

Annual Report 2024 - 2025



Next25™

Acknowledgement of Country

Next25 acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

Where Next25 uses the terms Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s) and First Nations people(s) in this report, we do not intend to reduce or imply homogeneity among the distinct Nations, languages and cultures that make up our shared lands.

For more information, visit next25.org.au. If you have any questions or comments, please email chloe@next25.org.au.

Contents

The Year That Was	4
Letter from our Chair – Alexandra Burt	4
Board of Directors	4
Letter from our CEO – Chloë Spackman	5
The Numbers	6
Our year on a page	6
Next 25 income and expenses	7
Improving How Australia Makes Its Future	8
Think – Our Research	9
Our Research Strategy	9
Understanding Barriers and Enablers to Constructive Discussion on Contested National Issues	11
Do – Our Initiatives	13
Trust in Government	14
10 Years of Leadership: 2015-2025	14
Constructive Discussion	24
What we're working on now	27
Engagement	28
Webinars	29
Constructive Conversations at the Social Impact Summit	30
Next25 in the Media	31
Future Engagements	31
Team	32
The Years Ahead	33
Our Supporters	34

The Year That Was

Letter from our Chair – Alexandra Burt

Consolidation, growth and momentum. These are the words that best characterise the past year for Next25. They are solid ambitions by any measure but, in times of immense change and uncertainty, they are also impressive achievements.

As with all systems work, there are inextricable links between these three areas of consolidation, growth and momentum which are powerfully exemplified by our two key programs aimed at restoring trust in government: *Leadership and Improving Democracy: Transforming Parliament for Women*. Both programs have become the credible and established vehicles for self-motivated parliamentarians wanting to enhance and elevate their impact. The number of programs being run is slowly increasing as is the number of participants in each course. In a time-poor world, this is encouraging. And, as a signal of the extraordinary value of the programs, Next25 continues to receive requests for extension of this important work, whether that be through the development of an alumni program, one-on-one coaching, or bigger explorations such as dedicated programs for specific cohorts. *Improving Democracy: Transforming Parliament for Women* was born out of such exploration, when four cross-party women in the NSW Parliament approached Next25 to develop a targeted program to improve the experience of women in their home parliament, fostering greater collaboration, positive relationships and better outcomes for the Parliament. Enquiries for this type of work continue to grow and are the proof that, by improving the capability of the system, the system can (and wants to) improve itself.

Also in this period, Next25 has made strong progress in our focus area of Constructive Discussion. For this phase of the project, Next25 has been working with the Transdisciplinary School at UTS. Using a critical real-world example (the Sydney housing crisis), Next25 and UTS teams have been testing methods and frameworks that best enable genuinely constructive discussion on contentious issues. The real-world testing is important for evaluating the success or otherwise of the process and will inform future phases. By making the work-in-progress public through webinars and online posts, all involved hope to bring greater awareness to the possibilities of using trusted and comprehensive discussion frameworks in other contested spaces. It's another step in improving the overall capability of the system.

Making all of this happen is our small yet incredible team, led by Chloë Spackman, to whom we owe a tremendous vote of thanks. Now well and truly settled into the CEO role, Chloë has been the driving force behind the consolidation, growth and momentum that is outlined in the pages of this report. With support from our long-standing Director of Finance, Paula Steyer, Chloë has onboarded terrific new team members who are already making positive and progressive contributions and elevating the level of thinking and application across the organisation. As they hit their stride, the momentum will only continue.

I would like to thank my fellow directors who are on this journey with us. This year we farewelled Nigel Andrade and Rachel Peck. Both were seasoned supporters of Next25, and we are thankful for their contributions of wisdom, insight and encouragement. We welcomed Elina Wilson and Enrico Rizzon to the board, also both long-time supporters of the organisation, and it is truly wonderful to have them joining me, Ralph Ashton and Taryn Williams at our board table.

Finally, on behalf of the board and team at Next25, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all our donors, supporters and subscribers. Each of you plays a role in making the work that we do both relevant and achievable. By sharing our belief that Australia can make a better future for itself, you are part of our success.



Alexandra Burt
Chair of the Board

Board of Directors



Nigel Andrade
Partner and Member of
the Board of Directors,
Kearney
(retired from the board, October 2024)



Ralph Ashton
Founder and Non-Executive
Director, Next25



Attila Brungs
Vice-Chancellor and
President, UNSW Sydney
(retired from the board, July 2024)



Merlin Crossley
Deputy Vice-Chancellor
(Academic Quality), UNSW
Sydney and Professor of
Molecular Biology
(retired from the board, July 2024)



Rachel Peck
Principal, Peck Von Hartel
Architects
(retired from the board, October 2024)



Enrico Rizzon
Vice-President and Partner,
Kearney



Taryn Williams
Tech Entrepreneur, Founder
and Board Member



Elina Wilson
Director, SALT Catalyst

Letter from our CEO – Chloë Spackman



Chloë Spackman
CEO

Next25’s mission is bold and ambitious, as it must be, to meet the challenges Australia faces in this time of polycrisis. But our approach, our commitment to progress, has a different character. We are patient, resilient, and humble. We mobilise quickly and act decisively when the moment demands it, but we also make time for critical reflection. As a learning organisation, we strive to be transparent about both our successes and our setbacks. We are the proverbial tortoise: steady, strategic, and built for the long haul. This is invaluable in febrile times.

This year, we made a recommitment to two principles in our mission to ensure Australia has what it takes to make the future its people want:

1. The long-term — embracing the steadiness, patience and resilience-building required to create lasting change, and
2. Enriching the social soil — the quality of relationships and connections, the invisible networks that, like mycelial networks in soil, enable ideas and movements to take root and flourish.

Ten Years of Next25 Leadership

As we created this Annual Report, it was encouraging to reflect on the systems transformations that have taken root over a decade of **Next25 Leadership**. In particular, the initiatives catalysed by cross-party and cross-jurisdiction networks of alumni who are driven to transform the political system and restore trust in government. Initiatives like **Transforming Parliament for Women**, which now counts 17% of currently sitting women parliamentarians as alumnae.

I am also encouraged by the significant cultural shift around politicians accessing professional and leadership development support. When you consider the investment in developing senior leaders in most other sectors, the lack of resourcing for parliamentarians highlights a serious cultural blind spot.

In January 2026, the **2025 Better Politics** Index was released. It ranked Australia number two for its “strong political leadership entrepreneur ecosystem”. We are proud of the role we have played in developing that ecosystem.

Constructive Discussion: An Idea Whose Time Has Come

This same ecosystem-building approach underpins our growing work on **Constructive Discussion**. We first identified this as one of four major opportunities for Australia’s flourishing future in our **Recoded research study** in 2021.

Since then, we’ve seen a growing appetite for our research, thought leadership and programmatic contributions to understanding and unlocking Constructive Discussions. Now, in 2026, in the face of declining trust, social cohesion and democratic resilience alongside the rise of loneliness, mental health challenges and polarisation, there is a strong ecosystem of organisations and people asking: how do we rise above the fear, algorithms and bad faith actors and create the conditions for constructive discussions across difference?

We are thrilled that in 2026, we are poised to launch new collaborations and partnerships, working with new communities to extend our work in enabling constructive discussions.

Looking Ahead

Thank you to the Next25 team, Board of Directors, and our wider circle of partners, contributors, and supporters for the diverse and inspiring skills, wise counsel, and genuine investment in Next25’s nuance, depth of strategy, and long-term vision. And for the fun we have while tackling big, hairy challenges.

And thank you to our visionary donors who connect with Next25’s ambition, mission and methodology with intellectual curiosity and trust.

We head into a new year clear-eyed and pragmatic about the challenges, yet optimistic and with a sense of agency.

Onwards.

The Numbers

30

Next25 newsletters sent

7,051

newsletter subscribers

4

thought leadership events

18

Parliamentarians took part in our programs in 2025

1

inaugural Research Fellow and Project Manager role created to work across Next25 and UTS, and turbocharge our praxis and the impact of our Constructive Discussion collaboration

10.5%

of all sitting parliamentarians are program alumni

1 in 4

Over 1 in 4 NSW women parliamentarians have participated in Improving Democracy: Transforming Parliament for Women

16.5%

of WA parliamentarians have participated in our Leadership programs

10 years

of delivering our Leadership programs to parliamentarians to reconnect to their values, strengthen their capability to respond to the challenges of the 21st century, and restore trust in the political system

1 in 2

NSW women parliamentarians have participated in a Next25 program

100%

of participants would recommend Leadership and Improving Democracy: Transforming Parliament for Women programs to colleagues

3

Programs for parliamentarians run

1

inaugural nationwide Improving Democracy: Transforming Parliament for Women program

