



committee for
**frankston and
mornington peninsula**

2025 Student Voice Forum – Report

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The Committee for Frankston & Mornington Peninsula (CFMP) is the peak advocacy body for the region.

We are an independent, non-partisan, member-based organisation which works beyond party politics to enhance the social, economic, and environmental sustainability of our region.

We work collaboratively across industry, business, not-for-profits, and local government to influence a better Peninsula.

As part of the *Committee for Frankston & Mornington Peninsula's Strategic Plan 2025-2030*, our guiding principles include:

“To partner with schools and education providers and ensure youth in our region are represented in forums, roundtables and policy discussions facilitated by CFMP.”

As the peak advocacy body for our region, we take our role in empowering our region's future leaders seriously – and we're delighted to be able to offer valuable forums for our school members and student leaders throughout the year.

This forum consists of two significant Committee-facilitated events which were attended by local representatives from all levels of government and business leaders from Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula.

- **31 March, 2025**
School Leaders Presentation Event

- **20 June, 2025**
Student Voice Forum



At the Committee's **March School Leaders Presentation Event**, student leaders from CFMP member schools responded to the following topic:

"This federal election, the Australian Government's number one priority should be..."

Student leaders spoke on topics including:

- *Violence against women*
- *Climate Crisis and Climate Change*
- *Youth disengagement with politics*
- *Funding and support for the arts*
- *Cost of living challenges for young people*
- *Mental health support and funding*
- *Student University debts*
- *Energy and nuclear power*
- *Economic opportunities for young people*
- *Rental affordability and homelessness*

The responses from students were both outstanding and thought-provoking.

All Members of Parliament and candidates were then given the opportunity to respond to each presentation and comment on key issues raised.

These topics then formed the basis of what Student Voice forum held in June would cover, when students would be provided a greater opportunity to directly engage with and provide feedback to locally elected representatives.

Across both events, we were pleased to be able to host as part of these forums the following local representatives across all three levels of government:

- *Jodie Belyea MP, the Federal Member for Dunkley*
- *Zoe McKenzie MP, the Federal Member for Flinders*
- *Paul Edbrooke MP, the State Member for Frankston*
- *Paul Mercurio MP, the State Member for Hastings*
- *Chris Crewther MP, the State Member for Mornington*
- *Cr Emily Green, Frankston City Council*
- *Cr Max Patton, Mornington Peninsula Shire Council*
- *2025 Liberal Candidate for Dunkley, Nathan Conroy*
- *2025 Labor Candidate for Flinders, Sarah Race*
- *2025 Independent Candidate for Flinders, Ben Smith*

Committee Member schools that participated across both events included:

- *Frankston High School*
- *Flinders Christian Community College*
- *Balcombe Grammar*
- *Mt Eliza Secondary College*
- *Woodleigh School*
- *Mornington Secondary College*
- *Peninsula Grammar*
- *Toorak College*
- *Foundation College*



At the **Student Voice Forum held in June**, the Committee ensured that student voices were listened to.

We provided students with direct access with key local decision-makers and local representatives, and facilitated workshops and an open panel Q&A.

The Workshops covered five key areas that were raised as critical issues at the School Leaders Presentation Event, including:

- 1. The Environment, climate change, and renewable energy – What difference can we make as individuals and as a region?*
- 2. Cost of living challenges for young people are ignored, our HECS debts are too high, and there are far fewer economic opportunities for young people in 2025.*
- 3. Gender, Age and mental health: Tackling the scourge of domestic violence and violence against women, and better funding and support for mental health.*

4. *Young people care about politics less than ever before. Is this true? How do we fix it or make it more engaging and impactful for youth particularly in our region?*
5. *Housing – how do we deal with the challenge of getting young people into their first home? Is the great Australian dream out of reach for the next generation of young people on the peninsula?*

Our workshop facilitators, led by Committee board members and business leaders, prompted conversations about solutions, proposals, initiatives and responses to some of these key issues.



The Environment, climate change, and renewable energy – What difference can we make as individuals and as a region?

Discussion points & actions
More funding should be provided for the Container Deposit Scheme
More education in schools on waste management and native plant production
Create grassroots campaigns to help young people get involved in cleaning up their local communities, speak out on climate change, and participate in environmental advocacy efforts
Promote environmental awareness within school systems and what impact individual students can have in their community
Promote environmental practices that promote taking care of the environment and not impose schemes
Provide connections between schools and local government that raise awareness on local environmental concerns

Cost of living challenges for young people are ignored, our HECS debts are too high, and there are far fewer economic opportunities for young people in 2025.

Discussion points & actions
The biggest economic challenge for young people is housing affordability
Culturally, tall poppy syndrome has a negative impact on society. We don't do enough to celebrate economic successes of people.
HECS debt remains an enormous challenge for young people anticipating to go to University

Young people care about politics less than ever before. Is this true? How do we fix it or make it more engaging and impactful for youth particularly in our region?

