



First Nations & Youth Action Framework & Toolkit

# FYA Federal Election Toolkit

This toolkit is a resource to empower First Nations communities and young people with the knowledge and confidence to participate in the electoral process. It offers practical resources on voting, community organising, and influencing policy, aiming to break down systemic barriers and support informed, meaningful participation in shaping the future.



Authorised by Foundation for Young Australians, Melbourne.

## Contents

1 Introduction	3
Purpose of this toolkit	3
Why voting matters for young people & First Nations communities	3
Key dates for the Federal Election	4
2 Voter Rights & Participation	5
Your rights as a voter	5
Voting on election day	5
Addressing myths and misinformation about voting	6
What to do if you face barriers to voting	6
3 How to Enrol & Vote	8
Enrolling to vote	8
Updating your voter roll details	8
Different ways to vote	8
How preferential voting works	9
Choosing your vote preferences	9
4 Understanding Policies & Candidates	11
How to Compare Policies That Impact Young People & First Nations Communities	11
Using Policy Scorecards	11
Where to find reliable information on your current member of parliament (MP)	11
Questions to ask candidates before voting	12
5 Community-Led Advocacy	13
Your strategy	13
How to engage with local MPs and candidates	13
Running community information sessions, events or candidate forums	14
Policy scorecards	16
Door Knocking	16
6 Engaging with traditional and social media + public narrative	17
What is racist dogwhistling?	17
Messaging, Framing and countering racist narratives	18
Using social media	20
Resources	21
Pitching stories to the media	21
Media Contacts	22
7 Wellbeing	23
Tips for Maintaining Wellbeing	24
Support Services	24
8 Resources & Support	25
Official Electoral Commission Sites	25
Voter Support Services	25



# Introduction

## Purpose of this toolkit

This toolkit is a resource to empower First Nations communities and young people with the knowledge and confidence to participate in the electoral process. It is mainly a curated compilation of links to the work of other organisations covering two main areas, the practicalities of the voting system itself, and how to organise and mobilise your community to influence policy and the election results. Where we saw a gap in the information, we have included some of FYA's own resources.

Many First Nations people face systemic barriers to voting, including logistical challenges, mis and disinformation, and a lack of culturally appropriate engagement. By equipping individuals and communities with this toolkit, we aim to empower young people to take action on issues that matter to them, increase voter participation, ensure informed decision-making, and strengthen First Nations representation in government.

For young people, including those who may be voting for the first time, this toolkit is designed to be a resource to enable informed participation. Voting is an opportunity to shape the future you will inherit. Youth participation in elections strengthens broader advocacy efforts and ensures that issues important to younger generations—such as climate action, education, housing, poverty and justice reform—are considered in political decision-making.

A note on terminology regarding First Nations communities throughout this toolkit - many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people prefer to be known by their distinct and diverse nations, clans and tribes. When referring to the collective, we prioritise terms like First Nations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and colloquial terms like 'mob' over the term 'Indigenous' which has been [co-opted by all levels of government](#).

## Why voting matters for young people & First Nations communities

For young people, elections provide an opportunity to bring attention to issues [that matter most to them](#), such as the climate crisis, mental health services, and affordable housing. Voting allows young people to influence who makes decisions on their behalf and hold leaders accountable for their promises.

For First Nations communities, engaging in the political process both during and outside election campaigns can be a step toward self-determination and addressing systemic inequalities. Historically, First Nations people fought for the

right to vote, with full voting rights across all jurisdictions achieved only in 1965. Recognising this history highlights the importance of exercising this right and continuing the push for fair and just representation in government policies. By voting and/or engaging with candidates and communities during elections, both young people and First Nations communities can contribute to meaningful change and ensure that their voices are heard in shaping a more inclusive, just and equitable future.

However, racism continues to play out in Federal politics in many ways, both overtly and systemically, with devastating impacts. From the very violent colonial foundations of Western 'democracy' in so-called Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-white voices have been historically ignored, oppressed and excluded. For this reason, some people within First Nations communities refuse to engage with the colonial political system at all, highlighting how this system prioritises symbolic change that largely limits the rights and autonomy of First Nations peoples (read Tony Birch's thinking [on the politics of refusal here](#) or the case of an [Elder refusing to recognise a colonial court](#)).

## Key dates for the Federal Election

- **Enrolment deadline:** April 7 is the last day to [enrol or update your details](#) to be eligible to vote. It's important to check your information is correct before this date.
- **Pre-polling opens:** If you cannot vote on election day, you may be eligible for early voting at designated locations. Early voting tends to be available for the two weeks leading up to the election. If you are voting by mail, you need to [apply for a postal vote](#), and make sure you complete your vote and post it before the election day.
- **Election day:** The final opportunity to cast your vote. Polling places will be open across the country, and you must vote if you are enrolled, as voting is compulsory in Australia.



