



**WHITEHORSE YOUTH
REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE**

**2017
ANNUAL REPORT**

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BACKGROUND

Nikki Doan

The Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee (WYRC) was established by the Whitehorse Council as an initiative to engage young people in the municipality, and enable them to represent the youth perspective in council discussions and decisions.

1.1 Aims

The WYRC exists to develop a communication link between young people and council. Its primary aims include;

- Advocating on behalf of the broader youth population, by consulting with them and reporting back to Council any concerns or comments;
- Hosting and managing events for young people to be involved in;
- Creating new opportunities for young people to be involved in their community;
- Represent the youth of Whitehorse at events.

1.2 Benefits

The WYRC provides a unique opportunity for its members to develop valuable skills and assets, including;

- Leadership ability
- Project/event management experience
- Consultation and communication capabilities
- Public speaking
- Problem solving
- Increased involvement and connection with the community
- Greater understanding of local government
- An insight as to the issues that affect young people
- The opportunity to meet and work with other like-minded young people, in order to achieve shared goals

The WYRC meetings are held fortnightly at Youth ConneXions.

1.3 Recruitment

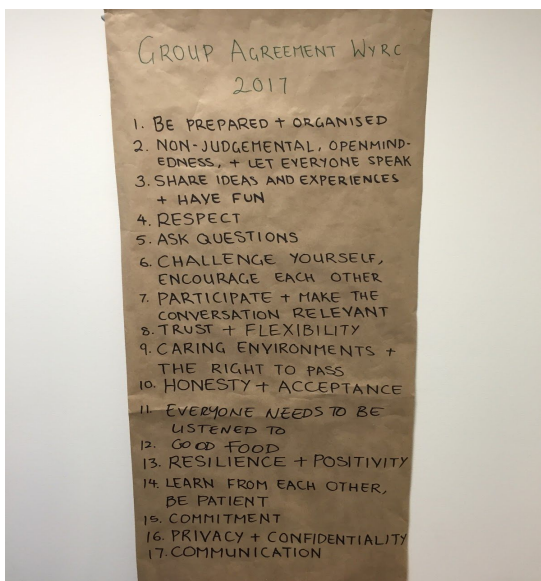
The committee is exclusively comprised of young people aged between 12-25, who have a relationship with the Whitehorse area through work, school or residence. The committee member position is advertised through schools, youth services, clubs and local media. The program coordinator then conducts an interview with the applicants, to discuss their goals for the committee, and to ensure they are aware of the expectations and responsibilities of being a committee member.

Committee members are appointed for a minimum tenure of 12 months, and are required to satisfy the National Police Check and Working With Children Check (if applicable).

The Whitehorse Youth Committee of 2017 was comprised of 12 young people, representing many different ethnicities, ages, backgrounds, and perspectives.



WYRC meetings are made more productive with the consumption of snacks and pizza!



The committee collectively created a group agreement of the values and attitudes we all agree to exemplify throughout the year.

INTRODUCING THE WYRC OF 2017



Back Row L-R; Charindya Janakantha, Kate Morrison, Olivia Zheng, Avishka Godakandage, Brendan Pumpa.

Front Row L-R; Jessica Xia, Charlotte Wang, Nikki Doan, Natalia Dembek Sanchez, Jasmine Szymakowski.

Front; Belle White.

Absent; Ashley Zhang.



TRAINING AND INDUCTION

Avishka Godakandage

2.1 Induction

The inaugural meeting of the WYRC 2017 was held on 8th March 2017 at the Civic Centre. Firstly, we were given a tour around the local council premises and Councillor Ben Stennett joined us on our tour. He emphasised on the importance of the Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee and educated us on the work carried out by the Whitehorse City Council. Afterwards all the members sat down in the meeting hall with our coordinator Jacqueline. Our induction was carried out smoothly as Jacqueline did a few ice breakers for the members to get to know each other and socialise. A draft of the year's activities was discussed, and much importance was given to the values and responsibilities that all WYRC members should carry out as we represent the youth within the Whitehorse community.

