



Australia Day

Reflect. Respect. Celebrate.

Northern  
Territory

AUSTRALIA DAY COUNCIL  
NORTHERN TERRITORY  
**2022-2023**

# ANNUAL REVIEW



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2023

## Chair's message



I am pleased to address you in this year's Annual Report, where we reflect on the remarkable events and activities held by the Australia Day Council Northern Territory over the past 12 months.

In January I attended the National Australian the Year Awards in Canberra with our Northern Territory recipients Sacha King, Bernard Tipiloura, Jahdai Vigona and Sameul Bush-Blanasi. We met the other 28 recipients from across the country as well as past alumni, many of whom were there to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Australia's Local Hero Award.

In February this year we said farewell and thank you to the outgoing Administration of the Northern Territory, Vicki O'Halloran who had served as Patron of the Australia Day Council Northern Territory since October 2017.

In May I had the honour of attending an event at Government House, to mark the Coronation of Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

In June we welcomed national Australia's Local Hero Amar Singh to Darwin where I performed a Saltwater Ceremony, connecting us to our ancestors so they can see, guide, and protect us while on Larrakia land.

I would like to thank everybody who has attended our events across the Territory as well as our event partners for your ongoing support.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge our board members who are all volunteers and give their time generously to contribute to the success of the Australia Day Council Northern Territory as well maintaining a high standard of governance to ensure that we remain a prestigious organization and as we continue to grow and face new challenges, I have every confidence that our remarkable staff will continue to shine, and together, we will achieve even greater heights.



Dr Richard Fejo

Chair

Australia Day Council Northern Territory



## Chief Executive Officer's message

In the blink of an eye another year has passed, and as I mark my sixth year with the Australia Day Council it never ceases to amaze me the stories that we hear through our awards programs of the inspirational, community minded and courageous Territorians that we have here in the Northern Territory.

This year once again four high achieving Territorians represented the Northern Territory in Canberra at the national Australian of the Year Awards in January, while 54 people were recognized at local level thorough the Citizen of the Year awards.

One of the highlights of this year was the The Festival of Us, held on Australia Day 26 January. It was a day of pride, celebration and inclusion and showcased the many cultures and nationalities we have living here in the Northern Territory including the Rirratjingu dancers who travelled from East Arnhemland and keynote speaker Sam Bloom who is a 2 x World Para Surfing Champion, bestselling author, and inspiration behind the global Netflix sensation Penguin Bloom.

This year's Tour of Honour was a resounding success. Travelling to Alice Springs, Darwin and the Tiwi Islands with 2023 National Local Hero, Amar Singh encouraged nominations for the Australian of the Year Awards as well as sharing the story of his charity Turbans4Australia. The team of volunteers at Turbans4Australia have assisted people facing all kinds of challenges, from those impacted by natural disasters like floods, bushfires and cyclones, to those facing homelessness, domestic violence, poverty, unemployment and isolation.

I'd like to recognize and congratulate the nine high-achieving ambassadors who travelled far and wide (even as far as Tasmania!) to share their stories of what being Australian means to them and to inspire those who were becoming Australian Citizens on Australia Day.

I would also like to take a moment to thank the Australia Day Council Northern Territory board for their ongoing support and express my appreciation for the outgoing board members who have represented and served our organisation with distinction. A special mention to Katherine Li who will be leaving after serving a three year Term and also to Dr Edwin Joseph who has completed two Terms spanning six years with the Australia Day Council. Looking ahead to 2024 I look forward to working with our incoming board members as well as continuing to grow our relationships with Northern Territory Councils and engage further with our remote communities.

I also look forward to meeting our 2024 Australian of the Year awards recipients and sharing their journeys with you all.



Anna McDonald  
Chief Executive Officer  
Australia Day Council Northern Territory

# Activities

- Australia Day 2023
- OZ Run
- Citizen of the Year
- Student Citizen of the Year
- OZ Forum
- OZ Sports
- Annual Regional Conference

Australia Day 2023

Photo: **OZ RUN**



# Key Highlights

# 2023

## Events

### OZ Run & Australia Day

Australia Day 2023 was a remarkable celebration of the city's unique multicultural identity and the rich cultural heritage of the Northern Territory.

Under the theme of "Reflect. Respect. Celebrate. We're all part of the story," the day brought together the diverse communities of Darwin to acknowledge their shared history, embrace their cultural diversity, and celebrate their collective pride as Territorians.

