

Monday, 15 December 2025

Class of 2025 achieves 40 Excellence Awards

Forty outstanding students from the Class of 2025 have been awarded prestigious Governor of South Australia Commendations across the categories of SACE (South Australian Certification of Education) Excellence, Aboriginal Student SACE Excellence and Excellence in Modified SACE.

This year's young recipients have led mental health initiatives, championed sustainability and wellbeing, volunteered in aged care facilities and so much more.

The Awards, now in their 14th year, recognise students who have excelled in their studies while also making significant contributions to their schools and communities.

Students will receive their Commendations at an official ceremony at Government House on February 11, 2026.

Jocelyn Russ is the Aboriginal Student SACE Excellence Award recipient for 2025. Jocelyn has been commended for his commitment to cultural education and awareness, demonstrated through his leadership in the Karnkanthi Indigenous Education Program and contribution to his school's Reconciliation Action Plan.

Two students have been awarded the Modified SACE Excellence Award, including Larrakia man Tristan Cubillo, who is a champion for inclusion and for the celebration of Aboriginal history and culture.

Commendations are selected from Year 12 SACE students nominated by their schools and assessed against selection criteria by an expert panel, which includes Her Excellency the Honourable Frances Adamson AC, Governor of South Australia.

A full list of Governor of South Australia Commendation recipients for 2025 is available online (www.sace.sa.edu.au) and included below.

Attributable to Her Excellency, the Honourable Frances Adamson AC, Governor of South Australia

Congratulations to winners of the Governor of South Australia Commendations for 2025.

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These young South Australians have excelled in their learning achievements, their ability to think critically and creatively, their commitment to community and their demonstration of the SACE capabilities which prepares them for life beyond school.

The Commendations are designed to recognise the whole person – they acknowledge students who are both academically accomplished and have contributed meaningfully to their communities and they reward initiative.

I look forward to welcoming the Commendation recipients to Government House in February to present them with their awards.

Attributable to SACE Board Chief Executive Michaela Bensley

On behalf of the SACE Board, I would like to congratulate this year's Governor of South Australia Commendation recipients for outstanding achievement across their studies whilst also contributing to their communities.

The SACE Board's vision is for all students to graduate with a world-class qualification that showcases the diversity of their skills and talents.

This year's Commendation recipients exemplify this vision and serve as inspiring examples. We wish them continued success in their future endeavours.

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2025 Governor of South Australia Commendation recipients

Governor of South Australia Commendation – Aboriginal Student Excellence Award

Jocelyn Russ: Cultural advocate and student leader Jocelyn has earned a High Distinction in university-level economics while completing Year 12 and achieved strong results across his SACE studies. Jocelyn mentors younger students, leads initiatives through the Karnkanthi Indigenous Education Program and contributes to St Michael's College Reconciliation Action Plan. His nationally shortlisted poetry challenges stereotypes and promotes understanding of Aboriginal identity. Jocelyn volunteers in environmental restoration, community events and youth programs while balancing work and sport. His resilience, integrity and commitment to education and cultural awareness make him an inspiring role model and future leader.

Governor of South Australia Commendation – Modified SACE Excellence Award

Tristan Cubillo: Tristan is a proud Larrakia, Iwaidja Murran, Bunuba, Walpiri, Gurindji, Warumungu and Jawoyn Aboriginal man born on Larrakia Country. His leadership shines through active involvement in his school's Aboriginal Perspectives Action Group. Tristan models tolerance and acceptance, always recognising the strengths of others. Using augmented communication tools, he has helped establish yarning circles, create a Nunga space in the library and deliver Acknowledgement of Country at school events. His efforts have been central to his school's journey towards cultural awareness, ensuring visible recognition and celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, past and present.

