

Big Issues survey 2017 comments

General comments from respondents

Taxation policy

I am very surprised that there is not reference to income tax reductions for all individual tax payers. Reference to the less advantaged – we need all round tax reform and a reduction in income tax across the board.

Increase the GST rate and base. Tax people's spending not their earnings and effort!

Additional suggestions: increase compulsory super, with compensating tax cuts for low to middle income workers. Also save on health/welfare bill by preventative measures such as a sugar tax, and banning tobacco, alcohol, gambling and sugary drinks ads.

Reform of GST allocation is overdue and needs to be addressed to ensure the Federation remains an attractive proposition.

I see you didn't offer lower personal taxes as one of your options in the question about tax reform.

The aim of tax reform should be to collect sufficient revenue for planned expenditure in the most efficient manner, without increasing wealth or income inequality.

My preferred tax reform wasn't listed – stop treating debt finance differently to equity – eliminate tax deductibility of interest (except for banks) and lower tax rates accordingly.

The Government should do three things:

- Widen the GST base
- Lower GST
- Remove payroll tax
- Wind back subsidies across the board
- Remove red tape
- Lower business taxes

These things would help the economy grow and reduce our long-term debt. Government has got to stop trying to pick winners, or micromanage the economy. The trajectory over the last 10 years or so has got to change as we are living on borrowed money with reduced capacity to pay.

Disruption

Disruptive technologies and related impacts on employment markets and traditional industries require urgent government policy and regulations to consider potential taxation of automation of the potential large number of traditional sectors of employment. This should consider UBI and retraining for people within these areas to ensure future sustainability and economic

security is not completely reliant on hand outs. Major infrastructure investments into technology and communications infrastructure along with health, education and well-being should be the highest priority for Australia.

Global competitiveness

The elephant in the room is Australia's declining global competitiveness. It's now a very high cost place to operate and isn't in the race with our global competitors to attract investment. Why would anyone come to Australia to invest – high tax, high costs and massive red tape?

Investment and infrastructure

Transport and infrastructure must be in place prior to further commercial or residential development. This is increasingly a quality of life issue in metropolitan areas.

Regulation and red tape are significant disincentives for productivity and investment from Asian monies coming into Australia.

A consistent approach to significant investment i.e. major infrastructure projects which take a long time to plan and deliver, is important if we want to attract significant investment from overseas. The current change of approach every three or four years at the state and federal level is not workable in the long term.

Speaking for myself in my industry there is no way we can get any more productivity gains until we have increased broadband speeds.

Education and skills

Using the vast resource of older people (especially those who are experiencing age discrimination) is an issue which deserves far more attention.

Reform the education sector.

Increased investment in education and research – is the key – not less – we must keep up to be a knowledge economy.

Regional development

Address major cities/regional cities imbalance by taxation incentive to job providing firms relocating/establishing in regional cities. Address communications imbalance in regional Australia and the 'bush'.

Environment

What about degradation of our environment and our air/water needed to survive and grow the food we need to live? What about population growth and the need to manage it? What about working to sustain growth and maintain prosperity as a goal? (read the Limits to Growth!)

Need a significantly greater focus on people/community and resources/environment.

Energy and resources

The energy regulatory framework and the Australian energy market need an overall review.

In relation to energy I believe that the first thing that the government should do is to remove all subsidies from the fossil fuel industry. No point talking about giving taxpayer's funds to renewables while still giving taxpayer funds to coal, oil and gas. Yes, should be progressive withdrawal to allow for adjustment.

The only thing that is needed in energy policy is a carbon tax. Needs to be priority #1.

Disappointing that there was no mention in the survey re: clean fuel. "Energy" in the economy is much more than just electricity. SA in particular, has the potential to provide clear leadership with clean power and clean fuel.

A key component missed in your energy section, and considered in my responses to that section, is the required policy change from government to stop permitting retention leases on oil and gas discoveries. Now that many major discoveries have been identified, exploration drilling has reduced significantly (no need to spend as new sources available when tenement holders want/choose to deliver to the market (producers in control), a use it or lose it policy should be adopted allowing business that want to exploit those discoveries will be encouraged to step forward and drive massive further investment, jobs and wealth for WA, lower energy prices for the state and business will result, businesses will relocate to WA from East and other parts of the world because of the secure long term energy supply (in gas) for the next 100 years, WA can be connected to the East to solve their energy problems and it is now the right time looking at the forecast tightening of supply in three to five years, drilling and tapping of existing known gas fields must start now (due to five to 10 year lag from drill hole to market delivery) to prevent sky-rocketing energy prices in WA and if you control supply you can control price. High energy prices are not good for any economy and work the opposite to what Australia wants. By all means let the producers sell their LNG internationally so they too get a win, and such should be working for Australia and not against. It is time to exploit properly our abundant resources and make Australia fantastic.

