

Better Together

Social Sustainability Strategy 2040



northern
beaches
council



Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of these lands and shows its respect to the Elders past and present.

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Mayor's Message

For those of us fortunate enough to live on the Northern Beaches, we know there's no place like it. At Council, we want to make sure our area continues to be a place that people want to live, work and visit. That's why we have created a Social Sustainability Strategy - "Better Together 2040" - which provides a roadmap for that strong future.



The Northern Beaches, just like the rest of Australia, has been impacted by extensive and rapid social change. Better Together will help to identify some of the unique challenges we face over the next 20 years, as well as build on the many strengths that already exist in our community.

This strategy delivers on our promise to the community in Council's Community Strategic Plan - "Shape 2028" - to ensure everyone living on the Northern Beaches experiences a safe, inclusive and connected community that lives in balance with our extraordinary coastal and bushland environment.

"Better Together" outlines a roadmap that will:

- provide a long-term social direction that builds up existing services, social resources and skills in our community
- provide a framework for enhancing the skills and knowledge of our community, so we can better respond to challenges
- strengthen our ability to recover from unexpected impacts whether that's pandemics, financial crisis or natural disasters.

We will review this strategy every five years, working in partnership with our residents to make sure it continues to address their needs, and nurtures a resilient and capable community, where everyone can fully participate in community life.

I am grateful to the hundreds of community members, local organisations and "Better Together" partners who have taken the time to attend and facilitate workshops, completed surveys and shared with us images and stories about their experiences of life on the Northern Beaches proving that we are better together.

We now have a living document that represents the mutual commitment between Council and the community to ensure that together we can create a Northern Beaches which is even more inclusive, safe and better connected.

Michael Regan
Mayor



Why a socially sustainable and inclusive community is important

Social sustainability is critical for a community's wellbeing and longevity. It is about creating inclusive and resilient communities that have the required skills, services, people and infrastructure to respond to and recover from social, political, environmental and economic change.

With collaborative planning and commitment from the community we can create places where people want to live and work in the long term.

We believe that the key to creating socially sustainable and inclusive communities is to ensure governments, the private sector and other stakeholders work together to create more safe, inclusive societies, empower citizens, and foster more resilient, peaceful communities.

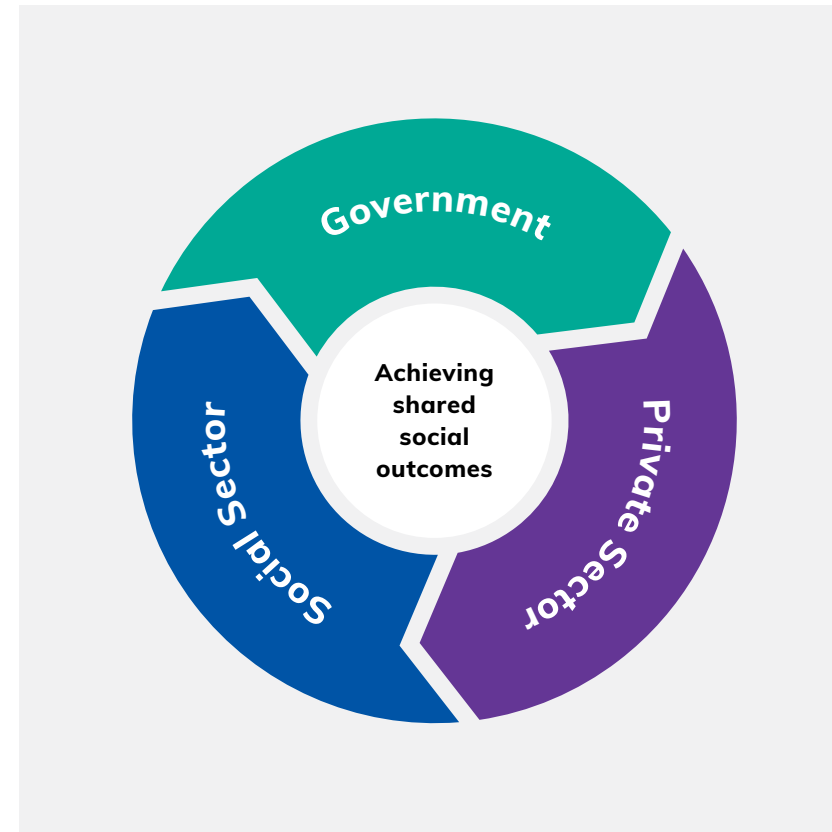


Figure 1



The vision for Better Together is to create:

**A socially sustainable and
inclusive community for all.**



Looking towards 2040 - a holistic approach

Successful, sustainable communities don't just happen, they require planning and work to create places where people want to live and work in the long term.

During consultation, our community used the word 'inclusive' to describe a place that is welcoming to everyone and offers services and opportunities that support the needs of different cultures and age groups. Many in our community acknowledge that more needs to be done to engage with culturally diverse minorities.

Creating a roadmap into tomorrow

Better Together provides a road map into the future as we grow and change over the next 20 years. It is a collaboration with the broader community as we all work together to ensure our community is stronger, more resilient, equitable and socially sustainable today and tomorrow.

By using a whole of community, strengths-based approach that establishes a cycle of social sustainability and inclusiveness where the Northern Beaches' key challenges are identified and addressed in an integrated way, ensuring we are better together.

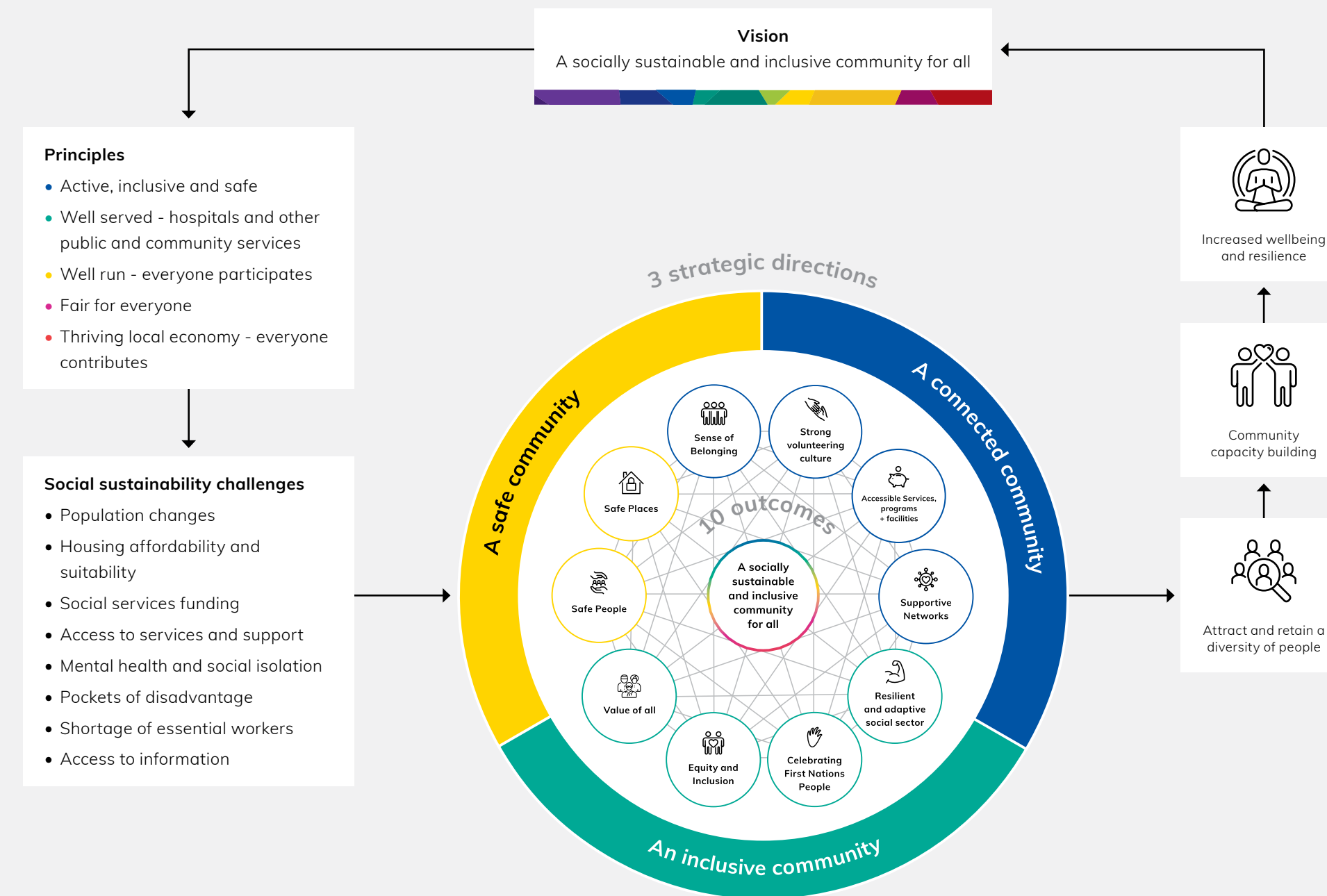


Figure 2

Better Together Strategic Framework


A community-centred approach

Principles


In becoming a leader in social sustainability, five principles of socially sustainable communities have been identified for the Northern Beaches community to aspire to.

