MAKING OUR FUTURE WORK

ACT Pilot Workshop Report

Australia²¹
SHAPING THE FUTURE

Contents

Executive Summary

The modern world of work is both an exciting and uncertain place for young people. Technological changes, the demand for 'soft' or 'enterprising' skills, and increasing casual and part-time work are changing the nature of employment markets.

There is a range of data available about the labour market and predictions about the future of work, but the voice of young people is often missing in contemporary research.

The Making our Future Work project, run by independent think tank Australia21, seeks to gain an empathic understanding of young people's experiences and feelings about the world of work, their future, and the challenges and opportunities they face.

The first stage of the project was an ACT pilot workshop held on 11 September 2017. The workshop was designed in consultation with an expert reference group and facilitated by young people (aged 31 or under).

Fourteen people aged 16-24 years from a range of backgrounds (employed, students, unstable housing) participated in the 3.5 hour workshop. Activities included an individual survey, small group discussion and whole group discussion.

Throughout the workshop, participant discussion crystallised around four key topics: education, social equity, workers' rights, and career paths. Discussion and reflection ranged across many levels – ie personal, individual workplace, employment market and 'culture', government policy, institutional, and societal.

Across all topics and levels, participants talked of change and feelings of uncertainty. In line with this, the hopes most frequently cited by participants were to find rewarding work, and to find work that is stable and secure. The most cited fear was overwhelmingly about stability and security of employment.

The participants' own words, contained in this report, provide a rich insight into how the broader world of work and predictions for the future are affecting these 14 young people, and what they believe could make this better or worse.

Project Context

The modern world of work is both an exciting and uncertain place for young people. Research suggests that technological and organisational changes are unsettling employment markets in most occupations. Technological changes are creating new jobs and extinguishing others. Highly skilled and educated workers are in big demand with 'soft' or 'enterprising' skills becoming privileged. Increasing casual and part-time work means employment is less secure than it was for previous generations.[1]

Debate about these work-related challenges and opportunities is often conducted amongst experts. Consultation by Australia21 with academics and organisations working with young people suggests that while there is a range of longitudinal survey and other data available, a key ingredient in contemporary research is missing – the voices of young people themselves.

The Making our Future Work project seeks to redress this imbalance by inviting young people from diverse backgrounds to share their lived experience of the world of work, and how they feel and think about their future. The objective of the Making our Future Work project is to gain an empathic understanding of young people's experiences/feelings about the world of work, their future, and the challenges and opportunities they face.

Australia21's plans for the project are that it will involve:

- four interactive workshops comprising one ACT pilot workshop and three workshops in other parts of Australia. The workshops will be with young people aged 16-25 from a diverse range of ethnic, cultural and geographic backgrounds and provide a forum for them to share their stories/perspectives on work, the changing workforce, and their future. The workshops would be youth-led and youth-focused. A reference group and other experts would guide the design of the workshops, with an evaluation of the ACT pilot workshop informing the design of the three subsequent workshops;

- inviting creative contributions (eg video, artwork) prior to the workshops; displaying these, and material presented and created at the workshops, on a dedicated web-page;

- producing a thematic workshop report;

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[1] The Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) 'New Work Order' series of reports provides a useful summary of research in an Australian context – https://www.fya.org.au/our-research/ and https://www.fya.org.au/report/new-work-order-summary/

- convening a roundtable of young people and youth and workforce experts/policy-makers to discuss workshop themes and implications for policy. The workshop report and web-page would provide context for the roundtable;

- producing and publicly sharing a report from the roundtable with recommendations.

Australia21 chose a workshop and roundtable approach for the project to allow for face-to-face engagement with and between young people, as opposed to online engagement. We considered this would allow for more nuanced discussion and understanding both amongst participants and between participants and researchers. Drawing young people together into a workshop would also provide a tangible forum for their views to be heard.

Australia21 hopes the outcomes of this project will be that:

- policy makers and the community gain a greater understanding of young people's lived experiences in relation to work, as well as their hopes for future employment and well-being;

- government/industry policy and programs are influenced by the project findings; and

- young people are empowered to contribute to policy debates and program issues affecting them.

ACT pilot workshop

Aims

The aims of the ACT pilot workshop were to:

- develop an understanding of how young people in the ACT feel about their future and work; and

- develop a workshop methodology and assess:
  - its effectiveness in allowing young people to share their experiences and contribute to debate, and
  - whether the workshop outcomes can be analysed and reported usefully for policy makers.

Reference group

The Making our Future Work ACT pilot workshop was developed by Australia21 in consultation with a volunteer reference group. The reference group comprised seven experts from the government, community and academic sectors. (Reference group members at Appendix 1.)

Participant recruitment

Fourteen young people aged 16-24 participated in the ACT pilot workshop on 11 September 2017 in the YWCA Canberra Conference room. Australia21 recruited workshop participants through established networks in the educational and community sectors in Canberra. For example, the Youth Coalition of the ACT promoted the workshop on behalf of Australia21 through its social media platforms and via email.

Our aim was to recruit as diverse a group as possible and our initial plan was to use a demographic survey as a sign-up process to ensure this. However, due to low sign-up numbers, Australia21 accepted all those who registered for the workshop. In spite of this, the demographic information set out below shows the group at the pilot workshop was spread across different demographics.

Sample

Tables 1-3 set out the demographic information about the workshop participants.

