

South Australian Australian of the Year finalists announced

The South Australian finalists for Australian of the Year, Senior Australian of the Year, Young Australian of the Year and Australia's Local Hero awards were announced today. They include community fundraisers, an Aussie Rules legend, a refugee, wildlife rescuers and a Paralympic swimming champion.

There are four finalists in each award category and recipients will be announced at the SA Australian of the Year Awards event on Wednesday 12 November 2008 in Adelaide. The South Australian recipients will then join recipients from all other States and Territories as finalists for the national awards. The national awards will be announced on 25 January 2009.

Ms Tam Johnston, Director of the Australian of the Year Awards, said the finalists were selected from more than 3,300 nominations received from across the nation.

"I think all South Australians can be very proud of their finalists this year," said Ms Johnston.

"Whether they are achieving against the odds or providing help where it's needed, they are all great members of the community."

The South Australian finalists are:

SA AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

Professor Christopher Burrell AO - Virologist & festival director (Leahbrook)
Ivan Copley - Indigenous community worker (Athelstone) Dr Damian Mead - Health clinic founder (Adelaide) Dr C. Ross Philpot OAM - Infectious diseases specialist (Myrtle Bank)

SA SENIOR AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

John Halbert MBE - Australian Rules legend (Rose Park) Shirley Hogben OAM - Community fundraiser (Largs North) Raymond Jones - Fundraising cyclist (North Adelaide) Antonio Romeo - Community-minded businessman (Torrensville)

SA YOUNG AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

Deng Chuor - Sudanese refugee Matthew Cowdrey OAM - Swimming champion (Salisbury Heights) Daniel Daw - Professional dancer (Mile End) Eleanor Sobey - Cockatoo recovery program manager (Kangaroo Island)

SA LOCAL HERO

Robert Curtis - Volunteer carer (Holden Hill) Frank England - Local philanthropist (Kingston) Beverley Langley - Wildlife rescuer (Cherry Gardens) Rito Paparella - Role model & mentor (Woodcroft)

This year marks the thirtieth anniversary of the Commonwealth Bank's involvement with the Australian of the Year Awards.

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

Ends. Finalist bios attached with this media release or downloadable from www.australianoftheyear.org.au For further information or to arrange an interview please contact: Nicole Browne, Media Opps 02 9954 7677 or 0414 673 762 or nicole@mediaopps.com.au

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN FINALISTS 2009 Australian of the Year - SA Finalists

Professor Christopher Burrell AO Virologist and festival director

As Professor of Virology at the University of Adelaide and head of the Infectious Disease Laboratories at the Institute of Medical and Veterinary Science, Christopher Burrell has contributed greatly to our understanding of and ability to control virus diseases. His research in the 1970's and 1980's led to major developments in the first diagnostic tools and vaccines for Hepatitis B, and greatly assisted our ability to control this infection. More recently, his work on HIV/AIDS has led to new understanding about the mechanisms of viral replication in this infection. In addition, Professor Burrell has been involved in studies on a number of other virus infections including human papillomavirus, influenza, and other respiratory viruses. Professor Burrell has also made a significant contribution to the arts. In 1999, he co-founded the Coriole Music Festival, a celebratory weekend where each year a different musical tradition is explored over three concerts. As its Musical Director he has built a festival that is now able to attract artists with both national and international reputations. Professor Burrell's contribution to both the science and arts has been outstanding.

Ivan Copley Indigenous community worker

Ivan Copley is a committed man of Aboriginal descent from the Peramangk people, the Kaurna people of the Adelaide plains and the Minang people of Western Australia. He has devoted his life to trying to achieve reconciliation and better outcomes for Indigenous Australians. As founder and Chair of the Campbelltown Council Reconciliation Committee he has achieved excellent

results, including the signing of a Statement of Reconciliation by the Mayor, CEO of the Council and himself. Through his work with Rotary he established the first clean drinking water purifier in the Aboriginal community of Leigh Creek, having raised the funds for it himself. Whilst at the Australian Bureau of Statistics he arranged for second-hand computers to be installed in Aboriginal communities without computer access. Recently he established an Aboriginal Funeral Fund to assist family members to travel to funerals. He raises money for the Fund through sales of merchandise in his spare time. These are just a few of the many ways in which Ivan is putting his heart and soul into bettering his community. He has been described as a 'bridge for all peoples.'

