



Australian Reddit Political Discussion Report: 2025 Federal Election Campaign

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Mat Bettinson

Report compiled by the Digital
Observatory at Queensland
University of Technology

Australia Digital Observatory

✉ digitalobservatory@qut.edu.au

1 Report on Australian Political Discussion on Reddit: 2025 Federal Election Campaign (Week 2)

This report summarizes political discussions among Australian users on 20 politically active subreddits during the 2025 Federal Election campaign. It is based on cascading summaries of thousands of submissions and tens of thousands of comments, categorized into key political themes identified as salient in the election cycle. Themes are presented in order of prominence based on the volume of discussion dedicated to them.

1.1 Theme: OTHER (29% of total)

Discussions categorized under 'OTHER' encompass a broad spectrum of political topics falling outside specific policy domains, yet collectively represent the most significant portion of the observed discourse. A dominant feature is **widespread political cynicism and distrust** (236 submissions), permeating discussions across all topics. Users express frustration with perceived broken promises, hypocrisy, lack of transparency, and political opportunism from all sides of politics. As one user put it, reflecting a common sentiment about perceived policy reversals:

“Weak flip-flopers. Why would anyone vote for them when they can’t even stand by their own convictions. Pathetic.”

This cynicism extends to specific political figures, with **critiques of Peter Dutton’s leadership and policies** (85 submissions) being particularly prominent. Discussions frequently analyze his leadership style, perceived trustworthiness, policy positions (especially nuclear energy and public service directives), and perceived attempts to adopt tactics reminiscent of US politics. Anthony Albanese’s performance is also discussed, albeit less intensely. The **influence of media outlets** (84 submissions), particularly Sky News, Murdoch-owned publications, and the ABC, is a major point of contention, with frequent accusations of bias, acting as propaganda arms, and unduly shaping public opinion. Concerns about the **influence of US politics and Trumpism** (72 submissions) on Australian political strategies and discourse are also frequently voiced. Electoral processes themselves are subject to scrutiny, including the **accuracy of polling**, **the ethics of party-distributed postal vote applications** (40 submissions), compulsory voting, and the transparency of independent candidates. The **role and influence of minor parties and independents** (35 submissions), particularly the Greens and Teals in potential minority government scenarios, are often analyzed regarding their policy leverage. Specific, sometimes niche, debates also emerge, such as the **work-from-home policy debate** (10 submissions) mainly affecting public servants, the environmental impact of **domestic cats on wildlife** (4 submissions), cannabis legalization, and regional issues like infrastructure bottlenecks.

1.1.1 Main Themes:

- **Widespread Political Cynicism and Distrust** (236 submissions): A dominant theme is the pervasive lack of faith in politicians, parties, and the political system, citing broken promises, hypocrisy, corruption, and opportunism.
- **Critiques of Peter Dutton’s Leadership and Policies** (85 submissions): Frequent discussions focusing on Peter Dutton’s leadership style, trustworthiness, policy decisions (e.g., nuclear, WFH), and perceived emulation of US political figures.
- **Media Bias and Influence** (84 submissions): Significant debate over the role and perceived bias of media outlets (Sky News, Murdoch press, ABC) in shaping political narratives and public opinion.

- **Influence of US Politics and Trumpism** (72 submissions): Concerns about the adoption of US political tactics, particularly those associated with Donald Trump, in Australian political discourse and campaigning.
- **Concerns about Electoral Processes and Integrity** (40 submissions): Discussions regarding polling accuracy, the mechanics and ethics of postal voting applications, compulsory voting, silent enrolment, and candidate transparency.
- **Role and Influence of Minor Parties and Independents** (35 submissions): Analysis of the impact and potential leverage of the Greens, Teals, and other independents, especially in minority government scenarios.
- **Work-From-Home Policy Debate** (10 submissions): Discussions surrounding the proposed and partially reversed mandates for public servants to return to the office.
- **Debate on Domestic Cat Impact on Wildlife** (4 submissions): Discussions concerning the environmental impact of free-roaming domestic cats on native Australian fauna.

