Townsville Heatwave Workshop

June 2025

SWELTERING CITIES

Townsville Heatwave Workshop Report

June 2025

The workshop took place on the land of the Bindal and Wulgurukaba People. This always was, and always will be Aboriginal Land. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and acknowledge with respect the many millennia of Indigenous science, culture, community and care in this region and beyond.

This report has been prepared by Sweltering Cities. We would like to acknowledge our partners, the Queensland Community Alliance, North Queensland Conservation Council, and Once Upon Tomorrow, as well as all the participants of the workshop. We thank the local businesses who supported us on the day, including Townsville Picnic Bay Surf Lifesaving Club and Whites Deli.

This work was made possible by the generous support of the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) as part of the Community Led Climate Solutions program.

Introduction & Context

In June 2025, Sweltering Cities and local partners hosted a community-led heatwave scenario workshop in Townsville. As North Queensland faces more dangerous and frequent heatwaves, the need for practical, locally-driven climate adaptation has never been greater.

Community-led approaches to heat resilience are powerful because they draw on deep local knowledge, existing networks of care, and the lived experience of those most affected. Rather than imposing top-down solutions, this project creates space for communities to identify risks, design responses, and lead the transformation of their neighbourhoods, systems, and services. **The Townsville workshop demonstrated how inclusive, collaborative planning can generate bold ideas, foster local leadership, and build the foundations of long-term resilience.**

Townsville's unique climate, community, and built environment make it both highly exposed to extreme heat and rich with opportunities for community-driven innovation. **The workshop brought together 36 people from across health, housing, energy, emergency services, local government, conservation, and community organisations to collaboratively explore future climate scenarios and design local solutions.**

Using a structured storytelling and systems thinking approach, the workshop created space for local knowledge, lived experience, and creativity to shape practical strategies for heat resilience.

This workshop was a collaboration between Sweltering Cities, Once Upon Tomorrow, the Queensland Community Alliance, and the North Queensland Conservation Council. The event was made possible through support from FRRR's Community Led Climate Solutions program, which enables regional communities to drive innovative local responses to the climate crisis.

The Townsville Heat Scenario Workshop is part of a wider effort to ensure that regional communities are not left behind in climate adaptation planning. At the workshop, Townsville locals described unique heat resilience strategies shaped by their lived experience and deep expertise. **By prioritising local leadership and engagement, this project supports not only technical or infrastructure solutions, but also stronger community networks, equity-focused decision-making, and culturally grounded approaches to resilience.**

As part of the workshop, participants were asked to imagine the front page of a newspaper in a future where Townsville had successfully adapted to extreme heat. Their visions were practical, hopeful, and rooted in local values: tree-lined, green streets providing shade and respite; well-funded community programs that reached everyone, including the most vulnerable; and Townsville recognised nationally as the "coolest" or most resilient city in Australia. These imagined headlines reflected more than optimism and they offered a glimpse into the kind of inclusive, connected, and climate-ready future that local communities are working to create.

Workshop Participants

The people who attended and contributed to the workshop came from a large range of backgrounds and organisations. Some had been born in Townsville, others had only recently arrived. They included practicing and student social workers, public health professionals, researchers and academics, electricians, activists and community leaders, faith leaders and more.

Participants who attended the workshop identified themselves as being connected to the following organisations. The ideas and actions in this report are not specifically endorsed by these organisations.

- Be P.Art
- Community Gro
- Community Recovery Department Families, Seniors and Disability Services and Child Safety
- ETU
- Insideout Architects P/L
- James Cook University
- Jensen Uniting Church
- Kirwan Uniting Church,
- North Queensland Conservation Council
- North Queensland Public Health Network
- NPS Pty Ltd
- Queensland Community Alliance
- Red Cross
- Regenerate Earth
- The Liberal Catholic Church
- Townsville Community Alliance
- Townsville Multicultural Support Group
- Wet Tropics Management Authority
- WWF
- Zinfra

TOWNSVILLE HEAT RESILIENCE PRIORITY ACTIONS

These recommendations from the Townsville heatwave scenario workshop held in June 2025 are designed to inform advocacy, planning, and investment in equitable climate adaptation. They are not endorsed by any single organisation but represent strong, commonly expressed priorities for protecting lives, strengthening communities, and preparing Townsville for a hotter future. A consistent theme throughout the workshop was that **resilience is collective** and that adaptation strategies must deliver **benefits across communities.**

STRENGTHEN SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND LOCAL CONNECTION

Community connection is one of the most powerful forms of resilience but it depends on physical spaces, communications, and support structures that reflect and serve the local context.

- Fund neighbourhood programs that help people connect with and support one another.
- Create and maintain inclusive, climate-safe meeting places like neighbourhood centres, community halls, and shared public spaces.
- Build local communications infrastructure,such as community newspapers and events, that reflect North Queensland identities, voices, and strengths. Support culturally inclusive storytelling, public messaging, and education about heat health and preparedness.

ENSURE SAFE AND DIGNIFIED WORK IN EXTREME HEAT

Workplace heat safety is not just a labour issue, it's a public health and equity issue. Workers in construction, care, delivery, hospitality, and emergency services are on the frontline of climate risk. Legislated, enforceable workplace heat safety standards will provide clarity and confidence. Flexible summer work arrangements will help people work at cooler times when possible,

BUILD COOL, CONNECTED PUBLIC SPACES

Safe, shaded, and accessible public spaces are essential for both physical safety and social wellbeing and should be present in every suburb. Upgrading public places with shade, green cover, evening lighting and cooling infrastructure for play, exercise, and rest will enable people to gather, connect, and support one another.

SUPPORT LOCAL GREENING AND FOOD SYSTEMS

Green infrastructure and local food systems can reduce heat, strengthen food security, support biodiversity, and build neighbourhood pride. Free trees, tree planting events, and more flexible trimming or tree removal policies will make Townsville cooler and greener. Planting the right trees in the right place creates the best long term investments for councils, utilities and communities. Garden education, community farms, and garden competitions connect people. Native landscaping and small-scale food production should be supported in planning codes.

EXPAND RELIABLE AND EQUITABLE ENERGY SYSTEMS

Keeping cool in a heatwave should not depend on income or postcode. Local energy solutions can improve comfort, save money, and prevent deadly heat stress. A regional energy resilience plan for homes, schools, and community infrastructure should include: solar and batteries for social housing, incentives for residential solar and batteries, and neighbourhood-scale energy systems like community batteries and microgrids.

EMBED CLIMATE LITERACY IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Education systems, from schools to trade training to community learning, are key to ensuring that all residents can adapt safely and confidently to heat. Peer-to-peer and community-led learning programs build trust and community connection. Civics education focused on misinformation resilience and critical thinking will support social cohesion and community participation.

