2016 Annual Report

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Report formatted by Khoi Cao with the assistance of Rajat Harwad

Background

The Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee (WYRC) was established in 2002 to provide a link between young people and the City of Whitehorse Council. The main aims of the committee include:

- To raise the positive profile of young people in the community;
- Advocate on behalf of the broader youth population by consulting with them and reporting back to Council on their aspirations and concerns;
- Create new opportunities for young people to be involved in their community

As a result of being involved in the WYRC, committee members gain:

- A greater understanding of local government
- The development of skills such as: project/event management, leadership, consultation, problem solving, goal setting and public speaking
- An increased connection to their community
- A greater understand of young people and the issues that affect them
- The opportunities to meet and work with other like-minded young people which strive to achieve shared goals.

Members of the committee are selected via a nomination process advertised through schools, youth services, clubs and local media in the City of Whitehorse. Due consideration is taken in selecting a spread of gender, age, cultural backgrounds and life experiences with a particular focus on attracting disadvantaged young people who would not normally receive the opportunity to participate in such an activity. Applicants complete the relevant documentation and then participate in an interview to ensure each applicant is aware of the expectations and responsibilities of being a committee member.

Introducing the 2016 WYRC

Dylan Gleeson

Jack Deng

Jonathan Er (Jon)

Khoi Cao

Tyra O'Niell

Jasmina Jong

Lily Cox

Rohit Harwad

Will Chen

Rahat Harwad

Tom Varns

Brendan Pumpa

Training and Induction

Rohit Harwad

Training

Over the past year, the WYRC received many forms of training which equipped us with the skills to become a successful, productive and cooperative committee.

The WYRC received training from The Workshop's Kate Wilde. This training focused on five main areas:

- Leadership
- Public Speaking
- Consultation
- Advocacy
- Program Management

Over the length of two sessions, we developed practical skills in these areas which helped us plan, organise and manage our meetings, projects and forums. During these training sessions, we thought about the different ideas of being a young leader and how we could perform our roles to the best of our ability. We grappled with concepts regarding how we could be excellent role models as well the manner in which we could identify the most prominent youth issues as well as identify ways to tackle these youth issues such as bullying, mental health, LGBTIQ.

In addition to this we experienced training in other fields such as completing a fire warden training which allowed us to be aware and ready of any actions necessary during a fire emergency. Apart from this, some of the team members took part in a barista course which was beneficial in gaining basic skills for the long term.

Induction

The 2016 WYRC was inducted formally at the time of our first meeting at the Whitehorse Centre. We were introduced to the work of the local Whitehorse council and the roles and responsibilities that the WYRC had to take on as we represented, consulted with as well as advocated on behalf of young people within our community. The members of our committee were given a tour around the precinct, where we saw the chambers, met with the Mayor as well as planned for the long year ahead of us. Our induction then shifted to a more relaxed tone where committee members got to know each other, build friendships and socially interact with each other over dinner. This was essential in bringing us closer to each other and built upon our skills to cooperate with one another.

Whitehorse Diversity Expo

Tyra O'Neill

In 2016 the WYRC redesigned the annual Youth Forum, calling it the Whitehorse Diversity Expo. The expo was an incredible experience for everyone in the committee and we all learnt so much about how to organise and coordinate expos such as this. We decided to focus on a few different issues affecting young people today which are highlighted the Whitehorse Youth Plan . These were:

- Mental Health
- Bullying
- 'Lesbian, Gay Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer' - LGBTIQ

Students from a number of Whitehorse schools and young people from services were invited to attend the expo so that we could raise awareness of, and address, these topics within the Whitehorse community.

Our aims of the forum were to:

- Provide youth with information about the issues of mental health, bullying and LGBTIQ
- Encourage young people to start a conversation with their peers about these issues and how they may be affecting them
- Break down the stigma associated with discussing topics regarding mental health, bullying and LGBTIQ
- Motivate young people to take action to combat any problems they may face associated with any of these topics

Planning for the forum began in February and throughout 2016, we were all given specific tasks to complete, such as planning catering, inviting speakers, booking the venue, speaking at the expo and many other responsibilities. The members of the committee showed amazing teamwork and communication skills throughout the year, so we were all able to finish the items on our to-do list well before the day of the Diversity Expo.

