

THE CITY OF
GREATER GEELONG

YOUTH COUNCIL PRESENTATION TO COUNCIL

26 March 2024

JUNIOR MAYOR – HTEEMOO
YOHELLAYMUSAW

Contents

Junior Mayor’s Message3

Acknowledgment of Country **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Purpose **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Induction **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

February Meeting..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Introducing the 2024 Youth Council Members..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Youth Council Group Charter **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Youth Council Priority Areas **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Conclusion..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Junior Mayor's Message

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

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 participants of the 2024 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 priority areas and group charter that will guide the work of the 2024 Youth Council Advisory Committee.

INDUCTION

The 2024 Youth Council participants were immersed in a three-day induction delivered by youth development staff across the January school holidays. This was the first opportunity for participants to meet staff, understand key elements of the program and connect with each of the members on Youth Council. On the first day members were led through a series of team building activities so they could get to know each other. As the day progressed, the participants started to find out more about why they were each there and what they had in common. For example, participants discussed their hopes and fears for the program including what everyone wanted to learn and develop during their term on Youth Council. These activities helped the group foster a stronger connection with each other and enabled them to feel more comfortable speaking up about issues within our community. The day also included hearing from guest presenters from the governance unit, the mayor and councillors support unit, and the corporate marketing and communications unit to help participants understand their roles and responsibilities and about the work of local government.

The second day of the induction focused on members sharing more about themselves, including what they were passionate about and why they wanted to participate in the program. This was an enjoyable part of the session where each member was able to talk about the issues they were most passionate about, whilst also having the opportunity to hear about what others in the room were most passionate about. This activity informed further activities and discussions supporting participants to develop their Youth Council charter and determine priority areas.

By the third day, all participants had built connections across their wards, with their passion for advocacy connecting them as a team. Participants learnt more about the program, including the councillor connect mentoring sessions and about the roles and responsibilities of the junior mayor and junior deputy mayor positions. The day also included a tour of the central youth hub pilot site, where participants provided their insights and feedback to staff. Overall, participants thoroughly enjoyed the three induction sessions, and gained the knowledge and skills to prepare them for the year ahead as well as establishing new friendships along the way.

The formal induction facilitated on January 24 marked the Youth Council's official welcome to the City of Greater Geelong. This session took place at City Hall with family, friends, and guests in attendance. Chaired by Acting Director, City Life, Amanda Locke, the event hosted guest speakers CEO Ali Wastie, and Mayor Trent Sullivan, both speaking about the relationship and connection between Youth Council, the city and its councillors.

After the presentations, it was time for the junior mayor election. Nine Youth Council members each delivered a three-minute speech detailing why they were the most suitable candidate for the role. After each candidate discussed their unique strengths, experiences, and what they hoped to achieve in the position, the election commenced. Each Youth Council member had one vote to cast for their preferred candidate. Hteemoo Yohellaymusaw was successfully elected to the position of junior mayor, whilst Mercy Antanasio was

successfully voted into the junior deputy mayor position. Both Youth Council members excitedly accepted their positions, thanking their family and friends for their support. The announcement of the junior mayor and junior deputy mayor marked the end of the event, where Amanda Locke, congratulated both Hteemoo and Mercy and thanked the guests for attending. Youth Council would like to thank all councillors and guests including family for attending this special event and marking their first formal event as the 2024 youth council advisory committee.

FEBRUARY MEETING

The February meeting was the first official Youth Council meeting for 2024. During the meeting participants endorsed their 2024 Youth Council priority areas and their Youth Council charter, two key pieces of work that will guide what participants work on and how they work together. Youth Council's first guest speaker delivered a workshop on the Acknowledgement of Country. The presenter discussed the importance of Acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the Land in which a meeting or event takes place, discussed the topic of language, allyship, and provided Youth Council members with an opportunity to discuss their heritage, and their own connection to Country. Youth council members then got into their ward groups to start brainstorming what to include in their own version of an Acknowledgment of Country. By the next Youth Council meeting, the presenter will have a draft Acknowledgment of Country developed from the brainstorming activity for participants to endorse. The workshop provided a great opportunity for participants to reflect on their own connection to Country, on their personal responsibility to educate themselves, and create a deeper connection with both the importance and practice of Acknowledging the Traditional Custodians.

INTRODUCING THE 2024 YOUTH COUNCIL MEMBERS

Bellarine Ward

Shanay Jacobs

Shanay is 16 years old and believes the three biggest issues for young people are a lack of educational opportunities, physical health including body issues, and youth crime including feeling unsafe on the streets of Geelong. Shanay brings extensive leadership experience to the role, with the ability to problem solve and be flexible and resilient in her thinking. Shanay shows dedication in her willingness to both participate in and make change.

Megan Watson

Megan is 15 years old and believes the top three issues for young people are mental illness and the inability to access mental health services when needed, young people not having a voice in school or community issues, and young people not having access to the learning equipment they require. Emily is a very confident and experienced public speaker, and is an active participant in her student leadership team.

Emily Wolfe

Emily is 15 years old and thinks that mental health including a lack of resources to help, the high rates of disconnection among youth due to mobile usage, and a lack of youth spaces across Geelong are the top three issues facing young people. Emily has previous leadership experience within her school, she is a great public speaker and is a very passionate individual.

