HELP MAKE THE FUTURE AUSTRALIA WANTS
The longer this continues the worse the long-term prospects for Australia become. So we are dedicated to understanding and improving how Australia makes its future.

Through rigorous analysis of what experts and the public tell us, we paint a clear picture of the future Australians want and track Australia’s progress.

The result has been poor outcomes on almost all of the big issues – these issues are the ‘what’. We believe that if we improve how we make decisions in this country it will act as a turbo-charger for everyone focused on what those decisions need to be.

This is a big task. It requires courage, resolve and humility. Courage to enable difficult conversations, resolve to persist and humility to embrace the reality that the best thinking can come from anywhere.

We are optimistic and believe this can, and will, be achieved by 2030.

Together, we can make the future Australia wants.

Your Life in 2030 – Unless We Act Now

Imagine you’re reading this in 2030, a mere ten years from today. It’s a beautiful Autumnal day. But you won’t go outside because – like most days – it’s either too hot or too smoky. Climate change has lengthened the bushfire season by months and increased the frequency of heatwaves across Australia.

As you came to work, you passed an angry mob outside Parliament House, protesting against job losses as the Australian economy has continued to be reshaped by global forces and blue collar and white collar jobs keep disappearing – in manufacturing, accounting, law, and medicine. Yesterday, you were told that – for the seventh year in a row – your pay rise would be less than inflation. Your standard of living will go backwards, again.

You’re wondering whether you’ll be able to take your niece to the new Biodiversity Museum so she can see a koala, which no longer exist in the wild as their habitat was destroyed and fragmented over the last 50 years. You’re also wondering whether your partner and their friend will patch up their differences after an argument about the increasing unequal access to technology – should government take more action to stop the disadvantaged being left behind or is it up to each individual to keep up?

After a brief bout of increased trust during Australia’s world-leading response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, trust in government and democracy inexorably declined. Today, as you read your social media feed and “news” presented on the global digital platforms, you wonder what’s true and what’s fake.
The lack of trust, the lack of a constructive media, and increasingly complex policy challenges have made governing even harder. But each time government fails to solve a complex challenge, you find yourself trusting government even less. And you find yourself questioning your own ability to influence anything important in society.

The main topic of conversation at dinner will be the war that has just broken out between three major regional powers over access to scarce water supplies from the Himalayas – and whether one or more of them will deploy their nuclear arsenals to secure their interests.

The only old people you’ll see this week are rich. Poor people simply cannot afford access to advanced healthcare. On your way home, you’ll pass police checkpoints at the major intersections, as social cohesion has broken down with increased inequality and decreased faith in society.

Of course, another future is possible. And Australian Futures Project is focussed on understanding and improving how Australia makes its future so as a country, together we can make the future we want.

A note on sources: This scenario was prepared by Australian Futures Project drawing particularly on information presented in the CSIRO’s “2019 Australian National Outlook” and the US National Intelligence Council’s most recent “Global Trends” report as well as our own analysis.

WHAT WE DO

We are an organisation that does the thinking and interprets that knowledge into actionable programs. Not just a think tank, but a think and do tank. Our work is encapsulated in a number of core activities which are set out in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNDERSTAND</th>
<th>IMPROVE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROGRAM X</strong> UPDATED ANNUALLY</td>
<td><strong>THOUGHT LEADERSHIP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Distil our view of the future Australians want based on what the Australian public and experts say</td>
<td>– Set the agenda on improving how Australia makes its future by building Australians’ understanding about what’s happening, what’s at stake, and what’s possible</td>
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<tr>
<td>– Assess how well Australia is progressing towards that future</td>
<td><strong>PARLIAMENTARY LEADERS PROGRAM</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RECODING THE FUTURE</strong> UPDATED EVERY 3 YEARS</td>
<td>– Create projects and products that improve how Australia makes its future</td>
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<tr>
<td>– Distil a consensus understanding of how Australia makes its future</td>
<td><strong>CONSULTING AND COLLABORATIONS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>– Identify, describe, and prioritise opportunities at a system level to improve how Australia makes its future</td>
<td>– Inspire, encourage, and support others to take steps that improve how Australia makes its future</td>
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Australia lacks a comprehensive understanding of what its people want for the future and how well they feel their country is progressing towards that future.

There are countless ad hoc polls about Australians’ aspirations and concerns, numerous research papers by experts on aspects of Australian values, and regular studies that measure progress on specific social, economic, and environmental criteria set by experts. Most are focused on the immediate past or the here and now.

