

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

Tonight we're meeting on Indigenous lands which are stolen and I am on the land of the Ngunnawal people and I would like to pay my respects and save this land was stolen and never ceded. For the code of conduct tonight we are providing a safe experience for everyone regardless of gender identity, sexual identity, IT size, gender anything, we don't tolerate bullying and if we see any miss behaviour we will remove anyone immediately.

We have a number of amazing questions tonight so thank you to everyone who submitted a question. You can ask your question by using the Q&A box at the bottom of the Zoom.

We have a great panel tonight. My name is Sophie Johnston, I am a Youth Commissioner with the National Youth Commission and I will be chairing the panel. This panel has come up in response to last week's Q&A Young and Free and anyone watching probably notice it wasn't very young or diverse.

As the youngest person on the panel, I am 24 and I feel like I am moving out of the group of young people. It's exciting we've been able to pull this incredible panel together of young and diverse people.

Joining us tonight we have Desiree Cai, and organising director at Young Campaigns, a movement of young people fighting for a healthy society with good jobs, and a safe climate for all. We have Mohamed Semra who wants to shatter stigma around African migrants and refugees. Brodie Gaudion has established a youth-based service locally known as the Sanctuary Murrumbidgee Youth Group. Amelia Telford is a young woman from Bundjalung country and is a national director of the Seed Indigenous Youth Climate Network. We also have Issy, a young person with lived experience of disability, chronic illness, who works for the Youth Disability Advocacy Service in Victoria. Palmer -- Victoria.

We might come back to that one. Ethan was one of the questions in last week's Q&A. I'm getting something through. Here we go. Ethan Taylor was one of the questioners last week on Q&A. Welcome, Ethan. Before we start with the rest of the panellists we wanted to get your take on our last weeks Q&A went.

ETHAN:

Last weeks Q&A lacked young people, to put it simply. Sophie, you were the only person on that panel who was under 30 years old and that is extremely disappointed with top we know involving people closer to the issue leads us to better solutions regarding issues.

I would have thought they would include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people given we are on the land of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

How did you feel about the response you got from the panel?

ETHAN:

I didn't feel good about the response. When we ask people in power questions we deserve a straight answer. Last week I was not given a straight answer. My question was sidestepped. And as I said, we need to make sure we don't lead – might leave anyone behind the COVID-19 requirement but now we have Scott Morrison, we are talking about homes here, people invading homes to get something they want without permission.

My question was around – do you think there's a way we can recover from COVID-19 by investing in renewable energy and respecting Indigenous land rights? And I think there is, I think there is a way we can recover from COVID-19 by creating good jobs for people, by respecting the homes of Indigenous people and not invading them.

I think there is a beautiful prosperous country we can build post COVID-19 and leaving gas and other fossil fuels behind.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

That is partly a good segue to our first question which quotes you, Ethan. The question Ethan asked was, we are pushing a gas recovery from COVID-19 and this means mining on Indigenous lands without consent, the burning of fossil fuels and the exacerbation of climate crisis for top do you think the government can give a recovery from COVID-19 by respecting Indigenous land rights and investing in renewables?

AMELIA TELFORD:

Thanks to everyone for tuning in. I need to expose, I am the national director of the Seed Indigenous Youth Climate Network and Ethan is one of our team members. We put that question to the panel last week. I am disclosing my interest, whereas what we are seeing right now with the COVID commission being headed by fossil fuel executives and the Commission being hand-picked by Scott Morrison himself, then not declaring the vested interest, it's incredibly important to do, for the sake of transparency but also I guess in light of this conversation and why we're having this panel tonight in response to last week's discussion.

I agree with what Ethan just said. It is definitely possible. And when you look at the strategies that have worked in terms of helping maintain or prevent I should say Corona from spreading throughout

Aboriginal communities, places where mining and fracking would go on, it is the leadership of those communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations that stood up from the beginning of this because we know in a very real way know the impact a pandemic like this can have on our communities, we have seen it in the past and we don't want to see it again, we can't afford to lose any more of our people or country or culture.

We know it is possible and the leadership of our people is where we need to look right now. It was great that we saw not only the Northern Territory Government but a bunch of other places look to that leadership and follow what people were calling for an asking for, and that is the response we need to have.

The communities most impacted by these issues have to be the ones that have to lead and be a part of it. We often say nothing about us without us. And that goes to tonight's panel in terms of young people and our future, but also those communities who are already involved – make vulnerable to the injustices we face in society.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

Our next question is a live one. It is coming from Jasmine Walker in Melbourne. We might take a minute to get her up.

