2026

Australian Young Lawyer Awards

Guide

Nominations close 28 August 2026

Law Council
OF AUSTRALIA

2026

Australian Young Lawyer Awards

About the awards

The Australian Young Lawyer Awards (the **Awards**) were established in 2005 and are conducted annually by the Law Council of Australia, led by its Young Lawyers Committee (the **Committee**).

The Awards comprise the **Australian Young Lawyer Award** and the **Australian Young Lawyer Organisation Award.**

The Australian Young Lawyer Award is presented to an individual Young Lawyer in recognition of their continuous and outstanding contribution to the profession and/or the community.

The Australian Young Lawyer Organisation Award rewards the excellence of a Young Lawyer Organisation in recognition of the implementation of a program for the benefit and assistance of the profession and/or the community.

2026 Nomination Period

Nominations open:

Monday 10:00 am AEST, 13 July 2026.

Nominations close:

Friday 5:00 pm AEST, 28 August 2026.

Definitions

Award means the 'Individual' or 'Organisation' Australian Young Lawyer Award.

Committee means the Law Council of Australia's Young Lawyers Committee.

Criteria means the rules for assessing Nominations as specified in this document.

Deadline means the due date for Nominations as specified in the Criteria.

Judge means a person appointed to evaluate the Awards in accordance with the Criteria.

Law Council means the Law Council of Australia.

Nomination means the document lodged by the Nominator proposing the Nominee as a candidate for the Awards in accordance with the Criteria.

Nominator means the person who nominates the Nominee.

Nominee means the Individual Young Lawyer or Young Lawyer Organisation nominated for the Award.

Program includes an ongoing project, publication or event conducted.

Young Lawyer means:

a. a person admitted to legal practice in Australia who has been in practice for a period of five years or less; or

b. a person admitted to legal practice in Australia who is under 36 years of age as of 30 June 2026.

Young Lawyer Organisation means an organisation (or part thereof) which, in the Judges' opinion, is substantially comprised of young lawyers.

Nomination Process

Nominations may be submitted by the Nominee or another person and must be received by the Law Council by the deadline.

Nominations for the Awards will generally open at least six weeks before the proposed presentation date.

Nominees may be contacted by the Law Council regarding the progress and outcome of their nomination.

Eligibility

To be eligible for Nomination, a Nominee must be a:

a. Young Lawyer;

OR

b. Young Lawyer Organisation.

Nomination Criteria

Australian Young Lawyer Award

A Nomination for the Australian Young Lawyer Award must:

a. illustrate the contribution over the period 1 July 2025—30 June 2026 or over a number of years by the Nominee; and

b. contain a detailed summary of the nature of the continuous and outstanding contribution to the profession and/or the community made by the Nominee including:

    a. full particulars of the contribution;

    b. the manner of implementation;

    c. the benefits derived by the profession and/or the community;

    d. the period of the contribution;

Australian Young Lawyer Organisation Award

A Nomination for the Australian Young Lawyer Organisation Award must:

a. relate to a program substantially implemented over the period 1 July 2025—30 June 2026. The development and introduction of the program (or a significant part thereof) should have taken place during the course of the preceding financial year; and

b. contain a detailed summary of the program undertaken including:

    a. full particulars of the program;

    b. manner of implementation;

    c. funding for the program;

    d. benefits derived;

    e. the period of the program; and

    f. details of the number of young lawyers and other members of the organisation.

Judging of the Awards

The Judges of the Awards are generally:

a. the President of the Law Council;

b. the Chair of the Committee; and

c. any other person(s) nominated by the Committee.

If a Judge is not available, a replacement judge will be nominated by the Committee.

The Nominees will be judged based on the Criteria above, and any other matter the Judges may think is relevant.

A Judge cannot be a Nominee for either Award.

