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future is  
**collaboration**

# Resilient Sydney **Engagement Report 2024**



Front cover

Photo: Kogarah community workshop / Cassandra Hannagan

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## **RESILIENT SYDNEY**

A program for Greater Sydney in New South Wales in 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](http://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](http://www.resilientcitiesnetwork.org)

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Report written by the Resilient Sydney Strategy project team – Yvette Andrews, Christobel Ferguson, Rebecca Wood, Lyn Blundell and designed by ReCo Digital.

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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.



Photo: Julie Vulcan

# Introduction

Resilient Sydney is a program to build the capacity and capability of local government and other organisations in Sydney so the city is better placed to survive, adapt and thrive in the face of acute shock events and chronic stresses.

This compilation report provides the key findings from engagement activities to inform the Resilient Sydney strategy 2025–2030. The outcomes of engagement were incorporated throughout the strategy development process.

The engagement process supported the strategy development across 3 phases:

1. Building an evidence base including the shocks and stresses most likely to affect Greater Sydney
2. Testing the shocks and stresses and developing action areas
3. Refining strategy actions.



Resilient ambassadors gathering for the agenda setting workshop  
Photo: Jacquie Manning

# Engagement activities

## 1 Developing the evidence base

**32**

Councils participated in an agenda setting workshop

**3**

Regional resilience risk assessment workshops (outcomes reported in the risk assessment report)

**8**

Community workshops held across Sydney

**5**

Youth workshops and a survey (separate report)

**1,501**

Online survey responses

## 2 Testing shocks and stresses and developing action areas

- Deliberative community panel on responding to the increasing risk of natural hazards.
- First Nations engagement.
- Five multicultural roundtables.
- Volunteering workshop.
- Arts and cultural sector workshop.
- Public health workers workshop.
- Eighty-five Interviews with experts throughout the strategy development process, across academia/research, industry, business, government and community.

## 3 Refining strategy actions

### Resilient Sydney strategy summit

On 20 August 2024, 171 stakeholders attended the Resilient Sydney Summit, held in Granville. Participants included resilience ambassadors and other council officers along with representatives from state government, community partners and academia.

The purpose of the summit was to test the overall ambition and scope of the strategy, refine and test action areas, and reconnect and build collaborative networks. Outcomes from the summit were incorporated directly into the strategy actions.

## 4 Engagement with councils

Councils were important partners throughout the process. Resilience ambassadors and other staff members from Greater Sydney councils were engaged through 4 face-to-face workshops (in addition to the summit), quarterly briefings, and individual meetings and communication. They attended many of the community and stakeholder workshops.

## Engagement summary

Engagement activity summary	# of participants / attendees
Resilience ambassadors agenda setting workshop (stakeholders)	79
Resilient Sydney online survey (stakeholders)	92
Risk assessment workshops (stakeholders) *	98
Online survey (community)	1,501
6 community workshops (community)	282
2 apartment residents focus groups (community)	28
Deliberative community panel (community)	53
5 youth workshops (community) *	116
University student projects (UTS and Macquarie) *	25
5 multicultural roundtables (stakeholders)	80
2 Elders and young Kooris workshops (community)	30
Arts and culture workshop (stakeholders)	31
Volunteering workshop (stakeholders)	16
Resilient Sydney strategy summit (stakeholders) *	171
Public health workers (stakeholders)	15
Resilience ambassadors vision and mission workshop (stakeholders)*	60
Resilience ambassadors theory of change workshop (stakeholders)*	17
Resilience ambassadors dignity principles workshop (stakeholders)*	25
Interviews and meetings with stakeholders and experts (stakeholders)	100+

\*Not included in this report.



Theory of change workshop  
Photo: Resilient Sydney

### Notes

- A summary of the risk assessment workshops is available in the full risk assessment report.
- The outcomes of the youth workshops are reported in a stand-alone report.
- Macquarie University student project ideas were considered in the synthesis of ideas for different engagement sources. UTS students produced a report which is part of the stand-alone youth report.
- The outcomes of the vision and mission workshop were translated into the vision and mission in the strategy.
- The outcomes of the theory of change workshop were used to inform the revised theory of change which informs the monitoring and evaluation framework.
- The dignity principles workshop was used to develop dignity principles for local government and produce a supporting capabilities framework for the strategy.

## Engagement principles

The engagement approach was informed by the following principles.

### Integrity

**The project is clear in scope and purpose.**

The engagement program is integrated clearly into the city resilience framework.

There is a consistent narrative throughout engagement activities that aligns with the city resilience framework and improving disaster risk reduction and management.

The engagement will contribute to a greater understanding of city resilience and builds the capability of partners, stakeholders and community to respond to shocks and stresses in a more resilient way.

Consistent use of data collection tools across activities ensures that data collected from different groups can be compared and synthesised.

### Inclusive

**We capture a range of perspectives from different people.**

All engagement activities are inclusive.

There is participation from a diverse range of people representative of the communities across Greater Sydney through both broad engagement and targeted activities.

Vulnerable communities who have been impacted by Sydney's shocks and stresses are engaged.

There is participation from a diverse range of stakeholders who can contribute to strengthening systems in Sydney including government, business, community and research.

### Dialogue

**We make space for people to exchange views.**

The approach to workshops enables those participating to understand the purpose of the activities, express their views and ideas and to hear and respect the views of others.

The methodology for the deliberative workshops and stakeholder workshops in phase 2 promote a consensus outcome on the actions/issues considered.

The process builds relationships and a collective understanding between stakeholders to support the ongoing implementation of resilience initiatives.

### Influence

**People can see and understand the impact of their involvement.**

The outcomes of the engagement program is reported in a clear, impactful and robust way that will influence the final strategy.

Engagement reports are publicly available and shared with participants.

Council partners can see the insights from their communities and have confidence that the strategy represents the interests of their communities.

The outcomes of the engagement program have the ability to impact policy and programs which support greater resilience in Sydney.



Liverpool workshop. Photo: Cassandra Hannagan

# Agenda setting workshop and stakeholder survey

## ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

The agenda setting workshop was held on 6 September 2023 at Customs House. It was co-hosted with Natural Hazards Research Australia. The workshop launched the engagement process for the Resilient Sydney strategy 2025–2030.

The workshop was attended by 79 people from:

- 32 Greater Sydney councils
- NSW Reconstruction Authority
- Department of Planning and Environment
- Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils
- Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils.

Professor Gavin Smith of the North Carolina State University gave a keynote address.

Participants also completed an online perception of resilience survey. The survey was also shared with resilience ambassadors who were unable to attend the workshop. 92 responses were received.



Agenda setting workshop. Photo: Jacquie Manning

## KEY FINDINGS

Workshop participants identified the top shocks currently facing Greater Sydney as heat, cyber-attacks, extreme weather and the impact of multiple and cascading events.

Survey results identified extreme heat, flooding and bushfires as the top shocks to affect Greater Sydney in the future.

Top stresses for Sydney included cost of living, housing affordability, impacts from poorly planned development, stress on health services, mental health, climate change and growing inequity.

Resilience achievements for local councils included:

- the ability of councils to respond, recover and adapt
- better resilience planning across the local government sector
- collaboration across councils
- increased community engagement
- greater community awareness of resilience.



Agenda setting workshop  
Photo: Jacquie Manning

The workshop identified the following areas as important to increasing city resilience in the future:

- 1** Increase knowledge sharing, for example, case studies, support and collaboration.

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- 2** Continue to build community knowledge, improve communication and strengthen community engagement. Communities working with councils.

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- 3** Evidence-based, climate-responsive planning and decision-making.

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- 4** Look at infrastructure and assets through the lens of resilience and climate risks.

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- 5** Better resourcing for resilience, recognising the need for collaboration between councils and other levels of government.

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- 6** Continue to build the profile and capacity of local government to support city resilience.

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- 7** Address mental health, wellbeing, social cohesion and inclusion.

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- 8** Council business continuity planning.

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# Community workshops

## ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

In November and December 2023, Cred Consulting with Resilient Sydney conducted 6 one-day community workshops with 282 residents of Greater Sydney. The workshops explored the experiences of residents across Sydney of shocks and stresses and their views on resilience. Taverner Research recruited 50 participants representing a demographic sample for each of the workshops in:

- eastern Sydney (held in Sydney CBD)
- central western Sydney (held in Parramatta)
- southern Sydney (held in Kogarah)
- south western Sydney (held in Liverpool)
- northern Sydney (held in Chatswood)
- north western Sydney (held in Penrith).

A combined set of findings for the workshops is provided in this report. Detailed outcomes from each of the workshops are available from the Resilient Sydney Office.

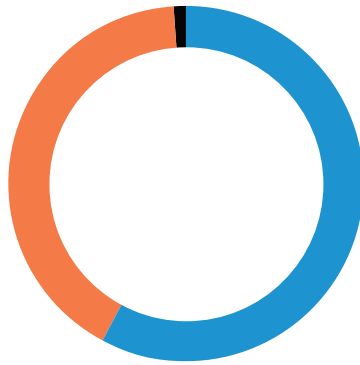


Penrith workshop. Photo: Jacque Manning

## Demographic profile of community workshops participants

### Gender

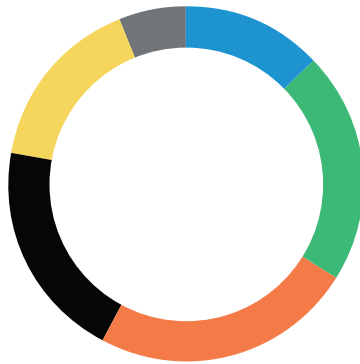
- Female (58%)
- Male (41%)
- Non-binary (1%)



**41%**  
Were born overseas

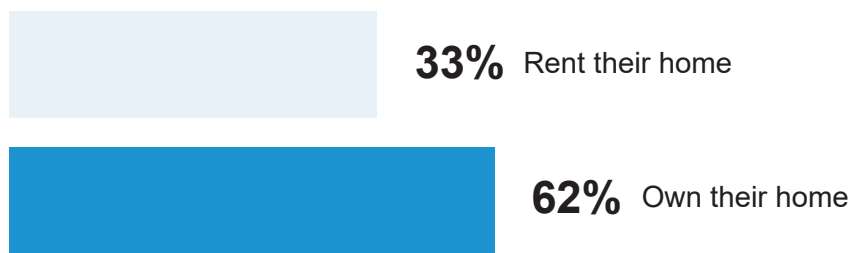
### Age

- 18-29 years (13%)
- 30-39 years (21%)
- 40-49 years (24%)
- 50-59 years (20%)
- 60-69 years (16%)
- 70+ years (6%)

