

**MEDIA RELEASE
MONDAY 11 JANUARY 2010**

**WHO'LL BE AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR 2010?
TWO WEEKS TO GO UNTIL TOP AUSSIES ANNOUNCED**

There are just two weeks to go until the Australian of the Year, Young Australian of the Year, Senior Australian of the Year and Australia's Local Hero for 2010 are announced.

The Australian of the Year Awards 2010 event will be held on the lawns in front of Parliament House Canberra from 5:30pm on Monday 25 January (the eve of Australia Day).

All 33 state and territory finalists will gather at the event to hear which names will be added to a 50 year old honour roll of inspiring Australians.

The finalists in all four award categories span community volunteers, environmentalists and wildlife rescuers, scientists and medical experts, innovators and social leaders, high achievers and everyday heroes.

Tam Johnston, Program Director for the National Australia Day Council, said the finalists were great ambassadors for the Australian public.

"These are people who have been nominated by their peers, the people of Australia," said Ms Johnston.

"They represent everything we admire about great Australian values, world-leading achievements and community building."

Australian of the Year 2010 Finalists:

NSW	Jon Dee - Environmental campaigner (Katoomba)
VIC	Professor Patrick McGorry - Youth mental health expert (Essendon)
QLD	Dr Chris Sarra - Indigenous educator (Caboolture)
WA	Professor Ralph Martins - Alzheimer's expert (Maddington)
SA	Julian Burton OAM - Charity founder (Adelaide)
TAS	Bruce Englefield - Tasmanian Devils' advocate (Biceno)
ACT	Professor Patricia Easteal - Human rights advocate (Canberra)
NT	Warwick Thornton - Filmmaker (Alice Springs)

Senior Australian of the Year 2010 Finalists:

NSW	Lyn Thorpe - Surgical theatre nurse (Charlestown)
VIC	Nigel Dick AM - Odyssey House founder (Camberwell)
QLD	Ron Rankin AM - Surf lifesaving leader (Cleveland)
WA	June Butcher AM - Wildlife rescuer (Gooseberry Hill)
SA	Maggie Beer - Cook and restaurateur (Nurioopta)
TAS	Bill Mollison - Permaculture advocate (Sisters Creek)
ACT	Dr John Buckingham - Breast cancer surgeon (Canberra)
NT	Alan Langworthy - Technological innovator (Berrimah)

Young Australian of the Year 2010 Finalists:

NSW	Jack Manning Bancroft - Indigenous mentor (Balmain)
VIC	Larissa Brown - Sustainability leader (Melbourne)
QLD	Jean Madden - Shelter designer (Upper Brookfield)
WA	Trooper Mark Donaldson VC - Courageous soldier
SA	Danielle Catanzariti - Actor (Murray Bridge)
TAS	Brad Smith - Entrepreneur (Legana)
ACT	Pierre Johannessen - Basketballer and humanitarian (Isaacs)
NT	Liam Jurrah - AFL star (East Bentleigh)

Australia's Local Hero 2010 Finalists:

NSW	Ronni Kahn - Food rescuer (Bronte)
VIC	Kevin & Rhonda Butler - Bushfire recovery volunteers (Kilmore East)
QLD	Mayor Paul Pisasale - Dedicated Mayor (Ipswich)
WA	Rhonda Parker - Dynamic volunteer (Boyup Brook)
SA	Mike Coddington - Volunteer fire fighter (Murray Bridge)
TAS	Delwyn Polden - Generous teacher (Burnie)
ACT	Julie Grehan - Disabilities volunteer (Higgins)
NT	Norma Higgins - Horticulturalist (Katherine)

Ralph Norris, CEO Commonwealth Bank, offered his congratulations to award recipients. The Commonwealth Bank has been the major sponsor of the Australian of the Year Awards for more than thirty years.

“On behalf of the Commonwealth Bank, I would like to congratulate all the finalists. Their hard work and achievements are an inspiration to the Australian community,” said Mr Norris.

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

Ends.