But, Australians’ voice about the future is going unheard. There is no clear picture of Australians’ values and aspirations (for themselves and their country), how they would like Australia to make its future, and how much influence they feel they have. There is no way to consistently track change over time.

Without this critical information, it is impossible to cut through the media echo chambers to focus the national conversation on the issues that matter. To hold leaders accountable for the future they are creating on behalf of all Australians. To fact-check powerful voices claiming to speak on behalf of Australians at large. To empower Australians to influence the future. To assess how well Australia’s future-making system is working. To know where to focus extra effort to improve progress. Or to know when to celebrate success.
COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL RESEARCH ON AUSTRALIANS’ VALUES, ASPIRATIONS, AND INFLUENCE

To fill this void, the Australian Futures Project is launching comprehensive annual research to understand Australians’:

– **Values:** What guides their own lives, what do they want to guide the national identity?

– **Aspirations:** What do they most want for the future – their own and the country’s?

– **Desired Future-Making System:** How would they like Australia to make its future?

– **Influence:** How much influence do they feel they have on the future – at a personal and national level?

We will compare results not only over time and across demographic and voting intention segments, but also at an individual, organisation, city, and national level. Importantly, we will show how aligned Australians’ current lives are to what they want. This will enable celebration of areas where the country is doing well while pinpointing areas for concerted effort to narrow the gap.

An ongoing media and communications strategy will drive engagement and action:

– **Annual Distillation:** Each October, the Australian Futures Project will release a distillation of what Australia wants and an assessment of progress based on how Australians describe their current lives

– **Ongoing Thought Leadership:** Throughout the following 12 months we will deliver publications and speeches to recommend action and contextualise the research and dive deeper into specific areas – including through guest expert opinions and comparisons to other data and research

This work is complex and new. We are therefore building Program X over three years, refining and augmenting our research and communication techniques to extract a deeper understanding and paint a clearer picture of what Australians want for their future. From 2021, we aim to introduce deliberative research techniques, providing an even deeper understanding of what Australians are telling us. To complement our assessment of progress based on the public’s perceptions, we will also develop a method to assess progress based on existing objective indicators.

**OUR OBJECTIVES ARE THAT BY THE END OF 2023:**

– **Trusted Source:** Program X is the common reference on what Australians want for the future and how well they feel their country is progressing towards that future

– **Action:** We and others in the future-making system have used Program X data and research to focus the national conversation on the issues that matter, to hold leaders and powerful voices accountable, to empower Australians to influence the future, to focus effort to improve progress, and to celebrate Australia’s successes

– **Income:** We generate half of the ongoing budget for Program X from thought leadership and consulting engagements with organisations around Australia, offering them tailored diagnostic tools and proprietary insights from deep analysis of the Program X data and research

**WHAT IS THE FUTURE-MAKING SYSTEM?**

A system is a collection of parts, that, through their interaction, function as a whole. A system is often thought of in terms of the actors in it. It also includes relationships, structures, processes, and resources as well as mental models (how each actor sees and understands the world – revealing experiences, assumptions, values, beliefs, biases, and blind spots). One of the three goals of Recoding the Future is to create a shared understanding of Australia’s future-making system. Our simplified starting point – drawn from our first nine years working with Australia’s future-making system – is described in the diagram right.
RECODING THE FUTURE

THE WAY AUSTRALIA MAKES ITS FUTURE IS BROKEN.

Agreement is widespread among leaders, experts and the public that the way Australia makes its future is not working. But concrete, evidence-backed ideas to solve this fundamental challenge are few and far between. And no one is building consensus among those with insights and power to effect positive change. Despite a world-ranked public service, top-rated cities and decades of economic growth, as a nation we are failing to maximise and share our successes across current and future generations.

Even before the first recession in three decades, 14% of Australians were expecting their lives in three to four years to get worse, not better and almost two-thirds felt the next generation will be worse off than their parents. With trust in government at a record low, wage growth stagnating, and extinction rates increasing, can you blame them?

In response, we have created RECODING THE FUTURE, a solutions-focussed research program that deeply engages stakeholders over three years to collectively understand, and then work together to identify and implement solutions that improve, how Australia makes its future. Australia cannot achieve what the public wants for the future until we improve how Australia makes its future.