Time flew by very quickly and soon enough, it was Tuesday August 16th - the day of the Whitehorse Diversity Expo at the Box Hill Town Hall. We had a very impressive line up

Keynote Speakers:

- Samantha from Beyond Blue
- Sacha & Sonya: The Australian Teenage Expo

Workshop Facilitators:

- Mel Jeffery from 'The Workshop'
- 'Stand Out' Ringwood SC
- Project Rockit

The day started with Cr Bill Bennett welcoming attendees on behalf of the Whitehorse City Council, followed by an amazing didgeridoo performance by Jesse Gardiner as we acknowledged the Aboriginal land on which we stood. Then, our passionate first keynote speaker, Samantha Atkin (Beyond Blue) spoke about her own experiences growing up, mainly focused around mental health and how she dealt with some of the obstacles she had been faced with throughout her life. From there, everyone split into three groups and begun taking part in the workshops, with breaks for morning tea and lunch.

Cr Bill Bennett welcoming hundreds of students

Mel Jeffery's workshop, much like Samantha's speech, was centered around mental health and she aimed to get all the young people involved by letting them guess answers to quiz questions and allowing time for discussion.

Our workshop that focused on the LGBTIQ community was run by 'Stand Out' (Ringwood SC). This was a very interesting session that, based on the feedback we received, many people enjoyed and learned something from because the people from 'Stand Out' were actually young people - similar in age to those that had attended this expo and were also a part of the LGBTIQ community in some way. Therefore, the 'Stand Out' workshop was refreshing and relatable. In this workshop those at the expo were able to find out more about terms and concepts associated with LGBTIQ people and worked in small groups to talk about how they can advocate for these minority groups.

Stand out discussions

Stand Out Session

Finally, the third workshop covered the issue of Bullying and was run by Project Rockit. The people from Project Rockit were able to engage their entire audience and teach them about how to deal with bullying, while still conveying their humor and individual personalities. This workshop was another favorite of those that attended the Diversity Expo, as they felt that they had learnt about different coping mechanisms in case they were facing this issue in their lives, but also how to stop any bullies they may come across, and what makes everyone unique and special!

Two of our many expo workers

Project Rockit immediately captivating the audience

The expo ended with a talk from Sacha & Sonya from the Australian Teenage Expo. Not only did they share stories from their own personal lives that covered a range of issues, even some that were not touched on in our workshops, they also complemented their speech with a few performances from some talented young Australian singers, who sang popular songs that made kept the whole crowd engaged as they sang, danced and clapped along to the music! Sacha & Sonya were definitely a highlight for most of the young people that had come to the Expo as they were quite inspiring and motivated people to be themselves, but were also able to cater for their audience and capture their attention the entire time!

Throughout the day, there was also a range of stalls in the foyer of the Town Hall where various organisations had set up and brought along information about what they do as well as items that people could put in their show bags (which were handed out at the start of the day). Furthermore, there was also an area where the young people could play games during morning tea and lunch.

Students keenly waiting for the start of our Diversity Expo!

Yummy! There were pizzas provided for the expo

The 2016 Whitehorse Diversity Expo went exceptionally well and it was a really positive experience not only for the schools, young people and organisations but also for the WYRC. We had a great time coordinating and attending the expo because we gained a wealth of experience and knowledge not just from the planning and implementation process, but also from supervising and joining in on the workshops.

We're very excited to see the Diversity Expo grow and we hope that it will continue to educate and empower even more young people within the community in the future.

The WYRC team!

One of our amazing 4 MC's addressing the audience

Spring Festival

Brendan Pumpa

On Sunday October 16th, the WYRC, Youth Services and Freeza had combined to run the youth area of the annual City of Whitehorse Spring Festival. This was a great opportunity for the two committees and staff members to be able to meet and work together to connect and consult with the community. This year we had provided featured:

- Freeza Youth Stage for local artist and performers to showcase their talents
- Bike and Blend (Bike smoothie maker)
- Hammocks
- Bubble Machine
- Snow Cones
- Bubble Soccer
- Lots of Décor!!
- Henna Art Table

The Committee had raised $800 dollars which is an amazing effort. The WYRC and Freeza had then decided that this money had best been donated to charities in need of aid. The WYRC had chosen to donate their portion of the earnings to Melbourne City Mission which provides a range of services to change lives. The Freeza committee had chosen to donate their portion to Asylum Seekers Resource Center which provides assistance to Asylum Seekers.

Overall, the event was a great success due to the all of the WYRC members being committed and helping each other to ensure the event runs smoothly. We hope to improve this event with greater planning and continued support by the Whitehorse Council.

