



ProspER Youth Advisory Group Vision Day

Outcome Report

November 2025



Acknowledgement of Country

Business NSW acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

We recognise the continuing connection of Aboriginal people to land, waters and culture and we thank them for sharing their knowledge with us so that our relationship with this land can be enriched.

Report author

This report was developed by Cherie Topfer, Founding Director of YEP Careers Pty Ltd. YEP Careers is a for-purpose organisation that designs and delivers entrepreneur, employability, and life skills programs to empower young people and communities. Cherie's work centres on creating career pathways that reflect individual strengths, passions, and local opportunities. She partners with educators, employers, all levels of government, and community leaders to build inclusive, practical solutions that connect people to education, work, and sustainable regional prosperity.

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1. Executive Summary

The ProspER Youth Advisory Group Vision Day was held at Invercauld House, Lismore on 8 November 2025 and involved 19 young people aged 14–17, who were from Northern Rivers and Tenterfield Shire.

The day is a significant component of the ProspER Regional Economic & Environment Plan 2040 engagement strategy, ensuring the perspectives of the youth are integral to long-term planning for the regions.

A series of interactive, place-based sessions, from values exploration and future visioning to career design and strategic conversation, facilitated participants lived experiences, identification of local challenges, and co-designing ideas for thriving regional futures. Their contributions showed their passion for sustainability, equity, creativity, and connection, and an unapologetic desire for real collaboration between youth and the leaders of today.

Key themes that emerged across the day included:

- The desire for inclusive, safe and connected communities.
- Accessible education, transport and housing.
- Innovation led by youth in sustainability, tech and creative sectors.
- The importance of engaging in long-term planning geared for intergenerational equity.
- A call for youth to be active partners, not passive stakeholders in economic development.

The Vision Day reinforced the ability of our youth to think systemically, creatively and collaboratively. Their perspectives provided a powerful foundation for shaping a region that is future-ready, inclusive, and deeply rooted in local identity.

The report captures a synopsis of activities and insights shaped by the facilitator's perspective, while integrating the words and concepts articulated by the youth.

2. Session Overview and Insights

Participants engaged in a full-day program of interactive, place-based activities with each session designed to be participatory, creative, and emotionally resonant, with embedded regional context and tactile engagement.



3. Introductions

As an icebreaker activity, participants were placed in pairs to start a conversation on what they loved doing or were good at, how they could use that skill or passion to make a difference and one word that they would use to describe 2040. They then introduced one another to the group with their respective responses to the questions.

Their vision aspirations 2040 included: Sustainable, hopeful, better, different, peaceful, visibility, opportunities, improved, prosperous, stable, equality, connected, growth, goodness and safe. Highlighting themes of value led transformation, progress and possibility and emotional social connection suggest that participants are not just imagining a better future, they are actively seeking one that is emotionally safe, socially inclusive, fair and a departure from current norms.

4. Values Activity

The day started with a powerful invitation to reflect on what matters most.

Participants explored a range of 55 value cards, identifying those that resonated most with their personal beliefs and aspirations. This individual reflection transitioned into small-group collaboration, where participants discussed and selected shared values they felt were essential to shaping a better future.

Each group then presented their chosen values, explaining not only what they selected, but why these values mattered for themselves, their communities, and the region. This activity laid a strong foundation for future-focused dialogue. It invited them to articulate guiding principles that would, in theory, shape personal choices, collective action, and regional strategic planning.

The values identified across the groups were both diverse and rich in detail, although there were several key common themes that emerged consistently. These included:

- **Justice** – Standing up for what is right and creating equality
- **Empathy** – Connecting with and understanding others through kindness
- **Sustainability** – Building systems that last without harming the earth
- **Growth** – Adapting and evolving in response to change



- **Inclusivity** – Welcoming all people—regardless of differences
- **Leadership** – Guiding communities through decisions that support wellbeing
- **Teamwork** – Collaborating to build futures that reflect everyone’s goals
- **Freedom** – Expressing ideas without judgment and pursuing happiness
- **Safety** – Feeling protected, confident, and free from fear
- **Innovation** – Solving problems in fresh ways that move people forward
- **Responsibility** – Owning actions and decisions that shape a better future
- **Originality** – Staying authentic and embracing diverse perspectives
- **Knowledge** – Valuing education, perseverance, and informed action
- **Trust** – Creating dependable, safe spaces for vulnerability
- **Courage** – Facing challenges with bravery and determination
- **Support** – Offering and receiving kindness and help
- **Connection** – Building community through sharing and collaboration
- **Fairness** – Promoting equality, kindness, and justice
- **Acceptance** – Embracing others as they are
- **Adaptability** – Responding flexibly to change
- **Fun** – Celebrating joy and creativity
- **Resilience** – Persisting through adversity with strength

Many groups opted for an intersection of values, like connecting safety with confidence or leadership with responsibility, to show how values are interconnected and work together to support wellbeing and economic opportunity as well as environmental care. Leadership, sustainability, and safety were among the most frequently prioritised, reflecting a collective desire for futures that are inclusive, secure, and forward-thinking.

