

2017 AUSTRALIAN YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE CONSULTATION REPORT



DENISON

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

ABOUT

THE YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UN IS A ROLE APPOINTED ANNUALLY BY UN YOUTH AUSTRALIA IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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



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

youthrep.unyouth.org.au
fb.com/UNYouthRep
youthrep@unyouth.org.au



FROM THE YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE

PAIGE BURTON

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

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

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

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

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 experiences of environmental disaster, of unemployment, of forced migration, and of family violence. They shared their gratitude for fantastic educators, and life-changing programs.

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 the young people in your electorate brings you as much joy as it has brought me. Thank you for taking the time to read this report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paige Burton".





THE 2017 CONSULTATION

WHO? WHERE? HOW? WHAT?

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

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

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

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

The Consultation aimed to answer the overarching question "what would society look like if we imagined young people in their full complexity?" and 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?





TASMANIA

The average age of the Tasmanians who participated in my consultation was 14.8. Young Victorians 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 Victorians in the consultation say that they feel like their opinions are represented by those in the government.

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

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

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

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

"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**

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 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.

78%

are interested in learning more about current events

62%

know what they want to do when they leave school

46%

are interested in learning more about how the government makes decisions

1

Marriage equality

Top issue raised by young Tasmanians.

"Marriage equality - stop treating it as a political football and get on with making a decision based on the voice of the country" Ellis, 23.

2

Gender equality

Was a frequent concern for young Tasmanians.

"It isn't about saying females are better. My mum is an Asian female engineer and senior manager...They devalue her worth. This isn't the kind of society I want to 'grow up' into." Annabelle, 15.

3

Healthcare

Improving mental health and disability services were of significance.

"I wish that they considered my mental health issues...when making decisions about me" Rhiannon, 15.

4

Climate change

Young people in Tasmania want to see more climate action.

"We have climate change to deal with. We need the government to plan ahead so that we have a healthier climate and fairer world to live in" Mary Scully, 19.

5

Animal welfare

Protection of animal welfare was important to young Tasmanians.

"Horses should not be abused because they don't deserve it, same with other animals." Bronte, 14.

STORIES FROM YOUNG TASMANIANS



"I wish the government understood the meaning of financial security to young people. I wish the government understood that by removing penalty rates, limiting access to financial support and the casualisation of the workforce reduces the capacity for young people to contribute meaningfully in their communities. Having access to services like Centrelink has allowed me to study, live out of home and gain my own sense of independence. It has meant I've been able to volunteer and dedicate a considerable amount of time to the things I love and the causes I care about, fields I hope to someday have a career in. These measures are a hand up, not a hand out. The casualisation of the workforce means jobs - in retail, 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." Claire, 19, TAS.



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



51%

of young people in Denison can name their Federal MP



YOUR ELECTORATE

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION RELATES TO THE FEDERAL ELECTORATE OF DENISON

The average age of the young person engaged in my consultation in Denison was 16.5. A large range of issues were raised in the electorate. (Results of top 5 issues they would like action on IN AUSTRALIA over the page in blue).

68% of those consulted said that they read/follow the news every day, with the majority of them getting their news from Social Media (primarily Facebook) as well as broadcast media (TV, mostly the ABC).

Only 14% of young people in Denison said they felt like their opinions are accurately represented by the government. 51% of them can name their Federal MP. 33% of the young people consulted said they feel like their opinions are taken seriously by those in

positions of power.

Engaging young people online? 88% prefer the internet to television.89% prefer You

On another light note, 74% prefer dogs to cats. 55% of young people in Denison prefer a swim over a bushwalk, and 61% of young people prefer movies to books. 63% would rather Marvel over DC.

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

1. Job opportunities
2. Drug/alcohol use
3. Climate change
4. Education inequality
5. Discrimination
6. Abuse/harrassment
7. Discrimination
8. Cost of education
9. Social media use
10. Peer pressure

47%

of young people in Denison know what they want to do for a career

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

“I want them to know that people like me have no clue on how we’re going to be able to pay for a house to live in whilst paying off uni debt.” Joseph, 15.

“That life experience can’t be measured by age and young people have important, meaningful perspectives on the issues that effect them. That young people contribute the their communities and the economy and are valid stakeholders in government decisions now, not just in the future.” Jamila, 25.

“That young people care about the long term. We expect our politicians to embrace and moderate change, not to resist it entirely.” Tom, 25

“I wish the government knew how difficult it is to apply for jobs and be able to get one in the job market. I wish they knew how difficult it is for young people to be independent and become an adult. I am about to finish university soon and will have to leave home in the next year or two. Quite frankly I find the prospect terrifying. I have many friends who have not been able to gain a job after finishing their degree, and I am not sure how I am going to cope with all the stress of managing my life. I wish the government took this more into account when making their decisions. Often it feels like they lack compassion for young people, sometimes blaming young people for the situation they are in. Maybe just maybe if they took that into account some of the policy problems could be solved that would alleviate issues like housing affordability and youth unemployment.” Peter, 21.

“Poor people work just as hard but capitalism does not reward people who are disadvantaged.” Lucy, 17.

1

Marriage equality

Youth in Denison want action on marriage equality.
“We all deserve equal rights.”
Christopher, 16.

2

People seeking asylum

Youth in Denison want action.
“I would like to see us increase our foreign aid spending and welcome more refugees.” Mitchell, 18.

3

Climate change is a concern.

“Climate change is the most important issue in my opinion because it is the only one that has a time limit before it is too late.” Finlay, 15.

4

Animal welfare

Youth in Denison want equality between genders
“We need to be kind to animals, and protect them because they can’t speak for themselves.” Maddison, 17.

5

Education standards

is a major issue
“We must improve the education of primary and secondary students and youth interest by teaching political science.” Amber, 15.

94%

are interested in learning more about current events

67%

feel like their opinions are accurately represented by the government

56%

are interested in learning more about how the government makes decisions