



# EXPLORING AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Years 7 to 8

National Australia Day Council  
Teaching and learning resources





# Australia Day celebrations

**Years: 7–8**

**Inquiry Focus: Diversity and cohesion**

## At a glance

What do the Australian of the Year Awards say about a changing and diverse Australia?

### **Inquiry overview**

This sequence of investigations considers the history of the Australian of the Year Awards and the gallery of outstanding Australians that the Awards celebrate. Using primary and secondary source materials including content hosted on the Australian of the Year website, newspaper archives and biographies, students explore how Australia's changing perspectives on diversity, inclusion and social responsibility are enacted through the Awards over time.

The unit will comprise investigative sequences that draw together findings based on evidence. Later in the investigation, 'Tell their story' will invite students to draw their findings together and to nominate one Australian of the Year they feel best represents the spirit of the Awards.

## Links to the Australian Curriculum

### Years 7–8 Civics and Citizenship

	Australian Curriculum version 7.5	Australian Curriculum version 8
<b>Knowledge and understanding</b>	<p><b>Year 7</b> How values, including freedom, respect, inclusion, civility, responsibility, compassion, equality and a 'fair go', can promote cohesion within Australian society (ACHCK052)</p> <p><b>Year 8</b> How national identity can shape a sense of belonging in Australia's multicultural society (ACHCK067)</p>	<p><b>Year 7</b> How values, including freedom, respect, inclusion, civility, responsibility, compassion, equality and a 'fair go', can promote cohesion within Australian society (ACHASSK197)</p> <p><b>Year 8</b> How national identity can shape a sense of belonging in Australia's multicultural society (ACHCK067)</p>
<b>Inquiry and skills</b>	<p><b>Year 7</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify, gather and sort information and ideas from a range of sources (ACHCS055)</li> <li>Critically analyse information and ideas from a range of sources in relation to civics and citizenship topics and issues (ACHCS056)</li> <li>Reflect on their role as a citizen in Australia's democracy (ACHCS060)</li> </ul> <p><b>Year 8</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify, gather and sort information and ideas from a range of sources (ACHCS069)</li> <li>Critically analyse information and ideas from a range of sources in relation to civics and citizenship topics and issues (ACHCS070)</li> <li>Reflect on their role as a citizen in Australia's democracy (ACHCS074)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Year 7</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply a methodology to locate and collect relevant information and data from a range of primary and secondary sources (ACHASSI153)</li> <li>Analyse primary and secondary sources to identify values and perspectives on people, actions, events, issues and phenomena, past and present (ACHASSI157)</li> <li>Reflect on learning to propose personal and/or collective action in response to an issue or challenge, taking into account different perspectives, and describe the expected effects (ACHASSI162)</li> </ul> <p><b>Year 8</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify, gather and sort information and ideas from a range of sources (ACHCS069)</li> <li>Critically analyse information and ideas from a range of sources in relation to civics and citizenship topics and issues (ACHCS070)</li> <li>Reflect on their role as a citizen in Australia's democracy (ACHCS074)</li> </ul>
<b>General capabilities</b>	Critical and creative thinking, Ethical understanding, Information and communication technology capability, Literacy, Personal and social capability	



## Getting started

This unit begins with awards that students may have won or aspire to win. The sequence of activities has been designed to encourage students to think about what needs to be achieved to win an award and the purpose of receiving an award – for the individual and for others.

### Being awarded

1. Elicit student responses to the question ‘Who has ever won an award’ and elaborate on reasons for the award/s they have won, how it made them feel, and what it meant for them.
2. For those who may not have won an award, what award would they like to win? Why?

Alternatively, show pictures or bring in examples of awards (eg athletics/swimming trophy, best and fairest, name on school honour board). What are the awards for? Who has won them? Who would like to win one of these awards? Why?

3. What other awards are students aware of (eg Brownlow Medal, Logies, bravery awards, ribbons in athletics and swimming, badges at Scouts or Guides, trophies for other activities)? Select one or two awards and note the prerequisites to win such an award and how the awards affect others and us.
4. We also have awards for being the ‘Greatest Australian’. Lead into the Australian of the Year Awards. What would you expect the ‘Greatest Australian’ to demonstrate?
  - What does a person now need to demonstrate to win this award? How has this changed over time?
  - What should the Australian of the Year winner demonstrate?

## Process

### Who has won the Australian of the Year Award?

1. Investigate the first decade of Australian of the Year Awards (1960s). As a class, make a table that shows who won, their achievements and the qualities they showed. In some cases this may need to be extrapolated from the source material.