Governor of South Australia Commendation – Excellence Award

Mehar Kaur Bains: Gifted communicator Mehar is an exceptional student and leader who combines academic excellence with service and advocacy. She achieved top results across humanities and languages and won the Premier's Anzac Spirit Prize. She has represented her peers as a keynote speaker, state finalist in Rostrum Voice of Youth, and best speaker at national debating events. Mehar's leadership includes captaining the Philosophy Club, coaching debating and coordinating the Cancer Awareness initiative. Her commitment to community is evident through volunteering, mentoring and faith-based service. Aspiring to a career in law and diplomacy, she exemplifies integrity, empathy and purpose.

Emily Becker: As 2025 College Captain, Emily has exemplified resilience, integrity, and service. She has excelled academically, earning the Academic Achievement with Merit award at her school. Her innovative approach to learning includes creating a VR workshop that merged technology with English studies and mentoring peers in Food and Hospitality. Emily completed a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education while balancing

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leadership roles and community service. Her empathy, creativity and unwavering commitment to excellence have made her a role model for younger students.

Shubham Bhatt: Deputy House Captain Shubham has been an exceptional leader and student, demonstrating outstanding communication and organisational skills while excelling academically across all subjects. His passion for STEM and sustainability is evident in his research on renewable energy and innovative projects. A dedicated mentor and active community contributor, Shubham balances leadership, university studies and district cricket with humility and generosity, aspiring to a future in astrophysics. Shubham achieved top results in Stage 2 Mathematics and Physics subjects, completed two first-year Computer Science courses through the University of Adelaide Headstart Program and earned multiple Dux awards.

Emma Choi: As state winner of the Lions Youth of the Year and multiple history awards, Emma's dedication to learning and equity positions her as a future changemaker in healthcare and beyond. Excelling in both STEM and the humanities, her commitment to community includes volunteering in aged care, hospitals and advocacy for vulnerable populations through organisations like SAYF and Canhelp. Emma has led with humility as Student Representative Council Executive Leader and debating coach, while contributing to research on youth wellbeing and social justice.

Amelie Coleman: A curious, compassionate and creative learner, Amelie has represented South Australia at national competitions and, as Crescam Ministrando Captain, co-led service initiatives across Seymour and Prince Alfred College in 2024. She helped organise major fundraising events, including the Heysen 160 challenge for mental health. Her commitment to social justice shines through volunteering, advocacy projects and intercultural engagement. A talented musician and entrepreneur, Amelie inspires others through humility, resilience and drive to make a meaningful difference. She achieved top results in advanced mathematics and excels across humanities and sciences, demonstrating critical and analytical thinking of the highest order.

Jordyn Cook: Accomplished musician Jordyn is a dedicated and high-achieving student who has excelled across academic, creative and leadership domains. Performing in school and community bands while mentoring younger students. She received subject prizes for Stage 2 English, General Mathematics, Music Ensemble and Society and Culture, as well as a prestigious Meritorious Award. Jordyn demonstrates strong ethical and social awareness through initiatives like fundraising for the Hutt St Centre and advocating for inclusion. Outside school, Jordyn works as a supervisor at Foodland and plays premierships netball, balancing responsibilities with resilience and integrity.

Max Davis: Inaugural Sports Co-Captain Max has made a significant impact across his school, leading charity events such as "Pink Round" for breast cancer awareness and working on cultural change in sport through the Gender, Respect and Responsible

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Behaviour Taskforce. Max contributed to school publications, spoke at assemblies and represented student voice in leadership committees. He balanced these responsibilities with strong academic achievement in Stage 2 subjects and active involvement in community initiatives. Max's ability to lead with integrity, organise complex projects, and promote respect and inclusion shows his commitment to making a positive difference.

Erin Doudle: As College Captain, Erin has demonstrated outstanding leadership, organising major events and mentoring younger students. Her ability to balance rigorous academics with extensive co-curricular commitments reflects resilience, organisation, and passion. Erin excels in the Arts, achieving top results in Drama, Music, Creative Arts and English Literature while performing in musicals, ensembles, and cabaret productions. She has represented her community at Generations in Jazz, Balaklava Eisteddfod, and Government House, earning numerous awards for music and leadership.