Other Matters

The Law Council may disclose the details of the successful Nominee on the Committee webpage of the Law Council's website, in the publications of the Law Council and by notifying the media, other legal professional bodies or any other person, agency or organisation who/which may have an interest in the outcome of the Awards.

The interval at which the Awards are to be presented and their form shall be at the sole discretion of the Committee.

These Rules may be varied from time to time by the Committee.

Contact

For more information contact:

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Previous Winners

The winners of the Australian Young Lawyer Awards since 2008 are outlined below.

Australian Young Lawyer Award

2008 – Anna Rakoczy

Anna Rakoczy of Clayton Utz, Perth for her tireless work with numerous voluntary organisations with her firm's pro bono program as well as on her own. As coordinator of the firm's Community Connect program, Anna travelled to the Tiwi Islands, north of Darwin, to help run a holiday program for Aboriginal children with the Red Cross in the remote community of Milikapiti. She also served as legal adviser and mentor on the Committee of True Blue Dreaming – a youth and community development program for 12 to 18 years olds living in rural and remote Australian communities.

2009 – Matthew Keogh

Matthew Keogh from Western Australia sat on no less than 12 committees for the Law Society of Western Australia, WA Young Lawyers' Committee and the Australian Labor Party. Matthew initiated the implementation of a Junior Lawyers Network at his place of employment, the Commonwealth Department of Public Prosecutions (CDPP) to ensure that young lawyers at the Perth Office of the CDPP had a strong support network. Outside assisting the legal profession, Matthew has also worked with Starick Services assisting victims of domestic violence.

2011 – Louisa Fitz-Gerald

Sydney practitioner Louisa Fitz-Gerald won the 2011 Award for her work with patients dealing with chronic illness. Louisa worked tirelessly to establish a legal referral service for cancer patients in NSW over an 18 month period. She was not only the sole driver of the project, but also the only person working with the project as the Professional Services Coordinator. The Cancer Council Legal Referral Service for cancer patients in Sydney and broader NSW assists cancer patients and carers across NSW to access legal services when they would otherwise be unable to do so due to cost, illness or other barriers.

2012 – Shatha Hamade

Shatha Hamade, Senior Legal Counsel for the RSPCA South Australia, won the 2012 Award for her significant contribution to animal law and welfare in Australia. Shatha volunteered her expertise in the area of animal law and welfare as the National Co-ordinator of the Barristers Animal Welfare Panel, provided pro-bono legal assistance to Humane Research Australia and contributed as a member of the South Australian Government Animal Welfare Advisory Committee and the Animal Law Committee of the Law Society of South Australia.

2013 – Stephen Mitchell

The 2013 Award was presented to Adelaide barrister Stephen Mitchell for his significant contribution to the profession and the community through his commitment to professional networking, mentoring and education as well as urban renewal and other community projects.

2014 – Kara Cook

Kara Cook from the Women's Legal Service in Queensland was awarded the 2014 Award for her significant contribution to the profession as a volunteer in community legal centres providing legal advice to disadvantaged people with a particular focus on women and victims of domestic violence and raising community awareness about domestic violence.

2015 – Kevin Kadirgamar

Kevin Kadirgamar was awarded the 2015 Award for his outstanding pro bono work in the areas of migration and refugee law. A full-time solicitor at Ward Keller in Darwin, Kevin has been tireless in his efforts to help some of the most vulnerable asylum seekers in Australia.

2016 – Natalie Wade

Adelaide solicitor Natalie Wade won the 2016 Award for her advocacy for equality within the legal profession and more broadly. Natalie works as a solicitor in the Child Protection System Royal Commission, with a focus on children with a disability and their vulnerabilities within the State Care System. She has conducted academic research on the participation of individuals with communication difficulties in courts and her work has been published in the Alternative Law Journal.

