



# **Australian Universities as Anchors-in-Place:** *A Yunus Centre Provocation*

# CONTENTS

Foreword by Professor Anne Tiernan

## **Part One: The Provocation**

Integrative Frameworks: Driving Impacts + Outcomes

Why Now?

## **Part Two: What are Anchor Models?**

Anchor Institutions

Anchor Missions

Anchor Collaboratives

Anchor Models and 'Place'

## **Part Three: Universities as Anchors**

Learning from Past Trajectories

Australian Universities as Anchors-in-Place

## **Part Four: Into Practice**

Practical Roles + Potential Outcomes

Research

Learning + Teaching

Active Collaboration with Community

Local Recruitment + Workforce Development

Procurement + Supply Chain

Place-based Impact Investment

Generation + Regeneration of Infrastructure + Healthy Environment

Growing Local Affordable Housing

## **The Yunus Centre Griffith University: Walking the Talk**

What We've Been Doing (2020)

Opportunities We're Exploring for 2021 + Beyond

What We're Learning

Conclusion

References

ISBN: 978-1-922361-07-3

Date: January 2021

Suggested citation:

"McNeill, J., Boorman, C. & Burkett, I. (2020). *Australian Universities as Anchors-in-Place: A Yunus Centre Provocation*. Brisbane, Australia: Griffith University"

Contact details:

Logan Campus, University Drive, Meadowbrook  
QLD 4131, Australia

Ph: +61 77 338 21453 | E: [yc@griffith.edu.au](mailto:yc@griffith.edu.au)

# Foreword



If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it is that the solutions to the problems that we face as individuals, communities and places, nations and a global community won't be found in silos. Instead, the information, expertise, skills and resources needed to overcome inequality and build resilience and anti-fragility to complex, interdependent challenges that impact us all, but especially the most vulnerable, will be found in networks, spanning different tiers of government, industry and the community.

This will place a premium on collaboration, resource and power sharing, because the scale and complexity of the task of recovery and regeneration from the pandemic, and of preparing for and mitigating against other threats, demands it. During the crisis we are seeing how people, motivated by clear and shared purpose, found ways of overcoming boundaries and silos that inhibit collaboration and worked together for better outcomes.

We are seeing too the importance of context, of local knowledge and lived experience; and of responsiveness to issues as they manifest for a specific cohort, or in a particular place. But collective action needs to be coordinated and connected with channels of capability, data, information and resources across sectoral and organisational boundaries towards shared priorities.

For too long, this has been seen as the task for governments and policy-makers and yet, in so many communities and places, Anchor Institutions have significant capacity and potential to drive opportunity and serve as platforms for aggregating and mobilising collective action.

This important provocation from the Yunus Centre outlines the special responsibility that Universities have, as major players in the economic and social fabric of the communities and places of which they are part, to create opportunity and drive inclusive growth strategies. It details practical strategies that all Australian universities could embrace right now as they renew their commitment to the civic engagement missions that animated their founding.

The paper also details commitments that Griffith University has made as part of its *Creating a Future for All Strategic Plan 2020-25*. I encourage leaders of all large organisations to contemplate their capacity and potential to contribute to prosperity and inclusion for all Australians, including and importantly at the place level.

Professor Anne Tiernan  
Dean (Engagement)  
Griffith Business School

January 2021

# Part One: The Provocation

Universities around the world are facing unprecedented changes in funding and policy support; technological advances that will change and challenge established teaching, learning and research models; and increased competition and other business model disruptions. Most universities are still, however, grounded in place, embedded physically and culturally in localities, and have staff, students, assets and infrastructure that will maintain their historical and physical connection to communities and regions.

Through this provocation we aim to stimulate dialogue and action with and through Australia's university sector, towards increasing and strengthening engagement with Anchor Institution approaches, 'missions', and Collaboratives.

We will argue that a provocation to strengthen engagement with Anchor models is timely and particularly relevant to the operating climate that will characterise the 2020s. Central to this positioning are the opportunities Anchor models offer for furthering core business whilst also intentionally prioritising societal wellbeing, through just and sustainable development. Importantly, Anchor models facilitate working with and through the communities in which universities are located, by aligning and focusing business-as-usual efforts on positive change that is embedded and locally meaningful.

In this provocation we deepen and extend on this positioning – arguing that Anchor missions and models offer integrative frameworks that can facilitate engaging with and supporting local, national and global priorities and scales. We term this a **'nested' framing**, and in the sections below outline how this can be useful for universities interested in strengthening and deepening their impact, whilst also meeting their core business responsibilities.

## Integrative Frameworks: Driving Impacts and Outcomes

At the global level, universities are beginning to align their goals and objectives, either formally or informally, with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and there are some inspiring examples emerging, of how the SDGs can be used to structure impact reporting. In Australia, for example, Western Sydney University's 2020 *Just Sustainability Report* saw it ranked third by the new global Times Higher Education (THE) University Impact Ranking. Internationally, the University of Manchester's comprehensive performance report against each of the 17 Goals provides another useful touch-point<sup>1</sup>. And in early 2017 Glasgow Caledonian University became the first university to adopt the SDGs as the guiding framework for its research strategy (Roy et al., 2020).

As these examples begin to illustrate, the SDGs are a framework that can scaffold proactive and deliberate transformational agendas, in ways that resonate with the civic-mission orientation of universities and which also position them as one actor within a broader ecosystem of change (Purcell et al., 2019, p.1344-45). How these high-level commitments translate into practice however, will perhaps be clearest where they connect in place. Through a grounding in place, Anchor models can strengthen the coherence of 'intentionality statements' (such as vision statements and strategic planning documents), and also deepen implementation efforts.

We argue, and outline further below, that whilst under-utilised in the Australian context, Anchor models generate practical frameworks for demonstrating these connections (Goddard, 2019) and their impacts. By aligning SDG commitments with community-engaged and place-based Anchor missions, a framework

1 See: <https://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/social-responsibility/sdgs>

capable of integrating globally-relevant and locally-nuanced impact goals and progress indicators can be developed. We suggest this approach has strong potential for elevating the contribution of universities to local and national objectives, and to global trajectories, whilst also improving organisational performance against stated goals and priorities.

Critically, Anchor models facilitate bottom-up growth of community wealth and are by design inclusive and generative, expanding and strengthening economic participation across multiple dimensions. They are the direct opposite of decoupled ‘place-less’ strategies and through their embeddedness create conditions that can make system transformations possible. As such they offer opportunities for transcending the limitations inherent in top-down, single-focus (or siloed) approaches to tackling issues and the framing of places in terms of ‘deficits’. Importantly in a resource-constrained climate, they can also be designed to be compatible with and complementary to existing investment and core business commitments.

At a regional level, Anchor models can strengthen ties within and between places through deepening and thickening connections and interdependence. Relationship ‘thickness’ and leveraging local strengths is known to boost flexibility and adaptability (Rodriguez-Pose & Wilkie, 2017). This in turn strengthens community capacities to weather and emerge from the types of social, economic and environmental shocks many around the globe have been living with in recent times - such as the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters like bushfires and droughts, and also financial crises.

## Why now?

Recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic will demand “...the most ambitious fiscal rescue of modern times” (The Economist, March 2020). This imperative highlights that innovative approaches will be needed to overcome the pull of ‘business-as-usual’ and to navigate the complex inter-relationships between the many issues that will compete for attention and resources in establishing any ‘new normal’. We know already, for example, that many communities are facing complex local economic development challenges – including issues of long-term unemployment and under-investment in vital infrastructure - and that responding to these challenges at a place-level will be compounded by other issues, such as depleted capacities within enabling ecosystems.