These five principles will allow us to harness the power and strengths of the community, integrate the key principles of social sustainability within a broader planning approach and break down both social and physical barriers that exist.

**Active, inclusive and safe**

**Well served** - hospitals and other public and community services

**Well run** - everyone participates

**Fair for everyone**


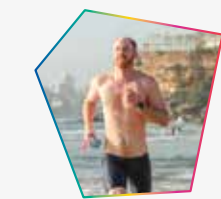
**Thriving local economy** - everyone contributes

Figure 3

Strategic directions and outcomes

Better Together has three strategic directions and 10 outcomes working towards a socially sustainable and inclusive Northern Beaches.



A **safe** community



An **inclusive** community



A **connected** community

 Safe places Our community is safe in public, at home and online	 Safe people Our community has access to people, organisations and information that can help when they need assistance	 Celebrating our First Nations people Our First Nations people and Indigenous heritage are included in all decision making.	 A resilient and adaptive social services sector We have an active, resilient and engaged social services sector	 Value of all people is recognised, respected and embraced Everyone in the community feels welcome
 Ensuring equity and inclusion The whole community has access to inclusive growth and opportunities	 Strong volunteering culture We have a thriving volunteering culture	 Services, programs and facilities are affordable and accessible to all Our community has access to the services, programs and facilities they need	 Broad range of supportive community and social networks that reflects the diversity of the Northern Beaches Community networks reflect the diverse interests of people living on the Northern Beaches	 Sense of belonging to life on the Northern Beaches Everyone who participates in community life feels like they belong

Figure 4

Our strategic line of sight

The principles of socially sustainable communities are supported by global, national, state and regional level strategies and goals. Better Together looks to provide the local directions needed to achieve outcomes towards these wider strategies and goals.

Global	UN Sustainable Development Goals
	<div><div>3GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING</div><div>4QUALITY EDUCATION</div><div>5GENDER EQUALITY</div><div>8DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH</div><div>10REDUCED INEQUALITIES</div><div>11SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES</div><div>16PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS</div><div>17PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS</div></div>
National	Smart Cities Plan National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Strategy Closing the Gap Multicultural Access and Equity Policy
State	Premier’s Priorities NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework Domestic and Family Violence Outcomes Framework NSW Strategic Framework for Mental Health Greater Sydney Region Plan, A Metropolis of Three Cities - Connecting Communities, March 2018
Region	‘Towards’ Our Greater Sydney 2056 - North District Plan - Connecting Communities A Liveability Framework for Sydney Resilient Sydney
Local Area	Northern Beaches Council Community Strategic Plan (Shape 2028) Northern Beaches Local Strategic Planning Statement (Towards 2040)

Integrating with existing Council Strategies and Plans

Better Together is a leading strategy, working closely with Council's existing programs and strategies to maximise outcomes for the community. At its core, Better Together will guide us as we help to deliver our community’s vision of a safe, inclusive and connected community.

This document refers to where other strategies and plans help to achieve the overall goal of a safe, inclusive and connected community. As documents are reviewed in coming years, Better Together will provide the ongoing strategic direction for the community’s social sustainability and provide a framework for prioritisation.

Relationship to existing Council strategic directions

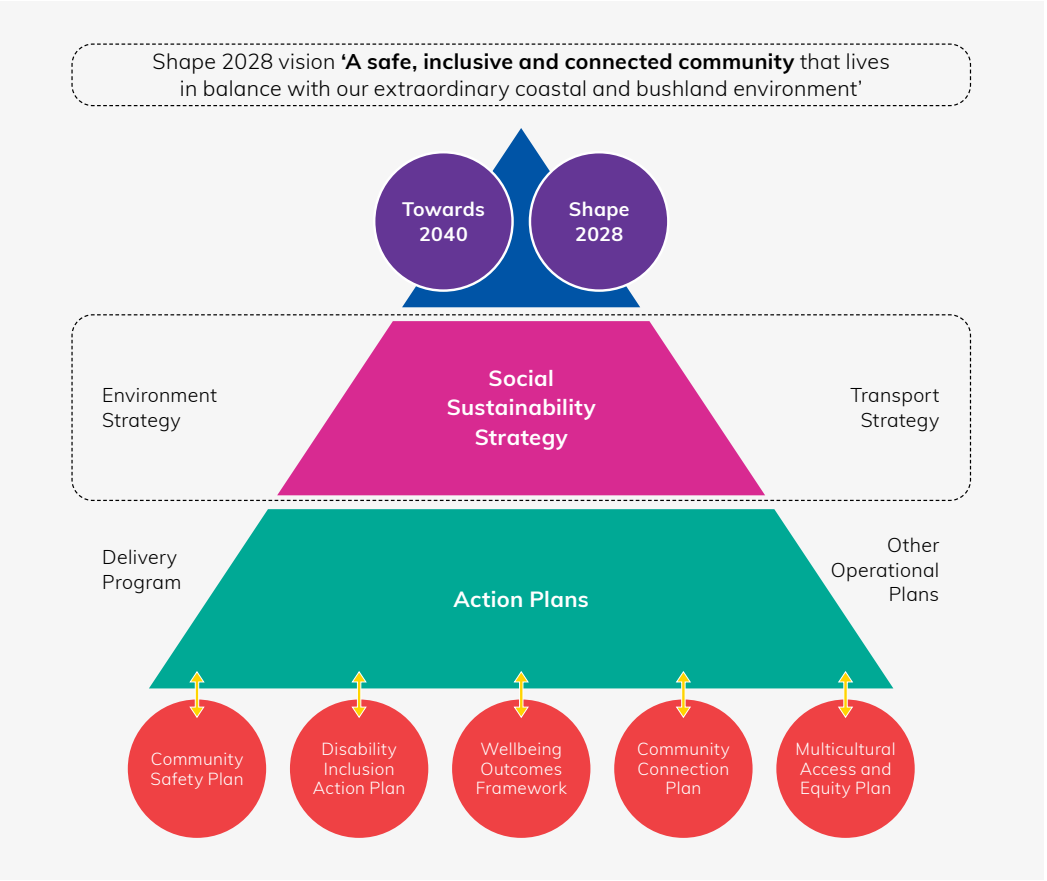


Figure 5

Rising to the challenge: Adapting to social change

Social change has been extensive and rapid both globally and within Australia, driven in part by changing demographics as people live longer¹, fewer babies are born and young people move away from metropolitan areas², particularly in Sydney.

Although the Northern Beaches is a naturally beautiful and socio-economically advantaged area, we must still prepare ourselves for the impact these broader societal trends will have on our way of life.

By understanding the local factors that create unique challenges for the Northern Beaches, we can also provide a nuanced and localised response to ensure that we maintain the vibrant, diverse and socially cohesive lifestyle we enjoy.

Eight key social sustainability challenges facing the Northern Beaches over the next 20 years have been identified.



Figure 6

¹ P. McDonald, "Ageing in Australia: Population changes and responses," in Population ageing and Australia's future, H. Kendig, P. McDonald and J. Piggott, Eds., Canberra, ANU Press, 2016, pp. 65-83.

² K. Bourne, K. Houghton, G. How, H. Achurch and R. Beaton, "The Big Movers: Understanding Population Mobility in Regional Australia," Regional Australia Institute, Canberra, 2020.

Key trends, opportunities and strengths

Understanding the unique aspects and strengths of our local community.

- Our community continues to grow with the Local Government Area (LGA) expected to be home to more than 300,000 people in 2041. This growth will bring increased demand for community facilities, services, transport and housing.
- Our population is ageing at a higher rate than Greater Sydney and North District averages. This is driven by a combination of the Northern Beaches proving to be a popular place to retire and age while at the same time young adults are increasingly choosing to migrate from the Northern Beaches to locations that offer greater access to education, employment, entertainment and affordable housing opportunities.
- There are strong local ties, with 50 percent of people living at the same address as five years ago.
- Over 50 percent of residents also work within the LGA, representing the highest local workforce in Greater Sydney.
- There is a high level of socioeconomic advantage, however we face greater challenges securing funding to provide support and services for the pockets of relatively disadvantaged populations living within the community.
- A high proportion of volunteers with 21.9 percent of the population reporting they engaged in some form of voluntary work compared with 16.7 percent across Greater Sydney.

