



- How do you feel about these scenarios that could happen in Sydney in the future?
Enough voting let's cast a ballot...
- Public "Urban Cool Rooms"
 - Open streets
 - Recreation in the sky
 - Bookless Libraries
 - Car-free neighbourhoods
 - Drone deliveries
 - Charging for waste
 - Urban farms
 - Late night performance venues
 - More Tourists
 - Shared backyards



Our Future Sydney

Consulting children and young people about 2050

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Introduction

From April to June 2019, the City of Sydney ran 20 workshops with 19 schools in or on the border of the City's local area seeking the views of children and young people about the future of Sydney to the year 2050.

Purpose

This consultation with children and young people forms part of the wider 2050 consultation for the development of the City of Sydney long term Community Strategic Plan.

The underlying premise of this consultation is that it is the children and young people of today who will be central to the implementation and impacts of the 2050 plan and that therefore, they have the right to have their opinions taken into account regarding the plan's development.

The following report summarises the views of 366 children and young people consulted on their vision for Sydney in the year 2050 and how they believe we should get there.

As the following quotation illustrates we were consistently struck by children and young people who were able to put forward considered and passionate opinions about the future of Sydney; a future, as they say themselves, that is not 'illusory or vague, but pressing and important'.

We may not have as much life experience as you, however we are more nationally and internationally connected than ever and have access to multitudes of information that we didn't have access to before. We are future-orientated and care about our world in a way that is not illusionary or vague, but pressing and important.

Student Age 15

Objectives

- Find out what matters to children and young people regarding the future to the year 2050.
- Explore children and young people's current and future vision for Sydney.
- Show children and young people that their views count and that the City of Sydney is listening.
- Build civic engagement in children and young people.
- Build ongoing, educative relationships with local schools.
- Supply children, young people and teachers with current real-world data about Sydney to support ongoing classroom activities about their local area.



Participation

During this consultation the City ran 20 workshops with 19 schools, ultimately reaching 366 students.

City staff sent an invitation to schools within the City of Sydney's local area or immediate vicinity to opt into the consultation at their discretion.

The following schools responded and participated in the engagement.

Primary schools engaged

- Plunket Street Public School (year 4-6)
- Darlington Public School (SRC)
- Bourke Street Public School (SRC)
- St Andrews Cathedral School (years 5-6)
- Glebe Public School (Year 6)
- Fort Street Public School (Year 6)
- Erskineville Public School (SRC)
- St James Catholic Primary school (SRC)
- Forest Lodge Public School (Year 5-6)

Primary aged children engaged: 164

High Schools engaged

- Emanuel School (Year 9)
- Newtown High School of the Performing Arts (SRC)
- Marrickville High School (SRC)
- Alexandria Park Community School (SRC)
- St Andrews Cathedral School (Year 12)
- Sydney Secondary College, Leichhardt (SRC)
- Sydney Secondary College, Balmain (SRC)
- Sydney Secondary College, Black Wattle Bay (SCR)
- Sydney Secondary College, Glebe Pathways Project (Current students)
- Sydney Girls High School (SRC)
- JJ Cahill Memorial High School (SRC)

High School aged children engaged: 202

Methodology

This consultation was embedded in a framework that took into account the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, NSW School Curriculum and the role of schools as pivotal nodes of local community connection.

Schools as the site for the consultations ensured a diverse range of local children and young people were able to participate and for this participation to be embedded in a learning context.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child enshrines 54 central rights that all children should have around the world. Of direct importance to the 2050 Consultation process is Article 12:

Children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account.

Our consultation in schools allowed us to uphold this right by giving a diverse range of children and young people multiple ways of expressing their opinions about Sydney's future direction and having those opinions taken into account alongside those of adults.

To ensure the consultation supported the learning outcomes of schools the activities were planned with reference to the NSW curriculum, with links to Geography, Mathematics, English, and Economics. They aligned with the philosophy of Civics and Citizenship that underpins all of the Australian National Curriculum and allowed young people the opportunity to **actively participate in Australia's diverse and inclusive society**.

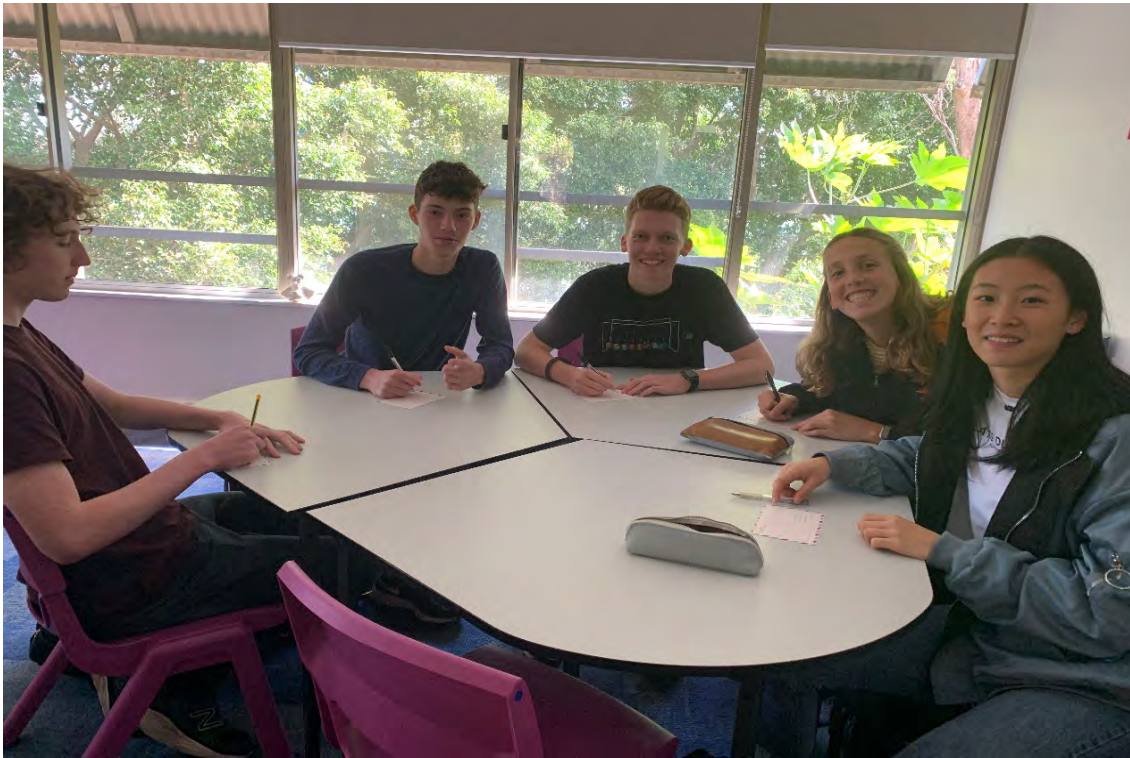
This consultation approach also responds to the City's Social Sustainability Policy and Action Plan 2018-2028 that states: **Engaging young people in decision-making and intergenerational equity focuses on the rights of future generations to inherit the same diversity in natural, cultural, health and economic resources enjoyed by previous generations. So, planning for a socially sustainable city should consider those with the greatest stake in its future: young people.**

Consultation activities were in multiple forms to ensure age and literacy appropriate options were available for all participants. Activities were designed to record the views of children and young people from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective.

