



2023

ANNUAL

REPORT

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Meet the Committee



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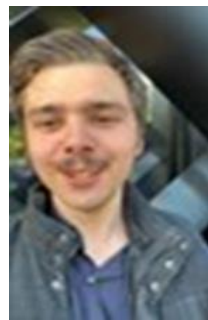
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Introduction

The Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee (WYRC) is made up of young people aged 12 to 25 who are passionate about making positive changes for young people in the Whitehorse community. The committee meets every two weeks for 2 hours in Box Hill and discusses the organisation of different events and initiatives.

Aim:

The fundamental goal of WYRC is to represent young people in Whitehorse and to collect ideas to report to Whitehorse City Council to further improve the community.

The primary aims include:

- Offer young people a safe space and safe events to connect with each other.
- Provide different workshops to provide young people with reliable information to support them throughout their life journey.
- To consult with community to understand youth issues and seek potential solutions.

Benefits:

As a member of WYRC, you will gain the opportunity to embrace multiple opportunities, make positive changes in Whitehorse for young people and be engaged in relevant trainings required to fulfill the role. Another major advantage of joining the WYRC is meeting similar minded and kind young people. Some more benefits and skills developed include:

- Communication skills
- Leadership
- Problem Solving
- Team Work
- Advocacy
- Public Speaking
- Consultation
- Different certificates (such as first aid)
- Organisation skills
- Time management

Recruitment:

Young people who are aged 12 to 25 years old who live, study, work or have any interactions with the City of Whitehorse community are able to sign up for the WYRC. The recruitment starts in November and ends in January. The opportunity is promoted through multiple platforms including: Seek.com, social media (Instagram and Facebook), schools and the Whitehorse publication, 'Whitehorse News'. Candidates are then required to attend an interview which consists of questions that inquire about their goals, perspectives and expectations of being a part of the committee.

Induction and meeting with the Mayor

The WYRC's main training and induction sessions occurred over two Saturdays, in February with the FreeZA 'Flying Pigs' Committee. There were multiple bonding and getting to know each other activities throughout the days, providing an opportunity to break the ice, share our goals for the year and make new friends. The first induction session was held at Youth ConneXions, where our responsibilities as committee members were outlined and our roles were explained in detail. We also participated in two training sessions - event management and, promotion and marketing. Both sessions were facilitated by Kate Wilde from 'The Workshop'. The second induction session was held at Maroondah Federation Estate. It was kicked off with fun icebreaking sessions, followed by a group bonding activity at Strike Bowling Eastland for the individual committees to get more familiar with each other. Our final training session for the induction included: advocacy, consultation and leadership training with Kate Wilde and Liz from 'The Workshop'.

On March 22, the WYRC had the opportunity to meet the Mayor Mark Lane at Nunawading Civic Centre. This was followed by a tour of the Council Chambers, where Mayor Mark Lane gave us a snapshot of his duties and how he could work with WYRC throughout the year. We also discussed local youth issues, as well as how we could implement our ideas to benefit the young people of Whitehorse. It was a great opportunity to learn about what the Mayor and Councillors do and the important role that Council plays in the community.



Youth Consultation

From March through to May the WYRC led community consultations to determine the key issues and challenges for young people in Whitehorse. These consultations were conducted in various locations including Box Hill Central, Box Hill Skatepark and the Box Hill Gardens. The consultations also included 'feedback' boxes at 3 Whitehorse libraries. Incentives provided by the WYRC were chocolate frogs and hot chocolate to encourage greater community input. Also provided at our consultations was information on youth services and activities.



After collecting the responses, the WYRC collated the data and planned initiatives and themes for the year that addressed the issues from the consultations.

Themes:

Embracing diversity, substance abuse and lack of safety and community connection.

Issues: Cyber safety, respectful relationships, vaping - misconceptions, safety / family violence, bullying - respecting body image, pronouns, culture and gender identity.



