

MEDIA RELEASE

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EMBARGOED UNTIL 4:20PM HOBART TIME OR AS ANNOUNCED AT EVENT

**2017 TASMANIAN AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARD
RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED**

2017 Tasmanian Australian of the Year – Rosalie Martin
2017 Tasmanian Senior Australian of the Year – Margaret Steadman
2017 Tasmanian Young Australian of the Year – Mitch McPherson
2017 Tasmanian Local Hero – Anthony Edler

The 2017 Tasmanian Australian of the Year Award recipients have been announced this afternoon at a ceremony at Government House in Hobart.

The Tasmanian 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 Tasmanian Australian of the Year is speech pathologist, Rosalie Martin. Helping prisoners crack the code of reading, speech pathologist Rosalie Martin has developed a unique approach to literacy. For three years, Rosalie has visited Tasmania's Risdon Prison as a volunteer to deliver Just Sentences, a pilot project that is achieving astounding results. With specialist knowledge in the acquisition of language, and in the processing and production of speech sounds, Rosie is able to uncover hidden literacy problems and tackle them head on. As a result, many of the people in her program have learned to read in a matter of months, and Rosie is showing how many lives, currently on hold in prison, could be transformed. The founding speech pathologist of Chatter Matters Tasmania – a charity building awareness and skills in human communication – Rosie also runs her own private practice specialising in services for children with autism spectrum disorder. With patience and persistence, Rosie is helping others to open new doors and explore new worlds.

The 2017 Tasmanian Senior Australian of the Year is 72 year old sustainable living advocate, Margaret Steadman. A climate and sustainable living advocate, Margaret Steadman finds practical solutions to many of our most challenging conundrums. While executive officer of Sustainable Living Tasmania, Margaret helped people understand the small steps that can make a big difference to the environment – from embracing energy efficiency to considering low-carbon footprint end of life options. A founding member of Climate Action Hobart and the West Hobart Environment Network, and a Council member of the Australian Conservation Foundation, Margaret has worked to influence the development of a climate action plan for the Tasmanian Government. She was the Hobart coordinator for the global People's Climate March in the lead-up to the 2015 Paris Climate Summit, and has organised local lobbying of banks to divest of climate-damaging investments. Margaret has led community initiatives from fire-ready forums to sustainable transport working groups. She also volunteers in the Migrant Resource Centre's refugee program and the Source Community Wholefoods Co-op. Quietly determined but never confrontational, Margaret works hard for people and planet.

The 2017 Tasmanian Young Australian of the Year is 29 year old suicide prevention leader, Mitch McPherson. When his younger brother took his own life in 2013, Mitch McPherson turned his devastating loss into a successful suicide prevention charity. Mitch has channelled his energy and ideas into SPEAK UP! Stay ChatTY, which honours his brother Ty and spreads the message that it's OK to not be OK. Starting with bumper stickers, Mitch has since raised more than \$250,000 through running events, golf days and gala balls. He has more than 19,800 followers on Facebook, and has spoken to more than 300 school groups, workplaces and sporting clubs to help people understand that nothing is so bad that it can't be shared. Now working full-time as a youth suicide prevention project officer with Relationships Australia Tasmania, Mitch's vision is that SPEAK UP! Stay ChatTY will become a national charity. Demonstrating personal resilience, care for others, and a deep understanding of how to turn adversity into opportunity, Mitch has personally helped hundreds of Tasmanian students and families.



The 2017 Tasmanian Local Hero is youth worker, Anthony Edler of Risdon Vale. A community leader and positive role model, Anthony Edler is driving a program that helps disadvantaged and at-risk young people in his community, while also expanding the possibilities for people in Namibia. The program coordinator of the Risdon Vale Bike Collective, Ant combines his knowledge and skills of mountain biking and youth work to help young people fix broken-down bikes while developing life and employment skills and making a positive contribution to society. Over the years the bikes have either been given away or sold to fund community projects – an upgrade to the local BMX track and the development of bush trails among them. Since Ant kick-started the program, more than 440 bikes have been repaired and donated to people in Namibia, creating jobs, helping children get to school and supporting nurses to care for the sick. With patience and passion, Ant has built links with funding bodies and businesses, schools and charities. He’s helped young kids gain support and confidence, as well as the satisfaction of giving to others in need.

National Australia Day Council CEO, Chris Kirby, said the Tasmanian Award recipients are people of whom all Tasmania can be proud.

“The Tasmanian Award recipients are all using their skills and experience to improve lives – whether it be helping individuals, changing communities or protecting our environmental future, they are making a significant impact,” said Mr Kirby.

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 Tasmanian Award recipients.

“Commonwealth Bank congratulates Rosalie, Margaret, Mitch and Anthony 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.

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

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/>

