

MEDIA RELEASE

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**NORTHERN TERRITORY'S NOMINEES FOR
2022 AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS ANNOUNCED**

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Nominees for the 2022 Northern Territory Australian of the Year Awards include a therapy dog specialist, an esteemed teacher and healer, Aboriginal health and justice advocates, a veteran helping others with mental health challenges, an LGBTQ+ advocate and a health specialist helping Timor Leste communities.

They are among 16 Territorians in the running to be named the NT Local Hero, Young Australian, Senior Australian or Australian of the Year.

The 2022 Northern Territory award nominees are:

Northern Territory Australian of the Year

Dr Joshua Francis - Paediatric Infectious Disease Specialist and researcher (Nakara)

Olga Havnen – Advocate for Aboriginal Australians (Darwin)

Leanne Liddle - Director of the Aboriginal Justice Unit (Darwin)

Kwame Selormey - CEO of Melaleuca Australia, community services leader (Darwin)

Northern Territory Young Australian of the Year

Kyle Bambra - Indigenous mentor (Darwin)

Sizolwenkosi Fuyana - Businesswoman, podcaster and youth advocate (Palmerston)

Paige Horrigan - LGBTQ+ youth leader and advocate (Palmerston)

Emma Warren - Life coach and business owner (Anula)

Northern Territory Senior Australian of the Year

Robyne Burr ridge OAM - Disability services advocate and Founder of Focus-A-Bility (Darwin)

Bishop Daniel Eugene Hurley AM - Emeritus Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Darwin (Darwin)

Bilawara Lee - Elder, teacher, healer, academic-in-residence (Darwin)

Kathleen Short OAM - Community volunteer, arts and craft steward (Darwin)

Northern Territory Local Hero

Rebecca Forrest - Event organiser and fundraiser (Darwin)

Shaun Tatipata - Founding Director of Deadly Enterprises (Darwin)

Kristy Teunissen - Dog trainer, therapy dog provider (Zuccoli)

Paul Walker - Veteran, mental health speaker and photographer (Katherine)

**see bios on following pages*

The nominees are among 129 people being recognised across all states and territories as part of the program, which began in 1960.

The four award recipients from the Northern Territory will be announced on the evening of Monday 1 November 2021 in a ceremony at the Darwin Convention Centre which will also be available to watch online via livestream.

They will then join the other state and territory recipients as national finalists for the national awards announcement on 25 January 2022.

National Australia Day Council CEO Karlie Brand congratulated the Northern Territory nominees on being selected for consideration in this year's awards.

"The Northern Territory nominees all show great leadership and compassion," said Ms Brand.

"They share a concern for the welfare of others and their contributions are to be celebrated."

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

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Nominee [bios on the following pages](#) and can also be viewed from australianoftheyear.org.au.

Nominee [photos can be downloaded](#) from this link (note all photos provided by nominees):
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/z4pxggic4aesq1c/AAC0Qa0KUY7E4ZXakvIOvcDHa?dl=0>

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NT AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR – NOMINEE BIOS

Dr Joshua Francis

Paediatric Infectious Disease Specialist and researcher

As a medical student, Dr Joshua (Josh) Francis travelled to Africa for his elective subjects. The experience ignited a passion to use his skills to meet international medical needs.

Now Darwin-based, 39 year old Josh regularly travels to Timor-Leste and back (quarantining on arrival in both countries on every trip) to establish testing procedures and train Timorese health workers to manage COVID-19.

A specialist in paediatric infectious diseases, Josh has also played a vital role in helping diagnose and treat rheumatic heart disease (RHD), tuberculosis and HIV in the children of Timor-Leste.

As a researcher at the Menzies School of Health Research, Josh's work focuses on RHD, tuberculosis, clinical microbiology, and strengthening health systems to tackle challenges in Indigenous and global child health.

Josh was instrumental in setting up a paediatric registrar exchange program between the Royal Darwin Hospital and Dili's national hospital. His research on RHD in Timor-Leste school students won best research paper at the 2019 Australian Medical Association National Conference Awards.

Olga Havnen

Advocate for Aboriginal Australians

Olga Havnen led Danila Dilba Health Service (DDHS) to become one of the largest Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations in the country. As CEO, she has led strategically, providing culturally safe care for Aboriginal Australians.

Under Olga's leadership, DDHS provided culturally appropriate messaging to protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities against COVID-19, opened a respiratory clinic to encourage COVID-19 testing, and set up vaccination centres that Indigenous people are comfortable attending. Olga has also advocated for safe isolation spaces for homeless and transient clients after testing.