This activity not only revealed what young people care about but also how they envisage values to influence real world decisions and regional transformation.



5. Snapshot of Now

We invited participants to rotate through four quadrant posters that capture four key areas of life: Career & Education, Housing & Lifestyle, Identity & Visibility and Community & Belonging. At each station, participants reflected on their current realities and responded to three prompts:

What's working?

- Career & Education – Where do you feel supported in learning or work?; What subjects, teachers or programs help you grow?
- Housing & Lifestyle – What makes your home or living space feel safe or supportive? What helps you get around easily?
- Identity & Visibility – Where do you feel seen and respected for who you are?; What helps you express your identity?
- Community & Belonging – Where do you feel welcome, included or connected?; What spaced or people make you feel part of something?

What's missing?

- Career & Education – What makes learning hard or stressful?; What opportunities feel out of reach?
- Housing & Lifestyle – What's hard about where you live or how you travel?; What's unfair or unsafe?
- Identity & Visibility – What makes it hard to be yourself?; Where do you feel judged or unsafe?
- Community & Belonging – Where do you feel left out or invisible?; What's missing from your community?

What's ideal?

- Career & Education – What would a dream education or career pathway look like?; What skills or support would help you thrive?
- Housing & Lifestyle – What would your ideal home or transport system look like?; How could housing and movement support freedom and wellbeing?
- Identity & Visibility – What would a world look like where everyone belongs?; What would help you feel confident and free to be you?
- Community & Belonging – What would a truly inclusive fun and supportive community look like? What does prosperity mean to you? What would help you feel proud of where you live?

The activity surfaced a wide range of insights, revealing both the strengths and challenges young people experience in their daily lives, and their aspirations for a more inclusive, supportive future.



5.1 Career & Education

Participants highlighted a variety of supports that help them grow, from career expos to apprenticeships to work experience, engaging teachers, outdoor learning and TAFE tasters. They valued diversity in job opportunities and appreciated physical activities and parental support.

However, they also recognised barriers such as limited transport options, pressure to perform, lack of bespoke learning support, and ambiguous pathways, especially for individuals without financial or family support. Concerns included job losses because of AI, few options in regional towns, and a need for more inclusive systems of education.

Their ideal futures included free education, inclusive workplaces, scholarships for hardworking students, extended learning opportunities, and career paths that were supported and clear.

The above is a synopsis and analysis of the facilitators observations and insights and below is what the participants said verbatim:

What's working	Engaging/alternate learning opportunities eg: outdoors learning	Job diversity/ career options available	Lots of jobs available. Lots of trade opportunities available, traineeships	Learning support
	Engaging activities – physical (sports)	Parents	Stable, supportive job	Tafe testers
	Careers expos	Apprenticeships	Work experience	
What's missing	Higher Wages for teachers = better education	Discipline	Support for different learning levels	Transport etc
	University if you have no family living near (house crisis)	Jobs and careers for juniors	ADHD and other learning support systems	Different learning adaptability
	Teachers	Pressure to be perfect	Judgement from peers	Job opportunities and pathways to job diversity



	Specialised healthcare	A clear access to uni pathways for people without the money	Knowing what's out there	Others in the classroom can make learning hard or stressful
	Effective international career pathways	Pressure from peers and parents to be better/good grades	Face to face learn style	Less job opportunities in Tenterfield
	Job losses from AI	Support for career pathways	More out of school learning	Opportunities/Alternative education fostering creativity
	Extended learning opportunities	Running classes	Workplace placements	Qualified people
	Childcare			
What's Ideal	Free education available	Inclusive workplaces	Career support	Clear Career Pathways post education
	Scholarships for hardworking students being easy to find.	Support to help get to your dreams in education and careers	Responsibility in Careers	Work experience
	More music opportunities	More support for higher education outside Australia		



5.2 Housing & Lifestyle

The youth showed appreciation for community infrastructure in skateparks, town squares, and school buses. Family and community were a key source of support, and sustainable travel options (bikes, EVs) were reported positively.

Some of the challenges included an unaffordable standard of living, lack of affordable housing, limited access or means of transport, poor routes to the regional towns and for women particularly safety at night. Participants also expressed concerns about discrimination, environmental degradation, and the effects of population growth on housing stability.

Their vision of the future encompassed safe, affordable, flexible housing, low-cost, accessible public transport, recreational areas, and increased safety infrastructure. They imagined homes and transport systems that support wellbeing, freedom and connection.

