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All the finalists in the The Advertiser-Sunday Mail Woman of the Year Awards 2021

From COVID-19 warriors to sporting young guns, the Advertiser-Sunday Mail Woman of the Year awards will tonight honour our best.

Jackie Tracy and [Rebecca DiGirolamo](#)

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The Advertiser - Sunday Mail Woman of the Year Awards 2021

South Australian women are among the fiercest in the nation – they are leaders in their field. From COVID-19 warriors to sporting young guns, SA women are challenging the status quo, defending our rights and

protecting our freedom.

Celebrate them and their achievements as we reveal the finalists across six categories in The Advertiser-Sunday Mail Woman of the Year Awards, ahead of International Women's Day.

The [winners will be announced tonight](#) at a gala ceremony at SkyCity Adelaide.

One inspirational woman will be named as our Woman of the Year.

Read more about these amazing women below.

OCPSE LEADER OF THE YEAR

The Honourable Vickie Chapman



Attorney-General Vickie Chapman with Zero, SA's inaugural canine court companion at the Adelaide Supreme court. Photo: Tait Schmaal.

Kangaroo-Island born and raised, the veteran politician made history becoming SA's first female Deputy Premier and Attorney-General in 2018. On the conservative side of politics, she has turned her considerable energies to bold legal reform – including tackling the scourge of domestic violence, and contentious abortion and prostitution law reform.

Professor Dr Nicola Spurrier

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Prof Spurrer has been dubbed SA's "Covid Queen" for her handling of the state's response to the pandemic Picture: NCA NewsWire / Emma Brasier

SA's Chief Medical Officer needs no introduction after her front and centre role during the COVID crisis. A charismatic communicator, imbued with quiet authority, she has led the state's response to the pandemic earning bouquets – and a few brickbats – along the way. With her own fridge magnets, not to mention "St Nicola" stickers, there is no doubt a star has been born.

Heather Croall





Adelaide Fringe director Heather Croall. Picture: Lee Knowles

The director and CEO of the Adelaide Fringe director stared down the pandemic declaring the show must go on. Without the usual headline acts from overseas, and with interstate border closures a constant threat, she prepared for a 2021 festival like no other – with about 80 per cent SA acts, never losing her effervescent manner and can-do attitude. Fringe director and chief executive since 2015, this Whyalla-born dynamo, with a wealth of international experience in the arts, has become a beloved figurehead of an iconic event.

Commissioner Helen Connolly



SA Commissioner for Children and Young People Helen Connolly.

AA's first Commissioner for Children and Young People has a passionate commitment to achieving better outcomes for kids – and listening to their voices. Her actions in the past year have included sending out thousands of postcards to children to better hear what matters to them most and how adults can better support them. Throughout her career, she has been an active advocate for the wellbeing of Australian families and children, focusings on early intervention and prevention. She is Co-Chair of Reconciliation SA.

Wendy Johnson





Wendy Johnson's leadership during COVID saw Glenunga High post its best ever SACE results. Photo: Chris Russell

This tireless educator heads SA's second largest public school, with pupils from 76 different nations, and has spearheaded its radical transformation into one of the top-performing schools in Australia. Her contributions do not stop at Glenunga International High School, but to the broader education system as Marshall Government appointee to review SACE, a member of the Gonski 2.0 panel and vice-president of the SA Secondary Principals' Association. Her leadership during COVID saw Glenunga High post its best ever SACE results despite the challenges of 2020, and continues to record outstanding scores by its International Baccalaureate diploma candidates.

Tanya Hosch



AFL's GM of Inclusion and Social Policy Tanya Hosch. Picture: NCA NewsWire / Martin Ollman

As the AFL's General Manager of Inclusion and Social Policy, this pioneer has used her position to advance the place of women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and gender-diverse people in the sport, and deliver a framework to curb racism against players. She has been at the forefront of the national conversation about constitutional recognition for First Nations people. She is 2021 South Australian of the Year.

Girl About Town RISING STAR

Alicia Beik



Alicia Beik.