## 2

## Voter Rights & Participation

### Your rights as a voter

Any citizen of Australia over the age of 18 must vote in a Federal Election if validly enrolled and not disqualified from voting or overseas. [Enrolling to vote](#) requires adding your name and address to the electoral roll. This is the list of voters entitled to vote in an election. You can enrol from when you're 17 years old, so you're ready to vote after your 18th birthday. The electoral roll closes April 7, so make sure you don't miss out! If you don't vote and you're eligible, you'll be issued a fine.

As a voter you have the right to accessibility and assistance in order to vote.

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) offers [translated information](#) in a variety of languages and formats to help everyone understand enrolling and voting in Australia. The AEC also offers [options](#) for people who are blind and have low vision and an Easy Read format that's designed to make reading accessible to individuals with diverse cognitive disabilities, low literacy levels, or those who may face challenges in comprehending complex information.

If you can't get to a polling place on election day you can vote at an early voting or mobile voting centre or [apply for a postal vote](#).

### Voting on election day - [Information for people with disability and mobility restrictions](#)

If you need assistance to vote at a polling place, you can ask someone to help you. Polling place staff are trained to assist you or you can nominate any person (other than a candidate) to assist.

A list of polling places will be made available on the AEC website in the weeks after an election is announced. Each polling place is given an accessibility rating to assist people with disabilities or mobility restrictions. These ratings are:

- wheelchair accessible;
- assisted wheelchair access; or
- not wheelchair accessible.

## Addressing myths and misinformation about voting

As the election approaches, it's important for all eligible voters, regardless of their circumstances, to understand their rights. Unfortunately, there are myths and misinformation surrounding the voting process that could deter eligible voters from having their say.

### ***Myth 1: People without a fixed address can't vote:***

Even without a fixed address people can still vote in Australian elections. The AEC recognises that many people may not have a fixed address, such as those who are homeless or moving frequently. If you don't have a fixed address, [use this form](#) to enrol to vote.

### ***Myth 2: People with a criminal record can't vote.***

You are restricted from voting only if you are **currently** serving a full-time sentence of **more than three years**, a restriction identified as a [human rights concern](#) by the Australian Human Rights Commission. Australian citizens aged 18 and over who have served their sentence are entitled to vote, including people on parole and those with prior convictions. Prisoners must be enrolled and remain enrolled while they are serving a full-time prison sentence. Serving a full-time sentence does not include at-home detention, a Community Corrections Order or parole. In those cases, they can enrol and vote as an ordinary voter. You can enrol to vote as a prisoner [here](#).

### ***Myth 3: Your vote can be traced***

Australia has strict protections for the privacy and secrecy of votes. When you vote in a Federal Election, your vote is completely anonymous unless you choose to tell people how you voted. The design of the Australian voting system ensures that no one can identify how an individual voted. The act of casting your vote is secret, and there are strict rules around the handling of ballots. The only thing that identifies a voter is their name on the electoral roll, which is separate from their actual vote.

If there's a circumstance in which having your address included in the publicly available electoral roll puts you or your family's safety at risk, then you are able to [apply to be a silent elector](#).

## What to do if you face barriers to voting

The voting system is imperfect, and as a result it means not all people enjoy the same access to voting due to discrimination or inaccessibility. If this occurs you can [make a complaint or provide feedback](#) directly to AEC.

If you wish to use an external complaint mechanism you can also contact:

- the Commonwealth Ombudsman who can investigate complaints about the administrative actions of Australian Government departments and agencies including the AEC. As a general rule, the Ombudsman will not, and in some cases cannot, investigate complaints until they have been raised with the agency first. The Commonwealth Ombudsman can be contacted on 1300 362 072 or via the [Commonwealth Ombudsman website](#).
- The Australian Information Commissioner (OAI) can review decisions related to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests or in regard to breaches of privacy. The OAI can be contacted on 1300 363 992 or via [the OAI website](#).
- the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) who investigates complaints of discrimination and breaches of human rights. The AHRC can be contacted on 1300 656 419 or via the [AHRC website](#).

## 3

## How to Enrol & Vote

### Enrolling to vote

If you are an Australian citizen aged 18 and above, you are required by law to register (“enrol”) to vote. If you are not registered to vote (“on the electoral roll”) then you can do so from now up until 7 days after the date of the Federal Election is called.

You can enrol to vote online [via this website](#). You can also enrol by filling out a [paper form which you can download here](#), pickup at AEC offices; state/territory electoral offices; or you can contact the AEC and they will send you one. There are specific forms for those with [no fixed address](#) or [serving a sentence \(of less than three years\) in prison](#).

