

Youth Council Terms of Reference

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Purpose

The Mildura Rural City Council Youth Council is an advisory and advocacy committee whose role is to represent the voice of young people who live, work and study in our region. The Mildura Rural City Council Youth Council is an important mechanism for consultation with young people and for providing advice to Mildura Rural City Councillors and staff on implementation and review of the Youth Engagement Strategy and policy and strategy development.

The goals of the Youth Council are to:

- a) Provide opportunities for young people to have their say and influence Council policies, plans and strategies.
- b) Promote young people as valuable citizens who make a positive contribution to the community.
- c) Provide opportunities for young people to develop leadership skills.
- d) Provide the opportunity for Councillors to meet, hear and learn from young people.
- e) Provide opportunities for young people to consult with the wider community.

Objectives

The objectives of the Youth Council are to:

- a) Represent and promote the voice of young people in the Mildura Rural City Council municipality.
- b) Provide a platform for young people to advocate on priorities that are important to their lives.
- c) Advise Mildura Rural City Council on current and emerging issues affecting young people.
- d) Provide opportunities for young people to influence youth-focused programs and projects.
- e) Provide a mechanism for young people to oversee the implementation of the Youth Strategy.
- f) Identify service gaps and opportunities for improved cooperation, coordination, advice and feedback to young people and partnerships that will improve outcomes for young people.
- g) Build a sense of civic pride about young people in the community.
- h) Provide opportunities for young people to be engaged in civic activities and events.
- i) Include young people from diverse backgrounds in decision-making processes.
- j) Strengthen professional development opportunities for young people.
- k) Develop young people's confidence and leadership skills.

Membership

Membership of Youth Council will consist of:

- a) Membership will be determined via a selection process, including a Mildura Rural City Council, Youth Council Expression of Interest form addressing the key selection criteria, an interview and a referee check.
- b) Expressions of Interest for the Youth Council can be submitted when the applicant is 12 years of age and are open to persons up to 25 years. This will allow for the young people to finish their term before the age of 26.
- c) Members aged 18 and above are required to hold a valid Working with Children Check.
- d) Youth Councillors should represent the diverse and varied needs of the youth community in Mildura including, but not limited to, living in rural Mildura, LGBTIQA+, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, people with a disability, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Casual Vacancies

The Youth Council may choose to fill a vacating Youth Councillor position/s through a Casual Vacancy process;

- a) If Youth Council membership falls below the minimum of 9 members and there is more than six months until the end of the Youth Council Term of Office, the Casual Vacancy process must be undertaken;
- b) A Casual Vacancy occurs when a Youth Councillor:
 - Resigns in writing to the Youth Council; or
 - Without prior leave of the Youth Council, is absent from three consecutive meetings and a majority of Youth Councillors have agreed to terminate the absentee Youth Councillor's membership.
- c) After a Casual Vacancy has occurred, the Youth Council must resolve one of the following motions:
 - The Youth Council resolves to fill the Casual Vacancy, created by vacating Youth Councillor/s by undertaking an expression of interest process.
 - The Youth Council resolves not to fill the Casual Vacancy created by vacating Youth Councillor/s.

Selection Criteria

Young people aged between 12 and 25 must complete an Expression of Interest (EOI) form, undertake an interview and provide a referee.

Applicants will be selected according to the following selection criteria:

- a) Their ability to constructively participate in an advisory capacity.
- b) The ability to represent a broad range of views that reflects the diversity of the Mildura Rural City Council community.
- c) A thorough understanding of the local community and its social, environment and economic influences on young people.
- d) Good knowledge and understanding of the local issues that are relevant to young people.
- e) A willingness to contribute positively to meetings in a fair and unbiased manner.
- f) The ability to look beyond personal interests for the benefit of the community.
- g) The ability and willingness to encourage participation from the community.
- h) The capacity to commit to the Youth Council and its expectations for the duration of the Youth Council term.
- i) A willingness to celebrate the success and achievements of young people in the Mildura Rural City Council municipality.

Process

Expressions of Interest will be open for three weeks (21 days);

- Councillors and Youth Engagement staff will shortlist applications for interviews.
- Successful applications will be contacted for an interview.
- Unsuccessful applications will be notified via email no more than five (5) working days after the Interviews have been completed.

Term of Office

Youth Councillors will be appointed for a two-year term, unless decided otherwise in the evaluation of the program. Youth Councillors reserve the right to reconsider their role on Youth Council according to work, study or personal commitments.

Youth Executive

The Youth Council will elect both a Youth Mayor and Deputy Youth Mayor. The election will be conducted by an anonymous ballot. Nominees for each position will be asked to present a candidate speech to the Youth Council explaining why they should be elected to the role. The ballot will be facilitated by Youth Engagement staff.

