

AWARENESS TO ACTION

A youth-informed proposal for a more just,
equitable and sustainable Australian future



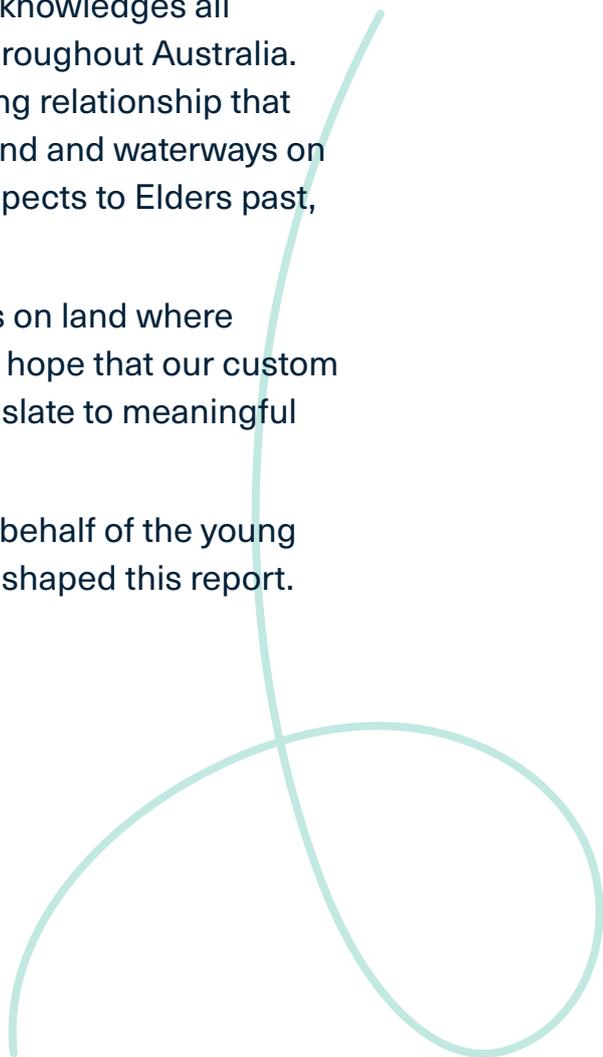
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

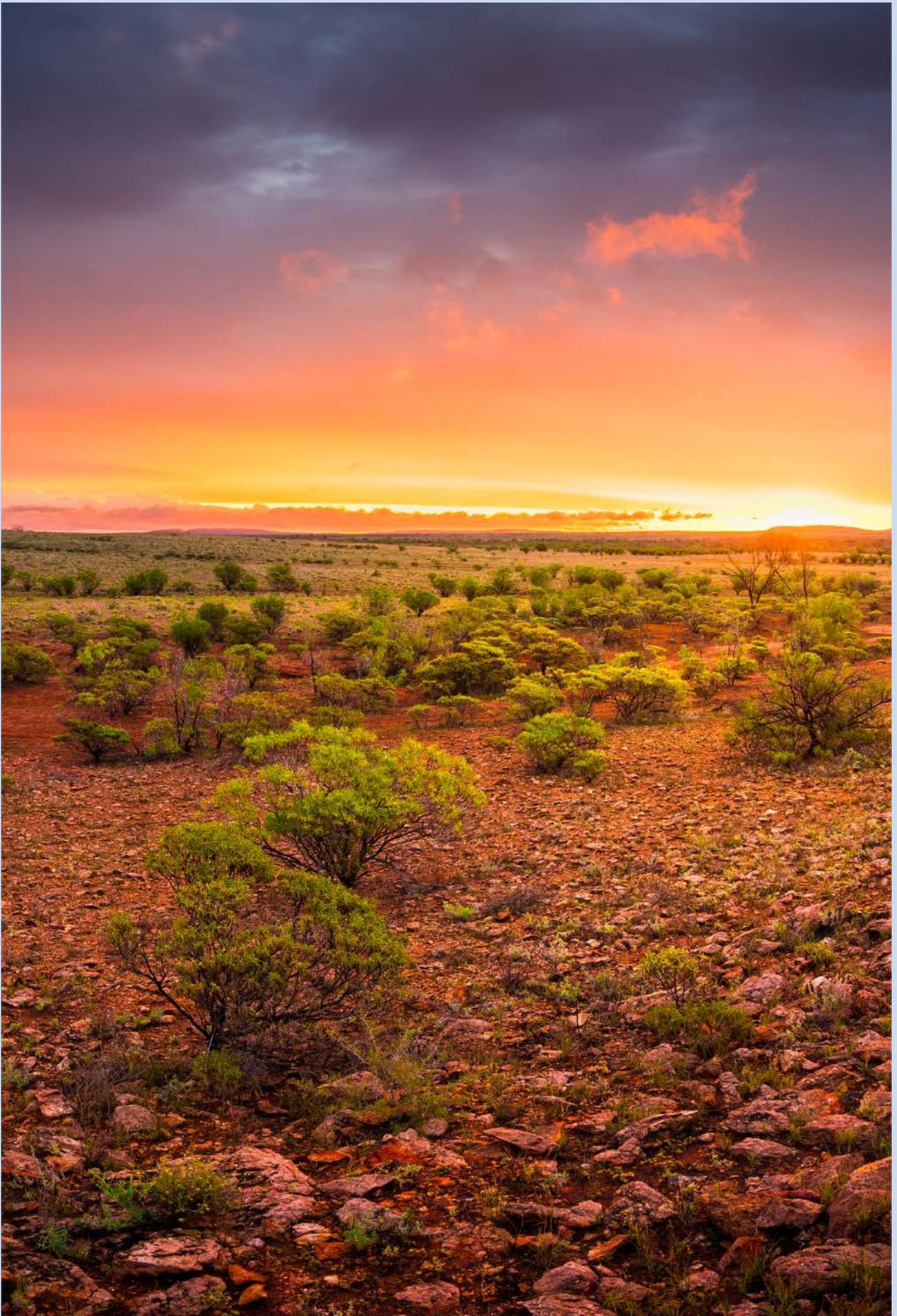
A conversation about a more just, equitable and sustainable Australia cannot begin without acknowledging the over 500 distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations from which today's Australia has been built.

Foundations for Tomorrow proudly acknowledges all Traditional Owners and Custodians throughout Australia. We recognise and respect the enduring relationship that First Nations peoples have with the land and waterways on which we depend, and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge that we live our lives on land where sovereignty was never ceded, and we hope that our custom of acknowledging this history will translate to meaningful action to address ongoing injustices.

We extend this acknowledgement on behalf of the young Australians whose perspectives have shaped this report.





Arrernte Country | Alice Springs, Northern Territory

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1

**EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The priorities of Australia's young people should inform our country's Covid-19 recovery plan. The decisions of today's leaders will lay the foundations for their future.

This report captures over 10,000 young Australian voices with the aim of informing Australia's leaders about the most critical issues from the perspective of Australia's young people. The findings cover the policy priorities of young Australians, the future they want to see, and who they view as responsible for creating a more just, equitable and sustainable future.

Each of these themes are explored through a Youth Priority Chapter that lays out the relevant survey findings, contextualises the issues, and includes insights from responding leaders across government, the private sector and civil society.

The survey shows that young Australians believe everyone has a role to play in addressing the country's challenges, but they expect the government to lead in solving these issues by setting the rules and holding industry to account.

Even though climate change is the biggest concern to young Australians, systemic challenges of personal wellbeing, security, and community-wide inclusion hinder their ability to meaningfully focus on and contribute to a sustainable future for Australia.

Unsurprisingly, young Australians have a long-term view of Australia's prosperity. They feel let down by the perceived focus of today's leaders on election cycles or short-term profit at the expense of their future. They are calling for more ambitious, long-term and accountable leadership from government and business.

This report presents a compelling mandate for the parliaments and boardrooms of Australia.

We bring these voices to the decision-making tables to break down silos, foster intergenerational collaboration, and empower Australians to tackle these complex challenges *together*.

Young Australians are most concerned with three key issues:



Meaningful climate solutions



Wellbeing and security for individuals



An equitable and inclusive society, especially for First Nations peoples

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KEY FINDINGS



Key Takeaway
for Government Leaders

Young Australians expect ambitious and action-oriented leadership from government leaders and are eager to support those who embrace this approach

Key Takeaway
for Industry Leaders

Young Australians are calling on industry leaders to pursue innovative business practices and an increased risk tolerance to advance solutions to Australia's greatest challenges

Young Australians lack confidence in the future and are calling for new approaches

- When asked about their confidence in Australia's ability to overcome current global challenges, only **4% of young Australians have absolute confidence in our current approach. 34% of young Australians report their confidence level at or below 4/10** (with 1 being no confidence at all)
- The *Your Voice* social media polling sought to understand how young Australians feel about their future. **While 66% report feeling uncertain or anxious about the future, 27% still feel hopeful. However, only 7% report feeling confident**

Climate change is a priority, with government seen as primarily responsible for progress but industry also being seen as essential

- **Climate change was ranked as the 'most pressing challenge facing Australia today'** and the theme most frequently raised by young Australians when asked what they deemed to be our most pressing social issue (24% of all submissions)
- Young Australians identified governments as the single most important stakeholder that can increase availability of sustainable products (33%), which is more than double the next stakeholder (with individuals as citizens and consumers and large-scale businesses ranking near equal)
- Young Australians feel that using renewable energy and favouring renewable energy providers are the most important individual behaviours (30%) to combat climate change. This was followed by reducing consumption of disposable goods (17%) and recycling whenever possible (16%)
- When asked if the government should make 'accelerating climate change action a key goal of the economic recovery', 80% of young Australians either 'strongly agree' or 'agree'

93%

of young Australians believe that government is not doing enough to address climate change

65%

of young Australians strongly agree or agree that banks should stop supporting fossil fuel expansion through lending and financial services

Young Australians feel insecure about their personal wellbeing and security, now and into the future

- Young Australians identified individual wellbeing (mental and physical health) and security (affordable, safe and accessible housing) as the second and third most important challenges currently facing Australia
- This sentiment for concern regarding wellbeing and security has been echoed in the overall sentiment shared by young Australians that they feel unsupported and unprepared for their future
- **71% say that they 'do not feel secure' about their future**
- **78% of young Australians do not believe that all Australians have access to the basic support they need**
- **70% do not feel that their education is preparing them adequately for their future**

Equity and inclusion are key to our Australian identity, and more work needs to be done to reach those goals

- **When asked if they believed Australia to be inclusive, 66% responded 'no'**
- A majority of young Australians identified following the directives of the Uluru Statement from the Heart as a key first step in addressing reconciliation
- When asked on a scale of 1-10 'how much of a priority should further work on First Nations recognition and reconciliation be for Australia in the future?', 62% of young Australians rated it 7/10 or above, with 17% rating it 10/10 (with 10 being the most important)

90%

of young Australians believe First Nations Australians should have an enshrined voice in Parliament

96%

of young Australians would vote 'yes' in a referendum to recognise First Nations Australians in the Australian Constitution

We all must play our role, but young people were clear that government should lead while industry should invest and be held accountable

- **Over half (51%) of young Australians' consumption decisions are primarily driven by ethical considerations in contrast to personal considerations, such as price and convenience, driving 49% of decision-making**
- When asked who they deem to be 'most responsible for addressing climate change', 53% of respondents identified 'the government' while only 15% ranked 'large-scale enterprises' as the most responsible
- **71% of young Australians would support politicians who take bold, immediate and ambitious action on the issues they care about, such as climate change**
- 'Stronger financial incentives' (27%), 'increased consumer pressure' (19%) and 'training for executive leadership teams' (14%) were identified as the key factors that would most improve responsible business practices
- 'Profitability' (21%), 'lack of commitment from public stakeholders' (19%) and 'conflict of interest' (17%) were identified as the barriers to improving responsible business practices

82%

of young Australians think private sector organisations should be held accountable for their environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) impact

11%

of young Australians identified voting as the most effective way to make a difference

Young people don't require perfection, but they are calling for ambitious action and strong leadership to rebuild trust

- Young Australians identified proactive action (49%), increased stability (20%) and improved transparency (11%) as the top three traits that would enable them to place trust in their leaders

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**LETTER OF
ENDORSEMENT**



Covid-19 has brought the country to a crossroads. While many challenges still lie ahead, we also have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. An opportunity to reshape our communities and economy. An opportunity to reset the way we do business, the way we live, and the direction we are headed. An opportunity to deliver better outcomes for Australians and create a brighter future for generations to come.

Tomorrow starts today for those looking to redefine our next step.

I believe the Foundations for Tomorrow, Awareness to Action Report plays an important role in this process. It offers us, Australia's leaders in business and government, and the wider public, the chance to hear directly from young Australians on their vision for the future of our nation. We need to listen to their concerns and challenges, and where they are advocating for change.

For Aware Super, knowing what is important to our members and the Australian public helps ensure we deliver on our promise to do well for our members at the same time as doing good for all. It also helps us ensure our fund and our services best reflect the needs of younger Australians. They are likely to live longer than any generation before them and their retirement savings will really matter!

This report gives us the chance to open a meaningful dialogue about the world that young Australians will inherit, and puts real value on their needs, opinions and ideas.

The results show an overwhelming desire for action from leaders on issues including climate change, housing affordability, and First Nations Australians. Leaders of the country's future have the responsibility to take that action and ensure what we do today is strong and sustainable for the long-term.

As Aware Super, we have the privilege of managing the retirement savings of 1.1 million Australians over their entire working careers. Acting in the best interest of our members and the broader community underpins every investment and business decision we make.

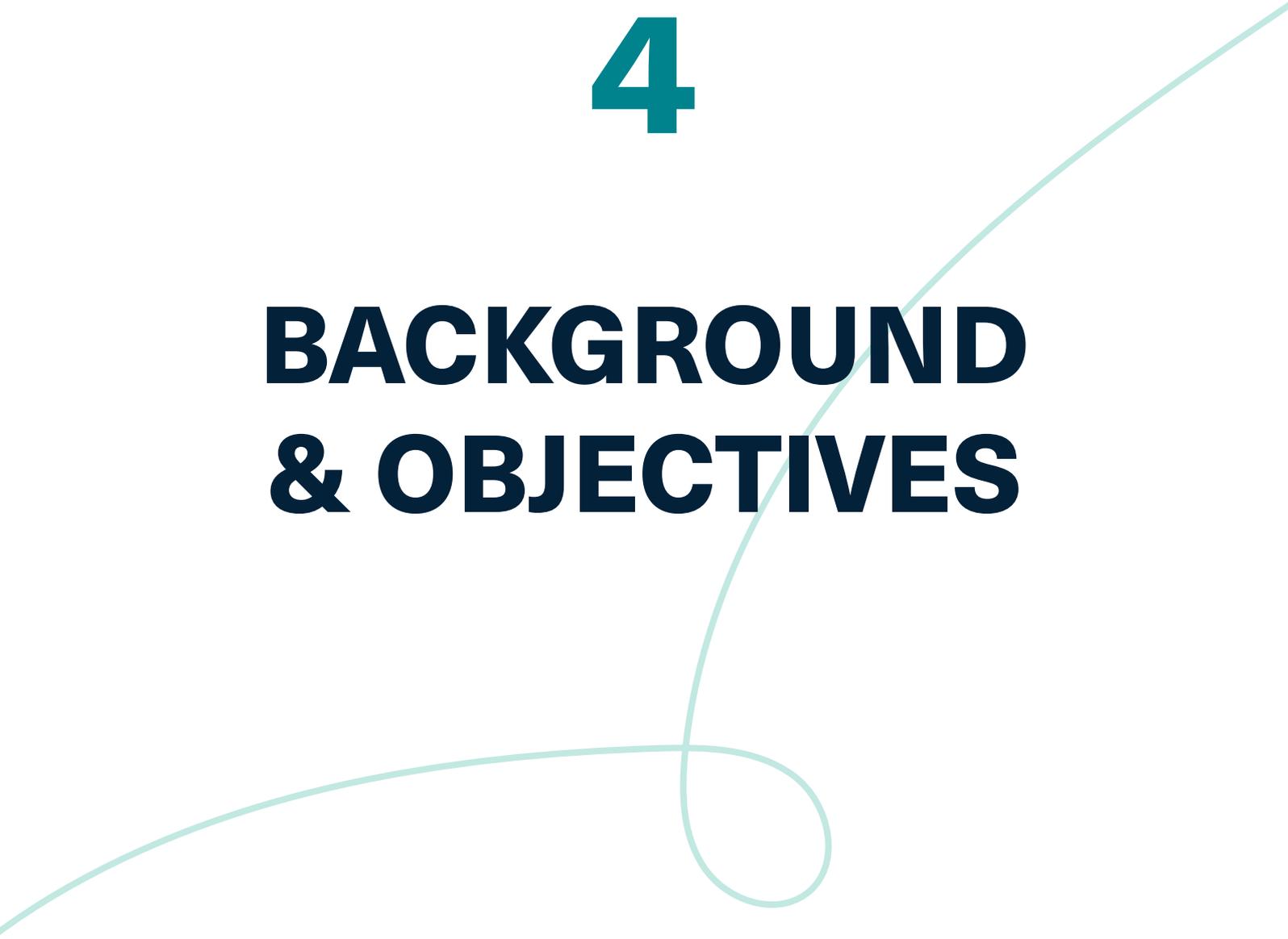
We are at a tipping point on many big issues, and the youth voice has been highly influential in moving public and corporate sentiment on topics such as climate change and gender equality.

