Australian of the Year Awards
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MEDIA RELEASE
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FROM CULTURALLY CONSCIOUS DIABETES CARE TO EMERGENCY RESPONSE BRAVERY - MEET THE 2027 AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARD RECIPIENTS FOR THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

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Five extraordinary people have been named the 2027 Australian of the Year Award recipients for the Northern Territory at a ceremony in Darwin this evening.

2027 Australian of the Year for the Northern Territory – Helen Lamech (Alice Springs)
2027 Senior Australian of the Year for the Northern Territory – Patricia King (Casuarina)
2027 Young Australian of the Year for the Northern Territory – Taitt Green (Katherine)
2027 Local Hero for the Northern Territory – Majors Niall and Michelle Gibson (Katherine)

From breaking the stigma around diabetes to providing voluntary pastoral care and frontline emergency services, the recipients of the 2027 Australian of the Year Awards for the Northern Territory are helping people in remote and regional areas.

The 2027 Australian of the Year for the Northern Territory is diabetes educator, Helen Lamech.

Helen Lamech, 60, is a nurse whose education leadership has transformed diabetes care in Central Australia.

Dedicating more than 30 years to nursing in the Northern Territory and the last decade to diabetes education, Helen has improved health outcomes for over 2000 people facing significant cultural and geographical barriers.

Helen established the region's first nurse-led type 1 diabetes clinic and has mentored more than 30 diabetes educators and over 300 health professionals. Her trauma-informed, culturally-responsive approach has reduced hospital admissions, improved safety and equipped families to manage diabetes with confidence.

Working alongside Aboriginal health workers, elders and schools, Helen co-designs programs that honour culture, build trust and create community-led pathways to better diabetes management. Helen delivers care flexibly in clinics, homes, schools and community spaces, to ensure people feel safe, respected and in control of their health.

Through proactive education and early intervention, Helen has dramatically enhanced the safety and wellbeing of thousands across the Territory.

The 2027 Senior Australian of the Year for the Northern Territory is volunteer chaplain, Patricia King.

Patricia (Pat) King, 74, has spent her life serving others, offering an unwavering commitment to helping people in their most vulnerable moments.

Pat was born in India to missionary parents who had survived a prisoner-of-war camp, instilling in her deep values of care, resilience and service. Moving to Darwin to study nursing, Pat found herself on the frontline of one of the Territory's darkest nights.

As a St John Ambulance volunteer on Christmas Eve 1974, Pat worked through Cyclone Tracy – taking emergency calls, treating the injured, triaging survivors, and helping families stay together during mass

evacuations. Pat remained on duty for three days, providing care amid the devastation that left 66 people dead and thousands displaced.

Today, Pat serves as a volunteer chaplain, offering confidential support to police officers. She listens without judgement, encourages storytelling and uses her lived experience to guide others through their most difficult moments

The 2027 Young Australian of the Year for the Northern Territory is volunteer first responder, Taitt Green.

Taitt Green, 18, is a courageous young Territorian who demonstrates remarkable courage during major emergencies. Joining St John Ambulance cadets when he was eight years old, Taitt became the youngest cadet in the Territory to compete individually in the St John NT Youth Competition, where he placed in the top three.

In 2020, Taitt joined the Air Force Cadets, where he mentored and trained younger cadets and led parades. In 2024, Taitt added the NT Fire and Rescue Service and, in 2025, the NT Emergency Services to his volunteer efforts.

When a significant hay shed fire threatened large gas tanks in Katherine in late 2025, Taitt put his life on the line to help extinguish the blaze. Then, in the devastating Katherine floods of 2026, Taitt waded chest-deep through floodwaters to help a woman to safety.

When later deployed to Arnhem Land to help clean up after Tropical Cyclone Neville, Taitt missed his 18th birthday celebrations. His initiative, sacrifice and compassion embody the highest standards of community service.

The 2027 Local Hero recipients for the Northern Territory are rural and remote chaplains, Majors Niall and Michelle Gibson

Majors Niall and Michelle Gibson serve as Salvation Army Flying Padre – rural and remote chaplains supporting some of Australia's most isolated communities across the Northern Territory and Western Australia.

Based in Katherine, Niall and Michelle can spend up to 100 hours in the air each year visiting around 80 remote cattle stations, schools, police stations, health centres and outback towns where internet and phone reception can be patchy.

Known for responding immediately after tragic station accidents, 63-year-old Niall and 61-year-old Michelle offer a listening ear, pastoral care and practical support to people who rarely receive visitors. They also conduct funerals, weddings and bush christenings, along with crisis support during events such as the Katherine floods.

Whether landing on tiny homestead strips or driving long distances, Niall and Michelle provide friendship, counselling and hope – quiet achievers bringing a listening ear and comfort to isolated people across Australia's vast Top End.

National Australia Day Council CEO Carrie Leeson congratulated the Northern Territory award recipients.

"This amazing group of recipients are providing essential services and support to communities across the Northern Territory," said Carrie.

"Helen is providing essential diabetes education and support, while Patricia has selflessly supported the community through times of crisis. Taitt is a young person providing outstanding voluntary emergency service, and Niall and Michelle are providing a lifeline of support and friendship to people in remote areas."

The Northern Territory award recipients will join those from all other states and territories for the national awards, to be announced on the evening of 25 January 2027 in Canberra.

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

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PHOTOS: From the awards announcement event can be downloaded from this link: NT Media Distribution photos - High res (credit NADC/Salty Dingo).

LIVESTREAM VISION: The Northern Territory awards announcement event livestream is available via australianoftheyear.org.au. The vision is YouTube based and is accessible for media use.