



Stronger
together.
**Prepared for
the future.**

Resilient Sydney Strategy 2025–2030

RESILIENT

SYDNEY

Front cover

Photo: Resilience Sydney ambassadors and steering
committee launch the strategy development process / Jacquie Manning

Illustration: NSW Topographic Maps / DCS Spatial Services

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RESILIENT SYDNEY

A program for Greater Sydney in New South Wales, Australia, to build the capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, businesses and systems to survive, adapt and thrive in the face of chronic stresses and acute shocks.

Resilient Sydney is a regional collaboration of the 33 local governments of Greater Sydney, aligned to the global Resilient Cities Network. The Resilient Sydney Office is funded by local government and hosted by the City of Sydney.

www.resilientsydney.com.au

RESILIENT CITIES NETWORK

Resilient Cities Network is a global urban resilience network of cities, bringing together global knowledge, practice, partnerships, and funding to empower members to build safe and equitable cities for all.

www.resilientcitiesnetwork.org

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Acknowledgement of Country



We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Gadigal, Wangal, Bidjigal, Gamaragal, Dharug, Dharawal, Gundungurra and Darkinjung Ngurra – the land, waters and sky of this place we now call Sydney.

We pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, past and present.

We recognise that this always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

“We are each only here for a short time but Country is always here.”¹

Statements about Country

Statement from inner Sydney

Healthy Country is clear sky, fresh air, clean water, no pollution, animals and plants revitalised and growing, people living in balance with the environment.

Connecting to Country and nature is important for our health and mental wellbeing. Healthy Country makes us feel relaxed, peaceful, calm, liberated, enlightened, happy and free. We have evolved to be connected to Country.

To clean up Country, we need opportunities to be involved and be listened to. The Government must find new ways of doing things.

We have strong voices and are united. So listen to us, and take us seriously.

Healthy people need healthy Country. All of us, all backgrounds and all cultures.

Written on Gadigal Ngurra in Marrickville by First Nations people from Dharawal, Dharug, Gamilaroi, Wiradjuri, Murawari, Ualarai, Wailwan and Bundjalung Country who live in Sydney.

Statement from western Sydney

We want a peaceful city where people can enjoy life.

We need more nature in our lives. Trees have value. They are important in cities. Sitting under trees makes us happy.

We need access to Country, including our national parks. Connecting to Country is something that everyone deserves. We need to be able to walk on Country.

We need to share our knowledge on caring for Country. Education is essential. Listening and learning is for everyone in the community, no matter their cultural background. It's everybody's right and responsibility.

Western science needs to be combined with Aboriginal knowledge in caring for Country and urban planning. Funding needs to reach and benefit the people on the ground.

As Aboriginal people in Western Sydney, we are a diverse community affected by over 230 years of colonisation, we need governments, policy-makers and all decision-makers to listen to us and include us.

We can't change the past. But we can build a better future.

Written on Dharawal Ngurra in Picton by First Nations people from Dharawal, Wiradjuri, Gamilaroi, Kunga, Awabakal, Ngunnawal and Torres Strait Country who live in Sydney.

Message from Greater Sydney mayors

Local government plays a critical role in supporting place-based resilience.

The resilience challenges facing Greater Sydney cannot be solved individually. They require a collaborative effort from local, state and federal governments, business and community.

The Resilient Sydney Strategy provides a pathway for collaboration to make Greater Sydney more resilient now and in the future.

Working together, in genuine partnership, will ensure Greater Sydney is a place where all communities thrive.

Edward McDougall
Bayside Council

Frank Carbone
Fairfield City Council

Sue Heins
Northern Beaches Council

Brad Bunting
Blacktown City Council

Elise Borg
Georges River Council

Todd Carney
Penrith City Council

Mark Greenhill OAM
Blue Mountains City Council

Les Sheather
Hawkesbury City Council

Dylan Parker
Randwick City Council

John Faker
Burwood Council

Warren Waddell
Hornsby Shire Council

John-Paul Baladi
Strathfield Council

Ashleigh Cagney
Camden Council

Zac Miles
Hunters Hill Council

Jack Boyd
Sutherland Shire Council

Darcy Lound
Campbelltown City Council

Darcy Byrne
Inner West Council

Clover Moore AO
City of Sydney

Bilal El-Hayek
City of Canterbury-Bankstown

Christine Kay
Ku-Ring-Gai Council

William Nemesh
Waverley Council

Michael Megna
City of Canada Bay

Merri Southwood
Lane Cove Municipal Council

Tanya Taylor
Willoughby City Council

Martin Zaiter
City of Parramatta

Ned Mannoun
Liverpool City Council

Matt Gould
Wollondilly Shire Council

Trenton Brown
City of Ryde

Ann Marie Kimber
Mosman Council

Sarah Swan
Woollahra Municipal Council

Ola Hamed
Cumberland City Council

Zoë Baker
North Sydney Council

“I have been delighted to host the Resilient Sydney office for the past 10 years. The Resilient Sydney network is more important than ever as we work together to future proof our city.”



**Lord Mayor
Clover Moore AO**

The development of the resilient Sydney strategy 2025–2030 was funded under the joint Australian Government–NSW Government national partnership agreement on disaster risk reduction.



Greater Sydney councils



Collaborating organisations



Resilient Sydney Steering Committee



Photo: Jacquie Manning / Resilient Sydney

Over the past 10 years, Resilient Sydney has set a benchmark for collaboration. Under the first Resilient Sydney strategy, we forged the relationships to support stronger city governance. The work of Resilient Sydney has established a common language for understanding, preparing for and responding to shock events. It has elevated the critical role local government plays in managing places and responding to community needs.

Greater Sydney has experienced all the shocks identified in the first strategy – fires, floods, heatwaves, infrastructure and network failures and a global pandemic. We have shown ourselves to be resilient but we also know these events have taken a toll on our communities. As these shocks escalate in the future, it is our job to work together to tackle the chronic stresses that increase our vulnerability and undermine our resilience.

In 2023, with funding from the NSW and Federal Governments, we embarked on another ambitious project to understand the risks facing Greater Sydney and develop a refreshed roadmap to strengthen city resilience.

We need to work together to ensure housing is affordable and climate-resilient; to accelerate a fair, clean energy transition; to address extreme heat and find sustainable solutions to Greater Sydney's mounting waste crisis. We need to continue to green our neighbourhoods; protect our natural environment and ensure our communities are connected, inclusive and more prepared for the future.

I am proud to stand alongside my colleagues on the Resilient Sydney steering committee to present to you, the Resilient Sydney strategy 2025–2030. Together, we have demonstrated that progress towards a city with communities that can adapt and thrive is possible. I look forward to our continued collaboration for a more resilient future.

Monica Barone PSM
Chair, Resilient Sydney

NSW Reconstruction Authority

The NSW Reconstruction Authority is proud to support the Resilient Sydney Strategy 2025–2030 – a powerful roadmap for a stronger, more connected, and future-ready Greater Sydney. This strategy reflects the very essence of resilience: working together across government, business, and community to prepare for challenges and build on opportunities.

Through our collaborative efforts, we've seen the importance of local knowledge and collective action in building adaptable, empowered communities. The strategy's focus on coordinated governance, environmental stewardship, and community-led initiatives aligns closely with the RA's vision to strengthen resilience across New South Wales.

We thank Resilient Sydney and the many partners involved for their commitment to this vision. Together, we can ensure Greater Sydney and its people not only overcome future challenges but thrive in the face of them.

Mal Lanyon
CEO, NSW Reconstruction Authority

National Emergency Management Agency

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) commends Resilient Sydney for this strategy.

The strategy recognises a resilient city is socially connected and people-centred, where residents are prepared and the environment is protected. Reducing disaster risk is a priority, including for the most disproportionately at-risk communities.

This is a strong foundation to build resilience in Greater Sydney.

Local governments are at the forefront of this important work. We recognise collaboration and partnership is necessary to achieve the vision.

As a federal partner, NEMA provides national policy leadership and strategic coordination to support locally-led action. NEMA also delivers programs to reduce the impact of disasters and increase the resilience of local communities.

We are committed to play our part to help reduce risk for the people of Greater Sydney, and all Australians.

Brendan Moon
Coordinator-General, NEMA

Resilient Cities Network



Source: Resilient Cities Network²

The 33 councils of Greater Sydney, the Resilient Sydney steering committee, the Resilient Sydney office and all those involved in shaping the Resilient Sydney 2025-2030 strategy deserve recognition for a major achievement - not just for the city, but for the resilience movement worldwide. Sydney was among the first cities to develop a resilience strategy and is now among the first to embark on a second-generation strategy, reaffirming its leadership in advancing urban resilience.

This new strategy builds on the foundation laid in 2018, strengthening the capacity of Sydney's communities, businesses, and institutions to integrate holistic resilience into the governance systems of the city – to navigate climate risks, economic transitions, and social challenges. By championing local government collaboration, prioritising community-led solutions, and integrating First Nations knowledge, Resilient Sydney 2025-2030 sets a benchmark for cities worldwide.

This work is the result of an extensive engagement process, reflecting the voices and priorities of Greater Sydney's diverse communities. The strategy's focus on readiness, care for the environment, equity across neighborhoods, enhancing social connections and above all a coordinated, trustworthy government ensures that Sydney is prepared for the shocks and stresses of today while also actively promoting a thriving future for her residents.

At the Resilient Cities Network, we are proud to support Sydney in this next phase and look forward to continued collaboration as the strategy moves into action.

Lauren Sorkin
Executive Director



Photo: bara, Monument to the Eora by Judy Watson / Chris Southwood

Strategy overview

Resilient Sydney is a collaboration of 33 Greater Sydney councils working with state and federal government partners, business, academia and community to strengthen the resilience of our city.

City resilience is the capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, businesses and systems within a city to survive, adapt and thrive no matter what kinds of chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience.

The Resilient Sydney Strategy includes an evidence-based and locally endorsed set of strategic directions to support collaborative action and increase the resilience of Greater Sydney to shocks and stresses.

Direction 1

Care for the environment

A city where we care for the environment and live sustainably

- 1** Embed First Nations knowledge and practices in land management
- 2** Connect and protect green and blue places
- 3** Increase tree canopy and habitat across Greater Sydney
- 4** Increase biosecurity awareness
- 5** Secure the future of Sydney's water supply
- 6** Support electrification and the energy transition
- 7** Improve the security of Greater Sydney's food systems
- 8** Address Greater Sydney's waste crisis

Direction 2

People-centred city

An equitable city with climate resilient neighbourhoods

- 9** Plan and design places to withstand increased natural hazards
- 10** Improve the heat resilience of communities in Greater Sydney
- 11** Increase and improve affordable rental housing
- 12** Better connect communities with active and public transport
- 13** Create inclusive and welcoming public places

Vision

Stronger together. Prepared for the future.

Mission

Collaborate to manage risk and build resilience in Greater Sydney through knowledge sharing, capacity building and planning for our communities, infrastructure, and natural environment.

Direction 3

Connect for strength

An inclusive city that supports social connections and community agency

14 Embed dignity principles in leadership and engagement

15 Replenish resilience through creative and cultural expression

16 Support First Nations self-determination

17 Facilitate community-led action

18 Engage children and young people in decision-making about the future and their wellbeing

19 Measure and value social capital

20 Facilitate inclusive access to social infrastructure

Direction 4

Be ready

A city where people and organisations are prepared for emergencies

21 Embed person-centred emergency planning

22 Research community preparedness and support coordinated campaigns

23 Improve emergency awareness in apartment buildings

24 Coordinate and encourage volunteering

25 Collaborate to be better prepared for emergencies

Direction 5

One city

A city with coordinated governance that people trust

26 Promote and participate in collaborative governance and engagement for Greater Sydney

27 Adopt region-wide data and tools

28 Enhance the Resilient Sydney data platform

29 Strengthen the resilience of council assets

30 Galvanize resilience across Greater Sydney

Snapshot of Greater Sydney

Greater Sydney encompasses the Blue Mountains to the west, the Hawkesbury River to the north, Lake Burragorang and the Royal National Park to the south. Home to over 5 million people from more than 200 cultures, the region covers approximately 12,370km².

People

5,231,147 People

66% of NSW's and 21% of Australia's population

Density of

429
per km²

25 km² in Hawkesbury v. 8,173 km² in City of Sydney

GDP of

\$490 billion

68% of NSW GDP,
25% of Australian GDP

Over 200 cultures

41% of residents
born overseas

Place

33 local government areas

2,287 MW

solar PV coverage
across Greater Sydney
rooftops

21.7%

canopy cover
across the Metro
Urban Area

Emissions of

45 million t CO₂-e

(trending down by 8% since 2014)

River systems and catchments

3 major catchments

9 rivers





Resilient Sydney

Who we are

Resilient Sydney is a collaboration network of 33 Greater Sydney councils. Resilient Sydney is guided by a regional steering committee representing councils from across Sydney, state government, business and community stakeholders. We are a member of the global Resilient Cities Network. The program began in 2015 and the first Resilient Sydney strategy was published in 2018.

The strategy aimed to increase the capacity of people, communities, businesses, institutions and systems in Greater Sydney to survive and adapt in the face of acute shocks and ongoing stresses.

A small team, led by the chief resilience officer, facilitates the Resilient Sydney program. Resilient Sydney works with cities around the world to share best practice. It facilitates resilience actions through collaboration with leaders and resilience ambassadors in Greater Sydney councils.

Over the past 8 years, the Resilient Sydney network has enhanced the way we understand our city and strengthened the way we work together.

Championing local government

Local government is uniquely placed to contribute to place-based resilience. Councils have broad responsibilities, delivering stewardship of place and services for local communities across the 4 domains of resilience: natural and built environment, health and wellbeing, economy and society, and governance and planning.

Local councils work closely with their communities. They have local knowledge and relationships that enable them to play an influential role in connecting other levels of government to local communities.

Councils also bear the brunt of shock events. They work in the context of the place to plan, prepare, respond and recover from shock events – alongside their communities.

Resilient Sydney champions the role of local government. Resilient Sydney facilitates collective advocacy on shared concerns for Greater Sydney councils. We also act as a conduit connecting state and federal government to Greater Sydney councils.

Resilient Sydney invests in the capacity of all Greater Sydney councils. This supports councils to respond to resilience challenges and ensures the ongoing resilience of this critical level of government in our city.

Our achievements³

Since the resilient Sydney strategy was launched in 2018 we have:

Mayoral summits

on key issues including affordable housing, waste and emergency planning

19 councils

with reconciliation action plans (RAPs) or First Nations strategies

380+ people

using the resilient Sydney data platform

16 councils

with urban forest plans

32 councils

participating in annual campaigns for emergency preparedness

14 councils

with or in the process of adopting affordable housing contribution schemes

21 councils

with net zero targets for their communities

9 councils

with emergency dashboards

19 councils

with resilience plans

6 councils

reviewing resilience of their assets

City resilience

City resilience is the capacity of individuals, communities, businesses and systems in a place to survive, adapt and thrive no matter what shocks and stresses they experience.

Over 100 cities around the world have a resilience strategy.

Sydney along with Paris and Rotterdam is now implementing our second strategy.

Resilient Sydney collaboration in action



Greater Sydney Heat Taskforce and heat smart city plan⁴

The Greater Sydney Heat Taskforce began in 2023 to address the risk of extreme heat in Greater Sydney. Developing the heat smart city plan involved 370 people from 40 organisations. It is the first plan of its kind in Australia and includes governance, planning, education and awareness, and economic actions.

Collaborators include:

- state departments and agencies including health, emergency management, transport, environment, planning, infrastructure and community services
- federal environment and emergency management agencies
- industry stakeholders representing business, reinsurance, water, energy and the development sectors

- Australian Red Cross, Sweltering Cities, Western Sydney Community Forum and other non-government organisations
- academics from Western Sydney University, UNSW and Sydney University
- Resilient Sydney and Greater Sydney councils.

The project has also delivered a:

- heat risk methodology for assessing community risk including a prototype heat-risk mapping tool
- heatwave management guide for local councils on key interventions they can take to support their communities in heatwaves
- cool suburbs assessment tool to help industry and governments rate and manage heat impacts through urban design.

The Greater Sydney Heat Taskforce is convened by the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC) and Resilient Sydney. The taskforce was funded under the joint Australian Government–NSW Government national partnership agreement on disaster risk reduction.

Photo: Greater Sydney Heat Taskforce launch the heat smart city plan, 2024 / WSROC



Resilient Sydney data platform

The Resilient Sydney platform project started in 2019, delivering Greater Sydney councils with action-oriented, consistent data and visualisation reports. The practical reports help councils understand, benchmark, monitor and compare the environmental footprint and community sustainability performance of their regions. The platform provides access to data at metropolitan, local government area and suburb levels for environmental impacts, renewables trends and transport use.

The platform now hosts more than 10 years of data, enabling councils to efficiently understand trends, opportunities and progress against environmental commitments. There are more than 380 local government users of the platform, supported by more than 5,000 hours in training to date.



Local government bushfire recovery network

The local government bushfire recovery support group was created in January 2020 to support recovery efforts during the severe fire season. The group includes Resilient Sydney, City of Sydney, Blacktown City Council and other supporting councils, Local Government NSW and the Office of Local Government.

The collaboration facilitated support from local governments across NSW for the first time during a major natural disaster. The group matched requests for support from affected councils with offers from unaffected ones. By June 2020, 106 requests and 556 offers had been made.

The group now involves government agencies and departments and is ready to mobilise in future shock events.



Partnering with local government to strengthen social cohesion

Social cohesion is a key feature of resilient communities. Councils, through place-based initiatives and strong relationships with their local communities, are well-positioned to nurture and strengthen social connections and cohesion. The NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, in collaboration with Resilient Sydney, commissioned Cred Consulting to create a pilot program to support the role local government plays in building social cohesion. Building social cohesion: a resource for local government⁵ is a comprehensive toolkit identifying the 6 roles councils play to strengthen social cohesion and measure the outcomes of their initiatives. The resource was developed with input from more than 100 NSW councils and a review of international frameworks and best practice case studies.

Shocks and stresses facing Greater Sydney

Shocks

Shocks are sudden events that disrupt a city.

Shocks include natural hazards such as heatwaves and floods, international crises such as economic crisis or disease pandemic, and critical infrastructure failures. When planning for city resilience, it is important to consider the cumulative effects from multiple shock events.

Resilient Sydney undertook a comprehensive resilience risk assessment alongside community engagement to identify the priority shocks and stresses facing Sydney. The detailed outcomes are available in the synthesis report and community engagement reports^{6, 1}.

Shocks for Greater Sydney

International crisis



Economic crisis



Cyberattack



War & conflict



Disease outbreak

Natural hazards



Heatwaves



Storms



Bushfires



Coastal hazards



Flooding

Critical infrastructure failure



Energy



Water



Transport



Waste



Digital networks



Shelter

Stresses

Stresses are ongoing challenges. They include unaffordable housing and cost of living pressures that weaken the ability of the city and communities to respond to and recover from shock events. It is important to consider how stresses increase the vulnerability of people, places and economies to shock events.

To inform the strategy, Resilient Sydney identified top stresses through community engagement¹ and a comprehensive resilience risk assessment^{6, 7}.

Stresses for Greater Sydney

Stresses that increase vulnerability for individuals and communities relating to geography and demographics

Inequity



Health services



Education



Housing



Cost of living



Transport

Wellbeing



Mental health



Family violence



Chronic health conditions



Social isolation & lack of community connections



Racism & vilification

Stresses that undermine the ability of the city to function effectively and manage increasing risks

Governance



Fragmented governance



Environmental degradation



Reducing social cohesion



Disrupted supply chains



Low trust



Shocks and stresses in different parts of Greater Sydney

Both the resilience risk assessment and community engagement indicated that different parts of Sydney face different shocks and stresses. For example, the councils on the rural boundary of Greater Sydney are more at risk of bushfires and floods.

The publicly available geospatial data used in the resilience risk assessment has been shared with councils and is available in the full risk assessment report. This gives a more granular account of natural hazard shocks relevant to specific parts of Greater Sydney.

The evidence base identified that geographic and economic inequality is increasing in Sydney. The first 5 stresses relate to inequity of access to services and opportunities and the increased likelihood of experiencing these stresses as a result of living in western parts of Sydney.