2.2 Leadership Training

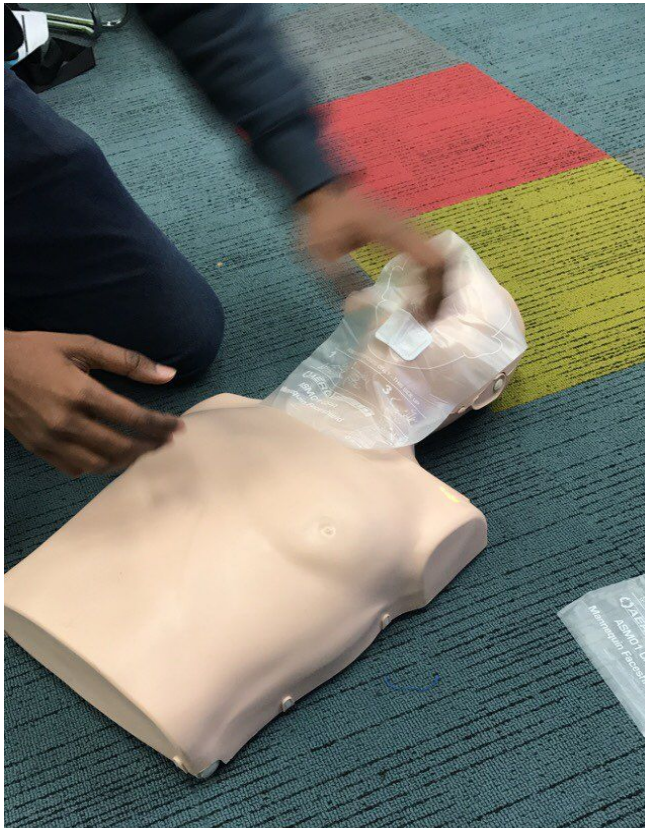
Several leadership sessions were held right after our induction, headed by Dan Donohue from 'Project Synthesis'. These valuable sessions helped us bond together as a team and helped us focus on important areas including leadership, consultation, advocacy and event management. "The bulls eye" exercise which is essentially an activity that prioritise the activities of the year was fun and exciting challenge we all enjoyed. Special thanks go out to Dan for organising such creative tasks to help us find the synergy within the committee.



2.3 First Aid Training

The first Aid training happened on the 27th of Nov 2017 amidst much enthusiasm from the team members. This is a vital skill/ knowledge that will be useful in emergency situations. Knowing what to do at the right time can be a difference between life and death! All the participants engaged actively with the first aid practitioner and many activities were done like practicing CPR, treating injuries and dressing bandages. These training would be quite helpful for the team members when they participate in youth conferences, youth activities and other outdoor events where a first aid situation can potentially occur. Following the completion of the program, all participants are now certified in Provide First Aid (Previously known as Level 2 Senior First Aid) (HLTAID003), as well as in Provide Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (HLTAID001).

The committee chose to voluntarily undertake this additional training as we believe it increases the value and service we can provide to the community. Possessing first aid knowledge will be invaluable for us as we often operate in a crowd or festival environment, where there is a higher possibility for injuries or accidents to occur. Additionally, the first aid knowledge can be utilised to benefit other facets of our lives, in environments such as our workplaces and schools.