Bios for all finalists are listed on the following pages of this media release OR can be downloaded from the media section of www.australianoftheyear.org.au

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Information and media accreditation application for the Australian of the Year Awards 2010 event on Monday 25 January 2010 is now available. Contact us for more information or visit <http://www.australianoftheyear.org.au/pages/page5.asp>

AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR 2010 FINALISTS

NSW *Jon Dee - Environmental campaigner (Katoomba)*

Jon Dee is one of Australia's most influential figures on environmental issues. In 1991, he co-founded *Planet Ark* with Pat Cash. He instigated *National Recycling Week*, the National Recycling Hotline, recyclingnearyou.com.au, co-founded *National Tree Day* with Olivia Newton-John, and founded *World Environment News*. In 2008, Jon became founder and Chairman of *Do Something!*. He continues to spearhead the campaign to eliminate plastic bags, and initiated the campaign for Australia's phase out of incandescent light globes. Jon Dee has led the way in showing Australia and the world how we can change our planet for the better.

VIC *Professor Patrick McGorry - Mental health expert (Essendon)*

Professor Patrick McGorry is passionate about caring for young people with mental health issues. He is Executive Director of Orygen Youth Health (OYH), a world-renowned youth mental health service that has put Australia at the forefront of innovation in the early intervention and treatment of mental illness. He is also a Director of the National Youth Mental Health Foundation (headspace). His extraordinary 27-year contribution to the improvement of the youth mental health sector has transformed the lives of tens of thousands of young people the world over.

QLD *Dr Chris Sarra - Indigenous educator (Caboolture)*

Best known for his groundbreaking approach to education in the community of Cherbourg, Dr Sarra is a dedicated educator who inspires Indigenous children to believe in themselves. Dr Sarra's leadership of the Cherbourg State School has become nationally acclaimed for its 'Strong and Smart' philosophy. He is now the Executive Director of the Stronger Smarter Institute which is transforming Indigenous education with positive messages of high expectations, quality relationships and community engagement in schools. Led by Dr Sarra, the Institute's programs are having significant impact on students, educators and communities in schools across Australia.

WA *Professor Ralph Martins - Alzheimer's expert (Maddington)*

Professor Ralph Martins is recognised as a world leader of research into Alzheimer's disease. His team made the first significant discovery, showing that the beta amyloid protein that coats the brain is the foundation of Alzheimer's. He has been instrumental in bringing to Perth new technology that makes it possible to determine if a patient has deposits of the toxic beta amyloid. Professor Martins continues to work to develop an early diagnostic blood test.

SA *Julian Burton OAM - Charity founder (Adelaide)*

When Julian Burton suffered life-threatening injuries in the 2002 Bali he was inspired to give back to the people who gave their time, skills, and generosity in supporting not only himself, but many others less fortunate than him. From his personal experience, Julian knew burn injuries were devastating both emotionally and physically. So in 2003, Julian founded the Julian Burton Burns Trust **which** has become Australia's first national community organisation solely committed to prevention, care and research associated with burn injury.

TAS *Bruce Englefield - Tasmanian Devils' advocate (Biceno)*

Bruce Englefield is on a mission to save the endangered Tasmanian Devil. While on holiday to Australia British-born Bruce fell in love with the animal and bought a wildlife park. Bruce is now devoting himself full time to the Devil Island Project, a conservation project that he has set up to help save the Tasmanian Devil. A facial tumour disease is wiping out the population, but Bruce is determined to save our icon.

ACT *Professor Patricia Easteal - Human rights advocate (Canberra)*

Professor Patricia Easteal has made an outstanding contribution to the advancement of human rights and justice in Australia. Her research, writing, teaching and advocacy has had a powerful impact on law reform and policy, especially in the area of violence against women. Legal practitioners, present and future, service providers and victims alike have been inspired by her passion and dedication. Her new book on women and the law is a milestone in the pursuit of justice and equity for all Australians.

