

Funds in Court – Inaugural Inspire Awards® 2016 Winning Nominations
The Chief Justice’s Best Achievement Award in Law: Fiona Smith and Peter Ward



A former non-executive director of the board at Yooralla, **Fiona Smith** is a public interest lawyer with vast experience across the human rights, business, health, welfare and community sectors. She has been at the forefront of reform leadership and has been Chairperson of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. Ms. Smith’s award was accepted by the CEO of Yooralla Dr Sherene Devanesen.

Mr Peter Ward has been practising solely as a criminal lawyer since 1976. He has been an accredited criminal law specialist since 1995 and a committee member of the Criminal Law Advisory Committee. For many years he was on the board of the Royal Institute for the Blind. Peter’s greatest contribution to the criminal law, and legal profession generally, is his mentoring of young lawyers.

**The Chief Justice's Best Achievement Award in Law (Honours Year):
Mathew Mirabella**



Mat has been an outstanding contributor to RMIT University's Graduate School of Business and Law. His academic performance has been exceptional with a high distinction grade in 22 of the 23 classes he has completed to date. Mat has also made an energetic contribution to the vibrancy of student life as an active participant in competitions and student associations. Mat has been a strong contributor to the community sector as a director and co-founder of NV Access Ltd and other disability support organisations.

The Australian Human Rights Commission Best Achievement Award in Human Rights: Colleen Furlanetto



Colleen, Mayor of Strathbogie Shire Council, has improved the individual and group status of women with disabilities as well as contributing to her local and wider community. Although she lives and works in a rural area, her reach spreads far wider and, despite living with MS, she is constantly seeking out ways she can assist others by initiating and encouraging progress and change. Colleen comes from a nursing background, and this, combined with her personal experiences living with a disability gives her valuable insight and experiences.

The Australian Institute of Architect's Best Achievement Award in Architecture and/or Built Design: Francesca Davenport



Francesca has worked in the area of design and disability access for over 45 years, using her unique perspective to educate others and make significant changes to the industry. Her commitment to disability access has directly led to the implementation of accessibility policy now mandated as standard building practice across the country and her contributions have helped create a more inclusive culture in Australian architecture.

**The Rotary International Best Achievement Award in Community Volunteering:
Rob Crestani**



Rob has had a long and distinguished association with Goalball, influencing the sport and its development in the community at an international level. Rob oversaw the running of eight Australian Goalball Championships and has held various executive roles within Victorian Goalball Association, Goalball Australia, and the International Blind Sports Federation. A four-time Paralympian, Rob understands the link between being involved in an activity and the development of positive self-esteem and loves to see any vision-impaired person presented with the opportunities to grow and develop.

**The Office of the Public Advocate's Best Achievement Award in Disability
Advocacy: Susan Arthur**



Susan is the President of Reinforce Inc., an advocacy organisation for people with a disability. She is also the founder and leader of Powerful Parents Self-Advocacy Group for parents with an intellectual disability. Susan had her own child removed from her care, and was herself removed from her mother's care. She then realised there was a lack of resources for parents with an intellectual disability and that systemic change was needed. She has since spoken out in the media, liaised with influential stakeholders and organised a major forum to raise the profile of this issue. Susan is a brave and committed advocate for an important social justice cause, even at great personal cost.

The Disability, Sport and Recreation Best Achievement Award in Innovation in Access and Mobility Design: Mark Soyer



Mark was diagnosed with leukaemia at three years old. At the age of 26 he severed his spinal cord in a motorcycle accident. During his rehabilitation he took up sit skiing and has since become an accredited Disability Wintersports Australia Level 1 Trainer. He has competed all over the world and was a member of the Australian Paralympic Skiing team. He has developed a business which provides wheelchair modification and maintenance services in Victoria. Mark's talents in design and innovation in disability equipment, combined with his skills on-snow, means he can connect with all types of people and he remains an ongoing inspiration to members and staff at Disabled Wintersports Australia.

**The Australian Medical Association Best Achievement Award in Medicine –
Speciality: Dr Harry Eeman**



Halfway through his training as a University of Sydney medical student, **Harry** suffered from rapid onset ascending paralysis and was diagnosed with Gullain Barre Syndrome. He returned to his studies after five months ventilated in ICU, 16 months of rehabilitation and 12 months of outpatient physiotherapy. Harry subsequently contributed to the floor-plan design of the emergency department at Canberra Hospital and spent 12 months working in the Emergency Department despite his physical limitations. As far as he is aware, he is the first intern in Canberra with tetraplegia. He also partnered with the ACT AMA to get a better deal for Junior Doctors in EBA negotiations. Harry has now dedicated his career to one of the most challenging types of patients – those with chronic pain.

The Australian Medical Association Best Achievement Award in Medicine – Advocacy: Dr Heather Belcher



Completing her medical degree at Monash University, **Heather** has since built a successful career as an anaesthetist at Prince Henry Hospital. She is known by all of her peers as a confident, reliable and hard-working team member. Heather contracted polio in childhood and whilst long-term polio sufferers face many challenges, “so does everybody else in life”, says Heather. Heather believes in the need to normalise the presence of disabled people in the ordinary community setting and her quiet determination and modest approach is recognised by all her peers, the registrars she teaches and above all, her patients.

