



The Centre for
Volunteering

Media Release

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86-year-old graffiti buster named 2024 Mid North Coast Volunteer of the Year

Tuncurry graffiti buster Ted Bickford has been named the 2024 Mid North Coast Volunteer of the Year for his decade's long dedication to a clean and graffiti free community across the region.

Ted received the award today at The Westport Club in Port Macquarie as part of the 2024 NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards.

Recipients in other Mid North Coast regional award categories were also announced, including young, adult, senior and volunteer team of the year.

The NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards celebrate the work of thousands of individuals and volunteer teams from a diverse range of organisations across the state.

The Awards are hosted by The Centre for Volunteering, whose mission it is to promote and support volunteering across NSW.

Mid North Coast Young Volunteer of the Year: Evan Cooper from Briarfield

Evan is a volunteer mentor for the LGBTQI+ peer support group Pride Club for young people in the Bellingen Shire, supporting positive mental health outcomes by creating a safe space to make friends, talk about issues, access resources, and be supported to be proud and strong as LGBTQI+.

Mid North Coast Adult Volunteer of the Year: Melinda Lightfoot from Tuncurry

Melinda is a founding member of the Great Lakes Suicide Prevention Network where she gives her time to raise awareness and support for suicide prevention. As a volunteer leader, Melinda brings dedicated volunteers together and provides important information to her local community while breaking down the stigmas often associated with discussions of suicide prevention.

Mid North Coast Senior Volunteer of the Year: Ted Bickford from Tuncurry

Ted has volunteered for more than 30 years, removing graffiti from public areas across the Great Lakes region. He is on call each day to respond to clean up call outs, driving to sites to clean, remove and cover over graffiti. His volunteer work includes community engagement and education at local schools and the justice system.

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Volunteer Team of the Year: Forster Neighbourhood Centre Community Hub Volunteers

The Foster Neighbourhood Centre Community Hub provides much-needed support to people experiencing mental health issues, suicide concerns, homelessness, escaping domestic violence or in financial distress. Staffed by a team of volunteers 5 days a week, the Hub provides over 500 emergency relief packages and 350 no-interest loans to vulnerable community members each year.

The Centre for Volunteering CEO Gemma Rygate said:

“These awards recognise the exceptional effort of volunteers across the Mid North Coast.

“Whether it’s in the local sports club, in health care, education and cultural centres, legal support or emergency response, volunteers are essential for the ongoing health and viability of local communities.

“It’s important for volunteers across the Mid North Coast to know that their commitment is recognised and valued.”

The Awards are supported by Principal Partners the NSW Department of Communities and Justice and ClubsNSW.

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

“Congratulations to the recipients of the Mid North Coast Volunteer of the Year Awards. Thank you for the incredible contributions you make to NSW and your local community.

“Volunteers are the lifeblood of our communities, and the NSW Government is pleased to be partnering with the Centre for Volunteering to recognise volunteers and the valuable role they play in making NSW the best state to live and work in.”

ClubsNSW CEO Rebecca Riant said:

“The awards are a tribute to the vital contributions made by volunteers across the state. Volunteers are the backbone of the NSW club industry, and their efforts are crucial in uplifting local communities.

“We’re delighted to have a special Club Volunteer of the Year Award category, and I can’t wait to see who takes home that honour.”

The Mid North Coast award recipients will be invited to represent their region at the Gala State Ceremony in Sydney at the end of the year, where the NSW Volunteer of the Year will be announced across each category.

More information at media@volunteering.com.au

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About the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards

2024 marks the 18th year of these high-profile Awards, which have honoured hundreds of thousands of volunteers for their community service, while highlighting the value and benefits of volunteering.

Anyone who volunteers in NSW can be nominated for an award.

The Award categories are:

- Young Volunteer of the Year
- Adult Volunteer of the Year
- Senior Volunteer of the Year
- Volunteer Team of the Year
- Employee Volunteer of the Year
- Club Volunteer of the Year
- 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 the Year is announced. Recipients for the NSW Volunteer of the Year are also announced across the eight categories.

The Awards are run by the Centre for Volunteering and proudly supported by our principal partners the NSW Department of Communities and Justice and ClubsNSW.

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