1.2 Theme: Economic Policy (20% of total)

Economic concerns dominate a significant portion of the political discourse, driven primarily by the **cost of living and inflation pressures** (114 submissions). Redditors frequently express anxieties about the affordability of essentials like groceries, energy, fuel, and housing, feeling squeezed financially and questioning the effectiveness of government relief measures. One user captures this sentiment starkly:

“Paycheck comes in and after everything there’s only few 100s left. Repeat the same shit over and over been like this for few years now. I have officially given up on buying the house its just not possible.”

Economic management and fiscal policy (167 submissions) are heavily scrutinized, with debates questioning the credentials of major parties, government spending levels, national debt, and the influence of corporate interests. The Coalition’s proposed (and later reversed) public service job cuts sparked considerable discussion about government efficiency and service delivery. **Taxation policy and reform debates** (68 submissions) are common, covering proposed tax cuts, the fairness of the current tax mix (income, corporate, GST), resource taxes, and the impact of concessions like negative gearing on housing. Calls for broader reform, such as wealth taxes, are often linked to funding social programs. The **housing affordability crisis** (50 submissions), while also its own category, features heavily in economic discussions due to its profound impact on household budgets and economic participation. **Energy policy costs and transition** (38 submissions) are a major economic flashpoint, particularly the debate surrounding the Coalition’s nuclear proposal versus renewable investments, focusing on the cost implications for households and the economy. The potential **impact of tariffs and international trade** (37 submissions), especially relating to US policy, raises concerns about inflation and economic stability. Finally, **public sector management and work-from-home policies** (25 submissions) are discussed in terms of government efficiency and spending.

1.2.1 Main Themes:

- **Economic Management and Fiscal Policy** (167 submissions): Scrutiny of major parties’ economic credentials, debates on government spending, debt, deficits/surpluses, and the perceived influence of ideology or corporate interests.
- **Cost of Living and Inflation Pressures** (114 submissions): Widespread anxiety about rising prices for essentials (groceries, energy, fuel, housing), stagnant wages, and the effectiveness of relief measures.

- **Taxation Policy and Reform Debates** (68 submissions): Discussions on tax cuts, fairness of the tax mix (income, corporate, GST, resources), negative gearing, CGT discounts, and calls for broader reform (e.g., wealth tax).
- **Housing Affordability Crisis** (50 submissions): Economic impacts of escalating house prices and rents, hindering economic participation and exacerbating inequality.
- **Energy Policy Costs and Transition** (38 submissions): Debates comparing costs and economic impacts of renewables, nuclear energy, gas policies, and subsidies on household bills and the broader economy.
- **Impact of Tariffs and International Trade** (37 submissions): Concerns about global economic factors, particularly US tariffs, affecting Australian inflation, currency value, exports, and economic stability.
- **Public Sector Management and Work-From-Home Policies** (25 submissions): Discussions on government efficiency, the role of consultants, potential impacts of job cuts (actual or proposed), and WFH policies on the public service.

1.3 Theme: National Security & Immigration (11% of total)

National security and immigration issues form a significant cluster of discussion, often intersecting with economic and social concerns. The **impact of migration levels on housing, the economy, and society** (51 submissions) is a dominant and often contentious theme. Many users link high migration intake to pressures on housing affordability, infrastructure, and wages, questioning its sustainability, while others argue for its economic necessity. As one user states, linking immigration directly to infrastructure strain:

“Our housing building model was not designed for mass immigration just like all the other infrastructure that cant cope.”

International students are frequently discussed within this context. **National security concerns** (42 submissions) are prominent, focusing on foreign influence, particularly regarding China, the ownership of critical infrastructure like the Port of Darwin, and the implications of defence alliances like AUKUS. Cybersecurity and data privacy are also raised as vulnerabilities. **Community safety, crime, and justice system performance** (34 submissions) are major anxieties, covering youth crime, perceived leniency in bail laws and sentencing, police effectiveness, and rising crime rates in various locations. Discussions on **border security, deportation, and visa integrity** (20 submissions) touch on policies for deporting criminals, managing entry requirements, and preventing visa system exploitation. Underlying these policy debates is a recurring discussion about **racism, discrimination, and social cohesion** (24 submissions), often referencing anti-immigrant sentiment, Islamophobia, antisemitism, and the broader challenges of multiculturalism.

