



# Australian Community Futures Planning

## Frequently Asked Questions about *Australia Together*

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# Frequently Asked Questions about *Australia Together*

## What is Australia Together?

- **Australia Together** is the nation's first integrated community futures plan.
- It is designed to increase our chances of arriving safely at our preferred future by 2050 or sooner.
- It is also the first national futures plan to be built **by** the community **for** the community.

## Why is *Australia Together* being built?

- In Australia, two out of our three levels of government do **not** steer their way to a better future for the nation by means of any agreed plan. State and federal governments are running a rudderless ship without a compass and little idea of whether we are headed for the rocks or not.
- More than this, **governments have set out no Vision of the nation we want to become** – the nation we wish to leave to our children.
- And **we the people have not told our governments where we want to go**. Nor have we told them anything about what we truly value, in common and in our diversity.
- **Australia Together** is being built to enable Australians to tell their leaders:
  - **what** we want to preserve about our current lives, what we want to improve or change entirely, and
  - **how** we prefer to travel towards that preferred future and the routes we wish to avoid.
- It is also being developed because **Australians are experiencing a loss of**:
  - vital rights to freedom of speech and association, freedom of the press and access to information,
  - equality of opportunity and a fair go for all,
  - environmental protections and amenity,
  - economic prosperity and equitable sharing of national wealth, and
  - confidence and trust in our governments.
- **Australia Together** is therefore being built to give a voice to Australians and help them imagine the nation they want to become, before it is too late.

For more information on why it is important to plan our own future in 2050, read **By 2050** by ACFP founder, Bronwyn Kelly.

**By 2050** – a guide to planning a better future as Australians together.



**By 2050** is available on [Amazon Kindle](#)

Extracts of **By 2050** are available on the ACFP website blog at <https://www.austcfp.com.au/blog>

## How is *Australia Together* being built?

- ***Australia Together*** is being built by inclusive community engagement over a period of years. **The planning process is cyclical and ongoing.**
- The community is invited to become involved in development of the first draft and encouraged to stay involved in all subsequent review and reporting processes.
- For the first version of ***Australia Together***, a draft Vision and draft Directions have been developed for ongoing community consideration.



## How does the cyclical planning process work for *Australia Together*?

- Planning for development and revision of ***Australia Together*** works in a cycle, aligned with elections for the federal parliament of Australia. This is the cycle of **National IP&R** (see below).
- **Early in the cycle**, subject to resources and funding:
  - consultation on aspects of the draft occurs in accordance with the **Community Engagement Program for *Australia Together***, available at <https://www.austcfp.com.au>, and
  - surveys of community support for aspects of the draft are undertaken.
- **Throughout the cycles** the following activities are also ongoing, subject to resources:
  - Development of **Targets** and **Indicators** for measuring the **wellbeing** of our **society, environment, economy** and **democracy**. This **Wellbeing Index** also measures the nation's movement towards or away from the **Vision** and **Directions**.
  - Development, assessment and assembly of **Strategies** that are consistent with the Vision and Directions.
- **Towards the end of each cycle**, before a federal election, an **End of Term Report** is produced. Based on performance against the Targets and Indicators of the plan, this report provides a factual assessment of whether during the federal parliament's term of office Australia moved closer to its preferred future or further away. The End of Term Report also provides insights for development of revisions of ***Australia Together*** in its subsequent cycle.

The cycle of IP&R allows Australians to drive their democracy in an organised, efficient and intelligent way, to maximise the chances of equitable progress towards the Vision of ***Australia Together*** and build national cohesion and resilience.



## Who is running the planning process for *Australia Together*?

- The process for development of and reporting on *Australia Together* is being run by **Australian Community Futures Planning (ACFP)**.
- ACFP was founded in March 2020 for the purpose of encouraging greater participation by Australians in planning their own future as a nation within a 21<sup>st</sup> century democracy.
- At ACFP we are using a new community engagement and planning framework called **National Integrated Planning & Reporting** or **National IP&R** to help Australians create *Australia Together*.

### Australian Community Futures Planning



ACFP is an independent, not-for-profit centre of excellence in national community futures planning, providing an organising framework that can enable any and all Australians to increase the chances of improving our entire quality of life:

- our **society**,
- our **environment**,
- our **economy**, and
- our **governance**.

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## What is the structure of *Australia Together*?

*Australia Together* integrates our **Strategies** for a better quality of life by 2050 and makes sure they will fit with the **Directions** we would prefer to take to reach our **Vision**.

