

NORTHERN BEACHES COUNCIL BETTER TOGETHER SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY 2040 ENGAGEMENT REPORT



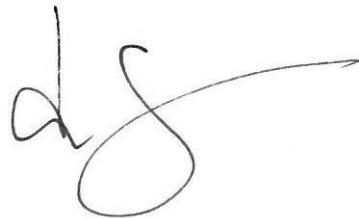
Better Together Engagement
Report
March 2021

REPORT

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Northern Beaches Council has stewardship of one of NSW's most scenic urban, coastal and bushland areas and is home to a diverse community of individuals. These unique assets of the region and its people are recognised in the Council's Community Strategic Plan (CSP), which defines the community's vision for the Northern Beaches as **a safe, inclusive and connected community that lives in balance with our extraordinary coastal and bushland environment.**

Council has embarked on the development of the *Better Together Social Sustainability Strategy 2040* to provide a vehicle to deliver on the community's vision for a safe, inclusive and connected community for all, as articulated in the Shape 2028 CSP.

Better Together uses a whole-of-community approach to establish a cycle of social sustainability and inclusiveness. Key challenges for the Northern Beaches community will be addressed in an integrated way, to help shape a stronger, more resilient, equitable and socially sustainable community over the next two decades.

RPS was engaged to support Northern Beaches Council design and undertake a program of extensive community and stakeholder engagement that aims to inform and refine Better Together, Council's Social Sustainability Strategy and Strategic Framework for the next 20 years.'

Through an extensive engagement program delivered in partnership with Council, we heard that the Better Together Strategy and Strategic Framework must address the five significant and complex issues that are critical for sustainable communities.

We heard that:

- Accessing information is critical for people to be safe, included and connected however there are significant barriers for some priority population groups.
- All people want to feel welcome, included and valued within the community.
- People who are experiencing mental health or social isolation need services and supports.
- Priority populations face barriers to finding employment and education opportunities that allow them to feel safe, connected and contribute to community life.
- Events, activities and facilities are essential for connection and need to be universally accessible.

1.1 Reporting approach

This report provides an overview of the process and outcomes of the engagement program for the Northern Beaches Council's Social Sustainability Strategy, known as *Better Together 2040* (the Strategy/Better Together). The purpose of this report is to demonstrate how engagement activities, outputs and insights have informed and shaped the Better Together Framework and guided action planning for implementation of the first five years of the Strategy.

Some of the recommendations and engagement themes in this report may be addressed by existing or planned Council strategies, action plans and activities that sit beyond the remit of the Better Together Strategy and Strategic Framework. RPS has worked with Northern Beaches Council to frame this report in a way that strikes a balance between what we heard and what is within the remit of the Social Sustainability Strategy. We note that the Strategy and Framework documents developed by Council will provide cross references to other programs and strategies that support key themes and recommendations.

It should also be noted that while the community or stakeholders may perceive some actions as more critical than others, this may not necessarily be reflected in Council's final Framework which seeks to address key priority issues and take a whole-of-community approach to delivering an even safer, more connected and more inclusive community over the next 20 years.

2 INTRODUCTION

Northern Beaches Council is committed to developing plans and strategies that embed a 'direct line of sight' between the expressed priorities and needs of its communities with practical actions and approaches that address these.

Social sustainability is taking on new meaning following the harrowing experiences of bushfires, coastal erosion and the global pandemic of Covid-19. Northern Beaches Council sought to create a broad, public conversation across its diverse communities to raise awareness and capture perspectives of what social sustainability means for individuals.

At the same time, Council wanted a robust program of engagement with people with lived experience so they could not only contribute to what social sustainability – and importantly what safe, included and connected – feels like, but could also help shape the future actions and strategies to create that future.

This report captures that feedback and through analysis and theming, presents it so that Council – and all its key partners and stakeholders – can use it to help guide, shape and implement practical responses to realising a vision for the Northern Beaches that embeds respect, support and dignity throughout the Northern Beaches experience.

2.1 Project background

Northern Beaches Council's Community Strategic Plan (CSP) defines the community's vision for the Northern Beaches as **a safe, inclusive and connected community that lives in balance with our extraordinary coastal and bushland environment.**

The purpose of the Better Together Social Sustainability Strategy 2040 is to deliver on the community's vision for a safe, inclusive and connected community for all, as articulated in the Shape 2028 CSP.

Better Together uses a whole of community approach to establish a cycle of social sustainability and inclusiveness. Key challenges for the Northern Beaches community are addressed in an integrated way, to help shape a stronger, more resilient, equitable and socially sustainable community over the next two decades.

RPS was engaged to support Northern Beaches Council design and undertake a program of extensive community and stakeholder engagement that aims to inform and refine Better Together, Council's Social Sustainability Strategy and Strategic Framework for the next 20 years.

2.2 Structure of this report

This report provides an overview of the process and outcomes of the engagement program for the Northern Beaches Council's Social Sustainability Strategy, known as *Better Together 2040* (the Strategy/Better Together). The purpose of this report is to demonstrate how engagement activities, outputs and insights have informed and shaped the Better Together Framework and guided action planning for implementation of the first five years of the Strategy.

This report includes:

- Engagement methodology
- Engagement processes and tools
- Findings and insights
- Engagement reflections and lessons learnt.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Engagement objectives

The engagement objectives for this project were to:

- **Engage broadly to maximise reach**, so that community awareness of, and interest in, the Strategy is achieved, by capturing the lived experience of a wide range of people living, working, and visiting the Northern Beaches to challenge and highlight the need to focus on safety, inclusion, and connectivity.
- **Create awareness and investment in the strategy by the community** by raising issues about safety, inclusivity, and connectedness. The broader campaign element will reach widely into the community across the Northern Beaches and is interwoven with robust stakeholder engagement, that will ensure all stakeholders feel connected and represented in the Strategy.
- Strengthen opportunities for **partnerships and collaboration with key Council, external stakeholders, and service providers** to guide effective implementation of the Strategy and first five-year Implementation Plan.
- **Intentionally seek out and celebrate the participation of voices of priority groups**, those traditionally less able to participate, are both active and heard in the engagement and help shape the Strategy and its Action Plans.