Table 1: Age of participants

Age	Quantity (out of 14)
16	2
17	0
18	1
19	0
20	3
21	3
22	2
23	1
24	2

Table 2: Other demographic information

Demographic factor	Quantity (out of 14)
Female	9
Male	5
Disability	2
Culturally or linguistically diverse background	5
LGBTQIA+	2
No access to secure accommodation in past four weeks	1
Currently studying	10

Table 3: Participants' highest level of qualification attained or in progress

Qualification	Quantity (out of 14)
Bachelor Degree	5
Advanced Diploma or Diploma	2
Certificate III/IV	2
Year 12	1
Year 11, Certificate I/II, or below	4

Participant consent, ethics and risk

We provided written information about the workshop to participants and obtained written consent from each participant (or their parent/carer if they were under 18 years old) about taking part in the workshop and how their information would be used. (Appendix 2)

In consultation with the reference group and Australia21's internal research committee, we assessed that informed written consent from participants and the ability for participants to withdraw at any time from the project was sufficient to meet ethical research requirements.

A possible risk for workshop participants was psychological distress as a result of thinking and talking about uncertainties in the future, or recounting of past events that are perceived to be difficult. Our mitigation approach was to inform participants of this risk and engage a mental health counsellor from headspace Canberra[2] to attend the workshop.

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[2] headspace Canberra is part of the National Youth Mental Health Foundation and supports young people aged 12 - 25 who are experiencing mild to moderate mental health concerns and/or substance use issues, and their family and friends. https://headspace.org.au/headspace-centres/headspace-canberra/

Workshop Process and Data Collection

The Making our Future Work workshop was facilitated by young people aged 31 or under. The lead facilitator was a qualitative researcher experienced in running group sessions as a university tutor. The three assistant facilitators were YoungA21[3] members with experience in youth engagement. Ensuring the workshop was youth-led was an important organisational factor aimed at helping participants feel comfortable and to avoid older people influencing the discussion. During the workshop, representatives of Australia21, YWCA Canberra, and the Department of Employment were present as observers but were asked not to contribute to the activities. The workshop process itself also involved several activities designed to ensure participants felt comfortable (eg welcome, overview from the headspace counsellor, warm up activities, dinner break).

Data collection activities progressed from an individual survey, to small group and then whole group discussion, with this sequence designed to allow participants to consolidate their own thoughts and feelings before sharing them with others, as well as giving them the chance to express themselves in a variety of settings.

Table 4 provides a detailed breakdown of the workshop activities.

Image 1: Small group discussion during the Making our Future Work ACT pilot workshop.

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[3] YoungA21 is Australia21's youth committee, a community of people under 30 who collaborate with Australia21 to develop fresh insights into issues affecting young Australians. For more information, see: http://australia21.org.au/young21overview

Table 4: Details of activities undertaken by participants in the Making our Future Work workshop

Activity	Details
Pre-workshop registration	Participants complete online demographic form.
Activity 1 – Written Survey	Participants complete a paper survey that details their work history, hopes and fears about their future and work, and option to expand upon a selected thought or feeling they have experienced.
Activity 2 – Small group brainstorm	Participants form groups of 4-6, discuss their identified hopes and fears (reflected upon in Activity 1), and use prompts to aid their discussion: *What have we heard about the future and work?* *What types of feelings does this include?* *How does this connect to other parts of the future and work?* Participants scribe and map their discussion on butcher's paper. YoungAustralia21 volunteers to aid facilitation when necessary. Groups present their discussion to the other groups, with Australia21 director collating points on whiteboard[4]. Audio recording obtained.
Activity 3 – Whole group discussion	Participants form a circle and contribute to a free-flowing discussion regarding their future and work. Facilitator to aid facilitation when necessary. Australia21 director collating points on whiteboard. Graphic recorder drawing summary of conversation. Audio recording obtained.
Voxpops[5] (voluntary)	Participants complete the sentences for Voxpop video recordings: *When I think about my future and work, I feel …* *If I could tell the government one thing about my future and work, it would be …*

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[4] An Australia21 director who is an experienced group discussion facilitator was selected to collate the information. His involvement also demonstrated the interest of older people and Australia21 in the voice of youth.

[5] Voxpops will be available on the Australia21 website.

The data items for analysis included:

- demographic information (workshop registration; Activity 1)

- written survey answers (Activity 1)

- small and large group discussion audio recordings, transcribed post-workshop (Activity 2; Activity 3)

- small group discussion maps (Activity 2).

Results

The data collected during the workshop is complex, with participant discussions and reflections covering issues at many levels, ranging from personal to societal. Australia21 has drawn from all the data items to best summarise the participant perspectives expressed during the workshop.

Results are presented at the individual and group levels, and as raw data (ie direct participant quotes, written survey responses, transcribed small group discussion maps) or summarised data (ie raw data grouped or summarised by the researcher).

Individual Responses

Activity 1 - Written Survey Answers

Thirteen participants answered the survey question about their hopes for the future and work: 'What are your hopes, if any, when you think about your future and work? Why is this?'. Table 5 shows the most frequent hopes cited were about:

- doing rewarding, meaningful work and contributing, working in their chosen area (10 responses)

- stability, financial security and good working conditions (7 responses)

Eleven participants answered the survey question about their fears for the future and work: 'What are your fears, if any, when you think about your future and work? Why is this?'. Table 6 shows the most frequent fear cited was overwhelmingly about finding work, especially stable, secure work (14 responses).

Table 5: Summary of participants' hopes when thinking about the future and work

Hope	Occurrence
Rewarding, meaningful work; work hard and contribute; morally sound work, work in an area of my choosing/area I'm passionate about	10
Stability; financial security; safe and secure work; good entitlements, protections, pay; not be un/under employed	7
Be well-respected by colleagues; feel valued	2
Work for myself	1
Have mobility with job	1
Change my life	1
Education	1
Part time work to support full time study	1
Not be tokenistic Indigenous Australian girl	1

Table 6: Summary of participants' fears when thinking about the future and work

Fear	Occurrence
Finding work; not having a stable career, secure full-time job; insecure, erratic work; casualisation of work; automation of jobs; not able to get job in specialist area; chosen field getting too competitive; not being among the best in chosen field	14
Financial concerns – student debt; work ideas or type of work won't be financially stable; won't be able to leave home due to housing market, long time studying, unemployment	3
Erosion of work rights	3
No meaningful work	2
Won't like work chosen (especially after years of studying)	2
Job cuts and decentralisation in public service, university research funding cuts	1
Pressure of being single earner in family	1
Poor employer/leadership affecting own growth	1
Not finishing study	1
Not worried	1

Thirteen participants answered the questions in the final section of the survey. This section allowed participants to expand upon a thought or feeling through three questions. The raw data in table 7 provides a direct insight into the chosen hope or fear of each participant, and what they think could make these seem better or worse.

