

YMCA Victoria

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# YOUTH PARLIAMENT PROGRAM REPORT 2021

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# 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. We also acknowledge 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 Dja Dja Wurrung, Wathaurung, Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung lands and pay our respects to the Elders and People of those lands. We also acknowledge the pain and trauma experienced by ongoing colonial practices and that truth-telling and healing is a continuing process with many stories still left unheard.

Every year on Youth Parliament, providing First Nations young people 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 First Nations voices in a culturally sensitive and empowering way.



Pictured Artwork created by OSHC students during 2020 Reconciliation Week.

## OVERVIEW

The 35th YMCA Victoria Youth Parliament was not a traditional Youth Parliament, but it was novel and just as empowering in every possible way. This year, Youth Parliament ran nearly entirely online due to COVID-related health restrictions in Victoria, combining program objectives with our camp community magic to create a legacy in this program's history.

In this report, you will find the testimonies of over 150 young people who engaged in this year's program as a: Youth Parliamentarian, member of the Youth Press Gallery, or Taskforce. You will follow the thread of developing and preparing for all circumstances that the COVID-19 pandemic presented for our important mission of inspiring young people to continue to raise their voice to the highest legislative body in Victoria.

The vast majority of this year's work was done by an esteemed team of volunteers—our Taskforce—who despite the odds, upheld the Y's steadfast belief in young people creating empowering communities. As a result, the 35th Youth Parliament was not only delivered to an exceptionally high standard, but innovations were made in online programming and livestreaming which promise an exciting future for the accessibility of civic engagement for young people.

“

“Strong supportive community, meaningful civic engagement, opportunities to connect with professionals and stakeholders in the field, [and] fantastic online adaptation”.

– 2021 Youth Parliamentarian



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**I would like to acknowledge and thank the people and partners who made this year possible.**

Firstly, I would like to thank the volunteer Taskforce who worked tirelessly to achieve this year's program. Tessa, Tahlia, Hiep, Kim, Georgia, Maggy, Meaghan, Amy, Alex, Annelise, Ally, Tom, Kayra, Miora, James, Shanti, Jo, Gemma, Swenisha and Lachlan—this achievement would not have been possible without you.

Secondly, I would like to thank the team from the Y Victoria, in the Youth, Communications, IT, Risk and all other teams who worked collaboratively to unite over the mission of bringing together young people in a safe, empowering space. I would also like to extend that acknowledgment to the Y Australia and all other associations who offered support or good wishes nationally.

Next, I would like to thank the Office for Youth at the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, the Victorian Electoral Commission and the Parliament House of Victoria staff. Whether through liaison support, communications, staffing, team sponsorship or training, you provided us with the capacity to elevate this program to be accessible to more young people with even greater potency. Your partnership is a privilege that I have been immensely grateful for.

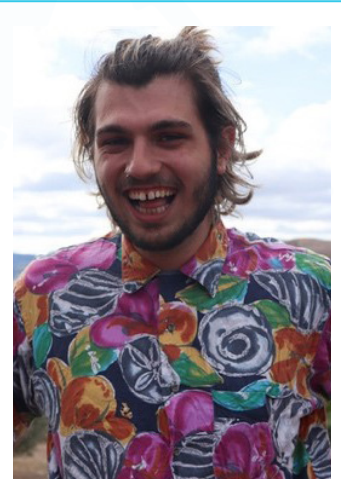
I would also like to thank our resource people, Youth Parliamentarians and Youth Press Gallery, who placed their trust in us that this would be a worthwhile and empowering experience. I'm glad the report says the vast majority thought it was. So many hours were put into this program because we believe in you, so thank you.

Finally, I would like to thank Tessa Buchanan for her phenomenal work as Wreck (Recreation) Director and our very own 'COVID-Alternative Commander-in-Chief' and wish her the very best in leading this mighty program as Program Director in 2022. You shine, utterly.

Kindly

**Kergen Angel**

Program Director - 2020-2021 YMCA Victoria Youth Parliament



**Kergen Angel**  
Program Director - 2021 YMCA  
Victoria Youth Parliament

## PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The 35th YMCA Victoria Youth Parliament was guided by a series of strategic goals, developed by the Victorian Government and the Y Victoria. They were:

- 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.

