

# New South Wales

LUNA PARK SYDNEY

2 November 2022

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# MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER

Once again this year, Australians have faced some major challenges, particularly here in NSW. But once again our people have responded with courage, kindness, resilience and determination, and with an unshakeable belief that, together, we can build a better future.

These are the traits that in many ways define our state and our nation, and that is why we celebrate them in the Australian of the Year Awards.


This year's finalists hail from across NSW, coming from different backgrounds and contributing in unique ways in a wide range of fields. And each finalist has been chosen because of the exemplary way in which they put Australian values into action.

Ultimately, these awards are about the spirit of service on which our nation has been built. It's the spirit of service that has inspired our finalists to see a problem, or a need, or an opportunity, and do something about it; to apply their talent and skill,

wisdom and experience, passion and creativity to make a difference to the people around them.

This is the spirit of service that has made our nation great, and in celebrating our finalists, we are emboldened to look to the future with ever greater optimism.

On behalf of the people of NSW, I offer my heartfelt congratulations and thanks to all of tonight's nominees and to the four category winners. We wish you all the best as you head to the national Australian of the Year Awards ceremony in Canberra, but above all we are grateful for your efforts and your selflessness; you have already done NSW proud.



**Dominic Perrottet MP**  
Premier of New South Wales



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# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

On behalf of the Australia Day Council of NSW, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to the 2023 NSW Australian of the Year Awards ceremony.

These Awards recognise the outstanding achievements and incredible contribution of everyday Australians across our great state. The 16 men and women that you will meet tonight have been chosen from hundreds of nominations. They are the embodiment of the traits and values that define us as Australians.

Their stories are an inspiration and shine a light on the power we all hold to have a real and positive impact. Whether it is in their local community or on a global scale, they are changing our world for the better.

I would like to congratulate all of tonight's finalists. You should be incredibly proud and thank you for sharing your driving force and achievements.

To tonight's winners, well done! I wish you all the very best of luck in the national Australian of the Year Awards in Canberra in January 2023.



**Andrew Parker**  
Chair, Australia Day Council of NSW



# 20 23



PHOTO SUPPLIED: UNSW MEDIA



**PROFESSOR MEGAN DAVIS**

**Aboriginal constitutional and human rights lawyer**

When the Uluru Statement from the Heart was first read aloud publicly in 2017, it was the voice of Professor Megan Davis that carried it across the nation.

Having worked on constitutional change for over a decade, Megan designed the First Nations dialogues that led to the Uluru Statement and continues to advocate for a constitutional First Nations Voice to Parliament.

Globally, the constitutional and human rights lawyer has served on two United Nations (UN) bodies and is one of six global experts on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Megan was named the *Australian Financial Review's* 2018 Women of Influence winner and is a co-recipient of the 2022 Sydney Peace Prize for the Uluru Statement. She's currently University of NSW Pro Vice-Chancellor Society and the Balnaves Chair in Constitutional Law.

Megan continues to invite all Australians to walk with First Nations as they seek a better future based on justice and self-determination.



**CRAIG FOSTER AM**

**Human rights and anti-racism activist, former Socceroo**

Craig Foster AM is one of Australia's most powerful voices for the disadvantaged.

The 29-times-capped Socceroo and award-winning sports broadcaster has spent the past decade campaigning for refugee rights and marginalised communities. He also promotes anti-racism, allyship and what he calls 'active multiculturalism' – communities protecting each other.

Craig was influential in helping the Afghan Women's National Football Team, Paralympians, taekwondo athletes and many other girls and women escape Afghanistan as the Taliban took hold of the country in August 2021.

Two years earlier, Craig helped secure the release of refugee footballer Hakeem al-Araibi who faced extradition to Bahrain from Thailand. More recently, he led a campaign to free refugees still trapped off and onshore in Australia.

