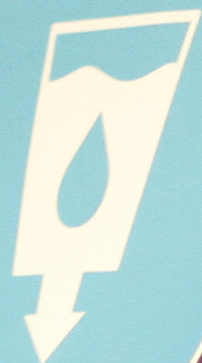


2017 AUSTRALIAN YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE CONSULTATION REPORT



AUSTRALIA

6 CLEAN WATER
AND SANITATION



7 AFFORDABLE AND
CLEAN ENERGY

ABOUT

THE YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UN IS A ROLE 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 consultation tour to engage with and discover the issues that are most important to young Australians.

During the tour, the Youth Representative tours the country, engaging and collaborating with young Australians through extensive consultation with students, community organisations and other institutions, in an effort to identify the issues that are most important to youth across the nation.

After the Consultation, the Youth Representative travels to New York as a member of the Australian Mission to the UN where they will attend the the UN General Assembly,

presenting the findings of the Consultation to the General Assembly's Third Committee.

Paige Burton is the 2017 Youth Representative to the United Nations. She is passionate about the role young people can play in international affairs, and educating their peers.

In 2015 and 2016, Paige was recognised for her work by Pro Bono Australia as the youngest ever recipient of the 'Impact 25: The 25 Most Influential People in the Social Sector' award. In 2017, Paige was named as a state finalist for the NSW Young Woman of The Year award.

Team of UN Youth Victoria volunteers who helped facilitate the Victorian elements of the Consultation.



First consultation of the year, at Scotch College, Melbourne.

Presentation of Australia's Youth Statement to the UN General Assembly. In the company of Australia's Permanent Ambassador to the UN- Gillian Bird, and Senator Gavin Marshall.



You can find more stories, photos, and data by following along online, or emailing the Youth Representative with a request.

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FROM THE YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE

PAIGE BURTON

In 2017, I wanted to try and answer the question 'what would society look like if we saw our young people as a product of their values, experiences, knowledge, creativity, and not just of their age?' For too long we have dehumanised young people by imagining them as merely young.

This year I asked tens of thousands of young Australians to tell me what they wish their representatives knew, and considered, about them when making policy.

I travelled over 100,000 kilometres meeting tens of thousands of young Australians. My team and I went to hundreds of schools, and community groups. We went to universities, festivals, markets, and conferences.

We ran thousands of consultations, and took the results to the United Nations General Assembly. But it didn't end there. We collected data from every Australian Federal Electorate, and I wanted to share it with you. I want you to share the joy of reading the nuanced, complicated, and thoughtful opinions of the young people who live in Australia.

Young people all over Australia spoke to me about a diverse range of issues. This report contains the top-level summary of the data at large, but I invite you to read through the results from your local area too.

Of course, this report is a result of the hard work of so many people and the generosity of those who donated money, time, and places for me to live throughout the year.

I want to give an important thank you to Mena Basaly, without whom this couldn't have happened. His work ethic, commitment to young people, empathy, and generosity can be found on every page of this report. Mena, thank you.

To Kyril Estrin, Penny Morton, Georgia Westway and the amazing team at DFAT, thank you for your support, and invaluable advice.

To Tim Matthews, Mark James, Duke Cole, Rebecca Warnes, Jonty Katz, Sophie Corea, I couldn't have done it without you.

To Campbell Nicol, Adam Knobel, Anita Tang, Nick Moraitis, Rebecca Wilson, Alec Webley, Rachel Burton, Leanne Mallet Doug Millen, Emily Mulligan, Dean Price, Nick Mezo, Tom Harrison, Stef Roberts-Thomson, Sammi Rudman, Amy Gray, Josie McEl-vogue, Drew Higgins, Chris Pycroft, Natalie Czapski, Rebecca Anderson, George Ober, Gil Haddock, Kim Lundy, Paddy Bacon, Luca Giaccardi, David Mejia Canales, Corrine Murphy, Jacob Masina, and Roger West-- thank you for your financial support. You made the scale of this program possible.

Finally, if you're a young person who contributed to this report, or volunteered in a consultation. Thank you. I'm certain you've made a bigger difference than we'll realise.

If I've learnt anything this year, it's that our voices get stronger the more we listen. And I hope that listening closer to young Australians brings as much joy as it has brought me.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'P. Burton'.





THE 2017 CONSULTATION

WHO? WHERE? HOW? WHAT?

The consultation took place from November 2016 to August 2017. Whilst a large majority of the consultation and data was collected face-to-face through use of paper surveys, online forms were made available to those unable to make it to a session of the Youth Representative's national tour.

The Youth Representative spent approximately one month in every Australian state and territory over the course of the year, working with a team of UN Youth Australia's facilitators to run consultations. Typically, a consultation lasted 1.5 hours.

All Australians between the ages of twelve and twenty five (inclusive) were able to participate in the consultation.

The team visited schools, universities, other educational institutions, community groups, non-profit organisations, festivals, markets, conferences, and held open events to reach more young people. Approximately 45,000 young Australians participated in face-to-face workshops with the Youth Representative and team. Around 2,500 completed web forms, and thousands more followed along with the stories online.

The Consultation aimed to answer the overarching question "what would society look like if we imagined young people in their full complexity?" The survey took form to ask questions of five broad areas.

1. Engagement:

- Can you name your local Federal MP?
- Do you feel that your opinions are represented in government policy?
- As a young person, do you feel like your opinions are taken seriously by those in power?
- Do you read the news/follow every day?
- Where do you get your news?

2. Youth issues:

- What is the most important issue facing young people in your local area?
- What do you think is the most important issue facing young people in Australia?

3. General issues:

- Which issues would you like to see the government taking more immediate action on?
- Why are these important to you? Do you have suggestions for solutions?

4. Stories:

- What do you wish the government knew, and considered about you and your life when making policy?

5. Learning:

- Are you interested in learning more about current events?
- Are you interested in learning more about the United Nations?
- Are you interested in learning more about how politicians /the government make decisions?

And we threw in some ice-breakers for good measure:

- Cats or Dogs?
- Marvel or DC?
- Netflix or YouTube?
- Winter or Summer?
- Internet or TV?
- Bushwalk or Ocean Swim?

To ensure that the Consultation was accessible to those with different needs, those unable to read or write in English, we created plain English versions of all questions, and provided volunteers who helped scribe, or translate where necessary.

A few primary school aged students participated in the program. They wrote letters that began "Dear Paige, I wish..." and shared their vision for what they want society to look like. Many younger (12-14) people also submitted drawings of issues that matter to them. I have shared them throughout this report.

Participants could leave their name, but were also given the option of remaining anonymous.





AUSTRALIA

THE FOLLOWING PAGES CONTAIN THE TOP LEVEL RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATIONS WITH YOUNG AUSTRALIANS.

The **average age** of young people involved in the 2017 consultation was **16.02**.

Gender was a self-identified question. **62.7%** identified themselves as “female”. **34.7%** identified themselves as “male”. **2.6%** were identified as something other than this. Including: genderqueer, trans, woman, man, boy, girl, N/A or the question was left blank.

The **top ten issues** raised in the consultation, in order, were: Gender equality, housing affordability, climate change, marriage equality, improving healthcare, cost of tertiary education, closing the gap, people seeking asylum, youth unemployment, and youth involvement in politics.

The quotes that accompany the issues reflect the general sentiment of young people consulted, but do not account for the diversity of all opinions. Young people, as with any other group, cannot be seen as homogenous.

Though marriage equality has since been made law, the decision was made to leave in results pertaining to marriage equality as it is indicative of the mindset of young people during the consultation.

Rural and regional areas were more likely than their city counterparts to raise issues related to infrastructure.

Climate change was the most frequent issue to be considered the most important, with 26 electorates listing it as number 1. Victorian electorates were mostly likely to have climate change as their number one issue, with 14 Victorian electorates noting climate as the issue they would most like action to be taken on.

Gender equality was the most important issue in 23 electorates. NSW electorates were the most likely to have gender equality as the top issue.

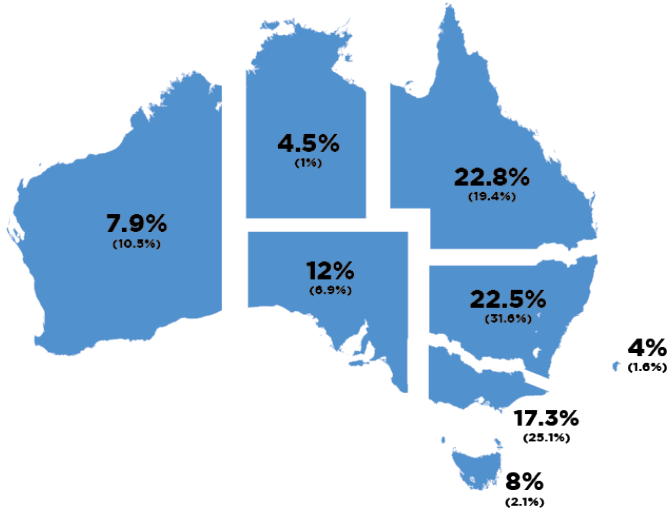
People seeking asylum was the top issue raised in three electorates: Bruce, Scullin, and Newcastle.

Regional development was listed as the top issue in 1 electorate, the NSW electorate of Werriwa.

Interestingly, Kennedy is the only electorate where a significant number of young people (4% consulted) are concerned about Australia going to war. The demographic is exclusively self identified males under 15.

52% of all young people consulted said they follow the news everyday. With most getting information from social media feeds (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat) and directly from local online papers (Fairfax, ABC, NewsCorp, The Guardian). Many still get information exclusively from free-to-air broadcast news, the radio, parents, teachers, and friends.

16% of young Australians feel that their views are reflected in the current federal government. Only 35% feel like they are taken seriously due to their age.



WHERE DOES THE DATA COME FROM?

The map highlights the distribution of data by state and territory, with the annotations showing the actual population distribution. On average there was a standard deviation of 3.5% between the data collected and the actual distribution of the population.

State / Territory	Population Distribution (%)	Distribution of Responses (%)
ACT	1.6	4
NSW	31.6	22.5
VIC	25.1	17.3
QLD	19.4	22.8
WA	10.5	7.9
SA	6.9	12
NT	1	4.5
TAS	2.1	8

85%

are interested in learning more about current events

68%

are interested in learning more about the United Nations

66%

are interested in learning more about how the government makes decisions

1

Gender equality

was the top issue raised in Australia

“I see my friends, the incredible women in my life attacked on the daily. On group chats, behind the screen and even face to face conversations. It’s all normalised, so I guess we all just accept it and move on. ‘It’ referring to the objectification we face every single day.” Ling Ling, 16.

2

Housing affordability

Was a concern all over the country

“House prices rise every year, it is becoming impossible for us to afford a house or even an apartment.” Eassie, 15.

3

Climate change

Worries young people

“I wish the government knew how much passion exists in our community for a response to climate change that sees it as a challenge to the status quo, a wake-up call, and an incredible opportunity.” Alex, 19.

4

Marriage equality

Young people frequently discussed marriage equality

“It’s validation that, yes, my peers, friends and strangers think I deserve equality under the law. That by extension, my sexuality doesn’t make me less of a human.” Bec, 25.

5

Healthcare

Improving mental health and disability services were of significance.

““I wish that the government knew that the current system for getting help with mental health, especially for students and younger people, is really difficult.” Sara, 16.



AUSTRALIA

TOP 5 ISSUES RAISED, DELINEATED BY AGE

12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Drug/alcohol abuse	Drug/alcohol abuse	Gender equality	Housing Affordability	Marriage equality	Marriage equality	Health/mental health	Climate change	Climate change	Housing affordability	Housing affordability	Climate change	Housing affordability	Climate change
Gender equality	Gender equality	Marriage equality	Marriage Equality	Health/mental health	Climate change	Housing affordability	Housing affordability	Housing affordability	Climate change	Climate change	Housing affordability	Gender equality	Housing affordability
Animal Welfare	Housing affordability	Housing affordability	Climate Change	Climate change	Housing affordability	Climate change	Gender equality	Gender Equality	Health/mental health	Gender equality	Marriage equality	Climate change	Marriage equality
Marriage equality	Health/mental health	Health/mental health	Gender Equality	Gender equality	Gender equality	Unemployment	Marriage equality	Health/Mental Health	Gender equality	Marriage equality	Health/mental health	Youth unemployment	Health/ental meath
Health/mental health	Animal welfare	Climate change	Health/mental health	Housing affordability	Health/mental health	Marriage equality	Unemployment	Marriage equality	Marriage equality	Closing the Gap	Gender equality	Marriage equality	Gender equality

“If there were more jobs for young people it would stop them from being out on the streets and involved in things like drugs and alcohol.” Hayley, 12.

“I wish they knew that every second person I know has used drugs or alcohol and could do more to help.” Erin, 13.

“I wish the government knew that women have the same rights as men and shouldn’t be treated otherwise because of gender.” Naomi, 14.

“That I should not feel stressed about the rising price of houses and student loans but I am because it seems so unachievable.” Aletana, 15.

“Things like marriage equality and the safe schools programme and racial discrimination act are so incredibly powerful to young LGBT Australians of a racial minority like myself. Most of the politicians in government don’t have that experience of discrimination and make decisions accordingly.” Anon, 16.

“I wish the government knew the way that their unwillingness to legalise gay marriage affects the young people with LGBT parents or family. We want to feel that our families are just as legitimate as everyone else’s and the fact that these laws exist that don’t give us the same rights is detrimental to not only those directly affected, but also to families who want those close to them to be respected by the government.” Eva, 17.