We are having a few technical difficulties. We might move onto the next question. Desiree, your work with Young Campaigns, what role – Matt role do you think young people can play in the mass movements that are forging a better future?

DESIREE CAI:

I think we have probably the most to gain out of mass movements and taking collective action to better our future. You look at the climate crisis and the economic crisis and young people bear the brunt of a lot of the burdens of both of those crises.

I think there is so much to be gained from mass participation because a lot of the changes that have ever happened and the progress that has been made in history has come about through mass movements and people coming together and fighting together and realising that our fights are all connected. We have to be fighting for land rights and First Nations justice in order to fight for a better and just climate and we have to come together on a mass scale between the union movement, people who are most vulnerable, climate movements, movements for immigrants and other people who have been screwed over by the government, when we come together we are better and can stand together to make a better society.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

Mohamed, do you have anything to add?

MOHAMED SEMRA:

Can you hear me? Honestly, she perfectly explained it.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

The next question is a bit of a follow-up and I might show to you, Issy. How do we make sure these movements are inclusive? Last year there was a ramping up of the school strike for climate movement, can you touch a bit on some of the things we can learn from the past and make sure our movements are more inclusive in the future?

ISSY OROSZ:

I think inclusivity in social movements is arguably the most important part about them because if they don't include all people, all people cannot access these movements equally, they will wait – Matt won't benefit from them. The main thing which is a bit of a buzzword is codesigned and what that means is when you are designing any part of any process, you must include people of all identities, abilities etc.

I think this is especially important for first Nations people and people with disabilities, which is where my job sees itself. Whether it is run by young people or not, or run by the government, you need to have people who will be involved in it, so that they can access it, their communities can access it.

Ensuring you have Auslan interpreters, ensuring you put alternative text on all your pictures, ensuring there is captioning, there is access keys around every event you have. Basic things which are necessities but you will realise afterwards that our intuitive will come from accessing communities.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

Our next question is from is are and I will throw to Brodie, about access for rural and regional young people for Do you believe the gap all widen between rural and metropolitan educational standards post coronavirus?

BRODIE GAUDION:

Interesting question. Where people have more privilege they will advance more and likewise people who are already disadvantaged might fall behind. Interestingly, with COVID, something rural communities have been crying out for for a long time is finally taking place and that is adapting to technologies to make it a available for us to be speaking from different places.

It's been amazingly uptake in more city based central organisations and it's been easier lately. To be

part of the conversation and be represented in that way. Our experience of COVID is significantly informed by the fact we have just been through the bushfires and our time -- town was cut off after the bushfires.

We are in a unique situation where it's impossible to completely separate the effects we are feeling now between one and the other. Also encountering COVID as young people, they have more access because there was already increased access to services that we have been able to reach out for and put in our community, by the time that COVID came through as well.

But I think in general, we have to be really conscious, just like you see mentioned before, that diversity, no matter what your circumstances are, ability diversity, or what you have access to, we really need to make a concerted effort to not let people fall behind.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

Amelia, what is your response to this, have you identify different barriers for operational and rural members in your networks?

AMELIA TELFORD:

Yes, for us, a lot of the work that seemed that power comes from bringing people together face-to-face and having conversations, having community events, learning from one another, all of that. The work has definitely been impacted and it has taken us more time than other organisations to shift gears and figure out how to just take it all online. Like it has not been as easy as we have seen a bunch of old -- a bunch of other organisations do.

Just a small team, the ability to reach people where they are, even though you can argue that we now can expand the work that we do to bring in more people in an online way, it also then brings up the challenges and barriers like having access to good internet, having access to a computer, having access to credit on your phone with data, we are in the middle of launching an online training Fellowship, because this year we would have put on a whole series of face-to-face training and community events, and so, we have just launched what we are calling protect country, Fellowship for Indigenous young people to get involved and still be building on their capacity to be leading change in communities during this time.

In the process of doing that we are asking people questions which is what you need to be able to participate in something like this and I think we are not going to know the answers until we ask those questions. So that is really where we are at, it is an opportunity to force ourselves to do this because previously we could have done something like this but now we are forced to do it and I think it will only really make a face-to-face work even more better so that we can stay connected nationally and in our communities.

But at the same time it has definitely been a struggle to shift gears and get into that. I can't imagine what it would be like to not have access to the resources that even myself and my team have.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

Mohamed, can you talk about how these barriers being in a rural or regional area for someone from a migrant background or a culturally linguistic background, what sort of digital barriers that might create in terms of education and employment?

