

YCS and YCW Conference Reaching Out the Margins

Between 5-7 July the YCS and YCW held their annual national conference at the Edmund Rice Retreat and Conference Centre in Sydney with the theme “Lead, Develop and Outreach”.

Inspired by Pope Francis’ call to reach out to the margins, the 20 leaders gathered from across the country reflected on the realities of young people today, using the YCW’s famous *see-judge-act* method. Participants reflected on their personal mission to reach out to other young people in their places of study and work as witnesses to God’s love, and on their collective mission to raise up the voices of young people to bring about a more just society.



YCS and YCW leaders started the conference by discussing the important issues impacting young people today, including the cost-of-living crisis, violence against girls and women, racism, mental health issues, drug use, and the exploitation of international students and young workers through wage theft and other forms of modern injustices. Participants also expressed concern about the breakdown of community both in Australia and internationally.

Leaders heard from guest speakers, including Sharmila Falzon - Community Capacity Building Lead at Parramatta City Council and International YCW President, Basma Louis, from Egypt, which helped inspire them to reflect deeply about their mission as young people committed to living out social justice in their daily lives.

The conference had a focus on the call to leadership and heard from the personal testimonies of leaders gathered. YCW’s new National President Achut Thuc shared about her leadership journey, coming to Australia as a teenage refugee from Sudan and now a Community Mental Health worker in Melbourne’s social housing estates. Thomas Magri also spoke about his action as a young builder, standing up for the rights of migrant workers at his workplace. New YCS student leader, Sara Amani Lockwood commented that the conference helped her gain a better understanding of her faith and values as a young Aboriginal woman living in Western Sydney.

The leaders agreed on actions to continue reaching out to the margins. Actions planned for the coming year include:

- Workers rights seminars, for young workers, teenage student-workers and young migrants.
- Continuing to run food serve programs, start the affordable housing project and an Aboriginal homelessness action.
- Appointment of social justice champions to coordinate awareness raising webinars for days of significance throughout the year.

For more information on the YCS or YCW please contact National Secretary, Sudeep Velagapudi at sudeep@ycw.org.au