MEDIA RELEASE
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FROM CONSERVATION TO CULTURAL CARE CONCIERGE – MEET THE 2027 AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARD RECIPIENTS FOR QUEENSLAND

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Four extraordinary people have been named the 2027 Australian of the Year Award recipients for Queensland at a ceremony in Brisbane this evening.

2027 Australian of the Year for Queensland – Robert Irwin (Beerwah)
2027 Senior Australian of the Year for Queensland – Carmel Crouch AM (Sunshine Coast)
2027 Young Australian of the Year for Queensland – Gout Gout (Ipswich)
2027 Local Hero for Queensland – Noel Brown (East Trinity)

From conserving our natural world to empowering independence, shattering world records and making healthcare more welcoming, the recipients of the 2027 Australian of the Year Awards for Queensland are making a difference and breaking new ground.

The 2027 Australian of the Year for Queensland is wildlife conservationist, Robert Irwin.

Robert Irwin, 22, is a passionate wildlife conservationist, whose contagious energy inspires others to join him in supporting the preservation of our environment and endangered wildlife.

The son of conservation pioneers Steve and Terri Irwin, Robert grew up surrounded by animals. He proudly follows in his dad's footsteps while carving a new legacy for the next generation. Alongside his mother Terri and sister Bindi, his work at Australia Zoo inspires and educates the community about the importance of preserving biodiversity. He also sits on the board of directors of their charity, Wildlife Warriors, where he promotes the protection of wildlife through a state-of-the-art wildlife hospital, conservation properties, and international conservation projects.

Robert's wildlife photography has earned Australian Geographic awards and has been recognised in the Wildlife Photographer of the Year Awards. His global television efforts have helped his message reach millions across the world.

The 2027 Senior Australian of the Year for Queensland is advocate for people with disability, Carmel Crouch AM.

For more than four decades, Carmel Crouch has helped thousands of people with disability gain skills, find work and live independently because she believed in their potential.

A founding board member of STEPS Group Australia in 1989, and managing director of STEPS Group of Companies, Carmel helped transform a small community organisation into a national leader in training, employment, disability and mental health support services. Under her leadership, STEPS pioneered the only Australian independence college of its kind, STEPS Pathways College. Here, students with disability and autism are empowered to build the skills and confidence needed for lifelong independence.

Carmel, 80, has broadened her impact to migrants, refugees, First Nations communities, and through a string of social enterprises. Carmel has proven time and time again that bringing the right partners together can turn complex social challenges into practical opportunities that strengthen communities, improve individuals' sense of belonging, self-realisation and wellbeing.

The 2027 Young Australian of the Year for Queensland is sprint sensation, Gout Gout.

Queensland teenager Gout Gout is mesmerising the world in his quest to become one of athletics' global greats.

At the 2024 Australian All Schools Athletics Championship, Gout ran the 200m in just 20.04 seconds, becoming the fastest 16-year-old in history and beating Usain Bolt's record at the same age. After a successful debut in Europe in 2025, Gout broke his Australian record and the World Junior record with a time of 19.67 seconds in April 2026.

Born in Ipswich, after his parents migrated to Australia from South Sudan two years earlier, Gout is one of seven children. At Ipswich Grammar School he spent his early sporting years playing football, before being discovered at the age of 14 by his coach. With training, Gout's performance skyrocketed.

Gout, 18, dreams of running in the LA Olympics in 2028 and of course in the Brisbane 2032 Olympic Games in his hometown. His talent has ignited international interest in Australian athletics, demonstrating that greatness can be achieved without expensive equipment: just a pair of shoes combined with natural talent, training and focus.

The 2027 Local Hero for Queensland is First Nations hospital greeter, Noel Brown.

Noel Brown, 65, is the specialist First Nations greeter at Cairns Hospital, a role that has transformed the healthcare experience of local First Nations people.

Hospitals can be clinical, intimidating and alienating – especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients who are hospitalised at higher rates yet often feel unseen or unwelcome. Noel changes that the moment people arrive at the hospital. His presence is not simply a greeting; it is a cultural intervention. By offering safety, familiarity and genuine human connection, Noel dismantles fear, reduces anxiety and helps people stay engaged with the care they need.

Through everyday conversation and deep empathy, Noel ensures First Nations patients feel respected, valued and safe. His work proves that cultural safety is as essential as clinical treatment, and that you don't need a medical degree to save lives. Noel sets a national benchmark for culturally grounded care, showing what every major hospital in Australia could aspire to.

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

"The achievements of our Queensland award recipients are nothing short of inspirational," said Carrie.

"Robert is continuing his family's legacy and sharing their passion for conservation with a new generation, while Gout is a teenage sprint sensation breaking world records. Carmel is helping people gain independence and dignity, while Noel provides understanding and support when it's needed most."

The Queensland 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: QLD Media Distribution photos - High res (credit NADC/Salty Dingo). Award recipient photos will be available after approx. 9:15pm Brisbane time.

LIVESTREAM VISION: The QLD awards announcement event is livestreamed from 7:15pm Brisbane time via

australianoftheyear.org.au. The vision is YouTube based and is accessible for media use.