If we are to shape economies fit to meet the demands and aspirations of the 21st Century, the full range of available actors will need to be engaged in unlocking new capacities and forms of productivity - whilst also fostering equity in prosperity, improvements in wellbeing, and stewardship of the natural environment. In this climate, many organisations are reinventing themselves and some sectors are seeking new and different approaches to servicing the needs they are designed to meet.

For the university sector, **right now** there is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to champion and shape trajectories towards more just and sustainable futures. With civic-benefit at their core, and underpinned by substantial asset and investment portfolios, the mixture of research, learning, and engagement activities universities can offer make them uniquely placed to champion and facilitate regenerative approaches to (re)building local economies and communities.



# Part Two: What are Anchor Models?

Anchor models include Anchor Institutions, Anchor Missions and Anchor Collaboratives. Each of these different Anchor configurations is outlined below.

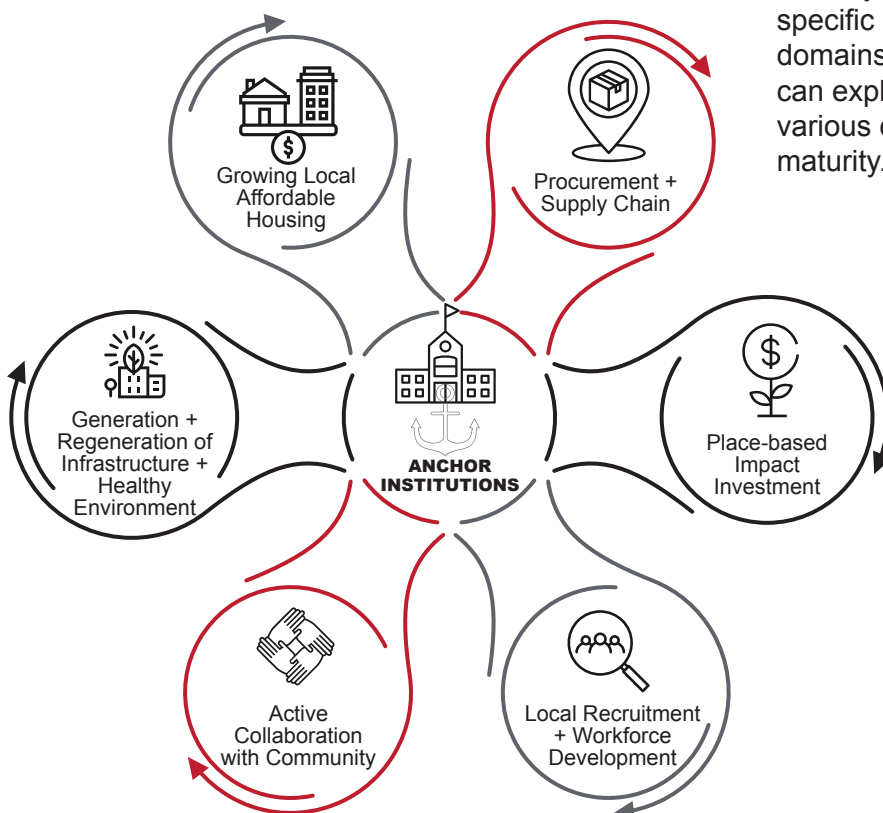
## Anchor Institutions

Anchor Institutions are large organisations characterised by a mission or purpose that is tightly connected to and strongly grounded in the current and future wellbeing of a specified place – whether a suburb, town, city, or region. At least in part, this connection is forged through the infrastructure and asset portfolios of Anchor Institutions, which typically require them to be committed to that place for the long term (Smallbone, Kitching & Blackburn, 2015).

*“Anchor institutions are a form of ‘sticky capital’ in that they are unlikely to close down or relocate from their community.” (Tiernan, 2019)*

Types of organisations that can and do play Anchor Institution roles within different scales of ‘place’ include: universities; hospitals; local government; community housing providers; community foundations; sports teams; community colleges; arts and cultural organisations; and other locally-based businesses, enterprises, and cooperatives<sup>2</sup>. In addition to significant asset and infrastructure portfolios, Anchor Institutions are often amongst the largest employers and spenders in a place.

When Anchor Institutions align their resources and strategies to benefit the communities in which they are anchored, the potential community impacts and societal outcomes are significant (and are discussed further below). Initially, collecting and analysing local data is key to generating alignment between place-based objectives and the delivery of core services. Figure 1 shows six specific and already-existing strategic activity domains through which Anchor Institutions can explore and implement initiatives, in various combinations and at different stages of maturity.



**Figure 1: Six strategic activity domains through which Anchor Institutions can support the places and communities in which they operate (drawing on personal communications with Julia Slay, 2019)**

<sup>2</sup> Whilst rarely Anchor Institutions in and of themselves, in Australia (and elsewhere), State and Commonwealth government departments and entities can also contribute to Anchor strategies through supporting policies, initiatives, and activities generated by and through local actors.

## Anchor Missions

*“An anchor mission is the process of deliberately deploying the institution’s long-term, place-based economic power to strengthen a local community, especially neighbourhoods where people facing historic and other barriers to economic opportunity live”. (Dragicevic, 2015)*

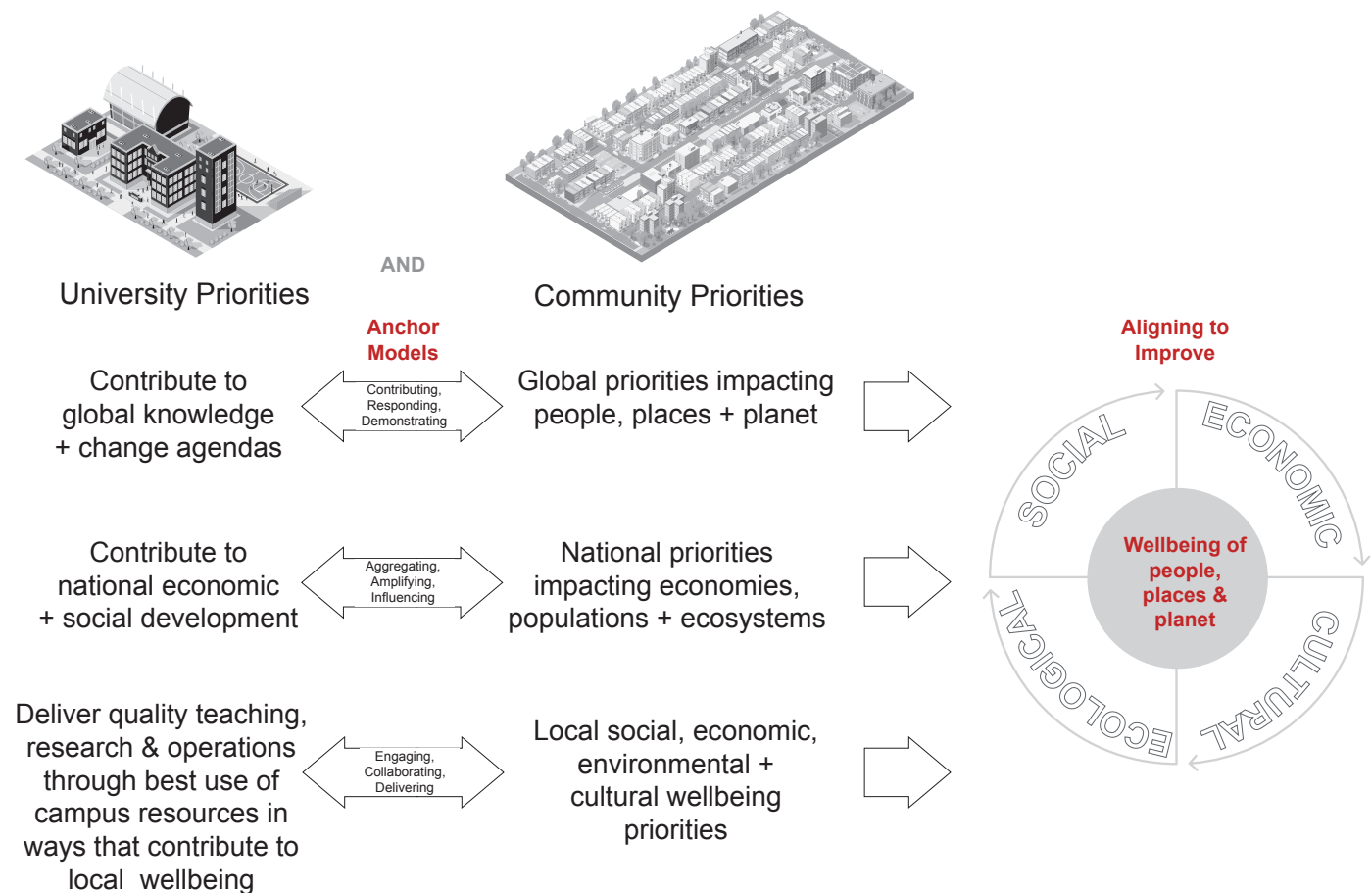
When an Anchor Institution commits to generating and contributing to specific place-based impacts and outcomes, it can be characterised as having adopted an anchor mission. Anchor missions articulate the integrated and aligned endeavours an Anchor Institution is committing to, in order to contribute to collaborative efforts and resolve issues in ways that will benefit its identified place.