I see huge promise in the change that young Australians want to enact and look forward to the discussions that this report will elicit. Let's listen to their collective voice and, together, drive tangible action to create a better Australia for every Australian.

**Deanne Stewart,
CEO, Aware Super**

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BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES



The Global Shapers Community, an initiative of the World Economic Forum, is a network of over 13,000 young people across 150 countries. Each Global Shapers Hub generates ideas and solutions that address local, regional and global challenges through community engagement and collaboration with stakeholders.

In 2020, the Global Shapers Community launched the Davos Lab, a global initiative seeking to drive a more just, equitable and sustainable future through community engagement of all citizens through surveys and dialogue. This global initiative has reached ~2.3 million people to date, including 344 dialogues in 66 countries.

As part of this initiative, the Australian Global Shapers Community established Foundations for Tomorrow, an organisation on a mission to amplify the voices of young Australians amongst government and business leaders to support the design of a more just, equitable and sustainable future for Australia.

In collaboration with Aware Super, Foundations for Tomorrow executed the *Your Voice* survey. This research focuses on themes relating to climate change, responsible business and community inclusion in addition to Australia-specific themes such as First Nations rights and reconciliation.

The scale of this project was made possible with support from Aware Super and through partnerships and collaboration with organisations across the private and social impact sectors.



OBJECTIVE

Foundations for Tomorrow's mission is to share and amplify the voices of young Australians to government leaders, industry decision-makers and fellow citizens to design a better Australia. This report delivers on this mission with three key objectives:

ELEVATE

Elevate the views, concerns and hopes of young Australians. By elevating the voices of young people to the ears of our national leaders, we intend to influence meaningful outcomes that will directly shape the nation for decades to come.

HIGHLIGHT

Highlight the opportunities and advantages available for governments and businesses in driving change that is impactful yet achievable.

DRIVE ACTION

Drive action by creating an inclusive dialogue across ages, lived experiences and ideological spectrums, prompting Australians to move from awareness into action.

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5

**REPORT
METHODOLOGY**

REPORT METHODOLOGY

This report captures the findings of a national youth consultation project undertaken by Foundations for Tomorrow, targeting Australians thirty years old and under between 12 April and 7 May 2021.

The report draws together 10,000 voices: 5,743 young Australians, under the age of 30, completed a comprehensive survey, the sentiments from which were echoed by 5,222 responses to social media polling targeted at young Australians. This report also includes the voices of 22 prominent leaders from across Australia’s government, business and community sectors.



Data set 1 includes responses from 5,743 young Australians to an online long-form survey.

This sample was made up of:

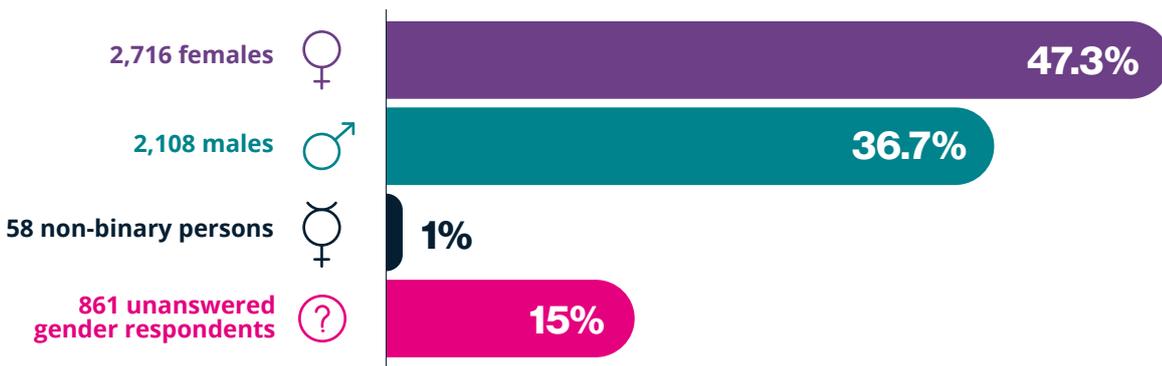


Figure 1. FFT Your Voice survey age demographics (N = 5,743)

Participants’ ages ranged from 15 to 30 years old:

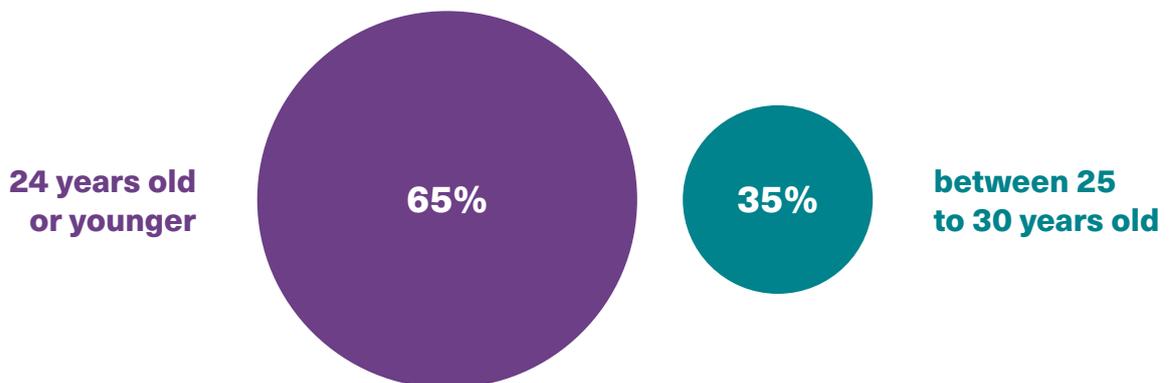


Figure 2. FFT Your Voice survey age demographics (N = 5,743)

The respondents were nationally distributed:

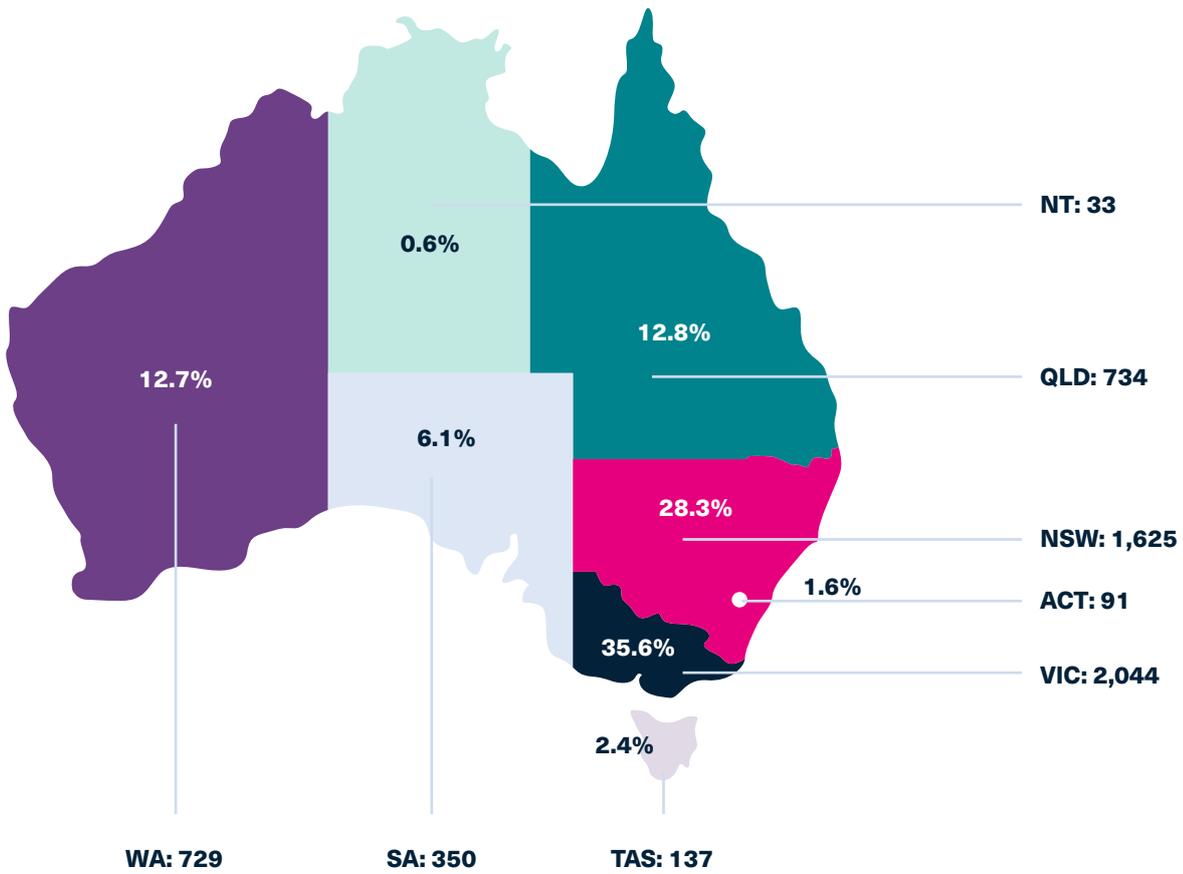


Figure 3. FFT Your Voice survey location demographics (N = 5,743)

SOCIAL MEDIA

Data set 2 includes 5,222 responses to social media polling across platforms including Instagram, LinkedIn and Facebook, which were targeted at young Australians.

This method was adopted to boost the reach of the survey, improve accessibility and broaden the socio-economic spread. Due to the nature of this data collection method, data set 2 does not have a demographic breakdown.

The source and sample sizes for each of the findings are noted throughout the report.

Details of the data analysis methodology can be found in the Appendix.

LEADER INTERVIEWS

The report also features insights from 22 Responding Leaders across Australia’s government, business and civil society sectors.

These semi-structured interviews were designed around questions provided by young Australians in their survey responses.

The full list of Responding Leaders is detailed on page 82.



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**PRIORITIES
OF YOUNG
AUSTRALIANS**

Young Australians have clear priorities for the future



1. Climate Solutions

Taking actions to limit global warming to 1.5°C, or at worst 2°C, above pre-industrial levels, through reducing and offsetting emissions in the pursuit of significant reductions by 2030 and Net Zero by 2050. This will involve investing in a sustainable-energy-fuelled economy while simultaneously seeking to protect and restore life on land and in water, in alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals¹.



2. Wellbeing & Security

Preserving the mental and physical wellbeing of the individual and ensuring their access to secure housing. Both wellbeing and security play an integral role in enabling active participation, agency and quality of life within our communities and society.



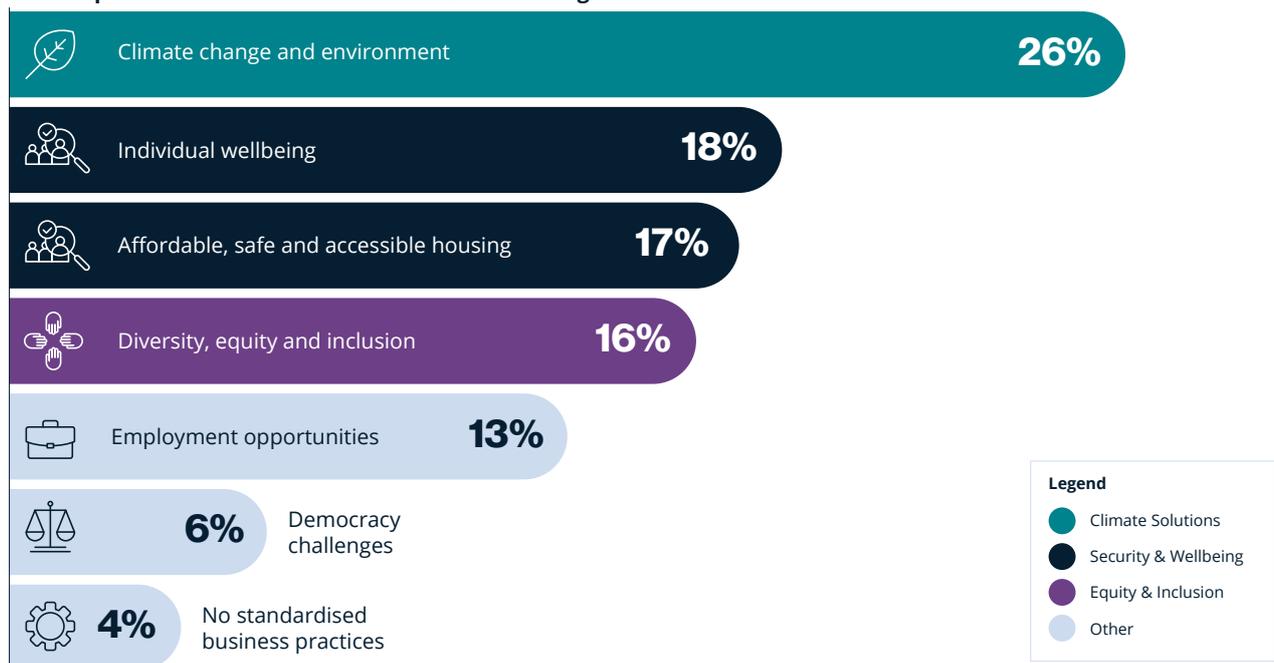
3. Equity & Inclusion

Correcting long-standing injustices with regards to historically marginalised communities is essential to creating a society that is safe, just and encourages participation of all people. This report brings focus specifically to First Nations justice.



What are the most important challenges facing Australia today?

% of respondents that ranked this as their #1 challenge



Legend

- Climate Solutions
- Security & Wellbeing
- Equity & Inclusion
- Other

Figure 4. Most important challenges facing Australia today (N = 5,743)

Young Australians do not feel confident in Australia’s approach to the future

Participants were surveyed on their confidence in Australia’s “current approach” to tackle the global challenges, including climate change, international instability, pandemic risks and the changing nature of work and technology.

34% of young Australians reported their confidence level at or below 4/10, with an additional 35% indicating their confidence level as ‘neutral’.

Only 4% of young Australians demonstrated absolute confidence in Australia’s current approach.



How confident are you that current global challenges are solvable under the existing approaches of government and industry?