PLAN AND RETROFIT FOR CLIMATE-READY HOMES AND BUILDINGS

Building codes, design standards, and financial incentives must reflect the lived reality of extreme heat in Townsville. Homes should be cool, affordable, and safe.

SUPPORT INCLUSIVE EMERGENCY AND HEALTH RESPONSE

Adaptation must explicitly include people with disability and health conditions, and people experiencing poverty and people who come from multicultural backgrounds to ensure communities have the capacity to respond together in an emergency. Specifically, we can expand community-led heatwave and disaster response programs. Plans should ensure food, water, and support can be delivered to isolated or at-risk residents.

DESIGN TRANSPORT THAT PROTECTS AND CONNECTS

Heat-safe, accessible transport allows people to stay connected, reach cool spaces, and avoid dangerous exposure. Good transport is a lifeline during extreme heat. Public transport stops and walking routes should be improved with shading, cooling, and safe waiting areas. Use existing infrastructure (like the rail line) and innovation to increase local transport options in growth areas.

LEAD WITH LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND LONG-TERM PLANNING

Townsville can lead on regional heat adaptation, but this requires strong local governance, clear long-term planning, and ongoing collaboration with communities.

- Publicly commit to a nature-positive vision for Townsville, with council leadership.
- Establish focus groups to help communities fact-check, shape, and communicate policy.
- Fund and share financial modelling that shows the long-term benefits of investing in adaptation.

Workshop Purpose and Objectives

The Townsville Heat Scenario Workshop was designed to bring together a diverse range of community members to imagine and prepare for the city's future under more extreme heat conditions. Rather than focusing only on risks, the workshop aimed to support people to think creatively, collaboratively, and strategically about what a heat-resilient Townsville could look like and how to get there.

The workshop used a structured scenario planning approach to explore different plausible futures and how climate change — particularly extreme heat — could interact with systems like housing, health, infrastructure, and local economies by the years 2035 to 2040. Detailed and publicly available climate projection data for Queensland was used to anchor the discussion in scientific consensus. Alongside this, the process drew on local knowledge, values, and lived experience to surface priorities and strategies that are both practical and visionary.

The objectives of the workshop were to:

Explore localised climate impacts
Understand how projected heat conditions in 2035–2040 could affect Townsville's communities, infrastructure, health systems, and daily life.

Strengthen cross-sector collaboration
Bring together people who don't typically work in the same spaces, including grassroots organisers, health professionals, planners, and community leaders to build shared understanding and solutions.

Generate community-led insights
Draw out stories, priorities, and lived experience that can inform advocacy, local planning, and investment decisions.

Surface locally grounded priorities
Identify practical actions, policy ideas, and place-based interventions that reflect the real needs and capacities of the community.

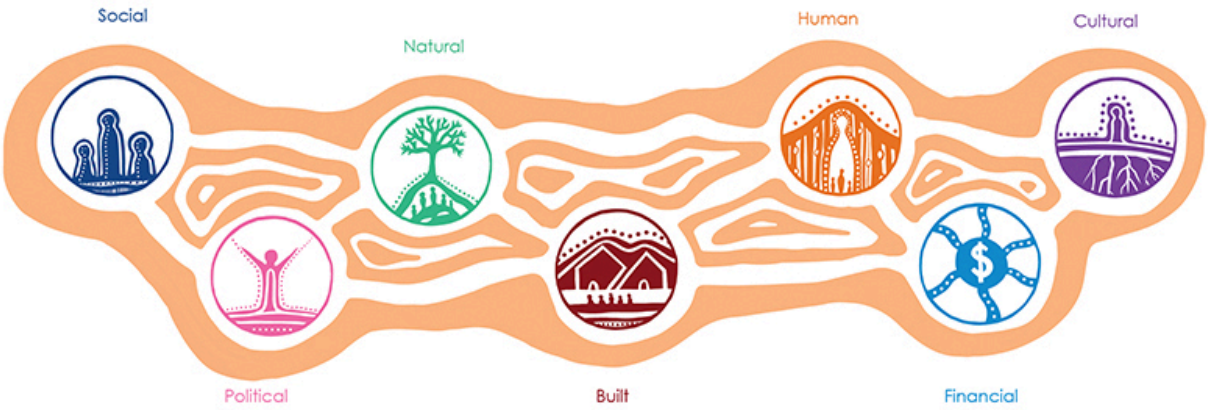
Inspire bold thinking and new relationships
Provide a space for imagination and mutual learning, building relationships that can support future action and partnerships.

These objectives reflect a broader shift toward inclusive, place-based climate adaptation grounded in the knowledge that community resilience has to be community led. We support an approach that centres the leadership and knowledge of local people in building safer, more equitable futures.

Scenario Approach & Climate Overlay

> "The future is fiction. It is a story that we write together, limited only by our imagination and our understanding of the world around us." (ARUP Foresight)

The workshop used a futures thinking framework to help participants explore how Townsville might experience extreme heat under different social, political, and environmental conditions in the year 2035. Participants worked in small groups using scenario narratives informed by the **Community Capitals Framework**[1], a tool that helps communities consider the strengths and risks across seven areas: social, cultural, human, natural, built, political, and financial capital.



(Quinn P, Gibbs L, Blake D, Campbell E, Johnston D, Ireton G. Guide to Post-Disaster Recovery Capitals (ReCap). Melbourne, Australia: Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre; May 2021.)

Three distinct future scenarios were presented, each developed referring to the Community Capitals Framework and describing different trajectories for governance, technology, community connection, and climate adaptation. Participants localised each scenario to Townsville, drawing on their own experiences, sector knowledge, and neighbourhood insights. This process encouraged them to consider how climate risks like prolonged heatwaves, power outages, and housing stress would play out in their communities in the future. The scenarios provided participants with potential futures we may need to respond to.

[1] Recovery Capitals (ReCap) Guide - Phoenix Australia Disaster Mental Health Hub provides a summary of the community / recovery capitals model and each capital area.

COMMUNITY CAPITALS WORKSHEET

Community Capitals Framework

(Flora & Flora 2004)

Social	Refers to the connections, reciprocity and trust among people and groups.
Financial	Refers to the availability of and access to resources including savings, income, assets, investments, credit, insurance, grants, donations, loans, consumption and distribution of goods and services, employment and economic activity.
Natural	Refers to natural resources and beauty, and the overall health of ecosystems. This includes air, land, soil, water, minerals, energy, weather, geographic location, flora, fauna and biodiversity
Political	Refers to the power to influence decision-making in relation to resource access and distribution, and the ability to engage external entities to achieve local goals.
Built	Refers to the design, building and maintenance of physical infrastructure, including its functional and aesthetic value.
Human	Refers to people's skills and capabilities, including the ability to access resources and knowledge.
Cultural	Refers to the way people understand and know the world, and how they act within it.

