



# Australian Reddit Political Discussion Report: 2025 Federal Election Campaign

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# 1 Report on Australian Political Discussion on Reddit: 2025 Federal Election Campaign (Week 3)

This report synthesizes political discussions among Australian users on Reddit during the 2025 Federal Election campaign. It is based on cascading summaries of thousands of submissions and tens of thousands of comments drawn from 20 politically active subreddits (/r/australian, /r/Adelaide, /r/AusEcon, /r/melbourne, /r/brisbane, /r/AusPublicService, /r/AusPol, /r/darwin, /r/hobart, /r/circlejerkaustralia, /r/WesternAustralia, /r/queensland, /r/canberra, /r/australia, /r/sydney, /r/perth, /r/AustralianPolitics, /r/aboriginal, /r/aus, /r/tasmania). The analysis identifies key political topic areas and emerging themes, ordered by their prominence in the discussions.

## 2 Theme: OTHER (28% of total)

Discussions surrounding the 2025 Australian Federal Election reveal significant voter disillusionment with the major political parties, Labor and the Liberal-National Coalition. Many express frustration with perceived inaction on key issues like housing affordability and a lack of inspiring policy visions, leading to increased consideration of minor parties (like the Greens), independents (including Teals), and strategic voting. A prominent theme is the perceived influence of American politics, particularly Trumpism, on the Australian landscape. Figures like Peter Dutton and Jacinta Price face frequent comparisons to Donald Trump, and their adoption of MAGA-style rhetoric and slogans is met with widespread criticism and skepticism about its effectiveness in the Australian context.

*"Keep American politics out of Australia. . . Trump is wrecking America"*

The performance and background of individual candidates, especially in marginal seats such as Dickson and Kooyong, are heavily scrutinized, with debates focusing on their competence, honesty, and connection to local communities. Concerns about media bias, particularly from outlets like Sky News and News Corp, are frequently voiced, alongside worries about online disinformation, astroturfing, and the impact of political advertising, including annoying or deceptive flyers and signs.

*"Honestly this shit should be illegal for all parties. It's social manipulation and really fucking dishonest"*

Discussions often intersect with state and local issues, including controversial development projects, council performance, infrastructure concerns (like NBN or transport), and broader critiques of government regulation and service delivery, reflecting a sense that federal politics impacts and is impacted by local realities. Issues of social division, including debates around cultural identity, LGBTQ+ rights, and racism, also surface in political contexts.

### 2.1 Main Themes:

- **Critiques of Government Performance and Local Issues** (211 submissions): Broad dissatisfaction with government regulation, service delivery (e.g., NBN, transport), council performance, and the handling of local development projects, reflecting a sense that governance is falling short at multiple levels.
- **Candidate Scrutiny and Electorate Battles** (114 submissions): Intense focus on the perceived competence, integrity, local connection, and track record of individual candidates, particularly incumbents and challengers in marginal or closely watched seats.

*"Has anyone achieved so little in so long as Ian Goodenough?"*

- **Voter Disillusionment and Search for Alternatives** (69 submissions): Widespread cynicism towards both Labor and the Coalition, frustration with perceived policy stagnation and lack of vision, leading users to discuss voting for minor parties, independents, or employing strategic voting tactics.  
*“Neither of the majors will fix the shit show we are in so we need to force them by making them suffer the only way they understand which is too stop voting for them.”*
- **Trump/MAGA Influence on Australian Politics** (62 submissions): Significant discussion and concern about the perceived adoption of US ‘Trumpist’ or ‘MAGA’ political styles, rhetoric, and policies by Australian politicians (notably figures like Dutton and Price), often met with criticism and skepticism.
- **Media Bias, Online Discourse, and Political Advertising** (53 submissions): Frequent critiques of perceived bias in media outlets (especially News Corp/Sky News), concerns about online disinformation, astroturfing campaigns, and negative reactions to political advertising methods like flyers and signs.
- **Social Divisions and Cultural Debates** (Not explicitly counted but present within broader themes): Discussions touching on cultural identity politics, racism, LGBTQ+ rights, and other social fault lines often arise within the context of political debate and candidate evaluation.

### 3 Theme: Economic Policy (21% of total)

Discussions surrounding the 2025 Australian Federal Election reveal widespread economic anxiety, dominated by the pervasive cost of living crisis. Housing affordability emerges as a critical flashpoint, with users lamenting soaring rents, the difficulty of saving deposits, high mortgage rates, and the perceived decline in living standards compared to previous generations. Concerns extend to the rising costs of groceries, energy (electricity, fuel), insurance, transport, and other essential goods and services, impacting disposable income, consumer behaviour, and the viability of small businesses.