Table 7: Individual participant response to a chosen thought or feeling

Please choose one thought or feeling. Which did you choose?	Why do you think/feel this way? Can you describe a time when you have thought/felt this?	What types of things could make this seem better?	What types of things could make this seem worse?
Slug through my career	• When I'm expecting a long, long, day. • I feel this way because I have to mentally brace myself so I won't quit or whine. • I feel like this when I try to predict my future.	Much broader scope of employers who I could work for, instead of trying to guess or unsuccessfully Google.	Radical changes by governments (such as decentralisation), pay wars, no pay increases, increasingly busy roads, maintaining lack of public transport, job cuts, war, and growing population in Canberra without taking good measures for city planning.
Stressed and uncertain	Because I'm not sure what the future hold, my ideas change a lot for what I want to do. [It is] always in the back on my mind!	Services at uni that help with career planning, More acceptance of different work flow.	'set career paths'
Uncertainty	My field doesn't have a clear promotion or growth track. It's very self directed. I could move between organisations but I don't know where to start.		
Optimism	I've been raised to always have faith in myself and teachers are always needed.		

Please choose one thought or feeling. Which did you choose?	Why do you think/feel this way? Can you describe a time when you have thought/felt this?	What types of things could make this seem better?	What types of things could make this seem worse?
Afraid/optimistic	After Brexit and the US election – realised the world is changing in a negative way, with more walls, more trade barriers, more pessimism, less cosmopolitanism, less trust.	More people moving away from politics or hate towards inclusivity and collaboration.	Politics getting even more divisive.
Happy	Feeling positive about where I work and good environment to working [in].	Nothing really	Loss of hours
Lucky	I feel lucky to have a great job doing something I'm passionate about.	Seeing the positive effects of my work.	Knowing that most young people struggle to find a job that doesn't exploit them.
Changing my life	For future, easier for you and can go to school safely, buy anything you like, freedom. I know my children will want this freedom.	Education and getting work. I want to help people. Maybe work in security to change people's lives.	Have to work hard to get a job. If not get a job, could go down bad pathways like alcohol and drugs. That could stop people getting a job in the future.
Hopeful optimism	Assuming that 1) society is a meritocracy and 2) grades are reflective of merit; I should be able to land a decent job. But then again, assumptions 1 & 2 aren't quite true and things can always go wrong (e.g. I can't get a part-time job for some reason). Even if I attend uni, am I	If I get into a good university maybe.	If I meet people who are unemployed/underemployed or if I still don't successfully land a part-time job.

Please choose one thought or feeling. Which did you choose?	Why do you think/feel this way? Can you describe a time when you have thought/felt this?	What types of things could make this seem better?	What types of things could make this seem worse?
	going to be able to get a job?		
Worried/uncertain	Previous experiences by higher managers that don't know you know they feel that way. This is in relation to accessing work rights.	Closer engagement and support by middle management. Cultural change.	Tokenistic policies. Resistance to cultural change towards flexible working by "old school" public servants.
Uncertainty	The last time I discussed my future with my manager, the mixed signals I've been getting don't bode well.	Guarantees about my future would be nice.	Being forced into further insecure work. Further erosion of workers' rights.
Scared	Because of the economy and the government services. Treatment of people with disabilities in employment. Most time I go to work thinking that I need to do better (and get an admin or library job).	Advocacy, talking to employment services. Not too much unfortunately. Unless government changes the policy.	Everything!
Positive	I feel positive about starting work, because it means I can be more independent in the world and get my own place to live.		

Six out of the 13 participants who answered these questions expanded on a positive feeling associated with thinking about their future and work. Five of the participants described a negative feeling. Four explore the notion of uncertainty, two in a neutral context and two paired with a negative feeling (stress or worry).

Group Responses

Activity 2 - Small group discussion scribed data

During Activity 2, participants formed three groups each facilitated by a YoungA21 volunteer. A nominated scribe from each group was asked to 'map' their discussion on butcher's paper. As a result, each group's conversation was represented in different formats.

Group 1

Group 1 consisted of six participants, who chose to represent their discussion through iterative note taking, drawing connections between issues and experiences with lines (see Image 2). Australia21 researchers have represented this in table 8 using three headings: 'key topics', 'corresponding ideas' and 'connections made'.

