



# Program Report

Resilient Sydney 2018–2024

# Participating councils of Greater Sydney



## Organisations facilitating flagship content



### About Resilient Sydney

Resilient Sydney is a collaboration of all 33 local governments of Greater Sydney in Australia. The program is coordinated by a small facilitating office governed by a metropolitan level Steering Committee of senior executives from local and state government and the business and community sectors. The program began in 2015 as a member of the 100 Resilient Cities initiative, and Sydney remains a member of the global Resilient Cities Network. The Resilient Sydney Office and program are funded by local government and hosted by the City of Sydney.

[www.resilientsydney.com.au](http://www.resilientsydney.com.au)

### About Resilient Cities Network

Resilient Cities Network is a global city-led organisation that drives urban resilience action to protect vulnerable communities from climate change and other physical, social and economic urban adversities and challenges. The Network supports cities and their Chief Resilience Officers in future-proofing their communities and critical infrastructure from shocks and stresses.

[www.resilientcitiesnetwork.org](http://www.resilientcitiesnetwork.org)

Resilient Sydney Program Report 2018–2024.

Published by the City of Sydney on behalf of the metropolitan councils of Sydney, with the support of Resilient Cities Network.





Photo by Chris Southwood/City of Sydney.

## Acknowledgement of country

Resilient Sydney acknowledges the First Nations peoples and Traditional Custodians of the land and waters of this place we now call Sydney. First Nation people continue to show great resilience and generosity of spirit towards other people with whom they now share their land and waters. We acknowledge their continued connection to and care for Country and pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, past and present.

**“Resilience comes from our family, identity, and a sense of belonging and community”**

.....  
Elder during the 2018 Resilient Sydney consultation

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# Introduction

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# Resilient Cities Network message



“The Resilient Sydney Strategy (2018) is a world-leading example of a city resilience strategy.”

The Resilient Cities Network (R-Cities) consists of member cities and Chief Resilience Officers from the former 100 Resilient Cities – pioneered by The Rockefeller Foundation program, sharing a common approach for city-led holistic urban resilience. Since 2019, R-Cities, in partnership with its global community delivers urban resilience by bringing together knowledge, practice, partnerships and funding to empower cities to build a safe, equitable and sustainable future for all. The Network focuses on empowering cities through our network of Chief Resilience Officers (CROs) and Communities of Practice; implementing specific urban resilience solutions through a set of multi-city programs; and mobilising financial and technical resources through our public and private sector partnerships.

In 2015, Sydney was tasked to hire a Chief Resilience Officer (CRO), develop a resilience strategy, access intelligence and services from private sector and non-profit partners, and share and receive ideas, innovation and knowledge through its global network. The Resilient Sydney Strategy (2018) is a world-leading example of a city resilience strategy. Governance was the core resilience challenge in Sydney. Over eight years of deep engagement with local and international leaders, communities and the private sector, Resilient Sydney has created a dynamic local network to enable transformational change and new governance for resilience in Greater Sydney.

Throughout, Sydney has been an active contributor to international conversations and knowledge-sharing for our global resilience agenda through:

1. Peer to peer exchange and city-to-city collaboration in the region and globally
2. Access to urban resilience expertise, technical assistance, and funding to facilitate project and strategy implementation
3. Global branding and communications about place-based resilience.

On behalf of R-Cities, I want to congratulate Resilient Sydney, the City of Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore and CEO Monica Barone, along with partner Mayors and councils across Greater Sydney, and the CRO Beck Dawson and team, on the successful implementation of the Resilient Cities approach. The delivery of the Resilient Sydney Strategy (2018) is impressive. Sydney is showing the world what can be done when leaders, governments, businesses and communities come together in the face of the increasing climate emergency to evolve and progress beyond the silos and rules that will not serve us in unprecedented times. Together we move beyond survival to thrive.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lauren N Sorkin'.

Executive Director, Resilient Cities Network  
**Lauren N Sorkin**

# Foreword

The last eight years of the Resilient Sydney Office (RSO) is testament to what can be achieved through collaboration. In 2016, diverse communities and organisations worked together across Greater Sydney to assess the risks and challenges facing our city. This led to the creation of the first Resilient Sydney strategy (2018–2024) outlining how we would tackle these together.

It is now time to reflect on our progress to date. Since 2018, Greater Sydney has been impacted by all eight of the top shocks our program identified. These shocks have shown how dependent we are on each other, how connected everyday life is to global networks, and how many people in our city are living in precarious situations. We are also more practised at working together and have more insight into how our city systems and people behave in a crisis.

This report provides many examples of how Greater Sydney councils, institutions and communities have worked together in new ways to improve how our city runs, to support those in need, and plan for a better future. Local governments across Sydney have created the conditions to build city resilience through identifying place-based resilience challenges, providing community-centred leadership, being flexible with resources and facilities, and focusing on rapid and consistent engagement with communities when they need it most.

This has been a period of significant capacity building. Organisations are now developing clear, ambitious plans and investing in the human resources needed to implement them. People across Sydney are becoming comfortable with resilience concepts and are increasingly using resilience terminology.

Resilient Sydney collected baseline data from the Greater Sydney councils in November 2023 to understand resilience efforts and initiatives across our region. Resilient Sydney will continue to collect and measure the region's resilience to ensure data informed decision making and evidence based policy making is core to collaboration.

There is more to do. Resilient Sydney and the Steering Committee look forward to continuing the critical work of increasing our city's resilience through the Resilient Sydney Strategy 2025–2030. We are committed to continuing to learn, measure, network and collaborate with the NSW Government, business, academia, and the community sector to continue to create a more resilient city. We acknowledge the leadership of Beck Dawson, Sydney's first Chief Resilience Officer who drove the formation and collaborative implementation of this strategy.

Chair, Resilient Sydney Steering Committee & CEO,  
City of Sydney  
**Monica Barone**



Photo by Katherine Griffiths/City of Sydney.

# Snapshot of Greater Sydney

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

## People

**5,231,147** People

65% of NSW's and 21% of Australia's population

Density of **429** per square km  
 25/sq km in Hawkesbury v. 8,173/sq km in City of Sydney

**GDP of \$490 billion**

68% of NSW GDP, 25% of Australian GDP

**Over 200 cultures** | **39%** of residents born overseas

## Place

**33** local government areas

**2,287<sup>MW</sup>** | **21.7%**

solar PV coverage across Greater Sydney rooftops

canopy cover across the Metro Urban Area

Emissions of **45 M tonnes CO2-e**  
 (trending down by 8% since 2014)

## River systems and catchments

3 major catchments | 9 rivers

### Top 3 environmental shocks



heatwaves



flooding & storms



bushfire

**Map Legend**

- ★ Central Business District
- ✈ International Airport
- ⚓ Port
- Council boundaries
- River systems





# Shocks and stresses in Sydney

Eight years of metropolitan-scale shock and stress events



## EXTREME WEATHER

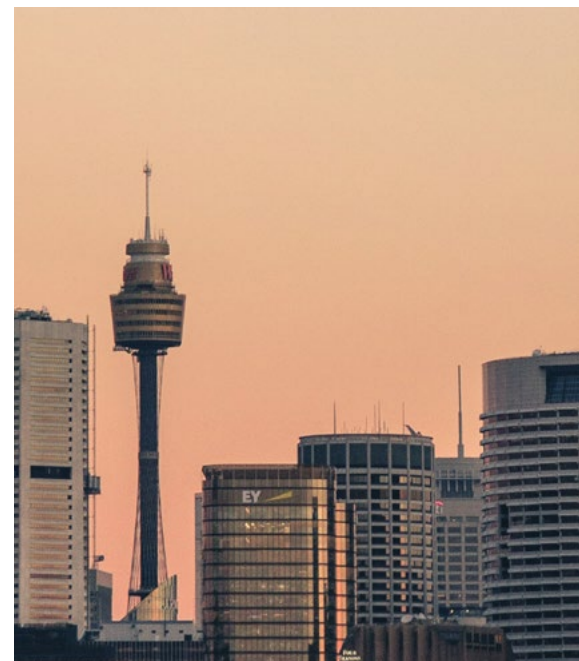
The cost of extreme weather is increasing. Across the country, it is estimated that natural disasters cost the Australian economy \$38 billion per year, or about 2 per cent of our annual GDP. This does not account for the immeasurable and long-lasting impacts on communities and the environment when experiencing disasters.<sup>1</sup>

### Fires

#### Dec 2019 – Jan 2020

NSW's Black Summer Bushfires saw mass-scale environmental impacts to the community, including bushfires, floods, drought, severe storms, extreme poor air quality and extreme heat. Across Australia, 33 lives were lost, nearly 3 billion animals were killed or displaced, including many threatened species, over 3,000 homes were destroyed and over 24 million hectares burned. The estimated financial losses were \$10 billion.<sup>2</sup>

The fires surrounded Sydney and impacted major suburban and peri-urban areas. The scale of the fires stretched resources, and by overlapping with wildfires in the northern hemisphere, it impeded our ability to share resources, such as waterbombing planes.



Penrith was declared the hottest place on earth in January 2020, reaching 48.9°C.

## Extreme heat

### February 2017

Observatory Hill in Sydney set a record for the most days above 35 degrees Celsius. Penrith in Sydney's northwest recorded a maximum temperature of 44.5 degrees Celsius and 38 days above 35 degrees Celsius.<sup>3</sup>

### December 2018

A high-pressure system causes a state-wide heatwave, with Western Sydney recording four consecutive days above 40 degrees Celsius.<sup>4</sup>

### January 2020

During a heatwave, the temperature in Penrith hit a record 48.9 degrees Celsius, making it the hottest place on the planet that day.<sup>5</sup>



## WATER CRISIS

### Drought

New South Wales was in a declared drought from 2017 to 2019, causing significant water restrictions and supply issues for Greater Sydney.<sup>6</sup>

### January 2019

Sydney's Warragamba Dam fell below 60 per cent and the city desalination plant was turned back on to supply Sydney with water.<sup>7</sup>

### December 2019

Sydney's Warragamba Dam fell to its lowest level in 15 years.<sup>8</sup>

Previous page: Smoke haze over the Sydney CBD during the 2019/20 Black Summer Bushfires.

Right: City storm. Photo by Katherine Griffiths/City of Sydney.

## Storms and flooding

East coast lows regularly bring storms and flooding to large parts of Sydney each year, resulting in some of the most expensive insurance events in Australia and regularly impacting millions of residents.

### December 2018

Sydney experienced a hailstorm that caused electrical hazards and disruptions to train lines as lightning struck power supplies and infrastructure. Over 143,000 insurance claims were lodged amounting to approximately \$1.36 billion worth of damage.<sup>9</sup>

### February 2020

Sydney received nearly 400mm of rain in three days – the heaviest in 30 years. Thousands were told to evacuate due to rising river levels, and over 200 people were rescued by emergency services.

On 18 February, over 75,000 lightning strikes hit the Sydney area and wind gusts over 100 km/h were recorded. Insurance claims of \$967 million were lodged for the event.<sup>10</sup>

## March 2021

A major storm event over 4 to 5 days caused riverine flooding and the overflow of the Warragamba Dam, causing a 1 in 50 years flood in Penrith, Windsor and Richmond, and the Hawkesbury and Colo River Valleys; 3,000 people were evacuated from their homes. The NSW Government declared a moratorium on development in the floodplain and discussed raising the Warragamba Dam wall.<sup>11</sup>

## February 2022

From February to April, NSW and south-east QLD experienced one of the most severe flood events in history. Record-breaking rains caused significant damage to critical infrastructure, disrupted major supply chains, damaged or destroyed over 8,000 homes resulting in \$4.29 billion of insurance claims, decimated the town of Lismore in the state's north, and impacted over 14 million people. Tragically, 26 people lost their lives while 24 Sydney Local Government Areas (LGAs) were declared disaster zones.<sup>12</sup>





## DISEASE PANDEMIC

### COVID-19

#### January 2020 to October 2023

Sydney recorded the first case of COVID-19 on 25 January, 2020. In March, the state issued Public Health Orders to force cancellation of events, restriction of non-essential travel, introduction of social distancing rules and cessation of non-essential businesses and activities.

From 2020 to 2022, Sydney experienced difficult lockdown conditions that restricted movement across the city and interstate, enforced mandatory COVID testing conditions for essential workers, introduced fines for non-compliance of wearing masks or remaining within your designated area of travel and caused significant breakdown of community connections, relationships, mental and public health, and the economy.

Due to higher rates of infection in Western Sydney, some communities were placed under extreme lockdown conditions, causing disproportionate impacts across Greater Sydney.

Work-from-home conditions were enforced across the city to limit travel and the spreading of the disease. Those who could not work from home experienced significant job and income loss. Australia's Federal Government provided unprecedented financial support to employers and employees through JobKeeper and JobSeeker payments, which helped to reduce the financial impact of the pandemic on the community.

A mandatory vaccination program was rolled out in early 2021 to help mitigate the health impacts of the disease on communities and reduce the spread.

On 20 October 2023, Australia's Chief Medical Officer declared the COVID-19 pandemic a Communicable Disease Incident of National Significance. From January 2020 to November 2023, there were 11,629,977 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and tragically, 23,342 deaths.

From 2020 to 2022, Sydney experienced difficult lockdown conditions that restricted movement across the city.





## INFRASTRUCTURE FAILURE

Major incidents on Sydney's critical infrastructure, such as the public transport network and energy grid, are usually caused by extreme weather and result in significant costs and delays.

### January 2019

The Eastern Suburbs of Sydney were brought to a 90-minute standstill by a major power outage which left 45,000 homes and businesses without electricity.<sup>13</sup>

### February 2020

Storms left more than 100,000 people across Sydney without power, with around 13,000 homes losing power for nearly a week.<sup>14</sup> The storms also caused a landslide on the train line between Leura and Katoomba, interrupting the rail service for a month.<sup>15</sup>

### December 2021

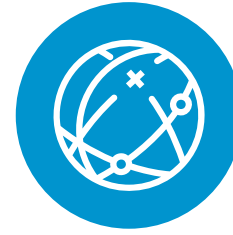
A micro-burst storm cell ripped through the Northern Beaches six days before Christmas causing significant damage to the energy grid and leaving over 36,000 residents without electricity.<sup>16</sup> The damage was so severe, parts of the electricity network had to be completely re-built.



## FINANCIAL INSTITUTION FAILURE

### February 2019

The final report for the Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry was handed into Parliament. Members of the public submitted more than 10,000 complaints about financial services entities by using the Commission's web form. The conduct of many entities were found to have broken the law, causing substantial loss to customers but yielding significant profits to the entities concerned.<sup>17</sup>



## DIGITAL NETWORK FAILURE

### May 2018

Major outage from Australia's largest telecom provider, Telstra, knocked out emergency calls to 000 for two hours across NSW and several states.<sup>18</sup>

### July 2019

Telstra outage impacts EFTPOS machines, disrupting all financial transactions in the city.<sup>19</sup>

### November 2023

Optus, Australia's second largest telecom provider, experiences a complete network failure, resulting in a 14-hour loss of connection for 10 million customers and preventing 228 emergency calls to 000. The provider was forced to face a Senate enquiry into the incident.<sup>20</sup>





## TERROR ATTACKS

Sydney has experienced social disruptions such as terrorism threats, protests and riots. Misinformation, polarisation and desensitisation have been reported as key factors contributing to social disruptions.

Terror attacks have a profound impact on the affected communities, often causing long-lasting emotional and psychological distress, as seen in the mental health struggles of survivors and those directly involved. There have been a number of attacks on cultural and religious groups, causing hurt in Sydney's diverse communities, and which challenge social cohesion. Sydney has significantly increased counter terrorism operations, including the establishment of task forces and raids on suspected terrorists.



## CYBER ATTACKS

Malicious actors are compromising Australia's security through cyber attacks. In FY23,<sup>21</sup> Australian residents, businesses and institutions experienced a cyber security incident every six minutes. In response to the increasing threat, the Australian Government created the National Office of Cyber Security led by a National Cyber Security Coordinator.<sup>22</sup>

### August 2016

Australia's census website was taken offline for 40 hours by 4 Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) said it believes the hacking attacks were a deliberate attempt to sabotage the national survey.<sup>23</sup>

### April 2020

47 Service NSW employees had their emails hacked and as a result, 104,000 customers had highly sensitive identification data stolen.

### September 2022

Telecommunications provider, Optus,<sup>24</sup> experienced the largest data breach on record with 10 million customers affected. Highly sensitive identification data, including passport, Medicare and drivers licence numbers, were stolen and compromised.

### November 2022

A cyber attack on health insurance provider, Medibank, resulted in the medical data of 480,000 current and former customers being held for ransom by the hackers before eventually being published on the dark web.

### March 2023

Financial services provider, Latitude Financial,<sup>25</sup> were targeted by hackers with 14 million customer identification details stolen, including loan applications, bank and credit card details, and identification documents.



## HEALTH SERVICES DEMAND

### 2019

The Grattan Institute published a report showing that private health insurance premiums are rising, and people are dropping their cover, especially the young and the healthy. Those who kept their cover are more likely to need health care, which drives insurance costs up further. 100,000 Australians dropped their private hospital cover between 2018 and 2019.<sup>26</sup>

### 2021

The COVID-19<sup>27</sup> pandemic placed enormous pressure on local health services across Sydney. People waited longer for ambulances and hospital treatment than pre-COVID levels, and the number of priority 1 ambulance calls was substantially higher than 2019 levels. Healthcare workers across Sydney reported being “completely overwhelmed”.<sup>28</sup>



## HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

The lack of affordable housing in Sydney reached an all-time high in 2023. Data showed that 35.3 per cent of Sydney renters were in rental stress, meaning more than 30 per cent of their income is spent on housing.

