



**MEDIA RELEASE**  
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## **2026 Australian Women in Music Awards Finalists Announced**

**Judy Small AM, Babyshakes Dillon, Megan Burslem, Kate Duncan, Katy Richards, and Jessica Wells** are among an outstanding list of finalists announced today by Australian Women in Music for the 2026 **Australian Women in Music Awards (AWMA)**.

The 2026 AWMA's have attracted a record number of nominations across 22 diverse award categories acknowledging the vast contribution of those working in technical, production and leadership roles, artistry, songwriting, photography, filmmaking, behind-the-scenes and more.

AWMA has cemented its place as a critical movement for change and one of the most progressive award ceremonies in the Australian music industry calendar. Supported by State and Federal Government with industry and community partners AWMA shines a light on the immense talent and contribution made by First Nations women, female, gender-diverse and multicultural artists and music practitioners across all areas of industry and all genres of music.

**Chrissie Vincent, Kate Duncan and Alexandria Morse** have been named as the finalists in this year's inaugural ARIA Music Advocacy Award, **Deb Suckling, Tracee Hutchison and Tania de Jong AM** are up for the Tina Arena Special Impact Award and **Margaret Brandman, Judy Small AM, and Anita Wardell** have been recognised as finalists in the Lifetime Achievement category.

Other AWMA finalists include:

**Emerging Artist Award:** Lottie McLeod, Paulina, Steph Strings

**Diversity in Music Award:** Karen Kyriakou, Emma Memma, Mindy Meng Wang

**Studio Production:** Sarah Belkner, Sophie Edwards, Monique Sesto

**Photographer Award:** Giulia McGauran, Simone Gorman-Clark, Jordy

**A full list of the AWMA 2026 Finalists is [HERE](#).**

The AWMA Ceremony and Concert will be held on **Thursday 27 May 2027** at **The Fortitude Music Hall** in Meanjin Brisbane, where industry and First Nations leaders, special guests and community will gather for a star-studded evening, featuring Black Carpet arrivals and a series of high-profile curated performances.

The **AWMA Conference** will be presented for the very first time at the **Judith Wright Arts Centre** on **Wednesday 26 May 2027** which will include a series of in-depth forums, workshops and an 'In Conversation' keynote address to be announced.

"It is an honour to announce the AWMA finalists every year to spotlight the extraordinary depth of talent thriving across all areas of industry. This is how we collectively rewrite the future of Australian music culture," said Executive Producer **Vicki Gordon**. "Warmest congratulations to all the exceptional artists, leaders, techs and music practitioners working behind the scenes who have been recognised this year", she added.

The AWMA 2026 finalists were assessed by a whopping 63-member Juror Council led by AWMA Juror Chair, Queensland musician and educator **Dr Diana Tolmie**.

"Our Juror Council approached the process with deep integrity and rigour. The extraordinary standard of nominations this year reflects the profound talent and impact of Australia's women and gender-diverse music professionals. It was truly inspiring to see such strong classical representation alongside artists from the broader sector, and equally encouraging that male industry leaders made up one-third of our Juror Council - reflecting a shared commitment to an equitable future for Australian music," said **Dr Tolmie**.

AWMA will be held on **26 and 27 May 2027**, in Meanjin, Brisbane.

**- ENDS -**

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**For interview opportunities with Vicki Gordon, please contact publicist Josie Gagliano at [info@rojoconsulting.com.au](mailto:info@rojoconsulting.com.au) or 0411 234 022**

The Australian Women in Music Awards & Conference Program is made possible with support from the Queensland Government and Sound NSW, and is assisted by the Australian Government through Music Australia. AWMA is proudly sponsored by Brisbane City Council and is supported by corporate, industry, and community partners.

#### **About AWMA**

AWMA is an initiative of Australian Women in Music established to dismantle systemic barriers across the music industry through targeted programs, visibility campaigns, industry lobbying and action.

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Founded in 2018 and led by highly respected music producer Vicki Gordon, the AWMA team is made up of experts with vast experience in the production of large-scale event management, digital media, strategic planning and development. AWMA is overseen by a Board of Directors with extensive experience in the music industry and the arts, accountancy, community engagement, not-for-profit governance, stakeholder engagement and law.

