

MAYORAL MINUTE

Congratulations to our Council Team

Council has been successful with a number of Awards over the past month, and I would like to acknowledge Council's hard-working staff.

We have won the Tidy Town Resource Recovery Award – Landfill to Circular Hub for Moss Vale Resource Recovery Centre.

Our Customer Service Team have taken out Customer Service Team of the Year for 2024 at the National Local Government Customer Service Network for their amazing work and in particular their development and implementation of the Customer Experience Charter and Standards.

Council has also won the Master Plumbers Association of NSW Awarded WSC Best-Tasting Tap Water in ACT & NSW 2024. The award, presented by the Water Industry Operations Association of Australia (WIOA), recognises the exceptional quality of our drinking water. Water samples from across the state were blind-tasted and judged on factors such as taste, clarity, and odour.

In addition, Council has won the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards in the category of Natural Environment Protection and Enhancement: On-Ground Works for Future-Proofing Southern Highlands Koalas.

Establishment of a Youth Council

For far too long the youth in our community have been spoken for by adults in positions of authority, assuming we know what they want. Moving forward, I am committed to hearing from them directly and giving their voices the platform they deserve.

I consider the establishment of a Youth Council to be a powerful way to engage young people in civic life, foster leadership, and ensure that youth perspectives are considered in decision-making processes.

The Council can play an important role in creating a way for young people to have a say in decisions about their community. Piloting a Youth Council gives us a chance to connect with young people, shows them that their ideas matter, and helps them get involved in community life.

A Youth Council would represent the views of young people on local issues, advise on youth programs, or advocate for policies that affect youth. It aims to foster civic engagement, build leadership skills and create a more inclusive and youth-friendly community.

Attached is the proposed Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Youth Council. Once the Youth Council is set up, it will be important to gather more input from young people to make sure their voices are heard.

The plan is to launch the Youth Council in April 2025. This gives enough time for staff to consult with schools and make sure that young people are fully involved in the process.

The administrative support and help from the Community Development team during meetings and the Youth Forum will be provided using the current staff and resources.

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Recommendation

That Council:

- 1. Note the recent successes of the Council Team in the Tidy Town Resource Recovery Award, National Local Government Customer Service Network and Master Plumbers Association of NSW Awards.**
- 2. Pilot a Youth Council for a 12-month period launching in Youth Week in April 2025.**
- 3. Adopt the proposed Terms of Reference (ToR) as included in Attachment 1 to this Minute.**
- 4. Note the Mayor is a non-voting member of the Youth Council.**
- 5. Appoint Councillor Champion as a non-voting member to the Youth Council for the period April 2025 - April 2026.**
- 6. Request the General Manager undertake review of the Youth Council following conclusion of the pilot in April 2026 and report outcomes back to Council by June 2026.**

1. Introduction

The Wingecarribee Shire Youth Council empowers young people to represent the voice of youth in the Wingecarribee Shire and to develop their skills to build engaged citizens and progressive leadership.

2. Purpose

The Wingecarribee Shire Youth Council's role is to represent the voice of young people who live, work, play and study in the Wingecarribee Local Government Area. It provides a formal means for representation and information exchange between Council and young people and provides opportunities for young people to raise local youth issues.

3. Aims and Objectives

Wingecarribee Shire Youth Council aims and objectives are to:

- Provide valuable advice to the Council on matters that affect young people before formal decisions are made.
- Create opportunities for youth engagement with the Council and ensure young voices are heard.
- Promote a youth voice to Council in a structured and formal way for future planning decisions.
- Represent the interests, perspectives, challenges, and opportunities of young people in our municipality.
- Establish connections between the Wingecarribee Shire Councillors and young people.

4. Youth Council membership

The Youth Council will consist of the following voting members:

- a. Two representatives across Year 7 to Year 12 from each local High School including:
 - Bowral High School
 - Moss Vale High School
 - Chevalier College
 - Oxley College
 - St Paul's International College
 - Frensham School
 - Southern Highlands Christian School
 - Aurora Steiner Southern Highlands
 - Family Run Education Southern Highlands (Home School Network)
- b. The Youth Council will consist of the following non-voting members:
 - Mayor of Wingecarribee Shire Council
 - Councillor – to be advised
 - Council Community Development Officer

Appointment of Youth Council voting members will be for a one-year term.

