

Strictly embargoed until 12.01am on Thursday, January 22, 2009

Academy winners are stamped as 2009 Legends

Four of Australia's most celebrated actors Cate Blanchett, Russell Crowe, Nicole Kidman AC and Geoffrey Rush will be immortalised on postage stamps released today in the lead up to Australia Day.

The four Academy Award winners have been named the 2009 Australia Post Australian Legends in recognition of the outstanding contribution they have made to Australian entertainment and culture.

Australia Post Managing Director Graeme John said the 2009 Australia Post Legends were admired for their achievements by Australians across all walks of life.

"Cate Blanchett, Russell Crowe, Nicole Kidman AC and Geoffrey Rush are already household names. The stamps will be a constant reminder of the indelible mark they have made on Australia's identity and culture," Mr John said.

"These four outstanding Australians have captured the imagination of millions of people in Australia and around the world with their award-winning performances."

The Legends will be honoured at Australia Day events held in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Perth, Darwin, Brisbane and Hobart. Each will be presented with 24-carat gold replicas of their stamps.

Nicole Kidman said she hoped her children would have an opportunity to stick her stamp on their mail.

"I have a vested interest in Australia. I want my children to live here at certain times of their life and see how wonderful it is. It would be lovely for them to lick a stamp, put it on an envelope and say 'that's my mum'," she said.

Cate Blanchett said she was very excited about featuring on a stamp.

"I am utterly, deeply, humbled and chuffed by the fact that I'm a stamp. I'm going to be licked by millions of Australians and I can't wait. It is also recognising the value of the arts in Australia. It brings it into general consumption and if I'm part of that, I feel intensely proud," she said,

Geoffrey Rush said he was delighted about being on a stamp, having grown up in the 50s and 60s when "the only person on a stamp ever was the Queen.

"It's a classy thing to know you're on security paper," he said.

The announcement comes as Australia Post celebrates its bicentennial year. It also follows the release last November of a special stamp series featuring the five favourite Australian films of all time.

The Legends will feature on eight 55 cent stamps, a first day cover and a set of maxicards. A biography, *Shining Lights: Australian Legends of the Screen*, by writer Michael Adams accompanies the stamp issue. The stamps and book can be purchased at participating Australia Post outlets or on-line at <http://www.auspost.com.au/legends>

For further information, please contact: Julia Balderstone or Susan McNair, PR for Australia Post, on 03 9696 5899, 0413 852 796 or by email at julia@curriecom.com.au.

Australia Post is the longest continually operating organisation in Australia. Every day Australia Post delivers 21 million items to 10.5 million addresses across Australia. With 4,453 outlets across the nation we are the largest retail network in Australia with 2,561 of these outlets in rural and remote areas. We are a fully self-funding business and receive no taxpayer funding.

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2009 Australia Post Australian Legends Award

The Australia Post Australian Legends Award is presented each year as part of Australia Day celebrations to honour individuals who have made a lifetime contribution to the development of our national identity and character.

The recipients are presented with 24-carat gold replicas of their stamps in recognition of the honour. An additional set of 24-carat gold stamps is presented to the Commonwealth on behalf of the Australian people.

When the inaugural Australian Legends Award was presented to Sir Donald Bradman in 1997, it was the first time an Australian stamp had specifically honoured a living person, other than a ruling monarch or member of the royal family.

The recipients of the Australian Legends Award have been:

1997	Cricketer	Sir Donald Bradman
1998	Olympic Legends	Betty Cuthbert Herb Elliott Dawn Fraser Marjorie Jackson Murray Rose Shirley Strickland
1999	Artist	Arthur Boyd
2000	Last Anzacs	Walter Parker Roy Longmore Alec Campbell
2001	Country Musician	Slim Dusty
2002	Medical Scientists	Professor Sir Gustav Nossal Professor Fiona Stanley Professor Nancy Millis Professor Donald Metcalf Professor Peter Doherty

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2003	Tennis Champions	Rod Laver Margaret Court
2004	Opera Singer	Dame Joan Sutherland
2005	Fashion Designers	Prue Acton Jenny Bannister Collette Dinnigan Akira Isogawa Joe Saba Carla Zampatti
2006	Entertainer	Barry Humphries
2007	Racing greats	Roy Higgins Bart Cummings John Tapp Scobie Breasley Bob Ingham George Moore
2008	Philanthropists	Dame Elisabeth Murdoch AC DBE Victor Smorgon AC and Loti Smorgon AO Lady (Mary) Fairfax AC OBE Frank Lowy AC

As reflected by the diverse range of award recipients, Australia Post is committed to honouring achievements across the spectrum of Australian life.

The 2009 Australia Post Australian Legends – Australian Legends of the Screen

This year as Australia Post celebrates its bicentenary, the Australia Post Australian Legends Award has been awarded to four Australian actors Cate Blanchett, Russell Crowe, Nicole Kidman AC and Geoffrey Rush.

These renowned Australian actors have established international reputations, including being nominated for and winning Hollywood's greatest honour, an Academy Award for acting.

Nicole Kidman was nominated for Best Actress for *Moulin Rouge!* in 2001 before winning the award in 2002 for her portrayal of Virginia Woolf in *The Hours*.

Cate Blanchett was nominated for Best Actress Oscars for *Elizabeth* in 1998 and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* in 2007. She was also nominated for Best Actress in a Supporting Role for her characterisation of Bob Dylan in *I'm Not There*, in 2007 and also for *Notes on a Scandal* in 2006. In 2005 she won the award for Best Supporting Actress in *The Aviator*.

BACKGROUNDER

Russell Crowe was nominated for Best Actor in 1999 for *The Insider* and again in 2001 for *A Beautiful Mind*. He won the award for Best Actor in 2000 with *Gladiator*.

Geoffrey Rush won the Best Actor award for his portrayal of pianist David Helfgott in 1996's *Shine*. He has also received two nominations: for the Best Actor award in 2000 for *Quills*, and for the Best Supporting Actor Award in 1998 for *Shakespeare in Love*.

Each actor is represented by two stamps: a portrait; and a film role for which the actor was nominated for or received an Academy Award.

The announcement comes two months after Australia Post helped commemorate the AFI Award's 50th Anniversary by releasing a special stamp series featuring the five favourite Australian films of all time.

Stamp Images and Products

Adam Crapp of the Australia Post Design Studio designed the stamps and products in this stamp issue. The four recipients are each featured on two stamps. The 2009 Australian Legends stamp issue features 8 x 55c stamps, a first day cover and a set of maxicards.

Shining Lights: Australian Legends of the Screen

Australia Post is releasing a commemorative book to celebrate the launch of the 2009 Australian Legends stamps. Titled *Shining Lights: Australian Legends of the Screen*, the book is written by entertainment writer Michael Adams and details the fascinating life stories of the 2009 Australian Legends.

The Australia Post Australian Legends stamps and book are now available at participating Australia Post outlets or online at <http://www.auspost.com.au/legends>

High resolution images of the stamps are available upon request. For further information, please contact Julia Balderstone or Susan McNair on 03 9696 5899, 0413 852 796 or by email at julia@curriecom.com.au