The plan is structured along what is known as the “quadruple bottom line” or QBL. This simply means that it covers our aspirations for a better:

- *Society,*
- *Environment,*
- *Economy, and*
- *Governance.*



## In *Australia Together*, who decides what's in the plan?

- Australians do, as long as they choose to participate together.
- ACFP gathers information on the preferences of Australians for things included in the Vision, Directions, Targets and Strategies of *Australia Together*.
- This information is gathered through community engagement and via review of surveys and other relevant research. Sources of data are fully disclosed.
- As and when resources permit, surveys of Australians will be undertaken to verify support for the Vision and Directions of the plan. If and when this reveals a need for changes, then those changes will be made transparently with reasons given.

## How are decisions made about inclusions in the plan?

- *Australia Together* is developed by a process of **National Integrated Planning & Reporting**. This is a community driven – bottom-up – planning process where the intention is that a community ownership of *Australia Together* can grow over time and we can reach a high degree of confidence that the plan does indeed present the best possible chance of delivering the future we want in all our diversity.
- Comments on the Vision and Directions and suggestions for Targets and Strategies that could be included in the plan can be made by any Australian.
- However, there is a process for determining whether a suggested Target or Strategy can be included. This is Integrated Planning and, as such, plans cannot include Strategies which will disable each other or undermine the Vision or Directions.
- Each time a suggestion is made it must therefore be accompanied by a written case setting out whether and how the suggestion will contribute positively to particular Directions and to the Vision and will do so without unduly disabling other parts of the plan. Cases made to support the inclusion of a Target or Strategy may or may not be published on the ACFP website.
- In the start-up phase of Australian Community Futures Planning, alliances will be sought with qualified agencies and individuals to establish an assessment committee for review of suggestions for inclusion in the plan and report back to the community. A summary of reasons for the assessment committee's decisions will be published, regardless of whether the suggestion is supported or rejected.
- There is no limit on suggestions. Ultimately, the Vision and Directions themselves constitute what determines whether a Target or Strategy should be included. Because the Vision and Directions are to be quality assured by ongoing community engagement or surveys and other research, they form the most effective and detached yardstick for assessing the appropriateness of Strategies and Targets.
- Participation in **National IP&R** for *Australia Together* must be done in the spirit of fairness and inclusiveness, using an evidence-based approach wherever possible, listening to Australians about all their aspirations and concerns, and exercising judgement about Strategies at all times in good faith. **For more information on National IP&R visit <https://www.austcfp.com.au/faq>**

Australians can work together to imagine their future anew.  
Ultimately, their preferred Vision and Directions determine which  
Targets and Strategies should be included in  
*Australia Together.*

## What if there is disagreement about what is in the plan?

- As in any diverse society there will be disagreement about the best plan for Australia. But diversity of opinions is considered to be a strength, not a problem.
- ACFP’s experience is that disagreement diminishes when people are:
  - thinking about the long term and their children, and
  - confident of the independence of the process from political or corporate undue influence.
- ACFP’s methodology is to reconcile disagreement through time by catering to diversity.
- National IP&R assumes we will succeed **because** of diversity, not despite it.
- It is not expected that 100% of Australians will agree with the Vision and Directions of **Australia Together**. However, it is intended that all Australians should be able to see they are not excluded from the benefits of the plan.
- ACFP provides full and complete access to the results of community engagement and surveys to provide assurance for Australians that their future can be catered for and secured as far as possible in **Australia Together**.



## Where did the draft Vision for Australia Together come from?

- In her book, **By 2050**, the founder of ACFP Bronwyn Kelly conducted wide ranging research on the aspirations of Australians as they have been expressed in various visioning and planning exercises conducted over the decade to 2020. These include:
  - Visions developed by local councils across Australia in consultation with their communities;
  - Visions (or approximations of visions) developed by some state governments for the future of their states;
  - A vision for “Australia reMADE”, developed via a wide-ranging community engagement program in 2017 by a group of civil society and environmental organisations in association with the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples;
  - A vision of the aspirations of Australians developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in association with its Measures of Australia’s Progress program in 2013; and
  - An “outlook vision” developed by member organisations of the Australian National Outlook 2019 (National Australia Bank, business leaders, universities, non-profits and the CSIRO).
- The Vision for **Australia Together** takes elements of all these and other visions and puts them together.



\*Note that the above publications are some of the sources of the Vision. These organisations do not necessarily endorse the Vision, nor have they been asked to endorse it.

