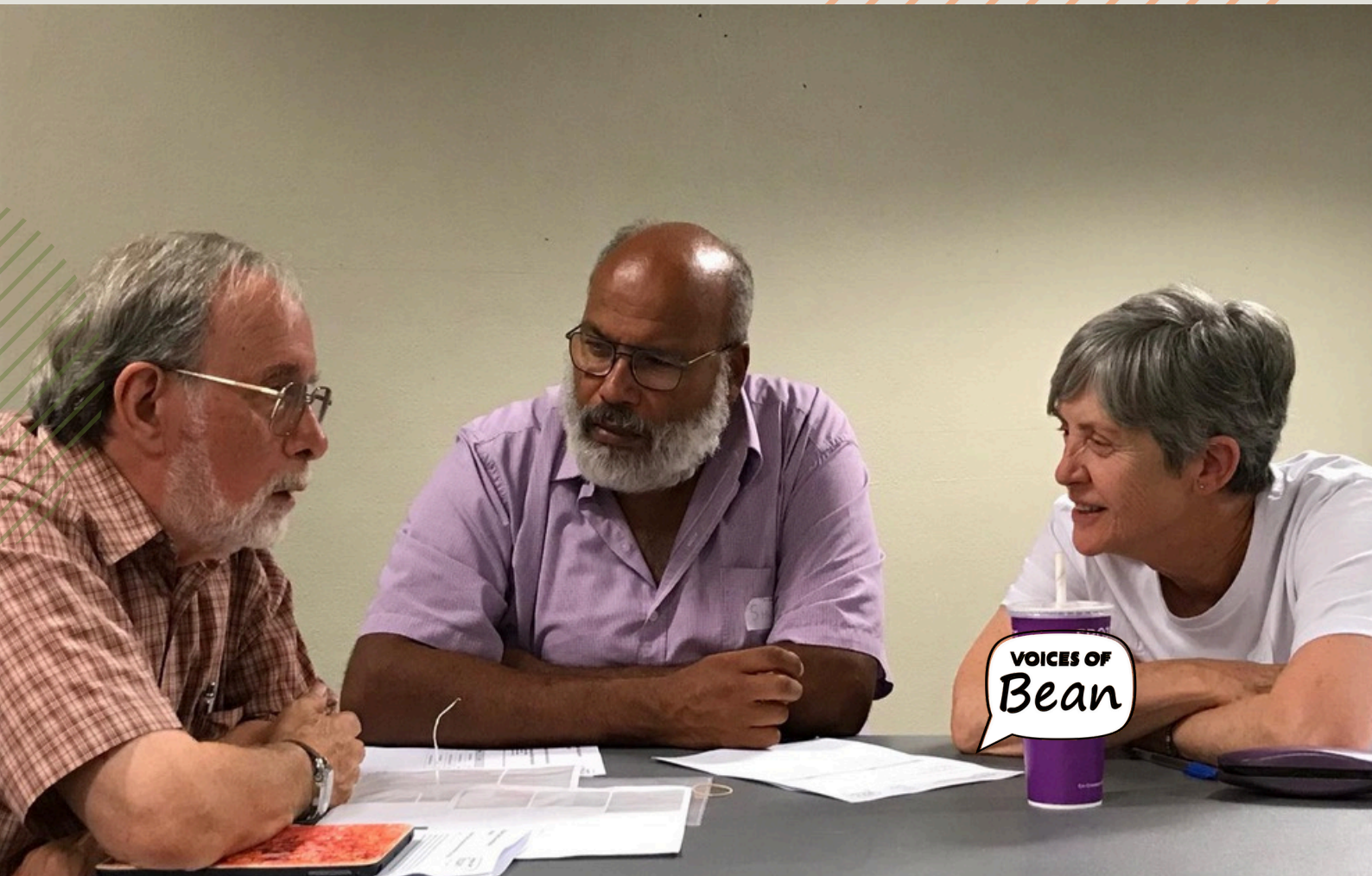




STAGE ONE REPORT:
Voices of Bean

BEAN LISTENING REPORT

May 2024



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JOIN US





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as the traditional custodians of the ACT and surrounding region and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region, and pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

hello@VoicesOfBean.org

www.VoicesOfBean.org



ABOUT THIS REPORT

The aim of this report is to give the reader insight into:

- The people of the electorate of Bean, what we value, our concerns, and what we would like to see change
- How we feel about government and our current representation
- How we would like to see representation change.

This report gives a summary at a point in time, and is intended to give potential candidates for election a starting point for the development of their own connection to and understanding of the community.





An evening with Denis Ginnivan on 15 January.



Out and about at various KTC events and stalls



ABOUT US

Voices of Bean is a community group of passionate Canberrans formed through shared frustration with the state of politics and the lack of action on key issues of both national and local importance.

Formed in late 2023, the group initially developed an understanding of our shared purpose and values. We want better representation for our community in the federal parliament.

