



RAISE OUR VOICE
AUSTRALIA

Raise Our Voice in Parliament

2021

Table of Contents

Where are the young people?

S

01. Introduction

H

02. Campaign overview

Z

03. Where are the young people?

W

04. Campaign outline

05. Who participated?

H

06. How do young people feel about politics?

07. What does it mean to be heard?

Z

08. What does it mean to be heard? continued

09. Post campaign survey

O

10. Next steps

C

11. Conclusion

NO T C D D O R T N

Despite being the custodians of our future, young voices are missing from our federal politics. This has got to change.

It is critical that young voices are heard at all levels of Australian politics. That young people are the leaders of tomorrow is a misconception. They're leading now, today. They're raising their voices on social media, taking to the streets to campaign for climate action, and are lobbying their MPs on consent education - amongst many other actions.

Young people have always been on the forefront of change, but too often, their leadership is overlooked by formal structures. Despite the unfair criticism that young people are disinterested in politics, the participation in this campaign demonstrates what we already know - young people are here, they're engaged, and they want to make change. We created this campaign to amplify the voices that young people already have, to help them engage with politics, and be heard by those that represent them.

We went out to politicians across the country with one key ask: to give up a 90-second speaking slot to amplify the voice of a young person from their electorate. Our 4-person strong volunteer team knew that young people would submit their speeches, but we didn't know how many.

We were not disappointed.

After a few weeks, the speech submissions began to flow in, surpassing 100, 200, 500, 600 submissions and covering a whole range of topics that we know young people care about - issues ranging from strong action on the climate to the need for more video games in class, gender equality to the greater regulation of tobacco products. 60% of submitters reported that the campaign was their first time engaging with Australian politics.

They spoke. We listened. We amplified.

Thank you to every single young person who raised their voice, and who trusted us with their vision for the future. You give us hope.

AN OVERVIEW

The team sought participation from federal Members of Parliament (MPs) and Senators across the political spectrum, with 66 politicians agreeing to participate in the campaign.

45 Participating MPs

21 Participating Senators

603 Speech submissions

125 Voices amplified in parliament

30 Media hits
Including in SBS, ABC,
7News

15 Post-campaign workshops run

4 Volunteers
Hundreds of hours
donated

\$0 Spent



It made my day to have my message shared in Parliament by Senator Rex Patrick.

*I have always wanted to help to make the world a better place for **people with a disability**. I want to make my family proud and my country proud.*

I would like to be in the Government and I would like to be a part of the change

- Hugo, 20

My name is Hugo T

WHERE ARE THE YOUNG PEOPLE?

There are approximately 4 million young people in Australia. Yet only 7 members of our federal Parliament are aged 18-34. This is a failure of democracy.

With one in five Australians under 25 years of age, the absence of young voices from Parliament is concerning. Overwhelmingly, young people *are* engaged, but are turning away from traditional institutions for one key reason: they do not feel represented. Our political leaders have a duty to represent *all* people in their electorate - and simultaneously, we have a duty to support young people to learn more about our traditional systems of power, and how they can leverage their voices for change. This campaign represented a low-barrier opportunity to engage, asking young people to articulate their vision for Australia's future in 20 years time.

Young women, persons from culturally diverse backgrounds, First Nations persons, persons with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQIA community also remain under-represented in our parliament. While we were encouraged participation from marginalised groups, we only saw only slight above-average participation of First Nations persons (4%), CALD persons (37%) and LGBTQIA persons (18%). We saw a significant above average participation of young women (61.5%) and below average from persons with a disability (7%). The campaign will be better targeted to ensure participation from these groups in 2022 while maintaining a focus on youth.



anikawellsmp



anikawellsmp This is Maddie - Earnshaw State College student, climate activist, and Lilley winner of the Raise Our Voice Australia Youth Voice in Parliament competition.

Today I'll be delivering Maddie's powerful speech in Parliament, answering the question "what do you want Australia to look like in 20 years?"

My generation is staring down the barrel of an uncertain future and instead of being excited and hopeful for what it may hold...I am scared to watch the fires that burned all summer long, climb higher and edge closer to home. I am scared because we are in a slow-motion car crash and the brakes are perfectly functional, but we are all asleep at the wheel. I am scared to watch as we rewrite the definition of humanity but refuse to acknowledge that we are all human. But most of all, I am scared that I am right.

Please, prove me wrong.

I am 16 years old. I don't have all the answers, but you have the power to make a change. What side of history will you stand on?

- Maddie, 16, Lilley

THE CAMPAIGN

Participants were invited to submit a 200 word speech on the topic "What do I want Australia to look like in 20 years time?" to inform a 90-second constituent speech. These speeches were read out by federal Politicians in the inaugural Youth Voice in Parliament week, which took place from 18-21 October.

