

SA Climate Leaders | **AWARDS** | 2026

An initiative of the Premier's Climate Change Council

WINNERS AND FINALISTS



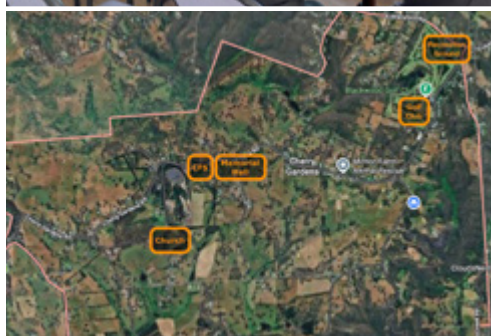
Government of South Australia
Premier's Climate Change Council

Supported by the Department for Environment and Water

Cherry Gardens Connect2Recover

Building community resilience to climate challenges

Community Category



"By enabling communities to organise resources, connect people with assistance and support locally-led recovery, RecoverConnect is making a significant contribution to disaster resilience."

Chris Cotton,
ASM Emergency Coordinator,
Charleston Emergency Response
& Recovery Group

Cherry Gardens Connect2Recover is a community-led initiative that strengthens disaster recovery through RecoverConnect, an online 'Get Help/Give Help' platform, and a network of four local community hubs providing support when emergencies occur.

As extreme weather events become more frequent, Cherry Gardens residents identified a need to coordinate community support and provide safe places for people to connect after bushfires and emergencies. The group worked with local government representatives, Country Fire Service volunteers and other community organisations to develop practical solutions tailored to local needs.

Developed by the group, the RecoverConnect platform enables residents to request or offer assistance online with trained volunteer moderators matching needs with available support and resources.

The initiative also brings together the Cherry Gardens Memorial Hall, Blackwood Golf Club, Cherry Gardens Uniting Church and Cherry Gardens Ironbank Recreation Ground through formal agreements to create a network of recovery hubs that can provide food, shelter, information and other practical support.

The approach has been tested through emergency scenarios involving a major bushfire with communication failures and roadblocks, and a sudden tornado. Lessons learned have informed planning, clarified roles and identified future resource needs. The model is now being shared with the Charleston Emergency Response and Recovery Group with the potential for much wider application.

Cherry Gardens Connect2Recover helps vulnerable residents receive support sooner, strengthens community self-reliance and provides a practical model that can be freely adapted by other communities.

The judges were impressed by Cherry Gardens Connect2Recover as a powerful example of how local leadership and collaboration can build more resilient and prepared communities in the face of increasing bushfire and extreme weather risks.

Note that the information provided has been submitted by applicants and has not been independently verified.

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#SAClimateAwards

SA Climate Leaders
AWARDS | 2026
WINNER

**OVERALL
WINNER!**

The Forktree Project

Climate resilient landscapes through restoration, education and partnerships

Community Category



"I have been working alongside The Forktree Project since 2021 to develop a shared understanding of the importance of restoration and rewilding of the Fleurieu from an Indigenous perspective. Restoring habitat is critical for both biodiversity, connection to Country (Ruwe) for Ngarrindjeri people, and combatting climate change through the carbon dioxide native plants and trees absorb."

Mark Koolmatrrie,
The Tribal Expertise Facility
and a Ngarrindjeri Elder

The Forktree Project is a habitat restoration, regenerative agriculture and environmental education initiative on the Fleurieu Peninsula.

Founded by Tim Jarvis in 2019, it demonstrates how restoring native vegetation and improving land management can help landscapes adapt to climate change while increasing carbon sequestration and supporting biodiversity.

Its nursery and rare seed orchard have produced 75,000 native plants from 170 species this year, including varieties that shade animals, retain soil moisture and resist bushfires. The project also trials methods for measuring carbon storage above and below ground and showcases sustainable practices such as recycled water use and off-grid power.

The project works with more than a dozen partner organisations across 35 sites, including First Nations

organisations, landholders, government agencies and community groups, to promote climate-resilient land management across the region.

A major initiative is a partnership with the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation, Aboriginal Lands Trust and Regenerate Australia to restore Ngarrindjeri Country on the Narrung Peninsula. Once restored, the landscape is expected to store around 10 tonnes of carbon dioxide per hectare each year while creating employment opportunities and strengthening connections to Country.

