

MEDIA RELEASE

FRIDAY 25 OCTOBER 2024

**2025 AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS
NOMINEES FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIA ANNOUNCED**

A foster carer, a performer using the arts to bring people together, a tennis champion, an aerospace engineer and a Police Commissioner turning personal tragedy into a force for good are just some of the nominees for the 2025 Australian of the Year Awards for South Australia.

The 2025 award nominees are:

2025 Australian of the Year for South Australia

Professor Leah Bromfield - Child protection expert (Adelaide)
Dr Sarah Cannard - Aerospace engineer (Cockatoo Valley)
Grantley Stevens - Commissioner, South Australian Police
Dr Hannah Wardill - Cancer researcher (Prospect)

2025 Senior Australian of the Year for South Australia

Anne Burgess AM - Anti-ageism advocate (Adelaide)
Dr Devinder Grewal - GP and medical services provider (Port Augusta)
Charles Jackson OAM - Indigenous advocate and knowledge holder (Quorn)
Keith Preston - Arts and events manager, artist (Adelaide)

2025 Young Australian of the Year for South Australia

Amber Brock-Fabel - Founder, South Australian Youth Forum (Adelaide)
Denzel James - Environmental advocate (Adelaide)
Andriana Petrakis - International tennis champion, coach and autism advocate (Adelaide)
Kushi Venkatesh - Comedian, reporter and content creator (Adelaide)

2025 Local Hero for South Australia

Sobia and Irfan Hashmi - Pharmacists and migrant community leaders (Glen Osmond)
Shane Hryhorec - Disability advocate (Port Adelaide)
Lisa O'Malley - Foster carer and co-founder, The Carer Project (Andrews Farm)
Dinah Thomasset - Founder, Villagehood Australia (Henley Beach South)

**see detailed bios on following pages*

The nominees for South Australia are among 137 people being recognised across all states and territories.

The award recipients for South Australia will be announced on the evening of Thursday 7 November 2024 in a ceremony at the Adelaide Convention Centre, which will also be available to watch online at australianoftheyear.org.au.

They will then join the other state and territory recipients as national finalists for the national awards announcement on 25 January 2025 in Canberra.

National Australia Day Council CEO Mark Fraser AO CVO congratulated the nominees for South Australia.

“The South Australia nominees for 2025 are passionate about what they do,” said Mark.

“Whether it’s commitment to their field of endeavour, a cause close to their heart, improving the lives of others, forging new frontiers or protecting culture, they are all inspirational.”

ENDS.

Nominee [bios on the following pages](#) and can also be viewed from australianoftheyear.org.au.

Nominee [photos can be downloaded](#) from this link (note – all photos have been supplied by nominees):
[SOUTH AUSTRALIA NOMINEE PHOTOS](#)

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2025 AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIA – NOMINEE BIOS

Professor Leah Bromfield

Child protection expert

Professor Leah Bromfield has devoted her life to establishing practical, evidence-based solutions to child abuse and neglect – important but challenging work.

Currently the director and chair of child protection at the Australian Centre for Child Protection, Leah developed the first evidence-based analysis of child protection practice frameworks. She informed improvements including the development of a new framework in South Australia and was on the team which advocated for – and got – the first National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children in 2007.

Over two decades, 46-year-old Leah has risen to become one of the most trusted researchers in the field. Her calls for transformation and radical redesign have led to world-first insights and contributed to significant changes in our understanding of, and responses to, child abuse and neglect.

She’s leading the development of a new child protection vision for South Australia, exploring unconventional approaches and interrogating assumptions to break the cycle of abuse.

Dr Sarah Cannard

Aerospace engineer

Dr Sarah Cannard is putting Australia’s space program on the international stage.

An experienced senior engineer with a PhD in aerospace engineering (and with 16 years working with Nova Systems in the defence and space industry under her belt), Sarah is a leader in her field. She has been involved in many complex defence, civil and space projects, including hypersonic rocket launches and the Hunter Class Frigate Program. It was Sarah’s team who designed Australia’s first ever lunar rover, Roo-ver, in partnership with the Australian Space Agency and NASA.