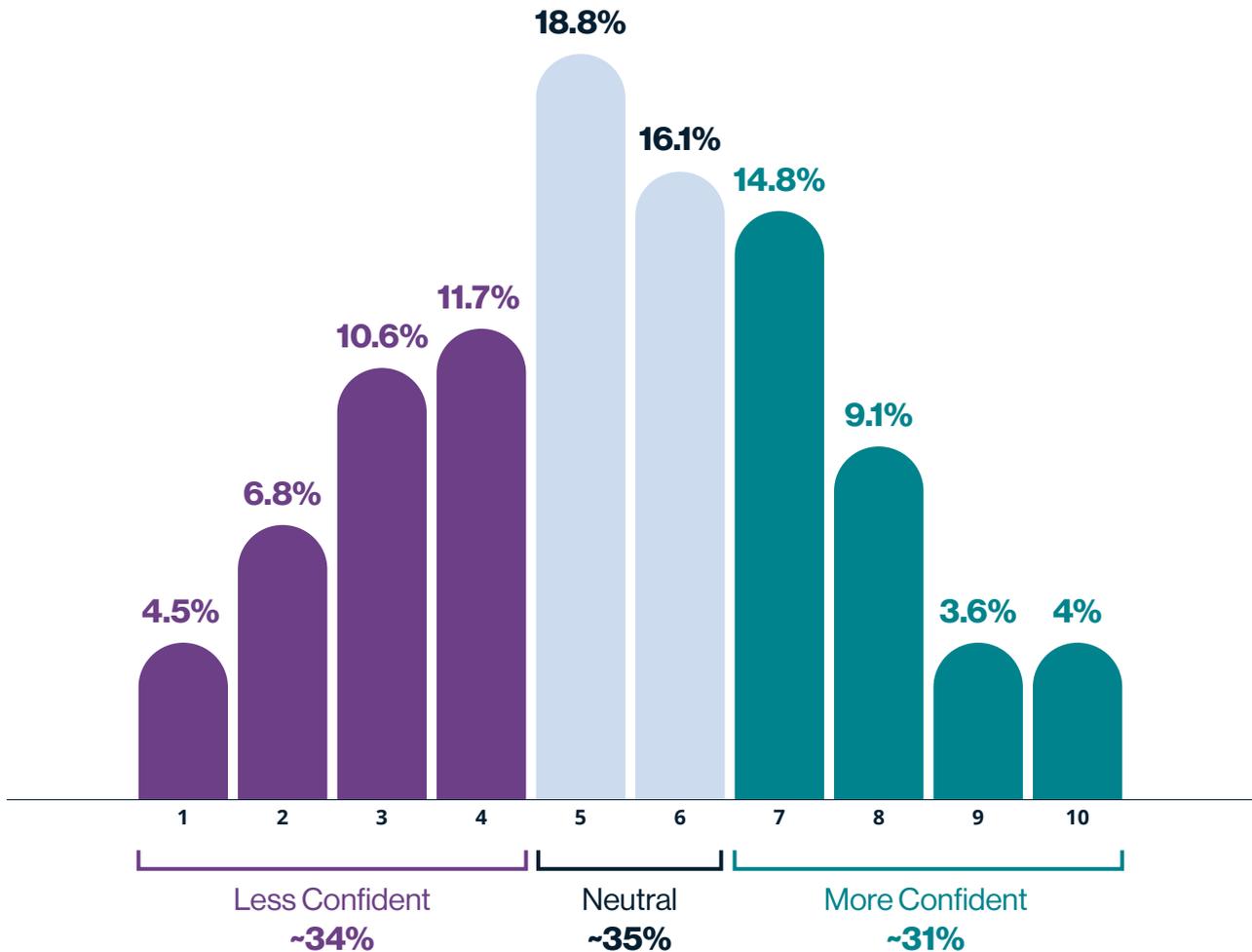


Figure 5. Confidence that current global challenges are solvable through existing approaches (N = 5,743)

Despite the uncertainty, young Australians remain hopeful

How do you feel when you think about the future?

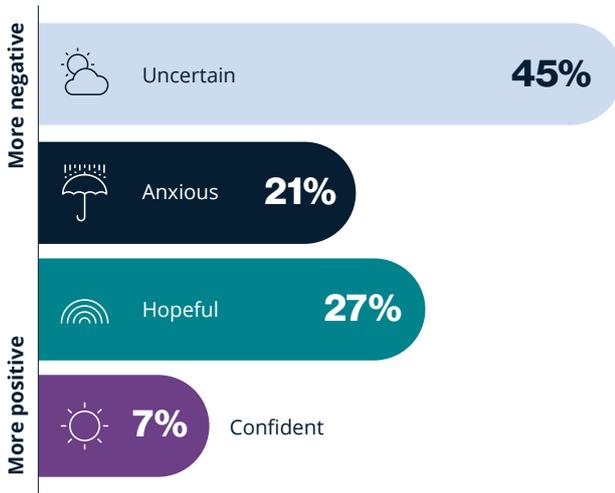


Figure 6. How young Australians feel about the future (N = 281)

This sentiment of uncertainty and low confidence was further illustrated by the findings of the *Your Voice* social media polling that sought to understand how young Australians felt about their future. 66% reported feeling uncertain or anxious about the future.

While 27% have retained hope as their primary feeling, only 7% feel confident about their future.

Young Australians are nervous about their future, but remain hopeful that progress is possible with an adjusted approach.



There is a massive window for us to reconsider and redesign. But, we must recognise that while nothing is off the table in this current context, there is also nothing guaranteed. The fact we have a window of opportunity does not, in itself, suggest that this will translate into the change we wish to see.

Abdullahi Alim,
Founder & Head of Strategy, The Davos Lab, World Economic Forum



Over the last 18 months, we've seen the best and the worst of humanity. And, there are a few important things we can take from it. As a whole economy and certainly from a government perspective, we demonstrated the ability to move really quickly when there's a crisis, which is something that I hope we can translate to other issues.

We also saw the whole of the community rally together with businesses and the National Cabinet. That sense of collaboration and community has been truly remarkable and is something that should be sustained.

Deanne Stewart,
CEO, Aware Super

Background Brief: A Period of Uncertainty

The global community is living through the biggest shock to our economic system, and day-to-day lives, since World War II.² Fortunately, compared to many countries around the world, Australia has fared comparatively well during the Covid-19 pandemic, with almost all Australian adults (95%) believing that Australia has handled the Covid-19 crisis well.³ As of July 2021, our unemployment rate has decreased to 4.9%, just above its pre-pandemic levels,⁴ and Australia's GDP rebounded stronger than almost every other advanced OECD nation.⁵

Despite this response to the pandemic, one can argue that the economy has been stalling. Productivity has been sluggish compared to 20 years ago⁵ and real wages increased by a paltry 2.6% between 2014-18, a stark contrast to the 9.4% growth achieved in the five years preceding 2013.⁶ During this time, economic inequalities have widened. Pre-Covid-19, the average wealth of the top 20% of households (\$3,255,000) was 90 times that of the lowest

20% (\$36,000), a substantial wealth divide that is progressively widening.⁷ For young Australians, this means an increasing gap between their income and the cost of living, and a resulting dilution of their sense of equality and empowerment.⁸

With the Covid-19 supplemented JobSeeker ending on 31 March 2021, the vaccine rollout incomplete and our international borders not yet open, it is too early to judge the exact economic impact of the pandemic. However, we do know that we face record public debt, with the underlying cash deficit in 2021-22 forecast to be \$106.6 billion (5.0% of GDP).⁹

For young Australians, these economic forecasts create a sense of instability, a sentiment that is understandably causing uncertainty and anxiety for many.



7

YOUTH PRIORITY #1:

**CLIMATE
SOLUTIONS**



If you know a certain practice has severe consequences, why do you still continue to do it? The young people will be the ones facing the irreversible consequences in the near future.

18 year old female, NSW



Young Australians want to see greater action on climate change from their leaders

Young Australians ranked climate change and environmental concerns as the most important challenge facing the country today.

93%

of young Australians polled believe that government is not doing enough to address climate change.

 **Do you believe our government is doing enough to address climate change?**

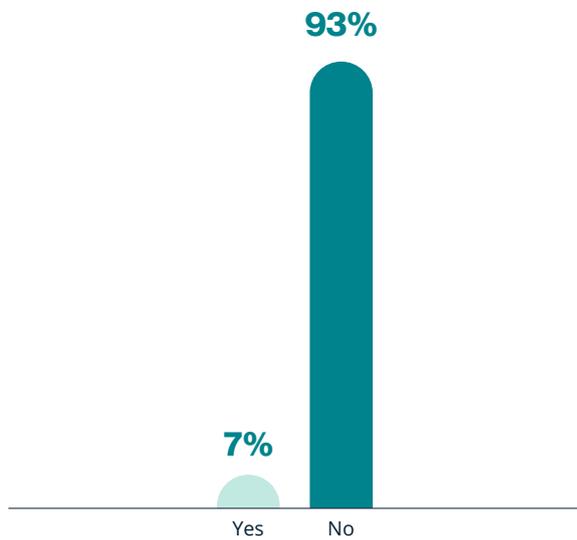


Figure 7. Is Government doing enough to address climate change (N = 927)

80%

either agree or strongly agree with the assertion that the government should make accelerating climate change action a key goal of economic recovery.

 **My government should make accelerating climate change action a key goal of the economic recovery**

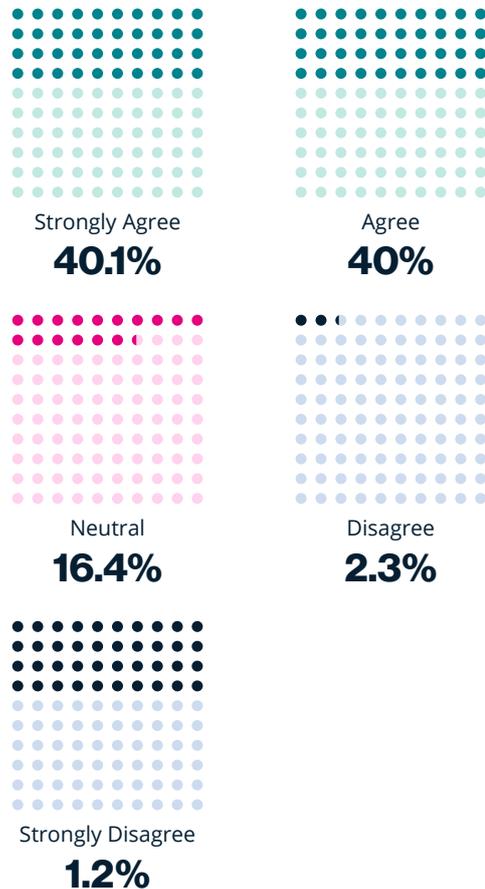


Figure 8. Should government accelerate climate change actions as part of the economic recovery (N = 5,743)

Respondents identified the obligation of large corporations to change their commercial strategies to support more just, equitable and sustainable outcomes.

65% of respondents agree that banks should stop supporting fossil fuel expansion through lending and financial services.

This suggests a significant proportion of young people believe that financial institutions have both the ability and the responsibility to curb Australia's dependency on fossil fuels.



How strongly do you agree/disagree that banks should stop supporting fossil fuel expansion through lending and financial services?

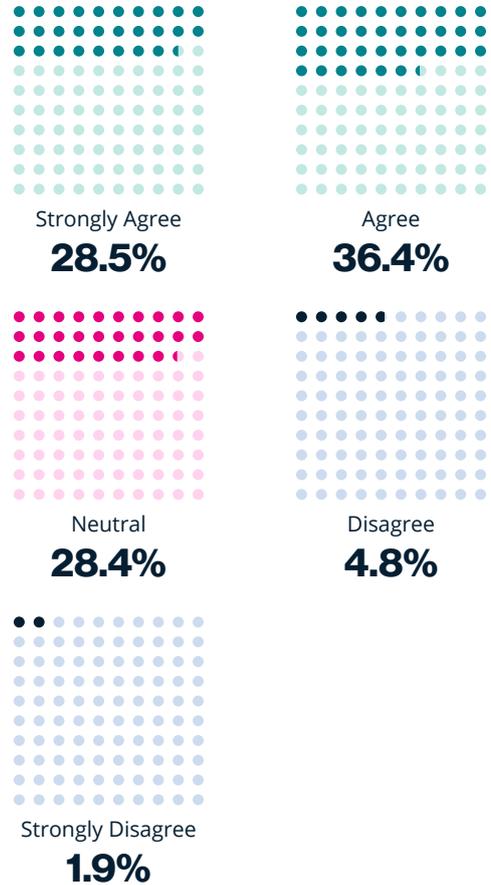


Figure 9. Should banks stop supporting fossil fuel expansion (N = 5,743)



2050 is too late for action. We have to tackle fossil fuel expansion and we have to start restoring the environment. Young people see this, they know it. I really urge my political colleagues to take the concerns of young people seriously. They deserve a future. They deserve a planet that is still liveable.

Senator Sarah Hanson-Young,
Senator for South Australia





The Australian Government's focus is on getting new low-emissions technologies to parity with existing approaches — or preferably even cheaper. This is a practical approach with global application.

One that enables and transforms industries through the power of technology and economics, not taxes that eliminate them and the jobs and livelihoods they support and create.

It will make Net Zero practically achievable for all countries — both developed and developing — and enable us to achieve our shared ambition of a safe, secure and prosperous future.

The Hon Angus Taylor MP,
Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction



In response to which stakeholders they deemed to be most important for increasing the availability of sustainable products, **34% of young Australians identified governments as the single most important stakeholder that can enable increased availability of sustainable products, which is more than double the next stakeholder.**

Young Australians feel that using renewable energy is the most important individual behaviour (30%) to combat climate change. This was followed by reducing our consumption of disposable goods (17%) and recycling whenever possible (16%).

Which stakeholders are most important to taking action on increasing the availability of sustainable products?

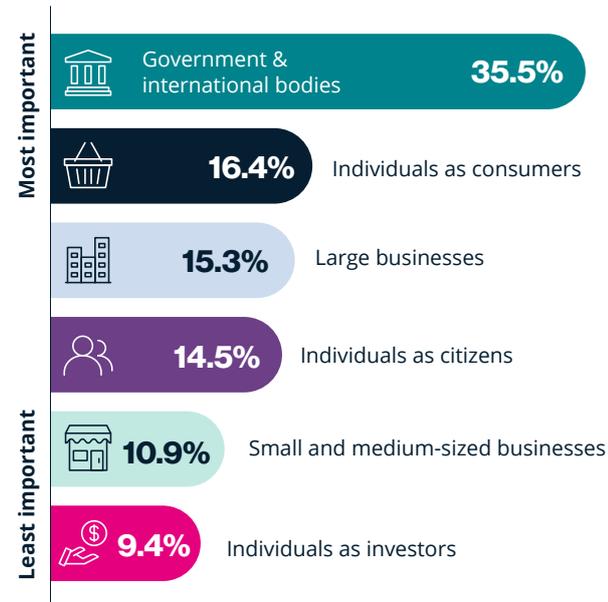


Figure 10. Stakeholders most important to increasing availability of sustainable products (N = 5,743)

Which individual behaviours do you think can make the greatest impact in combating climate change?

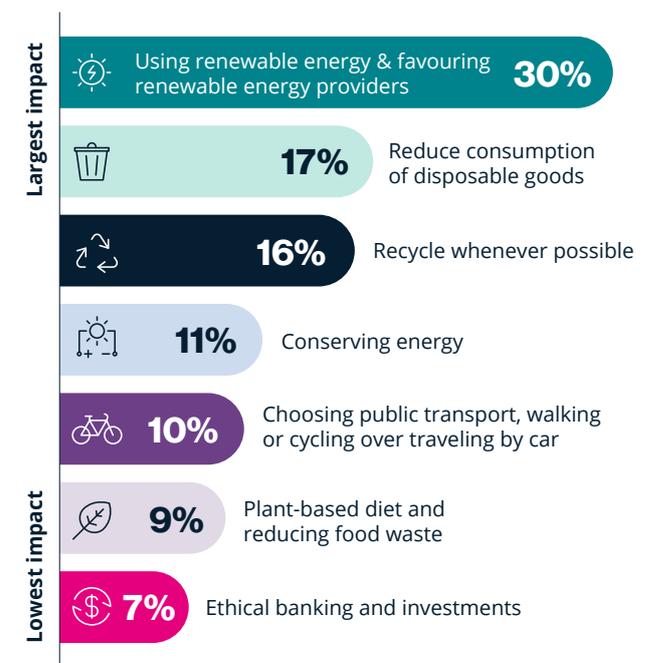


Figure 11. Behaviours with greatest impact on combating climate change (N = 5,743)

Young Australians are aware their future is at stake if greater action is not taken on climate change, and they expect to see both industry and government prioritise their responsibilities in accelerating and advancing climate solutions.