The identified strengths of our community are:

- High levels of community safety
- Thriving social, recreation and sporting opportunities
- High rates of volunteering
- Self-sufficient economy
- Socio-economically advantaged area
- Access to open space
- Safe ways to participate
- Strong not for profit presence

A more detailed investigation into the unique strengths and challenges facing the Northern Beaches community over the next 20 years is outlined in the Better Together Discussion Paper 2020.

The population is forecast to grow

273,499
residents in 2019

+39,004

312,503
residents in 2041



We are getting older

+3,421

+3,594



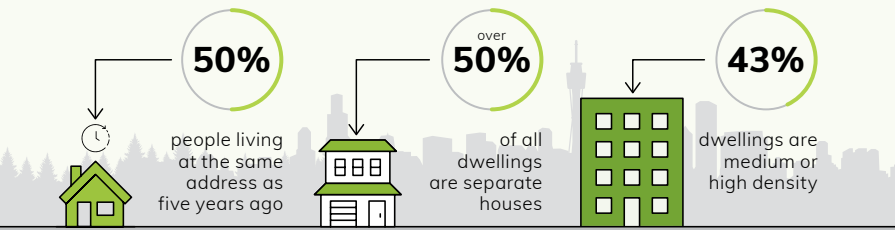
seniors 70-84



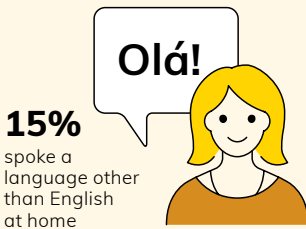
pre-retirees 50-59

Growth between 2011-2016

How we live



How we talk at home



Some of us need a hand



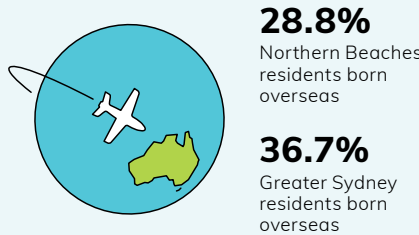
50%

residents have lived here for more than 5 years

Who we are

This demographic snapshot is created using 2016 ABS statistics

Where we come from



For those born overseas



Level of education

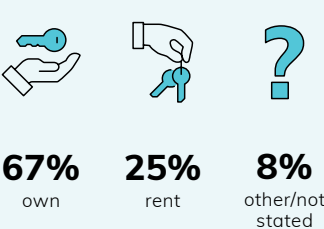
32.3%

Northern Beaches have gained a Bachelor or higher degree

28.3%

Greater Sydney have gained a Bachelor or higher degree

Rent vs own



96%

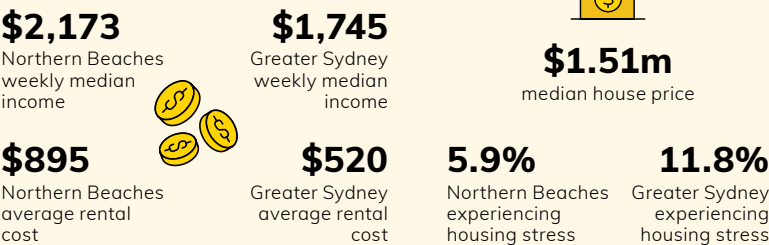
agree with the statement "I feel safe"

97%

indicate they are at least somewhat satisfied with community safety/ crime prevention in the Northern Beaches area

2019 Community Safety Survey

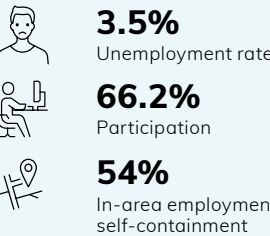
Let's talk money



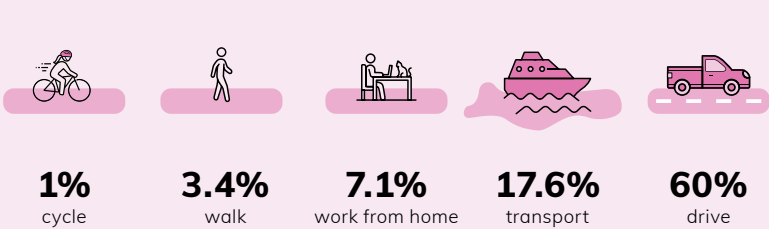
What we do - Top 5 professions



Our labour force



Commuting to work



We're not all the same! Honouring diversity within diversity

The community on the Northern Beaches consists of people of all ages, genders, abilities and a diverse range of ancestry. When considering our community and the numerous demographic groupings that exist, it is important to acknowledge that these population groups are not homogenous.

There is a range of interests, ideas, opinions and needs within each group.

Considering the demographic profile of the whole community and honouring diversity of opinion, interest and ideas has been important in creating Better Together. This forms part of a larger commitment to those in priority groups to understand their individuality and differences in their experience of shared challenges.

In our ongoing work with our priority populations, we will:

1. Challenge assumptions about whole groups and speak directly with those impacted by decisions
2. Acknowledge that inequities will affect people differently, even within the same demographic groups
3. Find, welcome and advocate for the diversity within every group and explore these differences before making decisions or plans.

Priority populations

Council has identified emerging priority populations within the community who have a unique set of circumstances that need to be considered in planning for future social wellbeing and resilience on the Northern Beaches.



Figure 7





How the Strategy was developed

Better Together has been developed and informed by feedback from the community over the last four years and further targeted consultation with key external and internal stakeholders and Council’s six Strategic Reference Groups over the last 12 months, shown below.

















	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
Objective	Educate people in an easy to understand way and engage them to participate	Ensure a broad cross-section of the community, including people with lived experience, provide feedback	Develop a shared understanding of our community's future strengths and challenges	Build partnerships with key stakeholders and create a collaborative strategy
Activities	<div> Video</div> <div> Harvesting interest</div> <div> Discussion paper</div> <div> Presentations</div> <div> Creative Challenge</div> <div> Workshop in a Box</div> <div> Survey</div> <div> Partner and stakeholder workshops</div> <div> Discussion Paper</div> <div> Community conversations</div> <div> Partner and stakeholder workshops</div> <div> Vox-pops</div> <div> Co-design day to create a collaborative decision-making framework for shared delivery of Better Together strategic directions</div>			
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 210 registered community members• 1,044 visits to Your Say page• 150,000 eNewsletter reach• 300 bookmarks delivered through our Home Delivery Library Service• 14 internal and external briefings• Strategic Reference Groups briefings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 90,000 social media reach• 12 Workshop in a Box sessions• 807 survey responses• 29 Creativity Challenge responses• 4 community forums briefed• 6 Strategic Reference Group Workshops• 2 partner and stakeholder workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7 discussion paper responses• 30 community members participated in 2 Community Conversations• 2 partner and stakeholder workshops• 10+ vox pop participants• 40+ members for combined Strategic Reference Group workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 69 participants including 16 people with lived experience and 18 community organisations represented• Refined 380+ ideas and priorities from engagement
Outcome from engagement	<div></div> <div>3 Strategic Directions</div>	<div></div> <div>10 Outcomes</div>	<div></div> <div>Key Actions and Aspirational Targets</div>	
	Education + Awareness Building	Knowledge Mining	Prioritisation	Co-Design

Figure 8

“I think it’s more about maintaining what works and not re-inventing the wheel”

Better Together Community Survey participant

What our community told us

We asked what makes a community safe, inclusive and connected. You told us that they are all intrinsically linked and equally critical to build social sustainability. We heard that by empowering the community through capacity building and strengthening neighbourhoods we will build resilience.

