



Local Government  
Professionals  
AUSTRALIA SA

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS AUSTRALIA, SA

22<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL  
LEADERSHIP  
EXCELLENCE  
AWARDS

EMERGING LEADER OF  
THE YEAR FINALISTS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS AUSTRALIA, SA

# 22<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## Award Finalists EMERGING LEADER OF THE YEAR

THANKS TO



**Local Government Association**  
of South Australia

**Contact:**

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# 22<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## Award Finalists EMERGING LEADER OF THE YEAR

### THANKS TO



### Steph Paprzycki-Baker

Team Leader, Community Safety, City of Adelaide

P: 08 8203 7176 | E: [s.paprzycki-baker@cityofadelaide.com.au](mailto:s.paprzycki-baker@cityofadelaide.com.au)

'Steph's role was just a position description and an idea when she began with City of Adelaide, with no handover or structure, nor pre-existing projects. Steph quickly created a plan for understanding the key strategic priorities for Council and the Regulatory Services team. When Steph first started, the team was well established and there was some hesitation about the new role and a new leader. Fortunately, Steph was undertaking the LG Professionals SA Ignite Program, and was equipped with the skills and tools required for a smooth transition.

Steph is a systems thinker, able to leverage council processes to improve internal workflows and customer experience. For example, Steph has taken the time to deeply understand the local nuisance exemption process, legislation, and common pain points both internally and externally, and has designed and implemented improvements following a broad consultation process.

Steph is never afraid of a difficult conversation and approaches these moments with care and integrity. I have witnessed Steph run performance management conversations and am inspired by the way Steph balances clear and to-the-point instruction with curiosity and compassion. This makes everyone in the room feel like they are on the same team and ultimately, in this situation, resulted in improved performance and fantastic career progression for that team member.

Steph takes a consultative approach when managing safety and risk, being as transparent as possible. At times, this can create some angst in the team as problems are worked through. Steph ensures that data which informs safety-based decisions is accessible in multiple forms to account for the different learning preferences of a large and diverse team, and that final decisions are fed back with the rationale clearly explained.

Steph is committed to doing what's necessary to create an inclusive workplace. In the first 12 months of employment, Steph was diagnosed with ADHD and more recently ASD. Steph has been vulnerable with me, the team, and our leadership group sharing her diagnoses, and we have all learned more about how to make the workplace more accessible and enjoyable for those who are neurodivergent. Steph even created a two-part video to help others understand the journey and what to be aware of and learn about, which was shared with the entire organisation and now forms part of our induction content. To me, this showed exceptional leadership by modelling authenticity and openness, which benefits the entire organisation.'

Emma Watkins

Former Team Leader, Community Safety, City of Adelaide

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## Award Finalists EMERGING LEADER OF THE YEAR

### THANKS TO



### Michelle Swan

Coordinator Operations Support, City of Charles Sturt  
P: 08 8408 1843 | E: mswan@charlessturt.sa.gov.au

'Michelle is a passionate, progressive, caring and courageous leader and is an integral part of the Field Services leadership team. Every day she shows her professionalism and continual drive to deliver for our customers while caring for our team, and over the past two years has developed immensely.

Two years ago, Michelle was a Level 4 Improvement and Support Officer with no direct reports. Now, as a Level 7 Coordinator Operations Support, she leads a team of eight, plays a key role in setting the Field Services strategy, successfully runs the Beverley Depot store, advocates for her Operations Support team and wider Field Services team, is part of corporate strategic working parties and has a high degree of influence in corporate projects.

During this time Michelle has made significant improvements to the Beverley store which sees approx. \$450,000 of stock pass through each year. By developing staff, implementing security measures and improving processes and procedures she has reduced the stock write off by 93%, ensuring sound financial management. She has improved customer experience by increasing stock types and stock levels and the implementation of the 'call and deliver' function which not only increased efficiencies in the field but also supports a RTW employee.

Michelle demonstrated her strong leadership skills through the implementation of the Operational Support review. Through engaging external company MCBI she led, implemented and assisted her team throughout this change. As a result, her team are engaged, have increased capability and capacity, and are delivering an exceptional customer outcome for our Field Services team and community.