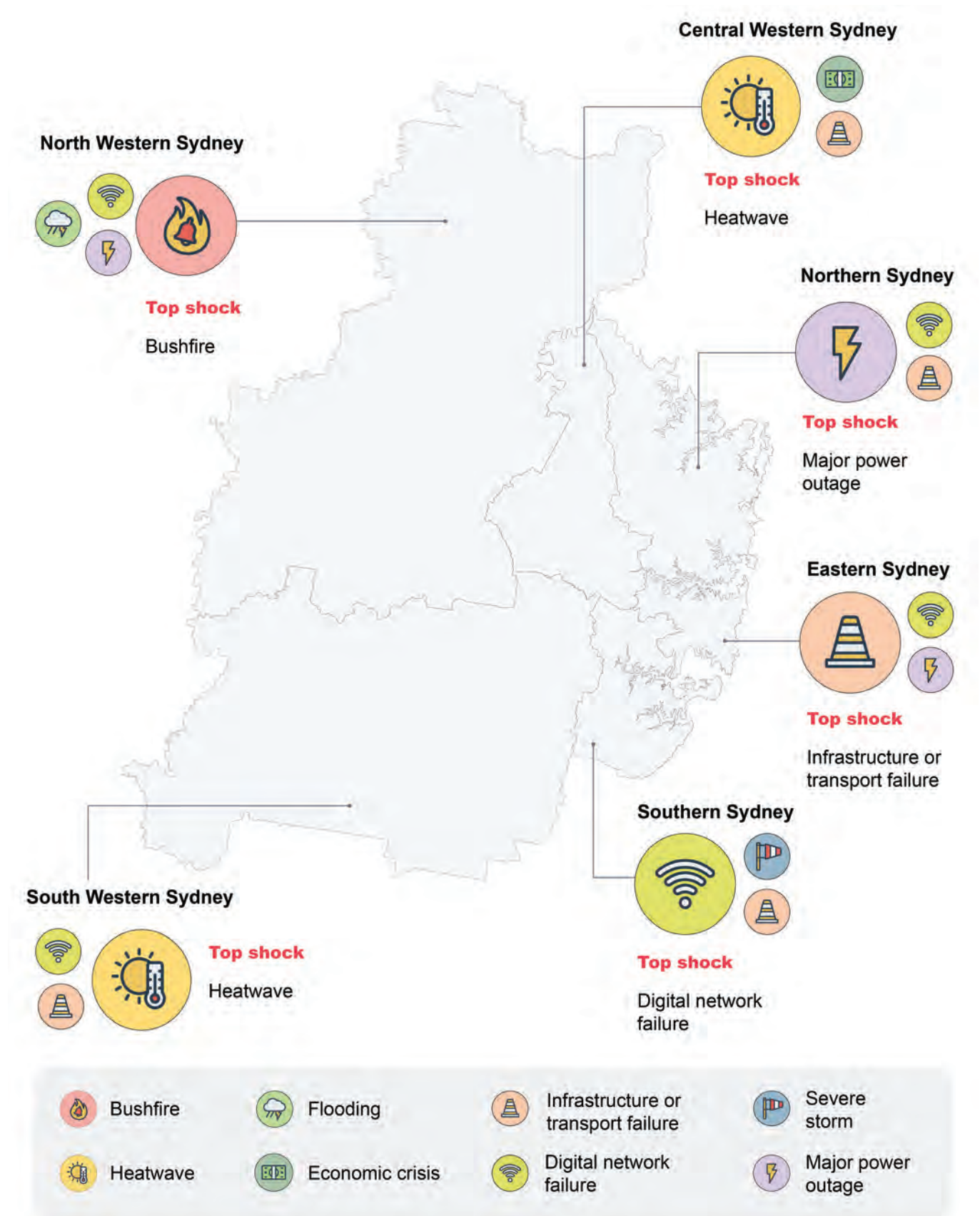
Many resilience responses identified in this strategy such as building social connections, strengthening asset management and improving collaboration are shock agnostic. Most actions in the strategy focus on addressing stresses and vulnerabilities to strengthen the resilience of Greater Sydney to all shock events. This is also important to building resilience to the cascading and compounding nature of major shocks – that is where communities experiences multiple shocks and stresses as a result of the initial event.

Where specific natural hazard risks are high, local councils in collaboration with the NSW Government and Resilient Sydney are developing and implementing hazard-based action plans.

For example, data indicates that communities in western Sydney are more likely to be exposed to extreme heat. Specific actions to address heatwaves are identified in the heat smart city plan⁴, a collaboration between the WSROC, Resilient Sydney, state government agencies, academics and community organisations.

Another example, is north western Sydney which is significantly affected by flood risk. Specific actions to mitigate the impact of floods on these communities are identified through the Hawkesbury Nepean Valley disaster adaptation plan⁸ led by the NSW Reconstruction Authority.

Shocks across Greater Sydney identified in community engagement



Developing the strategy

Four main drivers of change are now shaping human societies: **globalisation, urbanisation, climate change and digitalisation⁶**.

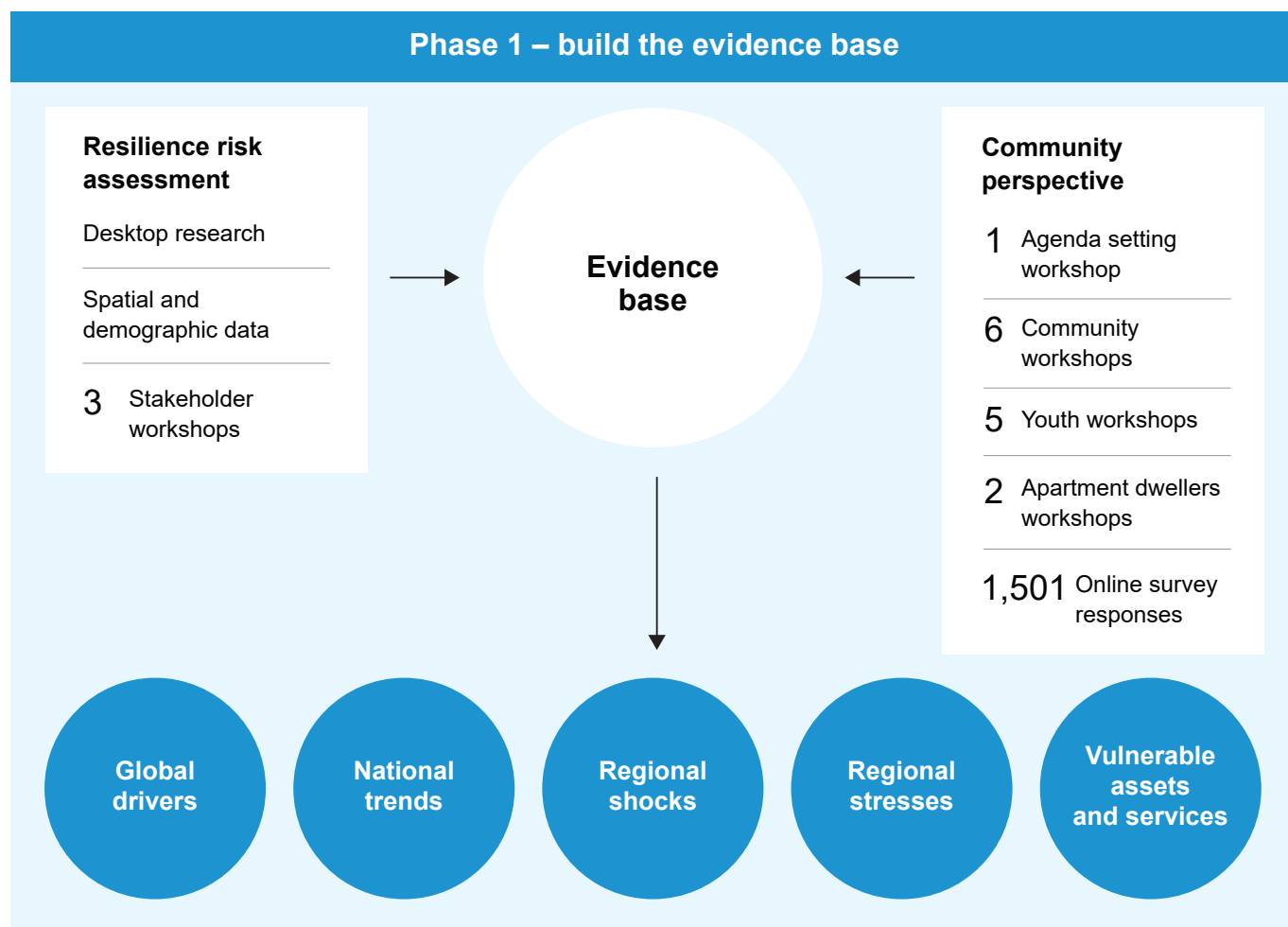
The city resilience framework is an internationally recognised way to understand how cities are changing and how we can strengthen their resilience.

The city resilience framework responds to these drivers.

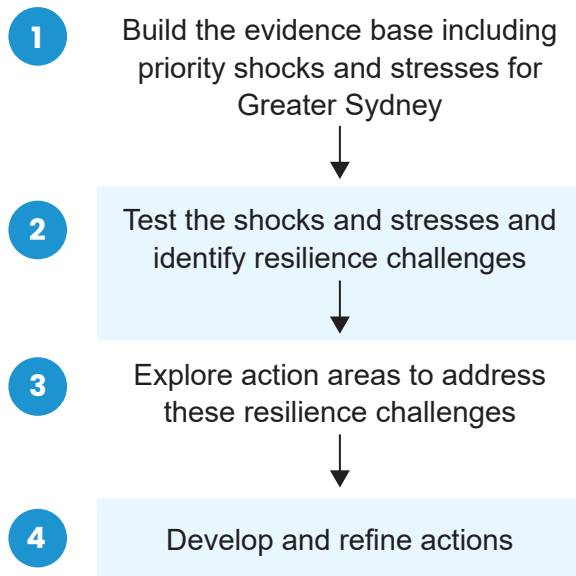
The framework describes the characteristics of a resilient city across 4 dimensions:

- **Health and wellbeing:** the health and wellbeing of everyone living and working in the city.
- **Natural and built environments:** the quality of the ecosystems and built infrastructure connecting and supporting the city
- **Economy and society:** the systems within the society and economy that enable urban populations to live peacefully and sustainably.
- **Governance and planning:** appropriate leadership, governance and strategy enabling the city to learn from the past and take timely action⁶.

The resilience risk assessment that informs the strategy was structured by the dimensions outlined in the city resilience framework. The resilience risk assessment alongside the outcomes of community engagement identified priority shocks and stresses facing Greater Sydney.



The strategy is based on extensive research and engagement across 4 phases to:



This process involved:

- an extensive review of current frameworks, strategies, policies and reports
- First Nations engagement with organisations, Elders and young people
- 8 community workshops with 282 people across Sydney
- 5 youth workshops
- 5 multicultural roundtables
- an online survey of 1,501 community members
- 4 workshops with resilience ambassadors from Greater Sydney councils
- 3 risk assessment stakeholder workshops
- sector workshops on volunteering, arts and culture and with public health workers
- a deliberative panel on natural hazard risks
- a summit attended by 171 representatives from local and state government
- interviews and meetings with over 100 stakeholders and experts
- participation in 30 sector events attended by over 1,200 people.

Through the strategy development process, we have engaged over 2,000 community members and 200 organisations. All 33 councils in Greater Sydney have been involved¹.



Finalising the actions

The actions in the strategy were developed with stakeholders at the Resilient Sydney strategy summit in August 2024 and in subsequent meetings.

Each action in this strategy addresses multiple shocks and stresses. The actions are spread across the 4 dimensions of the city resilience framework. Resilience principles have been applied to each action to ensure they:

- address multiple shocks and stresses
- build relationships and resilient behaviours for ongoing impact
- appreciate the critical roles played by different levels of government, the community and business
- can be scaled up for regional outcomes or modified to suit the local conditions.

More information about the risk assessment and engagement methodology and outcomes is in the synthesis report⁶ and community engagement report¹.

Community insights¹



People we consulted to develop this strategy are worried about¹

- having less personal resilience due to fatigue and uncertainty
- shocks and stresses affecting wellbeing and mental health
- having no control in a system that can feel uncaring
- cost-of-living pressures
- a lack of affordable and quality housing
- health and transport services
- damage to the environment and climate change.

People said they want¹

- to be better prepared for emergencies
- government to learn from lived experience
- clear and accessible government communication
- to build community connectedness and a sense of agency
- support for community leaders and local initiatives.

Of the respondents to the online survey¹

91% said housing was not affordable and did not meet people's needs

84% felt that there was unequal distribution of wealth in Sydney

59% of those who live in southwest and northwest Sydney said it was not easy to move around Sydney by public transport and walking

53% felt that government was not accountable and did not provide clear information to the public

36% agreed that Sydney is welcoming and connected

26% felt that Sydney is prepared for a crisis

20% agreed that different levels of government work well together to manage our city

Perspectives from groups in the community

- First Nations people stressed the importance of caring for Country, respecting and protecting cultural knowledge, and working with Aboriginal-controlled organisations¹
- young people were concerned about the impact of misinformation, polarisation and disinformation, and the lack of action on climate change⁹
- multicultural communities called for collaboration and support for community leaders and initiatives¹
- multicultural communities identified that shock events provide opportunities for greater exploitation and social division¹
- apartment residents said they were not well prepared for emergencies in their buildings, and many did not know their neighbours¹.

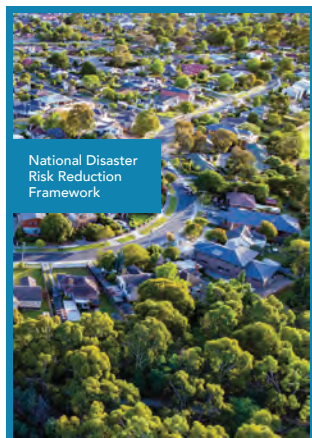
The communities' role in responding to natural hazard risks¹

Resilient Sydney convened a deliberative panel of 50 people randomly selected from across Sydney. They identified 8 key roles communities should play in responding to the growing risks of natural disasters.

1. Be personally prepared for natural disasters.
2. Understand and plan for increasing risks in your area (including learning from experiences elsewhere).
3. Build community connections and support each other, including vulnerable community members.
4. Take part in decisions about reducing the impacts of disasters and hold government to account.
5. Take part in decisions about responding to disasters when they happen and hold government to account.
6. Help all groups in the community have their voices heard, including vulnerable community members.
7. Be part of community projects and activities.
8. Recognise and draw experience from First Nations people's wisdom.

Australian frameworks for resilience

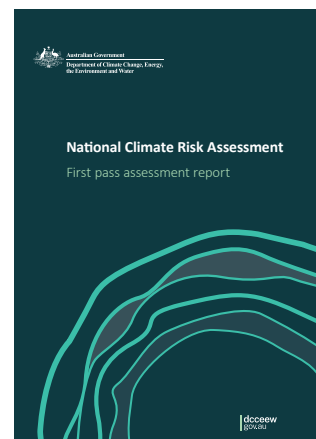
In developing the strategy, consideration has been given to relevant federal and state frameworks and climate projections.



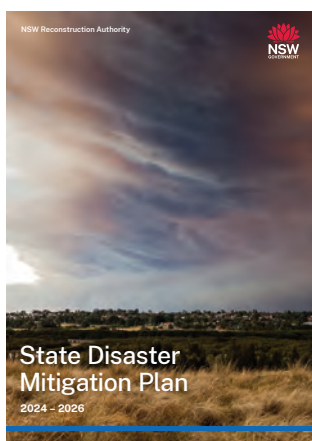
The national disaster risk reduction framework¹⁰ guides national, whole-of-society efforts to reduce risks and minimise the loss and suffering caused by natural disasters.



The 2023 critical infrastructure resilience strategy¹¹ provides a framework for how industry, state and territory governments, and the Australian Government work together to strengthen the resilience of critical infrastructure.



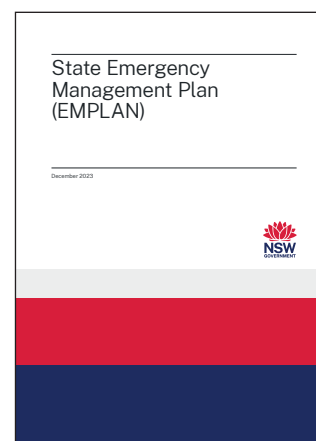
The national climate risk assessment (first pass)¹² identifies current and future climate change risks.



The state disaster mitigation plan¹³ (SDMP) informs the state's mitigation and adaptation planning approach to natural hazard risks.



The NSW and Australian regional climate modelling (NARClIM) project release the new projections – NARClIM2.0¹⁵ in late 2024. These projections provide plausible future climate change impacts for the Greater Sydney region.

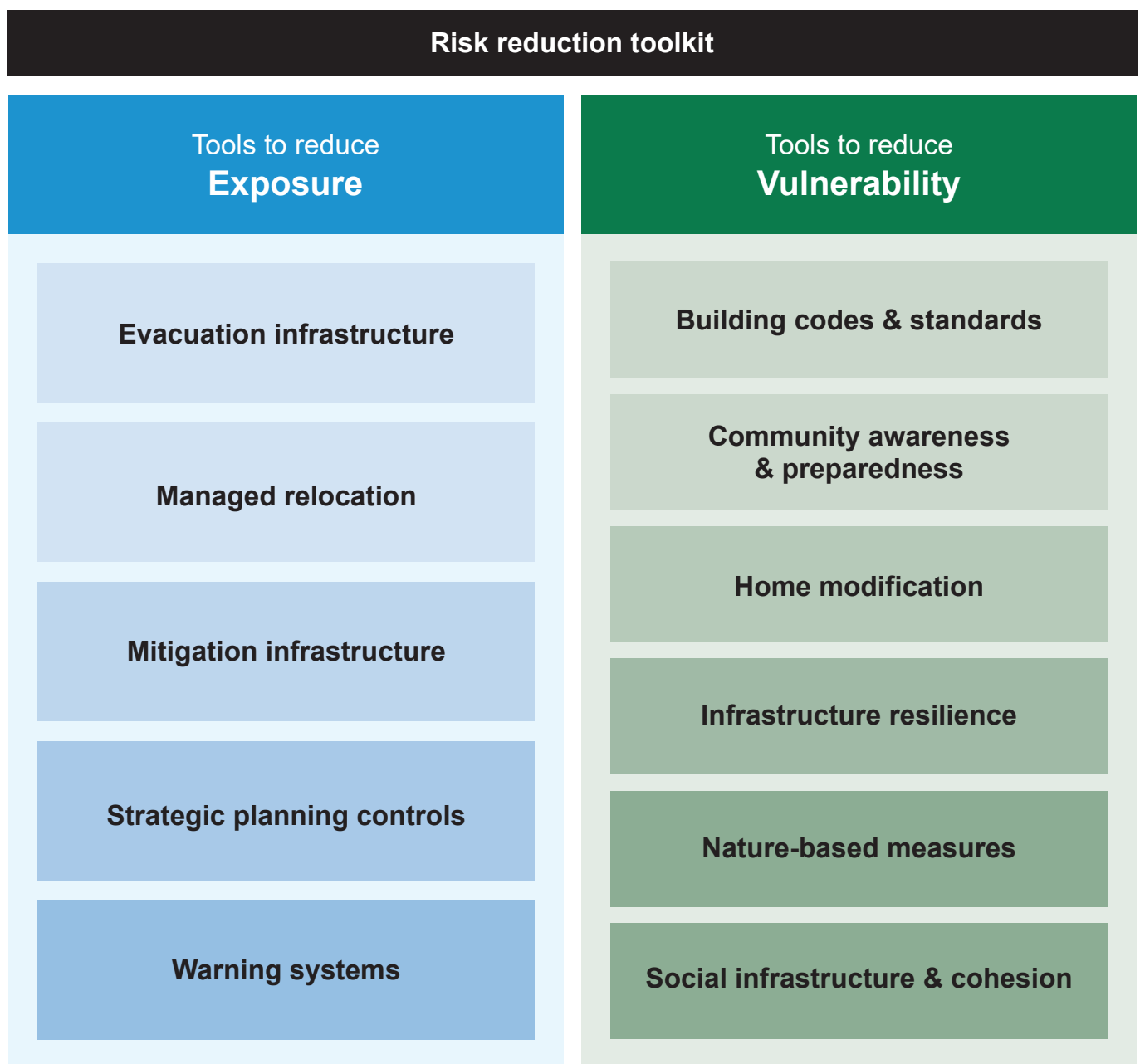


The State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 governs the state's emergency management arrangements¹⁵.

Aligning with the state disaster mitigation plan

The state government is implementing a disaster mitigation and adaptation framework directed by the NSW Reconstruction Authority Act 2022⁷. The SDMP provides a toolkit for reducing exposure and vulnerability to natural hazards. Actions in the resilient Sydney strategy have been mapped to the toolkit and enablers (collaborative governance, funding, capacity and capability, data and insurance) to demonstrate how the strategy aligns with the SDMP.

State disaster mitigation plan – toolkit¹³



Implementing the strategy together

The Resilient Sydney approach

Role of the Resilient Sydney office and network

The resilient Sydney office coordinates and supports action across local government and with state and federal agencies to implement the strategy. The chief resilience officer and the program team will develop an implementation plan to support the delivery of actions outlined in the strategy.

