

Patriot pulls his weight

NATALIE SCHENKEN

GLEN IRIS weightlifter Simon Heffernan will be thanking his friends, family and fellow Aussies on Australia Day.

The 33-year-old has been appointed as an Australia Day ambassador for the second consecutive year.

The Australia Day ambassador program sends high-profile and notable Victorians to visit 120 communities around the state.

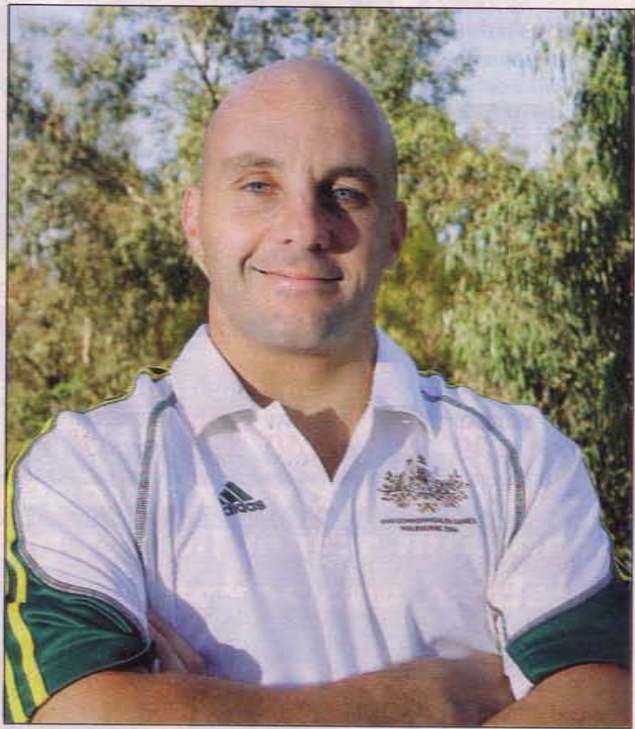
Mr Heffernan said he felt honoured to be chosen among the likes of Victoria Police's Chief Commissioner Christine Nixon and former premier Joan Kirner.

"It's a time of reflection . . . not just about wrapping yourself in a flag," Mr Heffernan said.

"It's about saying thank you and seeing how we can do things better."

This year, Mr Heffernan will travel to Tallangatta near Albury where he will talk about his career and memories of the 2006 Commonwealth Games, where he won a silver medal while competing in front of a home crowd, family and friends.

Mr Heffernan, who teaches at Emmaus College in Vermont South, said he hoped to be fit for the Beijing Olympics after recovering from an injury.



Australia Day ambassador Simon Heffernan.

N30PP302

He said he started lifting weights when he was a 15-year-old student at Malvern's De La Salle College.

"I wasn't tall enough for basketball," he said.

With a career spanning 15 years, Heffernan is well-known for his sporting successes and for being outspoken about drug use in weightlifting and the damage it has done to the sport's image.