



# COVID-19 RECOVERY SCENARIOS

## FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN MELBOURNE'S INNER NORTH

FINAL REPORT



# COVID-19 Recovery Scenarios for Young People in Melbourne's Inner North

## Final Report

*Only if you view your situation as critical do you recognise the need to transform it. Dissatisfaction can be a goad to reform. The sanguine, by contrast, are likely to come up with sheerly cosmetic solutions. True hope is needed most when the situation is at its starkest, a state of extremity that optimism is generally loath to acknowledge.*

Terry Eagleton (2015) *Hope Without Optimism*. Yale University Press

Dr Seth Brown

Mr James Goring

Professor Peter Kelly

UNESCO UNEVOC Centre, School of Education, RMIT University

RMIT University acknowledges the people of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung language groups of the eastern Kulin Nations on whose unceded lands we conduct the business of the University. RMIT University respectfully acknowledges their Ancestors and Elders, past and present. RMIT also acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and their Ancestors of the lands and waters across Australia where we conduct our business.



Co-designing sustainable futures for young people in times of crisis and disruption

Young people • Disruptions • Skills & Capabilities • Well-being • Future of Work

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The Inner Northern Suburbs of Melbourne: Darebin, Moreland and Yarra Local Government Areas (LGAs)</b>	<b>5</b>
The City of Moreland (CoM)	6
The City of Darebin (CoD)	6
The City of Yarra (CoY)	7
Youth Services in the Inner North	8
<b>Three Scenarios for 2025</b>	<b>9</b>
Introduction	9
Chaotic Futures: The Future We Want to Avoid	10
Unsustainable Futures: The Future We are Likely to Get	14
Sustainable Futures: The Future We Hope For	19
<b>Stakeholder Engagement</b>	<b>24</b>
Education, schooling, local government, industry, service providers and peak body leaders	24
Young People in Melbourne's Inner North	24
Facilitated Forum	25
<b>Themes</b>	<b>27</b>
Health and Well-being	27
The Economy and Livelihood	27
Education and Training	27
Community	28
<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Case Studies of Young People in the Inner North</b>	<b>30</b>
Connor	30
Bella	31
Rosie	32
Ash	33
<b>Appendix 2: UNESCO UNEVOC@RMIT and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Appendix 3: Young People as Youth Activists for Sustainable Futures. MICRO-CREDENTIAL: LEADERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.</b>	<b>38</b>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rosi Braidotti, a world renowned Italian-Australian philosopher based in the Netherlands, suggests that:

‘Hope is a way of dreaming up possible futures: an anticipatory virtue that permeates our lives and activates them. It is a powerful motivating force grounded not only in projects that aim at reconstructing the social imaginary, but also in the political economy of desires, affects and creativity that underscore it’.<sup>1</sup>

Hope is different to Optimism. You can be hopeful even if you are not optimistic.

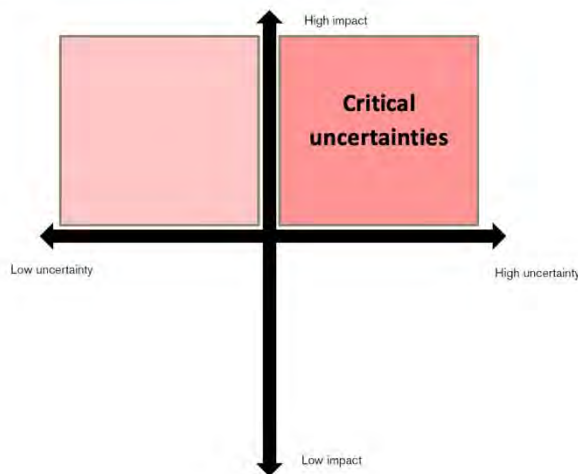
Scenario planning is a widely used tool that invests heavily in hope, because it seeks to imagine a range of possible futures, even if in doing so we are not optimistic about those possible futures.

Ged Davis, a former Vice President, Global Business Environment in Shell International Limited and head of Shell’s Scenarios Team suggests that:

‘Scenarios are stories about the future, but their purpose is to make better decisions in the present.’

Ernst Young’s concept of *Future Back Thinking* identifies the space of ‘critical uncertainties’ as being the space for doing scenario planning. This is an approach shared by others who use scenario planning methodologies.<sup>2</sup>

## Our methodology



A Wilson Matrix is commonly used to assess key drivers by exploring **which are most likely to have the greatest impact on the future** of the focal area in question.

Of these high impact drivers, the matrix is then used to assess **which are relatively uncertain**. These highly impactful, uncertain drivers are known as critical uncertainties. It is these that are fully explored across the scenario set.

<sup>1</sup> <https://unevocrm.it.org/2020/09/15/covid-19-and-young-peoples-recovery-scenarios-an-exercise-in-hope/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://unevocrm.it.org/2020/08/09/covid-19-recovery-scenarios-for-young-people-part-four-planning-and-preparedness-for-critical-uncertainties/>

The COVID-19 Recovery Scenarios for Young People in Melbourne's Inner North project is a scenario planning project that seeks to develop research informed scenarios of possible futures for young people in Melbourne's inner north in 2025.

This Final Report provides:

- 1) The three scenarios for discussion, consultation and feedback;
- 2) An outline of the conduct of various stages of the stakeholder engagement processes undertaken in the project;
- 3) An outline of the four themes that emerged in earlier phases of the project, and which have guided subsequent phases;
- 4) A concluding section that suggests a number of ways to use these scenarios to create impact for young people's recovery in the inner north;
- 5) **Appendix 1:** An account of a number of stories of young people from the inner north telling of their anxieties, uncertainties and hopes for their futures;
- 6) **Appendix 2:** A section outlining key goals and targets from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals framework – and how these inform this project, and the ongoing work of the UNESCO UNEVOC Centre at the School of Education, RMIT University;
- 7) **Appendix 3:** An outline of a proposed project to identify and develop a cohort of Youth Activists for Sustainable Futures (YASFs).

## THE INNER NORTHERN SUBURBS OF MELBOURNE: DAREBIN, MORELAND AND YARRA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS (LGAS)

**The Inner North of Melbourne** includes the Darebin, Moreland and Yarra local government areas. These areas occupy the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people.

‘...More than 390,000 people reside in the region with around 68,000 young people calling the area home. Historically, Darebin, Moreland and Yarra were the centre of Melbourne’s manufacturing sector. The concentrated nature of industry within the region contributed to large numbers of post-war migrants settling within its suburbs, resulting in a demographically diverse community across the three local government areas.

### Characteristics of our region

- High numbers of early school leavers, under 16 years of age
- Non-completion of Year 12 or its equivalent Certificate II
- Difficulty reengaging young people back into education and training
- Low levels of literacy and numeracy
- A high 20 per cent youth unemployment rate
- Many young people are not job ready
- Large Indigenous/Koorie population
- Diverse culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities
- Pockets of disadvantage, low income, and public housing
- Lower than state average uptake in apprenticeships and traineeships

The three local government areas are all significantly above the Victorian unemployment rate of 12 per cent for 20- to 24-year-olds and 21.5 per cent for 15- to 19-year-olds. This is a serious issue for the region and requires a whole-of-community response.

The development of the Inner Northern Youth Employment Taskforce (INJET) has been the direct result of rising youth unemployment in the region...<sup>3</sup>

The Australian Government’s *Local Jobs Plan: Inner Metropolitan Melbourne, Victoria* Report suggests, that since COVID-19 ‘the unemployment rate has increased to 6 per cent. While this is below the Victorian average of 7.1 per cent, the Employment Region has been one of the hardest hit areas in terms of job losses across the region.’<sup>4</sup> Job-active caseloads across Darebin, Moreland and Yarra Local Government Areas (LGA) increased significantly between March and October 2020 - by 289% in Darebin, 214% in Yarra and 272% in Moreland. The Plan states that:

According to the 2016 Census for Employment Regions, the youth disengagement rate in the Inner Metropolitan Melbourne Region is 6 per cent. While this is the lowest across Victoria’s Employment Regions and below the Victorian average of 11.2 per cent, the combined impact of labour market

---

<sup>3</sup> <http://inllen.org.au/about/regional-information/>

<sup>4</sup> [https://docs.employment.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/inner\\_metropolitan\\_melbourne\\_local\\_jobs\\_plan\\_-\\_october\\_2020\\_0.pdf](https://docs.employment.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/inner_metropolitan_melbourne_local_jobs_plan_-_october_2020_0.pdf)

dislocation and disruption to education and training, making it difficult to meet course outcomes, youth disengagement is likely to be higher than the 6 per cent recorded for the 2016 Census.<sup>5</sup>

---

### THE CITY OF MORELAND (COM)

The CoM covers the suburbs of Brunswick, Brunswick East, Brunswick West, Coburg, Coburg North, Fawkner, Glenroy, Gowanbrae, Hadfield, Oak Park, Pascoe Vale, and Pascoe Vale South. Small sections of the suburbs of Fitzroy North and Tullamarine are also part of the City of Moreland.<sup>6</sup>

The report - *Young People in Moreland: A Needs and Service Analysis* - published in 2018, outlines the youth services available to over 24,000 young people living in Moreland. The report describes a cohort that is diverse in age, ethnicity, sexuality, socioeconomic status and life experiences more generally and the services available to young people.<sup>7</sup>

According to 2016 Census data, young people aged 12 to 24 years living in Moreland, represented 14.8% of the total population of the municipality. As at January 2021, 9,953 (7.5%) of Moreland residents were receiving jobseeker or youth allowance, an increase of +5,011 from 4,942 (3.7%) since March 2020.<sup>8</sup>

Moreland Youth Services have supported young people throughout the COVID-19 pandemic including with assistance for emergency housing, food relief, LGBTIQ support, and family violence help, the 'be kind to others' and 'be kind to yourself' programs. Moreland Youth Services also facilitate *The Oxygen Committee*:

(also known as the Youth Facility and Services Steering Committee) are a group of young people who provide Moreland City Council with advice and recommendations on issues that affect young people in Moreland. This includes advice on the development of spaces that young people use and programs that run from Oxygen Youth Space, Moreland's purpose-built youth facility.<sup>9</sup>

---

### THE CITY OF DAREBIN (COD)

The CoD covers the suburbs (or parts of) Alphington, Bundoora, Coburg, Coburg North, Fairfield, Kingsbury, Macleod, Northcote, Preston, Reservoir, Thornbury.

In the 2016 Census, 33.2 per cent of Darebin residents stated they were born overseas. The major countries of birth were Italy, China, India, Greece, United Kingdom, Vietnam, New Zealand and Lebanon.

Darebin's residents speak a wide range of languages, with 37 per cent speaking a language other than English at home. Alongside English, the most common languages are Italian, Greek, Mandarin, Arabic, Vietnamese, Macedonian, Cantonese, Hindi and Punjabi. Approximately 7.3 per cent of the population do not speak English well or at all.

