

Australian
of the Year
➤ Awards

Reflect. Respect. Celebrate

South Australia

NATIONAL WINE CENTRE

14 November 2025

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MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR

Every day, people across South Australia give their time, energy and skills to improve the lives of others, often quietly, diligently, and without seeking recognition.

Tonight, we honour them. We honour those whose vision, energy and determination have made a difference in our communities.

The nominees for Australian of the Year, Young Australian of the Year, Senior Australian of the Year and Local Hero, have all responded to challenges with courage and commitment.

Through diverse perspectives, experiences, and talents, the nominees drive change, inspire others and make a lasting impact.

Their efforts span fields, cultures and communities, reflecting the richness and diversity that characterises our state.

They make us proud and inspire us all to do better, and to consider how each of us can contribute to our society and support those around us.

Congratulations to all our nominees.

This evening, we recognise your achievements and the example you set and we thank you for reminding us that care and commitment can make a difference and sometimes leave a lasting impact on South Australia for generations to come.



**Her Excellency the Honourable
Frances Adamson AC**
Governor of South Australia



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MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER

On behalf of all South Australians, I congratulate our state's nominees on their well-deserved recognition in the 2026 Australian of the Year Awards.

Since its inception in 1960, these awards have been a source of national pride and inspiration, not only providing us with a window into the work and personal stories of ordinary Australians doing extraordinary things, but also giving us a chance to come together to celebrate these amazing individuals who represent the best of us.

Here in South Australia – a state with an outstanding record of representation in these awards – the nominees are people of different ages, abilities and cultural backgrounds, demonstrating a commitment to making a contribution with passion and purpose.

Along their journey, they have earned the admiration and respect of their families, friends and fellow Australians as quiet achievers, going about their business while making a

lasting impact on the lives of those around them and the communities they live in.

Our state, and indeed, our nation is a better place because of their efforts and their legacy, which can serve as the foundation stone upon which we can all combine to build a better Australia for ourselves and future generations.

To our South Australian nominees, I offer my heartfelt congratulations on your outstanding achievement. Your service is an example to others of how one person's help can bring hope to the lives of their fellow Australians.

I wish you luck and thank you for your wonderful contribution to South Australia.



The Honourable Peter Malinauskas
Premier of South Australia



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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to the 2026 presentation of the Australian of the Year Awards for South Australia. It is a true honour and a great privilege to serve as Chair of the Australia Day Council of South Australia. On behalf of the Board, we would like to recognise our 17 exceptional South Australian finalists for these prestigious awards.

The Australian of the Year Awards recognise individuals whose leadership, service and vision make a significant difference in our communities. Their impact extends across South Australia, throughout the country and often around the globe. These awards are divided into four categories: Australian of the Year, Local Hero, Young Australian of the Year and Senior Australian of the Year.

Each year, South Australians can nominate people for these awards. The nominations come from and cover all walks of life, including community advocates, innovators, educators, carers, researchers and our quiet achievers, whose dedication exemplifies active citizenship. I sincerely thank all those who took the opportunity to nominate these amazing contributors,

ensuring the achievements of these remarkable individuals are recognised and celebrated.

From the thousands of nominations across the states and territories of Australia, every one of you has made a difference to our communities. Thank you. To the 128 Australians who have been recognised as finalists for their outstanding contributions, you are all extraordinary. This evening here in Adelaide, we proudly celebrate and are inspired by South Australia's 17 finalists. Each finalist has shown courage, purpose and dedication, raised awareness of vital issues and worked tirelessly to build stronger, more inclusive communities.

On behalf of the Board of the Australia Day Council of South Australia, I congratulate and thank each of you, our state finalists. Your efforts inspire and humble us all, representing the very best of South Australia.



Michelle Cox
Chair
Australia Day Council of South Australia



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THE AWARDS PROCESS



1
It all starts with your nomination



2
An expert panel selects one state and territory level recipient in each of the four award categories



4
The National Australia Day Council Board selects the national recipients



3
The state and territory recipients are awarded and go through to the national judging process



5
The four national recipients are awarded on Australia Day eve in Canberra

Want more information?

Visit the Australian of the Year Awards website australianoftheyear.org.au where you'll find the latest news and profiles of Australian of the Year Awards nominees, recipients and alumni.

