



# **YWCA AUSTRALIA** **YOUNG WOMEN'S COUNCIL** **END OF YEAR REPORT**

# GENERAL OVERVIEW



At YWCA Australia, (YWCA) our purpose is making young women's leadership and women's housing our priority for gender equality in Australia. Central to this goal is YWCA's Young Women's Council, which consists of young women and young gender diverse people aged between 18 and 30 from across Australia. These changemakers are united by their vision for a more gender equal housing future. The Young Women's Council has been established to advise YWCA on key issues impacting young women and young gender diverse people, aligning with YWCA's core focus on gender equality, housing and homelessness, and domestic and family violence.

The Council plays an important role in connecting the experiences and expectations of young women and young gender diverse people with YWCA's strategic advocacy direction. Their role and responsibilities are multi-faceted, including advocacy, campaigning, policy development, representation, and capacity building. By providing fresh perspectives and insights, the Council contributes significantly to shaping YWCA Australia's advocacy program, ensuring that the voices of young people are central to our work.

This past year has been a time of growth and achievement for the newly formed Council. Members have sharpened their advocacy and campaigning skills while driving change to achieve a healthier housing system for all. The Young Women's Council crafted a powerful statement for YWCA's submission to the 2024-25 Federal Budget, provided input on YWCA's submission to the 10-year National Housing and Homelessness Plan, and collaborated on research with Swinburne University into housing insecurity and homelessness for young women and gender diverse people.

A face-to-face meeting early in the Council's tenure saw members align their vision and values for their tenure. It was also a chance to be briefed on YWCA's history and the important role housing security for women and gender diverse people plays in shaping our future. Throughout the year, the Council has been instrumental in advancing gender equality outcomes and educating their peers - including hosting a webinar to analyse the National Strategy for Gender Equality. The Council also helped to develop campaigns for gender responsive housing and homelessness solutions and highlight the intersection between domestic and family violence and housing insecurity for YWCA's 16 Days of Activism campaign.

Building on these strong foundations, the Young Women's Council will continue to shape YWCA's advocacy and campaign agenda into 2024-25. They will ensure that the voices of young women and gender diverse people are heard as they work towards an Australia where everyone has access to safe, secure, and affordable housing throughout their tenure.



# MESSAGE FROM KATE & BIANCA

*Creating a gender equal housing future led by the voices of young women and gender diverse people*



We share a collective responsibility to secure a better housing future for our young people. We know the impact of the housing crisis is gendered and more and more it is hitting our young people hard – with an 18 percent increase in the number of young women experiencing housing insecurity or homelessness since the last Census. Young women and gender diverse people are disproportionately affected, facing rising rents, high vacancy rates, and a shortage of affordable housing options.

At YWCA, we believe that every young woman and gender diverse person deserves a safe, secure and affordable home as a foundation for their lives. We are committed to a future where gender equality is realised, and access to safe, secure, and affordable housing is essential to achieving this vision. The YWCA's Young Women's Council plays a crucial role in keeping these issues at the forefront of our advocacy and campaign efforts, providing a platform for young leaders to shape and influence solutions to the challenges we face.

We have the great privilege of working alongside this incredible group of changemakers to drive meaningful change. We've collaborated to gain a deeper understanding of the housing challenges faced by young people, amplify their voices in addressing these issues, and develop solutions to create positive change.

As we enter the final stretch of the Young Women's Council's term during a Federal Election year, a crucial time for advocacy and influence, we are enthusiastic about the opportunities ahead. Governments are paying close attention as more young people become eligible to vote. The upcoming federal election is expected to feature a heated debate over housing policies, with major parties aiming to attract voters who feel excluded from long-term, secure, and affordable housing. This crisis threatens to deepen intergenerational inequalities, and YWCA's Young Women's Council is committed to taking a stand.

We will continue collaborating closely with the Council to enhance their advocacy and campaigning skills. To achieve this, we will host a series of workshops and training sessions focused on government relations and media communications, equipping them to become effective advocates for the future.

We look forward to collaborating closely with the Young Women's Council to develop their skills as advocates, driving meaningful change and addressing the urgent housing challenges we face today.

