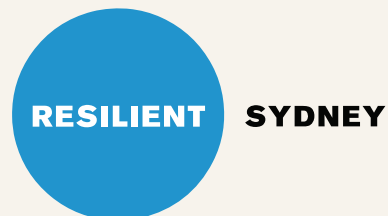




The
future
is **us**

Resilient Sydney Youth Engagement Report 2024





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

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

Content

06

Introduction

08

Engagement approach

09

About the participants



Illustration: The Visual Storytellers Group



10

Outcomes

What is resilience?	10
Why listen to the views of young people?	11
What's trending – shocks, stresses and megatrends?	13
Ideas for action	16

20

University of Technology intern program report



Young Koori people joined Elders to discuss the importance of healthy Country. The workshop was facilitated by Gregory Andrews and held alongside Goolay'yari on Gadigal Ngurra – Cooks River, Marrickville. This statement will be included in the Resilient Sydney Strategy 2025 – 2030. Photo: Resilient Sydney.

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.

Statement about Country written by Young Koori people with the guidance of Elders

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

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

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

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

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

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

Introduction

Communities in Greater Sydney are facing an escalation in the frequency and magnitude of acute shocks and day-to-day stresses. Shocks are sudden events that disrupt a city such as floods, pandemics and cyber-attacks. Stresses are ongoing challenges such as unaffordable housing and cost of living pressures that weaken the ability of the city and communities to respond and recover from shock events. Shocks and stresses have significantly impacted Sydney over the past 5 years depleting our resilience.

Resilient Sydney is a collaboration of 33 Greater Sydney councils to develop and implement city-wide actions to increase resilience and our ability to thrive in the face of shocks and stresses. Resilient Sydney is currently developing a new strategy for Greater Sydney.

In early 2024 Resilient Sydney consulted young people across Sydney to explore their experiences of shocks and stresses and their views on resilience and ways to strengthen it.

The outcomes of the engagement are documented in this report and will inform the Resilient Sydney Strategy 2025–2030.

Images (top to bottom):
 Redfern youth workshop / Resilient Sydney
 Northern Beaches workshop / Resilient Sydney
 Campbelltown youth workshop / Resilient Sydney



Engagement approach

The aim of the youth workshops was to foster a safe and inclusive environment for young people to have an effective voice on the social, cultural, and political issues that affect their lives.

To ensure this occurred Resilient Sydney worked alongside interns from UTS and young employees from the Resilient Sydney Office and City of Sydney to design, develop and facilitate the workshops and online survey. These young people represented communities across Greater Sydney.

The youth engagement involved two activities, a youth survey and six youth workshops across Greater Sydney. The purpose of the youth engagement program was to gather quantitative and qualitative evidence capturing youth perspectives on:

What resilience means
to young people

Key shocks and stresses
affecting young people today

Their vision and ideas for action
for a resilient Sydney

“Soon we will be leading your generation. So, look after us and listen”.



Image: Blacktown youth workshop / Cassandra Lau



Image: Sutherland Shire Youth Week workshop / Sutherland Shire Council

Youth workshop

Six workshops were held across Greater Sydney: Redfern, Blacktown, Campbelltown, Dee Why, Sutherland, Riverwood (modified activities).

Resilient Sydney organised and facilitated the workshops in Redfern, Blacktown, Campbelltown and Dee Why with the support of the local councils. Sutherland and Canterbury Bankstown Councils organised youth events that incorporated the workshop activities.

116 young people participated in the full workshops (not including Riverwood). Participants were recruited through Resilient Sydney, local councils, social media, youth networks such as Youth Action and Young and Resilient Western Sydney University and by Taverner Research. Incentives were provided to encourage young people to participate in the consultation and to recognise their time and effort.

The Sutherland workshop was held in conjunction with the Youth Climate and Biodiversity Forum hosted by Sutherland Shire Council. Students and teachers attended from 7 different high schools, with a mix of single gender schools, public, and catholic schools.

The Riverwood workshop was held as part of the CBCity’s Twilight Sports night engagement informing the Resilient Canterbury Bankstown Action Plan. A summary of the outcomes of this activity is included in the report but the participation numbers have not been incorporated into the overall numbers because the age group and activities were significantly different.