NT *Warwick Thornton - Filmmaker (Alice Springs)*

Warwick Thornton is one of Australia's most promising contemporary filmmakers, winning numerous local and international awards as a cinematographer, writer and director. Born in Alice Springs, Warwick is a cinematography graduate from the Australian Film Television and Radio School. His debut feature, *Samson and Delilah*, is widely recognised as one of Australia's finest films and was selected for the 2009 Cannes Film Festival where it won the Camera d'or for best first feature. Warwick's passion is to document the stories of his community and share them with us all.

SENIOR AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR 2010 FINALISTS

NSW *Hiskelina (Lyn) Thorpe - Surgical theatre nurse (Charlestown)*

Since 1993, Lyn Thorpe has used her surgical theatre nursing skills to help others around the world, repairing cleft lips and palates, horrific burns, and birth deformities. In 2008, Lyn went to Cambodia and was part of a team that performed 100 cataract extractions that resulted in immediate sight. Lyn has also helped to raise \$50,000 to bring a young burns victim from Papua New Guinea to Australia for treatment, nursing her in her own home after each operation. Lyn's caring nature shines through in all that she does.

VIC *Nigel Dick AM - Odyssey House founder (Camberwell)*

During a long and distinguished career Nigel Dick has worked at the highest levels of the Australian television industry, but he has also made an exceptional contribution to the community. In 1979, he was instrumental in establishing Odyssey House in Victoria, a residential rehabilitation program for people with drug and alcohol addiction. He has transformed the lives of more than 8,000 clients, and reduced the impact and negative effects of drug and alcohol use in Australia.

QLD *Ron Rankin AM - Surf lifesaving leader (Cleveland)*

Ron Rankin has been a volunteer member of Surf Life Saving Australia for over 46 years, on the Board of Directors for 25 years, and President since 2001. He makes a significant contribution to drowning prevention and lifesaving development in the international arena and is Director of the International Lifesaving Federation (ILS) and Vice President of the ILS Asia-Pacific region. Ron's dedication and commitment to an Australian tradition has saved many thousands of lives.

WA *June Butcher AM - Wildlife rescuer (Gooseberry Hill)*

June Butcher's love of animals resulted in her founding Kanyana Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre in 1986. Kanyana now has 140 volunteers and operates 365 days of the year caring for over 2,000 animals each year. June is also involved with the Department of Environment and Conservation's Western Shield endangered species captive breeding program for bilbies. She is now in the process of fulfilling her dream by moving Kanyana from her three-acre home to a new 16-hectare site.

SA *Maggie Beer - Cook and restaurateur (Nurioopta)*

Maggie Beer is an Australian culinary icon. She and her husband, Colin, ran the famed Pheasant Farm Restaurant, before Maggie opened an export kitchen for the production of preservative-free gourmet foods. In 1999, she opened Maggie Beer's Farm Shop and went on to co-host co-hosted the ABC cooking program, *The Cook and the Chef*. Maggie Beer hopes that through sharing her love of food she will inspire Australians to reconnect with food and appreciate what we eat.

TAS *Bill Mollison - Permaculture advocate (Sisters Creek)*

Known as the father of permaculture, Bill Mollison has influenced the lives of millions of people all over the world. Bill studied environmental science and in 1972 a Eureka moment led to the development of permaculture, creating stable productive systems that harmoniously work with nature, not against it. It has become accepted as a viable alternative to chemical-based agriculture. Bill continues to spread his message, teaching permaculture in almost every country.

ACT *Dr John Buckingham - Breast Cancer surgeon (Canberra)*

Dr John Buckingham is a well-loved specialist breast cancer surgeon who pioneered the sentinel node mapping technique. His interest in breast cancer surgery began when he trained in the United States. When Canberra's Calvary Hospital opened he joined its staff, and under his guidance Calvary was among the earliest institutions in Australia to undertake sentinel node biopsy. Each year 13,000 women are diagnosed with breast cancer and Dr Buckingham's groundbreaking work is saving women's lives.

NT *Alan Langworthy - Technological innovator (Berrimah)*

Alan Langworthy established and manages Powercorp, a world-leading and groundbreaking power systems engineering company whose technology is enabling remote communities to have city-quality power almost entirely from renewable sources. In the early 1990s, Powercorp also pioneered high-penetration wind diesel systems that now power remote communities from Antarctica to the Azores. This year Alan won a prestigious Clunies Ross Award for his contribution to science. Alan's pioneering work has significantly impacted the global development of remote renewable energy.

