



YMCA Victoria Youth Parliament Program Report 2020

Acknowledgment of Country

YMCA Victoria Youth Parliament recognises and pays respects to the First Nations that persist within and across the borders of colonial Victoria. We pay respect to this land that has been cared for, the rivers and waterways and the animals and plants, and the unbroken chain of storytelling and culture that has connected generations of Indigenous peoples, for over 60 000 years.

We acknowledge that Youth Parliament is run across Wathaurung, Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung lands.

We also acknowledge the pain and trauma experienced by ongoing colonial practices and that listening and healing is yet to happen.

Every year on Youth Parliament, providing young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with the opportunity to be heard on a legislative level is a priority. We hope to continue to learn and improve our practices to amplify Indigenous voices in a culturally-sensitive and empowering way.

Foreword

This report carries the testimony of the young people who stepped up to the platform of Youth Parliament and who championed their voices throughout the hardest collective year of our generation's history. I welcome its findings to be shared, amplified and nurtured, for better civic education and for a stronger, more inclusive Victorian democracy.

Youth Parliament demonstrates the potency of young people speaking, connecting and understanding, and the broader impact of this practice on not only those young people but their communities and our wider society. Having witnessed four iterations of Youth Parliaments, I have formed the belief that the political inclusion of young people is foundational to a well-functioning democracy. As someone who has seen firsthand the impact of inviting over 600 young people to be active citizens in our Victorian Parliament—from all backgrounds—what Youth Parliament offers is invaluable to our State. Its mission has always been about empowering a distinctly underheard demographic of society when it comes to law-making: young people. Since the beginning of the Westminster system, there has never existed anywhere close to a proportionate representation of young people in a parliament. Youth Parliament challenges this reality to its core.

Youth Parliament ensures young people are **heard**, not because it's 'nice to hear from the youth', but because year on year on year, the program demonstrates young people are powerful critical thinkers and are already leaders waiting to be recognised. Young Victorians bring forward solutions to not just some of the greatest issues facing a generation, but equally nuanced, local and well-researched solutions on topics that go under the political carpet. These are Youth Parliament's **raison d'être**.

Beyond the real and potent advocacy of the Youth Parliamentarians, the holistic benefit of Youth Parliament is in giving young people a voice, igniting a passion and delivering real and transferable skills.

There has never been a year that has demonstrated Youth Parliament's mission more acutely than 2020. The program was successful in achieving the majority of its aims, regardless of the fact that it could not safely operate its nominal Parliament sitting days or host a place for all Youth Parliamentarians to be together due to COVID-19.



Kergen Angel
Program Director - 2020 YMCA
Victoria Youth Parliament

Foreword continued

At the crux of all adaptations is the dedication to empowerment held by its volunteer Taskforce, who in a typical year spend six-months planning and delivering Youth Parliament, and this year spent well over 10 months. The Taskforce's work to innovate and adapt the program demonstrates a fortitude and grit won't by seasoned professionals, including: the submission of Bills, coordinating a plethora of meetings with MPs and industry leaders, as well as producing a suite of an interactive online training sessions. These volunteers demonstrated that even without a camp, a community could still grow, and despite not sitting in Parliament, young people's voices could still be meaningfully heard.

I am humbled by the momentum young people brought from across Victoria, regardless of gender, race, sexuality or class, towards championing themselves and their communities in the face of the global crisis. I suggest that lawmakers should be, too.

The program has also been transformed by its collaborative partnerships that have involved into the delivery of expert training. My thanks to the Victorian Electoral Commission for sharing their knowledge of civics and active citizenship to our Taskforce and Youth Parliamentarians, which was truly inspiring. My thanks also go to senior staff at Parliament House, who have shared their rich knowledge of Parliament this year, and for their commitment modernising our Bills and debates to reach a higher parliamentary standard.

Other elements of Youth Parliament also evolved as a result of the 2020 program. A shift in the team recruitment period meant that more teams could apply, with a milestone number of team applications achieved in 2020, with a grand total of 35. Additionally, with an extended period of time for teams to research and develop their Bills, this improved their depth and quality. These are highly significant developments in the Youth Parliament program, especially given the implications of the pandemic.

