



THE
ANNUAL
YOGIE
AWARDS

2025

Award Winners

presented by
Michael Pettersson MLA

Minister for Children, Youth and Families



www.youthcoalition.net

The Youth Coalition of the ACT acknowledges the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people as the Traditional Owners and continuing Custodians of the lands of the ACT and we pay our respects to the Elders, families and ancestors.

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

We acknowledge that the Indigenous people hold distinctive rights as the original people of modern day Australia including the right to a distinct status and culture, self-determination and land. The Youth Coalition of the ACT celebrates Indigenous cultures and the invaluable contribution they make to our community.



YOGIE AWARD WINNERS

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THE ANNUAL YOGIE AWARDS 2025

AWARD CATEGORIES

ORGANISATION, SERVICE, PROGRAM AND PROJECT AWARDS

- Innovation in Service Delivery
- Outstanding Achievement in Youth Participation

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

- Youth Work Champion
- Outstanding Contribution to Young People
- Outstanding Youth Worker
- Outstanding New Talent

YOUTH COALITION STAFF AWARDS

- Staff Acknowledgement Award
- Public Service Award

SPECIAL AWARDS

- ACT Children and Young People Commissioner's Award

The Annual Yogie Awards (the Yogies) recognise, celebrate, promote and reward outstanding practice in working with young people in the ACT and surrounding area. They also highlight the exceptional commitment, talent and innovation that exist in the youth sector. In 2025, we are celebrating twenty-two years of the Yogies.

The 2025 Yogies will be presented by Michael Petterson MLA. Awards are presented in 9 categories that recognise the work of groups and individuals, with young people, workers, individuals, programs and services invited to provide nominations.

A judging panel, comprised of a representative from the Youth Coalition; a representative from the Community Services Directorate; and a representative from the youth and community sector, determines the Award winners, with the exclusion of the Staff Acknowledgement Award and Public Service Award (which is identified by the Youth Coalition staff team). This year, the ACT Children and Young People Commissioner will recognise a young person who shows a strong commitment to social justice and children and young people's rights.

A commendation may be awarded when a nomination has been received that the judging panel believe deserves recognition. We invite you to get involved in promoting the great work of the ACT Youth Sector by sharing your comments and congratulations on social media.

INNOVATION IN SERVICE DELIVERY

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

OUTREACH PROGRAM FLEXIBLE EDUCATION

Having just finished its pilot year, the Flexible Education Outreach program transforms how education is delivered to young people who have disconnected from mainstream schooling due to their complex needs, including those in out-of-home care or involved in youth justice.

Designed for students referred through the Tier 3 Case Coordination Panel, the program offers an individualised, trauma-informed education setting for participants. Learning is delivered in community spaces where students feel safe, such as public libraries, cafés and ACT parks. Learning is co-designed with students to reflect their goals and interests, and includes academic, wellbeing, and real-world learning experiences.

Staff collaborate with a range of care teams to ensure each young person is holistically supported in a way that is coordinated, flexible, and ethical. The program supports young people to set and achieve their own educational goals in safe environments so they can build confidence to re-engage with learning.

Flexible Education Outreach advocates for its students to access education in ways that are meaningful to them, as one student describes, “without the pressure and stress of a regular school”. This has shown exceptional outcomes for young people who otherwise might have given up on their future. Prior to engaging in the program, the average school attendance for these young people was about 6%; by the end of the year, all participants had increased their school attendance and identified transition goals. They had engaged in either accredited learning, work experience, or identified their pathways for 2026 and beyond. The Flexible Education Outreach Program has demonstrated innovative approaches to education in ways that re-engaging these students and giving them the best chance to succeed.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

SAFE AND CONNECTED YOUTH PROGRAM & MULTICULTURAL HUB

The Safe and Connected Youth Program (SACY) is a therapeutic support helping young people aged between 8-15 at risk of homelessness due to family breakdown. Comprised of an early intervention and reunification component, they aim to preserve family connections by improving family functioning. Young people and families have access to a multidisciplinary team of family mediators, therapeutic case managers, family counsellors and youth workers to provide holistic, intensive, trauma-informed support.

The Multicultural Hub (mHub) is Canberra's lead not-for-profit community organisation providing services to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. They deliver a variety of services designed for young people, ranging from employment help and in-school programs to parent support and advocacy.

In the absence of a formal joint program, these services excelled in inter-service cooperation and demonstrated the courage to step outside standard procedure to act in the best interests of a young person. This was exemplified in how they were able to help a young person who had found herself in distress in Australia without family, community support, and unable to communicate in English.

