

Ricci Marks Awards Policy

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The Ricci Marks Awards (awards) policy provides guidance to the Department of Premier and Cabinet's First Peoples – State Relations (FPSR) group on the awards, eligibility criteria, and nomination and selection procedures.

2. Policy statement

2.1.1. About the awards

- 2.1.2. The awards began in 1997 as the Aboriginal Young Achievers Award. In 2004, they were renamed after Ricci Marks. Ricci Marks was a proud Wotjobaluk man and recipient of the award. In his short life, Ricci made an outstanding contribution to his community.
- 2.1.3. Today, the awards recognise the individual achievements of young First Nations people living in Victoria in areas such as: training, education, arts, sports, culture and community leadership.
- 2.1.4. There are 2 awards within the awards program, the Ricci Marks Award and the Ricci Marks Rising Star Award:
 - i. The Ricci Marks Award recognises the significant achievements and aspirations of young First Nations people living in Victoria.
 - ii. The Ricci Marks Rising Star Award recognises young First Nations people living in Victoria, who demonstrate significant promise and potential but may not have demonstrated the same level of achievement as the recipients of the major award.
- 2.1.5. The awards acknowledge achievements with an emphasis on future pathways and development. Recipients receive a bursary intended to assist them in pursuit of their aspirations.
- 2.1.6. The award applicants are reviewed and assessed by a selection panel (panel). The panel will provide recommendations on the award recipients to the Minister for Treaty and First Peoples (Minister) to consider.

2.2. Nominee eligibility

- 2.2.1. To be eligible, nominees must:
 - i. be First Nations person of Australia
 - ii. be aged between 16 and 25 (inclusive) on 1 January the year of the award
 - iii. have lived in Victoria since 1 January 2024
 - iv. have completed and submitted the nomination form to FPSR by the due date.
- 2.2.2. All FPSR employees and Victorian Government officials are excluded from being nominated.
- 2.2.3. Any incomplete nominations will not be considered for the awards.

- 2.2.4. Unsuccessful nominees will be notified in writing by FPSR.
- 2.2.5. To maintain the integrity of the awards, FPSR reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to disqualify any nominee or revoke an award from any recipient if the nominee or recipient has engaged in any conduct that may harm, damage, or bring the awards or FPSR into disrepute. This includes, but is not limited to, actions that attract public or media attention which are, or could be perceived as, prejudicial or detrimental to the awards or FPSR.

2.3. Who can nominate?

- 2.3.1. Nominees can be self-nominated or be nominated by others. Nominators can include family members, friends, employers, representatives from organisations, community groups and schools.

2.4. Nomination process

- 2.4.1. The nomination period will be open for a minimum of 40 calendar days.
- 2.4.2. A nominee can nominate themselves or be nominated by someone else.
- 2.4.3. If a nominee is nominating themselves, they must include:
 - i. responses to all nomination questions
 - ii. a signed consent form by themselves or their parent or guardian
 - iii. referee contact information.
- 2.4.4. If the nomination is completed by someone else, they must include:
 - i. responses to all nomination questions
 - ii. a signed consent form from the nominee or their parent or guardian
- 2.4.5. Nominations can be written, audio or video submissions.
- 2.4.6. Nominations can be completed online, by email, or by phone with an FPSR staff member

2.5. Shortlisting nominations process

- 2.5.1. FPSR staff will review nominations for eligibility and collate them for the panel's review and assessment.
- 2.5.2. All eligible nominations will be presented to the panel.
- 2.5.3. After nominations have closed, FPSR will provide each panel member with access to the eligible nominations for assessment.

2.6. Awardee selection process

- 2.6.1. After receiving the eligible nominations from FPSR, the panel has 14 calendar days to independently assess all eligible nominations against the weighted selection criteria supplied.
- 2.6.2. Within 7 calendar days of completing independent assessments, the panel will meet (in person or online) on a date determined by FPSR to select nominees to interview.
- 2.6.3. The panel will select a minimum of 5 nominees to interview:
 - i. 2-4 nominees should be shortlisted for the Ricci Marks Rising Star Award
 - ii. 3-5 nominees should be shortlisted for the Ricci Marks Award.
- 2.6.4. The panel will interview each of the shortlisted nominees. FPSR will schedule the interviews.
- 2.6.5. The panel or FPSR may contact nominee's referees at any time during this process.
- 2.6.6. FPSR will provide the questions to the nominees before the interview.

