

YCS Leaders Shaping the Future of NSW: Putting Faith into Action at the 2025 Youth Parliament

YCS and YCW forms leaders through the famous *see-judge-act* method by reflecting on the signs of the times through Gospel values. Young students and young workers put their faith into daily action and no more so have two YCS leaders from the Parramatta Diocese who have recently taken part in the NSW Youth Parliament during the July school holidays.

The Youth Parliament is coordinated by the Y NSW and 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.

YCS leaders, Taylah Cowley from St Columba's Catholic College Springwood and Sudeep Velagapudi from St Luke's Catholic College in Marsden Park have been able to build on their leadership first developed in their school YCS groups by learning how to create Youth Bills with recommendations on issues for change. These are debated during a mock sitting week in NSW Parliament House with Members of Parliament invited to chair.

Taylah Cowley

Taylah was appointed as the Member for the Blue Mountains and Shadow Minister for Women's Affairs. Taylah is a year 12 student at St Columba's Catholic College Springwood and is the YCS National Representative.



Taylah says that serving in the Youth Parliament has been an “an incredible opportunity to advocate, grow skills and make life-long connections.”

Taylah’s dedication, leadership and advocacy also didn’t go unnoticed either as she was named Youth Parliamentarian of the Year!

Sudeep Velagapudi

Sudeep was appointed as the Youth MP for Londonderry and Youth Minister for Health. Sudeep was also the lead sponsor of the Health and Medical Research Committee in the Youth Parliament. Sudeep is a year 11 student at St Luke’s Catholic College, Marsden Park and the YCW’s National Secretary.

Sudeep commented that “as we finish up the 2025 NSW Youth Parliament Sitting Week I am filled with an immense gratitude. I feel honoured beyond words to have been able to be Youth MP for Londonderry and Youth Minister for Health. I thank

all my AMAZING fellow Youth Parliamentarians and @the.ynswyp for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I would also like to thank the great people at @sydwestmulticulturalservices and



@blacktowncitycouncil for their support and sponsorships.

But most of all I look forward to the future with confidence that NSW is in good hands.

This is an amazing opportunity to represent the young people of NSW's concerns regarding health in our state and I aim to do just that. I thank my committee and the 2025 YP for this opportunity!"

NSW Youth Parliament

From 14 to 17 July, the Legislative Assembly hosted 89 motivated young people aged 15 to 18 from 73 electorates as they step into the shoes of Members of Parliament to present Youth Bills on the issues that they are particularly passionate about.

Now in its 24th year, Youth Parliament provides young people the opportunity to take on the role of elected representatives, re-enacting the full parliamentary process. Participants spend months working in committees to research, write, draft and debate bills to ultimately vote on youth-led legislation.

Across four days in Parliament, Youth Bills were debated on the floor, with sessions chaired by current NSW Members of Parliament (MPs). Topics spanned key areas like education, mental health, women's and aboriginal affairs, disability inclusion, sustainability and youth justice addressing the issues that matter most to young people.

This year these issues for the Y NSW Youth Parliament include:

- improving outcomes for young people in the criminal justice system
- increasing women's representation in medical research
- cultural representation and empowerment for First Nation's young people
- increasing education and career pathways
- workforce development particularly in regional areas
- redefining mental health for a community-based approach.

"Youth Parliament offers young people the opportunity to be heard on the issues that matter in their lives and communities," said Rob Kennaugh, CEO of the Y NSW.

Youth Parliament participants start with leadership and public speaking training at Y NSW's Camp Yarramundi. Over several months, they research issues, attend advocacy and parliamentary workshops, and consult community leaders to develop their Youth Bills.

"One of the most powerful things about Youth Parliament is realising that everyone, no matter where they come from, is driven by a desire to create positive change in their community.

YCW's 100 Years in Action

2025 also marks the 100th anniversary of the YCW since it was first established in Belgium by young priest, Fr. Joseph Cardijn. After witnessing his father die from the ills of factory life at the turn of the century, Cardijn consecrated his life to defending the sanctity of work and the dignity of all young workers. The YCS was established soon after. YCS and YCW continues to transform the lives of young people all over the world and will be celebrating 100 Years of Action at its National Leaders Conference in Melbourne from 29-30 November.

For more information about he YCS or YCW please contact info@ycw.org.au or visit www.ycw.org.au