Dr Damian Mead Health clinic founder Dr Damian Mead has been a general practitioner for 25 years, dedicating his working life to providing health services for homeless people. After graduating university he began visiting homeless shelters and as a result decided to establish the Brian Burdekin Clinic. This unique clinic provides multi-disciplinary health services to disadvantaged and marginalised people. Dr Mead is strongly committed to addressing problems that are often accompanied by poverty, including mental illness and substance abuse problems. He has created a warm and welcoming environment where each individual is regarded as being important. Patients are treated holistically by a team of professionals - including nurses, physiotherapists, a podiatrist, social workers and psychologists - who address the challenging medical, social, nutritional and accommodation problems experienced by homeless people. Dr Mead has established an outreach service that assists homeless people into accommodation and provides them with ongoing support. He was also a founding member of the Adelaide Day Centre for Homeless Persons which works in partnership with the clinic to provide a supportive community for homeless and isolated people. Dr Mead is highly regarded and much loved by his patients whose lives he has improved in so many ways.

Dr C. Ross Philpot OAM Infectious diseases specialist Dr Ross Philpot is a physician, scientist and teacher who specialises in infectious diseases. He has taken on countless executive positions in medical organisations to help improve understanding, diagnosis and treatment of infectious diseases. His tireless work promoting public awareness of sexually transmitted diseases heavily contributed to the creation of what is now the National Sexually Transmissible Infections Strategy. The commitment he has shown to the broader community is equalled by his regard for individual patients, particularly those with rare, misunderstood diseases. Dr Philpot was integral in diagnosing one of his patients with a rare immune system deficiency which he later also identified in the man's grandson. This led to his discovery

of a rare genetic X-linked mutation in males which enabled him to treat the entire family and make the information available worldwide to help others suffering from this rare disease. There are many stories like these of individuals Dr Philpot has helped with his remarkable work, resulting in a complete transformation of their lives. His persistence, ingenuity and rigour have seen him accumulate a broad knowledge of rare diseases that enables him to solve problems others find baffling. He is a courageous and progressive doctor who embraces new findings and embarks on novel treatments with a cautious and wise manner.

Senior Australian of the Year - SA Finalists

Shirley Hogben OAM Community fundraiser

During her 91 years, Shirley Hogben's broad range of service, dedication and commitment to a vast number of groups has been outstanding. In 1958, she was asked if she would be interested in helping form the Port Adelaide Auxiliary to raise funds for the Adelaide Children's Hospital. Despite already serving on many other committees at the time, she accepted. Shirley became secretary and 50 years later is still fulfilling that role. During this time she has helped raise more than \$350,000 and is a well-known fixture on Semaphore Road where she has sold raffle tickets and rattled her tin seeking donations for the hospital. In 1978, she was made a life member of the organisation. Shirley's commitment to helping others has extended to a wide array of other groups. She has been a Neighbourhood Watch coordinator for the past decade, and was the first secretary of the Women's Auxiliary of the Largs Bay RSL, a position she held for 27 years. She has served on fundraising committees of the Le Fevre Community Hospital, England Girls Grammar School, Inner Wheel Club, Ladies Probus Club and Legacy Club. Despite battling cancer she has never given up her work for charity and her dedication to serving others.

John Halbert MBE Australian Rules legend John Halbert has served the South Australian National Football League, Australian Football League, the Australian Football Foundation and the sport of Australian Rules at the community level with the greatest distinction over the last 40 years and continues in many of his roles serving the game at a national level. He made his debut with Sturt in 1955 and was an immediate success. By the time he retired from the game he had established a new record for the Blues by playing 251 games. Beyond this, John has had an exceptional career as an academic, sportsman, educator, mentor and public speaker. His dedication to the development of young people in sport has been a focus and this was recognised when he was made a Member of the British Empire in 1969 for his work in this area. Furthermore his service to the community has extended to his participation in the Lutheran

Church as a congregation Chairman, Board Member and respected elder. John is an honorable and distinguished Australian who continues to inspire young people in Australia through his excellence in the field of sport and the community in general.

Raymond Jones Fundraising cyclist

Raymond Jones is an energetic 88-year-old cyclist who has single-handedly raised over \$120,000 for the Mary Potter Foundation Inc, to support the Mary Potter Hospice. The Hospice, located at Calvary Hospital in North Adelaide, provides palliative care for terminally ill patients and their families. Without the support of government grants or church funding, the Hospice relies on fundraising to provide it with the resources needed to remain operating. Raymond's contribution to the organisation's survival is extraordinary. Affectionately known as 'Pedals,' for 17 years he undertook an annual 50-kilometre 'Ride for Love.' Every year he walked the streets of Adelaide generating sponsorship for his ride. The funds he raised helped to purchase items used for bereavement care in the Hospice which are particularly used with grieving children, a cause very close to Raymond's heart. In 1996, he was made an honorary life member of the Mary Potter Foundation for his commitment to their cause. He has only recently retired from sponsored riding but his supporters are now carrying on his wonderful work. The Hospice and its patients are indebted to this selfless man who has become a part of their family.