Background Brief: Australia's Climate Future

We are now at risk of failing our 'critical decade' on climate change.¹⁰ The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change identifies the need to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and with a hard limit of 2°C, which requires reaching Net Zero emissions globally by 2050 alongside significant reductions prior to 2030.¹¹

In May 2021, the International Energy Agency, traditionally bearish on the need for rapid transition, released a report imploring wealthy nations to phase out coal-fired power by the end of the decade. Their report emphasises that this is the only pathway that ensures stable and affordable energy supplies, universal energy access and robust economic growth by 2050.¹²

Beyond the increasing threat of natural disasters and heat waves that will impact the future health of young Australians, their financial future will be significantly impacted by the choices we make today. It has been estimated that the cost of climate change over a young person's lifetime will range between \$125,000 and \$245,000 due to losses in income, property wealth and risks to health.¹³

Government

The call to take action is being heeded by Australia's major trading partners and strategic allies. In April 2021, the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, Canada and the European Union have all increased their 2030 Paris Agreement emission reduction commitments and have committed to Net Zero by 2050.¹⁴ China, which is responsible for 28% of global carbon emissions and is Australia's biggest import and export partner, has also committed to Net Zero emissions by 2060. The G7 has agreed to stop financing fossil fuel projects by the end of 2021, and looming carbon tariffs proposed by the EU pose a risk to Australian exporters if we fail to reduce our structural reliance on fossil fuel infrastructure. These changes implemented by the EU are likely to be replicated by other strategic partners and are indicative of the future challenges Australia will face if significant proactive action is not taken by government and business leaders.¹⁵

Young Australians expect greater action from our leaders, and Australia risks being left behind its peers on climate change policy

With fossil fuels comprising a disproportionately high percentage of our export value (32%) and energy grid (79%), Australia starts its transition journey with a greater economy-wide structural dependency on carbon-intensive industries compared to many other countries.^{16,17} At the time of publication, Australia is the world's largest exporter of thermal and metallurgical coal and is second only to Qatar as the largest liquified natural gas (LNG) exporter.



Albany Wind Farm, Minang Country | Albany, Western Australia

Consequently, Australia's global carbon footprint is significant, with exported fossil fuel emissions currently representing around 3.6% of global emissions, which is almost triple the percentage of global CO₂ emissions that Australia emits on its own (1.3%).¹⁸

The longer we delay to make the structural changes required in our cities, suburbs and carbon-intensive communities, the more sudden and dislocating the inevitable transition is likely to be—especially for those in our regional communities. The six industries with the greatest exposure to the physical risks of climate change today employ 43% of workers and represent 38% of GDP.¹⁹

Our leaders should prioritise the growth industries of the future, invest in sustainable infrastructure, future-proof the labour force, and address the interconnected pressures on nature and biodiversity that contribute to breakouts of infections like Covid-19.²⁰

State and territory governments have stepped up in the absence of federal action and made commitments to achieve Net Zero by 2050.²¹ This serves as a powerful step to building pressure for action because all stakeholders would benefit from a national framework.

“

As a developed nation, that's in a leadership position, I think that waiting on the sidelines and not being proactive on climate change sends the wrong signal and is not the right thing to do... It's truly unfortunate, I think that some of the largest economies in the world are currently playing a very nationalist and zero-sum game.

—
Sherman Lo,
Adjunct Professor & Entrepreneur
in Residence, INSEAD

“

Climate change is a real but amorphous threat... that's why people call it a wicked problem because it defies the deep-seated cognitive triggers that happen when we think this is a threat that we need to act on.

—
Rebecca Huntley,
Author & Researcher

Industry

Just 100 companies were responsible for 71% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions between 1998 to 2017.²² Only 23% of the 22 greatest emitters from Australia's resource sector have pledged Net Zero scope 1 (direct) and scope 2 (purchased electricity) emissions by 2050.²³

However, young Australians identified 'using renewables' as the most effective way to combat climate change, placing the burden back on industry to create the supply to match the demand.²²

Industry plays a critical role in facilitating the development of climate solutions in Australia. While the current sustainability outlook for Australia's leading companies is mixed, business leaders have consistently offered a more vocal and proactive commitment to transitioning than political leaders over the last decade.



When assessing the sustainability of major corporations, 28 of Australia's largest electricity-consuming companies have committed to source 100% of their electricity from renewable energy.²⁴ These commitments are expected to support an estimated 2.8 gigawatts of demand for renewable energy projects and create over 5,000 jobs, with the majority of these objectives due to be achieved within the coming 5 years.²⁴

The economic fallout from Covid-19 has temporarily soured the sustainability outlook for corporations globally, and Australia is unlikely to be immune from this prevailing trend. In a recent survey of 750 executives, 30% noted that the operational impacts of climate-related disasters were affecting their business, and yet almost two-thirds of organisations needed to cut back on their environmental sustainability efforts in response to the pandemic-related economic downturn.¹⁸ However, the same companies expressed a desire to accelerate their sustainability efforts over the next 12 months, including by implementing measures that impact the bottom line and executive compensation.¹⁸



As a result of the pandemic, we've developed a whole new appetite for risk. Retaining this increased appetite is essential for driving the innovation that we are going to need to act effectively on these major issues.

My call to action to other leaders in industry and government would be for us to make a collective pledge to build a better future for all Australians, inclusive of all our stakeholders, for the benefit of our current generation and our upcoming youth.

Lynette Clunies-Ross,
Regional VP & MD, SAS Aus & NZ



Addressing climate change isn't an economic threat for Australia. It's an economic opportunity. The future is going to be clean, green energy. The great thing about that is that power prices will come down and that creates the potential for Australia to become a leading energy exporter...

Australia's economy has suffered from a lack of policy certainty around renewables. What investors need - if they are making an investment with a 10, 20, 30-year horizon - is the certainty that their investment isn't going to be worthless if there's a change in government.

The Hon Andrew Leigh MP, Deputy
Chair of Standing Committee on
Economics, Member for Fenner

Australia's Opportunity: Economic and Environmental Prosperity

Australia has an opportunity to overcome entrenched barriers, leverage our natural advantages to transition away from fossil fuels and lean into the conviction of the emerging voter base.

An ambitious and just energy transition will require genuine and long-standing commitments. Trust between governments, businesses and citizens will continue to be the main determinant of a successful outcome. As old technologies and jobs are phased out, social support systems will need to help workers transfer their knowledge and skills to emerging sectors.²⁵

However, too often progress is influenced or slowed by external vested interests, and this challenge must be overcome by increased accountability. Research by Influence Map shows that Australia's most influential industry associations have a disproportionately

negative impact on climate policy, with 75% taking positions against climate regulations while promoting a pro-fossil-fuel agenda.²⁶ Our research shows young Australians are opposed to this approach, with 82% either agreeing or strongly agreeing that private sector organisations should be held accountable for their environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) impact.

In the face of these multidimensional challenges, Australian youth demonstrated an appetite for courage, change and action from their leaders.

The survey gives leaders, who may be cautious of the politics of climate change, a sweeping endorsement from an emerging generation to take action and initiate meaningful dialogues.

Australian Solar Farm | Location & Traditional Owners unknown



8

YOUTH PRIORITY #2: **WELLBEING & SECURITY**





How might we have leadership that focuses on reducing inequality and on the long-term wellbeing of its citizens, rather than narrow political agendas and an overemphasis on GDP?

28 year old female, NSW



Young Australians feel their wellbeing and security is under threat and feel ill-prepared for their future

Young Australians identified individual wellbeing (mental and physical health) and security (affordable, safe and accessible housing) as the second and third most important challenges currently facing Australia (Figure 4).

While this report remains optimistic at the levels of hope retained by young people, it should not be ignored that 66% of young people feel either 'uncertain' or 'anxious' about their future (Figure 6). This is reinforced by the sentiment that Young Australians do not feel adequately prepared for, supported in or secure in their future.

Individual Wellbeing

Individual wellbeing was ranked as the second most pressing challenge facing Australia, with many submissions from young Australians indicating challenges specifically around mental health.

Growing recognition of the need for stability and care for personal health was reflected in 19% of young Australians who cite work/life balance as the most influential factor when considering which companies to work for (second only to pay).

Housing Security

Young Australians are more concerned about having a home than a job, and access to safe and affordable housing was described as the third most crucial challenge.

This need was ranked two positions above employment opportunities, and many respondents to the *Your Voice* campaign drew attention to the fundamental ability to acquire secure and affordable accommodation in any form.



71%

state that they 'do not feel secure' about their future



Do you feel your future is secure?

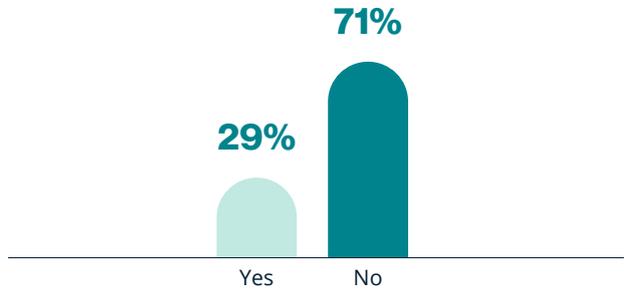


Figure 12. Do young Australians feel their future is secure (N = 984)

70%

do not believe their education is preparing them adequately for their future



Do you believe your education is preparing you adequately for your future?

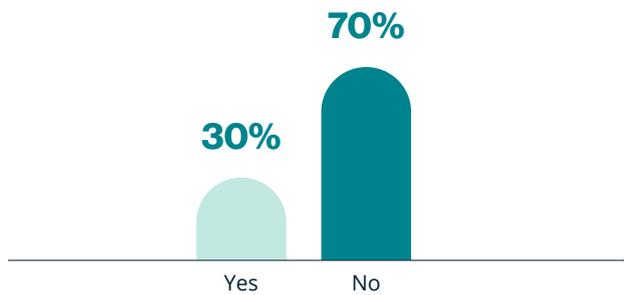


Figure 13. Is education preparing young Australians for the future (N = 520)

78%

do not believe that all Australians have access to the basic support they need



Do you believe that all Australians have access to the basic support they need?

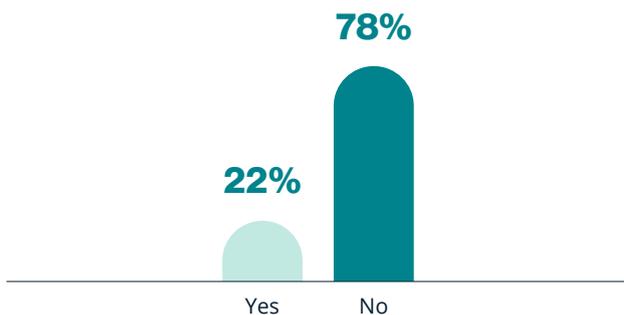


Figure 14. Do Australians have access to the basic support they need (N = 530)

Background Brief: The Wellbeing and Security of Australians

Even before the economic upheaval of Covid-19, the Grattan Institute declared that we are setting up the current generation of young Australians to be worse off than their predecessors for the first time in living memory.²⁷

An individual's wellbeing and personal security can be reinforcing factors in either virtuous or vicious cycles. Mental or physical health challenges may cause financial stress and endanger one's housing, while housing insecurity or financial stress may exacerbate, or pose obstacles to accessing support for, mental or physical illness.²⁸ These issues must be examined both together and apart to understand their full impact and effectively break negative cycles.²⁸

Wellbeing of Young Australians

Australia's health care system is ranked seventh globally on the Bloomberg Health Care Index. However, despite our universal health insurance scheme and outspending most OECD nations, health inequities prevail. Not all citizens have the same experience with the Australian health system; this is particularly true for people living with disabilities, rural and remote communities, and First Nations Australians. The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), for example, is heralded as a beacon of inclusion, yet only 10% of the 4.4 million Australians living with disabilities receive support.^{29,30}

Australians are struggling with mental health challenges. Even pre-pandemic, there was a need for greater mental health support, with Australia having the second-highest rate of mental health and substance abuse penetration in the world (18%).³¹



The way we've been moving as a country, and as a world, has been towards greater inequality, not less. The pandemic gives us a chance to acknowledge that, reset it and steer a course that is diametrically in a different direction.

Ciaran McCormack,
APAC Manager, Climate Reality Project

In the *Your Voice* social media polling, 17% of participants cited wellbeing, particularly mental health, as a major challenge in their life, which speaks to the magnitude of this issue. Moreover, despite the Government's recent major mental health investments,³² our research shows that many young Australians believe the mental health system is 'underfunded and overlooked'.*

The *Your Voice* findings highlight an issue that is costly to our system, but one that, if addressed, could yield immense economic benefits to all. Mental health challenges are the fourth most significant contributing factor to the burden of disease in Australia, with mental ill-health estimated to cost the Australian economy up to \$60 billion annually due to lost productivity.³³

Prioritising mental health outcomes reduces the economic burden on Australia's health system and represents an opportunity for organisations to attract and retain talent. Participants completed the *Your Voice* survey after the government scaled its ongoing mental health services in response to the pandemic, suggesting young people have an appetite for continued improvement.³⁴ In the *Your Voice* survey, 'work/life balance' was identified as the second highest priority for young Australians in the selection of their employer. The Australian Productivity Commission estimates that absenteeism and lost productivity due to mental health challenges cost the Australian economy \$17 billion every year, with improved wellbeing and security for Australians likely to yield increased workforce participation and national productivity.³⁵

Housing insecurity amongst young Australians

Young people flagging access to basic shelter as the third most pressing challenge in Australia should be a source of national concern.**

Shortages in the private rental market have inflated prices at the expense of low-income and disadvantaged groups.³⁶ Approximately 800,000 Australians live in social housing, which amounts to nearly eight Melbourne Cricket Grounds at full capacity.³⁷ In 2018, around 70% of social housing was assigned to those with 'special needs', as defined by The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, including those under 25, over 75 or living with a disability.³⁷

Despite the pressing need for safe and affordable housing, Australia is facing a social housing shortage of ~438,000 social housing units, which is anticipated to increase ~729,000 by 2036.³⁸ This excess demand cannot be accommodated by the private rental market, as competitive dynamics have driven the prices up and pushed the economically disadvantaged out. Without change, 728,000 families will be without a secure home in 15 years. Although efforts such as the National Rental Affordability Scheme seek to address these concerns, the weekly rent assistance of \$69.65 per week cannot keep pace with a market where the median rental rate is almost double, at \$114.40.³⁹

* *Your Voice* survey qualitative submissions.

** Based on the qualitative submissions of the *Your Voice* initiative, it is evident that the concerns for housing security held by young Australians specifically regarded the ability to secure rental accommodation rather than to secure homeownership.

Research from Macquarie University shows that homelessness in Australia is predominantly due to systemic issues of housing affordability rather than individual behaviours such as substance abuse or mental health issues.⁴⁰ The urgency of addressing this gap is highlighted by a 2019 Australian Bureau of Statistics estimate that 116,000 Australians are experiencing homelessness at any one time.⁴¹ State and federal governments used policy measures such as income and eviction protection schemes to stave off the effects of the pandemic, but, as these protections are phased out, it is unlikely that social housing stock can accommodate the spike in demand anticipated by City Futures Research Institute.⁴² Over the course of 2019, the net impact of new construction, demolitions, and sales saw available 'accessible housing'* dip from ~429,000 to ~428,000 dwellings.⁴² According to experts, these trends will continue even in light of the Federal Government allocation of ~\$125M to states and territories under the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement.^{36, 43, 44}

Covid-19's impact on the wellbeing and housing security of young Australians

During Covid-19, over 27% of young Australians experienced housing stress, with 44% unable to pay their rent on time.⁴⁵

Pre-existing housing insecurity has been exacerbated by Covid-19, with those already suffering economic and social disadvantages being hit the hardest.⁴⁶ Young people in particular faced acute stressors such as job loss, with over a quarter of young people aged 20-29 engaged in casual employment, making them significantly more likely to lose their jobs during the pandemic.⁴⁷

Australia's Opportunity: Bolstering wellbeing, security and democratic participation

Increased wellbeing and security of individuals delivers increased productivity at an organisational and national level.^{48, 49} This is because wellbeing and security directly impacts an individual's capacity to lead a 'contributing life'.⁵⁰

Better housing has been linked to improved health outcomes, which could reduce government expenditure on other services.⁵¹ Reducing the rates of homelessness generates a significant social return on investment. SGS Economics found that for every \$1 spent on 'last resort beds', \$2.70 in benefits are generated over a 20 period.⁵² KPMG showed that the \$5.6 billion Social Housing Initiative in 2009 led to the construction of 19,700 new homes and the creation of 14,000 jobs.⁵³ By re-building our way out of the Covid-19 pandemic, Australia can hit the trifecta of boosting housing supply, lowering rental prices and generating jobs.³⁸

* Accessible housing referred to the combined total of public housing, community housing, state-owned and managed Indigenous housing and Indigenous community housing dwellings.

