

MEDIA RELEASE

MONDAY 18 OCTOBER 2021

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

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Nominees for the 2022 Tasmania Australian of the Year Awards include a marine ecologist, a paramedic, a man who has devoted his life to plant research and food security, a researcher using Indigenous knowledge for environmental protection, a young disability support worker, the founder of a respite retreat for cancer patients, a model and actor advocating for Indigenous at-risk youth and a woman whose passion for music created a local orchestra.

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

The 2022 Tasmania award nominees are:

Tasmania Australian of the Year

Joanne Cook – Eating disorder recovery advocate (Hobart)
 Dr Emma Lee – Indigenous researcher (tebrakunna country)
 Craig Leeson – Documentary filmmaker and journalist (Burnie)
 Professor Gretta Pecl – Marine ecologist (Hobart)

Tasmania Young Australian of the Year

Jony Berry – Model, actor and comedian
 Kaytlyn Johnson – Youth leader & singer-songwriter (Lapoinya)
 Laura Johnson – Youth mental health advocate (Smithton)
 Oliver Parnham – Disability support worker (Sandy Bay)

Tasmania Senior Australian of the Year

Michael Barrenger – Paramedic (George Town)
 Bruce French AO – Agricultural scientist (Burnie)
 Margaret Hoban – Launceston Youth & Community Orchestra Founder (Launceston)
 Reverend Josephine Pyecroft – Anglican Priest (Longford)

Tasmania Local Hero

Jay Chipman – Founder, Homely Retreats (Lauderdale)
 Paul Hosking – Founder of HOPE at St Paul's Kitchen (Devonport)
 Tani Langoulant – Founder of Gree2b Girls (St Helens)
 Kimberley Smith APM – Community volunteer (Hobart)

**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 Tasmania will be announced in a ceremony on Friday 29 October 2021 at the Crowne Plaza Hobart 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 Tasmanian nominees on being recognised by their communities.

“The Tasmanian nominees are making extraordinary contributions and are all passionate about what they do,” said Ms Brand.

“Whether it be lifelong dedication to helping others every day or leading by example on matters which affect us all, they are truly making a difference.”

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/556lss6qxrusrkp/AABrjbdX9l7XbGKbPvKeAohFa?dl=0>

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TASMANIA AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR – NOMINEE BIOS

Joanne Cook

Founder and Executive Officer of the Tasmanian Recovery from Eating Disorders Foundation

Ten years ago, Joanne Cook established the Tasmanian Recovery from Eating Disorders Foundation (TRED), to support young Tasmanian men and women with eating disorders, and their families.

Previously diagnosed with an eating disorder (ED) herself, 61 year old Joanne has a deep understanding of the many issues EDs can create. She's never judged those affected, only sought to find effective ways to relieve the suffering and heartache.

Despite around one million Australians estimated to have an eating disorder, Tasmania's clinical and support services are extremely limited. In 2017, TRED merged with The Butterfly Foundation, helping boost the state's ability to deliver support.

Joanne often consults with professionals, giving them advice on EDs, an area that has often been disregarded and misunderstood. Among her achievements is the elevation of the voice of lived experience in ED treatment, recovery support and training and the establishment of Peer Support mentoring in Tasmania

Dr Emma Lee

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Fellow at Swinburne University of Technology

A *trawlulwuy* woman of *tebrakunna* country, Dr Emma Lee is a key architect of 'Reset the Relationship' – a Tasmanian government strategy focused on the themes of recognition, reconciliation and real outcomes for Aboriginal communities in Tasmania.

'Reset the Relationship' includes constitutional recognition, a focus on Tasmanian Aboriginal history and culture in the school system, and joint land management arrangements between the government and Aboriginal communities.

An academic at Swinburne University of Technology, Emma's research over the past 25 years has focused on Indigenous affairs, land and sea management, policy, and governance of Australian regulatory environments.

In 2017, Emma began a postdoctoral project to establish a market for cultural fisheries and food tourism in Tasmania. The aim is to promote Aboriginal economies, traditional knowledge and connections to marine environments.

Additionally, 48 year old Emma advocates for Aboriginal communities as a sitting member of the Australian Government's National Co-Design Group. She works to develop models so that Indigenous voices can be heard in parliament.

