

Sketching a Sydney Doughnut

June 2023





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This report presents the first sketch of a Sydney Doughnut - a compass for regeneration in Greater Sydney. We detail the findings from a series of community workshops and stakeholder roundtables held in late 2022, which form the foundation for this Sydney Doughnut sketch. Finally, this publication outlines opportunity areas for transformative action and presents Regen Sydney's strategy and upcoming streams of engagement.

We thank the UNSW Allens Hub and WWF Australia for providing us with funding that helped us to undertake this body of work.

For all our relations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Regen Sydney respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and the living cultures of the lands and waters that make up the place we now call Greater Sydney. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and generations yet to come. We offer deep gratitude to Aboriginal peoples who continue to care for Country after countless generations, and acknowledge that their sovereignty was never ceded.

We stand in solidarity with those who share the journey of reparation to address the ongoing injustices and devastation of colonialism in communities across Greater Sydney and beyond.

We are proud to celebrate the continuing contributions that Aboriginal people make to the life of this city. There can be no regenerative Sydney without regenerating Culture.



CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SETTING THE SCENE

WHO IS REGEN SYDNEY?.....	8
OUR THEORY OF CHANGE.....	9
THREE PILLARS OF OUR VISION.....	10
GUIDING PRINCIPLES.....	11
WHO'S ON THE JOURNEY WITH US?.....	12
HIGHLIGHTS SO FAR.....	13
OUR TIME.....	15
OUR COUNTRY.....	16
OUR PLACE, GREATER SYDNEY.....	18

A NEW COMPASS

SKETCHING A SYDNEY DOUGHNUT

A SYDNEY DOUGHNUT.....	23
SYDNEY DOUGHNUT: SOCIAL FABRIC.....	24
SYDNEY DOUGHNUT: ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS.....	25
ROLLING THE DOUGHNUT AT MULTIPLE SCALES.....	26

OUR APPROACH

REGENERATIVE ECONOMICS.....	28
SYSTEMIC DESIGN & INNOVATION.....	29
PHASES OF ENGAGEMENT.....	30

COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

INTRODUCTION.....	32
WORKSHOP 1: PEOPLE & COMMUNITY.....	33
WORKSHOP 2: PLACE & COUNTRY.....	42
A VISION FOR A REGENERATIVE SYDNEY.....	46

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLES

OVERVIEW OF STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLES.....	48
ROUNDTABLE 1: SOCIAL EQUITY & WELLBEING.....	49
ROUNDTABLE 2: SHAPING THE ENVIRONMENT.....	50
ROUNDTABLE 3: PUBLIC POLICY, GOVT. & LAW.....	51
ROUNDTABLE 4: FINANCE & ECONOMICS.....	52
MAPPING THE TRANSITION: OPPORTUNITY AREAS...	57

FROM DREAMING TO DOING

THE JOURNEY AHEAD

PHASE SHIFT.....	60
CONVENING THREE STREAMS OF ACTION.....	61
OUR MISSION.....	63
NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTIVATIONS.....	64
CITY-SCALE PILOTS.....	67
LIVING LAB.....	69

HOW WE'LL GET THERE

A COALITION TO MOBILISE ACTION.....	72
CORE TEAM FUNCTIONS.....	73
HOW WE CONVENE.....	74
RESOURCING THE JOURNEY.....	76
JOURNEY WITH US.....	78

ABOUT

CONTACT.....	80
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APPENDIX

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLES: WHAT WE HEARD.....	81
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WALKING TOGETHER WITH FIRST NATIONS

“ Aboriginal Law is inscribed in the land. It’s unchanging. What happens when these two ways come together is the question? And what is the process we engage in?”

What we term climate change, or the ‘environment problem’, is informed by the nature of the culture that people are a part of, which here is essentially a Western Culture. I wonder if we could step back and reflect on that a little bit?

The ‘environment problem’ is not defined by an evaluation of the problems that are confronting Aboriginal people today in contemporary society. So we have Aboriginal people today, who are participating in Australian society, on a spectrum of viewpoints and ideas, from traditional to contemporary Aboriginal persons.

Should we spend some time considering the evaluation of the problems that confront Aboriginal people today?

The primary problem confronting Aboriginal people today is the **regeneration of our Culture**. For us, that means, going back to our Country and spending time there, relearning the language of that place, and the songs of Creation that came from there. The stories in which there is a lot of wisdom and understanding that is nested in our mythologies. In some ways, we’re all without a myth.

So, it is worth asking: What is the myth we’re living out? Is there another myth that we’d prefer to live out?

We’re living in a time where in the environment movement, we’re focussing on the socio-political-cultural systems rather than focussing on the continuity of the current problem.

The current problem for us as Aboriginal people, for example, if we go back to traditional times (pre-1788), my ancestors were living in relationship with the natural world, which included all the plants and animals and spirits that walked those lands. All that knowledge we had - and still have - was expressed in **the relationships that we had between the people, the ecosystems and the living beings and spirits that walked those places.**

We need to find a way to regenerate those relationships and live out those relationships, so that we can genuinely access the knowledge, wisdom and understanding that is nested within them. ”

*Uncle Phil Bligh, Darkinjung Elder,
Co-founder of Beyond the Campfire*

Aboriginal people have been living, loving, understanding and upholding the Lore of Sydney for countless millennia. Regen Sydney is generously guided by the wisdom of First Nations elders and allies, including Uncle Phil Bligh and David Beaumont.

With grace and permission, we warmly share the invitation to walk together, that has been so generously extended to us, to the whole of our community.



Setting the Scene

WHO IS REGEN SYDNEY?

Regen Sydney is a rising coalition of over 600 individuals and organisations who are actively collaborating across sectors to envision a healthy, equitable, thriving Greater Sydney, now, and into the future. We are beginning by experimenting with Doughnut Economics.

We are part of a fast-growing network of cities, regions and places across the globe who are experimenting with localising and implementing more holistic measures of progress.

Our community has more than doubled, from 250 to 600 people, since we released the 'Growing the Movement' report a little over twelve months ago. This reflects a groundswell of interest in regenerative design and practice, localised economies and participatory citizenship, as well as community connectedness, resilience and disaster preparedness and response - in light of repeated bushfires, flooding, drought and the COVID-19 pandemic.

WHO ARE OUR COMMUNITY MEMBERS?

Regen Sydney's community members come from a huge array of professional fields. These include: Social Work, Innovation, Sustainability, Health, Architecture & Design, Engineering, Conservation, Climate Policy, Social Enterprise, Law, Education, NGO, Manufacturing, Fashion, Arts and Academia.

The breadth of professions represented in our community demonstrates both the broad appeal of the 'Doughnut' in connecting residents to tackle entrenched issues, as well as a strong desire for citizens and professionals across our city to play

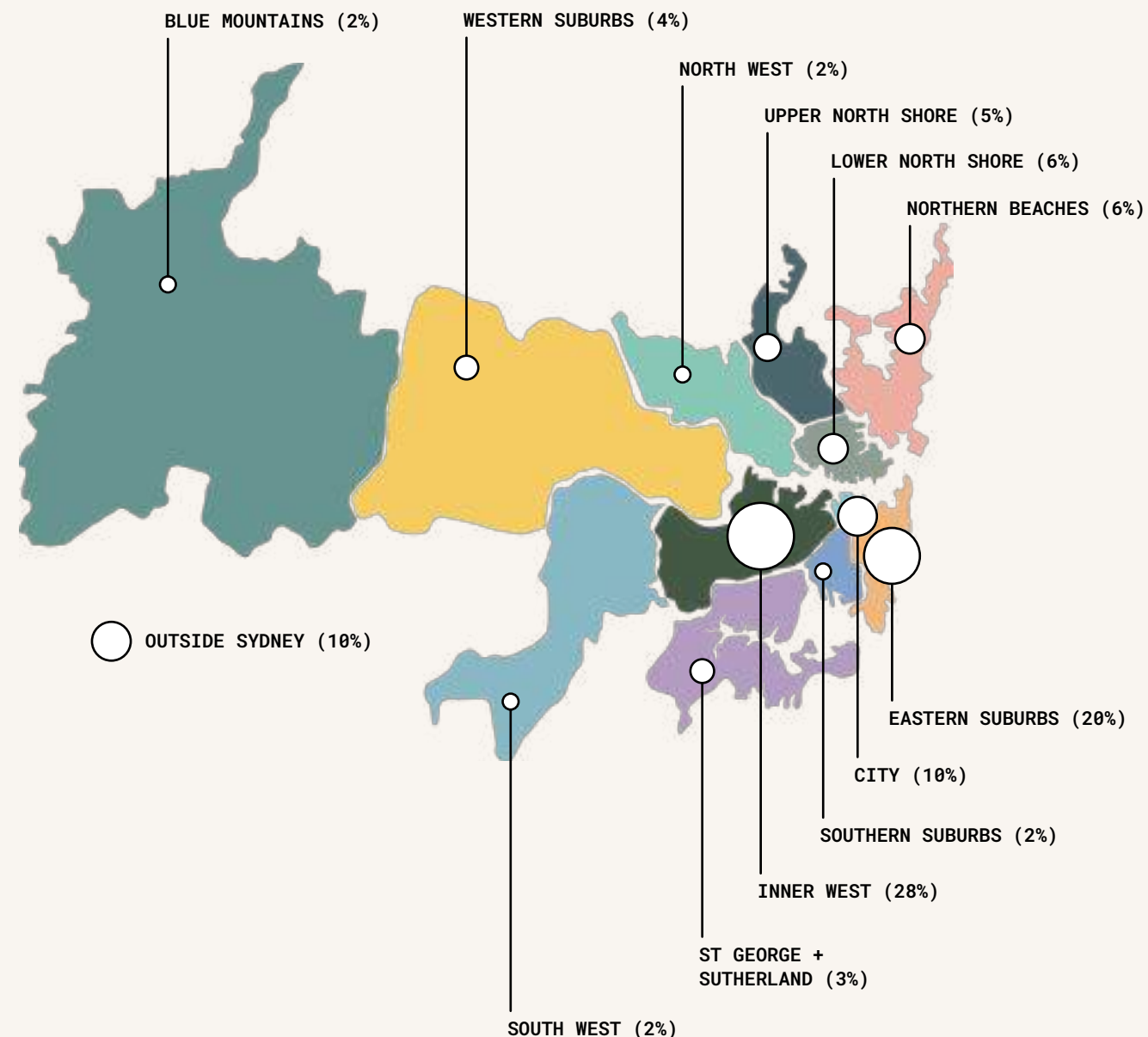
an active role in determining the collective future of the place we call home. It is a way to merge professional and grassroots expertise, with love of place, as concerned and engaged citizens. This community creates a bridge between the lived experience of people's work and home lives.

WHERE DO WE LIVE?

While some live in the North West & South West of Sydney, the community is predominately (and perhaps predictably) composed of those living

in the Inner West, Eastern Suburbs, City, North Shore and Northern Beaches. This is largely unchanged since our inception and launch of our 2022 report "Growing the Movement".

There are many possible explanations for this but it is clear that creating a single Greater Sydney 'vision' or 'Doughnut' will be impossible - and entirely inappropriate - without ensuring demographic and cultural representation from across diverse communities.



What excites people about Regen Sydney and the Doughnut?

People have a range of motivations for joining:

"Sharing local solutions for regeneration and inspiration :). Encouraging community connections for collaborative action"
(Environmental Educator)

"Networks for closing the loop on clothing/textiles waste. Education on regenerative principles."
(Circular Textiles)

"Being part of a smart and skilled community that connects, shares and inspires each other to bring Sydney back to life."
(Government)

"I'm not sure I believe in the work I do anymore, and I think the only way to sustainability is through degrowth."
(Sustainability Consultant)

"I live here. I want to see Sydney become an example of how to adapt, survive, thrive in the years to come."
(Education)

"Have an active role in modelling our future society."
(Recycling Consultant)

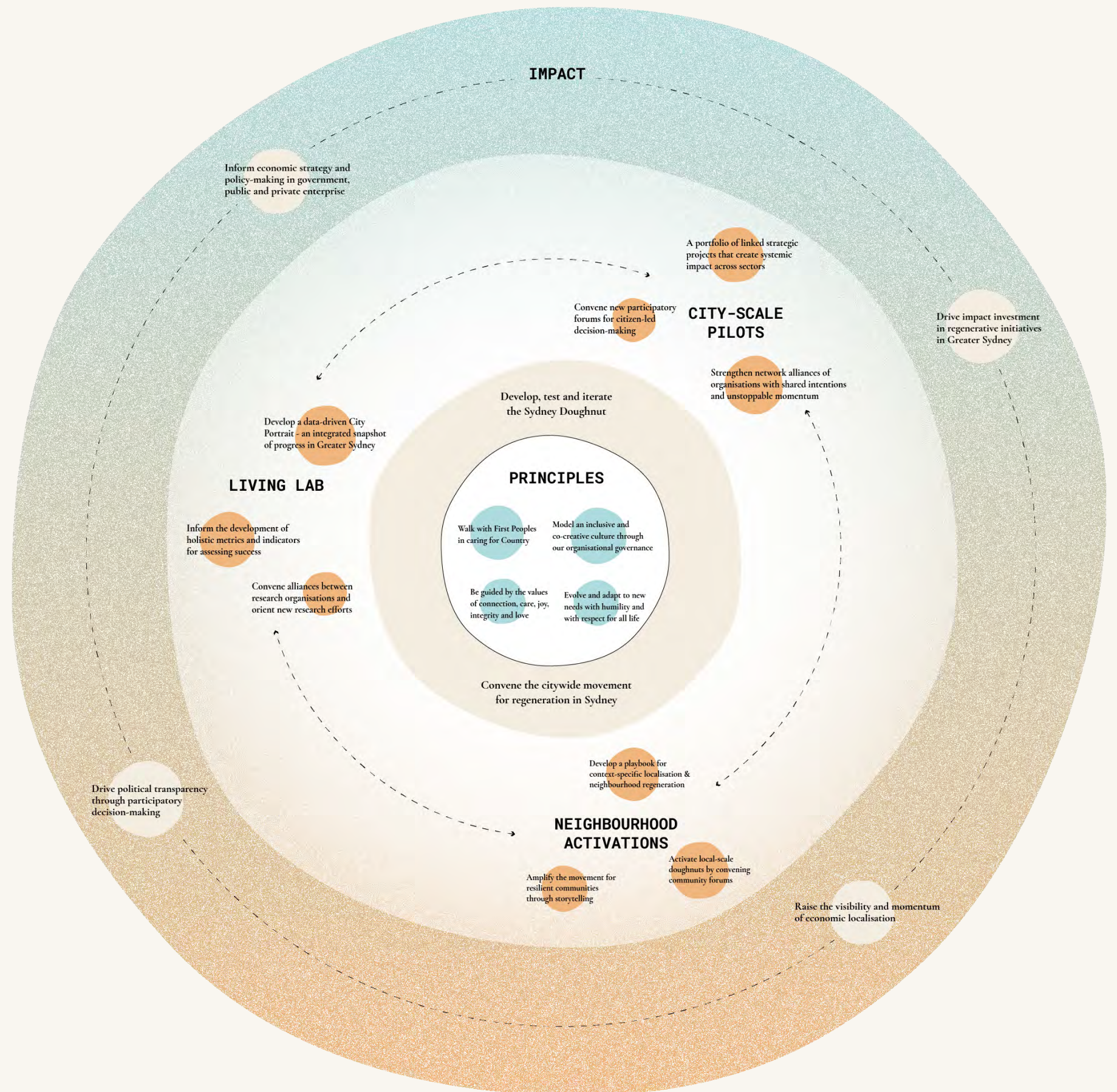
"To bring First Nations and people of colour to the forefront of climate justice."
(Circular Economy Communicator)

"Supporting communities and the arts and culture sector."
(Arts & Culture)

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Regen Sydney has a big vision for regeneration on a citywide scale, to ensure that no one is left behind and our living world can thrive. We are collectively guided by the question "how can we live on this land with joy?" to rewire our livelihoods, our values and our systems.

<p>ACTIONS [WHAT WE DO]</p>	<p>If we develop, test and iterate a Sydney Doughnut as a collective vision for regeneration;</p>
<p>ACTIVITIES [HOW WE DO IT]</p>	<p>By creating a portfolio of ambitious, linked, cross-sector, City-Scale Pilots, defining place-based and holistic measures of thriving, and developing hyper-local Neighbourhood Activations;</p>
<p>OUTPUTS [TANGIBLE RESULTS]</p>	<p>It will demonstrate what localised, thriving economies look and feel like, catalyse novel public-private partnerships and alliances, and amplify Sydney's role in the movement for resilient, responsible cities;</p>
<p>OUTCOMES [SYSTEM SHIFTING PATHWAYS]</p>	<p>And consequently, raise the collective ambition of Sydney, inform economic strategy and policy-making in government, public and private enterprise, as well as raise the visibility and momentum of economic localisation and participatory decision-making;</p>
<p>IMPACT [LONG TERM]</p>	<p>In order to move Greater Sydney and all its diverse regions into the safe and just space for all life, where social foundations and ecological responsibilities are both met.</p>



THREE PILLARS OF OUR VISION

1. Transition to an economy that heals and activates rather than destroys life, and demonstrate that this is not only possible, but it's already under way in Sydney.

2. Connect and grow the movement of individuals and organisations actively working towards making Sydney a resilient and regenerative city.

3. Get Sydney inside the 'doughnut' - the safe space for all life - within a generation.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1

Think global, act local

We will equip communities with the ability to respond appropriately to the challenges ahead at their local (suburbs) and city scale (Sydney), while offering them a global context for collaboration in the transition toward a regenerative Sydney. Everything we do is grounded in place-based tangible action.

2

Nature and Indigenous wisdom are our guides

We look to nature and Indigenous wisdom as our guide. We exist to nurture and support systems that are in tune with - and work in harmony with - nature.

3

Allyship with First Nations

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original custodians of these lands. We honour their care, wisdom and deep connection. We commit to decolonising our minds, reverse and remedy dispossession through direct action and listening to the voices of First Nations people.

4

Humility

We act with humility while co-initiating bold action in the face of an unpredictable future. At all times, we are committed to acting with integrity and curiosity in new and unfamiliar spaces. We acknowledge that we don't know what we don't know. We are ready to listen and to let go of what we do know in order to re-learn and collectively weave another story.

5

Compassion

We foster a culture of compassion and deep care for the Earth. In doing so, we develop care for self and care for others. Embodying empathy generates a ripple of wellbeing that changes the world around us, for us.

6

Co-creation with playfulness and joy

We hold lightness and humour even while navigating the big challenges. We collaborate with positivity, enthusiasm and energy. In doing so, we offer a fun, valuable and exciting experience for ourselves and elicit the many gifts of our community.

7

Dance with complexity

We encourage creativity and holistic approaches as we iterate regenerative ways of doing and being. We stay tuned to emergence and remain open to shifting our approaches and strategies as we learn and contribute to a thriving, inclusive, nature-positive and as yet, unwritten, future for Greater Sydney (and beyond).

THE INNER WORK

Transformative self-development work helps us grow a greater sense of awareness and reach the deeper levels of empathy required to truly embrace and harness multiple perspectives for the collective good.

Regenerative practice is based on the premise that we cannot make the outer transformations required to create a truly sustainable world without making inner transformations in how we think, how we work, and who we are. Our understanding of what's required of ourselves as practitioners and as human beings deepens as this inner work unfolds ([see Regenesi](#)s).

Whole system health and outer vitality depends on strong and nourished roots growing in healthy soils - i.e. caring for the inner is necessary.

The Inner Development Goals project works to identify, popularise and support the development of relevant abilities, skills and qualities for inner growth, through consciously supportive organisations, companies and institutions, to better address the global challenges ([see Inner Development Goals](#)).

Regen Sydney has built our foundations using this approach, and will continue to practise inner regeneration to meaningfully and wholeheartedly undertake our work going forward.

WHO'S ON THE JOURNEY WITH US?

Working together for a regenerative Sydney.



These organisations, and many more...

HIGHLIGHTS SO FAR

'THE FIRST BITE' LAUNCH 2021

In August 2021, we held a Regen Sydney 'First Bite' event. There were 115 people who attended from across Greater Sydney, representing community, circular economy, regenerative design, public policy, law, academia, First Nations and community.

The event received support from City of Sydney Deputy Lord Mayor, Jess Scully, who joined us to share insights about citizen-led democracy.

[Watch the event video](#)



'THE GATHERING' MAY 2022

Regen Sydney's first in-person gathering brought together ~50 community leaders, regenerative designers, policy influencers and sustainability experts from across the network to explore some of the stickiest questions we face in rolling the Sydney Doughnut forward.

[Watch event highlights](#)



TEDxSYDNEY CITY ACTIVATION

In August 2022, Regen Sydney partnered with TEDxSydney to transform Sydney Square into 'Regen Sydney Square'. We were joined by a panel of influential speakers and a full-house of inspired community members.

[Watch a clip from the event](#)

[Watch the panel discussion](#)



“Our current measures of progress are built on short-term memory models. This way that we do things right now is not the way they’ve always been done. First Nations people didn’t work with these models in this short-term image of history. This extractive, individualistic and completely unsustainable model that we have today is a blip in history. It will not last if we change it. It is not the way things have always been or always have to be and we have to spread this message to everyone.”

~ Jess Scully, ex-Deputy Lord Mayor City of Sydney: 'First Bite' event (2021)

OUR TIME

The world we inhabit has changed in some significant ways since Regen Sydney first gathered in early 2021.

GLOBAL ECONOMY

The global economy is still recovering - and reeling - from the COVID-19 pandemic-induced recession of 2020.

The resurgence of the virus and extended lockdowns, particularly in China, have caused ongoing disruptions to global supply chains and slowed economic growth, in what the IMF refers to as “a rocky recovery”¹. Leading economies, including the US, Europe & UK, are either in, or at risk of, recession². The UK is seeing annual inflation surging above 10%, as repeated hikes in interest rates squeeze household budgets at home and abroad.

In addition, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has prompted the greatest global energy crisis since the 1970s³, with the biggest shocks being seen in gas, coal and electricity. The latest World Energy Outlook states that the crisis has “the potential to hasten the transition to a more sustainable and secure energy system.”

To shield consumers from the impacts of the crisis, governments, including in Australia, have implemented short-term measures, while also accelerating structural changes to their energy supply and production. However, those who spend the biggest proportion of household income on energy (i.e. poorer households) continue to bear the brunt of these price fluctuations.

¹ [World Economic Outlook](#) - advanced economies are predicted to grow by <1% in 2023 (accessed May, 2022)

² [Recession in 2023? That depends on where you are in the world | World Economic Forum](#) (accessed May 2022)

³ [World Energy Outlook 2022](#) by International Energy Agency

⁴ The six boundaries already crossed include climate change, greenwater, biodiversity integrity, land system change, novel entities and biogeochemical flows (i.e. phosphorous and nitrogen). Source: [Planetary boundaries - Stockholm Resilience Centre](#), accessed May 2022

⁵ [Summary for Policymakers, IPCC](#) (accessed May 2023)

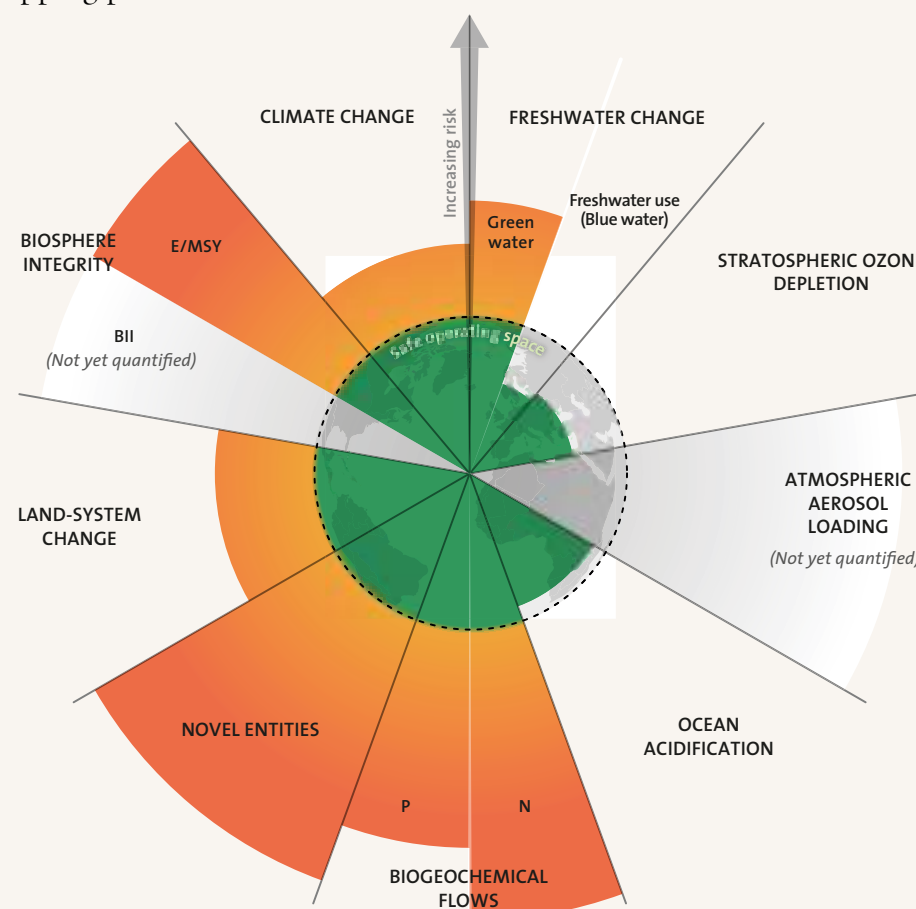
⁶ Pledging to adopt the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) [COP15: historic global deal for nature and people](#) (accessed May 2023).

“Energy markets and policies have changed as a result of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, not just for the time being, but for decades to come. Even with today’s policy settings, the energy world is shifting dramatically before our eyes. Government responses around the world promise to make this a historic and definitive turning point towards a cleaner, more affordable and more secure energy system.”

Faith Birol, IEA Executive Director
World Energy Outlook 2022

GLOBAL ECOLOGY

On a global level, on July 4th, 2023, Earth experienced its hottest day in ~125,000 years. Humanity is now deemed to have transgressed six out of nine planetary boundaries⁴, placing the ‘safe and just space for all life’ (the ‘dough’ of our collective doughnut) at unprecedented risk from irreversible chains of events as more ecological and climatic tipping points are crossed.



Credit: "Azote for Stockholm Resilience Centre, based on analysis in Wang-Erlandsson et al 2022". [View diagram here.](#)

In March 2023, the IPCC released its Sixth Assessment Report (6AR) stating “There is a rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all.” calling for “rapid- and far-reaching transition across all sectors and systems.” as well as the prioritisation of “equity, climate justice, social inclusion and just transition processes.”

“Integrating climate adaptation into social protection programs improves resilience. Many options are available for reducing emission-intensive consumption, including through behavioural and lifestyle changes, with co-benefits for societal well-being. (high confidence)”

IPCC, 6AR, 2023

The 6AR report⁵ also forewarns that Australia will experience an increase in heavy rainfall and flooding events such as those seen in 2022, as well as an increase in heat and cold extremes.

“There are opportunities even in the most difficult moments.”

Wangari Maathai

At the COP15 Biodiversity Summit in Montreal in December last year, 195 countries pledged to reverse biodiversity loss, protect indigenous rights and transform ‘business-as-usual’ to become nature positive by 2030.

“This framework contains global goals and targets aiming to protect & restore nature for current and future generations, ensure its sustainable use as well as spur investments for a green global economy. Together with the Paris Agreement on climate, it paves the way towards a climate-neutral, nature-positive & resilient world by 2050.”

EU commission⁶

The Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), features 23 targets to achieve by 2030, including: protecting more than 30% of the world’s land, coastal areas and oceans; restoration of 30% of terrestrial and marine ecosystems; halving global food waste; requiring transnational companies and financial institutions to monitor, assess and transparently disclose risks and impacts on biodiversity through their operations, portfolios, supply and value chains; and mobilising at least \$200bn (US) per year from public and private sources for biodiversity-related funding.

OUR COUNTRY

Closer to home, Australia emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic into a Federal election and series of catastrophic flooding events in 2022. The floods saw communities across the nation inundated, with many people evacuated or stranded, from Northern NSW to the Kimberley in WA, metropolitan Brisbane to Melbourne.

On April 7th, 2022, Sydney received almost a month's worth of rainfall overnight⁷. In NSW alone, 23 people tragically died in flooding events⁸ and, once again, untold numbers of livestock and native wildlife were lost as a result of 'natural' disaster.



Source: [New York Times](#), 15 Oct 2022

"A barrage of floods and storms over the past three years has cost insurance companies more than \$12 billion in claims and affected one in 25 adult Australians, according to the Insurance Council of Australia. This damages bill is on top of government funding to help stricken communities, which has topped \$4 billion in NSW just this year."

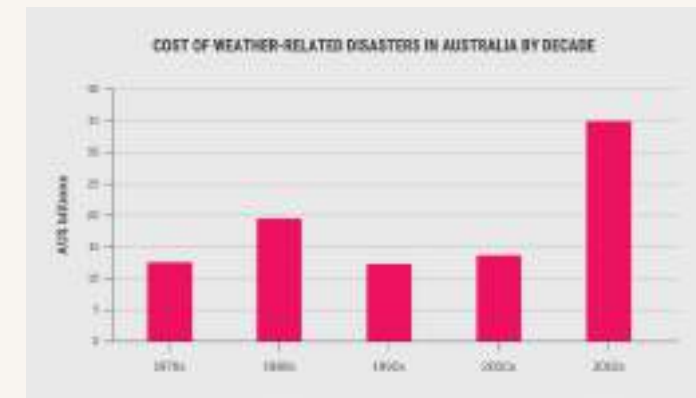
Floods and storms costs insurers \$12 billion
SMH, 30 Nov 2022

By March 2022, the costs of flooding disasters across Australia had already far outweighed the 2019/2020 bushfires. However, the numbers did not yet account for the prolonged devastation caused by subsequent flood events in Victoria in October 2022, or South Australia and the Kimberley in January 2023⁹:

*"Using actual claims costs from 197,000 claims across NSW & SE Qld, the event is estimated to have cost \$3.35 billion in insured losses. This makes the event the costliest flood in Australia's history."*¹⁰

Insurance Council of Australia

As El Niño conditions are predicted to dominate weather systems through 2023, Australia faces the renewed likelihood of extreme temperatures, searing drought, bushfires and flash-flooding, placing already fragile communities, wildlife, supply chains and food production under even greater risk.



Source: [Climate Council](#)

OUR ECONOMY

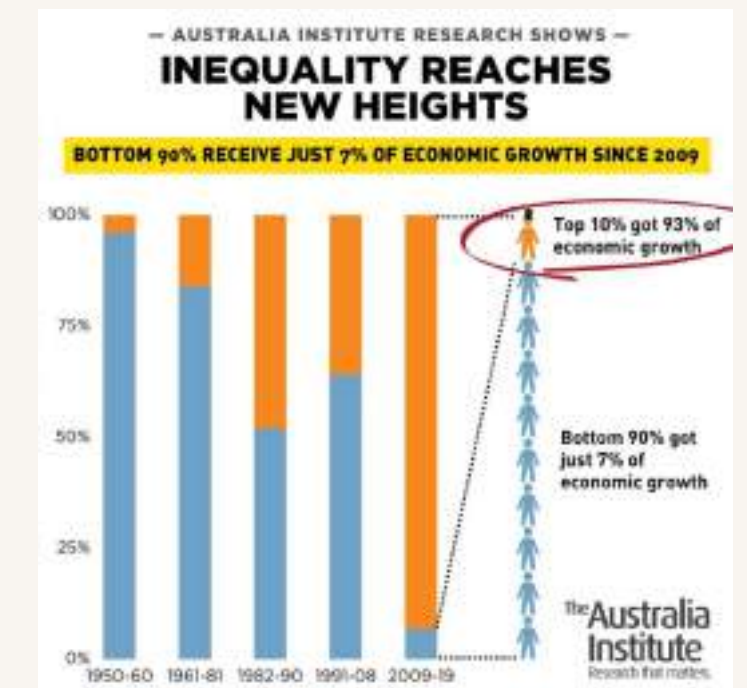
Since 2021, the story of our national economy has been dominated by stalling GDP, soaring interest rates and the associated 'cost of living crisis', primarily driven by price increases in transport, food and housing¹¹. Recent articles also warn of an impending 'mortgage cliff'¹², with one in five mortgages (~880,000) due to transition from the low fixed rates offered during the pandemic, onto higher variable rates, which Treasurer Jim Chalmers admits, "*will inflict significant pain*"¹³.

That pain is already being keenly felt across the country. New analysis found that 640,000 Australian households are experiencing housing stress¹⁴, the vast majority of these being families. In April 2023, mental health charity, Lifeline, reported seeing an 80% rise in the number of calls relating specifically to 'cost of living'¹⁵.

