After Now scenarios

Early messages from the conversations

Maria Duggan

2013
This report was prepared as an unpublished document for discussion within the Brotherhood of St Laurence. A later version may be published as a technical paper.
# Contents

Acknowledgements iv  
Summary v  

1 Purpose 1  

2 Context: from social inclusion to inclusive growth 1  

3 Function of the After Now scenarios 1  

4 What is a scenario? 4  

5 Methods 5  

6 What will shape the future: the major themes 8  
   Fairness and opportunity 9  
   Inequality 11  
   Multiculturalism 17  
   Political leadership 18  
   Climate change 20  
   Technology 21  

7 Conclusions 22  

8 Next steps 23  
   Testing the themes 23  
   Using the scenarios 23  
   Continuing the conversation 23  

Appendix A Interview questions 24  
Appendix B Codes and themes from the interviews 25  
Appendix C Six main interview themes by frequency of mention 26  

References 27
Acknowledgements

Grateful thanks are due to the wonderful team of volunteers, interns and consultants who made this project possible. They have all given generously of their time and expertise with limited reward apart from the fascinations of the interview process and the intellectual excitement of shaping the scenarios. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work with all of you:

Nicola Ballenden, Aradhana Barua, Carmen Dafner, Candy Han Yue, Moyra McAllister.

Maria Duggan
Summary

This paper provides an interim summary of the themes and issues arising from the After Now Scenarios Project interviews and workshops. Its main purpose is to inform the BSL Executive Team and other interested colleagues about the context, process and messages from the work to date. It will also act as a technical background paper (with updating) when the final scenarios are launched.

The paper is longer than some interim reports but no apology is made for that. The Scenarios Project has (to end of April 2013) involved more than 250 people in thinking deeply about the past, present and possible future of Australia, reflecting on what they are most proud about—and at times most sorry about—in that process. People generously gave the BSL their time in that endeavour and their voices require hearing over and beyond their contribution to the scenarios themselves. As a result, the discussion here is heavily amplified by direct quotes from the interviews. These represent only a fraction of what was said. There are over 2000 key statements (quotes) on the database. The richness, eloquence and diversity of views revealed by this process are both extraordinary and moving, presenting a real challenge in selecting from them to reflect this complexity.

Six major themes have been identified. These, it is suggested, may be the key variables which will shape the future, assuming there are no unexpected wild-cards or shocks. The variables are:

- fairness and opportunity
- inequality
- multiculturalism
- governance and political leadership
- climate change and technology.

Each of these major themes incorporates a number of related sub-themes so, for example, the theme of fairness and opportunity includes a strong sub-theme of key challenges, threats and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The importance of these themes in shaping the look and feel of a future Australia emerges from clustering and coding of the interview and workshop responses. As such, they can be taken as a common assessment of the key drivers of the future. This is not to imply that there is any consensus about the way forward in addressing any of these. This work did not set out to either ascertain or build such a consensus. Rather, it set out to expose both commonalities and differences in opinion in order to develop alternative views of the future. The common drivers will play out differently depending on political leadership, ideologies and policy directions. These different futures will be developed in narrative form in the forthcoming scenario publication.

The overwhelming conclusion is that, when asked to reflect in depth about the kind of society they want, most people implicate the interplay of social and economic policy in creating it, even if they do not all use this language. While opportunities and threats to growth are both an implicit and explicit strand throughout this work, underscoring the importance of continuing prosperity in securing future wellbeing, growth is not in itself a major theme. The majority of respondents think that continuing prosperity in Australia will require creative, resilient people; good services to build capabilities and health; strong social and technical innovation, including green innovation, to build the 21st-century knowledge economy; and continued investment in the relationship with Asia and
the rest of the world. This provides a sound platform for BSL in taking forward the new inclusive growth policy agenda.

**Next steps**

The findings discussed here are based on contributions from a broad but not representative sample of Australians; and the scenarios will be narratives of possible futures. If the Brotherhood of St Laurence wishes to test the key themes further, it is suggested that consideration is given to polling a representative sample using survey methods.

The scenarios will be produced with a companion toolkit outlining ways of using them. It is recommended that the whole Executive Team and Board is engaged in designing the process for dissemination of the work and in considering its utility in supporting BSL advocacy on the theme of inclusive growth in the next 12 months.

The willing response of contributors suggests that people want and need to debate policy and ideas and lack an outlet for this through the current media and mainstream political activity. The BSL is well placed to offer a platform to a wide range of people in debating policy issues related to its mission, with the framing provided by the scenarios. This would serve to strengthen its policy development work and also model the inclusion and social citizenship required to achieve inclusive growth.
1 Purpose

This paper provides a brief account of the context, methods and key findings of the enquiry undertaken by the Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) to inform the development of a number of alternative scenarios for a future Australia.

The primary purpose of this paper is to describe and analyse the major themes which have emerged during the initial consultation phase. These themes, distilled from in-depth interviews with 135 Australians from many walks of life and a range of cities and states, are the raw material from which the future scenarios will be developed.

A secondary purpose for the paper is to act as an internal briefing document for the BSL Board and Executive in considering the interview findings, enabling a deepening understanding of the relationship of this material to the future scenarios and the implications for BSL policy and advocacy work.

2 Context: from social inclusion to inclusive growth

The BSL has in recent years advocated a policy framework that understands social welfare as an investment in human capital and therefore as a means of improving workforce participation, skills and productivity rather than as an overall cost with purely social benefits. There are some signs that this thinking is gaining some traction.

The mantra of inclusive growth is increasingly prominent in the policy pronouncements of institutions including the World Bank and the OECD and leading international analysts (OECD 2011; World Bank 2009). The importance of this shift in the rhetoric is that inclusive growth attempts to promote sustained economic growth while reducing inequality. It therefore challenges long-held assumptions that growth would trickle down and lift all the boats. Inclusive growth is growth that not only creates opportunities, but also involves equal access to those opportunities for all.

For the purposes of this paper, inclusive growth involves recognition of the interdependence of social and economic policy. This is strikingly evident in the global context. On the one hand, the welfare state is flowering in the growing economies of Asia, with China, Indonesia and India in particular all embarking on social welfare reforms commensurate with those which transformed many Western economies after World War 2. Elsewhere, for example in Mexico and Brazil, there has been massive investment in universal services including health and education. On the other hand the continuing impact of the global financial crisis in the USA and the Eurozone has stimulated a new debate about the ways in which social welfare contributes to productivity and growth. The argument is sharply polarised between the advocates of austerity policies including reducing investment in public services and the stripping away of all form of welfare and those who call for these protections to be reinvigorated and allied to policies to create employment as a means of kick-starting and sustaining growth.

