

THE CITY OF
GREATER GEELONG

YOUTH COUNCIL PRESENTATION TO COUNCIL

Tuesday 23 March 2021



JUNIOR MAYOR – ELLIOT NICHOLAS

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Junior Mayor's Message

INTRODUCTION

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge the Wadawurrung People, the traditional owners of this land, and pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging, as well as acknowledging all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People present this evening. Good evening Mayor Stephanie Asher, Greater Geelong Councillors and Directors, as well as the Youth Council and community members here tonight.

PURPOSE

The purpose of tonight's presentation is to introduce Council to the members of the 2021 Youth Council Advisory Committee. We will highlight our activities since our induction in January, including working on the Charter and priorities for our time as Youth Council members.

WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED IN OUR FIRST TWO MONTHS

Youth Council 2021 Induction

On behalf of the rest of the Youth Council I would like to speak about the incredible experience that was the 2021 Youth Council Induction. We had multiple guest speakers come in to talk to us about the important side of the Youth Council, one being CEO Martin Cutter who talked to us about the inner workings and bigger picture of Council and the spread-out structure that is the City of Greater Geelong's employment. Another speaker was the Manager of Governance who talked about some proper terminology and structural details of governance and a good functioning Council. The other speakers included City staff from the Mayor and Councillors support unit who talked about support for the Mayor and Councillors, staff from the Corporate Communications and Marketing team who talked about appropriate use of communications and social media, the Acting Director of Community Life who was the MC and lastly we heard some wise words from Deputy Mayor Trent Sullivan. I learnt some very important things like, the responsibilities of being part of the Youth Council, what it means to be Junior Mayor, and the understanding of the opportunities that we have in the Youth Council this year.

This was fantastic information for us to learn on our first day yet, the induction was also a chance for the Youth Council to meet each other and for us to share some things about ourselves with the presenters and staff. The 2021 Youth Council is made up of these amazing young people.

Bellarine ward:

Mackenzie Sinclair is 16. Mackenzie wanted to join the Youth Council as she loves to advocate for change. Being part of the Youth Council also allows Mackenzie to be a voice for the youth of the region and share issues most important to us. The most important issue Mackenzie wants to talk about this year is mental health care in teens and the negative stigma around the topic.

Maria Glass is 15. Maria joined the Youth Council because she was interested in challenging herself to make a better contribution and to learn and be more aware of issues that are happening around her. Maria's desire is to understand others and learn new knowledge to better the world. Maria is passionate about showing that natural wonders of this world are around us to be discovered and appreciated, even when technology use – a double-edged sword – is expanding.

Emma Pape is 14. Emma wanted to join the Youth Council because having a role like this has been a long-lasting dream for her. Emma has always wanted to make a positive impact in the community and give back to the community because it has done so much for her. The main issues Emma would like to talk about this year are youth homelessness, mental health and climate change because they are all very real issues.

Brownbill ward:

I am Elliot Nicholas, I am 17. I wanted to be in the Youth Council to make a bigger and better change in areas like education, having experience being a member of the LGBTIQ+ community and wanting to make changes around inclusivity and awareness. My personal priority is the inclusivity and safety of the LGBTIQ+ community across schools.

Charlotte Hawkins is 14. Charlotte wanted to join the Youth Council to speak about issues she has seen in the community and to have a stronger voice overall on what happens in our youth. Charlotte believes we need to educate our youth on so many issues regarding equality, because most young people don't really understand the importance of acceptance and the consequences of an unequal community.

Minnie Dacres-Mannings is the Deputy Junior Mayor for 2021. She is 17. Minnie joined the Youth Council to enrich herself with opportunities. She has an interest in both the legal and political sides of government and thinks that gaining some experience through Youth Council would give some insight in to this. Youth mental health and suicide as well as disability awareness and inclusivity are important to Minnie.

