Australia Day Council
of South Australia



Annual Review 2025/26

Australia Day
Reflect. Respect. Celebrate.

South Australia

Acknowledgement of Country

The Australia Day Council of South Australia acknowledges the Adelaide region as the traditional country of the Kaurna people and respects Elders past, present and emerging. We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship with the land.



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About Us

The Australia Day Council of South Australia (ADCSA) is an independent, non-government association that fosters community engagement and promotes inclusivity.

As part of a national network of Australia Day Councils, we work collaboratively with community, business, government, and non-government sectors to celebrate and enhance Australia's national identity.

Our work is driven by a commitment to acknowledging our past, embracing diversity, and encouraging active participation.

Our Purpose

ADCSA aims to build a socially cohesive society by celebrating our shared heritage and fostering inclusivity and unity. We promote equal opportunity and stimulate thought leadership to deepen understanding of Australia's national identity, emphasising reconciliation and celebrating diversity.

Our Vision

We envision a connected community of inspired leaders who contribute to Australia's future while upholding Australian values. By amplifying diverse national stories, including those of First Nations peoples and migrants, we strive to foster a thriving, unified nation. Our efforts are centred on reconciliation, celebrating unity, and addressing contemporary issues by bringing communities together.

Our Impact

ADCSA, in partnership with diverse stakeholders, drives significant cultural and social impact by:

- Reimagining and honouring who we are as Australians
- Recognising and promoting active citizenship
- Cultivating social inclusion and cohesion
- Fostering cultural, social and economic impact
- Transforming lives and inspiring future leaders
- Counteracting disadvantage and providing platforms for the social concerns of our time
- Thought leadership for organisations and communities
- Advancing organisational, financial and environmental sustainability

Our collaborative efforts amplify voices, inspire change, and strength.



Message from the Chair



The Australia Day Council of South Australia continues to play an important role in recognising the individuals, organisations and communities that help make our state stronger.

As Chair, I am proud of the work undertaken throughout the past year, and of the strategic direction established by the Board to ensure the organisation continues to evolve and remain relevant for future generations.

This year marked an important period of renewal for the Board, with the appointment of several new members who bring a diverse range of skills, perspectives and experience. I also acknowledge those Board members whose service concluded during the year and thank them for their dedication and valuable contributions to the Council. This renewal strengthens our governance and provides a solid foundation as we continue to build a sustainable, resilient and forward-looking organisation.

A key priority for the Board has been strengthening the organisation's governance, financial sustainability and long-term strategic direction. By fostering strong partnerships, expanding opportunities for community engagement and maintaining robust governance practices, we are positioning the Australia Day Council of South Australia to continue delivering meaningful outcomes for our communities, our state and our nation.

Our Australian of the Year Award recipients continue to embody the very best of our nation. I sincerely thank our outstanding 2025 South Australian recipients, Professor Leah Bromfield, Charles Jackson OAM, Amber Brock-Fabel, and Irfan and Sobia Hashmi, for their extraordinary contributions to our state and for representing South Australia with distinction throughout the year.

I also warmly congratulate our 2026 SA Australian of the Year Award recipients. It has been a tremendous privilege to celebrate Australia's first astronaut, Katherine Bennell-Pegg, as both South Australia's and Australia's 2026 Australian of the Year. Katherine's remarkable achievements have inspired countless Australians to embrace curiosity, perseverance and ambition, exemplifying the spirit these awards seek to recognise.

I also congratulate Malcolm Benoy, James Currie, Chloe Wyatt-Jasper and Ayesha Safdar, whose significant contributions continue to strengthen communities and enrich the lives of others across our state and beyond.

I extend my sincere thanks to our Patron, Her Excellency the Honourable Frances Adamson AC, Governor of South Australia, and Mr Rod Bunten for their outstanding support and advocacy during their term at Government House. It has been both a pleasure and an honour to work alongside them. Their leadership, generosity and commitment to our community have been deeply valued, and they will be greatly missed.

Finally, I acknowledge and thank our sponsors, corporate partners, members and funding bodies, including the National Australia Day Council, the Government of South Australia and the City of Adelaide. Their ongoing support enables the Australia Day Council of South Australia to deliver programs that celebrate community, recognise achievement and inspire future generations.

We also value the opportunity to build new relationships with organisations such as Turbans 4 Australia, whose commitment to supporting communities in times of need reflects the values that unite us. We wish Amar Singh and the Sikh community every success as they work towards establishing a presence in South Australia.

It has been my pleasure to work alongside the Board this year, and I thank each member for their commitment and contribution. I would also like to acknowledge Dana Wortley, who has served as the Premier's representative for several years. We are deeply grateful for her time, dedication and wise counsel, all of which have been greatly valued by the Council.

As we look to the future, the Board remains committed to building an organisation that is financially sustainable, well governed and responsive to the needs of our communities. We are excited by the opportunities ahead and look forward to continuing our work in recognising the remarkable Australians whose contributions help shape a stronger, more connected and inclusive South Australia.

Michelle Cox
Chair
Australia Day Council
of South Australia

Message from the CEO



At the heart of everything we do are relationships.

The Australia Day Council of South Australia is built on partnerships, with communities, volunteers, sponsors, members, councils, government, educators, award recipients and ambassadors. It is these relationships that enable us to celebrate the remarkable people who strengthen our state and to create programs that inspire connection, belonging and participation throughout the year.

Reflecting on 2025–2026, I am immensely proud of what we have achieved together.

Across the past twelve months, we successfully delivered a diverse range of events, educational initiatives and award programs that celebrated achievement, encouraged civic participation and connected communities across metropolitan and regional South Australia. From recognising exceptional Australians through the Australian of the Year Awards and Citizen of the Year Awards, to inspiring thousands of students through our education programs and strengthening community engagement through our Ambassador Program, every initiative has been underpinned by a shared commitment to celebrating those who make a difference.

One of the highlights of the year was the opportunity to work alongside Australia's first astronaut and 2026 Australian of the Year, Katherine Bennell-Pegg. Watching students, regional communities and audiences across South Australia engage with Katherine's remarkable story reinforced the importance of bringing inspiring Australians directly into our communities. These moments spark conversations, encourage curiosity and remind us of what can be achieved through perseverance and purpose.