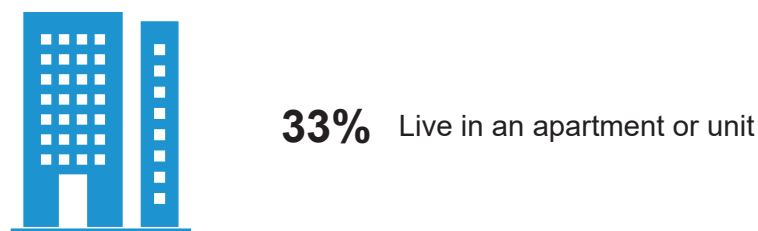


**56%**  
Speak only English

**44%**  
Speak a language other than English

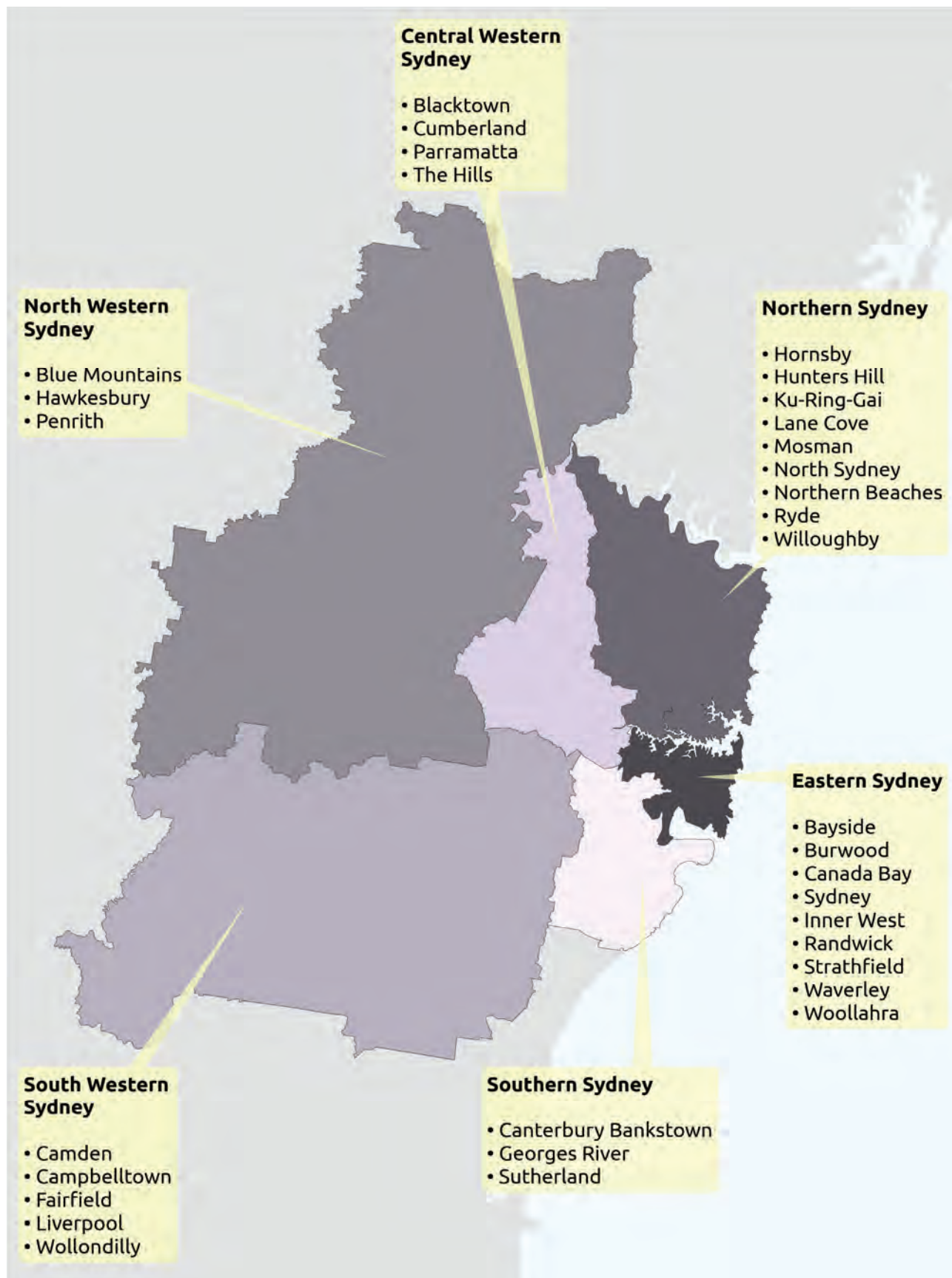


**13%**  
Identified themselves as having a disability



**9%**  
Are LGBTQIA+

## Workshop locations



Source: City of Sydney

## KEY FINDINGS

### 1 **Fatigue and uncertainty are depleting personal resilience**

People in Sydney now have a deeper understanding of how shocks, including a pandemic and a series of natural disasters, can disrupt the city and their lives.

Participants described their personal resilience as running low. They expressed concern that it is being depleted by consecutive and compounding shocks and stresses.

Participants spoke about feelings of uncertainty and helplessness when referring to their experiences of shock events. These are made more difficult by not knowing what is happening, what to do and when it will end.

People expressed concern about how physical and emotional fatigue will affect their ability to respond to future shocks. Shocks were described as becoming ongoing stresses in their lives.

“I’ve had a rough 24 months. I lost my dad and my sister was diagnosed with cancer. We had to deal with the medical system during the time of lockdowns. It made it really difficult.”

“The skies were red and it felt like it wasn’t going to end.”



Kogarah workshop  
Photo: Cassandra Hannagan



Sydney CBD workshop  
Photo: Jacquie Manning

### 2 **People are feeling a lack of control in an uncaring system**

There was a clear theme about a lack of care for people from decision-makers and service providers. People said they do not have control or influence over decisions that affect their lives.

Participants were concerned that government decisions do not align with community values and needs. They raised difficulties navigating critical services, particularly in times of crisis.

They spoke about a disconnection between services and how people feel. They felt there is no appreciation of their personal circumstances.

Participants said they felt that governments did not genuinely take on board their feedback.

“Lack of control. Not knowing when it will end, concerns about harm to animals and nature.”



Parramatta workshop  
Photo: Jacquie Manning

### 3 Consecutive shocks and increasing stresses are affecting wellbeing and mental health

Participants said health conditions were exacerbated during and after shock events requiring ongoing treatment that is not always available. People spoke about declining levels of mental health resulting from ongoing shocks and stresses. They described:

- the stress of living in a state of fear and uncertainty about the future
- a sense of exhaustion and not being able to cope with another shock
- a sense of loss and grief especially when separated from loved ones
- a sense of loss and sadness associated with witnessing devastation to the natural environment and native animals, and the fear that this will happen again.

“We need to deal with it in a more fair and equitable manner. Mental health issues are really important and penalising people for where they live is not okay.”

“Another type of pandemic and massive lockdowns like Melbourne had would affect mental health safety of my partner and I.”

### 4 Social connections are critical to resilience

Participants identified a sense of community as a key strength. People agreed that there needs to be a stronger focus on building social connections to improve community resilience.

People who had experienced natural disasters were clear that the community being able to work together was the most important component to recovery. This included support from local shops, pharmacies, GPs and schools, as well as charities and local community and volunteer groups including the State Emergency Service (SES) and Rural Fire Service (RFS).

There was a desire among people to connect to other people and make a meaningful contribution to the future of their communities. People said that being involved in local solutions strengthens resilience.

“Very caring and supportive community. If someone is in need, the community will donate and raise funds to help. They helped me pay for my mum’s funeral.”

“Campbelltown is a multicultural community with a strong sense of identity and helping spirit.”

“People don’t know each other and it’s hard to find help in times of need.”

“Caring and compassionate neighbours who were willing to help their neighbours.”

## 5 The strength of social connectedness varies across Sydney and within communities

Participants had mixed opinions on social connectedness in their area. Many felt their community comes together during shock events. Others indicated that they do not have a relationship with their neighbours and do not feel supported in their community.

Participants raised concerns about the impact of racism and discrimination on their lives. Some spoke about being socially or physically isolated and experiencing feelings of loneliness. Participants identified:

- living in apartments makes it more difficult to meet and connect with neighbours
- financial pressures mean people work and commute longer hours, reducing the opportunities to build local connections
- local interest groups and events, including those organised by councils, provided important opportunities for people to connect.

“I only knew one family in our block.”

“I went to a nearby house, introduced myself and asked if I can charge my phone because my car was broken down. The response was ‘no’ as if I was a terrorist. That scared me.”

“Crowded living conditions and lack of social interaction with friends created stress.”

“People don’t know each other and it’s hard to find help in times of need.”

“Will we pull together and support each other, or fight for the toilet paper?”

## 6 Cost-of-living pressures are undermining resilience in Sydney

People are very concerned about cost-of-living and financial pressures and are struggling with daily expenses. They are concerned about how this impacts their ability to cope with future shocks. They said:

- the cumulative stress of financial pressures is impacting other aspects of their lives, including mental health and the ability to care for each other
- they are worried they do not have the finances or capacity to cope with future shock events
- costs associated with repairing homes and increases in insurance premiums adds to financial pressures
- they feel they are being pushed out of Sydney by the high cost of living, housing crisis and impact of frequent shock events on their ability to earn a living
- financial assistance from the government helps with getting through shocks and recovery.

“The cost of living is so high I can’t even think about my future I’m just living day to day.”

“Cost of living and housing unaffordability are clouding out the big problems like climate change.”

“I am most concerned about my family and then my ability to service my mortgage because my job may not survive another shock.”

“It’s really difficult for families with low to medium incomes to survive.”

“I’m afraid I’ll be homeless next year.”

7

## Lack of affordable and quality housing is a major problem across Greater Sydney

Unaffordable and poor-quality housing is an overwhelming concern across Sydney. There was a strong desire for new housing to be designed to respond to climate change. Participants' concerns included:

- housing that does not cater for climate challenges such as heatwaves and torrential rain
- not realising their home was poor quality until they experienced a shock event
- tenants being unable to prepare for events such as heatwaves or to get damage repaired
- poor housing that exacerbates health conditions because of mould, dampness and difficulties heating or cooling homes
- increasing apartment living means people have limited access to open spaces, leading to family tensions and social isolation.
- participants identified the need for a stronger focus on providing cool, green and sustainable places of respite to improve resilience and wellbeing.

“Leaking roof because of continuous rain – mould growing in ceiling and clothes because of dampness.”

“My unit gets super hot without air conditioning.”

“We were so close to being homeless with a baby.”

8

## People want Sydney to be better prepared for emergencies

Some participants said they are personally prepared for emergency events. However, there was concern that Sydney – its government agencies, communities and individuals – is not properly prepared for future shocks. Participants said:

- state and local governments play an important role in emergency preparedness, including hazard reduction burning, urban greening, and maintaining trees and stormwater systems, but more needs to be done to be prepared
- seeing government actions to reduce risks helps build confidence in the community
- government agencies need to listen to impacted communities and learn from previous events
- information from local councils, the SES, RFS, charities and employers is helpful
- road access and public transport reliability during emergencies must be improved
- education on how to be prepared for shocks can help reduce the impacts.

Participants said there is confusion around the roles of different levels of government and agencies. This includes about who takes charge during emergencies and who is the best contact point for assistance and information. People spoke about:

- the increased risks for some people such as older people, people with disability and those who do not speak English
- their concern for pets including protecting them in storms and heatwaves and if they were expected to evacuate.

“Do we have a Plan B to get through the shock? Or are we going to feel overwhelmed, lost and not sure what to do to get through?”

“How ready is the government and community to deal with and control the shock.”



Chatswood workshop  
Photo: Jacquie Manning

9

### **Clear and accessible communication during and after an event is essential**

Participants expressed the importance of effective communication during a shock event, saying:

- there is a lack of timely, clear and reliable communication during shock events
- they want real-time updates during emergencies
- emergency information should be in different languages
- connections with family and friends are critical for people's wellbeing during shock events
- new channels such as social media are increasingly important
- tension is created when individuals do not comply with government directions or spread misinformation during crisis events
- information is provided during an event, but this drops off during recovery and people feel abandoned
- financial assistance from the government helps with getting through shocks and recovery.

