

# 2024 Youth Council

Annual Report



## Acknowledgement of Country

Gladstone Regional Council would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Bailai, the Gurang, the Gooreng Gooreng and the Taribelang Bunda people.

We pay respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Gladstone Regional Council is committed to cultivating a culture of inclusion and connectedness, acknowledging that our communities are richer when diversity is embraced.

## **Onboarding**

The Gladstone Regional Council Meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2024 actioned the endorsement of 11 new Youth Council members. The endorsed members were as follows:

1. Shriyanshi Sharma
2. Logan Althaus
3. Ava Hetherington
4. Jiexi Zang
5. Matt Torres
6. Rosharne Cakau
7. Kyle Weekes
8. Holly Morton
9. Lochlain Cathcart
10. Jakob Humphries
11. Naomi-Jon Redshaw

The Youth Council began their journey in early February 2024, with training on Youth Council Governance Procedures. This training, conducted by Council's Governance team, gave the newly appointed Youth Council an overview of their responsibilities as Youth Councillors and an introduction to the governing laws relevant to Local Government Advisory Committees. Additionally, the Youth Council were provided with an Orientation Session, training on 'The Art of Hosting' and 'Four-Fold Practice' as well as team building sessions with a focus on Asset Based Community Development.

On 20 February, Council hosted a Meet and Greet function at the Council Chambers to welcome the newly endorsed members. During the event, members introduced themselves, met the CEO, General Managers, the Mayor and Councillors, and received their Youth Council resource pack and shirt. The Mayor, Councillors, and the Executive Leadership Team provided the Youth Council with an overview of Council's operations and functions.


In March, nominations were called for Youth Council Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. Members stepped up to give speeches as to why they were seeking nomination. After a vote overseen by Mayor Burnett, Rosharne Cakau was elected Chairperson, and Holly Morton was elected Vice Chairperson.

The onboarding, Meet and Greet event, training, and election process created a welcoming and supportive environment for the new Youth Council members, setting them up for a productive and successful year.

## **2024 Projects and Activities**

### **1. Youth Council Meetings**

On 4 March, the first official Youth Council meeting was held under the leadership of the newly elected Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. The Youth Council held 12 formal meetings in 2025 giving the team an opportunity for members to experience formal advisory committee operations, including adhering to Local Government Legislation, upholding the Terms of Reference, and managing formal meeting documentation.



The Mayor and Councillors regularly attended meetings throughout the year to participate in Q&A sessions, allowing Youth Council members to gain insight into the local government sector and build relationships with seasoned professionals.

In addition to the Mayor and Councillors, many external guests from local, district and state organisations in various fields attended Youth Council meetings. These sessions provided Youth Council members with opportunities to engage with other organisations and exchange ideas, offering feedback from a youth perspective.

## **2. Advocacy & Engagement**


The Youth Council's activities throughout 2024 have highlighted their commitment to serving the youth community of Gladstone. Through their efforts, the Youth Council have tackled a range of topics, including mental health, education, environmental sustainability and social justice. The Youth Council have engaged with various organisations' community events throughout the year, including:

- Central Queensland Health and Hospital Service Sun Safe Program
- Welcoming Week Morning Tea – Boyne Island
- International Women's Day Dinner
- Zonta International Women's Day Breakfast
- GRC Access and Inclusion Action Plan Focus Group
- Coordinated Community Response to Domestic and Family Violence (CCRDFV) Remembrance Service
- First Nations Fire Management Workshop
- National Volunteers Week Breakfast of Champions
- Queensland Government Women on Boards Networking Event Rockhampton
- QAL Advisory Committee Meetings
- Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Council
- GRC Volunteer Cruise
- NAIDOC Expo
- Walking 4 Warriors
- CQU Hydrogen Community Hub
- Festival of Summer
- Roseberry Queensland AGM and 40<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration
- ANZAC Day Service
- Remembrance Day Service

Demonstrating a commitment to inclusivity and representation of young people in collaboration with community organisations, the Youth Council will continue to advocate and engage with the community to ensure that youth perspectives are considered in order to create opportunities for young people in the region in 2025 and beyond.

## **3. Youth Week**

In April, the Youth Council participated in Youth Week, engaging with the broader youth community in Gladstone to celebrate and advocate for youth issues. A collaboration between Youth Council, GRC, PCYC and Headspace, resulted in a week filled with fun activities across the region, including skateboard workshops, pool activities, art and craft and interactive stalls. Events were held at Agnes



Water, Mount Larcom, Calliope and Gladstone across the week, with young people being treated to a series of free activities and workshops.

As part of Youth Week celebrations, the Youth Council were successful in gaining a grant of \$5,000 via the Central Queensland Health and Hospital Service Sun Safety Initiative to help promote awareness of sun safety among young people in the region. To deliver on this initiative the Youth Council spoke with youth who attended the Youth Week activities across the region about how to be sun safe, using innovative sun safe products such as UV Stickers and wristbands as well as sunscreen sticks, hats and information packs on sun safety. The Youth Council also designed their own sun safety messages and marketing collateral which were printed onto corflutes and used throughout the week to help promote the sun safety message, as well as highlighting the artistic talents of young people in our region.

