

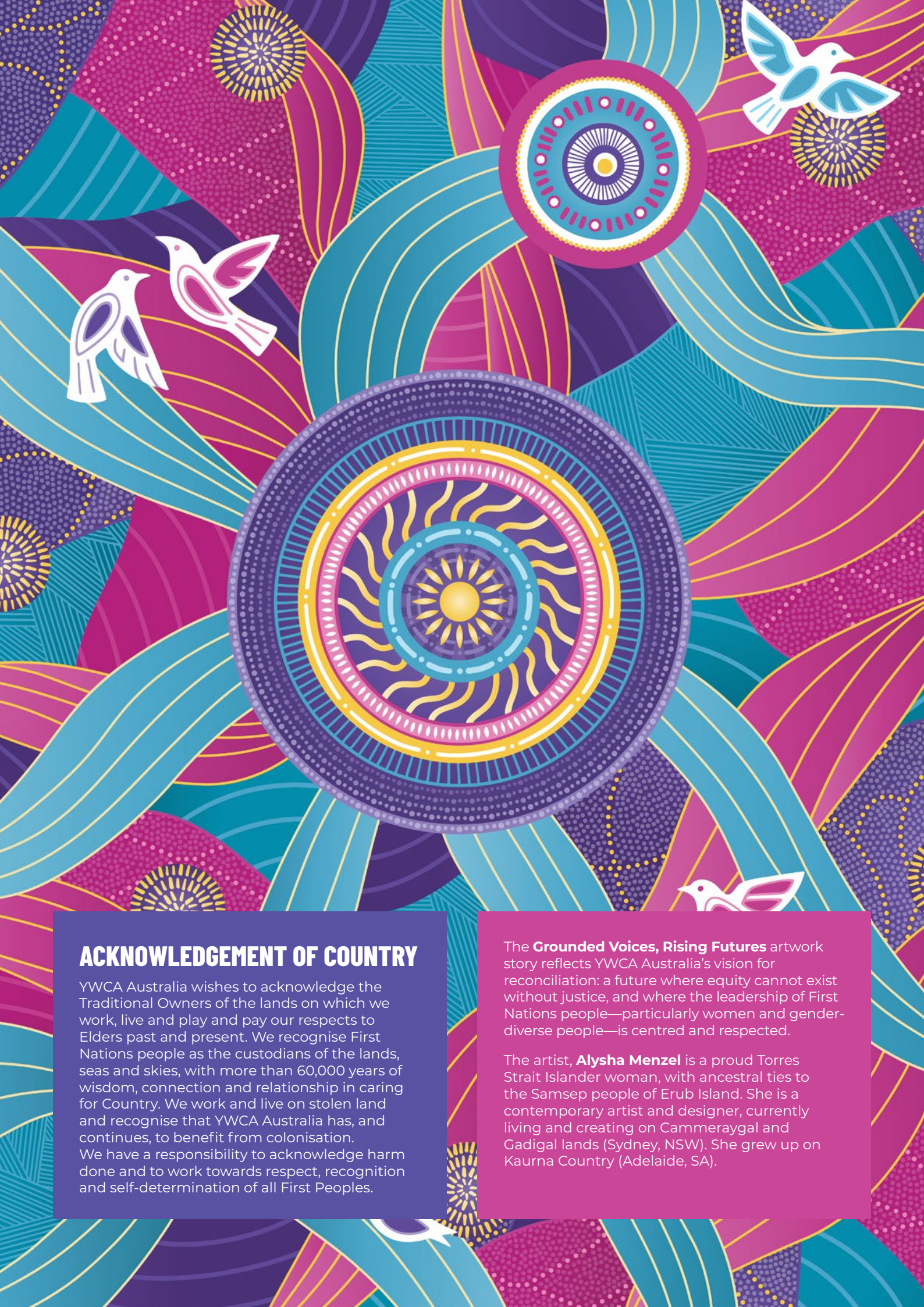


YOUNG WOMEN'S COUNCIL REPORT 2025-2026

**MAKING THE LEADERSHIP OF YOUNG
WOMEN AND GENDER-DIVERSE
PEOPLE OUR PRIORITY FOR
GENDER EQUITY IN AUSTRALIA**



Opening Doors.
Building Futures.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

YWCA Australia wishes to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we work, live and play and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We recognise First Nations people as the custodians of the lands, seas and skies, with more than 60,000 years of wisdom, connection and relationship in caring for Country. We work and live on stolen land and recognise that YWCA Australia has, and continues, to benefit from colonisation. We have a responsibility to acknowledge harm done and to work towards respect, recognition and self-determination of all First Peoples.

The **Grounded Voices, Rising Futures** artwork story reflects YWCA Australia's vision for reconciliation: a future where equity cannot exist without justice, and where the leadership of First Nations people—particularly women and gender-diverse people—is centred and respected.

The artist, **Alysha Menzel** is a proud Torres Strait Islander woman, with ancestral ties to the Samsep people of Erub Island. She is a contemporary artist and designer, currently living and creating on Cammeraygal and Gadigal lands (Sydney, NSW). She grew up on Kaurna Country (Adelaide, SA).

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YOUNG WOMEN AND GENDER-DIVERSE LEADERSHIP AT YWCA AUSTRALIA

Our vision at YWCA Australia ('YWCA') is for a future where gender equality is a reality.

Foundational to that vision is our purpose to make the leadership of young women and gender-diverse people our priority for gender equity in Australia.

YWCA's Young Women's Council ('the Council') is our national collective of young women and gender-diverse leaders which steer us to achieving our vision and purpose.

The Council is an advisory group for the strategic direction and advocacy outputs of YWCA. The Council plays an important role in ensuring YWCA remains accountable to the leadership and lived expertise of young women and gender-diverse people. The Council also advises YWCA's advocacy function on intergenerational, intersectional and gendered experiences of inequality for young women and gender-diverse people.

This report is written in gratitude to the Young Women's Council as a leadership group which has been pivotal in their change-making throughout the first year of their two-year term.

The Young Women's Council 2025 – 2027 are a sophisticated group that has woven together nuanced and intersectional perspectives, with bold and thoughtful leadership. Over the past year, the Council has built upon their advocacy skills and expertise; expanding their individual and collective voice for change.

The Young Women's Council's activities have been vast, and their impact has been deep. In their first year alone, the Young Women's Council has:

- Made representations to Federal and State government leaders on matters of housing, homelessness and gender-based violence through submissions, campaign videos, and in-person roundtables,
- Represented the national youth voice of YWCA across national and international conferences on housing and gender-equality,
- Informed YWCA's **Safe Homes, Equal Futures** Policy Platform and shaped YWCA's forthcoming organisational strategy,
- Led campaigns which have inspired and mobilised other young leaders across YWCA's Digital Activist Community, and
- Remained committed to continuous learning and excellence through training across governance, co-design and lived experience leadership.

The Young Women's Council 2025 – 2027, are a driving force of youth leadership at YWCA and across the nation. We offer our sincere thanks to each member of the Council for their meaningful commitment to their role and our shared vision of making gender equality a reality in Australia.

We look forward to our ongoing partnership with the members of YWCA's Young Women's Council towards realising safe homes and equal futures for young women and gender-diverse people across the nation.

**YWCA Australia's Advocacy
and External Affairs Team,**



Kate Whittle
Executive
General Manager



Bianca Tini Brunozzi
Advocacy and
Campaigns Advisor

YOUNG WOMEN'S

COUNCIL MEMBERS

YWCA's Young Women's Council are a cohort of 10 young women and gender-diverse leaders aged 18 – 30 years old from across the nation. The Young Women's Council representatives for 2025 – 2027 were elected by members of YWCA Australia.

