

Media Release

Tuesday, 29 September 2015

Nowra RFS volunteer wins top honours in volunteering awards

Nowra's Michael Evans received the State's top volunteering award when he was named Illawarra 2015 Volunteer of the Year at a ceremony at Wollongong Golf Club today.

As a volunteer fire fighter with the Illaroo Road Rural Fire Brigade for the past 45 years, Michael was joined by other category winners - June James of Woonona and the DENNY Foundation team from Warilla.

CEO of The Centre for Volunteering Gemma Rygate, who runs the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards, said volunteers improve people's lives by helping out and keeping people connected.

"New research on volunteering in Australia shows that people give more than 743 million hours of their time each year – they're the backbone of our community," Ms Rygate said.

"This year The Centre for Volunteering received more than 500 nominations covering almost 7,000 volunteers – including teams - which shows how much communities value volunteers."

Ms Rygate said Michael won the regional NSW 2015 Volunteer of the Year Award for his dedication to the RFS and bushfire safety in the community.

"Michael has been a great teacher and mentor to both brigade volunteers and the broader community when it comes to bushfire safety," Ms Rygate said.

"As an experienced, competent and dedicated volunteer fire fighter, Michael has played a key role in helping save lives and property over many decades.

"Michael is also an active volunteer with other organisations such as the paddle boarding club and his energy and genuine interest in people help make his community stronger."

The Winners of the 2015 Illawarra NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards are:

Award Category	Winner
Overall Winner Volunteer of the Year	Michael Evans of Nowra Illaroo Road Rural Fire Service Brigade
Adult Volunteer of the Year (25 – 64 years)	Michael Evans of Nowra Illaroo Road Rural Fire Service Brigade
Senior Volunteer of the Year (65+ years)	June James of Woonona Illawarra Community Garden Network
Volunteer Team of the Year	The DENNY Foundation (from Warilla)

Principal Partners:



Family &
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ClubsNSW

Sponsor:



ClubsNSW CEO Anthony Ball said the industry was proud to sponsor the Awards Program in order to help recognise volunteers across the state.

“With almost 50,000 volunteers engaged in our industry, clubs across NSW know how vital and valuable volunteers are to their activities and operations,” he said.

“We appreciate the inspirational role volunteers play in our communities to help others.

“These Awards are an opportunity to put a spotlight on our volunteers and say thank you.”

NSW Minister for Multiculturalism Mr John Ajaka , who is responsible for volunteering, said the awards were an opportunity to uncover and celebrate the great achievements of volunteers across NSW.

“The NSW Government is proud to sponsor these awards because we understand the profound social and economic value of volunteering. Volunteers are remarkable people who deserve our recognition,” Mr Ajaka said.

Twenty regional Volunteer of the Year Awards ceremonies are being held around the state.

All regional winners will be in the running for the overall NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards, which are announced at a gala event on Friday 4 December 2015 to coincide with International Volunteer Day.

The Volunteer of the Year Awards are generously supported by principal partners the NSW Department of Family and Community Services, and ClubsNSW, the industry body which represents the state’s 1400 not-for-profit clubs, as well as Bupa Aged Care.

For information visit www.volunteering.com.au

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BACKGROUND



The **NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards** is an annual program run by The Centre for Volunteering – the State’s peak body for volunteering - to recognise the outstanding work of volunteers in every region across NSW. Twenty one award ceremonies are held across NSW in September and October where nominees are recognised with certificates and winners announced. Regional winners will be entered into the overall State 2015 Volunteer of the Year

For more information go to www.volunteering.com.au