

## MEDIA RELEASE

WEDNESDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2022

### QUEENSLAND 2023 AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS NOMINEES ANNOUNCED

Nominees for the 2023 Queensland Australian of the Year Awards include tradies talking about mental health, a man pushing his lawnmower for child protection, friends helping homeless people by the box, a Torres Strait Islander helping her home community and the inventor of an artificial heart.

They are just some of the 19 people in the running to be named the Queensland Australian of the Year, Queensland Senior Australian of the Year, Queensland Young Australian of the Year and Queensland Local Hero.

The 2023 Queensland award nominees are:

#### Queensland Australian of the Year

Daniel Allen and Edward Ross - Social entrepreneurs, carpenters, founders TradeMutt and TIACS (Morningside & South Toowoomba)

William Barton - Multi-instrumentalist, composer, vocalist, producer

Dr Daniel Timms - Inventor of the BiVACOR titanium heart (Brisbane)

Dr Barbara Woodhouse - Oral and maxillofacial surgeon, medical pioneer (Redcliffe)

#### Queensland Senior Australian of the Year

Claude Lyle Harvey OAM - Child protection campaigner and Bravehearts fundraiser (Gold Coast)

Jay Larkins - Disability advocate and founder, Brisbane Paralympic Football Program (Keperra)

Father Michael Lowcock OAM - Indigenous advocate and founder, North West Queensland Indigenous Catholic Social Services (Mount Isa)

Betty Taylor - Campaigner and founder, Domestic Violence Prevention Centre and Red Rose Foundation (Ormiston)

#### Queensland Young Australian of the Year

Madelyn Jones and Gali Blacher - Co-founders, The Good Box (Kedron)

Talei Elu - Community organiser (Seisia)

Sam Hughes - Mental health fundraiser (Maleny)

Jeremy Hunt - Co-founder, The VacSeen Project (Toowoomba)

#### Queensland Local Hero

Brett and Belinda Beasley - Founders, Jack Beasley Foundation (Parkwood)

Peter Davis - Founder, Blood Bikes Australia (Springfield Lakes)

Melissa Redsell - Founder, A Brave Life (Warner)

Michael Sanford - Mental health advocate and founder, Bunyarra Wellbeing Co. (Maidenwell)

*\*see bios on following pages*

The Queensland nominees are among 130 people being recognised across all states and territories.

The four award recipients from Queensland will be announced on Tuesday 15 November 2022 in a ceremony at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre in Brisbane, which will also be available to watch via ABC iView from 6:30pm (local Brisbane time).

They will then join the other state and territory recipients as national finalists for the national awards announcement on 25 January 2023 in Canberra.

National Australia Day Council CEO Karlie Brand congratulated the Queensland nominees on their recognition.

“The 2023 Queensland nominees are making extraordinary contributions to their state and to people’s lives,” said Karlie.

“From medical advances to community development, they are all inspiring.”

## **20 Years Of Local Heroes**

The 2023 Awards also mark 20 years of the Local Hero category. Introduced in 2003, the award acknowledges extraordinary contributions made by Australians in their local community.

Queensland has twice been represented in the Australia’s Local Hero category:

- 2006 Toni Hoffman, patient advocate  
<https://www.australianoftheyear.org.au/recipients/toni-hoffman>
- 2015 Juliette Wright, social entrepreneur and founder of GIVIT  
<https://www.australianoftheyear.org.au/recipients/juliette-wright>

**ENDS.**

Nominee [bios](#) on the following pages and can also be viewed from [australianoftheyear.org.au](http://australianoftheyear.org.au).

Nominee [photos](#) can be downloaded from this link (note all photos provided by nominees):  
<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/gn7k8gzcje9lzs3jur4x5/h?dl=0&rlkey=a36yc4jbvuo4pcyksb3w26fsk>

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## QUEENSLAND AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR – NOMINEE BIOS

### **Daniel Allen and Edward Ross**

Social entrepreneurs, carpenters, founders of TradeMutt and TIACS

Best mates Daniel Allen (33) and Edward Ross (29) are two carpenters by trade who met on a Brisbane building site in 2014.

After Daniel tragically lost a close mate to suicide in 2015, the two tradies identified two glaring problems: the tone of the mental health conversation was too serious and ordinary Australians don't know where to go to first seek support.

In 2018, the boys launched TradeMutt, a social enterprise workwear company by tradies for tradies. Their funky workwear was designed to take a more fun, light-hearted and colourful approach to normalising mental health conversations on a daily basis.