“Conflicting messages from the government, always changing direction.”

10

### **People are concerned that transport and health services can be easily overwhelmed and often unreliable**

Public transport was seen as unreliable and prone to disruption, leaving people stranded. Alternative public transport options are expensive, slow and, in some areas, not available at all.

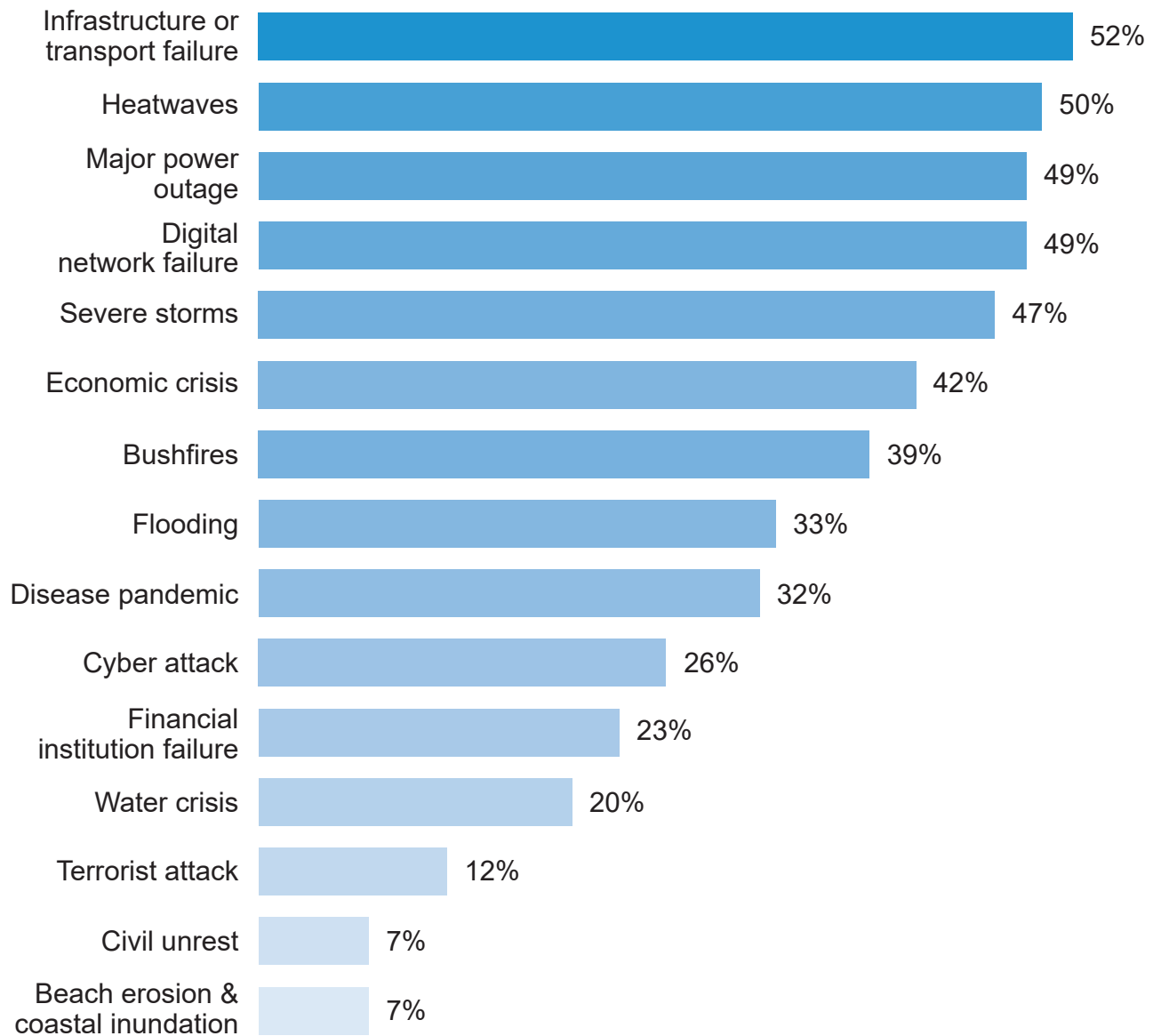
The inability to access public transport makes existing stresses worse, particularly job insecurity, earning income, cost of living and accessing important services. Participants expressed concern about health services being overwhelmed and expensive, with long wait times. This results in people not being able to get the treatment they need or being pushed into the private system where there is a larger financial impact.

“Unreliable transport means it was hard to plan my day and caused stress as I couldn't know when I could get around.”

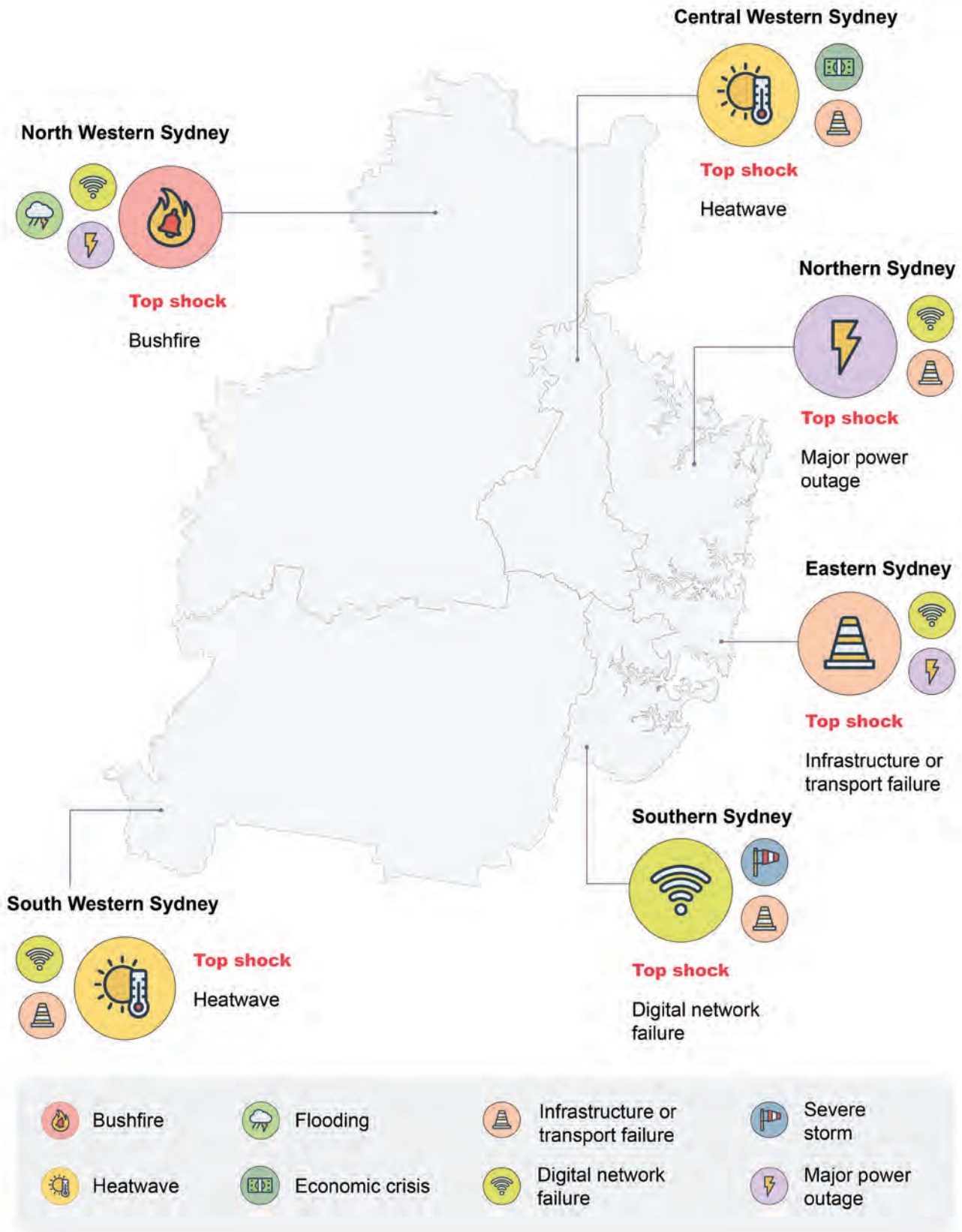
“When it rains in Sydney the trains suddenly are all delayed or cancelled. This causes major delays resulting in very long journey before reaching your destination.”

## Priority shocks

The workshops explored what shocks people were most concerned would affect Sydney. The priority shocks across Greater Sydney in order of concern are outlined below.

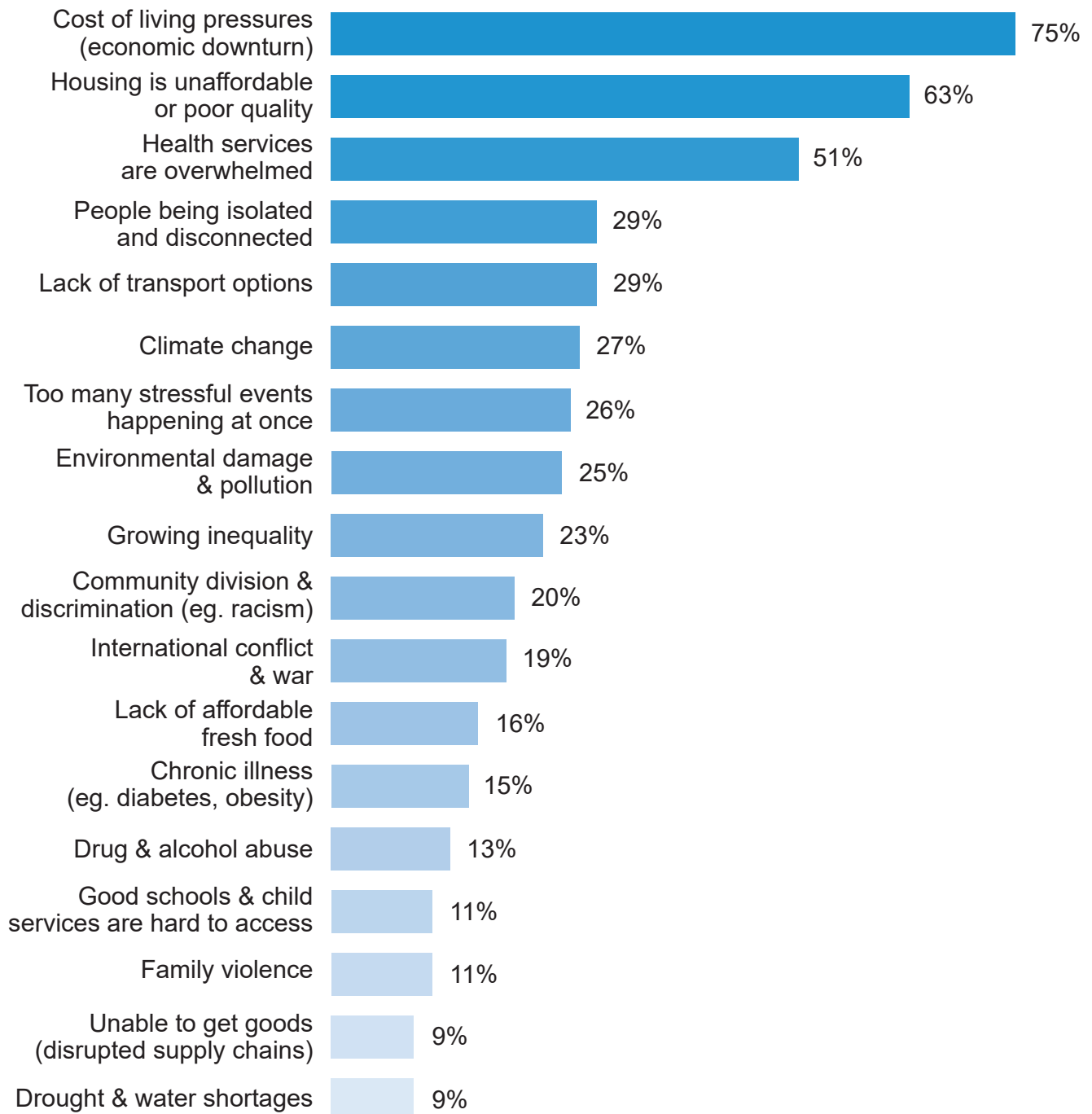


## Different shocks affect different parts of Greater Sydney



## Stresses

The workshops explored what ongoing stresses people were most concerned about. The priority stresses in Greater Sydney in order of concern are outlined below.



