

YOUNG PEOPLE DOING IT TOUGH

Exploring the complex and interlocking issues of homelessness, OOHC, justice, culture, safety and mental health.



ARMIDALE NSW
JUNE 17 - 19, 2025

Bringing together leaders and practitioners from Government and Non-Government organisations across the country, focused on our region, to discuss, learn and share how we get better at responding to young people who are in conflict with the law, at risk of violence, experiencing homelessness and poor mental health.

Join us as we share, learn and discuss:

- Lessons learnt on developing, sustaining & evaluating Youth Hubs
- Increasing social cohesion and youth participation in programming
- Improving our practice for working with First Nations communities and their organisations
- Overview of the issues facing young people in juvenile justice and detention
- Client-centred & strengths-based approaches to youth work
- Key issues for young people in Out of Home Care
- Implementing the findings of the Key Tenets report
- Key issues facing young people in Education
- Delivering a Rights Based approach to service delivery
- How the arts can play an important role in increasing our understanding for issues faced by young people doing it tough



REGISTRATION

REGISTER ONLINE:

www.womensshelterarmidale.org/conference



(02) 6772 5911



conference@wsa.ngo.org.au



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Produced by:

womensshelter
ARMIDALE



In partnership with:

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Key Speakers

LEARNING
GLOBAL
ACTING LOCAL



Janet Killgallon

Janet Killgallon is the Manager, Whole of Government Initiatives Team, Youth Justice NSW. In recent years, Janet has led teams responsible for developing human-centred design methodology and adopting this methodology to co-design and test multidisciplinary service responses for young people and families experiencing vulnerability, through a number of pilot projects.

Janet has experience in social policy, project management and communications in local, state, and federal governments. Janet has qualifications in legal studies and marketing and communications from South Africa



Sharlene McKenzie OAM

Sharlene is the Managing Director of Allawaw Aboriginal Corporation.

Sharlene has worked across the sector in Executive positions within NGOs that deliver services to the community. She has had some 18 years' experience within the community sector. Sharlene has managed delivery of services that directly support families, young people and children who have had contact with the criminal justice system, Out of Home Care and require support around complex needs. She also has experience within the mental health and disability sectors. For this work she was awarded an Order of Australia medal in 2022. She was also a finalist in the NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year in 2019.

Sharlene is a Wiradjuri woman who is passionate about empowering community and building partnerships of sustainability to work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



Gill Calvert

Gill was the inaugural NSW Children's Commissioner from 1999–2009. She was also responsible for coordinating government action for children and importantly refocusing government attention on the importance of the early years. She started her career as a family therapist with children and their families and the importance of listening to children and families experience has underpinned her lifelong commitment to children and their wellbeing.

Key Speakers continued...



Dr Unni Krishnan

Dr Unni Krishnan has worked in senior management, leadership, representational, governance/ board, and advisory positions for humanitarian, health, and development agencies (such as Oxfam, ActionAid, Plan International, Save The Children, War Child and the People's Health Movement), inter-agency and UN initiatives, academic and technical teams. He currently works as the Global Humanitarian Director, at Plan International. Currently, He is also on the board of humanitarian initiatives (e.g. CALP -Cash Learning Partnership).

Dr Unni has championed principled and effective humanitarian action and promoted ICVA's mission to enable, support, and guide constituents of the humanitarian ecosystem. Most importantly, fostered collaboration within agencies in the 'global south' and between them and international agencies.



Dr Lukas Carey

Dr. Lukas Carey received his Doctorate in Education and has worked in the education field for his entire career. Having been a teacher, trainer, Leading teacher and Principal working in mainstream and special education field, Lukas has a diverse experience in education and educational leadership. With a specific interest in alternative and individualised education and using it to keep young people out of the 'School to Prison Pipeline', Lukas works with at risk and justice impacted young people and adults across the country. Lukas is part of the Community Services team at UNE.



Leesa Waters

Leesa has over 30 years of experience in the social services sector, working in youth refuges, child protection services, women's refuges, correctional facilities, courtrooms, NGOs and government departments across Australia, providing her with an in-depth understanding of the issues that impact families. She holds a Bachelor of Social Science (Welfare), Bachelor of Law (Honours), Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice and a current Australian practising certificate from the NSW Law Society. Leesa currently lives in regional NSW and has worked nationally across regional, remote and metropolitan communities. She is passionate about the power of prevention and is a strong advocate for respectful relationships education for children and young people.

Leesa believes we should all continually ask ourselves 'what is it like for the child?'

Key Speakers continued...



Bruce Dennison

Bruce is an Anaiwan man with connections to the Kamilaroi people. Bruce has worked in various roles supporting young people, initially as Teachers Aid before working with the Youth Refuge and as Manager of the Post Release Support Program for young people exiting custody. He then joined the Clontarf Foundation and the Aboriginal Education Assistant role at Armidale Secondary College. A move to the Oorala Centre at UNE allowed him to continue to assist Aboriginal people, young and old before returning to the Youth Justice space as Assistant Manager at the Armidale Youth Justice Community Office.