The Australian Medical Association Best Achievement Award in Allied Health Research: Savant Thakur



Savant has completed his bachelor of Biomedicine with first class honours, winning the Australia Post Graduate Award and the much coveted International June Opie Fellowship. Born with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, he aspires to improve the quality of life and outcomes for other people with this condition. It is Savant's remarkable resolve and compassion which have provided other young men with DMD a much-needed role model. Whilst attending the St Vincent's Hospital as a patient, Savant takes time to mentor other young men, providing reassurance and offering assistance. In addition to his studies, Savant is also the creator of a popular blog and Facebook page enabling young men with DMD to connect with each other.

**The Victorian College of the Arts Best Achievement Award in Performing Arts:
Jodie Nick**



In her first year studying a Bachelor of Dramatic Art, **Jodie** received her Cochlear implant and was awarded the Richard Pratt Bursary for most outstanding student in second year. She was a formative member of Liminal Theatre and the key participant in “Vocal Empowerment: Working as an Actor with Cochlear Implant” which led to an Australian Research Council funded study. A review of her recent one woman show “The Sound of Waves” described it as “remarkable theatre that explores one artist’s journey between two worlds in all its isolation and wonder, frustration and humour”. Jody Nicks has been described as “an Olympian of the performing arts in this country”.

**The Police Association Victoria Best Achievement Award in Policing and
Community Engagement: Michael Cummins**



Michael is a retired police officer who now offers experience as a peer support officer to participants in the Retired Peer Support Officer Program. Mick supports those who are suffering from severe cases of post traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD), depression and other mental health issues. Mick has been known to pay for petrol and buy groceries for retired members and always goes above and beyond what is expected. Mick is also a volunteer with his local County Fire Brigade and within this group he is also known to provide support to other volunteers.

**The Disability Services Commissioner Best Achievement Award in “Speaking Up”:
Adam James**



Adam has been a member of VALID as a self-advocate and representative of other advocates for many years. He attends frequent meetings with the Eastern Self Advocacy Network and is part of EDSN’s Working Together Group where he is working on a project to empower people with disabilities to be trained as auditors for Disability Services. Adam has overcome intense personal trauma and with this in mind he has encouraged other people to speak up.

The Arts Access Best Achievement Award in Visual Arts: Alan Constable



Alan is a painter and ceramicist who is legally blind and deaf. He has exhibited in Australian and overseas galleries and has been a finalist in a number of prominent art awards. He is renowned for his ceramic cameras – thirteen of which have now being acquired by the National Gallery of Victoria. Although Alan’s works are often centred on political events, there is a genuine sense of joy in his paintings.

**The Australian national University Best Achievement Award in Non-Fiction Writing
Including Journalism: Margaret Easterbrook and Ken Haley**



Saturday editor of *The Age*, **Margaret** has had a long career in journalism and in 25 years at Fairfax has been a Canberra correspondent, media writer and covered state politics. Among her outstanding experiences, she has met with Nelson Mandela, prime ministers and top athletes, and visited places such as the “Death Railway” near the Thai/Burma border and the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem.



Ken is one of Australia's most travelled journalists having been to 145 different countries and his reputation is global. He is one of the most courageous people you will ever meet for whom the term "larger than life" was created for. Ken has been a sub-editor for much of his career and won the prestigious Walkey Award in that capacity. He is an excellent teacher, with a photographic memory for dates and an encyclopaedic knowledge of punctuation and vocabulary. He has written two books, one of which has been translated into Chinese. Ken's award was accepted on his behalf by Assoc. Prof. Andrew Dodd.

The Funds in Court Individual Excellence and Achievement Award: Marea Breisch, James Remedios, Christopher Rigg APM, Christopher Rotering and Glenn Thomas:



Marea suffered a severe head injury in 1995 resulting in communication and physical disabilities as well as a degree of cognitive and mental impairment. Prior to her injury, Marea was a highly respected secondary art teacher. After her injury, Marea had to relearn basic communication skills and has since returned to painting and participates in regular classes. She joined an art group trip to Italy, has sold a number of her paintings and aspires to have an exhibition of her own work in the future.

James has made remarkable progress since first coming to Funds in Court. He has travelled to India on several occasions, juggles work and study, has assisted a music group for people with disability, and even performed two songs at Embrace 2012.

Chris Rigg APM is an ex-police officer who had to retire after a car accident which resulted in personal injury and disability. Despite this, he has been a committee member of Haddon Community House for 10 years, a member of Haddon Lions Club for 13 years and has chaired many projects with both organisations. In April 2015 he was responsible for a project which saw 3800 poppies attached to plaques along Ballarat's Avenue of Honour to commemorate Gallipoli. The project was entirely his idea and he was at the coalface from start to finish, enlisting students from Ballarat Specialist School and Phoenix College to help. He has performed countless work assisting disadvantaged local residents as well as significant fundraising for charity.

Chris Rotering is passionate about educating the public in Acquired Brain Injury. He is part of a group called ABI Road that visits local schools in the Bendigo area and has spoken at many conferences about his own ABI experience.

Glenn has a passion for photography and has been an avid photographer for many years. He often travels to shoot interesting subjects and creates very beautiful photographs for people to enjoy.