3 Function of the After Now scenarios

The main function of the After Now scenarios is to develop narratives of alternative futures for Australia in an attempt to influence the public debate about what needs to happen in Australia if opportunities and prosperity are to be available to all. This process will help to clarify the policy platform needed both to build this future and to avoid damaging it.
Shifting the narrative

There has been continuous growth in Australia for the last 20 years. Australia has up to now avoided the extremes of inequality found in other developed economies, notably the United States and the United Kingdom; however, there are vulnerabilities and threats to this equilibrium. Australia’s productivity is declining and the rates of economic growth and the increase in household income are predicted to slow in the next three to five years (Vas 2012). In such a context, the BSL and others argue that investment in human capabilities through high-quality universal and targeted services and a strong social safety net is not an impediment to productivity and a drain on the nation’s resources but rather a vital policy lever for securing wellbeing.

The BSL has committed to a program of research, policy development and advocacy to promote the concept of inclusive growth in Australia. The scenarios project is one element in this new program. The Inclusive Growth Program has the ambitious aim of shifting the narrative to one which takes account of the need for integrated social and economic policy in sustaining growth into the future. This will not be easy. The dominant intellectual, material and cultural forces of the last forty years remain extraordinarily powerful. Public opinion in Australia as in many other countries has been formed in these conditions and evidence suggests that there is little appetite for the shoring up of the welfare state, particularly if this involves addressing the difficult question of paying for it (Sefton 2005; Western et al. 2007). It appears that there is little public support for those on welfare benefits of various kinds. In Australia and elsewhere, the stigma associated with welfare status has been accompanied by the language of the Poor Law and the segmentation of recipients into the deserving and undeserving. However, even these attitudes may be softened by better understanding of the facts and the human consequences of harsh and punitive policies (Horin 2013).

A key question for the After Now initiative is whether the debate might shift a little more if the future economic and social consequences of stripping away the welfare infrastructure are similarly brought to light.

Assumptions

Three key assumptions underpin the development of the scenarios.

The power of stories

The first assumption is the importance of story in framing life and decision making:

Evidence strongly suggests that humans in all cultures come to cast their own identity in some sort of narrative form. We are inveterate storytellers (Flanagan 1992, P198).

There is a voluminous, multidisciplinary literature which shows that humans are essentially storytellers, and that all powerful communication—history, art, language, science, etc.—is a form of storytelling. That is, the world is a collection of stories that we constantly check against our experience as we attempt to make sense of our lives, individually and collectively. It is also the case that many ordinary people find it difficult to engage with politics and policy and feel ‘disengaged, uncompahrening and not listened to’ [Button 2012] This is supported by our scenarios interviews. Many people told us that they felt that they lack a voice or are not heard in the policy-making process. Yet the story of Australia in the first half of the 21st century would surely be stronger for being co-created by all Australians. The challenge is to find ways of engaging them in telling it.
Ideology as narrative
The second assumption extends this theme. It is that ‘history records that there is nothing as powerful as a fantasy whose time has come’ (Judt 2009. P143).

Once again, there is a huge literature about the relationship of narrative to ideologies and to political power. It seems appropriate to reflect on the powerful images in the story that has been told to support neo-liberalism as the dominant world order. This story has been about ever-increasing personal wealth and the promotion of individual freedoms through consumption choices as a consequence of market liberalisation. It has been uniquely successful, gaining assent from people in many democracies in the last half-century and hence providing a political mandate for structural reforms. Indeed neo-liberalism has been so omnipresent that it is hard to imagine that another way might be possible. Recently, however, there are signs that while the processes and practices that have been built upon the narrative appear to be more embedded than ever, the accompanying story may be running out of its persuasive power.

This is not to oversimplify the challenge of trying to create an alternative narrative to shape the future. The public realm is characterised by debate, disagreement and even conflict as the following quotation illustrates: ‘The public sphere is an energy field in which mixed interests and explanations of reality coexist despite deep contradictions’ (Fox & Miller 1995 P105). An ideal political narrative is therefore one which embraces multiple narratives from which citizens can choose in order to bring about change that they want rather than a master narrative which either is not possible or will not win consensus.

Model of change
The third assumption driving the work is that the future is open to influence and not predetermined. Overwhelmingly participants in the scenarios work shared an assumption about the plasticity of the future and were keen for action by governments, themselves and others to ensure that it would be positive. This is not to suggest that there was a consensus about what a positive future might look like. The axiom that where you stand affects your point of view is as true about this work as any other; however it does point to some recurrent themes which most contributors felt would be important in defining the future. These are considered below.

These three assumptions have shaped the methods of this work. The chosen approach was highly interactive and participatory, drawing out multiple world views and enabling a wide range of individuals to tell their own stories of past, present and future Australia. The final scenario composites will be framed in the concerns, aspirations and common language of those who participated in the process.

The understanding that the future can be put to use supports our assumption that we have agency in creating it. Futures thinking, it is suggested, enhances confidence about our collective ability to create futures that we desire. As Inayatullah (2008, p.6) argues:

Futures methods (thus) decolonize the world we think we may want—they challenge our basic concepts. They deconstruct. This creative disruption allows for new possibilities to emerge.

The scenarios will be an attempt to describe the look and feel of certain sets of policy choices, using the information that people contributed in the development process, tested against available evidence in order to assess probability. The scenarios can then be used to invigorate public debate on the key question:

This is what the future may look like. Do you want it—or not?
4 What is a scenario?

We can engage with the future productively ... by undertaking a systematic consideration of what has been learned in the past, present knowns and unknowns and future possibilities. (Australian Academy of Science 2012, Negotiating our future: living scenarios for Australia to 2050, p. 116)

The After Now Scenarios are shared visions of how the future might evolve for Australia in the next five to ten years. These scenarios are not predictions of the future; rather, they represent ways in which public policy could respond to underlying political, social, economic and environmental change drivers. The political and policy choices which will be made in this critical election year will be a key determinant of which scenario elements come true.

The scenario method is probably one of the most widely used methods in future-scanning activity or foresight. Scenarios were first used by corporations as their planning became more complex. The oil company Shell was a pioneer in the field. Shell’s scenario planning enabled it to anticipate the rise and subsequent fall of oil prices in 1973 and gain an edge over its competitors. Both public and private sector organisations have used scenarios. The public sector relies mainly on scenario methodologies when it has to delineate policy alternatives. Almost all large businesses (especially multinational companies) use scenarios to develop their business strategies.

In future-scanning projects, the scenario method is a policy analysis tool that helps describe a possible set of future conditions. At national, regional and local level scenarios can be used to improve planning capacity, to enrich strategic public policy decisions and to guide major capital investments.

Scenario-ing: the knowledge base

Studies of the future are underpinned by a considerable conceptual and epistemological literature and extensive practice-based material. A good summary of the foundational concepts of future studies is provided by Inayatullah (2008). Ison et al. (2013) analyse the potential role of foresight techniques, including scenario-ing, in moving policy beyond mere rhetoric about whole-of-government approaches to [addressing] complex challenges.