Priority Plan

- a) At the beginning of each Youth Council term, the Youth Council must establish an annual priority plan that will guide their strategic direction during their term.
- b) The Youth Council may decide, by resolution, to establish a working group relevant to any of the identified priority areas.
- c) Where a working group has been formed, it will be chaired by a nominated Youth Councillor.
- d) The priorities must be selected and presented to a Council Forum in the first three months of the Youth Council term.
- e) The Youth Council Priority plan should be adopted by Council at a relevant ordinary Council meeting.

Working Group

- a) The role of a working group is to explore and develop options in relation to the Youth Council Priority Plan and make recommendations to the Youth Council for consideration.
- b) Working groups do not have any decision-making powers, all decisions must be referred to the Youth Council for a resolution.
- c) Where appropriate, additional working groups may be established to provide an opportunity for members to work collaboratively on specific projects, issues or areas that align with the Youth Priority plan and/or the Youth Engagement Strategy.
- d) Youth Council working groups will be chaired by a Youth Councillor and must not be the Youth Mayor or Deputy Youth Mayor.
- e) The chair of the working group is responsible for recruitment of members, managing the group and reporting on the progress of the group back to the Youth Council.
- f) Membership of working groups is open to both Youth Councillors and community members.
- g) At least two Youth Councillors are to be members of the working group.
- h) Working groups must also include young people from the broader Mildura Rural City Council municipality.
- i) The Youth Council may invite suitable people to join in an advisory capacity, for a specified purpose and for a specified period.

Quorum

The Mildura Rural City Council Youth Council has nine (9) members; therefore a quorum of members is seven (7). If a quorum is not present within 15 minutes after the scheduled start time of a Youth Council Meeting, the Youth Council will not be able to make any binding decisions.

Attendance

- Youth Councillors are required to have a reasonable excuse for not attending meetings. All absences must be provided within 24 hours of the meeting to Youth Engagement staff.
- Youth Councillors who fail to provide an apology before a Briefing or Meeting will be considered as absent from a meeting without notice.
- If a Youth Councillor is absent for more than three consecutive briefings/meetings without notice, or does not provide a timely or adequate apology, the Youth Councillor will be considered under review.
- Youth Councillors under review will be required to meet with Youth Council Executive and Youth Engagement staff to show cause.
- If a Youth Councillor is absent for three consecutive briefings/meetings without notice and has not shown cause, the Youth Council may vote to decide if the absentee Youth Councillor should continue as a member of the Youth Council.
- A motion must be passed to terminate the membership of a Youth Councillor under review. Written notice must then be provided to the absentee Youth Councillor for termination to be in effect.

Dates and Times of Meetings

- The formal Advisory Committee meeting will be held fortnightly at Council's Deakin Service Centre (76 Deakin Avenue, Mildura) or online as required.
- Times and days will be decided by elected Youth Council members together with Youth Engagement staff.
- All Youth Councillors will be required to attend induction and training sessions as scheduled by the Youth Engagement staff.
- Additional hours involving evening, weekends and school holidays may be required at various stages.
- Youth Councillors may at times be invited to attend and present at Council Meetings or Forums.
- Where a Briefing or Youth Council Meeting will be held over a lunch or dinner period, appropriate catering will be provided.

Special Youth Council Meetings

A special meeting of the Youth Council can be called by the Youth Mayor or at least two (2) Youth Councillors by a written notice to the Youth Mayor.

- a) The notice must specify the date and time of the special meeting and the business to be transacted.
- b) Notice must be given at least one week prior to the meeting.
- c) Mildura Rural City Council Youth Engagement staff must call the special meeting as specified in the notice or resolution.

Unless all Youth Councillors present unanimously agree to deal with another matter, only the business specified in the notice or resolution is to be transacted.

Reporting

The Youth Council will provide a minimum of quarterly progress reports to the Mildura Rural City Council to detail their progress and deliberation. The Youth Council will report back to Councillors where appropriate. Quarterly progress reports will be provided to the Mildura Rural City Council.

Confidentiality

In the course of their duties, Youth Councillors will receive information they are required to treat as confidential. This may be information that is either commercially sensitive or is personal to a particular individual or organisation. It's important that Youth Councillors are seen as a group that can be trusted with confidential information.

Youth Councillors are required to sign a confidentiality agreement at the beginning of the Youth Council Term. Youth Councillors must not breach any confidentiality protocols when communicating with the media, in a public form, or personally.

Honorarium Allowance

The commitment made to Youth Council is considerable with young people making a significant time commitment to ongoing work through the year which may impact their ability to undertake other paid employment. In acknowledgment of the significant time commitment involved in the Youth Council members will be paid a quarterly honorarium allowance to compensate costs associated with participation. A maximum of \$2000 per year.

Remote Area Travel Allowance

A remote travel allowance provides compensation for the cost and time on long distance travel by Youth Councillors who live in remote areas. Something about work cars. This allowance is only available to Youth Councillors who normally reside more than 50 kilometres from Mildura. The allowance is calculated based on the distance travelled from the Youth Councillors base location to the approved destination. The remote travel allowance will be paid quarterly.

