



2018 AUSTRALIAN YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE CONSULTATION REPORT



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ABOUT

The Australian Youth Representative to the United Nations is the only role of its kind in Australia. The role is appointed annually by UN Youth Australia in partnership with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Running since 1999, the Youth Representative holds an extensive, nationwide consultative Listening Tour to engage with and discover the issues that are most important to young Australians.

After the Listening Tour, the Youth Representative travels to New York as a member of the Australian Mission to the United Nations, and delivers a speech on the tour's findings to the General Assembly's Third Committee.

The 2018 Youth Representative is Amos Washington. Amos is passionate about the role young people can play in policy decision-making and public leadership. He hopes you enjoy reading this report on the hopes and dreams of young Australians.



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FROM THE YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE

What would Australia look like if young people had a greater say?

I'm delighted to present this report on my findings from my term as Youth Representative.

This year, I wanted to know what Australia would look like if young people had a greater say. To find out, I travelled close to 100,000km, visiting every state and territory and meeting thousands of young people in consultations. I engaged with a diverse range of young people, in both urban and regional areas, from all walks of life. From there, I collected together everything I heard and delivered my findings to the third committee of the United Nations General Assembly.

This report was created out of thousands of conversations with young people. In this report, you will find data, photos, artworks, and stories from these consultations. You'll also find some recommendations about how we can amplify the perspectives of young people and the significant contributions we can make to policy decision-making.

This year could not happen without a team of wonderful supporters. As such, there are so many people I have to thank. This role relies on small donations from individuals who are passionate about Australian young people. To everyone who contributed, great or small, thank you. A list of our sponsors and supporters can be found at the back of this report.

UN Youth Australia is full of some pretty wonderful, hardworking people. Special thanks must go to Nick Mezo for his support. Many thanks to our team of volunteers and their families around the country, particularly Jess Herne, Zoe Brightling, Grace Blackford, Brianna Bell, Emily Backus, Ariel Mroz, Katie McAllister, Sage Walle, Emma Troughton, Eleri Morgan, Libby Newton, Marielle Intveld, Cassady Swinbourne and Stewart Jackson.

I want to also thank my local member of parliament, Rebekha Sharkie MP, for her generous support of this year's program.

It was a privilege to spend six weeks at the Australian Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York City. My sincere thanks to Ambassador and Permanent Representative HE Ms Gillian Bird and the wonderful mission staff for allowing me the opportunity to work alongside them. Many thanks also to Kyril Estrin for his support throughout the year.

Thank you to my parents, Rebekah and David, for their encouragement and fierce support. Many thanks also to Ella Heywood-Smith and Maddie Sarre for their kindness and care this year. Willem King, thank you for your endless support, patience, and love.

Lastly, thank you to the thousands of young Australians who had their voices heard during this year's consultation. This report is for you. I hope you can see yourself reflected in its pages. It's been a great honour representing all of you.

Yours,



Amos Washington.

ABOUT THE 2018 CONSULTATION

In 2018, young Australians were able to participate in the Youth Representative consultation in a few different ways. Young people could:

- 1. Attend a face-to-face consultation during the Listening Tour;**
- 2. Complete the Youth Representative survey;**
- 3. Participate in the photo series when at a consultation, and/or;**
- 4. Send in art or letters to the Youth Representative.**

The Listening Tour consultations

The 2018 Youth Representative Listening Tour took place between March and August 2018. Consultations were run by the Youth Representative across every state and territory. Amos was hosted by schools, community groups, non-profit organisations, clubs and associations, Universities and TAFEs, and juvenile detention centres. Consultations were generally between 50 and 90 minutes long. In 2018, the Youth Representative conducted 152 consultations across the country.

Consultations were as much about providing an educational experience as they were about data collection. Consultations encouraged participants to explore the importance of youth perspectives and youth engagement, and responded directly to this year's guiding question, 'what would Australia look like if young people had a greater say?'

Broad data was collected from consultations based on conversations between the Youth Representative and the participants. All the notes and drawings from participants were collected and recorded after every consultation.

The Youth Representative survey

The Youth Representative survey provided young people with an opportunity to have their voices heard without attending a physical consultation. The survey was provided online for all young people to access, as well as in paper form when distributed during a consultation wherever possible. The survey covered multiple areas:

Warm-up questions ('would you rather?')

- Savoury or sweet? (46.6% savoury, 53.3% sweet)
- Indoors or outdoors? (36.6% indoors, 63.3% outdoors)
- Books or movies? (44.1% books, 55.8% movies)

Political engagement and representation (true or false):

- I feel like my opinions are represented by politicians in government.
- I feel like people respect my opinions as a young person.
- I know the name of my local Member of Parliament.
- I know what I want to do as a career.
- I am interested in current events that happen outside of Australia.
- I read/follow the news every day.
- I am interested in learning more about the United Nations.
- I am interested in learning about how the government makes decisions.

Issues (multiple choice and short answer)

- Young people were able to select issues they felt passionately about from an extensive list - e.g.
- "What is the biggest issue facing young people in your community? Can you think of any solutions?"
- "What is the biggest issue facing young people in Australia? Can you think of any solutions?"

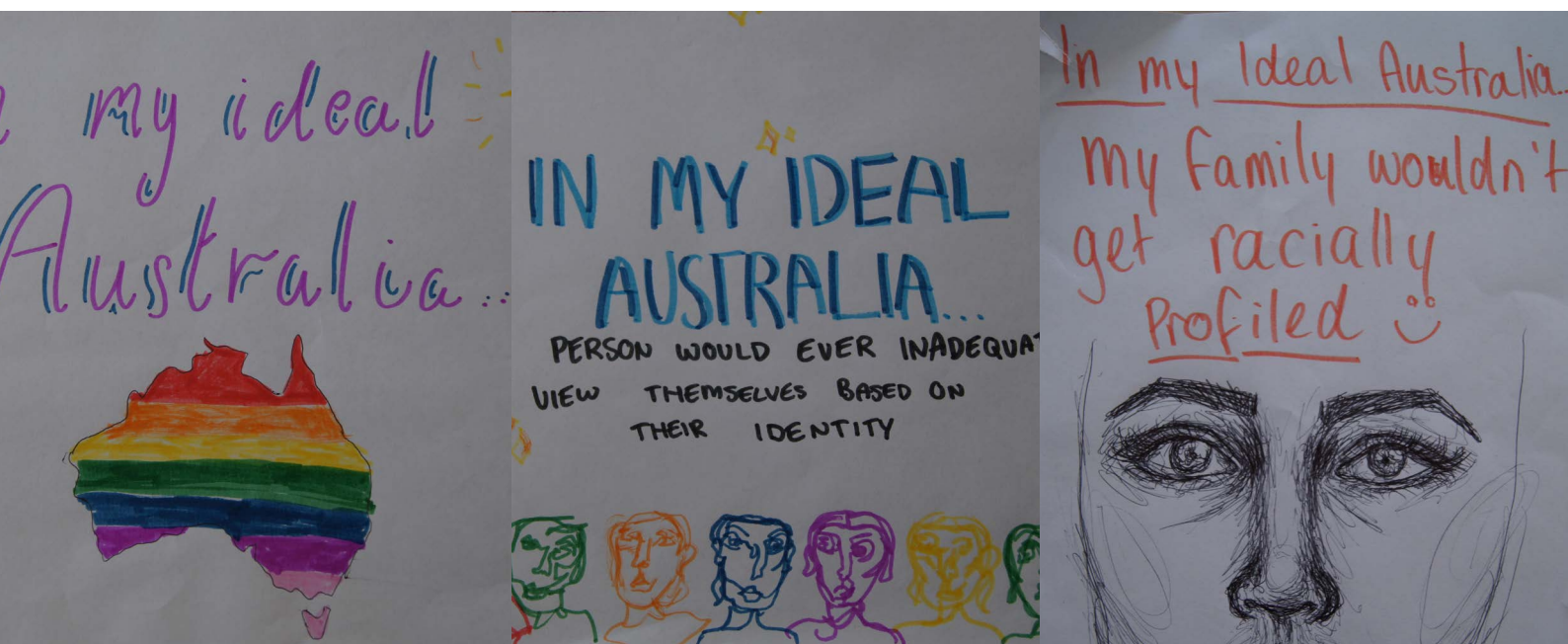
Young people were also encouraged to finish the sentence 'In my ideal Australia ...'

Photo Series and Art Project

Young people who attended consultations could participate in our photo series. Participants posed for photos and submitted a statement that began with the phrase 'in my ideal Australia ...'



Young people could also participate in our art project, submitting works that responded to the phrase 'in my ideal Australia...' Young people could mail in their works or complete it during a consultation where time permitted. Several young people also chose to write letters and statements.



CONSULTATION BY THE NUMBERS



152 CONSULTATIONS

38.2% CONSULTATIONS HELD OUTSIDE
OF CAPITAL CITIES



11-26 AGE RANGE OF YOUNG PEOPLE
PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM

16.4 AVERAGE AGE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN SURVEY
RESPONSES



35.5% SURVEY RESPONDENTS
IDENTIFYING AS MALE

60.2% SURVEY RESPONDENTS
IDENTIFYING AS FEMALE

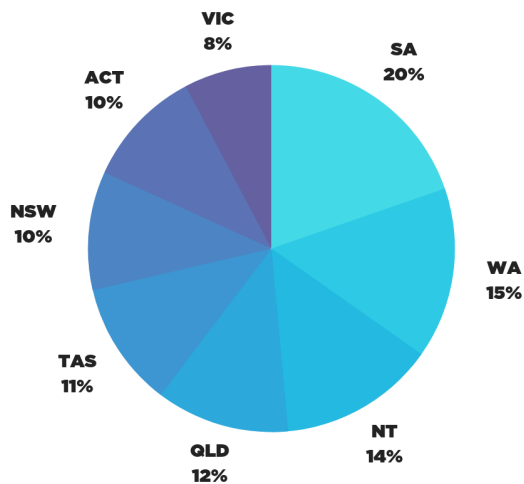
4.2% SURVEY RESPONDENTS IDENTIFYING AS
OTHERWISE INCLUDING 'BOY', 'NON-BINARY',
'TRANSGENDER', OR 'WOMAN'.



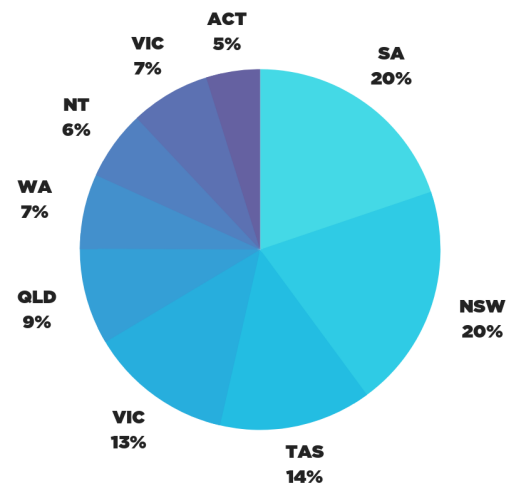
6.2% SURVEY RESPONDENTS IDENTIFYING
AS ABORIGINAL AND/OR TORRES
STRAIT ISLANDER

10.5% CONSULTATIONS WITH A SIGNIFICANT
PROPORTION OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES
STRAIT ISLANDER YOUNG PEOPLE

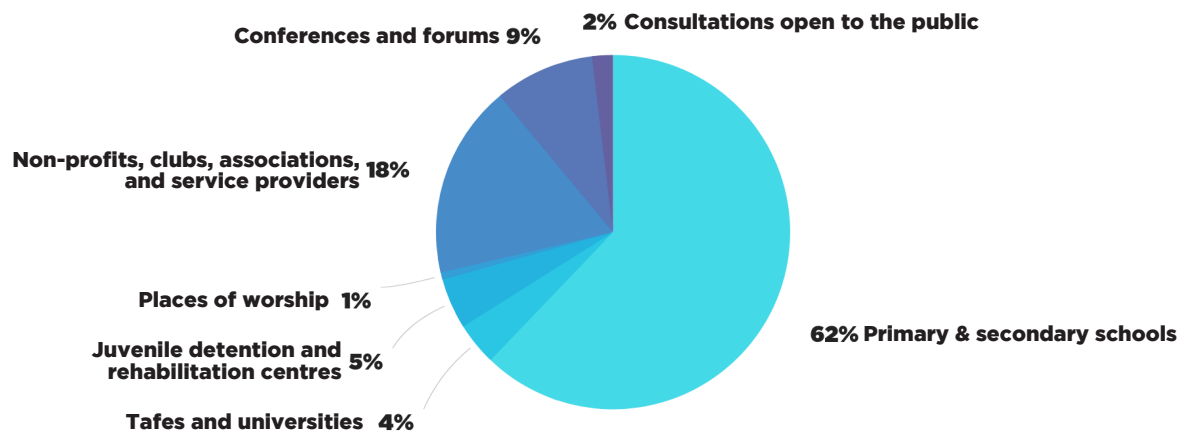
CONSULTATION DISTRIBUTION



SURVEY DISTRIBUTION



CONSULTATION VENUES



CONSULTATION LOCATIONS





SPEECH TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Amos spent six weeks at the United Nations, working alongside Australia's diplomats at the Australian Permanent Mission to the UN. Amos participated in high-level UN events and collaborated with fellow youth delegates from across the globe. Importantly, Amos delivered a speech on behalf of young Australians to the third committee of the United Nations General Assembly.

I am proud to be here representing Australian young people, a diverse and multicultural generation of our vibrant nation. This year, I embarked on a nationwide Listening Tour, consulting with thousands of young people across the country. I sought to answer the question, what would Australia look like if young people had a greater say?

From Albany to Alice Springs, Coober Pedy to Canberra, I spoke with young people from a diverse range of backgrounds and heard about the challenges they face. This experience is difficult to summarise in this short period of time, but I wanted to reflect on a few key learnings.

Firstly, it is crucial that we consider young people as participating members of society. There is a misconception that young people are waiting in the wings, yet to experience the real world. However, the issues the young people raised with me affect people of all ages, and are among the many issues that the 2030 Agenda strives to address. I spoke to culturally diverse young people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young peoples, members of the oldest continuing culture in the world, enduring racial prejudice. I engaged with young people experiencing discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. I worked with young people living with disabilities, who taught me about the importance of accessible and inclusive spaces.

I heard from young people who want safe and affordable housing, secure employment, a fair and equitable justice system, a healthy environment, an education system that encourages young people to thrive, and better support for those suffering from substance abuse. Young people I met advocated for a kinder society, free from bullying and harassment. In this sense, youth issues are community issues, and community issues are youth issues. Young people's experiences and perspectives of these issues are unique and varied, and we cannot get a full picture if we don't listen to these experiences and perspectives.

