

MEDIA RELEASE
THURSDAY 18 OCTOBER 2018

**NOMINEES ANNOUNCED FOR
2019 VICTORIAN AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARD**

A bushfire survivor, food rescuers, a horseman with heart, a child sex abuse detective, a polar explorer, a Paralympian and a medicine-maker are among nominees for the 2019 Victorian Australian of the Year Awards.

The Victorian Award nominees announced today are in the running to be named Victorian Australian of the Year, Victorian Senior Australian of the Year, Victorian Young Australian of the Year and Victoria's Local Hero.

The 2019 Victorian Award nominees are:

2019 VICTORIAN AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

Ian and Simone Carson – Founders of SecondBite (Armadale)
Hollie Feller – Rare disease advocate and fundraiser (Hampton, Melbourne)
Mark Sullivan – Medicine developer (Camberwell, Melbourne)
Chris Varney – Autism advocate and visionary (Ashburton, Melbourne)

2019 VICTORIAN SENIOR AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

Roy Francis – Health ambassador (Mornington)
Alison Harcourt – STEM pioneer (Kew)
Denis Ryan AM – Detective and victims advocate (Mildura)
Graham Salisbury – Volunteer equine therapist (Heathcote)

2019 VICTORIAN YOUNG AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

Jaryd Clifford – Athlete (Greensborough)
Jade Hameister – Adventurer (Hampton, Melbourne)
Dr Skye Kinder – Rural health advocate (Bendigo)
Leah Jing McIntosh – Writer and photographer (Wheelers Hill, Melbourne)

2019 VICTORIA'S LOCAL HERO

Jason Azzopardi – Founder of KidzFlip (Gisborne)
Andy Gild – Bicycles for Humanity volunteer (Caulfield, Melbourne)
Sam Haycroft – Disability worker and rocker (Phillip Island)
Carol Matthews – Bushfire survivor and activist (Brunswick, Melbourne)

**see bios on following pages*

The Victorian Australian of the Year, Senior Australian of the Year, Young Australian of the Year and Local Hero Award recipients will be announced on Tuesday, 23 October 2018 at Government House in Melbourne.

The Victorian Award recipients will join other State and Territory recipients from around Australia in the national awards, which will be held in Canberra on 25 January 2019.

National Australia Day Council CEO, Ms Karlie Brand said the Victorian nominees are among 130 people being recognised in all States and Territories as part of the 2019 Australian of the Year Awards.

"The Victorian nominees are inspiring not only for their achievements, but for their passionate pursuit of dreams, innovative thinking and commitment to helping others," said Ms Brand.

"Their stories show us the many ways in which Australians are making a difference."

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

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Nominee bios attached with this media release or can be viewed from australianoftheyear.org.au

Nominee photos can be downloaded from australianoftheyear.org.au

Information on the Australian of the Year Awards process can be found here:
<https://www.australianoftheyear.org.au/nominate/frequently-asked-questions>

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BIOGRAPHIES

VICTORIA - NOMINEES - AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

Ian and Simone Carson

Founders of SecondBite

After discovering that more than \$8 billion in food is thrown away each year in Australia, Ian and Simone Carson decided to do something about it. Starting by personally rescuing leftover fruit and vegetables from the Prahran Market and redistributing it to a charity for homeless people, the Carsons formally established SecondBite in 2005. The organisation has grown from three volunteers who moved 600 kgs of food in Victoria, to a nationwide not-for-profit, with 87 staff and hundreds of volunteers who, through its agency partners have provided over 105 million fresh, nutritious meals to Australians in hardship. SecondBite does more than feed hungry Australians. Through the agencies it supports, it helps provide companionship and connection and shines a light on social issues. At the same time, rescuing food provides significant environmental benefits.

The Carsons have overseen every step of SecondBite's growth, ensuring it stays true to its original values. Their actions demonstrate kindness, dedication, care and service to their fellow Australians.

Hollie Feller

Advocate and fundraiser

Hollie Feller's son Harry was born with Usher Syndrome 1F, a rare condition that caused him to be born deaf, have balance issues and be likely to lose his sight by adolescence. Despite having no medical background, Hollie and her family searched far and wide for a cure.