Central to our work is the privilege of partnering with First Nations peoples and with South Australia's richly diverse multicultural communities. Their generosity, knowledge and participation continue to shape our events and programs in meaningful ways. Whether through ceremonies, performances, storytelling or community leadership, these relationships help ensure our programs genuinely reflect the diversity, history and shared future of our state. We remain deeply grateful for the trust these communities place in our organisation and recognise that they are integral to everything we do.

This year also reminded us that delivering major community events requires both careful planning and adaptability. While not every event unfolded as originally intended, our ability to respond, adapt and continue celebrating our communities reflects the resilience of our organisation and the remarkable goodwill of our participants and partners. The overwhelming support shown following the cancellation of the 2026 Aus Lights Parade was a powerful reminder that the spirit of Australia Day is found not simply in an event itself, but in the people who come together to celebrate community, culture and belonging.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to our Board for their continued leadership, enthusiasm and commitment throughout the year. Their support has enabled the organisation to continue evolving while remaining true to our purpose. My thanks also extend to our ambassadors, volunteers, members, sponsors, funding partners and the many organisations and individuals who contribute so generously to our work. Together, you enable the Australia Day Council to continue delivering programs that celebrate achievement, foster belonging and strengthen communities across South Australia.

My heartfelt thanks goes out to each member of our team. Every year they go over and above in their service to the community, and they give so generously their time and commitment to ADCSA. They continue to reflect the values of integrity and openness and agility in all that they do. I feel privileged to serve the Board of the Australia Day Council of SA and to work alongside such a dedicated team.

As we look to the future, our commitment remains unchanged. We will continue to build meaningful relationships, create opportunities for Australians to connect and ensure that the stories we celebrate reflect the richness, diversity and generosity of our communities.

Translating the Board's vision and strategic objectives through the implementation of the strategic plan remains as a living document and articulates our shared vision and actions for now and into the future. Our strategic plan has set this chapter in our story for the last 12 months, one guided by our values, hopes and aspirations. We are pleased that the stretch goals we set ourselves have been achieved against a backdrop of global and state challenges, costs of living pressures and a changing Australian landscape.

Jan Chorley
Chief Executive Officer
Australia Day Council
of South Australia

Key Highlights



Inspiring Australians Student Summit with Amber Brock-Fabel at Riverbanks College.

Inspiring Australians Student Summit at Riverbanks College with Sam Bloom, Dr Richard Harris SC OAM and Amber Brock-Fabel.

Citizen of the Year Awards at Government House.

Empowering Young Citizens Forum.



NGO Luncheon with Her Excellency the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC, Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Australia Day Council of South Australia facilitated key meetings between Neale Daniher AO, 2025 Australian of the Year, FightMND, Federal Minister for Health and Ageing, the Hon. Mark Butler MP, and the Premier of South Australia, the Hon. Peter Malinauskas MP.

Volunteer Thank You Reception at Government House.

Key Highlights

Events

Empowering Young Citizens Forum

21 July 2025

ADCSA with the support of MGA Insurance Group and the Local Government Association of South Australia, hosted the inaugural 'Where to From Here?' Empowering Young Citizens Forum at LGA South Australia.

More than 50 Young Citizen of the Year recipients from councils across South Australia joined local leaders to establish a new network of emerging civic contributors. These young people are already making a difference in their communities and are eager to strengthen their impact.

The evening commenced with insights from ***2024 SA Young Australian of the Year Tiahni Adamson***.
Other speakers included ***Kylan Beech, 2024 SA Young Citizen of the Year; Denzel James, 2025 SA Young Australian of the Year finalist; Meredith Evans, 2024 SA Senior Australian of the Year; Georgia McDonnell, 2024 Adelaide Hills Young Citizen of the Year; and human rights advocate Behishta Anwar FGLF***.

Participants explored practical tools for community engagement and leadership while identifying some of the most pressing issues affecting young South Australians. These included climate change, mental health, cost of living pressures, rural hardship and the need for greater youth participation in decision making.

Interactive workshops enabled participants to share their experiences and develop practical ideas for future action.

The forum laid the groundwork for continued collaboration and a shared vision for long term impact. We look forward to delivering future forums where emerging young leaders can strengthen their networks, develop practical actions and continue making a positive difference within their communities.

Inspiring Australians Student Summit

26 August 2025

The fourth Inspiring Australians Student Summit was held at Riverbanks College B-12 bringing together more than 300 students from Riverbanks College and four visiting schools.

Students heard from three inspiring Australians who embody courage, leadership and service: ***Dr Richard Harris SC OAM, 2019 SA Australian of the Year; Sam Bloom, World Para Surfing Champion; and Amber Brock Fabel, 2025 SA Young Australian of the Year***.

Students from Paralowie School, Mark Oliphant College, Northern Adelaide School and Loreto College also attended, contributing to a diverse and inclusive audience.

A key strength of the Student Summit was the active involvement of students throughout the program. One of the College Captains performed the Welcome to Country, while the College Captains also facilitated the official opening and closing of the event. The Riverbanks College Rock Band performed for guests and fellow students, adding energy and creativity to the day.

During the panel session, students asked questions directly of the guest speakers, reinforcing the importance of youth voice, curiosity and leadership. Students also had opportunities to speak personally with the guest speakers before and after the event, creating authentic and memorable connections.

The Summit was proudly supported by the Department for Education, NASSSA, Flinders University, Credit Union SA and Sarah Constructions. This support and engagement from these key partners reflect the Summit's growing influence and strong alignment with the Department for Education's priorities.

25
26

Inspiring SA Women Impacting the World and Beyond – Women in Defence

5 September 2025

The Inspiring SA Women Impacting the World and Beyond: Women in Defence event provided an extraordinary opportunity to hear from women whose careers reflect decades of dedication, advocacy, determination and innovation.

The event attracted 155 attendees, including the Minister for Women the Honourable Katrine Hildyard MP. Guests also received a special video message from retired Colonel Pamela Melroy, a former United States fighter pilot, astronaut and NASA leader.

Students from Pinnacle College, Mitcham Girls High School, Wilderness School and Woodville High School attended the presentation and had the opportunity to speak directly with the presenters.

