

Young Australians and consumption

Young Australians are more engaged than we are given credit for. We think about why we buy the things we do. We consider the social, environmental and economic implications of how we travel. We understand the global market and understand the conditions people working to bring you your favourite brand of shoes or your favourite t-shirt face.

If you are a young Australian, you have most likely thought about these issues. It is also likely that you would be willing to do something positive about issues such as child labour, environmental damage, air and water pollution, and fairer trade.

Research suggests that young people with better access to information, the support of friends, family and other community members, and who are not confused by conflicting messages in the media about consuming versus making the world a better place are best prepared to tackle these issues.

A recently released report, titled *Sustainable Consumption: Young Australians as Agents of Change*, explores the influences on the consumption behaviour of young Australians and how they can be more effectively supported to lead their communities towards more sustainable consumption.

Sustainable Consumption developed from a growing awareness and concern about our over-consumption and its impact on global issues such as: health problems, environmental degradation, third-world poverty and human rights abuses. In commissioning the report, the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme also recognised that young people are demonstrating leadership in finding more sustainable ways of living and that they are more aware and concerned about social and environmental issues than any previous generation.

Sustainable Consumption: Young Australians as Agents of Change explores in depth the motivations underpinning youth consumption, tapping in to contemporary views of young Australians. It demonstrates that there are many conflicting messages about consumption and diverse influences on young people's behaviour, yet many want to 'do better'. The report presents many examples of good practices in Australia and around the globe where young people are at the centre of moves towards more sustainable ways of living, and are supported to gain the knowledge, confidence, and skills necessary to be effective agents of change.

Mr Cameron Neil, CEO of IYPF and one of the principal authors of the report, speaks passionately about applying the research. "Young Australians understand the interconnectedness of our world and that what they buy, how they travel, the energy and water they use, often has a negative impact on others and the planet. They are motivated to do something about it. Increasingly they are realising that others are not going to do it for them and that they have to take the lead".

A growing working group of young Australians, individuals and organisational supporters are planning to extend a capacity building program developed as part of the report into a wider national training and grants scheme for young Australian sustainable consumption change agents.

Interested individuals and organisations can learn more about the project, the Australian working group, and how to get involved by visiting the following URL

<http://www.iypf.org/IYPF-projects.htm#YouthSC> or by contacting youth.sc@iypf.org.