Secondly, it is clear that young people are concerned about the wellbeing of their generation. Young Australians in educational institutions, community groups, and juvenile detention centres consider mental health to be at a crisis point. In consultations, young people saw the interconnections between mental health and other community issues. An education system should emphasise the importance of mental health, and support services should consider the diversity of young people. Young people need to feel valued. The wellbeing of young people impacts on the rest of community, and when young people succeed, everyone benefits.

Finally, it is important that we include young people in policy decision-making, because young people are visionaries. We can enrich our policy conversations if we provide young people with a seat at the table, as young people have nuanced solutions to offer. A young woman from regional South Australia said to me: 'if I could influence one thing in my community, I would try to show that youth are an incredible, diverse group of people who deserve attention and the chance to influence change.' We cannot generalise about young people, and when it comes to creating policy, we cannot make assumptions about what young people want and need.

Young Australians are members of the global community and are part of the largest generation in world history; a generation of more than 1.8 billion people. Three years ago, we set the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, an ambitious blueprint for a more prosperous and sustainable world. However, in order to successfully implement the Agenda and meet the Sustainable Development Goals, we need to embrace the potential of young people to help shape a better future for all of us.

This year, I sought to answer the question what would Australia look like if young people had a greater say? If young people had a greater say in decision-making and setting our policy agenda, our world would be kinder, safer, and healthier. If young people had a greater say, our world would truly be more united.





AUSTRALIA

The following pages contain the top level results of the consultations with young Australians.

The top ten issue topics raised in consultations Australia-wide were **mental health and wellbeing** (17%), **discrimination and inequality** (14%), **education** (7.8%), **alcohol and other drugs** (6.6%), **personal growth and identity** (5.4%), **violence, crime and abuse** (5.3%), **gender-based issues** (4.7%), **socioeconomic issues** (4.6%), **family and relationships** (4.4%), and **environment/ climate change** (4.2%).

Mental health and wellbeing

Mental health and wellbeing was by far the largest issue in consultations, and the largest write-in answer and issue raised in the survey, reflecting the passion that young people demonstrated in consultations about the wellbeing of their peers. As one survey respondent commented, “Mental Health is slowly becoming more openly discussed and is losing stigma” (18, NSW). The large increase in the discussion of this issue from the Youth Representative program last year is evidence of this.

Mental health was almost always raised in conjunction with other issues, such as discrimination, financial pressures and substance abuse. While young people frequently take issue with the education system, they are optimistic in its power to address mental health. Recommendations to “educate people more on services available” (15, NT) and for “training [and] welfare models ... from early ages” (23, Tasmania) were common.

Young people across the country felt as though tailored, youth-focused mental health services needed to be more accessible and more prevalent, particularly in regional areas.

1. Mental health and wellbeing represented 17% of issues in consultations.

‘Mental health is very prevalent and stops young people from reaching their highest potential.’ 16, NSW

2. Discrimination and inequality were raised in a variety of contexts.

‘In my ideal Australia there wouldn’t be any discrimination about how you look, identify as, or the background you come from.’ 14, SA

3. Education funding, access, and curriculum were priorities across the country.

‘In my ideal Australia, young Australians would have access to well-funded, authentic education at school and university.’ 24, NT

4. Alcohol and other drugs are of concern to many.

‘We need to encourage cooperation between generations and lessen the stigma around issues for young people.’ 17, NSW

5. Personal growth and identity were often-discussed topics.

‘Life isn’t about satisfying other people’s expectations. It’s about following our own dreams.’ 18, VIC

Discrimination and inequality

Discrimination and inequality accounted for **14% of topics mentioned in consultations**.

When young people shared their vision of their ideal Australia, discrimination and inequality were mentioned far more than any other topic. When discrimination and inequality were discussed, young people spoke about socioeconomic inequalities, racism, gender equality, homophobia and transphobia, accessibility, ignorance and prejudice, stereotypes and stigma.

This reflects the priorities of countless young Australians. One wrote of an Australia where “no member of a cultural minority would face discrimination or be forced to shoulder blame for the actions of a few lone actors” (16, WA). Another emphasised how this should not be incidental to policymaking, but at the core of it: “in my ideal Australia, accessibility, inclusivity and equality is central to our identity as a nation” (23, Victoria).

Education

In the survey, education was a top issue. Many questioned whether the education system was preparing them for careers or for the real world. **63.9% of young people know what they want to do as a career**.

Thousands of young people were polled in consultations about whether we should lower the voting age to 16. Many young people expressed a need for an increase in civics education, particularly regarding the electoral and parliamentary systems. Young people are enthusiastic to learn more about domestic and international issues.

84.6% of respondents are interested in current events outside Australia, 78.8% are interested in learning more about the United Nations, and 77.8% are interested in learning about how the government makes decisions.

Many young people called for other curriculum reforms, with a focus on mental health, comprehensive sex education, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history. Some lamented that the education system was not engaging with young people in a way that fostered their passions: one believed students are not “engaged with the subjects they are learning” (ACT).

Differences in quality of education were frequently noted, and criticised for exacerbating inequalities. One student wrote that “a lot of people in my community are from low SES backgrounds”, calling for “needs-based funding, and more of it” (14, NSW). Others noted the challenges faced at school by young people of minority backgrounds. Many worried about the increasing costs of higher education, which also exacerbates inequality.

Young people across the country called for reform to examination and ranking processes, citing concerns about pressure, expectations, and the need for final year results to reflect effort. Multiple young people took issue with the disproportionate weighting of exams and other tests causing “an immense amount of stress around their education which is affecting their performance in class” (16, NSW).

Bullying was often raised, particularly amongst younger consultation participants, as a barrier to an receiving education. Education was also frequently raised as a solution to other issues. Education was understood for its power to promote mental wellbeing, positive behaviours, political engagement and awareness, tolerance, and more.



TOP ISSUES IN CONSULTATIONS BY AGE

The following table ranks the top 5 priorities of young Australians, gathered from the consultations and survey.

11	1. Discrimination and inequality	=2. Bullying and alcohol and other drugs	=4. Healthcare, regional development, and violence/crime.		
12	1. Mental health and wellbeing	=2. Violence/ crime and bullying	=4. Discrimination and inequality and alcohol and other drugs		
13	1. Mental health and wellbeing	2. Discrimination and inequality	3. Alcohol and other drugs	4. Bullying	5. Violence/ crime
14	1. Mental health and wellbeing	2. Discrimination and inequality	3. Alcohol and other drugs	4. Bullying	=5. Personal growth and identity and family and relationships
15	1. Mental health and wellbeing	2. Discrimination and inequality	3. Education	4. Alcohol and other drugs	5. Personal growth and identity
16	1. Mental health and wellbeing	2. Discrimination and inequality	3. Education	4. Alcohol and other drugs	5. Environment/ climate change
17	1. Mental health and wellbeing	2. Discrimination and inequality	3. Education	4. Environment/ climate change	5. Alcohol and other drugs
18	1. Mental health and wellbeing	2. Discrimination and inequality	3. Education	4. Environment/ climate change	=5. Alcohol and other drugs and socioeconomic issues
19	1. Discrimination and inequality	2. Mental health and wellbeing	3. Education	4. Socioeconomic issues	=5. Personal growth and identity and employment
20	1. Discrimination and inequality	2. Mental health and wellbeing	3. Alcohol and other drugs	4. Socioeconomic issues	5. Employment
21	1. Discrimination and inequality	2. Mental health and wellbeing	3. Education	4. Employment	5. Socioeconomic issues
22	1. Discrimination and inequality	2. Mental health and wellbeing	=3. Employment and socioeconomic issues		=5. Violence/ crime and housing affordability
23	1. Discrimination and inequality	2. Mental health and wellbeing	=3. Violence/ crime and employment		=5. Education and family and relationships
24	1. Discrimination and inequality	=2. Employment and housing affordability		4. Socioeconomic issues	=5. Education, youth engagement, and mental health and wellbeing
25	1. Discrimination and inequality	2. Education	=3. Housing affordability, mental health and wellbeing, and personal growth and identity		
26	1. Discrimination and inequality	2. Employment	=2. Housing affordability	=2. Socioeconomic issues	=2. Alcohol and other drugs

Summary

Mental health and wellbeing was a top issue raised amongst 12 to 18 year olds. 19 to 26 year olds and 11 year olds prioritised issues relating to discrimination and inequality.

Education was of particular concern to those aged 15 to 21, highlighting this issue as a priority for secondary school and university/Tafe students.

It is interesting to note that issues relating to personal growth and identity were in the top five for 14 and 15 year olds, a key transitional period for many young people. Personal growth and identity does not emerge as a top issue again until 19, when young people may have just transitioned from secondary schooling to tertiary education or work. Issues raised relating to personal growth and identity included 'insecurity,' 'pressure,' 'societal expectations,' 'stability,' 'responsibility,' and 'purpose in life.'

These issues were also often discussed by these age groups in tandem with other key issues such as mental health, substance abuse, education, discrimination, bullying, and relationships.

Bullying was cited as a key concern for young people aged 11 to 14, with social media often singled out in consultations in this age bracket as a forum for bullying. Young people commented on how social media can be used to bully people in complex and subtle ways, and that any cyberbullying solutions must be created in consultation and in conjunction with young people, the primary users of social media.

WHICH ISSUES DO YOU FEEL MOST PASSIONATE ABOUT? (AUSTRALIA)



1. EDUCATION



2. GENDER EQUALITY



3. CLIMATE CHANGE



4. FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS



5. ASYLUM SEEKERS & REFUGEES



6. HEALTHCARE



7. DRUG & ALCOHOL ABUSE



8. HOUSING AFFORDABILITY



9. THE JUSTICE SYSTEM



10. EMPLOYMENT

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Youth engagement and empowerment was a top issue when young people were asked about the biggest issues in their communities and in Australia. One expressed that "as children and young people, we are continually reminded that we are the future leaders of tomorrow, however what we often fail to realise is that children and young people matter now" (16, NSW). Another spoke for many when she shared her vision of an Australia in which "we would recognise that young people are capable of having independent and nuanced thoughts about policy" (24, Victoria).

43.7% of young people feel as though people respected their opinions as a young person. Only **19.2%** of young people feel like their opinions are represented by politicians in government. This sentiment reflected in conversations during consultations.

An equal proportion of young people know the name of their local MP (**50.2%**) and follow the news every day. (**49.3%**).



AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

The top issues in consultations in the ACT were:

- (1) **mental health and wellbeing**
- (=2) **discrimination and inequality, and education**
- (4) **environment / climate change**
- (5) **racism**

Mental health and wellbeing was the top issue raised in the ACT. Some consultation participants raised concerns about the high suicide rate amongst boys and men. Others spoke about mental health challenges that LGBTIQ young people face. They said that challenges in education, the health system, and public perceptions of mental health and minorities, are major contributing factors to poor mental health.

Discrimination and inequality was often mentioned, particularly in relation to education access and racism. In fact, racism was mentioned in consultations in the ACT more than in any other jurisdiction. Some young people in the ACT noted the challenges to finding solutions to discrimination and inequality-based issues when solutions require both cultural and legislative change.

Education was the equal second-most raised issue in consultations. As already mentioned, access to education was a key issue for young people, as was increasing mental health education in schools. Several young people spoke in the survey about pressure at school and how this impacts on mental health. Young people called for an education system that better caters for LGBTIQ and non-neurotypical young people, and others called for a curriculum that comprehensively covers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history.

22.7% of survey respondents feel that people respect their opinions as young people - **the lowest score in the nation.**

ACT respondents were the most likely in the country to report not knowing what they want to do as a career, accounting for **45.6%** of respondents.

98.7% of respondents in the ACT are *'interested in current events that happen outside of Australia.'* This is the **highest proportion in the nation.**

WHICH ISSUES DO YOU FEEL MOST PASSIONATE ABOUT? (ACT)



1. EDUCATION



2. GENDER EQUALITY



3. ASYLUM SEEKERS & REFUGEES



4. CLIMATE CHANGE



5. HOUSING AFFORDABILITY



6. FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS



7. INTERNATIONAL AID



8. HEALTHCARE



9. LGBTIQ+ ISSUES



10. INDIGENOUS ISSUES

Of the issues young Canberrans nominated in the survey as the ones they feel most passionately about, education, gender equality, and asylum seekers and refugees came out on top. Interestingly, young people in the ACT nominated international aid more often than any other jurisdiction.

The biggest issue in my community is...

'Misinformation from the internet. I think the national curriculum needs to be broader to include things such as Aboriginal and LGBT studies to prevent misinformation and the resulting discrimination.' **16 y.o.**

'How school is seen as our entire lives and takes priority over our personal interests. There is also a lot of pressure around doing well, and competing within that environment. I would like if school could be less stressful and other activities are equally valued.' **17 y.o.**

'Lack of recourse for discrimination and violence perpetrated by families against their kids.' **25 y.o.**

In my ideal Australia...

'...young people would spearhead change in their communities, community service would be a common pastime, we would be carbon neutral and the needs of the world would supersede the interests of Australia as a nation.' **17 y.o.**

'...everyone would get along better because there wouldn't be any discrimination against racism or gender.' **18 y.o.**

1. Mental health and wellbeing are of the highest concern to young Canberrans.

'There are not enough counsellors in schools so not everyone has access to free support for mental health issues.' 16 y.o.

2. Discrimination and inequality are issues that young Canberrans often raised in conjunction with other issues.

'In my ideal Australia, everyone has equal opportunity and wealth inequality is lessened.' 17 y.o.

3. Education including teaching, access and curriculum were of concern.

'Cost of living is making it increasingly difficult for students to access tertiary education.' 21 y.o.

4. Environment/climate change and its effects were often discussed.

'In my ideal Australia, the government and citizens work together to create environmental sustainability and make decisions that are beneficial to my future.' 17 y.o.

5. Racism was raised more in the ACT than anywhere else.

'In my ideal Australia, racism and discrimination against minority groups and women are abolished.' 16 y.o.

STORIES FROM THE ACT



It took me 14 years to discover that my diet was the reason I was so ill and in so much pain. Within two weeks of going gluten and dairy free I went from the bottom of my class to the top.

In my ideal Australia people would take my dietary requirements seriously. No, it's not a choice. No, I can't just have a little bit. No, I'm not doing it for attention.

In my ideal Australia I wouldn't have to force my mates to eat at the same three restaurants because they're the only restaurants I trust to get cross contamination right.