MOHAMED SEMRA:

Yes, so, I will speak about my experiences, especially with young people and I am coming from a background, I was born in the African community, and we tend to group together and make that our... Being here and because we don't have that acceptance... With each other, so I feel like we tend to isolate ourselves and it can only imagine how it might be in rural places. Where you might not have the same accessibility and resources that I now have living in an urban area. Having education and basically more access, I guess, to pursuing my goals and ambitions.

Sorry, I think I cut off. What I'm trying to say is, I understand that it might be, so, like I understand where the problem is.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

Yes, absolutely, it cut out slightly, there. We might, we have had a couple of people right into the chat about digital inclusion, how some people might not have access to things like internet, or internet connections, or access to a computer, that sort of thing, I thought I would mention that is coming through quite a lot on the chat.

I am told we are now ready to go to a live question from Jasmine in Melbourne, we might give that a try again. Here we go, something is happening. You are on mute at the moment.

SPEAKER:

Can you hear me, my question was just, what role do all of the panellists feel as movements play in building and creating a better future for young people across Australia?

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

I might go to you, Desiree.

DESIREE CAI:

Full disclosure, we worked together at young campaigns, we have been working together to build something for young people, we are launching tomorrow which is basically a key demand is for the

government to provide, our current demand is for the government to provide our climate jobs guarantee but it is these radical idea of a society that works for everyone and not just big business and the 1% to the government currently has you know, they are being property at by, if you were to be really cynical.

But the question was about mass movements. I think when everyone does engage, I have seen questions pop up in the chat about engaging young people and politics in general, and how hard that seems to be and I think a lot of young people lack engagement because they don't believe in the political process, they don't think it has much integrity and you can see why.

We spoke to the example of net Paola who is in the fossil fuel industry, heading the COVID commission, and that is really just one example of a lot where you can see that ordinary people are not really being represented by our parliamentarians and no wonder young people are disengaged when all they see is squabbling in Canberra and so forth.

But when you see lots of people coming together to fight for a transformative vision of a better world, just coming together on a massive scale, you can look at the last example in this trailer, a massive thing for climate change, when you see impact, you are reaching out to people where they are, in their communities and schools, like that is when you will get some change.

And we can kind of see it, you have mass participation of schoolchildren which is incredibly inspiring in the school students climate, I think if we continue like this practice of like engaging in civil political life, you will see a lot more young people get engaged.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

Brodie I will throw to you, your youth group has had quite a bit of impact in your local community, can you talk about this idea of really influential movements, social movements, but on a local level.

BRODIE GAUDION:

Yes, it is that, I think, think global act local and vise versa. Mallacoota has always had a deficit in... And it has been interesting, I was actually in the rural communities, there was work opportunities and I was visiting home, and that is experienced in a lot of and people, a lot of young people in rural home towns have been forced out of this issue to the COVID situation.

It has allowed us to organise and have more energy on a local level, and said people younger than us, in our own age groups, we inspire each other and inspire each other to tune in more to these mass movements and gain energy from that in addressing the fact that a lot of people don't feel and justifiably so, don't feel like the government has young people's futures at all in their interest.

And so, it is a really great time to be organising on a grassroots, local level, acknowledging that young people coming from these rural areas are the absolute experts in decision-making about their own futures and should be treated like engaged in this decision-making processes, they need to be made accessible for young people who are going to be dealing with the consequences.

And so, but also to acknowledge that it really does need, we need our peers to be engaging also with these mass movements, these concepts, so that we can translate it into our own experience, as diverse as they are, and engage and feed back into them.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

Our next question is around the casualisation of the workforce which for anybody who watched Q&A, they rented on quite a bit. So the question comes from grace and that is, many young people are casual workers and are not entitled to government help during COVID-19, how can our government that are financially support young people? I might through to Issy.

ISSY OROSZ:

It is not necessarily as simple as the government giving more money to people who worked casually, I think one of the big things we need to have is a shift in culture and that needs to be pushed by the government in that young people deserve to have access to sustainable my maintaining, careers. Even as young people. We should not necessarily be forced into casual positions, which is not a bad thing, but we should have access to opportunities and be equal at -- equal to older counterparts who have full-time jobs, guarantee jobs on contract.

I think that comes with social chains as most be perpetuated by the government, to allow us to assume positions that we rightfully deserve or are qualified for.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

Amelia, did you want to add anything to that about casualisation of the workforce and what we can do or what the government can do to address that for young people?

AMELIA TELFORD:

I don't feel this is necessarily my area, but I think for me, when I was watching the panel last week and hearing yourself speak, Sophie, and others, I think what comes down to it will be is that everybody deserves to be able to a safe in the workplace, to be able to be paid all the work they are doing, to be able to you know, have access to good work and I think for you know, when we at Seed and a lot of communities that we talk to, often people end up doing a bunch of work that they may not necessarily want to do, but they need to get money in their pockets, right? They need to put food on the table. So whatever work available they will do it will sto.

