

For Our Future

The Australian Future Generations Policy Brief



November 2024

About

This policy brief provides a comprehensive overview of measures and models Australia can adopt to secure a sustainable, healthy and equitable future for all Australians. Responding to the increasing momentum and demand for future generations policy in Australia, this brief capitalises on the unique opportunity presented by the adoption of the Declaration on Future Generations at the United Nations Summit for the Future in September 2024, as well as the upcoming 2025 Australian federal election.

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Foundations For Tomorrow


Foundations for Tomorrow (FFT) is a youth-driven non-profit committed to renewing our approaches to leadership, decision-making and governance. Our mission is to equip Australian leaders to think beyond electoral cycles and financial quarters to make the strategic long-term investments that lay the foundations for a thriving community, environment, and economy for years to come. To achieve this mission, FFT advocates for future generations policy to be implemented now to ensure that current and future generations of Australians are given a fair go. FFT convenes the Australian Parliamentary Group for Future Generations and is a founding member and inaugural chair of the Intergenerational Fairness Coalition.

Acknowledgements

This brief represents the culmination of research, collaborative dialogue and consultative efforts spanning the last two years. It is the product of inputs from a broad network of supporters whose insights, expertise, and commitment have been instrumental in shaping the findings of this policy brief. We extend our sincere thanks to the vast number of stakeholders who participated in consultations, workshops, briefings, and dialogues or provided comments on this brief, which have all enriched its content and recommendations.

We are particularly grateful to the co-chairs of the Parliamentary Group for Future Generations, Mrs Bridget Archer MP, Ms Zaneta Mascarenhas MP, and Dr Sophie Scamps MP, who provided invaluable guidance and support. Their dedication to ensuring that the voices of future generations are heard has been a cornerstone of this work.

Please see Appendix A for a full list of contributors and reviewers who have shaped this policy brief's findings.



We, Foundations for Tomorrow, acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Country and waterways on which we operate, and for which our livelihoods depend. We pay respect to Elders both past and present; we honour the resilience and strength embodied across generations of First Nations communities who have fought for their rights, their cultures and for self-determination. We also acknowledge those who tirelessly strive to protect, preserve and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, leaving a profound legacy for future generations of Elders and leaders.

We recognise that sovereignty was never ceded.

We affirm that this always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

As an organisation committed to shaping a better future for Australia, we pledge to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, embracing self-determination, social justice, sustainability, equality and reconciliation. We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are diverse, with deep-rooted histories and rich cultures that continue to thrive despite past injustices. We deeply honour the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities, and we strive to amplify their sacred wisdom, knowledge and expertise as we work collaboratively to pave the way for future generations.



Foreword

Australia has the opportunity—and the imperative—to reimagine our approach to governance, policymaking and national leadership.

In a world facing an unprecedented convergence of social, economic, and environmental challenges, we must act decisively. Future generations thinking offers us a pathway to proactively address these challenges with a bold, pragmatic vision for the coming decades. Failure to change our policy approach will not shield us from harm; instead, it will render us complicit in surrendering the promise of our shared future.

Four years ago, we founded Foundations for Tomorrow based on the belief that we all have a duty to serve as responsible leaders for the Australian people, and as good ancestors to our future generations. Future generations depend on our ability to make difficult but necessary decisions today. This is not only a moral responsibility but a pathway to building a resilient, prosperous, and cohesive nation.

This policy brief is the culmination of two years of dedicated research, collaborative dialogue and consultation. It provides actionable recommendations to embed future generations thinking into Australia's policy framework, including the establishment of a Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and an independent Commissioner for Future Generations, and the mandate for a national conversation.

These are not abstract ideals; they are pragmatic steps to secure the wellbeing of current and future Australians. These proposals alone will not provide the renewal required, they must be paired with complementary investments and notable shifts in both culture and capability.

I am immensely proud of what we've achieved as a small organisation. Foundations for Tomorrow continues to exceed expectations through our commitment to inclusion, collaboration, and building a unified movement for our future. Yet, I remain acutely aware of the urgency of this mission and the scale of the challenge ahead.

I extend my deepest gratitude to those that have contributed to shaping this Brief. Your contributions and encouragement inspire us to persist in our efforts and your support has made this initiative possible.

As we approach the 2025 Australian federal election, and with the momentum of the United Nations Declaration on Future Generations, we have a critical window of opportunity to set a national agenda focused on intergenerational fairness and wellbeing. Australians are ready for this shift—our leaders must now answer the call. As you read the following pages, I invite you to imagine an Australia where leadership transcends electoral cycles, decisions honour the voices of all generations, and together, we embrace the challenges of our time with foresight and unity.

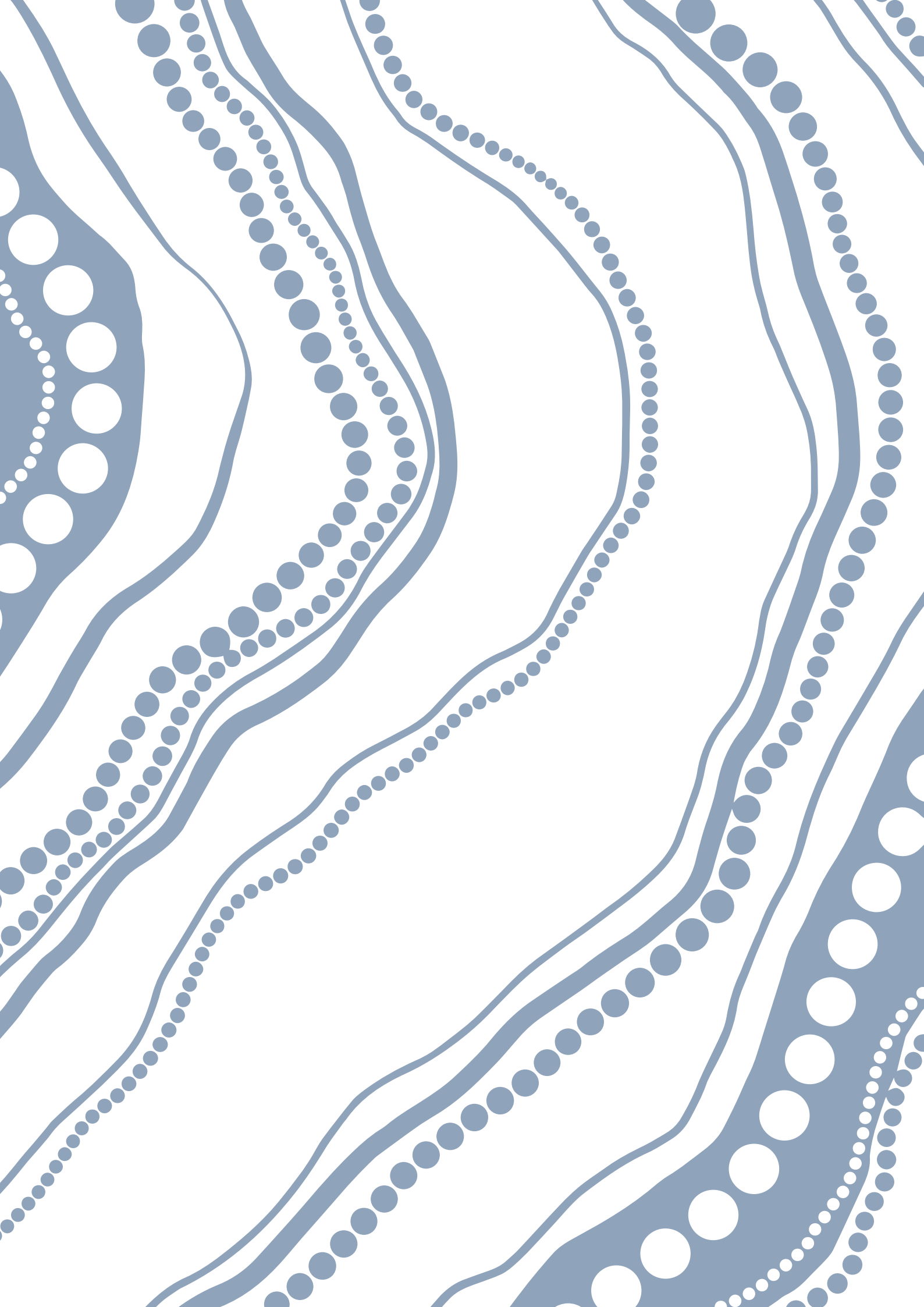
Thank you for joining us on this journey. Together, we are laying the foundations for our future.

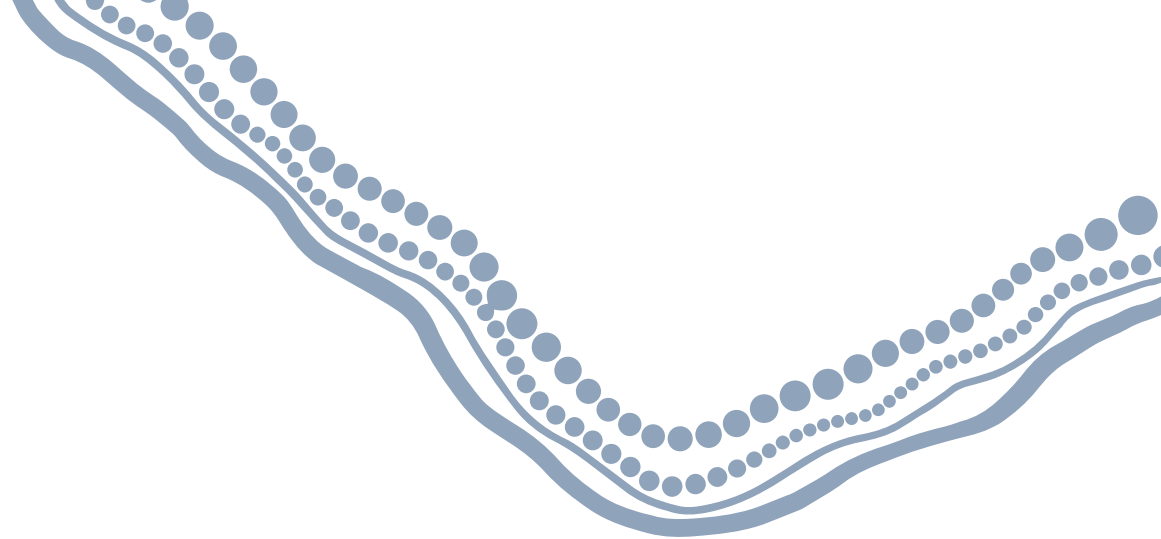
Yours sincerely,



Taylor Hawkins

Managing Director, Foundations for Tomorrow





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Executive Summary

Australia is at a critical juncture where the stakes for future generations have never been higher.

With the future marked by increasing uncertainty due to escalating and compounding global challenges—such as climate change, deepening economic inequality, resource degradation and rising polarisation—every decision we make today has profound and lasting consequences.

Australians are aware of the impacts these converging crises will have on their future and are calling for action. A 2024 survey conducted by EveryGen found that 97% of Australian respondents believe that policies today should take into account the interests of future generations, while 81% agree that Australian politicians think too short-term.¹ In another report conducted by MetLife, 82% of Australians expect deteriorating conditions over the next ten years, especially with regard to financial inequalities and climate change.² Fortunately, a majority of Australians have high confidence in our policymakers' skills and knowledge, and their ability to address key threats to our wellbeing.³ Leaders must take action.

This policy brief outlines the urgent need for a comprehensive future generations approach to policy and decision-making in Australia, anchored in the creation of a Commissioner for Future Generations, to overcome electoral short-termism and represent the interests of the generations to come.

This brief proposes the following **foundational recommendations** to embed and protect long-term thinking into Australia's governance framework:

1. Legislate a *Wellbeing of Future Generations Act* in the Federal Parliament:

Overarching legislation is essential to protect long-term policy commitments from the shifting priorities of different governments. The Act would provide a framework for advancing intergenerational equity and wellbeing, ensuring that today's decisions do not compromise the wellbeing and opportunities of future Australians.

2. Establish an independent statutory *Commissioner for Future Generations*:

The Act would create an independent statutory Commissioner to advocate for future Australians' long-term interests and sustainable practice, ensuring intergenerational fairness is integrated into decision-making across government.

3. Mandate the launch of a *National Conversation on Future Generations* and ongoing public engagement: Led by the Commissioner, this initiative would engage the public as active participants in the co-creation and evolution of the vision for Australia's future, fostering inclusivity and public trust in long-term policies.

Adopting these recommendations, supported by the broader ecosystem of considerations articulated within this brief, will help Australia overcome the limitations of short-term political cycles and human biases that hinder long-term thinking, creating a legacy of sustainable prosperity.

Balancing immediate needs with long-term goals ensures today's decisions address contemporary issues while laying the foundation for a resilient, prosperous, and fair Australia.

In the wake of the 2024 UN Summit for the Future and in advance of the 2025 Australian federal election, there is a unique window of opportunity to meet the growing demand for action to protect future generations.

We must act now, before the consequences of inaction become irreversible.