Each Council member is a leader in their own community. They bring their lived expertise, community knowledge and professional experience to their positions as YWCA's young women and gender-diverse leaders.



Annette is a qualified lawyer and a proud African-Australian woman, passionate about gender equality and culturally responsive leadership.

Professionally, she serves as an Assistant Director at the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC). In this role, she works to uphold transparency and accountability in government decision-making, strengthening her skills in policy interpretation, public engagement, and leadership.

Beyond her work in the public sector, Annette is the Founder and Executive Director of Amplify Black Women (ABW), a grassroots organisation dedicated to empowering Black women in Sydney. Through ABW, she creates safe, empowering spaces for women to thrive, with events focused on mental health, financial literacy, and professional development.

Annette's leadership is deeply shaped by her lived experience as an African-Australian woman, community engagement, and a strong belief in equity and representation.



Ashley grew up in Fremantle, WA, and has long been passionate about improving mental health outcomes in regional communities.

After completing her psychology degree, she relocated to Albany, where she now works as a private-sector psychologist while raising her two-year-old son.

Ashley is an active board member of the Albany Community Foundation, where she leads youth engagement and fundraising efforts. Through initiatives like the annual BIG Sleep Out, the Foundation has raised over \$250,000 to reduce the impact of homelessness in the Great Southern region. Her professional background spans the NDIS, youth services, and reintegration support for people exiting the justice system.

Driven by a commitment to grassroots leadership and systemic change, Ashley joined the Young Women's Council to both contribute her lived and professional experience and gain new skills to strengthen her impact within her local and wider communities.

Claudia Robinson is a passionate solicitor and human rights advocate dedicated to advancing equity, justice, and social inclusion.

Admitted to practice law in both Australia and New Zealand, Claudia's work is focused on supporting marginalised communities and fostering systemic change. Beyond her legal expertise, Claudia is deeply engaged in community service, mentoring emerging professionals, and creating accessible resources to empower others. She brings a trauma-informed and culturally sensitive approach to her work, ensuring that every voice is heard and valued.

Claudia undertakes a range of volunteer activities in the not-for-profit sector. Currently, Claudia serves as the Chair of the NSW Young Lawyers Human Rights Subcommittee and the Deputy Chair for Australian Lawyers for Human Rights' Human Rights Act(s) Committee, in addition to being part of the executive management team. Claudia's work has garnered international recognition, including receiving the Education Leadership Award from the Legacy Project.

Claudia is one of two Young Woman YWCA Directors appointed by the Board to the Young Women's Council.



For the past ten years, Gabrielle has sought opportunities to engage in her community, gravitating towards causes that support disadvantaged young people, particularly young women.

Specifically with YWCA, Gabrielle first encountered the organisation during the inaugural year of The Girls Leadership Network program, funded by a Great yDeas grant in 2017. After two years as a participant, Gabrielle established a Sydney chapter and facilitated the program for two additional cohorts.

Gabrielle currently engages with YWCA and young women in her community as a youth mentor with the Youth Frontiers program. Professionally, Gabrielle works as an Executive Assistant and is an MBA candidate at the Australian Graduate School of Management. Gabrielle holds an undergraduate degree in Anthropology and Linguistics, which, along with lived experience of intimate partner violence and housing instability, informs much of her professional and volunteer work.



Kaygan is a queer, disabled artist, creative, and advocate based on Whadjuk Noongar Boodjar.

Kaygan works as an Equity Projects Coordinator (Disability) at Edith Cowan University, where they lead institution-wide inclusion initiatives and community-driven programs for staff and students with disability.

Kaygan is a co-chair and co-founder of the Pride with Disability Network, a peer-led network for LGBTIQ+ people with disability and represents LGBTIQ+ people with disability on WA's First LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy Reference Group.

Kaygan's advocacy experience includes roles with the Youth Disability Advocacy Network, Youth Affairs Council and WA, and Children and Young People with Disability Australia. Kaygan brings skills in strategy, creative communication, and systems change – grounded in community care and interdependence. They are passionate about ensuring any advocacy around key societal priorities reflect disabled ways of existing.

Lena is an Afghan-Australian youth advocate, university student, and community leader passionate about gender equity, climate justice, and multicultural representation.

She is currently studying International Relations and finance at the University of Melbourne and has served on various youth advisory councils including Plan International Australia, Department of Climate Change Energy, Environment and Water, and the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network.

Lena is the founder of Strive Connecting, an initiative empowering young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds through storytelling and workshops. She has represented youth voices at national and international conferences and worked actively to drive intersectional policy reform. She has previously hosted a community radio program, speaks at public forums, and leads grassroots projects across Australia.

Lena is deeply committed to ensuring diverse voices are not only heard but genuinely included in decision-making spaces.



Linda is a committed advocate for gender equality, youth rights and climate change.

She firmly believes in the power of young women's leadership and intersectional feminism and is keen to leverage her experiences to advance YWCA's vision of a future where gender equality is a reality.

Relevantly, Linda was the 2024-2025 YWCA Board Trainee and a 2021 YWCA Delegate to the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65). She also has experience in advocacy, leadership roles, impact measurement and research / report writing.

Linda is also a lawyer by trade, with a broad commercial practice advising a wide range of for-profit and not-for-profit clients across many sectors.

Linda is one of two Young Woman YWCA Directors appointed by the Board to the Young Women's Council.



Pranjali is a young South Asian Australian living in Naarm/Melbourne.

She is a journalist at SBS News, a Juris Doctor student, and the Head of Media at Raise Our Voice Australia. Pranjali has worked across media, government and advocacy to champion gender equality, housing, prevention of family violence, child protection and youth justice. Pranjali is also a Plan Australia YAS alum and past Youth Congress member advising the Victorian Government.

As a young victim-survivor, Pranjali knows how critical safe, empowering spaces are—and she wants to build them. Pranjali uses storytelling and policy reform to centre the voices of young women, especially from multicultural and marginalised communities.

Change doesn't come from taking up less space—it comes from using your voice for what matters. That's what motivated Pranjali to apply for the YWCA Young Women's Council – to help build a safer, more equal world – together with incredible, driven people.

Rhiannon is a proud disabled, queer woman who believes in safety, community, and empowerment.

She believes that, "If you hold privilege, like I do as a white cis woman, you have a responsibility and duty to use it to challenge systems that benefit you and actively be a part of the reform while prioritising intersectionalism and authentic representation, co-design and lived in experience."

Rhiannon has spent years advocating, campaigning, and organising against inequality through grassroots action, research, volunteering, and movement building. Her work is driven by lived experience, deep empathy, and a fire for justice that doesn't burn out. Rhiannon has stood on stages, in rallies, in boardrooms and in Parliament House, always fighting for real reform led by those most impacted.

Rhiannon's expertise lies at the intersection of disability and gender issues. She is also a second-hand fashion lover and upcycler, local music and drag scenes punter. The relationship between politics and the arts, specifically music, is what initially engaged Rhiannon's politics passion, and she loves incorporating the relationship between the two into her work. Rhiannon describes herself as loud, colourful, authentic, and always brings those qualities to her activism too.



Tamika is a Widjabul Wia-Bal Bundjalung woman connected to the Aboriginal communities in Redfern, the Central Coast, and Northern Rivers regions.

Tamika became a mother at a young age (20) and a mother of three before 30.

