

Bradfield Speaks: Voices of Bradfield Listening Survey

Dr Samantha Graham and Thomas Gates

28 April 2022

**Voices of
Bradfield**

Be Heard, Be Represented

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to their Elders past and future and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

Thank you to all those residents of Bradfield who took the time to complete this survey. It is you whose voice we wanted to hear and it has come through loud and clear, calling for a different future than the one our current trajectory predicts.

Thank you also to all the members and supporters of Voices of Bradfield for backing this endeavour. It started out as just an idea, albeit one whose time had clearly come and one that was fuelled by a huge mix of emotions including distress, despair, anger, outrage and commitment. Each of the founding members knew we could no longer endure any more of the status quo and we had to step up. Particular thanks to Gillian King for her huge contribution to, and expertise in this survey, on top of her dedication to creating change no matter her own circumstances. It is entirely appropriate that the publication of this document falls on the 1st anniversary of the incorporation of Voices of Bradfield. Thank you to Rob, Carolyn, Stuart, Gillian, Kate, Carey and Claire for the many hours you've contributed to getting us to this point. It's been one hell of a year.



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Executive Summary

It is clear from this detailed research into the values and wishes of over 600 Bradfield residents over a 7 month period (June 2021 to January 2022), that we are looking for change. Residents of the safe Liberal seat on Sydney's North Shore were invited by community group, Voices of Bradfield, to reflect. And reflect they did. In the countless hours, days and weeks through the COVID-19 lockdowns and beyond, the voices of Bradfield residents were listened to, and these voices emphatically stated that they are urgently looking for change in the way politics is being done in Australia.

The key findings to emerge from the survey show:

- Bradfield residents' top concerns are: inadequate climate policy (77% of respondents), lack of integrity (44%), poor management of the COVID-19 pandemic (23%), and inequality in society (20%).
- More than 88% of respondents (including a majority of Liberal voters) desire stronger action on each of these issues, as well as more progress towards advocating for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament, restoring university funding, and recognizing the importance of the arts industry.
- More than 79% of respondents felt that their views and beliefs are not being listened to or represented by the incumbent Liberal MP for Bradfield across a broad range of issues.
- 89% of respondents were seriously concerned about "pork barrelling" (including 71% of Liberal voters)

These and other findings from the survey informed the criteria that Voices of Bradfield considered essential when seeking a suitable candidate to run as the community-backed Independent for Bradfield in the 2022 Federal Election. The important attributes for any potential candidate included:

- High-level, professional experience in climate policy and renewables
- A strong moral compass to address various forms of inequality
- A commitment to public funding of education and the restoration of the arts sector

Voices of Bradfield's chosen candidate, Nicolette Boele (pronounced 'Bulla') ticked every one of these boxes. Since the announcement of her candidacy, the survey results have contributed to the development of her policies and positions. When one is listening to the electorate, as Nicolette has been doing, policies should necessarily evolve based on science and new research, in collaboration with the views and expectations of the people of Bradfield. Nicolette intends to continue drawing on Voices of Bradfield community surveys to inform her decision-making in parliament should she be elected on May 21, 2022.

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Listening as the community speaks

“I believe we can change the world if we start listening to one another again. Simple, honest, human conversation.”

Margaret J. Wheatley, *Turning to One Another*.

“I’m not very political but I have a pretty strong compass of what’s right and wrong. And things are not right.”

Holly G, Corporate Consultant and Mother of 3

“I’ve voted Liberal my whole life. But my party’s moved to the right and they no longer reflect my values.”

David P, Lifetime Liberal voter, retired banker.

Background

About Voices of Bradfield

Voices of Bradfield was formally established as an Incorporated Association on April 28, 2021, with the objective of supporting a candidate for the Federal House of Representatives in the electorate of Bradfield who:

- a) is not a member of the Australian Labor Party, the Liberal Party, the Greens, or any other federally constituted political party;
- b) accepts the reality and science of climate change and recognises the need for urgent action;
- c) believes in the values of democracy, transparency, diversity and integrity; and
- d) will represent Bradfield with honesty, courage and respect for all.

Source: Voices of Bradfield Inc Constitution (2021) – subclause 2(2)

Survey Rationale

With the formal structure and mission of Voices of Bradfield established, the Executive Committee commenced hosting Kitchen Table Conversations (KTCs), a community-engagement process based on the Indi-inspired model initiated by Cathy McGowan. The process provides residents with an opportunity to meet with each other in a relaxed and casual setting, pause, think about the direction they see the country and their electorate moving, and offer their considered opinions, thoughts and desires on what they would like to see being done differently.

After holding several successful KTCs in the first half of 2021, we decided to supplement these face-to-face gatherings with an online survey. This decision was made:

- to expedite the process of hearing from the community, as arranging and convening KTCs across the electorate is time and labour-intensive;
- to give an opportunity for residents who were unlikely to attend such an event in a 'stranger's' home to also have their voice heard;
- because the unfolding COVID-19 Delta outbreak in Sydney made it unfeasible to continue to hold KTCs face-to-face.

The survey was designed to be relatively brief (completed in 8-10 minutes) but still comprehensive enough to allow residents of Bradfield to express their views and concerns regarding the current direction of Australian politics. It employed a series of open- and closed-ended questions focused primarily on topics identified as important issues by participants of earlier KTCs.

The survey was launched online in July 2021 and was made available for the next 7 months. It was also made open to 'Voices of' groups in the neighbouring electorates of Bennelong and Berowra who wanted to survey their residents but were not as well established or resourced to conduct their own surveys at the time. However, this report focuses solely on survey findings from Bradfield residents.

Objectives

The survey's main objectives were to:

- Clearly outline the main political issues that were causing concern to Bradfield's residents. For example, what was more important to us? Climate inaction risk, economic policy, misogyny in our highest offices, or something else?
- Gauge the electorate's perceptions of the incumbent Federal Government and its handling of major issues identified by KTC participants
- Establish a knowledge platform from which Voices of Bradfield could decide its next steps

“There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.”

Margaret J. Wheatley

How did we intend to use the results?

The survey results have already informed the broader strategic direction of Voices of Bradfield insofar as they reinforced the Executive Committee's beliefs that:

- On the whole, the people of Bradfield are very dissatisfied with their current representation in federal politics, and that
- An Independent candidate represents the best model for enacting meaningful reform to address their concerns.

Preliminary survey findings were used as a basis for guiding Voices of Bradfield's candidate search to identify a suitably qualified representative aligned with the values of the community to stand as an Independent for Bradfield in the 2022 Federal election. The search commenced on 21 September 2021 and concluded on 30 January 2022 with the announcement and launch of Nicolette Boele's candidacy. Since then, the survey results have contributed to the development of her policies and positions.

Moving forward, Voices of Bradfield intend to use the information gained from the survey (and those that will be conducted in future) to form a 'return conduit' between residents who completed the survey, back to the chosen Independent candidate and the wider community. In this iterative process – listen, collate, feed back, repeat – we are closing a loop in the democratic process that is otherwise frequently neglected. This is particularly the case in safe seats where the incumbent MP has a very comfortable margin, as in Bradfield, where the sitting member received 61% of first preference votes in 2019. By closing the loop in this way, Voices of Bradfield contributes to the restoration of trust in the political process, strengthening Australia's democracy and making the machinations of political parties more visible to 'ordinary' people, those of us who want to be truly represented in decisions that will affect our lives and those of our children.

“It's such a safe seat, there's no point voting. The Liberals will always win by a mile so why bother even trying for change.”

TA, Bradfield Resident, May 2021

Survey Methods

Survey Format

The survey was created via the Survey Monkey platform and a copy of the survey questions and response options can be found in Appendix 1. In total, there were 24 individual items spread across 7 questions asking respondents about their main concerns regarding the direction Australia is heading as well as their opinions regarding a number of issues identified by earlier KTC participants.

The following demographic information was also collected:

- Age (aggregated into four age groups – 18-34, 35-54, 55-64, and 65+)
- Gender
- Highest level of education (also aggregated into four groups – high school, trade/certificate/diploma, undergraduate/Bachelor's degree, and post-graduate degree)
- Postcode (used as the basis for confirming that the respondent lived in the Bradfield electorate)

Respondents were also asked to identify which political party they had tended to vote for most often in past elections (Liberal, Labor, Greens, or Independent/other minor party). An additional option (“it varies”) was provided to allow those who identify as “swinging” voters (those who tend to vote in line with particular issues rather than parties) to be classified as a separate group.

Target Population

The target population was residents of the Bradfield electorate.

Sampling Methods

Opt-in online convenience sample.

The survey was made available between July 7th 2021 and January 31st 2022. A weblink to the survey was made available to interested respondents through a variety of means, including via the Voices of Bradfield and Listening Project websites, Voices of Bradfield periodic newsletters, letterbox flyers, and through word of mouth at meet-and-greet and other social events.

In other words, respondents self-selected to participate, and in many cases they were recommended to the survey by those who had already completed it. This is an important point to mention, as the fact we have not used a probabilistic sampling method (where respondents are randomly selected to participate and each eligible voter in the electorate has an equal or at least a known probability of being selected) potentially introduces selection biases that could mean the sample as a whole is not entirely representative of the broader electorate. It also makes it difficult to calculate a ‘margin of error’ to quantify the level of confidence we can have in the accuracy of each datapoint.

The use of a convenience sample was unavoidable given that conducting the survey according to the gold-standard (probabilistic) methodology would require considerable human and financial resources that was well beyond the budget of Voices of Bradfield.

We note this limitation to be as transparent as possible regarding the potential impacts of sampling and selection biases on the representativeness of the survey findings. Nonetheless, we believe our sampling methods are adequate for the purposes of providing a 'temperature check' of the electorate, particularly if the survey results fall in line with other surveys of the electorate conducted around the same time.

Final Sample

As of 31st January 2022, a total of 957 respondents had completed the survey. 339 respondents were excluded through two stages of data cleaning, resulting in a final sample size of 618 respondents (Figure 1).

Of note, the vast majority of excluded respondents were identified (according to their postcode) as residing in the Bennelong electorate. This reflects that Voices of Bennelong were invited to use the survey within their electorate to help guide their decision-making.

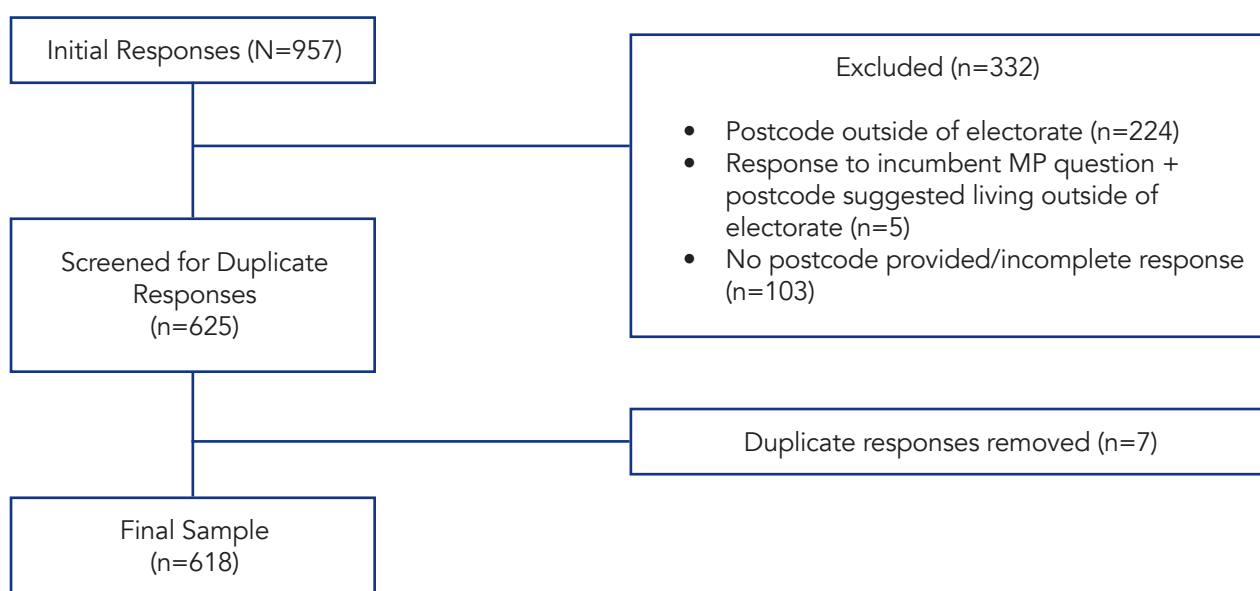


Figure 1. Data cleaning. Respondents were considered to be Bradfield residents if they lived in one of the following postcodes: 2067, 2069-2077. Responses were considered to be likely duplicates if 2 or more records contained identical IP addresses, age, gender, education, and voting history categories. In these instances, the earlier completed record was retained and the later completed record was excluded.

Data Analysis Strategy

The general analytic strategy was as follows:

- 1) We broadly assessed how representative the survey respondents were of the Bradfield electorate by comparing their demographic characteristics against the most recent available ABS Census data for Bradfield (from 2016)¹ and their voting histories against the 2019 election results for Bradfield².
- 2) Free-text responses to Q1 and Q2 (what are your 3 biggest concerns about Australia at the moment?) were coded into one of 20 pre-defined categories representing different issues (e.g., climate policy, economy/cost of living). Responses that did not fit neatly into any of these categories were coded as 'other'. A full list and description of the categories is provided in Appendix 2.

For each issue, the number of respondents endorsing it as one of their top 3 concerns was expressed as a percentage out of the total number of respondents (N=618). Percentages were also calculated to quantify the number of respondents endorsing each issue within (i) each voting group (NB. Those who declined to identify their voting history were excluded from these calculations, leaving N=583 respondents), (ii) age band, (iv) gender, and (v) education group.