Schools were given the choice to form a consultation cohort from a single class or their Student Representative Councils (SRC). This afforded a diverse range of children and young people participation in the experience of decision making and local civic participation.

Embedding this consultation about local issues in local schools acknowledged and supported the vital role schools play as social hubs and connectors for their communities

Our Future Sydney



Consultation activities

Discussions

Activities were contextualised by a presentation that gave information about the City's local government area, the role of consultations and provided opportunities for participants to ask questions about the role of council and the use of the data being collected during the sessions.

The presentation incorporated real-world data facts from the recently created City of Sydney data maps. These data maps cover the following topics:

- Moving around the city: how people move in and around Sydney.
- A natural city: highlights the natural ecology of Sydney.
- A resource efficient city: details the way different areas of Sydney use resources.
- Shared spaces: changes in the use of space within Sydney over the last four years.

We asked what students wanted their future city to look like and why this was important to them?

Future scenario cards were used in high school workshops where students would read a scenario and then students would indicate whether they agreed (Yes, Absolutely!) or disagreed (No Way!) using paddles. This prompted a discussion about why they felt one way or the other.

A discussion was also facilitated around the question: why is it important to listen to the views of young people?

City of Sydney staff recorded the discussion from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective.

Surveys

Three surveys, all adapted from the Sydney 2050 general online adult survey, were developed to ensure an age-appropriate version was available for children and young people ranging from Kindergarten to Year 12. These were:

- Primary school: junior (years 3 and below).
- Primary school: senior (years 4-6).
- High School survey: all ages

Surveys focused on the following questions:

- What do you hope Sydney will be like in the future?
- What pastimes do you enjoy now and want available to children/young people in the future?
- What excites you about Sydney's future?
- What concerns you about Sydney's future (high school only)?
- Why should adults listen to the views of children/young people?

Postcards

Write a postcard to Sydney of the future: this activity was designed to encourage students to personalise their vision of Sydney in a message to the city in the year 2050.

The prompt: 'Dear Sydney, In the future I hope you...' operated as an open field where students recorded both hopes and concerns for the future.

Q. 5. Adults should listen to my views about the future of Sydney because... we are the younger generation and would eventually be the older ones. Listening to our views would help adults consider other aspects to make Sydney a better place in the future. For example creating more sustainable building or rooftop gardens, bring a creative aspect into Sydney. Look at things from different perspectives.



Outcomes

The picture that emerges when looking over all the data is that participating children and young people have given thoughtful, well informed opinions about their vision of Sydney's future. Environmental responsibility, sustainability and related importance of parks, trees and green spaces rates highly across all age groups.

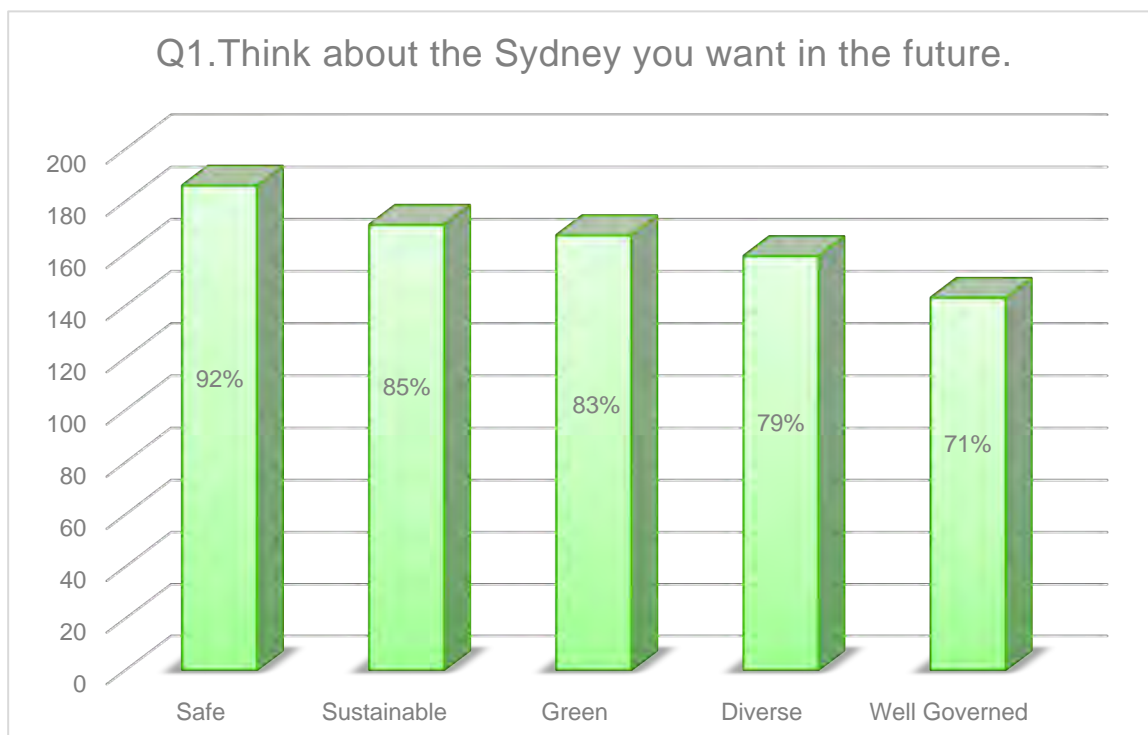
Safety, fairness and social cohesion are also high on the list of priorities for children and young people, along with the related ideas of friendliness, diversity and different cultures living together. The overarching idea of the need for tolerance came through strongly across all age groups. For example 70% of primary school age children expressed the hope that Sydney would be a city that celebrates Aboriginal communities and culture.

Further to this children and young people want a city where they can walk, cycle or catch public transport around to wherever they need to go. Conversations about these modes of transport always had as a backdrop the need to be environmentally friendly and sustainable into the future.