The workshop examined 4 main questions:

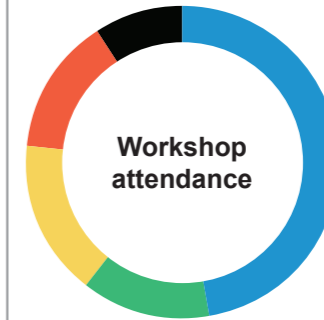
1 **Why listen to young people?**

2 **What does resilience mean to you?**

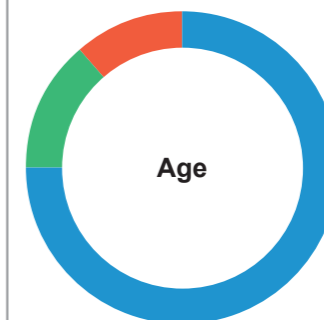
3 **Shocks, stresses and megatrends**
What is trending now?

4 **Manifest a resilient future**
You’re in charge of the city, what would you do to make Sydney a better place to live?

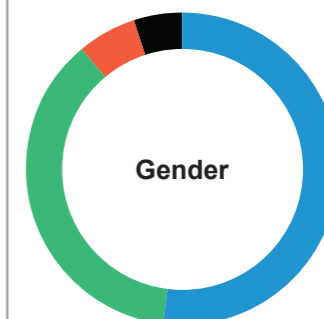
About the participants



- Sutherland (47%)
- Blacktown (13%)
- Campbelltown (16%)
- Redfern (14%)
- Dee Why (9%)



- 16–18 years (75%)
- 19–22 years (14%)
- 23–26 years (11%)



- Female (52%)
- Male (37%)
- Non-binary (6%)
- Prefer not to say (5%)

Languages Spoken at Home other than English

- Mandarin
- Cantonese
- Vietnamese
- Bangla
- Filipino
- Hindi

- Arabic
- Spanish
- Burmese
- Persian
- Bengali
- Russian
- Greek
- Ukrainian

Riverwood workshop

Approximately 60 teenagers attended the workshop in Riverwood hosted by Canterbury Bankstown. They were aged 12–15 and more boys than girls participated.

Outcomes

OUTCOME 1

What is resilience?

Resilience was not identified as one established concept to young people but represented different ideas of social capabilities and personal attributes. The concepts of endurance, bouncing back and perseverance were common themes, along with notions of learning from previous experiences, leadership and strength in connectedness and community building.

Young people said resilience as a personal and community resource was being impacted by concurrent shocks and stresses including cost of living, housing unaffordability and mental health impacts.

Young people said resilience is ...

- “Stepping up when others can’t.”
- “Bounce-back-ability”
- “Adaptability”
- “Showing up”
- “Compassion for Elders”
- “Coming together of all cultures”
- “Connection with community”
- “Perseverance and endurance”