Section I

The Australian Imperative for a Future Generations Approach

Within a global context defined by the unprecedented convergence of social, economic, and environmental challenges that demand urgent, coordinated action, Australia stands to gain significantly from implementing future generations policy, and risks further compromising democratic, social and environment standards, among others, if action is urgently not taken.

Short-Term Political Cycles and Converging Long-Term Risks

Australia's political system, shaped by short-term electoral cycles, often prioritises immediate gains over long-term planning. This approach overlooks the complexity and interconnectedness of emerging social, economic, and environmental challenges. As these challenges converge, they compound and escalate risks.

For example, as the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report found, climate change exacerbates existing vulnerabilities in society, including economic inequality and social instability, underscoring the importance of long-term strategic policy planning.⁴

Demographic Shifts and Mounting Pressure on Social Systems

Australia's ageing population is intensifying pressures on the healthcare system, government-funded pensions, and consideration to modernise superannuation systems.⁸ Younger Australians are increasingly burdened by the responsibility of supporting an older generation, while struggling with their own economic uncertainties. This dual strain threatens to stretch social services and public spending, creating a significant gap between demand and availability, particularly in healthcare infrastructure.⁹ Research from the Productivity Commission indicates that without urgent reform, Australia's aged care system will soon face unsustainable demands.¹⁰

Escalating Economic Inequality

Australia is witnessing a widening intergenerational wealth gap, with younger Australians increasingly locked out of homeownership and economic mobility.⁵ For the first time in modern history, younger generations—Millennials and Gen Z—are worse off than their parents, facing stagnant wages, unaffordable housing, and the rising cost of living limit their economic and wellbeing opportunities.⁶

The impending wealth transfer, the largest in Australia's history, risks deepening these inequalities, entrenching privilege, and exacerbating the housing crisis if left unaddressed.⁷

Disruption from Emerging Technologies

Technological advancements, particularly in AI, are evolving at a pace that outstrips the development of policy and regulatory frameworks. Rapid advances in technology raise concerns regarding data security, privacy and safety. Furthermore, if not governed effectively, the socio-economic disruptions associated with these technologies have the potential to exacerbate labour market imbalances and contributing to growing inequality.¹¹ Ethical dilemmas related to fairness, transparency, and accountability further complicate the landscape, prompting important questions about the responsible use of technology.¹² Collectively, these risks underscore the urgent need for a coordinated approach to ensure that technological advancements benefit society while minimising potential harms.¹³

Environmental Degradation and the Climate Emergency

Australia is highly vulnerable to climate change, facing increasing extreme weather events, biodiversity loss, and other environmental threats.¹⁴ These impacts are not felt equally—disadvantaged groups, including low-income, rural, and Indigenous communities, are disproportionately affected. Climate change exacerbates existing social and economic inequalities, leaving future generations in these groups particularly vulnerable to worsening living conditions and instability.¹⁵

Social Fragmentation and Loss of Trust

Social fragmentation is rising around the world due to increasing divisions by age, economic status, and political ideology.¹⁶ This trend is evident in many countries, including Australia, where similar patterns of erosion in social cohesion are occurring. While trust in public institutions in Australia remains relatively stable, last year the Scanlon-Monash Social-Cohesion Index rated Australia's social cohesion at its lowest point since the survey first began 16 years ago.¹⁷ As divisions deepen, trust in public institutions risks declining, complicating efforts to build consensus on critical long-term issues.

Together, these challenges paint a picture of a country at a critical time to make long-term decisions, where industry lobbying and political divides often prevent adequate intervention, and the failure to act on pressing issues is already having severe consequences now and for future generations.

By prioritising intergenerational fairness and embracing long-term thinking, Australia can work to mitigate these negative outcomes, implement strategic and sustainable long-term policies, uphold our moral duty to consider future generations and also position ourselves as a global leader in creating a resilient, prosperous and fair future.

Did You Know?

Australia is currently failing to meet the challenge presented by the Doughnut Economics framework, that is, to remain inside the doughnut, balancing social foundations with economic ceilings to achieve a just and safe environment for humanity to thrive.¹⁸

The Doughnut Economics model, developed by economist Kate Raworth, illustrates that the ideal space for humanity lies between these two extremes: ensuring that no one falls short on life's essentials while also preventing environmental degradation.¹⁹

Unfortunately, Australia's current trajectory indicates that we are not only failing to meet the needs of many of our citizens today but are also exceeding the ecological limits necessary for a sustainable future.

“Short-term, siloed decision making is driving burgeoning intergenerational inequality in Australia and is at the root of current crises here such as the housing and environmental crises.

Countries like Wales have addressed this fundamental flaw by establishing a Commissioner for the Wellbeing of Future Generations, backed up by wellbeing legislation, to hard wire long-term thinking.

Young people and future generations should not be left to carry the burden of poor decisions made today. I will be advocating strongly for the Australian federal government to adopt a similar Wellbeing of Future Generations Act to embed a model of holistic, long-term decision making here.”²⁰

Dr Sophie Scamps MP

Co-Chair, Australian Parliamentary Group for Future Generations

Section 2

The Future-Focused Opportunity for Australia

Future Generations, Intergenerational Fairness and Wellbeing

There is a growing global movement toward integrating principles of future generations, intergenerational fairness, and wellbeing into policy frameworks. This shift reflects a growing recognition of the imperative to balance present needs with the responsibility to safeguard the planet's health and finite resources, as well as health, wellbeing, safety, and opportunities for those who will follow long after us.

“The term ‘future generations’ refers to all people who will come after us. Their lives and eventual ability to effectively enjoy all human rights and meet their needs are already being influenced by our actions today. These people are distinct from and – by current demographic projections – will be vastly more numerous than present generations. More than 10 billion people are projected to be born before the end of this century alone, predominantly in countries that are currently lower middle-income.”²¹

Our Common Agenda Policy Brief on Future Generations, 2023, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres

Caring for and protecting future generations is not a modern innovation, rather these practices have been long established in Indigenous cultures and knowledges globally. Governments around the world are increasingly adopting future generations principles, inspired by both emerging global norms and traditional wisdom, as a move towards more sustainable and equitable governance (discussed in Section 3).

Who are Future Generations?

‘Future generations policies and leadership’ encompasses policy innovations and leadership approaches designed to balance the immediate needs of current generations with the imperative to preserve the health, resources, and stability of the planet for future inhabitants. This concept is ingrained in the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.²² According to the 2024 Declaration on Future Generations, “future generations are all those generations that do not yet exist, and who will inherit this planet”.²³ Their quality of life, future options and ability to enjoy fundamental human rights are already being shaped by our actions today.

The Connection Between Young People and Future Generations

This definition of ‘future generations’ also highlights the distinction between current and future populations. While today’s young people - defined in this policy brief to include children, adolescents and ‘youth’ more broadly - may have overlapping interests with future generations, it is recommended that they are treated as a separate group to future generations.

Policy interventions for future generations address the long-term impacts of today’s decisions, while policies for children and young people should focus on their own immediate needs and rights. It should be acknowledged that there is natural overlap in this distinction, with young people currently alive today set to benefit significantly from longer-term thinking throughout their life, however, the stance of this brief is to maintain a distinct definition in order to maintain specificity and avoid an overly bloated preferred Commissioner mandate.

Young people have a significant stake in shaping the future for the generations yet to be born. However, young people should not bear the sole responsibility of advocating for future generations yet to be born. Acting as good ancestors for the future is a duty for all of us.

What is Intergenerational Fairness?

Intergenerational fairness is the principle that today’s decisions should not undermine the quality of life for future generations, requiring proactive interventions to combat the generational challenges underlying many pressing policy debates.²⁴ It spans multiple domains, including sustainable development, climate action, health, geopolitics, and long-term economic planning. Policies grounded in intergenerational fairness focus on responsible resource and fiscal management and strategies, as well as balancing immediate needs with the goal of maintaining a stable and prosperous future. This approach ensures that the benefits and opportunities we enjoy today are preserved and extended for those who will follow, fostering a more equitable distribution of resources that allow for opportunities across generations.

What is Wellbeing?

Wellbeing encompasses not just physical and mental health but also economic stability, environmental sustainability, and social and cultural relationships, as reflected in the recently launched Australian Measuring What Matters Wellbeing Framework.²⁵ It is increasingly being integrated into governance frameworks and national indicators worldwide, reflecting a recognition that a holistic approach to embracing the wellbeing economy is crucial for a flourishing society.²⁶ For Australia, prioritising wellbeing involves creating policies that address both immediate and long-term needs. This includes ensuring that decisions and analysis adequately consider the needs of future generations.

"Building our capability and commitment to 'Future Generations' requires that governments identify and overcome the existing barriers to acting on evidence and human rights.

A Future Generations Commission is about ensuring that our federation works effectively for all of us, for all our citizens, including for the wellbeing today of our youngest citizens – Australia's children."

Anne Hollonds

National Children's Commissioner

The Opportunity for Australia

Six Benefits of a Future Generations Approach

By integrating the principles of intergenerational fairness and wellbeing, Australia has a profound opportunity to enhance our social cohesion, improve living standards and wellbeing, bolster our economic resilience, and safeguard our environment. This approach also positions us to actively seize opportunities and enhance our global standing and national power.

This approach would enable us to understand and address multifaceted challenges, anticipate future risks, and create a more resilient nation that is better prepared for the long term. Thinking ahead and acting now allows us to identify and mitigate risks early, protect people and the planet, preserve adequate resources for future allocation, and ensure that future Australians inherit a country better equipped to face the challenges of tomorrow.

1. Enhance Social Cohesion and Participation

An intergenerational approach offers an opportunity to enhance social cohesion by fostering connections and understanding across different age groups, socioeconomic backgrounds, and cultural communities.²⁷ This approach recognises that societal challenges and opportunities affect everyone in different ways, and by bringing diverse groups together, we can create a more inclusive and resilient society.

Much of Australia's strength lies in the richness and diversity of its multicultural population, with 29% of Australia's population being born outside Australia, and 48% having a parent born overseas according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.²⁸ This multicultural foundation facilitates the opportunity to draw cultural wisdom, international insights and contributions to the fabric of our social cohesion from all corners of the world.

By more actively involving the public in decision-making processes and community initiatives, we can cultivate a shared sense of purpose and collective responsibility for our society's future. Intergenerational and inclusive approaches can promote solutions to complex challenges such as climate change, economic inequality, and technological disruption that are developed with input from all groups, leading to more comprehensive and sustainable outcomes.²⁹

Ultimately, by fostering dialogue, collaboration, and mutual support across generations, cultures, demographics, we can build a stronger social fabric that is better equipped to navigate the uncertainties of the future and create a more inclusive, understanding, and cohesive society for all Australians.

2. Improve Living Standards and Wellbeing

In the long-term, intergenerational policies can significantly improve living and wellbeing standards. By anticipating future needs in areas such as housing, healthcare, education, and environmental management, we can develop sustainable solutions that address current issues while paving the way for future prosperity. This proactive

stance ensures that future generations inherit a secure country with robust infrastructure, a healthy environment, and strong social support systems, setting the stage for an ever-improving quality of life.

Wales has demonstrated measurable improvements in wellbeing through its 50 national wellbeing indicators established by the *Well-being of Future Generations Act*.³⁰ These indicators track progress in areas like health, education, environmental sustainability, and economic stability. By focusing on long-term outcomes, Wales has seen significant positive shifts across these indicators, improving the quality of life for both current and future generations.

3. Bolster Economic Resilience

From an economic perspective, embracing intergenerational fairness strengthens Australia's resilience and adaptability. It ensures all groups are engaged and active in the economy, which is crucial to prosperity.³¹ Long-term economic planning enables us to better anticipate and prepare for global shifts in technology, trade, and resource management.³² By making strategic investments in emerging industries and developing a skilled workforce for future job markets, we can create a more diverse and resilient economy. In doing so, we can better safeguard our future economic stability and position Australia as a competitive force in global markets.

Crucially, adopting longer term approaches allows us to identify challenges early—whether environmental, technological, social, or economic.³³ This enables preventative measures and gradual adaptation, which are more cost-effective than

reactive policies. For instance, more decisive global action on carbon emissions could have mitigated the severity of the extreme events we are now experiencing, which have significant human and economic impacts.³⁴ Additionally, earlier action could have positioned Australia to better take advantage of the growing green economy.³⁵

Norway's Sovereign Wealth Fund serves as a powerful example of how long-term planning can create a sustainable balance between benefiting current and future generations. By transforming oil revenues into a lasting source of wealth, Norway has bolstered its long-term economic resilience, enhanced living standards, and positioned itself as a global leader in ethical investment. *See the Case Study on Norway's sovereign wealth fund on page 13.*

4. Safeguard Our Environment

As a nation highly impacted by climate change, Australia must take decisive action to safeguard our environment for both current and future generations.³⁶ We know that addressing the root causes of climate change today will help reduce the severe impacts Australians may face in the future, including extreme heat, water scarcity and environmental degradation.³⁷ Investing in renewable energy technologies and sustainable land use policies now will not only mitigate the need for expensive disaster recovery efforts but also help build resilient communities that can thrive in a changing climate.³⁸ This approach also ensures the protection of Australia's unique flora, fauna and ecology—preserving the natural environment that defines our national



identity for future generations. We can draw on the rich heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their long-standing practices of intergenerational stewardship. This presents a unique opportunity to empower First Nations Peoples to lead sustainable agendas across all levels of future generations action for the benefit of all Australians.

