

WEST COAST YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL CHARTER AND OPERATIONAL PLAN

OVERVIEW

To support the implementation of Council's 2022-2023 and ongoing 2023-2024 Annual Plan Action Items - *Commence implementation of a mechanism for Council to engage with West Coast Youth* - Council endorsed the establishment of a formalised West Coast youth advisory council (referred to currently as WCYAC).

The WCYAC plays an important role in advising West Coast Council on issues that are relevant to young people across the LGA. Youth Power Org identifies Youth Advisory Councils as a "youth engagement strategy used by programs and organizations to positively incorporate youth voices and help build the capacity of youth participants".

All young people living on the West Coast are welcome to participate in the WCYAC and in some cases young people are nominated by their peers or communities to become members on the WCYAC.

The WCYAC will engage with Council in a cooperative and consultative capacity.

The WCYAC will provide to Council an effective direct mechanism for Council to engage with young people and consult with them about the issues that affect them as well as providing a mechanism whereby young people can raise issues directly with Council and identify areas for Council's strategic consideration. WCYAC members may engage with other young people in their communities and forward young people's aspirations, needs and wants to Council.

PURPOSE AND ROLE

The WCYAC has the following roles and purposes:

- Represent and speak on behalf of West Coast young people and children aged 8-25 at a Local Government level.
- Represent West Coast youth and children in a variety of capacities locally and where appropriate, engage with non-government organisations, stakeholders and peak bodies at a state level for the benefit of West Coast children and youth.
- Participate in the drafting, continuous improvement and evaluation of Council's Youth Strategy and other strategic community documents.
- Assist Council in the design and development of children's and youth programs and services whenever capacity for this exists.
- Advocate for the needs of West Coast children and youth independently, and where relevant, seek Council's support and assistance to raise these concerns in the appropriate sphere.

The WCYAC is created as an informal group with this draft charter initiated by Council staff which will be finalised and approved by the WCYAC once established.

The role of the WCYAC also encompasses the development of capability and leadership for its members and this is supported and coordinated by Council in partnership with West Coast Schools and other relevant youth organisations.

The role of the WCYAC also encompasses identifying priorities for youth and children in the region and to develop initiatives and partnerships that can help address these priorities. The YAC will also assist development of Council's Youth Strategy by acting as a steering committee and consultative group to inform and finalise the strategy.

FUNCTIONS, ACTIVITIES AND ENGAGEMENT PROCEDURE

The WCYAC is an entity composed of young people that serves as an advisory or advocacy body to Council.

The WCYAC and Council engage in the following ways:

- WCYAC participates in designated engagement sessions with Council representatives each month. The YAC will further meet with Councillors in a workshop once per quarter. This meeting will include the Mayor/Deputy Mayor or General Manager.
- The meetings will be held by way of video conference where WCYAC members can dial in from safe spaces in the community such as video conference rooms at schools and are assisted by appropriate school staff to do so. (Further guidelines on members' online safety and confidentiality will be detailed below.)
- At the workshop sessions, the WCYAC will consider, advise and/or vote upon specific matters before Council that pertain to children and youth living in the LGA.
- The WCYAC will be given the opportunity to participate in active decision making on 'relevant matters' by way of a vote during the workshop meetings. These determinations are then considered by Councillors when making their final determinations on agenda items in Council meetings.
- WCYAC members may review certain documents relating to matters before Council or the WCYAC as required. Assistance to interpret or clarify information will be coordinated in partnership by schools or Council.
- WCYAC members are encouraged to watch Monthly Ordinary Council Open Meetings as part of their commitment to the WCYAC and have the capacity to address these issues in their meetings with Councillors.
- When appropriate, the WCYAC will be invited to attend relevant municipal civic functions and events (only when accompanied by parent or guardian).
- Participation within sub-committees or advising on matters before other Council committees will be requested at the discretion of Council.
- In some cases, written correspondence will be exchanged between Council and WCYAC members and all correspondence will be subject to the public record.