Patron of Australia's Indigenous football teams, Craig works tirelessly for a better Australia including the 'Racism. It Stops With Me' and #RacismNotWelcome campaigns, and volunteers at the Addison Road Community Organisation and food pantry in Sydney's Inner West.



**DR BARRY KIRBY AO**

**Founder, The Hands of Rescue, obstetrics and gynaecology specialist**

Dr Barry Kirby AO was a 40-year-old carpenter working in Papua New Guinea (PNG) when he witnessed the devastating preventable death of a young woman.

He decided PNG needed more doctors than carpenters. Two degrees and 12 years later, he returned as a rural doctor.

Barry investigated over 30 maternal deaths in PNG and undertook extra study in obstetrics and gynaecology to learn how to better deal with emergencies. And so grew The Hands of Rescue, a not-for-profit working to reduce maternal mortality.

Barry's approach is holistic. His safe motherhood program trains staff; provides a flying doctor service; builds waiting houses; and encourages mothers to give birth in health centres.

To also address the poor treatment of PNG women by men, Barry produced a PNG television drama, 'It Takes A Village' which shines a light on the plight of women and maternal health and educates men on women's needs.



**PROFESSOR KELVIN KONG**

**Surgeon and advocate for Aboriginal ear health**

Professor Kelvin Kong is a proud Worimi man and the first Aboriginal fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons' (RACS).

The ear, nose and throat surgeon is dedicated to addressing and raising awareness of Indigenous ear health and the third world rates of ear disease seen in Australia, which has the worst recorded levels internationally.

Aboriginal children currently suffer ear disease rates and complications far greater than when compared with the general population, significantly affecting social and educational outcomes.

Kelvin's passion is to ensure all children have the same opportunities to hear well and achieve their potential. His dream is to reduce the disparity between health and learning outcomes for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Kelvin is part of a national approach to the betterment of ear and hearing outcomes, ensuring Indigenous health is highlighted through a broad lens and that ear health is a priority for the RACS, academia and health services.





**ASTRID HOCKING**

**Foster care advocate and anti-violence campaigner**

Astrid Hocking is so extraordinarily passionate about protecting vulnerable children that she fostered more than 90 children over 24 years, ranging from emergency stints to long-term stays.

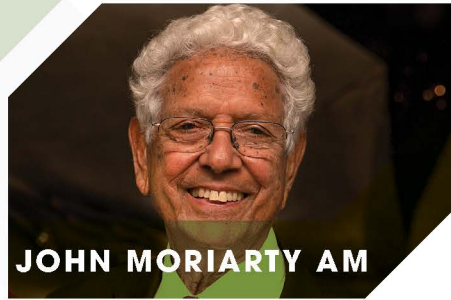
The former teacher made herself available whenever care was needed and some of her charges remain part of her extended family.

Astrid knew that foster carers needed better training and support, so she helped lobby the State government. This led to the launch of Connecting Carers NSW in 2008.

Astrid worked with the organisation for many years, providing ongoing training and support across the Hunter Valley and the state.

While she's given up her paid role, she works just as hard as a volunteer. She's Chair of Hearts and Hands Community Development, raising awareness of violence and child abuse.

The not-for-profit partners with an orphanage in the Philippines to rescue children from trafficking and empower disadvantaged communities to earn an income to become self-sustaining.



**JOHN MORIARTY AM**

**Co-founder, Moriarty Foundation**

John Moriarty AM is a Yanyuwa man who was taken from his family, Borroloola Country and culture when he was just four years old.

One of the Stolen Generation, he has dedicated his life to advancing Aboriginal rights.

John was a campaigner for citizenship in the 1967 Referendum and has been an Aboriginal voice to government for equality and engagement. He was also the first Indigenous soccer player to be selected to represent Australia.

In 1983, John and Ros Moriarty established Balarinji, Australia's foremost Indigenous design studio, famous for conceptualising Aboriginal artwork on Qantas aircraft.