Anthony Shannon

Anthony Shannon is the Director Early Intervention, Volunteering, Youth & Carers, Child & Family, Strategy, Policy & Commissioning at the Department of Communities & Justice. Anthony has held a number of positions leading state-wide targeted earlier intervention, child protection and homelessness reforms, and at District level, managing NGO disability and community services funding, community development and sector partnerships.



Hayden Tonazzi

Hayden Tonazzi is an award-winning director and creative producer who in 2025 was appointed the Artistic Director & CEO of the Australian Theatre for Young People (ATYP). A graduate of the 2019 NIDA MFA Directing Program, for over eight years' they have worked across new writing in theatre and musical theatre, most notably Saplings by Hannah Belanszky for the 2024 Sydney Festival (Winner of Best Production for Young People, Sydney Theatre Awards), Pickled کبیس for PYT Fairfield & Downstairs Belvoir, the last train to madeline by Callum Mackay for Fever103 and MeatMarkets Melbourne, and Converted! by Vic Zerbst with Oliver John Cameron for the 2025 Sydney Festival.



Lauren Stracey

Lauren is the CEO of Youth Action and a psychologist with 20+ years in the not-for-profit sector, dedicated to young people and families facing systemic barriers. Her work spans frontline service delivery, disaster recovery, policy reform, and leadership in values-driven organisations. A strategic thinker and passionate innovator, Lauren believes it's through the power of relationships that we are able to drive meaningful change. From delivering rural mental health support to driving policy reform, she champions early intervention and prevention. Her passion for social justice ensures young people are heard, valued, and central to decision-making—advocating for systems that foster hope, strength, and wellbeing.

Key Speakers continued...



Selim Ucar

Selim Ucar is the Acting CEO for Humanity Matters, a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) committed to breaking down barriers for young people, based in South Western Sydney. He has over 22 years experience in the youth sector, with extensive focus on street-based youth work. Selim has been responsible for leading and designing programs where vulnerable, disengaged young people can build connections and experience acceptance and inclusion through access to positive support networks. Selim has been a fervent advocate on behalf of marginalised, disconnected and vulnerable young people, particularly street-frequenting youth, bringing their needs and issues to the forefront of Government policy and service delivery.



Andrew Johnson

Andrew brings 30 years experience at senior level at the national and international level. He was the UN Representative for Save the Children, and led Save the Children's global strategic plan on violence against children and young people. He held the position of CEO in the Australian Republican Movement, Australia Council of Social Service, as well as the inaugural NSW Advocate for Children and Young People. He was adjunct Professor at New York University developing and teaching courses on child rights and Human Rights



Penny Lamaro

Penny has over 20 years' experience across government and community sector dealing with women, children and young people doing it tough. She is currently the CEO for the Women's Shelter Armidale bring innovation to frontline service delivery in regional NSW. Prior to this role, Penny worked in youth homelessness for nearly 10 years, during which time she managed the Youth Refuge, and founded 'WAGS The Dog Program' a highly successful dog therapy business. Penny is currently the Chair of Youth Action, the NSW peak body for young people and youth services. Penny work has been recognised nationally as 2025 Regional Woman of the Year Finalist and Winner of the Northern Tablelands Woman of the Year.



Andrew McCallum

Andrew is an experienced Chief Executive Officer with a demonstrated history of working in the non-profit organization management industry. Skilled in Nonprofit Organizations, Social Enterprise, Corporate Social Responsibility, Youth Development, and Government. Strong business development professional graduated from Cambridge Institute of Education UK. Andrew led St Luke's service provider, CEO of ACWA and President of ACOSS.

Conference Program

10:00 AM

*Official
Opening,
234 Brown St,
Armidale*



Free bus transport has been arranged from Trackside to the conference venue at the conclusion of proceedings

DAY ONE

17 JUNE 2025

1:00 PM

Welcome and Opening

1:30 PM

Panel: Lessons learnt and Key issues for Hubs

- Morgana Butler
- Selim Ucar
- Lauren Stracey

2:30 PM

Building safer facilitation skills with young people

- Leesa Waters
- Alice Dolin

3:00 PM

Rights-based service delivery

- Andrew Johnson

4:00 PM

Strengths-based approaches

- Veronica Gordon



Conference Program

DAY TWO

18 JUNE 2025

9:00 AM

Lessons learnt from trauma informed programming in emergency settings

- Dr Unni Krishnan

10:00 AM

Panel: Young People in Out of Home Care

- Andrew McCallum
- Gill Calvert

11:00 AM

Working Group Session: Key Tenets of youth work

- Anthony Shannon

12:00 PM

Panel: Client focused service delivery

- Morgana Butler
- Selim Ucar
- Jess Fielding

1:00 PM

LUNCH

2:00 PM

Prison to Principal: Alternative and individualised education

- Dr Lukas Carey

3:00 PM

Social cohesion and increasing youth participation in programming

- Andrew Johnson

4:00 PM

Young people experiencing homelessness

DAY THREE

19 JUNE 2025

9:00 AM

Panel: Culturally Safe Programming

- Bruce Dennison
- TBC

10:00 AM

Young people in detention

- Janet Killgallon
- Sharlene McKenzie OAM

11:00 AM

Raising Entrepreneurial Aspirations – Solving the local problems Young People care about the most

- Heather Thomson
- Janna Hayes

12:00 PM

Using the Arts in youth work

- Hayden Tonazzi

