Australian Community Futures Planning

Newsletter No. 7

We have it in our power to create the world anew

ACFP was set up in March 2020.

Our purpose is to give Australians an efficient means by which they can increase their shares of power and influence in their democracy, take more control of their future, and build the sort of country they want to leave to future generations.

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March 2022
What's been happening at ACFP?

- **We have released Issue No. 5 of the starting draft of** *Australia Together*
- **Issue No. 5 includes 33 new Targets and Strategies, bringing the total number to 265.**
- **We have released Australia's first End of Term Report on the state of the nation:** *The State of Australia 2022*
- **Articles by ACFP's Founder continued to appear in the media.**

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Are we making our Vision for a better Australia a reality?

Find out in ACFP's new report:

The State of Australia 2022

ACFP launches Australia's first ever comprehensive report on the state of the nation

Australian Community Futures Planning has released a major report on Australia's wellbeing, security and preparedness for the future at the end of the term of office of the 46th parliament of Australia.

Click here to download The State of Australia 2022

The State of Australia 2022

The report provides detailed results on our performance as a nation over the life of the 46th parliament and over the last two decades in making a better Australia. It is a comprehensive review of the effectiveness of the policies supported by governments and parliaments over that time.

This evidence-based report shows clearly that the dominant policies of the last ten to twenty years have let Australians down badly.

On release of the report, ACFP's Founder, Dr Bronwyn Kelly, said that **throughout the century, in a wide variety of surveys, research programs and community engagement forums, Australians have been shouting out quite clearly and consistently about the sort of nation they want to build. This report shows we are not building it. We are moving away from it.**

The report presents a comprehensive picture of what Australians have said they would prefer for the future and a comprehensive picture of the reality in 2022. "Prevailing policies are dragging us to a destination that is the polar opposite of everything we want for ourselves and our kids," said Dr Kelly.

The State of Australia 2022 reports on the results of performance against more than 260 indicators of our wellbeing as a nation. ACFP has tracked these results by building the ***Australia Together* National Wellbeing Index**. This is the nation's first comprehensive index of our wellbeing, security, preparedness for the future, social cohesion, economic performance, environmental custodianship, international standing and democratic strength. **It is an index of our strategic capability to build the particular type of better Australia we have said we want – one that can thrive in a 21st century globalised world.**

The Index is a composite of indicators used and reported on by the many institutions that conduct surveys and research on Australia, augmented by a variety of other indicators of performance on strategies and policies necessary to build the sort of future we want. **Uniquely, it looks forward as well as backward.**

"This is the first time that a full suite of such wide-ranging indicators and evidence has been put in one place," said Dr Kelly. "With the aid of the *Australia Together* National Wellbeing Index, Australians will now easily be able to see how well their parliaments and governments have actually been performing on delivering the things that matter most to Australians and where we want those we elect to do better. **It puts politicians on notice and it helps the people drive the agenda.**"

While the report is a confronting one, it is also a timely and essential wake-up call, packed full of factual information vital to Australians on their strengths and weaknesses as a nation. **On the positive side, the evidence is that there are strengths we can capitalise on. If we use those strengths in an organised and well planned manner, we have the capacity to reverse our recent sorry performance in the next five to ten years.**

Insights from the End of Term Report on *The State of Australia 2022*

The State of Australia 2022 provides substantial evidence and facts to help Australians answer the question:

Are we progressing towards a better Australia?

The answer is that we are *not* progressing towards a better Australia but that we have the will and capacity to reverse the situation, *if* we organise our democracy so that it runs more efficiently, effectively and equitably than it does now.

The report monitors whether we are moving as a nation towards the **Vision for *Australia Together*** and in accordance with the **safe Directions** of travel towards that Vision. It looks at our direction of travel over the short term (the 46th parliament) and the longer term (the last ten to twenty years) where data are available. Taking in the results on the direction of movement in relation to the 265 indicators in the Index:

The State of Australia 2022

Are we progressing towards a better Australia?

If Australians agree that the draft **Vision for *Australia Together*** describes the better Australia we might aspire to for ourselves and future generations, the answer to the above question in 2022 must be

No, we are not progressing towards a better Australia, we are travelling away from that preferred destination.