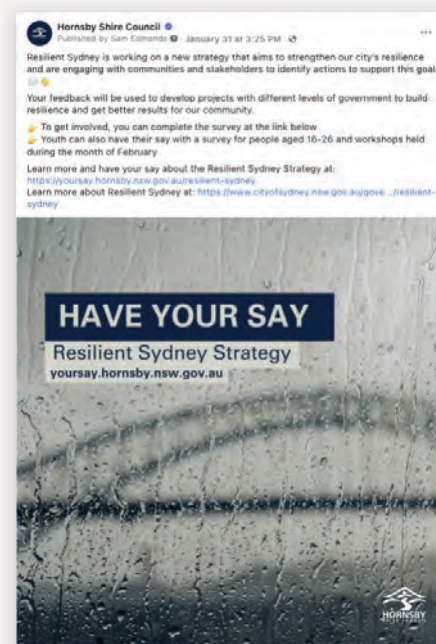
# Online survey

## ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

An online survey was conducted from October 2023 until March 2024. Councils promoted the survey via social media, e-newsletters, and 'Have your say' webpages. In total, 1,501 complete surveys were received with responses from all 33 local councils in Greater Sydney.

### Sample size (respondents)

Greater Sydney 1,501 Northern 483  
 Eastern 525 Southern 137  
 Central western 155 North western 66  
 South western 125



Hornsby Shire Council Facebook

## KEY FINDINGS

### Top shocks experienced in Sydney in the last 5 years

The survey asked respondents what shocks they and their community had experienced in the last 5 years.

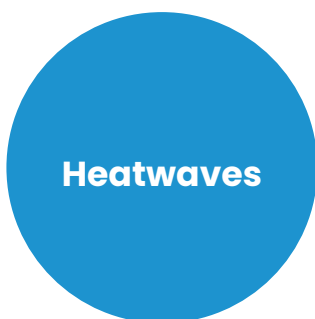
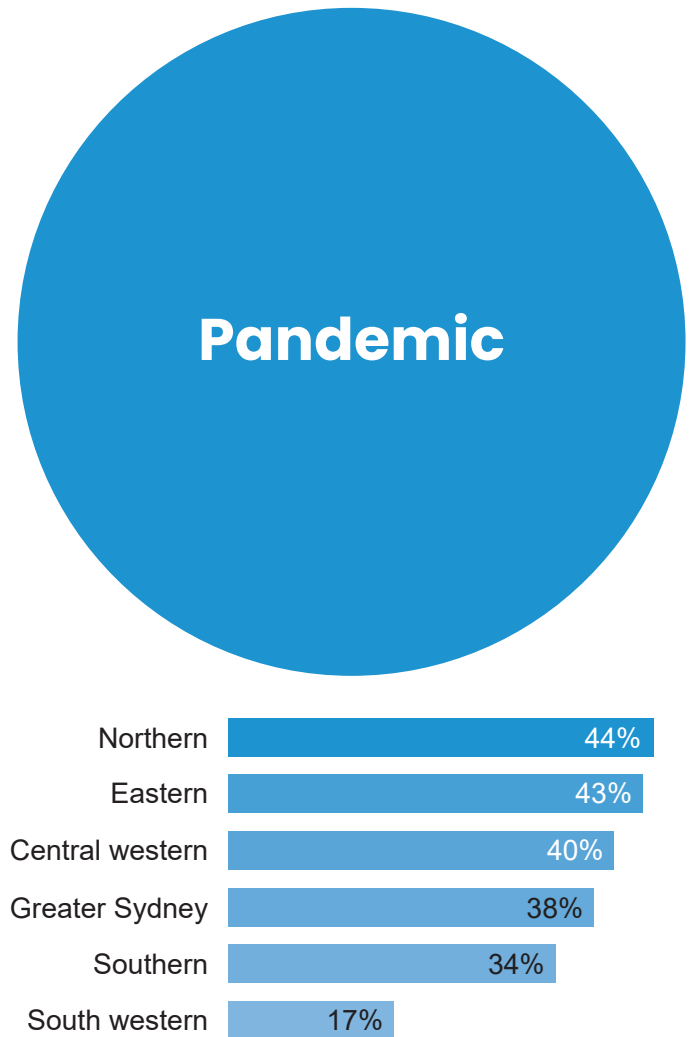
	Greater Sydney	Northern	Eastern	Southern	Central western	North western	South western
1	Disease pandemic 72%	Disease pandemic 75%	Disease pandemic 73%	Disease pandemic 73%	Heatwaves 79%	Bushfires 82%	Flooding 75%
2	Heatwaves 62%	Severe storms 63%	Heatwaves 60%	Heatwaves 69%	Disease pandemic 68%	Heatwaves 73%	Disease pandemic 66%
3	Severe storms 58%	Heatwaves 53%	Severe storms 49%	Severe storms 69%	Severe storms 56%	Flooding / Severe storms 67%	Heatwaves 66%

## Shock that most affected people

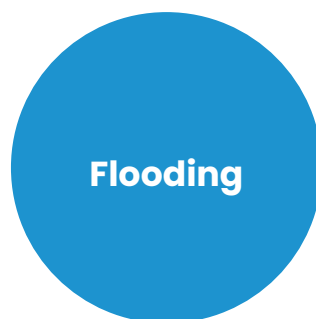
The survey asked respondents to indicate which shock event most affected them.

The pandemic had the most impact overall, with survey respondents saying they were moderately to severely impacted. In north western and south western Sydney, respondents said flooding was the most impactful shock.

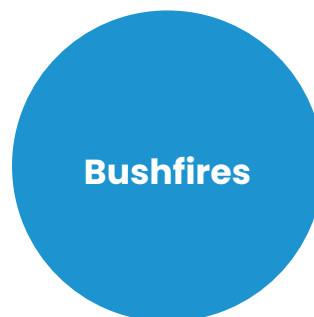
The percentage of respondents who identified that shock as most impactful is represented below against the 6 regions of Greater Sydney.



Central western 25%



North western 35%  
South western 23%



South western 17%



South western 13%

## Shocks of most concern for the future for Greater Sydney

	Greater Sydney	Northern	Eastern	Southern	Central western	North western	South western
1	Heatwaves 72%	Heatwaves 67%	Heatwaves 73%	Heatwaves 75%	Heatwaves 77%	Heatwaves 74%	Heatwaves 72%
2	Severe storms 63%	Severe storms 66%	Severe storms 61%	Severe storms 69%	Severe storms 61%	Bushfires 67%	Flooding 62%
3	Bushfires 52%	Bushfires 59%	Infrastructure failure e.g. transport 46%	Bushfires 62%	Flooding 54%	Severe storms 62%	Bushfires 60%
4	Flooding 49%	Flooding 50%	Economic crisis 44%	Flooding 53%	Bushfires 53%	Flooding 62%	Severe storms 58%
5	Infrastructure failure e.g. transport 46%	Major power outage 45%	Flooding 41%	Beach erosion and coastal inundation 47%	Infrastructure failure e.g. transport 50%	Infrastructure failure e.g. transport 48%	Economic crisis 54%
6	Economic crisis 42%	Infrastructure failure e.g. transport 43%	Bushfires 38%	Major power outage 44%	Economic crisis 45%	Digital network failure 45%	Infrastructure failure e.g. transport 54%
7	Major power outage 40%	Beach erosion and coastal inundation 41%	Major power outage 38%	Infrastructure failure e.g. transport 43%	Digital network failure 41%	Economic crisis 42%	Digital network failure 43%
8	Digital network failure 37%	Economic crisis 37%	Cyber-attack 35%	Digital network failure 41%	Cyber-attack 39%	Major power outage 39%	Cyber-attack 35%
9	Cyber-attack 36%	Cyber-attack 36%	Digital network failure 34%	Economic crisis 39%	Major power outage 39%	Water crisis 36%	Major power outage 33%
10	Beach erosion and coastal inundation 35%	Digital network failure 36%	Beach erosion and coastal inundation 34%	Cyber-attack 39%	Water crisis 32%	Cyber-attack 32%	Water crisis 30%

## Stresses of most concern for Greater Sydney

	Greater Sydney	Northern	Eastern	Southern	Central western	North western	South western
1	Housing 83%	Housing 81%	Housing 85%	Housing 87%	Housing 80%	Housing 92%	Housing 84%
2	Cost of living 73%	Cost of living 73%	Cost of living 72%	Cost of living 78%	Cost of living 72%	Health services 80%	Cost of living 78%
3	Health services 69%	Health services 67%	Health services 64%	Health services 77%	Health services 72%	Cost of living 77%	Health services 74%
4	Climate change 59%	Climate change 60%	Climate change 62%	Climate change 56%	Climate change 57%	Climate change 58%	Lack of transport options 47%
5	Growing inequity 52%	Growing inequity 51%	Growing inequity 58%	Growing inequity 52%	Growing inequity 48%	Lack of transport options 47%	Climate change 46%
6	Environmental damage 49%	Environmental damage 49%	Environmental damage 52%	Environmental damage 50%	Environmental damage 48%	Environmental damage 45%	Lack of affordable fresh food 44%
7	Social isolation 43%	Social isolation 37%	Social isolation 48%	Social isolation 46%	Lack of transport options 40%	Social isolation 45%	Growing inequity 42%
8	Lack of transport options 36%	Lack of transport options 37%	Too many stressful events 35%	Lack of transport options 44%	Social isolation 39%	Drought and water shortages 45%	Environmental damage 39%
9	Too many stressful events 35%	Drought and water shortages 36%	Community division 33%	Too many stressful events 39%	Too many stressful events 39%	Growing inequity 44%	Isolation 38%
10	Drought and water shortages 35%	Too many stressful events 33%	Drought and water shortages 31%	Drought and water shortages 39%	Drought and water shortages 37%	Family violence 39%	Schools & childcare 38%

## City resilience

The survey asked how Greater Sydney performed on measures of resilience. The results for all 22 indicators are listed on the following page. Of the respondents:



### Housing

**91%**

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



### Distribution of wealth

**84%**

felt there was unequal distribution of wealth in Sydney



### Transport

**59%**

of those who live in south western and north western Sydney said it was not easy to move around Sydney by public transport and walking



### Social connections

**36%**

agreed that Sydney is a welcoming place where people are connected



### Preparedness

**26%**

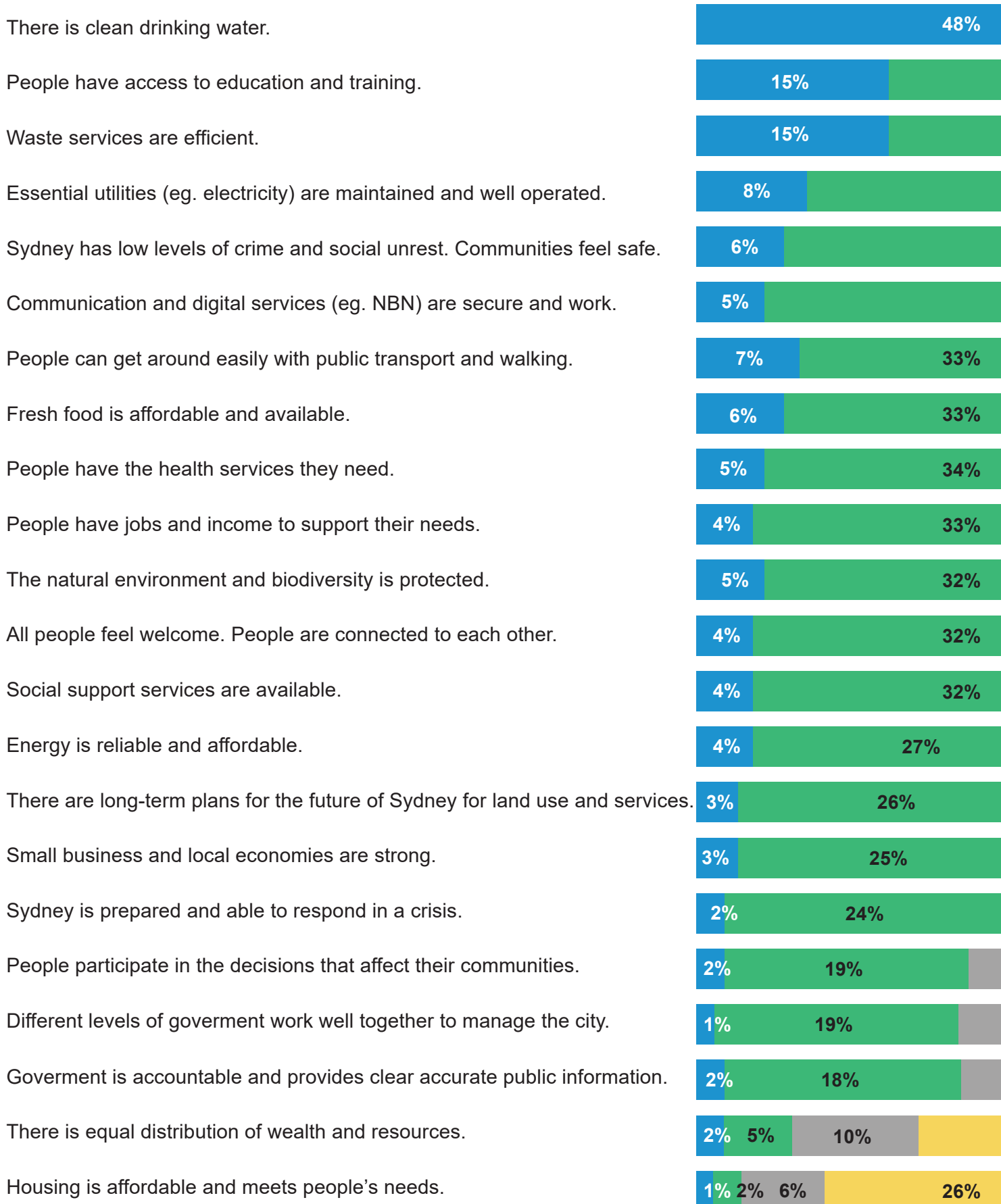
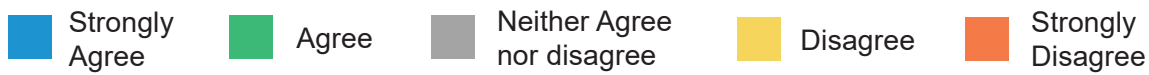
felt that Sydney is prepared for a crisis

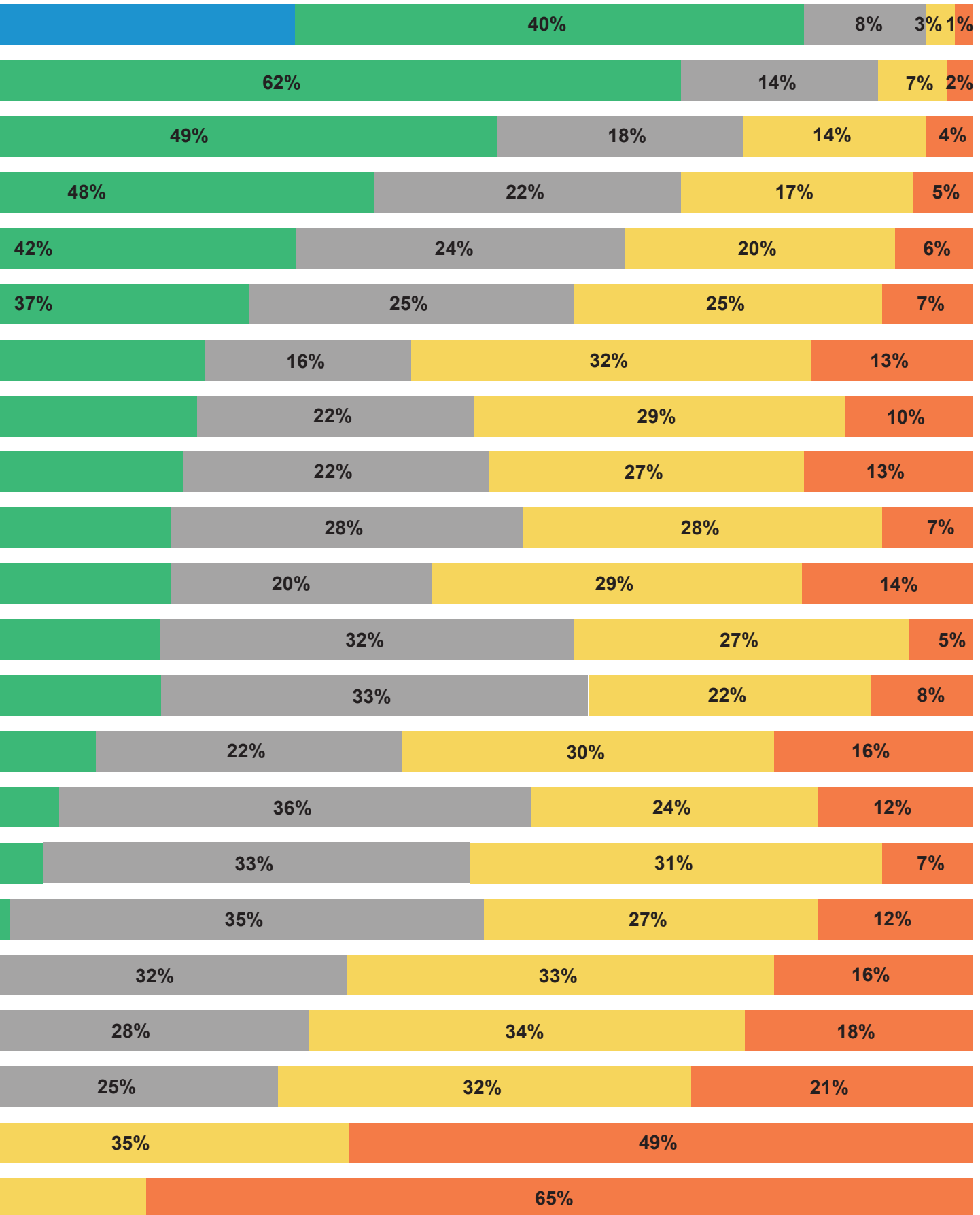


### Governance

**20%**

felt all levels of government work well together to manage the needs of Greater Sydney





# Apartment residents online focus groups

## ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

Resilient Sydney with Cred Consulting conducted 2 online focus groups in March 2024 with 28 residents of Greater Sydney who live in apartments. These participants had been to one of the community resilience workshops and were familiar with the content. One focus group involved renters. The other involved apartment owners. Priority was given to people living in large apartment buildings with more than 6 storeys.

The focus groups explored the unique experiences of residents living in apartment buildings in terms of emergency preparedness and social connections. These issues had been raised in the community workshops.

**“I don’t have confidence that apartments will be built to a high standard – instead they will be the bare minimum.”**



Photo: Katherine Griffiths / City of Sydney

## KEY FINDINGS

There were significant demographic differences between the cohort of renters versus the cohort of owners who participated in the focus groups. Of the participants who were renters:

- 31% were people with disability, compared with 13% of owners
- 60% were born overseas, compared with 20% of owners
- 54% spoke a language other than English, compared with 40% of owners.

Owners and renters share concerns about ineffective communication, low emergency preparedness and lack of social connections.

Common areas of concern to both owners and renters were:

- a lack of basic knowledge about emergency procedures for the building
- no emergency preparedness programs or training
- ineffective and ad hoc communication channels within the building
- little social connections with neighbours.

Many participants said that fire alarms go off regularly and residents now ignore them.

Participants expressed a need for programs and spaces in apartment buildings and surrounding neighbourhoods to improve resilience and connect people living in apartments.

“My carpet has black mould. It’s up to individual owners to make changes but if an owner doesn’t, it’s an issue.”

“If you’re on an embedded network you don’t have a choice to switch providers.”

“You only own the space between the walls so you can’t do anything. You can’t add solar, so all you can do is use efficient appliances in your home, but that doesn’t get you very far.”

“There is a lot of bureaucracy to change anything. Owners might be prepared to spend the money, but strata charges fees on top.”

“We’ve had so many false alarms, that not everyone evacuates.”

“Strata committees are too political and undertake projects for self interest only.”

“No one taking initiative to make changes to the building to deal with climate change.”

“Most buildings don’t have shared space. This makes it hard to run events.”

There was a preference for precinct-level spaces and programs to meet and socialise, particularly from renters.

Owners and renters face different challenges in improving the sustainability and climate resilience of their homes.

Renters had little ability to improve their homes or even get basic maintenance needs attended to. They spoke about being limited to changes landlords were willing to permit or pay for and by existing systems such as all-of-building agreements with energy companies. Extreme heat and flooding affected several of the participants in the renters workshop. Small changes, such as installing LED globes or window treatments to reduce heat, were difficult.

Owners referred to being limited by strata regulations when making changes to their own apartments. Poor strata management or reduced financial capacity of other owners made improving the sustainability and climate resilience of the building difficult.

# Deliberative panel on natural hazards risk

## ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

Resilient Sydney with Cred Consulting convened a deliberative community panel of 50 people randomly selected from across Greater Sydney. These people had all participated in one of the community workshops. They came from all parts of Greater Sydney.

