



Australian Government

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National Conversation Summary

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YOUTH
FORUM

Contents

National Conversation	2
National Strategy for Young Australians	3
AYF Background	3
Timeframe	4
Audience	4
Discussion Topics	4
Promotion	4
AYF Website	4
Launch	4
Events and outcomes	5
National Conversation Roundtables	5
AYF Ideas Board	5
Host Your Own Forum	5
Submissions	6
Facilitated Online Forums	6
youTHINK: live & online:	6
Next Steps	7

National Conversation

In October 2009, the Prime Minister, the Hon Kevin Rudd MP and the Hon Kate Ellis MP Minister for Early Childhood Education, Child Care and Youth, launched the National Conversation to purposefully consult with young people and the broader community on the development of the Australian Government's National Strategy for Young Australians (the Strategy).

The Strategy is a clear statement about why the Australian Government values young people, what it offers by way of support and how it plans to support them into the future.

It is about empowering and enabling young people to take charge of their own lives.

It recognises that there are compelling social and economic reasons for the government to invest in young people.

In order to achieve the overall vision and goals of the Strategy, the Government will focus immediate and concentrated action on eight priority areas. These priorities will adapt and change over time to reflect the latest evidence, react to emerging needs and respond to the evolving needs of young people over time.

The aim of the National Conversation, which was held during October and November 2009, was to ensure wide spread consultation to contribute to the development of the Strategy. The National Conversation process was supported by the Australian Youth Forum (AYF).

The consultation process aimed to reach a wide range of key stakeholders through a number of different channels. Activities included online events, national and local forums and targeted face-to-face discussions.

The **youTHINK**: live & online event provided an opportunity for young people to provide feedback on ideas that had been submitted as part of the Conversation.

The National Conversation built on previous engagement with young people and the youth sector through the AYF. Thousands of young Australians have been consulted on a range of issues since the AYF was launched in October 2008. The outcomes of all of these consultations were also considered in the development of the Strategy.

The National Conversation ran during October and November 2009. The final Strategy reflects the outcomes from all Government consultations. The Strategy was released on 14 April 2010. To read the Strategy visit www.youth.gov.au.



Purpose

The National Conversation was a purposefully run consultation process with Australia's young people and the broader community.

The aim of the National Conversation was to ensure wide spread consultation to feed into the development of the National Strategy for Young Australians (the Strategy). The conversation process was supported by the AYF and built on previous engagement with young people and the youth sector through the AYF.

National Strategy for Young Australians

The National Conversation introduced the proposed Vision, Goals and Priority Areas of the Strategy.

Vision - The Government's vision is for all young people to grow up safe, healthy, happy and resilient and to have the opportunities and skills they need to learn, work, engage in community life and influence decisions that affect them.

Goals - the Government's suggested goals were for young people:

- empowering young people to build their own lives for the future
- enabling young Australians to accept full responsibility for their lives, their actions and their behaviours
- building resilience in young Australians to negotiate the great life challenges that lie ahead
- building a healthier, safer and more productive Australia.

Priority Areas -the seven initial priority areas for the Strategy included:

- empowering young Australians in their schools, institutes of technology, and universities to shape their own futures
- supporting young Australians within their families
- mobilising young Australians within their communities
- enabling young Australians to participate safely and confidently online
- equipping young Australians with the skills and personal networks they need for employment
- strengthening early intervention with young Australians to help prevent any problems getting worse and to help young people get their lives back on track
- establishing clear cut legal consequences for behaviours that endanger the safety of others.

Following the National Conversation consultation process, the priority areas and goals were updated to reflect feedback of the participants and an additional priority has been included into the Strategy:

- improving the health and wellbeing of all young people.

The updated goals and priority areas are part of the final National Strategy for Young Australians www.youth.gov.au.

AYF Background

Launched in October 2008, the AYF is the Australian Government's commitment to youth engagement. The AYF provides opportunities for young Australians and the youth sector to engage directly with the Government in ongoing public discussion and facilitates their input into policy and decision making on issues that are important to them.

Further information about the AYF is available on the web www.youth.gov.au/ayf.

Timeframe

The National Conversation was held during October and November 2009.

Audience

The National Conversation focused on engaging relevant stakeholders, including young people, the youth sector, parent and community groups, researchers and academics.

Discussion Topics

The National Conversation objective was to consult on the development of the Strategy. A discussion paper was produced to stimulate conversation around the framework of the Strategy, and introduce discussion questions that aimed to:

- identify areas of need for young people
- stimulate discussion around the seven priority areas
- generate ideas for action which would support young people in each of these areas.

The discussion paper is available for review on the AYF website www.youth.gov.au/ayf.

Promotion

The National Conversation was promoted via:

- the AYF distribution list
- the Office for Youth stakeholder database (including youth sector and other non-government organisations)
- Federal Ministers, State and Territory Education Departments and Offices for Youth
- schools

- the local government network
- Australian Youth Information Network (AYIN) and YouthGas distribution lists
- Inspire foundation network
- twitter <http://twitter.com>
- YouTube <http://www.youtube.com/user/AustralianYouthForum>
- media releases

AYF Website

The AYF website incorporated a specific area for National Conversation information providing a portal for information on events and access to Host Your Own Forum kits.

From 22 to 28 October 2009, the AYF website focussed on encouraging young people from rural and regional areas to participate in the National Conversation. Tony Burke, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry hosted an online forum on specific issues facing rural and regional young Australians.

Launch

The Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd and Kate Ellis, Minister for Early Childhood Education, Child Care and Youth, launched the National Conversation in October 2009, with a video address published on the AYF website.