Inequality and disadvantage

Biggest problem facing the economy is the very low growth in household real income. If this is not addressed immediately we will have serious economic problems.

Governance

Undertake a review of the government wastage in this country.

Banking reform (an explicit reference) has been left out of the options in Q1! There is public concern about banks' lack of accountability. The federal government is avoiding the issue of a royal commission. As someone who has had bad experiences which merited a higher level of accountability from my bank, I look forward to a commission.

We need decisive leadership that invests in tackling the issues we will face in future, not just the upcoming election cycle.

Australia is over-governed. Many problems we face are the result of poor federal/state interaction – energy is a great example. Need to improve it or change it.

Fair share for WA on the GST distribution is the one and only priority for the Commonwealth to do.

Reduce government spending.

High priority should be to reduce the size of government.

I think you missed a key reform – holding politicians to account and reforming the Parliamentary process to move to a government that governs as leaders, not undermines and grandstands in Parliament.

Reduce duplication of government across State, Federal and Local.

Federal and State Governments should not try and tackle too many issues all at once – but rather have focus on key issues that will have biggest impact in each area outlined in this survey.

The community and the economy require a bi-partisan approach to formulate a plan and an action plan to make these things happen.

It would also be good to have some method of scrutinising and screening federal politicians, so that they have the best interests of this country first and foremost. Leadership in the federal parliament has been wanting over the last decade at least. You wouldn't have been asking half the questions in this survey if there had been some politicians with foresight, integrity and strategic thinking a decade ago (e.g. energy, ICT, NBN, soaring healthcare expenditure etc.)

Housing

Housing affordability is permanently altering the wealth distribution and structure of Australian society. Small adjustments to current policy settings are a technical response to an adaptive challenge. Governments need to recognise housing as critical economic infrastructure and dramatically increase investment and yield, including for hard / expensive to target groups, but also for those on middle incomes and down.

Housing affordability should incorporate the community housing sector and new dwelling typologies.

Perhaps I would accept a slightly lower standard of living in return for less population density and cheaper houses.

Other comments

Australia is too complacent – resources have made us a fat and lazy nation – we need to get fit and competitive for the new world economy.

Most important issues: greater certainty and stability in policy development process (fewer "thought bubbles" driven by populism); more bi-partisan collaboration in policy process (especially on big issues like energy policy); more policy based on facts and evidence.

Sustainability, inclusivity and equity are the most important factors in Australia's success as an economy moving forward.

Australia needs rapidly to rediscover defence capability and foreign affairs strategies as critical political/economic issues

Would love CEDA to look at the issue of prisons in Australia. The huge growth in prisoner numbers is an expensive drain on government budgets and there is no evidence that prisons improve safety or address the reasons people commit crime (such as addiction, poverty, mental illness).

Australia's advantage must ultimately be a human advantage – creative can-do collaborators who are both agile and flexible. Too much of our market is still dominated by rent seekers (the

big 4) – but we can aspire to delivering world class services – in education, health which both lift our futures and generate national export income.

Additionally, it would be good for CEDA to look and analyse the ease of doing business and maybe address where we are low in the rankings e.g. cost of exporting.

There is still the out-dated assumption that continual growth is a good thing - it is not. It is simply not sustainable. I would like to see more focus on the long-time viability of Australia's society – we need a better balance between economics, society and the environment. Economic and environmental sustainability should be top of the agenda. Otherwise we are in danger of losing our quality of life – the quality of the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink and the world we live in. Continual growth is not sustainable – we should focus on living within our environmental (and economic) means. Growth built on exploitation is also not sustainable. Climate Change is only one of the very real risks we face – living beyond our means will also destroy our quality of life.

The greatest challenge to our economy over the next decade is worker engagement as disruption and flat wages combined with the greatest mobility of labor ever makes it difficult to maintain investment in human capital. Moving investment from short term profitability to medium to long term value generation is critical to our survival.

Having lived and worked in Asia for a few years, the main impediment I see is that we look to Europe/the US for comparisons/answers. The 21st century is not about these traditional models and views, and we are certain to be left behind if we continue to entertain them.

Vibrant city, creative city, affordable city, green city, caring city...none of that necessarily means a richer city with richer people living in it, it means a better spread of money and resources across different priorities...someone will always have to lose and this time round it needs to be those who have the most money...that's what the future generation wants.