5. Position Australia to Seize Opportunities

Embracing intergenerational fairness is not just about mitigating risks; it's also about actively creating and seizing opportunities by fostering innovation, investing in research and development, and promoting a culture of long-term thinking.³⁹ This focus on future trends will help Australia position itself at the forefront of emerging industries and technologies, encourage the growth of new economic sectors and drive scientific breakthroughs that will shape our future.⁴⁰

For example, early action in areas like artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies allows us to address potential risks early, while unlocking opportunities for economic growth and global leadership. By leading in the regulation and development of these technologies, Australia can also ensure they contribute to a sustainable and equitable future.

6. Enhance Our Global Standing and Strengthen Our National Power

By positioning itself as a leader in future generations policy, Australia has the opportunity to significantly

enhance our global standing and influence. By joining other early movers in this space such as Wales and New Zealand, Australia's leadership can open doors for collaboration, peaceful globalisation efforts, international reciprocity and aid, and knowledge-sharing with other forward-thinking countries, fostering mutually beneficial international partnerships and cooperation across the Indo-Pacific and beyond.

Australia's ability to influence global norms and practices is further reinforced by the opportunity to draw on the rich heritage and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Their long-standing practices of intergenerational stewardship offer valuable insights into sustainable and community-focused policies.

The strategic benefits of this leadership extend to promoting Australia's national interests in an increasingly complex global environment. A national commitment to long-term policy making enhances social cohesion and democratic resilience, as well as trust in public institutions. This bolsters our domestic political stability in a time of global insecurity, improving our national resilience and ability to navigate crises and safeguard our long term interests.⁴¹ This also helps attract foreign investment, strengthen trade relationships, and position Australia as a key player in shaping global policies on critical issues like climate change, technological regulation, and sustainable development.⁴²

Case Study

Norway's Sovereign Wealth Fund - A Model of Smart Intergenerational Planning

Norway's Government Pension Fund Global, also known as Norway's Sovereign Wealth Fund or Oil Fund, provides an excellent example of long-term planning that benefits both current and future generations, and creates opportunities for a country in the areas above.⁴³ Established in 1990, the Fund manages Norway's revenue from oil and resources for the long-term benefits of both current and future generations in Norway.

Enhance social cohesion	<p>The fund has enhanced social cohesion in Norway by creating a shared national asset that all citizens have a stake in. It has fostered a sense of collective ownership and responsibility for the country's natural resources, bridging generational divides. The fund's ethical guidelines, established in 2004, reflect Norwegian values and promote responsible corporate behaviour globally, further strengthening national unity.</p>
Improve living standards and wellbeing	<p>By providing a stable source of income for the government, the fund allows Norway to maintain high levels of social spending and public services without imposing high tax burdens on its citizens.⁴⁴ This has contributed to Norway consistently ranking among the top countries in global wellbeing indices.⁴⁵</p>
Bolster economic resilience	<p>The fund contributes 3% of its annual value to the Norwegian budget – which equates to approximately 20% of Norway's annual budget. The fund acts as a buffer against broader economic shocks, particularly those related to oil price fluctuations.⁴⁶ This stability helps Norway maintain a strong and stable economy even during global economic downturns. By investing globally, the fund also helps diversify Norway's economic exposure beyond its domestic economy.</p>
Safeguard the environment	<p>While initially focused on oil and natural resources, the fund has increasingly incorporated environmental considerations. The fund is governed by ethical guidelines, avoiding investments that harm the environment. This ensures Norway's wealth is used sustainably, supporting environmentally conscious industries and protecting natural resources for future generations.</p>
Positioned to seize opportunities	<p>With over US\$1.4 trillion in assets, the fund invests in over 9,000 companies globally. This not only enhances Norway's influence but also opens avenues for strategic investments in innovative, future-focused industries, positioning Norway to seize opportunities.</p>
Enhancing global competitiveness and national power	<p>Norway's fund has clearly bolstered the country's global influence, positioning it as a responsible and ethical leader in international markets. By investing in over 9,000 companies worldwide, the fund gives Norway substantial sway in corporate governance and ethical investing, shaping global business practices in line with its values. This economic leverage strengthens Norway's soft power, allowing it to promote global environmental and social policies that reflect its interests and principles. Norway's success in managing its oil wealth has set a global standard for sustainable long-term planning, enhancing its national power and international reputation as a forward-thinking, responsible state.</p>

Australia is Well Positioned of Being a Leader in Policy Innovation

Australia has a history of implementing innovative, world-leading reforms. From pioneering road safety reforms to the groundbreaking establishment of Medicare, novel legislation for preventative health measures such as tobacco plain packaging laws and the establishment of the eSafety Commissioner—the world’s first government agency committed to keeping its citizens safer online—Australia has a track record in tackling emerging issues through forward-focused legislation and policy initiatives.⁴⁷

Why Should Australia Seize These Benefits Now?

Australia is at a critical juncture where the stakes for future generations have never been higher. With the momentum of the adoption of the Declaration on Future

Generations, the upcoming 2025 Australian federal election, and growing public support for a Commissioner for Future Generations, we have a critical window of opportunity to set a national agenda focused on intergenerational fairness and wellbeing.

The adoption of the Declaration on Future Generations, including 11 actions to guide the institutionalisation and monitoring of future generations protections, sets the stage for Australia to align its domestic policies with these international goals and commitments.

Meanwhile, the upcoming 2025 federal election presents a pivotal moment for policymakers and candidates to champion a vision that prioritises the long-term wellbeing of Australians and answers growing public demand for policies that consider intergenerational inequity and future generations.

Public appetite for change

Australians are increasingly calling for improved approaches to long-term policy-making:

According to the 2024 survey led by EveryGen:

97%

of Australians believe that current policies must consider the interests of future generations.

81%

feel that Australian politicians focus too much on short-term decisions.

79%

support the establishment of a Commissioner for Future Generations (or a similar body) to safeguard intergenerational justice in policy-making.⁴⁸

The EveryGen survey gathered inputs from 1,000 respondents, providing reliable and statistically robust insights on the opinions of Australians aged 18 and above. The cohort of respondents was representative against the Australia population of residents aged 18 above in terms of age and gender.

“The Duty of Care Bill and the campaign for its passage through Parliament are strongly aligned with the recommendations of the Future Generations Policy Brief, especially with the introduction of a Future Generations Commissioner and Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

At their core, they both advocate for a stronger focus on an intergenerational policy lens that transcends the three-year election cycle.”

The Duty of Care Campaign Team

The Duty of Care Campaign

This support has been reflected in the public momentum around Senator David Pocock’s introduction of the *Climate Change Amendment (Duty of Care and Intergenerational Climate Equity) Bill 2023* and the surrounding Duty of Care Campaign.⁴⁹

The Duty of Care Bill was introduced in August 2023 by Senator Pocock and Anjali Sharma, following the overturning by the Federal Court of the *Sharma v Minister for the Environment* decision. Opposition to the Bill cited implementation concerns over how decision makers would quantify the impacts of a single project on climate change and health and wellbeing. This reflects the need for a more holistic approach to public policy that takes seriously the government’s responsibility to ensure the needs and interests of current and future generations are protected, especially in the face of climate change.

The Bill has received incredible levels of support from a diverse cross-section of civil society, alongside the health sector, including GPs, obstetricians, psychologists and nurses. The inquiry into the Bill received over 400 submissions.

Section 3

International Approaches to Future Generations

Countries around the world are already taking action

A growing number of countries around the world are recognising the urgent need to consider the long-term consequences of today's decisions and are implementing initiatives to protect the interests of future generations.



Figure 1: Global mapping of future generations initiatives (see Appendix B)

From Wales and New Zealand to the Philippines and Nigeria, many governments are taking action to preserve their national long-term interests. Governments are adopting approaches including national strategies, legislation, commissioners, committees and policies.

Explore the various efforts and structures established by different countries around the world in Appendix B.

Efforts in Progress

In Ireland, a Commission for Future Generations Bill has been introduced in Parliament to establish an independent Commission to investigate and report within 12 months on how best to create an Office of Ombudsman for Future Generations, which would act as a guardian for the interests of Ireland's future generations.⁵⁰

Scotland is introducing a Member's Bill known as the Proposed Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill, which proposes to establish a Commission for Sustainable Development and Wellbeing and introduce a duty for public bodies to promote sustainable development principles in their work.⁵¹

Other Methods: Constitutions, Courts & Campaigns

59 National constitutions around the world reference the need to protect future generations.⁵²

Judicial Rulings

There has been a rise in legal decisions recognising the duties of states to protect the rights of future generations, largely in the context of increasing climate litigation. Some landmark cases include:

Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz and Others v. Switzerland (Switzerland, 2022): The European Court of Human Rights ruled that Switzerland violated human rights by failing to take adequate action on climate change, setting a precedent for climate litigation based on human rights.⁵³

Neubauer et al. v. Germany (Germany, 2021): Germany's Federal Constitutional Court ruled that the country's climate protection measures were insufficient to protect future generations, mandating the government set clear emission reduction targets beyond 2030 to protect the rights of future generations.⁵⁴

Urgenda Foundation v. State of the Netherlands (The Netherlands, 2019): The Dutch Supreme Court upheld lower court rulings that the government must cut emissions by at least 25% by the end of 2020 compared to 1990 levels. This established that governments have a

legal duty to protect citizens from climate change and recognised that climate inaction violates human rights, including those of future generations.⁵⁵

Future Generations v. Ministry of the Environment and Others (Colombia, 2018): Colombia's Supreme Court recognised the Amazon rainforest as an entity with rights and ordered the government to formulate and implement action plans to address deforestation in the Amazon, setting a precedent for the rights of nature and future generations.⁵⁶

Ashgar Leghari v. Federation of Pakistan (Pakistan, 2015): The Lahore High Court found that the government's inaction in implementing the National Climate Change Policy violated fundamental rights, particularly the rights to life and dignity, and ordered the creation of a Climate Change Commission to oversee policy implementation.⁵⁷

International Campaigns Driving Progress

The Campaign for an EU

Intergenerational Commissioner: A coalition of civil society organisations has been advocating for the establishment of a European Executive Vice President to act as the EU's Commissioner for Future Generations to ensure the interests of future generations are represented and considered in EU decision-making processes.⁵⁸ As part of her 2024 reelection campaign as the European Commissioner, Ursula von der Leyen made the commitment to appoint a Commissioner

'whose responsibilities will include ensuring intergenerational fairness'.⁵⁹ After she was re-elected in July 2024 von der Leyen announced she intends to appoint a Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness.⁶⁰

Campaign for Japanese Future

Generations Act: Inspired by the 2015 Welsh *Well-being of Future Generations Act*, the Wellbeing of Future Generations Japan Act Project is a civil society initiative set up in 2022 that advocates for the Japanese government to create a similar legal framework that prioritises the rights and interests of future generations.⁶¹

Key lessons and takeaways from international experiences

Wales

Through the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*, Wales' approach to future generations policy is often considered the gold standard for integrating long-term thinking into governance.⁶²

The Act's framework mandates that public bodies in Wales consider the long-term impact of their decisions on future generations, emphasising sustainability, wellbeing, and social equity. A key strength of this approach is the establishment of the Future Generations Commissioner, an independent advocate empowered to hold public bodies accountable and promote sustainable practices across the government.

Israel

Israel's Future Generations Commissioner's office was established in 2001 with a mission to integrate long-term planning into legislative processes. However, the office faced significant opposition and was dissolved in 2006.⁶⁴

Critics of the office argued that it interfered excessively with the legislative process without showing significant effectiveness in promoting sustainable policies. The dissolution of the office reflects the challenge of balancing the influence and impact of such positions on legislation while avoiding perceptions of interference with parliamentary authority.

Hungary

Established in 2008, Hungary's Ombudsman for Future Generations was designed to protect the interests of future generations by overseeing policies and legislative proposals.⁶³

However, in 2011, the independent office was merged into a unified Ombudsman system, reducing its independence and effectiveness. This change was criticised and seen as politically motivated, leading to the resignation of the first Ombudsman, Sándor Fülöp, in 2012.

The restructuring highlighted the difficulties of maintaining dedicated oversight institutions for future generations and the impact of political shifts and pressures.

New Zealand

In 2019 the New Zealand Labour government introduced its Wellbeing Budget, with a focus on measuring wellbeing and long-term outcomes rather than just GDP, with an emphasis on future generations.⁶⁵

Despite initial fanfare, the Wellbeing Budget struggled to translate its ambitious goals into measurable outcomes and faced implementation challenges. In 2024 the new government – led by the National Party – announced it would discontinue the concept. Gareth Hughes, Director of the Wellbeing Economy Alliance New Zealand and former MP, said that: "*Lacking deep citizen engagement, applicability to other organisations' work, or cross-party buy-in, they were seen as a Labour Party project.*"⁶⁶

Several efforts to collate the learnings from in-country innovations to advance intergenerational wellbeing have already been undertaken. Most recently, the School of International Futures released their Implementation Handbook for the UN Declaration on Future Generations, a comprehensive instruction manual for realising the ambitions of the Declaration and promoting a shift to a model of long-term governance at the national, regional, and multilateral levels.⁶⁷

Multilateral and international actions

The international community has long recognised the importance of safeguarding the rights and interests of future generations.

