

Social Issues Paper – Update 2025

Introduction

Council developed a Social Issues Paper in 2021 outlining key social issues within the City of Canada Bay following extensive community consultation. In 2025 Council undertook a review to check that the previously identified social issues remain relevant across the City of Canada Bay.

From June to September 2025, consultations were undertaken with the Community Services sector for this purpose. Through this focused consultation we were able to reflect on the current trends and identify issues that have emerged in recent years.

During the consultation period, 20 different organisations provided feedback via focus groups or one-to-one interviews. A variety of sectors were represented including education, health, disability, police, aged care, and culturally specific services.

Below is a summary of the strengths and issues in the City of Canada Bay, comparing the information gained from the initial consultation in 2021 to the update from service providers in 2025.

Canada Bay's Social Strengths

The City of Canada Bay has many strengths which were identified in the initial Social Issues Paper. Many of these strengths have continued to shape the City of Canada Bay. Service providers provided updates on the identified strengths and provided comments on some of the changes including possible opportunities to build on these strengths.

Strength	Identified in 2021	Update from service providers
Strong Social networks and groups	Many people in Canada Bay are passionate about contributing to their community, with strong networks of community groups and organisations that are driven and supported by engaged volunteers of all ages.	No update from service providers.
Social and cultural diversity	Canada Bay is home to people of all ages, from many different walks of life and cultural backgrounds. This diversity is a strength that is welcomed and celebrated.	Service providers recognised the diversity in our community including people from a variety of cultural backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people who identify as LGBTQIA+ and people of various ages. Service providers noted the opportunity for multicultural, intergenerational and other collaborative activities to strengthen connections across our area.
Green spaces and parks	Canada Bay has beautiful green spaces, parks and foreshore areas that support community wellbeing with opportunities for recreation and socialising.	No update from service providers.
Our community facilities	Canada Bay's community facilities, such as libraries and community centres, provide spaces for the community to learn, share, be creative and collaborate. The Connection in Rhodes is considered a best practice multipurpose community facility.	Council's libraries continue to be identified as important inclusive spaces. Expanding use of community spaces for hubs and community service provision is an opportunity.
Council support for programs	Services Council provides (e.g. bus outings for seniors and childcare centres, gymnastics/leisure programs, library programs) are highly valued by the community.	Council programs particularly Library and Community Development Programs were highlighted as strengths.

Community hearts in town centres	Local town centres in Canada Bay provide a focal point for community life and support wellbeing by providing places for people to meet and connect.	No update from service providers.
Service provider networks	Service providers operating in the Canada Bay area provide vital support and care for vulnerable people in the community, and Concord Hospital is one of the area's assets.	Council's role in supporting sector networking and capacity building was highlighted as a strength by service providers who identified an increasing need for this support.
Relatively high incomes	Overall, Canada Bay has a relatively high household income compared to Greater Sydney (\$2,058 compared to \$1,745 per week).	Service providers didn't comment on this but did note that the high cost of living has had a negative impact on some members of our community.
Older people's wellbeing	Findings from the Index of Wellbeing for Older Australians (IWOA) indicate that seniors in some areas of Canada Bay have high wellbeing (Drummoyne-Rodd Point and Concord - Mortlake - Cabarita), however other areas (Five Dock-Abbotsford-Wareemba and Concord West - North Strathfield) have relatively low wellbeing.	No update from service providers.
Children's development	Findings from the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) indicate that Canada Bay has a relatively low percentage of children whom are developmentally vulnerable compared to NSW and Australia.	Service providers noted in most fields children's development remains on track. However, there has been an increase in the number of children identified as developmentally vulnerable in communication and general knowledge. This was primarily noted in the Rhodes area.
Low crime	Findings from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research suggest that Canada Bay is a relatively safe place to live, with lower or similar rates of crime compared to neighbouring LGAs.	Crime statistics continue to show there is a comparative low rate of crime in this area. Service providers identified an increase in domestic violence and cybersecurity as issues that have increased in recent years.