*“Without a doubt it’s one of the better countries to be in but with how fucked the cost of living is, how bad housing has gotten, and how it feels like government (to some) feels like it’s doing almost nothing about these problems while bringing in more and more people, I don’t blame people for not wanting to die for the country.”*

Tax reform is another major battleground, featuring intense debate over the fairness and effectiveness of proposed income tax cuts and offsets from both major parties, often labelled as ‘vote buying’. Significant attention is paid to housing-related tax policies like negative gearing and capital gains tax discounts, with strong arguments for reform to improve affordability versus concerns about market disruption and impacts on investors.

*“It’s actually wild watching the major parties come up with so many fucking ways to avoid talking about negative gearing and capital gains tax discounts.”*

Discussions also encompass corporate taxation, resource taxation (PRRT), superannuation policies, government spending priorities versus national debt, and the adequacy of funding for social services and infrastructure. Economic regulation debates focus on the market power of the supermarket duopoly (ColesWorth) amid accusations of price gouging, the potential impacts of international trade tensions and tariffs (especially concerning the US and China), the regulation of energy markets (renewables vs nuclear viability and cost), financial system stability, rental market controls, and the philosophical divide between deregulation and market intervention. Broader economic performance issues like stagnant wage growth, low productivity, fears of recession, and

the economic impacts of immigration are also frequently mentioned, contributing to an overall sentiment of frustration with the current economic climate and skepticism towards political solutions.

### 3.1 Main Themes:

- **Widespread Cost of Living Pressures (Housing, Groceries, Energy, Inflation)** (220 submissions): Dominant theme focusing on the unaffordability of essentials like housing (rent/mortgages), groceries, energy, fuel, insurance, and transport, leading to declining living standards and financial stress.
- **Tax Reform Debates (Housing-related NG/CGT, Income Tax, Corporate Tax, Resource Tax, Spending & Debt)** (205 submissions): Intense discussion on the fairness and impact of income tax changes, significant focus on negative gearing and CGT discounts related to housing, alongside debates on corporate/resource taxes, government spending, and national debt.
- **Economic Regulation and Market Dynamics (Supermarkets, Trade/Tariffs, Energy, Finance, Interventionism)** (81 submissions): Concerns about supermarket duopoly power and alleged price gouging, impacts of trade tensions, energy market regulation (renewables vs. nuclear), financial stability, potential rent controls, and debates on government intervention vs. deregulation.

*“What sucks here is that the farmers and growers are caught in the middle. They’re squeezed by ColesWorth to drop their baseline supply rate, then ColesWorth pump up the consumer price, then they lose because we don’t buy the good because the price is BS.”*

## 4 Theme: Housing & Infrastructure (15% of total)

Discussions surrounding the 2025 Australian Federal Election consistently highlight a severe housing affordability crisis, impacting renters, first-home buyers, and younger generations across the country. A dominant theme is the perceived failure of both major political parties to implement effective solutions, with frequent criticism directed at demand-side policies like grants, tax deductions, and low-deposit schemes, which many argue merely inflate prices without addressing root causes.

*“Both parties are proposing incentives that will drive more demand, which is going to be harmful in the long term when it pushes prices higher.”*

The role of tax settings, particularly negative gearing and capital gains tax discounts, is intensely debated, with arguments that they incentivize speculative investment over homeownership and exacerbate affordability issues. Immigration levels are frequently cited as a significant contributor to housing demand pressure, sparking calls for adjustments to migration policies. Concurrently, there is a strong emphasis on the need for increased housing supply through various means, including direct government construction of public and social housing, zoning reforms to allow greater density, releasing more land, and exploring alternative building methods like prefabricated housing. However, significant challenges to increasing supply are acknowledged, including labour shortages in the construction industry, rising material costs, regulatory bottlenecks, and concerns about the quality of new builds. The rental market is depicted as extremely stressed, characterized by soaring rents, low vacancy rates, poor conditions, and inadequate tenant protections, leading to calls for rent controls and stronger regulations. Infrastructure deficits, particularly in transport and around new developments, are also frequently discussed, alongside concerns about urban sprawl versus densification, and the impact of specific large-scale projects on communities and

resources. Overall, there is widespread frustration and cynicism regarding the political will to enact meaningful change, with many feeling that policies continue to favour existing homeowners and investors.

