

Media Release

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Disability rights advocate named 2024 Sydney City/Eastern Suburbs Volunteer of the Year

Justice Advocacy Service volunteer Jenny Barga has been named the 2024 Sydney City/Eastern Suburbs Volunteer of the Year for her tireless support for the rights of people with intellectual disabilities or cognitive impairments within the justice system.

The award was announced today at Paddington RSL as part of the 2024 NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards. Recipients in other Sydney City and Eastern Suburbs regional award categories were also announced today 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.

Sydney City / Eastern Suburbs Young Volunteer of the Year: Maurice Wong from Millers Point

Sydney Boys High School student Maurice Wong contributed over 300 hours' service to St John Ambulance NSW last year, mentoring new recruits and providing vital first aid support at large events such as City2Surf, Sydney Half Marathon, Vivid Lightscape and the Anzac Day Dawn Service.

Sydney City / Eastern Suburbs Adult Volunteer of the Year: James Grant from Bondi

James has helped hundreds of people find work as a volunteer career coach with Project Placed. He provides free professional support to help unemployed people develop the skills, resources and confidence they need to find work.

Sydney City / Eastern Suburbs Senior Volunteer of the Year: Jenny Barga from Surry Hills.

Jenny is a legal academic and former maths teacher who has been supporting people with an intellectual disability to navigate the justice system. She has volunteered at the Justice Advocacy Service for over a decade, providing advice and emotional support in the courthouse, police stations and correctional centres.

Sydney City / Eastern Suburbs Volunteer Team of the Year: The Street Side Medics Woolloomooloo and Surry Hills Teams

The Inner City teams at The Street Side Medics assess over 600 patients on the streets each year, including vulnerable or homeless people without the resources to attend a regular GP clinic. By treating and detecting

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medical conditions early, the dedicated teams of volunteer doctors, nurses and other medical professionals, are improving patient outcomes while reducing the burden on local healthcare systems.

The Centre for Volunteering CEO Gemma Rygate said:

“These awards recognise the exceptional effort of volunteers across Sydney City and the Eastern Suburbs.

“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 Sydney City and the Eastern Suburbs to know that their commitment is recognised and valued.”

We are grateful that 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 Sydney City and Eastern Suburbs 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 Sydney City / Eastern Suburbs 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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