



Millennium Kids Youth Challenges on the Environment 2019

Hi, I'm Rachel!

I am 22 years old, a Millennium Kid Youth Board Member and a recent environmental science graduate.

I love being a Millennium Kid because of the “Head, Heart, Hands” ethos of the organisation that encourages every Millennium Kid to think of ideas to combat environmental issues, put those ideas into action and to look after our own mental health in the process. The apathy that governments and multinational corporations all over the world have towards environmental issues is really scary. The thought of a future with more natural disasters, no clean water to drink and no clean air to breath can really take it's toll on the mental health of a young person. This is why we actively work towards a better future for our planet and ourselves at Millennium Kids.

For my project, I talked to Kids at several different meetings, workshops and events around Western Australia about what was important to them in the upcoming federal election. All of those ideas are in this document (thanks to a lot of help from our mentors that helped me to compile and edit this) and I got to present it to the Minister for Environment at our website launch in March. We hope that the state and federal governments will listen to the Kids when they are shaping their policies.

The question that we asked the Kids was:

What issues do you want politicians to tackle?

Overwhelmingly the Kids want governments to focus on climate change and waste, but there are a lot of other issues as well. They want politicians to listen to their pleas for a more sustainable, humane world. Their lives and futures are at stake. They aren't happy with the way the planet and its people are being treated, and they want all levels of Australian government to be a positive force for change.

Millennium Kids are young people aged between 10 – 24 years old from a cross section of the Western Australian community.

This is what they said:

Climate Change

The Kids want politicians that understand climate science

Kids want politicians to acknowledge that climate change is real, and that we must take action. Now. They are scared because many politicians in power either don't understand climate science or are wilfully ignoring its implications.

Kids want the science of climate front and centre

They are clear - listen to the climate scientists and experts, not anti-science think tanks and fossil fuel industry lobby groups.

The Kids want to see our carbon sinks protected

They value the oxygen supply and the carbon storage provided by carbon sinks such as coral reefs, forests and wetlands. The kids want to see their carbon sinks protected by the government and kept safe from fracking, mining, coral bleaching and deforestation.

The Kids want to bring back the carbon tax

They were very encouraged by the decrease in Australia's carbon emissions when the carbon tax was first introduced. They loved it and they want it back. Kids don't think tax is a dirty word, they think that people should pay for their pollution.

The kids want big polluters to be held accountable

A huge amount of Australia's pollution is produced by a small number of companies. The Kids want those polluters to pay their fair share of taxes, to adhere to strict environmental regulations and to pay for effective carbon offset programs. Kids have repeatedly asked for better regulations for controlling carbon emissions. They support the stand taken by the EPA in introducing a carbon neutral policy.

The Kids want government support for environmental events

They want politicians to lead by example and take part in events such as Earth Hour, Plastic Free July and Clean Up Australia Day. The Kids want politicians to use their power and influence for good!

Kids want our finite resources managed better

Kids hear that LNG is supposed to be a transition fuel. They want to see that transition happening. They think that means the industry should provide funds to develop low carbon alternatives. Yet in 2019/20 the Australian governments receipts from LNG production are expected to be less than a billion dollars, or less than 2% of LNG export revenue. Kids think if we managed the money better, we could accelerate the transition to a cleaner future.

The Kids want carbon offset projects to be carefully regulated

They are concerned that Australian projects for carbon offsets are not regulated carefully enough and may not meet the criteria for quality offsets. The kids want a consistent and high standard for carbon offsets in Australia.

Waste

Kids say we need to own our waste problem

We need to reduce our waste, and we need to own it and be responsible for it in our own country. Many of our current recycling programs rely on overseas developing countries to deal with our waste. They want our waste to be recycled locally.

Kids want better waste education

We need the community better educated in where their rubbish goes, and a reduction in “greenwashing”. People need to know that products marketed as ‘bio’ or ‘biodegradable’ may need special facilities, sorting and handling, and so are not really the best option as we don’t have the facilities to deal with them in Western Australia.