Environmental education is also a core part of Forktree's work, with programs for schools, rural landholders and the wider community delivered through on-site activities, an online education portal, an Australian Curriculum- and SACE-aligned program, and an undergraduate work placement initiative with Flinders University.

The judges considered that The Forktree Project demonstrated exceptional leadership in practical climate action by integrating habitat restoration, regenerative land management, education and strong partnerships, including with the Ngarrindjeri community.

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AWARDS
FINALIST

Fruit Share Adelaide

Reducing food waste, strengthening food security



Community Category



"Fruit Share Adelaide was founded on the simple idea that surplus fruit should not go to waste when it can support people in need, strengthen community connections and contribute to practical climate action"

Brett Dunstone,
Founder, Fruit Share Adelaide

Fruit Share Adelaide delivers climate and community benefits by connecting growers, volunteers and food relief organisations to rescue surplus fruit and vegetables and redistribute them to people experiencing food insecurity.

Food waste is a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions, particularly when edible food is discarded rather than consumed. While many food recovery programs focus on supermarkets and hospitality businesses, Fruit Share Adelaide addresses an often-overlooked source of waste: surplus produce from backyard fruit trees and small-scale growers.

Since early 2024, the organisation has recovered more than 38 tonnes of fruit and vegetables with the help of over 400 volunteers. The produce is distributed through food relief organisations across more than 20 metropolitan Adelaide council areas.

The project demonstrates climate leadership through a low-cost model that reduces food waste and associated emissions while making better use of the water, energy and land resources already invested in food production. It also strengthens local food networks and community connections helping build resilience as climate change places increasing pressure on food systems.

With significant volumes of edible produce remaining unharvested each year, there is considerable potential to expand the model and increase its environmental, social and climate benefits.

The judges considered that Fruit Share Adelaide highlights the critical role that community collaboration and local action play in tackling climate challenges as well as supporting people in need.

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Kennett Builders

Buildings as material banks

kennett. EST 1914

Business and Industry - Large Enterprise Category



"The BAMB initiative implemented by Kennett proves that it is real, robust, and scalable. No other single initiative available in Australia makes such a meaningful, multi-generational impact."

Paul Davy,
Director, dsquared Consulting

Buildings as material banks (BAMB) identifies, catalogues and stores building materials in digital and physical material banks throughout a project's design, construction and end-of-life stages, enabling their reuse rather than disposal.

By treating buildings as long-term material resources, BAMB reduces waste and cuts greenhouse gas emissions associated with carbon intensive production of new materials.

After learning that construction contributes 37 percent of global emissions, Kennett Builders' General Manager, Anthony Carbone, brought together industry, university and government collaborators to turn BAMB from a concept into practical, scalable action.

Real-world testing across three South Australian projects has helped validate the approach and build local capability in circular construction.

These projects have avoided approximately 900 tonnes of greenhouse emissions by giving structural steel and precast concrete a second life and reducing the need for new materials. This is equivalent to removing nearly 200 petrol cars from South Australian roads for a year.

Working with the Green Building Council of Australia, Kennett helped establish BAMB as a recognised Green Star Leadership Challenge, making the approach available to projects across Australia. If adopted nationally, BAMB has the potential to avoid an estimated 2.2 to 3.8 million tonnes of emissions annually. The initiative has received national recognition, with an Australian research partnership currently underway.

Preliminary economic analysis suggests BAMB could help create new circular economy industries, support jobs and improve productivity while reducing resource use and emissions.

The judges were impressed with Kennett Builders' leadership and practical application of circular economy principles to reduce embodied carbon and transform construction waste into valuable resources.

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WINNER

Glaciem Cooling Technologies

Low emissions heating and cooling



Business and Industry - Small to Medium Enterprise Category



"We still hear that deep decarbonisation of complex thermal systems is too hard or too costly. With the right engineering and collaboration, we are delivering practical electrification solutions in real operating environments."

