

# **Attachment C**

**Draft Resilience Strategy 2023-2028  
(changes marked-up)**



# Draft Resilience Strategy 2023–2028

A strategy to address the resilience challenges in the City of Sydney area  
June 2023

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The City of Sydney acknowledges the Gadigal of the Eora Nation as the Traditional Custodians of our local area. We acknowledge Elders past and present and celebrate the resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to Country.

# Message from the Chief Executive Officer



I have seen firsthand the resilience of our local communities. We've faced many challenges in recent years, from drought and bushfire impacts and floods to the global pandemic and other extreme weather events, as well as cyber threats and changing economic conditions. But we've always come together and supported one another, especially those in need.

Given this, I'm pleased to announce our City of Sydney Resilience Strategy. This local strategy is a collaborative effort to strengthen our resilience and ensure we can continue to prepare for, respond, adapt, and recover from shocks and stresses now and into the future.

This strategy provides a greater understanding of our local area including our vulnerabilities, interconnectedness, and underlying pressures. Our local shocks and stresses provide the foundation to understand our resilience challenges and opportunities. It builds on the work of the metropolitan Resilient Sydney Strategy to inform and engage communities including government, business and residents to increase resilience and reduce risks for everyone.

At the heart of this strategy is a commitment to working together to understand our resilience challenges, what we're currently doing to respond to these challenges and actions to build our capacity and capability to strengthen community resilience. This includes investing in infrastructure, strengthening social networks and developing new partnerships.

Through this strategy we will work to ensure all members of our communities have the support they need to thrive and that we are able to bounce back more quickly from shocks and stresses when they occur.

I am proud to lead an organisation that is committed to building a more resilient community. Thank you for your support and commitment in making our city a more connected, prepared and resilient place to live, work and visit.

*P. M. Barone*

Chief Executive Officer  
**Monica Barone**

# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander statement



Victoria Park, Camperdown: Yabun Festival. Photo: Joseph Mayers.

The City of Sydney is on the lands of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation. They are stewards of the land where the city is built and have cared for this Country for over 60,000 years. Aboriginal people have lived on this place through drought, fire, flood, war and social upheaval. Their knowledge of this land can teach us how we can be resilient and adaptive in the face of modern disruptions.

The City of Sydney is committed to listening to, working with and elevating the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the city. We acknowledge the harmful impact of colonisation and that government policies still negatively impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This has led to intergenerational trauma including disadvantage in social inclusion, housing, education, health and wellbeing.



Redfern Community Centre: Reconciliation Week. Photo: Chris Southwood.

By addressing housing affordability, cost of living and gentrification, we will work together to prevent further displacement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the City of Sydney. The City of Sydney understands that these past human rights injustices impact us all as a nation and must be addressed in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in order to reconcile for the past.

We recognise that the British occupation on the shores of Warrane (Circular Quay), Sydney Harbour which began in 1788 had far-reaching and devastating impacts on the Gadigal of the Eora nation. Longstanding harmonious ways of life were disrupted by this invasion as Country, lands and waterways of Aboriginal peoples were appropriated.

Today Sydney is central to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures, traditions, histories, and activism.

Despite the destructive impact of this invasion, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures have endured and are now globally recognised as the world's longest continuous living cultures.

The City strives to honour the voices, needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by supporting and advocating their quest for self-determination and empowerment consistent with UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. By actively listening and understanding the harsh truths of the past, we are laying the groundwork for a future that embraces all Australians, a future based on genuine engagement, mutual respect and shared responsibility for our land and environment.

The ongoing custodianship of the Gadigal of the Eora Nation is an essential part of this future, as is Sydney's continuing place as central to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and communities.

Noting the existence and use of Aboriginal language, spirituality and terminology to identify places and landmarks in the area, it's incumbent on all of us to engage and consult directly with the local Aboriginal community for better cultural, social, environmental and economic benefits.

The City of Sydney is committed to reconciliation. Our actions and commitments will help to ensure the political, economic, social and cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are embedded in economic, social, environmental and cultural change.

# Executive summary

The City of Sydney local area is facing more challenges from the impacts of climate change and social and economic disruptions, which threaten the city's stability and prosperity. To address these challenges, we've developed this local resilience strategy that sets out a vision for a more adaptive and prosperous city.

The strategy's challenges and opportunities are described across 5 directions:

**Direction 1: An equitable, inclusive and connected community** – collaborate with partners and community to increase equity and create connected communities that are more resilient to shocks and stresses.

**Direction 2: A climate resilient city** – adapt to a changing climate by understanding risks and creating equitable solutions.

**Direction 3: Places, buildings and infrastructure for resilience** – strengthen infrastructure and assets to withstand shocks and stresses and build community resilience.






**Direction 4: A robust local economy** – improve community economic resilience through diversity, inclusivity and revitalising our city.

**Direction 5: A prepared community** – work with communities and government to prepare organisations, services and people to respond to and recover from shock events.

Our resilience strategy requires partnerships and collaboration between the City of Sydney and other levels of government, business and community organisations. We're prioritising action and investment in physical infrastructure, social systems, economic sustainability, and programs, people and existing initiatives.

By working together, we can create a more adaptive and thriving city for our communities to be better prepared for future challenges.



		We want to:	To address:	We will:	
 <p><b>Direction 1</b> <b>An equitable, inclusive &amp; connected community</b></p>		Collaborate with partners and community to increase equity and create connected communities that are more resilient to shocks and stresses.	Inequality, homelessness, safety, affordable housing, food insecurity, social cohesion, loneliness & isolation, digital inclusion.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Advocate for safe, healthy, appropriate, climate-proofed crisis, social, affordable and rental housing.</li> <li>2. Monitor community wellbeing and equality to inform decision making about resilience initiatives.</li> <li>3. Improve food security and equitable access to food.</li> <li>4. Increase social connectedness within and between communities to strengthen their capacity to recover.</li> </ol>	
	 <p><b>Direction 2</b> <b>A climate resilient city</b></p>		Adapt to a changing climate by understanding risks and creating equitable solutions.	Heat, drought, bushfires, storms & flooding, sea level rise, equity in our climate response.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Support our community to cope with increased heat and drought.</li> <li>6. Update flood and sea level rise planning to prepare the city for predicted climate impacts.</li> <li>7. Improve the City of Sydney's ability to understand and manage climate risks and equity implications.</li> </ol>
		 <p><b>Direction 3</b> <b>Places, buildings, and infrastructure for resilience</b></p>		Strengthen infrastructure and assets to withstand shocks and stresses and build community resilience.	Asset management, role of community facilities, infrastructure failure, lack of redundancy in infrastructure systems.
	 <p><b>Direction 4</b> <b>A robust local economy</b></p>			Improve community economic resilience through diversity, inclusivity and revitalising our city.	Economic recovery, diversification, skills & labour shortage, employment conditions, supply chain disruption, innovation.
		 <p><b>Direction 5</b> <b>A prepared community</b></p>		Work with communities and government to prepare organisations, services and people to respond to and recover from shock events.	Community preparedness, cyber security, data & information sharing, emergency communications.

# Introduction

## How this strategy was developed

This strategy for our local area was developed to localise the work commenced in 2015 by the Resilient Sydney program including the Resilient Sydney strategy. City of Sydney hosts the Resilient Sydney program and network on behalf of the 33 local governments in Greater Sydney. The City of Sydney Resilience Strategy supports several strategic directions from our community strategic plan:

1. Responsible governance and stewardship,
2. A leading environmental performer,
6. An equitable and inclusive city, and
7. Resilient and diverse communities.

It also aligns with and supports major strategies including our environmental strategy and social sustainability policy and action plan.

The City of Sydney Resilience Strategy is supported by research including a local area resilience risk assessment, which identifies current and emerging community shocks, stresses and future considerations for our local area.

Building on this evidence base, we undertook several activities to understand our resilience challenges, what we're currently doing in response and identify actions to strengthen community resilience.

~~This draft Strategy will be placed on public exhibition to enable all members of the community to provide feedback on what is proposed, before being adopted by Council.~~

**Community consultation has informed the Strategy. We asked community members about their experiences with emergency situations, their ideas on how our communities can be more prepared for emergencies and their thoughts on what will help our communities cope with the impact of shocks and stresses. We then test the draft directions and actions to ensure what we were proposing resonated with the community.**



## What is resilience?

Resilience is 'the capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, business and systems within a city to survive, adapt and thrive no matter what kinds of chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience.'  
Resilient Cities Network.

Resilience involves the social, economic and environmental systems that support urban areas, including physical infrastructure. The goal of urban resilience is to create adaptive, robust and secure cities that effectively respond to and recover from challenges.

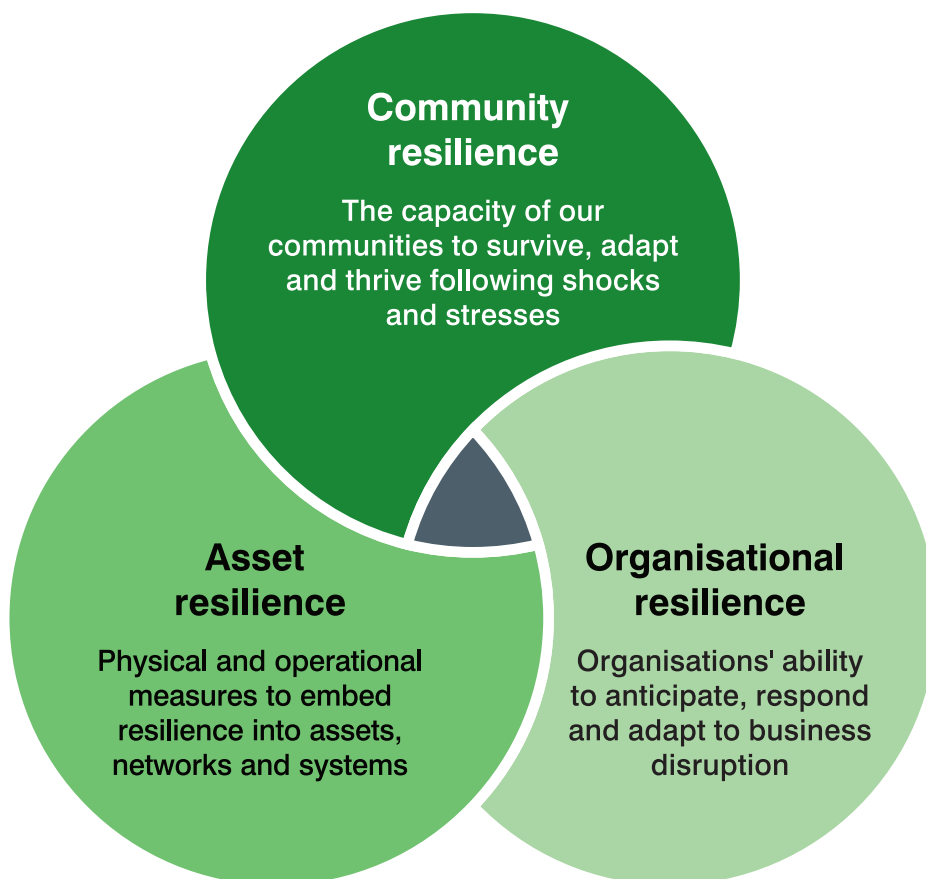
Acute shocks are sudden, sharp events that threaten a city, such as heatwaves, floods, disease outbreaks and cyberattacks.

Chronic stresses weaken the fabric of a city on a day-to-day or cyclical basis, such as rising inequity, lack of social cohesion and inadequate public transport.

Our city functions through a complex network of logistical, social, economic, governmental and technological systems. These systems impact our daily lives in many ways. Systems can support people in our community to thrive or they can exacerbate vulnerabilities.

Improving the systems and networks that make up a city will increase our resilience overall. Resilient systems withstand, respond, and adapt more readily to shocks and stresses.<sup>1</sup>

The intersection between community, organisational and asset resilience shows the interdependence and interconnectedness between these 3 elements to promote overall resilience.



## Shocks and stresses

In Sydney we're experiencing increasing shocks and stresses arising from climate change, geopolitical events and economic shifts. The impact that a shock has on a place depends upon the underlying stresses. For example, the shock of the Covid-19 pandemic exposed existing inequities and amplified chronic stresses affecting our communities such as housing affordability, social cohesion and food insecurity.