Group 1 started their discussion with the keyword '*uncertainty*' in the centre of the page, alongside the question 'will I be able to get a job??'. 'Uncertainty' was directly linked to innovation with a question about who will create the jobs of the future, and a comment that 'you can't just create a job from scratch'.
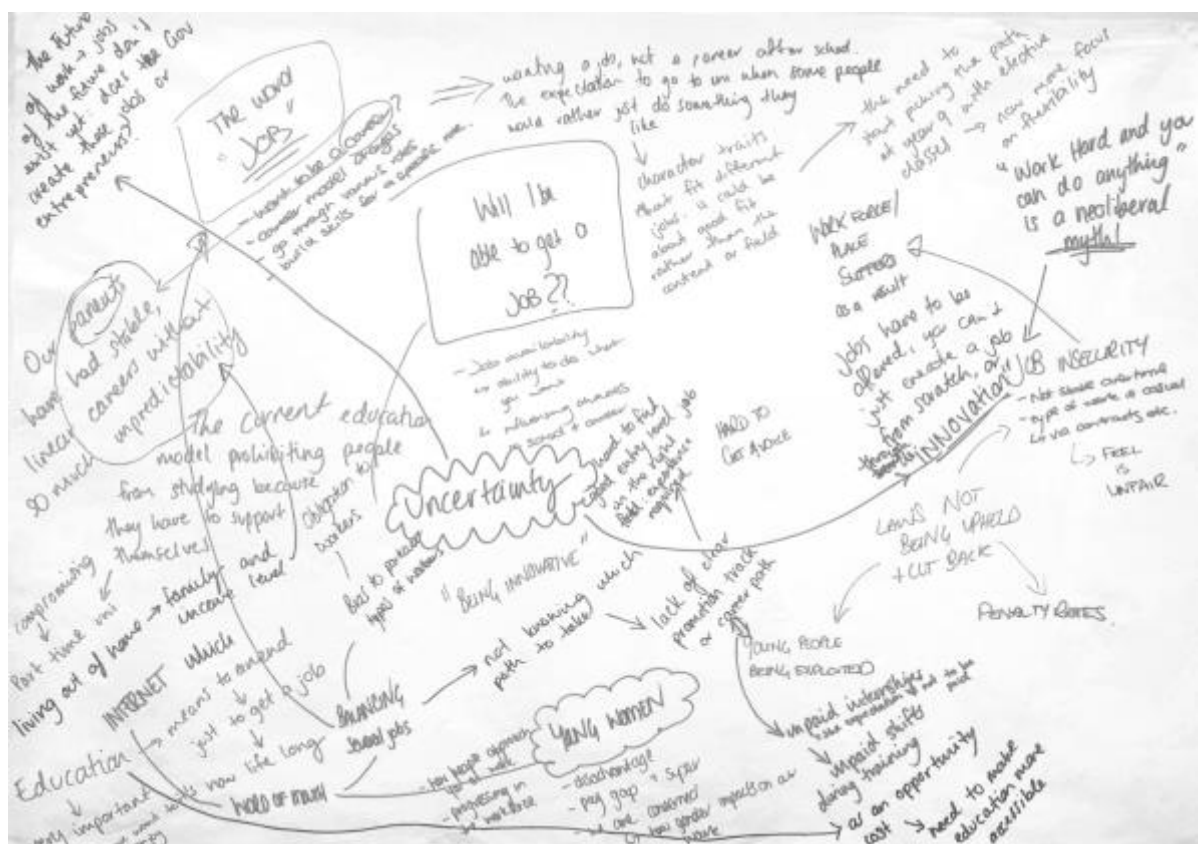
Image 2: Group 1 discussion map

Table 8: Group 1 discussion from butchers' paper, indicating key topics, corresponding ideas and connections made

Key Topic	Corresponding Ideas	Connections made
Uncertainty	• the future of work – jobs of the future don't exist yet; does the Government create these jobs or entrepreneurs?	Innovation
Will I be able to get a job?	Job availability: • ability to do what you want • influencing choices in school and career • hard to find good entry level job in the right field – experience required	Uncertainty Balancing several jobs
Innovation 'Being innovative'	• jobs have to be offered, you can't just create a job from scratch or through 'innovation'	'Work hard and you can do anything' is a neoliberal myth
The word 'job' Career	• want to be a career? • career model changes • go through various roles • build skills for a specific role • our parents have had stable, linear careers without so much unpredictability • wanting a job, not a career after school • the expectation to go to Uni when some people would rather just do something they like • character traits that fit different jobs – it could be about good fit rather than the content or field • the need to start picking the path at Year 9 with elective classes – need more focus on flexibility	Balancing several jobs
Balancing several jobs	• not knowing which path to take • lack of clear promotion track or career path • word of mouth • internet • bias to particular types of workers • obligations to workers	Hard to find good entry level job in the right field – experience required

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Key Topic	Corresponding Ideas	Connections made
Job insecurity	• not stable over time • type of work, ie casual, via contracts etc • feel is unfair • workplace suffers as a result	Laws not being upheld and cut back
Laws not being upheld and cut back	• penalty rates • young people being exploited • unpaid internships – the expectation is not to be paid • unpaid shifts during training	Lack of clear promotion track or career path
Education	• very important • means to an end – just to get a job • it's now lifelong • we want to enjoy • as an opportunity cost – need to make education more accessible • the current education model prohibiting people from studying because they have to support themselves • compromising • part time uni • living out of home – family and income level	Our parents have had stable, linear careers without so much unpredictability
Young women	• disadvantage • pay gap and super • we are concerned – how gender impacts on our work • how people approach you at work • progressing in the workforce	
Hard to get a voice		

Group 2

Group 2 consisted of five participants and explicitly used the prompts to frame their discussion. Table 9 depicts their recorded notes from each prompt (represented by headings).

Table 9: Group 2 discussion from butchers' paper

What have we heard?	How do you feel about changes?	What could make it better?
Change Automation Robots Education changes Movement in degrees' focus Arts degrees may become more useful • critical thinking Previous qualifications not enough University is less important • depends on the industry Regional areas affected differently Decentralisation not good for everyone Diversity • but can lead to tokenism Mobility is limited • disconnect between aspirations vs reality	Need to slug through • study for longer; more HECS debt How it affects ability to afford a home • plan on living at home longer • burden on family • stigma Casual job won't support you • makes you feel expendable • affects loyalty to employers Limits social life Embarrassing If you need to study more, have to move back home Have lots of dreams but traditional pathways don't allow this 'Exposure' or 'Learning and Development' = undervalued, used, 'screwed over'	Free education – allows social mobility Union density Need more pathways • access to resources • culture – how we think about inequality More support and funding for proven interventions Broader social and economic and political changes Kids in disadvantage don't have support Affirmative action? Need to address privilege – eg recruitment changes, blind recruiting? Role models – eg with Indigenous young people Cultural diversity policies of organisations

What have we heard?	How do you feel about changes?	What could make it better?
Insecurity • eg contract work Flexibility vs security Flexibility, but taking advantage of this can be looked down on • culture change required Workers' rights – eg penalty rates • finances	Very adaptable, used to change and embrace it The labour market favours the rich Anger at older generation for creating this system Feel that younger people are targeted by policy/funding cutbacks Pushes 'being young' to older age	Cultural competency important 'Paid stolen generation' – link with geographical factors Decentralise from city

Group 3

There were four participants in Group 3. One participant's social aide was present, who also contributed to the discussion. Table 10 represents the key topics discussed by this group, with corresponding ideas listed in dot point form.

