Regional Futures Plan Evaluation

June 2021

Robyn Eversole, Perri Campbell and Batool Moussa

Table of Contents

About the Report

This report has been prepared by CSI Swinburne for the Cradle Coast Authority, Tasmania.

About the Authors

Dr Perri Campbell is a youth and gender studies scholar with extensive experience working with social enterprises in Australia and North America. Perri applies Action Learning evaluation and monitoring along with critical theoretical analysis skills to support program development. Perri is the author of *Rethinking Young Peoples Marginalisation* (Routledge, 2019) and has published widely the health equity implications of social enterprises for young people.

Professor Robyn Eversole is an anthropologist and internationally recognised expert in rural regional development. Author of over 90 international publications for academic, policy, and professional audiences, including *Knowledge Partnering for Community Development* (Routledge, 2015), *Regional Development in Australia: Being Regional* (Routledge, 2016), and *Anthropology for Development: From Theory to Practice* (Routledge, 2018), Robyn has led interdisciplinary, policy-engaged research and evaluation projects and worked on-the-ground with rural communities in over a dozen countries, including 20 years in rural Australia.

Batool Moussa has worked in law, public health advocacy and behavioural sciences research. She is currently a research assistant at the Centre for Social Impact (CSI), Swinburne University of Technology.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge and thank the stakeholders from diverse sectors and organisations who have generously contributed their time to the research through participation in workshops, focus groups, and interviews, and through preparing and sharing their stories of significant change.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Cradle Coast Regional Futures Plan (RFP) was developed out of a community-based consultation process in the Cradle Coast Region of Tasmania in 2018, led by the Cradle Coast Authority (CCA). The Futures Plan then received funding from the Tasmanian government for a period of two years (2019 – 2021) to support its implementation. The Futures Plan aimed to improve living standards in the region, boost regional growth, foster a more resilient economy, and create more jobs and better jobs for the people of the Cradle Coast region. The Futures Plan itself, and the governance arrangements adopted for its implementation, aimed to provide a platform for working collaboratively across sectors, organisations and boundaries to address complex challenges in the region that were not being dealt with effectively by organisations working separately.

CSI Swinburne researchers were invited to evaluate the qualitative changes resulting from the RFP's first two years of implementation. The aim of the evaluation was to inform the direction of future planning by the five RFP Working Groups, the Regional Economic Development Steering Group (REDSG), Cradle Coast Authority, RFP Core Team, and the General Managers of the region's nine local government councils. Membership of the Steering Group and Working Groups is comprised of a cross-section of community members who represent key public, private and community sector organisations in the region.

The CSI evaluation process employed the Most Significant Change (MSC) method to understand how different stakeholders viewed the role of the RFP approach in creating change in the Cradle Coast region. This research method involved: Most Significant Change evaluation workshops conducted with the RFP Working Groups (Renewable Energy, Events, Choose Cradle Coast, Education and Training, Arts and Culture), the Regional Economic Development Steering Group and the Core Team; and interviews and a focus group with key stakeholders.

The aim of the MSC Workshops was for stakeholders to share, build and prioritise stories about changes in the region connected to the aims and goals of the RFP. Stories were grouped into categories or 'domains of change' (DoC). Stories of change from the Working Groups and Core Team were then prioritised by the Regional Economic Development Steering Group, to identify the stories which communicated the most significant changes identified through the RFP implementation process. One story was selected to illustrate each of the four domains of change, and two additional stories were provided by the REDSG to capture overall impacts of the RFP process to date. The six stories selected as representing change in the region are listed in the Table 1 below:

Story title	Domain of Change (DoC)
"Recognising the need for strategic/ coordinated community engagement"	*1. Collaboration and Connectivity – Overcoming Fragmentation and Silos, Involving Communities*
"The Changing Face of our Community"	*2. Communication and Storytelling – Promoting Pride in the Region/ Overcoming Negativity*
"The Importance of Arts and Culture in the Regional Narrative"	*3. Partnerships and influence – Finding New Sources of Investment and Buy-in/ Overcoming dependence*
"Connections"	*4. Confidence to Change/ Empowering Action – Clear Vision; Visible Action and Impact*
"Pride is building in our community" "The Futures Plan is Coming to Life"	*Overall impacts of the RFP process as articulated by the Regional Economic Development Steering Group*

Table 1: Most Significant Change Stories, summary version

The aim of the interviews and focus group was to provide additional perspectives on change processes from other regional stakeholders. Eight interviews were conducted with regional stakeholders with different levels of involvement in the RFP process, including some who were not currently involved in RFP implementation. One focus group was held with eight of the nine General Managers of the CCA's member councils.

The evaluation findings revealed that the Regional Futures Plan implementation process has contributed to laying the groundwork for locally led regional development action. The four identified domains of change (DoC) and the six Most Significant Change (MSC) stories describe: improved cross-sector coordination (DoC 1), evidence of a more positive and inclusive image of the region (DoC 2), the ability to identify new sources of economic value from within the region (DoC 3) and increased local confidence to drive change (DoC 4). While these are not direct changes in RFP target areas such as improved living standards, resilience, or jobs, they are all critical indicators of increased regional development capacity and capability in the region.

Changes identified by **Workshop Participants** emphasized better *Communication and Collaboration* across organisations, including increased informal communication and knowledge sharing in the region. Breaking down silos via communication and collaboration had positive flow-on benefits such as increasing *Community Cohesion and Resilience,* strengthening *Strategic Planning* at regional scale, and growing *Education and Employment Pathways* for young people. Workshop participants also emphasized regional strengths and highlighted growing *Pride, Culture, and Diversity* in the region. Workshop discussions gave numerous concrete examples of changes associated with these themes and reflected on successful adaptation in response to challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The **Focus Group Participants** agreed that the Futures Plan has helped drive activity and improve how member councils and stakeholders work together but observed that channels of communication to councils needed to be strengthened. The focus group identified a need for stronger communication and connectivity between the working groups, steering group and general managers of the member councils; more options for consultation about the social, environmental, employment, and industrialisation effects of new projects for different local government areas; and a more cooperative, cohesive way of strategic planning that can feed into how the working groups create and act on projects.

The **Interview Participants** focused on the challenges in the region, such as 'siloed' thinking and fragmentation across member councils; a lack of clarity in governance structures; and the overly broad scope of the Regional Futures Plan. Interviews identified opportunities for future change through thinking regionally, working better together, and more effective governance mechanisms, recognising both the challenges and the potential of operationalising a new way of doing joined-up regional development.

Overall, it was the process of implementing the Regional Futures Plan, rather than the Plan itself, which has made a difference to regional development capacity and capability in the Cradle Coast region. While it has been a relatively small-scale process, the five cross-sector Working Groups, Core Team and Regional Economic Development Steering Group have provided valuable mechanisms for building the capacity, capability and confidence of individuals and organisations to work together to achieve a common vision for their region. The process of bringing a paper plan 'to life' has manifested in improved capacity for collaboration and engaged a group of passionate regional community leaders in shaping regional narratives and strengthening regional resilience. This process has surfaced opportunities that were not captured in the original document and begun to demonstrate the potential for locally led regional development solutions, laying vital groundwork for future change.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Context

The Cradle Coast Region spans the north-west and western regions of Tasmania, occupying a third of the total geographical area of Tasmania. The Cradle Coast Authority (CCA) is an umbrella organisation bringing together the nine local government municipalities of the region. The region has a population of more than 110 000 people, with population centres including Burnie, Devonport, Wynyard, Smithton, Latrobe and Queenstown. The region boasts significant natural resources and a beautiful natural environment which attracts investors, tourists, and strengthens liveability and economic options in the region.

The region faces complex and inter-related challenges which affect many Tasmanians. These challenges include:

- *High unemployment rates*
- *Low educational attainment levels*
- *Shrinking working-age population*
- *Regionally dispersed population*
- *Significant labour demands (CCA, 2018; see also Denny, 2017).*

Different social groups are affected in particular ways by these issues. For instance, young people find themselves at the cross-section of employment and housing issues; those with experiences of marginalisation are at even greater risk. Many in North West Tasmania cannot afford market rental prices, particularly those relying on the Youth Allowance (Fromberg, 2021). Brady (2014) describes a youth jobs crisis on the West and North-West Coasts. Low educational attainment levels in the region have been linked to 'structural educational disadvantage' as well as 'an entrenched culture that is insufficiently attuned to the necessity of further education' (Corbett et al, 2017: 1). For Denny (2019: 1) these challenges are linked to significant shifts in regional industries and their workforce requirements:

> *Tasmania, like many economies, is undergoing a process of economic restructuring tied to what is known as the Fourth Industrial Revolution…. A growing concern linked to this revolution is the polarisation of the workforce. There is evidence the workforce is being hollowed out, particularly for young people. A growing proportion of jobs are either high or low skilled, while a declining share require mid-level skills.*
>
> *… This workforce polarisation, tied to deep structural issues, highlights the need to provide and prioritise continuous skill development and flexible career pathways.*

The Regional Futures Plan, written in 2018, acknowledges that the Cradle Coast Region is experiencing a period of ongoing economic growth, 'with successfully transitioning foundation industries, such as manufacturing and food processing, agriculture and forestry and emerging opportunities in aquaculture, niche food production, renewable energy, tourism and health care and social assistance' (CCA, 2018: 7). At the same time, the Futures Plan also highlights concerns about future growth due to complex regional issues that limit the capacity of regional workforces and threaten future industry competitiveness:

> *'The region's economic prosperity is dependent on the specialisations and competitiveness within and across these key sectors and needs to be underpinned by a workforce that is equipped to support such growth. However, there are several embedded structural challenges that need to be overcome to ensure the workforce is well-placed to provide the skills and capabilities to take on the jobs that are coming, especially in full-time higher skilled occupations'. (CCA, 2018: 7)*

To address these regional development issues, the Cradle Coast Authority (CCA) facilitated the development of the Regional Futures Plan on behalf of its Member Councils and the broader region. The Futures Plan was informed by community-based workshops that brought together stakeholders to identify issues affecting the future of the region. The RFP was developed after the State Government had proposed an Economic Development Plan and then retracted this plan. Local stakeholders felt that an Economic Development Plan

was needed, as they were concerned by fragmented approaches and a lack of continuity between State Government and Federal Government in their attempts to engage with key challenges in the region, such as employment. A regional approach was required because issues cross local council areas; they span 'sectors, organisations and responsibilities' and, as such, require a collaborative effort between regional 'enterprises and communities, that are often in competition with each other' (CCA, 2018: 7).

By facilitating a coordinated regional approach, the RFP aims to find a 'joined up' solution to issues that are often treated separately:

> *The Futures Plan and proposed governance arrangements provide a crucial platform for working collaboratively across sectors, organisations and boundaries on these complex challenges that are not effectively being dealt with separately. While the responses to these challenges often need to be industry led, CCA and our councils have an important role in championing these new ways of working better together (CCA, 2018: 3)*

A collaborative, cross-sectoral, and locally led approach aligns with current academic and policy thinking about the most effective approaches for regional economic development. The Regional Futures Plan has put these ideas into practice through multi-layered governance arrangements that bring together stakeholders from across the region. This implementation process was established in 2019 and, as of June 2021, has been in effect for nearly two years. The RFP identifies five Priority Action Areas that set the strategic intent for the plan. These areas are listed in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Priority Action Areas (CCA, 2018: 8).

The Cradle Coast Authority is a joint government entity with oversight of the implementation of the plan. The Regional Futures Plan is guided by the Regional Economic Development Steering Group (herein referred to as the REDSG or the Steering Group), the Core Team, comprising the CCA-based RFP Manager and implementation staff from each member council, and five thematic Working Groups.

The role of the Steering Group 'to provide the overall systems leadership and guide the implementation and review of the Futures Plan' (CCA, 2018: 10). The role of the Core Team is to support the Working Groups and assist with implementation of the RFP through each council. The role of the Working Groups is to provide the Steering Group with advice about how priority areas of the Futures Plan should be addressed, from the perspective of those who are most affected within the sector and community.

Five Working Groups were formed: the Renewable Energy Working Group (REWG), the Events Working Group (EWG), the Choose Cradle Coast Working Group (CCCWG), the Education and Training Working Group (E&TWG) and the Arts and Culture Working Group (A&CWG) The roles and responsibilities of the Working Groups, according to their Terms of Reference, are as follows:

- *Identify solutions or raise new ideas to address the priority area;*
- *Analyse and consider potential options in relation to the priority area;*
- *Bring practical industry/sector specific knowledge, skills and experience to the group to ensure robust consideration of the benefits and challenges of the priority area of interest;*
- *Implement projects and initiatives with the support of the CCA Core Team, and pursue funding grants and partnership opportunities where necessary; and*
- *Provide general advice to the Steering Group, as required.*

The Terms of Reference of each Working Group outlines their scope and activities relevant to their thematic area. These details are summarised here:

1. The *Renewable Energy Working Group (REWG)* aims to '[c]reate and energise regional prosperity through a pipeline of jobs; [b]uild on the region's hydro legacy, with investment in next generation renewable energy that is done well and supported by the community; and [d]eliver a regionally driven, generous contribution to the nation'. Their activities include:
   - Showcasing the region's renewable energy history, credentials and potential;
   - Developing a shared renewable energy transmission vision for the region;
   - Attracting Commonwealth funding for the Marinus Link project; and
   - Establishing a 'one stop shop' in the region co-located with CCA to provide ready access to projects and the public.

2. The *Events Working Group (EWG)* aims to develop a region-wide approach to facilitating the development and promotion of events, via an overarching brand for the region, including a shared events calendar, with the purpose of facilitating economic development and population retention and attraction. These goals are supported by the following activities:
   - Offer guidance to assist with developing and attracting a diverse range of events for the region;
   - Review events application processes with councils;
   - Address high and low periods in the annual events calendar and leverage opportunities to co-promote, create umbrella suites of events and identify opportunities for new events; and
   - Educate local businesses to utilise the events calendar to leverage economic opportunities during events.

3. The *Choose Cradle Coast Working Group (CCCWG)* aims to 'combat the decline in population being experienced in the region so that services and activities for residents can be maintained', via activities including:
   - Continue to upgrade the Choose Cradle Coast website;
   - Understand barriers to effective program implementation;
   - Share and learn from past experiences; and
   - Communicate the successes in the region.

4. The *Education and Training Working Group (ETWG)* aims to maximise the region's participation in education (including high school, technical training, and university) and qualifications in the workforce. The following activities support these goals:
   - Leverage the University of Tasmania (UTAS) Burnie campus developments;
   - Increase the take up of UTAS Children's University program;
   - Understand barriers to effective program implementation; and
   - Communicate the successes in the region.

5. The *Arts and Culture Working Group (A&CWG)* aims to increase participation in arts and cultural activities. Increased participation in arts and cultural activities is seen to contribute to a number of regional development outcomes such as addressing 'low educational attainment levels and incompatible skills in the region leading to higher unemployment rates', and with the potential to 'indirectly contribute to increased migration through a perception change about arts and cultural activities available in the region'. The group aims to assist more culturally diverse Cradle Coast stories to be told, and their activities include:
   - Collaborate to improve the outcomes of existing activities;
   - Develop strategies to encourage increased participation in arts and culture activities;
   - Communicate the benefits of participatory art and culture activities and their effect on regional culture; and
   - Communicate the successes in the region.