#### 4.1 Main Themes:

- **Housing Affordability Crisis and Policy Criticism** (129 submissions): Widespread frustration with the high cost of buying and renting, criticism of government policies (especially demand-side incentives) perceived as ineffective or counterproductive, and cynicism about political will for meaningful reform.
- **Housing Supply Challenges and Proposed Interventions** (83 submissions): Emphasis on the need to increase housing stock through various means (government building, zoning reform, land release), while acknowledging obstacles like construction costs, labour shortages, and regulatory hurdles.

*"The only way to lower housing costs is to build more housing. Everyone knows this, yet they keep throwing money at demand subsidies."*

- **Urban Planning, Density, and Infrastructure Concerns** (68 submissions): Debates around zoning laws, urban sprawl vs. densification, the adequacy of transport and other infrastructure supporting new developments, and the impact of planning decisions on communities.

*"Communities are actually destroyed because of zoning. This has created an artificial scarcity that Governments religiously enforce to keep available property low so they can earn big dollars."*

- **Immigration's Role in Housing Pressure** (55 submissions): Frequent linking of high immigration levels to increased demand for housing, contributing to affordability issues and straining infrastructure, leading to calls for reduced migration intake.

*"Honestly, both major parties will do absolutely everything else except address the root cause of not only the housing crisis, but the cost of living crisis and per capita recession as well, which is uncontrolled immigration."*

- **Rental Market Strain and Tenant Issues** (40 submissions): Focus on the difficulties faced by renters, including high rents, low vacancy rates, insecurity of tenure, poor property conditions, and calls for stronger tenant protections and potential rent controls.

*"Renting in Australia is substandard at best, criminal at worst."*

## 5 Theme: National Security & Immigration (13% of total)

Discussions surrounding the 2025 Australian Federal Election reveal significant public engagement with national security and immigration themes. A dominant and highly contentious topic is the perceived impact of immigration levels on Australia's housing affordability, cost of living, and wage growth. Many participants link high migration intakes, including international students, directly to pressures on housing supply and infrastructure, leading to widespread calls for reduced immigration as a potential solution. Conversely, others argue immigration is crucial for economic growth, fills labor shortages, and is being unfairly scapegoated for broader policy failures.

*"Its not racist to want less immigration when your reasons are purely tied to quality of life issues. Don't allow them to make it about race. Increased pressure on housing obviously has a detrimental impact to the majority of people."*

Concerns about national security manifest in several ways. Geopolitical tensions are a recurring theme, particularly regarding Australia's relationship with Indonesia, the influence of Russia and China, and the strategic implications and costs of security pacts like AUKUS. The reliability of the United States as an ally is frequently debated, prompting discussions about Australia's defense independence. This anxiety about US political trends extends domestically, with significant concern expressed about the potential adoption of 'MAGA'-style politics and rhetoric in Australia.

*"Same reason it's a thing anywhere. There are a lot of folks being led to believe that someone or another is the source of all their problems. . . Trump is the signal to reap the harvest."*

Border security operations face scrutiny, including debates over criminal deportation policies and traveler treatment. Community safety issues are frequently raised, encompassing concerns about crime rates, youth crime, policing effectiveness, bail laws, and the justice system. Accusations of political fearmongering related to security and immigration are common.

## 5.1 Main Themes:

- **Debate and Scrutiny of Immigration Policies, Levels, and Integration** (75 submissions): Extensive discussion on the appropriate levels and types of immigration, its economic and social impacts, integration challenges, and whether policies align with national needs or contribute to problems like housing shortages.

- **Immigration's Impact on Housing Affordability, Cost of Living, and Wages** (57 submissions): Strong focus on linking high migration levels to increased pressure on housing, infrastructure, and potentially suppressing wage growth, often framed as a primary driver of the cost of living crisis.

*"Third world mass migration - a central policy of both duopoly parties will keep pumping housing prices! Bonus: Wages will be suppressed with all the glut of labor on the market as well!!"*

- **Community Safety Concerns (Crime, Policing, Bail Laws, Security)** (43 submissions): Discussions about perceived increases in crime, effectiveness and bias in policing, adequacy of bail laws, sentencing leniency, youth crime initiatives, and the role of private security.

*"Judicial system and government soft on crime, thus is what we vote for"*

- **Influence of US Politics (Trumpism/MAGA) on Australian Policies and Society** (41 submissions): Concerns about the importation of US political polarization, particularly 'MAGA'-style rhetoric and policies, and its potential impact on Australian political discourse, immigration policies, and social cohesion.

- **National Security Concerns (Geopolitics, AUKUS, Russia/China Influence)** (22 submissions): Anxiety regarding regional stability, Australia's relationship with neighbours like Indonesia, the influence of major powers (China, Russia), the cost and strategic value of AUKUS, and reliance on the US alliance.