Olga's service goes well beyond her role. The 66 year old has advocated at home and at the UN against law reforms that disproportionately incarcerate Indigenous young people. Olga was also part of the five-year battle that successfully blocked an alcohol superstore being built next to one of Darwin's dry Indigenous communities.

Olga is retiring as CEO of an exceptionally resilient organisation that will retain her drive to improve the health of Aboriginal Australians.

Leanne Liddle

Director of the Aboriginal Justice Unit

Born and raised in Alice Springs, Central Arrernte woman Leanne Liddle has a passion for justice. As Director of the Aboriginal Justice Unit, she's travelled thousands of kilometres to meet and listen to Aboriginal communities across the Northern Territory.

Leanne is the driving force behind the Northern Territory Aboriginal Justice Agreement, which, in partnership with Aboriginal people aims to: reduce imprisonment rates; increase Aboriginal leadership; and improve justice outcomes for Aboriginal Territorians.

Leanne was South Australia's first Aboriginal policewoman. During her decade of service, she experienced racism and abuse that she fought and used to fuel her passion to make a difference in the justice arena.

Leanne went on to complete a law degree and has since worked for the United Nations, and in several high-profile government roles, before joining the Aboriginal Justice Unit in 2017. Now 52, Leanne is committed to empowering Aboriginal Territorians with justice solutions that will work where others have failed.

Kwame Selormey

CEO of Melaleuca Australia, community services leader

Kwame Selormey has dedicated his professional life to helping children, families, people with disabilities, people from diverse cultural backgrounds, and people with mental illness.

As CEO of Northern Territory not-for-profit organisation Melaleuca Australia, Kwame has reformed its strategic direction to better support diversity and healing, and to welcome refugees, migrants and asylum seekers as they settle into Australia. The organisation also offers specialist services including the Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma, the Humanitarian Settlement Program, and other family, youth and health services.

Some of Kwame's many achievements include leading one of Western Australia's largest Family Day Care Schemes and contributing to the development of Australia's early childhood curriculum framework. He also worked with Western Australian peak bodies to individualise support services for people with disabilities and severe mental illness.

Well-known and respected within the community services sector, 51 year old Kwame uses an individual and community engagement approach – enabling healthy communities by allowing individuals to self-direct and self-organise.

NT YOUNG AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR – NOMINEE BIOS

Kyle Bamba

Indigenous mentor

Arnhem Land's Kyle Bamba is a living example that challenges don't have to be barriers to achieving your dreams.

As a teenager, Kyle disliked school and was disengaged in class. One of his teachers referred him to a healing camp run by a non-profit organisation called the Balunu Foundation. The experience had a profound effect on Kyle, who ended up finishing Year 12.

Kyle now mentors Indigenous youth as part of the Balunu Foundation. He encourages them to give back to their communities, while teaching them about their culture and about choosing the right path in life.

Although he still has difficulties with reading and writing, 21 year old Kyle is now completing a hairdressing traineeship, and is one of the best students in his course. He's already using his new skills to give back; travelling to remote communities and volunteering with not-for-profit organisations and charities to cut and colour hair for free.

Kyle received the One Rail Indigenous Achievement Award in 2021 at the Northern Territory Young Achiever Awards.

Sizolwenkosi Fuyana

Businesswoman, podcaster and youth advocate

After overcoming her own adversities and mental health issues, small business owner Sizolwenkosi (Sizol) Fuyana now devotes her life to supporting disadvantaged young people who are at risk of entering the justice system.

Sizol is the founder and Managing Director of Fuyana Support. It's a youth-oriented consultancy firm that provides social and emotional wellbeing to young people, equipping them with skills to help them be more effective members of communities.

Sizol has partnered with the City of Palmerston to develop a 'Youth Info Map', with the project leading to freelance work with Joblink. She also works with youth at Don Dale Youth Detention Centre.

Sizol's podcast, *The Reality Change*, is about personal growth and facing adversity. She is also Chair of the 2021 Northern Territory Youth Round Table, which aims to make the government aware of key issues that are important to young people.

A law and psychology student who has volunteered for many working groups, 20 year old Sizol recently received a Northern Territory Government Small Business Achievement Award.

Paige Horrigan

LGBTQ+ youth leader and advocate

In 2019, Paige Horrigan experienced an LGBTQ+ motivated assault while at high school, yet no one was held accountable for this attack. This led them on a mission to promote greater awareness and acceptance of LGBTQ+ people and issues within the Palmerston community.

