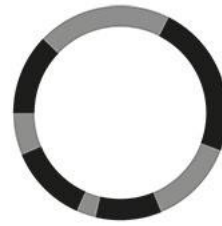


Interpretation Australia



Interpretation Australia National Awards 2026

Effective interpretation of our natural and cultural heritage makes a difference in our daily lives. It helps us understand and navigate our world, and adds depth and insight to our experiences in museums, zoos, parks, botanic gardens, heritage sites, the outdoors and commercial environments.

The Interpretation Australia National Awards were established in 2008 to recognise and reward outstanding achievements in the field of interpretation.

The awards are open to all IA members.

[Interpretation Australia National Awards | Interpretation Australia Association Inc](#)

Entries must be submitted electronically by 5.00pm Monday 15 June 2026.

Questions?

Please contact: awards@interpretationaustralia.asn.au

Awards Overview

The Interpretation Australia National Awards celebrate excellence, creativity, and leadership in the field of interpretation across Australia. The awards recognise both the achievements of individual practitioners and the quality of interpretive projects delivered in a wide range of settings, including museums, zoos, parks, botanic gardens, heritage sites, cultural institutions, tourism environments, and digital platforms.

The awards are divided into two streams:

Stream 1 — Project Awards

These awards recognise excellence in interpretive projects across indoor, outdoor, guided, digital, and mixed-media experiences. They celebrate innovation, audience engagement, accessibility, cultural respect, and high-quality interpretive design and delivery.

Stream 2 — Professional Awards

These awards recognise the skills, leadership, creativity, and impact of individuals working in interpretation. They celebrate emerging talent, sustained contribution, frontline excellence, and outstanding interpretive leadership.

Both streams are open to IA members.

Non-members may enter the project awards by paying the non-member nomination fee, which includes a one-year Interpretation Australia membership.

Full submission requirements, eligibility criteria, and judging information for each stream are provided in the following sections.

STREAM 1 — PROJECT AWARDS

Project Award Categories

Outdoor Interpretation Project

A project that demonstrates interpretation elements and design integrated into an outdoor environment or setting. This may include trails, parks, reserves, zoos, gardens, heritage landscapes, or other open-air environments. Projects may be permanent or temporary.

Total project budget determines the appropriate level:

- Level A: Project budget less than \$100,000
- Level B: Project budget over \$100,000

Indoor Interpretation Project

A project that demonstrates interpretation elements and design integrated into an indoor environment or setting. This may include museums, galleries, visitor centres, built heritage spaces, or indoor exhibitions. Projects may be permanent or temporary.

Total project budget determines the appropriate level:

- Level A: Project budget less than \$100,000
- Level B: Project budget over \$100,000

Guided Interpretive Experience

An innovative personal interpretation program facilitated by a live interpreter that allows audience interaction in real time, in a face-to-face setting.

These may include, but are not limited to:

- interpretive talks
- guided walks or hikes
- evening programs
- costumed interpretation
- theatrical or character-based programs
- historical reenactments
- ranger-led or educator-led experiences

This category recognises excellence in live, facilitated interpretation that creates meaningful audience engagement.

Mixed Media Interpretation Project

An interpretation project delivered primarily through digital media.

This may include:

- audio tours
- mobile apps
- websites
- podcasts

- digital interactives
- projections
- immersive or screen-based experiences
- augmented or virtual reality

Projects may include some physical elements, but digital must be the dominant interpretive medium.

First Nations Interpretation Project

A culturally led project that celebrates and elevates First Nations voices.

Projects may include the sharing of:

- stories and knowledge
- culture, science, and technology
- philosophy, traditions, or practices

The development and delivery phases must demonstrate authentic connection, collaboration, and consultation with Traditional Custodians, Elders, Knowledge-holders, and First Nations communities.

This category recognises culturally grounded interpretation that honours Country, community, and cultural authority.