Brownbill Ward

Mercy Antanasio

Deputy Junior Mayor

Mercy is 16 years old and believes that substance abuse is a big issue in Geelong. Mercy says that drug use is a normalised activity that leads to addictions and health problems later in life. As a woman of colour, Mercy has high cultural competency, and has the ability to understand different cultures and perspectives to promote inclusivity and cultural awareness within council's activities. Mercy believes this will be her greatest contribution to youth council.

Bee Chugh

Bee is 15 years old and says the top issues for young people include discrimination, substance abuse and mental health. Bee will bring her enthusiasm, her ability to think creatively, and her ability to talk to and engage with anyone.

Sebastian Roberts

Sebastian, also known as Seb, is 14 years old and believes that isolation, mental health, and community safety are the top issues for young people. Seb has eight years of experience in scouts, which has enhanced his leadership and communication skills. Seb has also participated in his school Student Representative Council (SRC) which has enabled him to also develop skills in talking and listening to his peers about their concerns and advocating on their behalf.

Kardinia Ward

Georgia Johnston

Georgia is 14 years old and thinks the top three issues for young people are LGBTQIA+ rights, environmental issues, and mental health. Georgia is a determined young person who is both creative and hardworking.

Elsie Lloyd

Elsie is 13 years old and believes discrimination, young people's mental health, and the use of e-cigarettes including the common misunderstandings of the health impacts of e-cigarettes, are the top issues facing young people today. In primary school Elsie led her peers in her position as school captain and has attended multiple workshops in leadership since commencing in her secondary school. Elsie is a confident public speaker and has the ability to communicate effectively with all people she engages with.

Friday Nuenza

Friday is 15 years old and thinks the top three issues for young people are mental health, the environment, and discrimination. Friday is a strong public speaker, she has the ability to work collaboratively with others, and has well developed leadership skills.

Windermere Ward

Hteemoo Yohellaymusaw

Junior Mayor

Hteemoo is 16 and believes that youth crime rates are rising in her community. Hteemoo says that substance abuse is a factor that influences these rates and that this can lead to both a detrimental effect on both the community and the individual's personal mental health. As a student leader, and a member of her schools extended leadership team, as well as her involvement in the Model- UN program, Hteemoo has had the opportunity to build a strong set of leadership skills and knowledge. Hteemoo describes herself as a versatile leader, who has strong communication, and organisational skills.

Amelia Leach

Amelia is 16 and believes that a focus on social mobility and the opportunity for education for young people from lower socio-economic groups is important. Amelia also thinks that environmental sustainability, specifically the preservation of Serendip Sanctuary are top issues to focus on. Amelia was previously a social justice leader at her school and continues to be both a passionate and motivated young person.

Dean Smilevski

Dean is 16 years old and believes the top three issues for young people in Geelong are low self-esteem, low confidence, and increasing stress associated with social media usage. Dean has lots of leadership experience, including being involved in his school council over the last year. Dean has a great work ethic and says he will bring his ability to work well in a team.

YOUTH COUNCIL GROUP CHARTER

The Youth Council group charter was endorsed by members at the February Youth Council meeting. 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 were asked to each select a previous year's attribute or value and then move around the room to find any duplications. Once members reviewed and selected values from previous years, members then came up with a few extra principles to add to their new charter. Below are the eleven agreed upon principles and values that will guide youth council's respectful, collaborative, and professional relationships moving forward.

Youth Council members will-

Be inclusive- everyone should be able to contribute.

Make sure every debate is always professional and is us against the problem, not each other.

Keep things on topic, make things achievable, and create actionable goals.

Show immense commitment to our roles as youth council representatives.

Be considerate, and acknowledge the wealth of diversity, differences, identities, and experiences of one another.

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.

Contribute to conversations, debates and ideas with the necessary and appropriate amount of effort and input.

Respect staff, councillors, and each youth council member providing their unique opinions and ideas.

Focus on being organised and punctual leading up to meetings and events in respect of staff and other youth council members.

Be open minded to other people's ideas and be open to compromise.

YOUTH COUNCIL PRIORITY AREAS

Youth Council members have chosen five priority areas for 2024. During the second induction session members participated in an activity where they each chose their top three issues for young people, and each member had the chance to discuss why they chose them, and what topics or issues they believed were important to focus on during their term. As well as reviewing previous year's priority areas, Councils' Our Community Plan, the Clever and Creative Strategy, and the Mission Australia youth survey results, Youth Council reflected on being a young person in 2024. Participants discussed and agreed that the focus on health, diversity, safety, and environment were all still very important, but financial and economic matters are now more than ever, equally important issues for young people. Therefore, it was decided that five priority areas would better reflect the growing needs of young people. The below priority areas were endorsed at the February Youth Council meeting and will guide our work for 2024.

- Protect the environment and increase sustainability across our community.
- Improve access to safe and accessible places for young people.
- Celebrate diversity, foster equity, and reduce stigma.
- Accelerate economic empowerment for young people.
- Progress health and wellbeing.

Kardinia Ward Protect the environment and increase sustainability across our community. The five priority areas will shape the 2024 Youth Council's strategic focus. Youth Council will seek out information across these areas and advocate on behalf of all young people across the City on matters of importance to young people connected to these topics.

COVID-19 YOUTH IMPACT REPORT

Attached to the youth council report is the Covid-19 Impact Report for councillors review.

CONCLUSION

Youth Council members cannot wait to work together with their peers in the program and start advocating for the needs of young people across Geelong. Youth council members are also looking forward to working with Councillors to voice their ideas and receive feedback to inform their first pieces of advice in the second Youth Council report.