- 3) For the remaining items across Q3-Q7, the number of respondents selecting each of the 5 response options was expressed as a percentage of the total number of respondents, as well as the percentages of each voting group, age band, gender, and education group selecting each response option.

For Q5 only (which asked respondents to rate their satisfaction with the level of representation by the incumbent MP on various issues), data from those respondents who failed to correctly identify him by name in Q4 were excluded.

Note that all percentages for each response option have been rounded up to the nearest integer. Therefore the total may not always add up exactly to 100%.

¹ ABS. (2016). 2016 Census QuickStats – Bradfield. Retrieved from https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/CED106

² AEC. (2019). Tally Room – Bradfield, NSW. Retrieved from <https://results.aec.gov.au/24310/Website/HouseDivisionPage-24310-108.htm>

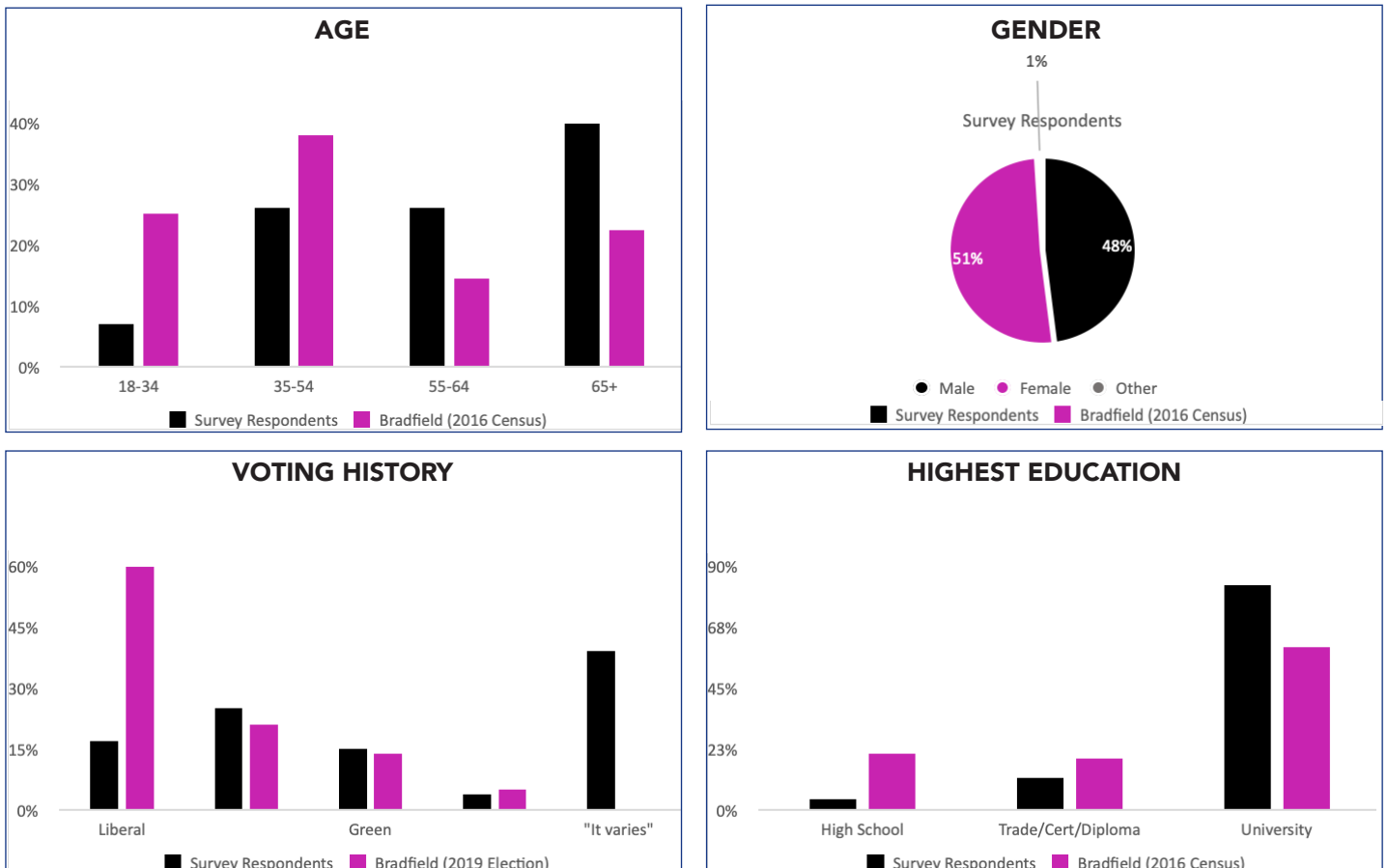
Survey Results

Sample Demographics and Voting History

Figure 2 indicates that the gender breakdown of the survey respondents was very similar to the overall Bradfield electorate, with nearly equal numbers of men and women participating. However, the respondents' demographic composition and voting history otherwise differed from the broader electorate in several ways:

- **Age:** 18-34 year olds (7% of respondents) were significantly under-represented in the sample relative to the broader electorate (25%), as were 35-54 year olds to a lesser extent (26% vs. 38%). On the other hand, 55-64 (26% vs. 15%) and 65+ age groups (40% vs. 22%) were over-represented.
- **Education:** a clear majority of survey respondents (80%) were university-educated. While Bradfield is one of the most educated electorates in the country (60% university educated), this sub-group was still over-represented in the survey. Respondents with high school-level education (4%) were particularly under-represented relative to their prevalence in the Bradfield electorate (21%).
- **Voting history:** "swinging" voters (i.e., 'it varies') were the largest voting group represented in the survey, comprising 39% of respondents. Liberal voters (17%) were significantly under-represented relative to the 2019 election results (61%). On the other hand, the proportion of respondents that normally voted for Labor (25%), the Greens (15%), and Independents/minor parties (4%) was generally in keeping with the election results. Figure 2. Sample Demographics and Voting History compared with Bradfield Electorate

Figure 2. Sample Demographics and Voting History compared with Bradfield Electorate



Q1 – Top 3 Concerns

Figure 3 presents the main concerns identified by survey respondents according to voting history. Overall, the top concerns identified were:

- 1) climate policy (77% of respondents)
- 2) integrity in politics (44%)
- 3) covid management (23%)
- 4) inequality (20%)
- 5) incompetent government (16%)
- 6) human rights/treatment of refugees (14%)

Voting history:

- Labor, Greens, and “swinging” voters were clearly very concerned about Australia’s current climate policy (79-89%). It is noteworthy that climate was also the most frequently identified concern for a majority of Liberal voters (55%).
- A similar pattern emerged for Integrity, which was the second most identified concern for all voting groups, albeit for a lower proportion of Liberal voters (32%) compared to others (44-48%).
- Housing affordability (12%), economy/cost of living (8%), and foreign policy (7%) were identified as major concerns by relatively fewer respondents overall. However, they appeared to be of greater importance to Liberal voters (18% of whom identified housing affordability, 12% economy, and 15% foreign policy).
- More Greens voters (18%) had major concerns about environmental degradation than other voting groups (4-11%).

Age:

- Overall, the differences by age group for each concern were not too marked, with just a few exceptions.
- While a high proportion of all age groups were concerned by the lack of climate policy (77-81%), lack of integrity in politics was more frequently identified as a main concern by older respondents (48-49% of those aged 55 and above) than younger respondents (34-35% of those aged under 55).
- Slightly more over 65s (25%) were concerned by government incompetence than other age groups (13-16%)
- Housing affordability and overdevelopment were of greater concern to 18-34 year olds (28%) compared with the other age groups (9-13%).

Gender:

- Overall, the differences by gender for each concern were also generally not too marked.
- Integrity was identified as a main concern by more men (51%) than women (37%).
- Inequality (24% vs. 15%) and human rights/treatment of refugees (18% vs. 9%) were identified as top concerns by more women than men respectively.

Figure 3. Top 3 Concerns by Voting History (% of Respondents)

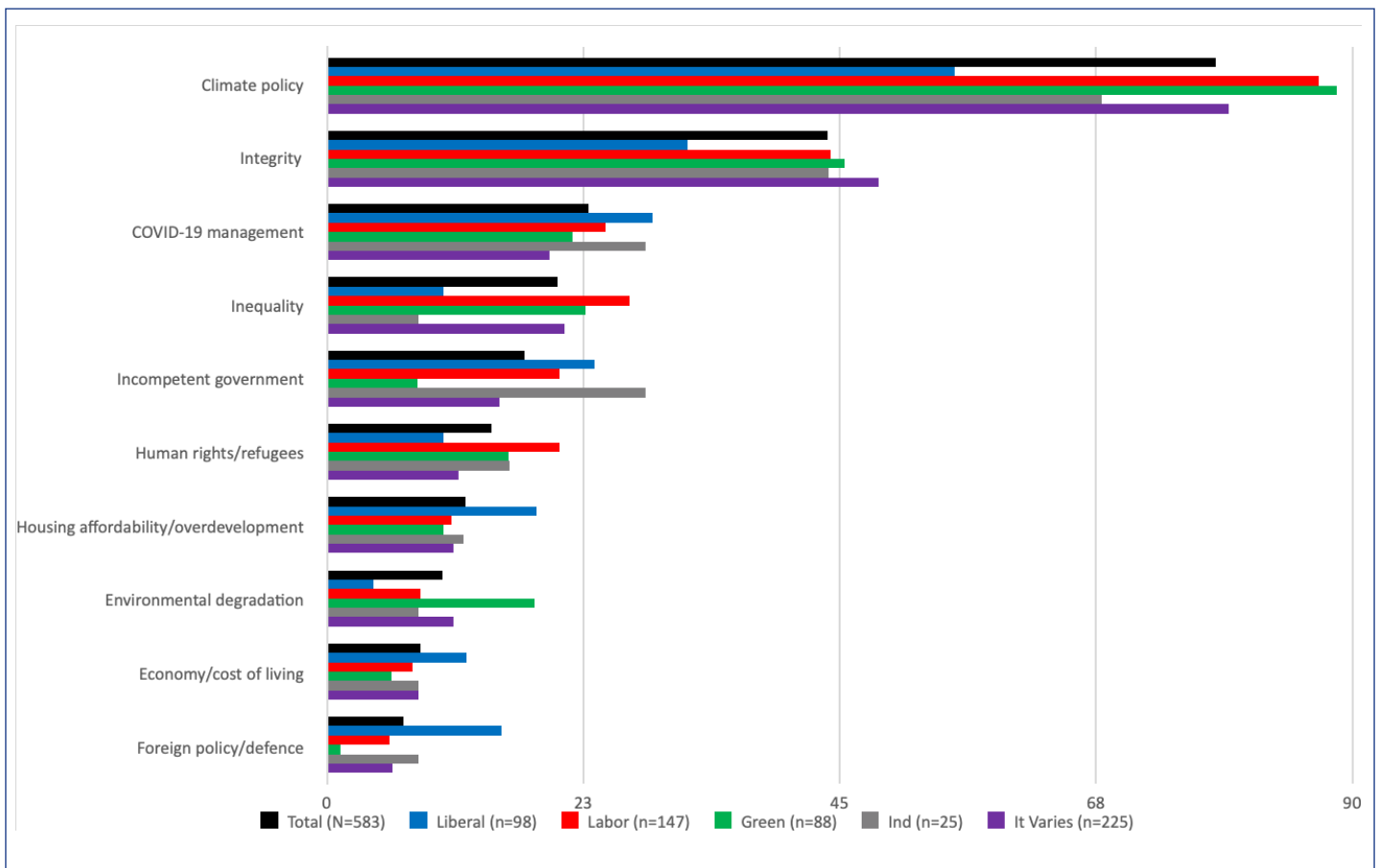


Figure 4. Top 3 Concerns by Age Band (% of Respondents)