Hollie, a mother of three and small business owner, teamed up with another mother whose child has Usher Syndrome, setting up UsherKids Australia in 2014, to connect families living with the diagnosis of a rare disease. Understanding that early diagnosis makes it easier for families to take control of their child's care, they are working with Melbourne specialists to improve protocols for referral for genetic testing.

While attending global conferences, speaking to world-leading specialists and visiting research institutions, Hollie set up Genetic Cures Australia in 2016. The organisation seeks to make it easier for Australians with rare-diseases to access clinical trials, by leveraging international bodies and advocating for more Australian-based medical research.

Mark Sullivan

Founder and managing director of MDGH

From his tiny Southbank office, Mark Sullivan's work ensures millions of disadvantaged people get the medicines they need. Founder and managing director of not-for-profit Medicines Development for Global Health (MDGH), Mark and his 11-person team develop medicines based on public health needs, rather than commercial opportunity. After years of fundraising, research and development, MDGH was the first Australian biopharmaceutical company to receive FDA approval for a new drug, moxidectin. The medicine treats river blindness, a debilitating illness affecting 20 million people in sub-Saharan Africa. The company has a self-sustained model to manufacture and distribute moxidectin. They are also planning clinical trials to assess moxidectin as a new treatment for the scabies parasite that up to 70% of Aboriginal babies have suffered by the age of 1.

The drug may also be an option for the 1.5 billion people affected with other neglected tropical diseases. Just as importantly, Mark has developed a highly effective new business model for developing much-needed new medicines.

Chris Varney

Autism advocate and visionary

Chris Varney wants us to rethink the negative narrative around autism. Growing up with Asperger's (a mild form of autism), he was inspired by the love, acceptance and support his family gave him to form the social enterprise I CAN Network in 2013.

I CAN educates children, young people and adults with autism on their rights, and helps them realise the value and unique potential of their abilities. By focusing on what autistic people can do, and through the mentorship of people who have experience living with autism, I CAN empowers mentees to make the most of their inherent strengths and natural interests.

In the past year alone, I CAN has mentored over 1050 autistic children, teens and adults nationwide, through schools, TAFEs, workplaces, camps and online programs. The organisation has also provided employment for 34 autistic people, many of whom are mentors. Chris' hard work and dedication also extends to increasing understanding of autism through his various speaking engagements.

VICTORIA - NOMINEES - SENIOR AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

Roy Francis, 78

Health ambassador and advocate

Roy Francis has been an active community volunteer throughout his life, contributing on school, sports and coaching committees. Since retiring in 2006, Roy has devoted his time to helping others, acting as an ambassador for the Prostate Cancer Foundation Australia, National Stroke Foundation, Beyond Blue and Cancer Council Victoria.

After being diagnosed with prostate cancer, Roy began travelling around Victoria to raise awareness about the disease – founding 11 prostate cancer support groups in partnership with local hospitals. He is now an advocate for multiple organisations, giving talks throughout the state on bowel cancer, prostate awareness, and mental health issues. In total, he has delivered more than 870 health presentations to over 27,000 Victorians.

Roy also does considerable fundraising work for local charities – and has succeeded in raising millions of dollars for good causes. He has received numerous honours for his outstanding community service, including the prestigious international Edward C Kaps Hope Award in Chicago, and the Premier's Volunteer Champions Award.

Alison Harcourt, 89

STEM pioneer

As a woman in mathematics and statistics, Alison Harcourt's seminal work from the 1950s onwards was often overlooked. She is now best known for developing integer linear programming, the basis of efficient computer processing. The 1960 paper written with Ailsa Land on the topic has been cited in 3000 academic journal articles. Alison has written numerous papers and is the co-author of three books. She was also one of the first users of CSIRAC, Australia's first digital computer. As a statistician, she worked with social scientist Ronald Henderson and economist R. J. Harper on what became known as the Melbourne Poverty Survey, Australia's first systematic, quantitative measure of poverty. Their work formed the basis of the 1972 Royal Commission into poverty. Alison's other outstanding work, with fellow statistician Malcolm Clark, on the randomisation of electoral ballot papers led to a change in the Commonwealth Electoral Act in 1984.

Denis Ryan AM, 87

Detective and advocate

Former Mildura police officer, Denis Ryan, was instrumental in uncovering widespread child sexual abuse carried out by Monsignor Father John Day, Mildura's parish priest at Sacred Heart Catholic Church during the 1960s and 1970s. Despite finding significant evidence that Day had molested countless children, Denis was hindered by both the powerful Catholic church and his own police department, who ordered him to drop the case.