Using scenarios

To be effective, scenarios must be.

- **plausible**. This means that it must fall within the limits of what might conceivably happen
- **internally consistent**. This means that the logics in a scenario must be clear and demonstrate believable causes and effects
- **useful for decision making**. Each scenario should contribute specific insights that are relevant to the chosen decision focus; for instance in relation to policy they should provide a ‘wind-tunnel’, enabling the testing of how a particular direction may play out in different circumstances.

Many different scenarios are currently in use in Australia (e.g. Australian Academy of Science 2012). The After Now scenarios are another contribution to this body of futures thinking. Their primary purpose is to provide the Brotherhood of St Laurence with information and inspiration for its advocacy for inclusive growth. Inevitably, this has involved asking questions about how Australia can continue to evolve as a robustly democratic, diverse, fair, sustainably prosperous
nation which offers a good quality of life and creates opportunities for all of its citizens while playing its part as a global citizen in an increasingly connected world. The scenarios will be written up as plausible stories of the future for Australia, reflecting various kinds of social policy arrangements. It is hoped that the scenarios’ basis in narrative will engage hearts as well as minds, generating meanings at deeper levels than logic-based communication alone.

5 Methods

The discipline of scenario-ing involves the use of highly structured approaches to develop narratives about the future that have a consistent logic and yet draw on a range of information, expert opinion, insight and creative thinking.

The following diagram summarises the process used to develop the After Now scenarios. This is a modified form of the Shell Scenario Planning Method. It differs from the standard Shell method (and other scenario planning methods) in one main respect: the raw material for the scenarios was generated through a very inclusive, bottom-up process.

Figure 5.1 Scenario development process

Scope and limitations

The interviews which generated the themes and will shape the future scenarios involved over 100 individuals, selected through a snowballing method. Every effort was made to ensure that the diversity and multicultural nature of Australian society was reflected in the process.

This work is not a survey; nor do we claim that the information contributed by respondents represents every branch and nuance of opinion in Australia.

However, we are satisfied that the recurring themes, certainties and uncertainties which surfaced from the work are, in aggregate, an accurate snapshot of opinion among those who were interviewed between October 2012 and April 2013. The following charts provide quantitative information about the interviewees.
Profile of contributors

Figure 5.2  Gender, life stage, country of birth, location and sector of contributors

Gender

- Male 47%
- Female 53%

Life stage

- Youth 12%
- Early adulthood 14%
- Middle adulthood 48%
- Older adulthood 26%

Country of birth

- Australia 72%
- Outside Australia 28%

Location

- Urban 82%
- Rural 18%

Sector

- Welfare 22%
- Education 9%
- Health 8%
- Academia 8%
- Public service 7%
- Business (incl. finance) 7%
- CALD communities 4%
- Other (includes politics, law, media, agriculture, arts, faith, science, disability) 26%
Interviews

Respondents were invited to respond to sixteen questions\(^1\). These were designed to encourage people to reflect deeply and to speak openly from their own experience. Just as important, the questions encouraged contributors to escape the present or default scenario by thinking firstly about the past and how society had changed since they were children, if born in Australia, or about the differences between Australia and wherever they were before, if not born in Australia. This kind of reflection brings into focus factors about contemporary life that are simply taken for granted or unexamined and enables a better appreciation of the scope and depth of social and cultural change. It enables, in turn, a deeper speculation about how change might occur in the future—including as a result of events or conditions which are as yet unknown but which may come out of left field and be transformative. This long quote from one of the interviews summarises this dynamic:

Looking back, I can see that all sorts of things have changed about Australia since I was a boy. We are much more connected to the rest of the world, much more multicultural, we have the Internet. We are much, much richer. All of these contribute to what we are and how we function as a society today. These changes have been huge but for me, the most important change is hard to pin down. It relates to a profoundly changing sense of what it means to be Australian in a time of accelerated change globally. How we relate to the rest of the world. What we are trying to say about ourselves to the rest of the world. This is what has shifted irrevocably for me and as I speak to you now I realise that this has happened without me being aware of it.

Coding and thematic analysis

The interview material was distilled into over 2000 key statements, each given a numeric code. This rigorous process involved systematic checking and cross-checking at various points in the interview process and two quality assurance workshops involving the whole scenarios team in considering each statement and agreeing on its code. The interconnectedness of the issues under discussion meant that it was difficult to break these down into discrete themes. We were also mindful of the caution of some commentators including Ison et al. (2013) who warn that ‘sequenced and linear processes’ may mimic the mainstream framing of knowledge and experience that contributes to many of the problems we are seeking to resolve in the first place.

The major and subsidiary themes from the interviews, and their interaction, are vividly represented in the Code Cloud (See Figure below). More than 35 constantly recurring themes were identified, as further illustrated in the table in Appendix B.

These themes were then appraised to identify those with the highest level of potential impact and the highest level of uncertainty. The selected themes were clustered to explore their interconnections and the ways these could play out in future (Curry & Hodgson 2008)). This process is critical because it enables the identification of axes of uncertainty which provide the foundation for the future scenarios. The six main themes are illustrated at Appendix C.

Scenarios workshops

The scenarios will emerge from a further process in which the themes, certainties and uncertainties are analysed by experts including an intensive workshop process

---

\(^1\) The interview questions can be found in Appendix A.
6 What will shape the future: the major themes

The following discussion addresses the six most frequent themes emerging from the interviews and analysis.

The picture is consistent with recent polling into Australian social attitudes (AuSSA Survey 2007, cited in Aarons & Pietsch 2012), which reveals a sense of strong pride in many aspects of Australian society and environment among those born in Australia or identifying as Australian. This is mirrored in interview responses and was notable across all contributors including recent migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, who appreciated the safety and stability of Australian society as well as the opportunities on offer here.

Australia is a welcoming country, diverse, multicultural. As a society we provide good working conditions, good living standards, a good social security system and a good public health system. We have the basic social infrastructure to address most human needs. In addition, we are a free country of free thinkers—a sound democracy even if politicians make fools of themselves. The challenge is to ensure that we invest in the capacity of our people to innovate—to develop the knowledge economy to sustain our future.

At the same time there is a sharp critique of trends that may disrupt or undermine highly prized social and environmental aspects of the Australian way of life and a sense of unease about how these might play out in future. Another quote encapsulates both of these dimensions.
Australia today is a significantly more diverse society (than when I was young). It is also a much more connected, international society. At the same time there has been a significant widening of the gap between wealthy and poor. Of the above changes, two have been good and one bad. In relation to equity, Australia has lost a much more easy-going lifestyle and social context. Everyone now works harder but the rewards are much more varied. Social equity is much weaker as a result. Australia is now seeing the emergence of a significant group of multiply disadvantaged people, which is of great concern.