The key themes that emerged in these conversations were:

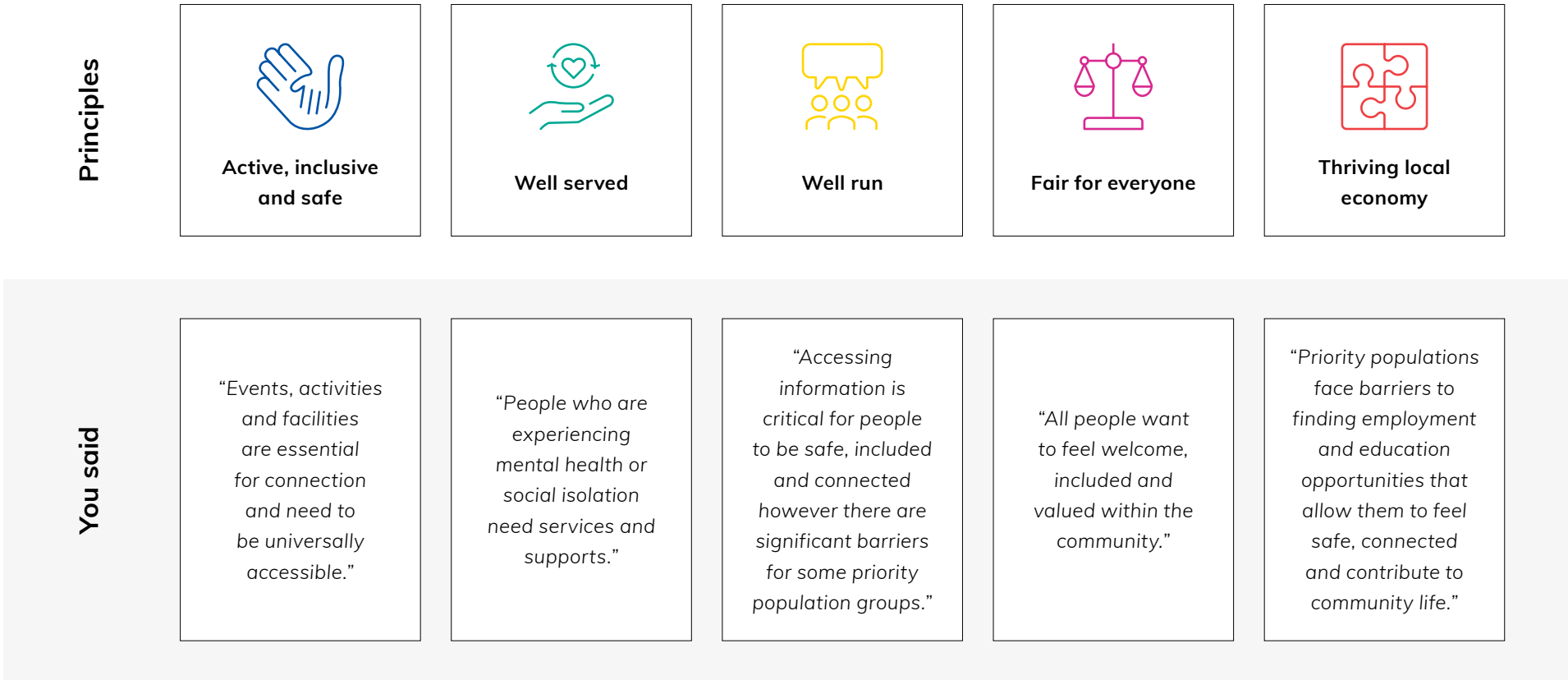


Figure 9



Council recognises the importance of investing in the social sustainability of our community³

Leadership and Advocacy	Through social planning, Council investigates and documents community challenges and outcomes in consultation with the social service sector and local residents and provides research and planning information to assist the effective planning of social services and programs. Council advocates for the community to State and Federal Governments on issues that are under their remit, such as housing, transport and health.
Promoting safe, inclusive and connected communities	Council supports the implementation of the Social Sustainability Strategy and encourages, supports and facilitates a range of community and cultural events and recreational activities that support people to feel safe, included and connected with community life. Council supports volunteering within Council and acts as an advocate for volunteering in the broader community.
Community capacity building	Council builds the capacity of the community and helps the community to determine and achieve its own outcomes, through partnerships and support with community, not-for-profit and charitable organisations. Council supports the building of connections, encourages collaboration and facilitates knowledge sharing across the social sector and other levels of government to enable program and service delivery that achieves collective outcomes. Community grants are provided to organisations delivering programs that build capacity in the community to address current issues.
Referral and information services	Council provides referrals and information that will help to connect people to the information they need to access services and participate in community life. This is provided through Council's website, libraries, community centres and customer service centres, e-newsletters, a range of media, poster, banners, brochures and by word of mouth.
Delivering Infrastructure	Council delivers critical infrastructure that enable people to be safe, connected and included in community life. This includes roads, parks, recreation facilities, town centres, sporting fields and social infrastructure such as community buildings, libraries, arts and culture facilities. Social infrastructure is available, affordable and accessible to the whole community, with subsidised accommodation provided to community groups and organisations. To maximise the use of community buildings and the sustainability of the social services sector, Council facilitates the co-location of services and the provision of community service hubs.
Delivering programs and services	Council partners with community organisations to deliver support services that respond to the changing needs of our community. Consideration will be given to the provision of community services that are responsive to community outcomes where there is a gap, and work to access a provider to deliver this service to the community.

³ Northern Beaches Council Social Sustainability Policy, updated 2021

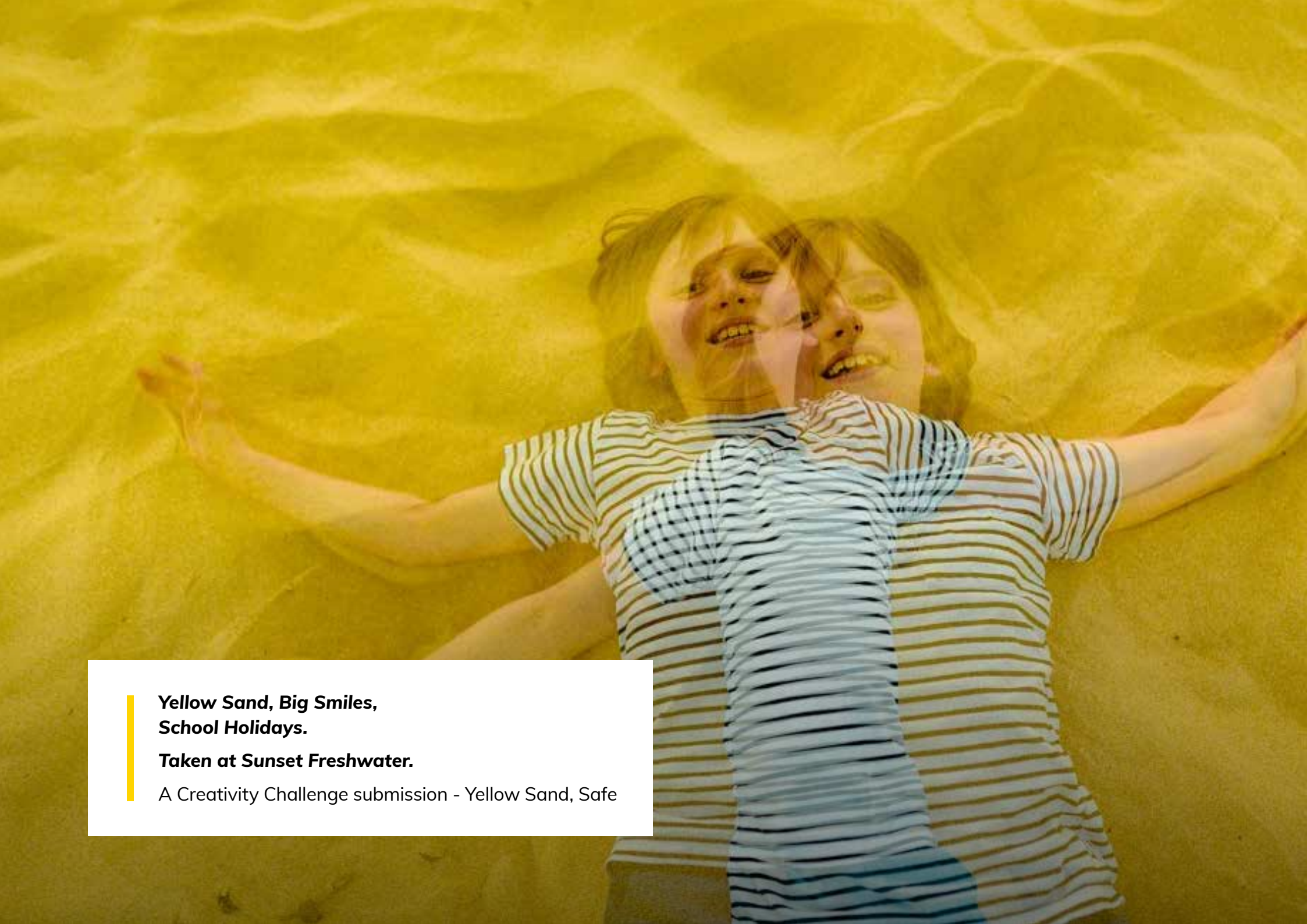


When people ask me where i live, i tell them that i live in paradise. I believe i do live in the most beautiful place on earth and i feel so grateful every day when i plunge into the ocean, or walk along the shore, or enjoy the evening light filtered through the gums.

I treasure the community and connection we share, nestled in nature yet brimming with culture, art and music. There is an honest and old-fashioned ethic in our community, a concern for each other and a decency which i value highly.

