

MEDIA RELEASE

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SOUTH AUSTRALIA 2023 AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS NOMINEES ANNOUNCED

Nominees for the 2023 South Australia Australian of the Year Awards include soccer players leading the way for change, a woman dedicated to helping pets, a body image activist, a zoologist and foster care advocate.

They are just some of the 16 people in the running to be named the South Australia Australian of the Year, South Australia Senior Australian of the Year, South Australia Young Australian of the Year and South Australia Local Hero.

The 2023 South Australia award nominees are:

South Australia Australian of the Year

Taryn Brumfitt – Body image activist, director, writer and speaker (Cumberland Park)
Professor Christopher Daniels – Environmentalist, zoologist and science communicator (Belair)
Andrea Madeley – Lawyer and workplace safety advocate (Williamstown)
Marie Shaw KC – Philanthropist and co-founder, Ice Factor program (Brompton)

South Australia Senior Australian of the Year

Margaret Fischer AM – Co-founder, Feast Adelaide Queer Arts & Cultural Festival (Hahndorf)
Sandra Miller – Aboriginal rights activist, advocate for Indigenous health and welfare (Glandore)
Eric Siggurs – Volunteer, Technology for Ageing and Disability SA (Greenacres)
Eugenia Tsoulis OAM – CEO, Australian Migrant Resource Centre; founding member, Settlement Council Australia (Adelaide)

South Australia Young Australian of the Year

Josh Cavallo – Professional soccer player and equality champion (Walkerville)
Felicity Graham – Author, advocate and CEO, Fostering Change Australia (Glengowrie)
Zainab Kazemi – Multicultural advocate and volunteer (Salisbury)
Awer Mabil – Professional soccer player and co-founder, Barefoot to Boots (Walkley Heights)

South Australia Local Hero

Neil Davis – Keynote speaker and co-founder, Sammy D Foundation (Woodcroft)
Elizabeth Habermann – Voluntary assisted dying advocate (Wudinna)
Christine Robertson – Co-founder, Lost Pets of South Australia and creator, Chipblitz program (Ridleyton)
Marigold White – Co-founder, Uniity (Adelaide)

**see bios on following pages*

The South Australia nominees are among 130 people being recognised across all states and territories.

The four award recipients from South Australia will be announced on Thursday 10 November 2022 in a ceremony at the Adelaide Convention Centre in Adelaide, which will also be available to watch via ABC iView from 7:00pm (local Adelaide time).

They will then join the other state and territory recipients as national finalists for the national awards announcement on 25 January 2023 in Canberra.

National Australia Day Council CEO Karlie Brand congratulated the nominees on their recognition.

“The 2023 South Australian nominees are extraordinary people making an impact for others,” said Karlie.

“They show us what a diverse community South Australia has and how everyone can make a difference.”

20 Years Of Local Heroes

The 2023 Awards also mark 20 years of the Local Hero category. Introduced in 2003, the award acknowledges extraordinary contributions made by Australians in their local community.

There is yet to be a South Australian awarded Australia’s Local Hero.... could 2023 be the year?

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 provided by nominees):

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/11ei6g1704ocou2yohr3e/h?dl=0&rlkey=cxdg3igtipgem5qf6kkpqgeyy>

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SOUTH AUSTRALIA AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR – NOMINEE BIOS

Taryn Brumfitt

Body image activist, director, writer and speaker

Documentary director Taryn Brumfitt leads the Body Image Movement, an Adelaide-based organisation that teaches people to love and appreciate their bodies. Her 2016 documentary *Embrace* tackled the serious issue of women's body loathing and Taryn's path to body acceptance. It was seen by millions of people in 190 countries and is available on Netflix.

Taryn has written four best-selling books. She released a documentary, *Embrace Kids*, in September 2022 that aims to teach nine- to 14-year-olds to move, nourish, respect and appreciate what their bodies can do.

She has collaborated with body image expert Dr Zali Yager to create an *Embrace Kids* companion parenting book. They have also created the Embrace Hub – a free, research-based resource for teachers, parents, children and communities on fostering body positivity.

Taryn's work has reached more than 200 million people. She is an internationally recognised keynote speaker whose work is recognised by UN Women.