3.2 Project engagement process

The Better Together Strategic Framework has been grounded in community participation and engagement from its origin.

The engagement process was broken into three clear phases as outlined in Table 1: Engagement process plan

- Phase 1: Internal baselining – using the existing evidence base to create a foundation for the Discussion Paper and Strategic Framework that would inform the consultation in Phase 2
- Phase 2: Engage and test assumptions - with broad and targeted engagement, test the foundation and flesh out the key areas of priorities
- Phase 3a: Check and refine – to test findings and capture the lived experience to create a Strategic Framework with strategic intent and human-centred focus
- Phase 3b: Confirm and partner – come together with key partners and those with lived experience in a Co-Design day to review and confirm Strategic Framework and strengthen partnering for implementation.

Table 1 below demonstrates in more detail how engagement informed and shaped the framework through the project.

Table 1: Engagement process plan

	PHASE 1 INTERNAL BASELINING: FORM THE FRAMEWORK	PHASE 2 ENGAGE AND TEST ASSUMPTIONS: BROAD AND TARGETED ENGAGEMENT	PHASE 3a CHECK AND REFINE: TESTING FINDINGS AND FRAMEWORK	PHASE 3b CONFIRM AND PARTNER: CO-DESIGN DAY
TIMING	August – November 2020	December 2020 – January 2021	February 2021	Late February 2021
PURPOSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with internal stakeholders to develop early aspirations and draft Outcomes for Framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage broadly to maximise reach, awareness and interest in Better Together Capture the lived experience and aspirations of the broad community and baseline perceptions of social sustainability. Test and prioritise early Outcomes to guide Strategy Development Understand implications of social sustainability for service design and delivery Build commitment to collaborative approaches needed for Strategy implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map existing programs and initiatives that link to Better Together Outcomes and identify key opportunities for partnership Review Outcomes, seek consensus or identify gaps, and assign priority areas to relevant outcomes Explore shared and unique social sustainability needs of each priority population group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and confirm Outcomes under Strategic Directions Reflect on and refine Vision Stories Undertake collaborative action planning to guide implementation of Strategy under Priority Areas Seek input into governance structures Gain additional lived experience and insight to visually communicate Better Together.
STAKEHOLDERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Beaches Council Community, Arts and Culture Working Group Northern Beaches Council Better Together Internal Working Group (cross-Council) All Northern Beaches Council Strategic Reference Groups (external) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Beaches Council Better Together Internal Working Group Service delivery partners and NGOs Broader community living, working, visiting or studying in the Northern Beaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Beaches Council Better Together Internal Working Group All Northern Beaches Council Strategic Reference Groups Service delivery partners and NGOs 'Harvested group' of opt-in community members recruited through engagement activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Beaches Council Better Together Internal Working Group Service delivery partners and NGOs Community representatives from Priority Population groups
ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSP vision of safe, inclusive and connected community? What would success look like in 20 years from now – how will we know we have delivered the Better Together Strategy? What does a safe, inclusive, and connected Northern Beaches look like? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is your experience feeling safe, included and connected? What does a safe, connected and inclusive community look and feels like? Understand impact of Better Together: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On how services are designed and delivered for interfaces and relationships within Northern Beaches Council to improve client and community outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the common and unique social sustainability needs of priority population groups? Is 'what we heard' reflected in these Outcomes? Which Priority Areas belong to each Outcome? What are the opportunities for partnership? What are our strengths and challenges as a community? What existing programs and initiatives will support Better Together? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is missing from the draft Framework and Vision stories? What are the critical actions to deliver the Strategy and what do you need to participate and contribute to implementation? Who are the leaders, supporters and participants? What is the governance structure required to be successful?
METHODS	<p>INFORM, COLLABORATE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Working Group workshop 1 Working Group workshops to define success, develop Outcomes under each Strategic Direction Community and Belonging Strategic Reference Group workshop Northern Beaches Council Strategic Reference Group workshops x6 	<p>INFORM, CONSULT, INVOLVE, COLLABORATE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your Say Better Together website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online survey Creative Challenge Discussion Paper Workshops in a Box Partner Workshops in a Box information session Internal Working Group workshop 2 Partner Group workshop 1 	<p>INVOLVE, COLLABORATE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your Say Better Together website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creative Challenge submissions presented Community conversations x2 'Super Strategic Reference Group' workshop Internal Working Group workshop 3 Partner Group workshop 2 	<p>INVOLVE, COLLABORATE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-Design Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review outcomes for consensus and gaps Reflect on and refine Vision Stories Rank Priority Areas Collaborative action planning Governance and partnership discussion
OUTCOMES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Strategic Directions Outcomes for community consideration Vision stories draft 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First draft Better Together Strategic Framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Strategic Directions with 15 Outcomes Vision stories refined Potential actions to achieve outcomes identified Priority areas identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Second draft of Better Together Framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Strategic Directions 11 Outcomes Vision Stories further refined Priority Areas refined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refined final draft Better Together Framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Strategic Directions 10 Outcomes Vision Stories finalised Priority Areas finalised 5-year Better Together Implementation Plan

3.3 Engagement methods and tools

A wide range of in person, digital, online and collaboration methods and tools were used throughout the engagement program. It was important to Council that the engagement program be broad, inclusive and focussed using a comprehensive range of activities designed to reach those goals

Table 2 below articulates for each method and tool:

- Where it sits on the IAP2 participation spectrum
- Engagement purpose or rationale
- How the tool supported an inclusive approach
- Challenges overcome in deploying the tool or method
- Metrics to illustrate the reach and community participation in the engagement tool.