Participants were posed with the question: What is the role of the community in responding to increasing risks of natural hazards?

The panel met twice in June 2024. On day 1, they interviewed 15 experts on different aspects of resilience and natural hazard risks\*. On day 2, they discussed and voted on recommendations. They identified 8 key roles the community should play in responding to the growing risks of natural disasters. Each of these recommendations received majority support from the group.

The recommendations from the panel are summarised below. The detailed recommendations including voting and dissenting comments along with an outline of the methodology are available in a comprehensive report on the process.

\*The list of experts who participated in the workshop is in the appendix.



Deliberative workshop. Photo: Cassandra Hannagan

# EIGHT ROLES THE COMMUNITY SHOULD PLAY IN RESPONDING TO THE INCREASING RISKS OF NATURAL HAZARDS

Recommended by the community panel

## 1 Be personally prepared for natural disasters

This means being proactive and having a plan in place. Community groups and leaders foster connections and encourage emergency preparedness. This reduces community vulnerability to disasters as communities are less reliant on external help in a disaster.

“We need to make people aware and be responsible with their duties in the community in terms of safety; safety for themselves, safety for the community.”

**Emeliana, Chester Hill**

Communities need:

- accessible information through a variety of channels
- targeted support for those who are more at risk in a disaster



Photo: Cassandra Hannagan

- resources such as personal protective equipment
- clear evacuation routes
- accurate emergency contact information

Government need to:

- listen to community experiences and needs
- provide appropriate communication materials and policies and resources
- collectively, we need to overcome community apathy.

“There’s no excuses. We need to be prepared. We need to have a plan.”

**Bruce, Baulkham Hills**

## 2 Understand and plan for increasing risks in your area including learning from experiences elsewhere

This means support everyone in the community to understand risks and be more prepared.

The community needs:

- access to data, including localised information on the risk of fire, floods and heatwaves.
- lessons from previous disasters to be shared with them.

“Community participation just yields so much great information.”

**Alison, Hawkesbury**

The community panel suggests:

- undertaking community engagement to develop local resilience action plans that will help us plan for emergencies and consider people who are most vulnerable in an emergency
- establishing local community resilience hubs and using emergency apps.

There will be challenges getting agreement on preparedness measures such as bushfire clearances and decisions about future housing. Communities will need to develop a greater appreciation of their responsibility to plan for disasters.

## 3 Build community connections and support each other, including vulnerable community members

This means thinking and acting as a community, working together and supporting each other. People need to regularly check in on vulnerable community members. Community centres, contact lists and buddy systems between younger and older people could be used to build connections.

“I thought this was a wonderful opportunity to be a valuable part of the community. To give back, have my say, make a difference.”

**Syeda, Blacktown**

We need to combine our community resources in times of need, for example, food, air conditioning, transport, and support

for wellbeing. We need to build our connections in safe times through regular community events that bring different groups together and build common interests and understanding.

4

**Take part in decisions about reducing the impacts of disasters and hold government to account**

This means local issues and experiences guide decision-making. The community is clear on their roles and responsibilities. Government is held accountable for mitigating disasters in the local area.

“I came to today’s session to really learn about what resilience is about and to offer my input on how we can build better resilience in our infrastructure.”

**Ivan, Rhodes**

We can reduce consequences when the community:

- understands risk
- understands how to measure outcomes and progress

- is involved in zoning and planning decisions in their local area.

We need to design better engagement between the government and community including identifying the experts and including everyone. Experts at community meetings could help better inform the community about planning, risk mitigation and support services.

“To have some input, have your say, have your opinion. Because if you’re not heard, then you’re not participating in democracy.”

**Megan, Penrith**

5

**Take part in decisions about responding to disasters when they happen and hold government to account**

This means government and community work together towards solutions and goals. We learn from lived experience, support each other and better plan for future disasters. This will strengthen resilience through coordinated decisions and allocating resources where they are needed. Communities will be able

to influence government to minimise impacts and play a role in approving mitigation practices with an understanding of the options.

Governments need:

- to setup ways to engage communities quickly and effectively that consider different opinions and values and reached agreement on important decisions
- to remember that high emotions during disasters can affect decisions
- adequately fund programs to build community resilience and support community participation
- ensure ongoing aftercare following disasters.

“I would like to see more transparency from the government in what they are doing in gathering information and also how they are responding to the information they receive.”

**Jai, Inner West**



Photo: Cassandra Hannagan

6

**Help all groups in the community have their voices heard, including vulnerable community members**

This pulls us together and builds community empowerment by facilitating two-way communications. It involves listening to different groups and building their ability to contribute and be heard. This will reduce vulnerability by increasing social cohesion and inclusion.

“Governments need to listen more to regular people and the true voice of the community.”

**Alexandra, Inner City**

Communities need accessible communications. Communication should be in different languages including Auslan. It should be provided multiple times, in multiple ways, including through:

- radio
- community centres
- signage
- schools
- emails
- mobile phone messages
- apps and social media.

“This is what resilience is for me. How we work well together, to live well together.”

**Jai,  
Inner West**

7

**Be part of community projects and activities**

This means having a willingness to participate and share our knowledge and resources. It involves people from all demographics – young people, older people, different cultural groups – coming together.

“I have a great passion for making sure that the land that we live on is looked after.”

**Alison,  
Hawkesbury**

This will reduce vulnerability and increase resilience by increasing community connections and reducing isolation. The community will be better prepared, with a greater sense of responsibility for each other. Projects and activities will respond to specific communities.



Photo: Cassandra Hannagan

To do this well, communities need:

- ways to share ideas and resources
- skilled people willing to share their expertise
- more community spaces and government support
- to overcome a lack of education and awareness about disasters, which are not a priority in our busy lives.

The individualistic mindset in a big city could be a barrier. We need to sort out who is going to lead and fund activities.

“I believe the community together, in acting, can do a lot, and the government need to think long term.”

**Adam,  
Emu Plains**

“Such as the different cultures, the Indigenous people how they can help. It’s never too late to learn.”

**Christine,  
Penrith**

8

**Recognise and draw experience from First Nations people’s wisdom.**

Recognition of and drawing experience from our First Nations people’s wisdom will support us to be more resilient as we will learn from thousands of years of lived experience and best practice. It will help us develop better tools to adapt and cope in Australia which is a unique place.

We will need to:

- listen, work side by side and accept with an open mindset that we are inextricably linked to the land, helping us all to develop a sense of custodianship
- elevate and value First Nations knowledge holders in this process and overcome prejudice
- see a genuine commitment from government – this is not political, it is practical.



Photo: Cassandra Hannagan

# First Nations engagement

## ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

Engagement with First Nations people has taken place throughout the strategy development.

### First Nations representation in the broad engagement included:

- Carol Vale and Donna Ingram from Murawin Aboriginal consultancy as part of the expert challenge panel for the risk assessment – and presenting and participating at all 3 risk assessment workshops
- Ryan Johnstone, expert in Aboriginal and youth recovery (working on the Lismore floods recovery) participated as an expert witness in the deliberative panel workshops
- First Nations participants in the youth workshops and youth survey
- 2 sessions at the Resilient Sydney strategy summit led by Jason Ardler, Thirriwirri Consulting and First Nations staff from Greater Sydney councils.

It is unknown if First Nations people participated in the community workshops as not everyone shared their cultural identity.

### Targeted engagement with First Nations people and organisations included:

- 2 online discussions with First Nations council staff to identify key issues for the strategy and plan the First Nations focus for the summit
- 2 workshops with Elders and young Koori people in Marrickville and Picton on healthy Country facilitated by Gregory Andrews, Lyrebird Dreaming consultancy
- participation at Orchard Hills cultural burning event
- meetings with First Nations organisations and council and government staff
- a review of Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations and Closing the Gap priority reforms consultation and recommendations.



First Nations workshop - Picton. Photo: Resilient Sydney

## STATEMENTS ABOUT COUNTRY

### Statement from the inner Sydney workshop (Marrickville)

“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.”

**First Nations people from Dharawal, Dharug, Gamilaroi, Wiradjuri, Murawari, Ualarai, Wailwan and Bundjalung Country.**

### Statement from the western Sydney workshop (Picton)

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.

**First Nations people from Dharawal, Wiradjuri, Gamilaroi, Kunga, Awabakal, Ngannawal and Torres Strait Country**

## KEY FINDINGS

### Healing and dignity

Identity for First Nations people is intertwined with kinship networks and connection to Country. Disruption to these connections has harmed the wellbeing of First Nations people.

Dignity relates to our inherent value. We are all equal in dignity at birth. The brain's reaction to dignity violations is similar to its response to physical trauma, making the psychological impact profound.

Dignity violations of First Nations people have been a feature of government policy. We need to acknowledge this. We need to know the honest history of Australia.

We need to address the ongoing impact of colonialism which continues to create barriers to the recognition and protection of the dignity and rights of First Nations people.



Resilient Sydney summit  
Photo: Jacquie Manning

### Caring for Country

“Our journey is to connect everyone to Country.”

Caring for Country includes a range of activities, including:

- collecting seeds to propagate local plants
- collecting bush medicine
- cultural burning
- protecting cultural sites
- cleaning up and restoring the health of places.

Caring for Country benefits the health and wellbeing of people and communities who practice it.

There are examples of very uncared-for places in Sydney coming back to health through the work of local Aboriginal people.

It is very important to follow cultural protocols and the leadership of Traditional Owners, Elders and cultural knowledge holders.

Climate change presents a serious threat to First Nations cultures and communities.

It is time for everyone living here to listen, learn and take responsibility for the health of the Country they live on.

We should all aim to be good ancestors.

“Aboriginal people are concerned about our environment. We have lived here a long time. The environment is important to our wellbeing and our future. Our culture is connected to the land and caring deeply for it.”

“What we are trying to do is to get everyone to care for Country because this is where we live. We live here together, on this land. We want everyone to be on the same page. We live in a special place in the world. We see the changes to it. We are each only here for a short time, but Country is always here.”



Cultural burn at Orchard Hills. Photo: Resilient Sydney

## Cultural fire

People said the western way of managing fire in Australia is not working. Investment is needed to build knowledge of practices such as using fire on Country: listening, learning and bringing in different knowledge to build local capacity.

There is a need for people with the appropriate fire knowledge to bring together cultural burning and modern fire management techniques.

Cultural burning can reduce fire risk but that should not be the priority at the moment. It is important to have the knowledge, skills and protocols in place and not to rush.

Blue Mountains, Liverpool, Campbelltown, Wollondilly and Penrith councils have experience with cultural burning but the regulations including approvals do not easily accommodate this activity. Botanic Gardens and Local Land Services are also using cultural fire. Other organisations are looking to participate in cultural burning including more urban councils.

## Working with Aboriginal-controlled organisations and businesses

Partnerships with Aboriginal-controlled organisations must be genuine. These partnerships can provide culturally safe services, independently from council, and deliver the best outcomes for communities.

Partnerships should be supported by shared decision-making. Funding must:

- be secure
- accommodate changing needs
- not increase administrative burdens on organisations
- strengthen the sector overall.

More must be done to share data about First Nations communities with those communities.

Aboriginal organisations can lead the way in providing services for the whole community. There are good examples during the pandemic with food relief and financial management services.

Respect is a fundamental part of how Aboriginal organisations work with community members.

