Australian of the Year Awards

Reflect. Respect. Celebrate

Tasmania

NINJA STADIUM

13 November 2026

2027

MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR

As Governor of Tasmania, I am pleased to recognise our 16 Tasmanian nominees in this year's Australian of the Year Awards and to acknowledge the outstanding contributions they have made to our community.

These Awards honour Australians who demonstrate excellence in their field, who give generously of their time and expertise, and who serve as role models for people across the nation.

This year's nominees have been selected from nominations submitted from right across Tasmania. They bring with them a wide range of experiences and achievements, yet each shares a commitment to strengthening the lives of others. Through their work, they support their communities, foster connection, and embody qualities we deeply value: integrity, compassion, determination and creativity.

What distinguishes these individuals is not only the impact of their efforts, but the spirit in which they contribute – with humility, dedication, and a genuine desire to make a positive difference. Their achievements reflect the strength and character of our state.

Although only four will go on to represent Tasmania at the national Awards in January, I extend my sincere appreciation to all 16 nominees. Each are a credit to Tasmania and Australia. I offer my warmest congratulations and heartfelt thanks for the service, the difference made, and the example set for others.

Caroline Wells

Her Excellency the Honourable Caroline Wells
Governor of Tasmania



2027

MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER



It is my greatest pleasure to welcome you to the 2027 Australian of the Year Awards for Tasmania. The Australian of the Year Awards offer us a moment to pause and reflect on what truly defines Tasmania – the character, generosity, and determination of our people.

Every year, we are reminded that remarkable things happen when individuals choose to step forward, lend their voice, and contribute to something larger than themselves.

This year's nominees embody that spirit in all its forms. They represent a broad range of experiences, backgrounds, and callings, yet stand united in their determination to contribute meaningfully. Their efforts, whether felt in a local neighbourhood or on a global stage, demonstrate the profound impact of service, leadership, and compassion.

Their work reminds us that meaningful change grows from persistence, courage, and a willingness to act when it matters. They encourage all of us to consider how we might contribute, uplift others, and help shape the future of our state.

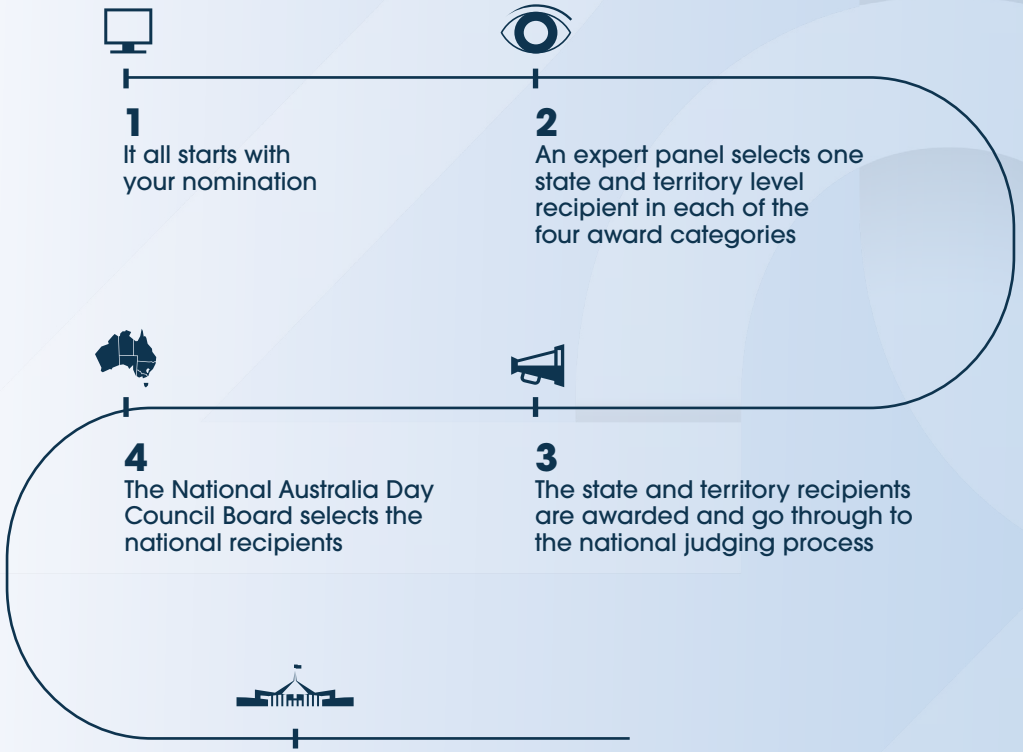
Today, we honour their achievements and the example they set.