# CURRENT MEMBERS



**Angelina Inthavong**  
20, QLD

Angelina is a passionate youth and health equity activist committed to amplifying diverse, intersectional voices for a more equitable world. She is completing her Bachelor of Health Sciences in 2024 and will begin her Doctor of Medicine and Surgery at ANU in 2025. Angelina draws on her expertise in research, advocacy, and campaigning, as well as her lived experience as a queer woman of colour from a low socioeconomic background, to drive systemic change.

Elected as Queensland's Youth Health Minister in 2021, Angelina led a groundbreaking Youth Bill to end period poverty. Since then, she has collaborated with youth activists in Nepal and Indonesia to research the gendered impacts of climate change, serves on the International Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Consortium, and is the Lead Campaigner for Sexual Health Advocates for Reproductive Equity (SHARE), advancing universal access to contraception in Australia. She also serves as a board director at Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT and the Australian Women's Health Alliance, where her intersectional feminist perspective supports gender equity in healthcare and sexual and reproductive health justice.

Sarah is the founder of What Were You Wearing (WWYW), a non-profit organisation focusing on providing education, awareness and advocacy on sexual violence. She is a survivor advocate of both child sexual abuse and adult sexual assault.

She is passionate about ending domestic and sexual violence and being able to help and support survivors. In 2023, she was awarded Newcastle Woman of the Year and was also awarded New South Wales Volunteer of the Year by Youth Action in 2022.

Her main passions are bringing awareness to how First Nations people, people living with a disability, and people within the LGBTQIA+ community are more affected by sexual violence. Being a part of all three communities has allowed her to have unique lived experience within these groups. Sarah is also studying a dual Bachelor of Law and Communication at the University of Newcastle.



**Sarah Williams**  
23, NSW

# CURRENT MEMBERS



**Lauren Scott**  
23, VIC

Lauren is a proud Arabana and Southern Arrernte person raised on Boon-wurrung country, and a passionate advocate for marginalised people, having held advisory and policy guidance roles in several organisations. They were on the Youth Advisory Committee for the Royal Children's Hospital from 2013-2018 as a person with disability. Lauren has also been heavily involved in student representation at the University of Melbourne Student Union, serving as both an Indigenous Committee member and general council representative in 2021, and a student-elected Office Bearer in 2022.

They describe themselves as an intersectional feminist and aim to platform the concerns and struggles of women and gender diverse people oppressed on several axes - women and gender diverse people who are Indigenous, people of colour, living with disability, queer, migrant and refugee. They believe that this is integral to ensuring the liberation and equality of all women and gender diverse people.

Rhiannon is a disabled, queer 25-year-old woman whose life is dedicated to social justice. She has spent over a decade volunteering in diverse roles with social justice organisations, bringing particular passion to policy and education reform. With experience spanning the NGO, private, public, grassroots, pharmacy, and government sectors, Rhiannon now focuses on gender-based violence, disability rights, and accessibility.

In recent years, she has merged her personal health journey and self-advocacy in the medical and healthcare industries with her activism and training, raising awareness of how to navigate health services and self-advocacy, with a gendered perspective and integrating accessibility and inclusion. Her passion and overall aim is to engage and encourage everyone to participate in community issues and socio-political matters.

Rhiannon is especially passionate about amplifying the intersectional voices of young women and gender-diverse individuals, which are often overlooked in housing policy and the disability rights landscape. Her advocacy centres on the human experience, and she champions learning through the lived experiences of others.



**Rhiannon Halling**  
25, NSW

# CURRENT MEMBERS



**Zoe Keath**  
26, QLD

Zoe Keath is a policy officer, youth advocate, and the founder of #SubmissionsSunday, an initiative dedicated to amplifying youth participation in parliamentary and government decision-making processes. Driven by a commitment to elevating youth voices across all levels of policy, Zoe collaborates with various organisations to advance this mission. Zoe is also an honours graduate from QUT, specialising in criminology and psychology, with her honours thesis examining the role of politics and social media in far-right extremism. Her contributions to the community have earned her recognition as one of the top 20 Women in Sustainable Development, a Young Woman to Watch in International Affairs (2023), and a Semi-Finalist in the 7News Young Achievers and Community Achievement Awards (2024).