But we do have the means of reversing our current course of travel and we have full capacity to switch to safer paths – paths by which we the people can make the **Vision for *Australia Together*** a reality, providing a place of wellbeing and security for everyone.

- On balance, **we have moved *away* from rather than towards 15 of the 17 elements of the Vision for *Australia Together*. Progress on the remaining two Vision elements has been stagnant**.
- In relation to the 42 Directions monitored, on balance:
  - **In only 2 cases have we moved in the safe direction of travel.**
  - In 4 cases we have moved in the safe direction but too slowly.
  - In 4 cases, evidence is mixed and progress is stagnant.
  - **In 32 cases we have moved contrary to the safe Direction of travel.**

The balance of movement away from the Vision has been heavily tilted towards the negative. And the data strongly indicate that the nation has been drifting solidly that way for more than a decade.

- **During the 46th parliament, negative performance (travelling contrary to the preferred safe Directions) outweighed positive performance by a factor of 255%.**
  - In all quadrants, negative performance outweighed positive performance.
  - The **worst performance** by far was in the **Environment** quadrant, although only a relatively small number of Indicators were monitored in that quadrant.
  - The **second worst performance** was in the **Economy** quadrant, where a relatively large number of indicators were monitored and negative performance outweighed positive performance by a factor of 667%.
- **During the longer term, negative performance (travelling contrary to the preferred Direction) outweighed positive performance by a factor of 516%.**
  - In all quadrants, negative performance significantly outweighed positive performance.
  - The **worst performance** by far was in the **Economy** quadrant, where a relatively large number of indicators were monitored and **negative performance outweighed positive performance by a factor of an astonishing 5400%**. The only positive factor in progress in Australia's economy has related to the predisposition of Australians towards the need to re-build equality and fairness.
  - The **second worst performance** was in the **Environment** quadrant, although only a relatively small number of Indicators were monitored in that quadrant.

Key the policies that clearly did not take us where we want to go include:

Neoliberalism

- We have witnessed the catastrophic failure of neoliberalism.

Inequality

- We have witnessed the growth of inequality and have recognised it as a cause of misery. But we are rejecting inequality as a feature of our future.

Imposed poverty, exclusions from the welfare system, and structural settings preventing full employment

- We have witnessed consignment of millions of Australians to deep poverty for lengthy periods and unnecessary, extended unemployment.

Structured discrimination against women and LGBTIQ+

- We have witnessed inaction on gender equality, including a policy vacuum that is stopping women and LGBTIQ+ from participating in the economy as fully as they might and consigning many to domestic abuse.

Dismantling of public education

- We have witnessed large scale attacks on our education system, potentially crippling our productivity and thereby setting the economy on a path of decline. This runs absolutely counter to the Vision for *Australia Together*.

Disregard of the environment and biodiversity

- We have witnessed the decimation of much of our natural environment and biodiversity. Stewardship of ecology has not been a priority policy.

Climate policy intransigence and support of fossil fuels

- We have witnessed the failure of our policies on climate change. It has blighted our land, our lives and livelihoods, and destroyed our reputation as a decent international citizen.

Disregard of accountability and tolerance of corruption

- We have witnessed a descent into state corruption particularly, but not solely, at the federal level of government.

Hawkish foreign policy

- We have witnessed the rise of a pugnacious thirst for war, which Australians reject and for which we are entirely ill-prepared.

Secrecy and sacrifice of human rights

- We are witnessing the rise of the secret state and the demise of our human rights.

Disregard of First Nations

- We have witnessed a stinging refusal of a gracious and respectful request from First Nations to walk with them "in a movement of the Australian people for a better future".

What have we done that has taken us towards a better Australia?

To the extent that we have been able to withstand government cutbacks in spending and services we have insisted on maintenance of our health care system and the benefit is clear (although there have been setbacks).

Some small progress has been made in relation to women's and LGBTIQ+ rights, although it has not yet resulted in measured improvements on vital indicators such as equal pay and domestic violence. But women have found their voice. New independent voices are rising as well in the *Voices Of* movement.

The most joyous and harmonious rise of voices has emerged from First Nations peoples. Australians are rising to acknowledge our Indigenous heart.