Timeline	Date
Contacted MPs and Senators	1 July - 30 July 2021
Campaign launched	2 August 2021
Speech submissions close	24 September 2021
Youth Voice in Parliament week	18-21 October 2021, with some speeches read in the following sitting periods



In 20 years, I hope to see an Australia that acknowledges the genocide & oppression that has occurred to First Nations people...Australia needs to raise the age of incarceration .

- excerpt from a speech by Abir, 20

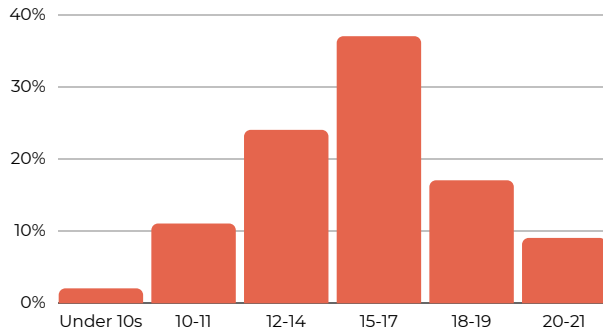
I'm 10 and I've lived through two bush fires in 6 years which were across the road from my house and we had to leave...we weren't sure if we had a home anymore.

- excerpt from a speech by Xanthe, 10

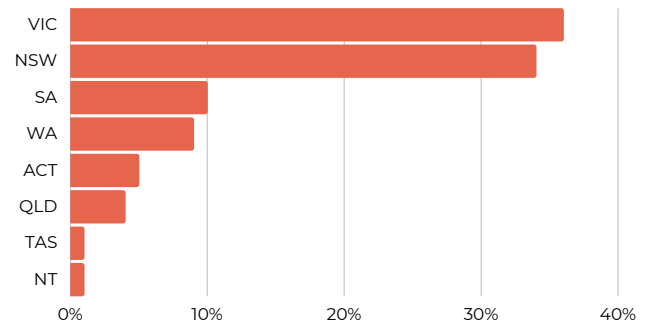
Who participated?

The average participant in the campaign was a young woman aged 15-17 from Victoria who self-reported that the climate is the issue they care most about.

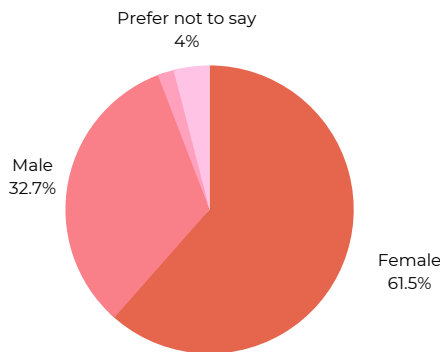
Age



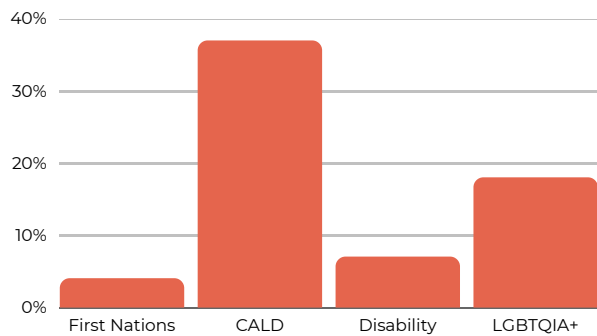
State



Gender



Diversity



Initial engagement

6/10



Participants reported that the campaign was their **first** engagement with Australian politics or a politician

The future

9.2/10



Respondents to the post-campaign survey said participation has increased their likelihood of engaging with politics in the future

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HEARD?

Going out to some of our young speech writers, we asked them what it meant to have their voice heard.

When I watched my speech read in parliament I cried. I cried for all the people who spend Fridays outside of school protesting for their future. For the people like me, who feel we have no control of the governments actions. For Indigenous Australians who have had this worry for decades.

I cried because I felt heard.

*I don't know if I would ever go into politics but I know that I want to provide spaces and opportunities for others to grieve and celebrate that feeling of **finally being seen**. That hopefully one day braver people will be able to make changes so us young people don't have to worry about being heard in parliament.*

- Ella, 16, Moreton (speech read by Graham Perret)

To have my speech read out in parliament was exciting, and surprising. I felt proud to have written a speech for parliament, and I feel proud now to have it read out to the parliamentarians it was addressed to.

Getting involved in politics is a good way to express passion on topics like climate change and it is certainly something I would think about in the future.

