



media release

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Joint exhibition honours 2024 Australian of the Year recipients

A moving display of personal items, including a motorbike helmet, a child's pair of shoes, a toy unicorn and a compass, are among the objects chosen for the 2024 Australian of the Year exhibition opening at the Museum of the Riverina – Historic Council Chambers on Saturday 2 March.

The National Museum of Australia and the National Australia Day Council have launched this exhibition of significant belongings of the 2024 Australian of the Year state and territory recipients, which reveal personal stories about their lives, aspirations and experiences.

Manager of the Museum of the Riverina Luke Grealy said "we're very excited to be able to host this fascinating exhibition celebrating the 2024 Australian of the Year recipients.

"Touring exhibitions from national institutions like this are a wonderful way to increase access to art and culture for Wagga Wagga residents."

The recipients include an environmental scientist, a champion for women in construction, an Indigenous health leader, and an advocate for victims of crime.

National Museum Director Katherine McMahon said the recipients had chosen deeply personal objects that reflect their life's story, work and experiences.

"We are delighted to display these captivating objects selected by the extraordinary state and territory recipients," Ms McMahon said.

"These objects underpin their personal history, reveal significant moments in their lives and connect to the broader social and political impact they have.

"We invite all Australians to view the objects on display, discover the remarkable stories of the Australians who selected them and reflect on the issues they raise."

National Australia Day Council chief executive officer Mark Fraser AO CVO said, "In these challenging times, these objects give us a sense of hope that our brightest days are ahead.

"Our Australians of the Year from each state and territory are, in their own way, making an impact – socially, environmentally or politically. They remind us of what can grow out of small seeds of action."

National Museum Curator Coen Ramalli said, "This exhibition allows all Australians to connect with the remarkable state and territory 2024 Australian of the Year recipients.

"It has been a joy and a privilege to work with them on this project, and I can't wait for visitors to see their objects and hear their stories."

Each year, the Australian of the Year Awards celebrate the achievements and contributions of eminent Australians who are role models for us all.

The 2024 Australian of the Year exhibition will be on display at the Museum of the Riverina – Historic Council Chambers, Baylis Street Wagga Wagga until Sunday 28 April 2024.

For more information visit museumriverina.com.au

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Australian of the Year state and territory recipient biographies and display objects:

- **Australian Capital Territory (ACT) 2024 Australian of the Year - Joanne Farrell, founder of Build Like a Girl**

Biography:

Joanne (Jo) fought hard to pursue her dream job as a builder – even working for free to gain an apprenticeship. She ultimately succeeded, becoming a qualified carpenter and builder working on major projects in Australia and overseas. In 2020 Jo founded Build Like a Girl, a not-for-profit organisation that mentors women and matches them with training and employment in the construction industry. She also works with government, industry bodies and unions to help them recruit and train women in trade roles.

Object: Steel hammer and hard hat

Hammers and hard hats are essential items on any construction site. Jo bought this hammer, the industry best, at the end of her hard-earned apprenticeship; and she wore this hard hat on site every day. For Jo, they are more than the tools of the trade. They are symbolic, representing her perseverance, leadership and belonging in the male-dominated construction industry.

- **New South Wales (NSW) 2024 Australians of the Year - Professor Georgina Long AO and Professor Richard Scolyer AO, melanoma treatment pioneers**

Biography:

Professor Georgina Long AO and Professor Richard Scolyer AO's research into the treatment of melanoma, Australia's 'national cancer', has saved thousands of lives. Less than a decade ago, advanced melanoma was fatal. Thanks to Georgina and Richard's immunotherapy treatment, which activates a patient's immune system, it has become a curable disease. Since Richard was diagnosed with brain cancer in June 2023, they have turned their focus to his condition. Experimenting further with immunotherapy, they hope to advance the understanding of brain cancer and benefit future patients.

Object: Triathlon medal and suit

Georgina and Richard have been friends and colleagues for a decade. Richard introduced Georgina to triathlons, and they have travelled the world together, participating in championships and representing Melanoma Institute Australia. Georgina received this medal at the 2019 ITU World Triathlon Series in Switzerland. Richard wore this suit in the 2023 World Triathlon Multisport Championship in Spain, a month before he had a seizure and was diagnosed with incurable brain cancer. When Georgina heard the news, she immediately outlined a world-first treatment plan, providing hope at a time of immense grief.

- **Northern Territory (NT) 2024 Australian of the Year, Blair McFarland, founder Central Australian Youth Link-Up Service**

Biography:

Blair McFarland witnessed the devastating impact of petrol sniffing on Indigenous communities in Central Australia in the 1990s. In response, he established Central Australian Youth Link-Up Service (CAYLUS) to address substance misuse by young people and improve their lives. Blair

and CAYLUS were instrumental in advocating for the roll-out of low aromatic fuel and the implementation of the *Low Aromatic Fuel Act 2013*. The result has been a staggering 95% reduction in volatile substance misuse.

