

*RSA Australasia Conference
Christchurch, NZ, 11-13 Feb, 2019*

Local Government and Housing in Australian Rural Communities

Dr John Martin

Emeritus Professor La Trobe University

LP150100160: Housing and Local Government in the 21st Century

Andrew Beer, John Martin, Allan Morris, Trevor Budge, Chris Paris

Institutional challenges versus local initiative

'Studies of Australian local government have typically focused on the powers and functions accorded to local government in the Australian federation. This institutional approach has tended to downplay the impact and importance of local government focused on its weaknesses rather than on its capacity to mobilise and support local interests'

(Professor Chris Aulich)

Overview

- Local Government and Housing in Australia for the 21stC (ARC Linkage LP150100160)
- National Survey: what they tell us
- In depth case studies: what we observe
- Gwydir Shire Council
- Sunshine Coast Council
- The rural-regional/urban ontological perspective
- Housing policy and strategy for urban and rural local governments

Local Government and Housing in Australia for the 21stC

- Uni SA, UTS, La Trobe
- Partner Organisations:
 - SA - Berri Barmera Council, City of Playford, City of Mount Gambier, Rural City of Murray Bridge, LGA SA
 - Vic - City of Greater Bendigo, City of Moonee Valley, Mt Alexander Shire Council
 - NSW – Gwydir Shire Council, Randwick City Council, Waverley Council
 - Qld – Sunshine Coast Council
- Completed a national survey of councils:
- <https://localgovernmentandhousing.com/2018/08/29/housing-locally-a-report-on-the-local-government-and-housing-linkage-project-national-survey/>

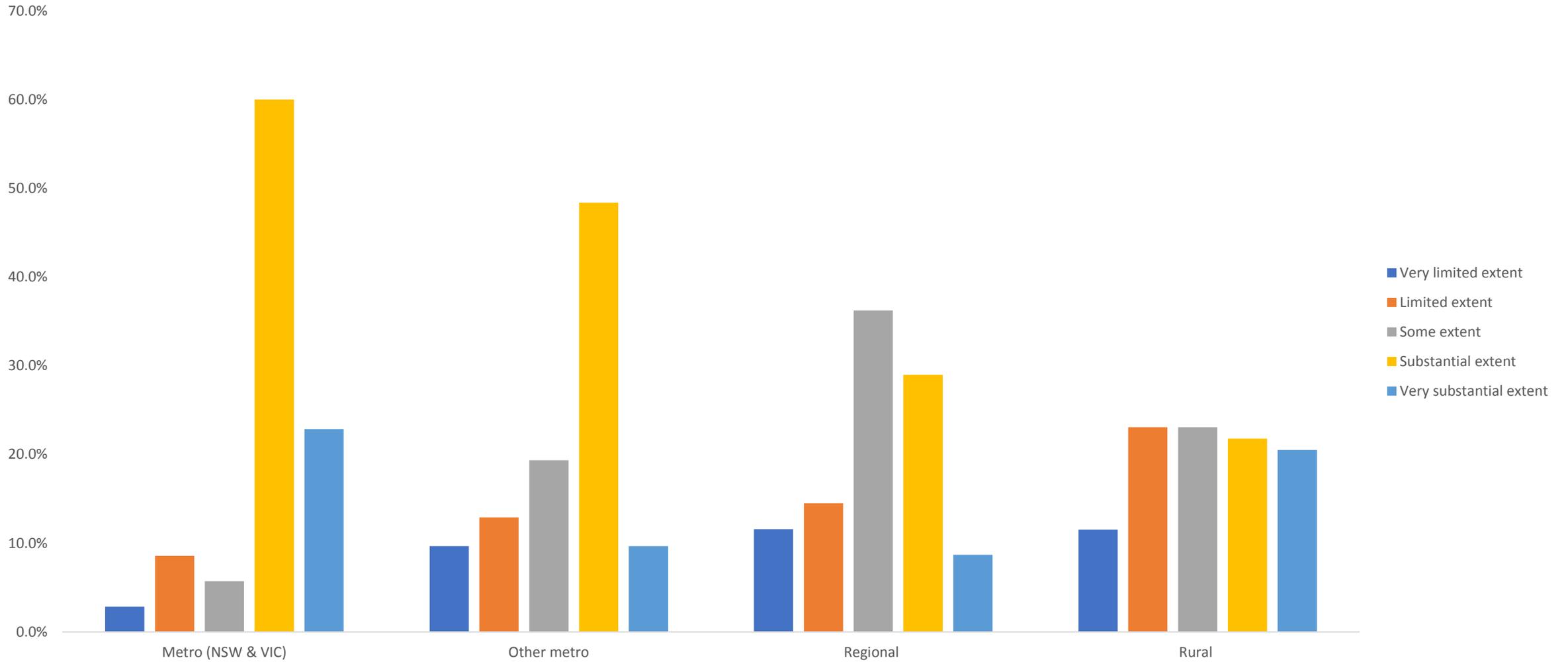
Local Government and Housing in Australia for the 21stC

