

# Media Release

**Embargoed until 2.30pm Tuesday 30 September 2025**

## **Dubbo Nepalese Community founder named 2025 Orana Volunteer of the Year**

Multicultural leader Ramesh Sharma has been awarded the 2025 Orana Volunteer of the Year, for his work building social cohesion and strong community connections with the Orana Residents of Indian Sub-Continental Heritage organisation.

Ramesh was recognised today at the 2025 Orana Volunteer of the Year Awards at the Dubbo RSL 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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:

### **Orana Young Volunteer of the Year: Pearl Blackburn from Cobar**

Pearl packs so much volunteering into every single week.

The Cobar High School student and cross-country runner gives her time at the student council, supporting student health and well-being programs, the Little Athletics and Show Girl Committees and many other programs and events.

### **Orana Adult Volunteer of the Year: Ramesh Sharma from Dubbo**

Ramesh gives his time with the Orana Residents of Indian Sub-Continental Heritage organisation, where he makes an invaluable contribution to building social cohesion, connections across communities and multiculturalism throughout the region.

He is also a founding member of the Dubbo Nepalese Community, serving as a vital link between the Nepalese diaspora and the broader community, and promoting and preserving Nepalese language and heritage.

### **Orana Senior Volunteer of the Year: Kerry Frost from Dubbo**

Kerry is a grief counsellor, early responder for people experiencing loss and President of the Orana branch of the National Association for Loss and Grief NSW.

Her volunteer work provides unwavering support to people at times of crisis and is in addition to her role on the board of the National Association for Loss and Grief NSW.

## **Orana Emergency Volunteer of the Year: Christopher Milne from North Yeoval**

Christopher is an Ambulance NSW Community First Responder volunteer, providing lifesaving acute care, back up care, and support to people in and around Yeoval.

He gave his time to complete the 12-month training before beginning his volunteer work and is now a vital cog in the emergency wheel for people throughout the region.

## **Orana Volunteer Team of the Year: National Association for Loss and Grief**

The National Association for Loss and Grief volunteer team give up their time to help people dealing with the trauma of an unexpected loss.

They have helped more than 200 people in the past 12 months, giving around 2000 hours of assistance to make sure people feel heard and supported.

**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 Orana 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.”

Orana 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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