She is passionate about advocating the complex barriers young parents experience which systematically prevent their equal access to opportunities. Tamika often draws from her own lived experience and is dedicated to ensuring that young parents have equitable access to services, opportunity, and participation within the workforce—particularly STEM.

Tamika is postgraduate qualified and spent a decade within the Australian construction industry. During this time, she witnessed many injustices of this sector, and how this impacts housing insecurity, mental health, and First Nations workforce development and participation. This recently led Tamika to undertake an Atlantic Fellowship with the University of Melbourne (2024); focused on applying self-determination principles to address Aboriginal housing needs.



Clara Conheady is a passionate advocate for intersectional gender equality, committed to ensuring decision-making spaces reflect the full diversity of our communities.

A Melbourne Global Shaper and current Observer on the Victorian Government LGBTQIA+ Health and Wellbeing Working Group, she brings a strong foundation in youth advocacy, public policy, and education, with a focus on amplifying marginalised voices, particularly women and gender-diverse young people, whose rights and wellbeing she champions through both lived experience and professional leadership.

Clara has worked across the public, private, and non-profit sectors, with experience spanning education, diplomacy, and community policy. She interned at the Embassy of Finland, considering what Australia can learn from the Finnish Green Energy transition and gender equality in diplomacy, and at the ACT Office for LGBTQIA+ Affairs, where she led policy research and recommendations. As the former Youth and Gender Expert on the UN Women Canberra Committee, she has contributed to shaping youth-informed approaches to global gender justice. Clara is also passionate about gender equity in sport and has published academic research on sex testing in elite women's athletics. In 2025, she was awarded the Global Leader Impact Fund to support menstrual equity for women and gender-diverse Australian Rules Football players.

Her experience spans local, national, and international contexts, from delivering sex-ed and consent education to thousands of young Australians with Elephant Ed, to representing Australia through the 2024/25 Australia-Indonesia Youth Exchange Program. Clara holds a deep belief in feminist leadership that centres care, collaboration, and community. Through the YWCA traineeship, she hopes to further develop her board-level governance skills and continue building inclusive systems that work for and with those most impacted.

Clara was a YWCA Board Trainee for 2025 - 26. In their capacity as a Board Trainee, Clara has also been an observer to the Young Women's Council for 2025 - 26.

YOUNG WOMEN'S COUNCIL LEADING POLICY AND SYSTEMS CHANGE: 2025-26 HIGHLIGHTS

YWCA's Young Women's Council has had an outstanding year of leading policy and systems change towards gender and housing justice.

ADVOCATING FOR POLICY AND SYSTEMS CHANGE

The Young Women's Council brings forward the voices of young women and gender-diverse people across Australia who understand the intergenerational, intersectional and gendered impacts of the housing crisis.

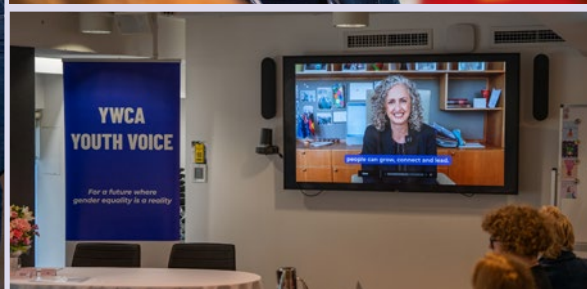
The Council advocates for intersectional policy responses to the compounding harms experienced by young women and gender-diverse people with intersecting identities.

The insights and expertise of the Young Women's Council have been received by governments at both the State and Federal levels. The Council's advocacy for policy and systems change culminated at their Summit hosted at YWCA's profit-for-purpose hotel, Song Hotel, on Gadigal land in March 2026.

The Council welcomed the Hon. Rose Jackson, MLC to a roundtable discussion at the Summit on matters relevant to her portfolio as the NSW Minister for Housing, Homelessness, Youth and Mental Health. This was an important opportunity for the Council to make representations to the Minister, ensuring that

the NSW government is abreast of the impacts of housing, homelessness, youth and mental health policies and programs for young women and gender-diverse people from diverse backgrounds. The Council successfully made representations to the Minister on the positive impact of YWCA's mentoring and service delivery programs within NSW which improve the lives of girls, women and gender-diverse people facing systems challenges, housing insecurity and homelessness.

At the Summit, the Council also received a message from the Federal Minister for Youth – Senator, the Hon. Dr Jess Walsh. The Council's relationship with the Federal Minister for Youth is built upon extensive submissions by the Council to the Federal Office for Youth to ensure that young women and gender-diverse people have a voice on the policy landscape impacting their lives today and in the future. In her message, the Senator recognised the work of YWCA's Young Women's Council in creating spaces where young women and gender-diverse people can grow, connect and lead.





SHAPING YWCA AUSTRALIA'S POLICY PLATFORM AND STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The Young Women's Council has been pivotal to shaping YWCA's strategic and advocacy direction.

YWCA's 2026 **Safe Homes, Equal Futures** Policy Platform sets out a practical roadmap for delivering a more gender-equal housing system in Australia. The Platform features the voices and insights of the collective, particularly through the Young Women's Council foreword and the platform pillar calling for the leadership of young women and gender-diverse people to be embedded in housing policy.

The Policy Platform is lifted by the call to action of the Young Women's Council:

"Policy responses to the challenges we face will be stronger and more effective when they are shaped by the people impacted by them. We are committed to creating a society where everyone has a stable home and no one's potential or safety is limited by their housing situation.

Will you join us on our mission?"

YWCA AUSTRALIA'S YOUNG WOMEN'S COUNCIL 2025 – 2027

In addition to shaping the Advocacy and External Affairs engagements of YWCA, the Young Women's Council plays an important role in providing strategic insight for YWCA. At their Summit, the Council met with the President and Chair of YWCA Australia's Board, Robyn Clubb AM. The Council also engaged in extensive workshops contributing to YWCA's forthcoming organisational strategy. The Council provided strategic guidance on priorities to ensure YWCA continues to advance gender equity and maximise social impact for young women, women and gender-diverse people. The facilitation of the Council's strategic impact at YWCA is deepened by the representation of two members across both the Young Women's Council and the Board of YWCA.

YOUNG WOMEN'S COUNCIL SUMMIT

SONG HOTEL, SYDNEY



MARCH 2026
RECORDED BY
KAYGAN LANE



FOR YWCA'S
NEW STRATEGY

"IT IS HARD
TO FEEL
HOPEFUL"



GENDER EQUALITY WORK
IS FIRST NATIONS JUSTICE

WE HAVE A LOT TO LEARN
FROM ALL WOMEN. WHEN WE
EMPOWER WOMEN, WE EMPOWER A
WHOLE COMMUNITY.



LEADERSHIP DOESN'T
BEGIN WITH A TITLE,
IT BEGINS WHEN YOU TAKE
STEPS TO MAKE CHANGE

LEADERSHIP LOOKS DIFFERENT
FOR EVERYONE

WHAT WILL
THE WORLD
LOOK LIKE IN
2032?



WEALTH
DISPARITY

RISING
VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN

AI ABUSE OF
WOMEN AND
CHILDREN

ROLL BACK OF
PROTECTIONS FOR
MARGINALISED
GROUPS



WORIMI!
WORIMI!

A WELCOME TO COUNTRY
ALLOWS US TO TAP INTO
THE KNOWLEDGE OF THIS
COUNTRY, OLD KNOWLEDGES.

