

Media Release

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Advocate for victims of serious crimes named 2025 Sydney City-Eastern Suburbs Volunteer of the Year

Advocacy Australia founder Clare Collins has been named the 2025 Sydney City-Eastern Suburbs Volunteer of the Year for her outstanding support and dedication to the victims of serious crimes in NSW.

Ms Collins was recognised today at the 2025 NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards ceremony at Club York.

The NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards are hosted by The Centre for Volunteering to help promote and support volunteering across NSW. They are now in their 19th year and celebrate the work of thousands of individuals and volunteer teams from a diverse range of organisations across the state.

Recipients of other individual and team awards were also announced today, including the inaugural Emergency Volunteer of the Year:

Sydney City-Eastern Suburbs Young Volunteer of the Year: Cianna Walker from Maroubra

Cianna has given more than 2,000 hours of her time with Y NSW's Youth Parliament Volunteer Taskforce, where she has encouraged young Aboriginal people to learn about policy and government.

She has been an active member of the Aboriginal Affairs Committee, which helps guide young people through the complex process of developing Youth Bills in the lead up to a mock sitting week in NSW Parliament House.

Sydney City-Eastern Suburbs Adult Volunteer of the Year: Tamera Lang from Bondi

Tamera has run community not-for-profit playgroups in Sydney's Eastern Suburbs for more than a decade, including the Clovelly and Bondi Beach playgroups.

She has helped expand and strengthen the volunteer base at the centres, growing the team to 30 parents, providing vital care and support for more than 1,300 families across 4,000 sessions over the past 12 months.

Sydney City-Eastern Suburbs Senior Volunteer of the Year: Clare Collins from Darlington

Clare founded Advocacy Australia in 2020, to provide essential support services for the families and victims of serious crimes.

She provides support and a voice for people who feel unheard, alone and unknown in the wake of serious tragedy and trauma.

Her strong advocacy helped drive essential legislative reforms to mental health laws in NSW, and greater support for grieving families.

Sydney City-Eastern Suburbs Emergency Volunteer of the Year: David Gellert from Vaocluse

David has been a member of SES since 2020, joining while he was still at school. As a duty officer, he has served as the first point of contact for assistance, as well as attending land search activities and supporting teams in other areas needing immediate critical assistance.

He is now studying a Bachelor of Emergency Management at university.

Sydney City-Eastern Suburbs Volunteer Team of the Year: Justice Advocacy Service Volunteer Team

The 160 members of the Justice Advocacy Service Volunteer Team provide essential support to people with cognitive impairment as they navigate the justice system across NSW.

These volunteers assist individuals during court appearances, legal meetings, when interacting with police and within correctional facilities, ensuring they are not left to face these often overwhelming situations alone.

The Centre for Volunteering CEO Gemma Rygate said in difficult times, volunteers often come forward to meet a crisis with compassion.

“Volunteers are the quiet force, whether helping ease cost of living pressures, supporting those in crisis or responding on the front line of floods, fires and emergencies,” Ms Rygate said.

“Their dedication isn’t just admirable; it underpins a more resilient and compassionate society. These exceptional individuals give selflessly - often while juggling careers, study, and family life - yet they still choose to show up for others when it matters most.”

The NSW Minister with responsibility for Volunteering, Jodie Harrison said:

“Congratulations to the recipients of the Sydney City-Eastern Suburbs Volunteer of the Year Awards. You’ve been recognised as heroes by the people in your communities who know you best.

“Thank you for your ongoing contributions, which make New South Wales the best state to live and work in. These awards are an important way we recognise your passion and dedication to your local communities.

“The NSW Government is continuing to work with The Centre for Volunteering to build a more diverse and inclusive volunteering sector so that all our volunteers feel respected and acknowledged for their work.”

Eastern Suburbs volunteer award recipients will be invited to represent their region at the Gala State Ceremony at the end of the year, where the NSW Volunteer of the Year is announced across each category.



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About the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards

The NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards are in their 19th year and have grown to become one of the largest celebrations of volunteering across Australia.

They are an annual program run by The Centre for Volunteering to recognise the outstanding work of volunteers and Leaders of Volunteers in every region across NSW.

Individuals or teams can be nominated in one of seven award categories.

The Award categories are:

- Young Volunteer of the Year – sponsored by the Minister for Youth – Hon Rose Jackson
- Adult Volunteer of the Year
- Senior Volunteer of the Year
- Volunteer Team of the Year
- Emergency Volunteer of the Year – sponsored by the Minister for Emergency Services – Hon Jihad Dib
- Not-for-Profit Voluntary Governance Award
- Volunteer Leader of the Year

Twenty-five regional ceremonies are held in towns and suburbs throughout NSW from mid-August until November.

The regional finalists will be invited to a Gala State ceremony in December in Sydney where the NSW Volunteer of the Year is announced. Recipients for the NSW Volunteer of the Year are also announced across the seven categories.

The Awards are run by The Centre for Volunteering. The NSW Government is the Principal Partner for the awards.



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