Professor Christopher Daniels

Environmentalist, zoologist and science communicator

Professor Christopher Daniels has been an incredible force in popularising citizen science in Australia. The former university academic and now government scientist has presented on ABC Radio for two decades.

He started with fortnightly backyard wildlife segments in 2003 and, since 2007, has presented community programs on urban environmental science.

Christopher was a driving force in Adelaide becoming a National Park City and spearheads efforts to connect South Australians with nature.

He also uses the arts to promote conservation. Christopher has written 11 books including a children's book, *Koala*, produced a musical theatre show on koalas, delivered comedy for the Adelaide Fringe with South Australia's Science Media Centre, and advocates for numerous South Australian nature authors.

Now chair of the foundation 'Koala Life' and the Green Adelaide Landscape Board, Christopher received a Doctor of Sciences from Adelaide University in 2019. He holds adjunct professorships at the University of South Australia and University of Adelaide.

Andrea Madeley

Lawyer and workplace safety advocate

Andrea Madeley's 18-year-old son Daniel died in a preventable workplace accident in 2004. Since then, Andrea has become a tenacious advocate for others affected by workplace death and injury, and a powerful voice against unsafe work practices.

Andrea has lobbied members of parliament to protect entitlements under South Australia's workers compensation scheme. She has also submitted numerous proposals under Australia's model work, health and safety legislation.

The South Australian Government nominated Andrea for the prestigious South Australian Women's Honour Roll in 2011.

Andrea completed a Bachelor of Laws degree with honours at Deakin University and was admitted to practise law in the Supreme Court of South Australia in 2019. Her focus is on personal injury law.

She helped develop South Australia's International Workers' Memorial Day Service, bringing together bereaved families and members of the public each year to remember those who lost their lives because of their work.

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Marie Shaw KC

Philanthropist and co-founder, Ice Factor program

Law trailblazer Marie Shaw KC has seen countless children in court following a trail of neglect and dysfunction. She realised she could help these disadvantaged young people after witnessing the positive impact sport had on her dyslexic daughter.

Marie helped set up the Ice Factor program at Thebarton Ice Arena in 2005. Thousands of at-risk high school students have taken part in the ice hockey program, learning team values and building their self-esteem. The program has helped many avoid homelessness, drug addiction and crime.

Marie supported two ex-students in 2017 to set up the first Indigenous ice hockey team – the Kaurna Boomerangs. The team has since travelled across Australia and internationally.

From a remote country town, Marie has fought her way to the top of her field. In her professional work as a senior criminal barrister, Marie also works pro bono and provides work experience opportunities for legal students.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA SENIOR AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR – NOMINEE BIOS**Margaret Fischer AM**

Co-founder, Feast Adelaide Queer Arts & Cultural Festival

Writing and acting in plays was always a regular pastime from a young age for Margaret Fischer AM, who went on to devote her life to South Australia's LGBTIQ+ communities and the arts.

In 1997, she co-founded the Feast Adelaide Queer Arts & Cultural Festival, the state's major not-for-profit queer celebration of pride and diversity.

The festival has been a constant on Adelaide's arts calendar in the 25 years since, with Margaret holding a range of positions including board chair for 11 years.

She's currently Director of Feast Queer Youth Drop In, a bi-monthly safe social space for LGBTIQ+ young people, and organises Queer Bingo which raises money for the service.

Youth Drop In has had a significant, positive impact on attendees, some of whom live in awful conditions, are in unsafe relationships and feel unable to be themselves anywhere else.

Margaret also helps deliver mental health workshops for the queer community.

Sandra Miller

Aboriginal rights activist, advocate for Indigenous health and welfare

Sandra Miller, a proud Wirangu woman from the Ceduna area, has been a trailblazer, breaking down barriers for Aboriginal women aspiring to leadership roles at a time when they were under-represented.

Sandra trained as a social worker and in the early 1980s worked for the Department of Community Welfare in Adelaide. She pushed to change government policies that were detrimental to Aboriginal children and encouraged Aboriginal people to become foster parents.

She went on to play an important part in policy development and service design across key state government portfolios, including Aboriginal health, ageing and welfare.

