

Fifty *over* 50

Join us in celebrating the incredible Australians on our 2024 DARE Fifty over 50 list. These extraordinary 50 women and men have well and truly earned their stripes, and they continue to make a positive impact on our communities. Their stories inspire us and reinforce the value this demographic brings to our society, redefining what ageing means today, and in the future.

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All our nominees fall into one of the following five categories:

1. THE HIGH PERFORMERS

Demonstrating perseverance, agility and resilience, they continue to reach new heights.

2. THE QUIET ACHIEVERS

Committed to getting the job done without any fanfare or seeking accolades, they are the backbone of our communities and society.

3. THE THOUGHT LEADERS

Offer trusted, informed opinions in their area of expertise to educate and inspire.

4. THE INFLUENCERS

Use their status or position to increase awareness on issues and advocate for change.

5. THE TRAILBLAZERS

Leaders in their field whose achievements have a direct impact on making our world a better place.

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WORDS

Karen Burge, Monique Butterworth, Stephen Corby, Adriana Donnola, Pip Harry, Camille Howard, Ingrid Laurence, Trudie McConnochie, Chris Pearson, Bridget Ross, Sue Smethurst, Rachel Smith, Sue Williams.

Naomi Watts, 55

CREATIVE CHAMELEON

Australian actor and producer Naomi is on a mission to demystify menopause after discovering she was perimenopausal at age 36. "Going through menopause at such a young age was not easy," she says. "My hormones were all over the place. I remember feeling so confused and alone, like I didn't have control over my own body."

So in 2022 Naomi launched Stripes, a wellbeing and beauty brand with a focus on education and ditching the stigma surrounding menopause. "There was a lack of open conversation and resources to help women navigate the changes we go through," she says. "That's why I'm now so passionate about raising awareness and encouraging more honest conversations."

Known as a creative chameleon, Naomi is also making waves in her acting career, most recently playing New York socialite Barbara 'Babe' Paley in the TV series *Feud: Capote Vs The Swans*, to critical acclaim.

Naomi, who married fellow actor Billy Crudup in New York last year, told *Harper's Bazaar* she avoids travelling for roles during the school year, so she can be a hands-on mother to her teenage children Sasha and Kai, by her former partner Liev Schreiber. When she does work, she loves the idea of playing strong women.

"As I get into the middle and latter part of my life, I'm okay with ageing. I am just always looking for dynamic people. Look, we're half the population, we're living longer. Why shouldn't these stories be just as relevant and interesting as stories about men of the same age?" she says.



The High Performers



Andrew Hoy, 65
RIDING HIGH

Andrew may be one of Australia's most successful athletes, with six Olympic medals – including three gold – but the equestrian never worries he'll become too big for his riding boots. "Working with horses keeps you humble," he tells DARE. "You have to build credibility and respect afresh with every animal in a clear way each time."

Andrew is now training for his incredible ninth Olympics, in Paris, where the equestrian events are scheduled for the Palace of Versailles. "It's the most beautiful place and I would feel very privileged to compete there. People ask me about retirement because of my age and achievements, but if I thought about that, I couldn't focus. Instead, I prefer to concentrate on what I'm doing today and how I could be better tomorrow. I've never set out to make, or break, records. I just want to be the best I can be."



Jason Donovan, 55
NATIONAL TREASURE

His stint as teen Scott Robinson on *Neighbours* catapulted Jason to international stardom. Alongside touring and selling millions of pop albums, he's had countless TV and stage roles and is currently playing Frank N Furter in *The Rocky Horror Show* in Australia. "What still gives me a thrill after all these years? I just love working and engaging with other performers, I still love performing live," he tells DARE. "I like the fact that at my age I can approach work with a sense of confidence. My body sometimes tells me I'm older, but it's about keeping physically fit. I'm loving my ice baths at the moment!"

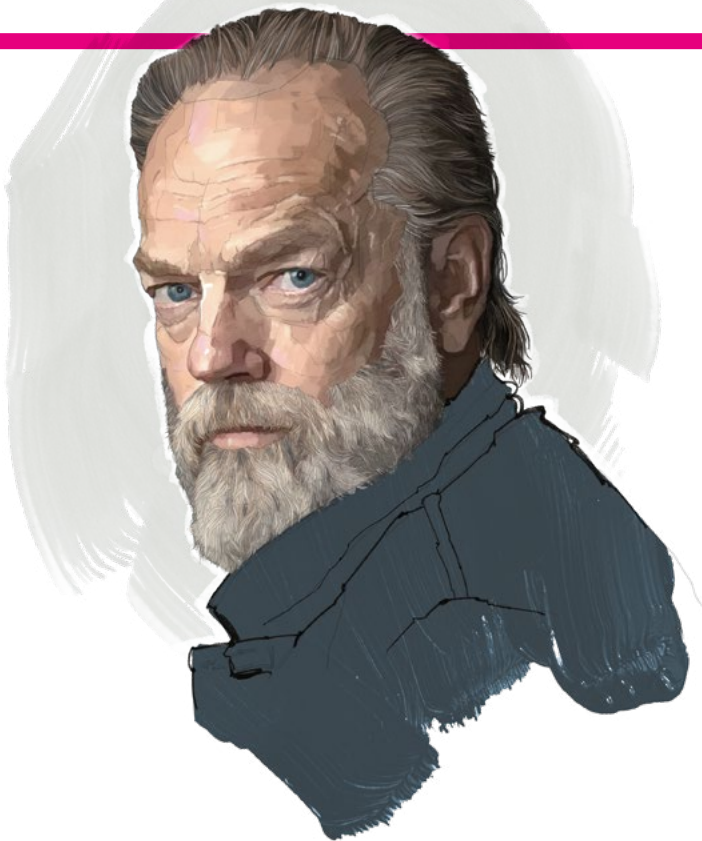
Jason says his family – his wife Angela and their three children – is everything: "I feel like all the hard work I did in my youth is paying off a bit for me now. I think one of the best things about being this age is that all you've experienced makes it easier to deal with life as you get older."