These uncertainties and tensions are reprised in the examination of the specific themes discussed below. Each of these is illuminated with quotes from the interviews, chosen to reflect a range of contributors and diverse viewpoints.

It needs to be noted that each of these major themes embraces a multitude of related and interconnected concerns. To illustrate, the issue of progress in relation to Aboriginal issues was mentioned frequently in response to several questions and is subsumed in the theme of fairness and opportunity below. Attributing and coding these responses was a judgement call made by the whole scenarios team (and it should be noted that the major and subsidiary themes were all in play in the scenario development workshops).

**Fairness and opportunity**

Many participants identified a shift in the concept of the fair go and its application today. A majority of respondents felt that the concept of the fair go is very important in defining Australian identity and its uniquely successful social policy but that this is being eroded by a widening gap in wealth and income and the increasing diversity of society. A number suggested that the concept is increasing conditional, that it is applied to ‘people like us’ and no longer seen as an important principle (‘in the Australian DNA’) that distinguishes Australia’s egalitarian ethos from elsewhere, notably the United States and the United Kingdom. Today, it is suggested, the term can even suggest exclusion as it is not applied to certain groups (Indigenous Australians, asylum seekers) and does not emphasise or create the social levelling that it once did. Many felt that while the fair go may be still used in rhetoric, it is increasingly misappropriated and has lost its saliency, becoming a catch phrase. 

*The way in which the principle [of a fair go], which is a very important one in Australia, has been implemented is wrong. Providing a fair go for all requires policy making that can address complexity, the multi-factorial issues that influence who flourishes and who languishes. The fragmentation of policy and responsibility means that this complexity is not addressed effectively, with the consequence that those with the most need, suffering complex, interlinked kinds of disadvantage do not have a fair go at all.*

*It has come to be associated with a bit of a sense of entitlement and middle-class welfare, maybe people that you wouldn’t expect think that the fair go applies to them, like well-off baby boomers for example. There needs to be a change in how we interpret a fair go.*

*Part of our mythology, the story we tell ourselves about how egalitarian we are compared with elsewhere.*
We have done better than the USA for sure but our deep social stratification has been hidden under the behaviour of mateship and a culture that is utterly reductive of that concept—beer and sport, not really pulling together as a society (apart from in a crisis).

Yes, a fair go still has traction in Australia but it is not without challenges, both ideological and technical.

A minority felt that a fair go is still alive and well as both concept and practical influence on policy in Australia, positively and negatively, as illustrated below.

The notion of a fair go is even stronger now. It is enshrined in rights for all not just male wage earners.

A fair go has meant that we are in a race to the bottom in Australia. We need to get comfortable with elites and use them properly to drive innovation. I am unhappy with how we understand and use elites.

Indigenous Australian disadvantage
Commentary on rights, issues and concerns for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is not a major theme in the interviews but those who addressed themselves to this topic were forthright in their views. Australia’s ethos as a fair society is not, it appears, equally applicable to Indigenous Australians, although once again there is a range of views.

A selection of the more positive comments follows.

Opportunities have been provided for Aborigine people to deal with the hurt and trauma of the past but the job is not yet done by any means.

The changes are moving in the right direction for Aborigines but there is much more still to do and what has been achieved feels very fragile in the face of the challenges bearing down on us.

There are some extremely successful Aborigines. A class structure is emerging [within Aboriginal communities] whether we like it or not. We need to embrace the opportunities but also to understand that this does not mean denying who we are, our difference or forfeit or deny our history and our beliefs in a process of assimilation.

Australia is starting to mature and move away from the denial of history. The national apology was important and also allowed recognition of other forgotten Australians Increased understanding of Indigenous Australians is still in the formative stage but the process has started. This also takes maturity on part of all parts of society.

Other interviewees were more pessimistic.

There is still too much denial of the history. It is the big elephant in the room in Australia. The trauma of Aboriginal history lives on in the pain and suffering of our people. The dominant historical discussion presents a false story about the history. No proper understanding can be reached, only limited reconciliation, when the history is obscured, hidden, distorted. Unless people understand the history, they cannot understand the present.
We are struggling to hold onto our culture. These days, our kids are losing contact with the land. Our culture appears to fading, dimming compared to how it was when we were children.

We are losing our elders. They are passing and there are no new ones emerging.

Inequality

Respondents linked concerns about fairness and opportunities to concerns about broader social changes which many found unsettling. Increasing inequality, consumerism, power and influence, and the sustainability of lifestyles were all important strands in this discussion, coupled with anxieties about the rising cost of living and housing, lack of infrastructure investment leading to cut-off communities, and poverty in later stages of life.

The difference between the haves and the have-nots has grown and this gap is obscene. I don’t know why it isn’t a political issue.

People need to focus on psycho-social wellbeing not just the economic wellbeing that is being forced down our throats by the political parties.

I do have worries though, like how my kids are ever going to be able to afford a house?

My kids will have a decent standard of living but only because of the wealth we pass on to them. What does this imply about the future? Is our standard of living sustainable?

Overall, few respondents addressed poverty per se as a problem for Australia. Further work is necessary to tease out why this might be. In part, it appears to relate to a sense that Australian social policy has been effective in providing a social safety net. It also implies that for many people it is the interconnectedness of factors that contribute to social exclusion that is the challenge. This in turn is linked to the theme of politics and leadership, and the view expressed by a significant number of people that current governance structures and the nature of politics mean that there is inadequate whole-of-government response to complexities.

We need smart policy that can address the complexity of the problems we face and their interconnectedness. We need to see health as totally connected to economic, social and environmental factors and, in fact, as created by them, for better or worse.

Of those who mentioned poverty, some were receiving benefits or working with welfare groups and were arguably more informed about these issues than others.

Insecure work means that it is hard to buy a house—you can’t apply for a loan or private rental because you don’t have a secure job. Even though you have work, you keep being dragged into the Centrelink net. You can’t make long-term plans and it is difficult to budget—it is not a nice way to live.

Newstart Allowance is now too low. People are almost in penury, way below what we consider to be a level of poverty.

Individuals or communities

Many people were nostalgic about a more socially connected past and worried that current trends were leading towards decreasing social and community consciousness. There was also unease about greater disparities appearing between ‘the haves and the have-nots’ and increasing
inequalities across society. People were concerned about the rise of user-pays service systems and competitive education models which, it was felt, create tiers of service and fuel perceptions of reduced access to and poorer quality services for the less affluent and socially able.

*When I was a child we knew everyone in the street. Nobody had much but we shared a lot. My parents used to play bridge with the neighbours. We had barbecues. We all felt equal, in the same boat and it felt good not having luxuries because nobody else did.*

The loss of freedom for children was a recurring message within this theme.