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.dese.gov.au/local-jobs-program/resources/inner-metropolitan-melbourne-local-jobs-plan>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.moreland.vic.gov.au/about-us/our-city/demographics-and-data/profile-of-moreland/>

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.moreland.vic.gov.au/globalassets/areas/youth/documents/moreland\\_young-people\\_service-and-gap-analysis\\_final.pdf](https://www.moreland.vic.gov.au/globalassets/areas/youth/documents/moreland_young-people_service-and-gap-analysis_final.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <https://profile.id.com.au/moreland>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.moreland.vic.gov.au/community-health/moreland-youth/get-to-know-us/youth-advisory-committee/>

As at January 2021, 9,026 (7.7%) Darebin residents were receiving jobseeker or youth allowance, an increase of +4,173 from 4,853 (4.2%) since March 2020.<sup>10</sup>

The City of Darebin is a Refugee Welcome Zone Leadership Council. A Refugee Welcome Zone is a Local Government Area which has made a commitment in spirit to welcoming refugees into the community, upholding the human rights of refugees, demonstrating compassion for refugees, and enhancing cultural and religious diversity in community.

The people of Darebin are made up of a rich diversity of religions and faiths. The Darebin Interfaith Council Committee was established in June 2005. It is a collaborative partnership aiming at creating opportunities for dialogue between religious leaders and community members of diverse faith background.<sup>11</sup>

Northcote High School (NHS) is situated in the City of Darebin. NHS staff and students emerged as active, key stakeholders in this project.

Darebin Youth Services run a number of programs and services for young people in the area. Young people involved with the *Young Citizens Jury* were also key stakeholders in this project:

The Young Citizens Jury gives young people a voice on issues and a platform to contribute to Council's decision-making process. The Young Citizens Jury is a group of 20 people passionate about making change in their community. They meet every month to discuss and debate current issues that are important to young people living in Darebin. They also identify and action relevant projects to address these issues.<sup>12</sup>

---

## THE CITY OF YARRA (COY)

The CoY is a vibrant inner metropolitan municipality which is home to a diverse community of about 100,000 people.

'...Yarra's 19.5 square kilometres include the suburbs of Abbotsford, Alphington (south of Heidelberg Road), Burnley, Carlton North, Clifton Hill, Collingwood, Cremorne, Fairfield (south of Heidelberg Road), Fitzroy, Fitzroy North, Princes Hill and Richmond.

As at January 2021, 5,188 (6.5%) Yarra residents were receiving jobseeker or youth allowance, an increase of +2,318 from 2,871 (3.6%) since March 2020.<sup>13</sup>

Yarra is a municipality of economic and social extremes. Nearly two in five households have a weekly income of more than \$2,395 per week. In contrast, nearly one in ten households live in public housing, with many experiencing the effects of economic and social disadvantage...'<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au/en/Discover-Darebin/Darebin-Overview>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au/Darebin-Living/Community-support/Diversity>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au/Darebin-Living/Community-support/Youth-Services/youth-voice>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/the-area>

<sup>14</sup> *0-25 Years Action Plan 2018-2022* <https://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/services/young-people>

Across the City of Yarra's under 25 population, 48% of young people aged 18-24 had one or both parents who were born overseas. 33% of 18-24 year olds lived in 'high density' housing, and 15% in a household earning less than \$650 per week.<sup>15</sup>

More Yarra residents per capita ride bicycles to and from work than in any other metropolitan Melbourne area. The City of Yarra *Smart City* approach places people at the centre of everything we do. It is built on the principals of: Liveability; Community; Environment; Council; Economy; Sustainability.<sup>16</sup>

Fitzroy High School (FHS) is situated in the City of Yarra. staff and students emerged as active, key stakeholders in this project.

---

## YOUTH SERVICES IN THE INNER NORTH

In addition to schools and LGA-based youth services, a number of organisations which supported this project, are key service providers for young people across all three LGA's and the Melbourne region more broadly. These include *Youth Projects*. *Youth Projects* are 'committed to breaking the cycle of disadvantage', and 'provides front line support to young people and individuals experiencing disadvantage, unemployment, homelessness, alcohol and other drug issues. We also help those looking to re-engage with learning and employment.' The *Youth Projects 2020 Impact Report* highlights the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequences for young people and the work of their organisation:

We delivered 2,250+ GP and nursing contacts, provided 880 mental health episodes of care, supplied 11,000+ food packs and nutritious meals and more than 2,300 showers and loads of laundry during the first 6 months of the crisis. More than 200 were swiftly supported into crisis accommodation in partnership with Launch Housing and Unison and also provided on-site COVID-19 testing in partnership with St Vincent's Hospital and Access Health.

...our Transition to Work program experienced an 85% increase of young people accessing employment support in May alone.

...The impact of ensuring disadvantaged groups receive public health messages during the pandemic cannot be underestimated as 35% of our service users heard about COVID-19 for the first time directly from Youth Projects.<sup>17</sup>

*The Brotherhood of St Laurence* (BSL) also provide support services to young people across the three Local Government Areas. The BSL is 'a social justice organisation working alongside people experiencing disadvantage to address the fundamental causes of poverty in Australia'. The BSL provides partners with:

the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to deliver Local Area Coordination (LAC) and Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) services for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) across the North East Melbourne, Hume, Moreland, Brimbank Melton, Western Melbourne and Bayside Peninsula areas.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> As above

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.youthprojects.org.au/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=9f8d511f-0f20-499c-8fee-429e388cc21f>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.bsl.org.au/services/people-with-disability/>

## THREE SCENARIOS FOR 2025

	1. Chaotic Futures (AVOID)	2. Unsustainable Futures (PREPARE)	3. Sustainable Futures (HOPE)
Health and Well-being			
Education and Training	<b>The Future We Want to Avoid</b>  Existing crises of a pre-COVID-19 world are amplified and become unmanageable.	<b>The Future We Are Likely to Get</b>  An unsustainable future in which the resources we use cannot be renewed indefinitely.	<b>The Future We Hope For</b>  A sustainable future in which we use renewable resources.
Economy and Livelihood	International, national, state and local institutions and systems are ill-equipped for responding to or managing this chaos.	A 'business as usual' approach to manage the COVID-19 crisis and its fallout means that international, national, state and local institutions and systems remain focussed on a series of 'stop gap' responses to crisis management.	Create new ways of working together that are inclusive, open and transparent.
Community			Shaped by shared visions for social and climate justices and difference and diversity.

## INTRODUCTION

A scenario is a presentation of a possible future situation in narrative form. As a rule, it also portrays causal relationships, which explain how, from the vantage point of the present, we arrived at that particular future in this particular story ('How might things come to this?'). One important characteristic of the scenario method lies in its explicit inclusion of uncertainties and its comparison of development alternatives that could shape the course of events. Scenarios are distinct from prognoses because they do not set out to predict the future. They are also distinct from utopias (or dystopias), which draw up a desired (or feared) future in the absence of any concretely established connections with the present. While prognoses are suitable for questions dealing with the nearer future, in relation to which developments can be 'calculated' with high probability and without major difficulty, utopias deal with the distant future, in relation to which many of today's certainties no longer hold good. Scenarios, however, play themselves out amidst the realities of today and the mid- to long-term uncertainties.

Sascha Meinert (2014)<sup>19</sup>

In this section we present the three scenarios for young people's possible futures - global, national and local - that attempt to identify, classify and group significant uncertainties under the headings:

**Chaotic Futures: The Future We Want to Avoid**

**Unsustainable Futures: The Future We are Likely to Get**

**Sustainable Futures: The Future We Hope For**

<sup>19</sup> <https://unevocrm.it.org/2020/08/09/covid-19-recovery-scenarios-for-young-people-part-four-planning-and-preparedness-for-critical-uncertainties/>

## CHAOTIC FUTURES: THE FUTURE WE WANT TO AVOID

**Chaotic Futures: The Future We Want to Avoid** describes a chaotic future in which the existing crises of a pre-COVID-19 world are amplified and become unmanageable by international, national, state and local institutions and systems that are ill-equipped for responding to or managing this chaos.

<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vaccines have different levels of effectiveness, and are not universally available. COVID-19 case numbers soar through successive waves globally (and in Australia) with an increasing death toll and ongoing periodic 'lockdowns'.</li> <li>The climate crisis worsens - year after year the number of bushfires, floods, cyclones, extinctions, etc. increase - as climate feedback loops, and a continuing lack of leadership and consensus on how to address the problem, intersect.</li> <li>Globally and nationally the number of young people suffering from mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and self-harm continues to increase to alarming levels.</li> <li>Service provision for young people's mental health in the inner north is overwhelmed by demand and a lack of resources and support.</li> </ul>
<b>Education and Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Australia falls behind in meeting key targets in relation to UN SDG 4 <i>Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all</i>.</li> <li>Ongoing, partisan debate between Federal and State governments, businesses and education institutions and professions about skills, micro-creds, and systems funding produces uncertainty, conflict and ongoing claims that education doesn't meet the needs of the 'real world'.</li> <li>The number of students in the Victorian school system opting to do an unscored VCE doubles by 2025. Young people complete their requirements to pass year 12 but opt out of exams.</li> <li>Education systems and providers in the inner north find themselves overwhelmed and ill-equipped to handle the increasing numbers of young people who express a lack of trust, and a loss of hope, in the 'promise of education' and become disengaged from education, training and employment pathways.</li> </ul>
<b>Economy and Livelihood</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As predicted, the 2020 recession turns into what appears to be a decade long 'greater depression'.</li> <li>Australia fails to meet key targets in relation to UN SDG 8 <i>Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all</i>.</li> <li>The 4th Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0) and 'digital disruption' creates fewer full-time, well-paid, 'secure', 'decent' jobs. As a consequence the wealth gap between the ultra-wealthy and 'ordinary Australians' continues to grow rapidly - fuelling social unrest in places such as the inner north.</li> <li>Federal and state governments leave it to the 'market' to help those young people who are unemployed and/or in precarious work. Many young people, dealing with health and well-being issues, give up hope and withdraw from the formal economy.</li> <li>Youth labour markets across the Inner North are characterised by precarious, casual and gig-work. The number of young people applying for each available job rises significantly.</li> </ul>
<b>Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A wave of populist leaders are elected globally further fuelling class tensions, gender, sexualities, and racial inequalities, international 'trade wars' and diplomatic crises.</li> <li>'Culture wars' erupt periodically across parts of Australia related to issues such as BlackLivesMatter, gender and sexualities, the climate crisis, and the economic crisis.</li> <li>Communities are divided, confused and chaotic in terms of who's to blame for these ongoing crises.</li> <li>Young people in the inner north lose hope in the abilities of institutions - their schools, local government, businesses - to deal with these crises.</li> <li>Affordable, safe and secure housing becomes increasingly scarce for young people in the inner north - property prices rise, rental and social housing can't meet young people's demand.</li> </ul>

In this scenario it is all too easy to become pessimistic and/or unhelpful about our short and longer term futures. But these futures are recognisable, possible, and need to be acknowledged and addressed if we are to avoid them (which should not be taken-for-granted as something we can achieve). As many agencies, organisations and commentators have suggested, many of the features and possibilities of this scenario became starkly evident during 2020, but the pandemic also amplified existing trends and trajectories.