Gabrielle Lourdes Elias: Social justice champion, aspiring international lawyer and College Co-Captain Gabrielle Elias has spent her final year at school supporting mental health and wellbeing initiatives and fundraising for cancer research. Awarded a swathe of debating awards, including The South Australian Debating Association Senior Grand Finalist (2025), she has also been recognised for her writing (New York Times Summer Academy Journalism Intern 2023) and was the Premier's ANZAC Spirit School Prize Recipient (2023). Gabrielle has excelled academically while contributing to her school and broader community. In 2023, Gabrielle took part in the Wurrumiyanga, Bathurst Island Service Immersion program in the Tiwi Islands and will return in 2026 for a six-month placement with the Cardoner Network.

Leo French: Social justice champion and talented musician and scholar, Leo has participated in UN Youth programs and research promoting accessibility in the arts. He has earned A+ grades across Stage 2 subjects and High Distinctions in university studies through the Headstart program. A gifted communicator, Leo is a state finalist and public speaking winner in the Lions Youth of the Year competition and an award-winning poet. His passion for music includes performing with national and cathedral choirs, composing original works, and mastering multiple instruments.

Ryan George: With humility and integrity, Ryan is an outstanding student who combines academic excellence with leadership and service. The Carter House Captain and First XI Soccer Captain is a state champion debater, accomplished musician and Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award recipient. Ryan volunteers through church ministries, Ronald McDonald House and community events, reflecting his commitment to helping others. He achieved A+ results in Stage 2 subjects and completed university extension studies in Human Physiology and Histology with High Distinction. Ryan's ability to balance rigorous academics, leadership roles and service demonstrates resilience, empathy and a strong sense of purpose.

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Olivia Giotis: Captain of the South Australian tennis team, Olivia has represented her state nationally and internationally while serving as Student Council Member and Peer Mentor. She has led fundraising initiatives, supported community programs and received awards including the Long Tan Leadership Award and the Robin McClelland Prize for service. She is an exceptional student who combines academic achievement with leadership and sporting success and has earned A+ and A grades across all Year 12 subjects and a High Distinction in university-level Forensic Science. Olivia's ability to balance elite sport, rigorous academics and community involvement reflects her discipline, integrity and commitment to excellence.

Zara Hart: House Captain and Boarding House leader Zara has actively contributed to reconciliation initiatives and shared her Jawyong heritage through cultural projects and the Jatbula Trek. She is an accomplished student who combines academic excellence with leadership and cultural advocacy. Achieving an A+ Merit in AIF and excelling in Politics and Industry and Entrepreneurial Solutions, she has also earned a Certificate III in Sport Coaching and a Silver Duke of Edinburgh Award. Zara has organised events, mentored younger students and promoted wellbeing and inclusion. Her commitment to service, creativity and intercultural understanding reflects integrity and resilience, making her an inspiring role model.

Lily Jacobs: Student mentor and volunteer Lily is an exceptional scholar and leader driven by excellence, compassion and integrity. As House Captain and Student Representative on the Governing Council, she has demonstrated confidence and professionalism in public speaking and leadership. Lily excels in STEM subjects, completing advanced studies in Mathematics and three sciences, and has engaged with world-leading researchers for her Research Project. Her contributions extend beyond academics through mentoring younger students, volunteering at hospitals and festivals and stage-managing school productions. With a strong sense of ethics, intercultural understanding and a passion for service, Lily aspires to a career in medicine, driven by empathy and purpose.

Maddison Jeffrey: Committed to inclusion and wellbeing, Maddison combines academic achievement with leadership and community engagement. She supports peers through mentoring and study groups, sharing strong literacy and numeracy skills while achieving high standards across all subjects. Maddison has contributed to social action initiatives and community events through the Marion Youth Council and volunteering with Aboriginal communities, demonstrating confidence in public speaking and project planning. She uses ICT creatively for research and presentations and approaches challenges with critical thinking and resilience. Maddison promotes diversity and ethical decision-making in all contexts. Her integrity, empathy and initiative make her an outstanding role model.

