

THE CITY OF
GREATER GEELONG

YOUTH COUNCIL PRESENTATION TO COUNCIL

28 March 2023

JUNIOR MAYOR – IRENE MULILO

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Junior Mayor's Message

INTRODUCTION

The Youth Council Advisory Committee would like to acknowledge the Wadawurrung People, the traditional owners of the land, waterways, and skies and pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the first report is to introduce Council and the Community to the members of the 2023 Youth Council Advisory Committee. The report will also highlight the outcomes of the Youth Council induction sessions and the first Youth Council meeting including the agreed upon Youth Council priority areas and Youth Council Group Charter that will guide the work of the 2023 Youth Council Advisory Committee.

INDUCTION

Based on feedback from the 2022 Youth Council group, the induction sessions were expanded to incorporate opportunities for members to get to know one another and learn more about the program before their first official meeting. At the first session Youth Council members met for the first time at Wurriki Nyal. During this session, members heard about what to expect during their time on Youth Council, including their roles and responsibilities as well as learning why their fellow Youth Council members applied for the program. In the second session, Youth Council members heard more about the program, they were given lots of information on what to anticipate and how to prepare, including how the 11 Youth Council meetings will run. Through a series of respectful discussions and debate, Youth Council developed a draft copy of the priority areas and group charter. Overall, the two days provided members with tremendous knowledge, excitement, and readiness to commence their roles on Youth Council.

The third induction session marked our official entry in to the 2023 Youth Council Program. Unlike the first two induction sessions, this event took place at City Hall in the historic Council Chambers, where family members and key City staff were invited to attend. After each Youth Council member had the opportunity to introduce themselves and detail why they applied for the Youth Council Program, they had the honour to hear from the acting CEO, Kaarina Phyland who welcomed them to the program and provided an overview of how the City works with the Geelong Council. Following on from this, members heard from Councillor Mason, who spoke about the significant responsibilities that come with being a Youth Council member, he also offered an overview of how Councillors engage with Youth Council, provided members with some professional advice to assist them in their roles and finally reminded members of the great opportunity they have been presented with. Youth Council also received presentations from the Manager of Governance and the City's Media and Communications teams.

The main event however, was the Junior Mayor election. Eight brave and courageous Youth Council members delivered an election pitch to their fellow members for the roles of Junior and Deputy Junior Mayor. Irene Mulilo was successfully elected in the position of Junior Mayor and Aleena Eftikhari as Deputy Junior Mayor, who both excitedly accepted their new leadership positions. Once the formalities of the meeting were complete, members had photos taken on the steps of City Hall.

Youth Council would like to thank all guest speakers for their informative presentations and especially Councillor Mason for imparting his words of wisdom.

2023 YOUTH COUNCIL MEMBERS

Bellarine Ward

Kirrily McConachy

Kirrily is 17 and believes the declining mental health of young people, domestic and emotional abuse and the lack of physical activity and poor diet are the top three things affecting young people right now. Kirrily brings her skills in public speaking and literacy to the program as well as her experience in the Wakayama Forum. Kirrily is also skilled in empathising with others.

Maximilian Thompson

Max is 12 and believes Geelong is lacking in public transport options and does not have enough foot and bike paths to connect the City. Max would also like to see more opportunities for social interaction among young people to improve mental health outcomes. Max is both passionate and dedicated to his community, he is a strong communicator and is a leader in both his community and school.

Leyla Cefai

Leyla is 12 and is someone who is not afraid to stand up for what she believes in. Leyla believes the top three issues for young people are vaping, bullying, and Geelong not having enough mental health services to support its young people.

Brownbill Ward

Rebekah Zutt

Rebekah is 16 and applied for Youth Council because she wanted to have the opportunity to have a say and voice her opinions. Rebekah believes Geelong needs better mental health support services, and more low-cost community events and facilities for young people. Rebekah brings good insight into topics that are often neglected, solves problems with creative solutions and provides a unique perspective.

Ruen Roach

Ruen is also 16 and has identified discrimination, a lack of useful resources available for all ranges of mental illnesses, identities, and disabilities, and the lack of communication and trust between youth and authority figures as the top 3 issues for young people. Ruen has a personal experience of mental illness which has made them stronger and keen to advocate for change. Ruen is passionate about learning new things, building their knowledge, and understanding others' perspectives.