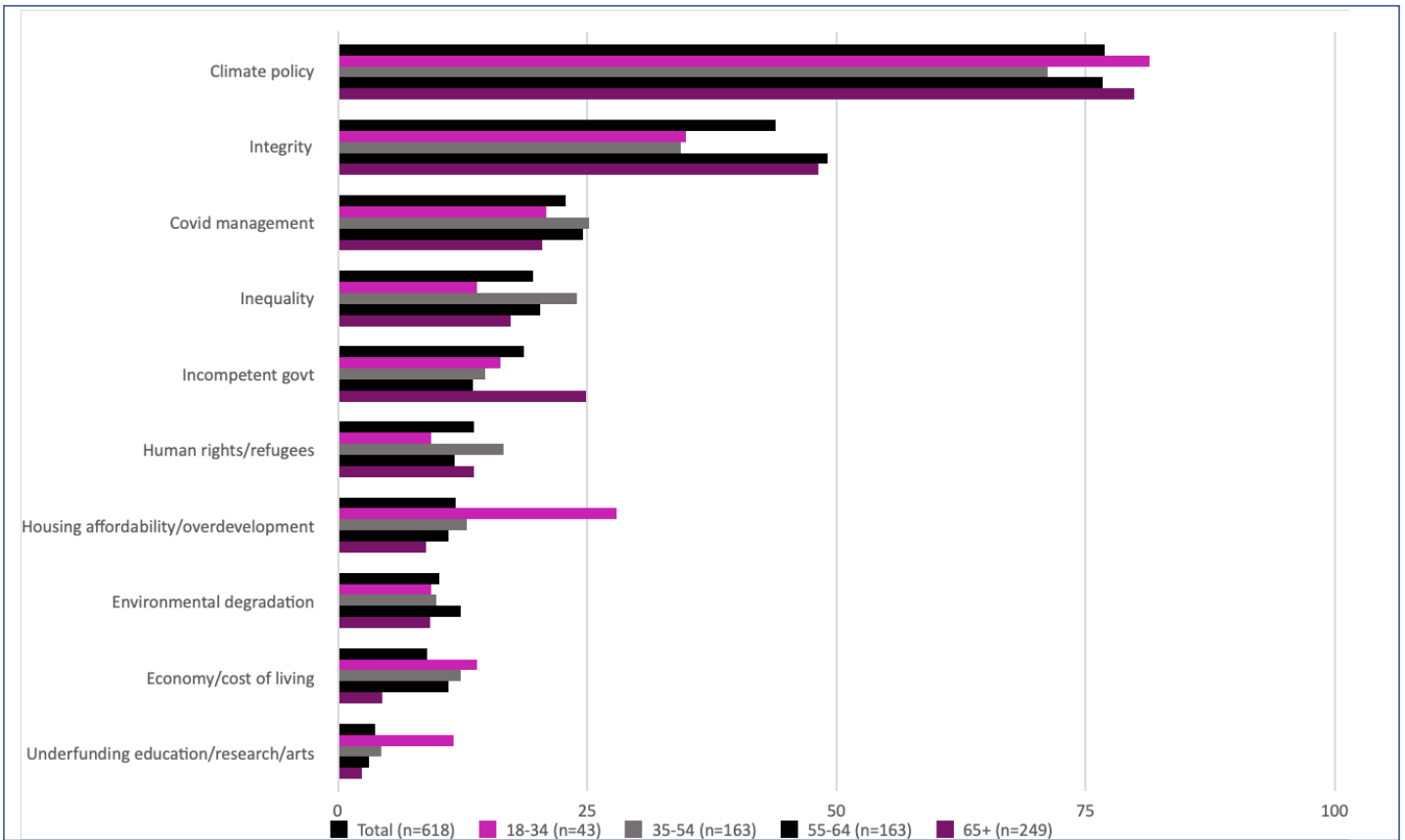
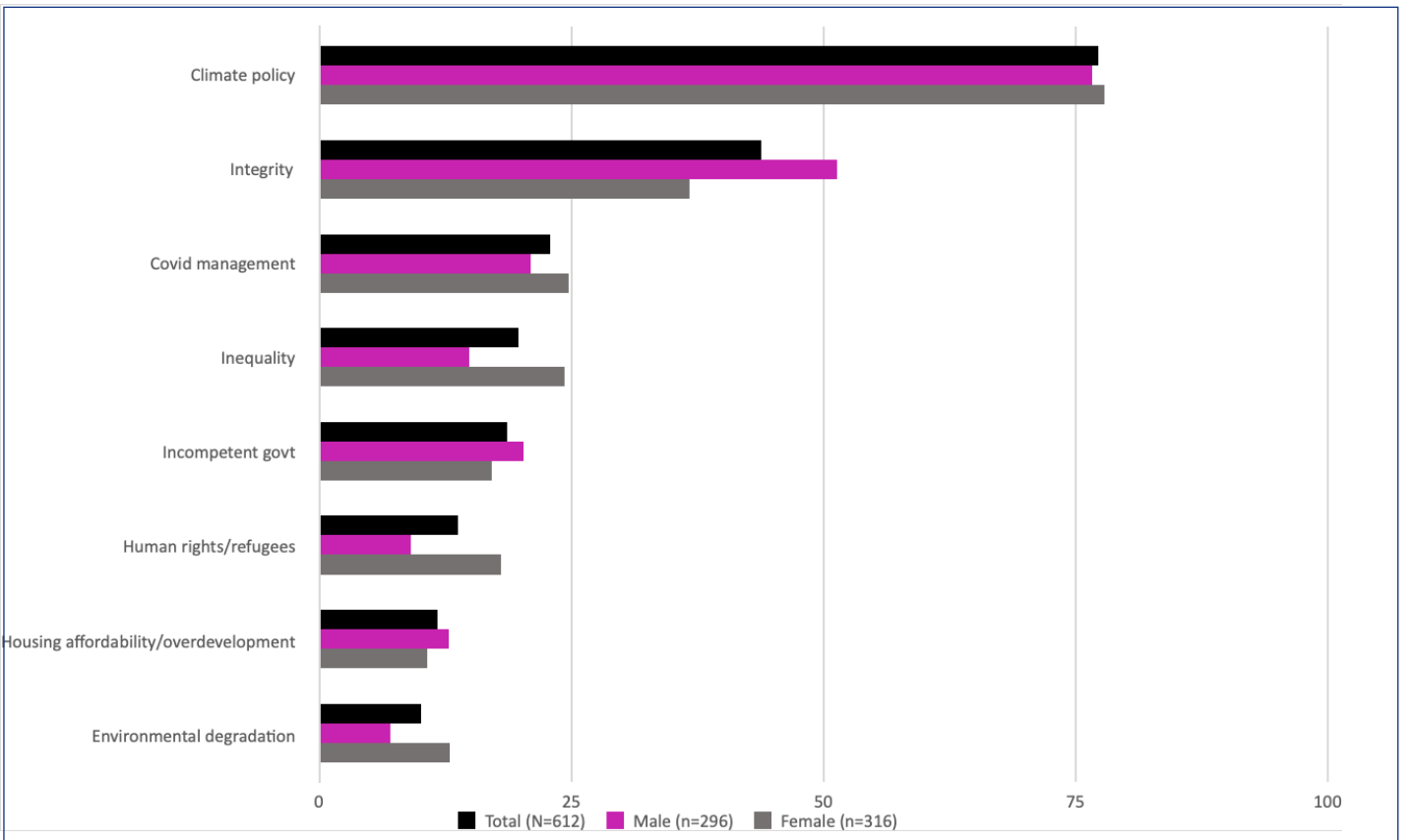


Figure 5. Top 3 Concerns by Gender (% of Respondents)

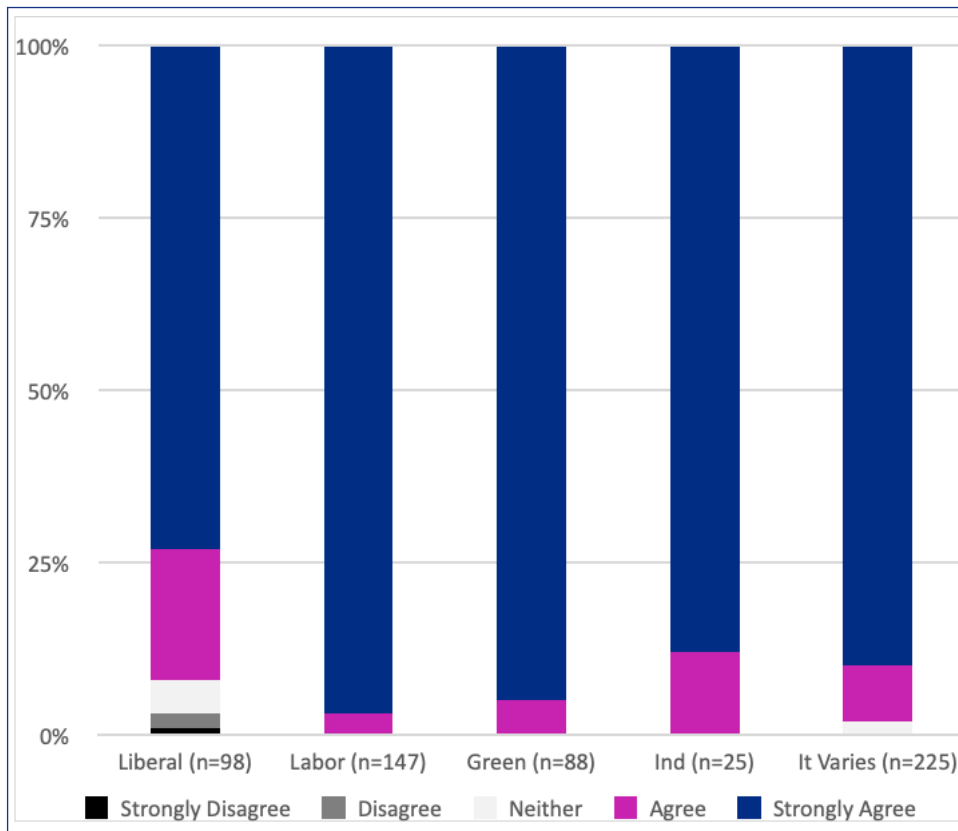


Q3 – Response to statements

We invited participants to state the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with 7 statements:

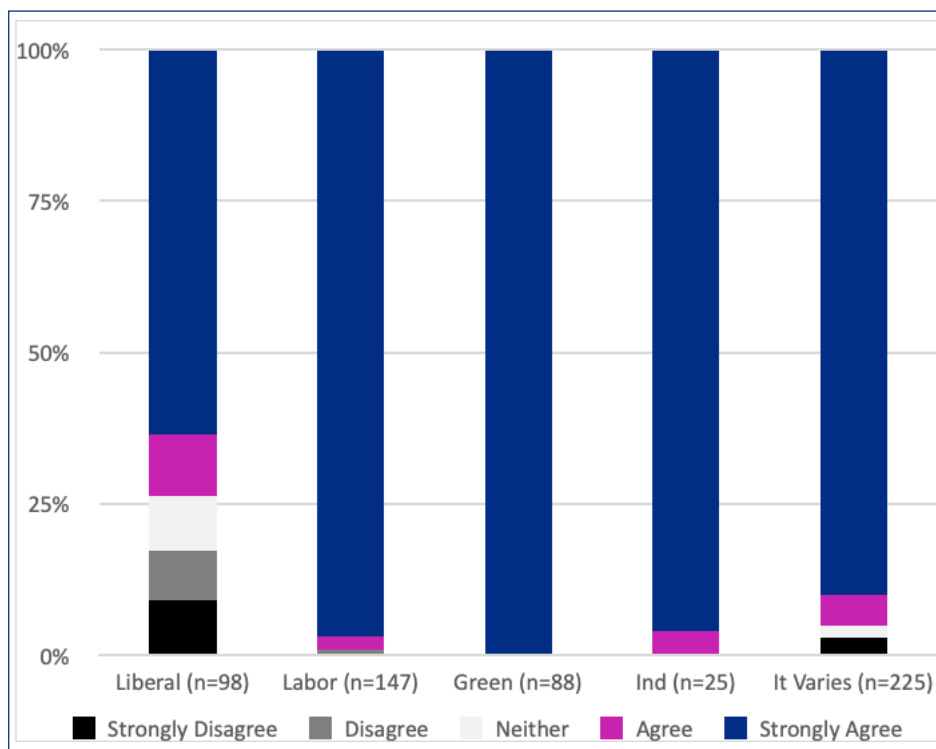
1. Australia should have a strong and independent Federal Anti-Corruption Commission

- The response to this statement was extremely strong in demanding the establishment of a Federal ICAC, with 97% either in *agreement or strong agreement*.
- Support was overwhelming regardless of how the sample was broken down according to voting history, age band, gender, and education groups.



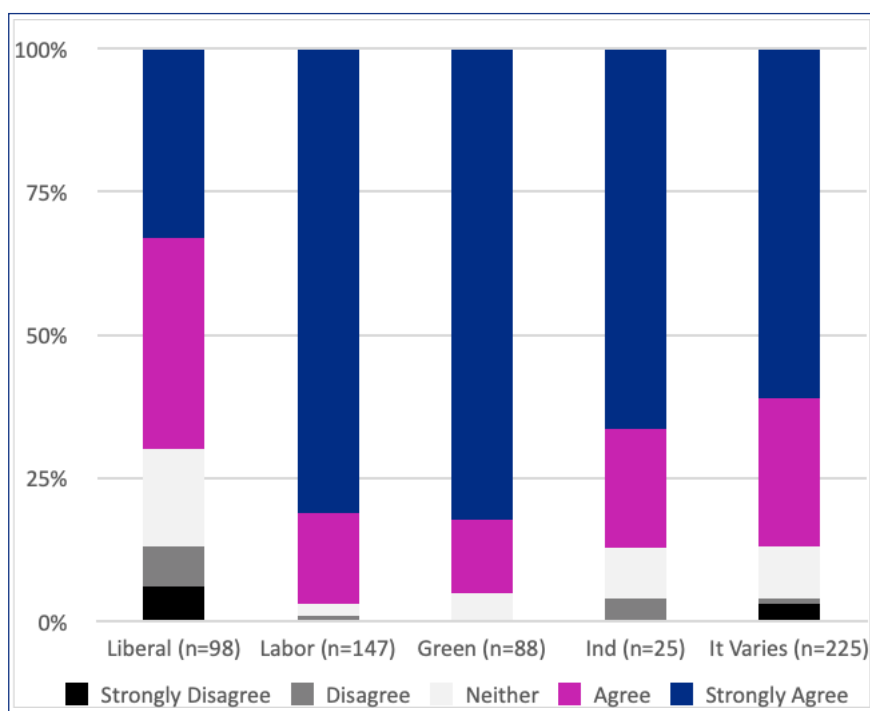
2. Global warming is a serious & pressing problem. We should begin taking steps now, even if this involves significant costs

- Climate change was also seen as a very significant concern, with 93% of respondents either in agreement or strong agreement that more urgent action is needed.
- Liberal voters showed far more variability in their responses compared with other voting groups. Specifically, only 73% of Liberal voters were in favour of this statement (agree or strongly agree) while 18% were opposed (9% of whom strongly disagree).
- Responses were generally comparable across age, gender, and education groups.



3. It is important to have an Indigenous Voice to Parliament in the Constitution

- Overall support for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament was very high, with 87% of respondents in agreement or strong agreement.
- Again, responses from Liberal voters were more varied compared to other voting groups, with 70% responding in favour (agree or strongly agree) and 13% opposed to this statement.
- Responses were similar across age, gender, and education groups.

