

Perth Now

Western Australia

WA's finest vie for Australian of the Year Awards

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- **14 comments**

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Sporting mentor Gerard Neesham, seen here talking to the Queen last week, is a finalist for WA's Australian of the Year. Picture: Supplied

Source: PerthNow



War hero Corporal Benjamin Roberts-Smith VC is in the running for WA's Australian of the Year.

Picture: Ray Strange

Source: PerthNow

A SPORTING mentor, a philanthropist builder, a Victoria Cross winner and a children's advocate are the finalists in WA's Australian of the Year Awards for 2012

Corporal Benjamin Roberts-Smith was awarded the Victoria Cross, Australia's highest military honour, in January for his service in Afghanistan.

On June 11 last year, as part of a Special Operations Task Group helicopter assault in Tizak, Kandahar province, Cpl Roberts-Smith exposed his own position to draw fire away from his patrol.

He stormed the enemy position, allowing his patrol to lift the weight of fire from other Australian troops.

Cpl Roberts-Smith has also been awarded the Medal for Gallantry and is the most highly decorated serving member of the Australian Defence Force.

Dale Alcock is a philanthropist and builder who operates Dale Alcock Homes and ABN Group, which builds more than 3000 homes a year.

He has set a high standard in the construction of sustainable homes, with improved energy consumption and water conservation.

Mr Alcock formed the ABN Foundation to give back to the community, especially in the fields of medical research, relief work and the environment.

Professor Donna Cross is a children's advocate and the foundation professor of child and adolescent health at the Child Health Promotion Research Centre.

She has conducted research in the USA, Canada, Russia, Estonia, Japan and Israel, with organisations including WHO, UNICEF and the American Health Foundation.

She has campaigned against drug use, cigarette smoking, bullying and child abuse, and has worked to raise awareness of HIV and road safety.

Sports mentor Gerard Neesham OAM is a former Sydney Swans player, coach of the Fremantle Dockers and Australian representative water polo player.

While relief teaching at Clontarf Aboriginal College, Mr Neesham thought sport could encourage boys to develop their education so he created an academy to operate in partnership with the college, but remaining independent.

The not-for-profit Clontarf Foundation now has more than 2000 boys enrolled across 36 schools in WA, the Northern Territory and Victoria.

WA Senior Australian of the Year finalists include volunteer physiotherapist Glenys Davies, businessman and fundraiser George Jones AM, youth rehabilitation leader Malcolm Smith, and psychologist and teacher Dr Julia Solomon.

WA Young Australian of the Year finalists include mental health campaigner Joshua Cunniffe, swimming coach Mathew Lovelock, reconciliation campaigner Krista McMeeken, and rugby champion and philanthropist David Pocock.

WA's local hero finalists are mining safety campaigner Helen Fitzroy, native horticulturist George Lullfitz, cancer research fundraiser Rick Parish, and disability campaigner Maria Sorgiovanni.

The WA Australian of the Year, Senior Australian of the Year, Young Australian of the Year and Local Hero Awards will be announced on November 19.

The WA award winners will join others from across the country as finalists for the national awards, which will be announced on January 25 in Canberra.

The 2012 finalists in Western Australia's Australian of the Year Awards are:

WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

Dale Alcock - Builder and Philanthropist

Professor Donna Cross - Children's Advocate

Gerard Neesham OAM - Sporting Mentor

Corporal Benjamin Roberts-Smith VC MG - Inspiring Soldier

WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S SENIOR AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

Glenys Davies - Volunteer Physiotherapist

George Jones AM - Businessman and Fundraiser

Malcolm Smith - Youth Rehabilitation

Dr Julia Solomon - Psychologist and Teacher

WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S YOUNG AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

Joshua Cunniffe - Mental Health Campaigner

Mathew Lovelock - Swimming Coach

Krista McMeeken - Reconciliation Campaigner

David Pocock - Rugby Champion and Philanthropist

WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S LOCAL HERO

Helen Fitzroy - Mining Safety Campaigner

George Lullfitz - Native Horticulturalist

Rick Parish - Cancer Research Fundraiser

Maria Sorgiovanni - Disability Campaigner

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