But we need jobs that do not force people to exploit their values or their culture or our land and water, all those things that we absolutely need, I don't feel like the specifics of this and policy round it is in the area, but I think we can all agree on those things, and to me, that is what it comes back to.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

There has been median the last day or so, I have had a few comments pop-up in the chat box around the extra \$60 billion that has been suddenly appearing in the Treasury. What is the panel's thoughts on that, we no that that was about half 1 billion casual workers, young casual workers -- half 1 million, who were locked out that shopkeeper payment. What does the panel think we can do, should the government be saving that 60 billion, how should we be using that? Desiree?

DESIREE CAI:

The obvious thing everyone has been pointing out is to extend JobKeeper and the current benefits we have to protect the people who have been left out in the cold – migrant workers and people on temporary visas and casual workers, many of them young people. But we can look at a policy that is bolder than the short-term, what is keeping people afloat during the crisis.

Something the government can do is create jobs. We have seen the idea of a green new deal, if people haven't heard that in America, the idea that government can create jobs that simultaneously give people work when they need it but are jobs insect is where we need to care for each other in society and works for the climate and doesn't exacerbate climate change.

Unlike government proposals to stimulate the economy with gas and investing in more fossil fuels and putting more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and causing global warming, we can invest in jobs that help communities transition out of coal, transition to renewables and also have jobs where people can feel like they are contributing to society are not just making a profit for their boss who might be a multimillionaire.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

I will pick you up on that transition's point, this is something the school strikers have been engaging in the union movement around, insuring that workers and families and communities in those industries are not left behind and they are moved into a new sustainable economy.

Does anyone on the panel have any thoughts on that? Or want to add anything to those conversations?

BRODIE GAUDION:

Do you mean talking about ways that young people's futures in the workforce can be protected?

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

We touched on the just transitions idea and there has been talk about ensuring that when we move into a more just and environmentally friendly economy we bring workers with us. Creating jobs for young people but making sure we bring communities along with us and not hurting families and the people who have been doing those jobs as well for

BRODIE GAUDION:

One of an out – make our community in Mallacoota, and we are small community, but during the response to both COVID and the bushfires there has been a lot more community engagement in decision-making processes and community decisions.

There has been an election in our small town where 12 people have been nominated onto a recovery Association to be part of the mechanism of representation in town to make sure decisions have been really informed from a grassroots level

And likewise through The Sanctuary it is opened up opportunities for young people to have jobs. It is a community-based organisation that is feeding into the benefit of the community and creating a bottom-up approach to information, great opportunities for people to be working and doing things they care about and improving the situation for everybody.

That is a great opportunity for the government to spend some of that money in a way that is great instead of bringing people in from externally all the time to do a few days work, in that relief kind of way. To be up skilling, helping individuals.

AMELIA TELFORD:

I will briefly touch on that, transitions. I think this goes back to the statement around asking people who are directly impact by it, what solution and features they want to build. A great example is what has been going on in the Latrobe Valley in Victoria, a region that has been providing energy to Victoria and the rest of the country for a very long time, and just today the Hazelwood power station, the smokestacks were demolished.

And I think that is a shout out to that community right now because there is a lot of mixed emotions and mixed feelings. In one way environmentalist and climate campaigners can celebrate this but at the same time it's about what is going on for the community. I think there are incredible community groups and young people there, the Australian climate have been asking what is the vision for the valley and putting that into the hands of community who live in the Valley.

Amazing stories come out from community members talking about still being a region that can provide power but it doesn't have to be dirty power. The community has faced incredible... It's not

incredible in a good way, but incredibly bad impacts, the rate of asthma, my partners family worked in the coal mines and suffered from black lung.

So many social impacts. There is a need for a transition but at the same time, we need to take the time and have the conversations and do it in a way that helps those communities to help themselves. As well is having a national policy and funding to go to it, which is what we need to see more of.

DESIREE CAI:

The importance of having those local communities really dictating the circumstances of transition. Or if you talk about a national climate jobs guarantee you need local communities to understand what they need to be dictating and determining the terms of that. We need to take to the national policy discussion.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

Our next question is for Mohamed and it's around mental health. COVID-19 has caused a spike in access and demand for mental health support, particularly for young people. How do we better support young people's mental health now and into the future?

