



Australia's Favourite Communicators

+ Wilkinson Butler Communicator of the Year 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Methodology Statement	3
About This Research	4-5
Wilkinson Butler Communicator of the Year	6
Australia's Favourite Communicators	6-10
Australians' views: What makes a good communicator?	11-12
Questions Asked	13

METHODOLOGY STATEMENT

Publication date: 20 January 2026

Methodology Statement

Research company	DemosAU
Client commissioning the research	Wilkinson Butler
End client	Wilkinson Butler
Fieldwork dates	13-17 November 2025 (wave 1), 13-15 January, 2026 (wave 2)
Mode of data collection	Internet Panels
Target population	Australian residents 18+ who pay attention to news
Sample size	1,103 (Wave 1) , 1030 (Wave 2).
Is voting intention published?	No
Effective sample size after weighting applied	636 (Wave 1), 564 (Wave 2)
Margin of error associated with effective sample size	+/-3.8% (Wave 1), +/- 4.1% (Wave 2) - Also see page 5.
Variables used in weighting	Age x gender, education, income, residential tenure, region, 2025 Federal Election vote.
Weighting method used	Rim Weighting
Full question text, responses categories and randomisation	See page 13
Source of sample	Online Panels (100%)
Positioning of voting intention questions in questionnaire?	N/A
How were undecided voters handled?	N/A
2PP calculation method	N/A

ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

DemosAU was commissioned to conduct public research to determine Australia's favourite communicators to inform the selection of Wilkinson Butler's Communicator of the Year Award.

Initial field work was carried out between November 13 and 17 2025. However, in light of the nation-shaping tragic attack at Bondi on December 14 and its aftermath, it was decided to conduct a second wave of the poll in January 2026.

What changed between November and January

Interestingly, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese secured the same percentage of mentions in both surveys, indicating that while several polls, including one from DemosAU, have shown a weakening of support for Labor since the Bondi attack, there's still a sizeable core group of voters who admire the Prime Minister's communication style.

There was, however, a significant increase in the the number of respondents identifying Pauline Hanson as a great communicator - from 11% in November to 17% in January, putting her on equal pegging with the Prime Minister. This is an indication that Ms Hanson's consistent messaging on immigration and other issues has found a more receptive audience post Bondi.

Other notable, albeit smaller, shifts included a two point increase for both Penny Wong (from 3% to 5%) and Chris Minns (from 1% to 3%).

A Note on the Methodology

This was a somewhat novel brief, with no established industry approach to answering a question of this nature. The closest examples from overseas involved surveys of communications' practitioners - experts in the field - whereas in this case, we wanted the perspectives of the general public.

There were two primary options available: a close-ended question where we would ask respondents to select a name from a list of pre-selected high profile names; or an open-ended approach, where respondents were free to list whichever names came to their mind.

ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

A Note on the Methodology (Continued)

After much discussion between DemosAU and Wilkinson Butler, we selected the open-ended approach. As expected, this resulted in a large number of names being mentioned – however, crucially, a handful stood out from the crowd, with two in particular well ahead of the pack. This allowed us to provide a clear answer to satisfactorily address Wilkinson Butler’s question.

Respondents were asked two substantive questions for this research. The first asked them to identify the names of any prominent Australians who they believed were great communicators. The second asked them to explain why that person or persons were a great communicator.

To ensure an engaged audience, respondents were also asked where they got their news from, with a substantial list of sources, including TV stations, websites and social media platforms provided. Those who selected “I don’t pay attention to the news” were excluded from the survey.

How to View the Margin of Error in this context

Generally in Australian published polls, the headline margin of error reported reflects an estimate based on a poll result of 50%, as this is the largest sampling variance.

Proportions closer to 0% or 100% have smaller theoretical sampling variance, but their uncertainty does not approach zero.

The effective margin of error for each percentage score in the second wave is as follows;

17%: $\pm 3.1\%$
15%: $\pm 3.0\%$
5%: $\pm 1.8\%$
3%: $\pm 1.4\%$
2%: $\pm 1.2\%$
1%: $\pm 0.8\%$

Note: The summaries and explanations from page 6–9 represent the views of respondents, not of DemosAU or Wilkinson Butler.

George Hasanakos

Director, Head of Research

AUSTRALIA'S FAVOURITE COMMUNICATORS

Anthony Albanese (Prime Minister)

Mentioned by: 17% of respondents (Wave 2)

17% of respondents (Wave 1)



Most Cited Traits

1. Clarity and simplicity of language
2. Authenticity and relatability
3. Calm, measured demeanour
4. Leadership/Role on the world stage

Indicative Respondent Verbatims/Quotes

"He explains policies in clear, relatable language and uses personal stories to connect with everyday Australians."