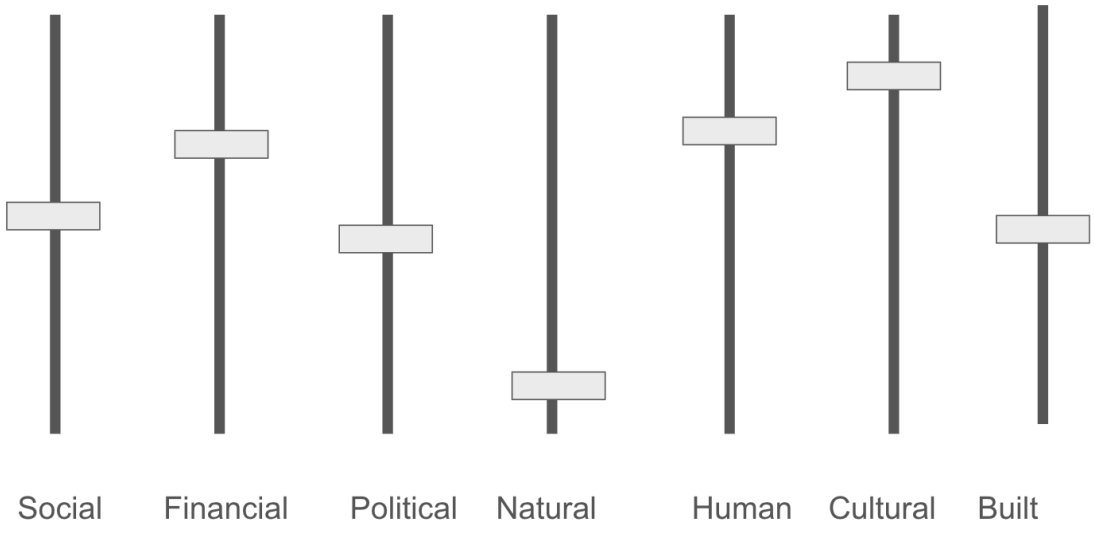
Imagine if our future was a recipe of the seven community capitals in varying degrees.

Like using a mixing desk to create different sounds...

Our future is not fixed but guided by the actions we take today, for tomorrow

SCENARIO WORKSHEET

Scenario: **Digital innovation**



By 2035, there has been rapid technological innovation, but not everyone is experiencing the benefits. AI has made many people more efficient at work, and the government stepped in so people who are working less are still getting the same income.

Digital efficiency has enabled shorter workweeks for some, it has also widened the gap between generations and people who do and people who don't have access to technology.

Tech companies have a lot of influence in our political and educational systems, prioritising innovation and growth over human or environmental needs. How we access information is increasingly shaped by algorithms.

Health and government services have largely moved online, reducing physical community infrastructure.

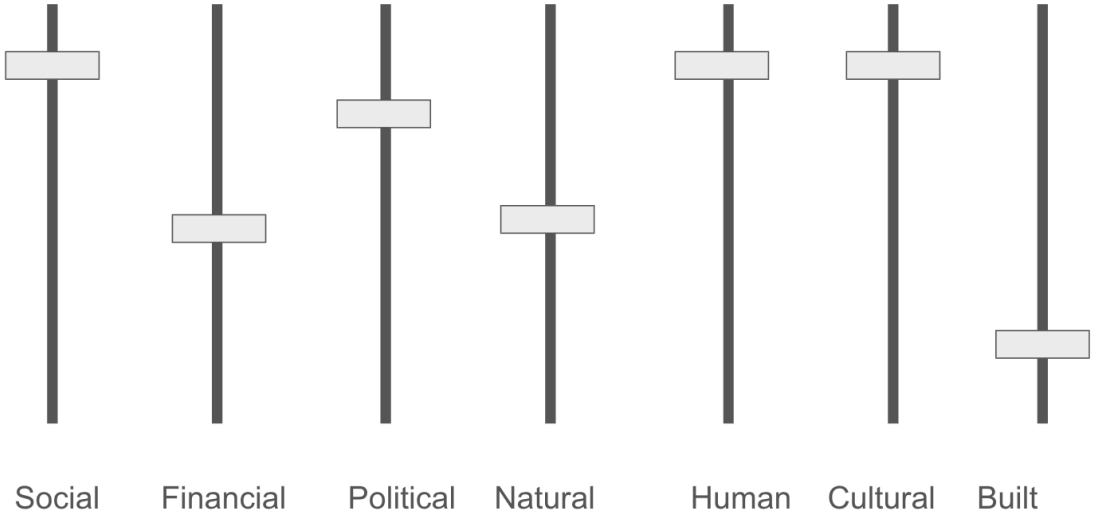
As centralised government services retreated from the community, local grassroots organisations stepped up as people sought human connection. Community organisations, and local storytelling and arts are thriving.

Despite new and better tools for environmental monitoring, there is weak enforcement and ineffective regulation, particularly in remote areas.

This is a future of high-tech progress marked by social and ecological tension, where digital opportunity coexists with widening divides.

SCENARIO WORKSHEET

Scenario: **Localism thrives**



Across Australia, people are spending more time in their local communities. stepping into an active role in shaping their social, political, and ecological futures.

People are collaborating more through repair cafes, tool libraries, festivals, and shared childcare to strengthen relationships and resilience. This is still work in progress however good intention is there and lots of new ideas are being tested.

New community-led governance models are putting grassroots priorities into well-supported local governments who have the resources to respond to community needs. Education is decentralised and focused on practical, collaborative skills such as agroecology, conflict resolution, and Indigenous knowledge. Community banks, cooperatives and small businesses keep profits local.