The Kids say a complete ban on single use plastics is just the beginning

There are plenty of alternatives to disposable coffee cups, plastic balloons, plastic micro-beads and single use cutlery items, and we want to see them completely phased out in Australia as soon as possible. Kids say we need to follow through with a ban on production of new plastic.

Kids want incentivised recycling

They want programs like Cash for Cans and other products as soon as possible. They want incentives to reduce waste in packaging, with increased taxes on excessive and non-recyclable packaging. Their aim is zero landfill.

Kids want to see industry play their part

They want the re-use of cardboard boxes in supermarkets promoted. They want supermarkets to stop wrapping fresh produce in plastic. They want excessive packaging eliminated, and retailers made accountable for waste and associated carbon emissions. They want industry pushed into giving up disposable packaging. They want supermarkets to review questionable marketing practices, such as distributing single use plastic toys.

Kids want to see research funded

We need research into how to reduce pollution, and clean up polluted areas. Kids say plastic is a resource, not rubbish. They encourage research into re-use of our current supplies of plastic. They want research into how we deal with the ‘too hard basket’ of things like coffee cups, soft plastics, used clothing and other fabrics, and medical equipment.

Kids see a role for government

As well as legislation to reduce the supply of plastic waste, they want a fully funded, fully supported state-wide recycling and resource recovery system. This system would provide input for waste management policy, where if we can’t recover and reuse the materials, we should not be selling them or using them.

The Kids want to know what bin to use

They want to have consistent branding and education on what is and isn't recyclable. Currently there are different recycling systems and education in each suburb. They want clear instructions on every bin.

The Kids want people to stop littering

There is litter all over our country roads and beautiful beaches and we want something to be done about it. They want to see more people fined for littering and they want tougher fines for littering, including the release of helium balloons.

The Kids want to see a three-bin system all over Australia

They love the three-bin system in Perth and we want all Australians, in every regional and remote town to have access to green waste and recycling collection as well as general waste.

Kids want an end to food waste

Food wastage is a major problem as it ends up in landfill. Kids want education programs for more efficient shopping and use, combined with FOGO bins in all Council areas. They want sorting and composting facilities at all public festivals and events.

Energy

The Kids want 100% renewable energy by 2030

Kids want Australia to reduce its carbon emissions. Now. Australia is the biggest polluter per capita in the world and they want that to change. They want to see a commitment to a strong federal renewable energy target as well as 100% renewable energy in each state. As part of this they want to see a focus on energy storage technology to provide reliable baseline power.

The Kids don't want dirty energy in Australia

They want to see all coal, oil and gas projects finished by 2030. This means no new projects, and a focus on renewables instead. They consider fracking any part of WA a disgrace.

The Kids want to see the next Australian mining boom

Australia has an abundance in all the elements required to make solar batteries, we want to see the mining industry support clean energy by refocusing towards mining elements for solar batteries. They want to sustain the mining industry by turning away from coal and towards elements for lithium batteries or other new technologies for a low carbon future.

The Kids want energy efficient homes

They can't believe that people are still building homes with no or poor insulation, dark roofs and poor solar design, where the inhabitants are suffering the consequences with high energy bills. Kids want building regulations that enforce high-energy

efficiency ratings from new buildings.

Animals

[Kids say species extinction rates need urgent attention](#)

Australia has the highest native animal extinction rate in the world. We need to act now. Feral animals competing for resources and preying on wildlife, coupled with habitat loss through deforestation and climate change are taking their toll. Kids know this, and they want it acknowledged and meaningful policies implemented urgently.

[The Kids want to see cats kept indoors](#)

Cats are a huge threat to native wildlife when roaming the outdoors. Kids want cats without tags to be taken to cat shelters and the owners of cats with tags to be fined.

[The Kids do not want shark culls](#)

The drumline method of shark culling is ineffective. It is dangerous for beachgoers and marine life, with no reduction in shark attacks. Sharks are very important apex predators, and we risk an ecosystem collapse if we continue to cull them. Kids support shark safety measures that preserve our shark populations.