Greater Sydney council's use the strategy as a basis for their own resilience strategies and actions embedded in their community strategic plans and other strategies and plans. Each council can select the action pathways that are most appropriate to address their place-based risks and resilience challenges.

Using the resilient Sydney ambassadors network and communities of practice, councils collaborate to leverage investment and knowledge and maximise resilience outcomes for their communities.

Collaboration for implementation

It will take a coordinated effort to achieve the resilience goals identified in this strategy. Collaboration across all levels of government, national, state and local and partnerships with business and communities will be necessary to achieve most of the goals.

Resilient Sydney will work with partners to develop an implementation plan for actions in the strategy. This plan will identify priority focus areas and key collaborators for action pathways. The implementation plan will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis to respond to system changes, challenges and priorities.

National government frameworks provide high-level strategic direction and resourcing. Relevant departments include:

- Department of Home Affairs
- National Emergency Management Agency
- Federal Department of Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water
- Australian Human Rights Commission.

There are numerous state government departments that deliver data, policy and planning to provide essential systems and services that support Greater Sydney and enhance its resilience including:

- Department of Premier and Cabinet
- NSW Reconstruction Authority
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
- Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
- NSW Health
- NSW State Emergency Services
- Department of Community Justice
- Homes NSW
- Office of Local Government
- Transport for NSW
- NSW Police
- Fire & Rescue NSW
- Local Land Services
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
- Office of Sport NSW.

Changes to legislation and regulation by state government will be required to facilitate some of the actions in this strategy. Resourcing and support for local government will be essential to ensure state government policies, plans and targets are achieved.

There is a range of land and asset managers in Greater Sydney that play an important role in building resilience including:

- Aboriginal land councils
- NSW National Parks
- Sydney Water and Water NSW
- Energy utilities including Endeavour Energy and Ausgrid
- NSW TelCo Authority, NBN and telecommunications providers
- Department of Education
- universities
- private landowners.

Local government works closely with individuals and community groups to effectively deliver initiatives in local places. These include:

- Traditional Custodians
- Aboriginal-controlled organisations
- Australian Red Cross
- Charities, not-for-profit and community organisations
- local business networks.

Resilient Sydney also works with experts and advocates including:

- government and advisory bodies such as the NSW Net Zero Commission, the Rental Commissioner, Small Business Commissioner, Disability Council and Multicultural NSW
- council groups including Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils, Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils, Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils, The Parks – Western Parkland Councils, Sydney Coastal Councils, Parramatta River Catchment Group, Cooks River Alliance, Georges Riverkeeper and NSW Association of Local Government
- international networks including Resilient Cities Network and C40
- peak bodies and industry groups such as NSW Council of Social Services, Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council, Climate Council, Green Buildings Council, Property Council, Committee for Sydney, Owners Corporation Network and the Centre for Volunteering,
- the insurance sector
- business groups including Business Sydney and Business Western Sydney
- academics and research institutes including the Natural Hazards Research Australia, Sydney Environment Institute, Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience, Collaborating 4 Inclusion, Young and Resilient Research Centre, Sydney Policy Lab, Smart Green Cities Research Centre and the Green Infrastructure Lab
- advocacy and innovation groups including Sweltering Cities, Climate-KIC, and the Australian Centre for Social Innovation.

Our strategy



Vision

**Stronger together.
Prepared for
the future.**

Mission

**Collaborate to manage
risk and build resilience
in Greater Sydney
through knowledge
sharing, capacity
building and planning
for our communities,
infrastructure, and
natural environment.**

Five directions

The strategy has 30 actions across 5 directions.

Direction 1 – care for our environment

Focuses on how we reframe our relationship with the natural environment to value and protect it and use resources sustainably.

Direction 2 – people-centred city

Considers how we make this place safe and equitable, now and in the future, for all the people who live here.

Direction 3 – connect for strength

Proposes actions to build strong social connections and communities where we care for each other.

Direction 4 – be ready

Responds to the urgency for us to be collectively prepared for shock events by harnessing stronger relationships and empowering communities.

Direction 5 – one city

Addresses the governance challenges facing Sydney in a way that enables the goals of directions 1, 2, 3 and 4 to be realised.

Although this strategy maps out actions to build resilience over the next 5 years, the decisions we make now, will have serious consequences for generations to come. The expectation of today's governments to improve their stewardship for the future was palpable in the youth workshops. In the words of one Aboriginal Elder, "We want to be remembered as good ancestors."

Structure of the directions

For each direction we describe the challenges facing Greater Sydney and why we need to act. We identify actions based on priorities and opportunities identified through community and stakeholder engagement and the risk assessment.

For each action we describe the specific resilience challenge and the goals we want to achieve, and outline action pathways that move us towards these goals. The pathways provide Resilient Sydney, councils and partners with options to focus effort depending on the local context and current priorities.

For each action we describe:

- resilience challenges
- resilience goals
- action pathways
- priority shocks and stresses addressed by the action
- alignment with the state disaster mitigation plan toolkit
- case studies of existing initiatives demonstrating action pathways.

"We want to be remembered as good ancestors."

First Nations Elder

Direction 1

Care for the environment

A city where we care for the environment and live sustainably



Greater Sydney has incredible natural beauty and ecologically significant environments. We rely on our healthy natural environments for clean water and air, and our green (parks and reserves) and blue (creeks, waterways and beaches) places to sustain the wellbeing of the people who live here. Healthy natural environments can better withstand and mitigate the impact of shock events such as heatwaves and flooding. However, human activities over our city's history have degraded the land and waters of Sydney. Urbanisation continues to encroach on our bushland.

The environment of Greater Sydney is also under pressure from climate change. Since the pre-industrial period, NSW has warmed by 1.4 to 1.6°C which is 1.4 times faster than the global average¹⁶. The risk assessment identified escalating threats to Greater Sydney's natural places and ecosystems. Current environmental and biodiversity policies and legislation in NSW are not strong enough to protect the natural environment⁷.

People are currently using more resources than the planet can sustain¹⁷ with wealthy nations consuming the most. The global economy has begun to change to more sustainable living by decarbonising energy systems and using more renewable energy sources. However, we also need to manage other key resources sustainably including water, food and waste. Urban-built environments with "greater densities of people create very large stocks and flows of resources". This is an opportunity to rebalance society's relationship with resources¹⁷.

Caring for the environment was a strong theme in consultations. People spoke about the healing effect of spending time in natural places, particularly during the pandemic. They expressed grief at environmental loss and damage. First Nations people described environmental loss as a threat to their culture¹. People raised the need to improve equitable access to nature and green and blue places in Greater Sydney¹.

Since the pre-industrial period, NSW has warmed by 1.4–1.6°C, 1.4 times faster than the global average.¹⁶



Caring for Country

For First Nations people, Country takes in everything within the physical, cultural and spiritual landscape. It includes:

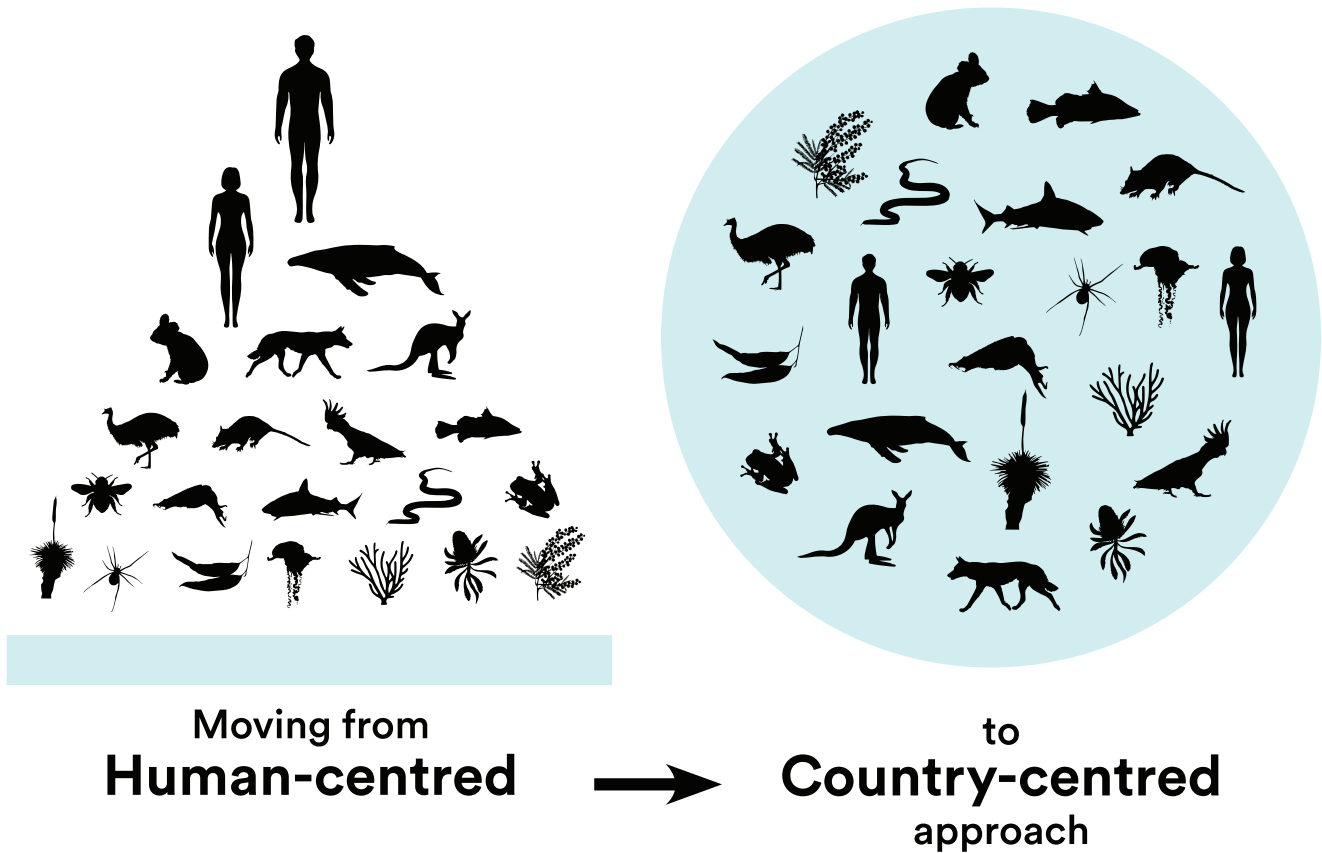
- landforms, waters, air, the sky and sacred places
- trees, rocks, plants, animals, foods, medicines and minerals
- cultural practice, kinship, knowledge, ceremony, songs, stories and art, spiritual beings, and people – past, present and future¹⁸.

Caring for Country enables self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Sydney and underpins their wellbeing. Consultations identified the importance of elevating First Nations voices in decision-making to heal and care for Country.

One way of thinking about caring for Country is to move away from a human-centred approach and towards a Country-centred approach.

Figure 1: Taking a Country-centred approach¹⁹

Diagram from the connecting with Country framework, NSW Government Architects.



First Nations' approaches to caring for Country include:

- cultural burning practices to restore healthy ecosystems and support native flora and fauna
- native food and medicine collection and harvesting
- management of unique habitats such as coastal dunes and middens
- protection and maintenance of culturally significant sites
- sharing lore and culture on Country.

We all benefit from caring for Country. Caring for Country builds community connections and a shared understanding of place by bringing people together to learn about and care for their local environment. Healing and restoring green and blue places in Greater Sydney will protect biodiversity. It will improve equitable access to healthy natural places for the people who live here.

Local initiatives can:

- grow and maintain healthy trees and habitat to cool our streets and public places

- better care for small, fragmented parcels of land, for example, 36% of green space in Australian cities is made up of street verges²⁰.
- significantly increase the biodiversity of neighbourhoods across Greater Sydney
- raise awareness about the threats to our environment
- engage more people in caring for Country.

Greener neighbourhoods support physical and mental wellbeing²¹. When modern land management is informed by First Nations knowledge of Country we will all be better able to care for this place.

Managing resources to increase resilience



The transition towards sustainable and resilient societies will ultimately depend on the responsible management of the planet's finite natural resources. Yet globally, we continue to use ever-increasing amounts of natural resources.

"The global material footprint rose from 43 billion metric tons in 1990 to 92 billion in 2017—an increase of 113% since 1990"²². Water, energy and agricultural land are not managed sustainably. Moving to a circular economy and using less resources are key to avoiding further environmental degradation and ecosystem collapse.

Global material footprint

92 billion t

in 2017

113% increase

From 43 billion t in 1990²²



Water

Greater Sydney relies heavily on **a single surface water reservoir for 85% of its drinking water supply⁴**.

Rain, droughts, and bushfires are happening more often and with more intensity. Risk of contamination, reduced supply and poor water quality is growing along with the need for more treatment and alternative sources. This raises the cost of our water supply.



Energy

Our energy system is undergoing a transformation. However the benefits are not equally shared. **Greater Sydney needs a resilient grid with electrification benefiting all.**

We need to accelerate the decarbonisation of our buildings and transport. We must also ensure the grid is able to respond to increasing demands. Efficiency, smart demand management, building ratings and support for electrification is required to balance demand for new renewable energy infrastructure.

Pressure is growing on governments, institutions, and businesses to transition to net zero emissions. At the same time, damage to powerlines from extreme weather events and demand during heatwaves have increased pressure on the energy network and become the leading causes of power outages.



Food production

About one third of the food produced for human consumption each year is lost or wasted, most of it in developed countries.

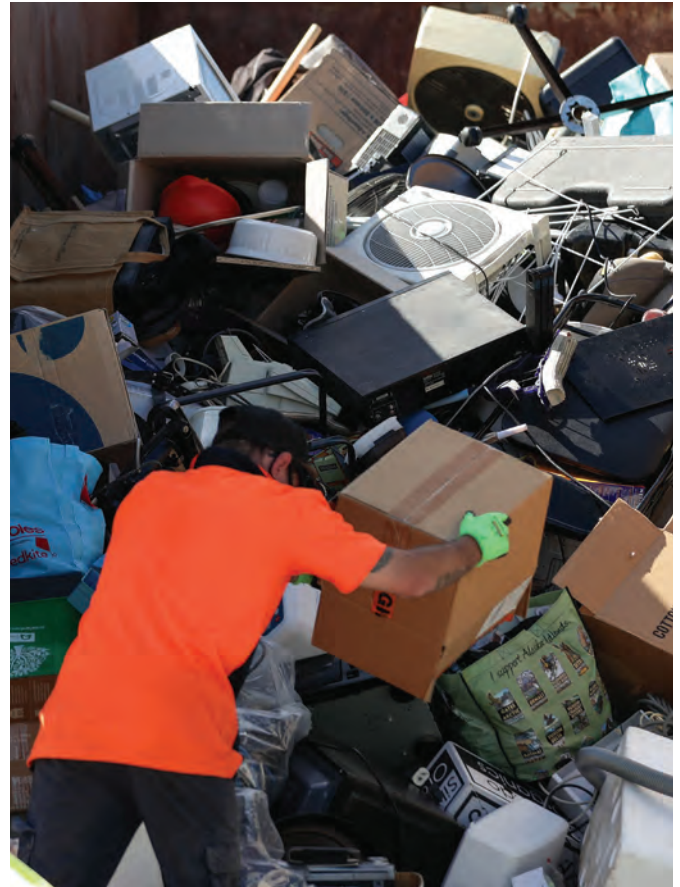
In the Sydney basin, continued urbanisation is predicted to reduce food production by 60% between 2011 and 2031. This loss of production will reduce Greater Sydney's food self-sufficiency from 20% to 6% by 2031. Fresh, nutritious food continues to become less affordable. Foodbank reported a 47% increase in requests for food relief from charities in Greater Sydney in 2020 compared to 2019⁷.

60% reduction in food production between 2011–2031⁷

In the Sydney basin, due to urbanisation

Only 6% food self-sufficiency by 2031⁷

in Greater Sydney



Waste management

The state government has recently acknowledged that **Greater Sydney will run out of landfill space by 2030²⁴**.

Globally and locally, people are creating more waste, and its disposal is a growing concern.

The waste management system is sensitive to disruptions. The failure of critical waste infrastructure may lead to pollution or contamination affecting the health of people and the environment. Shock events such as floods and disease outbreaks often create more waste. Waste disposal is an increasing cost for local government.

Local governments within Greater Sydney have begun to implement food organics and garden organics waste management to reduce the volume of waste to landfill.

Action 1

Embed First Nations knowledge and practices in land management

Shocks & stresses



Bushfires



Coastal hazards



Mental health



Racism & vilification



Social cohesion



Environment degradation

Resilience challenge

Current land management systems do not support caring for Country. Administrative and regulatory barriers restrict access and cultural practices on most land in Greater Sydney. Thousands of years of knowledge held by Traditional Custodians should be better valued and applied in caring for Sydney's increasingly vulnerable ecosystems.

State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Nature-based measures
- Social infrastructure and cohesion

Resilience goals

The connections to Country of First Nations people are nurtured through access to Country, sharing the stories of Country and caring for Country.

Knowledge and practices to care for Country are protected, restored and shared creating economic opportunities and ensuring future generations can practice culture.

Country is better cared for and healed, improving the resilience of Sydney's natural ecosystems.

Aboriginal-led governance in genuine partnership with land managers and local communities builds a shared responsibility for the wellbeing of Country.

Action pathways

1

Advocate for funding and management agreements that enable First Nations-led stewardship of land in Greater Sydney.

2

Advocate for research to quantify the social, economic and environmental benefits of First Nations land management to inform policy and practice in Greater Sydney.

3

Collaborate with Traditional Custodians and First Nations organisations including Aboriginal land councils to understand and reduce the barriers to caring for Country created by current administrative and regulatory processes.

4

Provide opportunities for councils and other land managers to experience and engage in First Nations land management practices.

5

Support councils to reinstate the original Aboriginal language names through dual-naming of geographical features in Greater Sydney.

6

Encourage the development of caring for Country plans across Greater Sydney by promoting current examples including the Cumberland Plains caring for Country Aboriginal outcomes strategy 2024²⁴.

7

Create and share a capability matrix for councils to inform their caring for Country goals and activities.

8

Share and promote the 'connecting with Country'¹⁹ framework to plan, design and deliver built-environment projects.

Case study



Caring for vulnerable coastal sites

In the Sutherland Shire, the community plays an important role in caring for the environment. There are 485 bushcare volunteers looking after 109 sites. Aboriginal Heritage Officer, Graham Avery, leads free cultural tours at Sutherland Shire community nursery, building knowledge about Dharawal culture and language within the local community and for council staff.

Sutherland Shire Council has constructed an elevated walkway at Grays Point to protect the significant Aboriginal shell midden, the critically endangered littoral rainforest, and endangered celtis leaf beetle population (*menippus darcy*).

The Sutherland Shire Council community nursery has propagated 300 of *celtis paniculata* (native celtis) seedlings, to support this local rainforest ecosystem.

Sutherland Shire Council

*Links to relevant websites for case studies are provided in appendix.

Photos: (left) Aboriginal Cultural Officer, Graham Avery with a native celtis tree / Resilient Sydney / (right) Cultural Burn in Penrith on Dharug Ngurra / Resilient Sydney



Caring for Country with cultural fire

Dharug, Gundungarra and Dharawal Traditional Custodians are leading cultural burns in Western Sydney. Councils and agencies are working with Traditional Custodians and cultural fire experts such as Firesticks Alliance to support the re-emergence of this critical approach to caring for Country.

Cultural burns are being conducted as part of the Cumberland Plain conservation plan. One example is the cool burns of grassland at the defence establishment in Orchard Hills to reduce weed species and promote native grassland ecosystems. Blue Mountains council has also established a pathway for Traditional Custodians to request cultural burns and for council to undertake this practice on their land.

The approach promotes deep cultural learning. It connects Traditional Custodians and First Nations communities with landowners and managers through a hands-on approach to caring for Country. It builds capacity to apply cultural fire to heal ecosystems in Greater Sydney. It brings another critical layer of knowledge about fire in Australia to the state agencies who manage bushfire risk.

Blue Mountains, Penrith, Liverpool, Campbelltown and Wollondilly councils, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, Greater Sydney Local Land Services, NSW National Parks

Case study



Eastern suburbs banksia scrub

Eastern suburbs banksia scrub (ESBS) is a critically endangered ecological community along Sydney's coast. This ancient plant community once grew across 5,300 ha of land between North Head and the Royal National Park in Sydney. Today, less than 146 ha remain.

IndigiGrow is a 100% Aboriginal owned and operated not-for-profit wholesale native plant nursery based at La Perouse Primary School and Matraville Sports High School. IndigiGrow employs young Aboriginal apprentices in horticulture to collect seeds and cuttings from ESBS remnants and propagate local plants. These young people are now driving the revival of ESBS.