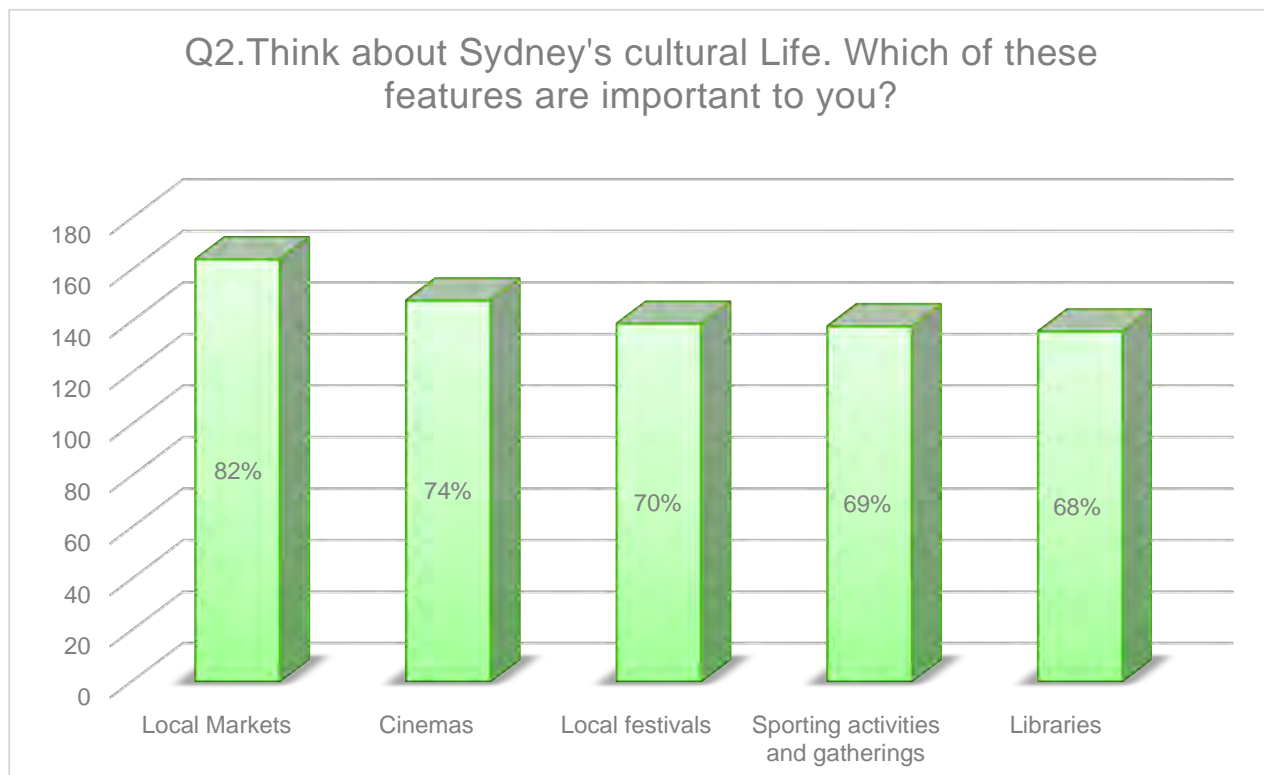
For high school students only one concern rated higher than climate change and this was housing affordability. Despite their wider concerns about the environment, their need to access affordable dwellings and homes to live safely with their families was of extremely high importance.

High School Survey Results

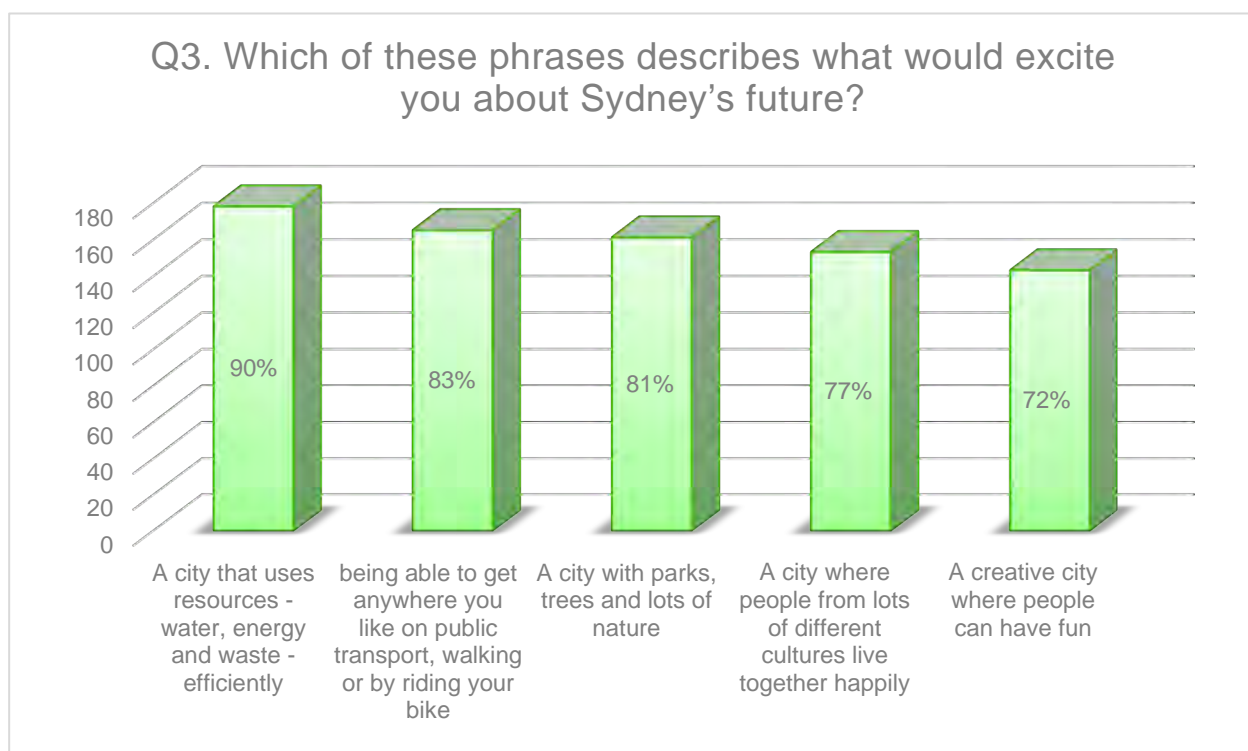
Question 1: This graph represents high school students responding to words that describe what they hope Sydney will be like when they are older. 92% prioritise a safe city, closely followed by a sustainable and green place.