OUR MISSION

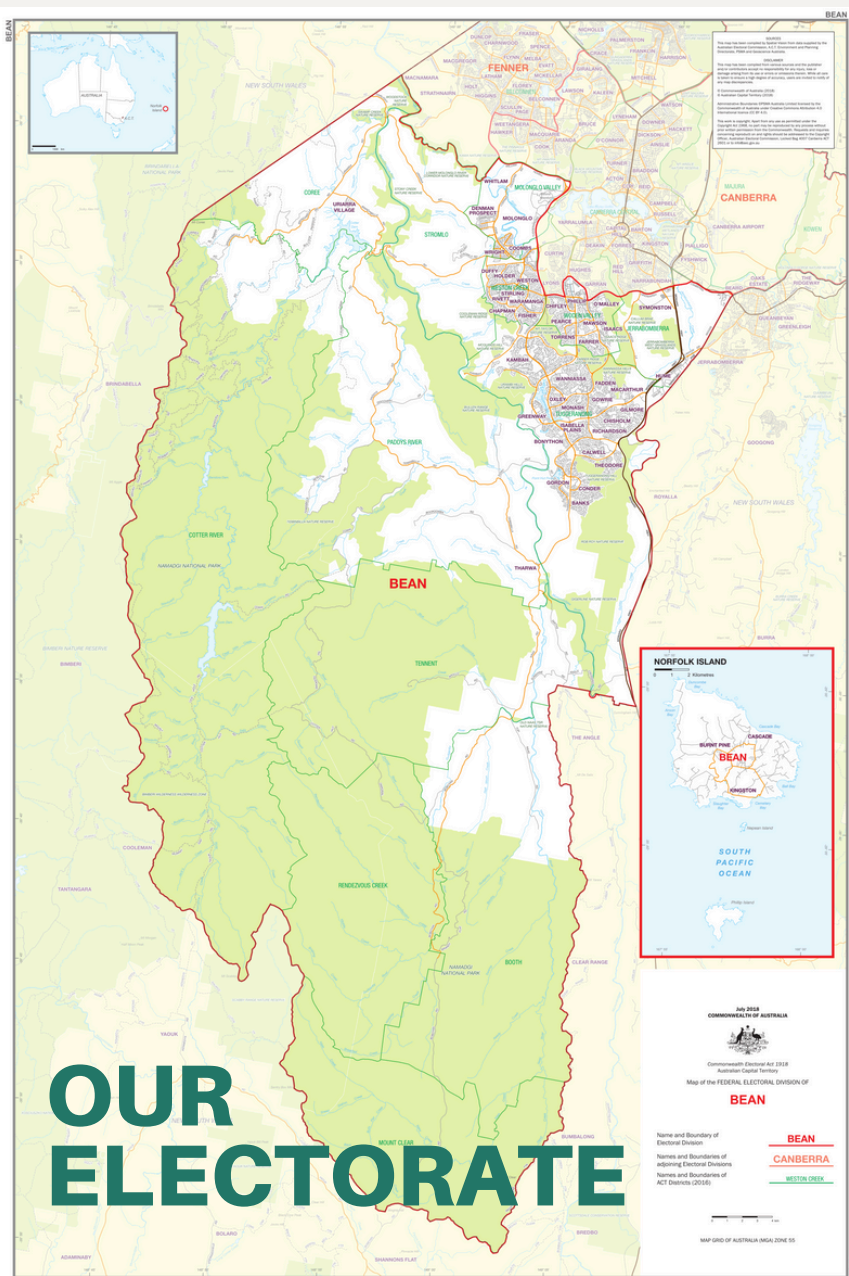
Our goal is to foster public involvement in democracy in Bean.

We are politically independent and know it is time for change. We will listen to the diverse voices of the Bean community and find the ideal community backed candidate to represent us in the next federal election.

OUR VALUES

- **Positivity.** We're not here to knock anyone, we want to do things better and be our best selves.
- **Honesty and Integrity.** Let's be the change we want to see.
- **Generous and Active Listening.** Every opinion starts from a good place and every voice needs to be heard. We're here to listen not to judge.
- **Mutual Respect.** We show respect to others and ask to be respected in turn.
- **Compromise to succeed.** Trust in team work; not everything will be perfect.
- **Commit and follow through.** We're realistic about our individual capacities.