By 2060 the annual economic cost of natural disasters in Australia is expected to increase from an average \$38 billion per year to at least \$73 billion and as much as \$94 billion per year. In NSW the total economic costs of natural disasters over the next forty years will be at least \$360 billion.<sup>2</sup> More frequent and severe shocks and stresses – in part, due to climate change – will test our capacity to cope as increasing impacts become more likely to exceed our limits.

### We've identified these acute shocks our area is vulnerable to:

-  critical infrastructure failure
-  epidemic/pandemic or mass medical emergency
-  extreme weather including heatwaves, severe storms and flooding
-  bushfire impacts
-  food, fuel or water crisis from drought or supply chain disruption
-  compromised buildings
-  cyberattack
-  civil unrest resulting in disorder, violence or riot
-  terrorist attack
-  landslip/subsidence

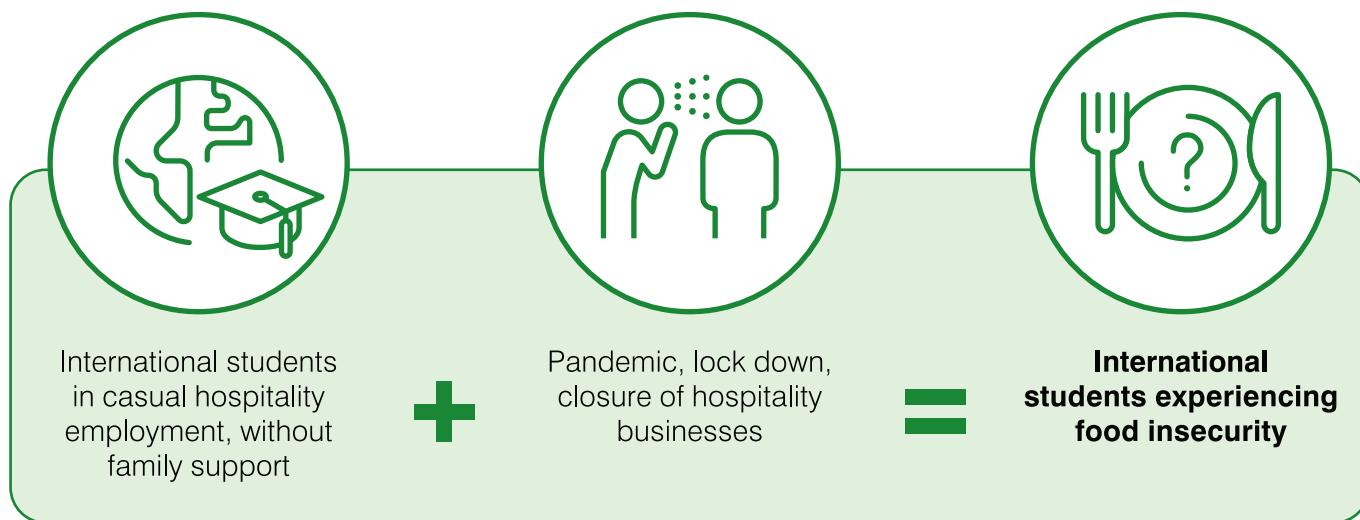
### We've identified these chronic stresses the city is vulnerable to:

-  increasing inequity between advantaged and disadvantaged households
-  increasing domestic and family violence
-  cultural intolerance
-  food insecurity
-  economic stress from lack of economic diversity, and supply chain disruption
-  skills and labour shortage, employment conditions, demand on essential workers
-  health service demands/limited capacity
-  individual financial vulnerability from high levels of household debt, low wage growth, workforce casualisation, underemployment and unemployment
-  water insecurity
-  ageing population/increasing vulnerabilities within the community
-  increasing population, residential density and demand on infrastructure and services
-  lack of affordable housing
-  decreasing redundancy in communications networks

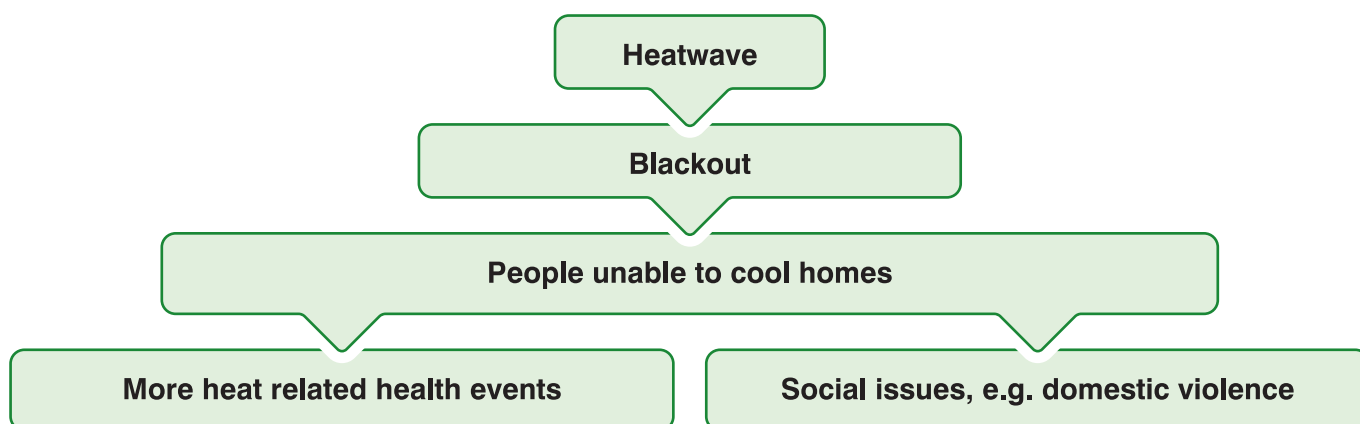
## Interconnected systems and risks

Stresses can undermine the ability of communities, assets and organisations to recover from a shock. Understanding the role of these stresses helps identify and prepare for potential cascading or compounding risks.

As shock and stress events increase, the likelihood of these events occurring simultaneously or directly after one another also increases. The compounding impact of shocks and stresses often results in a much longer response and recovery phase.<sup>3</sup> This example of compounding shocks and stresses shows how international students studying in Sydney were impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.



Cascading risks increase the vulnerability of communities, organisations and assets. A cascade is a chain of causes that occurs when hazards, risks and increased vulnerabilities connect across multiple scales to produce a disaster<sup>4</sup>. Wider community resilience will be negatively impacted by increased compounding and cascading risks, highlighting the importance of a coordinated, system wide approach to resilience. This example shows how a weather event cascades into health and social impacts.



The Covid-19 pandemic caused significant health, economic and social impacts. This amplified existing chronic stresses, impacting the most vulnerable, and creating a new group of communities in need. Responding to compounding and cascading impacts of the pandemic required coordinated support from the City of Sydney. This included emergency food distribution, dedicated community hotlines, targeted communications, personal protective equipment and community quick response grants.



Northcott Community Centre, Surry Hills, Covid-19 vaccination hub specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. Photo: Aby Felman.

## Our role in strengthening resilience

The City of Sydney plays a major role in strengthening community resilience by providing projects, programs and services to support local communities. Other people and organisations have responsibilities for parts of the complex network of systems that keep our local area running. They are responsible for working together and individually to ensure the safety of our community and the functioning of our city in good times and bad. This strategy identifies actions we can take to:

- lead and advocate
- plan and regulate
- build partnerships and capacity
- provide infrastructure, assets, projects, programs and services
- communicate with stakeholders.

The scale of disasters and disruptions affecting cities often overwhelms their ability to respond locally. Extreme weather events, bushfires and the Covid-19 pandemic reminded us that we are a global, hyperconnected city. As a well-resourced council, leader and vocal advocate we made a clear decision to work with communities and organisations beyond our local area boundaries.



Redfern Community Centre Reconciliation Event kitchen. Photo: Chris Southwood.



George Street: Living Colour. Photo: Katherine Griffiths.

## Priority communities

The term ‘priority community’ describes a group of people who are experiencing vulnerability due to the systems and circumstances in which they live. The City of Sydney has identified a number of priority communities in our local area who may require additional support during times of stress or emergency. We are aware that individuals may identify with more than one of these priority communities, and thus experience heightened vulnerability.

The City has identified the following priority communities under this strategy:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- People on low incomes
- Renters including social housing residents
- People experiencing homelessness
- People with disability
- People with mental health or chronic health issues
- People over 65-years-old
- Babies and children under five years old
- New immigrants, non-citizens, and refugees
- People with English as a second language.

## Governance

Good governance prioritises transparency, accountability and inclusivity in decision-making. It involves regular engagement with local communities to understand their needs and concerns, and to ensure policies and decisions reflect their priorities. It also involves building strong partnerships with other levels of government and business to achieve shared goals and maximise resources.

Disjointed governance and distrust is one of Sydney’s biggest challenges. Communities are concerned about disconnected decision-making determining housing, infrastructure and services, transport, education and employment. Responsibilities are distributed across numerous organisations and levels of government. Historically this has undermined our ability to make integrated, place-based decisions to meet the needs of our communities. This also undermines our ability to understand place-based risks and to take effective action.

These challenges are connected in people’s lives and aren’t constrained by boundaries or different levels of governance. Addressing them requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach to engage diverse stakeholders, promote transparency and accountability, and prioritise the public interest for good governance in our local area.

The City of Sydney has a responsibility to balance the needs and interests of current and future generations as it makes decisions. We need to ensure we provide effective governance and leadership and have the capacity and capability to serve our communities now and in the future. Trust between community, government, and institutions will be critical. We’ll achieve this through strong partnerships, inclusive decisions, collaboration, accountability and transparency, to strengthen governance across our local area and Greater Sydney.

## Our organisational resilience

Organisational resilience is our ability to anticipate, respond and adapt to disruptive events, such as industrial action, natural disasters, cyberattacks or economic disruptions. It involves physical, technological and human factors that enable us to adapt to changing circumstances and maintain operations in the face of adversity.

The goal of organisational resilience is to ensure we can continue to provide essential services, meet our obligations and achieve our goals, even during significant challenges. This involves developing a culture of preparedness, investing in robust systems and processes, and fostering strong relationships with key stakeholders, such as employees, our communities and suppliers.

We’ll need to be flexible and agile to redeploy resources during future emergencies. For example, during our response to the global pandemic, library employees became delivery drivers for emergency food relief in the city.

Supporting our organisation is our people strategy, which is part of our [resourcing strategy](#) and guides our decision making, priorities and investment in a resilient workforce.

Ultimately organisational resilience helps us be more flexible, agile, adaptable and secure, in response to shocks and stresses.

# What our communities told us

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## Consultation overview

During March and April 2023, we asked the community to share their experiences with emergency situations, their ideas on how our communities can be more prepared for emergencies and their thoughts on what will help our communities cope with the impact of shocks and stresses. The consultation focused on understanding the concerns, interests, and diverse perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disability, social housing residents, and other priority groups.

Feedback was gathered through conversations with community members at pop-ups in Redfern, Glebe, Woolloomooloo and Green Square, as well as social housing forums. A hard copy survey was distributed at these events and through community centres, customer services centres and library branches. An online survey and social pinpoint tool to map places of safety were available on our website. We ran a workshop with international students to capture a youth voice.

We asked community members about four key topic areas: safe places in our community during an emergency, the impacts of climate change, access to fresh healthy food, and emergency communication.

We presented to several of the City of Sydney's specialist advisory panels to provide an update on the Draft Strategy and to listen to feedback from priority communities including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel
- Inclusion (Disability) Advisory Panel
- Multicultural Advisory Panel

Further community consultation will be undertaken on the draft strategy during the public exhibition period.



“Resilience – bouncing back after adversity. Ongoing reminders that there is help out there.”  
- community member feedback



Waterloo Green, Waterloo: Redfern and Waterloo Pet Day.  
Photo: Sarah Rhodes.

## Key findings

- ~~People we spoke to said they feel safe in their own homes.~~
- ~~People who rent (including social housing residents) would like options to adapt their homes to deal with the impacts of climate change (e.g., air conditioning, blackout curtains, solar power with batteries, large freezer).~~
- ~~People do not feel prepared for an emergency caused by extreme weather.~~
- ~~They would like more information about emergency resources and places of refuge communicated in short, simple formats both online and face to face.~~
- ~~We can improve community resilience by supporting well connected communities.~~
- ~~More affordable options to buy or trade fresh healthy food close to home would help improve food security.~~
- ~~The safety of pets is important to people.~~
- ~~We can learn from the United Nations Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 to enhance disaster preparedness and improve response and recovery.~~

## Feedback on specific topics

### Safe places in our community in an emergency

Extreme heat and sustained blackout were the most experienced emergency situations, followed by flooding, severe storms and bushfire smoke.

Most people who had experienced a weather driven emergency chose to stay home. Some people chose to seek shelter nearby, with friends, or at a local shopping centre.

People told us they feel safe at home during an emergency event like a heatwave or flash flooding. Some people told us they feel safe at local council facilities (including community centres, libraries and aquatic centres), indoor air conditioned spaces (including shopping centres and cinemas) and at local green spaces.

Despite being a safe city, access to safety is not equally available to all. Systems can reinforce inequality which impacts trust with law enforcement and services designed to protect community safety. This includes cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

### Impacts of extreme weather

People do not feel prepared for an emergency caused by extreme weather. When asked how they would prepare, people told us they would organise household supplies, stockpile food and water and adapt their home to cope with the emergency. People who rent expressed strong concern that they are not able to make changes that would make their home more comfortable in an emergency.

People feel concerned about having enough essential items at home, having accurate information, and getting home when an emergency occurs. Many people are also concerned about accessing essential medical assistance, communicating with family and helping neighbours.

### Food security

People told us we could improve access to fresh healthy food in our community by addressing affordability issues, encouraging 'grow your own' options, and improving physical access to fresh affordable food supplies, for example through local growers markets.

People who have experienced difficulty accessing fresh healthy food told us they coped by seeking low cost options, careful budgeting, with help from support services and from friends and family.

### Communication

People told us they would like more information about emergency resources and places of refuge in their local area. They would like both online and face to face options to learn more about disaster preparedness. Comments suggested that short, simple formats would be most effective, such as checklists, maps or social media videos.

We heard that people find information online, through word of mouth and through social media. Many people also find information through news outlets, email and radio.

Information and communication should be accessible and provided in alternate formats for people with disability, with additional consideration of when there is no access to power or the internet.

### Other feedback

People told us we can enhance (or improve) community resilience by supporting community connection and wellbeing. They value how people in a well-connected community can help look after each other.

Many people commented on the need to adapt rented homes and need to provide for the safety of pets in an emergency. These concerns were raised consistently across the topics of safe places, the impacts of climate change, communication and general feedback.

Emergencies can be especially challenging for people with disability, and it is important to pre-plan and prepare where possible. Disability inclusive disaster risk reduction was suggested as a means for the City of Sydney to collaborate with people with disability to increase disaster resilience.

## **What our communities told us – additional content**

### **Consultation overview**

*During March and April 2023, we asked the community to share their experiences with emergency situations, their ideas on how our communities can be more prepared for emergencies and their thoughts on what will help our communities cope with the impact of shocks and stresses. The consultation focused on understanding the concerns, interests, and diverse perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disability, social housing residents, and other priority groups.*

*Feedback was gathered through conversations with community members at pop-ups in Redfern, Glebe, Woolloomooloo and Green Square, as well as social housing forums. We presented to several of the City of Sydney's specialist advisory panels to listen to feedback from priority communities*

*During the public exhibition, from July to September 2023, we asked people to share their views on the directions and actions in the draft Strategy. Feedback was gathered through a survey that was available online and in hard copy. We spoke to people at a number of community meetings and ran a webinar for the business community.*

### **People acknowledged climate change is the most pressing issue they face in terms of resilience and preparing for the future**

### **Feedback on the draft Strategy**

*Strong support was received for the directions and actions in the draft Strategy. All the actions also received support from respondents. The five actions people saw as most important were:*

- *Advocate for safe, healthy, appropriate, climate-proofed crisis, social, affordable, and rental housing*
- *Support our community to cope with increased heat and drought*
- *Collaborate with government and councils for accessible waste and recycling facilities with reserve capacity*
- *Improve the City of Sydney's ability to understand and manage climate risks and equity implications*
- *Improve food security and equitable access to food*

## **Feedback on specific topics**

*During both phases of engagement, people provided feedback on the following topics.*

### **Climate change and extreme weather**

*Climate change was the strongest theme across all community feedback. People acknowledged climate change is the most pressing issue they face in terms of resilience and preparing for the future.*

*People are aware that those who are already experiencing disadvantage are more likely to feel the future impacts of climate change.*

*People do not feel prepared for an emergency caused by extreme weather. When asked how they would prepare, people told us they would organise household supplies, stockpile food and water and adapt their home to cope with the emergency. People who rent expressed strong concern that they are not able to make changes that would make their home more comfortable in an emergency.*

*People also expressed a desire for government to invest in infrastructure to help protect the community, such as stormwater management, greening and making homes more resilient.*

### **Planning for an emergency**

*People told us they feel safe at home during an emergency event like a heatwave or flash flooding. Some people told us they feel safe at local council facilities (including community centres, libraries and aquatic centres), indoor air-conditioned spaces (including shopping centres and cinemas) and at local green spaces.*

*People are aware that disadvantaged groups can often be left behind and not have access to information and resources during emergencies and would like to see this addressed. We also heard that despite being a safe city, access to safety is not equally available to all. Systems can reinforce inequality which impacts trust with law enforcement and services designed to protect community safety. This includes cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.*

*People suggested that the City ensures that emergency communications and consultations on plans and actions reach all members of society. Suggestions included providing educational material about what to do in an emergency (what to pack, where to go etc.) and having community assembly centres that people can access during emergencies.*

### **Food security**

*People told us we could improve access to fresh healthy food in our community by addressing affordability issues, encouraging 'grow your own' options, and improving physical access to fresh affordable food supplies, for example through local growers markets.*

*People who have experienced difficulty accessing fresh healthy food told us they coped by seeking low-cost options, careful budgeting, with help from support services and from friends and family.*

### **Communication**

*People told us they would like more information about emergency resources and places of refuge in their local area. They would like both online and face-to face options to learn more about*

*disaster preparedness. People suggested collaborating with government, councils, and communities to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure effective planning.*

*Information and communication should be accessible and provided in alternate formats for people with disability, with additional consideration of when there is no access to power or the internet.*

#### **Community cohesion**

*People told us we can enhance (or improve) community resilience by supporting community connection and wellbeing. They value how people in a well-connected community can help look after each other.*

*Emergencies can be especially challenging for people with disability, and it is important to pre-plan and prepare where possible. Disability inclusive disaster risk reduction was suggested as a means for the City of Sydney to collaborate with people with disability to increase disaster resilience.*

#### **Economic resilience**

*Feedback about economic resilience varied. Businesses expressed concern about stresses such as supply chain disruption and skills and labour shortages. Feedback from non-business respondents included a sentiment that people should be prioritised. Whilst there is some understanding that having a strong local economy is beneficial for the community, people do not want it to be the driving force.*



Dyuralya Square, Waterloo: Green Square community information day.  
Photo: Damian Shaw.

# Direction 1

## An equitable, inclusive and connected community

Collaborate with partners and community to increase equity and create connected communities that are more resilient to shocks and stresses.

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### Our resilience challenges

Our communities face increasing inequality, with a wider gap between rich and poor, a lack of social and affordable housing, and increasing homelessness. Food insecurity is becoming a major challenge for government and communities.

People need to be digitally connected with access to data and devices to go about their daily lives. Importantly we also need to ensure our community is socially cohesive, with strong social networks and interconnected communities, to help us respond and recover quickly from future shocks and stresses.



Wellington St, Waterloo: OzHarvest supermarket in the Waterloo Estate. Photo: Mark Metcalfe.

### Inequality in Sydney

The cost of living crisis alongside housing stress continues to impact many people within our community, in particular low income earners and people living below the poverty line<sup>5</sup>. While wealth in Australia is growing, the gap between the richest and poorest within our society continues to grow, highlighting the inequalities faced by many.<sup>6</sup>

Inequality impacts all City of Sydney residents and workers directly or indirectly. It can undermine social cohesion, overall wellbeing and create barriers to full participation in the social, cultural, economic and political life of the city<sup>7</sup>.

In our local area, the Sydney Equality Indicators found serious inequalities across multiple domains including employment and income, housing, health, education, transport and participation in public life. These inequalities are experienced across multiple groups but are starkest for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people on low incomes and people with disability<sup>8</sup>. Other dimensions of inequality were evident across gender, citizenship and sexuality. It is also clear that where inequalities are experienced within one domain, they are undoubtedly experienced across multiple domains, demonstrating the interconnections of these barriers and impacts.

The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted existing inequalities in our city. Many people already marginalised or experiencing disadvantage and inequity were more adversely affected by the pandemic than the general population. Research suggests women experienced more significant impacts on their employment, domestic labour and health and wellbeing<sup>9</sup>, and young people are also missing out on economic opportunities.

Addressing inequality in Sydney requires systemic change across many areas through a comprehensive and collaborative effort involving all levels of government, community organisations and the private sector.



Homelessness Action Plan. Photo: Katherine Griffiths.

## Homelessness

Homelessness, including people sleeping rough, those in temporary accommodation and at risk of homelessness, is a key challenge for the City of Sydney. People sleeping rough are especially vulnerable to shocks, such as extreme weather events including heat stress, rain and flooding, and the Covid-19 pandemic. We're seeing more people sleeping rough, with 277 people in February 2023, an increase of 52 people from the previous year, due to a severe shortage of affordable and social housing in Sydney and across NSW. This includes people displaced due to extreme weather events, including floods in 2022.

We've met with a range of senior stakeholders across government and business, and the common theme is homelessness will continue to increase in coming years unless something is done to increase the amount of social and affordable housing available and to increase funding to support people to maintain tenancies. Contributing factors to the increase in homelessness may include critical statewide housing shortages, the cost-of-living crisis, increasing instances of family and domestic violence, financial impacts for older women and the impacts of environmental disasters on housing, food and household finances.

There has been a significant increase in numbers of people with severe mental and physical health issues which has put increased demand on the homelessness support sector. Due to the demands on the health system and lack of appropriate housing, there is inadequate supply of healthcare and longer-term accommodation and support options available for these people. The lack of resourcing and investment in high support housing models for people with complex needs means they spend longer sleeping rough.

Homelessness is a complex problem that cannot be tackled alone. The City of Sydney works with all levels of government, peak bodies, local organisations and the community to show leadership and commitment to end homelessness.

Given the ongoing, systemic challenges facing our city there will need to be significant ongoing funding and collaboration to end homelessness. This will require increased social and affordable housing, along with emergency preparedness and protocols, and ongoing support services.

## Community safety

In 2021 Sydney was ranked the number one safest city in Australia and fourth in the world by the Economist Safe Cities Index.<sup>10</sup> This index measures urban safety with indicators across 4 pillars: digital, infrastructure, health and personal security. Despite these rankings, access to safety is not equally available to all in Sydney. Many factors can increase the likelihood of being a victim or perpetrator of crime. Systems designed to respond to and prevent crime do not meet the needs of all community members. Systems can reinforce inequality which impacts trust with law enforcement and services designed to protect community safety.

Lack of safety has the potential to impact the city's reputation, deter tourism and hinder business growth. Perceptions of safety often come from how people feel about an area or place. Perceived fears can impact people's quality of life and the social and economic wellbeing of communities.

It is critical that the City of Sydney continues to address actual and perceived safety and ensures our residents and visitors feel safe in their communities. The challenge is to further develop and implement effective strategies that will continue to reduce crime and improve safety.



## Housing

Sydney is widely recognised as one of the world's most liveable cities but in the past decade complex housing issues have challenged our liveability indicators<sup>11</sup>. There is a severe housing shortage in Sydney, particularly affordable and social housing.

Access to safe and sustainable housing is fundamental to an inclusive and equitable society, and to increase safety and build community resilience. We're advocating and planning for more diverse, social and affordable housing through our [local housing strategy, housing for all](#). The strategy establishes an overarching vision, course, and shared responsibilities for housing delivery over the next 20 years. It identifies the housing challenges and community needs and establishes the land use planning priorities, objectives and actions to respond to key issues and manage growth and change in the city.

Design and construction quality of residential properties plays a significant part in community wellbeing, including the ability to adapt to climate change impacts. Housing needs to withstand the effects of increasing wet weather and provide passive cooling for more hotter days.

Access to good quality private and social housing is needed to reduce climate inequality experienced by priority groups, particularly those with low incomes, people renting and those living in apartments. People living in apartments, or renting in any type of dwelling, can have more difficulty adapting to climate impacts as they are unable to easily modify their home, for example, by installing insulation.

There are more than 9,700 state government owned social housing properties in our local area – one of the largest concentrations in Australia. Social housing is concentrated in a few high-density estates in Redfern, Waterloo, Surry Hills, Glebe and Woolloomooloo, with some smaller concentrations in other parts of the local area.

**The extremely poor condition of some of the social housing stock is a challenge for our community's current health and well-being and ability to adapt to climate change.**



Redfern: Social housing. Photo Katherine Griffiths.

Many residents are living in dwellings that need significant repairs and maintenance. In some properties conditions compromise health and safety. The Productivity Commission's report on government services for housing and homelessness in 2018 found that 24% of public housing tenants lived in dwellings not meeting minimum NSW standards<sup>12</sup>.

More than 25% of houses are over 50 years old and stagnant rental income received by NSW Land and Housing Corporation cannot cover increasing costs of repairs and maintenance of the ageing portfolio.

With social housing precincts such as Waterloo estate being redeveloped into a mix of social, affordable and private housing, it will be critical to ensure future housing has the quality and capacity to adapt to our changing climate.

In many cases housing is not fit for tenants with accessibility requirements or complex needs. NSW Land and Housing Corporation has acknowledged several challenges in supporting tenants with disability including complex modification requests from NDIS participants and the mismatch of properties to meet tenant needs. This includes a lack of specialist disability accommodation. Most housing has not been constructed with accessibility features to support people with chronic medical conditions, age-related health issues and disability.<sup>13</sup>

Housing affordability and availability, the condition of social housing properties and private rental properties and the inability for renters to adapt their homes to climate change impacts represent key challenges for the liveability and equity of our city.



Waterloo Estate: OzHarvest supermarket. Photo: Mark Metcalfe.

### Increasing food insecurity

Our food systems and supply chains are increasingly vulnerable to shocks such as extreme weather events or global pandemics, and stresses such as climate change that can impact food supply to our city. Food waste also contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions.

A growing number of people in our city are experiencing food insecurity, which includes disruptions to their physical and economic access to food. Many families are struggling with increased financial pressure from the cost of living.

The NSW Council of Social Service cost of living report found in 2022 that 16% of respondents in the city and inner south areas reported skipping meals in the past 12 months. Also, more than 60% of respondents cited food as an increased pressure on family budgets during the pandemic.<sup>14</sup>

The Foodbank hunger report in 2021 found 17% of Australian adults did not have enough to eat in the past year and could be categorised as severely food insecure. This means people are needing to reduce the quality and quantity of the food they eat by skipping meals or relying on food relief services, such as food banks and community pantries.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and people on low incomes are significantly more likely to be food insecure. During the pandemic many people relied on emergency food relief services due to lockdown restrictions and their financial circumstances.

Developing sustainable food systems is a priority for cities around the world, with many focusing on food policies, growing food, nutrition and reducing food waste, along with programs to address socio-economic equity.

In Australia there is a significant opportunity to learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's connection to Country and empower our First Nations communities as part of future solutions.

Due to the scale and complexity of our food systems addressing challenges to develop a sustainable food system also requires leadership, coordination and resourcing by the NSW Government.

The City of Sydney participated in the inquiry into food production and supply in NSW in 2022, which made recommendations to improve food security and develop more resilient and sustainable food systems across the state.



Waterloo Green: Pet Day. Photo: Sarah Rhodes.



St Helen's Community Centre. Photo: Chris Southwood.

### Social cohesion

Social inclusion and justice – key components of social cohesion – has declined sharply in Australia since 2020.<sup>15</sup>

Data from the City of Sydney's community wellbeing indicators (2019) shows that only 50% of community members were confident they would get help from their neighbours, but almost all would help their neighbours. This suggests a lot of goodwill but lack of connection.

Evidence shows that communities with high social cohesion are generally more resilient – by working together when disaster strikes, communities, organisations, businesses, government and individuals recover faster.<sup>16</sup> At the same time a lack of social cohesion, including social divides, marginalisation and inequality, can be a major stress itself and can lead to civil unrest and undermine community health and wellbeing.

Volunteering plays an important role in creating connections within community and can provide opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to come together. Working with people from different backgrounds can also support empathy and understanding for each other. This can help to break down barriers and promote understanding and acceptance of different cultures, religions and lifestyles, which can contribute to social cohesion. A strong culture of volunteerism and willingness to help each other is important in a time of crisis.

Strengthening social cohesion is an ongoing challenge. We need to continue focusing on how we build trust and supportive networks within and across community groups, whilst addressing cultural intolerance and being vigilant about racism and discrimination.

### Loneliness and isolation

Urban loneliness and social isolation have emerged as significant global issues that can impact wellbeing, physical and mental health, and the ability of communities to come together in times of need and for individuals to recover from emergencies.

There are multiple risk factors for loneliness and isolation in our area. We have people of diverse languages, ethnicity, religion, sexuality and gender. This diversity can be a catalyst for strength but also a challenge to forming strong bonds between people.

People move houses regularly and many live here briefly. Many residents speak limited English. A high proportion of people live alone. Students, including international students, and younger people are particularly at risk. Some groups have little or no face-to-face contact with others in their local area.

We need to continue to promote and provide opportunities for people to connect, reduce social isolation and enhance a sense of belonging within our communities.<sup>17</sup>

### Digital literacy and inclusion

It is increasingly important for people to have online access and the skills to use technology confidently to improve their day-to-day lives and engage in civic life. By contrast digitally excluded people miss out on social and economic benefits that connectivity provides, with affordable access to the internet being a major barrier.

There are 3 elements to digital inclusion:

- Digital access – where people own appropriate devices to access reliable and sustainable high-quality internet at home.
- Digital ability – where people have adequate skills to enable them to do a variety of tasks online with confidence.
- Digital affordability – where people can afford to pay for good quality service.

Households that need to pay more than 5% of their household income to access the internet are considered to have low affordability. Households paying more than 10% are in stress.

In 2021 we looked at digital inclusion initiatives offered in the City of Sydney area by government, not-for-profit and corporate services. Although generally not secure for functions such as banking, we found plenty of organisations offering free wifi in certain locations and supporting people to develop their digital skills. But very few initiatives helped people on limited incomes afford the devices and data they need to get online at home.

During the Covid-19 pandemic some social housing residents reported they experienced insufficient digital connection, or none at all<sup>18</sup>.

In February 2023 15% of 774 respondents to a City of Sydney survey about use of our community facilities said they either do not have internet access at home (11%), or do not have home internet access that meets their needs (4%). Improving digital literacy and inclusion enables our community to not only be better prepared in an emergency, but also addresses inequalities around access to education, employment, services and income.



Darling Square: Darling Square Library. Photo: Adam Hollingworth.

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## What we're doing

We're working towards our vision for a just, inclusive and socially sustainable city through our [social sustainability policy and action plan, a city for all](#).

We're implementing 59 social sustainability actions over the period 2018 – 2028. We continue to provide social services and support through early education and care services, community centres, homelessness services, social and skills development programs for young and older people, community transport, food services, diversity programs, support for international students and education and training programs.

The City empowers volunteers through co-produced programs with community members, the provision of direct funding or promoting volunteering opportunities. As an example, the City provided funding to the Stay Kind Foundation and Stay Kind ambassador programs. Roving teams of trained volunteer 'ambassadors' provide on-the-spot assistance to people at risk of becoming offenders or victims of crime in the city at night. A dedicated safe space provides vulnerable young people a place to rest, rehydrate, charge their phones, get first aid, find transport home, or wait for friends or family.

We work closely with other metropolitan councils, state government agencies and with business, community and not-for-profit organisations to advocate and collaborate on these complex issues that impact inequality, with a strong focus on housing, community safety and homelessness.

Our [local housing strategy, housing for all](#) establishes an overarching housing vision and sets the course for housing provision for the next 20 years. It identifies the housing challenges and community needs and establishes our land use planning priorities, objectives and actions to respond to key issues and manage growth and change in the city.

Our [homelessness action plan](#) details our role in working with our partners to create a resilient city, hosting safe and sustainable housing for everyone. We're responding to homelessness by monitoring trends in inner-city homelessness, assisting people sleeping rough, managing our public spaces and working with our partners to support people to access safe and sustainable housing and support.

We're committed to building an inclusive and accessible city for everyone, now and in the future. Through our [inclusion \(disability\) action plan](#) we're ensuring our programs, services, events, community facilities, public spaces and infrastructure are inclusive for everyone, including people with less visible disabilities. We're working to create positive attitudes and behaviours, more liveable communities, achieve higher rates of meaningful employment and provide more equitable access to mainstream services for people with disability.

Sydney is recognised internationally as a safe city. Our [community safety action plan](#) sets out our contribution to making Sydney a safe and resilient place to live, visit, work and study. It describes our work to increase actual and perceived public safety through crime prevention and response, preparedness, response to emergencies and strengthening community resilience.

Our plan to build and strengthen meaningful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is demonstrated through our stretch reconciliation action plan. This plan is a call to action for people in our organisation to make a stand for reconciliation. Through the Eora Journey we recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and communities, ensuring this fundamental part of our global city is celebrated by everyone. Place-based acknowledgement of Country is vital for reconciliation, and we seek to draw on the sophisticated, resilient and continuous culture of this place. We've worked with and achieved much with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel since 2008.

Digital literacy and inclusion are a focus for programs delivered through our community centres and libraries. Over the past decade we've increased digital literacy programs and the provision of technology and free public wifi across our facilities. We will be increasing this, adding free wifi to another 21 facilities. In late 2019 our libraries and learning team joined Be Connected, an Australian government initiative committed to increasing the confidence, skills and online safety of older Australians. The program aims to empower everyone to use the internet and everyday technology to thrive in our digital world.

## What we need to do next

Over the next 5 years we will take further action to address the challenges to becoming an inclusive and connected city. Actions have been designed to also address challenges captured under other Directions.

Action	Aligned Directions
<p><b>1. Advocate for safe, healthy, appropriate, climate-proofed crisis, social, affordable and rental housing</b></p> <p>We will respond to the shortage of good quality housing for priority communities including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with advocacy, strategic and operational activities, supporting renters and collaborating closely with the organisations that provide housing.</p> <p><b>We will work with:</b> NSW Department of Communities and Justice, Land and Housing Corporation, Planning and Environment, community housing providers, owners' corporations, tenant advocacy groups.</p>	<p>1: An inclusive and connected community ✓</p> <p>2: A climate resilient city ✓</p> <p>3: Places, buildings, and infrastructure for resilience</p> <p>4: A robust local economy ✓</p> <p>5: A prepared community</p>
<p><b>2. Monitor community wellbeing and equality to inform decision making about resilience initiatives</b></p> <p>We will undertake rigorous research into wellbeing and equality in our city, share the results with the community, and use this information to inform decision making in our city about resilience initiatives.</p> <p><b>We will work with:</b> Local community services and service providers, other levels of government and academia.</p>	<p>1: An inclusive and connected community ✓</p> <p>2: A climate resilient city ✓</p> <p>3: Places, buildings, and infrastructure for resilience</p> <p>4: A robust local economy</p> <p>5: A prepared community ✓</p>
<p><b>3. Improve food security and equitable access to food</b></p> <p>We will develop a sustainable food systems policy and action plan and strengthen our approach to working with others to provide emergency food relief when required and look for ways to support our community to grow food locally.</p> <p><b>We will work with:</b> Local community services and service providers, other levels of government, industry and academia, Sydney Farm Volunteers.</p>	<p>1: An inclusive and connected community ✓</p> <p>2: A climate resilient city ✓</p> <p>3: Places, buildings, and infrastructure for resilience</p> <p>4: A robust local economy</p> <p>5: A prepared community ✓</p>
<p><b>4. Increase social connectedness within and between communities to strengthen their capacity to recover</b></p> <p>We will continue to be a connector in bringing our diverse communities together, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, through provision of facilities, services, programs, grants, communication campaigns and volunteering.</p> <p><b>We will work with:</b> Local community services and service providers, other levels of government and academia.</p>	<p>1: An inclusive and connected community ✓</p> <p>2: A climate resilient city</p> <p>3: Places, buildings, and infrastructure for resilience</p> <p>4: A robust local economy</p> <p>5: A prepared community ✓</p>



Town Hall: Climate Strike. Photo: Katherine Griffiths.