“Mental illness is sometimes invisible, and just because someone is able to contribute or they ‘seem’ fine, this doesn’t mean that nothing is going on beneath the surface mental health is much more severe than it is treated as,m and this epidemic will only escalate for the worse if left unaddressed.” Nuria, 18.

“I wish the government knew that I want to be proud of the country I have grown up in and I wish the government knew how personal climate change is for young people; it is our reality and it is our future. I am proud to be apart of a generation which is aware of its duty and obligation to the environmental and social networks on which our lives are built. I am proud to be part of a generation which takes seriously, the sustainability of our planet.” Anna, 19.

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“I wish the government knew how demoralising it is when decisions are intentionally delayed for political purposes when clear solutions/reforms are presented by experts or those who are affected most. How can politicians and the political process be respected when they consistently ignore the views of their constituents in favour of those of special interests or short-term personal interests. E.g. Climate change” Murray, 20.

“The cost of university tied with the cost of housing is definitely having a negative effect on the dream of being financially stable in the future.” Shaista, 21.

“I wish they considered that most young people like me don’t know what career path they want to take and are often working multiple jobs in order to afford housing.” Curtis, 22.

“I want to live in a nation which takes action on climate change rather than turning its back on future generations.” Natalie, 23.

“Most young people do not have parental support to study or buy a house.” Charlotte, 24.

“I wish the government acted with more vision for the future, particularly around climate change.” Tali, 25.



AUSTRALIA

TOP ISSUES RAISED, BY ELECTORATE



CLIMATE CHANGE

- Ballarat
- Batman
- Bonner
- Calwell
- Canberra
- Chisholm
- Corangamite
- Corio
- Cowan
- Fairfax
- Farrer
- Fisher
- Higgins
- Hindmarsh
- Isaacs
- Kingsford Smith
- Lalor
- Latrobe
- Lilley
- McEwan
- Melbourne
- Moore
- Pearce
- Watson
- Wentworth
- Wills
- North Sydney



GENDER EQUALITY

- Bennelong
- Berowra
- Boothby
- Durack
- Greenway
- Groom
- Hinkler
- Hotham
- Hunter
- Oxley
- Parramatta
- Petrie
- Reid
- Sturt
- Sydney
- Warringah
- Casey
- Deakin
- Flinders
- Gilmore
- Mackellar
- Ryan
- Wide Bay



MARRIAGE EQUALITY

- Adelaide
- Barton
- Bendigo
- Canning
- Chifley
- Cowper
- Denison
- Dunkley
- Goldstein
- Gorton
- Grayndler
- Kingston
- Leichhardt
- Lyons
- Macquarie
- Mayo
- Melbourne Ports
- Moncrieff
- Murray
- Whitlam
- Wright
- Dawson



HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

- Banks
- Bowman
- Bradfield
- Cook
- Curtin
- Dobell
- Forrest
- Fowler
- Grey
- Holt
- Hughes
- Hume
- Jagajaga
- Macarthur
- Makin
- McMahon
- Rankin
- Riverina
- Wakefield
- Kooyong



HEALTHCARE (INCLUDING MENTAL HEALTH)

- Blair
- Brand
- Calare
- Capricornia
- Franklin
- Griffith
- Hasluck
- Indi
- Lyne
- McMillan
- Menzies
- Mitchell
- O'Connor
- Paterson
- Perth
- Richmond
- Robertson
- Shortland
- Solomon
- Swan



DRUG/ALCOHOL USE

- Barker
- Bass
- Blaxland
- Braddon
- Herbert
- Lingiari
- Port Adelaide
- Wannon
- Kennedy
- Parkes
- Fenner



TERTIARY EDUCATION COSTS

- Aston
- Brisbane
- Cunningham
- Fremantle
- Gellibrand
- McPherson
- Moreton
- Stirling
- Tangney



YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

- Dickson
- Fadden
- Flynn
- Maranoa
- Maribyrnong
- Page



EDUCATION STANDARDS

- Burt
- Longman
- Forde
- New England



PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM

- Bruce
- Newcastle
- Scullin



YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

- Gippsland
- Lindsay



CLOSING THE GAP

- Mallee



REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Werriwa



FOREIGN AID

- Eden-Monaro





THE ACT

The average age of the young people from the ACT who participated in my consultation was 16.7. Young people in the ACT are passionate about a large range of issues from curriculum reform to climate change. The top five issues that they would like the government to take action on can be found over the page.

14% of young Territorians in the consultation said that they feel like their opinions are represented by those in the government.

Responses like Alice's (15): **"We are young adults and most of us have big ideas that are as valid as those of adults and politicians."** can be seen across the ACT electorates, with many young people calling on their representatives to take them seriously. Of the young Territorians involved in the 2017 consultation, 15% of them feel like their opinions are represented in current government policy, and 37% of them feel like they are taken seriously as a young people, by those in positions of power.

63% of young people across the ACT follow

the news every day. They draw on a variety of sources, including, but not limited to: national broadcasters, radio, online foreign news services. They also get information from social media feeds (predominantly Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram). Additionally, Snapchat, and Reddit, local papers, free-to-air broadcast television, new media companies such as Junkee, Pedestrian, and BuzzFeed.

More than half (56%) of young people in the ACT can name their local Federal Member of Parliament.

"What is the important issue facing young people in your local community?"

1. Mental health services
2. Discrimination
3. Youth engagement with politics
4. Job opportunities
5. Cost of education
6. Climate change
7. Abuse/harrassment
8. Education funding
9. Housing affordability
10. LGBTI Rights

64% of the young people in the ACT in the Consultation know what they plan to do for a career, with many concerned about job pathways, and relevant education with frequent talk of career paths leaving them slightly uncertain about their futures.

Curious, we asked about some preferences that young people have for a range of things. 77% prefer dogs to cats. 54% prefer books to movies. 59% prefer Summer to Winter, and 69% prefer a swim in the ocean to a bushwalk.

What some young people in ACT wish you knew, and considered about their stories when making policy:

"My mental health is deteriorating, Im concerned there isn't enough help or awareness about mental health issues. I am also gay and concerned that marriage equality won't pass in Australia." Ameia, 15.

"That I am a Muslim, and a first generation Australian, but most importantly that I am simply a passionate young Australian citizen. That our differences of experiences and cultures should be embraced. And that I have been lucky enough to come across some amazing opportunities and amazing people who have helped and continue to help me along my lifelong journey of learning and social change. It's easy for young people to get lost in the noise of the world and the expectations placed upon us as individuals and as a generation." Aqeel, 17.

"Refugees are human beings, with families, emotions and aspirations... they are people just like you and me. They have the basic human right to safety and peace, just like you and me. If someone is willing to risk their own life, and the life of their loved ones, in hopes that they will be able to live a safer and happier life, they must be experiencing something so unbearable it seems worth it. The issue is one that is so serious and prevalent." Noor, 17.

94%

are interested in learning more about current events

76%

are interested in learning more about the United Nations

74%

are interested in learning more about how the government makes decisions

1

Climate change

Was the top concern for young Territorians

"We need stronger policies and actions reflecting scientific evidence." Emma, 13.

2

Gender equality

Equality between genders is important

"I think they need to work on gender equality because everyone should be equal." Max, 14.

3

Marriage equality

was important in the ACT

"Why shouldn't people be allowed to marry the person they love?" Jemimah, 12.

4

Healthcare

Improving mental health and disability services were of significance.

"Improving disability and mental health services is not only an issue regarding the Government but also the community. For example, the stigma surrounding

5

Housing affordability

was frequently mentioned in the consultation

"Many of us are scared we will never be able to own a house" Mikayla, 15.

STORIES FROM THE ACT



"I wish the government supported young people to think critically about journalism. An era has ended in which a handful of media groups almost exclusively delivered 'the news'. These groups no longer are the 'gatekeepers' of public information.

This is the most powerful opportunity humanity has ever possessed. But we don't yet know how to use it. When getting our news, people face the largest cacophony of voices from across the globe that they ever have. Schooling should focus more specifically on teaching people to look for the evidence which underlies a claim. Then, evidence itself should be held to greater scrutiny. The public is woefully educated on the motives which may underly a news organisation, journalist, study or other source. We also aren't prepared on how to interpret data. When we see a cited study, that study can be intuitively taken as authoritative. School doesn't teach sufficiently to think about sample size, time, or any range of factors which warrants scepticism. We often hear the phrase 'objectivity' used in a way that implies journalists should have no opinion. But in an era of information overload, where the path forward can seem more ambiguous than ever, perhaps that conception is not helpful - if it ever was. People should expect their journalists to suggest the way forward. Issues with doing so disappear if the public scrutinises those claims rigorously.

Only through fostered scepticism can we build consensus. So let's help people become more sceptical."

Nick, 20, ACT.



"I wish the government could provide mores assistance to the children from Defence families. At my school, we have a Defence mentor. It is only my first term at the school and I always enjoy being able to talk with a mentor and fellow students from Defence families.

Before moving to this school, I attended 3 other schools both overseas and interstate. None of which ever supported me. I feel it's important for schools to have these programs because it's hard to have parents who are deployed or living away from us."

Sarah, 14, ACT



"I wish the government knew more of the determination of young people to not be disadvantaged by their postcodes, and recognised the community organisations that support them to achieve regardless of where they live."

Corinda, 20, ACT.



"I wish the government knew that young Australians care about international health crises especially those facing women in Africa. I have particular concern with the poor standards of maternal health-care that jeopardise the wellbeing of women. Women should have the right to adequate maternal healthcare."

Munashe, 19, ACT.



"There should be no discrepancies between the quality and resources of public and private schools, and it's ludicrous there are some private institutions receiving more funding than public. I believe that education is the key to equality in employment, health, and all social aspects of life."

Manon, 19, ACT.



"I wish the government knew how worried I am about the impacts of climate change on our world. The environment is a very important issue that deserves more serious consideration from those in the position to make changes."

Ella, 19, ACT.



"I wish the government had more awareness of women's health issues, and the impact of these issues. Almost one in ten women in Australia live with endometriosis, and yet there is little awareness of what it even is. For me, it means that I take ridiculously expensive medication imported from Canada so that I can live my life somewhat normally. It means it'll take an extra year to finish my degree. It means I might not get to have children. Endometriosis is estimated to cost \$7.7 billion dollars annually, so surely there should be more recognition of this disease and more action taken by our government."

Kate, 19, ACT.



"I wish the government knew about the challenges young people-of-colour and immigrants have to face with within our society. The institutional obstacles and the awful recent discourse around the world has only made the situation worse for communities-of-colour. But I know (or at least hope) that Australians and our political leaders are more welcoming than what some of our recent actions might suggest."

Karan, 22, ACT.



"I am simply a passionate young Australian citizen who has been lucky enough to come across some amazing opportunities and incredible people who have helped and continue to help me along my lifelong journey of learning and social impact. However, It's easy for young people, including myself to get lost in the noise of the world and the expectations placed upon us as individuals and as a generation.

I wish the government realised that the youth around Australia and throughout the world want to make a positive difference, but are held back by the system of education we are brought up in. A system that focuses on content and information but doesn't teach us the skills, and provide us with the experiences that are going to be so key to driving our successes. A system that socializes us to believe we aren't capable of changing the world as young people. We just need to be shown doors to opportunities we never even knew existed, and feel empowered by people's belief in our potential. We change the world everyday, but to change the world in a way that means something unfortunately takes more time than most of us have, and I just don't have that level of patience. We need to promote a culture that fosters young leaders and empowers us to act on our passions in a way that catalyses change, and innovate our education to embody the nexus of skills, creativity and experiences that is so vital in ensuring we not only survive but thrive together in the future we have to live in."

Aqeel, 17, ACT.



"As a young woman, it is so disappointing to see so few women in Cabinet and in parliament at all. If the government is truly committed to gender equality throughout society then they should ensure that the highest levels of government are inclusive of women. Women have an important voice and I want to see the next generation of girls grow up with more role models in politics."

Steph, 21, ACT.



"I wish the government recognised the importance of an inclusive, extensive, and well resourced arts landscape. Since time immemorial this land has sustained a vital and vibrant tradition of human culture and storytelling. Ensuring every Australian is empowered to share, scrutinise, and celebrate their experiences, identities, and values is essential in honouring this history and enriching our future."

Marni, 19, ACT



"I wish governments knew that health starts with a pathway. The most simple public health solutions are influencing individual's lifestyle-changes through early intervention. I grew up in a household where my parents were doctors. I very rarely went to the doctor, but it wasn't like I was treated at home from the sick bed. It was because my parents promoted a healthy lifestyle - by teaching me to cook. Sure, I could cook fried chicken but it was easier to make a stir fry. Less oil burns too. My mother is doing research on something called the Healthy Kids Check for her PhD. It's a mechanism for GPs to give a broad based picture of a child's health through key indicators in the toddler and childhood years of development. She's completing a PhD by publication, and she was 5 years in when a new health minister cut Medicare subsidisation for the Healthy Kids Check. Start healthy lifestyles by allowing early intervention. The pathway to public health requires individuals to be prompted to change their lifestyles. Doctors are the ushers of that pathway. Governments need to recognise they require effective tools to achieve outcomes."

Jeevan, 19, ACT.



"I wish the government knew how hard it is to not have a consistent curriculum and education system for students who move interstate very often. Due to my father's job, I have lived in WA, Queensland, and the ACT. Each of these states has a differing education system. Even the two states that use the ATAR system have two different ways of calculating it! This difference makes it very difficult to move often, as you end up not only missing chunks of content that you need, but you also spend a lot of energy trying to understand the different systems. I have done Year 10 Chemistry and Physics 3 times, but have not learnt a thing about DNA because I kept missing the Biology unit in every school I attended that year. This is now affecting the way I approach university entrance exams like the BMAT. You end up having to choose between getting good grades and making friends, as it's incredibly difficult to do both while trying to fill in things that you have missed and figuring out the dynamics of a new system. This inconsistency makes life hard for teachers too. They are unable to assess student's abilities properly, sometimes resulting in students who are very capable being kept back from extension classes. We should not be forced to international schools in the search for a curriculum that is consistent. There's no such thing as an 'Australian school system,' but maybe it's time that there is one."

