

THE CITY OF  
GREATER GEELONG

# YOUTH COUNCIL SECOND REPORT TO COUNCIL

Tuesday 27 June 2023

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JUNIOR MAYOR –  
IRENE MULILO

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# Junior Mayor's Message

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## Introduction

Youth Council would like to acknowledge the Wadawurrung people, the traditional owners of the land, waterways, and skies, and pay their respects to Elder's past and present.

## Purpose

The purpose of this report is to outline the development, activities and achievements of Youth Council since the previous report was presented to Council on 28 March. The second Youth Council report contains advice that participants would like to provide to Council on matters of importance for young people. These matters were discussed during the Councillor Connect Mentoring Program (CCMP) sessions and validated through youth engagement activities undertaken by Youth Council members across the Municipality. Youth Council would like to thank all those who helped to shape and validate the recommendations contained within.

## What Youth Council Has Achieved Since the First Report

### March and April Meetings

Youth Council meetings have been a great opportunity for members to give advice to The City and to the Geelong community. Our March and April meetings were packed with engaging discussions and productive outcomes. During these meetings, Youth Council members provided advice regarding the needs and interests of young people across multiple locations and interest areas.

During the March meeting, Youth Council members had the opportunity to provide input into the Kardinia Park Master Plan, where members encouraged City Officers to upgrade sporting facilities, increase lighting, maximise usable outdoor space and consider and plan for diversity - for example by ensuring there are gender neutral toilets available to patrons.

Youth Council provided their input to the Youth Development Unit regarding the Youth Covid Impact Report results, and how they think Council can and should support young people to recover from the Covid 19 pandemic. Staff presented to Youth Council twice about this topic at both the April and March meetings, where they had the opportunity to provide further input and feedback about the results and recommendations outlined in the report.

Youth Council also worked closely with The City's Environment and Waste team to co-design approaches to better engage young people in the upcoming Geelong Nature Festival. Youth Council came up with a range of creative and fun activities in this workshop, including new methods staff could use to facilitate engagement that will inspire young people to connect with nature in preparation for the September school holidays. These approaches will encourage young people to connect with their community and their peers and have fun doing so.

Additionally, Youth Council have been invited to participate in the voting for Westfield Geelong's Local Heroes program and have been invited to participate in a youth food sustainability consultation facilitated by the Commonground Project. Both of which are exciting opportunities for Youth Council to be involved in.

Lastly, Youth Council heard from The City's Senior Sustainability Officer, regarding the Climate Change Response Plan including what The City is currently doing to lower emissions and meet the targets set out in the plan.

## Events and Opportunities

### Local Government Training

In March, Youth Council participated in local government training facilitated by the Victorian Local Governance Association at Wurriki Nyal. The training was a valuable learning experience for all involved and covered a wide range of topics related to local government. The content included the roles and responsibilities of Councillors, how local government operates and works with the state and federal governments.

Through interactive workshops and discussions, Youth Council members gained a better understanding of local government and how as the official voice for young people we can play a more active role in shaping the community's future. Overall, the training was a great success and provided Youth Council with valuable knowledge and skills that we can apply in our roles as leaders and advocates.

### **Women's Day Celebrations**

International Women's Day is an important annual event that celebrates the achievements of women and highlights the ongoing struggle for gender equality. It's a day to recognize the contributions of women to society, and to raise awareness about the challenges that women still face. One of the most important aspects of International Women's Day is the opportunity it provides for women to come together and share their experiences.

Celebrating International Women's Day with the City of Greater Geelong was a very special opportunity for Youth Council members. Listening to other women about their lives was incredibly empowering, as we were able to hear the stories of many amazing women who silently make a difference in our community every day and who were recognised and awarded for their efforts and contributions.

