

Australian of the Year Awards

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MEDIA RELEASE

WEDNESDAY 8 NOVEMBER 2023

2024 AUSTRALIANS OF THE YEAR FOR QUEENSLAND ANNOUNCED

2024 Australian of the Year for Queensland – Marco Renai (Gold Coast)

2024 Senior Australians of the Year for Queensland - Reverend Robyn & Reverend Dr Lindsay Burch (Gold Coast)

2024 Young Australian of the Year for Queensland - Emma McKeon AM (Gold Coast)

2024 Local Hero for Queensland - David Elliott OAM (Winton)

Awards event livestreamed via australianoftheyear.org.au

Wednesday 8 November 2023, 7:45PM (Brisbane time): The 2024 Australian of the Year Award recipients for Queensland have been announced at a ceremony in Brisbane this evening.

The Queensland 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 Queensland is the Founder of Men of Business, Marco Renai.

Marco Renai, 48, is founder of Men of Business (MOB) Academy. The senior secondary school focuses on empowering at-risk-young men with the skills, knowledge and confidence to be happy, healthy and successful.

After experiencing troubles at school as a teen and later volunteering in youth justice, Marco realised there were no programs for young men who struggled to engage with life and education. Inspired by his Italian heritage, which holds that family, food and doing good can make a difference, he piloted the first MOB program in 2011.

Marco and his community raised \$1 million to open the MOB Academy in 2020. Young men participate in education, work pathways and social and emotional wellbeing programs. Meals are provided and they can also engage with community in real-world experiences.

Today MOB is a federal and state-funded accredited academy with two branches, 35 passionate staff, thousands of past graduates and 195 thriving students.

Reverend Robyn and Reverend Dr Lindsay Burch, the Founders of Havafeed Relief, are the 2024 Senior Australians of the Year for Queensland.

Reverend Robyn and Reverend Dr Lindsay Burch's not-for-profit organisation Havafeed Relief has fed more than one million people.

Old Parliament House,
King George Terrace,
Parkes ACT 2600

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The couple started Havafeed in 1994 with a van and donated loaves of bread. It's now a regular fixture at the Mermaid Beach Community Centre. Six days a week, visitors can enjoy a hot meal, pick up a hamper, connect with others or talk with a local support service if they need help.

Robyn (72) and Lindsay (75) have dedicated their retirement years to Havafeed. They start before dawn to make sure they have enough food and volunteers for each day's work. The organisation receives no funding and relies entirely on donations from the community. The couple have never asked for wages, often using their own funds to keep their work afloat.

Havafeed Relief currently provides more than 300 meals a week and has raised almost \$2 million in donations over the last 30 years.

The 2024 Young Australian of the Year for Queensland is Olympian Emma McKeon AM.

Emma McKeon AM is the most successful Australian Olympian of all time – a title she claimed before her 28th birthday. She comes from a strong family of Australian swimmers. In fact, her father, uncle, brother and mother have all represented Australia.

Back in 2012, Emma just missed out on being chosen for the London Olympics. She took a break, but rediscovered her passion and went on to make a splash at the 2014 Commonwealth Games, where she claimed six medals from six races.

At the 2020 Summer Olympics, Emma became the first female swimmer and the second woman in history to win seven medals in a single Olympics. She has also broken Commonwealth Games, Olympic and World records.

Now aged 29, Emma has other titles to her name. In 2022 she was made a Member of the Order of Australia, and in 2023 she was named Gold Coast Young Australian of the Year.

David Elliott OAM, co-founder of the Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum of Natural History, is the 2024 Local Hero for Queensland.

David Elliott's chance discovery of a dinosaur fossil during routine sheep mustering in 1999 led to the revival of Australia's palaeontology field – and the creation of a palaeo-tourism industry that put outback Queensland on the map.

David's initial fossil discovery was followed by others. As palaeontologists began to return to the region to investigate, David and his wife Judy founded the Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum of Natural History in 2002 as a not-for-profit charity.

The Museum first operated on the couple's property, where they conducted dinosaur digs and built an impressive collection of fossils. Later, it was moved onto donated land. Today, it houses Australia's most significant collection of fossils from the country's largest dinosaurs. A major tourist attraction, it serves as a centre for Australian paleontological research and discovery in Australia.

David, now 66, was recognised for his contributions to science with an Order of Australia Medal (OAM) in 2015.

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

"The award recipients for Queensland reflect the values of the Australian of the Year awards - inspiration, excellence and positive citizenship - they are people all Queenslanders can be proud of," said Mark.

Acting Premier of Queensland Steven Miles said these national awards exemplify outstanding Queenslanders, from all walks of life, and recognise their incredible achievements.

“The recipients have been recognised for their outstanding contributions to Queensland and Australia, and their tireless efforts and dedication to making positive change and improving the lives of others.

“Congratulations to the recipients and all of the nominees for their great work in our communities and for making a positive difference for Queenslanders.”

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

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

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