In my ideal Australia we'd shine a spotlight on processed food. On whether it's ethically sourced, on whether it's actually good for our bodies.

In my ideal Australia our food star rating system wouldn't be a joke.

We should place more emphasis on what being healthy should feel like. On how our bodies should feel after eating.

In my ideal Australia all children would have access to nutritional food and an understanding of the importance of eating right.

Food impacts every aspect of our lives. It's time we gave it the respect and consideration it deserves.

Laura, 19.



In my ideal Australia, domestic violence and the prevention of domestic violence would be the forefront of issues discussed among both formal meetings such as locals parliaments as well as day-to-day conversations.

From this would come more acknowledgment for the issue at hand and also have the ability to provide support for not only the victim themselves but also the children who have just watched their lives change forever, the children who witness domestic violence.

Bronte, 16.



In my ideal Australia, we'd live in a nation internationally regarded for acceptance and innovation. Where the arts are appreciated on the same level as science and mathematics. Where success isn't judged off simply school grades or a high paying occupation. I want to see a future where Australia has a prominent entertainment industry and our culture can be accurately spread globally, where the world doesn't simply doesn't view us through stereotypes portrayed in old movies.

Matt, 16.



In my ideal Australia, feminism continues to grow, and become a standard.

In my ideal Australia, environmental issues are more heavily considered when making economic decisions. In my ideal Australia, racism and prejudice simply become footnotes in history and are replaced with genuine respect and compassion. But, in Australia right now, though we might not be perfect, I am certainly proud and appreciative to call this nation my home.

Lachie, 17



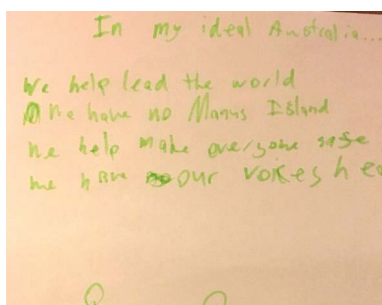
In my ideal Australia, everyone is treated equally and no one suffers from harmful stigma.

Isaac, 16.



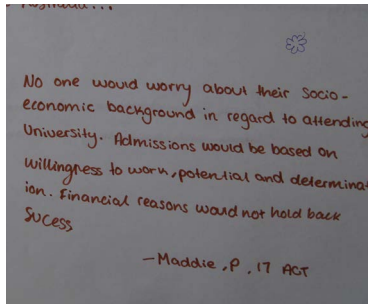
In my ideal Australia people would ask each other who they want to be when they grow up, what kind of person they want to be, what kind of change they want make in the world and not what occupation they want to have

Shaylah, 17.



In my ideal Australia ...
We help lead the world
We have no Manus Island
We help make everyone safe
We have our voices heard.

Anonymous, 14.



In my ideal Australia ... no-one would worry about their socio-economic background in regard to attending University. Admissions would be based on willingness to work, potential and determination. Financial reasons would not hold back success.

Maddie, 17.



In my ideal Australia ... everyone feels safe and comforted no matter where they are, or where they came from.

Anonymous, 14.





NEW SOUTH WALES

The top issues in consultations in NSW were:

- (1) **mental health and wellbeing**
- (2) **discrimination and inequality**
- (3) **education**
- (4) **socio-economic issues**
- (=5) **environment/climate change, and personal growth and identity**

Mental health and wellbeing was the top issue in New South Wales consultations. During consultations several young people placed emphasis on the importance of young people's mental health and wellbeing for the rest of the community. Some young people in New South Wales placed particular focus on the need for greater mental health awareness in the community.

Discrimination and inequality were recurring themes in New South Wales consultations. Some ethnically and religiously diverse young people in consultations spoke of discrimination and prejudice they faced on the street and on public transport in Sydney, with young people nominating stereotypes and misrepresentation in consultations as top issues.

Many young people spoke of socioeconomic disparities and inequalities faced by young people across New South Wales. Young people from regional areas spoke to this regarding cost of living, service and infrastructure, and employment.

Young people in New South Wales are clearly passionate about their education. When asked what the biggest issues are facing young people in their community in the survey, young people often mentioned education, youth engagement, or issues with politics and the political system. This echoes the finding that young people in New South Wales were most likely in the country to read or watch the news every day, and were most likely to be interested in learning about how the government makes decisions.

1. Mental health and wellbeing and community awareness was the top issue in NSW.

'In my ideal Australia, mental health issues are addressed and destigmatised.' 15 y.o.

2. Discrimination and inequality regarding economic inequality and prejudice were recurring themes.

'In my ideal Australia, I as a muslim female could do whatever I wanted and still feel comfortable in society.' 14 y.o.

3. Education is a priority but young people have concerns.

'The education system [is] not properly accounting for people of different abilities.' 14 y.o.

4. Socio-economic issues, particularly cost of living and housing, were often raised.

'In my ideal Australia, people could go to Uni without facing years of debt and trans people could actually afford the money for surgery to transition.' 16 y.o.

=5. Environment/climate change, and personal growth and identity were the equal fifth-most-raised issues in NSW.

'We are being left a broken world ravaged by climate change that may possibly be too late to fix by the time we get into positions of power.' 15 y.o.

62.7% of survey respondents read/watch the news every day - **the highest in the nation.**
91.5% of respondents in NSW are 'interested in learning about how the government makes decisions.' This is **also the highest proportion in the nation.**

However, **only 15.6%** of young people in NSW feel that their opinions are represented by politicians in government.

Some young people expressed issues with the education system's support of young people with learning difficulties. Lack of job opportunities after completion of education was a key topic. In one consultation, a group of young people nominated 'likelihood of youth unemployment despite tertiary education' as their top issue. This sentiment was evident in several consultations. Expectations and pressure to succeed were also raised.

Mental health and wellbeing was the top issue in New South Wales consultations. During consultations several the political system. This echoes the finding that young people in New South Wales were most likely in the country to read or watch the news every day, and were most likely to be interested in learning about how the government makes decisions. Some young people expressed issues with the education system's support of young people with learning difficulties. Lack of job opportunities after completion of education was a key topic. In one consultation, a group of young people nominated 'likelihood of youth unemployment despite tertiary education' as their top issue. This sentiment was evident in several consultations. Expectations and pressure to succeed were also raised.

Of the issues young people from New South Wales nominated in the survey as the ones they felt most passionately about, education came on top, followed by gender equality and asylum seekers and refugees.

The biggest issue in my community is...

'Mental health and homeless youth [which] are pressing issues that are leaving many young people endangered and without support. Strong education on mental health in schools and more youth centres are needed.' **14 y.o.**

'A lack of opportunities for young people living in regional Australian communities, especially compared to all the opportunities we see young urban people getting. This includes education, and in particular, opportunities in the arts sector.' **16 y.o.**

In my ideal Australia...

'... the public health system would be more easily accessible with less barriers to the system. Currently, peers with mental health issues are unable to afford expensive psychiatrists and medication, with Headspace [their] only option when they are in need of something more professional. A peer's grandmother whose cancer has returned recently had to sit at home in pain for days as there were no available hospital beds. There needs to be exceedingly more funding to the health system in Australia.' **17 y.o.**

'... the education system would be free for all, fit for preparing young Australians with the jobs of the future and able to inspire young people with capacity to feel like they are capable of change.' **15 y.o.**

'... I want different cultures to be respected and to be accepted as part of the community and a family. I want youth to be more vocal for change for a peaceful lifestyle and also for the world.' **17 y.o.**

WHICH ISSUES DO YOU FEEL MOST PASSIONATE ABOUT? (NSW)



1. EDUCATION



2. GENDER EQUALITY



3. ASYLUM SEEKERS & REFUGEES



4. CLIMATE CHANGE



5. THE JUSTICE SYSTEM



6. FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS



7. HEALTHCARE



8. INTERNATIONAL AID



9. IMMIGRATION



10. LGBTIQ+ ISSUES

STORIES FROM NSW



In my ideal Australia, people would hold themselves accountable for the decisions that they have made and the impact that they have had on others.

There would be no, 'We've messed up: the environment, the reef, the treatment of immigrants and asylum seekers, the treatment of farmers, the equity of education, the equity of resource distribution, the acknowledgment of Indigenous people, the provision of basic human rights, now it's the next generation's turn to fix it. The older generation would not only take responsibility for the vast amount of errors their generation has made, but also have a mindset of 'our time on this earth isn't up yet, and so, we will do what we can to help improve it'.

Adults would provide the youth with the tools, education and motivation needed to make up for the mistakes that have been made. Companies wouldn't back down from policies because of their profit-seeking greed.

The government wouldn't be influenced by which company backs them the most or by what environmentally unsustainable practice gives them the most money, they'd act for the people and for the upkeep of the country. And the youth would be empowered to be the change that Australia needs. All too often I hear that 'the world will never change, it's the human condition to stuff up', or 'you can't satisfy everyone', and although this can be the case,

In my ideal Australia, we'd at least be trying.

Amy, 17.



In my ideal Australia, the diet and fitness industry would not capitalise on individuals' low self-esteem, insecurities and perfectionism.

State and federal governments would make concerted efforts to regulate, monitor, and/or raise qualification thresholds with respect to PTs and similar personnel, #fitspo entrepreneurs, promoters of niche, alternative "healthy" lifestyles and extreme diets, "pro-ana" [pro-anorexia] forums and similar platforms that too often lend themselves to a pernicious culture of body dissatisfaction, fat-shaming and unhealthy community expectations and attitudes surrounding food, weight and shape.

Equally, food and beverage marketing companies would be held accountable to a greater extent for rising rates of obesity and related NCDs, disordered eating, food insecurity, food waste and the nationwide Indigenous health crisis. Their profit-making would not be prioritised over public health objectives; rather, there would be stricter internal and external regulation of, for instance, junk food sales and advertising targeting children, alongside nutrition policy reforms (beginning with the imposition of a #sugartax on low-nutritional value sugar-sweetened beverages).

In both these areas, personal autonomy and individualism (the "free choice" argument) would not suffice to justify non-intervention in the activities of actors who exploit consumer groups susceptible to less healthy choices. In my ideal Australia, public health would come first.

Libby, 21.



In my ideal Australia, we would build and acquire a mandate and consensus from everyone to collectively work on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for the prosperity and longevity of all of humanity.

Cameron, 17.



In my ideal Australia inequality, discrimination, prejudice, intolerance and bias of all shapes and forms would be a thing of the past. In my ideal Australia, there'd be a focus on technology and education for all socio-economic backgrounds, meaning children living in rural and remote areas still gain the same opportunities as those in suburban areas.

In my ideal Australia, refugees feel welcome rather than hide themselves from society. In my ideal Australia, there'd be a focus on mental health and General well being. In my ideal Australia, we'd all be happy.

Laila, 16.



In my ideal Australia, all cultures and religions would be accepting of each other's differences and would work hand in hand to move into the future as a united country.

In recent years, Australians have grown to be more accepting of each other and more aware of the various people around us; however, there is still a large portion of Australians who struggle to overcome these differences and embrace the multicultural society we live in.

In my ideal Australia, Australians would also extend this acceptance to the stranded Refugees trapped on Nauru island. Since 1945, the country has accepted over 800,000 refugees and displaced persons and the numbers are only growing. Only a small percentage of these Refugees are resettled in Australia whilst the majority are either sent back to their home country or left on the island waiting for news on their resettlement indefinitely.

One of the major factors preventing any change in the laws regarding these refugees, is people's fear of the new and different. Once these social fears are overcome, we as Australians can fulfil our human obligation to help others in need. But first, we must start at home.

An Australia where cultural differences are celebrated rather than scorned would foster a united nation and help to drive Australia into a peaceful, more accepting and more diverse future.

Aneesa, 15.



In my ideal Australia, people that sit on any part of the political spectrum will be able to voice their opinion for the benefit of greater discussion.

The Australian government would work towards more bilateral agreements so that real change can occur and laws are passed in the most effective use of time.

Annabel, 16.



In my ideal Australia -

Refugees are welcome and provided opportunities and facilities they require to live and function in Aus society.

People respect the ideals, beliefs, opinions and customs of each other.

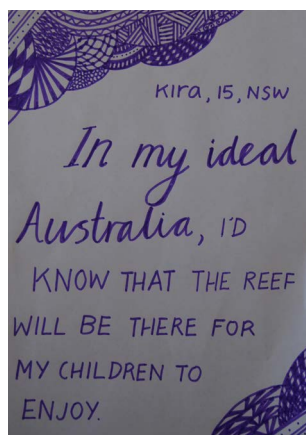
The education gap no longer exists and people aren't deprived of opportunities based on where they live, where they've come from or who they are.

Anonymous, 17.



In my ideal Australia, we have a long-term mindset as a country. We look forward to improve our cities and design them to be more sustainable and accommodate for a larger population. Climate action and active participation in reducing our carbon emissions are a given in our redeveloped cities. This is as the acknowledgement and understanding has been made that we require to act fast in our climate initiatives in order to protect our and the next generations physical future.

Karina, 15.



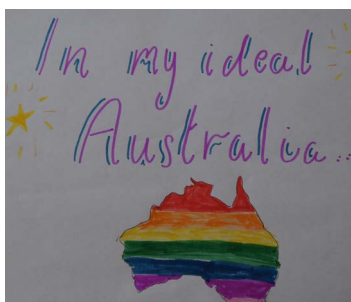
In my ideal Australia, I'd know that the reef will be there for my children to enjoy.

Kira, 15.



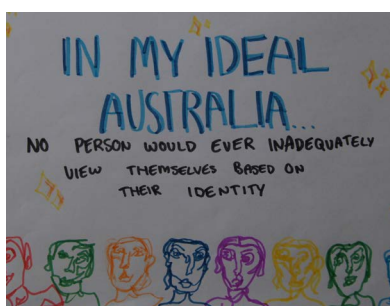
In my ideal Australia, there would be greater awareness about mental health. The entire topic of mental and emotional health would be destigmatised, and a lot of programs would be put in place, particularly for the youth to easily get support. Everyone would be comfortable to talk about a mental disease such as depression, as easily as they would talk about a physical illness, such as a broken bone.

Serene, 16.



In my ideal Australia...

Anonymous, 19.



In my ideal Australia... no person would ever inadequately view themselves based on their identity.

Anonymous, 14.



In my ideal Australia, people would be celebrated for their differences and every individual would be given a fair chance to follow their passions regardless of gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation.

In our modern society difference should be celebrated, but somehow the LGBTQI community and an individual's racial background still holds a stigma. It is simply ludicrous that in Australia subconscious discrimination still exists; especially in our multicultural country. Discrimination is simply not okay; even as a joke it should not be tolerated; even on social media. I believe Australia would be a different place if we had young leaders sharing their perspectives on world issues.

