

MEDIA RELEASE

TUESDAY 8 NOVEMBER 2016

EMBARGOED UNTIL 7:35PM ADELAIDE TIME OR AS ANNOUNCED AT EVENT

2017 SOUTH AUSTRALIA AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARD RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED

2017 SA Australian of the Year – Kate Swaffer
2017 SA Senior Australian of the Year – Patricia Buckskin
2017 SA Young Australian of the Year – Paul Vasileff
2017 SA Local Hero – Reginald George Heading

The 2017 South Australia Australian of the Year Award recipients have been announced at a ceremony at Adelaide Oval this evening.

The South Australian Award recipients will join recipients from the other States and Territories as finalists for the national Awards to be announced on 25 January 2017 in Canberra.

The 2017 South Australia Australian of the Year is dementia advocate Kate Swaffer.

A humanitarian, advocate and activist for people with dementia, Kate Swaffer was diagnosed with the disease in 2008, just before her 50th birthday. Refusing to be defeated by the diagnosis, Kate has helped redefine the way the world views dementia and has driven improvements to services and outcomes for the 354,000 Australians currently diagnosed. Since then, Kate has completed three degrees and is currently undertaking her PhD. As Chair, CEO and Co-founder of Dementia Alliance International, Kate is a voice for the 47.5 million people worldwide living with dementia. She sits on numerous committees and councils, and was the first person with dementia to be a keynote speaker at a World Health Organisation conference. An accomplished author, Kate has written a number of books and articles, including *What the hell happened to my brain: Living beyond dementia*. By transforming tragedy into triumph, Kate is changing society for the better and showing others how to lead remarkable lives despite the obstacles.

The 2017 South Australia Senior Australian of the Year is 67 year old educator Patricia Buckskin.

A proud Narrunga Kurna woman, Patricia Buckskin grew up in a family of eight children in South Australia's Riverland. Her lifelong passion for Aboriginal education was sparked in 1972, when she was appointed to Mansfield Park Primary School as its first Aboriginal teacher aide. In 1987, following the formation of the South Australian Aboriginal Education Unit, Pat was appointed as the first Aboriginal state manager of aboriginal education workers – a position she held until her retirement in 2009. A strong advocate and sounding board for many, Pat drove the development of the first culturally-based education award in Australia, led committees and was instrumental in setting up the Kurna Plains Aboriginal School – the first public Aboriginal school established in an urban setting in Australia. After decades spent encouraging Aboriginal parents to have a voice in their children's schooling, Pat continues to contribute by working tirelessly on committees and councils to ensure all children have access to quality, enriching education.

The 2017 South Australia Young Australian of the Year is 26 year old fashion designer Paul Vasileff.

With a passion for fashion, Paul Vasileff stitched his first dress at the tender age of 11, created countless formal dresses for friends in his teens and was just 16 when he showcased his first fashion collection. The young boy who learnt to sew with his grandmother graduated from Milan's prestigious Europeo Istituto di Design and is now the brains behind couture label Paolo Sebastian. At just 26, this down-to-earth designer operates a growing business in Adelaide with thirteen staff. Paul's luxurious hand-made creations are favourites on the world's runways, are stocked in boutiques in New York and around the globe, and are worn by celebrities walking the red carpet at the Oscars and Logies. Determined to create a local brand, all Paul's designs are stitched in South Australia, and he has proven that there's no need to relocate to succeed in the high-octane world of fashion. Paul's recipe for success? Perfectionism, stubbornness and an enduring belief that there's no place like home.



The 2017 South Australia Local Hero is agriculturist Reginald George Heading.

Few people can claim to have coined a phrase, but Reginald George Heading can. In 1976, George was involved with for air freighting hundreds of stud dairy cattle to India after they were gifted by the Australian Government to aid herd improvement. George reported to the media that the Friesians travelled “cattle class” – creating the well-worn phrase that jetsetters know today. During his long career, George spent 25 years working in Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Oman, Bahrain and Bhutan to equip local farmers with technical and practical knowledge, helping them apply modern Australian dryland farming techniques to improve the sustainability of their pastures and the health of their livestock. He has lectured at colleges and universities around the world, making a tremendous impact on the viability of entire industries. George has also given his time in service to local community organisations around South Australia. He’s planted football ovals in Whyalla, established bowls clubs in Port Germein and rolled up his sleeves for the Rotary Club in Port Pirie.

Katrine Hildyard MP, Assistant Minister to the Premier, congratulated the Award recipients.

“It is such a great privilege to meet members of our South Australian community who have generously and tirelessly contributed to enriching the lives of our fellow South Australians and our South Australian community generally,” said Ms Hildyard.

“My wholehearted congratulations and thanks to all of the recipients who have given so much. These awards represent the recognition and thanks of all South Australians for what you have given and done for all of our benefit.”

National Australia Day Council CEO, Chris Kirby, said the South Australian Award recipients were community members the State could be proud of.

“The South Australian Award recipients are changing perceptions, breaking barriers, achieving at the highest level and giving their knowledge so others benefit – what an inspirational group,” said Mr Kirby.

Commonwealth Bank has proudly sponsored the Australian of the Year Awards for 37 years. Chief Executive Officer Ian Narev said it was an honour to acknowledge the South Australian Award recipients.

“Commonwealth Bank congratulates Kate, Patricia, Paul and George on becoming national finalists in the Australian of the Year Awards,” said Mr Narev.

“We are delighted to celebrate their achievements and we wish them all the best for the National Awards in January.”

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

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MEDIA CONTACT: Zannie Abbott 0418 274 291 / zannie@mediaopps.com.au
Nicole Browne on 0414 673 762 / nicole@mediaopps.com.au

EMBARGO NOTE: Media attending the Awards event may of course report award recipients as they are announced on stage OR follow Australian of the Year Awards on Twitter @ausoftheyear or Facebook for the awards announcements as they happen - once each award is announced, it can be reported.

Finalists do not know the outcome before event – please do not contact finalists until after embargo time. Any questions, please contact Nicole 0414 673 762.

FACEBOOK LIVESTREAM: Watch the livestream of the event from 6pm at <https://www.facebook.com/AustralianoftheYear/>

PHOTOS from the Awards announcement event can be downloaded as available from <http://www.australianoftheyear.org.au/news-and-media/media-enquiries/>

For more information on the Australian of the Year Awards or members of the selection panel, visit www.australianoftheyear.org.au and <http://www.australianoftheyear.org.au/news-and-media/selection-panel-members/>