YOUNG AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR 2010 FINALISTS

NSW **Jack Manning Bancroft - Indigenous mentor (Balmain)**

At 24 years of age Jack Manning-Bancroft heads up Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME), and has been named in Sydney's Top 100 Most Influential People. AIME works with Indigenous students from Years 7 to 12 to increase student retention and university admission enrolments. There are now 40 schools and five universities, 500 Indigenous high school students and over 500 university volunteers across NSW participating in AIME. Jack is well on the way to further increasing school attendance and providing Indigenous students with a solid educational foundation.

VIC **Larissa Brown - Sustainability leader (Melbourne)**

Working from her bedroom, Larissa Brown founded the Centre for Sustainability Leadership at the age of 24. Five years on it is now a registered not-for-profit group with more than 100 volunteers, a Melbourne office and a partnership with the United Nations. The centre runs the Centre for Sustainability Leadership program which takes a group of young Australians who demonstrate potential and mentors them to lead efforts to create a more sustainable world.

QLD **Jean Madden - Shelter designer (Upper Brookfield)**

Working from her bedroom, Larissa Brown founded the Centre for Sustainability Leadership at the age of 24. Five years on it is now a registered not-for-profit group with more than 100 volunteers, a Melbourne office and a partnership with the United Nations. The centre runs the Centre for Sustainability Leadership program which takes a group of young Australians who demonstrate potential and mentors them to lead efforts to create a more sustainable world.

WA **Trooper Mark Donaldson VC - Courageous soldier**

This year Mark Donaldson was awarded the Victoria Cross, Australia's highest military honour. When Mark's unit in Afghanistan was hit by an ambush, he deliberately drew enemy fire to himself on several occasions so that wounded soldiers could be moved to safety. Then when he saw a coalition force interpreter lying wounded, he ran 80 metres across exposed ground to rescue him and carry him to safety. His bravery in the face of great danger saved lives and won him the highest respect.

SA **Danielle Catanzariti - Actor (Murray Bridge)**

Danielle started acting at the age of 10 and scored the lead role alongside Toni Collette in *Hey, Hey It's Esther Blueburger*, in 2006. From there her career took off. She starred with Natalie Imbruglia in her second film *Elise*, and was then handpicked by Cate Blanchett for the dark play, *Blackbird*. In 2008 she received the AFI Young Actor Award. At the young age of 17 Danielle has already demonstrated that she is an exceptional new talent of both stage and screen.

TAS **Brad Smith - Entrepreneur (Legana)**

Twenty-two year old Brad Smith is a budding entrepreneur with his own business, Braaap. At just 18 he began producing arguably the best pit bikes available worldwide. Named Australian Young Entrepreneur of the Year 2008 in the Small Business Champion Awards, he is also the Mini Supercross Champion of Australia. Brad has built four mini motorcross tracks in Tasmania and wants to have mini tracks built near all local townships to keep young people off the streets.

ACT **Pierre Johannessen - Basketballer and humanitarian (Isaacs)**

For Pierre Johannessen basketball is more than just a game, it is a way to change the world. In 2007, Pierre travelled to Bangladesh where, with three others, he established Big Bang Ballers, a basketball tournament. Big Bang Ballers is now an Australian-based organisation conducting activities in a number of countries including Bangladesh, Pakistan and the Philippines. Using basketball to tackle youth poverty and social disadvantage, it provides an outlet for those children least able to be children.

NT **Liam Jurrah - AFL star (East Bentleigh)**

Warlpiri man Liam Jurrah is the first player from a remote community in Central Australia to be drafted by the AFL. Before this, Liam had not trained with elite training squads; instead he spent evenings at one end of the local Yuendumu basketball court kicking a footy through the hoop. Since he was 16, Liam has been a member of the Jaru Pirrjirdi (Strong Voices) Youth Development and Leadership Project. He also works as a youth mentor with at-risk Warlpiri youth facing serious life issues.

