Striving to achieve…
Doing our best…
This is what Australians take pride in when they see outstanding people represent their country. Whatever the event, it serves as a focal point in the tapestry of time, whereas the pride which we feel is the fibre that creates the fabric of the Australian persona. One event that became a traditional part of this Australian picture was the Miss Australia Quest / Awards. But how many Australians know when and where it began and what it achieved?

Many critics gave the Quest a lifetime of no more than two years, but their predictions were proven incorrect. Miss Australia was successfully conducted for 45 years as a major fundraising medium for The Spastic Centres of Australia. Over its duration entrants, their families, committees, sponsors and the general public of Australia raised in excess of $87 million.
“In 1952, it became imperative that we should get together on a national basis to provide an association which we hoped the government authorities in Canberra would listen.

In June, we held a meeting in Sydney founding a national society for the welfare of people with cerebral palsy (CP) – The Australian Cerebral Palsy Association (ACPA). It did an immense amount of work, with a Medical Educational Symposium at three-yearly intervals. A national body was imperative if we were to make a financial success of the Miss Australia Quest, as we had been invited to do by Mr Bernard Dowd, who was prepared to fund expenses within a reasonable sum.

In 1955, Mrs McLeod was named the President of the ACPA and has been connected with the detailed organisation of the Miss Australia Quest in the ensuing thirty years. Later, in 1954, the ACPA had established a national fund raising organisation for the Miss Australia Quest. We succeeded in raising that, from small beginnings into a million dollar project in the 1980s. It was founded on the idealism of 5000 entrants in Australia each year. It was marked by the desire of the young girls to give something worthwhile to our CP children. With this end in view, they were prepared to give up their social life for a year, and to give their families and friends something worthwhile to do towards the care and education of a child with CP. Most girls realise that there was value in what they were doing. If they were lucky enough to get a prize at the end, there were no recriminations from the others.

From The Spastic Centre’s point of view, it put us in touch with the community generally, and made people more aware of children with CP than they were previously.”

Neil McLeod
Miss Australia 1908 - 1954

The first Australian beauty contest in 1908 was sparked off by an American newspaper claim that Miss Margaret Frey, winner of one of the first US beauty contests, must be “the most beautiful woman in the world”.

Australians refused to concede this and set about finding a girl to answer such a challenge on behalf of local womanhood. The result was Miss Alice Buckridge who wore boots, scorned make-up and weighed 70 kilos.

Australia’s second beauty contest was staged in 1911 at the Sydney Stadium, however the winner Miss Millicent Mahy never got around to collecting her prize - a Venus statue valued at £100.

Beauty contests were few and far between in those days and the next national competition did not take place until 1928 when Miss Beryl Mills became Miss Australia.

It was the first to be officially named the Miss Australia Contest.

Many organisations have intermittently promoted a Miss Australia Quest. Some reasonably successful fundraising ventures under the Miss Australia Quest banner were conducted, particularly during and immediately following the Second World War.

The Miss Australia Quest again captured the public interest in 1926, when it was introduced by Joynton Smith, owner of the Daily Guardian and Smith’s Weekly as a means of boosting newspaper circulation. In those early times, selection started primarily as a beauty contest and contestants were chosen from photographs. The final judging was held in Sydney.
First Beauty Contest

Miss Australia

Miss Australia 1908 Alice Buckridge

Miss Australia 1926 Beryl Mills

Miss Australia 1927 Phyllis Von Alwyn (insert) Feathered cape and sash

Miss Australia 1942 Mary White
Miss Australia

First Beauty Contest

Miss Australia 1949 Margaret Hughes
Miss Australia 1946 Rhondda Kelly
Miss Australia 1947 Judith Gainford
Miss Australia 1953 Maxine Morgan
The contest lapsed until 1953, when it was revived by Bernard J. Dowd, Managing Director of Dowd Associates, marketers in Australia of the American Hickory garments, to promote their products. Basically, the selections involved only newspaper advertisements seeking photographs of young girls from which a panel of judges, appointed by Hickory in each state, would privately select a winner. Then each state winner would then travel to Melbourne where a judging panel, again appointed by Hickory, selected Miss Australia.