MOHAMED SEMRA:

(audio dropout) really resonated with me. (audio dropout) our COVID-19 recovery but I feel concerned that sadly we are in the position where we might forget a lot of young people, particularly those from a migrant background.

I will speak through my personal experiences. Rowing up I had severe asthma. Whenever I was in class (audio dropout) and that got to me mentally and physically and was very draining. So I kept to myself because I felt like there was no safe space for me to give my two cents worth and I felt like if I did have my say I would get attacked and so forth.

I feel like the most important thing we can do is give minorities a safe space to express their views. Can everybody still hear me?

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

Yes, we can hear you OK.

MOHAMED SEMRA:

What I have been trying to do now is speak about what I've gone through and what I have learned from it. So that others might have, might be empowered to feel that... I feel like in the African community there are two things that can be done in terms of progressing and speaking about mental

health.

One is there is a stigma surrounding it, so if a young person was to suffer a mental illness, the older generation would put it down to 2 causes, one would be drug abuse and the other one would be lack of vision.

Outside of these two causes, you are OK. But if you lack these two, if you... What they do is try to put mental health is being only these two causes and what that does is it doesn't allow for any conversation on anything else. That's why I feel like young people don't want to speak about their problems, they don't want to be attacked.

I feel like it comes down to governments and schools to start educating all the people on mental health and what it means and that there are different causes and basically try to start changing things.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

I might throw to Issy now. Going on from what Mohamed said, a couple of weeks ago the government announced a multimillion dollar package to put money into front-line services for mental health. Is this enough? Enough to address the mental health needs, considering that there was such a lack of investment ride to the crisis?

ISSY OROSZ:

I think that's a good question. Personally, my mental health has changed since the outbreak of the pandemic and I am not ashamed to say that. I think what is hard is that this measure of additional funding has only come because there has been a global pandemic.

There isn't a committed guaranteed that there will be these services, that they will be accessible for all people with mental illness, but particularly young people. I think often, and other panellists have touched on, we find it harder to access services anyway, especially services that could be crucial to our well-being and our lives. It makes it increasingly hard during a pandemic when that national promise for the funding to continue.

The difference would be educating both people making decisions and also Australia as a whole on the true impact that mental health has on all people, especially young people and the fact it needs continual updates and funding for it.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

Brodie, we talked on the panel last week how mental health does not work in silos and for young people who are financially struggling and maybe losing their job or losing hours, it comes into play

with mental health. What are your thoughts in that space?

BRODIE GAUDION:

Definitely, it's been a rough year. It goes to show how things compound, particularly because we are already so isolated, after the bushfires what we needed was to get together and share stories, overcome this trauma through discussing it. And sharing those feelings and empathising with each other, where in reality we have been isolated away we never have before and that has been clear, already there was no regular mental health services in Mallacoota.

That was already a real gap in the services, there were a lot of healthcare professionals crying out for them. Because of COVID there has been a lot more access and funding coming into our community for these services, even though the need was always recognised.

It goes to show her needs to be affect – mac affected before at a high government level things change. It's a hard time for mental health and a hard time for young people to engage in these conversation in their future which are so uncertain. It's difficult, there are 14-year-olds with social media pages, the sense of humour is nihilistic in some ways, and it knowledge meant that the future is messed up in the government is not looking after our interests.

And working out their own ways to not get totally bogged down in it. It's harder for older people to understand why that is, but it's more than that, kids do care and they are trying to look after themselves and trying to survive.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

That's a good segue to one of our live questions. And that's from Philip who says, "How can adults be better adults, I would like to see adults amplify the ability of young people to bring about change. What you say to people who are older than you?" I'll open it up to the panel.

ISSY OROSZ:

I will speak, I have one demand and that is that you listen to us, that is the main thing I have to say, I saw a message in the chat as well about harmony and people put so much effort into the climate movement but they are not being changed, it is not because we are not putting enough effort but because we are not being listened to and I think that relates to all issues that affect young people.

Our voices are a little bit louder but if there is a bigger and willing to listen, we would not be in the situation of young people feeling neglected as we.

BRODIE GAUDION:

I think that is so true and also the commitment that all the people need to take, when they could

challenge that -- challenged by the views being expressed by young people, taking the journey and challenging themselves and challenging preconceptions alongside them, instead of pulling rank and you know, expecting young people to just respect the Elders by blindly following them. But being really sincere in their efforts to understand where the argument is coming from that they don't agree with.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

The next question is pre-recorded, let's see how I go with putting it out there, it does tight to -- touch to what you were saying, and all the panellists were saying about having on people's voices in the conversation. This question is from Adam band. Can everybody see my screen?

