

# MEDIA RELEASE

26 January 2020



## Australia Day Civic Events – Alice Springs

Alice Springs Town Council's Australia Day events commenced with an Arrernte Smoking Ceremony and Welcome to Country, official flag-raising, followed by the Australia Day Citizenship Ceremony, and concluding with the 2020 Centralian Awards presentation.

The Official Party included Mayor Damien Ryan, CEO Robert Jennings, Minister Dale Wakefield Minister for Territory Families & Member for Braitling, Australia Day Ambassador Mr Bob Shewring, Lions Club President Graemme Anning, and Apex Club representative Ben Crawford.

*"Today, we welcomed 69 adults and children from Belgium, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Russia, Sudan, Switzerland, Taiwan, Uganda, United Kingdom, USA, Vietnam and Zimbabwe into our Central Australian family,"* said Mayor Damien Ryan.

*"Citizenship unites all Australians in a common bond, whether you are of the original peoples, the children of migrants, or as first generation migrants. The diverse, cultural heritage we enjoy today stems from the contributions made by all of those who came before us."*

Following the citizenship ceremony, the 2020 Australia Day Ambassador for Alice Springs was introduced – Mr Bob Shewring, recipient of the 2016 NT Senior Australian of the Year (Vietnam veteran and repatriation campaigner for Australian soldiers killed overseas). The day's proceedings were concluded with the announcement of the 2020 Centralian Citizenship Awards recipients.

### **2020 Centralian Citizenship Awards recipients (bios following):**

- Centralian Citizen of the Year – **Emma Kraft**
- Centralian Senior Citizen of the Year – **Brendan Heenan**
- Centralian Young Citizen of the Year – **Zhengxiong (Sean) Xiao**
- Centralian Event of the Year – **Apex Christmas Icy Pole Treat, 2019**
- Centralian Volunteer of the Year – **Simon Casey**

*"Australia Day is also an occasion to celebrate our local heroes. The Centralian Awards recognises these remarkable individuals and the outstanding contributions they've made to the Alice Springs community over the past year."* said Mayor Damien Ryan.

Following the civic ceremony, the January '26rs' were invited to join VIPs in cutting the Australia Day cake, and a free community sausage sizzle followed.

Over at the Alice Springs Aquatic & Leisure Centre, the Australia Day Pool Party kicked off at 11am with free entry, the super volley inflatable, music, games, BBQ and a splash pad for the under 5s.

## 2020 Centralian Awards – recipients' biographies

### Centralian Citizen of the Year – Emma Kraft

Emma is a proud Centralian – born and raised in Alice Springs – and has contributed on many levels to the Alice Springs community.

Emma has a Bachelor of Applied Science (in Food Science and Nutrition) and a Master's in Public Health, and has worked tirelessly to promote health and wellbeing in our community by actively role-modelling and educating on the benefits of exercise and healthy eating.

She has worked as a Nutrition Lecturer at Batchelor Institute, a Regional Tobacco Coordinator with Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, travelling extensively to remote communities to share her knowledge and pursue her quest to 'make a difference'. Emma has also been a Health Promotion, Planning & Evaluation Officer, a Trachoma Health Promotions Officer and an Outreach Manager, with the Department of Health. She is currently the Sports Officer at Alice Springs Town Council.

Many will know Emma through her many extra curricula volunteering activities, such as her involvement in the Indigenous Marathon Project (led by ex-Olympian Marathoner, Rob De Castella) and the Deserts Sports Foundation, in support of young Centralian athletes, and she is often called upon as guest speaker at many local schools to engage students with the benefits of exercise, a balanced diet, and making healthy lifestyle choices. Emma is also an active member of the Athletics & Role Models (ARM) Touring Athletics Carnival and the National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy.