Marcia Hines, 69
AUSTRALIAN IDOL

Music legend Marcia reflects how lucky she is still to be doing what she loves: producing hit albums, performing in musicals and appearing on TV as a judge on *Australian Idol*. "It's just amazing to be doing all this," she tells DARE. "It's wonderful to remain relatively relevant! I'm having a ball, and loving being back on *Australian Idol*. We've all grown up with it – with some people coming up to me and saying they love watching the show with their grandmothers."

With her latest album out in 2023 (*Still Shining: The 50th Anniversary Ultimate Collection*) and a role as Teen Angel in *Grease the Musical* this year, Marcia next wants to sing duets with artists she loves, including Tina Arena. "There are a lot of people I'd like to work with, whose music I enjoy," she says. "It's lovely to be able to keep reinventing myself."



Hugo Weaving, 64
ROLE MASTER

One of our most acclaimed and awarded actors, Hugo is a master of stage and screen. He made his name in major Australian films such as *Babe*, followed by international blockbusters including *The Matrix* trilogy and *The Lord of the Rings* movies. Film was his own “great educator” in his childhood, Hugo says. “I was so thrilled about the world I was entering into and learning about – and it was film that did that.”

Despite his global fame, Hugo likes to stay local. “I do work in Australia. I’ve never lived in Los Angeles, I hate the place. I’d much rather live and work here and work on great Australian scripts.” Recently this includes streaming series *Love Me* and film *The Rooster* (he won 2024 AACTA awards for both projects) and an upcoming role in *How to Make Gravy*, based on Paul Kelly’s Christmas song. And with a long collaboration with the Sydney Theatre Company, Hugo is currently starring in its production of *The President*.

Keith Urban, 56
COUNTRY CHART-TOPPER

New Zealand-born, Australian-raised country star Keith’s love of music began in early childhood, and he followed his dreams all the way to Nashville. It was in America that he met his wife, fellow Australian star Nicole Kidman, and the couple now have two children. Keith’s career in the US is also going from strength to strength, with four Grammy awards, 12 studio albums and an ever-growing list of chart-topping hits and tours.

He hit new heights in 2023 with an induction into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame. “Being invited into the Hall of Fame is hands down one of the highest honours that’s ever happened to me,” says Keith, who is also set to release a new studio album – his first since 2020 – this year. “The songs are about hope, wild longing, working through things, and just sheer, mindless fun,” he says.



Helen Garner, 81
WONDEROUS WORDSMITH

She’s won most of the accolades Australia has to offer but writer Helen, in her ninth decade, is finally conquering the rest of the world, with her books being picked up by the US and UK. “I couldn’t be more astonished this has happened at such a late age,” she tells DARE. “It was never my ambition to be published outside my country,” adds the Australia Council Award for Lifetime Achievement in Literature winner. “But this is, I suppose, the icing on the cake and, while it is very surprising, it’s also a very happy thing.”

Helen has just finished another book, about her grandson’s under-16 AFL team, which she followed for a year. “Becoming a grandmother is the best thing that’s ever happened to me,” she says. “It’s brought me enormous happiness, and they’ve told me to carry on writing about them.”



The High Performers



Terry Denton, 73
DRAWING GENIUS

Illustrator and author Terry has been giving kids (and adults alike) a laugh for more than three decades with his unique drawing style that takes readers on wild and fun-filled adventures. “I’m trying to draw quickly and make it look like I’m drawing quickly,” Terry explains. “So it seems very unskilful, but the key thing is the idea.”

His wicked sense of humour shines through in his work, which includes picture books, junior novels and collaborations with top Australian authors, including Andy Griffiths. The pair’s hugely popular *Treehouse* series has sold over 10 million copies in Australia and is on the shelves in more than 35 countries. Andy is one of his biggest fans. “To sit beside Terry while he is drawing is amusing and mysterious in equal parts,” he says. “He seems to literally ‘think’ through the drawing process itself.”



Toni Collette, 51
SCREEN QUEEN

This year marks the 30th anniversary of Toni’s breakout role in *Muriel’s Wedding*, and she’s hardly slowing down. In fact, news site Deadline Hollywood says she is “as busy as any actor in town”. With recent multi-award-winning turns in TV hits *The Power*, *The Staircase* and *Unbelievable*, she’s now turning her considerable acting talents back to the big screen and has just filmed her “dream” role in *Juror #2*, directed and produced by Clint Eastwood and co-starring Nicholas Hoult, the British actor who played her son in 2002 film *About a Boy*.

Toni is also in demand from other top directors, including Bong Joon-ho, whose most recent film, *Parasite*, won four Oscars including Best Picture. The South Korean director called her personally to ask her to star in his forthcoming sci-fi film, *Mickey 17*, she reveals. “He said, ‘Toni, I’ve been watching you a long time. I love your work and I want you to be in my movie.’”