*Because we had a strong sense of community, there was community involvement in raising the children. The children belonged to the community in a way. The result was that we had freedom to roam. These days children are harried and hassled by parents who are afraid of imagined dangers—and are ‘hothousing’ the kids to give them a competitive edge in a dog-eat-dog world.*

The need to rethink current value-sets and lifestyle choices was also frequently addressed. Some interviewees expressed doubt about the sustainability of current systems—and emphasised the need for what one contributor called commitment to ‘shared sacrifice’ to mitigate the impacts of a downturn in productivity and to avoid US/UK style austerity scenarios.

*There is also far too much business welfare, with no strings attached—they never have to give it back. Lots of it is hidden and it is worth billions of dollars a year.*

*If we can accept a different set of values, less materialistic, less based on consumption and more sustainable, I think we would be happier in the long run.*

Set against this, a reasonably strong sub-theme focused on the need for greater personal and social responsibility. Some people felt strongly that individuals need to step up to the plate and look after themselves and their children better in order to address a perceived range of current social problems including crime, incivility, obesity and substance abuse.

*Parents need to exercise their responsibilities for their children. Poor parenting is at the heart of many of our social problems.*

*Fat people are fat through their own behaviours and choices. Why should we pay for their health issues as a result?*

*We owe vulnerable people a good life—the disabled, the elderly. But we don’t owe dole-bludgers a good life. We should not give them a penny.*

For others, the shared sacrifice sub-theme had a different interpretation, suggesting that everyone needed to develop a social consciousness.

*We have for a long time been told we are entitled to social services and welfare through our welfare and taxation system. Today there is less of a sense of connection with our welfare system and the need to contribute to it for a sense of common good.*

Still others had a different target in mind in connection with the theme of responsibility and suggested that big businesses needed also to accept more responsibility than at present for maintaining a strong social sphere.
Tax-payers build the roads, educate and look after the health of the workforce that enables industry to make its huge profit. Yet this is never acknowledged by the corporate sector which has a sense of utter entitlement.

Respondents from the business community strongly rejected the notion that they were not doing their bit.

Business does have a role to play through corporate social responsibility and through paying tax. But being a good corporate citizen is about more than just paying tax. We need to make sure we employ a broad range of people, support indigenous employment, women. The government should make it easier for big business to do that and imposing more taxes diminish our willingness to do that.

Access to services
Participants were asked to identify a platform of policy priorities to enable future generations to enjoy the same quality of life as enjoyed by a majority of Australians today. Overall, there was a high degree of policy literacy among those who responded. The overwhelming consensus among the interviewees was that there is a need for further investment in all levels of education and significant educational reform. There was also a high level of concern about insufficient and inequitable infrastructure investment in the context of population growth.

Education
In relation to education, complex motivations were evident. A number of contributors suggested that Australian education systems need to be world-class in order to create a future workforce capable of driving the 21st-century knowledge economy.

Governments only ever want to intervene once there is a crisis and all the evidence says that you can prevent many poor social outcomes by investing in early childhood education. This will be good for the country as a whole.

School curricula need to be reformed to equip children and young people with the skills they need to survive and adapt in a world where old certainties no longer apply. We need to reform the educational offer.

Funding for universities needs to increase so that these institutions can continue to be an Australian export.

Gonski Review proposals have to be implemented if we are to have a hope of emerging into the 21st century as a decent, fair, prosperous country where people can thrive.

Some people used social justice arguments, pointing to the need to shore up the educational opportunities of children and young people in disadvantaged communities as a key lever in improving life chances generally.

Failure to make progress on educational standards in schools is a major challenge and needs to be reversed. We have been very bad at tackling structural disadvantage in the education system. Its complexities need to be understood and properly addressed.

Ensure that there is equitable access to and equitable funding for schools in deprived areas.
Other contributors pointed to existing deficits in educational resources for disabled children and young people and excluded communities.

*We [deaf students] are feeling under attack now with cutbacks causing withdrawal of Auslan courses, TAFE courses and fewer well-qualified teachers. Why take away from us when our world is so disadvantaged already?*

*We need to get serious about helping disadvantaged groups participate in tertiary education. Increasingly tertiary education is required for material success. Yet the focus has shifted to individuals having to pay for it which puts it out of reach for many people. We are going the wrong way.*

*I fear that performance-based pay for teachers will drive them away from trying to make a difference in poorly resourced schools in low socioeconomic areas.*

Still others cited the need for sweeping educational reforms.

*I think at primary schools and secondary schools I would really broaden out the whole idea of education. Lots of kids have a negative experience of schools because it has become so narrow, just about reading and maths and not everyone is going to be good at these things or enjoy doing them. A broad education helps people to discover their talents, opens their eyes to other options in their lives. In lots of ways the private school system has done this better through excursions, school camps, sport, art and music. But these things should be in our public school system too. It is really the worst-off kids who miss out most on this kind of extra-curricular activity.*

*There is a shift to a performance frame, away from learning to performance. I think there is too much of an emphasis on how children perform rather than their learning process.*

**Health**

Overall, respondents felt that Australia provides a sound healthcare system and a robust public health system—and as a result population health status is very good.

*I think we do health care very well. There is a good mix between public and private sector. While the private sector may have encroached and the government seems to be pushing the private health sector, the idea of having a health system which supports individuals when they require it is done well. It is a good mix between the UK and American systems.*

Others disagreed.

*I would restore universalism in healthcare—make sure everyone is using the same shared system and would remove financial intermediaries such as health insurers.*

*Public health system is good but has deteriorated compared to the past. Are we headed towards America’s health system?*

Others pointed to the distinction between acute or urgent health care and chronic disease and disability management:

*Actually we care for our disabled very badly, and have poor attitudes towards those with intellectual disabilities. We do healthcare well.*
Among those who mentioned it, there was full support for the concept of the National Disability Insurance Scheme although worries were expressed about how this might evolve.

**We may be proud again if we get the needed disability insurance scheme though the model chosen will be critical. We need a universal system but [it’s] increasingly likely that it will be means-tested. If we get the disability insurance scheme wrong, that will be very negative and fuel discontent/anger.**

A number of contributors were concerned about the development of a multi-tier health system which would disadvantage the poor and excluded and worsen health inequalities. Others were concerned that increasing privatisation would erode the public health system and that Australia was developing an American-style health care system.

**Introduction of regimes of prioritisation of need in the public healthcare system, involving denying care and limiting access (for whatever reason) would profoundly change the nature of our society and shift us closer to the US model. End of the fair go.**

**Are we comfortable with a two-tier health system where some have the means to buy better health and some do not?**

A number of respondents felt that improvements are needed in relation to prevention, including primary prevention to tackle the broad social determinants of determinants and secondary prevention including managing chronic disease and disability which reduces the incidence of deterioration and enables people to live fuller, more independent lives – and reduces demand on acute healthcare services.

