

Media Release

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Angel of Compassion: Gloria Rohov named 2025 Illawarra Volunteer of the Year

Bringing hope to the region's needy, Gloria Rohov has been named 2025 Illawarra Volunteer of the Year for putting food on the table for those experiencing hardship and arranging essential bill relief.

Gloria received the 2025 Illawarra Volunteer of the Year Award at Illawarra Steelers Club today.

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:

Illawarra Young Volunteer of the Year: Chae Conte from Windang

Windang Surf Club's 18-year-old Club Captain Chae Conte has volunteered at the club since joining as a Nipper 12 years ago.

He is now the club's Youth Rookie Coordinator and has given more than 160 hours of his time over the past 18 months alone to help keep people safe in the water.

Illawarra Adult Volunteer of the Year: Hannah McNerney from Jamberoo

Jamberoo Rural Fire Service Captain Hannah McNerney began volunteering at 18 and became the brigade's first female captain. Now 33, she has overseen over 180 emergency incident responses per year, including bushfires, floods, and emergency operations.

Hannah also delivers school training and serves as Club Captain at Kiama Surf Life Saving.

Illawarra Senior Volunteer of the Year: Gloria Rohov from Thirroul

For over a decade, Gloria Rohov has quietly supported vulnerable Illawarra residents through food assistance and urgent utility relief at Anglicare. She helps clients manage electricity, gas, water, and phone bills, coordinates emergency food parcels, supports non-English-speaking clients, and mentors fellow volunteers.

Illawarra Emergency Volunteer of the Year: Margaret Vincent from Avondale

Margaret Vincent has volunteered for 40 years with St John Ambulance NSW, providing clinical leadership at major events and during disasters, including Cyclone Alfred and northern NSW floods.

Her dedication to community health and safety is unparalleled, having dedicated thousands of volunteer hours to patient care since 1985.

Illawarra Volunteer Team of the Year: Illawarra Bereavement and Palliative Care Volunteers

This dedicated team offers comfort to people in palliative care and their loved ones, both in hospitals and at home. They also support the bereaved as Grief Companions. Going the extra mile, some undertake biography training to offer up to six weeks of recording a person's life story and putting it into a bound book, with photos.

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 Illawarra 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."

Illawarra 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:

- 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 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 are the principal partners for the awards.



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