

Media Release: Territory's community leaders to shine at Australia Day Ball

Monday, 12 December 2016

The Northern Territory's recipients of the 2017 Australian of the Year Awards will take centre stage at the Australia Day Ball in January 2017.

Andrea Mason 2017 NT Australian of the Year, Bridie Duggan 2017 Young Australian of the Year and Tejinder Pal Singh 2017 NT Local Hero will be available to meet with guests and lead a discussion on what it means to be Australian.

Australia Day Council NT Executive Director, Kiya Gill said that this was the first time that the award recipients had the opportunity to participate in the Ball as the event usually coincided with the recipients already being in Canberra for the national Australian of the Year Award Ceremony.

"By changing the timing of the Ball to the weekend prior to Australia Day we will be able to send the NT representatives off in grand style with a gala ball recognising their success and commitment to the community," she said.

"The NT recipients are inspirational people who lead by example and inspire others to make a difference locally, nationally and globally. They are willing to stand up for what they believe in, to mentor and to take others on their journey.

"It is an honour to have them attend the Ball and be able to wish them every success as they go on to the national award ceremony."

The 2017 Australia Day Black Tie Ball will be held on Saturday, 21 January at the Darwin Convention Centre. The Master of Ceremonies will be Richard Margetson and entertainment will feature Darwin musicians *Jigsaw Collective*.

"Tickets to the Australia Day Ball are now on sale until Friday, 13 January, profits raised at the event support Australia Day activities in communities across the Territory, to ensure that the spirit of Australia Day is enjoyed by all Territorians," Ms Gill said.

The Australia Day Council of the Northern Territory is grateful for the generous support it receives from its sponsors, without them these events would not be possible, including North West Construction, Hardy Aviation, Fusion, Lion, Territory FM, Airnorth and Zip Print.

For further information on the 2017 Australia Day Council Black Tie Ball visit our website at: <http://nt.australiaday.org.au/events-nt/australia-day-gala-ball/> or contact the office on 8924 4204.

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Media enquiries: please contact Jeannette Button on 0407 727 080 or Kiya Gill on 8924 4204.

Notes:

NT 2017 Australian of the Year recipients

Andrea Mason - 2017 NT Australian of the Year

Working across a 350,000 square kilometre stretch of central Australia, Andrea Mason is helping Indigenous women to raise strong, healthy children. As the Chief Executive Officer of the Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara Women's Council, Andrea brings together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal thinking to create employment, support health and wellbeing, and tackle domestic violence and other social challenges. With deep respect for local language, law and

culture, Andrea is leading innovative social enterprises, such as the Tjanpi Desert Weavers, building micro businesses, teaching valuable employment skills, and melding traditional healers with the best of western medicine to maximise healing and well-being. She is determined to help children and young people realise the same aspirations as their urban counterparts.

Sister Anne Gardiner AM - 2017 NT Senior Australian of the Year

As a 22-year-old member of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Sister Anne Gardiner was asked to move to Bathurst Island to live among the Tiwi people. In the 62 years since, Sr Anne has devoted her life to enriching community, enhancing opportunity and supporting the Tiwi culture. An advocate of peace, love and the traditional Tiwi way of life, Sr Anne has worked tirelessly to document and preserve the Tiwi language for future generations. The Principal of the local primary school, Sr Anne has educated generations of children while also establishing community clubs, from mothers' groups to Little Athletics. She runs regular prayer meetings, founded an op shop and established a café to raise funds to support her much-loved community. Sr Anne's museum shares valuable stories and traditional customs, while also bringing financial benefit to the people. The cornerstone of the community, Sr Anne has earned an enduring place in the hearts of the Tiwi people.

(Unfortunately Sister Anne will not be able to join us at the Ball)

Bridie Duggan - 2017 NT Young Australian of the Year

Shocked by the suicide of a close friend in her hometown of Katherine, Bridie Duggan decided to take action. Setting herself an extreme challenge, Bridie travelled around Darwin each day for a month, and raised \$27,000 for the Livin Foundation in the process. Determined to raise awareness and funds to support the one in four Australians who will suffer from mental illness during their lives, Bridie wants others to know that speaking up and out is not weak. A qualified life coach and personal trainer, with a degree in exercise and sports science, Bridie inspires people to strive for healthy mind, body and spirit.

Tejinder pal Singh - 2017 NT Local Hero

For the past four years, Tejinder pal Singh has dedicated the last Sunday of each month to feeding poor and needy locals of northern Darwin. After a gruelling 12-hour shift driving a taxi, Tejinder spends five hours cooking up a storm in his kitchen, preparing 80 kilograms of vegetarian curry and rice, which he then serves as a free lunch. After arriving from the Punjab region with his family in 2006, Tejinder endured a racist tirade of abuse while transporting a passenger which inspired the humble man to break down the negative prejudice associated with turbans. Funding the feast each month from his own pocket, Tejinder attributes his generosity to his deep Sikh faith. His work has inspired three other groups to take up the cause to distribute free food to the homeless on Sundays. And the hungry and thirsty come flocking when they see Tejinder's van, emblazoned with the sign "free Indian food for hungry and needy people."