

MEDIA RELEASE

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**QUEENSLAND NOMINEES FOR
2022 AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS ANNOUNCED**

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Nominees for the 2022 Queensland Australian of the Year Awards include a man creating safe places for the homeless to rest, parents committed to preventing domestic violence, a woman making education possible for country children in need, a VC recipient and a man helping bridge the digital divide.

They are among 17 Queenslanders in the running to be named the Queensland Local Hero, Young Australian, Senior Australian or Australian of the Year.

The 2022 Queensland award nominees are:

Queensland Australian of the Year

Sue and Lloyd Clarke – Founders, Small Steps 4 Hannah (Camp Hill, Brisbane)

Norm McGillivray – Founder, Beddown (Brisbane)

Melissa McGuinness – Founder, YOU CHOOSE Youth Road Safety (Gold Coast)

Annette Whitaker – Co-founder/CEO, Pulmonary Hypertension Assoc Australia (Cairns)

Queensland Young Australian of the Year

Dr Tahnee Bridson – Founder, Hand-n-Hand Peer Support (Mareeba)

Jack Growden – Founder/CEO, Lite Haus International (Townsville)

Cody Schaeffer – Founder/Director, Borderline Australia (New Farm, Brisbane)

Dr Heidi Walkden – Neuroscientist and science policy fellow (Ipswich)

Queensland Senior Australian of the Year

Dr Colin Dillon AM APM – Australia's first Indigenous police officer (McDowall, Brisbane)

Beryl Neilsen OAM – Founder/Director, Winchester Foundation (Mackay)

Keith Payne VC AM – War veteran and Victoria Cross recipient (Mackay)

Beverley Trivett – Director and Chair, Cure Brain Cancer Foundation (Brisbane)

Queensland Local Hero

Saba Abraham – Founder, Mu'ooz Restaurant & Catering social enterprise (Brisbane)

Dr Nova Evans – Co-founder, Sunny Street (Sunshine Coast)

James Hill – Mental health advocate (Sunshine Coast)

Dr Zoe Knorre – Clinical psychologist, CEO Grace Homestead (Brisbane)

**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 Queensland will be announced on the evening of Thursday 11 November 2021 in a ceremony at the Queensland Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane which will also be livestreamed.

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 Queensland nominees on being recognised for their achievements.

“The Queensland nominees are all extraordinary people in their own way,” said Ms Brand.

“They are helping and supporting others, taking leadership roles, advocating for change and making groundbreaking discoveries.”

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

ENDS.

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/lwtbgeb8ox4jyep/AABbPs-kA6EH27wWLn76RYsVa?dl=0>

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QUEENSLAND AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR – NOMINEE BIOS

Sue and Lloyd Clarke

Founders of Small Steps 4 Hannah

Despite unimaginable grief, Sue and Lloyd Clarke have shown extraordinary dedication to educating Australia on the dangers of coercive control and domestic violence. After the murder of their daughter Hannah and three grandchildren, Aaliyah, Laianah and Trey, they vowed to put a stop to domestic and family violence.

Through their foundation, Small Steps 4 Hannah, Sue and Lloyd are committed to ensuring their tragedy isn't experienced by another family. They empower victims to speak up, guide family members to be aware of those who may be in an unsafe environment, and create safe environments for those who need them most.

Sue and Lloyd have also worked with the Queensland Government to establish the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce. It's transforming the way Queenslanders, and Australians in general, understand family and domestic violence, while giving previously ignored victims a voice in court.

By advocating for legislative change in the justice system, Sue and Lloyd hope the criminalisation of coercive control in Queensland will become Hannah's legacy.

Norm McGillivray

Founder of Beddown

Norm McGillivray was shocked when he learned that more than 8,000 vulnerable people sleep on the street, on benches and under bridges every night in Australia. He wondered how he could help those sleeping rough when he had a lightbulb moment.

While parked in the car park of a local shopping centre, he noticed that the space was nearly empty. He instantly saw potential in how it could be used, especially at night when it's typically completely vacant. From that idea, Norm founded Beddown in 2018. He partnered with car park operator Secure Parking, providing homeless people with pop-up accommodation and complementary facilities like showers and food in underutilised car parks and spaces.

By providing a safe, secure and comfortable place to get a good night's rest, Beddown helps restore the health and dignity of homeless people all around Australia. Fifty one year old Norm, whose father was personally impacted by homelessness, is using kindness and understanding to significantly improve the lives and wellbeing of vulnerable people.