1.3.1 Main Themes:

- **Migration’s Impact on Housing, Economy, and Society** (51 submissions): Intense debate on the effects of migration levels on housing affordability, infrastructure strain, the job market, wages, and overall economic health, including focus on international students.
- **National Security Concerns: Foreign Influence, Critical Infrastructure, and Alliances** (42 submissions): Discussions about geopolitical risks, foreign ownership (e.g., Port of Darwin), reliance on allies (AUKUS/US), cybersecurity threats, and data privacy.
- **Community Safety, Crime, and Justice System Performance** (34 submissions): Anxieties about rising crime rates (especially youth crime), effectiveness of police, perceived leniency of bail laws and sentencing, and overall justice system responsiveness.

- **Racism, Discrimination, and Social Cohesion** (24 submissions): Discussions touching on anti-immigrant sentiment, Islamophobia, antisemitism, experiences of discrimination, and the challenges of maintaining social harmony in a multicultural society.
- **Border Security, Deportation, and Visa Integrity** (20 submissions): Debates on policies regarding the deportation of non-citizen criminals, managing borders, preventing visa fraud, and handling entry refusals.

1.4 Theme: Housing & Infrastructure (10% of total)

The **housing affordability crisis** (88 submissions) is a defining issue in the discussions, characterized by deep frustration and anxiety over escalating house prices and rental costs that significantly outstrip wage growth. This crisis is seen as impacting fundamental life decisions and exacerbating generational inequality. One user notes the profound societal impact:

“Birth rate is in the toilet because one of the basic needs of society are not being met
- a affordable house to live in.”

The **rental market distress** (29 submissions) is described as acute, with users detailing intense competition, invasive application processes, lack of tenure security, and rapidly rising rents, leading to calls for stronger tenant protections and rent controls. The role of **immigration in housing demand** (20 submissions) is frequently debated, with arguments about its contribution to shortages versus other factors like insufficient construction and investment policies. **Infrastructure and urban development** (34 submissions) are criticized, particularly inadequate public transport, road congestion linked to urban sprawl, and a perceived lack of planning for population growth, fueling calls for densification around transport hubs. **Government housing policies and solutions** (51 submissions) are heavily scrutinized, including tax settings (negative gearing, CGT), first home buyer grants, the effectiveness of funding bodies like the HAFF, and zoning laws. There are strong calls for increased government intervention, such as direct construction of social housing and stricter regulations, often accompanied by skepticism about political will and the credibility of politicians. Concerns about **foreign investment** (9 submissions) driving up prices are also voiced.

1.4.1 Main Themes:

- **Housing Affordability Crisis** (88 submissions): Widespread concern over high housing costs, impact on life decisions, generational inequality, and difficulty entering the market.
- **Government Housing Policies and Solutions** (51 submissions): Discussion and critique of specific policies (tax incentives, grants, funding bodies), zoning laws, need for government intervention/construction, and political credibility.
- **Infrastructure and Urban Development** (34 submissions): Concerns about inadequate public transport, road congestion, urban sprawl, lack of planning for growth, and calls for densification.
- **Rental Market Distress** (29 submissions): Frustration with high rents, intense competition, invasive application processes, lack of security, and calls for reform.
- **Immigration and Housing Demand** (20 submissions): Debate on the extent to which high migration levels exacerbate housing shortages and affordability issues versus other contributing factors.
- **Foreign Investment Concerns** (9 submissions): Arguments linking foreign ownership of residential property to reduced housing availability and affordability for Australians.

1.5 Theme: Climate & Energy (7% of total)

Climate and energy policy discussions are marked by intense debate, primarily centered on the **nuclear vs. renewables debate** (35 submissions). The Coalition's push for nuclear power is met with significant skepticism regarding its cost, feasibility, timeline, and environmental impacts (waste, water usage), often viewed as a tactic to delay climate action. As one commenter argues:

"It'll cost infinitely less than it costs to have baseload nuclear power pledged but not actually be built for the next 30-40 years as an excuse to never transition away from coal."

