



Australian Reddit Political Discussion Report: 2025 Federal Election Campaign

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1 Australian Reddit Political Discussion Report: 2025 Federal Election Campaign (Week 4)

This report summarizes the key political discussions observed among Australian users on 20 politically active subreddits during the 2025 Federal Election campaign. It is based on a cascading synthesis of thousands of submissions and tens of thousands of comments, identifying the most prominent themes and issues engaging Redditors.

2 Theme: OTHER (29% of total)

Discussions outside specific policy silos were dominated by critiques of political conduct, widespread voter dissatisfaction, and the mechanics of the political system itself. There was extensive commentary on party strategies and campaigning tactics, often criticizing perceived negativity, lack of substance, policy reversals, and candidate quality. Many observed the increasing influence of US political styles, particularly drawing parallels between LNP strategies or rhetoric and those associated with Donald Trump. A powerful undercurrent was the deep disillusionment and cynicism directed towards both major parties, frequently expressed as a feeling of a “lose-lose situation” or a lack of genuine choice, driving interest towards minor parties and independents as protest votes or potential disruptors. As one user put it, reflecting the sentiment towards campaign tactics: *“I think at this point they are just throwing shit at the wall to see what sticks.”* Issues of political integrity, transparency, and the influence of money were significant concerns, focusing on political donations, lobbying, perceived cronyism, and the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures. The workings of the Australian electoral system, especially preferential voting and the role of the Senate, were frequently debated, alongside the challenges faced by smaller parties. Media bias and the quality of political discourse, particularly the shift towards personal attacks over policy debate online, were also common topics. Social and cultural issues, such as Indigenous recognition practices post-Voice referendum, the role of religion, identity politics, and LGBTQI+ rights, often intersected with political debate, sometimes framed within a ‘culture war’ context. International events occasionally surfaced, influencing discussions around foreign policy stances or travel advice.

2.1 Main Themes:

- **Political Strategy, Campaigning, and Party Conduct** (89 submissions): Extensive critique of party tactics, messaging, advertising (attack ads, corflutes), perceived policy backflips, candidate suitability, and overall campaign competence or chaos.
- **Rise and Role of Minor Parties and Independents** (62 submissions): Significant discussion about voting for minor parties or independents as an alternative to the major parties, either out of genuine support or as a protest vote against perceived failures of Labor and LNP. *“Independants. Time to bring accountability to the table.”*
- **Political Process and Voting System Mechanics** (40 submissions): Debates and explanations regarding Australia’s preferential voting system, the function and representation of the Senate, the influence of How-to-Vote cards, and systemic challenges facing minor parties.
- **Influence of US Politics (Trumpism) on Australian Campaigns** (37 submissions): Frequent comparisons of LNP campaign strategies, rhetoric, and leadership styles to Donald Trump and MAGA-style politics in the US. *“Dutton is such a Trump sucker, he’s had years of opposition to come up with the best he could, and he just copies Trump’s homework.”*
- **Media Influence and Political Discourse Quality** (36 submissions): Scrutiny of media coverage, accusations of bias (particularly from outlets like Murdoch press), and concerns

about the negativity, personal attacks, and lack of substantive policy debate in political discussions, especially online.

- **Social/Cultural Debates in Politics (Indigenous Issues, Religion, Identity)** (38 submissions): Discussions intersecting politics with social issues like Welcome to Country practices, the Voice referendum fallout, role of religion, freedom of speech, identity politics, and LGBTQI+ rights, often highlighting societal divisions.
- **Integrity, Transparency, and Political Donations** (30 submissions): Concerns about 'dark money' in politics, the influence of lobbyists and corporate donors, perceived cronyism ('jobs for mates'), accountability for past actions, and the effectiveness of anti-corruption bodies. *"No matter who you vote for, a dark money lobbyist always gets in."*
- **Voter Disillusionment and Cynicism towards Major Parties** (27 submissions): A strong sentiment of dissatisfaction, frustration, and lack of trust in both the Labor and Liberal/National parties, often perceiving them as out of touch, offering no real solutions, or being too similar. *"We are backed into a lose-lose situation, the best we can do is get some non-shit minors in, to disrupt the balance of power."*