We argue that one of the greatest potentials offered by Anchor models is their capacity to support nested missions and related strategies. By this we mean they offer an integrative framework that can structure place-based commitments at different scales of engagement and activity. For universities, some benefits

associated with these different scales of integration are outlined below and in Figure 2:

- At a **local level** they offer a language through which civic-benefit aspirations can be articulated and communicated clearly, along with a framework for designing impact objectives and approaches to monitoring
- At a **national level** they provide a framework through which roles in fostering just and sustainable economic and social development with communities and regions can be made more coherent and visible
- At a **global level** they can be aligned with collective impact agendas, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>3</sup>, to make commitments and contributions clearer

Like the often-cited ‘Moonshot’ mission, effective Anchor missions revolve around the collaborative efforts of interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral actors being harnessed towards achieving a shared outcome.



**Figure 2: Potential benefits for universities associated with different scales of integration around anchor missions**

<sup>3</sup> As many universities are increasingly doing formally and informally.

Progress is often monitored, measured and reported publicly to demonstrate local impact and accountability. We suggest that this transparency principle is central to unlocking the potential of Anchor missions, as it facilitates a dynamic orientation where adjustments can be made in response to shifts in the operating context, under-performance on targets, and/or opportunities to innovate that may arise.

## Anchor Collaboratives

As Anchor Institution initiatives have matured, some are now turning their attention to amplifying their impact through collaborative approaches that harness the efforts of multiple organisations around a specific Anchor mission or missions within a defined place. Such networks of Anchor Institutions are referred to as Anchor Collaboratives.

Anchor Collaboratives provide a structure through which Anchor Institutions can align their collective resources to benefit the place they are anchored in, usually through formalised alliances and strategies (Porter et al., 2019). These models offer organising frameworks through which to identify mutual interests, govern relationships, and coordinate initiatives undertaken with other key place-actors. As a result of this intentional partnering, Anchor Collaboratives multiply the impact of individual Anchor Institutions by harnessing the existing and collective resources of the group.

The multiple and intersecting ways in which Anchor Collaboratives can use their resources across all six strategic activity domains (as shown in Figure 1) is increasingly recognised as illustrated through the examples below

(see box below and boxes in Part Four). The configuration of Collaboratives, including the number and range of organisations involved, and the scope of their shared ambitions, varies from place to place, as relevant and appropriate to that context.

## Anchor models and ‘place’

As identified through the above discussion, in theory and in practice the concept of ‘place’ is central to Anchor models. More than a location on a map, ‘places’ are characterised by their ‘lived experience’ geographic boundaries, physical qualities (e.g. housing stock, green spaces), local services (e.g. industry, health) and by the shared perceptions, myths and stories that locals and others have about the place (Great Places Commission, 2018). At both micro and macro levels places are the sites at which social, economic, environmental, cultural and political variables intersect in tangible ways to directly impact the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.

Governments, along with philanthropic, for-profit and for-purpose organisations, are investing in approaches that aim to improve place-level wellbeing (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2018). This type of investment strategy is intended to benefit local residents, whilst boosting industry productivity and mitigating the societal costs of persistent and entrenched disadvantage. The value of place-based investment in addressing disadvantage is evidenced in the Nobel Prize winning work of Banerjee, Duflo & Kremer, which breaks complex issues into small research questions and investigates them within specific contexts<sup>4</sup>.

### Cleveland’s Greater University Circle Initiative, Ohio USA

For well over ten years now, Cleveland’s Greater University Circle Initiative (CGUCI) has been coordinating across three key Anchor Institutions – Cleveland Clinic, University Hospitals, and Case Western Reserve University.

Cleveland Clinic and University Hospitals are the number one and two employers in the region, and Case Western Reserve

University is a major educational and research institution. In 2016, together they employed more than 60,000 people; spent almost \$3 billion in goods and services annually; and had benefited from some of \$500 million in venture capital invested in biotech and healthcare in the first half of 2015 alone.

The seven neighbourhoods which surround these Anchor institutions include some of the poorest in the city. Every day, 40 000 people were driving into

the area to work, to visit, and to shop. Recognising opportunities to strengthen the contributions Anchor Institutions made within their local communities, the CGUCI was established to improve the prospects and income of the 60,000 people who live in the area. It ‘seeks to reweave community networks, in part through community engagement, to improve the quality of life in surrounding neighbourhoods, and to give residents a greater voice and connection to the resources of the Anchor Institutions’.

