



Making the Future Australia Wants

Addressing the nation's biggest issues
through Constructive Discussion

TD Research

Society's inability to discuss and navigate complex and contested topics contributes to Australia's underperformance on the nation's biggest issues. Together with [Next25](#), this research partnership aims to explore, understand, and support the conditions that foster *Constructive Discussion*, and builds on Next25's mission: to ensure Australia has what it takes to make the future its people want.

Constructive discussion emphasises a need for diverse perspectives to be raised, exchanged, and collectively considered in a manner that enables reflection and supports practical, collaborative decision-making, with involvement of diverse stakeholders facing challenges of national significance.

So, how can we assess Australia's ability to respond to critical issues and work together to co-create, test, and implement interventions that strengthen capacity to create the future Australia wants?

Project Overview

This transdisciplinary research explores some of the nation's most pressing challenges and aims to address their root causes, rather than just their symptoms, through fostering and elevating constructive discussion. The project began with Next25 interviewing 50 business and community leaders, where the research team identified key barriers and opportunities for national progress, emphasising the critical role that constructive discussion can have in navigating complex societal issues. From this foundation, the research focused on two areas:

1. **Understanding the conditions that enable constructive discussion**—and developing a practical framework to support its use across diverse contexts.
2. **Applying this approach to the Sydney housing crisis**—to explore how new forms of dialogue can unlock innovative and systemic solutions.

By exploring these questions, the team aims to enhance the transformative potential of education and professional practice, equipping stakeholders with tools to co-create the future Australia wants.

Our Impact

The research unearthed how rising polarisation and resistance to differing views are stalling progress on complex societal challenges, such as climate change, tax reform, immigration, inequality, indigenous disadvantage and housing affordability. In response, the team created a holistic framework for understanding, identifying, and applying constructive discussion strategies. Looking at the big picture, the framework acknowledges the various ways and scales at which the concept can be applied, aiming to help professionals avoid limiting their approaches by drawing attention to the multiple levels at which constructive discussion can take place, including:

- **Personal** – Reflecting on our own thinking and behaviours.
- **Conversational** – Engaging in open, respectful dialogue.
- **Institutional** – Embedding inclusive practices in organisations.
- **Cultural** – Shifting norms to support long-term change.

Using the framework, the team studied the Sydney housing 'crisis' as a powerful test case. This enabled social interventions that build trust and shared understanding; democratic innovations such as representative panels and co-designed pilot projects; and collaborative ideation that brings together diverse expertise and lived experience. The research showed that a focus on constructive discussion can offer new insights, recommendations, and interventions for professionals and other influential stakeholders seeking to achieve transformative system change in urban areas. The ongoing integration of systems science, socio-cultural perspectives, and transformative agendas is expected to benefit these endeavours and ultimately impact society in a variety of positive ways. The team continue to co-create and test new approaches to improve the Sydney housing ecosystem and address other complex issues.

Work with us

We deliver a wide range of research projects for public and private sector partners seeking research expertise and support in overcoming their complex challenges using our unique transdisciplinary (TD) methodology. To find out how TD Research can help you and your organisation, please email - TDRresearch@uts.edu.au

PROJECT PARTNERS

UTS Transdisciplinary School, UTS Institute for Sustainable Futures and Next25.

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