### 2017

Census data showed the homelessness crisis had worsened – jumping 14 per cent in five years.<sup>29</sup> The Sydney Alliance stated that the cost of housing had risen 70 per cent in five years, while wages had only risen 13 per cent.<sup>30</sup>

### April 2019

A Sydney Policy Lab report found that low-income and vulnerable groups were being forced into informal and sometimes illegal housing arrangements, due to a lack of affordable alternatives.<sup>31</sup>

### December 2019

83 organisations wrote to Prime Minister Scott Morrison advocating for the government to invest more in social housing.<sup>32</sup>

### 2021

Sydney house prices rose by nearly \$1,000 per day over the 2021 calendar year.<sup>33</sup>

### 2023

Sydney was ranked the second least affordable housing market in the world.<sup>34</sup>

### September 2023

The Australian Government announced the \$10 billion Housing Australia Future Fund aiming at building 30,000 social and affordable houses across Australia within 5 years.

Data shows that 35.3 per cent of Sydney renters are in rental stress.



## SOCIAL COHESION

After an initial spike at the start of 2020<sup>35</sup>, social cohesion across Australia has been in decline and is now at its lowest level since 2007.

There are multiple pressure points affecting social cohesion, including economic disparity, confusion around national belonging, deeper division and increased loneliness.<sup>36</sup>

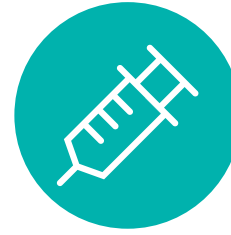
In 2023, one-in-six people said they had experienced racial or religious discrimination in the last 12 months, contributing to a weaker sense of belonging and wellbeing. The division around the Voice to Parliament has also impacted social cohesion, mirroring differences and adding to social divides and polarisation.<sup>37</sup>



## EMPLOYMENT DIVERSITY

The Diversity Council of Australia (DCA) conducts annual nationally representative survey of workplace inclusion.

The 2024 report indicated a rise in workers perceiving workplaces as non-inclusive post-pandemic, as well as an increase in discrimination and harassment. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers reported experiencing the highest levels of feeling excluded and workplace harassment, followed by workers with a disability and LGBTIQ+ workers.<sup>38</sup>



## DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE

The increase in methamphetamine-related hospitalisations has slowed but is still close to its all-time high of 153.1 per 100,000, reached in 2015/16.<sup>39</sup>

The use of e-cigarettes has quadrupled among people aged 18 to 24 and more than five-fold among people aged 14 to 17 between 2019–2023. Almost 50 per cent surveyed having tried vaping by age 16.<sup>40</sup>

According to the National Drug Strategy Survey 2023 risky alcohol consumption has remained steady between 2019 and 2023, around 30 per cent of adults.<sup>41</sup>





## INEQUITY

Researchers at Sydney University revealed high-income earners are clustering in ever-tighter spatial groups, reinforcing poverty and spatial segregation as low-income renters are displaced from these areas as the housing has become too expensive, despite the economic and social connection to these areas. Those on lower and moderate incomes are forced out to the fringes and must travel longer and further to for employment and services.<sup>42</sup>



## CHRONIC ILLNESS

The 2021 Census looked for at the level of incidence of selected long-term health conditions in the community and found that 32 per cent of Greater Sydney residents report at least one long-term health condition.<sup>43</sup>



## TRANSPORT DIVERSITY

Delays in infrastructure planning and provision and development of new suburbs continues to leave many in the community with limited access to public transport. A parliamentary inquiry in early 2024 confirmed that despite recent investment in metro infrastructure, many areas of Western Sydney remain underserved by public transport leaving many with little choice but to drive.<sup>44</sup>

Addressing car dependency extends beyond improving public transport options and requires an integrated approach that invests in active modes such as walking and cycling. Research published by Centre for Western Sydney notes that Western Sydney continues to rank low in walkability, especially LGAs far from Sydney's CBD, like the Blue Mountains and Wollondilly.<sup>45</sup>

Many employment precincts, hospitals and schools in Western Sydney remain 'underserved' by public transport.



Centrelink Offices. Photo by Jason South/SMH.

# A systems approach to place-based resilience

The Resilient Sydney Strategy (2018) takes a systems approach to building resilience. This involves analysing the components in city systems (organisations, institutions, businesses and communities), how they interact and how they could work better.

Through creating networks, sharing information, training and providing leadership, the strategy aims to improve understanding, capacity, connections, policies, processes and services. This creates systemic change that strengthens our city against multiple risks and provides a return on investment whether shock events occur or not.

For example:

- Strengthening community connections helps us pull together when we are in crisis. It also improves our mental health and protects against loneliness in periods of stability.
- Including the community in decision making helps us make better decisions, whether we need to rapidly respond to emergencies or create long-term strategic plans.
- Greening our city reduces our exposure to extreme heat days, and it also improves our mental health.
- Active transport networks continue to function when other transport networks fail and walking and cycling also improve our health and wellbeing.

Building resilience also prepares us better for the unknown.

The Resilient Sydney Strategy (2018) includes 5 directions containing 35 actions to strengthen Sydney's capacity to prepare for, respond to and recover from disaster, while ensuring all of Sydney's communities can access opportunities to thrive.

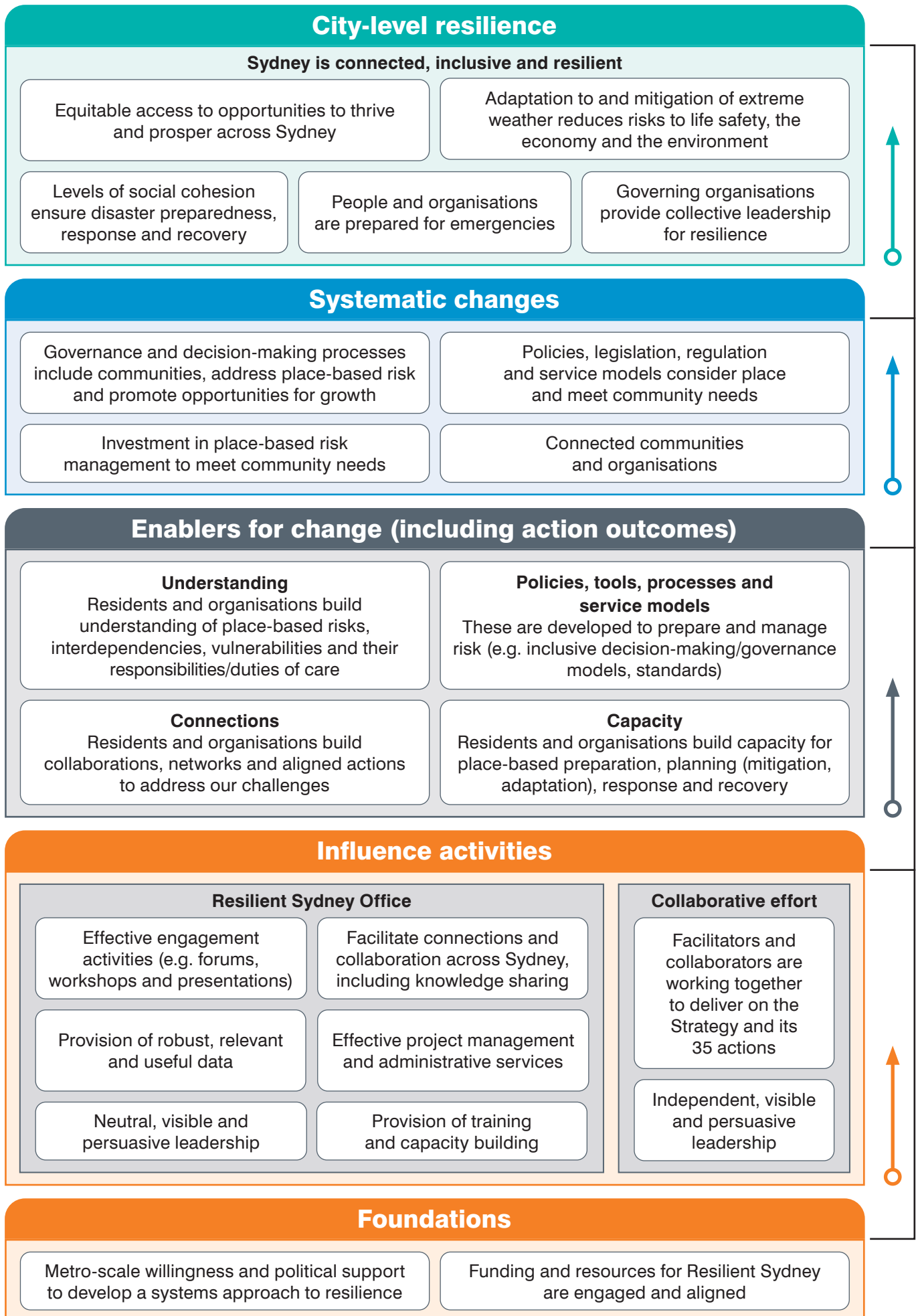
The Strategy is designed to address five core challenges by tackling the systems conditions holding these problems in place. For any systems change initiative, these typically include policies, practices, resource flows, relationships and connections, power dynamics and mental modes.

Given the nature of the problems that Resilient Sydney is trying to address – including institutional change in the context of a historical lack of connected decision making and action – a key objective for Resilient Sydney is to increase governance and community connections, as well as collaboration as a vehicle for systemic change.

Resilient Sydney recognises no one organisation can address the challenge of improving the city's resilience, and instead looks at how organisations, leaders and residents can work together, across and beyond traditional boundaries.

The Actions within the Strategy were delivered via collaborative initiatives, underpinned by a collective impact model for systemic change. Resilient Sydney has led to place-based change in policies, legislation, regulation, and service models, and overall improved resilience.

# Resilient Sydney Theory of Change



# Resilient Sydney program highlights (2018–2024)

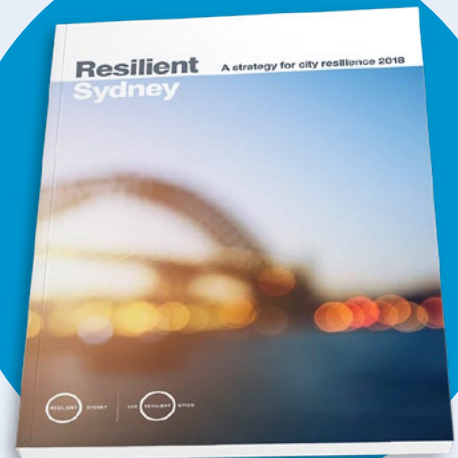
2015

## RESILIENT CITIES NETWORK

Sydney joins the global city network for resilience in 2015 with a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation

2017

2018



First resilience strategy for Greater Sydney published, a “world-leading example” that consulted 1,000 people and 100 organisations



Program becomes self-funded by Sydney local governments

2019

2020–2023

2023



The network of 33 Sydney councils coordinated to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic 2020–2023



The Resilient Sydney Platform – pioneered the first standardised city-wide database for local government



All 33 Sydney councils agree to continue collaborating for a second city resilience strategy 2025–2030

# Foundational actions



## Established

### Governance for resilience

- ✓ **33 Sydney councils** voluntarily collaborating to deliver the Resilient Sydney program
- ✓ **1 Metropolitan-wide Steering Committee** providing diverse governance and strategic direction from government, business and the community sector
- ✓ **8 years of stable hosting and governance** from the Lord Mayor and City of Sydney Council
- ✓ **80% engagement rate** of 66 dedicated council officers as Resilience Ambassadors meeting quarterly for over 8 years
- ✓ **6 Mayoral Summits** brought city leaders together to consider and advocate for city resilience, waste and water management, affordable housing and emergency management



### Capacity for resilience

- ✓ **Over 150 officers** across the Greater Sydney local government network engaged in resilience
- ✓ **350 Resilient Sydney Platform users** accessing benchmarking data at city and local scales
- ✓ **Over 4,000 people training hours** on the Resilient Sydney Platform with over 25 data and policy capacity-building masterclasses
- 2017–2020**  
Established the metropolitan Engagement Practitioners Network for local government
- 2020–2023**  
Social Cohesion Data and Policy Working Group
- 2021–2023**  
Affordable and Diverse Housing Summits and Working Group
- 2023**  
Waste Mayoral Summit



## Awards

**Chief Commissioners Award for Best Planning Intervention 2019** from the Greater Sydney Commission for the Resilient Sydney Strategy (2018). Chief Commissioner stated, “This powerful example of innovation and collaboration has immense potential to create positive change in our metropolis”.

**Best Smart City Award 2019** from the Committee for Sydney for the Resilient Sydney Platform.



## Pioneered

### Tools for resilience

#### 2019

Resilient Sydney data Platform

Emergency Management Maturity Matrix for councils

#### 2020

Template local pandemic response plans and policy changes for councils

#### 2021

Resilient Sydney Resilience Assessment Guide

Resilient Cities Interdependency and Priority Shocks Assessment Tool

Cool Suburbs Tool Pilot

#### 2022

Resilient Sydney Net Zero App

Resilient Sydney Affordable Housing toolkit and guidance for local government

NSW Government and Resilient Sydney 'Building Social Cohesion' framework and guidance for local government



### Foundations for resilience



#### 100% of the core

#### Resilient Sydney program

funded by local governments in Greater Sydney (2017–2024)



#### \$1.5 million awarded

to Resilient Sydney to renew the Resilient Sydney Strategy 2025–2030



#### 33 councils

have used Resilient Sydney information, tools, or guidance to support their resilience efforts

#### 2019

Research report on 'Understanding the Impacts of Disasters' on Sydney communities

#### 2021

Developed a theory of change and evaluation framework to test the effectiveness of the Resilient Sydney program

## Recognition

#### 62% of evaluation survey

respondents said their organisations had developed new plans, tools, processes, policies and/or service models as a result of their participation in Resilient Sydney.

#### Over 50% of organisations

surveyed had embedded Sydney's top shocks, stresses and challenges into organisational planning and reporting.

#### Resilient Sydney is regarded as a

"highly influential leader showcasing a model for change to regional, state and international audiences".<sup>46</sup>

# Resilient Sydney Strategy (2018–2024)

## Our vision

Greater Sydney is connected, inclusive and resilient.

## Our mission

Sydney will understand and be prepared to manage our resilience challenges.



## DIRECTION 1 People centred city

We include communities in decision making for growth and equity.

### Community resilience

- Over 1,000 people and 100 organisations were involved in the first resilience strategy for Greater Sydney
- 18 councils (54%) have adopted (12) or are developing (6) local resilience plans and 7 more have it as an action
- 402.5km of cycling infrastructure was built across Greater Sydney between 2016 and 2023

### Organisation resilience

- 26 councils (79%) have adopted (18) or are developing (8) an affordable housing policy, strategy or scheme
- 32 councils (97%) have embedded resilience into at least one of their Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) strategic documents
- 19 councils (58%) took new action following the Waste Mayoral Summit
- 22 councils have resilience or sustainability committees

### Outcomes

People are connected to where they live and able to access transport, affordable housing, education and employment opportunities.

- Inclusion
- Resilient growth
- A more equitable city



## DIRECTION 2

### Live with our climate

We adapt to sustain our quality of life and our environment.

#### Community resilience

- 1 million trees planted across Greater Sydney (2019–2022)
- 8 per cent reduction in overall emissions for Sydney since 2014
- 20 councils (61%) are developing plans or policies for community heat impacts
- Greener Neighbourhoods collaboration (2021–2023)

#### Organisation resilience

- 16 councils with urban forest plans to mitigate heat
- 21 councils (64%) have Net Zero targets for their communities
- 14 councils (42%) have adopted a community Net Zero Plan
- 30 councils (91%) procure renewable energy through a purchase power agreement – an average of 86 per cent of their operational energy
- 30 councils (91%) have assessed or improved the resilience of council-owned assets against climate hazards

#### Outcomes

People have access to clean air and water, natural environments and adaptive technology throughout the city for climate comfort and safety, health and city connections.

- Local adaptation
- Global performance
- A diverse economy



## DIRECTION 3

### Connect for strength

Every Sydneysider will feel they belong in our community and city.

#### Community resilience

- 25,000 downloads of the Everyday Racism App
- 31 councils (94%) promoted the Neighbour Day campaign to their communities
- 25 councils (76%) are Refugee Welcome Zones
- 16 councils (48%) are measuring social cohesion in their communities

#### Organisation resilience

- 32 councils (97%) have embedded Aboriginal cultural protocols into council meetings and events
- 21 councils (63%) have adopted (16) or are developing (5) a Reconciliation Action Plan
- 17 councils (52%) provide cultural awareness training to staff
- 18 councils (55%) have First Nations advisory committees
- 17 councils (52%) have multicultural advisory committees
- 20 councils (61%) have youth advisory committees
- 25 councils (76%) have disability advisory committees

#### Outcomes

People have equal access to engage in society, the economy and all the city has to offer.

- A welcoming and inclusive city
- Resilient cultures
- Strength in diversity



## DIRECTION 4

### Get ready

We know how to prepare, respond and recover.

#### Community resilience

- 40,000 downloads of the Get Prepared App
- 1.6 million people with access to disaster dashboards from 9 councils
- 32 councils (97%) promoted Emergency Ready Week to their communities
- 7 councils (21%) are developing a Local Recovery Plan for their communities

#### Organisation resilience

- 26 councils (79%) have a business continuity plan
- Local Government Bushfire Support Group (2020) and over 100 deployments of support
- 28 councils (85%) have a Local Emergency Management Committee
- Emergency Management Maturity Matrix for councils (2019)

#### Outcomes

Sydney residents and organisations understand the risks they face and how to work together to respond to them, now and in the future.

- Understanding risks
- Understanding interdependences
- A prepared community



## DIRECTION 5

### One city

We are one city.

#### Community resilience

Major collaboration projects led by Resilient Sydney and the NSW Government to tackle key city resilience challenges:

1. Greening our City Urban Forest and Data Program
2. Greater Sydney 'Race 2 Net Zero'
3. Cool Suburbs Pilot and Project
4. Strengthening Social Cohesion for Resilience
5. Diverse and Affordable Housing for Greater Sydney

#### Organisation resilience

- 33 Greater Sydney councils actively engaged in the Resilient Sydney program for 8 years
- Over 150 resilience officers across the local government network
- 80 per cent average attendance at quarterly Resilience Ambassador meetings
- 3 major M&E reports published highlighting effectiveness of the Resilient Sydney Program
- 7 in-person global network conferences attended and knowledge-sharing with 100 international cities

#### Outcomes

Key governing organisations across Sydney pledge to build their capacity and cooperate to understand and manage shock and stresses for everyone in a resilient metropolitan Sydney.

- Collective leadership
- Collaboration
- Sharing knowledge

“

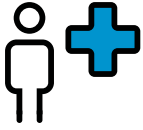
**There is clear evidence  
that Resilient Sydney  
has instigated greater  
investment in resilience  
across all stakeholder  
groups**

”



# City-wide actions for resilience (2018–2024)

## Resilience investments



**\$730 mil**

in emergency preparedness and recovery funding to Sydney communities



**\$1.4 mil**

to socially connect communities through local projects in NSW



**\$3 mil**

funding to build a cooler city to reduce urban heat



**\$200,000**

Greater Sydney Affordable and Diverse Housing Policy and Data Project

## State and Federal government investments for Sydney's resilience



### Housing

**\$200,000**

(estimated) Greater Sydney Affordable and Diverse Housing Project with SSROC, Resilient Sydney, NSW Government, and Community Housing Industry Association NSW (CHIA NSW)

### Social resilience



**\$482,000 (~50%) awarded to** 7 Sydney councils in Rounds 1 and 2 of the NSW Social Cohesion Grants (2022–2023)

**\$1.4 million available in** social cohesion funding available for local governments in NSW (2022–2023)

NSW Subjective Wellbeing Index (2018–2023) measuring indicators of social wellbeing **every 6 months from 5,000 people**



### Natural hazard resilience

**\$1.323mil**

for Greater Sydney Heat Taskforce

**\$60 million commitment** from NSW Government for canopy data for 8 years

**\$1.37 million Greener Neighbourhoods Program** grants made to 28 Sydney councils for urban greening projects

**\$250,000 Cool Suburbs Tool** – funded through Adapt NSW

### Emergency preparedness and recovery



**\$195.8 million (40.1%) awarded to** 33 councils (100%) from the \$500mil NSW Regional and Local Roads Repair Fund in response to 2022 floods

**\$5.15 million (17.2%) awarded to** 5 Sydney councils, SSROC, WSROC and Resilient Sydney from the \$30 million NSW Disaster Risk Reduction Fund

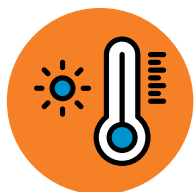
**\$500,000 (0.25%) awarded to** 1 Sydney council from Round 1 of the \$200 million Federal Disaster Ready Fund (15.88 per cent of total funds awarded to NSW)

## Sector actions across the city



### Business acting for resilience

- GreenStar resilience credits, Green Building Council of Australia (mandatory since 2019)
- Infrastructure Sustainability Council ISCA 2.0 resilience rating tool for buildings (since 2019)
- Defending Sydney report from Committee for Sydney (2023)
- Nature Positive Sydney report from Committee for Sydney (2023)



### Urban and extreme heat Sydney's top shock

- Turn Down the Heat Strategy 2018 (WSROC)
- Cooling the City Summit hosted by Penrith City Council (2019)
- WSROC Urban Heat Planning Toolkit (2021)
- Heat Smart Framework (2022)
- 16 councils (49%) have used WSROC and Resilient Sydney heat tools
- Greater Sydney Heat Taskforce 2022–2024 (WSROC and Resilient Sydney)



### Community Resilience

- Social Housing Emergency Preparedness Handbook – Inner Sydney Voice (2021)
- Connecting the Disaster Dots, preparedness resources for CALD communities – Willoughby City Council (2021)
- Heat Smart bus shelters (Sweltering Cities)



### New South Wales (NSW) State Government resilience interventions

#### Agencies

<b>2020–2022</b> Established Resilience NSW	<b>2022</b> Enacted the NSW Reconstruction Authority
--	---

#### Guidance

<b>2021</b> NSW Greener Neighbourhoods Guide  NSW Natural Hazards Toolkit	<b>2022</b> NSW Social Cohesion Framework and Guidance for Local Government  <b>2023</b> NSW Net Zero Communities Guide
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#### Collaboration mechanisms

<b>2018–2023</b> Metropolitan Active Transport Network	<b>2020–2023</b> NSW Local Government Anti-Racism Working Group
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#### Plans

<b>2018</b> NSW Critical Infrastructure Strategy	<b>2020–2030</b> NSW Net Zero Plan
<b>2018–2023</b> Direction 10 in the Greater Sydney Region Plan: “A resilient city”	<b>2024</b> State Disaster Mitigation Plan
<b>2019</b> Greening our City Premiers Priority	

.....

# Resilient Sydney Strategy (2018–2024) – Directions and actions

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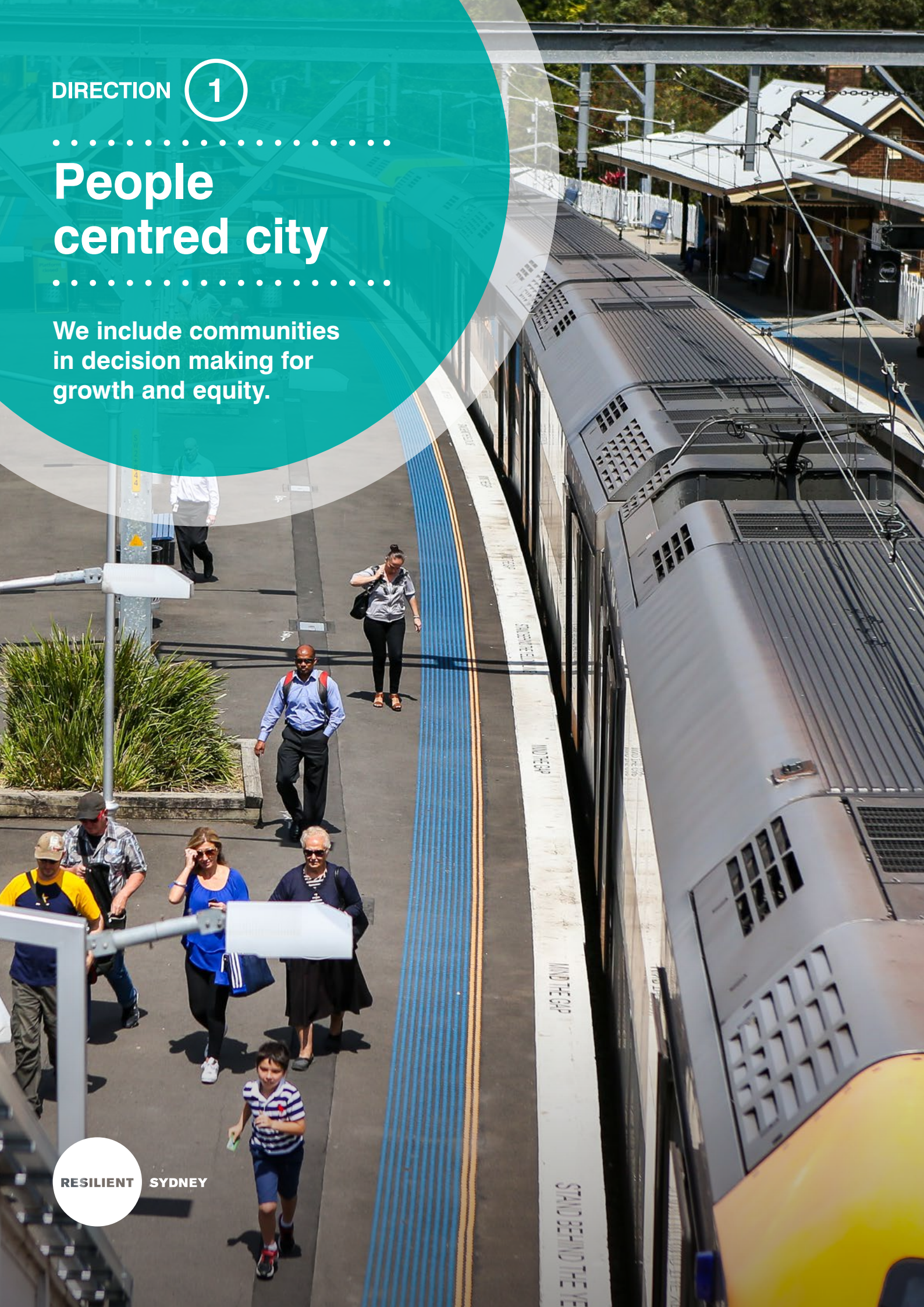


DIRECTION

1

.....  
**People  
centred city**  
.....

We include communities  
in decision making for  
growth and equity.





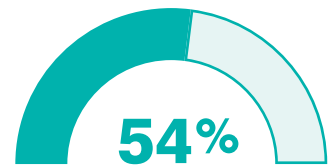
**100%**  
OF COUNCILS  
have improved  
their resilience as a  
result of the Resilient  
Sydney program



**97%**  
OF COUNCILS  
have embedded  
resilience into at least  
one of their IP&R  
strategic documents



**79%**  
OF COUNCILS  
have adopted or  
are developing an  
Affordable Housing  
policy, strategy  
or scheme



**54%**  
OF COUNCILS  
have adopted or  
are developing local  
resilience plans  
(and a further 7 have  
it as an action)



**402.5 km**  
of cycling infrastructure  
built across Greater Sydney  
between 2016 and 2023



**22 councils**  
have resilience or  
sustainability committees

## ACTION 1

### Shocks and stresses managed through planning for growth

In 2016, urban resilience was an emerging concept that was not on the mainstream political agenda. Eight years later, Sydney's elected representatives and public officials are now more aware of the shocks and stresses facing the city and their communities. They are taking a structured approach to resilience planning and are investing in the resources required to implement their plans.

Some local governments now have dedicated resilience teams, and many have incorporated resilience thinking and targets into their plans and reports.

In 2021, Resilient Sydney developed the Resilience Assessment Guide for Councils, enabling local government to conduct a resilience assessment of their community, assets and infrastructure in the face of shocks and stresses. The Guide incorporates tools, such as the 'R-Cities Interdependency and Priority Shocks Assessment Tool' from Infrastructure NSW, Resilient Sydney and the Resilient Cities Network, which assesses the resilience of assets. In 2022, Campbelltown City Council and the City of Sydney piloted the tool on their Council-owned assets.

The Guide provides the first step in the development of a comprehensive Resilience Strategy for Councils.

**Action: Ongoing. Resilient Sydney will continue to support local governments to embed resilience into their organisations.**

In response to the devastating floods in early 2022, the NSW Reconstruction Authority announced the Disaster Risk Reduction Fund and awarded nearly \$30 million in funding to 66 projects in early 2023. In Sydney, 8 organisations received \$5.15 million (17 per cent of the total funding) and have begun project development, due for completion by June 2024.

- **Bayside Council** – awarded \$300,000 for an AI flood detection project
- **Campbelltown City Council** – awarded \$120,000 for a Community Resilience Officer
- **Hornsby Shire Council** – awarded \$81,000 for a bushfire education and engagement program
- **Northern Beaches Council** – awarded \$300,000 for a Resilience Officer to create a disaster dashboard and investigate flood mitigation in the LGA

- **Blue Mountains City Council** – awarded \$1.135 million for a bioregional planetary health collaboration
- **Resilient Sydney** – awarded \$1.5 million for a renewed regional resilience strategy for Greater Sydney
- **South Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils** – awarded \$390,000 for a waste management risk reduction and resilience plan
- **Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils** – awarded \$1.323 million for a Greater Sydney multi-agency heat taskforce to improve heat risk governance

In 2023, the Federal Government announced a landmark \$1 billion Disaster Ready Fund to help finance risk reduction initiatives across the country over the next five years. In Sydney, Blacktown City Council was awarded \$500,000 from Round 1 of the fund to bolster drainage infrastructure for flood mitigation.

Waste has been identified as an emerging stress for Sydney. To support advocacy for this issue and the increasing demand it is placing on councils, Resilient Sydney partnered with SSROC to host a Mayoral Summit on Waste in May 2023.

- 32 out of 33 councils attended and 19 councils (58%) took new action following the summit.
- 25 councils (76%) have an adopted resilience strategy, plan or policy (12), are currently developing one (6) or have it as an action to develop one (7)

- 32 councils (97%) have embedded resilience into a strategic Integrated Planning and Reporting document
- 29 councils (88%) have taken action to assess, improve or manage the resilience of council-owned assets in regards to climate hazards
- 33 councils (100%) have been able to use information provided by the Resilient Sydney Office to support resilience efforts in their organisations or with partners

**“The Resilient Sydney strategy (2018) set the context for Ryde to prepare and adopt the first local resilience action plan undertaken by a council in NSW.”**

.....  
 Paul Bateson, Resource and Resilience Officer,  
 City of Ryde Council

**“For the first time, councils are developing their own resilience strategies, and I put that down to the work of Resilient Sydney.”**

.....  
 Marg Prendergast, Executive Director,  
 Disaster Recovery, Resilience NSW



Resilient Sydney Workshop held in the Barnet Long Room, Customs House. Photo by Katherine Griffiths/City of Sydney.



Members of the Penrith City Council Resilience Committee. Photo by Andrew Hewson/Penrith City Council.

## Case study

### **Penrith Resilience Committee – Innovation in representation**

Penrith City Council established a Resilience Committee in 2017. It advises Council on opportunities to improve resilience in Penrith and how to integrate resilience within the activities and decision-making of Council.

The Mayor, Councillors, representatives from the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE), the local area health district and Western Sydney University, industry professionals and community members all sit on the Committee. It meets at least four times a year.

Andrew Hewson, Resilience Ambassador from Penrith City Council, says that the Resilience Committee has been highly influential in changing the way people think about resilience.

“The Committee has a great balance of high-level strategic thinkers and local residents, which provides helpful insights for Councillors before their meetings. The Sustainability and Resilience unit is a team of four in an organisation of around 1,200 – we rely on leveraging the efforts of other teams to make an impact. The Committee has given resilience a higher standing within the organisation; it’s been much easier to get staff on board since it was established.

Resilience and sustainability have come along in leaps and bounds at Penrith City Council. Where they were once tick-a-box exercises at the end of a project, principles are now getting embedded across the organisation, and planned for at the outset of any city shaping project, like open space or urban design projects. The Committee has definitely been a big contributor to that, by providing strategic advice across the whole organisation on an ongoing basis.”

## ACTION

## 2

### Network metropolitan practitioners for community agency

Local Governments are now consulting Sydney communities on the decisions that affect their lives more frequently, and in a more structured way.

The most significant change has been recent legislative amendments that have increased requirements for local governments to consult. New technologies that made online consultations easier also played a role.<sup>47</sup>

The Resilient Sydney network continues to convene the greater Sydney engagement practitioners community of practice. It provides engagement practitioners in local government a place to share ideas, experiences and knowledge about engagement practice. Over the same period, the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) standards proliferated among local governments, and they have largely been adopted as a standard, reducing the need for the engagement practitioners' network.

Action: Completed work as set out in the 2018 strategy.

- 24 councils (73%) were involved in the metropolitan engagement practitioners' network
- 45 per cent of survey respondents said Resilient Sydney had increased their engagement with local communities and customers to create plans for action for local resilience
- 42 per cent of survey respondents said Resilient Sydney had increased their engagement with local communities to research local risks and needs
- 38 per cent of survey respondents said their organisation is seeing signs of improvement in the inclusion of community and customers in resilience planning



Members of the Metropolitan engagement practitioners' network. Photo by Katherine Griffiths/City of Sydney.



## ACTION 3

### Collaborate for cross-city active transport

Most modes of transport in Sydney create greenhouse emissions, are at risk of failing during a shock event, and do not promote healthy outcomes for residents. Active transport, such as cycling and walking, is reliable, healthy and creates zero emissions. Local and state government officials are now collaborating better to provide their communities with more active transport options.

Resilient Sydney helped to establish the Sydney Active Transport Forum in May 2017, bringing transport planners from state and local governments together to align policies and create cross-boundary transport solutions. The City of Sydney and City of Parramatta initially provided secretariat and governance support for the meetings and 14 Sydney councils were involved in the forum. In 2019, the NSW Government took on the coordination role and expanded the forum across the state. Four years later and the forum has now developed into a state-wide community of practice with over 600 invitees and 150 to 200 people in regular attendance, providing invaluable support to active transport planners and councils across NSW.

Action: Completed work as set out in the 2018 strategy.

- State-wide Active Transport Forum initiated by Resilient Sydney running for 6 years with 600 members
- 30 councils (91%) have either developed an active transport policy or are developing one
- Over 402 kilometres of cycleways have been built across the city since 2016

**“The Sydney active transport forum has been a fantastic initiative – it has facilitated better collaboration between our council and other councils, and the NSW Government.”**

.....  
 Fiona Campbell, Cycling Strategy  
 Manager at the City of Sydney



City Cycling. Photo by Katherine Griffiths/City of Sydney.

## Case study

### **Dockless Bike Share – Integrated governance provides clarity to the market**

Dockless bike share schemes provide people with convenient access to bikes, which makes it easier for people to choose to ride. However, early on, the introduction of dockless bike share in Sydney was not without problems. The schemes were not regulated and there were instances of bikes creating clutter and getting vandalised.

In the absence of a statewide regulatory framework, councils banded together to form the guidelines, improving the experience of Sydneysiders wanting to access this new transport option – with almost 20,000 bike share trips each week in inner Sydney.

Six councils in the network co-designed the “Inner Sydney bike share guidelines”, which set out expectations for dockless bike share operators, and helped councils take a consistent approach to share bikes across different local government areas. The guidelines helped bring structure and accountability to the market.

Russell Lenhoff, the Operations Manager at Limebike outlined his experience. “The guidelines brought structure and accountability. We would be following them anyway because we believe that things like GPS tracking, responding quickly to incidents, and keeping the bikes clean and safe is good business practice. But having the guidelines keeps us accountable and it keeps other operators accountable too.”

Bike share companies now work closely with councils to discuss upcoming events and collaborate by sharing trip data to identify the best areas to create bike lanes and bike parking zones. Today, share bikes are an accepted and widely used feature of Sydney streets. Imminent regulatory changes will further improve and streamline how these schemes are rolled out going forward, an important step change for this low impact form of transport.

## ACTION

# 4

### Support people to work closer to home

As housing near Sydney's CBD becomes more expensive, people are forced to live further away and spend more time commuting, which means less time with their families and communities. Working remotely can address this. Sydney, Australia and much of the world was forced to adapt to mass remote working in 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This experience required many organisations to implement new working protocols and establish new cultures. It also highlighted the technical barriers that many people still face.

In August 2021, 40.6 per cent of people across Greater Sydney were working from home.<sup>48</sup> During the transition, Resilience Ambassadors shared resources during network meetings to help Council colleagues adjust to working from home.

In 2023, some councils have institutionalised these changes, choosing to formalise flexible working arrangements for staff. This is an ongoing process. It will be important to review the COVID-19 pandemic response to understand the long-term effects of any institutional changes made, such as impact to local economies and employee wellbeing.

Action: Completed work as set out in the 2018 strategy.

## ACTION

# 5

### Improve access to health precincts

Many Sydney communities struggle to access the health system. New services that help transport patients to health services or bring the health services out into the community have been successfully trialled and are expanding.

The Wollondilly Health Alliance partnership between Wollondilly Shire Council, South Western Sydney Primary Health Network and South Western Sydney Local Health District is an example of a successful healthcare model improving local connections to health services.<sup>49</sup> The Alliance began in 2014 and continues to this day. In 2019, the Western Sydney Health Alliance was formed as part of the Western City Parklands Deal involving the nine Western Sydney councils. It aims to improve the coordination and effectiveness of health services in the region and support healthier neighbourhoods.<sup>50</sup>

Telehealth and electronic prescribing services were widely adopted by medical practitioners across Sydney in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with support from the Federal Government.<sup>51</sup> This intervention has further improved access to health services for all residents.

Action: Completed work as set out in the 2018 strategy.

## ACTION 6

### Build community capacity through co-design

When Sydney communities can provide their insights about navigating complex systems and are involved in the design and development of solutions that affect them, they get better outcomes. Genuine co-design is still relatively rare, but some organisations in Sydney are using innovative processes to do this.

The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) has been engaging communities to co-design solutions to tackle issues in Sydney such as housing, social isolation, intergenerational disadvantage, mental health, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Self-Determination. Its program, Family by Family, connects Sharing Families with Seeking Families in a peer-to-peer coaching and mentoring program. Since 2021, the program has supported over 1,500 families to create stronger and more resilient family units.<sup>52</sup>

Y-Lab has been engaging young people to codesign solutions for secondary pathways into work, further education and training, gender equality and gender-based violence, and youth unemployment.

On 25 and 26 October 2019, Climate KIC hosted a Climate hackathon (“Climathon”) supported by the Resilient Sydney Office, Munich RE and the Committee for Sydney.

Over 80 people from a wide range of backgrounds – students, policymakers, entrepreneurs and data analysts – formed 15 teams at Sydney’s event. Their challenge was to develop new solutions to improve Sydney’s resilience to the adverse impacts of heatwaves – whether that be infrastructure, economic, health or other impacts. The teams had to develop their ideas and the ‘pathway to market’ for their innovations, and pitch to a panel of judges. They were provided relevant datasets by Munich RE and heard inspirational talks by leading subject matter experts. The two winning teams were provided entry into Climate KIC’s acceleration program which supported them to develop their ideas further.

**Action: Completed work as set out in the 2018 strategy.**

## ACTION 7

### Advocate for affordable housing for everyone

Sydney housing, both to rent and buy, remains critically unaffordable to significant proportions of the population, especially very low and low-income households. It is driving pensioners out of their communities, creating financial stress for low-paid workers and driving an increase in homelessness.

Sydney councils are working together with community organisations to advocate for more affordable housing. Councils have been adopting new targets and processes to improve the rate and diversity of housing types for people in Sydney.

In 2020, a delegation of Capital City Lord Mayors attended the Commonwealth parliament to advocate for more affordable housing mechanisms, including taxation support. Structural interventions are required to enable wide-scale development of affordable housing in Australian cities.

#### The Affordable and Diverse Housing Project

The Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (SSROC) partnered with Resilient Sydney to deliver Action 7 in March 2021. City-wide Forums were held in 2021 and 2024 to identify potential land and agencies that could deliver affordable housing development projects in Sydney Council areas. A Working Group and Steering Committee comprised of local and state government representatives, including Cumberland Council and the City of Sydney, was established, convening regularly to create and deliver a program of pilot and pragmatic projects to catalyse action.

In early 2022, the group enlisted Urbanista, a housing consultant, to conduct research across local government to understand the barriers and challenges that were preventing councils from preparing Affordable Housing Contribution Schemes (AHCS) and to understand the data available for councils to utilise as evidence for their schemes. The project culminated in a toolkit and guide created for councils to use when applying for an AHCS, streamlining the process and potentially reducing costs, time and resources.

The project highlighted the urgent need for open and accessible housing data for councils. Phase 2 sought to collate data from major data owners across the system and present it on a readily accessible

data platform. This is an ongoing project with state government being led by SSROC and supported by Resilient Sydney and local government.

In October 2022, a Mayoral Summit hosted by Resilient Sydney, SSROC and the City of Sydney brought together Mayors, CEOs and General Managers from 19 councils across Greater Sydney to deliberate pathways open to councils for affordable and diverse housing. As of March 2023, 10 councils have taken new action on affordable housing for their LGAs based on the Resilient Sydney recommendations.

- 18 councils have social and/or affordable housing targets for their LGA
- 26 councils (79%) have adopted (18) or are developing (8) an Affordable Housing policy, strategy or scheme

**Action:** Initiated and ongoing. The Resilient Sydney Office will continue to support the Sydney Affordable Housing Action Group project with connections, advice on engagement and collaboration structures.

### The first-ever housing strategy for NSW

The NSW Government released a discussion paper on its housing strategy on 15 June 2020. The paper outlined a proposed vision, a summary of key housing trends, and was centred around four themes: supply, diversity, affordability and resilience.

In May 2021,<sup>53</sup> the first-ever state housing strategy for NSW, Housing 2041, was released. The Strategy has retained the key themes from the discussion paper, with 83 per cent of submissions identifying affordability as the key pillar to be addressed. The Strategy has unified existing housing policies into a single guiding framework and will be implemented through four-yearly action plans informed by data and monitoring.

### Landmark \$10 billion federal fund for housing

In response to the affordability crisis across the country, the Australian Government announced the \$10 billion Housing Australia Future Fund<sup>54</sup> in September 2023 aiming to deliver 30,000 new social and affordable rental houses over five years. These dwellings will be delivered in partnership with Community Housing Providers utilising the government-subsidised scheme to build and cover ongoing management costs.

## ACTION



### Develop skills for equity

Opportunities and education are not the same for everyone in Sydney due to the uneven impact of chronic stresses across the city. The economic impact of COVID-19 disproportionately disrupted the finances of families and communities in Sydney.

The annual ANZ Financial Wellbeing Survey in 2021<sup>55</sup> provided a snapshot of the state of financial wellbeing across Australian households and a person's resilience to sustain financial shocks. The average financial wellbeing score for respondents in Australia was 64 out of 100, falling into the "doing OK" bracket. There is a strong correlation between a person's mental health and their financial wellbeing, with 86 per cent of people in the "struggling" bracket reporting anxiety about their future financial situation. Unemployment was shown to be the second largest socio-economic impact on a person's financial wellbeing score, whilst a high level of education (post-secondary qualification) was the largest contributor to a person's earning potential, thereby increasing their financial wellbeing score.

Resilient Sydney has advocated for the development of products and services to support communities to access education and employment to improve their financial wellbeing. Over the last six years, organisations across Greater Sydney have developed products that support this action, such as:

- Commonwealth Bank of Australia (CBA) has embedded a spend tracker<sup>56</sup> into their banking app to enable customers to see exactly where their money is going, set budgets, and be notified when their spending is nearing the set limit.
- Essentials by AAI,<sup>57</sup> developed with Suncorp Group and Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, is designed for low-income earners with an annual household income of \$48,000 or less, making insurance affordable and accessible to all.
- Mosman Council<sup>58</sup> runs free English Conversation Classes for residents that have English as a second language. The classes are run by trained volunteers at the local community centre and directly support migrant and refugee community members to improve their English skills.

**Action:** Completed work as set out in the 2018 strategy. Ongoing work to be reviewed in the new Strategy (2025–2030).

DIRECTION

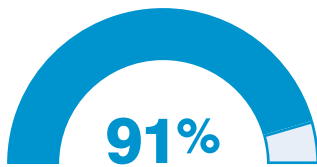
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# Live with our climate

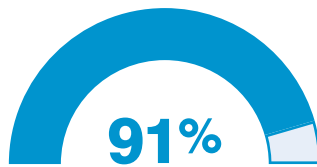
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We adapt to sustain  
our quality of life and  
our environment.



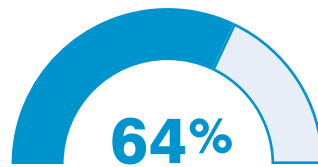
**91%**  
OF COUNCILS

procure renewable energy through a PPA – an average of 86% of their operational energy



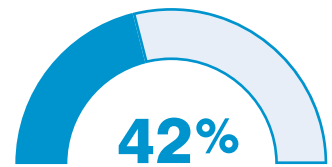
**91%**  
OF COUNCILS

have assessed or improved the resilience of council-owned assets against climate hazards



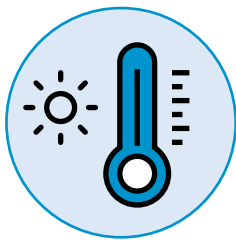
**64%**  
OF COUNCILS

have Net Zero targets for their communities



**42%**  
OF COUNCILS

have adopted a community Net Zero Plan



**20 councils**

are developing plans or policies for community heat impacts



**16 councils**

with urban forest plans to mitigate heat

## ACTION



## Policy and action to cool homes and streets

Heatwaves kill more Australians than any other natural disaster and place enormous pressure on our city’s assets, emergency services and its natural environment. The Resilient Sydney Office has been engaging the community and high-level decision makers about the diverse impacts of heat. A wide range of stakeholders are now collaborating to better understand and tackle the problem.

Local governments have begun collecting data about heat in their areas. They are implementing strategies to provide immediate protection to vulnerable communities, and prioritising ‘cool’ planning. A collaboration between WSROC and Resilient Sydney produced the Cool Suburbs rating tool ([coolsuburbs.com.au](http://coolsuburbs.com.au)) to audit and report on the “urban cooling potential” of suburbs, streets, and precincts in Sydney. It was released for testing to stakeholders in April 2022 and an updated version was launched in late 2024.

The NSW Government has now recognised extreme heat on the State Risk Register. It also successfully achieved the Premier’s Priority of planting 1 million trees across Greater Sydney by 2022.

The increasing urgency of extreme heat in Sydney led to the creation of the WSROC Heat Taskforce – a multi-agency, cross-city collaboration aiming to deliver four resources to tackle the heat crisis: a Heat Smart City Plan, state-wide expansion of the Cool Suburbs tool, a Heat Risk Methodology, and a local government Heatwave Management Guide. This landmark project was awarded \$1.323 million from the Disaster Risk Reduction Fund and the tools and resources were successfully delivered by the end of 2024.

**Action: Initiated, ongoing and scope increased. Resilient Sydney will continue to be a strategic partner for the Heat Taskforce project.**

- 8 councils either have a heatwave subplan and or are developing one
- 16 councils (49%) have urban forest plans to mitigate heat
- 20 councils (61%) are developing plans or policies for community heat impacts
- 16 councils (49%) have used WSROC and Resilient Sydney heat tools or guidance
- Around 350 people attended the Penrith City Council 'Cooling the City' Masterclass event in 2020

**“The shift in understanding and appreciation of heat has been seismic. Six years has seen heat prioritised in District Plans and Premier’s Priorities, local planning provisions, updated heatwave messaging and warnings. Most importantly, communities are demanding better.”**

.....  
 Judith Bruinsma, WSROC

In 2021, Resilient Sydney partnered with the Department of Planning and Environment to co-design the Greening Our City program with Sydney councils. The two-year collaboration resulted in comprehensive canopy data being supplied to councils via the Resilient Sydney data platform, four workshops, a best-practice Greener Neighbourhoods Guide for implementation of greening projects and \$1.37 million in grants for 28 Sydney councils to develop and deliver urban forestry projects and strategies.

## Case study

### Increasing action in the face of extreme heat events

**2017** – Office of Emergency Management features heat as a priority risk for NSW in the State Level Emergency Risk Assessment and includes it on the State Risk register

**December 2017** – Premier’s Priority to plant 1 million trees across Greater Sydney by 2022 announced

**2018** – Turn Down the Heat strategy released by WSROC. WSROC’s Turn Down the Heat Strategy aimed to complement existing council policies and strategies to create local, practical and coordinated action.

**January 2020** – Penrith experiences hottest day on record as the temperature reached 48.9 degrees.

**February 2020** – “Cooling the City Masterclass” hosted by Penrith City Council

**March 2021** – Urban Heat Planning Toolkit created by WSROC and partner councils identifying measures for councils to take to combat urban heat

**April 2022** – Cool Suburbs rating tool developed and released for testing

**July 2022** – WSROC awarded \$1.323 million to create the multi-agency Heat Taskforce for Greater Sydney

**Dec 2024** – Launch of the Greater Sydney Smart City Heat Plan



Attendees at the Penrith City Council Masterclass in 2020

## ACTION

# 10

## Develop investment in resilient buildings, assets, precincts and cities

Sydney's communities need infrastructure and buildings that are built to a higher standard if they are to withstand the more frequent extreme weather events that climate change will bring. The Resilient Sydney Office has been championing rating tools to help the market understand the resilience of buildings, infrastructure and places. Several rating tools have been developed since 2016.

The XDI-Sydney pilot program hosted by the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment operated from 2017 to 2020 and continues as an ongoing collaboration. The program is sharing data between government and business organisations on the interconnections and interdependencies of major critical infrastructure in Sydney. It is having a tangible impact on investment and planning for resilience.

The Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA) and the Infrastructure Council of Australia have both developed resilience standards in their ratings. Through these tools, senior staff in major corporations in Sydney are increasing their awareness of risks and interdependencies, and new opportunities for managing risk are being created in precincts, new developments and building assets and planning rules.

In 2022, Infrastructure NSW released its 20-year State Infrastructure Strategy 2022–2042,<sup>59</sup> containing 9 objectives to direct the strategic infrastructure priorities for the state. One objective, 'Embed reliability and resilience', seeks to develop place-based resilience and infrastructure adaptation strategies and conduct a state-wide hazard risk assessment to identify locations and assets most at risk.

**Action: Initiated and ongoing. Resilient Sydney will continue to intervene and advocate for resilient infrastructure.**

In 2023, the Committee for Sydney released the Defending Sydney report<sup>60</sup> in partnership with Resilient Sydney and IAG, highlighting investment opportunities for government and the private sector to vastly improve and structurally embed climate-responsive land use planning in Sydney. The report also highlights place-based adaptive pathways and collaborative decision making as essential new approaches to tackle the problem and lists 11 recommendations for adoption.

Across Sydney, 30 councils have taken action to assess or improve their assets against climate hazards. Strathfield Council<sup>61</sup> identified aging infrastructure as a vulnerability against climate change and took action to map all council-owned assets and create an asset management plan incorporating a resilience lens. Like other Sydney councils, Strathfield is readying their infrastructure for increasing climate shocks.

- 30 councils (91%) have assessed or improved the resilience of council-owned assets against climate hazards
- 4 rating tools now incorporate resilience – GBCA, Infrastructure Sustainability Council of Australia (ISCA), Global ESG Benchmark for Real Assets (GRESB) and Cross Dependency Initiative (XDI)
- 47 buildings in Greater Sydney have achieved resilience credit points in their Green Star ratings since 2016 (over 200 Australia wide)
- In 2020, the GBCA made the resilience credit a mandatory requirement for all ratings
- The new GBCA Green Star Home certification<sup>62</sup> (launched 2020) includes a new section on resilience that is required to complete the tool
- The ISCA 2.0 rating tool launched in 2019 incorporated a new category on resilience, requiring reporting on how infrastructure is contributing towards city, regional and community resilience.<sup>63</sup>

# ACTION

# 11

## Enable affordable access to renewable and resilient energy

Sydney's communities need clean, reliable and affordable energy. Resilient Sydney has supported councils to proactively action and promote renewable energy programs aimed at schools, residents and businesses. Local governments have made a meaningful contribution to the seismic shift towards renewables in the last six years with the majority of councils signing renewable energy Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs).

Local Government Areas have made switching to renewables accessible, normalised and desirable through publishing ambitious plans, leading by example and supporting their communities with incentives and programs.

Solar My Schools is a program created in 2016 by Randwick City Council, Waverley Council and Woollahra Council. After achieving incredible local results, the program was expanded across the Greater Sydney region with 9 participating Sydney councils and over 200 schools that converted to solar energy as a result of the program.



Solar My School Maroubra Bay Public School.

Across Sydney, councils are converting to renewable energy contracts and installing solar panels on large-scale infrastructure as an example to their communities. To help accelerate community action, some councils are offering rebates to their residents to make the switch to electric. For example, as part of their Sustainability Rebates Program,<sup>64</sup> North Sydney Council is offering eligible residents to help pay for sustainable upgrades and households: 20 per cent up to \$1,000, apartment blocks: 20 per cent up to \$5,000 and businesses: 20 per cent up to \$2,000. These upgrades include solar panels, batteries and electric appliances.

**Action: Initiated and significant progress made.**

- 30 councils (91%) procure an average of 86 per cent of their operational energy through a renewable energy PPA
- 22 councils (67%) signed the largest PPA deal for renewable energy on record, procured through SSROC in 2022<sup>65</sup> via ZEN Energy
- Since 2017, the Business Renewables Centre Australia estimates that there have been 110 corporate PPAs negotiated across Australia, contracting over 4 GW of renewable energy generation. Over half of corporate PPAs have been made with new solar and wind farms.<sup>66</sup>
- Over 200 schools have been involved in the Solar My School program in Greater Sydney.<sup>67</sup>
- 26 Resilient Sydney councils (78%) were members of the Cities Power Partnership,<sup>68</sup> committing to five pledges to reduce their emissions from energy consumption
- 21 councils signed up to promote the GreenPower campaign, created by the City of Sydney and GreenPower, to encourage uptake of renewable energy to residents.

# ACTION 12

## Adopt urban resilience in research and teaching curricula

For Sydney’s communities to be well managed in the future, tomorrow’s decision makers must learn about our resilience challenges today. The Resilient Sydney Office has encouraged Sydney universities to include urban resilience issues in curricula. Several have now introduced courses related to Sydney’s resilience challenges, such as reducing inequity, the green economy and emergency preparedness.

Resilience research and guidance from Greater Sydney universities has significantly grown and includes, but is not limited to:

- UTS Business School runs the Centre for Climate Risk and Resilience and the Centre for Built Infrastructure Resilience amongst others. The university also delivers courses in Urban Sustainability and Resilience and coordinates technical support and advice for resilience projects.
- UNSW Resilient Futures Collective delivered by the Institute for Global Development
- Macquarie University Resilient Societies research

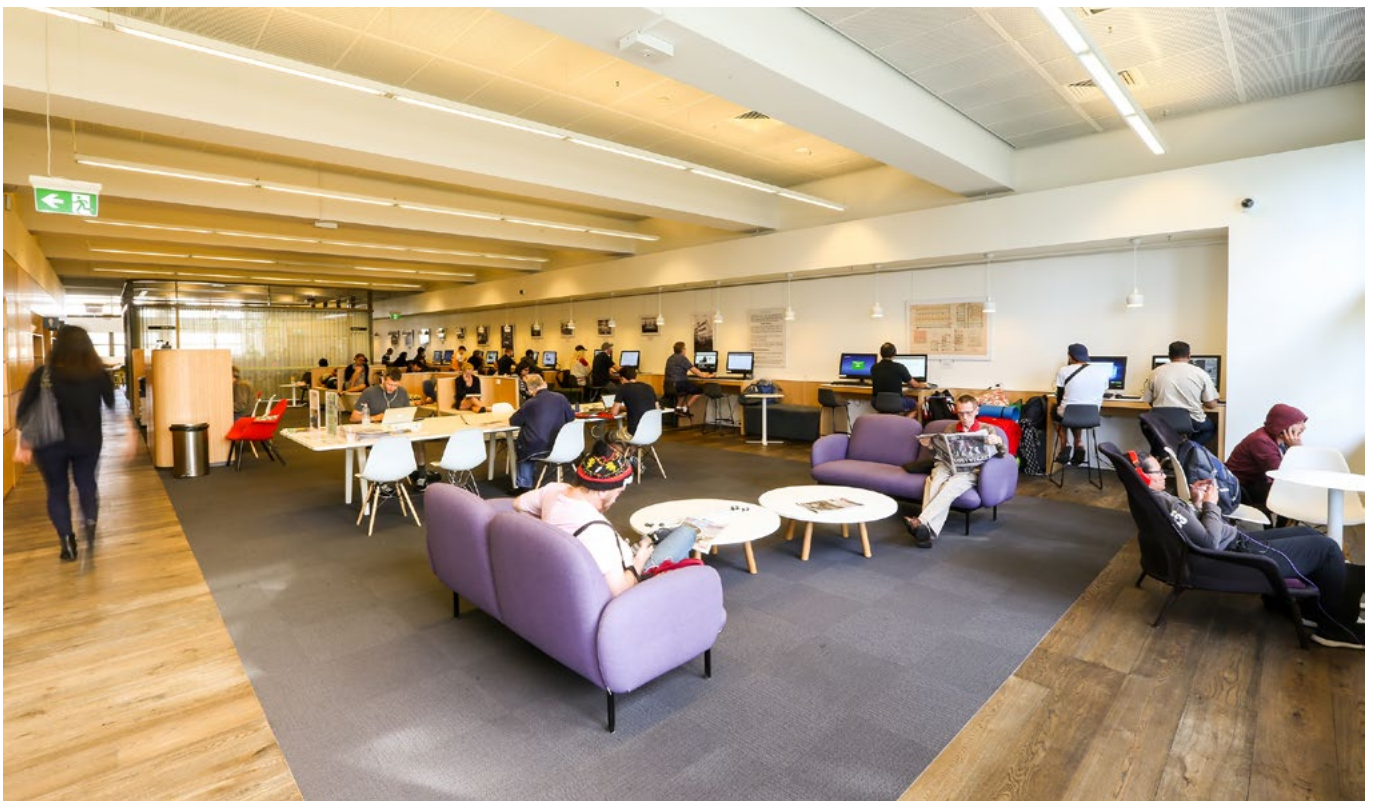
- University of Sydney project support for resilience, sustainability and social justice
- UWS Young and Resilient Research Centre.

The faculties at various universities has been particularly innovative with their resilience-related courses. An academic post at UNSW, Chair of Urban Resilience, was established in 2018. Considerable momentum is now progressing the development of urban resilience teaching and learning in Sydney.

Action: Completed work as set out in the 2018 strategy.

**“Studying the ecosystem approach to resilience was fascinating. Seeing how people are going about trying to tackle some of the biggest problems we’re facing as a society really inspired me to learn more about it.”**

.....  
A student



Kings Cross Library. Photo by Katherine Griffiths/City of Sydney.

## Measure metropolitan carbon emissions and report on progress

Limiting global heating to 1.5 degrees requires coordinated global action. Our city, state and nation have made commitments to reducing carbon emissions, so we need a standardised metropolitan-wide process for measuring and reporting on them.

The Resilient Sydney Office hosts a platform that enables this and has been training Resilience Ambassadors across the city on how to use it.

The Resilient Sydney Platform allows users to interrogate, communicate and report on their community-level environmental footprint in a standardised way. The Platform and data have been available to all Greater Sydney councils since March 2019. The Platform has been extended beyond its initial scope, providing councils with several environmental datasets for their local area, including emissions, energy, water, transport, waste, uptake of rooftop solar canopy and electric vehicle registration data.

Resilient Sydney makes the Platform freely available to members, the councils of Resilient Sydney, and has facilitated a capacity-building program to effectively create environmental accountants across Sydney.

The capacity-building program includes workshops on how to use the Platform and its datasets for informed, place-based decision-making. Each workshop includes an opportunity for environmental, strategic planning and corporate reporting teams to share best practice and to build relationships within and between the councils. In June 2020, Resilient Sydney partnered with the NSW Government's Net Zero Emissions team to deliver a highly successful masterclass that supported councils to include their environmental footprint in their Local Strategic Planning Statements.

The Platform and workshops have emphasised the importance of resilience in place, encouraging council teams to consider where to most strategically focus their emission reduction investment and action, and which sectors to prioritise to reduce environmental impact.

This is the first time a comparable, accessible, environmental data platform has been made available for every local government area of Sydney. Individual councils have previously reported some environmental data; however, fragmented governance across the city made metropolitan data collection, reporting and action inconsistent. Every council now has access to these datasets in a single portal, removing the inefficiency of adhoc, individual requests to data utilities, and enabling staff to focus on using this data for environmental action planning, target setting and the development of evidence-based policies and programs.



Resilient Sydney Platform. Photo by Noah Dawson/City of Sydney.

### The Net Zero app

In 2021, Resilient Sydney collaborated with the Greater Cities Commission and the Office of Energy and Climate Change to create the Net Zero app, funded by the NSW State Government. Data modelling inside the app is now available for each council to view their 2030, 2040 and 2050 pathway towards net zero, highlighting specific interventions (such as waste, transport and renewable energy) that councils can take to achieve their net zero or emission reductions targets.

The goal of the app is to provide clear and easily interpretable projections on emissions in each local government area to enable councils to either set or revise emission reductions targets, communicate the urgency of action, and understand the various interventions that can be taken to reduce emissions, specific to their area.

**Action:** Initiated and ongoing. Resilient Sydney will be focusing on providing additional data sets to councils on the Platform and looking at opportunities for expansion.

**“The content was explained in a relaxed manner with time taken to help people through any little issues. The tips on mining the data in more detail was excellent.”**

.....  
A Resilient Sydney Platform Masterclass Attendee

**“It’s very powerful, and it’s impressive how much data is available and how useful it can be to change the narrative!”**

.....  
Dot Hepburn, City of Parramatta Council

# ACTION

# 14

## Support a more flexible and resilient water cycle

Sydney’s growing population, ageing infrastructure and hotter climate are putting strains on our water supply. The Resilient Sydney Office brought together high-level representatives from state and local governments, businesses, developers, research institutions and peak industry associations across Greater Sydney for a Water Sensitive Sydney Summit, hosted by the City of Sydney. Since then, several institutional changes have been made to address the resilience of the water cycle.

The Summit, held in February 2018, coincided with a review by the NSW Government into the economic and regulatory barriers to recycled water schemes. It also led to much broader discussion about embedding water-sensitive principles into our city’s long-term planning, infrastructure and operations. Outcomes from the Summit were provided to State Government agencies and Sydney Water to help inform the Greater Sydney Water Strategy – a 20 to 40-year plan to create a more resilient water cycle in the face of drought, climate change and the growing population – published in August 2022.

A treaty was prepared and published by a collaboration of partners and endorsed by Resilient Sydney, seeking a statutory metropolitan water plan, new pricing models and investment in resilience measures in Sydney. It was also a powerful demonstration of the value of connecting across boundaries and working together to advocate for solutions to the challenges we face across Greater Sydney.

In June 2018, Frontier Economics published their report to Infrastructure NSW advising on the optimum regulatory framework for the uptake of cost-effective recycled water initiatives, with a focus on the economic regulatory framework governing the urban water sector. It made 32 recommendations aimed at addressing current and potential barriers to cost-effective water recycling.<sup>69</sup>

In July 2019, IPART published their review of water pricing arrangements for recycled water and related services, with 23 decisions to support efficient and effective water services.<sup>70</sup>

In March 2020, Sydney Water, Sydney’s major water utility, hired a Head of Resilience and Climate Change Adaptation.

Action: Ongoing into the new strategy (2025 to 2030).

**“There was furious agreement across the diversity in the room about the direction that we need to head in while recognising the complexity of the issue that no one party can solve alone.”**

.....  
Cynthia Mitchell, Deputy Director and Professor of Sustainability, Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney

**“We have refined our regulatory approach to support efficient investment in recycled water, including where it provides broader benefits to customers, while also protecting customers from any monopoly power of the public water utilities.”**

.....  
From the IPART report

- 16 councils (49%) have a policy on water resilience or plan for the use of recycled water in their LGA and 4 are developing one.



## Case study

### **The Parramatta River Catchment Group collaboration**

The Parramatta River<sup>71</sup> is approximately 21 kilometres long, covering 266 km<sup>2</sup> of catchment area from Blacktown in the west to Sydney Harbour in the east. It is home to over 370 species of wildlife and has significant cultural importance to First Nations Australians.

Up until the 1950s, most of the river was swimmable; however, increasing development along the river's foreshore led to its degradation and made many parts unsafe to swim.

In 2008, a collection of councils and state government agencies formed the Parramatta River Catchment Group (PRCG), including Blacktown City Council, Burwood Council, City of Canada Bay, Canterbury-Bankstown Council,

Cumberland Council, Hunters Hill Council, Inner West Council, City of Parramatta and City of Ryde.

In 2014, their inaugural strategy, *Our Living River*, set the mission of making the river swimmable again by 2025. Members are guided by five key pillars: Planning & Research, Coordination, Advocacy, Monitoring & Reporting, and Communications & Engagement. Many of the member councils have since released their own water strategy supporting the aims of the PRCG and the delivery of actions. Currently, there are five swimming spots open in the Parramatta River – a direct result of this collaboration.

# ACTION

# 15

## Reliance on liquid fuel

A disruption to Australia's fuel supply would cause major problems for Sydney. Diversifying our fuel sources will greatly reduce this threat and improve our terms of trade: Australia imported \$53.6 billion in 2022–23 worth of refined petroleum products.<sup>72</sup>

Greater Sydney is highly exposed to fuel supply chain disruptions, including from major climate events, economic supply constraints and geopolitical disruptions, such as the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The last fuel refinery in NSW closed in October 2014, making the need to reduce our reliance on liquid fuel and diversify transport options more urgent. Resilient Sydney has been pivotal in raising awareness of this challenge across the city with governments and businesses to support the need for change.

Local governments are rapidly trying to enable charging infrastructure and electric vehicle (EV) adoption across the city in support of this action.

Sydney councils are developing Electric Vehicle Policies and transition plans for their fleets to continue cutting their emissions. In 2022, The Hills Shire Council partnered<sup>73</sup> with electric vehicle suppliers to host an Electric Vehicle Expo, encouraging residents to come and learn firsthand from electric vehicle owners what it is like to make the switch to the new technology. Other councils and NRMA, supported by ACT and NSW Governments, are hosting similar expos. For council areas that are less well serviced by mass transit and thus have communities that are more reliant on cars as the primary form of transport, projections show that transitioning to electric vehicles is the best intervention they can take to reduce carbon emissions.

**Action: Initiated and ongoing. Action on electrification will be detailed in the new strategy (2025 to 2030).**

New EV purchases in Australia more than doubled in 2023, compared to 2022, with the total number of EVs on Australian roads now exceeding 180,000.<sup>74</sup>

- In NSW, 9 per cent of all vehicles sold in 2023 were electric vehicles.<sup>75</sup>
- The NSW Government's Electric Vehicle strategy (2022) includes investment of \$209 million towards expanding electric vehicle charging coverage, as well as significant funding to accelerate electrification of business and government fleets. The Strategy sets a target to increase EV sales to 52 per cent by 2030–31.<sup>76</sup>





DIRECTION

3

.....

# Connect for strength

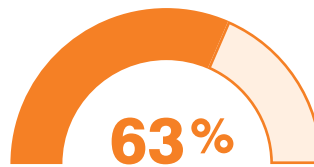
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Every Sydneysider will  
feel they belong in our  
community and city.