- The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015, provide a blueprint for achieving a better and more sustainable future, emphasising that development must meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.⁶⁸
- The Paris Agreement (2015) commits nations to limit global warming and protect the planet for future generations, while the Kyoto Protocol (1997) established legally binding emission reduction targets to combat climate change, highlighting a shared responsibility to mitigate impacts on future generations.⁶⁹
- The UNESCO Declaration on the Responsibilities of the Present Generations Towards Future Generations (1997), outlines ethical responsibilities to ensure that future generations inherit a healthy environment and sustainable resources.⁷⁰
- The Rio Declaration (1992) and the Stockholm Declaration (1972) further emphasise the importance of sustainable development and environmental stewardship for the sake of those yet to come.⁷¹
- The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992) both recognise the critical need to address environmental issues to protect the future.⁷²
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) also underscores the necessity of providing children, as the future stewards of the planet, with an environment that guarantees their development and rights.⁷³
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976) establishes that human rights are universal and must be upheld for all individuals, including those not yet born.⁷⁴

More recently, the Maastricht Principles on the Human Rights of Future Generations (2023), were adopted by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights which recognise states have an obligation to promote and protect the human rights of future generations under international law, as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).⁷⁵

UN Summit of the Future and Pact for the Future

The United Nations Summit of the Future, which took place on 22-23 September 2024, marked a critical moment in the global movement to protect the interests of future generations. This high-level event gathered world leaders to develop a new international consensus focused on improving current global conditions while ensuring a sustainable and equitable future. A key

outcome of the Summit was the adoption of the Pact for the Future, which includes several chapters, with one specifically dedicated to ‘youth and future generations’.⁷⁶

Declaration on Future Generations

An important component of the Pact for the Future is the Declaration on Future Generations.⁷⁷ The Declaration affirms the collective responsibility of countries to protect the needs and interests of future generations, building upon decades of international work on sustainable development, including the principles established in the 2030 Agenda. This landmark achievement of global cooperation clearly defines actions for advancing future generations

policy. Such actions include: the potential appointment of a UN Special Envoy for Future Generations; convening a high-level meeting of the General Assembly on future generations to review implementation of the Declaration; and developing a future-orientated culture across the UN to support anticipatory planning, foresight practices and futures literacy. The Declaration now serves as a global standard, calling on member states to safeguard the interests and needs of future generations through a “whole-of-government approach to...the assessment, development, implementation and evaluation of policies that safeguard the needs and interests of future generations”.

Articles of Note within the UN Declaration on Future Generations

27. Investing in capacity to better prepare for and respond to future global shocks, crises and challenges, and using evidence-based planning and foresight to avoid and mitigate risks, while ensuring that the poorest and most vulnerable do not bear disproportionate costs and burdens of mitigation, adaptation, restoration and resilience-building.
28. Undertaking a **whole-of-government approach** to coordination, including at the national and local levels, on **the assessment, development, implementation and evaluation of policies that safeguard the needs and interests of future generations.**
29. Enhancing cooperation with stakeholders, including civil society, academia, the scientific and technological community and the private sector, and encouraging intergenerational partnerships, by promoting a whole-of-society approach, to share best practices and develop innovative, long-term and forward-thinking ideas in order to safeguard the needs and interests of future generations.

“It’s staggering that long-term, intergenerational thinking isn’t already fundamental to the way we think about policymaking and decision-making. For me, this is just a basic part of our human code.”

Prioritising this way of thinking isn’t easy within the current system, which incentivises short-termism, and so it needs to be someone’s job to guide and support a genuine and collaborative effort towards this new way of leading.”

Dr Sophie Lewis

ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment

Section 4

Australia's Existing Policy Building Blocks

Australia has strong foundations for implementing future generations policy. Our rich Indigenous heritage, with its focus on environmental stewardship and intergenerational knowledge sharing, offers valuable insights for policy-making.

Key initiatives, such as the Australian Commission for the Future, the Intergenerational Report, and the 'Measuring What Matters' wellbeing framework, reflect a robust history and growing recognition of the value of holistic and long-term thinking to inform policy. Paired with international commitments like the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, these steps highlight Australia's strong position and growing imperative to act as we continue to fall short of our international commitments.

Future Generations Leadership and its Origins in Indigenous Wisdoms

Indigenous Peoples around the world have been practising the core tenets of future generations leadership, such as environmental stewardship, supported by intergenerational oral histories, and intergenerational kinship for thousands of years. Some of these include principles that span environmental stewardship, kinship and community connection, and intergenerational duty:

Caring for Country (Australia):

Considered an obligation and an honour by Indigenous Australians. Caring for Country draws on lores, knowledges and customs that have been inherited across

generations to safeguard the health of lands, skies, and waters as reciprocal relationships in a delicate balance.⁷⁸

Kinship Systems (Australia): While concepts of kinship differ across Indigenous cultures, generally kinship describes the wide range of relational bonds, responsibilities, and obligations within a family and community - with family broadly defined. In many kinship systems, cultural and caregiving responsibilities are shared. Kinship systems prioritise the collective, rather than an individual, with the intent to preserve Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing for future generations.⁷⁹

Kaitiakitanga (Aotearoa, New Zealand): The Māori concept of guardianship over the environment, emphasising the protection and sustainable management of natural resources.⁸⁰

The Seventh Generation Principle (North America): A foresight principle that guides decisions to benefit the earth seven generations into the future.⁸¹ It is noted among the Iroquois Confederacy through their Great Binding Law.⁸² This principle is echoed around the world as a notable point of consistency among Indigenous and First Nations cultures.

Ubuntu (South Africa): A philosophy meaning "I am because we are, since we are therefore I am," highlighting the interconnectedness and mutual responsibilities within communities, extending to environmental stewardship.⁸³

Enkishon (East Africa): A Maasai principle that involves a sacred duty to protect and nurture the earth, passed down through generations as a core aspect of their cultural identity, also considered as ‘wellbeing values’ across leadership, good governance and a rights-based respect for nature.⁸⁴

Hózhó (North America): In Navajo culture, this refers to a state of balance and harmony that must be maintained through responsible practices that consider the wellbeing of future generations.⁸⁵

Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq (Arctic): Among the Inuit, this principle involves deep respect and care for both people and the environment, emphasising the sustainable use of resources to ensure community survival over generations.⁸⁶

First Nations Leadership: The Long-Term View & Custodial Ethics⁸⁷

Australia has the opportunity to be a global leader in future generations policy. There is an even greater opportunity if we elevate the leadership, collective knowledge and intergenerational stewardship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples that have been practised on the lands now called Australia for more than 65,000 years. Indigenous Australians are the oldest continuous cultures in the world, with solutions to ensure Australia can continue to sustainably support future generations to come.

Australia's journey towards embedding long-term thinking into policy-making offers a unique opportunity to recognise

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures which have thrived for countless generations through deep connection and stewardship with the lands, waters, and skies. The authentic integration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges into policy-making is a multifaceted process that requires the recognition of the validity, diversity, and integration of worldviews and governance systems.

As such, integrating First Nations ways of knowing, being, and doing into future generations policy and governance presents a transformative opportunity to reimagine Australian governance. This will require moving beyond mere consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples towards a model of supporting the self-determination of Indigenous Peoples as genuine partnership and shared decision-making power, as described in the Uluru Statement from the Heart, the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.⁸⁸ It calls for a nuanced approach that acknowledges the intricacies of Indigenous-state relations and the need for substantive, rather than superficial tokenistic participation without substantive power shifts.

Failure to reconcile our future policy approaches with this wealth of Indigenous wisdom and leadership would not only be re-perpetrating our colonial legacy but also hinder our long-term success.

Innovation in Action

The First Nations Transformative Scenario Planning (TSP) Collaboration, led by the Ebony Institute and partners, aims to challenge current approaches and create future scenarios rooted in First Nations wisdom.⁸⁹ This approach, which involves ‘stretch collaboration’ to embrace conflict and find innovative solutions, was developed by Adam Kahane and Reos Partners.⁹⁰

Incorporating First Nations knowledges into policy-making enriches decision-making, supports reconciliation, and promotes sustainability. Australia can lead globally in creating an inclusive, equitable, and sustainable future for all generations by respecting and integrating Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies, grounded in intergenerational knowledge transfer and development.

“As First Nations people we govern, make decisions and determine the actions we take today based on intergenerational considerations that account for the health of people and the environment—the Countries we all depend on. We see the present as tied to the past and the future in a constant cycle of regeneration, where all actions affect lives and beings across the deep expanse of time.

I believe Australians hold much in common about the need to construct policies today that speak to this First Nations worldview of intergenerational thinking, care and responsibility. Policy-making needs to be responsive to the concerns and aspirations of all age groups if we are to construct societies that meet our diverse needs as a nation, and to ensure that we can care and nurture our planet, now and far into the future.”⁹¹

*June Oscar
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner*

A further exploration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives can be found in the Annex.

Australia's Record of Long-Term Policy Investments

Australia is well positioned to learn from the successes and challenges other nations have faced in implementing future generations protections or frameworks. This allows us to better tailor our response to our unique circumstances and system of government and recognise that any new structures or protections must build on a body of existing (or previous) Australian initiatives.

Since the 1980s, successive Australian governments have introduced a diverse range of future-focused initiatives, with varying degrees of success. In 1985, the Hawke government established the Commission for the Future within the Department of Industry, Technology and Commerce to foster public discourse on the social and economic implications of scientific and technological advancements.

Australian Commission for the Future (1985-1998)

Established in 1985, the Australian Commission for the Future (CFF) sought to promote public awareness of future-oriented issues, particularly those related to science and technology. The CFF aimed to empower individuals and communities to make informed decisions about the future and to guide public discourse on key challenges.

Throughout its existence, the CFF contributed to public understanding through publications like *The Futures Methodology Handbook* and initiatives such as the *Greenhouse Project*, which raised awareness about environmental issues. The Commission engaged collaboratively with the Australian public by means of conferences and workshops dedicated to bringing together experts and academics in discussions about Australia's future.

Despite its great contributions, the CFF faced political opposition, financial instability, and a lack of strategic coherence, leading to its closure in 1998. The key lessons from the CFF highlight the importance of clearly defining objectives, securing diversified funding for long-term sustainability, and maintaining strategic coherence through collaboration for any future initiatives.

While it struggled to maintain long-term viability, the CFF's legacy lies in its pioneering attempt to integrate futures thinking into public policy in Australia. A breakdown of lessons learned from the Commission for the Future can be found in the Annex.

During the early 2000s, a number of wellbeing initiatives were introduced under the Howard Government, such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics' 'Measures of Australia's Progress' (MAP) annual report series.⁹² MAP provided a holistic overview of Australia's national progress beyond GDP, informed by 26 indicators about society, the economy, the environment and governance.

Australia's Intergenerational Report (IGR) was introduced in 2002 as part of the *Charter of Budget Honesty Act 1998*. The report is legislated to be published every five years, with the purpose of assessing the long-term sustainability of current government policies and how they will impact future generations over the next 40 years.

Intergenerational Report (IGR)

The IGR was established following recommendations from the Productivity Commission's report 'Economic Implications of an Ageing Australia,' which emphasised the need for a comprehensive long-term assessment of the implications of population ageing. Prepared by the Treasurer and Treasury, the IGR provides a 40-year outlook on the economy and the Commonwealth Budget, focusing on the long-term sustainability of current policies in light of demographic, technological, and structural trends.

The report has consistently highlighted the challenges facing Australia's long-term fiscal position, signalling the need for significant fiscal reform. While the IGR provides valuable insights into economic and fiscal challenges, it has notable drawbacks. Its narrow economic focus overlooks critical areas such as environmental sustainability, social equity, broader social trends and technological advancements that are crucial for a comprehensive understanding of intergenerational equity. The IGR's placement within the Treasury, as opposed to a statutory Commissioner, limits its ability to offer an independent assessment of the implications of government approaches on future generations. The latest Intergenerational Report was published in 2023.⁹³

In recent years, several future-focused initiatives have been introduced at both the federal and state levels of government. In 2006, Australia established the Future Fund⁹⁴, a sovereign wealth fund for the benefit of future generations of Australians. The fund is the Australian government's

largest financial asset, with \$289 billion under management. The ACT government announced the 'ACT Wellbeing Framework' in 2020, which identifies twelve wellbeing domains that impact Canberrans' quality of life (see the Annex for a list of initiatives across Australian States and Territories).⁹⁵

2023 The Australian Centre for Evaluation

The Australian Centre for Evaluation (ACE) in Treasury, launched in May 2023 and, supported with a \$10 million investment over four years, is a significant step towards embedding rigorous, evidence-based evaluation across the Australian Public Service (APS). ACE aims to enhance long-term thinking and policy-making by building APS capacity for high-quality evaluations, ensuring that government initiatives deliver real value and accountability for future generations.⁹⁶

By championing impact evaluations and promoting the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy, ACE provides practical standards and guidance for integrating evaluation at all stages of the policy cycle.⁹⁷ This approach fosters a culture of continuous improvement, equipping government departments with tools to learn from past initiatives and optimise resources. ACE's collaboration with international evaluation leaders, along with its push to establish an APS Evaluation Profession, positions Australia at the forefront of best practice in evaluation.

