

The National Council of the YMCAs of Australia

100 YEARS YOUNG

Celebration of 100 years of working
as a National Movement in Australia

2017





A Message From The President Christopher Lewis

Welcome to this very special occasion in the history of the YMCA as a National Movement.

Tonight we celebrate the 100th occasion when YMCA people from across the country have gathered to celebrate the achievements of the previous year, and look to the year ahead. I wonder how many other national charities have celebrated this milestone - my guess is that we are in rarified company.

It is by no mistake that we are celebrating this achievement in the grounds of the Melbourne Museum. Just across the courtyard is the Royal Exhibition Building. Completed in 1880, it is almost as old as the YMCA in Australia! As many of you will know, it hosted the opening of the first Parliament of Australia on May 9, 1901. This was the first time that the individual colonies of this new federation had come together as one being, under a new constitution, to decide on what sort of nation they wanted to become. Within the walls you can still hear the echoes of the spirited discussions around the common values and beliefs that would become the foundation stones of a Commonwealth. I wonder what the 12,000 people that gathered on that day would make of today's Australia. Would they be proud of what we've become? Are the aspirations they wrote into the constitution still evident in the Australian community? I would like to think so.

I wonder also what the 35 delegates who gathered in Melbourne all those years ago - the first gathering under a new constitution as the National Council of the YMCAs of Australasia - would make of the YMCA today. Once again, I would like to think that they would recognise that the core values that have always underpinned our Movement are still present in our day to day operations. I think they would be proud of the 21st century charity that they founded.

That we are sitting within the walls of Melbourne's Museum also challenges us to reflect on how we want Australians to perceive us. Are we a museum piece? Are we merely an interesting artifact from a bygone era? Do young people look at us behind a glass case and wonder who we were and what we did?

Tonight, we celebrate the past, but look to the future. In these pages and over the course of the evening, you'll hear about eras that redefined the YMCA and how it was perceived by the Australian community. But you'll also hear about the future, and the importance of coming together with unity of purpose. That they may all be one. I wonder what those of us who gathered here tonight would make of the YMCA 100 AGMs further down the track.

Thank you for being here and helping us celebrate this important milestone.

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Lewis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

What Are We Celebrating?

The Federation.

As we all know, the YMCA was started in London in 1844 by George Williams. Seven short years later, in 1851, the Y first appeared in Australia, in Adelaide. The Movement spread quickly after that, with YMCAs commencing in most major towns and cities. For the first two decades, those YMCAs worked very much alone, with very little interaction between Associations.

In 1873, YMCAs started talking about the possibility of coming together - to learn from each other and encourage each other in their mission and service - and in 1877 the first Intercolonial Conference was held in Sydney with representatives from Australian and New Zealand YMCAs in attendance. Such was the success of this first conference, that they met another five times before the turn of the century.

1901 saw the colonies come together to form the Commonwealth of Australia. In the same year, the YMCAs of Australia appointed the first National General Secretary, utilising funds from the YMCA of London. The energetic JJ Virgo, the then Secretary of the Adelaide YMCA, took on the additional responsibility for Movement growth and development across the new nation - tasks that he referred to in his book as 'Creation and resuscitation'.



The Ballarat conference of 1906 saw the landmark development of a new National Constitution, and the National Council of the YMCAs of Australasia was formed. It gave the National body the power to promote the YMCA, to conduct conferences, to arrange deputations, and to provide advice and counsel on National matters. The first conference of the National Council happened in 1908.



In 1917, the entity called The National Council of the YMCAs of Australia and New Zealand was incorporated, and later that year, the very first Annual General Meeting of that entity was conducted. 100 years later, we celebrate that event.



The War Effort

The Role Of The National Council In The War Era.