I wish the Australian society was truly reflective of the views of the nation. Currently, with the perspectives in parliament being predominantly white and male we don't see the diverse values we see in our society. Ideally, every individual would be given a fair chance to reach their potential and the glass and bamboo ceilings would be eradicated. Placing every individual in Australia on an equal pedestal and giving everyone the chance they deserve.

Ella, 16.



NORTHERN TERRITORY

The Northern Territory leg of the Listening Tour took the Youth Representative to Alice Springs and Darwin. The top issues in consultations in the NT were:

- (1) Mental health and wellbeing
- (2) Personal growth and identity
- (3) Alcohol and other drugs
- (4) Education
- (5) Violence, crime and abuse

The top three issues of the NT consultations were heavily intertwined in conversations. Mental health and wellbeing was the top issue raised. Stress, suicide and depression, and lack of access to mental health services were all of concern. Discussions about mental health and wellbeing intersected heavily with other issues. In particular, stories of racism and racial profiling were highlighted during consultations and how this impacts on wellbeing. A young Aboriginal man highlighted the marked difference in how he is treated in public when wearing his private school uniform compared to when he is wearing casual clothes. In another consultation, a young Aboriginal woman described her experience of being refused entry into stores when her non-Indigenous friends were allowed in.

The Northern Territory was one of only two jurisdictions where personal growth and identity were in the top five issues raised in consultations, discussed in relation to self-perception and self-esteem, peer pressure, responsibility, societal expectations, and stability. Young people in remote areas talked extensively about the exorbitant costs of travel in the Territory and feelings of isolation. Although 70.5% of young Territorians know what they want to do as a career (the highest proportion in the nation), many young people in the Northern Territory expressed weariness about their futures and the futures of their families and peers.

One young person in a consultation discussed concerns about her future because of the high mortality rate in her family. Many others raised the lack of available support in the community for vulnerable young people experiencing disruptions in life due to exposure to the justice system, conflict and substance abuse.

1. Mental health and wellbeing accounted for almost a quarter of issues raised in consultations.

'Government should focus on the mental wellbeing of the youth as they are the future of Australia.' 15 y.o.

2. Personal growth and identity was discussed more in the Territory than most other jurisdictions.

'In my ideal Australia young people are respected for their opinions.' 14 y.o.

3. Alcohol and other drugs are of concern and young people called for support.

'There is nothing for [young people] to do so therefore they turn to substances for fun.' 17 y.o.

4. Education, particularly access and opportunities, is a priority for Territorians.

'In my ideal Australia ... my children would grow up safe, with affordable options for health and education.' 18 y.o.

5. Violence, crime and abuse and associated issues were raised often.

'In my ideal Australia ... women could feel safe in their home, workplace and leisurely activities.' 16 y.o.

70.5% of young Territorians know what they want to do as a career - the **highest proportion in the nation.**

Alcohol and other drugs was the third most raised topic in consultations. Substance abuse is of concern to many young Territorians. Some young people raised drink driving as a concern, as well as other antisocial behaviour that stemmed from substance abuse. Above all, young people in consultations focused on the importance of rehabilitation and support. One young person in the survey called for 'education and alternate activities to engage the youth' (17 y.o.).

In the Northern Territory, consultations were held in juvenile detention and rehabilitation centres. The importance of community support and the necessary infrastructure to facilitate positive wellbeing was emphasised.

Although the environment was not a top-five issue, many young people raised concerns about fracking in the Territory in both consultations and in the survey.

Of the issues young people from the Northern Territory nominated in the survey as the ones they felt most passionately about, education came on top, followed by family violence and gender equality.

The biggest issue in my community is...

'The disenfranchisement of Aboriginal Australian youths ... if I had to name a way to work towards progress it would centre around making Aboriginal Australian youths feel recognised in society. This means representative[s] in Parliament (which is already happening in the NT), youth-based services like headspace and LAUNCH tailored toward Aboriginal Australian youths, and rehabilitation in the juvenile detention system (as well as better anti-discrimination training for police).' **15 y.o.**

'Young people feeling as if their views and opinions don't matter.' **20 y.o.**

'The youth justice system set up to make us fail.' **16 y.o.**

'Mental health issues... Mental health isn't some fad. There are real people who suffer.' **16 y.o.**

In my ideal Australia...

'We wouldn't be degraded for using our devices and be tasked with saving a world ... our predecessors left for us to salvage.' **17 y.o.**

'Your gender, race, religion, sexual preferences, mental illnesses or disabilities would not have an effect on your treatment and opportunities in the workforce.' **19 y.o.**

'The Australian government would be more inclusive of Indigenous culture and tradition in our legal systems.' **16 y.o.**

WHICH ISSUES DO YOU FEEL MOST PASSIONATE ABOUT? (NT)



1. EDUCATION



2. FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS



3. GENDER EQUALITY



4. HEALTHCARE



5. DRUG & ALCOHOL ABUSE



6. HOUSING AFFORDABILITY



7. ASYLUM SEEKERS & REFUGEES



8. CLIMATE CHANGE



9. INDIGENOUS ISSUES



10. THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

STORIES FROM THE NT



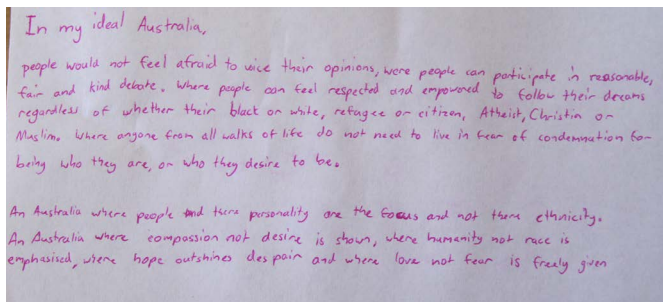
In my ideal Australia, there would be equal rights for all. there would not be such a major issue with the gaps between the cultures in our nation, there would not be a massive gap between the socioeconomic statuses that individuals in this nation hold.

In this ideal Australia, nobody would be identified to as rich or poor, we would be seen as working towards a greater goal, which is a real goal, something everyone is constantly striving to achieve in their individual lives. There would be no racism, everyone would be treated the same no matter what background they come from or the colour of their skin.

We would all respect each other for our differences, for these things are what make us unique.

Our nation should be striving to break such old barriers that separate our country. For this country to continue, we need to focus on fixing these problems, not on putting such large expenditure on coal and fracking, but on the people of this nation and, ideally, creating a stronger community within this nation for generations to come.

Brodee-Jean, 16.



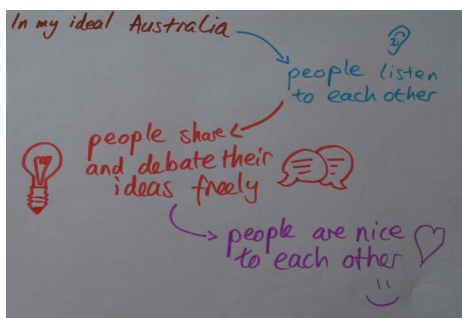
In my ideal Australia,

People would not feel afraid to voice their opinions, where people can participate in reasonable, fair and kind debate. Where people can feel respected and empowered to follow their dreams regardless of whether they're black or white, refugee or citizen, Atheist, Christian or Muslim. Where anyone from all walks of life do not need to live in fear of condemnation for being who they are, or who they desire to be.

An Australia where people and their personality are the focus and not their ethnicity. An Australia where compassion not desire is shown, where humanity not race is emphasised, where hope outshines despair and where love not fear is freely given.

In my ideal Australia, we can be the brothers and sisters that we were created to be.

Joshua, 16.



In my ideal Australia, people listen to each other, people share and debate their ideas freely, people are nice to each other.

Anonymous, 24.



In my ideal Australia, there would be a stronger institutional response to sexual harassment and assault. Currently, those in control of institutions that I interact with – who have the power to create meaningful change – sweep accusations under the rug, rather than make perpetrators accountable.

Some institutional leaders blink at accusations of sexual misconduct because it can be truly disconcerting to engage in dialogue that imposes responsibility upon offenders. However, this discomfort is a natural consequence of a shift in social norms that is necessary in supporting victims. We must bear the awkward conversations because, while rape represents the extreme end of the spectrum and may not be commonplace in certain communities, the much more common unwanted touching and overtures under the pretence of a joke or compliment give way to extreme violence and are mostly ignored within school and work institutions.

As someone whose own claim has been met with silence by a figure of authority, I understand how cruel this response is. If the leaders of our academic and work institutions worked to educate their communities on sexual violence, they could correct harmful attitudes and proactively discourage sexual harassment and assault.

Kim, 17.



In my ideal Australia, my depression wouldn't scare people away - it would encourage them to make a difference in many peoples lives, smashing the stigma around mental health.

Iona, 16.



In my ideal Australia, those with disabilities or mental illnesses would not be considered as second class citizens!

Ellie, 17.



In my ideal Australia people can walk safely on the streets without the fear of being the victim of an inhumane act.

Leilana, 15.





QUEENSLAND

The Youth Representative visited Brisbane, Sunshine Coast, Rockhampton, Townsville, and Cairns. The top issues in consultations in Queensland were:

- (1) **Mental health and wellbeing**
- (2) **Discrimination and inequality**
- (3) **Alcohol and other drugs**
- (=4) **Family and relationships**
- (=4) **Violence, crime and abuse**

These top five issues were heavily intertwined with each other. Mental health and wellbeing was discussed the most, particularly in relation to access to mental health services in regional centres and a lack of promotion of available services.

Young people also recognised how the wellbeing of young people impacts on the rest of the community. As one 17-year-old said, 'I think the government should ... allocate more funding towards mental health helplines and centres as ill mental health affects all of society through lowered productivity and lost knowledge.' Some young people also raised concerns about young people inaccurately 'self-diagnosing' when it comes to mental health issues. Some young people spoke about bullying and its role in poor mental health.

Discrimination and inequality were discussed in consultations in relation to racism, stereotypes, gender equality, homelessness, homophobia, and regional and socioeconomic inequality. In the survey, some young people expressed dismay at restrictive gender stereotypes, particularly regarding young women in sport. Young people in regional Queensland noted less opportunities and services for young people in their communities, compared to South East Queensland.

1. Mental health and wellbeing came out on top, with young Queenslanders concerned about access to and awareness of services.

'Keep the conversation about your mental health constant, especially amongst boys who are often shamed for talking about it.' 16 y.o.

2. Discrimination and inequality accounted for 13.6% of issues in consultations.

'In my ideal Australia, nobody would feel isolated, alienated or ostracised for their race, sexual orientation, disability or the way they are.' 15 y.o.

3. Alcohol and other drugs and their effect on crime, safety, and wellbeing were often raised.

'In my ideal Australia ... no-one would be in poverty, grief stricken due to substance abuse or from violence.' 17 y.o.

=4. Family and relationships are important to young Queenslanders.

'It is hard to get through school without being influenced one way or another through your friends and peers.' 14 y.o.

=4. Violence, crime and abuse were raised just as often as family and relationships.

'I believe a lot of the issues in my community are all caused by each other such as homelessness and drugs and alcohol abuse but a big one is youth crime.' 18 y.o.

15.4% of young Queenslanders feel like their opinions are represented by politicians in government. This is the **lowest percentage in the nation**.

Only 30% of young Queenslanders feel as though their opinions are respected as young people.

Alcohol and other drugs were mentioned as often in the survey as they were in consultations. Young Queenslanders expressed concerns about substance abuse on the streets of their communities. Substance abuse was often discussed in connection with homelessness, crime, family and relationship issues, employment, racism, and domestic violence. Other young people expressed concerns about whether policing efforts were effective in combating drug and alcohol-fuelled crime, particularly family violence.

Of the issues young people in Queensland nominated in the survey as the ones they felt most passionately about, gender equality came on top, followed by education, and family violence.

The biggest issue in my community is...

'Transport infrastructure is not keeping up with the population growth of the region.' **16 y.o.**

'Young people in my community are suffering from a general pressure to succeed ... the education system has become toxic to youth as our minds are focused solely on grades rather than taking in the valuable knowledge which determines the future.' **17 y.o.**

'The lack of respect and responsibility [young people] are given by adults. They feel as though they cannot reach out or can't find a way to prove the kind of person they are and the potential they wield to somebody older than them.' **16 y.o.**

'When kids get out of jail ... I feel as if everyone gives up on them.' **19 y.o.**

In my ideal Australia...

'No matter where you live ... there is an equal chance for all Australians to thrive and achieve their goals.' **13 y.o.**

'No one would be excluded from accessing the help they require when navigating through the legal system.' **20 y.o.**

'Women and men alike, can feel equally comfortable in sharing their emotions, feelings and mental health issues.' **17 y.o.**

WHICH ISSUES DO YOU FEEL MOST PASSIONATE ABOUT? (QLD)



1. GENDER EQUALITY



2. EDUCATION



3. FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS



4. DRUG & ALCOHOL ABUSE



5. CLIMATE CHANGE



6. EMPLOYMENT



7. HOUSING AFFORDABILITY



8. LGBTIQ+ ISSUES



9. THE JUSTICE SYSTEM



10. ASYLUM SEEKERS & REFUGEES

STORIES FROM QLD



In my ideal Australia, politics would take a realistic stance on Australian geographical positioning and its future position in the world. So many Australians are reluctant to engage with our close neighbours, and celebrate the fact that we are so close to Asia. Australians expect to live a Western lifestyle and fail to embrace some of the cultural opportunities that are so relevant to us. There are so many opportunities to collaborate and work with diverse people in the region, and Australians should engage with it.

Connor, 20.



In my ideal Australia no one would be excluded from accessing the help they require when navigating through the legal system.

Instead of being a power struggle between the most vulnerable people and those who have more money, education, stronger health and an identity which remains 'stigma-free,' it would be an even playing field where everyone can access both the legal and non-legal help they require. The community would not stereotype those who have fallen in circumstances where they have had to use the legal system as often they never understand the complexities of the issues they face. Further, there would be more support available in courts and legal centres from both lawyers and other professionals such as social workers and psychologists as often people accessing the legal system require more than just legal help.

Kaitlin, 20.



In my ideal Australia... I'd like a country where everyone is aware of the different kinds of bullying that happen to both youth and adults and as a result, people take a step towards reducing the amount of bullying such as discrimination, peer pressure, racism, cyber bullying etc. that occur to people. Because, making people aware of the types of bullying that exist can help individuals to realise that sometimes without even noticing they may bully someone and knowing the causes of bullying such as depression and suicide etc. can help people understand the depth of what happens after many snide comments.