3 Theme: Economic Policy (16% of total)

Economic discussions were overwhelmingly dominated by the severe cost of living crisis, identified by many as the single most important issue influencing their vote. Redditors expressed significant stress over rising prices for groceries, energy, rent, and fuel. As highlighted by one summary referencing polling: *"Vote Compass data shows cost of living is the most important issue for voters ahead of the election, with one quarter of respondents saying it is their biggest concern."* There was extensive debate about the causes, attributing blame variously to global inflation, government policies (past and present), and corporate behaviour, especially targeting the supermarket duopoly (Coles/Woolworths) and energy companies for perceived price gouging. The economic management credentials of Labor and the Coalition were intensely scrutinized, comparing records on debt, deficits, inflation, and wage growth. Labor's adjustments to Stage 3 tax cuts to favour lower/middle incomes, energy bill relief, and recent budget figures were cited by supporters, while critics pointed to falling real disposable incomes and persistent affordability issues. The Coalition faced criticism over historical debt levels and proposed spending cuts, particularly to the public service. Tax policy was a major battleground, covering income tax, corporate tax rates, resource taxation (often compared unfavourably to international examples like Norway), property investment incentives (negative gearing, CGT), 'sin taxes', and specific deductions. Regulation debates focused on competition (supermarkets), energy markets, and workplace relations. Underlying issues like wage stagnation, inequality, productivity, and household debt were persistent concerns, alongside debates about government spending priorities (infrastructure, social programs, defence) and the affordability of public transport.

3.1 Main Themes:

- **Cost of Living Crisis and Inflation** (55 submissions): Dominant theme focusing on rising prices for essentials (groceries, energy, rent, fuel), its impact on households, and debates over causes and solutions.
- **Government Spending, Debt, and Fiscal Management** (54 submissions): Scrutiny of both major parties' records and promises regarding government debt, budget deficits/surpluses, spending priorities (e.g., defence vs social services), and perceived fiscal responsibility. *"More debt? They know we can look at historical economic data right?"*

- **Tax Policy and Reform** (52 submissions): Intense discussion on income tax cuts (Stage 3), corporate tax rates, resource taxation (mining/gas), negative gearing/CGT, GST, 'sin taxes', and the overall fairness and structure of the tax system. *"To address the 'basic stuff' above, we need to raise taxes. IMO, the two big ones to target are multinationals, and the 0 tax on funded super after age 60, because those tax rates are blatantly unfair on society."*
- **Wages, Inequality, and Living Standards** (35 submissions): Concerns about stagnant wage growth relative to inflation, declining real disposable incomes, growing wealth inequality, and the overall impact on living standards. *"We've had the worst fall in disposable income in the oecd."*
- **Housing Affordability and Economic Policy** (21 submissions): Discussion linking housing costs directly to broader economic policy settings, including interest rates, tax incentives, and government intervention (or lack thereof).
- **Economic Regulation and Competition** (15 submissions): Debates concerning competition policy (especially supermarkets), regulation of energy markets, financial services (surcharges), workplace relations rules, and the effectiveness of bodies like the ACCC and RBA.
- **Mining and Resource Taxation** (15 submissions): Frustration over perceived low levels of taxation and royalties from the mining and gas sectors compared to international standards, and calls for greater national benefit capture. *"Seems like both sides of politics in Australia are terrified of discussing increases to royalties/taxes on oil, mineral and gas extraction - we're basically giving ours away resources away!"*
- **Public Transport Costs and Infrastructure** (6 submissions): Concerns regarding the cost and accessibility of public transport services, particularly in major cities and linking to airport access.
- **Black Market Economics (Tobacco/Vapes)** (3 submissions): Discussion on the economic consequences of high taxes or bans on products like tobacco and vapes, leading to the growth of illegal markets.

4 Theme: National Security & Immigration (14% of total)

National security and immigration discussions were highly prominent, often intersecting with economic and social concerns. The level of migration intake was a dominant topic, frequently linked by Redditors to pressures on housing affordability, infrastructure strain (roads, hospitals, schools), and potential impacts on wage growth and GDP per capita. There were widespread calls for reducing migration numbers or implementing better planning to manage population growth. Counterarguments highlighted the need for migrants to fill skills shortages, particularly in construction and healthcare, and to support an aging population. Concerns about social cohesion also featured, with debates around multiculturalism, integration, the influence of specific cultural groups, and anxieties about demographic change, sometimes leading to accusations of racism, which were themselves debated. Community safety emerged as another major focus, driven by frustrations over perceived increases in youth crime (particularly car theft), anti-social behaviour, and property crime. The effectiveness of the justice system, especially regarding bail laws for young or repeat offenders, faced heavy criticism, with many demanding stricter consequences. Policing effectiveness, resources, and pursuit policies were also under scrutiny. On national security, the AUKUS submarine deal was a significant point of discussion, focusing on its immense cost, long timeline, technological feasibility, implications for national sovereignty, and reliance on the US alliance, particularly given potential shifts in American foreign policy. Debates also covered overall defence spending levels in response to geopolitical tensions (China, Russia) and the need to balance defence priorities with domestic needs.