Antonio Romeo Community-minded businessman

Tony Romeo came to Australia from Italy as a 19 year old looking for an opportunity in life. After trying his hand at a number of different jobs he became a builder and eventually formed his own company. Over the following years he assisted many young migrants to settle in Australia, helping them adjust to their new country, further their education, and find homes and jobs. Twenty years ago he bought a Foodland store with his eldest son and the family were all involved in contributing to its success. The Romeo Group now owns and operates 16 Foodland stores throughout South Australia and interstate, and is well-known for employing disabled and disadvantaged people, giving them purpose and pride in life. Over the years the Romeo Group has donated generously to the needy, homeless and Rotary causes. Tony has been a Rotary member for many years and invested his energy and experience into working for them. He has also volunteered for the Queen of Angels Church. Tony is a good example of how from small beginnings impressive things can be achieved with hard work and perseverance. Through his kindness and generosity, Tony has made his local community a better place.

Young Australian of the Year - SA Finalists

Deng Chuor - 22 Sudanese refugee

Deng Chuor arrived in Australia from Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya four years ago. Since then he has worked to develop mutual understanding between the Sudanese community and the wider Australian community. He sees himself as a link between the two communities and has been a strong advocate for Sudanese families in their dealings with a range of government departments and other organisations. He founded Aweil Youth Group for Dinka youth in Adelaide. Besides its role as a social outlet for young people, the group addresses the challenges facing young people and helps new arrivals integrate into their new country. Deng has a great belief in the value of education, and his mentoring and advocacy for Sudanese students has been invaluable in helping them make the transition from refugee camps to the Australian education system. Through great persistence and personal financial sacrifice he has also established a primary school in his home village in Sudan which now has over 800 students. In 2006, Deng became an Australian citizen, describing the occasion as one of the most significant in his life. In a few short years Deng has achieved remarkable things. He is a wonderful role model for young refugees establishing themselves in Australia.

Matthew Cowdrey OAM - 19 Swimming legend

Matthew Cowdrey was born with a congenital amputation of his left arm below the elbow and yet in all aspects of life he has overcome his disability to achieve great things. An outstanding athlete, he first began competitive swimming at the age of eight. Since then he has achieved international status, representing Australia at a number of competitions including the Paralympics in Greece where he won three gold, two silver and two bronze medals, and the World Championships in South Africa where he won five gold, two silver and one bronze medal. By the age of 19 Matthew had broken 72 world records, 127 Australian records and 180 Australian age records in a variety of strokes. In 2006, he swam a qualifying time that enabled him to become the first disabled person to participate in the Australian Short Course Championships against able-bodied athletes. In his spare time, Matthew is an influential mentor and role model to young people. He has exhibited extreme self-discipline in his quest to become the best in the world and holds the title of International Male Disabled Swimmer of the Year 2007 and Australia's Paralympian of the Year 2008. This year he captained the Australian Paralympic swimming team at the Beijing Games where he won more medals than any other Paralympian attending the event, claiming 5 Gold and 3 Silver medals. All 5 of his Gold medals were won in World Record Time. He is truly an inspiration to all.

Daniel Daw - 25 Professional dancer Dan Daw became a well-respected professional dancer against all odds. Born with cerebral palsy, Dan has been involved with dance and movement since the age of two when his aunt opened the first ballet academy in his hometown of Whyalla. Since then Dan has worked in both the Australian and UK disability dance communities. In 2006, he was awarded a scholarship to further his skills by studying with the CandoCo Dance Company in London, a company leading the way in professional integrated dance working primarily with disabled performers. Daniel is currently a dancer and tutor with Restless Dance Company, South Australia's eminent company for young dancers with and without a disability. Dan has performed in many major works, including collaboration with Australian Dance Theatre, and worked with FRONTLINE dance on their fifth anniversary tour. He is passionate about educating and demystifying the community about what it is like to live with a disability, and one of his goals is to develop ways that mainstream institutions can include disabled people in their study programs. During his life Dan has taken on seemingly impossible odds and turned them into personal triumphs. His philosophy is to 'reach for the stars and see what you can get.'

