What Works for Place-Based Approaches in Victoria?

Part 1: A review of the literature

Prepared for Department Jobs Precincts and Regions (DJPR)

Prepared by Jesuit Social Services' Centre for Just Places, RMIT University and Centre for Community Child Health (MCRI)

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Acknowledgement of Country

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Lead Organisations

- Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR)
- Jesuit Social Services (Centre for Just Places) (CJP)
- RMIT University (Centre for Urban Research) (RMIT)
- Murdoch Children's Research Institute (Centre for Community Child Health) (MCRI)
- The University of Queensland (Institute for Social Science Research) (UQ)

Project Team

- Associate Professor Susie Moloney (Jesuit Social Services' CJP Lead)
- Associate Professor Melanie Davern (RMIT Lead)
- Sue West (MCRI Lead)
- Associate Professor Ian McShane (RMIT)
- Associate Professor Ashton DeSilva (RMIT)

Research Team

- Dr Haydie Gooder (CJP)
- Dr Thea Hewitt (CJP)
- Dr Karen Villanueva (RMIT)
- Amanda Alderton (RMIT)
- Dr Tim Moore (MCRI)
- Noushin Arefadib (MCRI)

Advisory Group

- Dr Melek Cigdem-Bayram (CJP and RMIT)
- Dr Brian Coffey (RMIT)
- Professor Lauren Rickards (RMIT)
- Professor Sharon Goldfeld (MCRI)
- Rebecca Fry (MCRI)
- Dr Francis Markham (ANU)
- Dr Geoffrey Woolcock (USQ)
- Professor Tim Reddel (UQ)
- Dr Lutfun Nahar Lata (UQ)
- Dr Bronwyn Lay (FCLC)
- Angela Elson (Stand Up Collaboration)
- Dr Rachel Goff (Stand Up Collaboration)

Oversight Committee

The Oversight Committee included representatives from:

- Place-Based Reform and Delivery, DJPR
- Research and Evaluation, Our Place
- Regional Policy, Engagement and Coordination, DJPR
- Latrobe Valley Authority, DJPR
- Dusseldorp Foundation
- Centre for Evaluation and Research, DoH
- Stronger Places, Stronger People, DSS
- Give Where You Live Foundation
- Strategic Partnerships, DET

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The Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions funded the development of this report. The overall project 'What works for place-based approaches in Victoria' comprises of three work packages: 1) meta-synthesis of critical factors for place-based approaches; 2) case studies of place-based approaches in Victoria; and: 3) knowledge translation of project outputs. The overall project management was led by the Jesuit Social Services' Centre for Just Places. The meta-synthesis was led by RMIT University, with Jesuit Social Services and Murdoch Children's Research Institute leading the case study work packages, and University of Queensland providing a policy review of place-based approaches as part of the meta-synthesis. The overall objective of the project was to increase the availability of high-quality evidence in understanding whether place-based approaches are effective in addressing complex issues and what works in the Victorian context.

Extensive research was conducted to address the overall objectives of the project. Consequently, research findings are separated into 2 key reports: *Part 1: A review of the literature* addresses the meta-synthesis; and *Part 2: A review of practice* addresses the case study analyses.[1] This report is Part 1 and outlines the critical factors for successful place-based approaches drawing on a meta-synthesis of existing Australian and international evidence in academic and grey literature. A short synthesis of key findings accompanies this report.

For further information

Jesuit Social Services' Centre for Just Places:
https://jss.org.au/what-we-do/centre-for-just-places/

Susie Moloney, Executive Director, Jesuit Social Services' Centre for Just Places

T: 0417 648 288

E: susie.moloney@jss.org.au

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[1] Hewitt, T., Arefadib N., Gooder, H., Moloney, S., Moore, T. and Ryks J. (2022). *What works for place-based approaches in Victoria. Part 2: A review of practice*. Report prepared for the Victorian Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions. DOI 10.25439/rmt.19702333

[2] Amanda Alderton and Karen Villanueva are joint first authors.

Tables

Figures

Abbreviations

Note: A full glossary of terminology used in this report can be found in Appendix 1: Glossary.

CDD: Community-driven development

EZ: Empowerment Zone

HJP: Health Justice Partnership

OECD: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

PBA: Place-based approach

RCTs: Randomised controlled trials

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

Executive summary

In recent years Victorians have endured difficult times with catastrophic summer bushfires (2019-2020), floods and the COVID-19 pandemic with its associated impacts including local and regional lockdowns, school closures, unemployment, changed migration patterns, financial distress, increased family violence, and impacts on mental health. These disruptions and emerging issues have occurred in the context of a rapidly changing climate with higher temperatures, more frequent and extreme weather events, greater risk of bushfires, floods and sea-level rises, all which will have disproportionate impacts on people living with socio-economic disadvantage. Consequently, to address the interconnections between these socio-economic and environmental issues at a local level, applying a place-based lens is critically important, particularly as policy and planning moves from responding to crises, into recovery, transition, adaptation and preparing for the future.

This research has been funded by the Place-Based Reform and Delivery branch of the Victorian Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) to consolidate and review evidence on what works for place-based approaches (PBAs) in the Victorian context. The major objective of the project was to increase understanding of the effectiveness of PBAs and make this evidence available to decision-makers, practitioners and funders of PBAs. The ultimate project objective has been to support PBAs, increase their effectiveness and improve the wellbeing of Victorian communities.

The project has been led by Jesuit Social Services' Centre for Just Places, with RMIT University Centre for Urban Research and the Centre for Community Child Health at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute. The research has been delivered and developed in partnership with DJPR and guided by the Department's project Oversight Committee as well as an independent Advisory Group.

The specific aims of the project were to identify elements of PBAs that influence success across the lifetime of initiatives, factors that influence effectiveness, barriers to effectiveness, government influences on effectiveness and successful partnerships, and the use of economic evaluation in PBAs. The project consisted of two major work programs: Part 1, a meta-synthesis of existing literature on PBAs; and Part 2, an examination of selected case studies across Victoria. This report provides results for Part 1 of the project, an extensive meta-synthesis of available evidence in the existing literature. A meta-synthesis describes a 'review of reviews' approach and literature included peer-reviewed journal articles, authoritative summaries, reports and other publications identified through database searches, the project team, Advisory Group and Oversight Committee. An historical policy review of PBAs is also included in this report as Appendix 2, and has been prepared by project Advisory Group members from the University of Queensland. The historical review of policy is outside the scope of the original project brief but has been provided for contextual information on changing policy environments related to PBAs over time, and across Australian state and federal jurisdictions.

Before presenting key findings derived from the literature, it is useful to provide a definition of PBAs 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, p. 7)

The Victorian Government's framework for place-based approaches (State Government of Victoria, 2020) acknowledges the important differences between PBAs and place-focused approaches. Place-focused approaches have limited community involvement in decision-making, concentrate on planning and service delivery, and ultimately government has control over decision-making. In comparison, PBAs are community driven initiatives that have the potential to work towards shared long-term outcomes usually requiring ongoing whole-of-government support and commitment to address complex and systemic issues. While place-based and place-focused represent different approaches, there is capacity for initiatives to move between these approaches, with the role of community in decision-making changing over time. This meta-synthesis of existing literature identified several essential features of successful PBAs (see Figure 1), as well as elements and conditions for success, and gaps and limitations in the existing literature. Key findings from the meta–synthesis are summarised below.

What is 'place'?

What is meant by 'place' varies for different people. Research over the last two decades has highlighted that places are dynamic, mobile over time and space, and interactive through interconnections with people, other species, and social practices (Tuck and McKenzie, 2015). Place is thus seen as the actual practices of people, rather than geographic boundaries of location imposed administratively (Fincher, 2021).

Essential features of successful PBAs

- **Strong focus on place** recognising local histories that affect how people emotionally connect to a place and their sense of identity within communities.
- **Commitment to promoting equity** and embedding this in all stages and activities, including understanding of the history of places, and acknowledging that systems and policies can reinforce existing inequities unless addressed in PBAs.
- **Commitment to power-sharing and self-determination** including prioritising First Nations understandings of place, learning from First Nations ways of working in place, and enabling First Nations people to make decisions and design governance structures and supporting Indigenous data sovereignty. Principles of self-determination should be included in all stages and activities of PBAs.
- **Adopt a strengths-based lens** when working with communities to understand self-identified strengths, rather than relying on deficit-based narratives. Stigma and paternalism come from deficit-based models and often ignore the lived experiences of residents.
- **Articulate a theory of change** describing how a PBA will lead to proposed desired outcomes and acknowledge socioeconomic factors, power, agency and the places where people are born, live, learn, work, play and age all affect a wide range of wellbeing outcomes.
- **Based on principles of good governance** including legitimacy to govern, transparency and visibility of decision-making, accountability, inclusiveness of all stakeholders, fairness, integration and coordination across governance levels, capability to effectively deliver, and adaptability in decision-making with associated responsive and reflective learning.
- **Shift from managerial, transactional service-delivery approaches to 'movement building'** demonstrating deep listening of local lived experiences and matched deep hearing that address community-defined priorities and not an approach that focuses only on program management and service delivery/coordination.
- **Understand that collaborative systems change takes time** to build trust, deeply listen to lived experiences and achieve long-term change in communities. Building trust is especially important if trust has been a violated in the past (e.g., previous interventions).

The following section consolidates key findings from the literature focusing on frequently occurring themes of governance and evaluation of PBAs. These points speak directly to the key aims and objectives of the project. In terms of governance, the literature highlights: shared power; inclusive and diverse participation; the importance of governance structures; flexible and long-term funding and support models; the critical role of government and leadership; and communication and leadership skills. In terms of evaluation, findings from the literature focus on principles and approaches of measurement, accountability and learning in the evaluation of PBAs.

Governance factors influencing PBAs

Shared power

- **Developing shared power should begin with deep listening** enabling the community to tell its story, including the history of pre-existing power dynamics, to question who should be involved in sharing power, with continued reflection throughout the PBA. Long-term co-design and co-production processes can enable power-sharing and strengthen capacity in government and communities.
- **Shared power should occur across the lifespan of a PBA** and not just as consultation or tokenistic engagement during development, which undermines the legitimacy of a PBA.
- **Power-sharing is critical to support First Nations self-determination** and much can be learnt from First Nations-led PBAs who demonstrate genuine devolution of decision-making power.

Inclusive and diverse

- **Genuine shared power and decision-making requires broad, diverse participation** and ownership across government, key stakeholders and community members and is a key determinant of PBA success that is universally supported in the literature.
- **PBAs need diverse and inclusive governance** matched with recruitment strategies that prioritise diversity, flexible meeting times, and formalised and broad membership. This should also include respect and reflection on community readiness and capacity building in the early stages of planning.

Importance of governance structures

- **Clear governance, vision, mission and theory of change are essential for consensus building** and should be based on a multi-level framework tailored to local needs rather than a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. Tackling achievable and winnable battles early (i.e., low hanging fruit) are also good principles for maintaining engagement and momentum but need to be balanced with long-term goals and sustainability.
- **Formalised, clear and appropriate governance is critical for trust** and requires formalisation of roles, defined relationships between organisations and formal, accountable, and long-term commitments to the PBA.
- **Many types of governance structures exist in PBAs** and in all typologies multiple tiers of government are critical to the success of PBAs due to their ongoing involvement and knowledge about complex community issues and through their provision of leadership and often funding. Governance structures should also adapt across the lifecourse of a PBA. For example, while local government might begin as the backbone/lead organisation, other partners can take on this role over time.
- **Establishing mechanism for sharing information between agencies, organisations and tiers of government is key in PBAs.** A backbone or lead organisation (commonly used in collective impact approaches (see Glossary for definition) can play this role supporting logistics, administration and communication between partners and stakeholders, though this can lead to over-investment in the lead organisation to the detriment of others.
- **Organisational changes and staff turnover within organisations risk PBA success** and are linked to changing governance arrangements and processes.
- **Participation in governance processes requires funding** and requires significant time, resources and organisational infrastructure.

Funding and support models

- **Sustainable, flexible and adequate resourcing is a key enabler of effective PBAs.**
- **Seeking and maintaining funding is a major (administrative) burden on PBAs and government plays a critical role in on-going funding.** Long-term government funding and the pooling of funds across government departments can help to mitigate risks along with a focus on outcomes and not outputs.
- **Governance processes and evaluation require appropriate resourcing across the lifetime of a PBA** and include compensation for participation on boards/committees, time spent on administration and funding applications. This is important to long-term engagement, power balances and cooperation.
- **Authority to direct funding and resource allocation must align with shared decision-making** and inflexibility in government financial systems are barriers to flexibility in PBAs.
- **Funding models should better support evaluation throughout the life of a PBA** with a specific allocation of funding to support measurement and evaluation from beginning to end.

The critical role of government

- **The three tiers of government create complexity for PBAs.** In many policy domains (e.g., health and education) federal, state, and local governments share power often making responsibility and accountability unclear. This can lead to a difficult to navigate bureaucratic maze of government departments, agencies, community organisations and not-for profits.
- **Lack of policy coherence** and 'handballing' across tiers of government and departments can erode community trust. PBAs are most successful when they are led by community and/or in partnership with government.
- **Government needs to move from a model of service delivery and contract management for PBAs** to a model that embraces systems thinking, flexibility, continual learning and collaboration with senior-level leadership support (e.g., Minister) without fear of failure, so that government is more effectively supporting and enabling initiatives and not shaping them.
- **Organisational cultures, structures and staff turnover (particularly in government) are barriers** to effective PBAs and an ongoing challenge for partner organisations. Relational governance is recommended and prioritises building strong local relationships, local community infrastructure for people to meet and maintaining a consistent contact person within government.

Leadership and fundamental skills

- **Leadership, interpersonal skills and mindsets are fundamental to effective PBAs.** This includes communication, facilitation, mediation, partnership skills, empathy and cultural competence. In government roles leadership skills include whole-of-government thinking and comfort with sharing power.
- **Capacity strengthening within government** including consensus building through agenda setting and policy development, strategic capacity and whole-of-government thinking (see Table 2). Implementation capacity needs to be supported with appropriate budgets and collaborative decision-making should support integration of social justice and ecological justice principles.
- **Capacity strengthening within communities** including building the competency of a community to develop governance structures, training on methods and processes of relevance to a PBA across its lifespan, development of shared use of language and avoidance of jargon which can be exclusionary.

Measurement, evaluation, learning and accountability are essential

Evaluation principles

- **Consistent, rigorous monitoring and evaluation grounded in a theory of change needs to be planned from the beginning** with sufficient funding that is flexible and continuous across the lifespan of a PBA and connected to shared agreement between all organisations on the measurement of PBA success.
- **Ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and learning across the lifespan of PBAs is necessary.** Informed by a clear understanding of what is trying to be achieved, this may be adapted if outcomes are not meeting people's needs.
- **Short, medium and long-term impacts of PBAs should be monitored,** as short-term population-level changes are unrealistic. Long-term outcomes for complex problems take up to 10-20 years to become evident.
- **Development and application of validated evaluation measures supported by training and research tools.** Important to align with holistic understandings of health and wellbeing particularly for First Nations communities, supporting deep listening/hearing and the development of trust.
- **Adequate funding to support monitoring, evaluation, reflection and learning is essential.** Even in well-resourced PBAs, much is spent on direct data collection and less on analysis, interpretation, and understanding the outcomes of a PBA. Evaluation is often based on secondary data collection which can disempower community contributions and community narratives. New funding models could consider allocating minimum percentages of PBA funding that must be dedicated to ongoing monitoring and evaluation with appropriate research tools and training.

Evaluation and learning approaches

- **Combine regular data collection, research evidence and community knowledge** to build understanding and collaboratively inform priorities and desired outcomes for a PBA. This data should also be combined with research evidence for strategy development.
- **Mixed methods approaches are encouraged in evaluation** (qualitative and quantitative), linked to adaptive participatory action research to improve effectiveness of evaluations, connecting process and outcome (not output) evaluation.
- **Acknowledge power-knowledge dynamics** understanding who is at the table and balancing academic research and evidence, and 'on the ground' community knowledge.
- **Fostering a learning approach enables reflection on progress and opportunities to incorporate lessons into practice** supporting flexible and continuous learning and improvement over the PBA lifecycle and not only at the completion stages.
- **Working with First Nations to support data sovereignty.** First Nations people need to be involved from the outset in the design and collection of official social statistics to ensure data is appropriate and meaningful and that Indigenous data sources have prominence and validation alongside culturally relevant and appropriate government data.

Use of economic evaluation methods

- Few PBA studies include econometric and cost-effectiveness assessment and it is a notable gap in the literature with very few examples identified in this extensive review. There are some promising signs that PBAs can generate substantial returns on investments. Built environment interventions have been linked to increased physical activity outcomes in a recent Australian meta-review while no economic analysis was found in a meta-review of Indigenous community development projects. There are some innovative approaches emerging around the theory of value creation that may contribute to improved economic evaluations (King, 2021).
- Lack of long-term evaluations and economic evaluations have contributed to difficulties in demonstrating whether PBAs make a difference. Measuring participation, capacity building and partnerships are also challenging in the short-term and are often inadequate at capturing community change.
- Economic evaluation doesn't tell the whole story and mixed methods are needed to comprehensively understand impact and outcomes of PBAs.