Melissa McGuinness

Founder of YOU CHOOSE Youth Road Safety

Following her son's death in a road crash that also killed four other young adults, Melissa McGuinness decided to use her tragic experience to facilitate a social movement for good.

Melissa founded YOU CHOOSE Youth Road Safety, an organisation that changes driving behaviours and prevents youth road trauma. Her national award-winning program has the support of schools, parents, students, police and community engagement officers, as well as organisations including the Australian Road Safety Foundation and Youth Leadership Academy Australia.

Since 2017, YOU CHOOSE Youth Road Safety has delivered its programs to schools across the country, engaging with more than 100,000 young Australians. It empowers them to take accountability for themselves and their peers by exploring the concepts of love, family and choice.

By challenging Australia's misguided understandings about 'luck' and lethal driving outcomes, 51 year old Melissa seeks to inspire current and future generations of young drivers as leaders – to protect their families and communities from the preventable misery of youth road trauma.

Annette Whitaker

Co-founder and CEO of the Pulmonary Hypertension Association of Australia

Annette (Annie) Whitaker has dedicated the past 22 years of her life to supporting and advocating for people with pulmonary hypertension (PH). A once invariably fatal condition – with sufferers dying within 2.8 years of a diagnosis – it's now survivable for much longer periods thanks to advances in medicine.

Annie co-founded the patient support group Pulmonary Hypertension Association of Australia (PHAA) in 2005 and has been CEO since inception. The organisation advocates on behalf of the PH community, while also providing hope, support and education for around 4,000 family and friends of people with PH. For each person diagnosed with PH, an average of 18 family and friends are affected. Many members have also joined PHAA after a post-mortem diagnosis of PH is given to a loved one who has passed away.

Annie is a relentless campaigner for the approval of new PH medications in Australia. The 63 year old has attended Federal Parliament hearings on behalf of PHAA and submitted numerous submissions to the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

QUEENSLAND YOUNG AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR – NOMINEE BIOS

Dr Tahnee Bridson

Founder of Hand-n-Hand Peer Support

Following the suicide of a well-known doctor in 2016, Dr Tahnee Bridson learned that many of her friends and colleagues were also suffering in silence – too scared to speak up out of shame, fear and stigma. It was then she decided her future would be dedicated to mental health.

With the encouragement of some high-profile health leaders, Tahnee founded Hand-n-Hand Peer Support in March 2020, to assist healthcare workers who were experiencing wellbeing or mental health difficulties. What began as a small WhatsApp group chat quickly became a collective of more than 2,000 healthcare workers on social media. The Black Dog Institute recently included Hand-n-Hand as an official partner.

Tahnee's work for Hand-n-Hand is done on a volunteer basis, in addition to her full-time job as a doctor. She's also training to become a psychiatrist.

By introducing peer support to healthcare settings, Hand-n-Hand has the potential to change the culture of workplaces all around the country. For 29 year old Tahnee, the possibilities are endless.

Jack Growden

Founder and CEO of LiteHaus International

When Jack Growden visited Papua New Guinea in 2017, none of the 3,500 rural primary schools had a functional computer lab. Realising the impact of not having access to digital technology on students, he donated his own laptop to the Kuta Primary School. He also promised to come back with 12 more.

After rallying volunteers and supporters back home, Jack returned six months later to fulfil his promise, under the not-for-profit he founded called LiteHaus International. The organisation has gone on to provide digital-learning opportunities to more than 40,000 students across four countries.

Jack also understands the digital divide isn't limited to the developing world. When COVID-19 hit and home schooling became the norm, he put out a call for students who needed a digital device. One Facebook post yielded 1,400 applications from 45 schools, and 649 students now have their own digital device.

Aged 24, Jack inspires people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to make a difference.

Cody Schaeffer

Founder and Director of Borderline Australia

From the age of 15, Cody Schaeffer has been creating programs and events to change the lives of young people in Queensland for the better.

His first effort was a charity concert to raise money for a child in the Goondiwindi community. Then at 16, he launched G-YOUTH (Gundy Youth Studio) – a weekly after-school event to get teenagers off the streets and learning hip-hop dance instead. This initiative won the Community Event of the Year award at the local Goondiwindi Australia Day Awards in 2011.

