# Meet the members

Ministerial Youth Advisory Council

The Ministerial Youth Advisory Council (MYAC) was established in 2017 to provide advice to the Minister for Youth on matters relating to young people. MYAC is made up of 11 young Western Australians, aged 15 to 25 years, who draw upon their relevant knowledge, experience and skills. The members below were appointed on 8 July 2024 and will serve until 30 June 2026.

### Co-chair – Alessia Maio || 22 || she/her || Perth

What made you want to be a part of MYAC?

I wanted to be a part of MYAC because I am passionate about advocating for issues that affect young people in our community. I believe that youth voices are crucial in shaping policies and initiatives that directly impact our lives. Being a part of MYAC will give me the opportunity to contribute to meaningful discussions and influence decisions that lead to positive change. Furthermore, I am eager to collaborate with other like-minded young individuals and learn from their experiences and perspectives.

Living with an incurable auto-immune disease has given me a unique perspective on the challenges that young people face and the impact of those challenges. After working in multiple high schools around Perth, I have witnessed firsthand the struggles and triumphs of youth in our community. These experiences have fuelled my passion for advocating on their behalf and striving to make a meaningful difference. Many young people feel as though they do not have a voice, so I am committed to ensuring that their needs and perspectives are heard and addressed effectively. Joining MYAC offers me the platform to voice these concerns and work collaboratively towards creating positive changes that will benefit young people. This role aligns with my personal values and aspirations of making a tangible difference in society.

If you studied/are studying, what course did you complete/are you completing and how is this setting you up for the future?

In December of 2023 I graduated from the University of Western Australia, completing a Bachelor of Arts with an Italian major and French minor. My degree at UWA was enriching and it was a time of self-discovery, learning and personal growth. After my educational experience at UWA, I was eager to further my education and pursue a career in the field of healthcare, specifically paramedicine. From a young age, I have had a strong desire to help and support others, especially those who are in vulnerable states, or those who are less fortunate than myself. This led me to dream of becoming a paramedic; a career in which I can save lives, support individuals in need and make a lasting impact on patients. I am now studying a Bachelor of Paramedical Science at Edith Cowan University, with the hopes of continuing my studies to a Masters in Critical Care Paramedicine. My ideal job title is a Critical Care Paramedic, a role that provides advanced life support for patients requiring a higher level of medical care in a pre-hospital setting.

I am confident that pursuing a degree in Paramedical Science will allow me to make a meaningful contribution to society, whilst also fulfilling my desire for continuous learning. I am eager to become a part of the community of professionals who strive to make a difference in the world of healthcare. There is a consistent demand for skilled Paramedics, providing strong job security and opportunities for employment across various regions. Paramedics play a vital role in their communities by providing critical emergency care and support, making a significant impact on public health and safety. I look forward to the challenges this career will bring, as well as the dynamic work environment.

### Co-Chair – Joshua Peckover || 21 || he/him || Peel

What made you want to be a part of MYAC?

I believe that the Government can have an incredibly positive impact on young people’s lives. I wanted to be part of the conversations that help frame how State Government will interact with young people and address youth issues in Western Australia.

I hope to help Government make the community aware of the services they provide to young people. Too often are young people shrugged off as having no interest in government and being too apathetic to engage in civic processes. I firmly believe that it is not the case that young people have no interest in government, but instead that young people are not aware of just how big of a role Government plays in their lives. I want to advise State Government and the Minister on ways they can meaningfully interact with young people to include them better in civic processes and providing services.

What is your job? How does being a young person help you in your chosen job?

I am the coordinator of a program called Youth Parliament in Western Australia. This program gathers 59 young people to each represent an electorate of the WA Legislative Assembly, and craft bills that address youth issues in Western Australia. Being a young person in this role is very rewarding. I get to appreciate first-hand the passion of our young people in Western Australia and support them in advocating for the issues they care most about. I also work along a team of fantastic young people who generously volunteer their time to help run this program. Being involved in a program that is run by young people, for young people, is an incredibly empowering experience.

### Member – Amani Kariuki || 17 || she/her || Perth

What are you most excited about with the possibility of serving on MYAC?

