



The Centre for
Volunteering

Media Release

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Top Broken Hill fundraiser takes out 2025 Far West Volunteer of the Year

Broken Hill Breast Cancer Support and Fundraising Group volunteer Lynne Hastwell has been awarded the 2025 Far West Volunteer of the Year, for her care, support and fundraising efforts for people living with cancer.

Lynne was recognised today at the 2025 NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards at the Broken Hill Musicians 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:

Far West Adult Volunteer of the Year: Klaeton Smith from Wentworth

Klaeton is a volunteer driver with LiveBetter Community Services' transport team, giving his time two days a week so vulnerable or isolated people across the region can attend medical appointments, do their shopping and take part in community events and activities.

His work is an essential service that helps people stay connected, access healthcare and breaks down isolation.

Far West Senior Volunteer of the Year: Lynne Hastwell from Broken Hill

Lynne is a key support person and top fundraiser at the Broken Hill Breast Cancer Support and Fundraising Group.

Her work helps to purchase valuable medical equipment for the local community and assists patients with travel and accommodation related to their treatment.

She has also volunteered at the Australian Red Cross for 12 years, the Broken Hill Hospital Kiosk for 13 years, and the Eureka Village for 7 years.

Far West Emergency Volunteer of the Year: NSW State Emergency Service - Broken Hill Unit

The 46 team members of the Broken Hill SES unit have become a vital lifesaving agency for the Far West region, responding to floods and storms, as well as working with other community groups to provide first aid, community education and engagement.



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Far West Volunteer Team of the Year: OzFish Volunteers - Heroes of the Murray Darling Basin

The local OzFish volunteer team has been dubbed the Heroes of the Murray Darling Basin for their life saving work to rescue native fish and crayfish from suffocation during blackwater events, floods and droughts.

The team navigates local waterways by boat and foot to safely relocate the rescued native species, while also planting and building fish habitats to help protect river ecosystems.

The team has rescued more than 750 crayfish, hundreds of fish, planted over 8,000 native species, and built around 100 fish habitats.

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 Far 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.”

Far 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.



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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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