**I don’t think we are fair dinkum about prevention and we are reluctant to think about complexity. Governments generally fund short-term, single-cause programs which don’t work at the population level. I think if we want to do well in the future we need to invest in more upstream, preventive interventions.**

**We need to focus on restorative wellbeing, maximising wellbeing and independence at every stage of life. Ageing is not an inevitable decline, the thing that prevents people from recovering from episodes of disability or illness is going into hospital—we need to stop over-medicalising and putting doctors on pedestals.**

**Legislation on smoking tipped the balance massively in relation to public health and something similar on obesity prevention would be a similar profound change, impacting on all aspects of how we live our lives—shifting the gaze from the individual to the obesogenic environment.**

**Infrastructure**

The need to respond to population growth in the cities and to address disparities between rural and urban areas was a strong theme, deeply interconnected with several other themes including inequality, individual or community, and climate change. However, the emphasis on investment in many comments suggests that providing effective technological and commercial infrastructure is seen as a political choice in much the same way as investment in social infrastructure and hence, this is addressed under the theme of services.

Overall, people were concerned about the need for effective infrastructure to enable Australians to live properly, receive the required health and other services, and ensure access to employment, as
well as proper communications and distribution networks to support business and create employment. There was evidence of deep concern about future social cohesion, public health and prosperity without this investment.

If we don’t design new spaces so that people can walk and cycle as part of daily life and have access to jobs and essential health and education services, then we are building in huge threats to health in the future from obesity-related diseases, poor mental health and poverty.

There is hideous urban sprawl, no proper urban planning.

We are increasingly seeing Victoria undergoing massive epidemiological transition. Massive increase in population, huge unemployment among young people in the state. If we do not provide opportunities for them, there is the potential for future social ‘discohesion’ and very poor public health.

Much stronger planning controls needed. Growth corridors are dreadful, soulless tracts and laissez-faire, slap-em-up buildings often in lovely places are a shameful blot on the country side and Australia’s reputation.

And for many, the need for new infrastructure to meet population growth presented a great opportunity to design for beauty, amenity and local economic development and to involve local people in designing liveable spaces.

We need to give more thought to shaping our cities in a way that the middle and outer suburbs are more vibrant and better places to live. The way you shape cities can promote or undermine social inclusion. We need to try to encourage jobs growth and the development of ‘villages’ in middle and outer suburbs. This is true for all Australian cities.

There needs to be a cultural shift in regards to what it means to live in the city. If we plan what our cities are going to look like in twenty years time, we have a greater opportunity to design communities so that they can handle higher density growth. Instead of our cities becoming urban sprawls we will have a better chance of looking like some of the best cities in the world like London and New York where getting around and being able to function in the city is manageable and it’s not mandatory to have a car.

Investment is needed in public housing and the dispersal of it. We don’t need all the poor people living together, we need mixed communities.

Use of resources

Many respondents mentioned that Australia has historically been seen as the lucky country and a number speculated that this would also be reflected in the historical appraisal. Many acknowledged that the mining boom has provided the quality of life and outcomes that people have come to expect.

The resources industry has directly allowed people to do well but the flow on is not well understood. The tax and royalty take has increased which means that governments are better off. For example here in Perth the new children’s hospital and the redevelopment of the waterfront is all being paid for by the mining industry, either through royalties or direct subsidies. Infrastructure in Perth is being paid for by a growing contribution from the mining industry.
And there were concerns. Some felt that Australia has squandered its opportunities.

*Once we have dug it all up, what is left for our economy?*

*We need to broaden and diversify our economic base to secure our future.*

Industry contributors, unsurprisingly, had a totally different view.

*I hope that history might say that we started out as a quarry but ended up as so much more. As value-adding service partners to Asia (including financial services, legal and educational services and tourism). And that will ensure our economic future and build a more secure economic base for when the resources run out.*

**Multiculturalism**

Many spoke about the successful embrace of multiculturalism in Australia and suggested that this is a defining characteristic of what makes Australia a great country.

*Generally-speaking, we have made a good job of diversifying our society. I think we are the most successful country in the world [in embracing diversity].*

*When I was a child there were only Aborigines and white Australians in my town, now there are a diversity of peoples in terms of race, skin colour, culture, values and beliefs.*

An occasional dissenting voice is noticeable.

*Exoticism—I am not sure how profound the acceptance of diversity is though. I think people like the food and some of the cultural aspects of diversity but that the subterranean strain of racism is still there though it has been hidden. I fear this could easily come back.*

**Refugees and asylum seekers**

Many respondents expressed concern for Australia’s humanitarian obligation to asylum seekers, asserting that strict refugee and immigration policies and offshore processing systems are a selfish way to deal with immigration.

*Asylum seeker policy is very vicious, paranoid and seems to reveal something very dark and unpleasant about Australian culture and politics.*

*A fundamental shift is needed in immigration policy to involve an explicit managed migration program processing on shore [and] ending of detention with some humanity as a driver as well as the economic argument.*

* Movements of people across the world will change. If we think we have a deluge of refugees now, wait until what happens in the next ten years.*

However, there were nuances of opinion:

*One of the possible issues with migration is that ghettos might develop. We need to not let certain groups drift downwards into poverty, particularly those who arrive less educated, like the Sudanese.*
Migrants are different. In the old days they came in the main from Europe, we had something in common with each other. I worry about how we build a shared vision of society with people from other parts of the world.

And some not so nuanced—though these were a tiny minority.

I would send all boat people back to wherever, immigrants who don’t gain employment within six months to be taken off benefits … That would be a good start.

Global citizen

A number of respondents linked the issue of asylum seekers and migration generally to reflections on Australia’s role as a global citizen.

Australia needs to think about its role on a global scale and its international obligations to address the global movement of people and the refugee crisis.

Someone told me that they thought Australia is going to be taken over by people coming here and there will be chaos, lack of resources. For me, that isn’t true because not everyone is going to come to Australia. I think Australia and the UN have the powers and the capacity to settle and direct refugees somewhere, somehow—to see and to plan the capacity of the nation. In cooperation with nations and the international organisations I think they have the power to come up with a global solution to settle refugees. Australia has to be part of the solution to the global crises of asylum seekers—it isn’t a local problem but a global issue.

This was in turn connected with uncertainty about Australia’s changing geopolitical alliances.

There is a need and an opportunity to redefine our relationship with Asia which we have not yet done. In order to pave the way for this, there is a cultural and identity shift or re-evaluation that needs to occur, away from the USA towards China. We need to consider what this relationship will look like beyond the export/coal/manufacturing terms and conditions.

If the US/Europe lose their presence on the world economic stage, giving way to China or India, that would be huge—such different cultures and potentially a huge clash of values. We would need to think differently about ourselves.