AUSTRALIA'S LOCAL HERO 2010 FINALISTS

NSW *Ronni Kahn - Food rescuer (Bronte)*

In 2004, Ronni Kahn founded OzHarvest, to collect and deliver surplus food from restaurants, cafes and events to charities. OzHarvest now has over 600 food donors and delivers more than 110,000 meals each month to 163 charities in Sydney, Canberra and Wollongong and continues to expand. With Ronni's guidance, OzHarvest has had a profound impact on the environment, saving thousands of tonnes of food from landfill and helping clients of charities to eat quality, nutritious food.

VIC *Kevin & Rhonda Butler - Bushfire recovery volunteers (Kilmore East)*

After the Black Saturday bushfire tragedy of 7 February 2009, Kilmore East farmers, Rhonda and Kevin Butler put out a call for volunteers to help rebuild destroyed fences in the Kilmore East to Kinglake region. For more than nine months, from their simple shearing shed, Kevin and Rhonda inspired more than 3,200 volunteers from all over Australia and overseas to help rebuild fences on approximately 400 properties. Working alongside the survivors and volunteers, Kevin and Rhonda have helped rebuild fences in weeks not months, providing friendship and support, instead of isolation and despair.

QLD *Mayor Paul Pisasale - Dedicated Mayor (Ipswich)*

As Mayor of Ipswich, Paul Pisasale has a deep loyalty for his city and Queensland. Paul was elected Mayor in 2004 and again in 2008 with an 82% majority, demonstrating the support and respect in which he is held. He established the Ipswich and Moreton Regional Development Corporation which helped businesses develop and reshape the city. He has also worked to protect existing parklands and create a new nature centre where visitors can see rare and protected species. Paul is passionate about making Ipswich the most liveable city in Australia.

WA *Rhonda Parker - Dynamic volunteer (Boyup Brook)*

A dynamic volunteer and family woman, Rhonda Parker has worked passionately to better her community for the past 28 years and is part of the glue that holds the community together. Rhonda is the longstanding Music Director for the Boyup Brook Country Music Club, which organises Western Australia's largest country music festival and she has also held numerous positions with many other organisations in her local district. Rhonda's enthusiasm and lack of hubris make her a much-loved identity in this small rural community.

SA *Mike Coddington - Volunteer fire fighter (Murray Bridge)*

In 1993, Mike Coddington joined the Murray Bridge Country Fire Service Brigade, and for the last eight years he has been the Brigade Captain. During this time he has increased membership from eight to 24 active fire fighters, and upgraded the brigade to a Hazchem incident response brigade. He works more than 1500 voluntary hours every year. Mike's leadership and mentoring has created a dedicated and professional group of volunteer fire fighters.

TAS *Delwyn Polden - Generous teacher (Burnie)*

Delwyn Polden's love of children is evident to all those who know her. She is a dedicated and inspirational music teacher, encouraging a love of music in all her students. Delwyn has three children of her own and is currently fostering three children long term. Over the years she and her husband, Rick, have fostered hundreds of children. A compassionate educator and open-hearted mother, Delwyn has changed the lives of many children for the better.

ACT *Julie Grehan - Disabilities volunteer (Higgins)*

For the last 29 years Julie Grehan has worked tirelessly to support people with disabilities. Nine years ago she set up Daryl's Den, a craft club for people with disabilities. The club provides a valuable opportunity for those who are often isolated to socialise and join in a range of activities that build self-esteem, confidence and a sense of purpose. Julie's love and devotion for those who have come to depend on Daryl's Den is unmistakable.

NT *Norma Higgins - Horticulturalist (Katherine)*

Norma Higgins created an opportunity for local farmers by establishing a weekly market in Katherine. It has delivered tangible self-sustaining economic activity, employment, vocational education and training outcomes. Norma has also been involved in the Katherine Horticultural Association since its inception, is actively involved with the Primary Industries Training Advisory Council, and is a founding member of her local group of NT Women in Agriculture. In 2008, Norma Higgins won the NT Rural Woman of the Year Award.