[The Kids want to see long term research grants](#)

Long term studies of animal behaviour and other natural phenomena currently require multiple funding applications over the life of a project. Kids want to see realistic time frames on government research grants that would allow long-term study.

[We need better treatment of agricultural animals](#)

The Kids want a ban on all live exports!

Live exports are cruel and unnecessary. They want all animals in the agricultural industry treated humanely.

[Kids want to factor in nature](#)

The Kids want planners to factor in nature bridges and wildlife corridors in land developments and major roads to protect our native animals from road kills. They want to counter the effects on breeding and hunting activities.

Water

[The Kids want clean drinking water](#)

The water in our water tables is being contaminated by fracking. They want a total ban on fracking.

[The Kids want our wetlands to be cared for](#)

Wetlands are wonderful carbon sinks and can provide a habitat for birds, frogs, and other wildlife, even in cities! They want well-maintained and protected wetlands with signage educating visitors of the impacts of littering or leaving dog poo uncollected.

The Kids want recycled water

Water is a very precious resource and with a growing population, we must do what we can to preserve it. They want to see recycled water systems across all of Australia.

Kids know education plays a big part

There are still people that don't take their own water bottle with them! Don't they know? This combines with active promotion of, and access to good drinking water in all public areas, including mobile water stations for events.

The Kids want our reefs and oceans protected

They cannot believe that mining operations are being planned on the Great Barrier Reef and the Great Southern Reef. Kids want the government to protect our ecologies, our tourism and our carbon sinks, by making reefs untouchable! They see no place for high risk drilling in our precious oceans. The oceans need to be better protected by legislation.

The Kids want smart use of technology

They want appropriate technology, like solar powered desalination, and reverse osmosis put to use to manage our water supplies.

Kids see clean water as a right

Kids want water supplies managed so people have access to clean water regardless of where they live.

Kids want everyone to play their part

They want better use of water by industry. Production of potable water in WA is now expensive, and its supply at low cost for use in some industrial processes needs review.

Peace and Lifestyle

The Kids want to see their politicians show more respect

The current treatment of Indigenous people, women, people with disabilities, people of colour, LGBTI people, and other marginalised groups needs improving. The Kids want all federal MPs to undergo basic cultural training and ALLY training to create more respectful leadership and harmonious community.

The Kids don't want any children in detention centres

Children are being kept in detention centres without proper access to nutritious food, hygienic living conditions, sanitary items and medical aid. They want the children brought to a safe environment in Australia.

The Kids want to see respect for lore law

They want the rights of Indigenous Australians to be dealt with in a culturally sensitive way, and genuine engagement with leaders in the indigenous communities. Kids want us to work with indigenous people to reduce the disproportionate

incarceration rates of their children.

Kids want compulsory education

Kids want Aboriginal history to be taught in all schools. Kids want local Aboriginal languages and culture taught in all schools and whole school participation in NAIDOC week celebrations. Kids want climate change taught in all schools. What the causes are and how each of us has a part to play in reducing our carbon footprint.

Kids see room for new policies

Kids find social and environmental justice policies lacking, or not taken seriously. They think we could do better in tackling poverty and the rich-poor divide in Australia. They know we can look after the land much better than we do. They want the use of their resources better taxed. They want a mining tax. They want a carbon tax. They want increased taxation on multinational corporations to subsidise environmental innovation.

Kids want equity for all

Kids want to live in a community that promotes equity. All councils should consider cultural and disability aspects in all new buildings and designs.

Plants

The Kids want to stop deforestation

Our forests are precious. They are carbon sinks, native wildlife habitats and tourist attractions, and they help to cool our planet. The Kids want us to stop cutting them down. They want an end to all the excuses that people use to constantly reduce the number of trees we have. They want to know that when they plant a tree, it will survive to provide the oxygen and habitat that it was intended to.

