# Case Study Youth Parliament

# Young Voices, Real Impact

## Program Overview

Youth Parliament is an eight-month leadership and civic participation program delivered by YMCA Victoria. The program provides young people aged 16 to 25 with the opportunity to build leadership, advocacy and public speaking skills while working together to develop and present a youth-led Bill in the Victorian Parliament.

The City of Greater Geelong has supported local participation in the program for the past three years, with six young people selected to represent the region in the 2025 Youth Parliament program.

Over the first few months of the program, participants built relationships with one another while developing their understanding of how the Victorian Parliament and legislative processes operate. Participants attended a state-wide training camp where they gained hands-on experience in debating, public speaking, parliamentary procedures and the formal processes involved in developing legislation.

Tori, Bella, and Jye reflected on their experiences, sharing the highlights, challenges, and opportunities Youth Parliament created for them.

## Building Connections and Confidence

For many participants, one of the most valuable aspects of Youth Parliament was the opportunity to connect with like-minded young people from across Victoria.

Bella reflected on the strong sense of teamwork developed throughout the program.

*"The team worked really well together. Training camp was full on. Very constant but really fun."*

Tori described the experience as an opportunity to grow both personally and professionally.



*"It gave me so much knowledge and experience, like working as a team, how to write a bill, how to look after each other and I have made lifelong friends with like-minded people."*

For Jye, the program created new opportunities and helped shape future pathways.

*"It's done a lot. Personally, it's been great for skill building, opened doors socially and academically, provided the opportunity to meet so many people and opened up so many pathways."*

## Taking Ideas to Parliament

After months of research, the team worked together to address an issue they were passionate about by developing the *Reforming Biolink Requirements Bill 2026*, gaining firsthand experience in policy development, advocacy and creating change.

In July, the City of Greater Geelong Youth Parliament team travelled to Parliament House to debate their Bill alongside other Youth Parliament teams from across Victoria.



Bella particularly valued the respectful exchange of different perspectives.

*"Parliament week was just incredible. I loved debating in Parliament and hearing different perspectives from young people. Differing opinions are often dehumanised whereas this wasn't. It gave me a better perspective on the world and how other young people in Victoria think."*

For Tori, simply being in Parliament House was an unforgettable experience.

*"Going to parliament I was very pumped. I was taking everything in. I was so happy learning."*

The team's Bill was debated and voted on by fellow Youth Parliamentarians before being formally presented for consideration by State Members of Parliament, where it passed unanimously.

### The Impact

While each participant's experience was unique, their reflections revealed common themes of personal growth, leadership development, and stronger communication skills. For Bella, this included building confidence speaking spontaneously and engaging with different perspectives.

*"A big one for me was talking without a preplanned speech. The open floor experience pushed me out of my comfort zone. Being able to talk respectfully with people who held different views showed me that forming relationships isn't just about your views."*

Tori described the importance of teamwork and stepping outside her comfort zone.

*"It taught me how important teamwork is and how much stronger ideas can become when you collaborate with other people. I pushed myself out of my comfort zone. I was really proud of myself."*

Tori also reflected on the unique opportunities Youth Parliament provided for young people to contribute meaningfully and be trusted with responsibility.

*"The experience changed the way I think about opportunities available to young people. It is one thing to tell young people their voices matter, but it is another to create a space where they are trusted with responsibility and encouraged to contribute. Youth Parliament did that."*

Since Youth Parliament, Jye has been elected Chair of Meli's Youth Advocacy Group. Tori has applied the skills gained through the program to her studies and aspirations in social work, while Bella hopes to build on her leadership experience by running for School Captain.

Participants consistently described Youth Parliament as one of the most impactful experiences of their lives.

*"It's an amazing program and I recommend it to any young person. It has made me decide what I want to do in the future. It may be my career. It was that influential." – Bella*

Jye reflected on the importance of ensuring other young people have access to the same opportunities.

*"It has improved my life, and I hope you get to improve the lives of others in the same way."*

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### Interested in getting involved?

For more information about future Youth Parliament opportunities, visit the YMCA Victoria Youth Parliament website [Participate in Youth Parliament | YMCA Victoria Youth Parliament] or contact the City of Greater Geelong Youth Development Team (youthcommunitydevelopment@geelongcity.vic.gov.au).