

HOPES & DREAMS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

REACH

Reach is an independent, for-purpose organisation for young people. Our mission is to encourage young people, no matter what their circumstances, to believe they can achieve.

Each year, 30,000 young people aged 10-18 experience Reach through workshops that are 100% youth-led – designed and delivered by our young crew.

Young people say they can relate to the crew because they speak honestly and openly about their own journey and challenges. This means our workshops are always relevant and meaningful to our young people.

Reach was established in 1994 by Jim Stynes OAM (AFL Brownlow Medal winner, youth motivator and 2003 Victorian of the Year) and Australian film director Paul Currie. They believed that, too often, the potential of young people was suppressed by fear, anger or hurt. The founding vision that drives the organisation is that every young person has the support and self-belief they need to fulfil their potential and dare to dream.

INTRODUCTION

Do you know what the 'great Australian Dream' looks like for today's teenagers? How often do the teenagers in your life talk to you about their vision for their future – what they hope for, aspire to, both for themselves and for their peers?

It is important for young people to dream big, to aspire, to envisage the kind of future they want and genuinely to feel able to chase that dream. And it's equally important for the rest of their community to support and encourage them to go for it.

This is why the Reach Foundation (Reach), in partnership with social researchers Reality Check Communication Research (Reality Check), have opened a real conversation with young people in Australia to explore their hopes and dreams. This is a critically important discussion which we believe has been and is missing from our national discourse with and about young people.

We are now ready to release the first ever Report into the Hopes and Dreams of Young Australians.

The Report is the result of a multi-tiered research process designed to provide a comprehensive story of the views of young people in Australia today. This process utilized various methods, including a literature review, focus groups, surveys and online discussion forums. Over 600 young Australians aged 13–18 took part in this research, providing a diversity of viewpoints that makes a meaningful contribution to the current conversation on what's important to young Australians today.

We (rightly) need to know about and understand the challenges and issues young people face, and this data is readily available from many highly respected and credible sources. But that's not the whole story – young people are not and should not be defined by what's wrong with them. We must know their aspirations, their hopes and understand their dreams and ambitions. And we must then encourage, enable and support their potential and efforts to achieve them.

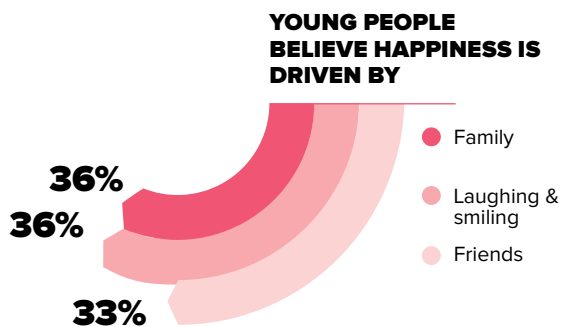


WHAT DID OUR YOUNG PEOPLE SAY?

THE FUTURE

The findings of the report show that although young people are excited and positive about the future, they are also fully aware of the challenges they will be presented with and the issues that are going on in the world today. However, putting aside any worries they might have, it's the 'pursuit of happiness' for not only themselves but everyone around them that is the most important thing.

You'll see from this report that the three most important factors impacting the happiness of Australia's young people are not material things, but instead, all about personal connectivity:



FREEDOM

Young Australians today believe strongly in freedom of expression and the right to have their voices heard without any fear of being judged. Most of these young people believe they are currently able to do this, however there are a number of them who are worried that this basic human right will be restricted in the future.

There are some underlying feelings from young people that their opinions are not being taken seriously and are not heard, due to their age and seeming lack of life experience. There is a strong hope that this will not be the case for future generations, and young people (particularly females) are happy to take on this role of change.



SOCIAL MEDIA

There is a concern among young people that social media creates judgement and negativity, however at the same time they recognise that it can also be utilised as a platform to promote change and be heard.



EDUCATION SYSTEM

Many young Australians are worried that the current education system doesn't allow for freedom of expression and thus they are being pushed to conform instead of being encouraged to be themselves.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

There is a strong belief that embracing social justice will have a huge positive impact on future happiness. Young Australians want full equality across all walks of life, including gender, sexuality, nationality and religion.

A new, more tolerant culture is trending among young people, and they are optimistic about wanting to take the lead to implement more change in the future. Despite this optimism, there is still some concern that discrimination will always remain to some extent or perhaps even worsen in the future. Some young people are calling for better support by good government example and more education tools to reduce discrimination.

APPRECIATION

The sense of social responsibility is becoming the basis for many young people's life choices and expectations.

Despite what some may believe, young Australians know they are privileged and they appreciate it. They are well aware that quality of life in Australia is much higher than that of other countries and most want to use their privilege to give back and help others.

The vast majority of young people feel safe living in Australia, although there are a few who do feel threatened by the unrest happening in other parts of the world and what this may mean for the future. Consequently, they are not just thinking of their own personal hopes and dreams for the future, but also how they can improve the quality of life for others.

CHALLENGES

Young Australians are aware of the challenges that will arise for them in the future, but overall recognize that there are plenty of opportunities to help them achieve their hopes and dreams. One of the main challenges young people are experiencing is that of pressure from parents and teachers to perform well, particularly coming up to year 12 exams.

CHALLENGES THEY BELIEVE WILL PRESENT IN THE FUTURE

- ▶ Employment/job shortages
- ▶ Rising cost of living
- ▶ Transition into adulthood
- ▶ Pressure to conform
- ▶ Pressure from parents and teachers
- ▶ Anxiety about school

SO WHAT NEXT?

The report provides a channel for young people to express their views, uncovering insights that will challenge current stereotypes and provide food for thought to explore new opportunities in the future.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Read the full Report. We give full permission to access, download and use the information in the Hopes & Dreams Report. What we ask is that you reference Reach as the source.

WWW.REACH.ORG.AU

SPREAD THE WORD

If you like what you read and agree that it is important to amplify the voice of young Australians by telling a story around how they feel about themselves and Australia today then spread the word.

Initiate and promote wider discussion and debate around young people's inspirations, opinions, hope and dreams.

Encourage others to access the full Report – spread it through your social media and networks.

HAVE THE CONVERSATION

Have a genuine conversation with a young person in your life about their hopes and dreams: what do they wish for themselves, for their friends, for their community?

GET INVOLVED

Reach will be running the Hopes & Dreams research project into the future. If you would like to get involved to support this initiative or to support Reach more broadly, we'd love to hear from you.

Visit us at www.reach.org.au or contact Trisha Squires CEO at trisha.squires@reach.org.au.



“ Flighty, self-absorbed, materialistic, media-dependent? Yes, you might pick up some hints of some of those things. But here’s what else you’ll discover: a switched-on, engaged, concerned and responsible voice that will surprise you – perhaps even shock you – by its intensity and maturity.”

Hugh Mackay, AO // Social Researcher

Head office // 152–156 Wellington St, Collingwood VIC 3066

NSW office // Level 1, 251 Riley St, Surry Hills NSW 2010

T // 03 9412 0900 **F** // 03 9416 2230 **E** // info@reach.org.au

ABN // 87 069 837 627

 /thereachfoundation

 /thereachfoundation

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