I’m so excited about the opportunity to meet a variety of fellow young people through serving on MYAC and being able to discuss the areas I’m passionate about with the Minister for Youth like youth justice and civic engagement. Hearing from peers about their lived experience is incredibly important to me and I am thrilled to have the opportunity to lend my voice to the chorus of advocates for youth issues.

What are you most enthusiastic about in life?

I am super enthusiastic about sport – likely owing to my competitive streak! I’ve been taking dance classes since I was in Kindy and nowadays, you can often find me at the studio training for competitions or doing some Pilates at the gym. Otherwise, I’m a keen Formula One and footy fan that yells at the TV!

### Member – Henry Bird || 17 || he/him || Perth

What made you want to be a part of MYAC?

I want to be a part of MYAC because I believe that young people can provide valuable insights to the government. Personally, I believe that environmental protection, in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, waste and land use, and supporting all West Australian young people to have diverse and fulfilling careers is of utmost priority for our government. I am excited to work with other passionate young people to make sure that these issues are on the government’s agenda.

What are you most enthusiastic about in life?

I am most enthusiastic about learning new ways of looking at things and meeting interesting people with different perspectives. I also love to unwind whilst enjoying the West Australian sunshine with my golden retriever-poodle Enzo in King’s Park or at the beach.

### Member – Isabella Choate || 25 || they/them || Perth

Why is it important for young people to have their voices heard by government?

Young people have the answers! Traditionally, youth are the disruptors - we can easily see faults in the system, often because we experience them, and we may not know the way things "should" work, so we come up with ways they could work. Furthermore, young people are actively engaged with politics - it affects every part of our lives. We rely on jobseeker, rent assistance and Youth Allowance. We access the public services like the overloaded mental health system and public hospitals. We go to school or university or TAFE. We are so involved in government systems and yet we often are overlooked as primary stakeholders during policy discussions or key decisions. It is important for young people to have our voices heard by government so that a particularly vulnerable population can be protected to become our future.

What is your job? How does being a young person help you in your chosen job?

I am currently working as the CEO of the Youth Disability Advocacy Network (YDAN). YDAN is the leading advocacy organisation for young people with disability aged 12-25 in WA. We strongly value living experience and are led by young people with disability. Being a young person in this role has been beneficial to the ways YDAN engages with community and stakeholders. Being a young person means that I not only understand, but am also living, similar experiences to those faced by our community. This means that the concerns of community are at the forefront of organisational decisions. Furthermore, it has helped develop a deeper level of trust with our board, members, and the wider community. My intersectional experiences of youth and disability help inform my flexible approach to work. Utilising job carving, flexible work times and locations, and implementing communication methods reflective of our needs, has resulted in sustainability of staff with disability. Another part of my role at YDAN is to support young people into what is often their first professional role. Having (relatively recently) experienced the confusing world of jobs and careers, I have been able to effectively support staff to understand the things that aren't taught but *are* expected in the workplace.

### Member – Joshoa Zilani || 19 || he/him || Peel

Why is it important for young people to have their voices heard by government?

Young people need to have their voices heard by Government as the policy being created now will affect them both now and especially in the future. Young people make up a significant portion of the population, however, their unique perspectives on issues and concerns are often overlooked in policymaking, which may affect them as they grow into future leaders and stakeholders in society. Young people can bring fresh perspectives and innovative ideas to the table. Their experiences can lead to creative solutions for issues, especially those affecting young people. Policies such as education, employment, and environmental sustainability, should require input from those who will be most affected by them in the long term.

Moreover, engaging young people in policymaking fosters a sense of empowerment and civic responsibility from an early age. It encourages them to actively participate in shaping their communities and societies, promoting a culture of informed citizenship and democratic engagement. By listening to and respecting young voices, governments can further build trust among younger generations, ensuring that future policies are fair and just. By listening to and consulting with young people now on policy, governments will be able to further address inter-generational inequity and ensure that policies created now will be fair and sustainable in the future.

What's your favourite way to give back to the community?

My favourite way to give back to the community is through active civic engagement in a way that creates equal opportunities and positive change for everybody. I mainly like to give back by advocating for issues that are important to the community and by empowering young people to achieve beyond their limits. I accomplish this by mentoring and facilitating young people in leadership and advocacy through workshops and events and assisting in programs that aim to build on a young person’s character development. My advocacy focuses more on the economic development of my community and providing ways to create new opportunities through policy.

