

MEDIA RELEASE
WEDNESDAY 24 OCTOBER 2018

NOMINEES ANNOUNCED FOR 2019 ACT AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS

A comedian who advocates against domestic violence, a YWCA leader targeting equality and homelessness, an ecologist saving species through education, a paediatrician upholding children's rights, an advocate helping people with intellectual disability find their voices and a woman who gets migrant women moving are among nominees for the 2019 ACT Australian of the Year Awards.

The nominees announced today are in the running to be named ACT Australian of the Year, ACT Senior Australian of the Year, ACT Young Australian of the Year and ACT Local Hero.

The 2019 ACT Award nominees are:

2019 ACT AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

Megan Gilmour - Education advocate for sick children (Hawker)
Kate Grarock - Ecologist and conservation advocate (Cook)
Virginia Haussegger AM - Journalist and women's advocate (Canberra)
Rebecca Vassarotti - Community advocate (Dickson)

2019 ACT SENIOR AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

Julian Cribb - Science writer (Franklin)
Cathi Moore - Social justice champion for women and girls (Richardson)
Dr Sue Packer AM - Paediatrician and child advocate (Lyons)
Agnes Shea OAM - Indigenous elder and reconciliation advocate (Gowrie)

2019 ACT YOUNG AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

Sophie Fisher - Mobility enabler for refugee and migrant women (Canberra)
Sally Hill - Indonesian language and bi-lateral relations advocate (Jerrabomberra)
Karlle Noon - Role model for Indigenous youth and STEM advocate (Stirling)
Hannah Wandel - Change agent for young rural women (Kingston)

2019 ACT LOCAL HERO

Peter Gordon - Community advocate (Narrabundah)
Jayanti Gupta - Supporter of women of South Asian origin (Hughes)
Juliet Moody - Comedian and domestic violence advocate (Forde)
David Williams - Disability advocate (Kaleen)

**see bios on following pages*

The ACT Australian of the Year, Senior Australian of the Year, Young Australian of the Year and Local Hero Award recipients will be announced on the evening of Monday 29 October 2018 at the National Arboretum in Canberra.

The ACT Award recipients will join other State and Territory recipients from around Australia in the national awards, which will be held in Canberra on 25 January 2019.

National Australia Day Council CEO, Ms Karlle Brand, said the ACT nominees are among more than 120 people being recognised in all States and Territories as part of the 2019 Australian of the Year Awards.

"The ACT nominees are doing extraordinary work in the community to help others," said Ms Brand.

"Whether it be through their professional skills or their voluntary efforts, they are creating change, improving lives and making our world a better place."

"It's also inspiring to see all nominees in the ACT Australian of the Year and ACT Young Australian of the Year categories this year are women.

“The stories of nominees around the nation show us the many ways in which Australians are making a difference.”

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

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Nominee bios attached with this media release or can be viewed from australianoftheyear.org.au

Nominee photos can be downloaded from australianoftheyear.org.au

Information on the Australian of the Year Awards process can be found here:
<https://www.australianoftheyear.org.au/nominate/frequently-asked-questions>

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BIOGRAPHIES

ACT - NOMINEES - AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

Megan Gilmour

Education advocate for sick children

Megan Gilmour is committed to changing the way schools see their responsibility to kids living with serious illness. Herself the mother of a critically ill child, Megan left a successful career in international development in 2010 to later co-found MissingSchool – a not-for-profit organisation working for continuous school connection for children with illness.

Through pioneering technology, research and partnerships with educators and health professionals, the organisation is boosting learning and social outcomes for sick children, supporting their families and teachers, and helping ease their transitions between their school environment and treatment.

Thanks to Megan's tenacity and drive, MissingSchool is fuelling positive change across Australia for more than 60,000 children who miss school due to illness. A 2016 Churchill Fellow, Megan is co-author of Australia-first research, *School Connection for Seriously Sick Kids: Who Are They, How Do We Know What Works, and Whose Job Is It?* and creator of the national telepresence robot service connecting these children real-time into their classrooms.

Kate Grarock

Ecologist and conservation advocate

A finalist of the 2018 Celestino Eureka Prize for Promoting Understanding of Science, Kate Grarock works tirelessly to engage the ACT community in conservation. After producing six scientific papers on the management of introduced species as part of her PhD, she was appointed Sanctuary Ecologist at Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary in Canberra in 2013.

