

Joint Exhibition Commemorates 2017 Australian of the Year National Finalists

National Museum of Australia Showcases Personal Objects

An advocate for living beyond dementia, a speech pathologist improving literacy in the justice system, a ground-breaking biomedical scientist and an Indigenous health leader, along with refugee champions and campaigners against slavery and domestic violence, will be honoured in a new exhibition featuring the 2017 *Australian of the Year* national finalists.

The National Museum of Australia and the National Australia Day Council (NADC) today launched an exhibition of personal objects representing the experiences of the 2017 *Australian of the Year* national finalists.

National Museum director Dr Mathew Trinca said the 2017 *Australian of the Year* national finalists have chosen diverse and personal objects reflecting their life's journey.

"We are proud to feature the special objects chosen by eight extraordinary individuals and to share their inspirational stories with the nation in this exhibition," Dr Trinca said.

NADC CEO Chris Kirby said, "This December marks the third year that the National Australia Day Council has collaborated with the National Museum of Australia to bring together this unique exhibition."

"We are delighted to showcase the remarkable stories of our 2017 Australian of the Year national finalists through objects that provide a special insight into their lives and their work."

- NSW Australian of the Year: Child soldier turned successful lawyer, Deng Adut, chose a collection of speeches by 19th century British lawyer and politician Thomas Erskine, which he bought as a student to help expand his English vocabulary and understanding of the law.
- VIC Australian on the Year: Refugee, torture and trauma rehabilitation advocate, Paris Aristotle AM, chose a "mind map" sketched in 1987 by John Gibson AM, outlining a detailed plan for Foundation House (the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture) - the organisation Mr Aristotle now heads.
- WA Australian of the Year: Businessman, philanthropist and anti-slavery advocate, Andrew Forrest, chose a brick, given to him by Indian villagers who had extricated themselves from bonded labour; and the *Book of Declarations*, signed in 2014 by religious leaders pledging to eradicate slavery.
- QLD Australian of the Year: Ground-breaking biomedical scientist treating spinal cord injuries, Emeritus Professor Alan Mackay-Sim, chose a fibreglass model of a nose, which usually hangs in his office, reflecting his research into nasal stem cells and their potential to help spinal cord injury.
- TAS Australian of the Year: A speech pathologist working in the justice system, Rosalie Martin, selected a perfume chosen for her by a Fijian woman and two golden cowrie shells, representing a formative period of her life living in Fiji.
- NT Australian of the Year: Indigenous leader and business woman of the year, Andrea Mason, selected a family photograph and a sports trophy she won in 1972 at the North Kalgoorlie primary school sports day, reflecting her parents' emphasis on participation and striving to achieve one's personal best.
- SA Australian of the Year: Author and advocate for living beyond dementia, Kate Swaffer, picked a wooden seagull, inspired by the book *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, which advocates following your own path to truth and freedom.
- ACT Australian of the Year: NRL champion turned youth mentor and educator, Alan Tongue, chose the bronzed football boot he received as 2008 Rugby League Players Association Education and Welfare Player of the Year; a white ribbon reflecting his fight against domestic violence; and a wooden cross representing his Christian faith.

Each year Australia celebrates the achievements and contributions of extraordinary people through the *Australian of the Year Awards* by profiling leading citizens who are role models for us all. The 2017 *Australian of the Year Awards* will be announced on 25 January 2017 at Parliament House, Canberra and broadcast live on the ABC from 7.30pm.

media release



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MEDIA CONTACTS

National Museum of Australia & Exhibition:

Tracy Sutherland, (02) 6208 5338, 0438 620 710 or Tracy.Sutherland@nma.gov.au

National Australia Day Council & Australian of the Year Awards:

Nicole Browne, 0414 673 762 or nicole@mediaopps.com.au