Table 2: Engagement methods and tools

Method	IAP2 Participation level	Engagement purpose	How this supported inclusion	Challenges overcome	Metrics and reach
<i>Stakeholder engagement</i>					
Better Together Internal Working Group	Collaborate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform and refine Framework • Secure buy-in from critical internal stakeholders • Guide implementation planning • Gather and build on existing knowledge about community aspirations related to social sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involved key Council stakeholders in Framework visioning, refinement and action planning for delivery. • 'Digital whiteboard' used to encourage participation from quieter voices in groups ad capture contributions • Facilitated collaboration and strengthened relationships 	<p>Northern Beaches Covid-lockdown and working from home restrictions</p> <p>Interdependency between strategies and plans across Council understood and mapped to clarify roles and responsibilities</p> <p>Limited knowledge about social sustainability and the various roles that contribute across Council</p>	3 workshops with 20+ participants
Strategic Reference Group (SRG) workshops	Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek input, feedback and create sense of ownership from critical Council stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRGs provide interested community members and stakeholders with meaningful opportunities to help inform and shape Council's strategic directions around Social Sustainability within the broader CSP vision • 'Digital whiteboard' used to encourage participation from quieter voices in groups ad capture contributions 	Online facilitation and wide participation from multiple SRG representatives in Covid environment which limited opportunities for face-to-face engagement	8 workshops with 75 participants
Partner workshops	Involve, Collaborate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate awareness, buy-in and sense of excitement about Strategy • Gather rich lived experience and draw on expertise of service delivery organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involved Partner organisations from the beginning of the process • Captured lived experience of priority groups • Encouraged participation in the Workshop in a Box 	<p>Delivered broad engagement and participation despite limited consultant by equipping Council's Social Planning and Services team to deliver workshops</p> <p>Partner organisations helped the engagement through their client groups using trusted relationships, delivering Workshop in a Box sessions</p> <p>Addressed the need to build stakeholder buy-in in order to successfully implement the strategy</p>	<p>2 workshops with 37 participants, comprising:</p> <p>Workshop #1: 23 attendees across 19 agencies</p> <p>Workshop #2: 14 participants across 12 agencies</p>

<i>Targeted engagement</i>					
Co-Design Day	Involve, Collaborate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide an update on Council's engagement to develop <i>Better Together</i> Generate a sense of excitement, buy-in and ownership from key stakeholders Collaboratively review key areas of the draft Strategy document and provide feedback about completeness Review, brainstorm and flesh out actionable suggestions to inform implementation planning Gain additional lived experience and partner organisation insights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants were drawn from key groups who will be directly responsible for implementing, partnering or impacted by the effective delivery of the Strategic Framework, including: Council staff involved with interfacing programs and strategies, service provider partners, priority groups including High School student representatives, people with a disability and community members with lived experience of other social sustainability challenges Participants with a disability were provided with additional support and some activities were paced differently to facilitate their involvement Participants were assigned to tables so there was a balanced representation for discussion and to encourage new connections Council staff facilitated table discussions to support participants to contribute 	<p>Sustained full-day participation from a cross section of partner organisations to include a variety of perspectives and experiences in the planning and decision-making process</p> <p>Breakout groups allowed quieter voices to be heard</p> <p>A range of facilitation and participatory techniques were used to embrace a variety of learning and participation styles – for example plenary, discussions, breakout groups, live online polling, written contributions, tactical/artistic collaborations, shared experiences for inclusion in the Co-Design Mural illustration</p>	<p>67 participants</p> <p>6 High School student participants</p> <p>4 participants with a disability</p> <p>4 people with mental health lived experience</p>
Workshop in a Box	Consult, Involve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use trusted partner relationships to guide priority groups through a structured process to enable broad and deep participation from the community Engage partner organisations, community groups, and individuals to take ownership and lead consultation Capture lived experience of priority populations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core audiences 'easy to forget' gaps and priority populations Workshop in a Box is designed to be an inclusive process for people with a wide range of accessibility or participation support needs, different document formats offered Enables participation by community members with low technology and literacy levels Process was run by partner organisations, by Council workers with priority populations and could also be delivered directly by community members with their family / friends or neighbourhood networks Participant responses could be submitted either hard-copy or online 	<p>Process is simple and accessible enabling input from all people</p> <p>Workshop approach was adapted for Covid restrictions and Northern Beaches outbreak so could be run in person or online</p> <p>Participation of young people facilitated by involvement of Youth Advisory Group and Youth Development Team</p> <p>Produced a greater reach with limited resources by enabling organisations and individuals to run the workshops on their own</p>	<p>12 workshops completed and submitted reaching 240 participants drawn from 6 priority groups</p>
<i>Broad community engagement</i>					
Online survey	Consult, Involve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To build broad awareness of project Gather lived experience and associations with social sustainability Capture what safety, inclusion and connection mean to the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey delivered broadly via Council's Your Say page Survey promoted through Council' social media and newsletter channels Youth Advisory Group supported promotion of survey to youth priority population group who are harder to reach via Council's traditional channels Simple survey with multiple choice and short-answer responses had low barrier to involvement Promotion of survey through Northern Beaches Youth Interagency and other channels and networks encouraged high participation levels amongst young people / high school students 	<p>Survey timeframe extended due to impact of Northern Beaches Covid lockdown.</p> <p>Participation of young people facilitated by involvement of Youth Advisory Group.</p>	<p>807 responses including 260 young people</p> <p>Total social media reach is 89,560 across Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, including boosted posts</p>
Creative Challenge	Consult, Involve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Artistic creative submissions to gather rich insight into lived experience of wider community, young people and other priority groups To gather submission to visually communicate concepts of social sustainability in engagement collateral and Strategic documentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creative Challenge invited participation through any creative media which explored one of the three Strategic Directions. Widened participation from written-based survey and workshop responses to include participation from children and young people, older people, CALD groups and people with a disability 	<p>Implications of accepting 'hard copy' creative submissions in person overcome via use of 'Stories' feature on Council's engagement website</p> <p>Allowed people who think creatively to contribute in a non-traditional way</p>	<p>29 entries shared broadly throughout engagement program</p>