On behalf of all Tasmanians, I extend my warmest congratulations to our 16 nominees. Thank you for your dedication, your generosity, and the difference you continue to make. I wish you every success in the Awards and in all that lies ahead.

Jeremy Rockliff MP
Premier of Tasmania

2027

THE AWARDS PROCESS



1
It all starts with your nomination

2
An expert panel selects one state and territory level recipient in each of the four award categories

3
The state and territory recipients are awarded and go through to the national judging process

4
The National Australia Day Council Board selects the national recipients

5
The four national recipients are awarded on Australia Day eve in Canberra

Want more information?

Visit the Australian of the Year Awards website **australianoftheyear.org.au** where you'll find latest news and profiles of Australian of the Year Awards nominees, recipients and alumni.

For more information on Australia Day, the Story of Australia campaign and the NADC, visit **australiaday.org.au**.

If our nominee stories bring anything up for you or you're concerned someone you know is at risk, please reach out to:
Lifeline on 13 11 14
Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636 or
13YARN, a crisis line for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

MATHEW DUGGAN
Bowel cancer campaigner



Mathew Duggan has run the length of Tasmania – twice – to raise awareness about early detection of bowel cancer, and how the disease can impact people of all ages.

Mathew was only 36 when he found out he had bowel cancer, a relatively young age to develop the disease. After successfully undergoing treatment, he was determined to use his own experiences to help others.

In 2025, Mathew ran from Cockle Creek south of Hobart to Stanley on the north coast in 12 days, signifying the 12 rounds of chemotherapy he went through. The following year, he repeated the journey in reverse, this time running 550km in just 10 days. Over the two years, he raised $126,000 for Cancer Council Tasmania and $150,000 for Bowel Cancer Australia, while also sharing the message that bowel cancer can afflict younger people, too.

Since completing the runs, Mathew has been a tireless campaigner and educator about the early detection of bowel cancer, openly talking about his own journey to teach others to recognise the early warning signs.

JENNIFER HAUSER
Cystic fibrosis physiotherapist



Jennifer (Jen) Hauser is the founder and president of CFPhysio.com Inc., a not-for-profit organisation that aims to educate physiotherapists and the community about the latest physiotherapy-based treatments for cystic fibrosis (CF).

The organisation brings together physiotherapists to share tutorials, videos, podcasts and offers learning modules for professionals to gain skills in CF physiotherapy management in support of people living with CF. Jen is an enthusiastic volunteer for the CF community, regularly participating in community events to raise funds to support individuals impacted by CF. Over the past 10 years, she has organised the 65 Roses for CF team, which runs in the annual City to Casino Fun Run & Walk in Hobart. Last year, members of CFPhysio.com, led by Jen, took part in the Crossing for CF across Australia to raise funds for education to CF clinics in low-to-middle income countries.

Jen's commitment and tireless energy are helping to improve access to resources and promote physiotherapy for everybody impacted by CF.

DR LILA LANDOWSKI
Neuroscientist and science communicator



Before the impact of AI and social media became a mainstream conversation, neuroscientist Dr Lila Landowski was sharing a warning about what our rapidly changing world was doing to the way we think, learn and pay attention.

Lila is a senior lecturer at the University of Tasmania, Board Director of Science & Technology Australia, Executive Director of the Australian Brain Alliance, a mentor, entrepreneur and WHO Fides Health Ambassador.

She is a leading voice in neuroscience, promoting awareness of brain health through talks and media appearances, and shaping conversations across government and education. Her TEDx Talk, *6 secrets to learning faster* is one of the most-watched TEDx Talks worldwide. Her video *Finding that connection© - neurons in a petri dish* has inspired hundreds of millions globally.

Lila received the 2026 Celestino Eureka Prize for promoting understanding of science and has been named as 'Superstar of STEM' by Science and Technology Australia.

DANNY MAYSON-KINDER
Founder, b kinder foundation



Danny Mayson-Kinder is challenging Australia's approach to bullying through her preventative kindness movement, b kinder foundation.

As founder of the b kinder foundation, Danny has channelled unimaginable grief into purpose after losing her 12-year-old daughter Billie in a tragic accident. What began as a tribute to Billie's compassionate spirit has become an evidence-informed charity that's influencing schools, workplaces and communities across the country.

Through the b kinder school program, b kinder summit and b kinder day, Danny has reached more than 400 schools and over 200,000 students. Her preventative approach teaches kindness as a practical, learnable skill – empowering young people to lead their own student-driven kindness movements.