The above is a synopsis and analysis of the facilitators observations and insights and below is what the participants said verbatim:

What's Working	New pump track in Ballina	Re-vamped Main Street Lennox	Lismore Square	Estate
	New skatepark in Lismore	Family	Emergency services	Towns community
	Sustainable travel	Electric Vehicles (EV's)	School Buses	Voice being heard
	Bikes & scooters			
What's Missing	Affordable childcare	Affordable housing	Transport in general	Transport to and from Tenterfield and rural towns
	Public transport	Youth areas	Shared parks/picnic areas	Affordable clothing
	The ability for first buyers to confidently find a home	More public transport/more advertising for it	Pathways to and from school	More safe crossing and traffic lights (before crossings)



	Cost of living	Affordability for basic day-day needs	Transport	Cutting into national parks by industrialisation
	Population growth leading to unsafe housing areas (Lismore floods)	Provisions for safety (women at night)	Discrimination & judgment and lack of diversity	
What's Ideal	Safe transport for everyone	Space for outdoor exercise	Flexible housing (dorms, houses close to work)	More sustainable housing
	Cheap public transport	Recreation areas (places to hangout)	More security for safety when alone	Safe affordable homes
	Cheaper housing and cost of living	University housing	Prioritising safety	Recreational areas
	Safer bus bays – help youth feel comfortable – catching buses solo (especially females)	More taxis/ car pool culture encouraged		



5.3 Identity & Visibility

Participants felt the most seen and respected in community spaces, through friends and through events celebrating diversity like Laneway in Lismore. Fashion, hobbies, and workshops were deemed significant avenues for self-expression.

Yet many said their school environments were judgmental, and discrimination on grounds of race, gender, sexuality and disability remained prevalent. They described the importance of empathy, trust, and support services, and showed frustration at being judged due to ambition or their academic drive.

Their ideal futures were of more equality, freedom of speech, cultural respect, and more environmental awareness. They envisioned communities where everyone has a voice, feels safe, and belongs, where diversity is celebrated and spiritual and cultural sites are protected

The above is a synopsis and analysis of the facilitators observations and insights and below is what the participants said verbatim:

What's Working	Community	Acceptance of diverse people/ cultures	More community events, Like Laneway in Lismore	Hobbies
	Workshops	Fashion	Friends	Work
What's Missing	School environments when you can be judged easily for small things	No open opportunities	Discrimination based off race, gender, sexuality and beliefs	Sexism, racism, homophobia are big problems that are too easily seen as jokes.
	People have their own ideas what's right and wrong	More acceptance around disability and sexualities	School feels judgemental	Empathy – not all people but a local minority
	Being judged for taking up opportunities	Being judged for being academic/taking studies seriously	Support within health services	Trust



What's Ideal	Equality	Talking to people as they walk past on the street	Freedom of speech	Race & Gender having more inclusivity
	Lower cost of living	Diversity	Freedom	Sense of belonging
	Larger sense of community in everyday life	Safety and respect	Everyone having a voice	Leaving the trees at Tenterfield
	Taking care of cultural/ spiritual area/sites	Environmental awareness		



5.4 Community & Belonging

Participants felt most connected at school, in their homes and in nature. Friends, family and teachers, and community engagement were important sources of inclusion. Community events, cultural wellbeing and spaces such as skateparks and sports fields were something they valued.

But they noted gaps in transportation, youth specific infrastructure and inclusive programming. Cultural group division, insufficient youth spaces and absence of opportunities in rural towns emerged as recurrent themes.

Their ideal communities had youth projects, arts and culture, clean places, festivals, cultural celebrations and local shops supported by the community. They envisioned environments in which everyone is secure, honoured and proud of those they share common ground with, where prosperity means opportunity, kindness and shared responsibility.

The above is a synopsis and analysis of the facilitators observations and insights and below is what the participants said verbatim:

What's Working	School: Friends, family, teachers	Home: Family & friends	Community: Friends, workers	Lismore skate park
	Lennox Sports fields	Schools – Tenterfield	Lismore Cinema	Cultural wellbeing
	Community engagement events	Therapy	Nature – beaches, rivers national parks	Work
What's Missing	School – opportunities for meeting new people	Inclusivity for young people	Public transport	Youth groups – everyone is split into different groups with different cultures
	Better pool for Tenterfield	Fast food – Tenterfield	Tenterfield cinema	Lismore – bowling/arcade
	Parks with trees – botanic gardens	More shops for youths	Youth wellbeing initiatives or programs	Cultural groups



	Easy education (hobbies, interests goals etc)	Infrastructure and areas to bring community and people together	More space for smaller communities	Safe bus interchange for Lismore
What's Ideal	Councillors	Opportunities for youth	Cleaner environments	Community celebrations/festivals
	Local community supported shops	A king understanding community	Celebration of Culture	Respect for everyone
	No-one feeling threatened or unsafe	More people stepping into different roles	Safe/clean regions	



Overall, several themes emerged across all quadrants consistently:

- Diversity and inclusion.
- Transport equity and access.
- Safety and wellbeing.
- Community connection.
- Clearly defined, well supported pathways in education and professions.

These insights provide a compelling snapshot of what young people really do value, what they struggle with and what they envision for the future.