The scale of the challenge and realities of Australia's aging population places heightened demand on the productivity of young people to sustain Australia's prosperity. This is even more pertinent in light of the need to pay down Covid-19 expenditures. With the current cash deficit in 2021-22 forecasted to be \$106.6 billion, young Australians require additional support to reach their potential.⁹

Improved wellbeing and security is also key to enabling meaningful political participation.^{54,55} This should be a priority for Australia given that the country was downgraded from an 'open' to 'narrowed' democracy in 2020, according to Civicus.⁵⁵

Effectively addressing young Australians' wellbeing and security challenges will better position them to proactively contribute to a more just, equitable and sustainable future.

Image courtesy of the World Economic Forum



“

Yes, Australia is a lucky nation. But for some people, luck is just not enough.

Abdullahi Alim,
Founder & Head of Strategy,
The Davos Lab, World Economic
Forum

“

Your success will always be the success of your team, and your team will only be successful if you are working with the community you are part of... What is of benefit to vulnerable members of society, will be of benefit to everyone in the society.

Dr Garry Nolan AM FAICD,
Chairman, Victorian Division,
Australian Red Cross

“

It's my personal feeling that...those with the most power must take that sense of responsibility and opportunity to think, 'when I make these choices, how am I not just making them in my own interest, but in the interests of the greater good?', so that they can be a force for good in the community.

Sarah Clarke,
Group GM, Sustainability, Mirvac

9

YOUTH PRIORITY #3: **EQUITY & INCLUSION**



“

Can they listen to advice from a *diverse* group of younger individuals, as they will be the ones who will inherit the consequences of the actions taken today?

27 year old male, VIC



Young Australians think Australia needs to prioritise equity and inclusion, specifically for First Nations Australians

When asked what they felt to be the most pressing challenges facing Australia, 16% of young people identified 'diversity, equity and inclusion' as the most pressing challenge. In addition 38% of those asked 'what is the most important social issue to you' gave responses focused on diversity and inclusion.

66%

When asked if they believed Australia to be inclusive, 66% responded 'no'.

Young Australians identify First Nations reconciliation, gender inequality, racism and the experience of people living with disabilities as priority considerations.

Equity and inclusion challenges impact many groups in Australia. While we recognise each of these issues warrant discussion, **the scope of our research and of this report directs our focus to First Nations inequities***.



Do you believe Australia is inclusive?

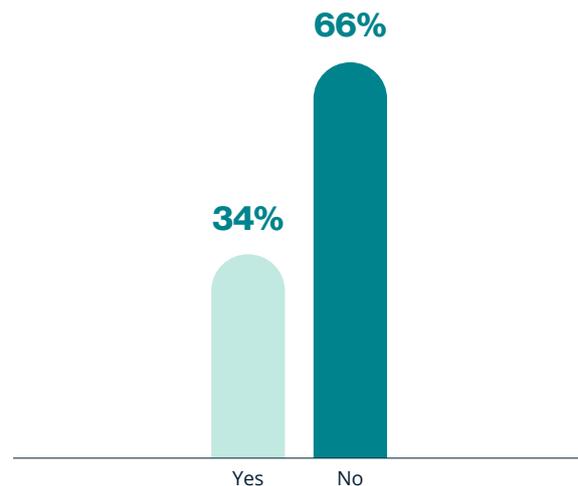


Figure 15. Do young Australians believe Australia is inclusive (N = 747)

* This focus is a product of its tractability, a framework employed by the Oxford Uehiro Center that provides directives for courses of priority on the tenets of the problem to be solved, the resources saved and those at risk. The authors recommend that further work be done to fully canvass the broader issues that are of great importance to a more just, equitable and sustainable future for all Australians.

Wurundjeri Country | Melbourne, Victoria





75%

of young Australians believe that First Nations' rights and reconciliation are important for Australia's future*. 17% ranked it at 10/10 of importance.



How much of a priority should further work on First Nations' rights and reconciliation be for Australia in the future?

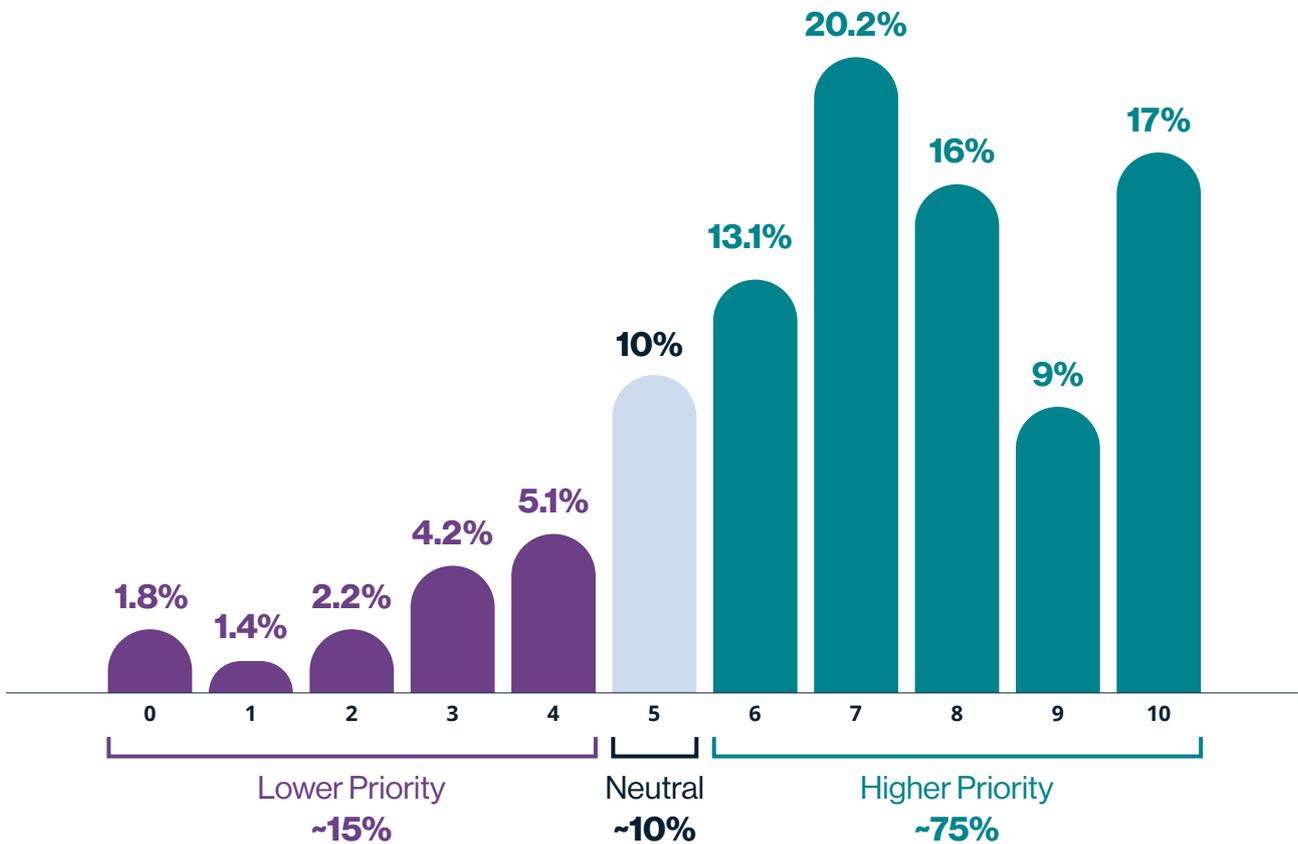


Figure 16. Priority that should be placed on First Nations' rights and reconciliation (N = 5,743)

* Young Australians scored it a 7/10 or greater in importance when asked 'on a scale of 1-10 how much of a priority should further work on First Nations recognition and reconciliation be for Australia in the future?'

96%

would vote 'yes' in a referendum to recognise First Nations Australians in the national constitution.

The majority of young Australians identified following the directives of the Uluru Statement from the Heart as a key first step in addressing reconciliation.



In a referendum to recognise First Nations Australians in our Constitution, how would you vote?

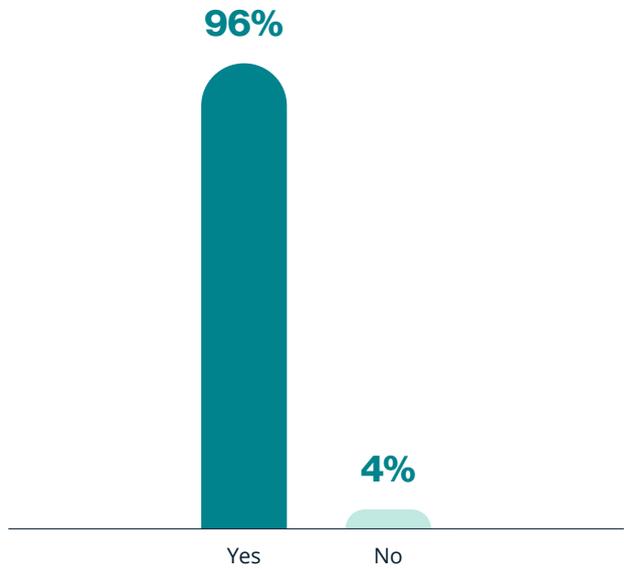


Figure 17. Would young Australians vote to recognise First Nations Australians in the constitution (N = 195)

90%

of young Australians believe First Nations Australians should have an enshrined voice in Parliament.

Young Australians believe First Nations rights and reconciliation must be prioritised and are dissatisfied with the rate of progress to date.

The true nature of equity and inclusion within Australia has become yet another front on which young Australians are demanding meaningful and proactive action from their leaders, with a reducing tolerance for symbolic gestures being leveraged in the absence of true progress.



Do you think First Nations Australians should have an enshrined voice in parliament?

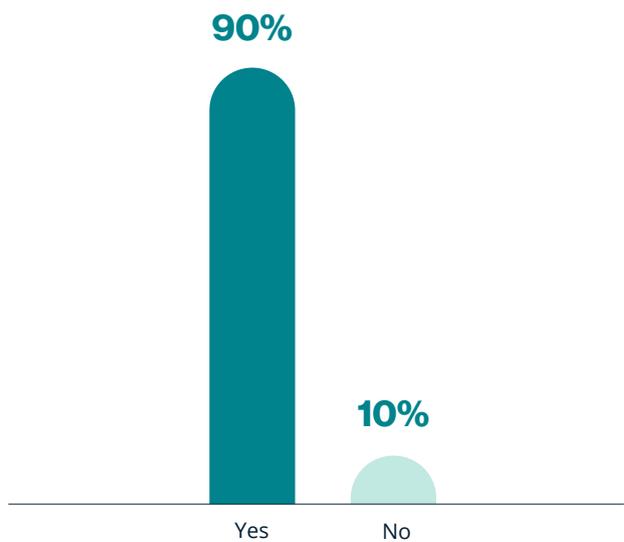


Figure 18. Would young Australians vote to recognise First Nations Australians in the constitution (N = 144)

Young Australians believe First Nations rights and reconciliation must be prioritised and are dissatisfied with the rate of progress to date.

Background Brief: Inequities Impacting First Nations Australians

The findings of the *Your Voice* survey indicates that prioritising First Nations rights and reconciliation is paramount for both First Nations and non-First Nations respondents. Achieving this outcome involves overcoming entrenched and systemic inequities to advance First Nations self-determination and equality in Australia more broadly.

This sentiment aligns with a growing trend across Australia; 95% of Australians want First Nations Australians to self-determine their own affairs, and over 80% believe it is important to establish a First Nations representative body within the Australian Constitution.⁵⁶

The exclusion of First Nations peoples manifests in a range of inequities across mortality and health outcomes, education and livelihoods, and incarceration rates. Overcoming these inequities has the potential to unlock the uniquely valuable knowledge systems of First Nations communities, particularly relating to community values and sustainable land management. Addressing these inequities will also enable Australia to finally embrace the economic benefits of greater inclusion.



“

I feel proud to be Australian. But I do believe that if we don't make the right decisions now, we'll become less proud to be Australian in the future. So we need to make sure that we are always trying to do better.

—
Dr Katie Allen MP,
Member for Higgins

“

Something that we're missing as a community is actually what different indigenous cultures across the world can teach us in terms of community frameworks, relationships, care of the environment, sustainable economic practices and social structures.

—
Sara Kane,
CEO, Circle Green

Mortality & Health Outcomes

The life expectancy of First Nations Australians pales in comparison to non-First Nations Australians, with a life expectancy 8.6 years lower for males and 7.8 years for females (for children born in 2015-17).⁵⁷

These divides between First Nations and non-First Nations age-standardised mortality rates are significant and have persisted for the last 12 years.⁵⁸ Even though Australia spends 10% of its GDP on healthcare and health systems (well above the OECD median of 8.1%),^{59,60} First Nations Australians were 3.5 times more likely than non-Indigenous Australians to have a preventable hospitalisation between 2010-12.⁶⁰ The gap in health status between First Nations and non-First Nations Australians remains unacceptably wide⁶¹ and has been identified as a human rights concern by the United Nations.⁶² We are not on track to meet the ABS target of closing the life expectancy gap by 2031.⁶³

The health gap experienced by First Nations Australians can also be observed through the occurrence of chronic illness. Social determinants such as economic disadvantage, poor education outcomes and unemployment were responsible for causing 34% of chronic

illness for First Nations individuals. In contrast, behavioural factors, such as smoking, only contributed to 19% of the chronic illness burden.⁶⁴ This is despite behavioural factors being the leading cause of chronic illness for the Australian population at large, demonstrating that **overcoming inequities, such as economic disadvantage, is essential to closing the health gap.**^{63,65}

Federal First Nations policies have not been sufficiently culturally informed, and the lack of community engagement and collaboration has allowed invisible health barriers to remain.⁶⁵ Facilitating authentic engagement and self-determination will reveal barriers to healthcare access that, once identified, can inform effective structural support.

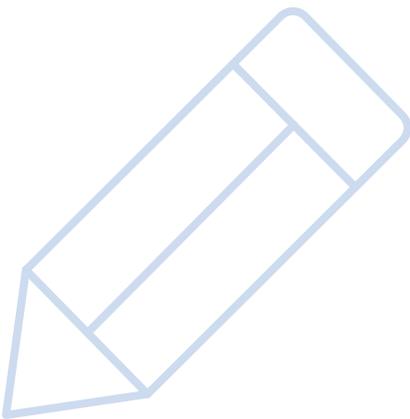
Engaging First Nations Elders and community leaders who hold cultural authority on such issues is critical.



Education & Livelihood Outcomes

Only 9% of First Nations Australians were in the top income quintile (20%) in 2019.⁶⁵

Education is a primary predictor of earning potential.⁶⁷ Unfortunately, First Nations Australians aged 20–24 complete Year 12 or equivalent at a rate 24% lower than non-First Nations Australians.⁶⁸ This disparity widens by approximately 9% later in life. For example, the median adjusted weekly household income for First Nations Australians is 33% lower than for non-First Nations Australians.⁶⁶ The provision of resources, even when directed towards First Nations communities, is also often restrictive. Structural barriers, such as the heavy administrative burdens in applications for government grants and funding, should be alleviated to ensure accessibility to First Nations-led organisations and avoid favouring large corporate charities with ample administrative resources.^{66,67}



Incarceration

First Nations Australians were identified as the most incarcerated people on Earth in 2015, based on international data considering the rate of incarceration per 100,000 adults within a populace group.⁶⁹ On an average night in 2020, just under half (48%) of all young Australians aged 10-17 in detention were First Nations peoples, despite constituting only 6% of the Australian population within this age bracket.⁷⁰

This means that young First Nations Australians were 17 times more likely to be in detention than their non-First Nations peers.⁷⁰ This system has demonstrable shortfalls for First Nations Australians as individuals as well as the Australian economy through reinforcement of systems of intergenerational disadvantage.