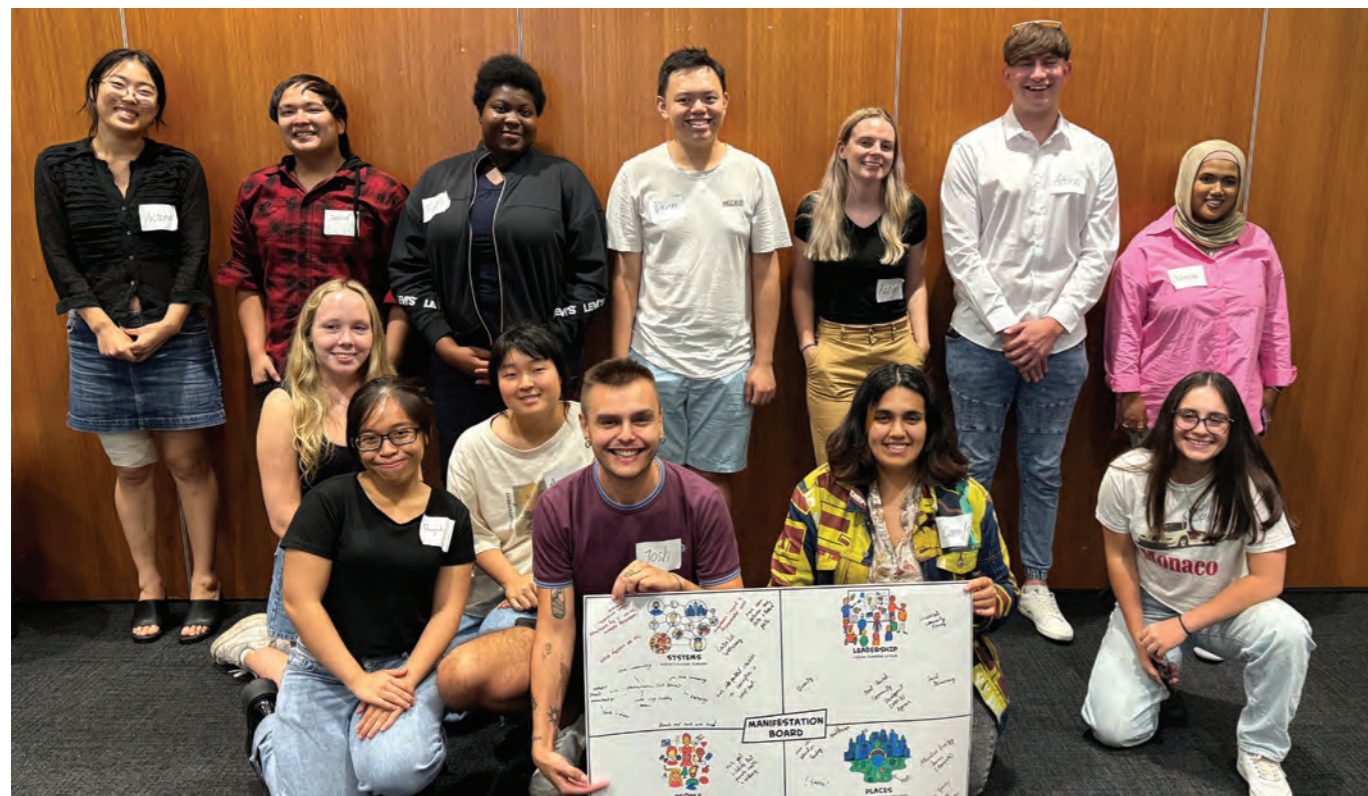


Image: Blacktown youth workshop / Resilient Sydney

OUTCOME 2

Why listen to the views of young people?

Young people said it was vital to capture their perspectives as they were open-minded, had fresh perspectives and were creative. An important reason to consult with young people is their standing as “intergenerational burden bearers”, and a generation who will inherit the consequences of today’s decisions. There was also hope that bridging the gap between generations would help solve problems.

THE FUTURE IS US. IT RESTS ON OUR SHOULDERS.

Current / fresh opinions

“So that we feel heard/ secure for the future. No anxiety and stress”

youth are Progressive!

“Older people have different problems than younger.”

we are the future

social justice

we have things to say.

If we don't care, who will?