Knowledge gaps and further research

- **Governance models and effectiveness:** Collective impact has been a dominant model of governance in PBAs and there have been some critiques of this approach. More research is needed to better understand these and alternative governance models. This includes more research on how PBA outcomes and community engagement are influenced by different governance models, and the influence of different tiers of government and diverse policy approaches.
- **Evaluation methods supported by theories, evidence and data:** Theories of change are often not developed or included in PBA evaluations, making it difficult to determine factors that influence successful outcomes. More rigour is needed in qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods, and there is scarce evidence around economic evaluation and longer-term evaluation outcomes. Improved evaluation requires capacity building support and provision of research tools and training.
- **First Nations ways of working in place and governance models:** This includes how First Nations-led PBAs develop different governance models and the strategies and processes used to engage First Nations communities.
- **Critical interrogation of PBAs:** A critical interrogation of PBAs including rationale or drivers behind different approaches could improve knowledge of PBA limitations, intersections between PBAs and other relevant government policies, and how this knowledge can be used within and across policy portfolios.
- **Community engagement and participation methods:** PBAs can be confused with implementing service reform in place. They are not the same thing. PBAs must be informed by clear principles which focus on engaging with lived experiences and community voices that shape and inform decision-making. Further research is required to understand the effectiveness of different methods and strategies for participatory decision-making in different contexts. This includes strategies that support diverse knowledges in the development of PBAs across their lifespan and measuring success from a community perspective.
- **Endemic policy 'forgetfulness' and influence of prevailing political and social ideologies:** An historical policy review (see Appendix 2) reveals a continued history of experimentation and reinvention of 'new' approaches based on political/social ideologies with little reflection or learning from past experiences. There is limited research on the connection between political ideologies, theories of change and PBA priorities and outcomes. Government needs to draw on lessons from past experience and mistakes to inform future approaches.

Section 1: Context, trends, disruptions and complexity

In Victoria, the *Dropping off the Edge* report (Tanton et al., 2021) found disadvantage is disproportionately concentrated in a small number of communities; these communities face high and persistent rates of intergenerational unemployment, low incomes, and early school leaving (before Year 10). While most of the disadvantage occurred outside of Melbourne, six of the ten areas of highest disadvantage were in Melbourne (Tanton et al., 2021). Over the last few years, Victorians have also endured a very difficult period, beginning with the catastrophic summer bushfires of 2019-20. This was followed by the COVID-19 pandemic that arrived in March 2020, leading to local and regional lockdowns with school closures, unemployment, isolation, demographic changes, financial distress, increased family violence, and poor mental health. Local places, social networks, and access to critical infrastructure such as health and community services and open spaces have played a key role in how people have coped during the COVID-19 pandemic. The uneven impacts and intersecting challenges brought about by climate change and COVID-19 are a reminder of why addressing place-based inequities and supporting place-based solutions is more important than ever.

These experiences have brought place to the forefront of thinking about responses to crisis, recovery, transition, and understandings of belonging. All places are unique in terms of their strengths and weaknesses, local concerns, and local communities. Action in places requires local knowledge, networks and resources, but also well-connected government and community responses, and systemic change. Place has been, and will continue to be, a crucial focus of social, economic, and environmental recovery and innovation in the future.

There are many persistent place-based issues that remain challenges to the social, environmental and economic wellbeing of all Victorians as well as new and emerging place-based challenges ahead. Living in an 'age of disruption' or an 'age of uncertainty' where the world is constantly changing requires careful consideration of the meaning of 'place'. It also requires developing responses to these challenges in a 'place-based' way, and examining the conditions, enablers and barriers of place-based approaches.

1.1 Place in the context of disruption and change

What is 'place'?

What is meant by 'place' varies for different people. Place in social policy has commonly been viewed as geographic administrative boundaries of locations – which are often identified as 'advantaged' or 'disadvantaged' according to the services or infrastructure they have compared with other areas – or as bounded clusters or 'containers' of individuals with characteristics seemingly indicating advantage or disadvantage (Fincher, 2021). Recent conceptualisations of place may provide new avenues for social policy to facilitate inclusion and reduce disadvantage. Inclusion here refers to equal opportunity for involvement with others in activities that occur across social differences in our society (e.g., wealth and class, ethnicity, ability, gender, age, or sexuality) and across varied regions and spatial settings. Place is thus seen as the actual practices of people, rather than imposed administratively (Fincher, 2021). Tuck and McKenzie critically reviewed meanings of 'place' over the past two or so decades, highlighting that places are dynamic, mobile over time and space, and interactive through interconnections with people, other species, and social practices. The authors also explain how spatial and place-based processes of colonisation and settler colonialism work to obscure First Nations' understandings of place (Tuck and McKenzie, 2015).

Over recent decades the Australian economy has experienced a number of disruptions that have affected our views of 'place'. Notably, the Global Financial Crisis affected commercial and government investment activities worldwide. Most recently, COVID-19 has impacted the world's economies in unprecedented ways, with its effects likely to continue well after 2022. For example, multiple and extended stay-at-home orders resulted in many Victorians working and learning from home, limited face-to-face socialising, and school and business closures. There have also been a number of political-economic changes that can and do have implications for our local communities. For example, China placing export conditions on certain Australian produce has affected different parts of the agricultural sector and regional economic development. Other economic changes that affect local economies include major employers shifting (or closing down) operations. These types of disruptions are complemented by disasters that are occurring across Australia on a frequent basis. Such disasters impact large areas and communities (e.g., 2019-20 east coast bushfires, 2022 Queensland, New South Wales and Victorian floods) directly and indirectly affecting the national economy. These disruptions and disasters are occurring as a result of, and in the context of, broader challenges and issues such as climate change, ecosystem decline, an affordable housing crisis, ageing societies, digital societies, decreases in fertility rates, evolving labour market conditions, and intergenerational poverty – just to name a few. In the context of this complexity, it is anticipated that disruptions and disasters will remain a feature of life rather than an anomaly.

1.2 Addressing systemic and place-based issues and challenges

Governments have a responsibility to anticipate and respond to the intersecting issues and systemic challenges we face while also reducing inequities across places and communities. Current policies and responses tend to be siloed, not well coordinated or integrated across levels of government and departments. There is broad consensus that the way we approach these challenges needs to change; indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed many failings of the status quo.

Public policy is about the strategic use of resources to solve problems (Chandler and Plano, 1988) while aiming to create public value in addressing social, economic and environmental objectives (Coffey, 2021, Mazzucato and Ryan-Collins, 2019). Improving quality of life is a recognised objective in public policy that has associated economic benefit and has been accepted by leading international agencies such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and World Bank, for decades. Improving quality of life and wellbeing is articulated across the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which lay out the blueprint for economic development and have been adopted by all United Nations member states (United Nations, 2015).

Increasingly, alternative economic development frameworks that centre wellbeing are being taken seriously. For example, the New Zealand government has adopted the concept of a wellbeing economy with a Living Standards Framework to steer Treasury decision-making (New Zealand Government, 2021) that directly links policy impacts to wellbeing.

Emerging think tanks and collaborative initiatives are examining new ways to define and measure progress such as Regen Melbourne (https://www.regen.melbourne/) drawing on Raworth's 'Doughnut Economics' framework.

These wellbeing-oriented economic frameworks are closely tied to local democracy and inclusion. Being involved in local decision-making is critical to quality of life and wellbeing, as demonstrated by initiatives like the OECD Better Life Index (https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/). Economic investment connected to democratisation is described as Community Driven Development (CDD) and is common in international development. It is based on community power in local decision-making and investment resourcing and has been used successfully by organisations such as the World Bank to deliver essential services and public goods (Wong and Guggenheim, 2018).

More locally is the Korin Korin Balit-Djak: Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategic plan 2017–2027 (Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, 2017). Self-determination is embedded throughout the plan's five priority areas: 1) Aboriginal community leadership; 2) prioritising Aboriginal culture and community; 3) system reform across the health and human services sector; 4) safe, secure, strong families and individuals; and: 5) physically, socially and emotionally healthy Aboriginal communities. The plan notes that flexible local place-based solutions that embody self-determination principles will be prioritised for implementation. Moreover, addressing recommendations and actions from the recent Victorian Mental Health Royal Commission include addressing First Nations social and emotional wellbeing, dedicated mental health and wellbeing research, community mental health services and collectives, early intervention, support for families and carers, a new mental health commission and preventative interventions for mental health promotion.

The increasing calls for centring wellbeing, self-determination, and local democracy and inclusion in public policy have brought 'place' to the fore of discussion about how to address the intersecting challenges we face. PBAs have emerged as a promising way of approaching 'wicked' and complex problems typically affecting the most disadvantaged groups and areas – that is, problems that are intergenerational and reproduced by a complex, interconnected web of factors – by working across multiple sectors and levels of government, as well as civil society, in a particular place. Addressing challenges through a systems and wellbeing lens, PBAs are gaining traction internationally and in Australia. They "target the specific circumstances of a place" (Victorian Government, 2020) and engage a wide range of stakeholders, including local communities. PBAs have been popular in Australia for many years (for an historical review of Australian policy (see Appendix 2) and have aimed to empower people and improve social capital, economic outcomes, and governance (Institute for Voluntary Action Research, 2017).

The importance of approaches that are grounded in place and wellbeing has never been more critical as governments respond to the impacts of COVID-19, which has seen a fall in OECD-average life expectancy, impacts on traditional macroeconomic measures, and hidden implications in terms of declining mental health, societal division, disconnection and loneliness (OECD, 2021). These issues are affecting communities right across Australia. At the same time, in the wake of extended lockdowns and working from home, many Victorians are more closely connected to and engaged with their local communities than ever before, presenting a fertile opportunity for working with communities in place. The recent floods in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria preceded by devastating bushfires over 2019-20 further reinforces the importance of working closely with communities to minimise future impacts and improve responses to climate change. The 2021 Infrastructure Plan (Infrastructure Victoria, 2021) for example, acknowledges place-based planning must have a shared vision that is developed jointly between current and future stakeholders, including the local community (Infrastructure Victoria, 2021).

Despite the promise PBAs hold, there is a danger that they may be implemented with an assumption that 'one-size-fits-all', or from a narrow service delivery-oriented perspective, or with no guiding framework at all; these kinds of approaches will be too reductionist to meet the challenges PBAs are meant to address. This means that PBA planning and implementation at the local level needs to be flexible as well as resilient. For PBAs to be able to meet contemporary as well as future challenges in adaptive and responsive ways, we need to look critically at the existing evidence to draw out key lessons and principles that can be applied reflexively (i.e., stimulating reflection and learning), rather than as a prescriptive 'one-size-fits-all' set of rules.

To this end, in this report (Part 1) we undertook a meta-synthesis of international literature on PBAs with an aim to critically review the existing knowledge around PBAs, draw out the critical principles and key lessons from PBAs, and reflect on the history of PBAs in Australia to inform more reflexive and responsive approaches to working in place in the future. We start by explaining our core methods and research questions. We then provide a brief characterisation of PBAs in Australia, followed by a synthesis of the critical principles that should underpin PBAs. Part 2 of this report contains five case studies of place-based approaches in Victoria. These case studies explore themes arising from the meta-synthesis and provide evidence to address gaps in the literature overall offering a sense of what is working and what needs strengthening in current Victorian PBAs.

1.3 What is a place-based approach?

There is no agreed definition of a PBA with a range of definitions found in the literature (Bynner, 2016). For this project, we have adopted the definition of a place-based approach from Dart (2018), who uses a collective impact framework:

> *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.* (p. 7)

Further, the Victorian PBA framework (State Government of Victoria, 2020) distinguishes between a 'place-based' versus a 'place-focused' approach. A 'place-based' approach targets the specific circumstances of a place and engages local people as active participants in development and implementation, requiring government to share decision-making with community members. This is different from a 'place-focused' approach that plans and adapts government services and infrastructure to ensure they meet local needs. In a 'place-focused' approach, government ultimately has control over the objectives, scope and implementation. There is capacity for initiatives to move between these approaches. Appendix 1 contains a glossary of these and other terms used in this report.

Section 2: Aims and approach

2.1 Aims and overall objectives

Through a meta-synthesis of existing literature, Part 1 aims to answer the following research questions:

Evidence of what works for place-based approaches:

- What are the elements of place-based approaches that contribute to successful establishment, consolidation, longevity and eventual outcomes?

Evidence of what works for funders and/or government:

- What key functions or enablers of government are needed to support place-based approaches?
- What conditions are required to enable government to be an effective partner to place-based approaches?

Evidence of social return on investment:

- What evidence is there on social return on investment of place-based approaches in Victoria, Australia and internationally?

2.2 Approach

The term meta-synthesis is used to describe a 'review of reviews'. For this report, we reviewed authoritative summaries, reports, articles and other publications that have already reviewed success factors of place-based approaches. We chose this method because there are multiple existing reviews of success factors for PBAs, but these reviews do not necessarily 'speak' to each other due to the complex nature of the literature and different terminology used across disciplines.

Literature was identified through three main sources: 1) recommendations from key stakeholders including the project team, Advisory Group, and Oversight Committee; 2) literature search using key search terms (Appendix 3) in journal databases ProQuest Central and Web of Science; and 3) reviewing reference lists of publications. Inclusion criteria for the meta-synthesis included reviews of PBAs, published in English, and from 2001 onwards. Publications could be international and cover multiple settings or contexts. Overall, our focus was on social policy-oriented PBAs (as distinguished from burgeoning place-based scholarship in economic innovation, infrastructure planning, and place-making).

We developed an analytical coding framework based on emerging factors from the literature reviewed. Notes were taken on each publication reviewed, imported into QSR International NVivo v12 (a software program designed to assist with organising and coding text), and coded using the analytical framework. Key findings were synthesised into written narrative summaries.

In this final report, 94 publications are cited; however, additional literature beyond this list has informed the development and thinking behind this meta-synthesis. Appendix 4 provides an extended list of references identified from the three key literature sources.

Section 3: A review of place-based approaches

This section outlines the meta-synthesis 'review of reviews'. Here, we discuss the findings from the literature using a narrative approach. While reviews and high-level summaries were our main focus, we supplemented the findings with other published literature where relevant. While some of these findings seem to appear across numerous studies, context and nuance must always be considered. For example, the term 'backbone' is often mentioned as a key aspect of a PBA, but is usually associated with collective impact PBAs (Kania and Kramer, 2011).

This section is organised into three main sub-themes. The first sub-theme examines the characteristics and principles of PBAs; the second focuses on governance and effective governance practices to enable PBAs and the third sub-theme explores the challenges of evaluating PBAs and their impacts. Each sub-theme discusses a range of factors or elements that contribute to or hinder the success of PBAs, with a particular focus on the role of government.

Before beginning, we first provide Figure 1, with a snapshot of key findings relating to the meta-synthesis research questions (question 1 and 3 in particular; see 2.1) and show some of the essential elements of PBAs and conditions that contribute to successful establishment, consolidation, longevity and long-term sustainability. Although they are represented in Figure 1 as distinct factors, the conditions, principles and practices that shape PBA effectiveness should be seen as interrelated. Further, while Figure 1 maps these factors out according to the stages in which they may be most salient, these factors also shape PBA effectiveness across all stages. For example, adequate infrastructure and resourcing is essential to establish PBAs and support the collaborative activities that build trust, but resourcing will also determine the capacity of the PBA to invest in capacity building, monitoring, evaluation, and learning across all stages. The following sections describe each of these factors and elements in-depth and explain how they contribute to successful establishment, consolidation, longevity and sustainability. The role of government in enabling these elements and conditions will also be discussed.

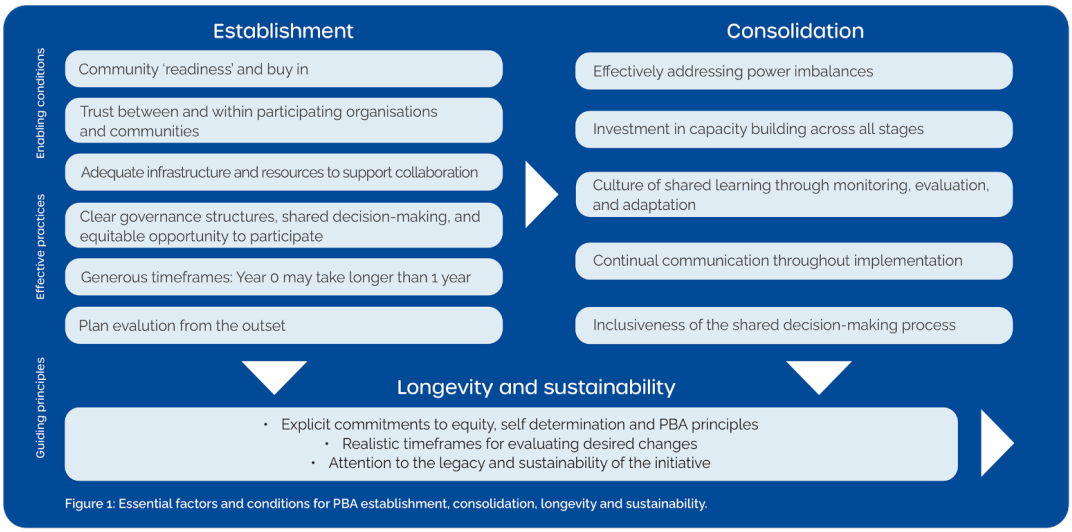

Figure 1. Essential factors and conditions for PBA establishment, consolidation, longevity and sustainability

3.1 Characteristics and principles of place-based approaches

PBAs may use a variety of methods and the role of government in each of these can vary, yet an overarching aim of PBAs is to include diverse voices drawn from multiple sectors and civil society. Based on a historical review of PBAs and policies in Australia conducted by researchers at the University of Queensland (See Appendix 2), an overriding theme for PBAs in Australia more broadly has been the changing and complex roles of government and communities in PBAs over time. As a result, PBAs in Australia are diverse and can variously (and non-exhaustively) be described as falling into several categories: state-centric administration, local partnerships, joined-up government, community control, and comprehensive local and/or regional governance. Historically, several objectives have shaped place-based policy approaches in Australia, including:

- Empowering communities and encouraging participation in community life
- Service improvement and coordination
- Specific social objectives (e.g., child wellbeing and development, poverty reduction, housing and urban renewal, employment, First Nations self-determination, remote service delivery)
- Integrating (or not) social and economic policy (and increasingly environmental objectives).

