

## MINUTES OF THE YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**Meeting Date:** Thursday, 26 February 2026  
**Location:** Osprey Training Room, City Administrative Centre, Bridge Road, Nowra  
**Time:** 10:07 AM

The following members were present:

Jess Richardson – Lead – Vibrant Communities – Chairperson  
Clr Debbie Killian  
Clr Selena Clancy  
Clr Gillian Boyd (Remotely)  
Nelani Botha (Remotely) – Left at 11:02am  
Mia Ferguson – Vincentia High School (Remotely)  
Charlotte Kovalik – Vincentia High School (Remotely)  
Lilli Dean – Vincentia High School (Remotely)  
Jaide Sutherland – St John the Evangelist Catholic High School – Left at 10:51am  
Scarlette Sutton – St John the Evangelist Catholic High School – Left at 10:51am  
Jasmine Najdovski – St John the Evangelist Catholic High School – Left at 10:51am  
Kyiesha Kershaw – St John the Evangelist Catholic High School – Left at 10:51am  
Lauren Buckingham – Manager – Customer & Community Services

Others present:

Katie Buckman – Director City Performance  
Kat Fischer – Governance Officer (Minute taker)  
Ben Fischer – Governance Officer  
Carly Stevens – Vincentia High School (Remotely)  
Jo-Ann Coleman – St John the Evangelist Catholic High School – Left at 10:51am

### Apologies / Leave of Absence

Apologies were received from Mayor Patricia White, Clr Brett Steele, Chloe Turner – Community Youth Representative, Shoalhaven High School, Jenny McKay - Shoalhaven River College, Emile Dupont-Louis – Ulladulla High School, Phuong Mester – Kiama & Shoalhaven Community College, Kaye Morris – Tafe NSW – Nowra Campus, Fiona Lam – Tafe NSW – Ulladulla Campus, Bradley Martin – Community Youth Representative and Ms Pemba Spargo - Country Universities Centre - Southern Shoalhaven.

### Confirmation of the Minutes

**RESOLVED** (By consent)

That the Minutes of the Youth Advisory Committee held on Tuesday 17 June 2025 be confirmed.

CARRIED

### Declaration of Interests

Nil

## PRESENTATIONS

### YA26.1 Open Discussion - Priority Areas for Young People

HPERM Ref:  
D25/508344

The Chairperson presented to the Committee an overview of the key priorities and strategies for young people identified in 2024 through the following sources:

- Office of Youth
- Mission Australia
- Shoalhaven City Council's Youth Advisory Committee

The Committee's community members then divided into three groups and were asked to identify what they considered to be the five key priority areas for young people in 2026.

#### **St John the Evangelist Catholic High School**

1. Mental health
2. Cost of living
3. Safe spaces for young people
4. Voting
5. Affordable housing

#### **Vincentia High School**

1. Mental health
2. Cost of living
3. Homelessness and social services
4. Climate change and the environment
5. Violence, safety and crime

#### **Nelani Botha – Community Representative**

1. Cost of living
2. Mental health
3. Housing affordability - rent and home ownership
4. Homelessness and social services
5. Safe spaces for young people

Following the group discussions, the Chairperson summarised the outcomes, noting that mental health and cost of living were identified as the highest priority areas.

Committee members were then asked to discuss within their groups the reasoning behind the selection of their number one priority. To support this discussion, the Chairperson posed the following reflective directions:

- Provide an example of something you've seen that has concerned you in this space. This could be a personal experience, or an observation made in the community.
- Share insight into why this was chosen as the highest priority for young people in 2026.

#### **Vincentia High School**

- Reported that they have observed an increase in young people experiencing mental health challenges without being able to access appropriate support.
- It was noted that mental health concerns are becoming normalised among young people due to the prevalence of these issues, which may lead to them not being taken as seriously as required.
- The group advised that there are limited local support options available, with school-based services being the primary resource, and that external services are not easily accessible.

#### **Nelani Botha – Community Representative**

- Advised that many young people who have recently moved out of home are struggling to meet basic living costs, including food, rent, electricity and gas.
- They noted that young people earning minimum wage or receiving insufficient work hours face significant financial pressure, making day-to-day living increasingly difficult.

#### **St John the Evangelist Catholic High School**

- Identified mental health as their top priority due to concern about the high suicide rate among young people.
- They reported that resources within the Shoalhaven are limited, with long wait times for services and insufficient availability of support.
- While school-based assistance is available, it was noted that waiting lists are lengthy.
- Online services were acknowledged as an option; however, the group expressed a preference for face-to-face support.