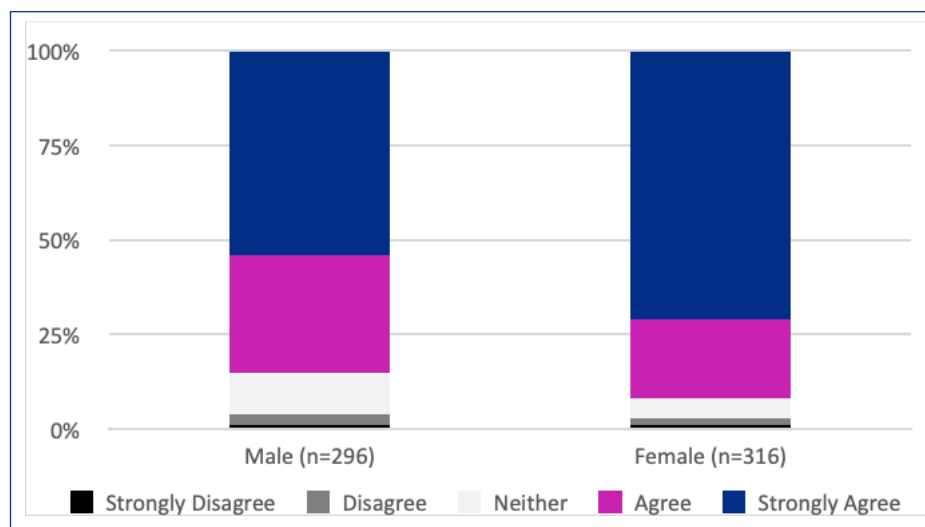
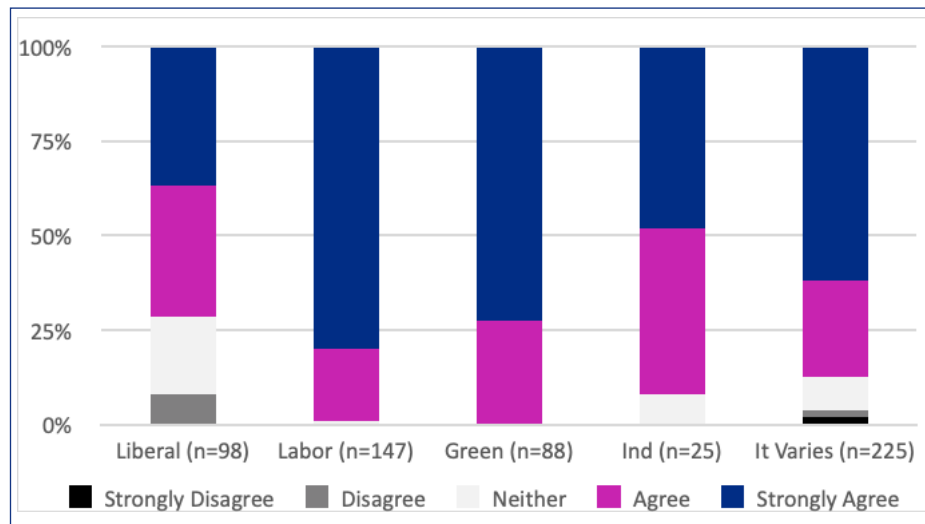


4. Australian universities should have their funding restored

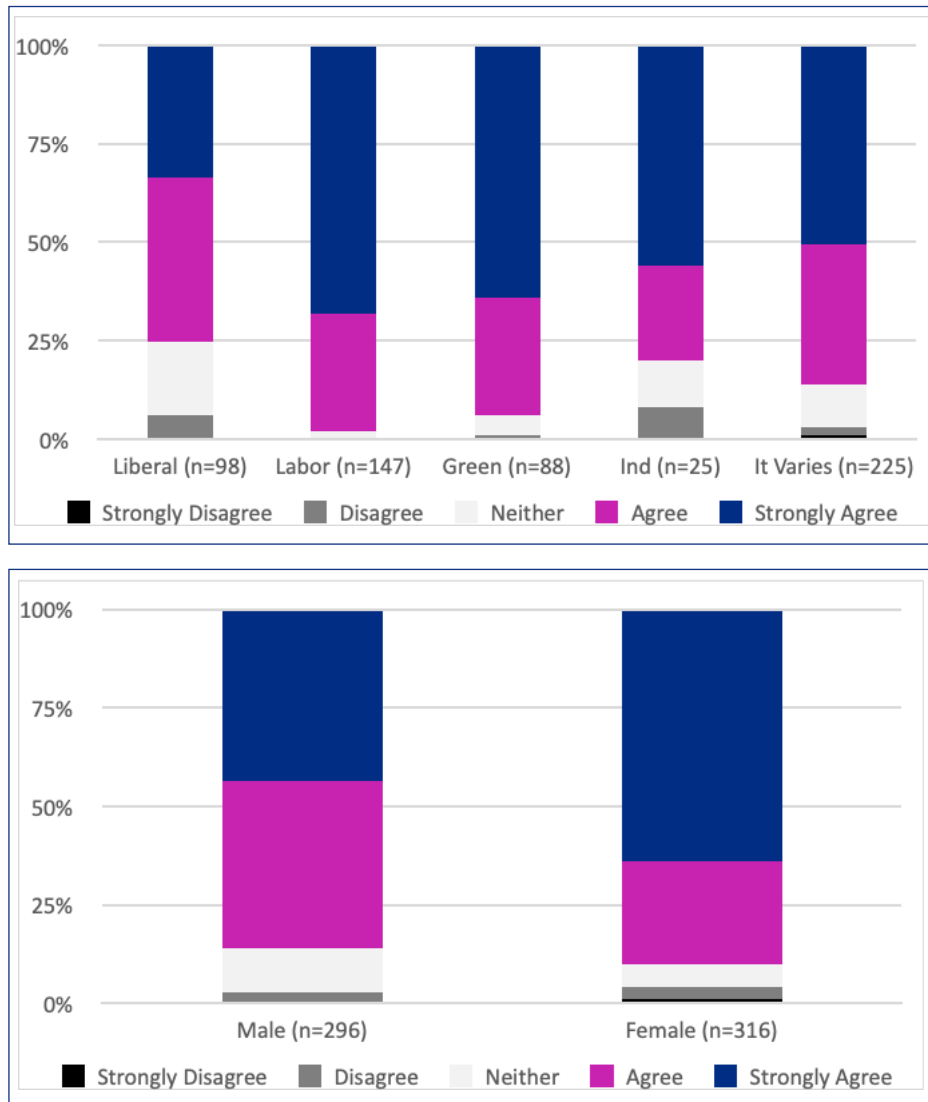
5. All Australians benefit from a strong, creative Arts industry

- Overall there was strong support for both of these statements, with 88% of respondents in agreement or strong agreement in both cases.
- There was a slight difference between Liberal voters and others in beliefs regarding university funding, with over 88% of Labor, Greens and other voters responding in favour of funding restoration compared to 72% of Liberal voters.
- Labor (98%) and Greens voters (94%) overwhelmingly gave support for the Arts industry, while Liberal (74%) and Independent/minor party voters (80%) were slightly less supportive.
- Men and women both responded in favour of both of these statements to a similar degree. However, women were more likely to strongly agree with them than men.
- There was very little difference in responses between age and education groups.

Universities

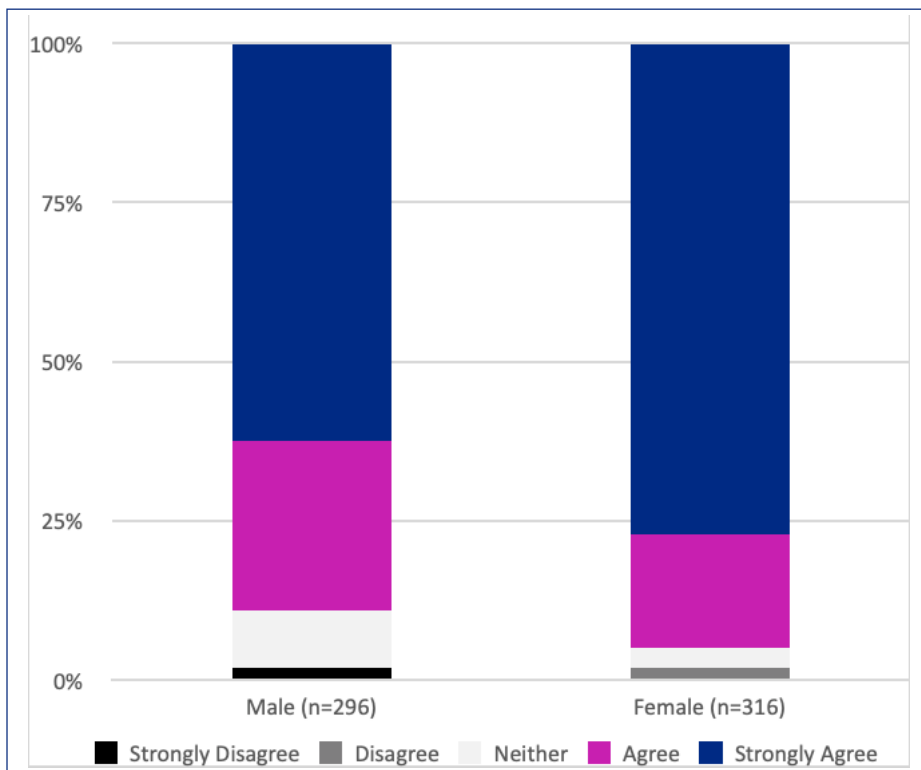
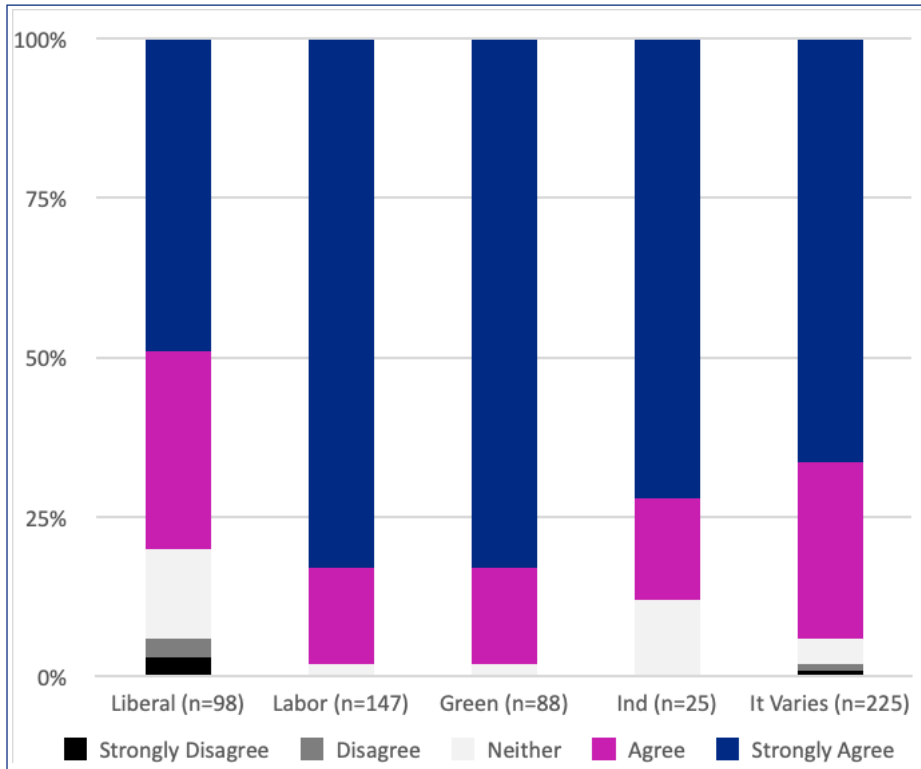


Arts



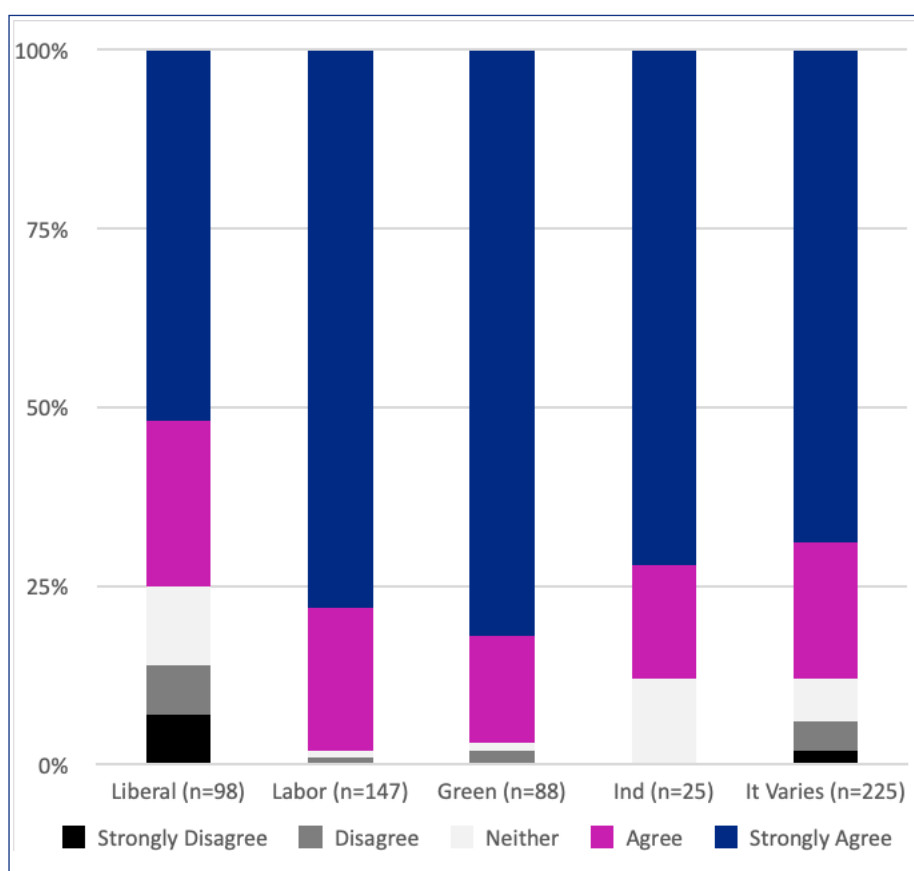
6. Women's rights and safety need to be better funded & prioritized

- Prioritizing women's rights and safety was another area of significant concern to voters, with 92% of respondents in agreement or strong agreement.
- Liberal voters (80%) were slightly less likely to respond in support of this statement compared with Labor, Greens, and "swinging" voters (95-98%).
- Women and men responded in favour of this statement to a similar extent. However, women were slightly more likely than men to strongly agree rather than just agree.
- Responses were similar across age and education groups.



