

MEDIA RELEASE
MONDAY 30 OCTOBER 2023

ACT 2024 AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED

2024 Australian of the Year for the ACT - Joanne Farrell
2024 Senior Australian of the Year for the ACT - Ebenezer Banful OAM
2024 Young Australian of the Year for the ACT - Caitlin Figueiredo
2024 Local Hero for the ACT - Selina Walker

Awards event livestreamed via australianoftheyear.org.au

Monday 30 October 2023, 7:25PM AEDT, Canberra: The 2024 Australian of the Year Award recipients for the Australian Capital Territory have been announced at a ceremony in Canberra this evening.

The four ACT recipients will join those from the other states and territories for the national awards to be announced on 25 January 2024.

The 2024 Australian of the Year for the ACT is Joanne Farrell, Founder of Build Like A Girl .

Joanne (Jo) Farrell is a champion for females in the construction industry. In 2020, she founded Build Like A Girl, a not-for-profit program that supports girls and women to work in trades. Build Like A Girl matches females with pre-apprenticeship and entry-level training, then mentors them to secure work in the construction industry.

As the general manager of Kane Constructions ACT, part of the multimillion-dollar Kane group, 45-year-old Jo has pushed for a better gender balance. Kane Constructions ACT went from having 6 per cent female staff in February 2020 to a 48 per cent female team in December 2022.

Jo works closely with government, peak industry bodies, unions, training organisations and building contractors to help them recruit, train and employ women in trade roles.

She also led construction of Strathnairn Charity House, a project designed and mostly built by women, which was auctioned in March 2023. Proceeds from the sale were distributed to local charities.

Volunteer and multiculturalism advocate Ebenezer Banful OAM is the 2024 Senior Australian of the Year for the ACT.

Ebenezer Banful OAM arrived in Australia more than three decades ago. Ever since, he has dedicated countless hours to helping others understand Ghanaian and African values, and promoting multiculturalism wherever he can.

Ebenezer spends much of his free time offering advice and assistance to newly arrived communities to help them integrate into Canberra.

The Companion House community organisation that he helped found supports survivors of persecution, torture and other war-related trauma.

Ebenezer has served on numerous committees advocating for multiculturalism. He has volunteered at nearly every National Multicultural Festival and assisted the Ghana High Commission's participation in the event in 2013.

He also set up Radio Ghana Hour, a community station focused on Ghanaian life and culture, for which he is program coordinator and presenter.

Respected in his community, 66-year-old Ebenezer's efforts have helped create harmony and understanding. He gains deep satisfaction assisting Canberra's new arrivals to settle in and thrive.

The 2024 Young Australian of the Year for the ACT is Co-chair of the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition, Caitlin Figueiredo

Changemaker Caitlin Figueiredo is determined to give young people a say in politics.

In 2015, she worked to bring young people's voices into parliament through a national youth advisory council. This led to her election to the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC) board, a volunteer position that she juggled with university work. Caitlin revitalised and transformed AYAC, which represents 4.5 million young Australians, creating a more diverse board that better represented young people.

Empowering the next generation of female politicians, she co-founded a political leadership group called Girls Take Over Parliament. It connects with young women from all political parties and enables them to receive support and training from a bipartisan lens.

Caitlin has also addressed the United Nations about the Sustainable Development Goals; this previous work establishing youth structures on gender equality is ongoing. Caitlin's efforts remain focused on making waves and creating more visionary leadership.

Selina Walker, Co-chair, ACT Reconciliation Council, is the 2024 Local Hero for the ACT.

Ngunnawal woman Selina Walker is a respected emerging elder and leader whose integrity has supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and reconciliation across the ACT.

The granddaughter of Aunty Agnes Shea, a recipient of the Order of Australia and a former ACT Chief Minister's Senior Citizen of the Year, Selina continues her grandmother's legacy of influencing and driving change with her unwavering efforts.

Since 2018, Selina has promoted reconciliation as co-chair of the ACT Reconciliation Council. As a founding member of Yerrabi Yurwang Child and Family Aboriginal Corporation, she helps improve outcomes for Aboriginal families and children, especially those in out-of-home care.

Selina advocates for Indigenous people within the justice system as a member of the ACT Victims of Crime and Justice Committee and has held roles to improve all children's educational outcomes in the Catholic school system.

A kinship carer, 42-year-old Selina was awarded Barnardos' 2017 ACT Mother of the Year.

National Australia Day Council CEO Mark Fraser AO CVO congratulated the ACT award recipients.

“The award recipients for the ACT are remarkable individuals, all committed to empowering others and improving lives,” said Mark.

“I wish them all the best at the national awards in January when finalists from around the nation gather here in Canberra.”

For more information on the Australian of the Year Awards, visit australianoftheyear.org.au.

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EMBARGO NOTE: Media attending the awards event may report award recipients as they are announced on stage OR watch the livestream at australianoftheyear.org.au - once each award is announced, it can be reported.

PHOTOS: From the awards announcement event can be downloaded as available after approx. 8:30pm Canberra time from this link (credit NADC/Salty Dingo): [ACT Media Distribution photos - High res](#)

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King George Terrace,
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