Additionally, Youth Press Gallery also sought to achieve the following objectives:

- The media on young people in Youth Parliament is created by young people
- For every Youth Press Gallery Journalist to have developed a publicly accessible portfolio of journalism work, across written, verbal, audio-visual and digital mediums.

## TIMELINE

### Team recruitment:

19 January 2021  
to 19 March 2021,  
confirmed 31 March 2021

### Taskforce recruited:

20 March 2021

### Bills developed:

19 April to 9 August 2021

### COVID-Alternative program developed:

May to September 2021

### Training Weekend [online]:

27 to 29 August 2021

### Week of Youth Parliament [online]:

19 to 24 September 2021



Teams debating a Bill online

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## PARTICIPANT PROGRAM RATING

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93%

“The program on the whole was **delivered to a high standard.**”



73%

“Youth Parliament gave me an opportunity to **develop my teamwork skills.**”



91%

“**I felt safe and supported** throughout Youth Parliament.”



80%

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



91%

“Youth Parliament gave me a platform to **be heard and respected in society.**”



88%

“The skills I learnt as part of the program **would be hard to learn in a classroom setting.**”



77%

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



74%

“As a result of Youth Parliament, **I developed leadership skills.**”



90%

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



92.5%

“Youth Parliament felt **welcoming and inclusive**”



79%

“**I have a stronger voice and am able to be heard more clearly on issues that I care about** because of my involvement in Youth Parliament”



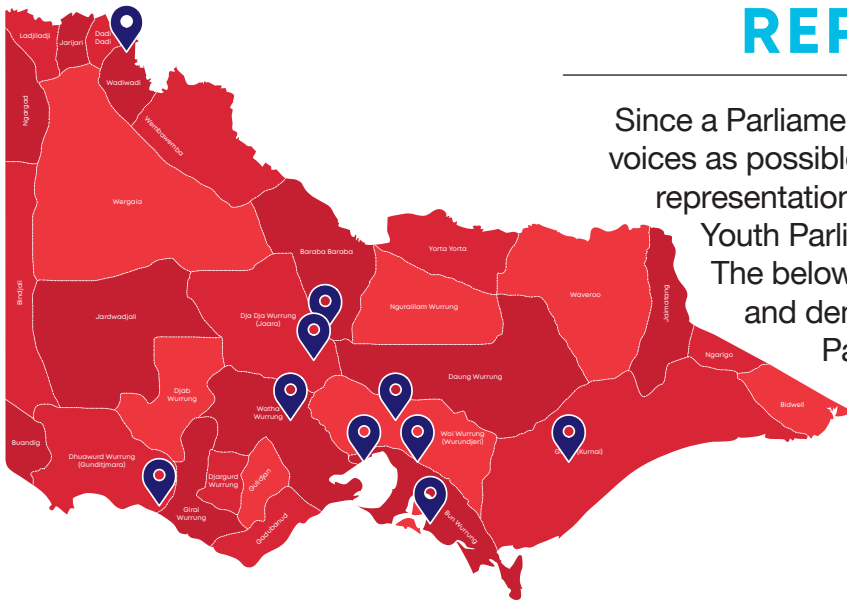
87%

“I would **recommend Youth Parliament to my peers.**”

# REPRESENTATION

Since a Parliament is designed to represent as many voices as possible, the geographic and demographic representation of young Victorians participating in Youth Parliament was a key selection criterion. The below data demonstrates the geographic and demographic make-up of 2021's Youth Parliamentarians, Youth Press Gallery Journalists and Taskforce.

*General geographic location of Youth Parliament teams in 2021*



## 21 YOUTH PARLIAMENT TASKFORCE MEMBERS:

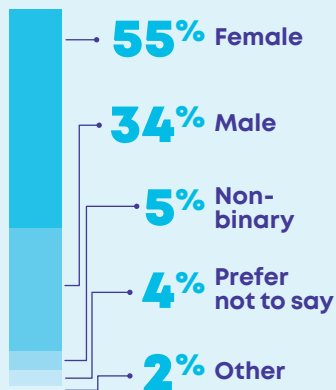
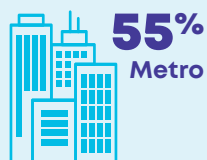
**69%** Female  
**26%** Male  
**5%** Non-binary