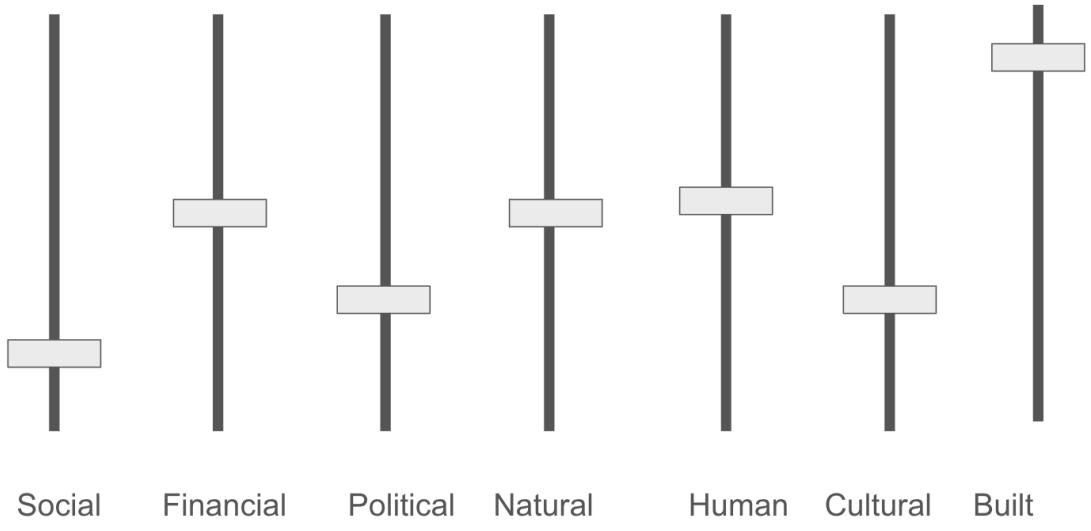
Fostering good will and connection across neighbourhoods is understood but people are finding it hard to put into practice. Cultural diversity is celebrated through revitalised festivals and traditions.

Federal and State programs to build more housing, upgrade homes or regulate for new housing standards, haven't gotten off the ground. Lots of people struggle with rent and mortgages, and insurance costs are extremely high.

Natural systems are cared for by local custodians, though tensions remain as food and energy production compete for space and resources.

SCENARIO WORKSHEET

Scenario: **Fortification**



The Australian society is defined by cautious stability and heightened security.

Democratic participation feels limited, leading to declining public trust. The economy is steady but high inflation means that businesses aren't taking risks or investing in growth.

There is tension around both new migrants to Australia, and internal migration as people are forced to move by disasters.

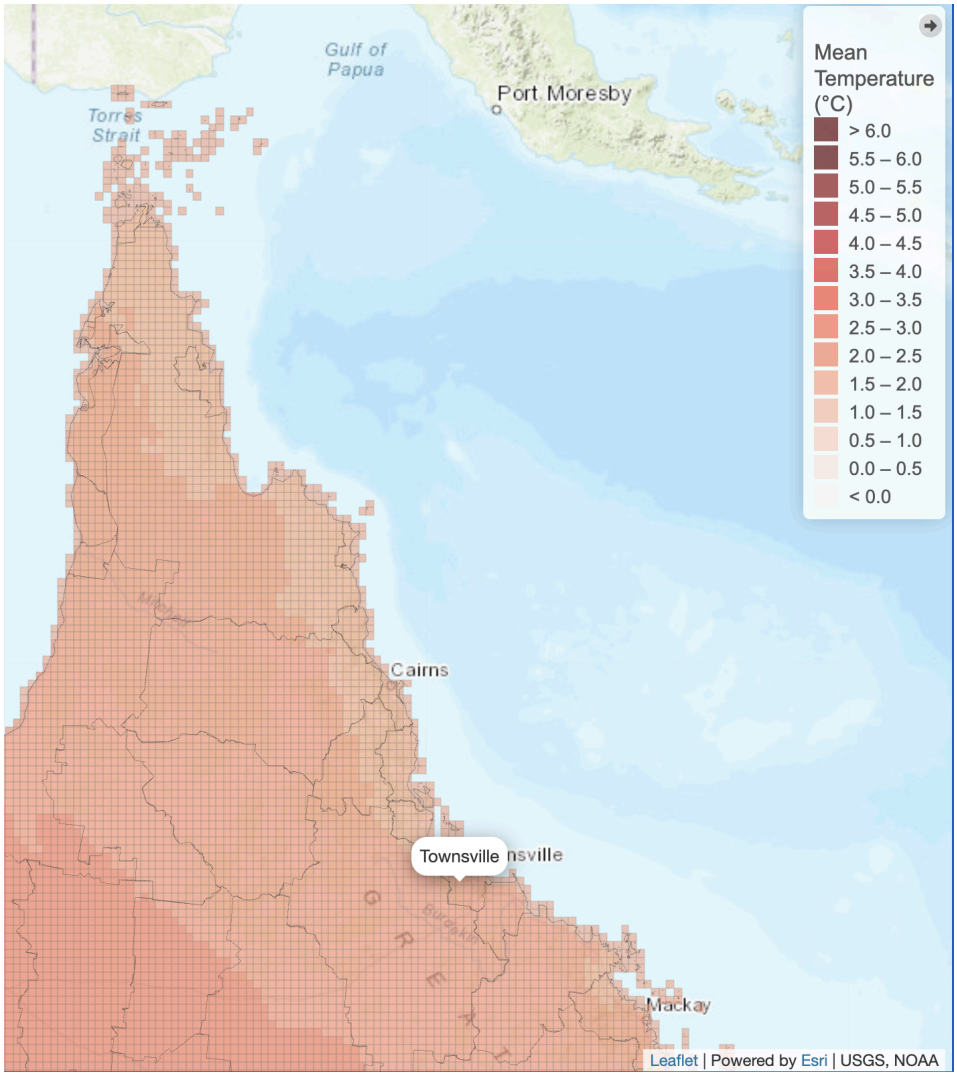
Mandatory resilience programs include evacuation drills, water rationing and volunteering. ‘Prepping’ is rewarded and ‘prepper influencers’ are common. Cultural narratives emphasize security, unity, and sacrifice.

Key natural ecosystems, especially those identified as Australian icons, are strictly protected with restricted access, while resource extraction continues in previously degraded areas to support economic stability.

Education prioritises technical trades and emergency skills, with arts and culture sidelined.

Urban infrastructure is heavily fortified against climate threats and new smart tech provides sophisticated early warning systems to hazards. Regional areas with smaller populations receive less protection, but new materials mean most people’s homes are more energy efficient. Many people live in high density, energy-efficient precincts designed for safety and efficiency.

The scenario discussions were combined with **Queensland Government climate projections**, which anticipate that by 2035 North Queensland will be hotter, experience fewer but worse cyclones and storms, and experience longer more extreme heatwaves. The Long Paddock is a climate projections and pasture information site created and updated by the Queensland Government. The Queensland Future Climate Dashboard allows us to explore the heat, drought, wetness and fire weather projections for the future under different climate scenarios.