In line with recommendations from the Thodey Review, ACE is instrumental in reducing reliance on external consultants and building internal capability within the APS.⁹⁸ The challenge remains to fully leverage ACE's insights to shape policies that are resilient, future-focused, and responsive to the needs of current and future generations.

In July 2023, Treasurer Jim Chalmers announced 'Measuring What Matters' as Australia's first national wellbeing framework.⁹⁹ Measuring What Matters tracks 50 indicators to support progress towards a "healthy, secure, sustainable, cohesive and prosperous" future.

2023 Measuring What Matters Framework

The Treasury's Measuring What Matters framework is the first of its kind in providing an explicit framework to measure Australia's progress across five broad themes, which can help inform an equitable and just society: Healthy, Secure, Sustainable, Cohesive, and Prosperous. This presents a critical foundation to linking government policy with wellbeing indicators to guide decision-making over time. This framework serves two main purposes, first for monitoring and assessing progress of specific wellbeing measures, as well as assessing government decision-making in the context of wellbeing more broadly. This has been the product of ongoing advocacy and importantly through extensive consultation with the community and leading groups such as the Centre for Policy Development and The George Institute for Global Health.

The Framework explicitly links government objectives to impact and makes ongoing funding conditional on outcomes. This has the potential to increase accountability and drive a more targeted, evidence-based approach to policy-making and long-term public sector productivity.

What is missing, however, is an effective means of using this Framework to inform and mandate policy decision-making across government.

In October 2022, Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher, Minister for the Public Service, announced the Government's APS Reform Agenda as a long-term commitment to building a stronger APS that delivers better community outcomes and contributes to a fairer and more inclusive Australia now and into the future.

APS Reform Agenda - Public Service Amendment Act 2024

In 2024, as part of the APS Reform Agenda, the *Public Service Amendment Act 2024* updated the *Public Service Act 1999* to strengthen the Australian Public Service (APS) adding the Value of

Stewardship.¹⁰⁰ From December 2024, the APS will take on stewardship as a sixth value, with APS employees required to consider the long-term impacts of their actions and build 'capability and institutional knowledge' supporting 'the public interest now and into the future by understanding the long-term impacts'. This amendment is aligned with the Thodey Review recommendations, and ensures APS employees and leaders play an active role in safeguarding the public service for future generations.¹⁰¹

2024 has also seen the release of the Policy Fit for the Future: The Australian Government Futures Primer, co-developed

by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and their partner, the Australian National University's NSC Futures Hub.¹⁰² This resource provides an overview of futures methodologies and offers contemporary techniques for strategic and long-term thinking. These techniques increase the likelihood of developing solutions that address the causes of a particular challenge and, thereby, are inherently more implementable and sustainable by understanding the forces shaping Australia's national, local, and global systems and outcomes.

Australia has already made international commitments

As outlined in Section 3, there are a number of international commitments that Australia has also made that reflect its obligations to consider the wellbeing of future generations, particularly in areas related to environmental sustainability and climate change.

- One of the most significant of these is the Paris Agreement, adopted in 2015 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

(UNFCCC).¹⁰³ This global accord aims to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, with efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Australia's commitment to the Paris Agreement underscores its recognition of the need to address climate change to protect the interests of future generations.

- Australia is also a party to United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which were adopted in 2015.¹⁰⁴ These goals provide a blueprint for achieving a better and more sustainable future for all by 2030. The SDGs include specific targets related to climate action (Goal 13), life on land (Goal 15), life below water (Goal 14), and other areas that directly impact the wellbeing of future generations.

A future generations approach would exercise domestic policy and practice to strengthen the required outcomes of the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Australia has already been found to not be meeting its international commitments

In September 2022, the United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) found that Australia violated the human rights of Torres Strait Islanders due to climate inaction impacting their right to enjoy their culture and be free from arbitrary interference with their private life, family, and home.¹⁰⁵

This landmark decision was in response to a complaint filed by eight Torres Strait Islanders from low-lying islands affected by climate change impacts like rising sea levels, which have damaged food sources and ancestral burial sites. The UNHCR found Australia had failed to adequately protect the Torres Strait Islanders from adverse climate change effects, violating their human rights under the 1976 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

“One of the most striking results to me is the high levels of support across all Australians of political parties who demonstrate visions for more long-term policymaking. This should give political parties of all stripes the confidence that long-term, intergenerational policymaking is a no-brainer and a ‘win-win’ for governments and the public alike.”¹⁰⁶

Dr Elise Stephenson

Deputy Director, Global Institute for Women's Leadership

“With multiple crises of climate change, growing wealth inequality and lack of housing for younger people, citizens are recognising that endemic short termism in governments is hanging the next generation out to dry.

There is a desperate need to address this by ensuring governments are required to take decisions which consider future generations. I've been pleased to share our experience of doing this in Wales in many parts of Australia over the last year and I believe that Australia is well positioned to be a leading country in putting the needs of future generations at the heart of decision making”¹⁰⁷

Sophie Howe

The first Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

Section 5

Applying a Future Generations Approach in Australia

As Australia explores how a Commissioner for Future Generations would strengthen the sustainability and effectiveness of our policy and decision-making, it is essential to evaluate our current policies and priorities, understand the broader implications for societal wellbeing, develop a sustainable resourcing model and address the complex interplay between immediate needs and long-term interests.

The Importance of Multi-Partisan Long-Termism

At a time of global geopolitical instability, economic inequality, fracturing social cohesion, and democratic fragility, a multi-partisan commitment to long-termism would strengthen **Australian democracy and foster greater stability between electoral cycles**. Indeed, the concept of taking a future generations approach to policy and decision-making is not an inherently new or progressive idea. Acting to safeguard Australia's future and protect long-term national interests is a core responsibility of all elected representatives.

By transcending the political divide and working across party lines to implement and protect a future generations approach to policy-making, politicians can not only uphold their democratic duties as leaders, but act as good ancestors to Australian democracy, leaving a legacy of being a responsive country that tackles chronic inequities and leaves Australia better off for generations to come. **With strong multi-partisanship on long-term policy, Australians could have the assurance that no matter who is in government,**

political leaders would be committed to acting in their long-term interests.

Implications for Societal Wellbeing

Australia must move beyond traditional economic indicators such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as the sole measure of progress. While GDP provides insights into economic activity, it fails to capture the full range of factors that define the quality of life across generations. Protecting the wellbeing of all Australians, including future generations, requires a more holistic approach that integrates diverse measures of wellbeing into our policy frameworks and economic planning.

A wellbeing-focused approach recognises that economic growth is only one aspect of societal prosperity. It emphasises the need for structural changes that promote long-term and sustainable development, ensuring that economic policies are aligned with enhancing the overall wellbeing of the population. This approach includes addressing systemic inequalities, promoting fair resource distribution, and crafting policies that are sustainable and inclusive.

By monitoring societal inequalities and tracking progress over time, a wellbeing-oriented framework creates a dynamic platform for informed policy-making. Prioritising general wellbeing means embedding structural changes into the economy and public policy to secure a strong foundation for future generations.

Australia is making progress on this. For example, the Treasury’s ‘Measuring What Matters’ framework focuses on indicators that address root causes of inequality rather than merely treating symptoms, laying the groundwork for a more equitable and prosperous future.¹⁰⁸

The Centre for Policy Development’s 2022 ‘Redefining Progress’ report outlines four key elements of a comprehensive wellbeing government approach: measuring wellbeing, conducting policy analysis and selection, embedding wellbeing within government processes, and ensuring transparency and accountability.¹⁰⁹

While Australia has made progress in developing methods to measure wellbeing,

complete integration of these elements into our policy and legislative processes is the next critical step. This is particularly important at the moment, as the cost of living crisis in Australia is affecting the broader wellbeing of over 10 million Australians, causing a rise in stress, health issues and interpersonal conflict.

“An economy designed deliberately to work for people and the planet, not the other way around. In a wellbeing economy, the rules, norms and incentives that shape the economy are set up to encourage activities that deliver quality of life and flourishing for all people, in harmony with our environment, by default.”

Centre for Policy Development¹¹⁰

Parliamentary Dialogue Insights

During FFT’s first Parliamentary Group for Future Generations Dialogue of 2024, a number of attendees highlighted the importance of objective metrics in measuring wellbeing. Having objective and accessible indicators of wellbeing serves an important role in tasks such as analysing progress and assessing budget allocations. However, these metrics themselves should not be the end goal.¹¹¹ These should instead be seen as an iterative means to understand trends over time, address foundational causes of inequalities, and embed wellbeing practices across government and industry. Similarly, they should include a combination of objective and subjective indicators, complemented by community engagement and ongoing refinement of assessment criteria. In this case, the Commissioner would play a key role in providing advice and research into ways of engaging our community and providing advice to public bodies.

OECD and Wellbeing: Measuring Progress Beyond GDP

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has been a leader in promoting the measurement of wellbeing as part of its efforts to support policies that improve people's lives, moving beyond traditional economic indicators like GDP to assess broader dimensions of societal progress.¹¹²

For example, the OECD Well-being Framework tracks dimensions like health, education, income, and environmental quality, ensuring a holistic view of what makes life better for people.¹¹³ The OECD's Better Life Index compares wellbeing across nations, emphasising key factors such as life satisfaction, safety, and work-life balance.¹¹⁴

This approach helps inform policy by highlighting inequalities and helping governments create more inclusive and sustainable policies that improve quality of life, foster resilience and address long-term challenges, ensuring future generations inherit a thriving, fairer society.

The OECD's focus on wellbeing measurement aligns with growing international recognition that societal progress is multidimensional, and it offers tools and frameworks to help governments make better, more informed policy decisions. More than two-thirds of OECD countries have implemented a wellbeing policy or monitoring framework – Australia included.

Resourcing as a core driver of impact

An independent Commissioner for Future Generations can only be as effective as the resources it commands. Without adequate funding, the role risks becoming a symbolic figurehead at best, or worse, an example of the pitfalls of underfunded policy innovation.

While securing the necessary funds in a constrained budget environment may be challenging, this strategic investment would save Australia money in the long-run. Should political will or financial resources fall short of establishing a fully funded independent commissioner, an alternative approach is to establish an Interim Commissioner, within the Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet, to lead a National Conversation on Future Generations.

While this would be an executive

appointment within the APS rather than a statutory establishment, this model could initiate immediate progress and serve as an interim solution while more permanent budgetary solutions are developed.

In this funding scenario, Foundations for Tomorrow would recommend this as an interim strategy to expedite progress on implementing a future generations approach in Australia. With the urgent challenges facing future generations, we have no more time to lose.

Other Considerations for Australia

In assessing how a Commissioner would apply a future generations lens to policy and decision-making in Australia, several key issues require further exploration.

These include balancing the immediate needs of current Australians with the long-term interests of future generations, clearly defining the Commissioner's role

and responsibilities to avoid overlap with existing bodies, integrating outputs into the legislative process, and ensuring political independence and accountability.

Australia must also consider how to establish effective evaluation metrics, learn from past initiatives, engage diverse stakeholders equitably and inclusively and promote a culture of long-term thinking throughout both the legislative and policy processes.

While it is beyond the scope of this brief to cover all these considerations in-depth, a list of questions for further reflection on these considerations can be found in the Appendix.

***“Tomorrow must be shaped by the interests of future generations. Our short-term political cycles, and tendency to use policy to problem solve our way out of immediate scenarios, needs challenging.*”**

***This Future Generations Brief explores mechanisms and approaches for Australia to govern with the long term in mind. As an Australian, I am persuaded by the significance of this work and how it will promise a better tomorrow for all.*”**

Prof Daniella Tilbury

Chair, Network for Institutions and Leaders for Future Generations

The Duty of Care Campaign Team

Section 6

Foundational Recommendations

FFT has engaged in a comprehensive consultative process to shape the foundational recommendations presented in this section. This process included extensive engagement with key stakeholders, academic and policy research, and the integration of insights from case studies of similar examples overseas (see the Annex for details of approaches considered). The brief has also been informed by feedback and briefings with the multi-partisan Parliamentary Group for Future Generations.

In formulating these recommendations, FFT has also considered the Australian political context and our system of government. The proposals are both practical and feasible within our current institutional framework and political system, while integrating the ambition and forward thinking required to safeguard the future.

Below, the policy brief sets out three Foundational Recommendations that Australia should urgently prioritise to embed intergenerational fairness and long-term thinking into our governance framework. These recommendations provide an institutional anchor from which to build a broader future generations approach to policy and decision-making in Australia.