Independent evaluation of the program shows the remarkable impact of Danny's work, including a 36% reduction in students feeling bullied and an 18% reduction in students witnessing bullying. Danny proves that kindness is a powerful, measurable force for change.

CHRISTINE CHILCOTT OAM
Community volunteer



For more than 40 years, Christine Chilcott has made an immeasurable contribution to her community in northern Tasmania as a volunteer across more than 30 organisations.

Her commitment to volunteering encompasses sporting clubs, aged care, education and community groups. She has worked on countless committees and boards, organised events and campaigned for support, never hesitating to offer her time and skills for the good of her community.

Today, Christine is active in about 10 organisations that benefit from her leadership and experience. She is still helping others in the community, running a weekly mobile shop that visits an aged care facility to deliver items to residents and foster social connectivity.

Christine balances the demands of her voluntary work with the challenges of running a farm and raising a family but is always willing to answer the call to help others. Her selflessness and dedication are an inspiration to those who follow her example.

BRUCE CORBETT AM AFSM
Volunteer firefighter and community transport volunteer



Bruce Corbett has served for five decades as a volunteer firefighter in the Tasmania Fire Service and is highly respected as a leader in emergency services.

Bruce joined the Wynyard Fire Brigade as a volunteer in 1977, quickly rising through the ranks to become brigade chief, a position he held for 26 years. During this period, he oversaw the expansion of the brigade, including responsibility for firefighting at Wynyard airport and the establishment of an ambulance station at Wynyard. He also continues to serve as a director on both state and national boards for fire services.

Bruce supports his community as a state board member and volunteer driver for Community Transport Services Tasmania, ensuring vulnerable residents can access vital medical appointments, pharmacies and pick up groceries. For his exemplary service to the community, Bruce was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the King's Birthday 2026 Honours List. Bruce's commitment and dedication over many years of volunteering is a model of selfless service to the community.

SAJINI SUMAR
Migrant and multicultural advocate



Sajini Sumar is the co-founder of the Multicultural Women's Council of Tasmania supporting migrant women and families. She has helped countless people build a life in Tasmania through her tireless work on behalf of migrants and multiculturalism.

Sajini's experience of living and working around the world as a registered nurse gave her an insight into the challenges faced by migrant women when settling in a new country. She has used these experiences to support newly arrived residents in Tasmania, helping them to access services, create social networks, find employment and build a new life.

Sajini is also a highly respected advocate for inclusion, multicultural health and cultural diversity, helping to strengthen communities and give a voice to people from all backgrounds.

She volunteers her time to numerous boards and advisory groups, and has been recognised on a national, state and community level for her outstanding contribution to promoting multiculturalism.

DANNY WALKER
Homelessness outreach volunteer



For more than 30 years, Danny Walker has been the driving force behind a mobile soup kitchen known as Danny's Bus, delivering food and support to people experiencing homelessness and disadvantage in Glenorchy and Hobart.

Danny's Bus is a regular fixture in the community, running twice a week to bring food and distribute staple items such as blankets and warm clothing to people in need. While Danny is the figurehead and organiser of the outreach service, its work is backed by a small army of volunteers who raise funds, source supplies, prepare food and distribute it to around 40 recipients each night.

At Christmas, Danny runs a special bus service, collecting people in the neighbourhood to share a Christmas dinner at a local church hall.

Danny epitomises the best of community service, selflessly dedicating his own time and resources without any fanfare to bring comfort to people experiencing homelessness and vulnerability.

GRACE CHIA
Solo hip-hop and R&B artist



Grace Chia is a hip-hop artist, creative leader and advocate reshaping Tasmania's music landscape by creating safer, more inclusive spaces for women and underrepresented young people. At 16, she founded CHIA Studios, a creative platform supporting emerging Tasmanian talent.

Grace has delivered more than 150 workshops using music and art to build confidence, advocacy, connection and belonging. CHIA Studios has produced more than 50 events, including Tasmania's first all-female hip-hop lineup, and delivered programs in youth justice centres, community houses, regional schools and Migrant Resource Centres.

Her music and advocacy challenge misogyny, racism and gender-based violence while creating opportunities for voices too often unheard. She has garnered over 250,000 streams, performed at over 200 events nationwide, and in 2025 she received the Australian Women in Music's Diversity Award. Through creativity, leadership and advocacy, Grace is showing how young people can build strong communities offering belonging and connection.

