



The Centre for
Volunteering

2026 NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards Nominator Guidelines





“Volunteers are the quiet force, whether helping ease cost of living pressures, supporting those in crisis or responding on the front line of floods, fires and emergencies. Their dedication isn’t just admirable; it underpins a more resilient and compassionate society. These exceptional individuals give selflessly - often while juggling careers, study, and family life - yet they still choose to show up for others when it matters most.”

Gemma Rygate, CEO, The Centre for Volunteering

In frame (left to right)

The Hon. Jodie Harrison, MP, Gemma Rygate, CEO The Centre for Volunteering and Molly Croft, 2025 NSW Young Volunteer of the Year and 2025 NSW Volunteer of the Year.

Welcome!

Thank you for taking the time to nominate an individual or team for the 2026 NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards.

The NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards is an annual program launched in 2007 by The Centre for Volunteering to recognise the outstanding efforts of the 4.9 million volunteers in NSW, and to promote the importance of volunteering to the community. In 2025, the Awards program recognised over 145,000 volunteers across the state.

Before you get started on the nomination form, please read the following information to ensure that you have all of the necessary details to complete the form.

Accessibility Support

The Centre for Volunteering is committed to making this nomination process accessible for people of all backgrounds and abilities. If you need support, we are here to help.

- If you would like to receive this guide in a larger print or another format, contact our Awards team at award@volunteering.com.au or 02 9261 3600.
- If you would like this guide translated into another language, contact the Translating and Interpreting Service on 1300 847 387 (<https://www.tisnational.gov.au/>)
- If you are deaf or hard of hearing, contact the National Relay Service via <https://www.accesshub.gov.au/about-the-nrs>

Definitions

In these guidelines, we define the terms volunteer, nominator, and nominee as follows:

Volunteer: An individual who gives their time willingly for common good and without financial gain.

Nominator: An individual or organisation who submits a nomination form about a volunteer for the awards.

Nominee: A volunteer, volunteer team, or organisation that is being recommended or put forward for the awards.

About Volunteering

In many communities, the word volunteering is not always recognised. Often acts of giving, sharing and helping out are imbedded and part of cultural practices, we support these customs and advocate that these are all forms of volunteering.

If you give your time, share your skills or help out in your community, you are a volunteer. Volunteering can be defined as “time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain”.

What is volunteering:

If you give your time, share your skills or help out in your community you are volunteering. An example that is volunteering: coaching your child’s football team, because people outside of your household and family also benefit.

What is not volunteering:

Volunteering does not include only helping your family or people you live with. An example that is not volunteering: helping your flat-mate, cousin or sister with their homework.

Eligibility – Who can be nominated:

Individuals and teams who

- have given their time willingly for the common good and without financial gain,
- reside in NSW,
- have given more than 20 hours of their time volunteering during the previous 11 months (July 2025 – May 2026) for a community group, legitimate not-for-profit organisation, or other entity which engages volunteers in a safe and legal manner such as schools or government agencies.

Volunteers and Volunteer Managers are not permitted to nominate themselves.

Key Dates

11 FEBRUARY Wednesday Nominations open	29 MAY Friday Nominations close	10 AUGUST – 5 NOVEMBER Regional ceremonies	EARLY DECEMBER NSW Volunteer of the Year State Gala
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Information and Support

If you have any questions, feel free to connect with us.

Phone: 02 9261 3600

Email: award@volunteering.com.au

Website: <https://www.volunteering.com.au/awards/about-the-awards>

Nominations

All nominations MUST be completed and submitted online via The Centre for Volunteering's website - <https://www.volunteering.com.au/awards/about-the-awards/> by **5pm Friday 29 May, 2026**.

As all certificates / awards will be as per the details supplied on the nomination form, please ensure that you double check the spelling of the nominee's name / team name / organisation etc. before submitting. Please also double check the email address, as all invitations to the regional ceremonies are sent by email only.

The 2026 Nomination Form allows for two types of recognition for the volunteers of NSW.

- 1) **Nomination for Recognition Only** - This is the simplest way to acknowledge volunteers. These nominees will be invited to their local regional ceremony (if their personal email address is provided, not the organisation's or nominator's email address). The nominee will be presented with a certificate to acknowledge their contribution to the community. This nomination requires you to complete four parts of the nomination form only.
- 2) **Nomination for Judging** - These nominees will be judged for the NSW Volunteer of the Year Award in the appropriate category. This nomination requires you to complete six parts (Parts 1-6), all of which must be completed to be accepted by the Judging Committee. To be included in Judging, the nominee's personal email address MUST be provided (ie. not the organisation's or nominator's email address). If this is not provided, the nomination will be moved in the Recognition Only section of the Awards.

Tips for Nominating – please visit our website for a comprehensive guide of how to nominate - <https://www.volunteering.com.au/tips-for-nominating/>

The nomination form can be saved at any point if you don't have time to complete the form in one sitting or need further information to continue. All you need to do is click on the **Save and Resume Later** button at the bottom of each section and you will be emailed a link from Formstack which can be used at a later date to continue your nomination.

