



## MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

21 January 2019

### Coonamble's Australia Day Ambassador

Doctor, Churchill Fellow, Writer and Past President of the Australian Medical Students' Association, Dr Benjamin Veness will join the Coonamble Community on January 26 as Coonamble's Australia Day Ambassador.

Educated at public schools in the suburbs, Benjamin was like many of Australia's brightest school-leavers, initially lured into commerce. He received a scholarship to study accounting and graduated university with a job in banking. Despite his success, he grew dissatisfied with spreadsheets and began searching for opportunities to make a greater contribution to society.

Returning to university to study medicine at the age of 25, Benjamin put his skills from the corporate world to good use. In his first year he produced his faculty's hugely successful revue, *Cadavata*, raising \$43,000 for charity. He then served two terms on the University of Sydney's governing body as the undergraduate student Fellow of Senate, before spending 2013 as President of the Australian Medical Students' Association (AMSA). In this national role Benjamin represented 17,000 medical students in dealings with the media, government ministers and senior bureaucrats, medical school deans, and other associations.

While President of AMSA, Benjamin also found time to complete a Master of Public Health. In recognition of his academic excellence and enrichment of the diverse life of the University and the broader community, he was awarded the Edmund Barton Medal for master's by coursework achievement. In 2015 and 2016, the University profiled Benjamin in its 'Leadership for Good' campaign, alongside illustrious alumni such as Gough Whitlam, Michael Kirby and Victor Chang.

An adept writer, Benjamin has authored numerous articles for the mainstream, medical and university press, including *The Sydney Morning Herald*. He led AMSA's interest in student mental health and was awarded a Churchill Fellowship in 2013 to undertake further research in this critically-important area, travelling to the US, Canada, the UK, China and Singapore. Benjamin has been invited to present his report, titled 'The Wicked Problem of University Student Mental Health', at conferences throughout Australia.

Benjamin currently works full-time as a doctor, undertaking his specialist medical training in psychiatry. On the side, he maintains his involvement in public health initiatives and medical research.



Coonamble Australia Day celebration will be held on Saturday 26 January at the Coonamble Showground Pavilion, commencing with a free community breakfast at 8.00am. Dr Veness will join Mayor Karanouh in presenting the 2019 Coonamble Australia Day Awards.

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<b>Precis or Summary:</b> Australia Day Ambassador	
<b>Attachments:</b> Image	<b>Embargoed:</b>
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