In 1954, during a lunchtime conversation, Mr Colin Clay, the Queensland Spastic Welfare League Executive Director, asked Mr G. Moore, the Queensland Director of Hickory, if the Quest could be used as a means of fundraising for ‘spastic children’ (children with cerebral palsy). This was prompted by the tremendous public interest generated by the judging of Miss Queensland. This conversation took place the day before the proposed selection of Miss Queensland. Everyone wholeheartedly gave their co-operation and the first £200 was raised through the Miss Australia Quest.

Thus, instead of being used solely as a commercial promotion, the Miss Australia Quest was turned into a worthy benefit to the community.

Miss Jill Jackson was chosen as Miss Queensland and represented the state at the national judging in Melbourne the following week. Miss Shirley Bliss from New South Wales became Miss Australia 1954.

Miss Australia Charity Queen
Miss Australia 1954
Shirley Bliss
Miss Australia Charity Queen
None

Miss Australia Charity Queen
Miss Australia 1956
June Finlayson
Miss Australia Charity Queen
None

Miss Australia Charity Queen
Miss Australia 1955
Maureen Kistle
Miss Australia Charity Queen
Ann Lambert

Miss Australia Charity Queen
Miss Australia 1957
Helen Wood
Miss Australia Charity Queen
Beverley Dickenson

Many faces of Miss Australia

The Fifties
Miss Australia

The Fifties

Miss Australia 1955
Maureen Kistle holding trophy

Miss Australia 1959
Joan Stanbury
Miss Australia Charity Queen
None

Miss Australia 1958
Pamela MacKay
Miss Australia Charity Queen
Wendy Shipway

Miss Australia Charity Queen
Wendy Shipway

No Charity Queen
The Australia Quest, while it was sponsored by Mr Bernard Dowd and Hickory, was conducted in each state by The Spastic Centres and the funds those centres raised provided care and welfare for children with cerebral palsy in that state. The co-operation of that fundraising effort was under the auspices of the Australian Cerebral Palsy Association – the Federation of Australian Spastic Centres. In 1963, Mr Dowd gave to the Australian Cerebral Palsy Association the full rights of ownership of the Miss Australia Quest.

In each state, the Australian Cerebral Palsy Association owned the Miss Australia Quest as a business enterprise and had the various titles - Miss Queensland, Miss New South Wales, etc. – registered in its name. Also registered were the Charity Queens/Fundraisers titles associated with each Region and State.

The ‘50s and ‘60s were the glory days of the Quest. Miss Australias were welcomed in their home towns by crowds numbering thousands, floats, bands and marching girls.

They stopped traffic in the streets of capital cities as they glided past in open cars. They traversed the globe as ambassadors promoting Australia’s export products and The Spastic Centre.
Miss Australia

Miss Australia 1965
Carole Jackson
Miss Australia Charity Queen
Rosemary Ryan

Heather Hamilton

Miss Australia 1964
Jan Taylor
Miss Australia Charity Queen
Heather Hamilton

1960s Logo
The Miss Australia Crown

In May 1965, The Miss Australia Crown was presented to the Miss Australia 1965, Carole Jackson, at the Tokyo Trade Fair.

The Miss Australia Crown is a priceless work of art. It contains approximately 800 genuinely cultured and perfectly matched Australian and Japanese pearls.

The design features the Australian wattle flower and leaf. The flower itself is made of pearls, while the leaf and all other metal parts of the crown are carved from solid sterling silver plate. Each leaf has been engraved by hand.

Surmounting the crown is a large Australian pearl. Another slightly smaller pearl is nestled directly below it. Bordering the crown at regular intervals are four more large Australian pearls interspersed with smaller Japanese pearls. There are also four pearl-topped hat pins to assist in securing the crown to head of the wearer.

It was designed by Melbourne artist Mr Ernest Booth, and created in Japan by Emperor Hirohito’s jeweller and some of Japan’s greatest craftsmen, one of whom in 1911, created the Japanese Imperial Crown.

The Miss Australia Crown was then donated to the Miss Australia Quest in May 1965 by Mr and Mrs James Greenfield, the proprietors of Toyomoto Australia Pty Ltd.

The crown sat on a square blue velvet cushion edged with 350 perfectly matched pearls. The cushion was encased in a magnificent white satin lined case.

