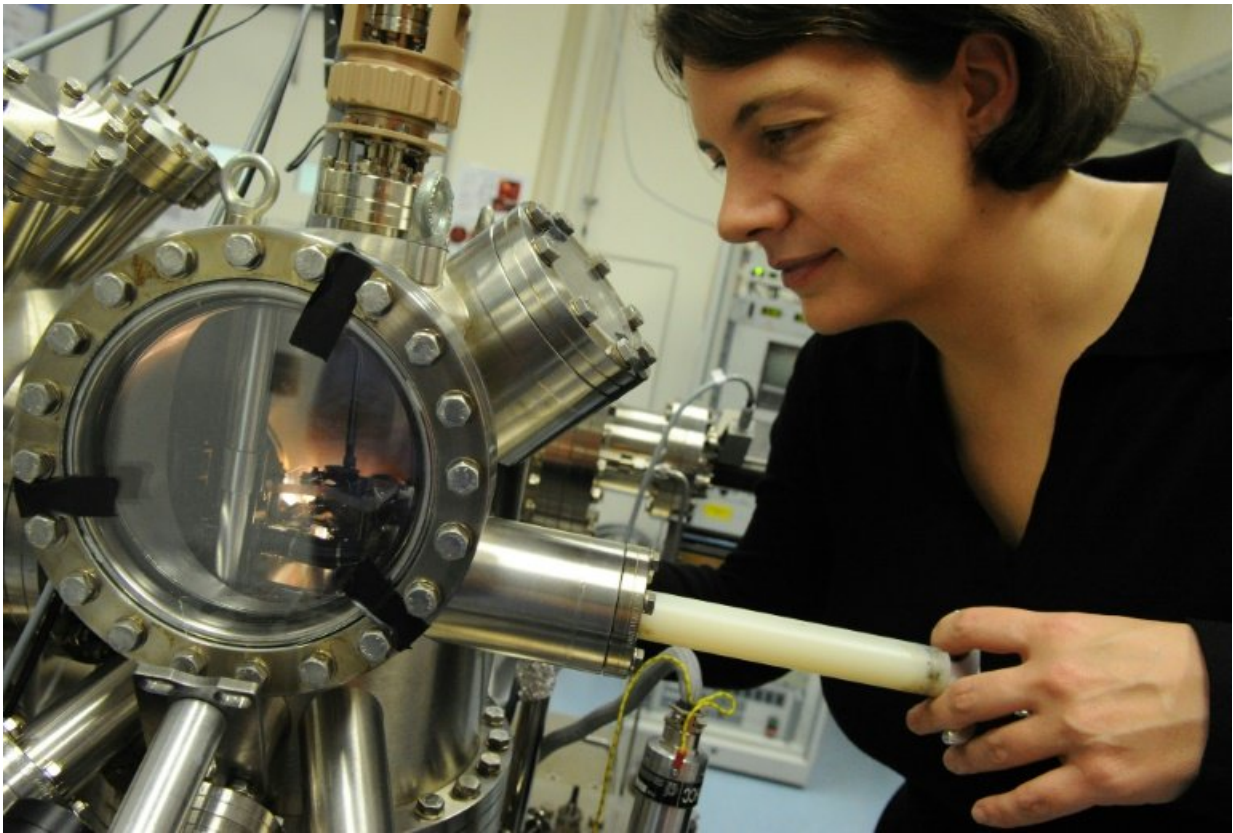


Quantum physics scientist named 'Australian of Year'

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Professor Michelle Simmons and her team at the University of New South Wales in 2012 created the world's first transistor made from a single atom

A groundbreaking quantum physics professor was named "Australian of the Year" on Thursday for her work heralded as ushering in a new era

for computer science.

British-born Michelle Yvonne Simmons, 50, and her team at the University of New South Wales created the world's first transistor made from a single atom, the award announcement stated.

"Michelle is an evangelist for Australian scientific research and a role model to [young scientists](#) everywhere," it said.

"Through her work she is naturally an inspiration for [young women](#) and a strong supporter of women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics."

Simmons' goal is to build a quantum computer "able to solve problems in minutes which would otherwise take thousands of years," with implications for drug design, artificial intelligence and self-driving cars, it said.

The public nominate people for the award whom they believe have made an extraordinary contribution to their community or nation, often inspiring others.

Shortlists are selected by panels at the state level before then being assessed by the board of the National Australia Day Council, a panel of people from a breadth of different fields appointed by the prime minister.

Former winners include indigenous Australian Olympian Cathy Freeman (1998), actor Geoffrey Rush (2012) and domestic violence campaigner Rosie Batty (2015).

Football champion Sam Kerr was awarded this year's "Young Australian of the Year" for her work as an ambassador for all women's sports.

The 24-year-old was a finalist for FIFA female player of the year in 2017.

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