Youth Services Review Consultation

On December 13 2023, Spark Strategy came to our WYRC meeting to talk to us about Council's Youth Services Review. This was a great opportunity to find out about the review and also to provide our thoughts and ideas into what Youth Services should look like into the future. It was great to be involved in this way so we as a group of young people can share our ideas about how Youth Services can deliver the best service to benefit young 12-25 year olds in the City of Whitehorse.

Spring Festival

Throughout the year, the WYRC spent a lot of time planning and organising the Whitehorse Annual Spring Festival. The festival usually consists of around 20,000 attendees throughout the day. As a group, we contacted several organisations and communities to see if they could come to make this an enjoyable event for all. Alongside this, we also planned out other activities for young people to enjoy.



On Sunday the 15th of October, the WYRC attended the annual Spring Festival along with the FReeZA 'Flying Pig' Events and Council Youth Services. We were located at the Whitehorse Civic Centre Precinct near 'The Round' from 8:30am to 5pm. The WYRC organised several activities for people of all ages to come and enjoy targeting young people but also inclusive of all. Among the many highlights of the day, activities such as 'community art' was a big hit as several people came to paint anything of their choice expressing their creativity. Another popular choice was the 'bike and blend' smoothie bikes which captured the eyes of several attendees. Long queues were formed for this with people creating their smoothie through cardio (riding bike). Lastly, the WYRC also managed to organise a photobooth with several props. We also had an amazing youth stage which gave the opportunity for young musicians to perform in a supported environment. Youth Services information was available for the community. All in all it was an amazing, successful and enjoyable day and a great way to promote ourselves and connect more with the community.

Training

Online Internal Council Training for WYRC and FReeZA Flying Pig Events, 25th September

Maureen D’Arcy – Metro Access Development Officer ***Community Development and Disability***

- Maureen detailed discussions regarding increasing accessibility for those with disabilities during youth events such as Spring Festival and the annual Whitehorse Youth Forum. Specific features that we brainstormed include sensory rooms, wheelchair ramps and elevators and seating areas to cater to their specific needs. She also shared with us her role within promoting accessibility from a Council perspective.

Kirsten Leiminger Community Development Officer - Engagement ***Community Engagement Training***

- Kirsten provided insight into her community engagement role, sharing how involving the voice and participation of our community can promote the development of our local Council. We discussed methods of engaging the young people of Whitehorse, such as organising team activities.

Justin Yuritta – Senior Arts Officer: Festivals ***Event Management***

- Justin shared with us the key elements of event management from a professional Council perspective, which involves active communication with relevant stakeholders, as well as planning layouts of event venues. We went through in detail the organisation process of the Whitehorse Spring Festival, exploring the features of the venue where WYRC and FReeZA would be holding the ‘Youth Area’ and ‘Flying Pigs’ Stage respectively.

First Aid Training

Committee members from WYRC and FReeZA ‘Flying Pig’ Events had the opportunity to participate in basic first aid and CPR training, organised by St. John’s. We had the flexibility of booking our own dates across the year, enabling us to schedule it according to our availabilities. The training took place for the whole day, combining theory, questionnaires, and practical sessions to create an effectively integrated session. It was taught by skilled professionals, making it easy for participants to follow along regardless of whether they were training for the first time or doing the training as a refresher. Overall, it was a very useful course, which enhanced our understanding and skills around promoting safety within the community and also useful to know for our events and initiatives.



Advocacy, Consultation and Leadership, 11th February

Delivered by Kate Wilde from 'The Workshop', the training emphasised that our voices as young people were key to creating a safer and more inclusive environment for Whitehorse. We learnt about the various demographics within Whitehorse, how they are disadvantaged in various ways and how we can better cater to their individual needs. To understand leadership better, we brainstormed various factors of our committee together, such as respect, confidentiality, and commitment, as they all interact to impact our group dynamic. We also participated in team activities to strengthen our bonds and learn skills such as communicating, listening, and advocating for our ideas.

