

Karinya House's Marie-Louise Corkhill named ACT Woman of the Year

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For the past two decades Marie-Louise Corkhill has given sanctuary to vulnerable pregnant woman and mothers with newborns.

It cannot be an easy gig running Canberra's Karinya House and in recognition of her tireless leadership and contribution to the lives of women in the city Ms Corkhill was named ACT Woman of the Year 2017 at the ACT Women's Awards on Tuesday night.



Ms Corkhill was the non-profit's first staff member in 1997 and said every day she is struck by the courage of women leaving violence or taking brave strides on their own to get themselves and their families to a better place.

"It was an amazing shock and I feel very humbled to receive the award. It is not about one person but the team at Karinya House," she said.

"My work every day is a privilege. The women I work with face incredible adversity and they make really life-changing courageous decisions. They inspire me every day."

In her 20 year career working closely with women, she has seen social attitudes and gender expectations shift but would like to our community chip away further at prejudice against single mothers.

"There is still a lot of prejudice around single mums even in 2017," she said.

"65 per cent of our mums are under 25 years old and they do great things renewing their education, their training. But there is still a lot of prejudice about mums not doing anything and having babies. One of the most amazing things we can do in the world is be a mother and I think it's important that is recognised."

Ms Corkhill was there when the first residential home was created in 1997, witnessed the second being launched in 2003, and has been instrumental in the seven year campaign to create a purpose-built Mother and Baby Unit for the small charity.

The awards also recognised Francesca Maclean, who was named ACT Young Woman of the Year.

Ms Maclean founded the Fifty50 program which encourages women to develop careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math.

The student-led organisation, which began at ANU, aims to close the gender gap in STEM professions and offers mentoring and career development workshops to young people.

Ms Maclean, who is undertaking a PhD in engineering, said she was "over the moon" to receive the award.

Andrea Hotchkiss rounded out the top awards, being named ACT Senior Woman of the Year 2017 for her work establishing and building women's football in the region.

ACT Minister for Women Yvette Berry said International Women's Day was a chance to reflect on what had been achieved and strive toward further gender equality, safety and opportunities for women.

Across the world have been tweeting to #BeBoldForChange a theme Ms Berry said called on every person in our community to take on gender inequality and discrimination together by creating change in their own circles of influence.

Ms Berry said this movement was backed up by the [ACT Women's Plan 2016-26](#) launched at the awards this week.

"Change takes leadership, it takes individuals, and it takes the whole community," she said.

"Through the ACT Women's Plan, the ACT Government is working with our community towards a safe and inclusive Canberra for everyone."

Prime Minister Turnbull started his day in Canberra at an International Women's Day morning tea with Australian Defence Force personnel.

This story was found at: <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/karinya-houses-marielouise-corkhill-named-act-woman-of-the-year-20170308-gut1xu.html>