### Member – Lilijana Nicholls || 20 || she/her || Perth

What made you want to be a part of MYAC?

I wanted to be a part of MYAC as I have enjoyed the time I have spent on local council advisory groups and have seen the impact that voicing my opinions and sharing my ideas can have on a local scale. I wanted to be able to take the skills I've learnt and apply them on a state-wide scale, working with other like-minded young people to enact change and provide a voice for youth.

What's your favourite way to give back to the community?

My favourite way to give back to the community is through volunteering. I have been involved with the Mandurah Youth Advisory group, running events for young people and advising on city strategies. I have also recently joined the Cockburn Youth Advisory Collective. I have volunteered with various organisations for several years, running stalls and events and mentoring STEM camps for high school students.

### Member – Nandini Gera || 19 || she/her || Goldfields/Esperance

What are you most excited about with the possibility of serving on MYAC?

I am excited to work with professionals and learn more about the state to help contribute to the betterment of youth facilities.

What are you most enthusiastic about in life?

I am most enthusiastic about experiencing little joys of life. Whether that be rain or a good sale!

### Member – Om Sharma || 19 || he/him || Perth

Why is it important for young people to have their voices heard by government?

It’s often claimed that ‘solving’ the current issues affecting young people today like mental health, cost of living or climate change should take precedence over youth voices in government. However, the opposite is true. By empowering young people and giving them spaces like the MYAC to be heard by key decision-makers in government, you actually make ‘solving’ many of the key challenges they face much easier. Young people are uniquely able to comment on and problem-solve the issues that are close to them, and providing them a platform to contribute their ideas only strengthens any work the government does to support them.

What is your job? How does being a young person help you in your chosen job?

I work as a Communications Officer for the Department of Communities, which mostly involves me writing a variety of materials including communication plans for our internal teams, feature articles and good news stories for our inter- and intranet, and content for government campaigns and state ministers. I love my job, and I like to think that being a young person allows me to have a unique perspective on the work I do, especially on topics I have personal experience with. The fact that I’m currently pursuing a degree in public relations also means I can apply the latest content from university into a real, practical environment. I wouldn’t give it up for the world.

### Member – Takunda Bere || 16 || she/her || Perth

What are you most excited about with the possibility of serving on MYAC?

I am most excited about the possibility of serving on MYAC, because it gives me the chance to proudly represent and advocate for the Kwinana community. Being able to voice not just my own opinion but also those of my peers is something I value deeply. I am also eager to foster my passion for youth advocacy. I enjoy embracing new experiences and I am looking forward to immersing myself in this opportunity.

What is your biggest passion?

Since I started my volunteering journey, my passion for youth advocacy has grown immensely and the love I’ve developed for my community is indescribable. I hope to inspire others to engage actively in their communities, fostering a similar passion for service learning. Representing young people in my community is a role I cherish deeply and it fuels my determination to encourage kindness.

### Member – Kate Monaghan || 25 || she/her || Southwest

Why is it important for young people to have their voices heard by government?

Australia is a diverse, vibrant country with people of all cultures, backgrounds, beliefs, and ages. For success in fostering an inclusive, positive and forward moving nation, it is vital to hear from as many voices as possible and to feed those voices into decision making and policy creation. If a decision affects a particular group, it would be an oversight to not include representatives of that group in the qualitative data that feeds into that decision, young people are no exception. Young people are the future (and current) leaders, they are creative, forward thinking, less afraid to take a chance, and not yet as bruised by the world – this is a pivotal voice that has the potential to drive the future of Australia.

What is your biggest passion?

My biggest passion is people. I see so many people who struggle, who have little confidence in themselves, who cannot find joy. The way this passion presents itself is through social inclusion and connection – I believe that if everyone can find somewhere they feel they belong, they can accomplish anything. Developing a social network and reducing isolation can increase confidence, cognitive function and overall health and wellbeing. It becomes so much easier for an individual to address other key challenges in their life if they feel that someone is in their corner, believes in them and will be there regardless. In a society where young people (all people) are both more connected and more isolated than ever before, the human factor is more important than ever.