With no shared language, SACY found creative ways to foster meaningful connection: staff used humour, visual storytelling, shared cooking of familiar traditional meals, and translated memes, to create trust and emotional safety. MHub worked alongside them to make sure that the young person's rights, identity and culture were respected at every point of their journey—from crisis toward visa security and community belonging.

Together, MHub and SACY collaborated to secure stable accommodation, cultural connection, school engagement and migration support for a young person, ensuring their safety, belonging and sense of identity were upheld.

OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN YOUTH PARTICIPATION

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

WINNER

LGBTQIA+ & ALLIES PROM COMMITTEE YWCA CANBERRA

The LGBTQIA+ & Allies Prom Committee is a youth-led volunteer group facilitated by YWCA Canberra that meets to organise an annual prom event for young LGBTQIA+ people and their allies aged 15-20. Volunteers meet monthly to organise every aspect of the night: from the theme and décor, to setting catering and creating promotional material. The Committee also preside over the Prom Awards which are held on the night. In the lead up to Prom night, the Committee go over anonymous nominations and finalise awardees by consensus.

Now in their 10th year, the Prom Committee have an extensive history of youth-led decision making and the positive outcomes that result for both the young people who can develop their skills through organising and the wider community. They have consistently created a space to celebrate the diversity, identities, and achievements of LGBTQIA+ young people, and embody the ethos of true youth participation.

YOUTH WORK CHAMPION

This award recognises an individual youth worker who excels in three areas of youth work - excellence in supporting young people, commitment to developing and improving their individual practice, and supporting and advancing the work of the youth sector.

WINNER

ZAC NOBLE

While currently making his impact at Flexible Education, Zac Noble has become a sector-shaping figure over his 7 years of youth and community work. He is known for his professional, passionate, intentional and respectful self. Zac inspires his peers and young people in how he role models holistic and relational youth work, but regularly seeks out training, mentors, and opportunities to learn how he can be a better youth worker. He is also known for his creative use of metaphor, and the reflection it invokes in his practice.

Zac has been pivotal in creating many of the youth programs in the ACT today. Recent examples of his work include a collaboration with CIT and Birrigai to deliver a Certificate II in Construction to Muliyan students which includes the students constructing a bus shelter at Birrigai Outdoor School. Another, working with the Natural Resource Management team, Zac coordinated Muliyan's first overnight On-Country camp in Tidbinbilla at the completion of a 6-month weekly on-country program. For students who have historically been excluded from such rites of passage, this stands as a transformative achievement.

His capacity to grow connections and nurture communities through modelling, mentorship and sharing has had life-changing ripple effects for young people throughout the territory. Zac nurtures the opportunity for young people to heal through relationships in community-building, and advocates that "community problems can't be solved with individual solutions". For this reason, he is relentless in his pursuit of transforming systems, particularly with youth justice and policing, to make them better for young people. Zac champions both youth work and community-level change to create a better world for all.

OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO YOUNG PEOPLE

This award recognises an outstanding individual who works hard, often 'behind the scenes', to support young people or the youth sector.

WINNER ZOE ROSSITER

Zoe Rossiter works as Gungahlin College's Defence School Mentor, though due to her approachability is someone who supports many more students who walk through her door, whatever the cause for their need.

Her office is a safe and welcoming space for young people to privately debrief and find guidance, emotional, and practical supports—things like food packs, transport assistance, vouchers for interview clothing or to purchase essential items. She works tirelessly behind the scenes to provide both social and academic opportunities for all, going above and beyond out of a deep care for her students.

But Zoe has made the most profound impact on the lives of young people with family in the Defence forces. Bringing her lived experience of growing up and still living in a Defence family, Zoe understands the difficulties of relentless change and stress associated with deployments. To empower these young people and enable them to thrive despite the challenges, Zoe provides holistic and tailored supports for Defence students, including a collaborative partnership with Soldier On that offers transition support and career readiness workshops. She also promotes initiatives that assist their families, like networking opportunities for Defence parents.

Part of her work also endeavours to make the school community a more protective space by raising awareness. Zoe regularly fosters understanding and inspires reflection in the wider community about the experiences of those in Defence and their families. This is done through her education around important Defence events like ANZAC Day, Remembrance Day and John Monash and is epitomised in the Defence Poppy Mural she commissioned a local Canberra artist to create in the Main Quad.

In recognition of her accomplishments, Zoe has received multiple nominations for various honours, including the Prime Minister's National Veteran Employment Awards (2023, 2024) and the Education Support Staff Award (2024, 2025).