There is also evidence of a willingness to affirm our connection to each other and to this land, and in the process make Australia anew. The evidence indicates that there is a desire to make a new start.

Otherwise, the most promising and hopeful set of results is present in:

- the apparent preparedness of Australians to come together to re-build after the pandemic;
- the recognition that a fully capable, energetic and competitive public sector is essential to our health, wellbeing and future prosperity – not a dead weight;
- our rejection of growing inequality; and
- an obvious readiness to do everything necessary to prevent climate change and seize the positive economic opportunities that spill out from that for all of us.

What's new in Targets and Strategies for *Australia Together*?

ACFP has now launched Issue No. 5 of ***Australia Together***. It contains another 33 Targets and Strategies to help make the Vision a reality by 2050 or sooner, bringing the total to 265. New Strategies include:

New Targets and Strategies in Issue No. 5 of *Australia Together* are designed to address serious problems in preparedness for natural disasters, women's safety and equity, defence capability, loss of rights and freedoms, unethical news media, incompetence in politicians, reconciliation with First Nations and protection of democracy through equitable taxpayer funding of elections.

- Strategies for **protection of the Great Barrier Reef** – **Env15.01** and **Env15.01.01**;
- Strategies for **improvement in our system of governance** including:
  - compulsory and satisfactory completion of training in ethics and proof of competency in permissible voting practice for parliamentarians – **Gov06.03.01**, and
  - electoral funding reform and protection of democracy through introduction of equitable taxpayer funding for elections – **Gov08.02.02**;
- a Strategy for **reform of ethics and regulation in news media** – **Gov10.01.01**;
- a Strategy to establish an **Australian Bill of Rights Commission** – **Gov03.01.01**;
- Strategies for **Indigenous rights and reconciliation** including:
  - establishment of a Makarrata Commission – **Soc02.01.01**, and
  - priority reforms for closing the gap – **Soc02.15**;
- Strategies for **equity of opportunity** including:
  - legislation of federal budget floor expenditures levels on tertiary education – **Soc05.01.02**, and
  - equitable access to pre-school education – **Soc05.03.01**;
- Strategies for **advancement of women and LGBTIQ+** including:
  - Women's National Integrated Reform Program for Safety, Respect and Equity – **Soc08.02**,
  - National Women's Council for oversight of the Women's National Integrated Reform Program for Safety, Respect and Equity – **Soc08.02.01**, and
  - Workplace safety for women and LGBTIQ+ – **Soc08.03**;
- Strategies for **defence and national resilience** including:
  - a Green Paper and community engagement to define Australia's Strategic Interests in Territorial Sovereign Defence – **Gov12.04.01**,
  - establishment of an annual Statement of Adherence to and Performance on the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework – **Soc16.02**, and
  - establishment of a National Community Council for Risk Reduction Review – **Soc16.02.01**.