1

launch of an inaugural WA-focused program for women parliamentarians

2

Improving Democracy: Transforming Parliament for Women alumnae workshops

5

parliamentarians engaged in ongoing coaching

104

alumni of our programs for parliamentarians

2

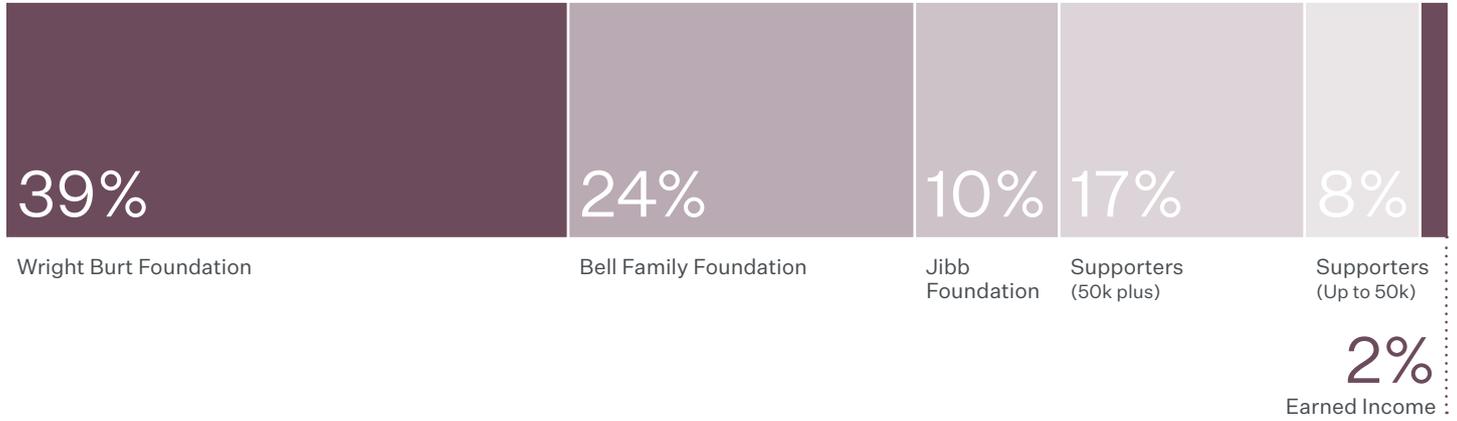
research reports

2

public webinars

In the 2024/25 financial year, Next25 received income of \$1.03m, broken down as follows:

Income By Type

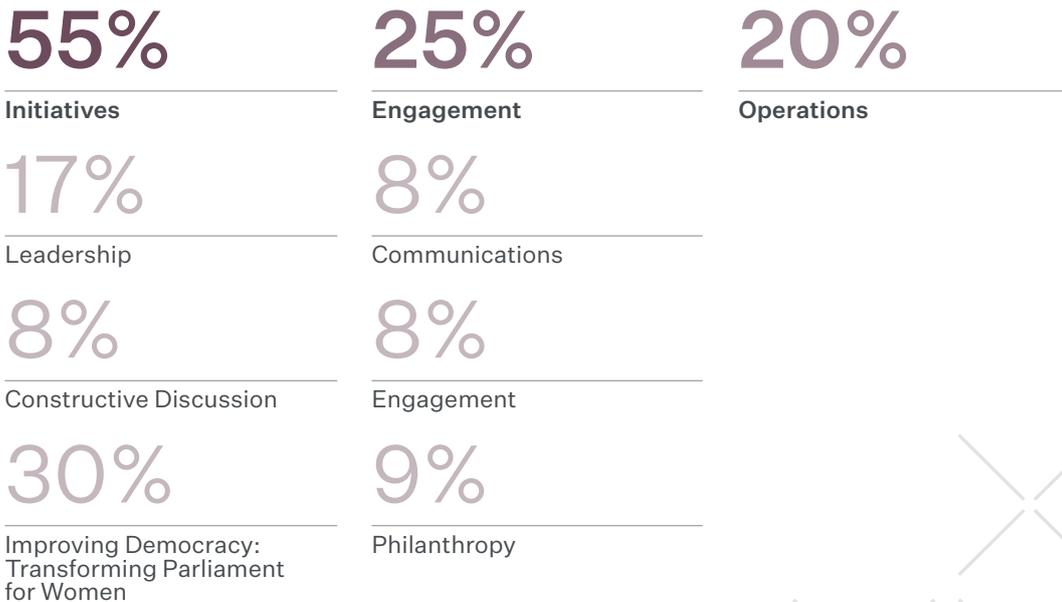


In the 2024/25 financial year Next25 incurred expenses of \$810k broken down as follows:

Expenses By Type



Expenses By Program



Improving How Australia Makes Its Future

Next25 is an independent, not-for-profit, think-and-do tank. Our mission is to ensure Australia has what it takes to make the future its people want. With rigorous research, trusted engagement, and ground-breaking initiatives, we uncover and address levers to shift deep contributing factors of Australia's biggest issues.

We continue to test, learn, and adapt to ensure we are contributing to Australia having what it takes to make a strong future. This is our think-and-do tank model:

THINK: Our Research

We engage the public and experts to answer three big questions:

Q1. What's the future Australia wants?

Q2. Are we on track?

Q3. If not, what are the deep contributing factors of Australia's underperformance and levers to shift them?

DO: Our Initiatives

We work with others to improve how Australia makes the future:

– We build game-changing initiatives around levers that address the deep contributing factors of Australia's underperformance

– We engage leaders and the public so they understand what's at stake, see that better is possible, want to contribute to the solution, and know where to start

– We support leaders to build their own initiatives

THINK: Our Research

Our Research Strategy

Our research strategy builds on the strong foundations established by our Navigator and Recoded research programs and has been refined in our 2026–28 Review and Refresh. Together, the research objectives, paradigm, and program define a scalable model that prioritises mission-critical projects and strengthens the boundaries of our research practice.

Emerging from the 2023 strategy, we find ourselves entering a new research phase, with a focus on strengthening University partnerships and collaborations as marked by the appointment of a Research Fellow and Project Manager in a newly created, joint role between Next25 and the University of Technology Sydney (UTS).

Research Objectives

Ensuring Next25's research is fit for purpose starts with a fundamental question: why do we do research? We conduct research to achieve one or more of six interconnected objectives:

- **Dynamic Problem Validation** – Continuously explore what futures Australians want, recognising that these desires are diverse and evolving, and assess Australia's readiness to realise them.
- **Understand the Problem and Identify Key Stakeholders** – Develop a nuanced understanding of the problem within its broader context, determining what is most urgent, relevant, and who is most affected or best placed to lead or influence change.
- **Identify Levers and Activate Change Agents** – Identify potential actors and levers for change through our research into deep contributing factors, and engage the key actors needed to activate them.
- **Support Action** – Translate research insights into actionable recommendations that support Next25's engagement and initiatives, equipping system actors with knowledge about where and how to intervene most effectively.
- **Evaluate Impact and Learn** – Consider the outcomes and influence of our research activities and understand their contribution to the wider future-making system.
- **Advance the Theory and Practice of Future-Making** – Contribute to the evolving discourse and practice of future-making by sharing reflections, frameworks, and lessons that shape how change is understood and pursued.

Research Paradigm

Next25's research paradigm is pragmatic, engaging with social processes and people, both of which are inherently variable and dynamic. Our knowledge contributions continue to use a range of practical strategies to effect change, underpinning a hybrid, mixed-methods research model that includes surveys, semi-structured interviews, case studies, and transdisciplinary methods.

Our paradigm supports three interconnected modes of research:

- **Fundamental Research** – to generate new knowledge and deepen theoretical understanding.
- **Applied Research** – to address real-world problems and develop practical interventions.
- **Challenge-led Research** – to respond to urgent societal issues and co-create knowledge with relevant stakeholders.



Our Suite of Research Programs

Collectively, Next25's Research answers our three think-tank questions, supports action in our do-tank, and contributes to wider impact and engagement. Under our refined strategy, our research programs include:

Core Programs

- **Navigator** – Next25 collects and analyses data to know if we're on track to the future Australia wants, scaling sample size and incorporating qualitative components to deepen insight.
- **Recorded** – Next25 engages experts and decision-makers to identify and understand opportunities to improve how Australia makes its future and guide the development of initiatives to address them, using a transdisciplinary research approach.
- **Praxis** – Next25 documents its method, impact, and lessons so we can improve our approach, transform reflection into actionable insight, and guide both Recorded and Navigator.
- **Case Studies** – Deep dives into particular initiatives, internal or external, to examine complex phenomena and situate our findings within broader systems.

Support Programs

- **Comparative Analysis** – Tracks change over time, reviewing Navigator survey data every 3–5 years to uncover long-term and seasonal trends.
- **Social Network Analysis** – Identifies the critical powerbrokers and gatekeepers best placed to create or foster systemic change.
- **Dashboard** – Presents research findings interactively online, extending insight and engagement.

These seven projects form a cohesive research ecosystem, with multidirectional data flow and feedback loops, enabling learnings to be reintegrated across programs. Engagement remains both a method and outcome of research, shaping program design, public discourse, and Next25's impact.

Our Research Network

Next25's partnership with the UTS TD (Transdisciplinary) School supports our "think-and-do" strategy on Constructive Discussion. This collaboration enhances our research capacity, provides access to university infrastructure and ethics processes, enables co-authorship and grant opportunities, and facilitates emerging external partnerships. We are also in the early stages of developing similar partnerships with other leading Australian universities.

