

Media Release



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Gladesville pilot named 2024 North Shore Volunteer of the Year

Little Wings volunteer pilot Luca Vignando from Gladesville has been named the 2024 North Shore Volunteer of the Year for his role flying critically ill children from rural and regional NSW to major cities for life saving treatment.

Luca was recognised today at Norths as part of the 2024 NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards. Recipients in other North Shore 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.

North Shore Young Volunteer of the Year: Sophie Baker from Northbridge

Sophie gives her free time to help people in trouble on the water as a volunteer with Marine Rescue Port Jackson. She was a member of the first all-female rescue vessel crew and has also become the youngest training officer in Marine Rescue's Central Zone.

North Shore Adult Volunteer of the Year: Luca Vignando from Gladesville

Luca is a volunteer pilot with Little Wings where he gives his time to provide air transport for critically ill children from rural and regional NSW in need of lifesaving treatment in major cities. Last year he completed 75 missions, helping to alleviate the financial and emotional burdens for those families.

North Shore Senior Volunteer of the Year: Lynne Cusack from Gladesville

Lynne has enjoyed a quarter-century association with the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney as a volunteer guide. She shares her passion for and knowledge of the gardens with visitors from all around the world, and with newly recruited volunteer guides.

North Shore Volunteer Team of the Year: Lane Cove Council Volunteer Bushcare Program

The 96 members of the Lane Cove Council Bushcare Program give many hours over weekends removing weeds and rubbish, planting trees and restoring rare and important bushland. Their tireless work over decades is helping to transform local habitat and reserves for native species and future generations.

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The Centre for Volunteering CEO Gemma Rygate said:

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

“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 North Shore 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 North Shore 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 North Shore 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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