Object: Motorbike helmet

Low aromatic fuel discourages petrol sniffing but was falsely rumoured to cause poor mechanical performance. To challenge the doubters, Blair fuelled up and took to the road. He wore this helmet when riding his motorbike around Central Australia. Those trips not only proved that low aromatic fuel was reliable, they also gave Blair a break from the hard but necessary work of reducing volatile substance misuse.

- **Queensland (QLD) 2024 Australian of the Year - Marco Renai, founder Men of Business**

Biography:

Marco Renai believes that family, food and doing good can make a difference. When he realised there were no programs to support young men struggling with school and life, he established Men of Business (MOB). He started running an eight-week program in schools and in 2020 opened the doors to the MOB Academy, a senior secondary school providing education, work pathways and engagement with the community. Marco and the academy aim to empower young men to build the skills, knowledge and confidence to lead happy, healthy lives.

Object: Men of Business brick

Marco sells bricks like this one to raise money for Men of Business, the charity he founded after meeting at-risk young men and hearing their stories. Over the past 13 years, Marco's programs have had a positive impact on the lives of thousands of young men. Students also receive a brick when they graduate from the Men of Business Academy, symbolising their work in laying a solid foundation for adulthood, building opportunities for their communities, and imagining new futures.

- **South Australia (SA) 2024 Australian of the Year, Tim Jarvis AM, environmental scientist and adventurer**

Biography:

Tim Jarvis AM transformed his childhood love of the outdoors into a career as an environmental scientist focused on sustainability. He also leads expeditions to some of the world's most remote places to start conversations about climate change and biodiversity loss. Focused on practical solutions, Tim has founded and supports a range of conservation initiatives. The Forktree Project is regenerating degraded farmland on the Fleurieu Peninsula, South Australia, and 25zero is documenting glaciers to highlight the urgent need for climate action.

Object: Compass

In 2013 Tim recreated one of the greatest survival journeys of all time, Sir Ernest Shackleton's 1915 crossing of the Southern Ocean. Tim and five companions sailed 1,500 kilometres from Elephant Island to South Georgia Island, Antarctica, before crossing the island's mountains on foot. They used the same food, clothing and technology that would have been used by Shackleton almost 100 years earlier. This compass was Tim's sole source of guidance through the unforgiving Antarctic.

- **Tasmania 2024 Australian of the Year - Stephanie Trethewey, rural women's advocate**

Biography:

When Stephanie Trethewey moved to a farm in northern Tasmania with her husband and six-month-old son, she was unprepared for the challenges of being a rural mother. Without family, friends or mothers' groups nearby, she felt completely isolated, but soon realised that other women must struggle, too. Stephanie created Motherland, a podcast that shares stories of rural motherhood. It has since expanded to become an online community of 20 virtual villages that connects and supports more than 200 mothers who are raising children and teenagers in rural Australia.

Object: Unicorn

Stephanie's husband, Sam, gave her this unicorn when she was working in an unfulfilling corporate job. In finance, unicorns are privately held companies valued at more than \$1 billion. She kept it on her desk as a reminder of the promise she made to herself – that there was more for her to see and do. The online community Stephanie founded, Motherland, has become her unicorn, although its worth resides in the lives of the rural mums it has helped feel less alone.

- **Victoria 2024 Australian of the Year - Janine Mohamed, Indigenous health leader**

Biography:

Janine Mohamed is a Narrunga Kurna woman who has dedicated her career to the First Nations health sector. With more than 20 years' experience in nursing, management and policy, Janine is an advocate for culturally safe and appropriate healthcare. She has also worked to develop and support the Indigenous health workforce and community-controlled health services, critical components of improved access to quality healthcare for First Nations people. Janine is currently the CEO of the Lowitja Institute, the national institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research.

Object: Child's shoes

Janine was raised by her grandmother on Point Pearce Mission in South Australia. There were few opportunities for Indigenous Australians on and around the mission, meaning many lived in poverty. Janine's family saved up to buy her these shoes. It was a combined effort and took time. Janine has travelled far from the mission but has never forgotten the value of good shoes – they mould to your feet and make walking easier. She owns many shoes now. Some have higher heels and are more expensive, but she's proud of them all.

- **Western Australia (WA) 2024 Australian of the Year, Mechelle Turvey, advocate for victims of crime**

Biography:

In October 2022, Mechelle Turvey's son Cassius was assaulted on his way home from school. He died 10 days later, sparking rallies and vigils across the country. Mechelle led the march in Perth and delivered a powerful speech about her son. She called for calm and the need for proper care for victims of crime and their families. Mechelle is now working with Western Australian Police, delivering training sessions on how to deal sensitively with the victims of crime.

Object: Cassius Turvey's school report

Cassius Turvey was kind and generous, with a beaming smile. Following his death, Cassius's mother, Mechelle, attended a rally in Perth in remembrance of her son. She read from one of his school reports to more than 8,000 people. The report highlights Cassius's positivity, his willingness to help others and his leadership. It provides a glimpse into Cassius's future. It shows Mechelle the person Cassius would have become and how he will be remembered.

Touring exhibition details

<https://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/2024-australian-of-the-year>

Photos

Photos From the launch event can be downloaded from:

<https://spaces.hightail.com/space/8gcC5vbU0Y>

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