Julian Hudson,
Founder & Managing Director,
Glaciem Cooling Technologies

Glaciem Cooling Technologies helps businesses reduce emissions, improve energy efficiency and lower operating costs through advanced heating, cooling and refrigeration solutions for complex industrial and commercial environments.

Across supermarkets, food manufacturing, research and government facilities, heating, cooling and refrigeration systems are essential to day-to-day operations. Electrification can sometimes be difficult due to complex site needs, and existing electric systems can still use considerable energy in hot weather.

Glaciem has developed a Dew Point CO₂ cooling system that uses an advanced indirect evaporative cooling process to deliver much cooler air than standard evaporative units, delivering highly efficiency even in hot weather.

In both research settings and industrial operations, including Baiada Wingfield, Glaciem has delivered high efficiency heating systems capable of meeting strict

operational and regulatory requirements, including process water temperatures of more than 80 °C.

At Coles Norwood, Glaciem's system improved energy efficiency by around 15 per cent and reduced peak electricity demand by more than 32 per cent compared with the company's next most efficient store. Glaciem is working with the Australian Institute for Machine Learning, with support from the South Australian Government, to use this data to develop optimisation tools to further reduce energy and emissions.

Through South Australian innovation and engineering leadership, Glaciem is providing practical ways to replace standard gas and electric heating and cooling systems to save energy, reduce operating costs, and cut greenhouse gas emissions.

The judges were impressed by Glaciem Cooling Technologies leadership in tackling complex commercial decarbonisation challenges, delivering innovative low-emissions heating and cooling solutions.

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SOLAFLO

Intelligent zero emissions pump

Business and Industry – Small to Medium Enterprise Category



"The Intelligent Zero Emissions Pump is the result of applying a simple principle: do more with less. More hydraulic performance and integrated functions from significantly less energy, with zero grid connection and emissions."

Mark Kirtland,
Founder and CEO, SOLAFLO

SOLAFLO's Intelligent Zero Emissions Pump (IZEP) is a South Australian-designed, smart, solar-powered technology that integrates pumping, filtration, sterilisation, lighting and robotic cleaning into a complete, low emissions pool and spa management system.

Pool pumps account for around 18 percent of household electricity use in homes with pools, and collectively generate around three million tonnes of carbon emissions each year – equivalent to around more than one million petrol cars annually.

IZEP tackles this challenge by replacing conventional technology, that has changed little in 50 years, with a smart, energy-efficient system powered by solar panels and battery storage, enabling day-and-night operation using off-grid renewable energy.

SOLAFLO designed the system from the ground up to reduce energy waste and improve performance. Its modular design enables deployment across thousands

of residential pools and spas, creating the potential for large-scale reductions in electricity consumption, household energy costs and associated emissions.

Designed and manufactured in Adelaide in collaboration with South Australian manufacturers and Flinders University, the patented system has completed 165,000 hours of testing, and pumped over 2,139 mega litres of water, showing the technology is reliable.

Launching commercially in 2026, every installation eliminates measurable emissions, lowers operating costs, and reduces noise, while supporting local manufacturing jobs. The technology also has potential to cut emissions across other water-pumping applications, including fountains, aquaculture and irrigation.

The judges were impressed with this innovative solution which combines smart technology, energy efficiency and off-grid solar power to provide a low-emissions alternative to conventional water and pool pumping systems.

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SA eBikes

Off-grid solar-powered tourism mobility



Business and Industry – Small to Medium Enterprise Category



"Our goal has always been to help people experience McLaren Vale differently – slower, more sustainably, and with a stronger connection to the region and environment."

Rachel Wells,
Co-Owner, SA eBikes

SA eBikes promotes eco-tourism through a fleet of 84 electric bikes, trikes and tuktuks that allow people to explore McLaren Vale and the Fleurieu Peninsula at a slower pace with a smaller environmental footprint.

Supported by two solar-powered, off-grid charging stations, the business demonstrates how renewable energy and low-emissions transport can be successfully integrated into regional tourism.

Each year, SA eBikes enables more than 3,000 regional tourism experiences and around 75,000 kilometres of low-emissions travel, a distance equivalent to travelling around Australia about three times.

Visitors experience the region in a quieter, more immersive way, allowing for stronger connections with local landscapes, businesses and communities. Accessible options also enable people with varying mobility, fitness and confidence levels to participate in environmentally responsible tourism experiences.