Craig Leeson

Documentary filmmaker and journalist

Craig Leeson is an award-winning filmmaker, journalist, television presenter and entrepreneur. He is the CEO of Leeson Media International and Ocean Vista Films and founder of the I Shot Hong Kong Film Festival.

In 2017, Craig released his first feature-length documentary, *A Plastic Ocean*. Viewed around the world and ranked the number one documentary on iTunes in the US, the UK and Canada, it helped launch global impetus for change to save our oceans from plastic pollution.

Craig's latest film, *The Last Glaciers*, will be released on IMAX in March 2022. It looks at the impact of global climate change. Craig travelled to 12 countries over four years to bring the film to life.

At 54, Craig is also active in charity work. He co-founded A Plastic Oceans Foundation and advises to Plastic Oceans International – a charity dedicated to ending humanity's single-use plastic addiction within a generation. Further, he's an adviser to The Klosters Forum and is the Global Sustainability Partner to BNP Paribas.

Professor Gretta Pecl

Professor of Marine Ecology at the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies and Director of the Centre for Marine Socioecology, University of Tasmania

Marine ecologist Professor Gretta Pecl has provided a solution to a global problem in the fight against climate change. With oceans so vast, it's an enormous task to collect enough data to demonstrate the impacts of climate change. And without this information, it's hard to make positive change.

To help overcome this problem, Gretta enlisted the help of thousands of recreational fishers, scuba divers, boaters and naturalists. From their input, she founded Redmap – the Range Extension Database and Mapping Project – a platform they could use to report species that are outside their normal geographic distribution.

For her work, 51 year old Gretta has been ranked 178th on the Reuters Hot List of '1,000 most influential climate scientists'. She also ranked in the top 20 women scientists in the same list.

In addition, Gretta is passionate about science communication and women's participation in science. She's won multiple national and international awards for both scientific research and scientific communication.

TASMANIA YOUNG AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR – NOMINEE BIOS

Jony Berry

Model, actor and comedian

A man of Palawa and Portuguese heritage, Jony Berry was the first Aboriginal person to represent Australia at the Mr World competition, using his platform as a model and performer to advocate for causes close to his heart.

Having experienced traumas including homelessness, domestic violence and child sexual assault himself, 27 year old Jony regularly speaks out about preventing youth suicide within Aboriginal communities. He's a founding member and youth mentor of the Ballawinnie Tasmanian Aboriginal community and co-founded the B.Excellence Program to provide cultural support and mentoring to high-risk Indigenous youth.

Jony also advocates for Aboriginal flag rights. When representing Australia at the Mr World competition he wanted to wear a large robe bearing the flag but organisers asked him to remove it for copyright reasons. The controversy reinforced his 'Free the Flag' message and made international news.

With his large social media following, Jony also uses his local and overseas profile to raise awareness of issues affecting young LGBTQ+ people.

Kaytlyn Johnson

Youth leader and singer-songwriter

Hailing from Wynyard in north-west Tasmania, Palawa woman Kaytlyn Johnson is an inspiring youth leader. In 2021, she won the First National Real Estate Leadership Award at the Tasmanian Young Achiever Awards, while also taking out the major category – the Premier's Young Achiever of the Year Award.

In high school, Kaytlyn was co-president of the Student Executive Council and one of seven student ambassadors involved in Tasmania's 150 years of public education celebrations. She earned an impressive ATAR in Year 12, which gained her acceptance into the University of Melbourne on a Chancellor's Scholarship.

Kaytlyn is a key member of Project O – an initiative that empowers young rural women to develop new skills, connect with their communities, and use their voices to campaign for change. Its latest 'Colourathon' art initiative raised more than \$12,000 for women and children experiencing family violence.

Kaytlyn is also a talented singer-songwriter with her music featured on triple j Unearthed. The 20 year old is an inspiration to many young Tasmanians, especially those in the Indigenous community.

Laura Johnson

Youth mental health advocate

After recognising that many people experience delays and a lack of treatment options when seeking help for mental health conditions, Laura Johnson decided to act. She started a petition to improve youth mental health resources in Tasmania's north-west.

The petition, sent to parliament with 700-plus signatures, highlights a mental health services crisis. Through her campaigning, Laura has called for increased investment in the training of specialist mental health professionals, broader access to education and improved facilities for treatment.