4.1 Main Themes:

- **Migration Levels, Housing, and Economic Impacts** (37 submissions): Extensive discussion linking high migration levels to pressure on housing markets, infrastructure capacity, wage stagnation, and GDP per capita, with frequent calls for reduction or better management. *"Migration is being leaned on at the expense of the rest of the population. Thus the GDP increase but GDP per capita plunge we've experienced."*
- **Community Safety and Policing** (36 submissions): Significant concern about perceived increases in crime (theft, anti-social behaviour), effectiveness of police response, resource allocation, and specific policing policies (e.g., pursuits). *"It's frustrating this kind of crime where its on going and the community knows exactly whos doing it and maybe even where they live, but its not serious enough for the cops to do anything about it."*
- **Immigration, Social Cohesion, and Cultural Integration** (24 submissions): Debates surrounding multiculturalism vs assimilation, influence of immigrant groups on society and politics, anxieties about demographic shifts, and discussions often touching on racism and discrimination.
- **National Security Strategy and Defence** (21 submissions): Focus on defence policy, particularly the AUKUS submarine deal (cost, feasibility, sovereignty), overall defence spending levels, geopolitical threats, and the US alliance. *"If we pursue AUCKUS, we don't get submarines. If we don't pursue AUCKUS, we don't get submarines."*
- **Youth Crime, Bail Laws, and Justice System Effectiveness** (12 submissions): Frustration with perceived leniency in the justice system, particularly regarding bail conditions for young offenders and repeat offenders, fueling calls for stricter laws and sentencing. *"Bail... what a surprise. Its infuriating that they keep letting these little thugs out on bail to go commit more crimes."*

5 Theme: Housing & Infrastructure (12% of total)

The housing crisis was a defining issue in discussions, characterized by deep frustration and anxiety about affordability for both renters and prospective buyers across the country. Many Redditors described the situation as untenable, forcing people into precarious living situations, long-term renting against their desires, or reliance on family. A strong theme was the attribution of blame to successive governments (both Labor and LNP) for failing to address the crisis effectively, often accusing politicians of prioritizing investor interests or lacking the political will due to their own property investments. Tax settings like negative gearing and the capital gains tax discount were frequently identified as key drivers exacerbating affordability issues, although the political difficulty of reforming them was acknowledged. High levels of immigration were consistently cited as a major factor increasing demand and driving up prices and rents. Alongside housing, there was significant anger about infrastructure deficits, particularly in rapidly growing outer suburbs and regional centres, where essential services like public transport, roads, schools, and healthcare were seen as failing to keep pace with population growth. Calls for solutions were widespread and often favoured significant government intervention, including large-scale public and affordable housing construction (potentially via a government developer), stricter rental market regulations (rent caps/freezes), and restrictions on foreign ownership. Existing government schemes were often dismissed as inadequate "tinkering." The rental market was described in dire terms, particularly in cities like Perth, with tenants facing intense competition and steep rent increases, fueling demands for stronger protections.

5.1 Main Themes:

- **Widespread Housing Affordability Crisis (Prices & Rent)** (69 submissions): Overwhelming focus on the extreme difficulty of affording to buy a home or pay rent, impacting diverse demographics and locations, leading to stress, insecurity, and altered life plans. *“People like myself are actually being forced to face the possibility that we may be renting for the rest of our lives...”*
- **Impact of Immigration on Housing Demand** (42 submissions): Consistent linking of high immigration levels to increased demand for housing, contributing significantly to rising prices and rents, leading to calls for migration policy adjustments. *“2 million population increase in the last 4 years... directly increases the demand on housing which is why the price is insane.”*
- **Critique of Major Party Policies and Political Will** (42 submissions): Strong criticism directed at both Labor and LNP for perceived inaction, inadequate policies (“bandaids”), and lack of political courage to implement systemic solutions, often linked to politicians’ own property interests.
- **Rental Market Strain and Tenant Rights/Protections** (26 submissions): Descriptions of a highly competitive and expensive rental market (“cooked”), with tenants facing significant insecurity, leading to calls for stronger legal protections, rent control measures, and limitations on evictions. *“There should be no problem with the idea of renting forever but we need much better laws to protect the rights of renters”*
- **Calls for Increased Government Role in Housing Supply (Public/Govt Construction)** (19 submissions): Strong support for direct government intervention in the housing market, including mass construction of public and affordable housing, potentially through a dedicated government agency.
- **Debate over Tax Policies (Negative Gearing & CGT)** (18 submissions): Frequent identification of negative gearing and the capital gains tax discount as key policy levers inflating property prices and favouring investors, with calls for reform despite political sensitivity. *“Neither major party wants to stop the actual causes of the housing crisis (CGT discount + negative gearing + first home buyers grant).”*
- **Infrastructure Lagging Behind Housing Development** (14 submissions): Frustration in growing areas about the lack of timely provision of essential infrastructure (transport, schools, hospitals) to support new housing developments and population increases. *“Welcome to Australia we put in 1 million people first then add infrastructure 50 years later...”*