England's Lord Derby said "The YMCA in peace is invaluable, in war indispensable". The threat of war in Europe was ever present in the years following federation. Two years prior to the declaration of war, the National Council of YMCAs approached the War Office to ask how it could best be of service should hostilities increase. It was agreed that "what the Red Cross Societies.... are to the wounded soldiers, the YMCA aims to be to the strong". With this the National Council set the goal that 'Every transport of any size leaving Australia carries a YMCA Secretary'. They then set about ensuring that the salaries of YMCA Representatives could be covered, and that each representative was equipped with what they needed to do their indispensable work.

The Army And Navy Committee of the National Council.

The YMCA moved quickly in establishing a Department of Army and Navy once the role of the organisation in the war effort was defined. Its governance was constituted as a Committee of the National Council, with members elected by Associations. It had two functions quoted in its terms of reference: The Army and Navy Department is the supreme authority on all matters pertaining to utilisation of the YMCA by the Defence Department, and Approval and appointment of all YMCA Representatives detailed for Army, Navy and Air Force outside Australia, and arrangements of terms and conditions of their service. It also looked after the procurement of supplies and equipment, and the development of financial appeals, publicity and propaganda. During World War II a separate committee was established to focus on the requirements of prisoners of war. The Army and Navy Committee, or its decendents, continued to meet until well into the 1960s. Its minutes are still kept in the National Office archives.

One Man's Experience.

Frank Grose was a YMCA Respresentative from the YMCA of Brisbane. He was sent over to France in 1916 with the First Divisional Artillery. We are fortunate that he took the time to describe his work in great detail, and had it published in a book called "A Rough YM Bloke". In it, he describes what it was like to deliver little comforts such as cigarettes, cocoa and reading materials to the gunners on the front line. He was issued with a bicycle, and notes the challenges of carrying enough supplies for 400 men, whilst all the time dodging incoming artillery fire. He also notes the importance of YMCA bases set up behind the lines, where soldiers could come for some R&R, exchange a book, listen to music, or write a letter home. It was a very practical form of YMCA service.



The Rough Y.M. Bloke.

A Letter From a Young AIF Private.

Perhaps the clearest idea of the work the Australian YMCA did during the war era can be seen in an excerpt from a letter received from a young AIF private. He wrote:

"Everywhere we move the YMCA follows us, if not already established, and only today they are opening up in the camp we are in. When we arrive at a new camp (which is pretty often lately) the first question asked by everyone is, Is there a YM here? And should the answer be no, it is received with a 'hard luck' and crest-fallen look. This organisation is magnificent, and goodness only knows what we would do without them. Their privileges are enjoyed by the good, bad and indifferent, and of whatever creed; they all flock to its reading and writing rooms, concerts, and last but not least, its bright praise services.... Since we have been in this camp we have been without a YM tent..... and I have known chaps to walk six miles to the next camp to write a few letters or spend a few piastres and then walk back again".



PASSED OPERATIONAL CENSORSHIP SWPA
PHOTO. NO. 16466.
NEW GUINEA. Driver A. Stevens of Kogarah, N.S.W., just off
the dusty track, stops at the Y.M.C.A. Coffee Stall to
quench his thirst.
PLEASE ACKNOWLEDGE TO THE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION



Reimagining Youth Work

Where It All Began.

The YMCA has always been, first and foremost, a youth development organisation. Formed by a 22 year old, it is not surprising that the main focus of the organisation, since inception, has been on the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of young people. The training and professional development of those charged with this responsibility has always been the YMCA's highest priority. The role of 'Youth Worker' has not always been around - in fact, prior to the 1970s, the term received little common use. Working with young people was generally perceived to be the domain of the school or the church or the family. Dr Jennifer Brooker from RMIT notes that prior to the professionalisation of youth work, those youth programs that did exist "...stressed duty, obedience, loyalty and service. Boys and girls were organised into (literally) uniform groups and taught what was deemed necessary for being a rounded citizen of the day". During the 1970s, the Australian YMCA found itself to be at the heart of - if not a driving force behind - a radical reimagining of how youth work could and should happen. It remains one of the most innovative and definitive eras of the Y's presence in Australia.

The Early Years of YMCA Youth Work Training.

