

SMART TOO HERE THEY ARE

Australia's brightest,
most creative people
and the benefits they
bring to our lives

**The
Bulletin**

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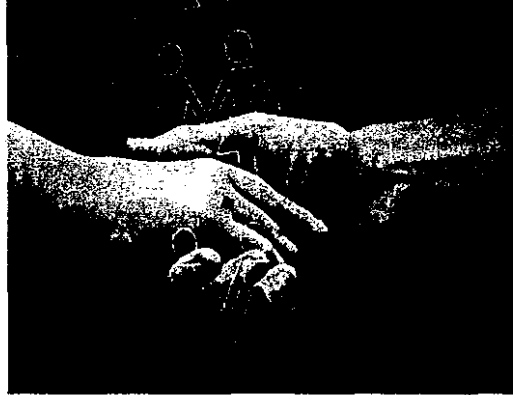


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People, culture, the world, the neighbourhood, humanity, and democracy - all fine words but what do they add up to? Taken in isolation, not much, but put them together and you have a society. Of sorts. But as our judges in this year's Society category comment, people who challenge the status quo through their ideas and their deeds are the ones who shape the kind of society we live in.

Sifting through the Australian community to come up with our top 10 innovators, thinkers and doers - often in areas of society that are typically under-recognised and usually considered just too hard - was a revelation. At a time when all of us have been forced to consider what makes for a "decent" society, a number of Australians stood out.

"Courage was the number one quality we were looking for - it was a search for people who were prepared to stick their neck out for the community and to take



a stand," says category judge Rhonda Galbally.

This year's panel was unanimous in its view that Australian society, now more than ever, needs strong community leaders. We don't have to agree with them but we should be mighty glad they are out there.

This year's list and our winner, Robert Manne, reflect the times we live in. We make no excuse for this. Tackling the national moral agenda on issues such as asylum-seekers, child abuse and indigenous affairs is a tough job but, as the panel said, someone's got to do it if we truly want a decent society. These people do.

Robert Manne may, the judges said, be seen by some as a controversial choice but he is a man who never stops thinking and right now we need as a society to be challenged, confronted with the other view, to consider.

But we also know that from little things, big things grow. Vince McCormack, who works with the long-term unemployed

in Tasmania, or Dale Spender, who continues to provoke but also act, especially in her commitment to helping homeless women, have both made tangible differences to people's lives.

Bottom line, says category judge Michael Raper, for any "decent" society is its investment in its social capital. This is built on trust and commitment. "Much of this comes from the not-for-profit, community sector and more especially from exceptional people who volunteer their skills, time and passion for nothing," he says.

None of those who have made the list this year shirks hard work and, importantly, they are innovative in the way in which they have been able to mobilise grassroots Australia to their cause.

As eminent scientist and former Australian of the Year Sir Gus Nossal once said: "Strong community leadership is about creating a healthy debate when people don't realise there is any thing to argue over."

THE JUDGING PANEL



Julie Munro
The first female CEO of Brisbane City Council and former CEO of the City of Adelaide



Michael Raper
Director of the NSW Welfare Rights Centre and former head of the Australian Council of Social Service



Rhonda Galbally
Founding CEO of www.ourcommunity.com.au and a finalist in last year's Smart100 Society section

ARND BRONKHORST

DALE SPENDER

Education consultant and learning services provider

Spender enjoys an international reputation for her work in education and new technology and is a prominent feminist who has campaigned for equity in the workplace. But it is her most recent work with homeless women that earns her a place in this year's Smart 100 list. Spender is one of the founding members of the Second Chance Program, which raises money for homeless women. One of the program's initiatives

is the "Purple Credit Card", which uses the existing system in ways that can benefit women. The initiative is supported by the Bank of Queensland and a percentage of every transaction goes towards giving homeless women a chance to take charge of their lives, to live with dignity and participate in the community. The initiative was developed when Spender and other women discovered there were only 14 beds for homeless women in Brisbane.

FIONA SMITH

Chair, Equal Opportunity Commission, Victoria

One of the leaders in the campaign for disability rights, Smith is now redefining the way discrimination is viewed and tackled. Under her leadership, the emphasis at the EOC has shifted away from individual cases, to focus on the environmental barriers that feed discrimination. For example, people cannot have equal opportunity to jobs, housing and transport if they cannot get there or get into a building. Smith is

also one of the pioneers of attendant care schemes, where people with disabilities are assisted in living independently in the community. Smith was one of the architects of the Victorian Guardianship legislation – the first in Australia – and helped develop the first Guardianship and Administration board in Australia to look after the interests of people who are unable, because of disability, to take care of their own affairs.

LILLIAN HOLT

Reconciliation campaigner, University of Melbourne Fellow

Holt was appointed a University of Melbourne Fellow in 2003. Her brief is wide but in essence she is a roving cultural ambassador and public intellectual. It is the latest role in her distinguished 30-year career in indig-

enous education and social justice. Holt leads by example. A former director of the Centre for Indigenous Education, at the University of Melbourne, she was born on Cherbourg Aboriginal Settlement, Queensland. She was



in the first wave of Aboriginal graduates in Australia and was also the first Aboriginal to work for the ABC. Before taking up her current position, Holt was principal of Tauondi, an Aboriginal Community College in Port

Adelaide. She has an international reputation as an advocate for reconciliation and for progressing the human rights agenda for indigenous Australia. She is also completing a PhD at Melbourne University on Aboriginal humour.

MICHAEL KIRBY, AC, CMG

High Court judge, human rights advocate

Best known locally as a controversial High Court judge, Kirby's international reputation as a supporter of rights and reform continues to gather pace. A courageous advocate for human rights, gay and lesbian rights and a campaigner for HIV-AIDS prevention, he is a member of the World Health Organisation's Global Commission on AIDS and the UNAIDS Global Reference Group on HIV-AIDS and Human Rights. Kirby

has promoted human rights throughout the world and helped develop a judicial training manual for the UN Centre for Human Rights. Kirby shows no signs of slowing down – in *Who's Who*, he lists "work" as one of his hobbies. He is a tireless campaigner, speaker and reformer who continues to push Australians towards accepting human rights as a central feature of a civil society.

PROFESSOR PATRICK MCGORRY

Professor of psychiatry, University of Melbourne, Director, Orygen Youth Health

McGorry established the first Australian early-intervention program for young people at risk of chronic mental illness or psychosis. He is a doctor and community campaigner, initiating the first coalition of youth and mental health and community service agencies. The coalition, led by McGorry, has developed a campaign to argue for reform of mental health services and for increased funding. The judges

said: "McGorry has brought youth mental health out of the medical domain into the social and community world – not only by developing the first [worldwide] models of early diagnosis and intervention – but he has spearheaded a campaign for youth mental health reform which demands that a safety net must envelop all young people who suffer from mental illness regardless of where they live."