4 For more information see: <https://www.nobelprize.org/uploads/2019/10/popular-economicsciencesprize2019.pdf>



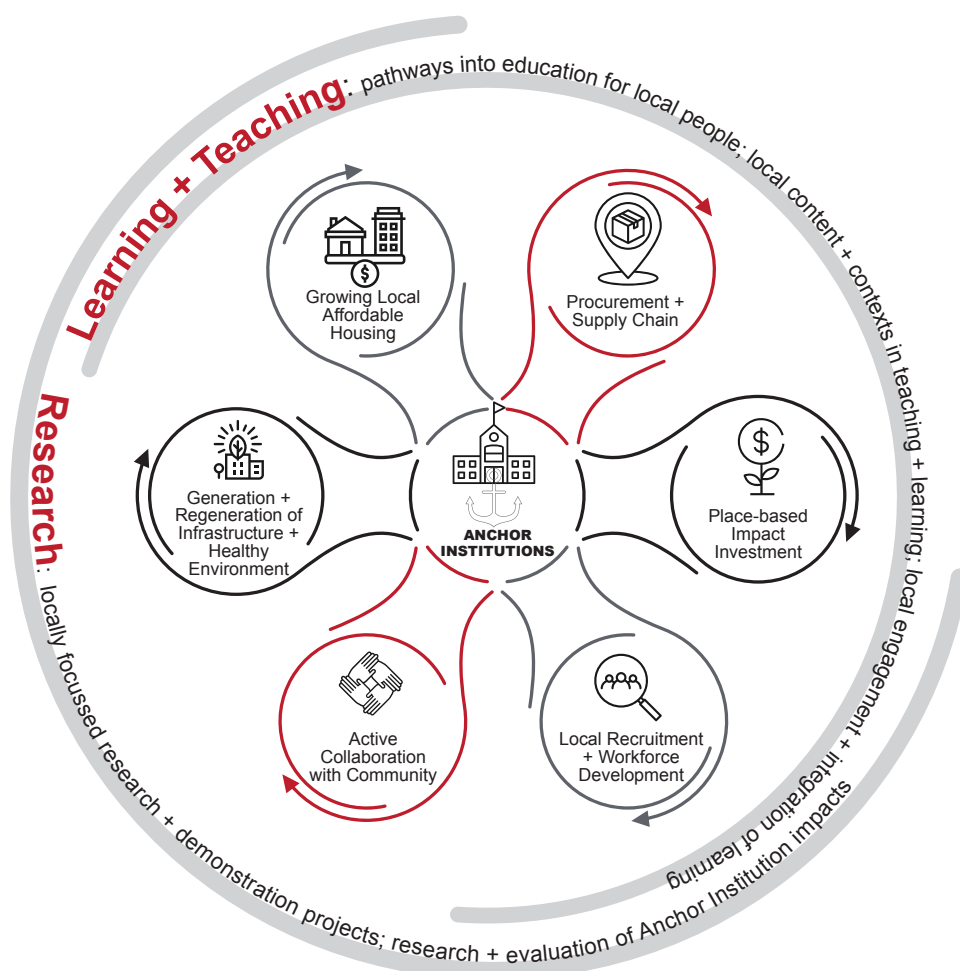
# Part Three: Universities as Anchors

Around the world engagement with Anchor models responds (at least in part) to concerns with how traditional approaches to economic development have become decoupled from notions of stewardship and an ethic of care for places and their communities (for example, the Amazon HQ2 ‘frenzy’ surfaced valuable lessons - see <https://bit.ly/2LK1ZdA> for a critique and lessons learnt from this process). These concerns are becoming powerful drivers for developing deeper and more nuanced forms of development that focus contributions towards just and sustainable local, national and global regeneration priorities.

Universities deliver their core business through a unique combination of teaching, research, procurement, asset management,

and recruitment processes. However, these functions often operate quite independently, and so opportunities to leverage their amplification potential in support of local labour market and economic development agendas can be overshadowed by daily-level priorities.

As depicted in Figure 3, universities have two additional domains of strategic activity - research and learning and teaching - which complement the six domains described above - and which could be amplified through the application of integrative Anchor model frameworks. The domains outlined show where resources can be directed to generate flows into place-based communities; and provide a framework for negotiating contributions with like-minded partners, and



*“Every jurisdiction should be asking the question about the extent to which the expenditure of anchor institutions is socially responsible and beneficial in addressing local community development. Who currently benefits from such expenditure? Is it helping address disadvantage? Does it support small businesses employing local people? Is it supporting environmentally sustainable practices? Councils and anchor institutions can take unilateral action to ask and address these questions in support of local economic development, without waiting for state or federal governments to lead”.*

Fensham 2020, p.26

**Figure 3: Two universities-specific activity domains added to the six strategic activity domains through which Anchor Institutions can support the places and communities in which they operate**

for improving coherence amongst priorities and initiatives at the local level.

Before exploring each activity domain further, we firstly provide some historical context for the emerging interest in Anchor models, which also provide insights into foundations on which future activity can be built.

## Learning from past trajectories

As with much innovation activity, 'Anchor-like' practices are not new. The trajectories towards current conceptualisations and practices have long tails, and we identify important early influences in the Australian universities sector as including the civic mission and service-learning agendas prominent in the late 1990s-early 2000s. Other common themes noted by the then Australian Consortium for Higher Education, Community Engagement and Social Responsibility (Sunderland et al., 2004) which continue to have relevance include:

- a focus on regionalisation, equity and participation;
- pressure to attract diverse investment in the face of declining government resourcing and to improve responsiveness to the needs of partners;
- mounting government and community expectations that universities contribute more fully to economic growth, competition, the knowledge economy, and civil society; and
- trends towards more applied, transdisciplinary, problem-focused, networked, and entrepreneurial scholarship.

Some practical legacies from these earlier endeavours are evident in current activities. For example, internationally successful Anchor models continue to reflect the earlier focus on civic mission. The University of Pennsylvania's Compact is a regularly updated plan designed to motivate innovation, radical inclusion and the creation of positive impact in local, national and global communities. It offers a useful example of the potential of Anchor models in the university context<sup>6</sup>. Service-learning trajectories are also evident, such as California State University's Office of Service Learning which connects teaching, learning and community service via student, faculty and community collaborations advancing diversity and social justice<sup>7</sup>.

In Australia, related activity is still evident in Work Integrated Learning (WIL) programs, Community Internship initiatives, On-campus Community Clinics, University Hospitals and other community-facing initiatives. However, at a broader level engagement with Anchor-like models has varied over time, reflecting changes to and differences in place-focused policy positionings (CEDA, 2019).

Through our work we are now seeing increasing, if still nascent, interest in the number and effectiveness of Anchor models developing elsewhere emerging here in Australia. We suggest it is useful to position this growing interest in relation to earlier trajectories, so as to ensure learning from that time informs the design of Anchor models as they are manifesting today. A distillation of relevant learnings highlighted by Garlick (2003) includes:

- effectively realising local social, economic, cultural and environmental benefits requires deliberate, resourced, embedded and unified strategies across the university, as well as processes to monitor and adjust activities in response to evidence as it emerges;
- achieving local transformations requires partnering strategies and engagement practices that are sufficiently robust to endure over the long-term, and flexible enough to adapt to changes in local and policy contexts over time;
- effective partnering is a skill which can be enhanced through deliberate capability development strategies, involving both university and community participants;
- universities need to clearly articulate and demonstrate the actual and potential value they bring to supporting the improvement of local community futures;
- inspiring missions need to drive practical and tangible action within and across institutions within national policy frameworks and contexts.

We argue that, building on these trajectories, at this juncture there is a significant opportunity to move beyond implicit and informal ('Anchor-like') approaches towards much more explicit models. Explicit models are grounded in a deep engagement with and understanding of

6 See: <https://president.upenn.edu/penn-compact>

7 See: <https://www.calstatela.edu/engagement/osl>

place and the roles of 'place-actors'. Improving understanding of where and how Australian universities fit within this framing will be central to realising the potential of Anchor models with and through the sector.

## Australian Universities as Anchors-in-Place

Australia is moving towards evaluating universities not only on their research and teaching outputs, but also on their impact (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2020). For example, today most universities have clear 'engaged local partner' objectives, particularly around addressing local issues and driving innovation; and 'community engagement' has once again become a growing area of practice and activity, with much investment in related initiatives (see for example Tiernan, 2019). Universities also often publicly express great pride in their 'deep roots' in the communities in which they are located. These influences and trends, combined with the civic-mission and service-learning orientations outlined above, mean the current operating context of Australian universities is closely aligned with the place-based ethos that underpins Anchor models.

Australia is a highly urbanised nation characterised by a rich diversity amongst its 'places' and the institutions located within them. Regional universities and campuses are often recognised for their potential to develop context-specific curricula, research agendas, procurement initiatives, and recruitment strategies – in ways that are responsive to local needs and opportunities, and that are enabled by geographic proximity and temporal responsiveness (Nous Group & Centre of Policy Studies, 2020). For Australia's largest universities however, being 'anchored' to the metropolitan communities in which they are located may seem a more tenuous concept, and one that could be overshadowed by pressures to align with global agendas, appeal to international investors, and to attract highly mobile student cohorts.