- Sujaan, 11 (speech read by Senator Katy Gallagher)

*This experience has inspired me to make change more than ever, and it means a lot to me that **my voice has been heard**.*

- Dani, 11, Wentworth (speech read by Dave Sharma)

I am very happy to know that I am being heard and that my voice matters.

- Participant, 6

*Politicians are among the least trusted people in the world and I wonder sometimes why I have such a desire to become one. After having my 90 second speech read in parliament and being promised by a Senator that they would fight for the change and work towards the future I want to see, I question whether it is an **empty promise**?*

*Is this a **people-** or **self-serving politician** that stands before me?*

*However, every inch of my being wants to continue to engage with the **political system** so that I can ensure my message is not disregarded, ignored or overlooked, as it already has been for so many years prior. The opportunity that the Raise Our Voice Australia program afforded me to have my speech read on such a scale, has only reignited the fire in my belly.*

- Gillian Gerry, 21 (speech read by Senator Larissa Waters)

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HEARD?

Going out to some of our young participants, we asked them what it meant to have their voice heard.



It made my day to have my message shared in Parliament by Senator Rex Patrick.

I have always wanted to help to make the world a better place for people with a disability. I want to make my family proud and my country proud.

I would like to be in the Government and I would like to be a part of the change.

- Hugo Tahney, 20 (speech read by Senator

I have always been quite engaged in Australian politics and campaigning, however this built my confidence for further engagements in the future.

- Post-campaign survey respondent, 18

It help me gain confidence to create more change in my community, I started my own charity!

It also gave me confidence and hope for the future, I want to run for parliament, or be at the UN.

- Post-campaign survey respondent, 13

1 in 3 young people say they feel under represented



POST-CAMPAIGN SURVEY

Following the campaign, we issued a survey to our participants to learn more about what participating in the campaign meant to them, and how they want to engage in the future.



Of respondents participated because they wanted to have their voice heard

When asked what prompted participants to submit a speech, participants reported wanting to have their voices heard. The responses reflected that participants were **already engaged** but were looking to get more involved in politics, or were **starting out** on their journeys.

"I love politics. It has made me feel as if my voice, story and view matter. I was already likely to engage but it made me not feel as disheartened and my vision is possible."

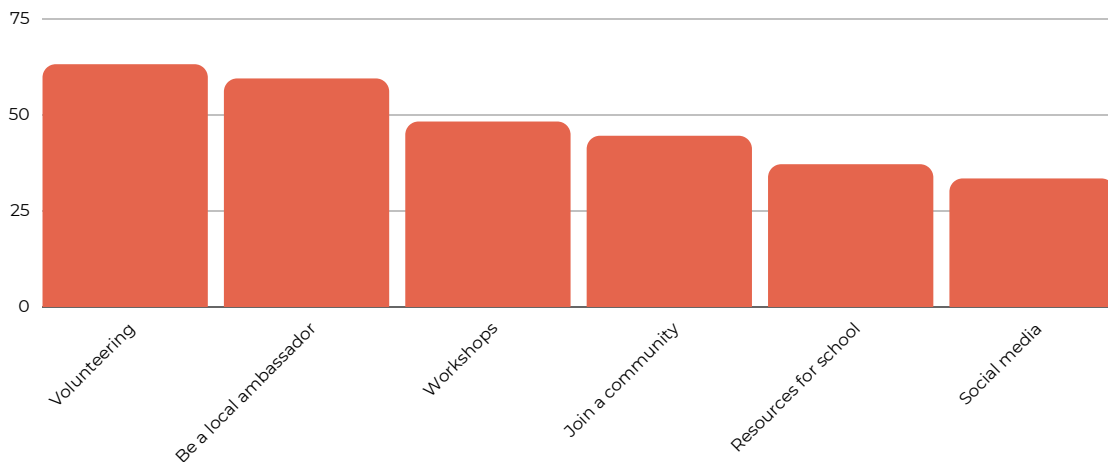
"It made everything seem... doable."

"It gave me hope. It gave me a chance to have my voice heard and potentially make a change. It did make me think about running and how much of a change I could have however I don't think I would. It definitely fuelled my want to be a change maker and use my voice to enact change."

"I had not known much about politics but now I want to learn more. I know have confidence to raise my voice and stand up to the issues in the community."

"I've always had an interest in politics, and this has only heightened my determination to be heard by the people in power, before I hopefully become on of those people."

While 65.2% of respondents said they had already campaigned for an issue or posted on social media and 56.5% had attended a protest, 63% said they would like to volunteer, and only 33% expressed an interest in learning more via social media. This demonstrates an interest in offline action.