Requirements for all Project Categories

- To ensure fairness and consistency across all categories:
- A minimum of two (2) eligible entries must be received for a category to proceed.
- Where less than 2 entries are received for a category, these entries will be placed into an 'Open' category and judged accordingly.
- To maintain the integrity of the awards, judges reserve the right not to present a category where applications do not demonstrate interpretation excellence.
- Only one winner may be designated per category.
- Interpretation Australia may reassign an entry to a more appropriate category in consultation with the entrant.
- First Nations projects may be entered into the First Nations Interpretation Project category or into any other category that best reflects the project's format, scope, and budget.

- Entrants may choose the category that most appropriately represents their work.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible to enter the 2026 Interpretation Australia National Awards, entrants must meet the following requirements:

Membership

- Entrants must be current IA members at the time of submission.
- Entries may be submitted under any current membership type (Individual or Corporate), provided the membership is active at the time of submission.
- Non-members may enter by paying the non-member entry fee, which includes a one-year IA membership.

Residency

- Entrants (or the lead organisation) must reside permanently within an Australian state or territory.

Project Timeframe

- Projects must have been completed within the last 24 months prior to the closing date.
- Copyright & Permissions
- Entrants must own the copyright for all submitted materials or have written permission from the copyright holder.
- IA may request proof of permissions if required.

Conflicts of Interest

- Judges and IA staff directly administering the awards are not eligible to enter.
- IA Board members may be nominated; however, they must not participate in any aspect of the awards process, including judging, access to submissions, or discussions relating to awards decisions.
- Entrants must declare any potential conflict of interest.

Submission Requirements

- Entries must be complete, accurate, and submitted by the deadline.
- Incomplete entries, incorrect category selection, or missing permissions may result in disqualification.
- Each project may be entered into one category only.
- It is the responsibility of the entrant to ensure that all primary stakeholders, site owners, and project team members are aware of the nomination and support its submission to the IA National Awards.

How to Enter

Entering the 2026 Interpretation Australia National Awards is a simple, two-step process: complete the online form and submit your supporting materials.

Step 1 — Complete the Online Submission Form

Entrants must complete the official online entry form for their chosen category.

The form collects essential details including project information, contact details, and membership status.

Step 2 — Submit Your Written Submission and Supporting Materials

After completing the form, entrants must email their written submission and supporting documentation to:

awards@interpretationaustralia.asn.au

Submission Deadline

All materials must be submitted by 5.00pm (AEST), 15 June 2026.

Late submissions cannot be accepted.

Submission Requirements

- **Written Submission**
 - Must address the three core sections of the submission form: Discovery, Design and Delivery.
 - Follow the recommended word limits provided in the form.
 - Submit as a single PDF or Word document.
- **Supporting Materials (up to 10 items total)**

In addition to the Written Submission, you may include up to 10 supporting items to help judges understand your project. An item may be any one of the following, up to a maximum of 10 individual items:

- a single image or photograph
- a document (PDF/Word)
- a short video or audio clip (via link only)
- a set of images grouped into one document (counts as one item)
- a link to a digital experience

Image captions: If submitting images individually, please include captions in a single caption list (The caption list is an administrative requirement and does not count toward the maximum of 10 supporting items).

Choose materials that best illustrate the story you've told in your submission.

- Media Content
 - Video and audio must be provided via links only (YouTube, Vimeo, SoundCloud, hosted files, etc.)
 - Do not attach media files directly.
- Additional Materials (optional)
 - Scripts, storyboards, plans, accessibility documentation, evaluation reports, etc.
 - These should support, not replace, the written submission.
- Submission Format
 - All submissions must be provided via a single link (OneDrive, Dropbox, SharePoint, Google Drive, etc.) with download permissions enabled.
 - Your total submission (including written submission and all supporting items) must be no more than 30Mb total. Compressed file archives (e.g ZIP/RAR etc) must extract to 30Mb or less.
- File Naming
 - Include project name, category, and entrant name.
 - Example: RiverTrail_OutdoorLevelA_SunshineCouncil.jpg.

Invoices & Payment

- An invoice will be issued within 7 days of receiving your submission.
- Payment must be received by the due date for the entry to be considered.
- Non-member fees include a one-year IA membership.

Entry Limits

- Entrants may submit multiple entries across different categories.
- Each project may be entered into **one category** only.

