We can develop solutions that meet the needs of multiple stakeholders including communities, industry and government with a focus on value for money investments. We provide customised advice to meet your needs.

The Urbis team takes a flexible, pragmatic and multi-layered approach to delivering client and community outcomes. Recognising the sensitivities and constraints of different projects and stakeholders enables us to identify and negotiate practical solutions that maximise benefits for our clients.

As part of an interdisciplinary firm also offering services in social and economic advisory, urban planning, design and property economics, we take a systems approach to achieving broad, integrated solutions. With Urbis, you tap into a trusted resource that complements and partners your own capabilities.

KEY AREAS OF EXPERTISE:

Our knowledge of the built, economic and social environments and how these affect community functioning mean that we are well placed to assist with the planning, development and renewal of communities including, but not limited to:

- Community Consultation and Engagement;
- NGO Governance and Succession;
- Research and Evaluation of Services and Facilities;
- Tracking and Predicting Residential Market Trends;
- Integration of Community and Affordable Housing in Mainstream Developments;
- Managing Density through Strategic, Integrated Neighbourhood Planning; and
- Place Making.

SERVICES OFFERED:

- Demographic Profiles;
- Competitor and Market Analysis;
- Housing Strategies;
- Transition Strategies;
- Negotiation and Partnership Facilitation;
- Stakeholder Engagement, Communications and Change Management Strategies;
- Community Development and Activation Strategies;
- Social and Economic Benefit and Impact Analysis;
- Social Return on Investment Studies;
- Service Reviews and Evaluations;
- Business Case Development;
- Tender and Submission Coordination;
- Service, Facility and Portfolio Mapping using Geographic Information Systems;
- Residential Portfolio and Market Research;
- Asset Optimisation and Portfolio Renewal Strategies;
- Property Valuations and Feasibility Assessments;
- Statutory Planning, Development Application Management and Negotiations through Council Planning Systems and Legislation;
- Social Infrastructure Planning and Delivery Strategies;
- Public Spaces and Neighbourhood Design; and
- Urban Renewal and Revitalisation Strategies.
Stephanie Wyeth
Director
Planning / Social Planning
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Stephanie is one of Queensland’s leading social planners with over 20 years’ experience across government, NGO, academic and the private sectors. Stephanie applies her strong understanding of government policy, demographic and social change, consumer demand and commercial drivers to ensure clients are able to deliver innovative property, infrastructure and service solutions.

Stephanie’s approach to consulting is informed by her background as both a town planner and community development practitioner in local government, where she was required to quickly profile and analyse the strengths and challenges of established and emerging communities using available data; work with broad range of policy and operational contexts; and, engage with technical specialists, government agencies, service providers, local networks and decision-makers. She has worked on housing and homelessness related projects since the mid-1990s undertaking a number of affordable housing policy and program initiatives including the development of local housing strategies and needs analysis; financial assistance packages for accommodation providers; and preparation of planning scheme provisions.

Ben Weaver
Associate Director
Planning
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Ben is an Associate Director with over 14 years consultancy experience in a variety of development and regulatory projects across South and Central Queensland and the United Kingdom. Ben has a proven track record of delivering complex planning and development projects. He has extensive experience in formulating development approval strategies and contributing to master planning exercises, planning for affordable housing, undertaking development assessments, preparing statutory planning instruments and assisting with expert advice for strategic plans and studies.

Leila Collins
Associate Director
Social Planning
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Leila is an experienced community service and social planning practitioner with 17 years’ experience working with all levels of government and the non-government sector, in Western Australia, Queensland, the Northern Territory and London. Leila has experience of working in culturally, socially and economically diverse communities; and growth cities.

A community development and policy background means that Leila has significant experience in research, asset mapping and needs assessment, housing strategies, scoping and review of housing, health and community services, market opportunity analysis and competitor analysis in the not-for-profit sector; strengthening governance in the not-for-profit sector, funding and succession strategies, stakeholder engagement and community consultation processes and community planning and visioning.

Nicki Hutley
Director
Policy Economics
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Nicki has more than 25 years of economic, financial market and public policy experience. She has provided advice to public and private sector clients across a broad spectrum of policy issues. Nicki employs economic expertise to facilitate a better understanding of key trends, risks and opportunities in global and domestic economies and financial markets, to enhance business and investment strategies and government policy outcomes.