#### Career highlights:

- Placed 2<sup>nd</sup>, XTERRA New Caledonia Trail Run, 2019
- Placed 6<sup>th</sup> in 35+ age group, World Masters Mountain Running Championships in Italy, 2019
- New York Marathon, 69th Female and Top 1,000 overall (of 52,000) – ran a PB of 2:58:12 and achieved Australian Marathon Ranking, 2018.
- Won the Alice Springs Masters Game Mile, breaking the existing Overall Mile Female record of 5:12, in 2018
- Inaugural Ambassador for Desert Sports Foundation (DSF), and inducted in the DSF League of Champions in 2018
- Australian representative, World Mountain Running Championship, 2013, 2014, 2017
- Oceania Trail Running Champion, 2017
- Competed in the Melbourne Marathon (Nationals), Mitchell St Mile (Darwin), Barrett Drive Mile (Alice Springs), Run Larapinta, Melbourne's City 2 Sea, Victorian 5km Championships, Noosa Bolt 5km, in 2016
- Team Manager of the Australian Mountain Running Team in Wales, 2015
- Australian representative, Arafura Games, since 2013
- Top ten, Australia's premier distance race The Zatopek:10, 2013, 2014
- Official Australian ranking for the 5000m and 10,000m, 2011
- Placed top three, NT News City 2 Surf, Perth City 2 Surf, Melbourne City 2 Sea, 2011

Emma has also won many local and Territory sports awards (Alice Springs Running & Walking Club and Athletics NT), is an active committee member for the Alice Springs Running & Walking Club, is on the Board of Directors for Athletics NT, and is a Sports Medicine volunteer for various sports, including Netball, Masters Games, the Running & Walking Club.

Through her high-profile sporting popularity, Emma has given her time freely for at least a decade to ensure she contributes and gives back to her community – she is undoubtedly one of the most significant and well-recognised role models to our youth.

### **Centralian Senior Citizen of the Year – Brendan Heenan**

Brendan works tirelessly in the community promoting the tourism industry in the Red Centre. As a full-time business owner-operator of the BIG4 MacDonnell Range Holiday Park, Brendan still finds time to give back to Alice Springs by supporting and volunteering at many community events.

In addition to volunteering at the Finke Desert Race, Old Timers Fete, Henley on Todd Regatta, and the Alice Springs Masters Games, many will recognise Brendan as ‘The Pancake Man’ who, for many years, has volunteered his time and pancake cooking skill at countless community events, such as:

- Australia Day Fun Run
- YMCA King of the Mountain Fun Run
- Mental Health Day
- Horses for Courses
- White Ribbon Day Fun Run
- Teddy Bears’ Picnic, for the Alice Springs Hospital’s Paediatric Unit

Brendan, previous President and member of the Rotary Club of Stuart (since 1971), was awarded the Paul Harris Fellow, in recognition of his exemplary work in community service. He has been on the Hamilton Downs Youth Camp committee since 2005.

Brendan was instrumental in ensuring the 2019 Road Transport Hall of Fame Reunion went ahead, and is on the committee working hard again to deliver this year’s Road Transport Hall of Fame Reunion.

During peak tourist season last year, Brendan took time away from his own business to work with new members of the Transport Historical Society – Statutory Manager Rosey Batt, and General Manager Lester Hamilton – to safeguard the organisation against closure. He is passionate about preserving the history and prosperity of Alice Springs by ensuring these annual reunions continue, attracting thousands of visitors and enthusiasts to our town.

Never one to be idle, Brendan joined the Alice Prize committee in 2019, is a Board Member for the Riding for the Disabled Association and Bindi Inc., and is President of the NT Caravan Parks Association – a volunteer role he has held for more than 20 years. He was also an Alice Springs Town Councillor for 9 years, from 2008 to 2016.

Brendan is a most deserving recipient for this year’s Centralian Senior Citizen of the year.

### **Centralian Young Citizen of the Year – Zhengxiong (Sean) Xiao**

A most worthy recipient of the 2020 Young Centralian Citizen of the Year Award, Sean is recognised for taking a prominent youth leadership role in our community over recent years, and for his significant contributions and dedicated service to Centralian Senior College.