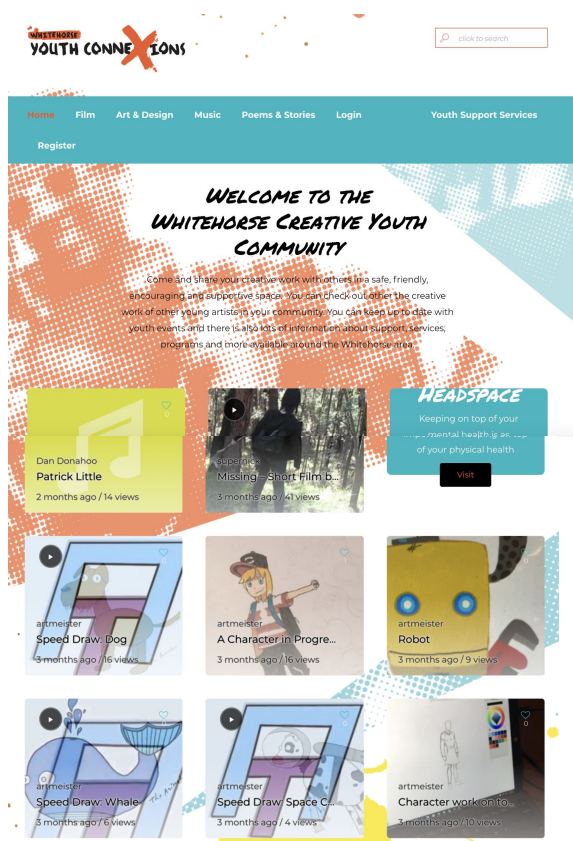


First Aid training at the WYRC headquarters!

CREATIVE YOUTH COMMUNITY

Nikki Doan

One of the foundational objectives of the Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee (WYRC) as a body is to represent the views and opinions of the youth in the municipality of Whitehorse. Through our participation in the consultations for the development of the Creative Youth Community (CYC), the WYRC were able to fulfil this responsibility.



The Creative Youth Community (CYC) is a new initiative developed by the Whitehorse Youth Services, and is a platform designed with the purpose of showcasing and connecting creative talent in the Whitehorse community. The CYC supports many different forms of creative expression, including photography, musical performance, visual art and poetry. Additionally, young people of all ages and abilities are encouraged to showcase their work, as it is a supportive environment that does not tolerate negativity.

The WYRC were approached by the developers of the platform, tasked with designing an interface that would be appealing and accessible for users. Each member of the WYRC drafted an interface that we thought would be most suitable. At

the end of the session, the group collaborated to discuss and compare designs. There were similarities between the designs in that they each borrowed elements from existing social media platforms. Particularly, users enjoyed the minimalist “Instagram-tile” for sharing media.

The site was successfully launched at the Whitehorse Spring Festival on the 15th of October with many new registered members, as well as raising the profile of the site. It is rewarding to see the suggestions made by the WYRC in the features of the final site’s layout and functions.

WHITEHORSE NEWS ARTICLES

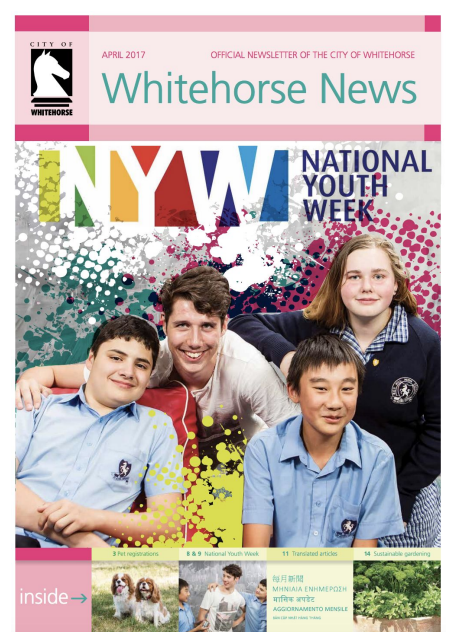
Nikki Doan

The WYRC represents the views of the youth of Whitehorse to council and the wider community through our monthly contributions to the Whitehorse News. Each month, the WYRC have the opportunity to write and submit an article pertaining to youth issues, to be published in the locally produced and distributed newspaper.

This is a fantastic opportunity for creative and linguistically gifted members of the committee to showcase their talents in writing and journalism, as well as providing the unique satisfaction of having published works. Additionally, it allows the youth perspective on issues or experiences to be published and viewed by the wider public. The Whitehorse News is distributed to a readership of approximately 61 000 people within the Whitehorse area, and is a traditional and effective way to accessing the community. As such, is critical that the concerns of young people are also represented.

