Northern Territory

DARWIN CONVENTION CENTRE

31 October 2022

2023

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF MINISTER

What makes a great Territorian?

You do.

We live in a special part of Australia and a special part of the world.

We are on ancient Aboriginal land. From the multicultural melting pot of the Top End, to our beautiful red centre, to our huge cattle stations, our wild rivers, our ranges and our gorges, we're lucky to call the Territory home.

Wherever we live in Australia, we've got to look out for each other. And we've got to care for this special country that sustains us.

That's what the Australian of the Year Awards are all about.

Recognising those people who go that little bit further — sometimes, quite a lot further — to help out others and to make the Territory a better place.

It's about those people who are ready to lend a hand to others who need it. It's about recognising those people who care about more than themselves.

In the four categories of Northern Territory Young Australian of the Year, Senior Australian of the Year, Local Hero, and Australian of the Year - this year's finalists are an excellent representation of both our geographical and demographical greatness.

I look forward to meeting those who will carry the flag for us across 2023.

I know you will do us proud.

Natasha



Natasha Fyles
Northern Territory Chief Minister



2023

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The Northern Territory Australian of the Year Awards celebrate the efforts of an incredible group of Territorians who are making a difference in our community every day and this year is no exception.

Tonight, we celebrate the achievements of 16 of our most remarkable Territorians, people who inspire us and go above and beyond to make the Northern Territory a better place to live.

From the Tiwi Islands to Alice Springs, we will hear stories of courage, compassion, generosity and selflessness.

It is an honour to celebrate with you this evening. Congratulations and good luck to all of our nominees.

Richie Fejo

Dr Richard Fejo
Chair
Australia Day Council
Northern Territory



2023



Chair, Northern Land Council

Raised as a proud Mayili man, Samuel Bush-Blanasi has worked for decades at local and national levels to empower Indigenous Australians.

As Chair and Deputy Chair of the Northern Land Council, he has been instrumental in securing sea country rights in Arnhem Land for traditional owners, and the incorporation in 2022 of the Aboriginal Sea Company (ASC).

The ASC is the first of its kind and will enable traditional owners to oversee commercial fishing, aquaculture and other fishing-related activities along the Arnhem Land coastline. It will provide employment and enable Aboriginal people to manage profitable and sustainable fishing.

Samuel has also supported native title claims, recently overseeing the historic hand-back of the remaining half of Kakadu National Park to 14 clan estate groups.

Nationally, he's pushed for reform of the Australian Constitution, joining forces with Indigenous leaders to host dialogue and develop the historic Uluru Statement from the Heart.



Founder, Kings Narrative counselling and coaching

Proud Arrernte man Tyson Carmody launched Kings Narrative in December 2021 after feeling frustrated at the lack of support services available for Indigenous men in the Northern Territory.

Kings Narrative is an Aboriginal-owned and operated social enterprise that delivers culturally appropriate counselling and coaching.

Tyson aims to change the conversation surrounding Aboriginal men and provide much-needed services through the program. He wants to better connect Aboriginal men to their roots by taking men out on country, making bush medicines and providing cultural immersions.

Tyson spent more than a decade in lead roles in the community and education departments before establishing Kings Narrative. He worked with and mentored Aboriginal youth, supporting them to engage with culture, education, health and counselling services.

His experience in these positions has given him good insight into the systems that disadvantage Aboriginal men.

He is also committed to working with non-Indigenous people to enable courageous conversations about reconciliation.



Suicide prevention ambassador

Matthew Hull saw first-hand growing up in a mining family the lack of understanding and empathy for people working in construction, mining and fly-in fly-out jobs.

He witnessed mental health issues that impacted families and people who lost mates to suicide.

So, he made it his life-long mission to help. MATES In Construction is a peer reviewed, industry-backed charity working on reducing suicide rates. The evidence-based community intervention program was featured in a World Health Organization global resource as an example of best practice.

Matthew is contacted by men and women from far and wide seeking help and sometimes immediate intervention. He supports those with acute suicidality and other life situations, and where needed, connects workers and their families to relevant services for ongoing support.

Matthew's dedication has seen MATES in Construction grow into many work sites in the Northern Territory and into Queensland, with multiple lives saved.



Founder, Deadly Hair Dude

Gary Strachan was a successful businessman with hairdressing salons across Darwin when he switched gears to give back to the community.

He studied law, worked with the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission, and realised his passion was to help young people break the cycle of offending.

Gary launched Deadly Hair Dude in 2020, a not-for-profit Indigenous and special needs training program for Aboriginal youth in remote communities.

The program centres on providing training in remote communities in which young people feel supported, leading to greater success.