Activities started bright and early at the Darwin Waterfront with a warm-up ZUMBA session at 6:30 am, followed by OZ Run at 7 am. Over 2,700 people participated in the 2.5km or 5km fun run/walk, making it once again the Northern Territory's most significant free running event.

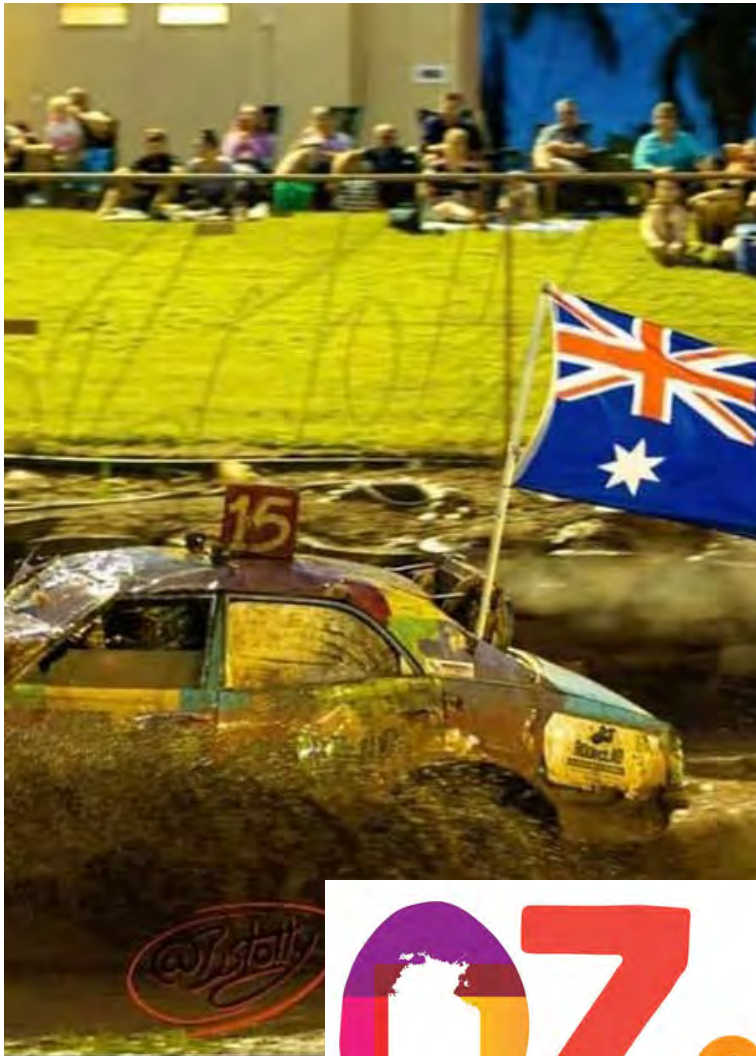
Following OZ Run, approximately 1500 people participated in a Smoking Ceremony hosted by traditional owners the Larrakia people. We also invited the Rirratjingu dancers from East Arnhemland to perform at both the Smoking Ceremony and The Festival of Us.

"The Festival of Us," captured the essence of what unites Territorians. Featuring an array of activities, such as speeches by inspirational sporting and community leaders, cultural performances, inclusive interactive activities, cuisine and traditional food stalls, games, live music, artist's installations, market stalls, and Multicultural OZ Fusion performances; the day truly exemplified the spirit of unity and togetherness.

In total, Australia Day NT 2023 attracted more than 4,500 attendees across the day.

Australia Day 2023's activities also had significant involvement from the local business community, with more than 117 businesses, directly participating. Furthermore, over 100 casual jobs were created as part of the event organization and execution.





# OZ SPORTS



# Key Highlights

# 2023

## Events

### OZ Sports

Each year community sporting groups and clubs are encouraged to hold a competition or event on Australia Day, 26 January to contribute to Australia Day celebrations throughout the Northern Territory.

The OZ Sports program is free to participate in and offers clubs and organisations an opportunity to promote their programs and encourage new memberships.

This year we received 35 event registrations from across the Territory.

### Ambassador Programme

The Australia Day Ambassador Program is the cornerstone of local Australia Day celebrations. Each year over Ambassadors generously volunteer their time and energy to visit regional and remote areas across the Northern Territory to inspire and unite communities.