Sandra continues to be a strong voice for her community since leaving the public service. She's had leadership roles in Aboriginal health and legal rights groups, and holds multiple board and executive appointments.

She has represented her community in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance and at the United Nations.

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Eric Siggurs

Volunteer, Technology for Ageing and Disability SA

When Eric Siggurs retired in 2005, he did what most other retirees do – travelled and did jobs around the house. But after 47 years with an engineering company, he eventually grew tired of not contributing to society.

At age 70, he started volunteering for Technology for Ageing and Disability SA and has since spent more than 12 years in his shed inventing and making equipment to help people with disabilities be independent, rather than relying on services.

Eric's contributed to more than 60 projects that have improved the lives of others.

Among the equipment he's designed and built are parallel bars that can be attached to treadmills, allowing children with disabilities to exercise at home, and rotatable frames so that people can produce art.

He's also designed and made equipment that has enabled children to go to the toilet without assistance and a ceiling-mounted pulley swing to support leg mobility.

Eugenia Tsoulis OAM

CEO, Australian Migrant Resource Centre and founding member, Settlement Council of Australia

Eugenia Tsoulis OAM was helping her fellow Greek migrants settle into life in Australia back when she was in primary school. Once a week before school, she'd act as a translator to help bus conductors deliver Greek men to potential employers around Adelaide.

Her passion and life's work ever since has been assisting new migrants and refugees.

Eugenia has helped thousands adjust to life in their adopted land. She has led the Australian Migrant Resource Centre as chief executive officer for 25 years. The organisation supported 4,200 new arrivals in 2020 alone.

She's been involved with the Settlement Council of Australia for 20 years, a peak body that links community workers in migrant services at the grassroots level with national policy makers.

Eugenia's colleagues call her the 'fairy godmother' of settlement services – someone you can always call on for advice and support, and who has touched thousands of lives.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA YOUNG AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR – NOMINEE BIOS

Josh Cavallo

Professional soccer player and equality champion

Josh Cavallo plays professional A-League soccer for Adelaide United FC and has represented the Australian under-20 national team.

He made sports history in 2021 by coming out as gay – making him the first in the Australian A-League and the only openly gay male professional footballer currently playing top-flight football in the world.

Josh's announcement inspired an outpouring of support from the world's top players, clubs and leading sports organisations – and encouraged other top league footballers to come out. But in a world in which homophobic bullying is still rife, he has also endured abuse during games and on social media.

Josh's actions influenced Adelaide United to host the first A-League Pride Games, staging men's and women's fixtures to promote inclusivity.

Flinders University presented Josh with an honorary doctorate in 2022 to recognise his exceptional contributions as a role model in elite men's sport and as a champion for equality.

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Felicity Graham

Author, advocate and CEO, Fostering Change Australia

Felicity Graham spent nine years of her childhood in the foster care system, being moved from place to place, including a youth homeless centre.

After a year in what she thought was her forever home where she felt loved and cared for, her mental health deteriorated. With her carers unable to provide the support she needed, Felicity's placement ended.

At 17, Felicity Graham published an autobiography, *Not Held Down*. Through the book she hopes to raise awareness about the challenges in the child protection system and to give a voice to children in care who feel forgotten.

Felicity advocates for better support for children, plus more training and support for foster carers, through her organisation Fostering Change Australia, which she launched at the age of 19.

Currently studying youth work, she shares her lived experience with foster care agencies and other relevant organisations and hopes to extend her advocacy.

Zainab Kazemi

Multicultural advocate and volunteer

Zainab Kazemi was 13 when she arrived in Australia with her family after fleeing Afghanistan. Now Zainab is helping other new arrivals, particularly Afghan women, to feel a sense of comfort and belonging in their new country.

Zainab remembers having her head shaved as a child so she could be disguised as a boy, just to be able to go to the shops. When she came to Australia, she found the cultural and linguistic diversity at her school so liberating that she was inspired to share her own culture with others.

She is now studying teaching at the University of South Australia and has participated in two Youth Parliaments. Despite studying and working two jobs, Zainab volunteers her free time to assist recently arrived Afghan refugees in Adelaide. She speaks with politicians, the media and at community events, also participating in fundraisers to help those still in danger in Afghanistan.