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<p>Better Together Discussion Paper and Community Conversations</p>	<p>Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set out considerations for developing the Strategy by articulating opportunities and challenges for the Northern Beaches community • Create a structured and safe space to enable residents to explore and discuss complex themes and issues around social sustainability • Confirm Council's views on the unique strengths and challenges facing the Northern Beaches • Gather insights from the community about opportunities and next steps to inform implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion paper promoted through Better Together Your Say page • Participants invited from 'harvested group' of community members who had previously expressed interest in being updated on and involved with the Strategy's development • Allowed people who prefer having time to review information before contributing to do so • Provided all the information to everyone so those contributing were considering the same issues and opportunities 	<p>Conversations held online due to Covid restrictions and Northern Beaches lockdown</p>	<p>7 submissions to discussion paper 2 online community conversations with 17 participants for the Strengths discussion and 13 participants for the Challenges discussion</p>
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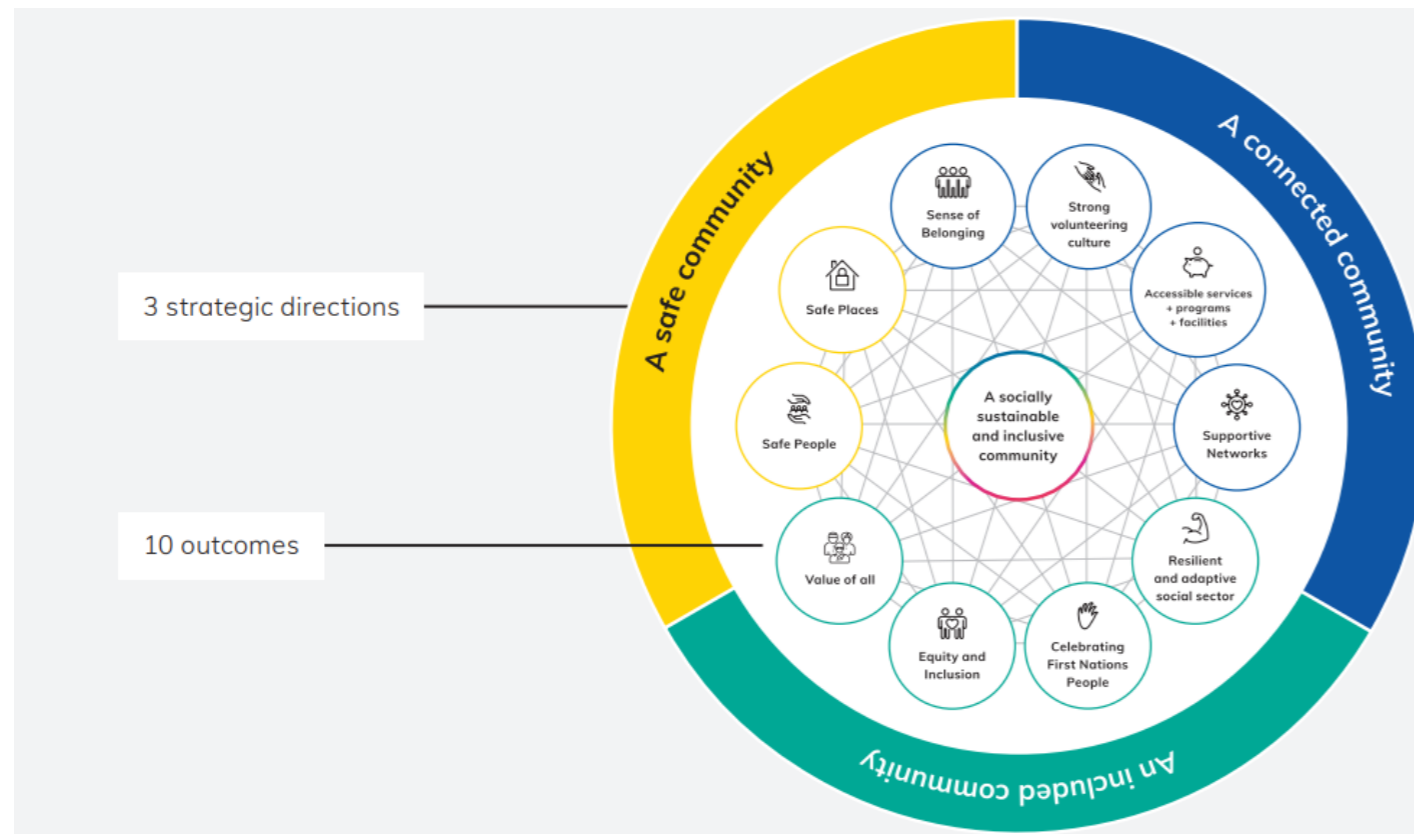
3.4 Structuring the engagement conversations

Engagement was structured around the three strategic directions of a safe community, an inclusive community and a connected community.