Evaluation & Judging

All entries are evaluated by a panel of experienced interpretation professionals using Interpretation Australia's universal rubric, based on the three interpretive phases of Discovery, Design and Delivery. This rubric is designed to be fair, transparent, and consistent across all categories.

Judging Process

- Each entry is assessed independently by multiple judges using the official IA Awards rubric.
- Judges review submissions individually and submit their scores before the deliberation meeting.
- The deliberation meeting is held to discuss scoring, ensure consistency, and confirm the final results.
- Judges may request clarification or additional information through IA if required.
- Entrants will receive a summary of judge feedback after the awards.

Evaluation Criteria

Project entries are assessed across three weighted criteria:

- Discovery (25%): Purpose, audience understanding, research, planning, and clarity of interpretive intent.
- Design (35%): Creativity, inclusivity, interpretive approach, design response to place, and alignment with best practice.
- Delivery (40%): Execution, impact, engagement, accessibility, and long-term value for audiences and communities.

Conflicts of Interest

- Judges must declare any conflict of interest before reviewing entries.
- Judges will not assess entries where a conflict exists.
- IA staff administering the awards do not participate in judging
- IA Board members must not participate in any aspect of the awards process, including judging, access to submissions, or discussions relating to awards decisions.

Entry Fees

Entry fees support the administration of the awards program and help Interpretation Australia provide feedback to entrants and recognition for excellence across the sector.

Member Rates

- Individual Member: \$100 per entry
- Corporate Member: \$100 per entry: (Corporate Membership covers all staff under the organisation's membership.)

Non-Member Rate

- Non-Member: \$250 per entry

(Includes a one-year Individual Membership to Interpretation Australia.)

Payment Process

- An invoice will be issued within 7 days of receiving your submission.
- Payment must be received by the due date for the entry to be considered valid.
- Entries with outstanding invoices at the close of judging will not proceed.

Refunds

- Once the submission has been accepted into the Awards, no refunds are permissible.

Notification

Entrants will receive confirmation that their submission has been received and is eligible for judging.

Award winners will be announced at the 2026 Interpretation Australia National Conference.

No advance notification of results will be provided.

Award winner commitments

A key objective of the awards is to profile excellence in interpretation to help further the professional and professional practice across Australia. To help achieve this outcome, the award winner of each category is expected to deliver the following free of charge to IA

- Participate in an IA 2026 Awards Winners webinar to be delivered in early 2027. A date will be announced (TBC).
- Provide an article and images about the award-winning project of approximately 1000 words that provides an overview of the project. IA will use the article, or parts thereof, across its website, eNews and social media platforms.
- Be the subject of an “Interpreter in focus” that highlights individual interpreters or businesses/services operating within Australia.

Award winners may also be invited to present speciality workshops based on their winning project based on a fee-for-service arrangement, should this be appropriate.

Award winners receive

All Interpretation Australia Award winners receive:

- a trophy presented at the IA Awards Ceremony
- a digital certificate recognising their achievement
- a feature listing on the IA website as part of the annual awards archive
- the IA Award Winner badge for use in personal, organisational, or project promotion
- the opportunity to be featured in IA eNews, social media, or future IA communications
- the option to present their work in an IA webinar or event, where relevant

Stream 2 — Professional / Individual Awards

Georgie Waterman Award

Since 1999, Interpretation Australia has celebrated the life of interpreter Georgie Waterman by awarding the Georgie Waterman Award to an outstanding interpreter. The Georgie Waterman Award recognises individuals who have made an outstanding and sustained contribution to the development of the profession of interpretation in Australia. The key focus of this award is on the sustained contribution being made to the profession.

Young Achievement Award

The Young Achievement Award is for emerging professionals who are making an outstanding contribution to the development of interpretation in Australia. First presented in 2008, this award celebrates inspiration, creativity, innovation and audience awareness of a young individual who demonstrates a commitment to Interpretation as their chosen profession.

Nominees for this category are typically in the first five years of their professional career, and their achievements are assessed in relation to early-career impact, initiative, and potential.

