



Government of Western Australia
Department of Communities

MEDIA RELEASE

SENIORS AWARDS FINALISTS ANNOUNCED: CELEBRATING OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS

PERTH, WA – Friday, 27 October 2023

WA Seniors Week 2023, set to run from November 12 to 19, is fast approaching, and with it, the highly anticipated 2023 Seniors Awards. These awards are a testament to the invaluable contributions made individually by seniors and those who support them throughout Western Australia.

This annual celebration underlines the essential role seniors play in our communities, fostering positive aging and active participation in community life. The WA Seniors Awards, administered by the Council on the Ageing WA (COTA WA) in partnership with the Department of Communities (Communities) and Lotterywest, honor individuals and organisations for their exceptional dedication to older Western Australians.

In recognition of their outstanding efforts, the COTA WA, in partnership with Lotterywest and Communities, are delighted to unveil the list of finalists for these prestigious awards (See Attachment A for short Biographies).

2023 WA Senior of the Year - Metropolitan (Finalists):

1. Benito Chan
2. Dorota Pietowska
3. Michael Wiggin

2023 WA Senior of the Year – Regional (Finalists):

1. Bernice Climie
2. David Walker
3. Ybeltje (Ypie) Thomson

2023 WA Seniors Advocate of the Year (Finalists):

1. Kedy Kristal
2. Professor Loretta Baldassar
3. Marika Krstevska

2023 WA Age Friendly Business of the Year (Finalists):

1. Connect Victoria Park Inc.
2. Nirrumbuk Aboriginal Corporation
3. Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre - Older People's Rights Service (OPRS)

2023 WA Age Friendly Local Government of the Year (Finalists):

1. City of Fremantle: Ambassador Program
2. City of Mandurah
3. City of Melville

Mary Anne Stephens, Chair of COTA WA, expressed her enthusiasm, saying, "These awards highlight the extraordinary achievements of our seniors and those who go above and beyond to support them. It is a time to celebrate and appreciate the contributions made by older Western Australians, who continue to enrich our lives with their wisdom, experience, and boundless enthusiasm."

Nominations were open to both community and local government organisations and members of the public across Western Australia who recognised the remarkable work carried out by seniors or their advocates. The response was overwhelming, with numerous outstanding nominations showcasing the remarkable impact seniors have on our society.

The finalists, selected through a rigorous process, represent a diverse range of fields, from community service to the arts, and from health and wellness to lifelong learning. Their stories inspire and remind us of the remarkable potential of seniors to bring about positive change.

The awards will be presented during Seniors Week, with the winner of each award category being announced by the Hon. Don Punch MLA, Minister for Seniors and Ageing, on Tuesday, 14 November 2023.

The countdown to Seniors Week is on, and the anticipation is building as Western Australia gears up to recognise and celebrate the invaluable contributions of our seniors and those who champion their cause.

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COTA WA MEDIA CONTACT: Mark Kinsela, CEO COTA (WA) mob: 0407 796 990

ATTACHMENT: Biographies of Award Finalists (alphabetical order)

2023 WA SENIORS ADVOCATE

Kedy Kristal (Success, WA)

Kedy is an exemplary advocate for older LGBTI individuals, Kedy has pioneered innovative initiatives, including the LGBTI Village Hub, empowering and connecting LGBTI seniors, while representing their voice at various government levels.

Marika Krstevska (Carine, WA)

Marika is a dedicated community champion with multilingual skills, Marika has advocated for seniors from diverse communities, ensuring culturally responsive aged care services for over a decade.

Professor Loretta Baldassar (Mount Lawley, WA)

Loretta has led a social revolution in understanding aging and migration impact, challenging ageism, and promoting a whole-life approach to aging. She has facilitated groundbreaking interventions for diverse older populations.

2023 WA SENIOR OF THE YEAR: REGIONAL

Bernice Climie (Cranbrook, WA)

Bernie is an icon of volunteerism and advocacy for seniors, contributing over two decades to numerous community organisations, including initiating the Seniors Lunch Group to connect generations and provide support, showing leadership and community spirit.

David Walker (Roebourne, WA)

David is a respected Ngarluma elder, David champions Aboriginal rights, culture, and personal responsibility, inspiring a generation to bridge two worlds and uphold compassion.

Ybeltje (Ypie) Thomson (Tammin, WA)

Ypie's 32-year dedication to the Tammin community includes leadership in the Tammin Seniors Committee, volunteering as a senior shopping bus driver, advocating for senior housing, delivering Meals on Wheels, and actively participating despite being a full-time caregiver.

WA SENIOR OF THE YEAR: METROPOLITAN

Benito Chan (West Perth, WA)

Benito is a dedicated advocate for dementia awareness and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse seniors, an autobiographical playwright, and full-time caregiver, and founder of Philippine Educational Theatre of Western Australia to promote multicultural interests in the arts.

Dorota Pietowska (Attadale, WA)

Dorota is a champion of culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and has dedicated over 40 years to supporting migrants, especially seniors, through volunteering, governance roles, and initiatives like the Umbrella Multicultural Community Care Services, leaving a lasting impact on aged care and multiculturalism in Western Australia.

Michael Wiggin (Claremont, WA)

Mike's tireless commitment to the Men's Shed movement and woodworking, exemplifies his dedication to creating thriving communities and supporting over 275 members.

WA AGE FRIENDLY BUSINESS

Connect Victoria Park Inc. (Victoria Park, WA)

Connect Victoria Park is a registered community housing provider in Victoria Park, WA, dedicated to offering social and affordable housing for individuals aged 60+. They stand out with their innovative housing and hub service model, featuring the unique 'Village Hub' that promotes active and healthy aging through community-driven social gatherings, workshops, and classes.

Nirrumbuk Aboriginal Corporation (Broome, WA)

Nirrumbuk, established in 1993, serves the Kimberley region and partners with the Broome Community of Elders to reduce loneliness among elderly residents. By organising social events, raising awareness about elder abuse, and collaborating with other community groups and services, they aim to empower vulnerable individuals, including those with disabilities, to interact with their community and access essential information.

Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre - Older People's Rights Service (Mirrabooka, WA)

The Older People's Rights Service (OPRS), established in 2007, is a multifaceted organisation providing legal advice, support, and advocacy to older adults at risk of elder abuse. They focus on empowering older adults to make informed decisions and address various types of elder abuse through a holistic approach, collaborating with partners and stakeholders to enhance the system's response.

WA AGE FRIENDLY LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The City of Fremantle

The City of Fremantle's Ambassador Program is a volunteer initiative that supports the Fremantle Visitor Centre, bringing together experienced volunteers to promote and enhance the city. The program not only benefits the local community but also provides volunteers with a sense of purpose, social connections, and self-worth, with their resilience highlighted during the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

City of Mandurah

City of Mandurah's 'Dandjoo Kaadajan Mia' Mandurah Seniors Centre has been a vital resource for the community, serving since 1990, offering activities, services, and a sense of connection to Mandurah's 32.2% senior demographic. The center's impact is evident with over 10,000 monthly visitors, diverse services, and a strong emphasis on community involvement, empowering seniors.

City of Melville

City of Melville's initiatives, including the Age Friendly Melville Assistance Fund, Activelink, forums, dementia support, and intergenerational events, have enhanced the lives of older residents, offering support, engagement, and a positive perspective on aging. These programs cater to a culturally diverse and aging population, fostering independence and overall well-being.