6. Time Travel Game

This activity invited participants to explore the past and imagine the future.

In small groups, they first matched pre-prepared event cards to timeline posters spanning 2005 to 2025. Understanding past events, set the stage for future visioning, as participants collaboratively envisioned milestones for 2030, 2035 and 2040.

The session inspired bold, values-based thinking. Participants demonstrated a robust understanding of global trends, regional challenges, and personal ambitions, anchoring their ideas of sustainability, equity, innovation, and wellbeing.

2030

Participants envisioned 2030 as a pivotal moment for environmental action, economic reform and inclusive social systems. Their ideas included:

- Flood mitigation plans for Lismore and widespread adoption of alternate power sources.
- More public awareness and planning on global warming.
- Reduced cost of living and control of inflation.
- AI that is more efficient and research-centric and less used by the public.
- A transition to sustainable living environments and community values: kindness, listening, speaking up and acceptance.
- Growing employment prevalence of robotic systems.
- AI tools like ChatGPT that are taking out traditional search engines.
- 50% lower emissions and better transportation to outlying neighbourhoods.
- Inclusive systems for neurodivergent people and childcare support for working families.
- Housing initiatives to promote home ownership.
- Equality and encouragement to take up meaningful, impactful careers.



The above is a synopsis and analysis of the facilitators observations and insights and below is what the participants said verbatim:

Middle east stops fighting	Childcare support for working families	Women having 4 years of maternal leave	Inclusivity for neurodivergent
Housing initiatives to help by houses	Everyone is treated equally	Lower cost of living and stop inflation	Encouraged to follow a career that you love doing and that makes a positive impact
Cut emissions by 50%	Transport to offlaying neighbourhoods	ChatGPT or AI will become the new google and no-one will use google	Alternate power sources
Cost of living reductions or financial support systems	Environmental protection	Lismore flood plans	Australian \$ plummets or rises in value
More understanding and planning for global warming	AI is more optimised not requiring as much resources. The public use of AI is more restricted, its being used more in research	More robotic systems taking up the role of humans	Sustainable living environment
Community understanding, listening, speaking up, accepting, kindness			

These visions reflect a desire for systemic transformation, balancing technological advancement with human-centred values and regional resilience.



2035

As we approached 2035, participants envisioned further integration between innovation and infrastructure. Highlights included:

- A “natural revolution”—a big discovery in the natural world.
- AI-driven financial systems that help in eliminating human error.
- Augmented reality and hyper advanced technology
- Positive leadership globally, nationally, state and locally, productive.
- Continued effort to lower cost of living and support families.
- Cities/towns adapted for population density and powered by sustainable energy
- Increased public transportation across regional areas.
- Emerging health care systems coupled with decreased health and labour workers in both areas.
- Expanded support for mental health and neurodiversity
- Our main fuel source is hydrogen.
- Clean, diverse towns and light rail networks throughout local communities.

The above is a synopsis and analysis of the facilitators observations and insights and below is what the participants said verbatim:

More support for teens who are depressed, socially, physically and mentally unstable	WWIII 2035 – America, China, Russia and North Korea	Hydrogen is adopted as a global fuel source alongside sustainable electricity	Clean and diverse town
Augmented Reality becomes normalised (like glasses) and enhances convenience (No phone zombies)	Advanced healthcare	Attractions to Lismore	Decline in Healthcare worker/ labour workers



Sustainable infrastructure and farming	Natural revolution – a large discovery in the natural world	New president elected and positive and productive leaders globally	AI Finance – AI takes over the financial systems to eliminate human error
Lower cost of living	Sustainable energy choices and cities adapted for population density	Centrelink wages increase	Better public transport in rural places
Hyper advances AI and technology.			

This era demonstrated a thirst for equitable development, where innovation was the purveyor of people, and where regional communities were no longer left behind.

2040

Visions for 2040 were place-bound, with a focus on the Northern Rivers and Tenterfield Shire. Participants imagined:

- More youth-friendly entertainment, particularly at night and on weekends such as music festivals and youth events that build connection and belonging.
- Entertainment industry in rural areas.
- Raise Lismore above the flood zone
- Growth in small local business
- Stronger connections between regional towns through inclusive and accessible transport systems, which may include underground trains, and a coastal railway linking Tweed Heads to Coffs Harbour offering seamless transport across the region
- More recreation centres: basketball courts, swimming pools, pickleball, baseball and indoor venues.
- Northern Rivers designated to be Australia's sustainability capital.
- Net zero emissions achieved a decade early
- Sustainably clean and safe towns powered by renewable energy.
- Protecting wildlife and minimising ecological footprints.



These aspirations reflect a deep commitment to place-based prosperity where young people thrive, communities are connected, and environmental care is embedded in everyday life.

