



The Australian Council for Educational Leaders

ANNUAL

NATIONAL AWARDS

RECOGNITION OF THE PROFESSION BY THE PROFESSION



INFORMATION PACK 2026

The Call for Nominations for both ACEL National and Branch awards and New Voice Scholarships will open concurrently on Wednesday 18 February 2026.

Submissions close on Wednesday 25 March at 11.59pm AEDT.

ACEL invites all members of the education profession to nominate an individual or team who has made a significant educational contribution and who has influenced education at a national level in Australia. ACEL awards are proudly peer nominated.

The most important evening on the ACEL calendar celebrates its impressive 40th year since the first Gold Medals were awarded to Victoria's Robert Fordham and Western Australia's Edwin Harold. Since their inception, the ACEL national awards have grown in stature with educators being recognised for their contributions across seven categories. We also recognise media organisations/journalists/programs that contribute significantly to raising the profile of the education sector and make valuable contributions to the national conversation via "The ACEL National Media Award".

Always a highlight of the ACEL Annual Conference, our National Awards Ceremony honours educational leaders who have dedicated themselves to the improvement of student and educational outcomes.

Awards will be presented across the seven categories which are open for nomination and one special achievement award which are listed below.

Nominated Categories

ACEL Gold Medal Award

ACEL National Fellowships

ACEL Hedley Beare Award for Educational Writing

ACEL Nganakarrawa Award

ACEL Keith Tronc Award for Outstanding Teacher Leadership

ACEL Leadership Award

ACEL National Media & Journalism Award

Achievement Award

ACEL Presidential Citation (discretionary)

The work of each nominee will be reviewed against criteria based on each specific award. Evidence provided must also demonstrate impact at a system, state and/or national level. This process is completely confidential. The ACEL Awards Committee has provided information in regard to nomination requirements, criteria for Fellowships and Awards and also provided guidelines and sample documentation to assist with the nomination process.

The 2026 National Awards will be announced in June and will be presented at the formal ceremony after the close of Day 1 of the ACEL National Conference 2026.

Information in regard to the conference is available on our website at: [ancel.org.au/events](https://www.ancel.org.au/events)

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THE AWARDS

Open for Nominations

ACEL Gold Medal

The ACEL Gold Medal is the most prestigious honour awarded by ACEL and is presented to an Australian educator whose influence and contribution to the study and practice of educational leadership is assessed as most outstanding at the national level. The contribution by the awardee is consistent with the [vision, mission and objects](#) of ACEL.

Nomination criteria:

- Category open to members and non-members for nomination
- Nominees will have shown considerable influence at a national level which should be demonstrated in the supporting statement
- Supporting evidence statement max 500 words
- Provide specific examples in the supporting statement
- Include the CV for the person being nominated (if available)

ACEL National Fellowship

The Fellowship is ACEL's second-highest honour, following the Gold Medal, and recognises educators who have demonstrated exceptional leadership in education. This award celebrates individuals whose contributions to ACEL and/or to educational practice have had a substantial and sustained impact at a national or international level. It honours those who have advanced the profession through achievements that extend significantly beyond the responsibilities of their day-to-day roles.

Nomination criteria:

- Category open to members and non-members for nomination
- Provide specific examples in the supporting statement of the nominee's contributions to ACEL and/or their influence at a national/international level
- Supporting evidence statement max 500 words
- Include the CV for the person being nominated (if available)

Evidence needs to be mapped against the following criteria:

1. Leading teaching and learning
2. Developing self and others
3. Leading improvement, innovation and change
4. Leading the management of an organisation
5. Engaging and working with the educational, wider community and/or profession
6. Contribution/s to ACEL (if applicable)
7. Contribution/s to the profession beyond the scope of professional role.

Nominators should specifically focus on identifying and describing achievements, capabilities and practices that clearly demonstrate excellent educational leadership by the nominee.

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Open for Nominations

ACEL Hedley Beare Award for Educational Writing

This award is presented annually for an outstanding piece of educational writing (which may take various forms) that has provided new and significant knowledge about educational leadership.

This award was introduced in 2002 as the ACEL Award for Educational Writing. Following its award to Hedley Beare, he graciously consented to the naming of the award in his honour.

Nomination criteria:

- Category open to members and non-members for nomination
- Provide specific examples in the supporting statement of the nominee/s contributions through their writing
- Supporting evidence statement max 300 words
- Include the CV for the person being nominated (if available)

ACEL Nganakarrawa Award

ACEL presents the Nganakarrawa Award (pronounced nana-ga-raa-wa) to those whose general excellence in educational leadership and whose wisdom, learning, experience and contribution to ACEL have earned lasting respect and gratitude for their influence in leading and mentoring others. With its origins in the Ndjebbana language of central Arnhemland, the term Nganakarrawa refers to 'those who move about, all seeing, all knowing, knowledgeable and well regarded.'