For each direction, feedback was sought for a vision and the outcomes that would mean that vision had been realised.

From these, an Action Plan targeting each outcome can be developed to guide future decisions regarding funding, priorities and coordination. See Figure 1 below for the outcomes framework that has been informed by the engagement process.

Figure 1 Better Together updated draft Outcomes Framework post consultation process



4 OVERARCHING FINDINGS, THEMES AND INSIGHTS

Many of the actionable suggestions, aspirations and insights from the engagement program have been incorporated into the evolution of the Better Together Strategic Framework. This process of refinement, broadening to include Priority Areas and synthesising suggestions to form the Implementation Plan has been articulated in the table in Section 2.2.

Additionally, the engagement and consultation activities that formed Phase 1 and 2 have been previously synthesised and summarised in the Phase 3a Engagement Data Summary for the 'Super SRG' meeting, found at Appendix A.

Overall we heard that the five biggest issues for our community, and which Better Together must address:

- Improving peoples **access to information** and addressing any **significant barriers** for priority populations.
- Ensuring everyone living, working and visiting the Northern Beaches **feels welcomed, included and valued**.
- People who are experiencing **mental health or social isolation can access services and supports**.
- Helping priority populations address **barriers to finding employment and education opportunities** to allow them to feel safe, connected and contribute to community life.
- **Events, activities and facilities** are universally accessible.

We heard throughout the engagement that:

- **Resilience remains an important**, but not necessarily well-defined or understood, element. This was crystallised during the Co-Design workshop, which was held at a time that had allowed participants to reflect not only on 2020 but specifically also the December and January Northern Beaches COVID-19 lockdown.
- The broad participation from across multiple sections of the Northern Beaches community showed there is a **desire and appetite across the community** to be involved, consulted, and participate in contributing to social sustainability. Council's involvement should range from providing access to information, participatory opportunities through to facilitating connections and celebrating diversity of the community. Throughout the engagement, there were some key repeated themes that would support this approach:
 - Ensuring access to, and dissemination of, information about the challenges, opportunities, and support currently available in the community is critical for improving Outcomes under all three Strategic Directions
 - Council has a clear mandate to support all people to participate in decision-making – from those who regularly make their views known, through to those with barriers to participation, priority population groups, and sections of the community that are 'easy to forget'
 - The community expects Council to provide opportunities for people to connect, grow their web of connections and relationships and feel welcome. This includes events,

information, and infrastructure such as meeting spaces and safe places to gather outdoors

- The community is proud of the diversity that exists on the Northern Beaches and wants this to be celebrated
- There is a richness to relationships and local community that can be enhanced by encouraging intergenerational connection amongst residents of the Northern Beaches.
- **Accountability, involvement, and governance** will be key to the success of engaging stakeholders in the ongoing implementation of the Strategy.
- A **Better Together Leadership Group or similar** should be considered, drawn from those participants that have been involved in the development of the Strategic Framework, to help implement, champion, and provide external governance for the Strategy and Implementation Plan.
- We heard many intricacies, suggestions and aspirations for addressing the key challenges for Social Sustainability on the Northern Beaches (Better Together Discussion Paper 2020). Many of these challenges can be described as '**wicked problems**' – enduring, complex issues that are difficult to solve. One of the reasons for this is that they are often outside the remit of Northern Beaches Council or any other one agency or organisation to solve.

Key insights from talking with service providers about ways to make enduring change is to find ways to strengthen collaboration and partnership between private, social and government sectors.

Council can play a key role in helping to coordinate and leading partnership at a local level. For example, agencies could contribute towards the purchasing and maintenance of shared software systems such as Customer Relationship Management databases; or co-fund additional staff roles that may be beyond the financial reach of individual agencies. In the long-term, Council could revisit and review its own contracting and tendering services to reduce barriers to participation for smaller organisations and agencies who have deep wisdom and experience in addressing some of these wicked problems.

- All levels of stakeholders and community members desire to strengthen **collaboration and partnership**. Strong cooperation from service providers in running Workshops in a Box and attending Partner Workshops and the Co-Design day shows their respect for and commitment to Council's social sustainability vision. This theme of collaboration and partnership was particularly evident at the Co-Design workshop and is discussed further in the separate report from that day, included as Appendix B.
- Other themes included:
 - A sense from participants that **empowering local communities** to deliver the strategy would play a crucial role, for example community mentoring, strengthening neighbourhoods, creating innovation hubs, and helping easy to forget groups celebrate their unique contribution to life on the Northern Beaches.
 - A desire to see Council make **the most effective use of existing community and Council programs, resources, and facilities**. Many actionable suggestions were linked to better and more efficient use of cultural and community spaces, libraries, Council buildings and green and open spaces.

4.1 Reporting approach

Across all feedback, we have grouped responses into three elements for a high-level snapshot:

1. Consensus – broad agreement across stakeholders/community
2. Tensions – key and conflicting concerns of some groups
3. Gaps – what was missing or information gaps.

Then, for the detail under each strategic direction, we present this information as:

- Challenges and why
- Points of complexity (tensions, competing needs and priorities)
- Information gaps
- Suggestions for how Northern Beaches Council might respond and recommended or capture of discussed action points.