The above is a synopsis and analysis of the facilitators observations and insights and below is what the participants said verbatim:

Renewable energy	Easy transportation	Looking out for wildlife and National parks	Learning ways and strategies that you can use in everyday life to make our ecological footprint smaller
For the Northern Rivers, we need it to be clean, safe and sustainable	Bring more bigger brand/chains to Northern Rivers	More rural spread of the entertainment industry	Underground trains
Army training base to attract more people and or families	Coastal Railway – Tweed to Coffs	Northern Rivers is the sustainability capital of Australia	More youth activities and opportunities
Tenterfield needs: shops for clothes, cinema, more sport opportunities, bowling alley, steakhouse, upgraded swimming pool (50m indoor), transport around town	Transport	More entertainment – things to do	Towns within Northern Rivers become more connected via accessible transport for the community
More events, opportunities and things to do	Things for youth to do of a night on weekend eg Events, music etc	More activities and transport for rural areas – Northern Rivers and Tenterfield	A greater number of recreational activities for younger people to engage in.



Development of sport facilities ie: Basketball courts, swimming pools, indoor versions of tennis, pickleball, baseball	Transport (safe & open for everyone) More opportunities	Small business development	Activities for Youth/experiences
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Across all eras, there were several recurring topics:

- Sustainability and climate action
- Technology and AI
- Equity and inclusion
- Regional pride and connection

The Time Travel Game reaffirmed young people's potential to think long term, link global forces and local conditions and construct future experiences that are futuristic while being realistic.



7. Vox Pop Recording

The Vox Pop Recording captured the voices, perspectives and hopes of young people as they looked ahead to 2040. Working in pairs, participants responded to four future-facing prompts designed to stimulate reflection, creativity, and advocacy:

1. What do you love about living?
2. What's one thing you wish leaders knew about young people?
3. What's one of your big hopes for the future of our region by 2040?
4. If you could create one thing for 2040, what would it be?

What was captured

“My hope for 2040 is that we will be able to stay here and keep on living here and it doesn't get too expensive. “

“One thing I wish leaders understood about us is that we really care about our impact on the future and we care how everything is going to develop and what this region is going to come to be.”

“I love the beach and how everyone supports everyone's businesses or just ideas.”

“One thing I wish leaders understood about young people is that we have opinions and ideas that are just as valued as theirs.”

“My wish for 2040 is that we have much better public transport which is safe and accessible for everyone.”

“One thing I would change for 2040 is many more opportunities for young people.”

“One thing we would change for 2040 would probably be to change the idea of industrialisation. People building now are focusing on money and tourism while we want to focus on community spirit and building a more livable space for the locals.”

“I love the natural environment, love the beaches, waterfalls, waterholes, body boarding, hiking and hanging out with mates. Experiencing life here is pretty good.”

“One thing we would change for 2040 would be the use of AI. IT's going up but we need it to come down to use our own brains and think for ourselves. We shouldn't have to rely on AI.”



“One thing I wish leaders understood about us is that we do want big opportunities as well as be put into positions which we can grow into and become. “

“What we love about living here is that the environment is very fresh and it is definitely a privilege to live in an area with clean air, lots of trees and not dirty like some cities and urban areas are. “

“What I love about living here is being close to the beach and the wildlife and just being able to travel 5 mins down the road and I am in such a beautiful area surrounded by nature.”

“My hope for 2040 is that I am able to stay in this region without having to travel elsewhere to have the same opportunities as the Gold Coast or Sydney and be able to have a stable career and stay in the area and maintain connection with family. “

The recordings offer a powerful snapshot of youth aspirations, grounded in lived experience and driven by a desire to shape a future that reflects their values, voices, and potential.

8. Future Snapshot

In this session, participants explored career options for the future, including skill sets, and pathways across seven key industries within the region:

- Technology & Innovation
- Agribusiness
- Education
- Health & Care
- Environment & Sustainability
- Tourism & Hospitality
- Creativity & Culture.

Each industry station provided a snapshot outlining:

1. What the industry looks like today
2. Key trends and technologies



3. Emerging challenges and opportunities

4. Real world examples of innovation in the Northern Rivers and Tenterfield Shire

In small groups, participants chose four industries to explore in depth. They rotated through their chosen stations, reading the snapshots and then collaboratively imagining future roles. For each role, they wrote down what it does, what skills it requires, potential pathways to get to it, and the support needed to make it more accessible.

While some participants initially found the task challenging, they quickly demonstrated critical thinking, creativity, and forward visioning. Their ideas reflected a strong awareness of global trends, local needs, and personal aspirations.

Below is a selection of the future roles envisioned by participants:

Technology & Innovation

AI Sustainability Officer: Decrease environmental footprint of AI systems. Must know IT and environmental issues. Intervention pathways are coding and computer science - subsidised and regulated by government funds.

Robotics Engineer (Textiles): Combats fast fashion waste using automated textile systems. Coding combined with design pathways (TAFE/university).

Effect Manager (SFX): Enhances creative productions with sound and visual effects. Requires stagecraft and multimedia skills, with support through education and industry inclusion.