Eleanor Sobey - 25 Cockatoo recovery program manager

Ellie Sobey has been a driving force in the fight to prevent the Glossy Black-Cockatoo from extinction. Since European settlement there has been a steady decline in its numbers across Australia and the birds are now listed as endangered. Ellie manages the Glossy Black-Cockatoo Recovery Program, which has become one of the most successful recovery programs for threatened species in Australia. The program undertakes continual research and successful on-ground actions supported by an eager and extensive group of volunteers. Work has included installing 80 artificial nest hollows where none were available, and protecting 200 nest sites from possums by placing corrugated iron around the bottom of nest trees and pruning the overlapping canopy. Ellie and her team also monitor the population, replant feeding habitat, observe and band the birds, and control birds that threaten the chicks and eggs. In 1995, there were just 200 birds left on Kangaroo Island, but thanks to the efforts of Ellie and her team there were an estimated 330 to 350 birds by 2007. Ellie spends most days doing field work well into the night and is passionate about protecting these beautiful birds.

Australia's Local Hero - SA Finalists

Robert Curtis Holden Hill

Volunteer carer As a volunteer with Aged Care Housing, Robert Curtis devotes much of his time to helping the disabled and the elderly living with dementia.

His work helps older people to maintain their independence and continue living a rich and fulfilling life. He provides respite for their families, is always on call to help in an emergency and has run short courses teaching people over 60 how to use a computer. Robert has been serving the community for more than 50 years. His resolve to help others began as a young man of 26 when he heard about drownings that were occurring in the Murray River at Mildura. He organised a lifesaving volunteer patrol and became the patrol leader. He then established a life saving club and became leader of the NSW Lifesavers. Since then he has served the community in various voluntary capacities. A kind hearted man, he undertakes all the work that he does with diligence and care and says he feels blessed to be able to help those in need.

Frank England Kingston

Local philanthropist A retired farmer, Frank England has a proud history of supporting and investing in his local community of Kingston. For more than 60 years Frank has been involved in the local agricultural show, beginning as a 14-year-old sheep steward. For almost 50 years he has been convenor of the show's jumping competition, coordinating 170 events over two days. Frank also works on the show committee and is widely respected for the way he quietly gets on with the job. Frank's financial contribution to Kingston has been extraordinary. Frank bought and donated land to enable the Kingston Retirement Village to expand and build a much-needed further 12 units. He also donated \$130,000 to the District Council to help establish the Kingston Medical Centre. The Centre is now an integral part of the town, providing medical care to the whole community. Frank is also a volunteer guide at the lighthouse and donated \$4,000 for a watering system which he then installed himself. The Kingston community is indebted to Frank for his generosity and hard work.

Beverley Langley Cherry Gardens

Wildlife rescuer Bev Langley runs a voluntary animal rescue service and has rescued and rehabilitated more than 6,000 injured and orphaned animals. Without the support of government funding she relies on donations and the goodwill of others to carry out her work. More than 120 volunteers assist her with feeding animals, building enclosures and collecting or donating food for the Minton Farm Native Animal and Bird Refuge that she set up on her property. Her residents include everything from horses, cows and kangaroos to geese, sugar gliders and kookaburras. Those animals unable to be released due to injuries that would prevent them from fending for themselves are retained at the farm and used to educate the community. Many school groups visit the farm and Bev takes every opportunity possible to teach both children

and adults about wildlife, helping promote respect and understanding towards all animals. Every day Bev responds to many calls for help from organisations like the RSPCA, Belair National Park and the public. She is always there when a major environmental disaster occurs, assisting with the aftermath. Without financial reward, Bev has selflessly invested all her spare time into responding to the plight of our wildlife.

Rito Paparella Woodcroft

Role model and mentor Living in the working class area of Onkaparinga, Rito Paparella challenges young people to improve themselves, to find direction and confidence in life, and work towards better living standards. To this end, he has for several decades sought to involve young people in sporting activities. Since 1985, he has been involved in the development of the Christies Beach Football Club and made the policy that no child interested in being a player would ever be turned away. This has often meant helping to find the fees for those children from low income families. He was also the driving force behind the reinvigoration of the Sports and Recreation Club over which he currently presides. He has done all of this in a voluntary capacity whilst running his own business. Rito has a unique ability to encourage others to bring out their very best and at his Tyree factory he has employed many non-English speaking migrant workers and offered them extensive training and support in order to build their skills. As a result of his approach the government selected his factory as a pilot study into employee involvement. Rito is driven by a love of seeing those around him fulfil their potential and has enriched the lives of many who have crossed his path.