

**The  
Royal Geographical Society  
of South Australia, Inc.**



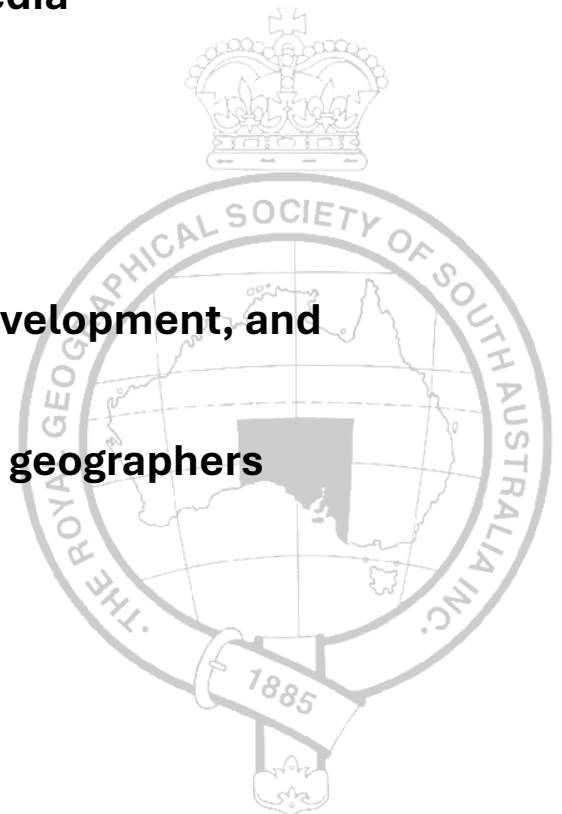
**The Society Prospectus**



*Experience. Geography. Together.™*

# Contents

- 1 Message from the President and Director**
- 3 The Society Prospectus**
- 4 Our Manifesto**
- 5 Governance**
- 7 Library**
- 8 Research funding and support**
- 9 Education**
- 10 Events**
- 11 Exploration**
- 12 Trail maintenance and GeoTrails**
- 13 News, information, and social media**
- 14 Publications**
- 15 Advocacy**
- 16 Collegiality and networking**
- 17 Lifelong learning, professional development, and  
volunteering**
- 18 Supporting the next generation of geographers**
- 19 Recognition**
- 21 Membership**
- 22 Donations and bequests**
- 23 Keeping in touch**





*Experience. Geography. Together.™*

# Message from the President and Director

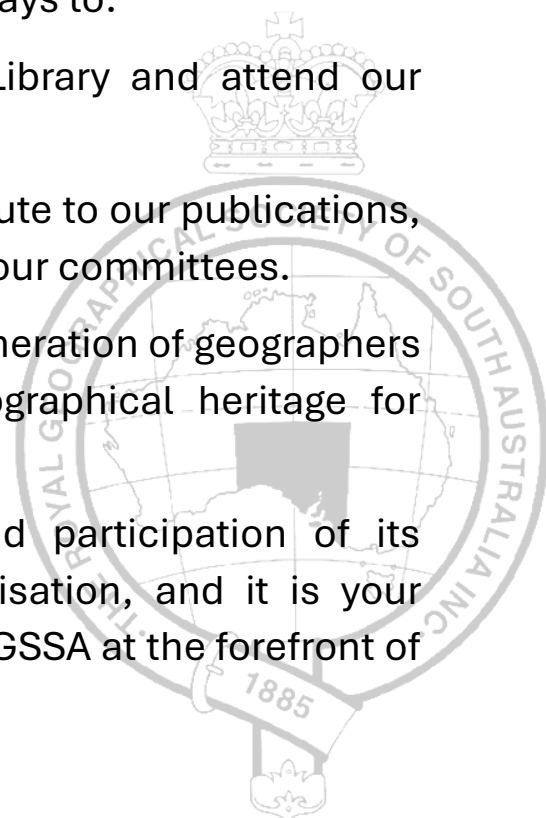
It is a pleasure to welcome you to the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia (RGSSA). Whether you are already one of our eminent Fellows, considering membership, or looking to support our work through a donation, you are joining a distinguished community dedicated to geography and exploration since 1885.

The RGSSA is more than a community-based learned society; it is a vibrant network of curious minds. Our mission is to promote a deeper understanding of the world around us—from the preservation of our rare and significant historical archives in the State Library to the active maintenance of GeoTrails across our diverse landscapes.

