

2017 Invercargill City Youth Council Report

Compiled by the ICYC members and the Community Development Team

The 2017 Invercargill City Youth Council (ICYC) has had a successful year. There were 24 members on the 2017 ICYC. There was a good mixture of experienced members and new members. The average time served by members is two years. The model of two Youth Councils, year 11 and under and student's year 12 and over, was continued from the 2016 ICYC. The two Youth Councils were named respectively the Unders and the Overs for short. The Overs Youth Council had 14 members and the Unders had 10 members. Each Youth Council had a mixture of gender, age, and experience. Each of the Youth Council's would meet separately and discuss issues before coming together to report on the key findings. The 2017 version appeared to work much better as compared to the 2016 version of this model. It is believed that that the lower numbers positively influenced this. This model again provided an opportunity for some of the younger ICYC members to find a civic voice within their own peer group, whereas the older group have been able to put into practise their experience. Having two youth councils created an environment where members could engage in healthy debate on topics and issues. There were several occasions whereby the Youth Council had to navigate through differing opinions to come to a common consensus. This was something they were able to achieve, with members having the opportunity to make contributions and have their opinions and ideas heard. As usual the ICYC ran Committees to facilitate specific projects. Committees were open to members from both Youth Councils and were seen as a good way for peer leadership opportunities, with the older and more experienced members imparting their knowledge and experience to the younger members.

The following is a description of some of the committee projects, achievements and activities that the 2017 ICYC have been involved in this year. Each item includes a comment from a youth council member.

Team Building

The year started out with a team building exercise held in February. Nic and Jess from Adventure Development Limited Invercargill facilitated the 2017 team building exercise for ICYC. The team building exercise consisted of some large group games on the grassed area outside Number 10 and some smaller team games in the Baptist Church Hall on Deveron Street. The feedback received from members was very positive and all members who completed the team building exercises said that they would attend an event like this again. Nic and Jess commented on how impressed they were with how well members participated and got involved. The team building exercise created an environment for new members to become acquainted with experienced members and set the tone for the rest of the year.

"The team building event was a success and let the Youth Council members come together and develop the Youth Council's teamwork as a whole, this influenced the Youth Council's success throughout the year." *Janaya Stevenson – Unders*

Smoke Free Committee

The Smokefree Committee, originally termed the Smokefree Esk Street Committee has been a long-standing project of the ICYC. The committee was originally formed 2 years ago and each year new members have joined and carried on the work from previous years. The 2017 committee saw the culmination of the previous years' hard work with a draft Council Policy going out for public consultation. The ICYC are very proud of the effort they have put in to this and it has been great for some members to be part of the process from the beginning and watch how democracy and local government can work.

"The smoke free initiative was first developed from the opinions of the members of the youth council in 2015. Many events and surveys have taken place over the previous years, such as smokefree cars and surveys about a smokefree CBD. The traction has been really positive and hopefully continues into the future." *Caitlin Boyle - Overs*

Youth Week

The theme for the 2017 Youth Week was '*Our voices count; count our voices.*' The Youth Week Committee decided a survey was the best way to honour this theme. The Youth Week Committee wanted to find out youth opinion about what they thought about Invercargill and how to improve engagement in future Youth Weeks. A paper and electronic survey was administered across five high schools in Invercargill, 238 responses were received back. The information was collated and interpreted and some good feedback was received on how to improve future youth week events. This mainly revolved around a free event with food that is well advertised. Other conclusions gained from the survey suggested that youth had a mainly positive view of Invercargill although they could see areas that would make it more youth friendly.