Patti Newton, 79
ENTERTAINER EXTRAORDINAIRE

An icon of the Australian entertainment scene, Patti returns to the stage this year with a starring role in *Grease the Musical*, playing schoolteacher Miss Lynch in the show’s new Australian run. Devoted wife to TV legend Bert Newton for 38 years, it’s Patti’s time to shine. An accomplished radio, TV and theatre performer in her own right, she says it’s what Bert would have wanted for her after his death in 2021.

“When Bert passed, I was having problems, like everybody does, and I didn’t think I was ever going to succeed or get out of bed again,” Patti explains. “But it wouldn’t be what he’d want, he would want me to move on.” Last year, she played Bird Woman in *Mary Poppins*, “a beautiful character, but only a cameo role”, which she says was the perfect reintroduction to the stage. “I did *Mary Poppins* and now I’m so excited to do *Grease*.”



The Quiet Achievers

Judith Neilson, 78
GIVING BACK

Although Judith's name has long been linked with art, her passion for global philanthropy is equally impressive. The Zimbabwe-born owner of Sydney's White Rabbit Gallery has invested vast sums of money into humanitarian causes, aiming to improve economic inequality in vulnerable communities in Australia and Africa. She also funds University of NSW research into innovative housing options for people displaced by natural disasters and conflict. "I don't believe that if you're poor you should have a lesser home than somebody who's rich," Judith says.

The focus of her philanthropy is helping communities become stronger. "We came here from Africa with nothing, and this country has been really good to us," she says. "I feel very strongly about contributing to a greater culture of philanthropy in Australia, and there's a big element of luck in being wealthy – I believe people have a responsibility to give back."



Brian Triglone, 78
COMMUNITY CONDUCTOR

Eight years ago, Brian watched a YouTube video of the Giving Voice Chorus, a US choir for people living with dementia. The community choir conductor was inspired to found a similar group in Canberra. "Alchemy Chorus is a dementia-inclusive community choir that is designed both for people living with dementia, their partner or close friend, and volunteer singers," he tells DARE.

"My initial goal was to bring some joy into the lives of couples impacted by dementia. Studies have shown that musical memory remains well into the dementia journey, and our choir members say that it's the best day of the week," says Brian, who was the 2023 ACT Senior Australian of the Year nominee. "Our concerts are a great source of pride. There's no greater feeling of satisfaction than to see smiling faces all around when we nail a song."

Professor Tom Calma, 70
JUSTICE CAMPAIGNER

When the referendum was defeated last year, many were disappointed, including Professor Calma, Aboriginal Elder and co-author of the Voice blueprint. But the social justice campaigner, who has spent nearly half a century pushing for the welfare of Indigenous people, believes we can have faith in the reconciliation efforts to come. "I've always been and always will be a glass-half-full person – I think the future is bright for our next tranche of leaders," says Professor Calma, who works as a consultant, volunteer and academic.

The 2023 Senior Australian of the Year and member of the Aged Care Council of Elders was appointed to the government's Aged Care Taskforce last year, and supports older people in accessing culturally safe aged care. "It's about creating empathy and respect so people can understand their treatment, medications and care that they can expect," he says.



The Quiet Achievers



Jack Hamilton, 83
LEGACY WORKER

Jack won the 2023 Northern Territory Chief Minister's Volunteer of the Year Award for his 38 years at Northern Territory Legacy, an organisation supporting the partners and children of those who gave their lives or health for our country. "It's nice to be recognised," he tells DARE. "I spent 36 years in the army and lost a few of my very close friends, and I supported those families as best I could. Then I joined Legacy and continued to do it – it's been some of the most important work I've done."

For Jack, that means making sure beneficiaries are catered for in the absence of a spouse and/or parent. He's also done countless fundraising and guided new volunteers through the Legacy ranks. And while he'll still be knocking about NT Legacy HQ, he says he is scaling down. "I'm keen to spend more time with the family and with my wife."



Valmai 'Val' Dempsey, 73
TIRELESS VOLUNTEER

Val has now retired from her job as a nurse, but her lifelong commitment to caring for the community shows no signs of wavering. Having notched up more than 50 years of service at St John Ambulance, she is now one of the ACT's longest-serving volunteers. "I don't suppose that the heart ever grows tired of being in that role," she tells DARE. "You get out of the house, you get to meet people, you get to share your knowledge, you get to learn more things – I learn something every time I go out."

Val's service saw her awarded Senior Australian of the Year in 2022, and she represented Australia at the Queen's funeral. The recognition has been "humbling". "I couldn't be more proud because it recognises some millions of Australians who go out there every day. Australia is supported by its volunteers, and we keep the country running."



Alan Schwartz, 71
SOCIAL JUSTICE

Entrepreneur, investor and philanthropist Alan spent some 30 years creating, acquiring and managing businesses including in publishing, property, professional services and software. Underlying his passion for business is what he describes as "a deep commitment to family and community", and an interest in the not-for-profit sector.

In 2004, Alan and his wife Carol established the Trawalla Foundation as a vehicle for their philanthropic activities, focusing on gender equality, creativity, sustainability and social justice. He now says he has transitioned from "entrepreneur and business builder" to "active investor, philanthropist and social activist". Alan's efforts were rewarded last year when he was made Officer of the Order of Australia, and while he welcomes the recognition, he says: "Community work is reward in itself."



Dr Miriam Rose Ungunmerr Baumann, 70s
INSPIRING EDUCATOR

Teacher, artist and respected Elder, Dr Ungunmerr Baumann has dedicated her life to educating children. In 1975 she became the Northern Territory's first fully-qualified Aboriginal teacher, working at St Francis Xavier Catholic School on the Daly River as a teacher then principal. In 2013 she created the Miriam Rose Foundation to bridge the divide between Aboriginal culture and mainstream society, and was named 2021 Senior Australian of the Year.