Laura also created the community event THEIRS, which stands for Talk, Hear and Help, Educate, Inform, Refer and Support. Its aim is to help people notice the signs of someone struggling so they can help.

Laura is involved in fundraising projects with organisations like the Cancer Council and World's Greatest Shave, and she contributed to a documentary that highlights her hometown's achievement in overcoming a methamphetamine problem.

Through her tireless work and advocacy, 22 year old Laura is a leading figure in improving mental health services for young people in Tasmania.

Oliver Parnham

Disability support worker

Oliver Parnham is the support worker of a 20-year-old man who has Xeroderma Pigmentosum with neurological effects. He provides physical, social and emotional care to his client – a 24/7 job – while also supporting the client's family.

He not only carries out support work but also manages the NDIS plan and the financial and healthcare side of his client's needs to reduce the stress on the client's family.

For his efforts, 20 year old Oliver has been recognised by the client's allied health team, as well as their support co-ordinator. He was nominated for the 2021 Tasmanian Young Achiever of the Year Award, and was a finalist in the 2021 TADPAC Print Service to the Disability Sector Award.

Oliver seeks to improve the way disability care is implemented. In particular, he wants to increase the number of young people in disability support. He says many young people with disabilities enjoy the company of other young people, yet very few of them are in the sector.

Oliver has a rare congenital heart defect that has required three open heart surgeries to date. While it often leaves him feeling tired, he never lets this impact how hard he works, always putting the client's needs above his own.

TASMANIA SENIOR AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR – NOMINEE BIOS

Michael Barrenger

Paramedic

Michael Barrenger has more than left his mark on the Tasmanian town of George Town since moving there in 1984. For almost four decades, he's been a paramedic with Ambulance Tasmania.

Originally joining the ambulance service in Launceston, a six-month trial in George Town turned into 37 years when he landed a full-time role. Throughout his career, Michael has delivered around 30 babies, three of whom were born in one 48-hour period. He was also called to the fatal heart attack of journalist Richard Carleton during the Beaconsfield mine collapse in 2006.

As well as regularly offering his skills as a paramedic, 65 year old Michael has contributed locally to Rotary, APEX, the Tasmanian State Emergency Service and George Town RSL.

As a result of his contributions, it would be hard to find anyone in George Town who has not had their life positively impacted by Michael in some way. Everyone knows and respects him for all he has done for the community.

Bruce French AO

Agricultural scientist and Founder of Food Plants International

Bruce French has dedicated his life to collecting and distributing information about edible plants. The 76 year old's work has made a practical difference in improving food security, nutrition and health outcomes for people in developing countries.

In 1999, Bruce founded Food Plants International, with the goal of documenting edible plants around the world. There are now more than 33,500 species detailed on its website.

Food Plants International's origins go back to the 1970s when Bruce was living in Papua New Guinea. He noticed many villagers suffering from disease and malnutrition, often while surrounded by nutritious edible plants.

From that moment, Bruce went on a mission to document the many species in Papua New Guinea. That effort soon expanded to include plants all around the world.

Food Plants International teamed up with Rotary Tasmania in 2007 and other organisations to create the Food Plant Solutions project. The aim is to provide regions with information on how to grow the most nutritious and viable food plants for their particular environment.

Margaret Hoban

Founder of the Launceston Youth and Community Orchestra

Margaret Hoban is an inspiration to thousands of people in the field of music. She has single-handedly raised the profile of community music in Launceston, thanks to her enthusiasm and high-calibre teaching expertise.

Margaret moved to Australia from the US in the early 1970s, as part of the Victorian Teacher Selection Program to fill shortfalls of qualified teachers. She intended to stay a year but, almost 50 years later, she's still in Launceston – now as an Australian citizen.

Margaret has always fought hard against elitism in music. She exemplifies her belief in the benefits of music for all by always helping people strive to be their absolute best.

At the age of 70, Margaret shows no signs of slowing down. She still goes backpacking and on bushwalks, often leaving her much younger companions in her wake. She's also taken on a young person as a conducting mentee, so that she can eventually "pass the baton" when the time comes.

