



Vision and Transition Strategy for a Water Sensitive Townsville

Industry Note

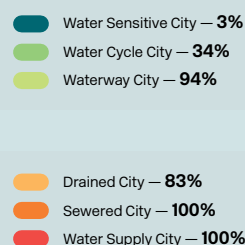
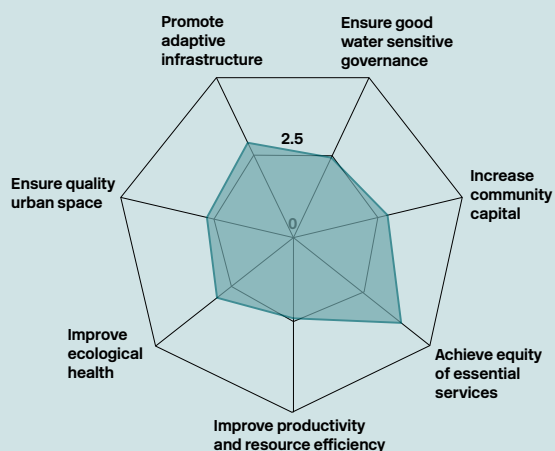
Townsville's relationship with water has been shaped by its unique dry tropical climate and extreme weather patterns and events. The traditional land owners and custodians, the Bindal and Wulgurukaba people, relied on the region's waterways and adapted their way of life to the dramatic seasonal variations. As the area became settled by Europeans and the town began to grow, water supply, sanitation and drainage services were provided through infrastructure solutions to suit the needs of a growing population.

More frequent droughts and cyclones as a result of a changing climate, as well as pressures on surrounding marine and other natural environments, have more recently led to an increased focus on climate resilience, urban liveability, and ecosystem health. Water is now seen not just as a resource to support development and urbanisation, but also as delivering broad values firmly embedded in the daily lives of Townsville's people.



A project by the Cooperative Research Centre for Water Sensitive Cities (CRCWSC) brought together 29 leading thinkers across water, planning, environment and development in Townsville in a series of 3 action research workshops. They considered the city's long-term water aspirations, benchmarked today's water sensitive performance and explored strategic priorities for the short-to medium-term that will be important in pursuing their water sensitive city vision.

The CRCWSC's Water Sensitive Cities (WSC) Index was used to benchmark Townsville's current water sensitive performance. Townsville scored highest for the goals of Achieve equity of essential services (3.9/5) and Improve ecological health (3.1/5). Areas for improvement include Ensure good water sensitive governance (2.4/5) and Improve productivity and resource efficiency (2.4/5). Figure 1 presents these results: (a) against each of the WSC Index goals, and (b) as a percentage attainment of each water sensitive city-state.



City State

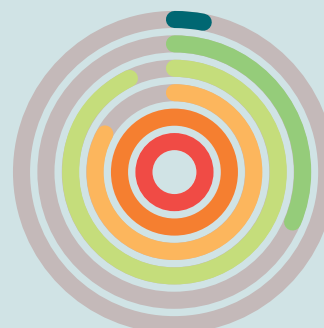


Figure 1: WSC Index results for Townsville (a) organised by WSC Index goal, and (b) filtered by city-state

Vision for a water sensitive Townsville

The 50-year water sensitive vision for Townsville aims to orient and align the actions of stakeholders over the long-term. The aspirations of project participants for their city's water future are expressed as a suite of outcome statements with accompanying rich descriptions.

The timeframe enables people to stretch their ambitions beyond today's systems and constraints to reflect on the transformative change that is possible over such a period.

Townsville is an attractive, resilient city that manages water to enhance healthy ecosystems, embrace dramatic natural water cycles, drive world-leading innovation, and support citizens who are proud of their dry tropical identity.

1. Townsville celebrates being an attractive, liveable city with integrated and multi-purpose built and natural environments that feature water, bring people together and showcase the city's dry tropical climate.
2. Water is managed holistically to ensure reliability of Townsville's water system and the long-term sustainability of its resources.
3. Townsville's waterways, wetlands, coastline, and surrounding marine and inland environments are healthy, valued, and continuously enhanced.
4. Townsville people are proud of their connection to water and are empowered to be active and responsible water stewards.
5. Townsville is an international water innovation hub that showcases water sensitive technology, practices and design for the dry tropics.
6. Inclusive water governance in Townsville enables integration, collaboration, innovation and collective leadership.
7. Indigenous water knowledge, values and ways of thinking are valued in the Townsville community and incorporated into water planning, design and management.