Canada Bay's Social Issues

The original consultation undertaken in 2021 identified a number of social issues in the City of Canada Bay. Below is a summary of the issues identified in the original consultation in 2021 compared to the recent feedback provided by service providers in 2025.

Issue	Identified in 2021	Update from Service Providers
Population Growth	Canada Bay will have approximately 32,000 additional residents by 2036, and community members said that population growth and increasing residential density is putting pressure on existing social infrastructure such as roads, public transport, schools, open spaces, community facilities and other services.	No update from service providers
Increasing Social Isolation	Community members said they are concerned about declining social cohesion and increasing social isolation in Canada Bay and the associated negative impacts on physical and mental health, in particular for older people and people living alone. People would like to see more programs, events and public spaces that encourage social connection and cohesion.	Identified as a significant and increasing issue by service providers. Social isolation among young people and men has increased in recent years. Possible causes identified include: increased work from home, reduced engagement in community programs even when heavily subsidised, decreased volunteering, rise in anxiety and mental health issues, increase in social media use and stigma.
Supporting cultural diversity	Our community is increasingly culturally diverse which can bring issues around social cohesion and connection with neighbourhoods and services; racist or exclusionary behaviour; and specific issues such as social isolation including for some of our older CALD grandparents who have caring responsibility for their grandchildren and limited English skills.	Barriers continue for people from diverse cultural backgrounds, especially for people who speak English as a second language or are unfamiliar with the healthcare and school systems in Australia. For some newly emerging cultural groups there are very limited resources and support (e.g. Mongolian community). Some people cannot access services due to visa restrictions. Lack of trust in social and emergency services for some newly arrived migrants can exacerbate issues.

Discriminatory attitudes	Some people told us that discriminatory attitudes and/or behaviours can be an issue for people living with disability and older people. It was also noted that there was an increase in incidence of racism against Chinese community members in Canada Bay during the COVID-19 pandemic.	Service providers identified that discriminatory attitudes persist particularly towards people with a disability and people from minority cultural backgrounds. More multicultural activities or events were proposed by service providers as an opportunity to reduce discrimination.
Mental Health and Wellbeing	Mental health and wellbeing can be a challenge for residents of all ages and backgrounds, and the community said there are some barriers to accessing mental health services in the Canada Bay area, including limited availability and affordability. For example, while we have a high youth population, there is no Headspace in the LGA.	Mental health continues to be a significant issue for Canada Bay. Young people are experiencing mental health issues at a greater level. While there is now more talk of mental health, it can still be challenging to access services. Parents have been observed to experience heightened anxiety and depression . Increased addictive behaviours such as alcohol abuse and gambling have been observed.
Access to public transport	While some areas of Canada Bay have good access to public transport , the community told us that other areas are poorly serviced which impacts on their ability to participate in the community and access services and can contribute to social isolation, particularly for older people in more established and low growth suburbs such as Drummoyne.	This continues to be identified as an issue. Appropriate parking at community venues and road safety around schools were also identified.
Ageing population	Canada Bay is home to an ageing population with an increasing need for aged care services and community members would like to see more programs and universally designed public domain and facilities to ensure people of all ages can actively participate in community life.	No specific update from service providers. Further information is captured in the digital divide point below.
High Housing and Rental Issues	Canada Bay has high housing and rental prices , which can put low to moderate income households under financial pressure and increase the risk of displacement.	Cost of living pressure has been identified as an increasing issue. Service providers noted this can lead to mental health challenges, family relationship issues and domestic and family violence.