"Being an educator is my proudest achievement because we integrated cultural education, which continually helped and taught our young people about the traditions, identity and their stories," she tells DARE. "I continue working closely with the local school and teachers who come to us as guests on our country, helping them build a strong relationship with our local teachers and together they build a strong future for our students who grow and learn."



Leanne Hillman, 68
SUPPORTING STRENGTH

The court environment can be daunting for victims and witnesses of crime, but thanks to volunteers like Leanne, they are supported when they need it most. She has worked at Victims and Witnesses of Crime Court Support (VWCCS) since 2009, and is now operations manager. “I worked with state government services for a number of years and when I retired, I was still interested in being able to give back to the community,” she tells DARE. “The work is enormously rewarding and I would strongly recommend people get involved in volunteering and to look at what skills they’ve got to offer.”

Leanne’s work was recognised in 2023 when she was named NSW Volunteer of the Year (and also Senior Volunteer of the Year, an award sponsored by Australian Seniors). “It was a great surprise because there are so many great volunteers, but I also have to say it was fantastically positive recognition of the work that VWCCS does,” she says.



Lillie Giang, 54
COMPASSIONATE COOK

When a huge storm hit Victoria in 2021, hundreds of families in the Dandenong Ranges area were left either homeless or without access to food. Local chef Lillie sprang into action, setting up an emergency relief kitchen. This operation was the origin of Feed One Feed All, a not-for-profit founded by Lillie that now produces 700 to 900 meals a week for people experiencing hardship. “I am fortunate that I can combine my passion for food with community outreach and that I have the skills to help those doing it tough,” she tells DARE. “I love food and I love sharing food.”

Demand for Feed One Feed All continues to grow. “I know we can’t help everyone or fix world hunger, but we can start with a bowl of rice,” Lillie says. “Together we can turn that bowl of rice into a nutritious meal and give some hope to someone who needs it.”

Professor Charlie Corke, 70
RESTORING DIGNITY

Over his long career as an intensive care doctor, Professor Corke has seen countless families making difficult decisions about a loved one’s care. Realising how ill-prepared most people are for this, he took a lead role in creating MyValues, a free online service that asks users questions, then compiles a report on their end-of-life medical treatment wishes. “It makes a really difficult thing approachable, and it makes people think,” he tells DARE.

Deputy chair of Victoria’s Voluntary Assisted Dying Review Board and author of *Letting Go: How to Plan for a Good Death*, Professor Corke wants to empower Australians to face their final days and is running a hospital program to educate doctors on navigating such conversations with patients. “I hope that with time we all become more mature, and we recognise the need to take control and to manage end-of-life decisions.”



The Thought Leaders



Rachel Ward, 66
REGENERATIVE ARTS

When bushfire tore through the Nambucca Valley in NSW in 2019, near actress and director Rachel's family farm, she knew it was time to act. "It was a wake-up call that we're in a serious climate challenge – what was I doing to ameliorate that?" she tells DARE. And so began her journey into regenerative farming. The practice aims to restore the ecosystem, and Rachel has had great success, creating a landscape that's now humming with beneficial critters, abundant grasses and thriving livestock.

Her progress was followed in a documentary, *Rachel's Farm*, and she hopes to launch a paddock-to-plate business. "I think I'm most proud of bringing environmental health back to this little pocket of land. It's very purposeful to be on this path of finding something very positive and active to turn things around climate-wise."



Andy Penn, 60
BUSINESS VANGUARD

In a time of data breaches and online crime, cybersecurity is a significant challenge for our economy. So when the federal government set up an expert advisory board to guide cybersecurity strategy, Andy, the former CEO of Telstra, was tapped to be chair. "There's no doubt that the level of cybersecurity threat has grown dramatically," he told the ABC. "There is much more that does need to be done, and that's just a reality of the digital world in which we live."

He concluded the role last year and now sits on the Coles Group board and has an advisory position for the Quad Investors Network, a group tackling security challenges in Australia, India, Japan and the US. "Being somebody who grew up in the UK and progressed through their career after having dropped out of school, Australia's offered me a lot of opportunity," he says.



Fiona Simson, 60
FARMER'S FRIEND

In 2006, when a mining giant came knocking with plans to dig up her family's farm, Fiona found her voice. She won a battle to protect the Liverpool Plains area of NSW, and 10 years later became the first female president of the National Farmers' Federation. Today, the crop and cattle producer is one of the most powerful and recognisable faces in Australian agriculture.