Gary has personally put $100,000-plus into the training program and set up salons in remote communities – giving trainees a pathway to employment post-training.

He recently began working with the Federal and NT governments to develop a horticultural program in remote Indigenous communities to improve food security and quality.

He's also exploring aquaculture training opportunities and developing mud-crab farming enterprises in remote communities.



BARAYUWA MUNUNGGURR

Yolngu culture, community and country advocate

Barayuwa Mununggurr is a highly respected Djapu elder who advocates consistently for the rights of Yolngu people to live on their traditional homelands and stay connected to country.

Barayuwa fought against Northern Territory and Federal Government plans to close remote communities in 2007.

He is a committed health advocate and led the way in encouraging First Nations people to be vaccinated against COVID-19. Barayuwa warned that COVID would spread like 'bushfire' in remote communities and lobbied for internal travel restrictions to be maintained.

After decades of campaigning, he has successfully secured the aged care facility in north-eastern Arnhem Land so that residents won't need to be relocated to Darwin. The facility will be built in Nhulunbuy.

He was awarded Senior Citizen of the Year in 2022 by the Northern Territory Government. His greatest passion is protecting the Yolngu way of life, preserving culture, history and the environment, while also improving the community's living standard.



GEORGIA OPDENBROUW

Domestic violence services advocate and volunteer

Retiree Georgia Opdenbrouw is upfront and vocal in her advocacy for more funding and support for domestic violence services.

Georgia, who was born and raised in Darwin, has volunteered at the Darwin Aboriginal and Islander Women's Shelter (DAIWS) for many years. The shelter provides culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who are homeless or escaping family violence. Volunteers and staff provide support, referral, outreach and crisis accommodation.

Georgia is currently DAIWS treasurer and the driving force behind the Sisterhood Group, a smaller volunteer group within DAIWS. This group brings together senior Aboriginal women from across Darwin to coordinate volunteer activities for the shelter and acts as a support network that enables women to maintain healthy connections to their communities.

The Sisterhood also organises and hosts events to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women learn more about critical issues such as cardiac health, physiotherapy and mental health.



BERNARD TIPILOURA

Suicide prevention campaigner

Tiwi Island elder Bernard Tipiloura is a suicide prevention campaigner whose efforts over 20 years have led to a dramatic drop in suicide rates.

The Tiwi Islands had one of the highest suicide rates in the world in 2006, reflecting the impacts of colonisation and deepening problems with 'gambling, gunja and grog'.

Bernard began his work to strengthen cultural identity and connection to country.

He and wife Lynette Johnson visited schools each week to encourage young people to be proud of who they were and draw strength from their homeland.

He was a key contributor to the Healing Foundation's *Stories from Community* report that analysed the fall in suicide rates in the Tiwi Islands and at Yarrabah in Queensland as a result of community-led programs.

Bernard donated a kidney when he was 60, volunteered and worked at the Red Cross until he was 80 and remains an avid anti-smoking campaigner.



LESLEY WOOLF

Nurse, health administrator and co-founder, Run With Dad

Lesley Woolf is a nurse, midwife and administrator who has spent the past three decades working to improve the health of Indigenous peoples in Australia and Papua New Guinea.

Advancing and transitioning health services to Aboriginal Community Control Organisations has been a major achievement over the years.

Lesley is consistently focused on upskilling, building capacity and ensuring communities receive equitable healthcare. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, she led a campaign to protect Indigenous peoples. 65 per cent of the eligible population was vaccinated in four days.

In 2014, Lesley co-founded Run With Dad, a community event to lift awareness of prostate cancer – the most commonly diagnosed cancer in men – and raise money for the prevention of the disease.

Lesley's contributions have helped progress health practices across the Northern Territory. She's currently Manager of Health and Community Services at the Malabam Health Board in Maningrida.



MEREDITH BATEY

Podiatrist

Meredith Batey is the first podiatrist employed by Danila Dilba Health Service in Darwin. She provides an essential service to more than 700 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients. Outside of Alice Springs, no other Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service employs a podiatrist, relying on visiting services.

First Nations Australians are disproportionately at risk of health issues, including diabetes-related foot complications.

Meredith's patients say they feel heard. She has been able to increase access to her service by working out of several established clinics in the Greater Darwin Region, meaning patients can get the care they need early, without presenting to a hospital.

She has more than tripled the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients receiving podiatric care within the greater Darwin region; assisted with reducing the number of diabetic-related foot complications; and made her patients feel more comfortable within a culturally safe service.



ISABELLE CRAVEN

Student and creator

Isabelle Craven draws on her background as a young person of mixed heritage to create art that resonates with her community.