The Chairperson asked the Committee whether there were any additional youth-related priorities that had not yet been raised through the group discussions.

#### **Nelani Botha – Community Representative**

- Advised that limited public transport continues to be a significant barrier for young people.
- They reported that young people frequently express concerns regarding insufficient bus services to key locations, including Vincentia and surrounding areas.
- It was noted that services operate at limited times and that long waiting periods make it difficult for young people to travel independently or access activities, employment, or support services.

#### **Vincentia High School**

- Identified youth substance use as an additional concern.
- They noted that some young people engage in smoking, drinking, vaping, or drug use as coping mechanisms for stress or other challenges.
- They expressed the view that young people would benefit from greater support to develop healthier coping strategies and to reduce reliance on harmful substances.

#### **St John the Evangelist Catholic High School**

- Identified job-seeking support as another priority area, noting that young people often require assistance in finding employment opportunities.
- They also reiterated concerns regarding limited transport options, advising that the lack of reliable public transport makes it difficult for young people to attend work, interviews, or training, and can impede their independence.

D25/508290

The Chairperson provided an overview of the upcoming Youth Week 2026 program and invited feedback from the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) on potential activities that would support the Youth Week goal: “use their voice to advocate for things young people want in their community.”

Committee members were then divided into groups to discuss the types of activities they have enjoyed at similar events and what they would like to see incorporated into a Youth Week advocacy activity.

St John the Evangelist Catholic High School expressed a preference for team-building activities that are game-focused, encourage participants to step outside their comfort zone, and support the development of new friendships.

Vincentia High School supported a youth-led and adult-guided model, noting that young people should take the lead in activities, with mentors available to provide assistance when needed.

Ms Nelani Botha highlighted the importance of team-building and ice-breaker activities, with an emphasis on having young people lead the program with appropriate adult support. They noted that the activity should remain centred on the interests and needs of the young people attending.

**YA26.3 Re-imagining Advisory Committees**

**HPERM Ref:  
D26/58388**

*Council’s Vibrant Communities Team (previously Community Capacity Building) facilitated a discussion regarding reviewing the effectiveness and future direction of the Youth Advisory Committee.*

*Members were asked to respond to the questionnaire below.*

**Questionnaire:**

[RE-IMAGINING THE YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE – Fill out form](#)

**RE-IMAGINING THE YOUTH  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**



## REPORTS

### YA26.4 Membership Resignation - Nathaniel Woodcock

**HPERM Ref:  
D24/206132**

#### **Recommendation**

That the Youth Advisory Committee:

1. Accept the resignation of Mr Nathaniel Woodcock (Youth Representative) and thank him for his contribution to the Committee.
2. Fill the Youth Representative vacancy through the current Expression of Interest.

#### **RESOLVED** (By consent)

That the Youth Advisory Committee:

1. Accept the resignation of Mr Nathaniel Woodcock (Youth Representative) and thank him for his contribution to the Committee.
2. Fill the Youth Representative vacancy through the current Expression of Interest.

CARRIED

### YA26.5 Membership Resignation - Kasey Henshaw

**HPERM Ref:  
D25/119929**

#### **Recommendation**

That the Youth Advisory Committee:

1. Accept the resignation of Ms Kasey Henshaw (Youth Representative) and thank her for her contribution to the Committee.
2. Fill the Youth Representative vacancy through the current Expression of Interest.

#### **RESOLVED** (By consent)

That the Youth Advisory Committee:

1. Accept the resignation of Ms Kasey Henshaw (Youth Representative) and thank her for her contribution to the Committee.
2. Fill the Youth Representative vacancy through the current Expression of Interest.

CARRIED

### YA26.6 Action Table Report - August 2024 to December 2025

**HPERM Ref:  
D25/455285**

#### **Recommendation (Item to be determined under delegated authority)**

That the Youth Advisory Committee:

1. Accept and receive the Action Table Report – August 2024 to December 2025 for information.
2. The following action is considered complete and can be removed from the Action Table.
  - a. YA24.6 Presentation Received - Shoalhaven Education Fund

**RESOLVED** (By consent)

That the Youth Advisory Committee:

1. Accept and receive the Action Table Report – August 2024 to December 2025 for information.
  
2. The following action is considered complete and can be removed from the Action Table.
  - a. YA24.6 Presentation Received - Shoalhaven Education Fund

CARRIED

There being no further business, the meeting concluded, the time being 11:06am.

Ms Jess Richardson – Lead – Vibrant Communities  
CHAIRPERSON