- The aims are:
- developing an understanding of the interplay between housing and local government in Australia in the 21st Century;
- mapping the governmental, demographic and economic processes currently reshaping that relationship;
- identifying new ways in which local governments – and the communities they represent – can meet their housing aspirations; and,
- developing a suite of policies and actions for use by local governments across Australia in metropolitan, rural and regional settings.

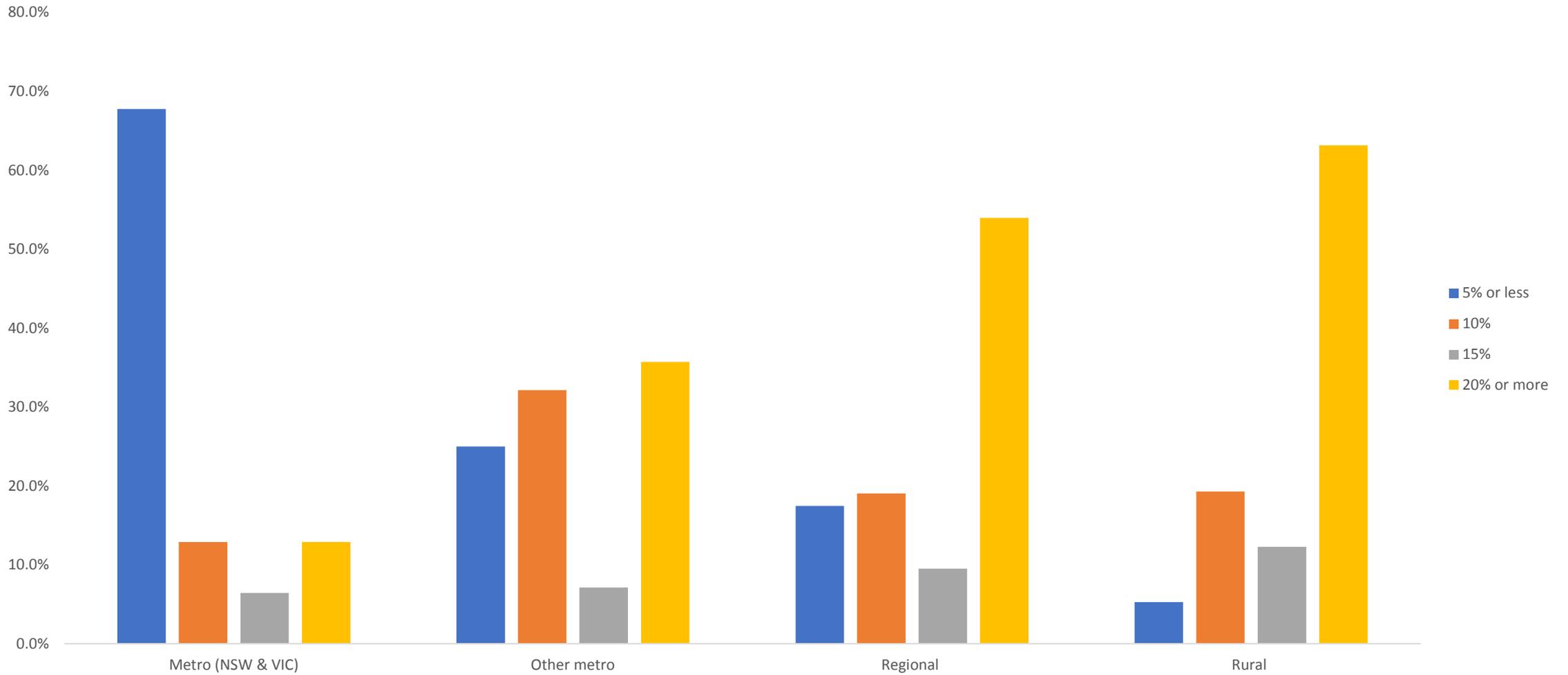
National Survey: Housing Locally

- 40% response from 535 local government councils across Australia
- Housing as a priority issue
- Affordability
- Council housing policy
- Policies beyond state government requirements
- Who deals with housing issues in your council?