**“Thank you. It means a lot to hear the beautiful rhythm of your voices. You share your ideas and what you are saying will be heard. It makes me happy to know Country is in your safe hands.”**

Aunty Pam to young  
Koori people

### **Listening to First Nations voices**

“We fought hard to have our voices heard.”

Governments have only just started listening to Aboriginal people.

First Nations leadership in individual councils is now making a significant difference in the cultural capability of local government in Greater Sydney.

Elevate First Nations voices in all aspects of planning and policy-making to ensure sustainable, resilient outcomes for future generations.

It is very important for young Aboriginal people to have a voice as they have different perspectives.

### **Perspectives from young people**

Young Koori people said teamwork and unity is important to young people.

Government should involve young Aboriginal people in advising on and looking after the health of rivers.

First Nations people and communities need to be prepared for the future. Slow down with technology and speed up with environmental protection.

Stop wasting money on things that do not matter (like submarines) and spend it on the environment and restoring Country.

Young Aboriginal people live in two worlds – they need to be able to co-exist with lore and with law. Support more youth programs for Aboriginal kids.



Photo: Resilient Sydney



Marrickville youth and Elders workshop. Photo: Resilient Sydney

**“We fought hard to have  
our voices heard.”**

# Multicultural roundtables

## ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

Resilient Sydney partnered with Multicultural NSW to host 5 multicultural roundtables with 80 participants from culturally and linguistically diverse communities and organisations across Greater Sydney.

Blacktown

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Ryde

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Sydney CBD

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Bankstown

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Online

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The workshops reflected on the draft list of shocks and stresses and developed action ideas in response.



Photo: Cassandra Hannagan

## KEY FINDINGS

### Supporting community leaders

Community leaders are seen as highly influential and effective in keeping communities safe, connected and informed during disasters. Offering funding and support to train and mentor future leaders will strengthen community resilience and trust between culturally and linguistically diverse communities, government and emergency management.

### Collaboration through a strengths-based approach

Taking a strengths-based approach to community-led preparedness and recovery was considered vital. There is concern that negative representations of communities can dominate media stories and political discourse.

Acknowledging community strengths and capabilities, modelled during the covid-19 pandemic, boosted community morale and built resilience through

community-led activities. A strengths-based approach also provides a model for different communities working together and increasing community connections.

### Better funding models

Red tape, short-term and restrictive parameters for funding pose challenges to providing community-based services. It is difficult to plan long-term and to build community resilience with current funding arrangements. Competitive funding mechanisms also do not support a collaborative community approach.

### A more coordinated and inclusive response to disasters

Lack of coordination and clear roles and responsibilities during a disaster were viewed as major barriers to effective disaster preparation, response and recovery. Community hubs were proposed as a focal point for information dissemination and services from different agencies during disasters. Local databases of community

organisations and their expertise were also proposed to better coordinate disaster response.

Communication on emergency preparedness and during a crisis event needs to be improved – across multiple channels, from trusted sources and multilingual.

### Social isolation and community connectedness

Social isolation was a concern before the pandemic, which has amplified the problem. People noted that newly arrived migrants were often unaware of services and government processes. They stressed building community connections was critical to the wellbeing and resilience of people living in a new country.

Social cohesion was identified as a government responsibility rather than a community problem. Public policies and processes were seen as fundamental drivers of social cohesion. The workshops identified the need to build public trust in government.

### Worker exploitation and modern slavery

Worker exploitation and other forms of modern slavery were noted as serious, hidden issues for culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Recently arrived migrants, international students, and people holding temporary and seasonal work visas were considered at greatest risk of exploitation and modern slavery. Shock events were considered opportunities for greater exploitation.

### Domestic violence

People raised concerns about an increase in domestic violence towards women and older people. They identified the link to social isolation. Participants were concerned that some people in culturally and linguistically diverse communities were more vulnerable to domestic violence and unfamiliar with their rights, the law and support services.

# Cultural workshop

## ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

A workshop was held on 28 May 2024 with key stakeholders within the cultural and arts sectors including:

23 councils

Art Gallery of NSW

Museum of Contemporary Art Australia

National Theatre of Parramatta

Institute for Regional Futures |  
Research & Innovation Division

Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre

Campbelltown Arts Centre

Hazelhurst Arts Centre

Brand X

Wedgetail pictures

It explored the role of creative expression in:

- recovering from shock events
- building resilience
- understanding resilience challenges for the creative sector.



Photo: Resilient Sydney

## KEY FINDINGS

Participants emphasised the value of arts and culture in building resilience. Creative expression gives people a voice. It breaks down barriers and helps educate and advocate on issues. It allows communities to imagine, connect and explore what matters to them. Art brings joy and positivity to people's lives. Participating in arts and culture builds social connections, reduces social isolation and improves mental health. Arts and culture contribute to strong local economies and provide avenues to learn and innovate.

Creative processes and projects are critical to recovering from shock events by facilitating difficult conversations and building empathy through storytelling. Creative expression is a powerful way for people to process and heal from loss and trauma.

The participants highlighted the need for more affordable arts and cultural spaces to enable them to work and thrive in Greater Sydney. Across Greater Sydney, artists struggle to find affordable studio, rehearsal and production spaces that are close to where they live.

There is inequitable access to art and culture across the city, related to availability, location and cost of artistic opportunities. Participants also highlighted the need to create a mechanism to provide affordable housing for artists and creatives to be able to work and live in Greater Sydney.

There was strong support for the creation of a cross-council arts and cultural network to promote information and resource sharing. This would facilitate collaboration and enable councils to act on initiatives that work and share information and assets across local government areas for community and cultural use.



Photo: Resilient Sydney

**Creative processes and projects are critical to recovering from shock events by facilitating difficult conversations and building empathy through storytelling.**

# Volunteering forum

## ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

**The workshop, held on 4 June 2024, explored:**

- the role of volunteering in building resilience
- challenges facing the volunteer sector
- ways to increase and support volunteering.

**It included 16 participants from**

Centre for Volunteering

SES

RFS

Australian Red Cross

City of Sydney

Peppercorn

Oz Harvest

NSW Reconstruction Authority

## KEY FINDINGS

The community recognises the value of volunteering, as it contributes to the greater good, helps people gain new skills and training and provides a sense of purpose and personal fulfilment. People value the social connection and sense of belonging volunteering brings.

**The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on volunteering, leading to a sharp decline in numbers.**

Current volunteers are getting older. Daily pressures, including the cost of living, mean people have less time to volunteer. There is also a growing need for volunteers in the face of increasingly frequent disasters.

There are different types of volunteering, formal and informal. Formal volunteering is defined as ongoing volunteering with an organisation or community group. Informal volunteering refers to one-off, occasional, spontaneous or online activities to help others outside your family and friends. This type of community-initiated volunteering organically develops in times of crisis as individuals and community groups band together. Research shows a growing mismatch between the needs of emergency response organisations and where and how people are now choosing to volunteer.

Emergency response organisations, including the SES and the RFS, have training requirements for their members. Appropriately trained volunteers are essential, but this can be a barrier for recruitment.

Volunteers play a crucial role in these emergency response organisations but challenges to recruit and retain volunteers has led to rethinking how to incorporate the desire of people to volunteer in a more informal way.

The forum highlighted that volunteering is a shared responsibility across agencies, organisations, and communities. It is critical to identify opportunities to work together to raise the profile of volunteering and the capacity of volunteers including recognition of prior training.

There is a focus on strengthening the appeal of volunteering with emergency response organisations to culturally and linguistically diverse communities and young people, who may not know about volunteering opportunities.

# Public health workers workshop



Photo Credit: PIKSEL / Getty Images

## ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

A workshop was held on 31 July 2024 with Western Sydney Local Health District public health workers. The workshop captured their unique experiences of witnessing how a global shock event impacted individuals and communities in Greater Sydney.

## KEY FINDINGS

Participants highlighted that we need to learn from the covid-19 pandemic to be better prepared for future health emergencies.

A key theme that emerged was the need to better care for the people on the frontline. They need logistical support (like catering and transport during extended hours of work), appropriate training, and emotional and mental wellbeing support.

Participants spoke about the challenges of enforcing isolation orders during the pandemic when individuals were in vulnerable situations, which made isolating extremely hard. They described how the pandemic brought to the fore significant inequality and vulnerability in Sydney. They provided additional support to individuals outside the responsibilities of their job to respond to the basic needs of the people they were instructing to isolate.

A significant resilience challenge facing the public health sector is ensuring a surge workforce during health emergencies. This is especially the case with emergencies such as the pandemic when out-of-hours work is required and when events have an extended duration. Fiscal tightening and staff burnout in the aftermath of the covid-19 pandemic are challenges impacting the capacity to prepare for future threats.

# Stakeholder interviews

## ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

Stakeholder interviews were held throughout the strategy development process. The aim of these interviews was to gain knowledge and expert opinion on specific areas of resilience. The interviews captured information, insights and opportunities that may not have been otherwise identified.



Resilient Sydney summit. Photo: Jacquie Manning

## KEY FINDINGS

Information and observations from the stakeholders who were interviewed are listed below.

### Global instability

- The rate of political change and global instability is increasing and our ability to adapt is not keeping up.
- Instability will continue to disrupt global supply chains in unexpected ways.
- International conflict and global issues are important for Sydney as the financial capital of Australia and home to a complex multicultural diaspora.

### Critical infrastructure interdependency

- Digitalisation is a key global driver. Many services now rely on access to both electricity and the internet. Disruption to electricity or internet amplifies the impact of other shock events.
- Businesses' continuity plans do not usually analyse and account for all the organisations they are connected to.

- We need standards of operation for smart city systems to build resilience by understanding interdependencies and creating capacity of alternative systems across sectors.

### Water and wastewater

- Water and wastewater must be recognised as an essential service. This extends to key suppliers of water treatment chemicals that rely on a limited global supply chain.
- Diversification of Sydney's water supply is critical to supporting a growing population and planning for the likelihood of extreme drought.
- Diversification of the water supply is contingent on IPART (Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal) approval of the Sydney Water pricing submission.
- Fire risk is a major threat to Sydney's drinking water. The

catchment is large and includes very rugged terrain which is hard to manage.

### Emerging risks

- Misinformation and polarisation will continue to increase and pose a threat to trust and democratic processes.
- Lithium battery fires are an emerging risk. There is a need for better disposal methods and assessing the risk status of batteries.
- Biosecurity risks are increasing. Local government and the community can be more involved in identifying biosecurity risks.

### Green infrastructure

- We need government to mandate that green infrastructure is properly considered in the planning and construction of projects.
- We need to plant trees that can cope with extreme weather and changing climates including drought.
- We need to plan for water to maintain green places and the urban forest.

### Managing a changing city

- The changing political and regulatory

environment reflects increasing recognition from national and state governments that local government plays a critical role in improving place-based resilience.

- Decisions made at state level impact local government and places.
- There is a need for longer-term planning for key infrastructure such as transport and utilities.
- Construction and infrastructure upgrades disrupt local businesses and can negatively impact small businesses.

### Climate resilience of housing

- Greater Sydney has a lot of housing stock that is old and not climate resilient.
- Sydney needs housing that is equitable and addresses the needs of an ageing population.
- Social housing needs retrofitting and upgrading.

### Cost of living and housing unaffordability

- There has been a significant increase in requests to charities for food assistance.
- The housing crisis and cost of living are damaging social cohesion and creating intergenerational inequity.