Despite this, globally there are examples of large metropolitan universities investing in Anchor models that have successfully:

- increased accessibility to potential innovation partners and investors (e.g. University of California);
- supported development of large scale 'Eds & Meds' precincts around city campuses (Gold Coast Health and Knowledge Precinct); and

- improved access to safe and accessible accommodation for staff and students (e.g. Cleveland University).

As universities negotiate the constraints resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, Anchor models provide exciting opportunities to leverage existing and diverse resources in ways which:

- deliver core business whilst also contributing to improving local wellbeing - through reflecting local priorities, and acknowledging systemic complexities at different scales;
- align strategies with 'nested' scales of impact (local, national, global) across both academic and professional activity domains;
- amplify impacts by aligning efforts with those of other key actors;
- potentially share some aspects of cost and risk with partners;
- demonstrate their societal value through publicly accessible and ongoing reporting of impacts – improving visibility and building trust amongst key audiences.

We argue that universities do not just operate in place (where place is effectively considered to be an externality), rather, that they are **of** place and therefore have both moral obligations and pragmatic opportunities to grow a shared and mutual sense of prosperity and wellbeing within the places of their belonging.



In 2018 the six largest regional universities in Australia

contributed

**\$2.4billion**

to REAL GDP

and created

**11,300 jobs**

in Regional Australia

Nous Group & Centre of Policy Studies (2020). The economic impact of the Regional Universities Network. Report prepared for the Regional Universities Network

# Part Four: Into Practice

As outlined above, universities are in many ways obvious Anchor actors as they have alignment on civic mission, a direct interest in the socio-economic health of the places in which they are located, represent significant market making potential, offer often substantial physical assets, and also have considerable balance sheet capacity.

In the current context, when regenerative approaches to COVID-19 recovery are sorely needed, and whilst many regions face significant and ongoing impacts from climatic events, there is an opportunity to unlock this potential. There may also be a tendency to jump to solutions, particularly those that seem to offer a quick-fix to pressing needs, and therefore a framework that steers focus to longer-term outcomes will be a useful tool.

Australia's Anchor movement could further mitigate this risk by learning from the work of the Democracy Collaborative in the US, which has been supporting the uptake of Anchor models since 2017. Working closely with its university partners, a dashboard approach that includes a metrics framework, baseline data collection, and documentation of the implementation journey has been developed and refined and could be a starting point for developing Australian specific tools and materials.

Table 1 provides a summary of the high-level institutional impact measures that have been developed as part of the dashboard project (Sladek 2017, p.55). As discussed above, the 'desired outcomes' the indicators are designed to monitor could also be aligned with the SDGs, to link Anchor activity to the global collaborative project.

The indicators are also aligned strongly with the strategic activity domains outlined in Figure 3 and provide an example of how they can be operationalised in university contexts. In the sections below, using the Anchor Institution activity domains set out in Figure 3, we provide examples of practical strategies and some potential outcomes for universities that could be generated through strategic engagement with Anchor models.

## Practical roles and potential outcomes

### *Research*

The research capacity and interests of universities, their staff, and their students can contribute to Anchor initiatives across several dimensions. Research expertise and activity that focuses on local social, economic, and/or environmental issues and opportunities can position and shape the nature and agreed objectives of Anchor models developed by universities and their partners. Research initiatives - at different scales and across different time horizons - also have the potential to support and advance efforts related to each of the strategic activity domains. Anchor models naturally lend themselves to the collaborative and cross-disciplinary research that often supports innovative outcomes. Universities are also well-placed to make much-needed contributions to advancing the understanding of how Anchor models deliver on their stated objectives through robust evaluative research.

### *Learning + Teaching*

Establishing learning and teaching specialisations that build skills and knowledge around locally relevant social, economic and environmental priorities, and ensuring practical pathways for local citizens to engage with these offerings at all levels of curriculum are key options available to universities. For students, a university engaged in active collaboration with its communities provides richer, more contextually relevant opportunities for grounded and applied learning, and opportunities to tap into local research agendas and organisations to inform and enrich endeavours in mutually beneficial ways. Local collaborations also generate more meaningful and productive experiences for students, around participating in professional networks and establishing employment pathways.



Issue Area	Desired Outcome	Indicators of Institutional Effort
Anchor Mission Alignment	Engaged Anchor Institution	Anchor mission articulated in stratic plan, reflected in structure of institution (eg. community engagement lead staff of cabinet rank)
Economic Development	Equitable Local + Minority Employment	Hire local policy Indirect local and minority employment policies through contracting requirements
	Thriving Local + Minority Business Community	Buy local policy Diversity supply policy University business incubator programs + small business technical assistance
	Housing Affordability	Programs and/or partnerships with local community development corporations (or other partners) to achieve housing affordability objectives
	Vibrant Arts + Community Development	Operating funds spent on arts and culture-based economic development
	Sound Community Investment	Policy to invest in local community
	Stable + Effective Local Partners	Policy metrics: partnership centre, community advisory board
Community Building	Financially Secure Households	University policy to support financial capacity building
Education	Educated Youth	Development of mentorship program, policies to link School of Education and /or students to local public schools, professional development, teacher education
Health, Safety & Environment	Safe Streets + Campuses	Community policing policy for union police force Partnerships with special service districts, block clubs, commit to pay for cleanup of student trash
	Healthy Community Residents	University policies to create clinics or wellness hub Community health outreach programs
	Healthy Environment	University / community sustainability plan Community access to university expertise

**Table 1: Summary of the high-level institutional impact measures developed as part of the dashboard project by The Democracy Collaborative (based on Sladek 2017, p.55)**



### **Active Collaboration with Community**

Perhaps most exciting amongst the potential benefits of Anchor models is proactively aligning 'core business' interests and objectives with place-based issues and opportunities identified through active collaboration with community members, organisations, and initiatives. These collaborations can open up channels for tapping into community knowledge and data which can be used to inform strategic, curricula, and research planning. They are also potential drivers for partnership responses to regional and community development in ways that address locally identified social, economic, environmental and/or cultural priorities. More targeted collaboration with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other priority cohorts can also help universities co-design strategies to advance equity agendas; including through local procurement commitments, and by growing employment and enrolment outcomes.

In Preston in the UK, a group of Anchor Institutions have adopted a 'guerilla localism' approach, intentionally growing local businesses and keeping spend value close to home. However, decades of traditional procurement practices had hollowed out the local economy, so a key strategy initially was to break large contracts into smaller packages, so that local businesses could compete and build capacity over time. Signs that what is now referred to as The Preston Model is beginning have a substantial social impact include that Preston had the joint-second biggest improvement in its position on the UK's multiple deprivation index between 2010 and 2015, and in 2016 was voted the best city in north-west England to live and work (<https://bit.ly/3bYHPFC> and <https://bit.ly/33AJ4a4>)

In Washington DC over 100 Anchor institutions have joined a purchasing co-op in order to ensure that their spend helps to generate local, equitable economic development. In 2018 they purchased \$16.7million in goods and services through this co-op with almost \$10m going to minority owned businesses ([www.cpa.coop](http://www.cpa.coop)).

### **Local Recruitment + Workforce Development**

Universities are often significant employers and can make important contributions to local workforce development agendas by identifying current and future workforce requirements across university job profiles. Pathways for local community members into these roles can be fostered through collaborating with local schools, training organisations, and allied industry bodies around developing relevant capabilities. In addition to bolstering local employment, recruiting locally is also likely to improve sustained access to skills required by universities, deliver reputational benefits, and support development of a workforce profile which better reflects the local community – leading to improved student and community engagement more generally.