Table 10: Group 3 discussion from butchers' paper

Fun • positivity • clients • co-workers – socialising	Fairness • casual can be bad	Think big
Parent support	Security	Patience
Casual	Positive about jobs	Volunteering
Respect	Love job	Busy
Money • cost	Supervisors	Cash in hand
Education • important	Training	Forward planning
Pressure		

In addition to reinforcing the topics covered in the individual survey responses (eg getting a job, security, employment conditions), the discussion maps from Activity 2 show participants also reflected on:

- innovation and questioned who will create the new jobs;

- career paths (noting they are unpredictable and there is no clear path), the contrast of flexibility versus security, and the need to balance several jobs;

- employment conditions limiting their life choices and the associated stigma, and exploitation of young people; and

- the positive aspects of work such as loving the job and enjoying the work-related socialising.

Several of these points relate directly to research predictions about work in the future. There were also strong comments on the butchers' paper:

'Work hard and you can do anything' is a neoliberal myth'
'Anger at older generation for creating this system'
'Feel that younger people are targeted by policy/funding cutbacks'

Activities 2 and 3 – small and whole group discussions
Key Topics

An Australia21 researcher transcribed the audio recordings of Activity 2 and 3 discussions. In this process, the researcher identified recurrent topics over both group discussion activities and confirmed these through keyword quantification (ie word count).

The key topics identified were: education, social equity, workers' rights, and career paths. Table 11 shows the frequency with which keywords occurred in the discussions and the subsequent grouping by the researcher of keywords into key topics.

The researcher also observed the repetition of the themes of 'change' and 'uncertainty' across all four key topics.

Table 11: Keywords, key topics and overarching themes

Keyword	Occurrence	Key topic	Overarching themes
education	34	Key topic: EDUCATION	Overarching themes: CHANGE UNCERTAINTY
school	14		
student	11		
university	10		
learn	5		
TAFE	1		
tertiary	1		
Keyword	Occurrence	Key Topic: SOCIAL EQUITY	
culture	10		
equal	7		
fair/unfair	7		
diverse	5		
gender	4		
women	4		
disability	2		
Keyword	Occurrence	Key Topic: WORKERS' RIGHTS	
working	23		
paid	21		
worker	11		
employers	10		
exploit	8		
casual	7		
contract	6		
rights (at work)	6		
wage	5		
union	5		
automation	3		
Keyword	Occurrence	Key Topic CAREER PATHS	
career	29		
opportunity	14		
path	13		
model (career)	5		
expectation	4		
innovation	4		

Levels of reflection

Based on all the activities in the workshop, the researchers identified six main levels of reflection expressed by participants.

Table 12: Levels of reflection expressed by participants

Level of reflection expressed by participant	Examples
Personal	Living at home; decision making; pursuit of studies.
Individual workplace	Respect in workplace; rewarding, meaningful work and contributing to society. Workplace adaptability regarding disability, mental and physical needs, etc.
Employment market and 'culture'	Meeting cultural needs and expectations; access to secure working conditions.
Policy	Welfare access; housing market affordability; rights of First Nation peoples.
Institutional	Education systems allowing for choice; corporate responsibilities.
Societal	Social equity and effects on individual wellbeing eg sexism, racism; global economy.

Participant Quotes

Direct quotes from participants illustrate aspects of the discussion and provide a rich insight into how young people are talking, thinking and feeling about work and their future. Quotes were selected on the basis of our summary of the data.

Links between key topics and levels of reflection

The following exchange illustrates how participants linked key topics and levels during the discussions.

Participant 1: The jobs that we will get won't exist down the line.
Participant 2: Yeah but someone has to start, and who takes that job. Is it us or the government or someone else?
Facilitator: How does this make you feel?
Participant 2: I think it reinforces not having a set career trajectory.
Participant 3: Makes it hard for it to be there when it doesn't exist yet!
Participant 2: Yeah, and like [you were] saying, you can just fall into something and pick up opportunities. And you can't know what brings good opportunities. That

overarching uncertainty.
Facilitator: How does that feel? Scary or exciting?
Participant 3: Scary.
Facilitator: Agree?
Participant 4: I don't know. I know governments say we need to create more jobs. But I feel like that's co-language for investing in big business and giving rich people tax breaks!

Textbox 1 is a collation of quotes from one participant named Sarah. Sarah is a 22 year old female who is currently studying, completing an unpaid internship and working.

Textbox 1: Sarah's experience of work and her future.

'I've been studying for the last five years. I haven't been travelling or anything, I've always lived in Canberra. And I had my first year of uni at home with Mum and Dad. Then, I moved out with my boyfriend and we had had to live closer to the city, closer to study. I was studying a double degree full time, and then I was working retail for 25 hours a week. And overloading myself with dancing and make-up artistry commitments, and being a make-up artist! I found it too much to be studying full time, so dropped to part-time. Then I was working too much to get any Centrelink benefits, so I was trying to supplement two student incomes, working, paying for rent and bills. So, it was really tricky so I stopped doing uni while my partner finished study. And he has sort of gone through the same situation. We've both been doing a bit of work, forgoing uni and taking breaks for whatever reason and after a while I decided that because the work was too much and I had that urge to go back and study. That meant that I couldn't work and maintain that same level of income. So I found a casual job and a different kind of work to go with my uni.'