Rhea, 16, ACT.



NEW SOUTH WALES

The average age of the young people from NSW who participated in my consultation was 16.8. Young people across NSW are passionate about a large range of issues from regional development, to curriculum reform. The top five issues that young people in NSW would like the government to take action on can be found over the page.

16% of young New South Welshman in the consultation say that they feel like their opinions are represented by those in the government.

Responses like Tabitha's (18): **"We are not a lazy generation. We are a generation with ideas, thoughts, and dreams, who are frequently told they are invalid or unachievable."** can be seen across most NSW electorates, with many young people calling on their representatives to take them seriously. Of the young people from NSW involved in the 2017 consultation, 36% of them feel like they are taken seriously as a young people, by those in positions of power. 60.7% of young people across NSW follow the news every day. They draw on a variety

of sources, including, but not limited to: social media feeds (predominantly Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. Occasionally Snapchat, and Reddit), local papers, free-to-air broadcast television, national broadcasters, radio, online foreign news services (such as Al Jazeera, and the New York Times), new media companies such as Junkee, Pedestrian, and BuzzFeed.

61% of young people in NSW can name their local Federal Member of Parliament.

65% of the young New South Welshman in

"What is the important issue facing young people in your local community?"

1. Mental health services
2. Housing affordability
3. Job opportunities
4. Youth engagement in politics
5. Discrimination
6. Drug/alcohol use
7. Education funding
8. Cost of tertiary education
9. Abuse/harrassment
10. Climate change

the Consultation know what they plan to do for a career, with many concerned about job pathways, and relevant education with frequent talk about the "future of work" leaving them slightly uncertain about their futures.

Curious, we asked about some preferences that young people have for a range of things. 87% of young people in NSW prefer the internet to television. 76.5% prefer dogs to cats. Slightly more (50.05%) prefer books to movies. 78% of young people in NSW rather Marvel than DC. 51% prefer YouTube to Netflix. 55% prefer Summer to Winter. And 58% prefer a swim in the ocean to a bushwalk.

What some young people in NSW wish you knew, and considered about their stories when making policy:

"Young people aren't engaging with politics because they aren't represented. A minister for youth would be a good start!" Caity, 21.

"I wish the Government knew that it terrifies me to see inaction on climate change (and to even see steps taken in the complete wrong direction). I wish the Government knew that it breaks my heart to see refugees seeking asylum in Australia, be abused and neglected in Australia's name. I wish the Government knew how angry I am about so many issues, and how powerless I sometimes feel. But I also hope that the Government knows how strong our voices are, and how persistent we can be. I hope they know that I'll be fighting every step of the way, until we have proper, long-term solutions to so many of the issues facing us today." Josie, 19.

"Invest more in science and technology to make Australia a global leader in innovation. Don't just spread and raise awareness about it. Encourage local science and technology businesses to hire local Australians here." Brenda, 21.

1 Housing affordability

Was the top issue in NSW.

"House prices rise every year, it is becoming impossible for us to afford a house or even an apartment." Eassie, 15.

2 Gender equality

Equality between genders is important for young people in NSW.

"I wish the government considered issues of gender inequality, such as the gender wage gap and the effect it has on women" Rose, 16.

3 Climate change

Was a frequent concern for young people in NSW.

"I grew up overseas in a country that was severely affected by climate change. These threatening signs to LIFE ON EARTH will not be solved by itself." Lizzy, 16.

4 Healthcare

Improving mental health and disability services were of significance.

"Access to mental health support is huge (Medicare psychologists have waiting lists for 3+ months) which is a long time to wait if you're suicidal and can't afford other services!" Hannah, 20.

5 Marriage equality

Young people in NSW called for government action on marriage equality.

"Marriage equality: just do it so we can get on with other important things" Rand, 17.

92%

are interested in learning more about current events

80%

are interested in learning more about the United Nations

77%

are interested in learning more about how the government makes decisions

STORIES FROM NEW SOUTH WALES



"Growing up I spent a lot of time in hospitals. I was usually there for long-term stays. Hospitals were places where specialists treated me like a puzzle to be solved and where friends visited confused because I didn't 'look' sick. Other than my close family, the people who helped me get through every single hospitalisation were my nurses.

My nurses were the ones who were there to explain to me complicated medical jargon when doctors on their rounds left in a flurry. They were there to chat to me about my favourite books and movies at 2am when I couldn't sleep because of the pain. They were there to help clean me when I couldn't walk and feed me when I couldn't lift a fork to my mouth (airplane sounds and all). If it wasn't for the nurses I had, the weeks and months I spent in hospital would have been unbearable, but instead amongst all of the bad there was still laughter and silliness. There was still time to make ice-cream sandwiches and dress up as ghosts in the spare sheets and for a kid who is sick, that's all you really need. I wish the government knew that nurses aren't just there to assist doctors. Nurses are there to actively make patients' lives easier and better and happier and they deserve to be valued so much more than they are."

Danielle, 19, NSW.



"I wish the government knew that for me to travel to and from work, I need to take public transport. Young people are often labelled as "lazy" but in reality, we need reliable, and affordable public transport to get around when we have working parents."

Zane, 16,



"I wish the government knew that there are a lot of safe young drivers that deserve the trust to be able to drive more than one person home at night so their friends aren't left stranded or tempted to make dangerous decisions."

Lily, 17, NSW.



"I wish the government spent as much time and resources on protecting our environment as they do on protecting our borders. Climate change will affect young people the most."

Jacqueline, 22, NSW.



"I wish the government knew how important it is for me to have autonomy over my own body. I am a mother, and I am pro choice. I love being a mother, and becoming a mother reinforced for me the importance of women being able to make decisions about their bodies, and their futures. In Australia, a woman seeking an abortion will meet a very different fate depending on which state she lives in - from imprisonment, to needing two doctors approval, or facing threatening picketers. There needs to be a national cohesive policy towards abortion that is free from stigma, and gives women their full legal rights."

Jodie, 22, NSW.



"I wish the government knew how disheartened I am by the way that teachers are perceived in Australia. Since starting my education degree I've lost count of the number of times that people have questioned my career choice and told me that I "could do so much more."

How is it that we've gotten to a point where those who nurture our country's future are so undervalued by the rest of society?"

Rebecca, 22, NSW.



"I wish the government knew that I have great expectations of how we will deal with the challenges that face our cities. Urban density is our future. I don't mean that in an aspirational sense. I mean to say that it is the unavoidable trajectory of Australian society. The integrity of our public domain and urban infrastructure and our commitment to environmental sustainability will inevitably be stressed. Proactive, innovative and design-led solutions will be needed to make sure our cities continue to be livable for all. ustralia is teeming with passionate and knowledgeable people in these fields so I am totally optimistic about our ability to produce these solutions and maybe even lead internationally. I think the challenge will be committing and focusing support for these people to do their work. I also think we all have a responsibility to make sure the powers that be care about these issues as much as they should."

Zachary, 22, NSW.



"I wish the government knew that my dream is to work on things that make a difference by changing our world for the better. However, whether I get a chance to make that change tomorrow depends on government actions today."

Daniel, 13, NSW.



"I wish the government knew how harmful it is to have such constrictive narratives of minority groups in the media.

At present, there are two dominant narratives surrounding Asian people: the "pushy and rude" Asian and the "shy and nerdy" Asian. Both these portrayals are huge generalisations, incredibly restrictive and to a degree, have negative connotations. When I was younger I use to struggle a lot with my heritage. I would feel ashamed and embarrassed because Western media had told me that I would grow up to be someone who was seen as rowdy and insolent.

Showing multifaceted stories of minority groups in society is vital in breaking the homogenous mould currently given to us by the media."

Simone, 17, NSW.



"I wish that the government knew that despite looking physically fine, I have a spinal injury and mental health issues that have forced me to redefine my limits. I wish that they could offer more support to those who do not fit the stereotype of someone with a disability. I know my limits do not define who I am, what I can do, and what I will achieve in the future."

Karen, 20, NSW.



"Being someone who identifies as part of the LGBTIQ community, I wish the government understood how necessary education and awareness-raising is in regard to our rights.

Young people are impressionable, so a lack of recognition, representation, and empowerment of people in minority groups can be detrimental to communities. Mental health issues are extremely prevalent in the LGBTIQ community, and should be addressed more seriously in educational systems, like the school curriculum."

Jac, 16, NSW.



"I wish the government knew that I pay well over half my income in rent, so that I can live a reasonable commute away from my university. I volunteer, have work experience, and work hard at university, but there's a 25% chance that I won't be able to find full time employment on graduating, and an even higher chance I won't find employment within my field of study.

I wish the government treated these kinds of issues seriously, rather than dismissing them as the baseless complaints of entitled young people."

Jonty, 22, NSW.



"I wish the government knew how much one teacher can change the life of a young kid in school. I'm studying physics because one teacher, the best science teacher at my all-girls school, told me that I could do it, and he changed my life forever. He stopped me from limiting myself to the 'girls' subjects, and I need the government to know that those teachers have more power over our future than anyone else.

If we want to see change in our society, we need to start treating our teachers the way they deserve to be treated."

Jen, 18, NSW.



"The government needs to take into consideration the young Australians going out on their own at a young age. It's difficult enough to live in an environment that expects many of us to take unpaid internships alongside paid work to cover rent at 50% of our wage, without being constantly called lazy or being reminded of the fantasy that somehow we could afford a house if we avoided avocado toast."

Thomas, 22, NSW.



"I wish the government knew how bad our society is at actually understanding mental health issues. Despite around one in five Australians confronting the difficulties of a mental illness in any given year, there is very little formal education on what these illnesses might be and on the different ways they can manifest. I say this not as someone who has all the answers and wishes everyone else would catch up; I say this as someone who constantly feels lost, scared and terrifyingly ignorant as to what is going on in my own head. Ending the stigma is only the first step – I wish the government knew that there is a big difference between not recoiling in fear and shame at the words "mental illness," and actually having the confidence to confront your own mental health and be there for other people trying to understand theirs. Unfortunately, it seems like we, as a society, are still struggling to even take that first step."

Danny, 19, NSW.



"I wish that the government knew how much people care about the way that we're treating refugees and asylum seekers. Compassion should inform our decisions."

Mena, 21, NSW



THE NT

The average age of the young people from the NT who participated in my consultation was 16. Young people across the NT are passionate about a large range of issues from regional development, to curriculum reform. The top five issues that young people in the NT would like the government to take action on can be found over the page.

16% of young Territorians in the consultation say that they feel like their opinions are represented by those in the government.

Responses like Yannis' (17): **"We are the next generation and decisions shouldn't be made for us without our input"** can be seen across both NT electorates, with many young people calling on their representatives to take them seriously. Of the young people from the NT involved in the 2017 consultation, 32% of them feel like they are taken seriously as a young people, by those in positions of power.

42.1% of young people across the territory follow the news every day. They draw on a variety of sources, including, but not limited

to: social media feeds (predominantly Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. Occasionally Snapchat, and Reddit), local papers, free-to-air broadcast television, national broadcasters, radio, online foreign news services (such as Al Jazeera, and the New York Times), new media companies such as Junkee, Pedestrian, and BuzzFeed.

49% of young people in the NT can name their local Federal Member of Parliament.

63% of the young Territorians in the Con-

"What is the important issue facing young people in your local community?"

- 1. Drug/alcohol use**
- 2. Mental health services**
- 3. Crime**
- 4. Youth engagement in politics**
- 5. Education funding and inequality**
- 6. Discrimination**
- 7. Peer pressure**
- 8. Climate change**
- 9. Abuse/harrassment**
- 10. Job opportunities**

sultation know what they plan to do for a career, with many concerned about job pathways, and relevant education with frequent talk about the "future of work" leaving them slightly uncertain about their futures.

Curious, we asked about some preferences that young people have for a range of things. 87% of young people in the NT prefer the internet to television. 78% prefer dogs to cats. 58% prefer movies to books. 82% of young people in the NT rather Marvel than DC. 54% prefer YouTube to Netflix. They have no preference between Summer and Winter. 52% prefer a swim in the ocean to a bushwalk.

What some young people in the NT wish you knew, and considered about their stories when making policy:

"Tertiary education shouldn't be made impossibly hard to achieve (financially speaking), as a young person, I work 16 hours a week, attend school every day, study after school 4-8 hours every week day, and am expected to be preparing myself to enter a tertiary institution. I face physical disabilities and mental health issues. The system tertiary education is currently under makes it near impossible for me to gain the level of education which I desperately long for. Education should not be only accessible by the rich or physically abled." Jemma, 17.

"When I see the conflict, famine and social unrest that causes the greatest refugee crisis since WW2, I see human beings, the same as us. And because of this I care about how Australia responds. I care that the Australian government has cut foreign aid, I care that Australia is breaking the Refugee Convention." Eliza, 17.

"We are remote. We aren't uneducated. We aren't careless. We aren't voiceless. We have passion and someday we will be making the decisions you are making. Take us seriously." Phoebe, 16.

87%

are interested in learning more about current events

65%

are interested in learning more about the United Nations

54%

are interested in learning more about how the government makes decisions

1

Healthcare

Improving mental health and disability services were of significance

"Mental Health is a pretty big issues, along with awareness and understanding." Digby, 16.

2

Gender equality

Equality between genders is important for young people in the NT

"Changing laws around marriage equality and gender rights are all children will know as they grow up and they will believe that they are equal." Maisie, 15.