Sarah actively promotes STEM careers through public speaking. The 43-year-old is passionate about inspiring the younger generation and creating opportunities for them to work in space out of Australia, not overseas.

Sarah is an Earhart Fellow and was the 2022 Female Space Leader of the Year. She was also a finalist in the 2024 Advertiser Sunday Mail Woman of the Year Awards.

Old Parliament House,
King George Terrace,
Parkes ACT 2600

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Grantley Stevens

Commissioner, South Australian Police

Commissioner for the South Australian Police since 2015, Grantley (Grant) Stevens is a veteran police officer with over 40 years on the job. He's overseen many of the state's most significant policing initiatives.

Grant is known for his authoritative yet good-humoured leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic, when his high-profile job saw him become a household name. The 60-year-old is also deeply respected for his strength and capacity for forgiveness in the face of awful loss.

In 2023, Grant's youngest son Charlie passed away after being hit by a car. Grant and his wife Emma chose to ask mourners to donate to Operation Flinders Foundation in lieu of flowers. Over \$217,000 has so far been donated towards the future of young and disadvantaged South Australians.

Since Charlie's death, Grant and Emma have advocated for organ donation, youth engagement and road safety, turning a personal tragedy that played out under the public eye into a force for change.

Dr Hannah Wardill

Cancer researcher

Dr Hannah Wardill is internationally recognised in the field of supportive oncology research. Her program, which involves both laboratory and clinical research, aims to prevent the long-term disadvantages inflicted by cancer and its treatment by developing supportive care solutions that meet the unique needs of the patient.

The Supportive Oncology Research Group, started by Hannah in 2020, has so far received over \$12 million in funding. This includes \$4.2 million from the Medical Research Future Fund for two landmark trials in Australia.

Hannah, 34, has held many leadership roles and as board member for the Multinational Association for Supportive Care in Cancer, she was instrumental in the creation of the Association's first framework for more effective engagement with patients, advocates and people with lived experiences.

Hannah's work has been prolific and highly impactful: she has published more than 85 peer-reviewed articles, received numerous awards and won more than \$15 million in funding.

2025 SENIOR AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIA – NOMINEE BIOS

Anne Burgess AM

Anti-ageism advocate

Anne Burgess AM ensures that the voices and experiences of older people are valued and respected, particularly in the planning and delivery of aged care reform.

Leveraging over 40 years' experience leading areas of government focused on social justice, Anne serves as chair of multiple councils and boards and was recently appointed chair of the prestigious Aged Care Council of Elders, which provides a direct voice to government.

In this capacity, Anne guides discussion and meaningful action to address assumptions about ageing, government accountability and elder abuse – among other topics. She has been instrumental in aged care policy reform and leading community conversations through conferences and various campaigns.

Described as both fearless and optimistic in her advocacy, 79-year-old Anne is focused on making a positive difference. In 2021, she was appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia for significant service to mental health, gender equality and older people.

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Dr Devinder Grewal

GP and medical services provider

Dr Devinder Grewal has been delivering medical care to isolated and rural areas of the eastern Australian states since the 70s – and he's not hung up the stethoscope yet.

Devinder opened his own general practice in Port Augusta in 1974. Over the next ten years, he delivered hundreds of babies and provided comprehensive medical services through his practice, in a time when that was rare.

Realising there were many communities around Queensland, South Australia and New South Wales without any medical professionals, Devinder recruited doctors to these regions and ensured they had training and support. He also founded the first seven-day clinics in Port Augusta and Whyalla.

Devinder helped the Royal Flying Doctor Service, the Aboriginal Health Service and undertook ad hoc duties with local hospitals, only stopping work in the A&E at Port August Base Hospital at 72. Today, at 82, he still supervises doctors at his Port August practice.

Charles Jackson OAM

Indigenous advocate and knowledge holder

Charles Jackson OAM's passion has been working with Indigenous Australians for more than 50 years.

The youngest of fourteen children, Charles didn't go through mainstream schooling. He left home at 15 years of age and began his working life as a drover. He's held many jobs including, marriage celebrant, cultural awareness teacher, board member, services coordinator and NDIS officer. Charles was the first Aboriginal in Australia to become a JP in 1978. – they all reflect Charles' unwavering commitment to the underserved members of his community.