The image below depicts the relationship of the Working Groups with the Core Team, the Regional Economic Development Steering Group, and the Cradle Coast Authority:
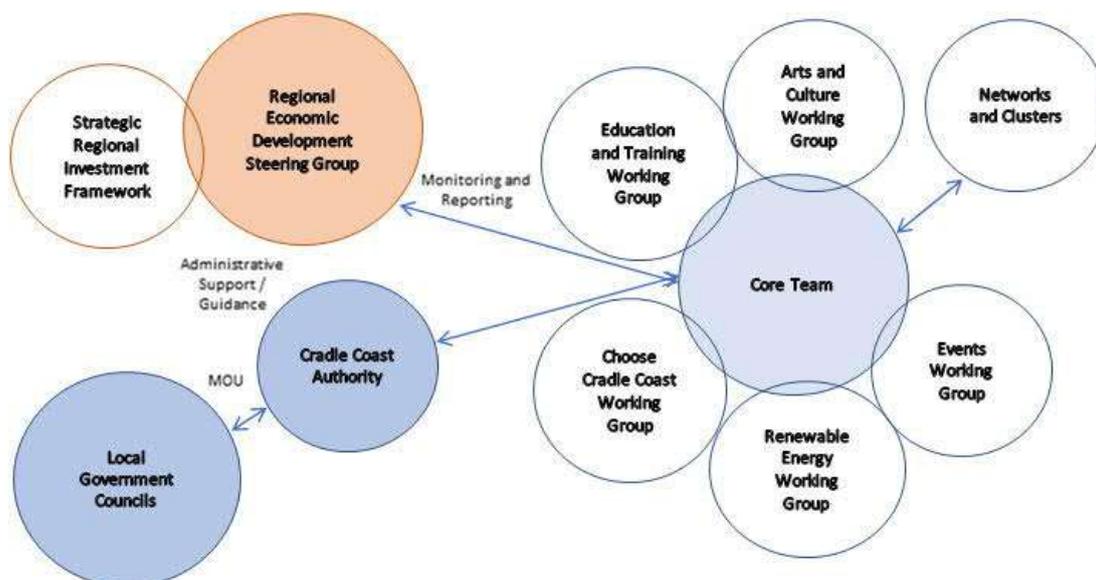
Figure 2: Governance Structure, RFP Implementation (Source: Cradle Coast Authority website)

1.2 Evaluation of the Regional Futures Plan

The Social Yield consultancy developed an evaluation framework for the Regional Futures Plan in June 2018. This framework proposed that the Futures Plan be evaluated throughout the project's lifespan. Swinburne researchers were invited to conduct an in-depth qualitative evaluation of the Regional Futures Plan (RFP) in the second year of its implementation. Implementation of the RFP commenced in July 2019 and this evaluation covers the two-year period between July 2019 to June 2021. Alongside this external, qualitative evaluation, the RFP Manager prepared a quantitative report of measurable outcomes against targets (Bracken, 2021).

Between March 2020 – May 2021, Swinburne researchers conducted interviews, a focus group, and seven 'Most Significant Change' workshops. Workshops were conducted with the RFP Core Team, all five Working Groups and the Steering Group. The aim of the MSC Workshops was to give stakeholders at the centre of the RFP process an opportunity to build and prioritise stories about changes in the region connected to the aims and goals of the RFP. These stories were then further prioritised by the Regional Economic Development Steering Group (REDSG) to identify the stories that captured the most significant changes for the region.

To provide further context for the RFP process and to contextualise and cross-check the significant changes identified, a focus group was conducted with the General Managers of the Authority's member councils, and interviews were conducted with a cross-section of other local residents. The local residents selected for interview included six who had varying levels of familiarity with the Regional Futures Plan process from previous involvement but were no longer involved in its implementation; and two who were closely involved in the process. The General Managers were able to provide a high-level understanding of regional issues and changes at council level, while interviewees provided a ground-level view from their particular organisational and personal perspectives. Qualitative data from both sources were used to triangulate the Most Significant Change findings from the workshops.

Prior to conducting the evaluation, the research team conducted a Most Significant Change training session on 22 March 2021 with the RFP Core Team. The training session was an opportunity to share knowledge with the Core Team about how to conduct Most Significant Change (MSC) research. The training provided to the Core

Team and the accompanying *Most Significant Change (MSC) Training Toolkit* provide the tools that the Team can use to monitor and evaluate the significant changes related to the Regional Futures Plan and its implementation in 2022 and into the future.

In Section 2 of this report we outline about how the evaluation was conducted, how the Most Significant Change approach was used, and how data was collected and analysed. We then present our findings in Section 3 starting with the four Most Significant Change stories from the Most Significant Change workshops and the two additional stories retained by the Steering Group. We then discuss the key areas of change we identified across the 20 Most Significant Change Stories contributed by the Working Groups, and the areas identified as requiring change. In the sub-sections that follow we discuss areas key challenges identified by focus group and interview participants and the strategies for change they identified. In Section 4 we present the key findings of the evaluation.

2. APPROACH AND METHOLODOGY

2.1 Evaluation Approach

2.1.1 A Qualitative Evaluation

A qualitative evaluation approach aims to provide in-depth data about the quality of the outcomes of a project or process. Moving beyond numbers, which can answer questions about the quantitative size of an outcome, a qualitative approach allows researchers to understand the nature of outcomes, why and how they occurred, and why and how they are important.

For projects and processes that are relatively new and untried, such as the Regional Futures Plan, a qualitative evaluation approach is most appropriate as it enables researchers to identify a range of outcomes, many of which may be unexpected and/or impossible to capture using quantitative measurements. A qualitative approach also provides deep insights about the processes through which outcomes are generated, making it particularly valuable for developmental evaluation; that is, evaluation which seeks to inform ongoing improvement in a project or process.

While quantitative evaluation collects data in the form of numbers, qualitative evaluation collects data in the form of themes or stories, which reveal different stakeholders' perceptions of outcomes, how and why they occurred (or failed to occur), and how and why they are important. The RFP evaluation focuses on stakeholders' perceptions of the RFP implementation process and its outcomes, seeking to identify the outcomes that stakeholders deem most important.

2.1.2 Most Significant Change (MSC) Approach

The Research Question guiding the evaluation of the RFP is:

> *What are the most significant changes that stakeholders identify in the Cradle Coast region from the Regional Futures Plan approach?*

To answer this question, the research team adopted a Most Significant Change approach. This was the recommended approach proposed in the evaluation framework developed by The Social Yield in 2018. The Most Significant Change (MSC) approach is a participatory research method used to monitor and evaluate change in a project, process or program. It is participatory because it engages all the key stakeholders involved, such as staff, funders, clients, and beneficiaries, in deciding the sorts of change to be recorded to assess the performance of a program. It also involves stakeholders in analysing the data (Dart & Davies, 2003).

Unlike conventional monitoring and evaluation methods that rely on pre-determined indicators of 'success' and 'impact' as defined by external decision-makers (Davies, 1996; Guijt, Arevalo & Salsdores, 1998), MSC focuses on what the program's stakeholders value most about the program and its outcomes. The key purpose of the MSC approach is to focus on the immediate outcomes of the program and steer it towards 'explicitly valued directions' (Dart & Davies, 2003: 140).

By clarifying and documenting what different stakeholders value, MSC facilitates open dialogue about how improvements can be made. The MSC process involves collecting Significant Change stories from stakeholders based on their own experiences, and then enabling stakeholders to systematically select the most significant of these stories.

2.1.3 MSC Process for the Regional Futures Plan Evaluation

There are different versions of the essential steps involved in carrying out MSC. The research team followed key steps as outlined by Dart and Davies (2003) in the design, implementation, and analysis phases of the evaluation.

First, we met with the Regional Economic Development Steering Group to identify 'Domains of Change'. Domains of Change are 'fuzzy categories' used to loosely organise stories of change into manageable parts and

help organisations track whether or not they are meeting their stated objectives (Davies & Dart, 2005: 17). Davies and Dart (2005) note that:

> *Domains can be identified before SC stories are collected or afterwards by sorting SC stories into meaningful groups… This depends on the extent to which the organisation wants to be open to new experiences rather than continuing to be guided by past experiences.* (18).

Deciding on Domains of Change is a collaborative and participatory process. The researchers met with the Steering Group Members in November 2020 to determine which areas of change they valued and wanted to track changes against. The four areas of change or *Domains of Change* identified were:

- Collaboration and Connectivity – Overcoming Fragmentation and Silos, Involving Communities
- Communication and Storytelling – Promoting Pride in the Region/ Overcoming Negativity
- Partnerships and influence – Finding New Sources of Investment and Buy-in/ Overcoming dependence
- Confidence to Change/ Empowering Action – Clear Vision; Visible Action and Impact

The Core Team and five Working Groups shared stories of change in workshops. During each workshop, participants sorted their stories into meaningful categories according to the types of change represented. They then compared these groups with the domains of change originally identified by the Steering Group. This process allowed the research team to test the degree of alignment across core stakeholders about the types of change that were most valued.

Workshop participants selected a subset of stories that, from their perspective, best communicated the most significant changes that they had observed. In the final stage of the process, these Most Significant Change stories from the Core Team and five Working Groups were then discussed and prioritised by the Steering Group to identify four that best illustrated each of the four domains of change. Two additional stories were put forward by the REDSG to capture overall impacts of the RFP process to date.

Finally, additional qualitative data were collected to triangulate the findings of the MSC process. One focus group was held with the General Managers of the member councils and eight interviews were held with additional stakeholders to explore their perceptions of change and the role of the Regional Futures Plan. These data contextualised the Most Significant Change stories and enabled the research team to build a robust picture of the impact of the Regional Futures Plan on conversations, strategies and actions in the region.

2.2 Data collection

Data was conducted via interviews, focus groups, and Most Significant change workshops. Eight interviews, one focus group, and seven workshops were held with different groups of stakeholders over the period March – May 2021, as detailed below.

2.2.1 Interviews

The intent of the interviews was to provide stakeholder perspectives from outside the Steering Group, Core Team and Working Groups. Given the early stage of the RRP process, it was recognised that most community members would have little or no familiarity with the RFP. Therefore, stakeholders invited for interview were those who had some involvement with the RFP process. We sought to speak with people who had a 'peripheral' view of the RFP process, through involvement in the past, but were no longer involved.

We established the following inclusion criteria for interview:

- Individuals who live in the region (aiming for a balance of males and females across multiple sectors, locations and organisations);
- Individuals who were involved in the RFP process at some stage (for example, in the2018 Futures Plan community workshop, a RFP working group, or as a Steering Group or Core Team member); and

- Individuals who are no longer involved with the RFP in any capacity (including as CCA Board members, Council employees or as employees of an organisation that is represented on the Steering Group or Working Groups).

These criteria enabled us to scope a pool of 15 potential interview participants, with an even gender balance, located across the region and positioned in different sectors:

- **Gender**: 11 men and 10 women;
- **Geography**: 11 based in Burnie, 6 in Devonport and 4 elsewhere in the region;
- **Sector**: 6 from education, 4 social/community sector, 2 government, 2 health, 2 finance, 2 agritourism, 1 defence, 1 energy, 1 finance).

From this list we invited prospective interviewees and secured six interviews (four men and two women). We also conducted interviews with two internal CCA stakeholders (one woman and one man) who were directly involved in the implementation of the RFP.

All eight interview participants were provided with a Plain Language Information and Consent form. Seven interviews were conducted online via videoconference, and one interviewee provided a written response to the questions via email (Please see Appendix 1, Interview Script).

2.2.2 Focus Group

The intent of the focus groups was to provide a high-level view of the RFP implementation from the perspectives of the General Managers of the member councils. A Plain Language Information and Consent form was circulated to General Managers prior to a regularly scheduled General Managers' meeting, and, with the consent of participants, a focus group was held at the start of the meeting on 10 March 2021. General Managers of eight of the nine member councils participated in the focus group, which was held online via videoconference and recorded. Participants were provided with an overview of the evaluation project and the MSC method. (Please see Appendix 2, Focus Group Script).

2.2.3 MSC Workshops

The MSC workshops were at the core of the evaluation methodology and aimed to engage the stakeholders who have been most closely involved in the development and implementation of the RFP. Seven workshops were held: one workshop with each of the five RFP Working Groups (Renewable Energy, Events, Choose Cradle Coast, Education and Training, Arts and Culture); one workshop with the Core Team; and a final workshop with the Steering Group. The aim of the workshops was to capture stories of change in the region which were related to the priority areas outlined in the Regional Futures Plan (i.e. increasing and supporting outcomes in education, employment, tourism, industry, innovation and enterprise). Recruitment criteria for MSC workshop participants was membership and involvement in CCA Working Groups.

Prior to each of the workshops, we held *Introduction briefings* with Working Group participants. At these briefings, the aims and goals of the evaluation were discussed. Potential participants were then given a Plain Language Information and Consent form, and a 'Homework Sheet' (Appendix 3) to assist them with preparing for their workshop. The purpose of the Homework Sheet was to encourage participants to think about the story they would like to share in the workshop and if they would like to bring an artefact to illustrate a change they had observed.

In total 23 individuals participated in the Working Group and Core Team Workshops (excluding organisers and observers), and an additional two people in the Steering Group Workshop. Five of these people participated more than once, in two workshops. Overall, there was 30 instances of participation. The gender breakdown of workshop participants reveals a stronger participation by women; of the 25 workshop participants, 16 were women and nine were men.

The process followed for each workshop was as follows:

Step 1: Each participant was asked to share a story of change with the group. Participants were also asked if they had an artefact or object that they thought was relevant to the story and would help them communicate the message. The stories were captured in real time by the research team in a Data Collection Table (Appendix 4). The data collection table was visible on screen for the workshop participants during the workshop.

Step 2: Participants were then asked to look back through each of the stories and, working as a group, identify themes and groupings that their stories might fit into. This encouraged the group to think about the types of change that their stories represented, and articulate grounded Domains of Change. Participants were encouraged to think of these as 'sub-headings' in a report. The areas of change were initially expressed as a sentence in the data collection table, for example:

> 'A. There is individual and community awareness and excitement of new possibilities, prosperity and positive changes to be acknowledged things are changing in a good way. Developments in digital and creative economy – emerging opportunities especially around education and training' (Education and Training Working Group).

This sentence was then discussed by the group and re-written as a Domain of Change:

> 'A. Raising individual and community awareness of challenges and new possibilities has led to increased opportunities for young people and the broader community' (Education and Training Working Group).

Participants then compared their own Domains of Change in the data collection table to the Domains of Change that had been previously articulated by the Steering Group and then invited to discuss the extent to which they were similar or different.

Step 3: The group where then asked to allocate each story to a Domain of Change. Working through the data collection table, each story was discussed and allocated to a domain of change with group consensus.

Step 4: Once the stories were each allocated to a Domain of Change, the group was asked to vote for the Most Significant Change story in each domain. This voting process generated one top story for each Domain (total of four stories), assessed by the majority to best represent the most significant changes they had observed throughout the RFP implementation process.

Many of the selected stories were seen as important and shared themes. The stories that were not selected did not articulate the change as strongly as those that were selected.

2.2.4 MSC Selection Process

Final Story Selection: On 30 March 2021 a MSC Workshop was held with the Regional Economic Development Steering Group (REDSG). The purpose of this workshop was to: (a) collect stories of most significant change from the Steering Group; and (b) select the Most Significant Change stories from the top-ranked stories collected from the previous workshops.

The final workshop consisted of the following steps:

- Overview/discussion of MSC method
- Share and capture stories from the Steering Group
- Group stories into Domains of Change
- Share and discuss Working Group and Core Team stories
- Vote for MSC story in each Domain of Change

Prior to the workshop with the REDSG, the researchers gathered the selected stories from the six previous workshops into a Story Categorisation and Selection Table (see Appendix 5a). Researchers mapped the Domains of Change generated in the workshops to the initial Domains of Change identified by the Steering Group. The Steering Group Domains of Change were broad enough to encompass the Domains of Change generated by the Working Groups.

The Steering Group members took turns in reading stories aloud (see Appendix 5b). Stories in the first Domain of Change were read aloud and discussed by the group. The aim of the discussion was to: (a) determine if the story should be placed in a different domain; and (b) identify the MSC story for each Domain of Change.

MSC stories were selected based on how well they connected with each domain of change and if they represented RFP priority areas. Following this, Steering Group participants were encouraged to choose stories that contained adequate detail and context and that communicated a meaningful message.

2.3 Thematic Analysis

A thematic analysis of the focus group, interviews and MSC Stories was conducted. Thematic analysis involves searching for patterns of meaning in the data and identifying, analysing and interpreting those patterns, or 'themes'. A mixed approach to analysis was used. Analysis was informed by theory (the Most Significant Change approach, described above) as well as by unexpected insights or meanings that were apparent in the transcripts.

For the interviews and the focus group, the analysis began with a process of coding using the qualitative analysis software NVivo version 12 (QSR International). Coding involves finding and highlighting words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs in the transcripts that relate to a phenomenon under study. Codes are assigned titles that denote units of meaning. The 'theory-driven' component of the analysis involved the development of a coding frame, which consists of a set of codes and sub-codes that were based on the research questions, the Most Significant Change literature, the interview questions, and a preliminary scan of the raw data. An iterative process of analysis followed, which involved searching for any unexpected meanings, ideas and nuances that were not captured by the existing coding frame. To ensure a good fit, the coding frame was adjusted in response to a careful reading and re-reading of the raw data.

Once no further codes could be identified, the codes were described, labelled and given descriptions. The codes were further classified by qualifying what data extracts 'fit' under each and excluding what did not, with example quotations drawn from the transcripts. This involved re-classifying, merging, or sorting codes that may have overlapped in meaning, or that did not appear frequently or at all in the data to warrant inclusion in the analysis. Once the final coding frame was established, key themes (broader topics, ideas and meanings) were identified and reviewed in line with the research questions.

A total of 20 Stories were selected by Working Groups members. These stories were analysed for recurring themes in order to capture the *areas or domains of change* most frequently mentioned. The subject and significance of the story were used to identify the key issue and area of change. In total, 10 areas of change were identified across the 20 stories. These areas are discussed in the Findings section (see page 22). A number of stories were linked to more than one theme indicating the complexity of the changes identified. In these cases, the story was categorised under the dominant theme and the connections to sub-themes noted in the discussion.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 The Most Significant Change Stories

The Most Significant Change stories selected by the Steering Group are listed in Table 2 below. In total, six stories were chosen to represent the significant changes observed in the region related to the Regional Futures Plan and its implementation. Of these six stories, four were selected from four Working Groups, and two from the Steering Group. The aim during the selection process was to find the strongest story of change for each Domain of Change. These stories are detailed in the pages that follow.

Domain of Change	Most Significant Story
Domain of Change 1: Collaboration and Connectivity – Overcoming Fragmentation and Silos, Involving Communities	Story 1. "Recognising the need for strategic/ coordinated community engagement", Renewable Energy Group.
Domain of Change 2: Communication and Storytelling – Promoting Pride in the Region/ Overcoming Negativity	Story 8. "The Changing Face of our Community", Choose Cradle Coast Group.
Domain of Change 3: Partnerships and influence – Finding New Sources of Investment and Buy-in/ Overcoming dependence	Story 12. "The Importance of Arts and Culture in the Regional Narrative", Arts and Culture Working Group.
Domain of Change 4: Confidence to Change/ Empowering Action – Clear Vision; Visible Action and Impact	Story 18. "Connections", Education and Training Working Group.
Steering Group Stories	Story 7: "Pride is building in our community" Story 20: "The Futures Plan is Coming to Life"

Table 2: Most Significant Change Stories

3.1.1 Collaboration and Connectivity

The first domain of change was *Collaboration and Connectivity – Overcoming Fragmentation and Silos, Involving Communities.* Six stories that were presented and selected by the Working Groups and the Core Team as representing significant change, spoke to Domain 1. These stories emphasised a number of changes relating to increasing levels of collaboration and connectivity across stakeholders, organisations and communities in the region.

The story selected by the Steering Group to represent the most significant change with respect to Collaboration and Connectivity was a story from the Renewable Energy Working Group, called "**Recognising the need for strategic/ coordinated community engagement".** The story was accompanied by an artefact, in the form of a flyer for the Cethana pumped hydro community drop-in session. The story and a copy of the artefact are presented below.

"Recognising the need for strategic/ coordinated community engagement" *(Renewable Energy Working Group, Story 1)*

Domains of Change: Collaboration and Connectivity – Overcoming Fragmentation and Silos, Involving Communities; and Confidence to Change/ Empowering Action – Clear Vision; Visible Action and Impact
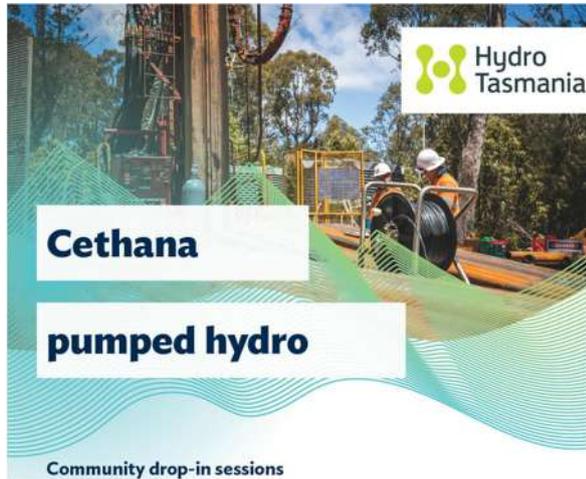
The working group members have now clarified what they are trying to achieve in meetings, toward the end of 2020. They have 'identified how seriously we need coordinated stakeholder engagement' as an industry, beyond the individual efforts of specific companies. Grassroots community engagement is needed which includes respected local leaders. Last week, the mayor of Kentish spoke on the local radio talk show in support of renewable energy projects, and a few days later someone from the community rang up in the open mic session and contradicted everything positive that had been said.

This is important because there is a need to take ownership of the community engagement agenda, be transparent, acknowledge deeper community concerns about regional development and impact on natural resources, and let people make up their own mind about the industry.

3.1.2 Communication and Storytelling

The second domain of change was *Communication and Storytelling – Promoting Pride in the Region/ Overcoming Negativity.* Four of the stories presented and selected by the Working Groups and Core Team spoke to Domain 2. These stories emphasised a number of changes relating to growing pride in the region and improved communication within and across communities.

The story selected by the Steering Group to represent the most significant change with respect to Communication and Storytelling was a story from the Choose Cradle Coast Working Group, called "**The Changing Face of Our Community**". This story communicated a *gradual change in the social fabric from tolerance to acceptance and welcoming*. The story was accompanied by an artefact in the form of a photograph from local Facebook page. The story and a copy of the artefact are presented below.

"The Changing Face of our Community" (Choose Cradle Coast Working Group, Story 8)

"Gradual change in the social fabric from tolerance to acceptance and welcoming"

The photo is of Salman, a cricket teammate from Circular Head. Salman is from Pakistan and came to Circular Head to work on the Woolnorth Dairy Farm. Some of the employees fielded a team for T20 cricket, and now Salman plays on the local team. His family was living in the region but they returned to Pakistan last year and have been unable to return due to COVID. Cultural diversity has been more visible in the Circular Head community in the past five years, and especially in the last two. For instance, there were also a number of workers from Papua New Guinea at the abattoir last year; they are living six or seven people to a home. The Council has organised community lunches and the Cricket Facebook Page has also facilitated community connections. It is very common to see people of different backgrounds involved in the community.

This is important because the story about the changing composition of the community ties in to the shortage of housing. These communities prefer a different style of housing because they enjoy living closer together, e.g. multiple people in the same house. The blend of housing and services will need to be tailored to the needs of a changing community.

3.1.3 Partnerships and Influence

The third domain of change was *Partnerships and influence – Finding New Sources of Investment and Buy-in/ Overcoming dependence.* Four stories presented and selected by the Working Groups spoke to Domain 3. These stories emphasised changes relating specifically to new sources of value creation in the region and were closely linked to conversations about the value and influence of regional arts, culture, and events.

The story selected by the Steering Group to represent the most significant change with respect to Partnerships and Influence was a story from the Arts and Culture Working Group, called "**The Importance of Arts and Culture in the Regional Narrative".** It was emailed ahead of the workshop and accompanied by an artefact in the form of a web link to an article by Kim Houghton at the Regional Australia institute on "How (and Why) Do Regions Grow?". The story spoke to changes in the form of action *to elevate the vitality and liveability of the region through both quality of local artists and ability to attract international artists*. A copy of the story and artefact are presented below.

"The Importance of Arts and Culture in the Regional Narrative" (Arts and Culture Working Group, Story 12)

"Elevate the vitality and liveability of the region through both quality of local artists and ability to attract international artists"

Kim Houghton
Economics as if people matter

HOME   ABOUT KIM HOUGHTON   ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POSTS

How (and why) do regions grow?

For me there are two clear and significant stories of change to come out of this process so far.

The first is the formation of a group that is thinking about Arts and Culture from a regional perspective. To my knowledge this has not been done or even attempted previously and in itself is a huge success/represents a significant opportunity for our region.

Because of the dispersed nature of our population and limited range/size of arts organisations, resources and formal opportunities in the sector there has tended to be a silo-ed, parochial nature to activities with individuals having an allegiance to one group, gallery or town, and groups and organisations having an allegiance to one town/subsection of the arts community even if they are as close as Devonport and Burnie. This has been a known and frustrating situation for as long as I have lived here without any significant change until now.

This is significant because the Arts and Culture working group has brought together:

- Artists/Arts Workers

- Local government/Private Sector/NFP representatives

- Arts/Non arts organisations

For example: Because of this Working Group I have met (even worked with to apply for a grant - unsuccessfully) Alexandra Morse (Art Therapist in the Health Care sector) who I had heard of but never even crossed paths with.

It has also strengthened my relationship with other artists (who I might see at exhibition or project openings but rarely meet with intentionally, or have the luxury/privilege of discussing the big picture (we are so all immersed and busy working on our own projects, careers, communities).

3.1.4 Confidence to Change/ Empowering Action

The fourth and final domain of change was *Confidence to Change/ Empowering Action – Clear Vision; Visible Action and Impact.* Four stories presented and selected by the Working Groups spoke to Domain 4. These stories emphasised changes that related to growing confidence and agency to action change within the region. Domain 4 was the most action-oriented of the four Domains of Change.

The story selected by the Steering Group to represent the most significant change with respect to Confidence to Change/ Empowering Action was a story from the Education and Training Working Group, called **"Connections".** This story illustrates changes as *raising individual and community awareness of challenges and new possibilities has led to increased opportunities for young people and the broader community*. A copy of the story is presented below.

> *"Connections" (Education and Training Working Group, Story 18)*
>
> *"Raising individual and community awareness of challenges and new possibilities has led to increased opportunities for young people and the broader community"*
>
> This is only the storyteller's second meeting with the Working Group, but she has observed that in spite of all of the dire predictions about the likely impact of COVID for young people, once people in the region have been able to get together, the response from the community has been unbelievable. In particular, there has been strong engagement of industry and community with schools. There has been a sense of urgency post-COVID and strong participation; people are enjoying the opportunity to connect. In the Beacon Foundation they say, "You can't be what you don't see", so the more that communities can connect with schools and enable young people to see the different career pathways that are available locally, the better the outcomes for young people will be.
>
> **This is important because** the North West is a tight-knit community where everyone is a friend of a friend; opportunities to connect and build new networks are valuable and can connect young people into education and employment pathways.

3.1.5 Stories from the Steering Group

In addition to the four Most Significant Change stories above, the Steering Group nominated two stories from their own experiences to capture the overall impacts of the RFP process to date. The first story, "Pride is Building in our Community", was seen as speaking to both Domain 1 (Collaboration and Connectivity) and Domain 2 (Communication and Storytelling). A copy of the story is presented below.

"Pride is building in our community" (Steering Group, Story 7)

There is positive energy around the region, coming out of COVID, and a very big pride of place. We have never seen that before; this has changed enormously. People are working together so much better. Before, people were staying with their groups, but now there is more extensive networking. There is value in working together, e.g. increasing employment opportunities. People have always valued where they come from, but it is enhanced now; people recognised they were lucky, privileged to be here during COVID and not somewhere like Melbourne in a lockdown. **This is significant because** there is a link between networking and collaboration – people building respect and appreciation of each other. This has lasted; people are continuing to work together. One group member received a letter from a committee member in Kentish, a public servant, about buying local for Easter. People are supporting their local community. It is also about moving around and spending locally, injecting money into the local economy. People are becoming more aware of this than they were previously**.**

From a Regional Futures Plan perspective, the working groups provided opportunities to extend these conversations, networks, and knowledge, and recognise what is happening in the region. In the past, people have not been as outgoing; but there has been a transformation. People are working together more in the arts, tourism and breaking through silos. There is a move from negativity in the region to a reflection among people that they were lucky to be in Tasmania. On the ground there are examples of CCA activities such as the Coastal Pathway that showcases the natural environment and wilderness. The Mersey Trails also – these initiatives showcase the environment that we live in and are making people realise just what the area has to offer. Here, we can enjoy different walks, activities, and experiences like bike riding and stay-cations; there are diverse things that we were able to do and we could move around even during COVID.

A view from outside the region confirms that change is happening. Pride is building in the North West. There are lots of actors that are making this happen, from the biking in Kentish and LaTrobe to events such as Ten Days on the Island. Grassroots pride is building – it is not 'being built'; rather, there are lots of people contributing to this, lots of people are doing things. It is hard to get fish swimming in the same direction unless they are part of the same 'school'.

The second story nominated by the Steering group was called "The Futures Plan is Coming to Life". This story spoke particularly to Domain of Change #4: Confidence to Change/ Empowering Action. This story was accompanied by an artefact in the form of a link to the Business North West Facebook Page with a recording of the Breakfast Session presentation on the Regional Futures Plan:

"The Futures Plan is Coming to Life" (SG2, Story 20)

Figure 3:
https://www.facebook.com/1897467903891217/videos/428553695116
876/?__so__=channel_tab&__rv__=all_videos_card

The Futures Plan is coming to life. It provided us with a construct that we could reference back to. The Plan is gaining momentum, validation and awareness. There is growing awareness of what is in the Regional Futures Plan, it is no longer just words on a page. When the storyteller first started in her position on the Steering Committee she was excited about the Plan, but then wondered: "How will we bring all this together?". There is now greater clarity around the links between RFP and the investment framework – there is more clarity on collaboration potential. There is a stronger shared vision and sense of collective responsibility with respect and appreciation among Working Group members and the broader CCA stakeholder structure.

The breakfast session with North West businesses was an 'Ah-ha' moment. We built the plane mid-air and we've finally landed it, now we need to make sure we can take off again. This was 14 months into the process. There is always a bit of anxiety about doing a presentation, but when Daryl and I started talking, we saw on people's faces that they were engaged. People were nodding in the room and we could answer their questions, it was a good conversation. There were people in the audience from Devonport, Smithton, around the region. There was interest to take the discussion to the next level. There were also random phone calls, conversations and people asking about the framework, asking: "how can we apply, how do we do it, does it make sense?". This was conversation starter. It is a bit like a jigsaw puzzle, each time we add a piece, the puzzle gains greater clarity.

This is significant because *living* the Regional Futures Plan is at the heart of what we're trying to do. It is the lever, and we need to have the right lever. It is about a stronger region, being able to make good choices about our careers and have options. The storyteller acknowledged her subjective position as a white middle-class woman, and that some in the community would have a different picture. Nevertheless, these differences are not as great as they were in the past. When we achieve everything that is in the Plan, we will have something to be very proud of.

3.2 Key Areas of Change identified in the MSC Workshops

The six stories presented above capture the "Most Significant Changes" that stakeholders closely involved in the process have observed through the implementation of the Regional Futures Plan. Through the workshop process, a much larger number of stories were shared and discussed to arrive at these six; a total number of 33 stories. Of the 33 stories, Workshop participants selected 20 which communicated the most significant changes from their perspectives. While each story was different and focused on a particular event, encounter, project or issue that affected local communities and the region, common themes ran through the stories. In this section we discuss the common themes emerging from the 20 Most Significant Change stories (stories available in Appendix 6), and, how these themes compare to the four Domains of Change identified by the Steering Group.

3.2.1 Communication and Collaboration

Across the stories, the most frequently mentioned area of change was **communication** and its contribution to growing **collaboration** for joint action within the region. All working groups identified significant changes in the form of stronger communication between working group members, working groups, community members and local organisations, and between council members and working groups.

Story 1 'Recognising the need for strategic/ coordinated community engagement' (Renewable Energy) describes reaching out to the community, refining the strategic aims of working groups and identifying the resources required to fulfil goals. The story acknowledges the need for 'Grassroots community engagement… which includes respected local leaders'. Story 4 'Policy Changes in Other Organisations' (Core Team) identifies change in the way local priorities are communicated and heard, with information being shared between councils and communicated with state-level decision makers. This change has empowered local actors and contributed to the breaking down of silos.

Several stories described how stronger collaboration and communication have been supported by online platforms. Story 9 'Self-access to information for local people via Regional Restart Hub' (Choose Cradle Coast) describes a process through which an online resource, the Regional Restart Hub, has created greater access to information about Cradle Coast projects, grants and activities for the community. This facilitates knowledge sharing with the community, the discussion of new projects and funding opportunities. Story 3 'Renewable Energy Networks' (Core Team) describes changes in the way people work via the Energy Hub Website which brings developers together online for greater collaboration.

Increased collaboration and friendly competition in the arts sector has led organisations to work together to plan impactful events for the region (Story 11, 'Visiting artist collaboration', Arts and Culture). For the Events Working Group, 'Collaboration has been the main benefit of the Working Group; collaboration has led to cost savings as well. Events have tight budgets, and so any cost savings can be reinvested in events' (Story 5, 'Collaboration'). The Arts and Culture Working Group report that, 'The RFP has resulted in something that previously did not exist – the Formation of a group that is thinking about Arts and Culture from a regional perspective' (Story 12, Arts and Culture).

Strengthened communications and collaboration aligns with *Domain of Change 1 Collaboration and Connectivity* and *Domain of Change 2 Communication and Storytelling – Promoting Pride in the Region/ Overcoming Negativity*. Working Groups, Steering Group and Core Team have provided structures to support communication and collaboration to overcome silos and encouraging civic participation among local actors. The Steering Group highlighted the benefits of continuing the Working Groups to enhance collaboration and build confidence:

> *'From a Regional Futures Plan perspective, the working groups provided opportunities to extend these conversations, networks, and knowledge, and recognise what is happening in the region. In the past, people have not been as outgoing; but there has been a transformation'* (Story 7, 'Pride is building in our community', Steering Group).

The RFP implementation process has created structures to facilitate communication and to reinforce the value of communication; not only across sectoral silos and among councils (both of which are important), but also "vertically" between Councils and state government (Story 4) and between Councils and their constituent communities (Story 9).

3.2.2 Community Cohesion and Resilience

The second strongest theme emerging from the most significant change stories is **community cohesion and resilience**. Many of these stories reflected directly or indirectly on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the region, and the ways that stakeholders were able to adapt and develop innovative responses.

Story 13 'Arts events' (Arts and Culture) describes how arts events brought the community together during the COVID-19 pandemic: 'Despite COVID, arts events have continued successfully, largely due to the drive and effort of volunteers.' There is now a strong volunteer support base for events among community members.

Story 18 (Education and Training) also describes a greater sense of community cohesion as people have remained connected even during the COVID-19 pandemic:

> *…the more that communities can connect with schools and enable young people to see the different career pathways that are available locally, the better the outcomes for young people will be. **This is important because** the North West is a tight-knit community where everyone is a friend of a friend; opportunities to connect and build new networks are valuable and can connect young people into education and employment pathways.*

The Events Working Group in particular experienced a stronger sense of cohesion, innovation and resilience among group members during the COVID-19 pandemic. The group also perceived community resilience and interest in grassroots community events:

> *'There was also knowledge sharing, for instance about what small community events were still continuing, and online events. A number of local events were held during COVID such as the Chalk Walk chalk sidewalk project' (Story 6, Resilience, Events Working Group).*

This theme builds upon the foundation of strengthened communication and collaboration and, as such, aligns with Domains of Change 1 and 2. Opening up channels of communication has laid the foundation for networks to form, which have contributed to a sense of growing community resilience. This resilience became apparent to Working Group members during the COVID-19 pandemic when social distancing restrictions were put in place and people found ways of coming together and supporting local business.

Building resilience via the evolution of networks was one of the aims set out in the Regional Futures Plan (CCA, 2021: 23). Improved resilience is also identified by Bracken (2021: 17) in terms of labour force participation and growth and resilience of the regional economy.

3.2.3 Strategic Planning

The Regional Futures Plan has facilitated **strategic planning** at regional scale in targeted areas. For instance, the Events Working Group have experienced changes in the way they think about and approach events, for instance how they can bring people together across different generations, and how events can be funded. Story 15 ('Funding for a Significant Regional Event') describes a new event with a strategic purpose:

> *'The proposed project is about telling stories from the region through photography and art, linking older people with younger people; school students with grandparents. We don't want to copy what has been done elsewhere; we want to tell our own stories'.*

For the Steering Group there has been a change in strategic planning as the RFP has come to life:

> *There is now greater clarity around the links between RFP and the investment framework – there is more clarity on collaboration potential. There is a stronger shared vision and sense of collective responsibility with respect and appreciation among Working Group members and the broader CCA*

26

stakeholder structure. This is significant because, living the Regional Futures Plan is at the heart of what we're trying to do. It is the lever, and we need to have the right lever. It is about a stronger region, being able to make good choices about our careers and have options. (Story 20, 'The Futures Plan is Coming to Life', Steering Group).

The Strategic Planning theme connects with Domain of Change 4 *Confidence to Change/ Empowering Action – Clear Vision; Visible Action*. The Arts and Culture Working Group are empowered by local stories, and for the Steering Group, a regional story of change and empowerment is also emerging. Increased social participation is also reported by Bracken (2021: 11), particularly through greater participation in the arts.

3.2.4 Education and Employment Pathways

There is increasing awareness that there are employment opportunities available in the region, but young people in particular are not being connected with jobs. This awareness has been accompanied by a more positive attitude of 'plenty' towards employment prospects for young people in the region (Story 2 'The People are There: Keeping them and including them', Choose Cradle Coast), and a focus on actively enabling education and employment pathways.

The Education and Training group (Story 17, 'Regional pathways') report that the Cradle Coast School Based Apprenticeship program has provided advice, pathways, and career opportunities to young people in the region. By placing students with councils, that program 'broadens students' awareness and exposure to the types of careers that are available in this region'.

The Arts and Culture Working Group and the Education and Training Group identified emerging opportunities for young people, including online: 'opportunities to use digital technologies to reach a wider audience and develop new arts ventures' (Story 14, 'Opportunities: linking arts to tourism, online presence, employment pathways, reaching out to young people', Arts and Culture).

The Education and Training Group identified specific changes in the confidence of graduates who have undertaken education and learning pathways. Graduates shared experiences of feeling empowered and having a sense of voice. The Group reported:

When the graduates were asked to reflect on their experience, they burst into tears; they all talked about confidence. They didn't think they had the capability to study at university. Even though they did have the ability, they lacked confidence. This is a fundamental issue in our region. If we are focusing on education and training in our region, infrastructure and systems matter, but so does the personal element. People need confidence and a pathway to follow.

The Study Hub helps students develop confidence by being present in the community and having support people available (Story 19, 'Confidence and aspiration', Education and Training).

The theme of Education and Employment Pathways strongly connects with *Domain of Change 1: Collaboration and Connectivity – Overcoming Fragmentation and Silos, Involving Communities*, and *Domain of Change 4 Confidence to Change/ Empowering Action – Clear Vision; Visible Action and Impact.* Students in the region are growing in confidence and feel empowered; and the action of linking education and employment is creating opportunities for students. This outcome links to the RFP's (2018: 32) strategic agenda and aim to utilise education and employment assets in the region to improve employment pathways.

3.2.5 Pride, Culture and Diversity

There has been a change in the sense of pride people have in their community and a greater appreciation of the natural environment, lifestyle, and culture of the Cradle Coast region. The Steering Group identified a growing sense of 'pride of place and pride in the natural resources that Tasmania has to offer' and 'positive energy around the region, coming out of COVID, and a very big pride of place' (Story 7, 'Pride is building in our community'). The theme of **Pride** in the region was closely linked to the themes of community **culture and diversity**.

A change in the social fabric was observed, with a noticeable shift towards acceptance and respect of people from outside the region. As the Choose Cradle Coast Working Group described, the region's culture is becoming more openly accepting as the population becomes more diverse:

> *There has been more visibility of diversity in the Circular Head community, in the past five years, and especially in the last two. For instance, there were also a number of workers from PNG at the abattoir last year; they are living 6 or 7 people to a home. The Council has organised community lunches, and the Cricket Facebook Page has also contributed to community connection. It is very common to see people of different backgrounds involved in the community.* (Story 8, 'The Changing Face of our Community')

In response to greater **community diversity** the Choose Cradle Coast group recognise the need for resources to support the needs of a growing and more diverse population. Story 16, 'Empty glasses and overflowing glasses', calls for a response to the need for housing:

> *'Making an area family-friendly and liveable can attract people, but we cannot attract people if we cannot provide housing for them. Housing is an issue that requires state government intervention. This is important because we can only go so far in terms of growing our populations and becoming more multicultural if we don't have housing'.*

The theme of *Pride, Culture and Diversity* cuts across Domain of Change 2 *Communication and Storytelling – Promoting Pride in the Region/ Overcoming Negativity*, and Domain of Change 3 *Partnerships and influence – Finding New Sources of Investment and Buy-in*). While the Cradle Coast region is overcoming negativity and experiencing a sense of pride and population growth, there is a need for new sources of investment and different levels of strategic planning to address the housing issues of the diverse population.

3.2.6 Comparison of Domains of Change and Themes

During the MSC process, workshop participants from Working Groups and the Core Team identified themes in their group's stories and used these to articulate their own Domains of Change. These were then compared with the Steering Group's Domains of Change. This process revealed significant alignment between the Steering Group's Domains of Change and those of the Working Groups and Core Team.

The Domains of Change identified by the Steering Group represent broad areas of change, while the Working Groups Domains of Change point to more specific areas of change – for instance, education, network building, and cultural diversity, and workforce development. Domains of Change identified in the workshops were categorised under the Steering Group Domains of Change to illustrate this relationship(See Table 3).

Steering Group Domains of Change (DoC) with corresponding Working Group/ Core Team DoC
1. *Collaboration and Connectivity* – Overcoming Fragmentation and Silos, Involving Communities   Working Group/ Core Team Domains of Change: • "Changes in flexibility of work, employer attitudes, and inclusive workforce development" (Choose Cradle Coast)   • "Connecting communities to opportunities through information access" (Core Team)   • "Linking local and collective voice to decision makers" (Core Team)   • "Working together towards the bigger picture" (Events)   • "Sharing knowledge, empathy, and supporting each other" (Events)
2. *Communication and Storytelling* – Promoting Pride in the Region/ Overcoming Negativity

Working Groups/ Core Team Domains of Change:
• "Gradual change in the social fabric from tolerance to acceptance and welcoming" (Choose Cradle Coast) • "Community ownership of action for change" (Core Team) • "Celebrating and promoting local, grassroots achievements and lifestyle, and expressing our voice" (Education and Training) • "Encourage collaboration and healthy competition in the arts sector" (Arts and Culture)
3. *Partnerships and influence* – Finding New Sources of Investment and Buy-in/ Overcoming dependence Working Groups/ Core Team Domains of Change: • "Elevate the vitality and liveability of the region through both quality of local artists and ability to attract international artists" (Arts and Culture) • "Enable access and involvement in the arts for all, in order to enrich the human experience, express our voice/story, empower, create confidence and belonging" (Arts and Culture) • "Recognise the role of arts and culture in the economic and entrepreneurial landscape including via digital technology" (Arts and Culture) • "Switching gears and reinventing events, including funding sources"; and "Telling our story uniquely" (Events)
4. *Confidence to Change/ Empowering Action* – Clear Vision; Visible Action and Impact Working Groups/ Core Team Domains of Change: • "Greater understanding of the housing issues and impact of major disruptor (pandemic)" (Choose Cradle Coast) • "Recognising the value of networks in collaborating and sharing connections between industry, business, education and community" (Education and Training) • "Raising individual and community awareness of challenges and new possibilities has led to increased opportunities for young people and the broader community" (Education and Training) • "Providing present, visible, invested support to build trust and confidence in education, training and career pathways" (Education and Training)

Table 3: Categorisation of Working Group Domains of Change

The Steering Group Domains of Change (Table 3, above) numbered 1 to 4 also align with the change themes that we identified in our thematic analysis of stories. The top two change themes, **Communication and Collaboration** and **Community Cohesion and Resilience**, are captured in the Steering Group Domains of Change 1 and 2. The standout theme here was *increased communication* across groups and Councils. The creation of the Working Groups themselves meant that members from different segments of the community were bought together to collaborate in ways they had previously not been able to.

Our theme of **Strategic Planning** aligns more closely with the Steering Group Domain of Change 1 *Collaboration and Connectivity* than it does with the Domain of Change 3 *Partnerships and Influence.* This is because the Stories of Change were about the ways in which Working Groups had been able to think and plan ahead with the Futures Plan priorities in mind, work together across groups and silos, and to generate participation in arts and culture, rather than focus on Investment and Buy-in/ Overcoming dependence.

Our theme of **Employment and Education Pathways** can be read as a sub-category of Steering Group Domain of Change 4 *Confidence to Change/ Empowering Action*. Educational pathways and connections/networks with employers were seen as a mechanism for empowerment and a way to create change on behalf of younger generations facing labour market challenges.

The theme **Pride, Culture and Diversity** aligns with Steering Group Domain of Change 2. *Communication and Storytelling.* Many MSC stories acknowledged the need to pause and reflect on local and regional assets, achievements and the potential of the natural environment. The Stories reflect a growing sense of pride in the region; however, this sense of pride was often tempered by lack of recognition of 'organic' local achievements in the community.

Steering Group Domain of Change	Themes from MSC Stories
Domain of Change 1: Collaboration and Connectivity – Overcoming Fragmentation and Silos, Involving Communities	Communication and Collaboration Community Cohesion and Resilience
Domain of Change 2: Communication and Storytelling – Promoting Pride in the Region/ Overcoming Negativity	Strategic Planning Pride, Culture and Diversity
Domain of Change 3: Partnerships and influence – Finding New Sources of Investment and Buy-in/ Overcoming dependence	Strategic Planning
Domain of Change 4: Confidence to Change/ Empowering Action – Clear Vision; Visible Action and Impact	Education and Employment Pathways

Table 4: Alignment of Domains of Change and Change Story Themes

3.3 Focus Group Findings: Council General Managers' Views

The focus group with general managers of CCA member councils was structured around four key questions (see Appendix 2) which we have used to frame our discussion here. In this section we discuss how the participants understand the role of the RFP in promoting change, and what could be done differently moving forward.

Overall, the focus group discussion centered around three key themes, which were framed in terms of *the need for*:

- **Stronger communication and connectivity** between the working groups, steering group and general managers of the member councils;
- **More options for consultation** about the social, environmental, employment, and industrialisation effects of new projects for different local government areas; and
- A more **cooperative, cohesive way of strategic planning** that can feed into how the working groups create and act on projects.

The Focus Group identified changes in their council areas and the broader region since the Regional Futures Plan was developed. Different council areas and sub-regions experience different changes and challenges, but all of the participants agreed that there needs to be a collaborative and considered response, particularly when it comes to economic development and the issues it presents across government boundaries.

Overall, the group agreed that the Plan contains high level priorities that set a clear, long-term 'vision' for the Cradle Coast region. However, greater consultation is needed to help align those priorities with the needs of the community and member councils, which often lose sight of how different projects fit together.

3.3.1 Regional challenges

The focus group discussion highlighted issues and challenges for the region as a whole. These included: managing opportunities for economic growth and diversification; transitioning towards renewable energy; and supporting community well-being and employment as traditional industries, such as manufacturing and agriculture, experience structural change. The challenges these issues presented for each council varied, but the participants recognised the value in understanding what is happening across the region, how it all fits together, and what can be done to find shared solutions. It was acknowledged that a broad strategic approach was needed to help connect different regional developments and allow for greater alignment and coordination. To help facilitate this, the general managers agreed that a mutual and grounded understanding of the local context of each region, their particular needs, and what is valued by the community, is required.

The *Latrobe and Kentish councils* reported that unprecedented growth in housing developments, the aquaculture industry and redevelopments in renewable energy had brought in new opportunities for economic development. As these changes take place and the population grows, key challenges include the need for affordable housing and new ways of managing the industrialisation of the wind energy zone. The *Waratah Wynyard Council* has experienced a similar surge in redevelopment, with an increase in the number of requests for rezoning and planning submitted to council.

The *Central Coast Council's* region has experienced environmental change, which has highlighted the need for climate action and better waste management. Concern was flagged about the health and well-being of community members, particularly in relation to the resources and infrastructure available to an aging community.

On the *West Coast*, the tourism, aquaculture and renewable energy industries have experienced significant growth, and there has been a shift in the resource sector over a long period of time, which has seen mining companies leaving the region. Technological changes have upended the workforce, reducing the need for routinised work and increasing the demand for high-skilled technical and analytic work. This process has accelerated over last the two years, which has had a "dramatic impact" on the community; as the economy continues to diversify, people are required to learn new skills and find new industries to work in.

3.3.2 Understanding the role of the Regional Futures Plan

The general managers agreed that the Regional Futures Plan has the capacity to help drive activity and change, improve how member councils and stakeholders work together on areas of competitive advantage and concern, and bring like-minded people from different sectors together.

Focus group participants also agreed that there is a role for the Plan in coordinating a whole-of-region approach to the challenges identified above. The Plan facilitated an understanding of 'how the pieces fit together' and how issues thought to be separate, such as tourism and development projects, should be addressed together. The Futures Plan could facilitate a coordinated approach to advocacy and tourism by framing these as linked markets operating in different areas. For example, looking to successes like Coastal Pathways, the small-scale Mountain bike projects in Latrobe/Kentish could be understood as part of a bigger process of keeping people in the area and connecting with other tourism events and activities.

> *… [T]he sectoral collaboration and cooperation…that's where I see the real benefit, getting those people together to work on areas of competitive advantage, areas of concern, and driving some activity and change in that space, which we're starting to see through working groups and otherwise. So to me, that's the critical role of the Plan.* (Focus Group)

The Regional Futures Plan also encouraged thinking about the broader environmental impact of development projects, such as pumped hydro. However, the participants felt that they would benefit from more feedback to

be kept abreast of existing initiatives. Focus group participants highlighted a need for stronger communication about current initiatives and how they are connected across the region, so that different stakeholders can work together to support developments. The impact of these initiatives, particularly controversial ones such as Pumped Hydro, need to be clearly communicated to local community members. Participants recognised that many local community members are concerned about the impacts of industrial development on natural resources, and community consultation would keep people informed and, in some cases, alleviate fears based on misinformation.

Participants also felt that it was difficult to engage with some of the Plan's items because of their regional specificity, and this contributed to a disconnect between the priorities of the Plan and what is happening on the ground. Engagement with the items of the Plan and the wider community is further complicated by the geographical distance between member councils and working groups, and the layout of the Cradle Coast region.

For the general managers, strengthening collaboration was about improving cross-sectoral linkages and connectivity – in particular, strengthening connections between working groups, and between steering groups and member councils. Some general managers felt disconnected from what was happening 'on the ground' and indicated that better cross-sector collaboration would help drive activity, improve information-sharing and allow stakeholders to see how different local initiatives are connected on a broader scale.

A strong and grounded understanding of the local context is also needed to inform the strategies of the Working Groups. It was observed that the working groups are best equipped to drive activity and generate new ideas and should be empowered to provide greater input into the direction of the Plan. To help facilitate this, communication between the steering group, working groups and member councils needs to be strengthened.

To help improve communication, it was suggested that the Plan could play a role in framing consultation documents for community members and stakeholders, and how its priorities can tie in with the State and other regional concerns or activities. Political actors at different levels of government need to be kept informed about the significance of different projects for the region so that they are appropriately funded and do not stall; for instance, Pumped Hydro will progress only if Project Marinus goes ahead. The Plan could also be used to frame discussions around the scale of projects, and how particular projects – such as renewable energy initiatives – can benefit the community.

> *I think just reinforcing the big picture wins that we've had by working together, like the Cradle Mountain Master Plan, the Coastal Pathway; like not fragmenting our ideas or projects and getting sign-off through the priorities projects, you know, to address some of those Future Plan issues, I think that's the big picture. But we've had some successes in that area over the last few years.* (Focus Group)

It was recognised that the Futures Plan aims to create inter-generational change in the long-term. This means that the impact of the Plan's initiatives are difficult to see and measure in the present, particularly when it comes to complex issues. To begin to reach the full potential of the Futures Plan, the processes, capabilities and competencies of the Authority must mature and become embedded in the region and the economy.

3.4 Interview Findings: Other Stakeholders' Views

In this section, we summarise the key challenges and changes identified in interviews. Many of the interview participants were involved in the early development and implementation of the Futures Plan. As a result, their observations focused more on the challenges of implementation.

Across the eight interviews conducted with regional stakeholders, discussions centered on three key changes and challenges:

- **Thinking regionally**
- **Working better together**
- **Effective governance**

Overall, the challenges identified related to: 'siloed' thinking and fragmentation across member councils; a lack of clarity in governance structures and leadership roles; and the broad and expansive scope of the Futures Plan, which made it difficult to for strong decisions to be made.

The participants also identified elements of the Futures Plan that have been critical in encouraging a more 'joined up' approach to regional development. Although the Futures Plan was slow to mature, it was already changing how people perceive regional problems and how they work together to address them. Having these joint structures in place also instils confidence in the region's ability to tackle issues and manage new opportunities for economic growth, particularly when faced with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.4.1 Thinking regionally

Interviewees noted that the Regional Futures Plan lacked a clearly articulated focus for the region as a whole. They found little clarity as to what it means to think about the needs of the region and how the priorities identified in the Plan can be actioned. This created some uncertainty among stakeholders, who often found it difficult to find ways to engage productively with others and to begin developing initiatives to tackle complex regional problems. In particular, the broad scope of the Futures Plan made it difficult to focus on issues of mutual concern in a practical and serviceable way:

> *I've found that some of the challenges for people have just been getting across the whole scope of the Futures Plan. It really is very broad, and it's all interrelated. You pull one string and then it just keeps on snowballing out. You go, "People can't get work", but then it's, "Oh, but that's because they don't have the skills", and then, "That's because they don't have the TAFE teachers", and, "That's because they don't have" – and you can have really long conversations and end up with not knowing what's going on and what we can do.* (Interview 6)

A former Reference Group member felt that much of this uncertainty can be attributed to the way that the Futures Plan was developed. It was shaped by two high-level approaches that were not well conceptually linked – one approach was driven by assets-based community development, and another by the Regional Australia Institute's (RAI) Pathfinder methodology. This contributed to a disconnect in practice because the approaches were not well aligned and lacked wholesale support across the board, which other interviewees attributed to the lack of a consistent and evenly spread consultation process.

> *… While both the CCA and Reference Group put in a great deal of effort to marry these two visions, the links between them were poorly articulated… At the same time, some Reference Group members expressed concern that the Group had not been consulted in the commissioning of RAI.* (Interview 7)

A key challenge is 'siloed' thinking among member councils. These 'silos' refer to the tendency to not share priorities, goals, resources and information with each other. The participants acknowledged that differences in economic activity – particularly between the eastern and western end of the Cradle Coast – limit the extent to which councils can find the mutual ground to 'think regionally' as "one cohesive economic entity" (Interview 4). For example, on the western end of the Coast, Burnie Council is better able to collaborate with surrounding government areas because it is of mutual benefit to them. This type of collaboration does not naturally carry over to councils on the eastern side of the Coast because they are not economically interdependent and there is little incentive for them to understand or address the issues that face different 'economic zones':

> *I still think that some of the underlying issues around what constitutes the region and how the member councils actually work together are still an obstacle to the Regional Future's Plan really being able to achieve everything that it could. So, I think it got picked up in the plan in the end. There's two schools of thought, that north-west is one region or it's actually two sub-regions and we need to work with that and work out how the two sub-regions work together, rather than try to pretend that it's all one cohesive economic entity.* (Interview 4)

Despite these limitations, the interviewees noted that member councils have increasingly recognised that working alone is not a viable or sustainable option. They do not have capacity to scale their own economies due to their geographic spread and demography, and would get much more value for money if they are not "duplicating delivery of small-scale services across a whole lot of little different areas" (Interview 2). The Futures Plan would have benefited from greater consultation to 'set the scene' for effective implementation. However, it has created the environment for a more consolidated approach to begin to develop. The interviewees identified this as a good outcome of the Futures Plan, and noted that the community need to be made more aware of the Plan's strengths to instill more confidence in its potential to address the issues that affect them, particularly among young people looking to take up new opportunities:

> *That's really been a big help, having other people and other regions also doing similar things. Some of them have got different issues as well, some of them don't have jobs and industry growth which we do, so that makes that even harder for them. Acknowledging that we have a pretty good economic position, we just need to make people aware of itis a good outcome of the Future Plan approach, too. It's buoyed people more than it depressed people.* (Interview 6)

3.4.2 Working better together

Interviewees had a strong understanding of the governance structures that were developed to facilitate collaboration. A common issue that was raised related to the capacity of these consultative processes to engage different stakeholders and encourage them to work together. These difficulties were attributed to the origins of the Plan, which appeared to be the work of one person "with a big idea" – not the result of careful planning and consultation. Stakeholders felt that they had little opportunity to provide input into the design and implementation of change initiatives and this led to a diminished sense of collective ownership and responsibility. As a result, many stakeholders felt confused about their roles and were not able to adapt quickly to new or different ways of working:

> *… I think this poor economic development manager with a big idea – and knew keeping things simple and bringing people on the journey wasn't his strength. And perhaps, if it had been carefully planned, people in my current role and maybe even the chair at the time and others might have been filling that role. But it ended up all being [one person], and everybody was just confused. And we know, "Oh my God, we keep rocking up at these meetings where there lots of talk, but we don't even understand. This is going nowhere."* (Interview 5)

Several participants also felt that they were not adequately consulted during the development of the Futures Plan on issues relating to the sectors and industries they represent. In some cases, organisations were left to innovate on their own to address resource constraints and gaps in service provision for people experiencing disadvantage, and for young people seeking employment pathways. Interviewees agreed that there is a need for greater consistency in approach, and clearer lines of accountability and transparency between the steering group and other stakeholders:

> *… I believe the development of the Futures Plan would have benefited from a much more tightly defined blueprint. Ideally, this blueprint… would have been developed in partnership with the Reference Group, so that any potential tensions or redundancies could be addressed from the outset.* (Interview 7)

Participants felt that a great deal of this consistency would come from the continuing maturation of the Plan and a collective belief in its potential. This is challenging as from its outset the Plan pursued a top-down mandate that clashed with how people are used to working. This created some tension and resistance among stakeholders. However, interviewees noted that this negativity was beginning to change, as stakeholders "have turned that [negative] conversation around" and are now "talking about all the opportunities and what we can make of [the Futures Plan]" (Interview 6). For instance, significant projects such as the Restart and Recovery Hub are increasingly being taken up because stakeholders are better able to share information and

resources with councils and with the Core Team. These channels of communication help feel stakeholders feel like they are part of a group. Most importantly, it enables them to identify areas of cross-over – however small they may be – and to work together to pursue shared goals.

3.4.3 Effective governance

Many of these challenges identified above were attributed to governance structures that do not effectively address the fragmentation that comes with working across different layers of government. Most stakeholders working within councils operate in a dual capacity (voluntarily on behalf of the region and in their routine roles) and this can make it difficult for them to engage with the Plan, particularly if general managers are not supportive of the "direction or the activities or strategies of the Authority" (Interview 4). People are also time poor and may not have the resourcing or capacity to work in roles that are adjacent to but not embedded within their day-to-day activities (Interview 8).

Interviewees also noted that at the outset, the Authority lacked the political legitimacy needed to encourage member councils to act outside their own 'silos' and vested interests. For instance, where the priorities and strategies of a member council do not align with those of the Authority, it was often viewed as more expedient (financially and politically) for the needs of the council to take precedence. This created some tension, both internally for staff within councils and among stakeholders who were engaged as working group members and/or within reference groups.

> *And that's another one of the challenges with us. I mean we're so reliant on state and federal funding to do everything that we do. The moment you start creating a bit of a profile around lean, impactful, leaderful public administration, there are plenty of people out there who start to feel a bit bitter and twisted about it all. I think lots of stakeholders who would prefer a weak Cradle Coast Authority actually – so that's always a challenge.* (Interview 5)

In addition to the challenges associated with working across organisational boundaries, direction at the level of leadership was not clearly defined, leaving stakeholders unclear of their own roles and responsibilities. One interviewee noted that the Authority's board did not have good stewardship over its own role in advancing organisational goals, managing different stakeholder relationships, and ensuring clarity of purpose about their own and others' responsibilities. This meant that the board, the representatives – made up of member councils and mayors – and the Plan's steering group were often not on the same page when it came to making decisions and developing a mandate.

Interviewees observed a "level of deeper collaboration" emerging between the Councils across the region and suggested that recognising differences and similarities between Council areas may help improve collaboration and how decisions are made (Interview 4). Councils have increasingly taken a more strategic and contextually embedded focus, and as the Plan continues to mature it may be best to move beyond the assumption that every opportunity and challenge is going to be identical across the whole region. This approach is reflected in the focus group discussion, which expressed a greater commitment to engaging with and consulting with the community and the working groups to identify opportunities that are relevant to them and that are of mutual concern (see Section 3.3). To help facilitate this, a change in governance and resourcing is required, such as, for example, having clearly defined responsibilities and roles at the level of upper governance, and employing people to work exclusively at the Authority and on the Futures Plan, rather than having them split their time between it and their employer.

3.4.4 Summary – the potential for future change

While interview participants discussed some changes in the region as a result of the Futures Plan, many were keen to take the opportunity to provide feedback on the changes that the region needed, rather than reflect on those that had occurred. The CCA and the RFP are both interventions into existing governance structures and relationships in the region that have impeded regional collaboration towards change. The CCA and RFP have therefore encountered resistance and the initiative has not been able to grow through much needed

relationships with member councils and industries. The Plan was thought to provide a good overview of the issues the region faces. However, it was also acknowledged that the Plan's priorities appear *too complex* with no clear or direct way of actioning them.

The success of implementing a new way of *doing* joined-up regional development ultimately hinges on cultural change that is better able to support a shared sense of responsibility in the region's future. Moving forward, the focus should be on "creating an environment… in which people can come together and get stuff done" (Interview 5). As one interviewee put it, closer attention must be given to supporting the momentum that those "positive conversations[s] about the region" bring, to continue to drive buy-in and investment, and help buffer against any external challenges that may affect the region in the future (Interview 6).

4. CONCLUSION: WHAT HAS CHANGED, WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

Our evaluation of the Regional Futures Plan focused on stakeholders' perceptions of the Futures Plan implementation process and its outcomes. We sought to identify the outcomes that stakeholders deemed most important, guided by the Research Question: *What are the most significant changes that stakeholders identify in the Cradle Coast region from the Regional Futures Plan approach?*

Participants identified many changes through their stories and discussions. These changes primarily referred to processes of communication and growing collaboration that were laying the groundwork for regionally led change. Stories also offered concrete examples that these processes were beginning to yield results. Key change themes identified in the research were: **Communication and Collaboration, Community Cohesion and Resilience, Strategic Planning, Education and Employment Pathways,** and **Pride, Culture and Diversity**. These themes all speak to growing the capability and capacity within the region to lead change.

The five cross-sector Working Groups, Core Team, and Regional Economic Development Steering Group have provided valuable mechanisms for building the capacity, capability and confidence of individuals and organisations to work together to achieve a common vision for their region. The process of bringing a paper Regional Futures Plan 'to life' has surfaced opportunities that were not captured in the original document and engaged a broader group of passionate regional community leaders.

The Futures Plan was designed for long-term, intergenerational change with the strategic intent of intervening into five priority action areas (see Section 1.1). These areas can be summarised as: understanding *job opportunities*; building/developing strengths of *tourism and industry*; supporting *innovation and entrepreneurship*; and improving *educational outcomes*. Changes in each of these areas were discussed by Working Group members.

In particular, Working Group members identified specific changes related to:
- Growing **employment opportunities** by making job pathways in the region more visible, working with industry to identify employment pathways, and bridging *job network firewalls* that create training and employment barriers.
- Planning **tourism events** that attract an international audience and engage the local community, including the ability to develop innovative community events in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Communicating with **industry** leaders to build a shared understanding of challenges in the region and how to develop opportunities for locals to be involved in the renewable energy industry.

To a lesser degree, Working Group members identified change in:
- Supporting **innovation** and **entrepreneurship** through the development of online platforms with information about funding opportunities;
- Generating **Apprenticeship opportunities** with local councils to support education and employment outcomes.

The qualitative evaluation shows that these shifts and changes have been bought about by strengthened communication and collaboration enabled by the RFP Working Group structure. Working group members also described *better communication* and increased informal communication which enabled knowledge sharing. The significance of stronger communication channels that branch out into the community, local organisations and industry cannot be overstated. These are the foundations of relationships that cut across geographical boundaries in order to make regional changes possible. As these relationships grow and intersect across organisations and localities, the potential for strategic and informed regional development action becomes a reality.

Changes in line with the goals of the Futures Plan are most apparent in the steps that working groups have taken towards *collaboration* with other stakeholders, local businesses, and the community. For instance, developments such as stronger participation in arts events or the recognition of stronger community

resilience, are just the tip of the iceberg indicating significant social and cultural change beneath the surface. Many working group members described this feeling of change as increasing pride in the region and celebration of its unique characteristics, strengths, and cultural diversity.

Interview and focus group discussions demonstrated that the Futures Plan has enabled stakeholders to think about change and future change through a collaborative, regional lens. At the same time, they highlighted challenges. The key areas of change identified by Working Groups were identified by focus groups and interview participants as key areas of challenge. As Table 4 shows, while participants documented important changes in **Communication and Collaboration** through the Regional Futures Plan process, interview and focus group participants articulated **Communications and Connectivity** as persisting challenges. While change has occurred, much still remains to be done to overcome silos and strengthen coordination across sectors and localities.

Similarly, other areas of positive change such as **Community Cohesion and Resilience** and **Strategic Planning** have commenced a change journey that is far from complete; in particular, improved **community consultation** and **more cooperative, cohesive strategic planning** supported by **effective governance structures** were discussed as areas that required strengthening. Participants felt that strengthening communication between member councils, working groups and the steering group would help to align priorities and improve how projects can be coordinated and actioned to achieve shared goals.

Area of Change MSC Story Themes	Area of Challenge Focus Group	Area of Challenge Interviews
Communication and Collaboration	Stronger communication and connectivity	Communication
Community Cohesion and Resilience	More options for consultation	Working better together
Strategic planning	Cooperative, cohesive way of strategic planning	Effective governance structures Thinking regionally and strategically
Employment and Education Pathways	Employment pathways	
Pride, Culture and Diversity		

Table 5: Key themes across participant groups

Discussion of changes related to the Regional Futures Plan implementation often sparked larger conversations about the changes that were occurring in the region. Complex social changes were at times difficult for stakeholders to describe, and often sparked a conversation about *what change was needed next*. Our evaluation has revealed some key issues that surfaced through these conversations, indicating promising directions that future change might take.

The following areas were identified as being key areas for *future change*:

1. *Community engagement in development projects*

Tasmania is undergoing development and industrial changes that may impact natural resources and the environment. In some cases, these changes are beneficial. However, there is a need for stronger communication about development projects with local community members:

> *'There is a need to take ownership of the community engagement agenda, be transparent, acknowledge deeper community concerns about regional development and impact on natural resources, and let people make up their own mind about the industry' (Story 1, 'Recognising the need for strategic/ coordinated community engagement', Renewable Energy).*

Focus Group members expressed concerns about the utilisation of natural resources and how they are affected by development projects. They agreed that better communication with local communities is needed to ensure that people understand and support development projects in their community.

The REWG and Core Team identified that greater community engagement and interest in local development projects is needed, as this would enable greater community ownership over who is involved, i.e which companies and organisations. There is a need for community input (particularly from local landowners), and feedback about how these development projects can be progressed. Natural attractions that support activities like Mountain Biking have a beneficial impact on liveability and population growth. For instance, projects like the Mersey mountain bike scheme and the Penguin scheme can help attract and retain the population by improving liveability standards.

2. Pathways to employment

Workshops and focus groups both discussed young people and employment, and the issue of youth career opportunities being obscured by the lack of pathways and work experience options. The essential concern for many participants was how these current challenges can be dealt with in a strategic way, given that networks (social capital) and a culture of low expectation are barriers to employment for young people with experiences of marginalisation.

In response to the challenges of an aging population and gaps in the workforce, many of the working groups identified the need to for a coordinated response. There is a need to connect young people into existing employment opportunities by making them aware of the options in the region. The Renewable Energy Working Group suggested that *renewable opportunities should translate to regional training opportunities.*

There is a need to connect people and job seekers with employment opportunities to support positive outcomes and morale. The Education and Training Working Group discussed the importance of creating pathways to help young people make choices about what careers they would like to pursue.

Working Groups also identified the need to retain the mature age workforce:

> *'We need to make the best of what we have currently, including retaining the mature age workforce and their skills – can business models be changed accommodate this?' (Story 2, 'The People are There: Keeping them and including them', Choose Cradle Coast).*

3. Strategic planning for housing solutions

Working Groups acknowledged the need for s*trategic planning* and *the right resources to support the* growing diversity of the community, and address housing issues in the region:

> *The story about the changing composition of communities ties into the shortage of housing. These communities prefer a different style of housing, they enjoy living closer together, e.g. multiple people in the same house. The blend of housing and services will need to be tailored to the needs of a changing community' (Story 8, 'The Changing Face of our Community', Choose Cradle Coast).*

> *'Nevertheless, there is a lack of forward thinking and communication between levels of government; for instance, local councils were caught unaware by the government's building stimulus package (Story 16, 'Empty glasses and overflowing glasses', Choose Cradle Coast).*

Choose Cradle Coast members discussed a lack of strategic planning and communication between different levels of government. *We note here that the CCA will undertake some preliminary work on regional land use planning that will bring stakeholders together on regional planning in late 2021. This will help the region prepare for the formal review of the Regional Land Use Strategy by the Tasmanian Planning Commission expected in 2022.*

4. *Recognition and pride of place*

A key message in workshops and significant change stories was the need for greater recognition and celebration of the strengths and achievements of people in the region and a higher value attributed to the local and grassroots produce and productions. For instance:

> *The students on the North West Coast are humble but they can do great things. For example, a group of local musicians from the North West and North of Tasmania wrote a song during COVID, called "Light a Candle". This song was recorded by musicians working alone in their own homes during COVID, produced in Launceston, and it topped the charts – number one. Many people on the Coast probably didn't know that was happening. The proceeds of the sales were donated to prevent child abuse. This is important because - What is locally grown here is of high standard (Story 10, 'Provedore', Education and Training Group).*

All working groups identified that there is little awareness about the natural beauty, resources and livability of Tasmania. This needs to be communicated both within and beyond Tasmania.

5. *Realising the Potential of Coordinated Regional Development Action*

Discussions across the interviews and the focus group indicated the need for ongoing regional development action in three key areas, building on the experiences of the Regional Futures Plan implementation to date. It was recognised that progress has been made, but there is need for further work to:

- Strengthen **collaboration** between organisations, sectors and member councils;
- Improve how decisions are made and **communicated** to ensure that the Authority can meet its full potential; and
- Drive the momentum needed to **instill confidence** in the region and its development, build political will and buy-in, and create investment opportunities for emerging industries.

Participants expressed differences in perspective and how to go about improving collaboration but agreed on the potential of joined-up regional development. In particular, Focus Groups and Interview participants identified the need for the Cradle Coast Authority and Futures Plan to be resourced over a longer period of time to ensure that intergenerational change is possible.

One of the key messages to come out the Most Significant Change evaluation is that the impact of the Futures Plan is very much about the process. The Futures Plan is *coming to life* and present in the thinking and the actions of many stakeholders, reflecting the process of action learning embedded in the Plan. This process of implementing the Futures Plan has made a significant difference to regional development capacity and capability in the Cradle Coast region.

This institutional knowledge, and the development of capability, capacity, and confidence to drive change, is part of the change process itself; it reflects a shift in attitudes and understanding of what is required to address deep-seated issues and challenges facing the Cradle Coast. Given the long-term nature of culture change, this documented shift in thinking and doing over a two-year period, driven by a relatively small group of community leaders, is a significant achievement. The Regional Futures Plan process has begun to demonstrate the potential for locally led regional development solutions. In doing so, it has created vital groundwork for future positive change.

REFERENCES

Bracken, C. (2021, forthcoming) Regional Futures Plan Evaluation, Quantitative Measures, Cradle Coast Authority.

Brady, J. (2014) 'Tasmania's youth jobs crisis', The Examiner, 24 February. Available at: https://www.examiner.com.au/story/2110446/tasmanias-youth-jobs-crisis/

Corbett, M., Fraser, S., Reaburn, R., Smith, H., Roberts, J., & Fielding-Wells, J. (2017) 'Building A New Generation: Community Expectations On Raising Aspirations In Rural Tasmania', *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, 27(3), 8-24.

Cradle Coast Authority ('CCA') (2018) Regional Futures Plan, Full Version (Technical Report) Prepared by Peter Murden, 26, November, 2018.

Cradle Coast Authority ('CCA') (2021) Regional Futures Plan, Online Version. Available at: https://www.cradlecoast.com/regional-futures-plan/

Denny, L, (2017) 'Insight One: The Changing Nature of Work in Tasmania', Institute Insights, Institute for the Study of Social Change, Hobart, Tasmania. Available at: https://www.utas.edu.au/social-change/publications/insights/insight-one-tasmanias-workforce

Denny, L, (2019) 'Workforce polarisation in Tasmania: Implications for the future of work and training', Institute Insights, Institute for the Study of Social Change, Hobart, Insight 7, pp. 1-13. Available at: https://www.utas.edu.au/social-change/publications/insights/insight-seven-workforce-polarisation-in-tasmania

Fromberg, A. (2021) 'Tasmania's housing crisis is forcing young people like Brayden and Ruby into homelessness', ABC News, Wednesday 17 March. Available at: https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-03-17/housing-crisis-forcing-young-tas-people-into-homelessness/100013412

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview questions

> Regional Futures Plan aim: improving **living standards** in the region by boosting **regional growth** and fostering a more **resilient** economy with a sharp focus on creating more **jobs and better** jobs.

Questions:

1. Introductions/ can you tell me about your role in the region?

2. In your view what are the key challenges facing this region and/or particular communities within it?

   Prompts: Are there any challenges related to living standards, regional growth, education and employment?

3. Who/what do you think could play a role in addressing these challenges and how, what would they do?

4. In relation to <u>this topic</u> have you noticed any changes over the past year for better or worse?

   Prompts:
   - Settings, place, objects
   - Can you tell me more about that? Who was involved?
   - Where was this going to happen? Setting, place, objects
   - What/ who made it work?
   - What are the obstacles?
   - Do you think that was an important thing/step? Why?
   - What didn't work or had unintended consequences?

5. What, if any, do you see is the role of the RFP and the steering group/ working groups in creating change in our region?

6. Why did you decide to get involved in the RFP process initially? Why did you decide not to continue?

7. What do you think could have been done differently/ better?

8. If you could change one thing in this region, what would it be?

Appendix 2: Focus Group Questions

- Have you observed any changes in your council or the broader region over the past two years since the Regional Futures Plan was developed?
- What, if any, do you see is the role of the RFP and the steering group/ working groups in creating change in our region? What is the link?
- What do you think could have been done differently/ better? What would you like to see going forward?
- Do you have any stories of change related to the Regional Futures Plan process?

Appendix 3: "Most Significant Change" Homework sheet

In March, Regional Futures Plan [RFP] stakeholders will come together in workshops to understand the impacts of the RFP process to date. To prepare, have a think about what 'significant changes' you have seen since you became involved.

Have you noticed something in your region or community change?

Ambition: What did you set out to do?

Belief: What do you think is possible?

Change: What has changed?

Can you think of a story or memory about change to put in the thought bubble?

What happened? _____

_____

Where did this happen? _____

_____

When did it happen? _____

_____

Why is this important do you think? _____

_____

Bring an Object! Is there an object, like a picture, a book or event program etc. that reminds you of a story about recent events or changes in your region? You are invited to bring your object to the workshop!

Appendix 4: Data Collection Table

This Data table format was used for all working groups. This example contains data from the Events working group.

Artefact	Story Title and number	Story	Domain	How well does the Domain of Change fit? Discussion notes
Link to the CCA website events page	1. Collaboration	'A benefit that has come out of the different Working Groups is that we have come together and worked together **rather than in competition**…' (Note: during discussion words were bolded to emphasise key themes)	A. Working together towards the bigger picture B. Sharing knowledge, empathy, and supporting each other (note: the story aligned with two Domain of Change)	- collaboration is reflected in this story

Appendix 5a: Story Categorisation and Selection Table

Steering Group Domains of Change with corresponding Working Group Domains of Change	Working Group MSC Story Titles and Domain of Change
1. *Collaboration and Connectivity* **– Overcoming Fragmentation and Silos, Involving Communities** Working Group DoCs: • "Changes in flexibility of work, employer attitudes, and inclusive workforce development" (Choose CC) • "Connecting communities to opportunities through information access" (Core Team) • "Linking local and collective voice to decision makers" (Core Team) • "Working together towards the bigger picture" (Events) • "Sharing knowledge, empathy, and supporting each other" (Events)	• **TOP STORY 1. "Recognising the need for strategic/ coordinated community engagement".** Steering Group DoC 1 and 4 (Renewable Energy Group) (This is more strategic) • **Story 2. "The People are There: Keeping them and Including Them".** DoC A: "Changes in flexibility of work, employer attitudes, and inclusive workforce development" (Choose Cradle Coast Group) • **Story 3. "Renewable Energy Networks".** DoC B: "Connecting communities to opportunities through information access" (Core Team) • **Story 4. "Policy Changes in Other Organisations".** DoC C: "Linking local and collective voice to decision makers" (Core Team) • **Story 5. "Collaboration".** DoC D: "Working together towards the bigger picture" (Events Group) • **Story 6. "Resilience".** DoC E: "Sharing knowledge, empathy, and supporting each other" (Events Group) **SG story 20 – "Pride is building in our community" (could move to another domain)**
2. *Communication and Storytelling* **– Promoting Pride in the Region/ Overcoming Negativity** Working Group DoCs: • "Gradual change in the social fabric from tolerance to **acceptance and welcoming**" (CCCWG)	• TOP STORY **7. "The Changing Face of our Community"** DoC F: "Gradual change in the social fabric from tolerance to acceptance and welcoming" (CCCWG) • **Story 8. "Self-access to information for local people via Regional Restart Hub"** DoC G: "Community ownership of action for change" (Core Team)

• "**Community ownership** of action for change" (Core Team) • "Celebrating and promoting **local, grassroots** achievements and lifestyle, and expressing our voice" (ETWG) • "**Encourage collaboration** and healthy competition in the arts sector" (ACWG)	• **Story 9. "Provedore"**. DoC H: "Celebrating and promoting local, grassroots achievements and lifestyle, and expressing our voice" (ETWG) • **Story 10. "Visiting Artist Collaboration"**. DoC I: "Encourage collaboration and healthy competition in the arts sector" (ACWG) • SG story 20 – "Pride is building in our community"
3. *Partnerships and influence* **– Finding New Sources of Investment and Buy-in/ Overcoming dependence** Working Group DoCs: • "Elevate the vitality and liveability of the region through both quality of local artists and ability to attract international artists" (ACWG) • "Enable access and involvement in the arts for all, in order to enrich the human experience, express our voice/story, empower, create confidence and belonging" (ACWG) • "Recognise the role of arts and culture in the economic and entrepreneurial landscape including via digital technology" (ACWG) • "Switching gears and reinventing events, including funding sources; and Telling our story uniquely" (Events WG)	• **TOP STORY 11. "The Importance of Arts and Culture in the Regional Narrative"**. DoC J: "Elevate the vitality and liveability of the region through both quality of local artists and ability to attract international artists" (ACWG)* • **Story 12. "Arts Events"**. DoC K: "Enable access and involvement in the arts for all, in order to enrich the human experience, express our voice/story, empower, create confidence and belonging" (ACWG) • **Story 13. "Opportunities: linking arts to tourism, online presence, employment pathways, reaching out to young people"**. DoC L: "Recognise the role of arts and culture in the economic and entrepreneurial landscape including via digital technology" (ACWG) • **Story 14. "Funding for a Significant Regional Event".** DoC M: "Switching gears and reinventing events, including funding sources; and Telling our story uniquely" (Events WG)
4. *Confidence to Change/ Empowering Action* **– Clear Vision; Visible Action and Impact** Working Group DoCs:	• **Story 15. "Empty Glasses and Overflowing Glasses".** DoC N: "Greater understanding of the housing issues and impact of major disruptor (pandemic)" (CCCWG)

• "Greater understanding of the housing issues and impact of major disruptor (pandemic)" (CCCWG) • "Recognising the value of networks in collaborating and sharing connections between industry, business, education and community" (ETWG) • "Raising individual and community awareness of challenges and new possibilities has led to increased opportunities for young people and the broader community" (ETWG) • "Providing present, visible, invested support to build trust and confidence in education, training and career pathways" (ETWG)	• **Story 16. "Regional Pathways".** DoC O: "Recognising the value of networks in collaborating and sharing connections between industry, business, education and community" (ETWG) • **TOP Story 17. "Connections"** DoC P: "Raising individual and community awareness of challenges and new possibilities has led to increased opportunities for young people and the broader community" (ETWG) • **Story 18. "Confidence and Aspiration".** DoC Q: "Providing present, visible, invested support to build trust and confidence in education, training and career pathways" (ETWG) • **[Story 1. "Recognising the need for strategic/ coordinated community engagement".** Steering Group DoC 1 and 4 (Renewable Energy Group)] **SG story 19. The futures plan is coming to life**

Appendix 5b: Order of Stories for the selection process

During the selection process, the Steering Group read through each story for each of the four Domains of Change with the aim of selecting one story to represent each Domain of Change. The stories were presented to the Steering Group in the following order:

Working Group MSC Story Titles and Domain of Change
Domain 1: • Story 1. "Recognising the need for strategic/ coordinated community engagement" (Renewable Energy Group) • Story 2. "The People are There: Keeping them and Including Them" (Choose Cradle Coast Group) • Story 3. "Renewable Energy Networks" (Core Team) • Story 4. "Policy Changes in Other Organisations" (Core Team) • Story 5. "Collaboration" (Events Group) • Story 6. "Resilience" (Events Group)
Domain 2: • Story 7. "The Changing Face of our Community" (CCCWG) • Story 8. "Self-access to information for local people via Regional Restart Hub" (Core Team) • Story 9. "Provedore" (ETWG) • Story 10. "Visiting Artist Collaboration" (ACWG)
Domain 3: • Story 11. "The Importance of Arts and Culture in the Regional Narrative" (ACWG) • Story 12. "Arts Events" (ACWG) • Story 13. "Opportunities: linking arts to tourism, online presence, employment pathways, reaching out to young people" (ACWG) • Story 14. "Funding for a Significant Regional Event" (Events WG)
Domain 4: • Story 15. "Empty Glasses and Overflowing Glasses" (CCCWG) • Story 16. "Regional Pathways" (ETWG) • Story 17. "Connections" (ETWG) • Story 18. "Confidence and Aspiration" (ETWG)

Appendix 6: Most Significant Change Stories

Working Groups Stories

Story 1: "Recognising the need for strategic/ coordinated community engagement" - REWG1

Domains of Change: Collaboration and Connectivity – Overcoming Fragmentation and Silos, Involving Communities; and Confidence to Change/ Empowering Action – Clear Vision; Visible Action and Impact
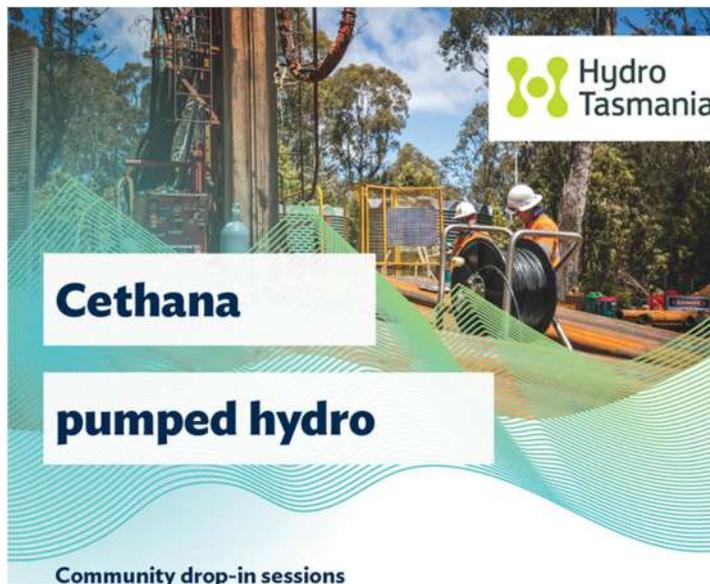
The REWG Working group members have now clarified what they are trying to achieve in working group meetings, toward the end of 2020. They have 'identified how seriously we need coordinated stakeholder engagement' as an industry, beyond the individual efforts of specific companies. Grassroots community engagement is needed which includes respected local leaders. Last week, the mayor of Kentish spoke on the local radio talk show in support of renewable energy projects, and a few days later someone from the community rang up in the open mic session and contradicted everything positive that had been said.

This is important because there is a need to take ownership of the community engagement agenda, be transparent, acknowledge deeper community concerns about regional development and impact on natural resources, and let people make up their own mind about the industry.

Story 2: "The People are There: Keeping them and including them" - CCCWG3

Domain of Change: "Changes in flexibility of work, employer attitudes, and inclusive workforce development"

Young people go away and they do not necessarily choose to come back. The storyteller has a daughter in London and a daughter in Victoria. He knows a couple of trained pharmacists who recently left the Coast to go to Melbourne; another skilled couple, one of whom was a builder, also moved to Melbourne for better career prospects. Yet we need these people here. This raises the question: are we letting them go? There is also the question of inclusion: some people feel they are locked out of the workforce. We need to break down the firewall between the labour market and people who are locked out of it. The current situation in Circular Head with dairy and meat processing is surfacing this. Currently we are not maximising the opportunities we have to maximise liveability and value. **This is important because** the issue is mirrored around Tasmania; we need to better link people into employment opportunities where there is a pressing need (i.e. dairy, mining, disability services, forestry). We need to make the best of what we have currently, including retaining the mature age workforce and their skills – can business models be changed accommodate to this?

Story 3: "Renewable Energy Networks" – CORE TEAM1

Domain of Change: "Connecting communities to opportunities through information access"

The artefact is the Future Energy Hub's website. A year ago, the Future Energy hub's website was simply a page that made a statement about the potential for renewable energy in the region – that was it. Now it is a detailed website with information on the Renewable Energy projects in the region. The storyteller directed us to the different projects visible on the website (https://www.cradlecoast.com/energy-hub/), such as the three following projects below:

The Renewable Energy Working Group identified the need for improved communication and information about the industry. There was a forum with all the developers who have projects in this region and beyond, e.g. Cattle Hill in the Central Highlands. Most of these developers are not located in Tasmania, and last year with COVID they couldn't travel. Through the forum and the website, they have now created a community of developers who are able to keep in touch with what is happening on the ground in Cradle Coast, for instance, being aware of training funds that are available. The storyteller noted that this website created the connection she needed with the developers. They each have ownership of their own pages on the website and keep these up to date. Communities can go into these and have a look to see what is happening with renewables projects. People in different parts of the Coast may be familiar with projects in their own area, but not those further away.

This is important for the development of the renewable energy industry; until recently there was no privately owned energy generation in Tasmania. Bringing developers together enables them to share information about Tasmania and the Cradle Coast community, and how the community is interacting with the industry. It enables them to understand challenges e.g. around housing and skills, and develop opportunities for locals to be involved in the industry, linking to Regional Futures Plan aims around better jobs, better paid jobs, and better quality of life. Recently, a successful training grant to share the stories of Tasmanians working in the renewables energy sector was developed based on ideas discussed with this group from industry.

Story 4: "Policy Changes in Other Organisations" - CORE TEAM2

Domain of Change: "Linking local and collective voice to decision makers"

This story is an example of a small change, but shows how our working group might be changing policy in Hobart. We started talking about Seniors Week in the Arts and Culture Working Group. We observed that it wasn't covering off on different age groups, and that it was often just promoting existing activities. We were talking about that in September 2019. Then we started discussing it in the Events Working Group in early 2020, asking what councils do for Seniors Week. It was quite a few bus trips with cups of tea with the frail aged from aged care homes. Meanwhile, the Education and Training working group was asking, 'How do we support older people to stay in the workforce?'. We approached COTA (Council on the Ageing) and they became a

partner with us in a Tasmania Community Fund application. We didn't get that funding, but we started a conversation with COTA about Seniors Weeks and wanting to do something new. COTA listened to our feedback, and earlier this month, they announced an engagement process with seniors in Hobart to find out what they wanted from Seniors Week. It's just in Hobart so far. I don't know if these things are connected, but we were asking, and now they are looking at a different approach. **This is important because** it is good when we can connect information across silos. We get a lot of feedback from councils that they want to have their voices heard, e.g. Circular Head on renewables. It's really important that we have a voice from the region communicating local priorities.

Story 5: "Collaboration" – Events1

Domain of Change: Working together towards the bigger picture.

In this working group, the events staff from each council started to talk and collaborate with each other. Before, it seemed to be more of a competition, who has the best events. Now we can see there is an advantage in working together, rather than in competition, and getting people moving around the region to different events. Waratah-Wynyard events officer has been working with the Burnie events officer because both have events in October. We are now planning to share costs, for instance, to have both programs printed together. We can share the load. The Working Group is enabling us to get to know each other, establish a relationship, so we feel comfortable to ring each other. Putting things on the events board has been important. We have built respect for each other. The Board went up in mid-2019 on the CCA website; it isn't only Council events; it includes other events such as Ten Days on the Island. It was not well populated during COVID, but it lets people know what events are happening in the region; it is a great resource.

This is important because collaboration has been the main benefit of the Working Group; collaboration has led to cost savings as well. Events have tight budgets, and so any cost savings can be reinvested in events.

Artefact image: CCA Events Board: https://www.cradlecoast.com/our-region/culture-events/

Story 6: "Resilience" – Events3

Domain of Change: Sharing knowledge, empathy, and supporting each other

When COVID hit, Council events staff were pulled in different directions; many of them had to look after buildings, signage, and COVID plans; many had other roles such as emergency management and social recovery that took precedence. The members who work for local councils are only now starting to get back to some kind of normal with their jobs. During COVID, there was good attendance at the working group, which played a bit of a support role. There was also knowledge sharing, for instance about what small community events were still continuing, and online events. A number of local events were held during COVID such as the Chalk Walk chalk sidewalk project; a Lego competition for kids, where they sent in photos of their creations; and an online concert. When we were shut down on the Coast, Council staff involved in social recovery came in to work, we organised the Chalk Walk, the Lego competition, and "Bin-solation", where people dressed up and took photos as they took out their bin. These photos are on the Council Facebook page. When we did open up, we had "Spring Loaded" instead of the Tulip Festival. We wanted to have events that could still

happen even if we were shut down. So we had a slide show on the main street to celebrate 29 years of the Festival – this would have been its 30th year. We had dioramas that were made and placed in the windows of businesses on Main Street. And a lady who does Tas Rocks had over 1000 painted rocks hidden for people to find, across different towns.

We organised a free kids' fun day and a free drive in movie night – we hired a blow-up screen from Hobart and held it at the Pony Club. There was a sunrise breakfast, with just a small charge to cover costs. There was yarn bombing also. In the Working Group, we were talking together about what we were doing differently. It showed our resilience.

This was important because there was stress for events staff during COVID; our big events were gone; so we asked ourselves, what else can we do for our community? We kept the Working Group active and supported each other. This showed our resilience and creativity during a time of great stress.

Story 7: "Pride is building in our community" – SG1

Domain of Change: Collaboration and Connectivity – Overcoming Fragmentation and Silos, Involving Communities; and also Domain of Change: Communication and Storytelling – Promoting Pride in the Region/ Overcoming Negativity (Steering Group)

There is positive energy around the region, coming out of COVID, and a very big pride of place. We have never seen that before; this has changed enormously. People are working together so much better. Before, people were staying with their groups, but now there is more extensive networking. There is value in working together, e.g. increasing employment opportunities. People have always valued where they come from, but it is enhanced now; people recognised they were lucky, privileged to be here during COVID and not somewhere like Melbourne in a lockdown. **This is significant because** there is a link between networking and collaboration – people building respect and appreciation of each other. This has lasted; people are continuing to work together. One group member received a letter from a committee member in Kentish, a public servant, about buying local for Easter. People are supporting their local community. It is also about moving around and spending locally, injecting money into the local economy. People are becoming more aware of this than they were previously**.**

From a Regional Futures Plan perspective, the working groups provided opportunities to extend these conversations, networks, and knowledge, and recognise what is happening in the region. In the past, people have not been as outgoing; but there has been a transformation. People are working together more in the arts, tourism and breaking through silos. There is a move from negativity in the region to a reflection among people that they were lucky to be in Tasmania. On the ground there are examples of CCA activities such as the Coastal Pathway that showcases the natural environment and wilderness. The Mersey Trails also – these initiatives showcase the environment that we live in and are making people realise just what the area has to offer. Here, we can enjoy different walks, activities, and experiences like bike riding and stay-cations; there are diverse things that we were able to do and we could move around even during COVID.

A view from outside the region confirms that change is happening. Pride is building in the North West. There are lots of actors that are making this happen, from the biking in Kentish and LaTrobe to events such as Ten Days on the Island. Grassroots pride is building – it is not 'being built'; rather, there are lots of people

contributing to this, lots of people are doing things. It is hard to get fish swimming in the same direction unless they are part of the same 'school'.

Story 8: "The Changing Face of our Community" - CCCWG1

Domain of Change: "Gradual change in the social fabric from tolerance to acceptance and welcoming"

The photo is of Salman, a cricket teammate from Circular Head. Salman is from Pakistan and came to Circular Head to work on the Woolnorth Dairy Farm. Some of the employees fielded a team for T20 cricket, and now Salman plays on the local team. His family was living in the region also, though they returned to Pakistan last year and have been unable to return due to COVID. There has been more visibility of diversity in the Circular Head community, in the past five years, and especially in the last two. For instance, there were also a number of workers from PNG at the abattoir last year; they are living 6 or 7 people to a home. The Council has organised community lunches, and the Cricket Facebook Page has also contributed to community connection. It is very common to see people of different backgrounds involved in the community.

This is important because the story about the changing composition of communities ties into the shortage of housing. These communities prefer a different style of housing, they enjoy living closer together, e.g. multiple people in the same house. The blend of housing and services will need to be tailored to the needs of a changing community.

Story 9: "Self-access to information for local people via Regional Restart Hub" - CCCWG4

Domain of Change: "Community ownership of action for change"

When COVID hit, Kentish and Latrobe were getting a lot of enquiries for Council help. They were able to find a way for local people to help themselves, by referring them directly to the Regional Restart Hub website (https://www.cradlecoast.com/). The website's Grantfinder page was also particularly helpful, as has been the regional information on the Hub. For instance, the medical centre has been trying to attract GPs and asked the Council for

information about what is available in the local area. The local area goes beyond their own council area; for instance, a doctor might want to live in Devonport, but the local council doesn't have information about Devonport. Being able to refer organisations to this regional-level information has been very helpful. Similarly, access to Profile ID data (https://profile.id.com.au/cradle-coast) has also been really useful to refer people when they are looking for statistics, for instance about accommodation. As Council redefined their grants and opened up new grants for businesses, they required businesses to access mentoring, and mentoring was also available through the Regional Restart Hub. While some of these resources existed before COVID, considerable additional resources were built in response to COVID. **This is important because** Council in the past has had to source this information for people itself; with the Regional Restart Hub, it was able to manage the large number of requests by referring people directly to this source of information.

Story 10: "Provedore" - ETWG4

Domain of Change: "Celebrating and promoting local, grassroots achievements and lifestyle, and expressing our voice".

The artefact is an award won by students from the storyteller's College in the local eisteddfod. It symbolises humility. The students on the North West Coast are humble but they can do great things. For example, a group of local musicians from the North West and North of Tasmania wrote a song during COVID, called "Light a Candle". This song was recorded by musicians working alone in their own homes during COVID, produced in Launceston, and it topped the charts – number one. Many people on the Coast probably didn't know that was happening. The proceeds of the sales were donated to prevent child abuse. **This is important because** what is locally grown here is of high standard. Currently, a number of local students have taken up apprenticeships, and 70,000 more apprenticeships have been funded. Maintaining this young age group on the Coast helps address the region's demographic challenges. The 'provedore' supports the local, the organic; it values the quality of what is present at the grassroots. After experiencing COVID, we appreciate what we have: the natural environment, lifestyle, and culture of this region.

Story 11: "Visiting artist collaboration" - ACWG4

Domain of Change: "Encourage collaboration and healthy competition in the arts sector"

The UTAS Artist in Residence Program was a collaboration that occurred because we were talking together in the Working Group. A member of this group, through his international contacts, knows the filmmaker Mark Rees. We began to talk with UTAS and Ten Days on the Island, and then applied for an Artist in Residence grant for Mark to come to Tasmania from Wales. It was a combination of our networks and the attractiveness of Tasmania as a destination – Mark contributed some of his own funding as he was keen to come. The grant was successful and the visit was planned for last July. The visit was delayed due to COVID but is still planned. **This is important because** this story is about international collaboration and the value of Tasmania and local artists in the global scene. The visiting artist remains an agenda item for the group, and it represents one of the

purposes of getting the group together; previously, each organisation would have funded a residency separately.

Story 12: "The Importance of Arts and Culture in the Regional Narrative" – ACWG2

Domain of Change: "Elevate the vitality and liveability of the region through both quality of local artists and ability to attract international artists"

For me there are two clear and significant stories of change to come out of this process so far.

The first is the formation of a group that is thinking about Arts and Culture from a regional perspective. To my knowledge this has not been done or even attempted previously and in itself is a huge success/represents a significant opportunity for our region.

Because of the dispersed nature of our population and limited range/size of arts organisations, resources and formal opportunities in the sector there has tended to be a silo-ed, parochial nature to activities with individuals having an allegiance to one group, gallery or town, and groups and organisations having an allegiance to one town/subsection of the arts community even if they are as close as Devonport and Burnie. This has been a known and frustrating situation for as long as I have lived here without any significant change until now.

This is significant because the Arts and Culture working group has brought together:
- Artists/Arts Workers
- Local government reps/Private Sector/NFP reps
- Non arts organisations/Arts orgs

For example: Because of this Working Group I have met (even worked with to apply for a grant - unsuccessfully) Alexandra Morse (Art Therapist in the Health Care sector) who I had heard of but never even crossed paths with.

It has also strengthened my relationship with other artists (who I might see at exhibition or project openings but rarely meet with intentionally, or have the luxury/privilege of discussing the big picture (we are so all immersed and busy working on our own projects, careers, communities).

Note: This story was emailed ahead of time and named in the workshop, along with this link to an article by Kim Houghton at the Regional Australia institute on "How (and Why) Do Regions Grow?" https://kimhoughton.com/2013/11/15/how-and-why-do-regions-grow/

Story 13: "Arts events" – ACWG1

Domain of Change: "Enable access and involvement in the arts for all, in order to enrich the human experience, express our voice/story, empower, create confidence and belonging"

There are iconic arts events in this region, such as The Unconformity, Ten Days on the Island, and Mapali (which was part of Ten Days). Some of these events are long-running and built on voluntary effort. They add to the cultural vitality of this region, and they are an economic driver as well. Despite COVID, arts events have continued successfully, largely due to the drive and effort of volunteers. **This is important** because our region attracts international, renowned artists, and our artists and arts events are cultural and economic contributors to the region. The local Paper on Skin event (wearable paper clothing arts) went online this year and attracted a bigger audience than ever before. The Vanishing Point exhibition is another example.

Story 14: "Opportunities: linking arts to tourism, online presence, employment pathways, reaching out to young people" - ACWG3

Domain of Change: "Recognise the role of arts and culture in the economic and entrepreneurial landscape, including via digital technology"

There are lots of creative people in this region, for instance in the University's Makers program. Many of these people were vulnerable during COVID. There were efforts to get their arts businesses online, but they were reluctant to do so. There was a workshop on using the Etsy platform, for instance, but not a lot of uptake, perhaps because the technology was unfamiliar. Nevertheless, there is an opportunity to share work digitally. The digital rights for a painting recently sold for more than the original work. Business North West successfully helped some of the photographers from the Central Coast market to get their work online during COVID. **This is important**

because there are opportunities for young people in the arts, for entrepreneurial arts ventures, and opportunities to use digital technologies to reach a wider audience and develop new arts ventures.

Story 15: "Funding for a Significant Regional Event" – Events2

Domain of Change: Switching gears and reinventing events, including funding sources; and DoC Telling our story uniquely

The storyteller is not Council events staff member; rather, a stallholder at events. She is a member of the Steering Group and joined the Working Group around November 2019. She only attended one or two meetings before COVID hit and everything was cancelled. She was, however, impressed with what the group had achieved prior to that, such as the Events Board. She is on the Steering Group, and the Steering Group is looking at having a significant regional event. There is a lot of willingness in the region to have an event, but no funding. Carol has put together funding applications to source funding for this event. However, the funding applications have not been successful; there was a lot of competition for funding during COVID. Without funding, they haven't been able to make it happen. This raises the question, 'How do we actually move anything forward without the funds behind it to drive it?'. We wanted to have something big happen, a significant outcome, a big regional event, but without funding we haven't worked out how to make it work; there is still work to do. The proposed project is about telling stories from the region through photography and art, linking older people with younger people; school students with grandparents. We don't want to copy what has been done elsewhere; we want to tell our own stories. The original concept was big, we wanted to have exhibits in every town hall and gallery across the Coast. We have scaled back a bit. **This is important because** the project concept is good, and I'd like to see it happen. Our community has the right to tell its stories, like other communities do, but in our own way. There are things here that are uniquely about us – stories such as 'The Ship that Never Was'; living away from the city, with our sea, forest and wilderness.

Story 16: "Empty glasses and overflowing glasses" – CCCWG3

Domain of Change: "Greater understanding of the housing issues and impact of major disruptor (pandemic)"

Local decision makers have limited ability to directly affect population; local councils often have a goal of population growth, but they can only go so far. Making an area family-friendly and liveable can attract people, but we cannot attract people if we cannot provide housing for them. Housing is an issue that requires state government intervention. There has been change; thirteen years ago a drag queen would not be on the front page of the local paper running a bingo night at a rural football club – but this was in the paper today. It's a sign of hope; slowly the Coast is becoming more openly accepting. Nevertheless, there is a lack of forward thinking and communication between levels of government; for instance, local councils were caught unaware by the government's building stimulus package. This policy has meant an incredible workload for the building industry, as they have been going from site to site, just building slabs to get projects underway before the deadline, but with no forward infrastructure plans. **This is important because** we can only go so far in terms of growing our populations and becoming more multicultural if we don't have housing. The private market is not taking care of things and addressing this need – is government intervention the answer? There needs to be some sort of intervention.

Story 17: "Regional pathways" - ETWG1

Domain of Change: "Recognising the value of networks in collaborating and sharing connections between industry, business, education and community"

The Cradle Coast School Based Apprenticeship program has provided advice, pathways, and career opportunities to young people in the region. Nine young people (Year 10 and up) have been placed in school-based apprenticeships with local councils since last year. Skills Tasmania has funded this program, working with Department of Education and the Cradle Coast Authority. Previously, there were 0 school based apprentices placed in local councils. When people think of local councils, they are often unaware of all of the things councils do. **This is important because** placing students with councils broadens students' awareness and exposure to the types of careers that are available in this region.

Story 18: "Connections" - ETWG2

Domain of Change: "Raising individual and community awareness of challenges and new possibilities has led to increased opportunities for young people and the broader community"

This is only the storyteller's second meeting with the Working Group, but she has observed that in spite of all of the dire predictions about the likely impact of COVID for young people, once people in the region have been able to get together, the response from the community has been unbelievable. In particular, there has been strong engagement of industry and community with schools. There has been a sense of urgency post-COVID and strong participation; people are enjoying the opportunity to connect. In the Beacon Foundation they say, "You can't be what you don't see", so the more that communities can connect with schools and enable young people to see the different career pathways that are available locally, the better the outcomes for young people will be. **This is important because** the North West is a tight-knit community where everyone is a friend of a friend; opportunities to connect and build new networks are valuable and can connect young people into education and employment pathways.
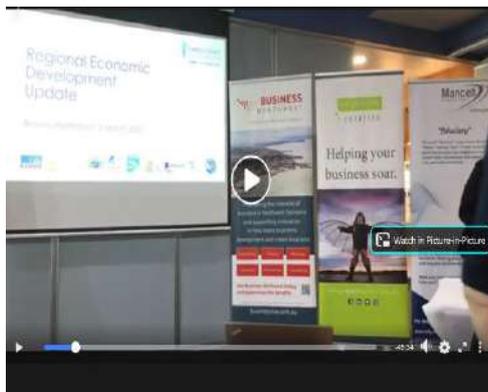
Story 19: "Confidence and aspiration" – ETWG3

Domain of Change: "Providing present, visible, invested support to build trust and confidence in education, training and career pathways"

Confidence in education and learning leads to pathways and opportunities. Education graduates at university last year were unable to graduate in Burnie due to the date change of the graduation ceremony following COVID. They received a one-line email and were terribly disappointed, because they wanted to graduate locally, surrounded by their family and friends. So the campus held a recognition event for these students here. When the graduates were asked to reflect on their experience, they burst into tears; they all talked about confidence. They didn't think they had the capability to study at university. Even though they did have the ability, they lacked confidence. This is a fundamental issue in our region. If we are focusing on education and training in our region, infrastructure and systems matter, but so does the personal element. People need confidence and a pathway to follow. The Study Hub West Coast is based in Zeehan, it is run by the community, funded by the government, and UTAS supports it. The Study Hub has a physical presence in the old Scout Hall and two people based there, that local people can relate to. There is a target of 106 students over the next three years, and they already have 96 students enrolled, from VET through to a Masters student. **This is important because** the Study Hub helps students develop confidence by being present in the community and having support people available.

Story 20: "The Futures Plan is Coming to Life" – SG2

Domain of Change: "Confidence to Change/ Empowering Action – Clear Vision; Visible Action and Impact"

The Futures Plan is coming to life. It provided us with a construct that we could reference back to. The Plan is gaining momentum, validation and awareness. There is growing awareness of what is in the Regional Futures Plan, it is no longer just words on a page. When the storyteller first started in her position on the Steering Committee she was excited about the Plan, but then wondered: "How will we bring all this together?". There is now greater clarity around the links between RFP and the investment framework – there is more clarity on collaboration potential. There is a stronger shared vision and sense of collective responsibility with respect and appreciation among Working Group members and the broader CCA stakeholder structure.

The breakfast session with North West businesses was an 'Ah-ha' moment. We built the plane mid-air and we've finally landed it, now we need to make sure we can take off again. This was 14 months into the process. There is always a bit of anxiety about doing a presentation, but when Daryl and I started talking, we saw on people's faces that they were engaged. People were nodding in the room and we could answer their questions, it was a good conversation. There were people in the audience from Devonport, Smithton, around the region. There was interest to take the discussion to the next level. There were also random phone calls, conversations and people asking about the framework, asking: "how can we apply, how do we do it, does it make sense?". This was conversation starter. It is a bit like a jigsaw puzzle, each time we add a piece, the puzzle gains greater clarity.

This is significant because *living* the Regional Futures Plan is at the heart of what we're trying to do. It is the lever, and we need to have the right lever. It is about a stronger region, being able to make good choices about our careers and have options. The storyteller acknowledged her subjective position as a white middle-class woman, and that some in the community would have a different picture. Nevertheless, these differences are not as great as they were in the past. When we achieve everything that is in the Plan, we will have something to be very proud of.

Artefact - Business North West Facebook Page with a recording of the Breakfast Session presentation on the Regional Futures Plan:

https://www.facebook.com/1897467903891217/videos/428553695116876/?__so__=channel_tab&__rv__=all_videos_card