### THE YOUNG PEOPLE IDENTIFIED THEMSELVES AS:

**27%** CALD  
**11%** Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander  
**61%** LGBTQIA+  
**10%** Having a disability

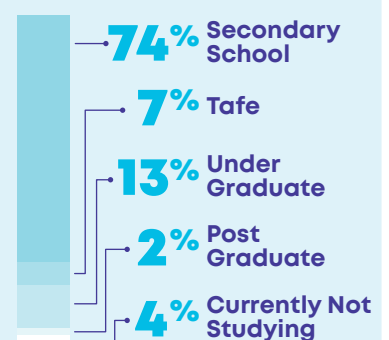
## 120 YOUTH PARLIAMENTARIANS:



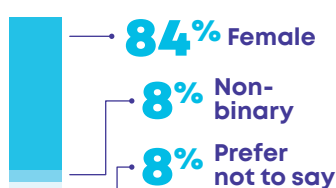
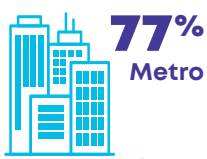
### THE YOUNG PEOPLE IDENTIFIED THEMSELVES AS:

**45%** CALD  
**43%** LGBTQIA+  
**7%** Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander  
**12%** Having a disability

### NEW FOR 2021 WE LOOKED INTO CURRENT LEVEL OF STUDY:



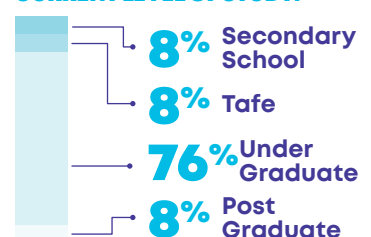
## 14 YOUTH PRESS GALLERY JOURNALISTS:



### THE YOUNG PEOPLE IDENTIFIED THEMSELVES AS:

**27%** CALD  
**61%** LGBTQIA+  
**10%** Having a disability

### NEW FOR 2021 WE LOOKED INTO CURRENT LEVEL OF STUDY:



# TASKFORCE

A team of 21 young volunteers contributed 8469 total recorded hours to deliver the 2021 program. This is the financial equivalent of approximately \$255,000.

They were appointed in March 2021 and concluded their role in October 2021. Through their work, determination, improvisation and collaboration, Youth Parliament was able to deliver significant outcomes for young people through its COVID-Alternative programming.

The Taskforce consisted of six portfolios and a leadership team. These portfolios were: Parliamentary Training, Logistics & Welfare, Youth Press Gallery, Wreck and Communications & Stakeholder Engagement. In addition, a COVID-Alternative subcommittee was established in May to prepare for a COVID-Alternative program.

The leadership team consisted of the Program Director, the peer-elected Youth Governor, and the Directors of each portfolio. The Taskforce and their positions were:

“

“Big congratulations to the taskforce for still putting together an engaging, welcoming, educational and fun event even online by far the best online anything I’ve gone to.”

– 2021 Youth Parliamentarian

## EXECUTIVE



## GENERAL



## TASKFORCE IMPACT

In 2021 the team of passionate taskforce stepped up to deliver another life changing program for young people in Victoria.

As seen from the impact results on previous pages, the program has a significant social impact. This year the Y also wanted to share the impact the program has on the taskforce:



# 100%

of Taskforce members felt a sense of connection or belonging to taskforce members and the team.

of Taskforce members felt taskforce was a safe and supportive place.

“

“Centering the voices and experiences of young people, as well as the issues they care about and offering them a safe and constructive platform to speak up about them [was a highlight]. I explained the program to many of my friends and family and they were amazed at the opportunity I had been given alongside the 120+ other young people involved.”

– 2021 Youth Parliamentarian

## PRE AND POST SURVEYS ALSO SHOWED EVIDENCE OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS AS A DIRECT RESULT OF THE PROGRAM:

PERSONAL AND  
PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

APPLY EXISTING  
SKILLS AND EXPERTISE

LEADERSHIP  
ABILITY

TEAMWORK  
ABILITY

COMMUNICATION  
SKILLS

PROGRAM  
DESIGN SKILLS

DEBRIEFING  
SKILLS

FACILITATION  
SKILLS

ORGANISATIONAL/TIME  
MANAGEMENT SKILLS

STAKEHOLDER  
ENGAGEMENT SKILLS

AMBASSADORSHIP  
SKILLS

# CHAMBERS

In 2021, the following four Youth Parliamentarians were elected preferentially, first for Chamber Leaders in their Chambers of five teams, and then for a Youth Premier with all Youth Parliamentarians and Youth Press Gallery Journalists voting.