- BANKS 2906
- BONYTHON 2905
- BOOTH DISTRICT 2620
- CALWELL 2905
- CHAPMAN 2611
- CHIFLEY 2606
- CHISHOLM 2905
- CONDER 2906
- COOMBS 2611
- COREE DISTRICT 2611
- CORIN DAM 2620
- COTTER DAM 2611
- COTTER RIVER DISTRICT 2611
- DENMAN PROSPECT 2611
- DUFFY 2611
- FADDEN 2904
- FARRER 2607
- FISHER 2611
- GILMORE 2905
- GORDON 2906
- GOWRIE 2904
- GREENWAY 2900
- HMAS HARMAN 2600
- HOLDER 2611
- HUME 2620
- ISAACS 2607
- ISABELLA PLAINS 2905
- JERRABOMBERRA DISTRICT 2609
- KAMBAH 2902
- MACARTHUR 2904
- MAWSON 2607
- MOLONGLO VALLEY DISTRICT 2611
- MONASH 2904
- MOUNT STROMLO 2611
- NORFOLK ISLAND 2899
- O'MALLEY 2606
- OXLEY 2903
- PADDYS RIVER DISTRICT 2620
- PEARCE 2607
- PHILLIP 2606
- PIERCES CREEK 2611
- RENDEZVOUS CREEK DISTRICT 2620
- RICHARDSON 2905
- RIVETT 2611
- ROYALLA 2620
- STIRLING 2611
- STROMLO 2611
- STROMLO DISTRICT 2611
- SWINGER HILL 2606
- PHILLIP 2606
- SYMONSTON 2609
- TENNENT DISTRICT 2620
- THARWA 2620
- THEODORE 2905
- TORRENS 2607
- TUGGERANONG DISTRICT 2620
- URIARRA 2611
- WANNIASSA 2903
- WARAMANGA 2611
- WESTON 2611
- WESTON CREEK DISTRICT 2611
- WHITLAM 2611
- WILLIAMSDALE 2620
- WRIGHT 2611

Bean is one of three ACT electorates for the federal House of Representatives.

Bean was first contested at the 2019 election, and is named after Charles Bean, Australia's war correspondent and editor of the 'Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918' and advocate for establishment of the Australian War Memorial.

Bean includes the southern parts of Canberra as well as most of rural ACT, plus Norfolk Island.

POPULATION: 112,088 electors, total 152,610



LISTENING TO BEAN

REPORT SUMMARY

Over the first four months of 2024, 412 residents across the federal electorate of Bean responded to us in discussion at local shops, through an online survey, and at 'Kitchen Table Conversations'.

The features of Bean most appreciated were Community, Convenience, Nature, Quiet, and Family Friendliness.

The top four issues of concern were:

- Cost of living
- Health, Disability and Aged Care
- Climate Change, and
- Housing Affordability

Over 80% of Bean residents don't feel represented by the incumbent MP. Overwhelmingly the MP was seen as being silent or absent or ineffective, and it was felt that Bean is not getting the attention and investment it deserves. Many questioned whether the MP represented the people, or just the interests of his party.

In considering an Independent candidate, people wanted someone with integrity, engaging with and from the electorate, who could represent them effectively and create positive change.

Bean residents are overwhelmingly open to, or already aligned with, the idea of an Independent candidate.



ABOVE: Our Kitchen Table Training event, co-hosted with Active Democracy Bean, on 1 February 2024

WE VALUE:

- Community
- Convenience
- Nature
- Quiet
- Family friendly



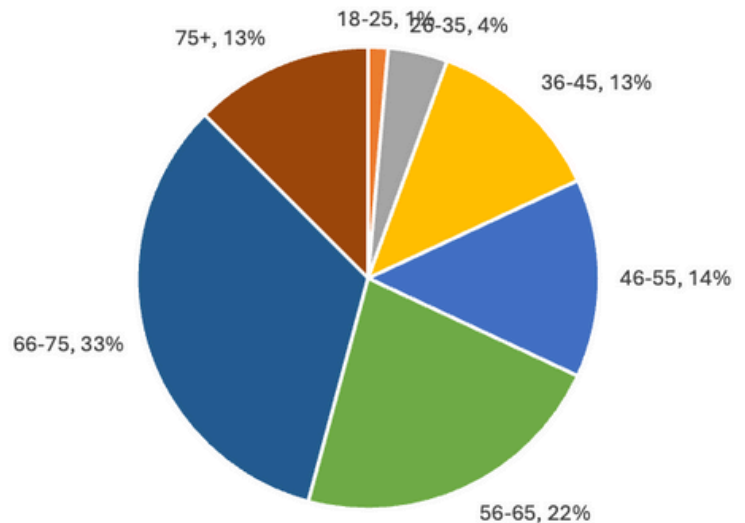
LISTENING TO BEAN

OUR PROJECT TO LISTEN TO THE PEOPLE OF BEAN STARTED IN EARLY JANUARY 2024 AND HAD THREE THREADS:

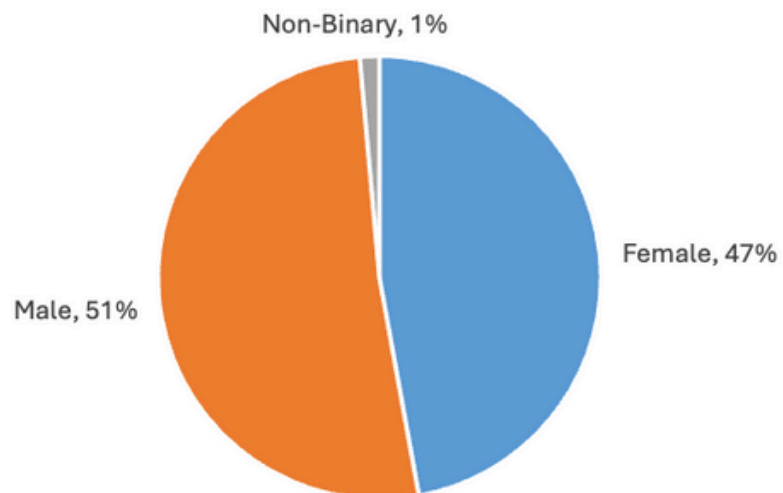
1. **Discussion with members of the public** at 'stalls' at local shopping centres on Saturday mornings. Everybody needs to shop, so this was our most representative sample of the community, although older age groups were somewhat more willing to engage than others. Two questions were asked: issues of concern, and what qualities they would want to see in an Independent candidate.

2. An **online survey** promoted through the voicesofbean.org website, social media, newsletters to our subscribers, and cards distributed at hospitality venues and stalls. The online survey captured more demographic data than the other methods and included questions about normal voting intention and preparedness to vote for an independent candidate. It was a good way of capturing people's thoughts in their own words, as well as being able to group respondents according to their answers.

Survey and KTC participants

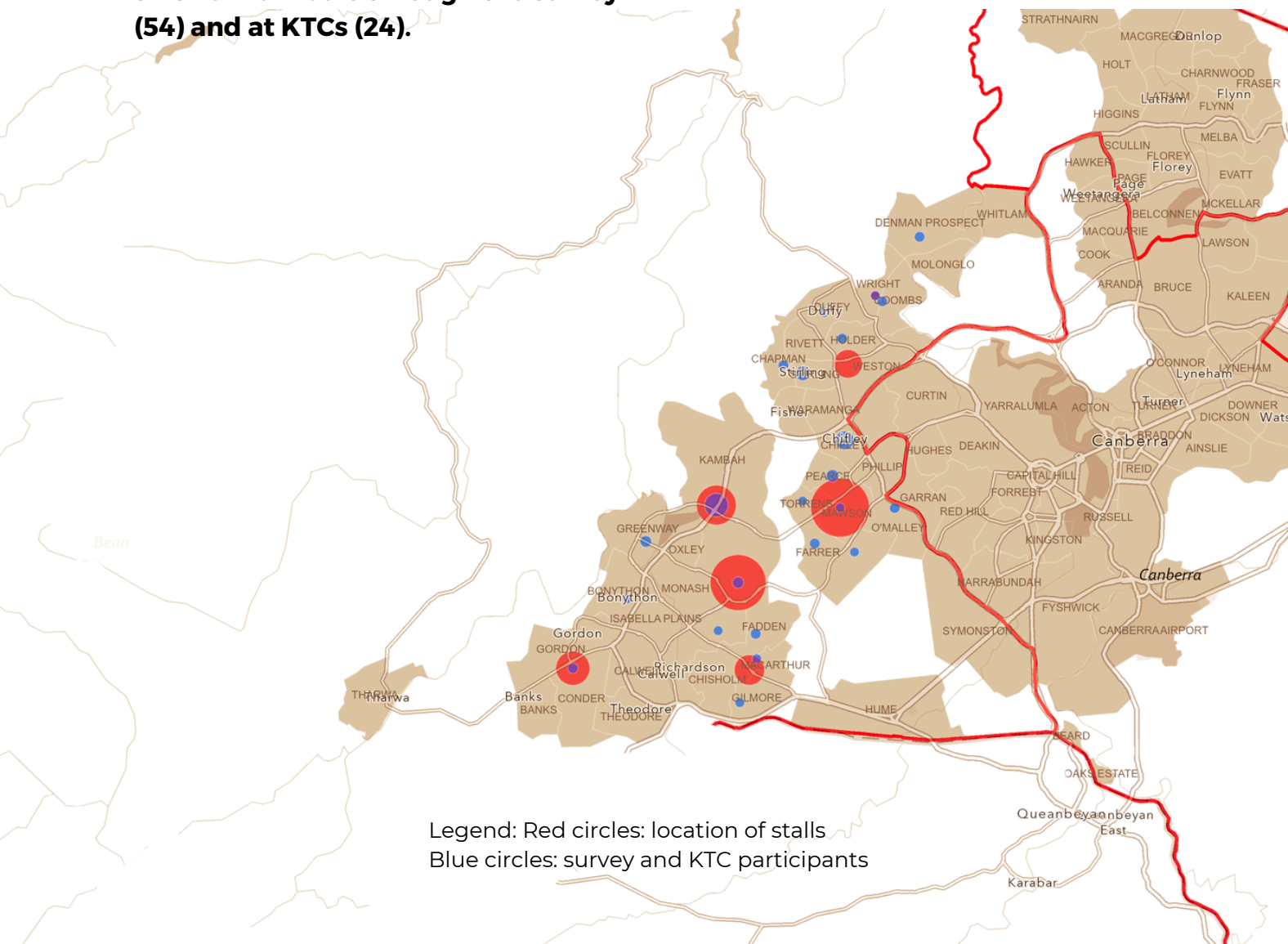


Survey and KTC participants



3. **'Kitchen Table Conversations'** (KTCs) held at Kambah Woolshed and at Chifley. These were an opportunity for deeper conversations with more detailed responses.