For more information see the [Electoral Commission's easy English guide](#). Scroll down for other languages.

### Updating your voter roll details

If you have moved house or changed your name since you enrolled, [you can update your details via the enrolment form](#) (just choose the option to update your details). You can do this at any time up until the electoral roll closes April 7. You can check your current details [via this website](#).

### Different ways to vote

Voting in Australia is compulsory.

There are several different ways to vote. No matter how you vote, it will be counted the same.

Most people will vote in person on the day of the election. You can also vote in person before the election or vote [by mail](#) (called “postal voting”). You can apply for a postal vote once the election is called, and you need to send it back before the day of the election. People with a disability or mobility restrictions can get assistance to vote ([see how here](#)), including telephone voting for blind and low-vision voters.



See the easy English guides on [how to vote in person](#) and [how to vote by mail](#) for more information. Scroll to the bottom of these docs for the phone number to the translation service if you'd like the information in another language.

If you live in a residential care facility, a remote location, homeless shelter or prison, a mobile polling station may visit you. You will need to [contact the Australian Electoral Commission](#) to find out where their mobile polling stations are going.

## How preferential voting works

Australian Federal Elections have a preferential voting system, which requires you rank the candidates in order of your preference across two ballot papers (House of Representatives and Senate). This system is an Australian invention that ensures voters' views on multiple candidates are taken into account, so you can still have a say in who represents you, even if your top choice doesn't win.

See the Australian Electoral Commission's [guide on how to make sure your vote counts](#). You must number all the boxes on the House of Representatives ballot paper, and *at least* 6 above the line or 12 below the line on the Senate ballot paper. The more you number on the Senate paper (above or below the line), the more likely your vote is to count all the way until all the Senators are elected.

While it is a little mathematical, understanding our voting system is empowering!

Check out these resources to build your understanding:

- “You can’t waste your vote!” - [House of Representatives](#) and [Senate](#)
- [Voting 101: what is preferential voting and how does it work in Australian elections?](#) - Guardian Australia
- [Australian Electoral Commission explanations](#)

Our voting system is different to that in other countries like the USA and UK which use “first past the post” (you just vote for one candidate without any preferencing). Our preferential system means that you can vote for a minor party or independent as your first preference, while still voting for the major party of your choice via your preferences (if your number 1 candidate doesn't win). False claims that voting for minor parties or independents “splits the progressive vote” or “wastes your vote”, are representing what happens in other countries, but not in Australia.

## Choosing your vote preferences

The most important thing to know about preferences is they are up to you! You do not need to follow any candidate's or organisation's how-to-vote card. Sometimes,

parties and candidates do preference deals and their how-to-vote card may not reflect the values of their voters.

It's a good idea to do some research before you go to vote (see Section 4). To vote, start by choosing the party or candidate you support the most (or dislike the least!) and put them number 1. Then number sequentially from most to least liked. See the Australian Electoral Commission's [guide on how to make sure your vote counts](#).

Your vote will help elect one House of Representatives member for your local area, and six (if you live in a state) or two (if you live in a territory) Senators. To form a government requires a majority of seats (76 or more seats) in the House of Representatives. If no single party gets a majority (a 'hung parliament') they will need support from a number of other members, most likely from a minor party like the Greens and/or independents. When a major party needs your vote to either block or pass legislation this is described as having the 'balance of power'.

You must number all the boxes on the House of Representatives ballot paper, and *at least* 6 above the line or 12 below the line on the Senate ballot paper. The more you number on the Senate paper (above or below the line), the more likely your vote is to count all the way until all the Senators are elected.

There are tools out there to help you prepare your preferences such as [Build a Ballot](#) (will be live once ballot papers are finalised), and the [ABC's Vote Compass](#) can help you see how your views align with the main political parties' policies.

If you do decide to follow a how-to-vote card, make sure you trust the candidate or organisation it has come from, and make sure it is in line with voting rules.

## 4

## Understanding Policies & Candidates

### How to Compare Policies That Impact Young People & First Nations Communities

Comparing the policies of parties and candidates is crucial for informed voting. They impact many aspects of our lives including education, jobs, healthcare, First Nations rights and climate action.

Imagine two political parties have different plans for education.

- **Party A** promises to lower university fees and increase apprenticeships.
- **Party B** wants to cut education funding and further restrict financial support for students.

By comparing their policies, young people can decide which party better supports their access to education and future job opportunities.

### Using Policy Scorecards

Policy scorecards break down party commitments in a simple, easy-to-compare format. They are often created by advocacy organisations that are focused on that particular policy area. It's important you check who has created the scorecard you are looking at, and whether they are a trustworthy source of information.