### *The Climate and Biodiversity Crises*

Given the warnings of the recent past, and projections over the next 5 years, in this scenario we see little evidence that the human activities that have produced these possibilities are changing at all, or are changing fast enough to avoid this chaotic future. For example, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) produces an annual 'Gap report' that measures progress, or a lack of it, towards particular indicators of/for sustainable development and achieving the Paris Agreement targets. In its 2020 report the UNEP (2020) points out that:

'Between 2020 and 2030, global coal, oil, and gas production would have to decline annually by 11%, 4%, and 3%, respectively, to be consistent with a 1.5°C pathway. But government plans and projections indicate an average 2% annual increase for each fuel.

This translates to a production gap similar to that estimated in the 2019 report, with countries aiming to produce 120% and 50% more fossil fuels by 2030 than would be consistent with limiting global warming to 1.5°C or 2°C, respectively.<sup>20</sup>

Many argue that by 2025 we will be left with only 5 years to prevent irreversible damage from climate change.<sup>21</sup> This chaotic scenario also sees the world's biodiversity continue to decline as the species extinction rates accelerate.<sup>22</sup>

The inaction, or a lack of sufficient action to address these challenges, that characterises this scenario, is something that young people around the world have been protesting for the last few years in the *School Strike for Climate* and *Fridays for the Future* mass movements.<sup>23</sup> For young Swedish activist Greta Thunberg and her colleagues, the climate and biodiversity crises that global agencies are outlining and foretelling are just 'the very beginning.'<sup>24</sup>

In the chaotic futures that these young people all too easily imagine, and fear, they acknowledge that: 'the world is complicated and that what we are asking for may not be easy or may seem unrealistic. But it is much more unrealistic to believe that our societies would be able to survive the...disastrous ecological consequences of today's business as usual. We are inevitably going to have to fundamentally change, one way or another.'<sup>25</sup>

### *The Economy*

Nouriel Roubini is professor of economics at New York University's Stern School of Business. He has worked for the International Monetary Fund, the US Federal Reserve, and the World Bank. Drawing on this extensive experience and knowledge of the recent history of the global economy, and his sense of the more immediate and longer terms possibilities of the pandemic, he identified, in 2020, what he called '10 ominous and risky trends' that point to an L-shaped "Greater Depression" for the decade of the 2020s.<sup>26</sup> The 10 risks are:

- 1) Deficits and debt, 2) Demography, 3) Deflation, 4) Currency debasement, 5) Digital Disruption and Employment Replacement, 6) De-globalisation, 7) Backlash against democracy, 8) The US v China, 9) New Cold War, 10) Environmental Crises.

Roubini reinforces the sense of the world that COVID-19 emerged into, and the ways in which these histories and presents are entangled with the possible, probable futures that we all face – the more than likely, if not

---

<sup>20</sup> UNEP (2020) The Production Gap: 2020 Special Report, <https://productiongap.org>

<sup>21</sup> UN (2019) Only 11 years left to prevent irreversible damage from climate change, speakers warn during General Assembly high-level meeting, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/ga12131.doc.htm>

<sup>22</sup> UN (2019) UN Report: Nature's dangerous decline 'Unprecedented'; species extinction rates 'Accelerating', <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/nature-decline-unprecedented-report/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://fridaysforfuture.org>

<sup>24</sup> Greta Thunberg, Luisa Neubauer, Anuna de Wever, and Adélaïde Charlier (2020) After two years of school strikes, the world is still in a state of climate crisis denial, *The Guardian*, August 19, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/aug/19/climate-crisis-leaders-greta-thunberg>

<sup>25</sup> Greta Thunberg, Luisa Neubauer, Anuna de Wever, and Adélaïde Charlier

<sup>26</sup> Nouriel Roubini (2020) A Greater Depression? <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/coronavirus-greater-great-depression-by-nouriel-roubini-2020-03?barrier=accesspaylog>

inevitable, worst case scenarios: ‘...These 10 risks, already looming large before Covid-19 struck, now threaten to fuel a perfect storm that sweeps the entire global economy into a decade of despair.’<sup>27</sup>

In this scenario, the initial economic shocks of the COVID-19 recession in 2020 and 2021, and their impacts on the education, training and employment pathways of young people over the coming 5 years, mirror many of the burdens and costs that particular populations of young people carried in the ‘downstream’ effects of the GFC.<sup>28</sup>

For many young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, Aboriginal and indigenous communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and young people with disabilities, these effects include: long periods of unemployment and underemployment; being ‘trapped’ in precarious and gig work beyond the limits of the choice and flexibility that are often touted for these forms of work; finding that they don’t have the skills and capabilities demanded by increasing digitalisation, automation and globalisation of the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution; and the social, economic, and health and well-being ‘scarring’ that accompanies these experiences.<sup>29</sup>

### *The Inner North*

Stakeholders from the inner north who were interviewed by the LLEN, and who participated in the facilitated forum workshop also share these concerns in their observations and experiences with young people. Young people’s anxiety about their sense of place in the world, and about purposeful education and employment, have escalated from a pre-existing condition to what is now palpable during the COVID-19 crisis. Their concerns, at times despair, about climate change have also been heightened as they both observe and experience the disconnect between existing systems and urgent challenges. These crises leave groups who were experiencing disadvantage or discrimination, such as young people from refugee and migrant communities, Aboriginal and indigenous young people, LGBTQIA+ young people and disabled young people in the inner north, more vulnerable in this chaotic futures scenario.

‘I think schools really need to think more about, you know, heighten the levels of distress and particularly around mental health, around some of the ways they operate, the hours they operate, the way in which they enforce rules that don’t need to be enforced. That if young people are already incredibly stressed, incredibly uncertain about continuing to attend school, then schools really need to answer the question, how are they going to change how young people are going to change? What is school going to do about how are they going to take the stress level down for young people?’

Melanie Raymond, Chair, Youth Projects.

Multiple recessions from the 1990s onwards have contributed to young people’s vulnerabilities in the inner north. These vulnerabilities operate on two interconnected levels. The first is the declining number of, and access to, meaningful employment, even entry level positions, and situations where young people juggle a few hours of work across a number of jobs while studying, with little prospect of gaining a qualification that leads to secure work. And second, the precariousness of the gig economy and economic shifts that contribute to the

---

<sup>27</sup> Nouriel Roubini (2020) A Greater Depression?

<sup>28</sup> Kelly, P. and Pike, J. (editors) (2017) [Neo-Liberalism and Austerity: The Moral Economies of Young People’s Health and Well-Being](#), Palgrave, London.

The Productivity Commission (2020) *Why did young people’s income decline?*  
<https://www.pc.gov.au/research/completed/youth-income-decline>

<sup>29</sup> Kelly, P. (2017) [Growing up After the GFC: Responsibilisation and Mortgaged Futures](#), *Discourse*, 38, 1, pp. 57-69

deepening of mental health issues that are further exacerbated by factors such as homelessness, domestic violence and substance abuse.

Stakeholders' concerns over young people's low wages, poor employment conditions and rising unemployment and the attitudes of employers, financial institutions, and services towards young people in the inner north are warranted in the wake of a national youth unemployment crisis. In this scenario, these issues worsen, particularly for young people with a large HECS debt, and in relation to low housing affordability and transport options and costs:

'The worst case scenario for me is we go back to where we were beforehand and we don't learn from that. So we go back to a place where young people cycle through unemployment benefits. The length of unemployment remains at twenty-four months in Broadmeadows. We don't have really strong pathways from school to further education or school to employment for those very vulnerable kids. We don't intervene early enough.'

Ben Vasilou, CEO Youth Projects.

The issue of young people's anxiety over post-school options for their futures is an ongoing concern for many stakeholders. Stakeholders acknowledge in this scenario that a failure to act in a comprehensive and collaborative way to re-engage and reimagine young people's livelihoods will lead to a chaotic futures scenario.

These concerns about chaotic futures are mirrored by many of the young people we spoke to in the inner north. Including, importantly, the feelings of anxiety, uncertainty and fear that accompany a sense of a chaotic future. These young people also voiced their concerns about chaotic futures where they lose hope in the abilities of institutions to deal with crisis, and the scarcity of affordable, safe and secure housing:

'So looking into the future, I would say I am scared anxious and hopeful all at the same time, I think... I think we kind of need to turn on our moral obligation... because we're not doing that at the moment... I think about the economy and how we are going to have to be, my generation, is going to have to be fixing that as well as paying off Uni fees or whatever... I think about we're still not really going to be able to afford a house and yeah just everyday expenses like that.'

Rosie, 18, Northcote

Ash describes the insurmountable obstacles to receiving adequate support from the government to budget for daily expenses:

'The other thing is like the financial situation. I don't have anything financial backing from like family. So at the moment without a job, my only financial support has been from the government with like Centrelink. Like youth allowance, and when on youth allowance, that money is not really sufficient to be able to, live on, when you're living in a place like Melbourne, where rent is so expensive, over half my finances, my money, was going to just my rent, it's a lot. Um. (laughs)...I think, yeah, I'm not really sure what to do.'

Ash, 24, Pascoe Vale.

Young people in this scenario are left with mortgaged and chaotic futures. These chaotic futures are further exacerbated by the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19, climate, and economic crises that leave young people in a perpetual state of precariousness with little voice in changing their predicament.

## UNSUSTAINABLE FUTURES: THE FUTURE WE ARE LIKELY TO GET

**Unsustainable Futures: The Future We are Likely to Get** describes an unsustainable future in which the resources we use cannot be renewed and continuing with a ‘business as usual’ approach to manage the crises the COVID-19 pandemic and fallout will mean that international, national, state and local institutions and systems will be overwhelmed.

