

**MEDIA RELEASE
EMBARGOED UNTIL FRIDAY 18 OCTOBER 2013**

**HIGH ACHIEVERS RECOGNISED FOR THEIR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS IN NSW
AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS 2014**

Finalists in the NSW Australian of the Year Awards 2014 include an inventor, a pain medicine expert, Indigenous champion, Paralympian, financier and social entrepreneur, wildlife warrior, community leader and marine scientist.

The NSW award finalists for 2014 are:

NSW AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR 2014

Dr Tom Denniss - Entrepreneur and Marathon Runner (Randwick)
Professor Michael Boyer AM - Cancer Researcher (Vaucluse)
Adam Goodes - Football Player and Indigenous Community Leader (Sydney)
Liesl Tesch - Paralympian and Humanitarian (Woy Woy)

NSW SENIOR AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR 2014

Peter Ford - Inventor and Enabler (Bellevue Hill)
Professor Michael Cousins AM - Pain Medicine Expert (Palm Beach)
Sister Annette Cunliffe RSC - Humanitarian and Educator (Bondi Junction)
Adjunct Professor Frank Talbot AM - Marine Scientist (Riverview)

NSW YOUNG AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR 2014

Jeremy Balkin - Financier & Social Entrepreneur (Rose Bay)
Jacqueline Freney - Paralympian (Skennars Head)
Turia Pitt - Survivor (Narrawallee)
Joseph Tawadros - Musician (Newtown)

NSW LOCAL HERO 2014

Jennifer Beale - Indigenous Champion (St Marys)
Reverend Graham Long - Community Leader (Bondi)
Douglas Painting - Community Leader (Bookham)
Dr Howard Ralph - Wildlife Warrior (Mona Vale)

The NSW Australian of the Year, Senior Australian of the Year, Young Australian of the Year and Local Hero Award recipients will be announced on **Monday 18 November** at the **Museum of Contemporary Art**. The NSW award recipients will then join recipients from all other States and Territories as finalists for the national awards, which will be held on 25 January 2014 in Canberra.

National Australia Day Council CEO, Mr Jeremy Lasek, said the NSW finalists are from a variety of backgrounds but all use their passion and talents in remarkable ways.

"The NSW finalists are an extraordinary group of people who work tirelessly in a range of different fields - some working for the greater good at a local level and others at a national and international level," said Mr Lasek.

"It is a privilege to be able to shine the spotlight on this remarkable group of people."

The Commonwealth Bank has been a Major Sponsor of the Australian of the Year Awards for more than 30 years. Chief Executive Officer Ian Narev congratulated the NSW finalists.

"On behalf of the Commonwealth Bank, I congratulate the finalists in the 2014 Australian of the Year Awards across all States and Territories. To emerge as a finalist from the thousands of nominated Australians is a great accomplishment. I wish you all the best of luck in the next stage of the program," said Mr Narev.

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

Ends.

Finalist bios attached with this media release or downloadable from www.australianoftheyear.org.au

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BIOGRAPHIES

NSW - FINALISTS - AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

Dr Tom Denniss - Entrepreneur and Marathon Runner

In 2013, Dr Tom Denniss became the fastest person to circumnavigate the world on foot, after undertaking an epic journey which saw him run a marathon each day for 622 days. During the 26,232 kilometre quest, Tom traversed the icy peaks of the Andes, skirted the rim of the Grand Canyon and trod the dusty length of the Nullarbor. He tore through 17 pairs of runners, covered five of the world's seven continents and raised more than \$60,000 for *Oxfam Australia*. A high achiever, Tom has a PhD in Mathematics and Oceanography and is the founder of renewable wave energy company *Oceanlinx*. Tom invented and commercialised a technology that converts energy in ocean waves into electricity. A vocal contributor to discussions about environmental issues, Tom sits on several international committees related to climate change and renewable energy, and was the first person to be inducted into the *International Ocean Energy Hall of Fame* as an ocean energy pioneer.