“

“I got the opportunity to have my voice heard in which I developed major confidence in myself that i didn't know i had. Another strength of the program was that I got to meet so many amazing people who share similar passions.”

– 2021 Youth Parliamentarian

The Chambers and leadership were:

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

### Government

**Youth Premier: Shehelah Ousman**  
— the Skyline Foundation

Teams:

- the Skyline Foundation
- Independents
- Wellington Shire Council
- Tarneit Senior College
- the Y Ballarat

### Opposition

**Leader of Opposition: Arth Tuteja**  
— Melbourne High Changemakers:

Teams:

- Melbourne High Changemakers
- Bendigo City Council
- Overnewton Anglican Community College
- Oonah Yarra Ranges Youth
- Hoppers Crossing Secondary College

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

### Government

**Chamber Leader: Elise Mitchell**  
— Westbourne Grammar School

Teams:

- Westbourne Grammar School
- Ivanhoe Girls' Grammar School
- Boroondara City Council
- Moyne Shire Council
- Korin Gamadji Institute

### Opposition

**Chamber Leader: Chloe Wrzesinski**  
— Castlemaine Secondary College

Teams:

- Castlemaine Secondary College
- Newhaven College
- Mildura Rural City Council
- Deaf Victoria
- City of Whittlesea

# YOUTH PARLIAMENTARIAN IMPACT

The difference in young people's opinion of themselves before and after taking part in Youth Parliament.

THESE KEY FINDINGS WERE GATHERED FROM PRE AND POST PROGRAM SURVEYS. AS A DIRECT RESULT OF THE YOUTH PARLIAMENT PROGRAM, YOUTH PARLIAMENTARIANS THOUGHT THEY HAD:



INCREASED  
CONFIDENCE TO ENGAGE  
WITH POLITICAL AND  
CIVIC PROCESSES.

INCREASED  
CONFIDENCE TO VOTE AT  
THE NEXT LOCAL, STATE  
OR FEDERAL ELECTION.

INCREASED CONNECTION  
TO A COMMUNITY  
OF PASSIONATE  
YOUNG PEOPLE.

INCREASED CONFIDENCE  
IN EXPRESSING THEMSELVES  
AND THEIR OPINIONS IN  
DAY TO DAY LIFE.

INCREASED CONFIDENCE  
IN SPEAKING IN FRONT  
OF AN AUDIENCE OF  
STRANGERS.

INCREASED CONFIDENCE  
WHEN SPEAKING WITH  
THE MEDIA, POLITICIANS  
AND PROFESSIONALS.

A BELIEF THAT  
PEOPLE VALUE WHAT  
YOUNG PEOPLE THINK,  
SAY AND DO.

The Program also focused this year on the development of specific skills

As a direct result of the program evidence also suggests young people increased skills in:

**Mindfulness &  
Self-care**



**Public  
speaking**



**Problem-  
solving**



**Critical  
thinking**



**Communication**



**Research**



**Teamwork**



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## YOUTH PRESS GALLERY

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In 2021 Youth Press Gallery ran its 8th iteration, providing 13 budding Journalists with the opportunity to develop a portfolio of work and report on the 2021 Youth Parliament.

The Journalists engaged in regular development sessions and had parallel training during the Training Weekend in August.

### IMPACT ON YOUTH PRESS GALLERY JOURNALISTS

As a result of participating in Youth Press Gallery, participants reported that:



**84%**

of journalists **felt confident in engaging** with political and civil processes.



**77%**

of journalists **felt confident conducting interviews.**



**73%**

of journalists **felt confident pitching ideas** to news editors and journalists.



**78%**

of journalists **felt confident in using digital platforms to share** their work.