Click here to browse Issue No. 5 of the starting draft of

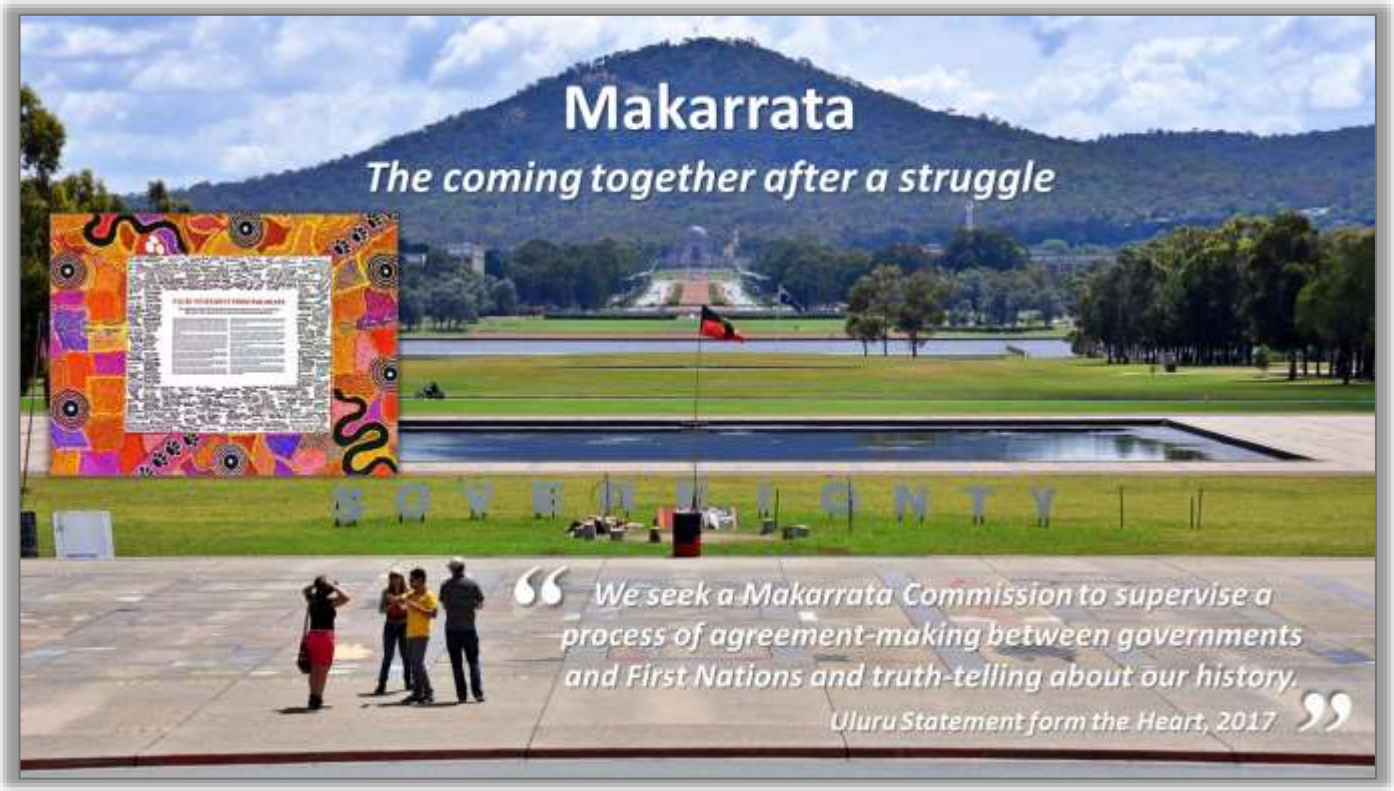
A variety of Targets were also added to the plan covering improvements needed in:

- inequality and underutilisation of the labour force (**Econ02.02.01** and **Econ03.09**);
- satisfaction with our system of government, our ability to have a say and cohesion in our democracy (**Gov01.02.01**, **Gov01.03.02** and **Gov01.03.03**);
- trust in government and institutions and each other (**Gov05.01.03**, **Gov09.01.01** and **Soc01.07.01**);
- Australians' preferences for peace versus war and readiness for an independent defence capability versus dependence on the US alliance (**Gov12.01.01** and **Gov12.01.02**);
- life satisfaction and an inclusive society (**Soc03.02**, **Soc04.06.03** and **Soc04.06.03**);
- freedom from discrimination on religious grounds (**Soc07.02**); and
- trust in the police and justice system (**Soc14.03** and **Soc15.02**).

ACFP media articles

This year's Australia Day saw publication of an article by Bronwyn Kelly calling for an Indigenous Voice to parliament. Click here or on the picture to read the article.

ACFP has joined in the growing chorus of calls for **a full and respectful response to the Uluru Statement from the Heart**. Our research for *The State of Australia 2022* has revealed evidence of:

- a willingness by a growing number of Australians to affirm the sovereignty of First Nations,
- acknowledgement that their sovereignty has never been ceded, and
- increased concurrence with the central belief of the Uluru Statement that "with substantive constitutional change and structural reform, this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood."

The evidence in *The State of Australia 2022* indicates that there is a desire to make a new start through constitutional change and truth-telling. Non-Indigenous Australians are discovering that they have the good fortune of living alongside the ancient wisdom of the oldest surviving civilisation in the world. They are discovering how much they have in common in love of this land. ACFP hopes that Strategies within ***Australia Together*** will assist First Nations to realise, in full, the aspirations of the Uluru Statement from the Heart.