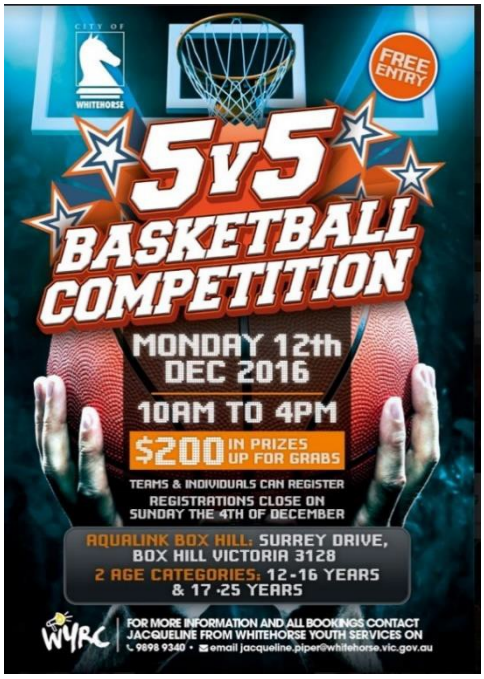
Freeza, WYRC and Youth Services

The Spring Fest poster

5V5 Basketball Competition

William Chen

Near the end of 2016, the WYRC organised a Basketball competition for young people in the Whitehorse region. The event was set to promote exercising and raising awareness for mental health issues as well as allow young people to get together, have fun and enjoy a game of basketball. The event was free of charge and open to anyone aged 12-25. The event was separated into two age groups account for the player's size and physical strength to avoid injury. Each member in the winning team was offered a $30 Rebel Sports gift card as well as the volunteer referees were offered a $50 voucher each. Initially the event was advertised on Facebook, through emails to different schools, and on the Whitehorse poster.



The event was held on 12th of December and planning had begun a month before the event. This involved delegating WYRC member's tasks such as:

- Designing the flyer for promotion
- Contacting Aqualink for booking the courts and organising basketballs
- Organising bibs
- Organising fruit and water
- Organising paper cups
- Advertising the event
- Registration on the day
- Organising Referees
- Keeping track of scores

Schedule:

The event started at 10.00am, but Registration took place at 9.30 am, after that the WYRC volunteers took turns to play in the game, scoring and taking photos of the event. Each game lasted 30 minutes each and was structured in a round robin format. The team with the most number of wins from each pool will then play each other in the final. There were breaks when the team is not playing as well as a lunch break at 1.00 pm. The event ended at 4.00 pm and the Volunteers helped pack up all the equipment.

Overall:

Although there were some challenges that the WYRC faced planning and running the day, overall it was a great experience. We hope to continue running this event in the future with a few adjustments to ensure it is ran smoothly and successfully.

IDAHOT Day

Dylan Gleeson

Since 2004, the international day against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) has been annually celebrated worldwide on the 17th of May in over 130 countries. IDAHOT represents an annual landmark to draw the attention of decision makers in the media and the community/public. Leaders and people of influence both local authorities and abroad to discrimination faced by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) communities and all those who don't conform to major sexual and gender norms.

This year the WYRC, along with Whitehorse Youth Services and representatives from other youth organisations, proudly celebrated IDAHOT day for the second time in the city of Whitehorse. This included flying a rainbow flag at the Nunawading Civic Center and Box Hill Town Hall in support, acknowledgement and solidarity with LGBTIQ individuals and communities who are both local and abroad. We also had ran a stall the whole day near Box Hill Centro to educate people about the LGBTIQ community and had garnered a large amount of support regarding the support of the community.

National Youth Week

Dylan Gleeson

On April 11-16th it was National Youth Week. This week is an annual week-long celebration of young people throughout Australia. It is a joint initiative which gives young people an opportunity to express your ideas and views, and act on issues that affect your lives. The WYRC had combined with the Freeza Committee to run multiple stalls on April 16th to celebrate young people. This included:

- A photobooth
- Free sausages and popcorn
- A Q&A blackboard to show youth opinion on important issues such as bullying
- A great opportunity for both committees to connect with young people and the community.

Halogen Young Leaders Conference

Rajat Harwad

On the 7th of November, many students like myself attended Halogen young leader's day in the Melbourne Exhibition Centre. I can still remember the hype that was surging through the crowd as we waited for the two amazing hosts Scott Tweedie and Gemma Knight to walk on the stage and get the presentation going. One by one different famous personalities came up and gave the audience their pathways and course that they took to become successful.

I distinctly remember a girl named Poppy Star who was a famous skateboarder who had won world recognized awards for skating and her skill. She is also running her own company where she creates her own unique art and sells it. I was sure that everyone found her presentation inspiring because there was a very small age difference.

Melissa Doyle was another fantastic speaker of the day. The journalist from channel 7 told us about her urge to show the world what was going on deep within it. She gave us an example of the time she went to Afghanistan to do a report and how she was terrified of the place.

Overall the Halogen young leader's day was a fabulous and innovative experience. It had allowed me to meet other amazing youth who had shared similar opinions with me in regards to youth leadership. It also allowed me to gain an insight into how so many famous personalities experiences of leadership. I for one, enjoyed it thoroughly.