Our Ambassadors are high profile, influential and deeply respected community leaders within the Northern Territory. These individuals share insights from their varied lived experiences, celebrate our diversity and reflect on who we are as nation.

This year we were in the fortunate position that we were able to send two of our NT Ambassadors to Tasmania to Bridport and King Island.

- City of Darwin – Kwame Selormey
- Litchfield Council – Rebecca Forrest
- Katherine Town Council – Lesley Woolf
- Nhulunbuy Corporation – Myra Fordham
- Coomalie Community Government Council – Samuel Weston
- Clubhouse Territory community event – Malia Ford
- King Island (Tasmania) Adam Drake
- Bridport (Tasmania) – Erica Gibson



“I loved the opportunity to promote Australia Day and to interact with amazing people who were nominees”.

“I loved the new connections with other people, giving people value and sharing views on AU day I felt special on stage”.



“Telling my story, networking and speaking about Australia Day and what it means to me”.

“The vast array of activities and celebrations, diversity of attendees”.



# Key Highlights

# 2023

## Events

### Community Grants

Each year the Australia Day Council Northern Territory invites councils and not-for-profits to apply for up to \$3000 to hold activities or events within two weeks of Australia Day. These activities can be anything from a flag raising and awards ceremony to a lamington eating competition, cane toad racing or thong throwing competition. This year, 15 organisations received funding through our Community Grants programme for their Australia Day events.

Organisation	Amount received	Number of participants
Alice Springs Town Council	3000	250
Central Desert Regional Council	3000	4200
City of Darwin	3000	300
City of Palmerston	3000	200
Clubhouse Territory	3000	300
Coomalie Community Government Council	1500	180
Darwin Malayalee Forum	2500	100
Darwin Trailer Boat Club	2000	350
Katherine Town Council	3000	200
Litchfield Council	3000	500
Nhulunbuy Corporation	2500	300
Variety NT	3000	12000
Victoria Daly Regional Council	2000	500
Wagait Shire Council	2500	110
West Arnhem Regional Council	3000	1300
<b>Total</b>	<b>40000</b>	



# Key Highlights

# 2023

## Events

### Citizen of the Year

The Australia Day Citizen of the Year Awards are proudly presented by the Australia Day Council Northern Territory and supported by the Northern Territory Government. Citizen of the Year Awards reward and recognise individuals and organisations that have made a noteworthy contribution during the current year, and/or given outstanding service over several years, to a local community over and above normal employment duties. Outstanding contribution and community service include areas such as education, health, fundraising, charitable and voluntary services, business, sport, arts, the environment, or any other area that contributes to the advancement and wellbeing of a community.

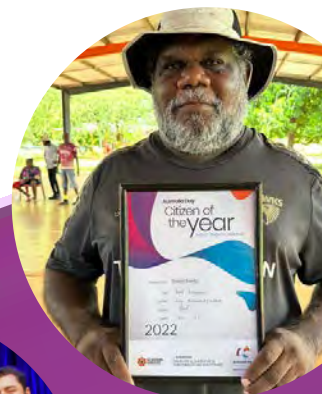
### Categories:

- Citizen of the Year
- Young Citizen of the Year
- Community Event of the year

Some councils choose to create their own awards too, including the “Volunteer of the Year” and “Sportsperson of the Year” category.

### Participating Councils

- Alice Springs Town Council
- Roper Gulf Regional Council
- Coomalie Community Council
- City of Darwin
- West Arnhem Regional Council
- Katherine
- Litchfield
- Nhulunbuy
- City of Palmerston
- Barkly Regional Council
- Tennant Creek
- Wagait Shire Council
- Victoria Daly Regional Council
- Belyuen Community



# Key Highlights

# 2023

## Events

### OZ Forum

*(Budgeted for June but held in October.)*

Each year the Australia Day Council NT hold an OZ Forum event where we invite Australian of the Year Awards alumni and friends of Australia Day Council to participate in a panel discussion.

The theme for this year's OZ Forum was "Community, Connection, and Mateship," with our focus on veterans wellbeing.

Facilitator, Ray Martin - Director of Defence and Veterans Engagement NT conducted a thought provoking discussion where our panel offered a unique perspective, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging and supporting our veterans. This event was held in collaboration with Mates4mates and proudly sponsored by the Department of Veterans' Affairs during Veterans Health Week.

The event served as a platform for attendees to gain insight into the challenges and triumphs faced by our veterans, fostering a sense of unity and appreciation for their dedicated service.