The White Paper on Australia and the Asian Century spells out a lot. If we want to make the most of our opportunities we need to make changes. We need to learn Asian languages, particularly Mandarin. We need to decide whether we are going to embrace and enable it or not. It is possible that we could close down the opportunity of engaging with China and Asia more broadly because the xenophobic issues will be overplayed in a way that makes it harder to take advantage of the opportunities.

Political leadership

While a number of respondents felt that by and large Australia has good governance and good institutions, the message from the interviews is that for many people these benefits are maintained despite, not because of, recent governments, looking back nostalgically to a period when governments were considered to be more effective.
The Whitlam years opened up opportunities for poorer people to better themselves by providing the conditions they need to thrive. This was transformative of society in a very profound way and to some extent we all still benefit from those changes.

Australia got better at change during the Paul Keating years. These were emotionally exhausting but we didn’t have a lot of choice. Our history of economic and social reform is robust. We have opened the economy, floated the dollar, privatised a lot of stuff that needed to be! We are not perfect but relative to lots of places we have done well.

Many participants perceived a degeneration of political leadership since the turn of the century and expressed dissatisfaction with the contemporary political process and, in particular, the rise in ‘wedge politics’ involving political scoring and adversarial debate rather than dialogue. Many called for visionary leadership and political courage and the need to reintroduce virtue into political leadership and political culture. A number attributed the unsatisfactory nature of politics to the problems imposed by small majorities or minority governments, but in way that suggests that a kind of cycle may be in play. As one respondent put it:

We have lost our faith in politics and politicians so we disengage and cannot give wholehearted support to one party or another. They all feel and behave the same. And then they fight and scrap and behave badly and that becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy and so we become more disgusted and more disengaged and so the whole thing perpetuates itself.

Linked to this some felt that there is a lack of genuine political discourse and deliberation which is contributing to the lack of engagement in the democratic process.

We lack proper scrutiny of government at all levels by an increasingly moribund, hamstrung media. The body politic is in a very unhealthy state—approaching stagnation.

We need an emotionally intelligent and change-rational government.

This was allied to a strong sub-theme about the nature of power and influence in Australian society. A number of people felt inequalities of power are contributing to a weakening of the democratic process itself and to cynicism and lack of engagement with the political process.

I think governments need to intervene and regulate and legislate to ensure fairness. Their job isn’t just to favour people who have a truckload of dollars to influence the political process.

Government needs to have the courage to tackle lobby groups and hard problems.

I feel like ordinary people are quite powerless in the political process and that it is dominated by wealthy vested interests.

The way corporations are structured. They’re very powerful forces that have no allegiances or responsibilities and they will do to us what they’re doing to the fish stocks.

Some participants witness a growing conservatism in the Australian political landscape.

I think the future will involve an even more vicious form of free-market liberalism.
Those forces in government who prefer equality are constrained. The transmission of anti-egalitarian, free market ideologies via NewsCorp is greater in Australia than in the UK or Europe.

Others saw the rise in political activist groups and grassroots community groups as a recent positive addition to the landscape.

Mainstream politics is broken, we are in a transition and something else will emerge.

And a number of others reflected on the interconnection between politics and society, speculating in way that is expressed (ambiguously) by the following quote.

Politics are a reflection of the culture, not the other way around.

Climate change

Many contributors expressed great concern about Australia’s seeming inability to tackle climate change effectively. While they accepted that the public are more environmentally conscious and that environmental activism is an increasing trend akin to a social movement, this was felt to be still a fringe rather a mainstream concern. Overall, participants felt that a convincing case has not been made to persuade people and institutions that there is a need to change the way things are done, by all of us, in order to address climate change.

I am profoundly pessimistic about climate change and I fear for my kids. We are a market-driven society and we will only properly engage with measure to tackle climate change when we are in the midst of a disaster. Once the cost of heatwaves, floods, extreme weather events have to be factored into budgets by governments then they will impose changes on the population. It is a test of the democratic system—our response to climate change could fail because governments can’t force the stronger policies that are needed.

Unfortunately most people and politicians are very short sighted, not willing to take short-term pain for long-term gain. Self-interest is massively in the way. There is a hopeless lack of leadership on the issue at a national and global level. All the positives are insignificant in the face of climate change.

Current predictions are too conservative and the situation is worse [than expected] with four degree warming rather than the one to two degrees originally predicted. In three to five years we will experience some major events that will make us realise addressing this is a priority—melting icecaps and permafrost.

Some people suggested that the climate change conversation has become individualised and self-interested rather than looking at the big picture.

[We need] a sophisticated discussion about climate, the environment and inequality which isn’t leading us into a delusory [sic] belief that change can be based on lifestyle choice alone. It is no good telling people who live in poverty that they should be growing their own basil to make pesto to sell at the farmers’ market.

There is a lack of collective effort to tackle climate change and patterns of consumption which may be responsible for climate change; this collective effort is in direct opposition to individualism.

A minority were climate sceptics, though these were very forthright in their views.
Socialist radicals in the World Bank have come up with reports on climate change.

The biggest environmentalists are farmers, farming in a renewable way. I disagree with the environment industry and am a climate change sceptic.

In response to a direct question, several contributors considered climate change and other environmental issues to be potential tipping points or game changers.

A temperature rise of two [degrees] Celsius would have incalculable impact and be a tipping point and a game changer. Our global consciousness is not able to comprehend this or to understand that to secure the future we need to have shared sacrifice now.

Acceleration of climate change? All sorts of assumptions would be out of the door. How many times can Queensland be battered and rebuilt, for example?

The impact of climate change and how industries will sustain themselves in light of these changes. The outcomes this will have on certain industries will be great and devastating depending on how we manage climate change in the future.

Some participants were proud of the introduction of the carbon tax, suggesting this exemplifies leadership and provides hope for the future.

We have the opportunity to become a world leader in renewable energy and the green economy.

Technology

Technology was seen by almost everyone as having major positive impacts on the present and the future. Some were very enthusiastic.

I think the information tapestry is fantastic; we need to harness this to counter the huge threats to our wellbeing, wherever they come from, and become better at tapping into technology and information in order to find solutions.

Others had more nuanced views.

There has been a lot of good that has come out of the growth of technology and social media. For instance, social activism is growing and there are networks and activity which are increasingly doing more to help society. There is a certain narcissism that pertains to social media as well, which is not necessarily a good thing.

And a number were concerned that information technology is exacerbating some worrying social conditions.

For all the positives, there is a demonstrably worse sense of place, community, social connections—in part driven by the overload of technological information/stimuli that negate and undermine direct human connections.

The emphasis on social media as the new democratic voice worries me. You need to debate and reflect properly to form and re-form your opinions. You need to do that in direct and continuing relationship with others. You cannot form your opinions on social media, only perpetuate your
A number felt, in response to a question about what Australia does well, that it has punched above our weight technologically, citing developments such as cochlear implants, pharmaceuticals and green technologies.