Zoe demonstrates an immense commitment to the wellbeing of young people, one that transforms lives and fosters resilience, confidence, and belonging in the face of challenging circumstances.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

DR JOO-INN CHEW

Currently a Mental Health General Practitioner at The Junction Youth Health Service, Dr Joo-Inn Chew has over two decades of experience in general practice and refugee health and is a previous recipient of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners' Registrar of the Year Award.

Over the past two years, she has supported young people experiencing mental health challenges in her current role by providing compassionate, trauma-informed care. In this time, Dr Joo-Inn has shown an unwavering commitment to the care of young people and the creation of a safe, accessible, and empowering space for those most in need. Young people and colleagues alike attest to her warmth, compassion, and patience, working in a system that often tries all three.

Her care for young people extends far beyond the job description. She coordinates extensively with multidisciplinary supports, advocating strongly for young people and timely interventions, and helping young people navigate the complexities of the mental health system with a gentle persistence. Dr Joo-Inn's efforts have resulted in countless positive outcomes for the wellbeing of young people, including engaging in ongoing treatment, reconnecting with education and employment, and rebuilding their confidence and self-worth. Throughout her work, she has shaped a professional culture that centres young people's autonomy and the voices which often go by unheard or misrepresented.

OUTSTANDING YOUTH WORKER

This award recognises an individual youth worker who has demonstrated their exceptional commitment to supporting young people through their ethical, participatory, and strength-based practice

WINNER

PATRICK WHITFIELD

Patrick Whitfield has been a dedicated Youth Worker and Case Manager at the Barnardos Our Place Youth Foyer for 9 years. He is a prominent and respected figure in the ACT youth sector and has had several YOGIES nominations from both his colleagues and young people.

With a wealth of knowledge, he excels in his strengths-based, ethical practice, and tirelessly demonstrates what good youth work can look like. Patrick has been committed to elevating young people's voices in his service and the broader community, establishing the Youth Advisory Group (YAG) at Our Place. He has been a steadfast support for their advocacy, resulting in the young people meeting with multiple politicians, having their message published, and even being mentioned in Question Time.

In the past year, he stepped up to take on the additional responsibility of Acting Program Manager. By continuing to work with the young people he was responsible for while balancing his duties as Program Manager, he preserved the hard-earned trust and rapport he had built with them and alleviated workload concerns for his staff.

This year as Program Manager, Patrick has demonstrated strong and transparent leadership in uncertain times, responding quickly to difficult situations and providing a much-needed source of calm strength for his team and the young people he works with. Further, he was instrumental in assisting the YAG to advocate for an extension of funding for their program. Staff and young people alike refer to him as 'the glue that holds everything together'.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

HELE ROSE

Hele Rose has worked for the past 3 years as a Youth Engagement Officer with the Youth Engagement Team at Woden Community Service, though her experience and dedication to working with young people who are vulnerable or at risk extends far further. The role includes casework support, advocacy, role modelling, assistance with services and developing life skills, drop-in, group work, and school support.

She has shown an unwavering focus on the best interests of young people from the first days of her career. Their voices and needs are central to her practice and shape her strong advocacy.

Hele is diligent in safeguarding while uplifting the dignity and autonomy of young people through her relational approach. Her youth work is the model of ethical practice and places much effort into upholding the Code's tenets in every aspect of her work. The standard she sets for herself is high, and it encourages her team to work similarly.

Hele's case management work is compassionate, consistent, and caring, and she shows an unrelenting dedication to helping young people build their future. She has a deft ability to find their strengths, interests, and supports, and uses them to empower young people to build sustainable pathways.

When a young person falls through the cracks, Hele never gives up on finding a way to connect them with the services they need to build their independence and make positive choice. A young person who submitted a nomination for Hele described her work as "lifesaving".

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

HIGHLY COMMENDED

KRISTIN BEYER

As the only youth worker at Harrison school, Kristin Beyer achieves far beyond what is expected of her.

She acts with integrity, commitment, and care as she creates programs, holds daily check-ins, and runs clubs that respond to the interests and needs of students. Every student is made to feel welcome and supported in their learning, though she focuses her work on helping those who need it most. Her outreach is proactive, and she maintains connections throughout the school to make sure that no student who is disengaged or at risk gets overlooked.

Kristin persistently defends the rights of her students, and her advocacy makes sure their voices guide decision-making, particularly during times of transition between primary, high school, and college.

Her efforts have also made the school a safe space for LGBTQ+ students and have encouraged a community that celebrates diversity and different cultures. As part of this, Kristin runs cultural programs for Pasifika students and assists with programs for the EALD community.