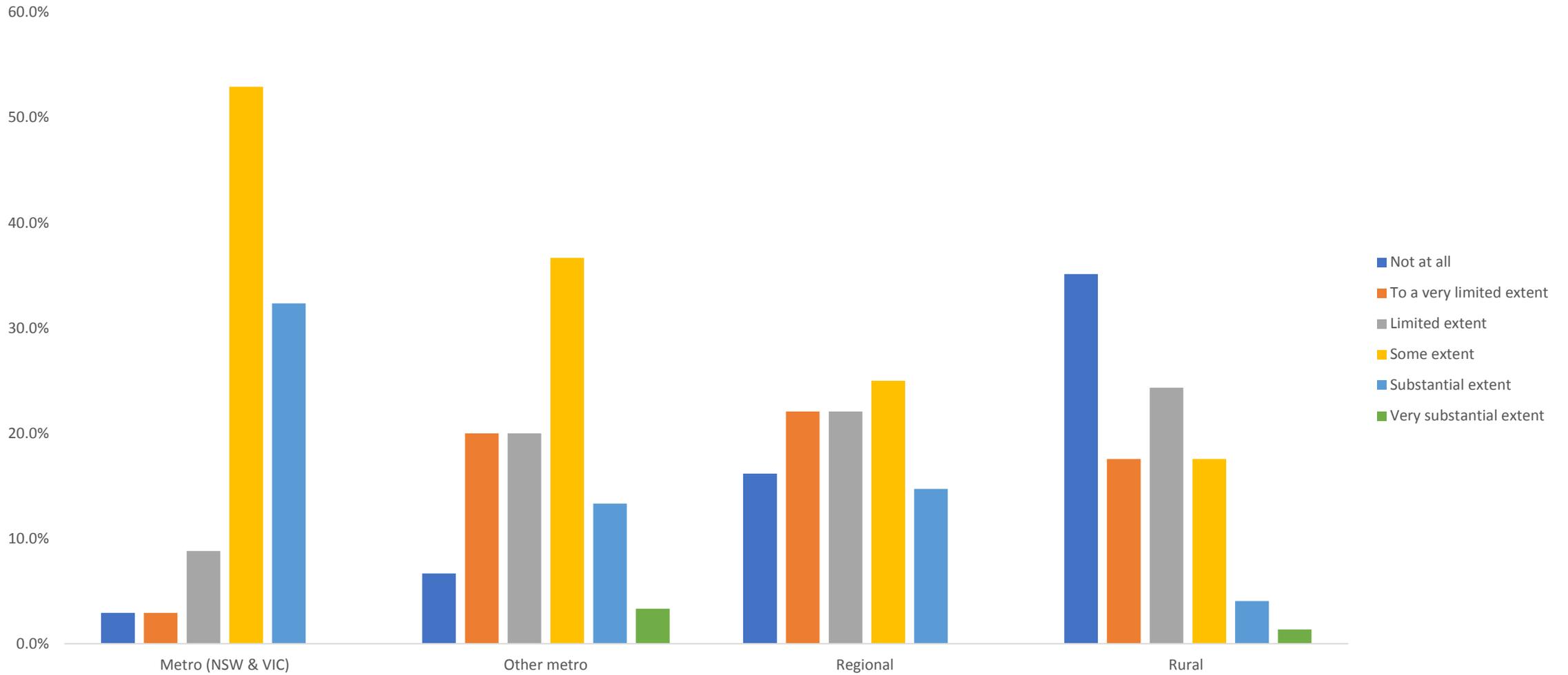
To what extent has housing been considered a priority by your Council over the past 12 months?



