

YOUNG CANBERRA CITIZEN^{OF}_{THE} YEAR

2026 Guidelines



Nominations close: 5 pm Tuesday 1 September 2026

Acknowledgement of Country

The Health and Community Services Directorate acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region.

We respect the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, and their continuing culture and contribution they make to the Canberra region and the life of our city.

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INTRODUCTION

Established in 1989, the Young Canberra Citizen of the Year Awards (the Awards) is an annual celebration recognising individuals and groups of young people aged 12 to 25 who have made a significant contribution to the ACT community.

The Awards recognise a diverse range of achievements, including contributions to community service, sport, education, science, culture, the arts, environmental sustainability, leadership, advocacy and personal development. They also celebrate young people who have demonstrated resilience, initiative and a positive impact on others through service, achievement or creative expression.

Nominations can be submitted in the following categories:

1. Young Canberra Citizen of the Year Award
2. Young Achiever Award
3. Personal Achievement Award
4. Environment and Sustainability Award
5. Group Achievement Award
6. Arts and Multimedia Award

The Awards are supported by the ACT Government and generous sponsors, who are committed to recognising the diverse talents and contributions of young individuals and groups across the ACT.

The Health and Community Services Directorate works closely with award recipients to support ongoing engagement with relevant networks, participation in community events, and representation of young people at official ACT occasions.

AIM

The Young Canberra Citizen of the Year Awards aim to:

- recognise and celebrate the achievements of young people in the ACT
- acknowledge outstanding contributions to the Canberra community
- encourage youth leadership, participation and civic engagement
- promote positive role models for young people
- increase awareness of the diverse ways young people contribute to the ACT community.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Nominations may be submitted by individuals or organisations, including self-nominations. Nominees may be considered for more than one award category where appropriate.

Who can be nominated?

Nominees must:

- be aged between 12 and 25 years by the closing date of nominations (1 September 2026)
- live, work, study or make a significant contribution to the ACT community
- meet the requirements of the award category they are nominated for
- agree to be nominated.

Previous recognition

The Young Canberra Citizen of the Year Awards aim to recognise a broad range of young people, groups and initiatives across the ACT.

Where a nominee, program, project or initiative has received a Young Canberra Citizen of the Year Award or commendation within the past two years, nominations should clearly show new achievements, growth, outcomes or innovation since the previous recognition.

Nominations that do not provide evidence of new or expanded impact may be considered less competitive during the assessment process.

AWARD CATEGORIES AND CRITERIA

Each award category has specific criteria that the Assessment Panel will use to assess nominations.

When completing a nomination, you should address the criteria listed under the relevant award category. Strong nominations clearly show the nominee's impact, contribution and achievements, with examples.

Young Canberra Citizen of the Year Award (12–25 years)

This award recognises a young person aged 12–25 who has made a significant overall impact on the ACT community. This is the highest award and is intended for individuals whose contribution stands out across multiple areas.

Criteria

An individual who:

- is an exceptional role model for other young people in the ACT
- has championed youth issues in the ACT
- has made a significant contribution to the ACT community through personal effort or community involvement.

Young Achiever Award (12–17 years)

This award recognises young people aged 12–17 who are demonstrating emerging leadership, initiative and strong potential. It is intended for individuals who are showing early signs of leadership and making a difference in their community.

Criteria

An individual who:

- demonstrates emerging leadership potential
- has championed youth issues in the ACT
- has taken initiative to achieve goals that benefit their ACT community

Personal Achievement Award (12–25 years)

This award recognises young people aged 12 to 25 who have shown resilience and determination, particularly in overcoming challenges.

Criteria

An individual who:

- has overcome adversity or significant challenges
- has shown exceptional commitment to achieving their goals
- has made a positive contribution to their community or inspired others through their achievements.

Environment and Sustainability Award (12–25 years)

This award recognises young people or groups of young people aged 12 to 25 making a positive environmental impact.

Criteria

An individual or group who:

- has made a meaningful contribution to protecting or improving the environment
- promotes environmentally responsible behaviour
- has driven positive environmental change in their community.

Group Achievement Award (12-25 years)

This award recognises teams or organisations that have made a meaningful impact for young people aged 12 to 25 in the ACT.

Criteria

A group or organisation that:

- has delivered initiatives that benefit young people in the ACT
- has responded to the needs and interests of young people
- has created or expanded opportunities for young people.

Arts and Multimedia Award (12–25 years)

This award recognises young people who use creative expression to influence, inspire or engage others.

Criteria

An individual who:

- has demonstrated excellence in the arts, multimedia or creative expression
- has used creative platforms to promote, express or raise awareness of youth issues
- has inspired, empowered or positively engaged young people through their creative work.

Not sure which category to choose?

Use the guide below to help select the most appropriate award.

If your nominee is...	Best category
A young person who has made a major impact in the ACT community	Young Canberra Citizen of the Year Award
A young leader showing initiative and potential	Young Achiever Award
Someone who has shown resilience and determination	Personal Achievement Award
A person or group making a positive environmental impact	Environment and Sustainability Award
A team or organisation making a difference for young people	Group Achievement Award
A young person using arts, media or creativity to inspire or engage others	Arts and Multimedia Award

KEY DATES

- Nominations open: Wednesday 1 July 2026
- Nominations close: Tuesday 1 September 2026 at 5 pm
- Awards Ceremony: Friday 6 November 2026

HOW TO SUBMIT A NOMINATION

- All nominations must be submitted online through SmartyGrants.
- You can nominate yourself or someone else.
- Incomplete nomination forms will not be assessed.
- Nominators need to provide detailed information about the nominee's achievements and any supporting evidence.
- Nominators must provide details of two referees who can verify the nominee's achievements.
- Nominators will also be required to confirm that all information provided is accurate and that referees have consented to be contacted.

Tips for nominators

- If you would like to nominate more than one individual, group or organisation, you will need to complete a separate nomination form for each nomination.
- Include supporting information where possible to help demonstrate how the nominee meets the award criteria.
- Share the completed nomination with referees in case the Assessment Panel contacts them.

ASSESSMENT OF NOMINATIONS

Following an eligibility review, nominations will be assessed by category Assessment Panel that include ACT Government representatives, sponsor representatives or subject matter experts.

Assessment panel members will declare any conflicts of interest and manage them in accordance with ACT Government requirements.

All nominations will first be reviewed to ensure they meet the eligibility requirements outlined in these Guidelines.

Eligible nominations will then be assessed against the criteria for the relevant award category.

To support a fair and informed assessment process, the Assessment Panel may contact:

- referees to verify information for shortlisted nominees
- nominators to clarify information provided in the nomination

Please note that being contacted by the Assessment Panel does not guarantee that a nominee will be shortlisted or selected as a finalist.

As part of the assessment process, the ACT Government may carry out appropriate checks to ensure that nominees meet the standards expected of award recipients.

AWARDS CEREMONY 6 NOVEMBER 2026

The 2026 Young Canberra Citizen of the Year Awards Ceremony will be held on Friday 6 November 2026 at the Anne Harding Conference Centre, University of Canberra, Bruce.

Award recipients will be announced at the ceremony, and the Minister for Children, Youth and Families will be invited to present the awards.

ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT

For more information visit ACT Government webpage

To seek assistance with nominations please email Office for Youth Engagement at Youth.Engagement@act.gov.au