While Australia's GDP figures may look relatively buoyant alongside those of other developed nations¹⁶, there can be no doubt that the health of our economy increasingly fails to reflect the health and wellbeing of people and communities. Rising inequality, tracing back to post-GFC 2009, looks set to continue unabated, at least in the near term, with 90% of Australians apparently missing out on the benefits of economic growth¹⁷.

"Australia is now a global outlier in the maldistribution of gains from economic growth, falling behind the EU, US, UK, China & Canada."

The Australia Institute - Media release April 2023



Source: [The Australia Institute](#)

"This research shows that 90% of Australians are largely missing out on the benefits of economic growth... While this analysis is shocking it has become increasingly clear that the Australian economy is not working for most people."

Matt Grudnoff

Senior Economist at the Australia Institute.

7 [2022 Australian Flooding - Center for Disaster Philanthropy](#) (accessed May 2023)
 8 [Heavy rains in Australia trigger fresh round of flood evacuations | Reuters](#), 29/03/2022 (accessed May 2023)
 9 [River Murray flood 'most significant' natural disaster in SA history - InDaily](#)
 10 [Updated data shows 2022 flood was Australia's costliest - Insurance Council of Australia](#)
 11 "In the 12 months to March 2022, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased by 5.1%, the highest annual rise reported since the introduction of the GST in 2000." [Australia's cost of living - Parliament of Australia](#) (accessed May 2022)
 12 [How bad will the looming mortgage cliff be? Australia Financial Review](#), April 2023 (accessed May 2023)
 13 [Capitalism after the crises | The Monthly](#), Feb 2023 (accessed May 2023)
 14 Defined as "households with no home, or living in overcrowded or expensive rentals costing more than 30 per cent of income", from 'Quantifying Australia's unmet housing need' [UNSW City Futures Research Centre](#), Nov 2022
 15 For many, this is the first call they've made to the service. [Lifeline sees 80% rise in calls relating to cost of living - ABC News](#), May 2023 (accessed May 2023)
 16 [Why Australia - Benchmark Report - Fundamentals - Austrade](#) (accessed May 2023)
 17 [Inequality on Steroids - The Australia Institute](#), April 2023 (accessed May 2023)

OUR COUNTRY (CONT.)

In the face of all this, it appears the new Federal Labor Government is making renewed efforts to change our collective measures of success beyond GDP. In October 2022, Federal Treasurer, Jim Chalmers, committed to producing a “Measuring What Matters Statement”, due for release in 2023. At the time of writing, consultation is still underway, but early submissions have surfaced five broad themes for consideration as being important to wellbeing: **prosperous, inclusive, sustainable, cohesive and healthy**¹⁸.

“Indicators that measure broader quality of life factors should be considered in addition to, not instead of, traditional macroeconomic measures. When policy processes consider these outcomes, they facilitate more holistic discussions of the type of economy and society Australians want to build together.”

Australian Budget Paper No. 1: Statement 4
“Measuring What Matters”

“Healthy economies rely on healthy people and communities.”

Jim Chalmers
‘Capitalism after the Crisis’, The Monthly, Feb 2023

THE INDIGENOUS ‘VOICE’ TO PARLIAMENT

As prefaced by Uncle Phil Bligh (p. 6), First Australians continue to be disproportionately impacted by structural inequity, social inequality and injustice. The [Voice to Parliament](#), due for public referendum later this year, seeks to improve Aboriginal representation in decision-making.

If passed, the Voice would advise the Australian parliament and government on matters relating to the social, spiritual and economic wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people¹⁹, aiming to address the significant social and economic inequalities faced by Indigenous Australians. The proposal has gained support from a wide range of stakeholders, including Indigenous leaders, non-Indigenous Australians, and politicians from different parties but continues to face criticism, controversy and debate among communities.

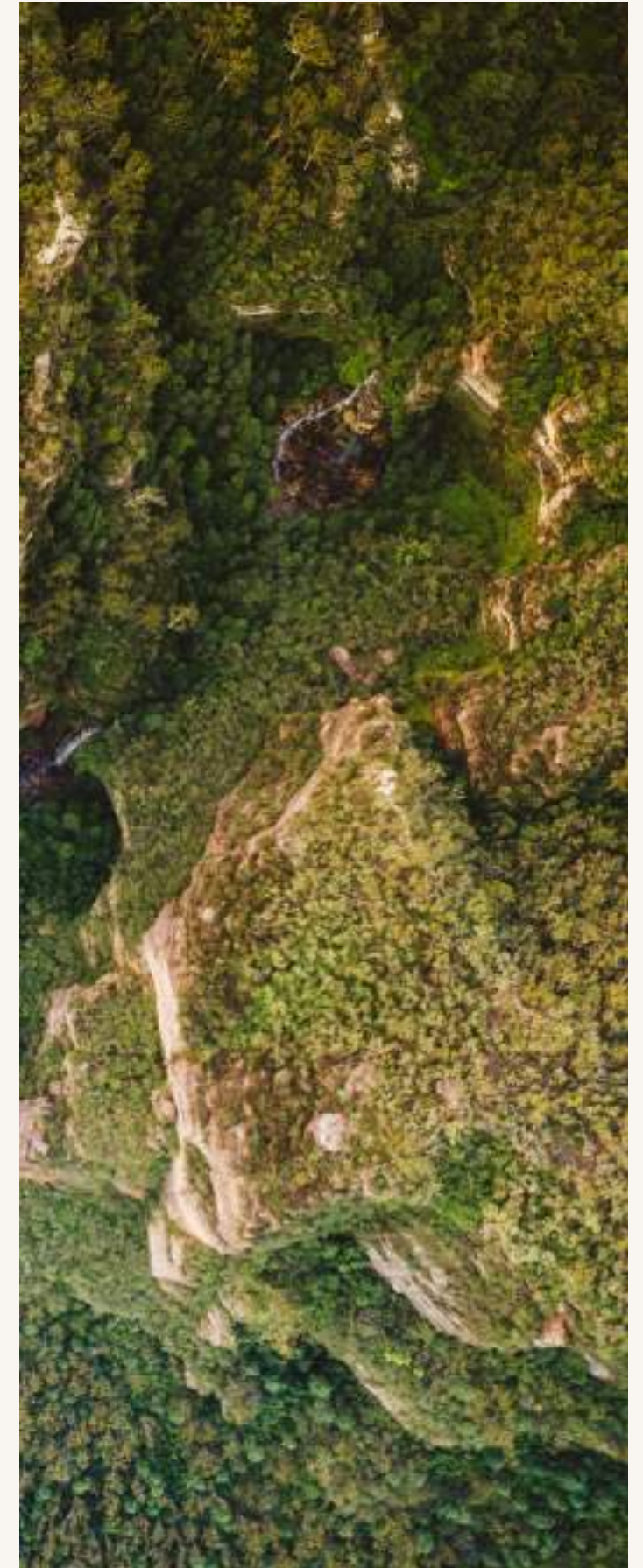
OUR ECOLOGY

Turning to our environment, the Australian Government recently committed to halt biodiversity loss and be nature-positive by 2030²⁰, committing to “reform Australia’s environmental laws to better protect, restore and manage our unique environment.” With Australia being in the inevitable position of having one of the highest extinction rates in the world²¹ there is much damage to undo. These commitments and reform cannot be implemented fast enough, and

in light of the IPCC’s warning, would appear to be incommensurate with the scale of the challenge.

Communities across Australia are rising in response to these significant challenges. Across the country, the community-led ‘**Regen Places**’ movement is expanding fast. Regen Sydney now finds itself among a constellation of 18 place-based initiatives experimenting with localised and regenerative economies across the country, alongside towns (Bendigo), cities (Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide) and regions (Mornington Peninsula).

The launch of the Regenerating Australia film and WWF’s \$2m Innovate to Regenerate Fund has also helped to strengthen the movement nationally. Innovate to Regenerate supports numerous community-led regenerative initiatives, across diverse sectors - [view initiatives here](#).



18 [Measuring what matters — second consultation process](#) | Treasury.gov.au

19 [What is the Indigenous voice to parliament, how would it work, and what happens next?](#) Guardian online, 19 April 2023 (accessed May 2023). See also: [Uluru Statement from the Heart](#)

20 [Nature Positive Plan: better for the environment, better for business](#) - DCCEEW

21 [Biodiversity conservation](#) | Australian Academy of Science, October 2021 (accessed May 2023).

OUR PLACE, GREATER SYDNEY

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY & COST OF LIVING

The aforementioned national ‘cost of living’ crisis is severely impacting residents across Sydney as inflation continues to drive up the prices of household staples, rents, energy and fuel, alongside mortgage interest rates. Despite being the ‘fourth most livable city’ in the world in 2023²², Sydney is the most expensive city to live in Australia²³, and the tenth most expensive city globally²⁴.

Housing stress and rising inflation continue to exacerbate the ‘East-West’ divide across Greater Sydney communities that we saw during the pandemic. Recent research by Business NSW reports that a single tenant now needs to earn more than \$100,000 in 82 of Sydney’s 209 postcodes to avoid housing stress²⁵. This affects the social fabric of our city in many ways, not least exacerbating shortages of key workers, as local housing becomes difficult to afford for young people, nurses, ambulance officers, police officers, firefighters, care-givers and teachers, who suffer longer commute times to get to their places of work (see article).

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

Housing, financial and heat-stress, exacerbated by the COVID-19 lockdowns, have led to a significant shift in the demographics of Sydney since Regen Sydney’s last report was published. It is estimated that approximately 86,000 people left Sydney in 2020-2022 as a result of the pandemic.

In Western Sydney, Parramatta lost up to 5% of residents as a result of internal national migration. Other areas that faced the largest absolute resident outflows were all in Sydney, including Fairfield, which lost 8,400 residents (4.3% of its population), Sydney’s inner city (7,600 residents, 3% of its population), and Canterbury Bankstown (7,000 residents, 4.8% of its population)²⁶.

Factors that influenced these moves include:

- Affordable housing
- People taking advantage of remote working
- Local employment opportunities
- Fewer young people being drawn to the cities for employment and education
- Smaller communities being more attractive during major city lockdowns
- High local amenity²⁷

These trends look set to continue over the short term.

As the strongest predictor of food insecurity,²⁸ the financial stress caused by the cost of living crisis is also impacting people’s access to adequate, nutritious and affordable food. Across Greater Sydney, food relief agencies have reported significant changes in the demographics of people seeking food relief, with an increase in the number of families and unemployed people accessing food relief services²⁹.

“Disruptions to employment and livelihoods due to pandemic lockdowns have exacerbated food insecurity as revealed in Food Bank Hunger Reports (2021) and recent analysis by the Melbourne Institute (Botha and Payne, 2022). Increasing demand for food relief was observed even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but demand for food relief increased in 2020-2022 (Food Bank, 2021; McKay et al 2019; McKay et al 2021). Those in remote and rural areas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, low-income earners, linguistically diverse groups, refugees, single parents, younger adults, the elderly, the homeless and those with a disability are more likely to experience food insecurity (Louie et al., 2022).”

Macquarie University

22 [Global Liveability Index 2023](#), accessed June 2023

23 Sydney is 48.1% higher than the cost of Adelaide which is the most affordable capital city to live in. Sydney’s also the most expensive major city for housing and utilities. It is 36 per cent more expensive than Melbourne and 52 per cent more expensive than Hobart. [Cost of living comparison: Australian cities June 2023 | Finder](#), accessed June 2023.

24 [Sydney in top 10 list of world’s most expensive cities](#)

25 [A Business NSW survey of 900 businesses found 43% of businesses identified the availability and affordability of housing as a barrier to employing workers.](#)

26 [Australia’s pandemic population shuffle revealed](#), Australian Financial Review (accessed June 2023).

27 [COVID-19’s impact on population growth: a regional renaissance as Melbourne and Sydney decline - KPMG Newsroom](#) (accessed June 2023).

28 [What explains high levels of food insecurity in Australia?](#), Melbourne Institute, 2022 (accessed June 2023)

29 [The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on emergency food relief providers across Sydney](#) | Macquarie University, 2022 (accessed June 2023)



Huge rental queues,
Source: [RealEstate](#)

OUR PLACE, GREATER SYDNEY (CONT.)

The cost of living crisis also directly affects Sydneysiders' ability to heat, cool and effectively insulate their homes, with those living further away from the coast subject to greater variations in temperature. As an 'El Niño' summer looks increasingly likely, the effects of heat stress will continue to be more strongly felt in Western Sydney communities, particularly among renters³⁰.

In Western Sydney apartments, "it is consistently hotter inside than out, with the top-floor apartment she shares with her partner hitting 46.8C on 26 December while the outdoor temperature at the time was 30C."

Cooling Common Spaces in Densifying Urban Environments, WSU & Landcom



³⁰ Apartments surveyed found to be above safe level on average nine hours a day as tenants cut back on cooling to save on energy bills. [Australian renters swelter in 'worrying indoor temperatures' of up to 40C in summer](#) | Housing | The Guardian

³¹ What is CWB? [How is community wealth building practised?](#) — The Democracy Collaborative

³² [Nature Positive Sydney](#), Committee for Sydney, Feb 2023

THINGS TO CELEBRATE

Sydney's current pressures further exacerbate equality, environmental and housing issues. Encouragingly, a number of local and city-wide initiatives have emerged in the last 12 months, which seek to bring a holistic lens to city-wide challenges. For example:

Community Wealth Building policy is under development³¹ | City of Sydney

"The Community Wealth Building approach is seeking to find a balance between local economic and community development and our city's national and global role. It is trying to strengthen elements of our local economy and community and build capacity and capability in targeted economic sectors. At the same time, we will continue to embrace an open and global economy that thrives on cross-border collaboration, trade, talent and knowledge exchange."

Nature Positive Sydney: Valuing Sydney's Living Infrastructure | Committee for Sydney

*"Nature-positive' is the term used to describe a world where nature – species and ecosystems – are being restored and regenerated rather than declining. Research shows nature-positive solutions can help cities rebuild in a healthier and more resilient way while creating opportunities for social and economic development."*³²

"Sydney Harbour itself has more fish species (588) than are known to occur in the entire Mediterranean Sea, and is considered the most biologically diverse harbour in the world."

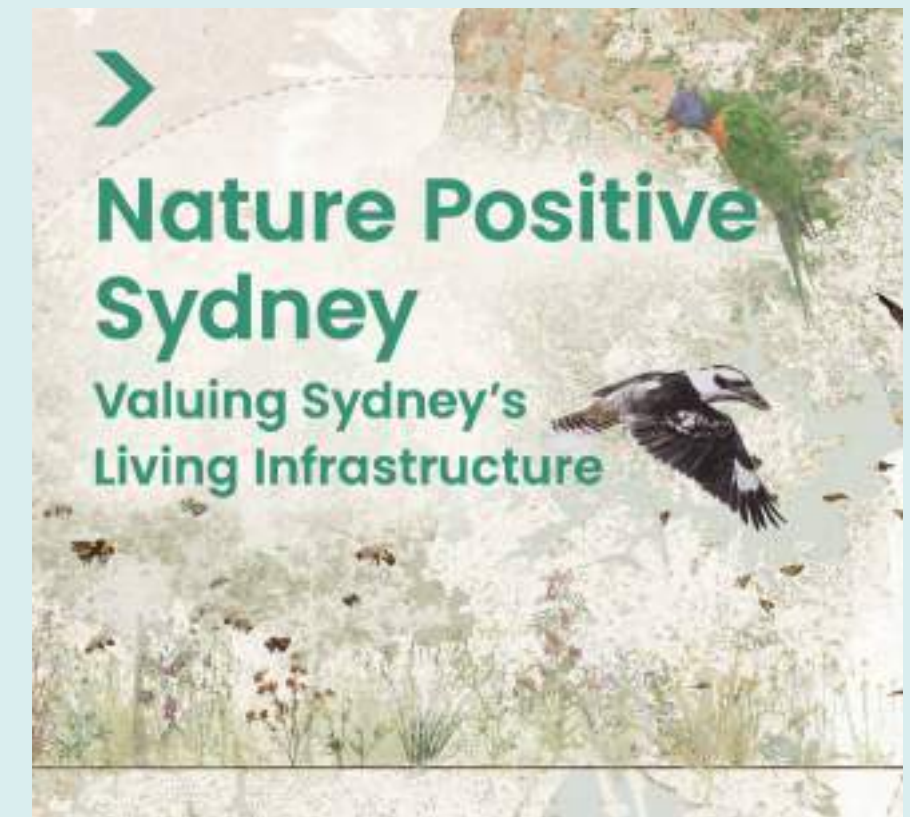
"One of the key benefits of investing in environmental restoration through growing living infrastructure is that it avoids this potential for breakdown of social and economic structures."

Me-Mel - formerly known as Goat Island - is in the process of being returned to First Nations community.

NSW government takes first step to returning Me-Mel/Goat Island to Indigenous community | ABC News

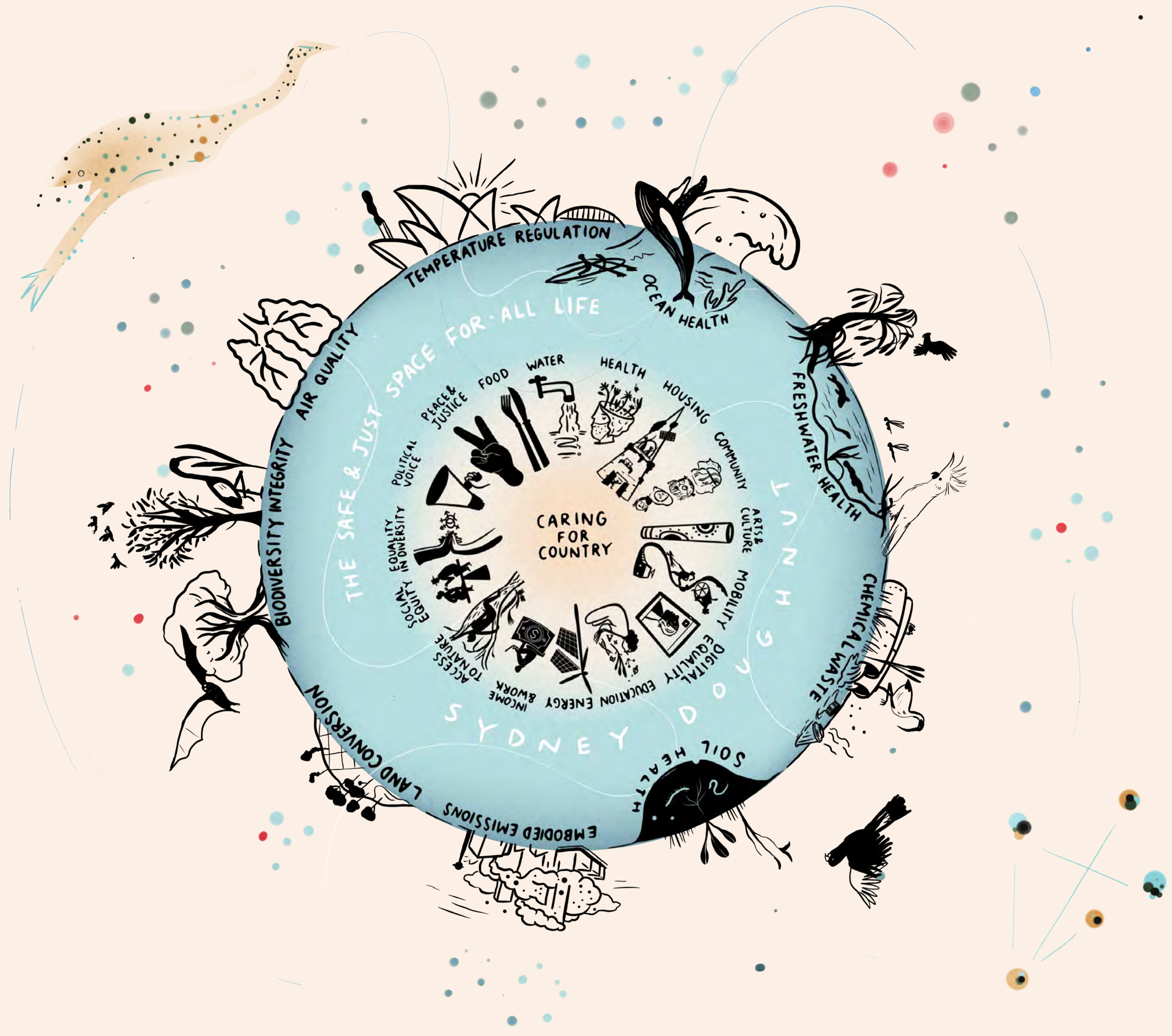
"Me-Mel is significant in the creation story Boora Birra, where the great eel spirit created the watercourses known today as Sydney Harbour."

"Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council deputy chair Yvonne Weldon said Me-Mel's transfer was a long time coming. 'It's so long overdue, it's so important for us to be able to get this right,' Ms Weldon said. 'Me-Mel is a place where we can go to be within our culture, pass culture on to our younger generations and share with other people.'"



A New Compass

Sketching a Sydney Doughnut

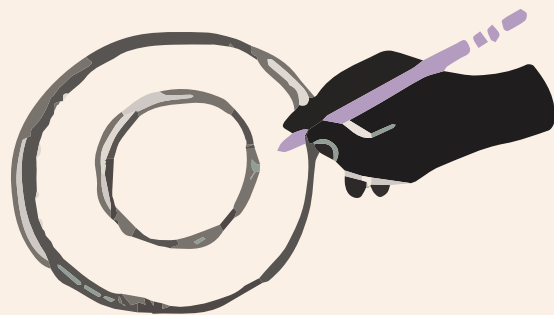


A SYDNEY DOUGHNUT

What do you see? The value of a sketch is that it is not a finished work, but an invitation: a way of evolving ideas and making decisions to keep rolling forward.

As part of our research, community workshops and stakeholder roundtables held through this body of work, we explored the ways that the Doughnut model might be localised in Greater Sydney. We discovered a high level of support for its potential to act as a visionary 'compass' to align and coalesce the diverse range of regenerative initiatives already underway, as well as those yet to come.

This 'first sketch' has evolved from the findings from the community workshops and stakeholder roundtables. It augments Kate Raworth's original doughnut framework with additional dimensions that reflect the most pertinent social (inner ring) and ecological (outer ring) dynamics at play in our city. These additional dimensions are 'Access to Nature', 'Arts & Culture' and 'Digital Equity' - explore them further on page 27.



REFRAMING THE ECOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS

The original Doughnut framework (see page 28) contains dimensions that relate to Earth system processes that sustain life. These planetary boundaries cannot be effectively downscaled to local or city scales³³. With that in mind, this Sydney Doughnut contains ecological dimensions relevant to the realisation of thriving local ecosystems.

These amended ecological dimensions are still heavily influenced by the planetary boundaries framework, as well as drawing from

dimensions in the *Doughnut Unrolled* framework - and aim to provide framings that might more effectively guide us at the city scale. These reframings of the ecological dimensions help us work with what we can see, sense, touch and quantify here in Sydney. We acknowledge that the health and vitality of our living systems here, play a part in determining the health and vitality of ecosystems across our shared planet.

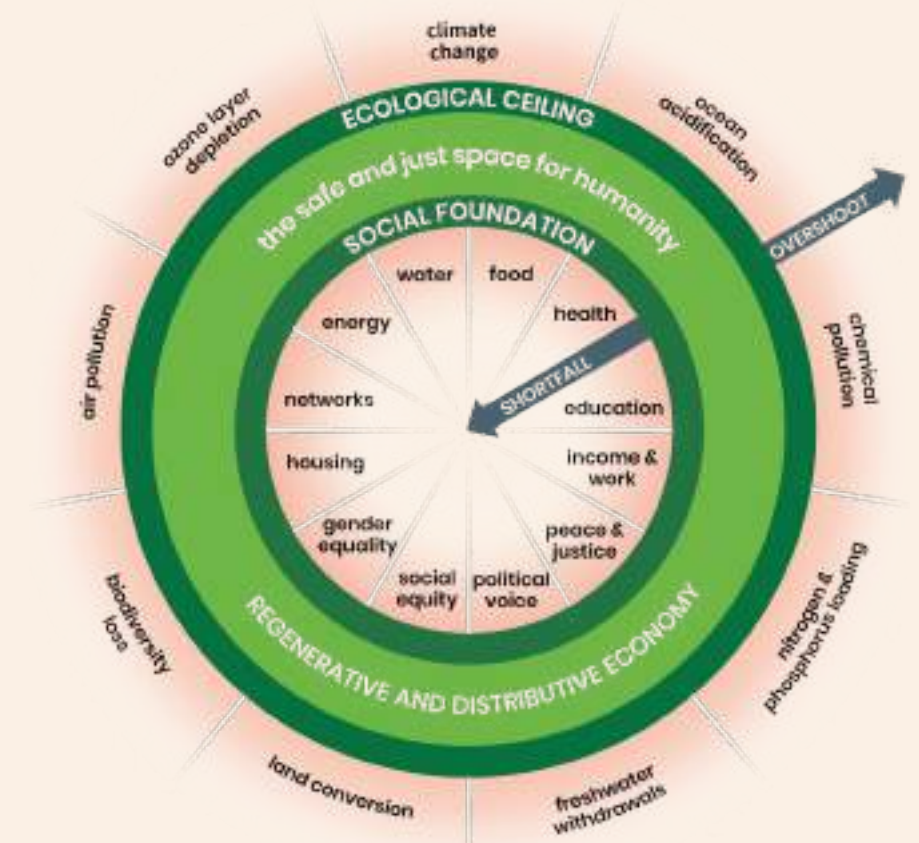
While our Sydney Doughnut is intimately connected to the city scale, it also seeks to complement action across other scales, e.g. empowering the aspirations of local neighbourhoods, and addressing the impacts of consumption felt globally. See page 29 for more detail.

DEPICTING THE CONNECTING FIBRE

In localising and adapting the Doughnut model to Sydney, we have also included beautiful iconography that represents the qualities of our place. Some other elements captured in the Sydney Doughnut are:

- Caring for Country - a central value system for custodianship of all life in our city; and in walking with First Peoples;
- Interconnectedness - threads between the social and ecological layers represent the inseparability of humans and the living world;
- Starry sky - the emu and southern cross symbolise the spiritual aspects of regeneration, and our place in deep time.

Note: this is a provocation & invitation - the first sketch of 'a' Sydney Doughnut, not 'the' Sydney Doughnut. Sydney is a living system that changes and evolves over time, so too will this Doughnut as we develop the Regen Sydney community and our collective vision.



33 Will Steffen et al. (2015) - *Planetary boundaries: Guiding human development on a changing planet*

SYDNEY DOUGHNUT: SOCIAL FABRIC



FOOD

Food is a daily essential for a healthy life, which is why all people need to have secure access to sufficient, affordable, safe and nutritious food. There is a sizable food inequity across Sydney's regions which is exacerbated by the cost of living crisis. Our dominant food production and distribution methods lead to land degradation, food wastage and preventable diet-related health issues.



WATER

Water is essential for drinking, cooking, and washing, as well as for food production. Even though most Australians take these essentials for granted, it is important to remember Australia is a water scarce country. Inflows into dams are becoming more erratic, exacerbated by longer periods of drought when Sydney's water storage levels are drastically reduced. It is important to treat water as the precious resource it is, including by normalising water recycling systems. Water holds significant social and spiritual meanings to First Nations people.



HEALTH

Health services provide people with essential care and treatment for illness and injury, from birth to death as well as significantly preventing and reducing the incidence of disease. While the health system we have in Sydney (and Australia more broadly) is widely considered excellent, health professionals and carers are calling out for better support. Some areas requiring more focus include holistic and Indigenous healing practices, mental health, dental, as well as drug and alcohol abuse rehabilitation services.



HOUSING

Sustainable and resilient homes and settlements are foundational for creating thriving communities, and for reducing the risks that people face from natural disasters and climate change. Sydney currently faces a deep and complex housing crisis along with much of the rest of the country, greatly exacerbated by the cost of living crisis. Housing ownership and rental are out of reach for many in our communities.



COMMUNITY

Having a sense of belonging in communities, whether based on location or around interests is essential for people to thrive. Social connection and the support it brings is fundamental to most people's sense of wellbeing. It helps build the social cohesion needed to create inclusive and mutually respectful societies, and ensures that people feel they have others to turn to in times of difficulty.



ARTS & CULTURE

Sydney has a rich and dynamic culture made up of the ancient Dreaming of our First Nations people, and the subsequent Anglo and multicultural influences that contribute to the melting pot that is our city. Diverse cultural practices and events bring music, art and dance to everyday life, giving people pride in their communities and enabling them to express and celebrate their values and heritage. Through creativity, traditions and rituals the people of Sydney connect with one another, as well as with the rest of the living world.



MOBILITY

Access to affordable, reliable, equitable mobility networks is vital to the wellbeing of our communities and its people. Transport opens up opportunities in life, connecting people to essential services, employment, leisure activities and communities across the regions of Sydney. While Sydney has advanced road, rail and bus infrastructure, these services are not located equally. Additionally our city could greatly improve support for active transport such as walking or cycling through both better planning and infrastructure.



DIGITAL EQUITY

Affordable access to the Internet and communications networks are crucial in complex modern cities. These often provide people with critical access to information and knowledge, including for education and public services, online banking, employment opportunities and new forms of organising. Factors such as age, ability and language can be barriers to accessing digital services.



EDUCATION

Education is foundational to every person's ability to participate in society and to take up opportunities throughout their life. The people of Sydney should have fair access to foster their lifelong learning. While overall our education system is one of the best in the world, it varies across Sydney's regions and is affected by structural and finance inequalities.



ENERGY

Access to clean, affordable energy services for lighting, warmth and cooking are essential for life. But our need for energy goes far beyond these basic needs, and electricity has become a fundamental requirement for modern life. We enjoy a relatively stable and accessible supply of both electricity and gas, though the energy consumption and associated carbon footprints vary greatly across Sydney's regions. Sydney is still heavily reliant on fossil fuels, although renewable energy is increasingly more cost effective. As fossil fuels are phased out at an accelerating rate, it is important that workers are fairly re-skilled into alternate industries.



INCOME & WORK

Decent work and adequate income are vital foundations for the livelihoods of all. People require work that is safe and meaningful, with fair pay and decent working conditions. Work should provide enough income to enable households to meet at least their basic needs and wants. Other sources of income – such as welfare payments, cash transfers and remittances – are critical for many, especially in the context of a cost of living crisis and burgeoning wealth inequality.



ACCESS TO NATURE

Equitable access to nature reserves and waterways is essential to the wellbeing of communities. Sydney is famous for its stunning harbour, beaches, national parks and wildlife, though not equally accessible across its regions. The last few years has seen an increased implementation of green corridors and swimmable waterways which not only supports our health and wellbeing but also improves wildlife habitats and reduces climate change induced heat stress.



SOCIAL EQUITY

The provision of equal opportunity, and the reduction of income and wealth inequalities are central to the Australian ethos of a 'fair go'. People living in more equal societies tend to be healthier, safer, and more trusting compared to those in less equal societies. Income and wealth inequality is rising across Australia, the impacts of which intersect with inequalities of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, language, ability and location.



EQUALITY IN DIVERSITY

Ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their life is essential to a just Sydney - including through equal access to education, health care, decent work and representation in political and economic decision-making processes. This is regardless of differences in ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, language, ability and location. There is a long way to go in addressing inequalities across these characteristics, including but not limited to structural racism, the gender pay gap, gender-based and family violence, homophobia and transphobia.



POLITICAL VOICE

Ensuring all people have voice in, and influence over, decisions that affect their lives is vital to effective governance. Democratic institutions, freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media, all tend to support more inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making in public life. Media has a responsibility to fairly represent the diverse voices of Sydney to foster the healthy functioning of our democracy. Monopolisation of media can lead to polarisation and simplification of discourse, especially in this era of fake news and generative AI.



PEACE & JUSTICE

Personal security, government accountability, and access to justice for all, including nature, are essential for peaceful and just societies. This allows people to live in community, free from fear and exploitation. Additionally this tackles corruption in business and politics by building effective and accountable institutions at all levels. It is critical to the provision of peace and justice that policing is fairly distributed across the regions of Sydney and its cultural groups.

SYDNEY DOUGHNUT: ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS



AIR QUALITY

Plants and their microorganisms immobilise, convert or remove airborne contaminants, improving air quality. Sydney experiences high aerosol emissions – including bushfire smoke, dust and gases – which is damaging to living organisms, and can significantly alter regional rainfall patterns. Recent decades have also shown that with concerted collaborative effort the shared issue of ozone layer depletion can be reversed.



EMBODIED EMISSIONS

Embodied emissions refer to the greenhouse gases that have been released into the atmosphere through human production and consumption practices; as well as on the other hand those greenhouse gases that are drawn down and prevented from being released into the atmosphere. Greenhouse gases are used as building blocks for biomass and are stored in natural landscapes, including in trees, soil and aquatic plants. Urban landscapes and the built environment can also draw down and hold carbon, whilst minimising the amount released during manufacturing processes. When greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide are released into the atmosphere, they amplify Earth's natural greenhouse effect, resulting in global heating.