Contributing members largely have creative freedom to determine their topic and writing style, though the submission will be reviewed several times before it is approved for printing. The “Young People” pages of the newspaper also provide information that may be useful and relevant to teens, such as information about events and providing contact details for services including mental health care. Additionally, these pages bring awareness to other initiatives of the WYRC including our upcoming events and Youth of the Month campaign.

Maintaining the “Young People” section of the Whitehorse news is an effective way to maintain the communication between the young people of Whitehorse, and the general public.



YOUNG PERSON OF THE MONTH

Kate Morrison

Each month, the Whitehorse Youth Representative Council discusses and awards an individual from the local area with the Young Person of the Month award.

The Whitehorse City Council's Young Person of the Month award acknowledges and celebrates the achievements of young people across various fields including arts, sport, drama, academics and contribution to the community.

Young people are nominated by adults or peers who believe that they have demonstrated outstanding abilities in one of the aforementioned areas. Recipients of this award are featured in the monthly Whitehorse News publication and receive a JB Hi-Fi gift voucher to recognise their achievements. Of the monthly nominees, the Whitehorse Youth Representative Council selects one recipient to be recognised as the Whitehorse Young Citizen of the Year, an award which is announced at the Australia Civic Awards Presentation in January.

It has been found that attaining nominees is the challenging part of this process. The nominations that were received were all more than deserving of the award which implies that the criterion is not unattainable. This led the committee to consider how we could increase the number of nominations that we receive monthly. Many of the nominations that were received this year came from the same organisation, which led us to conclude that targeting specific establishments was the best way to ensure that all young people have the opportunity to be recognised for their outstanding efforts. A list of sporting associations and schools within the local area was compiled and contacted in regards to this award. Each organisation was asked to encourage members of their community to nominate deserving young people and were provided with a copy of the flyer (see below) for reference.

Into the future, the council has begun exploring social media advertising on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. It is believed that this would be effective in gaining a greater number of nominations from peers rather than adults, as the majority of nominations have been this year.

Overall, it has been incredible to receive nominations from some incredibly talented young people and be able to recognise this in a formal award.



WHITEHORSE NATIONAL YOUTH WEEK

Avishka Godakandage

The main aim of this event was to celebrate young people in the City of Whitehorse as part of National Youth Week (NYW). NYW is an annual celebration occurring this year in the week of 31 March to 9 April. The aim of NYW is to give young people an opportunity to express their ideas and views, and act on issues that affect their lives. It is also about having a lot of fun and celebrate the positive contributions young people make.



The location of the City of Whitehorse's NYW event, the Youth Festival, was at the Box Hill Mall vicinity from 3pm -7pm. This exciting event was jointly organized by councils Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee, Freeza 'Flying Pig Events' Committee and Youth Services.



There were jaw dropping musical performances from our young musicians and the Freeza committee did an amazing job managing the stage. Among the musicians that took the stage was “Distracted by Pink”, “William Templar” and “Tram Drivers”. They were well appreciated by the public at the event. The young stars treasured every moment of spotlight given to their talents.

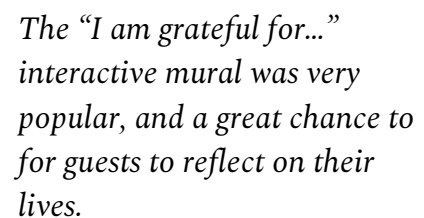
The stalls at the youth festival were well received as it was a busy Friday evening. Many people experienced “Henna tattoos” for the first time, as the tattoo artist was fashioning new henna designs for a mere gold coin donation.

Who doesn't love free popcorn? The popcorn machine manned by our members was a hit as the young and the old loved free popcorn while browsing through the stalls and enjoying good music. Youth related services, youth information, FReeZA and WYRC promotional leaflets were also distributed at our stall.

As part of our proceedings we let the community write what they were most grateful for in the “I am grateful for” board. Many students and youth took their time to pen something on the board. Among the highlights were “family, friends, cheese, music, coffee and popcorn”!