Here are some examples from the 2022 Federal Election:

- [Global justice and women's rights](#) by Action Aid
- [Climate](#) by Australian Youth Climate Coalition and Seed
- [Stronger First Nations Communities](#) by GetUp
- [Civil liberties](#) by NSW Council for Civil Liberties
- [Palestine](#), by the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network
- [LGBTIQ+ issues](#), by Equality Australia
- [Disability rights](#), by People With Disability Australia

### Where to find reliable information on your current member of parliament (MP)

Between elections, how do you know that the individual speaking for you, in your electorate, votes in your interest? Does their voting record reflect your values and those of your neighbours? Do they even turn up?

The *They Vote For You* website is a useful resource to peel back the layers of stuffy jargon, arcane procedures and language and find out how your MP voted on, for example, [expanding powers to intercept communications](#) or for [Aboriginal land rights](#).

It's easy to [get started by searching](#) or head to the full list of [Representatives](#) and [Senators](#). It is likely that your current representatives will run again. If so, you can judge them on their record. Please note that this website is not always up to date.

Specifically on the issue of Gaza, Muslim Votes Matter has set up [an MP tracker](#).

## Questions to ask candidates before voting

We encourage you to think about issues you care about, and turn them into questions for candidates so you can see where they stand. Short on ideas? Here are some questions taken from active youth-led and youth-focused campaigns. Their answers may help inform your vote.

### First Nations Rights & Self-Determination

GetUp: Will you commit to fully funding and implementing First Nations-led solutions for treaty and truth-telling?

### Education & Employment

National Union of Students: Will you lower the age of independence for Centrelink to 18 and increase the Youth Allowance rate so students aren't forced to live in poverty?

Young Workers Centre: Will you ban discriminatory junior wage rates?

### Climate Action & Environmental Protection

Seed: Will you end all public money handouts to coal, oil and gas corporations and instead invest those funds in First Nations communities-led climate solutions?

Australian Youth Climate Coalition: Will you ban unconventional fossil gas extraction (fracking) in the Northern Territory?

### Youth Representation & Civic Engagement

Make it 16: Will you commit to extending voting rights to 16 and 17 year olds?

### Housing

Renters and Housing Union: Will you build sufficient public housing to end the public housing wait list?

### Justice & Legal System Reform

Raise the Age: Will you support raising the age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 and ending systemic racism in the justice system?

## 5

## Community-Led Advocacy

### Your strategy

Before you set out to campaign around the election, take a moment to work out what your strategy is by answering some key questions:

1. What is your goal? Can you measure it? Will you know if you've achieved it?
2. Decision-maker/s - who is it that can give you what you want?
3. What will shift your decision-maker/s. What do they care about?
4. Who are your main supporters? What other people or groups are working on the same issue, can you collaborate with them?
5. What resources do you have and can you get?
6. Who/what are the barriers to your success? Is there anything you can do to remove these barriers?

Shifting votes is hard work. Often to have an impact on an election you need to be campaigning for many months, sometimes years, before the actual election date. Elections are a powerful moment to push for the change you want to see in the world, but just as important is the work you do between elections. That being said, see below for some information and inspiration for hitting the streets, internet and airwaves!

If you want to dig deeper into the thinking behind engaging in elections (or not) see [this article](#).

For inspiration, check out some of the work done in the lead up to previous elections by the [Australian Youth Climate Coalition](#) and [School Strike for Climate](#).

### How to engage with local MPs and candidates

If you want to know more about what your current member of parliament or the other candidates stand for, or you have an issue that you want to make sure candidates understand, then reach out to them and ask for a meeting!

Not sure how to do that? Check out the [meet your candidate guide](#) by the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition for steps and advice (note this guide is from 2022 so some information may be outdated).

Democracy in Colour has created an [anti-racist candidate pledge](#) - just fill out the form and they will ask candidates in your electorate to sign up to a pledge to get

racism out of politics.. You can also sign [this petition](#) from Democracy in Colour calling for politicians to stop engaging in scapegoating of communities.

For an example check out [the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network's engagement with MPs and Senators](#) in the lead up to the 2019 Federal Election.

## Running community information sessions, events or candidate forums

If you want to ensure that your issue is part of the election debate, then you can run a local information session and invite candidates to attend, or run a candidates forum where local candidates can present their policies on the issue to voters. Here are [some tips](#) for running a candidate forum (note, this is a resource from the USA).