Irene Mulilo

Irene is 17 and is the newly elected Junior Mayor. Irene strongly believes that financial security, mental health and equity and discrimination are the top three issues for young people in Geelong. Irene brings her critical thinking skills, and her innovative and creative way of looking at the world to the Youth Council program. Irene describes herself as a sociable and approachable person, who has experience with public speaking and is ready to take on the challenge of representing her peers as the Junior Mayor.

Kardinia Ward

Georgie Tigani

Georgie is 17 and believes the biggest issue right now is inaction on addressing climate change. Georgie also believes that governments could be doing more to support, listen and move forward with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. Lastly Georgie believes young people are struggling with positive body image and self-acceptance. Georgie brings her experience of leadership as school captain, her courage to speak up and her ability to accept and learn from her mistakes.

Anastasia Keller

Ana is 16 and believes the top three issues for young people is the limited education available about First Nations People and the foster care system and believes Geelong could do a better job at taking care of the homeless. Ana is a highly organised individual and loves planning and setting goals. Ana describes herself as enthusiastic and a great communicator.

Simoné De Koning

Simoné is 16 and believes young people need more access to mental health facilities and support, social events for those under 18 and LGBTQIA+ specific support services. Simoné is a great event's organiser, has skills in public relations and has a diverse range of views and ideas.

Windermere Ward

Ali Agha Walizada

Ali is 15 and believes racism, climate change, and providing more opportunities for young people to have a voice in the community are the biggest issues for young people right now. Ali has experienced bullying and racism in his own life and believes his experiences have made him stronger and more capable to address these issues in the broader community.

Aleena Eftikhari

Aleena is 16 and has been appointed Deputy Junior Mayor by her peers. Aleena is passionate about a range of issues in the community, including access to education, gender equality, food security, homelessness and services for refugee and asylum seekers. Aleena brings her personal experience of being a refugee in Australia and trying to resettle and adapt to a new country and way of life. Aleena strives to welcome those who are new in Australia to adapt to their new home and most importantly find their sense of belonging.

Ashton Stonehouse

Ashton is 15 and brings with her a strong set of leadership skills, strong teamwork skills and the ability to speak confidently in public. Ashton outlines mental health, the prevalent use of drugs and alcohol among youth, and bullying online and offline as the biggest issues facing young people today.

YOUTH COUNCIL GROUP CHARTER

The Youth Council Group Charter was endorsed by members at the February Youth Council meeting. Youth Council members developed a Group Charter to guide how they will act and work together as a team to reach their collective objectives and goals. To develop the group agreement, members reviewed previous years charters in smaller groups and came back as a group to combine their work. Below are the nine agreed upon principles and values that will guide their respectful, collaborative, and professional relationships moving forward.

Youth Council members will-

- Be considerate and acknowledge the wealth of diversity, differences, identities, and experiences of one another
- Be open minded by respecting and discussing all ideas and opinions
- Work effectively with each other
- Be accountable and committed to the Youth Council program
- Engage with, listen, and respond to the youth community
- Be professional, use polite language and be considerate in all interactions
- Be mindful of your own and each other's mental health and check up on each other
- Look at issues from a positive perspective and be solutions focused
- Remember we are all equals, and we are committed to providing our expertise as young people
- Enjoy the program and be open to all opportunities in our 12-month term

YOUTH COUNCIL PRIORITY AREAS

During the second induction session members participated in an activity where they each chose their top 5 issues for young people, and each had a chance to discuss why they chose them, and what topics or issues they believed were important to focus on during their term. Youth Council members also received information regarding Councils' Our Community Plan and the Clever and Creative Strategy, as well as reviewing the Mission Australia's Youth Survey results from the past 5 years and previous years Youth Council priority areas. Through receiving this information and engaging in debate and discussion, members were able to hear everyone's ideas, passion areas, negotiate their needs and start to assemble the priority areas for 2023. The below priority areas were endorsed at the February Youth Council meeting and will guide our work for the next 10 months.

1. Health and wellbeing
2. Healthy, safe, and accessible communities
3. Diversity, equity, and acceptance
4. Environment and sustainability education

These priority areas will shape the 2023 Youth Council's strategic focus, we will receive presentations, seek out information and advocate on behalf of all young people across the City on matters of importance to young people connected to these topics.

CONCLUSION

Youth Council is set and ready to continue their monthly meetings and begin working on their four priority areas as well as ensuring the voice of all young people are heard and considered in their advice to Council. Youth Council is also looking forward to the Councillor Connect Mentoring Program where they hope to gain insight on how to represent their community and build their leadership skills so they can be effective in their roles on Youth Council.