Australia is really good at medical research, better than our size. We are really good at clinical trials and our public healthcare system is fantastic. The regulation is innovation-friendly.

Others from within the technological industries expressed concern that Australia is not doing enough to build the 21st-century knowledge economy by investing in innovation—and removing impediments to innovation.

We don’t innovate very well, funding is all wrong and [the] dead hand of the universities is a stranglehold on creativity. Universities are not innovation hubs. We need to find ways of letting the venture capitalists and entrepreneurs, captains of industry, do the innovation. That is what they know how to do.

Our superannuation gives us a huge potential pool of money to invest in things like our own medical research and innovation but the funds are way too risk-averse. They won’t invest in Australian research. I have to go to the US to get finance.

7 Conclusions

The interim findings from this project are difficult to summarise. The comments reveal that Australian people are deeply engaged in thinking critically about past, present and future but are concerned about a lack of leadership in taking the country forward into the 21st century and a lack of voice in the process. While some common views about the key drivers of the future are discernible, this does not imply that there is consensus about the way forward. This underscores the potential importance of the scenarios in painting pictures of possible futures in which these key variables play out in different ways.

The overwhelming conclusion from this work is that, when given the opportunity to reflect in depth about the kind of society that is wanted, most people implicate the interplay of social and economic policy in creating it, even if they do not all use this language to express the insight. While opportunities and threats to growth are both an implicit and explicit strand throughout this work, underscoring the importance of continuing prosperity in securing future well-being, growth is not in itself a major theme. The majority of respondents suggested that continuing prosperity in Australia will require creative, resilient people; good services to build capabilities and health; strong social and technical innovation to ensure that Australia can build the 21st-century knowledge economy, including green innovation; and continued investment in the relationship with Asia and the rest of the world. Respondents clearly identified a range of current challenges to the idea of Australia as a fair and decent place to live, a nation which has had decades of continual prosperity while avoiding the overall widening of inequality which has occurred in other places in the same period. These challenges include the need for further (and different) action to equalise the life chances of Indigenous Australians, a new approach to the treatment of ‘boat people’; investment in essential services, particularly in geographies of high disadvantage; and better approaches to infrastructure planning. All of these concerns were anchored in a strong sense of
pride in Australia as a country and of deep appreciation, even love, for Australia as place, with its abundance of natural, social and cultural resources and its beauty. This provides a sound platform for BSL in taking forward the new inclusive growth policy agenda.

A further conclusion is that Australians are mostly optimistic about the future, notwithstanding the concerns and uncertainties. There is an underlying belief in human capacity and the power of governments to solve problems. There is also a belief that Australia possesses the fundamental creativity needed for resilient adaptation—or that a combination of capacity and fortunate circumstance will secure the future. This last speaks perhaps to an underlying ‘she’ll be right’ mentality. Our findings suggest that most Australians, irrespective of origin, feel that they are lucky people in a lucky country. As one commentator said, ‘Tsunamis are waves by the time they reach us’. The next five to ten years may test that belief more than ever before.

8 Next steps

Testing the themes
The findings discussed here are based on interviews and other contributions from a broad but not representative sample of Australians and the scenarios will be narratives of possible futures. If the Brotherhood of St Laurence wishes to test these findings and key themes further, it is suggested that consideration is given to polling a representative sample using survey methods.

Using the scenarios
The scenarios will be produced with a companion toolkit outlining ways of using them. It is recommended that the whole Executive Team and Board is engaged in designing the process for dissemination of the work and in considering its utility in supporting BSL advocacy on the theme of inclusive growth in the next 12 months.

Continuing the conversation
The willingness to engage in the interview process and the workshops, as well as explicit comments from contributors, suggests that people want and need to debate policy and ideas and lack an outlet for this through current institutions including the media and mainstream political activity. The BSL, as a respected non-government organisation, is well placed to offer a platform to a wide range of people in debating policy issues related to its mission, with the framing provided by the scenarios. This would serve to strengthen its policy development work and also model the inclusion and social citizenship required to achieve inclusive growth.
Appendix A  Interview questions

1  What is your name?
2  How would you describe what it is you do in life, both at work and outside of work?
3  How would you like to describe where you are in your life / your stage of life?
4  Were you born in Australia?  Yes/No
   If yes, go to Q5
   If no, go to Q6

   **Born Australia only**

5  What are the biggest changes that you have observed or experienced in the past 10 to 20 years in Australia:

   **People born elsewhere**

6  What is the main difference between Australia and where you were before?

   **All to answer**

7  What has been good about these changes/differences?
8  What not so good about these changes/differences?
9  What do you think Australia does well?
10 Does the notion of ‘a fair go’ still have salience in Australia?
11 Do you feel broadly hopeful about the future or not?
   Why/Why not?
12 What needs to happen for future generations to enjoy the same quality of life as that experienced by most Australians today?
13 Can you speculate about potential tipping points or game changers for Australia in the next 10 to 15 years?
14 If you were prime minister, what would you want people to say about your first 100 days?
15 What do you think history will say about Australia in the first half of the 21st century?
## Appendix B  Codes and themes from the interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Diversity/multiculturalism</td>
<td>19 Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>20 The rest of the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>21 Public health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mining boom</td>
<td>22 Sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Relationship with Asia</td>
<td>23 Hope for the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Relationship with USA</td>
<td>24 Demographic change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Affluence</td>
<td>25 Gender equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>26 Families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Social cohesion</td>
<td>27 Immigration policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Public Service</td>
<td>28 Environmental policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Climate change and other environment</td>
<td>29 Economic policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Fair Go</td>
<td>30 Tax and transfers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Discrimination/racism/social exclusion</td>
<td>31 Education policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Democratic freedom and voice</td>
<td>32 Social policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Technology and telecommunications</td>
<td>33 Family policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>34 Foreign policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Solidarity</td>
<td>35 Health Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Redistribution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix C  Six main interview themes by frequency of mention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes (and example sub-themes)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FAIRNESS and OPPORTUNITY</strong></td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of a 'fair go' / worries about its erosion/misuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MULTICULTURALISM</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pride in successful embrace of diversity and multiculturalism/ social tolerance</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POLITICS AND LEADERSHIP</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unease re negativity of political culture / need for visionary leadership</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CLIMATE CHANGE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns re climate change and other environmental issues</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INEQUALITY</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns about increasing inequalities in wealth and income / social cohesion / sustainability of lifestyles</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negativity of asylum seeker / refugee policy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TECHNOLOGY</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected world and declining affiliations/institutions</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


Australian Academy of Science (AAS) 2012, *Negotiating our future: living scenarios for Australia to 2050*, vol. 1, AAS, Canberra.