"This year Youth Week has been a major learning experience for us and we are really pleased with the feedback we got. This year's survey should prove very beneficial for future youth weeks and it was really fun to make." *Mackenzie Fallow - Unders*

Social Media

The Social Media Committee is solely in charge of managing the ICYC Facebook page. There were 8 members on the committee. The work of the committee has seen the ICYC Facebook page steadily gain in popularity over the year. The committee was able to improve the relevance and frequency of their posts. This was directly related to the training that was attended at the #Activate Conference. As well as this the Social Media Committee set up private chat groups and this proved a good forum for communicating to a large proportion of the ICYC members in real time. The result of this saw engagement with posts increase over the year. This was not without its challenges, however, 2017 has been provided a lot of good learning to the ICYC and its members at how social media can be used both positively and negatively.

“Over the year we have achieved a lot, such as informing the public on events and hosting some great chats. We have been able to help people get information and get photos from a variety of different events. I would say this year was very successful for the Facebook page gaining close to 100 likes.” *Calvin Jenkins - Unders*

It's L.I.T.

It's L.I.T was a forum event run by an ICYC committee. It was held on Friday 9 June at the Invercargill Working Men's club. The event was funded through a Ministry of Youth Development grant that the Youth Council received in 2016. Invercargill secondary schools, training providers, and youth services were invited. Eighty-two young people registered to attend the event. There were 3 speakers invited to discuss Leadership, Innovation and Teamwork (L.I.T). Andrew Moreton CEO of Rugby Southland spoke about team-work, Joe Findlay a young rowing coach from Invercargill spoke about leadership, and Orion Scott from Wellington spoke about innovation and her own design label that she started in her boarding school bedroom. The second half of the day was called Ignition where five entrepreneurial projects were presented to a dragon's den styled panel. The panel chose three groups to receive a \$300 grant and mentoring to get their project off the ground. The evaluations of the event indicated that the event was very well received.

“The ‘It's L.I.T’ youth leadership forum was possibly one of the most successful ICYC events held in recent years. There was a good turnout of people from all different schools and backgrounds and the guest speakers were interesting and relatable. Overall the day was engaging and enjoyable and I believe that I personally took a lot away from it.” *Tom Kennedy - Overs'*

Mates Helping Mates – Youthline Peer Support Training

At the second meeting of the year the Unders group discussed getting training around how they could better respond to their peers who were in distress. Community Development staff contacted Youthline to organise a training to support members with this topic. Youthline developed a bespoke programme for ICYC members to attend. This focussed on developing a self-awareness on what people's personal triggers are, how to support someone in distress and where to access help and support in the local community. The training was over three one hour sessions and was held in May. Feedback from members was that the training was useful. Youthline were impressed by the ICYC's request and that they were trying to be proactive around providing support to other youth in the city.

“I found this course to be thoroughly enjoyable and also extremely informative. I gained lots of new skills in how to relate to others that I use in my day to day life, and am now able to continue to pass those skills on, making the training a huge success.” *Phoebe Lee - Overs'*

Committee for a Brighter Invers – New Entrance signs

This committee which has been concentrating on improving the city's entranceway welcoming signage and has been patiently waiting for a Council decision on future funding for this project. The project presented an assessment case to the LTP process and has now gone into recess awaiting future developments.

"This committee continued from 2016. Though the new entrance sign proposal has stagnated we still believe that this idea is something worth continuing with in the future. We are also confident the public is interested in this concept. We are pleased with the progress and that the council is aware of this idea." *Meg O'Connell - Overs'*

UN Sustainable Goals

The UN-Sustainable Goals Committee was formed to generate knowledge around the 17 goals that have been developed by the United Nations with the purpose to make the world a better place to live over the next 15 years. The committee had a lot of interest with fourteen members from both the Overs and the Unders wanting to participate. The major achievement for the committee was a project which is relevant to Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities. The project was an Interschool Plastic Bag Challenge where students in years 7 & 8 were encouraged to bring clean plastic bag's to school. The school that collected the most plastic bags won a park bench made from recycled plastic bags. The Committee members produced a short video about the project which was posted to the ICYC Facebook page. The project was successful collecting 7342 plastic bags during the week-long event. Southland Boys' High School was the winner collecting plastic bags.