Photo: Julie Vulcan

- Short-term rental contracts and rental increases are causing people to move more frequently and reducing community connections, particularly in high-density communities.
- Housing All Australians is a Melbourne initiative that is refitting and repurposing other building types.
- Rule changes could incentivise older people with spare rooms to rent them out without jeopardising their pensions.

### Covid-19 pandemic

- During the pandemic, healthcare workers were under enormous pressure to implement strict rules and guidelines without the agency or resources to modify these rules to meet people’s personal circumstances.

- Many healthcare frontline workers experienced burnout and have left the system. We are less prepared now than we were in 2020.
- There has been increases in suicide, mental health issues and domestic violence in the aftermath of the pandemic.
- The mental impact of health events is often underestimated and not addressed.
- There is a lack of health services to support emotional and mental wellbeing.

### Wellbeing and community resilience

- There needs to be a focus on mental health and the impact of social media on adolescents.
- Being involved in projects to mitigate and respond to

natural disasters is empowering for young people and helps overcome climate anxiety.

- Being in nature has proven physical and psychological health benefits.
- Community action to care for and cool the environment gives people hope for the future.
- There are a range of benefits from community environment projects including social connections and tangible outcomes.
- A new word to add to resilience is replenishment – how do we support people to recover and get a break?
- Sport is a setting to promote respectful behaviours.
- Councils have a significant role in providing accessible, inclusive and appropriate sporting facilities. We need an accountability mechanism to report on how equitably these facilities are being used.
- Councils can be more proactive in promoting sporting opportunities for women and girls, for example, Inner West Council’s women leadership in community sport program.

- We need to focus on strengths rather than problems. How do we nurture our local community strength?
- Support initiatives that bring community groups together rather than funding them separately.

### Disaster preparedness

- Redi Communities Australian Red Cross program has been successful in regional areas in building community social connections and preparedness.
- We need a combination of technical experts and community members working together on adaptation and preparedness plans.
- We need to make more effort to understand the experience of people in a disaster.
- The people who use the evacuation centre should be consulted for evacuation centre evaluation reports.
- Government needs to engage early with communities to help prepare them for future shocks.
- Planning for emergency management often underestimates the number of people in a place. For example, high tourist destinations may need



Photo: Chad Ajamian / Getty Images

to accommodate a much larger number of people in evacuation centres.

- Preparation for coastal hazards and storms will also prepare Sydney for an earthquake, which will have a significant impact when it happens.
- There has been an increase in geotechnical events causing damage to buildings due to increased drilling and tunnelling under Sydney.

### Support for people at higher risk in an emergency

- High-rise and medium-density housing is more difficult for older people to evacuate.
- People-centred emergency planning tools are good but ongoing funding is

needed to support the implementation of individual emergency plans for people with disability.

- Many disasters happen in holiday periods. Visitors often do not have local knowledge or connections, making them more vulnerable.

### Disaster recovery

- In major recovery efforts there is often a lack of trust. The government thinks the community is not listening and the community thinks the government is not listening.
- It is important to understand community values in recovery.
- The role of volunteers and networks of family and friends is critical for recovery.

- People’s dignity must be respected when providing help in times of need.
- People’s needs should not be questioned. Support should be provided in good faith without administrative barriers.
- We need to be more aware of working in culturally appropriate ways and respecting diversity when responding in an emergency.
- Government programs can develop dependency. Instead, we need to build the resilience of people to help themselves.
- People are the answer – we need to nurture and train leaders in the community to lead recovery efforts. Community projects help rebuild confidence.

Some positive steps that worked post-bushfire were:

- establishing a community committee to prioritise actions
- recognising the pressure on council staff
- creating a registry of experts
- support from Australian Red Cross.
- Inappropriate donations can complicate the recovery, for example, donated food undermines local businesses who are also impacted.
- Animal welfare needs during emergencies put pressure on veterinary services.

# Appendix

## RESILIENT SYDNEY STRATEGY STAKEHOLDERS

### Resilient Sydney Strategy Stakeholders

Aboriginal Carbon Foundation  
 Advocate for Children and Young People  
 AECOM  
 Alongsiders Multicultural Community Services  
 Anglicare Disaster Recovery  
 Aroona Project Management  
 Art Gallery of NSW  
 Asylum Seekers Centre  
 Aurecon  
 Ausgrid  
 Australian Human Rights Commission  
 Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience  
 Australian National University  
 Australian Red Cross  
 Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council  
 Australian Water Association  
 Balmoral Group Australia  
 Bayside Council  
 Belong Blue Mountains  
 Blacktown City Council  
 Blue Mountains City Council  
 Blue Mountains Women's Health and Resource Centre  
 Burwood Council  
 Business Sydney  
 Business Western Sydney  
 Camden Council  
 Campbelltown Arts Centre  
 Campbelltown City Council  
 Canterbury City Community Centre  
 CBRE  
 Centre for Disability Research and Policy  
 Christian Community Aid NSW Ltd

City of Canada Bay Council  
 City of Canterbury-Bankstown  
 City of Parramatta  
 City of Ryde Council  
 Clear Horizon Consulting  
 Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations  
 Collaborating 4 Inclusion  
 Committee for Sydney  
 Commonwealth Bank of Australia  
 Communities in Fellowship Together  
 Community Housing Industry Association NSW  
 Community Migrant Resource Centres  
 Community Support Services Incorporated  
 Community Support Services, Bankstown  
 Conservation Volunteers Australia  
 Cooks River Alliance  
 Council On The Ageing (COTA) NSW  
 Cred Consulting  
 CSIRO  
 Cumberland Council  
 Daar Al-Wafa Association Australia  
 Deerubbin Local Aboriginal Land Council  
 Deloitte  
 Department of Home Affairs  
 Department of Premier and Cabinet  
 Dharawal Local Aboriginal Land Council  
 Disability Council NSW  
 Electrify This  
 Endeavour Energy  
 Energy & Water Ombudsman  
 Fairfield Council  
 Fakafotu Sydney  
 Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water  
 Fire and Rescue NSW  
 Firesticks Alliance  
 First Nations Economics  
 First Nations Response  
 Georges River Council  
 Greater Sydney Parklands

Green Buildings Council of Australia	Neighbours Every Day Council Advisory Group
Gundangara Local Aboriginal Land Council	Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network
Harman Foundation	Net Zero Commission
Hawkesbury City Council	Newcastle University - Institute for Regional Futures
High Speed Rail Authority	North Sydney Council
Homes NSW	Northern Beaches Council
Hornsby Shire	Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils
House of Sadaqa	Northside Enterprises Inc
Hunter's Hill Council	NSW Councils for Social Services
Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisations of Councils	NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
Indigigrow	NSW Department of Communities and Justice
Inner West Council	NSW Department of Community and Justice
Insurance Group Australia	NSW Department of Customer Service
James Martin Institute for Public Policy	NSW Department of Education
Katoomba Community Centre	NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
Konanninggo Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Services	NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
Ku-ring-gai Council	NSW Environment Protection Authority
La Perouse Local Aboriginal Land Council	NSW Federation of Community Language Schools
Landcom	NSW Health
Lane Cove Council	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services
Learning Ecologies for Action on Disaster Risk Reduction	NSW Police
Liverpool City Council	NSW Port Authority
Living Lab Northern Rivers	NSW Reconstruction Authority
Living Seawalls	NSW Rental Commissioner
Local Land Services	NSW Rural Fire Service
Lyrebird Dreaming	NSW Small Business Commissioner
Macquarie University	NSW State Emergency Services
Magna NDIS Consultant	NSW TelCo Authority
Mathew Doyle Consultant	Office of Energy and Climate Change
Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council	Office of Local Government
Migrate Success	Office of Sport NSW
Mosman Council	Office of the 24-hour Economy Commissioner
Multicultural NSW	Om Dhungel Consulting
Murawin	Owners Corporation Network
Museum of Contemporary Art Australia	Oz Harvest
Muslim Women Australia	Parramatta River Catchment Group
National Broadband Network	PCYC
National Council for Fire and Emergency Services	Penrith City Council
National Emergency Management Agency of Australia	

Peppercorn	Taverners Research
Planning Institute of Australia	Telstra
Powerhouse Museum	The Australian Centre for Social Innovation
Powerhouse Museum	The Bureau of Meteorology
Property Council of Australia	The Centre for Volunteering
Public Works Department	The Climate Factory
QANTAS	The Hills Shire Council
Randwick City Council	The Parks, Western Parklands Councils
Resilience Together Association	The Resilience Canopy
Resilient Cities Network	The Salvation Army
Reverse Garbage	The Smith Family
Rewiring Australia	The Superpower Institute
Settlement Services International	The University of Sydney
SGS Economics and Planning	Thirriwirri
Shelter NSW	Transport for NSW
Smart Green Cities Research Centre (Macquarie University)	Transport for NSW
South Western Sydney Local Health District	Transurban
Southern Downs Regional Council	UK NHS
Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils	University of Canberra - HEAL Global Research Centre
Spanish Community Care Organisation Inc	University of New South Wales
Sport NSW	University of Technology Sydney
Sri Lankan-Australian Women's Network	UTS Green Infrastructure Lab
St George Community housing	UTS Institute for Sustainable Futures
Stockland	Water NSW
Strathfield Council	Waverley Council
Sutherland Shire Council	Weatherzone
Swelting Cities	Wedgetail Pictures
Swiss Re Group	Welcoming Australia
Sydney Airport	Wentworth Healthcare
Sydney Alliance	Western Parkland City Authority
Sydney Coastal Councils Group Inc	Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils
Sydney Environment Institute (Sydney University)	Western Sydney University
Sydney Institute of Marine Science	Willoughby City Council
Sydney Korean Women's Association	Wollondilly Shire Council
Sydney Opera House	Woollahra Council
Sydney Tamil Mahram	Yimiri
Sydney Water	Young and Resilient (WSU)
TAFE NSW	Your Side Australia
Tathra Recovery Projects	Youth Action

## EXPERTS INTERVIEWED BY THE DELIBERATIVE COMMUNITY PANEL

(Names and roles as at the time of the workshop in June 2024)

**Aaron Fleming**

Manager Regional Delivery, NSW Reconstruction Authority

**Andrew Gissing**

Chief Executive Officer, Natural Hazards Research Australia

**Beck Dawson**

Chief Resilience Officer, Resilient Sydney

**Cara Varian**

Chief Executive Officer, NSW Council of Social Services

**David Sanderson**

Inaugural Judith Neilson Professor of Architecture, UNSW

**Hala Hubraq**

A/Executive Director Adaptation and Mitigation, NSW Reconstruction Authority

**Kerry Robinson OAM**

Chief Executive Officer, Blacktown City Council

**Linda Bracken**

Board Member Metropolitan Local Land Service, and Macdonald Valley Association

**Nick Chapman**

Resilience Advisor, Willoughby Council

**Paul Box**

Senior Principal Research Consultant, CSIRO

**Peta Collins,**

Project Director, Regional Adaptive Pathways Planning,  
NSW Department of Planning Housing and Infrastructure

**Rebecca Wood**

Project Manager, Resilient Sydney

**Rose Glassock**

NSW Department of Education

**Ross Edwards**

Emergency Planning Manager, City of Sydney

**Ryan Johnstone**

Youth Recovery Specialist, Advocate for Children and Young People

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