For more information on Australia Day, our Ambassador Program, the free Aussie of the Month schools program, and the NADC, visit australiaday.org.au.



If our nominee stories bring anything up for you or you're concerned someone you know is at risk, please reach out to:

Lifeline on 13 11 14

Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636 or

13YARN, a crisis line for Indigenous Australians



"We hope that we can inspire more young people to make Australia their home. We really encourage our young health professionals to come and enjoy working in regional communities because this is a great opportunity for them to start their career."

Irfan Hashmi and Sobia Hashmi
2025 SA Local Hero

"I've always advocated for the most vulnerable in our society. I am engaged with the people at the grassroot level. I want recognition for First Nations people and to be able to work with both parties to develop a bipartisan agreement."

Charles Jackson OAM
2025 SA Senior Australian of the Year

"My ultimate goal is a transformed child protection system that is fair, that has heart and that we can be proud of."

Professor Leah Bromfield
2025 SA Australian of the Year

"The South Australian Youth Forum is a platform led by young people, for young people to drive change within our communities and create a space where other young people don't feel alone in such a busy world."

Amber Brock-Fabel
2025 SA Young Australian of the Year

KATHERINE BENNELL-PEGG

Astronaut



Katherine Bennell-Pegg is making history as the first Australian to qualify as an astronaut under Australia's space program, opening pathways for others to follow.

Katherine graduated from Basic Astronaut Training in 2024 as part of a class of six trained by the European Astronaut Centre in Germany – the first international candidate to do so. She was initially chosen for the program from a field of over 22,500 applicants.

Katherine has harboured ambitions of becoming an astronaut since she was a young child. As a space engineer, she has advanced multiple space missions and technologies. Alongside her career achievements, Katherine is an energetic champion for Australia's space program, regularly presenting to audiences of schoolchildren and industry leaders to inspire the next generation and create new opportunities.

Katherine is a genuine trailblazer in Australia's emerging space industry. With her determination and drive to succeed, she is a powerful example for young Australians.

PAUL BROADBRIDGE

Veterans advocate



Paul Broadbridge has made a lasting contribution to Australia's defence and veteran community through his leadership of an organisation that forges meaningful connections between the defence and business sectors.

Paul is the driving force behind Australian Partners of Defence (APOD), founded by his fiancée, Rebecca Waller, who tragically passed away from cancer. Together they envisioned an organisation that supports defence personnel, veterans and their families throughout service life and in their transition to civilian life, ensuring they get the recognition they deserve.

Paul continues this legacy by connecting defence families with the wider community to improve their lives. Today, more than 195,000 members nationwide use APOD to access everyday savings, career opportunities and wellbeing support.

Paul leads APOD with empathy, dedication and the ability to connect with people from all walks of life, helping individuals while improving the support systems around them.

PROFESSOR MARION ECKERT

Health researcher



Professor Marion Eckert's groundbreaking research is transforming health outcomes across Australia and driving innovation in nursing and midwifery practice.

Her evidence-based research has delivered major advances in healthcare from online wellbeing tools supporting nurses and midwives, to cutting-edge, pioneering skin cancer detection services in remote regions, led by specially trained nurses using AI.

She led the establishment of the Australasian Nursing and Midwifery Clinical Trials Network in collaboration with other nursing and midwifery leaders, empowering nurse and midwife-led research in Australia and New Zealand. As the inaugural director of the internationally acclaimed, award-winning Rosemary Bryant AO Research Centre, Marion leads one of the world's foremost hubs for evidence-based nursing and midwifery research.

Beyond her research leadership, she is a dedicated mentor to students and clinical researchers alike, and an inspiring advocate for the essential, evolving role of nurses and midwives in shaping the future of healthcare.

DR MOHAMMAD AFZAL MAHMOOD

Public health expert



Dr Mohammad Afzal Mahmood's work in public health spans more than two decades of service both in Australia and southeast Asia. His expertise has helped transform health service delivery throughout the region, as well as in his local community in Adelaide.

Afzal's active leadership has been hugely influential in improving maternal healthcare in Timor Leste, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. Working with local authorities, Afzal has helped to introduce long-lasting changes among healthcare practitioners in developing countries, leading to a decrease in maternal and infant mortality.

