousing enables sustainability to be pursued collectively rather than as an individual responsibility building social capital for climate resilience.
- Shared decision-making and knowledge exchange distribute the practical and cognitive burden of environmentally responsible living, creating a supportive environment for long-term behavioural change.
- Resident feedback from cohousing communities highlights how collective systems are more easily developed and maintained through shared effort.
- Exposure to practical examples of sustainable living encourages the adoption of more consistent pro-environmental behaviours.
- By embedding sustainability within everyday community practices, cohousing moves environmental action beyond isolated individual efforts and into coordinated, community-scale outcomes.

# Climate Adaptation and Community Resilience Building Opportunities

- Design intentionally **fosters social connection, building social capital** among residents
- During extreme events (heatwaves, bushfires and flash flooding) strong **social networks are critical**
- Particularly **important for vulnerable residents**: older people, individuals with disability, and children
- International studies show that social connectedness **reduces mortality** during extreme heat events.
- Cohousing communities are well placed to **develop local emergency plans and disaster response procedures**
- Participatory governance enables plans to **reflect site-specific risks**, such as bushfire or flood exposure, and resident vulnerabilities.

# Making it all Happen

Sociocracy has presented us with resilient, equitable and regenerative self-governance practices



Fully uses sociocracy

"The goal for our governance is to increase connection instead of dividing us."



- Solar Working Group (WG)
- Emergency Management WG
- Common House WG
- Garden WG
- Owners Corporation WG





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By combining thoughtful design with a collaborative spirit, cohousing offers significant opportunities to advance environmental sustainability and strengthen climate resilience.

As seen in the Brougham Street project, these communities not only reduce environmental impact but also enhance wellbeing and collective preparedness for the challenges of a changing climate.

**Any questions, clarifications, observations further thoughts from Brougham St Cohousing Community members present here**



**CoHousing**  
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Website <https://www.cohousingaustralia.org.au/>

New approaches that respond to the climate and biodiversity emergency, the social health and wellbeing crisis, and the cost of housing and living crisis



**BROUGHAM ST**  
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Where Earth, Heart and Village Share a Table

Website: <https://www.broughamstreetcohousing.com>

**PROPERTY**  
**COLLECTIVES**

“...there’s power in community, strength in the collect  
and it’s time for a new way of doing real estate.”

Website: <https://propertycollectives.com.au/>



# What Is Cohousing?

1. Blends private homes with shared spaces
2. Is designed for social interaction
3. Co-designed with residents
4. Collectively managed by its residents
5. It is a good neighbour to the surrounding neighbourhood