OCEAN HEALTH

Ocean health is critical for our climatic systems. Around one quarter of carbon dioxide emissions are absorbed by the ocean, where they form carbonic acid and decreases the pH of the surface water. Not only is the ocean warming, which raises sea levels, but the increasing acidity makes it hard for organisms such as corals, shellfish and plankton to grow and survive, thus endangering the ocean ecosystem and its food chain. On top of this, Sydney's oceans also face contamination from sewage overflow (containing sediment, debris, viruses and bacteria) after heavy rainfall and floods, as well as from microplastics.



BIODIVERSITY INTEGRITY

The various natural landscapes throughout Sydney - including beaches, ocean, coastal bushland, river catchments, swamps, plains and mountain bushland - all provide rich habitats for a multitude of plant, animal and insect species. In a healthy and thriving state, they continually create conditions conducive to life. Deforestation and other forms of habitat destruction cause a decline in the number, variety and inter-connectedness of species, damaging the health and integrity of ecosystems.



FRESHWATER HEALTH

In healthy ecosystems water filters down through the soil, interacting with plants and organisms, and is cleaned in the process. Wetlands and riversides are important for managing surface runoff, stormwater and overflow from streams and rivers. Clean freshwater is essential for life and is widely used by agriculture, industry and households. However, excessive withdrawals of water - for agricultural, industrial or household use - can impair or even dry up lakes, rivers and aquifers, damaging ecosystems and altering the hydrological cycle and climate. Additionally, reactive nitrogen and phosphorus as widely used in agricultural fertilisers are hugely detrimental, as excess runoff causes algal blooms that can be toxic and kill off other aquatic life by starving the water of oxygen.



SOIL HEALTH

Soil health plays a vital role in allowing life to regenerate. Healthy soil provides ecosystem services, retains water and nutrients, enables plants to grow (supplying water, nutrients and oxygen), resists landscape erosion and acts as a buffer in the landscape. Soil is populated by soil biota which are essential for decomposing and recycling dead matter - contributing to carbon, water and nutrient cycles. It facilitates organisms, water and nutrients to move within it, and its biodiversity helps to prevent soil erosion. Sustaining native vegetation and food production without use of reactive fertilisers can contribute to both soil and freshwater health, whilst ensuring long-term ecosystemic integrity.



CHEMICAL WASTE

When plastics and toxic compounds - such as synthetic organic pollutants and heavy metals - are released into the biosphere they can persist for a very long time, with effects that may be irreversible. Accumulating in the bodies of birds and mammals (including humans), they reduce fertility and endanger ecosystems on land and in the oceans. While Sydney is a complex modern city which relies on industrialised processes that can create many of these harmful compounds, the development of a circular economy offers an approach to combat such waste.



LAND CONVERSION

Converting land for human use – such as turning forests and wetlands into cities, farmland and highways – depletes Earth's carbon sinks, destroys rich wildlife habitats, and undermines the land's role in continually cycling water, nitrogen and phosphorus. In the peri-urban regions of Sydney, a growing population, new development, urban sprawl and land clearing for intensive agriculture pose threats to remaining natural ecosystems.



TEMPERATURE REGULATION

Plants in bushland and urban environments intercept sunlight, keeping radiant heat from directly hitting the ground. They release moisture and significantly cool the air in surrounding areas. Areas of Western Sydney in particular are increasingly experiencing temperature abnormalities due to human-induced global heating. Our inland river arteries also play a role in regulating temperature.

ROLLING THE DOUGHNUT AT MULTIPLE SCALES

CITY (REGIONAL) SCALE

Convening the movement at the city-scale centres on mapping regenerative endeavours, fostering strategic collaborations, actively seeking out contribution from underrepresented communities, building relationships with First Nations Elders and community leaders and delivering positive outcomes through alliances, events and projects that enable the complex city ecosystem to dream of a new story for itself.

The region of Greater Sydney as a city itself is a vast area made of diverse potential across various localities. Downscaling the Doughnut model to the city-scale aims to catalyse greater visibility and momentum for regenerative initiatives across other scales³⁴. In doing so, deeper and broader alliances can surface to strengthen neighbourhood activations as well as to respond to Sydney's global responsibilities.

NEIGHBOURHOOD (LOCAL) SCALE

“It could be that the neighbourhood, not the individual, is the essential unit of social change. If you're trying to improve lives, maybe you have to think about changing many elements of a single neighbourhood, in a systematic way, at a steady pace.”

David Brooks, quoted by Civic Square

Coming together in our local communities allows us to share stories of struggle and hope with our neighbours and enjoy the deep sense of connection and camaraderie that happens at the street level of our lives.

“The idea of what the neighbourhood means to us - our homes, streets and wider place - is where we both have most agency and most viscerally feel the results of global system collapse, therefore making it an incredibly important unit of change through which people can be at the forefront of their own safe and just climate transitions.”

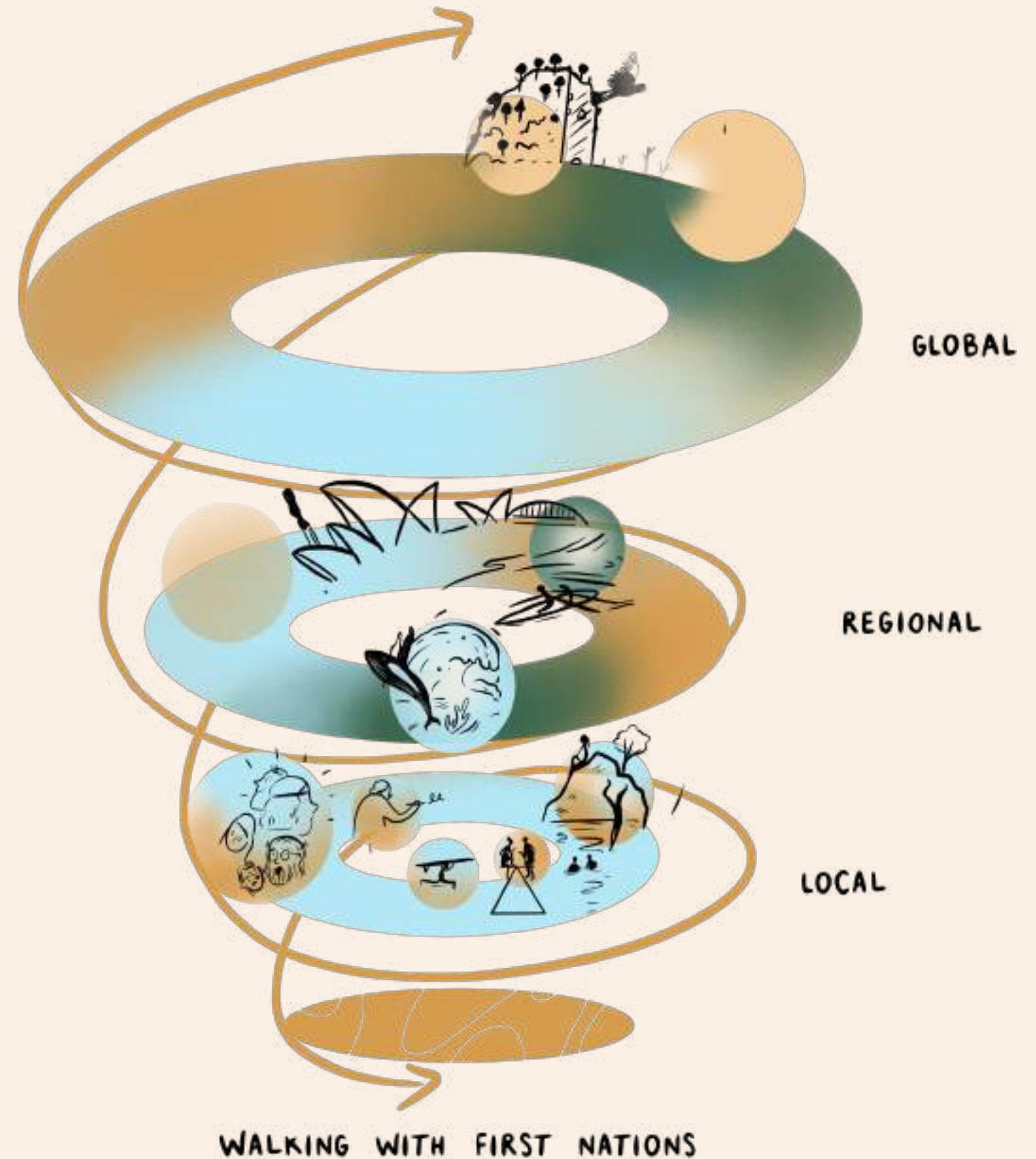
Civic Square, Birmingham UK

GLOBAL SCALE

As a global city, with global responsibilities, the Doughnut can help us to understand the impacts of Sydney's economy, consumption footprint and supply chains on people and places in other parts of our shared planet.

The indicators and alliances Regen Sydney will develop to strengthen our social fabric and ecological systems can be used to drive better policy making and regulation, while stepping up our global responsibilities.

Rolling our Sydney Doughnut, we can take our place among other Doughnut-friendly cities worldwide. Exciting new possibilities and adventures are made possible through the intersecting and interconnecting of the many feedback loops and currents of the global movement.



34 Rachel A. Turner & Jane Wills (2022) - [Downscaling doughnut economics for sustainability governance](#)



Our Approach

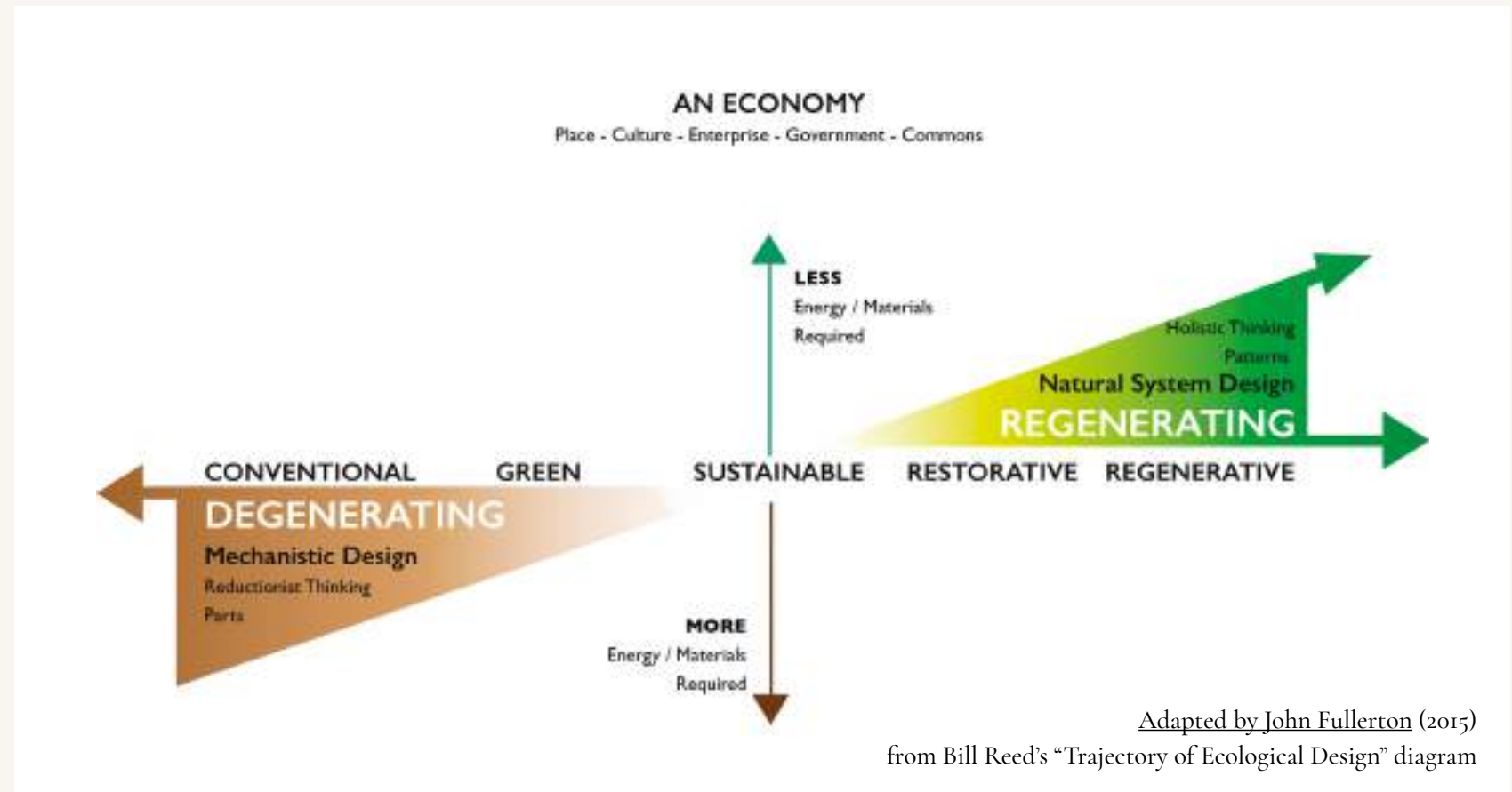
REGENERATIVE ECONOMICS

A regenerative economy goes beyond the concept of sustainability - of being '100% less bad' than a conventional economy. As depicted in the diagram right, a regenerative economy takes a systemic view, with humans playing a reciprocal role in the web of life.

Efforts to consciously design regenerative economies are expanding rapidly in Australia. These track rapidly rising global interest in shifting economic development from a focus on sustainability to regeneration, a trajectory observable from the World Economic Forum in Davos through to Indigenous communities.

“A regenerative economy works to realize the potential and grow the wealth generating capacity of every living entity it touches.”

Carol Sanford and Ben Haggard,
Regenerative Economy Collaborative



DOUGHNUT ECONOMICS

Doughnut Economics is the catalyst that has kickstarted our collective dialogue. It is an engaging, simple-to-understand framework that places the economy firmly in the context of our social fabric and ecological systems. The model encompasses a range of complementary approaches, and encourages bridge-building across sectors and siloes, a critical first step in system-wide transformation.

Regen Sydney has drawn heavily from the [Doughnut Unrolled](#) and [City Portrait](#) methodologies to convene our collaborative events - particularly the latest series of workshops and roundtables.

These two methodologies build upon the theoretical and conceptual foundations of regenerative economics and Doughnut Economics to create engaging methods for tangible application on the ground. They are invaluable in our attempts to downscale the Doughnut Economic model to the city-scale in a vision-led, holistic and life-centred way.

“It’s a radically new compass for guiding humanity this century. And it points towards a future that can provide for every person’s needs while safeguarding the living world on which we all depend.”

Kate Raworth, Doughnut Economics



SYSTEMIC INNOVATION

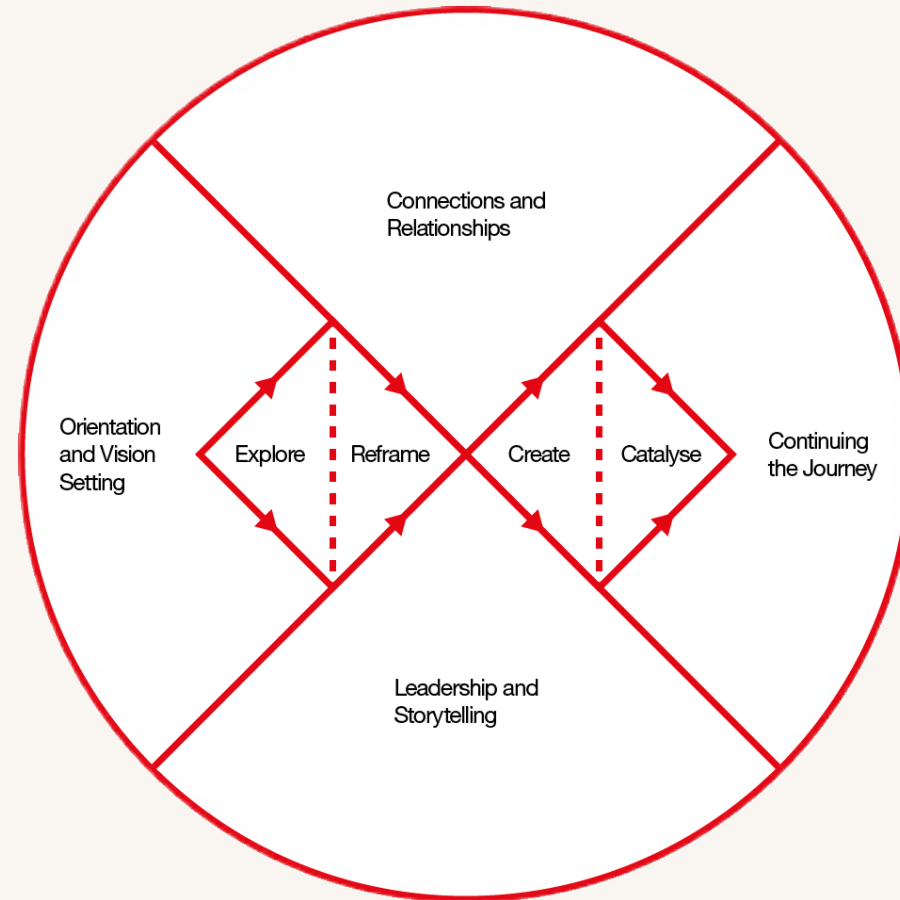
SYSTEMIC DESIGN

Systemic Design approaches including that of Transition Design have provided us with processes with which to convene multi-stakeholder forums as well as the network more broadly. These methods strive for collaboration to be deeply relational and grounded in local context, whilst fostering the creative emergence needed for radical innovation.

Regen Sydney has used such methods to surface collective visions of desirable futures, novel stakeholder alliances, structural leverage points and the long-term paradigm shifts required.

Systems are complex, dynamic, unpredictable, connected at multiple levels, and emergent. They can't be controlled in the sense that typical causal logic would suggest. However, we can intervene at leverage points that have greater power to influence change, or by purposefully creating new systems to transform situations for the better.

Design Council, UK - System-Shifting Design



Design Council, UK - System-Shifting Design

ROLES IN SYSTEM CHANGE

System innovation involves a much wider cast of more diverse characters than the more traditional innovation programmes run within organisations. New systems are made by a diverse constellation of people whether they are investors, politicians, innovators, regulators, suppliers or consumers, working inside or outside the system.

Charles Leadbeater & Jennie Winhall
Building Better Systems

Some of the key roles needed to enable systems change³⁶:

Entrepreneurs create transformative ventures which challenge the existing system and open the way to a new different system. They are the pioneers marking out the territory of the new system.

Insider-outsiders help to open up the existing system to new ideas, to help different system to emerge from within the shell of the old one. They have access to both the old and emerging systems.

Convenors bring together insiders, outsiders and other collaborators to create a shared agenda for change. Organisations that seek to play this role must be committed to changing a system and also command the credibility to bring together actors from every level of the system, from the grassroots to senior politicians.

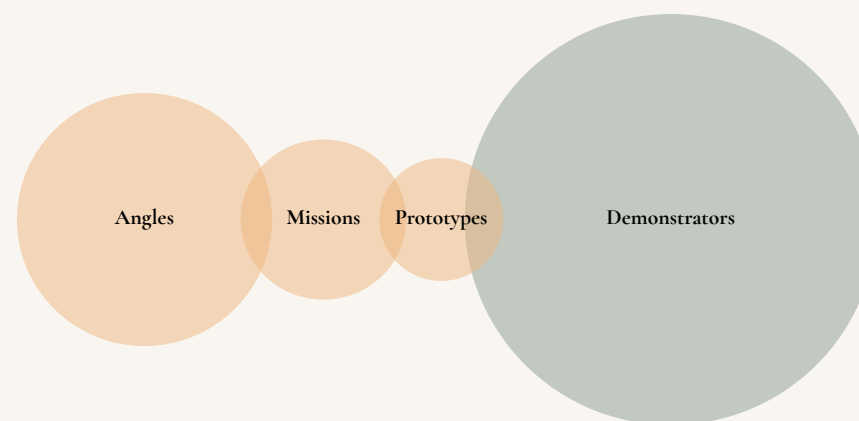
Commissioners redirect resources to the new system and create the authorising environment in which it can grow to become legitimate.

Historians open up the history of why the system takes the form it does. They show the system is not a fact of nature but the accumulation of a long chain of collective, creative, political and design decisions, taken in context, which shaped its formation and evolution.

Visionaries articulate a picture of future possibility, one which could be radically different. They make it possible to imagine stepping into a quite different world, in which systems work in quite different ways. Often systemic innovation is initiated by people with a radical vision.

MISSION-ORIENTED INNOVATION

Mission-Oriented Innovation³⁵ advocates for portfolios of connected projects that build on a foundation of unusual alliances, a guiding North Star vision and participatory processes. This model - developed by Mariana Mazzucato and adapted by Dan Hill - has been invaluable in helping us to frame our broader strategy.



Dan Hill - A participative adaption of Mazzucato's model

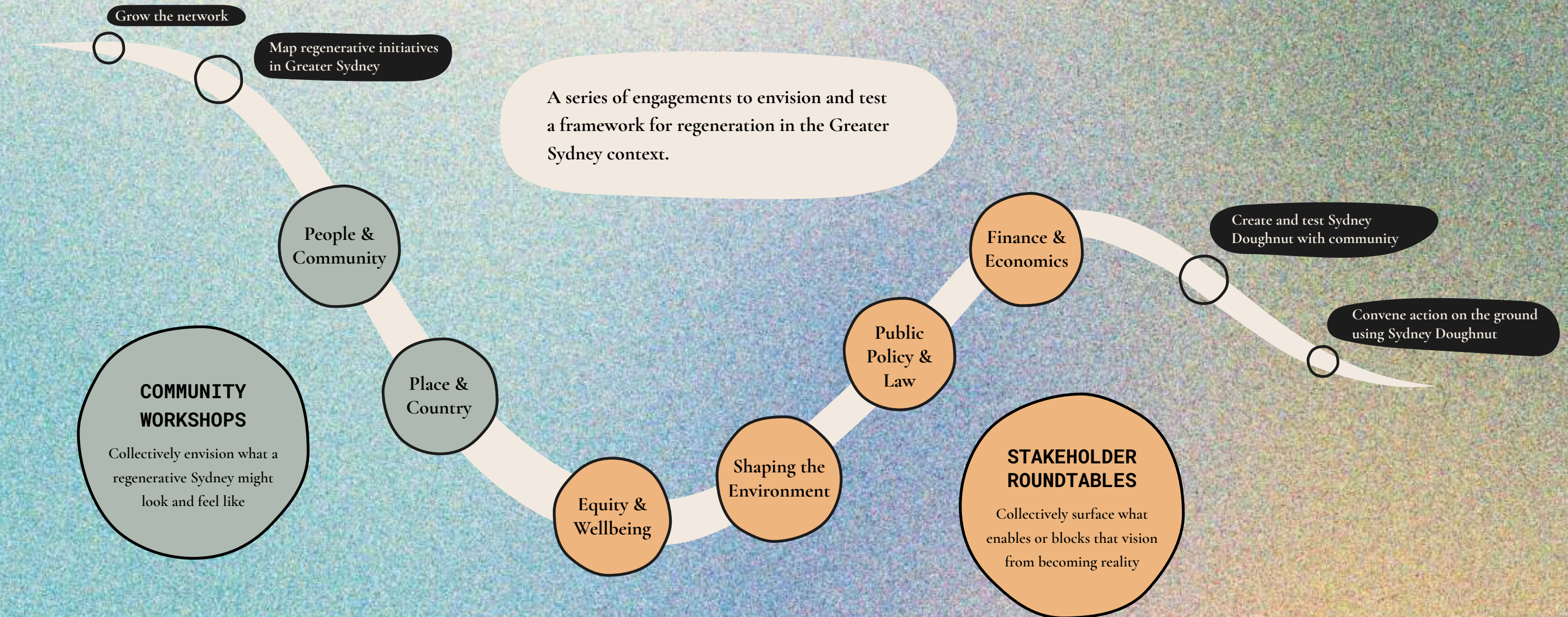
35 Dan Hill (2022) - *Designing Missions*

36 Drawn from Charles Leadbeater & Jennie Winhall (2020), *Building Better Systems*, page 40

PHASES OF ENGAGEMENT

Regen Sydney has been strategically convening the conversations and actions required to grow the movement for a regenerative Sydney.

We began with visioning events and background research in 2021, then in late 2022 we conducted a series of community workshops and stakeholder roundtables - to understand what a regenerative Sydney could look and feel like, and what needs to happen to bring this alive.





Community Workshops

INTRODUCTION

The community workshops built upon our initial research drawing out key vision and strategy documents from across Greater Sydney. The aspirations held by citizens and communities through those documents has helped to guide these workshops. This was a series of two workshops which kickstarted our first hand research through a deeply collaborative process.

WORKSHOP FORMAT

We used the Four Lenses of the City Portrait framework, developed by the Doughnut Economics Action Lab (DEAL) in their Doughnut Unrolled program³⁷. These lenses were further filtered by asking:

'How can the people of our city be more healthy, connected, empowered and enabled?'

'How can Sydney be as generous and resilient as its natural ecosystems?'

The first workshop was focused on People & Community, while the second workshop was looking at Place & Country. Largely, there was a focus on social aspects in the first workshop and a greater ecological focus in the second.

WHO PARTICIPATED?

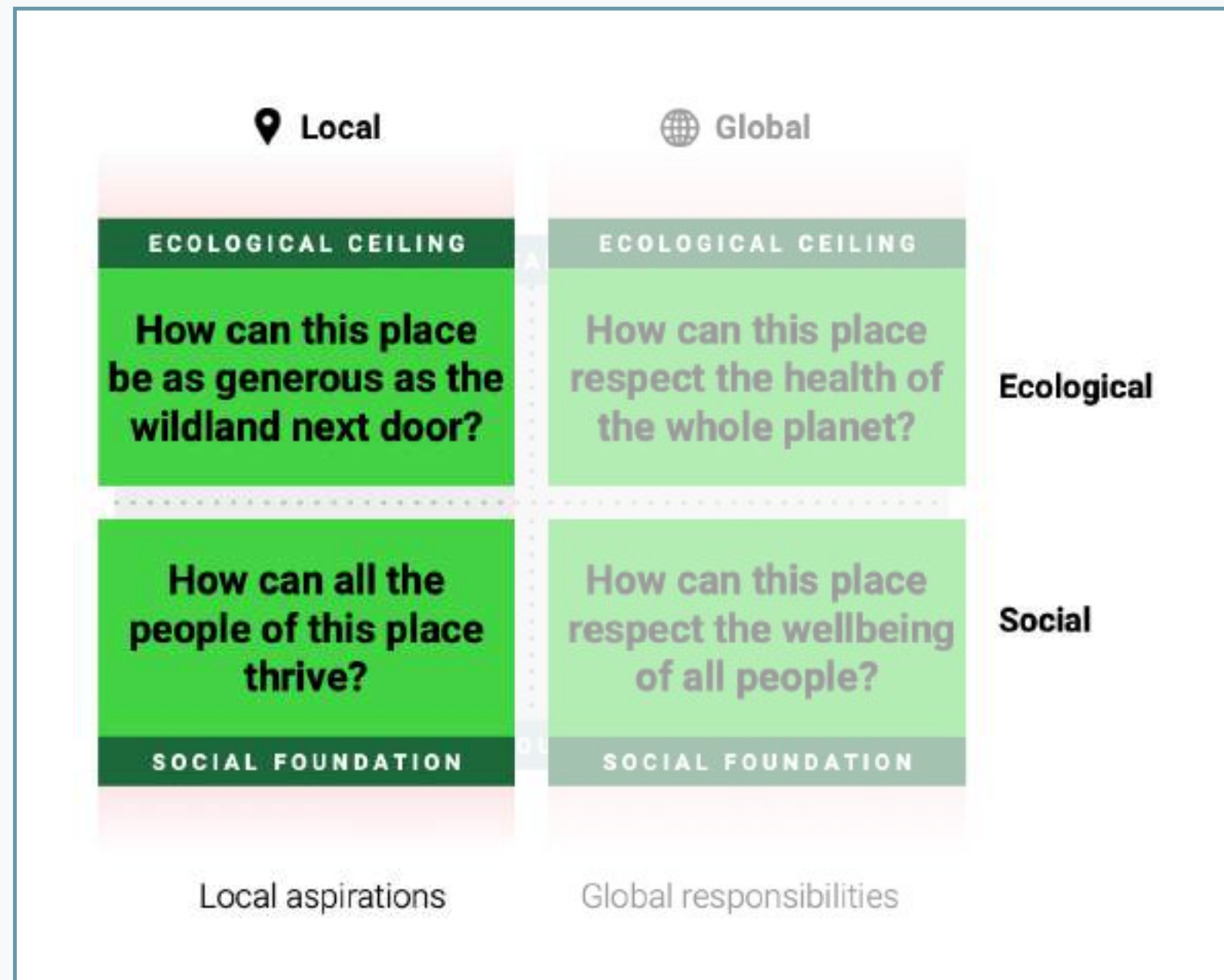
There were 60 participants across the two workshops, plus 12 core team members and facilitators. The participants came from a diverse spread of professional backgrounds including local government, social work, architecture, education and many more.

During the workshops, participants were asked to discuss and creatively elicit what they thought could make for a thriving community and ecology, and importantly, what is uniquely Sydney?

WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

Through an extensive process of deep listening and synthesis, we were able to reflect the values, aspirations and concerns of our community in vision statements and a first sketch of a Sydney Doughnut.

While the community workshops we held were focused on the two local scale quadrants (see image below) participants still made consideration of global impacts - both social and ecological - in their explorations. There is much more work left to be done in understanding and responding to global impacts at the city-scale.



37 [Creating City Portraits](#), Doughnut Economics Action Lab (Accessed May 2023)

WORKSHOP 1: PEOPLE & COMMUNITY

The first community workshop explored the theme of 'People & Community' through the lenses of Sydney as a healthy, connected, enabled and empowered city.

We asked participants to

- Think aspirationally about what's possible here in this place - what does thriving mean to us in Sydney?
- Consider whose voices are not being heard;
- Bring their lived experiences into the discussion.

Through this workshop, participants tended to:

- Orient themselves around the commons and collective impact - striving to include ecosystems in their collaborative consciousness;

- Draw out aspects of diversity in its many forms - whether that was in explicitly referencing the many geographies, many cultures, many demographics, as well as many ways of connecting to one another and place;
- Consider our city as a place of many edges for cross pollination - along with the challenges that come with this;
- Attempt to shift perspectives from passive to active - framings included living cultures, living democracy and putting sovereignty and care into practice.

Despite the social focus in the workshop, there were plenty of instances where participants considered ecological interconnections.



A HEALTHY SYDNEY

THEME-LEVEL INSIGHTS

Our workshop began with an exploration of themes from the social foundation (inner ring) of the Doughnut, in this case, an exploration of Sydney as a healthy city. We asked a series of questions and invited both written and verbal contributions. Our questions were:

- When do you experience Sydney as a healthy city?
- How does it feel to live in a healthy Sydney?
- What challenges does Sydney face in being a healthy city?

BALANCED SAFE SPIRIT GROUNDED
 NOURISHED ENERGISED JOY PEACEFUL
 RELAXED CONNECTED

A healthy Sydney is dependent upon

- A temperate climate - access to temperate spaces (e.g. tree cover)
- People being safely housed
- Connection to place - First Nations (people, culture, stories, knowledge, practices, etc)
- Improved walkability (walkable city), connected cycleways, more public transport and less cars
- Inclusion - activities people can enjoy to make a positive contribution to the city & community
- Thriving arts, music and cultural spaces where young people and people from diverse backgrounds feel safe to express themselves
- Access to healthy and local food
- Long lasting relationships between the city and the food-growing regions
- Equitable access to nature, health & education
- Open spaces and wildlife corridors - including quiet spaces, community garden, tall trees and bush areas
- No rubbish; 'no waste' culture - seeing waste as a resource
- Clean air

A healthy Sydney is challenged by

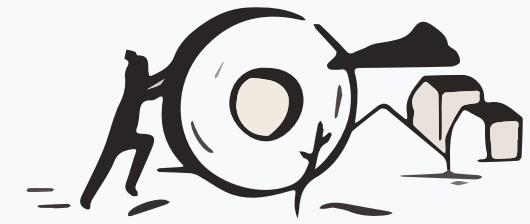
- Declining mental health & rise in anxiety, especially among youth and disadvantaged communities
- Social disadvantage, domestic violence, and rising inequality
- Lack of truth-telling about the modern city's origins
- Lack of safe spaces for people to experience safety
- Leaping from crisis-to-crisis
- Cost of living and housing; Time, income and work pressure
- Overcrowding, density of built environment
- Lack of attractive walking routes and nature, particularly in Western Parklands City
- Rising temperatures and declining tree canopies
- Workplaces are often far from living places
- Uneven access to nature, education and health systems
- A city designed for property developers before citizens

A HEALTHY SYDNEY

DIMENSION-LEVEL INSIGHTS

We then took a deep-dive into the four elements of what makes a healthy city. In this part of the workshop we asked:

- What is the role of each dimension (food, water, health, housing) in creating a healthy Sydney?
- What is your vision for each dimension (food, water, health, housing) in creating a healthy Sydney?