An asylum seeker from Iran, this migrant activist is a campaigner for affordable housing. Arriving with little English and few resources, she founded Rubies House Company to address housing issues. She developed the Affordable Sustainable Housing Program to help lower-income locals overcome housing barriers while providing jobs to newly arrived migrants. Alicia also volunteers and works with non-profit groups to empower and educate women.

Isobel Marshall & Eloise Hall





Taboo co-founders Isobel Marshall – the 2021 Young Australian of the Year – and Eloise Hall Picture: Brenton Edwards

In 2017, these young social entrepreneurs co-founded Taboo, which sells ethical sanitary products, with a mission to tackle period poverty. Their efforts are changing the lives of disadvantaged girls here and overseas. They were still in high school when a leadership conference inspired them to establish their cause-driven business. Their goal then and now is to help girls and women around the world by breaking down the stigma around menstruation and providing greater access to hygiene products.

Darcie Brown



Darcie Brown at The School Sports Awards at the SA Museum, Wednesday, February 10, 2021. Picture: Brenton Edwards

The youngest person to be signed to the Adelaide Strikers at 16, this cricketing star is the winner of the Young Gun Award for Under 23s. Last October, she made her Women's Big Bash League debut – taking a formidable 3-13 – at the age of 17. She undertook her Year 12 exams from the WBBL COVID hub in Sydney. Just last week, she was selected in the Australian Women's Cricket Team squad to tour NZ in March – and little wonder as she bowls at speeds around 120km per hour.

Tessa Deak



Tessa Deak.

At just 20, this passionate young woman leads from the front. She is the founder of the Chronic Illness Support Limestone Coast network, with more than 100 members. Tessa, of Mount Gambier, also is also the founder and chair of the 2019 and 2020 Wellness and Wellbeing Festival, showcasing local business and services. Tessa is a Headspace Youth Ambassador, working to open up the conversation around mental health, and raising awareness about depression and anxiety at schools.

Anne Hatchard





2020 Crows club champion Anne Hatchard. Picture: Tom Huntley

Anne Hatchard is the reigning 2020 Crows club champion, was last year named an All-Australian and also jointly won the SANFLW best and fairest medal even though she only played half the season.

INSPIRATION

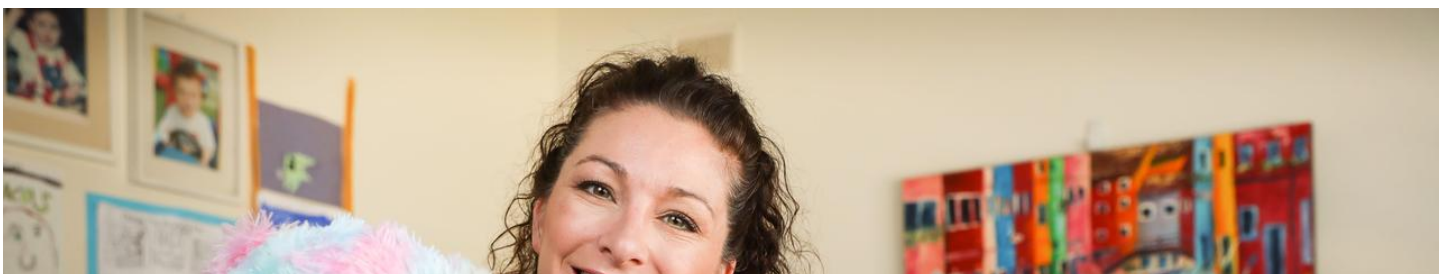
Erin Faehrmann, Youth Opportunities



Helping to turn young lives around. Erin Faehrmann (right).

As CEO of this non-profit that partners with schools, Erin and her staff are turning around the lives of disadvantaged young people. A dynamic pivot to online programs during COVID ensured young people did not miss out on support developing lifelong skills and confidence to thrive. It has been said that where it operates, this program has resulted in a 53 per cent reduction in the number of students at high risk of developing a mental health disorder.

Rikki Cooke, Treasure Boxes





Rikki Cooke's non-profit organisation Treasure Boxes provides assistance packages to families in need. Photo: Russell Millard / AAP.