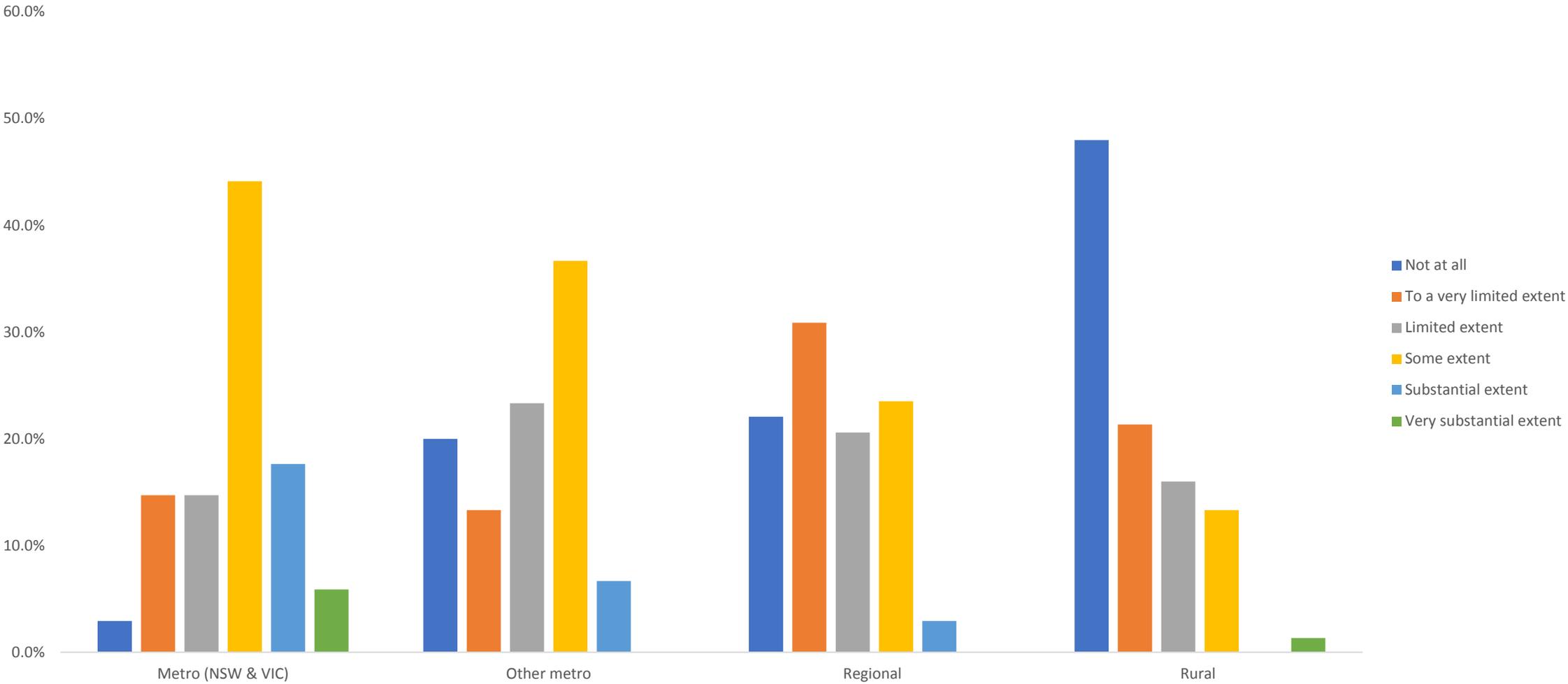
In your estimation, what proportion of housing stock within your Council area could be considered affordable?