Health and Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As many international agencies predicted, the climate crisis grows worse, and Australian governments continue to struggle to develop a coherent and co-ordinated approach in line with the Paris Agreement.</li> <li>Globally and nationally the number of young people suffering from mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and self-harm remains a major challenge, with policy makers seemingly unable to respond effectively.</li> <li>In the inner north, service provision for young people’s mental health struggles to meet demand. Existing local organisations are provided some additional resources and there is some coordinated effort across these LGAs.</li> <li>Youth service providers and schools increase digital infrastructure, preparedness and support to deliver higher quality online health services.</li> </ul>
Education and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Australia makes limited progress in meeting key targets in relation to <i>UN SDG 4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all</i>.</li> <li>Ongoing debate between Federal and State governments, businesses and education institutions and professions about skills, micro-creds, and systems funding does little to produce any certainty or consensus about secondary and post-secondary pathways, options and opportunities.</li> <li>The number of students in the Victorian school system opting to do an unscored VCE remains the same until 2025, while the ATAR retains its status as the dominant measure of secondary education outcomes and university admissions.</li> <li>Education systems and providers in the inner north struggle to develop new ways to meet the needs and aspirations of young people who are unemployed and disengaged from education, training and employment pathways.</li> <li>In the inner north large numbers of young people express a lack of trust, and a loss of hope, in the ‘promise of education’ and become disengaged from education, training and employment pathways.</li> </ul>
Economy and Livelihood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The 2020 recession develops into a series of V-shaped recoveries and recessions as global economic uncertainties, disruption, ‘trade wars’, and limited international movements impact national and local economies.</li> <li>Australia makes limited progress in meeting key targets in relation to <i>UN SDG 8 Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all</i>.</li> <li>Australia’s low growth, pre-COVID economy, the uneven emergence of ‘digital disruption’, and precarious labour markets with fewer full-time, well-paid, ‘secure’, ‘decent’ jobs, continues to contribute to significant wealth gaps between the ultra-wealthy and ‘ordinary Australians’. Many young people feel a sense of injustice and unfairness in places such as the inner north.</li> <li>Federal and state governments develop various ‘skills based’ interventions and programs to make more young people ‘employable’ but do little to address the ‘demand side’ of youth labour markets. Many young people, dealing with health and well-being issues, remain on the ‘margins’ of the formal economy.</li> <li>Youth labour markets across the Inner North are mostly characterised by precarious, casual and gig-work - with few pathways to secure, well-paid, ‘decent’ jobs. The number of young people applying for each available job continues to produce high levels of youth unemployment.</li> </ul>
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate and piecemeal political and policy responses fail to reduce class, gender, sexuality and racial inequalities, stimulate economic growth, or ease trade disputes and diplomatic crises.</li> <li>There is little progress in relation to the BlackLivesMatter, gender and sexuality equalities, and climate emergency movements to create change at the local, state, federal and global levels.</li> <li>Communities are frustrated to see little progress to address these crises.</li> <li>Institutions across the Inner North such as schools and local government continue on the same path in the face of these crises and consider these issues at the margins of their ‘core business’.</li> <li>Victoria’s ‘Big Housing Build’ has provided thousands of new social housing dwellings. The first home buyers, and renters market however, continues to see affordable, safe and secure housing beyond the reach of most young people in the inner north.</li> </ul>

Many aspects of this possible future echo those in the *Chaotic Futures* scenario. A ‘business as usual’ approach to the climate, the economy, education, training and employment pathways for young people, and their health and well-being reflects a sense that these things were in ‘pretty good shape’ prior to the pandemic, and that we just need to ‘bounce-back’ to this ‘normal’.

### *The Climate and Biodiversity Crises*

In late 2020 the United Nations Development Plan (UNDP) released its latest report titled - *The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene*. The UNDP lists the challenges that humans, non-humans and the planet face:

‘The climate crisis. Biodiversity collapse. Ocean acidification. The list is long and growing longer. So much so that many scientists believe that for the first time, instead of the planet shaping humans, humans are knowingly shaping the planet. This is the Anthropocene – the Age of Humans - a new geologic epoch.’

In our headlong pursuit of ‘unsustainable’ development humans ‘have taken the Earth for granted, destabilizing the very systems upon which we rely for survival’. COVID-19, ‘which almost certainly sprang to

humans from animals, offers a glimpse of our future, in which the strain on our planet mirrors the strain facing societies'. From this perspective, COVID-19, as a symptom or signal of wider processes took 'very little time to expose and exploit overlapping inequalities, as well as weaknesses in social, economic, and political systems, and threaten reversals in human development.'<sup>30</sup>

In this future: 'There is no great mystery about the cause of the COVID-19 pandemic – or of any modern pandemic...The same human activities that drive climate change and biodiversity loss also drive pandemic risk through their impacts on our environment...This is the path to pandemics.'<sup>31</sup>

### *The Economy*

The lack of response around the globe and in Australia to the climate and biodiversity crises impact negatively on international and national economic development. In this scenario, Australia makes limited progress in meeting key targets in relation to UN SDG 8 to *Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*.

Various agencies point out that exponential climate change impacts threaten more than supply chains and physical infrastructure, they endanger growth by exacerbating systems-level disruption to customers, investors, employees and communities. Wildfires in California, the world's 7<sup>th</sup> largest economy, and Australia, the 11<sup>th</sup> largest provide an indication of the potential impacts.<sup>32</sup>

As many international and national agencies have predicted, the climate crisis will grow worse, and Australian governments will continue to struggle to develop a coherent and co-ordinated approach in line with the Paris Agreement. Global and Australian business leaders must look at climate risk in new ways.<sup>33</sup>

In this scenario, the climate crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and ongoing economic crises undercut plans for an economic 'reboot'.<sup>34</sup> An uncertain recovery in 2021 and beyond is predicated on the pandemic fading, helped by new vaccine approvals and policy support with global growth expected to rebound to 5.5 percent in 2021 and 4.2% in 2022.<sup>35</sup> The recovery projected for 2021-22 follows a severe collapse in 2020 that has acutely

---

<sup>30</sup> The United Nations Development Program 2020, *Human Development Report 2020. The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene*, <http://report.hdr.undp.org/index.html>

<sup>31</sup> Dr. Peter Daszak, President of [EcoHealth Alliance](#) and Chair of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services ([IPBES](#)). IPBES (2020) *Escaping the 'Era of Pandemics': Experts Warn Worse Crises to Come. Options Offered to Reduce Risk*, <https://www.ipbes.net/pandemics-media-release>

<sup>32</sup> EY Megatrends 2020 and Beyond (p. 23)

<sup>33</sup> Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology (2021) Annual mean temperature anomaly Australia (1910 to 2020), <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/change/#tabs=Tracker&tracker=timeseries>

<sup>34</sup> Sacks, D., Bayles, K., Taggart, A., and Noble, S. (2021). COVID-19 and education: How Australian schools are responding and what happens next. <https://www.pwc.com.au/government/government-matters/covid-19-education-how-australian-schools-are-responding.html#:~:text=However%2C%20COVID%2D19%20has%20resulted,ascertaining%20engagement%20levels%20of%20students&text=increased%20social%20isolation%20and%20reduced%20ability%20to%20support%20student%20wellbeing>

<sup>35</sup> International Monetary Fund (2021). World economic outlook update: Policy support and vaccines expected to lift activity. <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2021/01/26/2021-world-economic-outlook-update>

impacted women, young people, the informally employed, and those working in contact intensive industries.<sup>36</sup> The strength of the recovery beyond 2021 is predicted to vary significantly across nations and is dependent on the effectiveness of policy support, access to medical interventions, and structural characteristics that were evident prior to entering the pandemic and its economic and social crises.<sup>37</sup>

### *Education and Training*

The challenges facing education systems in Australia, pre and post-COVID, and the sorts of education, training and employment pathways that might engage all young people, and cater for their health and well-being, are significant. As the Shergold report observes:

Education must prepare young people both for active citizenship in a democratic society and for purposeful engagement with the labour market. This is vital at a time when trust in democratic governance and institutions is at a low level and cognitive technologies are transforming the future of work.

Young people are increasingly anxious about the uncertainty of their futures. The profound disruptions of COVID-19 have heightened that unease. They sense that normal life is unlikely to be fully restored. Economic recovery is likely to be slow and patchy...

School leavers do not just need to be employable. They need to be adaptable, flexible and confident. Education must provide students with the essential attributes they require for lifelong learning in whatever fields of endeavour they may choose. The professional and applied skills they need will change significantly over their lives. The jobs they do will be transformed. Some, driven by entrepreneurial ambition, will want to set up their own businesses. Most will switch careers.

To achieve this – for all young Australians – profound challenges need to be overcome.<sup>38</sup>

In this business-as-usual scenario these challenges look similar in 2025, to the ways that they look prior to, and during the pandemic.

### *The Inner North*

As spiralling youth unemployment, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the climate crisis converge, young people are left particularly vulnerable to forms of collective trauma in this unsustainable futures scenario. Moving to a funding model that narrowly focuses on jobs and relegates creative and critical thinking to the periphery, leaves many young people saddled with large HECs debts that will be difficult to pay off in a shrinking full-time youth labour market with slow wage growth. The 'business as usual' response gives young people a tokenistic voice to reimagine education, employment, entrepreneurship and economic recovery in the face of tectonic shifts in the global economy:

'I think we've just got to start to look at things a bit differently. You know, we put too much focus on a job and the job outcome rather than the skills that could relate to the job. And providing these young people with work experience, diverse skills and the ability to actually integrate into a workplace are far more important than, you know, can they wire up a little component or they've got specific

---

<sup>36</sup> International Monetary Fund (2021, p. 1).

<sup>37</sup> International Monetary Fund (2021, p. 1).

<sup>38</sup> Education Council (Shergold review, 2020) *Looking to the future – Report of the review of senior secondary pathways into work, further education and training*, p.12, <https://www.pathwaysreview.edu.au>

building skills. I think we've got to go back and, you know, instead of trying to stream them very early, trying to provide them with an armoury of basic skills, which includes digitalization.'

Mike Grogan, Advanced Manufacturing Skills Centre.

In this scenario, a more regulated and compliance driven education system, under the banner of 'education for all', rarely caters for individual differences and needs and only offers supports that are based on narrowly defined metrics. Teachers, students, and parents are left to navigate a fragmented, labyrinthine system, and individual students are left to find meaning and connection within this complexity. The education system does not recognise the different impacts of certain subject areas such as the humanities and social sciences in improving young people's prospects for meaningful employment. The opportunity to engage young people in critical and creative thinking in order to secure future employment opportunities is lost in this scenario:

'I don't think we could just continue to rely on wellbeing staff or teachers within schools that, you know, whose resources are already stretched. I think satellite services into those institutions which funnel most of the kids of Australia. I think that's probably the best.'

Keith Waters, CEO, National Youth Commission.

Young people navigating this system, who have already experienced disrupted education are more likely to have a difficult time re-engaging in education and training. More and more young people in this scenario face discrimination based on the lack of culturally appropriate support to reach successful outcomes in schools. This system also provides opportunities for unregulated training bodies to take advantage of vulnerable cohorts of young people without any guarantee of jobs or outcomes for their future livelihoods. Young people in this scenario are left with a lack of community support and trust in the services and systems designed to support them.

The 'business as usual' approach to the issues of over-stretched resources and a narrow focus on young people obtaining employment will continue to be unsustainable in 2025 as stakeholders grapple with issues far beyond the scope of their organisations. The entanglements of the COVID-19, climate, and economic crises with young peoples' futures, provide perplexing problems that cannot be addressed through a 'business as usual' response.

These concerns about unsustainable futures are mirrored by many of the young people we spoke to in the inner north. Their feelings and experiences of current systems during the pandemic, signal how housing, employment, education and health might play out for some young people in an unsustainable, 'business as usual' recovery and future. For example, Aidyn describes his frustration in seeking employment during the COVID lockdown in Victoria, while his family was experiencing financial issues.