Tamika is a Widjabul Wia-Bal Bundjalung woman connected to the Aboriginal communities in Redfern, the Central Coast, and the Northern Rivers region. Tamika became a mother at a young age (20) and often draws from this lived experience when advocating for other young women and highlighting the complex barriers faced by young parents and First Nations peoples.

Tamika is postgraduate qualified and spent a decade working, studying and travelling within the Australian construction industry, where she worked in tier 1 construction management. Within this time, she witnessed many injustices of the building and development sector, and how this significantly impacts housing insecurity, mental health, and First Nations workforce development and participation.

Tamika is a 2024 Atlantic Fellow for the University of Melbourne, where she is completing a Master of Social Change Leadership and undertaking a social change project developing housing for Aboriginal communities.



**Tamika Jarvis**  
29, NSW

# CURRENT MEMBERS



**Asha Clementi**  
25, ACT

Asha Clementi is the Founder and CEO of Girls Run the World. She is an award-winning gender equality activist creating opportunities for young women in leadership and diplomacy. She graduated from the Australian National University with a Master of Diplomacy in 2022 and a Bachelor of International Security Studies in 2021.

At the age of 17, she co-founded The Girls Leadership Network. The program holds a series of free leadership workshops for young women aged 16 to 21, inspiring participants to create and run their own initiatives – from school clubs to social impact start-ups. In 2018, Asha founded Girls Run The World – a program that encourages young women to consider careers in diplomacy. It has given over 300 participants the opportunity to spend a day in 50 participating Embassies and High Commissions, meeting with ambassadors and making tangible contributions to the embassy's work. In 2024, in collaboration with the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre at ANU, she started the Women in Strategic Policy program - a new initiative, funded by the Department of Defence that trains and supports young women to contribute to Australia's strategic policy debate.

She was named the 2022 ACT Young Woman of the Year and one of the 40 Under 40 Most Influential Asian-Australians. Her work has been recognised internationally, as she received a Commonwealth Points of Light award from Queen Elizabeth II and a Hänn Honour from the Government of Finland.



# MEMBER PROFILES



## ZOE KEATH

### What led you to get involved with the Young Women's Council and YWCA Australia?

*I had admired YWCA Australia and the Young Women's Council for a long time. YWCA Australia had been such an active and impactful organisation in the feminist space, it was hard not to stumble upon their work and, once I did, I was very keen to be involved and support it any way I could. Once I heard that they were looking for new members for the Young Women's Council, I jumped at the chance.*

### How do you envision the Young Women's Council and YWCA Australia helping you achieve these goals?

*My long-term goal is to ensure young people's and diverse community voices are heard in all areas and levels of relevant decision-making, policy and politics, which will contribute to a better, brighter future. The Young Women's Council and YWCA Australia lead by example in ensuring that young people, particularly young women and gender-diverse people, are represented in all its advocacy. I envision the Young Women's Council and YWCA Australia being sector leaders in this form of co-design, showing how important it is to have young, diverse voices in your advocacy and decision-making.*

### What advice would you give to other young women looking to make a difference in their communities?

*My advice to other young women looking to make a difference in their communities is to find their passion. There are countless areas to make a difference so find an issue that ignites a fire in you. These may feel like big impossible challenges that cannot and will not be solved overnight so it's important to start small by identifying a local or smaller need where you can make a change. Even the smallest project*

*can create a large ripple effect. Building a network of mentors, allies and fellow young changemakers is important to making a difference so take advantage of opportunities like the ones the Young Women's Council and YWCA Australia have on offer including consultation, workshops, memberships and other volunteer opportunities. You can keep up to date on new opportunities by following the YWCA Australia social media accounts or becoming a YWCA Member.*

### What do you see are the biggest challenges for young women and gender diverse people in accessing housing now and into the future and what changes would you like to see to improve this?