To help speed up the process of restoring coastal habitat, IndigiGrow went fully wholesale to the public to make local native plants affordable and accessible for everyone.

There are significant remnants of ESBS in Randwick council area including Malabar Headland, La Perouse and Randwick Environment Park which has a walk with interpretive signage so people can easily learn more about this unique Sydney ecosystem.

IndigiGrow, Randwick Council,
Greater Sydney councils

Action 2

Connect and protect green and blue places

Shocks & stresses



Heatwaves



Flooding



Water



Mental health



Chronic health conditions



Environment degradation

Resilience challenge

The environment in Greater Sydney is under more pressure as urban areas, infrastructure and climate change impacts increase. People rely on the natural environment for their wellbeing. However, there is inequitable distribution of, and access to, parks and reserves (green places) and creeks, waterways and beaches (blue places) across Greater Sydney⁷.

State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Mitigation infrastructure
- Nature-based measures
- Infrastructure resilience
- Social infrastructure and cohesion

Resilience goals

Connected high-quality green and blue places support the wellbeing of people through more opportunity for recreation, active transport and spending time in nature.

Interconnected green and blue networks support greater biodiversity, protect ecological integrity and increase natural habitats and riparian corridors across Greater Sydney.

There is collaboration across governments to design, implement, and maintain nature-based measures to improve resilience of ecosystems and environments in Greater Sydney.

Greater Sydney has a region-wide plan to map, protect and enhance a sustainable network of green and blue places.

Action pathways

1

Advocate for state government to include minimum standards for green and blue infrastructure (for example, parks, gardens, street trees, green walls and roofs, ponds, swales and rain gardens) in strategic planning and assessments of developments.

2

Promote collaboration between councils, state government and river and coastal alliance groups to systematically record, track and sustainably manage green and blue infrastructure. This includes identifying more land and waterways that can be acquired or rehabilitated to strengthen green and blue networks.

3

Identify opportunities for councils, Aboriginal land councils, state government and private land managers to partner with each other on green and blue infrastructure projects.

4

Build on the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure framework for valuing green infrastructure and public spaces²⁵ to better measure the value of natural assets to local economies and to physical, mental, social and cultural wellbeing.

5

Collaborate with councils, river and coastal alliance groups and other landowners and managers in Greater Sydney to develop a community of practice for information sharing and problem-solving on initiatives that cross administrative boundaries.

6

Support investment in restoring and naturalising waterways and stormwater channels. Prioritise locations that provide new connections and expand riparian corridors.

7

Promote partnerships between state and local governments, Sydney Water and river and coastal alliance groups to provide more opportunities for people to access, care for and enjoy rivers and other bodies of water. This would include developing new swim sites.

8

Support councils to collaborate with state government to improve green and blue places through the metropolitan greenspace program²⁶, and to develop a Greater Sydney plan that protects and maintains a sustainable green and blue network.

Case study



Campbelltown's plan for a green blue grid

Campbelltown is experiencing significant urban growth, meaning careful planning is required to ensure future communities can thrive.

Their green blue grid plan aims to create a sustainable and resilient urban framework, integrating nature-based solutions and green infrastructure to mitigate the impacts of climate change. The plan promotes active transport links and habitat corridors. Outcomes will benefit the physical, mental, social and cultural wellbeing of residents and support healthy local ecosystems.

The plan is designed to connect across the local government area (LGA) boundaries with neighbouring councils and other land managers such as the botanic gardens.

Campbelltown City Council



Swimming in the Parramatta River

Sydney's rivers have been rediscovered as places for recreation and to enjoy nature. However, for over 200 years agriculture, industry, and urban development have polluted our rivers.

Renewed efforts to care for our rivers and clean up catchments has seen swimming return to the Parramatta River. There are now 6 swimming locations: Bayview Park Baths, Cabarita Park Beach, Chiswick Baths, Dawn Fraser Baths, Putney Park Beach and Lake Parramatta Reserve.

Councils collaborating through the Parramatta River Catchment Group, are continuing to invest in swim sites with support from the NSW Government's 'places to swim' grants.

Connecting with rivers through recreation is not only good for physical and mental wellbeing, but also gives people a greater understanding and appreciation of our blue natural places.

The City of Canada Bay, Parramatta Council, Inner West Council, Parramatta River Catchment Group, Hunters Hill Council, City of Ryde Council, NSW Government, Sydney Water, City of Parramatta, NSW EPA

Case study



Celebrating First Nations culture along the Great West Walk

The bush food trail on the Great West Walk invites the community to actively engage with nature and immerse themselves in First Nations culture. The Great West Walk is a 140km walking route stretching from Parramatta to the Blue Mountains.

The bush food trail was created in partnership with local First Nations organisations, including Muru-Mittigar and funded by state government and Penrith City Council.

Educational signage connects visitors with the cultural and ecological heritage of this part of Dharug Ngurra (Country). This includes information about how Dharug people use local plants. There are areas for workshops, educational activities and community gatherings.

Thousands of trees and scrubs have been planted along the Great West Walk to improve biodiversity and shade and cool the urban environment. The project demonstrates how urban greening can be a tool for adapting to climate impacts while celebrating cultural heritage.

Muru-Mittigar, Traditional Custodians, Penrith City Council, NSW State Government.



Living seawalls

Over half of Sydney Harbour's foreshore has been replaced by seawalls, much of which is managed by local councils. To restore marine biodiversity, Sydney councils have partnered with living seawalls, a program with the Sydney Institute of Marine Science, that enhances the ecological value of built structures in the marine environment.

Living seawalls modules are fixed to existing built structures, including seawalls, pilings and groynes. The modules are designed to mimic the features of a natural shoreline such as rockpools and crevices to encourage biodiverse marine communities. Providing microhabitats can boost biodiversity by 36%. They also stay up to 10°C cooler than exposed seawalls.

150 species have recently been observed on panels that were installed in North Sydney in 2018. Species include 25 algal, 90 invertebrates and 35 fish species that use the panels for food and shelter.

This Sydney-led initiative is being applied globally, offering adaptable ways to enhance marine ecosystems on built structures.

Sydney Institute of Marine Science, Mosman, Lane Cove, City of Sydney, North Sydney, Canada Bay, Northern Beaches, Inner West and Sutherland Shire Councils

Action 3

Increase tree canopy and habitat across Greater Sydney

Shocks & stresses



Heatwaves



Mental health



Water



Chronic health conditions



Social isolation



Environment degradation

Resilience challenge

Loss of tree canopy and habitat is contributing to biodiversity loss and intensifying the urban heat effect across Greater Sydney.

Resilience goals

Greater Sydney has more high-quality, connected forest canopy and multi-storey habitat to enhance urban biodiversity and support ecological and community resilience.

Parts of Sydney with poor canopy coverage are identified and prioritised for increased greening.

State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Nature-based measures
- Infrastructure resilience
- Social infrastructure and cohesion



Action pathways

1

Advocate for planning controls, incentives, fiscal measures, regulation and enforcement to minimise loss of urban tree canopy and support its protection and extension.

2

Advocate for planning controls that maximise tree canopy and green cover habitat targets and deep soil provisions in all urban areas.

3

Support existing partnership arrangements with the NSW Government to develop, record and track tree canopy to meet equitable targets for Greater Sydney.

4

Promote partnerships with public and private sector property owners to create microhabitats (including microforests, biodiversity corridors, wetlands, rain gardens, green roofs, and green walls).

5

Advocate for undergrounding or where this is not feasible, bundling of electrical wires to decrease the need to prune street trees and improve the safety and resilience of power lines.

6

Support councils to maximise urban greening by bringing community members together for specific projects targeting privately held land and public institutions, including schools, hospitals, cemeteries and universities.

7

Promote the biodiversity in place framework²⁰ and greener neighbourhoods guide²⁷ to increase native vegetation, restore habitat, and apply First Nations knowledge.

Case study



North Sydney tree canopy and native havens

North Sydney's tree canopy significantly declined in the face of pressure from infrastructure and housing projects between 2007 to 2022. However, council's commitment to protecting and increasing tree canopy has reversed the trend. Tree canopy cover across the LGA has increased from 24.9% in 2022 to 27.4% in 2024. Total tree canopy cover is now at 51.1% on public land.

North Sydney council is also engaging residents in creating and caring for native habitat corridors in their backyards and local streets through their native havens and streets alive programs. North Sydney's local plant guide includes tips for creating a wildlife habitat garden. They also provide free local native plants to residents.

North Sydney Council



Gardening at Waverley Cemetery

In 2022, Waverley local Carrie Furneaux won first place in the Waverley Garden Awards for the category, 'special street and shared gardens' with an innovative entry at her mother's grave in Waverley Cemetery. Carrie transformed a forlorn and austere place with thriving native and ornamental plants. From one small plot, flourishing flowers and scrubs now stretch down an aisle filled with new life – birds, butterflies, lizards and bees.

Volunteers organised through Waverley Council's volunteer program meet regularly on Saturdays, Sundays and mid-week to weed, propagate and plant native plants at the cemetery.

"My hope for the future, is to spread our wings further to create wonderful habitats for flora and fauna and transform the resting places of those long gone to a place of beauty, contemplation, reflection, a place for healing, joy and a home to our native species."

Waverley Council

Action 4

Increase biosecurity awareness

Shocks & stresses



Disease outbreak



Health services



Fragmented governance



Mental health



Environment degradation

Resilience challenge

Biosecurity threats pose a significant risk to the human and animal populations of Greater Sydney. These threats degrade our natural environments and undermine food production. Known imminent threats include shot hole borer, fire ants and bird flu.

Resilience goals

There is greater awareness and better surveillance and data on biosecurity risks, impacts and response requirements both within government and communities.



The tiny polyphagous shot hole borer has led to over 3,000 trees being removed in Perth in an effort to eradicate this damaging pest²⁸.

State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Warning systems
- Community awareness and preparedness
- Nature-based solutions

Action pathways

1

Increase council awareness of biosecurity risks through engaging with state government on the Greater Sydney risk assessment of biosecurity threats. Promote this as a way for councils to identify their priorities and coordinate action.

2

Engage with Department of Primary Industry and Regional Development to strengthen the understanding of roles and responsibilities for all parties in responding to a biosecurity threat.

3

Use state government training materials to build knowledge and improve surveillance of ongoing and emerging biosecurity threats.

4

Promote opportunities to increase knowledge of the community and landowners about biosecurity risks and the implications of inaction including the use of citizen science programs to have more 'eyes on the ground' to collect information about pests.

5

Advocate for state government to conduct region-wide biosecurity emergency response training drills with councils for better biosecurity preparedness across Greater Sydney.

Action 5

Secure the future of Sydney's water supply

Shocks & stresses



Disease outbreak



Water



Health services



Mental health



Environment degradation

Resilience challenge

Changing climate is impacting rainfall, making drought more likely. This will impact dam water availability and water quality, threatening the security of the water supply to Greater Sydney's growing population.

Resilience goals

Water resources are efficiently managed using integrated water cycle management, water conservation measures and water-sensitive urban design throughout Greater Sydney.

Greater Sydney has sustainable, cost-effective and reliable sources of drinking water.



State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Mitigation infrastructure
- Nature-based measures
- Infrastructure resilience

Action pathways

1

Support the implementation of Greater Sydney water strategy and Sydney Water's actions to improve the resilience of infrastructure, expand supply of rainfall independent drinking water and conserve and better utilise all our water resources²⁹.

2

Collaborate on community education campaigns that:

- increase the value the community gives to water
- promote actions to conserve water
- improve community understanding of recycled water.

3

Advocate to all levels of government for projects that integrate water cycle management, harness energy and maximise beneficial use of water resources across Greater Sydney.

4

Promote the efficient use of water and better demand management to optimise the use of limited water resources.

5

Collaborate with Sydney Water, councils and private owners to create climate-resilient green places with access to water that is fit for purpose to maintain green places and support healthy ecosystems.

Case study



Purified Recycled Water Discovery Centre

Sydney Water has opened a purified recycled water discovery centre at Quakers Hill. It provides an opportunity for community members to see the process and understand how water is produced at a purified recycled water plant.

Purified recycled water has been used for over 50 years in cities across the world including Perth. The water comes from industry and homes (including from kitchens, showers and toilets). It is purified through advanced treatment processes to meet strict Australian guidelines for water recycling.

Greater Sydney faces the risk of serious drought. We currently rely on rainfall for 85% of our drinking water. Purified recycled water could provide up to 25% of Sydney's water supply, taking pressure off Warragamba dam and helping Sydney be more resilient to drought.

Sydney Water



Green Square stormwater drain

To address flooding in the Green Square urban redevelopment area, the City of Sydney and Sydney Water constructed a \$140 million, 2km stormwater drain from Zetland to Alexandra Canal.

Two huge gross pollutant traps and a new water recycling plant treat water from the drain so it can be used by the residents of the Green Square town centre. 320 million L of non-potable (non-drinking) water is piped to new buildings and open spaces every year.

The stormwater drain keeps Green Square safe during downpours and helps capture and use rainwater to increase resilience during times of drought. It saves Sydney's precious drinking water, keeps local parks green and has reduced and cleaned up the water that ends up in the Cooks River.

City of Sydney, Sydney Water

Action 6

Support electrification and the energy transition

Shocks & stresses



Heatwaves



Energy



Digital network



Cost of Living



Environment degradation



Disrupted supply chains

Resilience challenge

Electrification is a critical step towards energy resilience. It reduces fossil fuel use, which is driving climate change. Significant planning and investment are needed to ensure a smooth and equitable transition to a clean energy future.

State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Building codes
- Home modification
- Infrastructure resilience

Resilience goals

Greater Sydney achieves an equitable and lowest-cost energy transition using clean renewable electricity in efficient, electric, grid-interactive buildings.

Increased use of renewable electricity and energy storage enables householders and businesses to reduce energy costs.

Sydneysiders have improved health outcomes from reduced air pollution.

Greater Sydney communities transition equitably from energy consumers to energy producers with a focus on smart demand management and efficiency.

Action pathways

1

Collaborate with the state government to co-design and implement actions under the NSW Consumer Energy Strategy³⁰ to support households and businesses to reduce costs and carbon emissions.

2

Set city-wide and LGA-specific emissions reduction and net zero targets. Endorse local evidence-based strategies that rapidly reduce carbon emissions from key sectors.

3

Advocate for consistent regulations that eliminate fossil fuels in new developments and build resource capacity for the energy transition.

4

Use communities of practice to share data insights and best practice guidance on implementation for electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, electrification retrofitting and better-performing buildings.

5

Advocate for local businesses and households to benefit from funding and guidance that supports an equitable transition to net zero outcomes and better performance from buildings and vehicles.

6

Advocate for a Greater Sydney renewable energy zone that increases equity of access to locally generated energy.

Case study



Renewable energy supply agreement

In 2022, 25 NSW councils signed a landmark renewable energy supply agreement. The deal, worth roughly \$180 million for 214 GW-hours a year of electricity was brokered by Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils. The approach combined the buying power of councils to secure a low-risk renewable energy agreement at highly competitive rates. The agreement means that 83% of energy needs for these councils is supplied by solar farms in Moree, central west NSW and the Riverina – a win for communities across NSW.

The agreement involves the supply of electricity to over 300 major council facilities, more than 210,000 streetlights and more than 3,000 small sites. Renewable energy supplies 100% of the energy needs for 19 of the councils. Council facilities and services for over 3 million people are now powered by renewables.

SSROC, Bayside, Burwood, Campbelltown, Canada Bay, Canterbury-Bankstown, Fairfield, Georges River, Hornsby, Hunters Hill, Inner West, Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, Liverpool, Mosman, North Sydney, Parramatta, Port Stephens, Randwick, Ryde, Singleton, Sutherland, Tamworth, Waverley, Willoughby and Woollahra Councils



Reaching net zero together

The net zero Ku-ring-gai program provides a leading example of how councils can actively engage their communities to deliver against ambitious emissions reduction targets.

Ku-ring-gai council has set a target for its community to reach net zero emissions by 2040 or earlier. Net zero Ku-ring-gai is creating a community online and through local events and networks. There are webinars, local case studies and a calendar of community events. The program links residents and businesses with champions and volunteer groups so they can learn from each other as they go all-electric, reduce waste and become more energy efficient.

Ku-ring-gai Council

Action 7

Improve the security of Greater Sydney's food systems

Shocks & stresses



Economic crisis



Waste



Cost of Living



Fragmented governance



Environment degradation



Disrupted supply chains

Resilience challenge

Food security is under pressure in Greater Sydney. There is inequity of access to nutritious and healthy food. As development grows and farmland becomes urban precincts, Greater Sydney's access to local and affordable food supplies continue to decline.

Resilience goals

People in Greater Sydney have reliable access to good quality, affordable and nutritious food to support their physical and mental wellbeing.

State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Community awareness and preparedness
- Social infrastructure and cohesion

Action pathways

1

Support capacity building in Greater Sydney to increase community preparedness to withstand disruption of food supplies and to reduce food waste.

2

Advocate for state government to investigate how urban agriculture in Greater Sydney could be supported and implemented.

3

Support councils to develop sustainable food programs that increase community access to nutritious, affordable and healthy foods and promote food consumption that does not harm the environment.

4

Advocate for state government to develop a NSW food system plan to promote equitable access to nutritious food and address food insecurity and food production, including urban agriculture, and integration with local government and service providers³¹.

Case study



Village pantry

Organisations across Greater Sydney are working together to not only provide low-cost and free meals but also reduce food waste.

Community Support Services in Bankstown provides nourishing food hampers from their village pantry to families, international students and people who are homeless. They work with Foodbank, OzHarvest and SecondBite among others to source food. This multicultural community-led organisation also runs economic development programs such as 'sew good' which teaches sewing skills and supports microbusinesses. Their vision is reviving the village to create a community in Western Sydney where all women and their families are supported to thrive through nourishment, nurturing and empowerment.

"Those who are able are encouraged to donate a gold coin and those unable simply receive the food for free." Mona Mohamed, Founder, CCS

Community Support Services, Bankstown



Happy Hens

The Happy Hens social enterprise is dedicated to connecting people of all generations through productive gardening and sustainability activities.

Their projects include the Bedlam Bay community garden on NSW National Parks land and Henley Green community garden located on the old bowling green owned by Hunters Hill council. Residents come together to create food gardens, organise seasonal markets selling fresh produce and hold community events such as Bedlam at the Bay for mental health awareness.

The Happy Hens run composting, reuse and recycling programs including using coffee grounds donated by local cafés to enrich the soil.

"We aim to make Gladesville, Hunters Hill, Ryde, and beyond an engaging, enjoyable, and sustainable place to live."

Happy Hens, Hunters Hill council,
NSW National Parks

Action 8

Address Greater Sydney's waste crisis

Shocks & stresses



Disease outbreak



Waste



Fragmented governance



Environment degradation



Disrupted supply chains

Resilience challenge

The way we manage materials and residual waste is a key risk to the health and safety of people and the environment. Adding to this, Greater Sydney is running out of landfill space. Urgent action is needed to avoid waste production and transform waste processing technology and infrastructure.

State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Strategic planning controls
- Infrastructure resilience

Resilience goals

People living and doing business in Greater Sydney participate in and benefit from a safe, equitable, cost-effective and efficient materials management system.

Greater Sydney's waste management system is resilient to disruptions and supports a circular economy and a net zero city.

Councils more efficiently manage costs and emissions and improve the quality of waste streams, leading to higher-value recycled products and cost recovery.

Action pathways

1

Advocate for waste management to be recognised as an essential service with legislated requirements.

2

Collaborate with state government to deliver a waste infrastructure implementation plan that solves landfill challenges and plans material flows for all waste streams. Advocate for investment in planning and development for advanced recycling and recovery solutions.

3

Collaborate with state government to do transparent, high-quality and timely data reporting that supports councils to cost-effectively contract and deliver services and handle material flows.

4

Support councils to collaborate with state agencies to develop service continuity plans for the management of critical waste streams.

5

Streamline processes and communication with communities to make it easier for people to minimise waste production, repair, reuse and recycle. This would divert more waste streams for a safer environment and safer city.

6

Encourage alternative waste solutions and waste avoidance and reduction strategies. Support new business models to drive circular economy solutions.

Case study



Waste leadership forum

In May 2023, Resilient Sydney and the City of Sydney convened mayors from across Greater Sydney to discuss waste. Local councils are on the front line of waste management. Lack of affordable, sustainable and long-term options for managing Sydney's waste presents mounting risks for councils and their communities.

The call for a region-wide response to waste is being led by Northern Suburbs Regional Organisations of Councils (NSROC) and Hornsby Council. Greater Sydney councils, regional organisations of councils and Resilient Sydney signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the NSW Environment Protection Authority in December 2024.

