

2018 YMCA National Convention Highlights



What an inspiring few days we've shared for our 2018 "Power of One" National Convention. We've hosted our inaugural National Youth Retreat. We saw some of the great work and facilities in Victoria, and on Friday we saw our belief in action in everything we saw, heard and experienced and what a powerhouse of opportunity we can provide when we unite around one purpose. Convention was formally opened by our own Olly Tripodi as a masterful MC, introducing our 'own T-Swift' - 13 year old Teisha Summit-Swift - singing a stunning rendition of the National Anthem, and an acknowledgment of country from 18 year old Jamarl Firebrace, of the Yorta Yorta.

Our National President Chris Lewis and CEO Melinda Crole reminded us of the Power of Acting as One Y, and of our own fight to ensure young people have agency - to address some of the very real issues facing them. We are all in this good fight together! We're living it! We saw that in the way we provided a platform today for young people to share their own personal stories of transformation, and impact.

Laura Pinter, 26, who took on Zoo Weekly and won, now inspires other young people to create the culture they want, instead of being consumed by it. How awesome was Josh Murray, 18, founder of Josh's Rainbow Eggs. Pardon the pun - but what a good egg! Living his belief and customers loving his product because he genuinely cares about them, too. We could all learn a lot from Josh and Laura.

Then we heard from talented young singer Adrian Eagle, reminding us all what it was like to be 17. How hard it can be. Now inspiring others to find their way out of the darkness. And our own young people were awesome! Laura Eason from YNSW inspired with her passion and acknowledgement of the importance of intergenerational leadership in a young person's life.

And we were wowed by four of our WhyNot editorial committee members - Jono Santamaria, Eleanor Brown, Georgie Nichol, and star contributor Aileen Ng. Look what happens when you give up control to young people! Magic happens! Please encourage young people you know to share their voice and art on this safe space. And sign up to receive updates at whynot.org.au. And as Simon Hammond said: 'this has to go global - if it doesn't we're not doing our job right'.

The Chair of the YMCA Belief Council, Simon Hammond, in his National Brand Architecture session reminded us we need to be edgy and relevant. We need to make sense to society, and we need to organise ourselves into four clear brands so customers can access us through many points. And next year, we'll look at our logo and look and feel again. And we'll find a million moments of everyday inspiration across the Y and tell these stories next year through WhyNot. And we'll do more work on creating more edgy spaces for young people.

We were also reminded we cannot afford to take our eyes off the ball post Royal Commission when it comes to protecting children and young people from harm, by Liana Buchanan, Principal Commissioner for Children and Young People, Victoria and Tim Moore, Associate Professor, Australian Centre for Child Protection. Finally we heard from Andrew McKenzie from the World YMCA about how united we are around young people right around the world - and why we need to be. And the amazing young people of the YMCA who gathered together over the past few days. Their message was "be bold and brave" and "thank you for believing in us".



On Saturday, we dusted off our dancing shoes and started with breakfasts for our Life Governors, Presidents, and CEOs. Next, we learned everything we shouldn't do in our Boardrooms from YMCA WA President and PWC Partner Justin Eve and Marion Barry also from PWC. We all have questions we need to take back to our boardrooms and executive teams. Questions like: Do we have the balance right between focusing on mission and financial outcomes? Are we really attuned to the voice of youth? Is the tone at the top right for what's happening on the ground? Is our risk and opportunity appetite clearly defined to support clear decision-making? How do you see and attend to thematic concerns?



We were all blown away by Dr Jessica Gallagher, whose life changed forever when at 17 she was told she was legally blind due to a degenerative disease. She highlighted the importance of developing trust, embracing fear, and cultivating an active mind set and combining this with a dash of courage - all relevant lessons for us. As perhaps was her biggest leadership message - about the importance of empathy truly being able to stand in others' shoes. Certainly every time we come together like this, we all get the opportunity to understand each other better. Jess also said that resonated. "We are the sum of the stories we tell ourselves."

The stories we told each other over these past 3-4 days are incredibly important and have certainly reminded me how far we have travelled in the past two years to not just talk about our belief but to really live it.

Over lunch, we farewelled Mark Sargent after his incredible career with the Y. A tenacious supporter of staff, young people and the greater good of the Y. Who will ever forget the story of Michelle? Sick! Thank you Mark, for leaving the organisation in better shape than you found it. Richard Nedov then chaired the YMCA Services AGM (repurposed E-Store) meeting where we were reminded of the importance of aggregating our services for the benefit of all our members. Richard outlined YMCA Services as the perfect vehicle for the Movement's back end services, beginning with our top 16 spends. We welcomed Glyn Davies as the CEO of YMCA Services, to build on Mark's legacy. Mark also delivered his last CEO Report, reminding the room of the importance of growing YMCA retail operations to support YMCAs, in tightening financial environments. He reminded us of his take on One Y: One dream, one team! We heard of the innovative products Estore took to market this year - aqua nappies and aqua goggles.



We closed Convention with our YMCA Australia AGM. We heard stories to celebrate significant birthdays for YMCA Ballarat and WA and we welcomed John Binden as a new Life Governor of the YMCA in Australia, and we thanked Peter Malone, outgoing National Board Member and Vice President, for his significant contribution to the Y. We celebrated all the nominees and recipients of our annual YMCA Australia Awards. And it was wonderful to have Life Governor Ian Howard, 95, with us in the room to present the award he continues to sponsor. National President Chris Lewis took us through a journey of what we've learned together. I shared reflections on leadership gained from my recent long service leave, with my message is that we need to "lead like conductors" in our communities - all playing from the same music - our shared strategic framework 2022. And we attended to some business items.... All in all a wonderful and inspiring time together to re-focus on the "Power of One" and what we can achieve together.