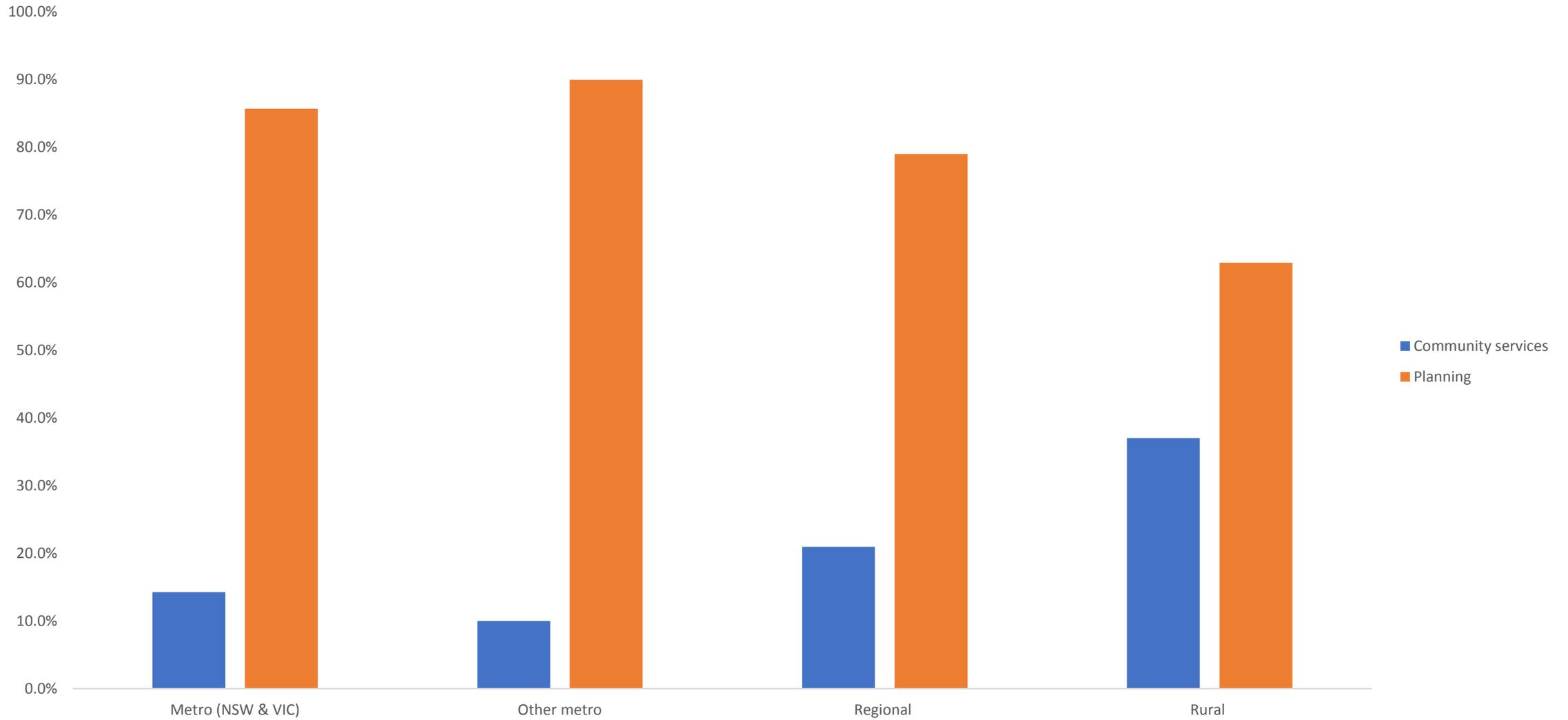
Would you describe your Council's policies relating to housing in your area as comprehensive?



To what extent do your Council's policies relating to housing in your area extend beyond those required under State government legislation?