Conversely, the **renewable energy transition** (54 submissions) generally receives support, driven by perceived cost and environmental benefits. However, concerns persist about grid stability, intermittency, land use, and the need for storage solutions. Government subsidies, especially for home batteries, are debated regarding their effectiveness and equity. The **role of natural gas** (18 submissions) is contentious, argued as either a necessary transition fuel or a harmful fossil fuel expansion conflicting with climate goals. **Climate policy and political trust** (31 submissions) are low, with both major parties criticized for perceived inadequacies, ties to fossil fuel industries, and lack of ambition. Labor's policies are debated for effectiveness, while the Coalition faces skepticism over its climate commitments. The direct link between **energy costs and cost of living implications** (31 submissions) is a major concern, with rising electricity bills and the affordability of new technologies being key anxieties. Broader **environmental conservation and biodiversity crisis** (8 submissions) issues, like extinction rates and deforestation, are raised but often overshadowed by economic pressures.

1.5.1 Main Themes:

- **Renewable Energy Transition: Investment, Grid Integration, and Battery Subsidies** (54 submissions): Support for solar, wind, and batteries, alongside concerns about grid stability, intermittency, storage needs, land use, and the effectiveness/equity of subsidies.
- **Nuclear vs. Renewables Debate: Feasibility, Cost, and Political Strategy** (35 submissions): Intense scrutiny of the Coalition's nuclear proposal regarding cost, timeline, waste, water use, and its perception as a delay tactic versus accelerating renewables.
- **Climate Policy & Political Trust: Party Credibility, Lobbying, and Urgency** (31 submissions): Skepticism towards major parties' climate commitments, perceived influence of fossil fuel lobbies, and calls for more ambitious action, often looking towards Greens/Independents.
- **Energy Costs & Cost of Living Implications** (31 submissions): Significant concern about the impact of energy policy choices on rising electricity bills, fuel costs, and the affordability of transitioning to new technologies (EVs, batteries).
- **Role of Natural Gas: Transition Fuel vs. Fossil Fuel Liability** (18 submissions): Debate over whether gas is essential for grid stability during transition or a harmful fossil fuel whose expansion undermines climate goals, including discussion on exports and pricing.
- **Environmental Conservation & Biodiversity Crisis** (8 submissions): Concerns raised about Australia's high extinction rates, deforestation, habitat loss, and the need for stronger conservation efforts.

1.6 Theme: Healthcare (6% of total)

Healthcare discussions reveal significant public concern about access, affordability, and the quality of services. **Medicare funding, bulk billing, and potential expansion** (31 submissions) remain central. Users lament the decline in bulk billing, rising out-of-pocket costs, and debate proposals

to include dental and mental health under Medicare, often expressing skepticism about political promises to strengthen the system. **Healthcare accessibility** (15 submissions) is a major issue, highlighted by difficulties finding bulk-billing GPs, long waiting times for appointments, high gap fees, and regional disparities. **Mental health services access and funding** (17 submissions) are frequently criticized for being inadequate, with concerns about session limits, high costs for specialists, and insufficient support for complex conditions. The affordability challenge is captured by one user:

“20 was a decent number until Labor cut it to 10. And also yes, being out of pocket by \$150 each time you see a therapist for your limited sessions - not many people can afford that in this Americanised economy.”

Dental care access and affordability (17 submissions) is another key concern due to high costs. **Healthcare worker conditions and strikes** (8 submissions), particularly the NSW doctors' strike, highlight issues of pay, hours, burnout, and staffing levels impacting patient care. **Women's health issues** (9 submissions), including endometriosis, fibroids, and access to reproductive care, are discussed, alongside calls for more research and support. **Harm reduction policies** (5 submissions) like pill testing also feature in public health debates.