> *The event felt purposeful and professional. These events are so important. It was excellent to see school students there. These young women in attendance are not just our future, they are our now.*

The esteemed panel featured ***Dr Catherine Grace MBBS, Jessica Pisani, Dr Sarah Cannard, Dr Susan Neuhaus AM CSC and Sumen Rai***. Together, they shared insights into space policy, sovereign capability, defence health, aerospace innovation and inclusive engagement.

The event was made possible through the valued support of the Government of South Australia, Office for Women, ASC Pty Ltd, Deloitte and Haigh's Chocolates. It celebrated women's leadership across defence and space while creating a strong foundation for future initiatives that inspire, educate and encourage meaningful change.

Attendee Reflections

"Excellent speakers. Expertly facilitated panel discussion. Brilliant video message from retired Colonel Pam Melroy. A look to the past and the future. Inspiring!"

"The diversity of careers and backgrounds of the panellists was excellent. It was great to see that not every career needs to be linear."

NGO Luncheon

23 October 2025

United by purpose and passion, South Australia's not for profit leaders came together for the fifth annual NGO Luncheon to share insights, build partnerships and explore solutions to challenges facing the sector. The gathering provided an important opportunity to strengthen capacity and reinforce the collective leadership required to build a more resilient and connected South Australia.

We were honoured to welcome ***Her Excellency the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC, Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia***. Drawing on her extensive experience across community, business, the arts and climate action, Her Excellency spoke about how leaders of community organisations can extend their influence beyond their immediate sectors and use the power of advocacy to create meaningful change.

The Honourable Nat Cook MP, Minister for Human Services, Seniors and Ageing Well, also shared valuable insights with attendees.

Guests heard from ***Professor Leah Bromfield, 2025 Australian of the Year for South Australia***, whose groundbreaking work as Chair of Child Protection and Director of the Australian Centre for Child Protection at the University of South Australia continues to influence policy and improve outcomes for children and families across the nation.

We were also pleased to welcome the Honourable Rob Kerin, former Premier of South Australia and Chair of the SANFL, along with the many dedicated chief executives and board chairs representing organisations that make an extraordinary contribution to the community every day.

Australian of the Year Breakfast

June 10, 2026




Australian
of the Year
Breakfast
Reflect. Respect. Celebrate.
www.AustraliaDaySA.com.au
2026
59

Key Highlights

Events

Australian of the Year Awards Presentation Evening

14 November 2025

The 2026 Australian of the Year Awards Presentation Evening celebrated the achievements of remarkable South Australians making significant contributions to the state and the nation.

The South Australian recipients included Australia's first astronaut, a citizen scientist supporting international climate research, a pioneer of the South Australian film industry, a young advocate improving mental health services and a community leader strengthening connections for migrant and refugee women.

South Australian of the Year
Katherine Bennell-Pegg

Trailblazing space engineer Katherine Bennell-Pegg became the first astronaut to qualify under Australia's space program. She has contributed to multiple space missions, championed Australia's emerging space industry and inspired young Australians to consider careers in science and space.

South Australian Senior Australians of the Year
Malcolm 'Mac' Benoy

A devoted citizen scientist, Mac has spent two decades preserving South Australia's meteorological history. He has digitised more than 90,000 historical records that now contribute to international climate research and a greater understanding of our changing environment.

James Currie

A preeminent sound engineer and pioneer of the South Australian film industry, James has made an outstanding contribution to Australian cinema. His distinguished career has helped shape the film industry in South Australia and beyond.

South Australian Young Australian of the Year
Chloe Wyatt-Jasper

At just 16 years of age, Chloe is transforming her lived experience into meaningful advocacy. She has challenged stigma, supported survivors of domestic violence and successfully advocated for $5 million in funding to improve youth mental health services.

South Australian Local Hero
Ayesha Fariha Safdar

As the founder of the Adelaide Pakistani Women's Association, Ayesha empowers migrant and refugee women through language support, educational pathways and stronger community connections.

Australia Day

26 January 2026

Australia Day commenced with more than **3,000 people gathering at Elder Park, Tarntanya Wama**, for the **Mourning in the Morning Smoking Ceremony**.

Curated and led by First Nations community leaders, the ceremony centred on the theme ***Our Continuing Story***, providing an opportunity for reflection, connection and respect while recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures, histories and continuing stories.

The morning commenced with a Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony led by ***Ngarrindjeri and Kaurna Elder Uncle Moogy Sumner AM***, a respected cultural leader whose work has strengthened connections between culture, Country and generations.

Tony McAvoy SC, a Wirdi man and the first Indigenous Australian to be appointed Senior Counsel, delivered the keynote address. His extensive work across native title, land rights, environmental law, justice and equality brought an important perspective to the morning's theme.

> *"We feel proud to be here today to show our respect to community and to celebrate survival*
>
> Proud Kaurna Woman

An *In Conversation* discussion brought together First Nations leaders ***Brenz Saunders, Deb Moyle and Leeroy Bilney***, sharing perspectives informed by community leadership, lived experience, governance and advocacy.

Culture and storytelling were also expressed through a diverse program of live performance. **Western Arrernte singer songwriter Rob Edwards** brought contemporary First Nations storytelling through music, while ***Ngarrindjeri, Narungga and Kaurna dancer and choreographer Caleena Sansbury*** shared culture through contemporary performance.

The program also featured the ***Iwiri Choir***, continuing a multigenerational choral tradition performed predominantly in Australian First Languages, and ***Torres Strait Islander musician and cultural educator Uncle Eddie Peters***.

Marcellus Enalanga, a First Nations journalist, presenter and youth advocate, guided the morning as MC, while First Nations production and events professional ***Letisha Ackland*** led the event's First Nations direction.

Together, the ceremony, conversations and performances created a considered and culturally led start to Australia Day, providing space for thousands of South Australians to listen, reflect and engage with *Our Continuing Story*.

Messages of Support

26 January 2026

Messages of Support was an Australia Day Council of South Australia initiative that invited attendees to scan a QR code and share a message of support with the community throughout the morning.

The initiative received an outstanding response, with messages reflecting respect, truth telling, unity, hope and a shared commitment to building a more connected future.