After seeing what can be accomplished in a year marked by challenges, the future for Youth Parliament only grows brighter. The technological innovations from this year will enhance the accessibility and efficacy of the program. I look forward to a new Youth Parliament doing what it has always done: leading Victoria to embrace change.

Kergen Angel

Program Director - 2020 YMCA Victoria Youth Parliament

Program overview

YMCA Victoria Youth Parliament, delivered by YMCA Victoria in conjunction with the Office for Youth and the Parliament of Victoria, is one of the most respected youth programs operating in the state. Since 1985, Youth Parliament has grown to become a highly recognised and commended program, acknowledged especially for the fact that it's run **by young people for young people**.

With the help of a dedicated volunteer Taskforce of participants and YMCA staff, 20 teams of young people from rural and metropolitan schools, universities and community groups debate issues of importance to young people in the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council Chambers of Parliament House. Young people aged between 16 and 25 years are invited to enter a team of six to participate in the program, with successful applicants researching and writing a Bill to debate at the annual sitting.

Bills passed by Youth Parliament, and given the assent of the Youth Governor, are handed onto the Minister for Youth for consideration and distribution to relevant portfolio Ministers. Over 30 Youth Parliament Bills have gone on to become Victorian legislation since the program's inception. Noteworthy Bills that have

achieved legislative status include the mandatory wearing of bike helmets and the establishment of a recycling scheme fund.

The 2020 program was greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in the regular residential aspect and debates held in Parliament House unable to go ahead. Fortunately, the unwavering belief in the outcomes of the program for young Victorians held by volunteers and YMCA staff enabled an adapted program, achieving the following:

- 18 Bills submitted to the Minister for Youth for Government consideration.
- A virtual Closing Ceremony in September featuring the Youth Governor Nicholas Steer, the Minister for Youth the Hon. Ros Spence, YMCA Victoria CEO Carolyn Morris, Youth Parliament Program Director Kergen Angel, and volunteer MC Alex Tyndall.
- Five online training sessions across five weeks, including a session delivered each by the Victorian Electoral Commission and Parliament House staff.
- 18 meetings with Members of Parliament, Department staff and industry leaders.
- The opportunity for participants to submit letters on an issue directly to a Minister.

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“I was able to put forward an issue that my community deeply cares about to someone who can make a change.”

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– 2020 Youth Parliamentarian

