

YOUNG AUSTRALIANS in  
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

# FUTURE LEADERS SERIES 2023

## FIRST NATIONS FOREIGN POLICY COMMUNIQUE

*Developing the leaders of tomorrow, today*



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

calleo indigenous



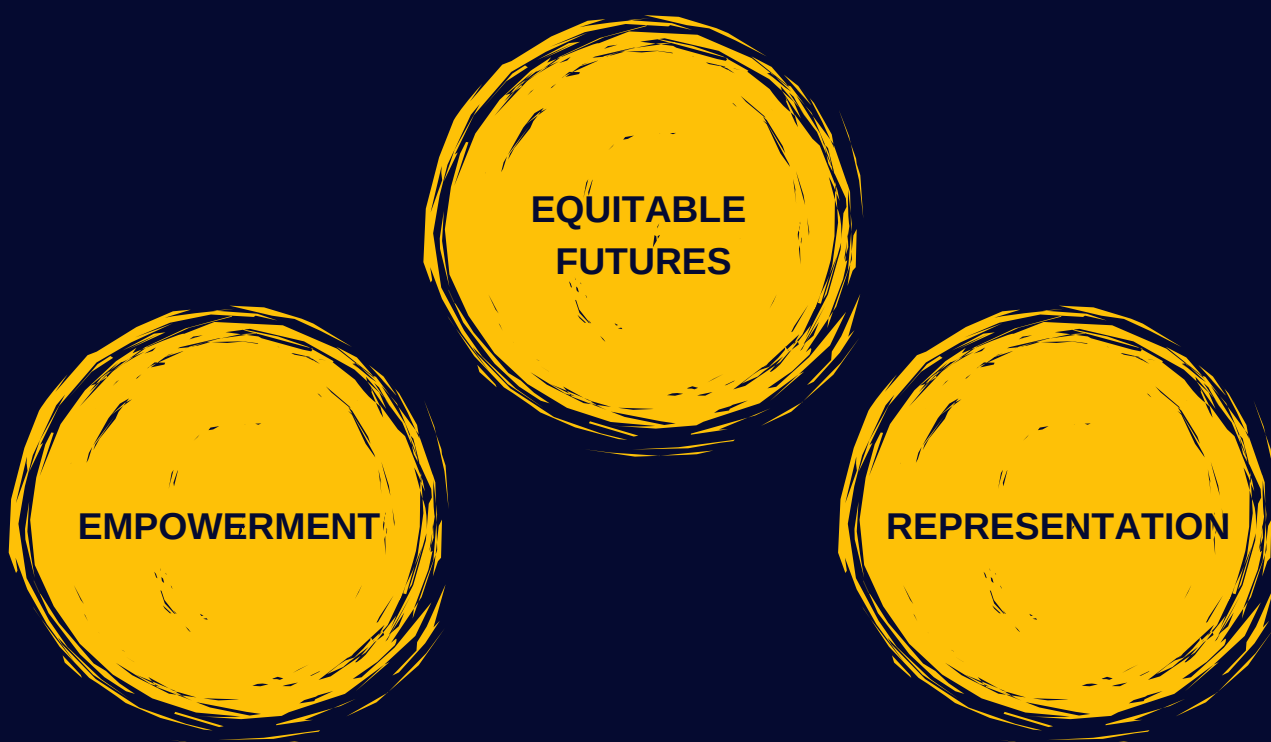
## Call to Action

Over six weeks in May and June 2023, Young Australians in International Affairs hosted the eighth iteration of the Future Leaders Series. Each series focuses on a critical issue affecting Australia, the Indo-Pacific region and the international system and equips participants with the knowledge, skills and networks to respond to these challenges and shape future policy decisions.

Together, we worked with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous young people from around Australia to listen and learn from First Nations experts and young people in the Pacific. We know that young people can and will contribute to the implementation of the First Nations foreign policy; this series explored how this can be done.

At the conclusion of the series, Young Australians in International Affairs selected a group of seven participants to represent the cohort at an extension program in Canberra, in September 2023. We facilitated a formal presentation and round table discussion with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade First Nations Taskforce, the office supporting the inaugural Ambassador for First Nations People, Mr Justin Mohamed. Our participants spoke to Indigenous youth leadership and diplomacy, exercised through cultural and intellectual property rights and climate action.

