

My article, published in the Maribyrnong Leader, on Tuesday the 17th of July 2018, page 7.

FOOTSCRAY

Push for drug education reform

Korin Gamadji Institute team debate for program to raise awareness of rising statewide problem at Youth Parliament

Gabriella Payne

FOOTSCRAY student Joseph Yugumbari is paving the way for drug education reform in Victorian secondary schools at this year's YMCA Youth Parliament of Victoria, after his team successfully passed a Bill.

Joseph, 17, a member of the Korin Gamadji Institute team, debated passionately for the proposed Bill, demanding compulsory drug education as a solution to a growing problem statewide.

Members of the team tabled the Bill because they believe drug use is a prominent issue and affects all Victorians, either directly or indirectly.

"Over the past decade, especially in Victoria's rural and regional areas, there's

been a drastic surge of the drug methamphetamine, with an average increase of 114 per cent per year," Joseph said.

He said his team believed by implementing compulsory drug education that Victoria would take a step towards eliminating drug use.

"It is our duty to change the culture of drugs and prevent another epidemic from happening," Joseph said.

Team members met through the KGI's indigenous leadership program — run by Richmond Football Club — which allows Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youths a chance to develop leadership skills and cultural connections.

The team is passionate about indigenous culture,

family and community, and strongly believes in looking out for the generations of students to follow.

"It's really empowering just to get our voice out there, for our people," Joseph said.

The students' Bill will now be passed on to the State Government for consideration.

The Youth Parliament program gives young people aged 16 to 25 an opportunity to voice their opinions in Victorian politics and to effect real change.

Since the program started 32 years ago, more than 25 Youth Parliament Bills have gone on to become Victorian legislation.

Gabriella Payne is a member of the YMCA Youth Press Gallery



YMCA Youth Parliament member Joseph Yugumbari at Parliament House. Picture: GABRIELLA PAYNE

Link to Leader website:

<http://leader.smedia.com.au/maribyrnong/>