Founding her sustainable charity in 2015, this social worker and emergency carer has taken it from strength to strength, fulfilling its core mission – to provide essential children's goods to families at risk of poverty and homelessness, and fleeing domestic violence. The goal is to alleviate hardship and ease trauma. In 2020, more than 7500 treasure boxes were provided, supporting more than 1500 babies and children. Coupled with a strong environmental focus, as it rehomes preloved items, Treasure Boxes is one of SA's fastest growing children's charities.

Alana Giaccio, All Abilities Cheer and Dance



Alana Giaccio with students Joshua, 9, and Charlie, 5 from Evanston Gardens in The Heights School Gym, Modbury Heights, S.A. Alana has opened SA's only cheer and dance studio. Photographer Emma Brasier.

After a 2012 back injury and stress fracture, Alana's lifelong dream of a career in dance was over. But eight years later, she launched her own studio – All Abilities Cheer and Dance (AACD). It's the only studio in SA

that offers recreation, competition and online cheer and dance classes under one roof for people of all ages with all types of disabilities.

Holly Scott



Road crash survivor and road safety advocate Holly Scott. Picture: RAA

Road Safety advocate Holly Scott has used her own devastating road accident – spending 15 days in a coma and needing to learn to walk and talk again – to campaign to help others. Approached by SA Police and The Advertiser to feature in a new campaign, she became the face of Driven: The Journey of Holly Scott. The seven-part documentary details her accident, the impact on her life and the people involved in her long road to recovery. She has shared her story with thousands of young people through the RAA Street Smart event, and been nominated as SA’s candidate for Young Australian of the Year 2021. She has started a Facebook group to support people with a brain injury, and is a regular speaker at schools and community groups.

Eleni Glouftsis





AFL umpire Eleni Glouftsis. Photo: Brenton. Edwards

Awarded an Order of Australia Medal in the 2021 Australia Day honours for her services to Australian Rules football, this sports trailblazer has spearheaded many firsts with a stated ambition to pave the way for other girls and women. She became the first woman to umpire a men's AFL match in 2016 and the first woman to umpire a Showdown at Adelaide Oval in May last year.

INNOVATOR

Dr Kylie Dunning, University of Adelaide



Dr Kylie Dunning has developed a world-first embryo health check for more accurate IVF diagnosis with funding from The Hospital Research Foundation. Photo: Tait Schmaal.

In groundbreaking reproductive biology research, this scientist is developing new technologies that overcome the need for invasive and inaccurate cell biopsies to determine the viability of embryos – using light to take a “molecular photo”. A fierce advocate for STEM, she has presented to more than 1000 school students.

Dr Katharina Richter, Basil Hetzel Institute for Translational Health Research



Dr Katharina Richter, NHMRC Biomedical Researcher in the Basil Hetzel Institute for Translational Health Research, The University of Adelaide.
Photo: Andrew Beveridge

This biomedical researcher has developed and patented a revolutionary approach to fighting superbugs by feeding bacteria poisonous food. An award-winning biomedical researcher, with a PHD from the University of Adelaide, and work stints in Europe, NZ and Australia, she is focused on developing new treatments against infections with antibiotic-resistant bacteria – one of the greatest threats to human health worldwide. Her aim is to bring innovative antibacterial treatments from bench to bedside.

Another mission is science education through public speaking, outreach activities and STEM workshops at schools.

Professor Karen Reynolds, Flinders University





Professor Karen Reynolds.

Director of Flinders University's Medical Device Research Institute, the professor has led her team to a win for Excellence in Science and Industry Collaboration in 2020. As COVID-19 triggered huge demand for personal protective equipment (PPE) for people working at the medical front line, she harnessed the university's advanced facilities and world-class cross-disciplinary personnel to provide vital services. With the support of the SA Government, and in collaboration with UniSA, the team established the South Australian Mask Testing Facility. The facility's function was then extended to include testing of surgical gowns. She is now promoting wider applications for innovations first driven by the pandemic response.

Dr Yan Jiao, University of Adelaide



Adelaide University Professor Dr Yan Jiao.