In 2012, they established Moriarty Foundation. It delivers Indi Kindi – an early years health, wellbeing, education and development initiative for children under five, and John Moriarty Football – Australia's longest running and most successful Indigenous soccer initiative for two-to-18-year-olds.

Moriarty Foundation reaches more than 2,000 Indigenous children each week in 19 remote and regional communities and is impacting 13 of the 17 Closing the Gap targets.



**TERESA PLANE**

**Palliative care pioneer and advocate**

Former nurse Teresa Plane is recognised as a pioneer of modern palliative care in Australia.

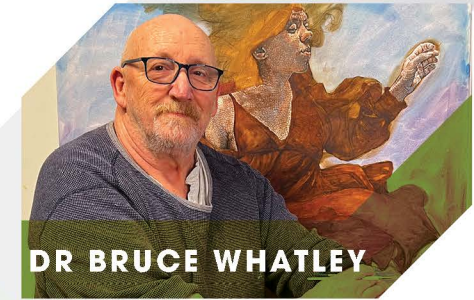
Her devotion began late one night during a drive home from hospital as she listened to a life-changing interview with psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross. As she heard her discuss the five stages of dying, Teresa realised she'd always been a death-denying nurse.

She was inspired to study palliative care methods overseas before opening a hospice and palliative care unit at Mt Carmel Hospital in western Sydney in 1978.

Teresa admitted patients on a need's basis rather than their ability to pay. She also launched a home care program, supported by a charity she'd established to advocate on behalf of the dying.

She later established Macquarie Hospice, a home care and day care centre and spoke many times at international forums, universities and national conferences.

Teresa continues advocating and volunteering as she approaches 90 years.



**DR BRUCE WHATLEY**

**Children's picture book illustrator and author**

Dr Bruce Whatley overcame a traumatic birth injury to become one of Australia's most prolific and best-known children's picture book illustrators and authors.

The tendons in Bruce's right arm were severed at birth, presenting a life-long challenge. But he went on to a career as an illustrator and art director, and later as an artist, storyteller and writer.

Bruce has written and/or illustrated more than 90 children's picture books since 1992, winning national and international awards and being published globally. His award-winning titles include *The Ugliest Dog in the World* and *Diary of a Wombat*.

He also works to inspire creativity in children, regularly visiting schools and remote communities over the past 30 years to nurture creative writing and art. In the process, he's helped build self-esteem and stimulated innovative thinking.

Bruce has completed a ground-breaking PhD, 'Left Hand Right Hand: implications of ambidextrous image making', exploring ties between art and neuroscience.





**CHANEL CONTOS**

**Founder, teachusconsent.com**

In February 2021, Chanel Contos asked on Instagram if anyone had been sexually assaulted while at school. Within 24 hours, over 200 people had replied 'yes'. She then launched an online petition to make consent education mandatory in Australian schools. It attracted 45,000 signatures. One year later, education ministers from around the country unanimously agreed to the demand.

Chanel's actions spurred a movement to end rape culture in Australia. The platform, teachusconsent.com, allows people to anonymously share their sexual assault experiences. Thousands have done so.

Teachusconsent.com has received funding to create consent education materials in collaboration with not-for-profit Our Watch.

Chanel's work has inspired international activism on exposing and ending rape culture. She now works on structural policy as Director of the Centre for Sex and Gender Equality at The Australia Institute. She won the Young People's Human Rights Medal in 2021 and a Diana Award for activism in 2022.



**LOTTIE DALZIEL**

**Founder, Banish and sustainability champion**

Lottie Dalziel didn't realise how hard it was to get accurate information about recycling and waste when she made a New Year Resolution to be kinder to the planet.

Rather than be disheartened, Lottie saw an opportunity. She founded Banish the same year as her resolution – 2018 – and made it her aim to provide Australians with reliable information and methods to reduce waste.

The Banish website and social media account is full of sustainability information, from how-to guides on composting to advice on planet-friendly food choices.