In June 2020, the pair launched TIACS, a free, early intervention mental health support service providing ongoing counselling services for the entire blue-collar sector. To date, TIACS has supported over 12,000 individuals at a return to the Australian community of \$2 million in free services, receiving numerous national accolades.

### **William Barton**

Multi-instrumentalist, composer, vocalist, producer

Proud Kalkadunga man William Barton is a multi-instrumentalist, vocalist, didgeridoo player and renowned classical composer.

Growing up on Kalkadungu country, Mt Isa, he learned didgeridoo (yidaki) from his uncle, Arthur Peterson, a Wannyi, Lardil and Kalkadunga elder. William left school at 12 to concentrate on music. By age 17, he had performed with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra.

William, who holds honorary doctorates from both Griffith University and the University of Sydney and an associate professor at ANU, has released five albums on the ABC Classics label including *Heartland* with Véronique Serret featuring the words of William's mother Aunty Delmae Barton.

The 41-year-old was the 2019 artist in residence at Melbourne Recital Centre, a Creative Consultant for Australia Day Live and has won multiple awards, including the 2021 Australia Council Don Banks Music Award for his sustained contribution to music. In 2022 William's 'Of The Earth' opened the new Opera House Concert Hall.

### **Dr Daniel Timms**

Inventor of the BiVACOR titanium heart

Dr Daniel Timms invented the world's first durable, total artificial heart – the BiVACOR titanium heart – which is currently being tested for trials in patients.

When Daniel's father died of heart failure, the then PhD student worked obsessively on a solution to assist people with failing hearts. According to one professor, Daniel went without a salary for a year and couch surfed to meet his goal.

Daniel's invention is being seen as the basis for future artificial heart design – and a viable alternative to heart transplants.

The small titanium machine has a single moving part – a tiny rotor held in place by magnets – which should make it extremely durable and a possible long-term replacement for a human heart.

Two decades on from when he started work on an artificial heart, 44-year-old Daniel is chief technology officer of his company BiVACOR. He continues to collaborate with leading researchers, surgeons and scientists globally

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developing other devices.

### **Dr Barbara Woodhouse**

Oral and maxillofacial surgeon, medical pioneer

Dr Barbara Woodhouse, Australia's first dual qualified female oral and maxillofacial surgeon, has led a lifetime of dedicated service. She pioneered several Australia-first surgical techniques and worked to establish maxillofacial services in rural and regional areas.

Barbara was president of the Queensland branch of the Australia and New Zealand Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons and is a director of the Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons. She successfully lobbied for legislative amendments to ensure children with significant facial deformity have equitable health access.

Barbara, 66, continues active involvement in training the next generation of maxillofacial surgeons, which remains male-dominated. A mentor to high school and university students, she frequently lectures nationally and internationally. She is also a passionate advocate for the mental health of junior doctors and for equality and inclusion.

Since 2001, Barbara has self-funded trips to the Asia-Pacific region to perform life-changing surgery and, more importantly, train local surgeons.

## **QUEENSLAND SENIOR AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR – NOMINEE BIOS**

### **Claude Lyle Harvey OAM**

Child protection campaigner and Bravehearts fundraiser

Many would excuse 77-year-old former gardener Claude Lyle Harvey OAM if he put his feet up after a lifetime of hard work.

Instead, Claude is spending his retirement trekking around Australia to increase awareness of child protection and raise funds for Bravehearts, a not-for-profit dedicated to preventing child sexual abuse and assisting survivors.

Over the past 17 years, he has pushed his trusty lawnmower 'Moyra' tens of thousands of kilometres around Australia.

He's brought in more than \$1.5 million for Bravehearts with the aim of hitting \$2 million by the end of 2024. Claude's commitment came after learning that two girls just three and four years old had been sexually abused by their 16-year-old neighbour.

He keeps walking, saying: "If I can save just one child from this crime that harms one in five Australian children, I will have achieved what I've set out to do."

### **Jay Larkins**

Disability advocate and founder, Brisbane Paralympic Football Program

Jay Larkins has dedicated himself to helping people with disabilities live their best lives.

He founded the Brisbane Paralympic Football Program (BFPF) in 2006 after he couldn't find a community sports group willing to include his son Jarrod, who has cerebral palsy.

Jay, 73, created the program so people of all abilities can stay active and engage in their community through sport. Through BFPF, Jarrod and many other young people with disabilities are going on to represent Australia in their chosen sports.

