

Universal child welfare plan

Rudd unveils his 2020 vision, as ideas flow in

By MICHELLE GRATTAN, MISHA SCHUBERT and KATHARINE MURPHY
CANBERRA

ALL Australian parents would have access to low-cost child care and welfare services under a proposal Kevin Rudd will take to his 2020 ideas summit.

Days before the summit begins, the Prime Minister has outlined a vision for universal access to a network of "one stop" child-care centres.

The centres would provide a broad mix of maternal and child health services, including feeding advice and vaccinations, long day care, preschool education and support for parents.

Addressing the Sydney Institute last night, Mr Rudd said his plan would need partnerships between various levels of government, as well as private and community service providers.

Access to the centres would be universal but not compulsory, and they would be underpinned by strengthened national quality standards, Mr Rudd said.

He revealed the plan as 1000 of the nation's "best and brightest" people prepared to descend on Canberra this weekend for the 2020 ideas summit.

Ahead of their arrival, the Government released details of more than 8000 submissions to the summit from groups and individuals — including a stark warning from a leading economist of a slowdown.

A survey designed to provide a snapshot of the nation's mood and priorities heading into the summit was also released, with respondents expressing strong optimism about where Australia is going.

Among the key findings in the survey by the Australian National University was that voters want more spent on health and education, and that the environment is now seen as the most pressing political priority of our time.

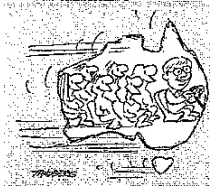
The survey also showed a nation with confidence in many of its institutions — including the Federal Government which, despite losing the trust over its handling of health and housing, has convinced many voters that it should take more powers from the states.

The confidence of voters is in contrast to the cynicism about institutions in many other nations, and may explain why Australians support high levels of government spending by international standards.

Strikingly, the polling found a huge level of optimism about whether the country is on the right track under Mr Rudd. Three in four Australians think it is — while the trend in the United States and Britain is the opposite.

And after years of drought and crippling water shortages, concern for the environment has skyrocketed back into the Australian psyche, outstripping every

INSIDE



Great ideas: will they fly? **PAGE 6**
ANALYSIS & DEBATE
 Telling our stories **PAGE 11**
METRO
 Thinking big on culture **PAGE 16**
theage.com.au
 Is Australia on the right track under the Rudd Government?
 Have your say online.

other issue except economic management.

"The environment has really leaped out of the woodwork — we care much more about the environment now than we did until quite recently," said ANU economist Andrew Leigh.

But low-income households were less interested in green issues than in having better health care.

While most people want more spent on health and education, they do not want extra money for culture, welfare and defence.

Despite that finding on defence, the military ranked more highly than other institutions, having the confidence of 32% of the population. Others to fare well included universities (24%) and the police (22%), while those that rated poorly were banks (6%), unions (7%) and the public service (7%).

Among more than 8000 submissions posted from groups and individuals on the 2020 Summit website last night, leading economist Fred Argy warns the Rudd Government to prepare "for the strong possibility of an economic slowdown over the next five-year period".

The former ambassador to the OECD says the Government, in preparing for an economic slowdown, should invest surpluses in an investment fund to "draw on at short notice".

The National Library of Australia in its submission, warns that unless the Government develops policies to make sure key records are preserved in digital form, Australians will look back on the current period as a "digital dark age".

And leading charity the Smith Family says Australia must take steps to address social exclusion and to improve the quality of education. "Today, the achievements of our students are persistently undermined by disparities between boys and girls, indigenous and non-indigenous students and schools in rural and urban as well as low and high socio-economic settings, it says

A SNAPSHOT OF THE NATION

HOW WE FEEL ABOUT OUR FUTURE

The direction in which Australia is heading?
 Satisfied or very satisfied **73%**
 Not satisfied **20%**
 Neither **7%**

Compared with the US...
 Satisfied **22%**
 Dissatisfied **72%**
 Neither **6%**

...and Britain
 Right direction **25%**
 Wrong track **70%**
 Unsure/don't know **5%**



WHAT WE THINK

MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE

- Environment **19%**
- Economy **18%**
- Water management **8%**
- Interest rates **7%**
- Housing affordability **7%**
- Immigration **6%**
- Health care **5%**
- Education **4%**
- Poverty **4%**
- Indigenous affairs **3%**

WHO WE TRUST

- Defence forces **32%**
- Universities **24%**
- Police **22%**
- Churches **13%**
- Courts **12%**
- Federal Parliament **10%**
- Public service **7%**
- Unions **7%**
- Banks **6%**

Source: Australian National University, Federal and State Government, and the Australian National University. The survey was conducted by Ipsos Mori for the Australian National University and the Australian National University. The survey was conducted by Ipsos Mori for the Australian National University and the Australian National University. The survey was conducted by Ipsos Mori for the Australian National University and the Australian National University.