In Adelaide, he has long been active in many community programs and cultural organisations, instigating public health programs to promote vaccination uptake, and providing outreach services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In his academic role at the University of Adelaide, Afzal's dedicated support of research students has created a legacy of skilled practitioners willing to take on the challenges of delivering healthcare around the world.

MALCOLM BENOY

Meteorological researcher



Malcolm 'Mac' Benoy has made a significant contribution to climate change research in his role as a volunteer citizen scientist, helping to preserve valuable records and data relating to South Australia's meteorological history.

Over the past two decades, Mac has volunteered with the Bureau of Meteorology in South Australia, where he set up a citizen science group to record and preserve valuable hand-written meteorological records from the 19th century. Under Mac's astute guidance, the group has digitised over 90,000 synoptic charts and related documents, providing an invaluable research tool for modern-day climatologists.

International climate change and meteorological researchers have used the group's records to reconstruct historical weather patterns in the southern hemisphere, helping to better understand how the global climate is changing.

Mac's professionalism, enthusiasm and insight continue to guide the team of citizen scientists in its work to document and preserve critical weather data.

JAMES CURRIE

Sound designer



James Currie's filmography reads like a list of South Australia's most successful films over the past 50 years. His work as a sound designer, recordist and mixer includes titles such as Breaker Morant, The Lighthorsemen, Bad Boy Bubby, The Tracker, Wolf Creek, Ten Canoes, Red Dog and, most recently, the AACTA award-winning documentary My Name is Gulpilil.

James has worked with many of South Australia's leading directors over his career and has won multiple awards for his lifetime of work. He has been instrumental in establishing and growing the state's film industry, particularly as an authority on sound design. His use of location sound, most notably in remote Indigenous communities, has helped create a uniquely Australian soundscape in film.

James is generous in sharing his expertise and knowledge with other practitioners, especially students, creating an enduring legacy of excellence in sound design now and into the future.

ROSA MATTO

Cookery teacher



Rosa Matto is beloved by South Australians, many of whom received their first taste of Italian cuisine through her recipes. She has been a tireless champion for Italian cuisine and culture for over four decades, appearing in print, radio, television and at festivals across the state.

Rosa also champions disadvantaged Australians everywhere, volunteering her time for many organisations including aged care, intellectually challenged adults, and women's and men's shelters.

Fifty years ago, Rosa was instrumental in establishing Radio Italiana 531 for the Italian-Australian community and has served in leadership roles across many Italian associations. In 2023, she was awarded the Order of the Star of Italy by the Italian government in recognition of her contribution to Italian culture.

Rosa continues to engage new generations with her passion, generosity and deep commitment to helping others, using food and cooking to bring people together and build stronger communities.

DR DAVID PATON AM

Inspirational conservationist



Dr David Paton has dedicated more than four decades to preserving South Australia's biodiversity and unique ecosystems.

David has motivated many South Australians to take a proactive role in conserving and restoring the environment through his role as an educator and researcher at the University of Adelaide, and through his leadership of several environmental organisations.

With his expertise in biodiversity protection, David co-founded Bio-R, a not-for-profit conservation organisation that has re-established hundreds of hectares of habitat. Bio-R attracts people from all walks of life and ages to its annual planting festivals, engaging thousands of people to make a hands-on contribution towards saving South Australia's biodiversity.

In all these roles, David exemplifies excellence in conservation research, education and community-driven environmental stewardship, leading by personal example and bringing others along to share his vision.

HAYLEY FRAZER

Author and storyteller



Hayley Frazer draws on her experience of dyslexia and dysgraphia to produce books and creative experiences that cultivate inclusion and celebrate diversity, encouraging readers and participants to connect and empathise.

Hayley produced her first picture book at 15 years of age, called *Something a Little Different*, which went on to be shortlisted for the Speech Pathology Australia Book of the Year and was selected for the Premier's Reading Challenge in South Australia and Victoria. Since then, Hayley has continued to explore neurodiversity-informed literacy and storytelling programs as a way of nurturing self-expression and creativity.

Hayley runs storytime sessions promoting a safe learning environment and hosts creative workshops for neurodiverse children and adults with all abilities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she produced online resources based on her books to give educators and families access to creative tools.