*"A neutral Indonesia is no threat or worry to Australia. A BRICS backed Indonesia is a BIG concern for Australia into the future."*

- **Scrutiny of Border Security Operations (ABF, Deportation, Traveler Treatment)** (17 submissions): Debates concerning the actions of the Australian Border Force, policies on deporting non-citizen criminals, effectiveness of anti-smuggling efforts, and treatment of travelers at borders.

- **Political Fearmongering and Misinformation on Security/Immigration** (16 submissions): Accusations that politicians or media outlets are deliberately using fear tactics or spreading misinformation related to immigration and national security threats for political gain.

*“People were in full blown panic. The Libs were already attacking Labor for letting it happen.”*

- **Concerns Among Australians Regarding US Travel and Border Treatment** (6 submissions): Apprehension about traveling to the US due to potential difficulties with border officials, including invasive searches and potential denial of entry based on social media or political views.

*“This is crazy, why would anyone go to the US at the moment? You have no idea if you will have your visa refused for calling Trump an idiot on Reddit, US immigration are checking people’s social media posts.”*

## 6 Theme: Climate & Energy (5% of total)

Discussions surrounding the 2025 Australian Federal Election frequently centered on climate and energy policy, revealing significant public engagement and division. A major point of contention is the Coalition’s proposal for nuclear energy, which faces widespread skepticism regarding its cost, feasibility, timeline, and waste disposal, often viewed as a delaying tactic for fossil fuels.

*“All this nuclear talk, is simply a way for them to delay the renewables rollout.”*

Conversely, some argue nuclear offers reliable baseload power. The transition to renewable energy (solar, wind) is another dominant theme, with strong support for acceleration but also concerns about grid stability, storage, land use, and infrastructure. The reliability of renewables during the transition is debated. The tangible impacts of climate change, such as extreme weather leading to rising insurance costs and ecosystem damage, are increasingly discussed, fueling frustration with perceived political inaction and fossil fuel subsidies.

*“I drive the freeway through the Adelaide hills nearly every day and the swathes of dead trees has been super concerning for a while now. On a long view it is some very obvious examples of our climate changing faster than ecosystems can adapt. . .”*

The link between energy policy and the cost of living is frequently highlighted. Environmental conservation issues, like habitat destruction and forest protection, are also prominent concerns.

### 6.1 Main Themes:

- **Renewable Energy Transition: Opportunities, Challenges, and Grid Integration** (48 submissions): Strong focus on the shift to solar and wind power, debating its speed, economic benefits, technical challenges (grid stability, storage, transmission), land use impacts, and comparisons with fossil fuels.

*“Australia has had 15 years of completely uncertain and volatile legal/political environment regarding renewables. . . And still despite all that, the market has consistently and continues to choose renewables. Fighting against renewables is fighting against market forces.”*

- **Nuclear Energy Debate: Feasibility, Cost, and Political Motivation** (39 submissions): Intense discussion surrounding the Coalition’s nuclear proposal, focusing on skepticism

about its cost-effectiveness, construction timelines, waste management, water usage, and whether it's a genuine solution or a distraction from renewables.

- **Climate Change Impacts and Policy Action: Urgency, Skepticism, and Political Will** (30 submissions): Discussions linking observed environmental changes (extreme weather, ecosystem damage) to climate change, expressing frustration with perceived government inaction, fossil fuel subsidies, and questioning the sincerity of climate commitments.
- **Environmental Conservation and Resource Management Concerns** (15 submissions): Focus on specific environmental issues like habitat loss due to development, mining impacts, deforestation, protection of native species, and the need for stronger environmental regulations.

*"Turtles live in the water body and government departments just don't care. Once they are gone in the area that's it."*

- **Energy Policy's Effect on Household Costs and Cost of Living** (9 submissions): Debates connecting energy policy choices (renewables investment vs. fossil fuel reliance vs. nuclear) directly to household electricity prices and overall cost of living pressures.

*"How the fuck have renewables caused an increase in prices? I pay NO electricity went off grid 25 years ago. How the fuck has my decision to use renewables and go OFF GRID caused an increase in the privatised profit seeking power giants prices?"*

## 7 Theme: Healthcare (4% of total)

Discussions surrounding healthcare reveal significant public concern about accessibility, affordability, and the scope of Medicare. A major focus is the state of Medicare itself, with debates around funding adequacy, declining bulk billing rates, and rising out-of-pocket costs for GPs, tests, and medications. The value of private health insurance versus strengthening the public system is questioned. The call to expand Medicare to include dental care is a recurring theme, linked to preventative health and equity.

