



ANNUAL REPORT

2019

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Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee members 2019



Lachlan Ansell



Hazel Chin



Shene Chiou



Jocelyn Chong



Json Doan



James Field



Grant Thomson-
Henderson



Roan Nair



Yash Sinha



Ananya Sundar



Alan Wang



Alan Wu



Jacqueline Piper & Zoey Deane - Whitehorse Youth Services

Background of WYRC - Jocelyn Chong

The Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee (WYRC) is a group of young individuals (aged between 12 and 25) working together to advocate on specific youth issues and become a strong voice for young people in the wider community. This one year program is a valuable platform for us to improve on our skill base and participate in worthwhile and relevant training initiatives. We attend fortnightly meetings hosted at Youth Connexions in Box Hill and here we share our ideas and thoughts about particular youth issues and work on upcoming youth events.

Once in a while, we have the benefit of having one of our Councillors attend our meetings where we are able to directly address our concerns about certain youth issues but, also learn from their expertise and experience. Our facilitators who help us along the way are Jacqueline Piper and Zoey Deane. Both of which have years of experience working with young people in an environment like this.

The application and recruitment process is fairly straight forward; upon submitting an expression of interest and applying via Council's 'Better Impact' system we are then contacted to attend an interview. If appropriate, our applications are finalised and become official members of the WYRC.

This year, we focused on six issues in particular that have guided our discussions:

- Family violence
- Safety
- Mental health
- Employment
- Drug and alcohol
- Body image

Our Aims:

- To discuss and address particular youth subject matters based young peoples and the communities interests and concerns.
- To participate in relevant training and skill development.
- To build knowledge on relevant youth services available.
- To consult and advocate for young people and provide relevant information.

WYRC Induction including meeting the Mayor - Ananya Sundar

The Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee for 2019 was formed in January following recruitment including a series of interviews conducted by Jacqueline Piper (Youth Participation Officer) and Zoey Deane (School Focused Youth Service Coordinator). A Committee of twelve youth members was formed.



Our first meeting!!

Our first meeting was at Youth Connexions where we all met each other for the first time. We got to know each other, formed our group agreement and started to plan out our year together. We also received induction manuals which contained previous annual reports, schedules for the meetings and chairing/action taking roles for the year, flyers for previous youth forums, contact numbers for organisations within the Council and information about all aspects of the WYRC. This manual proved to be useful because it served as a reference point throughout the year and helped us execute our forum and other events with a lot of guidance from previous years.

As part of our second meeting we had the opportunity to meet Mayor Bill Bennett who kindly dedicated time to meet with us and discuss the youth issues we believed were prevalent within the community. We had the opportunity to share our views with the Mayor who was extremely responsive to our opinions and assured us that he would take our

discussion into consideration. This meeting also allowed us to learn about each other's passions on youth issues as it was one of the early meetings we had had.

The Mayor Bill Bennett also gave us a tour of the Council chambers where we saw different meeting rooms, main room where the Council gathered, the reception area and foyer. We were also given the opportunity to sit at the Mayor and Councillors' seats and given an understanding as to how they may have conducted their meetings. During this time, we also had the opportunity to introduce ourselves to the Mayor and explain our roles in the Committee and the 2019 Committee's goals.



'SHINING A LIGHT' WYRC Youth Forum - Roan Nair and Alan Wu

Box Hill Town Hall Forum 13 – 17 Years

On 19 August 2019, the Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee (WYRC) held its fifth annual Whitehorse Youth Forum at Box Hill Town Hall. 2019's theme was 'Shining a Light', with the intention that the forum promotes awareness of stigmatised youth issues in a friendly and supportive environment. 100 students attended from four local high schools and the VCAL program at Box Hill Institute. In contrast to previous years, 2019's forum had a broader focus, covering six issues: mental health, healthy lifestyles, healthy relationships, safety, career and employment and body image.