In addition to her valuable role in protecting and reintroducing some of the ACT's most iconic and vulnerable species, Kate has developed a highly successful citizen-science initiative. This innovative program focusses on educating policy makers, community members, researchers and students on the science and benefits of conservation.

Through her public speaking, storytelling, school visits and media appearances, Kate has become a spokesperson and advocate for the sanctuary and its vital conservation work. She has plans to extend the impact of the program, by strengthening links to the school curriculum and higher degree research, to inspire more young people to protect and conserve the environment.

Virginia Haussegger AM

Journalist and women's advocate

For over 25 years, Virginia Haussegger AM has built a stellar career as a television journalist, writer and commentator. She has reported around the globe for leading current affairs programs on Channel 9, the Seven Network and the ABC, and anchored the ABC's flagship TV News in Canberra.

Virginia is also recognised as a leading advocate for women, and was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 2014. In 2016, she was appointed to head the University of Canberra's Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis' 50/50 by 2030 Foundation, a gender-equality initiative focussed on improving women's representation in leadership roles in government and public administration.

She is a sought-after speaker, addressing corporate and government forums on women's rights, gender equality and the media. She also advocates for women through her positions on various boards and committees, including the ACT Government's Cultural Facilities Corporation and Women in Media Canberra, and is a Patron of Canberra's Rape Crisis Centre.

Rebecca Vassarotti

Community advocate

For 15 years, Rebecca Vassarotti has advocated for the ACT community for gender equality, reducing homelessness, poverty and inequality and improving health services. She was Executive Director of YWCA Canberra for almost a decade. During this time, the organisation was awarded an Employer of Choice Award from the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency, and she led the YWCA Australia delegation to the Commission on the Status of Women in New York twice as well as serving as an advisor to the Australian Government delegation in 2013.

Rebecca holds multiple positions on advisory committees and boards, is a respected consultant and regular contributor for publication RiotACT. As co-Chair of the Canberra Gambling Reform Alliance, she is calling for measures to reduce gambling harm. As a member of the boards of Community Housing Canberra and the Early Morning Centre she works to reduce the impact of homelessness and to increase housing affordability. As Chair of Getaboutable, she advocates helping people with disabilities receive services they need to get out and about more easily.

ACT - NOMINEES - SENIOR AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

Julian Cribb, 68

Science writer

Influential, prolific and optimistic, Julian Cribb authored *Surviving the 21st Century*, a book exploring how we can best survive the ten greatest challenges facing humanity.

In the face of universal threats like climate change, people often feel powerless to influence the future. Julian advocates that individuals can have a big impact simply by choosing how and where they shop, bank and invest. Aligned with hundreds of millions of other equally concerned, equally empowered individuals, we can change the world. If humanity itself forms a consensus to prevent and mitigate climate change, it will be a political act like none other in history.

Articulate and passionate, Julian has written over 9,000 articles, received 32 awards for journalism, and written 10 books. A leader in making scientific progress accessible to ordinary Australians, Julian founded ScienceAlert in 2005, the first website to comprehensively cover Australian science. Julian was foundation president of the Australian Science Communicators and Director of National Awareness for CSIRO.

Cathi Moore, 65

Social justice champion for women and girls

Cathi Moore has devoted more than 30 years to improving the status and lives of women and girls, making an extraordinary contribution to the Canberra community.

Through her social advocacy, mentoring, and work at women's and service organisations, she has supported women and girls who are struggling with financial or personal issues, as well as established and emerging leaders. Cathi's achievements include implementing a sustainable investment strategy for YWCA Canberra to become the leading service provider for women, girls and families; mentoring female leaders; establishing the award-winning Disability House, that helps young people to live independently; helping establish a quota of 30% of YWCA Board Director positions for women aged 30 years or under; and running major community events, like the Marymead fete and Government House morning teas.

Cathi's ability to network and put service before self has benefited many of Canberra's leading community organisations, including the YWCA, ACTCOSS, Marymead, Parentline, Community Housing Canberra, Womenspeak and My Coaching My Future.

Dr Sue Packer AM, 76

Paediatrician and child advocate

Since starting her career as a paediatrician in 1972, Dr Sue Packer AM has worked tirelessly to advocate for the rights of children in our healthcare system and in the wider community.

