

Australian
of the Year
➤ Awards

Reflect. Respect. Celebrate

**Western
Australia**

GOVERNMENT HOUSE

30 October 2026

**20
27**

MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR

As Joint Patrons of Auspire – Australia Day Council WA, we are delighted to welcome you to the 2027 Australian of the Year Awards for Western Australia.

This evening, we gather to honour and celebrate exceptional Western Australians whose dedication, leadership, and service have made a profound difference to the lives of others and strengthened our communities.

These awards reflect the values that unite us: compassion, generosity, innovation, and a commitment to creating positive change. They recognise individuals who lead by example and inspire us through their contribution to the greater good. Through their vision, determination, and service, they have enriched our state and demonstrated the powerful impact one person can have.

On behalf of all Western Australians, we warmly congratulate this year's finalists. Thank you for your outstanding contributions, for the inspiration you provide, and for helping to build a stronger, more connected, and brighter future for our state.



**His Excellency the Honourable
Chris Dawson AC APM**
Governor of Western Australia



Mrs Darrilyn Dawson



2027

MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER

On behalf of the Government of Western Australia, I am honoured to welcome you to the Western Australian ceremony for the 2027 Australian of the Year Awards.

The Western Australians we celebrate this evening demonstrate passion, determination and commitment. Their achievements remind us that positive change begins with individuals who are willing to step forward, take action, and make a difference.

These nominees come from diverse backgrounds and fields of endeavour, yet they share a common purpose: a desire to improve the lives of others and strengthen the communities they serve. Through their leadership, innovation and generosity, they represent the very best of the Western Australian spirit.

I extend my sincere congratulations to all nominees. Your contributions have enriched our state, and your stories remind us of what can be accomplished through vision, perseverance and service.



Honourable Roger Cook MLA
Premier of Western Australia



2027

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Tonight, we come together to celebrate extraordinary individuals whose contributions have made a meaningful and lasting impact on our communities. These awards recognise the dedication, courage, and commitment of Australians who go above and beyond to make a difference. Each nominee represents the very best of our state through their leadership, innovation, generosity, and service to others.

To all nominees, congratulations. Being recognised in the Australian of the Year Awards is a significant achievement and a reflection of the positive change you create through your efforts. Your commitment inspires us all, and we thank you for the difference you make every day.

Thank you to our valued sponsors, partners, and selection panel members. Your support and dedication help shine a spotlight on the outstanding individuals being honoured this evening.

Enjoy the evening as we recognise the remarkable people whose contributions make Western Australia and our nation such an exceptional place.

