

12.2 Civic Awards 2026

Department

Governance and Integrity
Director Corporate Services

Confidential

This report has been prepared for consideration by Council in a closed meeting, pursuant to Section 66 (1) and 66 (2) (a) of the *Local Government Act 2020*. This report and information contained in it and any attachment is designated as confidential information pursuant to section 3 (1) (f) as it is personal information, being information which if released would result in the unreasonable disclosure of information about any person or their personal affairs.

This ground applies because the matter concerns personal information of nominees.

Attachment

SUMMARY

This report seeks Council endorsement of the recommended recipients for the 2026 Whitehorse Civic Awards following completion of the assessment process undertaken by the Civic Awards Panel.

The Whitehorse Civic Awards are conducted on an annual basis to formally recognise individuals and community groups who have made significant contributions to the local community. These awards play an important role in acknowledging outstanding service, dedication, and engagement that positively impacts the City of Whitehorse.

The awards aim to acknowledge outstanding community efforts, with three categories:

- Citizen of the Year – Honouring exceptional community contributions by an individual.
- Young Citizen of the Year – Recognising a young person who is a leader or changemaker within the community (must be under 27 as of 1 January 2025).
- Community Achievement Award – Celebrating an individual or group who makes a difference or volunteers in the Whitehorse community.

All nominations received through the 2026 Whitehorse Civic Awards process are included in full at Attachment 1 for transparency with totals below.

Award	Nominees
Citizen of the Year 2026	4

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Young Citizen of the Year 2026	4
Community Achievement Awards 2026	11

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Awards the:

a) Citizen of the Year 2026 to:

- [REDACTED]

b) Young Citizen of the Year 2026 to:

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

c) Community Achievement Awards 2026 to:

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

2. Resolves that this report and discussion relating to it remain confidential, except to the extent that the Chief Executive Officer (or delegate) must disclose aspects of it to give effect to the resolution, until part 3 of this resolution is in effect.

3. Authorises the release of the report and minutes following the public announcement of Civic Award recipients at the Community Dinner on 22 July 2026, as follows:

- Release this report redacted with names removed other than those in the resolution, excluding the attachments.
- Incorporate the confidential minutes into the open minutes, with names removed other than those in the resolution, and publish to Council's Transparency Hub on the Council website.

12.2 (cont)

KEY MATTERS**Background**

The Whitehorse Civic Awards recognise individuals, groups and organisations that have made an outstanding contribution to the Whitehorse community.

The Awards provide an opportunity to recognise and celebrate individuals, groups and organisations that make meaningful contributions to the community. Public recognition of these contributions helps strengthen community pride, connection and belonging, while highlighting the diverse ways residents support and enrich the Whitehorse community. Council's ongoing commitment to the Civic Awards reflects its broader commitment to recognising community achievement and fostering strong, inclusive and connected communities.

Introduction of Assessment Panel

In 2026, a revised assessment process was introduced to strengthen the Civic Awards selection process. A formal selection panel was established, comprising the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Council officers. Panel members were provided with a comprehensive assessment pack, including all nominations, a structured scoring matrix, and clear evaluation guidelines. Members were requested to complete their preliminary assessments independently and submit their scores prior to the panel meeting. A copy of the scoring criteria has been included at Attachment 2.

This approach enabled officers to collate and analyse the results in advance, supporting a more informed, efficient, and focused panel discussion. The revised process facilitates a consistent and evidence-based assessment of nominations, while also ensuring that deliberations were streamlined and productive.

The introduction of this process was informed by benchmarking undertaken earlier in the year with neighbouring councils. This review ensured that Whitehorse's Civic Awards framework reflects contemporary best practice in event and awards management and continues to meet community expectations with respect to fairness and transparency.

Based on the consolidated scoring outcomes, the nominations that achieved the highest median scores within each respective category are recommended as the 2026 Whitehorse Civic Award recipients. Final scores have been included at Attachment 3.

Continuous Improvement and Opportunity

Council's Civic Events program is subject to ongoing review to ensure continuous improvement and alignment with community expectations. Feedback received from the 2026 Civic Awards process has informed a number of proposed refinements for implementation in 2027, aimed at enhancing the quality, consistency, and accessibility of the nomination process.

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Proposed improvements to the Civic Awards nomination process include:

- Transitioning the nomination process to a standardised digital form to improve consistency and data collection
- Introducing indicative word limits to support clear, focused, and comparable submissions
- Incorporating structured response fields within the form to guide nominators and ensure alignment with assessment criteria
- Reviewing and updating award criteria to more closely align with Whitehorse City Council's values and strategic priorities
- Requiring the inclusion of a photograph of the nominee to support promotional and recognition activities

In addition, 2027 will mark the centenary of Box Hill City Council, representing a significant milestone for the municipality. To recognise this occasion, it is proposed that the Civic Awards presentation be integrated with the Community Dinner and the 100-year celebration event. The combined event is proposed to be held at Box Hill Town Hall, providing an opportunity to deliver a coordinated and high-profile community celebration.

Concurrently, a commemorative art collection is proposed to be exhibited, showcasing 100 years of Box Hill (now part of the City of Whitehorse), further contributing to the historical recognition and community engagement associated with the centenary.

