

THEY'VE NOMINATED THEMSELVES TO BECOME COUNCILLORS AT LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS, AND THESE IMPRESSIVE CANDIDATES ARE ALL AGED 21 OR UNDER

ERIN JONES

WHILE most of their cohort are more concerned about what to wear and where to party, these young council candidates have their eyes set firmly on a political future.

The Advertiser has spoken with some of the fresh, young faces who have nominated in the upcoming local government elections on November 12.

One candidate is in the midst of Year 12 exams, another aims to doorknock more than 2000 homes, while one is working two jobs and studying among campaigning.

Early nomination figures showed there were about 40 candidates aged 18-24 aiming to be elected onto councils around the state and about 140 candidates aged 25-34.

“It’s fantastic to see so many young candidates running for council at this year’s elections,” Local Government Association chief executive Clinton Jury said.

“A diverse council – not only when it comes to age, but gender, religion, race, qualifications and experience as well – ensures a wide range of community views are heard and considered.”

Children and Young People SA Commissioner Helen Connolly was completely supportive of young people being elected onto local councils.

“Their presence, not just as candidates, but ultimately as elected members will help ensure local government remains relevant to young people and is addressing the issues they see as priorities,” Ms Connolly said.

Voting closes on Thursday, November 10, at 5pm.

Jayden Squire, 19

Unley Council

THIS self-confessed “political nerd” is aiming to become the youngest councillor elected onto the council and he’s pounding the pavement to give himself the best shot.

A retiring councillor in the Clarence Park Ward advised him he wouldn’t have a chance of winning one of its two seats “unless I doorknocked every house”.

“There’s about 2500 houses, I’ve knocked about 1000 now and I think I’ll get to 2000 by the end of the campaign,” Mr Squire said.

If elected, the Adelaide University earth sciences student would trump Lachlan Clyne, who was elected onto the council at age 23, to become its youngest councillor.

Although young, Mr Squire said he has lived a “diverse” and “turbulent life” which saw him fostered by media personality Amanda Blair in his mid teens.

Mr Squire’s campaign was based on environmental action, fiscal responsibility and traffic management, particularly as he lives near South Rd.

“During peak hour we get quite a few cars that speed down there and I don’t think the council is doing enough to deal with it,” he said.

The Liberal Party member, who scrutineers at elections behind the scenes, said he shouldn’t be defined by his membership as “I’m much more progressive. I’m a young gay man who is really passionate about climate”.

Tammy Vo, 20 *Adelaide City Council*

A SIMPLE advertising campaign encouraging people to run for their local council was enough for Tammy Vo to throw her hat in the ring to provide a role model for other young leaders.

“There aren’t a lot of people my age involved in politics and the things that affect our daily lives,” Ms Vo, who lives and works in the city, said.

“I want people my age to be more informed and engaged with the council. It’s the most direct and approachable way to bring about change.”

The international relations and political science student said the current council was not a true representation of the city it was elected to lead and it’s “time for fresh start”.

“It’s not just business owners, or people above 65 that live in the city, it’s the students and people of colour,” she said. “How is a council going to make effective and accurate change representing the community, if it’s just a selective community?”

Ms Vo, who works in hospitality and fitness, was focused on helping the city rebuild post-pandemic, tackling homelessness and social inequality.

“Covid has really affected the city’s livelihood, among those consequences is the loss of a number of international students and our economy and social growth hasn’t been top notch like it used to be,” Ms Vo said.

Ms Vo is one of 14 candidates, including three incumbent councillors, vying for 4 Central Ward positions.

Isaac Solomon, 21
Gawler Council

HE may be young but he has a strong message: “I’m not one for nonsense and it’s time Gawler Council showed some maturity. It might sound ironic coming from a young person, but it’s true”.

The Trinity College graduate was referring to the council’s infighting hindering its ability to achieve positive outcomes for the community.

“For me, local government is not a grand thing where life or death decisions are made – it’s about getting the small things right and empowering the community that allows people to get on with their lives,” Mr Solomon said.

“People are missing out on the most basic things because the council isn’t doing it’s job properly. Young families aren’t able to get into their homes because of issues with planning approvals, that shouldn’t be issues.”

Mr Solomon, who is studying a double degree in law and history at UniSA, has saved for a couple of years to fund his campaign as this “isn’t something I’ve decided out of the blue”.

He has been a member of the council’s Gawler youth advisory committee for four years and has advocated for green household bins and better public transport.

“I would ask people to judge me by what I have done and not what I haven’t had the opportunity to do yet,” Mr Solomon, a Labor Party member, said.

“Some people suggest because they’ve been on the council they’re the safe option when what they’re asking is for people to put up with the same rubbish they’ve put up with for the past eight to 12 years.

Mr Solomon also sits on the governing council of UniSA and has chaired the board of the UniSA student association.

There are 23 candidates vying for 10 Area councillor positions.

Tabitha Stephenson-Jones, 18
Burnside Council

IN the middle of studying for her Year 12 exams, Ms Stephenson-Jones sets aside valuable time to doorknock and letterbox drop homes in the Kensington Park Ward.

And her final exam is only days before the ballot count starts on November 12.

“My parents were surprised when I first told them I wanted to run, but they’re very encouraging and supportive of my campaign,” Ms Stephenson-Jones said. “The council needs a shake up and a fresh voice, so if not now, when am I going to do it?”

Her passion for politics includes being involved in the inaugural South Australian Youth Forum, participating in Youth Parliament and the UN national conference.

“One of the main things that made me want to run (for council) was not seeing my generation being represented in our local government,” Ms Stephenson-Jones said.

“The Burnside Council area is not known for its diversity in candidates.

“We have so many bright young people in the area, who are not having their voices heard.”

Ms Stephenson-Jones said, if elected, she wanted to establish a youth forum as an advisory to the council, lower speed limits and better maintain footpaths around side streets.

The Greens Party member is one of five candidates, including one incumbent, vying for 2 seats.

Ethan White, 20 ***Gawler Council***

This UniSA student is heeding his own advice and jumping “off the couch” to represent the community “which has given me a lot personally and professionally”.

The film and television student is the host and producer of Off the Couch with Ethan – a Channel 44 television series encouraging teens and their families to explore SA.

Through the show he’s been able to gain insights on tourism opportunities and what family-friendly programs could be replicated in the fast-growing council area.

“Gawler has a great community vibe, but there’s more we could be doing to drive activities to engage our community even more,” Mr White, an Xavier College Old Scholar, said.

“There’s lots of developments and young families coming to the area and while at the moment we cater well for the established demographic, we

could do more for your younger families.”

Mr White is speaking at service clubs and doorknocking to raise his profile, but also to raise awareness on the election, as voting is voluntary.

“Gawler in the last election only had about 30 per cent voter update, it wasn’t the greatest,” Mr White said.

“I want to increase awareness about the election itself. A certain demographic normally vote, but it’s about getting my generation and others to. “Gawler’s 2019 and 2022 Young Citizen of the Year said it was refreshing and encouraging to see so many young candidates standing in their council area.

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