The Darwin local is the winner of the Road Safety Awareness Art Competition, as well as People's Choice Winner for the Exit Art exhibition by Year 12 students at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory.

Isabelle's art speaks for those whose voices are not often heard.

She was named an ambassador for 2022 NT Youth Week, an annual event at which young Territorians can express ideas, raise concerns and enjoy drug- and alcohol-free events. As MC, she shared her own personal experience of abuse.

Isabelle is also a member of the City of Palmerston's Youth Media Team and is involved in the LAUNCHmedia training program through the City of Darwin.



MYRA FORDHAM

Leadership and confidence coach, public speaker and author

It takes great courage to leave a violent partner. It takes even more courage to channel that experience to help others in similar situations.

In 2016, Myra Fordham suffered a severe brain injury resulting from domestic abuse by her boyfriend at the time. She underwent surgery and was placed in an induced coma for 11 days.

Myra had to learn to walk and talk again and overcome PTSD, anxiety and depression. The cognitive impairment and pain linked to her injury made it difficult for her to find employment.

Myra, a proud Malijin Gurindji woman, is now a public speaker, an internationally best-selling author and founder of Myra Fordham Coaching. She supports female entrepreneurs to conquer self-doubt and unleash the leader within by healing the past.

Myra's journey is a true testimony of power, endurance and healing, and her footprint is expanding globally.



JAHDAI VIGONA

First Nations community leader

Jahdai Vigona knows an individual can make a change much bigger than themselves. A proud Tiwi Islands man, he is passionate about improving the lives of Indigenous people.

He believes Aboriginal people are best placed to deliver better health outcomes to Aboriginal communities as they understand the services that are needed. He's at the forefront of delivering health messages and mental health programs that educate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students on how to seek help.

Jahdai has been a presenter at government forums, research summits and community events and is well sought-after for his public speaking. He encourages Indigenous people to use their voice, and for those voices to be heard.

Currently chair of the 2022 NT Youth Round Table, Jahdai has been recognised with several awards including the 2021 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year and 2022 NT Young Achiever of the Year Award.



NICOLE BROWN

Indigenous engagement consultant and social activist

Proud Larrakia woman Nicole Brown is a social activist whose primary aim is to advance Australia's First Nations peoples. This she does from her head and her heart.

Her diverse activities include investing in young leaders; facilitating safe spaces for people to come together; initiating purpose-led events; and speaking across the nation and the globe.

As a strong single mum, she has a particular desire to support marginalised groups such as Indigenous girls and the wider Indigenous community. Her passionate advocacy and positive energy have been recognised through multiple awards including the 2022 City of Darwin Citizen of the Year and 2022 Darwin Community NAIDOC Volunteer of the Year.

The thread connecting Nicole's initiatives is pride in her heritage and her desire to see her fellow first Australians thrive and prosper. By championing First Nations people and culture at every opportunity, Nicole is changing the narrative – and, ultimately, changing the future.



ISLA HOOPER

Student and artist

Isla Hooper is a passionate member and advocate for the LGBTIQ+ community and has been working with fellow Northern Territory Youth Round Table members (who represent the geographic, cultural and ethnic diversity of the Territory) to advocate for increased accessibility to the arts.

As part of their studies at Centralian Senior College in 2021, Isla organised a week-long exhibition and workshops called the 'Love a Local Portraiture Challenge' for the Desert Festival, attracting 150 submissions and being visited by 250 people. Through the portraiture challenge, Isla aimed to reinforce community connections by displaying the love young people have for those around them.

Through Isla's work with Central Craft, they also planned and facilitated ceramics workshops for kids in Alice Springs to help build their confidence and pride in their works. They worked with Yipirinya Primary School for the first two terms of 2022 and also held workshops during school holidays.



SACHA KING

Social worker and founder, Two Two One Mental Health Charity

Darwin social worker Sacha King set up her own charity in 2019 after she noticed a lack of mental health services in the Northern Territory. The region has almost twice the amount of mental health patients per capita than the Australian average and the lowest number of services.

Two Two One delivers accredited mental health training and community workshops to close gaps in the delivery of mental health services and education.

Sacha also organises events for young people around Darwin that create safe spaces where they can relax, share stories and access services and support.

The 'GO (Girls Only) Night' brings girls together with women from different backgrounds to connect and develop life skills, while the Darwin City Launch series offers local disadvantaged youth a sporting outlet on Saturday nights. Sacha also coordinates events for the Annual Mental Health Week. Funds raised go to running Mental Health First Aid courses in schools.



SAMUEL WESTON

Former soldier; ex-prison officer, now owner of Mad Snake Cafe

Samuel Weston was at his lowest point when he packed up his life and moved to Darwin to start a cafe. He'd just finished 10 years as a prison officer in Western Australia. Before that, he'd spent six years in the army. He was drinking too much and angry all the time. His relationship with his partner, the mother of his children, was the worst it had ever been.