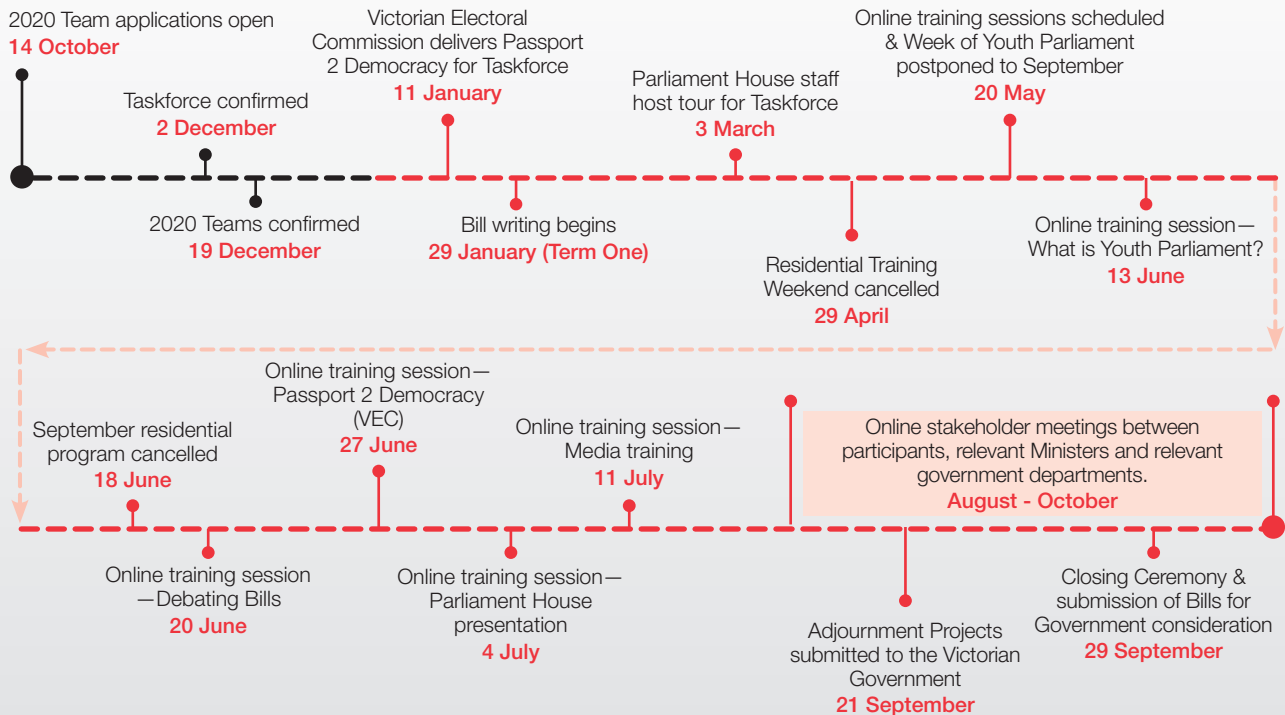


Timeline of Key Events & COVID-19

The changes to Youth Parliament as a result of COVID-19 were many and significant. The commitment and innovations led by volunteers, staff at the Y and key partners meant that the adapted 2020 program was still successful in achieving the majority of its initial program objectives.

The following timeline demonstrates how Youth Parliament adapted to a significantly changed program for 2020:

----- 2019
----- 2020



Taskforce on Parliament House tour
3 March 2020



Taskforce meetings on Zoom

“Youth Parliament adapted remarkably well to the online format.”

– 2020 Youth Parliamentarian



Program objectives

Youth Parliament is guided by a series of strategic goals, developed by the Victorian Government and YMCA Victoria. They are:

- Providing learning opportunities for young people including personal development, teamwork, and leadership skills.
- Helping to empower young people, build their confidence, resilience and self-responsibility through a youth participation approach.
- Providing opportunities for young people to participate in the decision-making, management and operation of the program.
- Providing training for young people and adults to support their participation in the program.
- Elevating the voice of young people through media training and professional interactions with Youth Press Gallery journalists and other media.
- Enabling and promoting young people's participation in formulating and publicly debating ideas and opinions on issues of community concern, using democratic processes.

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“Youth Parliament creates an environment that goes beyond empowering people to use their voice, it offers its participants a community that represents the positive change that its participants want to see in society.”

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– 2020 Youth Parliamentarian

Pre-COVID-19

The 2020 Youth Parliament program was undergoing targeted change prior to the major impacts by COVID-19. This included:

- A modernised Bill template designed to allow for more meaningful debates
- A modernised debate script, providing more time in Chambers during the Sitting Days of Youth Parliament
- First ever delivery of Passport 2 Democracy, an Australian civics education program, by the Victorian Electoral Commission to the volunteer Taskforce, prior to program delivery
- First ever tour of Parliament House by senior staff to Taskforce, prior to program delivery
- Plans for the Victorian Electoral Commission to facilitate face-to-face training and a true-to-life Youth Premier election at the residential Training Weekend
- Plans for a presentation by senior Parliament House staff to participants at the residential Training Weekend

