
FOREWORD BY THE PRIME MINISTER

In April 2008, I invited 1000 Australians to come to Canberra and be a part of the Australia 2020 Summit. Many others also joined in the conversation – through local Summits across Australia, a Youth Summit, over 500 School Summits, a Jewish Symposium and 8800 submissions.



The task was to shape a vision for the nation's future and explore new ideas and ways to meet the major challenges that lie ahead. Government does not have a monopoly on ideas – we need the contribution of all Australians to build a strong and successful future for our country. The 2020 Summit was an opportunity to have a conversation with a wide range of Australians, and to listen with an open mind to the creativity and diversity of their ideas.

With over 900 ideas generated, Australians showed that they are passionate about our nation's future. The energy, enthusiasm and level of engagement amongst Summit participants was truly remarkable and a source of inspiration and encouragement to the Government.

The Final Report of ideas from the Summit was provided to me on 31 May 2008 and I made a commitment to respond. This document meets that commitment.

None of us who gathered at Parliament House for the Summit could have foreseen the severity of the global economic downturn that was even then beginning to develop.

As a result of the crisis, the worst since the Great Depression of the 1930s, the world of today looks very different from that of April 2008.

But while the government has altered its priorities, it has not lost sight of its long-term vision to build a more secure, stronger and fairer Australia leading up to 2020.

In that regard, the best ideas that were developed at the Summit continue to have a strong impact on the Government's thinking and strategy.

The Summit has influenced us in many ways, some that we are yet to fully appreciate. In some cases it has led directly to new actions – in others it has subtly changed priorities across different policy areas. Not only did the Summit support, influence or cause us to re-evaluate a range of our existing priorities and commitments, it also proposed a number of practical new ideas.

The Government has already acted on many of these ideas. We have commenced a major review of Australia's Future Tax System. We have implemented a broad program of reform of our collaboration with the states and territories, culminating in new National Agreements and National Partnerships in critical policy areas, including health and education, in November last year. We are continuing to work with the states and territories on other priorities, such as reducing the burden imposed on business by red tape. We have released our Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme and a major new white paper on Homelessness. Many of these activities are directly related to the ideas put forward by the 2020 Summit.

In addition to these actions, we are making a commitment to nine practical new initiatives proposed by the Summit:

- A Deployable Civilian Capacity to respond to emergencies in our region
- First steps towards an Indigenous Cultural Education and Knowledge Centre by engaging with the Indigenous community and existing institutions on options for supporting and strengthening Indigenous culture
- Mentoring in the Workplace to facilitate the passing of knowledge between skilled mature age Australians and business and the community (Golden Gurus)

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- Research in Bionic Vision Science and Technology to support the development of the bionic eye in Australia
 - A Prime Minister's Australia Asia Endeavour Awards Scheme to support scholarships for students in Australia and Asia and deepen cultural understanding
 - A dedicated ABC Children's Channel
 - A Business and School Connections Roundtable – to enhance opportunities for business and schools to partner together to improve educational outcomes
 - A Skills for the Carbon Challenge initiative to equip workers and businesses with green skills
 - A Vocational Education Broadband Network to build a single post-secondary high speed broadband network.

These initiatives reflect the range, strength and quality of ideas emerging from the Summit. Many more ideas are set out in this document and we have tried to understand, respect and respond to each one. We are well on the way to implementing many ideas. Other ideas will be studied in ongoing policy processes.

Although important, it should be remembered that the Summit was not only about what various governments can, and should, do. The greatest expertise often exists elsewhere. The challenges of the future will require action from the business and community sectors, philanthropic organisations, educational institutions and individuals in their own homes. For that reason, some ideas raised at the Summit have been deliberately left for others to consider. Where appropriate, the Government will work closely with these groups to help build Australia's future.

Beyond the ideas generated from the Summit, the Summit itself has been an extraordinary learning experience in the value of engaging with the Australian community. We remain strongly committed to this new way of governing. We are undertaking Community Cabinets across Australia and developing a wider range of community engagement strategies to ensure we remain in contact with the community and continue to be open to new ideas and different points of view.

The Government will also develop practical initiatives in e-governance to increase the community's ability to interact with the parliament and the policy development processes of government, and to make extensive information about policy issues available online. As a first step, my department is seeking expert advice on the development of a whole of government approach.

The Summit has highlighted the importance of being prepared for the challenges we face in the future. It reflects my strong belief that we must continue to talk about the future and be unafraid to engage in a robust conversation about the direction our country should take over the coming decades.

I thank all the volunteers, participants and contributors to the Australia 2020 Summit for their willingness to engage in such a conversation. I am sure that they felt – as I did – that it was a privilege to be part of a national discussion about the most important issues of our time.

The Summit was just the beginning. Now the hard work begins. Along the way, we will face difficult choices and tough decisions, especially during the global recession. But we will also face exciting new opportunities and prospects. I believe that we can only benefit from these opportunities and build the future we want if we do it together – and I am very determined to continue to involve Australians in discussions, debates and decisions about the sort of nation we want to be as we make the journey towards 2020.



Kevin Rudd
Prime Minister of Australia