Event Management, 4th February

Delivered by Kate Wilde from 'The Workshop', we learnt the processes involved in managing an event, ranging from thinking of the type of event, risk management, sourcing materials and holding the event on the day. Kate Wilde shared with us the different types of people within a team when it came to planning an event, such as 'the Critic' who will approach the event from a pragmatic perspective and find risks involved in our plans; 'the Leader', who helps coordinate the various elements of the event, and 'the Cheerleader', who provides encouragement and moral support throughout the process. Through understanding our own roles within the group, we were able to approach planning events in a more cohesive manner, leading to the successful organisation of the annual Whitehorse Youth Forum.

Promotion and Marketing, 4th February

Delivered by Kate Wilde from 'The Workshop', this training involved learning about the key elements of marketing, such as branding of content, as well as having signature features that are easily recognisable. This would enable the content we produce to be more engaging for young people, as well as spread awareness of the work of WYRC. We also brainstormed the various avenues that could be utilised to promote our events which included social media, schools, and 'word of mouth'. These methods were used to promote the annual Whitehorse Youth Forum.



Young Person of the Month Award

'Young Person of the Month' is an award which the Whitehorse City Council presents young people from the ages of 12 - 17 in order to acknowledge their remarkable achievements and contributions to the Whitehorse community. This could be in areas including education, sport, arts and culture, music, volunteering, or any other sort of community involvement. To apply for this award, an adult, guardian or peer can nominate young people for this award. You can also nominate yourself! Winners of this award are acknowledged in the 'Whitehorse News' and receive a voucher from Council as a token of appreciation for their efforts.

Throughout the year, we did not receive many applications for this award due despite regular promotion. Nevertheless, the WYRC strongly believes in acknowledging the hard work being done in the City of Whitehorse.

In order to increase the awareness of this award, the WYRC designed a new flyer to spread around the City of Whitehorse. With the exceptional effort of the WYRC, we have promoted and tried to raise the awareness of this remarkable award. "The 'Young Person of the Month' Award is not just recognition, but a celebration for the talent and dedication within the Whitehorse community.

**WHITEHORSE
YOUNG
PERSON
OF THE
MONTH**

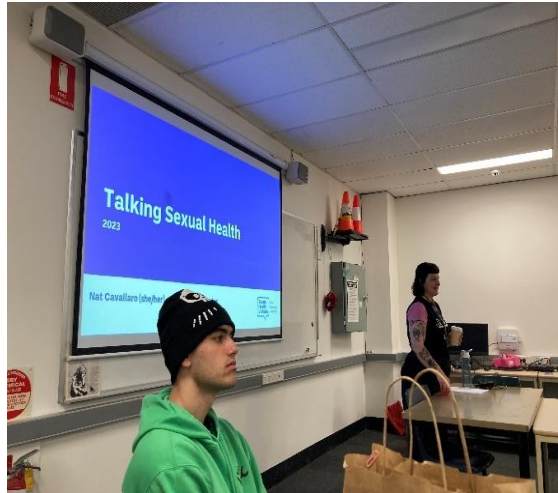
DO YOU KNOW A LOCAL LEGEND? **\$50 GIFT CARD FOR AWARD WINNERS**

NOMINATE THEM (AGES 12-25) FOR THEIR GREATNESS IN LEARNING, ARTS, SPORT OR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

WHITEHORSE CITY COUNCIL | WYRC | Facebook | Instagram

Consent and Healthy Relationships Workshop

Consent and healthy relationships are important issues for young people. As youth representatives, it came to our attention that the young people of the Whitehorse area would appreciate an opportunity to attend a workshop where they could discuss and be informed about issues related to healthy relationships and consent.



The WYRC worked closely with Jennifer from Box Hill TAFE and Natalie from Sexual Health Victoria to provide a workshop on October 3rd 2023 about consent and healthy relationships for young people in the Whitehorse area at the Nelson Street Campus of Box Hill TAFE. On the day, Jacqueline who is the WYRC Youth Participation Officer for the Health and Family Services Department and a WYRC member helped facilitate the event, along with Jennifer and Natalie. The WYRC member provided a speech during the workshop to welcome the participants and inform them on the committee's work in the community and how they can be involved in the committee initiatives. The event was a success, and the participants were engaged, asking questions and discussing issues relevant to them and their relationships, while learning about how to maintain healthy relationships.