#### **4. Ecofest**


The Youth Council made a great impression at this year's Ecofest held at the Tondoon Botanic Gardens in early June with an environmental awareness initiative targeted at young people to encourage people to think differently about recycling and how they can protect the environment. It was decided by the Youth Council team to create a Community Tree Canvas, an interactive art piece where community members can add their fingerprint to the tree to offer a commitment to environmental stewardship. Along with the Community Canvas, Trash Fash Tash was born, a concept to create a recycled outfit on a mannequin to highlight the various uses of recycled items that would normally end up in land fill. These concepts were developed during Youth Council meetings and a series of workshops that followed to design and create the outfit Tash would be wearing. For this project, the Youth Council also partnered with the GRC Waste Education team to help spread awareness of recycling on the day with information on the different types of materials and how they should be disposed of.

The stall was very popular among Ecofest attendees with many stopping to admire Trash Fash Tash and have their photo taken with her as well as participate in the interactive and informative activities. Youth Councillor Naomi-Jon also gave a speech at the main stage on the Youth Council's involvement at Ecofest and how the concept had come about. This project stemmed from eco-anxiety being flagged as a concern among young people in the community and is a fantastic initiative by the Youth Council to raise awareness about environmental issues and spark conversation about positive change for the future.

#### **5. Mayor's Youth Dinner**

In August, the Youth Council hosted the Mayor's Youth Dinner at the Gladstone Entertainment and Convention Centre. The event celebrated the achievements of young people in the Gladstone Region, for their contributions to sports, arts, academics, or community service. This year the event was changed to a dinner event rather than a breakfast as previously held, in response to community feedback, with a night time event proving more time friendly for families and regional community members to attend.

Members of the Youth Council were actively involved in the planning of this event and shared the hosting responsibilities on the night. The event planning process allowed the Youth Council to gain experience in event management, including run sheets, budgeting, risk management, and public speaking.



Attendees were treated to a three-course meal and entertainment with a special showing of the Olympics 800m event with the crowd supporting and cheering on Boyne Island local Peyton Craig. The Mayor's Youth Dinner was a resounding success, with nearly 400 community members coming together to recognise and celebrate the outstanding efforts, achievements, and contributions of the youth in our region.

## **6. Youth Council Review**

This year a review of the Youth Council was held to evaluate Council's current methods of engaging with young people and to develop a strategic plan to better engage and activate local youth. This review involved conducting a survey of current and past members of the Youth Council (past five years), a survey of current GRC Councillors, a workshop with current Youth Council members and research of best practice across various local governments.

From the findings of the engagement, it was proposed to create a Youth Council and a Youth Events Team. The breakdown of each team's purpose and objectives are as follows:

### **a) Youth Council:**

A formal Advisory Committee with a focus on strategy and advocacy:

- One-year program, with options for reappointment
- Fortnightly meetings and engagements during school terms
- Formal meetings and reports to council biannually
- Representation on Council's other advisory committees encouraged

Skills acquired:

- community engagement
- public speaking
- advocacy

Ongoing opportunities:

- stay on advisory committee
- run for position as a Councillor or local government officer

### **b) Youth Events Team**

A team of young people who plan and deliver one event for youth in their community:

- A rolling six-month program governed by a 'role description'
- Regional activation plan - delivered in Boyne/Tannum initially, followed by Agnes, Mt Larcom, Rosedale.

Skills acquired:

- Event management
- Budgeting
- Marketing
- Volunteer management

Ongoing opportunities:

- Events traineeship at Council
- Join Council's Events volunteers
- Join the Youth Council

The proposal and associated new Terms of Reference was presented at a Council General meeting and formally adopted at the General Council meeting on 1 October 2024.

## **7. 2025 Youth Council Recruitment Campaign**

In October, applications opened for the 2025 Youth Council. Current members played a significant role in promoting the program through school assemblies, social media, and school newsletters. This year, the introduction of a streamlined online application form made it easier for young people to submit an expression of interest. Youth Council chairperson Rosharne and Vice Chairperson Holly promoted the Youth Council in a video clip which was aired on Seven Regional News and Win Central Queensland, highlighting the positive roles of young people in the community and encouraging young people to consider joining the 2025 Youth Council.

Interest in joining the Youth council in 2025 was very high with 22 applications in total including 16 new applications and 5 members of the 2024 Youth Council returning for another term. Interviews commenced in early December with the new cohort of Youth Council members planned to be endorsed at the Council General Meeting in January 2025.

### **Conclusion**

The Gladstone Youth Council have dedicated their time and energy to representing the voices of youth in our community. These passionate individuals have not only demonstrated a commitment to civic engagement but have also shown exceptional leadership, creativity, and resilience in advocating for the needs and interests of their peers. From organising events to raising awareness about critical issues affecting young people, our volunteers have played a pivotal role in fostering a sense of community and belonging among youth in the Gladstone Region. Their innovative ideas and enthusiastic approach ensure that all young people feel respected, and every youth voice is valued and heard.



[www.gladstone.qld.gov.au](http://www.gladstone.qld.gov.au)