NEXT GENERATION

Illustration: The Visual Storytellers Group

OUTCOME 3

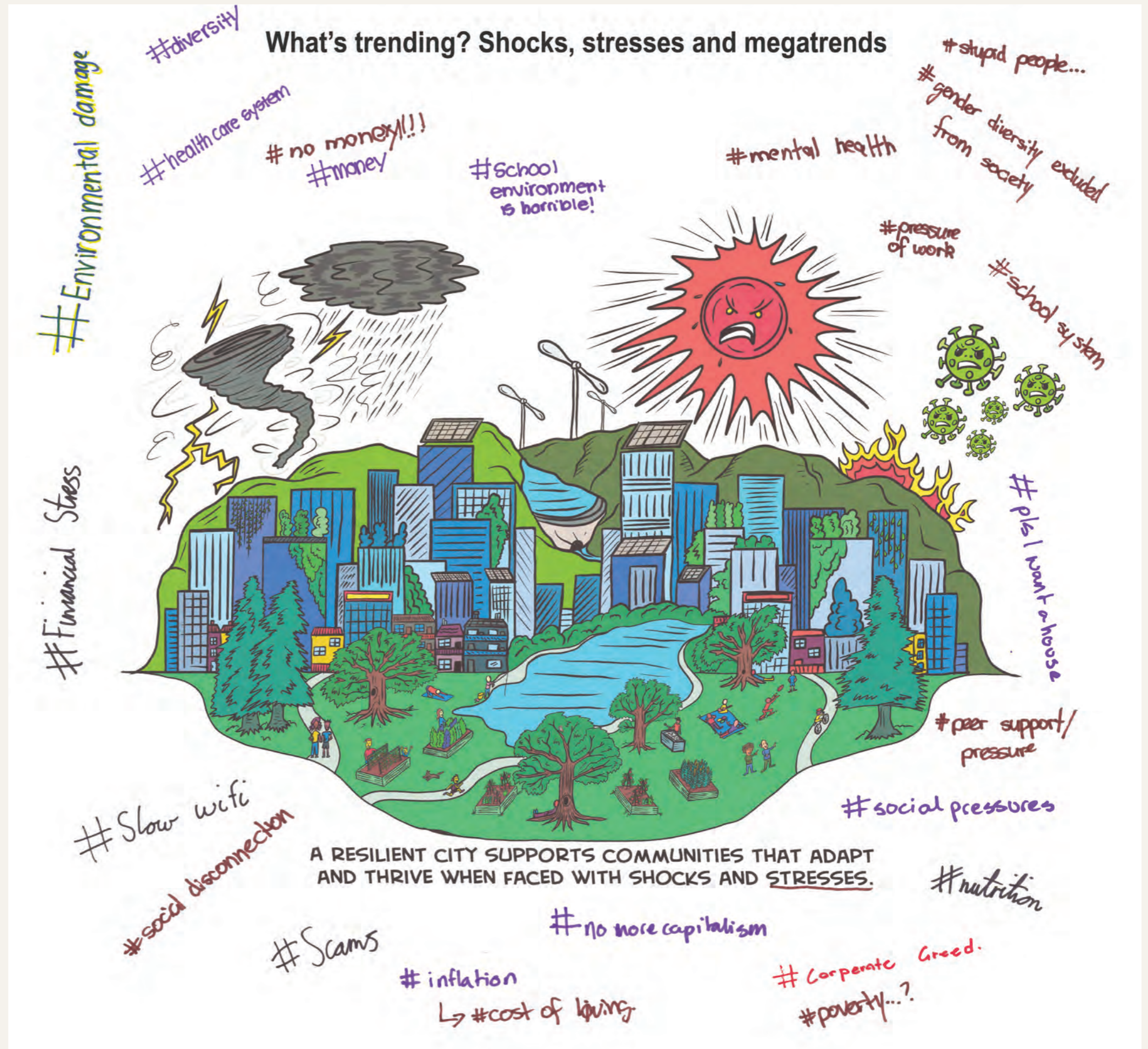
What's trending – shocks, stresses and megatrends?

Participants were asked to write hashtags for the issues affecting the resilience of young people and Sydney.

The cost of living and unaffordable housing were continuous themes of stress expressed throughout the workshops. Young people identified the cost of living is having wider implications on all aspects of their lives including housing, education options, mental health, transport, food options and accessing arts and cultural events for social connection. They also identified the emergence of an intergeneration divide in wealth.

Young people identified that these issues are delaying or even preventing young people from transitioning into adulthood. This is hindering independence, agency, and maturity.

Young people were concerned about the lack of action to protect the environment and respond to climate change. Global issues such as international conflict were also front of mind.



Australian dream

They felt that the ‘Australian dream’ of owning a house and job security, are no longer feasible options without radical intervention.

#Inflation everything is so expensive

#Poverty

#No money

#Rent hike

#Better wages for young people

#Ps I want a house

Social issues

They were also concerned about the lack of action on social issues such as gender inequality and racism.

#Not an equal playing field

#Racism

#Post referendum

#Pornography from such a young age

#Gender diversity excluded from society

Education inequality

Young people identified education inequality in relation to access, cost, resources, and subject availability, as a major stress. They noted that the school curriculum lacked relevancy to current issues faced by young people, and subjects needed to address life skills including financial acumen, job ready skills, navigating government systems, mentoring (guidance into adulthood) and mental health resilience.

