

Ruby Awards 2025 Winners

Outstanding Community Event or Project

The Knowledge Project, Kuma Kaaru and Nucleus

The Knowledge Project was founded by Jack Buckskin (Kuma Kaaru) and Chris Kellett (Nucleus). As a cultural educator, Jack frequently found himself repeating foundational information, limiting time for deeper conversations on Aboriginal culture, history and language.

In response, The Knowledge Project was developed in partnership with Kuma Kaaru, Nucleus Creative Agency and the City of Adelaide. The online platform uses artistic and cinematic storytelling to communicate complex cultural knowledge, bridging Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal perspectives and fostering greater understanding.

Launched in July 2024, the platform debuted videos on Kurna modern history and spirituality, presenting these topics through emotionally engaging storytelling.

Following the launch, four in-person events were held to strengthen community connection and provide opportunities for open, judgment-free discussion.

The project continues to evolve through community feedback, including submitted questions, collaborations and insights from events, ensuring future content responds to community needs and supports shared understanding.

Outstanding Regional Event or Project

Kulinma – Wellbeing Project, Anangu Schools Partnership

Kulinma, meaning “deep listening,” is a series of 11 short films exploring wellbeing themes relevant to Anangu culture. Narrated in Pitjantjatjara and English, the films were developed across eight schools in the APY Lands and two in the far west of South Australia within the Anangu Schools Partnership.

Coordinated by Artist in Residence James Parker, five students from each school participated in planning, script development, storyboarding, set construction, and the creation of puppets and props. Students also supported filming, including lighting, framing and special effects.

Working alongside Anangu co-coordinators, community members and Elders, students wrote and translated scripts, performed with puppeteers and recorded voiceovers in both languages.

The films explore wellbeing themes including Teasing, Helping Friends, Listening, Health, Being on Country, Lifting Spirits, Shame, Healthy Country, Keeping Out of Trouble, Danger, and Bedtime.

Outstanding Work, Event or Project for Young People

Neo, Art Gallery of South Australia

In 2024–25, Neo presented six themed events for young people aged 13–17 at the Art Gallery of South Australia. Each event responded to the interests and concerns of South Australian teens, inviting artists, performers and collaborators to create unique experiences for up to 800 participants.

Neo is a large-scale, teen-led arts and social experience. Collaboration is central to the program, connecting young people with diverse artforms and youth arts organisations across South Australia.

As the only program of its kind nationally, Neo sets a benchmark for youth engagement in cultural institutions. Delivered as a free, large-scale initiative supported by philanthropy, it expands the potential of public programming for young audiences.

Outstanding Work or Event Outside a Festival

Adhocracy – 15th Anniversary, Vitalstatistix

Adhocracy 2024 marked the 15th anniversary of Vitalstatistix's national arts hothouse, a key platform for contemporary and experimental performance development in Australia.

Since its inception in 2010, Adhocracy has provided artists with opportunities to test new ideas and audiences with insight into performance-making processes.

Co-curated by Jason Sweeney and incoming Artistic Director/CEO Jennifer Greer Holmes, the 2024 program departed from the open call format, presenting 16 invited projects from past participants and revisiting significant works.

The anniversary program supported the development of bold and diverse new work while showcasing South Australia's contemporary arts ecology to a national audience. It included artist talks, workshops, an artist gathering, and commissioned audio-visual installations projected onto the Waterside Workers Hall. The program also extended to surrounding venues, including Harts Mill and Post Office Projects Gallery + Studios.

Outstanding Work or Event Within a Festival

Songs Inside World Premiere, Adelaide Film Festival 2024

Songs Inside is a feature-length documentary following a group of women in the Adelaide Women's Prison as they explore the creative and therapeutic potential of music over six months.

Premiering at the 2024 Adelaide Film Festival to a sold-out audience of over 700 people at the Capri Cinema, the session was one of the festival's fastest-selling events.

Led by Barkindji singer-songwriter Nancy Bates, participants wrote original songs and learned the ukulele. The process revealed experiences of trauma and addiction while demonstrating the role of creative expression in fostering connection and resilience. The project culminated in a performance with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, the largest concert staged within an Australian prison.

The premiere event included a live performance by Nancy Bates and five participants who had been released from prison, accompanied by members of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra. The participants also shared personal reflections, creating a powerful experience for both audience and performers.

Outstanding Collaboration

nyilamum song cycles – Dr Lou Bennett AM, Paul Stanhope and the Australian String Quartet, in association with Binung Boorigan

The Australian premiere of *nyilamum song cycles* at the Adelaide Festival 2025 brought together Dr Lou Bennett AM, Paul Stanhope, the Australian String Quartet, and Binung Boorigan.