1.6.1 Main Themes:

- **Medicare Funding, Bulk Billing, and Expansion (Dental/Mental Health)** (31 submissions): Focus on Medicare's sustainability, the decline of bulk billing, rising gap fees, and potential expansion to cover dental and mental health services.
- **Mental Health Services Access and Funding** (17 submissions): Concerns about chronic underfunding, inadequate session limits under Medicare, high costs for psychologists/psychiatrists, and difficulty accessing youth and addiction services.
- **Dental Care Access and Affordability** (17 submissions): Significant concern over the high cost of dental treatment and lack of inclusion in universal healthcare schemes.
- **Healthcare Accessibility (GP Waits, Costs, Regional Issues)** (15 submissions): Frustration with long waiting times for GPs and specialists, high out-of-pocket costs, and disparities in service availability between urban and regional/remote areas.
- **Women's Health Issues** (9 submissions): Discussion of specific conditions like endometriosis, fibroids, gynaecological cancers, access to IVF/maternity care, and need for more research and support.
- **Healthcare Worker Conditions and Strikes** (8 submissions): Concerns about pay, working hours, burnout, and staffing levels for doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals, highlighted by industrial action.
- **Harm Reduction Policies (Pill Testing/Drug Checking)** (5 submissions): Debate on the implementation and funding of pill testing/drug checking services as a public health measure.

1.7 Theme: Social Services (5% of total)

Discussions on social services focus on the adequacy of support systems, worker protections, and access to essential services like childcare. **Welfare adequacy and systemic issues** (19 submissions) are prominent, with many arguing that payments like JobSeeker are insufficient to live on, especially given the cost of living crisis. Criticisms of mutual obligation requirements and job service providers are common. The sentiment of struggling individuals is palpable:

“Im honestly done. I've just about given up on life as a result. Whats the point to living when all I do is slave away and pay for boomer's comfort, all the while I either get

verbally abused on a weekly basis when I was employed, and treated as a 2nd rate citizen while unemployed.”

Worker protections, rights, and conditions (20 submissions) are frequently discussed, covering fair wages, safe working conditions (highlighted by healthcare strikes), the right to disconnect, work-from-home arrangements, and the importance of unions. The **intersection of social services with the housing crisis and homelessness** (15 submissions) highlights how failures in one area exacerbate problems in another. Concerns regarding **NDIS funding, oversight, and exploitation** (6 submissions) focus on the scheme’s sustainability, vulnerability to fraud, and difficulties faced by participants. The potential **impact of public service policies on service delivery** (12 submissions), particularly potential cuts affecting agencies like Centrelink and DVA, worries users about access to essential support. **Childcare accessibility, affordability, and quality** (4 submissions) remain key issues, discussing costs, educator pay, and the push for universal access.

1.7.1 Main Themes:

- **Worker Protections, Rights, and Conditions** (20 submissions): Debates on fair wages, working conditions across sectors (health, education, public service), right to disconnect, WFH policies, right to strike, and union representation.
- **Welfare Adequacy and Systemic Issues** (19 submissions): Concerns about the sufficiency of Centrelink payments (JobSeeker, Youth Allowance) relative to the poverty line and cost of living, alongside critiques of mutual obligations and job service providers.
- **Intersection of Social Services with Housing Crisis and Homelessness** (15 submissions): Highlighting the links between inadequate social support, housing unaffordability, rising homelessness, domestic violence, and food insecurity.
- **Impact of Public Service Policies on Service Delivery** (12 submissions): Worries about the effects of potential budget cuts, efficiency dividends, or policy changes (like WFH reversals) on the capacity of agencies like Centrelink and DVA to provide timely support.
- **Concerns Regarding NDIS Funding, Oversight, and Exploitation** (6 submissions): Discussions about the NDIS’s financial sustainability, susceptibility to fraud and price gouging, lack of effective oversight, and challenges for participants navigating the system.
- **Childcare Accessibility, Affordability, and Quality** (4 submissions): Focus on high childcare costs, the quality of care (especially in for-profit centres), the need for better pay for educators, and support for universal access or increased subsidies.

1.8 Theme: Industry & Manufacturing (4% of total)

Discussions related to industry and manufacturing often express a desire for greater economic self-reliance and a revival of local production. There is clear **support for domestic production (“Made in Australia”)** (29 submissions), with calls to bring back key industries like automotive parts and ensure greater control over critical sectors. As one user suggests:

“Bring back key manufacturing products to Australia, ie vehicles and parts to ensure self reliance.”