**76%**

of journalists **felt confident in using social media as a journalistic tool.**



**83%**

**felt connected to a community of passionate young people.**



**100%**

of journalists **felt people value what they think say and do.**

# YOUTH PRESS GALLERY

## IMPACT

PRE AND POST SURVEYS ALSO SHOWED EVIDENCE OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS AS A DIRECT RESULT OF THE PROGRAM:

**Mindfulness & Self-care**



**Social connection**



**Organisation and time management**



**Problem-solving**



**Research**



**Teamwork**



**Critical thinking**



**Videography**



**Photography**



**Social media**



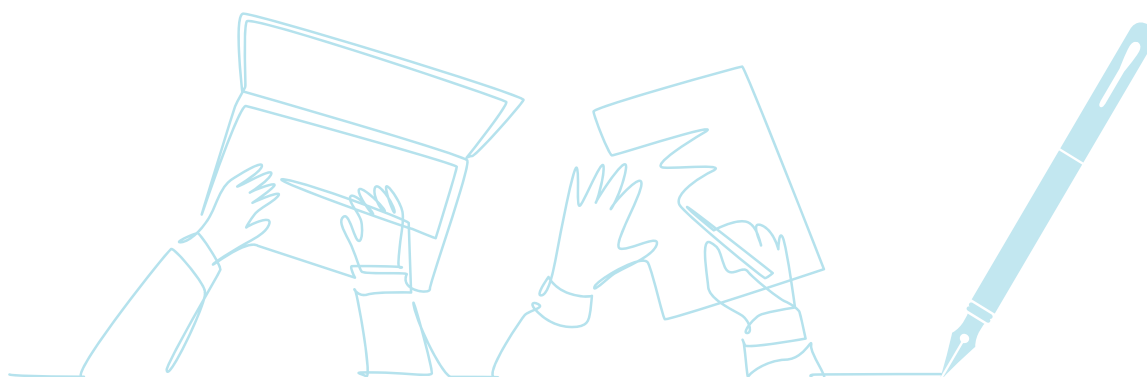
**Pitching**



### YOUTH PRESS GALLERY JOURNALISTS

- Abbygail Shun
- Charlie Goldberg
- Emily Dobson
- Farah Hawi
- Gek-Eryn Wylde
- Jacob Gamble
- Praelene Khera
- Ruby Sait
- Selina Zhang
- Simone Costa
- Simone Kealy
- Zac Chu

The 2021 Youth Press Gallery publications can be found here: [ymcapressgallery.com](https://ymcapressgallery.com)



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## PROGRAM PARTNERS

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**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 — Department of Families, Fairness & Housing*

The Office for Youth (OfY) is integral to the running of Youth Parliament, year on year. Their bi-partisan commitment when in government and funding support provides the Y 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 but grew significantly in 2021, 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.

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### *Parliament House of 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 2021, Parliament House staff provided our Taskforce with the resources and information on the mechanics of a parliament to ensure rigorous civic procedure is adhered to, as well as a tour of Parliament House. Furthermore, the Parliament House staff worked closely with the Taskforce to develop and deliver a complete virtual debate experience with proper Clerking and Hansard services as well. YMCA are very grateful for the ongoing support and involvement of the Parliamentary staff team as well as the Presiding Officers.

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### *Victorian Electoral Commission*

Our partnership with the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) has taken great steps in 2021. 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 2021, the VEC provided additional training to the volunteer Taskforce and later online to participants of Youth Parliament. The VEC also administered our Youth Premier election held at our online Training Weekend on August 29 2021, providing young people with direct experience with an important civic procedure.