By the time of this report, data had been collected from 412 individuals, primarily at stalls (334) and with smaller numbers through the survey (54) and at KTCs (24).





Listening at Erindale shops



KTC cupsa tea powered by Frank's electric car



Delicious figs shared with us while door knocking

WHAT WE HEARD

WHAT WE LOVE ABOUT BEAN, AND WHAT WE WANT TO SEE MORE OF

This was the first question asked at KTCs and despite the relatively small number of participants, there was a lot of similarity and agreement in the answers.

Community was the most valued aspect of living in Bean. There was appreciation of the sense of a great community generally, and, more specifically, people commented on friendliness, less aggression, less anonymity, good neighbours and unpretentiousness of people in Bean.

There were strong linkages expressed between community and features of the area such as the facilitation of community from a revamped park and small shopping hubs. Parks for the kids and a rich variety of things to do were also mentioned in relation to good facilities in Bean.

There was a disparity between suburbs relating to the local facilities – in many suburbs we heard (particularly through stalls) that local facilities were neglected, so addressing this neglect provides opportunities for building the sense of community that people valued so highly. Indeed this dominated what people wanted to see more of: **more family-friendly and community facilities and an expressed desire to get more involved in community.**

“Since the the new café came into the shops and they fixed up the park, there are always people meeting here and having kids’ birthday parties and things. It’s really built a sense of community.”





FAQ:

Why elect an Independent?



WHAT ISSUES MOST CONCERN US IN BEAN

When asked to think about issues primarily controlled by the Federal government, four issues stood out as the most important:

1. Cost of Living
2. Health, Disability and Aged Care
3. Climate Change
4. Housing Affordability

Meanwhile, many constituents expressed their view that the South of Canberra is largely forgotten about.

The relative importance of different issues varied between listening methods, demonstrating higher political engagement by KTC participants and survey respondents compared to people who stopped to chat with us at the shops.

For example, while **climate change** was the third-highest ranking concern at stalls, it was equal-top ranking issue in KTCs and the second issue for survey respondents. The small number of KTC participants must be kept in mind.



‘Talk but no action on climate change.’

‘Housing is an issue for all levels and ages of society.’

‘Climate change – Labor is making it worse, approving new coal and gas.’

‘There are so many failings in education and health systems.’

‘We can’t be complacent about the environment. I’m concerned about political will on climate.’

‘Homelessness is the biggest domestic challenge along with climate change.’



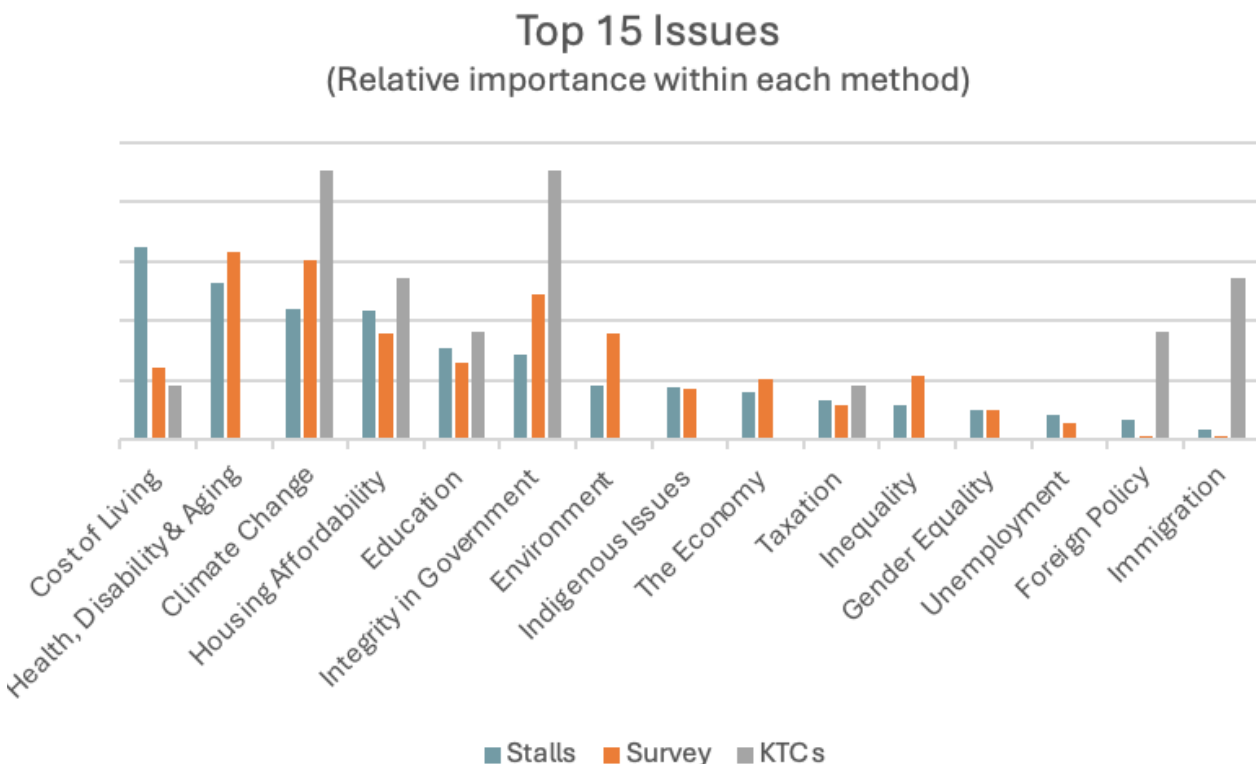
Housing affordability was an issue that cut across generations - older people recognised how hard it was for younger people to get into the market, even though they themselves were comfortable. Many suggestions were made across Bean about **tax reform** to improve housing affordability.