Today, Charles is a knowledge holder for Flinders Ranges Nation and working towards Wilpena Pound becoming a world heritage site.

Charles' latest venture is his new business, Urdu – an organisation that helps the Aboriginal community via culturally appropriate training and provides support and resources for people with disabilities or age-related impairments. Through his role as an advocate for the Aboriginal and wider community, the 75-year-old hopes to create a brighter future for all.

Keith Preston

Arts and events manager, artist

He's a performer, puppeteer, artist, musician, writer, producer and director.

Keith Preston's career in the South Australian arts and music scene spans decades, across genres. He has supported and entertained thousands of people and strives to support cultural heritage and living traditions. Keith is chair of Folk Alliance Australia and part of the leadership of several arts festivals and organisations.

In 2000, he helped establish the SA Folk Centre, and in 2010, the award-winning regional arts venue Heritage Arts & Traditions, which supports independent artists in Adelaide.

Passionate about ensuring people from all cultures and communities can enjoy a fair, diverse arts landscape, 71-year-old Keith works as arts manager with the Australian Migrant Resource Centre, creating opportunities for artists from refugee or migrant backgrounds.

He has led several Adelaide music groups to the international and national stage, and coordinated multiple tours and acclaimed musical collaborations. His own work features regularly at Adelaide Fringe.

2025 YOUNG AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIA– NOMINEE BIOS

Amber Brock-Fabel

Founder, South Australian Youth Forum

In a world where young people often have laws made for and about them, 20-year-old Amber Brock-Fabel is ensuring youth voices are heard.

Amber founded the South Australian Youth Forum in 2021 at just 17 years old. It empowers those aged 14 to 18 to discuss critical issues such as climate change, period poverty, gender equality and youth loneliness. The insights gathered – including surveys and models of engagement – are then presented to lawmakers and relevant organisations.

Under Amber’s leadership, the Forum has secured partnerships and collaborations with various organisations, gaining both national and international recognition, and was recently represented at the United Nations Summit of the Future, the National Inquiry into Civics Education and the Australian Conference on Youth Health.

The youth-led initiative won the Connecting Communities Award at the Young Achiever of the Year Gala in 2024, while Amber herself received the Governor of South Australia’s Commendation for Excellence.

Denzel James

Environmental advocate

Denzel James is a young person from Adelaide who is amplifying the voices of young people.

After witnessing drought, flooding and a lack of clean water in his childhood home of Oodnadatta in far-north South Australia, Denzel decided to encourage others to be climate champions.

Still in Year 12, his impactful leadership role earned him the prestigious title of one of UNICEF Australia's nine Young Ambassadors, representing his generation at state, national and international forums.

Denzel, 18, has been a strong advocate for managing the effects of climate change and contributed to the National Child and Youth Statement on Climate Change, launched at the 28th meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Dubai.

As a member of the South Australian Student Representative Council, Denzel helped start the ‘Free Fares for Our Future’ campaign, aiming to ensure that the future of every young Australian is safe and vibrant.

Andriana Petrakis

International tennis champion, coach and autism advocate

Andriana Petrakis, who has autism, is a tennis player sharing her experience, skills and knowledge with other young people with intellectual disabilities.

When Andriana was nine, her parents – unable to afford occupational therapy – saw tennis as an alternative to build her movement skills, hand eye coordination and social skills. Just over a decade later, Andriana represented Australia at the 2023 Virtus Global Games, the world’s largest elite sports event for athletes with an intellectual disability.

Now an assistant coach with Tennis SA’s Pathway Program, 22-year-old Andriana hopes to inspire other young people with a disability to learn new skills, meet new people and apply themselves while also having fun.

Andriana shares her passion, positivity and understanding of autism as a public speaker. She is ranked number five internationally and number two in Australia in the women’s singles People with an Intellectual Impairment category. She was awarded Tennis SA’s Most Outstanding Athlete with a Disability in 2023.