Planning

This event demanded active contributions from each member to discuss, organise and assemble the details and logistics of the forum. The WYRC commenced its discussion in our fortnightly meetings in the first quarter of the year with a discussion and conclusion of six primary issues that the forum would address. These issues were derived from those that were brought up by the 2018 WYRC. Once those issues were decided, the committee then allocated small groups of 2-4 people to investigate and research potential organisations that would deliver informative and impactful workshops on their designated issue. To highlight the importance of body image and represent it further, the WYRC made a decision to allocate body image as the issue that would deliver a keynote address. After allocating roles and responsibilities, the WYRC began the next step of the process through an initial proposition of transforming the nature of the event. Informally titled, 'The Traveling Forum'; the Committee began discussing the ways in which this creative project would work from a logistical perspective; due to how the event would now require our organisations to be booked at multiple venues and times instead of the one venue and one time of previous forums. As the WYRC Committee began contacting organisations, problems and difficulties arose resulting from how uncertain the details were. The travelling forum demanded strict schedules from schools which the schools could not provide in time. With these obstacles serving as a hindrance to the progression of our event, the WYRC had to reconsider their tactics. The issue was resolved with a unanimous decision to run the forum as a one-day event where schools and other organisations would come to a venue.

After we decided to run the forum as a one-day only event, the Committee began investigating a venue and after analysing some options and assessing their viability on how it would fit into our budget, the WYRC decided to run the forum at Box Hill Town Hall. With the venue and the date locked in, the Committee reinitiated their own private research and outsourcing of organisations that would run workshops and address their respective youth issue. We spent the next period of time organising workshops with organisations and we eventually sorted out a final list of participating organisations. The next logistical process was organising the catering that was supplied by a local business who made sandwiches both with meat and vegetables. After the major logistics were organised, the next step was coming up with ideas for promotion. One of the committee members, Roan Nair had contacted a student designer to draft promotion posters for the event. In the promotion time, Roan Nair and the WYRC worked together with the student designer, Mary Gavriilidou to create the promotional flyer that would be sent to schools to promote and for them to register and attend the event. In this process, Mary emailed



design drafts of the colour scheme in various patterns and colours. In the end, the WYRC decided on a brightly coloured, modernist flyer that they felt would be visually engaging. Once these posters were sent out to school and registration numbers were being organised, the WYRC held meetings to discuss the processes and responsibilities needed for the event. Prior to the event, the Committee did a site visit to inspect the venue. This site visit allowed us to set up the tables that had Council resources on it, and choose the rooms where the workshops would be held. Once everything was put in place, the WYRC felt confident that the event would be a success.

The Event:

The Committee members arrived at 7am, to start setting up for the day. At 8.30am, schools started arriving for registrations. Each student received a small showbag with youth services information, small giveaways and a forum brochure. The event officially began at 9 am with an opening speech by Mayor Cr Bill Bennett, which was followed by the keynote address for one of the issues, body image, delivered by the Butterfly Foundation.

Next, forum attendees were given the opportunity to participate in three chosen workshop sessions for the day covering three of the remaining five issues. Workshop preferences for the three sessions were selected during registrations on a first-come first-served basis. Although some workshop sessions had fewer people than expected, numbers were mostly equal in all workshops.

The five workshops were:
Healthy Relationships, by Relationships Victoria
Drugs and Alcohol, by Youth Support and Advocacy Service
Community Safety, by Victoria Police
Career and Employment, by Box Hill Institute
Mental Health, by Headspace



Each workshop consisted of a short presentation by the speakers, activity sessions where students completed activities in discussion groups, and some time for students to ask the speakers questions about their issue and their organisation. Each session was aimed to be practical yet interesting for students. For example, the police who presented the community safety workshop humorously shared some of their most memorable experiences on the job.

During the lunch break, students and teachers were provided homemade sandwiches by a local caterer in an effort to promote healthy eating. While lunch was being provided in the downstairs foyer, students were also able to visit stalls set up by youth and community organisations to learn about the services and opportunities available for young people in Whitehorse.

Finally, at the end of the event, students and teachers also took part in an informal feedback session about the event as a whole and each workshop. This part of the forum involved participants responding to several survey questions about the forum by placing stickers on a

bullseye scale. The centre of the bullseye represented 'excellent', while the rim of the bullseye represented 'needs improvement'.