The most exciting stall was the “DIY spray on stencil t-shirts, caps and bags” Spray paint utensils and stencils were available for youth to let the imagination take over. Long queues were visible due to the high popularity of this event. Many colorful designs were visible at its conclusion and many members of the community enjoyed this activity in particular.

Feedback received afterwards confirmed the popularity of the event among the young people of Whitehorse.



WHITEHORSE YOUTH FORUM

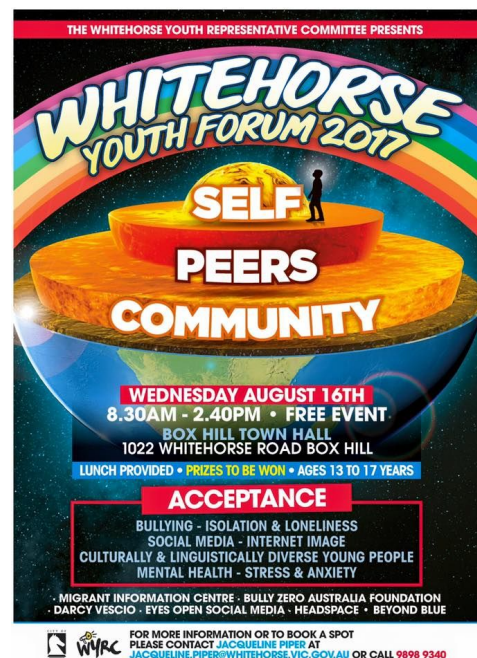
Charindya Janakantha and Jessica Xia

3.1 Overview

The 2017 Whitehorse Youth Forum, which was held on the 16th of August at the Box Hill Town Hall, is the WYRC's major event of the year. Whilst the event itself lasted only around 5 hours, organisation was a lengthy but thoroughly enjoyable learning experience, which allowed us to expand our understanding of important life skills such as collaboration, time management and budgeting. The Forum was held for young people within the Whitehorse region, and dealt mostly with the various pressures felt strongly by young people, via the promotion of self-acceptance and greater happiness within the student population. This (eventually, after much discussion and debate) took the form of our final, rather nebulous topic; acceptance, in all its forms- individually accepting oneself, accepting people within a group setting, and accepting everyone, as a wider community. Within these spheres of interaction, we also focussed on five smaller subtopics.

3.2 Planning

Selection of themes for the Forum was an enjoyable yet difficult endeavour, which took several weeks to completely consolidate and confirm. Our goal was to find and tackle the issues of greatest impact to the young people attending the event, but due to the time constraints of the Forum (a single day event), as well as our fixed budget, this took a great deal of manoeuvring to achieve. During meetings we brainstormed a list of common, yet often neglected issues which formed the basis of our potential theme list. With reference to the Whitehorse Youth Plan 2014-2018 through a process of elimination and rewording of topics, we managed to arrive at the final five. These were; mental health, bullying, social media, self-acceptance and the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community. We also made rudimentary plans for hiring one keynote speaker and four workshops, because we believed that experiential learning would be particularly beneficial and applicable to all attendees. When selecting our themes, we drew upon our understanding of news events, the current political climate and our own shared and personal knowledge.



However, as we got closer to the date of decision we realised that we had been overambitious and had thus overshot our budget. Consequently, we narrowed down our topic areas to “Self”, “Peers”, and “Community”; three categories that encapsulated the scope of most modern day youths’ issues. We decided to have two keynote speakers, one to start and one to finish the event with three workshops in between. These workshops discussed Bullying, Cultural and Migrant issues as well as Media Protection which were taken by the organisations and “Bully Zero”, “Migrant Information Centre” and “Eyes Open Social Media”. The two keynote speakers were Darcy Vescio, an AFLW Marquee player who discussed gender equality and cultural diversity and Megan Barrow from Beyond Blue who discussed and raised awareness in mental health issues such as social anxiety and depression.