3

Climate change

Was a frequent concern for young people in the NT

"Climate change is changing everything from food security, food safety, health, and refugees." Nisanji, 15.

4

Drug/alcohol use

Young people want action

"We need more facilities/programs related to helping with mental health and drug use issues." Zoe, 16.

5

Marriage equality

Young people in the NT called for government action on marriage equality

"I wish the government would recognise that the majority of Australians agree with marriage equality."Morgan, 16.

STORIES FROM THE NORTHERN TERRITORY



"I wish the government knew that there is more to schools than academics. Schools can be safe havens where students from all backgrounds have the opportunity to feel supported and valued. As a teacher of middle school students within the Northern Territory, I have come to understand that the classroom is a microcosm of the real world, and even with my youngest students I can see the pressures of the grown-up world that they are already burdened with. Some of them are the heads of their family, supporting their parents or siblings who are alcoholics or in gaol. I hear kids say racist slurs to each other, who bully each other and fight with each other, and I know they are just internalising and mirroring the worst of their realities, because it's all they know. For some of these kids, school isn't merely a place to learn. It is their safe haven. And as their teacher, I feel that sometimes the best way for me to educate them is to not only be their teacher, but to be their person. Although the themes within 'Romeo and Juliet' are important, so is sitting and talking about our families and plans for the future. Sometimes, class karaoke singalongs and rap battles are what they need more than essay writing and spelling tests. In a world where many of these students face a life harsher than they deserve, it is important to remember that school can also be a place where they can play, have fun, be themselves and feel safe. I tell my students I love them every day, not just because it is true, but because there's a chance that I might be the only person who tells them that, and it's something everyone deserves to hear." Hannah, 24, NT.



"I wish the government knew that as a 17 year old girl I am constantly told to be both my own individual person and to also fit within a specific box of what is considered to be intelligent. This is done by pinning myself against my fellow classmates to see who will make it out on top with the highest ATAR. My final years in high school have been some of the most stressful years of my life. I feel as though a single number is the dictates my future. I am constantly walking through the halls to see fellow classmates and friends breaking down in tears over a number-- a number in which is used once in our lives to define how successful we apparently will be in our future endeavours. But really, once I go to university, I can pass each of my subjects and then walk out with a degree in my chosen field."



"In this period of pessimism and fear, I am constantly in awe of my parents, especially my mum, who migrated to Australia nearly 22 years ago. She learnt English through attending night classes and by watching Play School and Sesame Street. Instead of looking down on groups of people, we should be proactively encouraging our political leaders to find meaningful ways of healing divisions." Chris, 19, NT.



"I wish the government understood the importance of multiculturalism. We lack leadership which encourages and facilitates relationships between people of different backgrounds here in Australia. We become more focused on keeping people out and creating a "label" for those who are different so that they have someone to blame for some of our countries issues. Multiculturalism is a beautiful thing and I feel as if we're beginning to forget that. I myself am a product of what I am talking about. My mother who is Indonesian was given the opportunity 25 years ago to come to Australia as an exchange teacher and met my father who is an Australian. Without that opportunity and the then government's policy focus of bringing people from overseas to Australia, I would not be here today. I have been lucky enough to have experienced Australian and Indonesian culture and can tell you that we have more in common than you may think." Max, 20, NT.



"I wish the government understood that changing the date of Australia Day will not only be symbolic but will also allow for a more open discourse that focuses on the past and present treatment of Indigenous Australians. The apology to the Stolen Generation was a defining moment in history, but it seems to be used as a way to prevent more change from occurring by using the excuse 'we have already apologised.' As someone who sees the effect of failed past and present government policies including the Territory Intervention, I want the government to make changes that benefit Australia's First Peoples rather than easing their own consciences. Focusing on introducing educational systems that focus on individual communities, incorporating more Indigenous languages and culture in classrooms, and addressing the institutionalised racism that is embedded in the Australian education, health, social and legal systems. The travesties that occurred on January 26th against the Indigenous population should be mourned. The day of celebrating a nation should be moved, to not only show respect but to also show what Australian values are. When we talk about "Australian values", I know we don't mean building a nation that oppresses, discriminates and ignores the plight of its people." Emma, 18, NT.



"I wish that the government would stop encouraging racial stereotypes, specifically when making legislation. I understand the necessity for legislation to be passed to protect the country from terrorism, however at what cost? Should a whole race feel persecuted for the actions of a minority? I wish the government would take into consideration just how much it will affect the audience of this legislation. To me, it seems like the government and public see terrorist acts committed predominantly by one group of people and assume that all people who look similar are bad. The shockwave of such an action creates a rippling effect of stereotypes focusing on race. This can lead to individuals being attacked due to their race and culture. I am tired of feeling nervous when a terrorist attack comes on TV and the terrorist's culture and background resembles my own. I am tired of shaving my beard for the sake of distancing myself to the faces on TV. I am tired of feeling like I need to reassure the people around me that I'm also English because being Indian is "too damn similar". I am tired of being persecuted by members of the public purely for my appearance. I am tired of the government saying they support multiculturalism, yet introducing laws that clearly do more harm than good." Russell, 19, NT.



"I wish the government would recognise how it feels to be a young woman Australian living in a culture where women and young people are often considered as less qualified to have political/social opinions on the issues facing us today. Rarely do I see my views and the views of my peers expressed by male politicians, and rarely do I see female politicians contribute without being ridiculed, insulted or questioned by male politicians for reasons that are irrelevant to the discussion, and irrelevant to their ability to make decisions as leaders and representatives." Morgan, 16, NT.



"I wish the government knew how much I care about the planet, and about climate change. This is our only home. We, as young people, have a good many years left on earth. The next generations will too. We will have to live with the consequences of the current government's environmental policy. By the time we ourselves are in government it will likely be too late to reverse the massive damage caused by climate change. I wish the government would take action now to protect our futures and our planet. Their decisions and policies today dictate the tomorrow of young people." Becky, 18, NT.



"I've always lived in Australia. I am a white Australian living on colonised country. My hope is that each non-Indigenous individual who represents others in parliament recognises their personal responsibility to learn about Australia's history. Breaking 'The Great Australian Silence' around historical and transgenerational injustices has to be about listening. Institutions, power brokers, individuals: listening, reading, engaging. Where to start? The Uluru Statement of the Heart. Australia can emerge stronger together with all her nations by recognising the strength of our First Nations peoples calling for Makarrata." Rosie, 23, NT.



"I wish the government knew how much I care about the planet, and about climate change. This is our only home. We, as young people, have a good many years left on earth. The next generations will too. We will have to live with the consequences of the current government's environmental policy. By the time we ourselves are in government it will likely be too late to reverse the massive damage caused by climate change. I wish the government would take action now to protect our futures and our planet. Their decisions and policies today dictate the



"I wish I the government knew the real struggles of young parents and higher education. Due to the thought of "not having enough money" to study for a degree at university, I decided whilst completing year 11 and 12, to take on a school-based apprenticeship. This allowed me to complete year 12, finish a certificate but most importantly support my financial needs at a young age. Unfortunately, this limited me to what I could accomplish in the long run. This did not give me an entry level to a university degree, but a job to work for after completing year 12. Now, working as a Program Consultant at the hospital and a mum to my dearest Antonio, I believe there needs to be more support that is accessible for young parents who wish to excel in their career -- no matter what it is. I wish they knew how hard it is for the youth who are disadvantaged that struggle to get the benefits that I've had to push and fight for before and during this time. I am privileged to be on the Northern Territory Youth Round Table for 2017 to be able to express and action my concern with this topic. I hope I am able to help make the change I wish to see in the world one day." Khayla, 24, NT.



QUEENSLAND

The average age of the Queenslanders who participated in my consultation was 15.7. Young Queenslanders are passionate about a large range of issues from regional development, to curriculum reform. The top five issues that young Queenslanders would like the government to take action on can be found over the page.

14% of young Queenslanders in the consultation said that they feel like their opinions are represented by those in the government.

Responses like Liv's (17): **"I wish they listened to the upcoming generations more, because we are the future"** can be seen across most Queensland electorates, with many young people calling on their representatives to take them seriously. Of the young Queenslanders involved in the 2017 consultation, 30% of them feel like they are taken seriously as a young people, by those in positions of power.

48% of young people across Queensland follow the news every day. They draw on a variety of sources, including, but not limited

to: social media feeds (predominantly Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. Occasionally Snapchat, and Reddit), local papers, free-to-air broadcast television, national broadcasters, radio, online foreign news services, new media companies such as Junkee, Pedestrian, and BuzzFeed.

Slightly less than half (46%) of young Queenslanders can name their local Federal Member of Parliament.

"What is the important issue facing young people in your local community?"

1. Mental health services
2. Job opportunities
3. Harrassment and abuse
4. Youth engagement with politics
5. Peer pressure
6. Education funding
7. Discrimination
8. LGBTI Rights
9. Housing affordability
10. Climate change

70% of the young Queenslanders in the Consultation know what they plan to do for a career, with many concerned about job pathways, and relevant education with frequent talk about the "future of the work-force" leaving them slightly uncertain about their futures.

Curious, we asked about some preferences that young people have for a range of things. 85% of young people in QLD prefer the internet to television. 81% prefer dogs to cats. 67% prefer movies to books. 71% of young people in QLD rather Marvel than DC. 63% prefer YouTube to Netflix. 52% prefer Winter to Summer. And 63% prefer a swim in the ocean to a bushwalk.

What some young people in QLD wish you knew, and considered about their stories when making policy:

"My mental health is deteriorating, Im concerned there isn't enough help or awareness about mental health issues. I am also gay and concerned that marriage equality won't pass in Australia." Ameia, 15.

"I wish they knew that regional and rural areas matter and that the young people from those area lack access to the quality of education, extra-curricular activities and work that young people from cities take for granted. I wish they understood that decisions like facilitating the mining boom, while it seemed amazing at the beginning, ended up ruining the life of the rural town I grew up in and had loved. Not only did it financially destroy hundreds of livelihoods by completely upturning the local economy, it also decimating crucial water systems and transformed valuable farming land into nothing more than empty properties with abandoned coal seam gas wells. I wish they knew that in the end people matter more than political donations, and that people that live outside of cities need to be considered in political decisions." Inari, 20.

"I am a human, not a hooligan" Cynan, 15.

83%

are interested in learning more about current events

65%

are interested in learning more about the United Nations

61%

are interested in learning more about how the government makes decisions

1 Marriage equality

Top issue raised by young QLDers.

"Why shouldn't people be allowed to marry the person they love?" Jemimah, 12.

2 Gender equality

Equality between genders is important for young Queenslanders.

"I think they need to work on gender equality because everyone should be equal." Max, 14.

3 Housing affordability

Was frequently mentioned in the consultation

"Many of us are scared we will never be able to own a house" Mikayla, 15.

4 Healthcare

Improving mental health and disability services were of significance.

"Improving disability and mental health services is not only an issue regarding the Government but also the community. For example, the stigma surrounding mental health issues" Jordan, 16.

5 Climate change

Was a frequent concern

"We need stronger policies and actions reflecting scientific evidence." Emma, 13.

STORIES FROM QUEENSLAND



"I wish the government actually valued education in the ways that they claim to. As a young person studying to become a teacher, it is incredibly disheartening to see the stress that teachers and students are put under as a result of our education system. I wish they translated this value into their long-time coming National Curriculum. As much as the National Curriculum is a great resource for primary and most secondary teachers and students, there is a massive gap in its structure for Senior students. It neglects any structure or goals for subjects outside of maths, English, and science, meaning that teachers and students who take any humanities or arts subjects have little to no help in ensuring that students can achieve highly in areas that our society doesn't seem to value. Students should know that there is always a place for their interests and talents, University cut offs to study education are at a consistently low level across Australian universities, and it shows how little value our society and government place on the worth of good teachers. I want the government to acknowledge that my chosen career has value and holds importance, because for some students, their teachers are the trusted adult, nurturer of ideas and talent, and the ones who introduce new concepts to their students. Teachers have the job of preparing the next cohort of doctors, lawyers, engineers, writers, and stock-brokers for their chosen careers, yet our chosen career is looked down upon, when that important place in society should always be valued."

Em, 20, QLD.



"“I wish the government understood the importance of anti-bullying programs such as Safe Schools. Too often young people slip through the cracks due to their gender identity or sexual orientation not fitting an acceptable ‘mould’. The rates of homelessness, mental illness and suicide amongst LGBTQIA* youths are frankly sickening. Especially considering that, even at 21, I still live in fear that I will not escape this cycle. The magnitude of this issue speaks to a disheartening lack of education and support in schools. The government should therefore be facilitating anti-bullying and sexual education programs, rather than actively stifling them.”"

Brandon, 20, QLD.



"The monetary gain of select “individuals” in no way validates the destruction of our nation’s natural resources and the prospects for future Australians. We must all learn to compromise if we wish to continue to enjoy the unparalleled beauty that we as a country have to offer."

Kate, 19, QLD.



"I wish the government understood that the representation and participation of young people in all levels of decision-making is not just as a pathway for a sustainable and prosperous economy for all but is a moral imperative for the rights and wellbeing of young people. Governmental interaction with young people must transcend paternalistic preaching or well-meaning but superficial outreach. Young people are not your rubberstamp or a box checking exercise. That regardless of however we present ourselves and however we engage in our democracy, it must be the obligation of government to meaningfully listen to us. Politicians of all parties must understand that the roots of youth disengagement stem from petty machinations that do nothing to reflect the diversity of us as people or our nuanced interests as citizens. That political deadlock and dysfunction does nothing to inspire us. We face everyday challenges of negotiating and navigating the complexity of bureaucracies, structural economic disadvantages, intersecting layers of discrimination all whilst the constant broadsides of intergenerational warfare we did not fire – that we are apathetic, entitled, lazy, delicate. And yet we passionate community leaders, pioneering entrepreneurs and innovators, and hardworking artists and scientists. Our political leaders and governments must see young people as who are: human beings with aspirations for not just a better tomorrow but a better today."

