

THE STORY OF CANBERRA YHA

An old farm worker's cottage became Canberra's first YHA, followed by a hostel in suburban bushlands and finally a central, city building.



1940

The Australian Government suggested a youth hostel in the nation's capital in 1949. Ten years later the Department of the Interior reinforced the idea.

1960

In 1962 YHA obtained a lease for an old farm worker's cottage located near Tharwa, 20 kilometres from the city. That hostel, Ingledene, was near the Murrumbidgee River. It operated for five years and was followed a few months later by another hostel opening up at an old farm a few kilometres away at Angle Crossing. This operated until 1984.

Meanwhile there were more grandiose plans afoot after YHA was given a lease for a site in what was then a bushland setting north of Canberra city, at O'Connor. The idea was to build a national memorial hostel there to honour those early volunteers who gave both time and money to obtain and maintain hostels. The \$300,000 price tag for the hostel was at the time the biggest allocation of funds for such a building.

Donations came from all over Australia, some as part of a project called 'buy a brick for Canberra'. A Canberra architect, Ken Charlton, donated his services to get the project - literally - off the ground. After two years the hostel was completed in 1968 and 300 people attended the opening ceremony. The most sophisticated Australian hostel of its time, it received an architectural award for its creative use of a bushland setting.

1980

The national memorial hostel became too small so another new purpose-built hostel was opened next door in 1989. The two hostels functioned side-by-side.

2000

With a growing number of visitors seeking more centrally located accommodation, in 2006 YHA relocated to Canberra's city centre, to a converted office block. The former national memorial hostel continued to be run as group accommodation by another not-for-profit organisation, the YMCA.



Tharwa YHA

"Ingenuity was always mixed with idealism in YHA's fund-raising, such as the 'Brick for Canberra' appeal".
- John McCulloch, former YHA Australia Chairperson



Angle Crossing YHA



YHA at O'Connor, North Canberra

This YHA is part of the world's largest budget accommodation network, Hostelling International, which provides more than 4,000 YHA/HI hostels in over 60 countries. YHA is a not-for-profit membership organisation providing travellers with quality accommodation and services.