Wanting to work for himself and with his long service leave in hand, Samuel went to Darwin. He now runs Mad Snake Cafe, named to honour those with mental health concerns or who haven't always fitted in.

Mad Snake Cafe provides a safe, friendly place for people to connect with others in the community.

This 1980s-themed cafe has a movie room, tabletop games and serves as a venue for board-game evenings, themed competitions, and meet-ups for Defence Force veterans and other groups.

RECOGNISING NORTHERN TERRITORY'S FINEST

Since 1960, the Australian of the Year Awards have recognised people from all across the country and from all fields of endeavour. This is just a snapshot of the recipients from the Northern Territory for the past five years. The full honour roll can be viewed at australianoftheyear.org.au.

Australian of the Year

2022 Leanne Liddle - Director of the Aboriginal Justice Unit
2021 Dr Wendy Page - Global expert in Aboriginal health
2020 Dr Geoffrey Thompson - Sports physician and ex-RAAF flying doctor
2019 Michael Long - AFL champion and community leader
2018 Dr Bo Reményi - Paediatric cardiologist

Senior Australian of the Year

2022 Robyne Burridge OAM - Disability services advocate and Founder of Focus-A-Bility
2021 Dr Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr Baumann AM - Aboriginal activist, educator and artist
2020 Dr B Marika AO - In memoriam Artist, cultural activist and environmental adviser
2019 Charlie King OAM - Human rights campaigner
2018 Kathy Guthadjaka - Educator and pioneering academic

Young Australian of the Year

2022 Sizolwenkosi Fuyana - Businesswoman, podcaster and youth advocate
2021 Stuart McGrath - Aboriginal health practitioner
2019 Danzal Baker - Rapper and dancer
2018 Kevin Kadirgamar - Educator and pioneering academic

Australia's Local Hero

2022 Rebecca Forrest - Event organiser and fundraiser
2021 Sergeant Erica Gibson - Police officer and safer communities advocate
2020 Shirleen Campbell - Family and domestic violence advocate
2019 Kate & Tick Everett - Advocates against bullying
2018 Bettina Danganbarr - Anti-domestic violence campaigner

* Names and post nominals of recipients in the Honour Roll are a reflection of the time they received the Award.

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

Chevron the human energy company

Australia Post

Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care

Australian Government Department of Education

Australian Government Department of Home Affairs

ABC

The Canberra Times part of the ACM network

International Day of People with Disability

CROWNE PLAZA AN IHG HOTEL CANBERRA

Australian National University

national museum australia

MinterEllison

THE AWARDS PROCESS

1
It all starts with your nomination

2
An expert panel selects one State and Territory level recipient in each of the four award categories

3
The state and territory recipients are awarded and go through to the national judging process

4
The National Australia Day Council Board selects the national recipients

5
The four national recipients are awarded on Australia Day eve in Canberra

NOMINATE NOW FOR 2024

Want more information?

Visit the Australian of the Year Awards website australianoftheyear.org.au where you'll find latest news and profiles of Australian of the Year Awards nominees, recipients and alumni.

For more information on Australia Day, the Story of Australia campaign and NADC visit australiaday.org.au

Australia's Local Hero award acknowledges people of any age making a difference in their local community.

In 2023, we'll celebrate 20 years of Australia's Local Hero award and pay special tribute to those humble people who inspire us with their selfless actions.

Thanks to the Department of Home Affairs, official partner of the award since its inception in 2003.

Celebrating 20 years Australia's Local Hero

THE AWARDS TROPHIES

The Australian National University (ANU) is committed to better outcomes for our community, the environment, our nation and the world. As the national university, we feel immensely privileged to be the exclusive cultural partner of the 2023 Australian of the Year Awards, recognising the outstanding service to the community that many Australians make.

The trophies for the 2023 Australian of the Year Awards are the stunning result of a collaborative effort by staff and students of the Glass Workshop in the ANU School of Art & Design.

The geometric nature of the design aims to represent the multiple facets that have shaped Australian society, embodying a nation that is confident in its leadership, contemporary in its outlook and distinguished by its diverse community. The facets also capture the points of the Southern Cross, the star of federation, and are rendered in a brilliant blue symbolising the Australian sky.

Each award has been created through a process of cast glass, and meticulously ground and polished by hand. The awards have been a wonderful project for students to apply their creative and technical skills to complete a professional commission.

ANU School of Music students have also contributed theme music for the Australian of the Year Awards, which will be used throughout the state and territory announcements.




2023