- 2.6.7. Following the interviews, the panel will meet either online or in person to review the recipient recommendations against the Terms of Reference and policy considerations.
- 2.6.8. The panel will complete and sign a recommendation report. The report will be provided to FPSR.

2.7. Endorsement

- 2.7.1. The panel will recommend selected nominees to the Minister to be considered for the awards. Final awardees are at the discretion of the Minister.
- 2.7.2. Award winners will be announced at an event. All shortlisted nominees and their nominators are requested to attend the event.

2.8. Policy considerations

- 2.8.1. The panel's final recommended awardees should include:
 - i. a gender balance
 - ii. young people from different communities, First Nations cultural groups and localities
 - iii. alignment to the key selection criteria.
- 2.8.2. Those involved in the shortlisting and selection process must maintain the highest level of confidentiality in relation to information they receive regarding the awards and nominees.

2.9. Panel formation and role

- 2.9.1. The establishment of the panel recognises and acknowledges the important and relevant knowledge and skills held by First Nations people and the importance of self-determination and the need for First Nations people to lead decision-making processes.
- 2.9.2. The panel will be made up of a minimum of five First Nations people living in Victoria and FPSR representatives.
- 2.9.3. A quorum will comprise a minimum of 3 panel members.
- 2.9.4. People seeking to become a panel member must submit an expression of interest. The submission requires information about their capacity to represent the First Nations communities and their relevant knowledge, skills and experience.
- 2.9.5. FPSR will assess the expressions of interest or nominations and recommend suitable candidates to the Executive Director, Community Relations and Heritage, FPSR to appoint to the panel.
- 2.9.6. The panel will be governed by and agree to a Terms of Reference.
- 2.9.7. All members of the panel are required to declare and submit any Communities of Interest (see 3) regarding the nominees in a register supplied by FPSR. FPSR will discuss these Communities with the panel and determine whether it is suitable for the concerned panel member to assess the associated nomination. For any declaration, panel members will be supported by FPSR to maintain the integrity of the awards.
- 2.9.8. The panel may determine that a nomination should change category if deemed more appropriate. This may occur during the eligibility or assessment phase.
- 2.9.9. Panel members should:
 - i. take the Policy considerations (see 2.8) into account when making their recommendations
 - ii. take a strengths-based approach (see 7.6) to the nominee assessment and recommendation process
 - iii. consider Communities of Interest during the assessment and recommendation process.

- 2.9.10. Panel members must maintain open communication with FPSR throughout the awards selection process.

3. Communities of Interest

- 3.1. First Nations people across Victoria are part of diverse Communities, often with multiple connections, roles and interests. In recognition of these connections, FPSR has chosen to implement a Communities of Interest register, rather than a Conflict of Interest register.
- 3.2. All panel members are required to declare any connections in the Communities of Interest register and notify FPSR of any relevant additions or amendments throughout their panel membership.
- 3.3. When completing the Communities of Interest register, panel members are required to consider all the communities they are part of across Victoria. These include family, cultural, personal, political or professional connections.
- 3.4. FPSR will maintain a Communities of Interest register for each panel member. The registers will be stored confidentially within FPSR's document management systems. Registers are not final documents and can be updated in recognition of the evolving nature of communities.

4. FPSR'S roles and responsibilities

4.1. What FPSR is responsible for

- 4.1.1. FPSR will appoint the panel according to the policy and its requirements.
- 4.1.2. FPSR will create and maintain Communities of Interest registers and support panel members to ensure integrity of the assessment process.
- 4.1.3. FPSR will oversee the nomination and associated approval processes.
- 4.1.4. FPSR will collate all eligible nominations and provide them to the panel for their consideration and recommendation.
- 4.1.5. FPSR will facilitate the panel meeting and provide secretariat support where needed.
- 4.1.6. FPSR will brief the Minister on the panel's recommendations.
- 4.1.7. FPSR will notify nominees and award recipients of their results and keep them informed throughout the nomination and selection process.
- 4.1.8. FPSR will deliver the awards event for nominees, recipients, and their guests.
- 4.1.9. FPSR will publish and disseminate all awards materials and communications.
- 4.1.10. FPSR is committed to upholding the integrity and reputation of the awards. As part of this responsibility, FPSR has the authority to disqualify nominees or revoke awards recipients whose actions may harm, damage, or bring the awards or FPSR into disrepute. This includes, but is not limited to, actions that attract public or media attention which are, or could be perceived as, prejudicial or detrimental to the awards or FPSR.