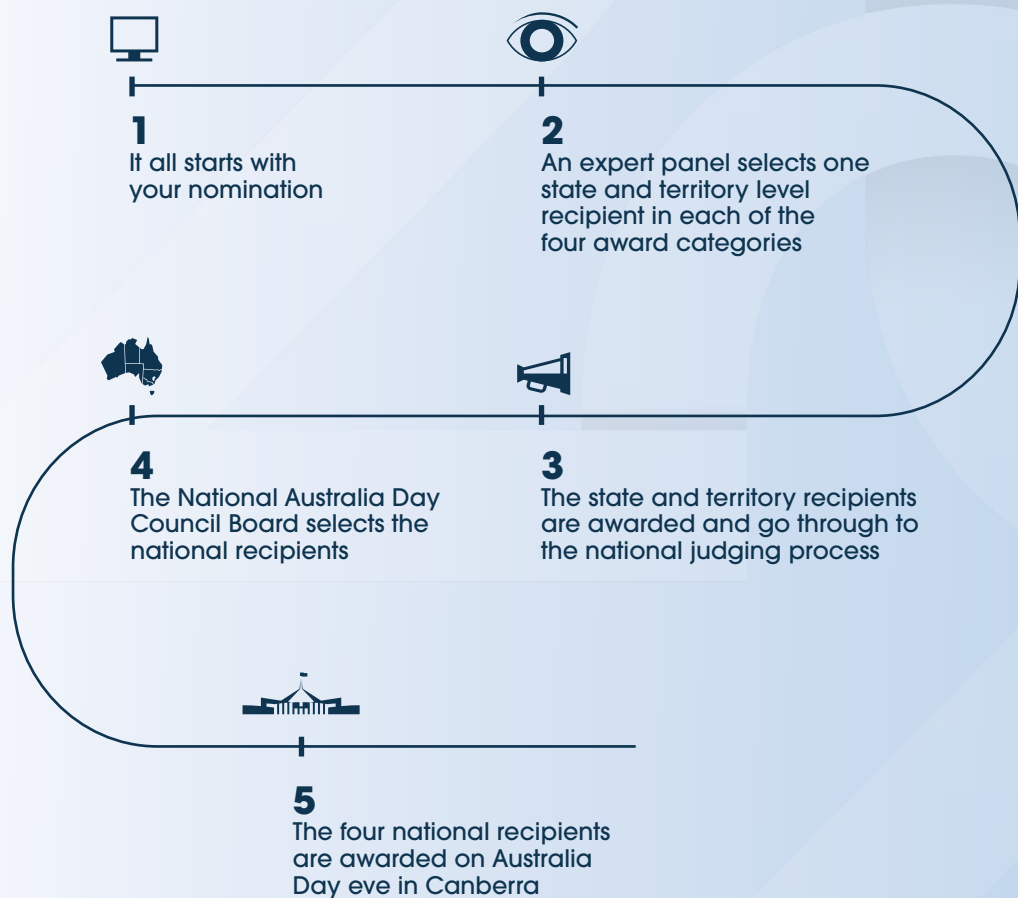


Bradley Woods AM
Chair
Auspire – Australia Day Council WA



20
27

THE AWARDS PROCESS



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 the NADC, visit australiaday.org.au.



If our nominee stories bring anything up for you or you're concerned someone you know is at risk, please reach out to:
 Lifeline on 13 11 14
 Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636 or
 13YARN, a crisis line for Indigenous Australians

ESTHER OH

Telehealth innovator



After her son lost his vision due to delayed treatment during COVID-19 lockdown and skills shortages, Esther Oh founded Agili8 to teleport the 'virtual' eyes and hands of multi-disciplinary medical experts – using smart glasses and smartphones – to remote frontline areas.

Despite battling an aggressive cancer, Esther pioneered her telehealth solution with remote Aboriginal communities to deliver a culturally safe model of care. In one instance, a remote patient in Port Hedland was saved from deadly infection and potential amputation in just 15 minutes using Agili8's solution.

Agili8's breakthroughs transcend time, distance, costs, manpower, socio-cultural and language barriers to close the gap for Aboriginal and remote communities. Since 2021, Esther has won multiple global awards for leadership, innovation and impact, including receiving more than \$500,000 as a Google AI Scale Tier company.

Esther's achievements highlight how determination and innovation can transform personal adversity into new technologies that can improve the lives of others in Australia and around the world.

KAV TEMPERLEY

Musician and mentor



Kav Temperley's songs have shaped Australian music for almost three decades. He co-founded Eskimo Joe in Fremantle in 1997, and the band has won eight ARIA Awards, two APRA Awards and three International Songwriting Competition Awards, with 11 songs voted into Triple J's Hottest 100. The 2006 hit, *Black Fingernails*, *Red Wine* spent 62 weeks in the ARIA Top 50.

Kav has mentored thousands of emerging musicians through his Fremantle studio and songwriting camps, judged the Vanda and Young Global Songwriting Competition, and co-created ArtsiX, a collaborative project bringing together musicians and visual artists, with more than 80 WA creatives staging exhibitions seen by tens of thousands. He has also advocated for songwriters' rights before WA Parliament.

Kav has also supported causes including White Ribbon, Close the Gap and bushfire relief. His contribution over three decades has put Western Australia's music scene on the map, lighting the way for the next generation of performers.

PROFESSOR MICHAEL WEAR

Indigenous marine environmentalist



Professor Michael Wear is a Malgana man and custodian of the marine environment in the UNESCO World Heritage site at Shark Bay (Gathaagudu) in Western Australia.

Over the past three decades of caring for Country, Michael has been instrumental in establishing large-scale marine restoration projects to protect the region's diverse ecosystems. He founded Tidal Moon, an Indigenous-owned and led sea cucumber harvesting enterprise that combines sustainable resource management with research into the health benefits of sea cucumbers.

Drawing on Indigenous knowledge and traditional practices, Tidal Moon together with Murdoch University, is leading a long-term restoration project of the seagrass reserves that play a vital role in sustaining marine biodiversity in Shark Bay. The project also creates much-needed training and employment opportunities for the local community.