Reflection:

A challenge that has been faced over the past few years running the event is the limited number of schools attending the event. This year we had five schools attending, which was more than previous years but, still far short of the fourteen secondary schools in Whitehorse. In future, the forum can be promoted earlier in the year to give schools enough flexibility to add the Forum to their calendars. A 'travelling forum' may also be considered, where multiple forums are delivered as school incursions to eliminate the hassle experienced by teachers when approving and rolling out school excursions.



Another challenge experienced by the Committee was working within the Youth Forum budget. For the past two years, the Committee has identified the need to hold both a younger youth (13-17 years) and an older youth (18-25 years) forum in order to target different groups of youth and their differing needs. Because the \$7500 budget has been spent on two events instead of one, smaller rooms were booked and fewer students could attend each event. Furthermore, the Committee is also restricted in choosing forum presenters, as nearly 75% of the budget is allocated to venue and catering costs.

Overall, the 2019 Forum was a valuable experience for both attendees and Committee members. Through the fun and interactive presentations, attendees were encouraged to discuss and address difficult youth and issues with their peers. Committee members also developed event management, teamwork and community engagement skills. The positive feedback about the presenters and workshops demonstrates the merit of the split forum structure with multiple small workshop groups. WYRC would like to thank the following organisations and individuals for their invaluable support and contribution to the 2019 Whitehorse Youth Forums: Cr Bill Bennett and Whitehorse City Council, Headspace, Butterfly Foundation, Relationships Victoria, Tyson McNamara and Box Hill Institute, Youth Support and Advocacy Service, Victoria Police, Eastern Access Community Health, Whitehorse Manningham Libraries, TMG College, and the Box Hill Town Hall staff.



Box Hill TAFE Workshop - Jocelyn Chong and Alan Wang

On 15th of October, WYRC held a workshop for TAFE students at Box Hill Institute. This workshop was aimed at young people aged 18 - 25 that our younger youth forum did not cover. The workshop focused on mental health and was presented by Headspace in a similar format to the Youth Forum workshops. Originally, more workshops were planned, covering the other focus issues in the secondary student forum. However, the original date had to be changed due to an unexpected change in the TAFE schedule and presenters were not able to attend on the new date.

Overall, the workshop ran smoothly and was fairly simple to organise as classrooms were booked and supervised by Tyson McNamara, the Youth Programs Coordinator at Box Hill Institute. We received positive feedback from many students. It was noticed that students were less likely to contribute and pay attention to the presenters, possibly because the workshop was held during lunchtime, just before Subway catering was provided.

In future, WYRC would like to see a full day event with more presenters and students. Although a full day event would require more planning and funds, it would be worth the effort as presenters would be more willing to commit their time to a full day event as opposed to a short one hour or half day session. However, the full day event would need to be promoted well and fit within the schedules of TAFE students so that students are willing to attend.



Spring Festival - *Ananya Sundar and Hazel Chin*

On the 20th of October, the Spring Festival, a renowned Council initiative was held in the Nunawading Civic Centre. The Spring Festival, held by Council every year is an event that allows community organisations and groups to build and foster a relationship with the community. The 2019 Whitehorse Spring Festival, similar to previous years, had many food trucks and stalls by different groups, stage performances and carnival rides. This year, the Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee worked alongside the FreeZA Committee and Youth Services to present a youth area. At the festival, the youth area also featured a youth stage that allowed young musicians in the Whitehorse region to showcase their talent.

Other activities organised by the WYRC and FReeZA included a youth art market, juice bike activity and a 3D drawing activity. All activities attracted a lot of attention and provided opportunities to connect with the local community. The youth art market provided a rare opportunity for young artists to promote their work to the community in a safe and supported space. Additionally, the juice bikes had a two-dollar donation which ultimately went back into the budget due to the high expenditure of the activities provided for the Spring Festival. The bikes were used to promote a healthy lifestyle, a topic that was outlined in the Municipal Youth Plan. The juice bikes activity involved a bike connected to a blender with fruit and juices in it, which the community members then cycled on to generate energy to power the blender and make a smoothie.



