

My Y Story

Pat's Journey from OSHC attendee to Change Agent

As a kid at the Bungendore OSHC program, my journey with the Y began long before I ever wore a uniform. At the time, I didn't know that this would be the first chapter of a story still unfolding today.

In Year 9 (2016), I officially reconnected with the Y through volunteering in the RAID Basketball program. That opportunity sparked something in me, it introduced me to the idea of leadership as service. Through RAID and a men's leadership group called TeamSupport, I found myself helping to design and run inclusive activity days for students with disabilities, especially at Black Mountain School. What began as weekly volunteering became a passion, one that followed me right up to the end of school, and beyond.

Originally, I thought I was heading into a future in IT. I had accepted an early entry for a Bachelor of IT at the ANU, and I was even the subjects captain during Year 11/12. But in Year 12, I had a pivot moment. I realised that while tech and coding was interesting, it wasn't what set my soul on fire. Studying Modern History revealed something that did: international relations, development, and understanding how communities grow, struggle, and thrive. So, I shifted gears and enrolled in a Bachelor of International Relations at ANU.

By then, I was still with RAID, and in 2020, just before COVID hit, I was offered a casual job as a RAID officer. That job became my constant during years of uncertainty, challenge, and change.

In 2022, I hit a wall. I wasn't sure who I was becoming, or where I was going. I stepped away from uni, let go of the timeline I thought I had to follow, and decided to focus on something completely different: netball. Over the next 2 years, I represented NSW at national tournaments, competed in the Men's State of Origin series, and played Division 1 in Sydney against Australia's best. Sport became my anchor, but so did something unexpected, creative writing. Writing became my outlet and helped me process a difficult period of life, one day at a time.

During this period of life, I discovered a truth that continues to shape me: hope matters. I believe that hope exists in three dimensions: hope for yourself, hope for others, and hope for the world you live in. Slowly, I found mine again. With that came the desire for more structure and purpose, so I began applying for jobs. After a few near-misses, I was approached by the Y Canberra Region for a part-time role. I accepted, and soon transitioned into full-time work.

Thanks to the support of leaders like the Y Canberra Region's CEO Kirsty Dixon and my direct manager Paulina Manenica, I've been able to resume my studies with dedicated study leave, and now I'm well on the way to completing my degree. That sense of purpose, the chance to keep learning, growing, and contributing, means everything to me.

Sport still plays a huge role in my life. I've played nearly every code imaginable: AFL, rugby, cricket, ultimate frisbee, even quidditch. Netball however, is where I've found my truest sense of team. It's a sport where individual success means nothing unless the entire group works as one.

And maybe that's a reflection of my life, too. I've learned that life isn't about sticking to a straight path. It's about showing up, with honesty, humour, curiosity, and heart. It's about finding joy in what you do, giving back to the community that raised you, and trusting that even when things don't go to plan, hope will carry you forward.

That's my Y story, and it's still being written.

