

Award Winners

Outstanding Individual Achievement Award

Dr Jelina Haines

A passionate advocate for multiculturalism, Dr Jelina Haines migrated to South Australia in 1997. She initially volunteered to support university students at remote Field Ecology Camps and went on to spearhead 52 minor programs, five major projects, three international educational programs and a host of community-led art projects. Her efforts helped revitalise local communities by creating income opportunities for Indigenous artists and their families.

Dr Haines had a significant artistic impact by collaborating with the Ngarrindjeri Cultural weavers at Camp Coorong on the lower Murray River. Together, they created numerous community woven sculptures of Ngarrindjeri totems, including a life-size Whale exhibited at the South Australian Museum and LeHavre Museum in France, and a Pelican and Murray Cod displayed at the National Australia Gallery and South Australian Maritime Museum. These projects united families, stories, and weavers, reinforcing their deep connections to the landscape and enduring laws.

The internationally award-winning research of Dr Haines focuses on the societal impact of digital technologies in marginalised communities, particularly Indigenous groups. Dr Haines currently volunteers as a Policy Advocacy Lead at Catalyst 2030 Australasia Chapter and serves as Chair at the Association for Information Science and Technology, USA. She has brought exchange students from Japan, Asia, Europe, and America, and mentors students from Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan in the areas of visual arts, archiving, and anthropology.

Arts and Culture Award

Mr Wonho Chong

For more than 50 years, 90-year-old Wonho Chong has been a pioneering force in Australia's multicultural arts, masterfully bridging Asian and Australian cultures through his internationally recognised martial arts leadership and metalcraft.

As founder of the Korea-Australia Friendship Association and a ninth Dan martial arts grandmaster, he has taught hundreds of students the principles of harmony and cultural understanding. In 1988 his GRAND-MASTERS exhibition brought together cultural masters from 10 nations for Australia's Bicentennial, while his metalwork fusing Korean, Japanese, and Australian elements is displayed in the Australian National Museum.

Highly Commended Finalist

Mrs Rehana Usman

For the past four years, textile artist and cultural educator Rehana Usman has enriched South Australia's multicultural arts scene through workshops in Indonesian Batik and Japanese Shibori dyeing. Her 2024 Adelaide Fringe Festival Shadow Puppetry show engaged young audiences in traditional storytelling. As an active volunteer and mentor, she has fostered cultural exchange through numerous festivals, including Fringe, SALA, and OzAsia, while supporting refugee communities through innovative art programs.

Community Sector Award

Power Community Limited

An arm of the Port Adelaide Football Club, Power Community Limited has united children from diverse backgrounds through Australian Rules football. Over the past two years, 980 students have participated in workshops with Port Power players, a program designed to celebrate cultural diversity, strengthen social cohesion and foster a sense of belonging. An added benefit is that students from a variety of backgrounds are introduced to playing Aussie Rules!

Media Award

Mr Fahim Hashimy

Fahim Hashimi has brought his journalistic skills and love of media to his new Australian home, initially researching and filming a documentary on the history of the Afghan cameleers, whose descendants he continues to support today by celebrating this little-known history.

Fahim also supports and connects often hard to reach multicultural communities through Farda TV, launched in 2009 on Channel 44. Since its inception he has donated many voluntary hours to programming in up to eight languages and has expanded its reach to social media and YouTube, making it a vital information source for many.

Highly Commended Finalist

Ms Monica Sharma

Since arriving in South Australia in 2018, Monica Sharma has been championing multiculturalism showcasing the stories of our diverse communities on SBS Radio, reporting on issues, community events and cultural festivals. With 24 years in media in both India and Australia, Monica is also a regular contributor to SBS's Tamil and other language programs, aiming to celebrate the contributions of migrants to South Australia.

Private Sector Award

Joint Winner

Mr Nick Shrestha

Nick Shrestha founded the industry placement business, Career Panacea, supporting people from 32 nationalities to connect with career opportunities, and promoting multiculturalism and inclusivity with Australian employers.