A relatively recent form of PBA that has grown in popularity in Australia is collective impact (see Appendix 1). However, other approaches are also prevalent including Asset-Based Community Development and what Hart and Connolly (2021) term 'statutory partnerships' (e.g., Regional Deals).

Findings in focus

Focus on place

Equity and self-determination

Strengths-based

Theory of change

Good governance

Movement building not managerial

Long-term timeframes

The principles underpinning PBAs fundamentally shape their ability to make long-term impact. Importantly, they should be committed to at the highest levels of PBA leadership, including in government. At a glance, essential principles of every PBA ought to include:

- **Commitment to promoting equity:** PBAs should explicitly articulate a commitment to improving equity and embedding this principle into all stages and activities of the PBA (Crimeen et al., 2017, Kania et al., 2021). PBAs should seek to understand how the socio-political history of a place continues to shape its present context and be aware of the systems and policies that reproduce inequities. PBAs should identify ways in which these structural inequities can be addressed, as well as advocate for policy and systems change (Kania et al., 2021).
- **Commitment to First Nations self-determination:** PBAs should explicitly articulate a commitment to First Nations self-determination, prioritise First Nations understandings of place and Country, and learn from First Nations ways of working in place. PBAs should embed the principles of self-determination into all stages and activities of the PBA (Smart, 2017, State Government of Victoria, 2020). A commitment to First Nations self-determination also requires understanding and supporting Indigenous data sovereignty at a local level, and working with First Nations people in the collection of official social statistics to ensure data is relevant and meaningful (Kukutai and Taylor, 2016).
- **Focus on place and connection to Country:** PBAs need an explicit place focus that seeks to understand the local history and socio-political context and accepts that the way people relate to place has an emotional dimension – for example, it shapes community's sense of identity – which may surface throughout the PBA (Beer et al., 2020, Kellert, 2013, Sansom and Robinson, 2019). PBAs can learn from First Nations understandings of place, which are multi-layered and include ancestral connection to Country, sacred sites, history and culture, and connections to the natural environment (Kingsley et al., 2021).
- **Adopt a strengths-based and desire-centred (rather than deficit-based or damage-centred) lens:** PBAs should aim to understand communities through their self-identified strengths and assets, rather than defining them based on aspects they are perceived to lack (deficits). Similarly, a desire-centered approach empowers communities to identify the experiences they desire, rather than being solely defined by the harm or damage caused by the oppression (e.g., colonisation) they have experienced (Tuck, 2009). Communities should be empowered to tell their own history, desires, and lived experiences continuously throughout the PBA. Deficit-based approaches perpetuate stigma, paternalism, and do not match with many individuals' lived experiences (McBride, 2018).
- **Commitment to improve wellbeing at the population level:** PBAs should aim to improve wellbeing at the population level. Assessing this impact requires well-planned monitoring and evaluation methods from the outset, and these should be aligned to an articulated theory of change (see below).
- **Shift from managerial, service-delivery approach to one focused on relationships and 'movement building':** The purpose of a PBA should be to understand the lived experiences of communities and build an inclusive movement around addressing community-defined priorities. A key part of this is investing in building relationships and trust between and within communities and organisations. This purpose contrasts with a managerial approach, where the purpose is to manage a program or improve the delivery and coordination of services (Cabaj and Weaver, 2016).

- **Understanding that collaborative work takes time:** Collaboration across diverse stakeholders to achieve population-level change requires realistic, long-term timeframes. Setting unrealistic timeframes can risk excluding the voices of important stakeholders and individuals with lived experience. In particular, building genuine trust between organisations and with the community takes time, especially when there has been a history of antagonism or when trust has been violated (e.g., through colonisation); however, investing in this work up-front is essential for longevity and may save time and energy in the long run (Ansell and Gash, 2007, Dreise and Mazurski, 2018). Setting the foundation for a sustainable, impactful PBA often requires upfront investment in strengthening capacity and community readiness. The establishment phase of a PBA, known as 'Year 0', may take longer than one year (Dart, 2018).
- **Develop a theory of change based in these principles:** PBAs should articulate a theory of change that explains how the approach will lead to the desired outcomes. The theory of change needs to examine the fundamental 'causes of causes' and be informed by broader thinking such as a social determinants of health approach, which emphasises that the conditions in which people live profoundly shape wellbeing (Crimeen et al., 2017). Poor understanding of the fundamental causes can lead to superficial administrative or service-delivery oriented approaches that are ineffective in addressing structural inequities (Gilbert, 2012). The theory of change should be consistent with the other essential principles outlined here; PBAs that adopt theories of change with unexamined assumptions that conflict with these principles will perpetuate stigma (e.g., by portraying communities through a deficit- or damage-based lens) (Tuck, 2009). This theory of change may need to be revisited over time as part of a continuous cycle of learning and sharing knowledge.

The extent to which PBAs demonstrate a commitment to these principles varies across individual initiatives and types of PBAs. In particular, collective impact models have been criticised for failing to explicitly incorporate the concept of equity (and structural inequity) into the collective impact framework (Spark Policy Institute and ORS Impact, 2018), and for prioritising the views of leaders and service providers over those with lived experience of the issue being addressed (Smart, 2017). This can erode the credibility of the PBA and undermine trust between stakeholders and the community. It leads to missed opportunities (e.g., to deeply understand inequities in a community through data disaggregation) and can result in decision-making that runs counter to the aims of the PBA (e.g., poor choice of lead organisation) (Smart, 2017, Tucker et al., 2021). In addition, issues of governance (especially, the role and 'governance of government' as relates to PBAs) have not typically been a strong focus of collective impact or similarly designed PBAs.

There are some barriers to incorporating all of these principles into PBAs (which are explored in the next section), particularly around timeframes and demonstrating impact. Despite the strong consensus that realistic, long-term timeframes are required, policy environments stressing brief interventions and short-term data are common (Cabaj and Weaver, 2016, Tucker et al., 2021). and threaten the longevity of PBAs and their abilities to create meaningful, sustained change.

3.2 Governance and the role of government

3.2.1 Principles of good governance

Governance is a multi-faceted concept that is used across different contexts and scales. In a broad sense governance can be considered as "the structures and processes by which people in societies make decisions and share power" (Schultz et al., 2015, p. 7369), with this occurring within the context of dynamic relations between state, market and civil society actors (Lemos and Agrawal, 2006, Rhodes, 1997, Stoker, 1998).

The governance of PBAs can take many forms (Hart and Connolly, 2021), which raises questions about what constitutes 'good governance' of place-based approaches. Principles for good governance (Table 1) - "normative statements about how governing or steering should happen" (Lockwood et al., 2010, p. 987) - provide useful guidance in this context, particularly as they are applicable to a range of formal and informal situations: good governance is situated and principled (Coffey et al., 2020).

Findings in focus: Principles of good governance

What are the elements of place-based approaches that contribute to successful establishment, consolidation, longevity and eventual outcomes?

- Both **governance of PBAs** and governance of government are important to PBA success
- **Principles of good governance** should guide governance of PBAs and of government

Table 1 Principles of good governance

Principle	Explanation
Legitimacy	"(a) the validity of an organisation's authority to govern that may be (i) conferred by democratic statute; or (ii) earned through the acceptance by stakeholders of an organisation's authority to govern; (b) that power being devolved to the lowest level at which it can be effectively exercised; and (c) the integrity with which this authority is exercised" (p. 991)
Transparency	"(a) visibility of decision-making process; (b) the clarity with which the reasoning behind decision is communicated; and; (c) the ready availability of relevant information about governance and performance in an organisation" (p. 993)
Accountability	"(a) the allocation and acceptance of responsibility for decisions and actions and (b) the demonstration of whether and how these responsibilities have been met" (p. 993)
Inclusiveness	"Opportunities available to stakeholders to participate in and influence decision-making processes and actions" (p. 993)
Fairness	"(a) the respect and attention given to stakeholders' views; (b) consistency and absence of personal bias in decision-making; and (c) the consideration given to the distribution of costs and benefits of decisions" (p. 994)
Integration	"(a) the connection between, and coordination across, different governance levels; (b) the connection between, and coordination across, organisations at the same level of governance; and (c) the alignment of priorities, plans, and activities across governance organisations" (p. 995)
Capability	"The systems, plans, resources, skills, leadership, knowledge, and experiences that enable organisations, and the individuals who direct, manage, and work for them, to effectively deliver on their responsibilities" (p. 996)
Adaptability	"(a) the incorporation of new knowledge and learning into decision-making and implementation; (b) anticipation and management of threats, opportunities, and associated risks; and (c) systematic reflection on individual, organisational, and system performance" (p. 996)

(Source: Lockwood et al., 2010, pp. 991-996)

There are two important and inter-related aspects of governance that determine the effectiveness of PBAs: **the governance structures of the PBA itself, and the 'governance of government' in the context of PBAs.** There is much less engagement within PBAs around the latter issue, due to well-known barriers encountered by PBAs delivered by, or in partnership with, government.

3.2.2 Power-sharing and self-determination

There is near universal agreement in the literature that the extent to which **power and decision-making authority is genuinely and meaningfully shared across government, stakeholders, and communities** is a key determinant of the success of the PBA. Rather than occurring as a one-off 'consultation' in the early stages, there are opportunities to share power across all stages and activities of the PBA. Yet, 'tokenistic' community engagement (where community members' voices are heard, but community members have no power to ensure their perspectives influence decision-making) (Arnstein, 1969) is still common and undermines the legitimacy of PBAs.

Developing an understanding of place and the community itself through 'deep listening' – enabling the community to tell its own history continuously throughout the PBA – is a fundamental starting point for sharing power. The governance of PBAs does not operate in a vacuum, but rather will be shaped by the history of a place and existing power dynamics (as discussed above in Section 3.1). It is therefore critical to continuously ask who is included in power-sharing, who is not (and why), and develop strategies to include those who are missing and manage power dynamics. To this end, existing studies highlight the importance of a **broad, diverse membership of stakeholders and community members** (Fry, 2019). Mechanisms to encourage diverse and inclusive governance include recruitment strategies that prioritise diversity, flexible meeting times, and formalisation of broad membership (e.g., through by-laws) (Calancie et al., 2021).

Findings in focus: Power-sharing and self-determination

What are the elements of place-based approaches that contribute to successful establishment, consolidation, longevity and eventual outcomes?

- **Genuine power-sharing** across government, stakeholders, and communities is key to success
- **Deep listening** and enabling communities to tell their own history is a fundamental starting point
- **Broad, diverse membership** of stakeholders and community members is critical to genuine power sharing
- **Commitment to self-determination principles** and enabling First Nations to make decisions and design governance structures is key to genuine power-sharing

Power-sharing is critical to enabling First Nations self-determination. Historically, policies to promote economic and social development in Australia have excluded First Nations from decision-making and governments have approached the governance of place-based programs and policies from a contract management role with a view to 'mainstreaming' services (i.e., shifting control over these services from First Nations-led organisations to 'mainstream' government departments) (Jordan et al., 2020). In contrast, enabling First Nations to make decisions and design their own governance structures, rules, and procedures not only aligns with self-determination principles, but also strengthens governance capacity within First Nations communities (Tsey et al., 2012). PBAs present an opportunity to empower First Nations if they embody the principles of self-determination, which ultimately requires sharing power.

Much can be learned about effective power-sharing from First Nations-led PBAs, which Hart and Connolly (2021) argue can be models of genuine devolution of decision-making power. For example, Yarnteen Corporation (Yarnteen) is a First Nations-led organisation working in place that has been recognised for outstanding governance. Yarnteen has achieved remarkable stability in its Board by adopting culturally-based governance structures with representation from major kinship groups, while maintaining a broader view of its constituency as being inclusive of the wider local First Nations populations (regardless of kinship) (Smith, 2006). It maintains a very high level of First Nations employment in both senior management and office staff and has helped establish a network of several 'off-shoot' programs as separately incorporated, devolved organisations (Smith, 2006). Another First Nations-led PBA, Empowered Communities, has explicitly centred empowerment in its framework and uses the concept of 'inside-out' governance, rather than using the language of 'top-down' versus 'bottom-up', which views decision-making as a long-term process where voices from the 'top' (e.g., government) and 'bottom' (e.g., communities) are brought into the conversation in different ways over a period of negotiation (between First Nations and government leaders 'inside'); importantly, First Nations and government negotiate as equals in inside-out collaboration (Wunan Foundation, 2015).

3.2.3 Governance of PBAs

Findings in focus: Governance of PBAs

What are the elements of place-based approaches that contribute to successful establishment, consolidation, longevity and eventual outcomes?

- **Sound and formalised governance arrangements** are key to building trust and transparency. Examples include: clear governance and communication structures; agreed division of responsibilities; clear definition of roles, with formal, accountable, and long-term commitments to the PBA; defined relationships between organisations; and adaptable, yet stable governance structures and processes.
- **Clear vision, mission, theory of change, and guiding principles** essential for consensus-building
- **Small wins** can build momentum, so long as short-term wins do not impeded long-term focus
- **Sustainability planning and attention to the long-term legacy** are important to longevity
- **Lead organisation or agencies** to coordinate or convene
- **Independent entities with authority** to allocate and direct funding represent true power sharing
- **Sustainable, flexible and adequate resourcing** is critical to support collaborative work and capacity strengthening
- **Policy- and systems-level links** back to government need to be maintained

What key functions or enablers of government are needed to support place-based approaches?

- **Government plays a critical role in funding PBAs,** but this is also a risk given election cycles and changing priorities of government
- **Long-term central government funding** can mitigate this risk. While central (i.e., state and federal) governments are key funders, PBAs are most sustainable when led by community or local government
- **Shared accountability and reporting** to break down challenges of individual funding streams
- **Pooling of budgets** (e.g., across departments) enables greater flexibility
- **Focus on outcomes**, rather than outputs, increases flexibility
- **Barrier:** funding arrangements can place **considerable administrative burden** on PBAs

What conditions are required to enable government to be an effective partner to place-based approaches?

- **Stable governance structures.** Constant organisational change and staff turnover can slow momentum
- **Barrier: difficulties in sharing information** across organisations, agencies, and tiers of government
- **Considerable time, resourcing and organisational infrastructure** required for communities and government to be able to participate in governance processes

Sound and formal governance arrangements are key to facilitating genuine power-sharing. Sound governance arrangements are critical to establishing authority (e.g., by forging stronger connections between communities and government institutions) and ensuring PBAs are accountable not only to their funders, but also to the communities they represent (Reddel, 2005). There is no 'one-size-fits-all' template of effective governance structures; rather, good governance is situated (structures are tailored to each PBA and place) and what worked in one place may not work in another (Gilbert, 2012, Morisson and Doussineau, 2019). Nevertheless, no matter the specific governance arrangements, it is widely agreed that the formalisation of governance arrangements is crucial to establishing transparency in processes and building trust between participating organisations. Examples of such formalisation include:

- clear governance and communication structures;
- agreed division of responsibilities and clear definition of roles, with formal, accountable, and long-term commitments to the PBA;
- defined relationships between organisations; and
- adaptable, yet stable governance structures and processes

(Crimeen et al., 2017, Dart, 2018, McBride, 2018, Moore et al., 2014, Petiwala et al., 2021, Smart, 2017, Tucker et al., 2021, Zakocs and Edwards, 2006). Further, basic protocols and consistently applied ground rules underpin the legitimacy and transparency of the governance structures (Ansell and Gash, 2007). These structures can adapt over time, but some stability is important, as **constant organisational change and staff turnover within organisations can slow the momentum,** as can frequently changing governance arrangements and processes within the PBA (Moore et al., 2014, Smart, 2017).

Along with clear governance structures, there is broad agreement that a **clear vision, mission, theory of change, and guiding principles are essential for consensus-building** (Institute for Voluntary Action Research, 2017, Ansell and Gash, 2007, McBride, 2018, Moore et al., 2014, Cabaj and Weaver, 2016, Dart, 2018, Wiseman, 2006, Petiwala et al., 2021, Calancie et al., 2021, Tucker et al., 2021, Fry, 2019). The vision and goals should be based in a multilevel framework and tailored to local needs (Gilbert, 2012). The objectives should be coherent, as tensions between competing objectives can be a stumbling block (Hart and Connolly, 2021).

Choosing 'winnable battles' and having 'small wins' have been highlighted as important for building momentum and sustaining engagement (Calancie et al., 2021, Ansell and Gash, 2007), but caution is warranted as others note that too much reliance on measurable short-term wins can impede a more important long-term focus (Gilbert, 2012).

Developing an idea from the outset of what the **long-term legacy** of the PBA will be (e.g., planning for institutionalisation of programs and initiatives), and keeping an eye on the long-term sustainability (e.g., planning around financial sustainability), of the initiative are also key to shaping it (Calancie et al., 2021). Gilbert (2012) suggests that ideally, the ultimate end-goal of a PBA is for the coordinating structures to be incorporated into mainstream government structures, and the capacity of government and the community is strengthened such that collaboration can occur through more conventional approaches.