Promotion was also a key endeavour which we dedicated much of our time and energy to prior to the event. Several brainstorming sessions took place, wherein we narrowed down our myriad of promotional poster ideas down to a single one, featuring a cross section of the earth floating in space, with the words ‘Self, Peers, Community’ superimposed over each layer of the earth’s cross-section, and other relevant information positioned above and below the Earth itself. These posters were then distributed to several nearby schools, and posted on notice boards around Box Hill, in hopes of attracting a large student turnout from all different organisations.

3.3 The Event

Overall, the day itself was a success, although we did encounter some problems along the way. For instance, several of the registered participants did not end up arriving on the day, for unknown reasons. However, of the students who did arrive, the overwhelming response was that it was a fantastic day, which allowed them to gain an abundance of youth-relevant information, with many students remarking on the importance of cyber safety. Others also noted that they gained a great deal of contextual information on the root of interpersonal problems, such as bullying and also the cultural barriers immigrants face, which often results in misunderstandings and subsequently, feelings of isolation.



The forum also consisted of several stalls which included some Youth Service Stalls and Headspace which offered pamphlets and contact information, as well as small trinkets, in hopes of encouraging students to reach out for help if required, and also to potentially seek volunteering opportunities within such organisations. This was an

important portion of the day, as many youths are unaware of the facilities and resources available to them.

In all, almost every single participant stated that they felt that they had gotten a lot out of the day, be it in terms of interschool interaction and forming new friendships, or in terms of increased knowledge of how to handle the wider society as well as how to maintain and support interpersonal bonds. The survey undertaken on the day suggested that practically every participant found that they had learnt at least one new, important concept over the course of the day. In particular, many students suggested that they gained an entirely new perspective on the plight of immigrant students and the problems which they face, as well as the widespread nature of such issues.



3.4 Conclusion

Thus, it can be seen that the day itself, whilst not without its glitches and mild problems, was a very valuable endeavour, from both our perspectives and the perspectives of the numerous participants. It was a superb opportunity to engage with young people within the area, and for them to engage with the council and the area's various nonprofits. Increased awareness of both the issues they face and the methods to deal with them can and will have an extremely beneficial impact on both the students' current, day-to-day lives, as well as their futures, and ultimately, on the future of Whitehorse as a whole. We're very grateful to the council for supporting yet another year of successful interaction with local young people, and hope that this collaboration extends far into the future!

3.5 Guests

Guests at the 2017 Whitehorse Youth Forum included;

- Darcy Vescio
- Councillor Denise Massoud
- Bully Zero
- Migrant Information Centre
- Eyes Open Social Media
- Beyond Blue
- Headspace
- Eastern Community Legal Centre
- Family Access Network

WHITEHORSE SPRING FESTIVAL

On the 15th of October, the Whitehorse Spring Festival took place from 10pm to 4pm. It was full of colourful stalls, vintage games, and community spirit. Among the food court and the amusement rides, the Youth Zone run by the WYRC and FReeZA was a favourite of the event.

In the Youth Zone, members of both committees were manning stalls and activities all day. These include a Youth Stage, Bike And Blend, an array of 'Best In Show' themed games, and an information booth promoting the 'Whitehorse Creative Youth Community'.



At the Youth Stage, several of Whitehorse's most talented musicians were given an opportunity to showcase their skills. Organised and run by hosts from the FReeZA and the WYRC, the Youth Stage was a huge success as everyone enjoyed the music and the performers had the audience wanting more.

The Bike n' Blend was very popular. Using bicycles, people could pedal to create delicious smoothies for themselves. The novelty of this activity formed queues to try it and kept the members running it very busy.

The games were an immediate success. The vintage exterior and playful feel attracted players quickly. All members running it made sure everyone had as much fun as possible.

Another part of the Youth Zone was the booth where members promoted the



Whitehorse Youth Community. This is a new website where young people of the community can share their creative work with other like minded people. The members in charge of this got many new young creators to sign up, and spread the message around.

Overall, the Whitehorse Spring Festival 2017 was a major success, and both the WYRC and the Freeza Committee were monumental in making that happen.