In 2024 we hope and ask that the contributions of young Australians are considered in the implementation of the First Nations foreign policy. The successful transformation of concept into policy relies on uplifting young voices as genuine decision-makers for future generations.



# SUPPORTING CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

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Access for young Indigenous people to international enterprise is limited, and First Nations cultures, knowledge and art are exploited as valuable exports. Considering Australia's historical Indigenous trading relationships and contemporary significance in the Pacific, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be supported to thrive in the economic landscape of the Indo-Pacific region.

A First Nations foreign policy should support and empower young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through capacity-building and Pacific-cultural engagement. It needs to help develop business and social enterprise; and invest in a sustainable future.

To achieve this we recommend the following:

## **The Pacific Yulgu Program.**

This program would be designed to develop Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Pasifika young people's innovation and capacity-building activities through four pillars of Indigenous empowerment:

1. Economic Development and Leadership
2. Cultural Reclamation and Development
3. Education and Health
4. Agriculture and food/water security

Through funding, programming, protection of cultural property, reinvestment into communities and continuing commitment to Pacific engagement, this program could empower young people to have a collective impact - informed by the knowledge of Australia's oldest diplomats.

*Yulgu means 'heart' in Ghungalu language.*



# INDIGENOUS YOUTH LEADERSHIP

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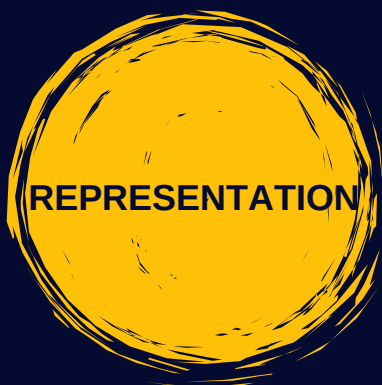
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There is a significant opportunity for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to harness the leadership potential of young Aboriginal and Torres Islander's and address the marked under-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in national and international forums.

To achieve this we recommend the following:

1. Support the establishment of a **National Indigenous Youth Conference** for First Nations youth to share views, yarn and make recommendations on the future of First Nations international engagement.
2. Provide further opportunities for a select group to gain useful experience in Australian foreign policy-making by **engaging with DFAT's First Nations Taskforce** and **shadowing the Ambassador for First Nation's People** to an international forum.
3. Support a First Nation group of youth to **represent Australia** at the **Global Indigenous Youth Caucus**.

Programs designed to promote the participation and development of First Nations youth to learn, contribute and represent their communities globally will support a candidacy pipeline of future leaders in the international community.



# INDIGENOUS CLIMATE ACTION AND DIPLOMACY

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Climate action is a national priority. Indigenous people have unique knowledge about land management and climate adaptation techniques that is not adequately reflected in environmental policy.

Meaningful involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia's climate change diplomacy, particularly in Pacific collaboration, should harness the First Nations foreign policy to:

- Strengthen international Indigenous to Indigenous climate collaboration
- Embed First Nations perspectives into Australia's climate action policy
- Progress First Nations' rights, and environmental and human rights interests globally

To achieve this we recommend the following:

1. Support Indigenous international mobility in the not-for-profit and non-government climate sector. A professional exchange program such as this should be designed to develop skills for Indigenous employees through publicly-funded secondments, also enhancing Pacific relationships and programs.
2. This function could be administered by the DFAT Office of the Pacific, offering 20 competitive grants of up to \$50,000 to support salaries and living stipends for up to 6 months in-country.
3. The program would target Indigenous early career professionals (not aged capped) with a demonstrated track record of commitment to environmental advocacy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, eco-preneurship, or sustainable development.

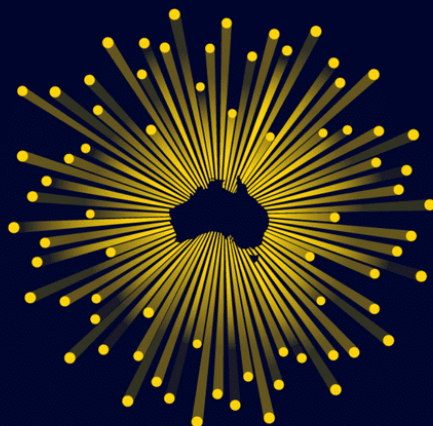


*Solutions to climate change are embedded deeply in Country. Indigenous people have a natural ability to see changes in Country first-hand.*



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**FIRST NATIONS FOREIGN POLICY**  
**COMMUNIQUÉ**

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