Top  Carole Jackson, Miss Australia 1965, receiving the Miss Australia crown from Miss Japan at the Tokyo Trade Fair.

Bottom: Miss Australia Crown
The Miss Australia Charity Queen Crown

The Miss Australia Charity Queen Crown was designed and presented by Mr Charles Greenfield of Toyomoto Australia. Greenfield also presented and was involved with the design of the Miss Australia Crown.

A Melbourne jeweller, Mr Noubar, made The Crown in Australia.

It took many months to complete the basic form of the crown including the detailed engraving of the leaves, all of which was completed by hand. The pearls are all handset and matched into clusters on the solid sterling silver crown.

The feature pearl is an Australian pearl found in Kure Bay, Western Australia. This pearl was specially selected for the crown and is held in place by a diamond set platinum cap made for the crown.

The crown was presented each year to the girl who raised the most money in Australia for children and adults with cerebral palsy.
Miss Australia

The Sixties

Miss Australia 1968
Helen Newton

Miss Australia Charity Queen
Margaret Thiess

Miss Australia 1969
Suzanne McClelland

Miss Australia Charity Queen
Merrilyn Peck

Sponsor Coca Cola, Miss Australia 1966 Sue Gallie and workmen onsite at the Sydney Opera House.
Miss Australia

The Seventies

Miss Australia 1970
Rhonda Iffland
Miss Australia Charity Queen
Anna Lezzi

Miss Australia 1971
June Wright
Miss Australia Charity Queen
Corrinne Collins

The Seventies

1970s Logo
Miss Australia

The Seventies

Miss Australia 1972
Gay Walker
Miss Australia Charity Queen
Jillian Beswick

Miss Australia 1973
Michelle Downs
Miss Australia Charity Queen
Deborah Roubin

Miss Australia 1974
Randy Baker
Miss Australia Charity Queen
Marianne Postle

Miss Australia 1975
Kerry Doyle
Miss Australia Charity Queen
Sarah Gray

Miss Australia 1976
Sharon Betty
Miss Australia Charity Queen
Maria Ferrigno

Miss Australia 1977
Francene Maras
Miss Australia Charity Queen
Angela Cecchini

Marianne Postle

Angela Cecchini
**Miss Australia**

**The Seventies**

Miss Australia 1978
Gloria Krop
Miss Australia Charity Queen
Marianne Crotty

Miss Australia 1979
Anne Sneddon
Miss Australia Charity Queen
Lynda Rowe

**Miss Australia Cookbook** - Sewell, Elizabeth, Cookery Editor, 1971.

Recipes contributed by fourteen Miss Australia Quest entrants, covering English country cooking, health food dishes, Russian cooking, American cooking, cocktail parties, outdoor entertaining etc.
The Eighties

Miss Australia

1980
Eleanor Morton
Miss Australia Charity Queen
Roma Pesce

1981
Leanne Dick
Miss Australia Charity Queen
Angelica La Bozzetta

1982
Jenny Coupland
Miss Australia Charity Queen
Jullianne McLoughlin

1983
Lisa Cornelius
Miss Australia Charity Queen
Judith Gallagher

Miss Australia Charity Queen

1980s Logo
Miss Australia 1984
Mary-Ann Koznjak
Miss Australia Charity Queen
Sherryl Fyfe

Miss Australia 1987
Judith Green
Miss Australia Charity Queen
Jeanelle Dendle

Miss Australia 1985
Maria Ridley
Miss Australia Charity Queen
Lynette Gibson

Miss Australia 1988
Caroline Lumley
Miss Australia Charity Queen
Julie Matschoss

Miss Australia 1989
Lea Dickson
Miss Australia Charity Queen
Anita Stower
The Nineties

Changing Times

In 1992, the Miss Australia Quest was changed to the Miss Australia Awards to reflect more closely the attitudes, achievements and aspirations of young Australian womanhood and attracted renewed appreciation for their skills, talents and contribution to community life. The trappings traditionally associated with beauty contests such as the sceptre, sashes and crowns were relegated to the archives. In 1993 – Joanne Dick was the first Miss Australia to be awarded a title and not crowned.