The Taskforce

Total recorded hours volunteered: **3326 hours**



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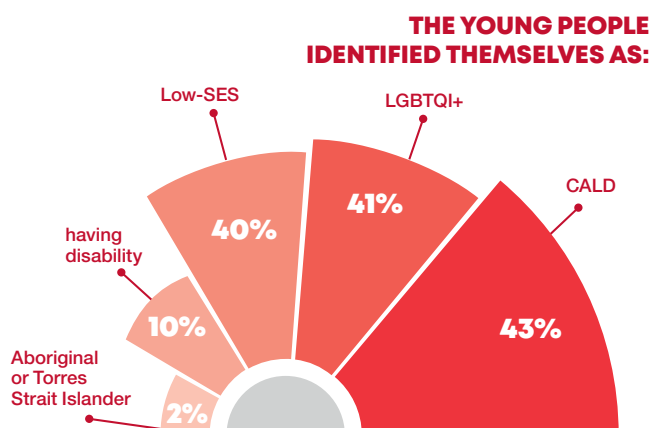
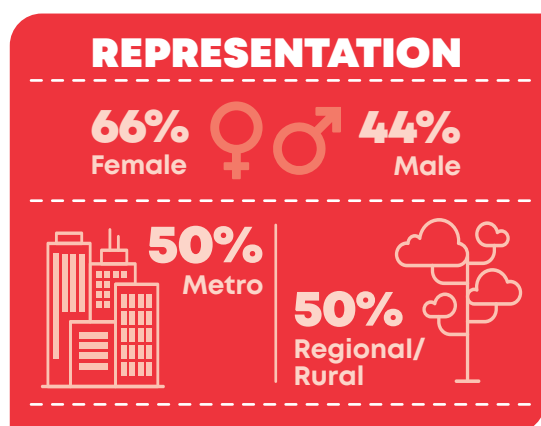
“[The Y] staff were amazing, energetic and super responsive, [a] great team of volunteers who were super passionate and interested in supporting our ideas.”

”

– 2020 Youth Parliamentarian

120 PARTICIPANTS WERE RECRUITED ON THE PROGRAM IN 2020.

2 teams and 5 individuals withdrew when Youth Parliament transitioned to an online program.
103 remained engaged until the end of the program.



“

“[Youth Parliament] allows you to feel as though you are in a safe place and the ability to connect with others from diverse backgrounds

”

– 2020 Youth Parliamentarian

Our Impact

In 2020, YMCA Victoria Youth Parliament had an overall positive impact upon young people, despite major changes to the program in accommodating to the COVID-19 crisis. The adaptability and achievement of the program is a testament to the belief in inspiring young people held by the Y, the volunteer Taskforce and partners.

Impact measurement	Pre-program 'Good' or higher	Post-program 'Good' or higher
"I would rate my knowledge about the Victorian political system as..." (things like how voting works, the upper and lower house, and the passage of Bills):	50%	84%
"I feel confident to engage with political and civic processes"	58%	85%
"I feel confident expressing myself and my opinions in my day to day life"	85%	89%
"How confident do you feel speaking with media, politicians or professionals?"	56%	80%

Program ratings



78%

"As a result of Youth Parliament, **I feel empowered to make change in my community**"



63%

"The skills I learnt at Youth Parliament, **would be hard to learn in a classroom setting.**"



86%

"Youth Parliament gave me an opportunity to **develop my teamwork skills**"



68%

"As a result of Youth Parliament, **I developed leadership skills**"



65%

"As a result of Youth Parliament, **I am now more confident.**"



73%

"Youth Parliament, **gave me a platform to be heard and respected in society.**"



91%

"I will use what I learnt at Youth Parliament **now and into the future**"



88%

"**I would recommend Youth Parliament to my peers**"

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"The program teaches young people how to become involved with their local and state politicians and teaches them how to speak out and make change."

”

– 2020 Youth Parliamentarian

Participant Highlights

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It was awesome to have a safe place to express ideas and communicate effectively with my team.

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“

I enjoyed working in a team environment with other individuals who had the same visions as me and wanted to contribute to positive change.

”

“

It brings young people to come together and think of the things that are effecting them and their communities and how those things need to change.

”

Stakeholders

Youth Parliament is privileged to benefit from the support of a variety of stakeholders. The support from the following stakeholders provide everything from financial support to teams, expertise in program delivery, and liaising with significant figures to provide expert opinion to teams. Continued stakeholder commitment allows for Youth Parliament to be an increasingly accessible and impactful program. We would like to thank our core stakeholders:

• The Office for Youth & Equality

The Office for Youth & Equality (OfYE) is integral to the running of Youth Parliament, year on year. Bi-partisan government support provides YMCA Victoria with the means to continue to engage with young people and community members through Youth Parliament. Support for five rural and regional teams who would not otherwise have the means to access the program in previous years has enabled strong rural and regional presence. This partnership has been growing over previous years and significantly in 2020, in the networking and stakeholder relationship space. A significant number of teams were connected to staff in Government Departments, as well as Members of Parliament, who provided unique insights into Bills relating to their departments and portfolios. This was a highlight for many participants of the program.