'And for me personally balancing about four types of [paid and unpaid] work. Including my studies and just sort of hitting a point in my work life where I am at a crossroads where I could take lots of different options and it's very uncertain for me to see where I'm going.'

'Do I choose the one that I've spent five years creating my huge HECS debt for? That has the least job employment potential and getting the entry is pretty hectic? I suppose when I cut down to the core of the issue I think about entry level jobs and uni graduates. It may be quite difficult to get your foot in the door. And that's one thing I'm very concerned about, the demand and supply of experiences.'

'[Employers] ask for people with experience but how do you get that experience? Chicken and the egg situation. The jobs that I could potentially apply for, they want full time availability or past experience. How do you get your foot in the door? Even as a secretary or something. Or, do I range off into one of my work areas where I'm more working for myself and it's a more creative role. That has its own challenges. I'd have to establish my own business essentially, and have to run that, verses paying my bills and living as a young person.'

Key topics

The following quotes illustrate the key topics identified by researchers.

Education

'It's interesting because facing graduating and not facing a career in what I studied, I can still and do feel like my study has been really useful. The skills I've built and challenges. Even if they aren't directly related to what I end up working in, it's still learning how to research and be a critical thinker. These skills are specialist and they help to elevate the general society.'

'Also on the educational front, a personal thing, in my job, market standard degrees aren't enough anymore. Having postgrad qualifications seem to be the standard norm. Especially in specialist areas like research.'

'The problem is, do you try to go for a really good part-time job while also doing part-time university? Well the thing with that is that our studies are postponed, our entrance into our careers are postponed, and that equates to a lot of problems. It's have some money versus have some education.'

'One thing I find annoying is that education is such an opportunity cost because it takes a lot of money and time. I think if you reduce the cost of education, a lot of people would pursue it, which is good for our society because we all benefit from more educated people. And we can't have education be this thing that people pursue solely for getting a job afterwards.'

'Maybe you go to uni, you study and prepare and the job isn't there anymore… and then the job that is there you don't have the experience for or it doesn't exist yet.'

Social Equity

'Well I was just thinking about how all the participants at this table are young women and how women especially are likely to be disadvantaged in the workforce. We obviously have a gender pay gap and in retirement women have so much less superannuation than men. As a young woman, it is a concern for me.'

Participant: I think there are always going to be barriers, but it's about having pathways to navigate through the barriers. Because we are in a society that is reinforced to stay within our social class. So you can get through those barriers with assistance and help.
Participant: Yeah, there should be more support for people to move between social classes.
Facilitator: And what do we mean by pathways?
Participant: Access to resources such as education.
Participant: Funding to headspace.
Participant: I think the way we think about inequality has to change. We are so

accepting of it. We have to go "there is so much inequality, and the inequality itself is the problem". For that to change, we need big structural changes.

'It's not being respected or recognised with things like Treaty – it's like how can they respect my opinions here when you can't even acknowledge and respect my past? So going into workplaces, they've got these recruiting methods like one page pitch and it's really scary for indigenous people that I know and mentor. There's a shame factor and you don't talk about yourself [the] way [that the recruitment calls for] and that is preventing a lot of young indigenous people from getting jobs.'

Workers' rights

'I know for me personally, it's affecting me in a way that I understand that all future work is like yep, totally expendable, never going to be here for very long because they only give me short term contracts. And, as a result of that, I feel absolutely no inclination to give any loyalty to any organisation that employs me.'

'… recruiting more people of diverse backgrounds, but then making sure that they don't tokenise them. I know that being Indigenous, as soon as anything Indigenous comes up, [my workplace] can be like "oh hey, you're black, you can answer that". And it's like, I have actual no qualifications on Indigenous policy but I can help you with the thing I'm employed to do.'

'I think we need more education about what our rights at work are. When I went through school we didn't get any education on what our entitlements are. Yeah, you turn 15 and 9 months and you're allowed to work, but you don't know what you're allowed to do. And, so, like I got a job at my local IGA and that was not good. I would just listen to what my manager would tell me, but that was not in the employees or young person's interest.'

'We need the definitions and how they are different. But then also like what is the fair work ombudsman and an award wage?'

Career Paths

'People are big dreamers but the traditional pathways don't work. And then you're just left in the middle.'

'Oh, sometimes it just gets too much. Like you don't know like what your priorities are… Is it work? Study? Both? But you can't maintain it and you can't really have it all. Or can you? Maybe you burn out.'

'… particularly in higher education that if you're doing uni or TAFE that there is some work-life balance and if you um, have trade-offs with balancing your work commitments and furthering your career goals, or work or whatever they may be, and getting money versing trying to study and using that as a means to get to another end so, um, I think there can be a big divide. Particularly in regards to lots of young students who are

working in maybe more casual or multiple types of employment that aren't related to their field of study in order to get by. And chopping and changing between your different levels of study and work because of your lifestyle choices or demands.'

'I think that comes down to expectations. The model that my parents have had, like my mum where she left college on the third day of year 11 and became a dental assistant and has worked in the dental industry for 25 years. Um, and she can't imagine the idea of leaving a job because you don't think that you like it any more, or changing a career path or having several different options and that like it's probably just because, like, maybe that's okay. It's just going to be what the future of our work is, but maybe we haven't seen anyone else do that yet. I don't know anyone personally that has actually established their career like that because it hasn't happened yet. So, I think it's more for me, not having that model seen that that is okay to do.'

'I think we are constantly hearing this kind of thing from the liberal parties actually, about how young people just need to be "innovative" and if they're creative enough they can find a job. But it's not about the individual. It's about if there are enough jobs in existence. And there aren't enough jobs.'