Online Workshops

The following online workshops were organised by the 2022 WYRC committee but held in 2023. In 2022, COVID-19 restrictions were still in place, and with rampant infection rates, the decision was made to hold online workshops that enable young people to learn from the safety and comfort of their own homes.

Jobs and Support Online Workshop: This workshop was held on Monday 20th of March, led by Mario D'Souza from Ever Onward. As a consultant, youth coach and career councillor with over 23 years of experience, Mario was the prime choice for this workshop. Despite 7 prior registrations, there were no attendees at the workshop. However, the entire committee participated in the workshop, asking questions, and learning about the 7 key techniques to find a suitable job, such as communicating our skills and abilities through confidence and knowledge. We also received requests from others to have this workshop recorded, indicating that there was interest. Likely reasons for the lack of attendance include the day and time of the event, inadequate promotion of the workshop and the online format. With COVID-19 restrictions mostly ceasing in 2023, more young people seek offline opportunities to socialise and learn and thus might be less likely to attend online events.

Healthy Relationships and Consent Online Workshop: This workshop was scheduled to be held on Thursday, 23rd of March, by Chrissy Keenan from Sexual Health Victoria. Chrissy is highly skilled and qualified in the field of sexual and reproductive health, with experience as an activist, teacher at secondary schools and universities as well as a birth doula. This workshop received 2 registrations, which ultimately resulted in the workshop being cancelled. There was also no opportunity to pre-record the workshop to share due to the rapidly changing nature of sexual and reproductive health information. This, in addition to the sensitive nature of the topics discussed, could be reasons to explain the lack of attendance.

Overall, in 2023, the committee witnessed an increasing lack of interest in online events, as demonstrated by the lack of attendance for such events compared to previous years. A shift to offline, face-to-face events could prove to be more engaging and suitable for young people.

Youth Committees Instagram Account

The WYRC along with the FReeZA 'Flying Pigs' committee have worked hard to build followers and be more active on our Instagram account. This is a wonderful way to connect with young people and promote the amazing work we are all doing to support young people in Whitehorse. Two Committee members each year take on the extra role of Social Media Coordinator with the sole purpose of working on our account, which they undertake extra training to achieve. We can proudly say that we have increased followers, accounts reached and engaged with which is very exciting.

Youth Affairs Council of Victoria visit

On the 26th of July the WYRC caught the train into the city to visit the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic). Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVic) is the peak body and leading policy advocate for young people and the youth sector in Victoria. Their vision is that the rights of young people in Victoria are respected, and they are active, visible and valued in their communities. Their mission is to propel action that inspires positive change for young people and the youth sector.



This was a wonderful opportunity for the WYRC to find out about what YACVic does and join as members. Also to get a perspective and understanding of youth advocacy on a State level and explore potential collaborations and involvement.



Annual Youth Forum – Whitehorse Youth Summit

Engaging workshops, delicious food, and an amazing expo, 'Whitehorse Youth Summit' was undoubtedly a major highlight of this year! More than 100 young and intrigued people joined our Summit, across more than 15 different schools/organisations around the City of Whitehorse. Graciously hosted at the Box Hill Town Hall, the Summit was unequivocally a successful event run by our Youth Committee. This year, we focused on some key topics of interest, including cyber safety, vaping - misconceptions, consent and healthy relationships and bullying - with a focus on embracing diversity, substance abuse and lack of safety and community connection.

The dedicated members of the WYRC arrived at the Town Hall at 7am, and organised/set up the numerous rooms for the interesting workshops, expos, and the introductions, for a timely start at 9am.

To kick off the day, our fantastic MC's Shriya, Cate, and Lihan, delved deeper into what the WYRC was, and introduced the key topics of focus for the event, as well as providing a palatable range of breakfast foods for everyone! We then explained how the day would run, and introduced our amazing Mayor of Whitehorse, Mark Lane, who spoke to us about the Youth Forum in a bit more detail. We also had our engaging keynote presenter, Aayushi Khillan from the Centre for Multicultural Youth speak and educate us about mental health and battling racism as an immigrant herself.

