



about Australia

Australians of the Year

- Since 1960, Australia has celebrated the achievements and contributions of eminent citizens through the Australian of the Year Awards. The awards recognise leading Australians who are role models for all.

Background

From their inception in 1960 until 1979, the Australian of the Year Awards were managed by the Victorian Australia Day Committee, which gained input from the other states on their choice of Australian of the Year.

In 1979, a new national coordinating body—the National Australia Day Committee—was given responsibility for advising the government on all aspects of Australia Day, a national holiday held on 26 January each year. In 1984, the committee was upgraded to the National Australia Day Council and, in 1990, it became an incorporated public company, with a chair and board members appointed by the federal government.

The program has grown to encompass four award categories: Australian of the Year, Young Australian of the Year (introduced in 1979), Senior Australian (introduced in 1999), and Australia's Local Hero (introduced in 2003).

The awards program has two program levels: state/territory and national. Recipients for each award at the state/territory level are automatically eligible for the national level. The state/territory process takes place in October, when finalists and recipients are selected by a panel of local officials, community and National Australia Day Council representatives, sponsors and past recipients.

Key dates

- Australians of the Year are selected on the basis of excellence in their field, their contribution to the community and nation, and their capacity to serve as an inspirational role model.
- Fifty-two outstanding individuals and one group have been named Australian of the Year since the program was introduced in 1960.
- Recipients of the award include prominent scientists, entertainers, athletes, volunteers and business leaders. Politicians and vice-regal representatives are not eligible.

Each panel selects for its state/territory: one Australian of the Year recipient and three finalists; one Senior Australian of the Year recipient and three finalists; one Young Australian of the Year recipient and three finalists; and one Local Hero recipient and three finalists.

A nominee can only be selected as a finalist or recipient in one awards category in a given year. A total of 12 people will be recognised in each state/territory. The state/territory Australians, Senior Australians and Young Australians of the Year and all Local Heroes (a total of 32 people) constitute the national finalists. The Board of the National Australia Day Council is the national selection panel.

The award is for individuals or groups of individuals only. Politicians and the vice-regal (Queen's) representatives are not eligible.

All nominees are considered for the Australian of the Year Award. Nominees aged 60 years and over on Australia Day will also have their names put forward for the Senior Australian of the Year Award and nominees aged 16 to 25 for the Young Australian of the Year Award. All are considered for Australia's Local Hero Award.

Selection criteria

Consideration is given to nominees' achievements in the year immediately prior to the awards, as well as their lifetime achievements and ongoing contribution to the Australian community and nation. They need to demonstrate excellence in their field and be an inspirational role model. The Local Hero award acknowledges a significant contribution at the local community level.

Selection panels also consider nominees' personal, academic and professional achievements; what the nominee has 'put back' into their field and the community; demonstrated leadership, innovation and creativity; future goals and likely impact; degree of difficulty of the achievement and sacrifices made; and previous awards and recognition.

Voluntary work, achievements, and availability and commitment to promote national pride and active citizenship though the year of the recipient's appointment are also considered. Australian of the Year Awards recipients must also be representative of a diverse nation, across gender, age, location, ethnicity and field of endeavour.

Australians of the Year

Fifty-two outstanding individuals and one group have been named Australian of the Year since the program was introduced in 1960.

- 2008 Lee Kernaghan OAM, musician
- 2007 Professor Tim Flannery, scientist/
environmentalist
- 2006 Professor Ian Frazer, doctor–scientist
- 2005 Fiona Wood AM, doctor
- 2004 Steve Waugh, cricketer
- 2003 Professor Fiona Stanley AC,
doctor–researcher
- 2002 Patrick Rafter, tennis player
- 2001 Lt General Peter Cosgrove AC MC,
soldier
- 2000 Sir Gustav Nossal AC CBE FAA FRS,
scientist
- 1999 Mark Taylor, cricketer
- 1998 Cathy Freeman, athlete
- 1997 Professor Peter Doherty, medical
researcher
- 1996 Doctor John Yu AM, a pediatrician
- 1995 Arthur Boyd AC OBE, artist
- 1994 Ian Kiernan OAM, environmentalist
- 1993 ** No award given
- 1992 Mandawuy Yunupingu, musician,
educator and community leader
- 1991 Archbishop Peter Hollingworth AO
OBE, bishop
- 1990 Fred Hollows AC (1929–93),
ophthalmologist
- 1989 Allan Border AO, cricketer