Denis showed great compassion and integrity in refusing to back down and continued his pursuit of justice. His attempts to have Father John Day prosecuted cost him his career and his marriage – but he never gave up to the fight for the children who were abused.

While Day died before he could be brought to justice, Denis was ultimately vindicated, appearing as a key witness in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Forty-four years after being dismissed from the force, he received a formal apology for his treatment from Victoria Police.

Graham Salisbury, 74

Volunteer equine therapist

Graham Salisbury and racing horse Subzero (Subbie) have been together through thick and thin. After working in racing for 40 years as Clerk of Course, Graham adopted the 1992 Melbourne Cup winner, so they could enjoy retirement together.

Rather than relaxing, Graham and Subbie are committed advocates for Racing Victoria and the sport they love, visiting primary schools in Melbourne to educate students about career opportunities and horse care.

Recognising the healing effects of equine therapy, Graham has also spent the past ten years visiting hospitals, nursing homes, and hospices with Subbie – bringing joy to thousands of children and adults living with illness and disability.

Although Graham is himself battling cancer, the pair are tireless in their efforts to raise money for charity and make a positive difference in the aged and special needs communities. Their dedication has been recognised across Australia and internationally, with invitations to appear at Crown Casino and global events such as the Dubai World Cup.

VICTORIA - NOMINEES - YOUNG AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

Jaryd Clifford, 19

Athlete

The first-ever Australian Track & Field Paralympian to compete in able-bodied competitions at an international level, Jaryd Clifford has become a trailblazer for the Para sporting community. Diagnosed with Juvenile Macular Degeneration, Jaryd started losing his vision at a young age. But he refused to see his disability as a limitation, finding his feet on the running track.

In 2016, against a field of able-bodied athletes, Jaryd placed second in the 2016 Victorian U18 1500m Junior Championships. He went on to represent Australia in the 2016 Paralympics in Rio, and took the bronze medal at the 2017 World Para Athletics Championships in London.

This year, Jaryd has made history twice – breaking the vision-impaired world record for the 1500m, then winning the National 1500m U20 Men's Race, despite being the only athlete with a disability. This achievement enabled him to represent Australia at the U20 World Championships in Finland. He now has his sights set on the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics.

Jade Hameister, 17

Adventurer

In January 2018, Melbourne schoolgirl Jade Hameister reached the end of an epic journey that has re-written polar exploration history. At 16 years of age, she became the youngest person in history to complete the Polar Hat Trick – skiing to the North Pole, coast-to-coast across Greenland, and to the South Pole (via a new route), journeys of around 1,300km over 80 days. She is also the youngest person in history to ski from the coast of Antarctica to the South Pole unsupported and unassisted, the first Australian woman to do so.

She delivered a TEDx talk in Melbourne in August 2016, in which she implored everyone to shift the focus for young women from how they look, to what they can do.

Through her ethos and hashtag #bravenotperfect she inspires other young people put aside their fear of failure and criticism, to follow their dreams.

She is sharing her love of polar regions to help protect them from global warming.

Skye Kinder, 27

Doctor

Dr Skye Kinder has dedicated her medical career to improving the health of marginalised patients throughout Australia. After witnessing her father travel to Melbourne for specialist appointments, she became committed to easing the travel burden and financial impact of healthcare on rural populations.

While studying, Skye became a passionate advocate for rural health, representing the Australian Medical Students' Association (AMSA) as Rural Health Officer. Through AMSA, she co-founded and chaired the first Rural Health Committee and set up a national Rural Health Summit, creating new opportunities for students in regional areas to participate in advocacy and policy.

Now a doctor, and board member of Rural Doctors Association of Victoria, Skye continues to highlight rural health issues to local, national and international audiences, through her research, ongoing speaking engagements, press appearances, workshops, and articles.

Skye was named Victoria's Junior Doctor of the Year in 2017 and Bendigo's Young Citizen of the Year in 2014.

Leah Jing McIntosh, 26

Writer and photographer

Leah Jing McIntosh is passionate about exploring and celebrating the Asian-Australian experience and driving greater diversity in the Australian media landscape.