SPEAKER:

For far too long, successive governments have a 0 young people, either because -- ignored young people, because they are only listen to their business mates or because they are out of touch, we need younger voices in our Parliament, what can we do to encourage more young people to run -- to run for Parliament?

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

I will throw to you, Desiree.

DESIREE CAI:

I think... I don't even know where to go with this, for one, running in an election to be actually elected in Parliament in Australia cost like a lot of money, I am talking like \$1 million, how is the young person ever going to be get involved in a system that is so difficult to be involved in?

To give an answer that is a bit more optimistic, and something that we can actually do, I think we want to see young people running the local office on all different levels. So young people running for council. And for people who want to make a change, just do it, go and run and maybe you are being disruptive and going in as the status quo of the current politics, but you need to go and run.

And the more people encouraged to run for local offices and to actually succeed, the more young people will start paying attention and see that is possible.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

Mohammad, I will throw to you.

MOHAMED SEMRA:

What we can do to encourage young people is if we identify and invest in young leaders. I feel like there is a lot of work that never gets identified and never get shown, so I feel like if organisations and

the government for just us as individuals, if we identify those young leaders that are doing amazing work and initiating change and we want to see them basically give their voice, it falls on us to try to identify that and seaways we can invest in them to basically put them in a position of power.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

Amelia, I am seeing some questions come through, comments, sorry, about lowering the voting age, and this is a debate that has come up for at least a couple of decades now, what are your thoughts on that? You have come across a lot of really intelligent, articulate young people. Is this the way to re-engage young people in the political system?

AMELIA TELFORD:

Absolutely, a little story, signing a petition, sorry, a campaign called youth decide which was run by the Australian youth climate coalition a few times back in 2009 and again a few years later, that was my first step to getting involved in this movement, there was the environment group at my high school, like a lot of other groups in universities and schools across the country, there were putting on events to engage young people in questions and conversations about their future.

It was called youth decide because it was a play on the federal election that was happening at the time saying we're going to ask young people what they think and we will present those results to politicians. It wasn't -- it was a way of engaging young people in the debate even though we could not read at the time. That for me was one of the first apps getting involved and I think, I definitely think we should argue to lower the voting age, when I talked to 16 year olds these days or people around that age, even, I have two beautiful stepdaughters and they are seven and eight, and they know what is what. They are literally, they hear about what is going on in the world and ask the question about what they think we should do and they have amazing, beautiful and servers. Fuelled by the values I think a lot of us have.

So the thing that I would add two as well, is that Adams questioned said that young people are being ignored and not given the ability to participate in these things and I would also add that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are being ignored, and it is our entire community, we have been calling for investment in our communities, we have been calling for our leaders to be listened to, and it is pretty frustrating to feel like you are banging your head against the wall time and time again.

So I think it is about increasing people's ability in going back to what we talked about before as well, building and leading social movements because if we are not going to see that change politically, we need to make it happen ourselves and so, like right now we are going into like, we are working with young people in the Northern Territory who are going into an election in August, and haven't yet had a chance to actually even talk to their communities about enrolling.

So the ability for people to be able to go in votes, and the ability for them to go and vote in a way that is safe and healthy, there is big questions being asked about the democratic participation of Aboriginal people having a say in voice in issues that impact them.

In similar ways to how young people are being ignored, we need to remember a lot of other communities whose voices are not being heard either.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

Not every young person is going to want to go into politics or parliament, what other ways can be make sure that young people are heard, that is not necessarily being elected into Parliament. I might throw that to see.

ISSY OROSZ:

There is lots of ways, and this is about Mohamed's point about identifying young leaders, but also youth organisations at the local levels and state levels, like all over the country, advocating for young people and involving young people.

I feel lucky because I work for one of them, but I feel we have so many resources available to us, 70 organisations doing so much work, with the voices of young people, why don't we access people that already there, people already willing to talk, I think it is a complete missed opportunity.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

Brodie you work for young people -- you work in one of the organisations that works with young people, what ideas do you have for fixing this?

BRODIE GAUDION:

The fires came to Mallacoota on 31 December and a sanctuary Mallacoota Youth Group began on 5 January, so we are pretty new and straight in response to that crisis. But already, I mentioned before that our country is to have a recovery Association which is made up of local residents. As the committee. And I have been elected onto that committee as has a local 22 rolled amazing environmental activist. So I think that is really showing how people want to hear the voices of young people.

We definitely outnumber, the average age of our town is well over 55, but we have a fair range of elected representatives on that committee, likewise we are just beginning to work out who to access and where to go to get our voices heard in how we want to run our own representative mechanisms here.