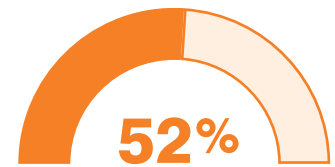




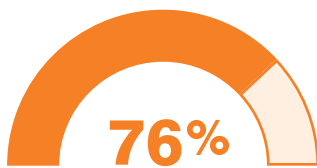
**97%**  
**OF COUNCILS**  
have embedded  
Aboriginal cultural  
protocols into council  
meetings and events



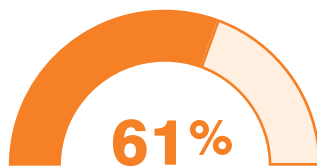
**63%**  
**OF COUNCILS**  
have adopted or  
are developing a  
Reconciliation  
Action Plan



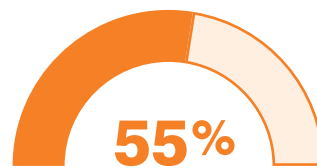
**52%**  
**OF COUNCILS**  
provide cultural  
awareness training  
to staff



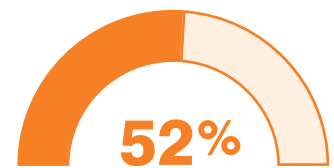
**76%**  
**OF COUNCILS**  
have disability advisory  
committees



**61%**  
**OF COUNCILS**  
have youth advisory  
committees



**55%**  
**OF COUNCILS**  
have First Nations  
advisory committees



**52%**  
**OF COUNCILS**  
have multicultural  
advisory committees

## ACTION 16

### Monitor metropolitan social cohesion and wellbeing

Attempts to measure social cohesion, tolerance and wellbeing across metropolitan Sydney have been fragmented and inconsistent, making evidence-based policy interventions difficult. The NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) collected data for Greater Sydney biannually as part of its NSW Subjective Wellbeing Index. The Resilient Sydney Office worked with the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), Multicultural NSW and the Greater Sydney Commission to present a business case to DPC requesting access to the data, for distribution to a wider range of policymakers. This database was released in May 2021.

The Resilient Sydney Office is catalysing NSW Government engagement in establishing statewide indicators and standards for measuring social cohesion, through facilitating discussions between bodies that manage or report social cohesion data. Resilient Sydney conducted research reviewing the key factors contributing to social cohesion and connection as a protective measure in communities facing disasters.

Councils have previously spent significant local funds on investing in data collection about social cohesion and community wellbeing. These new interventions offer the potential to reduce the overall cost of understanding community wellbeing in Sydney through common, available and continuous data that is comparable and shareable. The Department of Communities and Justice is developing a program to support local government to target programs and funding to areas of Sydney with poor outcomes.

In December 2021, DPC commissioned a survey of 1,000 people across NSW to measure levels of social cohesion across the state. Insights showed that levels of social cohesion and feelings of belonging varied greatly across Sydney and that the need for quality outdoor spaces was a priority for people across the city.

In July 2022, DPC and Cred Consulting, in collaboration with Resilient Sydney, created Building social cohesion: A resource for local government.<sup>77</sup> This resource and toolkit was designed as a guide for councils when implementing social cohesion projects, containing extensive place-based case studies and a metrics framework for measuring success.

As part of the engagement process for this toolkit, DPC hosted several workshops with local government in 2021 and 2022, culminating in the first round of social cohesion grants for councils in early 2022. From the \$400,000 total funding<sup>78</sup> from DPC, \$206,000 (51%) was awarded to three Sydney councils:

- **Georges River Council** – awarded \$66,000 to create the Better Together anti-racism campaign (case study in Action 20)<sup>79</sup>
- **Lane Cove Council** (in collaboration with Willoughby City Council and the Australian Red Cross) – awarded \$52,000 to create the Meet Your Neighbours project (case study in Action 18)<sup>80</sup>
- **Canada Bay Council** – awarded \$88,000 to establish a local mentoring program, supporting seven to nine emerging community leaders from local groups to become better connected, build closer networks, and prepare them for community leadership roles.<sup>81</sup>

In late 2023, DPC announced Round 3 of the Social Cohesion grants program, making a further \$500,000 available for social cohesion projects.

Resilient Sydney has begun discussions with DPC and researchers at the University of Sydney to create a new social cohesion project targeting risk reduction outcomes for communities dealing with disasters. The organisations are exploring funding opportunities to establish the project.

## Mobilising staff for community food relief

During the pandemic, communities turned to their local councils for support. The severe lockdowns across the city were particularly restrictive in the west, with areas like Fairfield significantly impacted by job losses, leaving families unable to access food. Fairfield City Council<sup>82</sup> partnered with local food relief organisations and redeployed staff into emergency support roles to distribute essential food packages to vulnerable families across the region. The solidarity with residents highlights the importance of community connections and enhances local social cohesion, trust in government and connection to place.

Action: Initiated and ongoing.

- 16 councils are measuring social cohesion and wellbeing through engagement, such as surveys or focus groups.



Food at NAIDOC in the City. Photo by Joseph Mayers/City of Sydney.

# ACTION 17

## Learning from First Nations Elders and community leaders – experts in resilience and survival

The Resilient Sydney Office worked with Inside Policy in 2017 and 2018 to hear from a group of First Nations Elders and community leaders about the shocks and stresses for their communities in Sydney. This report produced valuable insights and has been widely distributed.

Elders told us that a mature, resilient Sydney will be able to hear and acknowledge the truth about colonisation and dispossession, the contribution of First Nations people to the city, a proud history of resistance to invasion and the diversity of First Nations peoples in Sydney.

They identified the following actions that would contribute to stronger recognition of First Nations peoples in Sydney.

- Develop cultural centres highlighting:
  - cultural practices of the various traditional owner groups in Greater Sydney
  - the pre- and post-colonial history of Sydney and its impact on its First Peoples
  - First Nations peoples' contribution to Sydney and the range of First Nations role models and leaders in fields such as arts, sports, politics, business, land rights, civil rights, community services and the military.

- Promote Acknowledgement of Country at Sydney airport.
- Develop targeted aged care facilities for Elders.
- Co-create community services operated by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities including access to affordable housing.
- Develop processes, practices and centres that provide safety and enable healing from trauma.
- Develop business hubs for Indigenous business to start-up and grow as well as for Indigenous people to find employment.
- Celebrate and recognise the contribution of Sydney's First Peoples through dual place naming and public statues and artwork that pay tribute to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders.

Action: Initiated and ongoing.

- 17 councils (52%) provide cultural awareness training to staff.
- 21 councils (63%) have adopted (16) or are developing (5) a Reconciliation Action Plan for First Nations Australians.
- 18 councils (55%) have First Nations advisory committees.



Photo by Katherine Griffiths/City of Sydney.



Photo by Joseph Mayers/City of Sydney.

## ACTION 18

### Support communities to know their neighbours

Sydney communities are concerned about declining social cohesion. The Resilient Sydney Office has been promoting programs, like Neighbour Day, that build tolerance, reduce isolation and improve safety. The number of local governments engaging with these programs is increasing year on year.

The Neighbour Day initiative created by Relationships Australia is an annual program to encourage communities, organisations and governments to get connected and build relationships and community. A wide range of events, festivals, BBQs and messages encourage people to meet, learn about each other and establish relationships before they need to rely on each other in an emergency.

#### Connecting apartment neighbours

In 2022, Lane Cove Council,<sup>83</sup> in collaboration with Willoughby City Council and the Australian Red Cross, received a grant from the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet to create a social cohesion project for apartment dwellers, entitled 'Meet Your Neighbours'. The project produced a toolkit for local government, providing guidance on creating friendly, resilient communities and supplying resources for high-density residents to help build connection.

The program has enabled residential buildings to establish formalised social committees responsible for managing social cohesion among residents, providing ongoing, sustainable impact.

**Action: Initiated and ongoing. Resilient Sydney Office will continue to encourage promotion of Community Connections.**

- 31 councils (94%) engaged their residents in Neighbour Day in 2023 – up from 28 in 2022, 25 in 2021, 19 in 2020 and 11 in 2019.
- Lane Cove Council and Liverpool City Council are now certified as 'Very Neighbourly Organisations'.
- 83 per cent of people agree that people in their local area would help their neighbours.<sup>84</sup>
- Resilient Sydney now sits on the Neighbours Every Day Council Advisory Group (NEDCAG).

## ACTION 19

### Encourage cross-city visitation and understanding

Interactions between different cultural communities can contribute to improving tolerance and respect. The Resilient Sydney Office was planning to encourage cross-city visitation by promoting cultural festivals to people in other parts of Sydney. The pandemic interrupted these plans.

- East to West Connect by the Arab Council of Australia and Multicultural NSW.<sup>85</sup>

**Action: Initiated and ongoing. Resilient Sydney Office will continue to encourage the promotion of the importance of social connections.**

**“The Resilient Sydney Office has given us a communications channel to easily reach the right people, and the association has created reciprocal credibility.”**

.....  
Sam Robinson, Relationships Australia

## ACTION 20

### Promote safety and tolerance in everyday interactions

Sydney communities are concerned about intolerance of cultural diversity. The Resilient Sydney Office has been promoting initiatives that enable understanding of the experiences of people from different cultural communities. The Everyday Racism App, which offers users a journey to better understand racism by walking in the shoes of someone else for seven days, has been highly successful.

The Everyday Racism App was awarded second place in the 2014 Intercultural Innovation Awards and was one of three winners of the PEACEapp prize 2015. Initiatives, such as the Everyday Racism App and the Better Together project from Georges River Council, seek to eliminate racism and increase social cohesion in communities, particularly between cultural groups.

#### Funding for anti-racism education campaign

Georges River Council<sup>86</sup> received funding from the first round of the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet Social Cohesion grants in 2022 to deliver the Better Together anti-racism project, created by the Inner West Multicultural Network. The Council worked with the Challenging Racism Project at Western Sydney University and the Advance Diversity Services group to deliver seven Bystander Anti-Racism Training sessions for the Georges River community. Additionally, the Council is a member to several organisations that work to support diversity and inclusion, such as Refugee Welcome Zone, the NSW Anti-Racism Working Group, St George Multicultural Network and Welcoming Cities.

#### Government networks leading the way

Welcoming Cities,<sup>87</sup> a network of Australian local councils committed to embedding diversity and inclusion throughout their organisations and communities, has accredited seven Sydney councils as a 'Welcoming City'. This accreditation is a national benchmarking tool, assessing the Council's internal and external policies and practices and aligning them against the indicators from the accreditation framework. This accreditation provides a baseline and standard for city governments to measure their performance in social cohesion and inclusion.



Photo by Katherine Griffiths/City of Sydney.

The NSW Anti-Racism Working Group<sup>88</sup> was formed in June 2020 to address the growing number of racist incidents occurring across NSW. The group recognises that systemic racism requires a multi-level approach from government and key stakeholders to catalyse system-wide change. The current members of the group are staff from local government, state government and non-government organisations. The working group is an initiative of the Local Government Multicultural Network that is supported by Local Government NSW.

#### Action: Completed work as set out in the 2018 strategy.

- 9 councils are accredited as a 'Welcoming City'.<sup>89</sup>
- 25 councils are Refugee Welcome Zones.<sup>90</sup>
- Over 25,000 people have downloaded the Everyday Racism App.<sup>91</sup> Analysis has revealed that players:
  - have increased awareness of racist talk and actions (76.5%)
  - perceive the app's effectiveness at encouraging bystander action (90.7%)
  - have spoken up against racism since playing (60.0%)
  - perceive the importance of action (97.9%).



Drawing at NAIDOC in the City. Photo by Joseph Mayers/City of Sydney.

## ACTION 21

### Promote broad adoption of Welcome to Country protocols

Welcome to Country protocols are a way of increasing visibility and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and community leaders. The Resilient Sydney Office has been encouraging broad uptake of Welcome to Country protocols. All councils have now introduced these.

Performing a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of Country prior to commencing any formal proceedings, such as a meeting or an event, is an important way councils can pay respect to the Traditional Owners of the land on which they are gathered.

### Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country protocols – Reconciliation Australia<sup>92</sup>

Protocols for welcoming visitors to Country have been a part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures for thousands of years. Crossing into another group's Country required a request for permission to enter.

A Welcome to Country occurs at the beginning of a formal event and can take many forms including singing, dancing, smoking ceremonies or a speech in traditional language or English. A Welcome to Country is delivered by Traditional Owners, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have been given permission from Traditional Owners to welcome visitors to their Country. An Acknowledgement of Country is an opportunity for anyone to show respect for Traditional Owners and the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country. It can be given by both non-Indigenous people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

- 32 councils (97%) have embedded Aboriginal cultural protocols, such as an Acknowledgement of Country or Welcome to Country, into council meetings and events

**Action:** Initiated and ongoing. Resilient Sydney will continue to support adoption of protocols and recognition of First Nations people throughout Sydney.

## ACTION

## 22

### Support diversity in leadership

The mix of people in key city institutions and leadership positions does not represent or reflect the variety of people and cultural groups in our city's population. The Resilient Sydney Office intends to support diversity by providing civic leadership opportunities to people from culturally and linguistically diverse groups and promote organisational change in recruitment to encourage diversity.

Australia does not yet officially collect comprehensive data on cultural diversity within organisations and institutions.

Independent research, such as Sydney University's Leading for Change reports in 2016 and 2018, have begun to fill in some of the gaps at a national level. These reports show that Australia's cultural diversity is significantly underrepresented among senior leaders in Australian organisations and institutions.

Over the last five years, several major organisations have announced their own targets, commitments and plans for increasing diversity.

- In 2016, the Leadership Council on Cultural Diversity was formed: a group of leaders committed to improving the representation of cultural diversity within the leadership of Australian organisations.
- In 2017, the Australian Human Rights Commission and the University of Sydney Business School launched a program dedicated to cultural diversity and leadership that continues to run.<sup>93</sup>

- In December 2020, LG Professionals Australia (the nation's peak body for local government professionals) announced it was pushing for a gender balance of 40 per cent women, 40 per cent men, and 20 per cent of any gender in local government leadership roles by 2025.<sup>94</sup>
- In 2021, Local Government NSW, an independent organisation that supports and advocates for councils across NSW, ran various programs to increase female representation in Council leadership teams, conducting 29 forums across NSW with over 200 attendees.<sup>95</sup>
- In 2022, 39.5 per cent of local government councillors in NSW were women – an 8.5 per cent increase from 2017 levels.
- In 2023, the Commonwealth Government legislated that data on the gender pay gap in organisations with 100 or more staff will be publicly available from 2024 to help close the gap.

**Action: Completed work as set out in the 2018 strategy.**

DIRECTION

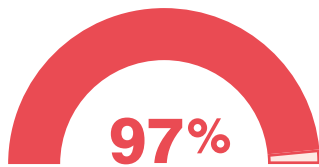
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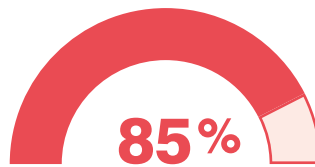
# Get ready

.....

We know how to prepare,  
respond and recover.



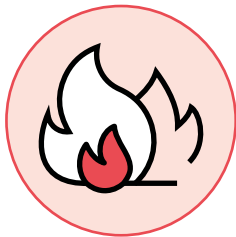
**97%**  
OF COUNCILS  
promoted Emergency  
Ready Week to their  
communities



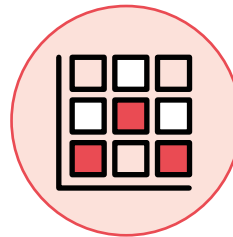
**85%**  
OF COUNCILS  
have a Local Emergency  
Management Committee



**79%**  
OF COUNCILS  
have a business  
continuity plan



Local Government Bushfire  
Support Group (2020) &  
**over 100**  
deployments  
of support



**Emergency  
Management**  
Maturity Matrix  
for councils (2019)

## ACTION **23**

### 100,000 prepared Sydneysiders

Sydney communities have expressed that they feel underprepared for emergencies. The Resilient Sydney Office has been promoting programs that increase community awareness of the likely shocks in their area and prompting residents to make emergency management plans and build emergency support networks. Though there has been steady progress, the initial target of 100,000 Get Prepared app downloads may have been overly ambitious. However, the reach of promotional campaigns for the app has exceeded that goal.

The Resilient Sydney Office has been supporting councils to promote emergency preparedness week and the Red Cross Get Prepared app, which enables communities to identify key contacts in an emergency, understand the risks relevant to where they live and to create an emergency plan.

The app was created in partnership with general insurer, IAG, and is being utilised by councils as an effective tool to increase community preparedness.

In 2022, the Red Cross received funding from IAG through their subsidiary, NRMA, to update the app and integrate it with their primary preparedness tool – the Red Cross RediPlan. This integration has enabled greater uptake of the product and was backed by a major campaign promoting the app to existing NRMA customers across the country.

In 2023, 32 councils (97%) promoted the Red Cross Emergency Ready Week campaign as part of the NSW Government’s Get Ready season – an increase from 31 in 2022 and 2021, 30 in 2020 and 25 in 2019.

**Action:** Initiated and ongoing. The Resilient Sydney Office will continue to promote emergency preparedness to councils through the EmergencyRedi campaign.