6 Theme: Climate & Energy (9% of total)

Climate and energy policy discussions were marked by significant debate and political division. The Coalition’s proposal for nuclear power generated substantial discussion, largely characterized by skepticism regarding its high cost, long construction timelines, suitability for Australia’s grid, and potential role as a delaying tactic for renewable energy deployment. In contrast, the transition towards renewable energy sources (solar, wind, batteries, pumped hydro) was a major focus, covering government targets, investment in infrastructure and household solutions, grid integration challenges, and cost comparisons with fossil fuels and nuclear. However, there was also widespread criticism directed at both major parties for perceived insufficient ambition and pace in climate action, often attributed to the influence of fossil fuel industries. Labor faced criticism for approving new fossil fuel projects alongside renewable targets, while the Coalition was often seen as lacking a credible climate policy beyond nuclear and continued fossil fuel support. The Greens and Teal independents were frequently mentioned as advocating for more aggressive

action. Environmental conservation concerns centred on habitat destruction (logging, mining, development), endangered species protection, the effectiveness of environmental laws, and managing invasive species. Gas policy was highly contentious, debating new project approvals, export levels versus domestic supply, resource taxation rates, and its role as a transition fuel. The cost of living implications of energy policy were a recurring theme, including debates about electricity prices under different scenarios and the cost-effectiveness of specific measures like fuel efficiency standards or EV incentives.

6.1 Main Themes:

- **Renewable Energy Transition: Targets, Technologies, Infrastructure, and Costs** (33 submissions): Extensive discussion on the shift to renewables (solar, wind, storage), government targets (e.g., 80% by 2030), necessary infrastructure upgrades, household adoption (solar/batteries), and cost-effectiveness arguments. *"We have world leading solar and huge potential for offshore wind that can be supplying power by 2030. Why not use that instead of nuclear energy which won't be built until the 2040s?"*
- **Climate Policy Ambition and Political Divide** (32 submissions): Criticism of both major parties for perceived lack of sufficient action on climate change, debates over the adequacy of targets, influence of fossil fuel lobby, and contrasting approaches (ALP renewables focus vs LNP nuclear/gas). *"Look beyond the headline - the inadequacies of climate policy inflict both the ALP and the LNP."*
- **Nuclear Energy Debate: Feasibility, Cost, and Political Strategy** (30 submissions): Significant focus on the Coalition's nuclear proposal, dominated by skepticism about economic viability (citing CSIRO costings), long timelines, waste disposal, and whether it's a genuine solution or a distraction. *"CSIRO has found the cost of electricity generated from nuclear reactors by 2040 would be about \$145-\$238 per MWh, compared to \$22-\$53 for solar, and \$45-\$78 for wind."*
- **Gas Policy: Exports, Domestic Supply, Taxation, and Climate Impact** (24 submissions): Debates over new gas project approvals (e.g., Beetaloo Basin), export contracts vs domestic reservation, low levels of resource taxation compared internationally, and the environmental impact of gas. *"I'd love to see our gas industry wound down for climate reasons, but while they are mining our gas we should at least be getting Norwegian style taxes out of them (78%). Or you know, anything more than 0%."*
- **Energy Policy and Cost of Living Impacts** (17 submissions): Connecting energy policy choices directly to household electricity bills, fuel costs, and the affordability of transitioning to electric vehicles or implementing energy efficiency measures.
- **Environmental Conservation: Habitat Loss, Species Protection, and Regulation** (16 submissions): Concerns about deforestation, logging impacts (especially on native forests/koalas), biodiversity loss, effectiveness of environmental protection laws, and impact of development on wildlife. *"Fixing our environmental laws is not hard - we know what needs to be done. What's lacking is the political spine to stand up to corporate interests."*

7 Theme: Social Services (7% of total)

Social services discussions highlighted tensions around welfare adequacy, worker rights, and access to support systems like the NDIS and childcare. Debates occurred around the purpose of welfare, with some arguing against dependency and others stressing the need for a strong safety net (including housing/healthcare) to reduce inequality. The adequacy of JobSeeker and pension payments was frequently questioned, with calls for increases above the poverty line, contrasting

with concerns about potential cuts. Compulsory income management remained controversial. The NDIS faced scrutiny over costs, alleged misuse, potential funding cuts, and accessibility challenges. Worker protections were a major focus, particularly the 'Right to Disconnect' legislation, seen by supporters as crucial for work-life balance but opposed by others citing business impacts. Coalition proposals to push return-to-office mandates for public servants sparked strong backlash against perceived interference in modern work practices (WFH). Penalty rates, fair pay, and wage theft were consistently raised as important issues. The role of unions was debated, alongside Labor's commitment to worker interests. Childcare affordability and accessibility, linked to the Child Care Subsidy, were key family concerns. Paid parental leave extensions, especially for infant loss, received strong support. The gender pay gap and retirement policies also featured in discussions.