Nicki has highly developed skills in economic modelling and analysis, applied across a wide range of investment and policy areas. She has deep experience and expertise in global and domestic macroeconomic forecasting, cost benefit analysis, economic impact assessments and government policy reviews and Regulation Impact Statements.
TENDER TO QLD GOVERNMENT FOR LOGAN RENEWAL INITIATIVE (TRANSFER OF SOCIAL HOUSING IN LOGAN, QLD)
COMPASS HOUSING SERVICES AND BLUECHP

Urbis was engaged by Compass Housing and BlueCHP in 2012 to be a consulting partner, and assist them to prepare an Expression of Interest and then two-staged tender submission for Government for the transfer of the Queensland social housing portfolio (approximately 4,700 properties) in Logan City LGA from State Government to a third party housing provider.

Urbis was initially engaged to provide advice communication, engagement and change management for the entire project and on urban design. As the submission process evolved over two years, Urbis took on a project management role in bid preparation and lead roles in developing the final strategies for capital development and renewal; tenancy transition, and communication and change management. Urbis provided social planning, statutory planning, urban design advice and residential market outlooks to the bid team. Compass Housing and BlueCHP were successful in securing a contract with the Queensland Government in September 2014.

OPPORTUNITY ANALYSIS FOR COMMUNITY HOUSING MARKET IN QUEENSLAND
COMMUNITY HOUSING CLIENT

Urbis was engaged by a Tier 1 community housing provider to undertake a preliminary opportunity assessment to expand services across Queensland, primarily focussing on expanding the social and community housing portfolio. The primary objective of the initial analysis was to identify opportunities for the provider in the Queensland market with consideration of market gaps and opportunities for strategic partnerships, joint ventures, mergers and acquisitions with other housing providers or managers.

The project included a policy analysis, locational assessment to identify possible markets, competitor analysis, SWOT analysis of opportunities in terms of government and market priorities and alignment to the provider’s core experience and capability.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP ADVICE IN COMMUNITY HOUSING
4WALLS LTD

4walls Ltd, a Brisbane based community housing provider was undergoing significant organisational change and working to actively establishing a new partnership culture with the Board, staff and external stakeholders.

Urbis provided high level strategic advice regarding strategies to reset partnership arrangements, confirm desired outcomes from partnerships and identify key influencing partnerships to commit a focus to, over the following 12 months as the new organisational culture and service delivery model was embedded. It included confirming key messages acceptable to the Board and CEO and the preferred approach conveying the 4walls Ltd model and partnership expectations regarding future engagement.

MARKET SCOPING FOR SUNSHINE COAST
COMMUNITY HOUSING CLIENT

Urbis was engaged by a community housing provider to undertake high level scoping of the community housing and partnership opportunities in the Sunshine Coast region. This included development of a local community demographic profile; mapping and analysis of clusters of state government social housing; a scan of key housing and community service providers in the region; stakeholder discussions with local Councils, state government and potential partners; and analysis of potential market opportunities and threats.

COOPERS PLAINS REDEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
QUEENSLAND DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES (HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS)

Urbis’ Social Policy and Property Economics teams undertook market research for a redevelopment and sequencing strategy for a public housing estate at Coopers Plains. The study involved detailed economic analysis, market assessment, community profiling, and a social housing strategy for the proposed redevelopment recommending potential options for mix, product and market offer.

The social housing strategy provided guidance on the optimum mix of social/affordable housing for the overall development and strategies to successfully integrate the residents within the development. This involved demographic analysis, identification of key success factors for integrating social housing with private housing and provision of a high level strategy to support of social housing within the overall development.

Based on the property market analysis and the strategic social housing analysis, Urbis assessed a range of redevelopment options and made a recommendation to the Department of Communities on the preferred option.
OUR PROJECTS

DIVERSITY, CHOICE, AFFORDABILITY – A PREFERRED HOUSING FUTURE FOR THE TOOWOOMBA REGION (TOOWOOMBA REGIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY)

TOOWOOMBA REGIONAL COUNCIL

Urbis developed Diversity, Choice, Affordability: A Preferred Housing Future for Toowoomba Region as a strategy for Toowoomba Regional Council. The purpose was to determine the role Toowoomba Regional Council should play in ensuring the housing market in Toowoomba delivers on objectives of affordability, diversity and certainty, in the supply of housing for the projected demand in all sectors of the market. It included:

- Description of the current housing market in Toowoomba and surround towns and villages;
- Identification of issues influencing the delivery of housing in the future including the ageing demographic profile of Toowoomba and the impact on housing affordability in the future; and
- Consideration of the specific roles Council could play in the housing market Identification of key actions Council can undertake to maintain affordability and manage mismatches in housing demand and supply.