'Right now I'm applying for a job...but because of the second lock down, that's actually taking me longer to find a job right now, or for them to employ me. Seven months for a reply. That's how long it took me. I'd actually like a job right now because at the moment my parents are...experiencing financial stress...in terms of paying bills...'

Aidyn, Fitzroy

Ruby looks forward to a future that will amplify the voices of young people to change the trajectory of these unsustainable futures.

'I'm 17 years old and I know that I hold similar beliefs to all my friends and in five years in the future, we're all going to be able to vote and the voices that we have are going to be a lot louder in a political sense.'

Ruby, 17, City of Yarra

Ann observes how the COVID-19 crisis has increased her level of stress and susceptibility to experiencing mental health issues.

‘COVID-19 made my life miserable. It made me more anxious, depressed, agitated. I’m the type of person who doesn’t like being at home because of my family situation. I like being at Uni or at my friend’s house. So being restricted to go anywhere and see my friends made me anxious to the point that I have mental breakdowns on a daily basis.’

Ann, 23, Moreland

These unsustainable futures demonstrate how the ‘business as usual’ approach scenario may play out in 2025 as young people struggle to find employment, deal with the amplified effects of the COVID-19 crisis on their mental health, and find a space to express and voice their concerns in a broken political system.

## SUSTAINABLE FUTURES: THE FUTURE WE HOPE FOR

**Sustainable Futures: The Future We Hope For** describes a sustainable future in which we use renewable resources, create new ways of working together that are inclusive, open and transparent and are shaped by shared visions for social and climate justice, and difference and diversity.

<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>International, national, state and local agencies and communities re-commit to the efforts required to meet the Paris Agreement, and young people around the globe are key drivers of this commitment and action.</li> <li>The number of young people suffering from mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and self-harm remains a major challenge, however the innovations from telehealth lead to higher quality, more accessible health and education services for young people.</li> <li>In the inner north, service provision for young people's mental health needs is largely able to meet demand through coordinated efforts, new partnerships across Moreland, Darebin and Yarra LGAs, their schools, councils and youth services.</li> <li>Young people have an effective and influential voice, and are considered key stakeholders who participate in the design, and lead in the recovery across schools, organisations, local government and businesses in Melbourne's Inner North.</li> </ul>
<b>Education and Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Australia makes significant progress towards meeting key targets in the <i>UN SDG 4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all</i> by 2025.</li> <li>Federal, State and Local governments, businesses and education institutions and professions work together to produce a more diverse and flexible secondary and post-secondary pathway mix – moving beyond an over-reliance on the ATAR.</li> <li>Safer schools foster an environment that is more supportive and inclusive of LGBTQIA+ young people.</li> <li>Education systems and providers, communities, businesses and governments in the inner north develop new models to meet the needs and aspirations of young people who are unemployed and disengaged from education, training and employment pathways.</li> <li>In the inner north large numbers of young people express greater trust, and are more hopeful, as they become more engaged with education and training, and have more employment pathway options.</li> </ul>
<b>Economy and Livelihood</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Global economic crises, uncertainties and disruption, produce new international and national consensus about the broad parameters of a global 'Green New Deal' to drive sustainable economic recovery.</li> <li>Australia makes significant progress in meeting key targets in relation to <i>UN SDG 8 Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all</i>.</li> <li>The recovery from the COVID recession involves a comprehensive, sustainable Youth Employment Strategy, which delivers meaningful and secure work for a greater number of young people.</li> <li>At State and local levels, a Green New Deal drives innovation and creation of decent, secure jobs, narrowing the wealth gaps between the ultra-wealthy and 'ordinary Australians'.</li> <li>Many young people feel an increasing sense of belonging and engagement with the communities, institutions and services in the inner north as their voices and concerns are central to co-designing the recovery.</li> </ul>
<b>Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elected leaders develop policies and pass legislation to reduce class, gender, sexuality and racial inequalities, stimulate economic growth, and ease trade disputes and diplomatic crises.</li> <li>A treaty emerges through negotiations between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and Australian and Victorian governments and local councils.</li> <li>Young people, communities, businesses and governments in the inner north develop new models to address the BlackLivesMatter, gender and sexuality inequalities, and Climate crises and act as agents of change in their communities.</li> <li>Young people, communities, businesses and governments in the inner north collaborate on the co-design of innovative housing models – co-operatives, 'social', 'shared', 'inter-generational' – that produce greater housing diversity and security for more young people.</li> </ul>

This is the scenario that we hope for in the face of what may seem like overwhelming challenges. In this scenario, key stakeholders at the international, national, state and local levels work collaboratively to achieve sustainable futures. At first glance, these futures may appear overly 'optimistic', but they are possible and recognisable futures that need to be acknowledged if we are to achieve them.

### *The Climate and Biodiversity Crises and the Economy*

In this scenario, international, national, state and local agencies and communities implement what have been termed 'green recovery plans and projects' – though in different places these mean different things, from the Australian Greens long standing policies, to a Democrat sponsored Green New Deal proposal in the US, and the EU's Green Deal.<sup>39</sup> Many governments are implementing green recovery plans, funding projects designed to stimulate economic growth and accelerate decarbonization.<sup>40</sup> As the world approaches 1.5°C of warming, organisations and businesses that embrace the challenge will secure their future, improve their capacity to create long term value for all stakeholders, and be well-placed to capture an innovation opportunity.<sup>41</sup> These

<sup>39</sup> <https://greens.org.au/greennewdeal>,

<https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/hres109/BILLS-116hres109ih.pdf>

<https://unevocrmr.org/2020/05/18/covid-19-climate-change-and-young-peoples-futures-views-from-europe/>

<sup>40</sup> EY Megatrends 2020 and Beyond (p. 23).

<sup>41</sup> EY Megatrends 2020 and Beyond (p. 23)

recovery plans are designed to stimulate growth and accelerate decarbonisation and re-commit to the efforts required to meet the Paris Agreement.

The OECD – in its report on *Biodiversity and the economic response to COVID-19: Ensuring a green and resilient recovery* – suggests that governments adopt a number of policies to ‘integrate biodiversity considerations into the COVID-19 recovery plans, and drive the transformative changes needed to halt and then reverse biodiversity loss’. These include things such as:

- *Ensure that COVID-19 economic recovery measures do not compromise biodiversity*
- *Scale up investment in biodiversity conservation, sustainable use and restoration*
- *Put a price on biodiversity loss*
- *Foster cross-sectoral and international collaboration.*<sup>42</sup>

In many of these initiatives young people are identified as key stakeholders in the imagining and implementation of these sustainable futures:<sup>43</sup>

Young people are central to this mission...the EGD promises 1) the development of a competence framework for teaching on environment and sustainability in schools, 2) financial resources, to improve sustainability in the built environments and operations of schools...and 3) and an updated Skills Agenda and Youth Guarantee to ensure young people are equipped for the transition from declining industry, into the green economy.<sup>44</sup>

In this scenario Australia makes significant progress in meeting key targets in relation to UN SDG 8 to *Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*. At national, state and local levels, a limited version of a Green New Deal drives innovation and creation of a greater number of decent, more secure jobs, and more just ‘flexible’ or ‘gig’ work practices. For example, new business models are emerging to provide specialised services to meet the unique needs of gig workers: EY’s analysis found that funds invested in banking for gig economy workers rocketed by almost 6500% in 2019.<sup>45</sup>

### *Education, Training and Well-being*

International agencies and bodies such as UNESCO, the OECD, the UN Secretariat, and the EU, have laid out various, ambitious, visions for education futures post COVID. Many of these offer a glimpse of possible futures for education that are more inclusive of diversity, and of education re-imagined as a public good that drives collective prosperity and justice for all young people. UNESCO’s vision outlines nine (9) ideas for what it calls ‘concrete action’:

1. Commit to strengthen education as a common good. Education is a bulwark against inequalities. In education as in health, we are safe when everybody is safe; we flourish when everybody flourishes.
2. Expand the definition of the right to education so that it addresses the importance of connectivity and access to knowledge and information. The Commission calls for a global public discussion—that includes, among others, learners of all ages—on ways the right to education needs to be expanded.
3. Value the teaching profession and teacher collaboration. There has been remarkable innovation in the responses of educators to the COVID-19 crisis, with those systems most engaged with families

---

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/biodiversity-and-the-economic-response-to-covid-19-ensuring-a-green-and-resilient-recovery-d98b5a09/>

<sup>43</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1588580774040&uri=CELEX:52019DC0640>

<sup>44</sup> <https://unevocrmrmit.org/2020/05/18/covid-19-climate-change-and-young-peoples-futures-views-from-europe/>

<sup>45</sup> The Youth Affairs Council of Australia (YACVIC) (2020, p. 16) [COVID-19 Recovery Plan for Young People](#)

and communities showing the most resilience. We must encourage conditions that give frontline educators autonomy and flexibility to act collaboratively.

4. Promote student, youth and children's participation and rights. Intergenerational justice and democratic principles should compel us to prioritize the participation of students and young people broadly in the co-construction of desirable change.
5. Protect the social spaces provided by schools as we transform education. The school as a physical space is indispensable. Traditional classroom organization must give way to a variety of ways of 'doing school' but the school as a separate space-time of collective living, specific and different from other spaces of learning must be preserved.
6. Make free and open source technologies available to teachers and students. Open educational resources and open access digital tools must be supported. Education cannot thrive with ready-made content built outside of the pedagogical space and outside of human relationships between teachers and students. Nor can education be dependent on digital platforms controlled by private companies.
7. Ensure scientific literacy within the curriculum. This is the right time for deep reflection on curriculum, particularly as we struggle against the denial of scientific knowledge and actively fight misinformation.
8. Protect domestic and international financing of public education. The pandemic has the power to undermine several decades of advances. National governments, international organizations, and all education and development partners must recognize the need to strengthen public health and social services but simultaneously mobilize around the protection of public education and its financing.
9. Advance global solidarity to end current levels of inequality. COVID-19 has shown us the extent to which our societies exploit power imbalances and our global system exploits inequalities. The Commission calls for renewed commitments to international cooperation and multilateralism, together with a revitalized global solidarity that has empathy and an appreciation of our common humanity at its core.

As UNESCO suggests:

COVID-19 presents us with a real challenge and a real responsibility. These ideas invite debate, engagement and action by governments, international organizations, civil society, educational professionals, as well as learners and stakeholders at all levels.<sup>46</sup>

In this scenario Australia makes significant progress towards meeting key targets in the UN SDG 4 to *Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all* by 2025. At the federal and state level, policy makers, for example, shift the focus from the 'deficits' of individual First Nations' young people, and target education reform in terms of curriculum, pedagogy, and professional development for teachers. They support the YACVic recommendation to address existing and increasing racism — both individual and structural — by building on the Victorian Government's Anti-Racism Action Plan and committing to working with young people to lead social cohesion.<sup>47</sup>

Youth strategies — at various levels - are inclusive and diverse in their vision and application and focused on reforming the systems that children and youth access to better support them. They are increasingly framed within a decolonising paradigm to support all children and youth regardless of their cultural context.<sup>48</sup>

Youth strategies recognise that education, training and employment pathways will look different for different young people, at different times (boom, recession), in different places (inner city, outer urban, regional and rural), and in relation to different labour market opportunities. Governments, communities, businesses,

---

<sup>46</sup> UNESCO, *Education in a Post COVID World: Nine Ideas for Public Action*, <https://en.unesco.org/news/education-post-covid-world-nine-ideas-public-action?fbclid=IwAR0ZkcPBWE0OF9ccBd4zkX-iaawunik0FDT7ik1iKrbGDprYScEzvPcVXBrU>, pp.5-6

<sup>47</sup> EY Megatrends 2020 and Beyond (p. 60).