The MOU establishes the Waste Leadership Forum. Council and state government executives are working on key actions to improve waste data, infrastructure planning and circular economy outcomes.

NSROC, WSROC, SSROC and the Parks, Greater Sydney councils, NSW Environmental Protection Authority

Direction 2

People-centred city

An equitable city with climate resilient neighbourhoods



As the impacts of climate change increase, many more communities in Sydney face risk from natural hazards including floods, bushfires, coastal inundation and heat. More areas of Sydney will become unsafe for new housing. Existing housing will need to be modified to become climate resilient, and water and energy efficient. Understanding these risks helps us take proactive action to minimise many adverse impacts of climate change. It means we can reduce our exposure to hazards and protect communities and assets.

Housing affordability was identified as a top stress throughout consultation. Over 35% of renter households in Greater Sydney experience housing stress (paying over 30% of monthly income on housing costs). Unaffordable housing costs the Sydney economy \$10 billion a year³².

Community engagement and the resilience risk assessment identified that communities across Greater Sydney have inequitable access to services and opportunities^{1, 7}. This inequity undermines the resilience of people to withstand shock events. Inequitable access to transport, particularly in Western Sydney was a high concern raised in consultation.

Heat is the most significant climate risk to health and wellbeing in Greater Sydney.

Climate responsive planning



Climate adaptation and mitigation strategies are increasingly important to protect people, the economy and ecosystems, now and in the future. Long-term planning that properly considers climate change will benefit social cohesion, human health and wellbeing, environment, infrastructure, and the economy³³.

Heat is the most significant climate risk to health and wellbeing in Sydney. Heatwaves already cause more deaths than any other natural hazard³³. Heatwaves are expected to double in frequency and duration over the next 50 years³⁴. Extreme heat has a big impact on the environment, the economy and social connections.

Sea-level rise will continue for centuries due to the long-term response of the oceans and ice sheets to climate change¹⁴. For Sydney, sea level rise is projected to be up to 29cm by 2050 and 1 to 4m by mid-next century. Adaptation to sea-level rise in coastal Sydney requires long-term planning now.

Mitigation and adaptation policies that improve climate resilience of housing, public transport and infrastructure will also decrease energy costs and improve the equity, sustainability and liveability of Greater Sydney.

Affordable and quality housing

Shelter is a basic human need. A well-designed and maintained home can reduce energy bills, improve health and protect lives in extreme events. Lack of affordable and quality housing was the top stress (along with cost of living) identified across all consultation⁶.

Local government makes an important contribution to increasing affordable housing through affordable housing schemes and levies. Community and private sectors, including institutional investors such as super funds, are also critical to solving Sydney's housing crisis.

We heard from communities that housing in Sydney is not resilient to climate impacts including heat and extreme wet weather. Renters said they are powerless to improve their housing to respond better. The resilience risk assessment identified residential housing and particularly social housing as very vulnerable to shock events⁷.

Connected and safe neighbourhoods

Not being able to travel around safely, affordably, and efficiently was identified as a key stress in consultation. This reduces equitable access to essential services, education and employment opportunities.

Women report feeling unsafe moving through public places and on public transport. Safety impacts choices in relation to where and when people travel³⁵.

Public places play a vital role in the social, cultural and economic life of cities. However, when people do not feel safe in a place, they are less likely to use that space, reducing their connections to their community and decreasing their resilience.

Over 35% of renter households in Greater Sydney experience housing stress (paying over 30% of monthly income on housing costs).³²

Action 9

Plan and design places to withstand increased natural hazards

Shocks & stresses



Heatwaves



Bushfires



Flooding



Coastal hazards



Shelter



Housing stress

Resilience challenge

Climate change is exposing more communities in Greater Sydney to extreme impacts from natural hazards including flooding, bushfires, coastal inundation and heat.

State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Managed relocations
- Strategic planning controls
- Building standards and codes
- Home modifications

Resilience goals

Homes are designed, built and retrofitted to withstand increasing impacts from extreme weather and keep people safe.

Planning policies and plans avoid increasing the number of people and homes in areas that are or will be vulnerable to natural hazards.

Plans are in place to support communities in areas that will become too risky for people to live in.

Action pathways

1

Advocate for adaptive strategic planning and design that is based on mitigating long-term climate risks and avoids maladaptive short-term solutions.

2

Advocate to state government that high-risk areas are identified including areas where increasing hazard risks are too great to build new homes.

3

Advocate for regional data and consistent planning and mitigation responses to manage risks from flooding and sea level rise across council boundaries.

4

Advocate for building codes that respond to the risks from a changing climate.

5

Collaborate on adaptation plans for high-risk neighbourhoods including mitigation infrastructure, managed relocations, hazard-specific building codes and standards, and building modifications.

6

Plan and design buildings that consider the changing risks for that place across the lifespan of the building.

7

Advocate for the publication of insurance risk information.

Case study



Coastal flood resilience in New York

New York City is adopting reforms to improve city resilience after Hurricane Sandy in 2012. In high-risk areas, coastal flood resiliency zoning strengthens building standards and gives owners flexibility to more easily improve the flood resilience of their properties.

Waterfront parks and public spaces play an important role in city resilience. Projects are informed by the 'design and planning for flood resiliency' guide to provide high-quality public spaces that recover quickly from storms and are designed with risks in mind.

Public spaces along the coast are the first line of defence against storm surge and sea level rise. Natural areas such as wetlands are incorporated to provide protection from storm surge.

Photo: Busa Photography

Action 10

Improve the heat resilience of communities in Greater Sydney

Shocks & stresses



Heatwaves



Energy



Shelter



Health services



Mental health



Family violence

Resilience challenge

Extreme heat is a significant threat to Greater Sydney's health, liveability, infrastructure, and productivity. Infrastructure failure or disruption combined with heat could have catastrophic effects for people. Lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities within government hampers response to extreme heat events.

State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Mitigation infrastructure
- Strategic planning controls
- Building codes
- Community awareness and preparedness
- Home modifications
- Infrastructure resilience
- Nature-based measures

Resilience goals

People, organisations, and built and natural environments are better prepared and able to withstand extreme heat.

Systems and services are in place that equitably protect lives, health and wellbeing during heatwaves.



Action pathways

1

Work with WSROC, the Greater Sydney Heat Taskforce and key stakeholders to implement recommendations in the Greater Sydney heat smart city plan (2025–2030)⁴.

2

Advocate for a clear set of roles and responsibilities in reducing and managing heat impacts in our region.

3

Collaborate with the state government, councils and community organisations on community awareness campaigns and tools to plan for heat events.

4

Continue to build council capacity to manage the environmental and safety impacts of heat and drought. Design and maintain streets, local parks, sport facilities and active outdoor spaces to provide shade and cooling, conserve water and protect facilities.

Case study

Greater Sydney heat smart city plan⁴

The Greater Sydney heat smart city plan has been developed under the Greater Sydney Heat Taskforce, a multi-sector collaboration of organisations across government, industry and the community sectors. The plan's directions are:

1. Heat smart decisions: collaboration, shared understanding and monitoring of heat risk improves heat risk decision-making for Greater Sydney.
2. Heat smart places for people: homes and buildings are heat-responsive and can keep people safe from heat, while heat mitigation and adaptation measures are required in state and local planning controls.
3. Heat smart economies: the private sector plans for heat, supports risk reduction, minimises the economic impacts of heat, and seeks commercial opportunities in adaptation.
4. Heat smart infrastructure: interconnected, resilient infrastructure enables communities to survive and thrive.
5. Heatwave ready: clear governance arrangements, funding and guidance support effective heatwave management, while communities and organisations are empowered to build resilience, reduce risks and manage emergencies.
6. Heat smart research: researchers and practitioners work collaboratively to deliver heat-resilient solutions.

Action 11

Increase and improve affordable rental housing

Shocks & stresses



Economic crisis



Heatwaves



Storms



Shelter



Housing stress



Chronic health conditions

Resilience challenge

Housing stress is affecting a growing number of Greater Sydney households exposing more people to social stresses, economic shocks and environmental hazards.

Resilience goals

All Greater Sydney councils have affordable housing contribution schemes.

There is a clear framework and increased capacity to deliver more affordable rent-controlled housing through partnerships between the state government, local government and community housing sector.



State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Strategic planning controls
- Building standards and codes
- Home modifications

Action pathways

1

Support the development and implementation of council affordable rental housing policies, schemes and levies to increase affordable housing.

2

Share knowledge and case studies about how to develop innovative housing projects on council land that increase housing for targeted communities.

3

Promote the use of the SSROC affordable housing toolkit³⁶. This toolkit supports councils build capacity to meet affordable housing targets and partner with not-for-profit community housing providers.

4

Advocate for state-mandated targets including on government-owned land for affordable rental housing that is affordable in perpetuity or replaced locally at the same level if sold or redeveloped.

5

Research whether local economic conditions can support higher affordable housing targets across Greater Sydney.

6

Collaborate with the state government and NSW Rental Commissioner to support rental reforms and programs that improve fairness, building quality and wellbeing for renters.

7

Advocate for a healthy homes standards scheme for all rental housing to better respond to extreme weather such as heatwaves and major rain events.

Case study



Affordable housing working group

SSROC partnered with Resilient Sydney to host a city-wide forum in April 2021. Following the forum, the affordable housing working group was established, led by SSROC, Cumberland City Council and City of Sydney to look at pilot projects and policy approaches.

Research was conducted into barriers to councils adopting affordable housing contribution schemes. A toolkit was created for councils to use when developing and applying for schemes.

The project highlighted the urgent need for accessible housing data for councils. State government, SSROC and Resilient Sydney are working on how to make this available on the Resilient Sydney data platform.

Momentum on affordable housing has continued with mayoral forums held in 2022 and 2024 and growing partnerships between councils and the community housing sector. The following councils now have affordable housing contribution schemes as part of their local environmental plans – City of Sydney, Randwick, Canada Bay, Northern Beaches, Willoughby, Penrith, Waverley and Inner West (Bays West). Councils in the process of adopting affordable housing contribution schemes include Blacktown City, Blue Mountains City, Camden, Hawkesbury City, Wollondilly Shire and Sutherland Shire.

Photo: 2024 Mayoral forum on affordable housing, Nick Langley / (opposite page): (left) City West Housing, Green Square, Katherine Griffiths / (right) Healthy Home Initiatives (HHI) New Zealand

Resilient Sydney, SSROC, Greater Sydney councils, community housing sector

Case study



City of Sydney's affordable housing approach

The City of Sydney has developed a comprehensive approach to increasing affordable housing, delivering 1,447 homes. As at June 2024, over \$400 million collected from their affordable housing contribution scheme has been given to community housing providers to build 873 affordable rental homes.

The City of Sydney has sold or leased land and property for affordable housing at a discount valued at \$31 million. Projects include 162 dwellings in Redfern on the former council depot and the establishment of the first transgender women's housing cooperative in Sydney.

Planning control changes that permit affordable housing in mixed business zones enable community housing providers to purchase less expensive land for new affordable homes. Voluntary planning agreements have also secured additional affordable rental properties.

The City of Sydney's affordable and diverse housing fund provides grants up to \$3 million to help community providers leverage private finance for projects. So far, \$13 million in grants has helped deliver project such as 52 dwellings for young people leaving out-of-home care and 42 aged care units for older people at risk of homelessness.

City of Sydney, community housing providers



NZ healthy homes standard for rental properties

The New Zealand healthy homes standards set minimum requirements for heating, insulation, ventilation, moisture ingress and drainage, and draught stopping in rental properties. The regulations came into effect in 2019 with the aim to close the gap in quality between rental and owner-occupied homes.

Landlords are responsible for ensuring their properties meet the standards and continue to do so over time. The standards apply to private rentals, government-owned housing and community housing.

All new or renewed tenancy agreements must include specific information about the rental property's current level of compliance with the healthy homes standards. Landlords who do not meet their obligations are in breach of the tenancy act and may face consequences such as financial penalties. There are easy-to-use tools and checklists for landlords and tenants.

The outcome of the standards is warmer, drier houses for all New Zealanders and less respiratory illness linked to cold, damp and mouldy homes.

Aotearoa – New Zealand. Te Tūāpapa Kura
Kāinga – Ministry of Housing and Urban
Development

Action 12**Better connect communities with active and public transport****Shocks & stresses**

Energy



Transport shock



Transport stress



Education



Cost of Living



Chronic health conditions

Resilience challenge

Transport options that are not good enough or hard to access are impacting people's work and education opportunities, access to services, social connections and wellbeing. This is happening particularly in western Sydney.

Resilience goals

Public transport services and active transport options provide affordable ways for people to move around Greater Sydney safely and efficiently.

People in Greater Sydney have access to local neighbourhoods with essential services from their home.

**State disaster mitigation plan alignment**

- Evacuation infrastructure
- Infrastructure resilience
- Social infrastructure and cohesion

Action pathways

1

Advocate for the rapid completion of the strategic cycleway corridors and walking connections to public transport hubs³⁷.

2

Advocate for more transport hubs with climate-responsive and gender-inclusive facilities including bike parking, toilets, drinking fountains, lighting, smart infrastructure, wayfinding, seating and cool refuges.

3

Advocate and support increasing greening along proposed and existing active transport routes to create shade and encourage their use.

4

Promote collaboration between state and local governments and industry to deliver and manage seamless journeys across public and active transport, day and night.

5

Collaborate with Transport for NSW (TfNSW) to collect and share more granular data including demographic information on people movement and transport mode-use.

6

Promote collaboration between TfNSW and local councils to deliver community engagement and behaviour change campaigns that encourage mode-shift to active and public transport.

7

Encourage active travel to schools and childcare centres supported by safe walking and riding options.

8

Support councils to implement car-share facilities and reduce private vehicle ownership.

Case study



Sydney active transport forum

In 2017, Resilient Sydney helped establish the Sydney active transport forum bringing transport planners from state and local governments together to align policies and create cross-boundary active transport solutions. The City of Sydney and City of Parramatta coordinated the forum and 14 Sydney councils were involved.

In 2019, the state government took on the coordination role and expanded the forum across NSW. Four years later, the forum has now developed into a state-wide community of practice with over 600 members. During this time, 30 Greater Sydney councils have either developed an active transport policy or are developing one.

Transport for NSW,
Greater Sydney Councils

Photo: State of New South Wales
(Transport for NSW)

Case study



Connecting the Parramatta River foreshore

The escarpment boardwalk is the final link in the Parramatta Valley cycleway. The community can now experience over 20km of off-road paths on both sides of the Parramatta River.

The river paths wind through open parks, local playgrounds and sporting fields, as well as mangroves on elevated boardwalks and in some sections through a tree canopy 6m off the ground. They provide active transport connections for students at local schools, workers with jobs in Parramatta CBD and people who walk and ride for enjoyment. The Parramatta foreshore paths reduce traffic and support wellbeing.

The pre-cast concrete panels of the escarpment boardwalk have been designed to withstand extreme situations, including a potential ferry strike and high velocity floodwaters. The new boardwalk section is expected to significantly increase the 2 million pedestrians and cyclists who enjoy the Parramatta CBD foreshore every year.

City of Parramatta, TfNSW



Willoughby Public School active travel

Traffic was becoming a significant safety and environmental issue at 2 large schools with over 2,000 students in Willoughby. The Willoughby Public School P&C approached Willoughby City Council for help.

Council staff designed an active travel geography unit, in collaboration with Observatory Hill Environmental Education Centre and the Bicycle Network. Year 5 students explored the benefits of walking and cycling to school and identified the best routes. Once the routes were safety checked by Willoughby City Council, a map was created by the Bicycle Network and directional and safety markings added to the footpaths.

Based on the success of the program, TfNSW's get kids active 2025–26 program has \$500,000 to support up to 10 more schools and councils to implement this behaviour change program.

Now Willoughby Council is transforming one of the routes into a green, pedestrian-friendly street. The students are contributing to the community consultation on this project by sharing their research and experience.

Willoughby City Council, Willoughby Primary School, TfNSW, Observatory Hill Environmental Education Centre, Bicycle Network

Action 13

Create inclusive and welcoming public places

Shocks & stresses



War & conflict



Disease outbreak



Heatwaves



Cost of Living



Social isolation



Reducing social cohesion

Resilience challenge

Public places are important for connecting neighbourhoods and people. However, many people, including women and young people, do not feel safe and welcome in many public places in Greater Sydney.

Resilience goals

Public places are safer, more inclusive and better connected with improved access to public transport.

Inclusive, engaging and safe places support local economies and diverse cultural and social experiences.

State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Evacuation infrastructure
- Strategic planning
- Nature-based measures
- Infrastructure resilience
- Social infrastructure and cohesion



Action pathways

1

Promote urban design and planning for climate-resilient public places that are safe and inclusive, day and night, such as through the transport-oriented development program.

2

Advocate for the TfNSW safer cities approach, including gender-inclusive placemaking principles, to be implemented more broadly.

3

Promote resources about child friendly cities that align with the United Nations Convention on the International Rights of the Child, such as the child friendly cities and communities handbook³⁹.

4

Encourage councils to streamline approval processes to facilitate more community activities and events hosted in public places.

5

Support councils to collaborate and share knowledge of global best practice for activation plans, day and night, for main streets and other local public places.

Case study



Her way projects

With funding from Transport for NSW, Sydney councils are using 'walkshops' to better understand the experiences of women and girls in public places. Walking through the place, women and girls from local communities, identify safety and access concerns. Hundreds of women and girls across Sydney have participated.

Their insights have led to quick-fix projects to improve public spaces including installing creative lighting, decluttering and cleaning, public art, new seating and planter boxes, and increasing activity with outdoor dining and street festivals.

The projects have created safer and more welcoming transport hubs and local town centres including at Guilford Lane at Guildford Station, Blacktown, Mount Druitt and Canley Vale town centres.

These pilot neighbourhoods are being closely monitored and evaluated so outcomes can be applied to other transport hubs in Greater Sydney.



Blacktown, Bayside, Canterbury Bankstown, City of Sydney, Cumberland, Fairfield councils, TfNSW

Photos (top to bottom): Mt Druitt Town Centre, Blacktown City Council / Back to Guilford festival, Cumberland City Council Canley Vale walkshop, Legacy Studios

Direction 3

Connect for strength

An inclusive city that supports social connections and community agency



Communities in Greater Sydney are fatigued by consecutive shocks and ongoing stresses. Mental health was identified through the risk assessment and community engagement as the top stress for people in Greater Sydney. People in Greater Sydney report significant increases in depression, anxiety and other mental health illnesses compared to pre-pandemic levels⁴⁰. Nearly 40% of young Australians (aged 16 to 24) experienced a mental health disorder between 2020 and 2022, up from 26% in 2007⁴¹. People in community consultation identified social isolation as undermining their wellbeing. Building connections to place and to each other is more important than ever as this helps to replenish personal and community resilience.

The World Economic Forum identified “erosion of social cohesion and societal polarisation” as the fifth most significant global risk in 2023⁴². In Australia, the Scanlon Social Cohesion report found that “declines in our sense of national pride and belonging, increasing financial strain and a weakening sense of social inclusion and justice were warning signs” for social cohesion⁴³. Trust in the decision-making of governments is diminishing and is now less than 50% in national surveys. These trends affect our ability to act collectively and make decisions on difficult and complex issues.

The World Economic Forum identified “erosion of social cohesion and societal polarisation” as the fifth most significant global risk in 2023.⁴³

Respecting dignity and building trust



In times of crisis and change, decision-making processes are often curtailed. This means that people have little control over major decisions that affect their lives. Throughout consultation, we heard that dignity was not always respected in the delivery of essential services and during emergency response and recovery.

Honouring people's dignity means we recognise everyone's inherent value – that everybody is somebody and has the right to be treated as such. By embedding dignity in leadership and service delivery, we can reduce the harm caused when people's dignity is violated. We address situations where someone's dignity has been violated.

When people feel that they are seen, heard, understood, included and given the benefit of the doubt they are more likely to trust and feel trusted. Communities that have their voices heard and can influence decisions and hold government to account are more resilient.

As a society we continue to struggle to reconcile our collective past and respect the peoples who have been custodians of this place, now known as Sydney, for thousands of generations. Truth-telling is a principle of dignity. Truth-telling in Sydney offers opportunities for greater resilience through shared connection to the place where we live and to each other.

Creative and cultural expression is critical to understanding each other's perspectives and building community connectedness. We heard through consultation that creative projects are important to the recovery process: to express loss, build empathy, heal and create hope. However, a lack of affordable creative production, rehearsal, performance and presentation spaces is having an impact on opportunities for the community to engage in creative practice. The cost of living and housing stresses are putting Greater Sydney's creative sector under increasing pressure.

Supporting self-determination in communities

People in Greater Sydney have experienced the pandemic and other disasters and know that stresses and future shock events are inevitable. We heard throughout community engagement that people can feel a sense of powerlessness during times of crisis. We also heard that community connections and support got them through¹.