So it is quite early days for us, but it is becoming obvious that the NYCA and YDAS is there, these

organisations exist, but we have not had much to do with them because we are quite fire out and I guess there is not many of us, so this is the first time that Mallacoota has been interacting with these groups.

I am hopeful, it is really evident that in order for young people to be able to organise it this way, they need their rent space to do that so that they can be having spontaneous conversations with each other in building up these densities in error and empowered in their own communities, so that we can be feeling confident enough to approach leaders and state and federal levels.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

Next question comes from the live audience, this one is on a different topic that we have not touched on yet and that is the arts. The question is, in these difficult times of the pandemic, the rates of mental health are increasing, why has arts funding been axed when arts is often what inspires and empowers people? I might throw to Amelia.

AMELIA TELFORD:

I am going to be completely honest, I was getting caught up in a chat, can you repeat the question, I am so sorry. I was reading the amazing comments from the audience.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

The question is around the arts and given that during the pandemic people are experiencing increased mental health problems, and arts is often something that inspires and empowers people, why has arts funding been axed during this time?

AMELIA TELFORD:

It is a great question, and I apologise for tuning out, I was honestly reading chat messages, but I think anything that gets cut, it shows where the government's priorities are and what they value, right? And so this industry is not valued, even though, the arts industry is amazing, not only does it support people to pursue their creative interest, but it creates incredible jobs, it is entertainment and tourism, so many things, and I think for people to be able to express themselves and incredibly important for a lot of First Nations communities like the arts, it is how a lot of us connect to our culture and connect to one another.

I think what has been pretty inspiring is seeing how quickly the arts face came together, and I live with a musician, and she was deeply impacted pretty quickly, will able to sit live Instagram gigs happening and people banding together, I think that is something that we have not touched on in this conversation, how communities have come together in what you might call mutual aid or community care or looking out for one another and I think like whatever that means to you, wait how UK or whatever, ultimately what it comes down to is people having a shared struggle and coming together

and I really saw that in the art space.

I think it inspired me to think about how we could do that in our activism and in our movements. Again, don't feel like it is fully my area, but just having been someone who has seen others inducted, I think, just outside of coronavirus or not, there needs to be more funding and support for the artist industry, that is how I feel.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:
Desiree?

DESIREE CAI:

Incorporating arts in political actions excites me because, this is a nerdy tangent, the way our -- art interacts with politics is important in times like this. This is a wild time to be alive as a human in society, right? I think we need art to get us through it. If we are going to push for a better world, what better vehicle to build it on the back of than art and beautiful music and new roles -- make murals.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

The next question is a live question. Those panel has not focused on secure housing for young people, how Porton is a secure home base? -- How important is a secure home base?

BRODIE GAUDION:

Really important. 20% of the houses in Mallacoota were burnt and that was an issue. Fortunately we had a huge amount of support comment in response to the bushfires and the young people themselves have been supported to find homes, by and large, and homelessness itself has not been a huge issue here so I can't really speak to that.

It's really important to have a home.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:
Issy?

ISSY OROSZ:

It's important to recognise that home may not look the same to everyone. It might not look like living in a home with your parents. It's important to acknowledge that all young people have their own identity associated with home and community and we need to listen to what they are telling us.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

We heard a lot in the media even before Corona about the increased cost of living coupled with rising rates of rental prices. How does the panel think this is particularly impacting young people?

DESIREE CAI:

You can't have a panel about young people without talking about avocado toast, right? If we stop eating avocado toast, we will be able to afford a house deposit, which is just not true. So many things in public policy are geared towards ordinary people, people who are not super rich from buying their own homes and even before the coronavirus crisis, even before the huge economic hit we have been hit by and the years of recovery we will have down the track, young people were struggling to afford a home and that is something the government needs to prioritise and hasn't.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

Amelia, did you have anything else on that one? OK, cool. The next one is about education systems. We have spoken a lot about how the... We've's education system geared towards universities but the TAFE and VT sector have been left behind and we are hearing from young people and schools and big business that there are huge gaps in skills and training, particularly in the TAFE and VT sector. What are your thoughts on how we can encourage more young people to go into the TAFE sector jobs?

ISSY OROSZ:

Sometimes society frames what education is supposed to be like, you should follow this linear journey for this many years and you will be successful. But it is not the majority – make the reality. The commitment to making TAFE courses more accessible, making them free, having them in more places so more people can access them, but also the shift in how we view education so people know this is a valid cause and we should enjoy it and have access to it.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

Desirée?