This refreshed Research Strategy reaffirms Next25's commitment to rigorous, action-oriented research in the public interest, pairing credible inquiry with practical impact to help Australia build the civic capability it needs to shape the future its people want.

What Are the Levers to Shift Deep Contributing Factors?

Building on over a decade of work to restore Australians' trust in government, Next25 has identified five levers to shift deep contributing factors:

- **Galvanising National Identity** – Articulate an honest, inclusive, and inspiring national identity.
- **Benchmarks Beyond GDP** – Define success using economic, social, and environmental factors.
- **Constructive Discussion** – Become better at discussing complex and contested issues despite diverse perspectives.
- **Engaged Decision-Making** – Enable Australians to contribute to, and feel represented by, decisions made on their behalf.
- **Trust in Government** – Restore Australians' trust in politics and the public service.

While we engage across all five levers, we are currently concentrating on **Constructive Discussion** and **Trust in Government** in our Do Tank.

Understanding Barriers and Enablers to Constructive Discussion on Contested National Issues

What is Constructive Discussion?

There is no one definition for Constructive Discussion. However, through Next25's research, two working definitions have emerged:

1. The first definition emphasises pragmatism, describing Constructive Discussion as:

“communication that is of useful and beneficial purpose, creating an environment where decision-making better reflects the shared view of the public interest with respect to the common good”.

This definition highlights the power of Constructive Discussion in effectively addressing societal challenges.

2. The second definition focuses on exploration and reflexivity, framing Constructive Discussion as:

“a communicative activity and process where people have the space and opportunity to share perspectives and explore differences in a reflexive, productive manner.”

This perspective prioritises understanding and unpacking underlying values, beliefs, and norms over immediate decision-making.

Our intention is that these complementary definitions allow us to be non-prescriptive, offering a useful springboard to explore what constructive discussion is and how it can be put into practice.



Strengthening Constructive Discussion through Collaboration with UTS

In 2024 and 2025, Next25 deepened its partnership with the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) Transdisciplinary (TD) School to better understand and strengthen Constructive Discussion in Australia. This partnership combines Next25's systems-level research and practice with UTS's academic expertise in transdisciplinary design and complex systems thinking, enabling a rigorous and applied exploration of how Australians can discuss and decide together on the nation's most contested issues.

Through this collaboration, two major research papers were produced that lay the groundwork for practical interventions and long-term change.

The Role of Constructive Discussion in Sydney's Housing System: Unlocking better outcomes through a systemic approach

1. Constructive Discussion: Conceptualising a Framework for Productive Communication Across Personal, Conversational, Institutional and Cultural Spheres (2025, Global Social Challenges Journal)

This paper presents a new, evidence-based framework defining Constructive Discussion across four interconnected spheres — personal, conversational, institutional, and cultural.

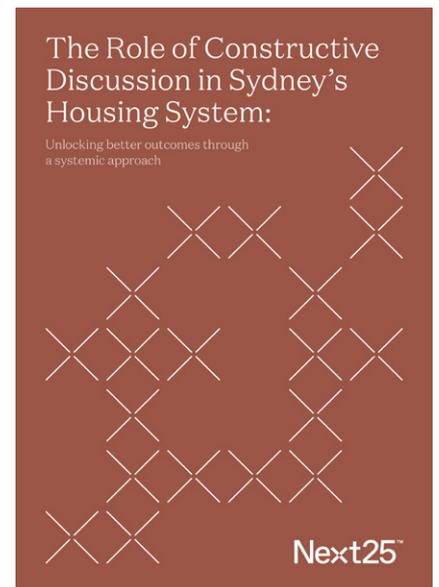
The model helps identify where dialogue breaks down and how to design interventions that foster understanding, trust, and collective problem-solving.

2. Discussion and City-Making: discursive dynamics and opportunities to influence housing outcomes in Sydney, Australia (Soon to be published; available at the above link as a preprint)

Applying the framework to one of Australia's most complex policy challenges, this paper explores how poor communication and fragmented decision-making contribute to Sydney's housing crisis.

Based on interviews with stakeholders from government, business, academia, and community sectors, it identifies both the barriers and opportunities to transform housing policy through more inclusive, constructive dialogue.

Together, these papers demonstrate the power of Constructive Discussion as both a diagnostic and practical tool—one that can help Australia shift from polarisation and gridlock toward collective progress on complex issues.



Read this snapshot overview version of key findings and next steps on the Constructive Discussion and City Making paper [here](#).

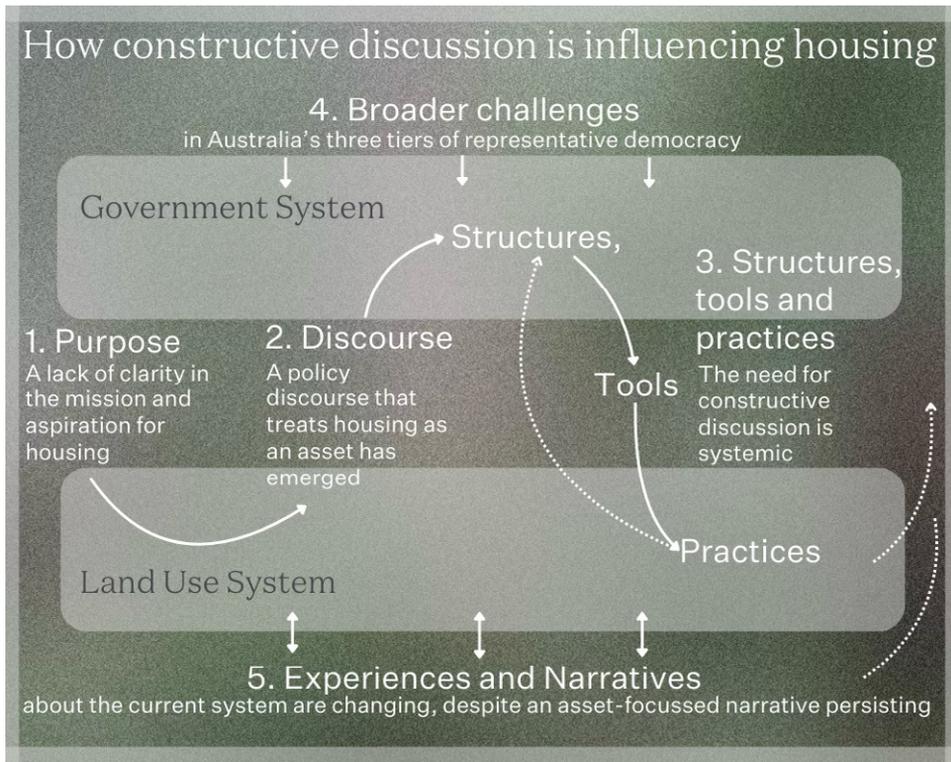


Figure 1:

A systems-level map highlighting the multiple interacting elements shaping our current housing system
Credit: [Samuel Wearne et al, 2024.](#)

Establishing a Dedicated Research Role between Next25 and UTS

To strengthen and embed this growing collaboration, Next25 and UTS appointed a Research Fellow and Project Manager, jointly positioned between Next25 and the UTS TD School.

The role builds on the foundations laid by both organisations, leading the next phase of research to:

- Design and trial safe-to-fail interventions for improving public dialogue
- Evaluate their real-world impact across civic, institutional, and cultural contexts, and
- Translate findings into practical tools for policymakers, practitioners, and communities.

This embedded role marks a milestone in the partnership, transforming an academic collaboration into a dynamic, iterative research ecosystem that directly informs practice and policy.

Looking Ahead: A toolkit to address barriers to Constructive Discussions

In mid-2026, we will release the outcomes of our current collaborative research with UTS, in a report digging into two of the barriers to Constructive Discussions;

- Fragmentation of knowledge and practice, and
- The under-recognition of tacit elements

And offering a toolkit to help people design and host constructive discussions in various contexts on complex and contested issues.

We look forward to sharing more!

DO: Our Initiatives

01	Restore Trust in Government: Leadership	Parliamentarians have an outsized influence on our future but operate in an intense and complex environment with little support. Next25 supports parliamentarians to reconnect to their values and harness their power, not only as individuals in the political system, but also as individuals who can improve the system.
02	Restore Trust in Government: Transforming Parliament for Women	Australia's parliaments do not reflect the diversity of the community. In particular, the culture of politics limits the full and flourishing participation of women. Next25 backs women parliamentarians by empowering them as agents of change and inspiring all parliamentarians to improve politics and the parliamentary system for women.
03	Enable Constructive Discussion	There are many possible reasons why it's hard to constructively discuss contested issues in Australia - and there are many possible solutions. Through our own work and through a partnership with a leading Australian university, Next25 is drawing on transdisciplinary experts to better understand the problem, test potential solutions, and choose one to implement at scale.