First Nations people have experienced 237 years of consecutive shock events starting with colonisation in 1788. The Australian Human Rights Commission recognises self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in alignment with the UN declaration of the rights of Indigenous people.

The Australian Local Government Association is a signatory to the closing the gap national agreement 2020⁴⁴. This agreement seeks to transform the way governments work with Aboriginal communities to overcome entrenched inequality and strengthen resilience. The Productivity Commission identified inaction by governments to put into practice principles of self-determination as a key factor undermining progress on closing the gap⁴⁵.

People said that being involved in local solutions strengthens their resilience. There has been an increase in local and regional disaster resilience groups. Communities expect governments to listen to and consider their lived experience when planning mitigation and adaptation measures for shock events. Local businesses and organisations including social enterprises, mutuals and cooperatives, and business networks, are investing in community resilience and leading recovery efforts.

Building social capital

Social capital describes the relationships that underpin communities:

- The bonds in our immediate family or social group.
- Our connections to other groups.
- Our ability to engage with decision-making authorities⁴⁶.

Communities with high levels of social capital are better able to withstand and recover from a crisis event⁴⁷. However, the impact of the investment to strengthen social capital is hard to measure. It is therefore undervalued.

Our consultation and the risk assessment identified that social capital in Greater Sydney is being undermined by inequality, racism, vilification, international conflicts, misinformation, and polarisation. Levels of community connectedness differ across Greater Sydney. Social isolation and lack of strong community connections reduce people's resilience making them more vulnerable to shock events.

Social infrastructure is the facilities, spaces, services and networks that support the wellbeing of communities. These include community places such as community centres, libraries, theatres, parks and playgrounds, sporting and recreation facilities, places of worship and social clubs. These places, along with networks, programs and services, support participation in social life. They provide places for people to build a sense of community belonging, strengthen social cohesion and help address loneliness. However, social infrastructure is not equitably available to everyone in Greater Sydney. Many community and sporting facilities are also highly vulnerable to climate impacts.

Action 14

Embed dignity principles in leadership and engagement

Shocks & stresses



War & conflict



Disease outbreak



Health services



Mental health



Racism & vilification



Family violence

Resilience challenge

Difficult and disrespectful interactions in the delivery of services, and emergency response and recovery environments, harm people's wellbeing and reduce their resilience. Government policies that are not informed by the people who they affect often violate dignity.

State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Managed relocations
- Community awareness and preparedness
- Social infrastructure and cohesion

Resilience goals

The concept of dignity informs the development and implementation of recovery plans and initiatives, helping communities and individuals remain resilient.

Engagement with communities is genuine, inclusive, safe and fair, and respects historical and local contexts. It informs decision-making to build trust and empower communities.

People know and respect the history of Sydney and its people.

Action pathways

1

Promote dignity principles to local government and emergency response and recovery agencies to inform the framing of relevant plans and protocols.

2

Promote and use tools for genuine and respectful community engagement through the local government community engagement practitioner's network.

3

Support campaigns that address racism, homophobia and other forms of vilification, and that promote respecting dignity.

4

Identify ways to redress dignity violations of the past by acknowledging our shared history.

Applying a dignity lens

Dignity is an inherent value that everyone possesses from birth, making us all equal in our dignity. When dignity is violated, often through abuse of power, or when people view themselves as superior, another person's worth is devalued. The brain reacts to dignity violations in the same way as it does to threats of physical harm. A toxic cycle can develop when individuals who are focused on their own pain hurt each other, perpetuating the violation of dignity. This undermines community resilience and social cohesion.

There are 10 essential elements⁴⁸ of dignity:

- 1 Acceptance of identity.
- 2 Inclusion: ensuring people feel included and valued.
- 3 Safety: providing an environment free of the threat of physical or psychological harm.
- 4 Fairness: ensuring fairness in all interactions.
- 5 Independence: respecting others' independence and autonomy.
- 6 Understanding: giving people the opportunity to be heard. However, opinions do not need to be accepted, particularly if they violate the dignity of others.
- 7 Benefit of the doubt: extending trust to others, assuming they are coming from a good place.
- 8 Accountability: being willing to apologise and engage in truth-telling and committing to changing harmful behaviours.
- 9 Recognition: validating others' contributions and worth.
- 10 Acknowledgement: hearing, validating and responding to the concerns and experiences of others.

Action 15

Replenish resilience through creative and cultural expression

Shocks & stresses



Disease outbreak



Bushfires



Reducing social cohesion



Mental health



Social isolation



Racism & vilification

Resilience challenge

Creative and cultural practices support individual and community expression. They provide insight into people's experiences and perspectives, build social connections and replenish community resilience.

Resilience goals

The role of arts and culture in building resilience and recovering from shock events is recognised and resourced by government.

Creative and cultural practices contribute to a deeper understanding of experiences of shock events and support physical, emotional and mental healing.

People feel empowered to express diverse experiences through their unique cultures and creativity.

Strong, connected and sustainable local creative sectors thrive across Greater Sydney.

State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Community awareness and preparedness
- Social infrastructure and cohesion

Action pathways

1

Advocate for increased investment in diverse cultural and creative community projects to support recovery and strengthen connections and understanding between people and place.

2

Support the development of a Sydney-wide arts and culture community of practice within local government to support knowledge sharing and enhance collaboration.

3

Collaborate with state government to audit Greater Sydney production and creative spaces. The audit would provide evidence for more cultural infrastructure and resources and to enable prioritisation and resource sharing.

Case study



Documenting the Mount Gosper mega-blaze

The Gaspers Mountain fire was Australia's first mega-blaze, a series of blazes centred around a single fire. It burned over 1 million ha in 79 days during the 2019–2020 black summer bushfire season, the most severe fire season in Australia's recorded history.

The documentary, *Megablaze: Dancing with the Devil*, directed by Bill Code and produced and co-written by Bill Code and Sarah Allely, explores the impact of the Gaspers Mountain megafire on the communities of the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury regions. The documentary explores themes of resilience, recovery and climate change, what brought communities together and what caused them to fray at the seams.

Wedge-Tail Pictures produced the film in collaboration with Hawkesbury City Council and the support of a black summer bushfire recovery grant.

Wedge-tail Pictures, Hawkesbury City Council, Australian Government, NSW Rural Fire Service

Photos: (left) Bill Code for Wedge-Tail Pictures and Hawkesbury City Council / (right) Safia Amadou & Mumbi, African Film Fest Australia Co-Directors, Opening Night, 2024 / Richmond Kobla Dido



African Film Fest Australia

For 40 years Arts & Cultural Exchange (ACE) has contributed to social resilience by prioritising cultural expression by Western Sydney's communities.

Despite a long settlement history in Australia, especially in Western Sydney, African communities have had few cultural events catering specifically for them. ACE's Africa Film Fest Australia (AFFA) responds to this need.

State government, industry and private sponsorship, and partnerships with City of Parramatta and Riverside Theatres helped enable Sydney's first pan-African film festival to launch in 2024. The 4-day AFFA program included 4 Australian premieres, 2 filmmaker panels and an Afrofutures animation workshop.

Sold-out sessions attracted 924 attendees including people who travelled from South Australia, Victoria, Queensland and regional NSW.

The audience was as diverse as the program which had features, short films and documentaries from South Africa, Kenya, Senegal, Nigeria, Congo, Algeria, Somalia, Zimbabwe and the Belgian, Scottish and Australian diasporas.

The 2025 AFFA opens at the Sydney Opera House and continues at Riverside Theatres.

Arts and Cultural Exchange, City of Parramatta, Riverside Theatres, Screen NSW and Multicultural NSW

Action 16

Support First Nations self-determination

Shocks & stresses



Housing



Education



Cost of Living



Mental health



Chronic health conditions



Racism & vilification

Resilience challenge

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Sydney do not have access to the choices needed to be able to meet their social and economic needs and realise self-determination.

Resilience goals

Traditional Custodians, Aboriginal-controlled organisations and community members are included in government decisions that affect First Nations people in Greater Sydney.

Local councils in Greater Sydney work in culturally informed ways that support increased self-determination for First Nations communities and address entrenched inequality.



State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Social infrastructure and cohesion

Photo: Launch of the City of Sydney Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce strategy, Joseph Myers

Action pathways

1

Support councils to develop protocols and policies that respect and protect First Nations cultural knowledge.

2

Showcase ways councils can adopt clearer processes for engaging with Traditional Custodians, Aboriginal Land Councils and First Nations communities through shared decision-making frameworks and partnership agreements.

3

Demonstrate how councils can most effectively embed ways of working to contribute to closing the gap.

- Building meaningful relationships and shared decision-making with Traditional Custodians, First Nations communities and local Aboriginal land councils.
- Partnering with Aboriginal-controlled organisations.
- Building the cultural capability of the workforce and employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Recognising and supporting First Nations data sovereignty.

4

Increase investment in First Nations businesses including advocating for changes to the Local Government Act 1993 to support social procurement policies.

5

Investigate and share opportunities to purchase carbon offsets from First Nations-owned and led initiatives.

Case study



First Nations-led carbon farming

While pushing emissions down is the priority, investment in carbon and nature projects can assist governments, businesses and organisations to achieve net zero. There is significant potential for carbon farming in NSW that would benefit Traditional Custodians and rural First Nations communities, and help heal Country.

This approach has benefits for communities and Country beyond the boundaries of Greater Sydney and recognises the interconnected nature of First Nations communities. Carbon farming in NSW would enable investment in cultural land practices on the traditional Country of many thousands of First Nations people who now live in Sydney.

The Aboriginal Carbon Foundation is a 100% Aboriginal owned not-for-profit established in 2010 to create economic independence for First Nations people through a variety of innovative solutions including carbon farming credits. In collaboration with the Firesticks Alliance Indigenous Corporation, they have developed cultural fire credits to sustainably finance cultural burning practices across Australia. First Nations-led carbon projects support self-determination and have significant environmental, social, cultural and economic outcomes.

Traditional Custodians, Aboriginal land councils and land managers, Aboriginal Carbon Foundation, Firesticks Alliance



Councils partnering with First Nations communities

Increasingly, First Nations voices are influencing councils through elected representatives, advisory panels and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in strategy and engagement roles. This influence is creating new opportunities across the broad range of council operations.

Eighteen councils in Greater Sydney have a Reconciliation Action Plan. The City of Parramatta recently adopted a First Nations strategy, the first Greater Sydney council to do so. The strategy builds “council’s capacity to pursue common goals with First Nations communities and to learn from the resilience demonstrated by the Dharug people who have lived in this place for tens of thousands of years”⁴⁹.

These council plans and strategies provide a platform for supporting self-determination of First Nations communities through procurement, engagement, partnerships and decision-making. They open the way to enable First Nations leadership in caring for and managing Country, investing in First Nations businesses, and partnering with First Nations organisations to deliver essential services including affordable housing.

Traditional Custodians, First Nations communities and organisations, Greater Sydney councils

Action 17

Facilitate community-led action

Shocks & stresses



Bushfires



Flooding



Mental health



Social isolation



Low trust



Reducing social cohesion

Resilience challenge

People in Greater Sydney have experienced the pandemic and other disasters and know that ongoing stresses and future shock events are inevitable. They want governments to support them to build capacity in their local communities to be better prepared and able to respond.

State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Community awareness and preparedness
- Social infrastructure and cohesion

Resilience goals

Community voices are integrated into disaster recovery.

Community members are better informed about their roles and responsibilities in preparing for and recovering from shocks events in their local area.

There are well-connected networks of people with capacity and resources to respond to shock events within their communities.

Community organisations and businesses have the governance and plans in place to be effective in disaster preparedness and recovery.

Action pathways

1

Collaborate with state government to create long-term funding pathways and processes that enable local community and business groups to run recovery programs for their communities after shock events.

4

Develop and share community materials (in multiple languages and formats) to support community leaders and organisations to prepare people for emergencies and create local community plans for recovery.

2

Promote programs to strengthen community organisations' governance and ability to apply for funding and implement disaster recovery actions.

5

Actively engage young people, older people, people with disability and culturally and linguistically diverse communities in emergency response training exercises and recovery planning.

3

Advocate for targeted funding and support for initiatives organised and led by First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. This will enhance effectiveness through culturally informed approaches and increased trust.

6

Promote neighbourhood network-building activities and campaigns.

Case study



First Nations Response

First Nations Response is a grassroots organisation led by Aboriginal women. It was founded in 2020 during the lockdowns to provide culturally appropriate support and urgent food relief to communities in inner Sydney.

They played a critical role helping people who were particularly vulnerable, many living alone in social housing with chronic health conditions. Importantly, the hampers they delivered included fresh, healthy food and not just dry staples.

First Nations Response is driven by the belief that healthy and sustainable food systems are essential for thriving First Nations communities. They pride themselves on creating a safe and dignified environment. They rely on volunteers, helping to create connections and build respect across communities.

Flexibility in their most recent grant has enabled First Nations Relief to be more responsive to community need. In addition to their weekly food services, they support communities during floods, protests, vigils, sorry business and deaths in custody. They also support women escaping domestic violence by providing furniture and household essentials.

First Nations Response, City of Sydney and Inner West councils



Being connected and prepared

The Macdonald Valley in the Hawkesbury has been significantly impacted by floods and fires over the last 5 years. The remote area is prone to being cut off. Communications are sparse and electricity outages can last for weeks. In response, the Macdonald Valley Association established the connected and prepared project.

The valley has been divided into 5 sectors with 25 community volunteer wardens. Wardens are permanent residents who look out for their immediate neighbours in their sub-sector. Wardens are not emergency responders but provide information and direct neighbours to emergency services. All wardens are connected via a WhatsApp network that includes State Emergency Service (SES) and NSW Rural Fire Service personnel. This has proved invaluable to getting help to people fast.

As the valley has a UHF (ultra high frequency) radio network, 450 handheld radios have been distributed to all households. Everyone has an emergency grab bag which includes a first aid kit, radio and torch, V-sheet to identify your location for helicopters or boats, USB stick to store vital documents, and personal and property emergency plans.

Community volunteers, Macdonald Valley Association, Federal Government black summer bushfires recovery grant

Case study



Lifesaving PPE from local leftovers

Reverse Garbage in Marrickville is one of Sydney's oldest environmental social enterprises. It promotes reuse and sells industrial discards to help fund their environmental education programs, along the way saving 100,000t a year of waste from landfill.

In the early days of the pandemic, a doctor rang Reverse Garbage to ask for help because his hospital had run out of face shields. Within 48 hours, the Reverse Garbage team produced a face shield from everyday items in the Reverse Garbage shop – plastic sheets from binder folders, foam off cuts, elastic and double-sided tape.

In the following weeks, 81 volunteers made 2,100 face shields that were distributed across Sydney and even as far as Katherine in the Northern Territory. Not only was the project a local solution to overcoming supply chain issues, it also helped rally the community – a positive story during a time of great stress and anxiety.

Reverse Garbage Cooperative

Action 18

Engage children and young people in decision-making about the future and their wellbeing

Shocks & stresses



Bushfires



Flooding



Education



Mental health



Social isolation



Low trust

Resilience challenge

Children and young people are experiencing mental health impacts from stresses including climate change, cost-of-living pressures and social isolation. They are also growing up with increasing disruption from extreme weather events. Polarising and desensitising content on social media also has a negative impact. Many young people feel disempowered in the face of global uncertainty.

State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Community awareness and preparedness
- Social infrastructure and cohesion

Resilience goals

Greater Sydney is a place where children and young people thrive.

Children and young people receive the support they need during shock events.

Young people have the capacity, skills and knowledge to maintain strong mental health and social support networks.

Young people play an active role in planning for and responding to future shock events.

Action pathways

1

Support councils to engage young people in the co-design, decision-making and implementation of actions to address issues that affect their lives and futures and enhance their resilience.

2

Promote engagement and decision-making that is inclusive of young people with different identities, perspectives and knowledge including First Nations, culturally and linguistically diverse and LGBTIQ+ young people, and young people with disability.

3

Advocate for councils to implement the 'supporting infants and children in disasters: a practice guide' from Emerging Minds⁵⁰.

4

Advocate for greater support to engage young people as partners in resilience planning, preparation, response and recovery.

Case study



50°C: climate, heat and resilience

50°C: climate, heat and resilience is a new interdisciplinary program for year 9 and 10 students, run by the Powerhouse in collaboration with western Sydney schools. It is supported by the NSW Office of the Chief Scientist and Engineer.

The program was launched at Riverside Theatre in December 2024 attended by over 800 students. The 10-week program examines heatwaves and extreme urban heat in Greater Sydney and explores how we can respond and adapt.

Students develop skills associated with fieldwork, data science, communication and community leadership. Students are empowered with knowledge from experts and practical experiences to drive change in their communities.

The program is integrated across the curriculum and supported with online resources. It inspires students to engage with climate change in a practical way and creates a sense of agency through action-learning. Students will share the outcomes of their projects with key decision-makers, academics and industry at the 50°C climate summit, hosted at Western Sydney University (WSU).

Powerhouse, NSW Government, CSIRO, WSU, UNSW, USyd, Blacktown, Parramatta and Cumberland councils, WSROC, Sydney Water, Story Factory, Australian Youth Climate Coalition, Sweltering Cities, Greening Australia, corporate partners



Youth climate and biodiversity forum

Sutherland Shire's youth climate and biodiversity forum empowers young people from the Sutherland Shire and beyond to make a positive contribution to addressing climate, environmental and resilience challenges.

This annual multi-school event strengthens youth interpersonal and communication skills, builds leadership skills, facilitates school collaboration, nurtures social cohesion and inspires young people to act.

55 students from 7 schools attended the 2024 forum, engaging with local government, participating in democracy and having their voices heard. It is an important principle of the forum that there are tangible and ongoing outcomes including local environment projects that students continue to do after the forum.

Sutherland Shire Council collaborated with Resilient Sydney to deliver a youth consultation workshop as part of the 2024 forum. Students, teachers and youth facilitators learnt about city resilience and considered how it can strengthen their local community and Greater Sydney. The workshop provided valuable input into the resilient Sydney strategy.

Sutherland Shire Council, local schools, UN Youth Ambassadors, Resilient Sydney

Action 19

Measure and value social capital

Shocks & stresses



Economic crisis



Cost of Living



Mental health



Social isolation



Low trust



Reducing social cohesion

Resilience challenge

Evidence shows that communities with strong social capital recover from shock events and cope with ongoing stresses better. However, the social infrastructure and local programs that build social capital are often undervalued.

Resilience goals

A commitment to building social capital is embedded into government plans and policies.

Social capital is measured to support investment in social infrastructure.

Councils and community organisations understand the value of social capital and work together in ways to strengthen it.



State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Community awareness and preparedness
- Social infrastructure and cohesion

Action pathways

1

Support the application of a social capital measurement framework to inform investment in social infrastructure across Greater Sydney. Align the framework across state and local governments.

2

Build knowledge across councils and community organisations to use social capital to build resilience and better prepare for future shock events.

3

Strengthen community leaders' ability to engage with all levels of government and each other through community leadership and network forums.

4

Advocate and promote funding pathways that foster collaboration and reduce competition between organisations and programs supporting social capital.

5

Support a community of practice on social policy and programs within local government to facilitate knowledge sharing and enhance collaboration.

Case study



Connecting people through bush care

Since 2008, Bushlink has been a driving force in fostering both inclusion and environmental stewardship. Bushlink is an award-winning initiative by Northside Enterprise Inc that provides meaningful employment for people with disability through environmental projects and education.

The program trains people with disability to be skilled bush regenerators. Bushlink provides bush care services for local councils, NSW National Parks, educational facilities and private landowners. They focus on improving the resilience of local bushland – enhancing natural areas and restoring natural habitats.

Teams of Bushlink regenerators also lead school students in caring for their school environment. Bushlink is currently working with over 20 schools in northern Sydney, transforming school grounds and building respectful relationships and connections with students and staff.

Bushlink is aiming to replicate the model with new partners across Greater Sydney, engaging people in caring for the environment to break barriers, foster resilience and create a more inclusive society.

Northside Enterprise Inc, Northern Beaches, Willoughby and Lane Cove councils, NSW National Parks, schools

Case study



CommUNITY Connect

City of Canterbury Bankstown hosts an annual CommUNITY Connect conference that brings together community workers from government and non-government organisations.

Over 110 people attended the 2024 conference which explored the intersectional experiences of moving through different stages of life. The conference heard perspectives from First Nations, culturally and linguistically diverse, and LGBTIQ+ communities, and people with disability.

Participants expanded their networks with other professionals and community leaders. They participated in workshops to discuss solutions for emerging trends and to meet local needs. They elevated their knowledge, understanding and skills through professional development sessions. This year, they also developed actions for the resilient CBCity action plan.