Discussion points & actions
<p>Young people feel disengaged for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative news cycle and media coverage • Can't vote under 18, so not a concern until we're older • Politics is often short-sighted • Young people feel overlooked by decision-makers • Major issues for political parties are not directed towards young people
Promoting young people to leadership positions will make a positive impact on political engagement among young people
Compulsory voting is in place but there is not compulsory political education in schools
Young people feel disengaged with local government because there is a misunderstanding of what responsibilities local government has, and, it can be seen as less significant to day-to-day lives than other levels of government
The representation of young people in local government is far too low
Schools should promote more opportunities for students to engage with politics and government
It is often viewed as taboo to talk about 'who you vote for'. This closes frank discussions about politics. Schools can be a place to encourage open conversations about politics.
Differences of opinion should be welcomed and encouraged as they help build better ideas across the board

Gender, Age and mental health: Tackling the scourge of domestic violence and violence against women, and better funding and support for mental health.

Discussion points & actions
Advocacy around males/young boys who are present in family violence (unknown data). This also relates to an under-representation in support available for young men adjusting to harsh societal, machismo norms
Further education on family violence required in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct intervention, support and education within schools • Responses to domestic violence • Ongoing support rather than crisis intervention • Reporting more of the consequences • Providing support to teachers
Sharing experiences to support mental health interventions, including hearing from people of all ages and promoting further awareness
Promote enhanced connections between family and friends with initiatives and regular mental health checks
Mandate student-led initiatives in schools to support mental health
Suicide is the leading cause of death in Australia for people aged 18 – 45, yet the public outcry, pressure and policy intervention doesn't exist like it does on other health issues
The mental health benefits of having good physical health should be better communicated and educated to young people. The relationship is crucial to having positive health outcomes generally.
Young students have a feeling of apathy to some issues because it can be hard to see the difference they are making in certain fields
Excelling and working hard during VCE is important, but it can come at the cost of young students' mental health

Housing – how do we deal with the challenge of getting young people into their first home? Is the great Australian dream out of reach for the next generation of young people on the peninsula?

Discussion points & actions
Rapid growth in population is contributing to the housing crisis
Unattainable expectations for young people wishing to own a large home, with a backyard, lots of bedrooms etc.
Status and wealth is tied to property ownership. There needs to be a cultural shift in this space
Community is more important than a big home for young people. They would prefer to live in a smaller home close to cities and activity centres with a real sense of community.
Access to housing affects every other facet of your life, including your health and wellbeing, standard of living, mental health, loneliness, and connectedness to community
Local government should do more to make more homes available. This can be done by releasing land/fast tracking appropriate developments.
Most students felt they would need assistance in buying their first home because it is not possible they can do it on their own
Government could provide greater incentives and subsidies for young people getting into small homes or apartments
Repercussions of not being able to afford a place to live include re-assessing career choices, larger university debts + economic pressures which would put young people off trying to get into the housing market
The local housing market on the Mornington Peninsula is expensive, and rising costs will only discourage young people to look at living where they grew up. Many will move to inner city to rent, or further out to buy.
The government should increase the first home buyers grant to make it more appropriate for young people seeking to get into the market
In school there should be more education and studies on home ownership
Shared housing developments, like that exist within Europe and Asia, are what young people would be happy to see here in Australia. This is because they are more connected to communities which is important for students.

Summary, key findings and action points

Across the two forums facilitated by the Committee for Frankston & Mornington Peninsula, more than 60 students from nine local schools participated and provided their insights as student leaders.

At each event, students were able to directly raise with local MP's and councillors what issues student leaders from Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula would like their local representatives to advocate for with decision makers at local, state and federal government level.

Key findings from this year's forum includes:

1. The top issue for student leaders in our region is housing affordability.
 - i. Many feel they will require assistance to buy their first home.
 - ii. Many believe the expectations of home ownership are different to the previous generation. Young people are likely to be more comfortable in smaller builds with community links.
 - iii. Many expressed specific concern about the local housing market and its affordability, which may see some priced out of their own home towns.
2. Students would like to see more direct action and support for mental health and domestic violence programs within schools.
3. The prospect of a significant, burdensome HECS debt is a worry shared by many students.
4. Disengagement with politics from young people can be addressed by better education of politics in schools and promoting young people into leadership positions across all levels of government.
5. Students are interested in taking direction environmental action locally and are seeking to partner with local government or environmental organisations to provide practical responses to local environmental issues.

The Committee for Frankston & Mornington Peninsula will deliver this report to all attendees and local representatives.

The Committee would like to thank our school members and student leaders for their leadership and passion for our region.

We look forward to hosting these opportunities again in 2026.

Josh Sinclair

CEO

Committee for Frankston & Mornington Peninsula

Statements from Attendees

“The School Leaders Voice Forum was an insightful and empowering experience. It gave us the rare opportunity to speak directly with local politicians, councillors, and business leaders about the issues that matter most to young people. It was incredibly meaningful to have our voices genuinely heard, and it will be great to see how the key points we raised are reflected in future discussions at council and in Parliament.”

Blake Alford-Ryan – Frankston High School

“The inaugural CFMP Student Voice Forum provided an empowering platform for our student leaders to directly engage with representatives from every level of government and share their perspectives on the issues that matter most to them. Youth perspectives are often overlooked; however, the Forum served as a powerful reminder to all in attendance of the unique value young people bring to the policy conversations shaping Australia’s future. Above all, those gathered genuinely honoured the role young people can play in our democratic process—an opportunity the students felt and sincerely appreciated.”

Jon Christie – Frankston High School (Staff)