

MEDIA RELEASE
MONDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2023

**2024 AUSTRALIANS OF THE YEAR
FOR NEW SOUTH WALES ANNOUNCED**

2024 Australians of the Year for NSW - Prof Richard Scolyer AO and Prof Georgina Long AO (Sydney)
2024 Senior Australian of the Year for NSW - John Ward (Georgetown, Newcastle)
2024 Young Australian of the Year for NSW - Nikhil Autar (Voyager Point)
2024 Local Hero for NSW - Angus Olsen (Katoomba)

Awards event livestreamed via australianoftheyear.org.au

Monday 13 November 2023, 7:35PM (Sydney time): The 2024 Australian of the Year Award recipients for New South Wales have been announced at a ceremony in Sydney this evening.

The NSW recipients will join those from the other states and territories for the national awards to be announced on 25 January 2024.

The 2024 Australians of the Year for NSW are Melanoma treatment pioneers, Prof Richard Scolyer AO and Prof Georgina Long AO.

Professor Richard Scolyer AO and Professor Georgina Long AO's enduring partnership has saved thousands of lives from melanoma, known as Australia's national cancer.

Less than a decade ago, advanced melanoma was fatal – but thanks to Richard and Georgina's immunotherapy approach, which activates a patient's own immune system, it has become a curable disease. The co-medical directors of Melanoma Institute Australia are sought-after media commentators and advocates for sun-safe behaviour and melanoma prevention.

In June 2023, when Richard (56) was diagnosed with incurable grade 4 brain cancer, he and Georgina (52) developed a series of world-first treatments based on their melanoma breakthroughs. Richard became the world's first brain cancer patient to have pre-surgery combination immunotherapy. By undertaking an experimental treatment with risk of shortening his life, he has advanced the understanding of brain cancer and is benefiting future patients.

Richard has generated widespread public interest by publicly documenting his own cancer treatment and progress.

Geriatrician and co-founder of Hunter Ageing Alliance, John Ward, is the 2024 Senior Australian of the Year for NSW.

John Ward, 79, has devoted his life to providing outstanding medical care for disadvantaged people and ageing Australians – often at personal cost and with little recognition.

As director of the Prison Medical Service, he provided care to inmates – despite few resources – and advocated for prison reform to protect this vulnerable group.

Focusing on geriatric medicine and aged care since the mid-1980s, he advocates for older Australians and the importance of social determinants of health such as social connection, exercise and accessible environments.

His integrated, collaborative approach to dementia care for patients and their carers has made the Hunter region a leader in this field.

John also co-founded the Hunter Ageing Alliance, which calls for governments, businesses and organisations to better focus on older people's needs. The organisation has eight programs in planning or implementation stage to create age-friendly communities, tackle elder abuse and end social isolation of older people.

The 2024 Young Australian of the Year for NSW is researcher and founder of Bheem Health, Nikhil Autar.

Diagnosed with leukaemia at the age of 17, Nikhil Autar has undergone chemotherapy, bone marrow transplants, open heart surgery and survives a life-threatening chronic illness.

As a cancer survivor who understands the importance of access for people with disability, Nikhil created Knia Maps – 'Know In Advance Maps' – which has plotted accessibility at major Sydney hospitals, universities, public venues and transport, plus hundreds of small businesses.

Nikhil also founded Bheem Health, a social enterprise that provides low-cost medical devices for sick and vulnerable people. His first device, BheemUP, allows any bed to convert into a hospital bed. He's now developing BheemSense, the world's first sensor mat that tracks sleep phases and helps minimise pressure sores.

Medical student Nikhil has raised almost \$500,000 in grant funding and conducted cancer research.

A blogger, disability advocate and motivational speaker, the 30-year-old's diverse and inclusive hiring practices have given migrants, people with disabilities and student engineers their first jobs.

Childhood cancer illustrator and author, Angus Olsen, is the 2024 Local Hero for NSW.

Angus Olsen's daughter, Jane, was two when she was diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer. While Angus sat at his daughter's bedside during her weeks of chemotherapy and surgery, he began drawing about her procedures to make sense of it.

The former Disney artist now creates artworks and books in simple language to help children better understand their cancer treatment. He's produced more than 20 books, which have been translated into 24 languages. His books and artworks have been accessed by people in 102 countries.

In 2020, Angus also made a series of comics that illustrated the similarities between lockdown and what children with cancer face all the time. Angus has teamed with several charities to create resources and raise funds for childhood cancer research.

The 44-year-old makes no profit from his illustrations. Every one of his images can be accessed free from his website idrawchildhoodcancer.com and social media pages.

National Australia Day Council CEO Mark Fraser AO CVO congratulated the NSW recipients.

"The award recipients for NSW are an inspiring group of people devoted to helping others," said Mark.

“The breakthrough work being done by Richard and Georgina, and Richard’s personal sacrifice, is simply extraordinary; John continues to bring much-needed focus to the health care of some of those most in need; Nikhil has channelled his own experiences to improve care for others; and Angus has shared his personal experience for families around the world to benefit.”

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

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PHOTOS: From the awards announcement event can be downloaded as available after approx. 8:30pm Sydney time from this link (credit NADC/Salty Dingo): [NSW Media Distribution photos - High res](#)

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