Knowing the challenges young people face to accessing supports, she has created a Youth Services Day which showcases the various services out there in the community. For all the work that Kristin does, she has become a treasured member of her school community.

OUTSTANDING NEW TALENT

This award recognises an individual youth worker, youth work trainee or volunteer who is new to the ACT Youth Sector, but has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to improving the wellbeing of young people.

WINNER

GARANG KUER BUL

Garang Kuer Bul is a Youth Engagement Officer at the Mura Lanyon Youth and Community Centre whose work has already made a deep impact on the communities he is involved in, creating spaces where inclusion, identity, and empowerment thrive.

Drawing from his lived experience, Garang combines cultural insight, relational leadership, high energy, and enthusiasm in his sessions, encouraging young people to bring out their entire selves. He is particularly attentive to the barriers that culturally and linguistically diverse youth face and makes a concerted effort to uplifting them in his work.

In his youth work, his preeminent achievement is the Y Basketball program, which helps reduce school absenteeism while building young people's relationships and physical health. In 2025, he launched Connect 2 Canberra, helping multicultural youth explore the city through excursions and activities to improve civic awareness and belonging. Garang also assists with the YWCA Canberra Clubhouse, a free out of school learning space that engages young people in STEAMM based learning. Here, he introduced discussion roundtables where participants learn how to debate, build their confidence, and develop their soft skills. In his own practice, he is committed to professional development and learning.

Outside of his professional youth work career, Garang is deeply involved in the South Sudanese Community and his spiritual community. He is the chair, founder and head coach of Canberra Eagles Sports Association which works to engage young people and their families in community programs based through basketball. He has founded various other youth programs and has a long track record of community volunteering. In 2011, he received the Personal Achievement Award in the Young Canberra Citizen of the Year ceremony, and in 2012 he was highly commended for his individual community services.

Though having only worked in the ACT youth sector for one year, Garang is already an inspiration in his workplace. He continually demonstrates the profoundly positive influence youth workers can make in the lives of young people.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

MADDY CATER

Only a bit over a year in the sector, Maddy Cater has been living the values of a youth worker in all she does. Maddy officially started in the sector in October last year as a Youth Engagement Officer at Northside Community Service after having worked in a general engagement role there.

Since February, she has been Youth Worker with the T25 Clinic in partnership with Directions & Woden Community Service. This has involved working in a multi-disciplinary team to deliver case management support to young people from 12-25 years old in the Canberra and Queanbeyan region. She also facilitates groups and events, runs engagement activities with young people, and participates in community engagement.

Maddy's warm and authentic nature has enabled her to build rapport in her new role with ease, engaging with kindness, curiosity, humour, and honesty. Through clear boundaries, consistency, and empathy, she creates safe, supportive relationships. She isn't afraid to admit when she doesn't know something, and will consistently seek advice, resources, and opinions from experts within the field to make sure that the young people in her care have the best outcomes possible.

Maddy routinely demonstrates initiative. In one instance, she actively sought out the policy changes and means necessary to address the young people falling through the cracks at her workplace because of transport issues. She has worked hard to learn the ins and outs of the youth sector and the available services, and she is always keen to take up training and networking opportunities. Her commitment to learning has led her to undertake further studies in mental health, and a promising future career.

YOUTH COALITION STAFF ACKNOWLEDGMENT AWARD

This award is selected by the Youth Coalition staff team, and acknowledges an individual or group who have significantly contributed to young people in the ACT, the youth sector, and the work of the Youth Coalition of the ACT.

WINNER

DR AINO SUOMI

Dr Aino Suomi is a public health researcher, psychologist, and director of the Centre for Gambling Research at ANU POLIS. She has conducted family focused research since 2006, including in areas of trauma, PTSD, the links between problem gambling and family violence, and the harms experienced by children as a result of gambling. Her research has made a significant contribution to policy, service provision, and public health messaging about the impacts of problem gambling, and help seeking for gambling harm.

Aino has worked closely alongside the Youth Coalition team for several projects. Over the last 12 months, this included the development of the Fair Play website, an evidence-based online hub that educates families on how children's online games work, and how we can protect children from gambling harm in games that often appear harmless. Fair Play also helps young people to better understand online betting and how they can seek help. Through this process, she was committed to hearing the experiences of children, young people, parents, and youth workers and ensuring the resources were practical, relevant and engaging. Aino has shown a commitment to advocating for young people, especially in this highly politicised field, where she always put the best interests of young people at the centre of her work.