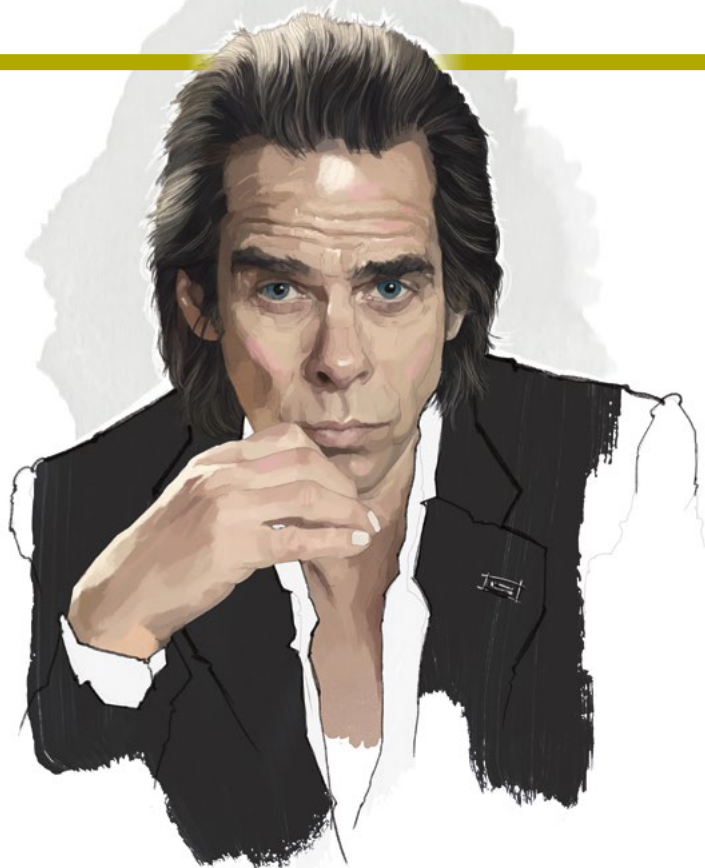
Fiona stepped down as president last year and is credited with reinvigorating the lobby group, repositioning agriculture as innovative and future-focused. She has now been elected to the board of the World Farmers' Organisation, representing Oceania. "The answer to having a say is to be on the front foot, get involved, be positive and engaged – and to have a loud voice and a seat at the table if you really want to change the debate and the narrative," she says.



Dr Alan Finkel, 71
POWER PLAYER

Dr Finkel, neuroscientist, engineer, researcher, entrepreneur, policy adviser and former Australian chief scientist, is hopeful that a clean energy future is within Australia's grasp. "In the pursuit of a zero-emissions future, nothing is more important than the energy system, currently responsible for nearly three-quarters of global greenhouse gas emissions," he tells DARE. "If we invest in new clean technologies, the old technologies will disappear. The investment is huge, the commitment must be unwavering, but the pathway is clear."

He describes the shift to clean energy as "the most difficult economic transition in human society since the dawn of agriculture". Yet he can see a way forward. "A low-emissions future is within our grasp as long as we all accept the need to compromise, so that the pursuit of perfection does not get in the way of the very good."



Nick Cave, 66
MUSIC ICON

He first made his name 40 years ago as the lead singer and songwriter with Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds but, in Nick's five-decade career, he's also been a score composer, a writer of books and film scripts and, most recently, a ceramic artist. Praised as a genius for both his words and music, the England-based star is currently on tour in Australia, and preparing to release the first Bad Seeds album in five years.

Nick has also been praised for his candid conversations around grief, following the tragic deaths of his sons Arthur (in 2015) and Jethro (in 2022). He expresses his pain in his book *Faith, Hope and Carnage* and on his website, The Red Hand Files, where he supports fans experiencing their own grief. "It was really with The Red Hand Files that I learned how to write about it," he says. "Even though I couldn't really talk about it, at least I could develop a language around grief."



Chris Cuffe, 64
PHILANTHROPIC SERVICES

Well known in financial circles, Chris spent years building and running successful wealth management practices. With this strong experience behind him, he explored why more wealthy Australians weren't engaged in philanthropy. "The research showed that there were many barriers preventing people from participating in structured philanthropy," he tells DARE.

To overcome the hurdles, he established and chairs Australian Philanthropic Services (APS), which helps clients manage their charitable giving using tax-efficient structures, and supports them in leaving a legacy. More than 800 clients now donate over \$160 million to charity each year. "While there is great benefit to the charities and the community, it is our clients who gain the most benefit from engaging with the causes that matter to them," says Chris.

Professor Kerry Phelps, 66
HEALTH HERO

The outspoken GP is not afraid of a challenge. A strong leader and unwavering advocate for doctors, patients and communities, Professor Phelps is past president of the Australian Medical Association, a former independent MP and a trusted voice in the media. She has dedicated much of her career to improving public health and spotlighting the health of Indigenous people, refugees and issues affecting LGBTQIA+ communities. "I've had this philosophy that if I'm in a position and have the ability to give attention to an important issue, then I feel a responsibility to speak up," she tells DARE.

Her new memoir, *Power of Balance*, further explores the milestones and ideas that helped shape her lifelong pursuit to create change. "I think caring deeply about the issues that you're working on is really fundamental to maintaining your motivation and your drive."



The Thought Leaders



Faith Agugu, 59
FEARLESS AGEING

While working as a psychotherapist, Sydney-based Faith noticed a recurring theme among her older female patients. “They were feeling undervalued, overlooked and invisible,” she tells DARE. “I found this astounding! In my culture, becoming older is something to be celebrated.” So in 2018, Nigerian-born Faith founded online platform SilverSirens.org for women aged 50-plus. “I wanted to build a community where women could be celebrated for who they are and what they have achieved, regardless of their age.”

Silver Sirens hosts regular events covering topics including nutrition, menopause and aged care, as well major issues such as the homelessness crisis and loneliness. “My hope for the next generation is that they will embrace ageing with grace and dignity because we have shown them how to.”



Tracey Spicer, 56
EQUALITY ADVOCATE

When Tracey was in her 30s, she lost her job as a full-time newsreader due to maternity discrimination. It set the author, broadcaster and journalist down the path of advocating for equity, and particularly the rights of women and girls. “The experience lit a fire in my belly that burns to this day,” she tells DARE.