Nomination criteria:

- Category open to members and non-members for nomination
- Provide specific examples in the supporting statement
- Supporting evidence statement max 300 words
- Include the CV for the person being nominated (if available)

ACEL Keith Tronc Award For Outstanding Leadership

This award is to an early career teacher who has demonstrated outstanding practice in the classroom and as a result has made a significant difference to colleagues and the lives of students. The awardee must have made a significant contribution to the improvement of student and educational outcomes.

Nomination criteria:

- Category open to members and non-members for nomination
- This category is open for nominees in their first five years of teaching
- Provide specific examples in the supporting statement
- Supporting evidence statement max 300 words
- Supporting documentation should make reference to the AITSL Professional Standards for Teachers at the accomplished and lead level
- Include the CV for the person being nominated (if available)

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ACEL Leadership Award

The Leadership Award acknowledges individual educators and teams who have demonstrated outstanding leadership through specific projects or initiatives. This award celebrates leadership excellence in driving innovation, conducting impactful research, or influencing educational policy. Recipients of this award are acknowledged for their role in achieving measurable improvements for students and/or colleagues.

Nomination criteria:

- Category open to all members of the education profession - both individuals and groups
- Provide specific examples in the supporting statement
- Supporting evidence statement max 300 words

ACEL National Media & Journalism Award

For their ongoing contribution and commitment to reporting in the arena of educational issues and their commitment to recognising and encouraging student and teacher voice on the critical issues affecting our schools across Australia.

Nomination criteria:

- Category open to all members of the education profession - both individuals and groups
- Provide specific examples in the supporting statement
- Supporting evidence statement max 300 words

Achievement Award

ACEL Presidential Citation (discretionary)

The Presidential Citation is an occasional award given by the President to recognise outstanding service to Australian education. It is presented to someone who has made an outstanding contribution in furthering the vision, mission and objectives of ACEL.

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GUIDELINES TO ASSIST NOMINATORS

Supporting Statements

Please read before you start the nomination:

1. Review the selection criteria for each award and review the lists of previous recipients to get a sense of the nature of the award.
 - a. Consider the evidence you will need to provide to address the award criteria at a “national level”.
 - b. It is important to note that national awards will not, in general, be given to nominees who have “done their paid job well”. The national awards recognise significant additional contributions to ACEL and/or influence in the professional and/or in the educational debate.
 - c. The Leadership Award acknowledges individual educators and teams who have demonstrated outstanding leadership through specific projects or initiatives. This award celebrates leadership excellence in driving innovation, conducting impactful research, or influencing educational policy. Recipients of this award are acknowledged for their role in achieving measurable improvements for students and/or colleagues. The strongest nominations will provide evidence in the supporting statement as to how the leadership of those nominated has created or influenced significant change in educational practice or research based change. If the award is to be given to a group, school, network or professional association please provide a contact name for the group e.g. principal (school), president (association), convenor (network).
 - d. The National Fellowship is ACEL’s second-highest honour, following the Gold Medal, and recognises educators who have demonstrated exceptional leadership in education. This award celebrates individuals whose contributions to ACEL and/or to educational practice have had a substantial and sustained impact at a national or international level. It honours those who have advanced the profession through achievements that extend significantly beyond the responsibilities of their day-to-day roles.
 - e. Major individual awards: To nominate a person for a major national individual Award, nominators need to address the criteria with specific examples in the supporting statement. Generalised biographical information is insufficient. A 1-2 page resume can be attached but, it should be noted that this is not a substitute for the information contained in the application.

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2. Collect the information you need to complete the application form. As not all people nominated receive the awards, please do not disclose the nomination to the person nominated. This means you may need to seek assistance from colleagues and family members to complete the required fields.
 - a. Please include your ACEL institutional or individual membership number if you are a member. You can find your account ID on your profile page at [ancel.org.au/myaccount](https://www.ancel.org.au/myaccount), or by contacting ACEL on (02) 8396 0800, or emailing membership@ancel.org.au
 - b. You need to specify the title of the nominee and use their first name and surname as shown on official documents. If the person prefers to be called by a diminutive, that should be included in brackets after the first name.
 - c. If available, post-nominals should be listed including recognition through the Order of Australia, professional post nominals such as ACEL Fellowships (FACELE), Fellowships with other organisations and other legal post nominals (e.g. JP)
 - d. If available, please provide details of the academic degrees/qualifications held by the person.
 - e. If available, please provide a work address for the person nominated and/or a home address if the work address is not available. This address will be used for written correspondence from ACEL in relation to the awards.
 - f. Email addresses and telephone numbers are required for contact between the ACEL awards committee, the award winners and, where extra information is required, from nominees. Please ensure that these details are correct and current at the time of submission.

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Supporting Statements

3. Complete the nomination:

- a. Complete the details using the information collected in Point 2.
- b. Supporting statement: Please provide an introductory sentence about the reason the person is being nominated (this may also be part of the citation). Then provide 3-4 pieces of evidence that exemplify the high level of the work, research, contribution and/or influence of the nominees in relation to the specific award criteria. The samples below may assist.

