



Media release



12 December 2018

2019 ABC HEYWIRE WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Regional Australia's best young storytellers talk about what's important to them.

Thirty-six young regional Australians were today announced as the winners of the ABC's Heywire storytelling competition.

Since 1998, Heywire has become a powerful place for regional and rural people, aged 16 – 22, to share their stories, and make a difference in their communities.

This year, hundreds of people entered from across Australia. The winners were chosen for “telling it like it is” about life in their part of the country.

The winners paint a diverse picture of Australia. From living on a fish farm in the desert to finding belonging in culture after leaving foster care. Young wildlife carers, country fire cadets and shearers all give a window into their life.

Nakita Jager from Clarence Town in NSW is one of this year's Heywire winners.

“[I wrote] about my dad and how our family deals with his dementia. Even though dad suffers from an illness, it does not define who he is. Dad is still that same person who I've always known and loved.”

Nakita is proud to be able to share her story and says Heywire is an important chance for young people to speak up about the things that matter to them. “More young voices in regional Australia need to be heard because it brings attention to issues that go unnoticed.”

A/Director of ABC Regional & Local, Judith Whelan congratulated the competition winners on their stories.

“After 20 years, *Heywire* just keeps going from strength to strength. We know from experience that some of winners announced today will go on to become valued members of our news, current affairs and content teams such as the ABC’s national security defence reporter, Andrew Green and Shahni Wellington, now based in our Darwin newsroom.

“And this year, *Heywire* continues to provide important opportunities for young rural and regional storytellers to develop their talent and to give them a national voice,” Whelan said.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport and Regional Development The Hon Michael McCormack MP also applauded the successful entrants.

“It’s fantastic to see young people bringing to light and sharing the stories that matter most to them and their local community,” Mr McCormack said.

“Young people help to breathe life into the regions, building on their qualities, not only so that their local towns survive, but that they flourish.

“Congratulations to all of the winners. I look forward to hearing your brilliant stories.”

In February, the winners will attend the Heywire Regional Youth Summit in Canberra. During the week-long summit, the winners will meet with Members of Parliament and community leaders, to develop ideas to strengthen their communities.

All the winning stories are available to stream via the ABC Listen app.

The full list of Heywire winners and their stories are here:

<https://www.abc.net.au/heywire/winners/>

Heywire is supported by the Australian Government through: The Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities; the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources; the Department of Health; the Department of Social Services and AgriFutures Australia.

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| Naomi Cobcroft | Canberra, ACT | I thought I was dying but it was just anxiety |
| Janaya Hennessy | Nowra, NSW | Life after foster care |
| Elka Devney | Moree, NSW | Trading a big city school for the warmth of a campfire under the stars |
| Marla Barosa | Ellangowan, NSW | Discovering a world of new experiences after moving to Australia |
| Jess Kelly | Griffith, NSW | Isolation and ignorance make life with Type 1 Diabetes lonely |
| Jackie Bayley | Dubbo, NSW | Learning to live after a suicide attempt |
| Maddison Pettigrove-Barr | Pambula Beach, NSW | The challenges and advantages of being a girl with autism in rural Australia |
| Nakita Jager | Clarence Town, NSW | My dad has dementia |
| Chloe Parker | Speers Point, NSW | “Midget” - the word makes my skin crawl |

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| Karlira Kelly | Borrooloola, NT | A long walk through my ancestors' country connects me with them |
| Anthony Nish | Elliot, NT | A roadtrip to Alice Springs to follow my dream to be a music producer |
| Saul Beatty | Carrara, Qld | I wore a back brace for two years to treat scoliosis |
| Jessica Spoor | Jambin, Qld | The trust I share with my horses is special |
| Max Alpin | Kowrowa, Qld | I love spearfishing with my family in the Barron River |
| Grace Vipen | Mackay, Qld | Volunteering in aged care has taught me about inequality |
| Hayden Di Bella | Ingham, Qld | Growing sweet potatoes in a sugarcane town |
| Tamica Bradey | Cloncurry, Qld | Moving to Cloncurry, I finally feel at home |
| Charline Marom | Toowoomba, Qld | My mother is my hero |
| Chelsea Meulders | Naracoorte, SA | I'm the only female fire service cadet in my town |
| Aidyn Loveday | Wellington, SA | You don't have to be a genius to help others |
| Megan Stephens | Cummins, SA | How a snow man helped me embrace my heritage |
| Biftu Reggasa | Hobart, Tas | I want to be a lawyer to fight injustice |
| Sam Watson | Ulverstone, Tas | Why I campaigned for same sex marriage |
| Emily Kunz | Geelong, Vic | I'm determined to overcome the challenges of my past |
| Kate Beranic | Woodend, Vic | After struggling with an eating disorder I'm learning to accept my body |
| Ivan Reyes | Stratford, Vic | Dancing is not just for girls - anyone can do it |
| Maggy Sessions | Nathalia, Vic | Coming out in small town Victoria |
| Lauren Paynter | Nyah, Vic | I'm trying to save my local pool for the benefit of the community |
| Claudia Cox | Sea Lake, Vic | The impact of drought on my small town |
| Brianna Merema | Broome, Vic | Nineteen eye operations to be able to see the world |
| Kurt Richards | Dowerin, WA | 249 to go: a day in the shearing shed |
| Alexander Rajagopalan | Bruce Rock, WA | Yes I have pectus excavatum, and yes I am embarrassed by it |
| Ebony Williams | Manjimup, WA | The opportunity I always wanted, saving endangered marsupials |
| Kritsana Phuseekhio | Christmas Island | Moving to Christmas Island - do they even have 4G? |
| Raymond Binsiar | Buttah Windee, WA | My dad is growing fish in the outback to help keep my family together |
| Kassidy Fuller | Bullfinch, WA | Drought and the threat of a live export ban put the family farm at risk |

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