### **Procurement + Supply Chain**

The expenditure of universities and similar institutions in Australia is around A\$37bn per annum according to TEQSA (2018). Despite reduced international demand and other financial impacts related to the pandemic, individually and potentially as Anchor Collaboratives, universities continue to have the capacity and expertise needed to facilitate effective local and regional partnerships and investment. Procurement and supply chain initiatives are increasingly recognised as investment approaches that offer practical mechanisms for generating increased and stronger outcomes using existing budgets. They can also be designed to intentionally foster and stimulate specific market segments such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses, social enterprises, and other local and regional producers.

### **Place-based Impact Investment**

Through highlighting so-called 'post-code' effects, recent and historical research confirms the impact places have on wellbeing (Vinson et al., 2015; Turner, 2018; Curtis & Congdon, 2019); that the effects persist over time (Vinson et al., 2015; CEDA, 2019); despite mounting investment (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2018); and are proven to be independent of other demographic indicators related to the people who live in those communities (Curtis & Congdon, 2019). Improving wellbeing

in high-needs places via targeted, locally-informed impact investment strategies could deliver local benefits which also contribute to broader productivity and wellbeing gains (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2018). Anchor models offer frameworks for developing strategic partnerships with local and regional industry bodies, like Local Investment Corporations, and with external investors to target and/or align investment strategies in ways which address shared local priorities, maximise local impacts and advance strategic objectives.

### ***Generation + Regeneration of Infrastructure + Healthy Environment***

Through Anchor models physical spaces can be transformed into transdisciplinary practice-labs, where practical and theoretical expertise can work together, to enhance cross-disciplinary learning and impacts. Depending on community needs and university capacities, Anchor strategies can initiate improved community access to physical infrastructure by 'opening up' use of green spaces, recreational facilities, meeting and teaching spaces and resources such as libraries, data hubs and computer labs to support local organising, start-ups and initiatives. Such endeavours can deliver stabilising effects for the institutional operating environment, transdisciplinary opportunities, and reputational benefits for the university.

### ***Growing Local Affordable Housing***

Providing affordable, safe and accessible housing for students and staff is a priority for many universities. Low levels of affordable housing can also impact local communities more broadly. Ensuring affordable housing options are available for key workers close to their places of employment is an important strategy for combatting the social issues that arise through long commute times and 'dormitory suburbs'. Regional or 'satellite city' Anchor institutions have potential to take up key roles in stimulating investment into local affordable housing options (Pill et al. 2020, p.3).

Universities have a range of resources and capacities which can be deployed to grow local affordable housing stocks, and when coupled with clear outcome goals can be configured to meet diverse community and student housing needs.

Some mechanisms available include:

- commitment of real estate holdings (land and buildings);

- development of employer-assisted housing programs;
- organisation of student volunteer labour;
- establishing grant programs and other investment strategies (Penn Institute for Urban Research, 2009); and
- provision of relevant technical knowledge, research, and evaluation capacity to inform broader development priorities and methods.

### **Rutgers University, Newark USA**

Rutgers' vision statement is to be a national leader in 21st century higher education, and its Anchor Institution role is a key strategic commitment in service of achieving this. The university's strategic plan Where Opportunity Meets Excellence elaborates on this, identifying five key areas of focus for its Anchor Institution agenda. Each of these activity domains includes tangible initiatives and activities, at various stages of development, that demonstrate how Anchor ambitions can be translated into practice in the university context. The headline elements of the Rutgers' approach are:

• Urban Economic Development & Equitable Growth – Centre for Urban Entrepreneurship & Economic Development; Centre on Law, Inequality & Metropolitan Equity; Newark 2020; Public Private Community Partnership Program; Rutgers Advanced Institute for the Study of Entrepreneurship & Development

• Education – Newark City of Learning Collaborative; Rutgers University – Newark Talent & Opportunity Pathways; Honors Living-Learning Community; Inclusive STEM Summer Programs; Garden State Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation Program; Diversity at Rutgers University

• Arts & Culture – Express Newark; Newest Americans; Humanities Action Lab; Institute of Jazz Studies; Paul Robeson Galleries

• Strong, Safe & Healthy Neighborhoods – Newark Public Safety; Aging & Brain Health Alliance; Rutgers Law School, Newark Legal Clinics; Office of University-Community Partnerships

• Science in the Public Interest – Addressing urban food deserts; Urban marshes and combatting climate change; Algorithmic Justice initiative; Urban bird habitats; Benasich lab

**The University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC)** Master Plan infrastructure initiative sought to make UTSC the intellectual, cultural and employment hub of the region through increased community participation in the development process.

Construction was projected to create 2,500 full-time equivalent jobs with salaries of nearly \$228 million from 2012 to 2019, the potential economic benefits for local residents - who on average experience greater unemployment than other GTA residents - were significant. The Master Plan's community-building focus led to development of several Anchor strategies at UTSC:

- In new buildings, which are not subject to existing contracts with food service providers, the university first offers smaller vendors a chance to set up shop. The vendors then hire from the local community and student body.
- The Hammerheads program - an initiative that gives at-risk youth a 16-week intensive experience in construction and trades with a guaranteed job placement upon graduation. Early positive responses led to consideration of having the program become a contractual requirement for all future construction projects.
- Together with the East Scarborough Storefront (The Storefront), a community organization that UTSC has partnered with on various training and learning programs, the university scoped a workforce development program to connect local residents with skills and interest in construction, with job opportunities at UTSC (adapted from Dragicevic, 2015).

## **The Yunus Centre Griffith University: walking the talk**

The Yunus Centre is an innovation centre, established in 2019, located on the Logan Campus of Griffith University. We use action research, demonstration projects, and other learning offerings to deliver on our core goals. We are committed to ensuring our work reflects and integrates these priorities and methods. As such, our approach is experimental and iterative, and we intentionally seek to evolve both how we work and the impact goals we aim to contribute to on an ongoing basis. Part of this is framing ourselves, and behaving as, a small Anchor Institution based within the Logan community.

The activities and initiatives outlined in Figure 4 below provide an indication of where our efforts have been directed to date (largely within the COVID-19 context), and in Figure 5 we outline some aspirations we are developing for the immediate future. Whilst these are not unique to the Yunus Centre or indeed to Griffith University (many universities will be involved in similar strands of activity, in different combinations), what we are aiming to demonstrate by including this section is how using Anchor model language and framing allows us to convey what may otherwise appear as disparate strands to our work as integrated elements designed to contribute to our overarching goals. We suggest this begins to shift the narrative towards a focus on impact and outcomes, and so to how we can contribute to building more just and sustainable communities. In this we are experimenting with 'walking the talk'!

## What we have been doing (2020):



### Anchor Mission

Moving towards a mission-oriented strategy which embeds our focus on contributing to wellbeing in Logan through integrated Anchor Institution initiatives across all of our work.

#### Undertaking research to -

- strengthen the impact capacity of local organisations and place-based initiatives;
- grow local knowledge and practice about Anchor Institutions, innovation and regeneration;
- help strengthen and evolve the local innovation ecosystem;
- employ migrants and refugees from the Logan area to research and co-design employment pathways for local refugees; and
- identify data sets to inform decision-making about positioning Griffith's Logan Campus as an Anchor Institution.