4.2 High level snapshot of feedback:

Consensus:

- Commentary around the desire to feel better included in participatory processes and understand decision making processes. Strong feedback that we are not closing the loop well enough between engagement and decision making – people don't understand what happens after they participate in an engagement process with Council.
- Access to information is a critical function of all three strategic directions, especially safety and connection. There were a variety of issues and themes that came through from various groups of people – however the consensus is that without access to information people are not able to participate as they would like to.
- That the community link positive individual and community wellbeing to aspects of safety and connection. Many people when talking about physical and mental wellbeing referenced feeling safe to participate, as well as having connections with people, places and spaces that they feel connected to. *This was a particularly strong theme in the visual and story sharing submitted.*

Tensions

- No consistent agreement around how diverse and inclusive we are as a community. Broadest point of contention with some feedback indicating that:
 - some people feel the Northern Beaches is a highly inclusive community and wouldn't change a thing
 - other members of the community feel they have experienced racism and/or exclusion
 - some talked about the fact that they personally felt included but had identified times where they felt that others were not.
- In terms of identified priority populations, both young people and those from a multiculturally and linguistically diverse background spoke more frequently in workshops about times where they did not feel safe, included or connected due to issues around diversity and inclusion. Many of these comments related to feeling as though the difference that they bring to the community was not celebrated, embraced or valued within the community.

- We identified that while economic participation overall is a strength for our community those in priority populations, especially youth and those from a multicultural and linguistically diverse background identify this as a key barrier and challenge for them in feeling safe and connected with community life.

Gaps

- Essential workers – two main issues were identified in relation to barriers in accessing this priority group.
 - Not identifying with the term – Many did not identify themselves as an essential worker and therefore did not identify themselves as such.
 - Not living in the area – A large number of essential workers live outside of the Local Government Area which means that they may not be picked up by traditional social media boosting and targeted advertising.
- People with a disability – further work is needed to strengthen the ability of this group to participate in future activities through introduction of easy read material, pacing of discussion and other accessibility initiatives.

5 KEY FINDINGS – STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

5.1 Key Direction: Safe

Overall, we heard:

- 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, how safe people feel, and the reality of safety, how safe people are, was a constant theme throughout engagement.
- Collaboration and cooperation are essential, so instead of ‘competing’ for limited funding and opportunities, Northern Beaches agencies and services should coordinate their approach, supporting each other to deliver unique services that as a whole contribute to make up a cohesive approach

Challenges and why

Safety and feeling safe are relative – they relate to how an individual feels at a given point in time, in a specific environment. Safety is closely linked with inclusiveness and connectedness and needs to be seen as part of the spectrum of social sustainability and not separately.

While physical safety elements – lighting, paths, passive and active surveillance, visibility of authority etc – remain important, so also is whether individuals or groups feel able to access and enjoy their community in terms of safety.

- Access to information is a key barrier and enabler, for people to feel safe to participate and understand what programs are already available and how they can be accessed.
- Safety includes practical measures such as home maintenance as well as lighting, activities and surveillance for example

Throughout the engagement, some stakeholders and community members have expressed reservations that the **Safe** Strategic Direction fully articulates and encompasses what both Council and the community desire from this area of Social Sustainability.

- There was feedback and mixed responses across multiple stages about inclusion of health and wellbeing as an Outcome under this Strategic Direction
- Feedback indicated the vision story needs to emphasise a collective sense of safety (as well as individual responsibility for safety)
- Some Co-design participants expressed **hesitation around the word ‘Safe’** and whether this accurately reflected what this Strategic Direction sought to achieve. This terminology should be considered.

Points of complexity for Priority Groups

Young People

- **Not feeling safe at night and alone**

Young people indicated that they most frequently felt unsafe at night and when they were alone
“When I’ve been walking by myself as a teenage girl at night, I feel unsafe”

- **Behaviour that makes me feel unsafe**

Young people also reported times when they felt unsafe that involved when others were acting or behaving in a certain way. Most commonly it was due to drug and alcohol related behaviour or someone's presence making a young person feel uncomfortable.

The two most frequent times young people shared of times they did not feel safe focused on not feeling safe at night and being around behaviour by others that made them feel unsafe

- **Having people I trust**

Positively, young people report feeling safe when they are with people they trust "when I was with my surf club community". Demonstrating the importance of connection in young people feeling safe.

- **Places or people to get help**

Young people talked about times they felt safe despite being in a situation where they felt emotionally or physically at risk. These experiences focused on knowing there was a person or place where they could access help "when I realised there was always a supportive system when I was upset" "being around teachers and staff."

Older People:

- **Not feeling safe to participate**

Older people cited physical safety issues as a key barrier for them participating. "Now the buses have changed more walking required but not safe"

- **Security about the future**

Access to information and advice around appropriate life stage experience was talked about as something that made them feel safe "more talks about what's happening in the future, wills, what happens when you go into care – I feel safer knowing what is coming"

Multicultural and Linguistically Diverse People

- **Understanding of safety**

Those from multicultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds emphasised that a key issue for them within safety was the need for better financial and employment security "Different kinds of security needs are priorities differently...personal security is fine but financial security and employment security is difficult" and "Jobs in Australia are precarious in comparison to overseas where jobs have lower requirements for qualification and are more stable"

Information gaps

Less an information gap and more of an education/listening piece would be to clarify whether this Strategic Direction is sufficiently targeted and practical.

Actions for Council

Consideration should be given to whether the Direction of 'Safe' should be broadened to include 'security' and the tension that an absence of anxiety (such as a concern for the future) is identified as 'feeling safe'. This may be an opportunity to broaden a public conversation and develop more nuanced, but widely agreed, language and terminology.

5.2 Key Direction: Inclusive

Overall, we heard:

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.

Inclusion and accessibility are closely linked. Therefore, ensuring that people can afford to participate, are able to access transport, and have the support they need to feel included should be considered across Council's programs. This 'inclusion' lens could include questions like 'who is not in the room?' 'How can people be included if they lack confidence, cash or car?' 'Is our language welcoming, supportive, and inclusive?'