Tasman, 24, QLD.



"Being a part of a democracy means that we're bound to spend a great deal of our time in profound and often irrevocable disagreement with one another. The humanities may not be able to resolve those disagreements, but it at least endows us with the empathy, understanding and criticality to appreciate that there are just people on the other side issue. I wish the government knew the importance of the humanities in growing a democracy that isn't us and them, but we."

Damian, 22, QLD.



"Too often governments act and legislate and act in self serving ways, betraying the very people they have sworn to protect. Minority groups are too often marginalised, and this is unacceptable. If bettering the lives of all Australians is not a priority, then what is it?"

Kristopher, 22, QLD.



"I wish the government knew how hard farmers work to give us the food we eat and the clothes we wear. I wish they knew the strain that farming families face, and provided better mental health support services. I wish they knew the importance of farming land, both to farmers and Australia, and did more to protect it from mining companies and the effects of climate change. I wish they would consult and listen to farmers more often. I wish they knew that young people are being forced to leave the bush in huge numbers, and did more to alleviate the challenges they face in buying a property or finding a job. I'm incredibly proud to be descended from generations of farmers. They're the hardest-working people in Australia but they don't get weekends or holidays. They get up and go to bed in the dark, enduring sleepless nights worrying over the price of fuel or the weather forecast or the future of their family. But they're tough, and resilient, and cheerful, and generous, and we wouldn't be here without them."

Lachlan, 22, QLD.



"I wish the government knew I care about long term natural resource management. We need to think about how people will eat beyond the next 20 years, without destroying our planet."

Sarah, 21, QLD.



"I wish the government knew how important the sufficient funding of community legal services and advocacy organisations is for all of society. Funding the pursuit of community legal advocacy is essential for the improvement of legislative and government responses to diverse and broad legal issues."

Mia, 20, QLD.



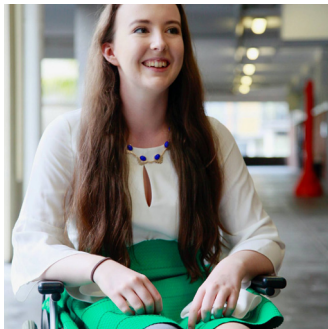
"I wish the government knew that all aspects of society are vulnerable to climate change. There are a lot of important things worth doing, but I wish the government knew how challenging I can find it sometimes to take any of it seriously in light of global inaction on climate change and the warnings from experts of our current trajectory. You can't govern for our generation without looking this existential threat in the face; I hope soon I can once again be proud of my country for taking leadership on this issue."

James, 23, QLD.



"I wish the government knew the financial burden that competing in high level sport, volunteering, academics, or music puts on regional students and young people. In order to be competing in your chosen area as a regional student, you are usually expected to travel to a major city. Flights alone often add hundreds of dollars onto an already expensive activity. Due to this many regional kids are left behind, or do not get recognised as they can not afford to make it down to larger competitions. This disparity often displays the narrative that regional students are not as educated as metro area students, when this is not the case. As a student who was lucky enough to play sport and participate at UN events, I often had to rely on scholarships to get me from point A to B. Gaining these scholarships can often be difficult and are not always accessible to regional students. This is further emphasised after leaving school, when you are viewed as an adult that can pay their own way."

Holly, 19, QLD.



"I wish the government knew that I am an asset not an inconvenience."

Brianna, 22, QLD.



"I wish the government knew that young women have it tough. You can't just describe our issues and tribulations in neat phrases such as 'gender pay gap', and 'women in STEM' either, although these problems do matter. What women face is much larger, and universal in nature. Whether it's the daily sexual harassment I can experience at my retail job, or a male student cutting me off while speaking in class, or one of the thousands of similar situations my female friends and I could experience, it all matters and it all negatively impacts a woman's confidence and experience and her opportunities thereafter. It's all part of the social conditioning that women and men alike are taught is normal behaviour. And it's near impossible to change this. I wish the government knew that, despite the rhetoric of “equality” and a “fair go” repeated throughout Australian society, not even the parliament can get it right and ensure women are safe, empowered and equal, and how incredibly demoralising that is for the young women in this country, including myself. And I wish the government knew how desperately we want, and deserve, better than this."

Jordana, 21, QLD



SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The average age of the South Australians who participated in my consultation was 15.3. Young South Australians are passionate about a large range of issues from regional development, to curriculum reform. The top five issues that young South Australians would like the government to take action on can be found over the page.

15% of young South Australians in the consultation say that they feel like their opinions are represented by those in the government.

Responses like Harry's (17): **"I wish the government would listen to the youth of Australia more, and consider our opinions before making decisions for and about us"** can be seen across most South Australian electorates, with many young people calling on their representatives to take them seriously. Of the young South Australians involved in the 2017 consultation, 38% of them feel like they are taken seriously as a young people, by those in positions of power.

44% of young people across South Australia

follow the news every day. They draw on a variety of sources, including, but not limited to: social media feeds (predominantly Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. Occasionally Snapchat), local papers, free-to-air broadcast television, national broadcasters, radio, online foreign news services, new media companies such as Junkee, Pedestrian, and BuzzFeed.

Slightly less than half (43%) of young South Australians can name their local Federal Member of Parliament.

“What is the important issue facing young people in your local community?”

1. Job opportunities
2. Mental health services
3. Harrassment and abuse
4. Youth engagement with politics
5. Discrimination
6. Education funding
7. Cost of education
8. Housing affordability
9. Peer pressure
10. LGBTI Rights

63% of the young South Australians in the Consultation know what they plan to do for a career, with many concerned about job pathways, and relevant education with frequent talk about the “future of work” leaving them slightly uncertain about their futures.

Curious, we asked about some preferences that young people have for a range of things. 88% of young people in South Australia prefer the internet to television. 78% prefer dogs to cats. 72% prefer movies to books. 68% of young people in South Australia rather Marvel than DC. 61% prefer YouTube to Netflix. 62% prefer Summer to Winter. And 51% prefer a swim in the ocean to a bushwalk.

What some young people in South Australia wish you knew, and considered about their stories when making policy:

“Children and youth are homeless and struggling. If nothing is done, the cycle will continue.” Sharni, 23.

“We’re not blind, we do see everything you do and we do all have opinions about it. We just don’t all know how to voice them when we’ve been told not to speak too loud our whole lives.” Charlotte, 17.

“I wish they considered and debated more long term issues such as technology, research and pressure on job security like the penalty rate cuts.” James, 17.

“That the best way forward is to put all of our abilities into science. The reason that we have developed so well recently is our innovation and progress in the field of science. I feel ashamed when we seem to neglect science and what it has given. I am only the person I am because of the previous innovation of scientists, and this world would be entirely different if we neglected scientific advancement.” Hamish, 20.

76%

are interested in learning more about current events

62%

are interested in learning more about the United Nations

60%

are interested in learning more about how the government makes decisions

1

Housing affordability

Top issue raised by young people in SA.

“I believe it is important to know that not everyone has all the money in the world to pay for a home to live in” Taresa, 18.

2

Marriage equality

Young people in SA called for government action on marriage equality.

“Marriage equality is a human right, it should not be something politicians bash around a room. Love is love.” Suman, 16.

3

Gender equality

Equality between genders is important for young South Australians.

“Gender inequality needs to be recognised in more places and something must be done.” Kira, 13.

4

Youth unemployment

Is a concern for many young people.

“It is so difficult to get a job out of high school and I need one to look after myself” Bailey, 17.

5

Healthcare

Improving mental health and disability services were of significance.

“We need better access to information and the facilities that provide mental health care.” Jeremy, 15.

STORIES FROM SOUTH AUSTRALIA



"I wish that the government knew that the current system for getting help with mental health, especially for students and younger people, is really difficult. Seeing a counsellor in schools for years and even seeing doctors and professional psychologists should result in a diagnosis and clear method of recovery. For most, seeing a doctor ends in a vague discussion and a mental health plan and a referral to a psychologist. There is rarely a clear cut diagnosis where people can name their mental health problems and be less scared of them. If the government knew this was an issue and we could, as a whole, work toward educating people on mental health issues, and treating them as physical ailments. Being scared of and not understanding your mental illness can only make it worse and more confusing and I wish the government understood this and would pay attention to this issue."

Sara, 17, SA.



"I wish the government knew and acted on the super transformative power of the arts. Being involved in theatre and music was a creative outlet for me, and it's distressing that young people may not be offered the same opportunities. The amount of local theatre companies and like organisations that are shrinking is upsetting, because of the real and tangible experience young people gain from being involved in the arts."

Christina, 20, SA



"I wish the government would recognise that the customer service performance of their welfare system and other services is severely lacking and often overly complicated.

Websites such as Centrelink or the ATO, though designed to be secure, are the opposite of user friendly, and people shouldn't be forced to jump through hoops in order to receive the benefits they need and deserve. Much more needs to be done to meet the standards of accessibility and ease that are expected of services used by such a large and diverse customer base."



"I wish the government knew and cared about sexual health issues facing young people, and the stigma and lack of education surrounding the topic of sex. As a young person, I am fortunate enough to grow up in a generation which is actively reducing sexual stigmas. However, I feel like we were left behind in schools, with sexual education only covering arbitrary activities like putting condoms on bananas. As someone living with sexual dysfunction, I struggled for many years not knowing what was 'wrong' with me, feeling isolated, alienated and alone throughout some formative teenage years. With some basic education, I could have been saved years of insecurity and unhealthy relationships not only with others but with myself. I wish the government knew that their educational programs miss really important aspects of sex, such as dysfunction, masturbation, consent and abuse. Sex is not like the movies, and with a generation of young people relying on pornography for their sexual education we are setting the expectations and 'norms' at a 'Hollywood' level. Furthermore, I wish the government would assist in educating people on sexual abuse, and supporting preventative programs so we can reduce the horrifying statistics that currently stand. I want to see leaders not only recognise, but embrace sexual liberation and freedom as the new 'norm', and have mature conversations about how we can progress as a society in supporting everyone to have the healthiest lives possible."

Ebony, 20, SA.



"I wish the government would recognise that the customer service performance of their welfare system and other services is severely lacking and often overly complicated. Websites such as Centrelink or the ATO, though designed to be secure, are the opposite of user friendly, and people shouldn't be forced to jump through hoops in order to receive the benefits they need and deserve. Much more needs to be done to meet the standards of accessibility and ease that are expected of services used by such a large and diverse customer base."

Reem, 20, NSW.



"All love is deserving of equal recognition and respect, regardless of a couple's sexuality or gender identification. It's time we as a country acknowledge this. Love is love."

Niav, 18, SA.



"I wish the government understood how important railways can be and how they can continue to change the world. Railways are what began globalisation but just because they might not be driving it now does not mean that they are obsolete. Railways can be useful both in an urban and regional context, both from an economic and social perspective, but Australia's rail network is in serious need of an overhaul. In a regional setting, rail connections mean that freight can be easily transported in bulk, whilst also allowing a level of mobility that only road vehicles can better, and even then only minimally. Railways are the sustainable option, being easy to run off of renewable sources, something which planes simply cannot offer, and cars cannot compete on over long distances. In urban areas, railways take cars off the road, again proving a more sustainable choice, as well easing the burden on a congested roads system, something which neither buses nor cars can do. Furthermore, public transport is incredibly important to both young people and older people, who may often not have the option of driving, giving them mobility and independence they otherwise would not have. Australia's rail network is no where near up to standard. It should not take 11 hours to get from Adelaide to Melbourne; trains should be able to travel significantly faster than an average speed of roughly 75km/h. There should be a way to travel with more speed and comfort than a car or a bus, without the expense and hassle of a plane; and that way is the railway."

Ned, 20, SA.



"I wish the government knew that despite living 10 minutes away from University by car, it takes me an hour to get there on public transport. Safe, reliable, and wide spread public transport is essential for young people to be able to live their lives. In Adelaide, as with much of Australia the public transport system is built to get people into and out of the CBD, while suburb to suburb public transport is severely overlooked. This means that people are forced to use cars in order to get to things like doctors' offices and supermarkets, as public transport options simply do not exist."

Tim, 20, SA.



"I wish the government knew that social media is a powerful medium that unites the youth of Australia and the youth of the world. It is a platform of communication that opens our eyes to global issues as they happen. Social media can call upon people to stand against injustices within our community. It is becoming increasingly evident that the world is becoming connected via social media; therefore, it is important that social media campaigns and messages are not over looked amongst traditional forms of media."

Henry, 16, SA.



"I wish the government knew that young LGBTI Australians have so much to offer in the community, and that our mental health and wellbeing must be invested in. LGBTI Australians have the highest suicide rate of any population in Australia, with a 14 times higher suicide attempt rate amongst same-sex attracted people and up to 50% of trans Australians attempting suicide in their lifetime. You would think that our leaders would see this as a national crisis, with urgent money being injected into mental health services, anti-bullying programs, legislative reform, and public awareness campaigns. But they're not – they're doing the opposite. Perhaps I'm an idealist, but I believe in a future Australia where people from all orientations and gender identities are valued for who they are. I hope that one day, maybe following the coming out of a friend or family member, a conversation at a campaign event with a queer constituent, or perhaps even a letter that stood out from the pile, our leaders will believe in this Australia also. Until then, all we can do is be visible, be heard, and keep applying glitter as needed."