Building on its 2024 premiere in Amsterdam, the expanded production realised Dr Bennett's vision for a work tracing a journey from dawn to dusk, weaving language, story and contemporary reflections on land, identity and resilience.

The collaborators combined complementary expertise to develop a cohesive and immersive work. The production incorporated spoken word, ambient recordings from Taungurung Country by sound designer Hamish Keen, and lighting design by Chris Petridis.

The program featured works by Dr Bennett and Paul Stanhope, including *nyilamum song cycles*, co-composed and commissioned by the ASQ. Presented at Adelaide Town Hall, the production highlighted the strength of collaborative practice in creating a powerful, site-responsive performance.

Outstanding Contribution by an Organisation or Group

Gray Street Workshop

Since its establishment in 1985, Gray Street Workshop has been dedicated to creating, sharing and supporting contemporary craft practice.

The workshop has played a significant role in shaping Australia's contemporary craft sector, fostering ambition, experimentation and artistic excellence.

Its impact is far-reaching, with more than 100 access tenants over 40 years benefiting from a collaborative environment and both formal and informal mentoring. Alumni have gone on to successful careers across artistic, educational and leadership roles in the arts.

Through its ongoing commitment to studio-based practice and adaptability over time, Gray Street Workshop has maintained its reputation as a leading and respected organisation within the field of contemporary craft.

Frank Ford Memorial Young Achiever Award

Katherine Sortini

Since graduating with Honours from Flinders Drama Centre in 2018, Katherine Sortini has established a career recognised by peers, major arts organisations and industry awards.

Working across writing, performance, producing and directing, her practice is noted for its authenticity and representation, creating work that resonates socially and artistically.

Her work combines personal and political narratives with innovative theatrical forms, while her leadership is demonstrated through the opportunities she creates for other artists.

Geoff Crowhurst Memorial Award

Matthew Ives

Matthew Ives' work in community cultural development is informed by his early experience as a teacher in areas of social disadvantage in London. After relocating to South Australia, he began his work in the arts at Parks Community Centre.

For the past 20 years, he has served as Cultural Development Coordinator at the City of Unley, embedding arts practice across public spaces, community settings and local initiatives.

Matthew has long been committed to supporting access to the arts and empowering communities to lead their own cultural development. He co-founded the Creative Communities Network in the late 1980s and has continued to support arts workers and practitioners through this network.

His work includes mentoring artists and emerging arts workers and fostering connections that strengthen local arts practice and advocacy.

Stevie Gadlabarti Goldsmith Memorial Award

Umeewarra Aboriginal Media Association

Umeewarra Media is a proudly Aboriginal-owned and operated media organisation based in Port Augusta, serving South Australian communities for over 40 years.

As a cultural and creative hub for Aboriginal voices, Umeewarra Media demonstrates outstanding artistic merit, originality, and leadership across radio, film, music, and community-based storytelling.

Umeewarra's flagship festival event Umeewarra Downtown for NAIDOC celebrations brings together musicians, dancers, visual artists, and storytellers in a professionally produced community festival that radiates cultural pride and artistic talent. The festival provides opportunities for young people to get involved behind the scenes in media, stage production, and event coordination.

Through a sustained commitment to community, creativity, and cultural integrity, Umeewarra Media continues to play a powerful role in celebrating Aboriginal identity, sharing stories, and building a strong future.

Their work demonstrates the value of self-determination, local voices and representation in the arts.

Premier's Award for Lifetime Achievement

Lesley Newton

Lesley Newton has been a central figure in the Adelaide Festival since 1993, serving as Head of Programming since 2008 across more than 20 festivals and numerous artistic leadership transitions.

Her work has spanned complex artistic programs and major external challenges, including global economic and public health events, while maintaining a consistent commitment to delivering ambitious festival programming.

Her contributions include the development of festival hubs such as Red Square, Universal Playground, Barrio and The Palais, as well as the delivery of large-scale productions including *Baleen Moondjan* at Glenelg Beach.

Her career reflects a sustained dedication to the arts and a significant contribution to the evolution of the Adelaide Festival.

Lesley's passion for her job and the industry shines through every day that she is in the office, a theatre or even on a dance floor! As former colleague Elizabeth Brooks says, "The most important thing to know about Lesley is that she is devoted to the arts, and it has been her life."

Ruby Awards Highlights

The winners of the 20th anniversary Ruby Awards 2025 were announced at a gala event on Friday 21 November 2025 at the Adelaide Convention Centre.

See all the event highlights in the [photo gallery](#) and [highlight video](#)