The 3D printing activity, linking in with the STEM learning theme of Spring Festival, was interlinked to education and allowed people to use their creativity to model 3D versions of items that they wanted. The youth area also had a youth information stall for the community to understand what was being offered by the Council for youth in the area, and also advertised FreeZA's events and the Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee. Additionally, a few of us conducted surveys within and the surrounding region of the youth area about attitudes towards healthy relationships and safety in the community, focus areas for the Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee this year. This allowed us to better understand the community's opinions on these issues faced by youth in the community.

IDAHOBBIT Day - James Field

IDAHOBBIT DAY is the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia that occurs on the 17th of May every year. The WYRC took part in supporting a day that was filled with joy, activities, and active support of the LGBTIQ+ community. On the day we had a multitude of different activities occurring such as circus activities, DJ Sierra, a mural being painted by a professional concrete artist, free cotton candy and popcorn as well as a variety of different local youth services advertising what they do as a part of the free stalls that we had set up to further support the community.

The day overall was a great success with thousands of people walking through the area and interacting with a lot of our stalls. We believe that it was a day that garnered a lot of growth in awareness of the LGBTIQ+ community as well as the need for active support from the wider community in regards to inclusion and diversity. On top of all the support we raised we also took it as an opportunity to survey the community in regards to their knowledge of the LGBTIQ+ community to determine what needs to be focused on building into the future.



Training with Ash King: Marketing - Json Doan

The first two training sessions of the year were held during our regular meeting times at Youth Connexions. These were conducted by Ash King (Director at Rainhound Records).

In the first session, Ash ran us through marketing and advertising. With his background as a member of an active band which heavily uses social media to advertise its performances, Ash was able to provide some unique insights into what really goes into running a marketing campaign.

Through analysis of the successful marketing campaigns conducted by some of the world's most iconic brands, Ash demonstrated to us what makes up effective advertising. Counter-intuitively, good ads do focus not on the products' features and specifications, and often carry very little direct information. Instead, powerhouse brands such as Apple and Nike build their image through campaigns focussing on brand association, usually employing the aid of public figures.

Following that we were treated to a unique insight to the analytical side of social media. Using Facebook's statistics and tracking, Ash showed us how to evaluate the performance of past campaigns and posts in order to maximise the exposure of future posts. I found this to be particularly interesting as this was something I had never previously encountered.

Ash's training session gave us a great insight into the real operations of a social media advertising campaign, and was full of useful tips and pointers we could put to future use.

Training with Ash King: Event Management - Yash Sinha

The second training module our Committee attended was an event management training session that was also run by Ash King. The session took place at Youth ConneXions. The program aimed to introduce fundamental aspects of how an event should be planned. This was done so that our members were better prepared for future events. More specifically the session covered topics such as event concepts, budget, venue, staff rosters, risk assessment, activities and more. We concluded that it was important for the team to understand and to know how an event is made successful. In our session, we were given activities to complete, one of which was to arrange parts of what the processes of an event would look like from the start to the end. This was achieved by us interacting with each other and deciding what 'process' was going to go where in ascending order. This training was very helpful for us incorporating ideas into our planned events together for 2019. Future committees may value this training if it was held early during the year.



SYN Radio Station Training - Json Doan

On August 5th we had the opportunity to attend the SYN radio station at RMIT for a training session in radio broadcasting.

Our trainer talked us through some of the basics of broadcasting, before giving us the chance to record a short clip on any topic of our choice. We were given some time to discuss our ideas and flesh out a rough plan for the conversation to follow, before we were brought to the recording room. As a functioning radio station, SYN gave us the opportunity to see and operate professional equipment, such as the microphones and soundboard. It was fantastic to experience such an exclusive environment, though speaking into the microphones was initially quite intimidating!

Overall, it was great fun visiting the station, and getting the opportunity to record our own short clips was very unique and not something we would otherwise get to experience.

This experience provided us with insight as to how to harness the power of radio in regard to promoting and marketing our initiatives.



Eastern Region Youth Reference Group Dinner - Grant Henderson and Alan Wang

On Friday 5th July 2019, the WYRC were invited to take part in the inaugural Eastern Region Young Person's Reference Group Dinner. Hosted by the Monash Youth Reference Group, the event took place at the Monash Civic Centre in Glen Waverley. The event saw the gathering of several Young Person's Reference Groups from the eastern suburbs of Melbourne: in addition to the WYRC and the MYPRG, the Maroondah Youth Wellbeing Advocates and the Knox Youth Advisory Committee were also present.