Agribusiness

Cow Cloner: Conceptualises ethical cloning for food security. Blends maths with agricultural tech; takes pathways through science and farming education.

Re-seller/Recycler: Promotes circular economy by repurposing farm equipment. Requires people skills and economic literacy, supported by transport and local networks.

Education

Environmental Awareness Educator: Teaches businesses and communities on how to reduce their environmental impact. Requires good communication and ecological knowledge, with support through funded programs and resources.



Health & Care

Specialist Support in Hospitals: Improves care for disabled individuals. Requires empathy and neurodiversity training, supported by awareness campaigns and healthcare agencies.

Personal Health Scanner: Combines occupational skills with technology accessibility and innovation to help meet the demand for remote care for the elderly. Combines nursing and IT skills, with support through funding and tech access.

Environment & Sustainability

Sustainable Energy Development Scientist: Designs location-specific energy solutions. Requires advanced science and engineering knowledge, with support from government and community investment.

Tourism & Hospitality

Localist Tour Guide: Shares authentic regional stories and experiences. Requires local knowledge and leadership, supported by community engagement and promotion.

Investment Facilitator: Connects investors with regional opportunities. Requires business and marketing skills, supported by infrastructure, cultural safety, and local partnerships.

Creativity & Culture

Youth Creativity Hub Facilitator: Facilitates spaces that are inclusive of youth-led creative expression. It requires imagination and teamwork, underwritten by funding, transport, and community participation.

Hologram Artist: Uses digital media to tell stories and advocate for global issues. Requires multimedia and historical knowledge, supported by access to technology and learning programs.

Creative Arts Facilitator: Connects emerging filmmakers with streaming platforms. Requires networking and visual design skills, supported by inclusion and industry access.

Summary

Several consistent themes emerged across industries and roles:

- **Sustainability:** Participants prioritised environmental responsibility across sectors—from energy and fashion to agriculture and AI.



- **Inclusion and Accessibility:** Many roles addressed barriers faced by youth, disabled individuals, and rural communities, with calls for funding, transport, and cultural safety.
- **Technology with Purpose:** Participants envisaged future technologies for serving people and planet, which balanced innovation with ethics and impact.
- **Local Pride and Regional Futures:** Roles were often grounded in the Northern Rivers context, reflecting a desire to build futures that are place-based, creative, and community-led.



9. Future Living

In this session, participants worked in teams, imagining how people might live in 2040. They were instructed to look not only at the structural layout of homes, streets and neighbourhoods, but how these spaces might encourage sustainability, technological innovation and belonging.

Using flip charts, each team sketched and described their vision for future living environments. The designs revealed a strong commitment to ecological responsibility, creative use of space, and community-centred infrastructure. Participants embraced the challenge with imagination and purpose, producing concepts that were both visionary and grounded in real-world possibilities.

Design Highlights

Participants imagined living spaces included:

- **Forest communities** with cyclic waste systems that fertilise trees and promote reforestation
- **Underwater eco-igloos** designed for resilience and harmony with marine environments
- **Mini wind turbines** powering individual homes
- **Rooftop backyards and gardens** to reclaim green space and support urban biodiversity
- **LED and skylight systems** to maximise natural light and reduce energy use
- **Magnet-powered buses** offering clean, efficient public transport
- **3D-printed houses** for rapid, low-waste construction
- **Solar panel windows** integrating energy generation into everyday architecture
- **Underground bungalows** with multi-level living, flower fields, recycled water systems, and permaculture farming
- **Vertical housing** with rooftop gardens, greywater reuse, and large communal living areas



- **Mountain-integrated homes** that blend seamlessly with the landscape and maintain cool temperatures natural
- **Key Insights**
 - Several themes emerged across the designs:
 - **Sustainability was central:** Every team prioritised low-impact living, renewable energy, and circular systems—from permaculture to greywater reuse.
 - **Technology was purposeful:** Innovations like 3D printing, solar-integrated architecture, and magnet transport were imagined not as novelties, but as tools for equity and resilience.
 - **Space was reimagined:** Participants challenged conventional housing models, proposing vertical, underground, and nature-integrated designs that respond to density and environmental constraints.
 - **Community mattered:** Many designs included shared gardens, multi-use infrastructure, and systems that support wellbeing, connection, and local food production.



This session affirmed young people’s capacity to think systemically and creatively about the future. Their designs were not only imaginative, they were deeply informed by values of care, inclusion, and ecological stewardship.



10. World Café

The World Café established a collaborative dialogue space, where participants rotated through three strategic question stations. Each station encouraged open discussion, idea-sharing, and future-focused thinking.

The questions explored:

1. What does a prosperous future for youth in our area look like in 2040?
2. What obstacles do we encounter, and how can leaders eliminate them?
3. How should leaders' partner with the youth to foster inclusive economic development?