ALL PARTS
OF AUS



YOUNG PEOPLE
ARE ALREADY
LEADING CHANGE
ACROSS THE
NATION



WELCOME MY
TIDDAS!
(SISTERS)
REALLY!
AS WOMEN
WE NEED TO LISTEN
AND FOLLOW OUR
INTUITION!

BINOWEE → MEANS
MOTHER EARTH, THE
RICHNESS OF THE
LAND

YOUR VOICES
ARE IMPORTANT
AND NEEDED. THE
YOUNG WOMENS
COUNCIL VOICES
GO RIGHT TO THE
BOARD TO CREATE CHANGE



YOU ARE AN
INCREDIBLY
IMPORTANT PART
OF OUR STRATEGY



IT IS VERY
BUSY AND VERY
EXCITING AT
YWCA

BRIDGING
THE
GAP
BETWEEN
REGIONAL + REMOTE
COMMUNITIES



NSW HOUSING STRATEGY

HOMES FOR NSW

HOUSING

HOMELESSNESS

50%
OF HOUSING
FOR WOMEN AND
CHILDREN LEAVING
FAMILY AND/OR
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



THE FOCUS FOR
THE NEXT 10
YEARS SHOULD
BE
→ WOMEN
→ FAMILIES
→ YOUTH

"YOU SIT AT THE
INTERSECTION OF
ALL OF THE MINISTER'S
PORTFOLIOS"

ADVOCACY
TIPS

- 1 DESCRIBE THE PATTERN
- 2 EXPLAIN THE IMPACT
- 3 POINT TO SOLUTIONS

COLLECTIVE
VOICE



IRS

FOUNDATION
VOLUNTEER
FOR 30 YEARS

WE ARE IN OUR
FINAL STAGES OF
HIRING OUR
NEW CEO



THIS STRATEGY
IS OUR GOLD
MEDAL!

REPRESENTING YWCA AUSTRALIA FOR GENDER AND HOUSING JUSTICE

Over the past year, members of the Young Women's Council have represented YWCA on regional, national and international stages for gender and housing justice.

In April 2026, YWCA was represented at the international **Women Deliver 2026 Conference** by a delegation of Young Women's Council members. Led by and representing feminist movements and youth advocates in the majority of the world, Women Deliver plays a pivotal role in global collective action for gender equality. For the first time, in 2026 the Women Deliver Conference was regionally hosted in the Oceanic Pacific. The four-day conference attracted more than 6,000 women and gender-expansive advocates from the region and beyond. We thank our Council members and observers, Pranjali, Clara, Lena and Linda for representing YWCA at this seminal conference. Alongside our Council members, YWCA was also proud to host our global colleagues from World YWCA and the Oceanic Pacific countries in Naarm.

In October 2025, YWCA was represented at the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) **National Housing Conference 2025** by a delegation of Young Women's Council members, Tamika, Ashley and Kaygan and Digital Activist Community member, Emem. The National Housing Conference is a three-day forum and the largest housing conference in Australasia.

Alongside Swinburne University of Technology, YWCA presented the findings of our joint research report, **'We've Been Robbed' Young Women and Gender Diverse People's Housing Experiences and Solutions**. Council members Tamika and Rhiannon were both members of the Research Working Group for the report, ensuring that the young women and gender-diverse people had the steer throughout the project.

The AHURI Conference was a meaningful opportunity for YWCA to platform the voices of our Young Women's Council and young women and gender-diverse research participants to the 'We've Been Robbed' research. YWCA held the stage to highlight the generational, gendered and intersectional nature of the nation's housing insecurity, and the solutions posed by young women and gender-diverse people. This Conference representation comes after the launch of the research report at Parliament House in Canberra hosted by the Parliamentary Friends of Housing, Senator David Pocock, Josh Burns, MP and Angie Bell MP. The report was launched in partnership with our research partners at Swinburne University of Technology and our Council leaders and Research Working Group members, Tamika and Rhiannon.

We thank our Council contributors for their trusted role in building the research, advocacy and impact of YWCA and in representing the Council and organisation across national, regional and international platforms.





16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM
AGAINST GENDER
BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence continues to be one of the most urgent and pervasive human rights issues of our time. It does not only cause immediate harm it leaves deep, long-term effects on survivors' health, safety, and ability to rebuild their lives.

For young women and gender-diverse people, the impacts can ripple across generations, shaping their confidence, education, employment opportunities, and sense of belonging in society.

-Lena Nabizada, Young Women's Council member



CAMPAIGNING FOR SAFE HOUSING AND EQUAL FUTURES

YWCA Australia exists to create a future where gender equality is a reality. Our core purpose is to ensure that women and gender-diverse people have access to safe, secure and affordable housing. Now more than ever, the voices of young women and gender-diverse people must be centred in identifying the barriers to housing and gender justice, and campaigning for the solutions.

Only when the voices of younger women and gender-diverse people are centred will we be able to address the compounding realities of intergenerational housing inequity and gender-based violence. These challenges have reached crisis point across Australia for young women and gender-diverse people, who have inherited a system in which safe, secure and affordable housing is increasingly out of reach, while gender-based violence has evolved to include new forms of technology-facilitated abuse.

At YWCA Australia, the Young Women's Council is a driving force for our advocacy and campaigns. The Council exemplifies the lived experience expertise of young women and gender-diverse people in shining the spotlight on the systemic change required for safe housing and equal futures.

The Young Women's Council have collaborated alongside other young women and gender-diverse advocates in YWCA Australia's Digital Activist Community to build youth-centred campaigns. They have drawn attention to the intersection between gender inequality and housing disparity across key campaigns from 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence to Homelessness Week.

YWCA Australia's Council members alongside Digital Activists utilise 16 Days of Activism to harness their voices to advocate for gender equality. These young leaders shine the spotlight to the collective responsibility that we all have to building a world free from violence, and the essential role that safe and secure housing has in achieving that goal.

"We all have a role to play in building a world free from violence. It starts with recognising that gender-based violence is not a private issue, it's a collective one that demands both cultural and structural change." Lena Nabizada, Young Women's Council member.

"Safe and secure housing is essential to end gender-based violence. Housing offers protection, stability and the foundation for recovery. For young women and gender-diverse people access to housing is not just a basic human need – it is critical in escaping cycles of violence and reclaiming autonomy."

Claudia Robinson, YWCA Australia Board member and Young Women's Council member.

YWCA Australia's young leaders have also campaigned around the importance of safer online spaces, like the Digital Activist Community, where young women and gender-diverse people can be connected for change-making. In the words of Digital Activist Community member and Young Women's Council observer, Clara Conheady, *"Online communities create space for solidarity and collective strength. They make advocacy for accessible, help advocates connect and collaborate across geographies, and ensure voices from rural, remote and marginalized communities are included in conversations that matter. They also show that advocacy is not only possible, but more powerful when we act together."*

The Young Women's Council have led campaign videos on policy and systems change, young women and gender-diverse leadership, and messages of hope for the next generation of young advocates. Their message is clear: Every young woman and gender-diverse person deserves safe, affordable housing. If we are going to address inequality in this country, we need to invest in safe, secure housing for women and gender-diverse people.

HONING THEIR ADVOCACY AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS

YWCA Australia supports the commitment of the Young Women's Council in engaging in tailored and targeted training to hone their advocacy and leadership skills. The training that the Council were supported to receive, or connected into, was determined by the learnings that were most important to them.

LIVED EXPERIENCE EXPERTISE AND ETHICAL STORYTELLING

The Young Women's Council received two training sessions with Morgan Cataldo on lived experience storytelling.