"Always was, always will be. Sovereignty was never ceded. We, a family of immigrants stand together with you. We accept the generous invitation to walk together." - First generation Australian from Aotearoa, the land of the Māori people

"Inclusion is not just a value; it is the cornerstone of our nation's future. By evolving how and when we celebrate, we create a space where every Australian—across all backgrounds and histories—feels truly seen and respected. Let's choose a path that allows us to come together in unity. It's time to celebrate our story, together." First Generation Australian from India

Due to the extreme weather conditions, the remaining public events planned for the day, including Aus Lights on the River and the Aus Lights Parade, were cancelled to ensure the safety of the community, performers, volunteers and event teams.

Sincere thanks are extended to our partners and supporters, whose ongoing commitment makes the Mourning in the Morning Smoking Ceremony possible. Thank you to ceremony key event partner SA Power Networks and smoking ceremony community support partners Adelaide PHN, Adelaide University, Credit Union SA, Sarah Constructions, SDA and Sofitel Adelaide. ADCSA also extends gratitude to Aus Lights Parade Community Support Partners SA Aquatic Centre, Galipo Foods and Altus Traffic. This community program is assisted by the Australian Government through the National Australia Day Council, the City of Adelaide, and is supported by the Government of South Australia.

The Council looks forward to welcoming the community back for a significant program of events on 26 January 2027.

25 26

Salute to Australia

26 January 2026

The 2026 Salute to Australia was held at the Torrens Parade Ground on 26 January and presented by the Australian Defence Force. The traditional 21-gun salute is a gesture of friendship, trust and peace, with origins dating back to the fourteenth century.

The ceremony holds particular significance for Australian Defence Force personnel who proudly wear the uniform and serve the nation at home and abroad.

> *"Thank you for delivering such a meaningful and powerful ceremony. It was truly special to see so many families, veterans and community members come together to reflect and honour the significance of the day.*

Mourning in the Morning

January 26, 2026





Key Highlights

Events

Citizen of the Year Awards at Government House

26 February 2026

The Citizen of the Year Awards recognise remarkable South Australians who go above and beyond to make a positive difference within their local communities.

Over 260 guests gathered in the grounds of Government House to celebrate recipients and commendation awardees from the South Australian Citizen of the Year Awards, the Awards for Leadership in Languages and Cultures and the Inspiring South Australian Women's Awards.

Guests enjoyed the official award presentations, entertainment by the Royal Australian Navy Band and refreshments on the grounds of Government House.

The event provided an important opportunity to formally recognise the dedication, leadership and community spirit of South Australians whose contributions inspire others and strengthen communities across the state.

The Awards are proudly presented by the Australia Day Council of South Australia (ADCSA) in collaboration with our Members, Local Government Authorities and Councils across the State. This statewide partnership highlights local recognition of outstanding individuals and community groups and maintains consistent program integrity and governance. The Awards are proudly sponsored by the Local Government Association of South Australia, Sarah Constructions, MGA Insurance Group, Community Bridging Services, Community Business Bureau, and Flinders University, whose support strengthens the program's reach and impact across South Australia.

Parade Thank You at Aquatic Centre

28 February 2026

The Aus Lights Thank You Event was delivered to formally recognise and thank Parade participants following the cancellation of the 2026 Aus Lights Parade due to extreme heat conditions.

The event welcomed hundreds of community participants, representatives and families from more than 40 multicultural and community organisations, providing an inclusive and family-friendly opportunity to acknowledge the significant preparation and cultural contribution made by participants - despite the Parade itself not proceeding.

Through the generosity of the Adelaide Aquatic Centre, attendees were provided exclusive access to selected pools and facilities, creating a relaxed environment focused on connection, celebration and community engagement. The afternoon concluded with a community BBQ generously supported by Barossa Fine Foods and delivered by the Rotary Club of Australia.

Lord Mayor Reception

29 April 2026

We were delighted to celebrate ***Katherine Bennell-Pegg, 2026 Australian of the Year*** and the ***2026 SA Australian of the Year recipients*** at a special reception hosted by the Lord Mayor of Adelaide, the Honourable Dr Jane Lomax-Smith AM. The gathering brought together ADCSA Members, Alumni, Ambassadors, and key partners to acknowledge the remarkable impact these awardees are making across South Australia and beyond. Our sincere thanks to the City of Adelaide for its ongoing partnership in recognising inspiring Australians who enrich our community.

Inspiring Australians Student Summit at Woodville High School

15 May 2026

600 students gathered for a powerful morning centred on curiosity, leadership and possibility at Woodville High School and St Clair Recreation Centre. Attending schools included Adelaide High School, Australian Science & Mathematics School, Glenunga International High School, Hamilton Secondary College, Le Fevre High School, Pinnacle College, Roma Mitchell Secondary College, Thebarton Senior College and Woodville High School.

Students heard from history-making astronaut and ***2026 Australian of the Year Katherine Bennell-Pegg, youth advocate and 2025 SA Young Australian of the Year Amber Brock-Fabel, and renowned science communicator and 2025 NSW Senior Australian of the Year Dr Karl Kruszelnicki AM***. Each speaker shared personal insights on resilience, curiosity, leadership and the importance of embracing opportunity.

The program also provided space for students to connect with peers, reflect on their aspirations, and consider their potential role in driving positive change within their communities and beyond.

A key highlight of the summit was the contribution of student leaders whose authenticity, passion and willingness to share their experiences demonstrated the strength and depth of emerging leadership across South Australia's school communities.

Port Lincoln Community Event with Katherine Bennell-Pegg

3 June 2026

More than 200 attendees from Port Lincoln and surrounding communities attended the free community event Find Your Place in Space, held at the Nautilus Arts Centre on June 3 2026 and MCed by Local resident Nicole Hancox. Delivered in partnership with Defence SA and Southern Launch the evening provided an opportunity for shared dialogue on Australia's future in space and the emerging opportunities within this rapidly growing industry.

Attendees heard from ***Katherine Bennell-Pegg, 2026 Australian of the Year*** and Australia's first astronaut, who shared her personal journey into the space sector and the extensive, multi-year training pathway required to become an astronaut. She reflected on the challenges and discipline involved in preparing for human spaceflight and emphasized the importance of curiosity, persistence and readiness to embrace opportunity in shaping a career within a rapidly evolving field.

The program also featured ***Lloyd Damp, CEO and Founder of Southern Launch***, who provided an overview of the broader space industry landscape and highlighted the diverse pathways emerging across science, engineering and technology.

