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## **NAPCAN Play Your Part Award 2012 - ACT Recipient**

**Recipient:** Claudia Lopez  
**For:** The STEPS and Return to Work Program for young mums  
**Based:** Conder, ACT

### **Background:**

Claudia Lopez has shown tremendous initiative and drive in her work at the YWCA Canberra. In particular in the way she has drawn together the various services and programs provided to assist young mums and their children. Two programs in particular that Claudia has coordinated for the young mums are STEPS (Sustainability, Training, Participation and Skill) and Return to Work.

The YWCA Canberra STEPS program is an early intervention program that aims to educate, support and empower young pregnant and parenting women (aged 13-25) to develop their capacity and skills to improve the overall safety, health and wellbeing of themselves and their children.

The program runs over a 17 week period and provides weekly workshops on the following topics: positive parenting, healthy relationships, health and wellbeing & community and social connections. The STEPS program offers free childcare, transport and a nutritious lunch for the young women participating in the program.

The Return to Work program is also catered towards young mothers aged 13-25 wanting to enter into employment or further education. Participants gain skills, knowledge and experience in a working environment run similar to a work place traineeship. Claudia facilitates the lessons and oversees the participants' work on administration within the YWCA of Canberra Lanyon Food Hub and Volunteer program to gain the competencies needed to achieve a Certificate III in Business Administration.

Claudia has worked consistently to bring these programs together to work best for the young mums who access her service. She is responsive in planning her workshops and in engaging the women in the return to work program. She ensures that her workshops are tailored to the needs of the current group of mums and focused on the key skills that



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they will need to best parent their young children, while ensuring a nurturing environment. Claudia creates an inclusive and non-judgemental environment where the women can discuss arising issues and learn through interactive exercises with their children. The mums report feeling much better equipped as parents once they have completed her program. Claudia's worked to create links between the various services that the centre provides, such as between the mums Return to Work program and the Food Hub, as well as externally to provide holistic support for the young mums and their children.

### **Recognition of Achievement**

NAPCAN'S 2012 Play Your Part Awards are about acknowledging individuals, communities or organisations that work towards strengthening communities and thereby creating environments that support the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Supporting young mothers has been recognised as an important strategy in the creation of child friendly and connected communities. The manner in which Claudia has coordinated the various programs and facilities at the YWCA Lanyon Community Centre to support the young mums, is an excellent example of responsive support which facilitates safe communities for children, and is the reason that she is being awarded the NAPCAN Play your Part ACT award 2012.