DR ABIGAIL DE WAARD
Equitable healthcare doctor



Dr Abigail De Waard is a Tasmanian doctor deeply committed to improving medical access for regional, rural and culturally diverse communities. Pursuing rural and remote placements in Tennant Creek, Cooma and among Aboriginal communities in regional NSW, Abigail contributes to research strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health systems.

Currently, Abigail is working in anaesthetics and critical care within the Tasmanian Health Service. She has also delivered Hospital at Home services, reducing travel and financial burdens for regional patients. Through her volunteer work with The Water Well Project, Abigail designs and delivers health literacy sessions to migrant and refugee communities across Tasmania, helping them to navigate the Australian healthcare system.

Previous volunteer work includes serving on a YWAM medical ship in Papua New Guinea, as an overnight volunteer with Ronald McDonald House Charities and in programs supporting children in foster care. Alongside her clinical work, Abigail also mentors junior doctors and medical students.

ROSIE PUTLAND
Disability consultant, storyteller and public speaker



Rosie Putland is driving significant disability reform by using her voice, expertise and lived experience to create pathways for people with disability to lead the conversation.

Based in Tasmania, Rosie co-founded Modality Co, a social enterprise that is embedding accessibility into her clients' communications, events and digital platforms from the ground up. Rosie also led national campaigns and created short-form content that translates complex policy into accessible, engaging messages in her work for Children and Young People with Disability Australia.

As the founder of the Tasmanian Accessibility Community, Rosie helps financially support accessibility initiatives for disabled rights events. Rosie co-produced and hosted two podcasts with Print Radio Tasmania. *Literacy Legends* tells the stories of people working to improve literacy rates in Tasmania and *Crip Culture* shares the careers of disabled creatives from around Australia.

In 2026, Rosie gave evidence at Australian Senate Committee hearings into the National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment Bill.

SHAKIRA ROBERTSON
Campaigner against violence toward women and children



Shakira Robertson is a fearless 22-year-old campaigner for the prevention of violence against women and children.

After her mother, Jacqui Lee Purton, was killed by her ex-partner in 2023, Shakira became the sole carer to her three younger brothers. Determined to honour her mother's memory, Shakira co-founded a grassroots initiative offering peer group mentoring and support for women and children called Her Strength. Her Story.

When her mother's killer received a more lenient manslaughter sentence due to a legal loophole, Shakira launched the legislative reform effort known as Jacqui's Law. Shakira is campaigning for amendments to the Tasmanian Criminal Code whereby vehicles would be classified as weapons when used to commit domestic violence offences. Shakira's online petition is gaining support across Tasmania.

Alongside her policy work, Shakira co-created the Butterflies and Boots Gala, an uplifting event for survivors of domestic or family abuse. Shakira is fearlessly reshaping Tasmania's response to domestic and family violence.



LOUISE COWAN
Founder, Shekinah House

Louise Cowan has built one of northern Tasmania's most important grassroots homelessness support services for people experiencing hardship.

Louise founded Shekinah House in 2014 to offer dignity, practical assistance and hope to Tasmanians who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or facing severe financial stress. Operating in central Launceston, staffed by more than 50 volunteers, Shekinah House has delivered over 8,800 meals, 2,750 showers and 2,700 loads of washing, becoming a trusted lifeline for people sleeping rough and for those experiencing crisis. Shekinah House has expanded its services – recently buying a 4-bedroom property debt free. Under Louise's leadership, the service has strengthened partnerships and created pathways into stable housing and community reintegration.

A compassionate and tireless advocate, Louise raises awareness of homelessness, mobilises local support and ensures every person who walks through the door is met with dignity, kindness and meaningful help. Her work embodies community-driven care at its best.



DANIEL EDWARDS
Founder and CEO, GreenSTEM Education

Daniel Edwards is opening world-class STEM opportunities for north-west Tasmanian students, connecting regional classrooms to engineering and innovation competitions across Australia and overseas.

As founder and CEO of GreenSTEM Education (Tasmania's first STEM education-focused charity), Daniel introduced the Greenpower electric vehicle competition to Australia – part of the global Greenpower Education Trust network. Daniel has grown the competition from one team at Montello Primary School into more than 50 teams competing across Tasmania and interstate.

Daniel's work has opened new educational pathways for regional students, connecting them to engineering, sustainability and real-world industry skills.

In 2026, Daniel took a team from Burnie to the United Kingdom as the first Australian F24 team to compete at the Greenpower International Final. Daniel has led this work as a volunteer while continuing to work as a classroom teacher.



GREG IRONS
Wildlife rescuer and conservationist

Greg Irons is a visionary wildlife conservationist who built and operates Tasmania's first wildlife rescue service and hospital.