More recently, Cody's focus has been on mental health issues. While working as a radio presenter, he founded Borderline Australia. It's a non-profit organisation dedicated to changing the lives of teenage Australians through youth mental health education and programs, including his popular *Borderline Youth Camp*.

With a drive, dedication and commitment to helping young people, 28 year old Cody has never shied away from being an instigator of change. For his efforts, he was named Brisbane's 2020 Young Citizen of the Year.

Dr Heidi Walkden

Neuroscientist and science policy fellow

Ever since high school science competitions piqued Dr Heidi Walkden's interest in neuroscience, she's made outstanding contributions to the field.

Heidi made a ground-breaking discovery when she found a new path by which bacteria can quickly move from the nasal cavity to the brain. In recognition of her research, she was named in the Forbes Asia 30 Under 30 list in the category of Healthcare and Science, as one of only three Australians to make the top 30 in her category.

Alongside her neuroscience research, Heidi has worked on the 'That's RAD! Science' engagement outreach project, producing engaging children's books that promote women in science. Since 2017, the project has released four books and distributed more than 6,000 copies to children, schools and libraries around Queensland and Australia.

From humble beginnings in Ipswich, 27 year old Heidi has made incredible discoveries and achieved international recognition for her accomplishments. All the while, she has consistently supported her colleagues in promoting science to the Australian community.

QUEENSLAND SENIOR AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR – NOMINEE BIOS

Dr Colin Dillon AM APM

Australia's first Indigenous police officer

When Dr Colin Dillon AM APM entered the Queensland Police Force in 1965, he became Australia's first Indigenous police officer. This was two years before the 1967 referendum introducing the counting of Aboriginal people in the nation's census, and a decade before ratification of the Racial Discrimination Act.

In 1987, Colin showed courage as the first serving police officer to voluntarily step forward and give first-hand knowledge under oath before the Fitzgerald Inquiry into Police Corruption. His evidence was instrumental in sending many corrupt officers, including the police commissioner, and several politicians to prison.

Colin has been awarded the Australian Police Medal and received an honorary doctorate from the Queensland University of Technology. In 2013, Colin was made a Member of the Order of Australia for his services to the Indigenous community.

Since retiring from the police force, Colin served as Chairman of Indigenous radio station, 98.9FM, and as a former Director of the Queensland Heart Foundation. Currently, the 77 year old is community member on the Parole Board of Queensland.

Beryl Neilsen OAM

Founder and Director of the Winchester Foundation

For many years, Beryl Neilsen OAM and her late husband John wanted to help children in regional and rural areas gain a high-quality education. While running and operating Winchester Downs, her family-run cattle property located south of Moranbah, she decided to follow up on that intention and help others.

In 2011, Beryl founded the John & Beryl Neilsen Winchester Foundation. Its work helps families cover the costs of boarding school and university, giving country children the same opportunities as those from the city.

Many of the children who've been supported by the foundation have gone on to become doctors, vets, physiotherapists and nurses, among other professions.

For hundreds of rural children, some opportunities may have never been possible without 79 year old Beryl's kindness, and the support of the Winchester Foundation. She was awarded an Order of Australia medal in 2021 for her tireless work as an advocate of opportunities for rural children.

Keith Payne VC AM

War veteran and Victoria Cross recipient

After leaving his job as a tradesman in 1951 to join the Australian Army, Keith Payne VC AM was sent to fight at the age of 18. It would be the beginning of decades of military service across the world, taking him to the battlefields of Korea, Malaya and Vietnam.

One night in 1969, in the dark jungle of Vietnam and under heavy enemy fire, Keith returned to a fled battlefield to rescue 40 of his soldiers. For his extreme act of bravery in leading his men to safety, Keith received the Victoria Cross in 1970.

Upon returning to Australia, Keith struggled with demons of his own, suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. This experience spurred him on to become active in counselling returned soldiers, while also encouraging and supporting troops in active service.

In his lifetime of service, 88 year old Keith has helped not only veterans of foreign wars, but also Indigenous diggers and communities left behind by civilian and military bureaucracy.

Beverley Trivett

Director and Chair of the Cure Brain Cancer Foundation

Inspired to promote a greater understanding of brain cancer following the death of her husband John in 1997 from glioblastoma multiforme, Beverley Trivett has devoted almost 25 years to driving the development of brain cancer resources.

