



12 APR, 2025

The youth is out there The youth is out there

The West Australian (Saturday edition), Perth

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Experts warn major parties about ambivalence among new voters

The youth is out there

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More than 750,000 Australians have turned 18 since the last Federal election but their eligibility to vote doesn't mean they're interested.

Experts are warning politicians they have their work cut out to win over young voters, with

many of them disillusioned and apathetic about the state of Australian politics.

Their indifference is further highlighted by the enrolment rate among 18-24-year-olds, which as of Friday lagged behind all other age groups. About 160,000 in that cohort are still missing from the electoral roll.

Australian National University associate professor Faith Gordon said several factors were causing dispassion in young people, but not "feeling heard" on key concerns was chief among them.

"We know they have a lot of concern about their future. We also hear they feel they haven't been heard. They talk about feeling disillusioned . . . with their local members," she said.

Perth resident Seth Dyson-May said he was "50-50" on whether politicians were listening to young Australians.

The 18-year-old said he was "intrigued" by politics but felt disconnected to MPs, despite their attempts to use social media to engage.

"Having a really good social

media platform is really important because it's easier to connect with younger generations," he said.

"It's also important for them to go places where young people are, like universities and social events, and talking to them there."

Sathini Dell conceded she was somewhat detached from day-to-day politics but was keen to get up to speed to ensure her vote counted.

"I'm not as engaged as I would like to be . . . but now that I'm 18 I know I have a responsibility, so I would like to learn and try and contribute to the best I can."

In a bid to get a better understanding, Ms Dell and Mr Dyson-May recently attended a 18th birthday party where Curtin MP Kate Chaney came along to take part in a Q&A.

They said it was helpful way to gain an insight into voting processes.

But who they, and other youngsters will vote for, remains unclear

ANU demographer Liz Allen rejected any speculation that the youth of today would most likely lean towards the Greens and Labor, saying that while some leftist policy appealed, they had a "general ambivalence" about politics.

"I don't believe we should count on younger voters likely

voting left. It tends to shift with what people are demanding," she said. "Voters want polities to feel their pain."

"That young people, in particular, are saying there's not hope for the future."

"This election will be one where voters will be seeking blood."

Youth Affairs Council WA chief executive Antonella Segre said the major parties needed to pivot to understand the issues affecting young Australians.

She said policy focused on older generations would no longer cut it.

"I do 100 per cent believe we are at that tipping point. I think that there needs to be a lot more equity and representation of the young people," she said.

"We don't hear any of the parties addressing those issues."

"That's why there is this level of disengagement, because we've got to remember that our young people are very active at all levels of politics. But if there's nothing that is aimed at them, they're disheartened."

Some politicians do appear to be trying, however.

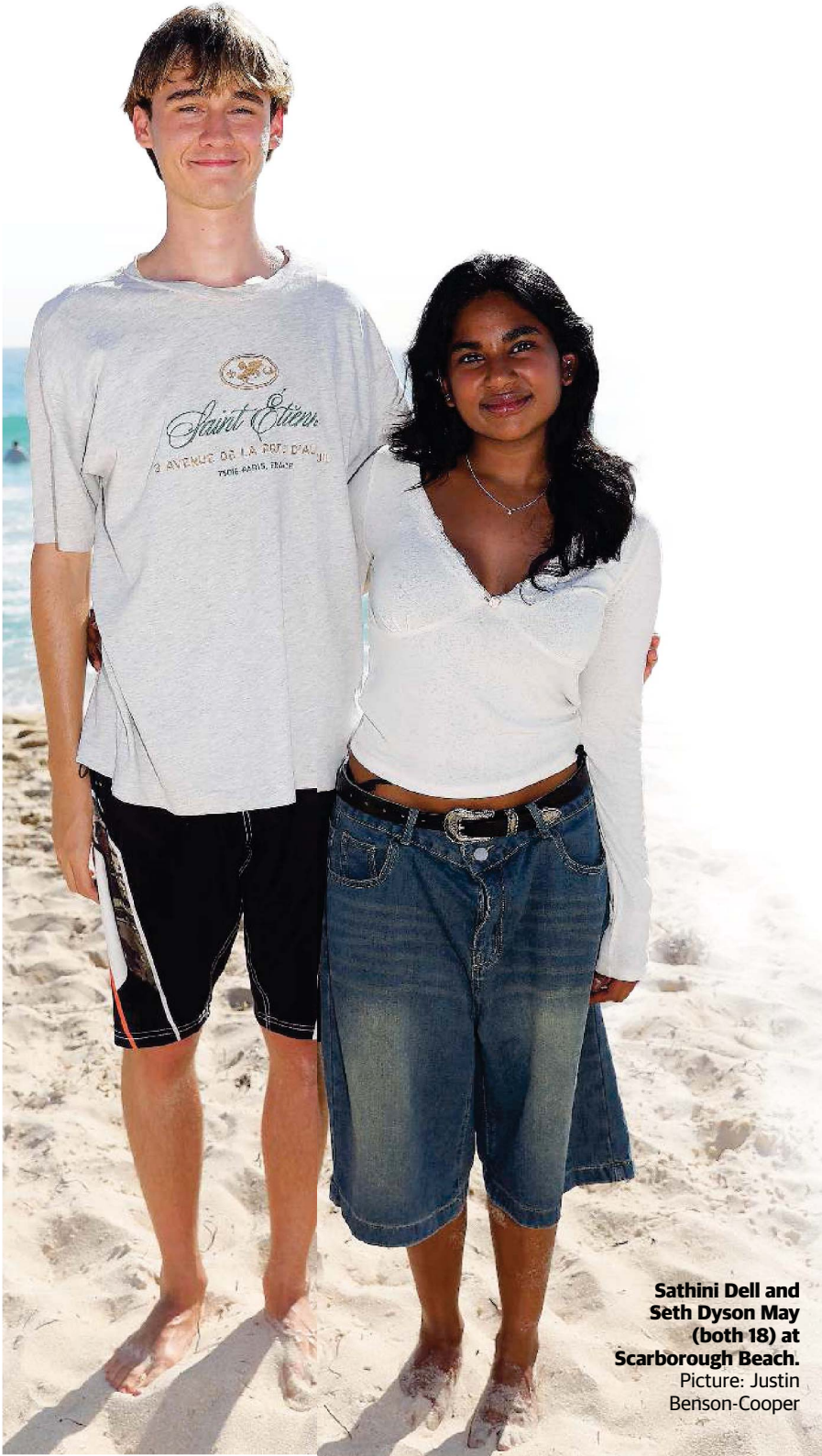
Prime Minister Anthony Albanese appeared on reality TV star Abbey Chatfield's podcast, while Opposition Leader Peter Dutton joined 22-year-old Olympian Sam Fricker's show.



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Sathini Dell and
Seth Dyson May
(both 18) at
Scarborough Beach.
Picture: Justin
Benson-Cooper