

Palliative care nurse named 2018 ACU Alumni of the Year

Bachelor of Nursing graduate Christine Shanahan has been named **ACU's 2018 Alumni of the Year**.

The award was one of five presented to outstanding graduates at a ceremony in Sydney on Thursday 29 November, 2018.

Christine has worked the wards of Sydney's hospitals, but she has also treated sexual violence victims in Sudan, diagnosed diseases from a tin shed in Timor Leste, opened a pharmacy in post-Soviet Turkmenistan, and nursed her way around a series of Australian outback hospitals.

After settling back home in Sydney, she unexpectedly changed direction and began working in palliative care where she says she has found her calling.

Christine was also named the winner of the ACU's 2018 **Community Engagement Award** which acknowledges a significant contribution to the wellbeing of others through community and humanitarian service.

Ruby Warber, who holds a Master of Psychology (Clinical), won the **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Award**, which recognises an outstanding contribution to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and made a difference in strengthening cultural connections respecting traditional rights, values and cultural heritage.

While she never intentionally set out to pursue a career in academia, Ruby has completed two masters' degrees, a PhD is on the horizon, and she has two prestigious, highly competitive academic scholarships to her name.

Ruby grew up in rural Western Australia as a descendent of the Noongar people, and moved to Melbourne for university and later to take up a social worker position with the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS). Ruby's aim was to qualify as a clinician to work with her Aboriginal community and close the life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. She is currently working as a psychologist with the Koori Kids program at VAHS.

Ruby has also spent considerable time giving back to her community through volunteering at ACU's Jim-baa-yer Indigenous Higher Education Unit, delivering psychoeducational workshops to a women's prison, and presenting sex education programs at a local high school.

Winner of the **International Contribution Award** was **Peter Suka Ririma**, who holds a Bachelor of Counselling. His award recognises and honours the outstanding achievements of an international member of the ACU alumni community who has realised distinction in their chosen professional field or within the international or Australian community.

Born and raised in a remote village in Papua New Guinea, Peter is a dedicated teacher and school counsellor who is committed to pushing for change in his home country. Winning an Australia Award scholarship, a prestigious prize administered by the Department of Foreign Affairs, was a turning point in Peter's life and enabled him to make his way to ACU.

Peter works at Don Bosco Technical School (DBTS) in Port Moresby, helping Papua New Guinea's most vulnerable youth, and his counselling degree has proven invaluable to his work. Turning his desire to make a difference into action, one of Peter's biggest achievements to date is establishing Yate Rawame Community Day, which is an annual series of local events that help educate his community about the issues that matter most to them.

The Young Alumni of the Year Award was **Caity Little**, who holds a Bachelor of Nursing/Bachelor of Paramedicine.

Four years ago Caity left her job at Ambulance Victoria to pursue her dream of working with Aboriginal communities in Alice Springs. Life in the Territory did not disappoint, and Caity believes working for St John Ambulance NT in the outback is an experience like nowhere else.

For Caity, retrieving patients from remote and often isolated locations to deliver patient care is all in a day's work. She is currently completing her Intensive Care Paramedic training and also works in her local hospital's emergency department as a registered nurse. As a firm believer in the power of giving back, she's given her time as a volunteer to the Alice Springs Animal Shelter, the Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation, and The Wild Medic Project in Nepal.

Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Greg Craven said the awards were a celebration of the many ways in which ACU graduates have made a difference to their communities locally and globally.

"The awards recognise the contributions our alumni have made to the University's Mission, through their professional, academic, community and research achievements.

"We are not just a bricks and mortar institution, we are a tightknit family with a shared vision for making positive change and creating opportunities in our communities.

"One of the things I hear most often from our graduates is how their time at ACU opened their eyes to the ways in which they could contribute to society.

"I congratulate them for making an impact and bringing about change in other people's lives with passion, commitment and integrity."

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