DISCUSSION, OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS**Discussion**

Nominations for the 2026 Whitehorse Civic Awards opened on 22 March 2026 and closed on 29 April 2026. A comprehensive multi-channel communications campaign was undertaken to promote the Awards and encourage community participation across a broad range of demographics and community networks.

Promotion of the Awards included Council's Whitehorse News magazine, organic and paid social media campaigns, Councillor social media promotion, a dedicated WeChat post, Council website submissions and event pages, the What's Happening in Whitehorse eNews, a message from the Mayor at a Council meeting, the Mayor's radio update, direct communication with community groups and targeted youth engagement through local schools and youth social media channels.

Eligibility criteria for the Awards required nominees to be Australian citizens and, unless exceptional circumstances applied, residents of Australia. Nominees were also required to reside, study, work or participate significantly within the Whitehorse community. Additional category-specific eligibility requirements applied for the Citizen of the Year, Young Citizen of the Year and Community Achievement Award categories.

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Following the close of nominations, the Civic Awards Panel undertook a robust assessment process for all eligible nominations received through the 2026 Whitehorse Civic Awards program. A structured scoring framework, supported by clearly defined assessment criteria and panel deliberations, was used to ensure a fair, transparent and consistent evaluation process across all award categories. The Panel carefully considered the merit, impact and community contribution of each nominee before determining the recommended recipients.

Options

1. Council may endorse the recommendations of the Civic Awards Panel as presented in the confidential attachment to this report.
2. Alternatively, Council may choose not to endorse the recommendations and award other recipients.
3. Council could also request further information or a further review of the assessment outcomes, however this option will cause delay in advising awardees of the award and the Community dinner.

Analysis

The recommended option is for Council to endorse the outcomes of the Civic Awards Panel process. This year's assessment process was designed to provide a robust, transparent and equitable approach to evaluating nominations and recognising outstanding community contribution. Endorsement of the recommendations will enable recipients to be formally notified and preparations to proceed for the 2026 Community Dinner and award presentation event.

Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Report Details

Strategic Alignment	Governance, Strong governance will be achieved through transparent, accountable management and the efficient and financially sustainable delivery of valuable core services. Community, We aim to foster a connected, inclusive, safe and active community where everyone feels a sense of belonging. The Civic Awards align closely with Community by recognising individuals and groups who actively contribute to a welcoming, inclusive and respectful community.
Financial and Resource Implications	Should Council wish to host the Civic Awards as a standalone event at Box Hill Town Hall with an expanded attendance of up to 400 guests, additional budget approval would be required. While the venue is capable of accommodating a larger audience, an event of this scale would incur costs beyond venue hire alone, including increased

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	catering, staffing, audio-visual production, security, accessibility provisions, risk management, cleaning, and event coordination. As no budget has been allocated for an expanded or standalone event at this stage, any proposal to proceed would need to be supported by a dedicated budget allocation to ensure the event can be delivered safely, inclusively, and to an appropriate civic standard. This budget allocation would be needed for the 27/28 F, indicative costs are Quotes obtained for an event at Box Hill Town Hall for 300 guests range from \$ 30,880.00 \$37,330.00, dinner or 400 guests from \$39,380.00 to \$48,980.00, this includes AV and a 2 course plated meal and drinks. Council's current community dinner budget is \$30,000.
Legislative and Risk Implications	There are no legal or risk implications arising from the recommendation contained in this report.
Equity, Inclusion, and Human Rights Considerations	In developing this report to Council, the subject matter has been considered in accordance with the requirements of the <i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006</i>. It is considered that the subject matter does not raise any human rights issues
Community Engagement	Nominations for the awards were invited publicly through Council's website and actively promoted via the website, social media, publications, and direct emails to community groups, aiming to encourage broad engagement and diversity among the nominees.
Innovation and Continuous Improvement	The recommendations in this report demonstrate continuous improvement by reinforcing a structured, panel-led assessment process with clear governance and role separation. Innovation is evident in exploring alternative event formats and timing to enhance inclusivity and recognition outcomes, while requiring additional budget approval reflects strengthened forward planning and financial governance.
Collaboration	Delivery of the Whitehorse Civic Awards involved collaboration across Councillors, Executive Officers, and Council officers, with cross-departmental input from Community, Infrastructure, Arts, and Youth services. Promotion and outreach were supported

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	through Council communications channels, partnership with the Youth Team for school engagement, and direct engagement with local community and sporting groups.
Conflict of Interest	The <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> requires members of Council staff, and persons engaged under contract to provide advice to Council, to disclose any direct or indirect interest in a matter to which the advice relates. Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

ATTACHMENT

1 WCC 2026 Civic Award Nominations

Whitehorse City Council designates this attachment and the information contained in it as Confidential Information pursuant to Section 3 (1) (f) of the *Local Government Act 2020*. This ground applies because the attached contain personal information.

2 WCC Civic Awards Scoring Sheet & Guidance

Whitehorse City Council designates this attachment and the information contained in it as Confidential Information pursuant to Section 3 (1) (f) of the *Local Government Act 2020*. This ground applies because the attached contain personal information.

3 Evaluation Scoring - WCC Civic Awards 2026 Final

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