This sentiment is linked to **concerns over foreign influence and economic sovereignty** (16 submissions), particularly regarding foreign ownership of critical industries like aviation, telecommunications, and minerals. Discussions about **industry transition, jobs, and economic diversification** (21 submissions) cover anxieties about job losses in traditional sectors (like mining construction), the potential of emerging fields (like renewables and AI), and the role of government plans like “Future Made in Australia” in driving this shift. However, there are also **challenges**

and skepticism towards manufacturing revival (9 submissions), citing high labor costs, global competition, and the need for significant investment and skills development as major hurdles. The role of government policy in either supporting or hindering domestic industry is frequently debated.

1.8.1 Main Themes:

- **Support for Domestic Production (“Made in Australia”)** (29 submissions): Desire to strengthen local manufacturing, reduce import reliance, support local purchasing, and develop specific industries (e.g., renewables, cannabis).
- **Industry Transition, Jobs, and Economic Diversification** (21 submissions): Discussions about shifts in the job market, decline in traditional sectors, potential in emerging fields (green energy, AI), and policies aimed at managing economic transitions.
- **Concerns over Foreign Influence and Economic Sovereignty** (16 submissions): Worries about the hollowing out of domestic industry, reliance on global supply chains, foreign ownership of critical assets, and outsourcing of services.
- **Challenges and Skepticism towards Manufacturing Revival** (9 submissions): Doubts about the feasibility of large-scale manufacturing returning due to high costs, competition, need for investment, skills gaps, and political will.

1.9 Theme: Education & Skills (2% of total)

While representing the smallest specific category, education discussions highlight key concerns about access, cost, quality, and curriculum. **Tertiary education access and affordability** (12 submissions) is a major focus, particularly regarding HECS/HELP debt (including recent indexation changes and relief measures), the value and cost of university degrees versus job outcomes, and the promotion of initiatives like Free TAFE. The **impact of international students on higher education** (6 submissions) is debated, weighing their financial contribution against concerns about universities prioritizing revenue over domestic student needs and potential impacts of proposed caps. **School funding, equity, and parental burden** (5 submissions) are recurring themes, focusing on disparities between public and private schools and the increasing financial demands placed on parents. **Curriculum debates and political influence in schools** (7 submissions) are contentious, covering the integration of Indigenous perspectives, concerns about ‘woke’ agendas, critical thinking development, technology use, and potential political interference. **Student financial stress and support systems** (6 submissions) are also discussed, with calls for increased support like Youth Allowance and higher PhD stipends due to cost-of-living pressures.

1.9.1 Main Themes:

- **Tertiary Education Access & Affordability (HECS, Free TAFE)** (12 submissions): Discussions on student debt (HECS/HELP indexation, relief, potential wiping), value of degrees, cost of university vs TAFE, and initiatives like Free TAFE.
- **Curriculum Debates and Political Influence in Schools** (7 submissions): Contentious discussions on curriculum content (Indigenous perspectives, ‘woke’ issues), critical thinking, technology use, child safety education, and perceived political interference.
- **Impact of International Students on Higher Education** (6 submissions): Debates on the role of international students regarding university funding, impact on domestic students, potential visa exploitation, quality concerns, and effects of proposed caps.
- **Student Financial Stress and Support Systems** (6 submissions): Concerns about the adequacy of student support payments (Youth Allowance, PhD stipends) amidst rising living costs and university fees.

- **School Funding, Equity, and Parental Burden** (5 submissions): Discussions on funding disparities between public and private schools, resource allocation, regional school quality, and increasing financial/time demands on parents.

1.10 Conclusion: What Australian Redditors are Thinking

The political discourse on Reddit during the 2025 Australian Federal Election campaign, as synthesized from discussions across 20 subreddits, reveals a public deeply concerned with fundamental economic and social stability, overlaid with significant political cynicism.