92%

of participants reported that they are more likely to engage with politics in the future as a result of the campaign.

NEXT STEPS

Looking forward, we will continue our work to support young Australians to engage with public decision making, including politics and policy.

01

Workshop series

We partnered with organisations including UNICEF, the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition and the Australian Youth Climate Coalition to run a series of post-campaign workshops curated to support participants to develop their understanding of politics and policy.

02

Better engage with our young submitters

Through volunteering roles, a community ambassador program, and workshops targeted at the young people themselves and their school communities.

03


Plan for the 2022 campaign

Recruit a diverse team, make the campaign more accessible for persons with a disability or who speak english as a second language, engage directly with teachers, student ambassadors and a more diverse audience.

CONCLUSION

Young people are engaged with politics, but feel under-represented. The issue they care about most is the climate, and they want their voices to be heard. Participation in the campaign helped the young participants to feel heard, and increased their likelihood of engaging with politics in the future.

Ensuring greater youth involvement and participation in our politics will not only strengthen our democracy, but ensure that they are the architects of the world they inherit. This campaign was a great starting point, but there's more to be done. We will incorporate the feedback to our 2022 program.





Young people are engaged

- 60% of submitters said it was their first time engaging with Australian politics
- 96% of participants who completed the post-campaign survey said they would be more likely to engage with politics as a result of the campaign
- Young women are particularly engaged with the highest number of speeches submitted

Young people feel under-represented

- Only one in three respondents felt represented in parliament
- But two in three respondents feel confident engaging in politics
- One one in two respondents felt confident in influencing federal politics



Young people care deeply about the climate

- The climate was highlighted as the issue young people care most about
- This was reflected across all demographics
- A lack of engagement on this issue of importance could contribute to a perceived lack of engagement with formal power structures

ANNEX: PARTICIPATING POLITICIANS

ACT

Senator Katy Gallagher
Alicia Payne - Member for Canberra

New South Wales

Senator Andrew Bragg
Senator Perin Davey
Senator Mehreen Faruqi
Senator Kristina Keneally
Senator Jenny McAllister
Chris Bowen - Member for McMahon
Dave Sharma - Member for Wentworth
Ed Husic - Member for Chifley
Emma McBride - Member for Dobell
Jason Falinski - Member for MacKellar
Kristy McBain - Member for Eden-Monro
Dr Mike Freelander - Member for Macarthur
Sharon Bird - Member for Cunningham
Susan Templeman - Member for Macquarie
Matt Thistlethwaite - Member for Kingsford Smith
Julie Owens - Member for Paramatta
Dr Fiona Martin - Member for Reid
Chris Hayes - Member for Fowler
Lucy Wicks - Member for Robertson
Anne Stanley - Member for Werriwa
Dr Zali Steggall - Member for Warringah

Western Australia

Senator Patrick Dodson
Senator Dean Smith
Senator Marielle Smith
Senator Jordon Steele-John
Celia Hammond - Member for Curtin
Patrick Gorman - Member for Perth

Northern Territory

Luke Gosling - Member for Solomon

Queensland

Senator Larissa Waters
Anika Wells - Member for Lilley
Andrew Wallace - Member for Fisher
Graham Perrett - Member for Moreton
Shayne Newmann - Member for Blair

South Australia

Senator Penny Wong
Senator Rex Patrick
Amanda Rishworth - Member for Kingston

Victoria

Senator Sarah Henderson
Senator Janet Rice
Senator Sarah Hanson-Young
Senator David Van
Senator Lidia Thorpe
Damian Drum - Member for Nicholls
Gladys Liu - Member for Chisholm
Dr Helen Haines - Member for Indi
Dr Katie Allen - Member for Higgins
Lisa Chesters - Member for Bendigo
Maria Vamvakinou - Member for Calwell
Peta Murphy - Member for Dunkley
Peter Khalil - Member for Wills
Richard Males - Member for Corio
Tim Watts - Member for Gellibrand
Tim Wilson - Member for Goldstein
Libby Coker - Member for Corangamite
Anthony Byrne - Member for Holt
Adam Bandt - Member for Melbourne

Tasmania

Senator Peter Whish-Wilson
Brian Mitchell - Member for Lyons
Andrew Wilkie - Member for Clarke

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A huge thank you to our volunteer team Ruby Bisson, Heather McNab and Emily Duncan, without whom this campaign would not have happened.

Thank you to every organisation and influencer who shared the campaign with their audiences, and every media outlet who took an interest and amplified the voice of young Australians.

Thank you to our MPs and Senators for their support for young Australians.

But most of all, thank you to every young Australian who raised their voice. You are our present, and our future.

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