7.1 Main Themes:

- **Adequacy and Fairness of Welfare Support** (21 submissions): Debates on the level of Centrelink payments (JobSeeker, pensions), eligibility criteria, compulsory income management (cashless welfare), and the balance between providing a safety net and concerns about dependency or system costs. *"This isn't a morale failing of these people it's a failing of the community, it's a failing of an extremely capitalist society that we all live in which is often harsh, unforgiving."*
- **National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Concerns** (13 submissions): Discussion about the rising cost of the NDIS, allegations of fraud or over-servicing by providers, potential government cuts or reforms, and difficulties accessing the scheme for those eligible. *"At \$50 billion per year and growing, we are spending more on NDIS benefits than we spend on nuclear submarines."*
- **Party Approaches to Worker Rights and Protections** (11 submissions): Contrasting views on the major parties' stances towards workers, unions, wages, and conditions, often expressing strong opinions about which party better represents worker interests.
- **'Right to Disconnect' Legislation** (9 submissions): Debate surrounding the legislation allowing employees to ignore work communications outside of hours, weighing employee well-being against business operational concerns. *"Fighting the right to disconnect is fighting to force people to work without being paid. Period."*
- **Work From Home (WFH) Policies** (9 submissions): Strong reactions to political discussions around WFH, particularly opposition to mandated return-to-office policies, seen as out of touch with employee preferences and modern work capabilities.
- **Penalty Rates, Wage Theft, and Fair Pay** (9 submissions): Emphasis on the importance of penalty rates for weekend/public holiday work, concerns about employers underpaying staff (wage theft), and broader issues of fair compensation.
- **Childcare Accessibility and Parental Leave Policies** (9 submissions): Focus on the cost and availability of childcare places, the impact of the Child Care Subsidy, and support for improvements to paid parental leave schemes. *"Since the Labor Minister made an announcement this week that he is going to amend Fair Work if re-elected, that parents with infant deaths and stillborn babies are going to be eligible for full paid parental leave from the companies they work for, I am definitely going to vote for Labor."*
- **Role and Influence of Unions** (9 submissions): Discussion on the role, power, and political alignment of trade unions in advocating for workers' rights and influencing Labor party policy.
- **Retirement and Pension Policies** (9 submissions): Concerns about the adequacy of the aged pension, rules around superannuation access, and specific public sector superannuation schemes.

- **Gender Pay Gap and Workplace Equality** (5 submissions): Examination of the persistent gender pay gap, discussion of structural biases in the workplace, and policies aimed at promoting equality.

8 Theme: Healthcare (5% of total)

Healthcare discussions revealed significant public concern about accessibility and cost. The state of Medicare was central, particularly the decline in bulk billing rates and increasing out-of-pocket costs for GP visits, often linked to historical Medicare rebate freezes. Proposed expansions, like including dental or more comprehensive mental health care under Medicare, were discussed, alongside the effectiveness of initiatives like Urgent Care Clinics. Accessing specialist services and hospital care was another major pain point, with complaints about long waiting lists for appointments and procedures in the public system, difficulties finding mental health professionals (especially psychiatrists), and hospital capacity issues like ambulance ramping. Regional healthcare disparities were highlighted, including limited access to specialists and under-resourced hospitals outside major cities. The cost of healthcare beyond GP visits – including ambulance fees, pharmaceuticals, and specialist consultations – was a significant barrier for many. Public health issues like vaccination access, sexual health, vape regulation, and the intersection of mental health/addiction with homelessness and safety were also debated. Comparisons between Labor and Coalition records on healthcare funding and management were common.

8.1 Main Themes:

- **Declining Bulk Billing and Rising GP Costs** (12 submissions): Major concern about the difficulty finding bulk-billing doctors and the increasing gap fees charged for GP consultations, impacting primary care access. *“Bulk billing rebates have been slashed to the bone so they need to pump patients through as quickly as possible.”*
- **Mental Health Service Gaps and Accessibility Issues** (11 submissions): Significant challenges reported in accessing timely and affordable mental health support, including long waits for psychologists/psychiatrists and debates over the number of subsidized sessions. *“Mental health services have been chronically underfunded. . .”*
- **Challenges Accessing Specialist and Hospital Services (Wait Times, Capacity)** (9 submissions): Frustration with long waiting times for specialist appointments and elective surgeries in the public system, alongside concerns about hospital overcrowding and ambulance ramping. *“Waited three years for an ‘urgent’ specialist appointment, only had to wait three weeks for surgery by how long they left it”*
- **Public Health Concerns (Vaccination, Disease Control, Harm Reduction)** (7 submissions): Discussions covering topics like vaccine availability and cost (e.g., flu vaccine), responses to infectious diseases, sexual health education, and harm reduction approaches (e.g., vaping regulation).
- **Proposed Medicare Expansion (Dental and Mental Health)** (6 submissions): Support for and discussion around proposals to broaden Medicare coverage to include dental care and more comprehensive mental health services. *“Expanding our health system to fully cover dental and mental healthcare into Medicare.”*
- **Healthcare Costs Beyond GP Visits (Ambulance, Pharmaceuticals, Specialists)** (5 submissions): Concerns about the affordability of other healthcare components, such as ambulance subscriptions/fees, prescription costs, and high fees for non-bulk-billed specialist consultations.

