

2017 AUSTRALIAN YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE CONSULTATION REPORT



SOLOMON

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.

With student leaders from Nightcliff Middle School.



During a consultation with senior students at Kormilda.

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?





THE NT

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

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

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

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

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

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

63% of the young territorians in the Con-

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

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

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

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

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

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

"When I see the conflict, famine and social unrest that causes the greatest refugee crisis since WW2, I see human beings, the same as us. And because of this I care about how Australia responds. I care that the Australian government has cut foreign aid, I care that Australia is breaking the Refugee Convention (which we helped create and are signatories of). The youth of today are open minded, and happy to accept people's differences and celebrate individuality." Eliza, 17.

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

87%

are interested in learning more about current events

65%

are interested in learning more about the United Nations

54%

are interested in learning more about how the government makes decisions

1

Healthcare

Improving mental health and disability services were of significance.

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

2

Gender equality

Equality between genders is important for young people in the NT

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

3

Climate change

Was a frequent concern for young people in the NT

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

4

Drug/alcohol use

Young people want action.

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

5

Marriage equality

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

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

STORIES FROM THE NORTHERN TERRITORY



"I wish the government knew that there is more to schools than academics. Schools can be safe havens where students from all backgrounds have the opportunity to feel supported and valued.

As a teacher of middle school students within the Northern Territory, I have come to understand that the classroom is a microcosm of the real world, and even with my youngest students I can see the pressures of the grown-up world that they are already burdened with.

Some of them are the heads of their family, supporting their parents or siblings who are alcoholics or in gaol. I hear kids say racist slurs to each other, who bully each other and fight with each other, and I know they are just internalising and mirroring the worst of their realities, because it's all they know. For some of these kids, school isn't merely a place to learn. It is their safe haven. And as their teacher, I feel that sometimes the best way for me to educate them is to not only be their teacher, but to be their person.

Although the themes within 'Romeo and Juliet' are important, so is sitting and talking about our families and plans for the future. Sometimes, class karaoke singalongs and rap battles are what they need more than essay writing and spelling tests. In a world where many of these students face a life harsher than they deserve, it is important to remember that school can also be a place where they can play, have fun, be themselves and feel safe. I tell my students I love them every day, not just because it is true, but because there's a chance that I might be the only person who tells them that, and it's something everyone deserves to hear."

Hannah, 24, NT.



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



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

Chris, 19, NT.



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

Max, 20, NT.



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

Emma, 18, NT.



"I wish that the government would stop encouraging racial stereotypes, specifically when making legislation.

I understand the necessity for legislation to be passed to protect the country from terrorism, however at what cost? Should a whole race feel persecuted for the actions of a minority?

I wish the government would take into consideration just how much it will affect the audience of this legislation. To me, it seems like the government and public see terrorist acts committed predominantly by one group of people and assume that all people who look similar are bad. The shockwave of such an action creates a rippling effect of stereotypes focusing on race. This can lead to individuals being attacked due to their race and culture.

I am tired of feeling nervous when a terrorist attack comes on TV and the terrorist's culture and background resembles my own. I am tired of shaving my beard for the sake of distancing myself to the faces on TV. I am tired of feeling like I need to reassure the people around me that I'm also English because being Indian is "too damn similar". I am tired of being persecuted by members of the public purely for my appearance. I am tired of the government saying they support multiculturalism, yet introducing laws that clearly do more harm than good."

Russell, 19, NT.



"I wish the government would recognise how it feels to be a young woman Australian living in a culture where women and young people are often considered as less qualified to have political/social opinions on the issues facing us today.

Rarely do I see my views and the views of my peers expressed by male politicians, and rarely do I see female politicians contribute without being ridiculed, insulted or questioned by male politicians for reasons that are irrelevant to the discussion, and irrelevant to their ability to make decisions as leaders and representatives."

Morgan, 16, NT.



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

I wish the government would take action now to protect our futures and our planet. Their decisions and policies today dictate the tomorrow of young people."

Becky, 18, NT.



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

Rosie, 23, NT.



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

I wish the government would take action now to protect our futures and our planet. Their decisions and policies today dictate the



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

Khayla, 24, NT.

45%

of young people in Solomon can name their Federal MP



YOUR ELECTORATE

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION RELATES TO THE FEDERAL ELECTORATE OF SOLOMON

The average age of the young person engaged in my consultation in Solomon was 16.6. 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).

48% of those consulted said that they read/follow the news every day, with the majority lifting news from Facebook feeds and online papers and watching free-to-air TV broadcast news.

45% of young people consulted in Solomon can name their local Federal MP. Only 16% of young people in Solomon say that they feel like their opinions are accurately reflected in current government policy. 33% 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? 78% prefer the internet to TV. 82% prefer YouTube to Netflix.

78% prefer dogs to cats. 82% of young people in Solomon would take Marvel over DC. 56% prefer a swim in the ocean, to a bushwalk and 56% prefer Winter to Summer.

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

1. Mental health services
2. Drug/alcohol use
3. Crime
4. Youth engagement in politics
5. Education funding
6. Climate change
7. Peer pressure
8. Discrimination
9. Job opportunities
10. Juvenile justice system reform

62%

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

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

“I wish that the government would support other countries with aid” Binayak, 14.

“I wish the government considered the story behind the struggle or the crime (e.g refugees, poverty etc) instead of viewing crime as such a black and white topic.”Mike, 16.

“I wish that the government knew that young people are interested in the world around them, and have ideas that are worth listening to. Many young people are concerned about the future and have plans and strategies to make it a better place, but are lacking an adequate platform to share these ideas. I think if more politicians speak with young people and focus on more long-term goals, youth can stop being the “leaders of tomorrow”, and can start making changes today.” Bridget, 16.

“I wish the government knew about my community. My parents fled their hometown not because they wanted to but because the situation of their country forced them to. The war, insecurity, lack of health services, lack of safety and education. I wish the government understood the issues affecting minority instead of trying to provide services for them without understanding their needs.” Jane, 23.

“I wish they considered that we are more than a statistic, we are powerful, kind, giving, smart and intelligent. Humans are complex, someone living below the poverty might have a better personal life rating than someone who is earning well. Resilience, if we can teach our young people to have hope and be resilient, we can make some incredible leaders and citizens.” Alicia, 22.

1

Healthcare

Is important to the youth of Solomon
“Because Darwin is a fairly rural town there is still a strong stigma surrounding mental health, because of this people generally don’t talk about mental illness sometimes leading to suicide.” Sam, 17.

2

Gender equality

Youth in Solomon want action.
“I also believe young women are still sexualised and not valued as equals.” Taylor, 17.

3

Climate change

Was frequently raised

4

Housing affordability

The cost of education is a concern.
“We should regulate negative gearing to slow rising rent and consider introducing housing ownership caps to increase housing supply and availability.” Tom, 19.

5

Marriage equality

Youth in Solomon want marriage equality
“We should legalise marriage equality and let men and women have the right to marry who they want to.”Margo, 19.

90%

are interested in learning more about current events

73%

are interested in learning more about the United Nations

62%

are interested in learning more about how the government makes decisions

THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS

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

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COMMUNITY PARTNERS



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All opinions expressed in this report reflect the views of young people consulted and do not reflect any policy or position of sponsors, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, or UN Youth Australia.