The evening was run through a series of break-out groups, which involved discussion on 4 different areas:

- Issues facing young people.
- Successful projects that the respective Youth Committees present have worked on.
- Strengths and challenges faced by each committee.
- The future direction of each committee.

During the event, members of the four respective youth committees in attendance were given the opportunity to exchange ideas and initiatives, based on their experiences serving on their respective committees. The event provided the WYRC with an excellent and valuable opportunity to learn about new ideas and initiatives which could hopefully be implemented by future WYRC groups. For example, the Monash Youth Reference Group's close and productive working relationship with the Monash City Council is one which the Whitehorse City Council should aim to replicate. The 2019 WYRC is of the unanimous view that the Eastern Region Young Person's Reference Group Dinner was a very valuable and meaningful event, one that should continue to be held in future years to come. The 2019 WYRC believes that such an event should be held multiple times over the year. WYRC 2020 will continue nurturing this initiative into the future.



Consultation with Butterfly Foundation - Yash Sinha

On the 28th of November, a consultation was held at Youth ConneXions with Hannah Jarman from the Butterfly Foundation. This was solely based on what each of the members of the committee had to say about the questions that were being presented to us by Hannah. The questions were mostly based on body image regarding the young people as that's what the organisation is known to associate with. Everyone had a chance to share their opinions about the topic at hand. The responses were recorded as a way of recalling accurate information from our discussion. For some questions, we were required to come up with scenarios that would best fit the circumstance while other question only required a simple answer.

The conclusion of the discussion was that everyone had such different yet similar perspectives on different questions.

Overall the session was great with everyone being actively involved in answering questions and constantly giving opinions on different matters. The thoughts provided by the WYRC were greatly appreciated by The Butterfly Foundation and they will be feeding these into future planning for their work with young people.



Whitehorse Community Walk - Shene Chiou

Renee Andresson from the Community Development Department came to one of our meetings to consult with us about a community walk event that was being planned. Renee described why and how the idea of a community walk came about and wanted to hear if we had any ideas we'd like to contribute. We were all very excited to have the opportunity to contribute to an event for our community. This event in particular being so important focusing on the issues of positive mental health, suicide prevention and community awareness.

When 8th of September came, three of our committee members (Grant, James and Shene) accompanied by Jacqueline Piper met at Blackburn Lake early morning. Volunteers were happy to see us and asked for our assistance with directing people to the appropriate location throughout the day. We had the opportunity to meet some important people, including Cr Ben Stennett! We were able to have a nice chat and a group photo with him.

At the event, there were not only seniors, families, teenagers and children but also many dogs! We were bathed in a lovely atmosphere that resembled a relaxed Sunday market; people introduced themselves and struck up a conversation with someone new. I was happy to meet an old man who had lost a friend when he was younger, it was interesting to hear his experience however, I was not able to offer anything but my ears.

Lunch was enjoyable, we had a local sporting group help handing out free sausage sizzle, one boy even kindly offered me two snags at once.

To conclude, through contributing and participating in a community event, I felt valued, included and experienced a sense of community that I appreciated. It was also encouraging for us to hear back from Renee "I got so many comments on how great the level of youth participation was so thank you!"



Training with Tyson: Advocacy, Leadership, Consultation, Public Speaking - Roan Nair

The WYRC attended a training session dedicated to successful leadership and our other WYRC focus areas hosted by Tyson McNamara (Youth Program Coordinator, Box Hill Institute). This session entailed a core focus on the implementation of passion in an individual's leadership endeavours. Tyson instructed the WYRC about different types of leadership in a managerial role. In this discussion, Tyson explained the various types of leadership that he had experienced. This included 'micro-managers' who he described specifically as individuals who insistently harp on other people to complete deadlines. Tyson contrasted this with his own description of a certain type of manager who encouraged others to complete their own tasks in their own timeframe with positive reinforcement. Following this discussion, Tyson educated the WYRC on the ways in which an individual can transition into becoming an effective leader. He outlined to the WYRC that one should research and identify who they are as a worker before utilising the experience they have gained from their position in generating success from understanding. In addition to this, Tyson explained to the WYRC on how to deal with a team member who isn't pulling their weight in their position by highlighting the importance of solution-based encounters and confrontations and negotiating the issue at hand. Tyson also added that confrontation needs to be honest and non-judgemental and the instigator of the confrontation should aim to lend support to the other team member in doing their job to maintain peace and create a positive outcome.