The policy brief then provides a set of additional recommendations for implementing a broader ecosystem of future generations policy (see pages 40-44).

These broader recommendations are complementary to the three Foundational Recommendations:

1. Legislate a *Wellbeing of Future Generations Act* in the Federal Parliament

Overarching legislation is essential to protect long-term policy commitments from the shifting priorities of different governments. The Act would provide a framework for advancing intergenerational equity and wellbeing, modelled on successful international examples such as the Welsh *Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015*.

This legislation would create enduring protection to ensure policies today do not compromise the wellbeing and opportunities of future Australians. The Act should require periodic reviews to adapt to evolving challenges, ensuring the legislation remains relevant and fit-for-purpose.

2. Establish an independent statutory *Commissioner for Future Generations*

The Act should establish an independent, statutory Commissioner for Future Generations to advocate for and represent the long-term interests of future Australians and ensure intergenerational fairness is integrated into decision-making across all sectors of government.

The Commissioner's mandate would be cross-cutting, focusing on a 20-30 year time scale and fostering cross-portfolio collaboration to ensure policies made today consider long-term impacts. This would include mandated consultation processes with relevant government

agencies and regular reporting to Parliament and government. The Commissioner would operate within the Australian Public Service but report directly to Parliament to safeguard independence from real or perceived political interference or bias.

The Commissioner should be appointed by the Federal Government of the day for a single seven-year term, with the nominated candidate subject to review by a statutory parliamentary committee. This approach draws on the appointment process and length of term from Wales.

The seven-year single term ensures the Commissioner is insulated from political pressures, allowing the position to focus on long-term outcomes rather than short-term electoral cycles.

Potential Scope for a Future Generations Commissioner in Australia

With various models for Future Generations Commissioners worldwide, it is essential to carefully analyse how such a role should be tailored for Australia. Key considerations include ensuring the Commissioner does not overlap with existing bodies, avoiding duplication of efforts, the need to define clear functions, establish effective powers, and ensure the role's mandate is both comprehensive and impactful.

Desired Role, Responsibilities & Powers:

An Australian Commissioner for Future Generations would act as an independent statutory authority dedicated to advocating

for and representing the interests and wellbeing of future generations. This role would be modelled after successful implementations in other countries and adapted to fit Australia's unique cultural, environmental, and legislative context. The Commission(er) should be an individual or body, operating with a small, dedicated team to maintain independence from the government.

Role and Responsibilities: The Commissioner would be mandated to safeguard the rights and interests of future generations in policy-making processes. Operating under a framework of core goals and priorities defined during a National Conversation (see p.38), the responsibilities could include:

- **Advisory Role:** Providing expert advice and recommendations to government agencies, public bodies, and policymakers on the long-term implications and intergenerational impacts of policy proposals, legislative initiatives, and strategic decisions.
- **Strategic Guidance:** Supporting the development and implementation of initiatives like a Budgetary Statement for Future Generations and the Productivity Commission's Intergenerational Report to enhance long-term, ethical, and sustainable policy-making.
- **Review and Assessment:** Conducting comprehensive reviews and assessments to ensure that public bodies adequately consider the wellbeing, rights, and interests of future generations in their decision-making

processes, in line with sustainable development and intergenerational equity principles.

- **Awareness and Capacity-Building Powers:** Authority to develop and implement educational campaigns, training programs, and initiatives to promote futures literacy and foresight in policy-making.
- **Collaboration and Coordination:** Facilitating collaboration and coordination among public bodies to align efforts towards achieving long-term objectives, Sustainable Development Goals, and the protection of future generations' interests.

Proposed Scope of Focus: The Commissioner's focus would be holistic, encouraging long-term thinking across all policy areas, rather than being restricted to specific issues like technology or climate. This approach supports a comprehensive national vision and wellbeing agenda.

Proposed Scope of Powers: To effectively fulfil these responsibilities, the Commissioner may exercise the following powers:

- **Advisory and Consultative Powers:** Authority to provide advice and recommendations on long-term and intergenerational impacts to government agencies and policymakers.
- **Awareness and Capacity-Building Powers:** Authority to develop and implement educational campaigns, training programs, and initiatives to promote futures literacy and foresight in policymaking.
- **Collaboration and Coordination Powers:** Power to foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing among public bodies, stakeholders, and experts to align efforts towards long-term objectives and Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Reporting and Monitoring:** Authority to publish reports, findings, and recommendations from reviews and assessments, and to monitor the implementation of these recommendations.
- **Review and Assessment Powers:** Power to conduct comprehensive evaluations of public bodies' decision-making processes and policies to ensure they prioritise the wellbeing and interests of future generations.

Terminology and Naming for a Commissioner for Future Generations

Preferences for the title of a commissioner vary among stakeholders, reflecting different priorities and theories on strategic positioning. Below is a high-level summary of considerations:

Commissioner for the Wellbeing of Future Generations: This title emphasises the importance of sustainable, long-term wellbeing for future generations, mirroring the Welsh approach.¹¹⁵ However, it might suggest a narrower focus on colloquial understandings of wellbeing alone, potentially excluding broader responsibilities such as environmental sustainability. An exclusive focus on future generations has also been observed to trigger resistance due to concerns of overlooking the pressing needs of current generations.

Commissioner for the Wellbeing of Current and Future Generations: Consultations to inform this policy brief indicate that the need to balance the interests of ‘current and future’ generations, and not overlook present day challenges, is front of mind for policy experts, advocates and every-day citizens alike. The inclusion of ‘current’ generations within the name reflects this public opinion by highlighting the responsibility to balance the needs of present and future populations. However, the inclusion of ‘current generations’ may blur the focus on future generations, creating potential overlap with existing positions that address these issues, particularly policy interventions in the interests of children and young people. Additionally, the emphasis on ‘wellbeing’ could limit the perception of the role’s broader mandate.

Commissioner for Current and Future Generations: This title highlights the intergenerational responsibility to balance the needs of both present and future populations. However, it may reduce the distinct focus on future generations and cause confusion about the role’s primary purpose. The inclusion of ‘current generations’ could also lead to overlap with roles already addressing today’s challenges.

Commissioner for Future Generations: This title is concise and directly focused on long-term impacts. It avoids confusion by clearly distinguishing future concerns from current issues, reducing overlap with other roles. Although it doesn’t explicitly mention ‘wellbeing,’ the Commissioner’s mandate inherently covers wellbeing, health, environmental sustainability, and quality of life. As mentioned above, this title does run an increased risk of resistance due to the exclusive focus on ‘future generations’, particularly without the inclusion of ‘wellbeing’ to indicate a more holistic approach.

This brief does not make a specific recommendation for a title. However, for the purposes of this brief, we use “Commissioner for Future Generations” as it is concise, conveys the role’s primary focus on future generations and avoids mandate overlap. The proposed legislation to support this role is referred to as the ‘Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.’

Regardless of the name eventually chosen for a commissioner, the reasoning, mandate and core responsibilities of the position must be well-defined and widely understood.

3. Mandate the launch of a *National Conversation on Future Generations* and ongoing public engagement

The Act should mandate a requirement for the Commissioner to undertake a National Conversation process in Australia. A National Conversation is a civic engagement strategy that leverages a variety of methods to gather diverse community perspectives and foster meaningful dialogue. This initiative is a sequential step and would be bolstered by the institutional anchorage of the Commissioner, ensuring that its outputs contribute to long-term success and change. As one of the first acts of the Commissioner, a National Conversation would help shape strategic priorities for the Commissioner's office and engage the public directly to ensure that future policies reflect a shared, intergenerational vision for Australia.

There are several overseas examples from which Australia could draw inspiration to lead this process. For example, in 2014 the Wales We Want process empowered citizens to influence the 2015 Welsh *Well-being of Future Generations Act*.¹¹⁶ This initiative illustrates the critical importance of a national conversation to securing deep public buy-in to a future generations approach. By actively engaging the public, Wales ensured that its future generations framework was shaped by citizen voices, establishing a robust democratic mandate for sustainability and wellbeing.

The National Conversation in Australia should take the form of nationwide consultations, town halls, digital forums and assemblies, engaging diverse public stakeholders to define long-term goals and build support for a future generations framework. Implementing a National

Conversation in Australia should involve proactive efforts to engage historically marginalised voices and those who are often underrepresented by political processes. Meaningful inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is critical and will require proactive community engagement and culturally responsive strategies to foster trust and dialogue.

The Commissioner should work closely with First Nations leaders and communities throughout and beyond the National Conversation to develop culturally appropriate engagement strategies that respect traditional decision-making processes and knowledge systems. This may also include incorporating transformation scenario planning approaches that respect and incorporate Indigenous knowledge systems and perspectives.

Beyond a National Conversation, it is crucial that the Commissioner continues to lead ongoing public engagements as part of its mandate, providing citizens with clear avenues to shape policy, bolstering public trust in decision-making and avoiding consultation fatigue from processes that do not yield visible results.

Facilitating a National Conversation is beneficial in several regards:

1. **Forging a Unifying Vision:** An inclusive process can bridge socio-cultural divides, creating a cohesive national identity and enhancing social cohesion. This approach can address polarisation and foster deeper community connections. The Wales We Want process is a powerful example of how national conversations can foster a shared long-term vision. Similarly, Scotland's National Performance

Framework articulates the aspirations of the Scottish people through ongoing public engagement, creating a shared vision for the future that drives effective public policy.¹¹⁷

2. Enriched Understanding of Community Needs:

Broad consultations reveal priorities not initially identified, aligning policy with community language and values. An Australian example of enriched understanding of community needs through consultation is the Mayi Kuwayu, currently the largest national study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, health and wellbeing which continues to offer insights on connections between identity, spirituality, and connection to Country, community, and language for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, providing essential insights for policy and service design.¹¹⁸ Similarly, Wales' national conversation led to the inclusion of 'a globally responsible Wales' as one of their seven wellbeing goals, an inclusion that would not have otherwise been anticipated.¹¹⁹ Singapore's Forward Singapore initiative also highlights how deep stakeholder engagement can clarify community needs and inform national strategies.¹²⁰

3. Foster Trust and Democratic

Engagement: Large-scale engagement enhances transparency, trust, and civic participation, translating complex policies into accessible language. This approach can strengthen democratic institutions and increase public engagement, the example of Yarra Valley Water's engagement of a citizen jury demonstrates the strengths of this approach, with New Zealand's experience with Wellbeing Budgets and the regression of their recent policy innovation being characterised by a lack of deep citizen engagement.¹²¹

4. Secure Community Buy-In: Involving citizens in policy development promotes ownership and long-term support for interventions. This engagement helps ensure policies are more likely to be sustained and supported over time. The Wales We Want initiative demonstrated how securing community buy-in is essential to ensure the sustainability and legitimacy of future-focused initiatives. Singapore's Forward Singapore initiative, which also engaged citizens in co-creating policies, also demonstrated how public input strengthens the legitimacy and sustainability of long-term policies.

5. Democratic Mandate for Policy

Innovation: A transparent, consultative process provides a clear mandate for policy changes, supporting their longevity across political cycles. The success of the *Well-being of Future Generations Act* in Wales, shaped by the Wales We Want process, underscores the power of public engagement in securing a clear and long-term mandate for policy innovation.

Further analysis on how a National Conversation could be conducted in Australia can be found in *A National Conversation on Measuring What Matters in Australia*, Centre for Policy Development.¹²² See the Annex for further information about international experiences conducting national conversations or dialogues.

Additional Recommendations for a Comprehensive Investment in Future Generations Policy

While the recommendations outlined in this brief are essential steps toward embedding future generations policy into Australia's governance framework, several additional actions would help establish a comprehensive and effective ecosystem that ensures intergenerational fairness across the policy landscape. Some recommendations include:

I. Adequately Engaging Key Stakeholders

A sustainable and participatory nation that generates successful long-term policies and decision making needs to be grounded in our communities. All people of Australia are important to shape the future of tomorrow, and this brief gives added mention to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities and young people.

Engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities as Equal Partners: As discussed in Section 4, a future generations policy for Australia must embrace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as equal partners, drawing on the deep, intergenerational knowledge embedded in these cultures. Indigenous Australians have long understood the importance of environmental stewardship, kinship systems, and custodial responsibilities that ensure the wellbeing of future generations. Embedding these perspectives into

the Commissioner's work presents an opportunity to reimagine Australian governance by honouring traditional knowledge systems and practices.

Central to this approach is acknowledging the imperative to reconcile with Australia's history, a commitment echoed in the Uluru Statement from the Heart. By honouring the principles of the Uluru Statement, the Commissioner's Office can work collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders to define a shared vision that respects Australia's rich Indigenous heritage while steering policy in a way that addresses historical injustices.

To achieve this, the Commissioner could facilitate Transformative Scenario Planning (TSP) led by First Nations communities, ensuring that future policy approaches are deeply informed by Indigenous knowledge systems. By embedding First Nations wisdom into governance, Australia can model a policy framework grounded in intergenerational equity, custodial ethics, and sustainability, providing a path for a truly inclusive and resilient future.

