



Award Winners 2008

presented by

Mr Andrew Barr MLA

*Minister for Children and Young People
Minister for Education
Minister for Planning
Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation*

The Yogies are a Youth Coalition of the ACT initiative
proudly supported by the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services

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We acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as the traditional owners and continuing custodians of the lands of the ACT and we pay our respects to the Elders, their families and ancestors.

We acknowledge that the effects of the forced removal of Indigenous children from their families as well as past racist policies and actions continues today.

We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples hold distinctive rights as the original people of modern day Australia, including the right to a distinct status and culture, self-determination and land.

We celebrate Indigenous cultures and the invaluable contribution to they make to our community.

The Youth Coalition is the peak youth affairs body in the Australian Capital Territory and responsible for representing the interests of people aged between 12 and 25 years of age, and those who work with them.

The Youth Coalition is represented on many ACT Government Advisory structures and provides advice to the ACT Government on youth issues as well as providing information to youth services about policy and program matters.

We actively promote the well-being and aspirations of young people in the ACT with particular respect to their social, political, cultural, spiritual, economic and educational development.

email: info@youthcoalition.net
web: www.youthcoalition.net
www.makingcontact.net.au
phone: (02) 6247 3540
fax: (02) 6249 1675
post: PO BOX 5232 Lyneham ACT 2602
visit: 46 Clianthus St., O'Connor ACT

The Yogie Awards 2008

The Yogie Awards (the Yogies) recognise, celebrate, promote and reward outstanding practice in working with young people in the ACT and surrounding area. The Yogies highlight the exceptional commitment, talent and innovation that exists in the youth sector.

The Yogies are presented annually by the ACT Minister for Children and Young People at the Youth Coalition's end-of-year function. The awards are presented in 9 categories that recognise the work of groups and individuals. Nominations are promoted towards the end of each year. Services, workers, young people and members of the community are encouraged to nominate any programs, services and individuals. A judging panel determines the winners.

The Yogies are an opportunity for youth and allied services to promote their initiatives, programs and workers to the sector and the community as a whole.

This booklet contains information about each award winner and the table of contents is below.

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For further information about the Yogies and youth services in the ACT visit
www.youthcoalition.net

Organisation, Service, Program or Project Awards

Outstanding Achievement in Youth Participation Award

This award recognises an organisation, service, program or project that has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to developing meaningful partnerships with young people.

Winner: **Messengers Program**
 Tuggeranong Arts Centre

The Messengers Program develops meaningful partnerships with young people from youth services, alternative education programs and ACT Government high schools to promote resilience through creative mediums such as art, drama, dance, film and writing. Young people work with artists, professional tutors and members of their peer groups to create works that are relevant to them.

The Messengers outreach program is developed and delivered by young people and has created significant opportunities for young people to participate in projects with a wellbeing focus, some projects established in 2008 include:

- *Get Up Get Going* involved over 500 year 8 students and explored issues around involvement in physical activity at school.
- *Young Gungahlin – Through Our Eyes* involved a group of students at the Gungahlin Youth Centre in art tutoring to develop a large scale mural and installation.
- *Ghost of You* was a short play that deals with loss and grief developed by young people in the Messenger Outreach Troup. It was first performed at the Mind Matters festival in August 2008.

Each of these activities place the voices, images, thoughts and work of young people at the heart of the project. Young people have developed their interests and skills, and are able to voice their particular views of the world and their place in it, whilst being supported in exploring issues that arise in the course of the activities.

The Messengers Youth Mentorship initiative employs two young people whose work is integral to the Messengers Program successfully, meaningfully and sustainably engaging and working with young people.

Partners: Office for Children, Youth and Family Support, Community Support and Infrastructure Grants, and ACT Health

Commendation: U-Turn Youth Advisory Group
U-Turn Youth Services

The U-Turn Youth Advisory Group has strengthened significantly over 2008. A key achievement was the development and implementation of *The Great Belco Scavenger Hunt* as part of National Youth Week 2008.

The Hunt involved teams of up to 4 young people racing around Belconnen collecting scavenger items and service information from various youth-orientated locations. This provided an opportunity for young people to engage with the services that are available to them, and break down any misconceptions they may have had about people accessing youth services in the community. Afterwards a barbeque and band night were held.

The Hunt involved 208 young people who had fun while learning life skills such as decision making, team work, communication skills and geographical awareness.

Due to the success of the event, the U-Turn Youth Advisory Group members have been more enthusiastic about taking on additional responsibilities for U-Turn Youth Services activities and to have their say about issues affecting young people in their community.

Partners: U-Turn Youth Services, Gininderra PCYC, Australian Institute of Sport, Belconnen Library, Zone 3 Belconnen, Intensity Belconnen, Rebel Sport Belconnen and Bungee Resilience Program.