Lucky us!

Good morning paradise - Creativity Challenge submission



**Yellow Sand, Big Smiles,
School Holidays.**

Taken at Sunset Freshwater.

A Creativity Challenge submission - Yellow Sand, Safe

Strategic Direction 1: A Safe Community

A safe community strengthens individual and community wellbeing and resilience

The concept of community safety within Better Together is broader than the traditional view of reducing and preventing injury and crime.

Better Together envisions a safe community that is concerned with achieving a positive state of wellbeing for all people within their social and physical environments.

The perception of safety is just as important as the experience of safety itself - when people feel safe, they can build stronger, more cohesive, vibrant and most importantly, participatory communities.

What our community told us

Our community told us that the three top priority areas to ensure a safe community are:

People want to feel safe in public, at home and while engaging online. They identified having people to turn to when they need support and knowing where to access information as being essential to remain safe and healthy. The importance of both the perception of safety, how safe people feel, and the reality of safety, how safe people actually are, were constant themes throughout engagement.

“Rules, entitlements and rights are for everyone.”

Workshop in a Box (multicultural priority group), participant comment

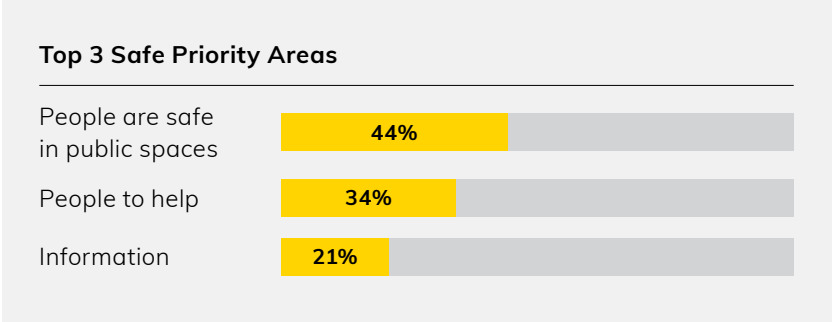



Figure 10


Our community’s aspiration



Safe Places

Everyone

- Has people within the community they can ask for support and connect with when they feel unsafe
- Has access to support for mental illness and social isolation
- Has access to resources and programs that improve wellbeing
- Feels safe and welcome to participate in life on the Northern Beaches



Safe People

Everyone

- Is safe when they are in public spaces
- Is free from emotional and physical harm when they are at home
- Is safe from bullying and scams when they participate online
- Has access to high quality sporting and recreation spaces that are green, accessible, inclusive and safe

What’s already happening to support safe communities



Community Safety Plan



Road Safety Action Plan



Safe social infrastructure including community centres and libraries



Crime prevention through environmental design is supported by plans and controls through design



Community Safety Committee



Provision and maintenance of high quality sporting and recreation spaces



Safe children's services

“I love that all the kids on our street can play together and grow up knowing that their immediate world is a good one.”
Creativity challenge submission ‘safe streets’

Imagining a safer Northern Beaches

For the purpose of this strategy, safety is defined as being safe from harm and danger, both emotionally and physically.

The Northern Beaches is a safe and resilient place to live, work and visit, where there is an individual and collective feeling of comfort and security.

People in the community may experience and perceive safety differently. Regardless of individual circumstances, people on the Northern Beaches live in a safe environment where everyone's right to be free from harm and danger is respected by others.

Instances of harm are greatly minimised. Everyone can access information and safe agencies are available for those who experience physical or emotional harm. The community identifies keeping children safe as a priority and has a strong commitment to best practice child safeguarding.



The community is resilient and has capacity to address difficult and complex personal safety issues including suicide and domestic and family violence. Everyone feels empowered to contribute and shares knowledge and information about available supports and systems.

A diverse network of public spaces enable everyone to be healthy, active and feel safe to participate in community life. There is cohesion and a culture of mutual caring, safe and free from bullying in the community, at home, and online.



Outcome Measure:

More than 95% of residents agree that they feel safe at home and in the community

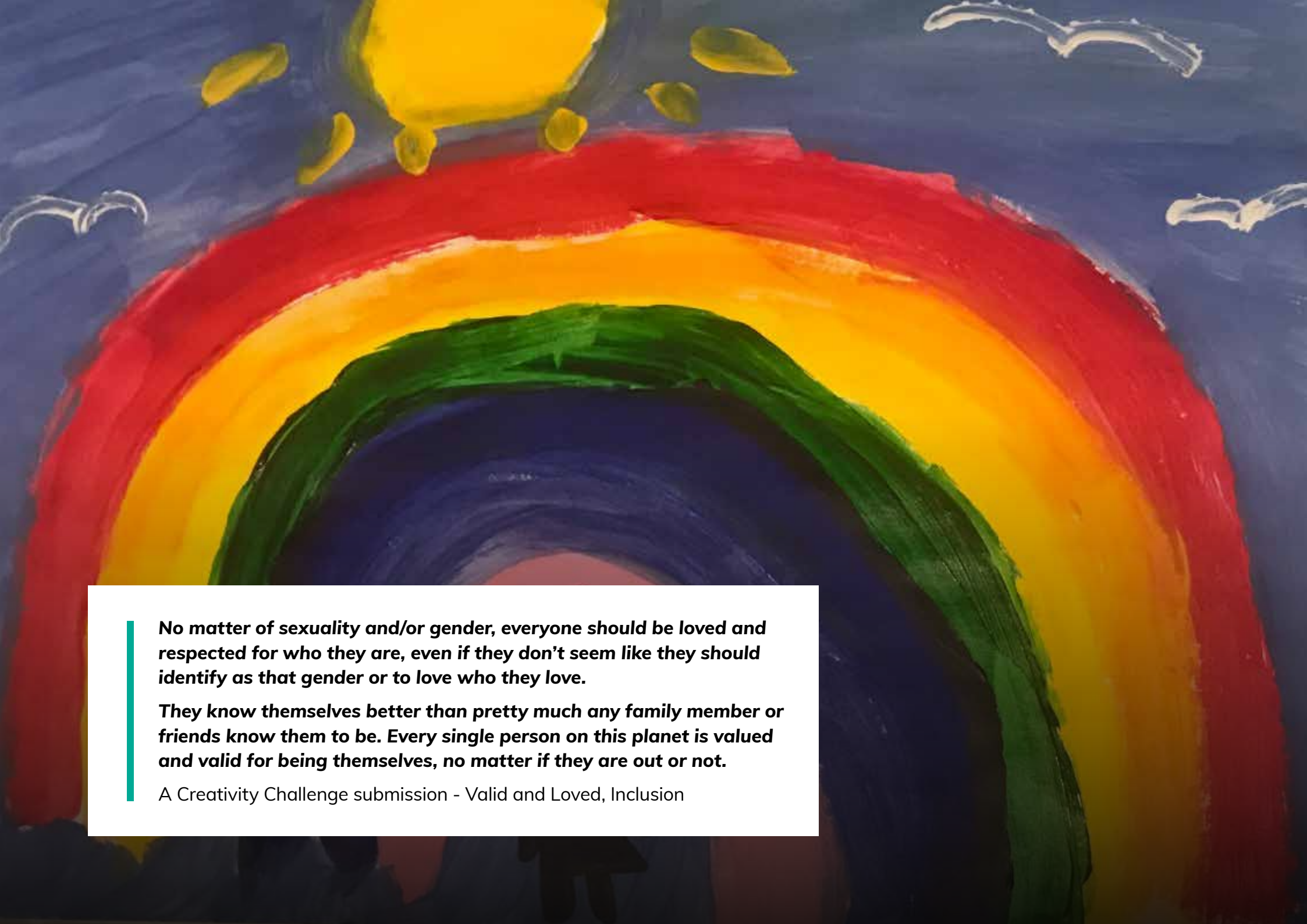
Outcomes		Indicator
	Safe Places	Our community is safe in public, at home and online % of residents who say they are able to participate in community life.
	Safe People	Our community has access to people, organisations and information that can help when they need assistance % of residents who say they know where to get 'help' when they need it.

2040 Aspirational Target: Everybody can access the mental health support they need within 1 week

Current situation: In 2020 mental health service providers reported wait lists of up to 3 months.

Working with the community, in the next 5 years Council will:

- Develop and implement a Community Safety Plan for the Northern Beaches.
- Develop Wellbeing Outcomes Framework for strengthening individual and collective wellbeing.
- Develop a Mental Health Issues paper.



No matter of sexuality and/or gender, everyone should be loved and respected for who they are, even if they don't seem like they should identify as that gender or to love who they love.

They know themselves better than pretty much any family member or friends know them to be. Every single person on this planet is valued and valid for being themselves, no matter if they are out or not.