First Nations Australians continue to fight for their right to self-determination.⁷¹

Despite public appetite for change, little structural progress has been achieved in the 30 years since the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation was established in 1991.⁵⁶ First Nations Australians remain unacknowledged in the Australian Constitution, and the prospect

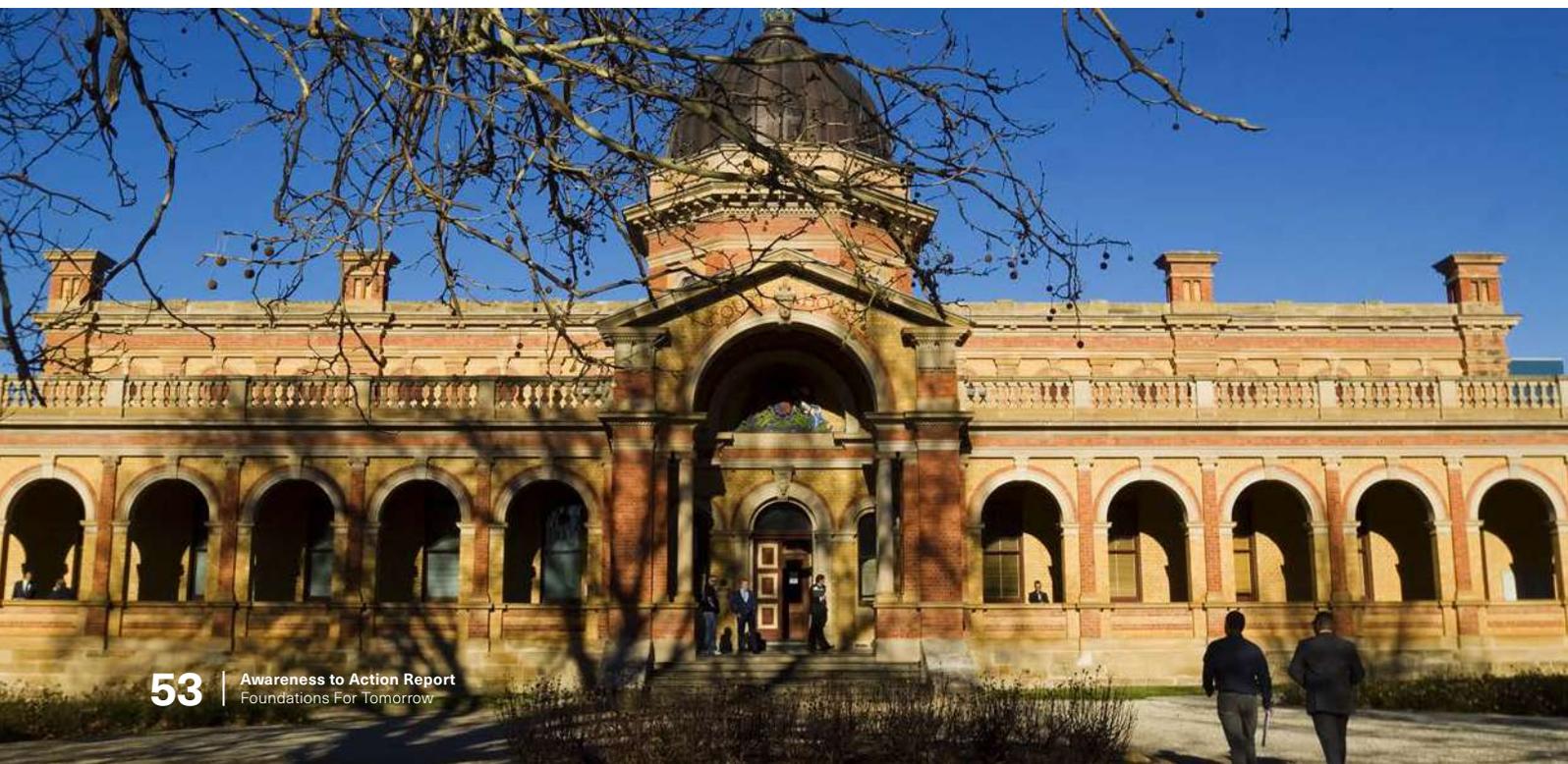
of a Makarrata (truth-telling process) or a First Nations voice enshrined in Parliament, as proposed in the Uluru Statement from the Heart, appear stalled.⁷²

Respondents to the *Your Voice* survey were dissatisfied with the progress on these issues. 90% believe First Nations voices should be enshrined in Parliament, and 96% support a referendum to recognise First Nations Australians in our Constitution. The 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart⁷³ was a landmark achievement and represents the most unified path forward, but to date there has been no material federal action to support its implementation.

This mirrors Australia's historically sluggish approach to First Nations policy.⁷⁴ Australia has consistently (and as recently as January 2021) been challenged by the UN Human Rights Council over its lack of progress towards our own commitments, specifically with regards to the need to reduce rates of First Nations incarceration.⁷⁵

Until this is addressed, how can we expect to build the culture of trust that would be required for genuine inclusion?

Goulburn Court House, Gundungurra Country | Goulburn, New South Wales



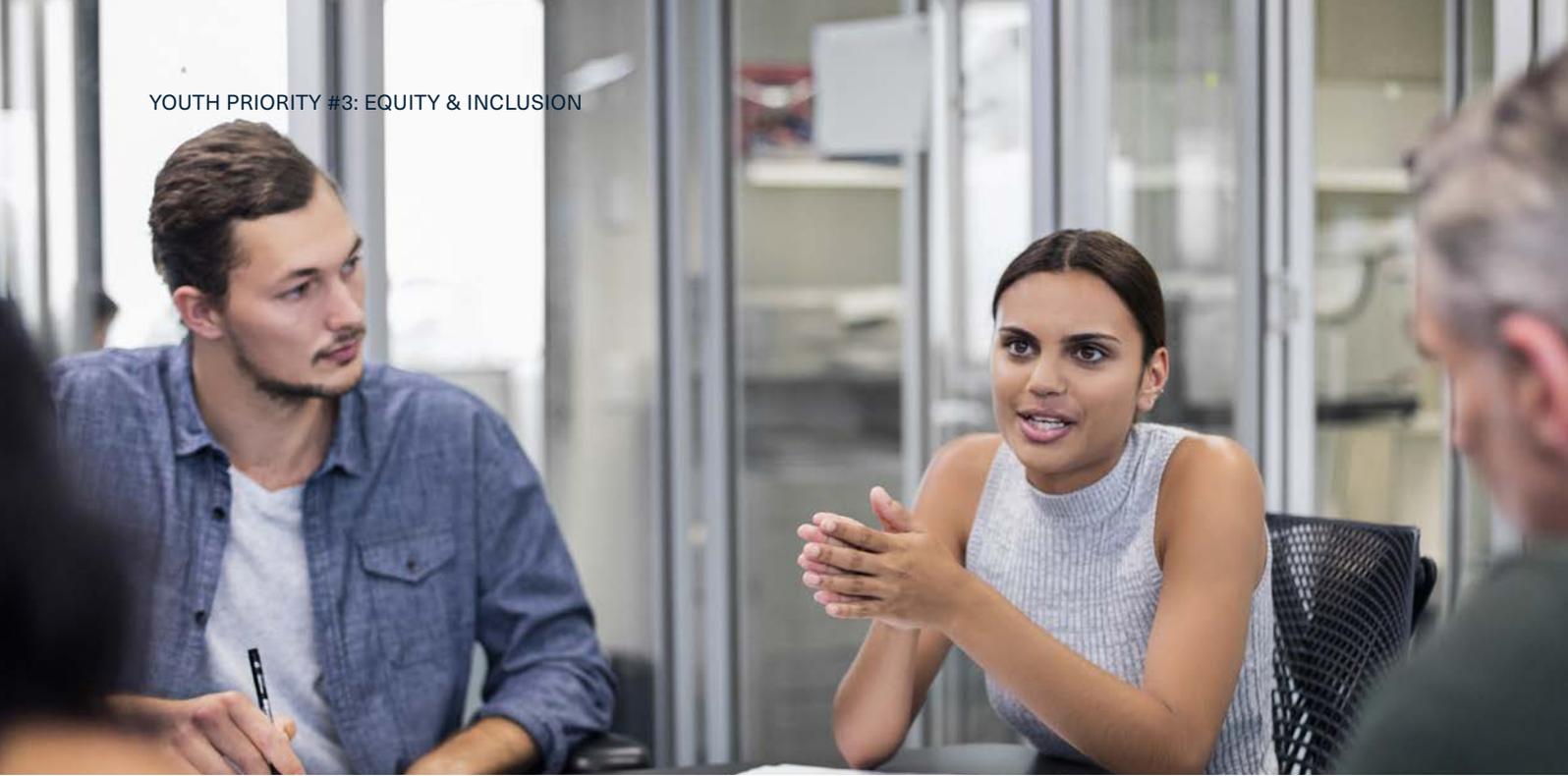
Australia's Opportunity: The economic benefits of a more inclusive society

The inequities faced by First Nations Australians are not only unjust; they are also expensive. Evidence shows that more inclusive societies are more prosperous, effective and resilient over the long-term.^{76,77} Australia's current inclusion deficit is estimated to cost the economy \$45 billion each year.⁷⁸ Increased inclusion rates can boost productivity through improved workforce participation and a reduced burden on the justice and health systems.^{64,79} By 'closing the gap', or at least attempting to bridge it, Australia can expect improved GDP over the long-term.⁸⁰

For example, detention has been shown to have little benefit for reducing recidivism.⁸¹

Alternative responses, such as restorative justice initiatives that divert young people away from juvenile detention, are proven to be effective. In the Northern Territory, for example, around 85% of diverted young people did not re-offend.⁸² The efficacy of diversionary measures is particularly pronounced amongst young First Nations Australians. Reductions in recidivism at this scale represent sizable cost-savings across the system.⁸³ Restorative justice can also include culturally aligned approaches rooted in First Nations wisdom, such as Koori courts and circle sentencing, which have been proven to reduce recidivism and are expected to yield sizable economic dividends.⁸⁴





Pursuing this approach would lay the groundwork for correcting the aforementioned inequities and meaningfully reducing costs. In the Northern Territory alone, it was estimated in 2016 that the costs of First Nations incarceration were \$3.9 billion (which grows to \$7.9 billion when productivity loss is taken into account).^{84,85}

These inclusion benefits are not unique to the public sector. For the private sector, greater inclusion has been shown to improve financial performance and stronger relationships between executive team members.⁸⁶

By achieving diversity and inclusion, Australia has the opportunity to build trust and develop solutions alongside First Nations Australians, resulting in benefits across our society.

“

First Nations leadership is an untapped resource... Regarding the cost of not prioritising First Nations voices, we already see it, we're in the middle of it. If you look at how much money is spent on incarceration bills, health bills, and the huge gaps in life expectancy between First Nations and other Australians, you can see we are in the middle of experiencing what that cost is.

Shelley Cable GAICD CPA,
CEO, Generation One at Minderoo Foundation



10

**WHO SHOULD LEAD
THE CHANGE?**

“

Why won't you listen to the younger generations about what we want from our leaders?

20 year old female, NSW

THE IDEAS OF YOUNG AUSTRALIANS

“

I would have large companies take responsibility and take action on committing to zero carbon emissions rather than blaming individuals for not being 'green' enough.

21 year old female, VIC

“

I would make it mandatory to hold businesses accountable for their ethics, treatment of employees and environmental impacts.”

25 year old female, QLD

“

Increase obligations for transparent reporting on supply chain sustainability for all businesses with strong financial penalties for failures to comply.

25 year old male, QLD

Even though Young Australians are willing to ‘vote with their wallet’, this alone will not be enough

Young people value ethical consumption and brands with a purpose. This was illustrated by half (51%) of *Your Voice* survey respondents making consumption decisions primarily driven by ethical considerations in contrast to personal considerations such as price and convenience. The fact that young Australians are giving these variables equal weight is significant, especially given only 27% of respondents are employed full-time.

Young Australians’ personal commitment to driving change represents a changing tide in how companies should consider their operations and

value chains. This shift in sentiment represents a risk of attrition to brand loyalty for companies that do not feature ethical products, and an opportunity to capture market share amongst those that do.

To avoid fracturing their customer base, industry leaders should make ethical production cost-effective.⁸⁷ The scale of major global challenges, such as climate action, means conscious consumerism alone cannot drive the change that young Australians want to see. Collective action from government and industry, in conjunction with ethical consumer behaviour, is required.



Which of the following is most important to you when selecting a product or service to purchase?

Personal Costs **49%**



Ethical Considerations **51%**

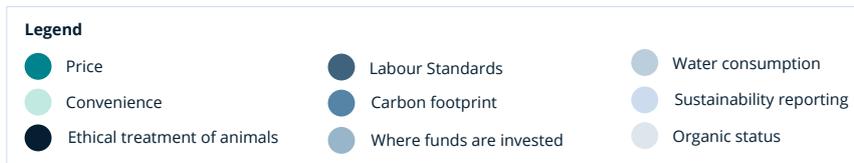
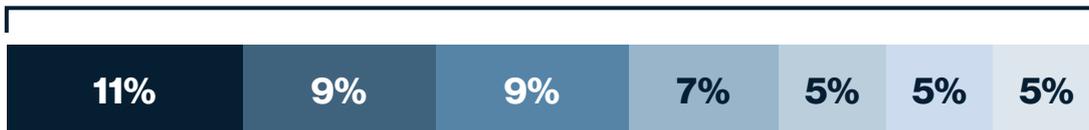


Figure 19. What is important when selecting a product or service to purchase (N = 5,743)

Young Australians are becoming increasingly aware of the implications of their choice of employer

Young Australians' choice of future employer is now driven by the organisation's 'values' and 'sustainability' practices, collectively 25%, to the same extent as their potential salary (26%), revealing another avenue by which

young Australians seek to drive change. This represents an opportunity for employers to bring value-based decisions and sustainability to the forefront of their business strategies and operations to attract and retain desirable talent.

What factors influence which businesses you choose to work for or with?

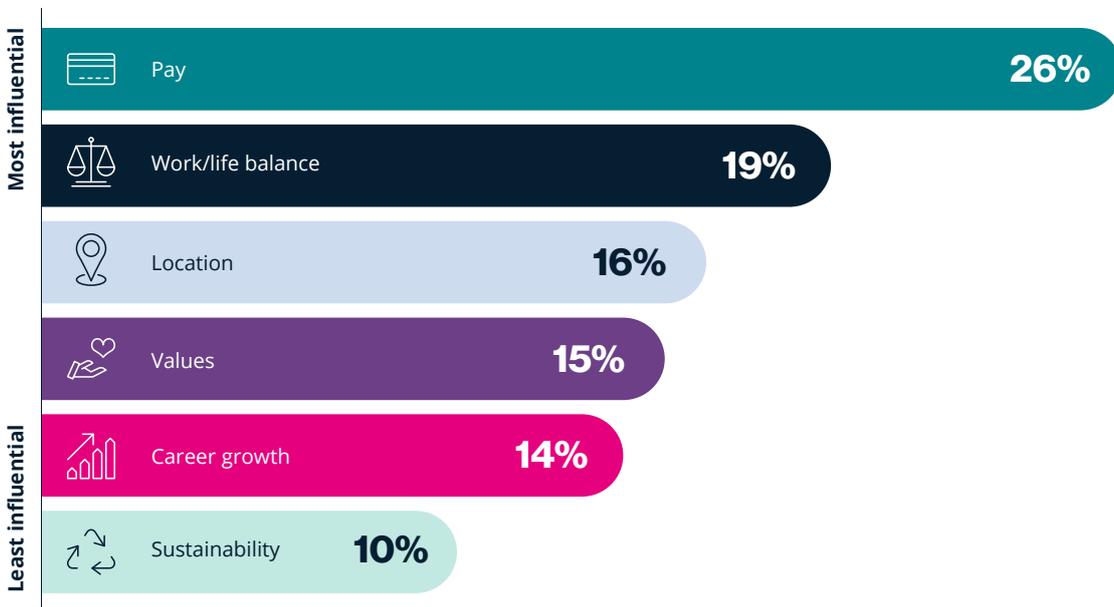


Figure 20. Factors which influence businesses young Australians choose to work for or with (N = 5,743)



Young Australians do not feel heard by politicians but believe in the responsibility of government

In their qualitative submissions to the *Your Voice* survey, young Australians made it clear that they did not feel heard and do not trust their leaders:

"Why aren't you listening?"

23 year old non-binary, WA

"Why aren't you listening to the young people?"

19 year old female, QLD

Only 11% of young Australians identify voting as the most effective way they can make a difference. This is indicative of a growing sentiment that the electoral system cannot or will not translate the desires of youth into action.