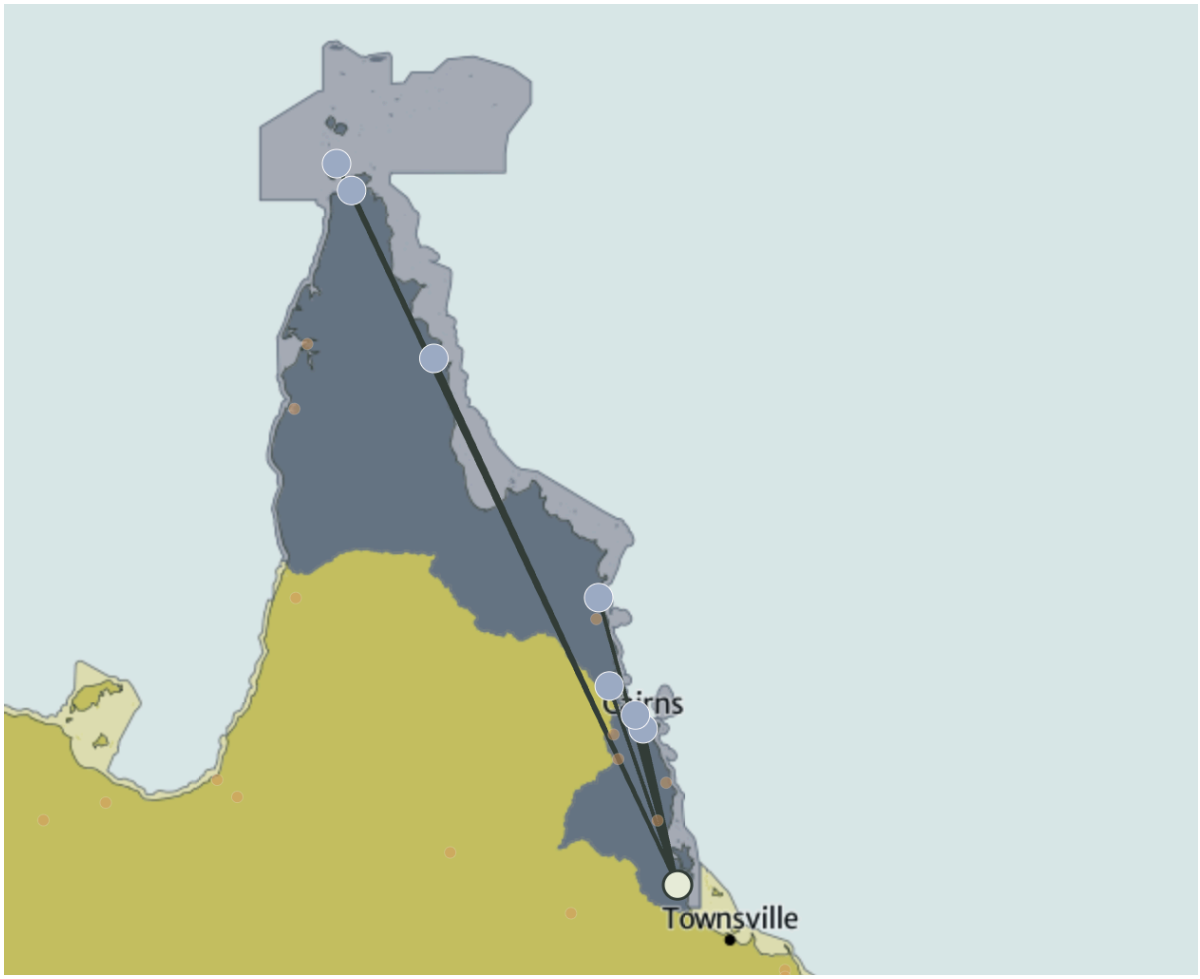
[Queensland Future Climate Dashboard | LongPaddock]

Combining local insights with scientific projections allowed participants to think both creatively and strategically. It also revealed how intersecting vulnerabilities like poor housing, income inequality, or social isolation could amplify heat risks, while highlighting community strengths and opportunities for shared resilience.

Our Future Climate

CLIMATE SCENARIO WORKSHEET

By 2030, the climate in Townsville will be similar to Cooktown, Thursday Island, or Cairns.



Climate analogues for North Queensland in 2030, CSIRO

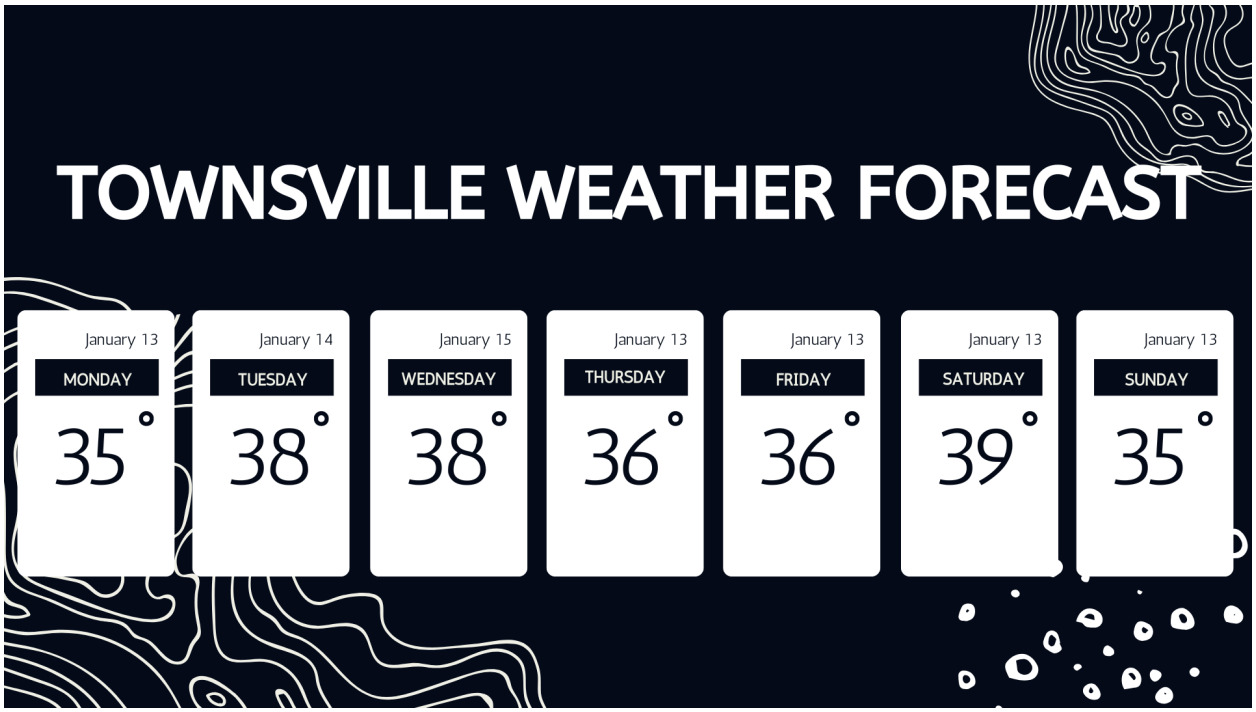
By 2035:

- The average temperature will be higher, meaning hotter summers and winters.
- There will be more hot nights.
- Heatwaves will be more frequent and longer.
- Cyclones will be less frequent but more intense.

