Australian of the Year Awards
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MEDIA RELEASE
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FROM TRANSFORMING WOMEN'S HEALTH TO TAKING LEARNING BEYOND EARTH – MEET THE 2027 AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARD RECIPIENTS FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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Four extraordinary people have been named the 2027 Australian of the Year Award recipients for South Australia at a ceremony in Adelaide this evening.

2027 Australian of the Year for South Australia – Dr Fariba Behnia-Willison (Somerton Park)
2027 Senior Australian of the Year for South Australia – Dr Roger Hunt (North Adelaide)
2027 Young Australian of the Year for South Australia – Edward Robinson (Blair Athol)
2027 Local Hero for South Australia – Neil Davis (Woodcroft)

From reconstructive gynaecological surgery and palliative care to violence prevention and educational satellite construction kits, the recipients of the 2027 Australian of the Year Awards for South Australia are making a difference and shaping change for generations to come.

The 2027 Australian of the Year for South Australia is endo-gynaecologist and reconstructive surgeon, Dr Fariba Behnia-Willison.

As a gynaecologist, innovator and advocate for women's health, Dr Fariba Behnia-Willison is transforming the lives of tens of thousands of women through pioneering pelvic floor medicine, surgical innovation and compassionate care.

An Iranian-Australian migrant, her journey across Iran, Germany and Australia shaped her resilience, precision and commitment to innovation. She believes every woman deserves dignity, comfort and advanced healthcare.

Through SmartFem's TGA-approved Victoria Graft System, 60-year-old Fariba advances regenerative solutions using a woman's own blood to create a graft for pelvic floor reconstruction, offering an alternative to synthetic mesh.

Through Desert Flower South Australia, she supports female genital mutilation survivors, providing restorative surgery using her graft at no cost.

Her mission extends beyond medicine by challenging silence, empowering women and building a legacy where innovation serves humanity. Her journey demonstrates how courage, compassion and knowledge can transform lives, restore dignity and ensure every woman's health and voice matters, while inspiring positive change across generations together.

The 2027 Senior Australian of the Year for South Australia is palliative medicine specialist, Dr Roger Hunt.

Dr Roger Hunt has devoted more than 40 years to easing the suffering of people at the end of their lives. As a young doctor at South Australia's first publicly funded hospice, Roger found himself walking beside patients and families through the tender and deeply human experience of dying and recognised his calling.

A founding member of Daw House Hospice, Roger developed university courses that were among the first to be online, and he earned a research doctorate. He later served as Medical Head of the Western Adelaide

Palliative Care Service and Central Adelaide Palliative Services. While Chairperson of SA's Palliative Care Association, he helped establish Palliative Care Australia.

Roger was a key advisor for South Australia's Consent to Medical Treatment and Palliative Care Act, protecting patient autonomy and clinicians' ability to relieve suffering.

Roger, 69, has long advocated for voluntary assisted dying to give patients more agency and control, he has served on ministerial panels and now sits on the SA Voluntary Assisted Dying Review Board.

The 2027 Young Australian of the Year for South Australia is space educator and entrepreneur, Edward Robinson.

Edward Robinson, 23, is helping students make sense of textbook maths and science by bringing real world engineering into classrooms.

Edward developed a passion for space in high school and set about building his own rocket. Soon after starting an electrical and mechatronic engineering degree, he began to see how the equations he was learning in textbooks could actually apply in real life. He thought others might benefit from practical, hands-on experiences too.

So, in 2022, he founded his company Robinson Aerospace, which manufactures an educational satellite kit called RASCube that enables students to build a functional satellite replica, collect live data and run experiments.

He has delivered more than 1700 space education kits to over 200 schools in 18 countries, allowing tens of thousands of students to design and analyse genuine space systems.

In his programs, students develop the same problem-solving, teamwork and technical skills used by professional engineers, making advanced STEM education accessible, regardless of a school's location or resources.

The 2027 Local Hero for South Australia award recipients is violence prevention advocate, Neil Davis.

Neil Davis is helping reshape youth culture to prevent violence. When Neil's 17-year-old son, Sam, was fatally hit with a single punch thrown by a gate crasher at a party, Neil was determined to create something positive out of the senseless loss.

In 2008, he established The Sammy D Foundation to change attitudes towards violence. By sharing his lived experience, he helps young people to see the lifelong impact of one moment, one punch, one decision and challenges young people who see violence as normal or even acceptable to think differently. Neil provides the tools and confidence to pause, walk away, seek help and choose a safer path.

Neil, 63, has delivered his powerful message in more than 2,000 presentations to young people in schools, sporting clubs and juvenile justice programs. In doing so, he is helping change the way young Australians think about violence, choices and responsibility.

National Australia Day Council CEO Carrie Leeson congratulated the South Australian award recipients.

"Our South Australian recipients are a truly inspiring group of people," Carrie said.

"Fariba is restoring health and dignity for thousands of women, while Roger is ensuring people have a choice and a voice in their final days. Edward is bringing space to young people all over the world, and Neil has turned personal loss into a campaign that is saving young lives," said Carrie.

The South Australian award recipients will join those from all other states and territories for the national awards, to be announced on the evening of 25 January 2027 in Canberra.

For more information on the Australian of the Year Awards, visit australianoftheyear.org.au.

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PHOTOS: From the awards announcement event can be downloaded from this link: SA Media Distribution photos - High res (credit NADC/Salty Dingo). Award recipient photos will be available after approx. 10:00pm Adelaide time.

LIVESTREAM VISION: The South Australia awards announcement event livestream is available via australianoftheyear.org.au. The vision is YouTube based and is accessible for media use.