A Creativity Challenge submission - Valid and Loved, Inclusion

Strategic Direction 2: An Inclusive Community

An inclusive community is adaptive to change which strengthens individual and community wellbeing and resilience.

By strengthening the inclusiveness of a community, we are nurturing the diversity needed to balance opinions and views. An inclusive community embraces the broad range of skills and abilities that comes from difference and also makes the community highly adaptive to change.

When people embrace the social justice and sustainability principles of equity, access, rights and inclusion, they intuitively embrace and value different opinions and ultimately reduce the fear towards difference.

What our community told us

The community told us that the three top priority areas to ensure an inclusive community are:

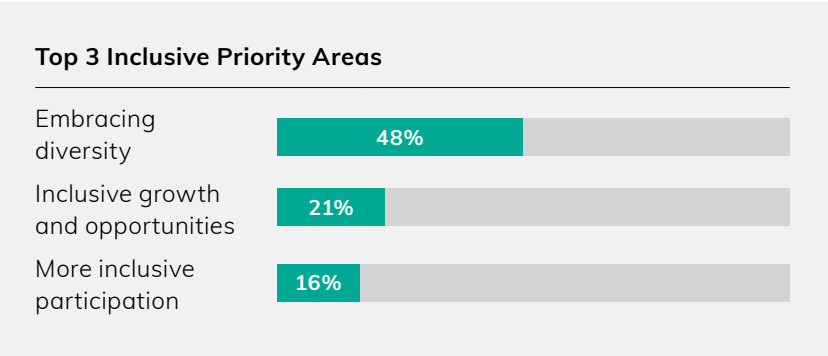


Figure 11


The community want to see all people included in community life and there was a recognition that more needs to be done to enable this. Being able to participate and contribute to decision making was a strong theme related to inclusion. Embracing diversity and creating a community that is welcoming of all people is seen as important to building strong communities.

Ensuring all people have access to opportunities that allow them to grow and contribute economically is fundamental to people feeling valued and included. The long-term sustainability of the social services sector and the ability of those organisations to adapt to the changing needs of the community is essential to support the most vulnerable in the community.

“Northern Beaches clean up crew meets once a month to clean up a beach or lagoon. People of all ages and cultural backgrounds come together to do a good deed for the planet and make new friends at the same time.”

Creativity challenge submission ‘coming together for a great cause’.


Our community’s aspiration



Celebrating First Nations People

First Nations People


- Are actively included in all decision making
- Work in partnership with our community to promote, preserve, celebrate and protect our Indigenous heritage and culture



Value of all

Everyone


- Embraces diversity of all kinds
- Celebrates differences within the community
- Is valued for who they are



Equity and Inclusion

Everyone

- Can contribute when decisions are made about things that matter to them
- Has access to education and employment opportunities and can benefit equitably from economic growth
- Recognises the need for priority populations to have programs and opportunities that reduce inequities




Resilient and adaptive social sector


Our community

- Has social services that are accessible and adaptive to changing needs in our community
- Has resilience which is increased through social services sector collaboration and capacity building
- Contributes their lived experience to inform evidence based decision making in the planning and delivery of social services


What’s already happening to support inclusive communities




Library programs that promote inclusion




Community grants program




Diverse community representation on Council's Strategic Reference Groups




Community groups and organisations promoting inclusive practice for those in priority populations




Building all abilities playgrounds




Celebration of Harmony Day



Web accessibility features such as captions and video text transcripts on Council website content



Promoting diversity and inclusion through delivery of programs, activities and services



Sponsorship for a Inclusion Award to promote local businesses to be accessible and inclusive for all

“Inclusion and accessibility embedded in design process, not at the end.”
Partner workshop 1

Imagining an even more inclusive Northern Beaches

For the purpose of this strategy, inclusion is defined as everybody having equal opportunity to enjoy the same experiences, and be part of groups that are meaningful to them.

The Northern Beaches is a place where diversity is celebrated with participation of all people equally valued.

Everyone deserves to participate, have fun, be visible, heard and celebrated regardless of age, gender, sexuality, cultural background, socioeconomic status, religion or beliefs, ability, or life circumstance.

Everyone is respected for what they contribute and actively encouraged to participate in the shared experience of living on the Northern Beaches. Decision-making reflects the diverse voices of the community and balances the needs of all.

All people experience a sense of wellbeing and acceptance, respecting different points of views and approaches to living. Those who live on the Northern Beaches represent a multigenerational community where the participation of all generations is equally valued.

Access to support and information is equitable and available to empower everyone to participate. Access to social infrastructure and services is provided in support of improving identified social sustainability challenges of priority populations.



Outcome Measure:

More than 90% of residents agree that they feel included in community life

Outcomes			Indicator
	Celebrating First Nations people	Our First Nations people and Indigenous heritage are included in all decision making.	% of priority populations represented in all engagement projects.
	Value of all people is recognised, respected and embrace	Everyone in the community feels welcome	% of people who say they feel valued as part of the Northern Beaches community.
	Ensuring equity and inclusion	The whole community has access to inclusive growth and opportunities	% of community grant funded programs supporting the identified priority populations.
	A resilient and adaptive social services sector	We have an active, resilient and engaged social services sector	% of social services reporting that they agree they can see a long-term future for their organisation on the Northern Beaches. % of social services reporting they believe they are meeting the needs of the Northern Beaches community.

2040 Aspirational Target: We have a community hub in each strategic centre that enables co-location of key services

Current situation: In 2021 there are 2 community hubs.

Working with the community, in the next 5 years Council will:

- Develop a Disability Inclusion Action Plan and Multicultural Access and Equity Action Plan
- Review and update the Northern Beaches Council Community Engagement Framework.
- Develop a youth issues paper
- focus community capacity-building efforts in the family and domestic violence and mental health sectors



Every week I meet up with fellow Bush carers.

While weeding and planting they share snippets of environmental news that I missed while busy with kids. We share opinions and chat about what's important to us.

It's my favourite news source and I really enjoy finding out about the joys and sorrows of people of different ages and backgrounds.

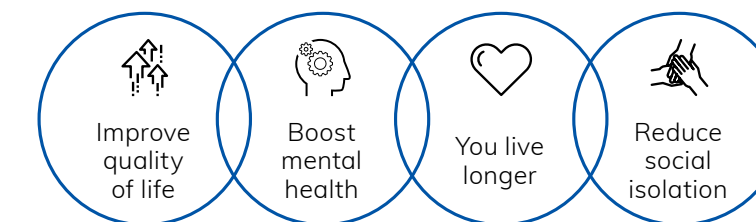
A Creativity Challenge submission - My green community

Strategic Direction 3: A Connected Community

A connected community is a healthier and more resilient community.

Connection is a fundamental need we share as humans. When people have strong ties with family, friends and the community they are happier, more secure, feel supported and have a sense of purpose. Access to social groups provides us with an important part of our identity individually and as a community.

Social connectedness helps:



“The natural beauty of our Northern Beaches and walks allow us to be part of our community and it is absolutely free!”

Creativity challenge submission ‘new friends’

What our community told us

The community told us that the three top priority areas to ensure a connected community are:

Top 3 Connected Priority Areas

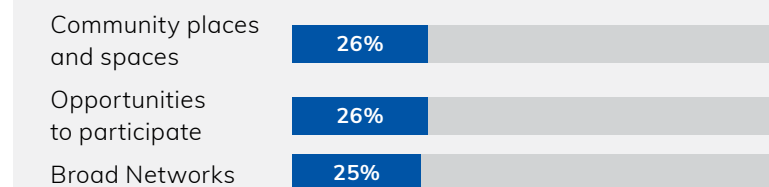



Figure 12

The community has a strong sense of belonging to the Northern Beaches. They feel connected to the natural beauty of the area and have a strong sense of connection to the people and neighbourhood where they live. The community places significant value on having regular opportunities to connect at events, activities, programs, and facilities. Social infrastructure is seen as essential to facilitate connection.

The strengths and interests of the community are recognised as being diverse, which can enable a wide range of social and recreational networks across the community. Volunteering is highly valued by the community and there is a strong culture of giving back. Our residents want more varied opportunities to contribute to the community, recognising that traditional volunteering activities can be a barrier for those who have work, study and caring responsibilities.


Our community’s aspiration



Sense of Belonging

Our community


- Has a unique identity that represents our shared values
- Can move around the Northern Beaches to connect and participate
- Has access to housing that matches their needs



Accessible Services, programs + facilities

Our community


- Can access places and spaces that are welcoming, inclusive, adaptable, and activated to enable connection
- Has access to the accurate and timely information needed to fully participate in community life



Supportive Networks

Everyone

- Has access to supportive and welcoming community and social networks
- Has the ability to connect through a variety of opportunities that reflect the diverse community




Strong volunteering culture


Our community

- Has access to a broad range of meaningful volunteering opportunities that positively contribute to community life
- Are supported by social service organisations and community groups that have the volunteers they need to successfully deliver services


What’s already happening to support connected communities




Big Ideas Forum that connects the community through exploration of topical issues




Arts and Creativity Strategy delivering on our community's commitment to supporting and growing a vibrant creative culture authentic to the Northern Beaches.