Events associated with the launch included:

- Prime Minister's web chat with fourteen participants, as a continued discussion from the PM's web blog held from 11-25 September 2009.
- Minister Ellis together with the ACT Minister for Education and Training, Children and Youth, Andrew Barr, hosted a discussion forum with 40, Year 9/10 students at Lyneham High School. The forum focussed on four key priorities (Enabling young Australians to participate safely and confidently

online; Establishing clear cut consequences for behaviours that endanger the safety of others; Supporting young Australians with their families; and Strengthening early intervention with young Australians to help prevent problems from getting worse and to help young people get their lives back on track).

- Online technology connected the two events through the Prime Minister's and Minister's twitter pages and twitpics.

Events and outcomes

The AYF organised events throughout the National Conversation aimed at engaging a broad cross section of the target audience. Details of these events and key outcomes are outlined below.

National Conversation Roundtables

22 to 29 October 2009

Seven targeted roundtable discussions were held at Parliament House in Canberra between 22 October and 29 October 2009. One hundred and twenty participants from a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences attended the roundtables, including:

- AYF Youth Engagement Steering Committee
- representatives from youth led organisations
- young people from rural and regional Australia
- young Indigenous Australians
- young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- young people who live with a disability or mental health issue
- young people from disadvantaged backgrounds

- students from universities and apprentices
- young parents and carers
- representatives from parent groups and groups that provide support services to young Australians.

The discussions addressed the vision, goals and the priority areas. Each session was tailored to the participants.

AYF Ideas Board

22 October to 8 December 2009

The AYF also hosted an ideas board specifically on the National Strategy. The board was based on the National Strategy discussion paper, providing background to the development of the Strategy. The posts were considered in the development of the Strategy.

During the period:

- 99 posts were received
- 73 posts were published
- 26 posts were rejected on the basis they did not meet the terms of use of the AYF website
- 1334 votes were received on the posted topics.

Host Your Own Forum

22 October to 9 November 2009

Host Your Own Forum kits were provided to enable forums to be held in individual communities. The Host Your Own Forum model provided the opportunity for interested individuals, schools and community groups to provide input into the Strategy. Where permission was given, the submissions were published on the AYF website. One video submission was received – this was published on the AYF YouTube channel

www.youtube.com/user/AustralianYouthForum.

Submissions

During the period, submissions were received from Federal Members of Parliament, non-government organisations, schools, community organisations, and organisations who provide services for young Australians (e.g. employment services).

Facilitated Online Forums 23 October to 12 November 2009

The Inspire Foundation facilitated six online forums during the National Conversation, aimed at different subsets of the target audience including rural and regional youth and youth workers. Several of these forums were also issue specific, focusing on online safety, youth mental health and skills and tertiary education. A total of 92 individuals participated in the forums.

The facilitated online forums included:

- Reach Out Community Forum Thread (23 October to 11 November) hosted on the Reach Out website <http://au.reachout.com>, this forum was an open discussion board.
- Rural & Regional facilitated Reach Out Forum (28 October) hosted on the Reach Out website <http://au.reachout.com>. This forum included a webchat with Tony Burke, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, focussing on elements of the Strategy from young people residing in rural and regional areas of Australia. A community board remained open for participants who were unable to participate in the allocated timeframe.
- Youth Worker Consultation (29 October - two sessions) hosted through the Act

Now website www.actnow.com.au, this forum was open to individuals working with in either a paid or voluntary capacity.

- Staying Safe Online – Habbo InfoBus session (2 November) this forum was facilitated at Habbo Hotel www.habbo.com.au, a moderated virtual world with teenagers as the main users of the site. The facilitated forum focused on the core priority ‘participating safely online’.
- Skills and Tertiary Education – facilitated Reach Out Forum (4 November) hosted on the Reach Out website <http://au.reachout.com>, this forum focussed on the priority areas around education, training and skill development.
- Youth Mental Health – facilitated Reach Out Forum (12 November) hosted on the Reach Out website <http://au.reachout.com>, this forum focussed on the Government’s vision for ‘all young people to grow up safe, healthy, happy and resilient’.

youTHINK: live & online: 12 November 2009

Hosted at the Telstra Experience Centre in Sydney, this event involved 100 young people in the studio audience and an estimated online audience of approximately 2000+ young people participating in the event across Australia from schools, universities and community centres.

youTHINK: live & online incorporated three, twenty-five minute sessions. Discussions focussed on the themes – Families & Communities, Education and Careers and Looking after yourself and others.

The event involved an interactive webcast, with the audience asked to provide feedback on ideas and suggestions

submitted through the National Conversation. The audience was able to vote on seven quick poll questions – covering different areas, with the responses published during the broadcast. Comments and suggestions submitted by online viewers during the event were integrated in to the open discussion.

youTHINK: live & online was hosted by media personality, Myf Warhurst and co-host Nic MacKay, co-founder of The Oaktree Foundation. The studio audience included members of the AYF Steering Committee, representatives from youth sector organisations, participants from National Conversation Roundtables, participants at ‘Host Your Own Forum’ events and school groups from the surrounding area.

A recording of the webcast is available for viewing until December 2010, via a link on the **youTHINK** page on the AYF website www.youth.gov.au/ayf/pages/youthink_home.htm#liveonline.

Next Steps

If you would like to review the key themes drawn from the National Conversation events and the ongoing engagement through the AYF that were considered in the development of the National Strategy for Young Australians, please email ayf@deewr.com.au to request a copy of the documentation.