Michael's commitment to sustainable environmental practices, combining local Indigenous knowledge with scientific research, is delivering long-lasting benefits to the whole Shark Bay region.

DR EMILY ZHEN

Organ transplant pioneer



Dr Emily Zhen is developing an innovative preservation technology that aims to give transplant recipients the best chance of a successful outcome.

After witnessing a transplant patient die following complications associated with a poorly preserved donor organ, Emily recognised there had to be better ways of transporting organs to maximise their chance of successful transplantation. She founded Materia Health to develop new methods of preserving and protecting donor organs and tissues during transportation.

The company is developing the MateriaPOD, a portable, reusable, precision preservation platform designed to actively control temperature and protect organs, tissues, blood and cells during transport. The MateriaPOD has attracted support from clinicians and collaborators globally and has potential applications beyond transplantation, including emergency and military medicine for blood logistics, and veterinary science for artificial insemination.

Emily's unwavering focus on saving lives is driving genuine change in patient care, with the goal of improving health outcomes for people around the world.

TINA BALDWIN Long-serving Lifeline volunteer



Tina Baldwin is the longest serving volunteer with Lifeline WA, with more than 40 years of experience providing vital crisis support to people in need.

Tina and her husband, Daniel, started out as Lifeline's first volunteer crisis supporters in Western Australia in the mid-1980s. Since then, she has answered more than 33,000 calls from people in distress needing support. In each case, Tina responds with compassion, openness and a willingness to listen.

Today, Tina applies her experience to mentoring new crisis supporters, helping equip them with the skills and empathy needed to support others. Beyond Lifeline, she volunteers with her local parish church and works as a family liaison officer with Ronald McDonald House.

Tina exemplifies the spirit of volunteering, selflessly dedicating her time to making a lasting difference to thousands of lives.

MICHELLE BLAKELEY Community housing champion



Michelle Blakeley brings together community groups, the private sector and government agencies to tackle the challenges of long-term homelessness in Western Australia.

An architect by profession, Michelle founded My Home to address homelessness in the state. My Home is a philanthropic housing developer delivering projects on unused sites, providing affordable, secure accommodation for people who are experiencing homelessness, particularly single parents and young mothers with newborns as well as older women.

The My Home model works by identifying prospective sites, typically government or church-owned land, and using a combination of public and private funding to build low-cost housing. The developments use prefabricated materials that can be quickly and easily installed on site. Local community groups also support the residents when they move in, so they feel at home straight away.

Michelle's championing of My Home has shown how housing inequality can be addressed project by project, bringing hope and dignity to many vulnerable people in need of a secure place to live.

SHEENA EDWARDS Digital technology mentor



Sheena Edwards is a passionate advocate for digital inclusion and the belief that no one should be left behind in an increasingly digital world.

As founder and leader of Switched On Seniors, Sheena has spent more than a decade helping older people gain confidence and practical skills to navigate smartphones, tablets and everyday digital life. Her approach is simple but powerful: patient, face-to-face learning, ongoing support and a safe group environment where there are no silly questions.

Under Sheena's leadership, Switched On Seniors has become more than a digital education program. It is a place where older people build friendships, overcome isolation, reconnect with their communities and regain independence in managing their lives.

Sheena's empathy, determination and commitment to lifelong learning are helping challenge the assumption that older people cannot or do not want to engage with technology – demonstrating that with the right support, confidence can grow at any age.

PROFESSOR CHARITHA PATTIARATCHI World-leading oceanographer



Professor Charitha (Chari) Pattiaratchi is recognised as a world-leading authority on oceanography, and his work has been hugely influential in expanding our understanding of how the oceans impact our lives.

Through pioneering research techniques, such as autonomous ocean gliders, Chari has made important discoveries about the behaviour of waves, currents, tides and coastal hazard events such as tsunamis. His research has practical results in improving marine safety and coastal planning as well as predicting how changing ocean conditions affect us all. His understanding of ocean currents led him to successfully predict the landfall of debris from the missing flight MH370.

Alongside his pioneering research, Chari has mentored hundreds of students and scientists through the coastal oceanography group he built at The University of Western Australia.

Like the ocean itself, the scope and depth of Chari's research is vast and sets the standard for oceanography studies across the globe.

PHEOBE HO

Mental health advocate



Pheobe Ho is using her lived experience to help people with eating disorders recover from debilitating physical and mental conditions.

