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Sri Lankan engineer wins 'Australian of the Year Award'



Jayantha Wickramatunga who arrived in Australia in 1994 has given his knowledge, time and leisure for the benefit of the country he lives in and has been honoured with a prestigious award.

Wickramatunga, a civil engineer was the recipient of the prestigious award 'Australian of the Year award' from the Department of Transport and Main roads of Queensland which has an employee capacity exceeding seven thousand. Jayantha holds the designation of Principle Engineer in the department where around four hundred engineers are employed.

"I am awarded this great honour by nominating me to the panel that makes the decision of the suitable people for this award in the Department I serve. This is how Departments like ours help the state to raise the image of the Australian Day. This time nine employees were selected for this honour" Wickramatunga explained.

"They appreciated me for giving my spare time to community work from the time I arrived in Australia in 1994," he added.

"You have contributed immensely to make Australia a better place to live by devoting your knowledge, time and energy" were the words of the Executive Director of the department explaining why I was selected for this honour," Wickramatunga said.

“This award brings honour to all the Sri Lankans living in Australia as a migrant community and it helps promoting the name and fame of my motherland. The recognition I have received must encourage the younger generation of Sri Lankans to contribute to the betterment of the land we live in and interact with the people of this country. Lots of Sri Lankans hold top positions in various fields in this country and if we all have a positive attitude and a love for the country we live in, it will do good by the people who are willing and waiting to come to Australia,” he added.

“In addition to the numerous volunteer work I do for the Sri Lankan community I do a programme called “Mission for vision programme” with Bangladesh. This contributed immensely for my nomination for the award. They realized that my community work is not only limited to Sri Lanka and Australia. They said they were happy to note that I have no borders when it comes to community work. So they see me as an Ambassador who has taken Sri Lankan values to promote humanity, loving kindness and compassion.” Jayantha stated proudly.

Jayantha is a Director of the Ethnic Broadcasting Association of Queensland. He serves as the President of the Institution of Engineers, Sri Lanka Queensland Chapter and is a corresponding member of the Engineers Australia, Queensland Division, Founder President of Old Anandian Group, Queensland, Former convenor of the Sri Lankan ethnic group 4EB radio in Queensland.

He has also received an Appreciation Certificate for serving as a Director of the 4EB ethnic Radio for more than five years as a volunteer, Model Landlord award for lesion with Trans link, Main roads and Excellence service Badge to name a few in his list of recognitions. He has been an office bearer of almost all the key volunteer organizations of Sri Lankans in Queensland and in its main city, Brisbane.

When he collected the Australian of the year award he said his late parents Don Simon Hewa Wickramatunga and Leelawathi Dias Gunasekera who were both teachers sacrificed a lot to give him a good education. Having studied at Mirissa Maha Vidyalaya and then at Rahula, Wickramatunga gained his higher education at Ananda College Maradana. Later he entered Peradeniya University and became a Civil Engineer. In 1990 he wedded Tharangi Renuka Hettiarachchi and is blessed with two children. The projects he served as an Engineer in Sri Lanka includes, the Kothmale Dam Project, the State Development and Construction Corporation and the Road Development Authority.

“My vision for the future is to lift the image of Sri Lanka through committed work through the Institution of Engineers Sri Lanka, Queensland Chapter.

There are about 200 Sri Lankan Engineers in Queensland and I will work hard to bring all of them under this umbrella. This organization is already recognized by the state and the training we conduct has become a part of the professional development knowledge enhancement. Through this organization we could show our talents and enhance the Sri Lankan image, and not limit my work to the Sri Lankan community,” he explained.