# Direction 2

## A climate resilient city

Adapt to a changing climate by understanding risks and creating equitable solutions.

### Our resilience challenges

Our climate has already changed. Australia has warmed by an average 1.47°C since national records began in 1910. Each decade since 1950 has been warmer than the last with the 8 years from 2013 to 2020 all ranking among the 10 warmest years on record.<sup>19</sup> Australia is experiencing more frequent and intense weather events such as extended droughts, flooding and damage from extreme storms and longer runs of days above 30 degrees. Our whole community is already feeling the effects of climate change particularly priority groups who are more adversely affected than the general population.

While we're not able to prevent these disasters from happening we need to plan and adapt to the changing nature of climate risk now and in the decades ahead. Protecting our communities will require greater investment in resilience, adaptation and mitigation planning – from government, business, community organisations and individuals. This will reduce the physical, economic and social recovery costs that follow a disaster and the impact on our communities.



Indigenous carbon offsets. Photo: ©Aboriginal Carbon Foundation.

### Understanding climate risk

Climate risk is the assessment of the consequences and likelihood of climate change impacts and adaptation options. Physical risks relate to the physical impacts of climate change, whereas transition risks relate to the associated changes to things like the economy, policies, laws, technologies, business and investment models. The economic risks of climate impacts are staggering, with natural disasters predicted to cost the Australian economy at least \$73 billion per year by 2060.<sup>20</sup> In its 2021 intergenerational report, the NSW Government considered climate change risk as a key determinant of the state’s long-term economic position for the first time.

An increasing number of organisations are conducting climate risk assessments to meet expectations of communities, investors and emerging regulations and guidelines. However, lack of consistent, up to date and accessible data is hampering the ability of organisations to work collaboratively and with the community, on a coordinated understanding of, and response to, these risks.

### Adapting to heat

Sydney’s hottest year on record was 2019 followed a 7-year run of hottest years ever from 2013. Climate scientists widely acknowledge the pattern of record warmer years will continue. Long runs of hotter days put pressure on our people and infrastructure, affecting public transport and roads, and open green spaces and biodiversity as trees and animals struggle to adapt to intense heat. When energy demand increases during heatwaves, electricity infrastructure is more likely to overload and fail putting pressure on building systems like air ventilation.

Increased heat also puts pressure on the health of residents and visitors, leading to negative consequences for quality of life and community wellbeing. It leads to more heat-related illnesses, adding pressure to our health systems, increased energy and water consumption and decreased air quality. It also exacerbates existing urban heat island effects.

People in the community already experiencing disadvantage have less ability to adapt. For example, people on low incomes may be unable to afford the cost of air conditioning, while people with pre-existing mental or physical health issues are more likely to suffer health impacts. Addressing the impacts of increased heat is critical to ensure the city’s resilience and sustainability from a changing climate.

### Drought

As global temperatures continue rising the frequency and intensity of drought events is increasing, leading to water shortages for domestic, agricultural and industrial use. This has a significant impact on the local economy and environment, and also affects the quality of life for residents.

More hotter days caused by climate change are a contributing factor to changing rainfall patterns and extended droughts. Climate change will cause increased variability – with more significant storms and increased drought risk. Drought conditions will impact water availability, the health of our green spaces and food production outside the city.

Our challenge is to adapt to the effects of drought in cities and ensure through effective water use and reducing unnecessary consumption that communities have access to sufficient water resources in the face of a changing climate.



## **Bushfires**

The 2019/20 bushfires, exacerbated by the prior years of drought, demonstrated that shocks outside our local area can seriously impact local residents and visitors. During the bushfires we experienced significant air quality issues and many community members suffered health impacts. Our services were also affected as our employees who work outside were directly impacted by the fires.

Unlike other climate impacts the risk of bushfires can be substantially lessened<sup>21 22</sup> by reinstating cultural fire land management practices used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for millennia. Small, low intensity controlled burns conducted early in the fire season remove fuel load and reduce the risk of late dry season fires. These cultural fire practices produce far less carbon emissions than uncontrolled wildfires and strengthen biodiversity by supporting native vegetation that relies on fire to propagate. They also provide powerful social and economic benefits, as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are employed on Country to practice and pass on traditional knowledge.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples hold tenure over 54% of Australia's landmass and manage almost half of Commonwealth parks and reserves<sup>23</sup>. There is a real opportunity for cities to work with regions, and for governments and organisations like the insurance industry to reduce bushfire risk by supporting Indigenous-led fire land management.

## **Storms and flooding**

NSW is already starting to see the effects of changing rainfall patterns due to climate change with heavy rainfall expected to increase in intensity and changes to overall rainfall levels.

While the City of Sydney area rarely experiences catastrophic flooding it does experience flash flooding during rainfall from severe weather and storms. Storms also cause damage to property and infrastructure and in early 2020 parts of metropolitan Sydney suffered weeklong power outages.

Increased rainfall intensity will create increased frequency and severity of flash flooding throughout the city with low-lying areas and developments bearing the brunt of the damage and cost to both property and business income. Though short-term in terms of impact, long-term adaptation is needed to reduce the impacts of flooding on both residential communities and those who visit the city for work and entertainment.

## **Sea level rise**

Sea level rise due to climate change is predicted to accelerate over the next 100 years. The direct impact of rising sea levels in the City of Sydney area is limited to harbour shorelines and adjacent low-lying areas. But sea level rise leads to indirect impacts including increased temporary and permanent flooding (inundation) of low-lying areas by higher-than-normal tides and storm surge.

Areas near water edges are expected to see open green spaces inundated by harbour waters, increases to storm surge levels and increased storm erosion. This will cause significant impacts on the community, environment and economy in these areas including damage to streets and property and flooding of critical infrastructure such as sewage systems and electrical substations.

## **Equity in our climate response**

While climate change will affect all people in the City of Sydney area, many of the most vulnerable within our community will be disproportionately affected. Climate change compounds stress and disadvantage already experienced, where even a minor climate shock can put vulnerable people under long-term stress.

The 2021 census shows that 60% of residents in our local area rent, mostly living in medium or high density multi-story dwellings. There are more than 22,000 households living in social and community housing and/or on low incomes. These communities are particularly susceptible to climate change impacts due to other vulnerabilities such as chronic health conditions and are more likely to live in low quality housing that is not equipped to protect against the effects of climate change. They have fewer resources and less ability to adapt to these impacts.

People living in these circumstances have a greater risk of heat injury, exposure to mould and decreased wellbeing. Our programs, activities and actions to adapt to climate change need to prioritise people and communities most impacted.

## What we're doing

We've reduced emissions by more than 77% across our operations since 2006 and became the first carbon neutral council in Australia in 2007. Our [environmental strategy](#) outlines our sustainability initiatives and current program of activities to take strong and effective action in response to climate change, and we report on progress in our [annual green report](#).

Our sustainable business partnership programs target key commercial sectors that contribute most to the city's environmental footprint. The [Better Buildings Partnership](#), [Sustainable Destination Partnership](#) and [CitySwitch](#) engage in sustainable action with 87 different organisations including building owners, hotel operators, entertainment venue managers and office tenants from legal firms to not-for-profit groups.

[Smart Green Apartments](#) works with owners, and strata and building managers to improve environmental performance in apartment buildings in our local area.

Despite our focus on mitigating causes of climate change the world is not on track to keep global heating below 1.5 degrees. While we will continue to focus on emissions reduction, we're increasing our efforts to prepare the city for long-term impacts of climate change and ensure our short-term risks and consequences of shocks are managed through cohesive disaster preparedness.

The [greening Sydney strategy](#), adopted in 2021 has 6 directions to make the city greener and more resilient. This follows decades of investment in biodiversity and urban forestry. Since 2009 we've created 27 hectares of new parkland and completed more than 124,000sqm of landscaping with 905,000 new plants, and since 2004 we have planted over 16,000 trees. Planting trees and plants is helping to reduce the heat island effect of dense building areas and create a more resilient city. We support 21 community gardens which are run by volunteers.

We partnered with Sydney Water to build a trunk drain from Green Square to Alexandra Canal. The drain has reduced the threat of high-level floods in the area. The inclusion of water treatment plants to treat stormwater creates 320 million litres of non-potable water every year that is sent to new buildings and open spaces, effectively recycling rainwater closer to where it falls.

In Sydney Park we're improving drainage in sports fields and in other open areas to ensure the park and sports fields can operate longer during periods of wet weather. We've installed water reuse systems in 20 parks connected to adaptive irrigation systems with real time monitoring. We've optimised our water recycling schemes, irrigation systems and water features to ensure water use is reducing over the long term.



Womerah Ave, Darlinghurst: Womerah Gardens. Photo: Renee Nowytarger.

## What we need to do next

Over the next 5 years we will take further action to address the challenges to becoming a climate resilient city. Actions have been designed to also address challenges captured under other Directions.

Action	Aligned Directions
<p><b>5. Support our community to cope with increased heat and drought</b></p> <p>We will plan ahead to manage future drought conditions in our own operations, look at how new homes can be built to better cope with heat, advocate for improved thermal comfort in existing homes, and provide advice and education to residents, including priority communities in poor quality rental and social accommodation.</p> <p><b>We will work with:</b> NSW Department of Communities and Justice, NSW Land and Housing Corporation, NSW Department of Planning and Environment, Australian Building Codes Board, universities, non-profit organisations in the homelessness sector.</p>	<p>1: An inclusive and connected community</p> <hr/> <p>2: A climate resilient city ✓</p> <hr/> <p>3: Places, buildings, and infrastructure for resilience ✓</p> <hr/> <p>4: A robust local economy</p> <hr/> <p>5: A prepared community ✓</p>
<p><b>6. Update flood and sea level rise planning to prepare the city for predicted climate impacts</b></p> <p>We will advocate for state government guidance to be updated to reflect recent climate modelling, and then update our flood models and management plans. We will also look at how the longer-term issue of sea level rise can be addressed in collaboration with other councils and agencies.</p> <p><b>We will work with:</b> NSW Department of Planning and Environment, other councils.</p>	<p>1: An inclusive and connected community</p> <hr/> <p>2: A climate resilient city ✓</p> <hr/> <p>3: Places, buildings, and infrastructure for resilience ✓</p> <hr/> <p>4: A robust local economy</p> <hr/> <p>5: A prepared community ✓</p>
<p><b>7. Improve the City of Sydney’s ability to understand and manage climate risks and equity implications</b></p> <p>We will strengthen consideration of climate risk in organisational decision making processes and explore ways to deliver more equitable outcomes in our environmental actions.</p> <p><b>We will work with:</b> Data providers, industry groups, national and international climate networks.</p>	<p>1: An inclusive and connected community ✓</p> <hr/> <p>2: A climate resilient city ✓</p> <hr/> <p>3: Places, buildings, and infrastructure for resilience ✓</p> <hr/> <p>4: A robust local economy ✓</p> <hr/> <p>5: A prepared community ✓</p>



Redfern Community Centre: Reconciliation Event. Photo: Chris Southwood.

# Direction 3

## Places, buildings and infrastructure for resilience

Managing our infrastructure and assets to withstand shocks and stresses and build community resilience.

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### Our resilience challenges

Like many other cities we face challenges with asset management, vulnerability to primary infrastructure failure including electricity and transport, waste and resource recovery infrastructure, and stormwater and drainage infrastructure.

Addressing these resilience challenges requires a comprehensive and integrated approach that considers the interdependencies between different systems and infrastructure, alongside community needs.

### Complex planning system

The NSW planning system is complex, with decisions about buildings, places and infrastructure made by multiple entities across local and state government. The Resilient Sydney Strategy identified disjointed governance as a key challenge for the metropolitan area. In our local area, the City of Sydney has the ability to use our planning controls to enhance the resilience qualities of developments for which we are the consent authority. As we learn more about how to design and build for resilience, we will need to update these controls, which in some instances may require the agreement of the NSW government. City of Sydney also needs to advocate for the NSW government's planning agencies to consider interdependencies and risks when making decisions about planning including land use, infrastructure development and policy change, to ensure they are strengthening the city's resilience.