The workshops were certainly a key part of our Youth Summit. We had dedicated and inspiring facilitators run them from organisations such as Victoria Police, YSAS, Bully Zero, and Sex Education Australia. Each workshop went for an hour, and we held 3 sessions for each one. After the first workshop and a wonderful morning tea filled with marvellous muffins and drinks, our second workshop was held. The workshops were spread across different rooms within the Town Hall, with visible arrows directing the young people to their chosen workshops. The workshops were overall a wonderful part of our Forum, and definitely informed/educated.



Once our first two workshops were complete, we had a short lunch break and had our lunchtime expo of youth organisations: Eastern Access Community Health, Headspace, Family Access Network, Victoria Police and Free from Family Violence (FVREE). This was certainly an amazing experience and the youth had a wonderful experience to see new opportunities that exist. We then had our final workshop to end the day, and had our evaluations and thanks. We also had a 'best socks of the Summit' competition which added to the fun of the day! Overall, our Annual Youth Summit for 2023 was a huge success! We had a lot of fun and the people who attended definitely learned something new and gained new experiences.



Cyber Safety Project

As previously outlined, the Youth Consultation occurred from March to May and was conducted by members of the WYRC engaging with the public to determine key issues and concerns that impact the young people of Whitehorse.

From these consultations and survey results from our Whitehorse Youth Summit, it was found that cyber safety is a key issue affecting young people. Key findings relating to cyber safety include the high prevalence of cyberbullying and harassment, the extensive mental and emotional toll this has on young people, and the lack of resources available to report cybercrime and learn more about cyber safety.

To reduce the impact of this issue and promote a safer community for young people, the WYRC is committed to working with the Whitehorse Council, relevant organisations, and community members to improve support around this important issue for young people.

So far, the WYRC has produced ideas that involve partnerships with organisations like Victoria Police, Phriendly Phishing and Headspace. Ideas include holding workshops, one-off or during the annual Youth Forum to educate young people on cyber safety. Furthermore, there was interest in having a referral process set in place in Youth Connexions, where young people seeking assistance from us can be directed to relevant organisations that can provide the relevant services. Additionally, there was an exploration of peer support and focus groups. This would involve young people with lived experience or other connections with cyber safety issues being trained to assist other young people in similar situations. This would effectively enable the creation of rapport with young people, encouraging them to seek help and help others. In addition, Youth Services has provided a Cyber Safety Information Session as part of their parent forum program as a direct result of the WYRC providing this insight.



Ultimately, the WYRC aims to increase awareness of the signs of cybercrime, educate young people on take preventative / safe measures when online and increase access to local support. In the long term, the WYRC aims to see reduced rates of cybercrime, young people being safe when online, increase mental health and empowerment of young people.

Conclusion

2023 was the first year for some time in which there were no restrictive lockdowns, with the diverse social impacts of COVID becoming less and less evident in our society. So throughout the year, the WYRC was able to hold meetings 'in person' at Youth Connexions, and this greatly contributed to strengthening the coherence within our team.

With everyone, especially the youth, in Whitehorse out and about again, the Committee has been highly successful in holding community events this year: we were able to go into the Whitehorse City Council and meet the Mayor; we had more than 100 youths participating the Youth Forum held at Box Hill Town Hall; we conducted consultations on important youth issues to learn about the current concerns or difficulties faced by youth in our community. Clearly, the WYRC has endeavoured to contribute to the community and propose effective solutions for youth issues this year.

The Whitehorse Representative Committee of 2023 would like to thank Jac, Steven and the rest of the Youth Services team and Whitehorse Council for their continuous support and encouragement. Without them, the WYRC could not have made the great achievements that we have made this year.

We hope that the WYRC will continue to strive in providing relevant and helpful services to young people in our community in 2024 and beyond.