Download the AWMA Legacy 2018-2025 [HERE](#)

**Notes and links for Editors:**

AWMA 2026 Finalists [HERE](#)

AWMA Website: [www.womeninmusicawards.com.au](http://www.womeninmusicawards.com.au)

**MEDIA ASSETS:**

Link to authorised images for media use [HERE](#)

Vicki Gordon profile photo link [HERE](#)

AWMA Board: [womeninmusicawards.com.au/awm-board/](http://womeninmusicawards.com.au/awm-board/)

Instagram: [instagram.com/womeninmusicaus](https://www.instagram.com/womeninmusicaus)

Facebook: [facebook.com/AWMAAwards/](https://www.facebook.com/AWMAAwards/)

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@australianwomeninmusicawards4945>

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/company/australianwomeninmusic/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/australianwomeninmusic/)

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#WomenInMusicAus

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**AWMA 2026 AWARD CATEGORIES** (includes 2025 recipients):

1. **Lifetime Achievement Award** - Presented to a female or gender-diverse artist or musician who has made an outstanding artistic contribution to the field of recording and/or live performance during their lifetime.

2025 Recipient: Dr Shellie Morris AO

2026 Finalists: Margaret Brandman, Judy Small AM, Anita Wardell

2. **APRA AMCOS Songwriter Award** - Recognises an outstanding female or gender-diverse songwriter or composer whose work demonstrates exceptional creative voice, craft, and impact. This award recognises excellence relative to opportunity, career stage, and professional context.

2025 Recipient: Missy Higgins

2026 Finalists: Ruby Gill, Babyshakes Dillon, Grace Woodroffe

3. **SONY Music Australia Artistic Excellence Award** - Recognises exceptional creative achievement from a female or gender-diverse artist/musician across any genre. This award recognises excellence relative to opportunity, career stage, and professional context.

2025 Recipients: Dr Shellie Morris AO

2026 Finalists: Aviva Endean, Mindy Meng Wang, Jessica Wells

4. **Music Leadership Award** - Recognises a female or gender-diverse Managing Director, Label Manager, A&R Director, Artist Manager or Publisher making significant impact in music industry leadership.

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2025 Recipient: Fiona Duncan

2026 Finalists: Vivienne Mellish, Katy Richards, Kristy Rosser

**5. Inaugural ARIA Music Advocacy Award** - Recognises a woman or gender-diverse person in music who has demonstrated strong, impactful advocacy for issues shaping the future of the Australian contemporary music industry.

2026 Finalists: Kate Duncan, Alexandra Morse, Chrissie Vincent

**6. Opera Impact Award** - acknowledges a female or gender-diverse person working in the field of opera as an artist, creative producer or manager, through which their vision and agency have made a significant impact on the ongoing development of the artform.

2025 Recipient: Nicole Car

2026 Finalists: Laura Hansford, Jessica O'Donoghue, Katrina Waters

**7. Tina Arena Special Impact Award** - Honours an unsung champion of the Australian music industry, someone whose sustained, often behind-the-scenes contribution has profoundly shaped the lives, careers, and wellbeing of others.

2025 Recipient: Kylie Thompson

2026 Finalists: Tania de Jong AM, Tracee Hutchison, Deb Suckling

**8. Humanitarian Award** - Recognises an individual (female, male or gender-diverse person) who has made a significant and lasting contribution in assisting female and gender-diverse artists working in remote and/or regional communities.

2025 Recipient: Tina Broad

2026 Finalists: Dr Yantra de Vilder, Louise Sawilejskij, Zoe Scrogings

**9. Diversity in Music Award** - Recognises an individual artist or female or gender-diverse-led collaboration whose professional practice measurably advances cultural diversity, inclusion, and equity within the Australian music ecosystem.

2025 Recipient: Grace Chia

2026 Finalists: Karen Kyriakou, Emma Memma, Mindy Meng Wang

**10. Excellence in Classical Music Award** Recognises a mid-to-late career female or gender-diverse classical music artist who has demonstrated musical excellence throughout their career.