Just after World War II, Sydney YMCA opened a training facility in Homebush designed to equip YMCA staff with the skills and talents required to do their valuable work. In 1947, they introduced a two year course entitled the YMCA Diploma of Youth Leadership, modelled on the successful Springfield College course in the USA. The content of that course included units on social service, Christian education, administration, program planning and execution, physical education, group leadership, community recreation and counselling.

In 1964, the College relocated from Homebush to Melbourne. YMCA staff attending the College would graduate with a qualification to work in roles such as a Boys Work or Girls Work Secretary, or a Camping Secretary, or a Physical Programs Secretary. The YMCA Training College received its accreditation as a tertiary institution in 1968.



1949 - The first graduating class of the two year Youth Work Diploma

Redefining Youth Work.

In 1975, and in response to changing community attitudes, the YMCA's College for Leadership Training embarked on a radical departure in its conceptualisation of youth work. It involved moving away from seeing the young person as a passive recipient of services and information, to being an active participant in their own development. This led to a new focus in how people who worked with youth defined themselves and their role. A new subject area was added to the existing Diploma course called "Personal and Professional Development (PPD)", where students were required to reflect on their own functioning within the youth work relationships. It encouraged students to perceive themselves as professionals in working with young people - not as someone who worked with young people as a by-product of other work. The term Youth Worker began to gain popular acceptance, and, during the second half of the 1970s, evidence of this professionalisation could be seen in such things as the development of a Youth Workers Award to determine pay rates. The YMCA is widely accepted as being the driving force behind these changes.



Today's The Day

Melinda Crole



Today's the day..

Not tomorrow, not after that report is tabled or review completed or committee meets. It's today. A perfectly normal day. It's today. The day the world needs to stop and listen to those who will inherit this world. **To young people.** Because today is the day they live in. Not sometime in the future when it may or may not get done. **Today is their day.**

In 2017 the YMCA, along with our world, is challenged by the pace of change, the rise of the digital revolution and to understand the importance of ensuring that the voices of our children and young people be heard. What creates the extraordinary, in my mind, is when we begin to unlock the potential of our collective impact. By co-creating and co-designing, by bringing people together, we can make possible the things we thought yesterday, may have been impossible.

We, together, live our ongoing commitment of ensuring children and young people are safe. This focus will unwaveringly continue into the future. There is much more to do and learn in ensuring that the rights of a child are protected and that children and young people can feel safe and be safe, every day, within a YMCA.

We continue to learn from, what is to be, the longest serving Royal Commission in Australia's history. However hard the process has been for us, it will make us stronger, more focused and better able to ensure children and young people can reach their potential. If you look into the eyes of a child or young person, filled with optimism, trust and love, you will never underestimate the need for this work. In response to survivors of child sexual abuse, we saw us collectively launch YMCA Redress. A trauma informed, values based response to survivors of sexual abuse within a YMCA. Our journey continues to pave the way for change and enormous collective national efforts to ensure every Australian understands, appreciates and desires the YMCA in their lives. We continue to collectively explore how we can optimise our mission impact and extend our reach to more people, more often and with more positive impact. We continue to be fearless and filled with optimism to take on the changes that will ensure the YMCA's future and relevance in Australia. We continue to be inspired, to trust each other and to decide together, do together, learn together and to be great because of it.

We will succeed - because we are taking the journey - together.

At the Y, we believe passionately in the power of inspired young people.
Our passion is to help bring about that power...today.
Everything else will follow.

Melinda Crole



“

WE BELIEVE IN THE
POWER OF INSPIRED
YOUNG PEOPLE

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As We Look To The Future

As we look to the future - we see hope and possibility.

We know that a better future depends on the ideas, energy and voice of the group with the most to benefit and the most to lose – those who will be there when tomorrow comes.