Challenges and why

People are naturally 'tribal' – we tend to find people who think like us, look like us, are interested in what we are interested in. This can create accidental socially homogenous 'enclaves' that look or feel exclusive and make it hard for new people to join established groups.

Points of complexity for Priority Groups

Young People

- **Being part of social groups**

High number of examples of positive inclusion talked about being part of a social group that was related to an interest area. Many examples feature sporting activities, however other interest areas were also important to note including music and arts.

"I felt included in my local footy team coz everyone is there for the same reason"

Conversely, young people talked a lot about how not feeling like they belong to a group made them feel excluded and on the outer. Interestingly, sporting groups were mentioned frequently as not being welcoming of new people and feeling like no one tried to welcome new people.

"In sport where I was left out because I didn't know anyone"

- **Embracing Diversity**

Young people talked a lot about the role of feeling seen, and the impact of feeling as though diversity and uniqueness was not embraced by others.

"Being judged by my race"

"Not many community celebrations of NAIDOC Week"

"At my school I don't get any queer education and am taught homosexuality is a sin"

"Ability to show of my culture at harmony day events"

Young people's understanding of diversity is broad, and they tend to talk about culture and gender as key aspects of a diverse community.

- **Connecting with other generations and understanding decisions.**

Intergenerational dissonance— trouble connecting with other generations and older people was talked about in terms of inclusion. “Old people not smiling (or just not giving a smile back) when out in public”.

- **There was also a correlation between when decisions were not communicated effectively or articulated well to young people, leading them feeling excluded.**

“When I wasn’t allowed to attend a concert on Manly Wharf – felt disrespected when not included”.

Older People

- **Importance of mobility**

Older people told us that they rely on public transport primarily to move around and any changes to these services can impact on their ability to feel included in the community. “Feel we can’t access some areas because there aren’t safe ways to do so” “bad transport lines will stop people seeking the services that they need as its too hard to move around”.

Moreover, community transport alternatives are not always accessible, with the cost being too high for some, particularly when older people are a member of other priority populations as well as overall confidence to access the service without support of a carer.

Multicultural and Linguistically Diverse People

- **Feeling Seen**

Those from multicultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds told us that they felt most included when they felt their difference was recognised and celebrated. They talked about “lack of involvement in cultural festivals. Tibetans would like cultural events like a night market”.

5.3 Key Direction: Connected

Overall, we heard:

The community has a strong sense of belonging to the Northern Beaches. They feel connected to the natural beauty of the Northern Beaches 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 with events, activities, programs, and facilities. Social infrastructure is seen as essential to facilitate connection.

The strengths and interest 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 the community sees themselves as having a strong culture of ‘giving back’. They 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. Changes to the more flexible nature of work and study after the enforced working/studying from home COVID-19 lockdown period may better enable volunteering in the short-term.

Points of complexity for Priority Groups

Young People

- **Being with others who have shared interests**

By far young people indicated most frequently they felt connected being with others who share their interests. Interests were varied including sport, dance, music, art and being at school. "Painting a mural with other people, artists and members of council".

- **Being a part of a group**

Similarly, being part of broader groups including school and family groups, was also important for young people feeling connected, "Working in the SRC as a leadership team makes me feel connected".

- **Digital connection, events and sharing experiences**

Interestingly, while connection digitally was mentioned "KALOF Instagram connects me", many more referenced face-to-face interactions such as events and sharing experiences with others in the community was when they felt most connected. "Knowing people through sport" "When I held a climate strike".

- **Lack of social interaction and feeling excluded**

Of those who shared times when they didn't feel connected, it mirrored the experiences young people indicated made them feel connected. Lack of social interaction with others, "being by myself", and meeting new people that resulted in feeling excluded were the most common times young people said they struggle to feel connected. "The first day of school because some people excluded me".

Older People

- **Spaces to connect**

Older people cited being with people as when they felt most connected "coming to our community lunch – connect with others and have some conversations". However, older people told us they feel like they have limited places to come together and connect with others "Don't feel connected to anything, living in a unit don't feel like we are connecting".

- **Mobility**

Mobility was important to older people as it allowed for them to move around the local area and access places they otherwise couldn't. "Hop Jump Skip bus is fantastic and takes us where to go locally".

Multicultural and Linguistically Diverse People

- **Employment and skills opportunities**

We heard that a significant barrier for those with a multicultural and linguistically diverse background related to struggling to have their previous skills recognised and access employment pathways "Employment & occupational training is overwhelming barrier" "Reskilling is very difficult as education is inaccessible" "Getting a driver's licence is difficult & expensive but required for jobs".

6 REFLECTIONS AND EVALUATION

Northern Beaches Council should be commended for their commitment to strive to consult with and engage those whose voices are not traditionally heard in similar engagement programs:

- This engagement program went beyond those who traditionally participate to reach those who are easy to forget – because they have a range of access and barriers to participation
- Community capacity building was evident in many of the activities and engagement processes, including young people's high levels of participation in the online survey, workshops in a box conducted at multiple high schools, the inclusion of priority groups including people with a disability and young people in the Co-design Day.
- The engagement program created a sense of interest and motivation so that participation in activity led to an increased level of participation in others. This is demonstrated by the extraordinarily high participation rates in the online survey from young people, an unexpected outcome that illustrates that when we create opportunities for engagement that are relevant and 'speak to' young people, they are both interested and engaged and welcome the opportunity.
- The engagement program captured and is able to maintain the voices of lived experience through the artefacts created for the Creative Challenge – providing an enduring focus and touchpoint for the Strategy now and in the future.

The *Better Together* engagement program achieved impressive reach and penetration broadly across the Northern Beaches community in a particularly challenging context of 2020 Covid impacts and specifically the December 2020 Northern Beaches outbreaks and lockdown.