*Tips on running an information session, event or candidate forum*

- **Think through these questions:**
  - What is the purpose of the event?
  - What do I hope to get from candidates?
  - What resources do I have to do this?
  - Who is going to help me?
- **Create an event plan:** A plan is a great way for you to work out all of the tasks you need to complete and set yourself a timeline to measure how you are tracking against those tasks. Think about each task there is and who will be responsible. Check out this resource by [YAC Vic on event planning](#).
- **Design your dream speaker list** and approach them to speak at the event. We suggest platforming young people, particularly First Nations and young people with lived experience of the issue/s you are discussing. Make sure you give yourself as much lead time as possible.
- **Invite your candidates:** The timing of this will be tricky - as you want to give them as much notice as possible, but also once you have a venue and speakers locked in, this will be more attractive for them to commit to attending. You could put together a summary of the event and email it to the candidate, and meet with them in the early stages of planning to secure their support for attending. Candidates will be really busy during this time so they will want it to be worth their while to attend.
- **Find a suitable venue:** Who do you know who could lend you a space? Any community organisations? What kind of space will create the vibe you want? Is it in your electorate? Most libraries and council websites have rooms or spaces you can hire at low cost. You may also be able to use a room or space in a local café or restaurant. Be sure to consider people's access needs when choosing your venue - it pays to think about things like wheelchair access, whether there are all gender toilets (if not, can you put up your own signs?), non-invasive lighting and sound, and location.



- **Design a flyer:** Canva is an easy to use tool to do this for posters and social media content. Make sure to include all the important event information either on the flyer or in the caption for a social media post.
- **Recruitment and promotion:** How are you going to get the word out? Advertise as soon as you can - once you've got the date and venue locked, you can do an initial promotion, and then update it as speakers are confirmed. For promotion, start with the communities you're already connected to e.g. your friends, family, sports team, school, classmates, church group, house mates or a local community organisation. Community noticeboards are a must! Would your local newspaper run a story? Worth asking :)
- **Design an agenda:** An agenda is a high-level plan for how time will be used in an event, workshop, or gathering. It is a guide for facilitators on when things should happen and how.
- **MCs:** Who is going to facilitate the event? Make sure they know who all the speakers are and have notes to support the facilitation. Set up a time to yarn with them about how you want the event to feel and what to do if any conflict breaks out.
- **Cultural safety:** Check out this resource [Running events on Aboriginal Land](#) from the Collective Imagining Zine, where Roxanne Moore (Noongar), Laniyuk (Larrakia, Kungarakana, Gurindji) and Boe Spearim (Kooma, Murawarii, Gamilaraay) discuss the ways that event organisers and facilitators can honour Aboriginal Sovereignty and create the conditions for cultural safety for First Nations young people.
- **Accessibility and Wellbeing Supports:** Examples could include Auslan interpretation, live captioning, transport costs e.g. taxis for immunocompromised folks who cannot get public transport, Rapid Antigen Tests for people to do a Covid test before they arrive, masks for people to wear to keep each other Covid safe or wellbeing support people. See [the Access Info for the 2024 Boorloo Disability Pride Festival](#) as an example of what you can do.
- **Prepare your candidates:** Candidates like to come to an event feeling prepared, so send them a briefing a week out including the agenda and set expectations about what their role will be at the event. Are they listening or speaking? If you'll be interviewing them, provide the questions in advance. Let them know who will be there and what to expect.
- **Catering:** Food and beverages are a really great way to ensure people feel comfortable at your event and in some cultures it is customary that the host provides food for their guests. Consider whether you want to have a snack table or finger food and what type of drinks you want to provide. Be sure to provide the most common such as tea and coffee.
- **Organise media to attend:** Letting local or community media know about your event can be a helpful way to spread awareness and also keep the candidates accountable to any policy commitments or broader comments they make at the event. See *Section 6 for resources on how to engage with*

*traditional and social media in a way which is safe and effective for you and your community.*

For inspiration [check out the Victorian Aboriginal community event](#) held in the electorate of Cooper in 2019.

## Policy scorecards

A policy scorecard is another way to communicate to voters how the different parties and candidates perform on the issue or issues you care about. Check out some example scorecards from the 2022 Federal Election:

- [Climate](#), by Australian Youth Climate Coalition and Seed
- [Stronger First Nations Communities](#), by GetUp
- [Civil liberties](#), by the NSW Council for Civil Liberties
- [Palestine](#), by the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network
- [Global justice and women's rights](#) by Action Aid
- [LGBTIQ+ issues](#), by Equality Australia
- [Disability rights](#), by People With Disability Australia

Note that if you print out scorecards or any other materials related to the election, you may need to "authorise" them. This usually involves having the name and address of a person involved in making the material included on it. [See the AEC for more information](#).

## Door Knocking

Door knocking is a good way to directly engage in meaningful conversations with people and win hearts and minds. To do some doorknocking you'll need a group of people, a script, some maps, an information pamphlet and a friendly and curious attitude. Check out the Nature Conservation Council of NSW for [a local how-to doorknock guide](#). You can also [check out this guide](#) prepared by the international Blueprints for Change group. Check out which youth-led groups are doing door-knocking this election and join in to see how they do it!

