

MEDIA RELEASE

Schools race to secure places at first local youth summit

10 March 2026

Ballarat's inaugural FUEL Youth Summit has reached capacity ahead of its debut, with strong demand from secondary schools across Ballarat securing all 200 places for local Year 10 students.

Delivered by the Youth Leadership Academy Australia (YLAA), the summit will bring nationally recognised youth leadership speakers and facilitators to the Civic Hall for a one-day event focused on confidence, leadership and practical skills for students.

The concept has certainly struck a chord before the doors have even opened, with Ballarat taking the opportunity to invest in their young people. The event is free for students to attend and as such nearly all Ballarat secondary schools are taking advantage of their students participating.

YLAA founder and headline speaker Wil Massara said the response to the Ballarat event reflected the importance of creating meaningful opportunities for young people to lead.

"Young people don't need to wait to become leaders, they can lead right now in their schools, friendships and communities," Mr Massara said.

"What excites us about FUEL is that students are choosing to show up for something that will challenge them, back them and remind them that they really matter. These events create the sort of momentum that shape young people's lives well beyond a single day", he said.

YLAA educates and empowers young people across Australia and is trusted by more than 1,000 schools nationally. As such, Community Bank Buninyong is bringing them to Ballarat for the Summit with venue support from the City of Ballarat.

Community Bank Buninyong's Partnerships Lead Kelly Bevan said the strong response showed just how much value local schools and students place on high-quality leadership opportunities.

“The opportunity FUEL provides has clearly resonated with schools, students and families who can see the value in giving local year 10’s such an opportunity to learn right here in Ballarat”, Ms Bevan said.

“To have YLAA delivering this program for us at the Civic Hall and to see students sign up so quickly, is a real sign that our young people are so ready for this”, she said.

FUEL forms part of Community Bank Buninyong’s broader community investment program. To date, Community Bank Buninyong has distributed more than \$2.5 million of profit to local projects and programs that strengthen the region.

Key program details

What: FUEL Youth Summit

When: Monday 16 March 2026

Where: Civic Hall Ballarat

Who: 200 students, from local Ballarat secondary schools. The FUEL Youth Summit is open to year 10 students only across the Ballarat region and students have been pre-selected by their schools to attend.

Interview/ Media Opportunities: by attending the FUEL Youth Summit on Monday 16 March and contacting Sam Elshaug 0417 585 600.

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Secondary School Contacts

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About Community Bank Buninyong

Buninyong & District Financial Services Limited (BDFSL) operates a locally owned franchise of Bendigo Bank (Community Bank Buninyong). Community Bank Buninyong exists for the purpose of distributing profit back into meaningful community projects, causes and organisations.

The company is focused on enabling organisations to make significant impact in the local community. To date, the company has returned over \$2.5 million of company profit over 15 years, was a winner and finalist in the Federation University Commerce Ballarat Business Excellence Awards 2025, 2023 and 2022 and attained Social Trader Certification in 2024.

For more information, visit www.communitygrowshere.com.au or social media @communitybankbuninyong