A common challenge facing PBAs are **difficulties in sharing information across organisations, agencies, and tiers of government**. This can be impacted by different legislative frameworks. Further, the organisational cultures and structures of organisations can vary considerably across sectors, which can be a barrier to collaboration (Moore et al., 2014). In some PBAs, **having a lead organisation or convener with dedicated staff** (often termed a 'backbone' in collective impact models) is an effective mechanism for coordinating different agencies and organisations and handling administrative and logistical tasks (McBride, 2018, Calancie et al., 2021, Tucker et al., 2021, Fry, 2019). However, there is some debate over whether a bespoke 'backbone' organisation is required for all types of PBAs; some have suggested this role need not be limited to one organisation (Smart, 2017). Indeed, PBAs should also be mindful of over-investing in the 'backbone' to the detriment of other important activities (Cabaj and Weaver, 2016). Notwithstanding these criticisms, the 'backbone' or lead organisation or convener can play a critical role in facilitating communication: continuous communication between organisations and stakeholders is critical to facilitate knowledge and power-sharing (Fry, 2019).

In addition to sound governance, **sustainable, flexible, and adequate resourcing is a critical enabler of effective PBAs** (Crimeen et al., 2017, Moore et al., 2014, Petiwala et al., 2021, Fry, 2019). Although funding should be flexible, it also needs to be intentional; for example, if a stated aim is to identify new models of working within government, then specific staff positions exploring these models ought to be funded (Institute for Voluntary Action Research, 2017). Government funding plays a larger role in funding PBAs in Australia (compared with, for example, the United States, where philanthropy plays a larger role); this can be both an enabler and a risk – as government priorities shift, so too can funding (McBride, 2018).

Governance structures are intimately tied to **funding and resourcing, and questions of who has the authority to direct funding**. Some governance arrangements do not include a mandate to make decisions about resource allocation, while others represent independent entities with the authority to allocate and direct funding. It is the latter arrangement that represents a true sharing of power, as the ability to determine how resources are allocated is considered to be a key dimension of citizen participation in local decision-making (Arnstein, 1969). The authority to direct funding, as well as other mechanisms that enable devolved decision-making in PBAs, are needed. At the same time, policy- and systems-level links back to government need to be maintained (Fry, 2019, Institute for Voluntary Action Research, 2017). Further, the inflexibility of budgeting and financial systems within government in Australia have been noted as key challenges to enabling flexible and adaptable PBAs (Australian Public Service Commission, 2007, Fry, 2019). It has been suggested that shared accountability and reporting can help break down the challenges associated with individual funding streams, while the pooling of budgets (e.g., across partners or departments) can enable greater flexibility. Rather than focusing solely on outputs, a focus on outcomes can also increase flexibility (Beer et al., 2020). This point about outcomes is discussed in further detail in Section 3.3.

There are some notable challenges in governance and resourcing facing PBAs. Firstly, **participation in governance processes requires time, resourcing, and organisational infrastructure,** and this can impact on power imbalances and who is included in decision-making (e.g., if an organisation does not exist to represent certain community members or stakeholders) (Ansell and Gash, 2007, Moore et al., 2014). Fair compensation for participation on boards and advisory committees has been suggested as one way to acknowledge the burden (e.g., time commitments) of participation (Petiwala et al., 2021). Appropriate resourcing of the PBA itself and to support the participating organisations is critical to ensuring collaborative work among participating organisations (Dart, 2018). While in-kind contributions can partly support this work, adequate funding remains essential to building local capacity for collaboration (Calancie et al., 2021, Smart, 2017). Yet, **funding arrangements can place considerable administrative burden** on those leading the PBA (e.g., applying for funding through multiple entities/agencies, each with their own reporting requirements) (Gilbert, 2012). Wiseman (2006) has called for more integrated mechanisms to link PBAs to resource allocation processes at the local, regional, and state levels. Others have argued that central-level funding is critical to the effectiveness of PBAs (Gilbert, 2012) and have recommended long-term central government funding arrangements (Australian Social Inclusion Board, 2011). In the following section, we discuss the role of government in PBA funding and governance, and implications for power-sharing with communities.

3.2.4 Role of government in PBAs

Findings in focus: Role of government in PBAs

What key functions or enablers of government are needed to support place-based approaches?

- **Government can convene/facilitate** by bringing policymakers together to facilitate systemic change
- **If adequately resourced, local government** can be an effective lead organisation or 'backbone'
- **Government should embrace a relational approach** to PBA governance, which prioritises building relationships and networks, rather than 'contract management' role
- **Embrace First Nations values (e.g., relationality),** norms, and ways of working and learn from First Nations-led PBAs
- **Maintain a consistent contact person** within government, and ensure adequate handover when staff changes must occur.

What conditions are required to enable government to be an effective partner to place-based approaches?

- **Local/devolved decision-making** so that decisions are made as close to the ground as possible
- **Embrace systems thinking and holistic thinking** and shift from risk-averse culture to one that learns from failures

Key barriers

- **Complexity of three tiers of government** can obscure 'big picture' and systems thinking
- **Administrative siloing, bureaucratic complexity,** unclear accountability, and poor alignment and integration of policy between tiers of government can erode community confidence in government partners
- **Increasingly centralised,** rather than devolved (local), decision-making in public policy
- **Short-term contracts and emphasis on short-term outcomes** and brief 'interventions' inhibit flexibility, capacity strengthening, and processes that build trust and enable power sharing. This is also in tension with First Nations values, norms and ways of working in place
- **Frequent change in personnel within government** is consistently highlighted as a challenge for communities and organisations partnering with government in PBAs

PBAs offer 'a policy framework that can re-conceptualise the state-community (and market) relationship and deliver improved community outcomes' (Reddel, 2002, pp. 54–55). As discussed in Section 3.1, PBAs currently represent a mixed bag in terms of the relationships and arrangements between government and civil society. While several types of PBA governance structures exist, to date there is a dearth of typologies that explore the governance of PBAs in-depth, and in particular, **the role of government in PBA governance.** The Victorian PBA framework identifies four types of governance structures for PBAs: state government team, community organisation team, local government team, and coalition team (State Government of Victoria, 2020).

Across these various forms of governance, the role of state and local government in providing leadership, resources and support is central to the effectiveness of PBAs (Wiseman, 2006). As a funder of PBAs, government can play a key role in bringing policymakers together across diverse portfolios and tiers of government to facilitate systemic change (Dart, 2018). In addition, local government has been highlighted as an important convener or partner of PBAs (Sansom and Robinson, 2019). In some instances, local government is best placed to serve as the 'backbone' or lead organisation, and local governments may also support communities to establish new local organisations that play this role (Sansom and Robinson, 2019). However, local governments need adequate resourcing to do this work well, yet there has been a tendency towards shifting the responsibility to local government without adequate accompanying resources (Reddel, 2004).

A key challenge for the governance of government in the context of PBAs is the **complexity of relationships among the three tiers of government.** Australia's federalist system of government means that powers are divided amongst the federal (i.e., Commonwealth), state, and local governments. In many policy domains relevant to place-based work (e.g., health and education) federal and state governments share concurrent powers, meaning both tiers of government are responsible for different aspects of these policy areas, however, neither are wholly accountable. It has been argued that this obscures 'big picture' thinking and means that no level of government has a complete understanding of how its own policies impact on the other parts of the system outside of its remit (Duckett and Willcox, 2015). Adding to this complexity are the numerous government departments and agencies, non-government organisations, community organisations and for-profit providers that have played an increasing role in service delivery, leading to what the Queensland Productivity Commission termed a 'bureaucratic maze' plagued by administrative siloing, limited knowledge sharing between levels of government and departments, unclear accountability, and poor alignment and integration of policy (Queensland Productivity Commission, 2017).

The **lack of policy coherence and coordination between governments** can lead to a loss of community confidence in government partners (Kingsley et al., 2021). For example, lack of coordination between levels of government and departments, or governments 'hand-balling' responsibility, erode communities' trust in government to deliver on its commitments to PBAs (Kingsley et al., 2021). Beyond the challenges of coordination between governments, in the last few decades, a 'creeping centralism' (Gallop, 2011) has characterised public policy, with less and less decision-making occurring at local levels. This extends into PBAs as well, yet the evidence indicates that PBAs are most effective when decision-making is decentralised and occurs close to the ground. For example, a 2015 review of Australian PBAs concluded that the federal and state governments were critical funders and enablers of PBAs, but that PBAs are most sustainable when led by community and/or partnering with local government (Brotherhood of St Laurence, 2015).

Another key challenge is that PBAs require government to work in new ways, often pushing up against established organisational culture. Several reviews have called for **a shift in government's role from 'contract management' to one that embraces systems thinking and holistic thinking** (Fry, 2019), enables innovation, collaboration, and flexibility (Smart, 2017), and shifts from a risk-averse culture to a 'safe-to-fail' or 'failing forward' culture that turns 'failures' into opportunities for collective learning (Smart, 2017, Dart, 2018). In short, more responsive, flexible, and collaborative action planning is required. However, the evidence emphasises that short-term contracts and policy environments that emphasise brief 'interventions' and short-term outcomes do not provide the flexibility required for PBAs to innovate, invest in building capacity, and engage in the processes that build trust and enable true power-sharing (Australian Social Inclusion Board, 2011, Tucker et al., 2021). It has also been noted that government's focus on contracts and compliance often is in tension with First Nations values, norms, and ways of working in place (Jordan et al., 2020, Altman, 2008). For example, Western legal requirements and norms of 'impersonal distribution' (Altman, 2008) can undermine kin-based obligations and First Nations values like relationality – defined as "the embedding of people with a sentient landscape, with each other, and other-than-human beings to secure effective personal and community security through socio-political coherence, proportionality and predictability" (Milroy and The ANZSOG First Peoples Team, 2019, Brigg and Graham, unpublished paper, 2019). In their submission to the Australian Public Service Review, the Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG) First Peoples Team recommended the public service adopt and embed First Nations values including relationality (Milroy and The ANZSOG First Peoples Team, 2019).

Emerging forms of governance may offer new ways of addressing these complexities while enabling devolution and genuine power-sharing. Indeed, there are now calls for **a shift towards 'relational' governance,** which represents "an approach to local governing that builds strong relationships between council service professionals and the people they are supporting, between councils and the community at large, and between local citizens themselves" (Cummins, 2022, p. 6). State and federal government play a key role in enabling this, through both devolving greater authority over place-based policy to local governments, as well as providing funding for the infrastructure (e.g., places where people gather and interact) and capacity building required to support and strengthen relationships between (and within) communities and local government (Cummins, 2022). A distinguishing feature of relational government is prioritising relationships; for PBAs, this means maintaining a **consistent contact person** within government (rather than viewing contact persons as interchangeable). The importance of maintaining consistent points of contact is underscored by the fact that frequent change in personnel within government is consistently highlighted as a challenge for communities and organisations partnering with government in place-based work (Gilbert, 2012, Kingsley et al., 2021).

In the last 20 years, the concept of **network governance** has also emerged as a way to re-conceptualise the relationship between government, communities, and other organisations working in place. Network governance envisages the role of government as being an arbitrator and facilitator between interest groups and organisations involved in PBAs (Reddel, 2004). It emphases outcomes, rather than outputs, and gives attention to trust- and network-building as mechanisms of governance (Osborne, 2006).

Moving towards a model of governance that focuses on building relationships and networks is another area where government (and PBA governance) can especially learn from First Nations-led PBAs and First Nations ways of working in place. Networked governance models have been identified as a key design principle for good governance in First Nations contexts (Tsey et al., 2012), and the capacity to build strong place-based relationships and networks, or building and bridging social capital (Putnam, 2000) has been recognised as a particular strength of First Nations-led work in place (Howard-Wagner, 2017).

3.2.5 Leadership, capacity, and fundamental skillsets

Findings in focus: Leadership, capacity, and fundamental skillsets

What are the elements of place-based approaches that contribute to successful establishment, consolidation, longevity and eventual outcomes?

- **Investing early in capacity strengthening** enables place 'readiness' and good governance
- **Strong leadership commitment** to the PBA across all partnering organisations and government
- **Long-term investment in place leadership** (cultivating intergenerational local leadership) is key to sustainability and longevity
- **Developing fundamental skills and enabling mindsets** (e.g., cultural competence, systems thinking, growth mindsets) is essential for trust building, open dialogue, and good governance

What key functions or enablers of government are needed to support place-based approaches?

- **Leadership support from within government** to the PBA enables strong partnerships
- **Cultivate fundamental skills** and enabling mindsets within government
- **Skills and experience in whole-of-government** thinking and approaches

What conditions are required to enable government to be an effective partner to place-based approaches?

- **Place 'readiness'** (strengths, skills, capabilities, existing relationships and networks) enables collaboration
- **Capacity for place-based governance** (consensus-building capacity, strategic capacity, implementation capacity, integrative capacity) See Table 2

Good governance requires **meeting people where they are at and investing early in capacity strengthening.** Strengthening the capacity of government, communities, and PBA staff (e.g., community liaisons, backbone organisation staff) alike is critical. This may require assessing **place 'readiness'** (i.e., strengths, skills and capabilities, existing relationships and networks) and identifying priorities for capacity strengthening as part of the 'Year 0' (planning and preparation) stage, which may require longer than one year (Dart, 2018).

A key area of readiness and capacity, the **importance of strong leadership** has been stressed as an ingredient of effective PBAs. Across all partnering organisations, senior-level commitment to the PBA is essential (Gilbert, 2012). Leadership can be understood through multiple lenses, including leadership as individual people, organisational leadership, and, increasingly, 'place leadership' (Jackson, 2019). **Place leadership** has been defined as "leadership in, of and over places" (Jackson, 2019, p. 218) and promotes a longer-term, intergenerational view of leadership, especially through its emphasis on developing young, emerging leaders in a given place. Long-term investment in capacity building in place (Wiseman, 2006) is a critical enabler of the sustainability of PBAs.

Viewing leadership through the lens of individual people, the literature identifies several **fundamental skillsets (so-called 'soft skills') and mindsets that are crucial to effective leadership** in PBAs. These include leadership skills and styles, such as: 'facilitative leadership', 'adaptive leadership', 'systems leadership' (Ansell and Gash, 2007, Dart, 2018, Smart, 2017). They also include cultural competence and communication skills, including the ability to facilitate productive group dynamics and build trusting relationships, mediation skills, and empathy (Cabaj and Weaver, 2016, Smart, 2017, Calancie et al., 2021, Fry, 2019, Gilbert, 2012). These skillsets (particularly mediation skills) become even more important when power imbalances are more pronounced (Ansell and Gash, 2007). Fundamental mindsets include openness and tolerance for ambiguity; systems thinking; commitment to promoting broad, diverse and active participation; a willingness to learn; and enabling or growth mindsets (Smart, 2017, State Government of Victoria, 2020, Calancie et al., 2021). In addition to these fundamental skillsets, technical competency among the leaders of PBAs is also essential (Ansell and Gash, 2007). Developing these fundamental skills, mindsets and competencies within both government and partnering organisations is therefore crucial to building trust, promoting open dialogue and knowledge sharing, and enabling good governance (Ansell and Gash, 2007).

For government specifically, **skills and experience in whole-of-government thinking** and approaches are also critical (Gilbert, 2012). COAG trials in 2006 found systematic changes and mechanisms were needed to enable whole-of-government work, including training in whole-of-government work across all levels of government (Tsey et al., 2012). Developing government's skills in **intercultural engagement** with First Nations peoples and organisations has also been recognised as a critical need (Tsey et al., 2012). This includes working with First Nations people to support Indigenous data sovereignty and ensuring that First Nations people are involved from the outset in the design and collection of official social statistics, in what Kukutai and Taylor (2016) call a recognition space where Indigenous data has prominence alongside culturally relevant and appropriate government data.

Discomfort with or hesitance to share power with communities can be a barrier to meaningful community engagement (Petiwala et al., 2021). This has historical roots; for example, groups of people who are sometimes described by government as being 'at-risk' or 'vulnerable' face additional barriers to being viewed by governments as capable of sound decision-making and agency (Murray, 2004). Similarly, government's appetite for risk can fluctuate (State Government of Victoria, 2020) and this may create hesitance to devolve decision-making. Some suggest new strategies (e.g., incentive systems) are required within government and government agencies to place a higher premium on developing these skills, mindsets, and cultural competence (Gilbert, 2012).

It is clear that to create the conditions that enable effective PBAs, **capacity strengthening within government is needed** (Australian Social Inclusion Board, 2011). As highlighted above, PBAs challenge government to work in different ways, and this requires building the skills and mindsets within government to enable the flexibility and continuous learning that makes PBAs effective. While there is a vibrant body of scholarship on different aspects of 'capacity' (Howlett 2009, Newman et al. 2017, Wu et al. 2018), the following criteria provide a useful starting point for the consideration of **capacity for place-based governance** (Table 2) and the 'governance of government' in the context of PBAs.

