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 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.

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

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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.

This report contains the top-level summary of the data 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—way and the amazing team at DFAT, thank you for your support, and invaluable advice.

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

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.
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.
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 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.

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

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.

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 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.

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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.

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

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.

Gender equality was the top issue raised in Australia “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.

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.

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.

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.

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/alco-
hol abuse

Gender equality

Housing affordability

Health/mental health

Climate change

Mental illness

housing affordability

education equality

health/mental health

gender equality

Anon, 16.

“Aletana, 15.

“I am because it seems so unachievable.”

rising price of houses and student loans but

I have the same rights as men and shouldn’t be

involved in things like drugs and alcohol.”

Hayley, 12.

“Most of the politicians in government don’t

have that experience of discrimination and

make decisions accordingly.” Anon, 16.

“I wish they considered that most young

people like me don’t know what career path

they want to take and are often working multi-

ple jobs in order to afford housing.”

Charlotte, 21.

“Mental illness is sometimes invisible, and

just because someone is able to contribute or

they ‘seem’ fine, this doesn’t mean that noth-

ing is going on beneath the surface mental

health is much more severe than it is treated

as and this epidemic will only escalate for

the worse if left unaddressed.”

Anna, 19.

“I wish the government knew how demor-

alising 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 politi-
cians 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.”

Shasta, 21.

“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.

“They think marriage equality and the safe

schools programme and racial discrimination

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 this

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.

“I wish the government knew 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.

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.

“Mental illness is sometimes invisible, and

just because someone is able to contribute or

they ‘seem’ fine, this doesn’t mean that noth-

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Anna, 19.
AUSTRALIA
TOP ISSUES RAISED, BY ELECTORATE

CLIMATE CHANGE
Ballarat
Batman
Calwell
Canberra
Chisholm
Corangamite
Corin
Cowin
Farron
Farrer
Fisher
Higgins
Hindmarsh
Isaacs
Kingford Smith
Lalor
Latrobe
Libby
McEwen
Melbourne
Moore
Pears
Watson
Wentworth
Wills
North Sydney

GENDER EQUALITY
Bennelong
Berowra
Bridgman
Durack
Gowrie
Hindmarsh
Huntingdon
Oakes
Parma
Petrk
Red
Sydney
Warringah
Casey
Dean
Finders
Gillmore
Mackellar
Ryan
Wide Bay

MARRIAGE EQUALITY
Adelaide
Barton
Balgownie
Bennelong
Bendigo
Canning
Chifley
Cowper
Croxton
Denison
Dunkley
Goldstein
Gordon
Greendale
Kingston
Leichhardt
Lyons
Macquarie
Mayo
Melbourne Ports
Moncrieff
Murray
Whitlam
Wright
Dawson

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY
Banks
Bowman
Bradfield
Canning
Coffin
Cowper
Dobell
Forrest
Fraser
Grey
Holt
Hughes
Hume
Japejapa
Macarthur
Makin
MacMillan
Marles
Mitchell
O’Connor
Paterson
Parkes
Richmond
Robertson
Shortland
Solomon
Swan

HEALTHCARE (INCLUDING MENTAL HEALTH)
Blair
Brand
Cairns
Capricornia
Franklin
Griffith
Hastings
Indi
Lynne Macmillan
McMillan
Mitchell
O’Connor
Paterson
Perth
Richmond
Robertson
Shortland
Solomon
Swan

DRUG/ALCOHOL USE
Barker
Bass
Blaxland
Braddon
Hebert
Lingiari
Port Adelaide
Wannon
Kennedy
Parkes
Fleming

TERTIARY EDUCATION COSTS
Aston
Brisbane
Cunningham
Freman
Flinders
Galbraith
McPherson
Moncrieff
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
Gilmore
Lindsay

CLOSING THE GAP
Mallee

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Warooka

FOREIGN AID
Eddin-Monaro
Marriage equality was important in the ACT

“Why shouldn’t people be allowed to marry the person they love?” Jemimah, 12.