SA eBikes works closely with local wineries, hospitality venues and tourism operators to encourage low-impact regional visitation and support the local economy. Through its 'Profit for Plantings' initiative, SA eBikes contributes to revegetation and biodiversity programs delivered through organisations such as McLaren Vale Biodiversity.

By linking tourism with renewable energy, accessibility and environmental restoration, SA eBikes demonstrates a practical model for more sustainable regional tourism.

The judges recognised SA eBikes for showing that climate leadership is not limited by size, with the small business combining off-grid solar power and electric transport to deliver low-emissions tourism experiences.

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City of Port Adelaide Enfield

Yitpi Yartapuultiku: the soul of Port Adelaide



Government Category



"This is more than just a building – it is a living space where Kaurna knowledge, language and stories can be shared, respected and passed on to future generations. It stands as a place of truth telling, healing and pride."

**Uncle Lewis and
Aunty Pat Waria-Read,**
Aboriginal Elders and Yitpi
Yartapuultiku
co-led design contributors

Yitpi Yartapuultiku is an Aboriginal cultural centre that has transformed a degraded former landfill site and reserve into a vibrant, Country-centred community destination.

The City of Port Adelaide Enfield, Kaurna custodians, the Aboriginal Advisory Panel, and Brave and Curious worked in a deeply collaborative way to integrate cultural knowledge, community aspirations, climate resilience and Connection to Country from design through to operation.

The cultural centre is rated as 6-star certified Green Star building demonstrating world leadership in sustainable design. The all-electric building features passive design, water and energy efficiency measures, high indoor environmental quality, a 75 kW solar PV system and 50 kWh battery storage. Extensive landscaping, tree planting, shade and permeable surfaces help create cooler outdoor spaces and reduce heat impacts.

The building is embedded within a culturally significant landscape, including the Living Shoreline, trails, cultural spaces and nature play areas.

A Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan identified future risks including rising temperatures, more frequent heatwaves, increased stormwater and sea-level rise along the Port River, informing integrated measures to help the site and community adapt.

A key adaptation feature is the Living Shoreline which replaces a degraded seawall with a natural river edge that restores mangrove and saltmarsh habitat, stabilises the shoreline, and reduces flood risk.

Ongoing management of the site is guided by a Healthy Country Plan that combines Kaurna traditional ecological knowledge with contemporary science.

The judges considered that Yitpi Yartapuultiku sets a benchmark for community infrastructure development by integrating Traditional Owner knowledge, climate-resilient design, ecological restoration and community wellbeing throughout its design, construction and operation.

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AWARDS
WINNER

Northern Adelaide Local Health Network

Reducing hospital food waste emissions



Health
Northern Adelaide
Local Health Network

Government Category



"Healthcare is one of the largest contributors to carbon emissions globally, yet it is rarely part of the climate conversation. We are acting now, and we are showing what is possible."

Sarah Ripley,
Manager Environment and
Sustainability, Northern Adelaide
Local Health Network



The Northern Adelaide Local Health Network (NALHN) is reducing greenhouse gas emissions and supporting the circular economy by diverting food waste from landfill and converting it into compost through its use of the WasteMaster dehydration system and a partnership with Jeffries.

Lyell McEwin Hospital generates significant food waste through its daily meal service. NALHN identified waste-related emissions as a priority in its Carbon Management Plan and introduced WasteMaster in late 2025 to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and environmental footprint.

One of only five systems of its kind in Australia, the WasteMaster system dehydrates food waste on site, reducing its volume by an average of 90 per cent. Jeffries collects the processed material and converts it into nutrient-rich agricultural compost for South Australian soils.

Since January 2026, WasteMaster has completed 25 processing cycles and diverted 16.5 tonnes of food waste from landfill. The system also generates data that helps the hospital refine menus and portion sizes, further reducing food waste.

The program delivers environmental and operational benefits and supports local employment through the Jeffries partnership. It builds on NALHN's broader sustainability efforts, including a reusable gown program that has eliminated nearly 800,000 single-use plastic personal protective equipment gowns.