Thank you to our esteemed speakers Matthew Hull, Annette Rudd, Bob Shewring OAM, and Samuel Weston.



# Key Highlights

# 2023

## Programs

### Australian of the Year Awards

Each year our nation celebrates the achievements and contributions of eminent Australians through the Australian of the Year Awards by profiling leading citizens who are role models for us all. They inspire us through their achievements and challenge us to make our own contribution to creating a better Australia. The Awards honour an exceptional group of highly respected Australians who ignite discussion and change on issues of national importance. The Australian of the Year Awards provides everyone with the opportunity to recognise any Australian who makes them proud.

The four finalist nominees by category were:

- **NT Local hero nominees**

Nicole Brown, Isla Hooper, Samuel Weston,  
**Sacha King (Recipient).**

- **NT Senior Australian of the Year nominees**

Barayuwa Mununggurr, Georgia Opdenbrouw,  
Lesley Woolf, **Bernard Tipiloura (Recipient).**

- **NT Young Australian of the Year Australian of the Year nominees**

Meredith Batey, Isabelle Craven, Myra Fordham,  
**Jahdai Vigona (Recipient).**

- **NT Australian of the Year nominees**

Tyson Carmody, Matthew Hill, Gary Strachan,  
**Samuel Bush-Blanski (recipient).**

200 guests attended the Northern Territory awards presentation event held at the Darwin Convention Centre.

The four recipients then went on to represent the Northern Territory in Canberra for the National Announcement on the eve of Australia Day.

*In 2023, three of our four Recipients for the Australian of the Year Awards were First Nations representatives.*



# 2023 NT Australian of the Year Award Recipients



Samuel Bush-Blanasi  
Chair, Northern Land Council  
2023 NT AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

Bernard Tipiloura  
Suicide prevention campaigner  
2023 NT SENIOR AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR



Jahdai Vigona  
First Nations community leader  
2023 NT YOUNG AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

Sacha King  
Social worker and founder, Two Two One  
Mental Health Charity  
2023 NT LOCAL HERO



# Key Highlights

# 2023

## Programs

### Tour of Honour 2023, Amar Singh

Amar Singh, the 2022 Australia's Local Hero, was warmly welcomed to Larrakia Country with a Saltwater Ceremony performed by Dr Richard Fejo - Traditional Owner and Chair of the Australia Day Council Northern Territory.

During his visit to the Northern Territory, Amar had various engagements, including interviews at both ABC Radio Darwin and Alice Springs to talk about his work with Turbans 4 Australia and promote Australian of the Year Awards nominations.

Amar also had the opportunity to meet with Australia Day Council NT board members and Australian of the Year Awards alumni.

Amar visited Durack and Woodroffe primary schools, where he presented Aussie of the Month awards and received portraits drawn by students. Amar also spoke at Melaleuca Australia's community morning tea which was held as part of the National Refugee Week program where his speech was translated into two languages as he spoke, Swahili and Urdu.



Amar met with 2023 NT Senior Australian of the Year Bernard Tipiloura as well as visiting Xavier Catholic College on the Tiwi Islands, and addressing teachers from Murrupurtiyanuwu primary school during their spiritual retreat.

This also happened to be the week of Sister Anne Gardiner's 92nd birthday and she was delighted to have Amar enjoy a slice of cake with her!

In Alice Springs, Amar met with the Centralian Sikh Community, attending their prayer time and sharing his story.

Overall, the Tour covered 3500km, involved radio interviews, school visits, festivals, and engaging with local communities. Amar's dedication to promoting kindness, supporting communities, and making a positive impact on people's lives showcased his exceptional character and the true essence of a local hero.







# Key Highlights

# 2023

## Programs

### Student Citizen of the Year

The Australia Day Student Citizen Award continues to honor and recognize exceptional students in the Northern Territory who exemplify qualities such as fair play, generosity of spirit, concern for others, cultural understanding, and a positive attitude within their school and wider community.

This year, a total of **141 outstanding students** were selected from various primary, middle, and senior schools across the region to receive the prestigious Student Citizen Award for their remarkable contributions.

Each award recipient is presented with a specially minted engraved medallion and a certificate bearing the signatures of the Administrator, Chief Minister, and Chair of the Australia Day Council, acknowledging their exceptional achievements.

We encourage presentation of the award to take place at the student's community's

flag raising ceremony on Australia Day but understand this is not always possible. Many schools choose to present the award at their end of year assembly before school breaks for Christmas.