Beverley has been a Director of the Cure Brain Cancer Foundation since April 2015. It is now the leading organisation for research, advocacy and treatments in Australia, with a mission to rapidly improve brain cancer survival, and ultimately find a cure.

Previously, Beverley was Founder and Director of the John Trivett Foundation from 1998 to 2015, in tribute to her late husband.

Since 2013, the Cure Brain Cancer Foundation has seen \$21 million invested into brain cancer research, funded 53 research grants, invested \$3.63 million into clinical trials, and created 3,500 brain cancer resources.

Now aged 72, Beverley's voluntary dedication to developing better outcomes for people living with brain cancer demonstrates her abiding interest in giving back to a community with unique needs.

QUEENSLAND LOCAL HERO – NOMINEE BIOS

Saba Abraham

Community leader, founder and Manager of social enterprise Mu'ooz Restaurant & Catering

Since arriving in Australia as a refugee from Eritrea, Saba Abraham has dedicated her time to supporting other refugees, uplifting her community, and building multiculturalism more broadly in Australia.

During the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, Saba played a vital role in preventing its spread in Queensland as the Chairperson of the Brisbane Community Leaders Gathering. The group of leaders from culturally and linguistically diverse communities ensured public health messages were translated directly into a range of languages so that all people could receive detailed and timely information.

In addition, 60 year old Saba is the founder and Manager of Mu'ooz Restaurant in Brisbane's West End. Since 2003, the not-for-profit social enterprise restaurant and catering business has provided employment and training opportunities for women who have arrived as refugees. Since inception, Mu'ooz has trained and employed more than 270 women.

Saba's caring, compassionate and loving leadership has earned her the title 'Mama Saba', an honorary expression that recognises everything she does for her community.

Dr Nova Evans

Co-founder of Sunny Street

Dr Nova Evans and her colleague Sonia Goodwin met in 2017 while at Queensland Health. Both worked as managers of services where their primary focus was to discharge people safely from the hospital system.

Wanting to find a way to positively impact their local community, Nova and Sonia resigned on the same day in March 2018 to establish a new organisation – one that provides primary healthcare street clinics to people experiencing vulnerability and homelessness.

Calling it Sunny Street, Nova and Sonia have invested \$45,000 of their own money into the initiative, going many months without a regular income before the launch in July 2018.

It initially opened for a four-hour period at the Maroochy Neighbourhood Centre, caring for 48 people on that first day. Since then, Sunny Street has rolled out clinics across the Sunshine Coast, into the Brisbane CBD and on the Fraser Coast. Forty three year old Nova, Sonia and their growing team of volunteers are working to launch Sunny Street in Canberra soon, with other states on the cards too.

James Hill

Mental health advocate

After his own experiences with mental illness, James Hill realised just how much stigma there was around asking for help. He felt a lack of education almost cost him his life.

So, after finding the courage to seek help, James has been on a journey to instigate significant change. He's working to support others, particularly men, so they better understand mental illness and how to access support.

James started work as a volunteer speaker with Beyond Blue in 2015. To this day, he continues to volunteer time in the community, sharing his story and delivering education.

In 2017, he co-designed and implemented a full-time Mental Health Advocate position at Energy Queensland, where he's worked as a tradesman since 2007. By using lived experience to develop a mental health strategy for the business, James is shifting cultural attitudes around mental illness.

At age 44, James's tireless advocacy shows how someone can turn a negative experience into a life-changing journey that can give hope to many.

Dr Zoe Knorre

Clinical psychologist and CEO of Grace Homestead

After witnessing the struggle of parents suffering from substance use disorder while trying to care for their children, Dr Zoe Knorre recognised that Australia wasn't adequately responding to the drug and alcohol crisis.

She began a two-year journey of planning and petitioning to open a rehabilitation centre that catered for women with children in their care. This led to the launch of Grace Homestead in 2018.

Located in the Lockyer Valley, Grace Homestead is a residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre. It meets at the junction between treatment for alcohol and drugs and child protection.

Zoe has changed many lives for the better through her work. Run by a group of volunteers and without funding, Grace Homestead is giving mothers and their children a second chance at life.

Outside of Grace Homestead, 40 year old Zoe runs her own practice as a clinical psychologist, drawing on her experience from working in public, private and academic settings. She is currently working on a child protection research project.