Other research has also shown that electoral engagement would likely drop from 87% to 50% or less for those under 25 years old if voting became voluntary,^{88,89} suggesting a lack of meaningful electoral engagement amongst young Australians.⁸⁹ The broader Australian population echoes this pessimism: only 39% felt confident that Australia would be a better country within the next decade, and 70% felt they could not influence the future.^{90,91}

Youth advisory and initiatives such as the Australian Government's Youth Taskforce remain an important strategy to increase participation in the absence of formal representation. However, further work is required to ensure meaningful participation beyond tokenistic or 'informative' engagements that provide only a limited or conditional platform for young Australians.⁹¹

“

Our research shows that young Australians are not disengaged from the issues; they are disengaging specifically from the traditional methods of democratic engagement because they're not feeling listened to, because they don't see their views represented.

Leanne Smith,
Director, Whitlam Institute

“

Young people rightly say that efforts to engage them are often token, just to make sure that the box is ticked to 'youth consultation' completed. I think we need to entirely reimagine the way young people are included in society as contributors, not just with a seat at the table, but shaping the table.

Nick Moraitis,
CEO, Foundation for Young Australians

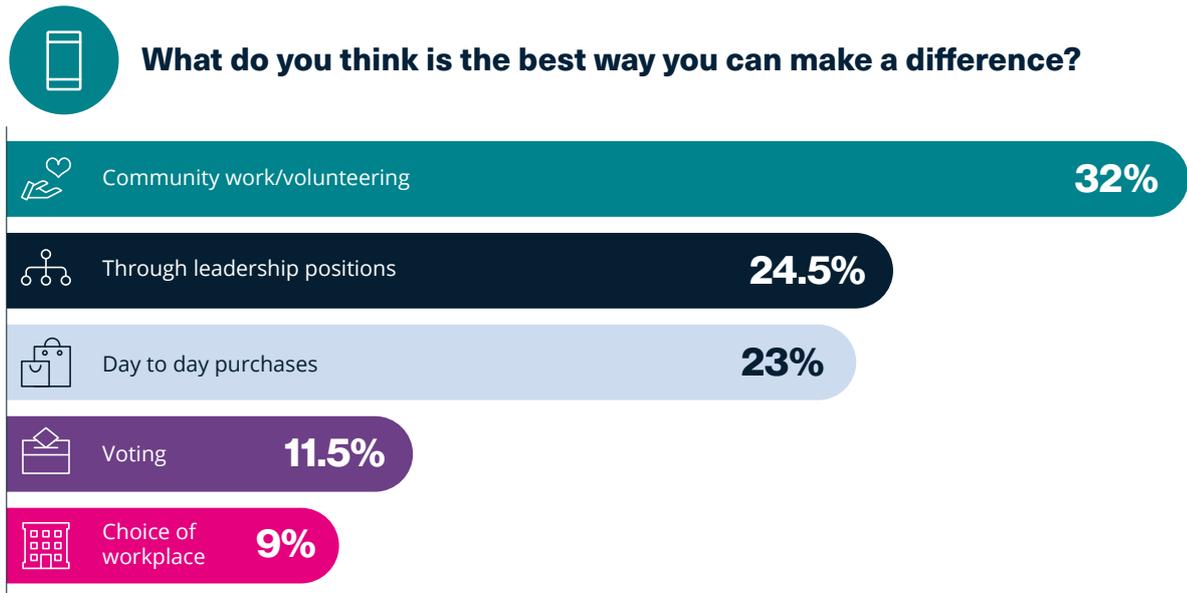


Figure 21. What is the best way one can make a difference (N = 384)

Young Australians are turning to other means of political expression

In the face of disenchantment with the electoral system, young people have adopted non-traditional means to drive change by embracing self-organisation, leveraging the rising power of social media⁹² and taking to the streets to express their frustration and effect change. For example, the Schools Strike 4 Climate, which was started by three students in central Victoria,

turned into a nation-wide movement supported by the Australian Youth Climate Coalition. Since the first protest march for climate action in 2018, the movement has garnered over 350,000 young Australians across 600 locations.⁹³

The challenge is not getting young Australians interested in politics; it is getting them engaged with a system where they do not feel heard.

Young Australians think government should take the lead so that businesses can follow with certainty

Young Australians emphasised the need for the government to lead the way and set the tone for change.

When asked who they deem to be 'most responsible for addressing climate change', 53% of young Australians selected government, while only 15% ranked large-scale enterprises as most responsible.



Who do you believe is most responsible for addressing climate change?



Figure 22. Who is most responsible for addressing climate change (N = 5,743)



Many businesses, communities and investors are taking significant action on sustainability knowing it's the right thing to do both financially and morally. However, many more tell us that they would go further if there was clarity of targets and policies, as without these, there is considerable risk and uncertainty about regulations that may be put in place in the future.

Deanne Stewart,
CEO, Aware Super

71%

of young Australians would support politicians who take bold, immediate and ambitious action on the issues they care about, such as climate change.



I will vote for or support political leaders who commit to taking bold, immediate, and ambitious action to address the climate crisis

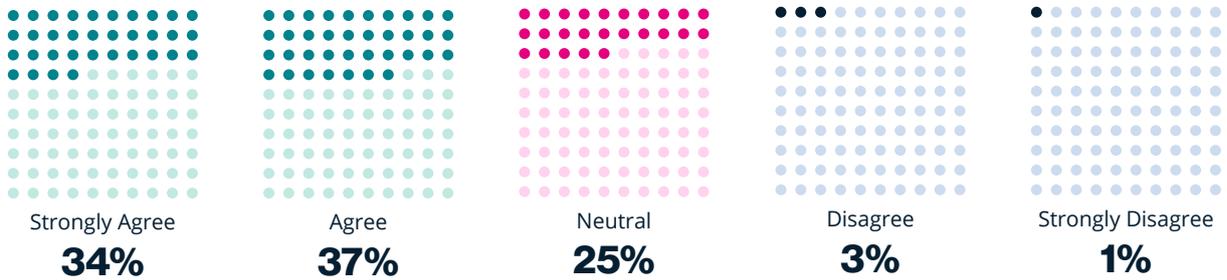


Figure 23. Voting or supporting political leaders who commit to climate action (N = 5,743)





Australian Parliament, Ngunnawal Country | Canberra, Australian Capital Territory



Respondents cited NFPs, individuals and companies most often as examples of positive impact

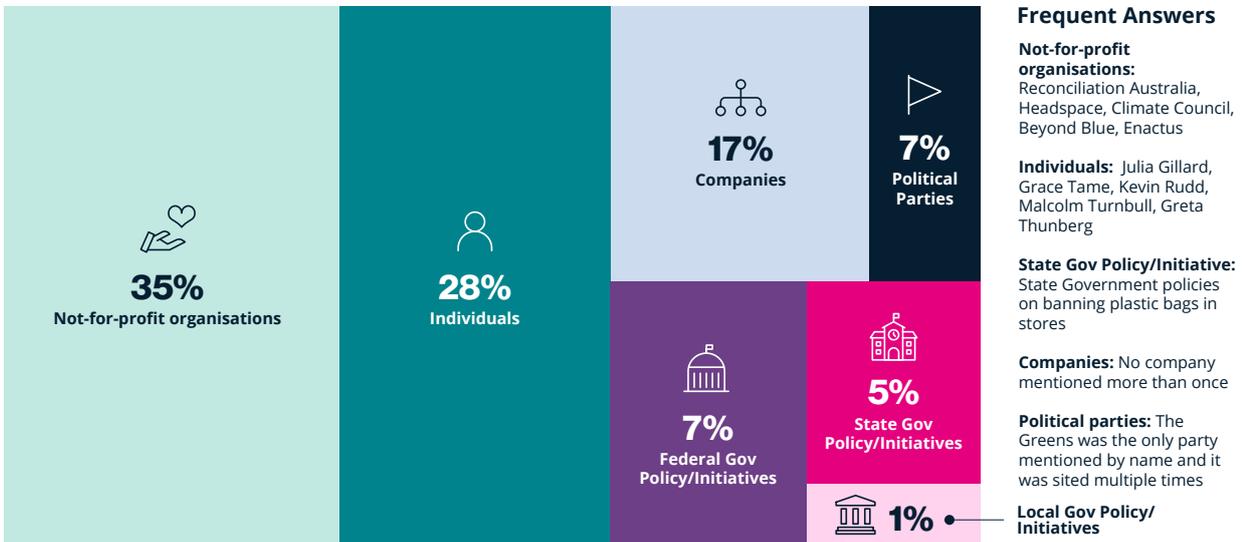


Figure 24. Examples of Australian leaders or organisations that have a positive impact (N = 138)

Unfortunately, **when asked to provide an example of Australian leaders or organisations that are currently creating a positive impact, the government was among respondents’ least popular answers.** Respondents instead predominantly identified not-for-profits and individuals as examples of those currently making a difference.

This disappointment is shared amongst the broader Australian population. A recent report by Next25 found that only one in five Australians believed politicians were doing a good job, with the majority expressing disappointment towards the lack of accountability, the prevalence of short-termism and vested interests, which they felt characterise current government actions.⁹⁰

Young Australians want industry to invest, innovate and be accountable

82%

of young Australians think businesses need to be held accountable for their environmental, social governance and technology standards of ethics.

Respondents reinforced the need for external imperatives to drive business behaviour, identifying 'stronger financial incentives', 'increased consumer pressure' and 'training for executive leadership teams' as the key factors that would *improve* responsible business practices. Key barriers perceived to *prevent* businesses from taking action include 'profitability', 'lack of commitment from public stakeholders' and 'conflict of interest' (Figure 27).



All private sector organisations should be held accountable for their environmental, social, governance and technology standards of ethics

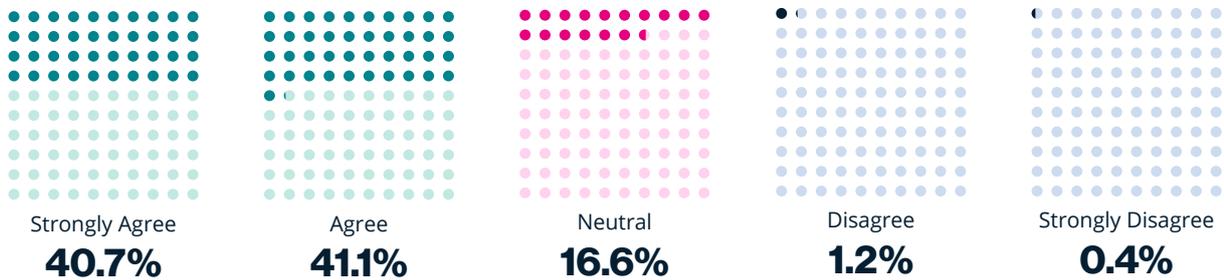


Figure 25. Should private sectors be held accountable for their business ethics (N = 5,743)



What do you think would improve the consideration of ESG standards into design, development and reporting of private organisations?

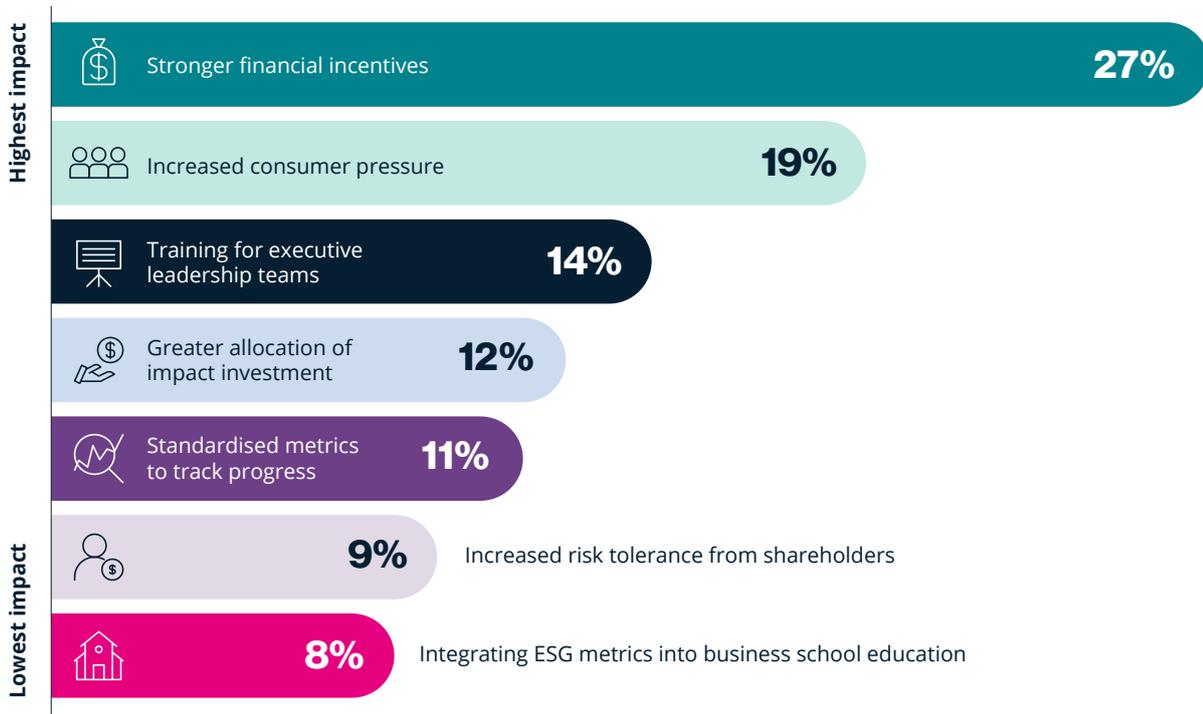


Figure 26. What would improve ESG standards (N = 5,743)



Business is the greatest platform for change, not only in creating and innovating new products, processes and services, but also in driving societal change... It can show how change can be affected while continuing to support jobs and standards of living. It builds on a long history of business driving important ideas that shape our communities.

Gisele Kapterian,
Director, Public Sector Strategy APAC, Salesforce



What are the key barriers that stand in the way of implementing next generation ESG considerations?

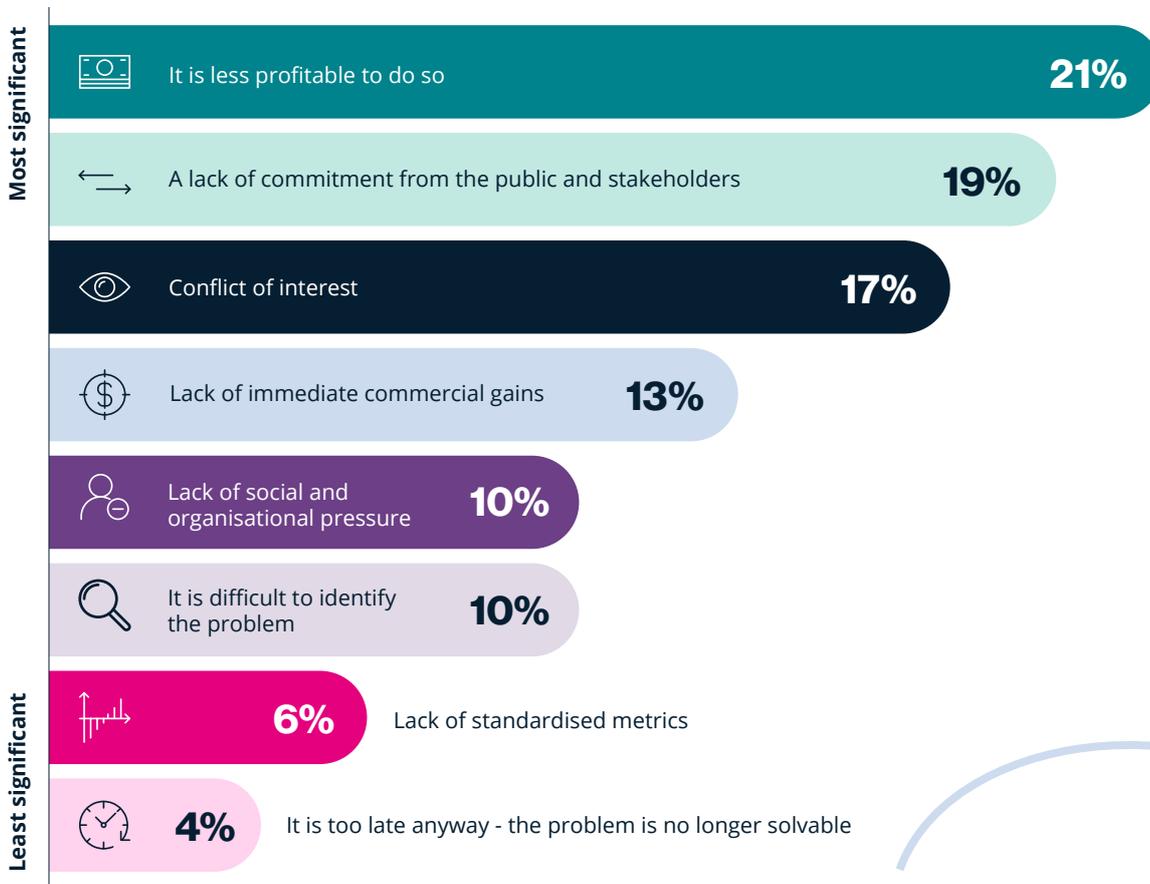


Figure 27. What would improve ESG considerations (N = 5,743)

Your Voice data shows that young Australians expect industry leaders to create change with ambition, which may require increased risk tolerance and innovation beyond what is possible for governments.