Young Australians: Fostering Collaboration Across Generations:

The establishment and operation of the Commissioner's Office should be done with structured involvement of young Australians to empower a new generation to shape the direction of Australia's policy landscape. By including young people in foundational decisions, we ensure policies reflect their unique perspectives and priorities. One approach to achieve this is through youth citizen juries that deliberate on significant policy questions, modelled on successful examples such as South Australia's

youth jury on nuclear waste, which decisively influenced state policy by rejecting the proposed nuclear waste facility. This approach underscores the capacity of young people to meaningfully contribute to complex policy discussions.

Young people, distinct from future generations, are directly impacted by today's policies and have a vested interest in long-term decision-making. While the Commissioner's role should advocate for those yet to be born, active youth engagement provides a crucial bridge between immediate needs and future impacts. This approach can be supported by the Office for Youth, ensuring that engagement methods are robust and institutionally supported.

Proactive Inclusivity in Creating a Shared Vision for the Future: A truly inclusive approach to creating a shared vision for the future requires proactive, intersectional planning to engage Australians who are often excluded from, or underrepresented by, political processes. This is critical as these communities are also, often, the most impacted by short-termist policies and intergenerational inequity. This includes those who experience exclusion due to cross-cultural barriers, geographic location, socio-economic status, or other systemic factors that hinder their inclusion. For these communities, the impact of short-term policies is direct and lasting, affecting access to opportunities, social mobility, and long-term wellbeing. Their participation is essential to shaping a policy framework that reflects Australia's multicultural diversity and fosters equity.

Therefore, a targeted approach should be taken that prioritises targeted consultations, place-based engagement, and culturally responsive dialogues to ensure that those historically

underrepresented feel welcomed as co-creators of a vision for the future.

Australia's Multicultural Identity and Creating a Shared Vision for the Future: Much of Australia's strength lies in the richness and diversity of its multicultural population, with an estimated 29% of Australia's population being born outside Australia, and 48% having a parent born overseas.¹²³ This multicultural foundation facilitates the opportunity to draw cultural wisdom, international insights and contributions to the fabric of our social cohesion from all corners of the world, referred to as 'the binding agent of our social cohesiveness' by June Oscar AO, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner.¹²⁴

Delivering on wellbeing across generations and crafting a compelling vision for the future should be done with a conscious commitment to overcoming systemic intercultural inequities to ensure that all Australians are able to enjoy the potential of our shared future.

2. Establishing Robust Support Infrastructure

Legislate the Delivery of a Report on Australia's Future: The Intergenerational Outlook: The Act should establish a statutory requirement for the delivery of a public report titled 'Australia's Future: The Intergenerational Outlook' to be delivered every five years.

This Report would provide a holistic look at Australia's future, informed by social, environmental, technological and future-oriented trends, and assess the impacts and implications for Australia's future generations. This report would be delivered by the Commissioner for Future Generations, with whole-of-government input.

As discussed in Section 4, existing reporting does not capture the breadth of issues relevant to future generations. The current Intergenerational Report (IGR) focuses primarily on fiscal and economic indicators. Criticism of the IGR has consistently focused on the need for analysis of the impacts of government spending over the long term, combined with a more comprehensive approach to capture the full spectrum of challenges and opportunities for future generations.

The IGR is legislated to be delivered every five years through the *Charter of Budget Honesty Act 1998*. The 'Australia's Future: The Intergenerational Outlook' report should be released in tandem with the IGR every five years to provide a holistic view of Australia's long-term prospects, ensuring that fiscal sustainability and macroeconomic projections are contextualised within broader societal trends and challenges.

This complementary but standalone report would also incorporate broader trends and indicators for wellbeing (provided by Treasury in the form of the Measuring What Matters Statement), trends relating to Closing the Gap, the state of our natural environment, external and international trends and threats to Australia, technological advancement and the future of work, and long-term challenges to government service delivery.

To inform this, Australia can draw on Scotland's experience with measuring progress against national wellbeing indicators; Finland's experience publishing its strategic 'Report on the Future' each parliamentary term; and insights from other forecasting and horizon scanning initiatives.¹²⁵

Establish a Statutory Parliamentary Committee on Future Generations:

The Act should establish a Statutory Parliamentary Committee on Future Generations to embed future generations considerations into Australia's parliament and legislative process.

The Parliamentary Committee should be modelled on the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights. It would institutionalise the current Parliamentary Group on Future Generations and act as a coordinating reference point for the Commissioner for Future Generations.

The Committee should be empowered to conduct reviews, inquiries, and investigations into specific areas of legislation, policy, or broader societal trends that may have significant long-term impacts on future generations. This would include examining the sustainability of government programs, reviewing the impact of major legislative reforms, and investigating emerging threats or opportunities related to technological advancements, climate change, or social shifts. By reviewing any relevant major legislation for its long-term implications, the committee would ensure that policies contribute to intergenerational equity and sustainable development without adding excessive bureaucracy. This committee would be lean but effective, ensuring parliamentary oversight focuses on the needs of future generations.

Other countries around the world such as Finland and the Philippines have established parliamentary committees to maintain parliamentary oversight and review mechanisms to ensure future generations policy is at the heart of national parliamentary considerations. For example, the ability to review policy and drafted legislation and then make

recommendations to Parliament has been effective in influencing reductions in short-termism and stimulating decision-making that accounts for future interests in Germany through their Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development.¹²⁶

Future Generations Impact Assessments – Forward-Thinking Policy:

Government policy should be required to undergo a Future Generations Impact Assessment. This structured evaluation would assess potential impacts on environmental sustainability, economic equity, and social wellbeing, taking inspiration from existing resources such as the School of International Future’s Intergenerational Fairness Policy Assessment Toolkit.¹²⁷ By embedding long-term considerations in policy-making, Australia can safeguard against policies that might unintentionally harm future generations. Drawing from global best practices in countries like Wales and Scotland could provide valuable insights for implementation in Australia.

3. Supporting Existing Initiatives and Fostering Collaboration

Engaging with Concurrent Advocacy Initiatives:

The Government should consider the merits of complementary reforms that would support an ecosystem for long-term thinking. This should include proposals to extend to a 4-year electoral period and the extensive body of work providing guidance for integrating the Measuring What Matters Framework into a wellbeing approach to government decision-making and the economy.¹²⁸

Collaboration with the APSC – A Pathway to Better Long-Term Thinking:

The Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) plays a critical

role in promoting long-term thinking in policy design and governance.¹²⁹ With the APS already doing long-term futures and foresight work (see Australia’s APS Futures and Foresight Capability project¹³⁰), the Commissioner should consider how to harness the existing momentum and leadership of the APSC to further integrate long-term principles and intergenerational thinking into the mandate of the APSC to ensure that decision-making is sustainable and forward-thinking.

Improvements to the Intergenerational Report:

The Intergenerational Report (IGR) is a celebrated innovation for intergenerational policy-making, but it has been criticised for its lack of influence on policy-making outcomes and narrow economic focus, often overlooking social, environmental, and technological trends. In addition to the aforementioned proposal to introduce a report titled ‘Australia’s Future: The Intergenerational Outlook’, the Commissioner’s Office could play an instrumental role in addressing these limitations by supporting Treasury to broaden the IGR’s scope, making it a more holistic and actionable tool for guiding long-term policy. By doing so, the two reports could provide robust and holistic guidance for Australia’s policy landscape.

In alignment with recommendations from Think Forward and the Monash Sustainable Development Institute for improvements to the IGR, the Commissioner could advocate for the inclusion of wellbeing and sustainability measures, incorporating an assessment of changes in the various ‘stocks’ that contribute to future wellbeing.¹³¹ This would provide a more comprehensive evaluation of intergenerational equity. Key indicators should capture environmental capital—such as

biodiversity and the functioning of ecosystems—as well as human and social capital, which includes the stock of skills, knowledge, and health that individuals possess, alongside the social relationships, networks, and norms within society and the institutions that underpin them. Together, these elements would offer a clearer picture of the long-term impacts of policy on future generations.

Additionally, the Commissioner should assist Treasury in integrating sustainability and equity as foundational principles within the IGR. This approach would address economic disparities across generations, advocating for an equitable distribution of the tax burden and ensuring future fiscal policies do

not disproportionately affect younger Australians. The Commissioner's input would also be valuable in incorporating scenario testing for potential future shocks—such as pandemics or environmental crises—enabling better risk management and resilience in policy planning.

By working closely with the Treasury, the Commissioner can help evolve the IGR into a balanced, forward-looking document that reflects the full spectrum of Australia's intergenerational challenges and opportunities. This collaborative approach will ensure that the IGR serves as a genuine accountability mechanism, grounded in the principles of sustainability, equity, and holistic wellbeing.

***“Our future children and grandchildren need us to act to safeguard their future.*”**

Wales has led the way in becoming the first country in the world to embed future generations into law, and this Future Generations Policy Brief provides an inspiring and practical routemap for advancing future generations policy in Australia.

Today's biggest problems can't wait any longer for action. All countries must take the bold actions required to benefit both present and future generations.”

Derek Walker

Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

Conclusion

Australia prides itself on the notion of a fair go for all, solidarity with our mates, and leaving a better future for those who will come after us. We are not currently embodying these values. We have a moral imperative to turn the tide and extend our mateship and solidarity to future generations. Doing so not only underpins long term wellbeing and prosperity but also represents a profound strategic opportunity for Australia.

Our policy brief has underscored the urgent need to integrate these principles into our legislative framework to safeguard the long-term interests of our future generations. By creating a Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, establishing a Commissioner for Future Generations, and implementing a range of other measures to build a legislative ecosystem to protect our future, Australia can build a robust framework that ensures the sustainability and prosperity of our nation for decades to come.

Australia is well placed to drive change and seize this opportunity. In the face of growing public appetite for wellbeing and intergenerational fairness to be considered in policy-making, Australia has the imperative, means and track record to successfully implement world-leading policy innovation.

We have a moral responsibility to take this action. The wellbeing of future Australians hinges on the choices we make today. By prioritising the careful stewardship of resources, enhancing social cohesion,

and improving economic resilience, we can address the multifaceted challenges of our time while preparing for future uncertainties.

The momentum from the 2024 UN Summit for the Future and the upcoming 2025 federal election presents a critical opportunity. The Summit has set the stage for global commitments to future generations, and the election offers a pivotal moment for policymakers to champion these values domestically.

We urge all members of Parliament to embrace this challenge, recognising their moral and political duty to future generations. The decisions made today will define the legacy we leave behind.

Let's seize this moment to ensure that Australia remains a beacon of sustainability, equity, and fairness for generations to come.

Appendix A

Additional Contributions

This report represents the culmination of research, collaborative dialogue and consultative efforts spanning the last 2 years and is the product of inputs from a rich network of supporters, whose insights, expertise, and commitment have been instrumental in shaping the findings of this policy brief.

We would like to acknowledge the members of the Foundations for Tomorrow team who served as lead authors of this policy brief: Otilie Allen; Clare Beaton-Wells; Nina Cass; Matthew Day; Amie Furlong; Emilio Goytizolo; Taylor Hawkins; Emmett Howard; Mercedes Page; Kate Purcell; Hayley Whatman.

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Members and friends of the Parliamentary Group for Future Generations, whose insights and reflections since the launch of the Group in February 2023 have guided our work.

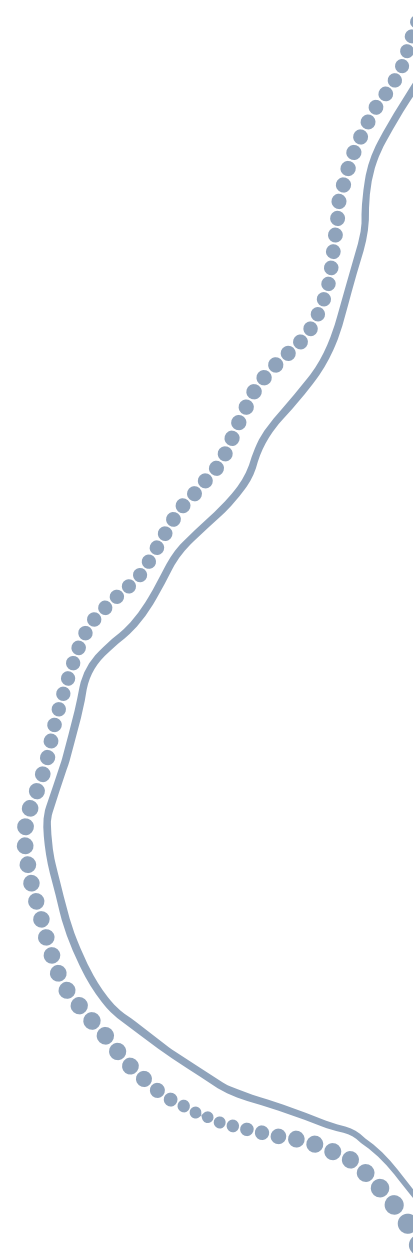
Members of the Intergenerational

Fairness Coalition; *Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, Australian Youth Affairs Coalition, Better Futures Australia, Center for Policy Development, EveryGen, Foundation for Young Australians, Global Shapers Community Canberra, Good Ancestors Policy, National Union of Students, Orygen, Parents for Climate, Plan International, Prevention United, The Council for the Human Future, Think Forward, Tomorrow Movement, UN Youth Australia, Youth Affairs Council Victoria.*

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Foundations for Tomorrow is proudly supported by Mannifera.



