



Australian of the Year heads speaker list for Alice



Dr James Muecke AM, 2020 Australian of the Year, will head the speaker’s list for Rotary’s Zone 8 Conference in Alice Springs, September 18-20.

ANNOUNCED on Australia Day, the honour for Dr Muecke was applauded across Australia.

His commitment to social impact and humanitarian endeavours has earned him a string of awards, including appointment as a Member in the General Division of the Order of Australia in 2012; the Australian Medical Association’s President’s Leadership Award in 2013; and Ernst & Young’s Social Entrepreneur for Australia in 2015.

James lived and worked as a doctor in Africa and subsequently as an eye surgeon in the Middle East, battling malaria, wild animals and rebel soldiers. He founded Sight For All in 2008,

turning his boundless energy into a fight against blindness in the Aboriginal and mainstream communities of Australia – and some of the poorest countries of Asia and Africa. Sight For All’s comprehensive and sustainable projects are now impacting the lives of more than one million people each year.

The Australian of the Year graduated with Honours from the University of Adelaide Medical School in 1987 and has enjoyed a career path as a researcher, teacher, author, musician, photographer and film producer. He uses his skills to deliver passionate, fascinating and at times confronting presentations about his life, work, philanthropy, resilience and social

entrepreneurship. He is certain to be a big hit with audiences at the Zone 8 Conference.

A neurological condition impacting his dexterity has forced James into premature retirement from surgery. Not letting his disability slow him down, however, James has redirected his vigoro to crafting films and has a number of powerful documentaries under his belt – and other compelling projects in production.

Several other outstanding speakers are already on the list for the conference, with further announcements to be made in the April issue of *Rotary Down Under*.

Those speakers already on the list include:

- President-elect Holger Knaack from Germany;
- RI past president Barry Rassin from the Bahamas;
- Australia’s own RI past president Ian Riseley OAM;
- Newly appointed Zone 8 RI Director Jessie Harman from Rotary Club of Ballarat North, Vic;
- Conference convenor RI past director Noel Trevaskis OAM from Rotary Club of Bega, NSW;
- Inspirational Purple House founder and leader Sarah Brown – one of the greatest indigenous medical success stories in Australia;
- Popular country music group The Bowden Brothers, who will perform at a spectacular open-air dinner at the Ooraminna movie set on the outskirts of Alice Springs.

See opposite for further details on the Alice Springs Conference, including tour ideas, accommodation options and senior leaders leading what will surely be an exciting event. •