#Financial education

#Literacy

#Resource public schools

#Teacher shortage

#Place air conditioning in schools

#Not enough education in schools on disasters

Public transport

Unreliable and costly public transport was a prominent stress in all workshops. Young people stated these issues were causing negative impacts on numerous aspects of their daily lives including access to education, employment, safety, and cost of living stress.

#Public transport can we do something about it please

#Cost of transport

#Waiting for the train

#Stuck on trains

Misinformation

Young people noted misinformation is polarising views. This is impacting on balanced perspectives being expressed and debated on social media and is undermining trust. They also believe over exposure to traumatic content on social media is creating desensitisation towards issues that would usually incite a concerned response such as violence, pornography, and discrimination.

#Polarising algorithms

#Digital overload

#Doomscrolling

#Trust who

#Misinformation is confusing

Mental health

The widespread issue of mental health in relation to access, cost and resources, was an ongoing theme. It is noted that mental health issues are further compounded by pessimistic ideas of the future, resilience depletion and accumulation of daily stresses. The impacts of community division and social isolation was also raised.

#Anxiety

#Mental health support and access wait times

#Everyone is lonely

#Social disconnection

#Inheriting a world destined to go into chaos

Climate change

Younger participants were particularly passionate about environmental issues. A strong sense of urgency was expressed for government to effectively respond to climate change and to protect the environment. However, an accumulation of daily stresses is also impacting the ability of many young people to think about and act on these wider issues.

#Eco anxiety

#Deforestation

#Extinction

#Eco crash

#Save the trees

Conflict & wars

Young people identified conflict and wider unrest as an important issue that was front of mind. Young people noted they were nervous about the future and viewed war as a real likelihood in their lifetime. One young person spoke of her refugee background and the fear she held for family abroad.

Young people indicated overexposure to conflict through social media channels, has the potential to minimise the reality of conflict, plus fuel cultural and faith-based discrimination.

#War

#Genocide

#Tension in indo pacific

#Conflict in the middle east and africa



Image: Riverwood workshop / Resilient Sydney

Riverwood workshop

The young people who attended the Canterbury Bankstown workshop in Riverwood identified mental health, poor transport and vaping as their top concerns.

They expressed a positive connection to their local area and valued the cultural diversity, green open spaces and places to connect with friends. They were frustrated with transport including inadequate buses and disruption to train services because of the metro line project. They were worried about safety and concerned by media coverage of events such as the Bondi Junction attack.

“No more she’ll be right mate”.

“Intergenerational burden bearers”.

OUTCOME 4

Manifestation boards – Ideas for action

Participants were asked what they would do to improve resilience in four domains: Leadership, People, Places and Systems. This manifestation board was based on the Resilient Cities Framework.



Images (top to bottom):
 Blacktown youth workshop / Resilient Sydney
 Campbelltown youth workshop / Resilient Sydney

Leadership

Young people identified the need for more young people and greater diversity within positions of power and influence across all levels of government. They wanted to see opportunities for young people to be heard such as through the vote and more engagement by governments. They believed this would create greater trust in the system and a diversity of perspectives and solutions.

“We dream big, we are disrupters”.

Young people identified the need for student leadership programs to foster young people as leaders in their communities, schools, and government. Leadership skills were viewed as necessary to adapt, innovate, and lead solutions for the future. Ideas for action in their words included:

- Inclusion of young people in voting
- A First Nations Treaty
- Create a platform to share innovative ideas
- Promote youth leaders and mentoring programs
- Longer term governments
- More community involvement
- More explanation and education about decisions
- Good evidence behind decisions
- Clarity not clairvoyance
- Learn from the last crisis

People

The cost of living, housing affordability and improvement in public transport were viewed as urgent areas for action that required innovative and contemporary ideas. However, they were less confident that government and business could provide solutions until they reviewed policies and strategies which contributed to the problem. Ideas for action included:

- Wellbeing checks in schools
- More options to volunteer
- Reduce service waiting times and lists
- More bulk billing for doctors and dentists
- More funding for the arts and music
- More youth centres for poor young people
- Outdoor exercise equipment
- Normalise talking about feelings
- Better emergency preparedness
- Outdoor learning spaces

Systems

Systems such as education, transport and health were viewed as “clunky”, “inefficient”, and not meeting the needs of young people. Young people wanted their ideas and experiences to inform services so they are more responsive to their needs. They want to be considered part of the economy and have greater economic certainty.