> *"Excellent event, very motivating for our youths. Speakers were outstanding with life experience how to achieve ones goals.*

The event brought together students, educators, professionals, business owners and community members, all engaged in exploring the future of Australia's space industry. A key highlight of the program was the Q&A session, informed by thoughtful questions submitted by audience members ahead of the event. These questions reflected the curiosity, ambition and enthusiasm of the local community, particularly among young people exploring future study and career pathways.

Australian of the Year Breakfast

10 June 2026

The 2026 Australian of the Year Breakfast brought together over 600 South Australians for a morning focused on curiosity, leadership and community impact.

The event convened a diverse cross-section of attendees including ADCSA members, partners, sponsors, alumni, business and government representatives and students, reflecting strong engagement across sectors.

A central feature of the program was ***2026 Australian of the Year and astronaut Katherine Bennell-Pegg***, who shared insights from her journey into the space sector and reflected on the persistence and openness required to pursue unconventional career pathways. Her remarks encouraged attendees to consider opportunity beyond perceived limits, with her reflection on space offering a broader lens on how perspective can shape understanding and ambition.

25 26

> *"The recipients were very inspirational with their speeches and what they have achieved to get to this point. Well deserving of the award.*

The 2026 SA Australian of the Year Award recipients - ***James Currie, Malcolm 'Mac' Benoy, Ayesha Safdar and Chloe Wyatt-Jasper*** - were also recognised for their contributions across community service, advocacy, innovation and creativity, each demonstrating a strong commitment to positive social impact.

The ADCSA acknowledge the invaluable assistance from the Australian Government through the National Australia Day Council and support from the Government of South Australia. A special thanks to our supporting partners – without your support and commitment, events like this would not be possible: Adelaide Cemeteries, Maras Group, St Peter's College, Accenture, Find Your Place SA, Harcourts Premium Groupand Kytons Bakery.

Key Highlights

Ambassadors

Council	Distance	Name
City of Charles Sturt	20	Lynn Hill
City of Holdfast Bay	42	Alexandra Seal
City of Marion	22.8	Nasir Hussain
City of Norwood Payneham & St Peters	10	Noel Mifsud JP KMG
City of Onkaparinga	58	Felicity-Ann Lewis
City of Playford	60	Ian Smith
City of Tea Tree Gully	38	Prof Rob Morrison OAM
City of Unley	6.8	Veena Madan
City of West Torrens	11.6	Christine Robertson OAM
Clare & Gilbert Valleys Council	240	Rev Dr Lynn Arnold AO
Coorong District Council	613	Kaitlin Purcell
District Council of Coober Pedy	1696	John Shepherd AM
District Council of Grant	870	Kylan Beech
District Council of Karoonda East Murray	300	Dr Robert Irving
District Council of Kimba	930	Sophie Thomson
District Council of Robe	672	Dr Peter Cahalan
District Council of Yankalilla	152	Monique Bareham
Mount Barker District Council	66	Anthony Hart
Regional Council of Goyder	320	Ingrid Kennerley
Rural City of Murray Bridge	150	Stella Braund
Southern Mallee	500	Michael O'Connell AM APM
Tatiara District Council	450	Wayne Anthoney
Wattle Range Council	800	Amber Brock-Fabel
Wudinna District Council	920	Prof Jennifer McKay AM
Total distance travelled	**8948.2 km**	

Merchandise

Merchandise sales continue to play an important role in supporting the ADCSA as a not-for-profit organisation. Income generated through our merchandise program helps fund activities that celebrate community, strengthen belonging and support leadership across Australia.

Wherever possible, we source Australian-made products and continue to offer unique gift items created by First Nations artists that comply with the Indigenous Art Code, ensuring artists are ethically recognised and supported.

This year, merchandise sales increased significantly, driven by the introduction of the Collateral Starter Pack. Developed in partnership with the National Australia Day Council (NADC), 471 starter packs were distributed to recipients of Australia Day Community Event Grants across Australia, expanding our reach and supporting communities nationwide.

Our core product range also remained popular, including the Reflect, Respect, Celebrate – We Are All Part of the Story merchandise, flags, banners, Handwavas, First Nations art pieces, Australian-made gifts, lapel pins and achievement medallions. In total, almost 1,000 deliveries were made during the year, reaching metropolitan, regional and remote communities across Australia, including Norfolk Island.

The Achievement Medallion Program also continued to grow, providing councils, community organisations and government departments with a meaningful way to recognise outstanding contributions and achievements.

We will continue to expand our merchandise range through new products and partnerships, ensuring the program supports both our mission and the long-term sustainability of the Council.


2026
Citizen of the Year
2026
Community Event of the Year
2026
Award for Active Citizenship
2026
Young Citizen of the Year


Australia Day
#australiaday


Australia Day
#australiaday


District Council of ROBE

Key Highlights

Awards

Australian of the Year Awards

Nominees for the 2026 SA Australian of the Year Awards include the first Australian to qualify as an astronaut under Australia's space program, a meteorological researcher, a sound designer, a mental health advocate, a community leader, a speech pathologist, an author and a conservationist.

South Australia's Australian of the Year

Recipient

Katherine Bennell-Pegg
Astronaut

Finalists

Paul Broadbridge
Veterans advocate

Professor Marion Eckert
Health Researcher

Dr Mohammad Afzal Mahmood
Public health expert

South Australia's Young Australian of the Year

Recipient

Chloe Wyatt-Jasper
Mental health advocate

Finalists

Hayley Frazer
Author and storyteller

Amelia Griffin
Speech pathologist

Amira Shahin
Humanitarian and educator

South Australia's Senior Australians of the Year

Recipients

Malcolm Benoy
Meteorological researcher

James Currie
Sound designer

Finalists

Rosa Matto
Cookery teacher

Dr David Paton AM
Inspirational conservationist

South Australia's Local hero

Recipient

Ayesha Safdar
Community Leader

Finalists

Linda Fisk & Anna Kemp
Women prisoner supporters

Callum MacPherson
Mental health podcaster

Ella Stratton
Palliative care supporter

The Citizen of the Year Awards

The Citizen of the Year Awards is a program that unearths remarkable local individuals across the whole of South Australia. They recognise the unsung heroes of South Australia who strive to make the community they live in a better place. They enrich their communities by helping those in need with leadership and commitment.