## 6

## Engaging with traditional and social media + public narrative

### What is racist dogwhistling?

A commonly used racist tactic in media and politics is referred to as a “dogwhistle”. According to the Cambridge dictionary, a dogwhistle is “a remark, speech, advertisement, etc. by a politician that is intended to be understood by a particular group, especially one with feelings of racism or hatred, without actually expressing these feelings.”

Dogwhistling is used to some extent by all political parties and media outlets, as these narratives are embedded into Australian identity, patriotism and media. So it's important to learn how to recognise them, fact check and analyse them to form your own view on the issue.

Some examples:

- “Tough on crime” narratives that reinforce stereotypes of First Nations or Black people being inherently violent or criminal. This narrative is often used to justify imprisonment/arrest and violent responses, and to distract from the systemic causes of over-incarceration including housing, family violence, intergenerational trauma and police racism.
  - Example: [NT News calls for help to reclaim Territory from scourge of violent crime](#) - NT News
  - Analysis: [Why the media aren't helping to solve the 'youth crime crisis' they're reporting](#) - The Conversation
- “Welfare” narratives that reinforce stereotypes of marginalised communities being dependent on welfare “handouts”, needing to “pick themselves up by their bootstraps” and stop being “lazy”, rather than pointing to the systemic issues and government failures behind their poverty and oppression.
- “Community safety” and “social cohesion” being weaponised against the community during protest actions. Politicians and police often characterise legal protests as a danger to communities and a threat to social cohesion to justify anti-protest laws, police crackdowns and to distract from their inaction and complicity in human rights abuses.
  - Example: [‘High prospect of conflict’: Rally ban gains support as woman arrested](#) - The Age
  - Analysis: [Australia leads the world in arresting climate and environment protesters](#) - The ABC

- “They’re coming for your land and/or jobs” - this is used in different contexts, but is often seen in the context of First Nations land rights or refugee/migrant issues. This uses fear and a scarcity mindset to turn collective human rights issues into perceived threats for individuals.
  - Example: [Slash migration, fix housing crisis: Coalition's plan to get Australia 'back on track'](#) - SBS
  - Analysis: [Peter Dutton wants to cut migration for the sake of housing. Here's why that's not a good idea](#) - The Conversation

If you want to gain a deeper understanding about **how to shift racist media narratives and counter racist dogwhistling**, look at these actions and resources from **Democracy in Colour**:

- Check out this guide to ‘[Shifting Narratives through Rapid Response Media Campaigning](#)’. This resource outlines their media campaign in response to the racist and heavy-handed over-policing of working-class and communities of colour in southwest Sydney at the start of the Delta outbreak in 2021.
- Ask candidates to sign Democracy in Colour’s [Antiracist Pledge](#) - ask candidates in your electorate to pledge to be antiracist during this election campaign and throughout their political career.
- Sign and share Democracy in Colour’s Racism Out of Politics [petition](#) calling for politicians to stop engaging in scapegoating of communities.

## Messaging, Framing and countering racist narratives

If you want to learn about how to frame your message in this election - whether it be for social media, public speeches or conversations with family and friends - here are a few handy resources to look at.

**Passing the Message Stick** is a groundbreaking multi-year First Nations-led research project designed to shift public narrative in support of First Nations justice and self-determination, launched by Australian Progress and GetUp in 2021. [This report](#) identifies 7 recommendations for messaging:

1. **Start our messages with a shared value.** *Powerful values like equity, taking care of one another, freedom, and knowing what’s best for ourselves can build support for self-determination and justice. By crafting messages around a shared value, we can bring our audiences along, and show how the barriers that hold us back violate widely-held values.*
2. **It’s time to reclaim our strength.** *People believe we’re capable of making good decisions and are more likely to support our demands for self-determination when we share stories of our strength and leadership.*
3. **Name the unfair barrier we face, who causes us harm and why.** *We need to shine a light on who causes the problems we face, and spell out their*

*motive. When we do this, audiences understand people create our problems, and therefore, people can solve our problems.*

4. **Combine truth and action.** *By combining truth and action, we help persuadables move beyond the guilt felt when we tell the truth, and towards supporting our asks. It's important to combine both truth and action, because our communities may disengage unless messages include truth and lived experience.*
5. **Create a collective 'we'.** *Our base and persuadables are nervous that self-determination means segregation. We can overcome this by bringing them into our message, with clear asks for their solidarity.*
6. **Use simple language to explain big concepts.** *Many people don't understand what concepts like self-determination, systemic racism, colonisation or equity mean. We need to say what we mean, by putting these terms in plain language - and when we do, we get wide support.*
7. **Never negate - don't repeat the opponent's message.** *The opposition's story that we're 'less than', or 'get special treatment', is strong. When we negate or myth bust the opponent's message, we only reinforce it. Say what we are, not what we are not, and always speak from our frame*

Passing the Message Stick also made a [Messaging 101](#) guide that outlines the 'VWV' messaging structure:

- **Value.** Start with a shared **value** that hooks our audience
- **Villain.** Then describe the **villain** who is creating barriers for us, and name their intentions.
- **Victory.** Next, share your **victory**, or a clear ask and solution.
- **Vision.** Wrap up your message with a **vision** of a positive, hopeful future.