Cost of living was a real pressure; two-income families shared how hard it was to make ends meet, while others with caring responsibilities described being caught between the increased cost of living and healthcare needs.

We heard about how difficult the NDIS scheme is for people to negotiate, as well as failings in **healthcare and aged care**. This included adequate resourcing for **mental healthcare**.

Other concerns included **foreign policy**, with several people commenting that we are geographically in Asia Pacific and must prioritise those relationships.

Regarding **immigration**, we heard people who wanted it scaled back, principally for economic reasons, while others expressed that policy could be more compassionate, which would benefit the region as well as Australia, including contributing to **security**.



DO YOU FEEL REPRESENTED BY YOUR FEDERAL MP?

Survey respondents and KTC participants overwhelmingly (84%) felt that they weren't adequately represented by their MP, with 9% feeling positive, and 7% unsure.

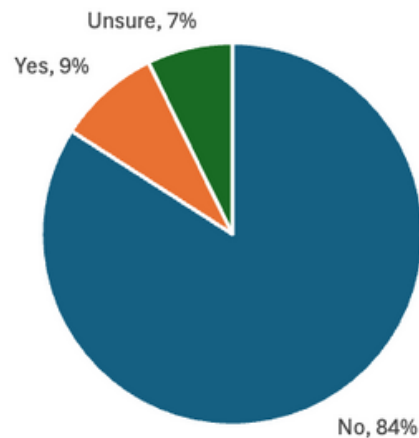
Positive responses included statements such as 'I have a voice to some extent', while unsure responses were things like 'Pretty much as can be expected for the effort I put in' or 'I don't have much to do with our elected representatives'.

Some responses acknowledged effort and goodwill on the part of their representative, but pointed to specific failings.

'MPs are often capable and hard-working, but don't engage and don't understand real needs.'

'Politicians don't explain what they're doing and trust the people to be wise. They need to be more brave and speak their mind.'

Do you feel represented by your federal MP?



The concern about timidity in government was heard repeatedly.

'Labor government is very timid, they need more spine and more progressive stance.'

Some people voiced a simple lack of feeling represented.

'MP is not visible, no evidence he is doing anything.'

'No - my local representative is too silent.'

People drew a direct link between the problems they perceived in the electorate and their perception of poor representation.

'Great idea to look at Bean. South Canberra is often overlooked by federal and ACT Government. A lot of policies and new projects are central or north Canberra based.'

National issues were also a focus for dissatisfaction with representation.

‘No, I have not had any feedback from my local federal member re concerns about climate change that I took to them late last year. I don't feel my concerns are treated seriously.’

Cynicism or frustration were also evident in the responses, often related to concerns about a lack of integrity in politics.

‘Don't feel represented but this is probably not the idea.’

‘The culture in politics of greed and corruption.’

‘Community is not represented while lobbyists have easy access.’

‘The unsatisfactory nature of party political representation was the focus for a number of respondents.

‘Liberals ignore voters because they won't get in, Labor ignores voters because they know they will get in anyway.’

‘No, the party system means politicians have to prioritise the party before their constituents.’

‘No. The member for Bean represents the Labor party, and supports all policies of the ALP, regardless of the wishes/needs of the community of Bean.’

‘Parties and their candidates represent themselves to The People, rather than undertake to represent The People to the Parliament.’

‘No. Because they don't represent us - they toe the party line instead.’

Taking this a step further, there was broad support for an Independent rather than a party politician.

‘Want an Independent. Best case: cross-bench holding balance of power. Worst case: seat becomes marginal - this is still beneficial.’

‘Enormously underwhelmed with David Smith. Someone like David Pocock would be a complete change.’