Education is also a vital part of youths' life and it would be great to see many more people getting involved and finishing high school to end up in higher education institutes such as university. It would be nice to have an array of people from diverse backgrounds within the workforce.

Dulmi, 19.



In my ideal Australia, our government recognises that fundamental human rights aren't easily revoked because of the way someone reaches our shores. It's a society that isn't able to stomach families sitting in offshore detention with no legal representation. It's a country where the current political government doesn't resign their mistakes over to the next generation with forty years of life still theirs to help in solutions. It's a place where we realise that young people are not rendering national issues irrelevant because we can't vote on them. It's somewhere that sees people advocating for the rights of human beings.

In my ideal Australia, we are championing change.

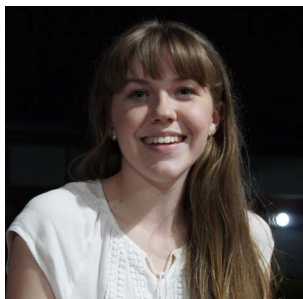
Liv, 16.



In my ideal Australia girls will grow up in a society knowing that they can do anything. That they are not inferior, that they deserve nothing less than utmost respect and that they not an object to be used by others. That the stereotypes ingrained in a country which prides itself on 'fair and equal society' are not them and don't define them. In my ideal Australia females will be truly represented in parliament, chosen on their worth, merit and talent.

Addie, 14.





In my ideal Australia, people are not forgotten or disregarded.

I aspire for our country to recognize the traditional owners of our land without it becoming a "tick in the box" acknowledgment.

I yearn for mental health to be regarded as a serious issue by medical professionals and the government alike.

I desire that the location in which someone is born does not dictate the opportunities they receive.

I hope we can learn to face our problems and remember that we are part of the wider global community.

But most of all I wish were not suppressing the voices of those we most need to hear.

Our leadership is imploding and myself and many other people, I am lucky enough to call my friends, are stuck watching our country flail around like a fish out of water. We feel helpless like we have no say and can do nothing to help this country that many of us were not even born in, that many of us love. Our country is new to the international platform and we should show ourselves to be an example of how young people can work within communities and with a country's leaders to develop sustainable policies that are understood and influenced by the people it will impact the most.

So, in my ideal Australia, we are not perfect. In fact, we are far from it, but we are democratically and actively trying to make changes to better our future.

Ella, 16.



In my ideal Australia, sexual health education is encompassing, inclusive and accessible for all. The challenge that many young people face today revolves around not only how we learn about sex and sexuality, but also what we learn.

Sexual health entails an individual's physical, mental and emotional sexual well-being. While various educational institutions follow sexual education programs, they rarely reach beyond the boundaries of discussing sexually-transmitted diseases and engagement in sexual activity. What there is lack of, is the scope of discussion about the mental and emotional aspects of sex and development of sexuality.

Sexual health education is critical, especially for young people. Yes, there are things that individuals of certain ages cannot comprehend, or would be unwilling to understand; but it is crucial that sexual education is tailored for individuals of various ages and interest levels in the related topics. Sexual health education is crucial for comfortable psychosexual development of an individual. Sexual health education is the foundation of one's understanding of how to lead healthy and fulfilling relationships with themselves and other people.

In the 21st century, the younger generations are celebrating diversity. Many sexual health education programs, however, do not reflect that. Young adults are often sheltered from the realities of anything sex and sexuality-related and are not included in the decision making that pertains to their own education and access to it.

Kristina, 18.



In my ideal Australia, there would be a more effective justice system, which would lower the crime rates across Australia with harsher penalties in effect, which will lead on to people feeling safe in their own environments and surroundings, instead of living in fear of atrocities occurring.

There would also be a larger focus on bettering those with mental health problems, specifically by listening to them, and providing funds into researching why these problems can occur, and what we as Australian citizens can do to help those, who may be in need of help.

That would be my ideal Australia.

Joshua, 15.



In my ideal Australia, everyone's differences would be celebrated.

Accepting our differences make us much stronger and kinder people. Everyone has a voice they have the right to share. If we began to embrace each opinion, idea or comment with an open mind, we would be able to move forward.

Mina, 15.



In my ideal Australia, differences in people's religions, races, and backgrounds would be encouraged - not pushed to the sidelines. People in parliament would not exclude or ridicule those Australians who are not the stereotypical British-Australian, instead, the beauty of our intrinsically multicultural country would be celebrated, respected and encouraged. My favourite part about my country is that people from every walk of life and from every continent on Earth can gather here, and if only our politicians saw how unique, diverse and special that gift was to Australia, I believe our nation would be a much better place.

Emily, 17.



In my ideal Australia...

my family wouldn't get racially profiled.

Anonymous, 16.



SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The Youth Representative visited Adelaide, the Adelaide Hills, the Barossa Valley, Port Augusta, and Coober Pedy. The top issues in consultations in South Australia were:

- (1) **Discrimination and inequality**
- (2) **Mental health and wellbeing**
- (3) **Alcohol and other drugs**
- (4) **Violence, crime and abuse**
- (=5) **Family and relationships, and education**

Discrimination and inequality was discussed in South Australian consultations in relation to the treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, access to education, LGBTIQ discrimination, racism, and sexism. Ignorance and stigma were raised in consultations as contributing factors to discrimination and inequality. Some young people from migrant backgrounds expressed concerns about racism in the community. Discussions on discrimination and inequality also circled around youth disenfranchisement. One young person from Port Augusta expressed her concerns that young people were merely in the 'peripheral vision' of our leaders.

Conversations about mental health and wellbeing circled around anxiety and depression in young people, expectations placed on young people, and concerns about how mental health issues are handled in the community. Some young people expressed concern about separated families, abuse, and family violence, and how an unsafe or unstable home life impacts on the wellbeing of young people. Young people, particularly in regional areas, highlighted inherent connections between a lack of enjoyable activities and opportunities for young people, and poor mental health and crime. Young South Australians identified a need for activities that promote mental wellbeing, created in consultation with young people.

1. Discrimination and inequality was the top issue for young South Australians.

'In my ideal Australia, everyone is accepted no matter where you come from - #NoRoomForRacism.' 16 y.o.

2. Mental health and wellbeing were seen to interact with other social issues.

'The biggest issue in my community that affects youth is mental illness and social isolation. There is also a degree of socioeconomic and geographical inequality.' 15 y.o.

3. Alcohol and other drugs greatly concern many young South Australians.

'I believe that the biggest issue for our generation is drug abuse among youth.' 15 y.o.

4. Violence, crime and abuse were seen as connected to substance abuse, opportunities, and inequality.

'As young people we have the right to be safe and at the moment I feel unsafe walking at night.' 17 y.o.

=5. Family and relationships, and education were raised as often as each other.

'In my ideal Australia ... teachers support their students, and parents support their children with their mental health and wellbeing.' 15 y.o.

28.6% of young South Australians feel that their opinions are represented by politicians in government. **55.2%** of young South Australians feel that people respect their opinions as young people. These are the **highest positive responses in the nation.**

However, the majority of young South Australians expressed a desire for greater youth engagement and representation.

Alcohol and other drugs, the third most raised topic in South Australian consultations, was seen as an issue that needed critical and compassionate attention. Some young South Australians expressed concerns about drug and alcohol abuse creating safety issues in the community and creating a subsequent knock-on effect of other issues. As explained by one 15-year-old:

“In my community, we face many issues concerning drugs and alcohol which then leads to family abuse. Our rural community needs a proper education on how to deal with this issue, and we need more support places.”

Conversations about these top issues were often discussed in connection with unemployment and job security. This is also shown in the survey.

Of the issues young South Australians nominated in the survey as the ones they felt most passionately about, education came out on top, followed by gender equality, and employment. However, South Australians ranked employment higher than any other state and territory.

The biggest issue in my community is...

‘The gross lack of academic culture and stimulus ... due to a general disbelief in the significance of an individual and how they can improve society.’ **16 y.o.**

‘Lack of awareness about how politics works - I believe Australian politics should be a mandatory component of the Australian secondary school curriculum to increase public voting efficacy and allowing more people to understand how they can have a say in what goes on in Australia.’

18 y.o.

‘Lack of jobs in Adelaide for uni graduates. The government needs to incentivise new industry and startups that are interesting and have junior positions.’ **16 y.o.**

‘People my age are often unable to get part time jobs due to lack of experience. How are we supposed to gain experience if nobody takes us on to begin with? It’s ridiculously difficult to obtain a position nowadays. Older generations call millennials lazy and mock young unemployed Australians, but the truth is that it’s just getting harder and harder for us. Business opportunities in Adelaide are at an all time low...’

In my ideal Australia...

‘The diversity of our population would be acknowledged by and reflected in our government.’ **23 y.o.**

‘We would base our policies... on respect and empathy... and with an eye to the future, rather than being stuck in the past.’ **20 y.o.**

‘No one has to worry about home life or where they are going to sleep.’ **14 y.o.**

‘We would stand up for our national values on the international stage, instead of towing the lines of our allies.’ **18 y.o.**

‘The country would run almost entirely on renewable energy, plastic would be used only as a last resort, and our environment would be a higher priority.’ **15 y.o.**

WHICH ISSUES DO YOU FEEL MOST PASSIONATE ABOUT? (SA)



1. EDUCATION



2. GENDER EQUALITY



3. EMPLOYMENT



4. FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS



5. CLIMATE CHANGE



6. DRUG & ALCOHOL ABUSE



7. HEALTHCARE



8. ASYLUM SEEKERS & REFUGEES



9. LGBTIQ+ ISSUES



10. ANIMAL WELFARE

STORIES FROM SA



In my ideal Australia, people would be valued equally no matter what job they have. Certain professions can be underappreciated in comparison to others. This is an injustice because every job contributes in a different way, and one's wage shouldn't determine one's value in society.

Cooper, 19.



In my ideal Australia, young Indigenous people will grow up with the same opportunities as non-Indigenous people.

I want to see the government create an education system that not only provides a first-class education for Indigenous people but also values the teaching of traditional stories and knowledge. I want to see an Australia where people in remote communities don't have to be good at sports to get a quality education. I want action on reconciliation, not just empty apologies.

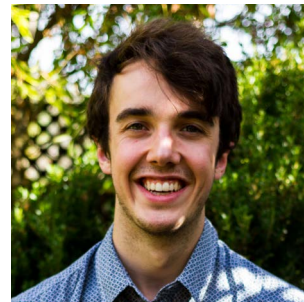
Alfred, 22.



In my ideal Australia, we would overcome the gender barrier and ensure that women have access to the same opportunities as men.

Women and girls shouldn't be forced to accept that we will always be limited in the choices and opportunities available to us. We shouldn't be faced with decisions that compromise our ability to achieve. We shouldn't have to feel like we need to adopt the same traits as our male counterparts in order to be valued enough to be powerful. Women should be celebrated precisely for who we are and for the contributions we make to Australia every day.

Azaara, 22.



In my ideal Australia, someone's opportunities wouldn't be determined by their socioeconomic status.

While stories of people overcoming their circumstances are everywhere, the truth is that opportunities are not given equally.

I'm proud of how Australian culture values mateship. But the hard truth is that our social mobility just isn't good enough, and more needs to be done.

Ben, 21.



In my ideal Australia, the traditions of every culture and religion would be embraced and celebrated.

The history and social subject curriculums in schools would extend beyond its current eurocentrism to educate Australians on the hugely diverse cultural practices of Africa, Asia and the Middle-East. A broader cultural education would combat the culture of fear established by the media's coverage of religious extremism. Every religious and cultural group deserves the safety and opportunity to share their customs.

I believe Australia should aim to actively increase the profile of non-Christian celebrations in the national calendar.

Hannah, 19.



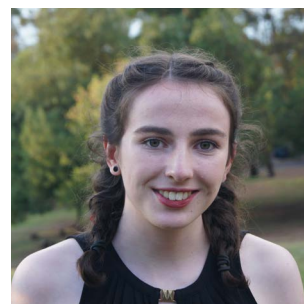
In my ideal Australia, political and International Studies are a compulsory part of the Australian high school curriculum, so that young people are aware of the role that they can play in shaping their own future.

Marielle, 20.



My ideal Australia is a place where young people don't have to worry about being picked on and put down because they are youth, and youth are seen as equal to adults.

Jasmine, 17.



My ideal Australia is a place where all Australian youth are provided equal opportunity and voice, regardless of location, status or beliefs. I am so concerned when I see young people around my community becoming disengaged with changes and events that will impact them, and I believe the biggest challenge we face is that we can't have a say in what is important to us.

Really, if I could influence one thing in my community, I would try to show that youth are an incredible, diverse group of people who deserve attention and the chance to influence change.

Cassie, 16.



In my ideal Australia, I would never again see a little boy in a tutu being tutted at as he walked down the street. My Aboriginal relatives would never again be followed in stores. Muslim girls would never again be embarrassed about the religious items they choose to wear.

As a young woman, I would never again hesitate to speak my mind or take on a position of leadership, the label of “bossy” always looming over my head. In my ideal Australia, diversity would not just be used as a marketing tool, or feel like an obligation to appear “politically correct”. Instead, diversity would be seen as the gift it truly is and its benefits would be realised and used in Australian society.

We are so lucky to live in a country where we are able to express our opinions and live our lives relatively freely, however it is our greatest misfortune and downfall that we are too caught up in our own insecurities and flaws to do so.

In my ideal Australia, we would share our experiences and our diversity with one another, with open curiosity and willingness to learn. From homes to schools to Parliament House, diversity is what makes Australia “the lucky country” and we need to start thinking of diversity as the blessing it is.

Grace, 16.



In my ideal Australia, people with a lower socioeconomic status wouldn't be afforded fewer opportunities than those of a higher one, nor would it inherently impact an individual's ability to engage with their society. As it stands, however, having lower SES in Australia and other contemporary western countries does just that.

Meanwhile, social security and welfare systems designed to alleviate these pressures - such as Centrelink - routinely forget or outright fail to provide for those suffering from financial hardship, while many of the current Australian educational systems are indirectly optimised to perpetuate the existing segregation of higher and lower SES peoples - if not financially, then certainly academically.

Those support programs that are offered to lower SES people by our governments often also come attached with not only inconvenient, but downright abusive conditions: forcing many parents to choose between obeying their mutual obligation requirements or putting food on the table, and equally as many students to pick between their studies and their payslips. In this, Australia has collectively created a silent, albeit vicious cycle that's as unsustainable as it is intolerable.