Lottie also runs BRAD – the Banish Recycling and Disposal Program. People send in hard-to-recycle items, such as blister packs, and Banish uses its partnership with TerraCycle to have them recycled in Australia.

The BRAD initiative recycled 11 tonnes of waste, or 150,000 products, from 11,000 households within its first 20 months.

Lottie delivered a TED talk in 2020 on the power of community to fight climate change.



**STEVE DRESLER**

**Founder, What Ability and the What Ability Foundation**

Steve Dresler was a 20-year-old working as a support worker on weekends in 2019 when he set up an Instagram account, What Ability, showcasing photos of awesome days out. Within two years, the organisation had over 150 support workers and more than 100 participants.

What Ability supports people living with autism, down syndrome and other disabilities to get out and have fun in the community. Support workers take participants bushwalking, swimming, to parks and restaurants to gain confidence and learn life skills.

Steve wants to share his vision for an inclusive Australia and engages current and retired athletes to get involved as support workers. He purposefully employs young people, too, so they see the disability sector as a worthwhile profession.

He also started the What Ability Foundation in late 2021 to unlock ticketed experiences for people with a disability and their families. His goal is to provide 1 million experiences across Australia by 2026.



**CHRISTOPHER MCHUGHES**

**Firefighter**

Christopher McHughes knows the local children look up to him, but he doesn't see himself as a role model. He says it's more that he'll always try a challenge and has a good work ethic.

Christopher is a proud Murriwarri Ngemba Yuwaalaraay man and in 2020 was a founding member of the first Indigenous State Mitigation crew in the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) in Brewarrina and Bourke. These crews care for kin and country affected by bushfire.

For Christopher, it's not just a job, it's a bridge to build trust between cultures. He hopes to show young people in different communities that they can be Aboriginal and in the mainstream, setting up programs to help them succeed. For example, the Girls on Fire camp showed local girls aspects of working with the RFS.

Christopher also helped deliver food during COVID-19 and assisted the Wilcannia community during lockdown.





**MONA MAHAMED**

**Founder, Community Support Services Inc**

Mona Mahamed, a mother of six and high school teacher, founded a community program that connects people, giving them a path to financial independence.

Mona saw a need in her community for the sort of support she received as she recovered from depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. She used her own money to start Community Support Services Inc (CSS) in Western Sydney in 2018.

Now more than 50 people visit the services hub every day. CSS partners with different philanthropic and government bodies to supply mental health, education, employment and practical support. Everyone is welcome.

CSS offers tutoring assistance for school kids, educational seminars, English classes and skills courses. It even supplies non-perishable food, toiletries and vouchers to those in need – crucial during the pandemic. They distributed nearly 150,000 kgs of food to 25,000 people in 2021 alone.

CSS has also furnished many houses for homeless individuals and women fleeing domestic violence relationships.



**CHRISTINE MASTELLO**

**Founder, Southlakes Incorporated and Community Hair Project**

Christine Mastello started a food bank in Lake Macquarie in 2013 with her own savings. At the time, her 15-year-old child was recovering from a stroke and her five-year-old with autism had four appointments a week. That didn't stop Christine from seeing a need in her community and meeting it.

Christine's not-for-profit, Southlakes Incorporated, now runs two walk-in food banks with three home delivery areas and supplies breakfast clubs at six schools. Southlakes hands out hundreds of hampers, pre-cooked meals and essentials every week – including clothing.

Southlakes delivered free food to 26,000 people during the first two years of COVID-19. It also donated \$1.2 million to homeless groups all around New South Wales when lockdowns meant volunteers couldn't help in person.

Christine also founded Community Hair Project, which is now nationwide. Volunteer hairdressers offer free haircuts and a toiletry kit to those in need. The program passed its 50,000th cut in 2022.



**SHIRANEE PARARAJASINGHAM**

**Pro bono Practice Executive and community champion**

Shiranee Pararajasingham's colleagues call her the soul and engine of Ashurst's pro bono legal practice, where she has worked as a Practice Executive for more than 34 years.