As you look through this Prospectus, we encourage you to see it as a map of the opportunities available to you as a member of the Society. Within these pages, you will find ways to:

- **Discover.** Access our world-class Library and attend our stimulating lecture series.
- **Engage.** Join us on field trips, contribute to our publications, or volunteer your expertise on one of our committees.
- **Support.** Help us mentor the next generation of geographers and preserve South Australia's geographical heritage for years to come.

Our Society thrives on the passion and participation of its members. We are a volunteer-led organisation, and it is your curiosity and commitment that keep the RGSSA at the forefront of geographical advocacy and education.



With the Society's other members, we look forward to meeting you at our upcoming events and working together to advance our shared understanding of the world and our place within it.

Welcome to the Society.

*Leigh Radford, OAM*

President

*Iain Hay*

Director



# The Society Prospectus

**The Society Prospectus provides details of membership of the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia (RGSSA), the range of benefits to which members have access, and the remarkable scope of our Society work that membership and voluntary contributions support.**

If you are new to the Society, we hope you find this a useful introduction to making the most of your association with one of the most longstanding learned societies for geography in the world.

For existing members, the following pages offer a reminder of what's available to you, perhaps serving as a signal to recent enhancements and to the personal and community value of your Society membership.



# Our Manifesto

The Royal Geographical Society of South Australia is a community of volunteers driven to contribute to a deeper appreciation of the world.

We gather as experts and enthusiasts to consider the connected, complex relationships between places and people that together make up our planet.

Through the rich dimension of our discipline, we explore how places came to be, how they're shaped over time, and what we can all do to conserve, enhance and develop them.

Since 1885, we've been the custodian of Australia's largest, oldest and rarest collection of geographical books, maps, manuscripts, and relics. And in a contemporary setting we continue to act as the champion of public discovery, leading milestone research, education, engagement, and partnership programs that see our efforts reach further.

We are passionate advocates for the enduring value of geography as the means to discover **what the world can teach us.**



# Governance

**The Royal Geographical Society of South Australia is governed by an elected Council and Society business is managed by a series of Committees responsible to the Council. The RGSSA is fortunate to have as joint Patrons; Her Excellency the Honourable Frances Adamson AC, Governor of South Australia, and Mr Rod Buntten.**

All members of the Society's very active Council are required to follow our [Code of Conduct](#) in addition to meeting their obligations at law and under the RGSSA Rules (currently under review).

Much of the RGSSA's work is handled by six Committees whose diligent members contribute in the following ways:

[Education Committee](#) supports and advocates for geographical education at all levels and liaises with relevant groups within and outside the Society.

[Engagement and Communications Committee](#) enhances the profile and image of the Society, as well as improving communication about its events, publications, resources and opportunities.

[Executive and Administration Committee](#) ensures that the Executive officers of the Society are aware of key issues affecting the Society and oversees the Society's administrative functions.

[Library Management Committee](#) maintains and manages the Society's internationally significant library and relics collection to the highest standard that resources allow and provides carefully managed visitor, information, and lending services.

Program Committee organises an active and balanced program of trips and events with geographical themes relating to the past, present and future.

Research Publications and Awards Committee develops and manages the Society's research grants program, advises Council on matters of research, and oversees the direction of the Society's publications.

RGSSA members are encouraged to become involved in all of the Society's activities including its governance.



# Library

**RGSSA members are afforded superior access to Society's [Library](#) which contains over 25,000 volumes and is one of the most significant collections of rare geographical books, manuscripts, maps and relics in Australia – housed in the second most beautiful library in the world (after Trinity College Library, Dublin).**

The oldest book in our collection is a beautifully bound version of Ptolemy's *Geographia* published in 1482. In addition, there are 26 other books published before 1599 including two Ortelius atlases (1571 and 1598). Other rare atlases include two Colom atlases (c1650 and 1670) and Mercator's atlas (1635). The manuscript collection contains many significant items including John McDouall Stuart's diary of his fifth expedition (1861/62) and two letters written by Colonel Light. Our significant physical relics, many of which are on display, include Colonel Light's Surveyors' Dumpy level and John McDouall Stuart's handmade table and chair.

Details of many of the Library's rarest and most precious items are described and illustrated in our stunning online [Treasures](#) pages.

The Library is staffed by volunteer librarians and library technicians who assist members and the public in their areas of interest. The Society makes a broad selection of its books and periodicals available for loan to members.