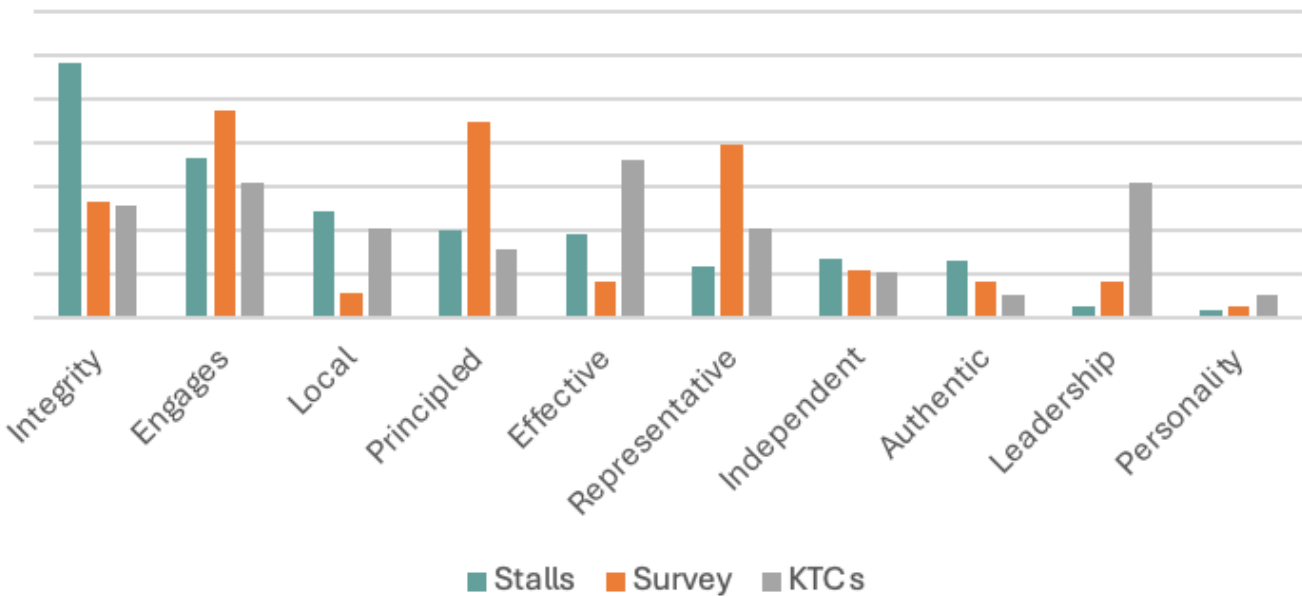
WHAT MAKES FOR A REALLY GOOD REPRESENTATIVE?

This was a free-form question in all three methods, and a large diversity of answers were given. These have been grouped into ten categories, of which the most important was integrity.

Integrity included 'honesty', 'do what they say they will do', 'trustworthy', 'transparency', 'not beholden to donors' and 'ethical'.

'Vested interests on both sides of politics have been able to hijack democracy - reduces the scope for action. Important for the community to regain control.'

Top 10 Qualities in a Candidate
(Relative importance within each method)



The second most important quality, **engages**, included 'listens to the electorate' and 'engages with the electorate'. Engages was the highest-ranking quality for survey respondents.

'Someone who listens, takes action and follows up with the constituent'

Local was the third category: people want a representative who is 'connected to the electorate' and 'local, from the community'. 'Someone who lives in the community they represent and who listens to the needs of their community and is their voice in the parliament.'

Principled, the fourth category, was dominated by the quality 'makes evidence-based decisions', but also included 'fairness, open-mindedness' and 'principled and stands their ground'.

'Not afraid to lose their seat (even though they probably wouldn't). Prepared to do what is best and not be dogmatic.'

Effective mostly represented 'positive change-maker' but also 'politically effective, impactful' and 'purpose-driven'. This was the quality most mentioned by KTC participants.

'Looking to the future not just the next election.'

'Fact based representation, rather than ideological posturing.'

Representative meant 'takes representative positions on issues' and was closely tied to the quality of representing the electorate in its breadth, and not just who voted for them, and representing the people not a party.

'We need more diversity in representation and more representation of lower end of the demographic spectrum.'

Independent was the seventh-highest rating quality, perhaps demonstrating that other things are more important to people, and independence may only be of significance if it is required for the other qualities to be expressed.

Comments such as 'clone David Pocock' were not infrequent, indicating that the ability of Independent candidates to be effective is now recognised.

'Major parties lock their people in, admire Bridget Archer and the Independents - refreshing change.'

The category '**authentic**' was dominated by 'not a career politician'.

'They used to be decent people who want to do good things. Now they're just career politicians, its all just a game, working for the party.'

Leadership was prominent among the qualities nominated by KTC participants, and included 'new ideas', 'vision' and 'courage'.

'Someone who is interested in the power of ideas not the idea of power.'
'Naïve to expect a representative will advocate all views - need an informed, evidence-based formulation of policy and be able to convince people of it.'

Lastly, **personality** is used to represent qualities such as 'nice', 'kind', 'compassionate' and 'serving others'.

