



# YMCA Victoria **YOUTH PARLIAMENT**

2026 Application Information Pack



# A MESSAGE FROM OUR PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Dear young Victorians and advocates of young people,

In 2026 we will see the 40th anniversary of the Victorian Youth Parliament run by The Y Victoria unfold. This will continue the program's legacy of being the longest running annual state forum for young people aged 16-25 to call for change in the state of Victoria. The program is well renowned for its commitment to authentic youth participation in civic and political process, and personally, I consider it to be one of the most empowering and enriching opportunities a young person in Victoria can experience.



**Kaitlin (Sheepy) Woolford**  
Program Director  
2026 YMCA Victoria  
Youth Parliament

The Youth Parliament program offers 120 young people from across Victoria the opportunity to make change from one of the most influential positions in our state; the chambers of the Victorian Parliament House. Over 60 Youth Parliament Bills have been adopted into current state legislation since the program's inception in 1986, including Bills on public transport, public safety, education, environment, and more! To name a few, laws which mandate the wearing of bicycle helmets and most recently, free public transport for students, originated from participants on the program in the past. In addition to the Bill development and debating offered on this program, the residential camping experience that we value on Youth Parliament offers Youth Parliamentarians and Press Gallery members an immersive environment for experiential learning and the development of personal and professional skills.

Applications to our program are always extremely competitive. To apply, please read the information and instructions on the following pages prior to submitting your application.

Please reach out with any questions or concerns that you may have during the application process.

Sincerely,

**Kaitlin (Sheepy) Woolford**  
Program Director - 2026 YMCA Victoria Youth Parliament

# WHAT IS YOUTH PARLIAMENT?

Youth Parliament is an annual residential program run by the Y that draws together 20 teams (each comprised of 6 young people aged 16-25) from across Victoria to advocate for issues that matter to them. Across the span of 5 months, participants will learn about the Victorian legislative system, develop advocacy and community leadership skills, and create and debate their own proposed legislation (Bill) on an issue that they are passionate about.

The program is delivered in three blocks:

## OFF-CAMP (TERM ONE AND TWO):

In the lead up to the residential camps, teams will meet and attend meetings with an assigned mentor from the Taskforce.

## TRAINING WEEKEND (MAY):

The Training Weekend is a three (3) day residential camp at Lake Dewar Discovery Camp. It is the time for participants to learn about parliamentary debating and parliamentary etiquette, learn about and engage with media, and begin building a sense of community with other young people.

## THE WEEK OF YOUTH PARLIAMENT (JUNE - JULY HOLIDAYS):

This is it! The Week of Youth Parliament is a six (6) day residential camp, also at Lake Dewar Discovery Camp. This is when Youth Parliamentarians will debate their Bills at Parliament House in front of ministers and the public. They will also continue to develop personal and professional skills, and build connections with a group of passionate change-makers who may become important personal and professional contacts for years following participation in the program.

“ Being part of the [Youth Parliament] program made me feel like I truly belonged. Working with others who shared similar passions, supporting each other, and being heard made me feel valued and connected to a bigger purpose.

”

- '25 Youth Parliamentarian





# KEY INFORMATION

**WHEN** Friday 22 May to Sunday 25 May 2026  
(Youth Parliament Training Weekend)

**Sunday 28 June to Friday 3 July 2026**  
(Week of Youth Parliament)

Please note; both residential components of the program are **COMPULSORY**. Participants will be required to attend for the full duration of the program.

**WHERE** Residential camp:  
Lake Dewar Discovery Camp  
339 Garrards Lane, MYRNIONG, 3341

**COSTS** \$6,385 (including GST) per  
team of six participants

Funding assistance is available for eligible teams and individuals. Please find information on this funding assistance below.

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE:

Youth Parliament is open to any young person:

- Residing in the state of Victoria; and
- Aged between 16 and 25 years at the time of the residential programs

## FUNDING ASSISTANCE

We currently have two subsidized funding options for a limited number of Youth Parliament teams or individuals. To apply for funding assistance, please indicate this in your application form.

### 1. Young people living with a disability:

Financial assistance is available to support individuals or teams of young people that are made up of people with a disability. These funds can go towards making the program more accessible to these young people.

### 2. Electorally underrepresented communities:

Full or partial sponsorship may be available to teams that are made up of young people from electorally underrepresented communities through the generous support of the Victorian Electoral Commission. Communities that are eligible to apply for this funding include:

- First Nations Young people living with a disability
- Low socio-economic
- Rural and/or regional
- Culturally & linguistically diverse
- Currently experiencing or have previously experienced homelessness

In the past some teams have been able to secure funding assistance by contacting local community organisations like Rotary clubs and local councils, or by contacting their local MP. We encourage any teams seeking partial or full funding assistance to explore these options first, due to the competitive nature of our program and the limited number of funded spots on offer.