January 2035 ….

It’s January 2035, and Townsville is enduring one of its longest and hottest summers on record. After months of build-up conditions starting in early October, temperatures have now remained above 35°C for over three weeks. The nights offer little relief, with minimums staying above 27°C and **oppressive humidity** pushing the 'feels like’ temperature past 45°C each afternoon. The city is in the middle of a severe heatwave, with a string of extreme heat days that meteorologists say is unprecedented for the region.

Inland Queensland is even hotter. Towns across the interior are recording daytime highs above 45°C, with prolonged heat and uncharacteristic humidity. January is only halfway through, but the records for consecutive hot days and hottest average monthly temperature may already be broken.



What people said

Localising the Scenarios

Participants discussed what the different future scenarios would look like in Townsville and North Queensland. The scenarios were shaped by some high and some low capitals, so every group described some positive and negative features. Some participants noted that it was difficult to envision high social capital without high built capital, as housing, transport, and community infrastructure are key connecting spaces and drivers of strength for other capitals.

Key Themes and Insights

Vulnerabilities & Risks Identified

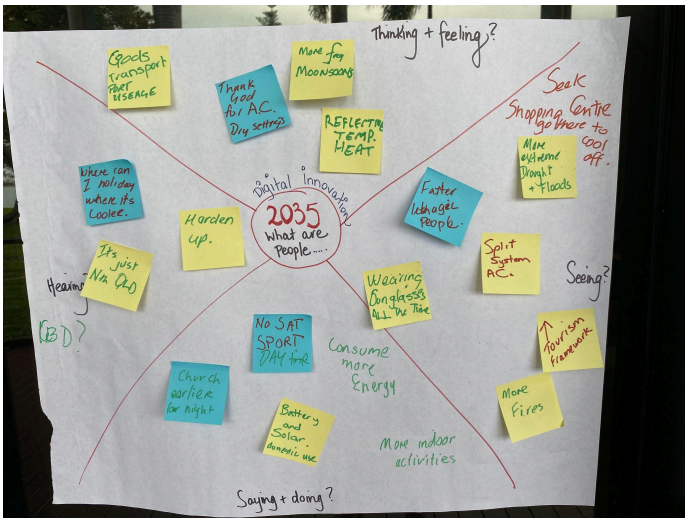
- Power outages, overloaded healthcare systems, social isolation during heat events
- High-risk groups: older adults, renters, people with disability, low-income communities
- Systemic gaps in public infrastructure, communication, housing standards

Strengths & Community Assets

- Existing networks of care (e.g. informal support systems, First Nations leadership)
- Strong environmental stewardship and local knowledge
- Willingness to collaborate across sectors; enthusiasm for decentralised solutions (e.g. community batteries, shared cooling spaces)

Visions of Heat-Resilient Futures

- "Garden-centric communes," underground cool spaces, air-conditioned “capsule beds” for relief at home.
- Redesigning the Strand and CBD for shade, safety and connection
- Community-led storytelling, policy co-design, localised energy and housing initiatives



What Participants Said About Future Extreme Heat Impacts in Townsville

"The Rich will get cooler, and the Poor will get hotter."

Physical and Environmental Conditions

- Prolonged extreme heat with multiple consecutive weeks over 35°C, with humidity driving 'feels like' temperatures above 45°C.
- Hotter nights creating dangerous conditions with no overnight relief.
- Poor air and water quality: concerns about worsening pollution, illegal dumping, and environmental vandalism.
- Ecosystem distress and widespread observations of coral bleaching, plants drying out and dying, and animal deaths (e.g. flying foxes, fish).

Housing, Infrastructure, and Urban Design

- Inadequate housing, especially older and public housing stock that is not designed for current or future climate conditions; poor thermal performance.
- Strain on infrastructure such as anticipated failures of power supply, water systems, and building materials (e.g. roads melting).
- Black outs when heatwaves or other disasters lead to energy infrastructure damage.
- Critical services under pressure as hospitals, emergency response, and aged care facilities are expected to be overwhelmed during heatwaves.

Social Impacts and Community Life

- Increase in heat-related illness and deaths, especially among vulnerable groups such as older people, people with disability, and people living in hot homes.
- Physical strain on outdoor workers, particularly those who deliver critical services, must work during the hottest conditions, and are pressured to work quickly.
- Mental health issues, stress, depression, and fatigue exacerbated by relentless heat and indoor confinement.
- Increases in heat-induced aggressive or violent behaviour and the potential exacerbation of domestic violence situations
- People shifting to night-time activity schedules; cancellation or rescheduling of outdoor events and sports.
- Greater reliance on screens and air-conditioned environments leading to social isolation, reduced face-to-face connection and a sense of community fragmentation.

Economic and Systemic Stress

- Increased electricity bills, food prices, and cooling needs.
- Concerns about affordability and access to basic services.
- Unequal impacts: risk of renters, low-income households, and people without reliable housing or income being left behind.

- Unaffordable insurance premiums leading to people being under- or un-insured.
- High housing costs combining with heat and flood to make more people's housing precarious and unstable.
- Disruptions to food supply, transport and supply chains.

Cultural and Emotional Responses

- Normalisation of heat and being 'North Queensland tough'. Phrases like "It's Queensland - it's hot" and "Harden up" reflect the local mood.
- Emotional exhaustion and fatigue from constant adaptation, loss of cultural events, and fear of what lies ahead. The emotional toll of constant heatwave warnings through news and weather apps.
- Participants also described signs of resilience and acts of care; checking on neighbours, cooling off together in shared spaces, volunteering, and making small local adjustments to daily life.

Priority Actions

Priority actions were identified by workshop participants in response to the future scenarios, bringing them back to the present noting what we could start working together on now, to be better prepared for the future. The actions identified through this workshop are deeply interconnected and contribute to multiple dimensions of community life. Many of the most strongly supported ideas such as urban greening, community-led education, and distributed energy systems, support more than one community capital at once. For example, strategically planting trees improves natural capital, cools the built environment, enhances social spaces, and reduces health risks. Community gardens support food security, build relationships, provide cooling, and generate economic and educational opportunities.