Reverend Josephine Pyecroft

Anglican priest

At the age of 84, Reverend Josephine (Jo) Pyecroft works as an Anglican priest for the rural community surrounding Quamby Parish in Tasmania's north. She works with the three historical churches of Westbury, Hagley and Carrick, and still ministers weddings, baptisms and funerals.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, when churches were closed, Jo harnessed modern technology and did her weekly Sunday Communion Services with sermons using her iPhone. She pre-recorded them before posting to the Quamby Parish Facebook page so people could still feel like they were going to church. Jo was also one of the key figures in saving the Quamby churches from being sold in 2018 by the Anglican Diocese of Tasmania.

Before moving to Tasmania, Jo was one of the first ordained women in the Anglican Church and the first female precentor in the world, looking after the Anglican Cathedral in Brisbane.

Serving the people in her community is what keeps Jo going. She's doesn't receive a stipend or other payment for her work.

TASMANIA LOCAL HERO – NOMINEE BIOS

Jay Chipman

Founder of Homely Retreats

Jay Chipman faced a battle with cancer in 2014–15, spending almost a year in hospital while raising her two young children. It's from that experience that she recognised the importance of quality family time and established Homely Retreats in 2018 – a respite service for Tasmanians affected by cancer.

Thanks to Homely Retreats, families with a parent undergoing cancer treatment can enjoy a complimentary weekend holiday experience to rest and reconnect.

With limited respite services in the mainland states and long waiting times of up to five years, Homely Retreats is currently the only source of respite for Tasmanians affected by cancer.

To support Homely Retreats, 37 year old Jay has attracted several Tasmanian sponsors, including a local family who donate the use of their accommodation property near Port Arthur.

Jay has continued to build Homely Retreats for the Tasmanian community throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. She aims to expand the service nationally while also calling on the government to offer stronger mental health and family counselling support systems for those impacted by cancer.

Paul Hosking

Founder of HOPE at St Paul's Kitchen

A much-loved identity in Tasmania's Devonport, 53 year old Paul Hosking has made a huge impact on thousands of lives since founding the not-for-profit venue, HOPE at St Paul's Kitchen.

Established in 2014, the kitchen is not government funded but runs purely on the generosity of locals. Paul cooks hundreds of meals every week for those who drop by, and he works with schools, community groups, and people who are less fortunate across Devonport.

He's continued to play an active role in the venue, even after a tongue cancer diagnosis in 2019 required surgery to remove five centimetres of his tongue and some lymph nodes. In his absence, Paul shaved off his trademark beard to fundraise \$4,000 to ease the financial burden on the kitchen and keep it afloat.

Paul is regarded in the community as 'one-of-a-kind' – someone who goes above and beyond in the name of helping others, regardless of their place in life. Devonport would be a very different place without him.

Tani Langoulant

Founder of Free2b Girls

Inspired by her lived experience of running a group for teenage girls in the small Tasmanian coastal town of St Helens, Tani Langoulant established Free2b Girls. It's a youth engagement program for females aged between 10 and 16. It provides a safe and respectful space where they can hang out and express their naturally creative selves, through music, dance, crafts and cooking.

The Free2b Girls program helps break down intergenerational and attitudinal barriers. It provides a platform where the interests and motivations of girls are valued as important catalysts for change. Since its founding in 2017, when a couple of girls came along to the program's first week, Free2b Girls now attracts up to 20 participants each week.

Tani's approach to youth engagement is informed by her background as a counsellor and social ecologist. This is blended with research in the areas of youth engagement, neuroscience, psychology, educational philosophy, youth policy, mental health strategies, evolutionary biology, and sustainable development.

Kimberley Smith APM

Community volunteer with the Rotary Club of Sullivans Cove

When Kimberley (Kim) Smith APM retired as a police officer in 2010, he joined the Rotary Club of Sullivans Cove. His achievements as a member and volunteer have been truly legendary.

Kim oversaw the formation and management of Reclink, which organises sporting activities for street youth becoming clean, as well as the Young Women's program, mentoring teenage girls who were survivors of abuse and neglect.

Additionally, Kim took on the role of L1 Learner's Licence Road Rules tutor for the West Moonah Community House. With the challenge of teaching refugees with a wide variance in English skills, Kim's solution was to develop Road Maps, using toy cars, as well as initiating videos to demonstrate the road rules in action. His idea was such a huge success, the program began receiving government grants, with 25 videos produced in five languages. Over 800 people have passed through the scheme.

A good and decent man, 67 year old Kim has improved many lives in his years of dedicated service.