The participants responded to every prompt in a deep and thoughtful manner and their contributions were both reflective of their own experience and practical and in some cases visionary. Below is what was captured with some insights that emerged:

10.1 A Thriving Future for Youth by 2040

Participants imagined a future where young people are connected, empowered, and supported to thrive in their own communities. Their vision included:

- More chances to meet people — socially, creatively, and professionally through festivals, sports, music and youth-led events.
- Expanded career pathways and education options that reflect regional industries and personal interests
- Feel safe, respected and valued in every area: home, school, work and community.
- Upgraded public transport systems to improve access and mobility
- Local programs which honour youth leadership and creativity eg, Jacaranda Queen, Beef Queen.
- Inclusive, nature-connected communities that prioritise sustainability and climate action.
- All ages have equal access to hobbies, entertainment and creative outlets.
- A culture of fun, independence and mutual care — where commitment, creativity and inclusiveness mean everything.



In their words

Opportunities for young people to connect with one another because a lot of youth don't actually have a chance to all meet one another	Cadets, Army, Navy, Airforce	More jobs and life opportunities in the regions so young people don't have to leave
More youth programs like Jacaranda Queen and Beef Queen	50m pool Tenterfield	More education on job opportunities and more career paths
Feeling safe, heard and respected, comfortable and have fun	More discipline and more independence for children	A harmonised community that values everyone
More events for youth to connect, like festivals, music, sports, etc.	Inclusivity for all	Better transport
Commitment, creativity, fun, inclusiveness, love	Local business community	Fun festivals, creative experiences
Public transport systems upgraded	New opportunities and help for young people to use the chances and opportunity given to them	People still care for the nature
More opportunities for young people's entertainment and hobbies like drama, sports, singing and more singing entertainment for really little kids	Equality for youth – no discrimination	Sustainable, green healthy, inclusive, fun
Thriving Northern Rivers – community spirit, local opportunities, alternate pathways, fun , educational, less industrialisation and more focus on climate action		



Barriers and How Leaders Can Help

Participants identified a range of personal, social and systemic barriers that they believe hinder young people. These included:

- Stigma and conformity with social standards, especially related to scholastic achievement and conduct.
- Screen addiction and heavy dependence on AI in schools, which reduces attention and engagement.
- Socio-economic inequality and limited access to education, housing and career pathways.
- Generational disconnect and lack of mutual understanding between youth and adults
- Narratives that devalue vocational pathways like TAFE.
- Concerns over safety at home, school, and in public places.
- Low awareness of current support programs and access to them.
- Discrimination based on disability, identity or background.
- Communication barriers and short-term decision-making that ignore long-term impacts

In their words

Face pressure to act/do the right thing	Peer pressure	There is a lot of stigma around teenagers, when the case most of the time is that we want to help make a change, and want our voices to be heard in the process
Screen addition, loss of attention span	AI used too much in schools	How socio economics status determines you lot in life for many young people so more equal distribution of wealth across world



Generational age gap – mutual ideas	Leaders could create new pathways and spaces to change outlooks	Cost of living lower or support for disadvantaged families so they get the same opportunities
Differences between social classes can create barriers to certain opportunities such as level of education. This issue could be addressed by supporting community members of lower social status to pursue higher education or a wider array of career opportunities	Change how people think and that TAFE is considered a bad thing	Lack of care to do well in studies/school Culture that dumb is cool
Create more opportunities for young people that are cheap and accessible	Decisions being made for too short-term satisfaction accounting for next generation impacts is important to the success of communities	I think some challenges that young people experience include, not feeling safe at home and at school or in the community. Letting people know that there is support for them and how they can easily access it. There are also a lot of programs out there, but many young people don't know they exist or how to access them
Communication barrier	Discrimination, exclusivity leaders could involve everybody	Un-included due to disability
Lots of people are un-included from an obstacle or a challenge cause people judge them by their cover and judge them if they have a disability		



10.2 Partnering for Inclusive Economic Development

Participants offered practical and relational strategies for how leaders can work alongside youth to shape the region's economic future:

- Provide grants and startup support for youth-led businesses and initiatives
- Create youth forums, councils, and regular consultation spaces to co-design opportunities
- Host inclusive events where leaders and youth exchange ideas in relaxed, creative settings
- Ensure youth have a voice in financial decisions and long-term planning
- Build respectful partnerships where age does not determine authority or value
- Promote open-minded communication and shared decision-making
- Recognise both government limitations and youth needs, working together to find solutions
- Develop economic plans that prioritise future generations and regional sustainability.