*"Seniors already got to pull the ladder up behind them. If dental is an issue worth fixing it should be for all Australians, especially because preventative measures will stop issues in the future."*

Access to specialized services, particularly mental health support, is a critical concern, citing prohibitive costs, long waits, inadequate rebates, and practitioner shortages. Similar difficulties are reported for other specialists, especially outside major cities. Concerns about hospital resources (staffing, emergency capabilities), workplace culture, and medication costs (PBS, 60-day dispensing) are frequently raised.

### 7.1 Main Themes:

- **Access to Specialists and Hospital Services** (15 submissions): Highlighting difficulties and long wait times in accessing medical specialists (e.g., dermatologists, rheumatologists) and concerns about hospital staffing, resources (especially in regional areas), and specific service availability (e.g., 24/7 obstetrics).

*"My GP told me waits in Canberra are ridiculous at the moment I agreed to go to Goulburn and got and the first appointment available there is in January 2026. Just to give you some wait times context at the moment :("*

- **Medicare Funding, Bulk Billing, and Affordability** (12 submissions): Debates centered on the adequacy of Medicare funding, the decline in bulk billing practices leading to increased out-of-pocket expenses for patients, and the overall affordability of primary healthcare.

*"It was Dutton's policies as Health Minister that fucked Medicare because, and I fucking quote, there are "too many free Medicare services.""*

- **Mental Health Access and Cost** (11 submissions): Significant focus on the barriers to accessing mental healthcare, including high costs for psychologists/psychiatrists, long waiting lists, insufficient Medicare rebates, and a lack of bulk-billing or specialized practitioners.

*"It is a disaster. Son - I am having anxiety issues and want to see a counsellor to find strategies for dealing with them. . . Cannot find a single counsellor in our area that is taking new patients that will allow for the current free counselling sessions. . . Gives up, and gets no help."*

- **Inclusion of Dental Care in Medicare** (10 submissions): Strong arguments made for expanding Medicare to cover dental services, often framed as essential healthcare and a matter of equity and long-term health outcomes.

## 8 Theme: Social Services (3% of total)

Discussions surrounding social services reveal significant public concern about the adequacy and accessibility of support systems. A major focus is on welfare support, with widespread anxiety about Centrelink payments (JobSeeker, pensions) failing to cover basic living costs amidst inflation, potentially increasing hardship and crime. The Robodebt scandal fuels distrust. Homelessness is highlighted as a critical issue with insufficient support. Retirement security anxieties center on superannuation and pension sufficiency, especially regarding housing costs. Challenges navigating the NDIS/DSP, funding concerns, and the need for better workplace accommodations are discussed under disability support. Worker protections debates cover penalty rates, sick leave rights, and workers' compensation.

*"Penalty rates aren't about religion — they're about fairness. They exist to compensate workers for giving up time when most others are off, like Sundays, nights, and public holidays."*

Childcare accessibility and affordability are significant pressure points, with calls for treating it as an essential public service rather than relying on subsidized private centers.

### 8.1 Main Themes:

- **Adequacy of Welfare Payments, Social Safety Nets, and Homelessness Support** (18 submissions): Concerns about the sufficiency of Centrelink payments (JobSeeker, pensions) to meet basic needs, the effectiveness of the social safety net, distrust stemming from Robodebt, and the lack of adequate support and accommodation for the homeless.

*"Once again the absolute poorest get zero though, and miss out completely. Instead of increasing the dole. . . they give people with more wealth than them, more wealth. Because they're buying votes."*

- **Worker Protections, Rights, and Workplace Conditions** (9 submissions): Discussions on the importance of penalty rates, the right to adequate sick leave, experiences with workers' compensation claims, employer attitudes towards employee well-being, and the role of unions.

- **Disability Support Systems: NDIS/DSP Access, Funding, and Advocacy** (6 submissions): Focus on difficulties accessing and navigating NDIS and DSP, concerns about funding levels, and the need for better advocacy and workplace support for people with disabilities, including neurodivergent individuals.

*"We desperately need to fund disability advocacy organisations to support & advocate for disabled people, enabling them to effectively..."*

- **Childcare Accessibility, Affordability, and Family Support Policies** (3 submissions): Highlighting the high cost and limited availability of childcare, criticisms of the current subsidy model for private centers, and calls for childcare to be treated as an essential public service.

*"If the government wants to run an economy where the majority of the population needs a dual income... childcare really needs to be a public service like public education."*

- **Retirement Security: Superannuation Adequacy and Pension Concerns** (3 submissions): Anxiety about whether current superannuation savings and aged pension rates will be sufficient for retirement, particularly given rising living and housing costs.