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

While less prominent overall, education discussions touched on key areas of access, cost, and quality. Tertiary education saw significant focus on TAFE, with support for fee-free courses to address skills shortages, though criticisms regarding program availability and funding existed. The apprenticeship system faced scrutiny over low wages and conditions, prompting calls for reform. Student debt (HECS/HELP) was a contentious topic, with debates around the fairness and impact of debt levels, alongside discussions of Labor's reduction measures and the Greens' push for debt elimination, contrasted with perceived Coalition indifference. University affordability and the role of international student fees were also mentioned. Early childhood education concerns centred on high costs, limited place availability, and quality control, fueling discussion around universal access proposals. In schools, the perennial debate over public versus private funding equity continued, alongside discussions about resource allocation for disadvantaged students. Education was also framed as a tool to address social issues like youth crime and disadvantage.

9.1 Main Themes:

- **Student Debt (HECS) and Tertiary Affordability** (7 submissions): Debates surrounding the HECS/HELP loan system, the burden of student debt, proposed relief measures (reduction/elimination), and the overall cost of university education. *"Honestly, after reading that they thought Labor's plan of taking 20% off HECs was for elitist people, they've lost me entirely, again."*
- **TAFE Funding and Apprenticeship Reform** (6 submissions): Focus on the importance of TAFE, support for fee-free programs, concerns about funding levels, and critiques of the current apprenticeship system (wages, conditions, effectiveness).
- **School Funding Equity and Student Support** (5 submissions): Ongoing debate about the distribution of government funding between public and private schools, and ensuring adequate resources and support for all students, particularly those facing disadvantage.
- **Education as a Solution to Youth Crime and Disadvantage** (3 submissions): Viewing investment in education and support systems as a crucial preventative measure to address youth offending and break cycles of poverty. *"Recidivism rates show that sending young people to jail without appropriate support doesn't help and, in some cases, exacerbate crime... The only thing that seems to work is education."*
- **Early Childhood Education Access and Cost** (2 submissions): Concerns regarding the high cost, limited availability, and quality of childcare and early learning services, and discussion of policies aimed at improving access and affordability.

10 Theme: Industry & Manufacturing (2% of total)

Discussions on industry and manufacturing, though less frequent, reflected anxieties about Australia's economic structure and national benefit. Labor's 'Future Made in Australia' policy was met with mixed reactions – hope for boosting domestic production (especially renewables) versus skepticism about its focus (perceived defence bias) or effectiveness as a subsidy program. A strong theme was frustration over resource management, with perceptions that valuable minerals and gas are extracted with insufficient return to the nation, fueling calls for more domestic processing, value-adding (e.g., batteries), and R&D investment. Small business health was a concern, with debates on insolvency causes and the desire for policies favouring business investment. Defence manufacturing capability was scrutinized, highlighting reliance on imports and the need for domestic production of essentials, with AUKUS seen by some as a potential (if uncertain) driver

of skills. Specific industry transitions, like live export phase-outs or challenges in logging/fossil fuels, illustrated tensions between economic impacts, jobs, and environmental/ethical concerns. The influence of powerful industry lobbies (mining, gas) on policy was frequently criticized.

10.1 Main Themes:

- **Economic Diversification & Value-Adding** (6 submissions): Desire for Australia to move beyond resource extraction towards more complex manufacturing, particularly in renewable technologies, and to process resources domestically. *"The current focus is on increasing the overall tax-based and onshoring more manufacturing so we can export higher value-add goods like batteries, turbines, etc."*
- **Resource Management & National Benefit** (5 submissions): Criticism of how Australia manages its natural resources, particularly perceptions of low taxation/royalties and foreign ownership, leading to calls for greater national benefit capture. *"our non-renewable natural resources continue to be dug out of our ground and flogged off for the profit of UK owned BHP and Swiss owned Rio Tinto."*
- **Industry Transition Challenges (Specific Sectors)** (5 submissions): Discussion on the difficulties and impacts of phasing out or transforming specific industries, such as live sheep exports, native forest logging, or fossil fuels, balancing economic, social, and environmental factors.
- **'Future Made in Australia' Policy: Promise vs. Reality** (3 submissions): Debate over the substance and likely impact of the government's industry policy, questioning its focus and effectiveness in genuinely boosting diverse domestic manufacturing. *"Future made in Australia is basically a shadow defense spending program. . . Based on the grants I have seen approved 19 out of 20 are defense related."*
- **Defence Industry & Domestic Capability** (3 submissions): Concerns about Australia's reliance on imported military hardware and supplies, and the need to develop sovereign capability in defence manufacturing and R&D.
- **Small Business Health & Viability** (2 submissions): Discussion about the challenges facing small businesses, including insolvency rates, regulatory burden, and the desire for supportive economic policies.