Elected the Campus Captain at Palmerston College, Paige has been significantly involved as a youth leader and advocate at the City of Palmerston's Youth Media Team. They are also a leading figure of Student Voice Positive Choice – a campaign supporting students to make positive choices and stand up for what is right to ensure all young people feel safe.

In 2020, Paige was a member of the Northern Territory Chief Minister's Youth Round Table and in 2021 they were awarded the City of Palmerston Young Citizen of the Year accolade.

With all of Paige's efforts, it's the 17 year old's ability to turn a negative situation into a positive that most inspires those around them to make changes for a better society.

Emma Warren

Life coach and business owner

Emma Warren is on a mission to help young women feel confident. She's a young female empowerment coach and the founder of She Flourishes – a company dedicated to empowering and helping young women reach their potential, fall in love with themselves and accomplish their goals.

As part of its launch in 2019, Emma facilitated online coaching programs and hosted multiple Confidence and Resilience workshops in collaboration with the Northern Territory Government. She also launched her Flourish in Life Program – a six-week course containing helpful modules and toolkits to build self-confidence – and organised a Mother Daughter Self-Love Lunch. Emma also has a podcast where she shares her learnings to empower others.

Before becoming a life coach, Emma founded Social Splash – a social media advertising, strategic management, photography and consultancy business. This business allowed her to become a 'digital nomad' and work overseas. She also co-owned Frunky – an ecommerce accessories business.

In 2021, 25 year old Emma won the Charles Darwin University Innovation Award at the Northern Territory Young Achiever Awards.

NT SENIOR AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR – NOMINEE BIOS

Robyne Burridge OAM

Disability services advocate and Founder of Focus-A-Bility

In 1980, Robyne Burridge moved to the Northern Territory for 18 months to coordinate its International Year of People with a Disability. Fast forward to 2021 and she is still living in the Territory – advocating for greater equality, accessibility and quality of life for all.

Robyne is a founding member of Integrated DisAbility Action, and a member of the governance committee on the Northern Territory Primary Health Network. She served 20 years as an Alderman with the Darwin City Council, including one year as Deputy Lord Mayor.

In 1997, Robyne established Focus-A-Bility to provide advocacy, case management and information to individuals with disability.

At 76, Robyne is highly regarded as a leader, advocate and activist in the disability sector. Her lived experience of cerebral palsy and expertise in disability advocacy has seen her mentor many executives in the sector.

The recipient of many awards, in 2020, Robyne received an Order of Australia Medal for service to people with a disability.

Bishop Daniel Eugene Hurley AM

Emeritus Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Darwin

Bishop Daniel Eugene Hurley was the sixth bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Darwin from 2007 until he retired in June 2018. He's known in his community for his kindness, generosity and pastoral approach – whether demonstrated through providing help to the people of Timor-Leste during recent floods or looking after local families in need.

Eugene was ordained as a priest in 1964. He served as Bishop of Port Pirie from 1998 until 2007, when he became the Bishop of Darwin. In this role, he was responsible for a very large diocese that takes up almost all of the Northern Territory.

In the 2019 Australia Day Honours he was made a Member of the Order of Australia for his service to the Catholic Church in Australia, and to the broader community in the Northern Territory.

Now aged 81, he still works hard every day of the week. He counts being invited into Aboriginal communities and experiencing their spirituality as his life's greatest privilege.

Bilawara Lee

Elder, teacher, healer, academic-in-residence

Aunty Bilawara Lee is a highly respected Elder of the Larrakia Nation. For the past three years, she has been steadfastly committed to reviving the Larrakia language. This has included teaching Australia's Governor General and the Northern Territory's Administrator an Acknowledgement to Country in Larrakia Language.

A recipient of the Female Elder of the Year Award in the 2021 NAIDOC Awards in Darwin, Bilawara is an internationally published author of two books (*Star Dreaming* and *Healing from the Dilly Bag*), and the first and only Larrakia Academic in Residence at Charles Darwin University. She also chairs the Menzies Child Health Division's Indigenous Reference Group.

Bilawara is acknowledged and respected internationally as a Healer and Teacher of the ancient wisdoms of Aboriginal Spirituality and Healing, cross-cultural communication and Larrakia cultural protocols. She represents Australia on the International Indigenous Grandmothers Council.

A much-loved community communicator, 71 year old Bilawara is an authorised marriage celebrant, conducting weddings, funerals, namings and other important civil ceremonies. Bilawara also conducts many Welcome to Country and smoking ceremonies.