The Australian Cerebral Palsy Association recognised that a major barrier to the rights of people with disabilities lies in community attitudes.

Every effort was made to create public awareness, acceptance and understanding of people with cerebral palsy as contributing members of the community. Like each and every Miss Australia entrant, people with disabilities are people with hopes, dreams and aspirations. The Quest did not represent an individual image, but rather it symbolized a combined concept of participation, striving, helping and achievement. This is what each entrant did when she entered Miss Australia.

Men entered in the Miss Australia Awards. In 1993, Damien Taylor, a Gold Coast hotel porter became the first man to win the Wintersun Quest, a traditional stepping stone to the national award. In 1997, Victorian Brad Rogers had a separate title created for him (“National Fundraiser”) when he scooped the award for fundraising.
Miss Australia 1992
Suzanne Lee
**Miss Australia Charity Queen**
Maria Barone

Miss Australia 1993
Joanne Dick
**Miss Australia Fundraiser**
Kathleen Sergi

Miss Australia 1994
Jayne Bargwanna
**Miss Australia Fundraiser**
Kristylee Curran

Miss Australia 1995
Margaret Tierney
**Miss Australia Fundraiser**
Anne-Maria Romeo

Miss Australia 1996
Suzanne Haward
**Miss Australia Fundraiser**
Lisa Mittiga

Miss Australia 1997
Tracy Secombe
**Miss Australia Fundraiser & National Fundraiser**
Filomena Labbozetta and Brad Rogers
Miss Australia 1998
Suellen Fuller
Miss Australia Fundraiser
Bita Nejad

Miss Australia 1999
Kathryn Hay
Miss Australia Fundraiser
Amber Potter

Miss Australia 2000
Sheree Primmer
Miss Australia Fundraiser
Catherine Doggett

End of a Era

In October 1998, the Miss Australia Company announced that in February 2000 it would cease to operate this great Australia icon. There were magic moments, even episodes that created national controversy. This was the longest running quest in Australia, and can take pride in knowing that the Miss Australia Quest/Awards has forged a place for itself in the living history of Australia.

In 2000, the final Miss Australia, Miss Sheree Primmer, was selected and announced for the Australian Cerebral Palsy Association. The final judging was held in Sydney.

Many critics gave the Quest a lifetime of no more than two years, but their predictions were proven incorrect. Miss Australia was successfully conducted for 45 years as a major fundraising medium for The Spastic Centres of Australia. Over its duration entrants, their families, committees, sponsors and the general public of Australia raised in excess of $87 million.

Please note: From 2001, Australia has been represented in international contests by Miss Universe Australia. This title has sometimes been erroneously labeled Miss Australia by the media – and this has caused some confusion.
“In 1953, I began my association with The Spastic Centre as a two-year-old child. Like most little girls I would watch Miss Australia being sashed and crowned on National TV. Wishing and hoping that one day it would my turn! In 1987, I began working for the Miss Australia Company. In the NSW and ACT branch. Over those 17 years I designed tickets, posters, state and national final programs, newsletters etc. for the entrants and sponsors.

The many entrants I have met during this time, I have kept in touch with a few of them.

I have also been fortunate enough to have sat on the NSW State Final selection panel five times - an experience I will never forget.

Since its closure in 2000 I have maintained my interest in the Miss Australia Quest.”

Judith Geppert
MISS AUSTRALIA QUEST, 1955

In aid of Spastic Children

How you can help...

1 ENTER THE MISS AUSTRALIA QUEST
2 SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL ENTRANT and your local Spastic Committee in their raising of funds

MISS AUSTRALIA WILL RECEIVE THESE PRIZES:

- Wardrobe valued at £1,000
- A Miss Australia 1955 Trophy
- A chaperoned overseas trip to Europe, United Kingdom, U.S.A.
- A chaperoned Australian tour to all leading centres
- A £1,000 fee
- £50 cash prize
- 250 dollars spending money

ENTRY FORMS AVAILABLE HERE
1. Helen Wood, with Australian Prime Minister, Harold Holt 1957.
2. Suzanne McClelland, with Australian Prime Minister, John Gordon 1969.
4. Tricia Reschke, with Paul Burke at the Mosman Spastic Centre 1962.