Research



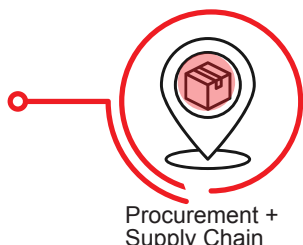
Learning + Teaching

#### Growing learning and teaching in and around Logan through -

- local entrepreneurship seminars and site visits;
- supporting learning through a program that is growing entrepreneurship activity amongst vulnerable older women; and
- delivering an Impact-led Work Integrated Learning (WIL) program for students, working with Logan-based impact organisations.

#### We are -

- engaging local suppliers, social entrepreneurs and makers wherever possible when purchasing products and services (e.g. in renovating and fitting out The Yunus Centre offices); and
- supporting Griffith University to include local social enterprises as suppliers for Logan Campus-related procurement opportunities.



Procurement + Supply Chain



Local Recruitment + Workforce Development

#### We are -

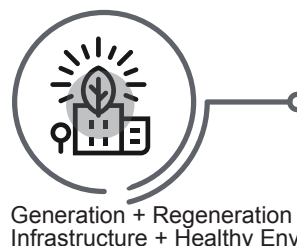
- partnering with a local community organisation to deliver work-based, micro-credentialled learning to support employment pathways for humanitarian refugees in Logan.

#### Working with Logan community stakeholders to -

- plan and host entrepreneurship workshops;
- deliver innovation and entrepreneurship programs in local schools; and
- support the innovation and evolution of local initiatives seeking to improve the positive impacts created in Logan.



Active Collaboration with Community



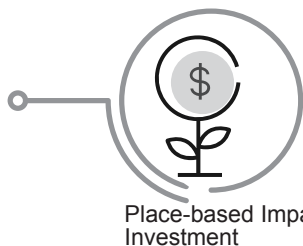
Generation + Regeneration of Infrastructure + Healthy Environment

#### We are -

- helping to map Logan's food bowl as input to a larger project designed to improve food resilience; and
- making The Yunus Centre facilities available to local entrepreneurs and change makers.

#### We are -

- developing a proposal to direct Impact Funds into the Logan community as part of a larger social enterprise development initiative.



Place-based Impact Investment



Growing Local Affordable Housing

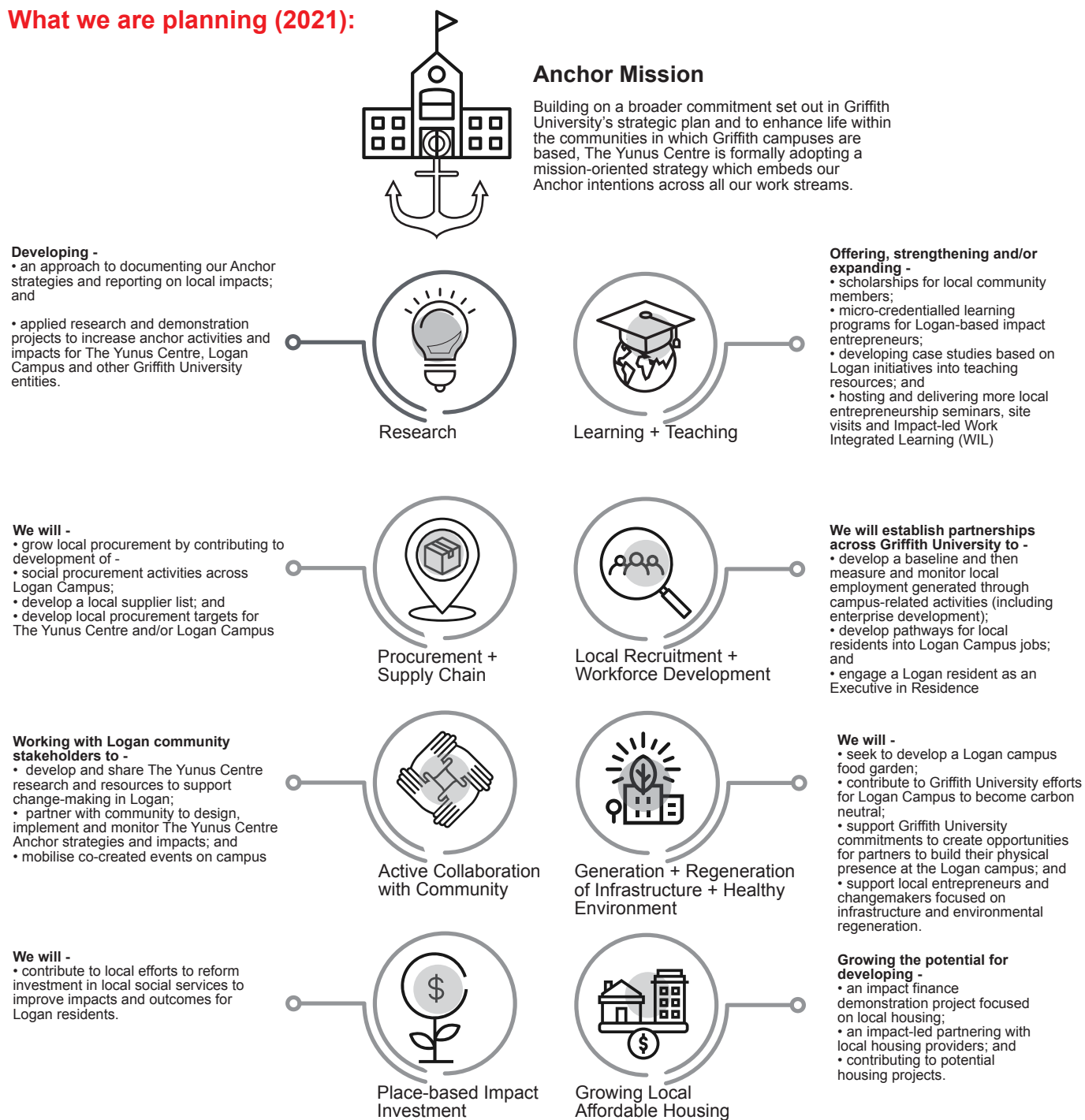
- no activity as yet.

**Figure 4: The Yunus Centre's Anchor Activities in 2020**

We also drew on Anchors thinking to develop our 'Roadmap to Recovery + Regeneration' published in early 2020; see Yunus 2020 for more information.



## What we are planning (2021):



**Figure 5: The Yunus Centre's Anchor Activity Plans for 2021**

Here we are also building on Griffith University's Strategic Plan Creating a Future For All 2020-25, which includes a broad commitment to enhancing life within the communities in which our campuses are based.



## What we're learning:

Through our Anchor model efforts to date, we are starting to build our practice-based appreciation of what it takes to turn an Anchor intention into real impact. We share these learnings which are informing our planning for 2021 and beyond with the desire to support practice development amongst other aspiring University Anchor Institutions:

- Many staff from across the University, in diverse areas of activity – and including both academic and professional groups, are enthusiastic about the logic of Anchor models and the opportunities to contribute to the design, delivery and monitoring of Anchor strategies.
- Whilst the 'busyness' of Universities, particularly within a context of fiscal reform and restraint, makes it challenging to mobilise a broad institutional Anchor Institution approach, it is possible for place-based academic centres to "make a start", begin to create local impacts, and attract other interested partners.
- University finance and Human Resource Management systems may not be designed to facilitate the extraction of place-based data in ways which would make it easy to measure and monitor the impact of Anchor strategies, but some work-arounds are possible with motivated partners.
- Even in times of significant resource constraint and situational complexity, it is possible to undertake work with an intentionality that enables positive local impacts which are aligned to aspirational national and global regeneration agendas.