With Australian healthcare institutions generating an estimated 251,000 tonnes of food waste each year, 99 per cent of which goes to landfill, NALHN is demonstrating how healthcare organisations can care for both people and the planet.

The judges were impressed by the Northern Adelaide Local Health Network's measurable reductions in food waste and emissions and capacity for wider application across hospitals and other healthcare settings.

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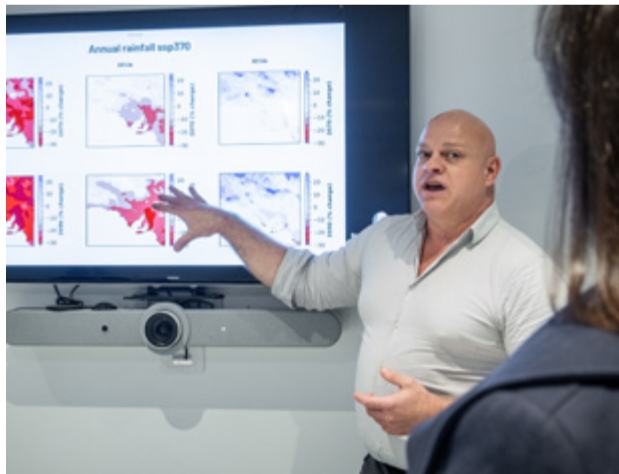
Darren Ray,

Department for Environment and Water

Climate science leadership

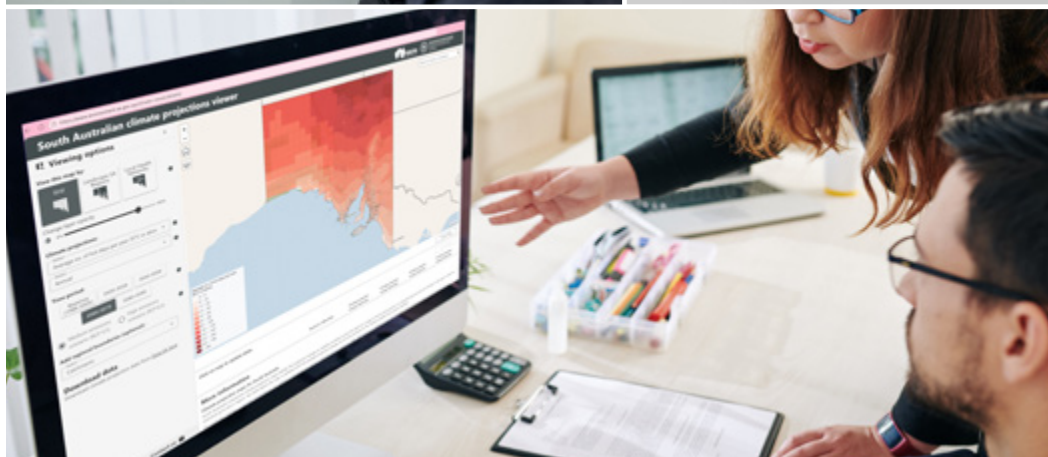


Government Category



"One of Darren's key strengths is turning complex climate data into practical information for decision-makers, ensuring it is both scientifically robust and presented in a clear, usable format"

Tim Carruthers,
Principal Advisor, Climate Science,
Department for Environment
and Water



For more than two decades, Darren Ray has helped South Australians understand and prepare for climate variability and climate change. Combining expertise in meteorology, climatology and data analytics, he translates complex climate science into practical information for planning and decision-making.

As Principal Data Analyst in the Department for Environment and Water's Climate Science team, Darren develops locally relevant climate projections and decision support tools that help governments, councils and industries plan for risks such as extreme heat, drought, flooding, sea-level rise and public health impacts.

His work underpins resources such as the SA Climate Projections Viewer, South Australia's climate projections guide, and open-access DataSA datasets, and provides detailed spatial representations of climate change across the state's varied coasts and topography.

In particular, because South Australia's climate differs from that of the northern hemisphere and Australia's east coast, where most climate modelling is focused, Darren analyses global and national climate data through a South Australian lens to produce locally relevant projections and insights.