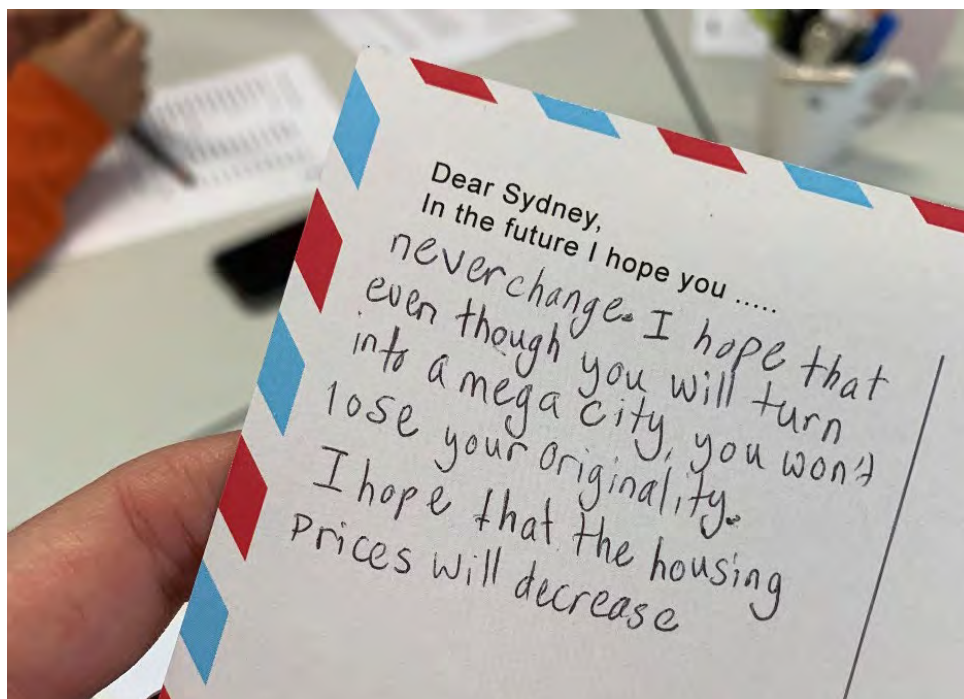
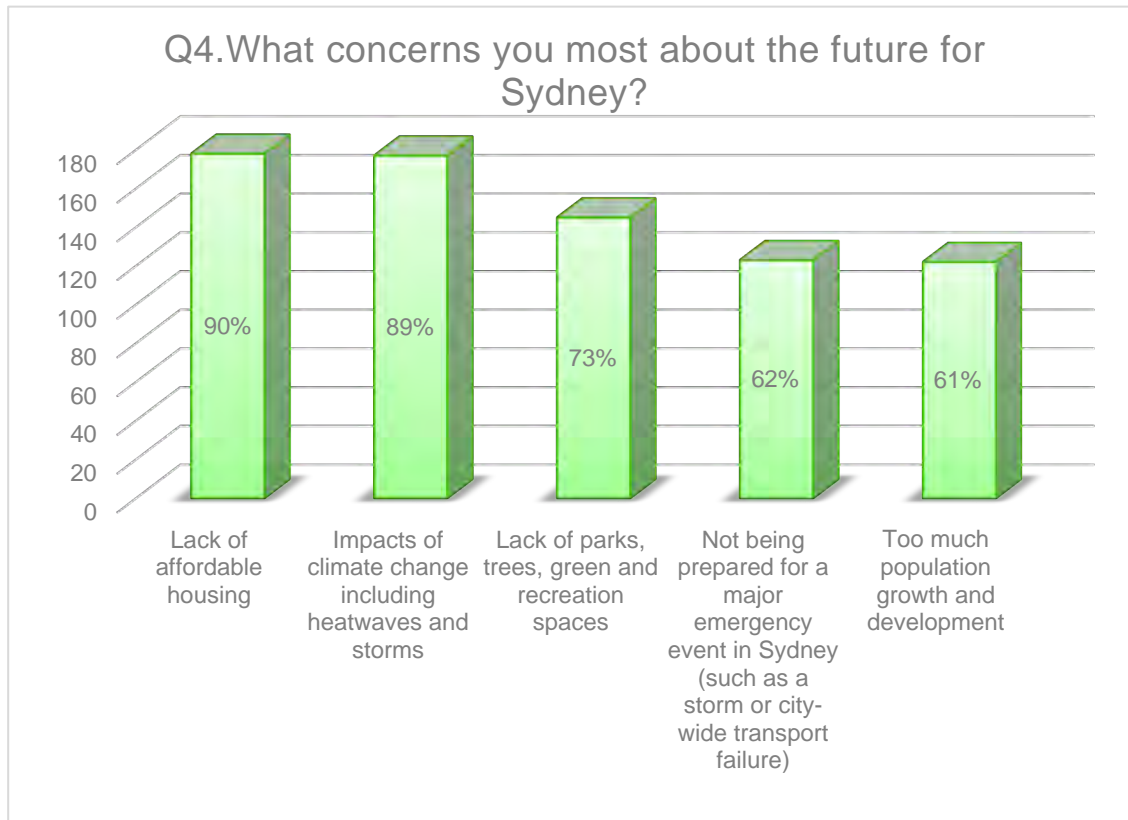
Question 2: Here we asked the students to choose features of cultural life that are important to them now and into the future. Outdoor activities such as local markets were highly favoured at 82%.



Question 3: Responses to this question demonstrate the consistent desire for a sustainable and more environmentally conscious city. 90% wanted a city that uses its resources such as water, energy and waste efficiently.

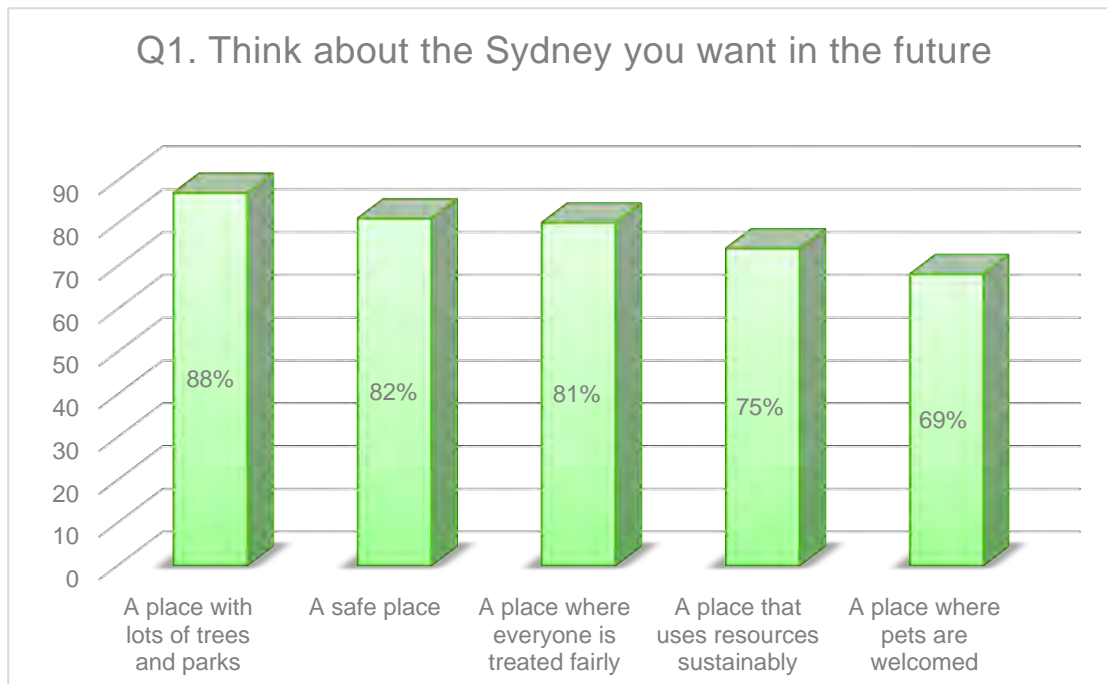


Question 4: In this question we asked high school age students what their main concerns were for the future. Despite the ongoing issue of climate change which again rated very highly these students, having more of an insight into economic matters, were most deeply concerned about the accessibility of affordable housing for themselves and their families. Our results tell us that young people are more concerned about building development in Sydney than the adults who participated in the survey.

