

Australian of the Year Awards

Western Australia's Finalists Announced For Australian of the Year Awards 2008

The Western Australian finalists for Australian of the Year, Senior Australian of the Year, Young Australian of the Year and Australia's Local Hero were announced today.

Ms Tam Johnston, National Manager of the Australian of the Year Awards, said nominations for this year's awards reflected the values Australians admired in others.

"We received more than 3,000 nominations for people who are contributing to the community, who are taking a leadership role in our society and whose achievements are an inspiration," said Ms Johnston.

Ralph Norris, Chief Executive Officer of major sponsor Commonwealth Bank of Australia, said the finalists demonstrated the diversity of Australian society and the importance of community.

"The finalists in this year's awards make a difference within local communities or to the Australian community as a whole and their contributions are a vital part of what makes this country great," said Mr Norris.

Western Australia's finalists are:

WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

Mark Bin Bakar - Indigenous arts leader (*Broome*)

Professor George Jelinek - Multiple Sclerosis pioneer (*Wembley*)

Dr David Joske - Contemporary therapies leader (*Nedlands*)

Patricia Lavater - Young women's supporter (*Guildford*)

Patricia Lavater

Young women's supporter

Patricia Lavater has been helping people in crisis since she was fourteen and established a youth drop-in centre at the ripe old age of seventeen. Ten years ago she helped establish a residential program, Esther House, that offered a safe refuge and recovery support for up to ten young women at a time. With the loss of the source of funds, Patricia established the Esther Foundation as an independent organisation to serve the needs of young women in crisis. This residential women's health and development program now operates seven homes in Perth, housing up to thirty young women and their children. Her program does more than provide a safe environment and counselling. It is an extensive recovery program that includes recreation, arts, sport, music, journal writing, reading, winter and summer camps, leadership training, and outreach support for former residents and their families. Patricia has a special gift for repairing broken lives.