Award	Sample supporting statements
Nganakawarra Award	(300 words) ACEL is pleased to recognise the contribution of Dr Freddy Kramer to the work of ACEL at a national and state level where he has held the position of state president while presenting at 7 of the last National Conferences. At the same time, his research in the area of innovation in tertiary teaching has had a significant impact on education policy and practice in Australia and internationally.
Hedley Beare Award	(300 words) Professor Jennifer Calmly is being nominated for this prestigious award for outstanding research and leadership at a national and international level in the study of the impact of inequity on the life prospects of Australian children. Jennifer’s findings and research into student disadvantage over a period of 20 years have been widely published and have had a significant impact on education policy and practice in Australia and internationally. She is the author of 5 books that now underpin graduate preparation for teachers working in disadvantaged communities. Recent publications: Her most recent publication, Hope Denied, Hope Discovered commissioned by the Australian government was widely acclaimed by academic and professional peers. She used longitudinal case studies and interviews recorded over a period of 20 years to identify the student, family, school and community factors that best predict life success for students from disadvantaged families and she used these to create a comprehensive set of recommendations now being implemented by the NSW and Victorian governments.

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Supporting Statements

Award	Sample supporting statements
<p>ACEL National Fellowship</p>	<p>(300 words)</p> <p>Mrs Christie Graham is a university lecturer, educational consultant and advocate who has been a member of ACEL since 1995. In 2015 she received a South Australian Fellowship for her contributions to ACEL as a conference organiser, contributor to AEL and member of the state awards committee.</p> <p>As a member of ACEL, Christie has made many contributions through her willingness to share the work of her schools in conversations, visits and presentations. She is committed to the ideals of leadership epitomised by ACEL and used in the criteria for his award.</p> <p>She was the principal of two Catholic secondary schools in South Australia and until 2010 was an executive member of the Catholic Principal's Council. Both her schools were recognised with National Awards for Excellence reflecting her outstanding curriculum, professional, organisational and pedagogical leadership.</p> <p>Christie is the author of Getting Clever – How Smart Schools Become Smarter, the story of how she created schools where students and teachers achieved outstanding performance and growth.</p> <p>Christie is widely known in the education community and the wider public in South Australia through published articles in newspapers, various online publications and through media commentary on education issues, especially as these relate to Catholic secondary schools.</p> <p>Her most recent work was featured in an ABC Compass documentary that has drawn widespread acclaim for its insightful commentary into the role of faith in Catholic Education.</p>

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Draft Citation

Draft citation: The citation is read at the awards ceremony. It should say in 100 words or less why ACEL is giving the award, what significant achievements are recognised and how the recipient has demonstrated leadership at a national level or beyond. The samples below may assist.

Award	Sample citations
Nganakawarra Award	<p>(50-100 words)</p> <p>ACEL is pleased to recognise the contribution of Dr Freddy Kramer to the work of ACEL at a national and state level where he has held the position of state president while presenting at 7 of the last National Conferences.</p> <p>At the same time, his research in the area of innovation in tertiary teaching has had a significant impact on education policy and practice in Australia and internationally.</p> <p>Dr Freddy Kramer is a very worthy recipient of this award.</p>
Hedley Beare Award	<p>(50-100 words)</p> <p>Professor Jennifer Calmly was nominated for this prestigious award for outstanding research in the study of the impact of inequity on the life prospects of Australian children.</p> <p>Her recent report for the Australian Government, Hope Denied, Hope Discovered has influenced significant changes in government policy and funding priorities in multiple jurisdictions.</p> <p>Her dedication to changing the life prospects of Australia's poorest children through research and writing places her as a most deserving recipient of this award.</p>
ACEL National Fellowship	<p>(50-100 words)</p> <p>Mrs Christie Graham is a university lecturer, educational consultant and advocate who has been a member of ACEL since 1995. She holds a South Australian Fellowship for her contributions to ACEL as a conference organiser, contributor to AEL and member of the state awards committee.</p> <p>As a school principal, lecturer and consultant, Christie Graham has made a national contribution to the development of student focused pedagogy underpinned by faith in Catholic secondary education .</p>

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Biography

Biography: The biography is included in the program and should be limited to 250 words. In preparing the biography, nominators should provide a biography written in the same style as the biographies used to introduce speakers at conferences. A sample is provided below. Please note post nominals will be included with a photograph and the citation. They do not need to be repeated here.

Award	Sample biography
All Awards	<p>(250 words)</p> <p>Mrs Phyllis Leader is the current principal of Alvin Heights K-12 school in the Australian Capital Territory. She is a recognised Lead Teacher (Australian Professional Standards for Teachers) with a distinguished portfolio of work leading professional learning and innovation in schools.</p> <p>Phyllis has held a number of roles in professional associations including an executive position with the National Principals' Collective from 2011-2017.</p> <p>In 2013 Phyllis convened a national conversation on principal wellbeing and effectiveness which resulted in significant changes in the way the Principals' Collective supports its members to respond to critical changes in their work. Phyllis has presented this work at conferences, established a research coalition with the University of Canberra and has a significant social media presence promoting the work of the Collective.</p> <p>In 2015, Phyllis' work was recognised with a leadership award from the Principals' Collective and in 2016 Phyllis became a Fellow of ACEL ACT.</p>