In recent years Tracey has focused on the impact of digital technology on gender inequality. Her 2023 book *Man-Made* spotlights the ways technology like AI perpetuates negative stereotypes about women and older people. “Chatbots in the home, like Siri, inevitably have female voices, while those in the business and finance sectors sound male,” she explains. “If an algorithm is being used to decide who gets a ventilator in hospital, it will choose a younger person every time, because they’re viewed as more valuable to a productive society.”



Bernard Salt, 67
FUTURE FOCUSED

At a time of rapid change, the ability to forecast cultural, social and property trends is highly valuable – and leading demographer Bernard has become a household name for doing just that. From coining the phrase “the goat’s cheese curtain” to describe socioeconomic division, to sparking debate over the “smashed avocado” consumption of would-be homebuyers, his insights have led debate on what we want Australia to look like.

Bernard, who has written six bestselling books, says his fascination with demography started early. “As a kid I questioned my parents about the Depression, about the war,” he tells DARE. Now, he believes entrepreneurship is the key to Australia’s future growth. “I don’t want the best and the brightest of Australia to be drawn to Silicon Valley,” he says. “I want businesses of scale and value to be owned and operated from within Australia.”

The Influencers



John Farnham, 74
THE VOICE

In a career spanning decades, John is one of the most significant contributors to Australian music. His 1986 smash hit *You're the Voice* became an anthem across the generations – even lent to last year's referendum 'Yes' campaign – with its album *Whispering Jack* becoming the country's highest-selling album by an Australian artist. The nation was collectively shocked when in 2022 the star revealed he was undergoing surgery for cancer, and relieved again after John declared he had been given the 'all clear' in August last year. "I am the luckiest man I know right now," he said.

Recovering away from the spotlight, he left it up to his sons Rob and James to attend the premiere of the authorised biopic *John Farnham: Finding the Voice*. Proving he has lost none of his influence, the film won Best Documentary at the 2024 AACTA Awards.



Wendy Moore, 53
STYLE MAKER

Media executive and interiors expert Wendy has been influencing Australian homes and lifestyles for decades, not that she'd use that word to describe herself. "The way the word – influencer – is used now is not how I think of myself," she tells DARE. "As a woman in business, you hope that you have some influence, but I would never have put that in my byline!" That byline is impressive: she's director of channels and content at Foxtel, co-host of *Selling Houses Australia* (Wendy is currently filming her fourth series – the show's 17th) and director of The Interiors Edit, her content and product collaboration company.

Throughout her career, she has pushed against the myth that "you had to be rich to be stylish". "I never wanted to do anything that's passive or voyeuristic; it's not looking at how other people live, it's dreaming about how you'd like to live."

Adam Gilchrist, 52
CRICKET LEGEND

Richie Benaud, who saw six decades of cricketing greats, called wicketkeeper-batsman and former Australian captain Adam the cleanest striker he had ever seen. Retiring from international competition in 2008 after a two-decade playing career, Adam has remained at the top of his game, working as a commentator, philanthropist and mentor. His aim, he says, is to nurture the spirit of cricket "from the ground up".

"What I love," he writes in his autobiography *True Colours*, "is introducing kids to the game, tapping all that pure, innocent enthusiasm of taking the ball and hitting and bowling it and learning to be part of the team." Inspired by past tours of India with the Australian cricket team, his current roles include as goodwill ambassador to World Vision and a new appointment to the advisory board of the Centre for Australia-India Relations.



The Influencers



Cate Blanchett, 54
MOVIE MAESTRO

From her breakthrough role in 1998 film *Elizabeth* to her Oscar-winning turns in *The Aviator* and *Blue Jasmine*, Cate has cemented herself as one of the most versatile and esteemed actresses of her generation. Yet it's Cate's critically acclaimed role in 2022 film *Tár* that secured her position as the most-Oscar-nominated Australian, earning her an eighth Academy Award nomination.

As well as her acting and producing roles for film and TV, Cate is also a UNHCR goodwill ambassador, championing refugee causes since 2016. She amplified these efforts through her 2020 series *Stateless*, about the plight of immigrants in detention in Australia. "Once you experience the situation that people are in, then you start to make a very visual connection to the immediate trauma of those people's experience," says Cate. "It does shift your point of view."



Professor Frank Jotzo, 54
CLIMATE CRUSADER

How do you keep calm as a climate change expert? Practise patience and understanding, environmental economist Professor Jotzo tells DARE. "You need a high degree of resilience to cope with setbacks and disappointments in general," says the director of the Centre for Climate and Energy Policy at ANU and lead for the government's Carbon Leakage Review. "You need a thick skin in terms of the world not acting with the urgency and resolve that the problems warrant. You don't make much progress when you dwell on the negatives. It's better to look at the positives."

These include rapid developments of alternative energy technologies and the fact that greenhouse gas emissions, while still growing in volume, are nowhere near past doom-laden predictions. "I wouldn't say we're cheerful overall, but there are reasons for optimism," he says.



Terri Irwin, 59
WILDLIFE WARRIOR

With her high-profile children taking on management roles at Australia Zoo, running the business and its charity causes, Terri knows her late husband Steve Irwin's work is in safe hands. "I'm incredibly proud of Bindi and Robert as they honour Steve's legacy and continue his conservation mission," she tells DARE. "I feel very content knowing that everything Steve and I worked so hard for is in good hands."

Terri's own focus continues to be on the protection of animals, here and abroad. She also became a grandmother in 2021, with the arrival of Bindi's daughter Grace. "Being part of Grace's life is the greatest part of my life," she says, adding: "Getting older is definitely a celebration. With a lifetime of experiences, triumphs, and some failures, older Australians have an opportunity to share their wisdom and truly benefit our community."



