



D. Wilks

Capturing Voices

3

*Sustainability focus groups with
Roseville College Students*



Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide a 25 year vision for Ku-ring-gai. A qualitative research approach was adopted where residents participated in face to face interviews, focus groups and public forums. A generational dimension was added and is outlined in section 2. Those who were unable to attend a discussion group yet wished to contribute additional information were invited to make written submissions. Prior to the commencement of this research, a writing competition had been conducted in 2006 for local young people as part of Council's celebration of its Centenary. The competition asked young residents to describe their future visions for Ku-ring-gai. The finalist submissions were examined and their thoughts were incorporated in this report. The flow chart (Figure 4) summarises the process of data collection and analysis used by Council.

“We should work to a level where children’s views are regarded just as important as any adults as we are the ones that shall be living the future and we are the ones who know what could make Ku-ring-gai and the world a better place...”

10 year old

Ku-ring-gai resident

New generational method for sustainability planning

Sustainability is concerned with planning for future generations to ensure they enjoy the quality of life and environment we experience today. The new generational method provides opportunities for children and young people to plan their futures along side older residents. It encompasses the knowledge and wisdom of the elderly whom may have lived in Ku-ring-gai for 80 years or more and have experienced many changes. This is a new public planning model targeting a more equitable community representation in planning and decision making processes. It has a core aim of building stronger human and environmental relationships and consequential behaviours leading towards sustainability. The generational approach is able to cut through educational, socio-economic, gender, special needs and ethnic barriers by the



formalised age-based grouping system. It builds intergenerational respect by incorporating, including and valuing citizens' views regardless of their age. The method recognises that at different stages of an individual's life their ideas, priorities, interests and relationships may change. Capturing age based perspectives provides a multi dimensional understanding of sustainability priorities (see Figure 5). This knowledge greatly assists future planning, engagement and participation in programs.

Ku-ring-gai's community discussion process involved a total of 264 local citizens between 9 and 99 years of age. Within 7 age groups they contributed towards planning Ku-ring-gai's future. They took part in face to face interviews, focus groups and forums from February to June 2007. Participants were purposefully selected, not only by age, but

Sustainability focus group for primary school students. Ku-ring-gai Council.

Figure 4: Summary of the new generational methodology

PHASE 1

Interviews / 7 age groups (9-99 years)

1. Pilot study conducted.
2. Interview questions refined following pilot study findings.
3. Participants located, background information sheets provided.
4. Parental and school consent forms sent and completed.
5. One hour interviews undertaken and recorded applying the same questions to each interview. Demographics collected.
6. Transcriptions made of interviews.
7. Interview data analysis.



PHASE 2

Focus Groups / 7 age groups (9-99 years)

1. Focus group questions designed.
2. Production of DVD commences.
3. Interview summary written for each age group.
4. Parental and school consent forms completed.
5. Participants invited and sent interview summaries.
6. Two hour focus group discussion sessions held and recorded, demographics collected.
7. Transcriptions made of focus groups.
8. Focus group data analysis.



PHASE 3

Intergenerational Forums / All ages

1. Invitations sent out, event advertised – newspapers, Council website, personal communication (all past participants invited).
2. Consent forms completed for residents under 18 years old.
3. Participants provided with a summary report as preliminary reading material.
4. Two forums held. Participants chose a themed table. Involved group discussions and a summary speaker.
5. Submission process promoted at the forums and advertised on Councils website for those who could not attend forums (6 week period post forums).
6. Data collation and analysis – thematic, age based and comparative.
7. Production of DVD completed.



1. Draft sustainability vision report completed and distributed back to community and Council for comment (3 month period).
2. Following community review final report revised and presented to Council for adoption.
3. Sustainability Reference Group formed (with members ranging in age from 9 to 80+ years to assist in implementing report and next phases).

