

2026 MALKA Aboriginal Art Prize Award Winners

The 2026 Malka Aboriginal Art Prize Award presentation was held on Thursday 9th July, once again aligning with NAIDOC Week celebrations. The event took place at the Yarta Purtli Art Gallery, celebrating the outstanding talent of Aboriginal artists from across regional South Australia.

Founded 17 years ago by the late Marvin McKenzie Senior, the Malka Aboriginal Art Prize was created as an annual platform for Aboriginal artists to showcase their work in a professional gallery setting. “Malka”, a word meaning “mark” or “painting” in several local Aboriginal languages, captures the spirit of this much-loved event.

The 2026 exhibition attracted entries from artists across the Far North, Mid North and Eyre Peninsula, continuing to highlight the exceptional talent, creativity and cultural diversity of Aboriginal artists throughout the region.

Port Augusta City Council CEO John Banks spoke of the importance of the prize.

“The Malka Aboriginal Art Prize continues to grow in stature, giving emerging Aboriginal artists a platform to gain recognition and build careers. Many past winners have gone on to exhibit across South Australia and beyond, with Malka often serving as a launchpad.”

Mayor Linley Shine said the exhibition continues to strengthen Port Augusta’s reputation as a centre for Aboriginal arts and culture.

“The Malka Aboriginal Art Prize supports artists of all generations to have their work seen, celebrated and respected. It strengthens our identity as a hub for Aboriginal arts and culture.”

Yarta Purtli Arts Officer Christie Mitchell said coordinating the exhibition had been an incredibly rewarding experience.

“It has been a true privilege to engage with artists from across our region and see the extraordinary depth of talent within regional communities. One of the most rewarding aspects of showcasing Malka is the opportunity to share diverse artistic voices — voices that reflect the lived experiences, histories and cultural pride of Aboriginal communities.”

The 2026 Malka Aboriginal Art Prize was awarded to Christine Tschuna, an artist from Ceduna, for her outstanding work titled Wirangu Eagle. Christine also won the Elder Category Award.

A self-taught artist, Christine creates contemporary Aboriginal art in a distinctive style, recognised through her considered use of colour, patterns, symbols and themes. Her intricate line work and dot painting reflect both cultural knowledge and a unique artistic vision.

Wirangu Eagle celebrates the enduring connection between the Wirangu people, Country and culture, capturing the strength, spirit and significance of the eagle within the landscape of the Far West Coast.

The People’s Choice Award was won by Candace Swan, who also received the Marvin McKenzie Senior Local Artist Award for her painting titled “Purpose”.

Candace was the 2025 Malka Aboriginal Art Prize winner and began painting with her mum at the age of 12, learning the foundations of her craft and gaining the skills that would shape her artistic journey. She was fortunate to help complete some of her mum's paintings before developing her own designs at just 14 years old.

Over time, Candace began experimenting with background colours and creating her own distinctive style, while continuing to honour community, connection and culture through her artwork.

"Purpose celebrates the history, culture and achievements of First Nations people and encourages Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to learn about culture and reconciliation." Candace stated.

Port Augusta City Council Malka Award Winner 2026

Winner - Christine Tschuna

Finalists:

2nd Candace Swan

3rd Verna Virginia Lawrie

Sponsored by Steel Mains Pty Ltd

Marvin McKenzie Senior, Local Artist Award

Winner - Candace Swan

Finalists:

2nd Jasmine Larkins

3rd Dakota Warren-Carlton

Sponsored by Iberdrola Australia

Port Augusta City Council Malka 2026 Elder Award

Winner - Christine Tschuna

Finalists:

2nd Verna Virginia Lawrie

3rd Eleanor Coleman

Sponsored by Kokatha Aboriginal Corporation

Port Augusta City Council Malka 2026 Youth Award

Winner - Morgan Dayman

Finalists:

2nd Deborah Twyla McKenzie-Bayley

3rd Ataisha Paige

Sponsored by Potentia Energy

Port Augusta City Council Malka 2026 Junior Award

Winner - Ciara Lennon-Gray

Finalists:

2nd Dekota Coulthard

3rd Pagen Bell-Riley

Sponsored by Potentia Energy

Port Augusta City Council Malka 2026 People's Choice Award

Winner - Candace Swan

Sponsored by Uniting Country SA



Photos: Top - Morgan Dayman Youth Award Winner, Bottom left - Mayor Linley Shine and Collette Gray Ceduna Arts Representative with Elder Winner and Overall Winning artwork by Christine Tschuna, Bottom right – Iberdrola representative Luke Nottle with the People’s Choice and Marvin McKenzie Snr Local Artist Award winning artwork by Candace Swan.

For further information please contact Port Augusta City Council Media and Communications Officer 8641 9100.

JOHN BANKS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
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