Professor Michael Boyer AM - Cancer Researcher

Chief Clinical Officer of the *Chris O'Brien Lifehouse* and former Director of the *Sydney Cancer Centre*, Professor Michael Boyer has saved the lives of many people who thought their cancer was incurable, and he has added many years to the life expectancy of others. Michael's major clinical interest is in the treatment of lung cancer, mesothelioma, and head and neck cancers. He is actively involved in research, focusing on the testing of new anti-cancer drugs for the treatment of lung cancer. Michael is the author of more than 120 scientific publications, holds several competitive grants and has been recognised as a member of six distinguished medical societies. Valuing the life of each patient, Michael never gives up on innovative approaches, little-known drugs or new clinical trials that might make a difference. An educator and leader of a great team, Michael inspires everyone from patients to colleagues. Intelligent, passionate and dedicated, Michael is giving many people the gift of life.

Adam Goodes - Football Player and Indigenous Community Leader

An Andjatharra man, Adam Goodes is a professional Australian Rules football player with the Sydney Swans. Adam holds an elite place in AFL history, winning two Brownlow Medals and two premierships. He is a four-time All-Australian, member of the Indigenous Team of the Century, and has represented Australia in the International Rules Series. Adam is proud of his Indigenous heritage, and is actively involved with several Indigenous sport and community programs. He has spent time working with troubled youth, including those in youth detention centres. Together with his cousin and former teammate Michael O'Loughlin, Adam established the *Go Foundation* which empowers the next generation of Indigenous role models in all walks of life. Adam co-chairs the foundation, focused on promoting education, employment and healthy lifestyles. Adam is a great role model and advocate for the fight against racism both on and off the field and is admired by a great many people around the nation.

Liesl Tesch - Paralympian and Humanitarian

A world-renowned Paralympic gold medallist and champion of disability sport across the globe, Liesl Tesch is a truly inspiring Australian. The mountain bike accident that left Liesl a partial paraplegic has not prevented her from becoming a wheelchair basketball champion, a sailor and a humanitarian. Liesl has found international success in a number of sports, changed the lives of individuals and communities around the world, and has commenced a personal mission to ensure social justice and inclusion for all people with disabilities. Liesl even manages to squeeze in a full time career as a high school teacher. After winning many medals in wheelchair basketball, Liesl switched to sailing, winning an elusive Paralympic gold medal in 2012. Liesl's victory was the impetus to launch *Sport Matters*, a not-for-profit focused on creating a "world where everyone is active, healthy, included, empowered and free from poverty". Liesl lives her life with no fear and dedicates herself to empowering others to do the same.



NSW - FINALISTS - SENIOR AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

Peter Ford - Inventor and Enabler

63 years old

While working for CNN, Peter Ford reported on some of the biggest stories in the world - from US Space Shuttle missions to the first Gulf War. But Peter's biggest achievement was the invention of a device – *Neuroswitch* – which enables people who cannot even lift a finger to communicate through a simple laptop. In 1982, while at CNN, Peter devoted his spare time to computer programming, and was part of the first US Veterans Administration team to develop microcomputers for rehabilitation and communications for people with disabilities. Peter's passion to help people with profound disabilities led him to found *Control Bionics*, and serve as a software consultant to rehabilitation researchers and therapists around the world. After decades of research and development, and help from Stephen Hawking, Peter's invention is helping people who had previously been 'locked in' to communicate with family and friends, write poetry and books, edit videos, send emails and engage in day to day activities that help them feel more connected with the world.

Professor Michael Cousins AM - Pain Medicine Expert

74 years old

Australia's pre-eminent pain medicine expert, Professor Michael Cousins has devoted his entire career and much of his personal life to improving the lives of people living with pain. His selfless commitment to this goal over the past four decades has led to a new understanding of chronic pain as a disease in its own right. Michael's advocacy is now prompting governments in Australia and internationally to recognise pain as a health care priority. Millions of Australians live with chronic pain, and up to 80 per cent do not get adequate treatment. Michael's awareness of this suffering prompted him to initiate the first *Australian and International Pain Summits* in 2010, leading to the development of national strategies which have revolutionised the way pain is understood. Michael has produced more than 300 peer-reviewed papers, as well as three books; he has established research centres, chaired dozens of advisory boards and is admired as a truly ground-breaking researcher, clinician, teacher and advocate in pain management.