# RESOURCE PERSON

The team application process is handled by a *Resource Person* who acts as a contact point between the program and the participants on a team. They will read and understand the application pack, and coordinate the application submission. The Resource Person is generally a teacher, youth worker, or council working at the organisation which is applying for a team, however a highly motivated and organised participant would also make a great Resource Person.

## **Once your team's place has been secured, the Resource Person is responsible for:**

- Facilitating communication between team members and the taskforce, especially in organising and running meetings (including set mentor meetings, and additional team meetings without the presence of a taskforce member)
- Being present in mentor meetings to support your team and to support taskforce members to be able to run an efficient and productive meeting
- Providing some guidance to teams in the development of ideas, but acknowledging that as young leaders, the participants should lead the decision-making process and workload
- Ensuring all team members' indemnity forms are submitted properly and on time
- Being a point of contact should any issues arise with payment or team members
- Ensuring payment is made in full, in accordance with the agreed timeline
- Supporting the team to feel prepared for the residential camps, including assisting in sourcing parliamentary attire, coordinating transport, and helping participants to feel confident in attending the residential camps

## **Resource Person expectation of commitment:**

The role of a Resource Person is just as important as that of a participant. They are crucial for the gathering of key information and for communication with team members to ensure a smooth process over the 6 month period of the program.

It is important that the Resource Person of a team is committed to their role within the program and remains communicative with the taskforce. This includes making all efforts to be present in mentor meetings. Please consider this expectation of commitment prior to submitting your application, remembering again, that this is an extremely competitive program and many organisations miss out on sending a team each year.

“

I honestly cannot describe how whole I feel now, I came into Youth Parliament not really feeling like I fit in at home within my community and I left knowing I have [created] my own community and a new family that I love more than anything. Youth Parliament changed me and I am so so so grateful for it.

”

– ‘25 Youth Parliamentarian

# PARTICIPANT EXPECTATIONS

Due to the limited spaces on the program, unfortunately some applicants miss out. It is imperative that every participant applicant understands the expectations of them, and that these are clearly communicated to them by the resource person or person who fills out the team application.

## **The expectations are as follows:**

- Participants commit to attending all meetings organised with their mentor, and any additional meetings their team organises to work on their Bill or speeches. Typically, teams meet 6-8 times in total. Participants are expected to spend at least five hours working on their Bill and speeches outside of the residential program.
- Participants must attend the entire three-day residential training weekend, and six-day residential program at Lake Dewar Discovery Camp.
- While on camp, participants must respect that the Y has duty of care for all participants, even if they are over the age of 18. This means that all participants must adhere to all procedures and policies and must stay on site at all times.
- While on the residential program, participants are expected to participate in all sessions and activities to the best of their ability.
- Participants are expected to respect the diversity and the opinions of other young people on the program and understand that the Victorian Youth Parliament program is a place for sharing ideas and learning new things.
- Participants understand that the Victorian Youth Parliament is a non-partisan, issues-based program and is not affiliated with any political party or specific ideologies.
- Participants should note that Youth Parliament is an alcohol, drug, and weapon free program. No alcohol, drugs or weapons are allowed onto the program in it's entirety.

# WHAT PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE

- Two residential camping experiences, including; full catering, accommodation, and transport to and from Parliament House, with optional transport to the campsite.
- Three days of facilitated debate in the chambers of the Parliament House of Victoria, Spring Street (this opportunity is afforded to very few programs, so we are lucky to be able to do so).
- Coaching and mentoring from the Taskforce for the duration of the program.
- The opportunity to work alongside a Youth Press Gallery journalist to develop media for their team's Bill.
- A suite of best practice leadership and teamwork training that can be applied to a multitude of contexts beyond camp

# APPLICATION DETAILS

**APPLICATIONS FOR YOUTH PARLIAMENT TEAMS WILL BE OPEN UNTIL 5.00PM ON SUNDAY 14TH SEPTEMBER 2025**

- All application submissions are for a Youth Parliament team made up of six participants. A complete team is not necessary during the application process, however if successful, team members must be confirmed by OCTOBER 31st 2025.
- All team members must be between 16-25 years for the duration of the residential programs.
- Only two of the six members of a team can be returning participants, and participants may only participate in the program twice.
  - *If finding team members is a difficulty, send us an email and we can discuss your options*
- All team members are to be committed to participating in all aspects of the Y Victorian Youth Parliament program, including meetings with their mentor, the residential training weekend, and the residential sitting week components of the program. This should be agreed to prior to signing up to join the team.

