MEDIA RELEASE
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2020 QLD Australian of the Year Award recipients announced

2020 QLD Australian of the Year – Rachel Downie (Buderim)
2020 QLD Senior Australian of the Year – Peter Dornan AM (Toowong)
2020 QLD Young Australian of the Year – Ashleigh Barty (Springfield)
2020 QLD Local Hero – Adjunct Assistant Professor Nick Marshall (Mermaid Waters)

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The 2020 Queensland Australian of the Year Awards have been announced this evening in a ceremony at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The four Queensland recipients will join those from the other states and territories for the national awards ceremony at the National Arboretum in Canberra on 25 January 2020 – the 60th anniversary of the awards.

The 2020 QLD Australian of the Year is educator and social entrepreneur Rachel Downie. (Rachel was unable to attend the presentation event this evening and the award was accepted on her behalf). Twenty-five years ago, Rachel Downie became an educator to help young people flourish. After losing a Year 9 student to suicide, Rachel decided she needed to find a way to support young people to say something when things aren’t right. She discovered students often felt too frightened to come forward with possible life-saving information, because of peer expectations. This led Rachel to developing and self-funding Stymie – an old-fashioned word for stop – to allow students to anonymously report harm without fear. Rachel developed Stymie with extensive consultation and help from students and educators. Since 2014 she has presented Stymie to more than 300,000 students nationally. Implemented nationally and internationally, students are using Stymie to report family violence, bullying, cyber-bullying, depression, illegal activity, harassment, self-harm, and harm to their communities. In 2018, Stymie schools received more than 40,000 notifications from concerned students, empowering them to use their empathy and conscience to report harm, and further a culture of care in their schools.

Men’s health activist Peter Dornan AM is the 2020 QLD Senior Australian of the Year. Following a prostate cancer diagnosis and treatment, and after experiencing depression, incontinence and other side effects, sports medicine physiotherapist Peter Dornan AM put an ad in the newspaper, inviting fellow patients to meet. Since then, he has supported men diagnosed with prostate cancer. Peter’s commitment to helping men share experiences and seek support has helped create a culture change in the treatment management for men with prostate cancer. Receiving a grant to research incontinence – a common consequence in men after prostate cancer treatment – he designed a successful program to treat the condition, and published a book used across Australian prostate cancer support groups. He also developed a nationally and internationally recognised program for managing patients with pelvic pain. Peter is a director of the Board of the Cancer Council of Queensland, for which he has helped raised significant funds. A successful writer and sculptor, he took up mountain climbing after prostate cancer recovery, successfully scaling Mount Kilimanjaro at age 60.
The 2020 QLD Young Australian of the Year is professional tennis player Ashleigh Barty. (Ashleigh was unable to attend the presentation event this evening and the award was accepted on her behalf). Ipswich-born professional tennis player Ashleigh (Ash) Barty inspires legions of fans with her dynamic tennis game, formidable serve and down-to-earth attitude. The former cricketer and teen tennis champion is ranked the world’s number one singles tennis player by the Women’s Tennis Association (WTA) – only the second Australian WTA singles number one after Evonne Goolagong Cawley. As an adult, Ash has won six singles titles on the WTA Tour, including one Grand Slam singles title at the 2019 French Open. She also sits in the top 20 of doubles players, and was a doubles runner up for the Australian Open at the age of just 16. She achieved one Grand Slam doubles title at the 2018 US Open with partner CoCo Vandeweghe. Ash also delighted fans around the world with her calm good-humoured acceptance of just missing out on reaching the 2019 Wimbledon quarter-finals. A First Nations woman, Ash serves as the National Indigenous Tennis Ambassador for Tennis Australia.

The Founder of Albatross Nippers, Adjunct Assistant Professor Nick Marshall is the 2020 QLD Local Hero. Sports and musculoskeletal physiotherapist, Adjunct Assistant Professor Nick Marshall, has a passion for ensuring those with special needs and disability are included in the community. An advocate for increased participation in surf lifesaving activities for many years, in 2015 Nick created the Albatross Nippers – an all-inclusive Nipper program at Nobby’s Beach, helping children with special needs experience nippers with other children of similar ages. The program has expanded to multiple Gold Coast beaches. In 2019, Nick’s Albatross Nippers became the first group of special needs children in history to participate in a surf lifesaving carnival and competition. Nick has also liaised with his local city council to install beach matting and free beach wheelchair access, and was instrumental in designing the online Surf Lifesaving Australia special needs module, teaching clubs across Australia to better interact, engage and develop programs at their beach. Motivated solely by the desire to create a better, more engaged community, Nick’s volunteer work inspires the Gold Coast community.

National Australia Day Council CEO Karlie Brand congratulated the award recipients from Queensland, noting their amazing contributions to our country.

“The 2020 QLD Australians of the Year inspire us all with their achievements and leadership,” said Ms Brand.

The Honourable Annastacia Palaszczuk, Premier of Queensland and Minister for Trade, said this prestigious awards program celebrated Queenslanders whose achievements and contributions went above and beyond what was expected, and this year was no different.

“In celebrating the awards’ 60th anniversary, we recognise outstanding Queenslanders who are role models, regional champions and leaders in our great state,” she said. “Congratulations to each of the 2020 recipients. I wish you the very best of luck at the national announcement in Canberra,” Ms Palaszczuk said.

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

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MEDIA CONTACT: Nicole Browne on 0414 673 762 / nicole@mediaopps.com.au

PHOTOS: From the awards announcement event can be downloaded as available from australianoftheyear.org.au. For more information on the Australian of the Year Awards visit https://www.australianoftheyear.org.au/nominate/frequently-asked-questions/