

Media Release

26 January 2011

Wagga Wagga Australia Day Award Winners announced

The Australia Day Awards Ceremony was held today and honoured a number of past and present local residents for their outstanding contributions to the community.

Below is the list of winners that were announced today and includes the citations for each.

Young Citizen of the Year Nominees 2011

Bridget Byrnes – nominated by Roslyn steel who described Bridget as someone who seizes every opportunity that is offered to her.

Adrianna Porcelli – Adriana was named the RSL youth of the year and volunteers at pets plus and was successful in participating in the Kokoda Youth Leadership Challenge.

Winner - 2011 Young Citizen of the Year - Bridget Byrnes

Bridget has been a girl guide since 2001. In 2007 she represented the Riverina region at a state camp to celebrate “Brownsea Island” centenary. Later in 2007 she represented Australia at the New Zealand Jamboree. She completed a youth leadership development program at the 2008 New South Wales Jamboree and this year participated in a “be the change” state workshop. This was a joint initiative between girl guides and the Australian government aid program.

Bridget is a member of Koorringal senior Guides and is currently working towards achieving her Queens Guide Award.

In January 2010 Bridget participated in the Australian Centenary Jamboree in Geelong.

Bridget has volunteered as a judge in the tournament of minds, sold badges for Legacy and represented her school at the gifted and talented conference in Canberra for youth during 2010.

During 2010 Bridget was a member of the NSW Premier’s Young People’s Reference Group. This group advises the government on a range of issues affecting the community and NSW. Bridget was chosen to make up a group of only twelve people. Bridget applied for the reference group because she wanted to voice the opinions and concerns of young people from regional New South Wales. She wanted to make a difference.

2010 was the celebration of 50 years of guiding at Turvey Park. Bridget worked with two other senior guides to organise this celebration.

Bridget remains open, generous and humble despite her amazing achievements.

Bridget is a remarkable young lady who is worthy of recognition in any company.

Citizen of the Year nominees 2011

Duncan Potts – Duncan has made a significant community contribution through his dedication to many community events, involvement with Star FM Kids' Kottage Ronald McDonald house and many other fundraising efforts.

Colonel Graeme Finney – Colonel Finney has made a significant community contribution through his involvement in a range of fundraising activities devoting hours of volunteering throughout the community.

Lex Bittar – Lex has made an outstanding contribution to the community through his profession as an educator and personally through his community service.

Dr Ray King OAM – Dr King has made a significant community contribution through his establishment of sunflower house as well as many other community contributions.

Patricia Danvers – Patricia has made a significant contribution to the community through the extensive generosity she provides to numerous organisations and community groups.

Winner – 2011 citizen of the year – Dr Ray King OAM

Dr King has certainly made a sizeable contribution to the local community. Letters of support describe ray as a man with integrity, honesty, thoughtfulness for others and the desire and ability to serve the community by helping those less fortunate than himself.

Since arriving in Wagga Wagga Dr King has worked tirelessly through dedicating long hours, submitting funding requests, calling on community groups to support his vision for a place for people with a mental illness to use and visit.

Commencing in 2003, Dr King drew together other members of the community and set up a committee to find, renovate and establish a building where people with a diagnosed mental illness could find support, and named it sunflower house.

In addition to establishing sunflower house, Dr King delivered workshops aimed at addressing an increasing rate of youth suicide including prevention, intervention and community education.

Since 2004, Dr King has funded a scholarship at the conservatorium of music which has been won by an outstanding student of music.

Dr King was also the founder and establisher of OMNI – Older Men New Ideas. This was initiated in 2001 and he has set up many omni groups in the Riverina. OMNI is a

meeting of older men to provide moral and social support to each other, to connect with other men and to gain support from other men over the age of 55 who face similar problems.

Dr King led the team that funded and physically laboured to create the senses garden at the Forrest centre.

He also initiated funding to help set up yal-balinga-da and organised working parties to create a learning place for the Wiradjuri people.

Dr King's involvement with many community groups including Rotary, Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, Lake Village improvement committee, carers groups, the Division of General Practice and Community Care through his work with the Australian Schizophrenia Fellowship has enabled him to be of great benefit to the community.

Dr Ray King is an outstandingly generous man and civic minded citizen.

Walk of Honour nominees 2011

Dr Ray King OAM - Dr King's contribution to the community of Wagga Wagga was through the establishment of sunflower house. He has also, as you have heard, worked tirelessly with Rotary, Wagga Art Gallery and the Lake Village Improvement Committee through to suicide prevention programs

Bill Kerr - Bill's contribution to the community was through his acting abilities, the arts and his famous tag "The Boy from Wagga Wagga".

Dorothy Louise Blackett - Louise has worked tirelessly teaching speech and drama. She started the children's theatre workshop and has always dedicated her time to support community projects.

Professor David Green –Professor Green's contribution to the community of Wagga Wagga was largely through his many projects involving the community and its relationship to Charles Sturt University.

Adrianna Porcelli – Adriana was named the RSL Youth of the Year and volunteers at Pets Plus and was successful in participating in the Kokoda youth leadership challenge.

Winner 2011 walk of honour – Bill Kerr

Bill Kerr was born 10th June 1922 in Cape Town, South Africa and spent his first twenty years in Wagga Wagga developing his skills as an actor in musical theatre, revues and Eisteddfods during the great depression.

In 1934 he starred in one of Australia's earliest talking films 'The Silence of Dean Maitland'. As an adolescent, Kerr worked at 2WG as a radio announcer from 1939-1941.