<sup>48</sup> YACVIC (2020, p. 20)

schools and NGOs create new models of education, training and employment pathways that acknowledge and account for these relationships.

The number of young people suffering from mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and self-harm remains a major challenge, however the innovations from telehealth promise to produce higher quality, more accessible health and education services for young people. In this future governments also recognise that ‘The ongoing mental health emergency can be mitigated by ensuring young people have access to free, appropriate and evidence-based mental health supports and care.’<sup>49</sup> This includes, increasing service capacity, support digital and online youth mental health services, education and employment supports, and support for families.

### *The Inner North*

In this sustainable futures scenario, young people, supported by stakeholders, co-design innovative approaches to education and sustainable livelihoods. For example, young people, and stakeholders in partnership with universities, co-design an assessment framework and metrics system that demonstrates and reflects a more inclusive response to the final years of secondary schooling. In this scenario, stakeholders actively listen and give voice to diverse groups of young people on what’s important to them and are committed to the process of co-design. Local organisations, businesses, and NGOs in the inner north work with young people in schools to test and refine an environmentally responsible business model, and build an integrated, sustainable collaboration and partnership between education and local stakeholders for developing social enterprises for structured workplace learning in schools.

This coordinated response leads to opportunities for potential part time work for transitional experiences in social enterprises and partnership opportunities for young people to build social enterprises in their local community. Local stakeholder, community-based accelerators emerge to enable young people to participate in building a New Economy Business Model – a model that draws on templates from various New Green Deal proposals:

‘I think there is a bit of a shift in the way local government, state government, hopefully federal government; that people are thinking about, about values generally and what matters. I think the pandemic has revealed some great fissures and some great cracks and some great issues and inequities. And I’m hoping that we don’t bounce back. I hope we bounce forward into a different reality where people are willing to be more mindful and willing to pay for the externalities like pollution and like paying for water and paying for things that actually come at a cost and similarly paying for fair employment and paying for fair opportunities and inclusion for young people.’

Kate Barelle, Co-founder, STREAT Social Enterprise.

In this sustainable futures scenario, organisations audit local environmental issues and workshop and invest in youth-led solutions. Councils provide grants and support young people to tackle *glocal* climate concerns. Organisations work with local businesses to identify and solve commercial environmental issues. Through access to mentors with a background in sustainability, schools and the broader community use the Vocational Mentoring Exchange to expand the thinking of the young people they support.

Community organisations also give young people opportunities to develop and deliver their own climate emergency activities and this work is promoted in the inner north. Young people are provided with information, training, and resources around climate activism. Organisations create a Climate Emergency Working Group that is led by a young staff member to work in an identified area with other young people dedicated to tackling climate change. This working group helps shape and form government policy to better address the climate emergency:

---

<sup>49</sup>The Youth Affairs Council of Australia (YACVIC) (2020, p. 16) [COVID-19 Recovery Plan for Young People](#)

'If we were to think more creatively around setting up local accords so that we have agreements and incentives, the way they must demonstrate the outcome. If you were given a government tax incentive for something, did you actually create new jobs? Are there ways we can keep local profits in local communities so that it is the last time there was a lot of workers coming from that from outside our region into the jobs and to retain local employment? The income from those jobs gets spent in our local community that that there is a preference for tendering and work that is delivered within communities experiencing disadvantage. Can we just be more creative around using our own resources to retain income and opportunity? And there are some really interesting examples from particularly from the UK around delivering up locally.'

Melanie Raymond, Chair Youth Projects.

Many young people across the inner north expressed their hope for a sustainable future in 2025. These hopes are for more inclusive forms of education, gender diversity in politics, increased corporate and political responsibility for inequalities and crisis, and protection and support for marginalised populations of young people. Chloe, for example, advocated for the development of new systems to replace the ATAR.

'I feel like opportunities are opening up for more neuro-diverse worlds, which is nice as we kind of realise how ineffective schooling is. Once we actually have to focus on it as something important going on in society and it's getting more attention...The discussion of erasing the ATAR is pretty exciting. I think because I'm doing underscore VCE, I feel a little bit jibbed.'

Chloe, 16, Brunswick

Lucy argued for more representation from young people and diverse groups in the political system.

'Politics. I hope that in five years...there is more youth represented in politics. I think it's super important because it's our future that we're going to be living and leading. So, I think it's really important that there's youth representation in politics. And I'd also like to see more females represented in politics. I think that if you look at the moment at New Zealand and what Jacinda Ardern is doing, I'd like to see something similar to that reflected in Australian politics.'

Lucy, 18, Fairfield

Young people are searching for innovative approaches to address 'wicked' problems and in finding solutions for sustainable futures in the inner north. In this scenario, opportunities and support are presented to young people to actively contribute and advocate for their futures in meaningful ways that move beyond a tokenistic response.

This scenario for sustainable futures offers a glimpse of the 'possible' in what may seem like an uncertain and possibly chaotic present. The future we hope for needs stakeholders to work with young people at multiple levels (local, state, and federal) in imaginative, creative, and cooperative ways, to produce ethical innovation.

## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The project was structured as a multi-stage, multi-phase research project designed to facilitate stakeholder input and engagement in all phases, and at a number of different levels, in the process of developing knowledge about the COVID 'present', and the futures that are possible in a COVID 'normal' world. This section briefly outlines these processes.

### EDUCATION, SCHOOLING, LOCAL GOVERNMENT, INDUSTRY, SERVICE PROVIDERS AND PEAK BODY LEADERS

The Inner Northern LLEN identified a group of key stakeholders from service providers, education/schooling, business/industry and local government in the inner north, and a number of peak body leaders beyond the inner north. The LLEN conducted 34 interviews during August and September 2020 in the midst of the second Melbourne COVID-19 lockdown. The report on these interviews, and the thematic analysis of the interviews can be found at this [link](#).

### YOUNG PEOPLE IN MELBOURNE'S INNER NORTH

The Inner Northern LLEN identified a group of schools and youth organisations who would support the project team to capture the voices of 50+ young people as key stakeholders in the recovery scenarios project. Youth support staff, teachers, career educators, case managers and area managers from the following organisations were active in connecting young people with the project, and supporting them in sharing their stories and experiences: Darebin City Council (the Young Citizen's Jury), Northcote High School, Moreland Youth Services, The Brotherhood of St Laurence, Yarra Youth Services, Youth Projects, and Fitzroy High School.

Participants were provided details of the project, asked to read the '[Participant Information Consent Form](#)', and provided details of the interview structure and content before they were given access to the '[Video-Ask](#)', automated interview link. Young people who participated in this project required different forms of support and access at various stages. Some interviews were conducted with the help of support workers, and a variety of video, audio and text-based responses were received. All young people were encouraged to spend some time considering their responses prior to responding to the following 4 interview questions:

1) Personal details

We want to know a little about you and where you live and what you do.

2) The Present and COVID-19's impact on your life

We want to know what impact COVID has had on you and your family and friends.

3) The future and your thoughts and feelings about it

We want to know a little about what you think the world will be like in 2025.

4) Your future and your hopes and aspirations

We want to know a little about your hopes and aspirations for your future.

53 interview responses were received during September and October 2020. A key aim of this part of the project was to ensure a diverse and inclusive group of young people. Key organisations sought to identify and support culturally and linguistically diverse young people, LGBTQI+ and gender diverse young people, young people experiencing unemployment, young women, young people from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background, and young people with disabilities to have their voices heard in this project.

The following summary points are not exhaustive, and are shaped by the background information that is disclosed in the individual narratives of participants:

- Range of participants aged 16-24, however most were aged 17-19
- 13 identified themselves as 'unemployed'
- 4 identified loss or reduction of work hours due to COVID-19
- 25 female, 20 male, 1 gender non-binary
- 4 identified support through NDIS
- 22 secondary school students participating in VCE or VCAL
- 5 enrolled in a University course
- 2 enrolled at TAFE
- 10 described their cultural or linguistic background throughout their stories
- 2 identified their home/living situation in terms of 'at-risk'
- 1 participant described living in social housing
- Participants identified that they live, work and study across a range of suburbs within the Darebin, Yarra and Moreland LGA's

*Video-ask* is a way of capturing voices that is not limited by text-based transcripts produced from audio recorded interviews. Video-ask interviews could be completed on any device, at any time, and in a number of formats, including video, audio and text.

As the analysis of this data further develops, we will publish additional thematic videos using the voices of multiple young people, and a number of video case studies using the voices of individual young people. (See Appendix 1)

A large number of the young men who responded chose not to do so in a video format. And a small number of responses were short, and text-based. The interview format was limited by a lack of closed-caption and AUSLAN interpretation utility. We have identified that these accessibility requirements would need to be incorporated in any further stages of the project.

A number of responses from the September wave of interviews were analysed according to the 4 theme (and sub-themes) structure of the facilitated forum. These videos were published in online articles/blogs alongside the stakeholder interviews completed by the LLEN, and incorporated into the facilitated forum content. These can be found at the following links.

- [Health and Wellbeing](#)
- [Education and Training](#)
- [Economy and Livelihood](#)
- [Community](#)

The responses received throughout the October wave of interviews included greater gender diversity, and a larger number of unemployed young people engaged in 'job-find' programs.

---

## FACILITATED FORUM AND FINAL WORKSHOP

The original plan for stakeholder engagement imagined the conduct of two face to face stakeholder engagement workshops of 1-2 days each. Melbourne's second 'lockdown' and the restrictions on face-to-face gathering indoors meant that these could not be conducted.

Working with Dr Shane Duggan from Ne-Lo, the RMIT team developed a structure and content for the conduct of an innovative, on-line facilitated forum. In the forum stakeholders were invited to engage with content structured thematically that invited them to contribute their knowledge, experience, insights and thoughts about the future for young people in the inner north and beyond.

The forum was conducted at the end of November. Sixty plus participants registered their intent to participate. Thirteen participants undertook some/all of the activities in the forum.

A second stakeholder forum was conducted in April 2021 to review and workshop the findings of the scenario project, and a separate evaluation and review of INYET's activities, performance and futures in the context of the COVID crisis.

## THEMES

The process of ongoing consultation between UNEVOC@RMIT and the LLEN, the early phases of stakeholder engagement, alongside the analysis of emerging research and commentary on the impacts of the pandemic beyond the immediate public health crisis, lead to the identification of four key themes that would structure each of the scenarios.

### HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Around the world, across Australia and Victoria, and in metropolitan Melbourne and Melbourne's inner north, the range of health, education, employment and social disruptions associated with the pandemic have posed significant health and well-being challenges for different groups of young people.

In a range of surveys and reports, young people, and the service providers who work with young people, have reported increased uncertainty and anxiety about the present and the future, and increases in issues related to feelings of isolation and disconnection.

*'So looking into the future I would say that I am scared, anxious and hopeful, all at the same time, I think.'* - Rosie, Year 12 student, Northcote.

### THE ECONOMY AND LIVELIHOOD

The COVID-19 pandemic is triggering profound crises around the world, and the social, economic and political fallout from these crises is likely to be longer and deeper than any recession for several generations.

These trajectories also signal significant problems for many young people who are disengaged from or trying to enter the labour market - particularly those with little work experience, or strong networks, or who are not currently engaged in a formal, vocational or higher education and training pathway.

*'Give the younger generation more opportunities.. it's going to be harder.. there's going to be a lot of people fighting for those opportunities, but I think they need to be more open with what the younger generations can do'* - Alannah, 17, Northcote.

### EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The June 2020 launch of the Australian Federal Government's *Jobs Ready Graduates Package* claimed that the Package would:

deliver more job-ready graduates in the disciplines and regions where they are needed most and help drive the nation's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this theme we canvas these and similar developments, and their relation to wider, already existing concerns about the sort of education, training, skills and capabilities that are of value in education systems in countries like Australia. The sort of education, training and skills that are of value in the context of the 4th industrial revolution, the climate crisis and what a green economy offers in terms of jobs, and the rise of precarious and 'gig' work for young people.

*'In 5 years...hopefully by then, In Victoria, they have come up with a better system than ATAR to measure education outcomes' - Lucy, 18, Fairfield.*

---

## COMMUNITY

Ernst Young (EY) identifies in its most recent edition of its *MegaTrends* series the rise of different forms of nationalism and populism in many countries in recent years.

In the first 12 months of the pandemic, the massive fault lines of inequality, injustice, racism, and the global and national social, political and economic tensions that characterised the world in which COVID-19 emerged, have been amplified.

For EY, many of these forces of populism and nationalism - fuelled by decades of a growth in inequalities, marginalisation, exclusion and disadvantage - will shape global, national and local social, economic and political forces and outcomes over the next 10 years.

In this theme we explore what communities in the inner north will look like in 2025, the challenges and opportunities that young people will encounter in the places where they live, and the range of strengths and weaknesses in these communities in terms of the futures that we might face.

*'Five years in the future, we are all going to be able to vote and the voices we have are going to be a lot louder' - Ruby, 17, Yarra.*

## CONCLUSIONS

In a blogpost titled *COVID-19 and the Problem of Young People's Futures* we suggested that the problem of an 'uncertain future' has been imagined as a problem for education and for young people over the last 40 or so years. In this context organisations such as the FYA, the OECD, UNESCO, and the World Economic Forum, and others, have had a significant voice in shaping the future that they/we might want to imagine.<sup>50</sup>

But, whether we like it not, or recognise it not, COVID-19 *changes everything* – even if the changes in the short term make it difficult to imagine the extent and the consequences of changes in the longer term. We know that young people carry a particularly heavy burden in the downstream of crises such as the GFC. In terms of their health and well-being, their engagement in education and training, and their transitions into work. And certain populations of young people are more at risk in relation to these challenges.<sup>51</sup>

Our aim, in working with the Inner Northern LLEN on this project, has been to contribute to the development of place-based partnerships for young people's futures that are disruptive, transformative and shaped by shared visions for social and climate justice, inclusion, and difference and diversity in the contexts of the uncertainties that the pandemic continues to produce.

In conducting the research, in collaborating with a range of stakeholders – including young people – and in producing the three scenarios, the project aims to produce a number of impacts across a number of areas:

- To strengthen capacity, resilience and aspirations of young people in the inner northern LGAs of Melbourne;
- To contribute to processes that seek to enhance young people's health and well-being, and education, training and employment pathways;
- To provide opportunities for young people from diverse backgrounds to take a leading role in the co-design of place-based ethical innovation;
- To maximise the impact of these outcomes through collaboration and partnerships across community sectors in the inner northern LGAs of Melbourne.

The next steps in this process include planning to identify:

- medium and longer-term outcomes and impacts;
- a more strategic identification of particular 'impact partners' to engage in particular projects;
- the pathways that need to be identified and developed to produce those impacts;
- and the range of measures and modes of 'capturing' these impacts that are appropriate for particular projects.

Finally, in Appendix 3 we include the outline of a project proposal that leverages much of the work, the outcomes, and the outputs of this project into a proposal to develop a cohort of Youth Activists for Sustainable Futures (YASFs) in the inner north. The promise of that proposed project is to develop a diverse and inclusive cohort of young people with capabilities to be active and productive in the co-design of place based plans and programs to develop more equitable ecologies of resilience and economic inclusion for all young people.

---

<sup>50</sup> <https://unevocrmmit.org/2020/07/25/covid-19-and-the-problem-of-young-peoples-futures/>

<sup>51</sup> Kelly, P. (2017) [Growing up After the GFC: Responsibilisation and Mortgaged Futures, Discourse, 38, 1, pp. 57-69](#); Kelly, P. and Pike, J. (editors) (2017) [Neo-Liberalism and Austerity: The Moral Economies of Young People's Health and Well-Being, Palgrave, London.](#)

## APPENDIX 1: CASE STUDIES OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE INNER NORTH

These case studies of young people who participated in the project, can be found on the UNEVOC@RMIT webpage: <https://unevocrmit.org>

Each of the stories has an embedded link to a video of the young person on the *Young People's Sustainable Futures Lab* YouTube channel: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFWst6SNkLpR4nRa\\_Y-mtbQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFWst6SNkLpR4nRa_Y-mtbQ)

Over the next few months, we will upload more case studies, and more videos on themes that emerge from the analysis of the data.

---

### CONNOR

<https://unevocrmit.org/2020/12/17/connors-story/>



For many of us, Connor comes across as ‘typical’ 16 year old young man – if there is a such a thing! For example, he speaks about his passion for sport, and having a good time with his mates. But he also talks about the challenges of being isolated from friends, of not being physically ‘at school’, and of struggling to stay motivated as the second wave of the pandemic unfolded during June through September in Melbourne in 2020.

As he says, he likes to learn by ‘doing things’, by ‘being hands on’. In the middle of Melbourne’s second, long lockdown in the winter of 2020 all Melbourne’s schools were closed and young people had to shift to ‘remote learning’. At the same time, they, like all of us, were confined to home other than for 1 hour’s exercise, with members of their own household, and were restricted to travelling no more than 5 kms from home.

For Connor this time was particularly challenging, and he is honest in reflecting on how that impacted on his health and well-being and his engagement in school work. He discusses the ways in which the pandemic lockdown and disruptions have made him anxious about his post-school options for work and study. There were times, he reflects, when he was living a ‘never ending cycle of sleeping, eating, studying and training’. Indeed, during this time, as he says ‘to be frank’, he hit a ‘depressed point’, and didn’t leave his room for some time.

But Connor also tries very hard to project a strong, optimistic, confident face. He describes himself as 'naturally confident'. But that 'natural' confidence has been shaken a little during the pandemic, and as he starts to think more 'realistically' about his hopes and aspirations for the future. He may not, after all, be able to play AFL at an elite level!

He has high hopes for the future in 2025, but is unsure if 'society will get a lot smarter or a lot dumber'.

Finally, Connor speaks about the importance and the challenge of speaking openly about how he feels, and what he is going through at times when he is struggling.

He is also honest about his views on some of the 'big issues' of equality, social change, political correctness, and the climate crisis. Connor tell us that he cares about many of these things, but he also doesn't want others telling him how he should think or act in relation to these things.

One of the things that Connor's story suggests is that various community, business and government stakeholders need to think about, and develop new ways of engaging a diversity of young people as key stakeholders in their own futures. Not ALL young people are 'progressive activists' – but they do have something to say about their futures.

---

BELLA

<https://unevocrmmit.org/2020/12/17/bellas-story/>



Bella is a young woman who appears as passionate and articulate about the world around her. Both in the more immediate sense of the place where she lives and where she goes to school, and in the larger sense of the nation, the planet, and the challenges and crises – inequality, racism, climate change, work and the economy, education opportunities – that she sees as needing to be taken seriously by communities, businesses and governments.

And currently she is disappointed in the lack of attention that many leaders are giving to these challenges.

Early in her video she discusses many of the challenges that many young people experienced during the prolonged 'stage 4' lockdown that metropolitan Melbourne was placed under during the period of July-September 2020 in public health attempts to 'flatten the curve' of the 2nd wave of the COVID pandemic.

She remarks, for example, on "spending a lot of time on screen and on social media talking to people, Skyping, Zooming...becoming addicted to social media and having no social contact other than with family...of having no schedule, boredom, loneliness, no motivation, no teachers, no things to look forward to".

The lockdown also had some upsides: "having more free time, more time to practice piano, but it's hard during lockdown, no FOMO (fear of missing out), no anxiety, more freedom to do things, connect with family, getting creative, no worrying about getting ready for school or your appearance, watch more movies and TV".

Bella also describes how, during the prolonged lockdown, she learned about the importance of community and "how much I rely on teachers, friends and school and how much I miss it".

COVID-19 has impacted on her feelings about the future and her views of school and what it means to her, and the place that it occupies in her life: "having this structure in my life since being four years old and suddenly it's all ripped away" had made her "more anxious, experiencing the first depression symptoms".

Her sense is that by 2025 and that there will fewer jobs, and a greater divide between rich and poor. She expresses some anxiety and uncertainty about what her future holds in terms of having a job, housing options, economic instability, the threat of another global financial crisis.

In this sort of future, Bella imagines that social media will play a greater role in our lives, and that politics will be more divisive and polarised as people on the 'left' and the 'right' become more ostracised by, and in, social media bubbles. Her hope, however, is that racism will be an issue that is taken much more seriously, and that LGBTQI people and women will have greater representation in the media and in government.

Bella's story highlights the concerns that many young people feel and experience about the multiple social issues that the pandemic has amplified. Her story also highlights the passion that many young people want to bring to these issues, if they are provided with opportunities to express this passion, or when they are able to develop their own with their friends, and in spaces that emerge in their communities. The challenge for stakeholders and communities is how to tap into that passion in meaningful and productive ways.

---

ROSIE

<https://unevocrmmit.org/2021/01/26/rosies-story/>



Rosie is a young person who is articulate and passionate about politics, her education, and social justice. She has acted as a leader in televised discussions about the impacts of 'stage 4' lockdown across metropolitan Melbourne during July-September 2020, during public health attempts to 'flatten the curve' of the 2nd wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>1</sup>

Rosie tells us that this time has been challenging for her, learning online and at home during lockdown, and describes wider concerns for how 'COVID has exemplified the inequalities within the VCE system'. Rosie describes herself as going to a 'pretty high socio-economic public school', and her concern for the distribution of digital resources across public and private schools. Her school experienced 'system overloading' and 'internet dropouts' while trying to 'test out their equipment' and that 'private [schools] were able to close before we did'. Rosie describes that learning in an online environment limited her opportunity 'to thrive around other people and having discussions', and that 'not having that one-on-one contact is really hard'.