Pheobe's journey of recovery from an eating disorder as a teenager inspired her to study psychology with a focus on young people and eating disorders. Now a senior clinical psychologist specialising in eating disorders at the Child and Adolescent Health Service, she treats some of Western Australia's most vulnerable young people and supports their families. Her lived experience continues to inform her clinical work and research, including exploring the role it can play as a part of a patient's recovery process.

Alongside her clinical work, Pheobe is a tireless advocate, mentor, public speaker and national policy adviser on a range of eating disorder and broader mental health topics.

Through her work and by sharing the insights of her own story, Pheobe's openness and generosity is an example of selfless dedication to helping others in need.

TARA JEISMAN

Founder of Sea Gals community group



What started out as a solo sunrise dip in the ocean for Tara Jeisman has grown into a nationwide movement – Sea Gals – for tens of thousands of women to meet up and go for an ocean dip.

Tara posted online about her solitary swim and was struck by the number of comments from women who wished they could do the same. In response, Tara invited all women to go for a sunrise dip; five women attended that first meet-up and Sea Gals was born.

Today, Sea Gals has 30,000 followers and regularly attracts hundreds of women at morning dips around Western Australia and on the east coast. The aim is to create a safe space where women can feel comfortable, connected and supported. The group also hosts wellness events, raises money for charity and promotes mental health awareness.

Tara has taken the simple pleasure of going for a dawn dip and created a whole community of fellow swimmers finding support, promoting good mental health and inspiring confidence in each other's company.

KURT KRISPYN

Marine scientist and communicator



Kurt Krispyn is a marine scientist, researcher, published author, educator, filmmaker and presenter working to make science more accessible and meaningful to everyone. Kurt founded Paramount Importance, a science communication platform connecting researchers with the public via podcasts, documentaries, educational films, social media and live experiences.

Alongside his marine research, publications and university teaching, Kurt works with scientists, conservationists and communities to communicate challenging environmental issues in ways that build understanding, encourage informed discussion and strengthen people's connection with nature.

His podcast has reached listeners in more than 100 countries, while his broader work has brought science to millions of people worldwide.

For World Seagrass Day, Kurt created and hosted the world's first live underwater podcast off Rottnest Island, allowing students and the public to interact with scientists beneath the ocean in real time, creating an immersive experience that brought marine science directly to audiences.

JOSHUA WIGLEY

3D-manufacturing innovator



Joshua Wigley is the founder and CEO of Hyperion Systems, a Perth-based company that specialises in large format 3D printed manufacturing for industries such as defence, construction, marine and infrastructure. He is at the forefront of a manufacturing revolution that is transforming how components and finished products are made and distributed.

Joshua has devised an innovative 'factory-in-a-box' model incorporating a portable manufacturing plant that can be moved to wherever it's needed. This means vital parts can be made faster on-site as required without having to set up complex manufacturing facilities.

The 3D printing process also uses recycled plastics which makes it more sustainable and less dependent on imported materials, creating a circular manufacturing process that takes plastic waste and turns it into useful items.

Joshua's innovative thinking is helping transform the future of Australian manufacturing by developing new technologies for faster, more flexible and sustainable production.

ADAM DESMOND

Indigenous community leader



Adam Desmond founded Binar, Perth's first Indigenous basketball association, 15 years ago with just six young people and a basketball court, creating a safe place for Aboriginal youth to connect, belong and thrive.

What began on a Perth basketball court has grown into a thriving Aboriginal community organisation supporting more than 2,500 predominantly Aboriginal children across Western Australia.

Today, Binar provides wraparound support through basketball, education, health, mentoring and cultural identity, creating positive pathways for young people both on and off the court. Its programs extend into schools and regional communities across Western Australia, connecting children with opportunities, services and strong role models. Binar has also grown into a successful basketball association, becoming the first Aboriginal-led club to enter WA's representative basketball competition.

Adam's vision has always extended beyond sport. Young people who once participated in Binar are now coaches, mentors and leaders themselves – creating a powerful cycle of Aboriginal leadership for the next generation.

MICHAEL ELWAN

Social worker and mental health advocate



Michael Elwan works to make mental health care more accessible and culturally responsive, particularly for multicultural communities, carers and families.

As a teenager in Egypt, he cared for his father, who was blind. He later cared for his mother through years of mental health challenges before she died by suicide.

