

Western Australian recipients



Australian of the Year
Professor Bruce Robinson AM
Cancer researcher & Fathering Advocate

A world leader in the study of asbestos related cancers, Professor Bruce Robinson's work will affect millions of people for decades to come. Bruce leads a large research team at the *University of Western Australia's School of Medicine and Pharmacology* which is studying cancer immunology and asbestos diseases, and Bruce and his team have been responsible for many world-first breakthroughs, including the first blood test for mesothelioma. His care for thousands of asbestos victims and their families extends well beyond the laboratory. After establishing medical clinics focused on patients' emotional and physical needs, Bruce initiated the highly successful *Breaking Bad News* course to help doctors with difficult conversations. Bruce is also a vocal advocate for fathering, and has produced a number of books and DVDs, and directs the *Fathering Project* at the University of Western Australia which aims to connect children with father figures. A passionate volunteer who has donated many hours of service to rural Indonesian medical clinics, Bruce's personal philosophy is to turn compassion into action.



Senior Australian of the Year – National Recipient
Fred Chaney AO
Reconciliation advocate

Fred Chaney's hard work in support of often marginalised people has never faltered. As founding co-chair of *Reconciliation Australia* and an early advocate for Aboriginal voting rights in 1961 and for the 1967 referendum, Fred's contribution has included helping establish the *Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia* to his national role as Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. For many years, Fred was Deputy President of the *National Native Title Tribunal* and, more recently, is Chair of *Desert Knowledge Australia* and chaired the *Board of Central Desert Native Title services*. He was instrumental in establishing the *Graham (Polly) Farmer Foundation*, which supports Indigenous young people to reach their potential. Fred's long history of public service is rooted in his fierce commitment to social justice and a belief in the inherent equality of people. In all his leadership roles, Fred inspires others to work collaboratively, respectfully and ambitiously to overcome the barriers that inhibit people's full economic and social participation in Australian society.

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Young Australian of the Year

Dr John van Bockxmeer

Doctor

While working as a doctor in the remote Pilbara region, Dr John van Bockxmeer had an epiphany. Looking out the window of the hospital, he saw Indigenous children kicking a tin can around the dusty oval and he knew it was time for change. He started recycling sports equipment in the city, packing a boot full of gear and driving the 3,500 kilometres from Albany to Kununurra to deliver it. Despite a series of successes, John realised that communities needed more than just sports equipment to stay healthy, and so he founded *Fair Game*, a charity that assists thousands of people in Indigenous and migrant communities with recycled equipment, sport, fitness and wellness programs and capacity-building through health education. A natural leader, John inspires those around him through the breadth and quality of his achievements. He coordinates a unique mentoring program for *Fair Game* volunteers and represents excellence in the fields of medicine and community development at the local, national and international levels.



Australia's Local Hero

Denise Smith-Ali

Linguist

A Noongar woman from the south west of Western Australia, Denise Smith-Ali is the custodian of two clans, Kaneang and Wilman of the Noongar Nation. Denise has overcome many challenges to become the only Noongar linguist in Australia, and has dedicated her life to reclaiming and reviving the language of the Noongar people. Denise has always been interested in her culture and language. Her early focus on educating young people and engaging them in their linguistic roots has shifted to documenting creation and ancestral stories that relate to country. Today, Denise produces resources to support Noongar language education in traditional and contemporary contexts, records and documents ancestral language and knowledge, and supports community awareness programs. She is also working on a cultural mapping project using *Google Earth*. Without Denise's contribution, the Noongar language may no longer be active. Denise not only volunteers with the Noongar community in Perth, she donates her time and expertise to Aboriginal language communities throughout Australia, helping them to keep their languages alive.