Fun snaps from the day! - Bubbles proved extremely popular with children



HALOGEN YOUNG LEADERS DAY

Charlotte Wang, Belle White, and Jasmine Szymakowski



On the 13th of November Jasmine, Belle and I went to the Halogen Young Leaders Day located at the Melbourne Convention Centre. The Halogen Organisation has reached 365,000 attendees and 300 speakers with 150 events under their belt. We were privileged to be able to listen to well-travelled speakers share their inspiring stories. These speakers include Nick Dal Santo and Gemma Triscari. The program is designed to benefit any student who shows an interest in developing their leadership potential. Over 23,000 students along with their teachers/principals attend this event around Australia annually.

After the event we were able to receive a Certificate of Participation.

To start off the day we were able to hear from the AFL player Nick Dal Santo. Having played over 300 AFL games with North Melbourne and St Kilda, Nick is a well known leader and role-model. Nick demonstrated amazing skill on the field, being recognised as an All-Australian player on numerous occasions, and going close to winning the Brownlow Medal (for the AFL best and fairest) multiple times. Nick's leadership attributes are well regarded by his team mates, having been an influential member of the player leadership group for many years. Since retiring from AFL football Nick has become a polished media presenter, speaker and community ambassador and continues to be a positive role-model for young people. He was also able to detail the negative comments that he has received and how he was overcome that negative criticism.

Gemma Triscari was the second speaker of the day and she was able to inspire us with the misogynistic comments that she overcame and the criticism she received for "bowling badly". Triscari is a left-arm pace bowler whose career has been on a steady upward curve for the past few years, leading to selection in the 2013 Women's Ashes squad and numerous Australia A Women's call-ups. Originally from WA, Triscari

started playing cricket after signing up for the wrong class at school and broke into the Fury side in 2007-08 after playing at the Under-17 National Championships.

The third speaker was John Coutis, without the lower part of his body, John delivers an amazing story of overcoming adversity. John has been one of the most talked about speakers since he last inspired people at this Halogen Young Leaders Day. He shared many key messages and for me he was the most inspiring speaker that I have ever had the pleasure meeting. John has shared his story with over 6 million people around the world.

The final speaker was leadership author Hayden Wilson, who spoke to us about how he would give everything a go, took chances, and even though he may have failed many times he was able to succeed in the end. Hayden Wilson is best known as the author of: Why Wait to Be Great? The Young Leader's Guide to Showing Up, Standing Out and Shining Bright.'

Hayden's daily life is filled with hundreds of leadership habits and daily practices, and his latest book unpacks many of these practical strategies. Hayden's practical advice has made him a highly sought after speaker and face-to-face mentor, with thousands of others helped on a regular basis by his popular podcasts.

The day provided a unique opportunity to reflect on the meaning of leadership through listening to the stories of current leaders. Students were encouraged to think about how they can have a positive impact not just in the future, but right now. I think I can speak on behalf of Jasmine and Belle when I say that we really enjoyed the day and hope that the future WYRC will be able to attend this event in the future.

During the break we also got the chance to be able to take a photo with John Coutis.



CONCLUSION

Nikki Doan

The past 12 months have been a year of meaningful contribution, personal growth, and fun for the Whitehorse Youth Committee of 2017. We were involved in many important events and campaigns throughout the year, and worked hard to provide a service that truly functioned to support the young people of the community. We served as an intermediary between the council and the youth of Whitehorse, by discussing, supporting, and representing the youth perspective.

As a collective, we represent the diversity of the people of Whitehorse, each with different backgrounds and experiences. This enabled us to have a broad and inclusive representation of opinions, resulting in a holistic committee. Through this experience, we have created meaningful and lasting friendships, as well as developing valuable new skills.

We would like to thank our wonderful facilitators, Jac and Emma, who supported and guided us throughout the year. Their expertise and leadership helped ensure the committee were productive and successful. Additionally, the committee would like to acknowledge the continued and generous support of the Whitehorse Council, whose generosity enable the valuable work of the WYRC to continue.

We have all had an incredible year with the committee and we would like to wish the Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee of 2018 success and good luck!