The role of food	The role of water	The role of health	The role of housing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nourishes us with nutrients • Connects us to the regions beyond the city limits • Supports overall health and wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeps us alive! • Gives us sense of connection • Supports our mental health • A foundation to all ecosystems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage holistic outcomes to reduce reliance on medication • Allow all people to enjoy a thriving life • Reduce the burden on those who require care for acute or chronic conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides shelter • Gives us stability and safety • A place for us to care for and call home
Visions for food	Visions for water	Visions for health	Visions for housing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equitable access to nutritious food • No food deserts anywhere in Sydney • Food waste is drastically reduced both in the household and commercially • Composting practices and infrastructure are solidified and commonplace • Our food system prioritises the rhythms of seasonal produce • Our food system strengthens native food production practices and First Nations producers • Community gardens, urban agriculture and household food production is bolstered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat it as a precious resource to be cycled, eg rainwater harvesting • Build local knowledge of water systems & cycle (green and blue water, we would have defined the role of water in different context and adapt what water/ how we use it accordingly) • Greywater recycling in all developments • Households and businesses store rainwater and use it for their daily needs • Treated wastewater is commonly used • Stormwater runoff is captured, treated and introduced into a resilient water distribution network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise the wellbeing of health professionals and care workers through fair and attractive remuneration • Accessible healthcare through all the regions of Sydney • Bolster our medical system by strengthening bulk billing for GP visits • Bring mental and dental into our public healthcare system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone is able to enjoy a safe and happy home • Essential workers can afford to live in the communities they serve • Better building codes are introduced • The additional energy cost due to poor design, lack of insulation and no renewable energy is not paid by the renters • Housing does not contribute to wildlife habitat loss • Greatly increased supply to affordable and social housing, helping to eliminate houselessness

A CONNECTED SYDNEY THEME-LEVEL INSIGHTS

Our workshop began with an exploration of themes from the social foundation (inner ring) of the Doughnut, in this case, an exploration of Sydney as a connected city. We asked a series of questions and invited both written and verbal contributions. Our questions were:

- When do you experience Sydney as a connected city?
- How does it feel to live in a connected Sydney?
- What challenges does Sydney face in being a connected city?

JOY PATIENCE
SUPPORTED LOVE BELONGING
SAFE AUTONOMY CARE

A connected Sydney is dependent upon

- Good and equitable transport
- Digital literacy and accessibility
- Enjoying each other's cultures and traditions
- Connecting into and knowing our local communities
- Shared facilities, community spaces and sporting clubs
- Connection to the land, spirituality
- Engagement with Aboriginal culture and history
- Vibrant public and civic spaces, such as parks, markets and libraries
- Music, festivals and free, accessible art exhibitions and outdoor events
- Connecting and exploring through water
- Democratic participation
- Healthy and empowered people

A connected Sydney is challenged by

- Housing insecurity - and the disruption to forming strong and collaborative neighbour relationships
- COVID-19 left many people disconnected from their neighbours - making it harder to reconnect
- Commercial interests prioritised over community needs (time, connection, places where to meet)
- People lacking access to parks and green spaces
- Inefficient and inaccessible public transport, cycleways, and enjoyable walking pathways
- The cost of living crisis
- Unequal access to internet and digital literacy
- Social polarities and echo chambers exacerbated by social media
- Language barriers between different groups

A CONNECTED SYDNEY

DIMENSION-LEVEL INSIGHTS

We then took a deep-dive into the four elements of what makes a connected city. In this part of the workshop we asked:

- What is the role of each dimension (connectivity, mobility, community, culture) in creating a connected Sydney?
- What is your vision for each dimension (connectivity, mobility, community, culture) in creating a connected Sydney?



<h3>The role of connectivity</h3>	<h3>The role of mobility</h3>	<h3>The role of community</h3>	<h3>The role of culture</h3>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect people with physical and digital places • Parks, gardens and playgrounds acting as a connector • Local groups collaborating with ease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide safe access to places • Diverse options to serve different needs • Connect the various parts of the city • Encourage active and shared transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide resilience - everyday and in response to disasters • Power of story and connection to their places (a national park, a beach, a park, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture's diversity is Sydney's strength • Share and capture our rich stories • Allows us to understand and reflect on who we are - past, present and future
<h3>Visions for connectivity</h3>	<h3>Visions for mobility</h3>	<h3>Visions for community</h3>	<h3>Visions for culture</h3>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A connected Sydney with equitable access to: • Community groups • Libraries • Outdoor and indoor places to run community activities • Community and guerrilla gardens • Equitable access to wifi (including free and public) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in infrastructures required to build a safe cycling and walking city • The 15-min suburb • Sydneysiders don't require a car to access their social basics (work, schools, community, hospitals, etc.) • Community electric car sharing system • People with disabilities being able to get around freely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-commercial and community-centred hubs powered by sharing over selling/buying/owning • An active and connected network of communities (sport, arts, gardening, science, etc.) • Community boards to connect community networks • Local markets to sustain local producers and feed the community • Community could overtake commercial needs (shared spaces, repair cafes, food cooperative, neighbourhood gathering, community garden, community sport club, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular and free access to cultural activities across Sydney • Network of libraries (seeds, books, toys, tools, etc.) • Build a culture that is informed by First Nations, Country and history. • Inclusivity for diversity of ages, genders, ethnicities

AN ENABLED SYDNEY

THEME-LEVEL INSIGHTS

Our workshop began with an exploration of themes from the social foundation (inner ring) of the Doughnut, in this case, an exploration of Sydney as an enabled city. We asked a series of questions and invited both written and verbal contributions. Our questions were:

- When do you experience Sydney as an enabled city?
- How does it feel to live in an enabled Sydney?
- What challenges does Sydney face in being an enabled city?



An enabled Sydney is dependent upon

- A fully engaged and productive workforce
- Accessible public transport
- Easy access to walks in nature
- Prevalent and accessible arts
- Locally manufactured items that offer sustainable alternatives
- Good education, no matter where you live
- Creating better opportunities to address growing inequalities
- Access to electricity
- Access to repair shops
- Affordable energy, food and housing
- Availability of jobs and education
- Access to libraries for both tools (e.g. 'library of things') and education

An enabled Sydney is challenged by

- Increasing rates of homelessness and unaffordability of housing
- Social stratification across Sydney's regions; the east/west divide (especially noticeable during COVID lockdown)
- Enormous and rapidly-growing wealth inequality between richest and poorest
- Life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and non-indigenous Australians
- Unequal opportunities to access good education
- Transparency of supply chains
- Privatisation of public services, which compounds inequality
- Resourcing and time barriers that prevent inclusive, diverse and representative participation in decision-making.
- Under-resourced local councils, dealing with with many competing interests
- Local government boundaries, which can make many issues too fragmented or contradictory
- Lack of investment in nature reserves in Sydney's 'middle ring'
- Affordability of electricity
- Affordability of good, healthy and sustainable food

AN ENABLED SYDNEY

DIMENSION-LEVEL INSIGHTS

We then took a deep-dive into the four elements of what makes an enabled city. In this part of the workshop we asked:

- What is the role of each dimension (education, energy, income & work) in creating an enabled Sydney?
- What is your vision for each dimension (education, energy, income & work) in creating an enabled Sydney?



The role of education

- Enable Sydneysiders to make informed choices about their lives, environment and communities
- Increase access to better job opportunities
- Develop knowledge and skills to think creatively and envision different futures.

Visions for education

- Equitable access to education
- We value access to free education across all Sydney for all ages, nationalities and ethnicities
- Education encourages citizens to be active in the political life of their communities.
- A range of built/rebuilt public regenerative schools e.g. with community gardens, First Nations Professors, chickens, renewable energy onsite.
- Local Indigenous Schools - food, energy, land.
- Range of public workshops (science, art, history, politics, etc.) accessible to the general public

The role of energy

- Provide security, safety, predictability and reliability
- Provide clean and affordable energy to all of the population (including renters)

Visions for energy

- Sydneysiders know where their energy is coming from and can generate their own energy from renewable sources
- Solar gardens, local grids and community batteries are commonplace
- Sydney knows how much energy we need to be in the 'safe and just space', prior to building new energy sources.
- Sydneysiders are energy literate. They understand how much power they consume and are able to act accordingly
- Companies and individuals have access to live energy consumption data (footprints), and can adapt their energy use to availability.
- People in rented accommodation share equally in the benefits of energy transition (i.e. they do not go solely to landlords and homeowners)

The role of income & work

- Provide a pathway of progress for those without higher levels of education
- Allow people to live without precarity

Visions for income & work

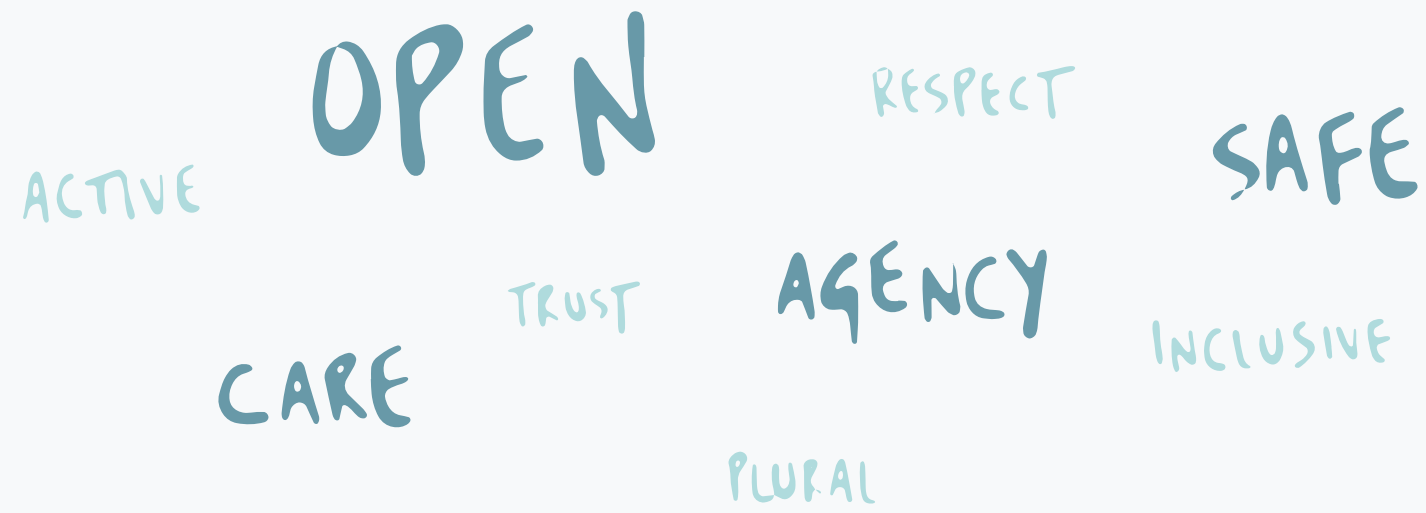
- Living income for jobseekers, disabled people, pensioners
- More jobs in renewable and regenerative sectors
- 4 day work week, with encouragement for greater community and volunteer work
- Universal Basic Income (UBI)
- Local currencies and cooperative models are adapted to Sydney's context

AN EMPOWERED SYDNEY

THEME-LEVEL INSIGHTS

Our workshop began with an exploration of themes from the social foundation (inner ring) of the Doughnut, in this case, an exploration of Sydney as an empowered city. We asked a series of questions and invited both written and verbal contributions. Our questions were:

- When do you experience Sydney as an empowered city?
- How does it feel to live in an empowered Sydney?
- What challenges does Sydney face in being an empowered city?



An empowered Sydney is dependent upon

- Cultural events that help to reinforce communal connections
- Institutions acting as role models
- Citizens having agency, voice and influence in the various levels of government - meaningful feedback loops beyond two-party politics
- Community hubs, which can actively participate in building local systemic actions
- Communities are consulted for civic improvements and local developments
- Access to services - public facilities, internet, information
- Transparent decision making processes
- No one is left behind
- Acknowledged past and its stories
- Connections between people, places and stories
- Egalitarian conditions so that all forms of work and labour feel are meaningful and valuable
- Provocative artistic interventions highlighting social and ecological issues
- Well resourced local council developments and civic infrastructure

An empowered Sydney is challenged by

- Increasing wealth inequality and the rising cost of living, with the associated socio-cultural divides
- The vested interests of the status quo - slow moving and influential power structures
- The pace of Sydney encourages over-work, and results in people who feel overwhelmed and that they lack time
- Lack of political voice amongst marginalised communities
- All forms of bigotry including racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia
- Slow pace of reconciliation with First Nations
- Political interference and biased reporting from media outlets; with negative coverage fueling rising anxiety
- Prevailing culture of individualism rather than community-mindedness.
- Funding geared towards large scale technological 'solutions' lacking community consideration
- Lack of social and affordable housing perpetuates cycles of disenfranchisement.

AN EMPOWERED SYDNEY

DIMENSION-LEVEL INSIGHTS

We then took a deep-dive into the four elements of what makes an empowered city. In this part of the workshop we asked:

- What is the role of each dimension (social equity, equality in diversity, political voice, peace & justice) in creating an empowered Sydney?
- What is your vision for each dimension (social equity, equality in diversity, political voice, peace & justice) in creating an empowered Sydney?



The role of social equity	The role of equality in diversity	The role of political voice	The role of peace & justice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for full and meaningful participation • Foundation for a society where everyone is heard, acknowledged and included. • Allow people to recognise inherent power structures, bias and privilege 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving voice and hearing the multiplicity of the collective • Inclusiveness for ageing people • Inclusion for young people's voices • Foster social cohesion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful feedback loops to government beyond two party politics • Community engagement via council • Access to public facilities and land • State response to community needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate meaningful contributions to society • Foster safety, social cohesion and freedom in community • The absence of worry about toxins, poisons in our water and food
Visions for social equity	Visions for equality in diversity	Visions for political voice	Visions for peace & justice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No one left behind, everyone is cared for through provision and access to services, housing, education for everyone • Address the prevalence of single older women at risk of homelessness • Creating spaces for women to be in positions of power • Make space for First Nations voices, and enable further reconciliation • Meaningfully address intergenerational inequalities facing young people - poverty, housing, ecological crisis • Universal Basic Income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy for the needs of all people • Value given to diversity of lived experience and expertise, across ages, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations • Everyone is cared about in the system • Provide role models and representation across all aspects of public life • Substantially support stability in housing, healthcare, etc. so people can focus on the diverse things that bring them joy • Support spaces for minority groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many more Independents in parliament • Agency and voice in governance • Participation and engagement • Citizens' assemblies are commonplace • Representation for the 'more than human' world in governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End Black deaths in custody • People and institutions are open and listen to conflicting perspectives • Think global, act local • Culture shift to meaningfully address gender-based and family violence • Just, reparative, empathic mechanisms for responding to harm • When we're explicitly given permission to explore and participate • A criminal justice system which is fair, transparent, rehabilitative and procedurally just

WORKSHOP 2: PLACE & COUNTRY

In the second workshop, we shifted our focus towards the ecological aspects of the Doughnut. The theme of 'Place & Country' was explored through the lenses of land, air, water and wildlife of Sydney.

Through our discussions we shared the language of our places and evoked our connectedness with each other and the more-than-human world. Participants were asked to consider the local ecosystems that are the foundation of our city's economy and the heart of our collective thriving.

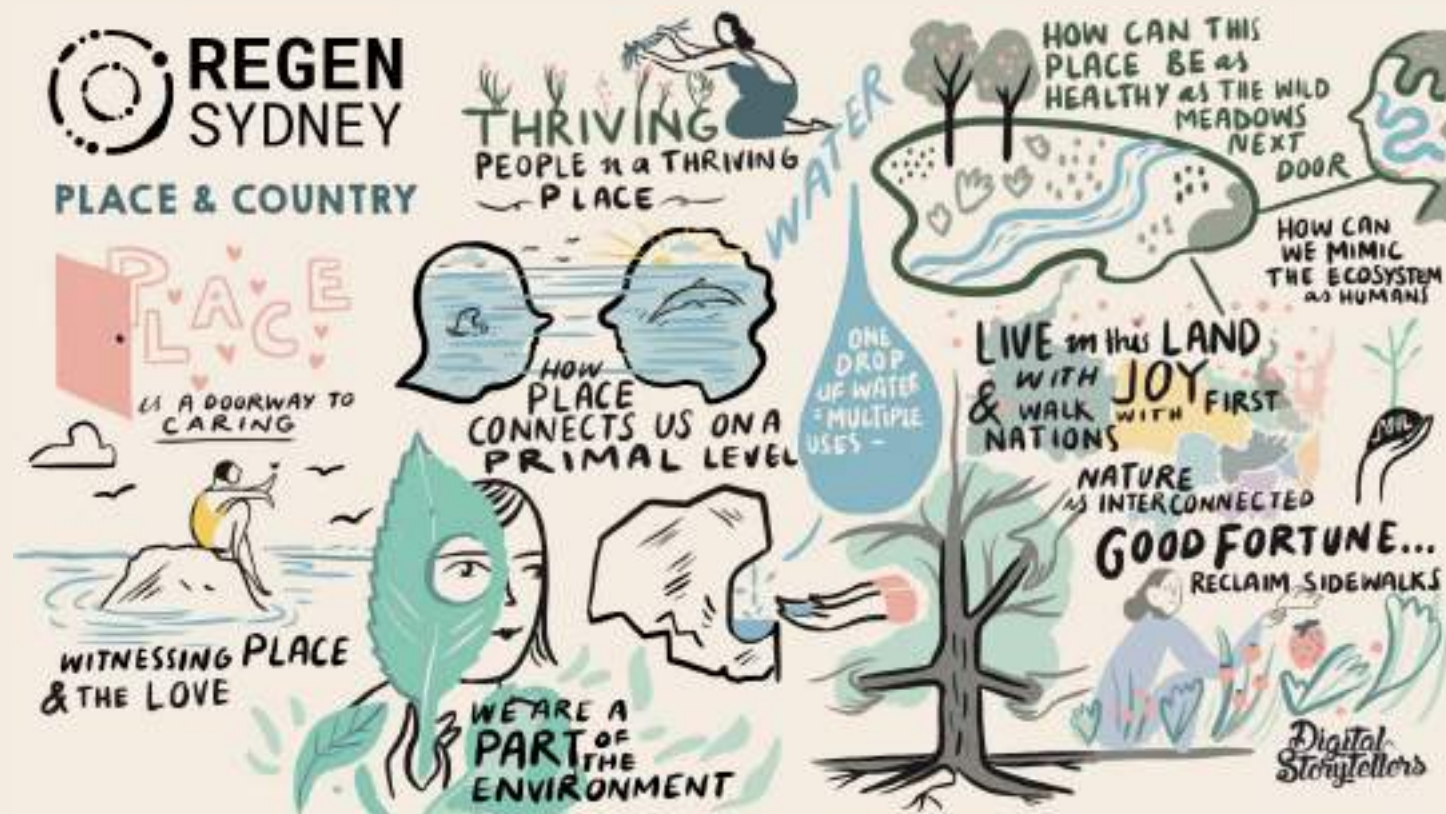
Connecting through their places, participants shared sit-spots, from Katoomba to Rushcutters Bay, North Head Reserve to 'Charlie's Garden' and so many places in between.

We asked participants to reflect on Sydney and to consider:

- The ways in which our place is unique in the way it thrives and supports life;
- How we might we mimic this generosity;
- Their communities and the ways in which they find them inspiring.

"There is a Law that's inscribed in this land. It is alive in this land. This [gathering] could very well be a part of that process, to reconnect and live out the law of this land. That's going to be at the heart of what we do in the future."

Uncle Phill Bligh

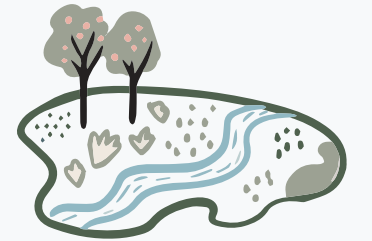


AN ECOLOGICALLY HEALTHY SYDNEY

THEME-LEVEL INSIGHTS

Our workshop began with an exploration of themes from the ecological ceiling (outer ring) of the Doughnut. Participants explored an ecologically healthy Sydney through the themes of air, land and water. We asked a series of questions and invited both written and verbal contributions. Our questions were:

- How does it feel to live in an ecologically healthy Sydney?
- What challenges does Sydney face in being an ecologically healthy city?
- What is your vision for our shared land, water and air ecosystems?



Challenges to healthy air

- Emissions from industry, cars, buses, trucks and aviation
- Bushfire smoke causing air pollution
- Hole in ozone layer closing but still present, causing increased UV radiation
- Impacts of light pollution on wildlife
- Increased urban heat island effect due to urban sprawl and development without adequate green infrastructure
- Aerosol emissions altering regional rainfall patterns

Challenges to healthy land

- Some LGA regulations hinder the freedom of residents to plant their streets and neighbourhoods
- Carbon offset programs are often planted without considering the whole system, so they are often ineffective
- Farming and development of peri-urban areas reduce the amount of space available for native habitat restoration
- We don't know enough about how native urban ecologies will work - we don't farm native ecologies
- Prevailing farming practices are degenerative and do not adequately consider soil health
- Impacts of resource extraction, farming and manufacturing are often externalised to the regions
- Converting land for human use can deplete its role as valuable carbon sinks, wildlife habitats and in cycling water and nutrients

Challenges to healthy water

- Currently favour built waterways and marine ecosystems over natural bodies of water
- Having the right amount of freshwater available - not too much, not too little
- Waste materials, toxic compounds and plastics continue to enter our waterways
- Urban design and built environments are predominantly made up of surfaces that are not conducive to cycling water
- Many of Sydney's waterways are polluted and dangerous for the health of humans and wildlife alike

AN ECOLOGICALLY HEALTHY SYDNEY

THEME-LEVEL INSIGHTS (CONT.)

Vision for healthy air


- Drastic emissions reduction
- Increased environmental standards for cars
- Protect and plant native tree and plant species to remove and reduce local air contaminants.
- Prioritise the use of building materials that capture and store atmospheric CO₂, such as timber, bamboo and other CO₂-sequestering construction materials.
- Green corridors and trees planted on streets offer shade
- Urban air temperature is brought down and is comparable to adjacent bush land
- Fire fighting and prevention is much better funded in a depoliticised manner to increase resilience.
- Increase in green corridors and natural reserves provide ample dark areas free of urban light pollution

Vision for healthy land

- Connecting up urban habitat spaces, e.g. with pollinator corridors, green bridges, wildlife corridors, pocket parks, green roofs, and riverside trails
- Protecting, restoring and rewilding public land, nature reserves, and public parks
- Increase in small scale market gardens
- Home and community composting
- Place ecosystem health and well being at the table of every decision
- "Start where you are, use what you have, do what you can"
- Demonstration ecovillages - to measure effects and show how others could implement innovative practices, processes and infrastructures
- Natural collection of organic materials through public compost bins
- Interaction between human and non-human - more emphasis on our interconnectedness
- Food sharing between neighbours and streets
- Great increase in prevalence of circular materials flows reduces dependency on landfill for waste
- Plenty of land available for native species to thrive
- Land ownership culture gives way to one of land custodianship

Vision for healthy water

- Swimmable ponds across Sydney (for human and non-human animals)
- Create more protected marine zones along Sydney's coastline
- Urban regeneration projects with drought adapted plants (bring back greenwater, cool down the city)
- Sponge city concept applied across Sydney - water sensitive urban design
- Regenerated ecological wetlands that address pollution, heat island effect, grey water, and habitat
- Work with (vs. against) our water & river systems, including floodplains and coastlines, which are rewilded
- Integrate Indigenous perspectives and practices to create healthy waterways: what would an Indigenous perspective on healthy waterways be?
- Swimmable rivers across Sydney - Nepean, Cooks, George's and Parramatta Rivers etc. - areas for leisure and healthy ecosystems for other marine animals and birds
- Rainwater harvesting at household level is normalised



“People are aware that they cannot continue in the same old way, but are immobilised because they cannot imagine an alternative. We need a vision that recognises that we are at one of the great turning points in human history when the survival of our planet and the restoration of our humanity require a great sea change in our ecological, economic, political, and spiritual values.”

~ Grace Lee Boggs

A VISION FOR A REGENERATIVE SYDNEY

Working collaboratively and across silos, the participants created a rich picture of what a regenerative Sydney could look and feel like.

By analysing and clustering the discussion points, we pulled out recurrent themes from participants' vision statements. There were many such themes that were relevant across the two workshops, as well as across the various social and ecological dimensions of the Doughnut.

A synthesis of these themes helps to form the community's vision for a regenerative Sydney.

A REGENERATIVE SYDNEY:



Means no one is left behind.

In this city of great diversity, many geographies, histories and cultures, no one should be left behind. Participants acknowledged that many parts of our society are falling through the cracks when it comes to food and housing. There was a lot of support for building networks of care and support as well as for bridging our huge disparities. Civic infrastructure and services play an increased role in supporting increased accessibility and equity.



Walks with First Peoples.

A truly regenerative Sydney centres First Nations wisdom and an understanding of Natural Law. There is an emphatically strong desire to walk with First Nations people in this work, and a regenerative economy is impossible to create in Sydney without doing so. In doing this work, we can learn from First Nations wisdom and First Laws; whilst addressing urgent calls to end black deaths in custody and progress the development of a long overdue Treaty.



Actively collaborates together.

Sydney values living cultures, living democracy and participation; fostering accessibility, whilst putting sovereignty and care into practice. Flipping a culture of passive consumerism on its head, there is a call for citizen and community empowerment. By harnessing the collective in community-led governance, residents of Sydney can find greater agency and decision-making power. Neighbourhood scale initiatives and economic localisation help to create greater resilience.



Is connected with our ecosystems.

The ecological & social spheres are deeply intertwined, and cannot be considered separately from each other. Our city needs to be ecologically integrated, for example through green corridors, community gardens and water sensitive urban design. Meaningful connection to nearby wild green spaces, bush, beaches and rivers is of utmost importance for its role in supporting the wellbeing of humans and non-humans alike.

Stakeholder Roundtables

OVERVIEW OF STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLES

Immediately following the community workshops in early December 2022, Regen Sydney convened a series of 4 x 75 minute stakeholder roundtables focused on:

- **Social Equity & Wellbeing**
- **Shaping the Environment (incl. Circular Economy)**
- **Public Policy & Law**
- **Finance & Economics**³⁸

ROUNDTABLE FORMAT

The roundtables were designed around the framing question:

"In your area of work, what practices or structures help to make the Doughnut & its promise of a regenerative Sydney possible? And what gets in the way?"

Participants were asked to:

- Identify 'enablers' and 'blockers' (eg. working practices, policies, structures etc) to a regenerative Sydney, from across a range of sectors and disciplines;
- Speak to the role they envision their sector playing in the regenerative transition, and to what is (or is not) happening that can support it;
- Identify new ways of working together that can promote regenerative practices and policies in Greater Sydney.

In addressing these prompts participants were inherently considering:

- Practices and structures;³⁹
 - Embedded practices - e.g. professional application of methodologies, tools, frameworks;
 - Underlying structures - e.g. policies, processes, relationships, power and authority.

WHO CAME?

In total, 70 change-makers attended the four roundtables. Each had each been identified as a **positive maverick** in their field (see right). Participants represented social entrepreneurship, sustainability consulting, the built environment, academia, circular economy, impact investing, local and state government; sustainable finance; community housing; food security; creative arts; planning and infrastructure and ecology - and many more.

WHO IS A POSITIVE MAVERICK?

Positive mavericks are professionals who experience
"an ethical responsibility to assertively voice our concerns about systemic and structural blockages of the fields we work in – even (or especially) when these fields purport to advance positive causes."

Ralph Thurm
R3.0 consultancy



In your area of work, what practices or structures help to make the Doughnut & its promise of a regenerative Sydney possible? And what gets in the way?

Consider your working practices (e.g. how you work & who with) and larger structural elements (e.g. policies, laws that affect your ability to work systemically).

³⁸ It should be noted that, while the roundtables were divided into four broad focus areas, in reality many themes that emerged from the discussions overlapped and crossed over groups. These have been represented in the [Lay of the Land](#) diagrams on page 55 & 56.

³⁹ [Everyday Patterns for Shifting Systems](#), Yunus Centre, Griffith University

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 1: SOCIAL EQUITY & WELLBEING

OVERVIEW

The first roundtable convened 21 people working across: food security, community housing, public policy, consulting, architecture, NGOs and social entrepreneurship.

Themes arose relating to housing supply and affordability, inequality and food insecurity, as well as Greater Sydney's relationship with peri-urban and rural areas.

This page presents high-level insights, please see Appendix 1 for a detailed synthesis of 'what we heard'.

HIGH-LEVEL INSIGHTS

1. Sydney is a 'property-obsessed' city. **Housing** in Sydney is largely conceived in terms of property ownership & investment, as opposed to a human right for all citizens. Changing land ownership structures and experimenting with community land trusts is seen as a key to unlocking some of the escalating housing affordability crisis.
2. Sydney's **food** system is dissipated and faces increased risk of disruption. Citizens potentially have little awareness of the linkages between the city & food-growing communities in peri-urban areas, who have experienced a recent raft of natural disasters.
3. **Food and housing are inextricably linked.** The rise of social enterprise and food relief ⁴⁰ services in Sydney are effectively papering over the cracks of a broken system rather than tackling the underlying causes.
4. There are many exciting **small-scale experiments** happening at community level across Sydney (e.g. community gardens, community farms, transition movements), which demonstrate a desire for communities to catalyse the changes they wish to see in their local areas.
5. **Businesses and corporates** are increasingly driven to realise place-based impact, and are seeking better opportunities to work on and with local initiatives and innovative NGOs in Sydney and beyond. However, these new kinds of partnerships can also create new challenges for both parties (e.g. time and budget constraints, reputational risk).
6. Effective **funding and partnerships** remain a challenge for cross-sector 'regenerative' initiatives. Philanthropy and academia are driving experimentation, often doing what government can't (e.g. social housing innovation)
7. Outdated **policies and legislation** are not keeping pace with community and business ambition, instead perpetuating siloed thinking & practices. This results in initiatives that could solve multiple challenges (e.g. ageing in place, digital inclusion, multigenerational housing etc), being stymied.

40 The [Foodbank Hunger Report 2022](#) shows, 64% of households cited increased/high cost of living as a reason why they couldn't meet their household food needs.

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 2: SHAPING THE ENVIRONMENT

OVERVIEW

In Roundtable 2, we heard from 22 participants representing: circular economy, built environment, business advisory consulting, sustainable materials, government and academia.

Themes emerged relating to the pace of transition in moving to a Circular Economy; defining and using metrics; challenges in working with supply chains; the role of pilots in innovation and the need to create coordinated portfolios of initiatives to attract a level of funding commensurate with the scale and pace of transformation required.

This page presents high-level insights, please see the Appendix for a detailed synthesis of 'what we heard'.

HIGH-LEVEL INSIGHTS

1. **There is a large gap between policy & action.** Good policy intentions aren't translating into action on the ground.
2. Australia is playing 'catch-up' after a long period of inaction on the **Circular Economy**. This has resulted in delays to national targets, duplication of effort and confusion over metrics.
3. **Businesses in the built environment** are looking for ways to better link social and environmental outcomes with commercial opportunities, for competitive gain.
4. It takes courage to step out of the status quo. Many business leaders are struggling to understand the **mindset & organisational culture** required to transition to a regen economy. Stronger alliances, collaborative networks and professional advice are needed to support the leaders and the cultural and mindset shifts required for deeper transition.
5. Concerns regarding **legal risks & corporate liability** are blocking the level of ambitious innovation needed for businesses to lead in systemic change initiatives.
6. Ambitious **pilot initiatives** are creating momentum for change, particularly in Greater Sydney's built environment (e.g. the implementation of the 'Connecting with Country Framework'⁴¹ at Aerotropolis in Western Sydney⁴²). Linking innovative pilot projects together under larger '**portfolios**' has the potential to attract much higher levels of funding, while also accelerating Sydney's transition.
7. A regenerative Sydney requires **working across multiple scales**, not only the larger 'economies of scale', but more localised 'economies of purpose' based on real community needs and practical, tangible actions. More needs to be done to meaningfully engage with intersectional justice and lived experience perspectives as part of the Regen Sydney movement.

41 [Connecting with Country](#), Government Architect, NSW (accessed May 2022)

42 [Wianamatta rising: charting the future of a Western Sydney waterway](#), (accessed May 2022)

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 3: PUBLIC POLICY, GOVERNMENT & LAW

OVERVIEW

Roundtable 3 hosted a conversation with 17 change-makers who possess deep understanding of the slow-to-shift structures, policies and laws that either maintain or shift the status quo.

Themes that arose: making the Law more accessible to change-makers; redirecting funding away from intermediaries to those on the ground; changing definitions of Company Director duties and finding ways to give communities a physical experience of a thriving economy.

This page presents high-level insights, please see the Appendix for a detailed synthesis of 'what we heard'.

