

# 2017 AUSTRALIAN YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE CONSULTATION REPORT



**KINGSTON**

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.

Some of the team from UN Youth SA who helped facilitate the SA elements of the Consultation.



Consultation as part of the SA regional road trip, at Jamestown High.



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



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

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# FROM THE YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE

PAIGE BURTON

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

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

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

We ran thousands of consultations, and took 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?





# SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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

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

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

44% of young people across South Australia

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# 76%

are interested in learning more about current events

# 62%

are interested in learning more about the United Nations

# 60%

are interested in learning more about how the government makes decisions

# 1

## Housing affordability

**Top issue raised by young people in SA.**

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

# 2

## Marriage equality

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

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

# 3

## Gender equality

**Equality between genders is important for young South Australians.**

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

# 4

## Youth unemployment

**Is a concern for many young people.**

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

# 5

## Healthcare

**Improving mental health and disability services were of significance.**

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

# STORIES FROM SOUTH AUSTRALIA



"I wish that the government knew that the current system for getting help with mental health, especially for students and younger people, is really difficult. Seeing a counsellor in schools for years and even seeing doctors and professional psychologists should result in a diagnosis and clear method of recovery. For most, seeing a doctor ends in a vague discussion and a mental health plan and a referral to a psychologist. There is rarely a clear cut diagnosis where people can name their mental health problems and be less scared of them. If the government knew this was an issue and we could, as a whole, work toward educating people on mental health issues, and treating them as physical ailments. Being scared of and not understanding your mental illness can only make it worse and more confusing and I wish the government understood this and would pay attention to this issue." Sara, 17, SA.



"I wish the government knew and acted on the super transformative power of the arts. Being involved in theatre and music was a creative outlet for me, and it's distressing that young people may not be offered the same opportunities. The amount of local theatre companies and like organisations that are shrinking is upsetting, because of the real and tangible experience young people gain from being involved in the arts." Christina, 20, SA



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

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



"I wish the government knew and cared about sexual health issues facing young people, and the stigma and lack of education surrounding the topic of sex. As a young person, I am fortunate enough to grow up in a generation which is actively reducing sexual stigmas. However, I feel like we were left behind in schools, with sexual education only covering arbitrary activities like putting condoms on bananas. As someone living with sexual dysfunction, I struggled for many years not knowing what was 'wrong' with me, feeling isolated, alienated and alone throughout some formative teenage years. With some basic education, I could have been saved years of insecurity and unhealthy relationships not only with others but with myself. I wish the government knew that their educational programs miss really important aspects of sex, such as dysfunction, masturbation, consent and abuse. Sex is not like the movies, and with a generation of young people relying on pornography for their sexual education we are setting the expectations and 'norms' at a 'Hollywood' level. Furthermore, I wish the government would assist in educating people on sexual abuse, and supporting preventative programs so we can reduce the horrifying statistics that currently stand. I want to see leaders not only recognise, but embrace sexual liberation and freedom as the new 'norm', and have mature conversations about how we can progress as a society in supporting everyone to have the healthiest lives possible." Ebony, 20, SA.



"I wish the government would recognise that the customer service performance of their welfare system and other services is severely lacking and often overly complicated. Websites such as Centrelink or the ATO, though designed to be secure, are the opposite of user friendly, and people shouldn't be forced to jump through hoops in order to receive the benefits they need and deserve. Much more needs to be done to meet the standards of accessibility and ease that are expected of services used by such a large and diverse customer base." Reem, 20, NSW.



"All love is deserving of equal recognition and respect, regardless of a couple's sexuality or gender identification. It's time we as a country acknowledge this. Love is love." Niav, 18, SA.



"I wish the government understood how important railways can be and how they can continue to change the world. Railways are what began globalisation but just because they might not be driving it now does not mean that they are obsolete. Railways can be useful both in an urban and regional context, both from an economic and social perspective, but Australia's rail network is in serious need of an overhaul. In a regional setting, rail connections mean that freight can be easily transported in bulk, whilst also allowing a level of mobility that only road vehicles can better, and even then only minimally. Railways are the sustainable option, being easy to run off of renewable sources, something which planes simply cannot offer, and cars cannot compete on over long distances. In urban areas, railways take cars off the road, again proving a more sustainable choice, as well easing the burden on a congested roads system, something which neither buses nor cars can do. Furthermore, public transport is incredibly important to both young people and older people, who may often not have the option of driving, giving them mobility and independence they otherwise would not have. Australia's rail network is no where near up to standard. It should not take 11 hours to get from Kingston to Melbourne; trains should be able to travel significantly faster than an average speed of roughly 75km/h. There should be a way to travel with more speed and comfort than a car or a bus, without the expense and hassle of a plane; and that way is the railway." Ned, 20, SA.



"I wish the government knew that despite living 10 minutes away from University by car, it takes me an hour to get there on public transport. Safe, reliable, and wide spread public transport is essential for young people to be able to live their lives. In Kingston, as with much of Australia the public transport system is built to get people into and out of the CBD, while suburb to suburb public transport is severely overlooked. This means that people are forced to use cars in order to get to things like doctors' offices and supermarkets, as public transport options simply do not exist." Tim, 20, SA.