"He has a calm demeanour and ensures he speaks thoroughly"

"Clear and straight to the point; All of us are tired of political jargon"

"Love his speeches in parliament; Clear speaking."

Respondents who selected Anthony Albanese as the best communicator most often cite his clarity and plain speaking style. In general, they appreciate that he avoids jargon, explains complex issues, such as the economy, housing and international relations, in simple, accessible terms, and "speaks clearly" using language "everyone understands."

A second major theme is authenticity and relatability: people describe him as honest, down-to-earth and connected to ordinary Australians, often referencing his working-class background and upbringing in public housing.

Many also highlight his calm, consistent demeanour, saying that he remains composed under pressure and comes across as credible and reassuring.

Finally, some point to his leadership presence as Prime Minister, arguing that his visibility on the national and international stage and his ability to handle media, diplomacy and policy explanations demonstrate strong communication skills.

AUSTRALIA'S FAVOURITE COMMUNICATORS

Pauline Hanson (One Nation Leader)

Mentioned by: 17% of respondents (Wave 2)

11% of respondents (Wave 1)



Indicative Respondent Verbatims/Quotes

"Pauline Hanson says what a lot of ordinary people are thinking but don't have the high profile to say;

"Ms Hanson seems to be ahead of the game. She seems to understand what the people want."

"She communicates clearly and in our language 'so to speaking to the point"

"To me she calls a spade a spade and always speaks the truth"

Most Cited Traits

1. Straight-talking
2. Authenticity and relatability
3. Relatable communication style
4. Courage and toughness

Respondents who identified Pauline Hanson as the best communicator generally view her as direct and truthful, with participants emphasising her blunt, unfiltered communication in contrast to other politicians seen as evasive.

She is described as representing "everyday Australians", listening to people who feel overlooked and advocating on issues including affordability, families, low incomes and social challenges.

Many respondents also value her communication style, which they see as clear, simple and characterised by plain language and accessible explanations of complex topics.

Lastly, many admire her confidence and toughness, interpreting her willingness to speak openly and challenge others as evidence of authenticity, determination and commitment to her stated positions.

AUSTRALIA'S FAVOURITE COMMUNICATORS

Penny Wong (Labor Senator)

Mentioned by: 5% of respondents (Wave 2)
3% of respondents (Wave 1)



Indicative Respondent Verbatims/Quotes

"Penny Wong has always hit the right note. She is measured and firm and compassionate."

"She communicates clearly, concisely and directly."

Most Cited Traits

1. Calm, measured and controlled
2. Intelligent and articulate
3. Professional diplomatic tone
4. Directness and clarity without theatrics

"I just like listening to her, she chooses her words well and has a nice tone of voice"

"She is a great diplomat representing Australia overseas in general"

Penny Wong is most commonly valued for a measured, calm, "adult" communication style, described as confident, intelligent, and controlled. Respondents emphasise tone, discipline, and clarity in delivery (including body language and directness).

Another major theme is diplomacy and foreign affairs credibility. People cite her as a strong representative for Australia internationally, framing her communication as balanced and effective in politically charged contexts.

A further thread is clear explanation of complex issues, with respondents describing her as direct, transparent, and able to communicate substance without unnecessary theatrics.

AUSTRALIA'S FAVOURITE COMMUNICATORS

Chris Minns (NSW Premier)

Mentioned by: 3% of respondents (Wave 2)
1% of respondents (Wave 1)



Indicative Respondent Verbatims/Quotes

"He speaks calmly and with authority"

"Even when put under pressure from constant questions being fired at him, he remains calm."

"Chris Minns was very involved and open to the public in terms of honesty in the wake of the Bondi attack."

"The response from Chris Minns to the Bondi tragedy showed leadership, empathy and clear communication..."

Most Cited Traits

1. Crisis Leadership post Bondi Tragedy
2. Empathy, compassion and humanity
3. Calm, composed authority
4. Plain, relatable communication and clarity

Minns is most often praised for calm, authoritative delivery under pressure. Respondents describe him as composed, measured, and credible, someone who "speaks calmly and with authority" and doesn't appear rattled in difficult moments.

A second strong theme is crisis/event communication and visible leadership, with multiple references to his handling of the "Bondi" situation: being present, providing direct updates, and sounding genuine and sympathetic.

He's also credited with clarity and straightforwardness, particularly in press conferences—getting to the point quickly and explaining situations in an easy-to-follow way.