### Managing assets

We're responsible for approximately \$13 billion in infrastructure and assets including roads and footpaths, stormwater and drainage, buildings and facilities, parks and open spaces, and information and technology assets. Our resident and visitor populations are growing while we face increasing budget constraints and there is a risk our assets will not meet future demand to support the services we provide to the community, especially under future climate conditions. Existing assets have commonly been designed to suit historic climates and may not withstand future climate conditions.

Building and upgrading assets to be more resilient is an ongoing challenge requiring investment and careful planning. Considering resilience outcomes at the design stage is the most efficient and cost-effective way to do this. We need to design assets that are flexible and fit for purpose. We need to consider how people will use and interact with our places, buildings and infrastructure and plan for ways to reduce shocks and stresses to the community. Buildings and infrastructure will need to be flexible to cater for future expansion without reconstruction and the ability to adapt to a changing city. This requires us to have a deep understanding of the interdependencies and vulnerabilities across the entire system, including the ways our assets interact with, and are dependent on, the functioning of those owned and managed by other organisations and levels of government.

Local governments have responsibility for very large numbers of critical assets, and historical funding mechanisms for asset maintenance and management will not be adequate to keep assets at a level that enables them to cope under future climate conditions. We need to work with other levels of government to identify sustainable funding sources.

### The role of community facilities

The City of Sydney owns and operates a wide range of community facilities, including community centres and venues for hire, libraries, recreation centres, aquatic centres and childcare centres. We also provide access to our facilities to community groups and organisations to enable them to deliver services for the community. These assets play an essential role in supporting community resilience. A range of services are provided to the community through these facilities including recreation, education, health and wellbeing activities, social connection, events and council related administration.

As we improve our understanding of what our community needs to become more resilient, we may need to change how we use these facilities. In particular, we see a role for some community facilities to provide enhanced services to support community preparedness as trusted places to access resources, programs and training, develop relationships, and as places of refuge during shock events such as heatwaves and storms.



Green Square, Zetland: Library and Plaza launch.  
Photo: Adam Hollingworth.



City infrastructure: rail lines, shade trees and tennis courts, Prince Alfred Park, Surry Hills. Photo: Joseph Nalevansky.

### **Vulnerability to critical infrastructure failure**

Our lives are increasingly reliant on electronic devices from phones to cars. A lack of redundancy in communication networks will see energy network failures rapidly disrupt communications and access to information.

Sydney is highly vulnerable to shock events such as heatwaves and storms that can disrupt electricity infrastructure serving the local area.

When energy demand increases during a heatwave electrical infrastructure is more likely to overload and fail. This will cause mass public transport disruptions and failures, air conditioners to stop working and outages to communication networks, reducing the ability of people to seek help.

This shows how easily extreme weather events can trigger other shocks, such as power and communication outages, and water network or infrastructure failures.<sup>24</sup>

The transport system is used by large volumes of people with many commuting significant distances to reach the city daily. Transport failure can be caused by deliberate disruptions such as civil unrest, protest, and/or terrorist attack, or by extreme weather events, and can result in large volumes of people stranded in the local area.

Most of this infrastructure is owned and managed by other organisations or other levels of government, and collaborative resilience planning is essential to ensure everyone plays their part in keeping our community safe during disasters.

To reduce carbon emissions from the use of gas and petrol, many individuals and businesses in the city are taking steps to electrify buildings and transport.

Buildings that have passive design features, are efficient or run on renewable electricity have resilience benefits as they can maintain safe temperature levels and fresh air even during short energy supply interruptions due to suitable shading, window to wall ratios, insulation and materials.

Energy storage from in-building batteries or electric vehicles can also provide demand flexibility that optimises energy costs, grid services, and occupant needs, in a continuous and integrated way. But increased reliance on electricity for mobility, cooking and water heating means when electricity outages occur, impacts will be more extensive. Stand-alone systems can continue to function during grid outages and can be useful in disasters.

### **Waste and resource recovery infrastructure**

Natural disasters and other disruptive events such as industrial action pose risks to waste and recycling collection and processing. Also, clean-up of materials such as toxic waste, fuel spills and asbestos materials are expensive and cause impacts for longer periods than the disruption that caused the damage.

There are numerous challenges for waste and recycling management in the local area. There are few local landfills or resource recovery facilities to manage waste and recycling. We rely on a small number of depots and commercially operated transfer stations to consolidate recyclables and waste before they are transferred by larger vehicles to facilities outside the local area for processing or disposal. To manage our waste efficiently and cost effectively relies on commercial operators continuing to manage waste transfer and resource recovery facilities reasonably close to the local area.

Systems for transporting and processing Sydney's household waste are fragile and vulnerable to disruption. Without coordinated action there is a significant risk that household waste and recycling will not be able to be collected or processed in the event of disasters such as storms, fires and floods. Waste left uncollected can present a public health risk.

This vulnerability was highlighted in 2022 when storms and landslip temporarily closed transport lines to the processing facility that accepts a significant proportion of the region's household waste. In that instance, affected councils undertook hurried calls to find alternative facilities, transporting waste as far away as Woy Woy in household refuse collection vehicles leading to delayed collections.

If one key location is inaccessible or closed due to a disaster there are few alternatives and a risk of waste accumulating on the kerb with collection trucks unable to deliver their loads to transfer stations that are full. During these events it is the responsibility of local government to ensure waste collections are maintained and have access to transfer and processing destinations.

### Stormwater and drainage infrastructure

Our stormwater and drainage infrastructure includes gross pollutant traps, drainage pipes and culverts, drainage pits, open channels and raingardens.

Climate change impacts such as more frequent and intense rainfall events can lead to inundation and overland flooding resulting in the increased risk of accidents on roadways and property damage.

Increases in damage, along with impacts on the supply chain as a result of the pandemic, has increased the risk of delays to infrastructure renewal, disruption to operations and delays in sourcing materials. This has led to a backlog of construction and maintenance activities.

Increasing residential density is resulting in more infrastructure upgrades where the City of Sydney has less control. For example, state owned major road or utilities upgrades which might span multiple years, lead to longer term stresses and impacts to our upgrade or renewal plans.

Without adequate investment and upgrades there is a risk that existing stormwater and drainage infrastructure may not be able to cope with future population demands. Therefore, there is a need to assess and improve stormwater and drainage infrastructure to enhance its resilience and sustainability while ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our communities and the surrounding environment.



Sydney: Cleansing staff with truck. Photo: Katherine Griffiths.

## What we're doing

We've started revising our detailed asset management plans to incorporate resilience assessments. This includes identifying which shocks and stresses affect each type of asset, and how mitigation actions can be implemented in asset management processes. We're also incorporating resilience principles into project management decision making in asset design and operations to provide community resilience outcomes and co-benefits.

Our community centres and libraries play an important role in social inclusion by providing access to a range of learning, creative, cultural, health and wellbeing activities and services. In 2023, we consulted our community about activities and services in our community centres and libraries. More than 70% of people told us our centres are important because they connect people.

We heard that our centres are valued because they provide equitable access to space, learning opportunities, activities and resources like books, computers and meeting rooms. People value that our centres provide community services and what they offer is affordable or free of charge.

Critical infrastructure failure including transport emergencies are managed and coordinated under NSW emergency management arrangements. These arrangements bring together emergency services, landowners and government agencies with specific responsibilities for emergency management to coordinate emergency responses. We're also able to effectively respond and recover through our crisis management, incident and emergency management, and business continuity arrangements to ensure essential services continue for our communities.

We're trialling new materials on our roads and footpaths that improve circular economy outcomes and are more resilient. If the trials are successful, we will aim to use similar materials across our roads and footpaths.

We're reviewing our flood modelling to ensure the effects of long-term climate change are understood and identifying infrastructure that is vulnerable to these impacts, in particular low-lying areas and drainage pinch points.

To achieve our zero waste target we're working with councils and advocating to the NSW Government to protect existing waste transfer stations and increase capacity of resource recovery facilities to support recycling continuity and the development of a circular economy. We're also advocating to continue protecting industrial land which allows for waste recycling and management opportunities for commercial operators.

We're participating in the development of a Sydney disaster waste management risk reduction and resilience plan. This is a regional project with regional organisations of councils, governments and industry working together to identify, analyse and develop contingency plans. This includes the range of risks and potential impacts on the collection, transport, processing and disposal of household residual, organic, bulky, and other streams of waste and recycling. This scale of collaboration between government and industry is necessary, unprecedented, and would not be possible without a coordinated approach.

We continue to advocate for improved building codes to ensure new homes are water and energy efficient, thermally comfortable and inexpensive to cool to ensure equitable access to safe housing as the climate warms.



## What we need to do next

Over the next 5 years we will take further action to address the challenges to establishing places, buildings and infrastructure for resilience. Actions have been designed to also address challenges captured under other Directions.

Actions	Aligned Directions
<p><b>8. Embed resilience principles in asset management</b></p> <p>We will explore how our assets support community resilience, and what we need to do to make assets themselves more resilient to shocks and stresses.</p> <p><b>We will work with:</b> City of Sydney suppliers, users of our facilities, industry groups.</p>	<p>1: An inclusive and connected community</p> <hr/> <p>2: A climate resilient city ✓</p> <hr/> <p>3: Places, buildings, and infrastructure for resilience ✓</p> <hr/> <p>4: A robust local economy</p> <hr/> <p>5: A prepared community</p>
<p><b>9. Collaborate with government and councils for accessible waste and recycling facilities with reserve capacity</b></p> <p>We will explore how to reduce risks in the waste management system.</p> <p><b>We will work with:</b> NSW Environmental Protection Authority, other councils, industry groups, City of Sydney suppliers.</p>	<p>1: An inclusive and connected community</p> <hr/> <p>2: A climate resilient city</p> <hr/> <p>3: Places, buildings, and infrastructure for resilience ✓</p> <hr/> <p>4: A robust local economy</p> <hr/> <p>5: A prepared community ✓</p>



Redfern Street: Summer Streets Event. Photo: Chris Southwood.

# Direction 4

## A robust local economy

Improve community economic resilience through diversity, inclusivity and revitalising our city.

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### Our resilience challenges

The Covid-19 pandemic had a major impact on the city's economy and triggered its first recession in almost 30 years. The economic loss was unprecedented as our economy was hit by a health crisis, lockdowns, loss of international visitors, students and migrants, disrupted supply chains, product and labour shortages, and rising inflation.

As Australia's major gateway to the world, the economy of central Sydney was particularly exposed, with border closures and working from home orders having significant impacts on the city centre, most acutely felt by the tourism, hospitality, retail and support services industries.

While these sectors are recovering, the scale of the impact and the cost to employees, businesses, communities and government brought into question the resilience of economic systems, both local and global.

A major learning from the pandemic was that without strong resilience a local economy can suffer severe loss from a major shock. It also showed that economic recovery can be prolonged if the economy lacks flexibility and diversity to adapt to new economic environments and the opportunities change brings.

Strengthening the city's economic resilience ensures it continues to operate effectively despite future disruptions. It gives confidence to businesses, workers, consumers and investors, and keeps our economy competitive and attractive to global talent and investment. To achieve this goal we must address many challenges the city faces that impair a robust economy.

### **Economic recovery**

The pandemic impacted Sydney's economy significantly since March 2020. In 2020/21, the city's gross regional product was estimated to have shrunk by \$6.8 billion or 4.9% with 4.2% of jobs lost.<sup>25</sup> Although the city's economy has in many segments largely recovered, the substantial change initially brought about by the pandemic has left a lasting impression and forced a transition in the way certain aspects of the economy function.

For example, with office occupancy in the city centre below pre-pandemic levels due to increased working from home arrangements, the commuter population in the city is lower, particularly on Mondays and Fridays. This has an impact not only on the future makeup of the office market, but also on retail and hospitality businesses that relied on a Monday to Friday working week. Conversely, after the pandemic the city centre is receiving more visitors on weekends, with the night-time economy in particular well up, suggesting the city centre is transitioning towards a more experience-based economy less dependent on the worker population.

### **Lack of economic diversification**

The city's economy is highly concentrated in a few key sectors in the city centre. The finance and insurance sector accounts for 33% of the city's economic output<sup>26</sup> and 45% of businesses operate in the visitor economy<sup>27</sup>. Our city centre is only around 5 square kilometres, yet it generates more than \$100 billion annually.

The high concentration of economic sectors increases the city's vulnerability to major shocks. This was highlighted during the pandemic when our visitor economy, retail, hospitality, entertainment, and international education sectors were impacted.