Halogen Young Leaders Conference

Young Person of the Month Award

Jonathan Er

The Whitehorse City Council's Young Person of the Month Award celebrates and recognises the achievements of young people across various fields such as arts, culture sport, music learning, drama or community participation.

Adults and peers from schools, universities and community groups nominate these outstanding young people. Recipients of this award feature in the council's monthly newspaper the Whitehorse News and will receive a JB Hi-Fi gift voucher. Furthermore, the council select one of the award recipients to be the Whitehorse Young Citizen of the Year for 2017, which was announced at the Whitehorse Australia Day Civic Awards Presentation and Concert.

Reception

Initially, it was difficult to attain nominees for the award. This was despite advertising it through placing posters in local schools, community groups and social media. However, after a change in poster design and further promotion the number of nominations increased and we were privileged to present this award to several outstanding young individuals of Whitehorse.

Further Action

The WYRC is in the process of looking at streamlining the nomination process to make it more convenient to nominate and be nominated. One of the measures being discussed is the introduction of an online nomination form for the award. At the moment, all nominations are made through physical forms therefore the WYRC believes that the introduction of online forms might make the nomination process more convenient.

Overall

It was amazing to be able to recognize the hard work of so many youths who had so many talents. We hope that in the future there will be even more nominees and that our change in the advertising will be successful.

Our new Youth Person of the Month Award poster

YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE MONTH

Libby Kay and Callum Lowe have both been named Whitehorse's Young Person of the Month for November.

LIBBY

Libby, 17, has been nominated for excelling in the performing arts. Libby is a student at Koonung Secondary College in Mont Albert North where she is a lead singer in the Koonung Band and had the role of Julie in the school musical *The Wedding Singer*. This year she also performed in the Victorian State School Spectacular as a principle vocalist. Libby successfully completed VCE Drama while a year 10 student, achieving runner up Dux of the class.

As well as being a role model in the performing arts field, Libby was a member of CASSE (Creating a Safe and Secure Environment) in 2015 and was instrumental in developing an anti-bullying campaign at her school.

Libby's teachers describe her as a responsible, empathetic and trustworthy individual.

Libby says that after finishing school she would like to travel overseas to gain life experience to draw from when she begins to audition for university level performing arts courses.

One of our many Youth of the Months of 2016

Communication Consults: The Whitehorse Community Youth Services Awareness Project

Lily Cox

Our consultation with, Jen and Dan at the beginning of the year was a great way to begin our year and bond together as a team through the sharing of our ideas and desires for the future of youth representation and communication in the city of Whitehorse. We began to delve into the real issues we wanted to address as a team and the ways in which we could creatively and most effectively reach youth in Whitehorse.

We used different mediums to explore the ways in which we could most effectively communicate with the Whitehorse youth. Our biggest 'break-through' was the realisation that the routes youth commuted for schools closely overlapped with where they met up socially as school was often a central forum where the majority of their friends could easily travel to. This initiated the focus of communication to be on these routes such as public transport stops and around schools.

In the social media consults we also analysed web-pages and other media outlets to see what was most attractive and easy to navigate from a teen perspective. We decided that bright colours were attractive but also that less is more when it came to information on webpages and the most effective tool was to lead the user to a phone or email which they could explore to find more detailed and specific information of what they were seeking. We concluded that to start broad and then let the user be able to then narrow down a search was the best use of a webpage.

Overall, we learnt a lot through analysing our own social media interactions and what we found attractive and were then able to give this feedback to Jen and Dan so they could communicate with youth most effectively. This was an amazing opportunity to delve further into the physiology of social media in today's world and the impact this has on teens with the hope of transforming this influence to a positive experience for teens.

Consulting with Jen and Dan

Conclusion

Jasmina Jong

Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee has had a successful, adventurous journey in 2016. Many incredible events were created with devotion and compassion *for* the young people *by* the young people of the committee. We, as a committee, collectively represent a diversity of backgrounds and disabilities who endeavour to involve, support, advocate and promote issues that are affecting youth in City of Whitehorse.

Our success is owed to friendships formed within the team who are full of commitment and vigor, as well as our lovely facilitators, Jacqueline Piper and Kodie Webb, from Youth Services, for providing necessary guidance concerning event implementation. We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to many individuals and organisations who took part in our events.

As the year ends, these events have produced a better awareness of youth issues and served as a reminder on the additional support available for the young people if needed. Our involvement with the community as a committee enabled the growth and development of skillsets and capabilities of each member. Thus, we are also grateful to the training providers for their provision of expertise to help us deliver better quality events. WYRC will continue its exciting action-packed plans for 2017 with complete support for the young people. The Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee would like to thank Whitehorse City Council for their continued support. Lastly, we would like to wish the 2017 WYRC good luck!