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FROM WAGGA WAGGA TO PARLIAMENT HOUSE: REGIONAL STUDENT WINS PRIZE

A rising young leader from Wagga Wagga has taken the title of Overall Winner in this year's statewide student short-film competition presented by the Parliament of NSW. Students from Years 5 to 12 were invited to create a 60-second film response to the question: 'What do I value about democracy?'

Ariba Omar, from Koorringal High School in Wagga Wagga, this year's Best Secondary Winner and Overall Winner, impressed judges with a thoughtful and compelling short film exploring the power of individual voices, including those from regional communities like her own.

"I couldn't believe it when they called my name. All the entries were so good," Ariba said. "I couldn't be more thankful for the beautiful certificates and the trophy. It was an amazing opportunity to make the video and learn more about democracy, and how even my voice, all the way from Wagga Wagga, can make a difference."

Ariba is already known locally as a student with big ambitions and an even bigger commitment to public service. A gifted public speaker, she was an attendee at the Legislative Council's Regional Roadshow representing her school in Griffith in a youth public-speaking competition. She also attended NSW Youth Parliament, representing her community and recently completed work experience with her local member, Dr Joe McGirr MP, whom she cites as inspiring.

"My friends joke about me being a regular at parliament," she said with a laugh. Ariba hopes to become a doctor like her parents and specialising further as a cancer specialist, following her participation in the Cancer Council NSW Youth Advisory Group - and now, thanks to her experiences with her local Member of Parliament, she's considering adding politics to her plans. She is also thankful to her school principal, Helen Schmetzer and deputy principal, Joshua Celi for their continued support.

The Hon. Ben Franklin MLC, President of the Legislative Council said: "Ariba's passion and curiosity reflect exactly what the competition aims to inspire: a deeper understanding of democracy and the belief that every voice matters."

Speaker of the NSW Legislative Assembly, The Hon, Greg Piper MP, said: "We were blown away by the creativity, insight and passion in their short films."



Dr Joe McGirr, gave a Community Recognition Statement about Ariba Omar in the LA on Thursday 13 November: “Anyone who doubts whether the future of democracy is in good hands need look no further than Wagga Wagga's Ariba Omar, who has been declared the overall winner of the 2025 Parli-Flicks Short Film Award ... Ariba is a shining example of the wisdom, compassion and dedication of the younger generation. I thank Ariba. She has done Wagga Wagga proud.

This year’s winners included a rap trio from Kinma School: *The Demorats*, complete with rat ears and tails, their original rap about democracy won Best Metropolitan entry. Tahmoor Public School in Sydney’s southwest won best primary school entry for its impactful submission. There were individual submissions from Lejia Sinanovic, from Sefton High School and Paige Goldie, from MacKillop College Port Macquarie, who won Best Junior Secondary School and Best Regional respectively”.

The competition which ran from May to August drew entries from across NSW, each offering a unique perspective into what democracy means to young people today.

The judges praised students for their creativity, political insight, and confidence in expressing what they value most about Australia’s democratic system.