Participants raised concerns about the resourcing of the education system. They suggested programs to support

young people transitioning into adulthood. They want inequality and injustice addressed. Ideas for action included:

- Increase the youth allowance
- See young people as part of the economy
- Pay teachers and nurses more
- Teach life skills and financial literacy in schools
- Better access to legal services
- CEOs to experience low paid positions
- Prison reform that focuses on rehabilitation

Place

The need to create more greener, natural spaces was a prominent idea for action throughout the workshops. Natural spaces were identified as places for physical and mental wellbeing, along with places of connection to help reduce social isolation. Young people said pursuing renewable and sustainable energy should be a priority of governments. Ideas for action included:

- Walkable cities
- Developing infrastructure in places that are growing
- Paint all roof tops white
- Community gardens
- More parks
- Renewable energy solutions
- More infrastructure for EVs
- Reduce reliance on cars
- Urgent action on climate change

SYSTEMS Society, culture & economy

“More financial education in schools”

courses focusing on how to teach, not just the content that is being taught.

Fix outdated HSC system to create less stress, more talent learning. (Not just memorizing a bunch of stuff)

TRANSPARENCY
even funding for schools

★ care more about environ. less about economy



inclusion of young people in voting

Manifestation boards

Illustration: The Visual Storytellers Group

“Wellbeing programs & organisations led by young people”

★ more schools like freshie
- 20min breaks between each class
- independence
- little discipline
- freedom of movement
- freedom of expression (hair, jewelry, nails)

Promoting safe school/work environments.

basic necessities paid by govt.

Financial education in schools

No bullying



I love meeting and looking at people from different backgrounds.

PEOPLE Health & wellbeing

Vision, planning & action **LEADERSHIP**

“Proactive & long-term policies”



More community input

People have agency & freedom of action

more cultural representation in politics

- More youth based leadership
↳ action as opposed to just consultation

YOUNG PEOPLE IN LEADERSHIP

If gov and politics is gonna run society, pls design it for empathy to work. Don't reward selfishness

“Invest in green energy”



Localized renewables

places that displace native animals

Transport infrastructure
↳ efficient Business Logistics

Spaces for gender diverse to freely express themselves.

Walkable Citys

more greenery

more youth based infrastructure
↳ third spaces aimed at young people (13-25)

Environment & infrastructure **PLACES**

University of Technology intern program report

Resilient Sydney participated in the Bachelor of Creative Intelligence and Innovation student intern program, hosting 4 third year students. The students assisted in the design, implementation and facilitation of the youth workshops and survey. The survey results were presented by the students at the workshops to inform the discussion. They have provided a report on the survey findings and their learnings from the project.



Images (top to bottom):
 Redfern youth workshop / Cassandra Lau
 Blacktown youth workshop / Resilient Sydney

The search for a young resilient Sydney

Report conducted by UTS BCII Interns 2023-2024
Cassandra Lau, Katie Yeung, Moira-Kelly Cruz, Sara Chaturvedi

Introduction

Over the course of our internship, we conducted an online survey to better understand the shocks and stressors in Sydney from a community-centric perspective.

Key findings

The survey responses aligned with the workshops outcomes and revealed several recurring themes pertinent to the challenges faced by young people today.

A common sentiment across the responses was that although young people are **equally concerned about various global issues** including climate change and social injustice, the impacts of financial and housing difficulties were felt more directly and of greater urgency. They felt they were left with no time or energy to deal with any other issues.

Parental support was recurrently mentioned as a core source of help for young people, reflecting how it has become increasingly difficult to be financially independent at a young age. An insight gained was the notion of how it is harder for the current generation to gain **upward social mobility** and **independence** compared to the previous generation.

However, there were also many responses that stated there has been **nothing** that has helped them cope with the challenges they're facing, and they typically just try **to work a few more jobs** to support themselves.