This interconnectedness is a strength. It reflects a systems-thinking approach from locals who understand that truly resilient communities require solutions that work across sectors. These ideas are not isolated fixes; they are building blocks for an integrated and equitable response to a hotter future.

Several key local lessons also stood out:

Place matters. Townsville's tropical climate, existing infrastructure, and community culture shape what will work and what won't. Solutions must be tailored, not copied from elsewhere.

Local knowledge and networks are already active. The community is already generating ideas, leading initiatives, and identifying gaps. Continued investment can amplify and sustain this momentum.

Equity must be built in. Many actions (from housing retrofits to heat health education) must prioritise people most at risk: renters, older people, people with disability, outdoor workers and those on low incomes.

Nature is not a luxury. Green infrastructure, biodiversity, and natural places are core infrastructure for a liveable Townsville – not just environmental add-ons.

Safe and dignified work is a human right. Given the projections for increased heat in Townsville, the safety of workers must be protected leveraging OH&S regulations and procedures.

The following priority areas reflect this thinking. Actions are grouped by theme and include a marker (e.g. +, ++, +++) where participants indicated strong support for implementation.

Food, connections and local greening

Strengthening local food systems and green infrastructure delivers multiple benefits; enhancing resilience, supporting local economies, and cooling the urban environment. Practical supports like free plants, compost programs, and gardening education were widely endorsed.

- **Education, funding and incentives for growing food and community gardens ++**
- **Free plants from council all year round +**
- **Strategically planting the right trees (especially cyclone- and drought-resistant species) in the right places and maintaining them with a watering program. Focus on native species and shade trees that will grow without interfering with energy infrastructure. Preserve existing trees with more flexible tree cutting regulations and the goal of preserving trees. +++**
- Free compost bins and worm farms from council and compost from the dump
- Run a local garden competition focussing on drought tolerant and water efficient planting
- Provide shading for community gardens
- Urban Planning should support smaller gardens (less lawns to water) or native gardens
- Shift from annual to monthly tree planting events
- Work with local council (e.g. parks teams) to support planting and shade
- Community gardens and farms including education components
- Garden-centric communities where neighbours are looking out for each other

Social connections

Building stronger neighbourhood ties and investing in informal community infrastructure are essential strategies for heat resilience. These actions help reduce isolation and ensure people are already connected to people who can support them during extreme weather.

- **Community programs to help people get to know their neighbours +**
    - Who are they?
    - What do they care about?
    - What do they need?
- **Community newspaper +**
    - Share our own stories
    - “What’s on Townsville”
- **Creating spaces for frank public conversations about heat and other climate change impacts.** The goal is to give people the information they need to be prepared and confident. Communications can be led by local trusted voices (eg. Cowboys), be fun, proud and resilient to build on the strength of North Queensland Communities, and include stories from other hot places to connect and learn from multicultural communities**. +**
- **Create and support accessible community meeting places such as the Bowls Club, Neighbourhood Centres, RSLs, TMSG, Retirement villages +**
- Hold street parties for people to connect with each other, eg. Christmas, Cracker night

- Design and support services to be run with community dignity as a priority. An example is food rescue as preventing landfill not just poverty alleviation.
- Transport initiatives to get elderly and other socially isolated people to events and help them feel like valued members of the community.
- Co-locating aged care and early childhood education and care to build connections across generations.
- More toy libraries.
- Free hydrolyte or other hydration and community facilities.
- Set up community groups to share strategies, cooling tips, and support
- Community interventions: trauma support, fatigue management, violence prevention
- Support volunteering around climate adaptation
- Flexible working arrangements, work-from-home options, adjusted hours
- Reschedule work and sporting events to avoid heat exposure
- Work shifts to cooler parts of the day or night
- Air-conditioned “capsule” beds for safe cooling at night
- Fishing workshops for food and skills
- Platform for rental sharing and emergency accommodation

Water

Decentralised water systems and household-level efficiency measures are vital to manage water demand and safeguard supply in a changing climate.

- Aquifer replenishment and recharge program with storm water saved for drier times.
- Support for household water efficiency
- Incentives from council to install rainwater tanks
- Sewerage recycling for water security and greywater
- Rainwater for toilets
- Distributed water supply to reduce dependency on dams + infrastructure

Ecosystem support and natural systems

Healthy ecosystems are essential for a liveable future. Natural areas play a vital role in moderating urban temperatures, supporting biodiversity, managing water, and improving wellbeing. Investing in conservation, local stewardship, and nature-positive policies helps Townsville adapt to heat while protecting the ecosystems that sustain life. Nature is not just a backdrop to climate resilience, it is core infrastructure.

- **Government policy that ensures circular economy principles, waste prevention, recycling, innovation in plastics to improve recyclability ++**
- Create complex habitat (logs, rocks, vegetation, waterholes) in reserves and parks to protect plants and animals during extreme heat.
- Manage threats to biodiversity and review quarantine status to ensure biosecurity is upheld with visitation

- Belgian Gardens State School has Black throated finch breeding programs - more of this!
- Leverage Townsville's eco tourism destination status to invest in nature - tourism money should be invested in nature

Cool places

Safe, shaded, and welcoming public spaces are critical during extreme heat. Local investment in shared facilities and urban greening supports both health and social connection.

- **Investing resources into protecting cooling off places like Crystal Creek from impacts of increased visitation +**
- Ensure public spaces are designed with cooling in mind, including new housing developments.
- More green spaces close to where people live for cooling, leisure, wildlife protection and clean air.
- Shared shaded community spaces e.g. Magnetic Island Skate Park
- Cool exercise and leisure spaces that are shaded from the heat, well lit at night for longer play in the evening, and use green infrastructure for cooling and shade.
- Fit halls & patios with fans for efficient outside cooling.
- More common shared facilities like swimming pools, water parks, and gardens.
- Indoor and outdoor heat refuges for each suburb (government or NGO-supported)
- More night markets and extended opening hours

Education

Climate education can happen everywhere, from schools to workplaces, and from universities to community groups. It plays a foundational role in adaptation and resilience. Focus areas include workforce skills, public understanding, and combating misinformation. Communities can take a leading role in designing and delivering education and peer-to-peer skill sharing.