Jay builds each participant's capacity, confidence and competence. His goal is to improve the overall health and wellbeing of people with disabilities and their families.

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He's also engaging with universities. Each year, more than 100 students from a range of faculties (from occupational therapy to law) join game sessions – providing opportunities for them to better understand individuals living with disability, something they'll take through their careers.

### **Father Michael Lowcock OAM**

Indigenous advocate and founder, North West Queensland Indigenous Catholic Social Services

When Father Michael Lowcock OAM joined the Catholic priesthood 50 years ago, he had no idea he'd spend most of his adult life in remote Mount Isa advocating for better services for the Indigenous community.

The boy from Bowen in The Whitsundays has spent the past 30 years in the mining city, establishing a range of services for people in Northwest Queensland, including migrants, and helping Aboriginal Australians break out of the cycle of poverty.

This includes setting up the North West Queensland Indigenous Catholic Social Services (NWQICSS) that employs 85 staff, 85 per cent of whom are Indigenous.

NWQICSS caters to Indigenous people in disadvantaged situations by providing services to children and families, at-risk youth, community support at Boulia and Mount Isa and those associated with the criminal justice system.

Fr Mick, now 73, also established the Jangawala Kitchen to provide meals to the homeless and the watch house inmates.

### **Betty Taylor**

Campaigner and founder, Domestic Violence Prevention Centre and Red Rose Foundation

Betty Taylor has been at the forefront of work to combat family violence for the past 33 years. She is particularly focused on preventing the stalking and violent deaths of women and has been pivotal in pushing for more effective responses and laws.

Betty established the Gold Coast's Domestic Violence Prevention Centre 26 years ago to support women and children affected by violence and works with perpetrators. She is also the founder and current CEO of the Red Rose Foundation, supporting survivors of violence.

More recently, 73-year-old Betty established the Australian Institute for Strangulation Prevention, which trains health, police and other professionals on how to better respond to evidence of non-lethal strangulation, a significant red flag for later homicide.

Betty also created Australia's first Strangulation Trauma Centre in Brisbane. The Centre is supported by the Red Rose Foundation and helps women who have survived strangulation to heal their physical and mental injuries.

## **QUEENSLAND YOUNG AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR – NOMINEE BIOS**

### **Madelyn Jones and Gali Blacher**

Co-founders, The Good Box

Brisbane-based Madelyn Jones (28) and Gali Blacher (28) are co-founders of social enterprise and charity The Good Box. It's been providing homeless people around Australia with a box of essential items, treats and a little bit of love since 2019.

Each box has a design telling the story of a person who has experienced homelessness and, in addition to useful items, also contains a handwritten message. The note is written by the sender and reminds the recipient that someone cares about them.

More than 17,000 people received Good Boxes in 2022 alone.

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Madelyn and Gali also run engagement programs at schools and businesses to debunk myths about homelessness. They employ people who have experienced homelessness to help lead these sessions, where participants pack Good Boxes while they learn about homelessness and what they can do to help.

### **Talei Elu**

Community organiser

Talei Elu decided to focus on her enthusiasm for her Torres Strait culture after six years working for the Federal Government.

Talei is a Saibai Koedal (crocodile) woman from the Torres Strait Islander community of Seisia in Cape York. She used her government experience, knack for media creation and community organisation skills to start initiatives that have had a positive effect in Seisia.

Since returning home during the pandemic, Talei has worked with the Australian Electoral Commission to enrol and educate more Indigenous people about the importance of voting.

She also arranged for local women to receive free feminine hygiene products, baby necessities, and beauty and self-care items. And she started Seisia Sports and Rec, a free sports equipment hire initiative for youth.

Talei regularly organises beach clean-ups and was recently named as the youngest member of the First Nations Consultative Committee and co-chair.

### **Sam Hughes**

Mental health fundraiser

Nineteen-year-old Sam Hughes, 'The Travelling Jackaroo', is driving around Australia for charity on a bright orange 1957 Chamberlain 9G tractor.

'Slim' the tractor motors along at 35 km/h. In addition to carrying Sam and his dog Bitsa, it tows an orange trailer kitted out with everything a young man might need – a fairy floss machine, jumping castle and wingless plane.

Sam is stopping in towns across the country, catching the eye of kids and adults alike, to raise money and awareness for rural mental health.

So far, Sam has collected more than \$100,000 for the Royal Flying Doctor Service, Dolly's Dream and Drought Angels.