She has been involved in child abuse prevention through the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect since its very early days and has treated babies and children suffering terrible trauma from child abuse.

In addition, Sue has championed the importance of early childhood environments for the developing brain, leading to recognition by education and government agencies. Sue was one of the driving forces behind the acknowledgement of the importance of creating child-friendly spaces in hospitals and the value of play in recovery.

Lecturing internationally and volunteering on a number of boards to improve health and well-being of children, Sue stands up for the rights of children at every opportunity and encourages others to do the same.

Agnes Shea OAM, 87

Indigenous elder and reconciliation advocate

The most senior elder of the Ngunnawal people, 87-year-old Agnes Shea OAM is a highly respected, dedicated advocate in the ACT's reconciliation movement. Growing up on Oak Hill and Hollywood missions in Yass, she survived harsh conditions due to discrimination. Despite her hardships she has remained gracious and accepting. A mother of six, grandmother of 13 and great-grandmother of 29, Agnes is a member of the Advisory Board to ACT Health and a foundation member of the United Ngunnawal Elders Council (UNEC). She played a role in establishing the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm, a culturally appropriate alcohol and drug residential rehabilitation service for Indigenous people. She continues to represent her people by delivering Welcomes to Country.

In 2004, Agnes received a Medal of the Order of Australia for her service to Ngunnawal people. In 2016, Agnes' life was the subject of the documentary Footprints on our Land – Auntie Agnes, Ngunnawal Elder – now being used as an educational tool across ACT schools.

ACT - NOMINEES - YOUNG AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

Sophie Fisher, 26

Mobility enabler for refugee and migrant women

Giving the gift of mobility and independence, Sophie Fisher is transforming the lives of refugee and migrant women. In 2017, Sophie founded Girls on Bikes, a free program that includes a bike and helmet donated by the community, plus a place in a five-week learn-to-ride program. For women who were not taught to ride at a young age or are from countries where learning to ride was not feasible, Sophie has given the opportunity to safely learn with other women and develop confidence. Already, 34 women have participated in the program with plans to teach another 50 women to ride in 2019; building strength, fitness, mobility and community. Generous with her time, leading with compassion, and a role model for other young women, Sophie also volunteers as a tutor at the Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services, has been a Youth Ambassador with ReachOut, is a Board Director at YWCA Canberra, and is a mentor with Country to Canberra.

Sally Hill, 30

Indonesian language and bi-lateral relations advocate

Sally Hill is passionate about combatting the serious decline in Indonesian language studies in Australia and improving Australia's relationship with our closest neighbour: Indonesia. In 2015, Sally founded the National Australia Indonesia Language Awards - the first language competition of its kind. From primary school students to executives, participants are invited nationwide to compete in an annual showcase of Indonesian language and culture. Sally voluntarily leads a team of 30 to organise the awards and fundraises hundreds of thousands of dollars to ensure their success.

The awards have received commendation both in Australia and Indonesia. Sharing her passion for helping others and improving Australia's bi-lateral relationships, Sally is also a co-founding director of the Australia-Indonesia Youth Association, an Asia Literacy Ambassador for Asialink, has been Managing Editor for the Asian Law Student's Association, Treasurer and Company Secretary for UN Youth Victoria, and has represented Australia at the Malaysian Prime Minister's International Malay Speech Competition.

Karlie Noon, 28

Role model for Indigenous youth and STEM advocate

As the first Indigenous woman in Australia to graduate with a double degree in mathematics and physics, Karlie Noon is using her knowledge to identify the traditional Aboriginal astronomical knowledge embedded within dreamtime stories. The research is helping to recognise and highlight the richness of Indigenous culture and the astronomy science embedded in it.

A Gamileroi woman who was determined to excel, Karlie overcame a poor background to achieve enormous success and her hope of becoming a researcher. Karlie is now conducting research looking at the Milky Way as part of a Master of Astronomy and Astrophysics (Advanced) degree, with CSIRO's Astronomy and Space Science and ANU's Research School of Astronomy and Astrophysics.

She is a generous mentor and motivates others with similar backgrounds, establishing a STEM program for Indigenous students and teachers and mentor's Indigenous students in the CSIRO's ASSETS program. Karlie demonstrates the power of positive role models to inspire the next generation of Indigenous students and fosters pride in Indigenous culture.

