

Dr Craig Challen SC OAM

Australian of the Year 2019, Thai Cave Rescue Diver, Aviator and Keynote Speaker

Dr Craig Challen was named Australian of the Year 2019 in recognition of his work to rescue 12 young soccer players and their coach from a flooded Thai cave in Chiang Rai, Thailand in July 2018. Craig is in high demand as a keynote speaker. He presents alone or in partnership with fellow cave rescue diver Dr Richard Harris. An internationally recognised diver, a former vet, CEO and keen aviator, Craig is able to tailor his presentations to suit the audience and is available for question and answer sessions.



More about Dr Craig Challen:

Craig was about to go on a caving holiday in the Nullarbor Plains, when he was called to help the rescue mission based on his technical expertise. Although he initially thought the rescue would be too difficult to accomplish, he played a leading role in the successful mission. Working 10 to 12 hours a day in extremely dangerous conditions, he repeatedly risked his life as the children were swum, one by one, through the dark and narrow flooded caves. Craig was awarded the Star of Courage for his unwavering and selfless bravery. In 2019 he was recognised as Australian of the Year for Western Australia.

One of Australia's leading technical divers, Craig is a member of the Wet Mules, a diving group that takes on some of the world's deepest caves. After commencing cave diving in the 1990s he was an early adopter of closed-circuit mixed gas rebreathers.

Notable explorations include the extension of Cocklebiddy Cave on the Nullarbor Plain of Australia in 2008 and the Pearse Resurgence in New Zealand over the last 10 years. He has additionally explored caves throughout Australia, New Zealand, China, Thailand, Vanuatu and the Cook Islands.

Craig also has an avid interest in shipwreck diving and has explored sites over the last 15 years in the South China Sea, Solomon Islands, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia.

A veterinary surgeon by profession and former CEO of Australian Animal Hospitals, now retired, Craig is also an enthusiastic helicopter and airplane pilot.

[VIEW SPEAKER'S BIO ONLINE ▶](#)