After serving in World War II Bill Kerr went to England to further his acting career and in the 1940's became one of Australia's notable expatriate figures, appearing regularly on the BBC's radio series 'Variety Bandbox', with his trademark comment "I'm only here for four minutes". During this time he was introduced, with his noticeably Australian accent, as 'The Boy from Wagga Wagga', a soubriquet he continued when included in the 1950's BBC radio comedy series 'Hancock's Half Hour'. Through this affectionate mockery Wagga Wagga became (in)famous throughout Britain and the reach of the BBC as epitomising a distinctive vernacular Australian identity.

Also in the 1950's Kerr made his mark as a leading actor in the British films 'Appointment in London' (1952) and 'The Dam Busters' (1954). And the first goons film 'Penny Points to Paradise' (1951), which sustained his long association with Spike Milligan into a role in the play 'The Bed-sitting Room' in 1963. In 1967 Kerr appeared in the second series of 'Dr Who'.

Having established his reputation as an iconic Australian actor (from Wagga Wagga), Kerr returned to Australia in 1979 and became a leading figure in the Australian film renaissance of the 1980s, with key roles in 'Gallipoli' (1981), 'The Year of Living Dangerously' (1982), 'Dusty' (1983) and 'Razorback' (1984). Kerr had supporting roles in 'Anzacs' and 'The Coca-Cola Kid' (both 1985).

Kerr was also praised by the critics for his performances as Alfred Doolittle in the stage musical 'My Fair Lady' in the 80s. In 2001 he featured in the acclaimed TV series 'Changi' and the Comedy 'Let's Get Skase'.

In 2010 here in wagga wagga bill kerr's life and achievements were celebrated in the Charles Sturt University and Museum of the Riverina exhibition 'Bill Kerr: The Boy from Wagga Wagga' curated by Dr Neill Overton who will accept the award on behalf of Bill Kerr.

Although he now lives in Perth, Bill Kerr's successes have been, significantly tied to Wagga Wagga, whose reputation has been promoted, enriched and delighted in both within Australia and internationally. From his high-pitched ocker voice "I've just arrived from Wagga Wagga I've only got four minutes" through his more recognisably all-purpose Australian identity, to his serious ('voice of gloom') Australian character roles, Bill Kerr has represented his country and Wagga Wagga to the world.

A generous, human and exemplary Australian, Bill Kerr is a deserved recipient of the 2011 Wagga Wagga Australia Day Walk of Honour Award.

Ted Ryder Memorial Award nominees 2011

John 'Jack' Peterson – a significant contribution to basketball and rugby league.

Chris Dolahenty – a significant contribution to touch football on a local, state and national level.

Winner 2011 Ted Ryder Memorial Award – Chris Dolahenty

Chris has made a significant contribution to touch football as a player, coach, referee and administrator at all levels of the sport. He has contributed to

- The Wagga Touch Association
- Suns – a Regional Touch Association
- NSW Touch – the State governing body
- Touch Football Australia – the National governing body; and
- The Federation of International Touch, the world wide governing body

Chris is currently a board member for the Wagga Touch Association, but has previously held the position of Junior Director. He is also a referee panel member and an independent Director of nNew South WalesTouch and in 2009 he was an assistant to the panel of the Federation of International Touch.

Since Chris's involvement in touch began in 1987, he has voluntarily given a considerable amount back to the sport. Chris has made an impact on the development of touch locally and at a state and national level. A highlight has been his appointment as Junior Director of the Wagga Touch Association where he has worked tirelessly to cement a strong junior committee and grow the competition. When Chris was appointed to this role in 2004, there were approximately 400 junior players participating in the sport. In 2010, touch is the highest junior participation sport in the Wagga Wagga Local Government Area. Chris and his committee run seventeen fields on a Saturday to cater for approximately 2000 players. This is the biggest touch league run at a single venue anywhere in New South Wales.

Chris continues enthusiastically to develop professional skills in many aspects of the game and is a highly valued and respected member of Wagga Touch.

Sporting Hall of Fame Inductee- Local Legend – Anthony Fletcher

Tony has been inducted into the Sporting Hall of Fame for his significant contribution to rugby league both as a referee and referee administrator.

Tony commenced as a Group 9 referee in 1976 and is still looking forward to refereeing in 2011.

Since joining the Group 9 Referees Association, Tony has refereed over 600 games which include:

- 392 first grade matches
- 156 reserve grade matches
- 82 under 18 matches
- 32 under 16 matches
- 6 first grade grand finals, 2 reserve grade grand finals and 1 under 18 grand final.

- As well as numerous junior, representative and school boy games which has taken Tony's total games refereed to over 1000.

Tony has been a committed member of the Group 9 Referees Association and held positions of:

- Treasurer from 1985 to 1989
- Secretary from 1990 to 2011
- Public Officer since the associations incorporation in 1993
- Editor of the weekly referee's association newsletter "touchdown" from 1990 to 2011.

Tony has previously been recognised for his ongoing achievements as a referee and was named Group 9 Referee of the Year in 2005 and Group 9 Referee Association Referee of the Year in 1991 and 1996.

Tony's long standing service to refereeing has been recognised with him being awarded life membership to the Group 9 Referees' Association in 1993, Group 9 Rugby League in 2007 and Country Rugby League Referees' Association in 2008.

Tony also received the Ted Ryder Memorial Award for service to sport in 2006.

Throughout his refereeing career, Tony has been instrumental in ensuring that the Group 9 Referees Association is a leading member of the Country Rugby League Referees Association by undertaking a number of important actions to improve the standard and knowledge of Group 9 referees.