



2023 Young Women in Public Affairs Awardee

Phoebe Bourke



District 23

Citizenship: Australia

Throughout Phoebe Bourke's scholastic journey, she has sought opportunities for social justice endeavors and ways to further community outreach. For six years, Phoebe has been an ambassador for OneGirl, a charity organization that aims to increase the education of women and girls in Uganda and Sierra Leone. In 2017, she became the youngest ambassador at 12 years old and raised AU\$3,700, enough to educate 12 girls for a year. This effort later saw her skiing in a school dress as a part of the fundraising initiative, Do it in a Dress, as well as increasing awareness by speaking at surrounding schools about women's barriers to education beyond borders.

Phoebe established her call to justice in middle school at Sacred Heart Girls' College where she was elected as St. Vincent de Paul captain in seventh to ninth grade and was a social justice student representative. During that time, she raised funds for Project Compassion, coordinating the gathering of mass donations of food, presents and clothing for the winter and Christmas appeal every year. She also founded the first Vinnies Conference at her new school, Sacré Coeur, where she was eager to share her passion for justice with young women everywhere.

As a founding member of the Open Hearts student voice club, Phoebe increased inclusion and acceptance of diversity be it socio-economic, color, gender identity or orientation. In her second year, she represented the school at the Sacred Heart AUSNET Conference in 2022, where she gave the opening address and spoke about the importance of understanding the mission for instilling the importance of service to humankind to girls and young people everywhere. On a grassroots level, Phoebe tutors disadvantaged and non-English speaking children around inner and outer Melbourne. She frequently says it is the best part of her week because she is able to provide a moment of peace in a safe place for little ones, or a listening ear and help for older students.

Phoebe was fortunate enough to be asked to speak at the Higgin's Voice to Parliament Forum 2023 among Indigenous panelists and constitutional specialists, regarding a referendum being posed. She spoke about the education needed in regional and rural areas, surrounding referendums and the parliamentary system, to have this passed.

Phoebe is planning for the inclusion of an Indigenous scholarship for each year level at her school through a possible collaboration with Melbourne Indigenous Transition School (MITS). This way, not only will Indigenous girls be able to have the opportunity that she's had in her education and co-curricular opportunities, but so too will the wider community be uplifted through the facilitation of greater relations.

In the future, Phoebe plans to study arts and major in global politics or follow her other passion for music. Her ultimate goal is to find a career that betters Australians and the global community.