11 What Australian Redditors are thinking: Conclusion

Based on the analysis of discussions across 20 politically active Australian subreddits during the 2025 election campaign, several key themes dominate the online political consciousness:

1. **Cost of Living and Economic Strain:** This is arguably the most pervasive and deeply felt issue. Redditors expressed significant anxiety about the affordability of essentials like housing, groceries, and energy. Discussions heavily focused on inflation, wage stagnation, corporate pricing behaviour (especially supermarkets), and the effectiveness of government relief measures.
2. **Housing Affordability Crisis:** Almost equal in prominence to cost of living, the inability to afford housing (both renting and buying) is a crisis point. Redditors overwhelmingly blame government inaction, specific tax policies (negative gearing/CGT), and high immigration levels for exacerbating the problem, demanding large-scale intervention.
3. **Political Disillusionment and Integrity:** A profound sense of cynicism and lack of faith in the major political parties (ALP and LNP) and the political process is evident. This manifests as frustration with campaign tactics, perceived lack of substantive policy differences,

concerns about political donations and lobbying influence, and a growing interest in minor parties and independents as alternatives.

4. **Migration Levels and Impacts:** High levels of immigration are frequently and strongly linked to pressures on housing, infrastructure, and potentially wages. While the need for skilled migration is acknowledged, the overall sentiment leans towards needing better management or reduction of intake numbers.
5. **Climate Change and Energy Policy:** Significant debate exists around the path forward, particularly contrasting the Coalition's nuclear proposal (met with widespread skepticism on cost/timeline) with the ongoing renewable energy transition. There's criticism of both major parties for perceived lack of ambition, often attributed to fossil fuel influence.
6. **Worker Rights and Conditions:** Issues like the 'Right to Disconnect', the future of Work From Home, penalty rates, and wage theft resonated strongly, indicating concerns about work-life balance and fair treatment in the workplace.

Comparison with Party Manifestos:

Comparing these dominant Reddit themes with the provided summaries of major party manifestos reveals both alignments and notable disconnects:

- **Alignments:**
 - **Cost of Living:** All major parties address this, offering different solutions (tax cuts, energy relief, inflation control), aligning with its high prominence on Reddit.
 - **Housing:** All parties acknowledge the affordability crisis with plans for home building, affordable housing initiatives, and foreign investment restrictions, reflecting Reddit's focus.
 - **Healthcare:** All parties propose Medicare enhancements, aligning with Reddit concerns about access and bulk billing.
 - **Renewables:** Labor and Greens' focus on renewable energy targets and investment aligns with significant Reddit discussion, though debates on ambition persist.
- **Disconnects & Differences in Emphasis:**
 - **Depth of Disillusionment/Integrity:** While parties campaign on trust, the deep-seated cynicism, focus on political integrity issues (donations, lobbying), and critique of campaign conduct seen on Reddit are not central pillars of the manifesto *promises*.
 - **Migration Emphasis:** While the LNP manifesto directly targets migration reduction (aligning with a strong Reddit theme), the provided ALP/Greens summaries are less explicit on this specific lever, despite Reddit users intensely linking migration to housing and infrastructure pressures.
 - **Negative Gearing/CGT:** These tax policies are heavily debated on Reddit as core drivers of the housing crisis, but are conspicuously absent from the provided major party manifesto summaries, likely due to political sensitivity.
 - **Resource Taxation:** Strong calls on Reddit for higher taxes on mining/gas extraction (e.g., Norway model) do not appear as major promises in the ALP/LNP manifesto summaries provided. The Greens' platform may align more closely here, but wasn't detailed on this point.
 - **Nuclear Energy:** The LNP's flagship policy is a major point of contention and skepticism on Reddit, representing a clear divergence from ALP/Greens policy and much public sentiment online.
 - **Worker Rights (WFH/Disconnect):** While significant topics on Reddit, these specific modern work issues feature less prominently in the broad strokes of the provided manifesto summaries, though party stances exist outside these summaries (e.g., ALP supporting Right to Disconnect).

- **Youth Crime/Bail Laws:** An LNP focus in their manifesto, reflecting community safety concerns voiced on Reddit, but less prominent in the provided ALP/Greens summaries.