7. The Federal Government has not demonstrated sufficient leadership in the COVID pandemic

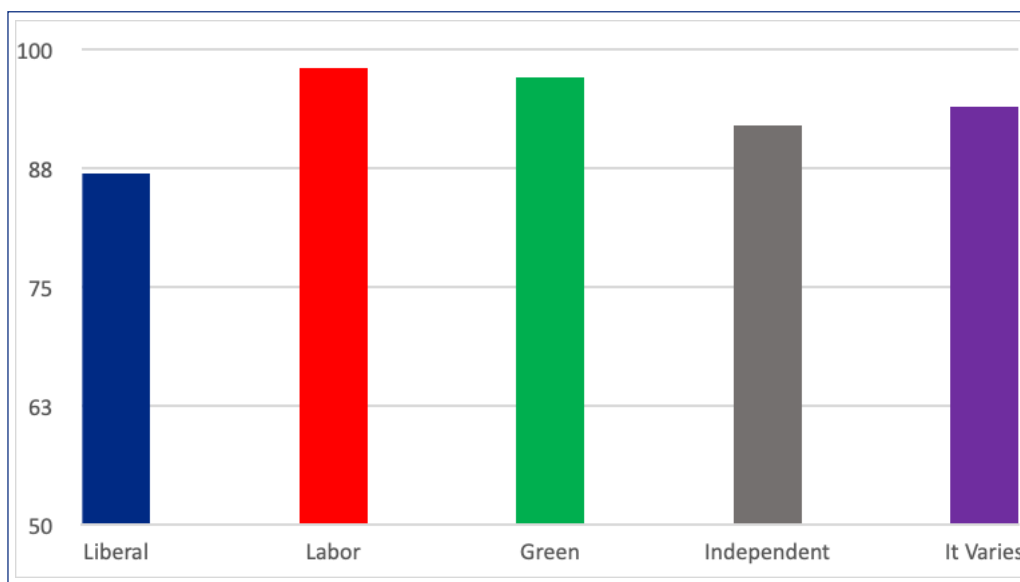
- Respondents were mostly dissatisfied with the federal government’s leadership during the pandemic, with 89% responding in favour of this statement.
- The highest levels of dissatisfaction (agree or strongly agree) were found in Labor (98%) and Greens voters (97%), with Independent/minor parties (88%) and “swinging” voters (90%) not far behind. Interestingly, 73% of Liberal voters also expressed dissatisfaction with the federal government in this regard.
- Responses were similar across age, gender, education groups.



Q4 – Identifying the incumbent Federal Member

In general, there was good awareness of the incumbent Federal MP for Bradfield, with 94% of respondents correctly identifying Paul Fletcher by name.

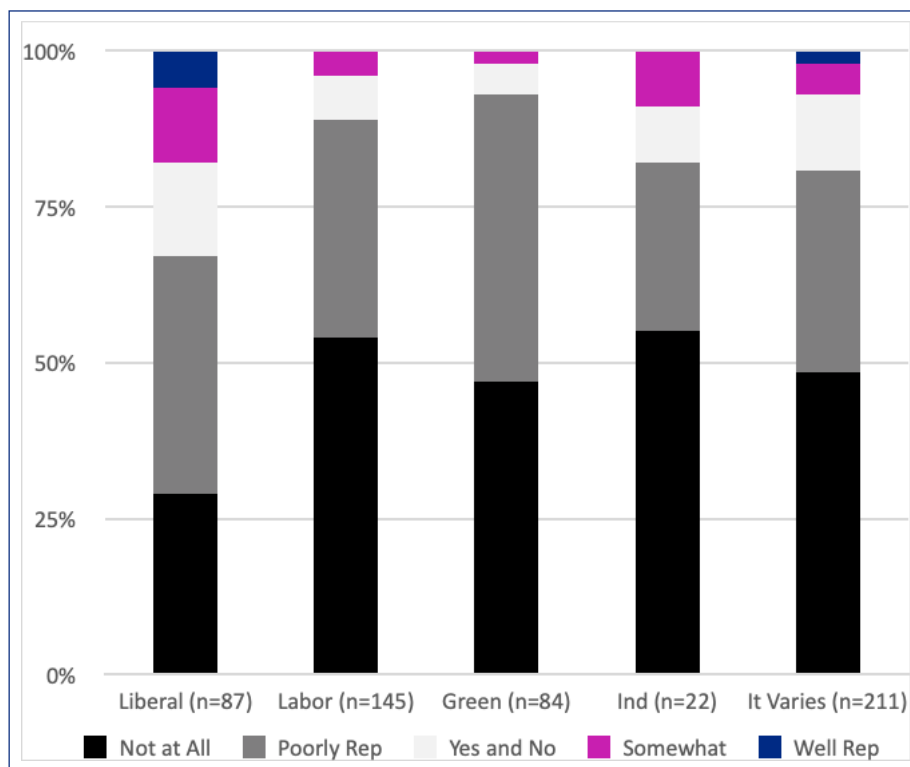
When breaking down along voting groups, Liberal voters were slightly less likely to know the name of the incumbent Liberal MP for Bradfield than other voting groups.



Q5 – To what extent do you feel your values & beliefs are being represented by your Federal MP in the following areas?

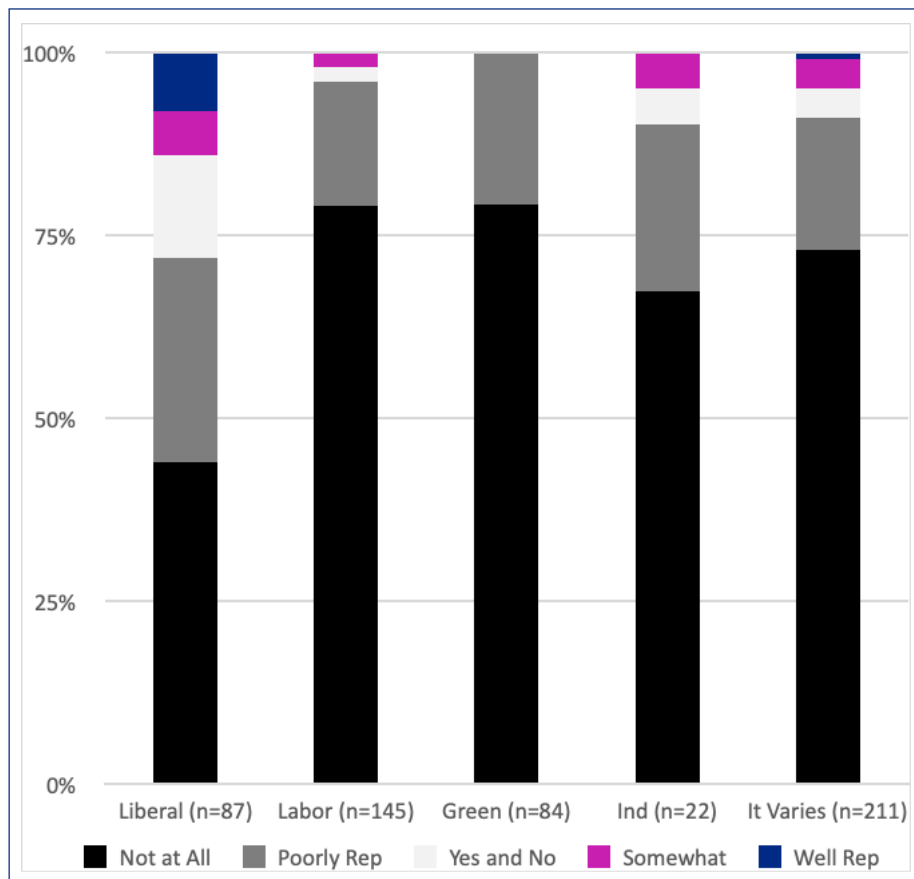
1. In listening to their constituents and taking your voice to Canberra.

- 80% of respondents indicated that they felt that their voice was being poorly or not at all represented by the incumbent Federal MP.
- Interestingly, this included 66% of Liberal voters, along with 80-93% of respondents in other voting groups.
- The level of dissatisfaction was consistent across all age groups, education groups, and was similar for both women and men.



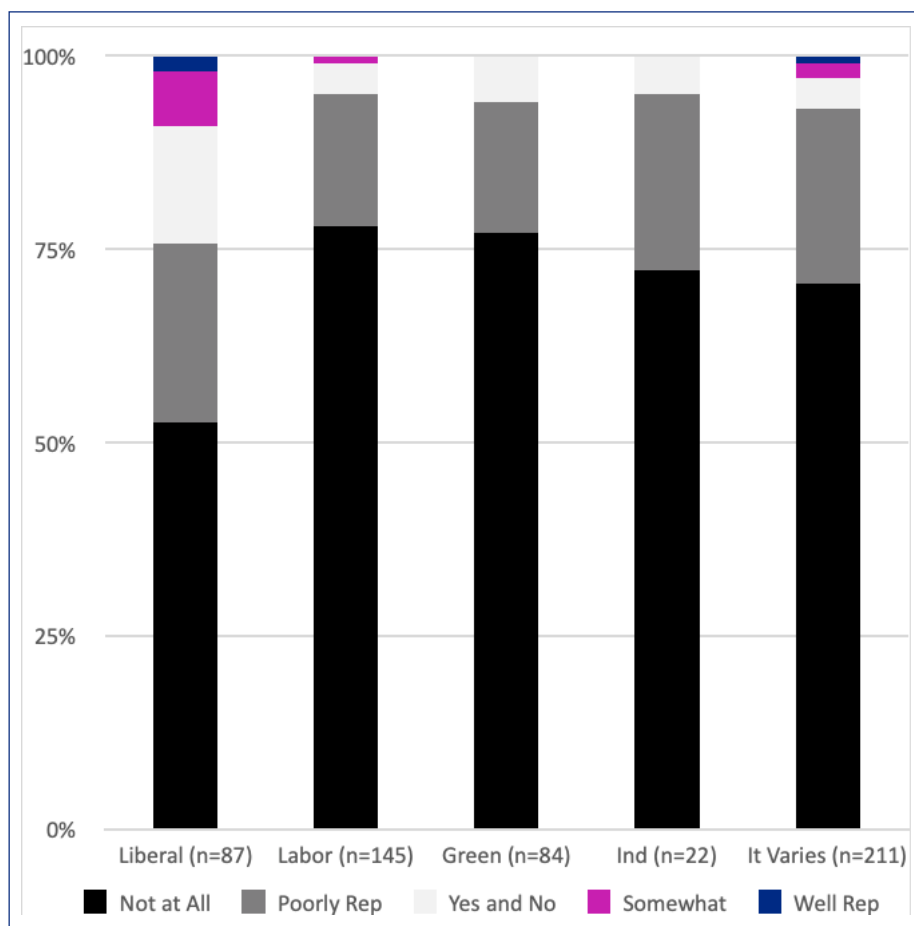
2. In addressing citizens' concerns about Climate Change with targets and actions.

- Overall, 91% of respondents felt the incumbent Federal MP was not at all or poorly representing their concerns regarding the need for stronger targets and actions to address climate change.
- This included 72% of Liberal voters. However, rates of dissatisfaction were higher in other voting groups, ranging from 91% of Independent/minor party voters to 100% of Greens voters.
- Levels of dissatisfaction were comparable across age, gender, and education groups.