*"Considering what it costs to live in this country now... my super will barely cover a few years of life in today's economic climate."*

## 9 Theme: Industry & Manufacturing (3% of total)

Discussions reveal a strong desire to revitalise domestic production via "Made in Australia" initiatives and support for local businesses, amid concerns about manufacturing weakness and global competition. High energy costs and cheap imports are seen as barriers, sparking debates on tariffs and subsidies like "Future Made in Australia". Industry transition is a major theme, focusing on job creation/displacement due to climate policies, automation/AI, and shifts from traditional sectors (coal) to renewables or advanced manufacturing. This highlights regional anxieties and the need for skills development (TAFE/apprenticeships) to manage change and address shortages (trades, IT). Workplace safety, fair wages, penalty rates, and conditions remain prominent concerns across sectors, alongside industrial relations discussions.

### 9.1 Main Themes:

- **Industry Transition, Job Creation, and Skills (Including Automation/AI impact)** (24 submissions): Focus on managing job shifts resulting from climate policies, technological change (automation, AI), and moves away from traditional industries, emphasizing the need for retraining, apprenticeships, and addressing skills shortages.

*"Unsustainable jobs are unsustainable... If we care about those communities (we should) then a transition plan to sustainable industry should be the number one political issue and priority for everyone"*

- **Support for Domestic Production and "Made in Australia"** (23 submissions): Strong sentiment favouring boosting local manufacturing, agriculture, and technology sectors, supporting Australian-made goods, and enhancing national self-sufficiency.

*"For me, this means that Australia becomes an innovator in industrial manufacturing, moving beyond primary industries."*

- **Economic Challenges and Competitiveness (Imports, Trade, Costs, Policy)** (14 submissions): Discussions on the difficulties faced by local industries due to import competition, trade dynamics, high operating costs (especially energy), and the effectiveness of government policies like tariffs or subsidies.

*“Dutch Disease is when you export so many raw materials that it distorts the currency to a point where value-added industries can no longer compete. That’s already happened.”*

- **Workplace Conditions, Safety, and Industrial Relations** (9 submissions): Concerns regarding occupational health and safety standards, fair wages, the role of penalty rates, working conditions in various industries, and the effectiveness of industrial relations frameworks and unions.

*“Good , the amount of companies that take don’t give a fuck about safety need to also be taken to court”*

## 10 Theme: Education & Skills (2% of total)

Discussions frequently touched upon education and skills, focusing significantly on tertiary education access and cost. Labor’s Fee Free TAFE policy was debated for its role in addressing skills shortages (especially construction trades) versus concerns about completion rates, quality, and apprenticeship availability. The Coalition’s potential axing of the program generated discussion. University education featured prominently via HECS/HELP debt debates, covering fairness of relief measures (ALP’s 20% cut, Greens’ free uni push), the debt burden’s impact, repayment timing, and the degree’s value. University funding models (reliance on international students, government cuts) were also critiqued. School-level concerns included public school quality, funding, infrastructure (shade), student welfare (free lunches), and teacher challenges (discipline, support). Early childhood education discussions centered on high childcare costs and quality concerns.

### 10.1 Main Themes:

- **TAFE Funding and Skills Shortages** (19 submissions): Debates on the effectiveness and necessity of programs like Fee Free TAFE for addressing critical skills gaps (e.g., construction trades) versus concerns about completion rates, training quality, and potential policy changes.

*“Coalition axing Labor’s Free Tafe would mean fewer builders and higher house prices, experts warn.”*

- **HECS Debt and University Affordability** (15 submissions): Significant discussion on the burden of HECS/HELP debt, the fairness and impact of proposed debt relief measures, indexation concerns, and the overall value proposition of university education.

*“Except for HECS - those follow you to the grave and most sign up for it when they are 18, which makes it fairly odious.”*

- **Apprenticeship System and Trade Training** (12 submissions): Focus on the challenges within the apprenticeship system, including inadequate training quality, poor treatment of apprentices, lack of available positions, and insufficient incentives.

*“From my experience alone I can say training made me quit. . . I feel like I wasted 3.5 years of my life being used as a cheap labourer.”*

- **School System Challenges** (7 submissions): Concerns related to public school funding, infrastructure needs (e.g., playground shade), student welfare issues (e.g., need for meal programs), and challenges faced by teachers (discipline, lack of support).

*“As a teacher, we need them to eat. Kids are not ready to learn if their stomach is empty.”*

- **Childcare Affordability and Quality** (4 submissions): Highlighting the significant financial burden of childcare costs for families and raising concerns about the quality of care, provider qualifications, and the need for systemic reform.

