

Women Of Influence

2019 Women of Influence are champions of reinvention

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Women of Influence - 2019



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Social Enterprise and Not-for-profit

Regional Economic
Solutions

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Women are known for being good multitaskers, but it appears they're good at juggling multiple careers too. Finalists in this year's [The Australian Financial Review 100 Women of Influence Awards](#) are champions of reinvention and possess broad skillsets they can adapt to different roles in their quest to influence change in business and society.

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Making the list in the public policy category this year is Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman [Kate Carnell](#). In the early 1990s Carnell owned two pharmacies, was the first female national vice-president of the Australian Pharmacy Guild, was on the local Chamber of Commerce and was raising young children.

Then Carnell was approached by a group of Canberra businessmen and women who asked if she would consider standing for the ACT Legislative Assembly.

“Initially I said, ‘Don't be stupid. Why would I do that? I've got a couple of pharmacies and a couple of kids.’ And I said, ‘Number one, I'm not a member of a party. And number two, I'm actually really busy’,” she recalls.

The clincher was when the group told Carnell they had heard her speak at a rally the week before, when she told the crowd that if you want real change, you've got to put up or shut up.

“And they said to me, ‘So, OK, put up or shut up.’”

Carnell joined the Liberal Party, was pre-selected a few weeks later and elected to the second ACT Legislative Assembly in 1992. She became leader in 1993 and chief minister and treasurer in 1995, helping to deliver important social changes in drug law reform, legalising the sex industry, and improving laws for same-sex couples in defacto relationships.

Carnell, who studied medicine and has worn multiple hats throughout her career, has many passions, namely small business, mental health and public policy. She believes in taking opportunities as they present themselves and has learnt that if you don't, you'll miss out.

“The thing that's really important for people, but for women particularly, is not to believe that somehow the ducks will all align one day and that the next right job or cause will come up – because the ducks never align,” she says.

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“If you wait for that perfect time when you don't have any family issues, you don't have elderly parents, your kids are fine, your partner's fine ... If you're trying to get everything in your life right before you take the next step or the next risk in your life, you'll never do it.

“The couple of things I regret are when I didn't just jump and swim like hell.”

Professor Megan Davis, overall winner of the 2018 Women of Influence awards. **Peter Braig**

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This year's list of 100 Women of Influence, presented by Qantas, was selected with the help of executive search firm Korn Ferry and a highly respected panel of judges, including 2018 overall winner [Professor Megan Davis](#), pro vice-chancellor (Indigenous) at the University of NSW, and 2017 overall winner Moya Dodd, partner at Gilbert & Tobin. The other judges were Charlotte Abbott, chief people and culture officer, Qantas Academy, Qantas, Barry Irvin, AM, executive chairman of Bega Cheese, *Financial Review* Chanticleer columnist Tony Boyd, *Financial Review* managing editor Joanne Gray, and *AFR BOSS* magazine editor Sally Patten.



This year, 833 entries were received. Finalists were selected based on a number of criteria, including dedicating their time and energy to helping and encouraging other women in their industry, for confronting unfairness, and using their skills and ability to help change the status quo to a more equal, more diverse and vibrant society.

There were a high number of entries in the public policy category, many from women who have influenced public policy from outside government, demonstrating that you can effect change from outside the system.

"There were more entrants than any other year in this category and the quality was very high," says Robert Webster, senior client partner at Korn Ferry. "There were women who had influenced policy in children's health and human rights; domestic violence policy and services; women's health and the mental health of physicians.

"Some of the applicants also had a lived experience which led to their advocacy, which inspired them to work inside the system to influence change."

Included on this year's list is eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant, who works to combat child sexual exploitation and [online cyber abuse](#), deputy director of research at The University of Queensland, Professor Karen Thorpe, who has undertaken extensive research on disadvantage and the role of early education in ameliorating the differences in children's life chances, and [Katarina Carroll](#), APM, who was recently sworn in as the 20th commissioner of the Queensland Police Service.