2017 – James Skelton

Commercial lawyer, James Skelton, won the 2017 Award. Mr Skelton was awarded for his leadership of the NSW Young Lawyers' Wellbeing and Diversity Working Group, which focuses on understanding the psychological, physiological and social factors affecting the wellbeing of lawyers, their colleagues, and their clients. A particular achievement was the coordination of the first ever float to enter the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras parade on behalf of NSW Young Lawyers.

2018 – Tamsin Webster

32-year-old Melbourne lawyer Tamsin Webster has won the 2018 Australian Young Lawyer Award for her continuous and outstanding contribution to the legal profession and the community through pro bono work. Ms Webster joined Maddocks as a graduate in 2011 and immediately immersed herself in the pro bono and volunteering opportunities offered by the firm. She is currently a Senior Associate in the Employment, Safety & People team.

2019 – Reimen Hii

Queensland barrister Reimen Hii won the 2019 Australian Young Lawyer Award for his outstanding contribution to the legal profession by spearheading a range of initiatives to support junior and culturally and linguistically diverse members of the profession, promoting cultural and gender diversity and awareness in the profession and judiciary. Mr Hii is the co-founder of the Queensland branch of the Asian Australian Lawyers Association and has delegated a significant amount of time to mentoring law students and providing pro bono support to Queensland community legal centres.

2020 – Dean Clifford-Jones

Queensland lawyer, Dean Clifford-Jones, won the 2020 Australian Young Lawyer Award, commended for his outstanding contribution to the legal profession through his work in advancing the rights of the LGBTIQ+ legal community. Mr Clifford-Jones founded Pride in Law in 2017, which advocates for tolerance and equality across the legal profession. Mr Clifford-Jones has grown the organisation into a national LGBTIQ+ Law Association running workshops and providing training that is helping to transform practices across the country.

2021 – Kendra Turner

Western-Australian lawyer, Kendra Turner won the 2021 Australian Young Lawyer Award for her outstanding work promoting access to justice and diversity and inclusion. Kendra has presented locally and nationally on the importance of diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Kendra is a Management Committee Member of the Society of African Australian Lawyers Inc., a not-for-profit which she helped launch and which aims

to improve access to justice in Western Australia, particularly within the African community. Kendra has also worked with the youth-run Indigenous Communities Education and Awareness Foundation and has volunteered for national and international not-for-profit organisations, including the Women's Legal Service WA, Tenancy WA, and Legal Aid Cambodia.

2022 – Tegun Middleton

Queensland lawyer, Tegun Middleton, won the 2022 Australian Young Lawyer Award for co-founding and expanding The Legal Forecast, an organisation for law students and early-career legal professionals which seeks to promote disruptive thinking, access to justice, inclusion, and mental wellbeing in the profession. Ventures such as The Legal Forecast not only require considerable vision, but also courage and commitment to put these ideas into practice and expand to other jurisdictions beyond Brisbane, as Tegun did. Beyond The Legal Forecast, Tegun works with the Board of the Lovewell Foundation and undertakes significant pro bono work for environment-related not-for-profits.

2023 – Palwasha Nawabi

New South Wales lawyer, Palwasha Nawabi, won the 2023 Australian Young Lawyer Award for leading the operational and administrative aspect of an urgent pro bono initiative that positively impacted the lives of vulnerable Afghan nationals fleeing Afghanistan. Ms Nawabi's significant dedication and personal commitment resulted in the successful procurement of 90 Subclass 449 visas for Afghan female judges, lawyers, prosecutors and activists (and their families) who were seeking to settle in Australia, after being evacuated temporarily to Greece in 2021 by the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute. Ms Nawabi's efforts enabled the betterment of the lives of these women and their families, who had been at imminent risk of persecution by the Taliban. She continues to assist in further work with Afghan nationals.

2024 – Kate Adnams

Brisbane lawyer, Kate Adnams, won the 2024 Australian Young Lawyer Award and was recognised for her commitment and contribution to helping vulnerable young people, especially those experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness. Ms Adnams is a Senior Lawyer at LawRight's Homelessness Law practice and leads its Stable Futures for Young Queenslanders project.