Amos, 21, SA.



"I wish that the government understood that sanitary items are not luxury items. They are the complete opposite, they are a necessity for half of the population. By maintaining the GST on sanitary items, women are being taxed for a bodily function and the government are receiving approximately \$25 million annually. Just like sunscreen and nicotine patches are tax free, so should the pads and tampons that I and every woman in Australia have to buy every couple of weeks. Furthermore, the increased cost of sanitary items due to the GST makes buying them a greater burden for women who cannot afford them. Taxing women for sanitary items would be similar to taxing people for being left handed or having blue eyes; it is simply unfair."

Lia, 15, SA.



"I wish the government knew that young people can and do change the world. I want more investment into the youth sector, because I want to spend my life empowering young people."

Nicola, 21, SA.



TASMANIA

The average age of the Tasmanians who participated in my consultation was 14.8. Young Tasmanians are passionate about a large range of issues from regional development, to curriculum reform. The top five issues that young Tasmanians would like the government to take action on can be found over the page.

23% of young Tasmanians in the consultation say that they feel like their opinions are represented by those in the government.

Responses like Max's (14): **"I wish the government knew that I care about my future. I understand that the world is complicated, but we should be included in decision-making."** can be seen across most of Tasmania, with many young people calling on their representatives to take them seriously. Of the young Tasmanians involved in the 2017 consultation, 37% of them feel like they are taken seriously as a young people, by those in positions of power.

Almost half (48%) of young people across Tasmania follow the news every day. They

draw on a variety of sources, including, but not limited to: social media feeds (predominantly Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram), local papers, free-to-air broadcast television, national broadcasters, radio, online foreign news services, new media companies such as Junkee, Pedestrian, and Buzzfeed.

About 78% of young Tasmanians are interested in learning about current events happening outside Australia.

Curious, we asked about some preferences that young people have for a range

"What is the most important issue facing young people in your local community?"

- 1. Unemployment**
- 2. Drugs/Alcohol abuse**
- 3. Youth engagement with politics**
- 4. Harassment and abuse**
- 5. Discrimination**
- 6. Mental Health**
- 7. Youth engagement**
- 8. Social media and technology**
- 9. Cost of education**
- 10. Education inequality**

of things. 80% of young people in Tasmania prefer dogs to cats, while 74% prefer summer over winter. 93% of the young people we consulted with prefer the Internet over television. The Marvel/DC battle is still being fought, with a close 52% of young Tasmanians claiming allegiance to Marvel superheroes.

What some young people in Tasmania wish you knew, and considered about their stories when making policy:

"That young people aren't entitled millennials wasting our money on frivolous expenses - we pay higher rents, have more essential costs, and the job market is harder to enter than ever before." Katie, 23.

"I want the government to know that I have very high dreams for my future as I want to study Medicine at University, but the costs are very high. My family is not exactly rich so as soon as I can get a job, I will get one so that I can go to University." Seonaid, 13.

"That I make an effort to be well informed, and that the decisions I make and opinions I form now are genuine, and not something I will grow out of." Jamila, 25.

"I have played sport my whole life and living in Burnie has made the goals I want to achieve much harder as people in areas such as Hobart are open to more coaching, team opportunities, benefits etc." Sophie, 16.

The goverment should consider that people who are in poverty aren't just numbers, they are actual people who have lives and families. The goverment should actually help these people instead of writing down the amount of people in poverty." Eimear, 13.

1 Marriage equality
Top issue raised by young Tasmanians
"Marriage equality - stop treating it as a political football and get on with making a decision based on the voice of the country" Ellis, 23.

2 Gender equality
Was a frequent concern for young Tasmanians
"It isn't about saying females are better. My mum is an Asian female engineer and senior manager...They devalue her worth. This isn't the kind of society I want to 'grow up' into." Annabelle, 15.

3 Healthcare
Improving mental health and disability services were of significance
"I wish that they considered my mental health issues...when making decisions about me" Rhiannon, 15.

4 Climate change
Young people in Tasmania want to see more climate action
"We have climate change to deal with. We need the government to plan ahead so that we have a healthier climate and fairer world to live in" Mary Scully, 19.

5 Animal welfare
Protection of animal welfare was important to young Tasmanians
"Horses should not be abused because they don't deserve it, same with other animals." Bronte, 14.

78%

are interested in learning more about current events

62%

know what they want to do when they leave school

46%

are interested in learning more about how the government makes decisions

STORIES FROM YOUNG TASMANIANS



"I wish the government understood the meaning of financial security to young people. I wish the government understood that by removing penalty rates, limiting access to financial support and the casualisation of the workforce reduces the capacity for young people to contribute meaningfully in their communities. Having access to services like Centrelink has allowed me to study, live out of home and gain my own sense of independence. It has meant I've been able to volunteer and dedicate a considerable amount of time to the things I love and the causes I care about, fields I hope to someday have a career in. These measures are a hand up, not a hand out. The casualisation of the workforce means jobs - in retail, hospital-ity and the service industry, for example, are insecure. These jobs are predominantly filled by young people; young people with families, young people with bills to pay, young people with educational needs and costs. I wish the government knew that young people are able and willing to work and will work hard to realise their aspirations, through paid and unpaid work. Having recently been unemployed, I have spent many hours thinking about my own financial security, how we stay afloat when we can be cut off from paid employment. I wish the government knew that young people are not dispensable. Part time work is no longer a norm. When you don't have it, it is constant planning, withdrawal and wondering what the next thing might be, or if you're even good enough for the next thing." Claire, 19, TAS.



"I wish the government knew how much of an asset young people could be for them in changing Australia for the better. Change is hard and in the last decade we've seen governments of every stripe struggle to implement big reforms. Its cliché but true that young people have a capacity to think long term, see the world as it could be and put a huge amount of energy into making it so. If governments take the time and develop the skills to genuinely engage with young people (while proposing policies that are in our long term interest) they could find us a powerful force to help convince the broader community to support their reforms." Tom, 24, TAS.



"I wish the government knew how hard I (and lots of other young people) are working. My grandparents were immigrants to Britain from Jamaica in the 1950's and I try to work hard to honour all of the sacrifices they made. We aren't just lazy kids-- teenagers work really hard and are often shut down by people who have forgotten how difficult it can be." Rose, 14, TAS.



"I'm Tasmanian and very proud of my home. I wish the government knew that our experiences are different from someone on the mainland. My community suffers due to a lack of some opportunities, however thrives in the way it is so very kind. After all, Tasmanians give more to charity as a percentage of their income than any other state. We may not have a shiny corporate city centre or millions of people - but we have a fantastically tight knit community, a developing arts scene and a stunning natural environment. These things are not always measurable; they don't always raise revenue or literacy levels. But our lives are rich despite our economic status, and we'll only get richer by playing to these strengths." Imogen, 20, TAS.



"It has been proven that sea levels are rising, that temperatures are increasing, and yet we still have climate change denial, and yet we still very little meaningful policy changes to deal with this. I wish the government realised how valuable a scientific education is for people of all ages. I wish the government appreciated science, and scientists. The solutions to so many of the big problems we will be facing in the future, climate change, resource management, and sustainability, will be solved by scientists. The cuts to science funding not only mean that these vital discoveries won't happen, but it also devalues science in the eyes of the Australian people." Cassady, 18, TAS.



"I wish the government knew about places that has historic roots and long-lasting families involved in natural resources, and them being displaced by new innovation and technology, and ignored with little immigration and heavy youth emmigration. I wish that for small areas such as the above, new policies for education and technology innovation would take place for long lasting population retention." Aaron, 17, TAS.



"I wish the government understood that young people don't exist in a vacuum to have policy done to them. We are not just a 'cohort', young person is not our only identity, we are people with lives, jobs and families, like anyone else. Too often, government policy talks about young persons issues - unemployment, the housing crisis, student debt, social disengagement. But they forget to actually talk to young people, to remember that we are lawyers, parents, volunteers, students, public servants, and tax-payers. Policy that affects us should be done with us, not to us." Katie, 23, TAS.



"Every young person I know is just trying to make their way on their own. That's all I wish the Government knew and remembered - being under 25 and making that huge jump between childhood and adulthood, between growth and consolidation, between receiving education and applying it, is just bonkers. Between seeing far too many reminders about how this generation will have to fork out the most per annum for a bachelor's degree, how they will pay the most as a percentage of their income for a median-priced house in their chosen suburb, and the bleak outlooks for young people trying to work their way into an under-employing and fiercely competitive labour market, I am constantly inspired by the strength of character and optimism in a workplace where I am surrounded by youth, and volunteer organisations where they change lives on a daily basis. There is so much nuance and individuality that is missed in the attention-grabbing, aggressive and negatively charged discourse around young people today. We must remind ourselves: we are always complex, we are doing our best, and we should be proud." Tom, 20, TAS.





VICTORIA

The average age of the Victorians who participated in my consultation was 16.2. Young Victorians are passionate about a large range of issues from regional development, to curriculum reform. The top five issues that young Victorians would like the government to take action on can be found over the page.

14% of young Victorians in the consultation say that they feel like their opinions are represented by those in the government.

Responses like Finley's (17): **"I wish that they listened to the countless, passionate young voices pleading for change. I wish they did more to preserve the environment, economy and infrastructure so that we can feel like a legitimate priority."** can be seen across most Victorian electorates, with many young people calling on their representatives to take them seriously. Of the young Victorians involved in the 2017 consultation, 37% of them feel like they are taken seriously as a young people, by those in positions of power.

57% of young people across Victoria follow the news every day. They draw on a variety of sources, including, but not limited to: social media feeds (predominantly Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. Ocassionaly Snapchat, and Reddit), local papers, free-to-air broadcast television, national broadcasters, radio, online foreign news services, new media companies such as Junkee, Pedestrian, and BuzzFeed.

Slightly more than half (52%) of young Victorians can name their local Federal Member

"What is the important issue facing young people in your local community?"

- 1. Mental health services**
- 2. Cost of education**
- 3. Youth engagement with politics**
- 4. Education inequality**
- 5. Job opportunities**
- 6. Cost of housing**
- 7. Discrimination**
- 8. Harrassment and abuse**
- 9. Drugs/alcohol abuse**
- 10. Public transport**

of Parliament.

60% of the young Victorians in the Consultation know what they plan to do for a career, with many concerned about job pathways, and relevant education with frequent talk about the "future of work" leaving them slightly uncertain about their futures.

Curious, we asked about some preferences that young people have for a range of things. 97% of young people in Victoria prefer the internet to television. 72% prefer dogs to cats. 58% prefer movies to books. 76.5% of young people in Victoria rather Marvel than DC. 56% prefer YouTube to Netflix. 53% prefer Summer to Winter. And 64% prefer a swim in the ocean to a bushwalk.

What some young people in Victoria wish you knew, and considered about their stories when making policy:

"I wish the government knew the importance of safe injecting spaces around Australia. The criminalisation of, and stigma against drug use is more detrimental than beneficial. It stops so many, especially people in my area, from seeking help. Safe injecting spaces would not encourage drug usage, but rather encourage safely for themselves and the people around them, and work towards rehabilitation." Isabella, 16.

"That I as an individual seriously want to go to university to further my education to eventually help and benefit others. But the price of university and housing in capital cities is daunting and makes me worried for my future." Brandon, 18.

91%

are interested in learning more about current events

77%

are interested in learning more about the United Nations

72%

are interested in learning more about how the government makes decisions

1

Housing affordability

Top issue raised by young Victorians.

"Going into adulthood is difficult enough without worrying about the cost of housing" Emily, 17.

2

Climate change

Was a frequent concern for young Victorians.

"We need immediate action on climate change - and to meet those targets quickly. We can invest in renewables, power our homes, and the economy" Joanna, 22.

3

Gender equality

Equality between genders is important for young Victorians.

"Everyone on the planet is equal and should have access to the same opportunities." Lachlan, 15.

4

Marriage equality

Young people in Victoria called for government action on marriage equality.

"Marriage equality is easy! We can get it done and move on to other, important issues" Aurora, 13.

5

Healthcare

Improving mental health and disability services were of significance.

"My town is full of heartache and received a mental health support institution after the last person to take their life. There needs to be much more support in rural areas." Lillian, 20.

STORIES FROM YOUNG VICTORIANS



"It's incredibly frustrating that somehow every issue has become political and our politics has become so polarised. From anti-bullying programs, to the urgent infrastructure needs of a city such Melbourne that's growing by 100,000 people each year, to climate change and the very future of our planet's survival. It feels as though everything is an opportunity to come against something, attack the other side, no matter the policy, even if there is little separating our politicians, compromise isn't an option, a political wedge will be found and further drive people apart. I just wish our politicians would put down their swords and be the inspiring, hopeful leaders we need to take on the challenges we face as a nation."

Simon, 23, Victoria.



"I wish the government understood how important the implementation of anti-bullying and education programs nationwide are to young LGBT+ people. As someone who has worked in the space, I know how crucial their work is to the youth of Australia. These programs are saving lives and yet they are constantly being attacked for trying to make a difference."

Nell, 17, Victoria.



"I wished that the government had a more genuine understanding of the infrastructure needs and interests of young people, especially with regard to outer suburbs. Having good friends in the outer suburbs it always baffles me that it is virtually impossible to get around these parts of town without a car, and during peak periods, even with a car it can take hours to get anywhere. Better infrastructure planning, especially for those who don't want to "live the dream" of car ownership would do wonders not just for the residents of the quickly built outer suburbs of big cities, but for many others too."

Josh, 17, Victoria.



"I wish that the government knew the massive difference that small barriers in accessing services for mental health can make to young people's ability to participate in society."

Jess, 22, Victoria.