## Conclusion

Anchor Institutions, missions, and Collaboratives offer integrative frameworks for structuring and amplifying the contributions civic institutions, such as Universities, can and do make to the economic and social fabric of 'their' communities. As outlined, there are strong historical foundations as well as contemporary drivers that support the logic of aligning existing civic infrastructure and budgetary spends to support place-based wellbeing outcomes, and Anchor models provide a useful and powerful structure for establishing this alignment.

Our aim in offering this Provocation has been to stimulate dialogue and action with and through Australia's University sector, towards increasing and strengthening engagement with Anchor models. The current context has created a unique setting for this work, and right now there is a significant opportunity for Universities to be bold and rise to the challenge of becoming key actors in driving just and sustainable development within their places of belonging.

## References

- Australian Government Productivity Commission. (2018). Rising Inequality? A stocktake of the evidence. Retrieved from <http://www.pc.gov.au/research/completed/rising-inequality>
- CEDA. (2019). Disrupting disadvantage: setting the scene. Retrieved from: <https://www.ceda.com.au/Research-and-policy/All-CEDA-research/Research-catalogue/Disrupting-disadvantage-setting-the-scene>
- Curtis, S. & Congdon, P. (2019, September). Individual and local area factors associated with self-reported wellbeing, perceived social cohesion and sense of attachment to one's community: analysis of the Understanding Society Survey. Retrieved from: <https://whatworkswellbeing.org/resources/individual-and-local-area-factors-associated-with-self-reported-wellbeing-perceived-social-cohesion-and-sense-of-a-achment-to-ones-community-analysis-of-the-understanding-society-survey/>
- Department of Education, Skills and Employment (2020). Performance-based funding for the Commonwealth Grant Scheme. Retrieved from: <https://www.education.gov.au/performance-based-funding-commonwealth-grant-scheme-0>
- Dragicevic, N. (2015). The Prosperous Province: Strategies for Building Community Wealth - Anchor Institutions. Ontario, Canada: Mowat Centre. Retrieved from: [https://munkschool.utoronto.ca/mowatcentre/wp-content/uploads/publications/109\\_anchor\\_institutions.pdf](https://munkschool.utoronto.ca/mowatcentre/wp-content/uploads/publications/109_anchor_institutions.pdf)
- Fensham, P. (2020). Community Wealth Building in Australia: A New Focus for Economic Development. Canberra: SGS Economics & Planning. Retrieved from: <https://www.sgsep.com.au/publications/insights/the-right-time-for-community-wealth-building-reform-in-australia>
- Garlick, S. (2003). Creative Regional Development: Knowledge-Based Associations Between Universities and their Places. *Metropolitan Universities*, 14(2), 48-70
- Goddard, J. (2019). The civic university: Confronting future challenges. University Industry Innovation Network (UIIN). Retrieved from: <https://uiin.org/2019/11/28/the-civic-university-confronting-future-challenges/>
- Great Places Commission. (2018). Great Places: Great Places Commission Interim Report. Retrieved from: <http://greatplaces.ousing.org.uk/take-part/interim-report>
- Griffith University. (2020). Creating a future for all: Strategic Plan 2020-2025. [https://www.griffith.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0037/932698/Strategic-Plan-2020-2025.pdf](https://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0037/932698/Strategic-Plan-2020-2025.pdf)
- Nous Group and Centre of Policy Studies. (2020). Economic Impact of the Regional Universities Network. Regional Universities Network. [https://www.run.edu.au/resources/RUN\\_Findings\\_Report\\_final\\_.pdf](https://www.run.edu.au/resources/RUN_Findings_Report_final_.pdf)
- Penn Institute for Urban Research. (2009, February). Retooling HUD for a Catalytic Federal Government: A Report to Secretary Shaun Donovan. Retrieved from: <https://community-wealth.org/sites/clone.community-wealth.org/files/downloads/report-brophy-godsil.pdf>
- Pill, M., Gurran, N., Gilbert, C. & Phibbs, P. (July 2020). Executive Summary: Strategic planning, city deals and affordable housing. Melbourne: AHURI. Retrieved from: [https://www.ahuri.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0025/63844/73203\\_FR\\_331\\_Executive-Summary.pdf](https://www.ahuri.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0025/63844/73203_FR_331_Executive-Summary.pdf)
- Porter, J. Fisher-Bruns, D., & Pham, B. H. (2019). Anchor Collaboratives: Building Bridges with Place-based partnerships and anchor institutions. Retrieved from: <https://democracycollaborative.org/sites/clone.community-wealth.org/files/downloads/Anchor%2520Collaboratives%2520Report%2520-%2520FINAL-updated.pdf>
- Purcell, W.M., Henriksen, H. & Spengler, J. (2019). Universities as the engine of transformational sustainability toward delivering the sustainable development goals: 'Living labs' for sustainability. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, v.20(8), 1343-1357
- Rodriguez-Pose, A. and Wilkie, C. (2017). 'Revamping Local and Regional Development Through Place-based Strategies'. *Cityscape*, 19, 1 151-170
- Roy, M., Wersun, A. & Donaldson, C. (2020, June). What is the civic university for? *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Retrieved from: [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/what\\_is\\_the\\_civic\\_university\\_for](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/what_is_the_civic_university_for)
- Sladek, E. (2017). Higher Education's Anchor Mission: Measuring Place-Based Engagement. University of Maryland: The Democracy Collaborative. Retrieved from: <https://democracycollaborative.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Higher%20Education%27s%20Anchor%20Mission.pdf>

Smallbone, D., Kitching, J., Blackburn, R. & Mosavi, S. (2015). Anchor institutions and small firms in the UK: A review of the literature on anchor institutions and their role in developing management and leadership skills in small firms. South Yorkshire: UK Commission for Employment & Skills. Retrieved from: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/414390/Anchor\\_institutions\\_and\\_small\\_firms.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/414390/Anchor_institutions_and_small_firms.pdf)

Sunderland, N., Muirhead, B., Parsons, R., & Holstrom, D. (2004, February). Foundation Paper: The Australian Consortium on Higher Education, Community Engagement and Social Responsibility. Australian Consortium Project Centre: University of Queensland Ipswich. Retrieved from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/37616950\\_Foundation\\_Paper\\_The\\_Australian\\_Consortium\\_on\\_Higher\\_Education\\_Community\\_Engagement\\_and\\_Social\\_Responsibility](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/37616950_Foundation_Paper_The_Australian_Consortium_on_Higher_Education_Community_Engagement_and_Social_Responsibility)

TEQSA, (2018, December). Key financial metrics on Australia's higher education sector. Australian Government: Canberra

The Economist. (2020). Editorial, 21 March 2020.

Tiernan, A. (2019, June 3). Optimistic Democracy: The promise and potential of intersectional collaborations to revitalize our vision for a flourishing Australia. Retrieved from: <https://www.annetiernan.com.au/blog/https/mediumcom/feed/amtiernan>

Turner, A. (2018). The Business case for racial equity: A Strategy for Growth. W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Altarum Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.wkkf.org/resource-directory#pp=10&p=1&f1=equitable-communities>

United Nations. (2020). Sustainable Development Goals. Geneva: United Nations. Retrieved from: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

Vinson, T., Rawsthorne, M., Beavis, A., & Ericson, M. (2015). Dropping off the Edge 2015: Persistent communal disadvantage in Australia. Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia. Retrieved from: <https://dote.org.au/>

Yunus Centre. (2020, May). Roadmap to Recovery and Regeneration: Opportunities for a post-pandemic recovery that creates better futures for all. Retrieved from: [https://www.griffith.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0023/1076702/RoadmapToRecoveryRegeneration-Version1.pdf](https://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0023/1076702/RoadmapToRecoveryRegeneration-Version1.pdf)