The Library is located on Level 2 of the Mortlock Wing in the State Library of South Australia, North Terrace, Adelaide.

While the Library is usually open from 10 am to 1 pm Tuesday to Friday, we recommend checking the Library's [webpage](#) before visiting in case of any scheduling changes.

# Research funding and support

**Each year the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia offers grants and important other forms of support to geographical research and communication.**

RGSSA funding is available to scholars at all career stages and provides for a wide range of activities.

Once a year, we offer [Dorothy Pyatt Postgraduate Research Grants](#) to support current members conducting defined doctoral research projects in geography at a South Australian university. One grant is for work in Australia and the other overseas.

Annually, we also invite applications for [Library Research Fellowships](#) for up to three scholars at any career point. These sought-after Fellowships offer researchers from outside South Australia opportunity to pursue their work in proximity to our distinguished collection of primary sources.

The Society convenes a popular annual Honours/Postgraduate student conference, incorporating professional development opportunities, for students of geography and cognate disciplines.

Through its Research, Publications and Awards Committee the Society also extends significant in-kind advice and counsel for member research.



# Education

**Recognising contemporary challenges to both the planet and to the discipline, the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia supports geographical education in a number of ways and at all levels.**

The Society has a long tradition of awarding prestigious and named [prizes for school students \(from Years 7-12\) and university students \(from Year 1 to PhD\)](#). Most of these acknowledge recipients with a certificate and financial reward as well as a period of membership of the Society.

Our work supporting geographical education also includes professional development opportunities for novice teachers, acknowledging that disproportionately few have a formal educational background in geography.

We also liaise with relevant educational and professional groups locally and nationally (e.g. Australian Geography Teachers' Association; HaSS Association Australia; Institute of Australian Geographers) on matters of geographical education, and we advocate for geography in schools, the tertiary sector, and adult education.



# Events

**Each year the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia Society hosts geographically focussed lectures, seminars, symposia and other events.**

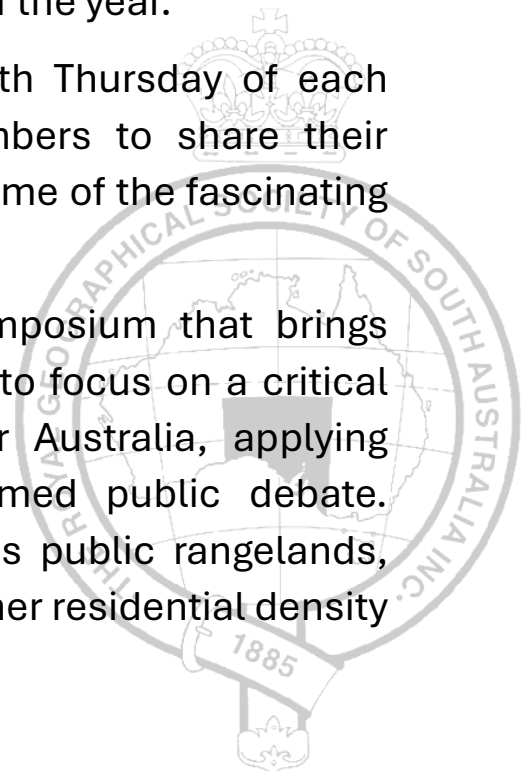
Our evening lecture program is open to all and offers ten opportunities each year to hear key figures speak on matters of broad appeal to members (discounted admission) and the general public. This includes the Society's annual Brock Lecture. Lectures are preceded by drinks and nibbles and are usually followed by a dinner for those who are interested. These occasions are an excellent opportunity to meet fellow geographers and members of the Society, as well as RGSSA Councillors.

Most evening lectures are now video-recorded and are available to watch again via our dedicated [YouTube channel](#).

Acknowledging that some of our members prefer not to attend evening lectures, we also offer an additional and separate program of lunchtime lectures in the cooler months of the year.

The [Rare Books Group](#) meets on the fourth Thursday of each month, providing an opportunity for members to share their interest in the provenance and content of some of the fascinating items in our collection.

Each year the Society hosts a major Symposium that brings together members, experts, and the public to focus on a critical issue directly affecting South Australia or Australia, applying geographical perspectives to foster informed public debate. Symposia have focussed on topics such as public rangelands, urbanisation of the Mt Lofty Ranges, and higher residential density as a solution to Adelaide's housing costs.