Appendix B

Future generations approaches around the world

Location	Name	Type	Mandate/Details	Structure/Type of Authority
African Union	Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want	Strategy	A pan-African strategic framework that aims to deliver on sustainable development for current and future generations.	A strategic framework of the African Union
Australia	Australian Parliamentary Group for Future Generations	Parliamentary Group	A collective of more than 20 Senators and Members of the Australian Parliament, convened in collaboration with civil society to facilitate dialogue and joint action to advance future generations policy in Australia.	Civil society initiative in collaboration with political champions
	Measuring What Matters	Wellbeing Framework	Australia's first national wellbeing framework designed to track progress towards a more healthy, secure, sustainable, cohesive and prosperous Australia.	A national wellbeing framework
	NSC Futures Hub	Independent Academic Think-Tank	The Futures Hub is Australia's centre of expertise in futures analysis. A whole-of-government resource that helps Australia's public sector to think about the future and make better decisions.	Independent institution, partner of the Australian government
Austria	How's Austria	Measurement Framework	Launched in 2012 by Statistics Austria to measure prosperity and progress for Austria. Created a set of 30 key indicators to expand Austrian understanding of progress and prosperity beyond GDP.	Government project led by Statistics Austria
Bangladesh	Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100	National Strategy	A long-term strategic plan aimed at managing resources sustainably and ensuring resilience against climate change impacts for future generations. Adopted in 2018.	Government policy framework
Belgium	Sustainable Development Indicators	Measurement Framework	Presented annually in a report that comprises over 80 indicators of wellbeing and development, designed to align with the UN SDGs. Provides a detailed analysis of the evolution of Belgian wellbeing and sustainability for future generations.	Annual publication released by Belgium's Federal Planning Bureau.
Brazil	Ministério Público	Independent office	Also known as the Public Prosecutor's Office; includes a remit on defending collective rights and promoting intergenerational justice and equity.	Independent office within the government, established in the Constitution and various legislation

Location	Name	Type	Mandate/Details	Structure/Type of Authority
The Balearic Islands	Law for the Wellbeing of Present and Future Generations	Legislation	Mandates compulsory assessments of policies to assess their potential impact on present and future generations.	Government legislation
Canada	Policy Horizons Canada	Government foresight initiative	Established in 2010, aims to promote long-term policy planning and foresight to address challenges facing future generations.	Reports through the Deputy Minister of Employment and Social Development Canada to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion
	2024 Budget, 'Fairness for every generation'	Federal Budget	A budget that focuses on equitable distribution of resources for all generations, emphasising social equity and sustainability.	Federal government initiative
	Canada's Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development	Commissioner	Established in 1995 to oversee environmental sustainability and promote intergenerational equity.	Statutory
	Quality of Life Framework	Policy Framework	Developed in 2020/2021, the framework aims to measure what matters most to Canadians, to help drive evidence-based budgeting and decision-making at the federal level.	Government policy framework overseen by Statistics Canada.
Costa Rica	National Decarbonization Plan 2018-2050	National Strategy	Established in 2018, aims to achieve zero net emissions by 2050 with an emphasis on sustainability and future generations.	Government-led initiative with cross-sectoral involvement
European Union	EU Ministers for the Future Network	Ministerial Network	Part of the EU's Foresight Network , a network of ministers from EU member states focused on long-term policy planning and foresight to address challenges facing future generations.	Informal network, meets at least once per year.
Finland	Committee for the Future	Parliamentary Committee	Established in 1993, advises the Finnish Parliament and government on future trends, sustainable development, and future generations.	Part of the Finnish Parliament, composed of members of Parliament
	Government Report on the Future	Strategic Document	Published every parliamentary term, provides long-term policy guidelines on major societal issues, including future generations.	Government report submitted by the Prime Minister's Office
France	New Indicators of Wealth	Policy Framework	In 2015, France passed a law introducing the New Indicators of Wealth, which includes 10 new indicators such as the environment, quality of life and inequalities for measuring wealth beyond GDP.	Nationally legislated statistical framework, overseen by government

Location	Name	Type	Mandate/Details	Structure/Type of Authority
Germany	Sustainable Development Strategy	National Strategy	Since 2002, focuses on sustainability and long-term wellbeing, updated regularly to reflect new challenges.	Government-led initiative, involving federal, state, and local governments
	Germany's Parliamentary Advisory Council for Sustainable Development	Parliamentary Advisory Council	Established in 2004 to provide advice on sustainability issues and long-term policy planning.	Advisory committee
Gibraltar	Gibraltar's Commissioner for Sustainable Development and Future Generations	Commissioner	Established in 2018, oversees initiatives that ensure sustainable development for future generations.	Independent office within the government
Iceland	Wellbeing Framework	Policy Initiative	Introduced in 2019, includes 39 wellbeing indicators across social, economic, and environmental dimensions.	Policy initiative led by the government
Ireland	Well-being Framework	Policy Initiative	A cross-government initiative, first published in 2021 to measure progress and ensure wellbeing considerations play a central role in shaping fiscal policies and addressing societal challenges.	Policy initiative led by the government; feeds into annual budget process
Israel	Well-being, Sustainability and National Resilience Indicators	Measurement Framework	In 2015, Israel adopted a resolution obligating the Central Bureau of Statistics to annually publish wellbeing, sustainability, and national resilience indicators, providing a basis for examining changes in Israel's wellbeing,	Government framework led by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics
Italy	Measures of Equitable and Sustainable Well-being	Wellbeing Framework	In 2010, Italy launched an initiative for measuring equitable and sustainable wellbeing in Italy. The initiative aims to measure wellbeing beyond GDP across 12 domains and 130 indicators.	Led by Italy's statistical bureau, Istat in collaboration with the National Council for Economics and Labour
Japan	Children's Future Strategy Council	Committee	Established to ensure the interests of children in policy-making, with a focus on future generations.	Advisory committee, chaired by the Prime Minister
	Future Design	Academic and Government Policy Initiative	An innovative approach involving stakeholders engaging in policy-making by imagining themselves as future generations.	Collaboration between academia, government, and the private sector
	Well-being Dashboard	Measurement Framework	In 2019, the Japanese Cabinet Office has developed a national Well-being Dashboard to present the findings of the annual Survey on Satisfaction and Quality of Life. This Dashboard informs national wellbeing KPIs and policy agendas.	A framework led by the Japanese Government's Cabinet Office.

Location	Name	Type	Mandate/Details	Structure/Type of Authority
Kenya	Kenya Vision 2030	National Strategy	Introduced in 2008, a long-term development blueprint to transform Kenya into an industrialised middle-income country by 2030. Emphasises sustainable resource management, climate change adaptation, and environmental protection to ensure the wellbeing of future generations.	Government policy framework, overseen by the State Department of Economic Planning
Kyrgyz Republic	National Development Strategy 2018-2040	National Strategy	A long-term strategy to achieve sustainable development and ensure a decent quality of life for current and future generations.	Government policy framework
Latvia	Latvia 2030	National Strategy	The NSDS, the Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030 (Latvia 2030) outlines core long-term goals, respective goals and action lines for achieving sustainable development until 2030.	Strategic planning document, overseen by the State Chancellery that answers directly to the Prime Minister.
Malta	Sustainable Development Act	Legislation	Established in 2012, aims to integrate sustainable development principles into national policies.	Government legislation, enforced by relevant authorities
	Guardian of Future Generations	Commissioner	Appointed under the Sustainable Development Act, responsible for monitoring and promoting sustainable practices.	Independent statutory body, with reporting duties to the government
The Netherlands	Monitor of Well-being	Policy Framework	In 2017, Statistics Netherlands developed the Monitor of Well-being, a statistical instrument designed to provide information on all aspects of wellbeing in the Netherlands and to inform parliamentary debate about the effectiveness of government policy.	Government policy framework led by Statistics Netherlands.
New Zealand	Public Service Act	Legislation	Established in 2020, promotes long-term stewardship and intergenerational wellbeing by requiring public service agencies to plan for the future.	Government legislation, applicable to all public service agencies
	New Zealand Treasury's Living Standards Framework	Policy framework	Comprehensive wellbeing framework developed by the New Zealand Treasury since 2011, guiding policy-making and budget decisions.	Treasury Department's framework, used to guide policy-making
Nigeria	Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on the SDGs	Government Office	First established in 2005 to oversee implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, the Office expanded in 2015 to implement and monitor progress on the SDGs.	Government office, reporting to the President

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Norway	Norwegian Pension Fund Global	Sovereign Wealth Fund	Established in 1990, manages surplus from oil revenues for the benefit of future generations, ensuring financial sustainability.	Government-managed sovereign wealth fund
	Quality of Life	National Survey	In 2020, Statistics Norway conducted a national survey on Quality of Life to obtain data on Norwegians' quality of life and inform the development of a national framework and strategy for measuring quality of life.	Government-led survey in collaboration with Statistics Norway and the What Works Wellbeing Centre.
The Philippines	Senate Committee on Sustainable Development Goals, Innovations and Futures Thinking	Parliamentary Committee	Established in 2019, responsible for advancing legislation and initiatives that embed forward-looking strategies and policies into the legislative process, ensuring the welfare of future generations is prioritised. Plays a key role in integrating the SDGs into national lawmaking, fostering a future-oriented approach to national development.	Permanent Senate committee, created through a Senate resolution in 2019
Scotland	Scotland's Futures Forum	Parliamentary Think-Tank	Works with Members of the Scottish Parliament to look beyond the electoral cycle and stimulate debate on long-term challenges and opportunities.	Company limited by guarantee owned by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (SPCB); Board of Directors, chaired by the Parliament's Presiding Officer
	National Performance Framework	National Policy Framework	A wellbeing framework first introduced in 2007, made into law in 2015. Measures progress against national outcomes, which are legislated to be reviewed every five years.	Government legislation
Singapore	Forward Singapore	National Strategy/Conversation	Launched in 2022 to engage Singaporeans in discussions aimed at refreshing the social compact, addressing contemporary challenges, and charting a roadmap for the future.	National Consultation led by the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, Singapore Centre for Strategic Futures
	Singapore Centre for Strategic Futures	Government Think-Tank	Established in 2009 and situated within Singapore's Prime Minister's Office (PMO) since 2015, conducts futures research and foresight work.	Located within the Prime Minister's Office
Slovenia	National Development Strategy 2030	Policy Framework	Introduced in 2017, a multi-sectoral national strategy building on the Vision of Slovenia and current economic state that takes into account global challenges and trends and is designed to incorporate the UN SDGs.	Government policy framework, overseen by the Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development.
South Korea	National Assembly Futures Institute	Government think-tank	Established in 2018 with the aim of predicting and analysing changes in the future environment and deriving mid-to-long term national development strategies to reinforce the National Assembly's policy capabilities.	National futures research institute located under the National Assembly.

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Taiwan	vTaiwan	National Strategy/ Platform	Launched in 2014, a digital platform and civic deliberation process, bringing together Taiwanese citizens and the government to shape legislation and build consensus on national issues.	National digital participation platform, developed by gov-zero and powered by Polis in collaboration with the Taiwanese government.
United Arab Emirates	Ministry of Possibilities	Government Ministry	A virtual ministry established in 2019 to incubate and solve systemic impossibilities of the government.	A Ministry within the UAE government
	The UAE First Long-Term Strategy	National Strategy	A 2023 strategic plan aimed at reducing climate emissions and ensuring sustainable growth to safeguard the wellbeing of future generations.	Strategic plan overseen by the UAE Ministry of Climate Change and Environment
United Kingdom	Measures of National Well-being Dashboard	Measurement Framework	Introduced in 2011, aims to provide an overview of wellbeing in the UK on an individual, community and national level. Considers change across 59 wellbeing measures, grouped by 10 topic areas.	Government-led initiative, overseen by the Office for National Statistics.
	All-Party Parliamentary Group for Future Generations	Parliamentary Group	Established in 2017, promotes long-term policy-making in the UK Parliament, focusing on intergenerational fairness and sustainable development.	Cross-partisan group in the UK Parliament
Wales	Well-being of Future Generations Act	Legislation	Established in 2015, requires public bodies to consider the long-term impact of their decisions on future generations.	Government legislation, applicable to all public bodies in Wales
	Future Generations Commissioner	Commissioner	Established under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, responsible for ensuring that public bodies comply with the Act and consider long-term impacts.	Independent statutory body, reports to the Welsh Parliament (Senedd)
	Wales Protocol for Future Generations	Non-Binding Protocol	Launched in 2024 by the Commissioner, the protocol aims to promote global best practices for future generations through international cooperation.	Non-binding voluntary protocol

To access the Annex and further information on the work that has informed this policy brief please visit:

<https://wwwFOUNDATIONSfortomorrow.org/futuregenerationspolicyroadmap>

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