

7.1 LMM 27/02/24 - ACKNOWLEDGING NEWCASTLE'S CITIZENS OF THE YEAR & AUSTRALIA DAY 2024 HONOURS LIST RECIPIENTS

MOTION:

That City of Newcastle:

Part A: Newcastle's Citizens of the Year:

1. Congratulates our 2024 Citizens of the Year and formally recognises the outstanding contributions of these extraordinary Novocastrians:
 - Citizen of the Year - Professor Nathan Bartlett for his contribution to medical science, research and education and his ongoing commitment to improving health outcome for other
 - Young Citizen of the Year - Olivia Hughes for her selfless charity work and fundraising efforts at just 17 years old. Olivia teaches modified Nippers at Nobbys SLSC for children with disabilities and is an incredible fundraiser for Ronald McDonald House, and for charities including Dr Chris O'Brien Lifehouse and SurfAid's Make a Wave Challenge.
 - Senior Citizen of the Year - Emeritus Professor Julie Byles for her work as a long-time advocate for the health of women and older people and for inspiring many young researchers and PhD candidates during her 20 years as the Co-Director of the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health.
 - Community Group of the Year - The LIVEFree Project for their work to elevate wellbeing and reduce loneliness in the community.

Part B: Newcastle's Australia Day Honours List

1. Congratulates the following Novocastrians who received awards in the recent Australia Day 2024 Honours List:
 - Barbara Whitcher OAM - For services to Stockton, and for significant volunteer efforts with many organisations including the Cancer Council, Probus, St Vincent De Paul, the Hunter Vally Graduate Women's Association, the Stockton Catholic Parish Council.
 - Professor Kelvin Kong AM - For significant service to medicine as an Otolaryngologist, and to Indigenous health.
 - Laureate Professor Jenny Gore AM - For significant service to tertiary education.
 - Conjoint Professor Tracy Dudding-Byth - For significant service to medical research, particularly genetics, and to the community.
 - Dr Jennifer Barnes OAM - For service to the performing arts through opera, and to the community.
 - Rodney Barnes OAM - For service to music, and to the community.
 - Lucia Wilcox OAM - For service to Netball.
 - Louise Buxton OAM - For service to aged care.
 - Margaret Covi OAM - For service to bushwalking.
 - Joy Loas OAM - For service to the community of the Newcastle region.
 - Philip Weston OAM - For service to the Anglican Church of Australia.

- The late Mr Des Skinner OAM - For services to lawn bowls.
- Peta Lawlor ESM - Emergency Services Medal.
- Wing Commander David Bell CSC - Conspicuous Service Cross.
- Wing Commander Andrew Jackson CSC - Conspicuous Service Cross.

BACKGROUND

Citizen of the Year honoured for pioneering COVID-19 treatment

A dedicated medical researcher who helped develop an effective preventative treatment for respiratory viral diseases including COVID-19 has been selected as Newcastle's 2024 Citizen of the Year.

Professor Nathan Bartlett received the honour at City of Newcastle's award ceremony today for his efforts across multiple research and education projects that will help future generations face the impact of respiratory infections including the COVID-19 virus.



The viral immunology professor and lecturer at The University of Newcastle played an integral role in the development of a nasal spray designed to prevent respiratory viral diseases such as COVID-19.

The spray, which is currently in clinical trials, is designed for high-risk groups such as immune-compromised patients and the elderly for whom vaccination may be less effective. Newcastle Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes said Mr Bartlett's selection as Citizen of the Year recognises his ongoing commitment to improving health outcomes for others.

“Professor Bartlett's pioneering medical research will save lives,” Cr Nelmes said.

“As new variants of COVID-19 continue to make people very unwell, his integral role in developing an effective treatment particularly to help those in our community at the greatest risk of severe disease and death remains vital.

“He has spent countless hours educating the community and industry bodies such as the National Asthma Council to better understand and cope with COVID-19 and respiratory viruses and dedicates his time to teaching and mentoring the next generation of medical professionals and biomedical researchers.

“The Citizen of the Year award is a fitting honour for his over 20 years of service to medical science and his care and commitment to the wellbeing of our community.” Professor Bartlett said it was an honour to receive the award and to contribute to the incredible work being done in the region in the ongoing fight against COVID-19.

“I have always been interested in respiratory viruses and my research took on a new urgency after a global pandemic was declared in March 2020,” Professor Bartlett said.

“It has been a privilege to undertake research at the Hunter Medical Research Institute and collaborate with many outstanding researchers to work towards lessening the burden that viruses place on the global community. I am honoured to accept this award on behalf of my team and those key collaborators without whom much of this work would not have been possible.”

Seventeen-year-old volunteer Olivia Hughes was named the 2024 Young Citizen of the Year for her selfless charity work and fundraising efforts.

As a dedicated member of Nobby's SLSC since the age of five, Olivia teaches modified Nippers to children with disabilities and regularly volunteers with sporting events such as triathlons and surf competitions.

After losing a childhood friend to cancer at age 10, the empathic teen began holding monthly craft sessions for sick kids and their families at Ronald McDonald House and is a passionate fundraiser for charities including Dr Chris O'Brien Lifehouse and SurfAid's Make a Wave Challenge.

Senior Citizen of the Year recipient Professor Julie Byles is a long-time advocate for the health of women and older people and has inspired many young researchers and PhD candidates during her 20 years as the Co-Director of the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health. After retiring in early 2023, Julie became the president of the Hunter Ageing Alliance and has since lent her skills to amplifying the voices and needs of the over 60s in Newcastle.

The LIVEfree Project has been named the 2024 Community Group of the Year in recognition of its work to elevate wellbeing and reduce loneliness in the community.

Led by Chris Jones from its Adamstown base, the group was congratulated on becoming a trusted source of support for community members who have faced trauma and hardship, and was recognised for their extensive school-based initiatives including the Smile and Thrive Dental Program and the Shine Bright Program, which empowered children to face adversity while equipping them with vital life skills.

City of Newcastle's annual Citizen of the Year awards formally recognise the outstanding contributions of extraordinary Novocastrians over the past year.