In terms of her future, Rosie says that 'our government needs to understand and open their eyes to what we're contributing to things like climate change, and how we can help countries less fortunate than us.' Rosie argues that we need to 'turn on our moral obligation key because we are not really doing that at the moment.' Rosie wants her government to take action on Black Lives Matter, Australia's ranking of 'insufficient effort' in addressing the climate crisis, 'the bushfires', and the asylum seeker and refugee crisis, discrimination and racism. At the time, Rosie aspired to study global politics at university in 2021, but, worried about getting a high enough ATAR score, was looking at alternative entry pathways.

Rosie is 'scared and anxious' that her generation will bear the economic burden of the COVID crisis and recession, all the while, 'paying off uni fees' and facing increasingly limited opportunities to 'buy a house'. However, Rosie projects an optimistic and confident face.

Rosie's story reminds us that stakeholders across the inner north of Melbourne – schools, youth organisations, social enterprises, and local government – need to take seriously the question of young people's aspirations to address problems such as the climate crisis, structural inequalities across the schooling system, discrimination and racism.

---

ASH

<https://unevocrmmit.org/2021/01/21/ashs-story/>



Ash, is a 24 year old young person who identifies as gender fluid, and whose pronouns are 'they' and 'them'. Ash appears thoughtful and reflective about their life, their community in Melbourne's inner northern suburbs, and the global issues facing the planet such as inequality, climate change, and employment opportunities. They view these issues as paramount to improving their life and others, with a focus on addressing these issues now rather than later.

Early in this video they discuss the challenges of being unemployed and struggling to find work during the COVID-19 crisis and being someone at-risk for health concerns of COVID-19. Ash had been in "full lockdown since mid-February" before the extended lockdown that metropolitan Melbourne was placed under during the period of July-September 2020 in public health attempts to 'flatten the curve' of the 2nd wave of the COVID pandemic.<sup>1</sup>

Ash remarks "I have been trying to find work...It's proven quite difficult with the coronavirus situation that we've been in...I have barely left my house since quarantine started which has not been good for both my mental and physical health".

Ash also comments "I think the biggest challenge has been the mental health side of things. I have struggled with depression and anxiety for 12 years now and this last year has been particularly difficult, being isolated and stuck inside my home 24/7".

COVID-19 has impacted on their support network. Ash discusses how they struggled with being isolated and disconnected. "I lost contact with doctors and my support group because of the Corona virus and because of my anxiety I didn't follow up with trying to do phone appointments with my doctors". Further, being unemployed and relying on the government for support has been challenging. They comment that "My only financial support has been from the government, with Centrelink. When I was on youth allowance...that money was not sufficient to live on...when you're living in a place like Melbourne where rent is so expensive. Over half my youth allowance was going to rent".

Ash sees an uncertain future, and expresses anxiety about their employment opportunities and the climate crisis. Ash urges the government to address these problems now instead of waiting 5 years. In the meantime, they will continue to attend rallies to address issues of climate change, racism and the treatment of asylum seekers and promote LGBT rights such as supporting the Victorian birth certificate reforms that will allow, for example, "non-binary", "gender queer" or "agender" to be valid options.

In Ash's view of the future in 2025, if we don't protect the rights of minorities and act on climate change, "it'll be too late". They remain however, hopeful that we will come together as a society and as a community" to address these issues.

## APPENDIX 2: UNESCO UNEVOC@RMIT AND THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

UNEVOC @ RMIT is part of an inclusive global learning network called the UNEVOC Network. It is a leader in facilitating co-design approaches for creating a future of sustainable development for all young people in times of crisis and disruption. The UNEVOC Network is coordinated by UNESCO-UNEVOC. UNESCO-UNEVOC is UNESCO's specialised Centre for technical and vocational education and training. It assists UNESCO's 195 member states to strengthen and upgrade their TVET systems. More information about UNESCO-UNEVOC can be found here: <https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/>

[UNEVOC@RMIT](#) is a leader in applied research and evidence-based intervention in relation to skills, education and training, and employment pathways in times of digital, climate, and educational disruption. UNEVOC@RMIT has developed a COVID-19 research agenda to respond to issues of young people's wellbeing, education, training and employment pathways amid the current crisis.

We partner with government, industry, and the not-for-profit sectors to lead applied and research-based activities that are fundamentally framed by the agenda set by the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#). Announced by the UN General Assembly in 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals are a set of 17 goals and 169 targets that are intended to provide a roadmap for global action across the 15 years to 2030.



*SDG 4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*

### Target 4.3

By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university

### Target 4.4

By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship

### Target 4.5

By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations

### Target 4.7

By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development

*SDG 5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*

Target 5.1

End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

Target 5.2

Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

Target 5.5

Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life

*SDG 8 Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*

Target 8.5

By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value

Target 8.6

By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training

Target 8.8

Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment

## APPENDIX 3: YOUNG PEOPLE AS YOUTH ACTIVISTS FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURES. MICRO-CREDENTIAL: LEADERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

### Project Summary

UNEVOC@RMIT, in collaboration with the Inner Northern Local Learning and Employment Network (INLLEN), is conducting the *COVID-19 Recovery Scenarios for Young People in Melbourne' Inner North* project - <http://inllen.org.au/inynet/>. We are also undertaking a project titled *COVID-19 and Disadvantaged Young People's Education and Employment Aspirations: A Longitudinal Study of Young People's Transitions in Geelong* - <https://unevocrmrmit.org/2021/01/21/covid-19-and-disadvantaged-young-peoples-education-and-employment-aspirations-a-longitudinal-study-of-young-peoples-transitions-in-geelong/>. Drawing on both these projects, this action research project will develop a cohort of 15-20 Youth Activists for Sustainable Futures (YASFs) across particular Local Government Areas (LGAs).

In Year 1 the project will leverage an existing youth cohort, models and materials from current projects to conduct a series of development workshops with up to 50 young people to identify the YASFs. In Year 2, these YASFs will partner with stakeholders to lead place-based processes of ethical innovation and co-design that will develop a series of projects to produce more inclusive and equitable ecologies of resilience in these LGAs.

### The Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic has produced social and economic crises that severely impact particular populations of young people, and which amplify existing inequalities. Historically - most recently in the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis of 2007-09 - young people tend to carry a particularly heavy burden in the downstream of crises. The COVID crisis intersects with the climate crisis, the unfolding sixth mass extinction of life on earth, and the education, training and work challenges shaped by the unfolding of the 4th Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0).

In this context, young people – in collective movements such as School Strikes for Climate and Fridays for Future, and in partnership with older generations – have self-organised to lead debates and take action for sustainable futures.

We will scale up innovations that can develop young people, in ways that are inclusive of diversity, as stakeholders in their own futures. These models will provide a mechanism to engage YASFs in the co-design of existing, and new, place based plans and programs to develop more equitable ecologies of resilience and economic inclusion for the most marginalised young people.

These YASFs will develop capabilities which will be recognised in the award of a micro-credential (micro-cred) in **Leadership for Sustainable Futures**

### The Concept

This project will scale up: the innovative place-based socio-ecological models of young people's health and well-being and education, training and employment pathways; and the methods, and impact pathways for engaging and developing YASFs. These innovations from our existing COVID recovery projects will be used to scale responses to the following urgent questions:

What are the key challenges - through to 2025 - facing different populations of young people in particular places in terms of recovery, resilience, social justice, education and livelihood?

How can stakeholders co-design ethical, innovative, place based scenarios, plans, programs and interventions to develop more inclusive and equitable ecologies of resilience?

The capabilities that YASFs develop in these processes will be recognised by a community produced and recognised micro-cred in **Leadership for Sustainable Futures**.

This model recognises and works with the challenges of engaging a diverse and inclusive cohort of young people as stakeholders in their own futures, and of framing the work of YASFs through technology, social media, action research, project and impact planning.

The concept of youth activism for sustainable futures takes inspiration from the distributed, interconnected (generational, technological, cultural and ecological), and evidenced-informed activism of youth lead collectives such as School Strikes for Climate and Fridays for Future (Kelly, Goring and Noonan 2021).

In this project, co-design and innovation are imagined as being informed by the UN SDGs, and as being 'ethical', by which we mean: responsible (anticipatory and precautionary); inclusive (collaborative and systemic); disruptive (bold and impactful); and, engaged (democratic and debatable) (Rickards and Steele 2019).

### Key Project Outputs.

Identification of workshop cohort from existing youth cohort (characterised by diversity in relation to class, Aboriginality, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and disability), and stakeholder networks;

Conduct of development workshops – organised thematically and by future scenarios bought forward from existing projects;

Training and development of a group of YASFs. These YASFs will be more representative of the diversity of the youth population than more traditional youth leadership programs, and will develop capabilities at the intersection of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and the UN SDG target 4.7.

The YASFs, on successful completion of workshops, will receive a micro-cred in **Leadership for Sustainable Futures**

### Key Project Outcomes.

Build a network across LGAs that brings a more capable, inclusive, and ethical youth voice to the multiple barriers young people face to economic inclusion.

Further develop socio-ecological models of recovery and resilience with a focus on the interconnections between young people's well-being, education, training and employment pathways.

Draw on the frameworks outlined in the UNDP Human Development Report 2020, *The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene*, to develop more inclusive and equitable ecologies of resilience in the LGAs.

### Micro-creds: Leadership for Sustainable Futures.

Micro-creds are a fairly recent, digitally enabled approach to the accreditation of skills and training outcomes. They are increasingly used in informal or non-traditional training contexts. The recent Australian Government's Education Council review of senior secondary pathways into work, further education, and training (the Shergold Report 2020) argues that micro-creds can capture skills development in innovative ways. Citing a number of peak bodies—including the Business Council of Australia—the review suggests the need for micro-creds is "increasingly well established in business, where they are used to address particular skill requirements in new or emerging occupations, provide evidence of workplace capabilities, or warrant the currency of existing skills" (2020: 110).

In each community the project will work with key stakeholders, including young people, to codesign an innovative and relevant micro-cred – Leadership for Sustainable Development - that draws on the model of the BLUE MOUNTAINS PLURIVERSITY.

In the Blue Mountains region of NSW, organisations and networks in local communities have used various existing mechanisms and applications to co-design and build their own micro-creds for the communities' young people. The Pluriversity expands the range of possibilities for young people aged 16+ to engage with one another and the wider community as they gain microcredentials and explore future life and career pathways.<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> <http://bmpluriversity.org/badges/>

# COVID-19 RECOVERY SCENARIOS

## FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN MELBOURNE'S INNER NORTH

FINAL REPORT