Innovation in Practice Award

This award recognises an organisation, service, program or project that has demonstrated exceptional "thinking outside the square" to create beneficial change for young people.

Winner: **10 Faces 10 Stories**
Australian Business and Community Network

Commendation: Canberra College
Medicare Australia

The Australian Business and Community Network (ABCN) enables member companies to use their business skills and resources collaboratively for greater social impact, specifically in the area of education. ABCN is a national initiative with a local arm established in Canberra in 2008 to improve opportunities for disadvantaged students through mentoring, partnering and support programs. As part of a national 100 Faces 100 Stories Program, the 10 Faces 10 Stories Project matched mentors from Medicare Australia with students from Canberra College. The mentors worked with the students to support them in telling their story in words and art. The students' work has since been published in a book.

The 10 Faces 10 Stories Project is a shining example of what is possible when business engages with young people and education. A diverse group of young people, including young parents, refugees, young people with a disability, young carers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people; and culturally and linguistically diverse young people were matched with senior staff from Medicare Australia. The mentors met with the students for a series of sessions to work with them on their stories. The program included a visit to the National Museum and the use of blogs as a communication tool between mentor and student.

Many of the students had difficult stories to tell. They spoke eloquently of their life journey, the people and events that have inspired and challenged them, and provided them with their directions for the future. For these young people it was a unique opportunity to be heard and valued by a world outside the family or education system. For some it has been a profound and life changing experience, giving them new strength and confidence to face the challenges ahead.

Medicare Australia had never engaged with young people in this way before. Creating the partnership with Canberra College, enabling the mentors to work closely with young people, venturing into the new world of blogs, and gaining insight into the lives of the students and the challenges of school life, was new ground for the organisation and for the individuals involved.

The connection and understanding, with and of, young people made by the mentors is an ongoing and powerful legacy of the project. At the launch of the 10 Faces 10 Stories book one mentor said,

"If these are the young people of today then our future is in safe hands."

Collaboration for Change Award

This award recognises an organisation, service, program or project that has demonstrated an outstanding collaboration or partnership in their community as a means to achieving positive outcomes for young people.

Winner: Service Partnership Agreement: Youth Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program Services Protocol

Canberra Youth Refuge

Care and Protection Services, Office of Children Youth and Family Support, Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services

Community Youth Justice, Office of Children Youth and Family Support, Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services

Exiting Quamby Program, Lowana Boarding House, Lowana Stairwell (H Block), Lowana Youth Services

Homelinx, Centacare Canberra

Karinya House

Lift Project, Galilee

Oasis Youth Residential Service, Salvation Army

Quamby Youth Detention Centre and Bimberi Youth Justice Centre, Office of Children Youth and Family Support, Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services

Anglicare Canberra and Goulburn Housing Program

Transition Program, Couch Surfing Program, Exiting Quamby Program, Barnardos

Tumladden

Turnaround, Office of Children Youth and Family Support, Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services

Young Parents Place, St Vincent De Paul Society

Youth Coalition of the ACT

In 2003 negotiations began between the Youth Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program (YSAAP) services and the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support to develop a Service Partnership Agreement.

The Service Partnership Agreement is intended to guide the collaborative and joint work undertaken by YSAAP services and Care and Protection Services, Community Youth Justice, and Turnaround within the Office of Children Youth and Family Support, in the provision of services to young people aged 15 - 18 years. It provides guidance in a number of circumstances including collaborative case management, information exchange and identification of service needs and gaps.

All parties involved in the Service Partnership Agreement, also known as the YSAAP Protocol, process learned a considerable amount about each others operation, roles, responsibilities and constraints to improve outcomes for young people.

Excellence in Research and Evaluation Award

This award recognises an organisation, service, program or project that has conducted research and / or evaluation for the advancement of knowledge in youth affairs and / or the improvement of practice with young people.

Winner: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Young People in Out of Home Care Project

Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Support Unit, Office for Children, Youth and Family Support, Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services

This Project aimed to explore the experiences of and identify the key challenges affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who were involved in the care and protection system. Using a peer-driven research methodology that employed an Aboriginal project officer and a group of youth leaders, the project engaged children and young people in Canberra and Wreck Bay.

This Project began amidst the roll-out of the national intervention and, for the first time locally (and possibly nationally), engaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in discussions about what they believed their communities needed and was valuable to them. It relied heavily on the ongoing dialogue, reflection and learning of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous workers who collaborated to ensure the Project's success.

The Project included two youth forums and an Out of Home Care Conference where Indigenous people, workers, policy officers and service providers discussed the project's findings and developed some strategies to move forward. It concluded with a community celebration which included traditional food, dance, music and culture alongside puppeteering, performances by Indigenous hip hop groups and Indigenous musician Emma Donovan.

