

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**SUNDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2016**

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 4:40PM PERTH TIME OR AS ANNOUNCED AT EVENT**

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

**2017 WA Australian of the Year – Andrew Forrest  
2017 WA Senior Australian of the Year – Peter Kenyon  
2017 WA Young Australian of the Year – Abdullahi Alim  
2017 WA Local Hero – June Oscar AO**

The Governor of Western Australia, Her Excellency the Honourable Kerry Sanderson AC, and the Premier of Western Australia, the Honourable Colin Barnett MLA, have announced the 2017 Western Australia's Australian of the Year Award recipients at a ceremony at the Government House Ballroom in Perth this afternoon.

They both paid tribute to all the finalists for their contribution to the community and their often tireless work for others. In presenting the Award recipients with their trophies, they wished them well as they represent Western Australia for the national Awards in Canberra in January.

The WA 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 WA Australian of the Year is philanthropist and anti-slavery advocate, Andrew Forrest.** With self-made wealth, Andrew Forrest drives hands-on philanthropy, supporting Australian initiatives for some 250 community strengthening causes. He is the first Australasian to pledge to give away the overwhelming majority of his wealth. Never daunted by the scale of challenge, Andrew devotes his relentless energy to society's most vulnerable, tirelessly working to highlight Australia's Indigenous disparity and drawing attention to and liberating 45.8 million people trapped in modern slavery around the world. His highly successful Fortescue Metals Group is one of Australia's largest engagers of Aboriginal businesses and Aboriginal employees. Andrew publicly encourages 'honest failure' as key to any country's success and humility as crucial to sustainable leadership. He promotes that he failed his way to success and encourages us all to stay above the politics of small thinking. Andrew wrote 'Creating Parity' for Prime Minister and Cabinet, served on the Global Citizenship Commission to refresh the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights for the United Nations, and is widely considered as one of Australia's greatest philanthropists, business leaders and change agents.

**The 2017 WA Senior Australian of the Year is 65 year old social entrepreneur, Peter Kenyon.** A community enthusiast and social entrepreneur, Peter Kenyon has worked with more than 1,600 communities in Australia and 59 overseas to stimulate economic renewal. Motivated by the desire to create healthy, inclusive and enterprising local economies, in 1989 Peter started Bank of I.D.E.A.S (Initiatives for the Development of Enterprising Action and Strategies). Since then, he's helped communities spark their own ideas and invest in themselves to build a sustainable future. He's worked with communities to build economic strategies in locations as far flung as Kuwait and Kakadu, Somalia and Subiaco. A keen author, Peter has written 16 books on community and economic development, youth policy and enterprise. A master communicator, he is a sought-after presenter and speaker, and tirelessly supports other international thought leaders in the pursuit of community activation. Peter's passion and purpose has seen him traverse the globe over 35 years in his relentless ambition to enable communities to discover their strengths and transform themselves.

**The 2017 WA Young Australian of the Year is 24 year old social innovator, Abdullahi Alim.** He graduated from his honours degree in finance last year, but Abdullahi Alim has already co-founded an innovation lab to solve issues of contemporary concern. Abdullahi came to Australia as a Somali refugee at the age of five. At 24, he is pursuing studies through Stanford University. Now, through the Lighthouse Strategy, Abdullahi runs 'hackathons' – fast-paced and intense exercises that bring bright young



innovators together to develop solutions to global challenges. Abdullahi's approach has attracted partners from the Australian Government to Google and the US Department of State. For example, MYHACK, an anti-extremism hackathon he coordinates, has seen young Australians create cutting-edge digital solutions to undermine the influence and pervasive appeal of violent extremist propaganda. Abdullahi's goal is to create hubs or 'lighthouses' around the world to promote social impact and youth entrepreneurship. He's set his sights on innovation challenges to empower more young Australians to solve international issues including the global refugee crisis and Indigenous disadvantage in the West.

**The 2017 WA Local Hero is anti-alcohol activist, June Oscar AO of Fitzroy Crossing.**

A senior Bunuba woman from Fitzroy Crossing, June Oscar upset businesses and even members of her own extended family when she began the tough work of securing alcohol restrictions in her community in 2007. But those restrictions acted as a circuit-breaker for a town in crisis. Frequent alcohol-fuelled violence and suicide had cast a shadow over Fitzroy Crossing in the Kimberley when June enlisted the support of West Australian Police Commissioner Karl O'Callaghan to lobby for a ban on full-strength takeaway alcohol. Since then, June has overseen the nation's first study of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD), discovering what many suspected: that her community has one of the highest rates of permanent brain damage from maternal alcohol abuse in the world. With remarkable strength and an extraordinary commitment to collaboration, June has brought about constructive discussion between often conflicting groups to support Indigenous families affected by FASD, and to build a safe and healthy future for the generations ahead of her.

National Australia Day Council CEO, Chris Kirby, said the Western Australian Award recipients are innovative and driven leaders within their fields and are inspiring ambassadors for their state.

"The WA Award recipients are leaders at all levels of community, creating positive change for others and for the future of our country," 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 Western Australian Award recipients.

"Commonwealth Bank congratulates Andrew, Peter, Abdullahi and June 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](http://australianoftheyear.org.au).

**ENDS.**

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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](http://www.australianoftheyear.org.au) and <http://www.australianoftheyear.org.au/news-and-media/selection-panel-members/>