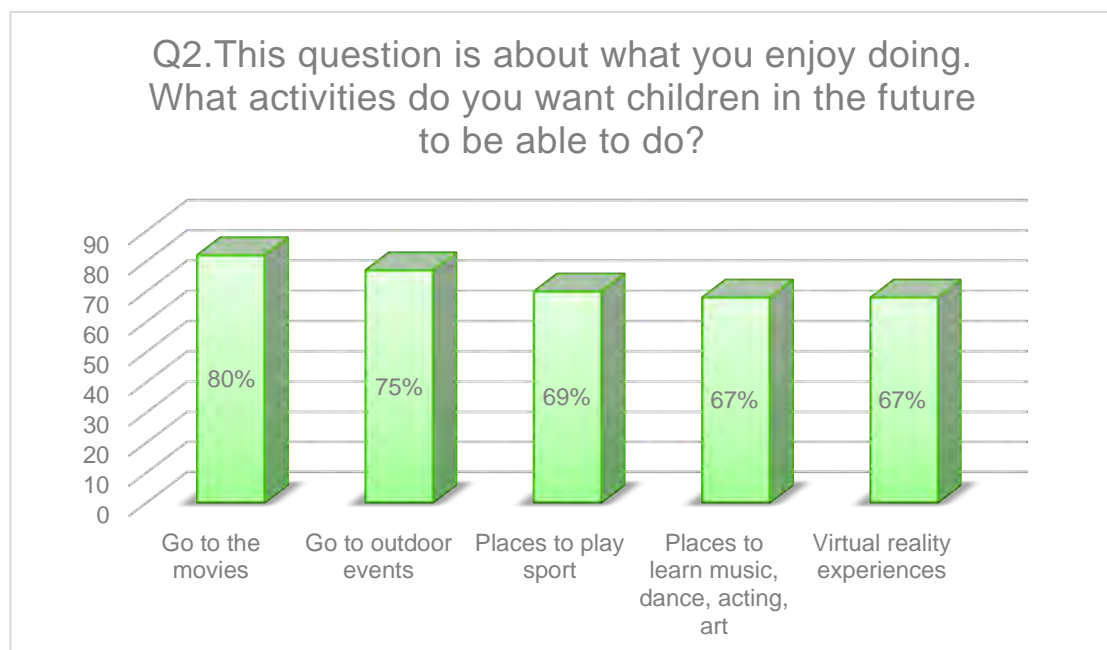


Primary School (Year 4-6) Survey Results

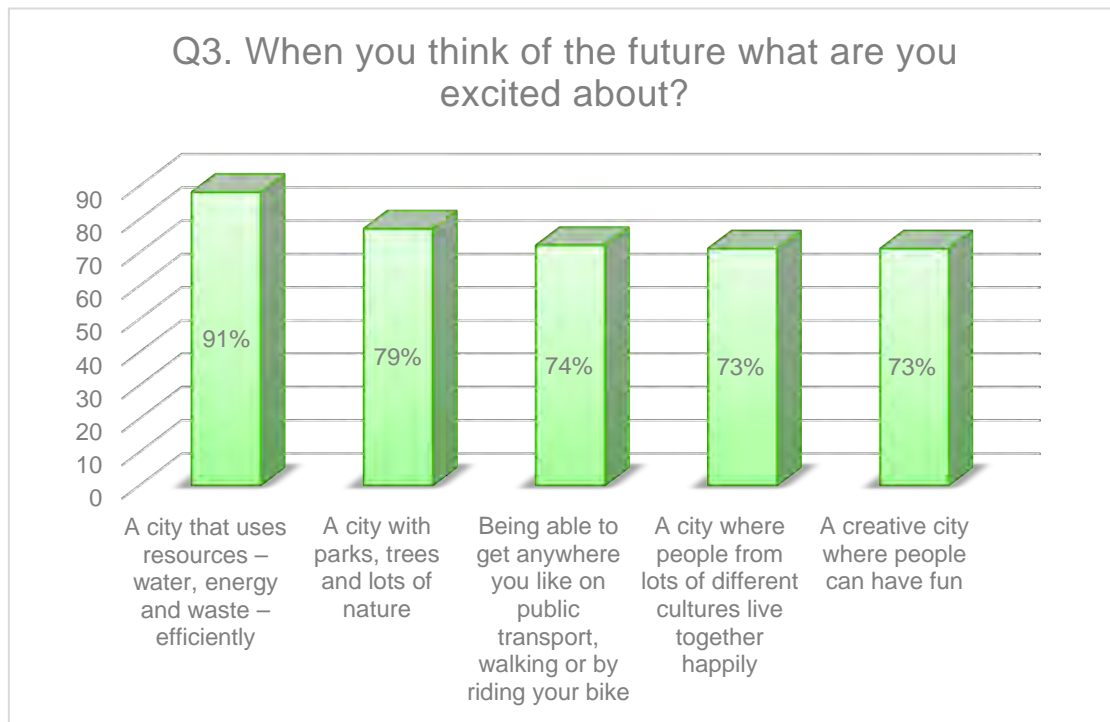
Question 1: As with their high school contemporaries younger students also hoped for a future that was safe, green and equitable.



Question 2: Access to movies and outdoor events were a high priority for these participants however it is interesting to note that children want to be included as participants in activities rather than just consumers. We also see that their engagement with technology is far greater than the adults who responded to the survey with access to virtual reality experiences at 67% compared to 14% of adults.

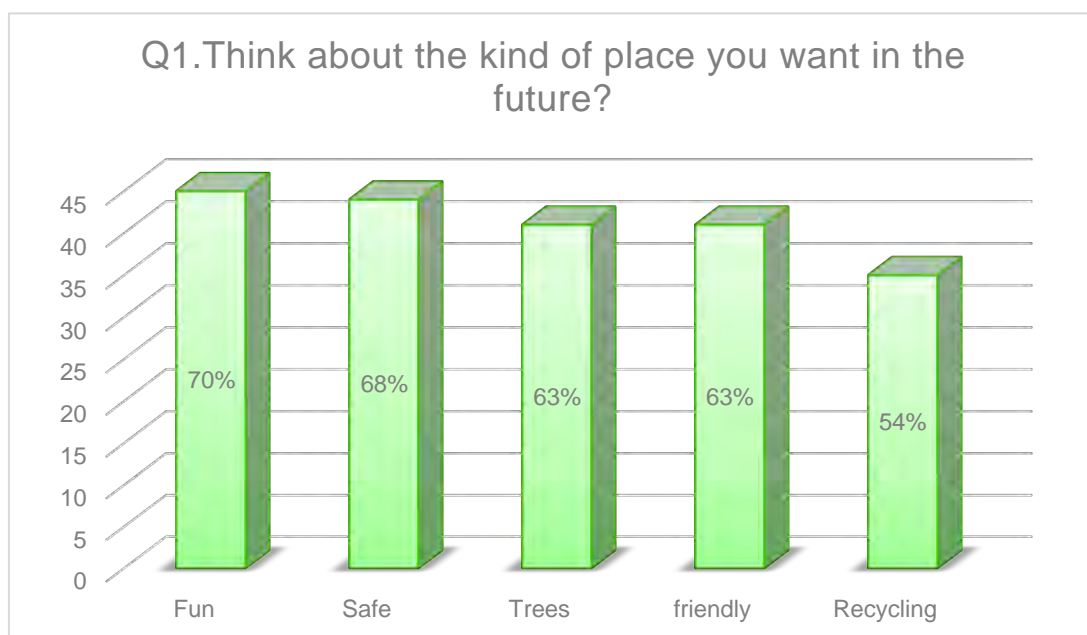


Question 3: Mirroring the older student responses, 91% of primary aged participants want a city that is efficient in its use of resources, again the message of environmental responsibility comes through strongly.