The program continues to encourage and uplift the next generation of leaders, promoting a culture of empathy, compassion, and active involvement in creating a more harmonious and united society.

All award recipients are acknowledged in a full page coloured advertisement in the NT News on Australia Day.



# Student Citizen of the Year



# Key Highlights

# 2023

## Events

### Regional Conference

The Australia Day Council NT's annual conference continues to be a pivotal event in our calendar, bringing together dedicated individuals from regional councils across the Northern Territory. This year's conference was hosted in Katherine, offering a unique blend of professional development and networking opportunities. The conference's diverse agenda, tailored to event organizers with a focus on Australia Day activities, featured local business presenters who shared their expertise.

Notably, we were honored to have the current NT Australian of the Year inspire our delegates, underlining the commitment of Australia Day Council NT to provide valuable experiences. We maintained our tradition of fostering collaboration by covering the travel and accommodation costs for one delegate from each council. The engaging "Speed Networking" session, where delegates had a minute each to discuss their Australia Day initiatives, was a standout feature.

The event was made possible thanks to the hard work of our team, dedicated sponsors, and the outstanding hospitality of Nitmiluk Tours for our conference dinner at Katherine Gorge. We also appreciate the invaluable insights from guest speakers, media training by Roxanne Fitzgerald, and social media expertise shared by Karen Hawkes. The support of attendees, both familiar faces and new connections, continues to be a cornerstone of this event. We eagerly anticipate another successful conference next year, showcasing the unwavering dedication and enthusiasm of our regional network.







# Impact at a Glance

## 2022-2023 Snapshot

# 2023

### Student Citizen of the Year Awards

- 141 students received Student citizen awards

### Citizen of the Year Awards

- 56 people received Citizen of the Year awards

### Events

- The “Festival of Us” held at the Darwin Convention Centre on Australia Day 26 January attracted over 4500 people across the day.
- Our annual OZ Run event had 2700 participants.
- 20 multi cultural groups performed on the OZ Fusion stage at The Festival of Us.
- XXXX attended the OZ Forum Veterans Wellbeing event

### Programs

- Australia Day Council NT assisted 12 councils and 4 not-for-profits through our Community Grants programme with funding for their Australia Day events.
- There were 32 sporting events from across the Territory registered for our OZ Sports programme on Australia Day.
- 54 Australia Day community events were registered across the Territory with Australia Day Council NT.







# Governance

# 2023

## Dr Richard Fejo (Chair)

Richard is a Larrakia man from Darwin from his father, his grandfather and his great grandfather in what culture calls "Grandfather lore". He is also Warumungu from Tennant Creek on his mother's side and holds a great amount of cultural knowledge and experiences from both northern and central Australia across the Northern Territory.

Richie started working as a Cultural Educator with Northern Territory General Practice Education for eleven years resigning from cultural education in 2020 to become the Flinders University Elder on Campus in Darwin. From 2018 Richie became the Chairman of the Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation (LNAC) until November 2021. In November 2020 Richie became the Chairman of the Darwin Waterfront Corporation and also has had previous roles with City of Darwin International Relations Committee from 2020 to 2022 standing down to become the current chairman of the Australia Day Council.

## Robert Annis-Brown

Robert (Rob) has had a 37 year career in banking, the last 21 years have been in Darwin. In servicing the business community Rob has gained inspiration from the people who call the NT home.

He is passionate about what makes Australia great and has volunteered for several community groups. Rob has served on the boards of the Charles Darwin University Foundation Australia Institution of Management & the Property Council NT Division.

Robert is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

## Helen Summers

For more than 25 years, optometrist Helen Summers has been devoted to caring for the vision of Top End communities, and helping to prevent blindness through education and employment. Helen also lectures and volunteers in not-for-profit and charities for people with vision loss and learning and neuro-developmental delays.

Helen is an advocate for the goals of Vision 2020 and Close the Gap for Vision – to reduce preventable blindness and provide vision services to regional and remote Australia. As well as active involvement in vision-related national and internal organisations, Helen has served as a non-executive director and committee member on Australian boards across health, social, indigenous and sporting sectors. Helen's passion for life has also seen her join a team to complete a 64km group trek on the Sunshine Coast, raising money for charity. She inspires many with her motivation, commitment and dynamic personality.