Trust in Government

10 Years of Leadership: 2015-2025

This year, Next25 celebrated a significant milestone - 10 years supporting Australian parliamentarians through our Leadership program. This is Next25's longest-standing initiative working towards restoring Australians' trust in government. Leadership is designed to support parliamentarians to reconnect to their values, build their leadership capability, and improve the political system more broadly.

Across 10 years of running Leadership:

100% of respondents say Leadership improved their ability to lead as an elected official

96% rate the course 8 out of 10 or above

100% would recommend Leadership to their colleagues

100% say the program improved:

- Understanding of their leadership and influence in order to improve their effectiveness
- Their power to drive change
- Understanding of their role and agency in changing or influencing the political system
- Empathy and understanding of their own biases and preferences
- Their ability to address complex challenges from a new perspective

Interestingly, "mandatory induction training" and "more constructive conversation between journalists and parliamentarians" remain our alumni's top picks for "the most effective way to improve how parliaments (both federal and state) make decisions in the long-term interest of society", further validating the importance of Next25's work in these areas.

DO: Our Initiatives

Number One Reflection from 10 Years of Leadership programs for Parliamentarians

CEO, Chloë Spackman, had been working on Next25's initiatives to Restore Trust in Government almost since their inception.



Chloë Spackman
CEO

“Looking back over a decade of impact in our programs supporting Australian parliamentarians to transform self and system and restore trust with the public, I am particularly encouraged by the immense shift I have witnessed in terms of the cultural and financial barriers to politicians accessing professional and leadership development support.

When we started out, there was a lot of stigma attached to the idea of politicians needing “leadership” support. There was also a dearth of options for financial support to access quality training, and a lot of fear about using what was available. When you consider the investment in

developing senior leaders in most other sectors, it makes the lack of resourcing for parliamentarians remarkable and it shines a light on a serious cultural blind spot. While there is still much more that is required—and possible—in addressing these barriers, I have seen a genuine shift in dismantling them.

In the early days, we were the only organisation offering bespoke training to politicians. Now, other complementary options have emerged. This is systems change in action, and Next25 and its partners are incredibly proud to have contributed to this evolved eco-system of training and support.”

10 years of Leadership

Courses, Coaching, Skills Development and Catalysing systems change initiatives such as Improving Democracy: Transforming Parliament for Women.

- We count over 10% of all currently sitting parliamentarians as alumni, and 17% of currently sitting women parliamentarians as alumnae
- 1 in 2 NSW women parliamentarians have participated in a program
- More than 1 in 4 NSW women parliamentarians have participated in Improving Democracy: Transforming Parliament for Women
- More than 16% of WA parliamentarians have participated in our Leadership programs

Watch a short video on Leadership with alumni testimonials by clicking on the thumbnail to the right.

More testimonials are available [here](#).



Click on the image above to watch a short video on Leadership with alumni testimonials

Highlights from 2024-25

Launch of a mixed Federal, State, and Territory Leadership program

In 2024, we launched our inaugural mixed Leadership program, inviting Federal, State, and Territory Parliamentarians to come together in one program. We see this as an opportunity for MPs to build relationships with politicians from across the country and connect across levels of government. Following a successful pilot, we will be running a second mixed Leadership program in September 2025.

Leadership – September 2024 in Sydney, NSW

Our Leadership program is designed to equip parliamentarians with the skills and insights needed to drive meaningful change. Drawing on Theory U and values-based leadership principles, participants enhance their ability to address complex challenges, understand their biases, and foster a more collaborative political environment.

From 6-7 September, federal and state parliamentarians gathered for an immersive two-day course of intensive learning, discussion, and development. The cohort included independents, as well as Labor and Liberal representatives and hailing from four states: NSW, VIC, TAS, and WA. All participants reported they would recommend the program to colleagues and that the program improved their ability to lead as an elected official.



“Next25 has opened my eyes and mind to an alternative view of political life - it is not hopeless, change is possible and good people are in politics, we just need to nurture them.

– Senator Tammy Tyrrell, Tas, Independent

“This course provides a rare opportunity to remind yourself why you are in parliament, in a neutral context.

– Kate Chaney, WA, Independent

From left to right:

Malcolm Doig, Ruth Forrest, Tammy Tyrrell, Sarah Kaine, Kate Chaney, Ann-Marie Hermans, Linda Williamson, Stephanie Mason, Chloë Spackman.

Programmatic innovations

Over the past year, the team have progressed the potential for Next25 to deliver customised, innovative solutions to address context-specific issues impacting parliamentary leadership. The proposed programs demonstrate the potential of Next25's programs to catalyse systemic change.

Western Australia – Improving Democracy: Transforming Parliament for Women

Conversations with alumni and senior parliamentarians in the Parliament of Western Australia led to the creation of our first offering of Improving Democracy: Transforming Parliament for Women, exclusively for WA women parliamentarians. This program will be held in Perth in late November 2025.

Tasmania – Leadership to Transform Parliament

In February 2025, at the request of one of our program alumnae, Next25 CEO Chloë Spackman and Lisa Doig, Founder and Director of Corporate Evolution, presented a bespoke Leadership program proposal to the Workplace Culture Oversight Committee of the Tasmanian Parliament. Following a positive reception, Next25 and Corporate Evolution have been developing a bespoke cultural transformation program for Tasmanian parliamentarians across the political divide.

Improving Democracy: Transforming Parliament for Women

Transforming the political system from the inside: establishing a nationwide initiative catalysed by Leadership alumnae



Click on the image to view the short video.

Launch of inaugural nationwide program

In January 2025, we held our first nationwide program, expanding the initiative beyond NSW to include women parliamentarians from all jurisdictions across Australia.

This expansion is significant as it aims to foster a more inclusive and representative political environment, addressing systemic biases and empowering women to assume leadership roles, while also creating a national platform for addressing the treatment of women in politics. By equipping female MPs with the tools and support needed to navigate and transform the parliamentary system, the national expansion seeks to be a contributing factor to the restoration of public trust in government.

In addition to welcoming women from parliaments beyond NSW for the first time, mayoral representatives of local governments also joined the program.

The participants were politically and demographically diverse, representing:

- Six political parties
- Three states and two territories
- Six parliaments
- Two local councils
- Ages spanning five decades
- New and experienced parliamentarians: seven serving their first term, one her third, and one her sixth. The mayors have been in office less than a year.
- Previous non-political careers in social work, medicine, adult entertainment, farming, marketing, and education.
- Constituencies ranging from capital cities to remote bushland areas

Some of the participants also achieved historic firsts in their respective fields:

- **First Indigenous woman** to lead a major party
- **The third youngest Senator in Australian history**, the youngest serving Senator, and the first person to wear a Hijab in Federal Parliament
- **The youngest Liberal woman to be elected to the NSW Legislative Council**, and the NSW Liberal Party's first LGBTQI+ woman parliamentarian
- **The first woman president** of the WA Legislative Council
- **The youngest Greens representative** elected to any Australian Parliament.

Nationwide Improving Democracy: Transforming Parliament for Women Launch – Dinner and Conversation with Next25

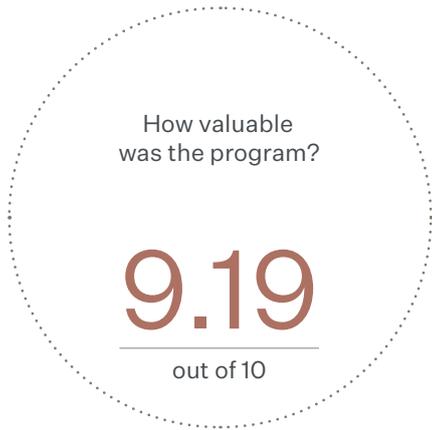
To mark the launch of the nationwide Improving Democracy: Transforming Parliament for Women program, Next25 hosted a dinner and an intimate conversation for program alumnae, participants in the first nationwide program, facilitators, donors, the Next25 team, board members, and changemakers from complementary organisations, including Foundations for Tomorrow, Pathways to Politics, and Women for Election.

The evening's discussion was facilitated, providing an opportunity to practice Constructive Discussion and consider collective efforts to restore trust in government by improving the experience and participation of women. The conversation was punctuated by addresses from Chloë Spackman, Next25 CEO; Lisa Doig and Renu Burr from Corporate Evolution; and Liesl Tesch, NSW MP and Steering Committee Member for Transforming Parliament for Women, who collectively introduced guests to the history, purpose, content, and impact of the Program and facilitated engaging discussions around the table.



The inaugural nationwide Transforming Parliament for Women cohort.