"I wanted to initiate a subcommittee focusing on spreading awareness of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals across youth from Invercargill. The main reason why I wanted to initiate the subcommittee is because a lot of youth aren't familiar with the goals. I believe it's important for youth to be aware of what the United Nations are putting in place, as we are the generation to make the change." *Madison Flannery – Unders*

South Island Youth Council Forum - #activate

Over the weekend of 13 and 14 May 2017 Hayden Scott-Chambers, Hamish Muhl, Caitlin Smith and Janaya Stevenson represented ICYC at the South Island Youth Council forum - #Activate. This was hosted by Youth Voice Canterbury at the Blue Skies Youth Lodge in Kaiapoi. The event was attended by 120 young people from 20 Youth Council/Youth Participation organisations around the South Island. Several different workshops were held across the two-day event including: The youth code of ethics, Treaty of Waitangi, wellbeing and resilience, running events, social media and engaging Pasifika youth. The keynote presentation was from the National Refugee Youth Council, the first type of Youth Council for refugee youth in the world. There was also time to network and learn how other youth council's work.

“#activate 2017 was a very enriching experience for me. It was an amazing opportunity to be able network and connect with people from other Youth Councils around the South Island. I made a lot of connections at this event, and I talk to many of them about youth issues, on a regular basis. The highlight of the event though, was the keynote speech from the National Refugee Youth Council. Their recount of their stories, was very moving and gave me a new perspective about refugee issues. Overall, the weekend was an amazing experience.” *Hamish Muhl – Overs’*

Submissions and Consultations

During 2017 ICYC made many submissions and were consulted for their opinions over several different topics. These included the following;

- Arts Murhiku
- Smoke free submission
- Healthy Families
- Annual Plan
- Long-Term Plan
- Southland Regional Development Agency submission

ICYC Members’ Evaluation

Youth Council members were given the opportunity to evaluate their experience of the 2017 ICYC. Members were asked to rate this out of 10, with ten being a positive experience. Members rated their experience highly and the mean rating was an 8 out of 10, 30% rated their experience as being 10 out of 10. Members were asked if they felt heard during Youth Council meetings with 86% agreeing with this. Ninety percent of members felt that the Invercargill City Council listened to the Youth Council and 100% of members participated in a project or a committee. This was an improvement on 2016. Members were also asked to provide comment on their experiences. Some themes that were identified were that members felt that the Youth Council provided an opportunity to further develop skills such as leadership and communication skills, as well as the Youth Council being a good way to have a voice. Members’ also provided valuable feedback on how their experience could be improved, this included suggestions around how to structure meetings better. Overall comments made by members were positive about their experience.

Chairpersons’ Comments

This year has been my first year on the Invercargill City Youth Council. I was lucky enough to have been elected as a chair person and enjoyed the responsibilities and challenges I faced with fulfilling the role. This year I think the Youth Council have done extremely well. Everyone has been open to new ideas and collectively we all put our best foot forward when it came to discussions around things that arose on the agenda and other topics and opinions other people had. This year I personally enjoyed getting to meet new people and believe I have gained many new skills. I really

enjoyed being a part of the UN Sustainable Development Goals committee and believe that this was a good way to get the youth of Invercargill more involved in what will eventually affect our future. I think this was well communicated to the youth by the Year 7-8 inter-school plastic bag challenge and thought it was a fun way to get everyone more aware of the goals. Overall, I believe it has been a successful year for everyone on the ICYC. *Emilia Dermody -Unders Chairperson*

I have thoroughly enjoyed my year on the youth council. It has been an awesome experience. It has been great to see all the projects that have taken place and all the great discussions to inform the community on what's happening. It has also been great having the separation for the youth council into the Unders and Overs. I think that it was a great idea. I am looking forward to see what will happen next year. *Calvin Jenkins - Unders Chairperson*