Example of the VWV messaging structure from GetUp social media post:



If you want to gain a deeper understanding of **deficit discourse and strengths-based approaches**, read [this summary report on deficit discourse](#) by **the Lowitja Institute** (Australia's only national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled health research institute).

*'Deficit discourse' refers to disempowering patterns of thought, language and practice that represent people in terms of deficiencies and failures. It particularly refers to discourse that places responsibility for problems with the affected individuals or communities, overlooking the larger socio-economic structures in which they are embedded.'*

- Lowitja Institute

## Using social media

Social media can be a powerful tool for advocacy. Here are some ways to use social media effectively during the election:

### 1. Sharing messages on social media

- Be clear and concise - Attention spans are short, get to the point quickly.
- Use visuals and video - Eye-catching graphics, infographics, and short videos increase engagement.
- Encourage action - Provide clear ways for people to get involved, whether it's voting, sharing information, or joining a campaign.

### 2. Countering misinformation and racist narratives

- Be mindful of online trolls - Disengage from bad-faith arguments and focus on reaching open-minded audiences.
- Don't amplify harmful or false narratives - Avoid quoting or sharing false, racist, sexist, ableist, homophobic or transphobic content, even when debunking or denying it. Instead, share positive, factual information.
- Fact-check before sharing - Misinformation spreads quickly. Verify sources before reposting.

## Resources on effective digital advocacy

- [Social media for change](#) by The Good Lobby. This booklet was written in the lead-up to the 2019 European Parliament elections, but its content is still relevant for young people and activists using social media for change in a wide variety of contexts.
- [Social Media Activism: A guide to online change making](#) by Jessie Mawson.



## Resources for countering misinformation and disinformation

- [Disinformation and Misinformation: Definition and Types](#) by the Commons Social Change Library. The Commons Library has collated definitions, types of misinformation and disinformation, and common tactics used to spread them, which can be used to start conversations, run training sessions, or inform planning.
- [A Guide to Prebunking](#) by the Commons Library. This resource looks at prevention, or 'pre-bunking' with factual information as a way to counter misinformation and disinformation before it reaches a wider audience.
- [Fighting Disinformation and Transphobia](#) is a podcast from Commons Conversations. This episode is a useful example of the application of countering disinformation techniques. It features Jackie Turner from the Trans Justice Project in a conversation about the importance of building solidarity, community and knowledge of history while combating disinformation.

## Pitching stories to the media

The media can be a very effective method for spreading awareness of issues or campaigns in the lead-up to an election. Engaging with 'traditional' media (such as written articles, radio interviews, and television segments) can be used to amplify your message or put pressure on decision-makers at a time when a lot of people will be watching what they say, and figuring out who to vote for.

It's important to make sure that you feel safe, comfortable, and prepared before speaking to a journalist - and for any interviews you give or information you pass on to be on your terms and for your own purposes. The **FYA Youth Media Centre** has put together a resource pack with some helpful guides on how to prepare for interviews, hold a press conference, and pitch to the media, as well as templates to get you started for writing your own media releases and opinion pieces.

During the weeks leading up to the federal election, journalists will be looking for stories on issues important to voters - this is a great opportunity to 'surf the wave' of increased attention, but it also means the media landscape is quite saturated. It's a frenzied time, and this means journalists are very busy, and lots of people and groups will be vying for attention. Be patient, think carefully about what is most important to you and your community, and don't be discouraged if someone says 'no thanks' to a story you'd like covered. Your voice and lived experience is valuable, and remember - the media is just *one* tool in your toolbelt! Your hard work and advocacy does not begin and end with media coverage.