Darren works closely with government agencies, councils and regional partnerships to build confidence in climate information and to make it accessible and relevant through shared data, standardised methods, workshops and training.

Beyond his formal role, Darren shares seasonal outlooks and climate insights through ABC Radio Adelaide, The Advertiser and agricultural networks. His climate information helps gardeners, farmers and regional communities make informed decisions about planting, water use and responding to climatic changes.

The judges considered that Darren Ray has made a significant contribution to helping South Australians prepare for and respond to climate change by translating complex climate science into clear, practical information for decision-makers and communities.

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FINALIST

A/Prof. Mark Thyer & Prof. Holger Maier, Environment Institute, Adelaide University

Smart stormwater systems



Research and Education Category



"The rise of urbanisation and intensifying rainfall events driven by climate change are placing our existing stormwater systems under significant stress. Using innovative methods and by collaborating with local councils and communities, Smart Stormwater Systems successfully reduce flooding impacts on environments and communities, driving climate resilience into the future."

Mark Thyer,
Associate Professor, Environment
Institute – Adelaide University

Smart Stormwater Systems use strategically located storage, sensors and automated controls to reduce flood risk and capture and reuse stormwater without the cost and disruption of traditional infrastructure upgrades.

As climate change and urban growth place increasing pressure on stormwater systems, Adelaide University researchers joined forces with the City of Mitcham, the City of Norwood Payneham and St Peters and KBR to develop smarter solutions. The project was supported by funding and sector leadership from Green Adelaide and the Stormwater Management Authority.

Smart Stormwater Systems apply machine learning to identify optimal locations for stormwater storage based on local rainfall patterns, infrastructure constraints and community priorities. Sensors monitor rainfall and water flow in real time, automatically opening and closing valves to manage water across the network.

Prototype testing showed that Smart Stormwater Systems handled an 87 per cent increase in rainfall intensity without increasing water outflow, compared with conventional systems, which could only handle a 33 per cent increase.

Case studies at Pasadena and Trinity Valley demonstrated real-world benefits, reducing stormwater flows during storms and cutting upgrade costs by 15–60 per cent while minimising disruption to residents. At Pasadena, the system doubled the amount of stormwater available for greening projects, such as wetlands, parks and trees.

Smart Stormwater Systems help communities adapt to climate change through smarter ways to reduce flood risk and increase stormwater reuse.

The judges considered that Smart Stormwater Systems stood out for applying innovation and smart technology to transform stormwater management, reducing flood risks and helping cities adapt to a changing climate.

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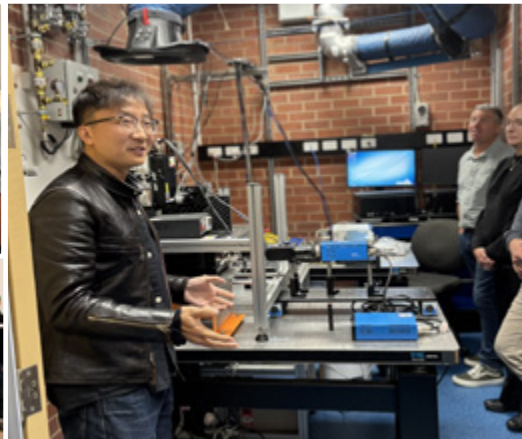
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AWARDS
WINNER

Heavy Industry Low-carbon Transition Cooperative Research Centre

Accelerating decarbonisation for heavy industry



Research and Education Category



"HILT CRC has achieved strong results through its R&D projects to decarbonise heavy industry, including alumina production. By bringing industry and researchers together, it helps ensure the research addresses real industry needs."

Emilio Pai,
Director of Process Engineering,
Emirates Global Aluminium

The Heavy Industry Low-carbon Transition Cooperative Research Centre (HILT CRC) is helping some of Australia's most emissions-intensive industries, including iron and steel, alumina and cement production, identify practical pathways to reduce emissions and be globally competitive.

Since 2024, HILT CRC has completed 30 projects and has another 24 underway. At the heart of its work is collaboration, bringing together more than 75 industry, government and research partners, to accelerate low-carbon innovation. More than a quarter of its partners are international, giving South Australian research a global reach.