**SOURCES**


Pew Research Centre, (2018), *A Decade After the Financial Crisis, Economic Confidence Rebounds in Many Countries: But pessimism about the future lingers, as does a sense that economic conditions were better pre-crisis*

Scanlon Foundation, Australian Multicultural Foundation & Monash University, (2019), *Mapping social cohesion the Scanlon Foundation Surveys*

The Economist Intelligence Unit, (2019), *Global Liveability Index*

The World Bank, (2020), *GDP growth (annual %) Australia*

THE THREE LOOP APPROACH

Given the complexity of this issue, a continually evolving global and domestic context and the importance of not jumping to solutions too quickly, Recoding the Future takes an iterative approach of three ‘loops’ across three years. We call this the ‘Three Loop Approach’.

Each loop is centred on gathering input from experts, leaders, and the public through qualitative and quantitative research methods and closes with a workshop to collaboratively make sense of the inputs and feed into a final report published by the Australian Futures Project. The Three Loop Approach enables rigour, flexibility and adaptability.

THREE LOOP TIMELINE

<table>
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<th>JULY 2020</th>
<th>SEPTEMBER 2021</th>
<th>AUGUST 2022</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>01</strong> UNDERSTAND</td>
<td>Evaluate and refine loop 2</td>
<td>Evaluate and refine loop 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>02</strong> DIAGNOSE</td>
<td><strong>03</strong> IMPROVE</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Initial research and design</td>
<td>Decide next steps</td>
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</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>SYSTEM INPUT &amp; SYNTHESIS:</th>
<th>May 2021 – September 2021</th>
<th>December 2021 – May 2022</th>
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<td>July 2020 – January 2021</td>
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<tr>
<th>SENSE-MAKING WORKSHOP:</th>
<th>October 2021</th>
<th>June 2022</th>
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<tr>
<td>February 2021</td>
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<th>RELEASE FINAL REPORT:</th>
<th>November 2021</th>
<th>August 2022</th>
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<tr>
<td>April 2021</td>
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EMPOWERING POLITICIANS TO CREATE BETTER FUTURES

Politicians have a powerful influence on how Australia makes its future. And yet, Australians’ trust in politicians and democracy is at a record low, and many politicians themselves are deeply dissatisfied with the status quo. They know that governing in the 21st Century is more complex than ever, requiring them to lead differently. But they feel isolated, constrained, and powerless to effect change. And just when it’s needed most, a culture of professional development is lacking within politics. So, politics has spiralled into a zero-sum game about power and short-term wins. The Parliamentary Leaders Program helps parliamentarians uncover and deeply understand their values, so they better understand their power, not only as individuals in the system, but also as individuals who can improve the system.

THE PARLIAMENTARY LEADERS PROGRAM: TRANSFORMING SELF AND SYSTEM

The Parliamentary Leaders Program strengthens and grows parliamentarians’ capability to respond to the challenges of the 21st Century, honing their leadership style, expands their influence through the lens of values and purpose, and equips them with the knowledge, skills, and behaviours to transform themselves and the political system.

The program has three key goals:

– **Leadership and values**: Improved ability of parliamentarians to address the complex challenges of the day through the lens of values-based leadership

– **Stewardship, vision, and agency**: Improved understanding and confidence of parliamentarians to improve the political system itself

– **Trust in politics and democracy**: Improved public trust and confidence in politics and democracy through the intentional transformation of the political system driven by alumni and their colleagues

IMMERSIVE TWO-DAY COURSE WITH ONGOING SUPPORT

Each year, we offer immersive, interactive, non-partisan courses to Federal and State parliamentarians. These two-day courses introduce participants to the latest research on leadership and the power of systems thinking and values-based approaches. Through coursework, self-reflection, and cross-party engagement, participants are encouraged to reassess their values, legacy, and approach and act on powerful insights about their patterns, assumptions, and behaviour. The experience is grounded in personal stories and lessons from experienced facilitators and high-profile leaders such as David Gonski AC and Arthur Sinodinos AO.

The two-day courses are complemented by a full support structure, including:

– Group coaching (two hours per month, online)

– A consolidation and expansion workshop three months post-course (half-day, in-person)

– A place in our alumni program, offering coaching, workshops, and thought leadership as well as opportunities for changemaking politicians to transform the political system itself

OUR OBJECTIVES ARE THAT BY THE END OF 2023:

– 20% of all sitting parliamentarians are members of an active, mixed-party alumni community

– 20% of our alumni provide case studies demonstrating success in addressing a complex challenge by understanding and leading in integrity with their values

– Alumni have worked together to catalyse three significant changes to the political system that have improved Australians’ trust and confidence in politics and democracy
The Australian Futures Project gave me a meaningful insight into my perception of myself, my role, my relationship, and provided me a framework for expanding my capacity and the capacity of our parliament

– Liesl Tesch MP, NSW Labor

PROGRAM PARTNERS
The Parliamentary Leaders Program is delivered in partnership with Corporate Evolution, a world leader in values-based culture and leadership consulting.