Another finalist in the public policy category this year is City of Sydney councillor Professor Kerryn Phelps, AM, who embodies how a lived experience can ignite passion for a cause. As the first female president of the Australian Medical Association in the early 2000s, Phelps advocated for the removal of children and adolescents from detention centres in Australia, convening a coalition of medical groups to pressure the Howard government to change its policy.

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She was also a staunch early campaigner for marriage equality, and with her now-wife Jackie Stricker-Phelps she campaigned to change NSW laws to allow same-sex couples to adopt. "I wanted to be able to talk about public policy," Kerryn Phelps says of her decision to stand for federal parliament. **James Alcock**

"There's no question that having personal skin in the game gives you an insight that you just can't get any other way," Phelps says. "People can be on board, they can understand, but to really keep on driving that personal experience and lived experience gives you a unique insight."

She believes a lived experience also helps you understand the impact public policy has on the human experience.

"You develop empathy for other people who are in situations where they are marginalised or discriminated against. You do get a translation of empathy from the cause that you are fighting to other causes where you recognise there needs to be change."



In 2018, the campaign to remove children from detention centres in Australia was revived with #KidsOffNauru, the same year then prime minister Malcolm Turnbull was deposed, triggering a byelection in the seat of Wentworth. Phelps saw an opportunity to change the political narrative and grabbed it with both hands, [making an unexpected leap into politics](#).

"The reason that I stood, without the strong expectation of winning, was because I wanted to be able to talk about public policy and why we had no climate action policy, the policy we had on refugees, on early childhood education, on public broadcasting – a whole range of issues where I actually had very strong feelings and was involved in the campaign so I could really highlight those policy areas," Phelps says. "And then of course I won."

As well as stepping up, this year's women understand the significance of not giving up. "You have to be patient and persistent and know the goal you're heading for," Phelps says. "Jackie and I spent 20 years working towards marriage equality, and along the way a number of politicians said, 'You're not going to get it, how about you go with civil union and be happy with that?' We were prepared to forgo a lesser outcome in favour of achieving the goal."

Carnell firmly believes in the power of taking action: "You often hear 'Oh, they should do something about that.' The inevitable 'they'.

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“I think that there has been a growing view that you can't rely on them, whoever they are, to do something about that. If you want change, then you've got to get involved and make that happen. Otherwise, it's the ‘put up or shut up’ line again.

“If you're not willing to put some time and effort into change that you want, or you believe is important for society, you really don't have a right to complain.”

Indigenous role models

This year's list featured a large number of Indigenous entrants, particularly in the local and regional category.

“This may be due to the impact of role models and how they inspire others,” says Korn Ferry's Robert Webster, referring to the two Indigenous women who were category winners last year: Professor Megan Davis in the public policy category, who was also the overall winner for 2018, while the other winner, who has since died, was in the local and regional category.

Dr Ngaree Blow is director of First Nations Health at The University of Melbourne. **Supplied**

This year Cheryl Moggs, community justice co-ordinator for Care Goondiwindi and Warlpiri, and Arrernte woman Shirleen Campbell, who provides a strong voice for women, children and men who have experienced family and domestic violence, made the cut in the local and regional category, while Dr Ngaree Blow, director of First Nations Health at The University of Melbourne, was recognised in the young leader category.

And perhaps it was because 2019 marks the 50th anniversary of the moon landing, but an interesting trend this year was the emergence of applicants leading advancements in space, who entered in categories such as public policy, and business and entrepreneur.

Included in this year's 100 are the executive director at the Australian Space Agency, Anntonette Dailey, and Carley Scott, chief executive of Equatorial Launch Australia, who leads Australia's first commercial spaceport and has secured a world-first with NASA planning to launch from her company's site in 2020.

Scott has spent a lot of time working with the Yolngu people, traditional owners of the north-eastern Arnhem Land where the space centre is located, considering the significance of what a venture like this on their land means for them.

The winners of each of the 10 categories and the overall winner will be announced at a gala dinner in Sydney on **October 22**.