Table 2 Criteria for assessing capacity for governance

Criteria	Description
Consensus-building capacity	the existence of styles and forums for agenda setting and policy development, which enable open deliberation of options and encourage widely accepted, enduring socially just and ecologically sound outcomes in both public and private sectors
Strategic capacity	the ability to recognise problems and develop rational policy responses that would lead to socially just and ecologically sustainable outcomes if implemented effectively
Implementation capacity	staffing levels and a skill base which can react to new challenges and learn from previous experiences, and budgets appropriate for effective implementation of policy initiatives. This includes capacity for research, monitoring, public reporting and review
Integrative capacity	the existence of agencies, laws and decision-making processes which enable the integration of social justice and ecological principles, practices and goals into place-based approaches

(Source: Lockwood et al., 2010, pp. 991-996)

Capacity strengthening activities in communities are essential to PBA effectiveness as well and should be invested in upfront and embedded into all stages. Importantly, community capacity strengthening should start from the community's strengths and build upon work that is already being done (Tsey et al., 2012). A central focus should be ensuring the community's capacity and competencies to engage in governance structures and decision-making and develop their own solutions (Moore et al 2014; Smart 2017). PBAs should develop a shared language so that jargon or technical language do not create barriers to participation (Petiwala 2021). Regular training should be offered throughout the PBA lifespan and use processes and methods (e.g., small group techniques) tailored to community needs and preferences (Wood, 2002).

Co-production, co-management and co-design are methods that can enable power-sharing (Cummins, 2022), while simultaneously strengthening capacity within both government and communities. Importantly, they should be understood as long-term processes – not one-off events (Cummins, 2022). It has been noted that shifting towards co-design and principles of self-determination has led to greater flexibility in Australian PBAs, compared with PBAs in the United States (Smart, 2017). Other examples of capacity strengthening methods that can enable power-sharing include community priority setting (e.g., by training community members to undertake a needs assessment).

Summary 3.2: Governance and the role of government

Elements of place-based approaches that contribute to success

- Sound and formalised governance arrangements
- Clear vision, mission, theory of change, and guiding principles
- Small wins (balanced with long-term focus)
- Sustainability planning and attention to long-term legacy
- Lead organisation or agencies ('backbone')
- Independent entities with authority to direct funding
- Sustainable, flexible, and adequate resourcing
- Policy- and systems-level linkages
- Early investment in capacity strengthening
- Strong leadership and high-level commitment
- Long-term investment in place leadership
- Fundamental skills and enabling mindsets

Key functions or enablers of government

- Long-term central government funding
- Shared accountability and reporting
- Pooling of budgets
- Focus on outcomes (rather than outputs)
- Government as convener/facilitator
- Adequately resourced local government as lead organisation
- Embracing systems thinking, holistic thinking
- Relational approaches to governance
- Embracing First Nations values
- Consistent contact person
- High-level commitment within government
- Fundamental skills and enabling mindsets within government
- Whole-of-government skills and experience

Enabling conditions for government partnership

- Stable governance structures
- Time, resourcing, and organisational infrastructure to support governance
- Local/devolved decision-making
- Place 'readiness'
- Capacity for place-based governance

3.3 Evidence for planning, monitoring, evaluation, learning, and accountability

There is increasing pressure on PBAs to use evidence-based practices, with funding sometimes being tied to their use. Collective impact practitioners have identified tensions in combining community engagement and data-driven or evidence-based approaches. Rather than simply being implemented 'off the shelf', it is critical that such approaches are tailored to the local context. A key part of understanding 'what works' is supporting high-quality evaluations of PBAs, which include processes of continuous monitoring and learning throughout and beyond the PBA's implementation. The key sub-themes discussed in this section include:

- Funding high-quality rigorous evaluations
- Realistic evaluation timeframes
- Shared measurement for defining and measuring success
- Evaluation and learning as capacity strengthening
- Power-knowledge dynamics
- Attributing and measuring impact and success
- Cost-effectiveness and social return on investment

3.3.1 Funding for high-quality rigorous evaluation

Evaluation is one of the most challenging aspects for PBAs, particularly those with less resources (Smart, 2017). Evaluation is not always valued as a central component to PBAs (Crew, 2020); it is often not included from the outset (McBride, 2018). The lack of long-term investment continues to be a barrier to understanding causality and impact. Even in the relatively well-resourced PBAs, there is typically very little allocation of dedicated resources to simply collect data, let alone collate and analyse it.

Findings in focus:

- Consistent, rigorous evaluation and monitoring of PBAs
- Clear implementation evaluation describing the key components of the PBA
- Funding for high-quality rigorous evaluation

Where evaluations of PBAs have been implemented, they are often considered as limited or lacking in rigour (Crew, 2020). Yet rigorous evaluation is crucial for monitoring progress and demonstrating the impact of PBAs. Evidence for decision-making, monitoring, learning and evaluation can be used for different purposes, including:

- identifying whether there is need for a PBA;
- evaluating 'success' and impact on outcomes to justify original and ongoing funding;
- measuring and tracking progress of the PBA (e.g., measure learning, practice change, quality of partnerships, community engagement);
- measuring area- or population-wide impacts of the interventions.

Effective evaluation requires adequate funding and resourcing. The need for **sufficient funding of rigorous evaluations** has been frequently raised in the literature on PBA effectiveness. Amongst existing studies, a wide range of evaluation methods are used (e.g., developmental evaluation, realist evaluation, action learning).

A recent systematic review (spanning 1996-2019) focusing on 13 studies and exploring the impacts of PBAs on children's health and wellbeing outcomes in disadvantaged areas (Glover et al., 2021), found that while evaluation studies exist, to-date the evidence base is insufficiently rigorous to be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of PBAs on child outcomes, especially in Australia. The review found medium to high bias in the quality of studies reviewed. They suggested further **consistent, rigorous evaluation and monitoring of PBAs (Fry, 2022), is required with clear implementation evaluation describing the key components of the PBA** (Glover et al., 2021). Others have also highlighted the need for more empirical research to advance conceptualisation, measurement and evaluation efforts (Brown et al., 2020). A recent systematic review of PBAs in New Zealand mentions that in instances where there are resource shortfalls, some collaborative initiatives prioritise service delivery over data collection, analysis, and identifying system improvement (Fry, 2022). Together, this points to the critical importance of ensuring funding for quality data collection, monitoring, and evaluation (Fry, 2022).

3.3.2 Evaluation timeframes need to be realistic

Effective action planning is required to address methodological issues and the evaluation needs of the PBA in the local context (Moore et al., 2014). Having **realistic timeframes** about the evaluation of short- and long-term impacts of the PBA is important for effective planning. Expectations of short-term population-level impact from the delivery of PBAs is unrealistic given the complexity of implementing interagency and community collaborations (Moore et al., 2014). The long-term objectives and outcomes characteristic of complex problems – often spanning 10 to 20 years or longer – are often seen to lie outside the timeframes of many government programs and their evaluation processes (Policy Horizons Canada, 2011), and imply a need for ongoing monitoring and sufficient funding to be able to support this activity. It is this **lack of long-term evaluations that has partly contributed to the difficulty in demonstrating whether PBAs make a difference to outcomes** (Policy Horizons Canada, 2011, Moore et al., 2014). Defining and measuring more short-term PBA characteristics, such as participation, capacity building and partnerships, are also challenging; while simple metrics are possible, they are often criticised as insufficient to capture true community change (Policy Horizons Canada, 2011).

Findings in focus:

- Effective planning for evaluation and monitoring is required from the beginning of the PBA
- Realistic timeframes for immediate, interim and long-term impacts of PBAs should be considered
- A lack of long-term evaluations has partly contributed to the challenge of demonstrating whether PBAs make a difference to population outcomes

3.3.3 Shared measurement for measuring 'success'

The collective impact literature emphasises the importance of **shared measurement, or agreement between all participating organisations on the ways success will be measured** and reported (Cabaj and Weaver, 2016). Partners may otherwise have their own evaluation approaches, and ideas of what to measure and ways to measure it (Crew, 2020). Shared measurement can establish a sense of urgency when developing the initiative, contribute to accountability as the initiative progresses, and foster flexible, continuous learning and improvement (Fry, 2019, Kania and Kramer, 2011, Moore et al., 2014). Cabaj and Weaver (2016) claim shared measurement is likely to be more successful if it is embedded as part of a larger system of learning and evaluation. Incorporating shared measurement as part of continuous learning, monitoring and evaluation requires:

1. feedback on different outcomes outlined in the PBA's theory of change, although others have highlighted that some PBAs do not have a theory of change to provide clarity on outcomes that might be anticipated (Crew, 2020);
2. manageable measurement;
3. robust processes for sense-making and decision-making; and
4. measurement should co-evolve with changing strategies.

Findings in focus:

- Shared measurement or agreement between all participating organisations is important for defining and measuring PBA 'success'
- A theory of change is essential to provide shared clarity on outcomes that should be measured

3.3.4 Evaluation and learning as capacity building and strengthening

Smart (2017) emphasises that PBAs should support culture, adaptive learning, use of data and evidence, and data should be shared and communicated in a way that is meaningful to community and local partners. A systematic review of studies evaluating Australian First Nations community development projects found that partnerships between researchers, community members and service providers have strong potential to improve methodological quality and community participation when research skills and community knowledge are integrated in the design, implementation and evaluation of projects (Snijder et al., 2015). It is essential that all communities, including First Nations, actively participate in the collection, collation and analysis of data (Kukutai and Taylor, 2016; Woolcock, 2019).

To support a culture of learning, reflection and power-sharing, decision-makers need to be open to sharing data, lessons, and failures. Measures should also be co-designed and validated by First Nations peoples to ensure they align with First Nations' concepts, experiences, and priorities (Snijder et al., 2015). Principles in the Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Framework and the Self-Determination Reform Framework can be used to interrogate if data are shared at the right level of decision-making, influence, control and accountability (State Government of Victoria, 2020). An environment of flexible, continuous learning and improvement can also help ensure effort is translating into change (Moore et al., 2014).

Findings in focus:

- Supporting culture, adaptive learning, and use of data and evidence is capacity building
- Integrating active community involvement in learning and evaluation processes has strong potential to improve methodological quality
- It is essential that all communities, including First Nations, actively participate in the collection, collation and analysis of data
- Support and training to use research tools and data is crucial for measuring progress

Further, **supporting the development of (and training to use) research tools and data sets** to measure progress and learn from successes and failures is crucial (Wiseman, 2006). Anticipating changes in outcomes and having the measures and datasets that will allow these to be tracked is essential. There should also be an emphasis on equity and development of tools to capture equity-focused work and outcomes (Brown et al., 2020). Lack of data and poor data literacy can impact the ability to measure and monitor progress and can be a considerable gap in knowledge. Local practitioners may lack the resources to collect, interpret, and reflect on data (Crew, 2020).

3.3.5 Power-knowledge dynamics around different types of information and knowledge

Complex power dynamics (e.g., between organisations, between governments and communities, or within communities) – particularly around the **prioritisation of different types of knowledge** – may occur and are likely to remain even when communities are empowered. **Acknowledging power-knowledge values (i.e., what types of knowledge/experience is valued) that impact on who is allowed 'at the table' to define community problems and solutions is important.** Different types of knowledge and experience are valued unequally; knowledge produced through research or academic conferences is often prioritised over knowledge created 'on the ground' through protests or grassroots organising (Petiwala et al., 2021). For example, what is considered 'credible' evidence is often based on traditional hierarchies of evidence that prioritise clinical methods, such as randomised controlled trials (RCTs), as 'gold standard' for program evaluation. RCTs, however, are resource intensive and costly. PBAs need to manage the tension between data-driven/evidence-based and community engagement by starting with community engagement and collaborative identification of priorities and desired outcomes, then look to research evidence to identify strategies (Smart, 2017). Alternative methods are discussed in the next section on measurement

Findings in focus:

- **Acknowledging power-knowledge** values (i.e., what types of knowledge/experience is valued) that impact on who is allowed 'at the table' to define community problems and solutions is important for effective planning and use of data for decision-making outcomes

3.3.6 Attributing and measuring impact and success

A major challenge for the effective evaluation of PBAs is the **complexity of attribution:** other initiatives, programs and external factors can influence short-term, intermediate and long-term outcomes through multiple pathways. The complexities of behaviour change make it difficult to attribute desired changes to particular interventions. As such, sufficient rigour is needed to document the processes, services, and delivery of the PBA in order to elicit what made the PBA effective (Crew 2022). Also recommended is the routine use of process measures that would allow examining the extent to which outcomes are a consequence of the project components (Snijder et al., 2015).

There are several approaches to measurement, which may be potential solutions to the complexity of attribution. Alternative methods may be used to provide insights on learning (e.g., **detailed learning reports**) (Fry, 2022). A special series on evaluation of PBAs (see Brown et al., 2020) also emphasises the need for documenting where complex multisectoral community change leads to population outcome change, and for demonstrating the added value of a coalition approach over other approaches. **Social Network Analysis** has predominantly been used to evaluate coalition approaches; this could be useful for evaluating network-related intermediate outcomes (e.g., changes in how organisations interact and share resources (Brown et al., 2020).

Mixed methods approaches (combining qualitative and quantitative techniques) with rigorous adaptive designs and participatory action research, are needed (Smart, 2017).

Mixed method approaches are likely to optimally improve effectiveness of the quality of evaluations because they provide greater range of relevant data (McBride, 2018, Snijder et al., 2015). If mixed methods are not adopted, 'data-informed decision-making' can retreat to reliance on existing secondary data about the place and its people, which in turn disempowers communities' contribution to the data and the story being told about their community. Having a combination of deductive (i.e., pre-determined) methods for high-level outcomes with inductive methods (i.e., allowing methods/findings to emerge along the way) to learn from emerging processes on the ground are important (Marsh et al., 2017, Hart and Connolly, 2021). Contemporary approaches also include abductive methods which are grounded in a shared and iterative meaning making progress to achieving an outcome (Oliver, 2012).

Findings in focus:

- Attributing change related to the PBA itself is a major challenge; the pathways in which interventions influence a range of outcomes are complex
- Sufficient rigour is essential for documenting the processes and delivery of the PBA
- Mixed methods approaches (combining qualitative and quantitative techniques) with rigorous adaptive designs and participatory action research, are needed

An example of mixed methods includes developing an integrated set of local community wellbeing **indicators and data sets** (quantitative methods) that can be used to identify areas that might be in need of intervention or used to track progress in achieving local outcomes. These metrics can be combined with **interviews and surveys** (qualitative methods) with individuals in the community (e.g., families and children) to obtain a nuanced and more in-depth understanding of progress towards outcomes. Another approach to demonstrating impact is to measure **'narrative change',** which focuses on how shared stories can transform how we perceive events, causes, and issues (Kalra et al., 2021). These perceptions can influence how we interact with others and our communities. Measuring narrative change involves a mixed method approach:

- Understanding the foundations for measurement and learning e.g., which outcomes is the PBA targeting?;
- Developing guiding questions for the process e.g., who currently holds power in the dominant narrative(s), and what implications does this have for the PBA?;
- Identifying targets of change e.g., reach, people's attitudes and beliefs;
- Using indicators e.g., short-term indicators for reach may include the number of views/ downloads of online content. Long-term indicators for reach may include the number of people reporting they are aware of the issue; and:
- Tracking and responding to the context in which the PBA is implemented and narrative change is measured e.g., looking for patterns in the data (over time) is part of continuous learning (Kalra et al., 2021).

3.3.7 Cost-effectiveness and social return on investment

One of the key research questions we sought to address in this meta-synthesis is finding any evidence on social return on investment of PBAs. Economic methods of evaluation compare the efficiency of alternative policies, programs or interventions by systematically identifying and valuing their costs and consequences. These methods include cost-benefit, cost-effectiveness, cost-utility analysis, and social return on investment (King, 2021). Very few reviews identified in this report have mentioned economic evaluation methods, let alone social return on investment. One recent Australian systematic review on locally delivered place-based interventions targeting health and health inequalities across physical, social, economic environments, examined 13 reviews comprising of 51 primary studies (McGowan et al., 2021). It found tentative evidence that the provision of built environment interventions (e.g., housing modifications, improving parks and playgrounds, cycle lanes) can positively impact physical activity outcomes. **The review found a notable gap in the evidence around economic interventions, cost-effectiveness, and health inequalities, highlighting a need for further research in this area.** Only one primary study reported cost-effectiveness data; they found traffic congestion pricing shifted car trips to public transport trips (Brown et al., 2015). Snijder's (2015) review of 31 studies evaluating First Nations community development projects found no studies undertook an economic analysis to weight the benefits of community development against its costs. A New Zealand review suggests that government may add considerable value through developing expectations for economic evaluation from the outset, making guidance explicit, and sharing best practice in this area. The New Zealand Treasury's CBAx spreadsheet model for undertaking cost-benefit analysis is an example of this approach (Fry, 2022).

Findings in focus:

- Calculating the value of the economic and social impacts of PBAs is complex
- There is a considerable gap in the evidence around economic interventions, cost-effectiveness, and health inequalities, highlighting a need for further research

Given the limited economic evidence available in existing reviews of PBAs, a more targeted search was undertaken to identify a sample of literature that reflects quantitative and/or mixed methods approaches to evaluating PBA outcomes. This sample of studies was also chosen because they highlight the range of initiatives that have been implemented in Australia and overseas. Additional literature was also recommended by our Advisory Group and Oversight Committee. While there are some examples of economic evaluation of PBAs, Australian studies are mostly limited to mixed method approaches involving interviews with stakeholders and/or program recipients (Nygaard et al., 2021, Arthurson et al., 2015, Press et al., 2016) and purely econometric approaches that include a cost-benefit analysis (Wood and Cigdem, 2012). Others have not used economic evaluation techniques, rather they have discussed reasons for impacts on outcomes (Bartik, 2020, Overman and Ehrlich, 2020).

