

Award Winners

Outstanding Individual Achievement Award

Ms Rosa Matto

A proud daughter of Italian migrants, Rosa Matto boasts an impressive 30-year career as a multifaceted figure in South Australia. Her accomplishments as a renowned celebrity chef, food writer, consultant, media personality, public speaker, and mentor to young women from diverse backgrounds reflect her unwavering determination and leadership. She has played a crucial role in high-profile events, bringing people together through the universal language of food.

Rosa's influence extends beyond her Italian heritage, as she consistently supports marginalised communities, earning recognition from the ZONTA Group and the South Australian Italian Association for her exceptional contributions to women and the arts. Rosa's steadfast commitment to promoting multiculturalism and fostering intercultural understanding makes her a deserving recipient for the 'Outstanding Individual Achievement Award'. Her long-term dedication and hands-on involvement in various clubs, charities, and causes set an exemplary standard for all.

Arts and Culture Award

Ms Elizabeth Sykora

For 20 years, Elizabeth Sykora from the City of Marion has supported artists showcasing their traditional culture through programs that have reached an estimated 62,000 people and raised awareness of multiculturalism.

Recent initiatives include performances by the Nexus Arts Orchestra; an interfaith forum to promote harmony; Refugee Week; a multicultural music and dance spectacular; and a Mosque open day. Elizabeth has also worked with the Shri Ganesha Hindu Temple and Parkholme Mosque to foster the understanding and inclusion of diverse religions.

Highly Commended Finalist

SLAVA Ukrainian Cultural Centre Inc

Respected across South Australia for its cross-cultural dancers, singers and musicians, SLAVA has participated in and organised numerous multicultural festivals and events since its inception in 2018. SLAVA has also supported newly arrived displaced Ukrainians to adjust to their new lives in South Australia.

Community Sector Award

Mr Nader Ibrahim

Six years ago, Nader Ibrahim co-founded the social enterprise, One Culture, employing migrant, refugee and indigenous youth and connecting young, vulnerable South Australians in the migrant and disability communities through sport.

As a member of the Australian Egyptian Society and active supporter of the South Australian Social Enterprise Council, Nader has organised community initiatives delivering vital needs, from promoting vaccination, to organising an international women's tournament to raise awareness of period poverty, which can be a significant barrier to sport participation.

STTARS – South East

As advocates for new arrivals and refugees across the Limestone Coast, the Mt Gambier chapter of the Survivors of Torture, Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Service travels long distances and works long hours to ensure the safety and comfort of vulnerable people.

They organise community forums and multicultural events in conjunction with the Australian Federal Police and South Australia Police to help develop relationships in communities from countries where authorities are not trusted. Their considerate, respectful and genuine care inspires confidence from the community.

Media Award

Mr Eric Ho

As a media personality across a host of platforms, including Facebook, WeChat, LittleRedBook and TikTok, this year's media award winner, Eric Ho, has reached an audience of more than 20,000 in myriad communities and countries.

Eric's unwavering commitment to multiculturalism is evident in his news reporting and enthusiastic promotion of various cultural events. His use of media to connect people is exemplified by his Chinese radio program - an invaluable lifeline, especially for older generations living in isolation and loneliness.

Highly Commended Finalist

Mr Tejinder Pal Singh Hallan

The judges highly commended Tejinder Pal Singh Hallan for his compelling story-telling through his TejJo TV channel, focused on Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Afghanistan and aligned communities. His linguistic versatility has enabled him to effectively communicate and connect with widespread audiences, fostering understanding of cultural diversity within South Australia.

Private Sector Award

Southern Cultural Immersion

Judges praised Southern Cultural Immersion's efforts to promote understanding and acceptance of Australia's First Nations people against a backdrop of racism, discrimination and division.

Kaurna owned and employing majority Aboriginal staff, the team's custodianship of the Living Kaurna Cultural Centre sees it sharing Aboriginal histories, cultures and stories to thousands of visitors annually – building respect, connection and a willingness to move forward as one.