Greg's commitment began while still in school after discovering an injured owl and spending a weekend trying to find help. He was left with the realisation that a rescue service didn't exist – a gap that stayed with him.

Greg set out to build this missing service. He started work at Bonorong Wildlife Sanctuary when he was 19 years old, ultimately purchasing Bonorong to fund these services at just 25, through a bold mix of vendor and bank finance.

Greg established a 24/7 statewide rescue network and personally trained more than 20,000 people in wildlife rescue. Bonorong volunteers and staff respond to over 22,000 rescue calls each year. Greg also built Tasmania's first wildlife hospital, which supports up to 5,000 patients a year. Under his leadership, Bonorong has grown to more than 80 staff and directs up to $3 million annually toward conservation.



RYAN WIGGINS
Disability and mental health ambassador

Ryan Wiggins is a disability and mental health ambassador who uses his lived experience of quadriplegia to drive awareness, community support and spinal cord injury research.

A former carpenter, Lauderdale/Cygnet footballer and state representative player, Ryan sustained a near-fatal C2 spinal cord injury in 2021 after diving into a pool, leaving him paralysed from the neck down.

Ryan now serves as an ambassador for the Perry Cross Spinal Research Foundation to raise funds and awareness for spinal cord injuries. He also spearheads initiatives such as the Paralysis Round in the Tasmanian State League and coordinates an annual Spinal Swing Day to raise money for spinal cord injury research.

Through his work for the Tasmania Devils Football Club, Ryan created the club's inaugural Mental Health Match in 2026. Ryan speaks to young people about mental health and resilience and has a long-term vision to establish a dedicated spinal recovery centre in Tasmania.

THE TROPHIES

The Australian National University (ANU) is committed to better outcomes for our community, the environment, our nation, and the world. As the national university, we feel immensely privileged to be the exclusive cultural partner of the 2027 Australian of the Year Awards recognising the outstanding service to the community that many Australians make.

This year we have developed original artistic and musical works to recognise Australia's highest achievers for the National Australia Day Council. The trophies for the 2027 Australian of the Year Awards are the stunning result of a collaborative effort by staff and students of the Glass Workshop in the ANU School of Art & Design.

The geometric nature of the design aims to represent the multiple facets that have shaped Australian society, embodying a nation that is confident in its leadership, contemporary in its outlook and distinguished by its diverse community. The facets also capture the points of the Southern Cross, the star of federation, and are rendered in a brilliant blue symbolising the Australian sky.

Each award has been created through a process of cast glass, and meticulously ground and polished by hand. The awards have been a wonderful project for students to apply their creative and technical skills to complete a professional commission.



RECOGNISING THE STATE'S FINEST

Since 1960, the Australian of the Year Awards have recognised people from across the country and from all fields of endeavour. This is just a snapshot of the recipients from Tasmania for the past five years. The full honour roll can be viewed at **australianoftheyear.org.au**

Australian of the Year

2026	Dr Jorian Kippax – Emergency doctor
2025	Sam Elsom – Founder, Sea Forest
2024	Stephanie Trethewey – Rural women's advocate and founder, Motherland
2023	John Kamara – Humanitarian and co-founder, Culturally Diverse Alliance of Tasmania and African Communities Council of Tasmania
2022	Craig Leeson – Documentary filmmaker and journalist

Senior Australian of the Year

2026	Julie Dunbabin – Nutritious eating visionary
2025	Associate Professor Penelope Blomfield – Gynaecological oncologist
2024	Reverend James Colville AM – Founder, Colony 47
2023	Dr Frances Donaldson – Doctor, frontline COVID-19 worker, prisoner advocate
2022	Bruce French AO – Agricultural scientist and Founder, Food Plants International

Young Australian of the Year

2026	Alyssia Kennedy – Life skills educator
2025	Ariarne Titmus OAM – Olympic swimmer
2024	Naarah – Actor, musician, Indigenous activist
2023	Meriem Daoui – Humanitarian and marathon runner
2022	Kaytlyn Johnson – Youth leader and singer-songwriter

Australia's Local Hero

2026	Emily Briffa – Social entrepreneur
2025	Keren Franks – Founder, Young Leaders of Tasmania
2024	Clair Harris – Founder, Tassie Mums
2023	Keith Parker – Volunteer ambulance officer and ammunition technical officer
2022	Kimberley Smith APM – Community volunteer with the Rotary Club of Sullivans Cove

* Names and post nominals of recipients in the Honour Roll are a reflection of the time they received the Award.

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

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