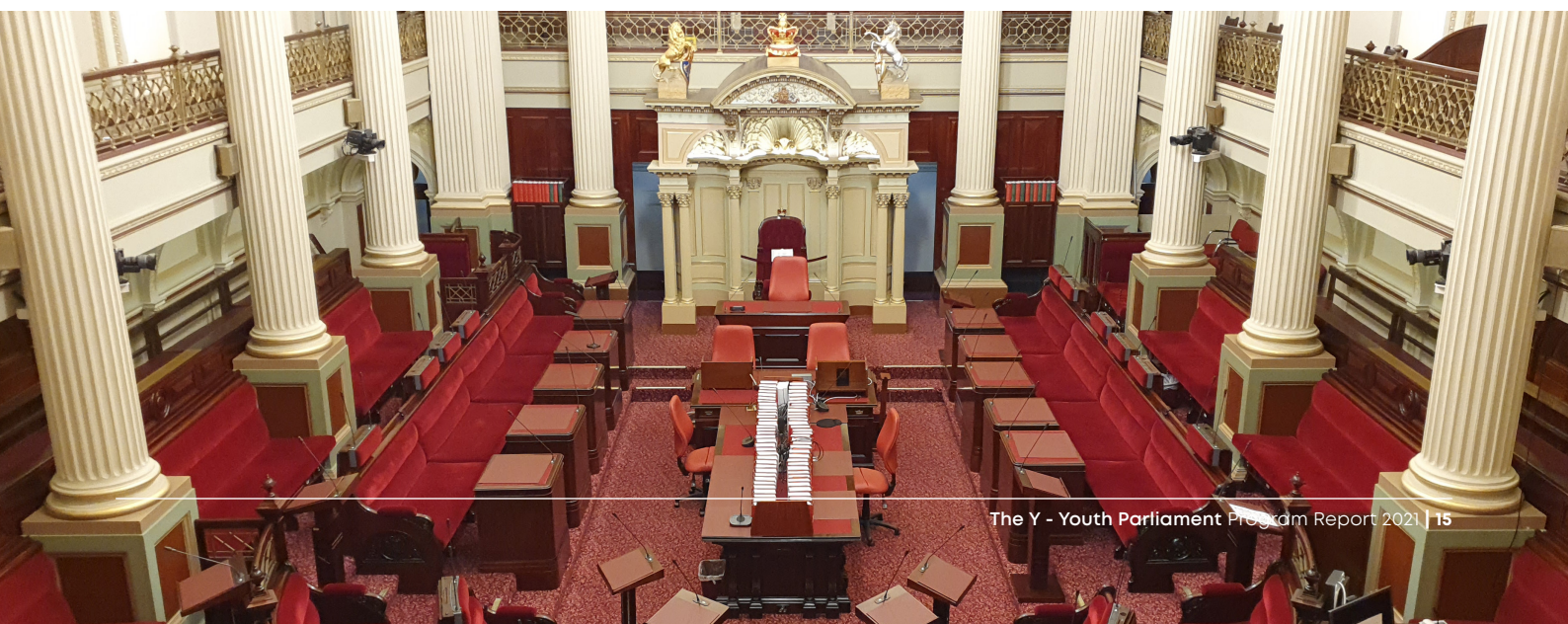
# STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Our stakeholder meetings are the intersection of our young people engaging in meaningful discussion with political representatives or industry professionals in their area of advocacy, development, or electorate.

In 2021, 21 meetings occurred between 17 teams and the Youth Press Gallery, directly connecting 115 young people to state politicians and industry professionals. These meetings directly informed the Bills produced, debates engaged in, and media developed.

**Our thanks to the following stakeholders who offered guidance to Teams and Journalists:**

NAME	STAKEHOLDER ROLE/ ORG	TEAM
Lauren Frost	Human Rights Law Centre and Raise The Age Convener for Victoria	The Skyline Foundation
Ben Carroll MP	Minister for Roads and Road Safety	Overnewton Anglican Community College
Tom Riley	Batyr - Youth Mental Health Group	Tarneit Senior College
Megan Grigg	Rainbows in Schools	Westbourne Grammar School
Anita Aherne	Kids on the Spectrum	Hoppers Crossing Secondary College
Kodie Webb, Patrick Burn and Steph	Department of Education and Training	Castlemaine Secondary College
Derm Ryan	Youth Affairs Victoria	City of Greater Bendigo
Ben Lever	Convener of the Ballarat Branch of the Public Transport User's Association	the Y Ballarat
Sam Hibbins MP	Greens MP for Prahran	Deaf Victoria



Our thanks to the following stakeholders who offered guidance to Teams and Journalists:

NAME	STAKEHOLDER ROLE/ ORG	TEAM
Hayley McQuire	National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition	Korin Gamadji Institute
Otis Heffernan-Wooden	Reconciliation Australia	Oonah Yarra Ranges Youth
Luke Donnellan MP	Minister for Disability, Aging and Carers and Child Protection	Melbourne High Changemakers
Ellen Moore and Kerry Wilson	Victoria Police - Curriculum Development	Newhaven College
Sara Hanna	headspace	Boroondara City Council
Ingrid Stitt MP	Minister for Workplace Safety	Ivanhoe Girls' Grammar School
Dr Nikki Vincent	Victorian Commissioner for Gender Equality in the Public Sector	Ivanhoe Girls' Grammar School
Mary-Anne Thomas	Minister for Agriculture	Moyne Shire Council
Rio Davis	ABC Gippsland journalist and Youth Press Gallery alumni	Youth Press Gallery
Sharnelle Vella	Channel 7 state political reporter	Youth Press Gallery
Rachael Dexter	The Sunday Age reporter	Youth Press Gallery
Morgan Hancock	Warrnambool Standard and Getty photographer	Youth Press Gallery

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“The Youth Parliament Victoria program's greatest strength is amplifying the voices of young people and leaders. This program provides a safe platform to do meaningful work and bring about the change we want to see. The opportunities that we have been given, such as global broadcasting of debates, meetings with Victorian Ministers and the presentation of our bills to Parliament, are things that I am beyond thankful for. This program gives people whose voices tend to be suppressed a turn to share how they think and feel. It is amazing.”

– 2021 Youth Parliamentarian

# TEAMS AND BILLS

In 2021, 20 teams developed Bills over a three-month period on a state-issue they were passionate about, which were then debated and voted on by fellow Youth Parliamentarians. Of the 20 Bills, 18 received a majority vote at the conclusion of their vote and two did not. The teams, their Bills and outcomes can be found here: [vicyouth.ymca.org.au/learning-and-leadership/youth-parliament/this-years-program/teams-and-bills](https://vicyouth.ymca.org.au/learning-and-leadership/youth-parliament/this-years-program/teams-and-bills)

TEAM	BILL TITLE	PASSED?
Boroondara City Council	Online Mental Health Hub Bill 2021	✓
Castlemaine Secondary College	Establishment of Gender-Neutral Public Bathrooms 2021	✓
City of Greater Bendigo	Equal Access to Education Bill 2021	✓
Deaf Victoria	Implementing Mandatory LOTE Auslan Subject in Schools Bill 2021	✓
Hoppers Crossing Secondary College	Neurodiversity Education in Schools Bill 2021	✓
Independents	Mandatory Rooftop Gardens on Public Buildings Bill 2021	✓
Ivanhoe Girls' Grammar School	Proactive Measures to Prevent Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Bill 2021	✓
Korin Gamadji Institute	Compulsory First Nations Education in Schools Bill 2021	✓
Mildura Rural City Council	Criminalisation of Coercive Control Bill 2021	✓
Moyne Shire Council	Sustainable Agriculture Incentives Bill 2021	✓
Newhaven College	Compulsory Training for Victorian Police Surrounding Sensitive Issues Bill 2021	✓
Oonah Yarra Ranges Council	Mandatory Reconciliation Plans in Schools Bill 2021	✓
the Skyline Foundation	Raising the Age of Criminal Responsibility Bill 2021	✓
Tarneit Senior College	Lowering the Age of Mental Health Confidentiality Bill 2021	✓
the Y Ballarat	Increasing the Efficiency of Public Bus Systems in Ballarat Bill 2021	✓
Wellington Shire Council	Increased Support for Youth Homelessness Bill 2021	✓
Westbourne Grammar School	Compulsory LGBTQIA+ Education for Primary School Students Bill 2021	✓
Whittlesea City Council	Improved Accessibility in Public Transport Bill 2021	✓
Melbourne High School	Privately Funded Aged Care Bill 2021	
Overnewton Anglican Community College	Controlled Areas for Recreational Hooning Bill 2021	

## WHAT HAPPENS WITH THE BILLS?

Bills are debated by the Youth Parliamentarians and the issue is put to a vote, just like in Victorian Parliament. The Bills can pass on the voices (“aye” and “no”) or a division can be called if the Chamber Leaders feel the vote is close. This year the Minister for Youth, the Honourable Ros Spence MP, received the Bills that were passed and presented them to relevant Ministers for their consideration.

Over the years, more than 30 pieces of Victorian legislation have found their origins in the Youth Parliament program. The ideas and concepts brought to the Victorian Youth Parliament display the remarkable forward thought and passion of young people in Victoria.