Kathleen Short OAM

Community volunteer, arts and craft steward

In 1974, community-minded Kathleen Short shared her love of creative embroidery by founding the Embroiderers' Guild of the Northern Territory (originally the Katherine, Northern Territory branch of the Embroiderers' Guild of New South Wales), where she was branch president for many years. Kathleen was also member of the Katherine District Show Society Council and an art and craft steward until 1988.

Kathleen is also passionate about educating young people. She was District Commissioner for the local Girl Guides group, and a critic for the Penguin Club – helping girls develop speaking skills. She cared deeply about their wellbeing; her home was known as a drop-in centre for many young people.

In 1984, Kathleen was elected to the Katherine Town Council, and later appointed Deputy Mayor. She received an Order of Australia Medal in 1997 for her service to the community.

Now living in Darwin, 84 year old Kathleen continues to give to the community as a volunteer and as a member of community-based committees.

NT LOCAL HERO – NOMINEE BIOS

Rebecca Forrest

Event organiser and fundraiser

Rebecca Forrest has an incredible talent for bringing people together in a safe environment where they can open up and share their experiences.

For more than 13 years, her events have raised awareness and much-needed funds for various causes. All up, her efforts have contributed \$1 million to support anti-violence and people with autism, as well as Life Education, the Cancer Council and the Police Legacy.

In 2018, Rebecca founded No One Left Behind – events that focus on women but also welcome men in sharing journeys, experiences and lessons learnt to inspire others. Her inaugural International Men's Day Forum included emotional addresses from Professor Mick Dodson AM and Tick Everett from Dolly's Dream. She also organises No More Violence events, pushing the message that violence won't be tolerated.

Rebecca is the Vice President of Business and Professional Women in Darwin. The 40 year old's passion for social justice, anti-violence and youth affairs saw her win the 2021 Palmerston Citizen of the Year Award.

Shaun Tatipata

Founding Director of Deadly Enterprises

Shaun Tatipata is the founding Director of Australia's first Aboriginal-owned optical and eye care provider, the Deadly Vision Centre. The Aboriginal enterprise promotes health and wellbeing, while also celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and community.

Shaun trained as an Aboriginal health worker in 2001. Since graduating, he's delivered primary healthcare services and implemented outreach programs in Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, as well as with the Northern Territory Government. Until recently, Shaun led The Fred Hollows Foundation's Indigenous Australia Program.

Shaun, who is of Wuthathi and Ngarrindjeri descent, is passionate about strengthening service coordination through improved leadership and governance.

Through the Deadly Vision Centre, 43 year old Shaun is helping close the gap in eye health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians by providing access to culturally safe and socially responsive eye care – in a way that's affordable and fashionable. Shaun is also committed to making it easier for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at risk of vision loss to get the specialist care they need.

Kristy Teunissen

Dog trainer, therapy dog provider

Being in hospital or having a mental illness can be a very stressful experience, especially for children. But receiving a visit from a four-legged friend can help children feel calmer and happier. That's why 38 year old Kristy Teunissen takes her therapy dogs, Harlow, Scout and Chip, to hospitals and schools, bringing joy and comfort to anxious, sick or troubled kids and older people.

Therapy dogs have been shown to help decrease stress hormones and improve behavioural issues in children. They also provide emotional, social and physical support, and improve concentration, relaxation and mood.

Kristy's therapy dogs have brought healing to Headspace Darwin, primary and secondary school students, Darwin and Palmerston hospitals and aged care centres. Kids and older people alike enjoy the calming, friendly presence of the dogs and look forward to giving Harlow, Scout and Chip a pat or a paw shake.

Kristy also helps with fundraising activities at Royal Darwin Hospital and works with Headspace to raise awareness during Mental Health Week.

Paul Walker

Veteran, mental health speaker and photographer

Australian Army veteran and mental health speaker Paul Walker inspires others with his compassionate approach to explaining the mental wounds of PTSD and depression. Paul also speaks to, and mentors at-risk youth.

A descendent of the Waanyi people covering the border of NT and QLD, and Walker clan from Scotland. A once homeless teen with substance abuse issues who overcame great diversity to work on his health and mindset to successfully join the army, becoming an experienced and well-respected soldier.

During his second overseas deployment in December 2000, on Operation Tanager Paul came under fire by militia in East Timor, saving a fellow soldier shot in the leg. Paul was later honourably discharged on medical grounds.

A former community worker and financial counsellor over the last five years throughout the Big Rivers region, 46 year old Paul also gives his time freely to help others, such as the evacuation from remote communities during Cyclone Trevor.