This year's theme was "crack the code" where Ally Watson, the founder of Code Like a Girl, an organization that aims to inspire more women and girls to pursue careers in technology, was the keynote speaker. During her talk, Ally shared insights into the challenges she has faced as a woman in the tech industry, including the lack of diversity and inclusion in many workplaces. Ally also spoke about the importance of creating more opportunities for women and girls to pursue careers in technology and highlighted the need for greater support and mentorship for those who were just starting out. Overall, Ally's talk was a powerful reminder of the ongoing struggle for gender equality in the tech industry, and the importance of advocating for change.

After Ally's speech, the Junior Mayor and Deputy Junior Mayor had the opportunity to ask Ally questions submitted by audience members. As someone who wishes to work in STEM one day, the opportunity to speak with Ally on stage was a truly amazing experience. The Youth Council members who attended the evening, all agreed the event was an inspiring experience, and were thrilled to be in an environment where they were surrounded by well accomplished women, helping build our belief, confidence, and enthusiasm for our future.

### **Read the Play Event**

Read the Play is an organisation that delivers programs that aim to reduce the barriers young people face that prevent them from seeking assistance with their mental health. Youth Council were invited to participate in a special event titled 'Starting Secondary School' that featured Dr Michael Carr-Gregg to discuss useful strategies that young people and their parents and caregivers could use during the transition into secondary school.

Youth Council members had the opportunity to speak about their own experiences transitioning to secondary school, including what strategies they used to look after their mental health, and how adults could support them through this significant transition. For some Youth Council members, this was their first opportunity to speak at a community event and a first where they have been able to share their own thoughts and reflections on their own experiences.

Youth Council found the information provided by Dr Michael Carr- Gregg extremely helpful and will implement some of the many strategies he recommended to ensure they stay on top of their wellbeing and to study more effectively. This opportunity allowed Youth Council members to feel heard and considered and reinforced that listening to the experiences of young people is equally as important as listening to the experts.

### **Growing Up in Cities**

Growing Up In Cities is a Deakin University research project that aims to empower young people and provide them with a platform to advocate for their health and wellbeing in urban spaces, with the Geelong research focusing on Central Geelong. The project has been an exciting initiative for Youth Council to be involved in.

Participants had the opportunity to engage in several activities, including a tour of Central Geelong, which Youth Council members mapped out, identified areas that they liked, that were just ok, and were in need of improvement. Youth Council members were excited to contribute to this research by sharing their unique

perspectives and knowledge of the city, including the challenges they face as young people and the opportunities they see for improvement. This project has been a great way to empower young people and provide a platform to share ideas to help shape the cities future.

## **Youth Awards**

Awarding the unique contributions of young people is incredibly important as it provides an opportunity to recognize the achievements of and celebrate young people contributing to community life. By highlighting the accomplishments of young people, Council can help to build young people's confidence and inspire them to continue pursuing their goals and dreams whilst also fostering a sense of community and belonging among young people, as they come together to celebrate each other's successes.

This year, two Youth Council members, including the Deputy Junior Mayor were provided with the opportunity to participate with other young people and staff in the voting process for the Youth Awards. It was a great opportunity to engage and discuss the brilliant contributions young people are making across the municipality.

The group carefully discussed every nominee's application and took all factors into account when collectively deciding on the final award recipients. It was an extremely tough decision to choose the final recipients of the awards, with so many deserving young people nominated. Participating in the process was a humbling experience, and an important opportunity to demonstrate to young people that their efforts are valued and appreciated. This process instilled in all of us the importance of recognition and how it can inspire young people to continue pursuing their passions to make a positive impact in their community.

Youth Council also had the opportunity to be involved in the delivery of the Youth Awards event. Youth Council members had the opportunity to speak with community members and guests who attended the evening, but the highpoint was seeing all who were recognized for their incredible achievements and contributions to their communities. There was a total of 10 award categories with 13 awarded young people and 89 nominations made across all categories demonstrating the considerable impact and positive difference young people are making to Geelong.