The information gathered at CommUNITY Connect conferences is collated and helps set the priorities for council's community grants program. These priorities are also shared through networks to inform the work of local organisations.

City of Canterbury Bankstown, local organisations and service providers

Photos: (left) Canterbury Bankstown Council
(right) lovleah / Gettys



Blue Mountains planetary health

Blue Mountains council is transforming the old Katoomba golf course into a centre for planetary health. The initiative aims to bring experts and community together to explore and test ways to build resilience in the face of increasing natural disasters.

The Blue Mountains planetary health initiative supports local action to restore the health of natural systems. The hydrological cycle is an important focus. Slowing water down and keeping it in the land improves the health of river systems and increases bushfire resilience. The centre is located on a swamp, a perfect example of natural water management. The centre is also testing practical solutions such as collecting water in community underground tanks under roads and parks which can be used for firefighting.

To connect people, the initiative includes a community media network that elevates stories of local stewardship. There is a range of council and community-led education programs and activities to support community action and build social connections.

Blue Mountains City Council, Western Sydney University, Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute, UTS Institute for Sustainable Futures, Monash Sustainable Development Institute, Notre Dame University, Sydney University's Environment Institute and National Parks and Wildlife Service, NSW Government

Action 20

Facilitate inclusive access to social infrastructure

Shocks & stresses



Heatwaves



Cost of Living



Mental health



Social isolation



Chronic health conditions



Racism & vilification

Resilience challenge

Social infrastructure including community centres, libraries, theatres, parks and playgrounds, sporting and recreation facilities, are not equitably available across Greater Sydney. Social infrastructure is particularly vulnerable to increasing impacts from natural hazards, for example, being flood prone or lacking insulation for heat.

State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Community awareness and preparedness
- Social infrastructure and cohesion

Resilience goals

The importance of social infrastructure is recognised in government planning.

Investment is made in the right social infrastructure as Greater Sydney communities grow.

People in Greater Sydney have access to community facilities in their neighbourhoods.

Social and community assets are more climate resilient.

Action pathways

1

Support initiatives to map social infrastructure in Greater Sydney and its ability to serve communities and remain resilient in the face of increasing climate risks.

2

Advocate for investment in climate-resilient social infrastructure to be part of all new developments.

3

Advocate for schools to be better resourced to strengthen networks with their local communities and share their facilities during non-school hours.

4

Support a framework that informs the delivery of effective social infrastructure by considering community needs, functionality of facilities, and maintenance and programming costs.

5

Explore ways to measure how communities are using local community facilities, services and programs to overcome barriers and maximise the benefits for those who need them most.

6

Collaborate with the NSW Office of Sport on implementing inclusive-use agreements for council facilities and other measures to promote better access for women and girls, young people and culturally diverse communities.

7

Advocate for local programs and events that connect people across different generations and social groups to build social capital.

Case study



Julia Reserve youth precinct

The Julia Reserve youth precinct in Oran Park, is made up of a state-of-the-art skate park, basketball courts, parkour training area and youth and community centre. The precinct provides holistic support through the co-location of multiple youth services and agencies. Services and programs include afterschool drop-in programs, art classes and cultural events, employment services, case management and school holiday programs.

Young people were consulted on the design of the precinct as well as having ongoing input into the programs and activities. All services located at the centre undergo a detailed induction process to ensure a consistent and safe approach to supporting the children and young people who use the centre.

Camden Council has developed a youth strategy with local young people that outlines the priorities for the precinct and its services and programs. Julia Reserve provides a welcoming and safe environment where young people can have fun and receive wrap around support.

Camden council

Case study



Play her way

Women's sport has made its mark on the national stage in recent years. However, women and girls still face significant barriers to equal participation. Nationally, only 3.7% of girls aged 15 to 17 met the physical activity guidelines in 2022. This age group participates at a rate 23.5% lower than boys⁶⁵.

The benefits sport has to physical and mental wellbeing are not being equally experienced. The NSW Office of Sport play her way strategy seeks to develop sporting environments based on inclusivity, equality and respect, and a system-wide approach to addressing barriers and opportunities particularly for adolescent girls.

Local councils have an important role in achieving lasting gender-equality in sport. Many local sporting facilities have historically been designed for men. Councils can set standards for more inclusive and accountable cultures in the sporting clubs who hire their facilities. They can collect information to better understand and address barriers to women and girls enjoying access to sporting facilities in their local area.

NSW Office of Sport, local councils

Direction 4

Be ready

A city where people and organisations
are prepared for emergencies



Sydney-siders have experienced bushfires, floods and storms in the past 5 years. People are becoming more aware of the importance of resilience and know they need to be ready for future shock events.

Australian Red Cross, local councils and state agencies are running a range of campaigns to raise emergency and disaster preparedness. However, more work is needed to embed emergency preparedness in the daily lives of people living in Greater Sydney.

Improving emergency preparedness

Recent shock events have shown how important it is to look after each other. During consultation people often raised the importance of supporting people who needed more help than themselves. The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability found that people with disability are at much greater risk of neglect during emergencies⁵¹. As a result the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Commission introduced an emergency and disaster management practice standard⁵² that requires all personal plans to include emergency response planning.

Preparing and sharing tailored plans with emergency services before shock events improves personal preparedness for people with disability and others who need more assistance in an emergency. Although there is a strong body of research and excellent training resources from organisations such as Collaborating for Inclusion, there is no ongoing funding mechanism to ensure people who need them have personalised emergency plans.

More people are living in high-density communities in Sydney. However, many do not know how to be safe in their apartment buildings. Shorter residence times are contributing to a high turnover in tenancies. Apartment residents often lack strong social networks within their buildings and have low awareness of emergency procedures¹.

Harnessing skills in our communities



Volunteering increases social capital in communities by strengthening skills and connections that can support people in times of crisis. While volunteering is prolific in Australian society many factors threaten its sustainability. The number of formal volunteers is declining and there are barriers to participation⁵⁴. People are time poor and are looking to contribute in different ways.

Community consultation revealed people want to help each other to be prepared to act in an emergency. Increasing numbers of informal volunteers want to support their community after disasters. New processes are needed to harness these capabilities and skills to supplement the dwindling numbers of formal volunteers and ensure the experience is effective, rewarding and safe.

Coordination and communication

Effective communication is essential during a crisis. Ensuring people know how and where to get information in an emergency is a key enabler of individual and community preparedness.

Current practices for communicating with communities before, during and after emergencies do not adequately cater for culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people with disability and people without access to digital channels.

During consultation people said that although state and local governments play an important role in emergency preparedness, more needs to be done to keep people safe during an emergency. They were often unclear about who to get information and support from before and after an emergency¹.

More needs to be done to embed emergency preparedness in the daily lives of people living in Greater Sydney.

Action 21

Embed person-centred emergency planning

Shocks & stresses



Heatwaves



Flooding



Health services



Mental health



Social isolation



Chronic health conditions

Resilience challenge

Some people are more at risk in an emergency situation and need extra preparation and support to make sure they are safe.

Resilience goals

Emergency plans are developed with people with disability and other people at risk in shock events.

State and local emergency planning frameworks have a coordinated, person-centred and inclusive approach that responds to people's needs.

Local emergency plans incorporate the needs and experiences of people with disability.



State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Community awareness and preparedness
- Social infrastructure and cohesion

Action pathways

1

Advocate for all levels of government to support the implementation of the disability inclusive disaster risk reduction framework and toolkit⁵⁵.

2

Develop a business case for the person-centred emergency preparedness (P-CEP) tool and facilitator training to be sustainability funded and delivered across local councils and community services organisations.

3

Promote the P-CEP peer leadership program and other resources including the Carers NSW household readiness toolkit⁶⁶ to build the capacity of community members to support family and friends to be better prepared.

4

Promote information sharing between the NDIS and councils. Include up-to-date information on how many people with disability live in a local area to inform emergency response planning.

5

Advocate for diverse perspectives to be included in Local Emergency Management Committee decisions and plans, including people with disability, First Nations people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

6

Advocate for co-designed emergency planning with social housing tenants.

Case study



P-CEP in action

Belong Blue Mountains' be ready program helps people with disability and seniors develop P-CEP plans, ensuring they are safer and more resilient in emergencies. So far, over 200 personalised P-CEP plans have been developed.

Following the Collaborating4Inclusion P-CEP approach, trained facilitators guide participants through conversations to identify their specific support needs, understand local disaster risks, and create a personalised emergency plan. A key part of this process is developing an action plan outlining practical steps participants can take to improve their preparedness. Support is provided both individually and through group workshops, helping participants strengthen social connections and communicate their emergency support needs to their networks.

Carers NSW worked with older people, people living with a disability and carers to develop the Care2Prepare household readiness toolkit and program. The pilot supported 340 households create their own plan. The toolkit captures people's capabilities, networks, support needs, risks, plans and triggers for action. It is available online.

Belong Blue Mountains, Collaborating4Inclusion, Carers NSW



Designing preparedness programs with the community

Australia Red Cross and City of Sydney worked with social housing representatives from the Forest Lodge and Glebe coordination group to co-design a community resilience and emergency preparedness program for social housing residents.

The co-design process built on existing materials – the Australia Red Cross RediPlan⁵⁶ and the Inner City Voice emergency preparedness handbook for people living in social housing⁵⁷. It identified the types of emergencies people were most worried about, what people needed to know to be safe in their homes and neighbourhood, and how the activities would be delivered.

On the advice of residents, the program covered both heat and fire emergencies and included an emergency go-bag for residents. There were four workshops with 30 residents participating, and 300 residents received a go bag.

The success of the program lay in the fact it was customised to the community and that trusted community members were leading it. The process has created local resilience champions and provides a scalable approach for increasing emergency preparedness in communities with high levels of vulnerability to shock events.

Australia Red Cross, City of Sydney, Forest Lodge and Glebe coordination group, Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance

Action 22

Research community preparedness and support coordinated campaigns

Shocks & stresses



Heatwaves



Bushfires



Flooding



Storms



Low trust



Fragmented governance

Resilience challenge

More residents of Sydney need to be prepared for future shock events.

Resilience goals

More people living in Greater Sydney have a household emergency plan that meets their individual needs.

State government, emergency response agencies and organisations, and local councils work together to deliver emergency preparedness campaigns.

Councils have access to consistent, effective, and inclusive communication resources and research to support local initiatives to prepare communities.



State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Community awareness and preparedness

Action pathways

1

Support annual and seasonal emergency preparedness programs such as 'get ready' (NSW Government) and EmergencyRedi (Australian Red Cross).

2

Collaborate with NSW Reconstruction Authority on their community preparedness program including research on community preparedness and integrated campaigns.

3

Collaborate with partners to measure the impact of preparedness campaigns and share the outcomes with councils to inform future actions.

4

Advocate for all preparedness materials to be provided in community languages and shared through culturally effective channels. Ensure campaigns are inclusive of people with disability and people who do not have access to digital channels.

Case study



EmergencyRedi Week

Despite the increasing prevalence and intensity of extreme weather events, the Australian Red Cross reports that only one in three Australian households have discussed practical emergency plans with their children and even fewer (only 27%) have talked about how to mentally prepare for disasters⁵⁸.

The Australian Red Cross EmergencyRedi Week is an annual initiative to raise awareness about the importance of being prepared for emergencies. The campaign encourages people to download the get prepared app and create a personalised RediPlan⁵⁶.

Each year, Resilient Sydney works with the Australian Red Cross to get as many Greater Sydney councils involved. In 2024, 32 Greater Sydney councils and the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils organised EmergencyRedi Week activities.

Australian Red Cross, Greater Sydney Councils, WSROC



Building emergency preparedness into community programs

Campbelltown City Council has a resilient communities program that runs emergency preparedness workshops in communities that are vulnerable to natural disasters with the Australian Red Cross, SES, RFS and Fire and Rescue.

They also deliver emergency preparedness workshops at libraries as part of existing programs including seniors catchups, seniors IT programs and family play groups. The program reaches people who can be particularly at risk in an emergency and establishes the council as a trusted place to seek information.

Bayside Council's resilience team worked with library staff to co-opt existing programs during EmergencyRedi Week to support emergency preparedness in multicultural communities. They held a free English class on how to communicate in an emergency including making practice 000 calls and describing different emergencies. The lesson plan proved popular and was considered extremely valuable by participants who brought home easy English resources to share with their friends and families.

Campbelltown City Council, Bayside Council, Australian Red Cross, SES, Fire and Rescue, Rural Fire Service

Action 23

Improve emergency awareness in apartment buildings

Shocks
& stresses



Heatwaves



Energy



Shelter



Mental
health



Social
isolation



Reducing
social cohesion

Resilience challenge

There are low levels of emergency awareness in apartment communities.

Resilience goals

Apartment dwellers have emergency preparedness plans and the skills and knowledge to respond to shock events.

Owners corporations, working with their strata and building managers, cost-effectively improve the resilience of their dwellings.

State and local government policy, planning and practices improve the wellbeing, social connectedness and emergency preparedness of apartment residents.

State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Community awareness and preparedness
- Social infrastructure and cohesion

Action pathways

1

Support councils to collaborate with state government and promote programs that foster social connection and emergency preparedness in apartments.

2

Advocate for state and local government and the strata industry to implement the recommendations of the Owners Corporation Network report, strata disaster: how prepared are our apartment communities for emergencies and disasters?⁵⁹

3

Support research into the social connectedness of apartment dwellers to identify effective mechanisms to strengthen social capital, resilience and emergency preparedness.

Case study



Hi neighbours!

Lane Cove and Willoughby councils have jointly developed a program to strengthen social connections in apartment buildings. The program includes a meet your neighbours toolkit for residents, building managers and strata committees. It offers lots of ideas about how to get people from the same building together.

The kit includes a resilience tool for vertical communities to assess their social connections, preparedness for emergencies and the resilience of the building and infrastructure. Residents work

on this assessment together and identify actions to reduce risks and build resilience. As part of the pilot program, Lane Cove council organised the Red Cross to hold emergency preparedness sessions. These proved to be very popular as a meaningful way to connect with neighbours.

The councils are now offering funding to support more vertical communities who are interested in joining the program. The guide and tool kit are available online for councils to use.

Lane Cove Council, Willoughby City Council, Australian Red Cross, Department of Premier and Cabinet

Action 24

Coordinate and encourage volunteering

Shocks & stresses



Heatwaves



Bushfires



Flooding



Storms



Coastal hazards



Reducing social cohesion

Resilience challenge

National data indicates volunteering has declined and that it is changing. New processes are needed to harness community skills, capabilities and local knowledge of informal volunteers to supplement emergency services.

Resilience goals

Volunteering continues to be valued across society. People have positive experiences volunteering in contexts that work for them.

Volunteering training is accredited.
Volunteer skills are recognised.

There is a regional database of volunteer expertise shared between state and local government. This improves place-based volunteer capacity to respond during shock events.

State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Community awareness and preparedness
- Social infrastructure and cohesion
- Enabler – capacity and capability

Action pathways

1

Collaborate with state government through the disaster adaptation planning process to identify and record community volunteering resources. Use this to build surge capacity for shock events.

2

Share case studies through networks to promote volunteering programs and processes to increase volunteering, build social capital and community resilience.

3

Work with organisations with volunteers to build emergency response skills that are appropriate for their place-based risks.

Case study



Recovery coordination in Wollondilly

The resilient Wollondilly mobile recovery van and the disaster recovery volunteer database are key resilience projects enhancing disaster preparedness and recovery within the Wollondilly local government area.

The disaster recovery volunteer database is designed to connect spontaneous volunteers with volunteer agencies, streamlining the coordination and deployment of support during recovery efforts following a disaster. It also serves as a tool for linking volunteers and fostering a network of community members ready to assist in recovery efforts.

The resilient Wollondilly mobile recovery van is a versatile hub for community engagement, recovery support and emergency response. Equipped with essential supplies and communication tools, the van can be deployed to impacted areas, providing a mobile recovery assistance point for distributing resources and sharing critical information to impacted residents.

These projects support community resilience by fostering volunteerism, improving recovery coordination, and ensuring effective disaster responses across Wollondilly.

Wollondilly Shire Council



Connecting people to place and each other

Hornsby Shire Council was awarded a grant from the state government for a volunteer citizen science project to track endangered species. The project focused on creek biodiversity.

Participants worked together to collect and document eDNA water samples. The results from two eDNA sampling events in Spring 2023 and Autumn 2024 are available on the data dashboard developed by the project team. In August 2022, there was a confirmed platypus sighting in Colah Creek where they were previously thought to be extinct.

The project is one of many across local councils that develop skills, knowledge and local community connections through volunteering which can be utilised during shock events. They also have great local outcomes for people and the environment.

Hornsby Shire Council, NSW State Government

Photo: (left) Wollondilly Shire Council
(right) Hornsby Shire Council

Action 25

Collaborate to be better prepared for emergencies

Shocks & stresses



Cyberattack



Heatwaves



Flooding



Storms



Bushfires



Fragmented governance

Resilience challenge

In an emergency it is critical people understand their roles, communicate consistently and pool and share available resources. This needs to be done in a collaborative way at a regional level before events occur.

State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Emergency infrastructure
- Community awareness and preparedness
- Enabler – capacity and capability

Resilience goals

Councils are clear on their roles and effectively contribute in emergency scenarios across Greater Sydney.

Communications planning is in place so that councils can support each other in the event of major communication service failure.

Local governments have established inclusive communication channels to disseminate crucial information and warnings.

Communities are prepared and know how and where to access reliable information and support in emergency events.

Action pathways

1

Maintain the local government emergency response group that can mobilise to provide coordinated support from councils in shock events.

2

Encourage councils to identify resources to share in an emergency and document this through a regional framework.

3

Advocate for councils to collaborate with state government and businesses to establish place-based community communication plans. These plans would support and supplement emergency communication channels during emergency events.

4

Support councils to identify safe and appropriate community facilities and public places that can:

- provide services to support community preparedness
- disseminate local communication in an emergency
- provide a community gathering place during an emergency.

5

Promote centralised community donations through mechanisms such as the Australian Red Cross Emergency Fund⁶¹ and GIVIT website⁶².

Case study



Recovery on wheels

The western edge of Greater Sydney faces significant natural disasters including bushfires and flood. A mix of suburban developments, rural properties, agricultural areas and remote villages make post-disaster recovery a complex task.

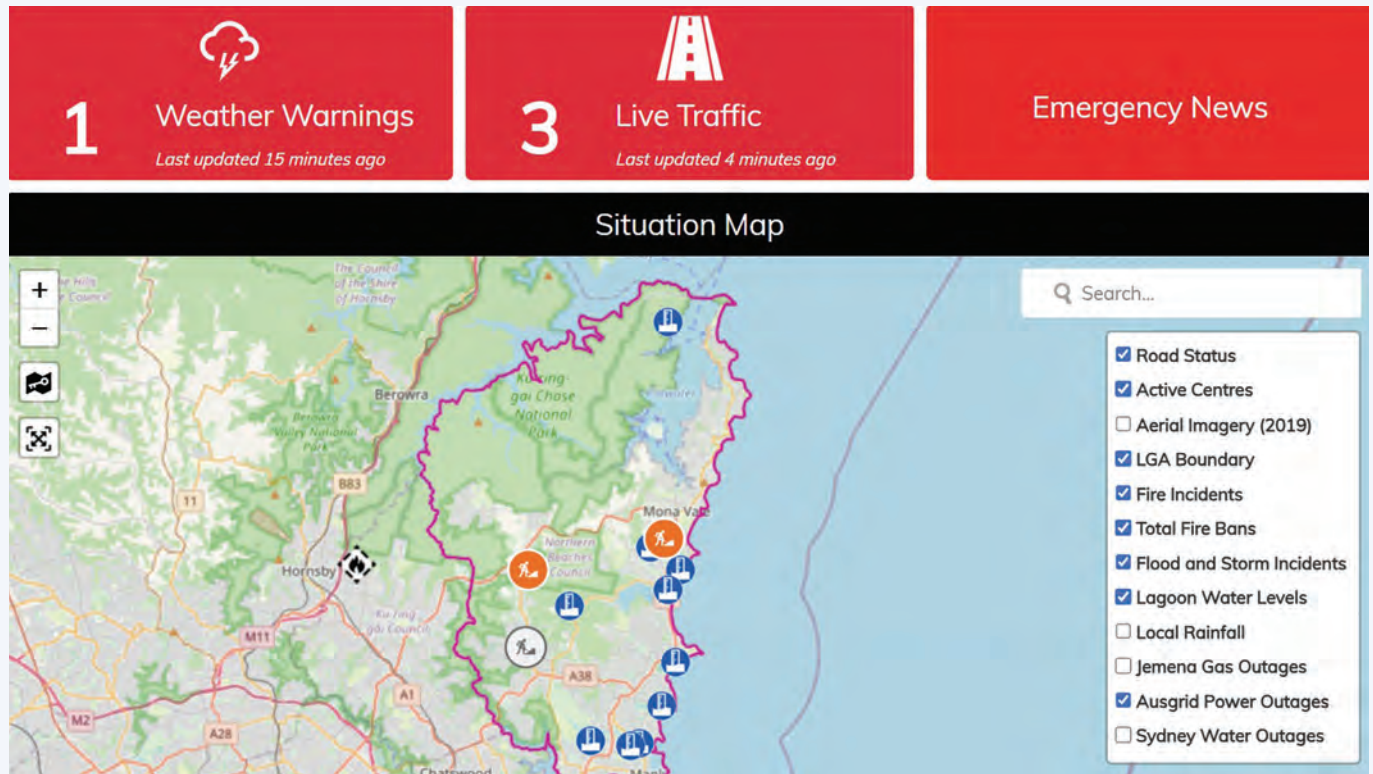
The 'recovery on wheels' network was established during the black summer bushfires recovery to respond to community needs in a coordinated way. It expanded during the Hawkesbury Nepean floods in 2020 and 2021.