This confirms the 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer findings, which found that 72% of Australians believe CEOs should act first rather than waiting for the government to enact change.⁹⁴

Young Australians' *Your Voice* responses affirmed other research findings that show we cannot wait for consumer demand to hit critical mass to drive these changes. Industry must undertake a leadership role in driving a more sustainable economy.^{95,96}



This is a significant opportunity for government and business leaders to appeal to a growing political and economic base that will become increasingly influential over time.

“

In this country, the realm of policy has traditionally been a government realm... However, other sectors of society, particularly business and civil society, are beginning to play a much stronger leadership role on a range of policy areas that should be the remit of the government. I think that if government wants to stay in the driving seat when it comes to policy, they're going to actually need to lead, otherwise, others will take the reins.

Leanne Smith,
Director, Whitlam Institute

“

As we emerge from the pandemic, we are ensuring young people have a greater say and can participate in securing Australia's recovery and building for the future.

The Hon Luke Howarth MP,
Assistant Minister for Youth and
Employment Services, Member for Petrie

“

I think young people have the right to be enraged, I'm enraged, and I'm old. I'm enraged because I see so much that revolves around politics and profits. Placing this ahead of what really matters in this world, which is the people on the planet we live on.

Leila Naja Hibri,
CEO, Australian Fashion Council
Image Courtesy of the World Economic Forum





Image Courtesy of the World Economic Forum

“

We can't afford to think that someone else is going to clean up this mess. I think the complexity of the issues that we're facing as a society means that everyone needs to be playing their part in the best way that they can. I think that we, as young people, can't wait until we get to a certain age, to take action... We need to be able to take action now.

Georgie Carey,
Councillor, Town of Mosman Park

“

We must be open to what's coming and what's emergent, and above all just be adaptive because the next 1,000 years we're in clean up... We're going to have to, once again, become beings that can live within that uncertainty, that can move within systems and contexts and landscapes that are constantly shifting, and find joy in that, from day to day.

Tyson Yunkaporta,
Author, Researcher & Academic

“

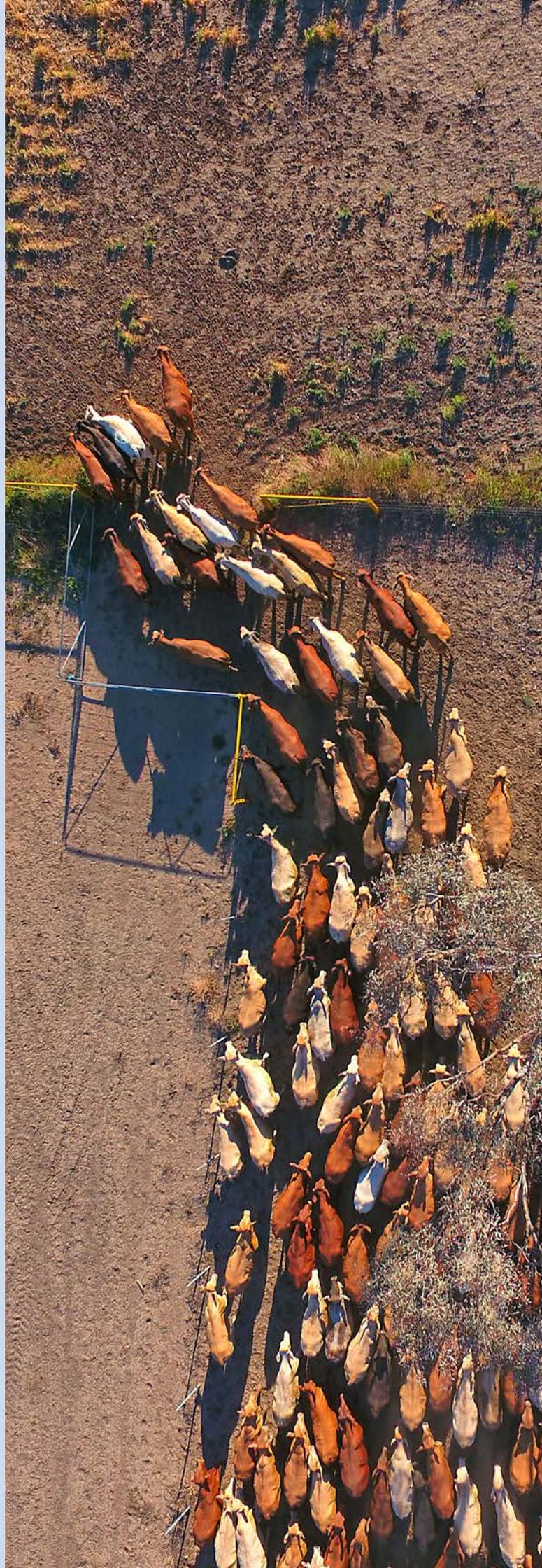
I think the big challenge we have regarding trust is actually very specific. It's about character-based trust. The more we can give young people the confidence that the breakdown in trust is resolved and that we're working in the public interest, the better chance we have to solve these problems.

Amit Singh,
Managing Director, Accenture Australia

“

There is a breakdown of trust in politicians and in government and that's a travesty. We need a democracy that is accountable, that is robust and that is engaged because the issues we need to solve in this next generation are huge. We're only going to manage that if we have trust in the system. It has to be a government-led response because we can't do it as individuals. And big businesses have proven already that they won't do it unless they're forced to do it. They're more interested in their profits than they are doing what's right by the climate or right by the community.

Senator Sarah Hanson-Young,
Senator for South Australia



11

**THE LEADERSHIP
YOUNG
AUSTRALIANS
WANT TO SEE**

“

Why is there no consistency in what leaders are held accountable for?

20 year old non-binary person, WA

Young Australians want to see a new culture of leadership that is committed to proactive and ambitious action.

What would enable you to place more trust in Australian industry and government leaders?

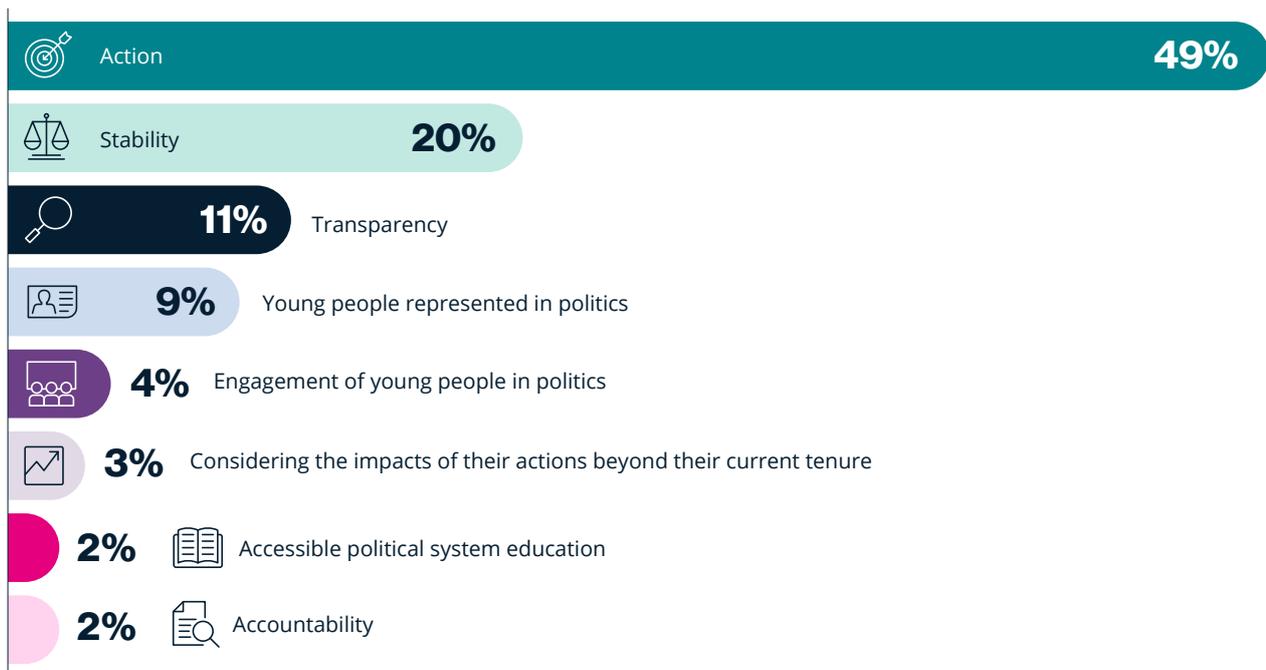


Figure 28. What would enable more trust in Australian leaders (N = 5,743)

49%

of Young Australians want their leaders to
TAKE PROACTIVE ACTION

20%

of Young Australians want their leaders
to provide **INCREASED STABILITY**

11%

of Young Australians want their leaders to operate with **TRANSPARENCY**

What young Australians are asking for is not radical.

Arguably, it is simply a restoration of our democratic system as it was intended.

Action, stability and transparency are the ingredients required to rebuild the trust that young Australians want to have in their leaders.

Principles for Future Leadership

In reviewing the more than 3,000 qualitative submissions from young Australians to the *Your Voice* survey, it is clear that they want to see integrity, collaboration and courage from their leaders.

Australia will be best placed to overcome the challenges we face if government and business embrace a new culture of leadership. This future leadership should be underpinned by the following six principles, drawn from the qualitative responses of Australians in the *Your Voice* survey.



1. Redefine Prosperity

Leaders should take a holistic view of Australia's prosperity and how to achieve it. We need to be conscious of not only directly innovating and improving productivity but also identifying negative cycles that should be dismantled. Commitment to addressing socio-economic inequities, including for minority groups, can unlock rewarding benefits of participation and productivity.



2. Multigenerational Thinking

Addressing systemic challenges requires a long-term strategy, not just short-term wins. A recent survey of Australian investors found that 70% believed that short-term pressures stripped leaders of the ability to push for innovation, digitisation and change.⁹⁷ In order to protect the interests of our collective future and capitalise upon the opportunities it presents, we must embrace mindsets that look beyond immediate outcomes into multi-generational impacts.



3. Proactive Inclusion

We must seek out inclusive leadership and decision-making. Australians should reconsider how we value knowledge and the ability of individuals to contribute to society. This will mean looking not just to conventional 'high-achievers' and those with formal qualifications. We need to value the insights available from lived experiences and indigenous wisdom and extend a meaningful platform of influence to them.



4. Restore Trust

Through proactive action, stability and transparency, leaders must restore the trust of young Australians. Young Australians are disillusioned, but the change they want isn't radical. They are looking to restore their trust in the system and see leaders addressing the issues that matter to them. Action, stability and transparency are the ingredients required to rebuild the trust that young Australians want to have in their leaders.



5. Work Together

Meaningful partnerships and collaboration will be key to Australia's future. Young Australians identified a role for every stakeholder as the future of Australia is our shared responsibility. To reap the benefits of inclusive decision-making and effectively act on this responsibility, we must work together.



6. Ambitious Vision & Greater Risk Appetite

Australian leaders need to display courage and risk tolerance to develop ambitious and innovative solutions to meet the coming challenges. We must become comfortable with the risks of measured experimentation and testing as we redefine what a future of business and governance could look like that proactively supports justice, equity and sustainability. In order to harness the potential of innovation, we need to celebrate bold, creative thinkers and overcome our deeply entrenched tall poppy syndrome.

Image courtesy of the World Economic Forum





12

**A CALL TO ACTION:
FROM YOUNG
AUSTRALIANS,
TO YOU**

Young Australians have spoken.

Through the *Your Voice* survey, more than 10,000 young voices have been elevated to Australia's government and business leaders.

Young Australians have revealed that they are anxious and uncertain about the future, particularly regarding Australia's ability to address national challenges through our current approaches. They shared their vision for how to achieve a more just, equitable and sustainable Australia.

Young people want action on climate change, individual wellbeing, security, and creating an equitable and inclusive society.

They expect government to take the lead in solving these issues by setting the rules by which industry should invest and be held accountable.

Currently, leaders are falling short of expectations.

Young Australians don't feel heard. They feel short-term wins are prioritised at the cost of their future, and they have lost trust in the system that is meant to represent them.

While uncertainty and anxiety are high, young Australians are still hopeful that their government and business leaders will find new ways to solve our pressing challenges.

Action, stability and transparency—what young Australians are asking for is not radical.

Arguably, it is simply a restoration of our democratic system as it was intended. Action, stability and transparency are the ingredients required to rebuild the trust that young Australians want to have in their leaders.

Young Australians are looking for six principles of future leadership:

Leaders need to:

- 1) redefine prosperity;
- 2) embrace multi-generational thinking;
- 3) prioritise proactive inclusion;
- 4) foster trust;
- 5) work together; and
- 6) adopt ambitious visions with a greater risk appetite.

These survey findings reveal an explicit call to action for the parliaments and boardrooms of Australia.

Young Australians have spoken. Will you answer their call?



13

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foundations for Tomorrow Team

Project Leads:

Taylor Hawkins | Bianca Goebel | Holly Crockford

Report Authors:

Angel Chen | Caleb Adams | Gabriela Fernando | Ian Buck | Linda Le | Ollie Tridgell |
Zoe Hawkins (Editor)

Partnerships, Campaign & Impact Teams:

Anna Bezuglova | Alex Bruhn | Alina Malyk | Adi Rai | Chelsea Hayward | Caleb Heard | Diletta Legowo |
Ebony Fowler | Hamsa Farah | Indrani Kothiyal | Joseph Kolapudi | Lisa Rapley | Lorena Rios |
Madeleine Parry | Oluwabamise Oyewale | Shaili Patel | Shikha Kanojia | Sophia Hamblin Wang

Advisory & Other Contributions:

Adam Mostogl | Darcy Small | Emmelyn Wu | Gregory Kahn | Rachell Hansen | Roslyn Lye | Sarah Power

Design Team:

DrawHistory

Responding Leaders

Abdullahi Alim, Founder & Head of Strategy, The Davos Lab, World Economic Forum

Amit Singh, MD, Accenture Strategy

The Hon Andrew Leigh MP, Deputy Chair of Standing Committee on Economics, Member for Fenner

Ciaran McCormack, APAC Manager, Climate Reality Project

Deanne Stewart, CEO, Aware Super

Dr Garry Nolan AM FAICD, Chairman, Victorian Division, Australian Red Cross

Georgie Carey, Councillor, Town of Mosman Park

Gisele Kapterian, Director, Public Sector Strategy APAC, Salesforce

Dr Katie Allen MP, Member for Higgins

Leanne Smith, Director, Whitlam Institute

Leila Naja Hibri, CEO, Australian Fashion Council

The Hon Angus Taylor MP, Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction

The Hon Luke Howarth MP, Assistant Minister for Youth and Employment Services, Member for Petrie

Lynette Clunies-Ross, Regional VP & MD, SAS Aus & NZ

Nick Moraitis, CEO, Foundation for Young Australians

Rebecca Huntley, Author, Researcher & Academic

Sarah Clarke, Group GM, Sustainability, Mirvac

Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, Senator for South Australia

Sara Kane, CEO, Circle Green

Shelley Cable GAICD CPA, CEO, Generation One at Minderoo Foundation

Sherman Lo, Adjunct Professor & Entrepreneur in Residence, INSEAD

Tyson Yunkaporta, Author, Researcher & Academic