## PLEASE NOTE:

- Applications for YMCA Victorian Youth Parliament is very competitive and is capped at 20 teams.
- Each application will be assessed on a uniform criteria to provide a balanced and accurately representative program which includes the vast spectrum of young Victorians.
- Selection of teams will be based on, but not limited to, the following criteria:
  - Appropriate representation of the diversity of Victoria's young people.
  - Applications are detailed and submitted on time.
  - Team's ability/plan to recruit and support a team of six young people.
  - Access to a secure funding source to cover full cost of the team's participation, including initial 50% deposit (This could include the funding assistance on offer for eligible teams, outlined on page 4).

# HOW TO APPLY

Please read through the information pack and complete the application form:

<https://vicyouth.ymca.org.au/learning-and-leadership/youth-parliament/application>

For any questions regarding the application process, please email Kaitlin "Sheepy" Woolford at [youthparliament.vic@ymca.org.au](mailto:youthparliament.vic@ymca.org.au)

## KEY CONTACTS DURING THE APPLICATION PERIOD

**Kaitlin Woolford** Program Director

[youthparliament.vic@ymca.org.au](mailto:youthparliament.vic@ymca.org.au)

0491 237 766

**Michael Delaney** Youth Services Manager

[michael.delaney@ymca.org.au](mailto:michael.delaney@ymca.org.au)

0403 289 373

# PROGRAM TIMELINE OF IMPORTANT DATES

5pm Sunday 14th Oct 2025	Team applications close
Thurs 18 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2025 latest	Successful applicants notified via Letter of Offer
5pm Mon 6th Oct 2025	Signed Letters of Offer due back to <a href="mailto:youthparliament.vic@ymca.org.au">youthparliament.vic@ymca.org.au</a>
Thurs 9th Oct 2025	Resource Person Information Night (online)
Mon 20th Oct 2025	Full or first payment due
Fri 31st Oct 2025	Confirmation of six team members due
Term 4 (2025), 1 and 2 (2026) (starting 1st Dec 2025)	Teams develop their Bills
Mon 16th Feb 2026	Final payment due
Thurs 12th Mar 2026	Participant Information Night (online)
Thurs 30th Apr 2026	Participant indemnity forms due
11.59pm Thurs 30th Apr 2026	Bills must be finalised and submitted to mentor
Fri 22nd to Sun 24th May 2026	Youth Parliament Training Weekend
Sun 28th June to Fri 3rd July 2026	Week of Youth Parliament
Mon 20th July 2026	Resource Person evaluation meeting (online)

**PLEASE NOTE:** failure to comply with any of the above deadlines may result in your team forfeiting their position on the program.



# AS A SUCCESSFUL APPLICANT...

- Each team's resource person will be sent a Letter of Offer, which will need to be returned by 5pm Monday October 6th.
- A Taskforce member will contact your team's Resource Person to organise all of your mentor meetings for Bill development. These will occur between 1st Dec 2025 and 30th April 2026.
- All six team members must be confirmed via the link provided with the Letter of Offer by 5pm Oct 31st 2025.
- All Bills must be finalised and submitted via email to your team's mentor by 11.59pm April 30th.

## SOME INSPIRATION TO GET YOU GOING!

Here are some examples of previous Bills:

- Promotion of alternative sentencing for non-violent crimes
- Increased access to healthcare
- Increased incentives for relocations of skilled professionals to rural areas
- Universal accessibility of all musical and cultural festivals
- Access to and free use of community gardens

## WHAT IF I AM NOT A SUCCESSFUL APPLICANT?

**Worry not! Occasionally we have teams drop out of the program due to varying circumstances, so we will have a team waitlist, as well as an individual participant list where teams and/or individual participants may be invited to participate in the program later in the year if and when a space becomes available.**

There are also a ton of other ways to engage with The Y Vic! We have heaps of other programs to cater to your advocacy and personal development needs, including the Youth Press Gallery if you are a budding journo. Send an email through to [youthparliament.vic@ymca.org.au](mailto:youthparliament.vic@ymca.org.au) if you would like some more information!

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information about the program can be found online at our following websites:

**Website** | [www.vicyouth.ymca.org.au/learning-and-leadership/youth-parliament](http://www.vicyouth.ymca.org.au/learning-and-leadership/youth-parliament)

**Instagram** | [@youthparliamentvictoria](https://www.instagram.com/youthparliamentvictoria)

**Facebook** | [www.facebook.com/ypvic/](https://www.facebook.com/ypvic/)

**Twitter** | [@ypvic](https://twitter.com/ypvic)

**YouTube** | [www.youtube.com/channel/UCvWBFaOVBBBoEXQ\\_NHAA5D6g](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvWBFaOVBBBoEXQ_NHAA5D6g)

Please know that any queries can be emailed to:

Kaitlin "Sheepy" Woolford at [youthparliament.vic@ymca.org.au](mailto:youthparliament.vic@ymca.org.au)