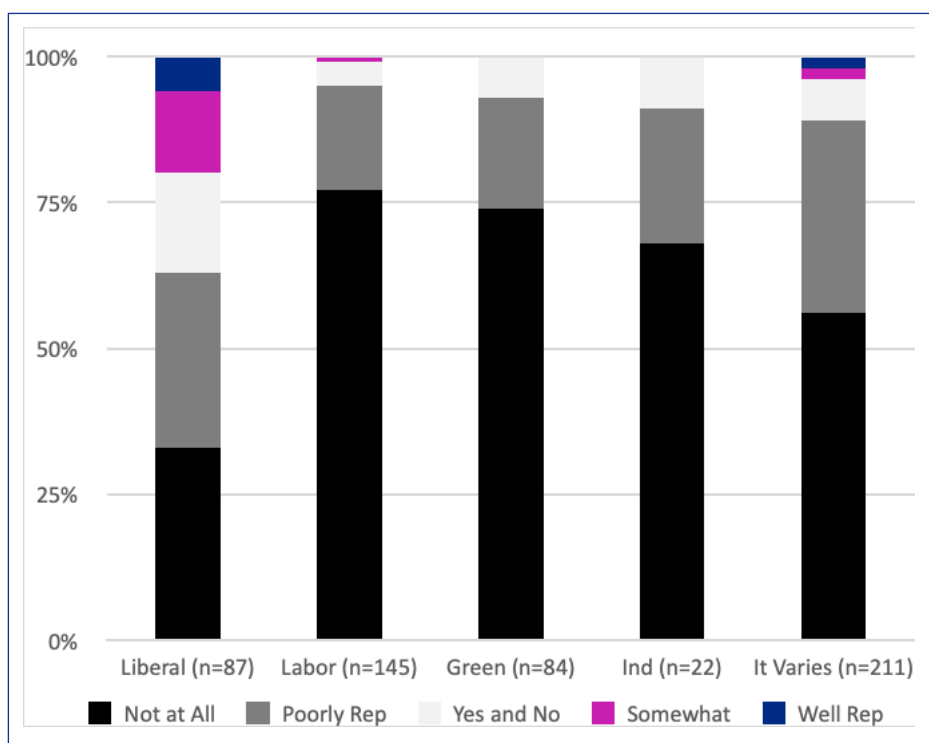
3. In pushing for an Independent Anti-Corruption Agency

- 92% of respondents felt that their values and beliefs regarding the establishment of a Federal ICAC were being not at all or poorly addressed by the incumbent Federal MP.
- This included 75% of Liberal voters, along with 94-95% of respondents in other voting groups.
- Levels of dissatisfaction were comparable across age, gender, and education groups.



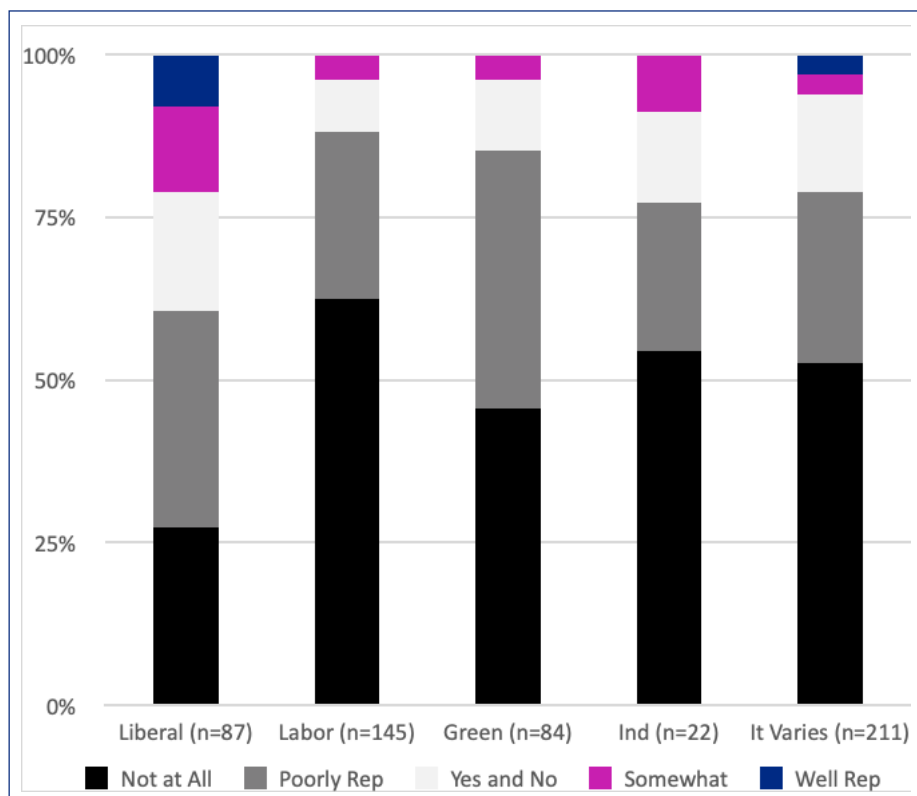
4. In the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers

- 87% of respondents felt that their voices were not being adequately heard regarding the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers.
- Again, a sizeable proportion of Liberal voters (63%) expressed dissatisfaction with the incumbent MP's representation on this issue (although 20% indicated that they felt they were being somewhat or well represented). A higher proportion of respondents in other voting groups expressed dissatisfaction (ranging from 83% of "swinging" voters to 96% of Greens voters).
- Levels of dissatisfaction were comparable across age, gender, and education groups.



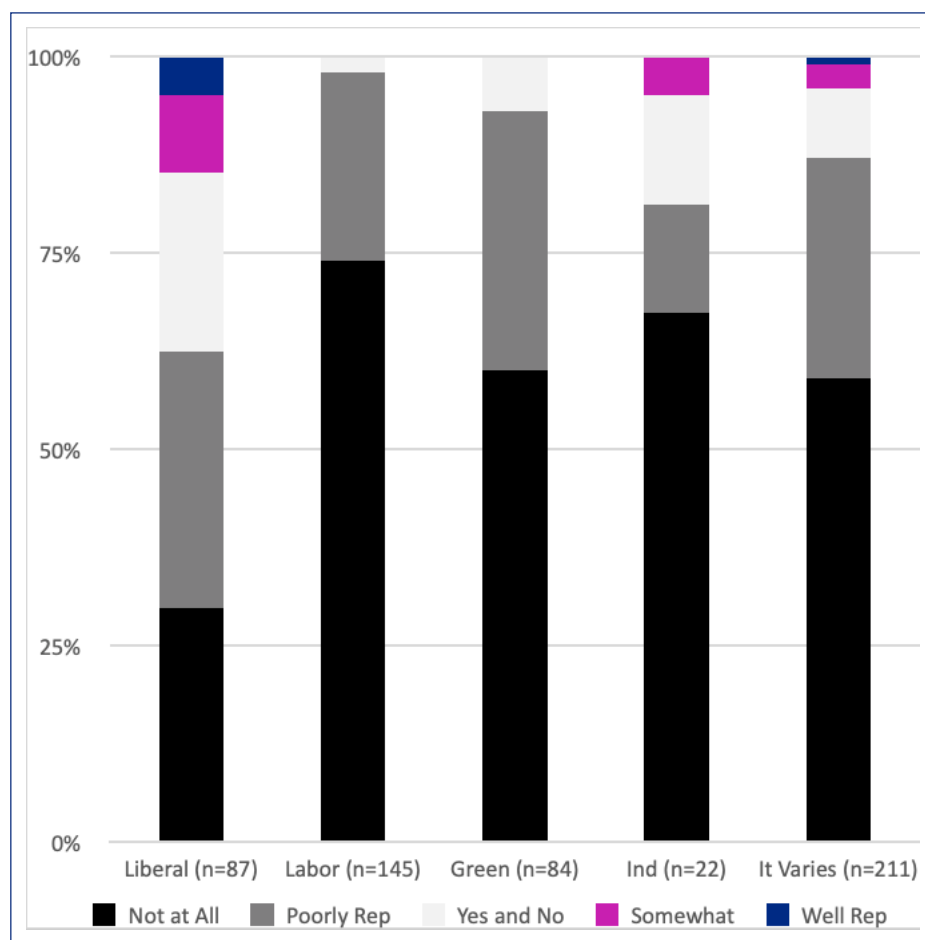
5. Governing with high standards of integrity, trust and respect

- 79% of respondents felt that the incumbent MP was not at all or poorly advocating for high standards of integrity, trust and respect in governance.
- Similar to the previous question, 60% of Liberal voters expressed dissatisfaction (while 21% indicated that they felt they were being somewhat or well represented), compared with 78-89% of respondents in other voting groups.
- Levels of dissatisfaction were comparable across age, gender, and education groups.



6. Making sure no one is left out of Australia's growing prosperity

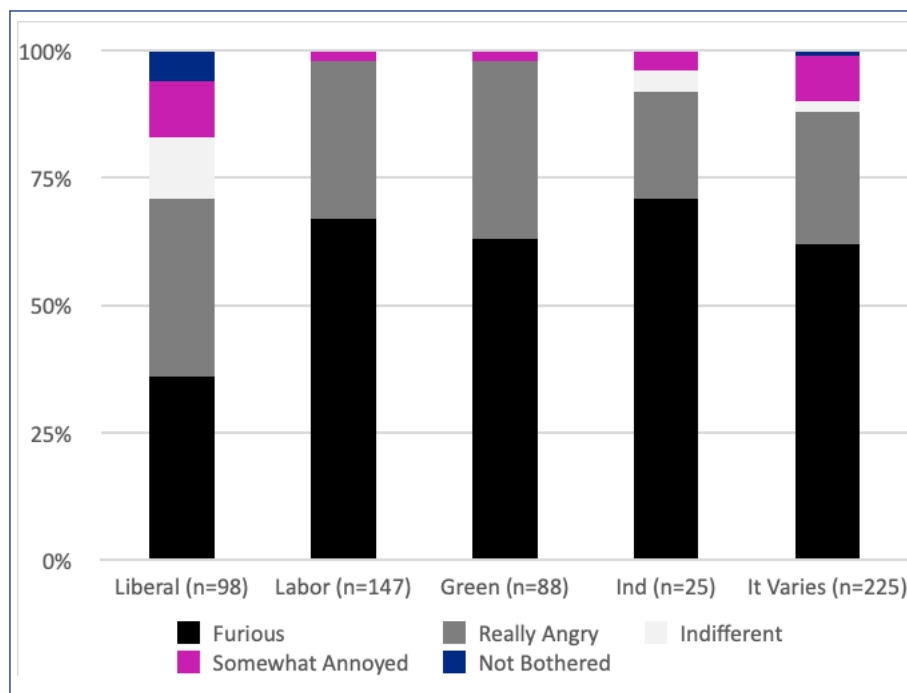
- 86% of respondents felt that the incumbent MP was not at all or poorly listening to their values and beliefs in regard to this statement.
- This included 63% of Liberal voters, compared to 82-98% of respondents in other voting groups.
- Levels of dissatisfaction were comparable across age, gender, and education groups.



Q6 – How do you feel about “pork barrelling”?

“Pork barrelling” can be defined as the use of taxpayer money by the incumbent government in selected (usually marginal or swinging) electorates in order to improve their party’s chances of winning an election.

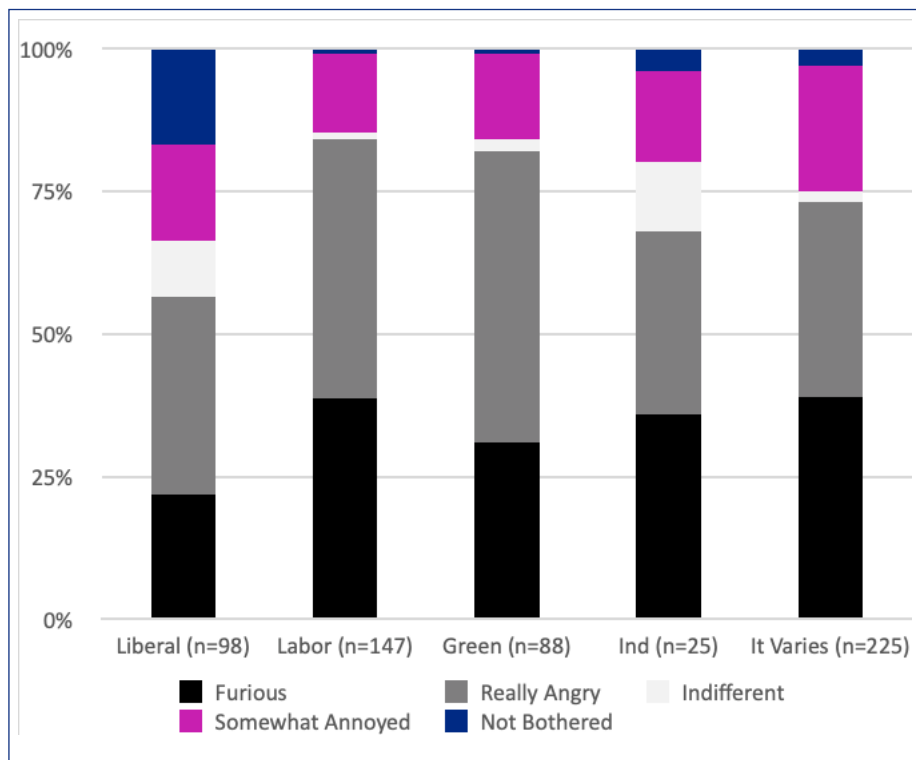
- Overall, 89% of respondents indicated strong concern about pork barrelling (they were either furious or really angry about it).
- Looking at voting history, 71% of Liberal voters indicated strong concern in relation to this question. This increased to between 88% and 98% of respondents from other voting groups.
- Levels of strong concern were similar across age, gender, and education groups.