*I think one of the biggest challenges for young women and gender diverse people in accessing housing now and into the future is the financial strain of trying to get and maintain securing housing. The astronomically high (and rising) cost of housing and living, coupled with the gender pay gap and under-valuation of industries dominated by young women and gender diverse people has created a perfect storm leaving many struggling to afford rent or a mortgage if they are fortunate enough to find housing. This is a burden particularly felt by disadvantaged and diverse groups such as single mothers and those fleeing domestic violence as well as our First Nations, disabled and LGBTIQ+ communities. To change this, I believe it is vital to ensure we are increasing the stock of genuinely affordable (and accessible and sustainable) housing options, including through rent control measures, First Home Buyer support and government subsidies, as well as support programs that are specifically tailored to young, diverse women and gender diverse people and the communities they represent.*



# MEMBER PROFILES

## TAMIKA JARVIS

### What led you to get involved with the Young Women's Council and YWCA Australia?

*I had been following the Y's movements for a few years and was extremely impressed by their ability to keep such pertinent women's issues at the forefront of the conversation. They advocated for many issues which I share lived experience of, and had felt overwhelmed by in the past. I naturally gravitated toward the organisation as it aligned with my values and took the leap to become involved with their Young Women's Council in 2023.*

### How do you envision the Young Women's Council and YWCA Australia helping you achieve these goals?

*I'm currently completing an Atlantic Fellowship with the University of Melbourne- this includes completing a Master of Social Change Leadership. I'm developing a social change project which aims to alleviate housing shortage and stability issues within Aboriginal communities using self-determination principles. I'm aiming to complete my studies by the end of this year, and then hopefully pursue a PhD, focusing on First Nations people and women within the Australian construction industry. I am motivated to explore the complex issues facing Aboriginal women in our male-dominated sectors within Australia, and how we can foster equitable participation and opportunity within a safe, culturally-appropriate and culturally supportive environment.*

### What advice would you give to other young women looking to make a difference in their communities?

*I would encourage young women to start looking for opportunities to create change as soon as they can and in whatever capacity they can. Whether that be while in school, university, volunteering on the weekend, or even a one-off charity day. I would encourage*



*them to begin by looking for organisations that align with their values, are working toward the change they want to see in the world and provide strong support for volunteers. 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.*

### What do you see are the biggest challenges for young women and gender diverse people in accessing housing now and into the future and what changes would you like to see to improve this?

*I see one of the biggest challenges for young women in accessing housing is that we are often unable to purchase property without a partner due to the extreme cost of living and property prices. This issue compounds when the young woman has children and caring responsibilities. I believe we need more opportunities for young women and mothers to purchase property to provide a safe, secure home for both themselves and their children. I'd like the conversation shifted from rental opportunity to home ownership opportunity. 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.*

# HIGHLIGHTS

## In-Person Summit

A strong foundation was laid for the Young Women's Council in its inaugural face-to-face meeting in Sydney on 5-6 August 2023. The gathering brought together seven newly elected Council members and YWCA representatives to build connections and establish a shared vision. Through comprehensive induction and engaging discussions, the Council delved into YWCA's history, strategic direction, and advocacy and policy priorities as outlined in YWCA's 2023-24 Policy Platform.

The meeting fostered a collaborative environment where members actively contributed diverse perspectives to shaping campaigns and defining the Council's values. A particular focus was placed on understanding the YWCA Policy Platform and applying an intersectional feminist lens to address housing insecurity and homelessness.

The positive feedback from attendees underscored the meeting's success in creating a supportive and productive atmosphere. The Council's ongoing engagement in campaign development and advocacy initiatives demonstrated their commitment to centering young women's voices in YWCA's work.



## Federal Budget Advocacy

YWCA made a strong case for gender equality in housing in its 2024-25 Federal Budget Submission. The submission, launched in February, outlined key priorities for creating a more equitable housing system.

Young women's perspectives were central to the document, with the Young Women's Council delivering a powerful opening statement that highlighted the unique challenges faced by young women and gender diverse people in securing safe and affordable housing. The submission focused on three core themes: building a healthier housing system for all, achieving gender equality through housing equality, and investing in the future of young women and gender diverse people.

The submission presented to government a comprehensive set of policy recommendations and investment priorities. The Young Women's Council played a vital role in shaping the submission's content through their insights and expertise.