Sister Annette Cunliffe RSC - Humanitarian and Educator

71 years old

A shining light for all Australians, regardless of their beliefs, Sister Annette Cunliffe has devoted her life to providing leadership in education and pursuing social justice for the most vulnerable members of our community. Annette joined the *Religious Sisters of Charity* in 1959, taking vows of poverty, chastity, obedience and service to the poor in 1962. Annette has never wavered from this commitment. With a degree, masters and PhD in education, Annette was a teacher, principal, senior lecturer, and for three years, head of the School of Educational Leadership at the Australian Catholic University. She has also acted as a mentor for young teachers from South East Asia. At 71, Annette is the Congregational Leader of her order, and coordinates outreach programs; from safe houses for mothers and children at risk in their own homes, to transport assistance for rural people needing help while undergoing medical treatment. Generous, wise and kind, Annette never tires of helping others.

Adjunct Professor Frank Talbot AM - Marine Scientist

83 years old

At the age of 83, Adjunct Professor Frank Talbot continues to devote his life to the protection and preservation of Australian and international marine environments. With a PhD in coral reef fishes, Frank has made a lasting contribution to marine science through his work, establishing the *Lizard Island* and *One Tree Island* research stations. Frank was also founding chair of the *Sydney Institute of Marine Science*, which is now one of the world's leading centres for marine research. The only Australian to have led the prestigious *Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History* in Washington DC, Frank was also Director of the *Australian Museum* for many years. Frank's career, contribution and achievements demonstrate his extraordinary leadership skills, intelligence and outstanding scientific record, and he has inspired thousands of young Australians to pursue careers in science and marine conservation. Now in his ninth decade, Frank is still full of energy and enthusiasm for his work, and is actively making a contribution to his community and his country.



NSW - FINALISTS - YOUNG AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

Jeremy Balkin - Financier & Social Entrepreneur

30 years old

In 2012, Jeremy Balkin left his high flying career in corporate finance to inspire wealthy Australians to embrace a life of giving. Jeremy founded *Karma Capital*, a financial advisory firm which helps the super wealthy to embrace philanthropy. At the same time, Jeremy's own non-profit philanthropic platform, *Give While You Live*, has raised millions of dollars for a range of causes. In the past three years, Jeremy has run the New York, Boston, Chicago and London marathons, and successfully returned from Mount Everest Base Camp in Nepal, raising funds for charities in Australia and overseas. In 2013, Jeremy was selected as a *Young Global Leader* by the World Economic Forum, and has given speeches about his vision to see "Philanthropy as an Asset Class" at the United Nations, Harvard, Columbia and Yale University's. Jeremy is applying his intelligence, education and experience to positively influence the allocation of capital and build a fairer world for all its citizens.

Jacqueline Freney - Paralympian

21 years old

Being born with cerebral palsy has not stopped Jacqueline Freney from achieving greatness in the sporting arena. Following in the footsteps of her swimming family, Jacqueline set herself the goal to become a competitive swimmer. In 2012, Jacqueline won a remarkable eight gold medals at the London 2012 Paralympic Games, becoming Australia's most successful Paralympian at a single games. Two of Jacqueline's performances were under world record time. She won a gold medal for every event in which she competed and her gold medal haul was greater than any other competitor from any country. Her success earned her the crown of Australia's *2012 Paralympian of the Year*. Jacqueline's indomitable spirit is not confined to the swimming pool. She is actively involved in the wider community, working with *Swimming Australia* as a motivational speaker to help other people with disabilities reach their potential. Jacqueline is an inspirational role model and positive proof that, with hard work and determination, anything is possible.

Turia Pitt - Survivor

26 years old

In 2011, Turia Pitt entered an ultra-marathon race that would change her life forever. Caught in a grass fire in a remote gorge in the Kimberleys, Turia suffered catastrophic burns to 65 per cent of her body. Turia, who was always a high achiever, refused to let the tragedy define her. Two years after her accident, there is no stopping Turia, who is studying her Masters in Engineering and completing an MBA. She ran the 2012 *City2Surf*, and plans to tackle the Lake Argyle Swim and a section of the Great Wall of China in 2014 to raise money for charity. Turia is passionate about organ and tissue donation, and is an advocate for the organisation *DonateLife*; she is also the ambassador of *Interplast*, a charity providing free reconstructive surgery to people in developing countries. Without an ounce of self-pity, bitterness or blame, Turia has bravely shared her story in her autobiography, *Everything to Live For*, and has inspired people with her determination to "never, never give up".