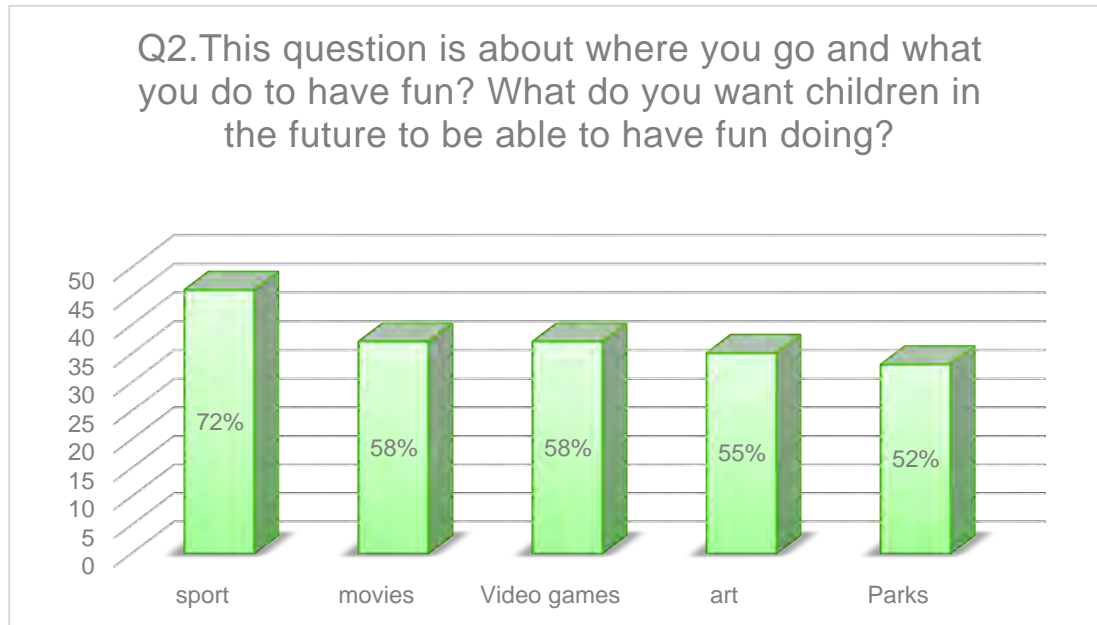


Primary School (Years K-3) Survey Results

Question 1: Our youngest survey participants hoped for a future that was fun and safe, with trees and an awareness of environmental sustainability.



Question 2: This question looked at the cultural activities of young students. The results show that despite access to sport presenting the highest percentage at 72% the changing engagement and importance of developing technology is reflected with video games being 58%.



Q.3. What excites you about the future? You can write or draw your answer...



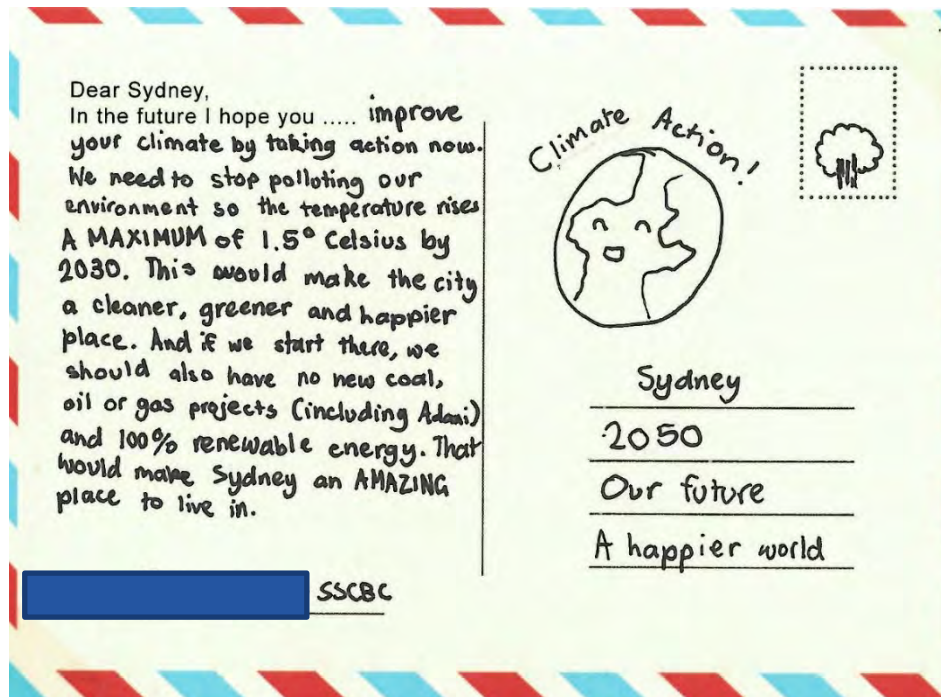
The writing here reads:

Underground cars

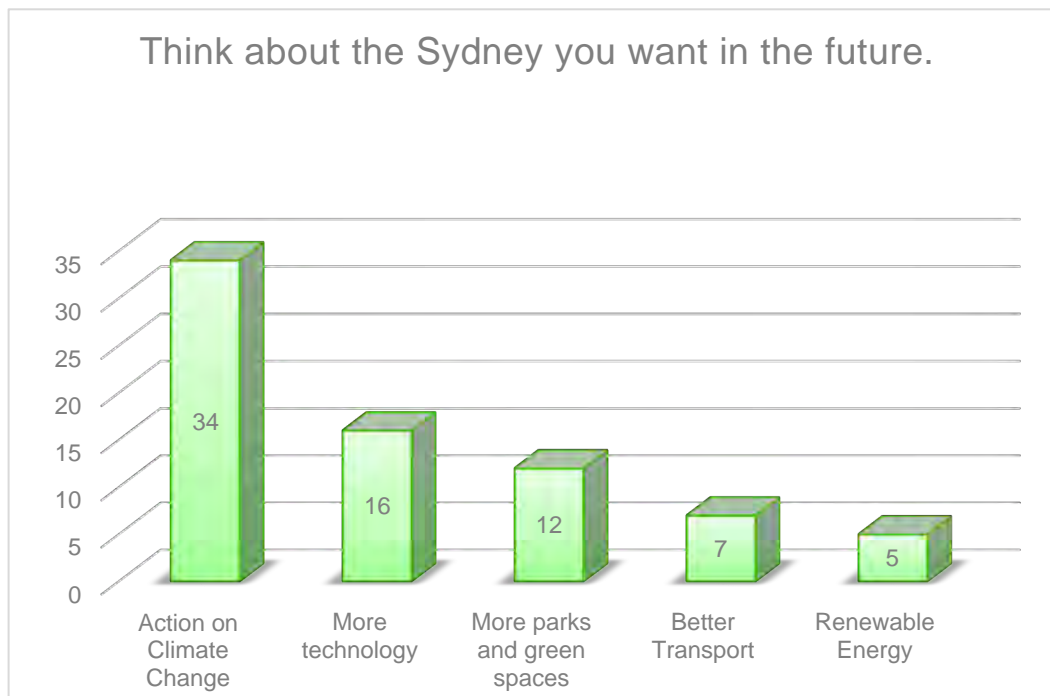
and green up top.