• The Victorian Electoral Commission

Our partnership with the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) has taken great steps in 2020. The VEC have historically provided sponsorship to five teams to access the program, particularly those from demographics that are considered underrepresented in Victorian electoral cycles.

In 2020, the VEC provided additional training to the volunteer Taskforce and later online to participants of Youth Parliament and YMCA Youth Press Gallery. Prior to COVID-19, VEC staff were scheduled to run the annual Youth Premier elections at the residential Training Weekend in a close-to-life adaption of a state election.

• Parliament House - Victoria

Parliament House does not only provide the venue for the three sitting days Youth Parliament runs each year, but also provides the expertise of Parliament House staff. The support from staff is integral to empowering young people to be truly heard with legitimate debate rules and traditions adhered to throughout the typical Youth Parliament experience.

In 2020, Parliament House staff gave critical insight into modernising the Bill templates teams use each year to write and debate their Bills. Additionally, this was the first year in nearly a decade that a senior staff member presented on the function and form of Parliament House to Youth Parliamentarians, albeit online.



Teams & Bills

Team applications opened for the 2020 program for the duration of Term Four, 2019. With a total of 35 team applications submitted, the 20 teams were confidently selected for the geographic and demographic representation of Victoria. COVID-19 did impact some original teams' ability to participate as well as some young people's ability to access remote engagement. Fortunately, 90% of teams were able to fully complete the adapted program and submit a Bill for Government consideration.

Copies of 2020 Bills can be found at:

<https://virtually.ymca.org.au/youth-space/youth-voice/listen/youth-parliament-bills-2020>

TEAM	BILL
Bacchus Marsh Grammar	Identification and Management of Toxic Waste Products in Victoria Bill 2020
Bendigo Youth Services	Improved Sustainability Measures for all Residential Buildings Bill 2020
Boroondara Youth Services	Single-Use Plastics Tax Bill 2020
Brotherhood of St. Laurence	Inclusive Paid Placement for Victorian Young People Bill 2020
Castlemaine Secondary College	Childcare Reform Bill 2020
Central Highlands Youth Advisory Board	Mental Health Support Post-Discharge Bill 2020
Coburg High School	Free Public Transport for Students Bill 2020
Greater Shepparton Secondary College	Occupational Health and Safety in Victorian Schools Bill 2020
Korin Gamadji Institute	Renewable Energy Transition Scheme Bill 2020
Mildura Rural City Council	Mandatory Air-Conditioning in Public Housing Bill 2020
Moreland City Council	Accessible Civics Education Bill 2020
Moyne Shire Council	Monitoring of Rural and Regional Road Quality and Safety Bill 2020
Newhaven College	Humane Use of Horses in Victorian Racing Bill 2020
Overnewton Anglican Community College	Reforming the Victorian Certificate of Education Bill 2020
Tarneit Senior College	Healthy Eating Program Bill 2020
Wellington Shire Council	Reform to Sexual Education in Victorian High Schools Bill 2020
Westbourne Grammar School	Reduction of Food Wastage in Supermarkets Bill 2020
Strathbogie Shire Council Youth in Politics	Life Education Classes in Victorian Curriculum Bill 2020

What Happens with the Bills?

Ordinarily Youth Parliament, Bills are debated by the Youth Parliamentarians and the issue is put to a vote, just like in real Parliament. The Bill can pass on the voices ('aye' and 'no') or a division can be called to break the deadlock. In 2020, there was no debate, however all Bills were presented to the Government for consideration. This year the Minister for Youth,

the Honourable Ros Spence MP, referred the issues to the relevant Ministers for their consideration. Over the years, more than 30 pieces of Victorian legislation have found their origins in the Youth Parliament. The ideas and concepts brought to the Youth Parliament display the remarkable forward thought and passion of young people in Victoria.