WINNER

DR ALYSSA MORSE

Dr Alyssa Morse is a lived experience researcher at the ANU's Centre for Mental Health Research. She has a particular interest in youth mental health and improving lived experience involvement in research and policy.

Over the past several years, she has been closely involved with or connected to a range of youth mental health initiatives in the ACT. This includes the initial consultations to inform the development of MindMap, and working alongside the Youth Coalition when we delivered complementary consultation processes.

Recently she has led three significant pieces commissioned by the ACT Child and Youth Mental Health Sector Alliance focussed on centring youth perspectives in service design, delivery and evaluation. The reviews look into: best practice and principles for collecting feedback from young people; patient-reported experience measures for children and young people; and young people's preferences for confidentiality and information sharing. All are freely available on the Alliance Working Group webpage.

Alyssa has advised the Youth Coalition's work this year on improving ethical research practices in youth participation activities and codesign workshops. She is committed to working collaboratively with community and government partners to improve youth mental health outcomes, beyond her research projects.

WINNER

DR ALISON CALEAR

18 years ago, Professor Alison Calear and her team received a YOGIE for the development of a digital mental health program for young people. Since then, she has remained committed to supporting local and national research and evaluation related to youth mental health.

Alison is co-head of the ANU's Centre for Mental Health Research and has expertise in youth mental health, digital mental health, and the prevention and early intervention of anxiety, depression and suicide. Within the ACT, her work has included local program evaluation, seeking to understand the drivers of ACT-specific phenomena, like anxiety among young women, and supporting local system initiatives, such as co-founding the Tertiary Education Suicide Prevention Partnership Group. Alison is a board member of Fearless Women, which provides dedicated outreach and support to young women in the ACT. She has also been a member of the Coordinating Committee for the Child and Youth Mental Health Sector Alliance for the past two years.

PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD

PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD

This award is selected by the Youth Coalition staff team, and acknowledges an individual in the public service who has significantly contributed to young people in the ACT, the youth sector, and the work of the Youth Coalition of the ACT.

WINNER JOSH SMITH

As a Housing Manager in the Housing ACT Youth Team for the past 2 years, Josh Smith has brought his lived experience into government in ways that amplify his compassionate, trauma-informed practice.

He works directly with young people aged between 16 and 25 to provide tenancy management support to young people who have exited from out of home care or have had youth justice involvement. The role includes property inspections, debt management, complaint management and other components like support with transfers and referrals.

Throughout his work, Josh is sensitive and responsive to the unique pressures that these young people face. His appreciation of their challenges means that his approach honours every young person's dignity, avoids re-traumatisation, and prioritises consent, patience and collaboration. He anticipates each individual young person's needs, connecting fragmented services, and quietly removes barriers, whether it's smoothing complex referrals, co-ordinating resources or advocating for flexible policies.

Beyond his work in direct service delivery, Josh advocates within government for the needs of young people to be centred in decision making, and he brings a pragmatic and compassionate point of view to his work. He is extensively involved in mentoring frontline staff in the community sector. His efforts here encourage a positive relationship between government and community agencies, one that continually improves and centres young people, resulting in tangible housing outcomes.

ACT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMISSIONER'S AWARD

This award is selected by the Children and Young Person Commissioner, and recognises a young person (under 25 years), who shows a strong commitment to social justice and children and young people's rights.

WINNER

LEAF JEPPESEN

Leaf Jeppesen is a young person who is passionate about fighting for change to make spaces more inclusive for all young people.

When their school shut down the Pride Club, which they coordinate, Leaf persistently advocated for its restoration so that LGBTQIA+ students had a safe space to support each other. They were successful in their efforts and brought back a sense of belonging and hope to their peers. At the Pride Club, Leaf has organised and facilitated major events such as Wear It Purple and IDAHOBIT Day, raising awareness and over \$1,000 for LGBTQIA+ charities in the past two years.

Beyond school, Leaf is an active member of YWCA Canberra's LGBTQIA+ & Allies Prom Committee. Their creative ideas and dedication shaped the 2024 prom and are guiding preparations for the 2025 event. In recognition of their resilience and role-model qualities, they received the Empowerment Award at the 2024 prom and again has been nominated for an award this year. They are also active in YWCA Canberra's weekly A-Z social group, where they warmly welcome new members, promoting inclusion and social support.

Leaf has transformed their personal challenges into a powerful force for change within their communities, displaying their resilience and unrelenting pursuit of justice. In this, Leaf has routinely shown a determination to protect the rights, safety, and wellbeing of their peers against institutional pressures.

The Annual YOGIE Awards are a Youth
Coalition of the ACT initiative, proudly
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and Community Services Directorate



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