More quantitative evaluation papers are available in the international literature (Foell and Pitzer, 2020), however it is important to recognise that the international literature on cost-effectiveness focuses on initiatives more akin to the definition of 'place-focused' approaches. Busso et al. (2013) used a spatial equilibrium model to perform a short run evaluation of the US Federal Empowerment Zone (EZ) program, which provides targeted tax incentives and block grants for encouraging economic, physical, and social growth in urban and rural areas needing it most. They found EZ designation (using rejected and future applicants as controls), substantially increased employment in zone neighbourhoods and generated wage increases for local workers without corresponding increases in population or the local cost of living.

They caution their short-term evaluation as administrative data indicate that participation in the EZ tax credit program increased only gradually over time and it took many years for some economic outcomes to respond (Busso et al., 2013). Another US study used econometric techniques (e.g., regression discontinuity methods) to evaluate the employment effects of place-based programs designed to create employment opportunities by offering tax credits to business and developers in these areas (Freedman, 2015); evaluation of these sort of programs are becoming increasingly popular in the US. The study (Freedman, 2015) found local areas do not necessarily see the benefits of the PBA; many of the new jobs created in areas that receive subsidised investment did not go to the residents because businesses could hire outside the designated neighbourhoods (i.e., broader regional areas).

An example of Australian use of social return on investment methodology was in the evaluation of the social impact of Beyond Empathy's Rites of Passage Project (Beyond Empathy, 2012/2013). The project involved film workshops with young people, who undergo practical training in a variety of roles such as filming, acting, camera work, scripting and props. A central premise of the project is that on-the-job learning may help improve individuals' sense of self and build personal and professional skills over time. The social return on investment methodology evaluates the impacts of the program from the perspective of stakeholders and assigns a monetary figure as a proxy to represent the value of impact. The evaluation found that approximately $1.94 million in social value was created for material stakeholder groups from an investment of $632,8231 over three years. For every dollar that was invested in the program, $3.10 of social value was created (range $2.40-$3.50) (Beyond Empathy, 2012/2013)

Another Australian example of calculating cost of impact is the KPMG impact assessment of the Maranguka Justice Reinvestment project (KPMG, 2018). The project is a First Nations-led place-based model of justice reinvestment, which aims to achieve sustained long-term outcomes through redirecting funding from adult and youth detention to activities and initiatives focused on addressing the underlying causes of crime in Bourke, NSW. In 2017, KPMG conducted an impact assessment of the changes in Bourke, resulting from the operations of the Maranguka Justice Reinvestment project. The impact assessment involved 'mapping' the key activities, aligning key indicators, data, and calculation pathways with these activities, and conducting impact analysis. The calculation estimations framework and assumptions are included in the report (KPMG, 2018). KPMG estimated the changes in Bourke in 2017 corresponding to the operations of the Maranguka Justice Reinvestment project, resulted in a gross impact of $3.1 million from an investment of $0.6 million (operation costs only). The impact assessment is not an outcomes evaluation and is based on a year of change (2017 compared to 2016). It examines the long-term opportunity in achieving economic impact and reducing pressures on the justice system. KPMG focused on indicators related to the Maranguka Justice Reinvestment Project activities (i.e., the assessment did not isolate the impact of the project itself).

In summary, this collection of examples shows that **calculating the value of the economic and social impacts of PBAs is a complex task, and this body of literature is still emerging.** For example, recent publications integrating evaluation and economic thinking propose a theory of value creation (ie 'how we suppose value is created') as a new framework that can be applied to place-based evaluations (King 2021). While examples of costing 'impact' of PBAs do exist, the consensus is that assessing impact is still a considerable gap in the evidence base. Mixed methods are still key – cost-benefit analysis and cost-effectiveness analysis only tell one part of the story.

Findings in focus: Planning, monitoring, evaluation, learning and accountability

Key challenges:

- Lack of adequate long-term funding. A lack of has long-term evaluations has partly contributed to the challenge of demonstrating whether PBAs make a difference to population outcomes
- Power-knowledge dynamics: may occur around the prioritisation of different types of knowledge
- Complexity of attribution: interventions and processes can influence short-term, intermediate and long-term outcomes through multiple pathways making it difficult to attribute changes as a result of the PBA
- Calculating the value of the economic and social impacts of PBAs is complex. The cost-effectiveness of PBAs is a key gap in evaluation evidence base

Effective evaluation methods and practices:

- Effective planning for evaluation and monitoring is required from the start (Moore et al., 2014)
- Realistic timeframes for immediate, interim and long-term impacts of PBAs
- Plan and fund high-quality long-term evaluations
- Shared measurement or agreement between all participating organisations is important for defining and measuring PBA 'success'
- A theory of change is essential to provide shared clarity on immediate, intermediate, and long-term outcomes. How outcomes are monitored and achieved can only be determined if it is clear in advance what they are trying to do, why and how
- Supporting culture, adaptive and continuous learning, and use of data and evidence is capacity building. An integrated learning culture: is important for PBAs to allow time for reflection on progress and opportunities to incorporate lessons into practice
- Integrating active community involvement in learning and evaluation processes has strong potential to improve methodological quality. It is essential that all communities, including First Nations, actively participate in the collection, collation and analysis of data
- Support and training to use research tools and data is crucial for measuring progress
- Acknowledge power-knowledge values (i.e., what types of knowledge/experience is valued) that impact on who is allowed 'at the table' to define community problems and solutions
- Sufficient rigour is essential for documenting the processes and delivery of the PBA
- Mixed methods approaches: combining qualitative and quantitative techniques) with rigorous adaptive designs and participatory action research, is likely to optimally improve effectiveness of the quality of evaluations because they provide greater range of relevant data (McBride, 2018, Snijder et al., 2015)

Section 4: Gaps in the evidence and next steps

Previous literature included in this meta-synthesis has identified several gaps in relation to PBAs, including (but not limited to):

- **Governance of PBA types:** Research is needed to better understand how different types of governance (including both governance of the PBA, and role of government or 'governance of government') work in different places and how 'outcomes' achieved might be attributed to different place-based methodologies. This includes understanding how collective impact PBAs, specifically, are implemented, and how this shapes community engagement and participation (Hart and Connolly, 2021).
- **First Nations ways of working in place:** Further work is needed to conceptualise how First Nations-led PBAs relate to different governance frameworks (Hart and Connolly, 2021) to aid in learning from the experiences of First Nations-led PBAs and First Nations ways of working in place. In addition, better understanding of the strategies and processes used to engage First Nations communities in PBAs, including who participated and to what degree (Snijder et al., 2015).
- **Evaluation:** Although there is a burgeoning body of PBA evaluations, most of these do not articulate a theory of change, making it difficult to understand how or why PBAs work (Kegler et al., 2020, Petiwala et al., 2021). Further, both qualitative and quantitative data evaluations could benefit from more rigour and transparency (qualitative) or better study design (quantitative) (Kegler et al., 2020, Snijder et al., 2015). Long-term evaluations of PBAs and economic evidence are scarce.

In addition, this meta-synthesis identified some additional areas to further develop current knowledge of PBA practices and essential principles:

- **Accountable and authoritative governance in PBAs:** Typologies of PBAs, based on accountable and authoritative governance arrangements, would assist in better understanding models of (in)effective PBA governance. These typologies could consider: a) forms of accountability and authority in PBA governance structures and the various roles of government; b) the different ways place is defined; c) the different ways 'communities' are defined; among other factors.
- **Longer term implementation strategies** to address endemic PBA pilots and experiments.
- **Critical interrogation of place-based approaches:** To complement future typologies of PBAs, a critical interrogation of PBAs (and the rationale or drivers underlying specific PBA types) could improve knowledge of the limits of PBAs, how PBAs complement and intersect with other government policies, and how PBAs can best be used within a policy portfolio.
- **Self-determination and place-based approaches:** An exploration of the extent to which various types of PBAs (e.g., First Nations-led, government partnerships, community coalitions) have embedded the principles of self-determination into their practices and frameworks is needed.

- **Methods of community engagement:** Although there is almost unanimous agreement that including communities in decision-making is critical in PBAs, there is still no universally agreed set of strategies that are most effective in doing this, and little agreement about which factors are most important to consider when planning these strategies (Petiwala et al., 2021). We need to know more about ways of getting constant feedback from community members regarding whether PBAs are addressing their needs, whether they were meaningfully involved in the decisions made, and how to do so in ways that are acceptable to them. Ideally community are involved at all stages from co-design, through to implementation and evaluation.
- **PBAs need to engage with lived experience of place, community identity and individual agency/human capability** so PBAs do not become a service reform or public administration exercise.
- **Prevailing political and social ideologies:** we need to understand how these impact on priorities for action and theories of change.
- **(Quasi-) PBAs occurring 'by proxy':** there is substantial work happening in place (e.g., through local partnerships) that is not formally part of a PBA, but may use elements of PBA frameworks or methods (PBA 'by proxy'), making the task of evaluation and attribution difficult and weakening the longevity and sustainability of these efforts.
- **Health Justice Partnerships (HJPs):** Although PBAs are broader than integrated service delivery, HJPs in Australia provide an example of integrated service delivery where health and legal services collaborate closely to increase access to justice for vulnerable populations (Lewis et al., 2018). HJPs support populations at risk of poor health and unmet legal need, such as those experiencing family violence, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities (see www.healthjustice.org.au). Regulatory frameworks across jurisdictions could provide value for improving place-based outcomes in the future.
- **Climate Change and community resilience initiatives.** There are emerging community-led initiatives in response to recent disasters (like bushfires and floods). While not captured in this meta-synthesis, these are examples of communities organising to improve recovery processes and also mitigate future risks. Community resilience initiatives draw attention to the underlying drivers of risk and vulnerability and highlight the need to build capacity to minimise future impacts. There are obvious alignments to be made between community resilience initiatives and place-based approaches that seek to address social and economic inequities. Organisations like VCOSS, the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal amongst others are working to support such initiatives. Further work needs to be done to strengthen and learn from these approaches.

Section 5: Conclusions

This report (Part 1) presented a meta-synthesis of international academic and grey literature addressing:

- essential elements of place-based approaches;
- key functions or enablers of government needed to support PBAs;
- conditions required to enable government to be an effective partner to place-based approaches; and
- evidence on social return on investment of place-based approaches.

Overall, several key lessons emerged from the literature, including:

- **A number of key principles are relevant to all PBAs.** These include equity, self-determination, strengths-based and desire-centred approaches, movement building and lived experience, long-term timeframes, theory of change, focus on place, and improved population-level outcomes.
- **Importance of sound governance that enables power-sharing.** This may require changes to the way government works, including shifting to more flexible funding and accountability structures, and shifting away from a programmatic or managerial approach to one that enables innovation, flexibility, and investing in building trust and long-term partnerships. It may also require a shift in focus to building relationships and networks, and committing to partnership goals and structures, rather than contract-, project-, or service delivery-oriented goals and structures. Building capacity in government to enable this work (e.g., developing foundational skillsets) is critical.
- **A need for long-term, sustainable, and flexible funding and investment in PBAs.** Short-term investment and unrealistic timeframes are barriers to doing the deep level of engagement that is so critical to building trust during PBA establishment. In addition, when PBAs are under-resourced, the quality of monitoring and evaluation suffers, undermining the opportunity to build a robust evidence base on the elements that contribute to effectiveness.
- **Application of well-designed monitoring, evaluation, learning and accountability approaches** that use mixed-methods and build local capacity are essential so that communities can meaningfully take part in the process of change and knowledge can be shared continuously.

Investing in PBAs is arguably one of the most important ways of supporting recovery efforts following the disruption Victorians have experienced due to Covid-19 and the ongoing complex socio-economic and environmental challenges we will face into the future. The strength of PBAs is founded in collaborative relationships, across governments, communities and organisations based on shared design, governance and accountability (Dart, 2018). PBAs are based on shared power and knowledge aimed at creating systemic change and this review reveals that there is much that can be learnt from existing efforts, and more that can be done to improve the success and effectiveness of PBAs in the future. Many of the most obvious gaps in the existing evidence have also been outlined in Section 4. Climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic have provided us with a stark reminder of the dynamic and ever changing context in which we live and also revealed significant inequities across communities and places. Although capturing learnings from past experiences are critical, what worked in the past does not necessarily inform what will work in the future and the findings presented here are by no means suggestive of a 'one-size-fits-all' model for PBAs. What is consistent across the literature is that PBAs should start from a nuanced understanding of place, tailor strategies to the local context and current community needs, and continuously adapt as new knowledge emerges along the journey. What is also clear is that PBAs require government to work differently to support long-term systemic change led by community decision-making processes and power-sharing.

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Section 7: Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1: Glossary

Table 3 Glossary of terms used in this report

Term	Definition
Backbone (Dart, 2018)	A defining feature of the collective impact approach is the role of a backbone organisation – a separate organisation dedicated to coordinating and supporting the various dimensions and collaborators involved. In this framework we use the alternative term 'facilitating partner'. Supporting backbone infrastructure is essential to ensuring the collaborative effort maintains momentum and facilitates impact across PBAs.
Place-based (State Government of Victoria, 2020)	Targets the specific circumstances of a place and engages local people as active participants in development and implementation, requiring government to share decision-making
Place-focused (State Government of Victoria, 2020)	Plan and adapt government services and infrastructure to ensure they meet local needs. Government ultimately has control over the objectives, scope and implementation
Tokenistic community engagement (Arnstein, 1969)	Community engagement that allows community members to express their views and opinions on an issue but does not provide them with any authority or power to make sure these views are factored into decision-making.
Collective impact (Dart, 2018)	At the more complex end of the spectrum of PBAs is the collaborative organisational approach of Collective Impact (CI). CI is only one of many place-based delivery approaches. More than just a new way of collaborating, CI is a progressive, staged approach to problem solving that requires multiple organisations from different sectors to align with a shared agenda and mutually reinforcing activities. Collaboration for Impact (CFI, 2018) define CI as: *A framework to tackle deeply entrenched and complex social problems. It is an innovative and structured approach to making collaboration work across government, business, philanthropy, non-profit organisations and community members to achieve significant and lasting social change.* One distinguishing feature of CI from other collaborations or partnerships is the backbone organisation with dedicated staff whose role is to help participating organisations shift from acting alone to working together (CFI, 2018). CI is not business as usual and it is widely agreed that securing long-term, sustainable change takes many years. There is no agreed-upon or consistent timeframe that defines CI progress, and many scholars and practitioners relate to progress phases for systemic change that can involve iterative cycles of exploration, emergence, adaption, maturity and sustaining.

Term	Definition
Realist evaluation (Policy Horizons Canada, 2011)	Evaluation that compares mechanisms and outcomes within programs to draw conclusions about the impact that context has on the change mechanism of the program.
Theory of change (Dart, 2018)	An explicit theory of how the intervention causes the intended or observed outcomes. The theory includes hypothesised links between (a) the intervention requirements and activities, and (b) the expected outcomes. Theory of change is often used interchangeably with program theory. In this framework we also refer to a high level theory of change. That means just the population results and preconditions, without the theory of action.
Systems change (Dart, 2018)	Systems are composed of multiple components of different types, both tangible and intangible. They include, for example people, resources and services as well relationships, values and perceptions. Systems exist in an environment, have boundaries, exhibit behaviours and are made up of (Arvidson et al., 2013) both interdependent and connect parts, causes and effects. Social systems are often complex and involve intractable, or 'wicked' problems.
Social return on investment (Arvidson et al., 2013)	An approach towards identifying an appreciating value created. It involves a diverse range of stakeholders in reviewing the inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts made and experienced by stakeholders in relation to the activities of an organisation, and putting a monetary value on the social, economic and environmental benefits and costs created by an organisation.
Cost-Benefit Analysis (Arvidson et al., 2013)	It is a form of economic analysis in which costs and benefits are quantified and compared. It is often used by governments or organisations to evaluate the desirability of a given intervention. Generally, a project should proceed only if total benefits outweigh total costs and if the ratio of benefits to costs exceeds a certain figure. CBA generally requires that all costs and benefits (whether tangible or intangible) be expressed in monetary units.

7.2 Appendix 2: Historical policy review of Australian PBAs

(This appendix was prepared by University of Queensland researchers Tim Reddel and Lutfun Nahar Lata and provides a useful historical policy analysis to inform the research for this project.)

This section examines how place-based approaches have emerged in different forms within the Australian context and are also influenced by international policy experience. Focusing mainly on the last few decades but picking up on trends from Australia's post-war reconstruction reforms, we situate current policy debates and frameworks in historical and broader policy contexts. We identify key themes from this analysis including how concepts and ideas about place and place-based approaches (PBAs) have changed over time, how and where policy ideas have come from (i.e., policy borrowing and lending or policy transfer) internationally and how these trends are shaping the current context informing PBAs in Victorian and Australia.

Strategic synthesis of literature of place in Australian public policy

This section scans key historical periods including Post World War II years of reconstruction and regional planning (1945-1949); the Whitlam Government years (1972-1975) characterised by regionalism, social planning and communities; 1980s-1990s - Federal and State governments undertake place-based trials, experiments and prepare reports but few policies; 2000s - place and community re-emerge in public policy and their impact. Key influences have been the UK government focus in late 1990s-early 2000s on social exclusion/inclusion and joined up government agendas.