Summary of data

Throughout the Making our Future Work ACT pilot workshop, participant discussion crystallised around four key topics: education, social equity, workers' rights, and career paths. While participants were asked to share their personal stories about hopes and fears about the future and work, discussion at the workshop ranged across many levels – ie personal, individual workplace, employment market and 'culture', government policy, institutional, and societal.

Across all topics and levels, participants talked of change and feelings of uncertainty. In line with this, the hopes most frequently cited by participants during Activity 1 (the individual written survey) were to find rewarding work that is stable and secure. The most cited fear was overwhelmingly about stability and security of employment.

The participants' discussion and own words, as illustrated by the quotes in this report, provide a rich insight into how the broader world of work and predictions for the future are affecting these 14 young people, and what they believe could make this better or worse.

The next stages of the Making our Future Work project will seek the views of more young people from different geographic locations in Australia to add to those shared in the ACT pilot.

Evaluation of pilot workshop

The evaluation of the Making our Future Work pilot workshop is based upon both participant feedback and reflections from the researchers at Australia21. Participant evaluation was undertaken through an anonymous survey at the completion of the workshop.

Participants were asked to represent on a scale from 0-10 (0 = not at all, 5 = adequately, 10 = very well) *if the workshop allowed them to share how they felt about their future and work*. The mean outcome was 8.4/10.
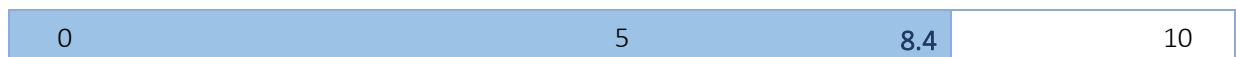
0	5	8.4	10

Participants were asked to represent on a scale from 0-10 (0 = not at all, 5 = adequately, 10 = very well) *if they felt that the topics in the final discussion best represented the position of young people in Canberra*. The mean outcome was 8.2/10.

0	5	8.2	10
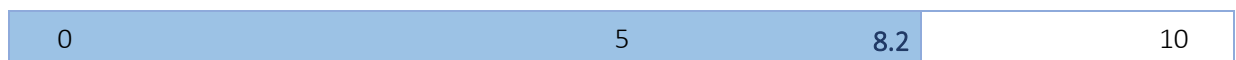
What worked well

The ACT pilot workshop was youth led, with participants responding positively to Australia21 facilitator energy and the opportunity to have their say. In the lead-up to the workshop, Australia21 facilitators were briefed that participant comfort and a sense of fun at the workshop was the highest priority, in the hope this would lead to more relaxed and open discussions. Participant feedback confirmed this was achieved:

> 'The fact that it was really fun and that we were given chances to express our point of view on a subject.'

> 'I liked the group discussions, I found them fun and engaging.'

> 'Great facilitation.'

Most participants had not previously met anyone in the workshop making appropriate facilitation crucial. Using experienced and engaging facilitators for future stages of the project is a priority for Australia21.

Diversity of participant demographics was an Australia21 goal for the Making our Future Work project. This was recognised and commended by participants at the ACT pilot workshop:

> 'I liked the diversity of attendees in their experiences with work.'

'I liked listening to the various perspectives and that it was interactive (talking with people, not being talked at). It taught me a lot about what to expect when I enter the workforce. I liked that the workshop was really inclusive as well, and that I was prompted to engage in conversation.'

The diversity of participants not only allowed Australia21 to glean experiences of work across demographics, but allowed participants to learn from each other. Participants also liked the opportunity to be heard and feel as though their voices are valid.

'Very interesting to hear other people's view and opportunity to be heard and know our voice is valid.'

Participant responses show that the workshop format allows young people to share their experiences, link these to other experiences and issues across levels, learn from others, and build empathy between participants.

Challenges

In developing and delivering the ACT pilot workshop, Australia21 encountered three notable difficulties: participant recruitment, limitations of the workshop format, and data management after the workshop.

During the recruitment process, ensuring vulnerable groups received project information involved contacting community and youth groups, rather than prospective participants themselves. We therefore had little control over the level of promotion of the project with our targeted groups. This made recruitment precarious. A more comprehensive recruitment effort involving more contact with prospective participants and promotion to community groups is likely to ensure a larger number of participants but would require increased resources.

The sign-up process prior to the workshop was a successful way to gauge diversity of participants, however the request for young people to sign-up for an event many weeks in advance was not effective. This is a challenge for future workshops across varied geographical locations where researchers are not members of the local community.

While Australia21 encouraged the attendance of personal support workers, and notified participants that a counsellor was onsite, it is noted that workshops or group settings can be overwhelming for some people. This is a limitation to the pursuit of workshops as a form of data collection. During the workshop, it was observed that participants rarely shared their feelings beyond a short description. This is perhaps due to the format of the workshop, as participants were asked to share vulnerable information in a group setting.

After the workshop, the digital transcription of the amassed data (audio recordings and written responses) was dependent upon volunteer resources. This could be improved by using data transcription and management software.

In addition, we relied heavily on pro bono contributions to deliver the ACT pilot workshop, which means that resourcing will be a key consideration for future stages of the project (see appendix 3 for an estimate of pro bono hours).

Next steps

In response to the learnings of the pilot workshop, Australia21 is commencing the development and design of stage 2 of the Making our Future Work project (ie seeking input from young people in other locations in Australia) and a stage 3 roundtable of young people and youth/workforce experts and policy-makers.