Neale Whitaker, 62
DESIGN GURU

For the lowdown on everything from pendants to pantries, interior design expert and TV star Neale is your man. His first life-defining moment was leaving the UK in 1999 for Australia. He had the formidable glossy duo of *Vogue Living* and *Vogue Entertaining + Travel* in his sights and ended up editing both. His other defining moment was becoming the avuncular judge on reno blockbuster, *The Block*, from 2010. More recently, he also took on Foxtel's *Love It or List It*, where he persuades owners to 'love' their homes again after his inspired renovations.

His hot homes prediction for 2024? "The Eccentric Aunt – it's the year to stop following trends and let your individuality shine," he tells DARE. "I love authentic interiors that tell the stories of their owners." Having conquered print and TV, he is now also taking social media in his stride. "Social media is everything to be honest! It's how I interact with the world."



Elle Macpherson, 60
SUPER MODEL

It's been a year of double celebrations for Australia's original supermodel, who not only turned 60 in recent months but is marking the 10th birthday of her wellness and supplement brand, WelleCo. "I am loving turning 60," says Elle, who was nicknamed 'The Body' in her early modelling career. "I think this is the first time in my life that I feel truly seen for who I am, that I've settled into my authentic self."

Still in demand as a model, Elle, who is based in Florida, returned to Australia in January to celebrate the anniversary of WelleCo and to deliver the keynote speech at the AO Inspirational Series at the Australian Open. During her visit, Elle explained the inspiration behind her wellness brand was to help people. "When I turned 50, I started to feel run-down, hormonally challenged. I thought, other people must be feeling this way. Now I am so proud of my Australian company that is doing so well all over the world."

Tracy Grimshaw, 63
TRUSTED VOICE

One of Australia's most recognisable TV faces, Tracy brought a fresh, female spin to current affairs when she replaced Ray Martin as host of Nine's flagship series *A Current Affair* in 2006. She charmed and disarmed A-listers such as Barbra Streisand and Oprah Winfrey – but it was her chats with ordinary Australians living through extraordinary moments that really captured our hearts. She stepped down in 2022, explaining she'd had enough of the daily grind.

Now Tracy is set to return to our screens this year in the Nine series *Do You Want to Live Forever?* with Dr Nick Coatsworth, which examines ageing and mortality. "I really haven't spent my life looking for the fountain of youth," Tracy admits, "but I'm fascinated by how far people take that search, and how advanced medicine is becoming in that space. I'm a bit of a medical nerd so the research has been a pleasure."



Brad Fittler, 52
GRASSROOTS GROWTH

There's nothing like sport to inspire Australians. But NRL star player turned coach and commentator Brad noticed that spirit wasn't extending far beyond urban borders. So he set off on the HOGS National Tour, a venture that takes him and other rugby league personalities on motorcycle tours to regional areas. "It all started because there were noises that bush footy was being forgotten," he tells DARE. "This allows us to get out into communities and give the country people of rugby league an experience."

Brad, who resigned as head coach of the NSW team in 2023 and is working in participation, football and community development for the NRL, took NSW-based HOGS into Queensland and Victoria for the first time this year. The tour hosts coaching clinics and facilitates discussions on mental health and fitness. "It's a nice way for the game to give back."



The Trailblazers



Dr Tony Press, 70
ANTARCTIC CHAMPION

When Dr Press talks about Antarctica, his deep affection for the landscape is palpable. As adjunct professor for the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies at the University of Tasmania, he has spent a lot of time on the frozen continent. “Walking out across the landscape, and just having this 360-degree view of the horizon, and the vastness and the sheer scale – it’s overwhelming, really,” he tells DARE.

The author of the Australian government’s Antarctic Strategic Plan, Dr Press describes the continent as the “engine room” of the global climate. “My hope for the future is that the governance framework, and the science that goes with it, will help us not only understand Antarctica and its role in the global climate, but also help us understand how to protect the species that live there, and protect Antarctica from climate change.”



Sally Morgan, 72
CELEBRATED STORYTELLER

First Nations writer, artist, dramatist and academic, Sally has proved herself someone who changes lives. Her seminal memoir *My Place*, about the Stolen Generations and her quest to discover her Indigenous roots, captured Australia’s imagination and has long been on school curricula across the nation. It also encouraged other First Nations people to reclaim their lineage. “I realised from talking to people that most Australians were very ignorant of Aboriginal history,” Sally says.

She is equally renowned for her art, with many works housed in the National Gallery of Australia, and is the writer of acclaimed books for children, including *The River*, which won an Environment Award for Children’s Literature in 2022, and *Thank You Rain!*, a CBCA Book of the Year – Notables 2023 winner. “We can never have enough stories,” she says.



Kieren Perkins, 50
GOLD STANDARD

When Australian Olympic swimmer Kieren had his first swimming lesson at school, he admits he wasn’t very good. But he enjoyed it so much, he carried on. The rest is history. “As my career went on, I chased gold medals,” he told education leaders last year. “And that’s what I’m still doing today as CEO of the Australian Sports Commission. I’m chasing gold-medal standards across the entire sports industry, from grassroots to the pinnacle of elite competition.”

Kieren, who retired from swimming in 2000 after setting 11 world records, has a new vision hinged on the upcoming 2032 Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games, with a program of major events on home soil that will showcase the very best of sport. “The runway to 2032 is a gift for this generation,” he says. “It’s an opportunity to unite, inspire and build the nation through sport.”