Q7 – Tell us how strongly you feel about the following topical issues

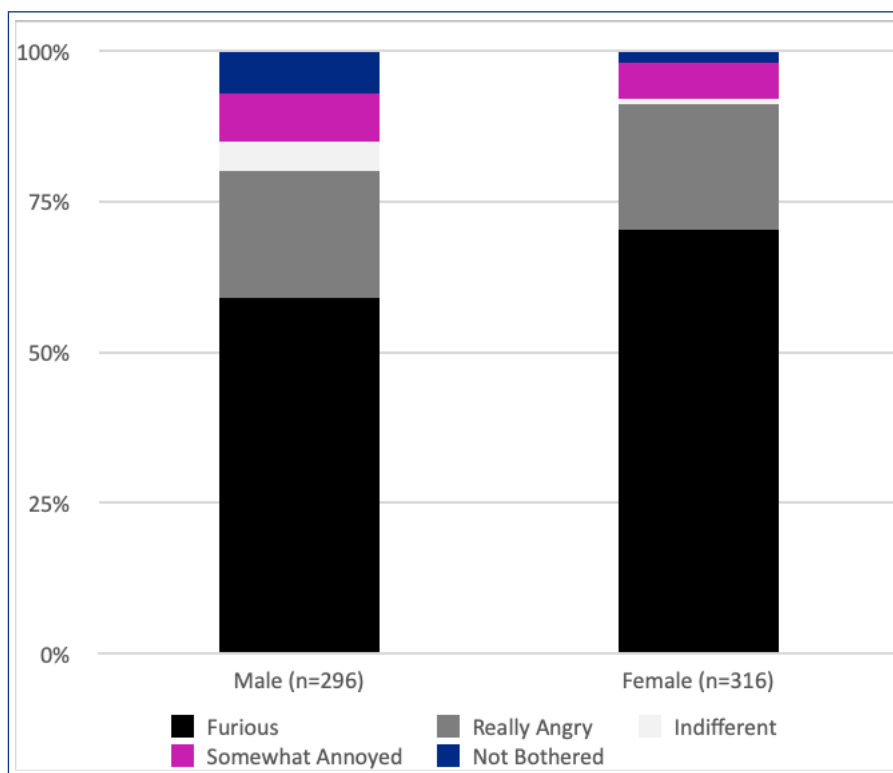
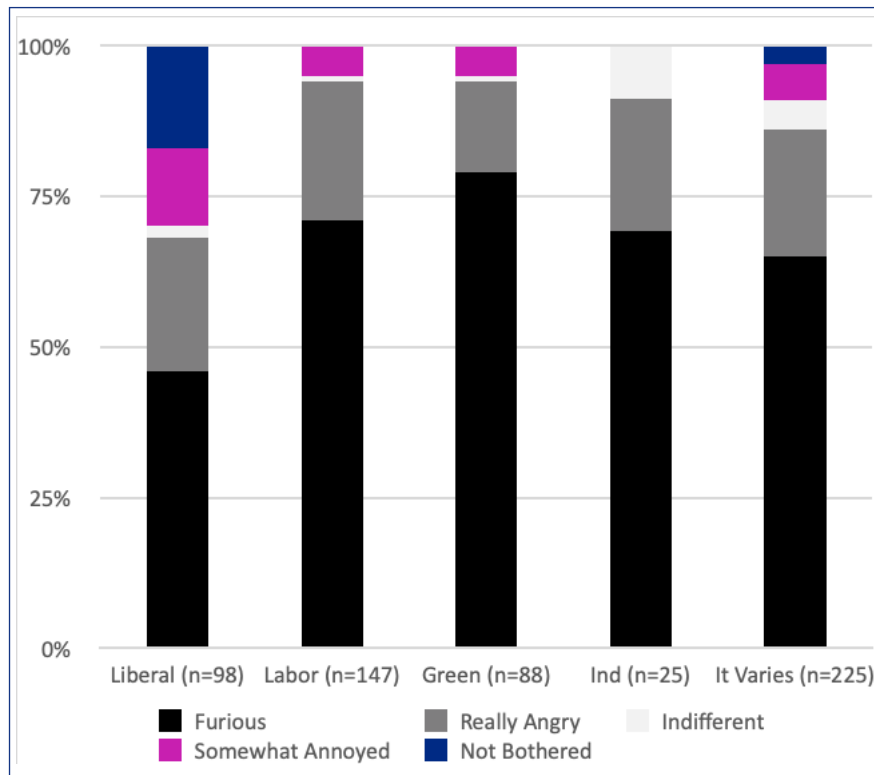
1. Australia’s management of vaccine purchases and our performance against other OECD countries

- 73% of respondents indicated strong dissatisfaction with the federal government’s management of the vaccine rollout (responding that they were either furious or really angry about it).
- The highest proportion of respondents expressing strong dissatisfaction were Labor (85%) and Greens (82%) voters, followed by “swinging” (73%) and Independent/minor party voters (68%). 55% of Liberal voters were also strongly dissatisfied.
- The extent of strong dissatisfaction was comparable across age and education groups.



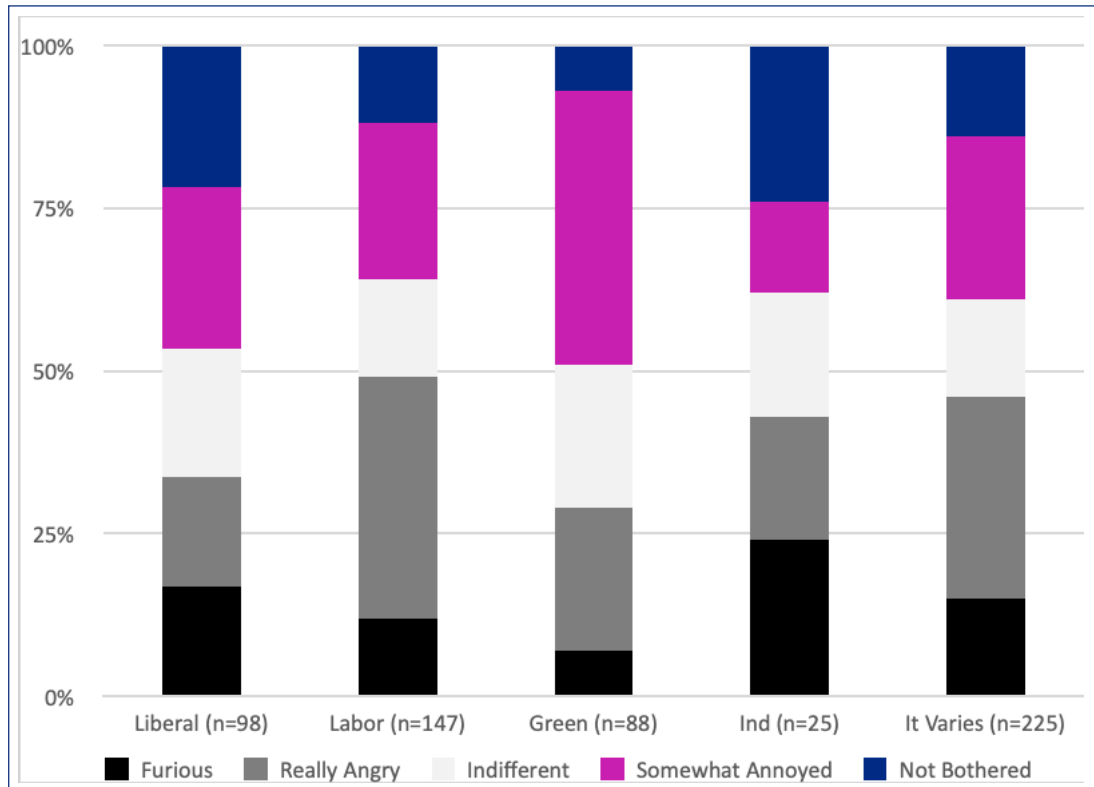
2. Barnaby Joyce appointed to the Status for Women Taskforce

- 86% of respondents indicated strong dissatisfaction with this appointment (responding that they were either furious or really angry about it).
- Again, Liberal voters (68%) were less likely to express strong dissatisfaction compared with the other voting groups (86%-94%).
- More women (90%) than men (80%) were strongly dissatisfied with this appointment.
- There were no differences in the levels of strong dissatisfaction across education groups.



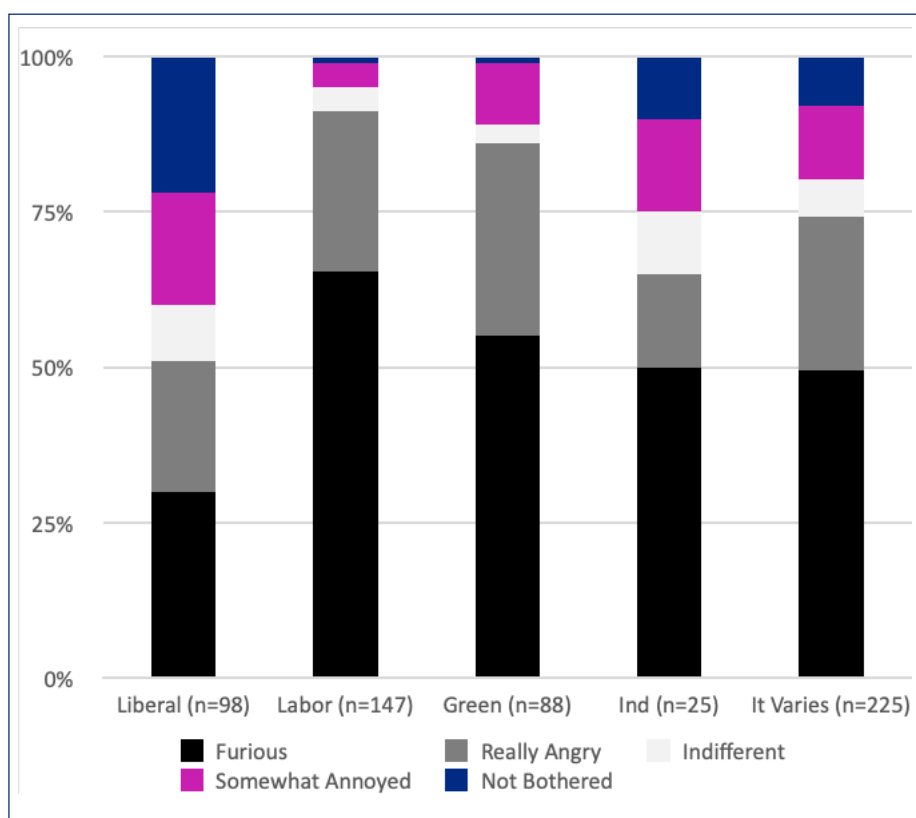
3. Flights to Australia have been halved, negatively affecting families and the economy

- Responses to this topical issue departed quite considerably from the other issues.
- There was a fairly even spread across the five response options, with 41% of respondents indicating that they were either furious or really angry about it, while 42% respondents were either somewhat annoyed or not bothered.
- The spread of responses was also fairly even across age, gender, and education groups.



4. The Biloela Family have not been permitted to return to their community in Queensland

- 76% of respondents indicated strong dissatisfaction with the government’s treatment of the Biloela family (responding that they were either furious or really angry about it).
- There was variation across voting groups, with Labor (92%) and Greens (86%) voters expressing the most dissatisfaction. They were followed by “swinging” voters (75%) and Independent/minor party voters (65%), while Liberal voters (51%) were the least likely to express strong dissatisfaction.
- There were no differences across age, gender, and education groups.



General Discussion

The findings of the Listening Project survey, designed to empower ordinary citizens of Bradfield to make their voices heard, demonstrate that voters are seriously disappointed with the current state of Federal politics and looking for stronger leadership and policy direction across a range of issues, particularly regarding climate action, integrity, and inequality in its many forms.

Further Commentary on Survey Findings

That the survey findings reflect a very strong desire for greater **climate action**, corroborates recent research by the Australian Conservation Foundation showing that a majority of voters in every electorate want real action on climate³. This was confirmed by a Lowy Institute poll which found that 61% of Australians agree that urgent action is needed, even if it involves significant costs⁴. Climate policy can no longer continue to be a political graveyard. The most recent IPCC reports⁵ indicate that the goal of limiting warming to below 1.5oC is now likely to be out of reach and a 2oC target is also under threat unless major changes are made now.

However, meaningful climate action is clearly not a priority for our government. Our lacklustre performance at the COP26 summit in Glasgow in November 2021 also underscored that on climate we have become global pariahs and a convenient cover for other high polluting nations to avoid making major commitments themselves. Despite the depressing state of inertia we have faced over two decades, it is never too late to start acting. Australia is blessed with abundant natural resources and we are well placed to thrive in the 21st century decarbonized economy. Residents of Bradfield clearly desire for their representatives to take a serious stand on climate – to stand up to the climate denialists in parliament and powerful vested interests currently blocking meaningful progress and begin the critical transition of our economy towards the industries of the future.

On **integrity**, demand for the promised and undelivered Federal ICAC has coincided with Australia slipping further down Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index⁶, which looks at the perception of abuse of public power for private gain. We now rank last amongst the 4 advanced Westminster-based governments, behind New Zealand, Canada and Britain. A recent National Integrity Survey⁷ by the organisation #ourdemocracy shows 94% of Bradfield residents support the implementation of a federal ICAC, while 89-99% support further integrity reforms. A significant number of MPs from the Liberal-National Party (LNP) have recently voiced scepticism of this evidence⁸, claiming that voters are more concerned about the economy and roads infrastructure, than reining in corruption. Our survey findings of 97% support for a strong and independent Federal ICAC clearly demonstrate that this is not the case in Bradfield.

³ Australian Conservation Foundation YouGov poll August 2021 –(<https://www.acf.org.au/majority-in-every-seat-want-more-climate-action-poll>)⁸<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/voters-don-t-care-about-integrity-commission-seven-liberal-mps-20220416-p5adw7.html>

⁴ <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/climatepoll-2021>

⁵ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/04/1115452>

⁶ <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021>

⁷ <https://www.ourdemocracy.com.au/survey/> and <https://www.ourdemocracy.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Bradfield-electorate-survey.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/voters-don-t-care-about-integrity-commission-seven-liberal-mps-20220416-p5adw7.html>

Voices of Bradfield strongly advocate for the creation of a bi-partisan federal corruption watchdog, consistent with the main elements proposed in Helen Haines' excellent Integrity Bill⁹, as one of the first priorities for the next Federal Parliament. This would be only a first step in a broader series of integrity reforms. Once passed into law, these measures would undoubtedly improve the quality of decision making and allocation of resources across every other policy area, leading to a ripple effect throughout all aspects of the socio-political framework. Unfortunately, neither major party sees this as being in their interest, which is why the job of integrity reform will necessarily fall to Independent MPs.

