



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

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

What we do

We partner with government, industry, and the not-for-profit sectors to lead applied and research-based activities for meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals, specifically:



Focusing on an applied program of research in the following areas:

1. Young people, 21st Century capabilities, and transitions in the future of work;
2. Building a networked approach to enabling and capturing social value in learning and training;
3. Exploring educational ecologies of well-being, resilience, and enterprise.

Our project

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



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Inner Northern Youth Employment Taskforce

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Young People's Sustainable Futures

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The COVID-19 pandemic is triggering social, economic and political crises around the world. The economic fallout from COVID-19 is likely to be longer and deeper than any recession for several generations, and the impact could be profound on the careers of young people.



Three Scenarios

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

1. Chaotic Futures (AVOID)	2. Unsustainable Futures (PREPARE)	3. Sustainable Futures (HOPE)
<p>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.</p>	<p>The Future We Are Likely to Get describes an unsustainable future in which the resources we use cannot be renewed. Continuing with a 'business as usual' approach to manage the COVID-19 crisis and fallout will mean that international, national, state and local institutions and systems will be overwhelmed.</p>	<p>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 justices and difference and diversity.</p>

Scenario 1 Chaotic Futures (AVOID)

Health and Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No effective vaccine, and COVID-19 case numbers soar through successive waves in Australia and globally with an increasing death toll and ongoing periodic 'lockdowns'.• 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.• 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.• Service provision for young people's mental health in the inner north is overwhelmed by demand and a lack of resources and support
Education and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Australia falls behind in meeting key targets in relation to UN SDG 4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all• 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'.• The number of students in the Victorian school system opting to do an unscored VCE rises from 1 in 25 to 1 in 12 in 2025, where they complete their requirements to pass year 12 but opt out of exams.• Education systems and providers in the inner north find themselves overwhelmed and ill-equipped to handle the increasing 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.
Economy and Livelihood	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• As predicted, the 2020 recession turns into what appears to be a decade long 'greater depression'.• Australia fails to meet key targets in relation to UN SDG 8 Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all• 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 - fueling social unrest in places such as the inner north.• 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.• 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 exponentially.
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A wave of populist leaders are elected globally further fueling racial and class tensions, international 'trade wars' and diplomatic crises.• 'Culture wars' erupt periodically across parts of Australia related to issues such as BlackLivesMatter, the climate crisis, and the economic crisis.• Communities are divided, confused and chaotic in terms of who's to blame for these ongoing crises.• Young people in the inner north lose hope in the abilities of institutions - their schools, local government, businesses - to do deal with these crises• 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.

Scenario 2 Unsustainable Futures (PREPARE)

Health and Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">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.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.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.Youth service providers and schools increase digital infrastructure, preparedness and support to deliver higher quality online learning, and online health services.
Education and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Australia makes limited progress in meeting key targets in relation to UN SDG 4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for allOngoing 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.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.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.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.
Economy and Livelihood	<ul style="list-style-type: none">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.Australia makes limited progress in meeting key targets in relation to UN SDG 8 Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for allAustralia'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.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.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.
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Elected leaders form gridlocks in political chains that slow the development of policies and the passing of legislation to reduce racial and class inequities, stimulate economic growth, or ease trade disputes and diplomatic crises.There is little progress in relation to the BlackLivesMatter and Climate Emergency movements to create change at the local, state, federal and global levels.Communities are frustrated to see little progress to address these crises.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'.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.

Scenario 3 Sustainable Futures (HOPE)

Health and Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">International, national, state and local agencies and communities re-commit to the efforts required to meet the Paris Accord and young people around the globe are key drivers of this commitment and action.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 and online learning lead to higher quality, more accessible health, and education services for young people.In the inner north, service provision for young people's mental health meets demand through coordinated efforts, new partnerships across Moreland, Darebin and Yarra LGAs, their schools, councils and youth services.Young people have a voice. They 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.
Education and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Australia makes significant progress towards meeting key targets in the UN SDG 4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2025Federal, State and Local governments, businesses and education institutions and professions work together to adequately support skills, micro-creds, and systems funding to produce greater consensus about more diverse and flexible secondary and post-secondary pathways – replacing the ATAR.Safer schools foster a safe environment that is supportive and inclusive of LGBTQIA young people.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.In the inner north large numbers of young people express trust, and are hopeful, as they become more engaged with education and training and have more employment pathway options.
Economy and Livelihood	<ul style="list-style-type: none">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.Australia makes significant progress in meeting key targets in relation to UN SDG 8 Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.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.At State and local levels, a Grew New Deal drives innovation and creation of decent, secure jobs, narrowing the wealth gaps between the ultra-wealthy and 'ordinary Australians'.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.
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Elected leaders develop policies and pass legislation to reduce racial and class inequities, stimulate economic growth, and ease trade disputes and diplomatic crises.A treaty emerges through negotiations between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and Australian and Victorian governments and local councils.There is progress in relation movements that create widespread change at the local, state, federal and global levelsYoung people, communities, businesses and governments in the inner north develop new models to address the BlackLivesMatter and Climate crises and act as agents of change in their communities.Young people, communities, businesses and governments in the inner north collaborate on the co-design of innovative models – co-operatives, 'social', 'shared', 'inter-generational' - that produce greater housing diversity and security for more young people.

What Have We Learned?

The importance of place-based responses to these multiple crises – even when the crises seem too BIG for places;

Identifying and working with key partners – and building and maintaining and nurturing those relationships (hard work!);

Thinking about, and developing new ways of engaging a diversity of young people as key stakeholders in their own futures (not ALL young people are '*progressive activists*');

The SDGs – as a global framework for action – are only ONE mechanism for delivering on the 'promise' of a sustainable future, and sometimes they won't be the most effective one! (Why don't they mention the 'C' word? Are they limited by their *Anthropocentric* view of development, and of life on the planet?)

Further Information

Peter Kelly
Professor of Education,
Head, UNESCO UNEVOC @ School
of Education
RMIT University
e: peter.kelly@rmit.edu.au
m: 0428625483

UNEVOC@RMIT -
<https://unevocrmit.org>

Young People's Sustainable Futures
Lab - <https://young-people-futures-lab.org>

YouTube Channel – INYET -
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLy2WdTkNLmS7mfJmzl43zaCW7Vrl1K44z>

YouTube Channel – YPSFL –
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFWst6SNkLpR4nRa_Y-mtbQ