Kushi Venkatesh

Comedian, reporter and content creator

Nineteen-year-old Kushi Venkatesh believes that everyone – no matter their age or skin colour – should have a voice. That's why South Australia's Funniest Teen of 2023 is a stand-up comedian and reporter – on top of being a university student and tennis coach.

Kushi was on track for college tennis when a bad shoulder dislocation meant she had to turn down a scholarship. The competitive Kushi turned to her other love, comedy, starring in the 'Brown Women Comedy' tour and amassing a following on social media for her relatable, hilarious and inspiring storytelling.

As the youngest reporter with *ABC's Behind the News*, Kushi's stories make complex topics accessible for children, turning the news into engaging and educational content.

Kushi's talent has been widely recognised – she was the winner of the Australian EdStart Achievement Award for Performing and Visual Arts in 2023 and was a Raw Comedy State Finalist in 2023 and 2024.

2025 LOCAL HERO FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIA – NOMINEE BIOS

Sobia and Irfan Hashmi

Pharmacists and migrant community leaders

Over 20 years, Sobia Hashmi and husband Irfan have transformed healthcare in remote and rural communities in South Australia. They've established six pharmacies in areas where there were previously none – which forced people to travel long distances for basic medications and care.

Sobia and Irfan are committed to serving their diverse communities, and to this end employ staff who collectively speak 21 languages, allowing them to reach vulnerable populations and provide culturally sensitive healthcare.

They have mentored countless intern pharmacists from overseas, coordinating multilingual education and outreach initiatives to help pharmacists enter the much-needed workforce in regional Australia. Their free weekly webinar series has assisted 4,000 overseas pharmacists in passing their exams in the last 12 months alone.

Their pharmacy group has won various awards and recognition for its commitment to improving health literacy and access to healthcare services, including an SA Multicultural Governor's Award in 2022.

Shane Hryhorec

Disability advocate

Growing up with a passion for sports and the beach, Shane Hryhorec's world changed in 2007 when a swimming accident left him with a spinal cord injury. Transitioning to life in a wheelchair, he immediately recognised the need to tackle ableism head-on.

Shane founded Push Mobility in 2013, a company committed to providing innovative, stylish mobility equipment that enhances the lives of people with disabilities. His vision was simple: to create products that people love, offering confidence and freedom to engage more fully in their communities.

He went on to establish Accessible Beaches Australia, a not-for-profit that partners with councils and lifesaving clubs to transform over 110 beaches across the country into inclusive spaces.

His latest venture, *Wheel Around the World*, is a travel blog inspiring people with disabilities to explore the world without barriers. With over 15 million views, his travel videos highlight accessible destinations and promote inclusive travel experiences.

Lisa O'Malley

Foster carer and co-founder, The Carer Project

Over two decades, Lisa O'Malley has been a foster carer to over 200 placements for children ranging in age from three weeks old to 17.

Lisa is a fierce advocate for children and for improving all aspects of the child protection sector, and through her experience in this area recognised the need for greater support for carers. She co-founded The Carer Project, an entirely volunteer-run organisation providing essential support, education and advocacy to all kinds of carers statewide, including foster, kinship and informal carers.

Lisa has worked tirelessly engaging with policy and change makers in all areas of child protection, contributing to royal commissions, inquiries, reviews and reform work. She remains steadfast in pursuit of the ultimate aims of supporting carers and improving outcomes for the most vulnerable children, those in care.

In 2023, Lisa was selected for the Women's Honour Roll and won Foster Carer of the Year in South Australia.

Dinah Thomasset

Founder, Villagehood Australia

After she migrated to Australia and became a mother, Dinah Thomasset experienced a very challenging period. She was far from her family and support network as she navigated this new life, and her mental health suffered.

Dinah travelled to visit family while she recovered and only then realised the true value of a village in helping to raise mothers and children. This insight crystallised into the creation of Villagehood Australia in 2020, a registered charity dedicated to supporting the health and wellbeing of new mothers.

The organisation is a safe space and support network for women in those early, transformative stages of motherhood. It provides a range of programs encompassing professional and peer support, education and group activities, transcending isolation for mothers, building their capacity to cope with challenges and positively influencing early childhood development.

Dinah pursues this mission passionately, working to empower her community and break the stigma surrounding maternal mental health.