Postcards

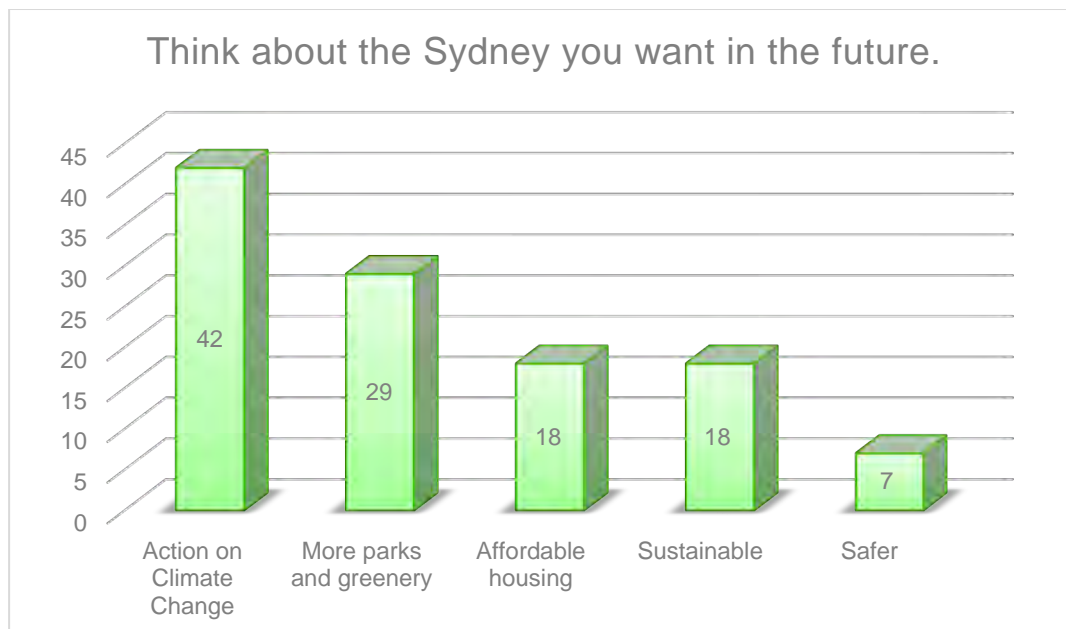
The desire for action on climate change, improved housing affordability, the importance of green spaces and good public transport were again echoed in the open field writing activities such as the postcard activity.



Postcard Summary: Top 5 Primary School Results



Postcard Summary: Top 5 High School Results



High School Future Scenario Cards

These cards gave students information about possible future scenarios as a provocation for discussion (rooftop farming / deliveries by drones / shared backyards etc.). Students then made a decision with a voting paddle: Yes Absolutely or No Way. They also recorded their answers on a sheet provided.

This activity prompted lively discussion across all schools. The student's responded passionately to all the issues, at times responding unanimously however often presenting valid arguments for both sides. In their arguments they took into consideration factors such as how viable the implementation of the project might be for the City (Shared Backyards) or whether it would be a good investment for the City (AI, Public "Urban Cool Rooms"). The students highlighted concepts they thought were symptomatic solutions rather than solutions addressing underlying problems.

We included the question:

Pick the issue you felt most strongly about and tell us why? Here are a selection of the responses:

Public "Urban Cool Rooms" may save energy in the short term however they dismiss the underlying problem of climate change.

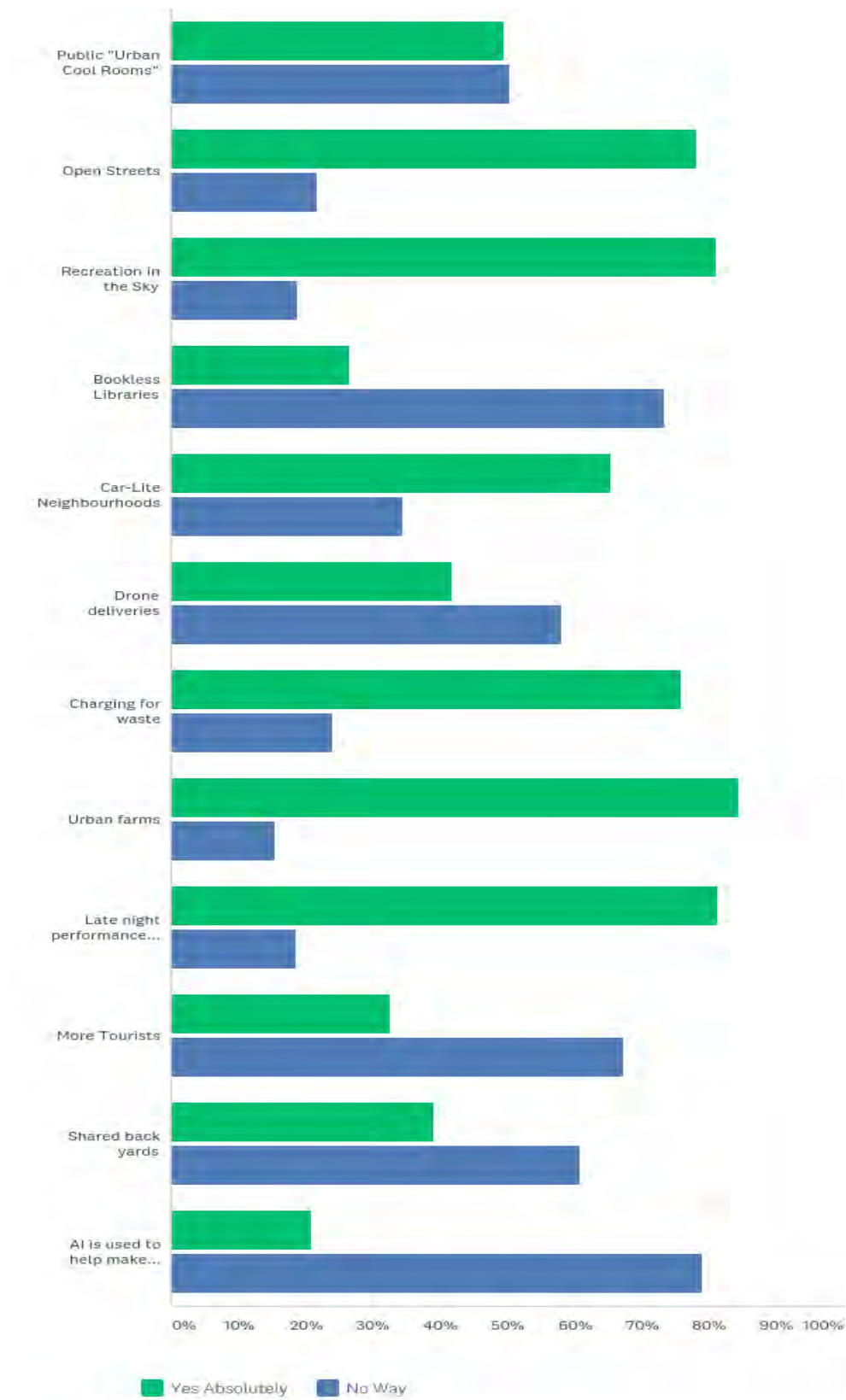
Open Streets are an exciting idea and sound like something lots of people would enjoy. The roads are congested and hazardous so if anytime the road can be clear of cars, sounds like a city that I'd visit regularly.