Hannah Wandel, 29

Change agent for young rural women

Concerned by the challenges faced by young women in regional Australia, Hannah Wandel founded Country to Canberra to help break down gender and geographical barriers to success. Hannah's passion for helping others was inspired by the generous response of her rural community when a fire destroyed her family's home when Hannah was just 13 years old.

In 2018, Hannah's amazing energy and drive saw her travel over 32,000kms to 80 bush communities nationally, to reach over 3,500 teenage girls to run gender equality, leadership and empowerment workshops.

Hannah has also organised 'Power Trip' camps where young rural women visit Canberra to be mentored by politicians and CEOs, and undertake training. Country to Canberra seeks to equip girls to become leaders in their communities and reach their potential. Program evaluations overwhelmingly show girls who attend have a greater understanding of equality issues and improved self-confidence.

Hannah's tireless efforts to advocate for young women also sees her volunteering on multiple community boards.

ACT- NOMINEES - AUSTRALIA'S LOCAL HERO

Peter Gordon

Community advocate

As CEO of Hands Across Canberra, Peter Gordon helps improve the lives of ACT's most vulnerable people. Serving on the foundation since its inception, Peter provides valuable leadership and uses his extensive network to help small, relatively unknown, community organisations to access funds, volunteers and board members – helping increase their capability.

The foundation accepts and distributes donations, holds fundraising events, links people and businesses to local charities, creates grants, and directs charities to resources, like grants and media assistance.

Peter works tirelessly to foster compassion to those in need within the Canberra community; encouraging people to give financially and volunteer their time.

Generously sharing his own time and skills in entrepreneurship and community engagement, Peter also serves on multiple boards. These include the Canberra Area Theatre Awards, the Indigenous Marathon Project, SmartStart for Kids, and The National Centre for Australian Children's Literature. He is also an ambassador for One Disease At A Time and a past president of Duo Australia.

Jayanti Gupta

Supporter of women of South Asian origin

Passionate about helping empower women of South Asian origin, Jayanti Gupta is founder and chair of the Integrated Women's Network.

The Network is a community organisation that works for the welfare and betterment of women of South Asian origin in the ACT. Assistance programs include health awareness, financial management, key skill development, mentorship, and networking with other women.

Jayanti also prepares and conducts early intervention training aimed at children, to help prevent family violence, called *Better Communication*. Jayanti actively helps women apply for work.

As an accomplished communicator and professional broadcaster, Jayanti is one of the founding members of two multicultural women's radio programs, 'Gender Equity Matters' and 'Yes She Can'. She currently co-produces Radio Harmony, which provides useful information and focuses on issues relevant to multicultural life in Australia.

A tireless volunteer, Jayanti is also a member of the ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Women, the Women's Interfaith Network, and serves on the Federation of Indian Associations of ACT.

Juliet Moody

Comedian and domestic violence advocate

Juliet Moody is the founder of the Fearless Initiative, a charity that uses comedy as a platform to provide hope for victims of family violence. Juliet started the Fearless Initiative to mark 10 years of freedom from her own experience with family violence. She is passionate about sending the message that there is life after family violence, and that confidence and identity can be reclaimed.

Through her work, Juliet demonstrates that comedy is about more than making people laugh – it's also about shining a light in dark places to help shape the community we want to be part of.

In her drive to create a better community, Juliet leads other comedians in uniting against family violence. In 2016 the inaugural Fearless Comedy Gala raised over \$30,000 for the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and is now an annual feature. Year-round, Juliet advocates and fundraises for family violence victims, including through organising fundraising events, such as Stand Up Against Violence.

David Williams

Disability advocate

For people with an intellectual disability, it can be challenging to have their voices heard. But David Williams is helping these people to speak up for themselves, instead of relying on others.

David founded the Confident Speakers program 22 years ago, providing participants with the skills and tools they need to communicate their viewpoint and participate in the broader community. The program combines a structured communication course with social engagement, encouragement and mentoring.

This approach, along with David's persistence and care, has seen participants who seemed non-verbal, grow in confidence, and deliver presentations to others and the community. Participants have also prepared and delivered papers at international conferences, including the International Down Syndrome Congress and the 2013 World Down Syndrome Day at the UN.

David's dedication to people with disabilities has included coordinating five fundraising balls for the ACT Down Syndrome Association, assisting in the Annual Buddy Walk and delivering the ACT's Athlete Leadership Program for Special Olympics over 6 years.