It is patronised by the President’s of the Liberal Party of Australia and the Australian Labor Party.

It is supported by the Jibb Foundation and run in partnership with host universities including the University of New South Wales, the Australian National University and The University of Western Australia.

TESTIMONIALS
“The Parliamentary Leaders Program provides a unique approach to leadership in complex situations and takes a different approach to ‘traditional’ leadership programs. I have gained immensely from the program and look forward to making a much more effective contribution to Australia in the future”

– Colin de Grussa MLC, National Party of Western Australia

“Touching base with my colleagues on a regular basis across the country and across the chamber has given me calmer more focused outlook on what we do, in these challenging times this is a way of checking in on your own vulnerabilities and values. We are all just human.”

– Lee Evans MP, NSW Liberal Party

“The leadership program is essentially about power – not the power of the position we hold, but of us as people to bring about change. I wish a course like this had been available when I was elected to parliament. I am a more powerful and effective representative because of it.”

– Julie Owens MP, Australian Labor Party

“The Australian Futures Project gave me a meaningful insight into my perception of myself, my role, my relationship, and provided me a framework for expanding my capacity and the capacity of our parliament”

– Liesl Tesch MP, NSW Labor
WHY AUSTRALIAN FUTURES PROJECT

The Australian Futures Project has a strong history of engaging experts, leaders and the public through qualitative and quantitative research and collaborative sense-making to first understand a challenge and then create solutions. From 2011 to 2013, we interviewed 1,000 experts and leaders across Australia to guide the strategy for our first phase. This also led – with input from the major political parties – to the creation of the Parliamentary Leaders Program. Over the last nine years, we have engaged the public through polling and social research for our My Big Idea, National Values Assessment, and The Perfect Candidate initiatives. We have also facilitated detailed solutions-focussed programs on specific elements of how Australia makes its future, including one on trust with the University of New South Wales.

Recoding the Future and Program X draw on this experience and almost a decade of insights from our work on the country’s future-making system. We know there’s a gap in understanding and improving how Australia makes its future: Australians’ voice about the future is going unheard. We have an expert team and a specialist Research Committee overseeing our methodology and research. And, we have relevant experience from two national initiatives:

For the 2016 Federal Election, we launched My Big Idea to support Australians to create the Australia we want tomorrow, today. It was the first time in the world that a detailed assessment of community values (a statistically valid National Values Assessment) was conducted to inform a national ideas competition linked to action.

For the 2019 Federal Election, we created The Perfect Candidate to enable citizens to see how aligned each political party was to their own concerns and to shift the national conversation from short-term problems to long-term solutions. It was based on insights gathered from over 100,000 everyday Australians.

In addition to these research-based programs, our first Parliamentary Leaders Program ran in 2015 and we now count approximately 7% of all sitting parliamentarians as alumni including 10% of NSW and WA parliaments. 100% of participants say they would recommend the program to other parliamentarians and over 90% of all participants said the program improved their ability to govern, and made a small to large improvement in their capacity to try new things, power to drive change and understanding of their role and agency in changing or influencing the political system.
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HELP US
MAKE THE FUTURE AUSTRALIA WANTS

Maximising and sharing success across current and future generations in Australia is a big task that requires courage, resolve and humility. We need your support to achieve this ambitious mission.

$100,000 PA
– La Trobe University
– Jibb Foundation

$50,000 PA
– Gourlay Charitable Trust
– Bill Manos
– Reef Shark Foundation
– Matthew Stubbs

UP TO $50,000 PA
– Graeme Prior
– Salt Catalyst
– Schudmak Family Foundation
– Sunshine Foundation
– Wheen Family Foundation
– Emma and Angus White
– Whitehawk Advisors
– Wright Burt Foundation

MAJOR PRO BONO SUPPORTERS
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– Corporate Evolution
– Corrs Chambers Westgarth
– Steve Spurr at Spurcoe
– University of New South Wales

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We can’t make the future Australia wants on our own. Join our supporters as we take action to ensure Australia maximises and shares its success across current and future generations.

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