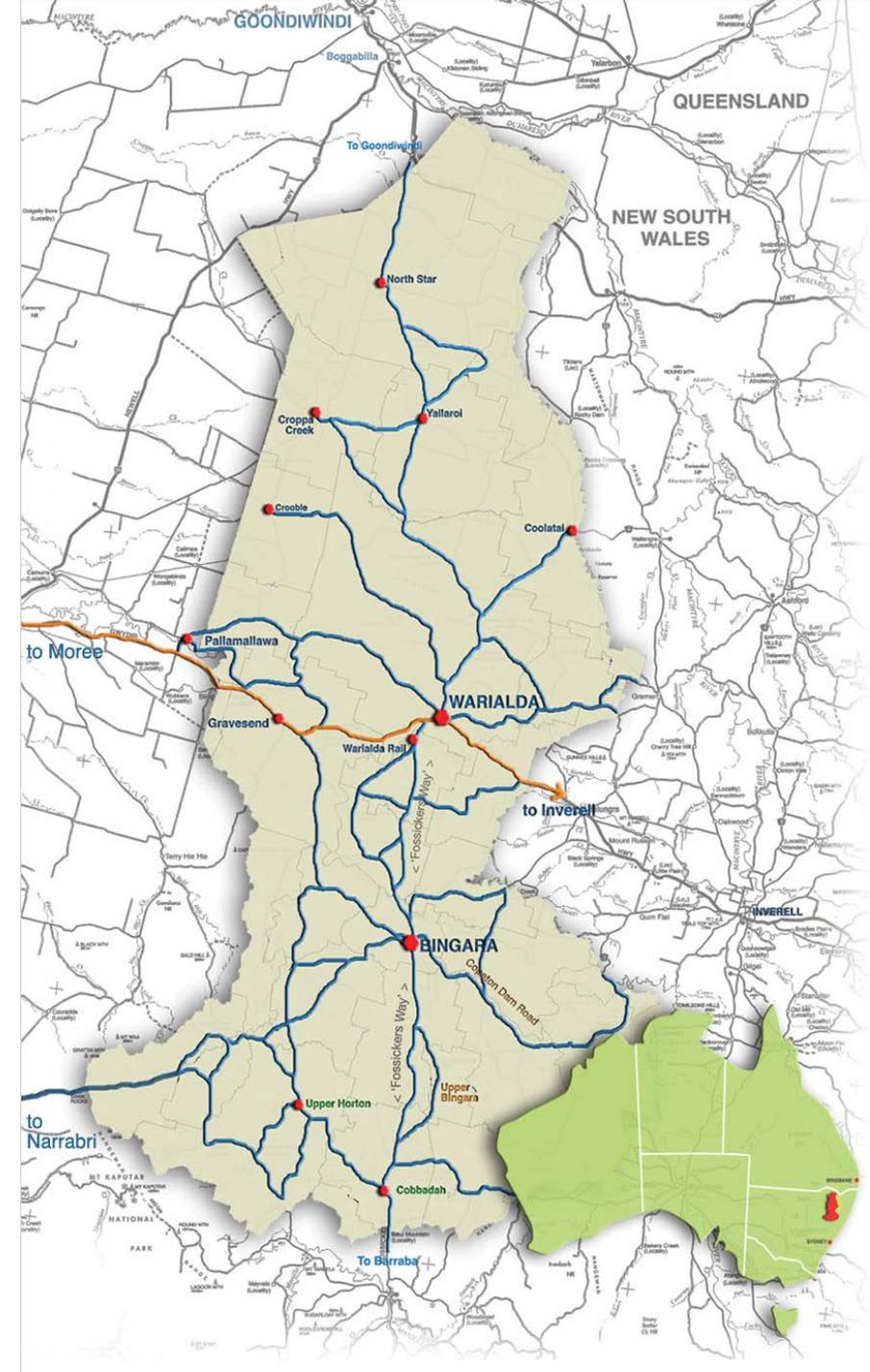


What sections within your Council deal with housing issues?



Gwydir Shire Council, NSW

- 560 km north of Sydney, 160 km north of Tamworth
- The shire is 9,122 square kilometres in size and is situated north of Tamworth Regional Council and continues almost to the Queensland border.
- Population (5,000) in decline/ageing
- Bingara and Wyallda (previously Bingara and Yallaroi shires amal in 2004)
- 30% vacancy rate
- Insufficient qual – professionals move to Moree and Inverell
- Two qual AirBnBs. One pub in Bingara



Gwydir Shire local housing policy and strategy

- No stated policy, yet:
- Six Council owned houses rented out
- Council goes guarantor for mortgages through Reg Aust Bank
- Infill strategy. Encourage granny flats
- Owns and runs aged care facility ('Naroo' 36 beds. Supports NFPO 'Touriandi' 28 beds)
- Collects rents on State owned public housing (Warialda, initiative of amal Yallaroi Shire) and uses this revenue to maintain these properties
- Supports community initiatives (Radiance Club, now intergenerational) by maintaining (Plunkett St) units acquired through fund raising for war widows
- Advises citizens on housing options

Bingara Radiance Club Incorporated

'The Bingara Radiance Club was formed by Miss Helen Kingsley on the 14th May 1938 [sic] during WWII.

From what we understand the object of the club was to initially knit socks and cook fruit cakes to send to the men serving overseas. Later, from notes we were able to find, the Club raised funds from Housie Competitions, Catering at the show and later through a shop selling clothing. The funds were accumulated and when the opportunity was there the Radiance Club, with the help of a loan from Mrs Vera King, were able to purchase what was once a guesthouse. This present building still exists and has since been converted to seven self contained flats who need accommodation at a cost then can afford.'