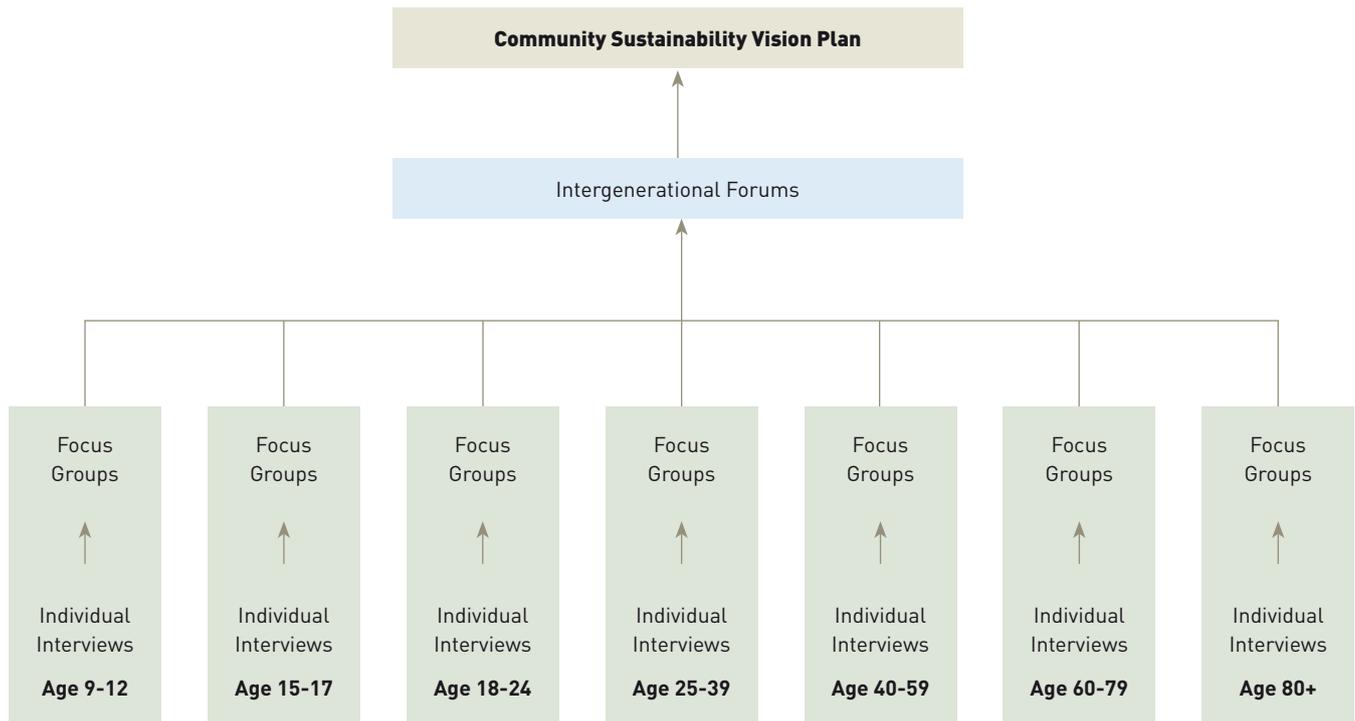


Figure 5: New generational method for sustainability visioning showing the age based approach

also by gender, and their ability to represent differing community sectors. The breakdown of this approach is shown in Tables 5 and 6. Councillors also participated in the interview phase of the research.

Pilot Study

The findings of a preliminary pilot study undertaken as part of a PhD research project in partnership with Ku-ring-gai Council are included in this report. The research involved 4 focus groups two of which consisted of Australian born residents and the other two groups were residents from overseas. They participated in a number of discussions concerning environmental sustainability, ethnicity and attachment to an area. This provided an opportunity to test the research questions and key themes (Davies, 2007).

Submissions

If people were unable to attend either the focus groups or forums they were encouraged to contribute their thoughts through a written submission. Upon request people were sent a submissions procedure information pack which included the summary report provided to all participants. This information was made available on Councils web site. A period of

PARTICIPATORY APPROACH	PARTICIPANTS
Pilot Study	37
Interview	67
Focus Group	51
Forum*	104
Councillors	5
Observers^	7
Total	271

* An estimated 32 people did not provide details.

^ Observers were non-residents of Ku-ring-gai.

Table 5: Total number of participants at each of the discussion phases

6 weeks following the projects completion was provided for residents to send in their submissions. A total of 8 submissions were received.

Essay competition

The winning entries for the 2006 Centenary Essay Competition were added to the collective data and included within the vision report. The competition formed part of the celebration of Ku-ring-gai's Centenary Year. All schools in Ku-ring-gai were invited to participate in the essay competition which was sponsored by Council and local businesses. Primary school



Left: 'This is what I want Ku-ring-gai to look like when I'm 30' by Alice Johnson, Year 4, Abbotsleigh Junior School.
Below: Sustainability focus group for senior residents. D.Wilks.

AGE	MALE	FEMALE
9-11	14	15
12-17	11	15
18-24	13	10
25-39	15	21
40-59	28	36
60-79	18	16
80+	11	9
Total	110	122
Details Not Given		32*
Combined Total		264

Table 6: Gender and age breakdown of participants



students were asked to describe the best aspects of living in Ku-ring-gai while high school students wrote about their vision of Ku-ring-gai in 2016.

Data Analysis

This required a process of refining the data commencing with individual interviews and culminating in the vision statement. Once the data was summarised and collated, the analysis involved determining generational commonalities and variations as well as examining the relative knowledge, awareness and concern for sustainability.

The data was interpreted using three approaches:

- age-based
- thematic
- comparative

As part of the process of describing their vision participants often suggested ways in which Ku-ring-gai can be sustainable. These were captured and included in the analysis to assist future action planning.

A more detailed description of the NGM data analysis is included in Appendix 8.2.