Another aspect of team leadership that Tyson explained to the WYRC involved event management. This entailed his outline on how a good leader provided clear guidelines and goals on where team members are needed and added that as much as initiative is valued, there are some cases where too many individuals in one area can disrupt efficiency. Tyson told the WYRC about the importance of clear position descriptions and how in a situation where an individual is expressing interest in a position where they're not necessarily needed; a leader should affirm their initiative and validate them before giving them clear instructions on what they are needing to do. Furthermore, Tyson illustrated that it is imperative that leaders provide clear goals and communicate with reason and purpose in order to establish a positive and functioning environment for events. Other advice Tyson gave to the WYRC regarded the semantics surrounding community consultation. This advice addressed the structure of certain types of questions that he categorised into Green, Orange and Red questions. Green questions were questions that evoke an almost instant response like what is someone's favourite pizza. Orange questions were simple but demanded a deeper level of thought and involves questions that are a bit more personal but still easy to answer. Red questions were regarded as intensely intimate and personal questions that demanded a lot of reflection and what Tyson recommended was prefacing these type of questions with the purpose and possibly opening up an option for participants to email their responses.

In summary, Tyson's leadership training touched base on several aspects of being a good leader and the WYRC is grateful for his time spent on educating the committee on various areas that definitely helped the committee understand the ways in which good and effective leaders conduct themselves.

Ben Stennett: History of Whitehorse - Ananya Sundar

This year, the Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee had the opportunity to spend some time with Councillor Ben Stennett. One of these occasions allowed us to have the opportunity to have a history lesson of the Whitehorse area from Councillor Stennett in one of our meetings. We as a Committee were glad for this opportunity as it allowed us to gain an insight into the council and area that we were volunteering in.

Councillor Stennett's history session commenced with a presentation detailed with photos and information about the area. We learnt about how the Whitehorse Council was named after a famous pub in the area which was named after a featured white horse statue. In an incident, the pub burned down however, the statue of the white horse survived the fire and became the icon of our Council today. The statue is now preserved and can still be seen in the Box Hill Town Hall chambers.

We also learnt about how Box Hill used to be a really wealthy district and was more in connection with Camberwell however, due to the Mayor's interests, it was combined to become Whitehorse with the Nunawading region instead. The merging of districts and the formation of Councils was also made to allow for a more coherent and community-based approach around Victoria, and it was also further strengthened by the building of railroads and the railway stations that we now see in the Belgrave/ Lilydale lines.



The presentation was really important as it also included famous people who lived in the area including one entrepreneur who had a business involving fruits and beekeeping. This also drew our attention to remember to work towards striving towards an eco-friendly and sustainable environment, which our Council has already taken great efforts towards, particularly through their GreenMoney initiative.

Councillor Stennett's history session concluded with the end of the meeting. We gained a lot from his presentation, as allowing us to understand the history behind the council allowed us to understand how it had subsequently developed and allowed us to understand how to better address the issues in the community.

Youth of the Month Nominations - Hazel Chin

The Young Person of the Month Award celebrates a young person under the age of 27 who has made a great contribution to the Whitehorse Community. It acknowledges the efforts and achievements of those who have excelled in areas such as the arts, culture, sport, music, learning, drama or community participation.

Young people can be nominated by adults, peers, schools, or others in the community who believe that they have demonstrated outstanding abilities in the aforementioned areas. Recipients of the award are featured in the monthly Whitehorse News publication, and receive a JB Hi-Fi voucher as recognition of their achievements. Of the monthly nominees, a recipient of the Young Person of the Month Award is selected to be recognised as the Whitehorse Young Citizen of the Year, which is an award announced at the annual Whitehorse Australia Day Civic Awards Presentation.