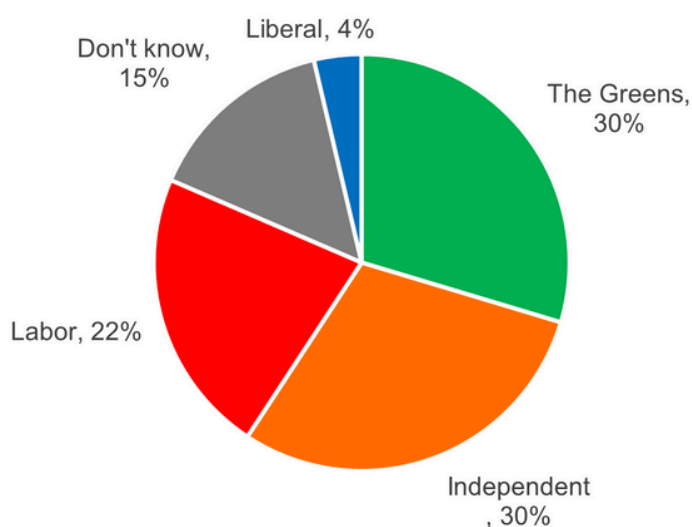
ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS FROM THE SURVEY

The online survey was anonymous and included several questions that weren't asked in discussion at stalls or KTCs. This allows for some additional insights, keeping in mind that the total number of respondents (54) was not large enough for statistical analysis or strong conclusions to be drawn. Survey respondents were equally male and female (47.2% each, the balance non-binary or preferred not to say). The average age of male and female respondents was very similar (about 61 years).

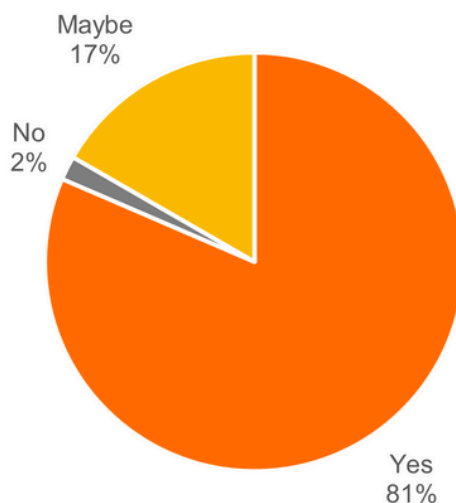
Respondents were asked 'Which political Party do you think currently aligns the most with your views & interests?' Thirty percent selected Independent, equal to 30% selecting The Greens, while 22% were Labor, 15% unsure and only 4% Liberal. Respondents hence were progressive in general, and a large number already aligned with Independent.

When asked 'Are you open to giving an Independent candidate your 1st preference vote?', 81% answered yes, 17% maybe and only 2% no.

Current alignment



Open to an Independent





Comparing this to the alignment expressed in the earlier question, for those who were aligned with a party, 76% said that they were open to voting for an Independent, with a further 21% maybe. At this early stage, there is tremendous support and openness for an Independent candidate.

Thirteen issues were suggested in the question 'Federal issues of most concern to you (pick up to 5)' and there was an option to suggest other issues.

The top seven issues people were concerned about, were the same for males and females, but the six issues that ranked lowest were ranked differently between genders. Women were more concerned about inequality, Indigenous issues and gender equality, while men were more concerned about the economy, taxation and unemployment.



NEXT STEPS

FIERCE HOPE: DEMOCRACY IS NOT A SPECTATOR SPORT

This is only the first report and not the last word. Our listening project continues and there is ample opportunity for the people of Bean to join us, speak with us and get involved. We need community if we're to have a Community Independent!

If you live in Bean and your voice has not been heard yet, **please join our mailing list**, follow us on social media, **get involved** in our events, complete the online survey, and help **spread the word**.

The release of this first report coincides with the start of our candidate selection process. **Perhaps you would like to throw your hat in the ring, or tap someone else on the shoulder** - we're keen for names to come forward in confidence.

A selection panel drawn from our group and from the community will interview prospective candidates and develop a shortlist. Shortlisted people will speak at a public forum, and the audience will be able to ask questions, as well as submit feedback to the panel. This feedback will inform final interviews by the selection panel and the final choice of candidate.

It is important to us that this process is community-based and as transparent as it can be while respecting privacy of the prospective candidates. Only when the community makes the choice together will the candidate have the broad support of the community that they need for election.



JOIN US

OUR VISION: A POLITICS FOR PEOPLE & PLANET

An community-backed Independent for Bean will:

- Represent us, not a Party
 - Represent our community concerns, not Party politics,
 - Represent our views in Parliamentary committees convened around important issues,
 - Hold a vote in Parliament equal to every other representative, and...
-
- they could hold the balance of power on the cross bench, forcing a minority government to negotiate with our representative.

hello@VoicesOfBean.org

www.VoicesOfBean.org

"Never doubt
that a small group of
thoughtful committed
individuals can
change the world.

In fact, it's the only
thing that ever has."

-Margaret Mead





VOICES OF

Bean