Skutches and Windguys have their say

By KATHARINE MURPHY and CHRIS HAMMER
CANBERRA



THE 2020 summit has Kevin (of course!) and a minor celebrity support cast of Cate and Jamie and Hugh and Lachlan.

And courtesy of the miracle that is modern Australian democracy it also has Calypthynchus and Karenp6 and R.A.W. and Skutch and 40-something-female and Banana Republic: I think Not and Windguy.

Yes, these hitherto infamous (extra)ordinary persons will all be in Canberra this weekend too at least in spirit, or virtual reality or cyberspace or somewhere. These and many more

like them, have taken the time and trouble to send in 8782 contributions to the summit. Government officials say 3612 individuals made submissions, but some made multiple submissions across the 10 separate forums (brilliant), bringing the grand total to more than 8000.

Public servants have already assessed this mountain of contributions and a week ago sent an overview to the official summiters, drawing together "the major themes". This would be

challenging indeed, given the startling breadth of 2020 vision laid bare before them.

In an example of the Fresh Thinking promoted vociferously by Kevin Rudd during last year's election campaign, Adolf Mombberger suggests damming 10 rivers in Papua New Guinea and exporting the hydro-electricity to Australia.

"I am amazed that I have been omitted from 2020 since I am the only one who has a solution to the global warming," he writes.

Skutch writes: "I have a plan that constitutes two words and if these two words were a part of Australian belief then we would revere Earth as Australia's Highest process. That

plan has started by the formula $x + y = ONE$ and that is man + Woman = Life and Kevin Rudd + Julia Gillard (sic) = Truth" Magnificent!

Windguy writes: "I believe there is three things, if made free, will help create endless productivity within a nation. Those three things are free energy, free communication and free transport (fuel)." (We're with you, Windguy.)

In possibly the most novel idea since former tourism minister Fran Bailey suggested erecting a shade cloth over the Great Barrier Reef to stop coral bleaching, Dopefish Enterprises suggests: "We should build a veranda extension covering the whole east coast."

From the sweet folks in Year 6 Ashfield Public School: "I think that to help any overgrown city or town we could divide that city or town into multiple (sic) parts and give each part there (sic) own government (sic) system or we could even make several countries as well as connect them to the Federal and state system."

And closer to home for Melbourneans, as part of her submission on the future of the Australian economy, Carly suggests: "Get school kids to paint murals on the concrete walls of Southern Cross station in Melbourne. It'd be a bit daggy, but a good symbol of community co-operation and creativity." It would. Carly Yes it would.

WEATHER
MELBOURNE Drizzle clearing to a fine and partly cloudy afternoon. Light to moderate south to south-easterly winds.
 Min 12 Max 19

TOMORROW Fog then fine
SATURDAY Fog then fine
SUNDAY Fine
MONDAY Fine
 Min 11 Max 22
 Min 9 Max 25
 Min 11 Max 24
 Min 11 Max 23
 Details PAGE 21

WATER
 32.3%

ODD SPOT
 Three days after stealing a rare collection of coins, a thief in Germany took them to the bank and delivered them into the hands of the man he had robbed. A bank worker recognised them as the set worth about 50,000 euros (\$A\$5 000) that had been stolen from his house.

INDEX
CLASSIFIEDS BUSINESSDAY 6, 7
COMMENT & DEBATE PAGE 13
EDITORIALS, LETTERS PAGE 12
LAW LIST BUSINESSDAY 7
LOTTERIES PAGE 2

METRO PAGE 14-16
MILESTONES PAGE 19
MINDGAMES PAGE 20
SHARES BUSINESSDAY 8, 9
WORLD PAGES 8-9