

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**FRIDAY 4 NOVEMBER 2022**

## **TASMANIA 2023 AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED**

**2023 Tasmania Australian of the Year – John Kamara (Hobart)**  
**2023 Tasmania Senior Australian of the Year – Dr Frances Donaldson (Hobart)**  
**2023 Tasmania Young Australian of the Year – Meriem Daoui (Kingston)**  
**2023 Tasmania Local Hero – Keith Parker (Sheffield)**

Awards event livestreamed via a link available at [australianoftheyear.org.au](http://australianoftheyear.org.au) or on ABC iView

**Friday 4 November 2022, 3:45PM AEDT Hobart:** The 2023 Tasmania Australian of the Year Awards have been announced in the presence of Her Excellency the Honourable Barbara Baker AC, Governor of Tasmania and The Honourable Jeremy Rockliff, Premier of Tasmania at a ceremony in Hobart today.

The four Tasmania recipients will join those from the other states and territories for the national awards to be announced on 25 January 2023.

**The 2023 Tasmania Australian of the Year is John Kamara, humanitarian and co-founder, Culturally Diverse Alliance of Tasmania & African Communities Council of Tasmania.**

John Kamara escaped war-torn Sierra Leone 19 years ago and started a new life in Tasmania in 2004. Now 38, he does all he can to assist migrants, refugees and people from culturally diverse communities. His own experiences and work in child protection mean he understands the challenges new arrivals and marginalised groups face.

Sitting on multiple boards and involved in many community groups, John highlights systemic disadvantages for migrants such as racism, labour exploitation and recognition of overseas qualifications. He also assists with migrants' resumes and their search for jobs and housing.

John co-founded the Culturally Diverse Alliance of Tasmania to support education and promote social cohesion, as well as the first ever African Communities Council of Tasmania. It strives to cement relationships among African Australians and the wider community.

He and his wife, Mavis, have also since established Kamara's Heart Foundation, a charity to assist children in Sierra Leone.

**Doctor, frontline COVID-19 worker and prisoner advocate Dr Frances Donaldson is the 2023 Tasmania Senior Australian of the Year.**

Dr Frances Donaldson began her lifelong commitment to health care as a young nurse in Hobart, rising to become Director of Nursing before switching to study medicine in her 40s. She's since spent four decades working to improve health care standards in Tasmania.

Dr Frances spent 12 years navigating Tasmania's under-resourced prison health service, advocating for better health outcomes for prisoners and other disadvantaged Tasmanians.

Most recently, the 80-year-old has served at the frontline of Tasmania's COVID-19 response and has been one of the lead doctors working in the COVID@homeplus service from the beginning. Working sometimes seven days a week, she's consistently shared her knowledge as the stalwart of the team.

Before borders were reopened in December 2021 she volunteered to look after seasonal workers in hotel quarantine, requiring a significant on-call commitment.

**The 2023 Tasmania Young Australian of the Year is humanitarian and marathon runner Meriem Daoui.**

Meriem Daoui, a Tasmanian marathon runner and registered nurse, uses her love of running as a platform to do good. She ran her first marathon at age 16, raising over \$5,000 for displaced Syrians affected by their country's civil war.

Born in Morocco, Meriem relocated to Tasmania at age 10 where she experienced racism and was bullied for wearing a hijab. Anxiety, depression and eating disorders plagued her teenage years, but the support she received during her adversities inspired her to give back to the community.

Now 23, Meriem has also used marathons to raise awareness and funds for childhood cancer research. She most recently conquered the Everest challenge, running the Point-to-Pinnacle course – also known as the world's hardest half-marathon – every day for one week. The challenge raised over \$12,000.

In 2021, Meriem was awarded the Australian Peter Norman Humanitarian award for her community and philanthropic efforts.

**Volunteer ambulance officer and ammunition technical officer Keith Parker is the 2023 Tasmania Local Hero.** *(note: Keith was unable to attend the awards event in Hobart)*

Keith Parker has specialised in explosive ordnance throughout his Army career, serving overseas and assisting the United Nations (UN) on several occasions.

He helped the UN modernise and improve its explosives storage when he managed an international explosives safety trial at Woomera, South Australia.

Keith also acted as an Australian representative to help negotiate weapons surrender during a period of conflict in the Solomon Islands.

Outside of his army role, since 2011 Keith has contributed more than 1,500 hours a year as a Volunteer Ambulance Officer (VAO) for Ambulance Tasmania in Sheffield. He has often been a first responder to the scene of medical emergencies in rural Tasmania and works alongside paramedics to provide patient care.

Keith, 66, has progressed to VAO-4 (the highest rank) and now assists in the training of new recruits, covers vacant night shifts and operates solo as a first responder if no paramedics are available.

National Australia Day Council CEO Karlie Brand congratulated the award recipients from Tasmania.

“The Tasmanian recipients are wonderful humanitarians, working to help others and make a positive change in community,” said Ms Brand.

“We look forward to welcoming them to Canberra for the national Australian of the Year Awards to be announced on 25 January 2023.”

For more information on the Australian of the Year Awards, visit [australianoftheyear.org.au](http://australianoftheyear.org.au).

**ENDS.**

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**EMBARGO NOTE:** Media attending the awards event may of course report award recipients as they are announced on stage OR follow @AustralianoftheYear on Facebook for the awards live streaming - once each award is announced, it can be reported.

**PHOTOS:** From the awards announcement event can be downloaded as available after approx. 4:30pm Hobart time from this link (credit NADC/Salty Dingo):  
[221104 NADC TAS Media Distribution photos \(high res\)](#)

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