

For immediate release
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2024 NSW YOUTH PARLIAMENT PARTICIPANTS PROUDLY REPRESENT DIVERSITY

The next generation of youth leaders kicked off the 2024 Youth Parliament program at Camp Yarramundi last month, with the 70 participants proudly representing the wonderful diversity of youth in NSW.

Youth Parliament is the Y NSW's flagship youth leadership and engagement program that has been operating for over 20 years in NSW. With a focus on leadership and advocacy, the program enables high school students in years 10 to 12 to build confidence, develop leadership skills, engage with civic leadership, policy development and democratic parliamentary debate.

This year's cohort represent 53 per cent of NSW electorates, with participants from rural and regional communities, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and those living with a disability or mental health diagnosis. Of the 70 participants, six participants identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and 23 identify as LGBTQIA+.

"We are so thrilled to see broad participation from young leaders of diverse backgrounds and rural communities. Their unique perspectives and experiences are essential in shaping discussions and policies at the Youth Parliament, ensuring all voices are heard in decision-making processes effecting our collective future," said Prue Warrilow, Interim Executive Director of the Y NSW.

Youth Parliament plays an important role in public discourse as it is about empowerment and advocacy. It provides a platform for young people to have their voices heard on issues that are important to them and their local communities.

"Led by young people for young people, our Youth Parliament participants receive training over a six-month period that includes in-person camps and online workshops. They create Youth Bills with recommendations on issues for change, debate in a mock sitting week in NSW Parliament and present to Members of Parliament and peak bodies," continued Ms Warrilow.

The Y NSW committed heavily to seeking sponsors for the program to reduce barriers of diverse young people applying. Proudly, this resulted in 74% of participants being sponsored for this year's program. The major sponsor was Department of Regional Youth

"We believe this iconic program should be accessible to all young people, regardless of circumstances, and therefore launched a Youth Parliament sponsorship program last year to seek generous support for young people who are experiencing marginalisation or disadvantage," added Ms Warrilow.

The sponsorship program will give young people experiencing disadvantage or marginalisation the opportunity to gain leadership and advocacy skills, create meaningful friendships and have their voices heard, without a financial barrier.

"In the past only a handful of participants have been sponsored but with the generosity of our program partners and other donors we have helped more than 51 young people across our state to experience the life-changing program in 2024," she concluded.

Participants attended the April Youth Parliament Training Camp which allows the participants to connect and engage in a series of workshops ranging from advocacy, leadership and parliamentary education. These workshops prepare each committee to write a Youth Bill, which will be debated in the Parliament of NSW later in the year.

For more information on The Y NSW's Youth Parliament visit www.ymcansw.org.au/.

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About the Y NSW:

The Y NSW is a vibrant, for-purpose organisation delivering cause-driven programs and valuable community services that help strengthen young people's lives, their families, and the communities in which they live. The Y is part of the largest youth organisations in the world, YMCA, which reaches across 120 countries. The Y NSW serves more than 40 communities in NSW and employs more than 1500 people. Each year, more than 2 million people visit our fitness and aquatic centres and more than 10,000 children attend our Outside School Hours Care services.