# ILLUMINATING INFORMAL HOUSING IN SEQ

# AN HONOURS THESIS PREPARED FOR PLAN4009 | LAUREN HALL

#### **Research Problem**

- In Australia, only a few studies have been conducted on informal housing, and only in Sydney
- Informality in the Global North is still relatively unknown. This thesis aimed to shed light on this topic by asking:

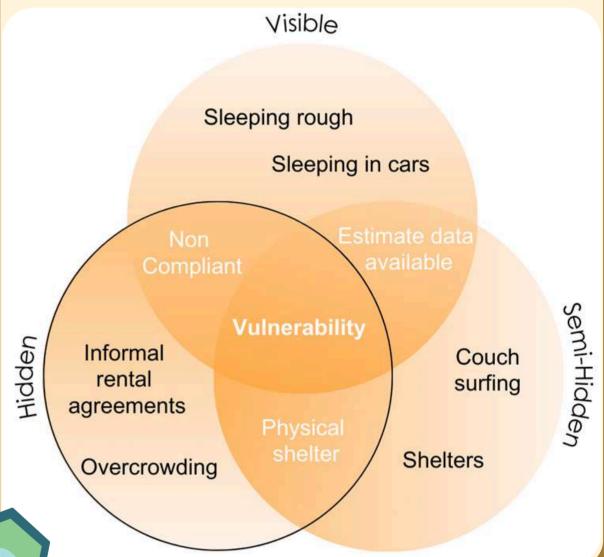
"What is the spatial distribution and typologies of informal housing in SEQ, what demographics are affected, and what risks are posed to residents?"

## Methodology

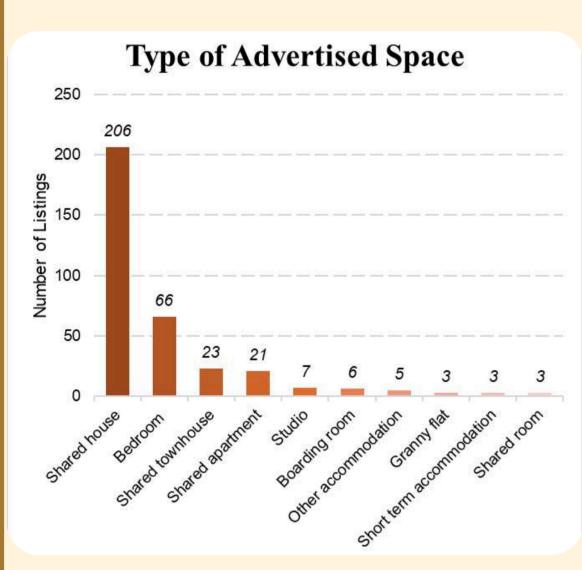
- Manual web scraping of online realtor **Gumtree.com** as a proxy for informality
- Only considered listings for \$300 per week or less to align with baseline 'affordable' housing for the lowest economic quartile of population in SEQ
- 343 Listings from the eight urban LGAs of SEQ collected over a four-week period
- Collected information on location, price, dwelling and household statistics, advertisement text, and images

## **Literature Review**

- The literature, across academia and governance, did not reveal a consistent definition of informality
- A framework was created for this thesis to define informality based on how 'visible' the typology is
- The 'hidden' typologies are those considered truly informal, in comparison to known typologies such as sleeping rough and emergency shelters