The Project engaged young people using culturally appropriate, youth-led and youth-friendly methods such as traditional art and storytelling workshops, group games and sports. It also worked with a hip hop crew who helped young people develop two music tracks that shared young people's experience in care.

By employing young people to help construct, deliver, analyse and present research findings the Project was able to gather richer and more in-depth information, and also provide young people opportunities to grow, to develop skills and take advantage of opportunities that were enabled through their participation.

It is also an example of how Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, researchers and practitioners, and young people and adults can collaborate to achieve worthwhile and valuable outcomes.

Partners: Aunty Agnes, Dale Huddleston, Emma Donovan and her band, Lifeline Canberra, Mistery and BRB Productions, Wirradjuri Echo, and Wreck Bay Community Council.

Excellence in Organisational Practice

This award recognises an organisation, service, or program that has demonstrated excellence in organisational development as a means to achieving positive outcomes with young people.

Winners: **Multicultural Youth Services**
Queanbeyan Multilingual Centre

Multicultural Youth Services (MYS) assists refugee and migrant young people aged 12 – 25 years who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Assistance is provided with regards to accommodation, employment, education, training, family issues and any other matters that are important to young people. The service also runs social, recreational and community development projects.

MYS is the only multicultural youth service in Australia to use a "drop in" model. This has enabled young people, particularly those from Sudanese backgrounds, to access support, information, education and community. The demand on MYS has grown exponentially over the past few years reflecting their needs based service provision. They currently have 55 young people accessing their staff team of 3 youth workers each day.

MYS offers holistic, timely and culturally appropriate assistance for young people to engage with their family and community. MYS assists young people by providing services relevant to young people at all stages along the continuum of assistance – from early intervention to transitional support – in ways that are culturally and contextually appropriate. They support young people to participate in services and the economic and social life of the Canberra community.

MYS uses five core considerations that form the basis of good practice in culturally and contextually appropriate service delivery including responding to cultural diversity; incorporating the family context; employing strengths-based service delivery; engaging in multi-level advocacy; and working in partnership.

MYS works within a youth work paradigm where family and community are included as key factors in their assessment, case management and support with young people.

The family and community context in which young people are situated is a feature of MYS youth work service provision. Family and community play a key role in decision-making regarding the young person's choices, inter-generational relationships, family roles and even the young person's ability to cope with highly self-directed learning environments.

Add to this the impact of the refugee experience on family and community, including re-configuration, death of family members, concern for family members still overseas, and shifts in traditional roles and the family and community context emerges as a critical element in providing support to newly arrived young people and their families.

Individuals Awards

Outstanding Youth Worker Award

This award recognises an individual youth worker who has advanced the rights and wellbeing of young people by advocating for systemic change, supporting young people to access full membership of society and to be decision-makers in their own lives.

Winner: Mike Harris

Mike Harris has taught and supported young people with a disability at The Woden School for over four years. He is a person with dedication and passion not just with the learning process of young people at school, but also in the Canberra community including:

- Showpod and Wakakiri
- The Warehouse Circus at Floriade
- Coordinating disability awareness at Alfred Deakin High
- Implementing restorative practices into schools
- Working with parents providing home support

Mike has worked to create opportunities for young people with a disability that build upon young people's strengths and enable young people to meaningfully participate in all decisions that affect them.

Mike is an inspirational person in his ability to support and engage with young people with physical and intellectual disabilities. Mike continues to be a huge part of the lives of young people at The Woden School through mentoring and supporting of the young people.

Mike is a true advocate for young people with disabilities not just in educational settings but also the local community, participating in numerous programs with equal care, compassion and diligence.

Mike also mentors ACT Department of Education staff and university students about working meaningfully with young people with disabilities. His passion and commitment to this cause has left an indelible mark on those he has worked with, including the team at Woden Youth Centre.

Mike has also been a strong and reliable supporter of Woden Youth Centre and has a thoroughly flexible disposition towards any challenges, as well as innovative ideas to assist the youth centre with programs supporting young people with disabilities.

Outstanding New Talent Award

This award recognises individual youth worker, youth work trainee or volunteer that has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to improving the wellbeing of young people.

Winner: Kasia Grodeka

Kasia currently works as an Outreach Support worker with Open Family Australia in the ACT. Open Family Outreach workers provide support and assistance to young people aged between 13 and 25 who are primarily homeless or at risk of homelessness, helping them in their circumstances to better their situation.

Kasia has been with Open Family for around 2 years and before that was relatively new to the sector, having worked with Canberra Youth Refuge and Canberra Rape Crisis Centre.

Kasia's role as an Outreach Support Worker with Open Family is a particularly demanding one where she works in a variety of settings and places where young people congregate and need support. She often works unsupervised, exercises significant professional ethical judgment and works outside of normal hours.

Kasia has excelled in her ability to reach out and achieve amazing results with young people who are often facing extremely challenging circumstances.