For example:


Year	Australian of the Year	Achievements	Qualities
1960	Sir Macfarlane Burnet	Nobel Prize for medicine for research on immunology	Research skills, dedication, inventiveness, international recognition
1961			
1962			

Students analyse what they notice about the award winners in the 1960s (eg gender balance, nationality, age, achievements, country of birth, qualities, area/s of excellence).

2. Divide the class into five groups. Allocate a decade to each group (ie 1970s 1980s, 1990s, 2000s and 2010s). See [www.australianoftheyear.org.au/honour-roll](http://www.australianoftheyear.org.au/honour-roll). Select appropriate decade for all award winners.
3. Using the same process as that was used for the 1960s, students make a table that shows all award winners. They insert an additional column that provides space for any interesting information about the award winner (eg quotes, anecdotes).
4. Once they have completed their decade, groups prepare a series of statements about what their investigation of one decade of award winners has shown.

For example:

- 'x more men than women have won the Award'
  - 'there have been changes to the criteria for the Award'
  - 'sportspeople or celebrities make up x% of those who have won the Award'
  - 'there have been x number of First Australian award winners'
  - 'there are now more categories of the Australian of the Year Awards than in x'.
5. Sharing information: groups upload information from their decade into a drop box for sharing with the rest of the class. Alternatively, students write their table on poster paper and display it around the room so all groups can see others' work.

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6. Synthesis: the class devises an additional series of statements about what the complete investigation of each decade of award winners has shown.
- What has changed and what has stayed the same about the award winners (eg 'there has been a change in the criteria for the selection of award winners'; 'there are not many x people who have won an award'; 'award winners are now x whereas 30 years ago this was not the case'). Note any 'unusual' years and why they are unusual.
  - Students consider the award winners from the 1960s. Ask: Would you expect any of these people would have won an award this year? Why or why not? What does your response suggest about what is currently important to Australians? What does this say about how Australia has changed over the last 50 or so years?
  - Students discuss why the additional categories (Young, Senior and Local Hero) were created.

**Note:** The previous activity should highlight that the award winners of the Australian of the Year Awards have increasingly become more diverse.

There has also been a shift in focus from what a person has achieved to what they can achieve in the year of winning the award. See the alumni and honour roll sections of the Australian of the Year Awards website to find out what previous winners have done since winning their award.

The following activity features Rosie Batty's story. Students should note that, as her experience has demonstrated, award winners can be 'ordinary people' who become agents for change. There are potential community benefits that an award winner can achieve by winning the award.

### **'Ordinary people' winning awards: Spotlight on Rosie Batty (2015 Australian of the Year)**

Using information found on the Australian of the Year Awards website, as well as other reputable sources, students prepare a short oral presentation that responds to the following questions:

- Why do you think Rosie Batty won the Australian of the Year Award?
- Would it have been likely that Rosie Batty would have been nominated for the Australian of the Year Award in the 1960s? Why or why not?
- What Australian values do you think Rosie Batty demonstrates and why (eg freedom, respect, inclusion, civility, responsibility, compassion, equality and a 'fair go')?
- Why are these values important to Australian society?
- To what extent do award winners such as Rosie Batty make a difference?



## **‘Interviewing’ an award winner: A role-play**

In the next series of activities, students investigate one award winner who they regard as outstanding and they ‘tell their story’. Using a role-play that could take the form of an interview, small groups investigate important features of the person’s life, what they achieved before and after receiving the award.

1. First, pairs or small groups select one award winner (Australian of the Year, Senior Australian of the Year, Young Australian of the Year or Local Hero) who they regard as outstanding. They can use the Australian of the Year archive as a source. Encourage students to consider all Australian of the Year award winners.
2. Next, the pairs and small groups prepare interview questions of their ‘favourite’ award winner.

Requirements could include:

- a list of questions about the award winner’s early life and achievements that students would ask this person about
  - responses to those questions from the award winner’s perspective
  - additional questions about the award winner’s responses to the Award, what has happened since receiving the Award, and advice for others
  - comments award winners made when they won their Award, and whether they would they change those comments now (and why or why not?)
  - how winning the Award has changed the award winners’ lives and the lives of others.
3. Students will need to be able to support their questions and responses with evidence from the Australian of the Year Awards website and other reputable websites or other sources.
  4. Encourage students to be creative in their interviews- using images with voice-over and role-play the interviewee with appropriate dress and props to add a sense of authenticity.
  5. Students may film their ‘interviews’.

## **Why is it important to have an Australian of the Year Award?**

After viewing the interviews, discuss common and key characteristics of the award winners. Ask: Why is having an Australian of the Year Award important for Australians and for Australia?