The Kids want more plants

The Kids are really concerned about loss of bushland and habitat in our city. Some Councils have only 10% tree canopy and 60% hard surfaces, such as buildings, car parks, paths and roads causing the suburbs to be hotter. Kids know we need to restore the tree canopies in Australia to cool our cities, replenish our oxygen supplies and to help stabilise our climate against floods and droughts. The Kids want to see a commitment from all levels of government to increase the overall number of trees in Australia.

Kids want to build ecological links

Kids understand that it's not all about individual trees, but more about ecologies. They want to see connections between areas of high diversity in Perth and across the state. They want to see cooperation and coordination between different governments and councils to acquire strategic land for linking up bush.

Kids want better road design

Kids were having a say when the Roe 8 protests were in full swing. Kids are now out having a say about the Ring Road in the South West. They want better design that protects trees, wetlands and bushland. They want to link the South West with the train system to stop the number of cars, destruction of forests for Ring Roads and widening due to congestion.

The Kids want to see more recycled timber

While they know timber should be a renewable resource, Kids don't think we are doing enough to recover the material already in use. They want better use of trees that are cut down for any reason, and better recovery of timber from demolition sites.

Kids want school bushland and trees protected

Councils measure school bushland and trees as part of the overall canopy for their targets, but Kids are concerned schools don't have their own canopy targets. Too many schools lose tree canopy for new buildings and built infrastructure. Kids see school grounds as important community resources, and want an overall plan in partnership with other government departments to protect these precious sites for future generations.

The Kids want native vegetation on verges

Verges with native vegetation require less water and less maintenance than a grassy verge as well as acting as a carbon sink and a habitat for bees and native birds. They want to see funding available for people that want to plant native vegetation on their verges.

The Kids want better use made of land that is cleared

They are sick of seeing bushland cleared for the sake of a one-storey building or a few car parking spots. They want to see building regulations insist that infrastructure makes efficient use of cleared land. Kids would rather see one acre of land cleared for a ten-storey residential complex than ten acres cleared for a series of bungalows. The kids want higher density living, balanced with public open space!

Kids want rules for private land

Too many new developments have no trees at all. Old houses are being knocked down and no trees are left. Kids want a minimum number of trees per block.

Kids want better legislation

Currently the fines for knocking down all the trees in a development are so small they are not a deterrent at all. Kids want much harsher penalties!

Kids want revegetation a priority for all levels of government

Kids want to work with Councils on their coordinated revegetation projects to cool the city through **Green Lab**. They want all levels of Government involved to ensure Councils are supported in their objectives.

Kids want more Green Space

Kids want to see a fund to purchase land for conservation. Currently any land that is for sale gets bought by developers or industry, cleared and built on.

Air and Transport

The Kids want public transport, cycling and walking accessibility prioritised

They are concerned that city development and expansion programs continue to prioritise car transport. This isn't practical in growing cities, and they want less cars. The Kids want infrastructure to best support and encourage people travelling by public transport, by bike or by foot. The Kids also want the real advantages and savings for the community of increased public transport use recognised with financial incentives for people to use it. Kids want to see a public transport friendly city, with cars banned from the CBD, and free CAT bus services extended to other areas.

The Kids want changes in the cars we drive

Hydrogen fuel cell cars combine hydrogen and oxygen to produce water and electricity! The kids would like to see the automotive industry in Australia move away from fossil fuels and towards hydrogen from green sources such as hydroelectric dams. They want to see promotion and development of electric and electronic cars and components. They want to see incentives for low carbon emission vehicles and transport systems.

Kids want us to take the lead on new technology

They want us to support and develop hydrogen fuelled cars and biofuel powered air transport. Kids say free energy, or energy from growing plants should be underpinning our transport systems.

The Kids want to say thank you

Kids want to thank you for some great policies, projects and initiatives that have had a positive impact on people and the environment and they want you to know that they celebrate the positives as well as tackling the issues.

For more information please contact:

Millennium Kids Inc Youth Board

info@millenniumkids.com.au