# HIGHLIGHTS



## YWCA X Swinburne University Qualitative Research

YWCA Australia and Swinburne University of Technology have undertaken collaborative research project to delve into the housing experiences of young women and young gender diverse people across Australia. The study aims to uncover the challenges and aspirations of young people navigating the housing landscape.

Two Young Women's Council members, Tamika and Rhiannon, actively contributed to the research as members of the Research Working Group. Their invaluable firsthand perspectives assisted the researchers to refine their approach and provide perspective to our findings.

By amplifying the voices of young women and gender diverse people, this research will inform evidence-based policy solutions and strengthen advocacy efforts for improved housing outcomes.

## The Young Women's Council actively contributed to shaping YWCA's advocacy and campaigning efforts.



### Policy submissions and consultations

Providing feedback and input on the Federal Budget, Senate Inquiry into the Rental Crisis, National Strategy for Gender Equality, and National Housing and Homelessness Plan.



### Government engagement

- Advocating for increased support for young people experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness, with Young Women's Council recommendation supporting YWCA representations to the Office of the Queensland Minister for Housing and securing dedicated funding for youth focused initiatives in the Homes for Queenslanders Plan.
- Young Women's Council positions on key policy issues supported engagement with Offices for the Ministers for Women in New South Wales and Housing and Equality in Victoria to highlight the needs of young women.



### Campaigns development and support

- Providing feedback on campaign materials for the 16 Days of Activism, co-presenting a webinar on gender equality, contributing to guest editorials, and shaping YWCA's Federal Budget campaign.
- Young Women's Council Members featured in YWCA's International Women's Day campaign celebrating feminist changemakers.



### Digital activism

Contributing to the development of the Digital Activist Community engagement plan and showcasing Young Women's Council members as activist spotlights.

# KEY OPPORTUNITIES



The Young Women's Council is also regularly offered opportunities to engage in a range of initiatives, supported by the YWCA Advocacy team.



Participate in the Office for Youth's Engage! Strategy and the Youth Steering Committee to shape government policies.



Contribute to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICDP) Global Youth Dialogue.



Support the Home Time Campaign to address youth homelessness in Australia.



Attend the National Youth Disability Summit to connect with peers and gain insights.



Participate in the Young Women's Policy Submission (YWPS) to share experiences and inform policy changes.



Contribute articles to Parity Magazine on youth homelessness.



Utilise the Foundation for Young Australians Speaker Series to amplify young women's voices.



Participate in the PreventX Messaging for a Movement Conference to network and learn.



Contribute to the Anti-Poverty Centre Housing Quality Survey.



Participate in the Victoria's Gender Equality Advisory Group.



Access media and public relations support when needed.

# NEXT STEPS



In 2024-25, YWCA's Young Women's Council will undertake a range of strategic activities to guide our advocacy to government, develop and drive our campaigns, and participate in various capacity-building and leadership opportunities.



Young Women's Council members will review their Charter, ensuring it remains aligned with our evolving goals and activities. The Council will also shape a strategic workplan, which will outline key activities and milestones for the financial year.



Through a series of formal meetings and working groups, the Council will collaborate with the Advocacy and External Affairs team to delve into policy areas such as housing, homelessness, domestic and family violence, and gender equality. A key focus for the Council will be revising YWCA's Policy Platform for the 2024-25 federal election, highlighting the issues of housing insecurity and homelessness faced by young women and gender diverse people.



To drive tangible change and mobilise our Digital Activist Community, the Council will collaborate closely with the Advocacy and External Affairs team to lead two major campaigns: one targeting the specific housing challenges faced by young women, and another aimed at increasing the supply of social and affordable housing. The culmination of our research partnership with Swinburne University will be a delegation to Canberra, where select members of the Young Women's Council will present our findings to parliamentarians, advocating for policy changes that prioritise the housing needs of young women and gender diverse people now and into the future.



Our commitment to building capacity extends beyond policy development. We will support the creation of submissions to government consultations, providing members of the Council with the skills and knowledge to effectively engage with policymakers. Through targeted training in media, storytelling, government relations, and intersectional feminist leadership, we will strengthen our advocacy efforts and ensure that the perspectives of young women and young gender diverse people are heard and continue to shape YWCA's advocacy and campaigns for the year ahead.



# CONTACT US

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