



Australian of the Year Awards 2016

**MEDIA RELEASE
2 NOVEMBER 2015**

EMBARGOED UNTIL 7:00PM CANBERRA TIME OR AS ANNOUNCED AT EVENT
DO NOT CONTACT AWARD RECIPIENTS AS THEY ARE NOT AWARE OF THE OUTCOME
UNTIL NAMES ARE ANNOUNCED ON STAGE

2016 ACT AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARD RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED

2016 ACT Australian of the Year - David Morrison AO - Equality advocate (Griffith)

2016 ACT Senior Australian of the Year - Professor Greg Tegart AM FTSE - Scientist and technology advocate (Yarralumla)

2016 ACT Young Australian of the Year - Nipuni Wijewickrema - Social entrepreneur (Chifley)

2016 ACT Local Hero - Peter Cursley - Newborn care champion (Farrer)

The Chief Minister of the ACT, Mr Andrew Barr has announced the 2016 ACT Australian of the Year Award recipients at a ceremony at the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra this evening.

David Morrison AO has been named **2016 ACT Australian of the Year** for his work as an equality advocate.

Few would expect a tough-as-nails Chief of Army to be recognised internationally for his commitment to gender equality, diversity and inclusion. But when former Lieutenant-General David Morrison ordered misbehaving troops to 'get out' if they couldn't accept women as equals, his video went viral and he started a cultural shift that has changed Australia's armed forces forever. Since then, the number of women joining the army has grown by two per cent and the culture is more accepting of racial, ethnic and sexual diversity. In 2014, David was invited to speak at the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, sharing the stage with US Secretary of State John Kerry and actor and activist Angelina Jolie, and arguing that militaries that exclude women 'do nothing to distinguish the soldier from the brute'. David retired in 2015 after 36 years in the Australian Army, and four years as its Chief, but he continues his commitment as a champion of human rights in his new role as the Chair of the Diversity Council Australia.

Scientist and technology advocate **Professor Greg Tegart AM FTSE** has been awarded **2016 ACT Senior Australian of the Year**.

At 86 years of age, Professor Greg Tegart is a leading advocate for smart assistive technologies that give aged and disabled people independence and a better quality of life. Greg's distinguished career spans research in metallurgy and materials and high level executive and policy positions in industry, the CSIRO and the federal government. The extent of Greg's contribution to Australian science and technology policy over four decades is substantial. He led Australia's initial participation in climate change assessment through the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and was recognised for his contribution to the awarding of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize to the IPCC. He has been a leader in studies linking technology to the future of society. In recent years, Greg's world-leading work to promote smart assistive technologies for aged and disability care has enabled many Australians to lead more empowered and independent lives. Greg provides a real-world example of the contribution that older people can make to the Australian community.

The **2016 ACT Young Australian of the Year** is 22 year old Chifley resident **Nipuni Wijewickrema**.

A young woman trying to change the world "one flower at a time", Nipuni Wijewickrema runs a floristry business designed to create employment opportunities for people with special needs. Nip, as she is affectionately known, first established GG's Florist with her family to ensure her 16-year-old younger sister Gayana would have fulfilling work after graduating from high school. Gayana, who has been born with Down syndrome, is now famous around Canberra for her floral deliveries that always come with a big hug. From a backyard garden shed, Nip has shown other local organisations how to create safe working environments for people with disabilities. As well as working full-time and managing the family floristry business, Nip is a volunteer counsellor with Lifeline and contributes regularly to community initiatives, assisting many young people through her work with the ACT Youth Advisory Council. Passionate, dedicated, driven and incredibly sleep deprived, Nip has developed a socially sustainable business model which is changing the way Canberrans think about inclusion.





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Farrer's **Peter Cursley** has been awarded **2016 ACT Local Hero** for his work as a newborn care champion.

After enduring the tragic loss of his baby daughter, and soon after his wife, Peter Cursley responded to his personal heartbreak by dedicating his life to helping others. In 1995, he established the Newborn Intensive Care Foundation and has since raised more than \$4 million for the Canberra Hospital and its Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). Through Peter's hard work and dedication, vital equipment – from breast pumps and recliner chairs for nursing mums to state-of-the-art medical equipment – has been purchased. The Foundation also contributes to nurse education and training to ensure staff remain at the cutting-edge of neonatal care. NICU cares for around 700 babies each year, with 40 per cent coming from New South Wales. Combining his retirement jobs with his voluntary work as chairman of the Foundation, Peter's motto, "life should not be a struggle when you are a few hours old" has driven the Foundation's agenda for two decades. Peter's never-ending generosity makes life better for so many babies and families.

The ACT Award recipients will join recipients from the other States and Territories as finalists for the national Awards to be announced on 25 January 2016 in Canberra.

National Australia Day Council CEO, Jeremy Lasek, said the ACT Award recipients are four inspirational Australians.

"The ACT Award recipients are inspirational Australians working hard to make positive change internationally, nationally and in our home town. We can be proud of them all." said Mr Lasek.

For more than 36 years, the Commonwealth Bank has been a proud sponsor of the Australian of the Year Awards. Commonwealth Bank Chief Executive Officer, Ian Narev, congratulated the ACT Award recipients.

"Congratulations to the ACT recipients on being named national finalists in the Australian of the Year Awards. We recognise their inspirational contribution to our community and wish them well for the national Awards," said Mr Narev.

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

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EMBARGO NOTE: Media attending the Awards event may of course report Award recipients as they are announced on stage OR follow Australian of the Year Awards on Twitter @ausoftheyear or Facebook @australianoftheyear for the Awards announcements as they happen - once each Award is announced, it can be reported.

