

MEDIA RELEASE: *EMBARGOED UNTIL 8:30PM AEST WEDNESDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 2023*

Agronomist dedicated to ending global hunger named 2023 Global Australian of the Year

International food security expert Professor Glenn Denning has won the prestigious Global Australian of the Year Award for 2023, recognising more than 40 years spent working to end global hunger and promote sustainable development.

The Global Australian Awards, presented by [Advance, The Global Australian Network](#), showcase the achievements of inspiring global Australians who are innovating in their field and shaping the world. The Awards have been presented by Advance since 2012, and are overseen by a [judging panel](#) of eminent Australians.

Professor Denning's award was announced by the Minister for Industry and Science Ed Husic, during the live broadcast of the 2023 Global Australian Awards, along with 8 category winners, joining more than 170 eminent Australians recognised as Advance GameChangers over the past 12 years.

Advance Global Australians' CEO Johanna Pitman said Professor Denning exemplifies the idea of a global Australian, having spent his entire career working all over the globe, on a mission to build and promote sustainable food systems capable of supporting every person on the planet.

"Professor Denning has spent four decades on the frontline of the fight for food security. An agronomist and development practitioner, he has driven innovation, partnership, and impact at every level, working with everyone from local farmers to global institutions and governments, to create lasting solutions to world hunger and malnutrition. He has helped shape many of the most critical transformations of global food systems and continues to influence the future of our planet as an international advisor, university educator and global thought leader.

"From the rice paddies of the Philippines and Southeast Asia, to the highlands and woodlands of Africa, Professor Denning has led the development and dissemination of ground-breaking new approaches to agriculture, transforming access to healthy, nutritious food in some of the most impoverished communities around the world. Today he trains the next generation of practitioners and guides them to scale the available solutions to achieve food security and sustainability outcomes – balancing the ultimate tension of the need to feed and sustain a growing global population, while protecting the environment for both current and future generations.

"Professor Denning is an inspirational global leader whose work is central to the future of our people and planet. It is a terrific honour to recognise his immense contribution, as the 2023 Global Australian of the Year."

Professor Denning grew up in suburban Brisbane and always had a passion for growing plants. As a child he would grow vegetables and ornamentals in his backyard. His father, once a farmer, grew orchids, so it was no surprise to his family and teachers that he went on to study agricultural science at the University of Queensland.

His foray into international development reflected his curiosity - putting his hand up for a research project in Bali that a fellow student declined. Over the four decades since then, his work has taken him all over Asia and Africa, leading international development programs and advising governments and international organisations on agriculture, food policy and sustainable development in more than 50 countries.

Today, Professor Denning is a Professor of Professional Practice and founding Director of the Master of Public Administration in Development Practice (MPA-DP) at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA), focused on preparing a new generation of practitioners to solve the world's most challenging problems. In January 2023, Professor Denning published his book, [*Universal Food Security: How to End Hunger While Protecting the Planet*](#) - a practical, evidence-based guide to transforming the global food system.

Professor Denning believes the vision of universal food security – that every person should have a healthy diet and that healthy diet should be derived from sustainable food systems – is achievable. He reminds us that food security is a human right.

“My focus throughout my career has been on putting good ideas into practice; harnessing the potential of science and technology, combined with better policies and the capabilities of local communities, to bring about positive development outcomes,” Prof Denning said.

“I’ve learnt that this complex problem needs a holistic, nuanced set of solutions. Different geographies and communities require different policies and interventions to solve hunger in ways that work. The key to tackling complex issues such as world hunger lies in setting ambitious goals, being well-informed and building unlikely alliances from various sectors, to create meaningful solutions together.”

Professor Denning remains ever motivated in his work, concerned by the urgency and magnitude of the challenge, yet inspired by the next generation of practitioners ready to tackle and solve it.

“We have to transform the global food system, to bring better health outcomes and better environmental outcomes – and we have no time to waste. We have practical solutions, but the problem is we haven’t taken them to scale. But we now have a new generation of practitioner leaders emerging, including more than 600 of my former students who are now working across 80 countries to bring about local impact. They inspire me to believe that a food secure world, a more sustainable world is an achievable reality.”

Professor Denning is one of 25 finalists recognised in this year’s Awards, for their work across Asia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, North America and outer space!

“This year’s GameChangers are tackling global challenges from food security to global warming; leading the development of new solutions for decarbonisation, digital transformation, and space exploration; and amplifying voices the world needs to hear. From scientists to storytellers, archaeologists to artists, tech trailblazers to teachers, corporate leaders to creative visionaries, doctors to entrepreneurs, advocates to academics - they are working at the cutting edge of their professions,” Ms Pitman said.