In response to the lack of representation of Asian-Australians in the media, she created Liminal Magazine, which highlights the achievements of extraordinary Asian-Australians through long-form interviews and portraits.

The recipient of several creative grants and awards, including a Wheeler Centre Hot Desk Fellowship and a Creative Victoria grant in 2018, Leah is a talented writer and photographer. Her articles on contemporary racism have been published by SBS, Archer and Metro Magazine, and, in May this year, she collaborated with the New York Times Australia Bureau.

In 2018, Leah also co-founded Comic Sans, a serialised comics anthology that provides a platform to artists from under-represented communities. As part of the Footscray Community Arts Centre Emerging Culture Leaders Program, Leah continues to inspire and represent the Asian-Australian arts community and promote greater diversity in Australia's media.

VICTORIA - NOMINEES - AUSTRALIA'S LOCAL HERO

Jason Azzopardi

Founder of KidzFlip

In his role as the Youth Resource Officer in Gisborne Police Station in the Macedon Ranges, Leading Senior Constable Jason Azzopardi knows firsthand the challenges that many young Australians face. In a community where 26 per cent of its population are aged under 19, Jason sees the impact that issues like bullying, mental illness, unemployment, substance abuse, anti-social behaviour and family violence have on young people.

To help young people avoid becoming victims or offenders, Jason set up the not-for-profit group, KidzFlip. The organisation, supported by local community groups and the wider community, engages with young people having trouble at home or school. The program then links youth to training, education or other support services to help turn their lives around.

Brought up in a close-knit family, Jason has always been motivated to help others. This year he has personally provided invaluable support and care to the families and friends of three young people who lost their battle with mental illness.

Andy Gild

Volunteer for Bicycles for Humanity

In 2008, Melbourne physiotherapist/wellness coach Andy Gild co-founded the first Australian chapter of Bicycles for Humanity (B4H). By the end of 2018, B4H will have shipped over 10,000 donated bicycles to support initiatives in Namibia, Botswana, Kenya, Madagascar, Zambia, and Cambodia, and selected Australian communities.

Once the bicycles arrive, the shipping container is turned into a bicycle workshop, in collaboration with Bicycling Empowerment Network Namibia (BENN) and local partners. The workshop creates ongoing, sustainable employment by training locals in mechanics and business skills. It also creates funding opportunities for future projects, like computer centres, farming services and solar phone-charging facilities.

Andy's voluntary contributions include serving on B4H's Board, including as Vice President, Treasurer and President; helping B4H Melbourne become incorporated and achieve deductible gift-recipient status; using her coaching skills to help B4H grow and better collaborate with partner organisation BENN; and driving around Melbourne collecting bicycles, finding places to store them and packing them into shipping containers.

Sam Haycroft

Disability worker and rocker

Sam Haycroft wants to make severely disabled people feel like rock stars – literally. This caring and inspiring musician and disability worker started an inclusive heavy metal band, Skull Fork, with some of the people that he cares for at disability support service, Scope.

Each Thursday, the band meets outside the local post office, moving on to play in front of Woolworths. Support from the Phillip Island community has helped the band members feel connected to the community, leading to increased personal growth, skill development and confidence.

Sam spends countless hours rehearsing and driving members to gigs. Together, the band makes all the decisions about band activities, gigs and fund raising. Their successful crowd-funding campaign helped them record an album, released by MGM. They have also produced their own merchandise, including T-shirts, guitar picks and fridge magnets. This helps them to raise the money they need to travel to band events and gigs, and to pay for band and recording equipment.

Carol Matthews

Bushfire survivor and activist

On 7 February 2009 Carol, Dave and Ellie Matthews experienced an unimaginable tragedy – the death of their 22-year-old son Sam, and the destruction of their home in the Black Saturday bushfires.

Despite her considerable pain, Carol put her grief on 'hold' to advocate for emotional preparedness to be included in bushfire planning and preparation. She has been pivotal in developing a 'multi-sensory bus' to help people understand the effect that high arousal during the chaos of a fire will have on decision making.

Carol has attended many meetings with Victorian Government representatives and supported other community members recovering from the trauma of the bushfire.

Carol was also the lead litigant in the class action against the electricity distributor that caused the fire, securing \$500 million for survivors – the largest class action settlement in Australian history. In the face of her own personal loss, she displayed enormous courage to secure a better outcome for bushfire victims.