

THE CITY OF
GREATER GEELONG

YOUTH COUNCIL THIRD REPORT TO COUNCIL

28 September 2021

DEPUTY JUNIOR MAYOR –
MACKENZIE SINCLAIR

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Junior Mayor's Message

INTRODUCTION

Youth Council would like to acknowledge the Wadawurrung People, the traditional owners of this land, and pay their respects to Elder's past, present, and emerging.

Youth Council would also like to acknowledge the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillor's for their support, guidance and mentoring over the first half of the year and thank them for their feedback that has helped to shape the advice and input presented in this report.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to outline the progress and achievements of Youth Council since the previous report presented to Council on 22 June. This report also outlines the advice Youth Council would like to provide to Council based on discussions had with Councillors throughout the ward-based Councillor Connect Mentoring Program (CCMP) sessions.

WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED SO FAR

Youth Council have completed the first half of their 12-month term. The last six months has been filled with events, activities, and opportunities to develop skills and knowledge in local government and community engagement. Youth Council have convened a total of six times where just under 20 guest presenters have consulted Youth Council about many topics relating to their four priority areas. Youth Council are operating effectively and enjoying every minute of the unique opportunity to represent young people of Geelong.

MAY, JUNE AND JULY MEETINGS

Over the last three youth council meetings, consultations have focused on three central themes-

- How the City can improve its engagement with young people
- Input into the City's design and planning processes
- Opportunities for active involvement in research

Youth Council have had the opportunity to shape the City's future online engagement activities with young people. They have done this by providing feedback on survey designs and have provided input into how and where to collect information from young people. The overall aim has been to assist City staff with how to capture the voices of young people so they have input into planning and design processes and to ensure that the City is getting important information and opportunities out to young people on youth appropriate platforms.

Youth Council had the opportunity to provide input into the update of the Clever and Creative Vision, the Revitalising Central Geelong Refresh Plan, and the Armstrong Creek Town Centre Precinct design. Congruent with the last Youth Council report, Youth Council's sentiment has remained the same, for Council staff to consider youth designated spaces within their design and planning processes. Additionally, Youth Council have given feedback to Council staff about what attracts young people to certain places and have ensured young people have been considered as key users of spaces included in these plans. Youth Council also learnt about the process that Council goes through when creating a new space such as the Armstrong Creek Town Centre Precinct.

Youth Council were engaged to identify safe and unsafe places using Monash Universities YourGround online tool and were approached by a PhD student from RMIT about being involved in a qualitative study aimed at understanding the impact of Covid-19 on young people's education and employment aspirations for the future. The presenter also offered Youth Council with learning and employment opportunities to gain research and content development skills.

Youth Council found some of the interactive engagement methods used in the consultation beneficial in helping them understand and respond to questions presented to them. Youth Council also had the opportunity to connect with members of the 2020 Youth Council who shared their knowledge and learnings and have since developed a peer mentoring relationship. Youth Council would again like to thank all the presenters who consulted with them to capture the views and ideas of young people.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Youth Council Junior Mayor and Deputy Junior Mayor attended an IDAHOBIT Day celebration hosted by the Youth Development Unit earlier in May, where they heard from Jo Bangles a local LGBTQIA+ advocate who spoke about the importance of finding your community.

Youth Council members were fortunate enough to attend the premiere of short film, *Pipi Thay Too*, created by participants from the City's only youth designated facility, The fOrT. Youth Council members gained a greater insight into the local Karen and Kareni community and heard first-hand how important their community is to them in Geelong. The film was fantastic, and the young people should be commended for all their hard work.

Youth Council have also come together to develop several health promoting social media posts to better communicate information to young people during the Covid-19 lockdowns. Their posts have included how to correctly wear a mask, to get a covid-19 test if you feel the slightest of symptoms and the promotion of healthy behaviours to help keep young people well during lockdown.

COUNCILLOR CONNECT MENTORING PROGRAM

In July, Youth Council members had their second instalment of the Councillor Connect Mentoring Program (CCMP). The mentoring component of the meeting focused on public speaking where Councillors provided Youth Council members with tips and tricks around effective communication, and shared experiences of how public speaking is an important part of a Councillor's role and duties.