For World Storytelling Day in March 2026, members of the Young Women's Council alongside members of the Digital Activist Community explored the power of translating their experiences into advocacy for change-making. Moreover, the tools to support ethical storytelling and working with their story safely and on their own terms.

"Stories shape our imaginations and, therefore the realities we live in... If people are the sum of the stories told about them and the stories they then internalize about themselves, whose imaginations are we living in, and what does it take to challenge this?"

Morgan Cataldo (2024)

"Does this feel dignifying? Considering, telling and sharing more ethical stories."

As young women and gender-diverse advocates for equality, it is important that the young leaders of YWCA Australia are supported with the conditions to harness their voices to question, dismantle and re-imagine systems. It is essential that this advocacy is rooted in ethical and grounded principles.

The Young Women's Council members and Digital Activist Community members highly valued their training supported by YWCA Australia with Morgan Cataldo on ethical storytelling and lived experience expertise.

"Being able to critically assess safety and purpose in storytelling was the highlight of this training for me. It is so valuable that YWCA are not only listening to young people when we share, but investing in our communities capacity for storytelling and making meaning."

YOUNG WOMEN'S
COUNCIL MEMBER

"The lived experience training by Morgan Cataldo was an embodiment of power building. The training made me feel infinitely more confident in sharing my story and creating a scaffolding for longevity and care within my advocacy."

YOUNG WOMEN'S
COUNCIL MEMBER

"Learning how to use your lived experience in a strategic, measured and sustainable way is so important. Morgan's training provides that foundational knowledge in an accessible, socially responsive and tender way."

YOUNG WOMEN'S
COUNCIL MEMBER

"Young women and gender diverse people are lit from within, and experiences like this where you get access to expert knowledge and the support of peers just helps you find ways to shine."

DIGITAL ACTIVIST
COMMUNITY MEMBER

The Young Women's Council were also connected in with valued sector partners for training and opportunities.

GOVERNANCE FOR YOUNG WOMEN AND GENDER-DIVERSE LEADERS

Council members participated in the pilot governance program of Discover Governance a course led by Dr Kath Hall through Just Governance. Discover Governance is a practical, accessible governance program for women, gender-diverse people and those with lived experience who are ready to be part of decisions that shape communities.

The program ran virtually over six-weeks, and was participated by Council members Annette, Ashley, Gabrielle and Kaygan, alongside Council observer, Clara and Advocacy and Campaigns Advisor, Bianca. Annette has since joined the Board of Just Governance, alongside Bianca, as Co-Treasurer!

"This program doesn't just teach governance—it models it. It reshaped how I think about leadership, responsibility, and the role I can play." Annette, Young Women's Council member and founder of Amplify Black Women.

"Discover Governance made governance feel accessible, empowering, and genuinely engaging. I'm walking away more prepared, more informed, and far more confident to step into board spaces." Kaygan, Council member, creative and advocate.

CO-DESIGNING AND CO-CREATION WITH COMMUNITY

Council member, Tamika participated in a co-designing and co-creating with care course alongside Bianca.

KA McKercher's Beyond Sticky Notes training is a seven-part course sharing practical tools and skills for co-creation. This is a powerful course which will support YWCA Australia's role in facilitating, organising and encouraging co-creation and engagement with young women and gender-diverse leaders.



GLOBAL ADVOCACY: ATTENDING THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Council member, Annette connected with former Young Women's Council member, Asha Clementi and YWCA Australia Board member, Khayshie Tilak Ramesh to travel to the United Nations for the 70th annual Commission on the Status of Women in New York!

Annette reflects on the experience as a deeply meaningful opportunity to be connected with advocates from across the globe to shape policies and agreements driving progress for women and girls worldwide.





SPOTLIGHT

TAMIKA'S ADVOCACY

SHAPING YWCA'S RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN AND ADVOCATING FOR SAFETY AND SECURITY FOR FIRST NATIONS YOUNG MOTHERS AND THEIR CHILDREN

Young Women's Council member, Tamika Jarvis contributed her voice to shaping YWCA Australia's Reconciliation Action Plan. Tamika is a proud Widjabul Wia-Bal Bundjalung woman deeply connected to the Aboriginal communities in Redfern, the Central Coast, and Northern Rivers regions. Tamika is a passionate advocate, a mother of three, and a dedicated member of YWCA Australia's Young Women's Council, elected for two consecutive terms: 2023–2025 and 2025–2027.



Tamika's vision is clear:

“I believe we need more opportunities for young women and mothers to purchase property to provide a safe, secure home for both them and their children. Home ownership should not be a privilege of the wealthy, those who have children later in life, or those in nuclear or dual-income households. It should be a right for all Australian women.”

Tamika is an ambassador for young women engaging with YWCA Australia and encourages others to align with value-centred organisations that empower volunteers and foster social change:

“I've grown to learn the value of an organisation that cares for and empowers their volunteers and provides opportunities for the development of their individuals to create wider social change. Young women can get involved with the Young Women's Council or YWCA Australia initiatives by following the Y's movements on social media, via email, and exploring their volunteering opportunities. I had been watching the Young Women's Council movements for around four years before I applied.”

Tamika's advocacy journey began when she became a parent at the age of 20. Navigating the challenges of young parenthood opened her eyes to the complex and systemic barriers that prevent equal access to opportunities - especially for young parents, First Nations people, and young women. Her lived experience fuels her commitment to creating meaningful change, particularly in housing and career access:

“It was this, combined with my lived experience as a woman and First Nations person, that I found my advocacy wheelhouse.”

As a Young Women's Council member, Tamika has embraced opportunities to write, speak, train, and connect across diverse advocacy spaces. Notable highlights include contributing to the YWCA Research Working Group for the **We've Been Robbed: Young Women and Gender Diverse People's Housing Experiences and Solutions** report, attending its launch at Parliament House in Canberra, and speaking on a panel for World Homelessness Day 2024. Tamika also represented YWCA at the 2025 Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Conference (AHURI) conference, contributing her insights to our advocacy on gender-responsive housing: evidence, practice and lived experience.

Tamika is a strong voice for culturally responsive and gender-specific solutions to systemic issues. She advocates powerfully for First Nations people to live and work on Country, enabling them to fulfill cultural obligations, care responsibilities, and continue language and cultural practices. She also highlights the housing crisis facing young women, particularly single mothers, noting the difficulty of home ownership without a partner due to rising living costs and property prices.





NATIONAL RECOGNITION OF THE YOUNG WOMEN'S COUNCIL

The Young Women's Council has been formally recognised in **Closing the Gender Gap in Housing**, a national roadmap commissioned by **Australians Investing in Women (AIIW)** and delivered by **Per Capita**. The report draws on multi-year consultation with more than 100 organisations across all eight states and territories.

This recognition provides strong, independent validation of the Young Women's Council model and strengthens the evidence base for embedding young women's lived experience and leadership in YWCA Australia's advocacy and decision-making.

WHERE THE YOUNG WOMEN'S COUNCIL IS RECOGNISED

- **A National Exemplar for Lived Experience Leadership:**
Recommendation 4, **Fund and support lived experience experts**, identifies the Young Women's Council as one of three leading national models for embedding lived experience in major advocacy, housing policy and funding decisions, alongside the **WEAVERs Project** at the University of Melbourne and the **Wiyi Yani U Thangani Institute** at the Australian National University.
- **Showcased as an Example of "What's Working":**
The report profiles the Young Women's Council as an advisory body that enables young women and gender diverse people to contribute their advice and expertise to YWCA Australia's advocacy. Its inclusion in the report's dedicated **What's Working** section positions the Council as a positive model for the broader sector.
- **Recognised for its National Reach:**
The report's National Projects Map identifies the Young Women's Council as one of only four initiatives operating nationally, with other case studies largely focused on individual states or territories.
- **Complemented by YWCA Australia's Research Leadership:**
The report also draws on YWCA Australia and Per Capita's **Housing That Pays Back** cost-benefit analysis to support its national investment case for gender-responsive social housing. Together, these citations recognise both YWCA Australia's evidence base and its approach to embedding lived experience in advocacy.