"I wish the government knew how much passion exists in our community for a response to climate change that sees it as a challenge to the status quo, a wake-up call, and an incredible opportunity: to revolutionise our economy and create a fairer future for everyone. Right now, we have the chance to build a clean energy future and cooperative, resilient communities, with the wellbeing of people and our environment at the centre. We have the science, technology, and willpower for action- and we can't afford to debate or delay any longer."

Alex, 19, Victoria.



"I wish the government knew how important initiatives such as HECS-HELP and regulated university fees are for my future. Coming from a low socioeconomic background, these safety nets have allowed me to attend a great university and set myself up for a positive future. It's great knowing I can get an education and make a difference regardless of my financial situation."

Luke, 19, Victoria.



"I wish our government knew that young people aren't blindly idealistic. If we hold an opinion, it's based on fact, it's based on statistics, and it's based on our own experiences. Young people's experiences are not less worthy than an older person's experience. If you deem our voices as less important or not justified simply because of our age, you're disregarding a major section of the population, and this is the opposite to the government's role. Please, listen to us, let us help. We may even vote for you."

Daniel, 18, Victoria.



"I wish the government knew how failing to provide sexual education to maturing young adults can not only negatively impact the individual, but also the families who often feel morally obliged to provide financial support. Many families are already unable to provide adequate care and sufficient resources for their children. Removing the taboo of 'sex' and providing adequate education is the first step in minimising these permanent consequences and relieving the strain of unplanned pregnancies on individual citizens, their families and society."

Stephanie, 19, Victoria.



"I wish the government knew how little time young people are allowing themselves to maintain their own mental health. In Year 11 and 12, many students internalize the message that the only way to get a good ATAR is to spend every available hour on study and exam practice, rather than trying to maintain a healthy work-life balance. What's worse is that the culture of relentless work carries on into uni; even if you're not taking a course that demands a large amount of work, you're told that you need to spend that extra time applying for internships or gaining work experience if you want your degree to be of use. It becomes easy to feel guilty whenever you take time to yourself, and before you know it, you can reach the end of your studies and realise you never stopped to enjoy what you were learning."

Sam, 20, Victoria.



"I wish the government knew how important it is for every young person to have access to a quality education. Every young person has the fundamental right to a good education regardless of disability, gender, location or socio-economic status."

Zoe, 20, Victoria.



"I wish the government knew that being a young person in Australia can be bloody hard. Internships, studying, volunteering and working are difficult to balance, and that's before you add in the stress of making ends meet and paying rent every month. The contribution young people make to this country should be recognised and celebrated."

Kellie, 22, Victoria.



"I wish the government considered the impact of discrepancies between the States and the Territories of Australia in terms of educational resources and quality. A few months before my year 12 exams in Darwin, Northern Territory, one of my teachers had to stop teaching and leave. Due to not being able to find a replacement teacher, we were responsible for our own independent exam preparation. I wish the government knew how much this affected my year 12 exam results and how unfairly disadvantaged I felt. Such a division in educational quality due to lack of resources should not hinder anyone's opportunity to a good standard of life, as that begins with equal opportunity."

Eylem, 21, Victoria.



"I wish the government knew that the filter tunnel vision that comes with standardised testing is compressing our creativity and innovation. Optimism and experimentation is so pivotal for young leaders, and such important qualities to not only myself, but many young people around the world. By implimenting education in multiple choice bubbles, short answer questions and essays, we don't see the ticking minds of practicality and social awareness. These must be treasured; harnessed in order to raise the standard of our young people past a traditional form of systematic compression of education in a changing society."

Ishra, 17, Victoria



"I wish the government knew that intelligence cannot be measured simply by how well you do in an exam, or through an ATAR. We're often told how we are valued, how what we do matters. But when it comes down to the laws that are passed and the benchmarks we are set, intelligence is judged through a means without context, as if we wanted the measure the intelligence of a computer, not a person."

Alex, 17, Victoria.



"I wish the government knew just how harmful their rhetoric with regard to refugees and people seeking asylum are. I feel this is an issue endemic of both of the major political parties, and one that is incredibly damaging. I've volunteered at law firm that specialises in immigration for the past 9 months, and I have first hand heard the plight of some of these people. Many of them flee war, famine and persecution, enduring at times, torture and the death of parents, siblings and other loved ones. Only to come to this country and be labelled as "illegals" or "boat people". Such rhetoric is not only harmful, but delegitimises their plight and reduces them to "criminals".

I wish that the government knew that irrespective of their stance on immigration, they need not resort to such harsh labels when referring to these people. As with all things, a little bit of compassion goes a long way."

Bahe, 19, Victoria.



"I wish the government respected my right to love my girlfriend. I am not defined by my sexuality."

Renee, 18, Victoria.



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The average age of the Western Australians who participated in my consultation was 15.9. Western Australians are passionate about a large range of issues from mental health to education inequality. The top five issues that young Western Australians would like the government to take action on can be found over the page.

21% of young Western Australians in the consultation say that they feel like their opinions are represented by those in the government.

Responses like Brittany's (17): "I am so aware that there are others far worse off than I am, and this just gives more reason to why youth need to have a say in how their lives are run. We are the future, but feel as though we have no access to the stepping stones for a successful one." are typical across Western Australian electorates, with about 60% indicating that they do not feel respected by their representatives.

47% of young people across Western Australia follow the news every day. They

draw on a variety of sources, including, but not limited to: free-to-air broadcast television, national broadcasters, social media feeds (predominantly Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. Occasionally Snapchat, and Reddit), local papers, radio, online foreign news services, and new media companies such as Junkee, Pedestrian, and Buzzfeed.

Slightly less than half (45%) of young Western Australians can name their local Federal Member of Parliament.

“What is the important issue facing young people in your local community?”

1. Drugs/Alcohol abuse
2. Mental Health
3. Unemployment/job opportunities
4. Cost of education
5. Education inequality
6. Cost of housing
7. Harassment and abuse
8. Cost of living
9. Discrimination
10. Climate Change

62% of the young Western Australians in the Consultation know what they plan to do for a career, with many concerned about job pathways, and relevant education with frequent talk about the “future of work” leaving them slightly uncertain about their futures.

Curious, we asked about some preferences that young people have for a range of things. 82% prefer the internet to television. 76% prefer dogs to cats. 63% prefer movies to books. 86% of young people in Western Australia would rather Marvel over DC. 59% prefer YouTube to Netflix. 54% prefer Summer to Winter. And 60% prefer a swim in the ocean to a bushwalk.

What some young people in Western Australia wish you knew, and considered about their stories when making policy:

“Young people are politically active and hardworking. We’re not an economic burden and we want our rights and to be educated”
Aryanne, 17.

“I wish they knew that I really do care about and have a knowledge of topical issues. I wish they knew that I am trying to engage with them, because I believe in speaking out and making change. I wish they knew that we have ideas and possible solutions and that young people ARE able to and should be an active part of the political system.” Ruby, 16.

“Although I am extremely grateful for the opportunities I have been given I can’t help but feel that there is an imbalance of opportunity and education between wealthy suburbs and poorer suburbs, which needs to be focused on to make this imbalance less prominent in Australia’s society.” Faith, 18

82%

are interested in learning more about current events

59%

want to learn more about the UN

63%

are interested in learning more about how the government makes decisions

1

Improving healthcare

Top issue raised in Western Australia.
“It’s harder than it looks, give us a break. Mental health is a real part of our lives.”
Wil, 17

2

Marriage equality

Action on marriage equality was raised by young Western Australians.
Things like marriage equality ... are so incredibly powerful to young LGBT Australians ” Akio, 16

3

Gender equality

Equality between genders is important for young Western Australians.

“Everyone on the planet is equal and should have access to the same opportunities.” Lachlan, 15.

4

Cost of tertiary education

Rising education costs were raised frequently.
“I care about my future and the opportunities I will have in life.” Lara, 15

5

Climate change

Environmental responsibility is important to young Western Australians.

“I personally have been fortunate enough to not suffer many hardships but I do strongly believe we need to be active about climate change and conserving our environment” Ava, 16

STORIES FROM WESTERN AUSTRALIA



"I wish the government knew that people don't live in government housing because we want to, we live in government housing because we have nowhere left to turn and would otherwise end up homeless. I have lived with my grandparents in government housing my entire life and am grateful that Australia has sufficient infrastructure to support people who need it. But there is a damaging stigma that comes with it, and unfortunately the government perpetuates that stigma by using harmful rhetoric and creating uninformed social housing policy. My grandfather was conscripted to Vietnam over 50 years ago and is one of the many government housing tenants who have a unique personal story. The class divide is only widening and none of us deserve to be reduced solely to an addiction, an economic status, or a disability. Government housing should be used to empower people at a disadvantage rather than used as a political punching bag." Deni, 19, WA.



"I wish the government understood the challenges and barriers faced by people living in rural and remote Australia. Most people living in the metropolitan centres cannot comprehend the distance and remoteness of our rural areas, particularly in a state as large as Western Australia. My town is a half day drive to the nearest regional centre and can be a two day journey to Perth. This distance and isolation impacts on almost every facet of every day life. In particular, I wish the government would take the time out from their (mostly) metropolitan offices to come out and truly understand the strain of resources and the lack of access to basic services in small rural towns. As a registered nurse working in the Pilbara, every day I witness the struggles that people face - and it's not simply reduced access to specialised resources but to access basic essential health services including having a dentist, an optometrist, a physiotherapist. For any sort of treatment, patients may have to leave town for weeks and be away from their families, support systems, and their land. Not only is the person in critical need not getting essential care, but it also exhausts limited local services. In towns such as this one, doctors are locum, and nurses often pass through for a few weeks to a few months. This severely impairs the ability for the local health services to provide quality continuity of care, and promote wellbeing. Repeatedly, essential funding gets withdrawn or redistributed and I wish the government tried harder to remember us living in rural and remote Australia." Sammi, 23, WA.



"I wish the government would realise that approaching youths and their issues in a condescending manner won't achieve anything, but also that it is vital to sit down and listen to our ideas. The dominant narrative in society seems to dictate that we are "too young to understand" and that our struggles are just part of growing up. The danger in this, is that it leads us to let young people's journeys with mental health be trivialised, delegitimised and unheard." Isabel, 17, WA.



"I wish the government knew that young people are a lot more committed than they think when it comes to the things we're passionate about. There seems to be an unspoken but super common misconception that we're unreliable, reckless and not as valuable as older generations when it comes to politics. I wish the government knew that these representations and misconceptions discourage young people from taking action and that with a little more open-mindedness, we can make real change and be a valuable asset." Rana, 15, WA.



"I wish the government understood that Closing the Gap actually requires listening to the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The treatment of First Australians has been and continues to be, the darkest chapter in Australian history. Yet, it is far too often met with cheap rhetoric and a failure to genuinely engage with the enormously complex social and institutional challenges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to face. We need solutions developed and supported by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for their own communities. Community-centred approaches provide the foundation for dealing with the long-term impact that these tragic issues have. Such community approaches aren't crafted in an office in Canberra, and nor should they be. The voices calling for a drastic change in how we work towards closing the gap have long been there, but have for too long been ignored. When we talk about closing the gap, it's also important not to forget how large that gap is. This isn't from a bygone era of our history that we've since corrected. This is Australia right now. What I really wish the government knew is that my opinion on these issues isn't the one they should be listening to. They should be listening to the views of those people whose voices have been ignored for far too long, and for whom these issues have a profound and devastating effect – Australia's First Peoples." Cormac, 20, WA.



"I wish the government saw Arts funding in regional Australia as a beautiful opportunity and not an inconvenience. The face of Australia to the international community is largely the bush, the beaches and the outback, so it doesn't make sense to me that the government is not actively funding the people and the organisations who will share the stories of these places. I've grown up in Denmark and Albany, towns in the Southwest region of WA. To be successful in these places, you have to leave them; because there just aren't enough opportunities for young people to work or to study. It's exhausting to hear friends say, "There's nothing to do here," when we live in one of the most beautiful regions in the world. I wish the government realised how valuable young people and the arts are to creating and sustaining beautiful communities in these regions and showing the rest of the world the beauty and diversity of regional Australia." Katie, 20, WA.



"I was hesitant to talk about this issue, because it still seems to be such a taboo issue that faces lots of backlash. But I've decided that THAT is really the reason why I should discuss this more. I wish the government considered my body as my own, and that society saw that menstrual products are not a luxury item, but a real necessity." Katherine, 21, WA.

"We need to support accessible early childhood education and care in remote areas. Childcare centres create stability for families, cultivate resilience and empathy, and can ensure intergenerational wellbeing. Centres able to respond to the needs of families in remote areas, and particularly those led by Aboriginal women, are falling through the cracks of funding models. We need to invest in preventative measures to properly respond to states of crisis. I wish the government were listening to the evidence and to the knowledge of Aboriginal women and organisations." Laura, 17, WA.



"I wish the government knew the huge impact that sexual assault centres have the capacity to provide. The compassionate, specialised and honest approaches taken are immensely different to other avenues of support, which are often limited in their abilities to act both respectfully and realistically. Cuts to sexual assault centres and programs further restrict what is already minimal access to crucial services, limiting choice and accessibility and introducing impossible delays to getting help at the most important times. Cuts also contribute to a culture where trauma is shoved under a rug and expected to fix itself and never be spoken of again. I need the government to know the value of these services, and that providing them selectively and sparsely is not enough." Sara, 19, WA.



"I am educated and have an opinion that is just as valid as someone my senior. I want to do something with my life considered unconventional and that should be encouraged, not a cause for me to be silenced or disregarded." Patricia, 16, WA.