One of the key responsibilities for the Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee is to select the recipient of the award each month. It is a significant responsibility for the WYRC as there are many talented young people in the municipality and we would like to acknowledge the talents of all applicants. Each month, the entire committee reads over and considers all applications before a democratic vote to decide the monthly recipient.

There has been some incredible YOM nominations in 2019 however, the Committee still believe that the award is being underutilised, and even more young people in the municipality should be nominated each month. The WYRC 2020 will focus on increased and effective promotion of this amazing opportunity for young people.

Additionally, into 2020 and beyond, the Committee hopes to see an increase in the use of social media tools such as Instagram and Facebook for marketing purposes. We believe this is one of the most effective and direct methods of communication with young people, and this can help increase the number of nominations by peers, rather than adults, as many of the nominations have been this year. The WYRC 2020 Social Media Coordinators representing the committee will be putting a solid effort into this moving forward.



Overall, the Youth of the Month Award serves to recognise the many contributions of young people in the Whitehorse municipality with a formal award and it has been very rewarding for the WYRC to receive nominations for some incredibly talented young people.

Whitehorse City Council publishes the Whitehorse News each month online and delivers it to over 60 000 households in Whitehorse as well as public facilities such as libraries. The newspaper contains local news, community information and short Councillor reports. There are also a page in the newspaper dedicated to youth related information, including the Young Person of the Month, Youth Connexions activities and Creative Youth Community competitions.

In April, we were fortunate to have Hannah Rowlands from Council's Communications Department coming to a meeting to discuss some journalism tips. She shared with us the importance of keeping the message simple and supporting opinions with strong evidence.

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Halogen Young Leaders Day - Alan Wang

On 11th November 2019, myself and two other members of the Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee were fortunate to be given the opportunity to attend the Halogen Young Leaders Day, an annual event which aims to inspire & influence young people to lead themselves and others well. During the event, we were given the opportunity to hear from a variety of guest speakers who shared their stories and life experiences, providing us with unique and distinctive perspectives on leadership from a variety of different fields and viewpoints. The day was split up into 3 sessions, separated by a morning tea break and a lunch break.

The first speaker was Bianca Chatfield, a former professional netballer, who played for the Melbourne Vixens and represented Australia internationally. Her story was about accepting oneself and not giving up. Bianca was really tall during her childhood, which made her stand out from her peers; she was initially insecure about this, and would attempt to disguise her height, such as through slouching in photographs. Through netball, a sport in which her height gave her an advantage, she began to embrace her height and she gained greater self-confidence. She talked about her disappointment in missing out on selection for Australia's squad for the 2010 Commonwealth Games, and how this setback drove her to become better; she subsequently captained, and won the ANZ Championship with the Melbourne Vixens, as well as winning a gold medal at the 2014 Commonwealth Games. She also discussed her participation on The Block, and how her experiences on her program both pushed her and helped her to develop and utilise mechanisms for coping with stress and pressure. Bianca's story illustrated the importance of embracing your strengths and characteristics, of bouncing back from setbacks, of being able to cope with pressure.



The second speaker was John Coutis. John was born undersized with severe physical disabilities; doctors gave him little chance of survival, believing that he would not live long after his birth. However, John defied all odds and expectations; he had turned 50 prior to his presentation at Halogen. This would set the scene for the remainder of his presentation. In his presentation, John talked about the difficulties and barriers he frequently encountered throughout his life as a result of his disabilities (e.g. he was bullied and hazed throughout his schooling), as well as the invaluable support that his family provided him throughout his life (e.g. he was taught by his father that he had to adapt to life, that life wouldn't adapt to him). Despite the serious, and at times emotional, nature of his presentation, his presentation was frequently laced with humour and wit, enabling attendees to remain engaged and connected with his story. John's story was touching and inspirational and served to give us all a greater understanding of perseverance, of resilience, of humility, as well as giving us a greater appreciation of our lives and our upbringings.

