

MEDIA RELEASE
TUESDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2023

2024 AUSTRALIANS OF THE YEAR FOR VICTORIA ANNOUNCED

2024 Australian of the Year for Victoria - Janine Mohamed (Gisborne)
2024 Senior Australian of the Year for Victoria - Glenys Oogjes (Heidelberg)
2024 Young Australian of the Year for Victoria - Bhakta Bahadur Bhattarai (Wodonga)
2024 Local Hero for Victoria - Betul Tuna (Shepparton)

Awards event livestreamed via australianoftheyear.org.au

Tuesday 14 November 2023, 8:40PM: The 2024 Australian of the Year Award recipients for Victoria have been announced at a ceremony in Melbourne this evening.

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

The 2024 Australian of the Year for Victoria is Indigenous health leader, Janine Mohamed.

Janine Mohamed is an exceptional leader, even if she sometimes jokes about being an 'accidental CEO'.

In her nearly five years leading the Lowitja Institute in Melbourne, and before that as CEO of the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives, she has created important platforms for Indigenous peoples and championed culturally safe health care.

A Narungga Kurna woman, 49-year-old Janine initially studied nursing at the University of South Australia, where she's now an Adjunct Professor and a celebrated Alumni of the Year. For the next 25 years, she worked in nursing, health policy and research in the Indigenous Community Controlled Health sector. In 2020, she was awarded an honorary doctorate in nursing by Edith Cowan University.

Janine is committed to dismantling racism, expanding opportunities for the Indigenous health workforce, and to closing the gap in Indigenous health outcomes through the systemic integration of cultural safety.

Animal justice advocate, Glenys Oogjes, is the 2024 Senior Australian of the Year for Victoria.

Glenys Oogjes started work at Animals Australia in 1983 as its sole employee. She is now CEO of the organisation, which is one of Australia's most effective animal advocacy groups, and has been putting animal welfare on government and community agendas for four decades.

Glenys has been a quiet force behind historic changes in Australian animal policy, including some of our current animal protection laws. She was one of the instigators behind the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy – first endorsed in 2004 – and the more recent Australian Animal Welfare Standards for Poultry, which will see battery cages for egg-laying hens phased out across the country.

Even when faced with distressing evidence or vehement opposition, 67-year-old Glenys remains a calm bulwark for animal justice.

Highly regarded internationally, Glenys is also a board member of the World Federation for Animals and works with other leaders to build a kinder world on a global scale.

The 2024 Young Australian of the Year for Victoria is registered nurse and founder, Albury Wodonga Multicultural Community Events Inc, Bhakta Bahadur Bhattarai.

Better known as Durga, 28-year-old Bhakta Bahadur Bhattarai's selfless actions are a constant source of care and connection among Wodonga's multicultural community.

Born and raised in a Bhutanese refugee camp in Nepal, Durga came to Australia with his family in 2012. He completed high school and then trained as a pharmacy assistant and registered nurse. Feeling lonely and isolated during his studies, Durga founded the Albury Wodonga Multicultural Community Events Inc in 2014. The organisation advocates for and showcases multicultural communities and organises help during difficult times.

On top of his work as a nurse, Durga supplied homemade masks to the elderly and emergency food relief during the COVID-19 lockdowns. He also arranged multiple community wellbeing and entertainment programs, and has raised thousands of dollars for sick young people and disability support.

Among several awards recognising his contributions, Durga was awarded the Meritorious Service Award from the Government of Victoria in 2019.

Betul Tuna, co-founder, Point of Difference Studio, is the 2024 Local Hero for Victoria.

Betul Tuna is deeply committed to humanitarian and community causes. The Turkish Muslim-Australian – who was born, raised and lives on Yorta Yorta Country – has been instrumental in supporting local and international communities during emergencies and making the district a safe, supportive place.

During the 2022 floods in her local community and the 2023 earthquake in Turkey, Betul helped ensure affected communities received necessary supplies and access to essential services.

She also coordinated the design and implementation of a state-funded program that aims to prevent violence against women in migrant and refugee communities and created a bold and successful campaign against female genital mutilation.

Betul co-founded the 'Hijack'd' mobile food van, which provides culturally appropriate food and creates jobs for local young people. The 38-year-old also co-founded the Point of Difference Studio which champions arts, culture and identity and advocates for culturally safe, respectful and accessible environments in regional Victoria.

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

"The award recipients for Victoria provide inspiration for us all with their leadership and dedication," said Mark.

“Janine is forging pathways for Indigenous health workers; Glenys is a champion of change for those without a voice; Durga’s selfless care is creating valuable connection for people; and Betul is bringing peace and respect to the community.”

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. 9:15pm Melbourne time from this link (credit NADC/Salty Dingo): [VIC Media Distribution photos - High res](#)

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