Her quest to help extends beyond her job. Shiranee has spent every Saturday of the school term for the past 18 years teaching English at the Sudanese Australian Integrated Learning program and is now a coordinator. She was instrumental in expanding this program to Sri Lankan Tamil refugees and creating a tutoring program for children.

On top of this, Shiranee provides cultural, emotional and practical support for new migrants, who often struggle with culture shock, trauma and financial stress.

As a member of organising committees of the Sydney Tamil Christian Fellowship and Australian Medical Aid Foundation, she's also involved with fundraising efforts through her church, professional and personal networks for various charities in the North and East of Sri Lanka, and advocates for refugee rights in her personal capacity and as a member of Grandmothers Against Detention.



**AMAR SINGH**

**Founder, Turbans 4 Australia**

Amar Singh believes helping others should not be limited by religion, language or cultural background.

Amar founded a charity after experiencing racial slurs and insults because of his Sikh turban and beard. He wanted to show people they didn't need to be afraid and began helping struggling Australians.

Every week, Turbans 4 Australia package and distribute up to 450 food and grocery hampers to people experiencing food insecurity in Western Sydney.

They also raise awareness and funds for important causes while promoting multiculturalism and religious tolerance. But the organisation is best known around Australia since its founding in 2015 for transporting emergency goods to those in need.

Turbans 4 Australia has delivered hay to farmers experiencing drought; supplies to flood victims in Lismore and bushfire-impacted people on the South Coast; food hampers to the isolated and vulnerable during COVID-19 lockdowns; and supplies to the Salvation Army in central Queensland in the devastating wake of Cyclone Marcia.

# RECOGNISING NEW SOUTH WALES' 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 New South Wales for the past five years. The full honour roll can be viewed at [australianoftheyear.org.au](http://australianoftheyear.org.au).

## Australian of the Year

- 2022** Professor Veena Sahajwalla - Founding Director of the Centre for Sustainable Materials Research and Technology at the University of New South Wales
- 2021** Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons AFSM - Ex-NSW Fire Commissioner
- 2020** Professor Munjed Al Muderis - Orthopaedic surgeon & human-rights advocate
- 2019** Kurt Fearnley AO - Paralympic gold medallist and disability activist
- 2018** Professor Michelle Simmons - Professor in quantum physics

## Senior Australian of the Year

- 2022** Abla Tohamy Kadous - President of the Islamic Women's Welfare Association
- 2021** Aunty Isabel Reid - Elder and advocate for the Stolen Generation
- 2020** Sue Lennox - Environmental educator and social enterprise founder
- 2019** Heather Lee OAM - Athlete
- 2018** Dr Catherine Hamlin AC - Pioneering surgeon

## Young Australian of the Year

- 2022** Dr Daniel Nour - Founder of Street Side Medics
- 2021** Nathan Parker - Pilot Invictus Games gold medallist
- 2020** Corey Tutt - Indigenous mentor and fundraiser
- 2019** Jarrod Wheatley - Social entrepreneur
- 2018** Macinley Butson - Scientist and inventor

## Australia's Local Hero

- 2022** Shanna Whan - Founder and CEO of Sober in the Country
- 2021** Rosemary Kariuki - Advocate for migrant and refugee women
- 2020** Bernie Shakeshaft - Founder of BackTrack Youth Works Program
- 2019** Sophie Smith - Founder of Running for Premature Babies foundation
- 2018** Eddie Woo - Internationally renowned mathematics teacher

# THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS



Australian Government  
Department of Health  
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Australian Government  
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The Canberra Times  
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International Day of  
People with Disability

**CROWNE PLAZA**  
AN IHG® HOTEL  
CANBERRA



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



# 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



**4**

The National Australia Day Council Board selects the national recipients



**3**

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



**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](http://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](http://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.



# 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