In summary, while party platforms address core concerns like cost of living and housing, Australian Redditors appear highly focused on the *perceived root causes* (e.g., tax policy, migration levels, resource management) and express a level of political cynicism and demand for integrity that may not be fully captured or addressed by the headline promises of the major parties. There's a strong desire for systemic change, particularly regarding housing and economic fairness, coupled with significant skepticism about the current political establishment's willingness or ability to deliver it.

11.1 What Changed: Week 3 vs Week 4

Comparing the analysis of Reddit political discussions between Week 3 and Week 4 reveals shifts in focus, likely influenced by specific policy announcements and the evolving campaign narrative, even as core anxieties remained prominent.

Overall Theme Distribution Shifts:

While the underlying **deep voter disillusionment** captured in the 'OTHER' theme remained persistently high (increasing slightly from 28% to 29%), Week 4 saw a notable reshuffling in the prominence of specific policy areas compared to Week 3:

- **Economic Policy:** Saw a significant *decrease* in relative share (21% -> 16%). While the **Cost of Living Crisis** remained a central pillar (as noted in the Week 4 report's top themes), the *specific focus* on economic policy debates may have lessened relative to other surging themes.
- **Housing & Infrastructure:** Also saw a *decrease* (15% -> 12%). The intense focus driven by major housing announcements in Week 3 appears to have subsided slightly in relative terms, though it remained a critical issue. The narrative perhaps shifted back from specific *new* policy critiques to the enduring, systemic **Housing Affordability Crisis**.
- **Climate & Energy:** Experienced a significant *increase* (5% -> 9%). This likely reflects the LNP's **EV rebate flip-flop**, which generated considerable news and likely fuelled online debate about policy consistency, the cost of climate action, and the viability of the energy transition. Skepticism surrounding the Coalition's nuclear proposal continued to be a strong undercurrent, as noted in the Week 4 report.
- **Social Services:** Saw a substantial *increase* (3% -> 7%). This aligns strongly with Labor's announcement of the **"Building Australia's Future: Labor's Commitment to Women" package**, particularly its focus on universal early childhood education and women's health. The Week 4 report highlights discussions on NDIS, welfare adequacy, and worker rights ('Right to Disconnect', WFH), suggesting these gained more traction alongside the new announcements.
- **National Security & Immigration:** Showed a slight *increase* (13% -> 14%), maintaining its high prominence. This likely reflects the LNP's pledge to **boost defence spending** and the announcement of their **"Operation Safer Communities" crime crackdown**. These policies directly fed into discussions around defence strategy (AUKUS costs were already a theme) and community safety/policing effectiveness, which were identified as key sub-themes in Week 4. The persistent linkage of **migration levels to housing and infrastructure pressure** also continued.
- **Healthcare:** Saw a small *increase* (4% -> 5%), likely connected to Labor's **Women's Health Package** announcement, potentially amplified by the concurrent media reporting

on “medical misogyny”. This aligns with the Week 4 report’s focus on access issues (GPs, mental health, specialists) and proposed Medicare expansions.

- **Industry & Manufacturing / Education & Skills:** Remained relatively low and stable (around 2-3% each), suggesting they were not major focus areas driven by Week 4 news cycles.

Shift in Discussion Nuance:

- **Political Conduct & Strategy (‘OTHER’):** While the overall percentage was stable, the critiques within this theme likely sharpened around specific events. The LNP’s EV policy reversal and the skepticism surrounding their public service cut clarification (Canberra focus) probably fuelled the Week 4 report’s noted emphasis on “**critiques of political conduct,**” “**policy reversals,**” “**candidate quality,**” and “**campaign competence or chaos.**” The “Trumpism” comparisons likely persisted, applied to campaign tactics and rhetoric.
- **From Housing Policy Detail to Broader Crises:** Week 3 was heavily dominated by reactions to specific, large-scale housing policy announcements. Week 4, while still highly concerned with housing, saw a relative dip in this theme and the broader Economic Policy theme. This suggests the conversation perhaps broadened again to encompass the *overall* cost of living and the *systemic* nature of the housing crisis, alongside the newer policy focuses in climate, social services, and national security introduced during the week.

Conclusion:

While the foundational anxieties around cost of living, housing affordability, and political disillusionment remained central, the relative focus of Australian Reddit political discussion shifted significantly between Week 3 and Week 4. The specific housing policy debates prominent in Week 3 became less dominant relative to emerging discussions spurred by Week 4’s announcements concerning **climate/energy policy (EVs), social services (women’s package, childcare), national security (defence spending, crime), and healthcare (women’s health)**. Critiques of political strategy and perceived policy inconsistency also appeared amplified in Week 4.

11.2 Acknowledgement

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

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