The Project was designed to deliver a housing strategy that is unique to Toowoomba, focuses on the specific needs of the individual communities within the region, and prioritises the actions and initiatives Council should undertake in the next 10 years.

SUNSHINE COAST AFFORDABLE HOUSING MATRIX

SUNSHINE COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL

Urbis was engaged by Sunshine Coast Regional Council to develop an Affordable Living Matrix to identify well designed, affordable and compact living forms in and around centres on the Sunshine Coast. This tool will enable Council to consider support for future development and/or redevelopment, stimulate growth in the region and facilitate the promotion of affordable living opportunities.

The matrix will support and achieve the outcomes identified in Council’s housing policies by quantifying the subjective and qualitative elements of affordable living. The purpose of the matrix is to measure the affordable urban outcomes of proposed future development for the region, which seeks to bolster the local economy and encourage development near centres. The tool will be used by Council at the Development Assessment stage of a project to determine the level of affordability for the development.

Indicators will include items such as price points, the dwelling type, access to infrastructure and inclusion of energy efficient design features. The matrix will be a scaled scoring system to determine if the proposal meets or does not meet the set criteria.

FACTORS AFFECTING HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

QUEENSLAND DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET

The Factors Affecting Housing Affordability Study was commissioned to provide the key background information and insights for Queensland’s inaugural Growth Summit in March 2010. The study investigated three core areas impacting housing affordability in South East Queensland:

- Dwelling development costs for both Greenfield and Infill developments
- Infrastructure Charges
- The land supply process in terms of depth of supply and development timing.

The study used Melbourne as a better practice example in comparison to South East Queensland and drew on town planning, property economics and valuation skills from both our Melbourne and Brisbane offices.

The Factors Affecting Housing Affordability Study was recognised by the Queensland Premier at the Growth Summit. Many of the recommendations identified in this report were utilised in the resultant Growth Study Action report.
The Queensland Department of Housing and Public Works commissioned Urbis to assess and report on the implementation of the Housing and Employment Program (HEP) – Ipswich Pilot within a very constrained timeframe with a requirement for a high level of one-to-one engagement with service users during a time which historically quite difficult to make contact (e.g. Christmas/New year). The project structure was driven by a limited budget and constrained timeframe and was required to inform Government decision making regarding the continuation of the pilot and the expansion of the program, as a pathway from social housing into the private market.

The intent of the evaluation was to determine the overall effectiveness of the program to date, in terms of policy design, service delivery and outcomes for clients. Specifically, the evaluation was required to consider the following:

- The effectiveness of the program in assisting people to access the private rental market and employment and training opportunities;
- Whether changes were necessary to the program to improve efficiency and/or client outcomes; and
- How the program should be delivered in the future, including consideration for expansion of the program.

The PSEL provides Department of Housing tenants with the chance to secure a home by purchasing a share of the social housing property that they currently occupy. Loans are restricted to Department of Housing tenants who are on higher incomes and are designed to help them transition into home ownership.

Urbis was engaged to assess and report on the implementation of the Pathways Shared Equity Loan (PSEL). This project evaluated the PSEL to determine how successful it has been in terms of client outcomes, effectiveness of service delivery, efficacy of communication and procedures in supporting uptake by suitable clients, and the usefulness of information in assisting potential clients to make decisions regarding home purchase.

The program was evaluated using program logic to assess whether the inputs were adequate to produce the outputs and if the outputs actually resulted in the desired outcomes. A range of qualitative data collection methods were employed, including phone interviews, case studies with clients and potential clients, focus groups with program staff and managers. Quantitative data collection included administrative data, program documentation, economic statistics.

RentConnect is a program to assist people on low to medium incomes who are eligible for social housing but unlikely to be allocated housing in the short term, to access the private rental market.

The RentConnect Advisory Service pilot commenced in Caboolture and Rockhampton in September 2008. Urbis completed the pilot evaluation prior to the successful expansion of the service to 12 additional sites across Queensland.

RentConnect is a program to assist people on low to medium incomes who are eligible for social housing but unlikely to be allocated housing in the short term, to access the private rental market.

The evaluation, conducted by Urbis Social Policy and Property Economics, included a review of available program data, reports and relevant literature, analysis of cost effectiveness and opportunity costs. Clients, community and referral agencies and real estate agents were interviewed to collect information about their experience of and perspectives on the program. Detailed client case studies were developed to highlight client and real estate agent experiences of the services. Outcomes informed a state-wide expansion of RentConnect across 12 sites.