HIGH-LEVEL INSIGHTS

1. **Regulatory 'minefields'** are deterring Sydney-based innovators from taking action. This opens up opportunities for creative pro bono legal work and public policy/legal alliances to help clarify pathways forward.
2. **Democratising the law** and making it more accessible to community and business leaders has the potential to unlock innovation by derisking regeneratively-focused initiatives.
3. **Citizen trust has been strongly eroded** in government processes and decision-making due to short-term political cycles and lack of significant action on the community needs. However, there is a groundswell of interest from changemakers both within - and outside - government in Greater Sydney to retrofit political processes to be more accountable to community, and accelerate the pace of change required for transition.
4. There's a strong tension between the way Government works and the care, agility and willingness of public policy makers in ensuring relevant policies are designed to achieve the best outcomes. **Regulatory sandboxes and pilots** are helping policy makers to experiment with fresh approaches.
5. There is a huge opportunity to reshape politics so that it better supports both cross-sectoral alliances in the private and non-profit sectors sparking new ways of addressing challenges, as well as **reorienting the flow of funding** directly to young people and community leaders on the ground (rather than through intermediaries).
6. Pressure to change **legal definitions of Company Directors' duties** is building fast, which can enable flows of capital toward positive social & environmental impact.
7. The enthusiasm for a Sydney Doughnut, must be matched by **practical, tangible examples** on the ground, that brings to life the **physical experience of what a thriving local economy looks and feels like**. This can embed both the narrative and lived experience of Doughnut Economics in local communities.
8. The Doughnut's aim of 'thriving people in a thriving place' depends on **reaching beyond the echo-chambers of the 'regen converted'**, to communities with lived experience of the status quo, not only within Greater Sydney, but to communities beyond municipal boundaries. Cultivating practices of **deep listening and cultural awareness** are crucial in this work.

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 4: FINANCE & ECONOMICS

OVERVIEW


The final roundtable brought together 20 specialists from economic strategy, investment, community wealth building, business advisors, heads of finance, crowdfunders, economic researchers and academics.

Themes that emerged include: outdated investment structures; lack of awareness of the role different types of funding play in various change initiatives; legal barriers which deter innovation; a need for portfolios of connected investments; the role of storytelling in facilitating change, and the desire for dedicated, courageous spaces for changemakers to network, experiment and collaborate.

This page presents high-level insights, please see the Appendix for a detailed synthesis of 'what we heard'.

HIGH-LEVEL INSIGHTS

1. **Awareness and literacy** in 'regeneration' and 'regenerative investment' is still generally low among Finance Directors, CFOs & senior business leaders. However, the maturity-curve is rapidly on the rise, driven by citizen, talent and investor expectations.
2. There is a **persistent misalignment** between the way investment funds are structured & the connected, mutually-reinforcing kinds of investment needed for ecological restoration.
3. Awareness of the **different functions different kinds of funding play in systems change is low among those trying to create change in their communities**. Addressing this knowledge-gap has the potential to create new opportunities, alliances and partnerships.
4. Creating **portfolios of connected investments** - alongside novel alliances and public-private partnerships - can encourage organisations to work systemically and collaboratively toward shared place-based goals.
5. **Legal barriers** (pertaining to KPIs & stakeholder interest) continue to block the potential of Sydney-based business leaders from enabling change.
6. There is a growing recognition of the power of **regenerative storytelling**, which means not just sharing the human stories of impact, but also building the capacity of communities to tell their own authentic stories and lead on the matters most pertinent to them. Adopting an ecosystem approach to storytelling enables us to create the conditions for systemic change, deepen levels of trust across diverse stakeholders & establish accountability through radical transparency.
7. **Using the Doughnut as a 'Compass'** holds enormous potential for aligning long-term direction across multiple sectors and stakeholder groups.
8. Opportunity exists to create better linkages across financial areas (eg charity, start-up, philanthropy, crowd-funding) to bring about change both nationally, and across Greater Sydney, however people need help to spot them. **Greater Sydney can benefit from courageously convened spaces**, such as those curated by Regen Sydney, which inspire a collective vision, **catalyse unusual and impactful collaborations** and provide trusted and culturally-safe spaces to explore new ideas.



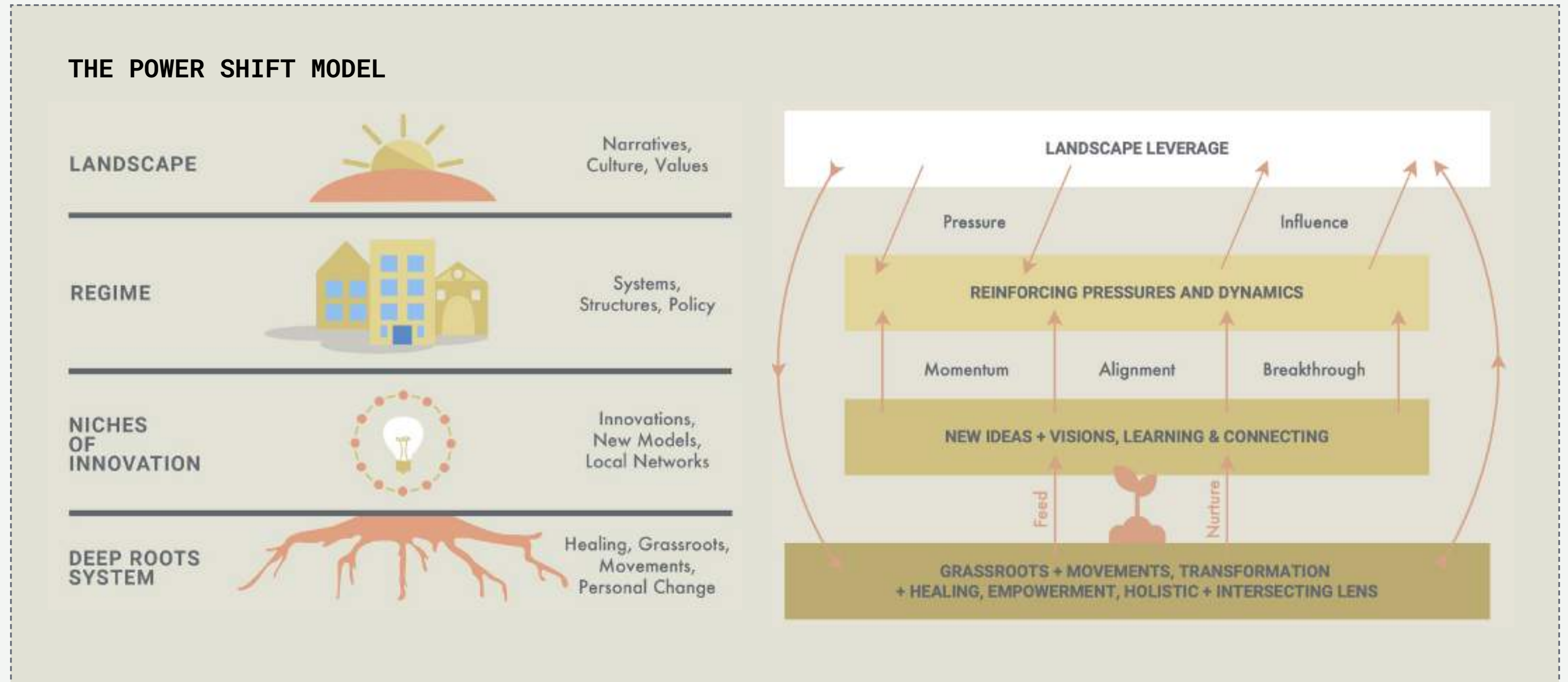
“We are co-creative participants in a 14 billion-year process of the universe becoming conscious of itself. We are a keystone species capable of creating conditions conducive to all life. That’s why we are in this together and why it is worth transcending and including all our differences in pursuit of a shared vision of thriving together.”

- Daniel Christian Wahl, ‘Designing Regenerative Cultures’ 2016

MAKING SENSE OF WHAT WE HEARD

How might we make sense of what we heard in the stakeholder roundtables?

As we synthesised the rich stakeholder roundtable insights, we found that the enablers and blockers cut across various sites of leverage. The 'Power Shift' transition theory framework⁴³ shown below allowed us to better make sense of the emerging gaps and opportunities.



43 Source: *Our frameworks — The Systems Sanctuary: Building on Geels'* (2011) Transition Theory.

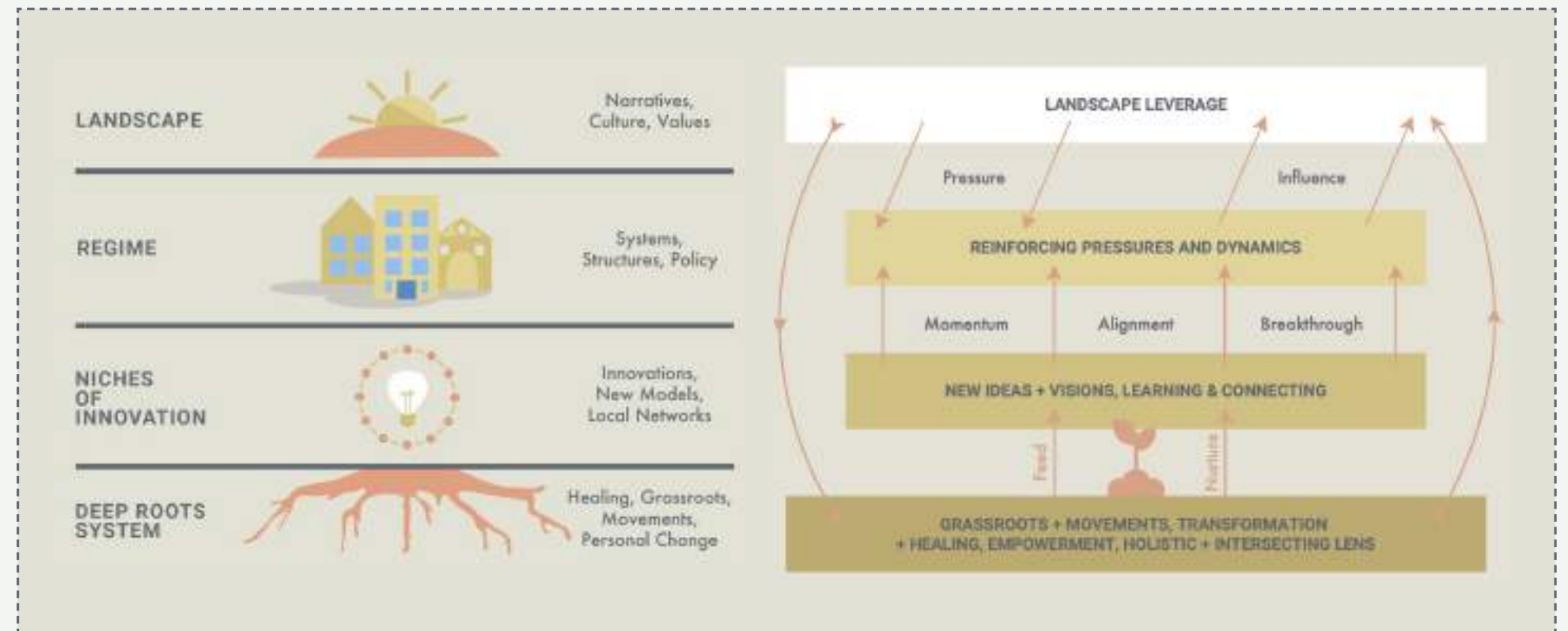
MAPPING THE SYSTEM TRANSITION

Plotting enablers and blockers across the four-layers of the 'Power Shift' model of transition theory allows us to take a wide-angle view across multiple levels of 'the system' - i.e. Greater Sydney's economy.

This model helps to demystify the nonlinear processes of system change, by identifying key aspects of the slow-moving 'regime', and the faster paced 'niches of innovation'.

The framework, adapted from Geels, highlights the importance of interactions between four levels:

- **Landscape:** the intangible context of social values, political beliefs, cultural narratives and worldviews
- **Regime:** the dominant structures of economics, politics, governance, institutions and technologies
- **Niches:** local and small-scale initiatives, experimental models, innovative projects and collaborations
- **Deep roots system:** a focus on lived experience and community, including personal healing, empowerment, and holistic understanding of the intersectionality of issues.



“If a factory is torn down but the rationality which produced it is left standing, then that rationality will simply produce another factory. If a revolution destroys a government, but the systematic patterns of thought that produced that government are left intact, then those patterns will repeat themselves ... There’s so much talk about the system. And so little understanding.”

Robert Pirsig, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance (1974)

“The work at the Deep Roots System level reflects deep empowerment: valuing self, strengthening collectives of like-minded groups and communities, valuing lived experience, and turning marginalisation and oppression into strength.”⁴⁴

Tatiana Fraser, The Systems Sanctuary, 2020

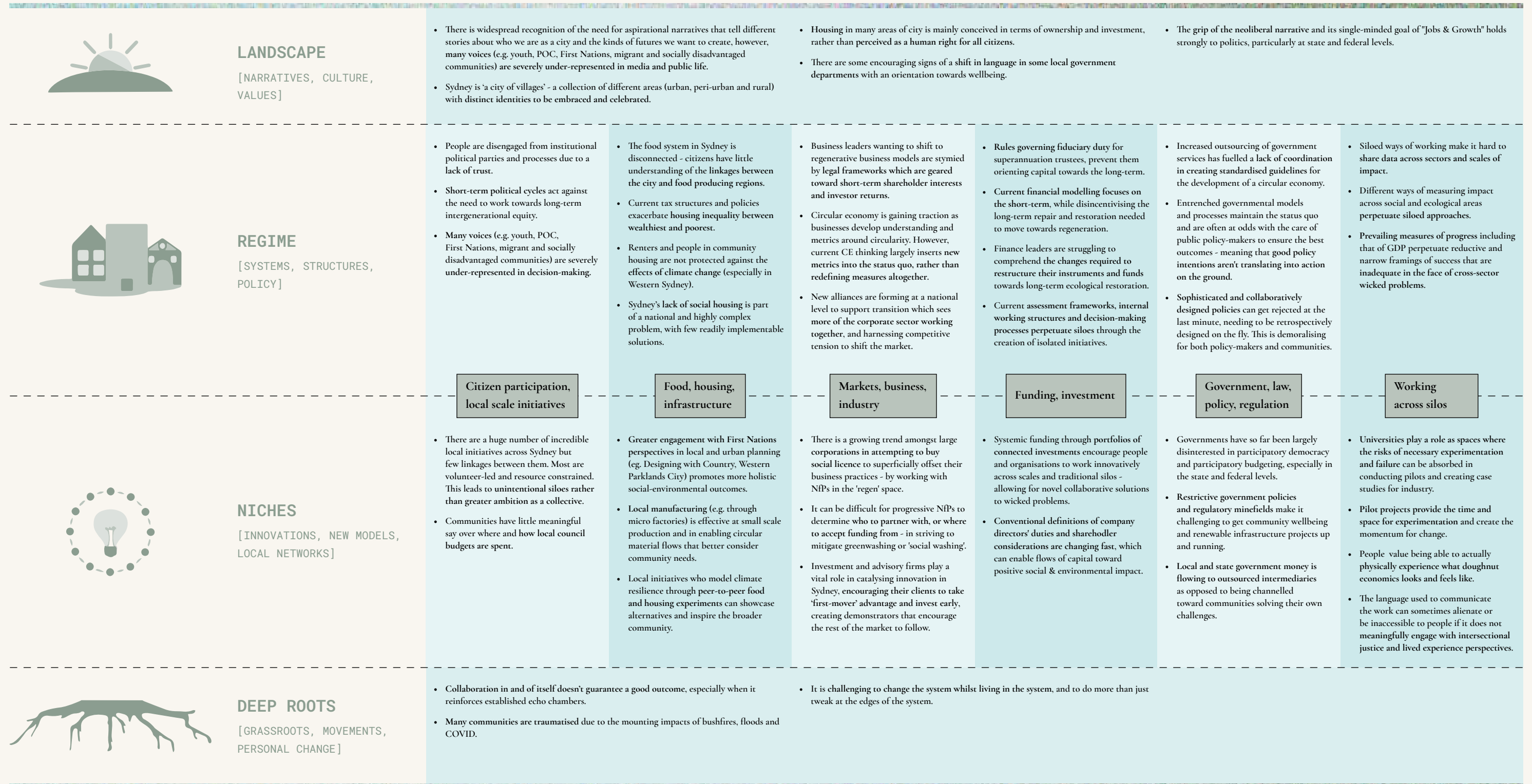
44 [Towards a new, holistic framework of systems change: Adapting Geels' Transition Theory](#), The Systems Sanctuary, Nov 2020

MAPPING THE SYSTEM TRANSITION: PRESENT DYNAMICS

Shown on this page are the key **present dynamics** that have emerged through the series of stakeholder roundtables and the subsequent synthesis. These include both enablers and blockers encountered organisationally and structurally.

The insights have been plotted on the Powershift Framework (introduced on page 53) to better identify systemic dynamics. During synthesis of the roundtable insights, there were six prominent themes that captured potent areas for action, and are the frames around which the insights are organised. These are:

- Citizen participation, local scale initiatives
- Food, housing, infrastructure
- Markets, business, finance
- Funding, investment
- Government, law, policy, regulation
- Working across silos

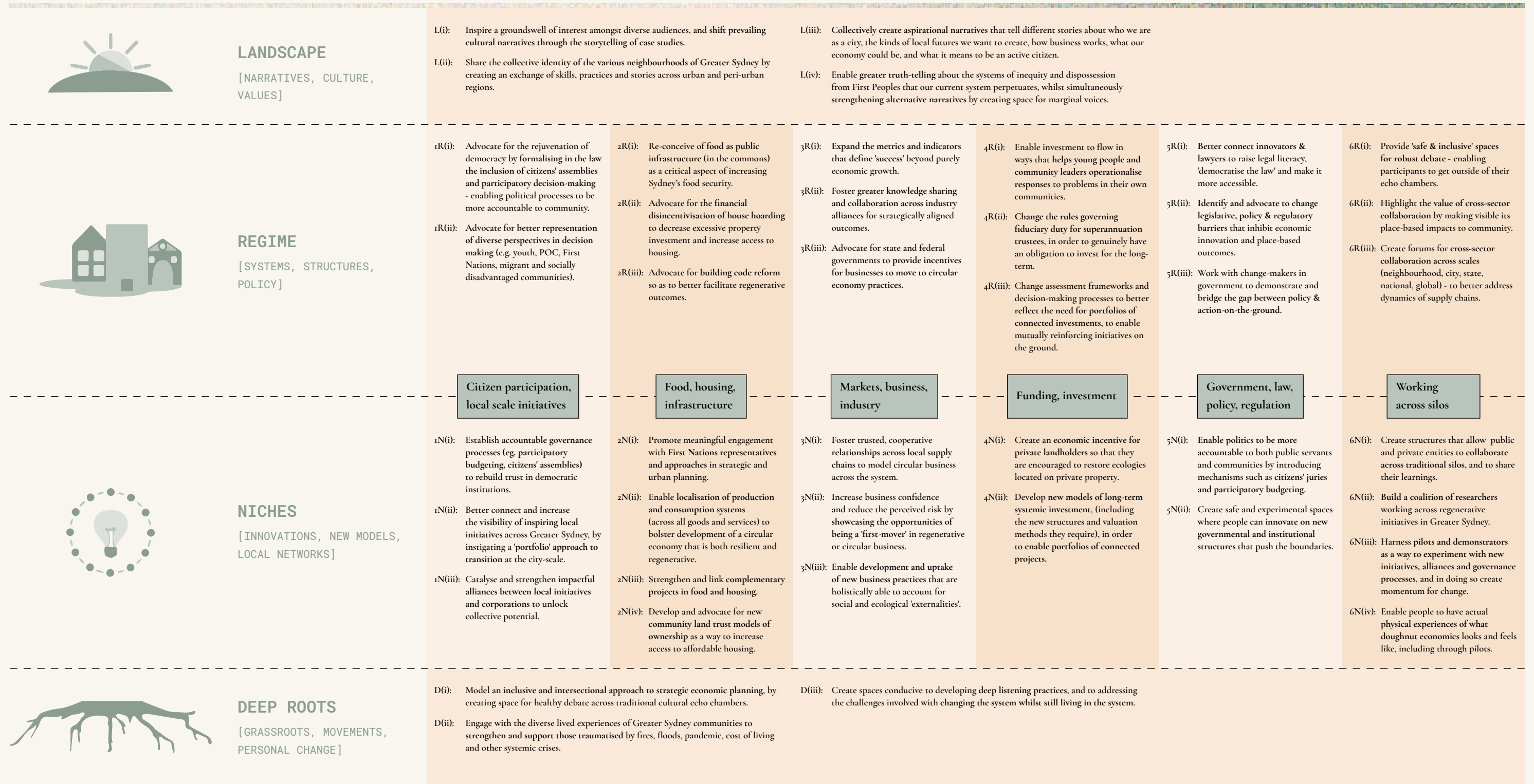


MAPPING THE SYSTEM TRANSITION: OPPORTUNITY AREAS

Shown on this page are the key **opportunities areas** that have emerged through the series of stakeholder roundtables and the subsequent synthesis. These include areas of potential action organisationally and structurally.

The insights have been plotted on the Powershift Framework (introduced on page 53) to better identify systemic dynamics. During synthesis of the roundtable insights, there were six prominent themes that captured potent areas for action, and are the frames around which the insights are organised. These are:

- Citizen participation, local scale initiatives
- Food, housing, infrastructure
- Markets, business, finance
- Funding, investment
- Government, law, policy, regulation
- Working across silos



From Dreaming to Doing

The Journey Ahead

PHASE SHIFT

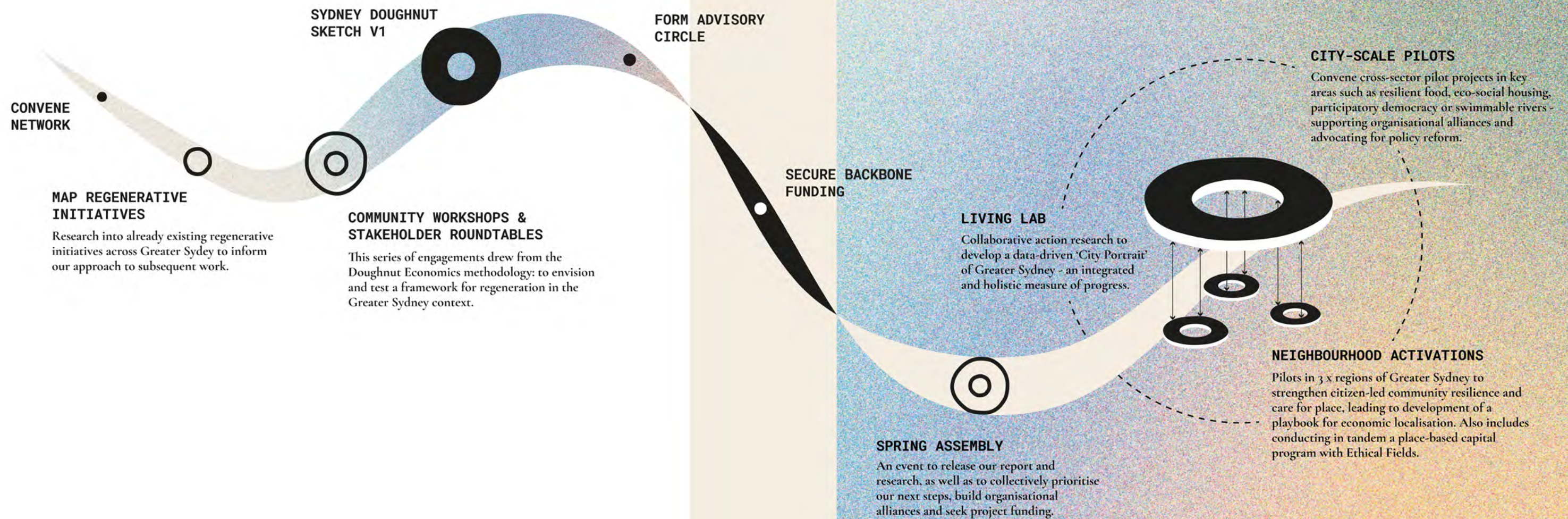
A pivot from theory to action:

From building the movement and exploring theoretical foundations → to creating place-based and cross-sector action

2021-2022

NOW

2023-2025



CONVENING THREE STREAMS OF ACTION

LIVING LAB

Form a 'Living Lab' research group to determine relevant holistic indicators for thriving people and places across Sydney. Test and iterate through Neighbourhood Activations and City-Scale Pilots.

Outcomes:

- Holistic indicators to inform a 'Doughnut Dashboard'
- Data-oriented 'City Portrait' reflecting Sydney's current status
- Active network of researchers
- Guidance and advocacy for policy-making

CITY-SCALE PILOTS

Convene ambitious, cross-sector pilot initiatives that demonstrate what regenerative and distributive economics look and feel like in our city (e.g. swimmable rivers, resilient food system, housing for all).

Outcomes:

- Novel cross-sector alliances and partnerships working together to improve community wellbeing, resilience and ecological health
- Tangible showcases of initiatives that bring to life what regenerative and distributive economies look & feel like
- Establishment of systemic funding frameworks
- Testable prototypes across Greater Sydney

NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTIVATIONS

Work with councils and communities across Sydney to activate 'doughnut-thinking' in their place. Catalyse and support local initiatives that generate community health and restore ecological health.

Outcomes:

- More resilient and sustainable communities across Greater Sydney
- Local cultures of active citizenship
- Localised 'Doughnuts' grounded in place
- Shareable 'playbook' for localisation

OUR MISSION

	NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTIVATIONS	CITY-SCALE PILOTS	LIVING LAB
POTENTIAL	Thriving neighbourhoods with active citizens and localised economies working together to generate community wealth and restore ecological health.	Connected, well-funded clusters of ambitious, cross-sector pilot initiatives that tangibly shift the city's perception of what's possible.	Integrated, comprehensive, place-centred indicators that can be used to assess progress to guide policy-making in resilient city planning.
SYSTEM LEVEL	NICHES, ROOTS	LANDSCAPE, REGIME, NICHES	LANDSCAPE, REGIME
ACTIVITIES	<p>Recruit at least 3 councils to champion the activation of community wealth and ecological health within municipalities across Sydney.</p> <p>Activate 2-5 neighbourhoods across Sydney to adapt the Sydney Doughnut in their neighbourhoods, drawing from DEAL's methodology and toolsets, and supported by Regen Sydney.</p> <p>Develop and trial place-based funding frameworks to finance community leadership in economic localisation.</p> <p>Foster the development of creative and participatory community forums. Nurture capacity for residents, business and council to collaborate on shared vision and action.</p> <p>Develop a playbook for localisation to inspire and support other areas of Greater Sydney - and beyond - to trial their own.</p> <p>Share learnings. Build the capacity of neighbourhoods to tell and share their stories of regeneration, to create a groundswell of local ambition.</p>	<p>Collectively define and prioritise challenge areas with the greatest potential to get Sydney inside the 'safe & just space'.</p> <p>Define an initial 'demonstrator' initiative that makes the promise of a Sydney Doughnut tangible through key prioritised areas of action, e.g. food, participation, housing, waterways.</p> <p>Foster the collaborative courage of Sydney. Nurture bold alliances (public-private) & enhance the collaborative capacity and aspiration of the city's changemakers.</p> <p>Develop and trial collaborative funding frameworks to finance portfolios of initiatives with a shared mission (systemic funding). Work together to create traction and raise ambition for other initiatives.</p> <p>Share learnings. Build the capacity of the city to tell and share stories of regeneration to shift the narrative of what's possible for Sydney.</p>	<p>Form a 'Living Lab' research space to conduct data-oriented collaborative research.</p> <p>Foster the development of holistic indicators to measure progress at the city-scale - helping to form a 'Doughnut Dashboard'. Test and iterate through Neighbourhood Activations and City-Scale Pilots.</p> <p>Develop a detailed City Portrait of Greater Sydney. Use holistic indicators to create a snapshot of Sydney's progress and identify areas of action.</p> <p>Grow an alliance of organisations who are engaged in collaborating through the Regen Sydney network.</p> <p>Share learnings. Build the capacity of the researchers to tell and share stories of regeneration to catalyse holistic policy-making responses.</p>
OUTCOMES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More resilient and sustainable communities across Greater Sydney • Local cultures of active citizenship • Localised 'Doughnuts' grounded in place • Shareable 'playbook' for localisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Novel cross-sector alliances and partnerships working together to improve community wellbeing, resilience and ecological health • Tangible showcases of initiatives that bring to life what regenerative and distributive economies look & feel like. • Establishment of systemic funding frameworks • Testable prototypes across Greater Sydney 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holistic indicators to inform a 'Doughnut Dashboard' • Data-oriented 'City Portrait' reflecting Sydney's current status • Active network of researchers • Guidance and advocacy for policy-making
TIMELINE	0-12 MONTHS	6-24 MONTHS	0-24 MONTHS
ACTORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community leaders & changemakers • Local businesses • Local governments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporates, NGOs, start-ups & social enterprises • Local and state governments • Subject matter experts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecological economics researchers • Policy-makers and subject matter experts • Neighbourhood Activation and City-Scale Pilot participants
EXAMPLES	Civic Square: Birmingham Neighbourhood Doughnut; Village Zero	Regen Melbourne: Swimmable Birrarung, Participatory Melbourne	City of Amsterdam: City Portrait; Regen Melbourne: Measuring What Matters



NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTIVATIONS

The ‘tyranny of geography’ that proves so challenging when it comes to creating a macro, unified portrait of Greater Sydney (i.e. a single ‘Sydney Doughnut’), points us toward an inherent opportunity to downscale the Doughnut even further.

At the local or neighbourhood level, Sydney’s constitution as a ‘city of villages’⁴⁵ works directly in favour of local initiatives and installations that make the abstract concepts of Doughnut Economics tangible and relatable in everyday life.

"The problem is the solution"

Permaculture sub-principle, Bill Mollison & David Holmgren

From streetscapes and waterways to neighbourhood gardens, farmers markets and street libraries to parks, playgrounds and repair shops, it’s here that we experience the vitality of our neighbourhood in our daily life, we feel it in the vibrancy of our ‘bump spaces’⁴⁶ through the density, diversity and quality of our social exchanges.

Regen Sydney envisions a city of distinct, yet connected villages, each of which understand their function and vitality as integral to the health of the city as a whole, as well as their responsibilities beyond municipal, state and national borders.

The creation of multiple Neighbourhood Activations can turn this vision into reality by enabling communities to define and implement the indicators of ‘thriving’ that mean the most to them.

⁴⁵ [City of Villages | The Dictionary of Sydney](#)

⁴⁶ ‘Bump spaces’ are places where people can come together, both formally and informally. Source: [Bumping spaces - Bennett Institute for Public Policy](#).

“Our neighbourhoods are also where our agency and ability to organise is highest, and are sites that can help to alleviate our grief and sense of powerlessness, making them the foundations of the hopeful, creative, just transition that we know is in our hearts. Movements, stories and organising for new economic possibilities is nurtured, demonstrated, and crafted through everyday actions, and we have the collective energy to rehearse and manifest bold visions for our futures.”

Civic Square



Comments from Stakeholder Roundtable 3:

'Finding tangible ways to give people a physical experience of what Doughnut Economics looks and feels like can embed both the narrative and the lived experience of what Doughnut Economics means at the local level.'

“With respect to ‘neighbourhood activations’, what does the doughnut actually mean for my life?... People shift when they experience the thing that you’re trying to tell them. Finding some way to give them the actual physical experience of what Doughnut Economics looks and feels like, requires quite a bit of creativity, but it just shifts people when they can touch and feel it, rather than seeing it in a diagram - which feels good, but how does it actually practically work?”

Sustainability Director, Local Government
(Public Policy & Law Roundtable)

“This is something that really struck me ... how the neighbourhood focus was a really strong idea - at that local level. As someone who’s been an outsider to Sydney, that struck me as being really interesting - a series of smaller villages rather than one hub. What the NSW government is doing with the Sydney city region, brings that about. I think that’s a potential enabler. That brings you a lot closer to some of the impacts. That might be an opportunity to embrace more local doughnut-like models.”

Economic Policy expert, NSW Government
(Public Policy & Law Roundtable)



NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTIVATIONS (CONT.)

PURPOSE

Make the Doughnut tangible. Take radical ideas and turn them into transformative action that communities can interact with and build upon in their place. Foster an active citizenship and localised economies, working together to generate resilience, community wealth and ecological health.

Revitalise local places, strengthen community resilience, foster greater economic empowerment - e.g. through renewable energy, waste circularity, transport, clean water, green and wild spaces, civic culture.

WHO'S INVOLVED?