Our partnership continues with the support of the Local Government Association of South Australia, Sarah Constructions, MGA Insurance Group, Community Bridging Services (CBS) Inc, Flinders University and Community Business Bureau (CBB). The recipients for 2026 were:

South Australia's Citizen of the Year 2026

Andrew Plastow
City of Charles Sturt
Education Innovator & Indigenous Leader

South Australia's Young Citizen of the Year 2026

Ishaan Chaudhuri
City of Norwood Payneham and St Peters
Medical Student, Volunteer & Community Advocate

South Australia's Community Event of the Year 2026

Recipient:

Gawler Show
Town of Gawler
Celebrating Heritage, Agriculture & Community

Commendation:

Victor Harbor Half Marathon
City of Victor Harbor
Running for Wellbeing & Community

25 26

South Australia's Award for Active Citizenship 2026

David Richardson
Mount Barker District Council
Community Connector
& Volunteer Leader

Commendations:

The Laura Nature Playground Committee
Northern Areas Council
Community Builders & Local Changemakers

Lyne Harrison
Light Regional Council
Community Care & Food Relief Champion

Awards for Leadership in Languages and Cultures

The Awards for Leadership in Languages and Cultures recognise outstanding young people who have demonstrated leadership and a commitment to advocating for a culturally diverse Australia.

Category 1

Recipient:

Anton Slobodian
Blackfriars Priory School

Commendation:

Serena Xiao
Morialta Secondary School

Category 2

Joint recipients:

Nazdana Hussaini

Melih Aslan

> *"Receiving the Inspiring South Australian Women's Award meant a great deal to me. So much of the work women do for their communities happens quietly, so being recognised was a reminder that it matters, and our efforts are seen by those around us.*
>
> 2026 Inspiring South Australian Women's Award Emerging Leader – Joint Recipient Amira Shahin

Inspiring South Australian Women's Awards

The Inspiring South Australian Women's Awards recognise exceptional women who have made a significant contribution to their communities and the state.

Inspiring South Australian Woman 2026

Recipient:

Dr Fariba Behnia-Willison
Women's Health Advocate

Commendation:

Associate Professor Jodie Avery
Endometriosis Researcher

Emerging Leader 2026

Joint recipients:

Kedeisha Kartinyeri
First Female Aboriginal Accountant

Amira Shahin
Humanitarian and Educator

Citizen of the Year

26 February, 2026





Our Community of Support

Partnerships and sponsorships are vital for events and programs delivered by the Australia Day Council of South Australia. We thank the following funding partners and sponsors for their generous support.

Funding Partners

Government of South Australia Department of the Premier and Cabinet

Government of South Australia Multicultural Affairs

Government of South Australia Department for Education

Australian Government through the National Australia Day Council

City of Adelaide

Government of South Australia Office for Women

Minister for Education through the Multicultural Education and Languages Committee (MELC)

Local Government Association of South Australia

Sponsors

Accenture
Australian of the Year Breakfast celebrating Katherine Bennell-Pegg 2026 Australian of the Year June 2026

Adelaide Cemeteries Authority
Australian of the Year Breakfast celebrating Katherine Bennell-Pegg 2026 Australian of the Year June 2026

Adelaide University
Smoking Ceremony Mourning in the Morning January 2026

Adelaide PHN
Smoking Ceremony Mourning in the Morning January 2026

Adelaide Venue Management Corporation
Australian of the Year Breakfast celebrating Katherine Bennell-Pegg 2026 Australian of the Year June 2026

AJS Lighting Sound Events
Aus Lights on the River Program 2026

Altus Traffic
Aus Day Parade January2026

Australian Space Agency
Port Lincoln Find Your Place in Space - Katherine Bennell-Pegg 2026 Australian of the Year June 2026

Australian Submarine Corporation (ASC)
Inspiring South Australian Women Impacting the World and Beyond – Women In Defence September 2025

Channel 44
Aus Lights on the River Program 2026

City of Port Lincoln
Find Your Place in Space – Katherine Bennell-Pegg 2026 Australian of the Year June 2026

Credit Union South Australia
Inspiring Australians Student Summit Riverbanks College August 2025

Smoking Ceremony Mourning in the Morning January 2026

Inspiring Australians Student Summit Woodville High School May 2026

Community Business Bureau
Citizen of the Year Awards Program February 2026

Community Bridging Services
Citizen of the Year Awards Program February 2026

Defence SA – SA Space Industry Centre
Port Lincoln Find Your Place in Space - Katherine Bennell-Pegg 2026 Australian of the Year June 2026

Australian of the Year Breakfast celebrating Katherine Bennell-Pegg 2026 Australian of the Year June 2026

Deloitte
Inspiring South Australian Women Impacting the World and Beyond, Women in Defence September 2025

Epson Australia
Aus Lights on the River Program January 2026

Eventwise
Aus Lights on the River Program January 2026

Flinders University
Inspiring Australians Student Summit Riverbanks College August 2025

Citizen of the Year Awards Program February 2026

Inspiring Australians Student Summit Woodville High School May 2026

Galipo Foods
Smoking Ceremony Mourning in the Morning January 2026

Aus Lights Parade January 2026

Glam Adelaide
Aus Lights on the River Program 2026

Haigh's Chocolates
Inspiring South Australian Women Impacting the World and Beyond, Women in Defence September 2025

Harcourts Premium Group

Australian of the Year Breakfast celebrating Katherine Bennell-Pegg 2026 Australian of the Year June 2026

InDaily
Aus Lights on the River Program January 2026

Jacqui Island Media & Marketing
Aus Lights on the River Program January 2026

Kytons Bakery
Citizen of the Year Awards Government House February 2026

Australian of the Year Breakfast celebrating Katherine Bennell-Pegg 2026 Australian of the Year June 2026

Little Lion PR
Aus Lights on the River Program January 2026

Local Government Association of South Australia
Empowering Young Citizens Inaugural Pilot Forum July 2025

Citizen of the Year Awards Program February 2026

Maras Group
Australian of the Year Breakfast celebrating Katherine Bennell-Pegg 2026 Australian of the Year June 2026

MGA Insurance Group
Empowering Young Citizens Inaugural Pilot Forum July 2025

Citizen of the Year Awards Program February 2026

Office for Women – South Australian Government
Inspiring South Australian Women Impacting the World and Beyond, Women in Defence September 2025