2025 Recipient: Catherine Milliken

2026 Finalists: Jessica Gethin, Sophie Rowell, Jessica Wells

**11. Heavy Music Award** - Recognises a female or gender-diverse person who has made contributions of outstanding significance as an artist, musician, music practitioner, agent, artist or label manager, supporter and/or advocator of Heavy Music.

2025 Recipient: Monica Strut

2026 Finalists: Robyn Doreian, Candace Krieger, Rachel Whitford

**12. Collarts Creative Leadership Award** - A curatorial award recognising excellence in creative programming from a female or gender-diverse person working in broadcast media (radio, tv, online, streaming services), a music festival or live performance/venue to champion female and gender-diverse artists.

2025 Recipient: Kimberley Galceran

2026 Finalists: Sonja Horbelt, Stephanie Nicholls, Chelsea Wilson

**13. Studio Production Award** - Recognises a female or gender-diverse sound engineer or producer who has made contributions of outstanding significance in the studio recording environment.

2025 Recipient: Tahlia-Rose Coleman

2026 Finalists: Sarah Belkner, Sophie Edwards, Monique Sesto

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**14. Live Creative Production Award** - Recognises a female or gender-diverse person working in a live production environment making significant impact in their field: includes but is not limited to roles such as Live Sound, Lighting & Visual Design, Set Design, Show Producer etc.

2025 Recipient: Kate Berry

2026 Finalists: Carly Griffen, Sarah Ponturo, Kearna Sweeney

**15. Live Production Touring Award** - Recognises a female or gender-diverse person working in a live production or touring environment making significant impact in their field: Includes Tour/Operations/Promotions Management, Tour Assistant, Backstage, Roadcrew, and other related support roles.

2025 Recipient: Letisha Ackland

2026 Finalists: Robyn Jelleff, Katy Richards, Mahalia Swinfield

**16. Emerging Artist Award** - Acknowledges an outstanding emerging female or gender-diverse artist between the ages of 18-25 inclusive.

2025 Recipient: Katia Geha

2026 Finalists: Lottie McLeod, Paulina, Steph Strings

**17. Music Photographer Award** - Recognises a female or gender-diverse music photographer currently working in the field and to acknowledge their portfolio of work.

2025 Recipient: Suzanne Phoenix

2026 Finalists: Giulia McGauran, Simone Gorman-Clark, Jordy

**18. Filmmaker Award** - Recognises a female or gender-diverse music videographer, clip-maker, filmmaker, or music animator currently working in the field and to acknowledge their body of work.

2025 Recipient: Emily Dynes

2026 Finalists: Phoebe Faye, Emma Franz

**19. Music Journalist Award** - Recognises a female or gender-diverse music journalist, blogger or editor who has made a creative contribution and courageous impact in truth telling and innovative reporting in the Australian music industry.

2025 Recipient: Jules LeFevre

2026 Finalists: Heather Anderson, Megan Burslem, Clare Neal

**20. Australian Women in Music 2026 AWMA Honour Roll** - acknowledges outstanding women who have made a significant and lasting contribution in their chosen field. This award also provides a platform for recognition and appreciation of political activists and exceptional creative pioneers.

2025 Recipient: Ruby Hunter

2026: To be announced on the evening of the Awards Ceremony.

**21. Australian Women in Music Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Cultural Legacy Award** Recognises First Nations women's voices, stories and leadership through music, truth-telling and inter-generational legacy honouring those paving the way and stewarding culture within communities.

2025 Inaugural Recipient: Arrkula Yinbayarra with Dr Shellie Morris

2026: To be announced on the evening of the Awards Ceremony.

**22. Australian Women in Music Inspiration Award** - recognises a highly regarded creative, an exceptional artist or group with a unique talent who leads by example with confidence, commitment and integrity.

2025 Recipient: Donna Simpson & Vikki Thorn of The Waifs

2026: Presented to Kim 'Busty Beatz' Bowers on 20 March, 2026.

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