

Media Release



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Former top cop named 2024 New England and Northern Inland Volunteer of the Year

Retired Armidale Police Inspector Matt Lynch has been awarded the 2024 New England and Northern Inland Volunteer of the Year, for his commitment and dedication to supporting young people as a mentor, coach, driver and cook with youth support group BackTrack.

Matt was recognised today at the Armidale City Bowling Club as part of the 2024 NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards. Recipients in other New England and Northern Inland 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.

New England and Northern Inland Young Volunteer of the Year: Harrison Burkett from Tamworth

Harry dedicates countless hours each week to supporting local sports, including hockey, touch football, and cricket, both as a player and an umpire. He also gives his time setting up and cleaning at the Tamworth Show.

New England and Northern Inland Adult Volunteer of the Year: Matt Lynch from Armidale

The volunteer work of retired police officer Matt Lynch has made an immeasurable difference to the lives of young people and their families throughout the NSW Northern Tablelands region.

Matt is a volunteer mentor, driver, cook, coach and court supporter with BackTrack – an Armidale based community group supporting young people in need of help. His practical assistance is matched with invaluable personal support.

New England and Northern Inland Senior Volunteer of the Year: Betty Dunn from Tamworth

Betty Dunn has banked more than 25 years of volunteer service with the St Vincent de Paul Society in its shop and support centres. She's been a volunteer coach, administrator and organiser with the Tamworth Netball Association for 50 years and a volunteer at the Parry School and the Tamworth Base Hospital maternity ward.

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New England and Northern Inland Volunteer Team of the Year: NSW SES Tamworth Unit

The 55 members of the Tamworth SES unit are on call 24 hours a day to respond to floods, storms, fires and other incidents throughout the area and across NSW. They support the district by providing first aid, educating the public about emergency situations, and teaching valuable skills to younger members of the community.

The Centre for Volunteering CEO Gemma Rygate said:

“These awards recognise the exceptional effort of volunteers across the New England and Northern Inland region.

“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 Northern Tablelands 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 New England and Northern Inland 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 New England and Northern Inland 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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