Homelessness	There are also people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Canada Bay, and there is a need for an increase in affordable housing supply and crisis accommodation.	This continues to be an issue for some members of our community. Service providers report increased need among young people and people experiencing domestic and family violence .
Inequality	While Canada Bay is generally a relatively affluent community, community members said there are also pockets of socioeconomic disadvantage and were concerned about inequality across the community .	No update from service providers.
Things to do or places to go for young people	Young people and parents said that there are few things to do or places to go for young people in Canada Bay if you don't play sport, and said there is a need for more opportunities for young people to have their say. The only public high school in the area has 14 demountables and there will be increased pressures with high population growth in suburbs nearby Concord.	The need for a variety of youth programs and places was identified. A youth drop-in or multi-purpose space was recommended by service providers. Issues identified for young people included poor mental health, social media over-use/ bullying and cost of living pressures.
Access and Inclusion for people living with a disability	Community members identified a wide range of opportunities to support access and inclusion for people living with disability and carers in Canada Bay , including improved accessible design of town centres, community facilities and streets, more awareness of disability and positive attitudes in the community, improved transport services and increased employment pathways.	Inclusion within society for people with a disability continues to be an issue. Many challenges were noted relating to NDIS and accessing appropriate services. School resourcing was also identified as an issue. The need for co-design of programs was identified.
LGBTQIA+ acceptance	Community members said that there is still work to be done in Canada Bay to encourage more positive attitudes and behaviours towards LGBTQIA+ community members , and there are no local support groups or services.	Discrimination and challenges in accessing services and supports have been raised as concerns.
Visibility of First Nations people, culture and heritage	Community members want to see increased recognition, visibility and celebration of First Nations. people, culture and heritage in the Canada Bay LGA.	This continues to be noted as a social issue in the City of Canada Bay.

Domestic Violence	Stakeholder interviews and research indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly increased the incidence as well as the critical nature of domestic violence . One service provider working in the Canada Bay area told us that they have seen a particular increase in the number of older women (50+) contacting them to access support.	Service providers told us that the instances of domestic and family violence have increased . There is a general lack of knowledge of types of violence and support options in the community. Groups at increased risk of DFV include: • Women with babies and very young children • Older women without income • Women who have recently migrated to Australia • International students and people on specific visas Programs that support sector collaboration have been noted to be successful and service providers said they would like to see these initiatives continue.
Low provision rate of welfare services	Council does not deliver social welfare services directly, is not the best placed, and does not have the resources to deliver specialists social services directly. However, there is a low provision in the area, and Council can play an advocacy role .	Service providers spoke about funding issues and funding that is limited to certain eligibility requirements e.g. some visas, age limits or other requirements restrict access to services .
Lack of promotion and collaboration between existing groups	While Canada Bay is home to many community organisations, people told us there is a need for increased promotion of existing groups and opportunity for more collaboration between community groups, NGOs, and service providers to share resources and support each other.	Service providers noted reduced sector information sharing and the need to increase networking and collaboration. Service providers identified an important role for Council to support information sharing and networking opportunities.
Digital divide	Council staff and community members indicated that the increasing shift toward online service delivery can be a challenge for people in the Canada Bay community, particularly for those who are unable to engage online or don't have access to a computer or internet at home with a need to "bridge the digital divide."	Service providers noted older people may have lower digital literacy and technology skills. This means they may not be able to connect with information and family members as well. Cyber security remains an issue.

Service providers located outside LGA	Most service providers that operate in the Canada Bay area are located outside of the LGA , including in larger centres such as Burwood, Ashfield and Strathfield. This can be a barrier to residents in accessing services, especially for those who are transport disadvantaged.	Most service providers continue to be based outside the area. Many providers state this limits their capacity to hold programs in the area.
Forecast undersupply of community centre floor space	Council's Social Infrastructure Strategy identified that Canada Bay has a significant current and forecast undersupply of community centre floor space , as well as an oversupply of small ageing community centre buildings which is a barrier to services providers and community groups in running programs to support the community. Most existing facilities are venues for hire and are not fit-out with offices to provide spaces for services to operate and activate them.	This continues to be identified by service providers as an issue.
Support for Carers	Not identified	There is an increasing awareness among service providers that carers require support. Carers provide unpaid support to family members or friends who have a disability or illness.