89% of respondents were either furious or really angry about **pork-barrelling** specifically. As we enter into the election period, pork-barrelling has once again gone into overdrive, with the Federal Government so far earmarking \$7.28 billion of taxpayer money since the election was called for projects in just 18 marginal seats (31% of the \$23.3 billion announced in total)¹⁰. While the amounts promised by Labor in these seats pale in comparison, we are nonetheless being given yet more evidence that the practice of enticing voters in one direction or the other remains a staple of the two-party process, with our own incumbent MP not being immune from such accusations¹¹. Widespread reform is urgently needed to hold both major parties to much higher standard of transparency regarding the administration of discretionary government grants and tenders.

The 450 page Set the Standard report outlining findings of the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces¹² showed in detail the perverse culture in Parliament House that led to 33% of people working there reporting having experienced sexual harassment¹³. The Jenkins Review, released in November 2021, made 28 recommendations, however the Federal Government is dragging its feet and very little progress has been made. The desire to avoid a significant backlash if found to be doing nothing, seems to be the major rationale for acting, rather than any deep commitment to redressing the inequitable treatment of women and upending the 'turn a blind eye' culture. The current 'boys' club' will only ever be addressed by having more **women in parliament** as a starting point, particularly women who are strong enough to call out this open secret. This is something that Independents are more likely to be able to achieve because their primary commitment is to the residents of their electorate, and not to a particular party or faction therein.

Which brings us to the question of leadership more generally, wherein 73% of Liberal voters in our survey expressed dissatisfaction with the Government's **leadership** during the **COVID-19** pandemic. Reconciling this with the incessant claims that the LNP are superior financial and economic managers is difficult. The inability to source, negotiate and allocate adequate vaccination supplies, along with the partisan allocation of recovery funds which left whole sectors reeling, was hard to watch. And these sectors, including the arts and higher education, are according to our survey findings, particularly important to Bradfield residents. 88% of respondents felt Australian Universities should have their funding restored and the same figure agreed that Australians benefit from a strong and creative arts industry. The incomprehensible gutting of these industries (wherein university lecturers did not receive financial support through JobKeeper and those employed in the arts were left for a considerable period of time with very little assistance), sitting alongside corporate welfare that saw large corporations walk away with COVID relief payments¹⁴ beggars belief. In another more recent example, we have witnessed what can only be considered the bizarre response of a Government Minister setting up a "go fund me" campaign to assist flood victims¹⁵. 'Economic management' and 'leadership' appear to have taken a dangerous and incomprehensible turn which warrant no further exploration here.

⁹ <https://www.helenhaines.org/issues/integrity/>

¹⁰ <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/coalition-has-promised-voters-833m-a-day-as-it-outspends-labor-in-campaign-mode-20220422-p5afd8.html>

¹¹ Paul Fletcher, leaked talking points to counter pork barrelling accusations re NBN hot spots <https://www.innovationaus.com/leaked-coalition-brief-details-pork-barrel-defence/>

¹² <https://humanrights.gov.au/CPWReview>

¹³ <https://theconversation.com/the-jenkins-review-has-28-recommendations-to-fix-parliaments-toxic-culture-will-our-leaders-listen-172858>

Why Independent?

The gradual (20 year) trend of voters trickling away from the major parties is becoming a deluge thanks to the rise of the Independents in the current electoral cycle as the latest manifestation of this visceral dissatisfaction with the status quo. Like other 'Voices of' groups, Voices of Bradfield was borne from this sentiment.

Voting for a community-backed Independent this election is the only way to ensure meaningful progress on the issues that matter most to the electorate. Re-election of the Morrison government would be disastrous, especially given the LNP's recent abdication of commitment to legislate a Federal ICAC, and their stronger commitments to the coal and gas industries over the next four years while reducing annual climate spending¹⁶. However, the nature of the 2-party system has led Labor to adopt a 'small target' approach (staying small and saying very little so their policies can't be attacked as they were at the last election) which means that the difference between the two major parties is shrinking. For example, Labor also committing to new coal and gas projects¹⁷ means that Independents become the only smart choice for moderate voters, those who have been paying attention, know the absolute urgency of strong climate action and *want their demands taken to Canberra*.

Why Nicolette?

With decades of experience in capital markets, clean energy, climate policy and human rights, Nicolette will prioritise the following major concerns:

Climate. She will support Zali Steggall's climate bill, which stipulates a 60% emissions reduction on 2005 levels by 2030. She will act on the opportunities that global decarbonisation presents to Australia and will be an experienced voice in the development of this new and innovative economy.

Integrity. She will demand a Federal ICAC along the lines of Helen Haines' Bill, however this will only be a start as further practical reforms are necessary, for example, developing non-political criteria for federal government appointments, such as to the ABC, Australia Post and Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

Inequality. She will implement recommendations from the Jenkins Review to address inequality and systemic bias in the treatment of women, as well as acting in other arenas where inequality is enabled and perpetuated, such as housing affordability, which she recognises as one of the major economic, social and ethical issues of our time.

Ongoing Community Engagement

Thus we return to the process of *collective listening*, which is where the Voices of Bradfield community found its power. The combination of the Kitchen Table Conversations supplemented with the online survey, allowed for a *collective speaking up*, and very quickly, the cultural silence was broken. The newsletter feeding data and observations back to the community was our return conduit that started to wake residents up to the opinions of their own neighbours. Everyone was thinking the same thing, but no one realized because of the Australian cultural norm of not talking about politics. This self-censoring is incredibly helpful to incumbents and is an additional barrier that keeps us, busy with our lives, from engaging with politics and demanding the changes we know we need.

¹⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/mar/18/australias-biggest-companies-pocketed-hundreds-of-millions-in-jobkeeper-despite-positive-earnings>

¹⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/feb/27/isnt-this-the-role-of-government-peter-dutton-panned-for-setting-up-fundraiser-for-flood-victims>

¹⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/mar/29/australia-federal-budget-2022-climate-environment-morrison-government-coalition-great-barrier-reef-angus-taylor>

¹⁷ <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/labor-digs-in-on-support-for-coal-to-negate-damaging-climate-debate-20220418-p5ae8h.html>

“I’m so busy and I feel like I don’t have enough knowledge to make a change, or a difference. But if someone put something right in front of me, I’d do it.”

Giselle C, working mother of 2 and carer for 2 ageing parents.

Times have clearly changed, whether it was the fires of 2019/20 or the more recent floods, people are joining the dots in their own minds between human impacts on ecosystems and infrastructure, policy decisions by those governing us, and our children’s future. And once they see the connections and realise the audacity with which the major parties are neglecting future generations, they are finding more courage to speak up.


By creating this feedback loop from scratch, and as a community-initiated mechanism funded only by the members of Voices of Bradfield, we hoped to hear and amplify the collective voice of the electorate. This report coming back to the community is therefore a very significant milestone in the work of Voices of Bradfield since our inception 14 short months ago. Having in the interim sought, found and created a platform for Bradfield’s first community-backed Independent, Nicolette Boele, an essential ongoing role for us will be to provide this two way conduit, no matter what happens at the upcoming election.

“We need to replace the questions ‘what’s wrong?’ and ‘how can we fix it?’ with two better questions – ‘what’s possible here?’ and ‘who cares?’”

Margaret J. Wheatley

Conclusions

What this survey allows for, at an important inflexion point in the political cycle, but even more importantly in terms of the broader climate cycle, is the opportunity to provide the electorate of Bradfield with a written memory of the past 3 years under the Liberal National coalition. And an invitation to think differently as we go to the polling booths this year. We have an election that will most likely be decided by female voters who are currently uncommitted and who are unconvinced by the current Prime Minister’s leadership. While the leader of the LNP has stated categorically that he will not ‘negotiate’ with Independents¹⁸, come May 21 he might just find that that decision is out of his control. Voters of Bradfield, safe as the seat has to date been considered, you may well be responsible for putting a brilliant MP onto the cross-bench, where she can hold the main parties accountable and give us the change we so clearly have been asking for.



**Bradfield is ready
for change.
Be part of history
Vote 1 Nicolette Boele**

Authorised by Dr Samantha Graham, Voices of Bradfield Inc, 16 Normanhurst Rd, Normanhurst, 2076, NSW. # INC2100484.

¹⁸ <https://www.news.com.au/national/federal-election/no-deal-albanese-will-not-strike-a-deal-with-independents-to-win/news-story/6ec7345f03445ed0205698fc224ca5cb>

Appendix One – Copy of the Survey

www.thelisteningproject.info



Hi and thanks for taking this 5-10 minute survey.

It is part of "The Listening Project", an initiative set up by local residents of Sydney, to gauge what's important to our fellow local citizens in these worrying times.

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. While responses are anonymous, you can opt to give us your email address at the end as we are happy to share the collated results with you. Then you'll know if the things keeping you up at night are also the things keeping your neighbours up!

Personal data collected is only used for the purposes of this survey and will not be shared with 3rd parties for reasons beyond the express purposes of the survey. For more information about requirements for protecting your data, please see here.

The Listening Project Team
Gillan K, Sam G.
www.thelisteningproject.info for more information

PS If you'd like to use this survey to collect information about your own particular Electorate exclusively, let us know and we'll give you your own version of the survey.

Q1. What are your 3 biggest concerns about Australia at the moment? (in no particular order)

Q2. Any other comments you'd like to add about the above, or additional concerns?

Q3. To what extent do you Agree or Disagree with these 7 statements? (Strongly agree, agree, neither, disagree, strongly disagree, don't know, plus "other" option for comments).

1. Australia should have a strong and independent Federal Anti-Corruption Commission
2. Global warming is a serious & pressing problem. We should begin taking steps now, even if this involves significant costs
3. It is important to have an Indigenous Voice to Parliament in the Constitution
4. Australian universities should have their funding restored
5. All Australians benefit from a strong, creative Arts industry
6. Women's rights and safety need to be better funded & prioritized
7. The Federal Government has not demonstrated sufficient leadership in the COVID pandemic

Q4. Do you know the name of your Federal Member? Yes/No. Please write your MP's name here.

Q5. To what extent do you feel your values & beliefs are being represented by your Federal MP, in the following areas?

(Well, somewhat, yes & no, poorly represented, not at all represented, it's not an important issue to me, plus "other" option for comments: Add anything else here on how well or poorly you feel represented and why).

1. In the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers
2. In listening to their constituents and taking their (your) voice to Canberra
3. In addressing citizen's concerns about Climate Change with targets and actions
4. In pushing for an Independent Anti-Corruption Agency
5. Governing with high standards of integrity, trust and respect
6. Making sure no one is left out of Australia's growing prosperity

Q6. How do you feel about "Pork Barrelling"? (defined as when the incumbent party spends taxpayer money in selected electorates to improve their party's chances of winning an election).

(Not bothered, somewhat annoyed, I'm indifferent, really angry, furious, I don't know plus "other" for comments).

Q7. Tell us how strongly you feel about the following topical issues (Not bothered, somewhat annoyed, I'm indifferent, really angry, furious, I don't know, "other" Let us know anything else that has elicited strong feelings from you about the direction Australia is heading).

1. Australia's management of vaccine purchases and our performance against other OECD countries
2. Barnaby Joyce has been appointed to the Status for Women Taskforce
3. Flights to Australia have been halved, negatively affecting families & the economy
4. That the Biloea Family have not been permitted to return to their community in QLD

Q8. Please tell us a little about yourself: age, gender, highest level of education, voting history.

Q9. Please tell us your postcode

Q10. If you'd like to receive a summary of findings from this community survey, please give us your name and email.

Thank you very much for taking the time to do this survey. Please go to www.thelisteningproject.info if you'd like to know more.

Appendix Two – Coding of Top 3 Concerns

Concern	Description
Climate policy	Climate - policy to reduce emissions, climate denialism, renewable energy policy
Integrity	Integrity, corruption, pork barrelling, power of lobbyists, big money in politics, lack of accountability
Covid management	Covid - poor management, slow vaccine distribution, poor quarantine facilities
Environmental degradation	Environment, extinctions, sustainability, MD Basin
Inequality	Inequality - disadvantage, economic, women's safety/ misogyny, wealth distribution
Human rights/Refugees	Refugees, heartless policy, poor response to Afghanistan, human rights issues, lack of empathy, racism
Economy/Cost of living	Economy, cost of living, cost of lockdowns, petrol prices, national debt, permanent employment, tax reform
Housing affordability/overdevelopment	Housing - cost, more social housing, urbanisation, density
Foreign policy	Foreign policy, China, diplomacy, war mongering, arms race, geopolitical tensions
Incompetent government	Government competency, ineffective, poor leadership, no long term thinking, wasteful (e.g., Jobkeeper)
Covid restrictions	Covid restrictions infringe our rights, too harsh, lockdowns, mandatory vaccines, closed borders, business shut down, schools closed
Immigration	Immigration – too much, should be more/better,
Travel	Travel restrictions
Media	Media distortion for special interests, unfair, Murdoch press, media concentration, defunding ABC
Business	Industrial relations, rights of workers
Underfunding healthcare/social services	Underfunding of healthcare, human services, aged care
Underfunding education/research/arts	Underfunding of education (school and university), science, research, innovation, arts
Public Service	Right wing ideology, intentional underfunding
Political system	Political system is broken, need Independents, lack decent opposition, end of democracy
Indigenous	Indigenous Voice to Parliament, reconciliation, inequality, gap
Other	Other
No response	No response

Authorised by Dr Samantha Graham, President, Voices of Bradfield Inc, 16 Normanhurst Rd, Normanhurst, 2076.