It's in my ideal Australia therefore, that this cycle and others of economic inequality have come to their end; it's in my ideal Australia that your SES doesn't impact your educational opportunities, and it's my ideal Australia that your annual income and fortnightly hours don't determine your societal worth.

Josh, 18.



In my ideal Australia, somebody's ability to succeed in life would not depend on luck.

In the current state of Australia, those with money have a disproportional access to better education. There is no doubt that quality education is directly related to later life outcomes and, as a result of this, the circumstances of one's birth will, in many cases, ultimately determine and restrict the choices that they can make to control the direction of their lives.

I don't believe that anybody's life outcomes should be down to luck, and that is why in my ideal Australia there would be a more progressive taxation system, allowing more government funding towards an even more accessible, high-quality, public education system, breaking the cycle of disadvantage which is present within our society.

Luke, 17.



In my ideal Australia, I would love to see every African have the same opportunity compared to others.

Enoch, 20.



In my ideal Australia, coal and gas companies would never get prioritised over the health of future generations.

We know that to avoid the worst impacts of climate change we need to stop digging up and burning fossil fuels right now. It scares me that corporations hold so much influence that governments see new coal and gas projects as viable options in 2018.

Governments should never knowingly allow projects like Adani's coal mine that harm the health, safety and well-being of our communities.

Maddie, 23.



TASMANIA

The Youth Representative visited Hobart, Cygnet, Triabunna, Deloraine, Devonport, and Burnie. The top issues in consultations in Tasmania were:

- (1) **Discrimination and inequality**
- (2) **Mental health and wellbeing**
- (3) **Socio-economic issues**
- (4) **Gender-based issues**
- (5) **Education**

While socio-economic issues were the third-most-raised issues in Tasmania, they permeated many other issues raised in consultations. Specifically, access to healthcare and housing, government services, and cost of living were raised. These issues are exacerbated by challenges young Tasmanians reported facing when finding jobs.

Young Tasmanians were concerned about equal access to healthcare after recent outbreaks of meningococcal in Hobart, with others also concerned about costs associated with accessing abortion. Many young people in Hobart spoke about rising housing costs and the challenges finding affordable rentals. Some young people mentioned specific home rental companies that they believe to be reducing housing stock and raising prices.

In the survey, Tasmanians ranked housing affordability (as well as drug and alcohol abuse and animal welfare,) higher than any other state or territory. As described by one 16-year-old in the survey, 'Tasmania has terrible house prices and many young families can't afford them.' Some others drew connections between housing and living costs and safety: 'the state of economy, house pricing and job rates make it extremely difficult for a young person to raise a family in a safe environment.' (15 yo). New Tasmanians from refugee backgrounds expressed challenges navigating housing, employment, and Centrelink.

1. Discrimination and inequality was the top issue for Tasmanians. *'LGBTIQ people are afraid to 'come out' because of harassment / bullying.'* 16 y.o.

2. Mental health and wellbeing was discussed extensively in relation to family and socioeconomic issues. *'We need to fix this by educating the community about mental health and help people in need.'* 15 y.o.

3. Socio-economic issues intersected across many other issues. *'[The biggest issue facing young people in the community is] cost of living, especially for students that are trying to balance a work study life.'* 20 y.o.

4. Gender-based issues were raised in Tasmanian consultations more than anywhere else. *'Women are subconsciously discriminated against. I think holding information sessions about subconscious discrimination would help people to understand when they are being unknowingly unfair.'* 15 y.o.

5. Education structure, access, and curriculum are of concern. *'The biggest issue facing young people in my community is the lack of economic and educational opportunities, creating a brain drain from regional areas.'* 18 y.o.

Discrimination and inequality were the most discussed issues, particularly in relation to accessibility, acceptance, socioeconomic inequality, and racism. Young Tasmanians who were consulted were clearly passionate about accepting differences. As described by this 14-year-old when asked what the biggest issue was facing young people Australia-wide:

'We're all the same, yet people think it's better to be 'this' than 'that' because that's how they grow up. Stereotypes have a lot to do with this, but the easiest way to prevent this is to just grow up, realise that we are all equal. Adults also have a role in discrimination, they can be just as juvenile. For example, the other day I was at a kid's football match when I heard a man yell out to a black kid. I'm not going to write what he said because it was so bad. This needs to stop.'

Mental health and wellbeing were often discussed in connection to family and socio-economic issues. One young person in consultation described their challenges with the foster care system. An Aboriginal young person expressed sadness at her lack of education on Tasmanian Aboriginal culture and history and how this lack of awareness has an impact. Many young people made connections between a lack of mental health services for young people and an increase in violence and substance abuse. One young person expressed that two big challenges were 'people being too afraid of mental health to get a diagnosis/people not having the money or resources to get help' (14 y.o.).

The biggest issue in my community is...

'Job security for casual workers, as well as their rights in general.' 18 y.o.

'Our mental health should be taken as seriously as our physical health. There should be more ways to stay mentally healthy just like there are many options for exercise or healthy eating.' 17 y.o.

'Healthcare funding. Tasmania is a state that is considerably poorer than the other states in Australia, and our main public hospital is under significant strain.' 18 y.o.

'Lack of facilities, such as schools and public transport, in rural areas. If the government put more money towards developing rural schools and giving teachers incentives to teach there more young people could go to school close to home. ... I'm relatively lucky that I only have to travel for a hour and a half to get to school every day, some of my friends have to live at the hostel in town and only go home on the weekend so that they can have a better education with more

In my ideal Australia...

'I'd be able to kiss a girl without feeling any sense of shame or fear. My opinion of myself is dictated by the ways I'm encouraged by those around me, and it's frustrating for me that I was never told that being queer was an option when I was growing up. ... As Australians, we are standing on the edge of apathy now that the marriage equality debate has concluded. ... LGBT+ people are still massively discriminated against in this country, isolated from their communities because of arbitrary biological traits. ... The fight for equality is ongoing, and in my ideal Australia the fight for acceptance would have ended long ago.' 18 y.o.

'Our voices are heard. We get to share our opinions and have our say on important matters without being passed off as 'just a kid'. We get to show that we're worth more than anyone bargained for. We get to show that we are valid. We get to show that we can change the world and that we don't have to wait.' 16 y.o.

WHICH ISSUES DO YOU FEEL MOST PASSIONATE ABOUT? (TAS)



1. EDUCATION



2. CLIMATE CHANGE



3. DRUG & ALCOHOL ABUSE



4. HOUSING AFFORDABILITY



5. GENDER EQUALITY



6. HEALTHCARE



7. ANIMAL WELFARE



8. FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS



9. EMPLOYMENT



10. ASYLUM SEEKERS & REFUGEES

Only 17.6% of young Tasmanians feel like their opinions are represented by politicians in government.

STORIES FROM TASMANIA



In my ideal Australia, government sets aside its shortsightedness and egotistical agenda, promotes effective change before re-election policy and engages in meaningful discourse.

I am constantly amazed by some of the outstanding youths around Australia that I get to associate with, hugely engaged, politically literate and effective leaders among those around them.

In my ideal Australia our governing body, the highest executive in our nation behaves in a strong and productive way, and challenges the issues of a rapidly changing environment across every facet of our nation.

Most importantly of all, in my ideal Australia we learn to recognise the children that behave like adults, rather than the adults that behave like children.

Kelly, 17.



In my ideal Australia, empathy and open heartedness is nurtured, and we are able to open our arms to others regardless of their background, where opportunities are available to everyone equally, and where we are valued by our qualities, not gender, race etc.

Sophie, 17.



My ideal Australia looks like...

An Australian society that has the courage to challenge their opinions, values and ideologies regarding the issues facing us all. An Australian society that debates issues in a constructive and productive way. An Australian society that values pluralism and equal discussion in debate. These ideals are fundamental to the change we wish to achieve, these ideals will be the driving force to unite us.

People that stand up for change. That stand behind important causes. People that also know how to listen, and also to learn. People that are passionate and spread this throughout communities. People who are open to starting conversations on issues that must be discussed.

People that not only inspire, but let themselves be inspired. Watch these people. Listen to these people. Be this person.

In practice, these ideals look like: when debating, instead of saying no, asking why. Instead of becoming dismissive, learning from opinions different to your own, to either challenge your opinions or to confirm your views further. Instead of disregarding, learn the logic and understand the thought process.

An Australia that can have these conversations respectfully, to listen to both sides of every issue and come to the most informed conclusion from weighing all opinions.

To discuss and think about the past and present, and learn for the future.

Be the one that encourages the change you wish to see.

Jemima, 17.



In my ideal Australia, there would be equal access to education for all students.

I believe that it is just as important to receive an education as it is to receive the same quality of education as a student being educated at another school. Currently in Australia, there is a difference in education based on the school a student attends. This can be because of geographical location or socio-economic status. In theory, we are providing an equal opportunity to people when they leave school but, in reality, further education and future employment are entirely dependent on your place of education.

Elise, 15.



In my ideal Australia, everyone's beliefs and opinions would be heard and listened to with respect.

I believe that within our youth there is a lot of disrespect towards people with opposing beliefs and opinions, both politically and religiously. Many young people are nervous to speak up about their beliefs and opinions due to fear of disrespectful comments or actions. In my ideal Australia nobody would feel anxious speaking up about things they feel passionate about.

Lana, 17.



In my ideal Australia, issues that directly affect outcomes for ordinary Australians would be put before any ideological differences.

While the leadership spill was occurring and taking up significant amounts of the media's time, it is worth noting that important issues are still continuing. The current drought ravaging Australia is still a major issue that threatens the livelihoods of many. The refugee crisis seems to have been long forgotten by the public, yet it's still happening. And going back to the straw that broke the camel's back, every day an energy policy that focuses on the long-term is ignored, the government is failing the children of tomorrow. But all of this is forgotten because of the revolving door of leadership.

It's a revolving door that fails to address many of the issues that people care about. It's a revolving door that isn't democratic. And it's a revolving door that increases apathy in the political system. Those aren't issues the people in parliament are affected by, it's the people in the street, it's the people who are disadvantaged, and it's us. Despite having little to no say, youth have the most to lose from a government that fails to recognise that getting outcomes, rather than infighting about who can best follow the party line, is ultimately the most important.

Koh, 18.



In my ideal Australia, people would know their limits. While not a terribly high minded ideal, or even one everyone would agree we should strive for, it strikes me as a practical one. In a world where climate scientists have to debate on air with people accusing them of perpetrating hoaxes, foreign policy experts must wrestle with hardliners demanding a cut to strategically essential foreign aid and where doctors must face down mums who think vaccines cause autism it seems essential we take a step back as a society, and acknowledge we aren't experts on everything. And with that in mind, present a united Australian front to the problems of the twenty first century.

Paul, 16.



In my ideal Australia, everyone would have access to high quality, free healthcare. A system where people didn't have to wait years on dialysis or on waiting lists to receive organ transplants. Where all important vaccinations were free for young children and elderly Australia's (the most at risk of illness in our community.) Money wouldn't be a barrier to healthcare and stigma wouldn't be directed towards people accessing public healthcare. Often people don't realise the effect that healthcare can have on an individuals life. Good healthcare can change people's lives daily, I believe all Australians no matter their situation should access to a quality healthcare system.

Bryher, 17.





VICTORIA

The Youth Representative conducted consultations around Melbourne, as well as in Gippsland. The top issues in consultations in Victoria were:

- (1) **Discrimination and inequality**
- (2) **Education**
- (3) **Mental health and wellbeing**
- (4) **Personal growth and identity**
- (5) **Gender-based issues**

Discrimination and inequality was discussed in relation to accessibility for people with disabilities, racism, and the importance of protecting the rights of LGBTIQ people. In fact, young Victorians ranked LGBTIQ issues highest in the survey in the country when it came to selecting issues they felt passionately about. Young Victorians emphasised the importance of ending stigma and marginalisation. Consultations were run in Victoria with disability service providers and advocacy groups, with young people with disabilities expressing frustration with navigating the Melbourne public transport system, and with discrimination some faced when looking for work after university.

Education was the second most discussed issue in consultations and the top issue raised in the survey across all questions. The survey found that Young Victorians have a keen interest in their education and desire to learn more about current events and the United Nations. Young Victorians expressed a need for comprehensive sex education and a greater focus on wellbeing in the education system. Some young Victorians noted inequalities between private and public schools, and expressed concern about education access for regional and low socioeconomic young people.

1. Discrimination and inequality accounted for 21.3% of issues raised in consultations.

'In my ideal Australia, there would be equality in every sense and wealth would not influence your ability to make a difference.' 16 y.o.

2. Education is a massive issue in Victoria and was discussed in depth.

'The biggest issue is uncertainty about the educational and work opportunities available to us, and concern about our future.' 16 y.o.

3. Mental health and wellbeing and ending stigma is important to Victorians.

'Mental health issues impact so many young people in their everyday lives, and so many people can't get help because of the expense or lack of parental support.' 16 y.o.

4. Personal growth and identity matter to young Victorians.

'In my ideal Australia, we would all receive a blank canvas.' 16 y.o.

5. Gender-based issues were often discussed in Victoria, particularly regarding violence against women.

'Too many young women and girls are treated without respect by young boys who see it normal to harass, and too many boys aren't able to ask for help and view emotions healthily.' 16 y.o.

63% of young Victorians can name their local MP - **the highest proportion in the country.**

97.6% of young Victorians are interested in current events that happen outside of Australia. **97.1%** are interested in learning more about the United Nations - **the highest proportion in the country.**

Others were concerned about the transition from education to employment. Many young Victorians (particularly senior high school students) expressed fears about the VCE. One 14-year-old suggested that pressures placed on high school students in the current education system calls for 'more diverse criteria for acceptance' into university courses. Others were concerned that students were being placed under undue stress when it came to the ATAR system, described by some as 'unfair.'

Mental health and wellbeing were the third most raised issues in Victoria. Much like conversations about mental health around the country, stigma, access to services, and a lack of awareness, education, and understanding were seen as key barriers to mental wellbeing in young people. One 17-year-old emphasised a need to 'remove the stigma around seeking treatment ... regarding mental health, and provid[e] a strong support and foundation for children.' Victorians raised social media and technology as an issue more commonly than any other state or territory. Young Victorians expressed concerns about social media and how body image, peer pressure and bullying on the internet impacts on mental health.

The biggest issue in my community is...