Conflict of Interest

The Local Government Act 2020 (the Act) identifies General and Material Conflicts of Interest which require disclosure as they arise.

If a Youth Councillor has a particular bias or interest in an issue or discussion, or believe others might perceive that they do, there may be a conflict of interest. If this occurs, the Youth Councillor must alert the Youth Mayor and Youth Engagement staff at the beginning of the meeting when requested.

Youth Councillors are required to abide by the Conflict of Interest obligations in the Act. A Conflict of Interest Register will be kept by Mildura Rural City Council.

Resolution of Grievances

If a conflict occurs between Youth Council members, the Youth Mayor/Deputy Mayor and Youth Council will work with Youth Engagement Services staff to resolve the issue.

If a Youth Councillor has a grievance or concern, it should be raised as follows:

- a) If the grievance is about a fellow Youth Council member, the issue should be first raised with the Youth Mayor (or Deputy Youth Mayor if the Youth Mayor is absent)
- b) If the grievance is about the Youth Mayor, the issue should be raised with Youth Engagement Services staff.
- c) If the grievance is about Youth Engagement staff member, the issue should be raised with the Youth Mayor and Youth Engagement Coordinator
- d) If the grievance is about Youth Engagement staff member and/or Coordinator, this issue should be raised with the Youth Mayor and the Manager Community Care Services
- e) If the grievance is about a member of staff from another Council Department, the issue should be raised with the Youth Mayor and Manager Community Care Services

Communication and Social Media

All communications with the media will be conducted under the guidance of, and with the support of, Youth Engagement Services staff Council's Communications team.

Media statements/releases on behalf of the Youth Council will be issued by the Youth Mayor or through the Communications team.

Youth Councillors directly approached by media outlets will, in the first instance, redirect enquiries to Council Communications Officer or Media Officer. Youth Councillors must seek authorisation before making media statements. This will be done in consultation with Youth Engagement staff and the Communications team.

The Youth Mayor is responsible for policy statements about the strategic direction of the Youth Council. The Youth Mayor may delegate the authority to other Youth Councillors under certain circumstances, this includes, but is not limited to:

- The Youth Mayor is unavailable within the required time to respond to the request.
- A Youth Councillor has a specific ongoing interest and/or role in a particular issue.
- A Youth Councillor has a specific knowledge or expertise in the matter.
- A Youth Councillor leads a specific working group.

Guidelines for Personal Views

In the interest of free speech, Youth Councillors must feel free to make personal comments on matters important to them, without undermining the Youth Council. When expressing their views, Youth Councillors agree that:

- Youth Councillors will make it clear they are not representing the Youth Council
- Youth Councillors will not distribute media releases, unless approved as a Youth Council media release by Council's Communications team.
- Social media profiles that identify the account holder as being a Youth Councillor must include the following disclaimer: Any views expressed here are my own and are not necessarily the views of the Youth Council.

Advance notice should be provided to the Youth Mayor and Council's Communication Officer or Media Officer of any statements to be made to the media or media releases to be issued. In making media statements, or issuing media releases:

- Youth Councillors must not act to damage or impair the public image of, or public confidence in the Youth Council
- Youth Councillors will refrain from publicly criticising decisions made by the Youth Council and/or Mildura Rural City Council

Support for Youth Councillors

The Youth Engagement Service staff will provide support to the Youth Council, assisting with the preparation and development of documents. Further to this, Youth Engagement Services staff will assist with policy research and development, event planning and other duties.

Transport assistance will be provided in the form of taxi vouchers to aid Youth Councillors travelling to and from meetings and official duties. Any support required to enable full participation on the Youth Council will be provided by Council. This includes support for accessing information, eg agendas, minutes and documents in Easy English, large print, braille, interpreter and translation services, electronic and hard copy options.

The structure and processes of the meetings will be designed to ensure the voices of all Youth Councillors are heard. Youth Councillors will be provided with name badges, iPads and Mildura Rural City Council email addresses that are consistent with Council policies.

Training

Youth Councillors will be provided opportunities to attend various training and professional development sessions throughout their term. This may include Training in meeting procedures, Code of Conduct, Governance, Public speaking, Leadership and any other training as required.

Induction Training

All Youth Councillors are required to attend an induction to the Youth Council and an induction to the Mildura Rural City Council. Youth Council induction will include:

- Roles and responsibilities of Youth Councillors
- Expectations of Youth Councillors
- Media training
- Information about Youth Council's role and processes
- Information about the Mildura Rural City Council
- Information about the role of local government

Youth Councillors will also have their photo taken, both as a group and individually to be used in official publications. Mildura Rural City Council Councillors will be invited to meet with the Youth Council at the beginning of each Youth Council term and participate in Youth Councillors' induction and orientation training sessions.