Joseph Tawadros - Musician

30 years old

Born in Cairo in 1983, Joseph Tawadros immigrated to Australia with his family in 1986, bringing with him a musical tradition inherited from his grandfather, a virtuoso of the violin and the oud. Joseph has established himself as one of the world's leading oud performers and composers. He has recorded and composed for some of the world's leading musicians and appears in concert halls worldwide, dazzling audiences with his brilliant technique, his passionate musicianship and his joyous style of performance. Always willing to push the boundaries and challenge traditional musical forms and rhythms, Joseph has recorded 10 albums to date, winning an ARIA Award in 2012 for *Concerto of the Greater Sea* with the Australian Chamber Orchestra. Joseph has been responsible for expanding the oud's reputation in mainstream western culture, while also gaining recognition in the Arab world for his virtuosity. A true ambassador for multiculturalism, Joseph has made a great contribution to the Australian musical landscape, uniting people and bridging cultures through his music.



NSW - FINALISTS - AUSTRALIA'S LOCAL HERO

Jennifer Beale - Indigenous Champion

Twenty years ago, Jennifer Beale began operating the *Butucarbin Aboriginal Corporation* from the boot of her car. Today, Jennifer oversees an organisation that serves thousands of people in Sydney's Mt Druitt, and supports the Indigenous community to achieve social justice, improve health and foster cultural pride. A trained nurse, Jennifer's deep commitment to her people, and others who are marginalised in society, has driven her tireless devotion to community development and resilience. Many of Jennifer's programs have been wildly successful – her *NAIDOC Day* celebrations, for example, attract up to two thousand people. Through Jennifer's ongoing support, young women have escaped domestic violence, Aboriginal elders are respected and cared for, 'at risk' youth have re-engaged with education and employment, and children have learned traditional dances and cultural customs. Passionate and persistent, Jennifer is prepared to stand up in the face of injustice and to ensure that the voices of those least able to speak for themselves are heard.

Reverend Graham Long - Community Leader

When the Reverend Graham Long joined the Wayside Chapel a decade ago as its pastor and Chief Executive Officer, it was a shadow of its former glory. The hub for Sydney's socially marginalised, the Wayside Chapel was on the verge of bankruptcy, service delivery was spasmodic, its buildings were dilapidated and its existence was seriously under threat. Graham's inspired leadership, commitment and extraordinary ability to connect with all people has rejuvenated the Wayside Chapel and it is now a flourishing refuge of love and optimism. With a philosophy of 'love over hate', Graham has touched and transformed the lives of thousands of Australians. Graham leads a team of 32 staff and more than 500 volunteers who deliver programs and activities for more than 75,000 visitors each year. He has helped drug addicts and alcoholics, chronic gamblers, victims of domestic violence and people who suffer from mental illness. Graham's extraordinary gift has been to again make Wayside a hopeful place for everyone to visit.

Douglas Painting - Community Leader

Born and bred in the country, Douglas Painting has been a committed member of his local community for his entire life. A volunteer with many local groups, including the Rural Fire Service, parents and friends associations of schools, the Lions Club, church groups and the Bookham Agricultural Bureau, of which he is currently President, Doug is highly respected for his humble leadership. His common sense approach, practical problem-solving skills, reputation as a 'jack of all trades' and his passion for his local community make Doug the 'go to' man in trying times. After his community was devastated by a major fire in January 2013, Doug was an indispensable asset, volunteering his time for no other reason than he believed he could make a difference. For over 30 years he's fought bushfires, assisted backpackers, rescued people out of car wrecks, led working bees, raised funds for local sporting clubs and managed the *Bookham War Memorial Hall* – and the people of Bookham are richer for Doug's tireless personal contribution.

Dr Howard Ralph - Wildlife Warrior

A skilled and dedicated wildlife veterinarian, Dr Howard Ralph works in a voluntary capacity seven days and seven nights each week to save the broken and bloodied animals of Australia. Howard has achieved legendary status among wildlife rescuers and carers for his commitment to treating any animal he's called to help, from kangaroos to king brown snakes. From the *Southern Cross Wildlife Care Sanctuary* that he founded as a non-commercial venture five years ago, Howard helps thousands of his patients each year. He's clocked up more than 400,000 kilometres in just a few years, driving to help wildlife survivors of floods, cyclones and fires around the country. He's also travelled as far afield as Africa and Asia. He undertakes extremely delicate operations – removing cataracts from a possum's eye, pinning the hips of a rare frog or fixing the wing of a tiny bird. In a profession dedicated to domestic pets, Howard's boundless devotion is giving many of Australia's native creatures a second chance at life.