'Housing affordability. I think in terms of demand, reducing incentives for the investor home buyer, increasing subsidies for the first time home buyer. Could also potentially increase supply of housing schemes by approving more townhouses/units/apartments where appropriate.' **21 y.o.**

'Complacency among community leaders and members is the biggest issue facing young people. The environment is deteriorating right in front of all of us and yet only a few people are willing to act upon it. Everyone is consumed by the "throw away" lifestyle we are now apart of, and most people aren't willing to make any changes to it to help our planet.' **19 y.o.**

'We're overlooked, misrepresented, and brushed aside - and that affects even the ones who are doing their best to change things.' **21 y.o.**

'Social divisions being driven by rhetoric from politicians that overexaggerates the prevalence of crime and attributes it to minority groups.' **18 y.o.**

In my ideal Australia...

'Accessibility, inclusivity and equality is central to our identity as a nation. A country that works towards a healthy planet, to ensure a prosperous future for generations to come. Our country will ensure that education is accessible to all, and offer the relevant tools of success to everyone - void of discrimination and prejudice. Australia will break down the stigma of mental and physical disabilities through empathy and education - that will then eradicate the weight that inhibits people, young and old, from seeking help.' **23 y.o.**

'We would recognise that young people are capable of having independent and nuanced thoughts about policy. We would recognise that empathy for others isn't a sign of immaturity. We would recognise that our politics must be as diverse as our population.' **24 y.o.**

'All girls will grow up knowing they can do anything.' **14 y.o.**

WHICH ISSUES DO YOU FEEL MOST PASSIONATE ABOUT? (VIC)



1. EDUCATION



2. GENDER EQUALITY



3. ASYLUM SEEKERS & REFUGEES



4. CLIMATE CHANGE



5. FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS



6. LGBTIQ+ ISSUES



7. HOUSING AFFORDABILITY



8. INTERNATIONAL AID



9. IMMIGRATION



10. HEALTHCARE

STORIES FROM VICTORIA



In my ideal Australia the government wouldn't see acting compassionately and acting logically as mutually exclusive concepts.

While practicality is undoubtedly important, policies that demonise, harm or discriminate against groups or individuals cannot be seen as either logical or reasonable. To me, the government and society should always act with empathy towards those who are disadvantaged by race, gender, socio-economic status, sexuality or background, rather than deciding that protecting these people is too difficult or not worth their time. This would require us to stop seeing social issues as inherently less important than economics and to actively combat ideas and policies that contribute to people becoming disenfranchised.

In this society, political parties would be reluctant to enforce policies in which people fleeing persecution are effectively imprisoned rather than being too afraid to show them some kindness, and educational programs to reduce bullying towards LGBTQIA+ youth would not be a point of controversy that can be used in a scare campaign to attract votes. I believe that our country would be far better off if compassionate policy was part of the status quo of politics rather than a rare occurrence.

Michael, 17.



In my ideal Australia young people would be taken more seriously when voicing opinions or suggestions. Our voices would be heard and adequately taken into consideration.

When it comes to the future of this country, it is our generation that will be most affected by the decisions that are made today, and so it only makes sense to have our contributions be included and respected in political discussions.

Whether the topic of discussion is our environment, our schooling, our communities, our jobs, our housing or our health, the fact is that the discussion is ours to be a part of.

Keisha, 17.



In my ideal Australia, the bodies of women would not be considered public property. No girl would feel the need to walk home with keys between her fingers or endure degrading and derogatory harassment on the streets. The casual misogyny that begins with our country's leaders and filters down the rank and file, through the media and through workplaces, would end.

Milly, 16.



In my ideal Australia, there will be no discrimination and alienation regarding an individual or a group of individuals' race, gender, culture, religion and socioeconomic status.

I believe that certain problems we face as a nation and enlarge the global community such as the refugee crisis, the unequal distribution of wealth and growing political extremism exemplify that we are living in a time when hatred and selfishness dictate the attitudes of people and of society more than ever before. It is for this reason that I wholeheartedly believe that we as a nation must take the leap in attempting to understand and overcome our differences, and come together in love and unity.

Young Jun, 16.



In my ideal Australia:

We would ensure that LGBTQ+ students feel safe at school.

We wouldn't bicker over school programs that take a stand against bullying simply because these programs aim to create safer spaces for LGBTQ+ students.

We would value kindness and inclusivity.

Kyla, 17.



In my ideal Australia, no one should have to fear for their own safety, whether in a public space or in the privacy of their home.

Women are often warned not to dress provocatively, not to leave their drinks unattended, not to travel alone at night, and yet should be able to do so without fear of violence. These warnings do not ensure our safety, rather perpetuate the idea that we are somehow responsible for violence enacted against us.

The recent death of Eurydice Dixon in Melbourne's inner suburbs is a tragedy for those who knew her, and for the wider community; it changes the way we feel about our public spaces, about strangers on the street, about the everyday choice of walking instead of paying for an Uber.

However, we need to stop asking if we are putting ourselves at risk, and start examining how this risk is created. Our answer to this tragedy should be a change in how we educate our young people about violence, and entitlement, so that no one has to fear for their own safety, regardless of the circumstances.

Eva, 18.

(Note: Eva's statement was shared on our Facebook page on June 18.)



In my ideal Australia, students can overcome the academic, extracurricular, parental and social pressures that contribute to a unhealthy mental state. With more than half the students of Australia experiencing anxiety and depression, mental health is certainly an issue we need to address. Too often do we base our self worth on the success of others and I have seen how this can have harmful effects on students. We are taught to be competitive, that the only way to be accepted by our friends and family is through our popularity and a "good" ATAR, and that we must have achievements in order to succeed in life.

Well...Newsflash: we're all unique, we all have different passions and we all have individual endeavours. Life isn't about satisfying other people's expectations. It's about following our own dreams.

Emily, 18.



In my ideal Australia, all people would be empowered to follow their passions and aspirations.

People would treat each other with respect and dignity, despite differences.

We would be open to collaboration and discussion to create a sustainable and equal future.

Eva, 18.



In my ideal Australia, people of all creeds, religions, ages, races, and political opinions would be able to participate in open and constructive conversation, if not to realize that there is more that binds us together than separates us, then to simply understand the other side's point of view.

Thomas, 15.



In my ideal Australia, curiosity would be cherished not hidden. When children and young people ask questions and want to know more they should be encouraged, embraced and elated. Not told to be quiet or more obedient so that the 'adults can talk'. It is so important that learning is at the core of Australian culture in order for us to progress as a society through innovation. Wanting big answers to big questions would be valued and not seen as idealistic. Questions would be answered and answers would be questioned.

Isabelle, 15.



In my ideal Australia, young people would be able to have a say on matters like education, health care, employment, welfare, and community participation which impact their lives and have their opinion taken seriously by those in power.

Young people at 16 can learn to drive, apply for youth allowance, work and pay taxes, have a choice between continuing to continue schooling until year 12 or go to TAFE but don't have much political agency on how those matters are dealt by them.

I'm 25 so my time as a young person is running out, but I don't want to see the next generation of young people be overlooked and ignored by people in power because of their age.

Maria, 25.



In our ideal Australia, the government would take concrete steps to combat climate change and transition to renewables. The approval of the Adani mine project is disheartening, as it goes against the Paris climate agreement, and will directly impact our future. However, we believe young people have the ability to make a difference and influence Australia's policy-makers.

Grace and Abbey, both 16.



In my ideal Australia, everyone would feel accepted and be treated equally. They would have the same opportunities. There wouldn't be a gender pay gap. Aboriginal Australians would have the same life expectancy as other Australians. People wouldn't be shamed for the way they look. Everyone would be able to afford basic essentials for life such as a home, healthy food, healthcare, warm clothes and basic utilities such as electricity, gas, water and internet. People wouldn't be discriminated against based on their race, sexuality, age or gender.

Sage, 18.



In my ideal Australia, accessibility, inclusivity and equality is central to our identity as a nation. A country that works towards a healthy planet, to ensure a prosperous future for generations to come.

Our country will ensure that education is accessible to all, and offer the relevant tools of success to everyone - void of discrimination and prejudice.

Australia will break down the stigma of mental and physical disabilities through empathy and education - that will then eradicate the weight that inhibits people, young and old, from seeking help.

AI, 23.



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The Youth Representative conducted consultations around Perth, as well as in Albany, Denmark, Manjimup, and Mt Barker. The top issues in consultations in Western Australia were:

- (1) Mental health and wellbeing
- (2) Discrimination and inequality
- (3) Alcohol and other drugs
- (4) Education
- (=5) Bullying, and violence, crime and abuse

Mental health and wellbeing was the top issue in Western Australia, representing 18.9% of issues raised in consultations - higher than the national average. Young Western Australians mentioned self-esteem issues, anxiety, depression, and suicide as key concerns when discussing mental health and wellbeing. Lack of opportunities in regional areas were seen as exacerbating mental health issues. Bullying and cyberbullying were also mentioned in consultations more often than any other state or territory. Young Western Australians had plenty of solutions to offer, including this one from a 15-year-old young person:

'I believe that a solution is better access to resources that can help them deal with the mental health problems they may be struggling with. Counselling, especially I believe should be readily available without consent or permission from parents. Many young people, even if they're seeing a counselor, are reluctant to open up about their problems in fear of their parents, guardians or other authority figures finding out about them.'

Another young person asserted that 'support groups in school should be established so that every student can have someone to trust and talk to' (14 y.o.).

1. Mental health and wellbeing accounted for over 18% of issues in consultations.

'Every teenager should have the support that they need in and out of school, someone to talk to and a guide to help them learn during such a vulnerable stage of their lives.' 14 y.o.

2. Discrimination and inequality conversations centred around socioeconomic inequalities, racism, and sexism.

'In my ideal Australia, the government would be run by a variety of people with different races, ages, genders, religions, sexualities, etc. and people would be accepted for who they are.' 16 y.o.

3. Alcohol and other drugs is of concern to many young Western Australians.

'In my ideal Australia, everyone has a job and there are no drugs affecting people and available to young people.' 15 y.o.

4. Education including curriculum reform and providing equal access in urban and rural areas were of importance.

'Education is a major thing that has gaps down here. We have little in the way of sex ed, home economics and any real life skills.' 15 y.o.

=5. Bullying, and violence, crime and abuse were the equal fifth-most raised issues.

'I think that cyberbullying is a big problem with young people because of how many social media sites there are. I think having more safety precautions on sights would help prevent this problem from occurring.' 13 y.o.

Most conversations about discrimination and inequality, the second most raised issue topic, centred around racism, sexism, and socioeconomic disparity. Key solutions raised by young Western Australians largely centred around education and positive advocacy campaigns.

One young person suggested creating a celebratory week in schools where people could share their culture and background. Others suggested an increased focus on celebrating diversity and teaching about discrimination in schools. Young Western Australians' passion for education as a solution to inequality was evident in the consultations and survey, with education being the fourth most raised topic in consultations.

Of the issues young Western Australians nominated in the survey as the ones they felt most passionately about, education was the second most commonly nominated issue, preceded by gender equality and followed by the environment/ climate change.

Alcohol and other drugs were the third most raised issue. Young Western Australians expressed concern about underage drinking and substance abuse. As with mental health, alcohol and other drugs were seen to be tied with a lack of services and opportunities for young people, particularly in regional areas.

The biggest issue in my community is...

'I live in a fairly low socio-economic area where youth unemployment is high, girls become pregnant under the consent age, Indigenous communities are even more disenfranchised and have substance abuse issues, first/second generation Australians constantly face discrimination due to racism and there is poor education.' **16 y.o.**

'Education is a major thing that has gaps down here. We have little in the way of sex ed, home economics and any real life skills. ... We haven't been taught how to pay taxes, buy a home, save money properly and so many other things which i think needs to be incorporated into the curriculum.' **15 y.o.**

'Lack of education surrounding things like race, gender, orientation, mental health issues. ... A potential solution is to incorporate these topics into the curriculum more and devote more time to explaining them.' **15 y.o.**

'Being pressured into drugs, alcohol, pranks and other illegal acts. This is resulting in injury of themselves or other people.' **16 y.o.**

'People should give more faith in younger people and listen to younger people more often. Young people are also people and should be treated the same as older people. This is a problem in our community.' **12 y.o.**

In my ideal Australia...

'Diversity connects us instead of dividing our nation.' **13 y.o.**

'Young people would have the confidence and means to express themselves, their concerns, their opinions and their identity. They would have equal access to employment and opportunities.' **17 y.o.**

'The media doesn't dictate our politicians.' **Age not given.**

WHICH ISSUES DO YOU FEEL MOST PASSIONATE ABOUT? (WA)



1. GENDER EQUALITY



2. EDUCATION



3. CLIMATE CHANGE



4. FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS



5. DRUG & ALCOHOL ABUSE



6. HEALTHCARE



7. ANIMAL WELFARE



8. THE JUSTICE SYSTEM



9. INDIGENOUS ISSUES



10. ASYLUM SEEKERS & REFUGEES

Although **60.8%** of young Western Australians can name their local MP, only **15.7%** of young Western Australians feel like their opinions are represented by politicians in government.

STORIES FROM WA



In my ideal Australia I am not the only one who understands. I would be able to look to my classmates and have a conversation on who's in government, who is leading our country. My friends and family would understand the basic principles of our political system and would have the tools available to draw conclusions. Our votes would not be thrown away on a whim, a biased opinion handed to us or nullified by ignorance. We should be, and could be, governed by the people in the sense that we as a nation possess the education necessary to participate in the discussion.

Australian students should have access to a nationwide civic education curriculum. We should learn of the power and impact behind our vote and ourselves. The opportunity to research and develop opinions in a constructive environment about our countries future is vitally important. Even a basic understanding of politics and its functions would allow us, as a nation, to engage in productive debate.

In my ideal Australia, we the people have the power because we the people have the information necessary to understand our own power.

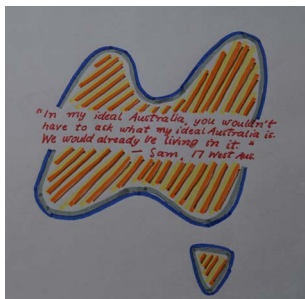
Dean, 17.



In my ideal Australia, this intergenerational mentality of "us" versus "them" would no longer exist. There is a lot of cynicism about what the future holds; food security, consequences of a growing displaced population, terrorism and climate change to name a few.

In my ideal Australia people are united — not divided when faced with challenges that threaten our livelihood and the future's for that matter.

Tyara, 16



In my ideal Australia, you wouldn't have to ask what my ideal Australia is. We would already be living in it.

Sam, 17.



In my ideal Australia, we would have policies that not only protect the people and rightful owners of this land, but the land itself. Land free from agriculture, resource extraction and depletion so future generations and ourselves can enjoy it. We are so fortunate to live in a country so rich with resources and beautiful landscapes, but with our current political climate the environment often is the loser. It's not okay. We must do better.