The network's focus has now moved to fostering strong ongoing relationships and resilience in preparation for future events. This will enable the network to quickly pivot to recovery when needed.

The network is coordinated by Hawkesbury and Penrith Councils. The network is connected into local emergency management committees and works closely with community organisations including Peppercorn Services, Wesley Mission, Legal Aid, Red Cross and Rural Aid.

Hawkesbury, Penrith, Blue Mountains, Blacktown, The Hills, Lithgow, and Wollondilly Councils, NSW Reconstruction Authority, NSW Health, Local Land Services, Environmental Protection Authority, Service NSW, SES, National Emergency Management Authority

Case study



Using technology to keep people safe

Nine bushfire and flood-prone Greater Sydney councils have built disaster dashboards. This means residents can quickly find emergency information including evacuation orders, council updates on local roads, SES notifications, and a local hazards map. The dashboards are an important resource for 1.6 million people across Greater Sydney.

Bayside Council's smart flood sensors project uses green-powered CCTV equipped with AI and smart sensors to detect floodwater on roads and activate LED warning signs during flash floods. The signs offer advanced warnings in low visibility to stop drivers and pedestrians accidentally entering floodwaters. The real-time data is also available on an open data platform.

Other councils are using technology to better inform their operations during extreme weather. Blacktown City Council uses real-time weather data to make operational decisions that respond to extreme weather events such as activating cool zones or pausing outdoor work to keep people safe during heatwaves.

Penrith City, Hornsby Shire, Hawkesbury City, Blue Mountains City, Sutherland Shire, Northern Beaches, Camden, Wollondilly Shire and Blacktown City councils / Bayside Council, NSW Reconstruction Authority

Direction 5

One city

A city with coordinated
governance that people trust



Greater Sydney has 3 levels of government: local, state and federal, and hosts multiple regional peak bodies. A complex and multi-level governance system requires a high degree of collaboration to implement action that responds to shocks and stresses.

Australia is experiencing declining trust in government⁷. Workshop participants and survey respondents were concerned that government decisions do not align with community values and needs.

- Only 20% of survey respondents believe all levels of government work well together to manage the needs of Greater Sydney.
- 53% felt that government was not accountable and did not provide clear information to the public¹.

However, national surveys also consistently report that trust in local government is higher than other levels of government⁶³. Local government provides a trusted interface for place-based action. Collaboration across levels of government is needed to share critical data so councils can set targets, make planning decisions, manage assets and track performance.

Only 20% of survey respondents believe all levels of government work well together to manage the needs of Greater Sydney.¹

Evidence-based decision-making



Data is critical for understanding current and future risks to Greater Sydney and the potential consequences of shock events for places, economies, and people. A science-informed evidence base (including agreed climate projections) is needed to support decisions at both regional and local scales.

The state government must decide how NARClm2.0 climate projections¹⁴ are used in assumptions for land use planning and other functions that impact local government.

Timely access to reliable, quality data is increasingly valuable for businesses, organisations and individuals to manage their risks. Governance frameworks and standards for data and information sharing are needed to ensure data sharing is transparent, reliable, responsible and sustainable.

Robust regional risk assessments with community engagement will enable state and local governments to prioritise adaptation and mitigation planning for natural disasters and other shock events. A strong data-informed evidence base helps disparate groups unite on a common problem, supporting better resilience.

Resilience of council assets

Existing assets have been designed to suit historic climates and may not withstand future conditions. Building and upgrading assets to be more resilient is an ongoing challenge for councils. Considering resilience at the design stage is the most efficient and cost-effective approach.

The historical funding mechanisms for asset maintenance may not be enough to ensure assets can cope with a changing climate. Local governments need to work with other levels of government to identify sustainable and equitable ways to fund adaptation and mitigation pathways for their assets. This should include investment after disasters to build back.

Collaborative governance

The foundation of Resilient Sydney is collaborative governance. We take proactive action to address the complex and critical issues affecting the resilience of Greater Sydney by building relationships. Resilient Sydney's approach to strengthening governance:

- enables the sharing of risk data and other vital information
- facilitates working between levels of government and across agencies and jurisdictions
- engages communities in research, plans and decisions.

Coordinated and transparent governance can rebuild trust in government decision-making and secure a stronger social licence to act.

The foundation of Resilient Sydney is collaborative governance.

Action 26

Promote and participate in collaborative governance and engagement for Greater Sydney

Shocks & stresses



Digital networks



Waste



Low trust



Reducing social cohesion



Environment degradation



Fragmented governance

Resilience challenge

Multiple levels of government create complexity for decision-makers in Greater Sydney. Without collaborative problem-solving, we are unlikely to address complex city-wide challenges.

State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Enabler – collaborative governance
- Enabler – capacity and capability

Resilience goals

Collaborative governance models are in place to address city-wide resilience challenges.

Community values and priorities are included in government decisions about planning and infrastructure, and disaster mitigation and adaptation.

Decision-making and planning processes ensure people understand the concept of tolerable risk and decide what it means for their communities.

Community involvement in decision-making leads to a shared responsibility for managing risk, social licence to act and improved trust in government.

Action pathways

1

Collaborate with the regional organisations of councils across Greater Sydney to address regional resilience challenges.

2

Participate in region-wide governance structures for the disaster adaptation plan (DAP)⁶⁴.

3

Collaborate on developing a region-wide engagement framework to support the development of the DAP, adaptation pathways and place-based preparedness programs for communities across Greater Sydney.

4

Ensure climate risk assessment processes, adaptation pathways and place-based preparedness programs are inclusive of First Nations people's connection to Country and knowledge of place.

5

Collaborate with NSW Reconstruction Authority to develop a regional database of organisations, community groups, networks and volunteers. Use this to map surge capacity that can be mobilised in a shock event.

6

Coordinate regional community engagement activities on critical issues where collaboration on a shared position between councils will deliver the best outcome.

Action 27

Adopt region-wide data and tools

Shocks & stresses



Bushfires



Heatwaves



Flooding



Coastal hazards



Low trust



Fragmented governance

Resilience challenge

A regional approach to data and planning for resilience is critical to effectively mitigate and adapt to the escalating risks to the places, people and economies of Greater Sydney.

State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Strategic planning
- Enabler – data
- Enabler – capacity and capability

Resilience goals

Science-based data, including climate scenario predictions, is agreed across all levels of government to support planning and decision-making at local and regional scales.

A consistent, regional-wide approach to providing local councils in Greater Sydney with access to timely, reliable, robust and securely managed information enables councils to efficiently direct resources to resilience actions.

State and local government are better able to benchmark, set targets, prioritise actions and report on performance and resilience to shocks and stresses.

Action pathways

1

Collaborate with state government on a single source of hazard data. The data includes agreed climate projections and coastal inundation mapping to ensure consistent application of this data to the common planning assumptions.

2

Advocate for businesses to share hazard risk data with state and local governments.

3

Collaborate with state government to develop a consistent, shared approach for sensor data collection to better inform climate-smart decision-making for Greater Sydney.

4

Explore ways to collect comparable community insights across Greater Sydney such as a set of standard consultation questions for community strategic plans.

5

Explore and share emerging opportunities to use data in making strategic and operational decisions.

Action 28

Enhance the Resilient Sydney data platform

Shocks & stresses



Energy



Heatwaves



Water



Low trust



Fragmented governance



Environment degradation

Resilience challenge

Local government requires an increasingly complex range of data to:

- inform how it allocates resources to build community and organisational resilience.
- respond to mandatory state reporting and planning requirements.

Resilience goals

Councils have access to reliable and suitable data to set benchmarks and targets, and to inform strategies, policies and operations.

Councils can effectively respond to mandatory reporting requirements and report on operational performance.

There is a standardised and streamlined approach to providing local government with regional data so councils can direct funds to action rather than data collection.

Action pathways

1

Continue to identify data needs and improve data capability across councils in Greater Sydney to enable the development of evidence-based policy and targets required to deliver resilience outcomes.

2

Advocate for and support increased access to relevant datasets across public and private sector to enable measurable collaborative action on resilience priorities.

State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Enabler – data
- Enabler – capacity and capability

Action 29

Strengthen the resilience of council assets

Shocks & stresses



Economic crisis



Heatwaves



Bushfires



Flooding



Storms



Coastal hazards

Resilience challenge

Greater Sydney councils face increasing challenges in maintaining their assets and services as the frequency and intensity of shock events escalate.

Resilience goals

The resilience of council-managed assets to natural and other hazards is improved by reducing the risks and impacts arising from asset failures on systems, people, the environment and economy.

Long-term financial sustainability of local government is strengthened through the cost-effective adaptation of assets and services.

State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Enabler – funding
- Enabler – capacity and capability
- Infrastructure resilience

Action pathways

1

Support council asset managers across Greater Sydney through guidance and peer learning to incorporate resilience assessments into asset management plans.

2

Support councils to develop business continuity plans that respond to emerging threats including cyber-attacks and cumulative shock events.

3

Support councils develop priority adaptation lists for infrastructure and assets that the community relies on. The lists are informed by an understanding of the interdependencies between resilience risks.

4

Collaborate with the NSW Government to develop regional prioritisation plans for asset renewal. Identify adaptation pathways for councils to increase the resilience of their assets and services.

Case study

Before**Before****Now**

Darwin's Walk

The popular and historic Darwins Walk runs alongside Jamison Creek which captures most of the runoff from Wentworth Falls township. The track has been flood-damaged many times and repaired with existing materials. However, it was heavily impacted by major flooding in 2020 and then successive storms in 2021, 2022 and 2024. These events significantly altered the creek-line and eroded the earthen tracks. The timber boardwalks and bridges were washed downstream.

It was clear that more resilient infrastructure was required. A new track alignment was established away from the creek. Resilient design elements included replacing timber steps with sandstone, and installing steel footbridges and elevated boardwalks using techniques that minimised disturbance to the environment.

These and other resilient design principles are progressively being applied within many of the Blue Mountains City Council's susceptible natural areas.

Blue Mountains City Council

Case study



Mona Vale Surf Life Saving Club

Sydney's coastline holds great recreational, social and cultural significance. It is also exposed to a range of hazards which are increasing in severity. To rebuild the Mona Vale Surf Lifesaving Club, Northern Beaches Council had to carefully consider erosion, saltwater intrusion, sea level rise and storm surge events.

The project included an 'acceptable risk' methodology that considered hazard risk over the 100-year life of the building and a resilience analysis of a range of engineering approaches. This informed the setbacks and the innovative piling and foundation design. Climate resilient

materials include precast concrete panels which can withstand storm waves, laminated glass to reduce the risk from shattering and stainless steel fittings. The outcome is reduced maintenance costs over a 100-year design life.

Northern Beaches Council worked with the Institute of Public Works and Engineering Australasia to develop two publicly-available practice notes coming out of the project on climate change impacts on the useful life of infrastructure and climate resilient materials for infrastructure assets.

Northern Beaches Council, NSW Stronger Communities Fund, Mona Vale Surf Life Saving Club, Institute of Public Works and Engineering Australasia

Action 30

Galvanize resilience across Greater Sydney

Shocks & stresses



Flooding



Heatwaves



Waste



Low trust



Fragmented governance



Reducing social cohesion

Resilience challenge

Greater Sydney councils with the NSW Government must participate in coordinated actions to increase and enhance the resilience of the city.

Resilience goals

The coordination of new initiatives and sharing of costs and resources accelerates the implementation and success of resilience actions across Greater Sydney.

Streamlined and efficient implementation of resilience actions across Greater Sydney builds a high level of organisational, individual and community preparedness.



State disaster mitigation plan alignment

- Enabler – collaborative governance
- Enabler – capacity and capability

Action pathways

1

Coordinate implementation of the Resilient Sydney strategy (2025–2030) and measure, evaluate and report its outcomes.

2

Ensure ongoing support for resilience implementation throughout Greater Sydney led by a representative steering committee.

3

Host Greater Sydney mayoral forums.

4

Host the 'Greater Sydney resilience ambassadors' program.

5

Develop and maintain memorandums of understanding between Resilient Sydney and state government departments and agencies on certain priorities and actions in the strategy.

6

Collaborate with regional organisations of councils, joint organisations, local government rivers and coastal alliances, peak bodies, businesses and researchers to advocate for regional priorities to state and national governments.

7

Participate in international networks and knowledge programs for city resilience.

Appendix Theory of change



Stronger together. Prepared for the future.

A city where we care
for the environment
and live sustainably

An equitable city
with climate resilient
neighbourhoods

Resulting in governance models that demonstrate

**Reflectiveness and
resourcefulness**

Able to learn from the past and
act in times of crisis

Which will enable

Connections

Increased collaborations,
networks, and aligned
action to address
challenges

Understanding

Increased understanding of,
and sense of shared
responsibility for
place-based risks

Then the Resilient Sydney network will be able to

Connect local action
with **global** action
and opportunities

Strengthen **collaborative
leadership** among local
government executives

If the Resilient Sydney Office

Demonstrates and
facilitates **collaborative
leadership**

Is **nimble and
responsive** while being
guided by strategy

Enables
**sharing
lead**

Metro-scale willingness and
support to develop a systems
approach to resilience

Dedicated resourcing
and buy-in embedded
within organisations

An inclusive city that supports social connections and community agency

A city where people and organisations are prepared for emergencies

A city with coordinated governance that people trust

Robustness and flexibility

Systems and assets can withstand shocks and stresses, and use alternative strategies to facilitate rapid recovery

Inclusiveness and integration

Decisions are appropriate and equitable, with good governance bringing together communities, systems and institutions to achieve greater goals

Capacity

Increased capacity for place-based preparation, planning, response and recovery

Policies and tools

Development of effective policies and tools to prepare for and manage risk

Representation

State and federal authorities better understand and address local and regional challenges

Build **operational capability** within local government and other organisations

Co-design **place-based relationships** between all levels of government and communities

Work together to deliver on **strategy actions**

Knowledge and thought leadership

Engages and connects people and organisations across the system

Provides robust and relevant **data**

Provides effective **project management and network coordination**

Awareness and understanding of resilience at all levels of government and in community

Strong, trusted, widely recognised Resilient Sydney brand

Funding and resources for Resilient Sydney

Appendix

Case study web links

Direction 1 – Care for the environment

Caring for vulnerable coastal sites	Sutherland Shire Council	www.sutherlandshire.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/community-nursery
Caring for Country with cultural fire	Firesticks Alliance Department for Planning, Housing and Infrastructure	www.firesticks.org.au www.planning.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-03/caring-for-country-aboriginal-outcomes-strategy-2024-2033.pdf
Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub	IndiGrow Randwick City Council	www.indigigrow.com.au www.randwick.nsw.gov.au/facilities-and-recreation/parks/parks-by-suburb/randwick/randwick-environment-park
Swimming in the Parramatta River	Parramatta River Catchment Group	www.ourlivingriver.com.au
Celebrating Aboriginal culture along the Great West Walk	Great West Walk Muru Mittigar	www.greatwestwalk.com.au www.murumittigar.com.au
Living Seawalls	Living Seawalls	www.livingseawalls.com.au
North Sydney tree canopy and native havens	North Sydney Council	www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/native-environment/native-havens-program
Gardening at Waverley Cemetery	Waverley Council	www.waverley.nsw.gov.au/cemeteries/get_involved
Purified Recycled Water Discovery Centre	Sydney Water	www.sydneywater.com.au/education/drinking-water/purified-recycled-water.html
Green Square stormwater drain	City of Sydney	www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/building-new-infrastructure/green-square-stormwater-drain
Reaching net zero together	Ku-ring-gai Council	www.netzero.krg.nsw.gov.au/Home
Village Pantry	Community Support Services	www.cssvillage.org.au
Happy Hens	The Happy Hens	www.happyhens.org.au

Direction 2 – People-centred city

Greater Sydney heat smart city plan	WSROC	https://wsroc.com.au/projects/project-turn-down-the-heat/greater-sydney-heat-smart-city-plan
Affordable housing working group	SSROC	https://ssroc.nsw.gov.au/projects/affordable-housing/
City of Sydney's affordable housing approach	City of Sydney	www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/affordable-housing-contributions/city-of-sydney-affordable-housing-program
NZ healthy homes standard for rental properties	New Zealand Ministry for Housing and Urban Planning	www.tenancy.govt.nz/healthy-homes
Connecting the Parramatta River foreshore	City of Parramatta	www.cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au/vision/parramatta-river-transformation
Willoughby Council Public School active travel	Willoughby Council	www.willoughby.nsw.gov.au/Council/News-and-media/Active-Travel-Launch-Willoughby-Public-School
	TfNSW	www.nsw.gov.au/driving-boating-and-transport/get-kids-active
Her Way Projects	Transport for NSW - Safer cities, her way	www.transport.nsw.gov.au/industry/cities-and-active-transport/cities-revitalisation-and-place/festival-of-place-0/safer

Direction 3 – Connecting for strength

Documenting the Mount Gosper mega-blaze	Megablaze: Dancing With The Devil	www.wedgetailpictures.com/post/megablaze-dancing-with-the-devil
Africa Film Fest Australia	Africa Film Fest Australia	www.africafilmfest.au
	Arts and Cultural Exchange	aceinc.org.au
First Nations-led carbon farming	The Aboriginal Carbon Foundation	www.abcfoundation.org.au
	Firesticks Alliance	www.firesticks.org.au
Councils partnering with First Nations communities	Parramatta Council	www.cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au/community/dharug-and-first-nations-community

First Nations Response	First Nations Response	www.firstnationsresponse.org
Being connected and prepared	Macdonald Valley Association	www.macdonaldvalleyassociation.org.au
Lifesaving PPE from local leftovers	Reverse Garbage	www.reversegarbage.org.au
50°C: climate, heat and resilience	Powerhouse Museum	www.powerhouse.com.au/50c-climate-heat-and-resilience
Connecting people through bush care	Northside Enterprise Inc-Bushlink	www.bushlink.org.au
CommUnity Connect	City of Canterbury-Bankstown	www.cbcity.nsw.gov.au/community-connect
Blue Mountains planetary health	Blue Mountains City Council	www.bluemountainsplanetaryhealth.com.au
Julia Reserve youth precinct	Camden Council	www.juliareserveyouthprecinct.com.au
Play her way	NSW Office of Sport	www.sport.nsw.gov.au/play-her-way

Direction 4 – Be ready

P-CEP in action	Belong Blue Mountains Carers NSW	www.belongbm.org.au www.carersnsw.org.au/services-and-support/information-hubs/disaster-preparedness-hub
Designing preparedness programs with the community	Australian Red Cross RediPlan Inner City Voice / City of Sydney	www.redcross.org.au/prepare www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/guides/emergency-preparedness-handbook-people-living-social-housing
EmergencyRedi Week	Australian Red Cross	www.redcross.org.au/prepare
Building emergency preparedness into community programs	Campbelltown City Council	www.campbelltown.nsw.gov.au/News/Resilient-Residents
Hi neighbours!	Willoughby City Council Lane Cove Council	www.willoughby.nsw.gov.au/Community/Community-health-and-safety/High-density-living/Hi-Neighbours www.lanecove.nsw.gov.au/Community/Love-Where-You-Live/Meet-Your-Neighbours

Recover coordination in Wollondilly	Wollondilly Shire Council	www.wollondilly.nsw.gov.au/emergency-management
Connecting people to place and each other	Hornsby Shire Council	www.hornsby.nsw.gov.au/environment/waterways/what-can-you-do-for-the-environment/citizen-science
Using technology to keep people safe	Bayside council	https://nsw-bayside.opendatasoft.com/pages/home

Direction 5 – One city

Darwins Walk	Blue Mountains City Council	www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/ward-1-projects/darwins-walk-project
Mona Vale Surf Life Saving Club	Institute of Public Works and Engineering Australasia	www.ipwea.org/resourcesnew/bookshop#PN

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