## Case study

### Innovative projects supporting CALD communities

In 2021, Willoughby Council released the 'Connecting the Disaster Dots' project, funded by the state government agency, NSW Reconstruction Authority (formerly Resilience NSW). This project sought to improve emergency preparedness information for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities due to evidence highlighting the lack of diverse language materials and culturally appropriate information. The project created a range of translated resources, videos and guides and tested their effectiveness with local CALD focus groups. During its 2022 implementation phase, Willoughby City Council with neighbouring Lane Cove Council and the City of Ryde partnered with the Red Cross to deliver in-person CALD community workshops and training sessions.<sup>96</sup>

**“Evidence highlights the lack of diverse language materials and culturally appropriate information.”**

## Pilot disaster preparedness program for councils

The quality and capacity of emergency management delivery across Sydney councils is highly variable. The Resilient Sydney Office held events, created guidance and templates, and collected data to support improvement in emergency management in Sydney.

Councils have worked together through the Ambassadors program since 2018 to share tools, processes and frameworks utilised by their organisations. This knowledge-sharing has helped councils across Greater Sydney to develop their own emergency management procedures, including recovery and response plans, emergency management pandemic sub-plans, business continuity plans, templates for Risk Assessments and Control Planning, a Pandemic Prioritisation Matrix, and a COVID-19 WHS Recovery Checklist.

- 28 councils have a Local Emergency Management Committee.
- 26 councils have a business continuity plan.
- 15 councils have consequence management guides.
- 17 councils have emergency management sub-plans.

**Action: Initiated. Alternative actions pursued to support widespread recovery from bushfires and COVID-19.**

## Mobilising council action for COVID-19

On 10 March 2020, as Commonwealth and State government made rapid decisions in response to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Resilient Sydney Office spoke to their city colleagues in Wuhan, China, to understand the scale of the problem coming to Australia and what city governments should be doing to prepare. Upon receiving advice, Resilient Sydney urgently convened a crisis meeting of leaders from local government across Sydney to coordinate their response. General Managers, Chief Executive Officers and Local Emergency Management Officers of Councils met together with Local Government NSW, the NSW Office of Local Government and NSW Health to discuss the pandemic response from councils. They workshoped resourcing and planning, and what was needed in terms of legislative changes, communications structures (e.g. a direct channel to NSW Health), and collaboration to ensure consistent decision-making across the city. The result was significant preparation and fortification of the local government sector ahead of the most disruptive two-year period in Australia's modern history.

A guide and toolkit were provided to the Ambassadors network for review and feedback. Engagement with local government by the Greater Sydney Commission and the Department of Planning and Environment resulted in a highly useable and technically relevant guide.

## ACTION

# 25

### Mapping vulnerabilities at a District planning level

The impact of shock events will vary for different areas of Sydney depending on their geography, resources and communities. The Resilient Sydney Office worked with the Greater Cities Commission (formerly the Greater Sydney Commission), to construct Direction 10 – ‘A Resilient City’,<sup>97</sup> in the Greater Sydney Region Plan 2018.

The Region Plan set the direction of the development for Greater Sydney to 2056. Direction 10 – A Resilient City brought together the initiatives happening across key government agencies to deliver on system and place-based resilience, including the formerly 100 Resilient Cities Network and Resilient Sydney.

Objective 37 in Direction 10<sup>98</sup> seeks to reduce community exposure to natural and urban hazards. In support of this objective, Resilient Sydney provided advice and place-based knowledge to the NSW Government to inform the Natural Hazards toolkit – a strategic guide and resource kit for local government to create strategic plans and planning proposals specific to the natural hazards affecting their community.<sup>99</sup>

**Action: Completed work as set out in the 2018 strategy.**

- 29 councils (88%) have assessed or improved the resilience of council-owned assets against climate hazards.
- Councils have access to new guidance and tools on Natural Hazards in NSW.
- XDI hazard assessment tool made available to Councils.
- On average, councils have 0.80 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff dedicated to resilience work and 0.72 FTE staff dedicated to emergency management.

## ACTION

# 26

### Develop a Critical Infrastructure Resilience Strategy

As the city becomes larger and more complex, the interdependencies between critical infrastructure systems we rely on are increasing, raising the risk of failure in the face of disruption. The Resilient Sydney Office advocated to the Office of Emergency Management (now the NSW Reconstruction Authority) to create a Critical Infrastructure Resilience Strategy, which has been published and implemented since 2018.

The strategy is the result of a collaborative partnership between government, NSW communities, and infrastructure owners and operators. It brought together critical infrastructure providers and emergency managers to understand interdependencies for the first time in Sydney and is the first NSW strategy to address vulnerabilities of infrastructure with an all-hazards approach. The outcomes go beyond physical infrastructure and include holistic improvement of organisational, community and infrastructure resilience.

During implementation, a series of user-focused resources were created to support planning, infrastructure and emergency services professionals to improve critical infrastructure management across NSW.

The Strategy identifies that Australia is set to spend over \$1 trillion on infrastructure before 2050 with NSW being the main recipient of funding and development. With early integration, it is estimated that spending an additional 1 per cent of the infrastructure project budget on climate-resilient materials and designs can provide effective mitigation against natural hazards and climate shocks.<sup>100</sup>

**Action: Completed work as set out in the 2018 strategy.**

## ACTION 27

### Evaluate the community impacts of disasters

There is little information about the long-term cost of disasters, making it difficult to make the case for investment. The Resilient Sydney Office partnered with the University of Sydney to undertake research with communities that have experienced shock events across Greater Sydney. It was funded by the NSW Office of Emergency Management (now the NSW Reconstruction Authority) and the report was released in 2018.

The 'Resilient Sydney – Insights into Community Urban Resilience Experiences'<sup>101</sup> report details findings of four studies conducted across Greater Sydney using the system-effects methodology to understand the experiences of communities following disasters. The studies assessed four major shock events in Sydney:

- The 2013 Blue Mountains bushfires
- The 2014 Martin Place Lindt café terror event
- The 2016 East Coast Low in the Northern Beaches causing storms and flooding
- The 2016/17 heatwave in Penrith.

Focus groups with targeted engagement from directly impacted residents and communities enabled researchers to accurately assess the long-term and enduring impact of these shock events and highlighted the critical role that social cohesion plays in helping residents to cope and recover faster from disasters.

These studies directly influenced the creation of the Resilient Sydney Strategy (2018).

In 2023, the Committee for Sydney in partnership with Resilient Sydney, IAG and AECOM published the 'Defending Sydney' report,<sup>102</sup> cataloguing the immense impact of the 2022 East Coast Floods on the Sydney region. The report makes 11 recommendations with 38 sub-actions to effectively mitigate further impacts on communities from flooding events, including climate-focused land-use planning, local Disaster Adaptation Plans for councils, open risk data sharing from insurers, and a statewide policy for managed retreat.

The report evaluates the impact of disasters on communities and provides systems-change strategies to balance the housing and climate crises.

**Action: Completed work as set out in the 2018 strategy.**

## ACTION

28

### Support small businesses to manage cyber security

Cyber security threats is one of the biggest shocks facing Greater Sydney. The scale and sophistication of cyber threats has been increasing, with several major data breaches occurring in the last three years. The Resilient Sydney Office has promoted the recommendations of the NSW Small Business Commission's Cyber Scare Report. Since 2016, both the NSW and Commonwealth Governments have made significant commitments to cyber security.

In September 2018, Cyber Security NSW released its NSW Cyber Security Strategy. In 2020, Minister Dominello announced that it would invest \$240 million to quadruple the size of the Cyber Security NSW team and broaden its scope to incorporate small agencies and councils.<sup>103</sup>

In August 2020, the Department of Home Affairs launched Australia's Cyber Security Strategy 2020, a 10-year strategy accompanied by \$1.67 billion of funding to develop new government capabilities, incentivise industry to protect themselves and their customers, build trust in the digital economy, and support the community to be secure online.<sup>104</sup>

A 2021 report from the Australian Cyber Security Centre (ACSC) highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic saw critical services, such as the healthcare, energy and food distribution sectors, become significant targets for ransomware attacks, making up one quarter of all cyber incidents reported to the ACSC between 2020 and 2021.<sup>105</sup>

In response to the increasing and pervasive threat of cyber attacks, the Australian Government announced the establishment of a new Federal Department dedicated to cyber security. The National Office of Cyber Security is led by the National Cyber Security Coordinator to direct and implement national cyber security policy, programs and preparedness efforts.<sup>106</sup>

**Action: Completed work as set out in the 2018 strategy.**

- 10 councils have been promoting cyber security to businesses.
- ACSC published more than 40 guides to support older Australians, families and businesses to implement sound cyber security practices.<sup>107</sup>

## ACTION

29

### Help communities to train and volunteer to prepare for disasters

Sydney communities want to strengthen local connections to ensure support and safety is close by in the event of a disaster. The Resilient Sydney Office has been promoting volunteering opportunities through council networks and worked with state government to deliver grant programs for councils.

In 2023, the Department of Premier and Cabinet released Round 2 of the Social Cohesion Grants<sup>108</sup> for local government, with this round seeking innovation in volunteering. Councils could apply for grants of \$50,000 to \$100,000 from the \$500,000 fund for projects that increase volunteerism in their local areas, build the resilience of local community leaders and groups, and encourage civic engagement and participation. From the seven successful recipients, four were Sydney councils:

- City of Ryde – awarded \$50,000 for a project to increase inclusive volunteering opportunities for people with disability.
- Hornsby Shire Council – awarded \$76,000 for a volunteer citizen scientists project tracking endangered species in their natural waterways.
- Ku-ring-gai Shire Council – awarded \$50,000 to deliver an engagement program to increase local volunteerism, targeting their CALD community.
- Wollondilly Shire Council – awarded \$100,000 to deliver a volunteer training program and toolkit to support a community disaster recovery hub.

**Action: Completed work as set out in the 2018 strategy.**

- 21 councils have made new information available to the community to promote volunteering.

## ACTION

## 30

### Inform risks and ratings with open-source data

Resilient Sydney has been connecting relevant agencies and organisations to explore opportunities for data sharing, reporting and developing consistent communication protocols, along with advocating for datasets to be made publicly available. Providing transparent data and information about risks will help people make better risk management decisions.

There was significant uptake of the NSW Fires Near Me app during the Black Summer Bushfires in 2019. The app was downloaded more than 2.7 million times and the NSW RFS website recorded 109 million page views during the 2019 Black Summer fire season, allowing residents to quickly and easily track fires near their homes or in their area. Innovations in communications, such as 'Leave Zones'<sup>109</sup> and 'Tourist Leave Zones' enabled the NSW Rural Fire Service to quickly declare areas of NSW unsafe for residents and tourists, and order people to leave or not enter that area ahead of predicted dangerous conditions.

During the 2020–2022 COVID-19 pandemic, NSW Health communications and the compulsory 'QR Check-In' feature on the Service NSW app<sup>110</sup> enabled efficient contact tracing for positive cases across NSW and Sydney. This innovation helped the community to know when and how to respond to local shock events, enabling better management of crises.

### Emergency information provided through Disaster Dashboards

Following the Black Summer Bushfires in 2019, four Sydney councils in bushfire and flood-prone regions – Penrith City, Hornsby Shire, Hawkesbury City and Blue Mountains City Council – created Disaster Dashboards, enabling residents to quickly find emergency information, such as evacuation orders, Council updates on local roads, SES notifications and a local hazards map, all in the one place.

The dashboards from Penrith City and Hornsby Shire were funded by Resilience NSW as part of the Regional Disaster Preparedness Program, an initiative originally piloted in the Hunter Region north of Sydney before being extended to councils in Sydney.<sup>111</sup>

Since the initial project was launched, Sutherland Shire Council, Northern Beaches Council, Camden Council, Wollondilly Shire Council and Blacktown City Council have created their own emergency communication platforms, enabling centralised and rapid distribution of information during disasters to their communities.

- 9 emergency dashboards reaching 1.6 million people across Sydney.

**Action: Initiated and ongoing. The Resilient Sydney Office will continue to engage with data owners to encourage open-source sharing of data.**

DIRECTION

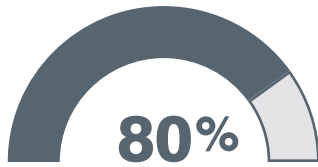
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# One city

We are one city.



RESILIENT SYDNEY



**80%**  
**average attendance**  
 at quarterly Resilience  
 Ambassador meetings

**33**

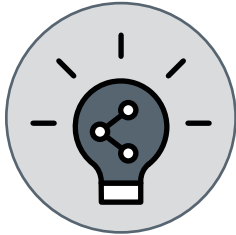
**Greater Sydney  
 councils**

actively engaged  
 in the Resilient Sydney  
 program for 8 years

**over  
 150**

**resilience officers**

across the local  
 government network



**7 in-person global  
 network conferences**

attended and knowledge-sharing  
 with 100 cities around the world



**3 major M&E  
 reports published**

highlighting the effectiveness of  
 the Resilient Sydney Program

**ACTION**

**31**

**Engage 100 organisations in the Sydney  
 Resilience Commitment**

Sydney has complex and disjointed governance with three layers of government and increasing private sector control of core utilities and services delivering people’s everyday needs. The Resilient Sydney Office has coordinated a central network of Resilience Ambassadors in local governments across the city to share learnings and coordinate action. It has also facilitated coordination between local governments and the NSW Government. As a result, Sydney has responded more effectively to the many shocks and stresses it has faced in the last six years.

The Resilient Sydney program uses a ‘network-model’ approach to make systemic changes in the city for resilience. This is unusual internationally. It is a successful approach in Sydney because it directly tackles the disjointed nature of our governance by focusing on improving the connectedness of people and organisations in formal networks.

The Resilience Ambassadors’ network started in 2016. It brings together over 150 Resilience Champions, LEMOs and communication experts from Sydney’s 33 local governments. The network collaborates to prepare for disruption across the city’s systems, businesses and communities.

Resilience Ambassadors advise key decision makers within their organisations, providing them with a resilience lens for assessing information and voicing community views. Ambassadors use the network to share data, insights and resources. The network has also supported the co-design of user-focused engagement platforms, including knowledge-sharing meetings, resilience-focused operational plans and business reporting tools.

Ambassadors produce and implement resilience plans in their organisations and embed resilience principles into their community projects and business plans.

**“Resilient Sydney has enabled me to engage with all of the metro councils about resilience, recovery and preparedness... it’s also enabled us to collaborate more closely, for state and local government to share their ideas so that we can work together more.”**

.....  
 Response to a survey from a State  
 Government representative

Previous page: Photo by Katherine Griffiths/City of Sydney.



Resilient Sydney Workshop. Photo by Katherine Griffiths/ City of Sydney.

The network meets quarterly for members to share updates and discuss key issues. Resilient Sydney also provides an action update to the Ambassadors, covering active projects and collaborations and any notices for the network.

- New networks for knowledge sharing: Ambassadors Network, Platform Network, GBCA Network, Committee for Sydney Resilience Network, Asset Management Resilience Network and State Government Sustainability Network.
- Over 150 Ambassadors, Local Emergency Management staff and resilience officers in the Resilience Network.
- 31 network meetings hosted by Resilient Sydney providing 62 hours of knowledge-sharing and an 80 per cent average attendance rate.
- 81 per cent of survey respondents said they had a better understanding of who they could collaborate with to manage resilience challenges.
- 39 per cent of survey respondents said they used or shared documents through the Ambassador network to help staff adjust to working from home arrangements during the COVID-19 lockdown in Sydney.

**Action:** Initiated and ongoing. The Resilient Sydney Office will continue to lead the Ambassadors Network and will continue to engage organisations in urban resilience during the next strategy engagement process.

## ACTION 32

### Maintain and support the Resilient Sydney Office

The Resilient Sydney Office and program has been a catalysing force in developing urban resilience understanding and action in Sydney. A purposeful, coordinated response to Sydney's resilience challenges requires dedicated, adaptive leadership. The Resilient Sydney Office needs long-term resourcing and authority to continue to provide galvanising research, templates, guidance, training, networking creation, and monitoring and evaluation.

The Resilient Sydney Program has successfully transitioned from being dependent on funding from the Rockefeller Foundation to a co-contribution model from councils across Greater Sydney. The Steering Committee members come from a diverse range of organisations, are highly engaged, and have provided a significant investment of their valuable time into guiding the program.

The Resilient Sydney Steering Committee provides metropolitan governance over the program and includes executive leader representatives from each of the planning districts of Greater Sydney, NSW Government, business and the community sector. As a voluntary collaborative governance structure, resourcing for the Office is temporal and tenuous. A new approach to long-term resilience governance is required to enable systems change beyond the life of the strategy.

Since 2020, the Resilient Sydney Office has received funding from 94 per cent of the 33 Sydney councils, covering 100 per cent of core program functions.

In 2022, Resilient Sydney received a letter of support from the CEO or General Manager of all 33 Sydney councils to prepare a grant application for a second Resilient Sydney Strategy (2025 to 2030) from the Disaster Risk Reduction Fund. The support from 100 per cent of Sydney's councils shows the ongoing commitment to the Resilient Sydney program.



## Awards

- 2019 Chief Commissioner's Award from the Greater Sydney Commission for the Resilient Sydney Strategy.
- 2019 Best Smart City Project Award from the Committee for Sydney for the Resilient Sydney Platform.

Action: Initiated and ongoing.

**“It’s very much a council-led, council-supported, council-focused program. They’re very aware of the needs and the challenges that local government face and they’re really good at advocating for outcomes to that higher level, for what we need.”**

.....  
 Response from a Local Government representative

## Case study

### Chief Commissioner’s Award

In 2019, Resilient Sydney was honoured to receive the Chief Commissioner’s Award at the Greater Sydney Commission’s Greater Sydney Planning Awards.