The WCYAC and other key stakeholders engage in the following ways:

- The WCYAC are the peak youth advisory group for the West Coast of Tasmania. Subsequently, there may be occasions where its representation and/or attendance is sought by peak youth bodies at a state level. In these instances, arrangements will be discussed with parents, teachers and young people to coordinate their participation. Council, where possible, will endeavor to support and assist these activities and advocate for events to be located on the West Coast to facilitate equitable accessibility for the WCYAC.
- In all cases, appropriate measures will be actioned by all responsible parties to ensure the safety and wellbeing of young people participating in consultative activities or attending external events.

STRUCTURE

The WCYAC is comprised of a maximum of 16 members.

WCYAC determines the hierarchy of membership, i.e. election of a Youth Mayor and Youth Deputy Mayor.

WCYAC is to be assisted by a 'WCYAC support group' consisting of specified school staff/teachers, councillors and Council staff.

The WCYAC support group is to assist in the recruitment of members to the WCYAC and assist in the further development of WCYAC Terms of Reference.

WCYAC support group governed by simple MoU.

MEMBERSHIP

- WCYAC members may be aged between 8-18.
- The initial YAC will include two members from each West Coast School. Students attending school may nominate and be elected by their peers.
- Nominations/ elections for reps will be held at each school. If no nominations are received from a school the school prefects/captains will be invited to join.
- Young people not attending school will be invited for nomination and will be selected by a selection panel that includes the Mayor, council staff and other appropriate stakeholders.
- The maximum number of members of the YAC will be 16.
- 14 members allows for (initially) two reps per school, 2 homeschool reps and 2 rep who are not attending school or who are older than school age.
- As the WCYAC develops it has the authority to alter terms of recruitment under supervision by the WCYAC support group, the Mayor or General Manager of Council.
- Members will remain on the WCYAC for one year but may renominate.
- WCYAC members may elect a chair to be the West Coast Youth Mayor on the WCYAC after determining what these roles are.

Recruitment/ nomination process

- Emails sent to schools
- Students nominate
- Parental permission required for any person under 18 yrs old.
- Nominations accepted
- Voting for/ selection of candidates
- Successful candidates inducted in to WCYAC

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Further to this document a model terms of reference will be drafted with youth input for interim use.

WCYAC are welcome to further develop ToR with guidance from YAC support group, Mayor or GM.

SAFETY GUIDELINES

The operation of, and engagement with the WCYAC, requires a strict adherence to all applicable child safety policies and procedures along with those prescribed by the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Bill 2022, the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework and the [Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023](#).

The new laws come into effect as of 1 January 2024.

Under the law, Tasmanian Local Government Associations will have to comply with the [Child and Youth Safe Standards](#), which are a list of things organisations must do to protect the wellbeing and safety of children they come into contact with.

The standards are:

- **Standard 1: Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.** This means all people in the organisation care about children and young people's safety and wellbeing above everything else, and make sure they act that way and lead others to act that way.
- **Standard 2: Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.** This means children and young people are told about their human rights, have a say in decisions and are taken seriously.

- **Standard 3: Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.** This means families and communities know about and are involved in the organisation's child and safety and wellbeing activities.
- **Standard 4: Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.** This means the rights of every child and young person are being met, and children and young people are treated with dignity, respect and fairness.
- **Standard 5: People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.** This means people working with children and young people are safe to work with children and young people and respectful of them. They are taught how to keep children safe and well.
- **Standard 6: Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.** This means children, young people, families, staff and volunteers are listened to and can share problems and concerns.
- **Standard 7: Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.** This means staff and volunteers keep learning all the time so they know how to keep children and young people safe and well.
- **Standard 8: Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.** This means children and young people are safe in online and physical spaces.
- **Standard 9: Implementation of the Child and Youth Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.** This means the organisation keeps reviewing and improving its child safety and wellbeing practices.
- **Standard 10: Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.** This means organisation writes down how it keeps children and young people safe and well, and makes sure that everyone can see these documents.

Local government is also mandated to comply with the [Reportable Conduct Scheme](#), which requires leaders of organisations to:

- report concerns about conduct related to child abuse involving a worker to an independent body, and
- do investigations.

The WCYAC plays an important role in assisting Council to meet its Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework obligations.

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