The third speaker was Erin Molan, a journalist and television presenter, who currently serves as a weekend news sports presenter and as the host of '20 to One'. In her presentation, she talked about her upbringing, as well as her early interest in journalism, which was sparked during her years living in Indonesia, when Suharto was the president. Erin's presentation highlighted the importance of



persistence and resilience. Erin's refusal to give up, her persistent sending of emails, led to her landing her first media role. In 2014, Erin became the first female host of the NRL Footy Show. As a woman who had never played rugby league professionally, she was subjected to relentless online trolling and verbal abuse, some of which were of a graphic or confronting nature. She spoke about how she was initially affected by the trolling and abuse, and how she eventually learned to handle them. She also spoke about the importance of picking your battles: at one time, after being subjected to attacks and threats towards herself and her new-born child, she took some trolls to court and won, thereby helping to send a message that online abuse is not tolerable and can result in legal consequences. She also talked about how she aimed to utilise her profile in order to raise attention to causes, an example of which was her support for Bowel Cancer Australia, which was inspired by her sister's diagnosis with the disease. Key messages she communicated in her presentation were the importance of persistence and resilience, as well as picking your battles and making the most of your profile to promote positive change.



The final presenter of the day was Sean Purcell. His story, like the others before him, was one of resilience and inspiration. Sean suffered a cardiac arrest whilst he was on a morning run along the beach, which left him medically dead temporarily. Thanks to the assistance of strangers, who performed CPR and attempted to resuscitate him, he was airlifted to hospital and was in a coma for several days. Doctors predicted that even if he woke up from his coma, he would have severe permanent brain damage. However, against all odds, he survived and made a full recovery; the predicted brain damage did not eventuate. The theme of his presentation was 'second chance at life'. Ever since that event, Sean was given a second chance, and he has been making the most of it, engaging in philanthropic activities and giving talks in a bid to raise awareness of making the most of life, of making the most of your chances. Sean's story illustrated the value of one's life and the necessity of making the most of it.

Being able to participate in the Halogen Young Leaders Day was one of the highlights of my time with the WYRC. Overall, the four speakers were engaging and inspirational, and were invaluable in giving us different perspectives in leadership and life. As a result of the Young Leaders Day, we have been given a raw, first-hand insight into overcoming challenges, in believing in ourselves, in remaining resolute. The lessons we have learned from this event will benefit us immensely for years to come.

Rubi the Therapy Dog – Lachie Ansell

In May 2018 the WYRC recommend the presence of a Therapy dog at Council's Youth ConneXions youth centre as a strategy to benefit young people attending the centre. Animal assisted therapy is a unique addition to Youth Services and will positively affect health and wellbeing of young people that attend Youth Connexions in the following ways:

Physical Health

- lowers blood pressure
- improves cardiovascular health
- releases endorphins (oxytocin) that have a calming effect
- diminishes overall physical pain
- the act of petting produces an automatic relaxation response, reducing the amount of medication some folks need

For Mental Health

- lifts spirits and lessens depression
- decreases feelings of isolation and alienation
- encourages communication
- provides comfort
- increases socialization and sense of community
- reduces boredom
- decreases anxiety
- helps children overcome speech and emotional disorders
- creates motivation for the client to recover faster
- reduces loneliness

The WYRC sourced a generous donation from the Rotary Club of Box Hill Central of \$700 and in September of 2019 'Rubi' started attending Youth Connexions on the first Monday of the month from 3 – 4.30pm.

Moving forward based on the positive feedback received by young people, Youth Services plans to continue having 'Rubi' at the centre subject to funding.



Conclusion – Shene Chiou

I really enjoyed learning with a group of youths who live in the same municipality as me, but are all so very different and unique. I have learnt much from them. There were many things we had learn as we go, we were constantly challenged and grew together as a group. Our differences proved valuable in planning events, as we were able to consider the same difficulties from different angles which made the events well considered.

Great thanks to Jacqueline and Zoey, for always offering to help out, always making us feel welcome and comfortable, always pushing us to have our voices heard. Especially Jacqueline for all the times she pushed herself to send emails or make calls to represent us the best way she could. Zoey for all her advice that she was able to provide clear structure and steps for us to take and follow through with during event planning times.

Also thank you so much to Whitehorse City Council for making this incredible opportunity possible for all of us.

I would like to thank everyone on the Committee for their patience, kindness and bravery for volunteering a year of their youth to make the City of Whitehorse a better place.

All the best to all of us and may our experiences from this year help us on our own journeys and benefit those around us.