WHY THIS MATTERS

The recognition is significant because it comes from an independent national research process informed by more than 100 organisations across philanthropy, government, impact investment and community housing, and reviewed by ten experts.

Importantly, the Young Women's Council is recognised as a leading model specifically centred on the lived experience and leadership of young women and gender diverse people. This provides meaningful external validation of the Council's role and impact.

The report's central argument, that gender-neutral housing systems can entrench inequality, and that lived experience should be valued, remunerated and embedded in decision-making, closely aligns with the purpose of the Young Women's Council.

This recognition strengthens the case for YWCA Australia to continue investing in the Council and to explore opportunities to deepen its influence across organisational strategy, advocacy and government engagement in FY2026–27 and beyond.





THE BARRIERS TO HOUSING SECURITY AND THE YOUNG WOMEN'S COUNCIL'S VISION FOR CHANGE

THE BARRIERS TO HOUSING ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

YWCA Australia's Young Women's Council are united in their vision for a future where gender equality is a reality. That vision is driven through the purpose of making young women and gender-diverse leadership and housing for women and gender-diverse people our priority in Australia.

As young women and gender-diverse leaders in Australia, YWCA's Council members have a sophisticated and practical policy understanding of the barriers and solutions to housing access and affordability for young people. In the words of one Council member,



"The main barriers for young women and gender-diverse people are economic instability, discrimination, and limited affordable housing options.

Many also face domestic or family violence, which creates urgent housing needs, and navigating support systems can be difficult, especially for culturally diverse communities.

Addressing these barriers requires inclusive policies, integrated support services, and centring lived experience in decision-making."

YWCA AUSTRALIA YOUNG WOMEN'S COUNCIL MEMBER 2025-27

At the systemic level, Young Women's Council members submit that the main barrier for housing affordability and access for young women and gender-diverse people is a lack of safe, secure and affordable housing which is compounded by uniquely gendered factors. As identified by the Young Women's Council, those factors include:

- The gender pay gap and gendered barriers to employment.
- Lack of safety within the home from domestic and family violence or unhealthy living conditions, but an inability to exit the home and relocate.
- Barriers to exiting and relocating from the home due to a lack of support system, independent finances and independent rental history record. This is compounded for young migrant women in Australia.
- Lack of safe, secure and affordable housing options. This is compounded for young women who have low-income and are relying upon social security payments (e.g., Youth Allowance, Commonwealth Rent Assistance, Income Support Payments, Parenting Payments, Disability Support Pension) and who struggle to access social and affordable housing due to the long waitlists and the hurdles to secure housing.
- Experiences of power imbalances with landlords and within the system due to the lack of information tailored for young people from different communities about their housing rights and the supports available to them.
- Experiences of power imbalances with landlords and within the system in jurisdictions which lack restrictions on rental increases and basic housing health and safety standards.
- Difficulties having open discussions without shame are often associated with the root causes of housing insecurity and homelessness. This is compounded by a lack of formal spaces for representation of the voices of young women and gender-diverse people with lived experience of housing insecurity, homelessness and domestic and family abuse to identify barriers and inform policy solutions.



YOUNG WOMEN'S COUNCIL'S VISION FOR CHANGE

Consultation with YWCA's Council members reflects the change-making that is possible when young women and gender-diverse people have a seat at the policy table.



YWCA Australia's Young Women's Council members have practical solutions to offer in response to the barriers young people across the nation face to housing access and affordability. This solution-orientated mindset reflects the importance of the Australian Government engaging with young people on the housing crisis which is impacting them the hardest.

YWCA's Council members have a clear vision on the policy solutions that would move the dial towards addressing the housing, homelessness, cost-of-living and gendered issues experienced by young Australians:

- Increasing social and affordable housing. Measures towards this include expediting building processes; government increasing the hiring of town planners and engineers; addressing housing and economic inequalities through taxation measures.
- Increasing housing options for young people in Western Australia and other regional and remote areas. This includes increased investment in youth foyer housing and youth homelessness hub options for young people which are supported by educational, social and housing supports.
- Greater protections for young people by introducing and coordinating minimum safety health standards for housing to avoid the toxic environments (e.g., mold and water damage) that young people are often living in which create further health, wellbeing and productivity consequences.
- Greater protections for women and gender-diverse people experiencing domestic and family violence, coupled with supports to leave. Measures towards this include reviewing policies around requirements for rental histories, references, and supports for deposits.
- Greater access to housing for people with disability by increasing minimum access standards for new and refurbished builds.
- Creating targeted training and skills opportunities for young women and gender-diverse people from all backgrounds towards closing the gender pay gap to afford safe and secure housing.

The Council members have a clear vision for change for young women and gender-diverse people in Australia:



"My vision is that all young women and gender-diverse people in Australia have access to safe, secure, and affordable housing, without facing discrimination or systemic barriers. Housing security should be recognised as a foundation for well-being, opportunity, and equality."

I want to see policies and programs that address the unique challenges faced by marginalised communities, including culturally diverse women, those experiencing domestic violence, and young people navigating economic instability.

I also envision a system where housing support is integrated with tailored services, such as mental health, legal assistance, and education or employment pathways, so that people can rebuild and thrive.

Ultimately, my goal is to help create a society where everyone has a stable home, and no one's potential or safety is limited by their housing situation."



"Housing should be accessible, safe, and empowering. You should be able to choose where you live and who you live with... People with disability should not need specialist housing; housing should be accessible."



"My vision is "ensuring long-term affordable housing that provides physical and emotional security."

YWCA AUSTRALIA YOUNG WOMEN'S COUNCIL MEMBERS 2025-27

THE POLICY AND SYSTEMS CHANGE RECOMMENDATIONS OF YWCA AUSTRALIA'S YOUNG WOMEN'S COUNCIL

EMBED THE INTERSECTIONAL EXPERTISE OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE INTO POLICY-MAKING

“Policies will be stronger and more effective when they are shaped by the people who are most affected by them.”

YOUNG WOMEN'S COUNCIL MEMBER

This statement goes to the heart of the centring the lived experience of intersectional voices, and the voices of young women and gender-diverse people in the design of policy solutions to the challenges that they have inherited.

In the first year of their term, the members of the 2025-27 Council have been advocating across State and Federal governments. A core call to action to governments is meaningful engagement with young people on the issues that matter to them with a view to achieving robust and effective policies, specifically on housing and homelessness.

“The government should actively involve young people in the design, consultation and evaluation of housing and homelessness policies.

This includes creating accessible platforms for young people from diverse backgrounds to share their lived experiences, ensuring representation of culturally diverse, Indigenous, and gender-diverse voices.

It's also important to integrate youth perspectives into decision-making bodies, advisory councils, and consultations, and to provide support such as mentorship, training, and financial assistance so young people can participate meaningfully.

Policies will be stronger and more effective when they are shaped by the people who are most affected by them.”