2025 – Alexandra Einfeld

Alexandra Einfeld won the 2025 Australian Young Lawyer Award in recognition of her leadership and impact in improving support and opportunities in the arbitration field. She has work as an Independent Tribunal Secretary for arbitrators and alongside this has initiated and managed multiple projects that create opportunities for other practitioners in the industry.

Previous Winners

Australian Young Lawyer Organisation Award

- NSW Young Lawyers for its *Young Offenders Advice Project.*
- NSW Young Lawyers Community Services Committee for its *Indigenous Law Student Mentoring Program.*
- Australian Red Cross, International Humanitarian Law Unit for the *International Criminal Court Mock Trial.*
- Law Institute of Victoria Young Lawyers Professional Development Committee for its program, *Thriving and Surviving: Employment Practices and Achieving a Healthy Balance.*
- NSW Young Lawyers Community Services *Committee for its School Student Mentoring Program.*
- NSW Young Lawyers Criminal Law Committee for its publication, *The Practitioner's Guide to Criminal Law* (2nd ed).
- Law Institute of Victoria Young Lawyers Community Issues Committee for its *Social Justice Essay Contest.*
- Law Institute of Victoria Young Lawyers for its establishment of the *Later Lawyers Network.*
- NSW Young Lawyers Criminal Law Committee for presentations to school children about criminal law and their rights.
- NSW Young Lawyers Careers Committee for its *Shadowing Program.*
- Law Institute of Victoria Young Lawyers for its publication, *Young Lawyers' Survival Handbook.*
- NSW Young Lawyers Civil Litigation Committee for its publication, *The Practitioner's Guide to Civil Litigation.*
- Law Institute of Victoria Young Lawyers Victorian Law Reform Committee for its program, *Recognition of same sex partnerships.*
- Victorian New Barristers Standing Committee for their work in establishing the duty barristers scheme.
- NSW Young Lawyers Human Rights Committee for its publication, *New Land: New Law* (2nd ed).
- NSW Young Lawyers Human Rights Committee for its *Human Rights Opportunities Database.*
- NSW Young Lawyers Animal Law Committee for its brochure, *What about me? Pets and your will.*
- NSW Young Lawyers Bushweb Regional Issues Committee for its *Creating Networks program.*
- NSW Young Lawyers for establishing the *Justice Education Conference program.*
- NSW Young Lawyers Workplace and Safety Law Committee for establishing a pro bono scheme at the Fair Work Commission in Sydney.
- NSW Young Lawyers International Law Committee for its outstanding contribution, primarily through its publication, *The Practitioner's Guide to International Law.*
- NSW Young Lawyers Human Rights Committee for its its *Refugee Assistance Project.*
- The Legal Forecast, for its significant contribution to the legal profession and the community, empowering new ideas and change through the lens of technology, innovation, wellbeing and access to justice.
- NSW Young Lawyers Human Rights Committee for its program, *Addressing Sexual Harassment in Australian Legal Workplaces.*

- Law Institute of Victoria's Young Lawyers, for its program *Physically Distant, Professionally Close: How to thrive in a virtual world*.
- Law Institute of Victoria's Young Lawyers, for its *Young Lawyers Bootcamp 2021*.
- The Law Society of WA's Young Lawyers Committee for its publications, the *Know Your Rights Guide and the Fair, Safe and Inclusive Workplaces* resource.
- The Queensland Young Lawyers, for its *2023 Queensland Legal Salary Survey*.
- The Queensland Law Society's Future Leaders Committee (FLC), for its development and implementation of a podcast called *The Callover*.
- NSW Young Lawyers, for the development of its Pro Bono Guide titled *Demystifying Pro Bono: Contributing to Closing the Access to Justice in New South Wales*.

The Australian Young Lawyer Awards are proudly administered and supported by the Law Council of Australia's Young Lawyers Committee.

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