

MEDIA RELEASE

YOUTH CONGRESS PROPOSED BY BUNURONG CANDIDATE: MICHAEL NUGENT

"We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future", or so said Franklin D. Roosevelt.

A proposal by Michael Nugent, Bunurong Ward candidate for next month's local elections, strives to do both. Mr Nugent wants Council to set up a Youth Congress to ensure young voices, from secondary school students to 25 year olds, become a constant presence in Council processes and are heard before decisions are made.

"Listening to our youth on issues that affect them and giving them the opportunity to raise new issues and make recommendations will help us 'build the future for our youth'. It will also help 'build our youth for the future' by giving them the training and experience they need to become our next generation of leaders." Mr Nugent said.

"Youth deserve more than occasional consultation by Council on single issues. Hearing their perspective is vital, and this can be done through a Youth Congress that meets regularly to advise Council."

"It's not only an investment in their future, but in the future of all generations, a future that will soon be in their hands."

Secondary school students to 25 year olds make up just over 11% of the local population, and that percentage has been dropping over the years and is considerably lower than Victoria's regional average. Mr Nugent believes that if we want young people to stay in the area rather than move to Melbourne or further afield, we need to build a community that is better suited to their needs, now and in the future.

He commended the current Council on the Regional University Centre announced in June, but thinks more needs to be done.

"The Council Plan says it has a 'focus on jobs of the future for today's youth' but there has been too little action to follow this through. With Council's 2016-2020 Youth Action Plan due for renewal next year, now is the perfect time to form a Youth Congress."

"Let's really listen to what our young people have to say" says Mr Nugent, as he asks them "what are your hopes, your fears, your dreams; what are your ideas for our COVID recovery and for dealing with climate change; what are your big issues and how should we, together as a united community, respond?"

"Let's harness the creativity of youth and build on it for a better Bass Coast."