KALOF - Youth engagement program




Connecting volunteers with appropriate volunteer organisations in the community




Services and programs e.g. Meals on wheels, Library programs, creative and gallery programs




Creative Space, North Curl Curl, Manly Art Gallery & Museum and Avalon Workshop



Glen Street Theatre - a diversified program



A range of programs, events, activities and community spaces and places are available that support connection in a variety of ways



A community development team that provides information and referral advice, as well as a range of information resources

“I lead an art group for people with a disability at Forestville and often we have more volunteers than artists - I have been doing this for more than 30 years and volunteers have always been there for us.”
Community conversation - Strengths, participant comment

Imagining a better connected Northern Beaches

For the purpose of this strategy, connection is defined as the relationships in which people are linked with other people or places from which they build meaningful networks and grow personal strength and resilience.

The people of the Northern Beaches are connected across generations, through their relationships with their family, cultural groups, and the broader community.

Individuals are linked to a variety of networks where they are part of the community and feel a sense of belonging. Barriers for those seeking to strengthen their networks are recognised and overcome.

Everyone is informed and has equal access and opportunities to education, housing, health, support services, employment, and information that is accurate, reliable, and timely.





Vibrant and diverse opportunities are available that enhance individual and community wellbeing. These opportunities bring people together and foster and contribute to people feeling that they have a place in the community.

Everyone has access to safe communal spaces that encourage shared connection to the natural and built environment.



Outcome Measure:

More than 90% of residents agree that they feel connected with community life

Outcomes			Indicator
	Sense of belonging to life on the Northern Beaches	Everyone who participates in community life feels like they belong	% of people who say they feel they belong to the Northern Beaches community.
	Services, programs and facilities are affordable and accessible to all	Our community has access to the services, programs and facilities they need	% of residents reporting they can access the services, programs and facilities they need. % of residents reporting they can access the information they need to participate
	Broad range of supportive community and social networks that reflects the diversity of the Northern Beaches	Community networks reflect the diverse interests of people living on the Northern Beaches	% of people who say they have someone they know in the local community who they can turn to in times of need.
	Strong volunteering culture	We have a thriving volunteer culture	% of organisations who say they have enough volunteers to meet demand.

2040 Aspirational Target: All community events, information and infrastructure are universally accessible.

Current situation: In 2021 there were no rationalised guidelines for minimum inclusion and accessibility standards.

Working with the community, in the next 5 years Council will:

- Develop a community connection plan.
- Address barriers to accessing information, programs and facilities
- Build on the strength of the Northern Beaches volunteering culture

Strategy implementation

The next five years

The commitments in this Strategy will be prioritised and included in Council's annual Operational Plan and business plans over the 20-year period of the Strategy.

Better Together outlines specific projects and high-level actions necessary to deliver the outcomes required in the next five years. It includes the development of supporting action plans which target key priorities identified from community consultation.

A variety of tools including advocacy, innovation, research, collaboration, partnership and further engagement will be necessary to deliver our commitments.

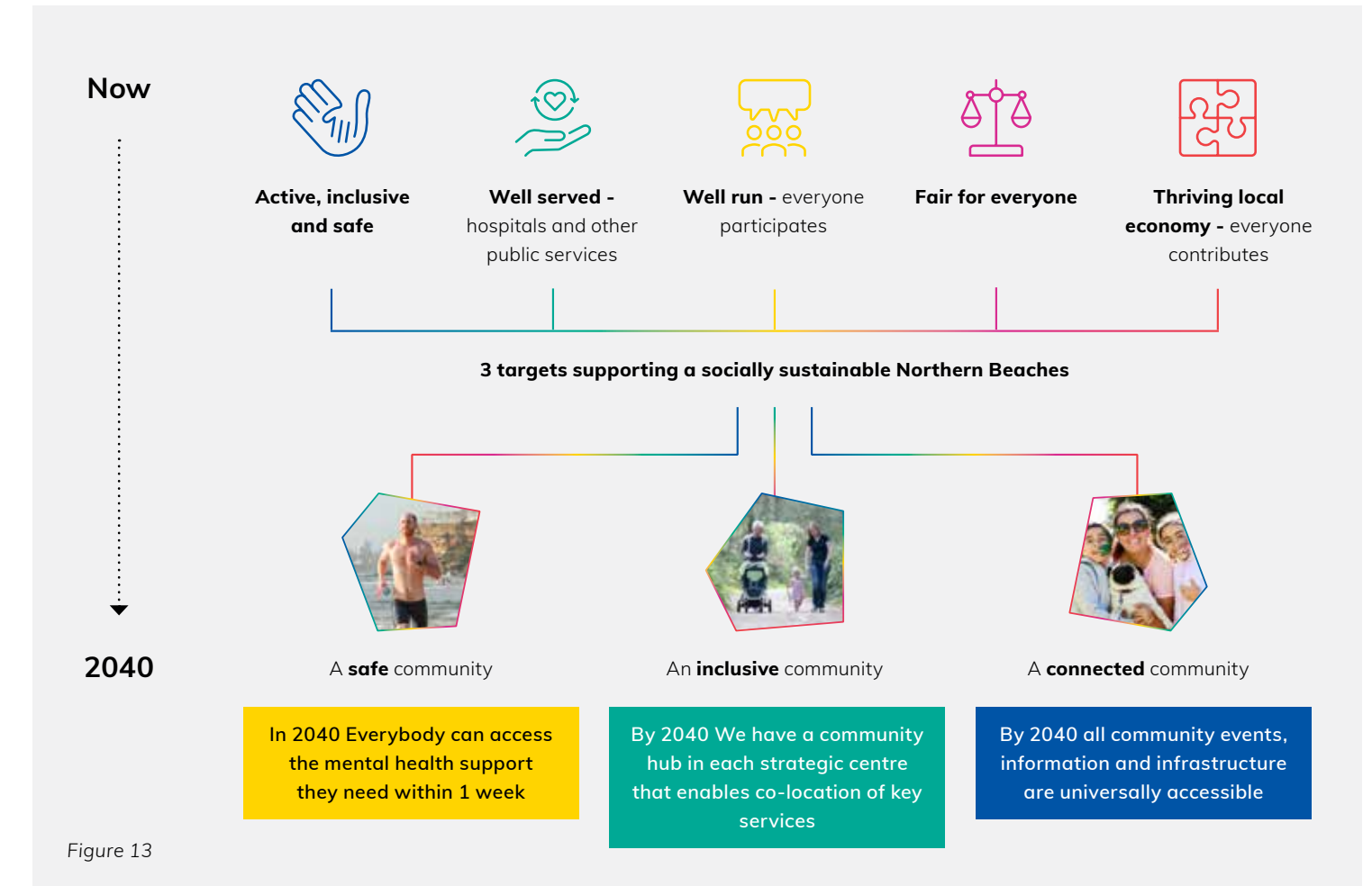
Council will develop an indicative timeline to guide work planning for the range of actions that need to be undertaken and review the evolving needs of the communities and adjust for changing priorities.

Council will continue to bring relevant internal and external stakeholders together to work collaboratively to achieve our shared vision for the community.

Aspirational Targets

Prioritising our work to make progress towards a socially sustainable and inclusive Northern Beaches.

An aspirational target has been selected for each Strategic Direction in response to key themes that emerged during our engagement.










Better Together actions for the next five years

As part of the work with key community stakeholders, a set of key actions have been identified that will guide the activities for the next five years. These will make a positive impact towards being a more socially sustainable and inclusive community.








Figure 14 demonstrates how actions and outcomes work together over time to achieve progressive impact. This forms the basis of the Better Together Monitoring and Evaluation framework, enabling delivery and reporting of work against key outcome indicators on a rolling basis.










Strategic Direction 2
An Inclusive Community

Working towards			
Outcomes	Principle	In collaboration with the community we will	Key action for Council
 Equity and Inclusion		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify the employment skill sets that will emerge in the next 10-15 years and proactively support the growth of these sectors on the Northern BeachesExplore opportunities and partnerships for skill building, such as mentoring to support economic developmentIdentify and promote pathways to education and employment, especially for priority populationsResearch innovative approaches to increasing intergenerational skills exchange	Develop an Economic Development Strategy that considers the needs of priority populations living on the Northern Beaches, including young people, people from multicultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and people living with disability to ensure inclusive growth and opportunities.
			