*“It’s \$700 a week per child to have a child in child care 5 days a week. It’s a huge issue and up there with housing”*

## 11 Conclusion: What Australian Redditors are thinking

The political discourse on Australian Reddit during the 2025 Federal Election campaign is dominated by deep-seated **economic anxiety**, primarily driven by the **cost of living crisis** and, inextricably linked, the **housing affordability crisis**. These two issues permeate discussions across multiple themes, representing the most prominent concerns by a significant margin. Redditors express widespread frustration with the rising costs of essentials – housing (rent and mortgages), groceries, energy, and transport – leading to a perceived decline in living standards and financial security. Housing, in particular, is a flashpoint, with intense debate around the failures of past policies, the impact of tax settings like negative gearing and CGT discounts, the role of immigration in demand pressure, and the urgent need for increased supply and rental market reforms.

Beyond economics, a powerful undercurrent is **voter disillusionment and cynicism** towards the major political parties (ALP and LNP). There’s a strong sense that politicians are out of touch, ineffective, or unwilling to tackle major challenges like housing affordability head-on. This fuels interest in minor parties (Greens), independents, and discussions about strategic voting. Concerns about **political integrity, media bias** (particularly News Corp/Sky News), online disinformation, and the perceived negative **influence of US political trends** (**‘Trumpism’/‘MAGA’**) on Australian politics are also notably prominent themes.

**Immigration** emerges as another highly significant and contentious topic, frequently linked directly to pressures on housing, infrastructure, cost of living, and wages. While some defend its economic necessity, many call for reduced intake levels. **Climate and energy policy** remains a key battleground, characterized by the heated debate over the Coalition’s nuclear proposal versus Labor’s and the Greens’ focus on renewables, alongside growing discussion of tangible climate impacts and the urgency for action. Other important, though less dominant, themes include **healthcare access and affordability** (especially mental health and calls for dental in Medicare), the adequacy of **social services** and welfare payments, **education costs** (HECS debt, TAFE funding), and the need to support **domestic industry**.

### Contrasting Reddit Themes with Party Manifestos:

Comparing these prominent Reddit themes with the summarized party manifestos reveals both alignments and significant disconnects:

1. **Alignment on Problem Recognition (Cost of Living, Housing):** All major parties acknowledge the cost of living and housing crises in their manifestos, proposing various relief measures (energy bills, tax cuts - ALP/LNP) and housing policies (building targets, foreign

buyer bans, affordability schemes - ALL). The Greens specifically target supermarket power and rent controls, aligning with specific Reddit frustrations.

2. **Disconnect on Housing Solutions Depth/Focus:** While parties propose solutions, Reddit discussions often delve deeper into systemic issues like **negative gearing and CGT reform**, which are major points of contention online but less emphasized as core reform planks in the ALP/LNP manifesto summaries provided. Reddit users also express significant skepticism towards demand-side housing incentives favoured by major parties, preferring supply-side interventions and regulatory reform.
3. **Disconnect on Political Trust and Process:** The profound **voter disillusionment, cynicism, and concerns about political integrity and US political influence** prominent on Reddit are not directly addressed in party manifestos, which focus on policy promises rather than the perceived crisis of trust in the political process itself. Similarly, concerns about **media bias and disinformation** are largely absent from manifesto platforms.
4. **Alignment/Disconnect on Immigration:** The LNP's focus on reducing migration and linking it to housing pressure directly aligns with a major theme on Reddit. The ALP and Greens' positions, as summarized, appear less directly focused on migration reduction as a primary lever for these issues, creating a partial disconnect with the strong emphasis seen in Reddit discussions.
5. **Alignment on Climate/Energy Focus, Divergence on Solutions:** All parties address climate/energy, aligning with its importance on Reddit. However, the proposed solutions diverge sharply (ALP renewables, LNP nuclear/gas, Greens anti-fossil fuel), mirroring the polarized debates online. Reddit discussions show significant skepticism towards the LNP's nuclear plan's feasibility and cost, a nuance not captured in simple manifesto points.
6. **Partial Alignment on Specific Issues:** Themes like improving Medicare bulk-billing (ALL), TAFE funding (ALP/Greens), childcare support (ALP/Greens), and "Made in Australia" (ALP) show alignment between specific party policies and Reddit discussions, though these topics were less dominant overall than the core economic and trust issues.