- Community leaders & changemakers
- Local businesses and local government
- Schools, TAFE, colleges, universities
- Data scientists, researchers
- Artists, storytellers

WORKING WITH LOCAL COUNCILS

- Alignment with their community wealth building strategies
- Research networks
- Provide legitimacy
- Local knowledge and relationships
- Regulatory expertise to identify structural blockers

OUTCOMES

- More resilient and sustainable communities across Greater Sydney
- Localised 'Doughnuts' grounded in place
- Shareable 'playbook' for localisation
- Strengthening community wealth building

Regen Sydney's vision for 2025: 2-5 LGAs across Greater Sydney working on Neighbourhood Activations. Sharing learning and data between each other and contributing to rounding-out a 'Sydney Doughnut'.

ACTIVITIES

1. Community Portrait of Place (3 months)

Initially, Regen Sydney and representatives from local councils work together to identify relevant initiatives already underway in the local area. Regen Sydney will act as convenor and process facilitator for the 'Doughnut Unrolled' methodology, bringing together a core group of community leaders, residents, business owners and others to effectively champion engagement and ensure appropriate community representation and enthusiasm. Key to success will be finding fun and engaging ways for the community to get involved in - and take eventual ownership of - their 'Doughnut'.

- Identify and map relevant local initiatives
 - Appraisal of what already exists
 - Identify and collaborate with anchor institutions
- Conduct visioning and mapping activities
 - Build upon the Sydney Doughnut - how does the community colour it in?
 - Surface community aspirations for a thriving neighbourhood
 - "What is the spirit of place, the gaps and possibilities?"

2. Data Portrait of Place (3 months)

Building upon a shared vision, the neighbourhood working group will then seek to articulate how well they are currently doing when compared to their aspirations. The community vision of the Doughnut will be drawn from to identify a set of indicators to creatively express a benchmark for how well the neighbourhood is doing. With a holistic understanding, the community can then look at the key gaps and opportunities that are emerging - asking how well their visions compare to reality. Based on this they will collectively clarify and prioritise areas for action in their neighbourhood.

- Identify localised indicators based on community's Doughnut vision
- Articulate gaps and opportunities when comparing visions with reality
- Prioritise areas for action

3. Activations (6 months)

Activations are where the Community Portrait of Place and Data Portrait of Place come to life in practice. They are imaginative, immersive prototypes that bring the visions to life in highly tangible ways. These deep, practical demonstrations can take many different forms, such as revitalising specific streets or waterways to get them 'inside the Doughnut', building 21st century regenerative civic infrastructure, bolstering local food security and availability through community gardens, community solar, or trialling different forms of participatory decision-making.



NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTIVATIONS (CONT.)

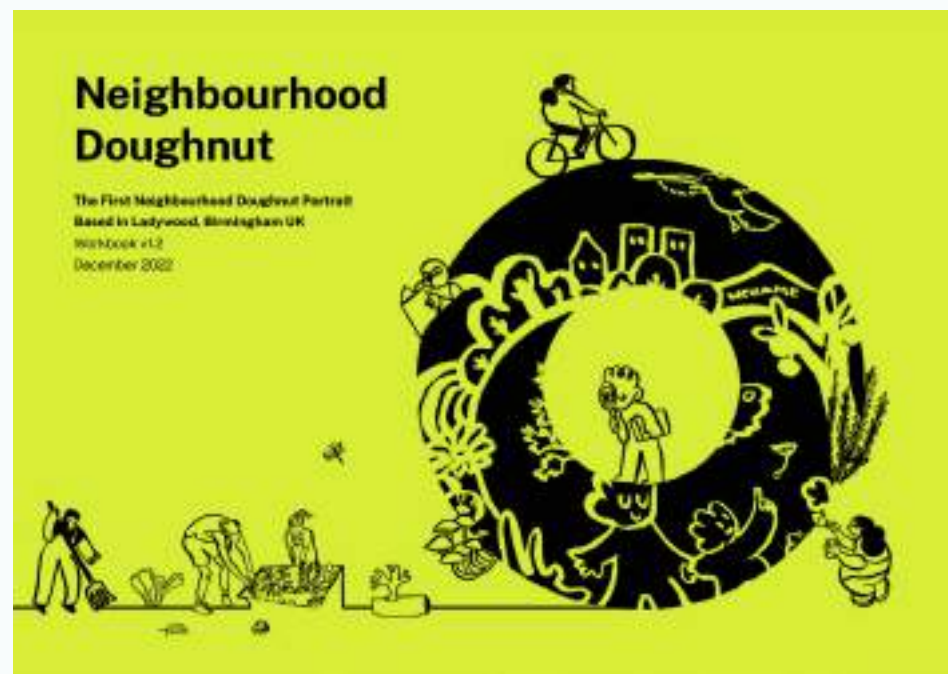
CASE STUDY: LADYWOOD, BIRMINGHAM, UK

Steps towards a Neighbourhood Doughnut

Over the last 3 years, Civic Square in collaboration with the Doughnut Economic Action Lab, have been working with the Ladywood community and local partners in Birmingham (UK) to downscale the Doughnut, taking ideas off the page to co-create the Doughnut Economics framework at their local scale.

Their mission was to get to the heart of new economic possibilities for their neighbourhoods. Together, they have created a movement connecting artists, designers, ecologists, gardeners, teachers, neighbours and friends to vision, build and invest in the social and civic infrastructure for neighbourhoods of the future.

See [Civic Square's Neighbourhood Doughnut Digital Launch](#)



View the [Neighbourhood Doughnut Workbook](#)

Through a highly participatory series of street installations, talks, workshops, community dinners, peer-to-peer learning journeys and a 3-week 'neighbourhood festival', the community contributed data, stories and methodologies to create a Community Portrait of Place,⁴⁷ which launched in October 2022. Together they explored local culture and stories, neighbourhood science, participatory democracy, local food systems. Some of the questions that guided them were:

- What does it mean for our neighbourhood(s) to thrive? What matters here?
- How do we rebuild our relationship with our neighbourhood's natural habitats and resources?
- How do we thrive in our neighbourhood(s) whilst respecting the planet and people across the world?
- Is GDP the right goal? How did we get here? What are we working towards?
- What kind of place, planet and neighbourhood(s) do you want to leave to future generations?
- What impacts have colonialism, racial injustice and over-extractions from nature had on the modern economy?
- What does nurturing regenerative, biodiverse, connected neighbourhoods look like in practice?
- What might happen if we don't act? What are the risks of climate breakdown to our lives, the lives of people all around the world and future generations?
- What is the role of business, corporations and governments in how we build this future?
- How do we return to cultures of care, repair and maintenance in our everyday lives?

These localised questions, sat in direct relation to Civic Square & DEAL explorations on a wider, national scale:

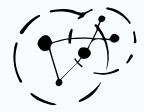
- What if instead of creating inappropriate KPIs and metrics towards 20th century change that continue to extract, we could all orientate ourselves together across public, private, civic towards moving our homes, streets, and neighbourhoods into this safe and just space?
- What if we could understand, share and make the data and research open for communities and neighbourhoods; neighbours young and old, could be part of unpacking that, creating new knowledge and dreaming up bold futures?
- What if we could get into more equitable relationships with funders and investors to hold each other accountable to goals bigger than ourselves?

Beyond the Doughnut: Civic Square 2023-2030

Neighbourhood Doughnut → Regenerative Infrastructure → Neighbourhood Transitions

1. **Neighbourhood Doughnut** - acts as a compass to guide the scale of challenge and opportunity. Data and community portraits orient towards the safe & just space of thriving and balance in local neighbourhoods.
2. **Regenerative Infrastructure** - capital project, turning industrial site into 21st Century regenerative infrastructure. Acts as a tangible demonstration in real time of retrofitting neighbourhoods, libraries, playgrounds, and local platforms for wealth to be generated and circulated to many people in a place, as part of a wider transition.
3. **Neighbourhood Transitions** - whole home to whole street retrofits that considers how to improve air quality, biodiversity, soil quality and more. Rebuilding social fabric and ways of organising to move towards a radically more just and sustainable future that is also more joyful and connected. Develop deep knowledge systems and agency.

47 Explore Ladywood's 'Community Portrait of Place' launch via [CIVIC SQUARE - YouTube](#) (accessed July 2023)



CITY-SCALE PILOTS

“A system does not just need visionaries, it needs ways for a new vision to emerge which many people can contribute to.”

Building Better Systems - A Green Paper on Innovation

PURPOSE

Make the Doughnut visible. Build relationships, and create a ripple effect through a series of linked initiatives that bring the future to life in tangible, interactive ways. Demonstrate different transitions that are required across various scales and sectors⁴⁸. In doing so, pilots help to build new realities.

“Simply, [...] the demonstrator is what we begin to get when prototypes move from transforming one or two streets, to transforming multiple streets in entire city blocks and neighbourhoods, and thus producing ripple effects through all their inherent services, experiences, infrastructures, cultures, biodiversity, forms of governance, and so on.

Scaling may be non-linear here, as critical mass may be achieved at various certain points in this development, producing the ‘greater than the sum of the parts’ perturbation point which shifts a system from one state to another.”

Dan Hill - Designing Missions

Regen Sydney's Role: Systems Convenor

SCOPE

Regen Sydney sees a huge opportunity to connect and accelerate the various systemic initiatives that are already underway across our city. This will require radically different kinds of coalitions across sectors and regions of the city to create tangible action on the ground

The City-Scale Pilots are to be centred around broad themes - encouraging systemic approaches and unusual alliances across sectors to emerge through these lenses. Our community workshops and stakeholder roundtables revealed numerous areas where Regen Sydney could focus to convene City-Scale Pilots, including:

- **Food.** Enabling equitable access to affordable, healthy, regeneratively grown food.
- **Housing.** Supporting the reimagining of our housing system towards access and equity.
- **Participation.** Supporting the development of participatory decision-making.
- **Restoration.** Facilitating the creation and restoration of wild corridors and clean waterways.

These areas of focus offer rich potential for demonstrators to form around unusual public-private partnerships and tangible showcases of the transition involved.

Comments from the stakeholder roundtables in support of these areas of focus:

“We need to consider food as public infrastructure. We plan for electricity, roads, transport - food needs to be part of that public plan, not left to ad hoc private sector. It links to housing, walkability, green space - food production space, food sharing, food growing. We are being more and more locked into the duopoly of supermarkets due to lack of planning around food as a public good.”

Food Security & Sovereignty Expert

“In our work, we don’t talk about public housing or social housing, we talk about community housing. There’s a community’s responsibility to house everybody. The social aspect of housing is perhaps the most difficult thing to solve in terms of inequality in Australia at the moment. It’s a huge issue that is so big - and so onerous to acknowledge - that we can’t see our way through it.”

Architect, author & educator for social and sustainable architecture

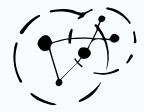
The big trust deficit that broke down between the government and the people, enabled people to disconnect from the political system, and turn to other places. The rise of peer-to-peer trust is an enabler for Doughnut Economics, regenerative thinking and local empowerment.”

Nicolette Boele, Teal candidate

“I know that Doughnut Economics has a really beautiful narrative, but it needs something that would compel people to understand that we need to change our economic underpinning.... The thing with Circular Economy, for example, is one of its massive tenets is changing the economic system of consumerism. That part often gets just left out, because it’s too difficult. Regenerating nature is another part of Circular Economy that also gets dropped off the list because it’s tricky. There’s something in there about the storytelling that can give the next layer to the Doughnut Economics piece.”

Director Sustainability, Western Sydney LGA

48 See [A New Normal](#) for examples of making demonstrations tangible



CITY-SCALE PILOTS (CONT.)

CITY-SCALE PILOT: FOOD

Imagine a Sydney where everyone has access to affordable, healthy, regeneratively grown food. Regen Sydney is remapping and retelling our food story and providing the opportunity for us to come together to ‘grow the table’ together - buying good food, growing good food, and building community, bite by bite!

The way we grow, access, eat, move and dispose of food affects almost every part of the Doughnut. Plus it’s the tastiest bit!

“The food system is the connective tissue between all of the other systems that we have. So if I dream forward and think about what’s possible, we have to be thinking about: what are the regenerative and agroecological ways that we are growing food? How are we making sure that there’s no waste? How do we make sure that this food system is circular by design? How are we making sure that we come together and tell our stories and we gather around food, just the way our First Nations have for tens of thousands of years? We can always make the table bigger and invite more and more people to share that food.”

Bec Scott, Moving Feast

Regen Sydney’s role as systemic convenors is all about raising collective ambition, bringing people together in new and novel ways, building alliances around the Sydney doughnut for a regenerative future.

We’re asking key stakeholders right across Greater Sydney: **what does an abundant food system look like for Sydney?**

1. Convene a Sydney food systems forum with diverse stakeholders

2. Map Sydney’s food system at each scale of the doughnut

3. Link and launch a range of pilot initiatives

WHAT OUTCOMES MIGHT WE ACHIEVE TOGETHER?

- Mapping our food system at each scale of the Sydney Doughnut
- Showcasing positive current and future stories
- Identifying inter-relationships, gaps and opportunities
- Defining the mission and a plan of action
- Forming alliances to make it happen
- Developing and trialling collaborative funding models

WHO MIGHT BE INVOLVED?

- Urban & peri-urban food producers
- Community activators
- Commercial Food & Beverage industry
- Circular economy - food waste & reclamation
- Non Governmental Organisations
- Policy makers and planners
- Research institutions & universities
- Philanthropic partners

WHAT WE NEED TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

- Project Lead
- Program Partners
- Food System Allies
- Resourcing and Funding

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

If you want to be part of regrowing Sydney’s food system, email us at regensydney@gmail.com

Developing appropriate indicators and metrics that underpin each aspect of the Sydney Doughnut is essential to know where best to channel activities and resources on-the-ground.

Being able to measure - both qualitatively and quantitatively - Sydney's progress in being able move into a safe and just space will help our communities better identify areas for action - where we are succeeding and where we are falling short.

“Both hard and soft evidence is used, thereby avoiding the common trap of giving preference to the quantitative above all else, which is especially dangerous when working in areas of knowledge where reliable measurements do not yet exist or data is overwhelming.”

Helsinki Design Lab, Recipes for Systemic Change

PURPOSE

Make the Doughnut accountable. This program of work is centred around further development of our Sydney Doughnut through collaborative research. Regen Sydney will convene the co-design and testing of the Doughnut Economics ‘City Portrait’ methodology. Through this data-oriented process, Regen Sydney aims to create integrated, comprehensive and place-based ways of measuring progress.

The identification, testing and application of a set of integrated indicators through the City Portrait methodology offers great potential to guide policy-making in resilient city planning. The time is now to enable city-scale policymaking to move beyond sustainability to regenerative outcomes.

In the quest to enable resilient city planning and the transition to net-zero economies, policy-makers are faced with a lack of integrated and holistic measurement frameworks. With the inadequacy of prevailing GDP-oriented economic measurement in responding to social and ecological needs, governments face increasing calls to support development of a wellbeing economy. Not only can holistic measures for economic progress redirect actions for the wellbeing of Sydney's residents and ecosystems, but they can also help to better account for our global consumption-side impacts.

This program of work will produce a City Portrait that is both a foundation for integrating diverse metrics and indicators across sectors, as well as a touchstone for the public acceptability of the trade-offs and tensions inevitably at stake in engaging with such a measure.

OUTCOMES

The Living Lab will provide a holistic and integrated City Portrait framework to guide ‘safe and just’ policy-making. Current siloed approaches to policy-making often lead to outcomes that are beneficial to either social wellbeing or ecological health but with detrimental effects to aspects of the other.

This is not an inevitability: rather the availability of a legible and accessible holistic measurement framework could guide policy-makers to find avenues for action that achieve systemic outcomes across both social and ecological needs. By having access to greater visibility of interconnected metrics, policy-making could be directed towards areas with the greatest need and potential in integrated rather than piecemeal actions.

By harnessing the development of a City Portrait through an independent organisation such as Regen Sydney, it could be possible to build a wellbeing economy in a depoliticised manner. The processes of engagement between public and private stakeholders as well as Regen Sydney's deep community engagement would act to strengthen

trust in not only the merits of wellbeing economics but also the role of participatory governance.

The types of wicked problems our society faces require long-term vision-led engagement, rather than short-term fixes dictated by political cycles. The City Portrait could meaningfully help to shift the dial of collaboration between policy-makers, business and community, and in doing so bolster our democratic governance processes.

The Living Lab will help culture and policy to better move in tandem, so that Sydney may thrive, as a locally empowered, globally responsible city.

Comment from Stakeholder Roundtable 3:

“How can politics be retrofitted to actually be accountable to public servants and communities they serve?”

NSW Government, policy & evaluation



LIVING LAB (CONT.)

ACTIVITIES

The transdisciplinary action research involved will be deeply collaborative and relational, underpinned by ongoing cross-sector stakeholder engagement to inform the value of the City Portrait. Activities to be conducted span four primary stages:

1. Define the scope of activities and impact (4 months)

- Form Regen Sydney Research Lab, team structure and detailed project plan;
- Establish public policy advisory group for guidance through project;
- Consult key stakeholders to advise on the Sydney Doughnut model; understand potential opportunities and challenges in data collection;
- Conduct desk research to identify the scope of key precedents and City-Scale Pilots to be used as case studies.

2. Develop a framework of indicators (8 months)

- Conduct desk research to identify key precedents in other contexts, (both nationally and globally); compile database of relevant indicators;
- Cross-reference existing indicators with the social and ecological segments of the Sydney Doughnut to identify what new indicators will need to be developed;
- Hold bimonthly collaborative forums with a public policy advisory group to shape the emerging framework;
- Develop full draft of indicators to obtain qualitative and quantitative datasets across the segments of the 'Sydney Doughnut';
- Identify relevant data sources (qualitative and quantitative).

3. Create a City Portrait (6 months)

- Draw and compile data for each indicator; obtain quantitative data for all indicators where possible;
- Obtain qualitative data for new indicators as needed, including through Regen Sydney's City Scale Pilots and Participatory Sydney community and industry deliberations (in development through separate funding) Hold bimonthly collaborative forums with public policy advisory group to review emerging findings.

4. Synthesise findings and collate reporting (6 months)

- Conduct data analysis of the collected data;
- Consult key stakeholders to review findings;
- Curate findings into a report and visual sensemaking tools;
- Evaluate and refine the indicators; create revised version of the City Portrait framework to be used for ongoing measurement.

How We'll Get There

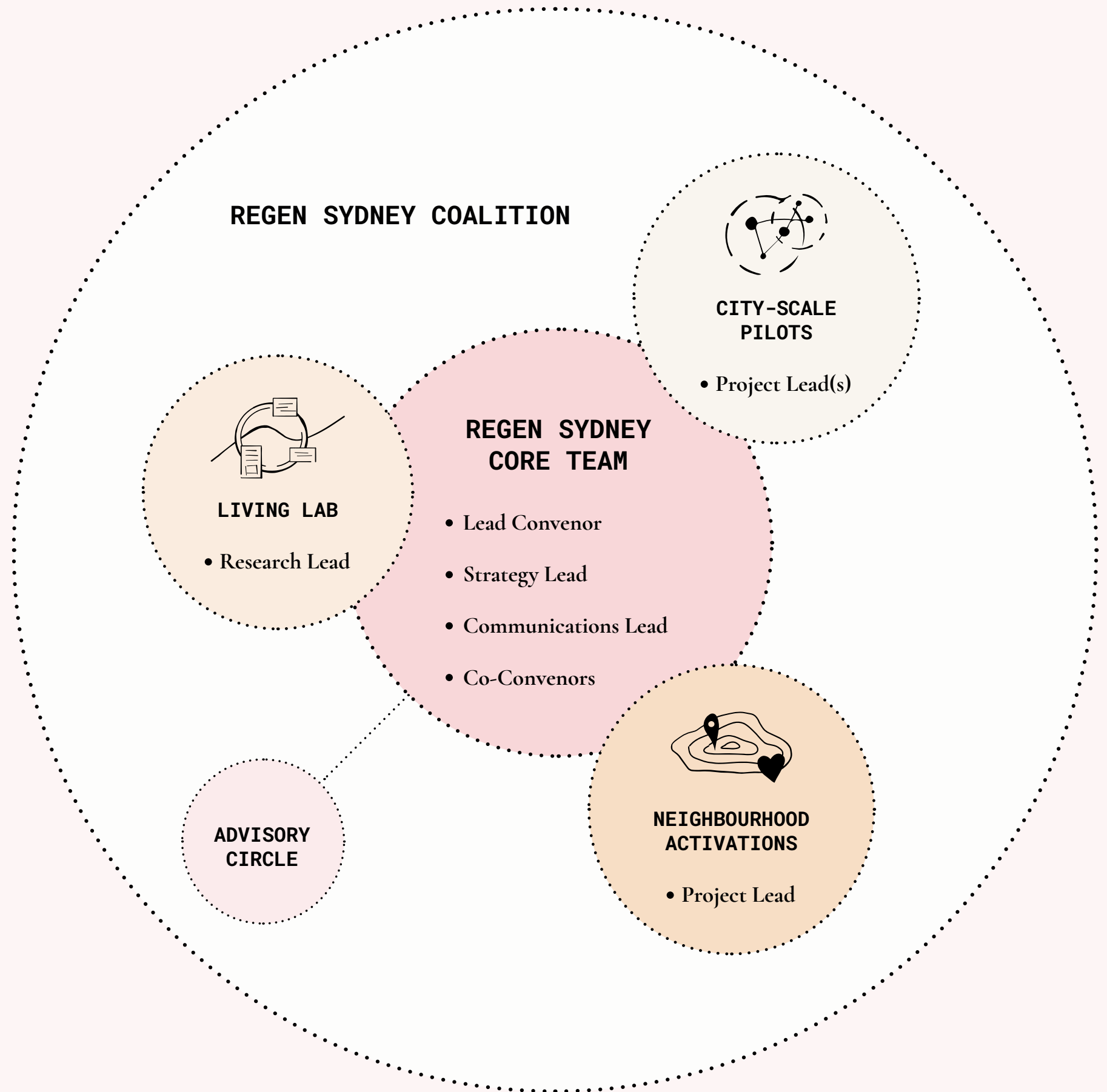
A COALITION TO MOBILISE ACTION

Delivering these three streams of activities, requires a dedicated and highly coordinated team.

Learning from allies who are a step ahead of us in this work (e.g. Regen Melbourne & Civic Square), we are seeking backbone funding to resource our core team of 4 (2 x FTE + 2 x 0.6 FTE), with additional Project Leads attached to each work stream.

Together, these bodies of work will continue to amplify the network of individuals and organisations that make up the Regen Sydney network. Guided by the compass of our Sydney Doughnut, this portfolio will catalyse real action towards activating a safe and just city on the ground.

Regen Sydney is in the process of setting up our organisational model and becoming an incorporated association.



CORE TEAM FUNCTIONS

The core team roles identified on the previous page would together cover the following backbone functions:

Convening & Alliance Building

- Develop and communicate Regen Sydney's vision & strategy;
- Uphold values and integrity of the vision of Regen Sydney;
- Convene an Advisory Circle to guide the strategy;
- Work with strategic partners & funders to resource backbone function;
- Build a coalition of partners and allies to activate the demonstrator initiatives;
- Broker connections across government partners and strategic allies to advocate for policy reform;

Systemic Design

- Develop and communicate Theory of Change (situating it in systemic context);
- Foster and convene unusual alliances across sectors and scales to catalyse City-Scale Pilots and Neighbourhood Activations;
- Design and facilitate collaborative forums for creative, collective action, ensuring diverse and representational participation;
- Conduct synthesis and visual-sensemaking of action research;
- Portray the 'bigger picture' - evaluate how and where change is happening.

Collaborative Research

- Develop and manage a Regen Sydney Living Lab to conduct action research, build industry and research partnerships and deliver knowledge translation;
- Grow and manage an alliance of research institutions & universities;
- Lead the development of a City Portrait, utilising and connecting data from the City-Scale Pilots and Neighbourhood Activations;
- Test and build the City Portrait to measure progress in Greater Sydney.

Community Weaving

- Nurture the Regen Sydney network to spark unusual and impactful alliances among members and related organisations;
- Amplify the regenerative activities that are already happening across our city; build storytelling capacity of members, curate and share inspiring stories from across the network;
- Event organising to support the design and production of Regen Sydney's forums and gatherings, large and small, virtual and in the real world;
- Establish and manage social platforms to harness community contribution and drive member engagement.



HOW WE CONVENE

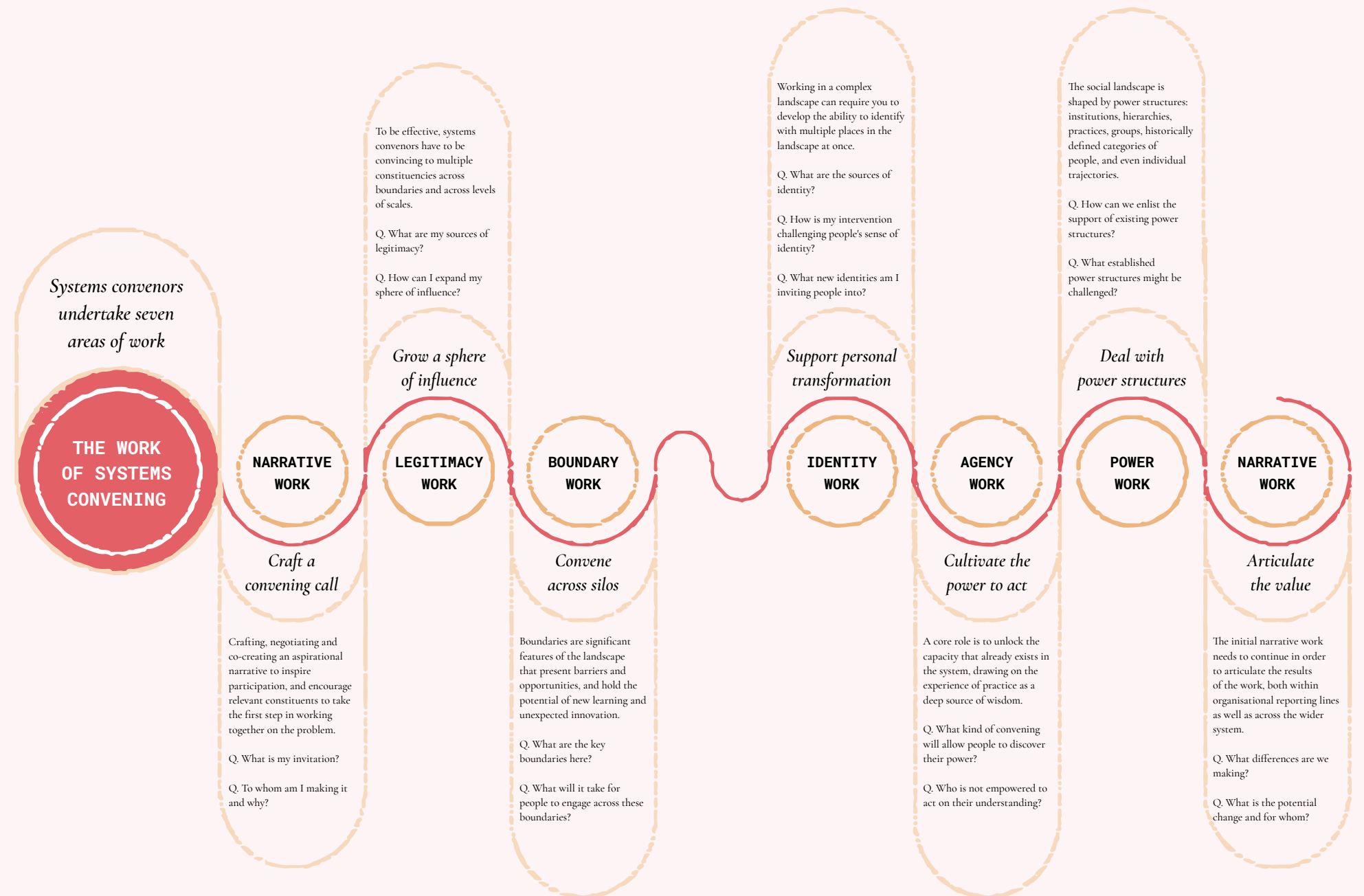
CONVENING COURAGEOUS COLLABORATIONS

Transition towards a regenerative economy requires coalitions of ‘positive mavericks’ working collectively at various scales and across different sectors and disciplines to catalyse change simultaneously from the inside-out and outside-in; from the ‘niches of innovation’ to the ‘regime’ (as shown on p. 53)⁴⁹.

As we heard in the roundtables, (see p. 47) there is a growing number of ambitious initiatives and pilots already underway in our city. However, despite good intentions, the majority of these continue to be siloed, lacking in a shared mission and failing to achieve the funding, longevity, speed and scale needed to restore damaged ecosystems and transition to a net-zero compatible future.

“Systems convenors...exist in all successful partnerships, those who are able to bring people together across different practices, organisations, goals, and cultures. They enable learning across boundaries and connect people across silos, seeking to engage diverse perspectives. As a form of cross-boundary leadership, systems convening is an approach well suited to the most complex of challenges, with the potential to help all institutions thrive in the 21st century.”

Centre for Public Impact



Orchestrating that process, through creative convening and catalysing courageous collaborations in service of an even ‘Greater’ Sydney, is the magic that Regen Sydney offers. This is essential - though often under-resourced and invisible⁵⁰ - work that consciously develops ‘relational infrastructure’⁵¹, sparking novel alliances, raising collective ambition and unlocking the creative potential needed to make systems innovation possible.

49 Watch: [Systems Innovation Overview](#) (accessed May 2023)
50 Systems convening is increasingly made more visible by fellow convenors such as [Regen Melbourne](#) (Au) and [Civic Square](#) (UK) and recognised by philanthropic funders such as the Paul Ramsey Foundation - watch [Coalitions of Capital: convening system shifting investors](#), Dec 2022, System Innovation Initiative
51 Source: [On Relational Infrastructure](#) by Sam Rye, March 2023 (accessed May 2023)

Credit: Centre for Public Impact

HOW WE CONVENE (CONT.)

“Systems are to be engaged with on the ground, which means systems doing, not systems thinking.”

Dan Hill - System-Shifting Design

Regen Sydney has a central role to play in the collective reimagining of our city, as well as the unleashing of regenerative potential of our place and local communities. We will continue to create dedicated, inclusive and creative spaces, both online and in-person - to bring together visionaries, pioneers and regenerative changemakers from across various sectors, communities and disciplines in Sydney, with the intention of forming novel alliances and sparking unusual collaborations.

With appropriate resources and a clear vision, in this next phase, Regen Sydney will expand the systems-convening work we have been doing since inception, while continuing to orient the community towards the ‘safe & just space for all life’, (see [Civic Square: Reimagining Economic Possibilities](#)).

To date, Regen Sydney has been a collective experiment, following an emergent process and relying on the energies and goodwill of a handful of passionate volunteers and supporters, with small additional pieces of funding⁵².

With minimal resources and enormous commitment, over the last 2.5 years, we have formed a core team that have met twice weekly, run many events, grown the community, expanded our influence across Sydney and beyond and proved that there is a wide-level of support for Regen Sydney’s vision.

What we need as we enter the next phase is bold and tangible action, backed by adequate and reliable resources, that ensure consistent momentum in raising the collective ambition of Sydney. It is no small ask.

So, what might that action look like, and how might we resource it?



⁵² Thanks to UNSW Allens Hub, Narara Ecovillage and WWF Australia

RESOURCING THE JOURNEY

What's got us here won't get us there - we must transform our voluntary activism into resourced and defined roles.

To get from Dreaming into Doing, Regen Sydney needs the resources to support the team and its functions. The kinds of people we need to make this dream a reality are:

- Able to bring together the different organisations, institutions and community leaders necessary to activate a localised economy in tangible ways;
- Familiar with place-based innovation, collective impact, strategic & service design to bring people together and help the collective visualise the path ahead, and reflect back how and where change is happening;
- Creative, joyous and engaged - committed to developing their inner capacities to make change, and actively walking their values into the world.

ADVISORY CIRCLE

We will form a cross-sector advisory circle of independent, trusted advisors across complementary areas, who will steward Regen Sydney as we take our next steps in turning strategy into tangible action.

The role of the advisory circle will be to:

- Develop and share knowledge of relevant trends (e.g. industry, community, regenerative design, infrastructure, economy, law etc);
- Provide “wise counsel” on issues raised by the core team, including on allyship with First Nations;
- Invigorate the core team with insights and ideas, which can only come with distance from the day-to-day operations;
- Encourage and support the exploration of new ideas, supporting the evolution of Regen Sydney’s vision, strategy and operations;
- Encourage the development of a governance framework that enables responsiveness and co-creation, whilst not stifling the spirit or vision of Regen Sydney;
- Monitor progress towards our goals and challenge core team members to consider options for developing the strategy.

Through the roundtable process and prior relationship building, almost half of those invited expressed an interest in joining the Advisory Circle. Even before we begin this stage, we now have a pool of more than 30 knowledgeable and passionate advisors willing to guide the next steps of Regen Sydney’s journey. These advisors represent sustainable food systems, social housing, regenerative design, local government, social enterprise, built environment, youth and social justice.

Time frame: 0-3 months

Expected investment: 1-3 hours per week over 6 months.

