

Media Release

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Shelly Beach Patrol Captain named 2025 Central Coast Volunteer of the Year

Shelly Beach Surf Lifesaver Lynnette Vuradin has been awarded the 2025 Central Coast Volunteer of the Year for her work mentoring young life savers and maintaining beach safety for people across the region.

Lynnette was recognised today at the 2025 NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards at the Gosford 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 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 Coast Young Volunteer of the Year: Tahlia Blanshard from Jilliby

Tahlia has been volunteering with Cerebral Palsy Alliance for the past six years, supporting programs and events to encourage physical activity, fitness and to build strength and mobility.

Alongside her volunteering, she carries out national duties as a key defender with the Australian ParaMatildas football team. She continues to find time to assist young people with Cerebral Palsy and other disabilities to empower them to challenge themselves.

Central Coast Adult Volunteer of the Year: Lynnette Vuradin from Tumby Umbi

Lynnette is a Patrol Captain with the Shelly Beach Surf Club, where she gives her time to keep beaches safe. She mentors new surf lifesaving volunteers.

She is also an age manager, events official, rescue watercraft operator and trainer, and founded the Ladies on Patrol group to encourage and support women in surf lifesaving. Lynnette is a regular participant in the Beach to Bush program, which teaches beach and surf safety skills to school-aged children in regional NSW.

Central Coast Senior Volunteer of the Year: Laurie Sweet from Gwandalan

Laurie shares his volunteering across many different projects, causes and organisations. He teaches sustainable fishing practices through Fishcare NSW and the Gwandalan Fishing Club, including helping women, school children and NDIS participants learn about fishing and the outdoors. He also gives his time with We Care

Connect, preparing support packages for families, and repairing and restoring donated items including cots, prams, toys and other essential items.

In addition, Laurie has been an active member of the Gwandalan and Summerland Point Peninsula Improvement Group for the past seven years, advocating for his local community on issues that affect them.

Central Coast Emergency Volunteer of the Year: Marine Rescue Hawkesbury

The 50 volunteers at Marine Rescue Hawkesbury are on call 24-7 to respond to boating incidents across the 110 kilometres of the Hawkesbury River and surrounding waterways.

The team covers radio operations, rescue vessel crewing, mentoring, equipment maintenance and public engagement. They also respond to floods and medical emergencies in isolated, river-only-access communities, they deliver supplies, and support post-disaster clean-up.

Central Coast Volunteer Team of the Year: Fairhaven Op Shopping Village Volunteers

The 60 Fairhaven Op Shopping Village Volunteers sort, clean, display, and sell donated items to raise money for disability services and provide essential items for The Man's Bag and Share the Dignity organisations.

The team mentor new volunteers and support employees with disabilities, helping them to build confidence and develop practical employment skills.

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 Coast 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 Coast 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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