A senior lecturer, this chemical engineer's "green" research is into developing innovative catalyst materials that can convert clean and inexhaustible energy resources to transportable fuels, to replace the traditional fossil fuels. Winner of a 2020 Tall Poppy Award, she has been recognised as a national Rising Star by The Australian based on research performance.

Associate Professor Maria Inacio, SAHMRI, UniSA





Epidemiologist Associate Professor Maria Inacio. Picture: Andrew Beveridge

This epidemiologist leads a team delving into the causes of good or poor quality aged care, and building evidence and tools to reduce the chance of negative outcomes. This area is of great concern with an ageing population and issues in the sector so significant they have resulted in a Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. She has been awarded \$8 million in research funding, published over 145 scientific articles, and has been awarded several prestigious institutional and national awards including the 2020 Information Technology in Aged Care Award.

COMMUNITY CHAMPION

Kali Graham





Paramedic Kali Graham.

A proud Narungga woman, this young paramedic was the first person from her family to graduate from university. Her heritage has drawn her to work in Whyalla, where vast distances and limited resources are among the challenges. She acts as a mentor through Solid Starts, a program designed to help Aboriginal high school students learn about health careers. She also took part in Flinders University's Inspire Mentorship program.

Meg Clothier



Meg Clothier.

This South Australian occupational therapist founded Two Young Nomads with her husband. Just weeks after marrying, the two embarked on their 2020 mission, which has taken them across vast distances to drought-affected farms, where they act as caretakers for free allowing farming families to take a respite break from their everyday lives.

Sabrina Davis





Sabrina Davis in her backyard in Gosse, Kangaroo Island. Picture: Supplied

COVID-19 shut down community sport and gatherings which the people of Kangaroo Island would normally have relied on to help deal with the devastation of last summer's bushfires. After losing her home, this resilient islander launched the Humans of KI Facebook page, to share the stories of locals putting the island back on track. A campaign running alongside has also raised \$60,000 to replace critical firefighting equipment that farmers, always on the front line of rural firefighting, lost in the blaze.

Dana Mitchell



Dana Mitchell from the Kangaroo Island Wildlife Park with injured Koala Ash in Parndana, Kangaroo Island on December 16, 2020. Picture Simon Cross

This wildlife warrior and her husband rescued more than 600 koalas on Kangaroo Island during the tragic bushfires. In response to the devastation, they founded an animal rescue centre, run through their Kangaroo Island Wildlife Park. Their Koala Rescue Centre is now collaborating with universities to fund research into

koala genetics, oxalate nephrosis and other issues to safeguard the species for future generations. Dana and her husband were honoured by Hollywood star Matthew McConaughey as Australian Local Legends.

Sallee Shepherd



Murray Bridge Young Citizen of the Year Sallee Shepherd, at Taillem Bend, Tuesday, December 29, 2020. Photo: Morgan Sette

As Murray Bridge’s Young Citizen of the Year, Sallee is a bright light in her Murraylands community, immersed in all aspects of life from events like Christmas parades to being captain at the Taillem Bend Netball Club and creating an art installation. She was mayor of the Murray Bridge Youth Council and represented the Coorong District at the Youth Suicide Prevention Forum and been part of the Coorong Connection Youth Network. She is the winner of an Australian Defence Force Long Tan Youth Leadership and Teamwork Award; Santos Regional Service Award; and a 2020 Scouts SA Leadership Award, as well as an Order of Australia Association SA Branch 2020 Student Citizenship Award. The young gun also has her own bakery business – Sallee’s Cupcakes.

SKYCITY HOSPITALITY HERO AWARD

Emma McCaskill





Emma McCaskill

Having forged a hugely successful international career, highly decorated chef Emma has turned her focus to educating the next generation of chefs. The former Magill Estate Restaurant co- executive chef has taken up a new role with the Adelaide Institute of Hospitality, helping connect the training college with restaurants. She also works with innovative COVID-inspired initiative Chefs on Wheels.

Irina Santiago-Brown, Inkwell Wines



Irina Santiago-Brown

This Brazilian-born powerhouse is at the forefront of sustainability and has just developed an innovative new winery management app Cellar Chimp. Her sustainable winery and cellar doors also welcomes overnight guests in award-winning accommodation.