4.2. What FPSR is not responsible for

- 4.2.1. FPSR will not determine or recommend who is selected or not selected for the awards.
- 4.2.2. FPSR will not contact family members of nominees beyond those included in the nomination application unless permission is granted by the nominee.
- 4.2.3. FPSR is not responsible for settling disputes between family or community members, should they arise.

5. Finality of decisions

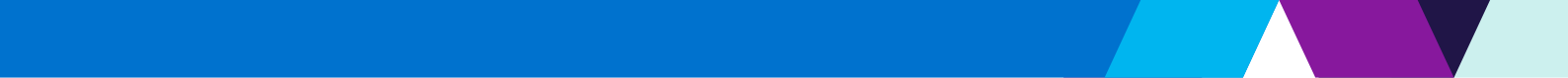
- 5.1. All decisions made by FPSR and the panel regarding the awards, including nominations, disqualifications and recipient selections are final and binding. No appeals, grievances or requests for reassessment will be considered.
- 5.2. FPSR acknowledges that individuals may wish to express concerns or dissatisfaction with the award process. While all decisions regarding the awards are final and binding, individuals may lodge a formal grievance for record purposes. However, please note that such grievances will be reviewed for informational purposes only and will not lead to an appeal, reconsideration, or alteration of any decisions made.
- 5.3. A formal grievance must be submitted within 14 days of the announcement of the awards to fpsr.events@dpc.vic.gov.au.

6. Scope of policy

- 6.1. This policy applies to all nominees, award recipients, and panel members involved in the awards process. FPSR reserves the right to amend, modify or update this policy at its sole discretion. Any revisions made to this policy will be promptly published and communicated to all relevant parties through appropriate channels. All individuals covered by this policy are expected to comply with the most current version.

7. Definitions

- 7.1. A First Nations person is defined in this policy document as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent; identifying as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander; and/or being accepted as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander by an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community.
- 7.2. A nominee is defined in this policy as a person/s who has been nominated for a Ricci Marks Award in the current period.
- 7.3. A nominator is defined in this policy as the person who nominates the nominee.
- 7.4. A referee is defined in this policy as a community member from within the State of Victoria who has a relationship with and can provide a reference for the nominee.
- 7.5. An award recipient is defined in this policy as an individual to whom a Ricci Marks Award or Ricci Marks Rising Star Award has been granted.
- 7.6. A strengths-based approach is defined as focusing on identifying, complementing, and supporting an individual's strengths and capacities, rather than concentrating on problems or concerns.
- 7.7. 'Communities of Interest' is a strengths-based approach to identify and address actual or perceived conflicts of interest to maintain the integrity of the assessment process. This approach aligns with program values by recognising and acknowledging the interconnected relationships of First Nations people. It supports assessors to list their Communities of Interest and discuss with program staff when it is appropriate or inappropriate for an assessor to review an application.
- 7.8. There may be instances where an assessor's Communities of Interest could impact their decision-making and their ability to make an impartial assessment. In some cases, the impact on decision-making may not be certain but could still be possible. Additionally, there may be public perception that an assessor's community connections could influence their decisions, regardless of whether this is true.



We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and pay our respect to them, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

© State of Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet) August 2025

The State of Victoria does not guarantee that this publication is without flaw or is wholly appropriate for your purposes. We disclaim all liability for any error, loss or other consequence that may arise from your relying on any information in this publication.

To receive this document in an alternative format, phone **03 9922 7160**, email **fpsr.events@dpc.vic.gov.au**, or contact National Relay Service on **1800 555 660** if required.