Program outcomes



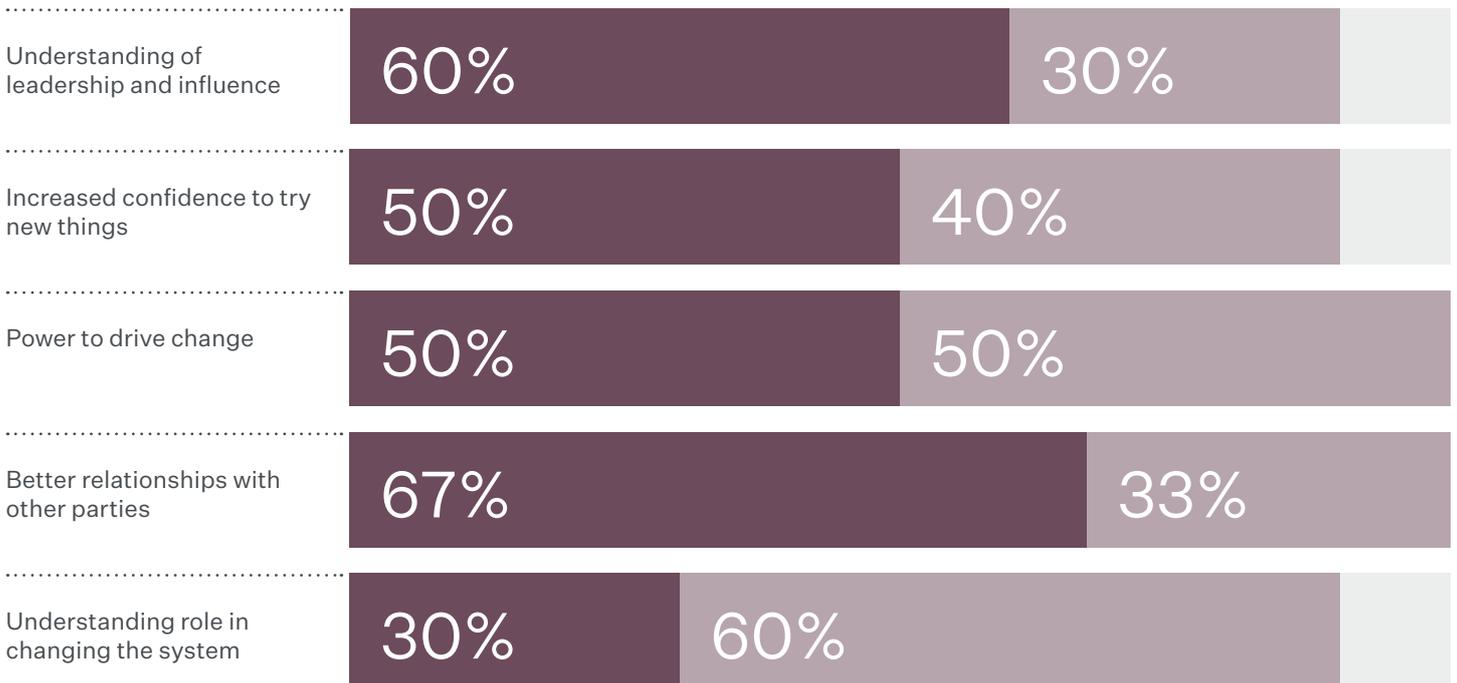
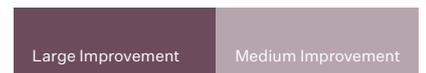
The data collected from the feedback surveys showed that **100% of participants** felt that the workshop improved their ability to lead as an elected official.

A large improvement was reported, on average, in participants' abilities across the following criteria:

- Understanding of your leadership and influence in order to improve your effectiveness
- Capacity to try new things
- Power to drive change
- Relationships with other Parliamentarians
- Empathy and understanding of your own biases and preferences

• **Confidence in the ability of yourself and others to play a role in the transformation of politics**

Percentage of participants reporting Medium to Large improvements across leadership dimensions



Common themes that emerged when parliamentarians were asked to reflect on the value of the programs include:

- 01 Providing time and space to reflect and gain an invaluable perspective
- 02 Practical skills and capacity development that is applicable across professional and personal life, different roles and seasons
- 03 Challenging beliefs, mindsets and behavioural patterns in a way that unlocks and turbo-charges progress
- 04 Bringing clarity to a role that is all-consuming and lacks boundaries by design

How the program has improved my leadership	Most valuable things about the program	Most challenging things about the program
Self-Awareness and Personal Reflection	Connection Across Divides - 'Across the aisle' relationships	Emotional Intensity and Vulnerability
Authenticity and Confidence	Self-Discovery and Transformation - Understanding who you are	Self-Examination and Inner Work
Clarification of Values and Purpose	Vulnerability as Strength - Safe space for authentic sharing	Being Fully Present
Breaking Limiting Beliefs	Collective Power and Solidarity - Feeling of togetherness, we're stronger together	Physical and Mental Exhaustion
Pause and Intentionality	Practical and Empowering Process - Tools and pathways forward	Confronting the Past
Connection and Sisterhood		
Agency and Empowerment		

“I was doubtful about the ability of the small group of diverse women to change the culture of parliament. Now I believe that we really can.”

– Improving Democracy: Transforming NSW Parliament for Women Participant, 2022



“Women in politics is one of the best ways for the world to transform for the better. The transformation workshop is a unique opportunity to support the strength of women in democracy.”

– Selena Uiibo MP, NT Labor

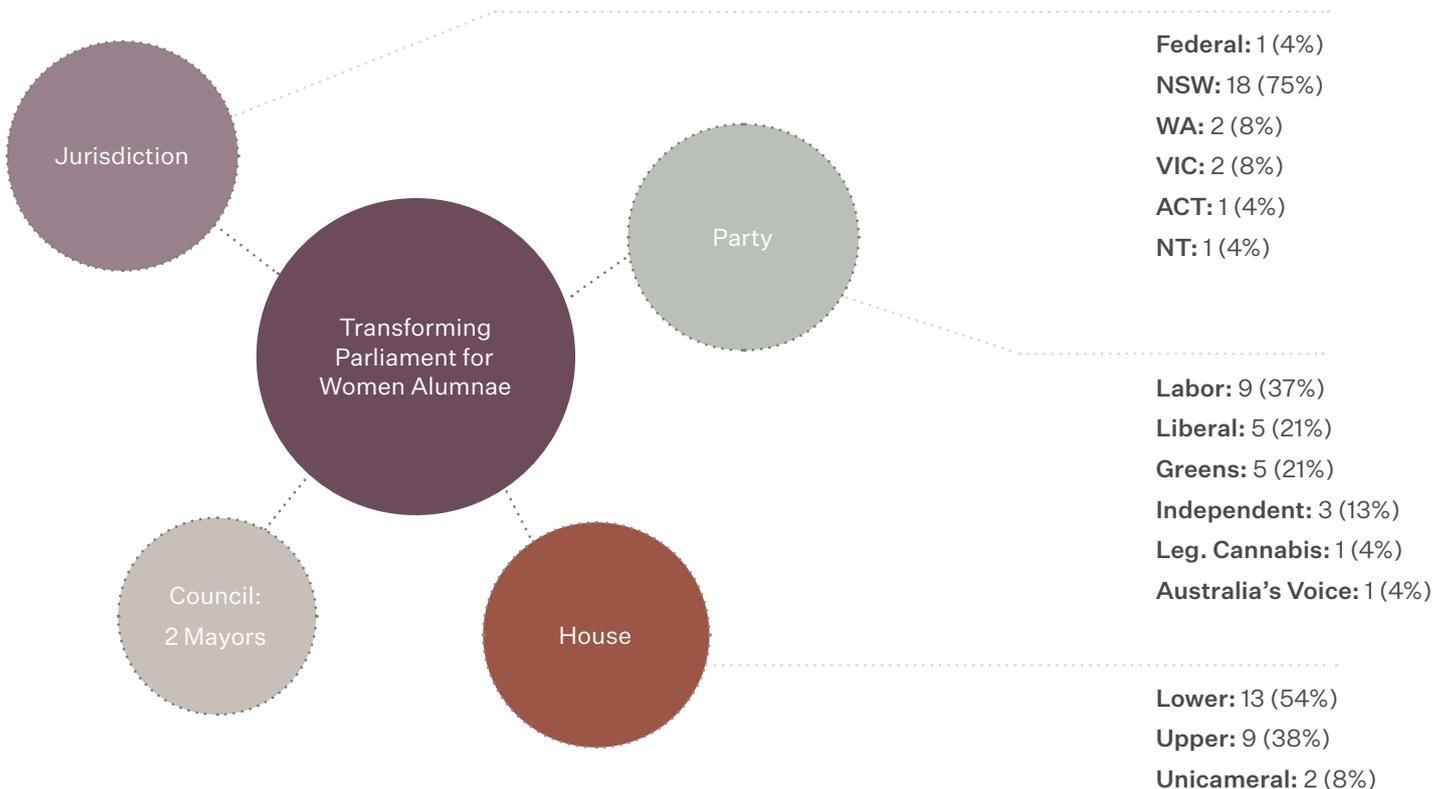
“You don’t often get the time to connect, reflect and share vulnerability across the aisle, but this opened up a new way of working together and understanding.”

– Kinne Ring, Mayor, Kempsey Shire Council

“This workshop provided me with a unique environment to share challenges and vulnerabilities with other elected women, allowing me to explore areas for growth through a practical, empowering process. Highly recommend for women leaders looking for a better understanding of their motivations and power.”

