



The Centre for  
Volunteering

# Media Release

**Embargoed until 2.30pm Friday 19th September 2025**

## **Turramurra pilot named 2025 Upper North Volunteer of the Year**

Retired Turramurra pilot Glenn Bridgland has been awarded the 2025 Upper North Shore Volunteer of the Year for his life-saving work flying sick children to receive critical medical treatment.

Glenn received the 2025 Upper North Shore Volunteer of the Year Award today at Hornsby RSL.

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:

### **Upper North Shore Young Volunteer of the Year: Max Harpham from Asquith**

Max has been a volunteer mentor at The Shepherd Centre for the past two years, where he supports teenagers with hearing loss to develop the skills and confidence to live in a hearing world.

At six months of age, Max became the first and youngest baby to receive a bilateral cochlear implant at the Centre. He is now in his third year at university, studying to become an audiologist.

His experiences and achievements are an inspiration to other young people with hearing loss, giving them the tools, resources and networks to embrace deafness and thrive.

### **Upper North Shore Adult Volunteer of the Year: Declan O'Hare from Cherrybrook**

Declan volunteers with the Justice Advocacy Service, offering vital support to clients with cognitive impairments and intellectual disabilities to help them navigate the criminal justice system.

In his court role, Declan, who lives with autism, assists clients during legal proceedings to understand court processes. What truly sets Declan apart is his use of lived experience to connect with and advocate for others.

### **Upper North Shore Senior Volunteer of the Year: Glenn Bridgland from Turramurra**

As a volunteer pilot with Little Wings, Glenn has helped hundreds of children and their families living in regional and rural NSW to access specialist and often lifesaving medical treatment in major cities.

The retired long-haul airline pilot has flown more than 180 missions and has given hundreds more hours mentoring and training new pilots.

### **Upper North Shore Emergency Volunteer of the Year: John Aitken from Pymble**



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John has given countless hours of his time over the past 15 years with Marine Rescue Cottage Point and Marine Rescue Sydney, responding to emergency callouts and keeping people safe on the water. He skips the Cottage Point rescue vessels across Cowan Creek and the Hawkesbury River, coupled with his radio officer duties across the rescue service's Sydney operations, while also overseeing the treasury duties for the Cottage Point service.

He is also a prominent member of the Rotary Club of Kuring-gai, volunteering his time with them for decades.

### **Upper North Shore Volunteer Team of the Year: Hornsby Street Side Medics**

The Hornsby Street Side Medics team helps more than 300 homeless people by providing them with free medical care. They prescribe potentially lifesaving medications, diagnose illnesses, attend to wounds and administer antibiotics to prevent complications like amputations.

The team is made up of GPs, medical specialists, paramedics, nurses, allied health professionals and support staff who give their time one day a week all year round.

**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 Upper North Shore 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."

Upper North Shore 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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