



# 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.

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

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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