Sam, 19, wants people to talk more about mental health and believes there is nothing more Australian than checking up on a mate to make sure they are ok.

### **Jeremy Hunt**

Co-founder, The VacSeen Project

Jeremy Hunt co-founded The VacSeen Project in early 2021 to help homeless people access vaccines for free.

The catalyst was when Jeremy, then a second-year medical student, became aware that a Brisbane homeless health service couldn't afford flu vaccines for many patients.

People experiencing homelessness face higher rates of illness, so Jeremy and some fellow students set about addressing this, founding The VacSeen Project and helping 200 people from marginalised groups receive a free flu shot within its first four months.

Jeremy appreciated the need to take preventative medicine into non-medical settings. The 23-year-old subsequently led The VacSeen Project to deliver flu and COVID-19 vaccines through outreach programs, helping over 800 people access vaccines at more than 75 clinics.

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Through these clinics, weekly general health support initiatives and advocacy and education projects, the 70-strong volunteer team has spent 11,000 minutes of conversation with marginalised people about their health.

## **QUEENSLAND LOCAL HERO – NOMINEE BIOS**

### **Brett and Belinda Beasley**

Founders, Jack Beasley Foundation

Seventeen-year-old Jack Beasley was out for a night with friends in Surfers Paradise in 2019 when he was attacked and fatally stabbed by a group of youths. It was 12 days before Christmas.

Within weeks, his grieving parents Belinda (51) and Brett (52) had launched the Jack Beasley Foundation.

Their aim from the outset has been to honour their son's memory and raise awareness of the dangers, repercussions and snowball effect violence can have on the lives of so many. They want to make communities safer for everyone. One way they have done this is through an education platform that launched in 2021 and continues to be presented at schools, sporting clubs and youth groups.

Its focus is on educating young people on the prevalence of knives in public places, victim prevention strategies, and the long-term effects and consequences carrying a knife has on so many people.

### **Peter Davis**

Founder, Blood Bikes Australia

Several years ago, motorcycle enthusiast Peter Davis figured out a way to combine going for a ride with 'doing some good'.

He launched Blood Bikes Australia – a volunteer brigade of motorcyclists that ferry urgent blood and medical supplies between hospitals for free. The money saved on transporting blood and supplies can then go to other healthcare services.

Peter, 63, first started making deliveries in Brisbane on his own but it soon grew to nine volunteers. Blood Bikes Australia has now grown to 280 qualified volunteers across Australia.

His team of riders has made nearly 4,000 last-resort pick-ups and deliveries for 50 healthcare providers from Cairns to Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth and Tasmania. They've delivered life-saving blood, biopsies, COVID tests, stem cells, corneas for transplant and clinical trial tests, along with files and patients' personal items.

Peter's long-term goal is for more hospitals to use Blood Bikes Australia, saving more lives and healthcare dollars.

### **Melissa Redsell**

Founder, A Brave Life

Melissa had been coping with a dysfunctional family life when she became pregnant at 16. Despite constantly being told her life was over, Melissa finished high school when she was seven months pregnant.

She had very limited family support and struggled to buy essentials but worked hard. Melissa attended university as a single parent with a one-year-old in tow and became a registered nurse and midwife.

Working in healthcare, she recognised the need for better support for teenage and young mothers. She started gifting newborn essentials to young mums who were struggling. Within 12 months, she'd started A Brave Life.

The charity supports young mothers dealing with domestic violence, poverty, trauma, relationship breakdowns, unplanned pregnancy and homelessness. It provides essentials such as baby supplies, emotional nurturing and paths to education and employment. By mid-2022, 45-year-old Melissa had delivered more than 8,000 baby

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bundle care packages.

**Michael Sanford**

Mental health advocate and founder, Bunyarra Wellbeing Co.

Michael Sanford walked away from a full-time job in 2019 to tackle a major crisis overwhelming the South Burnett region of south-east Queensland – suicide. The Burnett local area records the second highest suicide rate in Australia.

As a former local youth worker, Michael had seen the ongoing gaps in mental health services and the need to address them. He founded Bunyarra Wellbeing Co and immediately began to tackle how the community talks about and responds to mental health and suicide.

In 2020, he partnered with a Queensland Government energy provider to remove any barriers to employees accessing mental health services. He developed and delivered a program designed to improve mental health services on worksites – with five suicide interventions recorded in the first five weeks.

Since then, the 34-year-old created and delivered multiple programs to improve mental wellbeing in the workplace and more broadly in the community.

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