Also, a lack of diversification in the scale of businesses can impact resilience with smaller businesses often better placed to act nimbly and respond to changes compared to larger organisations.

### **Skills and labour shortage**

The pandemic led to a major shortage in both unskilled and skilled labour in specific areas of the economy, particularly as international students and overseas migration levels declined. As highlighted by the October 2022 release of the National Skills Commission's skills priority list, 336 occupations from 914 across all industries are in shortage in NSW.<sup>28</sup> The online job vacancies in the Greater Sydney region kept growing since June 2020 and reached more than 68,000 in September 2022, a 37% increase from the pre-pandemic level in September 2019.<sup>29</sup> While international student and overseas migration volumes are growing again some labour shortage challenges will ease, but a skills shortage is anticipated to remain for several years.

The skills and labour shortage weakens the economic resilience by curbing market supply, adding costs to businesses, making the economy less efficient and slowing down the city's transition to a future-ready economy. The pandemic has underscored the importance of training and upskilling our local workforce to ensure a reliable talent pipeline, including global talent that we relied on heavily in the past.

### **Supply chain disruption**

Sydney's economy relies heavily on supplies from other parts of Australia and overseas. In 2020/21 the city imported more than \$37 billion in goods and services, with \$14.3 billion from overseas.<sup>30</sup> But our global supply chains are vulnerable due to lack of diversification and the shift towards 'just-in-time' inventory management, which relies on regular and predictable shipments.

The pandemic and the war in Ukraine highlighted this vulnerability with significant disruptions to global supply chains. The City of Sydney business needs survey found that 45% of participating businesses had difficulty sourcing stock or raw materials in May 2020, with 34% still facing challenges in June 2021.<sup>31</sup>

Strengthening local supply chains not only improves resilience but also presents opportunities for local jobs growth and lower carbon emissions due to reduced transportation distances, and partnerships between business, government and the community are critical to reducing the vulnerability of supply chains.



Darling Square Library. Photo: Abril Felman.

### **Innovation and creativity in the economy**

Innovation is the process of trying new and different ways to solve problems, add value, and create opportunities for business, consumers and the broader community.

Building a strong innovation economy is crucial to strengthening the city's resilience as innovation both provides solutions to new challenges – from renewable energy technology to flood mitigation mechanisms – and has been proven to help businesses withstand, adapt and recover from major economic shocks.

Although Sydney is home to Australia's largest innovation economy, the city has fallen behind many international peers, with Sydney's ranking as a global tech startup ecosystem dropping from 16th in 2016 to 20th in 2022 (and 24th in 2021).<sup>32</sup>

The creative economy is a key contributor to the innovation economy, with creativity and the wide diversity of skills in the creative sector central to cultural innovation and technological advances in the economy. However, too often creative spaces and communities that have been instrumental in driving the success of an area are subsequently pushed out by redevelopment and gentrification. This is particularly true in high-cost cities such as Sydney.

## What we're doing

After a prolonged period of economic disruption, the City of Sydney is developing a new economic strategy to respond to the challenges and opportunities presented by the post-pandemic world. We released an [economic strategy discussion paper](#) in 2022 and the new strategy will be developed in 2023 with continued input from local business and communities.

The strategy will capture Sydney's competitive strengths and build from the social, environmental, and economic values of the city and its people to position Sydney for future success. Among other things it will explore a community wealth building model to keep locally generated wealth in the local economy, placing control and benefits in the hands of local people. In 2021 we explored how this could occur in a [community wealth building discussion paper](#).

Beyond developing a new economic strategy we're delivering a range of measures that support local economic development and overall economic resilience.

We're playing a key role in supporting our community groups and local businesses to recover from the impacts of Covid-19. At the onset of the pandemic we acted quickly and prepared a [community recovery plan](#). This 18-month plan was based on extensive feedback from the community, building on the \$72.5 million in support packages we released in March 2020. Highlights include waiving footway dining fees, rent relief for commercial properties, pedestrianising and activating George Street, and grant support for organisations and businesses. Support programs also include the Reboot series that provides free upskilling webinars for small local businesses in the retail, hospitality, arts and cultural sectors to cope with challenges following the pandemic.

Through our [tech startups action plan](#) we're supporting innovation and increasing small business diversity in Sydney. The plan focuses on fostering entrepreneurial culture, skills, and capacity building, increasing ecosystem density and improving access to funding and markets. It is supported by innovation grants and a newly opened hub for climate-tech startups and scaleups, Greenhouse. This hub aims to provide affordable space, access to business support programming and state of the art facilities, and directly support more than 100 high-performing startups and scaleups to create more than 1,500 new jobs over 10 years.

We fund the NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce and IndigiSpace to provide several business accelerator programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.

We promote and support developing a 24-hour economy through the implementation of and support the development of the creative industries through the [Creative City cultural policy and action plan](#).

## What we need to do next

Over the next 5 years we will take further action to address the challenges to maintaining a robust local economy. Actions have been designed to also address challenges captured under other Directions.

Actions	Aligned Directions
<p><b>10. Analyse and communicate changes in the economy to help businesses and communities to adapt to changing conditions</b></p> <p>We will share economic data and insights with business and the community and convene forums to hear from business and collectively work on economic challenges and opportunities.</p> <p><b>We will work with:</b> Local businesses, industry groups, Investment NSW.</p>	<p>1: An inclusive and connected community</p> <hr/> <p>2: A climate resilient city</p> <hr/> <p>3: Places, buildings, and infrastructure for resilience</p> <hr/> <p>4: A robust local economy ✓</p> <hr/> <p>5: A prepared community</p>
<p><b>11. Promote economic diversity and inclusion to strengthen the innovation economy and the skills needed for a resilient future</b></p> <p>We will look at opportunities for activating diverse sectors of the economy including adaptive reuse of underutilised properties and policy support for creative floorspace.</p> <p><b>We will work with:</b> Local businesses, industry groups, Investment NSW.</p>	<p>1: An inclusive and connected community</p> <hr/> <p>2: A climate resilient city</p> <hr/> <p>3: Places, buildings, and infrastructure for resilience</p> <hr/> <p>4: A robust local economy ✓</p> <hr/> <p>5: A prepared community</p>



Sydney Town Hall: Covid-19 vaccination clinic. Photo: Chris Southwood.

# Direction 5

## A prepared community

Work with communities and government to prepare organisations, services and people to respond to and recover from shock events.

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### Our resilience challenges

#### **Communities feel unprepared for emergencies**

Many people in our communities felt they were not adequately prepared to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic or that organisations planned their emergency response in isolation of local services. In 2020 40% of respondents to our recovery planning survey felt Sydney was not adequately prepared for an emergency. The City seeks to address this perception through this strategy and actions.

We also know priority communities are particularly vulnerable during crises and emergencies and need more support in response and evacuation.

They have also told us that they want to be more involved in emergency planning to ensure their needs are identified. This particularly relates to people with a disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

There is a need to develop the capacity of communities to effectively respond to emergencies and disasters. There is a role for the City of Sydney alongside other agencies to provide processes, training and information to build capacity and preparedness for emergencies when they occur.

### **Cyber security**

Cyber security is a constantly evolving and complex issue that affects individuals, businesses and governments. While electronic systems and digital information provide enormous opportunity our communities including children, young and older people are vulnerable to more sophisticated scams and other cybercriminal activities.

We're increasingly dependent on digital technologies and may be a target for state-based, criminal and activist threat actors. A cyberattack or incident presents a risk of major disruption to services and operations with genuine risk to critical infrastructure and services.

Strong cyber security enables effective use of emerging technologies and ensures confidence in the services we provide. Therefore, there is a need to continually improve cyber security measures to protect our communities, safeguard sensitive information and maintain public confidence.

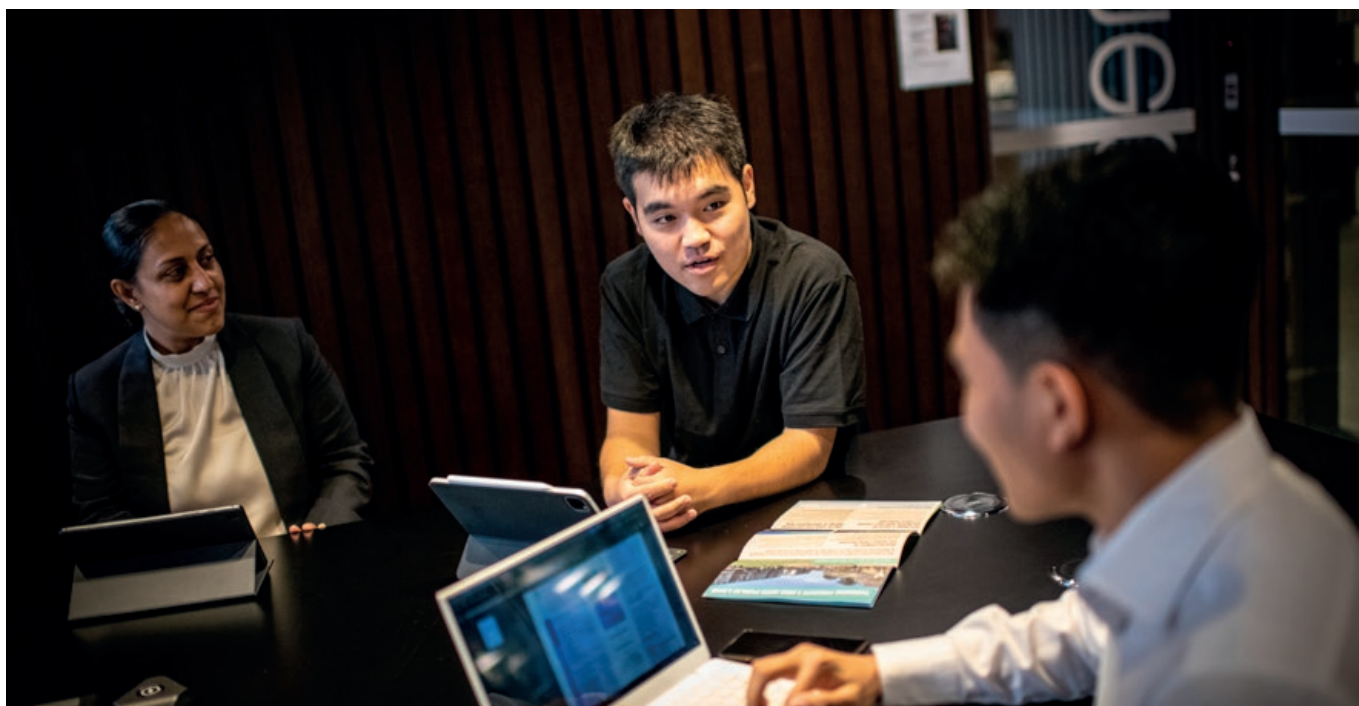
### **Data and information sharing**

As data becomes increasingly valuable and essential for businesses and organisations to stay competitive there is a growing need for effective data and information sharing arrangements. This is particularly important for accurate, consistent and timely sharing of data and information between all levels of government and agencies in planning for, and in response to shock events.

The development of data marketplaces, application programming interfaces, and agreements to facilitate data exchange and collaboration are all critical to this. But the ability to trace the origin and history of data, and interoperability including common operating platforms are two key challenges that need to be addressed to ensure these arrangements are effective and sustainable.

Data and information sharing arrangements must also consider legal and security implications of sharing sensitive data. This includes the need for clear and enforceable agreements between data providers and users to ensure data is used appropriately and in line with relevant regulations and policies.

To address these challenges it is essential to develop effective governance frameworks, standards, and best practices for data and information sharing arrangements. This will require collaboration between industry, government and other stakeholders to ensure data and information sharing is done in a transparent, responsible and sustainable way.



Sydney Town Hall: International Student Leadership Ambassadors. Photo: Jessica Lindsay.



**Communicating with our community is critical**

Current practices for communicating with our communities before, during and after emergencies do not adequately cater for our culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people with disability and/or digitally excluded people.

Effective communication is essential during crises and natural disasters. Ensuring people have access to crisis-related information can mean the difference between life and death. Reaching all community members is essential, including those who aren't proficient in English, have cognitive or intellectual disabilities and/or low literacy.

Research has shown that trusted culturally and linguistically diverse community organisations and community leaders played a vital part in crisis communications during the Covid-19 pandemic<sup>33</sup>. They ensured their communities received public health messages and arranged practical assistance such as grocery shopping and children's school kits. Community groups helped to keep their communities informed and maintained community connections during a difficult, isolating period.