Gender equality

Equality between genders is important

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

Housing affordability was frequently mentioned in the consultation

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

Climate change

Was the top concern for young Territorians

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

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 them.” Alice, 15.

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.

64% of 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. 58% 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, I’m 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.

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.

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.

Climate change was the top concern for young Territorians

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

Gender equality

Equality between genders is important

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

Housing affordability was frequently mentioned in the consultation

“Many of us are scared we will never be able to own a house” Mikayla, 15.
Only through fostered scepticism rigorously should expect their journalists to not helpful - if it ever was. People ever, perhaps that conception is overload, where the path forward activity' used in a way that implies factors which warrants scepticism.

"I wish the government could provide more 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 overseas. 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 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 ridiculous amounts of medication imported from Canada so that I can live my life somewhat normally. It means I’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 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.”

Elsa, 16, 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 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 is 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 a ‘time that there is one.”

Rhea, 16, 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. We often hear the phrase ‘objec- tivity’ used in a way that implies 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.

Kate, 19, ACT.

"I wish the government knew of the determination of young peo-ple to not be disadvantaged by their postcodes, and recognised the community organisations that support them to achieve regard- less of where they live.”

Conrida, 20, ACT.

"I wish the government knew about the challenges young peo-ple face in finding community care which isn’t in a form which child is safety and drawing our futures. A system that socialises 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 knew existed, and feel empowered by people’s belief in our potential.

Life changes the world everyday, but to change the world in a way that means something unfortu- nately 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 nuances of us. It’s creative and experiences that is so vital in ensuring we not only survive but thrive together in the future we have to live in.”

Aqsa, 17, ACT.

"As a young woman, it is so disapp-pointing to see so few women in Cabinet and in parliament at all. If the government is truly committed to gender equality throughout so-ciety 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 genera-tion of girls grow up with more role models in politics.”

Sajn, 21, ACT.

"I wish the government knew how the health starts with a pathway. The most simple public health solu-tions 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 I 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 grow 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 min- ister 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 aorta of that pathway. Governments need to recognise they require effective tools to achieve out- comes.”

Jasmin, 19, ACT.

"I wish the government recognised the importance of an inclusive, extensive, and well sources arts landscape. Since time immemorial this land has sus-tained 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.”

Marli, 19, ACT.

"I wish the government knew how much students who are very capable are being kept back from extension classes. We should 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 a ‘time that there is one.”

Rhea, 16, ACT.

"The environment is a very important issue that deserves more serious consideration from those in the position to make changes.”

Elsa, 16, ACT.

"I wish the government knew 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.”

Conrida, 20, ACT.

"I wish the government knew about the challenges young people of colour and immigrants have to face with within our society. The institutional statistics 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.

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Kate, 19, ACT.

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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 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!” Caty, 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.

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

NEW SOUTH WALES

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
"Growing up I spent a lot of time in hospital. 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 3am 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 (deplorable 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 spine 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, rather than dismissing them as the laypeople who do the work. I also think we all have a responsibility to make sure the powers that be care about our teachers the way they deserve to be treated."  

Jacqui, 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 a 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 face 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."  

Jane, 16, NSW.

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Jane, 16, NSW.
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 rep-re-sented by those in the government. Responses like Yanni’s (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 representa-tives 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. Occasional-ly 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-sultation know what they plan to do for a career, with many concerned about job pathways, and relevant education with fre-quent talk about the “future of work” leaving them slightly uncertain about their futures.

Curious, we asked about some prefer-ences 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 consid-ered about their stories when making policy:

“Tertiary education shouldn’t be made impossibly hard to achieve (fina-nacially 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 able.” Jemma, 17.

“When I see the conflict, famine and social unrest that causes the greatest refu-gee 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.