YWCA AUSTRALIA YOUNG WOMEN'S COUNCIL MEMBER 2025-27

ENHANCE ENGAGEMENT PROCESSES WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

The Young Women's Council has practical suggestions to enhancing engagement processes with young people by governments.

1

Adopt a place-based approach

Through the National Youth Consultation process and other consultative feedback, the Young Women's Council recommends that the Australian Government applies a place-based approach to “understand how different communities of young people need to be spoken with, and how.”

2

Build reciprocal relationships and engage in genuine power-sharing

It is important that the goal of engagement includes genuine decision-making ability and power-sharing, with one recommendation to consider looking towards the position of Minister for Youth becoming one which is represented by a young Australian.

3

Enhance visibility of opportunities for young people to be heard

At a process level, Young Women's Council members recommended better advertisement of the good engagement work that the Federal Government and State and local governments are doing. This includes including through the Office for Youth National Survey and Youth Advisory Groups. This can be achieved through strengthening partnerships with sector representatives who are connected to communities of young people, like YWCA Australia.

4

Ensure that when using online methods to reach more young people that the opportunity for consultation remains robust

The Young Women's Council notes the importance of youth groups which inform, shape and make decisions in governance structures. The Council supports the use of online consultations to allow for further fractals of youth engagement and greater reach to young people in regional and remote areas Australia. It is important that the form for online engagements provides enough opportunity for reflections to be shared. Council members request that governments provide greater space for young people to share responses on issues and solutions that matter most to them.

5

Listen, Act and Close the Feedback Loop

Importantly, it is essential that following on from youth engagements that there is meaningful action, supported by a feedback loop on that action back to young people.

IMPROVE GOVERNANCE MECHANISMS: ESTABLISH A NATIONAL YOUTH ADVISORY GROUP ON HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Young people are calling on their governments to partner with them on the development of housing and homelessness policies and programs.

YWCA Australia and our Young Women's Council calls for such a commitment through the establishment of a Youth Advisory Group on Housing and Homelessness.

At a Federal level, the greatest impact of this Advisory group would be supported by cross-portfolio partnership and engagement. The core actors would be the Minister for Youth and the Office for Youth, the Minister for Housing and Treasury. This would be strongly bolstered by engagements with the Minister for Social Services and the Department of Social Services, and the Minister for Women and Finance. These Government functions have responsibilities pertaining directly to national housing and homelessness policy, as well as social security policy, and the prevention of family violence which is so closely tied to gendered housing precarity.

The Young Women's Council expresses the significance of the membership of the prospective Youth Advisory Group on Housing and Homelessness being diversely represented, with positions for young women and gender-diverse people at the face of rising trends of housing precarity, homelessness, and gender-based violence. The voices of young people with lived experience expertise of housing insecurity and homelessness will be central to the Group's representation.

Benefits of Establishing a National Youth Advisory Group on Housing and Homelessness

The establishment of a National Youth Advisory Group on Housing and Homelessness would have benefits which are three-fold:

1. A clear indication that the Australian Government recognises and is listening to young people on the issues that matter most to them, and for which they have conveyed importance directly to the Government. This includes through youth consultations and advice to the Office for Youth for the Engage! Strategy.
2. An opportunity to empower young people to advocate and engage with government. The establishment of the Youth Advisory Group should be seen as a platform for ongoing engagement with young people by the departments and agencies with responsibility over the issues of housing, cost-of-living and gender equality that are most important to young people.
3. Support responsible government portfolio holders to work in partnership with young people who are most impacted by the cost-of-living and housing crisis to design practical policies and programs which will better meet the needs of young people. The creation of this partnership will have real world outcomes towards improving the living standards of youth as a stronger baseline for their life course, and for the economic and housing security of the Australian population now and in the future.

INTRODUCE CENTRALISED EDUCATIONAL AND INFORMATION HUBS

Young women and gender-diverse people are acutely impacted by the cost-of-living, housing and homelessness crisis. They are aware of the government agenda on housing and of the changing housing policy landscape around this.

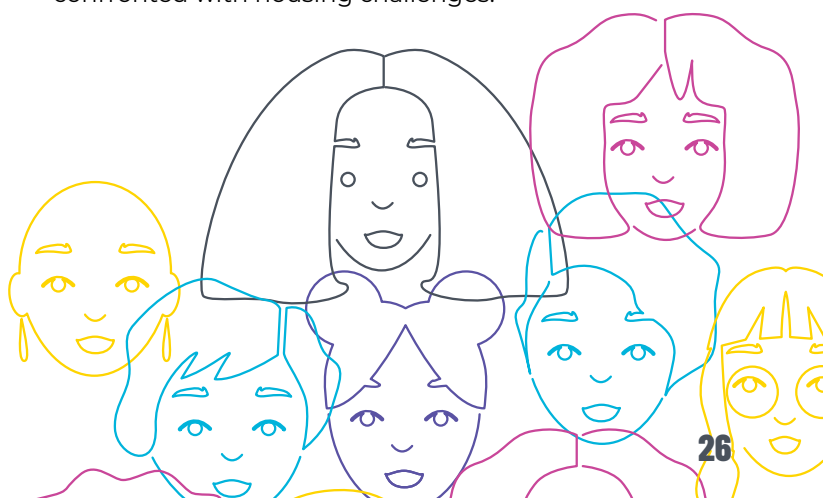
Young people, however, lack access to centralised, comprehensive information to navigate the housing and rental market – from financial literacy to their rights as renters, and the services and supports that may be available to them. The absence of centralised and comprehensive information leads to confusion for young people and creates additional barriers to them accessing safe, secure and affordable housing. There are also limited opportunities for young people to have conversations on what would support their diverse needs for housing, and limited mechanisms for these barriers and solutions to be conveyed to governments.

Young women and gender-diverse people connected with YWCA Australia are calling for the establishment of educational and information hubs on housing to address these issues. These calls have come from members of our Young Women's Council 2023-25 and 2025-27. They have also been conveyed through interviews with young women and gender-diverse people across the nation in our **'We've Been Robbed'** research report with Swinburne University.

Young people recommend the establishment of centralised hubs, both online and in communities. These hubs would provide clear, accessible information on rental rights, home buying and financial literacy. These hubs would also list the specialist services that young people could reach out to for housing security and support if in need.

These hubs can be an opportunity to promote discussions on innovative housing solutions driven by young people. These hubs can be a space for young people to share their experiences and ideas, and their recommendations for change. In doing so, these hubs can become a youth-led think tank supporting governments to ensure that their design of housing policies and services meets the needs of young people and future generations.

In addition to being online and in communities, these hubs should be incorporated into school curricula, hosted at universities, and facilitated through organisations connected with young people on housing, like YWCA Australia. By connecting in with young people from school onwards, we can empower young people with the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to navigate housing. This confidence can be built early on, resourcing young people before they are confronted with housing challenges.





SPOTLIGHT

REFLECTIONS FROM CLAUDIA ROBINSON

**YWCA AUSTRALIA BOARD
REPRESENTATIVE TO THE
YOUNG WOMEN'S COUNCIL**

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR BEST EXPERIENCE AS A MEMBER OF THE YOUNG WOMEN'S COUNCIL 2025-27?

I have loved being the Board Representative to the Young Women's Council, which has allowed me to bring the voices of passionate young women directly into the boardroom of the YWCA. I've enjoyed working alongside such a dedicated and diverse group of young leaders, each bringing unique insights and lived experiences. Together, we've shaped projects and priorities that reflect the real needs of young women and gender-diverse people across Australia, and it's been rewarding to see our input directly influence YWCA's strategy and advocacy.