"I wish the government realised that underestimating the potential of young people based on labels or stereotypes derived from how we look or sound is deeply unhelpful in achieving meaningful social progress. I am incredibly proud to be a gay first-generation immigrant; but that doesn't mean that my identity is solely defined by my sexual orientation, my ethnicity, or my age. The government needs to recognise that our identities and values are shaped by complex factors that extend beyond these visible labels. The sooner the government begins to celebrate the rich diversity of young people who call Australia home, the sooner our society will begin to appreciate the immense potential of young people in leading powerful social change." Anish, 22, WA.



"I wish the government knew that I really do care about and have a knowledge of topical issues. I wish they knew that I am trying to engage with them, because I believe in speaking out and making change. I wish they knew that we have ideas and possible solutions and that young people are able to and should be an active part of the political system." Ruby, 16, WA.

LETTERS FROM YOUNG AUSTRALIANS

PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS WROTE LETTERS AND MADE DRAWINGS DETAILING THEIR CONCERNS AND HOPES FOR THE FUTURE. THESE HAVE BEEN LEFT UNEDITED, BUT HAVE BEEN TYPED FOR LEGIBILITY AND KEPT ANONYMOUS.

“Dear Paige,

Have you been thinking about gay rights? This is one of the ways people express themselves. I believe that people should be able to LOVE WHOEVER they want. I would really appreciate it if you could tell Malcolm Turnbull to think about this too!

Thank you. Have a nice day!”
Anon, 12, QLD.

“Dear Paige,

I think the world should do more and think more about homelessness because everyone should have somewhere safe and dry to stay.”
Anon, 11, QLD.

“Dear Paige,

I wish the government would help our world become more equal. Not only for women but for everyone wanting to express themselves. And live a happy life.”
Anon, 12.

“Dear Paige,

I wish the government would stop pollution because it is effecting the animals and the environment. People are littering, so they are killing animals. I think we should stop using fossil fuels (coal, gas) because of the animals and the environment.”
Anon, 12.

“Dear Paige,

I believe that homelessness is a big world issue and affects many people. Having no money for food or shelter can be hard. I wish the government would lower the cost of shelter and food or build more shelters for homeless people. This will also help keep our streets safe for everyone. I recently went to Melbourne for the first time and saw the first homeless person in real life. I learnt that because governments don't want people on the street, police officers move them all the time. It's so sad. Please stop this problem!”
Anon, 11.

“Dear Paige,

I hope the government fixes the problem of many people losing their jobs because of machines.”
Anon, 12.

Dear Paige, Freedom!
I wish the government
would help our world
to become more equal.
Not only for women but
for everyone wanting
to express themselves.
and live a happy life.
Equality!
Love! Happiness, Expression!





STATEMENT TO THE UN

THE TEXT OF PAIGE'S STATEMENT TO THE 72ND SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S THIRD COMMITTEE.

Mr Chair, two years ago, the international community endorsed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Agenda is the most ambitious, important, and comprehensive modern response to the world's most pressing issues.

I'm here today as a proud member of the largest ever generation of young people. I'm proud of the instrumental role that young people women and men played in shaping the 2030 Agenda, and of the work they are doing, and will continue to do to ensure that we meet our goals.

Often, young people are referred to as being the "world's future workforce" or a "useful economic resource" in the challenges of sustainable development. And whilst young people are an important global economic force, it's important to remember that young peoples' contributions to our shared future extend far beyond the economy.

Often, young people are referred to as being the "world's future workforce" or a "useful economic resource" in the challenges of sustainable development. And whilst young people are an important global economic force, it's important to remember that young peoples' contributions to our shared future extend far beyond the economy.

I know that young people have complex and nuanced ways of looking at the challenges facing our world. I know that young people have intelligent contributions to make to public discourse but too often don't have a seat at the table. And I know that young people have creative solutions to offer—which is helpful because our world is facing unprecedented challenges that will require young people to help solve.

This year, I travelled over 100,000km around Australia. I had conversations with tens of thousands of young men and women, boys and girls and individuals of diverse gender.

I asked each of them what they wish our decision-makers knew, and considered, about them when they're making policy. When asked why he cares about the issues he raised with me, a 17 year old Queenslander summed up the general sentiment of my consultation: "because fairness and equality should be at the core of all decision-making for our generation, and the ones to come".

It is that message of inclusive, intergenerational fairness and equality that underpins the values of young Australians. It's difficult to do justice to the diversity of responses to my consultation, but a few things are clear.

First, we need to be careful to imagine young people with the complexity that they deserve—that same complexity which adults assume for themselves. We all need to be asking the question "what would society look like if we saw young peoples' opinions as a product of their values, creativity, knowledge and experiences and not just of their age?"

We dehumanise this generation of youth when we think of them as being merely young. Like the rest of the population, young people are diverse and complex and deserve to be treated as such. The ability and capacity of young people must ring clear in spaces deafened by stereotypes, and silenced by a lack of trust.

Next, we have to realise that the "youth/adult issues" construct is a false one. "Youth issues" don't exist in silos. There's a temptation to think that the issues that affect young people are exclusively found online, in schools, or involve peer pressure. All issues affect young people, and young people influence all issues. Young people face many of the same barriers as adults. And like adults, they experience inequalities as a result of negative stereotypes about gender, sexuality, disability, race and other aspects of their identity.

Young people all over Australia spoke to me about issues relating to the cost of living, unemployment, and economic productivity. They shared the impact of education—both formal and informal on their lives. They told me of their desires for certainty in the realms of global peace and security. They articulated the importance of access to health services, programs, and quality public infrastructure. Young people expressed their harrowing experiences of environmental disaster, of unemployment, of forced migration, of family violence, and of abuse relating to their sexuality and gender identity.

We need to recognise that these issues don't just affect young people because they'll be in positions of power in the future. Instead, we must remember that these issues affect young people now, in a myriad of ways.

When young people look at people in power, they don't always see themselves reflected back at them. Whilst a large majority of Australian young people can name their local political representatives, most of them feel disconnected from the decisions they make. In this regard, youth disengagement is an enemy of progress and an ally of inequality.

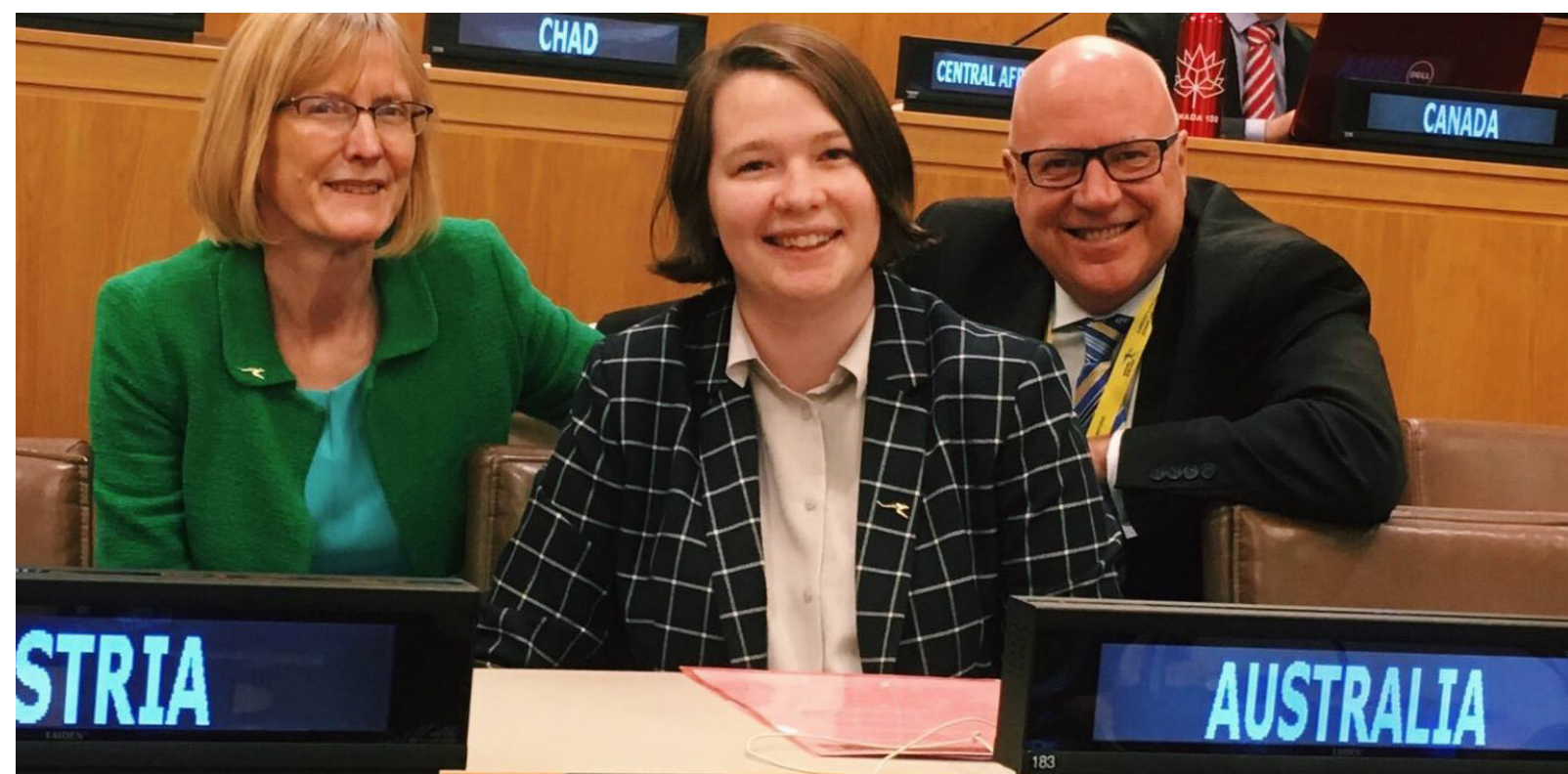
Finally, young people know that the path to the 2030 Agenda is one that has to be paved together. Young Australians consider themselves to be members of a global community. The people I met with realise that our biggest challenges don't respect borders. They know that international cooperation is key to making a lasting impact.

Young Australians I met want to learn more about the United Nations in their classrooms. Young Australians care about current affairs outside of the country, and read news to follow important issues every day. Young people are informed, and committed to creating a fairer and more inclusive society.

If I've learnt anything this year, it's that our voices get stronger the more we listen. And we should all take the time to listen to young people. Less than 20% of young people I spoke with this year feel like their opinions are taken seriously due to their age. But listening isn't a means to an end. We need to back up our words with actions. We need to show our commitment to young people and move beyond tokenism to ensure that young people are meaningfully included in decisions that affect them at all levels.

The challenges before us loom large, but so too does the untapped potential of young people. I'm confident that with support, young people will lead the way to a fair and just future where all of us are free and equal. Young Australians care deeply about the promises that we've made to generations past, present, and future.

The only way forward is together as a community. It's up to us to create a community that allows all young people to take ownership of the journey to the 2030 Agenda—a community that makes them feel celebrated, supported, engaged, and powerful.





YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

IN LATE 2017, HUNDREDS OF YOUNG AUSTRALIANS SIGNED UP TO MEET WITH THEIR LOCAL MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT TO DISCUSS THE CONSULTATION

Hundreds of young people signed up to meet with their local MP to deliver and discuss the results of consultations in their local area.

Our team organised meetings, ran briefings, and ensured that young Australians got the chance to engage with their representatives. Many more meetings have been scheduled by young Australians and will continue to take place in 2018.

For many, it was the first time they met their MP, written to them, or even attended a meeting. Feedback from MPs and participants has been positive, with many requesting more detail, or setting up ongoing engagement with young people in their area.

More than anything, the reports are about the young Australians who contributed to them. They are about the generosity of those who have shared their ideas, and the nuanced ways they look at their communities.

Many people have taken the time to discuss what the consultations have meant to them. Some of these are shared below:

"I am much more aware of some issues around the world, and also am more confident in my own thoughts regarding those issues." 16, ACT.

"This program, and reading the stories has given me hope for the future." 53, NSW.

"It has allowed me to find a way to make my opinion and voice heard." 15, SA.

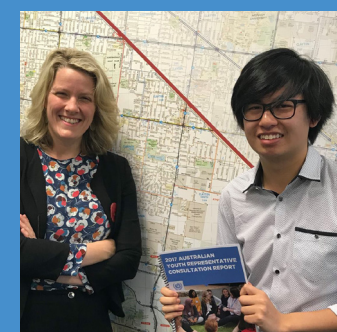
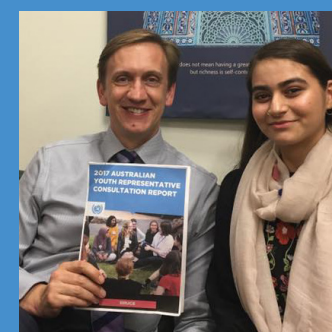
"It has continued to make me realise how many things need to be improved, across Australia and the world, and that we can in fact do that." 19, SA.

"It certainly inspired me to never forget how incredibly intelligent young people are, sometimes even we forget." 18, SA.

"The program has continually reminded me about the diversity of opinion in the country, and that young people can express these with eloquence and patient, detailed analysis. While many of the posts aligned perfectly with how I saw the world, in many ways I enjoyed reading things that challenged me more as I would actively try to work out the merits of the argument being put forward, which opened me up to accepting other world views." 16, VIC.

"This program has positively reminded me how powerful of a force young people can be. We are often dehumanised and have our agency stripped from us purely due to our age, but Paige's tour this year gave hundreds of voices and faces a platform and a sense of unity." 20, VIC.

"I'd like to thank you for this enlightening opportunity, it really taught me a lot about engaging with my MP." 17, WA.



THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS

WITHOUT YOU, THE 2017 YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE PROGRAM WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE

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