

Minister for Fair Trading
Minister for Youth
Minister for Volunteering

Linda Burney MP



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MEDIA RELEASE
CHANCE TO RECOGNISE UNSUNG HEROES

To mark National Volunteer Week, Minister for Volunteering Linda Burney today officially launched the 2008 NSW Volunteer of the Year Award.

The Award represents the only formal state-wide recognition of NSW's 1.7 million volunteers and the enormous contribution they make to their communities every year.

Ms Burney, patron of the Award, said the winners of the inaugural Awards last year were tremendous examples of ordinary people doing extraordinary work.

"Women like Mary Mamour of Blacktown symbolise perfectly the theme of 2008 National Volunteer Week: *Volunteers change our world*," she said.

Ms Mamour, 2007 NSW Volunteer of the Year, is a leading advocate for young African migrants in her community, many of whom have escaped from the trauma of refugee camps in Sudan.

Amanda Grant of Sutherland won both the 2007 NSW Youth Volunteer of the Year and Corporate Volunteer of the Year. She founded the Tradies Community Service Volunteer Program for local tradespeople raising funds for people in need.

Senior Volunteer of the Year, Laurie Smith from Port Macquarie, has been a volunteer mentor to disadvantaged children for more than 12 years.

"I anticipate the 2008 nominations will be equally inspiring and I encourage representatives of the thousands of not-for-profit organisations throughout the State to nominate their most dedicated and productive workers," Ms Burney said.

"National Volunteer Week is about highlighting the important work these people do to make their communities harmonious and cohesive places to live. It's the perfect time to call for nominations for such a significant award."

The Award is coordinated through The Centre for Volunteering, the peak body for more than 330,000 not-for-profit organisations in NSW. Information about the Award and nomination forms can be downloaded from The Centre's website, www.volunteering.com.au.

Regional Awards will be presented in November, with the winners being invited to attend a State award ceremony on 5 December 2008, International Volunteer Day.

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VOLUNTEERING FACTS

ABS statistics report that in 2006, 1.7 million people volunteered in NSW. They gave 235 million volunteer work hours, and contributed an estimated \$5 billion to the State's economy. Most give their time to the 300,000-plus fully volunteer managed community organisations in this State.

As well as economic benefits, international research from a range of sources shows:

- communities with a high level of volunteering have increased community cohesiveness and social capital, and lower levels of anti-social behaviour
- people who volunteer had higher employment prospects through increased social and community interaction and the skills they learn through their volunteering roles
- people who volunteer have better physical and mental health, are less isolated and less depressed. In fact, the older the volunteer and the more hours they volunteer, the better their health and sense of well-being.

Other volunteering statistics

(Source: *Giving Australia: Research on Philanthropy in Australia*, 2005)

- Women are more likely than men to volunteer and on average volunteer more hours over a year.
- More people volunteer in regional areas than in cities.
- The volunteer rate increases with the level of education attained.
- People aged 35–44 volunteer more than any other age group, with people aged 45–54 the second highest group.
- People aged 55–64 dedicate more hours for volunteer work.
- Younger and older volunteers contributed with the largest number of mean hours for volunteering.
- Full time and part time employees contribute with more than 50% of total hours of volunteer work.
- Single parents volunteer more frequently, and for more hours on average than people from two-parent families.

How can you volunteer?

A good starting point for anyone interested in volunteering is to contact the NSW Centre for Volunteering. Visit www.volunteering.com.au or call 9261 3600. For those wishing to volunteer their professional skills to a charity or community group, the organisation *goodcompany* can also help: visit www.goodcompany.com.au.

NSW Government State Plan targets

Under State Plan Priority R4: Increased participation and integration in community activities, the Government aims to:

- increase by 10% by 2016 the level of volunteering and community participation in NSW
- increase the diversity of the volunteer workforce.