Increasing uncertainty and anxiety for the future is depleting both mental and societal resilience. 30% of respondents stated they struggle with a **mental health** condition.

Respondents

Amongst 127 respondents, 64% were female, 30% were male, and 6% were non-binary or preferred not to say.

Majority of the respondents fall within the age group of 19 to 22 and primarily speak English at home. 6% of respondents were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

“Age is not a barrier to producing great ideas. Involving youth in conversations surrounding them and their future should be prioritised moving forward”.

“We are the bearers of intergenerational burden”.

“We have things to say”.

“World view formed through social media and insta so our world view is broader”.

“So much can come from education but unfortunately kids from unfortunate backgrounds don't come to school”.



Images (left to right):
Redfern youth workshop / Cassandra Lau
Blacktown youth workshop / Cassandra Lau

Outcomes

Economic challenges

By far the most prevalent concern expressed by participants were economic challenges faced by young people today. This includes the unaffordable cost of living, competitive rental and job markets, and a lack of proportional income growth.

Property prices near urban centres are skyrocketing, exacerbating financial strain, while transportation expenses further burden individuals seeking more affordable accommodations further west of the Sydney CBD.

Intergenerational upwards mobility

Survey findings show that achieving upward social mobility is increasingly difficult for the current generation compared to previous cohorts. Financial and housing difficulties are felt most acutely, leaving young people with little time or energy to address other pressing issues. This leads to a delay in moving out, achieving independence from parents and/or guardians is becoming more and more unachievable, leading to implications for working society as a whole.

Survey participants were also acutely aware of disparities in experiences among young people, influenced by factors such as race, gender, disability and/or socioeconomic background. It is essential to recognize and address these disparities to ensure equitable opportunities and support for all young individuals.

“I admire the strong family units in my area, mostly Korean and Chinese families I believe. I wish we had that. Family cohesion is the main reason for one's ability to bounce back”.

“I was sweating doing homework from heat issues in my room, it was unbearable and affected my study”.

“Mentality of doom for the future, can't see an end result”.

Government and business responsibility

Participants consistently urged Government and business entities to be more proactive in finding solutions to the challenges faced by young people. They should be held accountable, and be pushed to actively engage in addressing issues such as affordable housing, job creation, and social support systems.

Participants were also critical of individualist solutions to structural problems, and believed that the solution to issues such as climate change and cost of living crisis would be found through Government and business initiatives, rather than reducing their personal carbon footprint.

Although the youth are equally concerned for various issues, financial and housing difficulties were felt most directly and urgently, leaving them with no time or energy to deal with other issues.

Mental health and wellbeing

Mental health emerged as a significant concern among young people, with growing awareness of the challenges they face. Rather than concerns surrounding awareness, participants were critical of inaccessible mental health support services, and desired more tangible action from governing systems.

Many participants expressed concerns surrounding domestic and family violence, citing that if they were to encounter such a circumstance, finding alternative housing would be impossible.

Engagement

Overall, there seemed to be a consensus that young people felt as though their voices were not being adequately listened to. Despite this, they still showed great interest in taking part in local and community initiatives, citing community networks as their primary source of comfort to shocks and stresses. The narrative of young people being apathetic towards Government and local council initiatives is incorrect - they just aren't being listened to in a way that matters.

Data and comments

Money worries and housing issues, were surveyed to be the largest concerns, with 42% of respondents choosing money worries and 26% choosing housing issues. Social connection was found to be the third largest concern 14%, followed by climate change 10%, system failure 6% and no concern 2%.

“Social media always presenting black and white divided opinions no middle ground”.

“We are going to be inheriting the decisions made by older generations”.

“Young people being self-serving is not true, common misconception”.

“I think schools should offer more subjects on life issues on what you need to know e.g. money, savings, superannuation, and buying a house”.

“As I am approaching the completion of my studies, I definitely feel very anxious when I think about the future - finding a stable job, saving up for a house, paying bills etc. It's worrying to balance the enjoyment of life but also sustainability of life.”

“As a young person, I don't believe my wage is enough to live comfortably and afford a house in the future.”

“Rent super high and at the same time super hard to find a job.”

“We have things to say”.



Image: Blacktown youth workshop / Cassandra Lau

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