OJO Creative
Aus Lights on the River Program January 2026

Australian of the Year Breakfast celebrating Katherine Bennell-Pegg 2026 Australian of the Year June 2026

Citizen of the Year Awards Program February 2026

Inspiring Australians Student Summit Riverbanks College August 2025

Inspiring Australians Student Summit Woodville High School May 2026

Play & Go
Aus Lights on the River Program January 2026

SA Aquatic and Leisure Centre
Aus Lights Parade January 2026

SAFM
Aus Lights on the River Program January 2026

SA Power Networks
Smoking Ceremony Mourning in the Morning January 2026

Sarah Constructions
Citizen of the Year Awards Program February 2026

Inspiring Australians Student Summit Riverbanks College August 2025

Smoking Ceremony Mourning in the Morning January 2026

SDA
Smoking Ceremony Mourning in the Morning January 2026

Sofitel Adelaide
Inspiring Australians Student Summit Riverbanks College August 2025

Aus Lights Program January 2026

Smoking Ceremony Mourning in the Morning January 2026

Citizen of the Year Awards Program February 2026

Australian of the Year for South Australia Awards Program 2026

Southern Launch
Port Lincoln Find Your Place in Space - Katherine Bennell-Pegg 2026 Australian of the Year June 2026

St Peter's College
Australian of the Year Breakfast celebrating Katherine Bennell-Pegg 2026 Australian of the Year June 2026

Uni Hub Spencer Gulf
Port Lincoln Find Your Place in Space - Katherine Bennell-Pegg 2026 Australian of the Year - June 2026

Inspiring South Australian Women Impacting the World and Beyond – Women in Defence

September 4, 2025




pacting the World and Beyond - Women In Defence
www.australiadaysa.c

Organisation and Governance

The Board of Management is the governing body of the Australia Day Council of South Australia Inc (ADCSA). In the year 2025 – 2026 the Board comprised of the following members:

Ms Michelle Cox – Chairperson

Ms Heather Holmes-Ross – Deputy Chairperson – LGA representative

Ms Antonietta Cocchiaro OAM – Deputy Chairperson

Mr Des Quirk – Treasurer – elected 24 November 2025

Ms Gillian Lewis

Professor Jennifer McKay AM

Mr John Fulbrook MP – Premier's representative – appointed 24 November 2025

Ms Anna Cheung

Dr Mehmat Aslan – SAMC representative

Mr Rajendra Pandey – appointed Member 24 November 2025

Ms Carmel Noon – City of Adelaide representative – appointment 25 September 2025

Ms Sally Neville OAM – elected 24 November 2025

Ms Dana Wortley MP – Premier's representative – resigned AGM November 2025

Ms Catherine Herrmann – resigned 11 August 2025

The ADCSA Board met on 8 occasions. Meetings were held on Monday evenings at ADCSA Offices at 240 Currie Street Adelaide, commencing at 5.30pm. ADCSA moved into new offices at Level 1, Torrens Building 220 Victoria Square Adelaide in November 2025 and Board meetings were then rescheduled to this address. Board members attended in person or via Teams link up.

- 11 August 2025
- 22 September 2025
- 17 November 2025
- 24 November 2025 (after AGM to appoint officers)
- 12 January 2026
- 16 March 2026
- 4 May 2026
- 29 June 2026

The Annual General Meeting was held on the 24 November 2025. Members attended in person and via Teams link.

The Corporate Governance Committee has met on 3 occasions during the year. The purpose of the committee is to assist the Board in fulfilling its corporate governance responsibilities.

The Corporate Governance Committee comprises 3 Board members and 2 Independent Members.

The Sponsorship, Membership and Marketing Committee met on one occasion during the year.

Board Attendance - 2025/2026

Member	Aug	Sep	Nov	Nov	Jan	Jan	Mar	May	Jun
Michelle Cox	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Healther Holmes-Ross	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓
Antonietta Cocchiaro OAM	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Des Quirk	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Prof Jennifer McKay AM	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A	✓	✓	✓
Gillian Lewis	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
John Fulbrook MP				Appointed	✓	✓	A	✓	A
Anna Cheung	✓	A	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dr Mehmat Aslan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A
Rajendra Pandey	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A
Carmel Noon		Appointed	A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sally Neville OAM			Appointed	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dana Wortley MP	A	✓	A	Resigned					
Catherine Herrmann	Resigned								

Note: The meeting on 20 January was via Teams.
Some members joined the meetings via Teams if they were overseas.
A = apology



Katherine Bennell-Pegg, 2026 Australian of the Year and Australia's first astronaut.

Our Impact

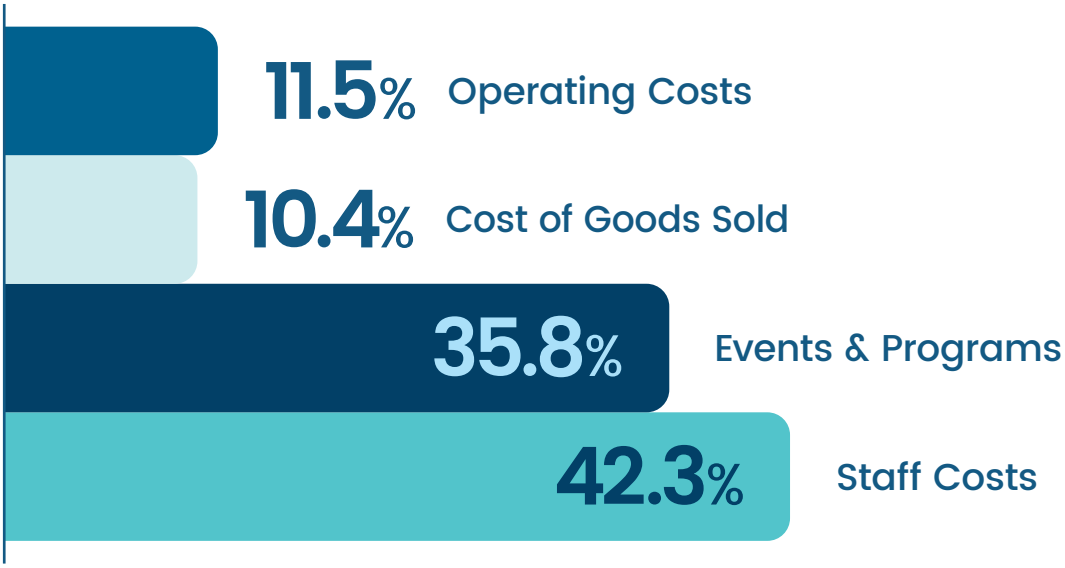
Income Sources



Awards
4 of the last 8
Australian of the Year recipients have been South Australian

We're batting above our weight!