Australia has a long history of combating concentrated, deep and persistent social disadvantage. Traditionally, government policies and programs have focused on the provision of universal support and services to people who experience a particular form of disadvantage. Over many decades, the increasing awareness and understanding of the complexity of social problems and community disadvantage has driven policy makers to consider ways of addressing multi-dimensional policy problems that account for social, economic and cultural dimensions of a community as well as better integrated and more accessible service systems. The costs associated with concentrated disadvantage including lower quality of life for vulnerable population groups, communities and broader society, costs of welfare provision and lost economic opportunities to utilise a potential workforce have also been major drivers for governments to look for alternatives to traditional forms of policy interventions.

PBAs have provided a conceptually sound and practical alternative for targeting support for an entire community. They provide opportunities for co-designed outcomes and community participation as well as enabling connections between individuals, community capability and place to achieve better outcomes. PBAs also allow policy practitioners to think beyond poverty and unemployment levels for a particular region and focus more broadly on the reasons for community disadvantage such as a lack of opportunities, rather than a lack of income alone (Productivity Commission, 2013: 31). PBAs also enable practitioners to focus on addressing community disadvantage by considering the complex interplay between the characteristics of residents living in a community (e.g. unemployment, low income) and the efforts of the social and environmental context within the community (e.g. weak social networks, relative lack of opportunities) (Caruana & McDonald, 2011).

Practical applications of place-based approaches in Australia have been evident since the 1940s and governments have sought to implement place-based solutions to address a wide range of social policy issues relating to health, education, child development, family functioning, community strengthening, housing, urban regeneration, employment, migrant settlement, Indigenous communities and social cohesion. Despite significant investment over many decades however, the evidence of place-based initiatives' success and cost-effectiveness is still emerging (Brotherhood of St Laurence, 2015; Hart & Connolly, 2021).

Many applications to date have been temporary and short-term in nature, often developed in response to different government initiatives over time, contrary to the requirement for place-based approaches to address the most enduring, long-term challenges of social disadvantage (e.g. Australian Assistance Plan in the 1970s and locational disadvantage pilots in the 1990s). Further compounding at times are unclear or inconsistent social policy objectives, ongoing debate about the most effective forms of governance and service delivery and the role governments (state, territory and Commonwealth) should play in place-based approaches. There is also a need for more responsive and flexible funding arrangements (i.e. brokered solutions rather than competitive grants) that are scalable and aligned to the place-based challenges to be addressed and intended policy objectives.

PBAs, however, continue to be one of the strongest justifications for effective targeting of people experiencing multiple and inter-related forms of disadvantage and provide a platform for the delivery of a more integrated and holistic suite of services and supports (see Stronger Places, Stronger People and the Empowered Communities initiatives). Debate continues by governments on why, how, when and who is best placed to implement PBAs and what past learnings should be drawn upon today to lead effective efforts to support citizens in need.

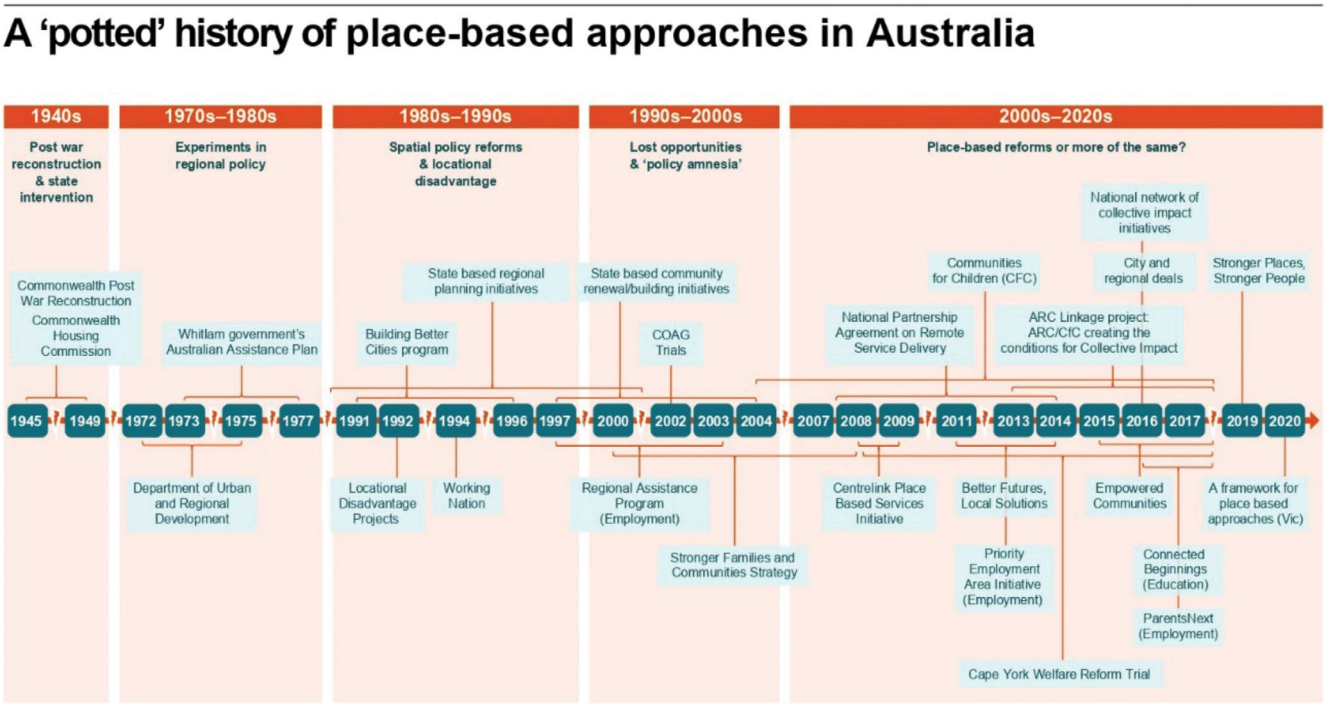
Reddel (2002) argues the growing populism in academic and policy debates of the ideas and values of community, localism and citizen participation required greater interrogation as to their theoretical clarity and policy utility. In particular much of the debates in the early 2000s did not consider an active role for the state and its institutions while offering an uncritical and at times a romantic conception of `community' as a policy panacea for addressing local disadvantage. An indicative place policy framework was posited drawing on a broad sweep of political science and public administration writings encompassing the themes of network (or new) governance and its critiques of new public managerialism and competitive market mechanisms (see Rhodes, 1997; Considine, 2001) and various approaches to reconfiguring the relationship between the state and civil society and the increasing democratisation of decision-making processes (see Giddens, 1994; Jessop, 2016). This literature suggests that a key element of any contemporary place policy framework should build upon new institutional arrangements that promote a focus on building a shared ownership of local problems, a governance model encompassing ad hoc coalitions, place-based and more centralised arrangements that include public, private and civil society institutions and critically a skill set based on dialogue, deliberation and association.

This component of the synthesis review will examine historical and contemporary Australian place policy episodes including the design and implementation of place-based governance systems (local, regional and central forms). While there will be a focus on Commonwealth government policies and programs, key State/ Territory government initiatives will be highlighted.

A potted history of Australian place-based approaches

The reality of the Australian experience is that while PBAs may represent a significant advance on traditional policy responses and service systems, available evidence highlights that most government-initiated approaches have been short-term, lasting only for a few years – essentially 'trials' that are difficult to evaluate and measure positive social outcomes. Whilst conceptually place-based approaches may be a significant advance on policy making and service delivery, there is still limited evidence to suggest that PBAs can offer comprehensive solutions and longer-term and sustainable community benefits beyond traditional approaches.

Figure 2. A potted history of PBAs in Australia



1940s and post-war reconstruction – reinvigorating the state, economy and civil society

Australian governments' policy interest in 'place' has been evident from the post-war period. Concepts of regional planning, community and place have also been evident since the late 1940s during the post-war reconstruction period. The Commonwealth Housing Commission established in the late 1940s argued strongly that national housing policies and programs must be seen in a regional context which promoted "a rising standard of human welfare" and the participation of local people in planning for their communities (Commonwealth Department of Post War Reconstruction, 1949: viii). These intentions were not matched by practical action and following the defeat of the Chifley Labor government in 1949 the Commonwealth did not pursue an integrated regional or place policy agenda (Harris, 1989).

Eminent historian Stuart Macintyre (2015) has chronicled the economic and social policy (and delivery) reforms of Australia's immediate post-war period. The `citizen' was the pre-imminent focus of policy and planning. "The ultimate aim of planning", Barnett, Burt and Heath stated, "is to provide abundantly the essential needs of the citizen", but the planners were ambivalent about the capacity of the citizen to participate in the process. "They were aware that planning could not be imposed. If left solely to government and public authorities, H C ('Nugget') Coombs warned reconstruction would be a barren, empty thing: to be real, it must have its roots among the people" (Macintyre, 2015: 193).

An example of this form of citizen participation (and reflective of the social structures in the 1940s) was the role of local communities and their leaders in the planning process as highlighted by the newly established Commonwealth Housing Commission. They would bring a new awareness, a scientific awareness, to their post-war jobs, whether it is "planning a meal or planning a house" (Macintyre, 2015: 195). It's important to note that local and regional planning as championed by Coombs and other policy leaders was nestled in broader public policies such as social welfare, employment and industry. The central purpose of planning was the "organisation of the resources, human and material, of the nation for the benefit of the whole community" (Macintyre, 2015: 193).

Following the change of Federal government in 1949, Commonwealth leadership in place-based policies and planning lay largely dormant until the election of the Whitlam government in December 1972.

1970s to early 1980s – short lived experiments in regional social and economic policies

The Whitlam Government's Australian Assistance Plan (AAP) emerged from the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP), which was introduced in the Canadian parliament in 1966 as a major social welfare partnership between Federal and Provincial governments for the next thirty years (Oppenheimer, Collins & Eklund, 2018). Following the CAP model, the Australian Assistance Plan was introduced as "an attempt to regionalize welfare services and return administrative power to a grassroots level" (Whitlam, 1985: 364). In comparison to the CAP, the AAP was enacted quickly without having proper consultation with state governments and its legislation was never enacted. Despite criticisms of the Whitlam government's AAP program, AAP was arguably the first place-based policy approach to social welfare and service delivery in Australia (Oppenheimer, Collins & Eklund, 2018). The AAP drew on concepts of social planning and community development, and the establishment of newly created Regional Councils for Social Development (RCSDs) which were to bring together various groups with an interest in welfare, but with a strong focus on citizen participation, to allocate resources for welfare at the local community level. RCSDs became the key social planning, evaluative and advisory body for the region thus forming a link with the Australian and State government in connection with the social development needs of the region (Reddel, 2005).

Notwithstanding the AAP's many merits, Adam Graycar its leader evaluator argued the Plan can be seen as a classical example of the federal government attempting to create a new local governance system which was larger than local government, smaller than state government, not directly accountable to the community through any formal democratic process (parliamentary or electoral) and without clearly defined roles and responsibilities (Graycar, 1977). Funding for AAP ceased with the dismissal of the Whitlam government on 11 November 1975 and the establishment of the conservative Fraser government shortly thereafter (Oppenheimer, Collins & Eklund, 2018). Although the AAP played an important role in empowering people and community, we will never know how much it could have impacted our social assistance program. A spatial or place-based approach to public policy (especially social policy) lay largely dormant until the early 1990s.

1980s to mid-1990s - tentative integration of spatial policies, social justice, local disadvantage with economic reforms

Australian social policy in the 1980s to 1990s focused on employment and the impacts of globalisation, economic restructuring, deregulation and privatisation. The early 1990s saw community centred ideas and was strongly influenced by international experience. For example, the 'Third Way' as exemplified by New Labour in the UK (1997-2010) started to become more prominent in social policy and place-based approaches. There was also recognition of `locational disadvantage' via the uneven impacts of economic restructuring. For example: Deals for Communities (NDC) and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) in the UK and structural adjustment programs in the European Union. In Australia, the spatial dimensions of social and economic policy began to have prominence in the early 1990s as reflected in the sheer volume of governmental publications at both state and federal levels (Smyth & Reddel, 1997: 97). Alexander's (1994) review of the 'report plethora' at the feeler level identified an emerging social policy agenda to do with equity, social justice, locational disadvantage and environmental sustainability as a response to the years of neglect and the hegemony of economic rationalism. However, this agenda was primarily actioned through a profusion of 'social justice', `locational disadvantage' and `community renewal' experiments and trials by state and federal governments that were largely ad hoc and lacking in a coherent policy framework (Smyth & Reddel, 1997). Regional economic policy re-emerged in the 1990s as a response to the impacts of globalisation and government policies for economic restructuring resulting in substantial shifts in the regional dispersion of resources. "It is the dramatically uneven impact of this redistribution" that confronted policy makers in the early 1990s, according to Gibson-Graham (1194: 149), to which the Keating government's Working Nation (1994-95) offered the first major policy response in Australia. The central policy idea of Working Nation was the Job Compact to address the geographic dimensions of long-term unemployment and the recognition that many regions will not benefit from generalised economic growth (Probert, 1994: 105). Working Nation received a rather negative response due to its ideological acceptance of market-driven solutions that inevitably generate regional inequalities (Gibson-Graham, 1994; Probert, 1994) and its implementation deficiencies due to costs blow outs and a reliance on centralised federal bureaucracy (Wanna, 2018). The change of Federal government in 1996 saw the demise of Working Nation and indeed any comprehensive regional or place-based policy for some time.

Mid 1990s to 2000s – lost opportunities, more experiments and policy `amnesia'

Under the Howard government, there was a residual acknowledgement of social capital and community participation in public policy (e.g., the Regional Australia Strategy), but without any substantial place based policy agenda. The interventionist dimensions of PBAs appeared inconsistent with the Howard government's policy agenda (1996-2007) which favoured a market-driven approach to economic and social policy. The rise of the One Nation political party in Queensland from 1998, however, raised concerns about socioeconomic disparities, which placed regions and regionalism back on the policy agenda. Thus, by the 2000s there was a revival of PBAs driven by the political fallout from the social impacts of uneven economic development created by the open market economy (Reddel, 2001).

The Rudd/Gillard/Rudd Labor governments from 2007 to 2013 (in collaboration with State and Territory governments) saw more PBAs implemented (Communities for Children, Community Renewal, Local Solutions Fund, Cape York Welfare Reform, Remote Service Delivery National Partnership Agreement, Empowered Communities and recent reforms to the Closing the Gap Strategy). Indigenous PBAs will be discussed in detail in the next section. In 2008, the Australian Government's Social Inclusion Board was established to advise on ways to achieve better outcomes for the most disadvantaged and to improve social inclusion in society (Australian Social Inclusion Board, 2012). The Board reported on a range of national and international location-based initiatives and provided a range of broad overarching principles for PBAs. The Board was later disbanded by the Abbott Government in 2013 and its social inclusion agenda was not progressed.

Contemporary experience - policy opportunities and reform or more of the same?

Australian governments have borrowed or been influenced by many place-based policy ideas from the United Kingdom. A key influence has been the Blair Labour Government that came to power in 1997 with addressing social exclusion as a central policy priority for the United Kingdom (Levitas, 1998). In a more popular vein, the slogan 'joined up solutions to joined up problems' became the new mantra of British public policy (Ling, 2002). Complementing this focus on social exclusion/ inclusion, was a revival of interest in the analysis of locational disadvantage and the promotion of devolution and local partnerships as strategies to reintegrate forgotten places into the mainstream economy (Geddes, 2000). Program reforms such as the *New Deal for Communities*, the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, anti- poverty strategies and Regional Development Agencies became key institutional planks for addressing social exclusion at central, regional and local spheres of government and community activity (Geddes, 2000). Despite policy and ideological differences, a more devolved and place-based policy agenda was pursued by the Cameron Conservative government from 2010 including the *Troubled Families*, *Whole of Place* Community Budgets programmes and *Local Enterprise Partnerships* (Marsh et al., 2018).

Following the United Kingdom's' social inclusion agenda there was a new emphasis in Australia on understanding poverty or exclusion as a 'joined up, multi-dimensional problem requiring 'joined up solutions'. This led to Council of Australian Governments (COAG) trials in various locations across Australia – focusing still on the system of government rather than on promoting new approaches to tackling issues of poverty and exclusion. The following section provides detailed discussion on Indigenous place-based policy reform.

Indigenous place-based reforms

Arguably, place-based approaches have been a key part of Commonwealth approaches to Indigenous affairs since the 1970s turn to 'self-determination'. The vision of self-determination envisaged by the influential Council for Aboriginal Affairs, chaired once again by Coombs, viewed the 'community' (rather than the region, nation or state) as the scale at which Indigenous self-determination would be realised (Rowse, 2000). This view was instantiated through the incorporation of self-governing communities and the funding of Indigenous community-controlled local service organisations in domains including housing (funding for Aboriginal Housing Associations from 1972–73) and economic development (through the Community Development and Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme from 1977). From 1989, the funding and program administration for these organisations by the Commonwealth was provided through an Indigenous-controlled government agency, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). ATSIC was elected by Indigenous people across 36 regions, each of which had their own regional councils and developed regional plans and priorities.

From 2002, the Australian governments have developed several strategies and programs to improve engagement with Indigenous communities and to strengthen whole-of-government coordination arrangements which took on increased significance after the abolition of ATSIC in 2004 (Marks, 2008; Hunt, 2013). The most prominent of these was the COAG Trials. The COAG Trials were intended to develop whole-of-government-approaches to service delivery in eight communities or regions, incorporating place-based elements over time. These Trials encountered significant challenges, particularly around community engagement, ineffective coordination and decision-making mechanisms, churn in government personnel, and difficulties in creating the kind of systemic changes within government required for the whole-of-government approach (Morgan-Disney, 2006; Smith, 2007).

