

# Media Release



Embargoed until 3pm Friday 4 October 2024

## Cerebral Palsy pioneer named 2024 Hunter Volunteer of the Year

The pioneer of support and therapy services for people living with Cerebral Palsy in the Hunter region, Jill Stuart, has been named the Hunter Volunteer of the Year, for her tireless work over the past 60 years.

The award was announced today at Club Stockton as part of the 2024 NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards. Recipients in other Hunter 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.

### Hunter Young Volunteer of the Year: Sarah Williams from Newcastle

Sarah is the Founder of What Were You Wearing? Australia, an organisation dedicated to ending sexual violence and supporting sexual assault victims. Her volunteer work with the organisation led to compulsory drink spiking awareness training for bar and security staff across NSW and the ACT.

She helped establish sexual assault services at music festivals and provides awareness and education material to more than 250,000 social media followers and the wider indigenous and non-indigenous communities.

### Hunter Adult Volunteer of the Year: Dawn Watt from Newcastle

Dawn was instrumental in establishing the Newcastle Northstars, one of the largest and most respected ice hockey clubs in Australia. She also drove the formation of the Newcastle Ice Hockey League, established and coaches the Northstars para team, and has served as Vice President of Ice Hockey NSW.

### Hunter Senior Volunteer of the Year: Jill Stuart from Kahiba

Jill's 60 years of volunteer work have greatly improved access to services for people across the Hunter region who are living with disability. She helped establish a Cerebral Palsy Alliance (CPA) branch in the area, creating a family focused and supportive community system. The Stuart Centre in Croudace Bay is CPA's longest-running therapy centre, currently supporting more than 350 clients and their families.

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### **Hunter Volunteer Team of the Year: Soul Hub**

The 220 volunteers at Soul Hub feed some of the most vulnerable, homeless and marginalised people in the community, cooking up to 900 meals a week for over 150 people each day. The army of dedicated volunteers help to create welcoming spaces for those who are broken, homeless and facing mental health challenges.

### **The Centre for Volunteering CEO Gemma Rygate said:**

“These awards recognise the exceptional effort of volunteers across the Hunter 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 region 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 Hunter 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.”

Hunter 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](mailto:media@volunteering.com.au)

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## About the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards

2024 marks the 18<sup>th</sup> 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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