The focus here can be on several issues, including:

- the bigger impact of the Award for Australians’ sense of themselves and how the Award can be a source of unity and cohesion
- how the more recent award winners (including Senior Australians of the Year, Young Australians of the Year and Local Heroes in particular) include award winners from diverse cultural groups
- how the award winners’ advocacy roles can highlight important and common social issues
- how the award winner can be an important social mirror about what is good and what needs changing in Australian society
- how the award winner can be an ‘ordinary’ Australian who achieves extraordinary things.



## Action options

1. With technical assistance as required, students create an interactive mosaic of award winners from a particular period (eg the last ten years, the last 30 years, since 1960).
2. Students download a photograph of their award winner and use these images to create a mosaic. By selecting a picture of an award winner, information about the award winner appears on the screen. Additional values that the award winner demonstrated (eg compassion, fighting for a 'fair go') could also be included.
3. Alternatively, a more challenging exercise would be to turn the statements about the award winner into questions that make the reader work out the answers.

## Looking back, looking forward

1. After engaging with this inquiry sequence, students consider:
  - Who benefits the most from the Australian of the Year Awards: the individual or the community?
  - Who should be our next Australian of the Year? Why?
  - What might be the criteria for Australian of the Year Awards in the future? (Do award winners need to be born in Australia? Should there be a requirement that those with disabilities or children are allocated a separate award category?)
2. Students can prepare a statement of their beliefs about the Australian of the Year Award and how the criteria for this Award reflects what we value and what unites us.

## Extension activities: Class debates

The Australian of the Year Awards have not been without controversy over the years and much of this has been reflected in the media. Class debates provide an opportunity to discuss some of the issues raised in the past over the selection and actions of award winners. Invite teams of students to debate the affirmative and negative cases for these questions:

- **Do too many sporting heroes win the Awards?** In 2001, Australia cricket captain Mark Waugh was the third professional athlete to be awarded one of the Australian of the Year category awards in as many years. This provoked criticism that too many sportspeople dominate the Awards. How many athletes or sportspeople have been awarded in the four categories since 1960? Calculate the percentage compared to people from other areas of excellence. What other areas of excellence stand out? (eg arts, medicine, science) Do sporting heroes get enough money and trophies from their performances? Consider the role a sportsperson plays in Australian society and their roles outside the sport – is this fair comment?
- **Should an award winner be an advocate for change?** In 1990, award winner Fred Hollows used his profile to campaign against Australia's involvement in the Gulf War. The 2010 winner, Professor Patrick McGorry, used his year as Australian of the Year to bring attention to youth mental health, criticising government spending in the area. The 2007 Young Australia of the Year, Tania Major, exercised her role to highlight the social problems of First Australian communities. The 2015 Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty, used her acceptance speech to advocate against domestic violence. Should an award winner be a symbol of achievement or an advocate for change?



- **Is an award winner a role model?** In 2011, Jessica Watson was awarded Young Australian of the Year for her achievement of sailing solo non-stop around the world. At the time of her journey, there was some criticism that sailing solo around the world at just 16 was irresponsible and that her award would make her a dangerous role model. Should courage and determination outweigh these concerns when awarding a Young Australian of the Year?
- **Do award winners earn our respect?** In 2015, there was considerable controversy and media attention about the fact that in mid-2015 Adam Goodes, the 2014 Australian of the Year, was being booed by some AFL spectators when he took to the field. The National Australia Day Council (NADC) issued a statement in support of Adam Goodes (see [www.australianoftheyear.org.au/news-and-media/tour-of-honour-2013/news-and-media/news/article/?id=statement-from-the-national-australia-day-council-regarding-adam-goodes](http://www.australianoftheyear.org.au/news-and-media/tour-of-honour-2013/news-and-media/news/article/?id=statement-from-the-national-australia-day-council-regarding-adam-goodes)). What is this statement saying? Why do you think it was important that the NADC issued this statement?

## Assessment

### Assessment task: PowerPoint presentation

Students construct a multimedia oral presentation that explores the following questions:

- Why do you think we have the Australian of the Year Awards?
- To what extent have the achievements and personal qualities of the winners of the Australian of the Year Awards changed since the 1960s?

### Suggested assessment criteria

Extent to which the group ...	Low	Medium	High
demonstrated a clear understanding of the reasons for having Australian of the Year Awards			
demonstrated a clear understanding of the achievements and qualities that have characterised award winners in the past and present			
was able to use evidence from their investigation to articulate what has changed and what has stayed the same about the Australian of the Year Awards over the last 50 years			
provided an argument that was clearly organised			
delivered an effective oral presentation supported by content in PowerPoint slides (or using other technology)			
used appropriate grammatical and spelling conventions			
other (teacher or students to insert)			

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Writer: Geraldine Ditchburn

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