Car-lite neighbourhoods is something we should work towards as cars produce a lot of carbon emissions and waste.

The issue I feel most strongly about is urban farms. This is essential to making the most of limited urban space, for both recreation and resource production.



Overall responses to the Discussion cards activity



Why my voice is important

Across all age groups we asked the open-ended question of why adults should listen to children and young people. Their comments again mirror the seriousness with which they undertook the consultation experience as one which gave them a voice –a voice they felt needed to be listened to because adults are not doing enough to address the problems of our time.

Essentially this is my future, especially with global warming risks and being safe and secure. I don't even know if we're going to make it to 2050. I don't think I'll have the opportunity to have children. I expect the government to listen to climate strikes by children my age to even have a future. (Age 13)

The classroom conversations and survey results showed from the perspective of young people that the future of Sydney, and the world, is dictated by climate change and requires the urgent action children and young people are imploring adults to take on this issue. As the quote above illustrates climate change is not viewed by children and young people as an abstract future scenario that may impact our way of life but as a critical danger that must be immediately prioritised and addressed if the human race is to survive.

My cohort and I are the future and we want it to be positive for ourselves and the environment. If adults don't start listening to our advice now I am scared that by the time we are in power (government, voters etc.) we can't enact our desired change because their actions are irreversible.

"Surprisingly" teenagers have opinions on things that "matter". A lot of people my age understand the consequences of climate change, human impacts, urban development, if not better than the average adult. We are all informed and educated; we have a voice, but little opportunities to voice them.

I am a citizen of Sydney and it will be my future that will be impacted by the choices and decisions made by the current adults. We have a voice that is equally as powerful and as valid as any other adult, and we would appreciate it if you not only try to listen to our opinions but understand why our concerns are what they are.

Inclusivity is an essential aspect of any future planning however it is vital to incorporate the perspectives of young lives as they are the ones who will be most impacted by the future developments.

Adults should listen to me because the future Sydney will be the home where I raise my children and I want them to grow up in a place that's safe, clean and teaches them about art and culture.

Q.4. Adults should listen to me because...? You can write or draw your answer...

We have
right
we will
be the
leaders.

The text reads:

We have

right

we will be

leaders



Conclusion

Through this consultation children and young people were given an opportunity to voice their perspectives on the matters that they find important about the future – they are asking adults not only to listen but also understand their message.

Through the use of age appropriate surveys and by fostering discussions on topics that were meaningful to the future lives of these children and young people we were able to gather clear and important data to help guide our city towards a sustainable, safe and equitable Sydney 2050.

It should be noted that one hundred percent of the feedback from teachers confirmed they believed the activity was a worthwhile and educational experience for their students.

One teacher remarked:

‘Students felt that their voices were valued and that was a really lovely thing for them to know that they can make a difference.’

Participating children and young people have given us a message of environmental awareness and the need for urgent action, it is a tolerant message that speaks of the need for inclusivity, safety, fairness and social cohesion in a rapidly changing and uncertain world.

I will be living in Sydney for a long time and if adults don't listen we won't be prepared to cater for a rapidly changing society. It is so important to engage people who will be most affected when making plans for something, and this means young people for the future. Young people all have lots of creative ideas and ignoring this can be detrimental. I also don't get to vote yet which means I can't democratically express my views but I soon will and if adults don't take into account young people, they will face a backlash in the polls as these people turn 18.

(Age 16)

Appendix 1

Links to the National Curriculum

The resources utilised by our educators and community engagement specialists when working with students as part of our Planning for Sydney 2050 initiative, directly link to the National Curriculum and Syllabus set by Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and The NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA).

Civics and citizenship education builds students' knowledge and understanding of the ways in which citizens can actively participate in Australia's diverse and inclusive society. Students are encouraged to develop skills such as participating in discussions, working cooperatively with others, negotiating issues and developing the ability to make decisions. These are the skills that will allow students to effectively participate in society and become responsible, informed and active citizens. (NSW Department of Education, Learning across the curriculum).

Opportunities to apply knowledge from several key learning areas are presented throughout the consultation process, discussion and collection of data. These consultations allow the students to apply skills to real life scenarios. Outlined below are extracts from the syllabus rationale and examples of how they directly apply to the process of consultation.

Geography

The study of Geography enables students to become active, responsible and informed citizens able to evaluate the opinions of others and express their own ideas and arguments. This forms a basis for active participation in community life, a commitment to sustainability, the creation of a just society, and the promotion of intercultural understanding and lifelong learning. The skills and capabilities developed through geographical study can be applied to further education, work and everyday life... (Geography K-10 Syllabus, Rationale 2012)

The consultations enable students to review information about future planning and gives them the opportunity to express their own ideas and opinions as to how their future city should be shaped. By utilising interactive data maps, local maps, surveys and discussions, hands on skills from the geography syllabus are highlighted and applied.

Mathematics

The Mathematics curriculum makes clear the links between the various components of mathematics, as well as the relationship between mathematics and other disciplines. Students learn to apply their mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding in a broad range of contexts beyond the mathematics classroom... (Mathematics K-10 Syllabus, Rationale 2012)

The data maps we examine throughout the consultation present information in varying ways- heat maps, column graphs, ratios and probability. Understanding and reading these directly applies skills taught in mathematics

English

Through responding to and composing texts from Kindergarten to Year 10, students learn about the power, value and art of the English language for communication, knowledge and enjoyment. They engage with and explore texts that include widely acknowledged quality literature of past and contemporary societies and engage with the literature and literary heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. By composing and responding with imagination, feeling, logic and conviction, students develop understanding of themselves and of human experience and culture. They develop clear and precise skills in speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing, and

knowledge and understanding of language forms and features and structures of texts... (English K-10 Syllabus, Rationale 2012)

One of the materials we developed is a blank postcard. We encourage the students to “write a letter” to their future Sydney. Allowing the students to respond to the stimuli, composing responses with imagination, feeling, logic and conviction. By examining their place in the world and expressing it through written compositions, the students gain a greater understanding of the human experience within a city and helps them identify their own and their community’s cultural identity.

Economics

Economic decisions have a crucial influence on the quality of life experienced by people throughout the world. The study of economics can help individuals, groups and societies make choices that assist them to improve their quality of life. (Economics Stage 6 Syllabus, Rationale 2009)

For our more senior students our consultations allowed them to have a deeper understanding of how economic decisions made now will affect their lives in 2050 by presenting and examining our data maps, which outline resource use and future projected population growth in different parts of the Sydney area.