Michelle is committed not only to her own personal development but that of her team. She continually looks for opportunities for the team to grow and develop, both internally and externally to Council. Her commitment to her development is demonstrated through the commencement of her MBA. Michelle is hard working, passionate, capable, insightful, empathic and strives for excellence. She cares about the wellbeing, growth and development of all team members.

We are lucky to have her in our team and it is my pleasure to recognise her work.'

Adrian Ralph  
General Manager Asset Management Services, City of Charles Sturt  
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## Award Finalists EMERGING LEADER OF THE YEAR

### THANKS TO



### Hayley Ashworth

Team Leader - Sport and Recreation, City of Mitcham

P: 0474 185 327 | E: hashworth@mitchamcouncil.sa.gov.au

'Commencing at City of Mitcham in September 2019 as Sport and Recreation Officer, Hayley has consistently demonstrated her capability and commitment in achieving positive outcomes for sport and recreation across the city, resulting in her advancement and recognition as an emerging leader and recent appointment as Team Leader Sport and Recreation.

Hayley is well respected within the industry for her passion and advocacy for local community in planning and delivering many new sport and recreation facilities in the last three years at the City of Mitcham, including:

- Karinya Reserve -New Clubrooms and artificial pitch for the Sturt Lions
- Kingswood Oval Clubroom redevelopment for Unley Jets Football Club and Unley Cricket Club
- Hawthorndene Oval -Changeroom and Shared community facility (awaiting funding to deliver)
- Bellevue Heights Tennis Club – Clubroom renovations and tennis court reconstruction and lighting

She has achieved these quality improvements through building strong partnerships with clubs, community, State sporting associations and Local and State Government funding bodies, backed by sound project planning informed by community engagement.

Hayley communicates with honesty and demonstrates fairness in her approach. She does not waiver under pressure and seeks out equitable, balanced outcomes in all of her dealings with clubs and the local community. She is responsible for managing complex funding arrangements and budgets in planning for many new sport and recreation facilities.

Hayley has fulfilled the role of Acting Manager during periods of leave, earning the respect of the senior management team for her knowledge and strong ethics. Hayley advocates for her team through suggesting training and inclusion in a range of sport and recreation networks and encouraging her team to become involved in the many training and development opportunities offered through LG Professionals SA. I am inspired daily by Hayley's commitment to building capacity for people to be active, healthy and connected, and in providing inclusive and safe environments for all in the community.'

Anneke Polkamp

Manager Property and Facilities, City of Mitcham

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## Award Finalists EMERGING LEADER OF THE YEAR

### THANKS TO



#### **Thomas Ruzgar**

Team Coordinator Open Space Operations, City of Onkaparinga  
P: 0403 149 827 | E: [thomas.ruzgar@onkaparinga.sa.gov.au](mailto:thomas.ruzgar@onkaparinga.sa.gov.au)

'Thomas was successful in being appointed to the Team Coordinator Open Space Operations position in 2021 but was demonstrating exceptional leadership within his team before this appointment. Thomas demonstrates leadership beyond his years of experience. He has a calm and deliberate style with the ability to engage with people of all levels and backgrounds.

Thomas has been involved in several committees including WHS and Enterprise Bargaining, which has required him to represent his work group and team. He has demonstrated the ability to communicate difficult and sensitive matters in a professional manner. As a WHS work group representative this has always been a focus for Thomas and an area in which he has demonstrated strong leadership. He motivates and inspires his team and colleagues to look at new and different ways of undertaking tasks and assists in the implementation of these ideas.

Thomas is always looking for opportunities for development, to support his drive to become a long-term leader within Local Government. He understands the importance of developing others around him, which is done through his nurturing approach. He provides team members opportunities to take on different tasks and responsibilities, as well as identifying formal training in the various requirements of each team members' role or in support of their future aspirations.

One of Thomas's strengths is in always asking questions and seeking input from others. As he continues to develop his leadership skills, he actively takes on advice and applies this to his own leadership style. Thomas has personally engaged many times with me on matters and to see how he approaches each situation and conducts himself within the workplace is a credit to who he is as a person and leader.

I am exceptionally proud of Thomas and the way he leads and engages with everyone he works with. He has worked extremely hard and taken on opportunities both within and outside Council, ensuring he continues to develop as an outstanding leader.'

Daryl Sowerby  
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