Being a Co-Chair for the Unders of the 2017 Youth Council has yet again been an amazing experience, and has offered me many opportunities that have helped me progress into a successful leader. This year the Youth Council has continued to organise a variety of opportunities and events for the Invercargill youth to learn about leadership, teamwork and the importance of our voice. An example of this being the 'It's L.I.T.' leadership forum that some of our members organised. Its L.I.T. encouraged students to be innovative and take any opportunities that arise, which is something that our council strives to achieve. The 2017 Invercargill City Youth council has been a huge success and I feel extremely proud to be a part of a group that cares so much about Invercargill and particularly its Youths involvement. For anyone who is interested in joining our council in 2018 I would highly recommend becoming a part of this rewarding and fun group! *Meg Laker – Unders Chairperson*

Being a Co-Chairperson of the 2017 Youth Council after being a member in 2016 has been a great privilege I have not taken lightly. Being in this position I have adapted and improved in many leadership qualities, for example working with others. Having 3 chairpersons has been a really valuable experience and made me delegate work better and taught me how to learn off others and work as a cohesive leadership team. Being a chairperson has improved my understanding and heightened my confidence in regard to dealing with conflict and how to handle it correctly, to come to an outcome that everyone is pleased with, and resolve the matter civilly. Being a chairperson I have been exposed to an array of opportunities that I have truly appreciated and I would highly recommend joining the Youth Council in 2018 or running for chair if available. I am extremely grateful that my peers elected me to represent them and lead their meetings and want to also thank Mary, Councillor Crackett and Ollie for their ongoing assistance this year and support whilst chairing. *Meg O'Connell – Overs Chairperson*

This year's Youth Council was one of immense challenge and reward. I personally feel that the communication, acceptance, and cooperation has grown significantly among the group as the year has progressed. We overcame conflict and challenges in mature, and professional manners. Similar to 2016, the combination of the 'Unders ' and 'Overs' groups allowed for healthy discussion surrounding many interesting topics. Differing opinions made each meeting interesting, and I feel that each member always had the opportunity to speak up and be heard. The 2017 Youth Council group has been an exciting and motivated group to work with. *Jack Shaw – Overs Chairperson*

It has been a great pleasure to Co-Chair the Overs Invercargill City Youth Council alongside both Meg and Jack. The Youth Council this year, in my opinion, had a great bunch of people who had lots to contribute to meetings and whom I have learnt a lot from. Most of all I have learnt a lot about working in a team and how to deal with, at times, difficult situations. Being part of the Social Media Committee I have enjoyed seeing our Facebook page likes and post interaction increase and I hope next year's Youth Council continues to build on this. I have had a fun time, some of the best being when we, the Overs Youth Council, go off on tangents at almost every meeting, leading to the Unders' Youth Council peering through the glass waiting for us to finish. I would also like to thank Ollie, Mary, Cr Crackett and Gemma for being fantastic leaders for us all this year and keeping the ship running smoothly. *Laura McDonald – Overs Chairperson*

Looking Forward

The ICYC looks to celebrate 20 years in 2018. This will make the Invercargill Youth Council one of the longest standing concurrent Youth Councils in New Zealand. There has already been some discussion around possible special projects that could be used to mark the occasion, for example the development of a new logo and a series of articles in the media highlighting the role youth council membership has had in the future of past youth council members.

Conclusions

This report outlines the key successes and projects completed during 2017 by the ICYC. It highlights another extremely successful year for the ICYC and its members. ICYC members have gained some valuable learning from their experiences in 2017 and the ICYC continues to provide a forum for Invercargill's Youth to become civically engaged in their city, as well as providing an environment for positive youth development. The model of the Overs and Unders appears to have worked well by providing an environment for younger members to find their civic voices. This has been highlighted by the projects initiated by the Unders: UN Sustainable Goals and Mates Helping Mates. The 2018 year again looks promising with many projects continuing and possibly starting to celebrate the ICYC's 20th year.