In summary, while party platforms address key concerns like cost of living and housing acknowledged on Reddit, there appears to be a significant disconnect regarding the perceived depth of the problems (especially housing affordability drivers like tax settings), the pervasive lack of trust in the political establishment and media, and the perceived influence of foreign political styles. The intensity of frustration and the focus on systemic reform often voiced on Reddit may not be fully reflected in the headline policy proposals of the major parties.

## 11.1 Contrasting Reddit Discussion: Week 2 vs Week 3

Comparing the analysis of Reddit political discussions between Week 2 and Week 3 reveals both continuity in core concerns and notable shifts in focus, likely influenced by major policy announcements and political events during Week 3.

### 11.1.1 Overall Theme Distribution:

While the relative ranking of most themes remained broadly similar, two significant shifts occurred:

1. **Housing & Infrastructure Surge:** This theme saw the most dramatic increase, rising from 10% of the discussion in Week 2 to 15% in Week 3.
2. **National Security & Immigration Uptick:** This theme also saw a noticeable increase, from 11% to 13%.

Conversely, themes like Climate & Energy, Healthcare, Social Services, and Industry & Manufacturing saw slight decreases in their overall share of the discussion, suggesting that while still

important, they were somewhat overshadowed by the intensified focus on housing and national security narratives during Week 3. The dominant 'OTHER' category saw a marginal decrease (29% to 28%), indicating persistent underlying cynicism but perhaps slightly more focus channelled into specific policy areas.

#### 11.1.2 Shifts within Key Themes:

- **Housing & Infrastructure:** The significant jump in this theme strongly correlates with the major housing policy announcements from both Labor (instant deductions, low-deposit scheme, affordable housing package) and the LNP (tax relief, mortgage interest deductibility, super-for-deposit). Week 3 discussions reflected this intense focus, moving beyond the general crisis narrative prevalent in Week 2 to engage directly, and often critically, with these new proposals. There was a heightened critique of demand-side policies (seen as potentially inflationary), intense debate around the specifics (like using superannuation), and stronger calls for supply-side solutions and systemic reforms like negative gearing/CGT changes, which were already present but gained further traction. Rental market stress also remained a critical point.
- **Economic Policy:** This remained a dominant theme (20% - > 21%), intrinsically linked to housing. While cost of living pressures were central in both weeks, Week 3 saw housing affordability become an even more critical *economic* flashpoint. The tax relief measures announced by both parties likely fuelled the increased discussion around "vote buying" and the fairness/effectiveness of tax cuts versus broader reform (especially negative gearing/CGT). Concerns about supermarket power also appeared slightly more pronounced in Week 3.
- **National Security & Immigration:** The increase (11% - > 13%) likely reflects the political controversy sparked by Peter Dutton's comments regarding supposed Russian aircraft in Indonesia. Week 3 discussions showed an increased focus on specific geopolitical tensions (Indonesia, Russia, China, AUKUS reliability) compared to the more general foreign influence concerns highlighted in Week 2. This incident may also have amplified discussions around political fearmongering and the perceived importation of 'MAGA'-style tactics, a theme explicitly noted within this category in the Week 3 report. The core debate linking high migration levels to housing and cost of living pressures remained intense and central in both weeks.
- **OTHER (Political Cynicism & Trust):** While slightly down proportionally, the underlying sentiment remained strong. Week 3 discussions continued the themes of cynicism and distrust seen in Week 2, but perhaps with a sharper focus on specific candidate scrutiny (especially Dutton and Price, with frequent Trump comparisons) and the perceived influence of US political styles ('MAGA'). Critiques of media bias (News Corp/Sky) were consistent across both weeks.
- **Climate & Energy:** This theme saw a slight decrease in focus (7% - > 5%). The core debate (nuclear vs. renewables) persisted, but Week 3 discussions perhaps placed a slightly stronger emphasis on the tangible impacts of climate change (extreme weather, insurance costs) compared to the more policy-focused debates of Week 2. Skepticism towards the Coalition's nuclear proposal remained high in both periods.

#### 11.1.3 Summary of Differences

The primary differentiator between Week 2 and Week 3 discussions was the **intense surge in focus on Housing & Infrastructure**, directly driven by competing policy announcements from

the major parties. This dominated the discourse, pushing housing concerns even further up the agenda and intensifying debates around specific solutions and underlying drivers like tax settings. Secondly, a specific **geopolitical incident involving Dutton, Indonesia, and Russia noticeably elevated the National Security theme**, adding a layer of specific international tension and political strategy critique to the ongoing debates about migration and foreign influence. While core anxieties around the cost of living, political trust, and climate/energy persisted, Week 3's discourse was significantly shaped by these specific political and policy developments.

## 11.2 Acknowledgement

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

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