



LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS AUSTRALIA, SA

20<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL  
LEADERSHIP  
EXCELLENCE  
AWARDS

EMERGING LEADER OF THE YEAR  
FINALISTS

# 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## Award Finalists EMERGING LEADER OF THE YEAR

THANKS TO



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# 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## Award Finalists EMERGING LEADER OF THE YEAR

### THANKS TO



Bec Lyons  
Coordinator Customer Experience (Community Connections), City of Charles Sturt  
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“Bec was appointed Acting Coordinator Library Customer Experience in early March 2020, subsequently winning the role and being appointed permanently later in the year. Before taking on this role Bec had no prior experience working in a library, having previously undertaken a variety of community development roles.

In March 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic swept through and everything changed. Bec was a revelation. In earlier stages of her career she had lived and worked in Sri Lanka working with communities to rebuild following the devastating Tsunami that decimated large parts of this country. Her exemplary skill set came to the fore as she worked tirelessly in a totally unfamiliar library environment to effectively and courageously navigate and steer the service and team through significant changes, which often occurred very quickly.

Bec had to not only learn how a library operated in ‘normal’ circumstances, but also how these services could adapt to meet the requirements of COVID restrictions. The staff and community’s response to these adapted services was overwhelmingly positive and a great affirmation of her decision making and implementation skills.

City of Charles Sturt utilises Pulse Surveys to check in with teams around several key metrics. Bec’s team have consistently rated her exceptionally high in all metrics. These include leader support 90/100, communication 89/100, integrity 85/100, safety 90/100, and her support of her team’s wellbeing 89/100.

Through her efforts and leadership, her team have never been more connected with their roles, their customers and the community. They feel supported and encouraged to develop themselves. Bec herself participated in the LG Professionals SA Emerging Leader Program in 2018 and actively encourages personal and professional development within her team.

With a current team of 42 staff and 5 branches she and her team leaders work tirelessly on effective and efficient deployment modelling. Irrespective of the COVID environment she is also leading projects that include a review of operating hours and roster efficiencies and improvements.

She is an integral member of the project team developing a new community facility (an integrated library and community centre) at West Lakes and has assumed the lead on technology, developing a new operating model, and will contribute to the development of a new program framework. Her working relationships with others are exceptional - she is well respected across the organisation and in the community.

Bec has an unparalleled work ethic. She sees everything through and is exceptionally professional in her conduct along the way. In December 2020, after only nine months in the role I appointed her Acting Manager Community Connections. She took this opportunity in her stride and performed exceptionally well.

In our Community Plan we talk about a strong and connected community with one of our pillars of success being ‘no one gets left behind’. Bec actively contributes to the delivery of the former and exemplifies the latter through her leadership style.”

- Jacqui Stretton  
Manager Community Connections, City of Charles Sturt

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### THANKS TO



Renee O'Connor  
Sport & Recreation Coordinator, Adelaide Hills Council  
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“When Renee joined Adelaide Hills Council (AHC) in 2016, she stepped into the newly formed role of Sport and Recreation Planner. With virtually no system, processes, or strategies in place, Renee took to the challenge with enthusiasm and developed AHC’s Sport and Recreation Strategy in her first six months. The Strategy, which required extensive consultation with Elected Members, internal stakeholders, and a vast network of local clubs and peak bodies, continues to guide Council’s approach to sport and recreation in the district to this day.

The following year an internal restructure saw the Sport and Recreation portfolio transferred to AHC’s Open Space department, where Renee became one of my direct reports. This change also saw Renee’s day-to-day work move to a male-dominated office space at our works depot, and from the very beginning her presence was like a breath of fresh air. Renee’s ability to work with people from a range of backgrounds soon became evident and she quickly gained the esteem of field staff, who regularly seek her advice and direction.

I have come from a background in maintenance and lean heavily on Renee’s skill and leadership in the sport and recreation field to guide strategic approaches to complex challenges. Even when projects involve the potentially intimidating presence of State and Federal politicians, Ministers, Elected Members and peak sporting bodies such as the AFL and Cricket Australia, Renee has remained level-headed and ensured the best possible outcomes for Council and our community. Renee continues to foster these relationships for long-term success.

When AHC formed its inaugural Council Incident Management Team (CIMT) in 2019, Renee was identified early as someone suitable for a role, due to her proven ability to cope under pressure, be a team player, adapt to changing conditions, and be happy to roll up her sleeves and simply ‘get on with it’. When, in December of that year, the Cudlee Creek Bush Fire incident broke out in our district, Renee took on the role of Planning Officer in the CIMT and worked tirelessly in support of her colleagues in the operations centre, as well as ensuring the welfare and safety of our staff in the field. Her work and diligence in this role was commended by the Council Commander in the debrief of this incident, and she has since reprised her role with the CIMT in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2021 Cherry Gardens Bush Fire, where Renee proactively contacted the Commander to offer her help despite being on annual leave.

Renee’s track record of outstanding work ethic has allowed me to confidently appoint her as Acting Manager Open Space on several occasions, and the excellent feedback I have received about her abilities to lead does not go unnoticed. She is a role model to everyone she is in contact with, most especially her two young daughters. I continue to be amazed at all she achieves.”

- Chris Janssan  
Manager Open Space, Adelaide Hills Council

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### THANKS TO



James Mitchell  
Senior Assets and Engineering Lead, City of Unley  
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“Since joining the City of Unley in May 2020, James has become a great asset to the organisation, forging strong relationships and rapport with his direct reports and peers. This has been achieved by ensuring regular team meetings and one on one catch-ups whereby consistent and regular communication and feedback is encouraged and enabled.

James’ greatest success in the past year has been the preparation and delivery of Council’s full suite of Asset Management Plans, being new to Unley and given full responsibility for these strategic documents was no small task. The process required James to collaborate closely with numerous staff outside of his own team and across the organisation from Finance, Depot Operations and even the swimming pool to gather and analyse relevant asset condition and maintenance data to ensure the AMP’s were robust and trustworthy, in order to forecast Council’s Asset Management and financial obligations.

James was very particular with the content of the AMP’s and produced plans of a very high standard, evidenced by the compliments received from Council’s Audit Committee, Elected Members and the community, following a positive public consultation process. Council’s Senior Management team were extremely impressed with James’s management and contribution to this organisational objective.

James’ area of responsibility includes Buildings, Property, Asset Management, Engineering, Capital Delivery and Natural Assets. This broad portfolio requires James to be disciplined in his personal development (acquiring knowledge and experience) and leadership approach to manage such a diverse team of staff, each with extensive knowledge in their own field of expertise. James has managed this feat with maturity, humility and professionalism which is to be highly commended.

James leads by example with his own commitment to self-development, which has positively influenced other staff to get involved, collaborate and become members of other organisations, committees and focus groups.

The City of Unley prides itself on its urban forest and James, on a daily basis, is required to manage Council’s associated risk in this regard, varying from political, financial or personal. This requires decision making that is informed, considered and balanced, considering health and environmental benefits, community expectation against possible infrastructure damage, property damage and nuisance factors.

Looking to the future, James has actively been involved in the development of Council’s Climate and Energy Plan, and is currently giving due consideration to the management of available resources and capital works program opportunities to incorporate the desired environmental outcomes through asset renewals and daily business activities.

James has shown the desire and ability to lead his team to achieve Council’s strategic objectives and we have every confidence that he will continue to grow and become a great leader within Local Government.”

- Aaron Wood  
Manager Assets and Operations, City of Unley