Townsville’s progress towards its vision was analysed using the CRCWSC’s Transition Dynamics Framework, which assesses the presence of important enabling factors that would support a city’s transition to a new practice. This analysis indicates that Townsville has made significant advancements towards water sensitive practices, with

strong leadership from champions, a growing knowledge base, pilot projects and a range of policy, regulative and practical tools to guide the new practices. Figure 2 below depicts Townsville’s current transition phase for each of the vision themes.

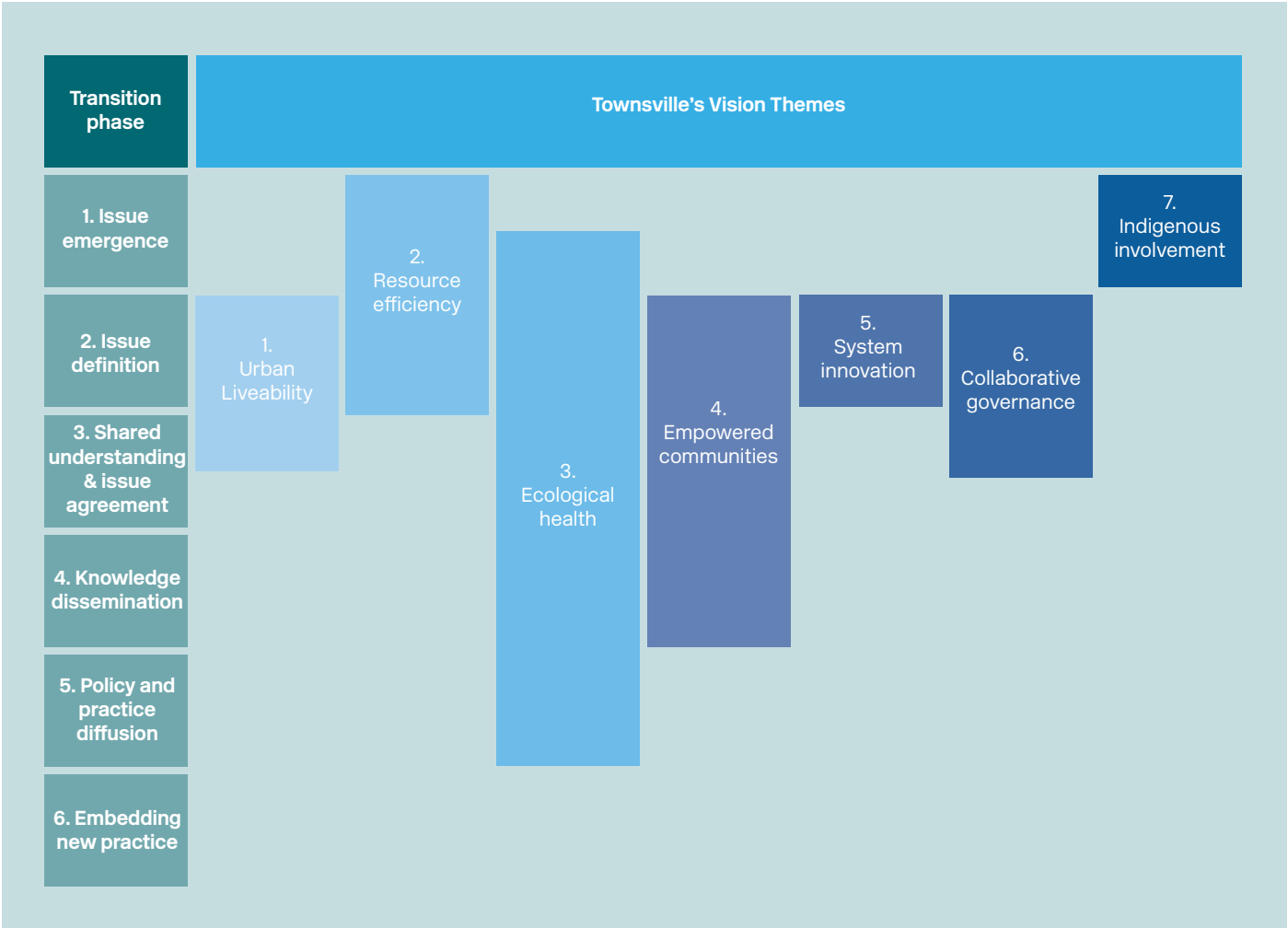
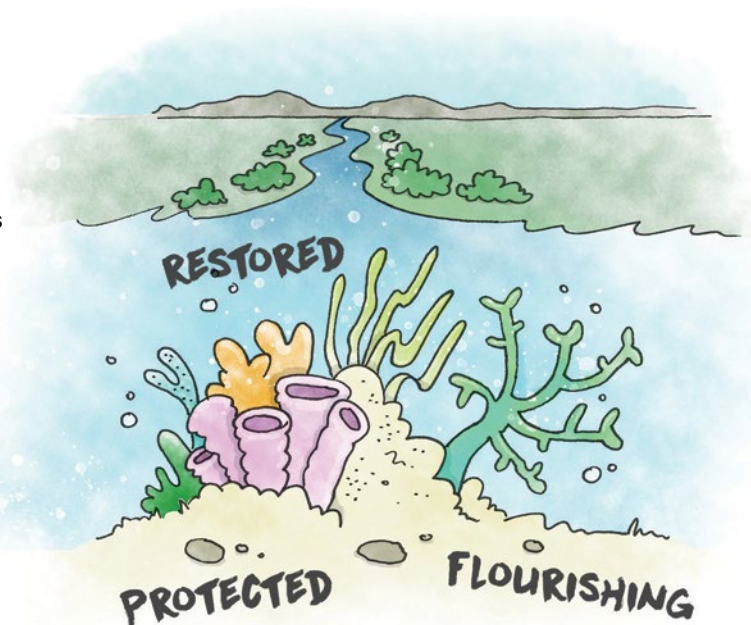


