

MEDIA RELEASE

WEDNESDAY 2 NOVEMBER 2016

EMBARGOED UNTIL 7:05PM DARWIN TIME OR AS ANNOUNCED AT EVENT

**2017 NORTHERN TERRITORY AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARD
RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED**

2017 NT Australian of the Year – Andrea Mason
2017 NT Senior Australian of the Year – Sister Anne Gardiner AM
2017 NT Young Australian of the Year – Bridie Duggan
2017 NT Local Hero – Tejinder pal Singh

The 2017 Northern Territory Australian of the Year Award recipients have been announced this evening at a ceremony at the Darwin Convention Centre.

The NT Award recipients will join recipients from the other States and Territories as finalists for the national Awards to be announced on 25 January 2017 in Canberra.

The 2017 Northern Territory Australian of the Year is Indigenous leader, Andrea Mason.

Working across a 350,000 square kilometre stretch of central Australia, Andrea Mason is helping Indigenous women to raise strong, healthy children. As the Chief Executive Officer of the Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara Women's Council, Andrea brings together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal thinking to create employment, support health and wellbeing, and tackle domestic violence and other social challenges. With deep respect for local language, law and culture, Andrea is leading innovative social enterprises, such as the Tjanpi Desert Weavers, building micro businesses, teaching valuable employment skills, and melding traditional healers with the best of western medicine to maximise healing and well-being. She is determined to help children and young people realise the same aspirations as their urban counterparts. A high achiever, Andrea was the first Indigenous Australian woman to lead a political party, after the Family First Party chose her as its national leader in 2004. Today, Andrea's commitment, compassion and drive to support families in the vast NPY region is indefatigable.

The 2017 Northern Territory Senior Australian of the Year is 85 year old community champion, Sister Anne Gardiner AM. As a 22-year-old member of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Sister Anne Gardiner was asked to move to Bathurst Island to live among the Tiwi people. In the 62 years since, Sr Anne has devoted her life to enriching community, enhancing opportunity and supporting the Tiwi culture. An advocate of peace, love and the traditional Tiwi way of life, Sr Anne has worked tirelessly to document and preserve the Tiwi language for future generations. The Principal of the local primary school, Sr Anne has educated generations of children while also establishing community clubs, from mothers' groups to Little Athletics. She runs regular prayer meetings, founded an op shop and established a café to raise funds to support her much-loved community. Sr Anne's museum shares valuable stories and traditional customs, while also bringing financial benefit to the people. The cornerstone of the community, Sr Anne has earned an enduring place in the hearts of the Tiwi people.

The 2017 Northern Territory Young Australian of the Year is 24 year old healthy living advocate, Bridie Duggan. Shocked by the suicide of a close friend in her hometown of Katherine, Bridie Duggan decided to take action. Setting herself an extreme challenge, Bridie travelled around Darwin each day for a month, and raised \$27,000 for the Livin Foundation in the process. Determined to raise awareness and funds to support the one in four Australians who will suffer from mental illness during their lives, Bridie wants others to know that speaking up and out is not weak. A qualified life coach and personal trainer, with a degree in exercise and sports science, Bridie inspires people to strive for healthy mind, body and spirit. She devotes countless volunteer hours to her community – helping people to lose weight and gain self-esteem, volunteering as a strapper for football clubs of all codes, and instructing fitness classes for children with autism. With a reputation as superwoman within her community, Bridie draws on an endless supply of energy to encourage others.



The 2017 Northern Territory Local Hero is food van founder, Tejinder pal Singh. For the past four years, Tejinder pal Singh has dedicated the last Sunday of each month to feeding poor and needy locals of northern Darwin. After a gruelling 12-hour shift driving a taxi, Tejinder spends five hours cooking up a storm in his kitchen, preparing 80 kilograms of vegetarian curry and rice, which he then serves as a free lunch. After arriving from the Punjab region with his family in 2006, Tejinder endured a racist tirade of abuse while transporting a passenger which inspired the humble man to break down the negative prejudice associated with turbans. Funding the feast each month from his own pocket, Tejinder attributes his generosity to his deep Sikh faith. His work has inspired three other groups to take up the cause to distribute free food to the homeless on Sundays. And the hungry and thirsty come flocking when they see Tejinder's van, emblazoned with the sign "free Indian food for hungry and needy people."

Northern Territory Chief Minister, Michael Gunner, recognised the recipients for their outstanding efforts and contributions to the NT community and the nation.

"These inspirational people epitomise selflessness by often putting others before themselves," Mr Gunner said.

"We can all learn from their efforts and hard work in helping make our communities and the whole of the Northern Territory a better place to live and work.

"Our recipients hail from vastly different backgrounds yet they all have one thing in common – they have an overwhelming desire to help others.

"It's often that these are the people who go about their business unrecognised, which is why I'm so pleased that their achievements are being acknowledged.

"I'm sure that all Territorians will join me in thanking our recipients and wishing them well at the national Awards."

Australia Day Council NT Chair, Daryl Manzie, said the Territory Awards recipients are four inspirational Australians.

"These Awards celebrate the achievements of Australians worthy of the nation's attention and tonight's finalists, and indeed Award recipients, are no exception to the rule," said Mr Manzie.

"These are remarkable members of our community who lead by example and inspire others to make a difference locally, nationally and globally. They are willing to stand up for what they believe in, to mentor and to take others on their journey.

"It is an honour to recognise them through this esteemed Award process and I wish them every success as they go on to the national Australian of the Year Award ceremony in January. Good luck and thank you."



Commonwealth Bank has proudly sponsored the Australian of the Year Awards for 37 years. Chief Executive Officer, Ian Narev, said it was an honour to acknowledge the Northern Territory Award recipients.

“Commonwealth Bank congratulates Andrea, Sister Anne, Bridie and Tejinder on becoming national finalists in the Australian of the Year Awards,” said Mr Narev.

“We are delighted to celebrate their achievements and we wish them all the best for the National Awards in January.”

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 for the Awards announcements as they happen - once each award is announced, it can be reported.

For more information on the Australian of the Year Awards or members of the selection panel visit www.australianoftheyear.org.au and <http://www.australianoftheyear.org.au/news-and-media/selection-panel-members/>

Photos from the Awards announcement event can be downloaded as available from <http://www.australianoftheyear.org.au/news-and-media/media-enquiries/>