Kardinia ward:

Madeline Grace is 17. Madeline joined the Youth Council to represent her peers and the youth of Geelong and to also be able to focus on issues that Geelong is currently facing. Furthermore, Madeline wants to be able to grow as a leader and to be able to be an agent of change in Geelong. After a very tough year in 2020, Madeline believes that an important issue to focus on is mental health and wellbeing. By focusing, supporting and advocating on mental health and wellbeing, Geelong youth can be able to feel that they are supported and that the community understands what they are going through.

Nieve Smart is 15. Nieve wanted to join the Youth Council because the youth's voice in all areas of the world, deserves to be heard. Especially as the decisions that leaders make will directly affect our future. Nieve would love to talk and act around the issue of climate change and focus on mental health and suicide prevention.

Eva Maria Gee is 13. Eva wanted to join the Youth Council to have her voice heard and thinks it would be nice to see her ideas in action. Eva's personal priority would be to have youth inclusion and finds that the activeness of young people would improve as a result, with the lack of acceptance something that could be worked on.

Windermere ward:

Emily Rogers is 12. Emily wanted to join the Youth Council to add more positive things to Geelong and meet new people. Emily really wants to talk about keeping Geelong sustainable and having more community events.

Ezra Uebergang is 17. Ezra sees the Youth Council as a new experience and a way to get to know what happens in the decision-making process of making Geelong what it is today. As Ezra finds out more about how this impacts young people, he hopes to discuss youth access to mental health facilities and safety around public transport.

Lilly Madden is 12. Lilly joined the Youth Council because she really enjoyed having leadership roles in the past and has always wanted to know more about our local government and Council. Lilly thinks that this would be a great opportunity to learn more about Geelong. The important issue that Lilly would like to focus on is mental health and making sure that everyone is in the right headspace this year after the impact that 2020 had.

Youth Council Charter

At our first meeting, we worked together to create the 2021 Youth Council charter which includes the values and behaviours we know will help us meet our goals as Youth Council members. We talked through the idea of responsibilities, reviewed the charter of last year's Youth Council and then had discussions in mixed groups to come up with our own expectations. Being open-minded, sensitive to other people's experiences and having fun were important ideas we have included in our charter.

The final charter will be put together and brought to our March meeting to be endorsed.

2021 Priority Areas

An exciting part of our February meeting was making decisions on the 2021 Youth Council's priority areas.

We started by looking at Council's strategic priorities in the most recent Council Plan and worked in wards to decide what we liked and how these priorities fit with what young people are experiencing. Then we looked at results from the last three years of the Mission Australia annual youth survey and talk about whether the priorities and experiences of young people across Australia fit in with what is happening for young people here in Greater Geelong. Finally, each ward decided on what they thought were the three priority areas before bringing every wards ideas together.

Everyone was involved in discussing how to bring a large list down to only a few priority areas. We looked for priorities that might have been written differently but focused on the same area and had an open debate on the language we wanted to use. After a final vote, the Youth Council priority areas for 2021 are:

- Health and wellbeing
- Diversity and inclusion
- Access to healthy and safe environments
- Opportunities for growth and learning

OUR PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT TWO MONTHS

Over the next two months we will start to break down our priority areas into the topics we want to discuss more and provide advice on. We will also start to work with Councillors and learn from them in our Councillor Connect mentoring program starting in March.

CONCLUSION

Now that we have set our priorities for the year and agreed on what we need to do to make the most of our role, we are excited to get started on putting youth voice into Council's work.

At our upcoming meetings, we want to be able to connect with different areas in the City of Greater Geelong, with groups in our community and with other young people so that we can collect as much information as possible before offering input. We are looking forward to meeting with the Councillors from our wards to discuss what we learn with them, share our own perspectives as young people and hear more about their experiences and skills as leaders in our community.

I would like to take this opportunity to say congratulations to all the Youth Council as they are very bright and unique individuals and I look forward to working with all of them this year. I also want to say thanks to them for voting me as this Youth Council's Junior Mayor and I will do my best to make sure all their opinions and voices are heard. If Youth Council members or Councillors have something they would like to say, I'd encourage them to speak with me as I believe there is no such thing as a silly question.

The next report to Council will be presented on 22 June, with another update on Youth Council's work, achievements and advice.