

Media Release

Embargoed until 2.30pm Wednesday 24th September 2025

Kelso living legend named 2025 Central West Volunteer of the Year

Kelso Scouting legend Paul Hennessy has been awarded the 2025 Central West Volunteer of the Year, for his support over half a century for young people to gain skills, build resilience and make strong connections.

Paul was recognised today at the 2025 Central West Volunteer of the Year Awards at Orange Ex-Services Club.

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:

Central West Young Volunteer of the Year: Stassi Austin from Cowra

Stassi holds many volunteering hats. She is one of the founders and board members of Cowra Country Universities Centre, helping to grow it to more than 90 students, with women making up 75% of enrolments.

She is also the Chair of the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition, giving a greater voice to young people across the country and she helped establish the anti-bullying campaign #Projectupstander.

Central West Adult Volunteer of the Year: Paul Hennessy from Kelso.

Paul has been a Scouts NSW leader for more than 50 years, giving his time to mentor members, and helping them learn new skills, build resilience, and foster positive mental health.

He recently started his own program to help outback or country kids get access to Scouting by providing free equipment and clothing. Earlier this year, Paul was crowned a Living Legend by Bathurst City Council.

Central West Senior Volunteer of the Year: June Howe from Harden

June gives her time at Can Assist Harden-Murrumburrah, Harden Hawkes Rugby League Club, Harden Pony Club, the Anglicare Op Shop, Harden Hospital Auxiliary, Meals on Wheels and Harden Grange Aged Care Home.

It's a full volunteering card for the 90 year-old, who still gets out selling raffle tickets, working in canteens, serving at the BBQ, visiting elderly residents, and in the garden.

Central West Emergency Volunteer of the Year: Lifeline Central West Crisis Supporters

There are more than 100 members of the Lifeline Central West Crisis Supporters team who give their time to provide support and counselling to people in the region who are at risk or require mental health support.

Members of the team are on call 24/7 to answer the crisis line so they can speak to people in need when they require support. They provided almost 3,000 hours of phone support over the past year.

Central West Volunteer Team of the Year: Birds in the Bush Team

The nine members of the Birds in the Bush Volunteer Team create safer communities for women and children in rural and regional areas by advocating for better services and raising community awareness about the impact and causes of domestic and family violence.

The group shares a large volunteering workload including organising events, fundraising, community collaboration, designing and selling merchandise, and social media advocacy - helping to raise \$422,000 to support domestic violence initiatives across the region.

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 Central West 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."

Central West 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.

[Access images of the local recipients via this Dropbox link.](#)

More information at media@volunteering.com.au or call 0402 837 917



Principal Partner



Regional Awards Sponsor



Awards Supporters



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.



Principal Partner



Regional Awards Sponsor



Awards Supporters