Laura Carter, Unico Zelo Wines



Laura Carter.

Leading an all-female team, winemaker Laura has gone from strength to strength at this Gumeracha winery, distillery and cellar door during this challenging year. Unico Zelo won the 2021 Best of Wine Tourism Award for 'Innovative Wine Tourism Experience' for 'Wine For The People' – the daily live streamed happy hour they produced when COVID lockdowns hit Australia.

Sali Sasi, Leigh Street Wine Room



A business and branding queen and breast cancer survivor, Sali's latest venture, LSWR, has won a swag of prestigious awards since opening in 2019, including 2020 Best New Haunt in the Australian Wineslinger Awards. Sali has been an outspoken advocate for the hospitality industry during the darkest days of COVID.

Bethany Finn



Bethany Finn

Leaving behind her role in a five-star hotel restaurant, Bethany is now executive chef in residence for Life Care, with the goal of bringing her “joy of cooking to our older loved ones”. Most recently the founding executive chef of the Mayfair Hotel, she also opened the multi-award winning Urban Bistro. A longtime trailblazer, she was the first woman appointed as executive chef at the Hilton Adelaide.

Public sector trailblazers at record high

South Australia's public service is leading the way in gender equality, with one in every two executives now women through a significant cultural and policy shift in under seven years.

Latest figures show the proportion of public sector female executives reached a record 52.7 per cent as of June last year.

In terms of headcount, there were 727 female executives and 651 male executives.

This is an increase from 51 per cent in 2019 and almost double the growth since 2014, following the appointment of South Australian Commissioner for Public Sector Employment Erma Ranieri.

“If we don’t actually have women, and diversity in thinking, in our executive ranks, then you can never influence what are important policy decisions for half of our population,” Mrs Ranieri said.

Addressing “unconscious bias” in the recruitment process, role-modelling a commitment to diversity and redesigning roles to enable flexible work were key policy drivers to gender equality and diversity at the top, she said.

Mrs Ranieri said the future looked bright. “I see very strong women and women who have been nurtured to expect what they are striving for and not compromise themselves, to think for themselves and expect support for caring at home as a shared responsibility,” she said.

Her comments come as South Australia prepares to mark International Women’s Day on March 8. It also follows the release of annual data showing Australian women are taking home \$242.20 less in full-time average weekly earnings than men.

The Office of the Commissioner of Public Sector Employment is supporting The Advertiser and Sunday Mail’s celebration of SA women through its Women of the Year Awards, first held in 2019.

“The Advertiser and Sunday Mail have been strong advocates for driving equality and supporting South Australian women,” Sunday Mail editor Jessica Leo-Kelton said. “Our annual Woman of the Year Awards celebrate inspiring and trailblazing South Australian women across a multitude of categories.”

This year’s awards finalists across six categories include SA’s Chief Medical Officer Professor Nicola Spurrier, Commissioner for Children and Young People Helen Connolly, director and chief executive of the Adelaide Fringe Heather Croall, Young Australian of the Year Isobel Marshall and asylum seeker and migrant activist Alicia Beik.

The winners will be announced on Thursday night at a gala ceremony at SkyCity Adelaide. One inspirational woman will be named as our Woman of the Year.

Vice President-elect Kamala Harris will make history when she becomes the first woman and woman of colour to hold the job in the White House.



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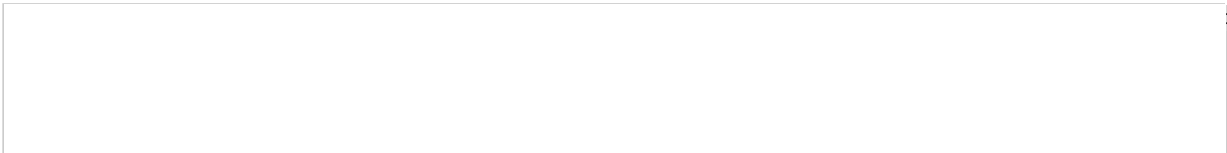
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