Through her work and community engagement, Hayley fosters creativity in people of all ages and abilities.

AMELIA GRIFFIN

Speech pathologist



Amelia Griffin is dedicated to helping people who experience communication and cognitive challenges to express themselves. Her therapy practice and use of assistive technology is opening new ways to tackle communication disorders that result from conditions such as autism and dementia.

Amelia is the founder of My Mind Matters Therapy, a speech pathology practice and assistive technology company. Last year, she launched two apps to provide communication assistance to people with speech difficulties, offering a more affordable technology option. Both apps are widely used by speech pathologists, educators and aged care practitioners.

Amelia gives her time to help people with cognitive challenges, offering free therapy sessions to children and adults with dementia, running disability-inclusive soccer programs for children, and facilitating neuro-affirming social clubs for children who struggle with peer relationships. She also collaborates on research projects, mentors students, and volunteers with aged care facilities to support inclusive communication practices.

AMIRA SHAHIN

Humanitarian and educator



Amira Shahin is a leader whose work spans mental health, maternal health, and humanitarian service.

Amira is the founder of Mindful Pursuits, an initiative that delivers mental health education to schools and youth groups. She gives regular presentations and facilitates workshops on mental health topics, particularly in culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Amira also works with the charity Still Aware, which is focused on preventing stillbirths and supporting safer pregnancies through education and community engagement.

As an author, Amira has written three best-selling children's books on autism, emotional resilience, and the experiences of children growing up in conflict zones. True to her values, she donates all proceeds to humanitarian causes, funding projects such as food relief, freshwater wells, orphan support, and medical treatment for vulnerable families.

In all of her roles, Amira displays a selfless commitment to helping others, particularly young people and families affected by displacement, conflict and cultural marginalisation.

CHLOE WYATT-JASPER

Mental health advocate



Chloe Wyatt-Jasper has applied her lived experience of trauma and mental health challenges to help other people facing similar issues. Chloe experienced a domestic violence family tragedy at a very young age and has lived with profound mental health conditions as a result. In speaking out about these challenges, Chloe hopes to help other people overcome the stigma often associated with mental health.

Chloe has spoken openly about her own challenges and advocated for greater support for people experiencing mental health issues. Her advocacy led her to be selected to take part in the South Australian Teen Parliament, where she successfully lobbied South Australian Premier Peter Malinauskas for \$5 million for improved mental health services for young people.

Chloe also supports Backpacks 4 SA Kids, which helps survivors of domestic violence by donating backpacks with essential items such as clothes and toiletries.

LINDA FISK & ANNA KEMP

Women prisoner supporters



Linda Fisk and Anna Kemp established Seeds of Affinity in 2006 to support women exiting prison by providing a place and community where they feel a sense of belonging.

Seeds is peer-led and driven by women affected by the criminal justice system. It helps women to navigate the transition from prison to community and provides advocacy and support to women in prison. Each week Seeds hosts a community lunch where women learn from each other's experience and can access resources such as clothes and food.

Linda and Anna have touched hundreds of women's lives and are tireless advocates for the rights of women in and out of prison. They have contributed to research and written book chapters to educate professionals and the wider community, challenging negative stereotypes.

Importantly, their program creates a community 'feel' that some women have never felt before. This helps women to feel valued and able to develop their self-belief and confidence to go on and live positive lives with their families.

CALLUM MACPHERSON

Mental health podcaster



Volunteer creator, Callum MacPherson, is the man behind Young Blood – Men's Mental Health, a video podcast dedicated to the mental health of young men and their loved ones.

Winner of Best Wellbeing Podcast at the 2024 Australian Podcast Awards, Young Blood is a unique offering that's shared more than 250 episodes featuring lived experience stories and expert interviews with guests from across Australia.

When grieving the loss of his mate to suicide in 2019, Callum couldn't find any platforms for young men to share their struggles with each other and the world, so he decided to create one.

What started as a personal mission has evolved through six years of work to become part of a cultural shift in the way we think and talk about men's mental health, driven by the belief that conversations save lives.

AYESHA SAFDAR

Community leader



Ayesha Safdar has dedicated herself to helping newly-arrived migrant and refugee women find their place in Australian society.