In addition to Sean’s many academic achievements, he was:

- Winner of the 2019 NT Youth Volunteer of the Year Award, Volunteering NT
- a Member of Centralian Senior College’s Student Representative Council, 2018, 2019
- a Member of the 2019 NT Youth Round Table, and Southern Vice Chair
- Co-host for Council’s 2019 Youth Art Music Festival

- Panel Speaker at the Menzies School of Health Research 2019 Youth Health Summit
- NT Student Representative for the review of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, 2019

Sean has also participated as:

- Member for Orygen's Youth Research Council (a national youth mental health service)
- Member of the Youth Advisory Group for Headspace, Alice Springs, and has run the Headspace School Holiday Program, supported the grand opening day and assisted in running various Headspace events.
- Volunteer for NT Youth Week events
- An organiser of the first Alice Springs Government School Student Leadership Forum and cross-school learning day.
- Attendee of No Women Left Behind, Orygen by Young People for Young People, Youth Task Force Consultation, NT Administrator's visit to Centralian Senior College.
- Attendee of the launch of the new Alice Springs Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, December 2019
- An actor for upcoming movie 'Ilyawe' (shooting commenced December 2019)

Beyond being a well-rounded student and active leader, Sean is most active in promoting positive youth engagement across the wider community, listening to the concerns of his peers and sharing his positive vision for young Territorians.

### **Centralian Event of the Year – Apex Christmas Icy Pole Treat, 2019**

2019 marked the 46<sup>th</sup> year of the Apex Club of Central Australia's annual Christmas Icy-Pole Treat, with Apex members, like-minded volunteers and, of course, Santa delivering icy-poles to the children of Alice Springs, in all areas of our community – including town camps and the hospital – from the back of utes and trucks.

The Apex Christmas Icy-Pole Treat contributes to a shared Christmas experience that is inclusive, fun and uniquely Centralian. It is a much-loved Christmas tradition in Alice Springs which has grown from just a few volunteers with utes, to last year's turnout of 16 vehicles and 64 volunteers. Every street in Alice Springs was reached and approximately 6,000 icy-poles were given out.

The Apex Club of Central Australia is a small but committed group of people that aspires to engage our community with empathy, generosity and enthusiasm, and which relies heavily on the good-will and support of family, friends and supporters every year.

This year, the Christmas Icy-Pole Treat is set for 8 December 2020 and, Apex says, it is shaping up to be even better than last year. This has been one of Apex Central Australia's favourite events to run, bringing together the whole of the Alice Springs community and generating a ute-load of Christmas cheer and happy, smiling children.

Congratulations and thank you to the generous volunteers and supporters of the annual Apex Christmas Icy-Pole Treat.

### **Centralian Volunteer of the Year – Simon Casey**

Firefighter Simon Casey is the backbone of the Alice Springs Volunteer Bushfire Brigade, spending countless extra hours with the unit, in addition to a full-time job as Fleet Manager at Central Australian Health Services.

With the support of wife Julie, Simon often works late at night, with limited resources and used parts, somehow managing to keep the pumps, trucks and equipment running so fire crews can continue to respond quickly, and safely.

Simon has been mentor and role model for the Brigade's newest volunteers, giving his time to plan training nights, where the knowledge that keeps everyone safe is passed onto members, instilling the confidence to respond to emergency situations without hesitation, and knowing they are heading into fire grounds with an approachable, hands-on leader by their side.

Beyond a full-time job and after-hours work with the local Brigade, Simon has assisted with the Harts Range Races, Aileron Rodeo and Finke Desert Race, rotated north to assist the Darwin Brigade, also at Yulara, as well as given countless hours tackling the West MacDonnell Ranges fires last year.

In a short time, Simon has earned the respect and support of peers, being voted in as Deputy Captain, and has won Alice Springs Volunteer Bushfire Brigade's Fire Fighter of the Year for two years running.

Simon has also earned life membership with Alice Springs Baseball, in recognition of the years he has umpired games (and continues to do so), assisting new umpires in developing their skills, in addition to his past efforts as Juniors coach, and assistant coach for the Little League NT sides that have played at the National level.

Simon is described as someone who never seeks praise or recognition for the volume of time he gives to the local community, preferring to 'chip away in the background'.

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