Most Prominent Themes:

1. **Widespread Political Cynicism and Distrust:** This is arguably the most pervasive sentiment, transcending specific policy areas. Redditors express deep skepticism towards politicians' motives, promises, and the political system's ability to address major challenges. Critiques of leadership (particularly Peter Dutton) and concerns about media bias fuel this distrust.
2. **Economic Pressure (Cost of Living & Management):** Anxiety about the rising cost of essentials (housing, groceries, energy) is intense. Discussions revolve around inflation, wage stagnation, the fairness of the tax system, and skepticism about the effectiveness of government relief measures and overall economic management by major parties.
3. **Housing Affordability Crisis:** Housing is discussed not just as an economic issue but as a social crisis impacting life decisions, generational equity, and basic security. The rental market is seen as particularly brutal, and there's strong debate about the roles of immigration, government policy (or lack thereof), and investment practices.
4. **Migration Impacts:** Concerns about the level of immigration and its perceived impact on housing, infrastructure, wages, and social cohesion are significant and frequently debated, often intersecting with national security and economic discussions.
5. **Energy Transition Conflict:** The debate between accelerating renewables and the Coalition's nuclear proposal is a major flashpoint, discussed in terms of cost, feasibility, environmental impact, and its implications for household energy bills. Trust in political commitments on climate action is generally low.

While less prominent in volume, significant concerns are also voiced regarding **healthcare access and affordability** (especially Medicare, mental health, dental), **social service adequacy** (welfare payments, NDIS), **national security** (foreign influence, community safety), **industry decline**, and **education system pressures**. The diversity within topics is notable; for instance, 'Economic Policy' encompasses everything from macro-management debates to individual struggles with grocery bills.

Comparison with Party Manifestos & Disconnects:

Comparing these dominant Reddit themes with the summarized manifestos of the ALP, LNP, and Greens reveals several points of alignment and significant disconnects:

- **Alignment:**
 - **Cost of Living:** All parties address this (energy relief - ALP; lowering inflation - LNP; breaking up supermarkets - GREENS), aligning with the high prominence of this issue on Reddit.
 - **Healthcare:** All parties promise Medicare enhancements (bulk billing, GPs), reflecting Reddit concerns, though the scale of proposed solutions may not match the perceived crisis online. Greens' dental inclusion aligns with Reddit calls.

- **Housing:** All parties have housing policies (building targets - ALP; affordability initiatives - LNP; rent controls - GREENS; foreign investment limits - ALP/LIB), acknowledging the issue's importance.
- **Energy:** The core conflict (renewables - ALP/GREENS vs. nuclear/gas - LNP) is clearly reflected in both manifestos and Reddit debates.
- **Education:** Free TAFE (ALP/GREENS) and student debt action (ALP/GREENS) match specific Reddit discussion points.
- **Industry:** ALP's "Made in Australia" resonates with Reddit's desire for domestic production.
- **Disconnects:**
 - **Cynicism and Trust:** The overwhelming theme of political distrust, cynicism, concerns about leadership integrity, and media influence found on Reddit is largely absent from party manifestos, which naturally focus on positive policy offerings.
 - **Scale of Crisis vs. Solutions:** For issues like housing and cost of living, the *intensity* of frustration and the perception of a deep-seated crisis on Reddit often seem to dwarf the scale of the solutions proposed in manifestos. Redditors frequently discuss more radical or systemic changes (e.g., major tax reform like wealth taxes, drastic negative gearing changes, large-scale government housing construction) than are typically platformed by major parties.
 - **Immigration Debate Intensity:** While the LNP manifesto addresses migration reduction, the *depth and breadth* of the debate on Reddit – linking it intensely to housing, infrastructure, wages, social cohesion, and visa integrity – may be more pronounced than the manifesto points suggest.
 - **Systemic Critiques:** Reddit discussions often delve into critiques of the economic system itself (e.g., questioning capitalism's fairness for younger generations, corporate power) or the social services system (e.g., punitive aspects of mutual obligation) in ways that go beyond specific manifesto promises.
 - **Nuclear Skepticism:** While the LNP proposes nuclear energy, Reddit discussions reflect significant skepticism about its feasibility, cost, and underlying motives, suggesting a potential gap between the policy proposal and public acceptance, at least within this online cohort.
 - **Healthcare Access Reality:** Manifesto promises on Medicare enhancement contrast with Reddit descriptions of severe difficulties in accessing basic GP care, long waits, and unaffordable specialist/mental health services, suggesting a potential disconnect between policy goals and lived experience.

In conclusion, while party manifestos address many of the core policy areas concerning Australian Redditors (economy, housing, healthcare, energy), the online discourse is characterized by a deeper level of anxiety, skepticism about proposed solutions, and pervasive distrust in the political establishment itself – elements not typically captured in formal party platforms.