Demonstration of this reach is provided in Table 3 and Figure 2 below.

Table 3: *Better Together* engagement program reach

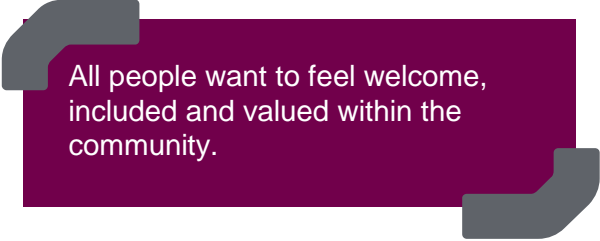
Method	Better Together
Social media reach	89,560
Survey participation	807
Video views	9,144
SRG members in workshops	75 across 8 workshops
Community members in focus group discussion	30 across 2 conversations
Web page visits	6700+
Young people participants	260
Other methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 29 – Creativity Challenge entries • 12 - Workshops in a box • 7 - Discussion paper submission • 20+ partner organisations collaborated with • 14 – stakeholders workshops

Figure 2 *Better Together* engagement reach and metrics



7 CONCLUSION

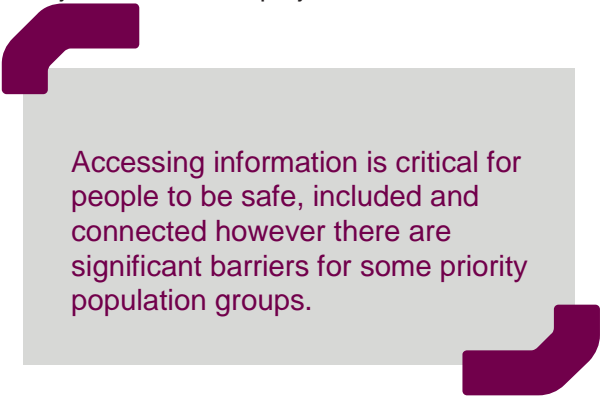
Reflecting on the five main areas of focus for Council in terms of the community's biggest issues, we have drawn the following conclusions and recommendations.



All people want to feel welcome, included and valued within the community.


The wide and deep engagement to support the development of Better Together Framework and Implementation Plan shows there is **broad support for the values** that underpin the Social Sustainability Strategy – from both the local community and Council's partner organisations as service providers.

What is **less clear is the role of local government** in supporting social sustainability – this is not clear cut as they are not a major service provider and manage competing demands when planning for major infrastructure projects.



Accessing information is critical for people to be safe, included and connected however there are significant barriers for some priority population groups.

Council's role to date as well as the engagement findings demonstrated the importance of **acting as a consistent coordination body** to clearly articulate a future direction and help support delivery of this vision by the local community, Council and partner organisations. The Co-Design Day showed both the desire and pathway for the wider community, those with lived experience of social sustainability challenges, and service provider partners to collaborate. Council needs to provide introductions, platforms and structures to enable this to happen formally and regularly.



Events, activities and facilities are essential for connection and need to be universally accessible.

The multitude of actionable feedback and suggestions for implementing the Framework also showed the **wider community is eager to contribute but lacks clarity** around how their individual actions and initiatives can feed into and support the broader Strategy.

People who are experiencing mental health or social isolation need services and supports.

Priority populations face barriers to finding employment and education opportunities that allow them to feel safe, connected and contribute to community life.

Our concluding recommendation is that Council should **replicate the collaborative and partnership-focused engagement approach** used to develop, test and refine the Better Together Framework and Implementation Plan to take the project forward:

- This of course includes looping back to contributors, partners, those involved in the Co-Design Day and the wider community to provide an update on the Strategy's progress and articulate how their feedback has been used to shape the Framework and Implementation Plan.
- Additionally, once the Strategy has been finalised, Council should consider establishing a *Better Together Leadership Group* or similar forum to help implement, champion and provide external governance for the Strategy and Implementation Plan.
- The approach and role local government in Australia has taken to supporting environmental sustainability initiatives may provide a helpful comparable approach for the Northern Beaches Council in creating an even safer, more inclusive and connected community. While not an energy or service local councils have provided leadership in decision-making and policy, using goals, targets and the leverage of their commercial decisions to drive change. This has resulted in local government becoming a lynchpin in providing information and linking the local community with existing programs, initiatives and partner organisations. Drawing inspiration from this model, the Northern Beaches Council could be both a key driver of better social sustainability outcomes and a catalyst for empowering local community members to contribute to areas they are passionate about.

Appendix A

Phase 3a Engagement Data Summary for ‘Super SRG’ meeting



WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Level 13, 255 Pitt Street
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Reference:	<i>Better Together: Northern Beaches Council Social Sustainability Strategy 2041</i>
Meeting Name:	NBC <i>Better Together</i> workshop #2 Updating and confirming directions for <i>Better Together</i>
Meeting date:	SRG: Wednesday 10 February, 6:15-8:45pm
Meeting location:	Via Teams

Workshop purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an update on how Council is developing the <i>Better Together</i> Social Sustainability Strategy • Test top outcomes under each Strategic Direction (from survey responses) • Confirm and expand outcomes • Introduce priority areas and confirm grouping • Test Vision stories • Identify potential partnerships <p>Emphasise that everyone in the room has an important role to play because they bring a different perspective on how Council serves the community.</p>
Report	This report was authored by Laura Fayers-Pooley, Associate Director at RPS. 22 February 2021

Appendix B

Co-Design Day Feedback Report



NORTHERN BEACHES COUNCIL CO-DESIGN DAY FEEDBACK REPORT



Feedback report
March 2021

rpsgroup.com