Awer Mabil

Professional soccer player and co-founder, Barefoot to Boots

Socceroo Awer Mabil is co-founder of the not-for-profit organisation Barefoot to Boots, which aims for better health, education, policies and gender equality for refugees.

His own unique way of celebrating a goal is a message to those struggling with their mental health: you are not alone and you can speak up.

The winger knows something about trying times. Awer grew up in a Kenyan refugee camp after his family fled civil war in Sudan, before coming to Australia at 10. Only a year after reaching his dream to play for the Socceroos, his sister died in a car accident in 2019.

Awer says that he now feels 'unbreakable'. It is his experience of hard times, the memory of his sister and the knowledge that young people see him as a role model that drives him to perform. It's what he does that Awer wants to be known for – not his background.

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SOUTH AUSTRALIA LOCAL HERO – NOMINEE BIOS

Neil Davis

Keynote speaker and co-founder, Sammy D Foundation

Sam Davis was 17 when he said goodbye to his mum and dad and went out to a party on 3 May 2008. The next day he was gone, killed in a one-punch attack.

Sam's father, Neil Davis, co-founded the Sammy D Foundation with the aim of trying to ensure no more innocent lives are lost to violence.

The Sammy D Foundation provides one-on-one mentoring for young people at risk of offending and anti-violence education programs. One school more than halved violent incidents after it started working with the organisation.

Responding to an increase in violence at junior sporting events, Neil and the Foundation developed a violence prevention program that's being delivered in clubs across South Australia.

Neil tells his story about four times a week and has reached more than 180,000 people in schools, sporting clubs and the juvenile justice system.

Neil's message is simple: violence is never the answer.

Elizabeth Habermann

Voluntary assisted dying advocate

Elizabeth Habermann's 19-year-old son Rhys took medication to end his own life in January 2017. Rhys died at home peacefully with members of his family after eighteen months of agonising bone cancer that had spread and was terminal. At the time, what he did was illegal.

Rhys recorded a video to protect his family from prosecution, but the Habermanns were investigated by police for 18 months. Rhys's room was even called a crime scene.

Despite one trauma after another, Elizabeth has continued her son's advocacy for voluntary assisted dying. She has spoken to politicians and the media, sharing her family's experience and grief to raise awareness of the need for voluntary assisted dying.

Elizabeth was instrumental in the recent change of law that means South Australia will soon allow voluntary assisted dying.

This means terminally ill patients and their families will never again experience the unnecessary hurt her family did.

Christine Robertson

Co-founder, Lost Pets of South Australia and creator, Chipblitz program

More than 65,000 pets across Australia have received a microchip thanks to Christine Robertson, but that wasn't what she initially set out to achieve.

Christine co-founded the Lost Pets of South Australia charity in 2013 to reunite lost pets with their families. The volunteer organisation uses social media and its connections with the RSPCA and other animal welfare groups to get lost animals back home.

However, it soon became apparent that many pets were being lost because their owners couldn't afford to get them microchipped. Microchip fees generally start at about \$65.

So Christine developed the Chipblitz program in 2015, allowing trained implanters to microchip a pet for just \$10.

Chipblitz is now the biggest pet microchipping program in the Southern Hemisphere. It has a partnership with national

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pet goods store PETstock and 1,400-plus volunteers. More than 44,000 pets have been chipped in South Australia alone since the program began.

Marigold White

Co-founder, Uniity

As a migrant, Marigold White understands the emotional and practical difficulties that come with not having family close-by.

When she moved to Australia in the early 1990s, she missed family back in Ireland. By chance, she befriended an older woman. The two enriched each other's lives and became like family, despite being unconnected by blood or marriage.

Now Marigold helps other people form family-style social connection, those that include different generations. The not-for-profit she co-founded, Uniity, is driven by empathy and the emotional importance – and health benefits – of making people feel valued and needed.

It offers opportunities for people to get to know each other through sharing interests, skills and experiences, regardless of age, personal circumstances or background.

Participants say Uniity gives them a greater sense of belonging, purpose and positive wellbeing.

Marigold supports community members to connect socially and to lead activities with confidence. She hopes to see Uniity expand its impact nationwide.

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