Now a Perth-based accredited social worker, Michael founded Lived Experience Solutions. He supports people in English and Arabic, trains practitioners in culturally responsive care, and advises organisations on involving people with lived and living experience in decisions about services.

His community advocacy brings multicultural perspectives into mental health and suicide prevention. Through his practice, training and advisory work, he advocates for care that respects people's culture, circumstances and knowledge.

Michael was named the Australian Association of Social Workers 2025 Social Worker of the Year. He also received the Outstanding Individual Achievement Award at the 2026 WA Multicultural Awards.

VICTORIA PELLOWE

FIFO community leader



Victoria (Vicky) Pellowe is an advocate for one of Western Australia's most overlooked community groups – the families of fly in, fly out (FIFO) workers.

As a former FIFO worker herself and now the at-home parent raising children while her partner works away, Vicky understands the isolation, uncertainty and emotional load the lifestyle can place on families.

In response, she founded and leads The FIFO Family Project, a not-for-profit creating FIFO-specific resources, community connection and advocacy for families in the resources sector. Her FIFO New Parents Guide, co-designed with 42 FIFO families and professionals, is now used by the WA Country Health Service Child, Youth & Family team, including rural and remote communities.

Since May 2024, Vicky has organised more than 50 community meet-ups and events, bringing together over 2,000 FIFO family members across Perth.

Vicky's understanding of her FIFO community is changing how workplaces and support systems sustain healthy families.

DR DAYNA POOL

Neurological rehabilitation pioneer



Dr Dayna Pool is widely recognised as a leader in neurological rehabilitation whose pioneering work is transforming the treatment of children and young adults living with neurological conditions and injuries.

Dayna founded the Healthy Strides Foundation, a not-for-profit facility that focuses on developing intensive, evidence-based rehabilitation therapies developed on the latest research. Her fundraising and campaigning for the Foundation resulted in the installation of Australia's first intelligent zero-gravity mobility system to help patients in their rehabilitation treatment. The success of the Healthy Strides approach has seen it also establish clinics in Singapore and Malaysia.

Alongside her clinical practice, Dayna is co-creator of the popular ResearchWorks podcast, focusing on the latest research from clinicians and disability advocates. She is also developing a Healthy Strides Community Hub to support young people with mobility challenges as they transition out of paediatric care.

Dayna's focus on advancing neurological rehabilitation therapies is paving the way for young people and their families to achieve independence and gain meaningful participation in daily life.

THE 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 2027 Australian of the Year Awards recognising the outstanding service to the community that many Australians make.

This year we have developed original artistic and musical works to recognise Australia's highest achievers for the National Australia Day Council. The trophies for the 2027 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.



RECOGNISING THE STATE'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 Western Australia for the past five years. The full honour roll can be viewed at australianoftheyear.org.au

	2026	Dr Daniela Vecchio – Digital addiction and gaming disorder specialist
	2025	Dianne Haggerty and Ian Haggerty – Agriculture pioneers
	2024	Mechelle Turvey – Advocate for victims of crime
	2023	Professor Samar Aoun – Researcher and advocate for end-of-life care, bereavement and grief support
	2022	Paul Litherland – Cyber safety educator and campaigner
	2026	Professor Kingsley Dixon AO – World-leading botanist
	2025	Brother Thomas Oliver Pickett AM – Co-founder, Wheelchairs For Kids
	2024	Charlie Bass – Founder, Centre for Entrepreneurial Research and Innovation
	2023	Theresa Kwok – Community advocate
	2022	Janice Standen – President, Grandparents Rearing Grandchildren WA
	2026	Dr Haseeb Riaz and Gareth Shanthikumar – Positive masculinity educators
	2025	Jack Anderson – Co-founder, Elucidate Education
	2024	Kate Kirwin – Founder, She Codes Australia and women in STEM advocate
	2023	Nagmeldin Bol – Athlete and Olympian
	2022	Kendall Whyte – Founder and CEO, Blue Tree Project
	2026	Frank Mitchell – Indigenous construction leader
	2025	Dr Jacinta Vu – Oral medicine specialist
	2024	Nick Hudson – Founder, The Push-Up Challenge and mental health advocate
	2023	James Murphy – Co-founder, Town Team Movement
	2022	Craig Hollywood – Founder and CEO, Short Back & Sidewalks

* 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



Australian Government
Department of Home Affairs



Australian
National
University



MinterEllison



Australia Day
Council of
Western Australia