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

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
“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 young 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 racial slurs to each other, who bully each other and fight with each other, and I know they are just internalising and mirroring the world 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 ‘Roméo and Juliet’ are important, so is sitting and talking about our families and place 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 harder 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 is 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 of my life. I feel as though a simple number is the dictates my future. I am constantly walking through the halls to see fellow classmates and friends breakdown 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.”

Max, 20, 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 societies issues. We look to the past as 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 Aus-Indonesian culture and can tell you that we have more in common than you may think.”

Emmalee, 18, NT.

“I wish the government would recognize how I feel to be a young woman Australian living in a culture where women and young people are often considered as less qualified to have political/city 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 made up 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 would stop encouraging racial stereotyp- ies, 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 use terrorist acts committed predominately by one group of people and assume that all people who look similar are bad. The shockwaves of such an action create a ripple 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 back- ground resembles my own. I am tired of shaming 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 punished 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 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 wish the government knew that I am a white Australian living on colonised country. My hope is that each non-Indig- enous 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 State- ment of the Heart. Australia can emerge stronger together with all its nations by recognising the strength of our First Nations peoples calling for Makarrata.”

Rosie, 23, NT.

“STORIES FROM THE NORTHERN TERRITORY”

I wish the government knew the real struggles of young people and higher education. Due to the thought of “not having enough money” to study for a degree at university, I decided whilst com- pleting 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. Unfortu- nately, 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 it is work for after completing year 12. Now, working as a Program Con- sultant 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 struggles to get the benefit that I’ve had to push and fight for before and during this time.

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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. Occasional- ly Snapchat, and Reddit), local papers, free-to-air broadcast television, national broadcasters, radio, online foreign news services, new media companies such as Jukin, Pedestrian, and Buzzfeed.

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

Responses like Jemimah’s, 12. “Why shouldn’t people be allowed to marry the person they love?” and Max, 14. “I think they need to work on gender equality because everyone should be equal.”

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 workforce” 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. I’m 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 areas 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.
“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 leaves on family and friends, 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 the recognition they deserve. 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 how tolerated 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 being an acceptable ‘mould’. The rates of homelessness, mental illness and suicide amongst LGBTQIA+ youth are frighteningly sobering. 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. This government should therefore be facilitating bullying and anti-bullying education programs, rather than actively stigmatising them.”

Brandon, 21, QLD.

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Brandon, 21, QLD.

“The monetary gain of select ‘in- ducements’ 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.

“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 overturning the lives of all Australians is not a priority, then what is it?”

Kristoph, 22, 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 it 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.”

Holly, 19, QLD.

“I wish the government knew how important the financial burden that competing in high level sport, volunteering, academia, or music puts on regional students and young people. In order to compete in your chosen area as a regional student, you are usually expected to travel to a major city. Flights alone often cost 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 metropolitan students, when this is not the case. As a student who was lucky enough to play sport and participate at U17 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 for their own way.”

James, 23, QLD.

“I wish the government knew how much and what is it?”

Sarah, 21, QLD.

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Sarah, 21, QLD.
Housing affordability
Top issue raised by young people in SA.
“...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.

Marriage equality
Young people in SA called for government action on marriage equality.
“...a human right, it should not be something politicians bash around a room. Love is love.”
Suman, 16.

Gender equality
Equality between genders is important for young South Australians.
“...needs to be recognised in more places and something must be done.”
Kira, 13.

Youth unemployment
Is a concern for many young people.
“...so difficult to get a job out of high school and I need one to look after myself”
Bailey, 17.

Healthcare
Improving mental health and disability services were of significance.
“...better access to information and the facilities that provide mental health care.”
Jeremy, 15.

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.

The top five issues that young South Australians would like the government to take action on are:

1. Job opportunities
2. Mental health services
3. Harassment 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

60% 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. 76% 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
I wish that the government knew that
the current system for getting help
with mental health, espe-
cially for students and younger
people, is really difficult. Seeing
a counsellor in schools for years
and even seeing doctors and
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For most, seeing a doctor ends in
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STORIES FROM SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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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.