The Awards acknowledge excellence in planning and recognise outstanding collaborative, innovative and bold initiatives that will deliver benefits to communities, economies and the environment.

The Chief Commissioner Ms Turnbull said, “This powerful example of innovation and collaboration has immense potential to create positive change in our metropolis”.

This prestigious award is testament to the commitment and enthusiasm of so many people collaborating across our city.



## ACTION

## 33

### Measure resilience and wellbeing to monitor and evaluate our goals

Quantifying the benefits of acting for resilience is key to understanding our capacity to make transformative change.

In 2020–21, Resilient Sydney engaged a consultant to review and evaluate the effectiveness of the Resilient Sydney program, strategy and office to date. The evaluation also investigated the impact of the program on improving evidence-based decision making, adaptive leadership and good governance in Sydney.

The findings were documented in the Outcomes and Insights Report which has been published on the City of Sydney website.<sup>112</sup>

Key highlights include:

- Resilient Sydney has significantly changed the political and institutional landscape in Greater Sydney and set an important precedent for city-wide resilience.
- Resilient Sydney has instigated changes to improve community resilience in policies, practices and resource flows at the local, state and Commonwealth levels, and within the private and other sectors.
- The establishment of the Resilient Sydney Platform has improved the way decisions are made and resources are allocated at the local government level.
- Resilient Sydney has inspired stakeholders to change their own work practices, from trying different project management approaches through to adopting more strategic and proactive mindsets in their work.
- Resilient Sydney is seen as a highly influential leader that is showcasing a model for change to regional, state and international audiences. It has brought the thinking around technical risks required to address resilience challenges within a holistic overview of the city system, enabling a rapid acceleration of shared learnings.
- Resilient Sydney is building knowledge and capacity to address resilience challenges by delivering professional development opportunities and establishing a network of Resilience Ambassadors, Resilience Officers and others in relevant roles.
- Resilient Sydney is building a highly respected 'brand' that has credibility and influence and is trusted to speak on behalf of councils and communities.
- Resilient Sydney has developed great collaborations for successful action management with an institutional structure to manage this.



Resilient Sydney Workshop. Photo by Katherine Griffiths/City of Sydney.

This Program Report (2025), the Environmental Footprints Report (2024) and the Outcomes and Insights report (2021) highlight the results of system changes and the strategy implementation outcomes of the program.

### Monitoring and evaluation reports

- In 2019, the Monitoring & Evaluation Framework was created, which included a Theory of Change model to help guide the purpose of the Resilient Sydney Office.
- In 2020, the Greater Sydney Commission published its first edition of 'The Pulse of Greater Sydney': a report with performance indicators tracking the implementation of the Greater Sydney Region Plan.
- In 2021, the Outcomes and Insights Report was published, showcasing results from 154 respondents and 20 interviews from local and state government, business, community and academic stakeholders.
- In 2024, the Environmental Footprints report was published by Resilient Sydney, capturing the sustainability actions happening across local government and the place-based use of the Resilient Sydney Data Platform to inform local strategies and policies.
- In 2025, this report, the Resilient Sydney Program report, was published, highlighting the outcomes achieved in each action of the Resilient Sydney Strategy (2018) and mapping the systems change that has occurred as a result of the program.

**Action: Complete. This report closes off the implementation of the first strategy and completes the monitoring and evaluation action for the program.**

## ACTION **34**

### Use digital collaboration and networking tools

Collaborating can be difficult in Sydney due to our complex governance structures and vast size of the metropolitan area, restricting the opportunities and increasing the costs of leaders and collaborators meeting together from different parts of Sydney. The response to COVID-19 included a major transition to digital cross-city meetings for the Resilient Sydney program.

This has improved the ability of organisations to be involved, and increased the number of people accessing the programs and actions and the transfer of information across Sydney for resilience.

The Resilient Sydney Office now uses online platforms to enable stakeholders to connect, share information and collaborate. New tools and mechanisms are now in place for the Ambassadors Network, Steering Committee meetings and Platform workshops. Use of video conferencing enabled the transition to city-wide connections and rapid sharing of documents, templates and approaches across jurisdictions during COVID-19.

During the Black Summer of 2019–20, the Local Government Bushfire Support Recovery Group was established to enable NSW councils to support impacted councils in bushfire recovery. Digital tools were used to collect offers and requests for help from councils, leading to over 100 deployments of people, equipment and resources to support the recovery.

During the devastating floods across NSW in early 2022, the digital giving platform, GIVIT, was utilised by the NSW Government as the primary mechanism for community members to donate to flood-affected residents. This form of support is targeted and based on actual, as opposed to perceived, need, resulting in less waste from unwanted donations. In six months, over \$16.9 million of donations were registered through the platform.

- 106 deployments of support were made from the Local Government Bushfire Recovery Support Group.
- 557 offers of support were submitted to the Local Government Bushfire Recovery Support Group from 47 different councils.

**Action: Completed work as set out in the 2018 strategy.**



Bushfire support group. Photo by Katherine Griffiths/City of Sydney.

## Case study

### Local Government Bushfire Recovery Support Group

The Shoalhaven was devastated by the Black Summer bushfires with 80 per cent of the LGA burnt, over 310 houses destroyed, and hundreds of others severely damaged.

Ros Ball, the Records Manager at Shoalhaven City Council, knew that people would need access to their development applications (DAs) for insurance claims and repairs. Most of these DAs were paper records and Ros knew that if she could scan these documents and give people digital access to their DAs, it would make their lives easier during a traumatic time. However, as many of these properties had more than one DA, it meant locating thousands of documents in the basement archives and scanning them, which would take some time.

She put in a request to the Local Government Bushfire Recovery Support Group for personnel to assist. The next day she received a call from the group coordinator with the news that two staff from Waverley Council had offered to come down and help. The two Waverley staff joined the Shoalhaven team for two weeks, followed by a staff member from Junee Council.

“I was around during the 2001 fires and I’ve seen a few other disasters during my time here and this is the first time this kind of support has been made available to us. We really appreciate the support that other councils provided by releasing their staff to us. Being able to make life a little bit easier for people who had lost their homes was really important for the community and, from a psychological standpoint, knowing that people were willing to come and help us was a real boost.”

**“It was a very positive and uplifting experience having them come and join us.”**

.....  
Ros Ball, Shoalhaven City Council

# ACTION **35**

## Learn and share with other cities through the international city network

Resilient Sydney has much to share with and learn from other cities that have tackled similar challenges. The Resilient Sydney Office has been actively engaged in the global Resilient Cities network, connecting Sydney stakeholders to international resources and contacts. Sharing of experience and processes has benefited projects, organisations and communities through shortening the effort and processes in Sydney to make improvements for resilience.

City leaders have attended global and regional meetings on urban resilience, creating new networks and knowledge exchanges for Sydney. Many of these have led to collaborations and sharing of approaches, resources and strategies.

The Resilient Sydney Office, Steering Committee members and the Lord Mayor of the City of Sydney continue to be active participants in the Resilient Cities Network (formerly the 100RC network) since Sydney joined in 2015. City leaders attended four Urban Resilience Summits in 2015, 2017, 2019 and 2023, enabling new networks and knowledge to be accessed for Sydney. City leaders also attended the specialist City-Technology Exchange in 2017, the Metropolitan Governance Exchange in 2018 and regional meetings of Asia-Pacific and Oceania cities, including the first post-pandemic in-person Asia-Pacific meeting hosted in Bangkok in 2022.

Sydney has offered the global network tangible examples of innovations and world best practice approaches for:

- Resilience planning using metropolitan governance networks
- Community engagement and research
- Management of extreme heat.



Photo by Katherine Griffiths/City of Sydney.

Tools and platform services from the Resilient Cities Network and 100RC Network used in Sydney include:

- The Watson Foundation Fellows
- KHUB/PlaceCube network technology
- AECOM/100RC Assets and Risks tool
- The 100RC City Resilience Framework
- Infrastructure assets.

**“Cities across the Asia-Pacific region and beyond look to Sydney for good practice, for governance and a range of other things.”**

.....  
Lauren Sorkin, Executive Director,  
Resilient Cities Network

**“What we’re finding is that the Sydney-based metropolitan model developed by Resilient Sydney has lessons for the regional areas.”**

.....  
Marg Prendergast, Executive Director,  
Disaster Recovery, Resilience NSW

Action: Ongoing. Resilient Sydney will continue to collaborate with the global network.

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# The future of Resilient Sydney

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## In this section

- 78 Impacts on the city system
- 79 Resilient Sydney Strategy 2025–2030





Beck Dawson, Sydney's first Chief Resilience Officer. Photo by Jamie Williams/City of Sydney.

## Impacts on the city system

Since the Resilient Sydney Office was founded in 2015, our city has experienced all eight of the shocks that we identified in our preliminary risk assessment.

Some of them, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Summer bushfires, have had seismic impacts. Their full effects are not yet known, and they will continue to cause trauma for many years to come.

These shocks highlighted the weaknesses in our city's fabric caused by the chronic stresses that are weighing on us. For instance, the pandemic showed us how vulnerable our young people are to economic disruptions as they are more likely to be in casual jobs, have fewer savings, and struggle to find affordable housing.

Some developments in the last five years are having mixed impacts. For example, the electrification of transport will reduce the threat of liquid fuel supply disruptions but increase the threat of electrical infrastructure failure. The pandemic swiftly accelerated and normalised remote working, which has helped to reduce pressure on the transport network, revitalise local economic centres and is allowing people more time with their families and communities. However, it is also making us more susceptible to cyberattacks and reducing economic activity in city business centres.

Despite the increasing threat of climate-based shocks, there has been positive action. On climate change, the world reached a binding agreement in Paris in 2016 with the major emitters setting net zero targets. In 2022, Australia pledged its commitment by adopting a 2050 net zero target. Across the country, there has been huge momentum in the divestment movement. Financial and government institutions are refusing to back fossil fuel projects and the price of renewables has dropped at a phenomenal pace. Locally, the NSW Government has released a renewable electricity strategy and net zero plan, which will see renewables deployed at record-breaking speed and creating jobs in regional areas.

Resilient Sydney has generated considerable momentum for urban resilience in Sydney and has demonstrated its impact on the city system. In 2025, it will continue that momentum with the second resilience strategy for Greater Sydney.

**“The local impacts of climate change are becoming increasingly apparent through record-breaking temperatures, drought and prolonged fire seasons. We know that on the current trajectory, far worse is yet to come.”**

Previous page: Photo by Mark Metcalfe/City of Sydney

# Resilient Sydney Strategy 2025–2030

Despite incredible progress across the system, the key resilience challenges identified in the first Resilient Sydney Strategy are still prevalent today, and continued action is needed to further increase Sydney’s resilience.

The first Resilient Sydney Strategy (2018–2024) provided a new governance approach with forums, networks, practical actions and shared commitments between State agencies and the 33 local governments of Sydney all working together. Resilient Sydney has proven the value in conducting a comprehensive public engagement process to generate a genuine community-led strategy. The first strategy is now largely complete, yet there is an urgent need for a renewed second strategy to focus efforts, funding and attention on practical actions that will prevent or mitigate the impacts of future shock and stress events.

Building on from the successes achieved with the first strategy, the Resilient Sydney Office has been awarded a Disaster Risk Reduction Fund (DRRF) grant administered by the NSW Reconstruction Authority and the National Emergency Management Agency to renew the Resilient Sydney Strategy (2025 to 2030). A letter of support received from every council in Sydney demonstrated the value of Resilient Sydney and the urgent need to continue collective action towards a more resilient city.



Photo by Cassandra Hannagan/City of Sydney.

Dynamic engagement activities with residents, businesses, state government agencies, academics and community groups across Sydney will provide the foundation for the renewed strategy. Organisations and participants will be guided through a deep exploration of the shocks and stresses, megatrends and vulnerabilities currently facing Sydney, and the ways we can strengthen resilience and our ability to respond and adapt.

Our engagement model, the strengthening of cross-sector and governmental relational ties, and the evidence from the renewed technical regional risk assessment will create the social licence to successfully realise the goals and objectives of the next Resilient Sydney Strategy (2025 to 2030). The strategy will set practical local and regional actions for cooperative investment that tackle place-based community risks and needs, outlining a comprehensive resilience roadmap for Greater Sydney to 2030.

As the new Strategy is implemented, Resilient Sydney will continue to develop new tools, policies, data, processes and community or organisational engagement that build the capacity of all actors in Sydney to deliver place-based risk reduction.

The Resilience Ambassadors network will continue into the next strategy with Ambassadors providing feedback and place-based knowledge to further shape the renewed strategy's actions. The network will continue to collaborate and support the implementation of the renewed Strategy.

## Increasing the value of the Resilient Sydney Platform

Given the successful implementation and uptake of the Resilient Sydney Platform, it has been extended, ensuring the councils of Greater Sydney can continue to access critical longitudinal datasets to support their resilience initiatives.

With the program continuing, there has been interest from State Government partners in expanding the Platform to other regions of NSW using the same methodology and governance approach to monitor and increase resilience across the state.

Expansion into non-environmental datasets, such as social cohesion, affordable housing and emergency management data, is becoming increasingly likely as working groups in each topic confirm council needs and gain access to valuable data from data owners. As the renewed Strategy takes shape, the data required by councils to expand their resilience initiatives and meet the needs of their communities will inform the datasets that Resilient Sydney pursues for the expansion of the Platform.

**“The network-of-networks logic utilised by the Resilience Ambassadors has proven that cohesive governance is imperative to the success of Greater Sydney and that peer-to-peer support is invaluable.”**



Photo by Cassandra Hannagan/City of Sydney.

# Appendix 1: Resilient Sydney Steering Committee

## Current Steering Committee members:

1. **Monica Barone** – Chief Executive Officer, City of Sydney
2. **Meredith Wallace** – General Manager, Bayside Council
3. **Kerry Robinson OAM** – Chief Executive Officer, Blacktown City Council
4. **Lindy Deitz** – General Manager, Campbelltown City Council
5. **Gail Connolly** – Chief Executive Officer, City of Parramatta
6. **Scott Phillips** – Chief Executive Officer, Northern Beaches Council
7. **Andrew Moore** – General Manager, Penrith City Council
8. **Hugh Phemister** – General Manager, Willoughby City Council
9. **Chris Hanger** – Chief Operating Officer, DCCEEW
10. **Steve Hartley** – Executive Director Sustainability and Resilience, NSW Department of Planning and Environment
11. **Nini Purwajati** – Program and Knowledge Lead, Resilient Cities Network
12. **Keith Baxter** – Director of Emergency Recovery and Strategy, OLG
13. **Aaron Coutts-Smith** – A/Executive Director, Climate Change and Sustainability, DCCEEW
14. **Mel Dewsnap** – A/Chief Resilience Officer, Resilient Sydney
15. **Amanda Leck** – Head, Adaptation, Mitigation & Reconstruction, NSW Reconstruction Authority
16. **Dean Betts** – A/Director, Regional Delivery, NSW Reconstruction Authority
17. **Brett Whitworth** – Deputy Secretary, OLG

## Previous members noted for long service to the Committee during the period 2018–2024:

**Beck Dawson** – Executive Director – Adaptation and Mitigation, NSW Reconstruction Authority/ Former Chief Resilience Officer, Resilient Sydney

**Greg Dyer** – Chief Executive Officer, Sydney Fish Markets and previous CEO, Parramatta City Council

**Jacki Johnson** – Group Executive IAG

**Sam Kernaghan** – Director, Resilience Program, Committee for Sydney/Former Associate Director, Asia Pacific, Resilient Cities Network and 100 Resilient Cities

**Alex O'Mara** – Director and Founder, Sustainable Solutions Advisory/Former Group Deputy Secretary, Place Design and Public Spaces, NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment

**Marg Prendergast** – Former Executive Director, Resilience NSW

**Rod Simpson** – Former Environment Commissioner, Greater Sydney Commission

**Robert Tickner** – Former CEO, Australian Red Cross and Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience and Safer Communities

**Kate Wilson** – Former Executive Director, Climate Change and Sustainability, NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment

**Warwick Winn** – General Manager, Eurobodalla Shire Council/Former General Manager, Penrith City Councils

**Elizabeth Mildwater** – Secretary, Department of Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport/Former CEO, Greater Cities Commission

**Ray Brownlee** – General Manager, Randwick City Council/Former General Manager, Northern Beaches Council

**Dawn Routledge** – Executive Director Partnerships, Projects & Insights, Service NSW/Former Executive Director, Resilience NSW

**Debra Just** – Former Chief Executive Officer, Willoughby City Council

**Lauren Sorkin** – Executive Director, Resilient Cities Network

**Christine Stasi** – Group Executive, People Performance & Reputation, IAG

**Danny Rezek** – Partner, Audit and Assurance, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu

# Endnotes

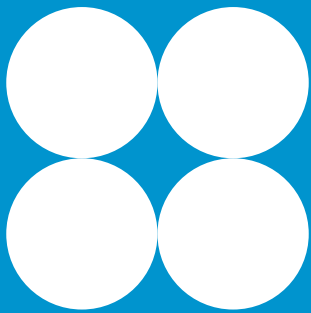
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References and links were correct at the time of publication and may be subject to change.



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