- **Civics education designed in collaboration with the community to build trust and address risks of mis- and dis-information) +++++**
- In schools:
    - Improve climate change education including adaptation, helping young people understand green jobs, smart sustainable living, energy efficiency, health in a changing climate, and more
    - Bring in NGOs and community networks to share local programs
- In workplaces
    - More apprentices and trades education for the energy and adaptation jobs of the future
    - Sustainability and green technology and innovation training for tradespeople
    - Heat safety education

- In the community:
    - Programs for people to learn from First Nations knowledge and practices
    - Building awareness about the health benefits of spending time in nature builds respect for conservation
    - Climate resilience training
    - Community engagement and education for public health and safety
    - Youth leadership
    - Experts and community leaders should work together to solve problems together
    - Education on recognising signs of heat distress and dehydration, and when to step in
    - Increase cross cultural awareness with programs, festivals and other celebration of diverse cultures
- At James Cook University
    - Run free critical thinking and climate resilience workshops
    - Support youth leadership and organising

Energy

Energy resilience and affordability are central to long-term adaptation. Participants supported both household and neighbourhood-scale solar, storage, and microgrid development.

- **Advocate for more rooftop solar and batteries +**
- **Fund energy efficiency upgrades and install solar on all Department of Housing homes +**
- **Solar rebate increased individual homes and for local suburbs +**
- **Networks of homes with solar panels share power, use batteries for energy security, and export excess energy for additional income. +**
- Investigate wind energy for homes and local public buildings like schools.
- A public plan for energy resilience.
- More community battery banks (with government funding).
- Solar working groups to discuss options and funding.
- Investigate use of pumped hydro without compromising nature (e.g. Kidston project).

Safe and dignified work for everyone

Fair and enforceable protections for workers in high-heat conditions are non-negotiable. Workplace reform, clearer standards, and flexible scheduling are urgent needs.

- **Work health and safety conditions are not a perk. Introduce standardised and legislated heat policy. +++**
- **Shorter summer work schedules such as four day work weeks or shorter days from October to March +**
- Reinstate best industry Workplace health and safety conditions
- Flexible work arrangements in summer
- Clear rules are needed; “Stop working in heat” is open to interpretation.

- Incentivise training for fridge and air conditioner mechanics.

Planning and Built Environment

Urban form and building standards play a critical role in heat exposure. There was strong support for passive cooling design, green facades, and financial incentives for sustainable development.

- **Vertical gardens and green facades for building and visual quality +**
- **Passive cooling for new buildings supported by financial incentives, education and policy. This should include** residential and commercial buildings, potentially including automation and innovation (e.g. retractable roofs, adjustable louvres) **+**
- Update planning regulations at a state and local level to encourage medium rise development in North Queensland.
- Encourage innovation that utilises geography and natural assets for passive cooling technologies
- Update the National Construction Code or Queensland State Building Codes to be more targeted to the demands of the North Queensland climate and environment.
- Explore AMCORD, New Urbanism and Placemaking for urban design.
- Financial incentives or rate reductions for climate friendly actions at home such as removing hard surfaces, storing water, energy efficiency and increasing shade.
- Support and encourage community scale developments that bring people together for sustainability and community connection
- Shared spaces in group housing
- Communal swimming pools

Local Leadership, anti-disinformation, systems change

Trustworthy local leadership, strong public communication, and transparent decision-making are critical for long-term adaptation. Investment in planning, analysis, and public engagement is essential.

- **Government commitment to a nature positive future where the local council leads the way +++**
- **Focus groups to fact check policies and consider potential outcomes for communities - become reliable communicators in the community. +**
- **Robust financial analysis on the outcomes of climate adaptation actions and incentives for investing in adaptation that considers the costs and benefits of climate adaptation. +++**
- Experts and community leaders working together to solve problems together
- Share stories from the past; digitising and sharing what has worked in previous disasters.
- More tailored emergency/disaster alerts (avoid alert fatigue, include clear response actions).
- Local climate research, including partnerships with community groups.

- Support policies that reduce trimming and felling of shade trees.
- Change takes decades so we need long-term climate-informed planning frameworks.

Transport

Heat-resilient transport options, including shading, public infrastructure, and accessible services, ensure communities can remain mobile and connected.

- **Establish local train service on existing rail ++**
- **Shaded walkways to access public transport hubs +**
- **More comfortable and shaded bus stops with fans +**
- **Car pooling Incentivised with fuel discounts, parking discounts and transit lanes ++**
- New transport options:
    - Ferry across river
    - Trackless trams
    - Local shuttle service
- Higher car parking fees for SUVs

Community Support During Emergencies

Locally-led heatwave and disaster support mechanisms were identified as a key opportunity. These systems must be inclusive, well-coordinated, and adequately resourced. Equity in heat resilience means ensuring people with disability and complex health needs are not left behind in planning or service delivery.

- **NDIS support for people during heatwaves. Home medical facilities (eg. dialysis and oxygen) need continued power during disasters. Consider wheelchair users. +**
- Community supported programs expanding support at key moments, including disaster support and transport
- Guaranteed delivery of food, water, and support for vulnerable people during heatwaves

Enablers of positive action

The above actions are actions in their own right however it should be noted that some actions are also enablers. These support the viability of actions to become reality. Enablers for priority actions include:

- Education and upskilling
- Funding
- Community grants
- Incentives
- Collaboration

Conclusion and Next Steps

The Townsville heat scenario workshop demonstrated what is possible when diverse local voices come together to plan for the future. By drawing on lived experience, professional expertise, and place-based knowledge, participants identified actionable, systems-focused solutions to the challenge of extreme heat in North Queensland.

One of the strongest reflections from participants was the value of the space itself. The workshop created a rare opportunity for people across health, housing, energy, planning, emergency services, and community organisations to sit together, think systemically, and connect meaningfully. The range of people in the room — and the respect and curiosity that defined the discussion — made it possible to uncover cross-cutting recommendations that would not have emerged in traditional consultations.

The format also allowed people to move beyond immediate pressures and imagine what it might truly take for Townsville to become a cool, safe, and connected city in a hotter future. That vision was not just about technology or infrastructure, but about relationships, leadership, and the kinds of places people want to live in and care for.

To build on the momentum from this workshop, the following next steps are recommended:

Share this report widely with local government, community organisations, policy makers, and funders. Use it as a foundation for ongoing advocacy, funding proposals, and policy development.

Support follow-up conversations and projects that build on the priorities identified, especially those that can bring together stakeholders to lead local pilots or advocacy campaigns.

Invest in running similar workshops in other communities across North Queensland and beyond. This model has proven effective in surfacing cross-cutting, actionable ideas and strengthening local capacity.

Continue supporting the Townsville network of participants to stay connected, share progress, and advocate for regionally relevant solutions to heat and climate challenges. Queensland Community Alliance and North Queensland Conservation Council will continue to convene and lead local heat resilience networks.

Townsville's future will be shaped by how we respond to heat now. What this workshop demonstrated is that when communities are given the time, space, and support to lead, they can develop practical, inclusive, and visionary solutions. The work has only just begun and the relationships, ideas, and energy sparked here offer a strong foundation to build from.