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.

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.

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.

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 a fairer world to live in” Mary Scully, 19.

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

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 consultation, 37% of them feel like they are taken seriously as 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 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 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

78% 62% 46%
are interested in learning more about current events
know what they want to do when they leave school
are interested in learning more about how the government makes decisions

1. Marriage equality
2. Gender equality
3. Healthcare
4. Climate change
5. Animal welfare
Claire, 19, TAS.

“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 means are a hand up, not a hand out. The casualisation of the workforce means jobs - in retail, hospitality 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.”

Clare, 18, TAS.

Rose, 14, TAS.

“We aren’t just lazy kids– teens aged 14–17 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.

Tom, 24, 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. It’s cliche 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) am 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.

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Rose, 14, TAS.

Ikram, 17, TAS.

“I wish the government understood that for small areas such as the chosen suburb, and the bleak outcomes, however thrives in the opportunity to learn about 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 wish the government knew how hard I (and lots of other young people) am 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 am 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 thrive 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, 30, TAS.

“Every young person I have known has been 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 suburbs, and the bleak outlooks for young people trying to work their way into an under-employing and fiercely competitive labour market, I am constantly impressed 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 all complex, we are doing our best, and we should be proud.”

Tom, 20, TAS.
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.”

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. 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 more than half (52%) of young Victorians can name their local Federal Member 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 safety for themselves and the people around them, and work towards rehabilitation.” Isabella, 16.

“That 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
"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 score again and something, attack the other side, no matter the policy, even if there is little separating our politicians, compromise isn’t an option, a compromise doesn’t mean anything, it’s little separating our politicians, it’s little separating our politicians. 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 collective impact.

Nel, 17, 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 much 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 demean 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, 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 internalise 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 worrisome is that the culture of relentless work comes as an untold even if you’re not taking a course that demands a large amount of work, you’re told 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 for yourself, and before you know it, you can wash the edge of your studies and realise you never stopped to enjoy what you were learning.”

Sam, 20, 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 socio-economic background, these study 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.”


"I wish the government knew how fascinating it is 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 taboos 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 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.”

Kalle, 22, 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 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 ‘rejects’ or ‘boat people’. Such rhetoric is not only harmful, but dehumanises 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 knew that the liberal tunnel vision that comes with standardised testing is compressing our creativity and innovation. Optimism and experimentation is as pivotal for young leaders, and such important qualities to not only myself, but many young people around the world. By implementing 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 systemically compressive education in a changing society.”

Ishra, 17, Victoria.

"I wish the government knew that the measure the intelligence of a person is judged through a means of achievement and social awareness. We have the science, technology, and willpower for action and we can’t afford to debate or delay any longer.”

Ishra, 17, Victoria.
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.

82% 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

62% of 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.
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 house those 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 treated as punching bags. Government housing should be reduced solely to an addiction, an area that the government considers to be too young to understand, and that our struggles are just part of growing up. The danger in this, is that it leads to a toxic narrative where young people’s journeys with mental health be trivialised, delegitimised and unheard. (Leah, 17, WA).

I wish the government would realise that closing the gap in terms 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 issues can 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 is also important not to forget how large that gap is. This isn’t from a bygone era of our history that we’ve since moved on. This is Australia right now. What I really wish the government knew is that my opinion on these issues isn’t the only 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 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, restless 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. (Ryan, 15, WA).

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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 hurt 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 sparingly is not enough. (Katherine, 21, WA).

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I wish the government realised that understanding 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. (Sam, 22, 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 also create stability for communities. 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. (Laure, 17, WA).

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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 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 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 wish the government would stop pollution because it is affecting 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 hope the government fixes the problem of many people losing their jobs because of machines.

Anon, 12.

Dear Paige,

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!

Freedom.
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. Their ability and capacity of young people must ring clear in spaces dehumanised 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, and economic productivity.

We have 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.

We have 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?"
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 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." 10, 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 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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