The election of the Rudd Labor government in 2007 saw a recommitment to Indigenous affairs through the national apology to the stolen generations in 2008, followed closely by COAG's endorsement of a *Closing the Gap strategy* that continues today (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2021). Critics argue that although the COAG in 2008 targeted to achieve six ambitious goals to 'close the gap' in life outcomes for Indigenous children, families, and communities, the federal government did not adequately consider implementation strategies and how agencies would deliver on these goals (Marsh et al., 2017: 8). Key local implementation problems included limited community engagement and allocated program funding not reaching targeted Indigenous communities and populations (Phillips-Brown et al., 2012). Consequently, successive annual reports on COAG implementation revealed a failure to achieve Closing the Gap targets, which continues today.

The ambitious National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery (NPARSD) highlights many of these systemic and implementation issues for Closing the Gap and PBAs. The NPARSD (2009-2014) was a commitment by the Australian, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australian, Western Australian and Northern Territory governments to address local Indigenous disadvantage. The intent of the NPARSD, together with other relevant COAG agreements, was to contribute to improved access, range and coordination of services, improved levels of governance and leadership, and increased economic and social participation in 29 priority remote community locations (National Indigenous Australians Agency, 2022). While progress was made in improving service access and coordination for remote communities, the endorsed summative evaluation found that the remote service delivery model was seen by participants as 'all about government processes', rather than a genuine partnership with the community where community members are empowered to drive a service improvement agenda (PMC, 2014: 43). There was an over reliance on top-down centralised approaches, the lack of effective engagement early in the process, and the lack of community and government capacity for genuine engagement and collaboration (Phillips-Brown et al., 2012).

The NPARSD highlights broader tensions with the design of PBAs: the challenges of focusing on both improved government service delivery coordination and building local community engagement and governance capacity (Brown, 2020). The NPARSD experience is that top-down government service delivery agenda prevail (PMC, 2014).

In 2013, and following the change of federal government, Prime Minister Abbott prioritised Indigenous advancement and introduced localised service delivery practices to create a more decentralised approach through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (Marsh et al., 2017). However, there remained a gap in decision-making and control from the community level (Marsh et al., 2017). Indigenous affairs continued to be contested throughout the period of the federal Coalition government. The National Agreement on Closing the Gap signed by all Australian governments in July 2020 has been seen to offer a new approach to Indigenous affairs based on a full and genuine partnership. Four priority reforms: formal partnerships and decision-making, building the community-controlled sector, transforming government organisations and shared access to regional level data are the centre pieces of the Agreement and strongly support a place policy agenda.

More recently a significant Indigenous place policy is Empowered Communities, which operates in ten regions across Australia with backing from the Australian Government (Wunan Foundation Inc., 2015). Empowered Communities, which is yet to be independently evaluated, has focused on developing governance and partnership arrangements; regional priority setting; and developing methods for sharing decision-making about the funding of regional initiatives for Indigenous people. The *Empowered Communities design documen*t (2015) posited a vision which saw the achievement of social and economic development being inter-linked with the retention of Indigenous cultures, languages and identities. While the fulfilment of this vision is still very much a work in progress, Empowered Communities appears to be a shift from government-led programs to a more holistic, co-designed and critically Indigenous controlled reform process.

City Deals

In 2016, following the United Kingdom's City Deals model, the Australian House of Representatives Select Committee on Regional Development and Decentralisation recommended expanding the City and Regional Deals program to include additional areas and to allocate extra resources to meet the demand for new city deals (Hart & Connolly, 2021).

The City Deals model encourages 'city councils or groupings of councils to work together more effectively in identifying local economic development opportunities. They then strike a deal with the central government to secure the funding necessary to realise these opportunities' (Burton, 2016). In Australia, the Commonwealth Government has supported City Deals for Launceston, Western Sydney, Geelong, Adelaide, Townsville, Darwin, Hobart, Perth, and South East Queensland (Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development, 2020). The Commonwealth and the participatory states signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which sets out the objectives and principles of city deals (see Australian Government and Government of Western Australia, 2018). These deals were signed for 10 years in most cases. However, the state governments set up their priorities, for example, Hobart's main focus is providing affordable housing whereas Darwin prioritises heat mitigation. There are also differences in the level of Indigenous inclusion, such as, Darwin has Larrakia projects that focus on building the Larrakia Cultural Centre to promote Indigenous cultural activities, whereas Western Sydney prioritises greater recognition of Indigenous people and established an investment hub for Indigenous communities (Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development, 2021; Hart & Connolly, 2021). Hart and Connolly (2021) also found similarities in investment by participatory states. Most investments are focused on three areas (i) infrastructure development; (ii) public facility upgrades, and (iii) creation of precincts to advance (i) digital economies, (ii) cultural economies, and (iii) knowledge economies (Hart & Connolly, 2021: 8).

Social policy placed-based initiatives

A common theme in social policy research around disadvantage for families is the role of community or place in both understanding disadvantage and in addressing it (Vinson & Rawsthorne, 2015; Payne & Samarage, 2020; Ananyev, Payne & Samarage, 2020). Living in a community where there are high rates of poverty or other indicators of disadvantage is a strong predictor of experiencing persistent disadvantage and addressing disadvantage at the community or place-based level is seen as an important pathway in moving people out of entrenched disadvantage. It can be argued that research related to place has influenced government policy approaches. Both at the Commonwealth and State and Territory levels, place-based policies and programs are seen as effective ways of addressing the complex nature of disadvantage experienced by families through looking at their physical and social environment and the service systems they engage with rather than looking solely at the issues they face as individuals (Centre for Community Child Health 2011; Dart, 2018; Victorian Government, 2020). Over the past decade, place-based approaches have been increasingly rolled out as policy responses to complex social problems across Australia. These approaches are driven by the notion of local answers to local solutions and have consultation and shared decision making as core components of these models. However, place-based approaches in the Australian context have been characterised by trials, pilots, time limited programs and a narrow focus on human service delivery rather than broader policy design (Reddel, 2002).

Stronger Places, Stronger People (Commonwealth)

The legacy of the AAP in the 1970s and locational disadvantage experiments of the 1990s can (perhaps) be seen in recent Commonwealth government attention to PBAs. In contrast to the economic development focus of the city and regional deals, the Commonwealth Government (Department of Social Services (DSS)) in partnership with state and territory governments and 10 communities across Australia have developed a place-based, community led, collective impact initiative, known as Stronger Places, Stronger People (SPSP), to improve the wellbeing of community members. This five year initiative which commenced in 2019 is designed to "disrupt disadvantage and create better futures for children and their families through locally tailored and evidence-driven solutions to local problems, in partnership with local people" (DSS, 2021). This program has commenced in nine communities including Logan, Rockhampton and Gladstone in Queensland, Bourke and Kempsey in New South Wales, Mildura in Victoria, Burnie in Tasmania, the Far West Region of South Australia (including Ceduna) and the Barkly Region (including Tennant Creek) in the Northern Territory. These communities were selected based on several criteria including markers of disadvantage, existing community collaboration, strong local leadership, established local governance structures, a promising degree of readiness to work differently, an existing collective impact practice is preferred, a level of social cohesion and a shared vision for change (DSS, 2021).

The selected communities receive funding to support a local project team known as the 'backbone team'. The backbone team is responsible for "local planning, inclusive engagement, measurement and evaluation, joint decision-making, governance and local action. The backbone team works with, and is accountable to, a local community leadership group, supporting the community in developing and implementing their tailored strategy and plan of action" (DSS, 2021). The project also provides funding to selected communities for capacity building support in order to develop the necessary skills and expertise of the local backbone team to implement community action plans. Communities also "participate in a Partnership Exploration Process, which is designed to develop a shared understanding of collective impact practice in the community, plan for the year ahead and confirm the commitment from all partners" (DSS, 2021).

Locational disadvantage and community cohesion (State led programs)

Apart from the Federal Government's place-based initiatives, state governments and non- government agencies across Australia in recent times have implemented place-based policy frameworks and programs to design and deliver more locally responsive services. For example, in 2016, the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) developed a place-based framework to deliver services. To implement this framework, VCOSS focuses on the following approaches (Morgan & Frey, 2011):

- A focus on place;
- Support for disadvantaged groups;
- Roles for community and service users;
- Effective engagement and communication;
- Local decision-making;
- Shared vision and a joint approach;
- Innovation;
- Flexible service delivery;
- Capacity development;
- Backbone funding and support;
- Outcomes-focused measurement;
- Good governance; and
- Long-term timeframes.

The Victorian Government through its A Framework for Place-Based Approaches notes that different levels of government should learn and adopt place-based initiatives when the government actors need the support of the local people and communities to solve macro social problems such as urbanisation, inequality, intergenerational disadvantage, demographic shifts and environmental change (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2020). The Victorian place-based framework further indicates the benefits of working with local communities by pointing out the importance of building strong and resilient communities that are able to support the government in delivering services (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2020). Using a place-based framework can strengthen civic engagement, support policymakers to solve problems using a system approach and initiate cost-effective and preventative responses (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2020). For example, the Victorian Government implemented the Metropolitan and Regional Partnerships to create opportunities for local communities to 'influence local decisions and shape their future'. The Loddon Campaspe Regional Partnership advocated for a program that was co-designed by representatives from business, the community and three levels of government to improve the health of people in the Loddon Campaspe region.

The Healthy Heart of Victoria (HHV) project was co-designed through consultation with 96 people from different organisations across the Loddon Campaspe region, through several workshops amounting to 500 hours. The outcome of this project was a co-designed, regionally owned, implementation model with three components:

- a localised support network of health and wellbeing advocates to build knowledge and drive change to make health everybody's business across the region
- an active living census - survey of community members' activity levels and preferences within regional and rural municipalities
- using the survey results to better inform infrastructure and program planning to encourage active lifestyles (Victoria Government, 2020).

In addition to designing programs for encouraging active lifestyles, the place-based framework has also been used to deliver education and family services to disadvantaged communities in the Gippsland area, to create employment opportunities and to support capacity building for culturally diverse communities to support young people and prevent youth disengagement (Dandenong, Melton and Wyndham regions).

Like the Victorian Government, the Queensland Government has taken up various place-based initiatives following the Australian Government's SPSP initiative. In Queensland, SPSP is funded by the Australian Government's Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Queensland Government's Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors. In Queensland, there are three SPSP communities: Gladstone, Rockhampton and Logan. In 2019, the Gladstone community began to work with stakeholders from DSS and Collaboration for Impact and PriceWaterhouseCoopers Indigenous Consulting Business (PIC) to implement SPSP for Gladstone. The Gladstone community team aims to disrupt the cycle of disadvantage experienced by children. Although their main focus is children's wellbeing, they recognise the importance of ensuring the wellbeing of parents and families in order to achieve children's wellbeing. To ensure the wellbeing of parents and families, the community team focuses on issues such as alcohol and drugs, domestic and family violence, mental health and poverty (McGinis & King, 2019). Since 2019 the Gladstone community backbone team have been consulting with government, sector and community representatives and collecting region specific data and reviewing existing data to identify current crisis points and working towards measuring current performance against recognised social wellbeing indicators (McGinis & King, 2019).

The Logan based SPSP builds on *Logan Together* in south east Queensland which is a collaborative, community driven and place-based initiative using a collective impact methodology to give children in Logan aged 0-8 years of age a good start in life and real opportunities to thrive. *Logan Together* is working collaboratively with other place-based initiatives nationally to promote a more community driven public policy reform in Australia. While it is too early to be definitive it can be argued that SPSP builds on these various initiatives and highlights the need for broader systemic reform to address intergenerational disadvantage in local communities.

The Tasmanian Government has also introduced place-based initiatives to provide a single-entry point to early childhood services (ECS) for families of children from pregnancy to age five. This model has emerged as part of the Australian Government's pro-equity approach to addressing systemic barriers to access and participation in ECS and family support services. Existing research shows that Tasmanian children live amongst the most disadvantaged communities in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013).

They also experience the highest levels of exclusion and have the lowest living standard in comparison to other states and territories in Australia (Philips, 2015; Vinson, Rawsthorne, Bevis & Ericson, 2015). The selection criteria for establishing ECS centres for all Tasmanian communities include: a higher than state average percentage of children under four years of age; demographic characteristics such as Aboriginal families, sole parent families, very young parents; a high score on individual measures of social and economic exclusion including criteria like low educational attainment, housing stress, adult unemployment, and family income supplements; high socio-economic area disadvantage; and strong support for establishing a Centre from the local community (Taylor et al., 2017: 1498). Twelve centres were established between 2011 to 2014. The vision of these centres is that all Tasmanian children will experience the best possible start in life (Department of Education Tasmania, 2015). The centres have four priority areas:

(i) to provide high quality learning, health and wellbeing programs that support children and families to learn and thrive;

(ii) to build each community's sense of belonging with their centre as a place of importance;

(iii) to create and maintain strong and flexible partnerships between everyone involved in each centre's community; and

(iv) to develop tools that will show the differences the centres are making to the lives of children, their families, support services and the community (Taylor et al., 2017: 1498).

However, it is hard to measure the impact of Tasmanian Government's ECS Centre's initiatives as they are recently established. A study by Taylor and colleagues (2017) investigated the impact of centres on parents' use and experiences of ECS using a mixed methods approach. Their findings revealed that centre users made more use of ECS than non-users. Centre users also reported that ECS were convenient and close to services, committed to helping as well as worked closely with one another and parents felt they were welcoming places. Centre users further reported that the centres were helping them to develop positive child, family, school and community connections (Taylor et al., 2017).

Summative ideas: Policy, Governance and Practice

This indicative scan of the policy dimensions of PBAs from both a historical and more contemporary perspective is necessarily incomplete. An overriding theme/s has been the changing and complex roles of government and communities in PBAs which can variously be described as state centric administration, local partnerships, joined up government, community control and comprehensive local and/or regional governance. These labels might be simplistic and generalised but suggest the following attributes - objectives and themes that have over time shaped PBAs in Australia.

Table 4. Summary of key policy attributes of PBAs

Term	Definition
Governance modes	**Mixed collaborative approaches** of government program administration, service coordination, stakeholder consultation, local partnerships, devolved decision making highlighting the challenges of Australian federation
Policy objectives	**Siloed and not joined up** - Community development, local empowerment, child wellbeing, poverty reduction, housing and urban renewal, economic development, infrastructure provision, employment generation
Design approach	**Theories of change aspiring for an agreed whole of place approach** (including scale e.g., locality or region and policy objectives) and joined up strategies with public sector, civil society and private sector
Implementation strategies	**Collective impact models** popular with backbone community organisations to provide local capacity, resourcing for networks and a shared measurement system (government funding silos remain a challenge). Other strategies include government led coalitions of local agencies
Policy, practice and evidence	**Mixed evidence of impact** with evaluation, data and measurement limitations ongoing (especially for attribution and causality) with diversity and similarities for urban, regional and remote PBAs.

Adapted from Reddel (2002)

From the AAP, a forgotten social policy experiment of the 1970s addressing spatial disadvantage, to contemporary place policy interventions with what appear more ambiguous objectives, PBAs have a significant and influential policy legacy. This scan of experience and literature suggests some key propositions to explore further in our PBA evidence development including:

- Endemic policy 'amnesia' so that we continue to experiment and trial new approaches without remembering the findings or legacy of history.
- Complexity of federal-state-local government relations as systemic obstacles to PBAs
  - (the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted these many issues and complexities, again).
- Conflation of PBAs with other place focused initiatives where government services are responsive to local needs, but not necessarily through a community driven approach.
- Tendency to see PBAS as the remedy to all 'wicked' problems based more on hope/ambition than theory, methodologies, evaluations, or empirical analysis.
- The methodological challenges of causality and attribution in designing, implementing, and evaluating PBAs.
- Accountability systems and funding programs are often siloed and do not support subsidiarity and local decision making.
- Engaging with community identity/capacity building and individual agency/human capability, so PBAs are not primarily a service reform or public administration exercise.
- Legacy of COVID-19 on notions of place, community and the role of governments will be long lasting and pernicious for public policy and politics.

To conclude, Peter Shergold, former Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and an earlier architect of place-based Indigenous reform strategies highlights the broader challenges and opportunities of place-based policy thinking especially for the public sector working with local communities that not only focuses on delivering outcomes but also broader notions of democratic participation and public purpose:

> *A different type of public service (is required), not just an improved version of what already exists…I believe that Australia needs to rebuild and rearticulate the structures of democratic governance, recognizing that it requires greater collaboration between the public sector (on the one hand) and the private and community sectors (on the other). New forms of partnership are required to provide public benefit in unexpected ways and, in the process, to revitalize participatory engagement of citizens in the life of the nation. To achieve these goals the operation of public services (collectively) and the role of public servants (individually) will have to be transformed. So what are the elements of change that can together make over the world of public administration?* (Shergold, 2013: 8–9).

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7.3 Appendix 3: Literature search terms

Concept 1 (Title/Abstract/Keywords): Place-based approach:

- Place-based approach
- Place-based initiative
- Community initiative
- Location-based initiative
- Collective impact
- Community coalition
- Community partnership
- Community development
- Area-based approach
- Area-based initiative
- Systems change
- Strengths-based approach
- Nation building
- Empowered communities
- Connected beginnings
- Regional partnerships
- Metropolitan partnerships

Concept 2 (Title/Abstract/Keywords): Literature reviews and authoritative summaries:

- Review
- Overview
- Synthesis
- Meta-analysis
- Framework
- Summary

7.4 Appendix 4: Extended reference list

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