**Connor:** Hi, my name’s Connor and I’m from Brauer Secondary College. I am passionate about youth mental health, and I’m here today to explore the importance of active civic participation.

So what is active civic participation?

Active civic participation involves working together with other people to raise concerns, engage with different perspectives, reach an agreement, make a plan, and then take action toward solving issues. We all see things in our schools, communities, and world that we wish were different. Active civic participation is when we go beyond our main roles and responsibilities as citizens, and choose to take action. We can work towards positive change, develop new skills, and make new friends.

To learn more about active civic participation, I sat down with Nuriyah Haque, who is the Victorian State Director at Oaktree Foundation. She’s also the participation and events officer at YACVic, and a member of Victoria’s Youth Congress in 2020.

Thank you so much for coming in today.

**Nuriyah:** No worries, thank you for having me Connor.

**Connor:** What does community actually mean to you?

**Nuriyah:** To me, I mean community can mean a lot of things. Your global community can be the whole world, how we work together in society, but then it can also just be your little inner community, the people that you interact with, the people that you wanna support and you wanna be supported by as well.

**Connor:** What influenced you to actually participate in your community?

**Nuriyah:** Volunteering is a great way to sort of get started, I just put my hand up for everything. The wonderful thing about working in sort of like NGOs and advocacy organisation is that civic participation isn’t just being that loud voice, it could just be supporting people in the background. Especially when you sort of recognise that sometimes some people in the community might not be ready yet to speak for themselves and might not have that opportunity. So, when you find yourself in a position where you can, just take it.

**Connor:** It’s really good to have multiple points of view from different generations, different age groups, different people, because that really does bring us all together and helps out the entire community. So what advice would you give to young people that want to start being active in their community, but don’t know how?

**Nuriyah:** You and who you are is exactly what people want, and talking about your lived experience, and talking about the things that you’ve faced and you’ve seen is really important. And there’s probably a bunch of other people thinking the same thing. So, take that step forward and things will be okay. Sometimes the solution could be just going and talking to your local MP, and talking to your councillors who are there for you. Send them (chuckles) a letter, or start a petition, or write a post.

**Connor:** Yeah, so how important do you think it is to really get involved in your community?

**Nuriyah:** I think it’s really important. I think the more young people get involved, the more other young people would see that you can do it. When I was younger, if I had seen my friends that are taking part I would have put my hand up straight away and be like, “I wanna hang out with my friends too.” So I think sometimes it is about being that sort of frontrunner and being that leader.

**Connor:** What is an issue?

An issue is a topic, a problem, or an opportunity that people are thinking and talking about. Issues can affect us personally, but can also have a broader effect on our communities. Some examples are mental health, bullying, the environment, funding for schools and public transport.

What issues are you passionate about? And how can your community work towards trying to solve these issues?

To get a student perspective, I then sat down with Caelen Khoo a year eight student at Catholic Regional College in St. Albans. Caelen is very active in his school SRC, has worked to create many events for his fellow students, and participates in a school gardening group.

So thank you for coming in today.

**Caelen:** Thank you for having me.

**Connor:** Tell us about your background and how you participate in your community.

**Caelen:** I contribute to my community by being in the year 8 SRC as well as being year seven SRC, doing my part in their school garden, and also taking part in the Kids Teaching Kids program.

**Connor:** What has your SRC done in your school?

**Caelen:** We’ve raised various issues that we feel are important, bringing up ideas on how we could help the transition from online learning back to school, and also helping the students be more engaged and motivated to do their best.

**Connor:** Personally my SRC we’re trying to help with mental health in our school, so we’re trying to get therapy rabbits in.

What does active civic participation mean to you?

**Caelen:** I think being active is not just keeping quiet if you think something’s wrong, listening to everyone and their opinions.

**Connor:** What have you actually learned from participating?

**Caelen:** I’ve learned that being a leader is much more than a title but actually something that you have to act out with your words and your actions.

**Connor:** Yeah, it’s really good to just put yourself out there and show that you’re a leader instead of just saying it. So for the youth that want to be a part of the community and want to be more active, how do you think they should get started?

**Caelen:** Start by looking into how they could help, what groups I could participate in or join. If you feel like something’s not right, stand up, say something, and through that other students will also get inspired.

**Connor:** Today, you learned what active civic participation is, and how we can all get involved in our community.

So, what issue are you planning to take action on?

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