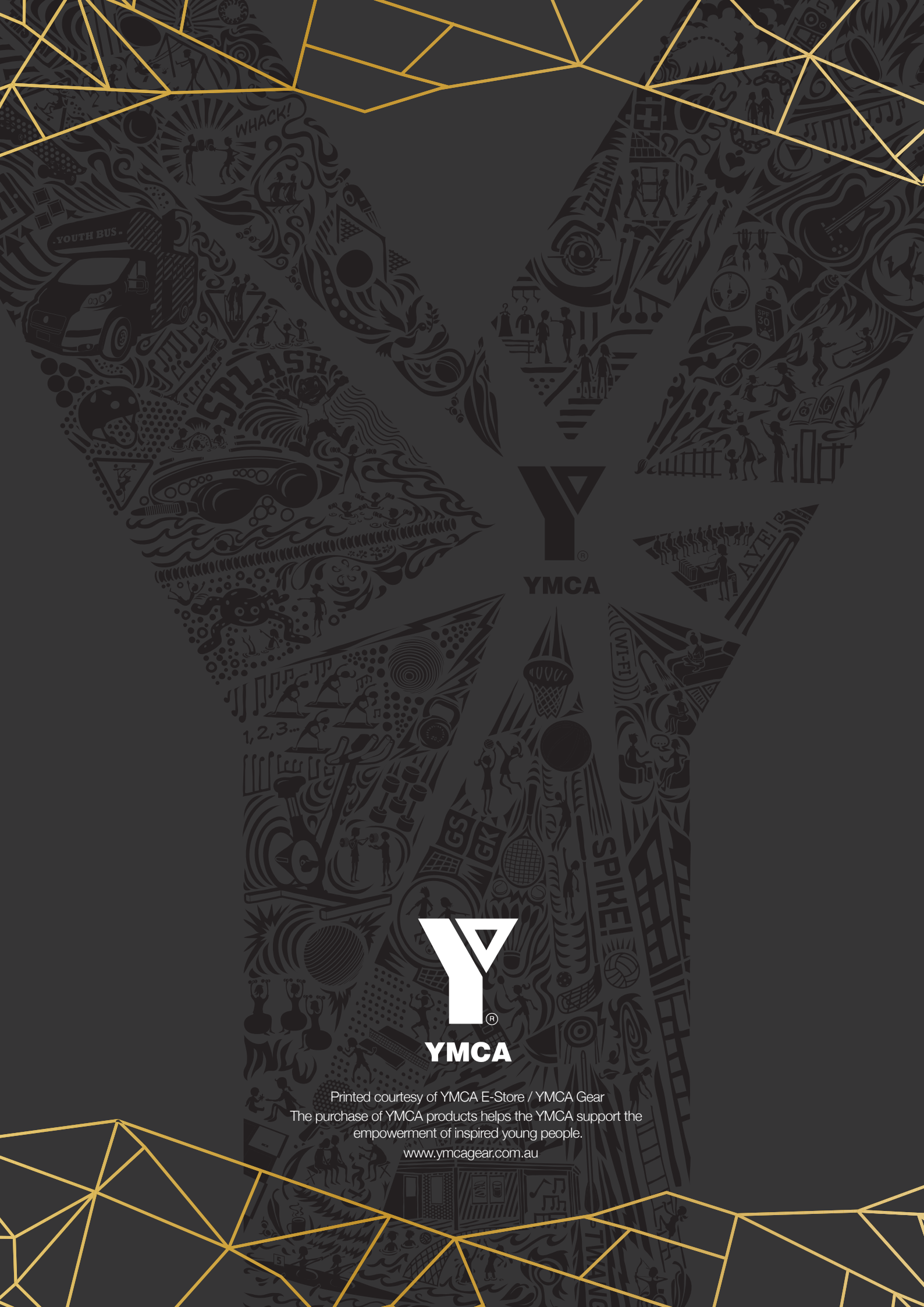
Which is why we stand for young people.
Which is why we will listen to young people.

We believe that young people always have
and always will shape the future
- when they're inspired and empowered.

We believe in the power of
inspired young people.







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The purchase of YMCA products helps the YMCA support the
empowerment of inspired young people.

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