

MEDIA RELEASE
THURSDAY 1 NOVEMBER 2018

2019 SOUTH AUSTRALIA AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED

2019 South Australia Australian of the Year – Dr Richard Harris SC OAM
2019 South Australia Senior Australian of the Year – Reginald Dodd
2019 South Australia Young Australian of the Year – Eleni Glouftsis
2019 South Australia Local Hero – Megan McLoughlin

7:30pm Adelaide: The 2019 South Australia Australian of the Year Award recipients have been announced this evening at a ceremony held at Adelaide Oval.

The South Australia Award recipients will become part of 32 State and Territory recipients from around the country. These recipients will represent their state at the national Awards on 25 January 2019 in Canberra, where the four Australians of the Year will be announced.

The 2019 South Australia Australian of the Year is specialist anaesthetist and cave diver, Dr Richard Harris SC OAM of Toorak Gardens. In July 2018, Adelaide anaesthetist Dr Richard Harris made worldwide headlines when he joined an international team to rescue a group of 12 boys and their soccer coach from a flooded cave in Chiang Rai, Thailand. A diver with 30 years' experience and a specialist in aeromedical retrieval, Richard was leaving for a cave-diving holiday when he received the call for help. Under great pressure and putting his own life at risk, he swam through the narrow cave system to assess the health of those trapped, giving the medical all-clear for each evacuee, and administering an anaesthetic to each of them within the cave to facilitate their rescue. Richard was key to the rescue's success, showing character, determination and courage, and staying until the last person was safe. He has previously participated in complex diving recoveries, appeared in National Geographic documentaries and, in 2015, was recognised for his outstanding contribution to cave exploration. In 2017, he was awarded The Australasian Technical Diver of the Year.

The 2019 South Australia Senior Australian of the Year is 78 year old reconciliation advocate Reginald Dodds of Marree. Arabunna elder Reg Dodd has spent a lifetime advocating for his people. Using a Roget's Thesaurus, he interpreted complex legislation, making his first Native Title claim in 1998. At Reg's initiative, Lawyers for the Arabunna Marree People (LAMP) was created, with lawyers from all over Australia providing millions of dollars of pro bono legal assistance, including legal support for Native Title, which was granted to the Arabunna in 2012. Other LAMP initiatives included a submission for National Heritage listing of Arabunna country, now on the finalised priority assessment list; securing funding for heritage restoration works; and emergency assistance to individual Arabunna women and men. With a LAMP lawyer, Reg also co-designed and co-taught a law course at RMIT University on country. A loyal family man, Reg has led cultural immersion tours of the Lake Eyre region since 1996 to financially support the Arabunna Centre and promote reconciliation. He is also a magnificent photographic artist, holding many successful exhibitions.

The 2019 South Australia Young Australian of the Year is 26 year old AFL umpire Eleni Glouftsis of Brunswick. Eleni Glouftsis made history at the age of 25 by becoming the first woman to officiate Australian Football League (AFL) games as a field umpire. While in high school, she began umpiring for amateur leagues and was awarded an AFL Female Pathway Scholarship. Through her dedication to the sport, Eleni became the first female umpire in the South Australian National Football League before going on to umpire 33 senior games for the Victorian Football League. After working hard on her fitness levels, Eleni finally broke through at the highest level in 2017. With no female umpire to look up to in her own career, Eleni hopes her debut will open doors for other young girls who are passionate about professional umpiring. Her tenacity and commitment to overcoming barriers have enabled her to smash through this glass ceiling and redefine the role of women in sport. As a Greek-Australian, Eleni also inspires culturally diverse communities to be included in Australian institutions.

The 2019 South Australia Local Hero is organ donation advocate Megan McLoughlin of Tanunda.

Megan McLoughlin is the founder of Herd of Hope, which promotes organ donation to the community. The charity sought partnership with the University of South Australia to capture the need for mental health services for those regionally based affected by the cause. Serious medical complications left Megan legally blind. Shortly after, she found herself with acute renal failure, she was given only weeks to live – until a transplant saved her life. Megan is one of 64 women in the world to deliver two children post double transplant. This year, she has faced two cancer diagnoses, yet continues to focus her energy on improving the lives of others. In 2018, Megan overcame numerous setbacks & held a cattle drive on Bondi Beach to launch the Herd of Hope. Recently an event held in SA raised funds to alleviate the stress regionally based families face when seeking accommodation in Adelaide. Megan continues to inspire the community with a positive message of hope.

Premier of South Australia, The Hon Steven Marshall MP, said the Award recipients were inspirational for their achievements and contributions to our state.

“I sincerely congratulate Richard, Reg, Eleni and Megan for the extraordinary contributions they have each made to the broader South Australian community,” said the Premier.

“Each individual recognised has conducted themselves with passion and integrity; whether it be using their skills to help others at great risk, to forge a new path which others may follow, to preserve culture and country or overcome their own challenges to make a difference for others in need.

“They are extraordinary South Australians of whom we can be exceptionally proud.”

National Australia Day Council CEO, Ms Karlie Brand said the South Australia Award recipients’ stories showed the diverse ways in which people around the nation are contributing.

“The South Australia Award recipients are making a difference locally, nationally and internationally – we look forward to welcoming them to Canberra in January for the national awards,” said Ms Brand.

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

ENDS.

MEDIA CONTACT: 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. If you are not following the live announcements, you must wait until the embargo time to report.

PHOTOS: from the Awards announcement event can be downloaded as available from australianoftheyear.org.au

For more information on the Australian of the Year Awards visit <https://www.australianoftheyear.org.au/nominate/frequently-asked-questions/>