We literally cannot live if we do not protect our planet. Every other social and political cause becomes secondary if we do not have a place to live, clean air, clean water, and a stable climate. It is up to each of us to make choices that best reflect what we want as global citizens. In my ideal Australia, the environment is as important as a strong wi-fi connection.

Aayushi, 17.



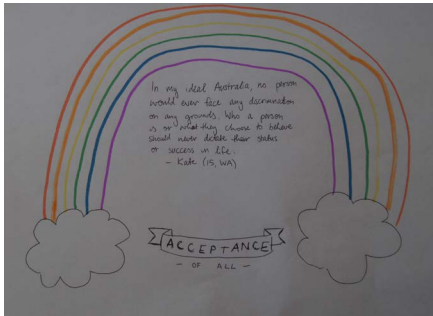
In my ideal Australia, men would be free from the toxic stereotypes of masculinity so we can begin to build a healthier idea of 'what is a man' for today.

The set of standards our society holds for men isn't all bad, and many of them promote positive behaviour and values. However, some of them end up damaging both men's lives and others'. By promoting ideas such as that men should be aggressive, dominate women and not share their feelings, Western ideals of masculinity lead men to miss out on parts of life that should be available to everyone, regardless of gender — things like emotional connection and nurturing. And at its worst, toxic masculinity can lead to suicide as well as physical and sexual violence which is extremely damaging to men and to the women around them.

I know that if I have a problem, no matter how trivial, sensitive or emotional it may seem, I can discuss it with any of my male friends with no judgement. However I recognise that this isn't always the case, and I think it's essential for guys to have such a space to develop strong emotional connections and deal effectively with their problems instead of letting them compound and reach a crisis point. Guys are not less of a "man" for talking about and engaging in their feelings. This norm and its narrow constraints cannot be allowed to perpetuate any longer.

Hayden, 16.





In my ideal Australia, no person would ever face any discrimination on any grounds. Who a person is or what they choose to believe should never dictate their status or success in life.

Kate, 15.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Amos Washington, the 2018 Youth Representative, provides these recommendations in response to thousands of conversations he has had with young people from across the country throughout this year. They aim to support the wellbeing of young people and amplify the perspectives of young Australians into the future. It is not possible to provide a recommendation for every issue that was raised this year, but they seek to address a few key areas.

1. That we lower the voting age to 16.

If this report conveys only one message, it should be that young people are key stakeholders in our society. They are not merely future participants in Australia; they are participants now, and can make important contributions to policy. It's time to allow 16 and 17-year-olds the right to vote in local, state, and federal elections if they wish.

Lowering the voting age should be paired with a renewed focus on civics education in schools.

2. That alternatives to youth detention are always prioritised.

This year's Listening Tour included seven consultations across four detention centres and one rehabilitation centre. A detention centre is no place for a young person to be growing up. As such, it is critical that policymakers continue to explore all alternative options for the rehabilitation and support of young people who are engaged with the justice system. Young people in detention expressed concern that there was no support available for them outside the justice system. Policymakers must ensure that there is adequate support to prevent young people from re-entering detention.

Two consultations were held in Don Dale Youth Detention Centre. The Report of the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory, handed down in November 2017, recommended that this detention centre be closed. It is clear that the Centre is not suitable for the habitation of young people and must be closed.¹ At the time of the consultations, the Youth Representative was informed that every young person in Don Dale Youth Detention Centre was Indigenous. It is critical that the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in detention is addressed.

3. That schools provide comprehensive, inclusive sex education, and education on mental health, bullying, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.

Young Australians are passionate about their education. However, young people are identifying gaps in their learning that need to be addressed. The importance of comprehensive sex education was raised by young people in every state and territory this year. We need nationally standardised, comprehensive sex education that takes student diversity into account. Such comprehensive sex education should be made available at every high school in Australia. Schools must also implement comprehensive anti-bullying and mental health education programs, and provide access to mental health services that are confidential and do not require intervention or approval from parents or caregivers.

Young people around the country noted the lack of education on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. School curriculums need to provide extensive education on the histories and cultures of First Nations peoples.

4. That the federal government funds additional youth mental health services in regional communities.

Young Australians consider mental health to be a crisis point. If you're a young person in regional Australia, accessing adequate mental health services can be challenging. We need more mental health services in regional areas.

Such mental health services should be tailored to young people and their needs. Mental health services should be welcoming and safe environments for LGBTIQ young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, young people with disabilities, and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

¹ Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory 2017, Royal Commission and Board of Inquiry into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory: Findings and Recommendations, Commonwealth of Australia, <https://childdetentionnt.royalcommission.gov.au/Documents/Royal-Commission-NT-Findings-and-Recommendations.pdf>, p. 29

5. That the Government appoint a Minister for Youth.

Australia has not had a Minister for Youth since 2013, with the Opposition only recently appointing a Shadow Minister. It is impossible to care for and represent young people when they do not have a focal point in the ministry. New Zealand and the United Kingdom appoint a Minister for Youth. In some countries, this is a Cabinet position. In Canada, the position is held by the Prime Minister.

The absence of a Youth Ministry hurts young people. It limits the consideration of youth issues in government, and dilutes responsibility and accountability. Government cannot sufficiently represent youth interests through existing portfolios or consultation mechanisms. This year's Youth Representative consultation found that just 1 in 5 young Australians felt that their interests were represented by politicians in government. This call has been echoed by some parliamentarians, and bodies including the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC), the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic), and Youth Action NSW. State and Territory governments need to also appoint Youth Ministers.

6. That the federal government appoints a fully-funded youth advisory council.

The federal government does not have any youth advisory body to assist with youth perspectives on government policy. The absence of such a body means that decisions may be made without youth consultation or a youth perspective. A youth advisory council comprised entirely of youth people under 25 from a diverse range of backgrounds, appointed by application and not along party lines, could advise government on young Australians. This advisory council would meet several times per year, and be formally incorporated into the machinations of government. The council members would be respected for their expertise and appropriately compensated for their time.

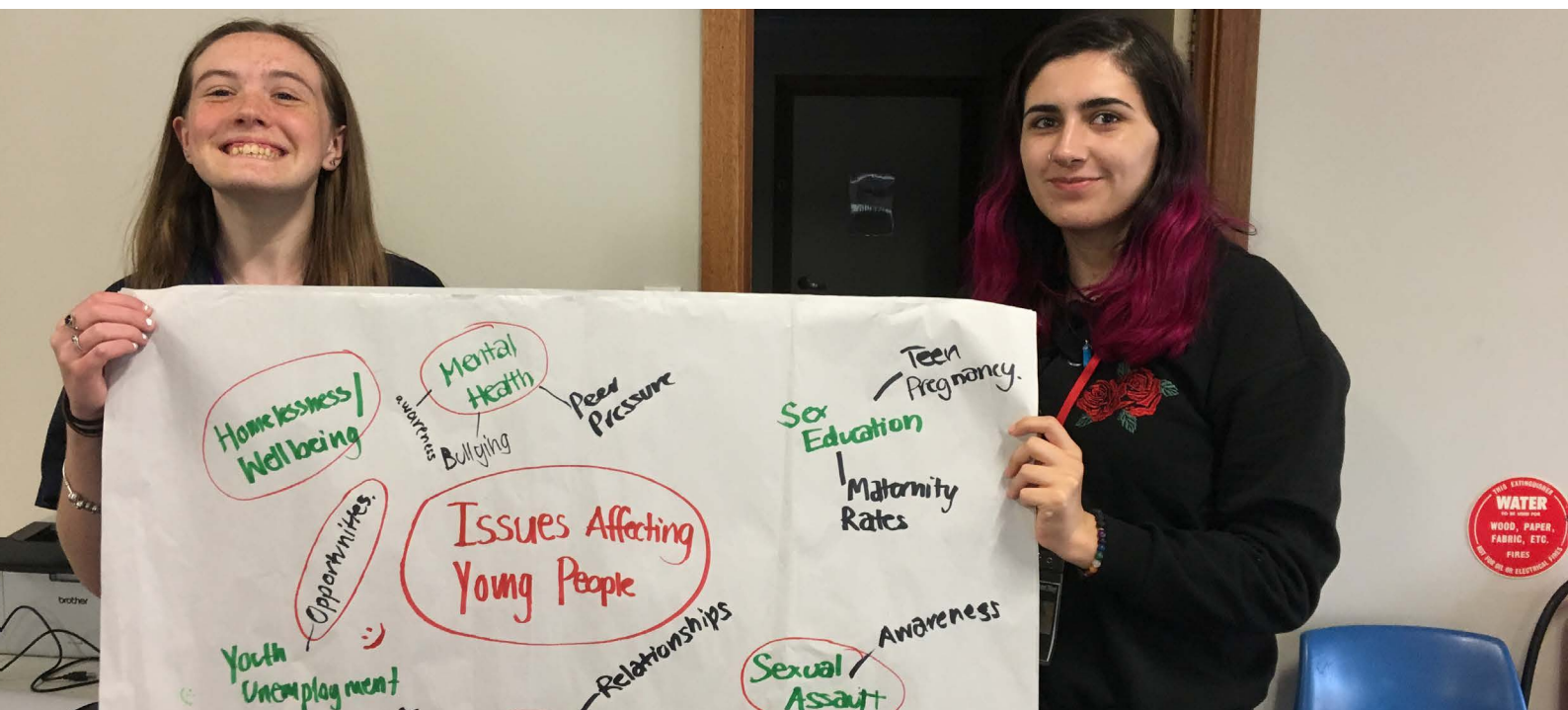
7. That local and state/territory governments implement inclusive youth consultation strategies.

All local governments should have a youth advisory council comprised of a diverse and representative group of young people serving in a consultative capacity. Some councils appoint a Youth Mayor, with a young person working in a leadership role in the interests of young people in the council area. Such positions should have appropriate funding to ensure adequate compensation for the young person's time. State and territory governments should engage youth advisory councils in a similar way to the federal model proposed above.

8. That the government fully funds a national youth peak body.

The Australian Government defunded AYAC in 2014. Australia needs a fully-funded body that advocates for the rights of young people and provides professional youth-informed advice. While young people are important stakeholders across every aspect of government, it is critical that a peak body exists to ensure that the needs of young people are considered in every policy decision.

These recommendations reflect the views of the Youth Representative, and do not reflect any policy or position of sponsors and partners, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, or UN Youth Australia.



OTHER REPORTS

The Youth Representative Program is not the only consultative process that young Australians are able to engage with. Here's the findings of some other recent youth reports.

Mission Australia Youth Survey 2018 (Mission Australia, 28 November 2018)

Mission Australia recently surveyed 28,286 young people aged between 15 and 19.

- Both the Mission Australia Youth Survey and Youth Representative Consultation Report find mental health to be a top issue. The top three issues in the Mission Australia Youth Survey, when young people were asked to list three issues they considered to be most important in Australia, were 'mental health', 'alcohol and drugs' and 'equity and discrimination.' Mental health is also the top issue in the Youth Representative Consultation Report, with alcohol and drugs and equity and discrimination also in the top five.
- The Mission Australia Youth Survey found that the proportion of young people indicating mental health in the question above has doubled between 2016 and 2018. This year's Youth Representative Consultation Report also found a far higher prevalence of mental health as an issue compared to last year's report.
- 'Coping with stress' and 'school or study' problems were listed as the top two concerns amongst respondents, in line with previous Youth Surveys. The third highest rated issue of concern was 'mental health'. These top three issues are certainly in line with conversations in Youth Representative consultations this year.
- Both the Mission Australia Youth Survey and Youth Representative Consultation Report found bullying to be an increasingly identified issue facing Australia today.

Youth Representative Australia Report 2017 (UN Youth Australia, 22 January 2018)

Paige Burton was the 2017 Youth Rep and also delivered a report. Key points of comparison include:

- Younger Australians (14 years and under) were most likely to raise alcohol and other drugs in both reports.
- Education, the environment (including climate change), health, housing affordability and various forms of equality were among the top issues raised across both years.
- Economic issues were more often raised by older young people in both reports.
- Many young people emphasised marriage equality in 2017, but this became law before the 2018 consultation. LGBTIQ issues continue to be frequently raised this year. Young people understand that LGBTIQ issues don't end with marriage equality.
- Mental health was raised far more often this year. Young people this year acknowledged that conversations about mental health are constantly evolving.
- This year's survey results demonstrate that young people continue to engage in current affairs, are keen to learn more, and strive to improve their communities.

The Children's Report (UNICEF Australia and the Australian Child Rights Taskforce, 1 November 2018)

This report primarily drew from external academic research, but also involved a direct consultation of Australian young people.

- The Children's Report finds that young people are suffering from mental health issues and reaching out to mental health services in greater numbers every year. This year's Youth Representative program found a significant increase in the discussion of mental health.
- The Children's Report lamented that Australia is drifting from some ideals of education quality and accessibility. Increased discussion of education in this year's Youth Representative program suggests that young people may share anxiety on the current direction of education.
- Both reports highlight the importance of addressing violence against children. While The Children's Report dedicates one of its five themed chapters to the topic, 'family violence' was the fourth-most indicated issue in this program when young people were asked to circle issues about which they felt most passionately.

The What's Up In Your World Survey (Triple J, 31 July 2018)

This survey polled 11,000 young Australians between 18 and 29.

- Both highlight the need to better support LGBTIQ young people. Triple J found that 47% of LGBTIQ young people have not yet come out. The Youth Representative report also found sustained discussion of LGBTIQ issues.
- Like this report, Triple J found that mental health was the most-raised issue by young people. Housing affordability, employment and education were also top issues for young people consulted in both of Triple J's survey and our report. While Triple J found that 2 in 3 young people feel negatively about the Earth's future, the environment and climate change was the third-most-selected issue of issues young people feel passionately about in this report.
- Triple J found that only 7% of young people are confident that our politicians are working in the interests of young people. In the Youth Representative report, less than one in five young people feel like their opinions are represented by politicians in government.

SUPPORTERS

The Youth Representative program relies on community support. Many thanks to everyone who supported this year's program!

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This report was written on Peramangk and Ngunnawal lands. UN Youth Australia acknowledges and pays respect to the past, present and future Custodians and Elders of this nation and the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Opinions expressed in this report by individuals reflect the views of those young people consulted, and do not reflect any policy or position of sponsors and partners, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, or UN Youth Australia.

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“As children and young people, we are continually reminded that we are the future leaders of tomorrow, however, what we often fail to realise is that children and young people matter now.”



unyouth.org.au/youthrep