Professor Matthew Colless, 63
STAR SCIENTIST

Professor Colless became an astronomer and astrophysicist because he wanted to find out the answers to the big questions in life. “I wanted to know things like where we came from and where we’re going,” he tells DARE. “But every question you answer, throws up a new set of questions.” The distinguished professor at the ANU’s Research School of Astronomy and Astrophysics adds: “It’s proved a fabulous career, however. You get to think about the big things, meet fascinating people from around the world and play with really big toys.”

Among those favourite toys is the Extremely Large Telescope under construction in Chile that he’s just visited. When finished, it will be the world’s biggest, with a 39m diameter. “When scientists like myself started, we didn’t realise that only 5% of the universe was visible. The other 95% is unknown stuff but we’re making good progress. I’d love to know those answers!”



Alex Perry, 61
GLAMOUR MASTER

Thriving in the glamorous yet cut-throat world of fashion, few Australian designers have succeeded like Alex – and after more than 30 years in the industry, he has no plans to slow down. “It’s not in my nature to sit back and rest on my laurels,” he says. “For me, it’s about amping it up, keeping it new, making sure we, as a brand, don’t become complacent.”

Alex opened his first shop in Sydney in 1992 and became a household name in 2005 as judge on *Australia’s Next Top Model* for its 10-year run. His collections are synonymous with celebrity and style, selling in luxury retailers across the globe and worn by some of the world’s most beautiful women, including Mary of Denmark, Nicole Kidman, Jennifer Lopez and Gwyneth Paltrow. “I like my clothes to be transformative,” says Alex. “They have to have a sense of drama, and I want it to transform the wearer, make them feel beautiful and unbelievably confident.”



Deborah Mailman, 51
PASSIONATE PERFORMER

Deborah is one of the country’s most beloved actors, with roles in films such as *The Sapphires* and popular TV shows like *Total Control*, the third series of which was released in 2024. She was the first Aboriginal actor to win the Best Actress AFI Award in 1998 and has since won multiple acting prizes across both TV and film. “When I look back at the body of work I’ve done over the years, I feel really proud, and I do hope that will open doors for others,” she tells DARE. “I’ve played some wonderful characters. Age often brings more interesting and eclectic ones, and more confidence.”

Deborah wants to continue acting for as long as she’s in demand. “You’ve got to enjoy it and love it, otherwise it’s just too hard an industry to be in. I take everything as it comes, but I would love to do a bit more comedy. I think we all need a good laugh these days!”

Louise Sauvage, 50
PARALYMPIC POWERHOUSE

As one of Australia’s most decorated Paralympians, Louise hasn’t put on the brakes since competing in her first IPC Athletics World Championships at the age of 16. Does she remember winning her first gold? “It feels like a long time ago – 32 years ago, at the 1992 Barcelona Paralympics,” she tells DARE. Louise dominated wheelchair racing for over a decade, and since retiring in 2004 has switched to coaching young athletes.

“I’m probably just as competitive as I was. But going to the other side as a coach is very different. You’re part of someone else’s journey, which is a big buzz for me. We’re working hard for the upcoming Paris Paralympics 2024 in August.” Louise believes sporting veterans have a vital role to play in guiding future stars. “They have a knowledge and perspective and history we can take and learn from. And that’s so important for younger athletes.”



The Trailblazers

Professor Peter Hannaford, 84

LEADING LIGHT

Professor Hannaford is acknowledged as an award-winning global expert in his field of experimental science. “I don’t know the ‘r’ word; there’s no such thing as retirement,” he tells DARE. “I’ll always maintain an interest in science, whatever happens.” His work covers the length and breadth of time and space, researching chemical physics at the CSIRO for 24 years, before moving to Swinburne University of Technology, where he remains professor emeritus, to become director of the Centre for Atom Optics and Ultrafast Spectroscopy.

He has developed novel laser techniques and been involved in pioneering their application to search for mineral deposits and create atomic clocks that measure time with breathtaking precision. In-between, he still travels the world lecturing, speaking at conferences, and inspiring young scientists. “I love that,” he says. “It makes me feel I’m still young.”



Layne Beachley, 52

SURFING LEGEND

A seven-time world champion, Layne is widely regarded as the most successful female surfer in history, with a talent that shook up the male-dominated sport forever. Since her retirement in 2008, she has been inducted into the Sport Australia Hall of Fame, and in 2023 became the first female patron of Surfing Australia, having stepped down as its chair after eight years in the role. She’s also fought for equality for women and girls. “There are many people out there who will tell you that you can’t,” she says. “What you must do is turn around and say, ‘Watch me.’”

Layne remains passionate about helping others design a life they love, and has a new self-empowerment platform, Awake Academy. “I’m so excited for 2024 and all the exciting projects I have in the pipeline,” she says. “There is so much to look forward to.”



Julia Gillard, 62

BORN LEADER

From becoming Australia’s first female prime minister to improving the lives of girls and women worldwide, Julia is a force for change. She’s the founder and chair of the Global Institute for Women’s Leadership, which addresses the under-representation of women in leadership – very fitting for a woman who made waves with *that* powerful misogyny speech in 2012. “Discussion of gender is now much more common,” she says. “That gives me a lot of heart because we only change big things in our world by talking about them and getting the energy together for the change.”

She serves as chair of Wellcome, which supports science-based solutions to global health challenges, and is patron of CAMFED – Campaign For Female Education, a Pan-African movement helping girls to thrive. “I believe everyone should get a great quality education, no matter where they are on our planet.”

For extended coverage of the **Fifty over 50 list**, go to seniors.com.au/fiftyover50