Expenses



Across SA Community Events

46 Community Grants for Local Government and Not-For-Profit Community Organisations

Totalling **$4.5M**

Social Media

447,951 Views	**132,400** Views	**62,233** Views
20,488 Engagement	**27,817** Engagement	**16,354** Engagement
14,384 Followers	**1,742** Followers	**1,646** Followers

Whole of Year Engagement

	Attendees
Australian of the Year Awards Presentation Evening	287
Citizen of the Year Awards at Government House	260
Mourning in the Morning Smoking Ceremony	3018
Inspiring Australians Student Summit	910
Australian of the Year Breakfast	605

8,948kms Travelled Across SA

26 Ambassadors

29 Destinations

9 Across Metropolitan Councils

15 Across Regional Councils

2026 SA Australians of the Year







K. BENNELL-PEGG







Members, Sponsors and Supporters

Members

33 individual members

9 event pass holders

Total 42 individual members

Corporate Members

Bronze

Access 2 Place Housing

Association of Independent Schools of SA

Centennial Park Cemetery Authority

Community Bridging Services (CBS) Inc

Community Corporate Pty Ltd

Fidens Support Services

Foodland North Adelaide

Green Gold Energy

HelloDoc Psychiatry Service

Kan-Pan Pty Ltd (KP Media)

Midnight Pharmacy

SA Disability care

SA Shoulder Pavers Pty Ltd

The Multiple Sclerosis Society of SA & NT

The Australia Pavillion Sports Museum Inc

Williams Barrister and Solicitors

Your Generation Care

Silver

Adelaide Venue Management

RM Williams

Rocco Giglio

Tong De Association

Gold

Asbestos Disease Society of South Australia

Karidis Corporation Ltd

Maras Group (Aust) Pty Ltd

Multicultural Communities Council of SA #59049774

Platinum

Intract Australia Pty Ltd

Kaya Disability Support

Government Entity Member

Unley Council

Council Members

Adelaide Hills Council

Adelaide Plains Council

Alexandrina Council

Barunga West Council

Berri Barmera Council

Campbelltown City Council

City of Adelaide

City of Burnside

City of Charles Sturt

City of Salisbury

City of Tea Tree Gully

Clare & Gilbert Valleys District Council

Cleve District Council

Coorong District Council

Copper Coast Council

District Council of Ceduna

District Council of Coober Pedy

Elliston District Council

Flinders Ranges Council

Franklin Harbour District Council

Gawler Town Council

Goyder Regional Council

Grant District Council

Holdfast Bay City Council

Kangaroo Island District Council

Karoonda-East Murray District Council

Kimba District Council

Light Regional Council

Lower Eyre Peninsula District Council

Loxton Waikerie District Council

Marion City Council

Mid Murray District Council

Mitcham City Council

Mount Barker District Council

Mount Gambier City Council

Mount Remarkable District Council

Murray Bridge Rural City Council

Naracoorte Lucindale Council

Northern Areas District Council

Norwood Payneham & St Peters Council

Onkaparinga City Council

Orroroo Carrieton District Council

Outback Communities Authority

Peterborough District Council

Playford City Council

Port Adelaide Enfield City Council

Port Augusta City Council

Port Lincoln City Council

Port Pirie Regional Council

Prospect City Council

Renmark Paringa Council

Robe District Council

Roxby Downs Municipal Council

Southern Mallee District Council

Streaky Bay District Council

Tatiara District Council

The Barossa Council

Tumby Bay District Council

Unley City Council

Victor Harbor City Council

Wakefield Regional Council

Walkerville Town Council

Wattle Range Council

West Torrens City Council

Whyalla City Council

Wudinna District Council

Yankalilla District Council

Yorke Peninsula Council

Australian of the Year Awards
Reflect. Respect. Celebrate

Australia Day
Reflect. Respect. Celebrate.
South Australia

CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARDS
Reflect. Respect. Celebrate.

Inspiring South Australian Women

Award for Leadership in Languages and Cultures

The Australia Day Council of South Australia extends our thanks to the following partners for their generous support.

Funding and Strategic Partners

Government of South Australia

Australia Day
Reflect. Respect. Celebrate.

CITY OF ADELAIDE

Government of South Australia
Department for Education

Government of South Australia
Office for Women

Supporting Partners

accenture

ADELAIDE CEMETERIES

Adelaide University

Supported by phn ADELAIDE
An Australian Government Initiative

ALTUS TRAFFIC

Australian Space Agency

ASC

credit unionsa

City of Port Lincoln

cbb Community Business Bureau

CBS Community Bridging Services (CBS) Inc.

DEFENCESA

Deloitte.

EPSON EXCEED YOUR VISION

Flinders University

Galipo food company

HAIGH'S CHOCOLATES

Harcourts Premium Group

Kytons 85 BAKERY

lga South Australia

MARAS Group

MGA INSURANCE GROUP STANDING BY YOU

ojo creative

SA AQUATIC & LEISURE CENTRE

SA Power Networks

SARAH Building Great Relationships.

sda at work with you

SOFITEL ADELAIDE

SOUTHERN LAUNCH

St Peter's College ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA

AlniHub Spencer Gulf

Media Partners across our 2025-2026 Program

ADELAIDE COMMUNITY TELEVISION

GLAM Adelaide

littlelionpr

IN INDAILY

Jacqui Island MEDIA & MARKETING

play&go Adelaide

SAFM 107.1

Venue and event assistance partners across our 2025-2026 program

ADELAIDE VENUE MANAGEMENT

AJS LIGHTING SOUND EVENTS

eventwise

novatech creative event technology

SEP SHORT EVENT PRODUCTIONS



Australia Day
Reflect. Respect. Celebrate.

South Australia

Photo credits to:
asbCreative Photography
NADC/Salty Dingo
Nic Mollison Lighting & Projection Design