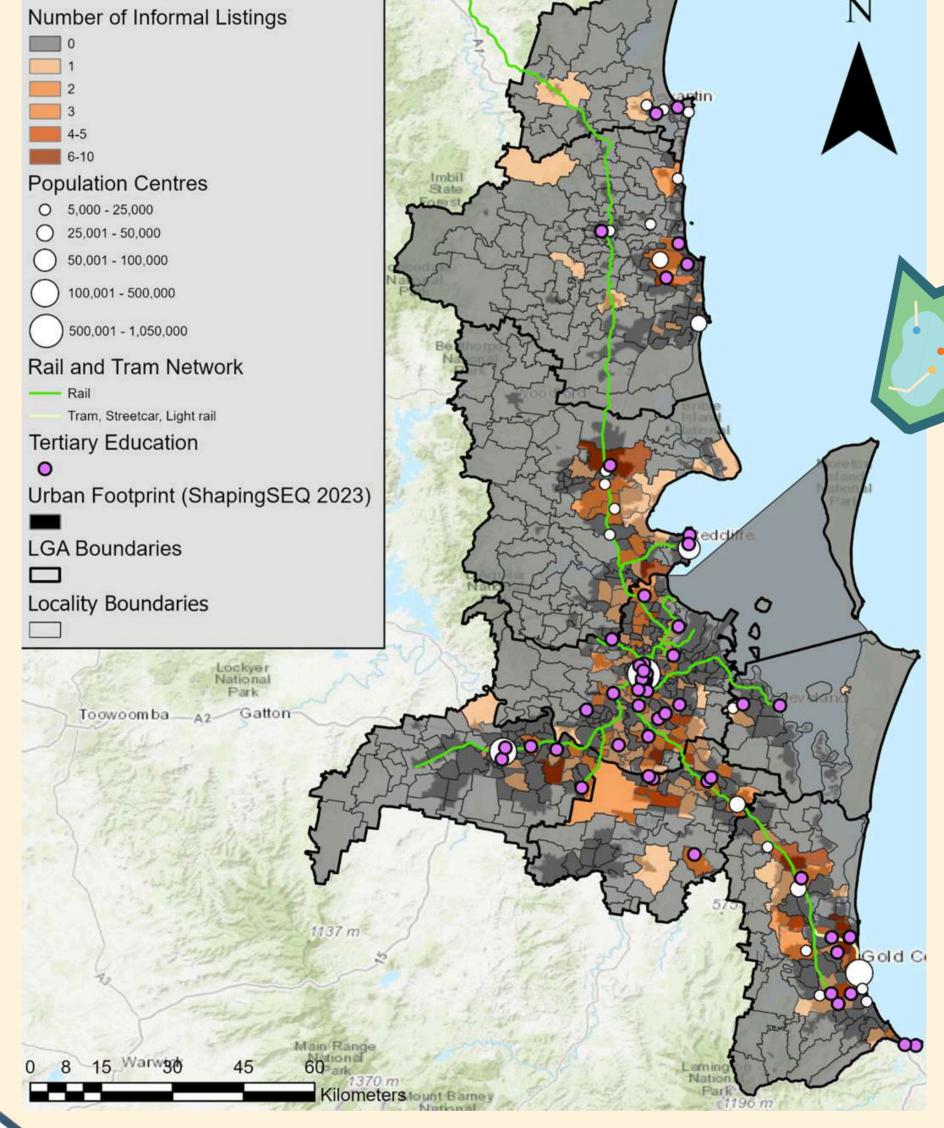
### **Fundamental Data**



- Informality occurs across a wide range of suburbs, with differing demographics, housing typologies, and predominant land uses.
- The most commonly listed housing typologies were low-density detached houses in suburban localities, reflective of SEQ's urban sprawl and the regional scope.
- Compared to the literature, there was little occurrence of overcrowding, with informal typologies more likely to be informal rental agreements or non-compliant conversion of rooms.

# Distribution of Informal Listings and Liveability

Legend



# **Distribution and Liveability**

- Informality is a predominately urban phenomenon, but still occurred across the urban-rural spectrum
- Proximity to amenities was often used as a draw in advertisement text, the most common of which are shown below.

schools markets restaurants westfield shop university shops chemist stores market shopping hospitals beach griffith bus bank cafes medical park campus train qut station woolworths universities tafe farm cinema rail transport campuses

• Despite the above, there was **less** correlation to student amenity and a higher working professional demographic than expected. This indicates that a wider range of income earners are relying on the informal market.



 "Seeking a preferred female to share with an elderly man, offering a low rental fee in return for a caring arrangement, possibly even receiving some form of caring

revealed a lack of privacy and possible non-compliance with building codes

35per night...suit respectful individuals or small family

### **Advertisement Texts and Risk**



LinkedIn:

- payment." Images attached to the listings
- Vulnerable populations may achieve some benefit from informal housing, particularly when the offer is **community-driven**.
  - "Medium or short-term emergency housing couch surf needing safe simple shelter"

# **Policy Implications**

- Informal housing is becoming a greater concern in Australia and in SEQ. However, lack of research and understanding has resulted in a distinct lack of policy.
  - Future policy needs to respond to SEQ directly, not rely on assumed best practice.
  - Policy makers cannot assume that informal housing is located solely in lower socioeconomic regions.
  - It should not aim to remove non-compliant dwellings without regard to the future wellbeing of the resident



- between informal and formal market prices, stratified by locality (**p=0.870**).
- This indicates a **distinct separation** between the formal and informal system.