Highly Commended Finalist

Dr Lalith Gamage

With a track record of serving rural and remote communities, paediatrician Dr Lalith Gamage was highly commended for his community leadership and dedication to child health, his innovation in health delivery and organ donation, and employment of workers from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

Public Sector Award

Lifetime Support Authority, People and Partnerships

The Lifetime Support Authority supports people seriously injured in road accidents. Exemplifying commitment to multiculturalism in the workplace, its People and Partnerships team has developed a strategy focussed on inclusion and belonging.

The team drives initiatives such as cultural and diversity training for clinical services providers who support those living with long term injuries, and celebrations for Harmony Day and Harmony Week for employees and their families. Its efforts to recruit and retain employees from different cultural backgrounds serves as a role model for other South Australian organisations.

Highly Commended Finalist

Rural City of Murray Bridge, Community Services

The Rural City of Murray Bridge is highly commended for more than 20 years of welcoming refugees and migrants – who they call ‘new neighbours’ – through events such as the annual Refugee Week “All-Culture Fest” celebration which engages more than 30 nationalities. In 2022, Murray Bridge won ‘Welcoming City’ accreditation for promoting understanding of diverse cultures.

Volunteer Award

Mr Rahim Zaidi

In a story of remarkable courage, Rahim Zaidi fled Afghanistan to spend several years in a refugee camp in Pakistan before migrating to Australia in 2008. He set about learning English and established his first restaurant in 2012, and second some years later.

Noting many young Afghans lacked recreational opportunities, he established the Ghan soccer team, beginning in 2012 with young men and expanding to young women in 2016. The Ghan Soccer Club is now a multicultural meeting point for some 160 diverse players, over a third of whom are female. He sponsored the inaugural Afghan soccer tournament bringing together teams from across Australia, and overseas. Not content to rest, Rahim generously continues to provide his time, energy, and money to support the success of the Ghan Soccer Club.

Senior Volunteer Award

Mrs Giovanna 'Jill' De Cianni

Giovanna 'Jill' De Cianni has worked tirelessly to build a career, a family and a community in the Campbelltown area since arriving in Australia in 1960 unable to speak English. In 2009 she established the twice-weekly heart foundation walking group at Thorndon Park, which now boasts 80 members.

Walkers benefit from the peaceful park atmosphere that helps manage their mental and physical health, boosts community connections and encourages conversations for people who have English as a second language.

In 2022, Jill was named one of the 10 Women of Campbelltown and appointed a member of the Campbelltown Council's Ageing Well Advisory Committee, making thoughtful contributions that help bring the community together.

Highly Commended Finalist

Mr Khalid Farooqi

Khalid Farooqi's community and cultural work spans 40 years since arriving in Adelaide in 1982. He founded the Pakistani Australian Association of South Australia and has been active in various multicultural organisations.

Now an elder, he is highly commended for guiding the Pakistani community to contribute its share in building a comprehensive multicultural mosaic in South Australia.

Youth Award

Ms Delnia Palani

Delnia Palani exemplifies resilience, service, and commitment. Raised in a refugee camp, she faced unimaginable hardships, including violence against families, war, starvation, and illness before arriving in Australia in 2000.

Determined to give back to her new home, Delnia learned multiple languages and excelled academically, obtaining a Bachelor of Health Science, a Master's in Clinical Nursing, and a midwifery degree.

Her dedication to improving antenatal care for culturally diverse women stems from her own childhood experiences. Working as a Registered Nurse/Midwife she is unwavering in her efforts to improve healthcare for vulnerable communities.

Highly Commended Finalist

Miss Jessica Williams

A certified youth worker, Jessica Williams is highly commended for supporting young immigrants and international students grappling with social isolation, homesickness, financial challenges, and housing issues.

At Flinders University she was elected as the People of Colour Officer on the Student Council and, in May 2023, she was honoured with the Spirit Super Connecting Communities Award from the City of Marion's Youth Collective Committee.