"I wish the government knew that social media is a powerful medium that unites the youth of Australia and the youth of the world. It is a platform of communication that opens our eyes to global issues as they happen. Social media can call upon people to stand against injustices within our community. It is becoming increasingly evident that the world is becoming connected via social media; therefore, it is important that social media campaigns and messages are not over looked amongst traditional forms of media." Henry, 16, SA.



"I wish the government knew that young LGBTI Australians have so much to offer in the community, and that our mental health and wellbeing must be invested in. LGBTI Australians have the highest suicide rate of any population in Australia, with a 14 times higher suicide attempt rate amongst same-sex attracted people and up to 50% of trans Australians attempting suicide in their lifetime. You would think that our leaders would see this as a national crisis, with urgent money being injected into mental health services, anti-bullying programs, legislative reform, and public awareness campaigns. But they're not – they're doing the opposite. Perhaps I'm an idealist, but I believe in a future Australia where people from all orientations and gender identities are valued for who they are. I hope that one day, maybe following the coming out of a friend or family member, a conversation at a campaign event with a queer constituent, or perhaps even a letter that stood out from the pile, our leaders will believe in this Australia also. Until then, all we can do is be visible, be heard, and keep applying glitter as needed." Amos, 21, SA.



"I wish that the government understood that sanitary items are not luxury items. They are the complete opposite, they are a necessity for half of the population. By maintaining the GST on sanitary items, women are being taxed for a bodily function and the government are receiving approximately \$25 million annually. Just like sunscreen and nicotine patches are tax free, so should the pads and tampons that I and every woman in Australia have to buy every couple of weeks. Furthermore, the increased cost of sanitary items due to the GST makes buying them a greater burden for women who cannot afford them. Taxing women for sanitary items would be similar to taxing people for being left handed or having blue eyes; it is simply unfair." Lia, 15, SA.



"I wish the government knew that young people can and do change the world. I want more investment into the youth sector, because I want to spend my life empowering young people." Nicola, 21, SA.

# 66%

of young people in Kingston can name their Federal MP



## YOUR ELECTORATE

### THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION RELATES TO THE FEDERAL ELECTORATE OF KINGSTON

The average age of the young person engaged in my consultation in Kingston was 16.3. A large range of issues were raised in the electorate. (Results of top 5 issues IN AUSTRALIA that they would like action on over the page in the blue column).

A well informed electorate, 66% of those consulted said that they read/follow the news every day with the majority of them getting their information from broadcast TV news and online newspapers.

66% of young people consulted in Kingston can name their local Federal MP. Just 11% of young people in Kingston say that they feel like their opinions are accurately reflected in current government

policy. 34% of the young people consulted saying that they feel, as a young person, that their opinions are taken seriously by those in positions of power.

Engaging young people online? 92% of young people in Kingston prefer the internet to television. 60% prefer Netflix to YouTube.

Just for fun: 68% prefer dogs to cats. Close to 100% of young people in Kingston would take Marvel over DC. 63% of young people prefer movies to books. 53% prefer a swim in the ocean to a bushwalk, with 60% preferring Winter to Summer.

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

1. Job opportunities
2. Drugs/alcohol use
3. Public transport
4. Mental health services
5. Education inequality
6. Body image
7. Peer pressure
8. Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander rights
9. LGBTI Rights
10. Youth engagement in politics

# 68%

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

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

“I wish the government knew and considered how much a great education can empower youth to make a positive difference in their community and the importance of helping disadvantaged youth. By investing in youth through a range of programs designed to educate and support young people we can create a strong and vibrant community that is able to help others into the future.” Max, 17.

“I have some very influential people in my life who are part of the LGBTQ+ community and I believe that they should have the rights that every other Australian has.” Ebony, 17.

“I wish that the government would consider how little money independently living youths have, I wish there were more supports. I also wish there was more recognition of independent youths, rather than trying to shove us into poorly kept Junction housing and forgetting we exist.” Paige, 17.

“I live in a family of six, with an autistic brother. I am trying to get a job to help support my family, and save money for my future, but am struggling to do so. I am currently in year 11 and panicking prematurely about my University costs, and how I’m going to be able to afford a home in our country’s current condition. As well as this, I know what career I would like, but due to the unemployment rate, am not sure whether or not I would be able to attain it. All of this is taking a serious toll on my mental health and I’m finding myself having a break down on a regular basis. The way I see it, the government needs to just make some serious changes and decisions instead of bickering about nonsense, because I know I’m not the only one in my situation.” Isabelle, 16.

# 87%

are interested in learning more about current events

# 74%

are interested in learning more about the United Nations

# 71%

are interested in learning more about how the government makes decisions

# 1

## Marriage equality

**Young people want equality.**  
“Pass same sex marriage and don’t waste millions of dollars on the postal vote!” Sara, 20.

# 2

## Climate change

**Young people are concerned**  
“We have to invest in cleaner energy sources, as soon as possible.” Nick, 16.

# 3

## Gender equality

**Young people want equality between genders**  
“We need to be encouraging businesses with less women to employ more who have the attributes the company seeks.” Georgia, 16.

# 4

## Youth unemployment

**Young people want action**  
“The government should focus on employing the next generation.” Jeremy, 15.

# 5

## Healthcare

**Young people want action**  
“Mental health issues and pressures of performing well in school are the biggest issues for young people in my local community.” Max, 17.