

Media Release

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The welcoming face of Soul Hub takes out 2025 Hunter Volunteer of the Year

Soul Hub Newcastle guest support worker David Dorhauer has been awarded the 2025 Hunter Volunteer of the Year, for his service to people in need across the city.

David was recognised today at the 2025 NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards at the NEX in Newcastle.

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:

Hunter Young Volunteer of the Year: Alyssa Wharton from Adamstown

Newcastle cricketer Alyssa works hard on the pitch, but even harder on the sidelines as a volunteer, supporting young players and encouraging more girls to take to the field.

She gives her time as the Cricket Blast Coordinator and Women's Coordinator at the Newcastle City & Eastern Districts Cricket Club. She also umpires, coaches and mentors young players and organises cricket carnivals for the Newcastle District Cricket Association.

Hunter Adult Volunteer of the Year: David Dorhauer from Newcastle

Dave gives his time as a guest support worker at Soul Hub Newcastle where he welcomes clients who wish to enjoy a healthy, hot meal in a safe and welcoming environment. He's on deck for between 4 and 7 shifts each week, managing the volunteer crew, training new team members and organising breakfast. His work has a big impact on people experiencing homelessness, poverty or isolation.

Hunter Senior Volunteer of the Year: Fay Smith from Cameron Park

Fay has volunteered at Belmont Hospital for close to a decade, giving more than 5,000 hours at the hospital's volunteer kiosk, the Meet and Greet program, and fundraising and patient services.

She also serves on the Belmont Hospital Volunteers Auxiliary and on the hospital's Consumers Committee, leading to numerous hospital and district-wide improvements for patients and health consumers.

Hunter Emergency Volunteer of the Year: Warren Eades from Swansea

Warren has volunteered at Lake Macquarie Marine Rescue for the past 30 years to keep people safe on the water, assisting with towing broken vessels, guiding larger boats, and in search and rescue operations.

Hunter Volunteer Team of the Year: LIVEfree Project Backyard Brekky Team

The 20 Backyard Brekky volunteers prepare fresh breakfasts and free grocery hampers for people facing homelessness, financial hardship, social isolation and family violence.

The team cooks, serves, and cleans up one day a week, serving around 160 people and families, and ensuring everyone is met with a warm meal and a welcoming environment.

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 Hunter 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.”

Hunter 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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