

Media Release

Embargoed until 4pm Wednesday 26 August 2026

Leading volunteer recruiter named 2026 Outer Western Sydney Volunteer of the Year

Share the Dignity volunteer manager Kerrie Barton has been named the 2026 Outer Western Sydney Volunteer of the Year, for her relentless drive to recruit, train and mentor more than 200 volunteers to help end period poverty across NSW.

Kerrie was recognised today at the 2026 NSW Volunteer of Year Awards at the St Mary's Band Club.

The NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards are hosted by The Centre for Volunteering to help promote and support volunteering across NSW. The Awards are now in their 20th year and celebrate the work of thousands of individuals and volunteer teams from a diverse range of organisations across the state.

Other individual and team awards were also announced today:

Outer Western Sydney Young Volunteer of the Year: Jacob Gormley from St Clair

Jacob is the President of Nepean Region Rotaract - the youth arm of Rotary International. He also gives his time as a Justice of the Peace, an event organiser for the Australia Latin American Emerging Leaders Dialogue and as an advocate for young people in Penrith.

He has led community initiatives like Clean Up Australia Day, blood drives, and is a founding member of the Penrith City Council Youth Committee.

Outer Western Sydney Adult Volunteer of the Year: Kerrie Barton from Blacktown

Kerrie is the guru volunteer recruiter and manager for the NSW Chapter of Share the Dignity, an organisation dedicated to ensuring no one is without access to menstruation products, particularly those who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, domestic violence or poverty.

She leads volunteer engagement and onboarding as part of the organisation's three major collection and fundraising drives each year. She has helped recruit and retain 200 volunteers and supports a total of 1,000 volunteers throughout the state.

Outer Western Sydney Senior Volunteer of the Year: Linda Rushworth from Oakhurst

Linda has given more than 5,000 hours of her time over the past seven years to help people throughout the state experiencing food insecurity.

She volunteers at Foodbank NSW & ACT's major distribution warehouse at Glendenning three days per week, where she helps oversee the sorting, packing and distribution of rescued food so it can be sent across the region.

Outer Western Sydney Volunteer Team of the Year: Foodbank NSW & ACT Community Volunteers, Blacktown

The 380 strong team of Foodbank volunteers have contributed over 4,500 days of work to provide more than 20 million meals to people and families throughout the region and the state.

They give their time to help people experiencing food insecurity due to cost-of-living pressures and social issues, at the same time helping them to combat mental health issues and social stigmas.

The Centre for Volunteering CEO Gemma Rygate said volunteers from across Sydney's outer west give so much to the local community.

"Volunteers help build strong and healthy communities across the state," Ms Rygate said.

"They are always there when we need them most, giving their time and support across all areas of life including health, emergency services, education and community sectors.

"Volunteers are role models for others, highlighting how volunteering can have such a positive impact on people and places. These awards celebrate the volunteering effort and impact."

The NSW Minister with responsibility for Volunteering, Jodie Harrison said:

"Congratulations to our everyday heroes, the winners of the Outer Western Sydney Volunteer of the Year Awards.

"From the bush to the sea, volunteers are the true heartbeat of our communities. Thank you for your invaluable contributions. You make New South Wales the best state to live in.

"In partnership with the Centre for Volunteering, the NSW Government continues to build a sector that is strong and diverse, and to make sure volunteers like you are recognised for and supported in what you do."

Outer Western Sydney award recipients will be invited to represent their region at the State Gala Award Ceremony at the end of the year, where the NSW Volunteer of the Year in each category will be announced.



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About the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards

The NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards are in their 20th 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 is the principal partner for the awards.



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