– Judy Hannan MP, NSW Independent

Alumnae by numbers



Transforming Parliament for Women in the Media

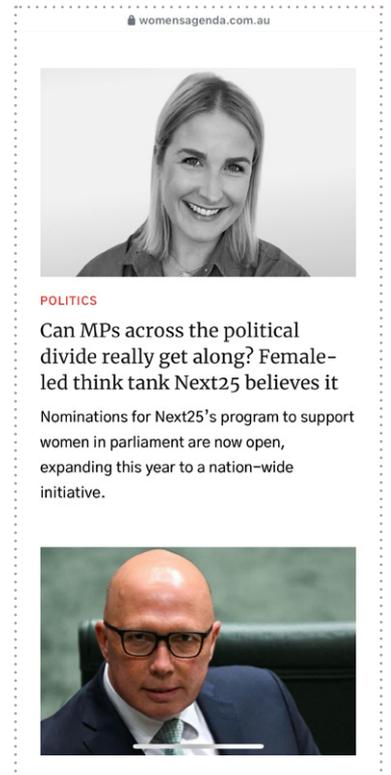
Over the past three years, we've witnessed significant cultural shifts, with over 30% of women MPs in NSW Parliament now being part of the collective of women transforming parliament from the inside. We are thankful to **Women's Agenda** for sharing the news of the nationwide program launch, highlighting its importance for democracy and its impacts on participants.

“Not only did I delve deeply into my own values and possibilities as a leader, I also developed profound relationships with women from across the parliament, and we now work closely together in various aspects of our parliamentary roles,”

–Liesl Tesch MP, NSW Labor

“When women feel more connected and confident in their workplaces, they are more likely to call out bad behaviour and demand a higher standard. This has a positive impact on all MPs, all parliamentary staff and the public alike.”

– Chloë Spackman, CEO Next25



[Read the article here.](#)

Coming soon

Next25 Leadership for WA Women Parliamentarians: Transforming Parliament for Women heads to WA

Following its creation and subsequent success in NSW, and this year's national launch, the team will soon be headed across the country to WA for our first program for women parliamentarians from the Parliament of Western Australia.

Second Nationwide Transforming Parliament for Women program

As this Annual Report went to press, and based on the success of the inaugural program, we launched our second Nationwide Improving Democracy: Transforming Parliament for Women program, planned for 2026.

Coaching

Recognising the continuous nature of personal and professional development, Next25 offers group and one-to-one coaching programs for alumni of our programs. These programs provide ongoing support and guidance, helping participants apply their learning in real-world contexts and navigate the evolving challenges of their roles.

Coachees commonly note positive improvements in their:

- Sense of their vision and values
- Understanding of their strengths and limitations
- Sense of personal empowerment and ability to thrive

“I have really benefitted from the alumni course, as it has enabled me to apply what I am learning to real and current scenarios that I am experiencing as a Member of Parliament. It has helped me to improve how I carry out my parliamentary duties and developed my leadership skills even further.”

– The Hon Sarah Mitchell MLC, NSW Nationals.

Next25 plans to continue providing personalised coaching to alumni as part of its ongoing support for parliamentarians who have taken part in Leadership and/or Transforming Parliament for Women.



Constructive Discussion

Since 2021, Next25 has been working to understand the barriers to Constructive Discussion and the opportunities to improve our nation's ability to constructively discuss complex and contested issues.

In 2022, Next25 engaged a Steering Committee and an additional 21 diverse stakeholders from across the future-making system in two workshops to explore and better understand the challenge of enabling constructive discussion from a cross-sector perspective. The collective insights and ideas for where to start making change are shared in this workbook.



Constructive Discussion and the Voice Referendum

Our 2023 Report, "Contested Spaces: Australia, the Referendum, and Constructive Discussion" offers insights into the key barriers and enabling factors that people in Australia encountered when discussing the proposed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament. Four areas of guidance for improving the quality of our discussions are offered. A speed webinar covering key findings is available [here](#).

Click on the image to view the short video

Transdisciplinary Collaboration with UTS

Currently, Next25 is collaborating with members of a transdisciplinary UTS research team. Building on what we have already learned from 2021 onwards, we are working collaboratively to uncover barriers and enablers to constructive discussion, and test and implement intervention(s) to improve how we talk about contested issues.

In 2024 and 2025, Next25 and members of a UTS transdisciplinary research team partnered to explore whether we can use constructive discussion to make the Sydney housing crisis solvable. And if so, what does that tell us about constructive discussion that could be useful in other contexts?

As part of this collaboration, we have worked on the design and production of two research papers (see the Research section of this report, [page 12](#)).

The research has also identified possibilities for interventions where constructive discussion can be leveraged to address the housing challenge, and possible solutions to foster constructive discussion on other contested issues.

In 2025, we created a new Research Fellow and Project Manager to work across Next25 and UTS to lead the next phase of the collaboration, including designing, testing, and scaling an initiative to transform Australia's capacity for constructive discussion.

Constructive Discussion and the Housing Challenge: Webinar

In August 2024, we delivered a free, public **1-hour webinar** with Next25's CEO, and UTS academics Fanny Salignac, Alex Baumber, and Sam Wearne, who shared insights and key takeaways from this first phase of our collaboration, including:

- The four spheres of constructive discussion, co-created as a model to make sense of existing methods and frameworks to support constructive discussion in different contexts, and which may support the design of discursive interventions for the following phases of our work and for others interested in using constructive discussion as a lens to intervene in complex challenges
- The five factors our diverse group of research participants from across the Sydney housing system identified as impacting people's ability to have constructive discussions about housing
- The interventions that could hold the potential to influence long-term decision-making and which will provide the basis for the next phase of our collaboration



[Click on the image to view the short video](#)

“At the Transdisciplinary School, we believe that the complex problems the world is facing require solutions that transdisciplinary thinking can provide.” We “provide a conduit between UTS and industry to address complex challenges and create impactful and meaningful change. Our work with Next25 is a stellar example of this. We value our partnership immensely.”

– Dr Fanny Salignac, UTS Transdisciplinary School

Feedback from Webinar Participants

“Constructive discussion provides a great opportunity for making progress on difficult issues.”

“It was really useful and we as a community are lucky to have people doing this great work.”

Webinar: Constructive Discussion for Australia's Democracy

As part of the Australian Festival of Democracy and Human Rights in June 2025, Next25 hosted a public webinar to share key insights from our work on Constructive Discussion.

The event explored:

- What we've discovered about Constructive Discussion through our research and engagement, including the national conversation in the lead up to the Referendum on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament, our collaborative research with the TD School on the Sydney housing challenge, and our initiative, Improving Democracy: Transforming Parliament for Women
- The conditions needed for more productive, trust-based dialogue across difference
- The "uncomfortable questions" we might ask ourselves before entering critical conversations



Click on the image to view the short video

“Understanding how the personal, conversational, institutional, and cultural spheres of discussion interact gives us powerful insight into where dialogue breaks down — and how we can repair it.”

— Dr Laura MacLauchlan, Research Fellow and Project Manager, UTS and Next25

“Our ability to talk constructively about contested issues is critical for developing our democratic resilience. Becoming better at these conversations — despite our varied experiences and perspectives — is a key lever for creating the future Australia wants.”

— Chloë Spackman, CEO, Next25

Feedback from webinar attendees

Feedback from the webinar confirmed strong engagement and enthusiasm for this work:

- 91% of participants rated the event 9 or 10 out of 10 for engaging them with Next25's mission.
- 100% rated it 9 or 10 out of 10 for demonstrating how research applies to systemic challenges.
- 73% rated it 8 or higher for prompting new ways of thinking about constructive discussion.

Participant comments:

“Wonderful work. I've already introduced some of the strategies in my own conversations.”

“Fantastic webinar — short, powerful, and inspiring.”

“Super — I really look forward to continuing this learning (and conversation) in future.”

What we're working on now

A toolkit to address barriers to Constructive Discussions

In mid-2026, we'll publish findings from our latest UTS research collaboration—a report examining two key barriers to constructive discussions:

- Fragmented knowledge and practice
- Under-recognised tacit elements

The report will include a practical toolkit helping Next25 and others design and facilitate constructive discussions on complex, contested issues across different settings.

Addressing social cohesion and declining trust through Constructive Discussions

Australia is experiencing declining social cohesion, falling trust, and rising loneliness - pressures that weaken belonging, tolerance, and community connection. Only 33% of young people **report a strong sense of belonging**; trust has **fallen to 39%** (from 65% in 2007); and **one in three Australians** experiences loneliness.

Next25 has discovered that our ability to have Constructive Discussions on complex and contested issues is a critical skill for restoring trust and social cohesion, and a key lever to unlocking a flourishing future.

good.film is a film audience platform designed to deepen understanding of complex and contested topics by watching movies and TV shows audiences love; that fall into their newly created “impact” genre.

good.film believes “stories change the world”, that no matter our differences, a good story can make a big impact. They discovered that film remains one of the most accessible cultural access points for (re)connecting communities and understanding diversity, and they're passionate about building social connections and partnerships through film.

That's why Next25 and good.film are collaborating to pilot a national Film Club that uses impact-focused film and guided **Constructive Discussions** to rebuild social connection and combat polarisation.