Its projects are developing cleaner manufacturing processes, renewable energy use, carbon capture and other technologies that can support the transition to lower-emissions production. Some examples include:

- The 'Green steel via magnetite' project which is exploring pathways for South Australia to produce low-emissions iron and steel, while generating knowledge relevant to magnetite-based green steel production globally.

- The SA-based AlumiNEXT™ flagship project that brings together major global alumina producers, researchers and technology companies to develop next-generation, low-carbon refineries.
- Working with CSIRO through the Green Metals Innovation Network to develop a domestic green metals industry spanning steel, alumina and aluminium.
- Projects focused on carbon capture and reuse, and technologies to upgrade iron ore to purities required for low-carbon production.

HILT CRC is also helping build the future workforce through postgraduate research, scholarships, internships, industry short courses, webinars and public education programs.

By tackling technical, energy, infrastructure, workforce and market challenges, HILT CRC is helping position South Australia as a leader in low-carbon industrial innovation.

The judges recognised HILT CRC as a leading research collaboration with international reach, helping Australian industries transition to low-carbon production while strengthening their future competitiveness.

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SA Climate Leaders | 20
AWARDS | 26
FINALIST

Australian Wine Research Institute, Hill-Smith Family Estates & Avcatech

CO₂ capture and reuse in wine production

Research and Education Category

AWRI Australian Wine Research Institute

**HILL-SMITH
FAMILY ESTATES**

AVCATECH
ADVANCED CARGO TECHNOLOGIES



"It is fantastic to collaborate with Hill-Smith Family Estates and Avcatech on this important project and to try and solve something for the wine industry where there is currently no practical existing solution."

Simon Nordestgaard,
Principal Engineer, Australian Wine Research Institute

The Australian Wine Research Institute, Hill-Smith Family Estates and Avcatech are developing a Fermentation CO₂ Capture, Treatment and Reuse System that enables wineries to reduce emissions by reusing carbon dioxide produced naturally during winemaking.

Carbon dioxide is used in winemaking to protect wine from oxygen and preserve its quality during production and storage. The gas is also produced during fermentation. However, existing capture and reuse systems are designed for breweries and are generally too costly or unsuitable for winery operations. As a result, wineries buy industrial CO₂, often produced from fossil fuels and often subject to supply constraints, while fermentation gas is released into the atmosphere.

To address this challenge, the project partners combined their expertise in research, trial planning, technology development, equipment scaling and winemaking to design a system tailored to winery requirements.

This includes compatibility with thin-walled storage tanks and cap management, the stage in red wine production where grape skins are mixed back into fermenting juice.

The system is now in commercial-scale trials following successful testing on large winery tanks last year, with Avcatech's treatment and reuse technology incorporated for the 2026 vintage.

By capturing and reusing naturally occurring fermentation CO₂, the project has the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at scale and lower reliance on industrial gas supplies in Australia and overseas.

The judges were impressed by this project, which combines research, innovation and industry collaboration to deliver a practical solution for reducing CO₂ emissions in the wine sector.

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Mount Barker District Council

Homes for Tomorrow: driving climate-resilient housing across South Australia



City of Norwood Payneham & St Peters

Green Connections: relational stewardship for urban greening



AdaptWest

Regional cool spaces network and mobile cooling hub pilot



CH4 Global

Working to reduce methane emissions



Adelaide Electrical Salvage

Repair, Recover, Employ: building Adelaide's circular economy



Archer Heavy Equipment

Second-life electric freight

SA Climate Leaders | 20 **AWARDS** | 26

An initiative of the Premier's Climate Change Council

We wish to thank all applicants for being involved in this years climate leaders awards and for sharing their projects and activities displaying the great work taking place to build South Australia's reputation as a leader in climate action.

For more information visit
environment.sa.gov.au/climate-change

Acknowledgement of Country

The Department for Environment and Water acknowledges First Nations peoples as the First Peoples of the lands and waters we live and work upon and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge and respect the deep spiritual connection and the relationship that First Nations people have to Country. We work in partnership with the First Peoples of South Australia and support their Nations to take a leading role in caring for their Country.



Government of South Australia
Premier's Climate Change Council

Supported by the Department for Environment and Water