The event included two youth performers who sang at the event and welcomed local MPs including Western Victorian Liberal MP Joe McCracken and The Federal Member for Corangamite, Libby Coker. Mayor Trent Sullivan was in attendance and presented each award nominee with a certificate, and winners with an additional certificate, trophy, and a \$500 prize to contribute to their cause. The celebration left a lasting impression on Youth Council members that will continue to motivate and inspire them to be change makers.

## **Connecting With the Community and Testing Recommendations**

Youth Council members have attended the newly created Youth Advisory Board program across the fOrT youth space and the Armstrong Creek East Community Hub, where young people from across Geelong had the opportunity to provide input and advice to Youth Council members about their recommendations to Council, whilst also having the opportunity to provide input into how the hubs are run across the municipality.

This new program will be central to ensuring young people's voices across Geelong are heard and considered by Youth Council. Youth Council look forward to gaining the feedback provided to them via the Youth Advisory Board members, who will provide their insights and ideas to strengthen Youth Council's ongoing work.

## **Youth Council Advice**

### **Racism Experienced by Young People**

Youth Council have spoken to many culturally and linguistically diverse young people who are experiencing racism in their schools, workplaces, and communities. Interestingly, the findings of the 2022 Mission Youth Survey, the only national survey of young people, also found that equity and discrimination was an important issue affecting young Australians.

When speaking with Councillors through our CCMP sessions, Councillors reinforced the importance of providing leadership in this space. Therefore, Youth Council urge Council to invest more in supporting the most vulnerable in the community who are dealing with daily occurrences of racism, intolerance, and disrespect.

#### ***Youth Council's Advice pertaining to combating and preventing racism:***

1. *Increase the visibility of our multicultural communities in Geelong.*
  - a. The City showcases the wonderful work and culture of our Wudawurung People across art, signage, and events. Youth Council would love to see Council continue this work whilst increasing its investment in multicultural art installations, cultural celebrations and community education that better reflects our growing and diverse multicultural Community.
2. *Increase Council's understanding of the issue of racism experienced by young people*
  - a. The Youth Development Unit recently authored an excellent report about the experiences of young people and how their lives have been impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic. Youth Council would like to see a similar report developed that aims to understand the issue of racism experienced by young people and what can be done to address it in both a Community and school environment.

#### **Covid 19 Youth Impact Report**

At the Councillor Connect Mentoring Sessions across May and June, Youth Council presented and discussed some alarming results collected from the data gathered as part of the Covid 19 Youth Impact Report. The findings highlighted that 75% of respondents indicated that they were either 'negatively or very negatively' impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The top 2 areas young people identified as being negatively impacted were mental wellbeing and their education. The findings of this report informed a series of recommendations that aim to assist young people to fully recover from the accumulative effects of the pandemic.

#### ***Youth Council's Advice pertaining to the impact of COVID 19 on young people and a preferred Council response:***

1. *Councillors receive and review the Youth Covid 19 Impact report.*
2. *Councillors understand the outlined recommendations made in the Youth Covid 19 Impact and refer the findings to the CEO for their consideration.*

#### **Youth Council's Priorities for the Next Two Months**

In the upcoming months Youth Council members are excited to author the third Youth Council Report and are eager to get stuck into their third round of Councillor Connect Mentoring Sessions, which will help shape the delivery of the next set of Youth Council recommendations. Youth Council members are keen to continue attending events, including a visit to the upcoming Commonground Project where they will participate in a tour and consultation about food sustainability, and are also keen to participate the second "Read The Play" session with Dr Michael Carr-Gregg discussing how to survive year 12.

#### **Conclusion**

Youth Council members are incredibly grateful for the past five months and for all of the opportunities and training they have received. Youth Council members are hoping to make a positive impact on the community through their advice and they are excited to continue their work over the next six months. Youth Council really enjoyed the opportunity to participate in the 2023 Youth Awards event and want to take one last opportunity to congratulate each and every person nominated for an award. Youth Council members look forward to the opportunities and challenges that the next three months will bring and are confident that they can continue to make a meaningful impact on the community.