## Renae McGarvie APM

Renae McGarvie APM has a passion for working and volunteering at the community level. Renae grew up in Darwin and served across the Territory as a police officer for 24 years before recently becoming Chief of People and Strategy Officer for the West Daly Regional Council. She is currently undertaking an MBA at UniSA while also being involved in a variety of organisations.

Renae has two amazing children who inspire her to be a role model for them and the community. Renae is honoured to be involved with the Australia Day Council NT, recognising people that volunteer their time and dedicate their professional careers for the future generations.

## Malia Ford

Born and bred in the Territory, Malia strives towards empowering the Territories Youth. Malia completed her Master's in Occupational Therapy at the end of 2022, she hopes to improve the lives of many Territorians through empowerment and inclusive practice and uses her own experiences of disadvantage to reduce stigma around homelessness and childhood abuse. She is an alumnus of the Youth Round Table 2016, has previous experience as an executive member of the Young Professionals Network Committee, founding Vice Chair of Two Two One Mental Health Charity and founding President of CDU student club Allied Health Collective.

Malia can often be found around the community volunteering at various events and is a current Nightcliff Lions Club member as well as a current member of the Volunteering NT committee.

## Katherine Li

Katherine Li is proud to call Australia home after migrating from China around ten years ago. As a fluent and confident communicator in Mandarin and English, Katherine prides herself on building strong relationships with those she meets. As a passionate advocate for multicultural societies, Australia has helped Katherine's passion for supporting others to grow.

In 2018/19, Katherine was the President of the Young Professionals Network NT supporting hundreds of young Territorians to get involved with social and professional development events. With experience in commercial, public sector, not-for-profit and membership organisations, Katherine brings her wealth of experience and knowledge to her work.

## Dr Edwin Joseph

Edwin is passionate about serving the community and being active in public life. He has a multidisciplinary education, including a doctoral degree. His experience includes roles in higher education, project management, research, policy and more. Throughout his life, Edwin has been volunteering for community groups, not-for-profit organizations and professional associations. Currently he serves on eleven boards in the Northern Territory.

# Governance

# 2023

## Jodie Ryan

Jodie commenced on the Australia Day Council in August 2022, following a 30-year career in the Northern Territory Public Sector, the last 9 of these as the Chief Executive of the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet and the Department of Treasury and Finance. Ms Ryan has deep experience, knowledge and understanding of the Northern Territory Government, with a particular focus on improving the economic and social development of the Northern Territory. Her experience encompasses working extensively with all tiers of Government, the private sector and non-government organisations.

Ms Ryan is a former member of the Charles Darwin University Council, the Australia New Zealand School of Government, and the Darwin Waterfront Corporation. She has a Bachelor of Business, Majoring in Accounting, and is a Certified Practising Accountant.

## Shipra Soni

Shipra is currently serving as the Treasurer of the board and works full time serving the Bishop of Darwin working as the Business Manager at Catholic Church Diocese of Darwin. She is passionate towards children's' future and has been a Board Member (Treasurer) for Variety the Children's Charity NT.

Shipra is an immensely grounded human being, her heart reaches out for anyone in need , be it family, a friend or stranger. Through her innate skills and formal qualifications, she has accomplished a lot in the last 10 years in Darwin

## Neville Driver

Neville Driver join the Australia Day Council board to celebrate inclusivity within the community and ensure that seniors are recognised and celebrated.

Neville holds various other boards positions in the Northern Territory including vice president and public officer of the Palmerston Litchfield seniors Association and chair of the ministers advisory council for senior Territorians.





Australian  
of the Year  
▶ Awards

Reflect. Respect. Celebrate.



Australian  
of the Year  
▶ Awards

Reflect. Respect. Celebrate.



2023

# Australia Day

Reflect. Respect. Celebrate.

## Northern Territory

Thank you to our sponsors supporters and event partners for your ongoing commitment to the Australia Day Council Northern Territory. They Australia Day Council Northern Territory is supported by the Northern Territory government through the Department of the Chief Minister and the Australian government through the National Australia Day Council

### Sponsors and Supporters

Alawa Scouts  
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City of Darwin  
Core Traffic Control  
Darwin Convention Centre  
Darwin Waterfront Corporation  
Fairy Jill Enchanted Entertainment

National Australia Day Council  
Nightcliff Lions Club  
Office of Paul Kirby MLA  
St John Ambulance  
Territory FM  
Tip Top Circus  
Top End Zumba Crew  
Total Event Services