His volunteering efforts in career seminars, mentorship programs and networking events have helped more than 400 multicultural candidates bridge the gap between education and employment. Nick is the first Nepalese in Australia honoured in the annual '40 Under 40' business awards and has also featured in Forbes' Under 40 for his business achievements.

Joint Winner

IKEA Adelaide

IKEA Adelaide's Refugee Workforce Inclusion program is an outstanding example of corporate leadership in addressing refugee employment in South Australia. What started as an eight-week paid work placement program in 2020, transitioned to a permanent pillar of recruitment in 2023.

Thirty refugees have secured meaningful work since its commencement and of these 80% have remained employed at IKEA. The results serve to inspire other firms to welcome refugees into their workforce for deeper cultural connections leading to a better customer experience.

Public Sector Award

Mr Farid Nait-Ladjemil

Australian Federal Police (AFP) Officer Farid Nait-Ladjemil's efforts to promote harmony and unity in South Australia through a large number of cultural activities has enhanced respect for the AFP among diverse communities. With a focus on youth, Farid is a mentor and positive role model who is building trust in authority and instilling society responsibility.

Highly Commended Finalist

Fregon Anangu School

Fregon Anangu School has made considerable investment in young women's and men's programs to educate, empower and foster respectful behaviours, and further, uniting Anangu staff with Piranpa educators to enhance culturally informed education.

Volunteer Award

Joint Winner

Ms Maria Berekally

For the past eight years, Maria Berekally has volunteered more than 400 hours teaching English to new arrivals and people for whom English is an additional language at the City of Tea Tree Gully. She has delivered classes to more than 1100 students from diverse cultural backgrounds ranging from Afghanistan to Syria to China to Sudan. Her classes offer far more than just English lessons, giving students a chance to form meaningful connections and new friendships.

Joint Winner

Ms Mursal Jamshedi

Mursal Jamshedi settled in Australia after escaping the Taliban in Afghanistan and has since used her personal experiences to support others facing similar challenges. She founded the Afghan Culture Association in 2018 and played a pivotal role in resettling Afghan refugees, providing them with emergency accommodation, orientation services and access to health, education and employment resources. She also facilitates trauma rehabilitation, offers English and driving classes and advocates for Afghan women to participate in sports and cultural exchanges.

Senior Volunteer Award

Joint Winner

Mrs Balbir Kaur Grewal

Balbir Grewal has devoted some 44 years to volunteering in Adelaide and regional South Australia. She helped established the first Sikh temple in South Australia and the Australia Sikh Games. A teacher by profession, she founded the Guru Nanak Punjabi School to teach and promote Punjabi language, culture and traditions to the next generation. Balbir started a Punjabi Folk Festival in 2010 under the name 'Lohri Mela' to promote multiculturalism and bring the wider community together.

Joint Winner

Mrs Yasmeen Kajani

Yasmeen Kajani has dedicated almost 35 years to multiculturalism, serving on the board of the Pakistani Association of South Australia and promoting its programs. She was instrumental in setting up the Urdu School in Adelaide to preserve cultural heritage, volunteering as a teacher for 12 years. Besides helping new arrivals from the Indian Sub-continent, she was a much-needed support and guidance for the families affected by domestic violence. Yasmeen also mentored medical students and registrars in regional South Australia.

Youth Award

Harmony Club

For the past two years, the Harmony Club has transformed their school's cultural landscape with innovative initiatives such as establishing a dedicated prayer space, orchestrating an 800-ribbon unity campaign, and leading their school to consecutive victories in the Port Adelaide Football Club's Multicultural Cup. Through their vision, this trio of student leaders has developed significant community partnerships and created lasting change, including a cultural flags display and regular celebrations of diversity. Their successful model of student-led cultural inclusion is now being studied by the Department for Education for broader implementation across South Australian schools.