The second half of the meeting contained Youth Council's discussion topics which included some very specific questions for Councillors about public safety, social infrastructure, and Council's role in supporting young people during Covid-19 lockdowns. Youth Council would like to thank Councillors for their time and advice on matters of importance to young people and reiterate the importance of these sessions to help inform the advice provided in this report.

FOLLOW UP ON ADVICE PROVIDED IN THE PREVIOUS YOUTH COUNCIL REPORT

At the CCMP sessions Youth Council asked Councillors if they would like further information from them regarding the recommendation made in the Second Youth Council Report. Councillors asked for additional design requirements and preferred service delivery models for a youth designated space for Council to consider. Youth Council have since met and discussed in detail what they think the space should look and feel like to meet the needs of local young people. Please see **attachment three** which outlines Youth Council's discussions for consideration.

TESTING YOUTH COUNCIL INPUT AND ADVICE

As Youth Council had success in confirming their input and advice with the youth community in their last report, Youth Council once again set out to test their input and advice with the youth community. This time Youth Council developed interactive social media posts to gain the perspectives of young people. Below is the advice Youth Council would like to provide to Council, that has been validated and supported by young people across the municipality.

YOUTH COUNCIL INPUT AND ADVICE

1. Covid-19 and Young People

Youth Council recommend that in the case of another substantial COVID lockdown where staff are redeployed, that:

- Council considers investing in a development and redeployment program for Council staff to provide support, coaching, mentoring or tutoring to vulnerable populations to decrease the risk of disengagement from school/society and decrease risk of social isolation

Youth Council Priority Areas Addressed:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Diversity and Inclusion

2. Public Safety

Youth Council would like Council to note the following input and advice:

- Youth Council would like to express support for the planned upgrades to Tim Hill Reserve included in the 2021-22 Council budget. Separately, Youth Council advocates for Council undertake a scoping study to understand costs to install lighting across walking tracks and open space to improve perceptions of safety for young people using and transiting through the reserve.
- Youth Council asks that Councillors advocate on their behalf to the Department of Transport to assess the suitability of a school crossing at 131 Geelong Rd, Grovedale, connecting the existing bus stop to the Alternative Education setting that is located directly opposite.
- Youth Council would like to express its support for the inclusion of funding for the investigation and design work relating to traffic lights at the Thornhill / Roslyn Road intersection in Highton in the 2021-22 budget, and notes this as a high priority for young people accessing this area.

Youth Council Priority Areas addressed:

- Safe and Healthy Places
- Health and Wellbeing

3. Social Infrastructure

Youth Council would like Council to:

- Consider the service model and design preferences provided in the document Youth Council Third Report - Integrated Youth Hubs, when developing the Youth Facility Feasibility and Business Case, which was endorsed by Council at its meeting on 22nd June 2021.
- Recommend when appropriate, that Youth Council participate in a Council facilitated co-design process with other young people, key stakeholders, services and partners to ensure a youth designated space meets the needs of local young people.
- Support the development of a Master Plan for Chirnside Park in Lara that focuses on upgrades on existing infrastructure, inclusion of fitness equipment and interactive nature play installations.
- Explore the opportunity for additional fitness equipment in parks, playgrounds and open green space across Greater Geelong to encourage physical activity among young people and the general community.

Youth Council Priority Areas addressed:

- Safe and Healthy Places
- Health and Wellbeing

OUR PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT TWO MONTHS

Youth Council are excited to participate in the Growing Up in Geelong Study with Deakin University in the coming months and look forward to their remaining Youth Council meetings. Youth Council will continue to work collaboratively to amplify the voices of young people from across Geelong by engaging with their peers and community. Lastly, Youth Council are excited to continue the discussions about a youth designated space in Central Geelong.

CONCLUSION

As Youth Council move into the second half of 2021, they are excited to work with Councillors in the CCMP program to further develop their civic skills, and to continue to learn and gain knowledge through the many presentations and consultations in their Youth Council meetings. Finally, Youth Council look forward to preparing their fourth and final report due to council on Tuesday 4 December.