Kasia has shown outstanding diligence and tenacity towards achieving the most appropriate outcomes for the young people she works with. This has been strongly reflected in the feedback she receives from the young people she works with.

Kasia's dedication to the young people she works with has been truly outstanding, she never gives in and will offer anyone she supports her very best at all times.

Outstanding Contribution to Young People Award

This award recognises an outstanding individual who works to improve the wellbeing of young people in the ACT.

Winner: Rob Horsefield

For many years Rob Horsefield worked at Stromlo High School in the off line program. When the funding was no longer available, the program was withdrawn and Rob "retired".

Rob had a short and well deserved break and before anyone knew it he was working at Galilee in a full-time volunteer capacity by implementing the *Respite and Enhancement Program*. He has worked in this position 5 days per week, on a volunteer basis, for 8 years.

Rob has made an outstanding contribution to young people in his many years working in the education system but particularly in the last 8 years in the *Respite and Enhancement Program*.

Rob focuses on the young person's personal achievements and works with them to improve self-esteem and confidence, raising community awareness, and increase the young people's sense of purpose and belonging.

Through the *Respite and Enhancement Program*, Rob takes young men out of mainstream secondary schools, for 1 - 3 days per week to work with them, in a technics workshop setting, with hands on projects.

Rob is an outstanding, innovative, unique and special mentor to these young men. He has unlimited patience and tireless commitment. Some young men who've worked with him reckon:

"He's mad."

"He can help you make anything."

"He's deadly."

Rob has worked with over 50 young men in his 8 years at Galilee and provided them with support, mentoring, skills, education, and an absolute belief in their capacity to fulfil their potential. Rob has undoubtedly changed the lives of many of these young people.

Lifetime Achievement Award

This award recognises an individual who has consistently demonstrated a commitment to supporting and improving the wellbeing of young people in the ACT.

Winner: Meredith Hunter

Meredith has dedicated herself, in both paid and voluntary capacities, to advancing the rights and wellbeing of disadvantaged people, particularly young people and people experiencing homelessness.

For over a decade Meredith has been an leader in the advocacy and promotion of the wellbeing and aspirations of young people in the ACT with particular respect to their social, political, cultural, spiritual, economic and educational development.

Meredith has worked with the ACT youth sector to build cooperative partnerships with services and across sectors to collectively achieve positive outcomes for young people. She has fostered opportunities for inter-agency and cross-sector collaborative approaches to enable young people to have a greater range of choices in terms of support networks and access to a range of information, skills and resources to meet their needs.

Meredith has been committed to working across the Canberra community to eliminate injustice, inequity and social exclusion.

She has been an outstanding advocate for young people in the ACT. She was the Director of the Youth Coalition of the ACT, the peak body for youth affairs in the ACT, for a decade where she worked diligently with the youth sector to raise the profile of youth affairs; progress sector viability and development; and to ensure young people meaningfully participate in decisions that affect their lives.

In doing so, Meredith has worked with the hope that the work of the collective will ultimately lead to a Canberra community that values and provides opportunities, participation, justice and equality for all young people.

Special Award of Recognition

This award is a special one-off award to recognise a significant achievement in promoting the interest, wellbeing and rights of young people in the ACT.

Winner: **First Children and Young People Commissioner in the ACT**
ACT Human Rights Commission

For many years young people, youth workers and the youth sector called for the establishment of a Children and Young People Commissioner in the ACT. In 2007 this advocacy became a reality.

The Children and Young People Commissioner has two main functions that are set out in the *Human Rights Commission Act 2005*. When undertaking these functions the Commissioner must make an effort to consult with children and young people in ways that promote their participation in decision-making, listen to and seriously consider their views, and be aware of the cultural diversity of children and young people. The Commissioner must also make an effort to ensure that the Human Rights Commission is accessible to children and young people.

The Commissioner makes recommendations to government and non-government agencies on policies, practices and services that affect children, young people and their carers. The Commissioner promotes the rights of children and young people, particularly in relation to services they may use and can work with these services to promote their improvement. The Commission also undertakes community education to promote the role of the Commission and awareness of rights. The Commissioner relies on the *Human Rights Act 2004* and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child when advancing the rights of children and young people.

A person can complain to the Commission about services for children and young people if the service is not being provided appropriately, if it does not meet accepted standards, or if the service is not provided at all. The Commission encourages young people to try to resolve their matter by speaking directly to the person or organisation they are troubled about before lodging a complaint. If that isn't possible or if the young person's concern isn't resolved they can lodge a complaint with the Commission.

The Commissioner provides an independent, fair and accessible process for the resolution of complaints between children, young people, or their carers and the providers of services specifically for them. The Commissioner also encourages and assist users and providers of services for children and young people to develop the delivery of their services by a process of review and improvement.