



Media Release

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Pride and Progress on show at annual LGBTQIA+ youth ball

Providing a safe space for young LGBTQIA+ people in Cockburn to shine has been Youth Diversity Inc's (YDI) role for the past five years and its annual Pride and Progress Ball is again set to celebrate the group's growing relevance.

More than 200 young people aged 14 to 24 are expected at this year's ball, which is still the only event of its kind for young gender and sexuality diverse people in Perth.

The ball will be held from 5pm to 8pm on Saturday 12 November at the City of Cockburn Youth Centre celebrating what it means to 'Shine', a theme it shares with the 2022 Pride WA Parade in Northbridge on 26 November.

Dedicated YDI volunteers Leila Diaz (20) and Bree Gray (20) have been involved in all five of the organisation's Pride and Progress Balls and can't wait to welcome young people from all over Perth to Cockburn Youth Centre in Success.

Both agree a major attraction of the free fun event is that young gender and sexually diverse people can gather in a positive, safe, supportive environment, and dress up or down, depending on individual taste, to celebrate together.

They first discovered YDI as local high school students and have been active weekly members since joining about 10 other local young people at the group's first meeting in April 2018.

In recent weeks they have been busily helping youth services staff prepare for the event which includes free food and soft drinks, a DJ and dancefloor, performances by young drag artists, a photobooth, art/makers and information stalls, tabletop roleplaying games, a quiet chill-out space and a popular interactive game lead by Leila called Fabulous Feud, a gay-themed game show loosely based on TVs Family Feud.

"This annual event is important for a lot of young people because many schools don't allow same sex couples or gender diverse people to go to school balls unless they go with a partner of the opposite gender," Leila said.



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“There is no dress code at the YDI ball so people can come in casual dress or get really dressed up. People don’t have to spend a lot of money on what they wear or feel any pressure to dress up if they don’t want to.

“Or people can do what I do and really get dressed up! Both Bree and I love searching for our outfits at op shops and for us this is a really fun part of the whole experience.”

Like many who become involved with YDI, the friends identified with the social support group’s role of welcoming young LGBTQIA+ young people and their allies to socialise, share stories and have fun in a safe, supportive environment.

Both were facing questions and pressure around their sexuality when they became involved with YDI and stressed the importance of safe spaces for young people at a time when mental health concerns could be heightened and complex.

“This group is non-judgmental and there are always people here to talk to. The youth workers really listen to us. It’s a great place to make friends and just be yourself,” they said.

A highlight of the 2021 ball was a live broadcast by Youth Jam Radio CEO and founder Isaac Mulcrone who interviewed WA LGBTQIA+ community member and advocate, journalist Narelda Jacobs.

During the interview, Ms Jacobs said if she’d had a pride and progress ball to go to as a 14-25-year-old, “it would have changed my trajectory”.

“(It would mean) you would be with your community of people that you love and are supported by. It would make all the world of difference,” Jacobs said.

Find out more about this year’s Pride and Progress Ball and book free tickets [online](#).

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For more information contact:
Media and Communications Officer
City of Cockburn
T: 08 9411 3551
E: media@cockburn.wa.gov.au