“Succeeding in another country means embracing risks, working in unfamiliar environments, and operating without an established network – it takes grit, curiosity, and hard work. That is why Global Australians are immensely valuable for Australia, and that’s why their success and impact needs to be celebrated. Advance is proud to shine the spotlight on their incredible impact around the world and build deeper connections with these remarkable Australians back here in Australia.”

The Global Australian Awards are the only of their kind to recognise the contributions of the Australian diaspora – the 1 million Australians living abroad and 2.5 million international graduates of Australian universities.

The Awards broadcast will be available to all Australians via YouTube and ABC iView following the event. To learn more click [here](#)

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More about Professor Glenn Denning:

Professor Glenn Denning is a world-renowned expert in international agriculture, food security and sustainable development, who has dedicated his career to ending hunger and malnutrition. At the global level, he served on the UN Millennium Project Hunger Task Force and the Senior Steering Group of the UN High Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis. He worked in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research for 24 years and held senior management positions at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and the World Agroforestry Centre. While at IRRI, one of his major successes came in Cambodia, where he mobilized technical and financial support from the Australian Government that helped the country emerge from war and genocide to become self-sufficient and later a rice exporter. In recognition of this work, Denning was honoured by the Government of Cambodia as Commander of the Royal Order of Sahametrei in 2000.

Glenn contributed to the design and establishment of the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) and served on GAFSP’s Technical Advisory Committee, reviewing, evaluating, and endorsing country proposals that resulted in approval of over \$1 billion of grant funding to more than 25 countries. He also served on the founding board of the Institute of African Leadership for Sustainable Development and advised the Asian Development Bank on aligning its strategy and operations to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

In 2009, he moved to New York, as founding Director of the Master of Public Administration in Development Practice (MPA-DP), a joint undertaking of SIPA with Columbia University’s Earth Institute. His teaching and mentorship have inspired hundreds of young practitioners, and his contributions have earned honours, including the Columbia University Presidential Award for Outstanding Teaching in 2014.

2023 Global Australian Award Winners:

Alumni

- Prof Abelardo Apollo Ilagan David, Jr. - Founder and Executive Director, ILLC, APDM and REACH Foundation, Inc.

Creative Excellence

- Lucy McRae - Sci-fi Artist and Body Architect

Emerging Leader

- Dr Brett Parkinson - Senior Manager, Research and Development, C-Zero Energy

Global Impact

- Prof Glenn Denning - Professor of Practice, Columbia University

Global Talent

- Dr Cle-Anne Gabriel - National Leader - Decarbonisation, KPMG Australia/ Founder and Director, ThinkZero

Indo-Pacific Impact

- Prof Armand Salvador B. Mijares - Professor of Archaeology, University of the Philippines-Diliman

Inspiring Corporate Leader

- Andrea Della Mattea - President, Asia Pacific, Microsoft

Social Impact

- Yalda Hakim - Journalist and Presenter

Technology & Entrepreneurship

- Dr Kynan Eng - Co-Founder and CEO, iniVation

Overall Winner

Global Australian of the Year - Prof Glenn Denning - Professor of Practice, Columbia University

ABOUT ADVANCE.ORG

Advance is the Global Australian Network. We connect:

- Australians living overseas with one another and to Australia
- Australian expats who have returned to Australia
- Current and former international students
- Recently arrived skilled migrants to Australia

Our mission is to strengthen Australia by nurturing a globally connected mindset at home and abroad. We do this by supporting the flow of information and ideas between Global Australians and their home country. Since our founding in 2002, we've grown to serve members globally and provide services,



events, and opportunities to Australia's greatest national resource: our people—at home and abroad. Our community of around 70,000 members are critical drivers of productivity and skills, and Australia's interconnectedness with our neighbours and trading partners.

Advance is guided by an [honorary board and committed volunteer advisors](#). These 42 well-connected individuals are based in Australia and across 13 countries around the world. Advance is a not-for-profit funded through corporate sponsorship and a Federal Government grant through DFAT's public diplomacy division, signifying the enormous potential of Australia's diaspora to advance social, cultural, and economic links around the world. Our Patron is the Prime Minister of Australia, the Honourable Anthony Albanese MP. Successive Prime Ministers have been the patron of Advance since 2002, sharing a commitment to the Australian diaspora and the work of Advance.

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