RESULTS

All Communicators mentioned by ~1% of respondents or more (Wave 2)

Cohort	Yes
Anthony Albanese	17%
Pauline Hanson	17%
Penny Wong	5%
Chris Minns	3%
Jacinta Price	3%
Kevin Rudd	3%
Barnaby Joyce	2%
David Crisafulli	2%
John Howard	2%
Josh Frydenberg	2%
Robert Irwin	2%
Abbie Chatfield	1%
Adam Bandt	1%
Andrew Forrest	1%
Andrew Hastie	1%
Craig McRae	1%
David Pocock	1%
Dylan Alcott	1%
Gina Rinehart	1%
Glenn McGrath	1%

Cohort	Yes
Hugh Jackman	1%
Jelena Dokic	1%
Jim Chalmers	1%
Julia Gillard	1%
Malcolm Turnbull	1%
Mark Bouris	1%
Michelle Bullock	1%
Natalie Barr	1%
Pat Cummins	1%
Paul Keating	1%
Paul Murray	1%
Peter Malinauskas	1%
Ricky Ponting	1%
Scott Morrison	1%
Steve Smith	1%
Todd Woodbridge	1%
Tony Abbott	1%
Waleed Aly	1%
All Others not listed (individually polling under 1%)	15%

Note: Total responses may exceed 100% as respondents could nominate more than one name

What Makes Someone a Great Communicator?

From respondents' open-ended responses, we have identified six general themes below. (Wave 1 Only)

1. Honesty & trustworthiness

Mentioned by ~26% of respondents

The most common reflection of a great communicator is someone who is honest, straight, and can be trusted. In other words, someone who "tells it like it is", "doesn't BS", and whose words line up with their actions over time.

Keywords: honest, truth, no bullshit, trust, authentic, genuine, not hiding anything.

For some respondents, honesty is the minimum bar: if a person isn't truthful, they cannot be a great communicator, no matter how polished they are.

2. Clarity, plain language & simplicity

Mentioned by ~22% of respondents

The next big theme is clarity: using plain, simple language and explaining things in a way that's easy to follow. This theme includes both clarity of content (explaining complex issues clearly) and clarity of structure (being concise, not waffling, not using jargon).

Keywords: clear, straight to the point, simple, easy to understand, no nonsense.

Clarity and honesty are often mentioned together – being "clear" and "straight" is part of what makes someone feel honest.

3. Listening, empathy & caring about people

Mentioned by ~20% of respondents

A large group emphasise that great communicators don't just talk, they listen and show empathy. They're seen as people who understand "ordinary Australians", care about others, and take the time to listen rather than lecture.

Keywords: listen, good listener, empathy, cares, compassionate, understands people, hears us.

For many, empathy + listening is what differentiates someone who is just a good speaker from someone who is a genuinely good communicator.

4. Strong delivery, speaking style & body language

Mentioned by ~15% of respondents

Another large cluster of comments focus on how people speak as much as what they say; articulation, tone, poise, and body language.

Keywords: articulate, eloquent, well spoken, good tone of voice, maintains eye contact.

This theme overlaps with confidence (below), but is distinct: it's about technical speaking skill and physical presence.

5. Knowledgeable & informed

Mentioned by ~14% of respondents

A significant share explicitly want communicators who know their stuff – people who are well-informed, experienced, and can back up what they say with facts or expertise.

Keywords: knowledgeable, informed, expert, experienced, research, facts, evidence.

For these respondents, credibility comes partly from substance: it's not enough to sound good; communicators must be across the detail.

6. Confidence, conviction & passion

Mentioned by ~12% of respondents

Many respondents describe great communicators as confident, passionate and decisive. They value communicators who genuinely believe in what they're saying and project that belief without being overbearing.

Keywords: confidence, strong, passionate, inspiring, conviction.

Confidence and passion are most positively viewed when paired with honesty and clarity; over-confidence without substance isn't seen as desirable.

QUESTIONS ASKED

Q. In general, where do you get your news from?

- News websites and newspapers
- Commercial TV news (7,9, 10, Sky News)
- ABC
- Instagram
- Tiktok
- Facebook
- X
- Other
- I don't pay attention to the news - (*leave survey*)

Q. For the purposes of this discussion, let's define a great communicator as someone who comes across as trustworthy, expresses ideas clearly, connects authentically with others, or inspires audiences.

Name the Australians, with a public profile, who you think are great communicators in 2025?

You can name one person, or up to five. They may be in politics, in business, in the media, in sport or well-known in the community.

- Open-ended response

Q. What has one or more of these people said or done that makes them such a great communicator?

- Open-ended response + Follow up prompt for more detail.

DEMOS AU

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