Figure 2: Transition phases for Townsville’s vision themes

To further advance Townsville's water sensitive city transition, particular focus is needed on establishing platforms that will support collaboration across diverse stakeholders to drive new solutions for a range of issues associated with water sensitivity. Specific high level strategies recommended to address priority transition needs in the short- to medium-term are:

- I. Embed Townsville's water sensitive aspirations in a broad city vision and organisational policies, plans and strategies.
- II. Establish platforms that will support and drive integration and collaboration within Council and with external stakeholders.



- III. Develop new knowledge on issues and potential solutions for particular aspects of Townsville's water sensitive city vision.

- IV. Learn from and scale innovations to provide on-ground demonstrations and practical guidance for water sensitive approaches in the dry tropics context.

Townsville has strong momentum towards achieving its vision of a future water sensitive city. However, strategic attention is needed to overcome the social and institutional barriers that could impede further on-ground progress. The recommendations presented in Vision and Transition Strategy for a Water Sensitive Townsville aim to provide orientation and guidance for stakeholders across Townsville in navigating these barriers and advancing its water sensitive city agenda.



Further reading

Hammer, K., Rogers, B.C., Chandler, F. and Chesterfield, C. (2018). Vision and Transition Strategy for a Water Sensitive Townsville. Melbourne, Australia: Cooperative Research Centre for Water Sensitive Cities.

Hammer, K., Rogers, B.C., Chandler, F. and Chesterfield, C. (2018). Benchmarking, Envisioning and Transition Planning for a Water Sensitive Townsville: Final Case Report. Melbourne, Australia: Cooperative Research Centre for Water Sensitive Cities.

Further information



Briony Rogers
IRP1 Project Leader
briony.rogers@monash.edu

Katie Hammer
IRP1 Project Manager
katie.hammer@monash.edu



Level 1, 8 Scenic Blvd
Monash University, Clayton
Victoria 3800, Australia



info@crwsc.org.au



<https://watersensitivecities.org.au/content/project-irp1/>



@crwsc



CRC for
Water Sensitive Cities

© 2018 - CRC for Water Sensitive Cities Ltd.