

Historic *Maronite Youth in Parliament Summit* Held at Parliament House

Canberra, 26 May 2026 – Twenty-eight young Maronite Australians from Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane gathered in Canberra on Tuesday, 26 May 2026, under the leadership of His Excellency Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay, Maronite Bishop of Australia, New Zealand and Oceania, for the inaugural Maronite Youth in Parliament Summit, a landmark event designed to amplify the voices of Maronite youth in national policymaking.

Hosted at Parliament House by The Parliamentary Friends of Lebanon, co-chaired by Andrew Charlton MP and Alex Hawke MP, the summit marked the first time Maronite youth have been formally invited into Parliament to present their perspectives on Australia's future and contribute directly to national conversations.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese dropped by during one of the question sessions, greeting the delegates and acknowledging the importance of youth engagement in shaping national policy. In a symbolic moment, the Prime Minister was presented with a cedar tree, a powerful emblem of Lebanon, and a candle marking the *Year of Prayer for Peace* declared by the Maronite Eparchy for 2026.

Youth-Led Policy Development

Participants were assigned to one of four working groups under the following themes: Stronger Community, Stronger Nation, Stronger World and Stronger Future. Each group was tasked with developing practical recommendations for the Australian Government on strengthening the Maronite community, building social cohesion, supporting Lebanon and the Middle East, and empowering young people to meet future challenges. Throughout the day, delegates engaged in robust dialogue, policy brainstorming and collaborative problem-solving, with their discussions to be consolidated into a formal communiqué for submission to Parliament, reflecting their deep commitment to civic participation, cultural identity and Australia's multicultural society.

The summit aimed to ensure Maronite youth feel heard by policymakers and to create a direct channel between young community leaders and Australia's elected representatives. The forthcoming communiqué will be crafted entirely by the youth delegates and will outline actionable recommendations for government and serve as a foundation for ongoing engagement between Maronite youth and federal leaders.

The Maronite Eparchy extended its gratitude to all those who contributed to the organisation and success of this summit for Maronite youth, particularly Andrew Charlton MP and Alex Hawke MP, as well as the Diocesan Youth Chaplain Fr. Yousef Elias and the Coordinator of Maronite Youth Australia, Ms. Rachel Mazraani.

About the Maronite Youth in Parliament Summit

The summit is an initiative of The Parliamentary Friends of Lebanon, supported by the Maronite Eparchy of Australia. It aims to foster leadership, civic engagement, and constructive dialogue between young Maronite Australians and the nation's policymakers.