 Celebrating First Nations People		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Conduct a multicultural access and equity assessment to identify areas of strength and improvementEnsure all Council-led services meet the needs of all community members, including communities from diverse cultural and linguistic backgroundsIdentify ways to support the promotion and celebration of our community's diversity and multiculturalismDevelop opportunities for Council staff involved in direct service delivery to learn how to engage effectively with people from culturally linguistically diverse backgrounds and people living with disabilityIdentify pathways for those with diverse backgrounds to participate in planning for future social infrastructureDeliver community development programs to build the capacity of priority populations and service providers to improve access and inclusionContinue delivering Council's Community Grants program with a focus on funding programs that reduce inequities for our priority populations	Develop a Disability Inclusion Action Plan and Multicultural Access and Equity Action Plan to identify and break down barriers to access and equity for priority populations, especially First Nations people, people living with disability and those from a multicultural and linguistically diverse background.
			
 Value of all			




An Inclusive Community cont.

Working towards			
Outcomes	Principle	In collaboration with the community we will	Key action for Council
 Equity and Inclusion		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Actively promote and ensure inclusion in all Council events, activities and programsEnsure our approach to public participation is clear to both Council staff and our communityActively encourage young people to have a say about decisions that impact themDevelop a training program to support educating staff on the benefits of engagement and to build their capacity to implement programs effectively	Review and update the Northern Beaches Council Community Engagement Framework.
 Equity and Inclusion		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Conduct targeted engagement with underrepresented groups of youth and build a comprehensive understanding of how to best support all young peopleInvestigate ways of strengthening youth leadership for disadvantaged young peopleIdentify and promote youth friendly spaces that respond to the diverse needs of young peopleExamine how broader social challenges contribute to how young people participate and connect with the wider communityInform the development of other Action Plans in relation to youth-specific needs, challenges and opportunities	Develop a youth issues paper and deliver youth development programs that build capacity and resilience of a diverse cross section of young people and local youth services.
 Value of all			
 Resilient and adaptive social sector		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Continue the establishment of Community Service Hubs in strategic locations across the Northern Beaches and identify community partnerships to implement the modelIdentify cross-sector initiatives that build capacity to tackle local social challenges, including support in collaboration, grant writing and advocacy skillsEstablish a forum for cross sector interagency collaboration for the Northern BeachesIdentify, support and advocate with community organisations for more prevention-based funding for social issues impacting on the Northern Beaches, allowing for a focus on intervention before crisis pointIdentify emerging social challenges and develop mechanisms to share the information and build a culture of evidence-based decision making, and service planningTake a leadership role in strategic social planning for the Northern Beaches area	Work collaboratively with local social services to focus community capacity-building efforts in the family and domestic violence and mental health sectors to address core community needs in this area.

Strategic Direction 3
A Connected Community

Working towards			
Outcomes	Principle	In collaboration with the community we will	Key action for Council
<div><div>Sense of Belonging</div><div>Accessible Services, programs + facilities</div><div>Supportive Networks</div></div> <div></div>		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partner with organisations and community groups to develop and promote initiatives that support creating connection between people, with a focus on welcoming new residents to the area• Identify key barriers to participation for priority populations and identify strategies to ensure universal inclusion to opportunities that enable connection• Partner with community organisations to deliver initiatives including events, programs, and activities that strengthen connection between priority populations, cultures and generations• Assist in building a local narrative identifying local stories, arts, history and culture• Investigate ways to activate shared community places and spaces that enable opportunities for diverse and multigenerational connection within a localised and collaborative approach• Identify the tools community organisations need to deliver community events and initiatives that enable connection• Advocate to other levels of government to prioritise innovative action on housing affordability and a housing first approach to homelessness	Develop a community connection plan that strengthens the interaction between all members of our community
<div>Accessible Services, programs + facilities</div>	<div></div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify partnerships between Council and service providers to develop an accessible online space with information on community services and programs• Explore opportunities for community skill-building to strengthen online participation• Develop a Digital Literacy Framework to address barriers in engaging digitally for anyone needing support to participate online• Identify and advocate for the use of open spaces for multipurpose use that aligns with diverse community needs• Identify and collaborate on initiatives that reduce/subsidise service and program costs to ensure access for all	Address barriers to accessing information, programs and facilities especially for older people, people living with disability and those with English as a second language.

An Connected Community cont.

Working towards			
Outcomes	Principle	In collaboration with the community we will	Key action for Council
<div>Strong volunteering culture</div>	<div></div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with organisations that provide volunteering opportunities to create a shared approach to increasing the role and participation of volunteering in the community, including collaborating with businesses to instigate staff programs• Find additional ways of recognising and celebrating the outstanding contribution of volunteers to continue to build the strong volunteering culture on the Northern Beaches• Investigate how volunteering can increase intergenerational skills exchange and attract young people to volunteering	Build on the strength of the Northern Beaches volunteering culture. Expansion of volunteering opportunities to a broader demographic and create better connections between organisations.



Better Together Leadership Group

One of the first actions to be completed will be the formation of a Better Together Leadership Group consisting of key internal and external stakeholders. This group will reflect our communities' lived experience of the Northern Beaches, will work collectively on the actions in the Implementation Plan and help Council track and promote the benefits and impacts of Better Together.

How we'll track our progress

The key indicators identified for each outcome will be measured and reported every two years through a Community Wellbeing Survey. A baseline will be established as part of the implementation of the strategy. Better Together will be reviewed and updated every five years to ensure the Outcomes and Priority Areas remain current and responsive to evolving needs of the community.

Acknowledgements

Council wishes to thank all contributors and stakeholders who helped create *Better Together* Social Sustainability Strategy 2040 and Action Plan 2021-2026.

In particular we would like to recognise the following community partners that have provided expertise and lived experience about what an even more inclusive, safer and connected community the Northern Beaches can be today and tomorrow.

Many other organisations, groups and individuals will be actively engaged in the implementation of Better Together to ensure success and Council looks forward to collaborating to implement actions and develop further plans.

- Bridge Housing Limited
 - Catholic Care Diocese of Broken Bay
 - Community Northern Beaches
 - Department of Communities and Justice
 - Easylink Community Transport
 - Link Housing
 - Northern Beaches Secondary College - Manly Campus
 - Mary’s House
 - Mission Australia
 - StreetWork
 - Tafe NSW
 - Taldumande Youth Services
 - MWP Care
 - Northern Beaches and Mosman College
 - Northern Beaches Multicultural Communities
- Northern Beaches Women’s Shelter
 - Northside Enterprise Inc
 - One Eighty
 - Oxford Falls Grammar
 - Pioneer Clubhouse
 - Department of Education, Schools as Community Centres
 - Sydney North Health Network
 - Stella Maris College
 - The Burdekin Association
 - Uniting Local Area Coordination
 - Up & Over
 - Your Side
 - Zena Shapter Creative Services

Key terms

Social Sustainability and Inclusion	A global practice previously known as Social Development that focuses on addressing deep rooted systemic inequalities.
Place based approaches	Collaborative, long-term approaches to build thriving communities delivered in a defined geographic location. Place-based approaches are often used to respond to complex, interrelated or challenging issues - such as to address social issues impacting those experiencing, or at risk of, disadvantage, or for natural disasters.
Wellbeing	A complex combination of a person’s physical, mental, emotional and social health factors. Wellbeing is strongly linked to happiness and life satisfaction. In short, wellbeing could be described as how you feel about yourself and your life.
Resilience	The ability of communities to respond positively to unexpected social, political, environmental and economic events.
Capacity building	The process by which individuals, groups and organisations, institutions and countries develop, enhance and organise their systems, resources and knowledge; all reflected in their abilities, individually and collectively, to perform functions, solve problems and achieve objectives.
Participatory approach	Everyone who has a stake in the outcome has a voice. Everyone’s perspective is considered when designing solutions.
Adaptive capacity	The ability of the community, systems and individuals to adjust to potential damage, to take advantage of opportunities, or to cope with the consequences over time.
Social sustainability	The OECD definition of social sustainability blends traditional social policy areas and principles, such as equity and health, with emerging issues concerning participation, needs, social capital, the economy, the environment, and more recently, with the notions of happiness, wellbeing and quality of life.
Inclusion	When a diversity of people (e.g. of different ages, cultural backgrounds, genders) feel valued and respected, have access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute their perspectives and talents to improve their community.
Social capital	Networks (links between groups or individuals) together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups.
Social cohesion	A socially cohesive society is one that works towards the wellbeing of all its members, fights exclusion and marginalisation, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust and offers its members the opportunity of upward mobility.
Social isolation	The absence of social contact that can lead to loneliness.



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