HOW HAS YOUR TERM ON THE YOUNG WOMEN'S COUNCIL SUPPORTED YOU TO ACHIEVE YOUR CHANGEMAKING GOALS?

Serving as the Board Representative on the Young Women's Council has given me a unique platform to bridge my legal expertise with broader policy change, ensuring the lived experiences of young women are amplified in governance and decision-making spaces. This experience has strengthened my commitment to using the law not only as a tool for individual justice but also as a driver of systemic change. I look forward to continuing to build momentum for young women and gender-diverse leadership and advocacy over the next year with this Council cohort!

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHER YOUNG WOMEN LOOKING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES?

My advice to young women looking to make a difference in their communities is to start where you are, with what you have. I would encourage young women to identify organisations, causes, and communities that truly align with your values. When you commit to work that reflects your passions and principles, your impact feels authentic and sustainable.

Making a difference comes in many forms - it can be volunteering, joining a campaign, supporting grassroots initiatives, or simply showing up consistently for your community or a cause that you believe in. Change happens in many forms, and every contribution matters. Be bold in putting yourself forward, even if you feel underqualified (you probably aren't!).

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE TO SAFE AND EQUAL HOUSING FOR YOUNG WOMEN AND GENDER-DIVERSE PEOPLE, AND WHAT CHANGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE TO IMPROVE THIS ISSUE?

One of the biggest challenges for young women and gender-diverse people is the financial strain of securing and maintaining housing. The soaring cost of living and housing, combined with the gender pay gap has left many unable to afford rent or a mortgage. This burden is felt most by single mothers, those fleeing domestic violence, First Nations, disabled and LGBTIQ+ communities, who face additional layers of disadvantage.

To address this, we need stronger investment in genuinely affordable, accessible, and sustainable housing, rent control/caps, government subsidies and targeted housing support programmes in addition to a robust national trauma-informed and gender-responsive housing policy. Home ownership should not be a privilege for the wealthy - it should be a human right. Expanding pathways to home ownership for homes that are not just adequate but also safe, secure and inclusive must be a priority.



YOUNG WOMEN'S COUNCIL ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2025-26

THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

In the first year of its 2025–2027 term, YWCA Australia's Young Women's Council has taken the voices of young women and gender-diverse people from local communities to Parliament House, national policy discussions and the international stage.

Council members have influenced YWCA Australia's policy and strategic direction, engaged directly with political decision-makers, mobilised young activists, contributed to nationally significant research and been recognised as a leading Australian model for embedding lived experience in housing policy and decision-making.

10

Young women
and gender-diverse
leaders aged 18–30

5

Council members
from regional
Australia

2

Council members
also serving as
YWCA Board
Directors

6,000+

Advocates gathered
at Women Deliver
2026, where four
Council members
represented
YWCA Australia

100+

Organisations
consulted in the
development of
Closing the Gender
Gap in Housing,
which recognised
the Council as a
leading national
model

3

Ministerial
engagements,
including engagement
with the NSW
Minister for Housing,
Homelessness,
Mental Health and Youth
and the Federal Minister
for Youth

4

Major campaign
content streams
led or shaped by
Council members

4

Training and
capability-building
programs across
the Council

FROM LIVED EXPERIENCE TO NATIONAL INFLUENCE. RECOGNISED AS A LEADING NATIONAL MODEL

The Young Women's Council was recognised in Closing the Gender Gap in Housing, commissioned by Australians Investing in Women and delivered by Per Capita. The Council was profiled in the report's "What's Working" section, and featured as **one of only four projects operating nationally** to support gender equality in housing.

The Council was also featured as one of three leading models across the nation that are embedding lived experience in advocacy.

This independent recognition demonstrates the power of the Council's model: young women and gender-diverse people are not simply consulted about decisions that affect their lives, they are supported to help shape them.

TAKING YOUNG VOICES DIRECTLY TO DECISION-MAKERS

At the Council's two day Summit in March 2026, members sat down with the **NSW Minister for Housing, Homelessness, Mental Health and Youth, the Hon. Rose Jackson, MLC**. In their roundtable with the Minister, the Council discussed the realities facing girls, women and gender-diverse people experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness from an intersectional perspective. The Council presented solutions to the Minister and noted the important role of YWCA's housing, services and youth mentoring programs.

The Council also received a special video address from **Federal Minister for Youth, Senator the Hon. Dr Jess Walsh**, recognising its role in creating spaces for young women and gender-diverse people to **grow, connect and lead**.

These engagements gave Council members a direct platform to bring their experiences, ideas and solutions to political decision-makers.

SHAPING YWCA'S POLICY AND FUTURE DIRECTION

The Council did not just contribute to YWCA Australia's advocacy agenda this year, they helped write it.

Members **authored the foreword to YWCA Australia's 2026 Safe Homes, Equal Futures Policy Platform** and shaped a policy pillar calling for young women and gender-diverse people's leadership to be embedded in housing policy.

Council members also participated in consultation for YWCA's forthcoming **Future 2032 Strategy**, bringing a youth and gender equity lens to the organisation's future direction.



"Policy responses to the challenges we face will be stronger and more effective when they are shaped by the people impacted by them."

YWCA AUSTRALIA'S YOUNG WOMEN'S COUNCIL 2025-2027

FROM THE NATIONAL HOUSING CONFERENCE TO THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE

Council members represented YWCA Australia in some of the year's most significant forums for housing and gender equality.

At the AHURI National Housing Conference 2025, three Council members and a Digital Activist Community member attended where YWCA research findings to Australia's housing sector were presented by the Executive General Manager of Advocacy.

At Women Deliver 2026, four Council members represented YWCA Australia alongside more than **6,000 advocates**, taking young Australian voices into an international movement for gender equality.

MOBILISING A WIDER MOVEMENT

The Council's influence extends beyond its 10 members.

Throughout the year, Council members helped activate YWCA Australia's wider **Digital Activist Community**, creating and contributing to campaigns for including **16 Days of Activism** and **Homelessness Week**.

The Council also contributed to a **National Youth Engagement submission to the Federal Office** for Youth, helping bring young people's perspectives into government decision-making.

LEADERSHIP THAT REACHES THE BOARDROOM

The Young Women's Council is designed to connect lived experience, advocacy and organisational governance.

2 Council members, Claudia Robinson and Linda Le, also serve as **YWCA Australia Board Directors**, while 2025-26 Board Trainee Clara Conheady joined the Council as an observer.

Council members also strengthened their governance capability through **Just Governance training delivered by Dr Kath Hall**, building their understanding of governance, ethical leadership and how to navigate and influence organisational decision-making.

Together, these opportunities create a powerful pathway for young women's perspectives to travel from **community and lived experience, through advocacy and policy, and into YWCA Australia's highest levels of governance and decision-making**, while equipping the next generation of leaders with the skills and confidence to participate meaningfully in governance.

YEAR ONE: BUILDING THE NEXT GENERATION OF INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST LEADERSHIP

In just one year, the Young Women's Council has demonstrated what is possible when young women and gender-diverse people are given genuine opportunities to lead.

This is young people exercising influence, building power from the ground up and helping shape the systems and decisions that will define their futures.

“

**ADVOCACY IS NOT ONLY
POSSIBLE BUT MORE
POWERFUL WHEN WE
ACT TOGETHER.**

YWCA AUSTRALIA YOUNG LEADER, CLARA CONHEADY





YOUNG WOMEN'S COUNCIL REPORT 2025-2026

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