(BRC Inc owns and rents two cottages, seven flats and a house to people on a needs basis)

Sunshine Coast Council, Queensland

- Population 303,000
- Mooloolaba approx. 100kms Bris CBD
- SEQ Regional Plan (State Govt) expects major new housing estates at Caloundra West (7% an growth from 20 to 40K by 2026)
- Infrastructure: new hosp, light rail, h'way upgrades
- Major urban development



Sunshine Coast: Population Growth

- ‘The population of the Sunshine Coast is forecast to grow to over 385,000 people by 2026. It is anticipated that we will require a total of over **168,000 dwellings**.
- The population, dwelling statistics and demographics of the Sunshine Coast between 2016 and 2026, is forecast below:
- there will be an increase of approximately 83,300 persons, or over 8,300 people per year
- the majority of population growth will be provided through net migration (97% of all population growth)
- the largest of population increases will be those aged 35-39 years and those 0-4 years and 5-9 years (i.e. younger and more established families)
- there will be an increase of approximately 36,700 dwellings and 32,700 households (or over 3,670 dwellings and 3,270 households per year)’

Sunshine Coast Council housing policy

- The *Environment and Liveability Strategy 2017* (the Strategy) builds a pathway to a healthy environment and liveable Sunshine Coast in 2041, and sets clear and integrated strategic directions to achieve this vision.
- The Strategy's Neighbourhoods and Housing theme seeks to develop self-contained neighbourhoods and provide associated housing that promotes and provides a diversity of affordable and sustainable living options for all our community, supported by appropriate infrastructure and services.
- The Strategy seeks to achieve *“A diversity of neighbourhoods and housing [which] provides sustainable and affordable living options for everyone.”* To monitor progress, the theme target is *“Increase the diversity of affordable living options by 2041.”* (SCC Housing Benchmark report 2017)

Sunshine Coast Council housing policy and strategy

- Housing choices referred to as 'products'
- Development pressure from the State Government and developers places heavy workload on professional staff
- Development proposals treated in a strictly professional manner so as to maintain Council's overarching goals of fit-for-purpose housing
- Not involved in public housing provision
- Work closely with Coast2Bay Housing Co-operative but do not provide any resources
- Liveability strategy guiding light



The rural-regional/urban ontological perspective

- Rural places are economically challenged, socially construed.
 - There is a taken-for-grantedness at an interpersonal level that people and places are to be cared for. Communitarian
- Regional (urban) places are economically vibrant, corporatised and managerial in their approach, relative to rural places.
 - There is a focus on process and products within a broader development context balancing the desire for housing with political, managerial, community and developer pressure for conflicting views about process and outcomes. Economic rationalism.
- These contexts influence individual world views about how best to respond. This is reflected in a council's policies: explicit and implicit

The rural-regional/urban ontological perspective

Explicit policies		Sunshine Coast Council
Implicit behaviour	Gwydir	
	Community focus	Economic rationalist focus

Housing policy and strategy for urban and rural local governments

- Housing needs in rural and urban communities are similar (affordability, fit-for-purpose); yet,
- The way LGs supporting these communities address local housing issues reflect their context and capacity to do so.
- However, the rules of engagement are universal (eg, state local government and other Acts) and essentially inflexible
- Federal, state and local governments have different political and administrative interests: Feds to empower success; states to control the processes and local to address need and wants.
- Can councils accommodate local needs and values within these universal rules of engagement?
- Being explicit is an essential first step

The strategic issue..... (councils should ask)

- How does our community ensure a place to live for everyone: a place that meets individual needs?
 - Is it a 'whole of community' strategy?
 - Does it recognise changing needs over time?
 - Is a 'place to live' seen as much more than the roof over one's head?
 - Does it recognise individuals and families have different needs?
 - Does it recognise liveability is much more than having a house to live in?
 - Resilient housing outcomes happen when community members are connected and confident in their relationships with each other
 - Local councils can lead and facilitate such relationships to achieve fit-for-purpose local housing outcomes
 - Being aware councils have this leadership potential is an important first step

john.martin@Latrobe.edu.au

+61421584313