Interpretive Manager Award (new)

The Interpretive Manager Award recognises individuals who lead, guide, or coordinate interpretive teams, programs, or projects. This award celebrates managers who demonstrate excellence in strategic thinking, project leadership, collaboration, and the ability to deliver high-quality interpretive outcomes across multiple initiatives.

Nominees may work in government agencies, cultural institutions, consultancies, tourism organisations, or community settings, and must demonstrate leadership that elevates both their team and the broader profession.

Frontline Interpreter Award (new)

The Frontline Interpreter Award celebrates excellence in face-to-face interpretation. This award recognises guides, educators, presenters, rangers, and other visitor-facing interpreters who create meaningful, engaging, and memorable experiences for audiences.

Nominees demonstrate strong communication skills, audience awareness, cultural sensitivity, and the ability to connect people with place, story, and meaning through live interpretation

Category Requirements

To ensure fairness and consistency across all Professional / Individual Award categories:

- Professional / Individual Award categories may proceed with a single eligible nomination.
- If only one nomination is received, the judging panel will assess the submission against the award criteria to determine whether the nominee meets the required standard of excellence.
- An award will only be granted if the judges agree that the nomination demonstrates merit at the level expected for that category.
- Only one winner may be designated per category.
- Nominators may choose the category that most appropriately reflects the nominee's role and contribution.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible to enter the 2026 Interpretation Australia National Awards, entrants must meet the following requirements:

Membership

- Nominees must be IA members at the time of submission.
- If the nominee is being entered under a corporate membership, they must be a listed representative of that organisation.

Residency

- Nominees must reside permanently within an Australian state or territory.

Copyright & Permissions

- Nominators must have permission to share any supporting materials included in the submission.
- IA may request proof of permissions if required.

Conflicts of Interest

- Judges and IA staff directly administering the awards are not eligible to be nominated.
- IA Board members may be nominated; however, they must not participate in any aspect of the awards process, including judging, access to submissions, or discussions relating to awards decisions.
- Nominators must declare any potential conflict of interest.

Submission Requirements

- Nominations must be complete, accurate, and submitted by the deadline.
- Incomplete nominations or missing permissions may result in disqualification.
- Each nomination must address the three judging criteria (200–300 words each).
- Up to three optional supporting materials may be included.
- The nominee must consent to being nominated.

How to Enter

Entering the 2026 Interpretation Australia National Awards is a simple, two-step process: complete the online form and submit your supporting materials.

Step 1 — Complete the Online Submission Form

Nominators must complete the official online nomination form for the chosen Professional Award category.

The form collects essential details including:

- nominee information
- nominator information
- membership status
- category selection
- nominee consent

Step 2 — Submit Your Written Submission and Supporting Materials

After completing the form, nominators must email the written nomination statement and any supporting materials to:

awards@interpretationaustralia.asn.au

Submission Deadline

All materials must be submitted by 5.00pm (AEST), 15 June 2026.

Late submissions cannot be accepted.

Submission Requirements

- Nomination Statement:
 - Must address the three judging criteria:
 - Contribution to Interpretation
 - Impact on Audiences and Communities
 - Professionalism, Collaboration & Cultural Respect
 - Each section should be 200–300 words.
 - Submit as a single PDF or Word document.
- Supporting Materials (Recommended)
 - Up to five items may be included (or a combined portfolio of 10 pages or less), such as:
 - letters of support
 - testimonials
 - links to relevant work
 - short CV or professional bio
 - media articles
 - video or audio links (Must be provided via links only, YouTube, Vimeo, SoundCloud, hosted files, etc., do not attach media files directly).
- Submission Format
 - All submissions must be provided via a single link (OneDrive, Dropbox, SharePoint, Google Drive, etc.) with download permissions enabled.
 - Your total submission (including written submission and all supporting items) must be no more than 30Mb total. Compressed file archives (e.g ZIP/RAR etc) must extract to 30Mb or less.
- File Naming
 - Include nominee name and award category.
 - Example: JaneSmith_YoungAchievementAward.pdf

Invoices & Payment

- There is no entry fee for Professional Award nominations.

Entry Limits

- Nominators may submit multiple nominations across different categories.
- Each nominee may be entered into one Professional Award category only.