If you would like any extra support, advice, or help liaising with the media during the lead-up to the federal election, the Youth Media Centre is available. You can reach out to FYA's Youth Media Lead, Heather McNab, at [youthmedia@fya.org.au](mailto:youthmedia@fya.org.au)

### **Tips and checklists for getting media interest in your issue, knowing your rights when speaking to journalists and how to prepare for an interview:**

- [Template: Media strategy](#)
- [Template: Media release](#)
- [Template + tips: Pitching an op-ed](#)
- [Tips: Calling talkback radio](#)
- [Tips: Getting media coverage for your campaign](#)
- [Tips: Pitching a media release](#)
- [Tips: Preparing for a tv or radio interview](#)
- [Tips: Writing a letter to the editor](#)
- [Tips: Your rights when speaking to the media](#)

### **Media Contacts**

If you want to connect with First Nations media specifically, below are a few useful contacts and links:

- First Nations Media Australia [map of First Nations radio services](#)
- First Nations Media Australia [map of First Nations television services](#)
- Koori Mail contact [editor@koorimail.com](mailto:editor@koorimail.com)
- NITV news contact [NITVNews@sbs.com.au](mailto:NITVNews@sbs.com.au)
- [Pitch an article to IndigenousX](#)

If you want to pitch a story to any media outlet and want more contacts and advice, get in touch with Heather at the Youth Media Centre: [youthmedia@fya.org.au](mailto:youthmedia@fya.org.au)

## 7

## Wellbeing

### Wellbeing in advocacy

Participating in elections—whether by voting, advocating for your community, or engaging in political discussions—can be empowering but also emotionally and mentally demanding. Prioritising your wellbeing ensures you can stay engaged in ways that feel sustainable and meaningful. When thinking about wellbeing it's important to consider [social and emotional wellbeing](#) (see below diagram), which is a strength-based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health discourse which is recognised across Australia (and internationally) as culturally unique and community created. Strong and dynamic relationships between the seven domains enables individuals, families, and communities to thrive.



SEWB diagram from [Social and Emotional Wellbeing \(SEWB\) Fact Sheet](#)

## Tips for Maintaining Wellbeing

- Set boundaries: Limit exposure to overwhelming political discussions or social media. Take breaks when needed and focus on what feels manageable.
- Stay connected: Reach out to supportive friends, family, or community members. Sharing experiences and seeking support can help you feel less alone.
- Practice self-care: This can look different for everyone, but by engaging in activities that restore your wellbeing—such as exercise, mindfulness, creative expression, or spending time in nature—taking care of yourself can go a long way.
- Seek professional support: If stress, anxiety, or other mental health challenges arise, don't hesitate to seek professional help.

## Support Services

If the electoral process or political discussions impact your mental health, consider reaching out:

- If you are in immediate danger, call 000.
- [13YARN](#) (13 92 76) – A culturally safe helpline for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- [Lifeline](#) (13 11 14) – 24/7 crisis support and mental health services.
- [Beyond Blue](#) (1300 22 4636) – Mental health support and resources.

Your voice matters, and so does your wellbeing. Taking care of yourself ensures you can continue advocating for your community in a way that feels sustainable and empowering.

## 8

## Resources & Support

Access to reliable information and support is essential for informed voting and active community engagement. Below are key resources to assist with voter enrolment, understanding the electoral process, and organising community initiatives.

### Official Electoral Commission Sites

- Australian Electoral Commission (AEC): The AEC provides comprehensive information on voter enrolment, election dates, and voting procedures. Visit their official website at [www.aec.gov.au](http://www.aec.gov.au).
- First Nations Australians Electoral Information: The AEC offers tailored resources to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in participating in elections. Access these resources at [www.aec.gov.au/indigenous](http://www.aec.gov.au/indigenous).
- The official election results will be published [here](#) as the votes are counted. Election results will also be covered by news outlets.
- Social Media Toolkit: Raise awareness and encourage voter participation through social media by accessing the AEC's communication resources at [www.aec.gov.au/media/](http://www.aec.gov.au/media/).

### Voter Support Services

- AEC Contact Information: For assistance with voter enrolment, locating polling places, or other election-related inquiries, contact the AEC directly at 13 23 26.
- Indigenous Electoral Participation Program (IEPP): The IEPP is dedicated to increasing electoral participation among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Learn more about their initiatives and support services at [www.aec.gov.au/indigenous/iepp.htm](http://www.aec.gov.au/indigenous/iepp.htm).
- Accessibility Support: The AEC is committed to ensuring all Australians can vote. Information on accessibility services, including assistance for voters with disabilities, is available at [www.aec.gov.au/voting/accessibility.htm](http://www.aec.gov.au/voting/accessibility.htm)

#### Need more info or support? Reach out to us at:

 [info@fya.org.au](mailto:info@fya.org.au)  [fya.org.au](http://fya.org.au)  
 [@fya\\_org](#)

FYA acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we all work and live. We recognise their continuing connection to land, water and community and pay respects to Elders past, present and those yet to come. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded. This always was, always will be Aboriginal land.

**Authorised by Foundation for Young Australians, Melbourne.**

This resource was compiled by the Foundation for Young Australians in 2025. All external content linked or referenced remains the property of its respective owners.