1.11 Key Changes from Week 1 to Week 2 of the Campaign

Overall Thematic Prominence:

The broad distribution of discussion across themes remained largely consistent, indicating the persistence of core concerns.

- **'OTHER' (General Political Sentiment):** Saw a slight increase (27% to 29%), suggesting a potential intensification of discussions around political trust, leadership, and media narratives.

- **Economic Policy:** Remained stable at 20%, reinforcing its status as a primary battleground.
- **National Security & Immigration / Housing & Infrastructure:** Saw minor decreases (13% to 11% and 11% to 10% respectively), though they remain highly significant themes.
- **Climate, Healthcare, Social Services, Industry, Education:** Maintained relatively stable percentages, indicating consistent, albeit lower-volume, discussion levels compared to the top themes.

Shifts within Key Themes:

- **Political Cynicism & Leadership:** While already prominent, **widespread political cynicism and distrust** appears even more pronounced and explicitly centered in the Week 2 'OTHER' category description ("dominant feature"). Critiques of Peter Dutton's leadership remain intense. The LNP's reversal on public service job cuts and work-from-home mandates likely fueled discussions captured here, potentially contributing to the cynicism expressed (reflected in the "Weak flip-floppers" quote) and specifically noted under the 'Public Sector Management' sub-theme in Economic Policy. The influence of US politics/Trumpism and concerns about specific electoral processes (like postal vote applications) also gained more explicit mention in Week 2.
- **Economic Policy Focus:** Cost of living remains the dominant *anxiety*, but Week 2's structure gives more prominence to **"Economic Management and Fiscal Policy"** as a distinct high-volume sub-theme. The LNP's policy reversals directly feed into the "Public Sector Management and Work-From-Home Policies" discussions within this theme. Concerns about **tariffs and international trade** were also more explicitly highlighted in Week 2.
- **Climate & Energy Nuances:** The **Nuclear vs. Renewables debate** solidified as the central conflict point in Week 2, framed with significant skepticism towards the nuclear proposal's feasibility and cost. Labor's **\$4000 home battery subsidy announcement** likely spurred discussion within the "Renewable Energy Transition" sub-theme, specifically around battery subsidies and household cost implications.
- **Healthcare Specificity:** While core concerns about Medicare and access persist, Week 2 saw increased prominence for **Mental Health Services Access and Funding** and **Dental Care Access and Affordability** as major sub-themes. Labor's **\$1 billion mental health investment announcement** directly aligns with the heightened focus on mental health discussions. The explicit mention of **Healthcare Worker Conditions and Strikes** also became more notable.
- **Social Services Linkages:** Week 2 more explicitly highlighted the **intersection of social services failures with the housing crisis and homelessness**. Discussions around **Worker Protections** also seemed slightly more elevated. The LNP's public service policy reversals are relevant here too, regarding the potential impact on service delivery agencies like Centrelink.
- **Housing Granularity:** While affordability remains the overarching crisis, Week 2 provided more distinct focus on **Rental Market Distress** and **Government Housing Policies/Solutions**, detailing specific mechanisms like tax settings (negative gearing/CGT) and funding bodies (HAFF).
- **Education Debt Focus:** Discussions around HECS/HELP debt, particularly indexation and relief measures, appeared more pronounced within the Tertiary Education sub-theme in Week 2.

Conclusion on Changes:

While the foundational concerns around economic pressure, housing, and political trust remained dominant across both weeks, Week 2 saw an intensified focus on political cynicism, potentially

fueled by specific policy reversals (LNP). Policy announcements (Labor) directly correlated with increased discussion granularity in relevant areas like mental health funding and battery subsidies. The Nuclear vs. Renewables debate became even more central to climate discussions. Essentially, the broad landscape remained similar, but specific events and announcements sharpened the focus and potentially deepened the skepticism within key thematic areas.

2 Notes

The findings in this report were synthesized using AI models, including Google Gemini Flash and Gemini Pro.

2.1 Acknowledgement

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¹<https://internetobservatory.org.au/>

²<https://www.education.gov.au/national-research-infrastructure>