



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

VICTORIAN AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

Friday 8 November 2024

Acknowledgments

The Honourable Jacinta Allan MP, Premier of Victoria

Wayne Farnham MP, Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition,
representing the Leader of the Opposition

Dr Michelle Ananda-Rajah MP, Federal Member for Higgins

Mark Fraser, Chief Executive Officer, National Australia Day Council and **Members of the Board**

Assessment Selection Panel Representatives

Australian of the Year Alumni

2025 Victorian Australian of the Year Nominees

Distinguished guests

I begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the lands on which this building stands – the Wurundjeri people – and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present, and thank, in particular, Wurundjeri man Daniel Ross for his warm Welcome to Country this evening.

A short distance from where we stand lies the Burnet Institute.

Its mission as a medical research facility is to place equity at the heart of medicine.

Among its many contributions over the years, the Burnet Institute has helped respond to HIV in low-income countries, reduce hepatitis C in Australia and treat tuberculosis in Papua New Guinea.

The institute is named in honour of Sir Macfarlane Burnet – Australia's first, and Victoria's first – Australian of the Year.

To this very day, the longevity and the legacy of Burnet continues to change lives.

As we mark the 65th anniversary of these awards tonight, it's important to reflect on where we've come from, and where we are heading.

All of tonight's nominees have made an indelible mark on our State and our country.

Your devotion to bettering our communities is not confined to the present – it's a part of a legacy that will shape our future for the better.

As the saying goes:

"We stand on the shoulders of giants."

Your contribution, regardless of the field, continues a journey that generations of Victorians will continue to benefit from.

Each Victorian Australian of the Year nominee represents countless other Victorians who have been uplifted by their work

Whether you've been nominated for your volunteer service, for your profession or for a particular achievement – you are being celebrated by your community for contributions that we admire and value.

The Australian of the Year awards are more than just accolades; they are a powerful symbol of recognition and appreciation from your community.

Of course, you don't need an award to make a difference.

Many of you will be quite humbled by this honour, and I'm sure you haven't gone about your work with the sole motivation of being recognised for your efforts.

But it is important that we acknowledge such contributions because they speak to what we value as a community.

And in celebrating your work, we hope to spread your message to a wider audience so you can continue to uplift others.

I want to take a moment to thank those that nominated a candidate.

The Victorian stories of passion, advocacy and unwavering support may not have come to light without your efforts.

While it might seem small – through the act of nominating someone – you are bringing their efforts to light, encouraging others to take inspiration and, most importantly, action.

To all family and friends gathered here tonight, I'd like to extend my personal thanks for your support to those nominated.

Often, this honour is the result of a team effort, backed by the support of loved ones.

Without your support, these achievements might have seemed all but impossible.

Victoria thrives thanks to the dedication of individuals like those nominated tonight. Your commitment to creating a better society matters.

It mattered yesterday, it matters today and most importantly – it will matter tomorrow.

Thank you.