In their words

Give grants to help young people start new businesses and new startups	Youth involvement in financial matters that affect them. Could be a good opportunity for development for youth	Leaders could conduct youth members of the community to co-create job opportunities/career options that include all possible pathways to support economic growth.
By having youth forums – like the ones with Ben Franklin	Have fetes to get youth involved where leaders attend and get ideas from youth	Having leaders set up a meeting with youth. Communicating and creating opportunities to listen and speak to youth



Developing economic plans in the long term interest directly effecting future generations	Having more youth forums/councils programs like this!	Communication between leaders and youth – accepting ideas regardless of age or experience (open minded)
Meeting with young people to ask them what they want and the kind of jobs they want.	Having an event for future leaders that fun, inclusive and not boring, for them to share their ideas	Let the youth have a say in what the future economic state is in not a full say but a contribution.
Respected relationships where everyone listens to one another and “Im older than you so I know more”	Talking with each other and keeping in touch.	Positive communication between leaders and youth, co-developing plans to improve economic growth
A balanced and evenly respected relationship between youth and leaders. A equal working partnership. Not one where youth feel diminished and like their voices aren’t listened to.	Understand both the governments limitations and the youth’s needs	Having a youth voice program or just using your voice to speak up and stand your ground.

The World Café elicited a clear and consistent message, and that is young people want to be seen, heard and actively involved in shaping theirs and the region’s future. They see thriving communities based on connection, creativity, and opportunity, in which regional living is not synonymous with limited choice. They are asking leaders to eradicate barriers, including stigma, inequality and short-term thinking, by investing in inclusive education, accessible support systems and cross generational understanding. Most importantly, they’re calling for true partnership, where youth aren’t merely consulted but co-construct economic strategies, steer initiatives, and make meaningful contributions to long-term regional prosperity.



11. Survey Sprint

The survey sprint consisted of participants reviewing tailored survey questions to target youth in the Northern Rivers and Tenterfield Shire so that their voices are heard. Participants used a voting system to decide which questions to use, change or not to use.

Final survey questions included:

- How old are you?
- What town/suburb do you live in?
- How long have you lived in the region?
 - 1-5 years
 - 5-10 years
 - 10+ years
 - Always lived here
- What's your favourite thing to do on weekends?
- If a friend from out of town visited, where would you take them first?
- Are there enough things for people your age to do at night or on weekends?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Sort of
- What's missing for young people in your area?
- What kinds of places, activities or opportunities would make you want to stick around after school or uni?
- If you had a magic wand and could create one new thing here, what would it be?
- Do you think you will still be living in this region in 5-10 years? Why or why not?
- Please rank the following in order of how important these things are in deciding whether you would stay living in the area.
 - Job opportunities
 - Entertainment
 - Affordable housing
 - Supportive community
- What do you think needs to be improved or added in the future, for our region to thrive?
- If you could plan a festival, event or hangout spot here, what would it be called and what would it include (what would you do there)?



12. Participant Feedback Summary

Overall Experience

The participants rated the day with “Excellent” or “Good,” indicating that the event was well received and met expectations.

Session Engagement

The sessions most rated “Very engaging” included:

- Values Activity.
- Snapshot of Now.
- Time Travel Game.
- Future Snapshot.
- Future Living.

Sessions such as World Café, Vox Pop Recording, and Survey Sprint got much more mixed reviews, commonly rated as “Somewhat engaging.”

What Participants Liked Most

Participants most enjoyed:

- Hands-on and creative activities
- Connecting with peers
- Expressing ideas and opinions
- Learning about industries and futures
- Feeling part of something bigger

Areas for Improvement

While majority thought the day “worked well,” some said:

- I wanted more time to share ideas.
- Some parts felt unclear and rushed.
- I wasn’t sure how my input would be used



Being heard and respected

Most participants felt “Always” heard and respected. Post event reflections show they left feeling:

- Connected to others in their region
- Energised to make a difference
- Curious about industries and ideas
- Ready to share what they’d learned

Recommendation Rate

An overwhelming majority (90 percent) said they would recommend the experience to others.

Overall Key Insights

Young people see vibrant and thriving communities that are built on connection, creativity, and opportunity. They want leaders to break down barriers that exist in the form of stigma, inequality or short-term thinking by investing in inclusive education systems, support that is available to everyone and intergenerational understanding. Most importantly, they seek genuine partnership, co-creating strategies, leading initiatives, and shaping long-term regional prosperity.

Opportunities

The Vision Day affirmed the value of youth voice in shaping regional economic and environmental futures. To honour participants’ contributions and embed their insights into the ProspER 2040 Plan, the following actions are recommended:

- **Create a Youth Advisory Network:** Utilising the Vision Day participants as ambassadors create a youth-led group to guide planning, track progress, and continue co-designing solutions that respond to the themes surfaced during the Vision Day. This network should be supported to meet regularly, deepen insights, and ensure youth perspectives remain embedded across planning cycles.
- **Support Youth-Led Projects:** Explore youth driven initiatives into sustainability, creative industries, mental health and connectivity, with potential funding to test scalable youth-led models.



- Strengthen Communication and Access: Partner with other relevant stakeholders to increase visibility of services and programs with youth through youth-centred messaging and outreach.
- Host Annual Youth Vision Forums. Keep the Vision Day alive as an annual space for reflection, connection and cross generation partnership.