Selection of Youth Council voting members will be done through an open application process managed through the abovementioned schools and school network.

A Councillor may attend Youth Council meetings as an observer. However, the Councillor is not entitled to give notice of business for inclusion in the agenda for the meeting or to vote at the meeting.

5. Meetings

Meetings will be held three times per year (once per term) during school hours and at various school locations. Meetings may also be held online using video conferencing.

Youth Council members will also participate in the Annual one-day Youth Forum that will be held at a Council facility.

Council's Community Development Officer will assist Youth Council members in the performance of secretariat duties. The format of minutes will be determined by the Youth Council at its first meeting.

Agenda items will be called for at least a fortnight prior to the scheduled meeting and the agenda and reports will be distributed one week prior to the meeting.

Youth Council members will notify Council's Community Development Officer 24 hours prior to the scheduled meeting if they are unable to attend.

6. Responsibilities of voting members

Youth Council members are required to:

- Bring their own experiences of being a young person in the Wingecarribee Shire.
- Keep informed of current issues and emerging themes in relation to young people.
- Represent local young people.
- Be aware of the activities, interests and concerns relating to the youth sector and the lives of young people in the Shire.
- Prepare for and participate in regular Youth Council meetings
- Engage with and seek feedback from other young people in the Shire in relation to the topics discussed at Youth Council meetings
- Act as ambassadors for the Youth Council in the community and amongst other young people.

7. Responsibilities of non-voting members

Non-voting members are required to:

- Actively listen to the experiences and feedback from the Youth Council
- Be aware of the activities, interests and concerns relating to the youth sector and the lives of young people in the Shire.
- Prepare for and participate in regular Youth Council meetings
- Engage with and seek feedback from other young people in the Shire in relation to the topics discussed at Youth Council meetings

8. Meeting proceedings

- a) The Youth Council will operate on a consensus basis with members to have an equal say in any discussions required.
- b) Should a vote be necessary each member of the Youth Council is entitled to one vote with the Youth Council Chair to hold the casting vote if there is a deadlock of votes.
- c) The Youth Council will select one of its members as the Chairperson and another as the alternate Chairperson for each meeting.
- d) A quorum comprising of at least half of the Youth Council members must be present at all Youth Council meetings. Without a quorum, no business may be conducted.
- e) The meetings are not open to the public; however, other persons with relevant expertise and skills may be invited to attend the meetings at the request of the Chairperson on behalf of the Youth Council to provide advice and assistance where necessary. These invitees have no voting rights.
- f) The meeting minutes are to be reported to Councillors via a Councillor Update. Any matters arising that require a separate decision of Council may at the discretion of the General Manager be reported at a Council meeting for formal consideration by Councillors.
- g) Once reported to Councillors, the meeting minutes will be published on Council's website.

9. Providing advice to Council

The Youth Council may invite Council Officers to meetings for the purpose of gaining information and consulting on relevant Council strategies and policies. The Youth Council may also engage with Council Officers at Youth Council meetings for the purpose of providing expert advice to Council on topics and issues relevant to young people.

10. Relationship with Council

The Youth Council will report to and meet with Council twice yearly informing Council of identified issues or priorities of the Youth Council, projects and portfolio work undertaken by Youth Council members and enter into dialogue with Council leaders around issues of importance or consequence for young people.

A suitable forum for these twice-yearly meetings will be determined once the Youth Council is established and may include presentations/discussion at Council Briefings.

The mode of report will be chosen by Youth Council members. Reports to Council could incorporate but are not limited to; video or infographic reports; verbal Council presentations; written updates (memos, letters or submissions)

11. Public Statements

Members of the Youth Council cannot make public statements on behalf of Council as an independent group without prior approval of the General Manager or nominee.

12. Review of Terms of Reference

These Terms of Reference may be reviewed after 12 months in consultation with Youth Council membership. Council will work with Youth Council through a codesign process to explore opportunities to evolve the committee towards a Youth Council Committee.

13. Youth Council Code of Conduct

Youth Council members are expected to abide by the following Code of Conduct:

- Respect differing opinions and foster an inclusive environment
- Maintain confidentiality
- Uphold Council values of Resilience, Empathy, Sustainability, Pride, Efficiency, Courage and Teamwork.