We look forward to sharing more about our work on the Film Club, planned for 2026!



Engagement

Engaging with leaders and the public spans all aspects of what we do at Next25 – research, initiatives, and beyond. We engage others as part of our theory of change, to support an understanding of what’s at stake, demonstrate that better is possible, encourage and inspire contributions, and help others know where to start.

Over the past year, Next25 has shared our research and insights with diverse individuals, groups, organisations, and institutions across Australia. A selection of those engagements is included below.

We are in conversations with other change-makers, academics, leaders, and experts from various social enterprises, not-for-profits, and universities about potential collaborations for 2026.

8,631

Followers and subscribers

578

Social media engagements

7.3 k

Unique website visitors

Webinars

Next25 delivered three public webinars in the 2024-25 financial year and was invited to contribute to a range of other conversations hosted by complementary organisations, building momentum in our engagement with media, public, academic, and political stakeholders.

- Aug '24 **Constructive Discussion and the Sydney Housing Challenge: Webinar**

Hosted by Next25. A conversation between Next25 and a few members of the UTS transdisciplinary research team we partnered with to explore whether we can use constructive discussion to make the Sydney housing crisis solvable. ([See page 25](#))


- Sep '24 **Integrating Deep Wisdom and Deep Connection in Contested Spaces**

Hosted by the [Charter for Compassion for the Australian National Day of Compassion](#). Next25 joined by Dr Lynne Reeder from the Australian Compassion Council, to discuss how we can learn to model open and curious conversations; forge connections before conclusions, practice reflexivity of thought, and foster genuine exchanges and deflect divisive tactics (view webinar [here](#)).


- Feb '25 **Political Wellbeing Summit**

Hosted by [Locale Learning](#). Next25 joined an international panel to discuss the importance of the mental wellbeing of our elected representatives.

This panel and other content available (via payment) on Locale Learning's website [here](#).


- June '25 **Constructive Discussion for Australia's Democracy**

Hosted by Next25 as part of the Australian Festival of Democracy and Human Rights 2025 ([see page 26](#)).


- June '25 **Women's Climate Conversations: Compassion and Kindness in Government**

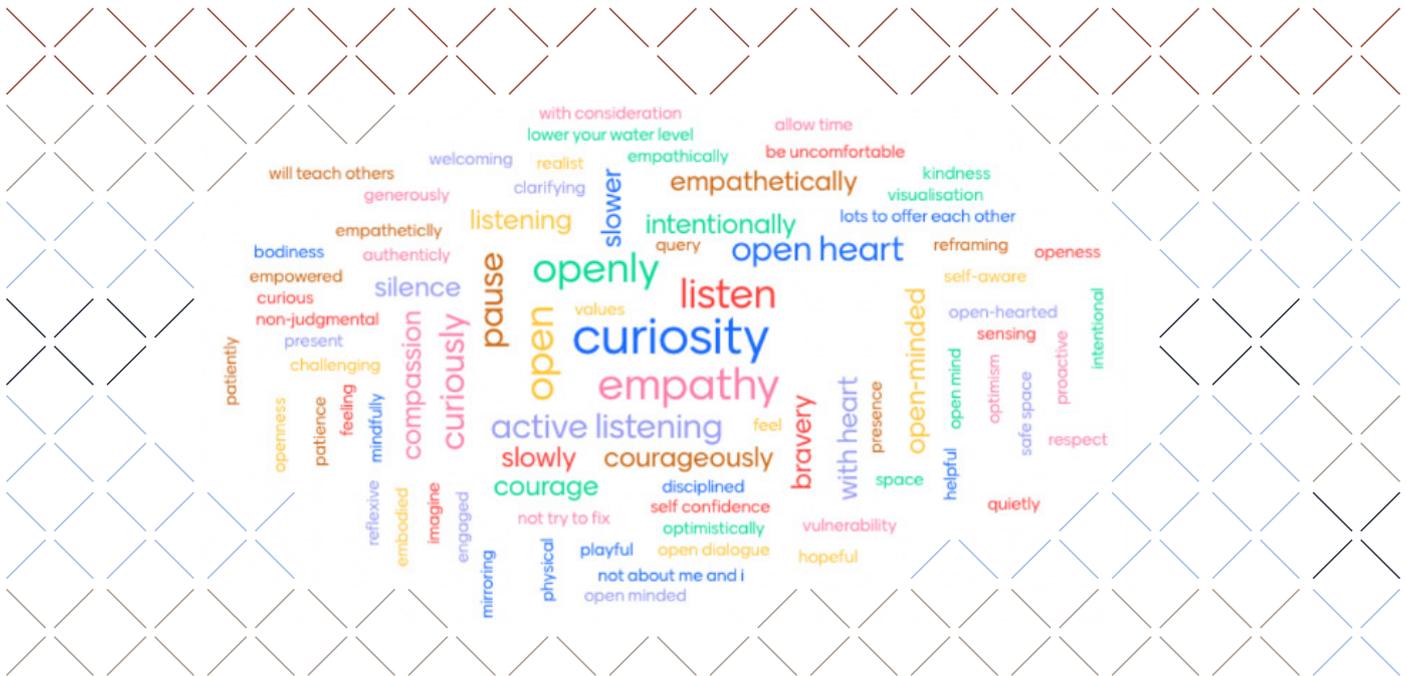
Hosted by the [Women's Climate Congress](#). Next25 joined WA Federal MP, Kate Chaney, and Jennifer Nadel, a transformational leader, journalist, speaker, author and barrister as well as Co-Founder and CEO of Compassion in Politics UK for this panel conversation on the role of compassion and kindness in government as a gateway to wise action on Australia's most challenging issues. Hosted by Dr Janet Salisbury, Women's Climate Congress Founder.



Constructive Conversations at the Social Impact Summit – July 2024

Our CEO Chloë Spackman and Senior Facilitator Dr Renu Burr demonstrated our think-to-do model, through our “Constructive Conversations” keynote and engagement exercise in their presentation at the Social Impact Summit.

This word cloud below reflects how participants will approach constructive conversations in future, reflecting their commitment to pause and adopt more curious, mindful, empathetic, and open approaches to dialogue.



Feedback

“Transforming self to transform systems. What a great opening keynote this morning at the Social Impact Summit. Chloë Spackman from Next25 talked us through research that explored the barriers and challenges to constructive discussion. And how we can all step into creating space and opportunity for the sorts of conversations that will support connection and progress across increasingly polarised social issues and public debate... It’s always great to step out of the every-day of work and attend a conference or summit to listen to ideas afresh and to again remind us of the importance of thinking broadly.” - **Karina Davis, CEO Jobsbank**

“Conversation is not difficult. How we feel about it is difficult.”

- **Dr Renu Burr,**
Senior Facilitator and Coach

Opening keynote from Chloë Spackman from Next25 revealed barriers in the way of a cohesive society, and the power - echoed by Craig Foster AM yesterday - of sitting with the discomfort rather than running from it. Renu Burr led a whole-of-Summit workshop on constructive conversations, most of which spilled into the hallways and terraces post-session.”

- The Impact Institute



Next25 in the Media

In her interview with the *Daily Telegraph*, Next25 CEO, Chloë Spackman reflected on the growing polarisation in Australian public life and the need to rebuild social cohesion. “Politics has become increasingly personal,” she observed, noting that divisions are often amplified by social-media echo chambers and partisan narratives.

“Despite this, [my optimism is] drawn from examples of cross-party relationships and friendships, describing them as “really inspiring” because “they demonstrate how we can maintain and even prioritise healthy relationships, even on hot-button issues.” These stories align closely with Next25’s mission to strengthen constructive discussion and bridge divides across communities and institutions.

Chloë also highlighted the risks for younger Australians, who “live in a world dominated by algorithms that make it harder to connect with each other’s humanity.” Through its research and programs, such as *Constructive Discussion and Transforming Parliament for Women*, Next25 continues to address these challenges by creating spaces where diverse perspectives can coexist, supporting the cultural and systemic shifts needed for a more inclusive and trusted democracy.