DESIREE CAI:

The public education system has been decimated by successive Liberal government to have taken funding away. There is a lot of problems with our education system, the way it works. The way the university sectors relies on international students and as a result a government has prompted up as the education source you should go to after high school, and that is so not the case. People go to TAFE to find qualifications rather than following the course you are told you have to go to.

It is about public funding and free education is a big one that some states are on their way but its investment in public education.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

Brodie?

BRODIE GAUDION:

It's also an interesting time to talk about decentralising the education system, where in Mallacoota we have had a lot of our landscape birds and their -- burned and there is a lot to be learning from regenerating the bush, as an example. 10 or 15 years ago they had an amazing green program where local people were employed to do marine and coastal management activities and were given a certificate 2, they were given a lot of skills and that led people into working in the sector.

In the last few months have been trying to find out why that does not exist anymore, such a successful program, I've been frustrated to keep getting the answer that the government doesn't have funding for those programs anymore but have you heard about the work for the dole scheme? That has proved to have negative effects.

It is the government's current policy line that that is what they want to be pushing instead of humanising programs investing in people's interests and passions and services they can deliver to the community. But instead... We need to have free education that is localised and addresses local markets and encourage local markets to exist in improved ways.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

We have 1.5 minutes left. We have a few comments on here saying we should be a regular panel. We will see what we can do in that space. We do have a number of questions in the chat box, we will get to them at a later date.

This is all being recorded and will be available online. Before we finish up, I will give each of the panellists an opportunity to put forward your message to the people watching about what you think young people need for the future. I will start with Mohamed.

MOHAMED SEMRA:

I think young people above all else need to feel supported. I feel like young people need to feel supported and they need to have a safe space to speak about any problems they may have. And also, be invested in. If we see someone doing good we should invest in that potential because maybe that could have a trickle-down effect and inspire other young people to continue doing good work and so forth. I feel like identifying, investing and supporting, that's my thing.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

Amelia Mack?

AMELIA TELFORD:

I love that, Mohamed. What I would add in the context of this panel, for us one of the things we've

been reflecting on his coronavirus is a massive issue we are facing right now and it'll we can really talk about. As is, multiple times today, one of the biggest issues we work on is around climate change and building climate justice and supporting community at the centre, and this is still a big issue, polls are showing that Australians are concerned about climate change even during this time.

The message from Seed is from these issues, how we recover from coronavirus, First Nations leadership is critical. For us, one of the biggest things that came at when connecting with First Nations people globally was the message that when country is sick, so are we. That is not to say that the causes of climate change and coronavirus are collected – mac connected, but there is a huge imbalance in the world right now until we redress the causes, whether another pandemic or another global crisis, we will continue... What young people need to realise is we will live in a state of crises, whether bushfires or coronavirus or whatever, and we need to get better.

We need to get better at dealing with crises. Centring those people most impacted is key. Thanks for listening.

ISSY OROSZ:

I will echo all the sentiments brought up earlier. I think an important thing is when young people are lucky enough to be listened to we should ensure young people are young people of different intersections, we are not genus group and we all have different needs to make sure that when voices are heard we are hearing voices of people of colour, queer of -- we're people, people from regional areas, people with disabilities, we all need to be listened to.

DESIREE CAI:

So many great takeaway is. My main one is you can do something. Right? Organisations on this panel, doing shit in their communities and you can get involved. That's what it will take to build a better world and come out of this crisis with a more equitable world, one where we don't have to struggle to put a roof over our heads and all the issues we have talked about today, there are always so many when you talk about young people's issues. The first step is taking a shoe -- action and getting involved and talking to your friends and family and if you are not running for office, which is a big ask, doing something political and getting involved and maybe we can start a mass movement together.

BRODIE GAUDION:

One of the Century members made it clear that something important to say is there has been a lot of consultation with young people and not just about asking young people what they want. It's about actually delivering that. And the fact there is so much future uncertainty, the fact that the Q&A last week, someone said don't worry, we will sort that out.

That as an intentionally misleading line to be talk about. Some young people are saying we want to finish school, get a job, put effort into life and get rewarded. That is great to listen to as well. Greta Sundberg said had older leaders come to us asking for advice, do it, follow-up, it's easy.

SOPHIE JOHNSTON:

Thank you so much to all our panellists. And thank you to everyone who joined in and asked questions. It's been such a good discussion and it so important and a conversation we need to continue in all of our spaces but also together because a lot of the time social movements really do cross into each other's lives and we are ber when we fight these battles together.

So, thank you to everyone and I hope we can do something like this again soon.

DESIREE CAI:

Thank you.

AMELIA TELFORD:

Thanks so much.

MOHAMED SEMRA:

Thank you.