Evaluation & Judging

All nominations are evaluated by a panel of experienced interpretation professionals using Interpretation Australia's Professional Awards rubric. The rubric is designed to be fair, transparent, and consistent across all categories, and reflects the qualities expected of outstanding interpreters at all career stages.

Judging Process

- Each nomination is assessed independently by multiple judges using the official IA Professional Awards rubric.
- Judges submit their scores directly to IA.
- Final results are confirmed by IA once all scores have been received.
- No deliberation meeting is held for Professional Awards.
- No individual feedback is provided to nominees.

Evaluation Criteria

Professional Award nominations are assessed across three equally weighted criteria:

- Contribution (30%): Leadership, professionalism, and sustained impact on the interpretation sector.
- Audience Impact (30%): Communication skills, engagement, and effectiveness in connecting audiences with place, story, or meaning.
- Innovation & Leadership (40%): Creativity, problem-solving, initiative, and influence on interpretive practice.

*For the Young Achievement Award, judges interpret the "Contribution to the Field" criterion as Emerging Contribution to the Field, focusing on early-career impact, initiative, innovation, and potential rather than long-term legacy or sustained sector influence.

Conflicts of Interest

- Judges must declare any conflict of interest before reviewing nominations.
- Judges will not assess nominations where a conflict exists.
- IA staff administering the awards do not participate in judging.
- IA Board members must not participate in any aspect of the awards process, including judging, access to submissions, or discussions relating to awards decisions.

Entry Fees

There is no entry fee for Professional Award nominations.

Notification

Nominators and nominees will receive confirmation that their nomination has been received and is eligible for judging.

Award winners will be announced at the 2026 Interpretation Australia National Conference.

No advance notification of results will be provided.

Award winner commitments

A key objective of the Professional Awards is to celebrate excellence in interpretation and highlight the individuals who contribute to the strength and growth of the sector. To support this outcome, each Professional Award winner is asked to contribute the following, free of charge:

- Provide a written profile (approximately 400–600 words) and images outlining their work, achievements, and professional practice. IA may use this content, or excerpts from it, across its website, eNews, and social media platforms.
- Participate in an “Interpreter in Focus” feature, showcasing their contribution to interpretation in Australia.
- Provide a high-quality photograph for use in IA communications and promotional materials.

Award winners may also be invited to deliver a workshop, presentation, or professional development session on a fee-for-service basis, where appropriate.

Award winners receive

All Interpretation Australia Award winners receive:

- a trophy presented at the IA Awards Ceremony
- a digital certificate recognising their achievement
- a feature listing on the IA website as part of the annual awards archive

- the IA Award Winner badge for use in personal, organisational, or project promotion
- the opportunity to be featured in IA eNews, social media, or future IA communications
- the option to present their work in an IA webinar or event, where relevant

Key Dates

All entrants should review the awards timeline carefully to ensure their submission is completed on time.

Late submissions cannot be accepted.

Awards Open: 1 April 2026

Submission Deadline: 5.00pm (AEST), 15 June 2026

Judging Period: July 2026

Awards Ceremony: September 2026 (at the IA National Conference)

Terms & Conditions

- All entries and nominations must be submitted via the official online form and emailed materials must be received by the deadline.
- Entrants and nominees must meet all eligibility requirements at the time of submission.
- IA reserves the right to verify any information provided in submissions or nominations.
- IA may reassign an entry or nomination to a more appropriate category in consultation with the entrant or nominator.
- Judges' decisions are final and no correspondence will be entered into regarding outcomes.
- IA reserves the right not to confer an award if the judging panel determines that the standard of excellence has not been met.
- By submitting an entry or nomination, entrants and nominators confirm they have obtained all necessary permissions for supporting materials.
- Award winners agree to provide a written profile and photograph for IA communications.
- IA may use non-confidential submission or nomination materials for promotional purposes, with appropriate credit.
- No advance notification of results will be provided; winners are announced at the IA National Conference.

Contact Information

For questions about eligibility, categories, or the submission process, please contact:

Interpretation Australia – Awards Team

Email: awards@interpretationaustralia.asn.au

Website: <https://interpretationaustralia.asn.au>