## Can our governments be compelled by *Australia Together*?

- No. ***Australia Together*** has no statutory weight.
- But as the plan gathers strength and support, governments would be increasingly unwise to ignore it.
- ***Australia Together*** will eventually provide an overarching Vision that is compelling for the vast majority of Australians and a plan that provides the best chance of making that Vision a reality by 2050. It may take a decade or more, but eventually the plan will become the most credible and efficient path to our preferred future.

## Can Australians be compelled by *Australia Together*?

- Australian Community Futures Planning hopes that Australians will find ***Australia Together*** compelling. But it is not compulsory. It binds neither the government nor Australians at large.
- Because the plan cannot be imposed on Australians and in no way diminishes their democratic rights and personal freedoms, it cannot unduly constrain any individuals and does not diminish their right to secure their future as individuals in ways that may be inconsistent with the plan.
- Despite this, ACFP is confident that because of the transparent methodology of development and monitoring of the plan that it is likely to significantly enhance the capacity of all Australians to realise their preferred diverse futures.
- Because ***Australia Together*** is not a binding plan, its real strength lies not in whether it will be compulsory but in how it gives us an opportunity we have never yet had to contribute our ingenuity and inspiration and tell our leaders what we want to become as a nation. The planning process seeks to capitalise on the generosity of diverse, educated Australians and their willingness to shape a plan which adds up to more than the sum of its parts and produces social, economic and environmental results that are much greater than they would be if we did not pool our efforts.

## If the plan cannot compel a government, why bother to participate?

- Australia's political system severely and unnecessarily limits the influence Australians can have over their future. It reduces them to relying on the luck that good and ethical leadership will be forthcoming from those we elect and that they will govern for all. In this arrangement, short sighted political agendas always take precedence over our longer term common and diverse interests. The result is that politics divides us instead of uniting us, the most vulnerable are excluded entirely and we move further away from a better future, causing ourselves significant unnecessary expense in the process.
- In contrast, a transparent integrated national plan can substantially increase the influence Australians have over their future and save them from wasting money. It does so by injecting a simple extra step into the sequence we use to organise our own governance. As at 2020, that sequence is set such that we elect a government and then trust that they will plan and safeguard our present and future interests. In the new sequence, we build a plan before we vote. The coherent plans we, the people, develop for our own future – together in all our diversity – take precedence over the divergent, short-sighted platforms of political parties. In this re-arrangement, politics matters less and less, and a far more equitable distribution of power in our democracy is progressively built.
- We are bothering to participate because ***Australia Together*** will increase the power of Australians over their own future.

## How does *Australia Together* cater for diversity?

- ***Australia Together*** caters for diversity by bringing us together and creating an orderly space where **both** our diverse and common aspirations can coexist.
- It assumes from the beginning that a plan which accommodates us in all our diversity is the strongest of all plans because it accesses the wealth of our diverse and collective intelligences.
- In short, it assumes a plan cannot succeed unless it caters to diversity – unless it is fully inclusive.
- A vital part of a community futures plan is that diverse people and communities should be able to find a place for themselves in the Australia that is envisaged in it. They should be able to see **their** future reflected in the plan **but not to the exclusion of someone else's**. They should be able to see what they have in common with others but also that their diversity will not be suppressed or their particular cultural interest or social standing relegated or excluded. Otherwise the plan will not succeed.
- ***Australia Together***, if well-constructed, can deliver a vastly better future for all Australians than the one we might reasonably expect if we developed a plan that excluded some groups.
- In ***Australia Together*** our diversity is not something to be lost, it is to be capitalised on.



### By 2050

#### Epilogue

*What can bring us together – and into far happier circumstances – is a particular type of plan: a plan where each of us can see ourselves and through which our particular aspirations will have a better chance of being realised; a plan where we can see that we have not been excluded or forsaken, or asked to abnegate ourselves; a plan where we are not pitted against each other and against our own children; and a plan whereby we can achieve our own aspirations without needing to lessen someone else's. Indeed, we work on the assumption that we can only realise our aspirations **because** of the diverse aspirations of others.*

## How can I participate in development of *Australia Together*?

- Anyone can become involved by registering interest with Australian Community Futures Planning at <https://www.austcfp.com.au/>

## Is there a community engagement plan for *Australia Together*?

- Yes.
- Australian Community Futures Planning will be in start-up mode between 2020 and 2022. This means that community engagement activities are subject to availability of resources. However, a Community Engagement Program has been developed based on best practice approaches in IP&R. As at 2020, this does not include firm commitments regarding the timing of engagement due to lack of funding in ACFP's start-up phase.
- The **Community Engagement Program for *Australia Together*** is accessible at <https://www.austcfp.com.au/become-involved>