

## Former Army chief David Morrison is the 2016 Australian of the Year

Written by The Conversation USA

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High-profile former Army chief David Morrison is Australian of the Year, with the award given for his commitment to “gender equality, diversity and inclusion”.

In a stand seen as critical in the battle to change the culture in the defence forces, Lieutenant-General Morrison, reacting to a sex scandal, delivered a blunt message in 2013 to misbehaving troops unable to accept women as equals: they should “get out”. “Those who think that it is OK to behave in a way that demeans or exploits their colleagues have no place in this army,” he said.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull announced the Australian of the Year awards on Monday night in Canberra. Morrison follows Rosie Batty, who campaigned against domestic violence throughout last year and is credited with a major role in putting the issue squarely on the national agenda.

Morrison struck a controversial note in his speech to Monday’s function when he said that among the areas he will concentrate on in the next year would be the republican cause. He said it was time “to at least revisit the question so that we can stand both free and fully independent amongst the community of nations”.

Opposition Leader Bill Shorten will use Australia Day to talk up the need for a debate about the republic but Turnbull believes the issue should wait until after the Queen’s reign ends.

Morrison retired in 2015 after 36 years in the army, and four years as its chief. He now chairs Diversity Council Australia.

Since Morrison elevated the issues of equality and inclusiveness, the number of women joining the army has grown and there has been greater acceptance of diversity.

As it happened, two other Australian of the Year finalists worked with Morrison in his efforts to instil more tolerance in the military.

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Queensland Australian of the Year Catherine McGregor, formerly Malcolm McGregor, whose transition from a man to a woman brought to national prominence issues faced by transgender people in the armed forces and more generally, was Morrison's speechwriter and drafted the "get out" address.

NSW winner Elizabeth Broderick, the former Sex Discrimination Commissioner, led a major review into the treatment of women in the Australian Defence Force.

Senior Australian of the Year is professor Gordian Fulde, 67, who has been director of emergency at St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney for 32 years. He is the longest-serving emergency department director in the country and has been a strong voice against the scourges of "ice" and alcohol-fuelled violence.

The Young Australian of the Year award has gone jointly to 21-year-old social entrepreneurs Nic Marchesi and Lucas Patchett, from Queensland, who built a free mobile laundry in a van to help homeless people. A world-first idea, it has grown to five vans in Brisbane, Melbourne, Southeast Victoria, Sydney and the Gold Coast. Run by more than 270 volunteers, the vans serve more than 36 locations and wash more than 350 loads weekly.

Australia's Local Hero is Catherine Keenan, from NSW, co-founder and executive director of the Sydney Story Factory. Her award is for nurturing the talents of marginalised young people, especially indigenous youth and those from non-English speaking backgrounds, helping them to express themselves through writing and story telling. She has trained more than 1200 volunteers to work with students, teaching them writing skills and assisting them to find their own voice.

*Michelle Grattan does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organization that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond the academic appointment above.*

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