- 1988 Kay Cottee AO, sailor
- 1987 John Farnham, musician
- 1986 Dick Smith, entrepreneur
- 1985 Paul Hogan AM, actor
- 1984 Lois O'Donoghue CBE AM, health worker and administrator
- 1983 Robert de Castella MBE, athlete
- 1982 Sir Edward Williams KCMG KBE (1921–99), judge
- 1981 Sir John Crawford AC CBE, economist
- 1980 Manning Clark AC (1915–91), historian
- 1979 * Senator Neville Bonnor AO, senator
- 1979 * Harry Butler CBE, conservationist
- 1978 * Alan Bond, entrepreneur
- 1978 * Galarrwuy Yunupingu AM, community leader and activist
- 1977 * Sir Murray Tyrall KCVO CBE, Official Secretary to the Governor-General
- 1977 * Dame Raigh Roe DBE, Country Women's Association leader
- 1976 Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop AC CMG OBE (1907–93), surgeon
- 1975 * Sir John Cornforth AC CBE, chemist
- 1975 * Major General Alan Stretton AO CBE, soldier
- 1974 Sir Bernard Heinze AC (1894–1982), musician
- 1973 Patrick White (1912–90), novelist
- 1972 Shane Gould MBE, swimmer
- 1971 Evonne Goolagong Cawley AO MBE, tennis player
- 1970 His Eminence Cardinal Sir Norman Gilroy KBE (1896–1977), cardinal
- 1969 The Rt Hon Richard Gardiner Casey Baron of Berwick, Victoria and of the City of Westminster KG GCMG CH (1890–1976), Governor-General of Australia
- 1968 Lionel Rose MBE, boxer
- 1967 The Seekers, musical group
- 1966 Sir Jack Brabham OBE (b. 1926), racing driver
- 1965 Sir Robert Helpmann CBE (1909–86), actor, dancer, producer and choreographer
- 1964 Dawn Fraser MBE, swimmer
- 1963 Sir John Eccles AC (1903–97), neurologist
- 1962 Alexander 'Jock' Sturrock MBE, sailor
- 1961 Dame Joan Sutherland OM AC DBE, musician
- 1960 Sir MacFarlane Burnet OM AK KBE (1899–1985), doctor–scientist
- * From 1975 to 1979 the Canberra Australia Day Council also recognised an Australian of the Year.
- ** The award dating system changed—no award made in this year.

2008 recipients

Australian of the Year—Lee Kernaghan OAM

Lee Kernaghan is a country music performer who has won 24 Golden Guitar awards at the Australian Country Music Awards. His Australian of the Year award recognised his efforts to help rural families through his 'Pass the Hat Around' tours, which have raised more than \$1 million for communities in need, particularly as a result of drought.

Senior Australian of the Year— David Bussau AM

David Bussau is a social entrepreneur and one of the pioneers of the micro-enterprise movement, which helps alleviate developing world poverty using small loans to the poor. In 1979, he co-founded Opportunity International. The organisation has made 1.25 million loans to people in 23 countries.

Young Australian of the Year—Casey Stoner

Motorbike racer Casey Stoner was named Young Australian of the Year in recognition of his success as a MotoGP champion.

Australia's Local Hero—Jonathon Welch

Choral conductor Jonathon Welch, who helped a group of down-and-out Australians fight homelessness, depression and drug addiction to sing in his Choir of Hard Knocks, was named Australia's Local Hero.

Trophies

Australians of the Year receive glass trophies designed and created by Melbourne-based artist Kristin McFarlane. Each is a unique work of art designed to be a representation of Australian symbols and a lasting memory of the recipient's achievements.

The trophies feature Australian motifs and icons including the Southern Cross, a map of the coastline and the words of the national anthem. The name of the award recipient is embedded in the trophy itself, rather than etched in after its completion.

Note: Unless otherwise stated, all dollar amounts are in Australian dollars.

More information

Australia Day

www.australiaday.gov.au

Australian of the Year Awards

www.australianoftheyear.gov.au

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Satellite imagery © Commonwealth of Australia,
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Western Australian coastline.