Read the article



When love and friendship conquer all
Different political passions are not always an insurmountable barrier

Angina Bharadwaj
When Jewish Labor MP Josh Burns and pro-Palestinian Animal Justice Party MP Georgie Purcell at Canberra's night of nights, the Mid Winter Ball it was a surprising sign of love across the political lines in an increasingly divided Australia. But it wasn't the only case where love and friendship have blossomed between people whose politics don't mix. There is Industry and Science Minister Ed Husic who is engaged to Fiona Scott, the highly regarded adviser to independent ACT Senator David Pocock. Muslim MP Husic was also famously friends with former Liberal Treasurer Josh Frydenberg — a Jewish man. Labor Western Australian MP and Early Childhood Minister Anne Aly had her office across the corridor from Liberal MP Julian Leeser when they struck up a friendship. She told *The Saturday Telegraph* the friendship between the Muslim Minister and Jewish MP grew over celebrations of Eid and Hanukkah where they would offer their traditional snacks to each other and their staff. Their camaraderie has continued even as their two communities are at war. Greens Senator David Shoobridge and political strategy expert brother Michael Shoobridge both tackle the topic of Australia's defence in their respective careers — coming at it often from opposing angles but never in a way that overshadows their strong personal relationships. In NSW, Housing Minister Rose Jackson and her husband Sam Crosby were friends with Liberal former Premier Dominic Perrottet since their shared days in student politics as university students. Their friendship continued even as the Labor Party — in which Jackson was a vocal and active frontbencher — toppled Perrottet's leadership in 2023. NSW Liberal MP James Griffin is another example: he's the son of a former Greens councillor. Victorian state MPs Ben and Lucy Hood are the first siblings elected to parliament who sit on opposite sides of the chamber with Ben being a



Liberal while Lucy is a Labor MP. Chloë Spackman is the chair of think tank Next25 and has investigated how politics is increasingly dividing families and friendships. “In a world where people are estranging themselves with immediate family over politics, it is beautiful to see these examples,” she said. Ms Spackman's research has found Australians under the age of 30 are concerned about how to accept those with different views to their own. “What's really inspiring about these relationships is they demonstrate how we can maintain and even prioritise healthy relationships even on hot button issues,” she said. Ms Spackman said social media was driving a lot of the division among young people. “Under 26s live in a world that's dominated by social media and social media algorithms, it can be more difficult to connect with each other's humanity,” she said. She said a recent example of families and friendships being torn apart over politics was the Voice. “Our research discovered that despite this intention for constructive dialogue, many people experienced confusion, apathy, and bias and were acutely aware of subjective echo chambers (during the Voice),” she said. “There is plenty of evidence that our social cohesion is at risk.” Ms Spackman's comments are backed by research from Relationships Australia which showed 13 per cent of respondents said different values and belief were putting pressure on their relationships. The growing divide is also reflected in the 2022 Australian Election Study which showed a growing gender divide in politics, signalling that many heterosexual Australians would have to navigate differing opinions in relationships. “The gender gap in voting reflects other political differences between men and women. One question in the AES asks voters to place themselves on a scale from left to right, where zero is left and 10 is right,” the study said. “In 2022 the average position for men was 5.4, whereas for women it was 4.7, the largest gender gap in left-right placement on record. But Monash University political science expert Dr Sarah Glazarian said compulsory voting protected Australia from the polarised and divided elections of the United States. In the US, she said, “candidates rely on pressing buttons, trying to attract voters who agree with them or disagree with their opponent to turn out for the vote.” “In Australia, the parties don't need to worry about trying to generate interest to polarise the community, people will turn up to vote,” she said.

Future Engagements

Next25 CEO Chloë Spackman has been invited to give the Occasional Address at the October 2025 UTS Graduation Ceremony. This invite is an honour, a reflection of the strong and impactful collaboration Next25 has built with UTS and reflects our long and proud history of collaborating with university staff and students. As an organisation committed to long-term, multigenerational thinking and action, the opportunity to contribute to and share in this celebration with graduates will no doubt be a highlight of 2025.

Team



Chloë Spackman
CEO



Paula Steyer
Director of Finance



Charlotte Mortlock
Senior
Engagement Lead



Joanna Lamb
Program Manager



Stephanie Mason
Program Manager



**Dr Laura
McLauchlan**
Research Fellow
and Project
Manager, Next25
and UTS



**Amy Chrichton-
Peterson**
Program Officer



Gus Richardson
Program Officer



Angie Bradbury
Senior
Communications
Advisor



Ralph Ashton
Senior Facilitator
and Coach



Dr Renu Burr
Senior Facilitator
and Coach



Lisa Doig
Senior Facilitator



Malcolm Doig
Senior Facilitator
and Coach

The Years Ahead

Our work will bring Australia closer to being a country where:

- **Politics serves the public interest**

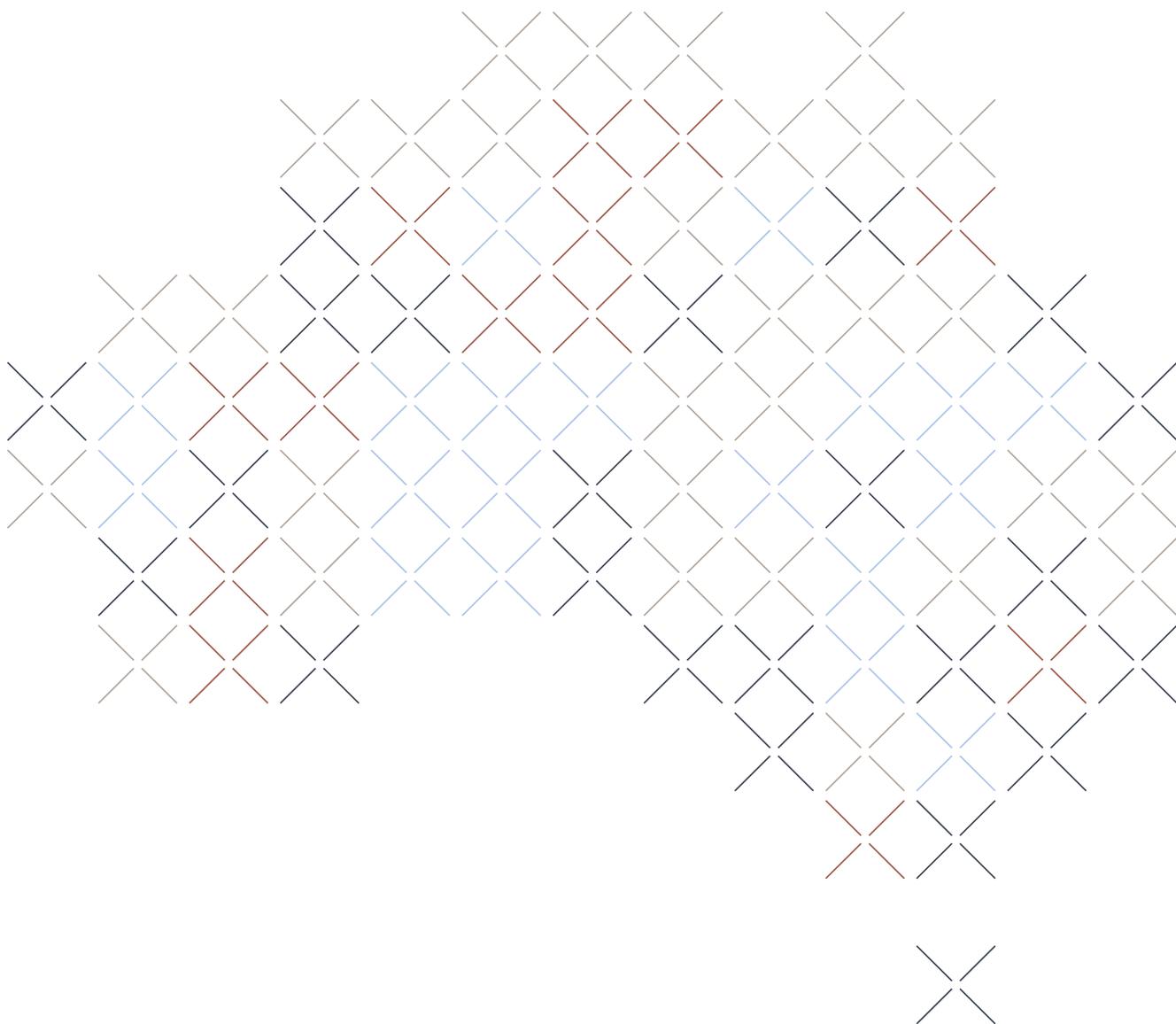
Politics is delivering the public interest instead of focusing on the short-term and power for power's sake. Parliamentarians are serving society with increased clarity, conviction, and capability.

- **Discussion is constructive**

Discussion about the future of our country is more constructive and less polarised. Australians from all walks of life are drawing on a trusted understanding about the future Australia wants and on better ways to engage with people holding different points of view.

- **Australia is optimistic and engaged**

Leaders and the public are more optimistic and engaged. Armed with capability and a sense of possibility, they are playing their roles, big and small, in ensuring our nation has what it takes to make the future Australia wants.



Our Supporters

Thank you. We couldn't do it without you!

- Wright Burt Foundation
- Bell Family Foundation
- Jibb Foundation
- University of New South Wales (UNSW)
- Allier Capital
- Reef Shark Foundation
- Sunshine Foundation
- Next25 Board Syndicate
- Gourlay Charitable Trust
- William Manos
- Fiona and Graeme Prior
- SALT Catalyst
- George and James McGregor
- Lyn Harding
- Prabha Kutty
- Tony Henderson
- Corporate Evolution
- University of Technology Sydney (UTS)
- Corrs
- Nexia
- Forrest Research Foundation

Acknowledgements

Next25's work would not be possible without the commitment, support, and expertise of those who give their time as part of our Research Committee, Steering Committees, interviewees, university interns, and research participants.

Think future.
Act today.

For more information, please contact:

Chloë Spackman

CEO

chloe@next25.org.au

61 421 514 366

next25.org.au

ACN 605 648 977

Next25™