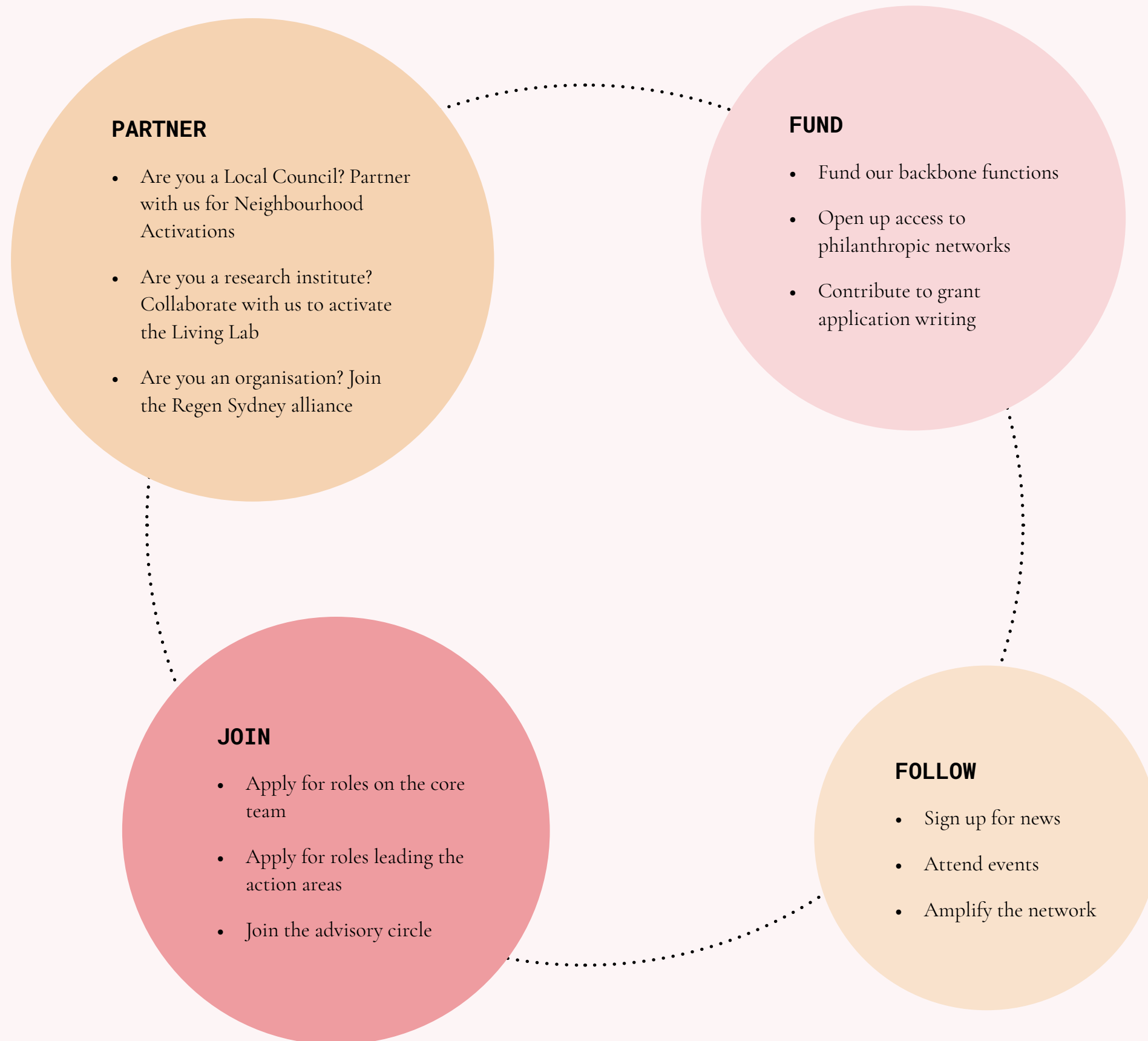
Interested? Get in touch: regensydney@gmail.com

“We will continue to create a new world – seed by seed, person by person, community by community – until this planet is embraced in a circle of resurgent life and resurgent love.”

~ Vandana Shiva

JOURNEY WITH US

Join the Regen Sydney journey.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS TO CONTRIBUTORS

This work simply could not have been done without the hard work and long standing friendships, relationships and alliances of the Regen Sydney community. Countless volunteer hours, hearts, heads and hands have contributed to growing this movement. Thank you to everyone who rolled up your sleeves with us, generously shared your expertise and experience and helped us to channel the immense energy needed to help us bring this piece into being.

Special thanks to illustrator and friend, **Josie Ford**, for your endless pizzaz and patience with us through many ‘rounds’ of the Doughnut sketch to make it distinctly ‘Sydney’.

Regen Sydney is grateful to belong to a bold ecology of places throughout Australia and the world who continue to support and inspire us. In particular, enduring gratitude to **Willow Berzin** (Coalition of Everyone, Regen Places) and **Nicole Barling-Luke & Kaj Löfgren** (Regen Melbourne), for your thoughtful advice, carrying us through some of the stickier moments and continually raising the bar for the regeneration of our cities and places across Australia.

We also particularly acknowledge the deep wisdom of **Uncle Phil Bligh**, who generously challenges each of us to live in joy and harmony with the land, walk together across cultural divides and centre First Nations perspectives in every decision we make. Huge thanks too to **David Beaumont**, for your support and advice at every stage of Regen Sydney’s journey, we simply could not have got this far without you.

To our core funding and thought-partners: University of New South Wales (the Allens Hub for Law Technology and

Innovation, and the Sustainable Development Law Reform Hub) , WWF-Australia, University of Technology Sydney, Doughnut Economics Action Lab, Coalition of Everyone, Regen Melbourne, TEDx Sydney, Dave Burrows (Narara Ecovillage), Anthropocene Transition Network and Dimitry Podger - thank you for courageously backing this movement and encouraging us. These movements need more funders who are willing to step out of the status quo and make change happen.

Lastly, we wish to acknowledge the bold leadership, vision and unwavering commitment of the positive mavericks who champion the movement toward ecologically rich, socially-just futures in Australia and beyond, in particular: **Jess Scully, Laura Hamilton O’Hara, Dr Chris Riedy, Jess Miller, Dan Hill, Immy Kaur, Kate Raworth, Rob Shorter**. You inspire us everyday.

It is a privilege to walk this path with each and every one of you.

ABOUT

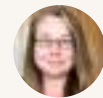
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For more information please visit our website:

<https://regen.sydney/>

June 2023

A stylized profile of a person's head, facing right, rendered in various shades of green. The profile is composed of several overlapping, semi-transparent layers, creating a layered effect. The background is a light, neutral color.

Appendix

Stakeholder Roundtables: What We Heard

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 1: SOCIAL EQUITY & WELLBEING

WHAT WE HEARD

HOUSING

Sydney is a 'property-obsessed' city. Rising inequality and the housing affordability crisis in Sydney (and beyond) is driven by the national economy's centering of property as an investment vs a human right.

"The greatest form of inequality in this country is not in wages, it's in wealth. And that's expressed in houses."

Architect, Author & Educator for Social and Sustainable Architecture

Sydney's lack of social housing is part of a national and highly complex problem, with few readily implementable solutions.

"The social aspect of housing is perhaps the most difficult thing to solve in terms of inequality in Australia at the moment. It's a huge issue that is so big - and so onerous to acknowledge - that we can't see our way through it."

Architect, author & educator for social and sustainable architecture

Philanthropy is driving shifts & experimentation in housing, effectively doing what government can't.

"There are some green shoots of philanthropy of companies, particularly not for profits. The churches are one. I work with a group called [Faith Housing Alliance](#) who are looking to convert from worship to mission - to physically convert churches into housing - with some philanthropic organisations and philanthropists who are now looking at housing."

Architect Specialist Advisor - Social and Sustainable Architecture

The housing affordability crisis is a challenge that plays into ethics, and how we envision our communities.

"In our work, we don't talk about public housing or social housing, we talk about community housing. There's a community's responsibility to house everybody."

Architect, Author & Educator for Social and Sustainable Architecture

Renters and people in community housing are not protected against effects of climate change (especially in Western Sydney).

"NSW needs to be more like VIC where community housing providers have more control over their assets and what they do with them. No-one left behind. We simply shouldn't tolerate the conditions in which social housing is provided."

Associate Professor, Culture & Sustainability, Western Sydney

It is driving people who were previously looked after by social housing, to rent from the wealthiest third of society.

"One third of people who own their own homes outright, and the banks are encouraging them to buy a second, third or fourth home. One third of people in the middle are buying their homes on mortgages from the banks, who are one of the wealthiest banks in the world. And the governments, the Federal Government in particular, concentrates on them. But there's one or two people at the other end who are renters that used to be looked after by social housing. But that's so decreased that they are now renting from the first third"

Architect, Author & Educator for Social and Sustainable Architecture

Focusing attention on changing land ownership structures in Sydney is seen as a key to unlocking some of the escalating housing affordability crisis.

"One area we need to look very carefully at is land ownership. The only way of making rental housing for [the bottom] third, in any way affordable, is to discount the land. The cost of construction of the houses doesn't change, whether you're building a middle class apartment in a good part of Sydney, or you're building a house on the outside edge. It's pretty much the same. It's the land cost that demands it."

Architect Specialist Advisor - Social and Sustainable Architecture

Community land trust (CLT) models in Australia lag a long way behind countries such as the UK and US. They have the potential to address affordable housing concerns (especially in relation to home ownership), increase the range of housing tenure options available, foster community development and social capital, and maintain a stock of perpetually affordable housing.

"I'm inspired by my colleague Louise Crabtree Hayes⁵³ who's been working for more than 20 years on 'what would it mean to really import a community land trust model into a space like Sydney', which would fundamentally change and destigmatise the way social housing is built, and for whom. That would shift the debate around climate adaptation."

Associate Professor, Culture & Sustainability, Western Sydney

53 [Community Land Trusts](#), Institute for Culture and Society, University Western Sydney.

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 1: SOCIAL EQUITY & WELLBEING

WHAT WE HEARD

FOOD

Food and housing are inextricably linked. The rise of social enterprise and food relief⁵⁴ services in Sydney are effectively papering over the cracks of a broken system rather than tackling the underlying causes.

"If people don't have housing, they don't have anywhere to cope or work with food. ... without forms of housing, you can't feed people. [...] Food rescue is not sustainable as a method of taking care of people within the city... We're actually rewarding businesses for bad food management on one level."

Sustainable Food Systems & Advocacy Advisor

Re-conceive of food as public infrastructure (in the commons) as a critical aspect of increasing Sydney's food security into the future.

"We need to consider food as public infrastructure. We plan for electricity, roads, transport - food needs to be part of that public plan, not left to ad hoc private sector. It links to housing, walkability, green space - food production space, food sharing, food growing. We are being more and more locked into the duopoly of supermarkets due to lack of planning around food as a public good."

Food Security & Sovereignty Expert

To build resilience and improve food security, the ongoing impacts of the recent fires, floods & pandemic on Sydney's food-growing communities needs to be more widely understood and addressed.

"If you want to talk food, yes, urban agriculture & community gardens are important, but at a city level, what's happening in our peri-urban areas and Greater West is very, very important. Communities are traumatised."

Food Security & Sovereignty Expert

The rural-urban divide - both geographically and relationally - is strong and persistent.

"What gets in the way? The urban-rural divide and how we imagine how our landscapes are being impacted over the Blue Mountains, in terms of land clearing and biodiversity loss etc. Our food bowl is the Hawkesbury-Nepean and they've suffered 4 floods in 2 years. After the bushfires, pandemic and floods, that's where so much of our attention should be going."

"Much more needs to be thought about in terms of the intersection with peri urban and greater regional Australia and how our food systems really work."

Sustainable Food Systems & Advocacy Advisor

This only serves to strengthen the divide between urban and peri-urban/rural communities.

"An 'Us & Them' dichotomy exists between urban and rural food production. It's not helpful to look at it in such a black and white way. We have to consider both ends of the food system - production and consumption."

Rural Sociologist, Transdisciplinary Researcher

Accurate data on food security, sovereignty and food access in urban areas is often obscured by broader statistics.

"It's easy to say Australia is food secure because we export all of this food. But actually, just because we have a huge export market, doesn't mean that addresses food insecurity or food access or food sovereignty in urban areas."

Rural Sociologist, Transdisciplinary Researcher

Outdated policies and legislation are not keeping pace with community and business ambition, instead perpetuating siloed thinking & practices.

This results in ideas that could solve multiple challenges (e.g. ageing in place, growing food, multigenerational housing etc), being stymied. For example, potential exists to grow food in rooftop gardens but current building standards prevent them. Capacity-building and support is needed to conceptualise linkages and interventions to address multiple challenges.

"The reason we have less roof-growing and gardens in this country is because our roofs haven't got the substance and the structure that's needed to pack the soil and create a lot of roof gardens because we are on our roofs aren't built to sustain things like snow and other weather."

Food Security & Sovereignty Expert

Sydney's local food network and food security movement is highly dissipated.

There is no single department or unifying policy in NSW focussed on creating a thriving, sustainable food system (unlike Melbourne). This threatens food security - leaving the food supply chain to market forces - and leads to duplication of effort⁵⁵.

Food Security & Sovereignty Expert

54 The [Foodbank Hunger Report 2022](#) shows, 64% of households cited increased/high cost of living as a reason why they couldn't meet their household food needs.

55 ['Who is responsible for ensuring food security in NSW?'](#) Institute for Sustainable Futures, UTS, April 2022.

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 1: SOCIAL EQUITY & WELLBEING

WHAT WE HEARD

COMMUNITY-POWERED MOVEMENT

What is seen as encouraging is that there are many diverse, small-scale experiments in food growing and business happening at community level.

"Sydney is looking at so many different ways of doing business and growing food. The farms are quite small, but they are experiments and ways of looking at doing things differently: different types of business structures, different types of relationships, dealing direct and localisation. To me, that's something that's really working. And diversity is working too. The diversity seems like an antidote."

Food Sovereignty & Security Expert

These can be enablers for larger initiatives but what is urgently needed is storytelling & models and case studies of successful examples (e.g. in circular building, social housing) that can attract funding.

Communities across Greater Sydney (and elsewhere) are taking action, building peer-to-peer relationships and developing their social practice. Doughnut Economics is seen as a helpful way to see how they fit together.

"One of the ways that we're heading, especially with a Doughnut Economics model, is back to the communities. I think that's probably a good thing - that would solve a lot of problems, social and environmental. There are tons of grassroots projects going on. I'm curating Regenerate Australia Projects through the World Wildlife Fund and seeing extraordinary community projects come across my desk - beautiful, fabulous."

ESG Advisor

FUNDING TRANSITION

The question of funding is widely regarded as the toughest nut to crack in the move towards a regenerative future for Greater Sydney, with many participants actively seeking alternate and novel ways to fund longer-term, partnered and strategic initiatives.

"How do you create and access funding for systemic change?"

Architect Specialist Advisor - Social and Sustainable Architecture

Funding exists, but it is piecemeal, rather than designed for holistic outcomes.

Current funding models work against the holistic interventions that can deliver multiple social-environmental benefits simultaneously. This further perpetuates siloed and fragmented approaches to entrenched challenges.

"A lot of funding exists if you're doing, say, 'embodied carbon' OR 'nature positive'. But what if you're doing ALL the things? What funding covers that? The answer is none, or very little. So how do you fund change that's further up the stream where you're trying to prevent stuff from happening in the first place?"

CEO, Regenerative Design , NGO

There is a lack of knowledge about alternative funding models among community-based initiatives. An opportunity exists to better link crowdfunders with opportunities to work more with local initiatives.

"We don't [work with local initiatives] as much as we'd like to. Having that community connection would be really powerful. So many people that I speak to who are doing incredible things don't even realise that [crowdfunding] is even an option"

Crowdfunder, Social Impact

There is a growing trend among large corporations to attempt to 'buy' the social capital and licence afforded by working with innovative NFPs in the 'regen' space (*largely driven by changes in reporting and shifts in values-led demand*).

However, the reputational and operational risks can be challenging for smaller organisations to navigate: who to partner with and where to accept funding from in order to do the work? How to mitigate against greenwashing? And who holds the balance of power in the decision-making?

"There's a real tension around where does the money come from... Funding can sometimes come from corporate orgs who are trying to buy some level of social licence themselves. Navigating existing as an organisation that needs to pay salaries - who do we take money from, and where are the boundaries in that? - is hard. We'd all love to get money from the likes of Bank Australia but there are only so many things they can fund!"

CEO, Regenerative Design , NGO

The philanthropy sector in Australia, though small, is increasingly looked to as a solution to fill the funding gap for experimental, system-shifting initiatives.

"Australia is moving down the American model of relying on philanthropy to fill in the missing tax take."

"There are some green shoots of philanthropy, particularly not for profits. The churches are one. I work with a group called Faith Housing Alliance who are looking to convert from worship to mission - to physically convert churches into housing - with some philanthropic organisations and philanthropists who are now looking at housing."

Architect Specialist Advisor - Social and Sustainable Architecture

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 1: SOCIAL EQUITY & WELLBEING

WHAT WE HEARD

ENABLING TRANSITION

Businesses willing to move to a circular economy are prevented from doing so due to the prohibitive costs. They are looking to the state and federal government to provide the incentives that can support them to do so.

“One of my clients in Sydney is a property developer. They're building multi-million dollar developments... They have the appetite to build for the circular economy, but they can't do it and remain in business. It's just too expensive to use the materials that they would need to use.”

ESG Advisor

Cost structures and entrenched financial models preclude long-term thinking required to shift to a regenerative future.

“Often it's the financial models that are in the way, where the expenditure at the beginning of a project doesn't take into account the lifetime expenditure of a project and that's why the upfront costs never take into account long-term sustainability.”

Regenerative Practice Lead, Built Environment

Large publicly-funded projects tend to be particularly risk-averse, which inhibits innovation at a bigger scale and slows the pace of Sydney's transition.

“With smaller projects, such as a private school, it's much more easy to break [the risk-averse, status quo], but on multi-stakeholder, public infrastructure projects, such as a public hospital, it's much harder. It's something that takes time.”

Regenerative Practice Lead, Built Environment

For organisations and individuals alike, trying to change 'the system' - while working and living in 'the system' is incredibly challenging.

Companies are often looking to shortcut - tick checkboxes for reporting - which encourages people to work at the edges rather than look for systemic change

“We're trying to change the system whilst living in the system, and that's really difficult in terms of: 'Do we continue to tweak around the edges, or do we accelerate the fundamental system change?' From a company perspective, it becomes, 'Here, we don't have to think! Here's a tick box.' but how do we shift this into broader conversations?”

Senior Architect, Regenerative Design

Traditional siloed approaches to project management, restricted timeframes and short-term thinking business and government are at odds with the scale of change required to create more holistic social-environmental outcomes (which requires greater 'upfront' thinking and collaboration).

“Time is often our enemy. People are used to one-way of doing things, creating timelines etc. To do things differently we need upfront thinking and very often that's not allowed.”

Senior Architect, Regenerative Design

INCLUSION

Two thirds of young people in NSW live in Sydney (1/3 live in Western Sydney). Their voice is notably absent from the Regen Sydney movement.

Sydney's youth is disproportionately affected by the housing affordability crisis, rising inequality and mental health crisis. Their voices are not being heard. What is it that young people would like to see measured and reflected in terms of thriving?

CALD communities have an important role to play in catalysing innovation in housing and food security. Diverse culturally and demographically representative perspectives are largely missing from the Regen movement thus far.

“The Doughnut model is just one way - not THE way. We also need to encompass non-sovereign and diverse perspectives.”

Associate Professor, Culture & Sustainability, Western Sydney

Digital exclusion in Western and Southwestern Sydney, furthers social disadvantage across Greater Sydney's geographical and socio-cultural divide.

Western & Southwestern Sydney are the only areas in Greater Sydney with lower than average digital access and inclusion. At the same time, the city discards an enormous amount of tech waste which can be repurposed and distributed. (eg. WorkVentures)

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 1: SOCIAL EQUITY & WELLBEING

WHAT WE HEARD

INFRASTRUCTURE

Current incentivisation encourages 'waste' and inhibits circularity, especially in tech. It can result in perfectly use-able tech being sent overseas & dumped, instead of repurposed and reused locally, which could also positively impact those who are digitally excluded.

"Organisations are used to making money from their end of life tech. There are also legislative blockers [to recycling tech]... There is no incentive for reuse of technology."

Director, Technology & Social Impact, Social Enterprise

There is a massive gap between local and national ambition and what's happening on the ground, in terms of the speed of transition and infrastructure deployment that supports a circular economy in the built environment.

"The commercial building sector is responsible for a huge amount of carbon emissions and a huge amount of landfill. It's ripe for big change. I see it as a real opportunity to make substantial change. But Australia does not have the technology, or perhaps the willingness to deploy it to - to put in place ways to deal with so called waste materials. So people who might want to take action, actually can't."

Director, Technology & Social Impact, Social Enterprise

As well as at a household level...

"On a more local level, we just don't have the infrastructure - on a even a household level - to effectively recycle or reuse or redeploy the things that we traditionally call 'waste'. Even at a household level, you can separate the garbage, but it just goes into the same spot, you know. That's a real block for me. We just don't have that infrastructure set up."

ESG Advisor

MEASURING WHAT MATTERS

Circular economy is gaining traction as businesses and government in Sydney (and beyond) develop understanding and metrics around circularity. However, current circular economy thinking does not go far enough to support businesses to redefine measures of success, and orient toward a life-affirming and sustaining economy. Rather, CE is seen as inserting new measures into the status quo.

"It's important to ask what are the desirable measures and who are we measuring for?... We're framing [measurement] in such a way that it inserts into the existing system status quo - and so we're reinforcing and upholding the current system rather than creating system change."

Circular Economy Advisor

WORKING AT THE EDGES

In the absence of appropriate financial capital, the regenerative design and development space relies heavily on social capital and personal networks to get things done. It can come at personal expense.

"We shouldn't have to rely on social capital to get stuff done and in many ways we [in the sustainability & regen space] rely on it too much. And it can come at the expense of too many things. How can you make use of your networks without damaging them or becoming extractive?"

CEO, Regenerative Design , NGO

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 1: SOCIAL EQUITY & WELLBEING

WHAT WE HEARD

WORLDVIEWS & SHIFTING NARRATIVES

"The biggest barrier that I'm finding is worldviews - what do people think humans thrive by? What's their own trauma and how does that impact how they show up, when you've got whole traumatised communities?"

Head of Social Impact, NGO

Transitioning to a regenerative future for Greater Sydney, is predicated on ongoing personal and collective practices (e.g. deep listening), that enable the holding of multiple perspectives, and understanding and engaging with diverse worldviews.

"The other practice that is really working, which I'm bringing along is deep listening. Really, really listening. The capacity to deeply listen, be vulnerable, allow space for somebody else to connect, without judgement."

Head of Social Impact, NGO

Collaboration is often hailed as a silver bullet, but collaboration in and of itself doesn't guarantee a good outcome without spaces and practices that support healthy debate and questioning.

"We will collaborate, but that doesn't mean that the outcome is [guaranteed] to be great. I'd love to see how we can have healthy debate and conversations. Collaboration is being framed as this wonderful thing, but how do we actually do it well?"

Circular Economy Lead, Built Environment

Some saw the 'Doughnut' as a dashboard as an ideas that can play into the current narrative of mastery and control, rather than challenging it and opening up a new frame (e.g. caring for an economic system that is dying, 'hospicing modernity').

"With the idea of 'hospicing modernity', it's about 'How do we care for a system that is dying?'. Once you accept that, it changes the nature of what regeneration means. We don't have mastery and control, so a dashboard won't bring us there. A story needs to be told even if it is uncomfortable."

Associate Professor, Culture & Sustainability, Western Sydney

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 2: SHAPING THE ENVIRONMENT

WHAT WE HEARD

POLICY OUTCOMES

Policy intentions are not translating into action on the ground. Entrenched models & processes in business and government inadvertently maintain the status quo.

“There are a lot of really good intentions at a policy level around creating places and having aspirations around Net Zero, equity & affordable housing etc. But the real issue is those aspirations translating into reality through the entrenched processes & models within Government and the private sector.”

Jess Miller, Strategic Climate & Sustainability Advisor, Urban Policy

CITIZEN TRUST

There has been a ‘trust deficit’ between citizens and both media and government over the last few years, resulting in people turning to alternative ways of being informed and finding agency.

“There are different ways that generations are becoming informed and educated about what’s going on. The big trust deficit that broke down between the government and the people, enabled people to disconnect from the political system, and turn to other places. The rise of peer-to-peer trust is an enabler for Doughnut Economics, regenerative thinking and local empowerment”

Nicolette Boele, Teal candidate, Smart Energy and Electrification Advocate

CIRCULAR ECONOMY & STANDARDS

Australia is playing catchup after a long period of inaction on the Circular Economy. This has resulted in delays to national targets, duplication of effort; outdated infrastructure and confusion over metrics.

Creating consistent guidelines for businesses to work within, takes time but ultimately provides welcome consistency and boundaries to shift the market.

“Working for Standards Australia, it was a constant challenge, trying to get parties to agree to one-way of doing things but then giving them leeway to enact it in their own jurisdiction. But having that consistent way is very helpful in setting the guidelines.”

Connie Ho, ERM, Circular Economy and ESG Program Lead

Changes to reporting and standards at Federal level (eg TCFD and TNFD) are welcomed by industry but often don't go far or fast enough for the scale of change required. There is ambition to do more.

“Structural changes, such as TCFD, give us a platform to paint the picture in financial risk terms that execs & boards must respond to... also the opportunity when you paint the picture of what is the biggest economic disruption of our lifetime in the economy. It creates an enormous opportunity if you can paint a picture for those who move first as being in the lead, if you can help them participate in the upside.”

Beth Keddie, Pollination, Executive Director, Strategy, Net Zero

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 2: SHAPING THE ENVIRONMENT

WHAT WE HEARD

BUSINESS & MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

Despite orienting frameworks, such as the SDGs, there is still a huge gap between what's happening & what needs to happen as some corporates 'cherry-pick' aspects to work on, rather than working more strategically.

"I used to love having frameworks like the SDGs to work with, but the more I work with them, the more I realise they don't work in a developed economic model. Corporates are cherry-picking, based on a popularity vote, rather than on strategic decisions that they'll only deal with certain, easier ones. Therefore there is a huge gap between what's happening and what actually needs to happen on the ground."

Selena Joy Griffith, Enactus Australia, CEO, Educator and Facilitator

"Some people are doing great work, but some are just doing that they've always done, and saying 'yeah, that's green, it's not using too much energy.' But it's still overly large and concreted and it's not drastically different. It's just rebranded, slightly softened Business as Usual."

Senior Architect, Regenerative Design

However, a growing number of corporates are seeking to connect social-ecological outcomes with commercial opportunities.

"There is enormous demand from corporates trying to get to the heart of how you connect environment & ecological considerations with commercial & business opportunity... Our team has grown from 12-300 in 3 years!"

Beth Keddie, Polination, Executive Director, Strategy, Net Zero

Changes in public attitudes & awareness toward climate, biodiversity loss and sustainability are driving changes in the market.

Investors and consumers are catalysing the demand for corporates to do better. They are demanding greater transparency over company policies (eg Indigenous policy & sustainability strategy), the recyclable content of products & supply chains, and kickstarting conversations in the public sphere.

"Employees are also starting to compare what policies different employers have to make a decision on where to go."

Connie Ho, ERM, Circular Economy and ESG Program Lead

Investment & advisory firms play a vital role in catalysing innovation in Sydney, encouraging their clients to take 'first-mover' advantage and invest early, creating demonstrators that encourage the rest of the market to follow.

"We like to use the language of big ideas, that corporates really want to go out and be known for. We're harnessing the competitive tension that exists for corporate leaders to go out and be first... That drop in the pond can really change the nature of people doing things differently."

Sustainability Consultant, Strategy & Risk)

New kinds of relationships and alliances (eg MECLA) are forming along local supply chains, which can lead to much bigger shifts both within - and outside of - Greater Sydney.

"As soon as you have the relationships, then you've got the energy to demand that the bigger system change. It's energising. That demand is filtering through to investors and corporates & even employees."

Beth Keddie, Pollination, Executive Director, Strategy, Net Zero

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 2: SHAPING THE ENVIRONMENT

WHAT WE HEARD

MEASURING IMPACT

There are currently no methods to correctly measure the long-term and wider impacts of 'bad' decisions being made in the built environment.

"One of our main issues - in housing, transport, development - is correctly and accurately measuring externalities. If cutting a tree down had a million dollar tag to it, people wouldn't cut it down."

Professor, Civil & Environmental Engineering

INNOVATION FOR TRANSITION - PILOTS

Temporary trial activations⁵⁶ and piloting innovative initiatives (e.g. implementing the 'Connecting with Country Framework'⁵⁷ at Aerotropolis in Western Sydney⁵⁸) create the momentum for change in our city. Across business and government, these pilots showcase to others what is possible, enable collaborative learning and can attract new kinds of funding.

"We focus on temporary & trial activations... testing and reporting on that and point out how it's contributing to long-term, positive change."

Claire Wastell, NSW Government, Cities Revitalisation and Place

"An application of theory is very, very important here. It's progress, not perfection. What we actually need is millions and millions and millions of people and their organisations doing circularity imperfectly rather than a few doing it perfectly."

Lisa McClean, National Circular Economy Strategist

There is an opportunity for government, business and communities to think and act more collaboratively, creating coordinated portfolios of place-based approaches that can address multiple challenges across the city, in order to attract the level of funding required for city-scale transition.

"We want impact at scale, so we need to create momentum through pilots, but aiming to build - or imagine - a living infrastructure asset portfolio - that's what they [potential funders at scale] are looking for... We presented a plan for Western Sydney to some Big Finance, and their response was, 'We only invest in the order of hundreds of millions - even billions - of dollars. Show me a thousand of these and we can get you the money.' That intuitively feels like the opportunity."

"How do you reorient the governance & economics of community projects in a way that is compatible with the funding models that exist, as a transition plan. I think that's SO exciting!"

Jess Miller, Strategic Climate & Sustainability Advisor, Urban Policy

However, these kinds of initiatives tend to be standalone projects, rather than belonging to a broader, more ambitious 'ecosystem' of place-based approaches. As such, they end up 'tinkering round the edges', rather than catalysing the kind of broadscale transition that many involved are keen to see.

"We need a range of place-based approaches, as opposed to trying to argue the maths and economics... With carbon accounting, for instance, it just leaves too many loop holes. It's not addressing the systemic issues. It's just a bit of acupuncture when really what we need is major surgery."

Jess Miller, Strategic Climate & Sustainability Advisor, Urban Policy

⁵⁶ For examples, see: [Night Time Industries Recovery Roadmap](#)

⁵⁷ [Connecting with Country](#), Government Architect, NSW (accessed May 2022)

⁵⁸ [Wianamatta rising: charting the future of a Western Sydney waterway](#), (accessed May 2022)

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 2: SHAPING THE ENVIRONMENT

WHAT WE HEARD

INNOVATION FOR TRANSITION – PILOTS

Restrictive and/or ambiguous government policies from both local and state level (eg. community solar) and outdated planning laws are preventing progressive projects from getting up and running.

“I work with a lot of the different groups in the Northern Beaches and we have a lot of trouble getting regenerative projects up and running, mostly related with local government and state government policies that are restrictive for the adoption of different technologies, particularly around community based solar, which we're interested in, but also a lot of the new planning laws that have been pushed through without a lot of thought.”

“We've got this really tense conversation happening between stakeholders, and the reason we're having that is because the policy doesn't help us to make a proper decision for all parties.”

Selena Joy Griffith, Enactus Australia, CEO, Educator and Facilitator

A regenerative Sydney requires working across multiple scales, not only the larger ‘economies of scale’, but more localised ‘economies of purpose’ based on real community needs and practical, tangible actions⁵⁹.

“If we are going to look at cities, regions, communities and the localised concerns of those communities, we've got to be careful about how we talk about economies of scale, which has been the traditional mantra that everyone's gone after.”

“The way we offer solutions to wellbeing, health, waste, water and environment, and how we care for our environment, can always happen under the framework of ‘economies of purpose’... You can't just talk about circular economy without practical, actionable real world solutions.... They have to be fit for purpose based on what your community's needs are.”

Circular Economy Scientist & Innovation expert

FUNDING TRANSITION

Legislative changes regarding ‘fiduciary duty’ have the potential to unlock ‘brave, patient capital’ currently tied up in superfunds to invest in the long term.

“If we had more people in Parliament who could change the rules that govern the definition of fiduciary duty for superannuation trustees, who genuinely have a legal obligation to invest for the long term. ...I've just spent the last eight years in [Parliament] finding out how to unlock that money for the SDGs and other type objectives. It's not a perfect solution, but... If we could do that, it would probably help achieve a quite a massive unleashing of brave, courageous and patient capital into some of the systemic type things that we're talking about here.”

Nicolette Boele, Teal candidate, Smart Energy and Electrification Advocate

Momentum for change at the city-scale is building in Sydney, with City of Sydney leading the way on decarbonisation and moving to circularity.

