



Tasmanian Australian of the Year nominees include wildlife campaigner Peter Walsh; and (inset from top) community representative and former politician Adriana Taylor, mental health advocate Mitch McPherson and nutritious eating advocate Julie Dunbabin.

Generosity, community spirit bind Australian of the Year contenders

Bridget Clarke

The founder of a mental health and suicide prevention organisation, Tasmania's "platypus whisper" and a UNICEF ambassador are among nominees for the 2026 Tasmanian Australian of the Year.

Sixteen Tasmanians representing communities from Smithton to Tarooma received nominations across four categories – Australian of the Year, Senior Australian of the Year, Young Australian of the Year and Local Hero of the Year.

Among the nominees for Australian of the Year for Tasmania is Mitch

McPherson, the founder of SPEAKUP! Stay ChatTY.

The New Town resident established the suicide prevention charity after the death of his younger brother, Ty, in 2013.

It has since raised more than \$270,000 for the delivery of mental health and suicide prevention awareness resources.

Tasmania's pre-eminent platypus expert and wildlife campaigner, Pete Walsh, was nominated in the Local Hero category, while the Senior Australian of the Year category saw nominations for Julie Dunbabin of Tasmania's School Lunch Program, and former politician and Glenorchy City

Council mayor Adriana Taylor.

Youth mental health advocate Laura Johnson OAM was again nominated for Young Tasmanian Australian of the Year after her initial nomination in 2022.

UNICEF Australia's Young Ambassador for Tasmania, Reede Adams-Beckett, 21, also was recognised in the field.

After Tuesday's announcement of the nominations, National Australia Day Council chief executive Mark Fraser said all nominees for the Tasmanian awards were doing "extraordinary things".

"While they are

contributing in many different ways, they are all helping," he said.

"Helping people, helping communities, helping in crises, helping the environment and our wildlife, helping create opportunities and helping bring about change."

The Tasmanian nominees are among 134 people being recognised across all Australian states and territories.

Tasmanian award winners will be announced at a ceremony at Hobart's Theatre Royal on November 18, ahead of the national awards announcement in Canberra on January 25 next year.

Housing report a shocker

Lifting lid on dire conditions

Elise Kaine

More Tasmanian's are living in conditions more commonly seen in developing countries, according to Anglicare Tasmania, which has reported an increase in people living in sheds or houses without running water or bathrooms.

A new quarterly snapshot report by Anglicare Tasmania found there had been a 34 per cent increase in the number of Tasmanians seeking housing support from the Housing Connect Front Door, the entry point for housing services in Tasmania, in the July-September quarter compared to the same time last year.

There was an 88 per cent increase in the number of people sleeping rough, and a 54 per cent increase in people living in inadequate or substandard dwellings.

The number of children in families seeking housing support had grown by 60 per cent, a particularly concerning figure for Anglicare Tasmania CEO Chris Jones (inset).

"The Housing Connect Front Door staff provide a caring and supportive service, but the simple fact is that most clients don't have access to what they truly need – a secure and stable home," Dr Jones said.

New modelling by Anglicare's Social Action and Research Centre (SARC) shows that without change, demand for social housing will continue to grow faster than supply and would result in 14,000 Tasma-

nians waiting for social housing by 2032.

SARC co-ordinator, economist Mary Bennett said the numbers show that "more direct government intervention is urgently needed".

"The private market is not delivering affordable housing for all Tasmanians. We have critically low rental vacancy rates across Tasmania and rents outpacing wages by 15 per cent, which is driving up demand for social housing," she said.

The Housing Connect Front Door Snapshot recommends that the Tasmanian Government works with providers to make more supported accommodation available to people who need additional support, funds delivery of more crisis accommodation, transitional housing and social homes that meet the needs of people living with mental health conditions or escaping domestic and family violence and works with the Australian Government to scale up investment in long-term social housing.

Dr Jones said there were a number of "well-intentioned" government initiatives that had stalled and were no longer working as intended, such as the Family Violence Rapid Rehousing and the Private Rental Incentive Scheme.

"They're well-intended but are clearly not working. We urgently need more social homes on the ground, so that individuals and families with children can be moved into housing and off a growing waitlist," Dr Jones said.



Full list of nominees

- 2026 AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR FOR TASMANIA**
- Mitch McPherson - Mental health advocate (New Town)
 - Dr Rosie Nash - Health literacy leader (Blackmans Bay)
 - Tyler Richardson - Musician and fundraiser (Kingston)
 - Dr Jorian (Jo) Kippax - Emergency doctor (Ridgeway)

- 2026 SENIOR AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR FOR TASMANIA**
- Margaret Chilcott - Volunteer ambulance officer (Poatina)
 - Julie Dunbabin - Nutritious eating visionary (Tarooma)
 - Brendan Sullivan - Men's health and wellbeing advocate (Rosny)
 - Adriana Taylor - Community representative (Collinsvale)

- 2026 YOUNG AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR FOR TASMANIA**
- Reede Adams-Beckett - Youth advocate (Launceston)
 - Laura Johnson OAM - Mental health advocate (Smithton/Somerset)
 - Alyssia Kennedy - Life skills educator (Heybridge)
 - Sahar Naqshband - Refugee mentor (New Norfolk)

- 2026 LOCAL HERO FOR TASMANIA**
- Emily Briffa - Social entrepreneur (West Hobart)
 - Janelle McMillan OAM - Disability advocate (Collinsvale)
 - Rodney Spinks - Community charity worker (Launceston)
 - Pete Walsh - Wildlife campaigner (South Hobart)

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