We need to acknowledge the importance and value in maintaining existing networks and relationships. We value this work by continuing to invest and resource connections with community leaders including cultural and religious leaders, groups and services.

As a result, communicating emergency response messages and relevant community information will need to consider who needs information, where they are, appropriate interpretation for key languages spoken, and ensuring inclusive communication such as Auslan. Consideration needs to be made for people who aren't online and who are unable to receive communication through digital channels.



Prince Alfred Park: Inclusive Tennis Festival. Photo: Katherine Griffiths.

## What we're doing

Effective emergency planning is key to minimising the impacts and cost of emergencies, after all reasonable risk reduction measures have been taken. The emergency planning process is designed to produce arrangements that manage emergency impacts.

The capacity of our communities to respond to shock events is intrinsically linked to our ability to respond, adapt and recover. The safety and wellbeing of our employees and communities, protection of our assets, operations and the city's reputation during times of crisis is our highest priority. We achieve this through a robust and regularly tested set of crisis management, incident and emergency management, and business continuity arrangements. We recognise these arrangements support effective response and recovery of essential services for our communities, in turn strengthening their resilience.

The Local Emergency Management Committee is responsible for preparing and reviewing plans to prevent, prepare, respond and recover from emergencies in our local area. The committee is made up of representatives from emergency services, landowners and government agencies with responsibilities for emergency management in the city. We've appointed a full time local emergency management officer to ensure we continue meeting our legislative responsibilities for emergency management but also to demonstrate best practice in local government.

These responsibilities include developing the City of Sydney local emergency management plan. The plan details the control, coordination and liaison arrangements including the activation and coordination of resources. Through this work the committee has identified 4 priority areas and developed an action plan addressing:

- Collaboration and communication – increasing the resilience of communication systems and improving information sharing practices.
- Capacity and training – improving planning for and capacity to respond to multi-hazard events.
- Community connections – supporting local connections and helping communities prepare for priority shocks.
- Critical infrastructure interdependencies – improving understanding of critical infrastructure interdependencies and adaptability.

The committee works in partnership with the regional local government led program Resilient Sydney to meet direction 4 in the Resilient Sydney Strategy: Get Ready, to better understand risks and interdependencies, and how to work together to respond to them.

The City of Sydney hosts the Resilient Sydney program and network on behalf of the 33 local governments in Greater Sydney.

We're also a member of the metropolitan Resilient Sydney resilience ambassadors network. Since 2016 the network has brought together around 50 resilience champions representing the governing bodies of metropolitan Sydney. The network has formed strong connections for greater preparedness for disruption across city systems, organisations and communities.

The network has supported a rise in people-centred decisions ensuring communities benefit from strategic thinking and action through resilience initiatives. Resilient Sydney and the network continue to share best practice templates and innovative tools to build the capacity of member organisations and their communities.

During the Covid-19 pandemic the network shared pragmatic tools and templates to prepare response and recovery plans including emergency pandemic sub-plans, business continuity plans and mental health support for employees and communities.

To serve the community, we need to collect and manage a variety of personal and confidential information. To safeguard this information, we've invested heavily in our cyber security management framework. We have robust policies and procedures, education and training programs, and a range of measures that align with the Australian Cyber Security Centre's essential eight mitigation strategies. We have proactively implemented industry best practice controls, including business continuity, IT disaster recovery testing, and 24/7 threat detection and response to cyber security threats. The City of Sydney is very proactive in its approach to cyber security, leading the way in local government.



Braille Circular Quay. Photo: Damian Shaw.

We communicate with a range of audiences across our communities, and we're committed to ensuring the way we communicate is accessible to all. We ensure information provided online and in print is accessible and alternative formats are available when required. This includes developing websites, apps, producing digital document formats and creating prints materials for accessibility.

We also ensure effective, appropriate and respectful communication with people with disability. We provide some of our communications in alternative formats such as Braille, Auslan video, captioned video, audio, accessible Word and PDF files and Easy English.

## What we need to do next

Over the next 5 years we will take further action to address the challenges to becoming a prepared community. Actions have been designed to also address challenges captured under other Directions.

Actions	Aligned Directions
<p><b>12. Develop disaster preparedness and climate adaptation initiatives with priority communities who require additional support</b></p> <p>We will work with priority communities, including people with disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, to identify the support, training and education they need to be better prepared.</p> <p><b>We will work with:</b> Local community organisations, residents, Local Emergency Management Committee, businesses, owners corporations, tenant advocacy organisations, other levels of government.</p>	<p>1: An inclusive and connected community</p> <hr/> <p>2: A climate resilient city ✓</p> <hr/> <p>3: Places, buildings, and infrastructure for resilience</p> <hr/> <p>4: A robust local economy</p> <hr/> <p>5: A prepared community ✓</p>
<p><b>13. Enhance community facilities to assist priority communities who require additional support during shock events</b></p> <p>Work with government and businesses to ensure that our community is able to access shelter or respite during shock events, including in our own facilities during operational hours.</p> <p><b>We will work with:</b> State and federal government, business (including local businesses), Local Emergency Management Committee, local community organisations.</p>	<p>1: An inclusive and connected community ✓</p> <hr/> <p>2: A climate resilient city ✓</p> <hr/> <p>3: Places, buildings, and infrastructure for resilience ✓</p> <hr/> <p>4: A robust local economy</p> <hr/> <p>5: A prepared community ✓</p>
<p><b>14. Support businesses to become more resilient and to contribute to community resilience</b></p> <p>We will explore how we can better support small business to prepare for emergencies, and how larger business can contribute to addressing shocks and stresses, including for priority communities.</p> <p><b>We will work with:</b> Local businesses, industry groups, Local Emergency Management Committee.</p>	<p>1: An inclusive and connected community ✓</p> <hr/> <p>2: A climate resilient city ✓</p> <hr/> <p>3: Places, buildings, and infrastructure for resilience ✓</p> <hr/> <p>4: A robust local economy ✓</p> <hr/> <p>5: A prepared community ✓</p>
<p><b>15. Strengthen the City’s emergency communications channels, ensuring they are accessible to diverse communities</b></p> <p>We will develop an engaging and accessible online source of emergency preparedness information, including in key community languages. We will also establish what other forms of communication are needed by priority communities including people with a disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to ensure that everyone can get the information they need in the format they need.</p> <p><b>We will work with:</b> Community organisations and leaders, residents, Local Emergency Management Committee, inclusion advocacy groups.</p>	<p>1: An inclusive and connected community ✓</p> <hr/> <p>2: A climate resilient city ✓</p> <hr/> <p>3: Places, buildings, and infrastructure for resilience</p> <hr/> <p>4: A robust local economy</p> <hr/> <p>5: A prepared community ✓</p>

# Implementing the Strategy

The City of Sydney Resilience Strategy was developed in collaboration with numerous internal and external stakeholders. Implementing the strategy will require coordination across multiple business areas at the City of Sydney to ensure accountability to actions. Resources will be allocated over the five years of the strategy in accordance with the City of Sydney's usual budget and project planning processes. We will also need to work extensively with other levels of government, the private sector and of course our community.

Community resilience is continually evolving. Developments in national, state and local policy allow us to take advantage of new initiatives or respond with further advocacy and collaboration when change is not fast enough. The City of Sydney will actively seek partner funding from other levels of government to support additional community resilience initiatives.

Undertaking action and investment to address the resilience challenges faced by our city requires collaboration from all parts of our communities. We look forward to implementing this strategy in partnership with our residents, government and the business community.



Darlinghurst: Launch of Frances Newton Reserve. Photo: Damian Shaw.

# Resources



Redfern: 40,000 Years Mural. Photo: Katherine Griffiths.

This City of Sydney Resilience Strategy provides a greater understanding of our current context and current and emerging community shocks, stresses and resilience challenges faced by our local area.

It builds on the regional Resilient Sydney Strategy and helps incorporate these findings into planning and decision making at all levels. It will inform and engage government, residents and businesses in resilience planning.

Adopting the findings of the strategy will help organisations in our local area manage risks and potential impacts from shocks and stresses.

We invite all members of our communities to build their capacity and reduce their exposure to the risks arising from the shocks and stresses in the local area.

The City of Sydney publishes advice on topics including air quality, floods, heatwaves, pandemic, storms, pets in emergencies, personal emergency plans, emergency management plans for a business or building and disaster recovery. Information on preparing for emergencies is available for residents, workers and visitors, childcare workers, and business owners and managers at [cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/guides](https://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/guides).

Below are several additional resources that can be used to support you or your organisation:

- [Resilient Cities Network](#)
- [National Emergency Management Agency](#)
- [Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience](#)
- [Infrastructure Australia](#)
- [Infrastructure for Resilient Places Framework: A Practical Guidance for Asset Managers](#)
- [Infrastructure NSW](#)
- [NSW Reconstruction Authority](#)
- [Resilient Sydney](#)
- [Resilient Sydney – Resilience assessment guide](#)
- [Emergency preparedness handbook for people living in social housing](#)

# Appendix

## Supporting strategies and plans

These strategies and plans and their subsequent updates support this strategy:

- [A City for All: Social sustainability policy & action plan 2018–2028 \(2018\)](#)
- [A City for All: Inclusion \(disability\) action plan 2021–2025 \(2021\)](#)
- [A City for All: community safety action plan 2019–2023 \(2019\)](#)
- [A City for All: homelessness action plan \(2020\)](#)
- [Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan \(2020-2030\)](#)
- [Resilient Sydney strategy \(2018\)](#)
- [Smart City Strategic Framework \(2020\)](#)
- [Housing for all: City of Sydney local housing strategy](#)
- [Mobile Voluntary Services Guidelines](#)
- [Emergency Protocol for Rough Sleeping \(Department of Communities and Justice and City of Sydney\)](#)
- [Boarding Housing Guidelines \(Draft\) – emergency response for boarding houses in case of catastrophic incident.](#)
- [Protocol for homeless people in public places](#)
- [Environmental strategy \(2021–2025\)](#)
- [Greening Sydney strategy \(2021\)](#)
- [City plan 2036: local strategic planning statement \(2020\)](#)
- [Residential apartments sustainability plan \(2015\)](#)
- [Sydney’s sustainable office buildings plan \(2018\)](#)
- [Adapting for climate change \(2015\)](#)
- [Making Sydney a sustainable destination \(2018\)](#)
- [Leave nothing to waste – waste strategy and action plan \(2017–2030\)](#)
- [Street tree masterplan \(2011\) \(update in development\)](#)
- [Urban forest strategy \(2013\) \(update in development\)](#)
- [Green environmental sustainability progress report \(annual\)](#)
- [An indicative assessment of four key areas of climate risk for the 2021 NSW Intergenerational report](#)
- [NSW Climate change adaptation strategy](#)
- [Strategic planning for natural hazards in NSW](#)
- [Floodplain Risk Management Plans](#)
- [Resilient Cities Network Infrastructure for resilient places framework](#)
- [Infrastructure Australia – A pathway to infrastructure resilience 2021](#)
- [Audit Office of NSW – Managing climate risks to assets and services 2021](#)
- [NSW Critical infrastructure resilience strategy 2018](#)
- [Resourcing strategy 2022 – asset management plan](#)
- [Economic strategy discussion paper \(draft\)](#)
- [Community wealth building discussion paper 2021](#)
- [Building a strong green and circular economy for Sydney 2019 \(AlphaBeta\)](#)
- [Open Sydney: Future directions for Sydney at night. strategy & action plan 2013–2030](#)
- [Community recovery plan \(2020\)](#)
- [Eora Journey economic development Plan 2016](#)
- [State emergency management plan \(EMPLAN\)](#)
- [Sydney metropolitan region emergency management plan](#)
- [Local emergency management plan 2021](#)
- [Crisis and emergency management plan, sub plans and supporting plans for emergency pandemic, engineering emergency, heatwave, homelessness, severe weather response, community recovery, emergency communications, emergency response, evacuation centres, volunteer management \(internal use only\)](#)
- [Business continuity plans \(internal use only\)](#)

# Endnotes

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- 16 The Importance of Social Capital in Building Community Resilience [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316117238\\_The\\_Importance\\_of\\_Social\\_Capital\\_in\\_Building\\_Community\\_Resilience](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316117238_The_Importance_of_Social_Capital_in_Building_Community_Resilience)
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