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Teresa Kennedy: Accomplished music leader Teresa has excelled in Music, Visual Arts and Design Technology, producing professional-standard projects, such as a published picture book promoting cultural awareness. She has performed widely, including as a guest artist with the Adelaide Youth Orchestra and received the Piano Certificate of Performance Prize at the AMEB Awards. Teresa has supported ensembles, mentored peers and contributed to parish and school events. Her resilience, shown when adapting to a finger injury before final performances, reflects determination and emotional intelligence.

Mollie Kennett: Head Prefect Mollie has led initiatives promoting wellbeing, inclusivity and student voice, including the innovative 'Sister Chats' program. She has balanced her leadership with exceptional academic achievement and active involvement in music, sport and drama, earning the Caltex All Rounder Award. A talented vocalist and athlete, Mollie competed in elite choirs and rowing events while mentoring younger students. Her commitment to service includes volunteering at community outreach programs, supporting Aboriginal children in the APY Lands and participating in a service-learning trip to Fiji.

Eugena Kim: Critical thinker and committed volunteer, Eugena is a compassionate leader and an exceptional student who has achieved excellent results in her school subjects, while completing two university-level extension studies. Eugena demonstrates intellectual agility, critical thinking and strong organisational skills, excelling in research and collaborative learning. Her commitment to service includes volunteering for community initiatives, supporting diversity campaigns, and assisting aged care and health programs. Fluent in English and Korean, she values intercultural understanding and aspires to a career in healthcare.

Grace Leonello: College Captain Grace has led fundraising and social justice initiatives, raising thousands of dollars for causes including malaria relief and domestic violence awareness. She represented youth voices through campaigns such as Raise Our Voices, with her speech tabled in the Senate and contributed to Youth Parliament, where her bill was passed in the Legislative Council. Grace has mentored younger students in debating and leadership programs and served on state and national youth forums. Her ability to balance academic success with advocacy and service reflects commitment, organisation and a focus on creating positive change.

Charlize Liddle (Birdwood): Head Prefect and proud Arrernte woman Charlize has driven initiatives to improve student wellbeing and engagement, hosted assemblies and represented her peers at high-level events. She undertook Aboriginal Studies through Open Access and achieved outstanding academic results while mentoring classmates and encouraging resilience. Charlize attended the National Schools Constitutional Convention in Canberra and the Aboriginal Youth Summit, contributing to reports for

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state and federal politicians. Charlize also received a scholarship through James Cook University and explored social work as a career pathway.

Amy Lin: Year 12 Prefect, musician and Sports Captain Amy has demonstrated outstanding leadership, organising major school events and mentoring younger students. Her commitment to community is evident through extensive fundraising for charities, volunteering at WestCare and supporting orphanages in Cambodia. A talented musician, Amy performs in multiple ensembles and has won awards at Generations in Jazz. Her integrity, resilience and passion for helping others make her an inspiring role model.

Jasmin Low: Sustainability and social justice champion Jasmin earned a Merit for her Research Project on Formula 1's net zero goals and their relevance to Australia's climate targets. As a writer for DIVEBOMB Motorsport Magazine, Jasmin publishes articles on elite motorsports, having been media accredited at the bp Adelaide Grand Final and represented the magazine alongside the international press. She is a founding member of her school's Reconciliation Action Plan Committee and actively promotes cultural awareness and inclusion. Selected for a national careers event at the Australian Grand Prix, Jasmin aspires to influence ethical innovation in motorsport.

Hawa Mahmoodi: A dedicated and resilient learner, Hawa has demonstrated exceptional communication skills, confidently speaking at events and contributing thoughtful ideas in leadership forums. Her involvement in Student Voice includes planning major events and raising significant funds for national programs. Hawa combines creativity and critical thinking with strong organisational abilities, adapting to challenges with composure. She values diversity, advocates for inclusion and uses her experiences to support others. Despite personal responsibilities, Hawa remains committed to learning and community engagement, earning respect for her integrity, empathy, and determination to create positive change.

Rose McCullough: National Titration Competition Gold Medal winner and volunteer Rose has contributed to wellbeing initiatives as a Wellbeing Ambassador, leading events such as R U OK? Day and Wear It Purple Days. An exceptional student, she has excelled in Stage 2 subjects, including English Literary Studies, Maths Methods, Chemistry and Physics, while completing two university subjects in Human Anatomy and Physiology. Her volunteer work includes supporting people experiencing homelessness and assisting in healthcare during an overseas placement in Peru. Rose's resilience, compassion, and commitment to learning make her an outstanding role model.

Callum McIntyre-Gregory (Mount Gambier): A born leader, Callum has led initiatives promoting equity and inclusion, including cultural advisory groups and LGBTQIA+ support programs. As School Captain, he introduced programs that improved student engagement and created a regional student leadership network connecting 14 schools. He has consistently achieved top results in English, Mathematics and Science, earning

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multiple subject awards and recognition for public speaking at state-level competitions. Callum's contributions extend to sport as a qualified soccer referee and coach. His ability to balance academics, leadership and community service demonstrates commitment, reliability and a focus on making a positive impact.

Grace Muhama: Diversity and inclusion advocate Grace initiated tutoring for immigrant parents, helping them pass literacy and numeracy test while excelling in Specialist Mathematics, English Literary Studies and Biology. She has completed a Harvard course and a Certificate III in Hospitality and is actively engaged in cultural initiatives. Grace's leadership includes organising community events, producing digital media for her church and founding a student wellbeing group.

Holly Paech (Mount Barker): A committed and compassionate leader, Holly has served as College Captain and President of the Faith in Action group. She has balanced academic success with completing a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care, demonstrating resilience through challenges and earning future employment in an Early Learning Centre. Holly is passionate about inclusion and social justice, mentoring younger students and leading initiatives such as RUOK Day, fundraising events and community service projects. Recognised with the Muriel Matters Award, Holly exemplifies empathy, integrity and dedication. Her leadership and commitment to education reflect her aspiration to become a teacher.

Matthew Price: From leading his school community to tackling university-level anatomy alongside Year 12, Matthew has consistently pushed boundaries. As School Captain, he combines academic excellence with advocacy, speaking publicly about living with Crohn's disease to raise awareness and inspire resilience. His research into CRISPR and personalised gene therapy reflects advanced critical thinking and ethical insight. Even after emergency surgery and weeks in hospital, Matthew maintained top results and recalibrated his goals with determination. His ability to turn adversity into purpose, coupled with his vision for contributing to medical research, marks him as a future innovator in health and science.

Lincoln Rieger: Lincoln is an exceptional leader whose influence spans school, community and national platforms. As Deputy College Captain, he has co-lead student initiatives on sustainability and wellbeing, while his role as Deputy Assistant Chief Commissioner for Youth at Scouts SA saw him lead the 2024 Change Makers Conference and shape Vision 2030. Lincoln also serves as a National Youth Ambassador, representing young voices at high-profile events and in media. His advocacy includes gender equity, climate action, and inclusion, supported by fundraising for major charities and mentoring younger Scouts.

Mitchell Roebuck (Eudunda): Garden art business owner Mitchell is a dedicated and high-achieving student who combines academic excellence with leadership and

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community service. The School Captain has represented his peers with integrity and contributed to events such as ANZAC Day and fundraising initiatives. Mitchell completed a Certificate III in Agriculture alongside his SACE studies and achieved Merits for Design, Technology and Engineering, and Workplace Practices. He is highly skilled in ICT and metal fabrication, running his own garden art business and contributing to school projects like the café conversion. His involvement in sports, volunteering and cultural immersion trips reflects his commitment to learning, service and personal growth.

Niya Singhal: Award-winning SRC President Niya has led initiatives promoting wellbeing, inclusion and social justice, while representing her peers at major events such as the CEDA workforce panel. A state debater and finalist in Rostrum Voice of Youth, Niya has received multiple awards, including A+ Merits in Legal Studies and AIF, the Kathleen Hassell Memorial Prize for English and the Shirley Calder Prize for Citizenship and Service. She completed a Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award, mentored at SONY Camp and contributed to fundraising for Nepal. Niya's leadership reflects integrity, compassion and vision.

Saisushanth Sreeram: Gifted communicator and Mock Trial Barrister Saisushanth mentors peers, leads anti-bullying initiatives and fosters community spirit through school events. Recognised for his integrity and humility, and driven by a passion for helping others, he aspires to study Medicine. Saisushanth has excelled in Math and Science subjects at school and completed university-level Mathematics through the University of Adelaide's Headstart Program with a High Distinction. His achievements extend to Chemistry, Biology and English Literary Studies.

Amalea Steel: Amalea is a passionate leader and advocate for cultural understanding. As a child of military parents, she attended seven schools across NSW and SA, finishing at St Columba College as College Captain in 2025. She has promoted Aboriginal perspectives through initiatives like writing the College's Acknowledgement of Country and leading assemblies with authenticity. An active member of the Deadly Yarners program, Amalea fosters empathy and reconciliation. Her contributions to the Reconciliation Action Plan and Aboriginal Art Consultation reflect her commitment to ethical action and inclusion, inspiring others to embrace diversity.

Mateja Tolo: Mateja's ethical reasoning, empathy and dedication to community service make her an inspiring role model with a passion for creating positive change. She has balanced six Stage 2 subjects, coaching dance teams and part-time work with remarkable organisation. Mateja completed a Certificate III in Health Services Assistance and continues to volunteer in disability support initiatives. Creative and compassionate, she has achieved outstanding results in Specialist Mathematics, Mathematical Methods, Chemistry and Biology. Her AIF project used dance to empower neurodiverse students, reflecting her commitment to inclusion and wellbeing.

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Amy Wallace: Amy has excelled academically while contributing to national conversations on ethical technology and education. She co-authored *The Next Word: AI and Learners*, drawing on her work amplifying student voice through conferences, parliamentary engagement and advisory groups. In her leadership roles, including as School Captain and Student Digital Leader, Amy has driven initiatives focused on responsible technology use, inclusion and student agency. Her advocacy spans disability inclusion, sustainability and health, alongside volunteering with The Smith Family, the Red Cross, the Cancer Council and global service projects. From founding initiatives to mentoring peers, Amy consistently turns ideas into action, demonstrating vision, empathy and a clear commitment to shaping a better future.

Zilu Xu: Zilu is an aspiring doctor with a strong record of academic and community involvement. A dedicated St John Ambulance Cadet from 2021 to 2025, he earned merits in Biology and the Research Project in 2024. Zilu represented his school in Tournament of Minds for five years and achieved top honours at the 2023 SA OZCHIN Quiz Bowl, winning both the Chinese Background Language Learners (Senior) and Chinese Language Learners written test categories. Beyond academics, he plays and coaches basketball, tutors UCAT and enjoys music as a drummer and guitarist. He also participated in the Australian Mathematics Competition. Zilu has received an offer for an interview at Oxford University, where he hopes to study.

Alecs Zorzi: Head Prefect Alecs is an exceptional student and leader whose achievements span academics, leadership and community service. He spearheaded initiatives promoting mental health, gender equality and social justice, including Blue Week and KickStart for Period Poverty. Alecs excels academically, completing six Stage 2 subjects with A+ grades and earning High Distinctions in university-level studies through the University of Adelaide Headstart program. A talented orator and four-time Purton Oratory winner, he combines communication skills with humility and empathy. His contributions to music, sport and volunteer work reflect his commitment to service and inclusion. Alecs exemplifies integrity, resilience, and a passion for making a difference.

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