In 2010, Ayesha founded the Adelaide Pakistani Women's Association (APWA) to create a safe, inclusive space for Pakistani women adjusting to life in Australia. Today, the association works with women from all backgrounds, helping them to navigate their way through a new culture and acquire language skills, education and employment. Ayesha is empowering women to build their confidence and develop the skills they need to create a new life in Australia.

Under her leadership, the APWA runs cultural events, promotes small businesses run by women and creates education pathways for women by connecting them to training in childcare, nursing and community services.

Ayesha's tireless work in empowering women and building bridges between communities has been hugely influential in promoting social inclusion in South Australia and beyond.

ELLA STRATTON

Palliative care supporter



Ella Stratton understands what it's like for a family to lose a child through illness. She wants to make sure that no family faces such a tragedy alone.

Ella and her husband Jarrod lost their 12-year-old son, Hunter, to a life-limiting illness. In his last years of life, they were supported by palliative care at the Women's and Children's Hospital. In response, Ella and Jarrod set up the Hunter Alfred Stratton (HAS) Foundation to support other families facing terminal illness.

The foundation has raised more than \$1.4 million which is spent directly on families through care support packages, meals and gifts. HAS also contributes to the Women's and Children's Hospital beach house holiday home used by palliative care families, as well as to the TLC for Kids special ambulance transport program they run, which helps children's dreams come true.

Ella's understanding and drive are helping many families survive their darkest moments with support and compassion.

THE TROPHIES

The Australian National University (ANU) is committed to better outcomes for our community, the environment, our nation, and the world. As the national university, we feel immensely privileged to be the exclusive cultural partner of the 2026 Australian of the Year Awards recognising the outstanding service to the community that many Australians make.

This year we have developed original artistic and musical works to recognise Australia's highest achievers for the National Australia Day Council. The trophies for the 2026 Australian of the Year Awards are the stunning result of a collaborative effort by staff and students of the Glass Workshop in the ANU School of Art & Design.

The geometric nature of the design aims to represent the multiple facets that have shaped Australian society, embodying a nation that is confident in its leadership, contemporary in its outlook and distinguished by its diverse community. The facets also capture the points of the Southern Cross, the star of federation, and are rendered in a brilliant blue symbolising the Australian sky.

Each award has been created through a process of cast glass, and meticulously ground and polished by hand. The awards have been a wonderful project for students to apply their creative and technical skills to complete a professional commission.



RECOGNISING THE STATE'S FINEST

Since 1960, the Australian of the Year Awards have recognised people from all across the country and from all fields of endeavour. This is just a snapshot of the recipients from South Australia for the past five years. The full honour roll can be viewed at australianoftheyear.org.au

	2025	Professor Leah Bromfield – Child protection expert
	2024	Tim Jarvis AM – Environmental scientist and advocate
	2023	Taryn Brumfitt – Body image activist, director, writer and speaker
	2022	Professor Helen Marshall AM – Vaccination researcher
	2021	Tanya Hosch – Leader, changemaker and visionary
	2025	Charles Jackson OAM – Indigenous advocate and knowledge holder
	2024	Sister Meredith Evans – Sister of Mercy
	2023	Sandra Miller – Aboriginal rights activist, advocate for Indigenous health and welfare
	2022	Mark Le Messurier – Educator, counsellor and author
	2021	Professor Richard Bruggemann – Disability advocate
	2025	Amber Brock-Fabel – Founder, South Australian Youth Forum
	2024	Tiahni Adamson – Wildlife conservation biologist
	2023	Awer Mabil – Professional soccer player and co-founder, Barefoot to Boots
	2022	Dr Trudy Lin – Special Needs Dentistry
	2021	Isobel Marshall – Social entrepreneur
	2025	Sobia Hashmi and Irfan Hashmi – Pharmacists and migrant community leaders
	2024	Rachael Zaltron OAM – Founder, Backpacks 4 SA Kids
	2023	Christine Robertson OAM – Co-founder, Lost Pets of South Australia and creator of the Chipblitz program
	2022	Monique Bareham – President of Lymphoedema Association SA Inc.
	2021	Russell Ebert OAM – In Memoriam – Respectful relationships advocate

* Names and post nominals of recipients in the Honour Roll are a reflection of the time they received the Award.

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS