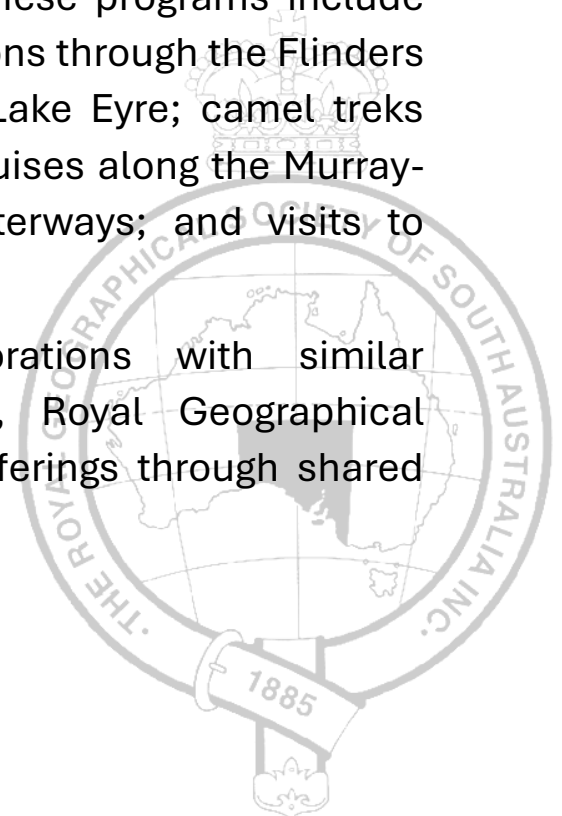
# Exploration

**To explore geographical themes and issues relevant to South Australia, the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia organises a variety of field programs ranging from local excursions to extended expeditions. These trips provide members with a unique opportunity to engage directly with the places that make our part of the world.**

The Society hosts day trips to significant – as well as everyday – sites within Adelaide’s surrounds and regional South Australia. These focused outings explore a wide range of themes such as urban sprawl, pastoral heritage (e.g. Australia’s second-oldest Merino stud and a cornerstone of our State’s pastoral history), and colonial infrastructure (e.g. historic River Port Goolwa).

For those seeking deeper immersion, we coordinate multi-day journeys to more remote destinations. These programs include itineraries such as vehicle-based expeditions through the Flinders Ranges and out toward the margins of Lake Eyre; camel treks through the Simpson Desert; extended cruises along the Murray-Darling system, tracing vital inland waterways; and visits to Australian territories like Norfolk Island.

The RGSSA supports active collaborations with similar organisations (e.g. Geography Victoria, Royal Geographical Society of Queensland) to extend our offerings through shared trips and cross-institutional expertise.



# Trail Maintenance and GeoTrails

**Continuing in the spirit of exploration that is fundamental to geographical imaginations, RGSSA members are involved actively in walking trail maintenance and development of mobile apps to support self-guided adventures in South Australia.**

[The Walking Trails Support Group](#) comprises RGSSA volunteers devoted to the development and maintenance of walking tracks in the Flinders and Mount Lofty Ranges.

The group runs trips throughout the year to ensure existing tracks are in good condition, manage erosion, and keep track marking clear, aiming for safety and minimum environmental impact. While Barossa trips are day-long, Flinders Ranges maintenance is handled across three two-week trips, utilising various ranger and shearers' quarters. The work is non-arduous and customisable to each member's capacity, offering varied and interesting company.

A key goal of the Group is to enrich walkers' experiences by providing information on the area's flora, fauna, Aboriginal knowledge, geology, and European history. This is achieved through information leaflets, maps, and notes, available at trailheads or via the website.

The Group has also developed a number of free mobile applications for exploring SA's geography and geology, offering GPS-guided walking and driving trails, maps, and information on various sites, for both Android and Apple devices. 'Barossa Country Walks', 'Flinders Ranges Walks', and 'South Australia Geotrails' make geography, geology and earth science accessible, providing self-guided adventures across some of the state's unique landscapes.

# News, information, and social media

**Staying informed is vital to making the most of RGSSA membership, and we utilise a variety of platforms to keep members connected with our latest initiatives and the broader geographical community. Whether through traditional publications or digital updates, the Society ensures members have timely access to events, news, and opportunities for engagement.**

As a member of the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia you will receive regular updates about the work of the Society, including [GeoNews](#), our bi-monthly newsletter that delivers news of key Society activities, events, and member-authored articles straight to your inbox/ letterbox.

In addition, regular emails to all members provide details of the latest activities and initiatives from the Society — many of which are covered further in this guide — as well as geography-related events taking place across Adelaide and beyond. These include externally organised lectures, seminars, conferences and other events; calls for papers; book launches; offers of funding; and selected employment opportunities.

The Society also maintains [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [LinkedIn](#) sites where we provide news of coming events, celebrate shared experiences including talks and field trips, record events, and applaud member achievements. We also have a presence on [Wikipedia](#).

And, of course, our website provides a regularly updated overview of Society news, activities and events.

# Publications

**Publications are an important means for the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia to communicate with our members and to broadcast new geographical research. We currently have a number of outlets for the benefit of RGSSA members and the wider community.**

Our current publication activities include:

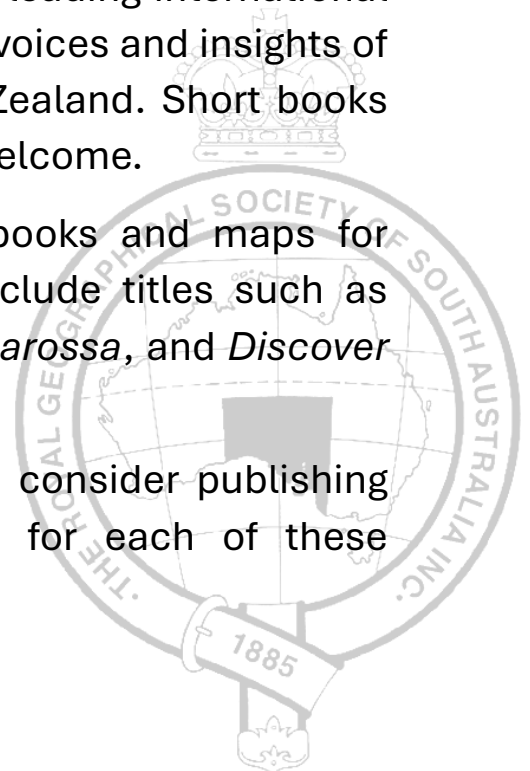
[GeoNews](#), our bimonthly newsletter delivering news of key Society activities, events, and member-authored articles.

[South Australian Geographical Journal](#), Australia's most longstanding scholarly journal of geography, carrying refereed research papers and other articles relating to the geography of South Australia and its immediate vicinity.

['Antipodean Perspectives on Geography'](#) is a book series collaboration between the RGSSA and leading international publisher Anthem Press to amplify the voices and insights of geographers from Australia and New Zealand. Short books (20,000-30,000 words) are especially welcome.

The Society also occasionally publishes books and maps for general audiences. Successful volumes include titles such as *Explore the Flinders Ranges*, *Exploring the Barossa*, and *Discover Kangaroo Island*.

We warmly encourage RGSSA members to consider publishing their work with the Society, and editors for each of these publications welcome your submissions.



# Advocacy

**The Royal Geographical Society of South Australia actively serves geographical and wider communities through dedicated advocacy and campaigning.**

The Society publicly advocates for the value of geography as a crucial field of study and a vital civic good, promoting the essential skills and expertise that geographers bring to understanding and addressing contemporary global challenges.

We support geography researchers and educators whose work may be threatened by institutional cuts or closures, working closely with those whose careers are at risk to offer guidance and a platform for concern.

We contribute to significant national bodies such as the Australian Academy of Science's National Committee for Geographical Sciences in its ongoing work to provide strategic evidence-based advice on geographical sciences; support science literacy and excellence on geographical sciences; and liaise with international counterparts.

To maximise our effectiveness, we coordinate our shared advocacy work by collaborating closely with partner and allied organisations, both nationally and internationally (e.g. International Science Council, International Geographical Union, Australian Geography Teachers' Association, Institute of Australian Geographers). This supports a unified and impactful voice in promoting the discipline.



# Collegiality and networking

**Members of the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia are a key part of Australia's equal oldest, largest, and most active geographical organisations.**

Members are also part of a vibrant, welcoming community passionate about geography and exploration. Our membership offers networking opportunities, allowing you to connect with fellow enthusiasts, academics, field experts, and volunteers through our diverse range of activities.

Our scheduled gatherings are convivial and purposeful. Our unscheduled gatherings, be it meeting for coffee in the State Library café or chatting in the Society's premises, are amiable and animated. Together they create a sense of 'belonging' that is often noted by our members.

You'll forge friendships built on shared intellectual curiosity and a passion for learning from our world. Whether you're attending a lecture, volunteering in the library, or maintaining remote tracks, you'll find great company and a collaborative environment that will extend your understanding of our world and create wonderful lasting memories.

We look forward to your membership and enduring association with the Society.



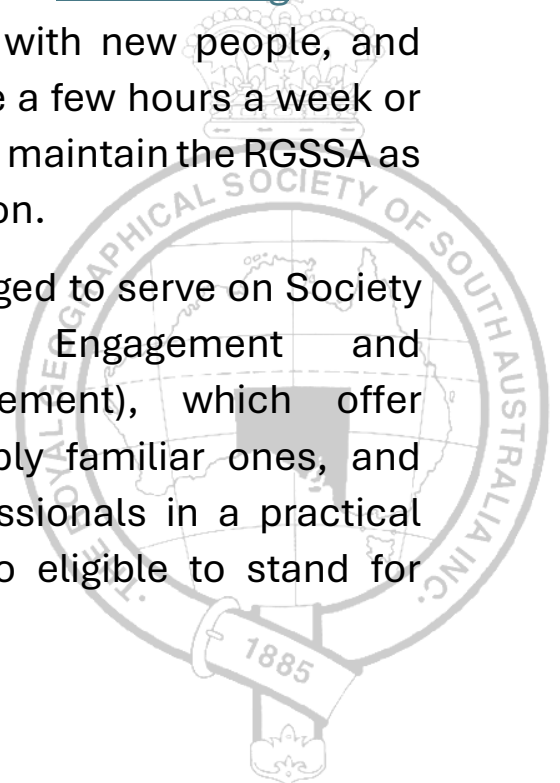
# Lifelong learning, professional development, and volunteering

**The RGSSA supports professional development and lifelong learning for members through a diverse array of activities, resources, and volunteering opportunities.**

Structured learning and knowledge sharing are supported through our stimulating lectures on a broad range of topics, publications, rare books discussions, and through research grants. Experiential learning is sustained through field trips and excursions as well as through members' access to our Library's unique resources. The Library offers a world-class resource for personal and professional research in geography, exploration, and history.

Wide-ranging opportunities for lifelong learning and professional development are available through committee and other volunteering openings. The Society relies heavily on its volunteers to keep it an active and viable organisation. [Volunteering](#) allows you to make a positive impact, connect with new people, and develop new skills. Whether you can spare a few hours a week or month, your welcome contribution will also maintain the RGSSA as an active and viable community organisation.

RGSSA members are eligible and encouraged to serve on Society committees (such as Education, Engagement and Communications, and Library Management), which offer opportunities to develop new skills, apply familiar ones, and network with other volunteers and professionals in a practical setting. Of course, all members are also eligible to stand for election to the Society's Council.



# Supporting the next generation of geographers

**Through tailor-made professional development activities and social gatherings the Society nurtures the next generation of South Australian geographers.**

[GeoNext](#) was established by the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia in 2025 to support the professional development of emerging geographers and geographically passionate early-career professionals.

GeoNext provides networking opportunities by facilitating connections with like-minded peers, academics, and established senior members of the geographical community, essential for career growth. It aims to build capacity among its members by offering opportunities for professional development, including lectures, discussions, and specific geography skills workshops. And it helps to create a supportive community for young geographers and early-career professionals, enhancing the visibility of their work within the RGSSA and the broader community.



# Recognition

**The Royal Geographical Society of South Australia makes a number of longstanding and highly regarded awards to acknowledge contributions to geography and to recognise efforts to further the objects of the Society.**

Our member-only awards include:

[Fellowship](#) for members of RGSSA who have made significant contributions to advancing the objects of the Society.

[The Centenary Silver Medal](#) for outstanding service to the Society as evidenced by long and active tenure on the Council and/or Committees of the Society or by significant contributions to the varied activities of the Society.

[Life Membership](#) for those who have held 50 years of continuous membership of the Society.

The Society also maintains an active campaign to ensure recognition of notable volunteer contributions through the annual South Australian [Premier's Certificate of Recognition for Outstanding Volunteer Service](#) award program.

Acknowledging the extensive contributions made to geography beyond the Society's membership, we also offer a number of other awards that are also open to both members and non-members.

[The John Lewis Gold Medal](#) for Exploration / Geographical Research / Literary Work in Geography for noteworthy geographical achievements in Exploration, Research or Literary Work particularly work that has a South Australian context.

The Society presents [The G.W. Symes Award](#) to an author of a worthy academic, peer-reviewed publication. This

publication must relate to the history of South Australia (or the Northern Territory as it affects South Australia's history) and must be substantially informed by the discipline of geography.

And finally, through our [Honorary Life Membership](#) we acknowledge non-members of RGSSA who have rendered valuable service in the promotion, or furtherance of all or any of the objects of the Society.



# Membership

**We think that as a voluntary, community-based learned society, RGSSA has a lot to offer. We do hope you agree. We'd like to encourage you join the Society, maintain your membership, and persuade others to get involved.**

As the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia is a charity, your annual subscription – which we maintain at a very modest rate – is vital for our work to provide member benefits and to support the wider geographical community. Our rolling [membership](#) year not only means you can join any time, but it also makes it easy to purchase a [gift subscription](#) for a family or friend's birthday or other special occasion.

And if we could ask one thing of you? If you are willing, please do recommend the Society to your family, friends, and colleagues.

We are very grateful to all our members for your subscriptions and the many ways you assist with our activities.



# Donations and bequests

**The Royal Geographical Society of South Australia relies on the generosity of our members and the public to maintain our unique collections and support the Society's wide range of activities focussed on advancing geography.**

Because the RGSSA is a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC), donations of \$2 or more to the Society's Trust Funds are typically tax-deductible. If you wish to donate to the Society, you can do it in a variety of ways.

**Membership Renewal:** You can easily add a donation when renewing your annual membership.

**Direct Donations:** Financial contributions can be made at any time via [Donate](#) section on the RGSSA website or by contacting the Society's office.

**Bequests:** Many of our members choose to support the future of the Society by including a gift in their Will. If you would like to leave a lasting legacy, the Society welcomes discussions regarding bequests of money, property, or significant geographical collections.

**Other Ways:** As custodians we welcome suitable donations of physical objects or money to develop and preserve our collections of significant books, maps, manuscripts and relics relating to First Nations peoples, exploration, and settlement of geographical interest.

If you wish to discuss funding or supporting the Society's work in these or additional ways, please contact the Society's President, Director, or Treasurer. All such giving is greatly appreciated and acknowledged as appropriate.

# Keeping in touch

**As a member of the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia we welcome you to contact us if you have questions or points you wish to bring to our attention.**

Listed below are people who you may wish to contact if you have points to raise or from whom you are most likely to hear as a member of the Society:

|                   |                           |  |
|-------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Leigh Radford OAM | President                 | <a href="mailto:president@rgssa.org.au">president@rgssa.org.au</a>   |
| Iain Hay          | Director                  | <a href="mailto:director@rgssa.org.au">director@rgssa.org.au</a>     |
| Melissa Gibbs     | Secretary                 | <a href="mailto:admin@rgssa.org.au">admin@rgssa.org.au</a>           |
| Tony Merchant     | Treasurer                 | <a href="mailto:admin@rgssa.org.au">admin@rgssa.org.au</a>           |
| Alan Pickering    | Office Manager            | <a href="mailto:admin@rgssa.org.au">admin@rgssa.org.au</a>           |
| Nona Verco        | Library Chair             | <a href="mailto:library@rgssa.org.au">library@rgssa.org.au</a>       |
| Ingrid Ahmer      | Volunteer<br>Co-ordinator | <a href="mailto:volunteers@rgssa.org.au">volunteers@rgssa.org.au</a> |

**If you want to visit our office or Library, you'll find us at:**

Level 2, Mortlock Wing  
State Library of South Australia  
North Terrace Adelaide SA 5000

**If you want to post something to us, the address is:**

The Royal Geographical Society of South Australia Inc.  
PO Box 3661 Rundle Mall  
Adelaide SA 5000



**Our Society office hours and relevant contact information are:**

Thursdays from 10.00 am to 1.00 pm (most weeks) and 10:00 am to 4:00 pm (on lecture days - 3rd Thursday of the month)

Office telephone: (+618) 7424 6311

**Our Library hours:**

While the Library is usually open from 10 am to 1 pm Tuesday to Friday, we recommend checking the Library's webpage before visiting in case of any scheduling changes.

And finally, further information about the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia is available at our [website](#).



# Version History

Version 1, The Society Prospectus RGSSA, January 2026 (Iain Hay) ©



*Advancing Geography since 1885.™*