Appendix 1: Reference Group members

Member	Affiliated organisation
Anna Hill	Foundation of Young Australians
Emmi Teng	YoungA21 member
Geoff Buchanan, Eliza Moloney	ACT Council of Social Services
Peter Yuile	Australia21 Director
Prof. Lesley Farrell	Associate Dean, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne
Rebecca Cuzzillo	Youth Coalition of the ACT
Sarah Clifton	Youth and Young Adults Canberra/Goulburn Director, St Vincent de Paul
Steve Cork	Australia21 Director
Thomas Campbell	UN Youth Canberra
Tiffany Heaslip	Federal Department of Employment

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet

Research Project Title: Making our Future Work (ACT pilot workshop)

Principal Investigator: Australia21

Research Site: YWCA Canberra, 71 Northbourne Ave, Canberra City

Before you decide if you wish to participate in this research project, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish.

This research project is conducted by Australia21. Australia21 is a not-for-profit think tank that promotes fair, sustainable and inclusive public policy through evidence-based research.

1.   What is the purpose of this research project?

Australia21 believes that young people have the expertise to help shape the future they want. The purpose of this research project is to generate discussion about how young people feel about their future and work. Our aim is to help inform public policy around work by starting a discussion that places young people and their stories at its heart.

2.   Why have I been invited to participate in this research project?

You are eligible to participate in this research project if you are aged between 16-25 and live in the Canberra region, Australia. You are invited to discuss how you think and feel about your future and work.

3.   What if I don't want to take part in this research project or if I want to withdraw later?

Participation in this research project is voluntary. It is completely up to you whether or not you participate.

Whatever your decision, it will not affect any arrangements you may have with service providers or government agencies (for example, arrangements for education, care, health treatment, Government payments, etc.).

You may withdraw from the research project at any time and for any reason or no reason. Please tell the project team that you wish to withdraw from the research project. Information that has been collected about you prior to your withdrawal will not to be used in the data analysis. No new information will be collected or used after you have withdrawn from the research project.

4.   What does this research project involve?

This research project will be conducted over two stages:

- Stage 1 – an online participant information survey (expression of interest). The survey asks for some background information about you that is relevant to the topic of the future and work. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete;

- Stage 2 – a 4-hour workshop running on *11 September 2017 from 4.00-8.00pm at YWCA Canberra, 71 Northbourne Avenue, Canberra City*. The workshop will involve sharing your thoughts/feeling about the future and work in small groups (4 or 5 people), and taking part in larger group discussions (up to 25 people) about the information shared in the small groups. You may also choose to share your thoughts on camera (i.e. you may choose to be videotaped talking about your thoughts and feelings about the future and work).

Participation in this study will not cost you anything. You will not be paid for their involvement. Dinner will be provided for you during the workshop.

5. Are there risks to me in taking part in this research project?

The risks associated with participation in this research project are minimal. A possible risk may be psychological distress because of thinking and talking about uncertainties in the future, or recounting of past events that are perceived to be difficult. If you take part in this research project, you are not obliged to answer any question(s) if you do not wish to do so.

As a large part of the data collection takes place in a workshop/group setting, you will hear information that other participants share.

If there is the potential for prolonged or significant distress in thinking about the workshop topic or hearing the information shared by others, it is advised that you do not participate in this research project.

Sharing of past or planned illegal activities is not permitted in any part of the data collection process (online survey, email questions or workshop). If this information is shared, the research team will not record the data, and refer you to appropriate services (e.g. the police).

There are circumstances in which being the victim of a crime can affect how we think about the future and work. If this is the case for you, and you divulge information to the researchers, Australia21 will refer you to appropriate counselling services. Australia21 cannot provide official advice or pursue legal claims, and hence you will be referred to services that can assist you.

6. Who is organising and funding the research?

This research project is being conducted by independent think tank, Australia21 (www.australia21.org.au). The project team comprises Australia21 staff, Jennifer Malbon (Project Officer) and Anne Quinn (Executive Officer), and Australia21 Board members, Steve Cork and Peter Yuile.

The research project is being funded by the Australian Government Department of Employment and Australia21. The YWCA Canberra has donated the workshop venue, but have not contributed to the research design, nor will have access to the raw data generated.

No researcher, Australia21 staff or Board member will receive personal financial benefit from your involvement in this study. The researchers declare no personal conflict of interest relevant to the undertaking of this research.

7. How will my confidentiality be protected?

If you wish to remain anonymous (to be specified on the participant consent form), Australia21 will store your data under a code that cannot be linked to your name. The data will be stored within

Australia21 hard drives, and will be password protected. This password will not be given to anyone outside of the researchers at Australia21 who are associated with the 'Making our Future Work Project'. This data will be destroyed after five (5) years.

Australia21 will not release any personal contact details to any other individual or organisation, nor will they contact you for any reason outside of the project context unless otherwise agreed by you.

8. What happens with the results?

Results will be analysed by the Australia21 project team (see Q6) and presented publicly in a report and visual format (e.g. video, photographs, drawings) that will be available online. The report will also be available in hard copy.

In any report or visual product, information will be provided in such a way that you cannot be identified unless you would like to be. Results will be provided to you, if you wish.

9. What should I do if I want to discuss this research project further before I decide?

When you have read this information, the Project Officer, Jennifer Malbon, will discuss it with you and answer any queries you may have. You are also able to take this information away with you and discuss it with your family, friends, or any other person you choose. If you would like to know more at any stage, please do not hesitate to contact Jennifer Malbon on:

Phone: 02 6288 0823   Email: projects@australia21.org.au

10. Who should I contact if I have concerns about the conduct of this research project?

If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research project, and do not feel comfortable discussing this with the project team, you may contact the Chair of the Australia21 Board, Paul Barratt.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this research project.

Appendix 3: Pro bono hours

Role in Australia21	Total pro bono hours
Project officer	279
Executive Officer	171
Directors (2)	37
Honorary Youth Advisor	14
Community Engagement Coordinator	16
YoungA21 Volunteer(s)	6

Note: The Australia21 Making our Future Work reference group also contributed their expertise on a pro bono basis.