“I think that Sydney is a fantastic place to be working at the city-level, because you have an LGA that is really engaged with - and also on the broader Sydney agenda that's really getting engaged with - decarbonization, sustainability and moving into circularity.”

National Circularity Leader

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 2: SHAPING THE ENVIRONMENT

WHAT WE HEARD

METRICS

“For us it’s about getting definition, and metrics out there that are very important - and this can lead on to developing a roadmap - can help to inform other people’s agenda - and to apply theory into practice.”

Lisa McClean, National Circular Economy Strategist

“What are relevant metrics & what are relevant indicators & how can we create a collective visual communication about them, so people can collaborate with us (Regen Sydney) for collective impact.”

Selena Joy Griffith, Enactus Australia, CEO, Educator and Facilitator

ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES IN TRANSITION

Our universities both enable and restrict change at different levels.

“Circularity is proposing a highly radical transformation of our economy and some - in that curve or at the head of it - innovators are coming up in particularly through the universities. We’ve had terrific experiences at our universities.”

Lisa McClean, National Circular Economy Strategist

They play an important role in enabling transition as collaborative and experimental spaces that can absorb risk, but their siloed approach to funding can also inhibit more holistic outcomes.

“The university is enabling a kind of experimental space which is very difficult to find outside the university sector. It’s a blocker, though, because it still is quite a competitive and siloed approach to the disciplines within universities too. These two things are kind of struggling, but it’s an incredibly important space for kind culture-leading, experimental research and, in a sense, absorbing some of the risk of research enterprise to stakeholders outside the university.”

Associate Professor, Design Studies and Climate Resilience

LANGUAGE, INCLUSION & INTERSECTIONALITY

More needs to be done to meet where they are, wherever they live across the city, and to meaningfully engage with intersectional justice and lived experience perspectives.

The regenerative movement and associated language, as it is now, tends to attract ‘the usual crowd’ (i.e. citizens with time and resources to participate from more affluent areas of Sydney, such as North, Inner West and Eastern suburbs). The movement risks alienating culturally and linguistically diverse communities, particularly in Western Sydney.

“It’s about speaking in a way that’s accessible to folks: understanding the concept of being a person of colour, and the struggles of being an immigrant and dealing with those challenges. Then all of a sudden you’re being told to be a part of regeneration, which is incredibly important but isn’t top priority. It’s about making sure that the intersectional lens and justice layer all of this work comes in.”

Climate justice and mental health awareness advocate

The question of Justice and intersectional structures must be kept at the forefront of the regen movement (who is building them and who for?)

“The issue of justice comes in because, no matter all the structures we’re building, it’s about who is building them and how do those structures serve those people?”

Climate justice and mental health awareness advocate

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 2: SHAPING THE ENVIRONMENT

WHAT WE HEARD

MINDSET & BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

It takes courage for leaders and organisations to step out of the status quo. Alongside precedents and pilots, stronger alliances, collaborative networks and professional advice are needed to support the cultural and mindset shifts required for deeper transition.

"We need bravery to step into something that is not status quo, because we need that paradigm shift in how we design our products, run our supply chains & how we cooperate with competitors. It's a very different mindset shift."

Circular Economy Advisor

"It takes everyone to stand up and say, 'That's not good enough', we've got to work out another way.' Because otherwise, you can have policies, but they just get walked around."

Regenerative Design Architect

"In Government, being that 'bravery' team, sometimes it can be hard to fight for who we are and what we're doing in pointing to temporary interventions that can drive long-term change. We are lucky enough to be supported through that."

Project Officer, Cities Revitalisation

"There's a desperate lack of understanding of the urgency of the situation and the fact that every single one of us needs to be thinking differently in every single decision we take. It's not for someone else to sort it out and say, 'Oh, this is just mine, we'll just do this.'"

Circular Economy Advisor

CHANGE FATIGUE

Change-fatigue is real. Re-engaging with communities to progress civic innovation in post-covid Sydney proved challenging in 2022. People are consultation- and Zoom-fatigued.

"Re-engaging with communities post-COVID is actually really challenging. People are a little bit wary about still about getting in face-to-face to do stuff. They are also very consultation fatigued - and then meeting fatigued - so you can't get them in virtually."

Selena Joy Griffith, Enactus Australia, CEO, Educator and Facilitator

Passionate changemakers continue to move change along, even through adversity. Finding ways to support these people (eg. through collaborative networks and knowledge sharing) is key to maintaining the momentum for change.

"It is always the amazing people that have passion to get something happening and keep moving it along through adversity and all the different and difficult challenge. But that same group tends to get tired and then combative, and then under years and years of good work, we just like one cranky outburst."

Selena Joy Griffith, Enactus Australia, CEO, Educator and Facilitator

The Doughnut framework is seen as a powerful unifier and motivator in that regard.

"Finding ways to support the people that want to do good, to continue to do good, through knowledge sharing between groups.. so that we're not all reinventing the wheel. That's what I like about Doughnut Economics, because a key component of it is documenting and knowledge sharing, and that's very valuable for everyone."

Selena Joy Griffith, Enactus Australia, CEO, Educator and Facilitator

Also key is staying connected to the deeper motivator behind the 'regen' movement, in order to avoid co-opting and greenwashing, as some participants who came from Circular Economy backgrounds reported.

"We have to change our worldview. Otherwise we'll do circular economy and forget what the heck it was that we were trying to do circular economy for. It's the latest version of greenwash. The whole idea of circular economy was to flip the dollars per pound on its head. And we've forgotten that in almost everything that we talk about in circular economy, we've forgotten what the purpose was."

Cynthia Mitchell, Sustainability Transformations Consultant

Again, a number of participants highlighted the need for any approach to be underpinned by practices of deep listening in 'inner work' that enable effective collaboration between highly diverse groups.

"In terms of adult development, for most of us in the West, what happens is that we get stuck at the point of thinking that 'my truth is pretty good'... What we need to be able to do is to listen well and to be able to make space for different perspectives. And we struggle to be able to do that... There are so many things that we could do now if people were able to feel brave."

Cynthia Mitchell, Sustainability Transformations Consultant

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 3: PUBLIC POLICY, GOVERNMENT & LAW

WHAT WE HEARD

TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

Discussions around Net Zero, Circular Economy and Sustainability are maturing among government, business and legal professionals.

The NSW government's prioritisation of Net Zero and Circular Economy are expediting the conversation at state and local levels, and paving the way for broader adoption and experimentation.

"In terms of enablers, the focus on Circular Economy is strengthening at the moment and there's greater recognition of Net Zero as a state government priority."

NSW Government leader, Economic Policy

"There's a huge amount of state government policy coming out that is quite progressive in the sustainability front, around net zero, decarbonising the economy. There's different kinds of conversations that are being had - that's hugely positive.. I'm having to have fewer arguments about stuff that seems pretty basic."

Director Sustainability, Western Sydney LGA

However, there is a very obvious tension in how state and local government work (bureaucracy of decision making, power structures, political cycles) & the level of radical reform needed to shift things. No single department has all the policy levers.

"From the state government perspective, we don't have all the policy levers, particularly when it comes to the economy itself. We have a lot of planning or ecological [levers], but no one government has them all."

NSW Government leader, Economic Policy

Citizen trust has been strongly eroded in government processes and decision-making due to short-term political cycles and lack of significant action on the community needs.

"How can you trust a government where the public servants come up with a way to represent their needs and then it's not enacted. And then no one wants to think long-term because it's just till the next election."

NSW Government, Climate Policy & Evaluation

Depending on what's happening in the political cycle, sophisticated and collaboratively designed policies can get rejected at the last minute, needing to be retrospectively designed on the fly. This is demoralising for well-intentioned policy-makers and the communities they engage with in the design process.

"Often public servants work really, really hard to engage a diverse bunch of stakeholders and do a lot of research to develop a really beautiful, sophisticated policy, which is well costed and matches the needs of the community. Then it goes up to whoever the decision-maker is, and it's completely kiboshed in an afternoon and it's replaced by, 'We need to do [this] and to figure it out.' Then everything has to be retrospectively designed, on the fly. It's exceptionally high pressure and done in a last minute way. Obviously the outcomes are just very rarely good in that circumstance because you're completely on the back-foot. It can be a bit demoralising for public servants who often are in that job for the right reasons and really want to be there."

NSW Government, Climate Policy & Evaluation

There is a significant opportunity to innovate budgeting processes (eg with Virtual budgeting) to support better decision-making in Government and make visible the longer-term impacts of decision (eg. by more effectively measuring externalities).

"Budgets seem to be often the place where the rubber hits the road and you miss the opportunity to think long-term. There are opportunities to innovate budget processes, and wellbeing budgets, which could be built on. But there are things, like virtual budgets, where you predict what's going to happen and incorporate a few other externalities into decisions in a structured way, so that every decision-maker can actually look at those and say, 'okay, that's the impact of these things'. I'm surprised that we don't really do in Cabinet discussions."

NSW Government leader, Department of Premier & Cabinet

There is a groundswell of interest from changemakers both within - and outside - government in Greater Sydney to retrofit political processes to be more accountable to community, and accelerate the pace of change required for transition to a regenerative future.

For example, participatory democracy and budgeting, to enable citizens to respond directly to challenges in their own communities.

"How can politics be retrofitted to actually be accountable to public servants and communities they serve?"

NSW Government, policy & evaluation

"We've got a number of colleagues that are really trying to push [participatory democracy & budgeting] with Government. At the moment, Government aren't that interested - they've been trying that for years. But it may be the time. The time could be right now."

Director Sustainability, Western Sydney LGA

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 3: PUBLIC POLICY, GOVERNMENT & LAW

WHAT WE HEARD

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Local and state government money is flowing to outsourced intermediaries as opposed to being channelled toward communities solving their own challenges.

“There’s an issue with outsourcing government services and that just creates a problem with all these people in the middle... It’s a crazy way of spending money. The money just goes to all the wrong places. It’s all about money, and where it goes - and what labour it’s funding. It’s a way of structurally changing it going into all these intermediaries and it actually going to people trying to live their lives and solve their own problems. If we did that there would be a lot less problems.”

Founder, Immigration Support

There is a huge opportunity to reorient funding so that it flows in ways that help young people and community leaders to operationalise responses to problems in their own community.

“We need to get funds to flow in a way that empowers & finances people to operationalise the answers to the problems in their own communities.”

Founder, Immigration Support

There is a groundswell of interest in new processes for participatory democracy and budgeting across local government areas. However, this has not been met with widespread interest. More case studies could encourage others to follow.

“Participatory budgeting does happen at some local government levels. The New Democracy movement look at that and they all look at citizen panels. I’ve got a number of colleagues that are really trying to push it with government at the moment, but government aren’t that interested. They’ve been trying that for years. But it may be the time. The time could be right now.”

Founder, Immigration Support

LAW

Law is traditionally a “slow, archaic, precedent-based system”, which puts it out of step with the pace of change required to address urgent social and environmental challenges in Sydney and beyond.

Misunderstanding and misperception of the Law is common among community members, this stymies the level of innovation needed to support transition.

“People are daunted by the Law. They don’t understand it. Particularly in community, you don’t know where to go to get access to information about the Law. The impact we see of that, in areas like this, which are novel and without precedent, is that it would stymie innovation, because people perceive that there are regulatory roadblocks or legal minefields that they don’t know how to navigate past, to create what they want to create.”

Law Partner, Commercial litigation & public law

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 3: PUBLIC POLICY, GOVERNMENT & LAW

WHAT WE HEARD

LAW

There is a big opportunity for lawyers, specialists and academics to work with Sydney-based social entrepreneurs and communities to identify legal roadblocks and democratise the Law.

“There’s great opportunity for lawyers, for private lawyers and NfPs and academics to democratise the Law and make it more accessible to people when they are looking at how they can push boundaries in areas which will create this kind of change.”

Law Partner, Commercial litigation & public law

“So, how do you make someone who wants to start-up an idea in a city feel like they have the capacity to do that without needing to go off and spend thousands and thousands on lawyers to tell them they can?”

Law Partner, Commercial litigation & public law

“What are some of the roadblocks that exist in some of the areas that people want to create change in and how do we make that not as much of a roadblock in doing so. I think that can be done.”

Law Partner, Commercial litigation & public law

Legal changemakers working in private practice are helping to democratise the Law and generate knowledge through pro bono, ‘low bono’ work and self-funded projects in under-represented areas. These projects create case studies and legal precedents, which can be shared more widely in the public domain.

“Sometimes we have a mix [of projects]: some pro bono, low bono, some self-funded, generating knowledge in an area that is unique, such as working with survivors of sexual assault, which is one area where we can generate a huge amount of knowledge. Through various structures we can try and help the most amount of people.”

Law Partner, Commercial litigation & public law

In this slow-moving environment, even incremental changes can have aggregate and positive effects, which help pioneers working in the legal system to keep motivated to create positive impact through their field.

“Our work [as lawyers] is important, to show up, be persistent, keep the pressure on the right places and do the best we can within the parameters of the system that we’ve got. To tweak it and nudge it and just keep showing up in the best way that we can.

The aggregate of that is knowing that everyone’s working from all these different angles - coming at climate change shifts from the corporate angle, from the energy sector angle, from the carbon angle - all the aggregate of that will hopefully get us to the world we’re trying to create.”

Law Partner, Commercial litigation & public law

In business, the conventional definitions surrounding a Company Director’s duties and shareholder considerations are changing. This can unlock flows of capital to support transition (e.g. impact on environment and impact to community can now be included in reporting).

“In terms of the environment, the ‘Overton Window’ is moving fast in the right direction... A lot of directors were hostile in the past, because they didn’t see the environment as a major concern for them. But now we’ve got a new generation of directors coming through and there has been this change in opinion.”

Strategic Planning Consultant & Futurist

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 3: PUBLIC POLICY, GOVERNMENT & LAW

WHAT WE HEARD

NEW ALLIANCES

New alliances are forming at a national level to support transition (e.g. Australian Sustainable Finance Initiative). They motivate more of the corporate sector to work together, and harness competitive tension to shift the market. This would be further improved with stronger policy direction by government.

“We’re seeing a lot of alliances and a lot of the corporate sector working together, which is actually quite nice. But again, I think they could be more action-driven by the government and give us direction.”

Lawyer, Property Development & Infrastructure

There has been an explosion in new digital networks since the pandemic. These are helping to facilitate greater diversity of new ideas & exposure to action networks, as well as breaking down traditional silos.

“In some ways the bright side of the pandemic has been that a lot more of those unusual alliances, networks & interactions have been facilitated... We’re getting in touch with people that we might not have otherwise done before and that exposure to different people’s thinking is really broadening our sense as to what is possible and how we can move forward by working together together and breaking down silos.”

Professor of Sustainability Transformations

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Sydney’s social enterprise network is regarded as a space brimming with novel ideas, energy and passion, and led by creative, imaginative people who demonstrate how businesses can deliver multiple benefits to community, using new business models. They provide a helpful source of inspiration to others.

“The social enterprise world feels like a real enabler, as does the energy and passion of young refugees - empowering and financing that passion in order to operationalise the answers to the problems in their own communities.”

Founder, Immigration Support

OPEN KNOWLEDGE SHARING

As a networked community of practice with a strong mission, Regen Sydney can provide a welcome space for experimental thinking and knowledge sharing across both the public and private sector.

“My perception in terms of drivers for a regenerative Sydney is to make sure that we share our lessons learnt, especially when it comes to climate change... A huge constraint is not only funding but also the ability to share data.”

Senior Lecturer in Construction

“There’s a tendency to share best practice [but] a real reluctance to share lessons learned and what went wrong, both in the public sector and the private sector. There is an obligation in the public sector to make that data and knowledge sharing public, which happens more than not, compared to the private sector. In the private sector, the holder of data has IP. Success is easy to share, more than the lessons learned.”

Director, Systems Innovation

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 3: PUBLIC POLICY, GOVERNMENT & LAW

WHAT WE HEARD

CHALLENGING JOBS & GROWTH MINDSET

The grip of the neoliberal narrative and its unyielding goal of "Jobs & Growth" holds strongly to business and politics, particularly at state & national level.

However, there are some encouraging signs of a shift in language in some local government departments, as well as a reorientation toward wellbeing indicators.

"We've had some success with things like taking out the words 'economic growth', 'jobs & growth' most of the strategy I'm developing at the moment, and changing that to 'diversity of jobs, security of jobs and access to jobs', rather than growth."

Director Sustainability, Western Sydney LGA

SHIFTING NARRATIVES

Again, the group recognised the need for bold imagination and storytelling in moving Doughnut Economics from theory into action.

"I know that Doughnut Economics has a really beautiful narrative, but it needs something that would compel people to understand that we need to change our economic underpinning.... The thing with Circular Economy, for example, is one of its massive tenets is changing the economic system of consumerism. That part often gets just left out, because it's too difficult. Regenerating nature is another part of Circular Economy that also gets dropped off the list because it's tricky. There's something in there about the storytelling that can give the next layer to the Doughnut Economics piece."

Director Sustainability, Western Sydney LGA

... this is particularly important in helping leaders address the Catch-22 between their aspirations for a regenerative economy, and their businesses need to trade in the current market as it is.

"There's a lot of fine talk about Doughnut Economics, but this sort of neoliberal capitalist narrative of economics is still incredibly strong. You have to serve your shareholders and you still have to deliver economic growth and productivity and efficiency, and get punished by the market if you don't deliver on those things."

"There is still that really strong tension between a lot of people being very clear about an aspiration for a different narrative, but still being very much sitting within these systems that are asking for something different from them."

"It's easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism."

Professor of Sustainability Transformations

EXPERIENCING THE DOUGHNUT

The enthusiasm for a Sydney Doughnut, must be matched by practical, tangible examples on the ground, that brings it to life for people.

"With respect to 'neighbourhood activations', what does the Doughnut actually mean for my life?... People shift when they experience the thing that you're trying to tell them. Finding some way to give them the actual physical experience of what Doughnut Economics looks and feels like, requires quite a bit of creativity, but it just shifts people when they can touch and feel it, rather than seeing it in a diagram - which feels good, but how does it actually practically work?"

Director Sustainability, Western Sydney LGA

"This is something that really struck me ... how the neighbourhood focus was a really strong idea - at that local level. As someone who's been an outsider to Sydney, that struck me as being really interesting - a series of smaller villages rather than one hub. With what the NSW government is doing with the Sydney city region, brings that about. I think that's a potential enabler. That brings you a lot closer to some of the impacts. That might be an opportunity to embrace more local doughnut-like models."

Economic Policy expert, NSW Government

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 3: PUBLIC POLICY, GOVERNMENT & LAW

WHAT WE HEARD

BROADENING PERSPECTIVES

Any notion of a regenerative future for our city, must create better linkages & focus on the highly dependent relationship between Greater Sydney & surrounding regional areas.

“There’s not so much focus paid to regional & rural areas - we’re not going out to chat to them. Fringe areas are not included so much.”

Lawyer, Professional Services

Again, the group recognised that engaging within existing sustainability and transition networks risks the movement becoming an echo-chamber for the ‘regen-converted’, rather than reaching diverse groups of people heavily impacted by the status quo (e.g. people living in social housing).

“Housing is a foundational space - and we do it so poorly in Australia. There are people living in low-quality housing situations that need to be part of these conversations and, for whatever reasons, the conversation doesn’t get traction in Australia.”

Partner - Commercial Litigation & Private Law

“The networks & alliances I’m involved with feel like we are just preaching to the converted. They are into this stuff. But there are a lot of people out there just living their lives that aren’t thinking that way...Whether on the fringes of Sydney, there are people who feel left out by the changes that are happening... We need to find ways to reach out beyond the networks of the converted to get others excited about different kinds of futures. It feels like a huge challenge. I’m not sure how to go about that.”

Professor of Sustainability Transformations

“I like that Doughnut Economics uses the word ‘economics’, but how do you put it in more value terms rather than say dollar terms. It’s about the value created, the value-based system.”

Consultant, Stakeholder Engagement, Renewables & Agribusiness

The success of the Regen Sydney movement is not about attracting people to the notion of ‘the Doughnut’, but rather going to different communities, listening and understanding where and how it might be a useful frame.

“It’s not just attracting people to this movement, but actually going in and being ‘in-place’ and seeing what’s happening in different communities, joining-in and seeing where this might or may not be helpful frame.”

Professor of Sustainability Transformations

CHANGE & ENGAGEMENT FATIGUE

It’s important to recognise and mitigate the negative impacts of well-intentioned change initiatives on previously under-represented communities and organisations.

The shift toward regenerative development is causing engagement-fatigue, particularly among First Nations people and firms.

“Engagement fatigue particularly for First Nations people, and particularly for the work we’re doing. We’re building a new city - designing with Country is at the heart of that. But there are two or three Aboriginal firms that deal with planning and building design, and they are being hammered.”

Director Sustainability, Western Sydney LGA

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 4: FINANCE & ECONOMICS

WHAT WE HEARD

Awareness and literacy in 'regeneration' is still generally low among Finance Directors, CFOs & senior business leaders.

"I'm starting to have a conversation with other CFOs and big business about what 'regenerative' even means. It may come as no surprise that no other finance director that I've spoken to actually even knows what regenerative business is."

Business Strategist, CFO

"CFOs are struggling with sustainability, so a step beyond sustainability as commerce blows their mind. As finance professionals, we've got to operate - as lawyers do - within the current system, at the same time as disrupting everything about that. It's hard to be able to get the desire to do that in people that are busy just doing the same things. They aren't going to sit around trying to bring change at scale."

Business Strategist, CFO

However, the maturity-curve is rapidly on the rise, driven by citizen and talent interests and investor expectations, as well as direct experience during COVID & the bushfire crises.

"To enable that discussion and open up areas of possibility, it takes a lot of resources and time and trust and conversations to be able to get some of that awareness out into the world of the finance professional. It feels like it's virtually impossible, other than there's just cracks of light that people get this. Some of that's happening since Covid, the fires and the floods, has brought that to people's doors."

Business Strategist, CFO

"People are starting to have a lot more understanding than they've previously had. The maturity curve is on the way up. I think there is a desire and intent there, as well as straight market signals and expectations of talent from citizens and investors that is driving that."

Business Advisor & Innovation Coach

... as well as the larger question of 'what is the purpose of finance?'

"We're coming to the end of an experiment in all the things that can be privatised. ... Victoria is looking at doing some re-nationalising - around the energy sector in particular. The question 'what's the purpose of finance?' is really coming to a head."

Nicolette Boele, Teal candidate, Smart Energy and Electrification Advocate

INVESTMENT STRUCTURES

There's a massive gap between the way investment funds are structured and the science of what's required to restore Sydney's degraded landscapes. The economics simply doesn't stack up, meaning there are few organisations who are actively trying to bridge it.

"Even the [financial leaders] who were interested in investing in nature, the way they're structuring their funds is completely misaligned with what is actually required environmentally and scientifically. So, from the perspective of our business, where restoring degraded landscapes takes time, it's expensive. You can't deploy all of the capital in four or five years, which is typically what you've got to do in a traditional fund. And you can't close and exit in ten to fifteen years - it's a longer term play."

Environmental Lawyer & Entrepreneur

Finance leaders are struggling to comprehend the level of change required to restructure their instruments and funds towards a nature-positive future.

"Showing them the financial modelling still elicits the response that it takes too long. But this is what we've got to do to reverse biodiversity loss. It's not just protecting what we've got but restoring it - which takes time. They're struggling to comprehend that and they're struggling to realise they've got to change the way they're structuring their instruments - their funds."

Environmental Lawyer & Entrepreneur

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 4: FINANCE & ECONOMICS

WHAT WE HEARD

INVESTMENT STRUCTURES

Greater economic incentives are needed to address opportunity costs to landholders and promote ecological restoration in Greater Sydney.

“A lot of [wetlands] are located on private property, not just in Australia that internationally. So you need to create an economic incentive for those private landholders to restore them and that has to be equal to or greater than whatever it is they're earning now through agriculture. You have to address the opportunity cost.”

Environmental Lawyer & Entrepreneur

Portfolios of connected investments need to be built - alongside novel alliances and public-private partnerships - to encourage organisations to work systemically and collaboratively toward shared place-based goals

“Finance and investment see the connected need for finance and investment across a multitude of different things.. If you're going to build a new industry or you're going to build connected solutions, you actually need to invest in multiple things in a connected way. We call that systemic investing.”

Director, Systems Innovation

“It's not about singular projects, it's a network portfolio is more like a permaculture garden, where we can see what is growing, how, and what is supporting each other and thinking more up things and in those terms.”

Transdisciplinary Research & Education

...and build the case to minimise harm in the broader financial system.

“It's not going to be enough just to find capital to do good projects, and do a regenerative local or greater Sydney solution, we also have to look at the broader financial system - insurance, investment and banking - about how to help them minimise harm.”

Nicolette Boele, Teal candidate, Smart Energy and Electrification Advocate

The Doughnut may be a valuable tool to communicate a shared vision, and support investors to move beyond the idea of isolated investments to a series of connected, place-based opportunities.

“Is the Doughnut aiming to help investors move beyond the idea of isolated investments? We're looking at coordinated governance mechanisms as a way of aggregating what is investable in a particular place. We need to have a conceptual shared vision for a place [to guide that].”

Director, Systems Innovation

... but systemic investment needs to start at the national level.

“Systemic investment needs to start at the national scale. Investors are often big, massive organisations, so they often need new structures, new valuation methods before they can then be applied locally. It's often very hard for them to start locally [first].”

Director, Systems Innovation

LEGAL BARRIERS

Legal barriers around organisational KPIs and stakeholder interest continue to block the potential of business from enabling change, preventing them from being able to shift their models and progress toward collective & societal goals, rather than individual interest & perpetual growth.

“BCorps are essentially breaking the law by not entirely focusing on stakeholder interests above everything else... You can be in a business where people want to do amazing things, but fundamentally they are not able to because the business is just heading in the wrong direction because it has to in order to meet this KPI and this investor's and this stakeholder's need. So we're kind of assuming as part of this conversation that people want to - and can - do good, but we need to remove that barrier as well.”

Crowdfunder for Social Impact

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 4: FINANCE & ECONOMICS

WHAT WE HEARD

EROSION OF TRUST

Trust is one of the enabling conditions for collaboration and between citizens and government. However, public trust in large corporations and government has eroded over the last decade. This has the potential to be a barrier to systemic change.

“There’s a lack of trust in government, but also a lack of trust of government trusting citizens. And how do we shift that to do the systems change? That’s a big piece I’m noticing, trust between senior management and other management to actually enable change.”

Transdisciplinary Research & Education

FINANCE & FUNDING KNOWLEDGE

There is a general low level of awareness about the functions different kinds of funding play in systems change. Providing spaces for education to address this knowledge-gap, and combine different types of funding in creative ways, has the potential to unlock new opportunities and alliances.

“Investor finance is very different to commercial-operational finance, versus the banking finance as well. Sometimes you might think, “oh, it’s just finance”, but actually, they’re really different streams and people actually think differently. So, it’s about trying to meet people where they’re but also providing a space for education.”

Business Strategist, CFO

“We have to understand different types of money and how they function differently... Institutional investment is so different to lending to conventional finance. And they think differently to the debt people, who think very differently to grant funding, who think differently to concessional finance.”

Director, Systems Innovation

“What feels really positive about that for me is that if there are those of us who can start to think creatively about the combinations of those different types of money, to invest in the kind of portfolios that [comprise] named, connected projects - which are mutually reinforcing and connected to each other - we can bring a genuinely systemic view to the investment itself.”

Director, Systems Innovation

Crowd-funding organisations are playing an important role in transition by shifting how funding is accessed by changemakers in communities across Greater Sydney.

Unlike charities, they are not regulated, so there is a low barrier to entry, which enables different kinds of initiatives or campaigns to get support.

“... people often want to get to that project in your local community. That’s potentially where potentially crowdfunding can come in, because it has a low barrier to entry in that there’s no regulation, it’s just crowdfunding. It’s people pooling money together for a different project. And because it’s campaign-driven rather than organisation-driven, people are funding projects instead of funding an organisation, so that can be really powerful.”

Crowdfunder for Social Impact

And in contrast to philanthropy, crowd-funding creates opportunities for storytelling and for more people to be invested in the outcomes.

“It’s almost like the ‘scatter’ approach even works much better than just pegging all your hopes on one incredibly wealthy person who is going to come in and go, “I can solve all your problems”, like the ‘angel’. With crowdfunding, the more people who feel like they’ve got a piece of it, the more powerful it is and the more your message gets out there.”

Crowdfunder for Social Impact

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 4: FINANCE & ECONOMICS

WHAT WE HEARD

STORYTELLING

Storytelling plays a powerful role in enabling the conditions for systemic change, by generating agency, trust & accountability.

“What was resonating... is the power of stories to share and convey impact, but as a kind of enabling condition in system change. But also what I’m hearing is ‘trust’.”

Transdisciplinary Research & Education

“We’re trending in the right direction. There is already action - how do we make some of it more visible and surface some of it? It means framing things in a way that people aren’t used to - it’s systemic, so we don’t need isolated data points in traditional silos.”

Business Advisor & Innovation Coach

There’s an opportunity to bring finance and business leaders on a journey, build credibility and stimulate the impetus for change by showcasing what is happening.

“It’s about raising awareness and the need to showcase what’s actually happening as a good way to bring people on the journey. From my perspective, CFOs in ‘commercial land’ are not aware of what regenerative business even means and looks like.”

LEADING INNOVATION FOR TRANSITION

City of Sydney is using its leadership position and influence to initiate change in its supply chains, as well as across other LGAs in Greater Sydney.

“We can actually showcase our leadership by doing the right thing, adopting the best practices with our own operation, to try to influence the rest of the community. We also have grants and procurement to ensure that the money actually goes to the right organisations that we really want to see thriving.”

Economist, City of Sydney

NETWORKS & COLLABORATION

Opportunity exists to network better across financial areas eg charity, start-up, philanthropy, crowd-funding) to bring about change both nationally, and across Greater Sydney.

“If you only look at the local economy, it doesn’t work, especially with circularity. There are long supply chains, and the input of different industries, many of which are located in regional areas. We should really work together... it requires at least a statewide or national level of cooperation together.”

Economic Development Strategist, Local Council

While plenty of opportunities to work together exist, people working across different areas require help to connect & spot them.

Dedicated network convenors ‘weavers and pollinators’ across multiple areas (social enterprise, crowd-funding, business etc), such as Regen Sydney, play a vital role in transition by catalysing more unusual and impactful collaborations.

“There’s an enabler in convening spaces to connect, whether that’s inspiring or mentoring or other things, or those waves of pollinators that help with that.”

Transdisciplinary Research & Education

“One thing we haven’t tapped into really well is that community aspect and how can we focus people together on something where we’re looking at how we can address that challenge... They tend to all be doing incredible things in different silos.”

Crowdfunder for Social Impact

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE 4: FINANCE & ECONOMICS

WHAT WE HEARD

NETWORKS & COLLABORATION

Working across silos to solve complex problems can mean conversations that bridge diverse lived experiences and professional expertise.

“You don't solve complex problems in silos.”

Environmental Lawyer & Entrepreneur

“Having conversations across multiple layers, using people's credibility and expertise in their fields of work, and bringing those conversations together - I'm starting to see some opportunities there. So me, with my civil conversations, and others with more of the Indigenous conversations - how do we bring those groups together?”

Business Strategist, CFO

POSITIVE MAVERICKS

‘Positive Mavericks’ challenge of working ‘between’ spaces - engaging with the system we’re in, while also trying to unlock what comes next...

“My whole brain is split left-brain / right-brain. Constantly the ‘lawyer’ part of me thinks, ‘Maybe not’, whereas the other one is, ‘Yes!’, just do it!... I've sent the lawyer into the background in a corner now. She doesn't come out often!”

Environmental Lawyer & Entrepreneur

While working towards a regenerative future can feel energising, again participants highlighted the reputational risks and personal costs associated with working in this way (particularly in finance & law). Needs to be acknowledged.

“The ‘Positive Maverick’ thing is very important. It is a real professional risk in some instances.”

Environmental Lawyer & Entrepreneur

“I do this in my spare time because this doesn't pay me any money. I can't do this as a job because I wouldn't have a roof over my head. So I have to be able to do this because I'm passionate about it.”

Female, Business Advisor & Board Member

DOUGHNUT DECISION-MAKING

The Doughnut is seen as a ‘North Star’ - a framework that can align more effective, long-term decision making across different sectors in Greater Sydney.

“We need to fundamentally change what the North Star is, what the purpose is, and what the drivers are. Until we do that, we're tinkering at the edges, we keep patching things over, and not looking at the systemic problem that prevents us from getting the change that we need.”

Director, Systems Innovation

“The Doughnut is not the end in its own right. You could still greenwash with the Doughnut, because it will justify you're somehow doing what you need to get done. I think you need to have a north star in there.”

Nicolette Boele, Teal candidate, Smart Energy and Electrification Advocate

“The ‘Doughnut’ creates the framework with which you can innovate. Whether you're designing a new building or whether you're doing a finance investment, [Doughnut Economics] gives you that boundary - no you can't overshoot, and you can't leave anyone out.”

Director, Systems Innovation