Please note that The Centre for Volunteering is unable to view or access partially completed forms so you will need to save the link to your incomplete form.

Part 1: Nominee's Permission / Consent

All nominators must have permission / consent from the individual they are nominating, to disclose their personal information as part of their entry in the 2026 NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards. For privacy purposes, the nominee is required to understand and be aware that as a result of this nomination, their name, image and story may be used publicly by The

Centre for Volunteering in promotional material. In relation to a Volunteer Team, you are not required to gain permission from every volunteer within that team, only the individual whose email address and phone number you are providing on the nomination form. Please note that the volunteer you are nominating, along with their referees (where required), will be sent a copy of the full nomination form. For full details on The Centre's Privacy Policy, please visit – <https://www.volunteering.com.au/privacy-policy/> .

Part 2: Award Category

There are seven award categories open to nomination in 2026:

1. **Young Volunteer:** Aged 24 years and under (please note that nominees under 18 years of age will be required to submit a parental consent form in order to be included in the Awards)
2. **Adult Volunteer:** Aged 25 to 64 years
3. **Senior Volunteer:** Aged 65 years and over
4. **Volunteer Team:** Team to be made up of more than one individual
5. **Emergency Volunteer:** Individual or team volunteering in emergency prevention, preparation, response, or recovery efforts.
6. **Volunteer Leader:** An individual or team responsible for managing / coordinating volunteers. Nominees can be a designated Volunteer Manager, Coordinator, a team of Volunteer Managers in a Volunteer Involving Organisation, community group or a not-for-profit organisation. The volunteer leader can be a paid position.
 - Nominations within this category can be submitted for either teams or individuals,
7. **Not-for-Profit Voluntary Governance:** An unpaid board of directors or individual board member, who exemplifies excellence in governance.

Part 3: Nominee

Nominators must provide the nominee's details:

1. Title
2. First Name
3. Last Name
4. Nominee's Personal Email Address – an organisation's email address or the nominator's email address will not be accepted. If their personal email address is not provided, the nominee will not be invited to attend a Regional Award Ceremony. In this case, their certificate will be forwarded to the nominator by the end of 2026.
5. Nominee's Age Range
6. Nominee's Residential Suburb, Postcode – for individual nominees (eg. Young, Adult, Senior, Emergency categories), their Personal Residential Suburb must be provided, not the Organisation's address.
7. Phone Number

8. Organisation or Group where the nominee gives their time
9. Organisation / Group Address
10. Organisation / Group Phone Number

NOTE: If you are nominating in one of the Team categories, you are also required to provide the following details:

- Nominee Team Name
- Number of Volunteers within the Team
- Email address for the team's Manager or Coordinator

NOTE: Volunteer Team nominations do not require the names of the individual team members. Volunteer Teams will be provided with a single certificate / award under the Volunteer Team's name. If you would like each volunteer team member to receive their own individualised certificate, you will need to complete an additional nomination for them under the Young, Adult or Senior category.

Part 4: Nominator

Nominators must provide their own details:

1. Title
2. First Name
3. Last Name
4. Nominator's Relationship to Nominee (eg. Friend, Family Member, Co-Worker etc)
5. Email Address
6. Address (work or residential)
7. Phone Number
8. Organisation/ Group (if applicable)

Part 5: Nominee's Work (Nominations for Judging Nominations only)

Nominators should provide a comprehensive outline of the nominee's work over the past 11 months in this section. Each question allows for a response of no more than 300 words. No videos or website links will be accepted.

As judging is based only on the information you provide in this section, it is essential to include a comprehensive and meaningful outline of the nominee's work. Please ensure your answers are focused only on the questions provided. Any additional information will not be taken into consideration.

1. Scope of volunteering work. Describe the nominee's volunteer role, responsibilities and activities. This can be within one or across several volunteering programs / organisations.
2. Impact of the nominee's volunteering contribution on the community. Describe how the nominee's work has benefited and impacted the community, such as information on barriers reduced, people impacted, time dedicated, successes and broader benefits.

Part 6: Referees (Nominations for Judging Nominations only)

All applications must include two referees who can confirm the details of the nomination if necessary. One of the referees must represent the organisation or group the nominee volunteers with.

The nominee and the nominator (you) cannot be listed as a referee. Referees listed must be informed that you are disclosing their personal information on the nomination form.

Details required for each referee are:

1. Title
2. First Name
3. Last Name
4. Referee's Relationship to Nominee
5. Phone Number
6. Email Address

Part 7: Statistical Information (optional for both types of nomination)

How did you hear about the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards?

- Previous Nominee or Nominator
- The Centre for Volunteering Website
- Email from The Centre for Volunteering
- Media
- Social Media
- Word of Mouth
- Other

Additional Information For Nominators

Nomination receipt notification

Once the nomination has been submitted, both the nominee and the nominator will be emailed a copy of the Nomination Form. Please check all information particularly spelling of the nominee's name, the organisation they volunteer for and award category, as this is what will be on their certificate. If any details are incorrect, please contact the awards team at award@volunteering.com.au, changes can be updated until Friday 29 May, 2026.

What Happens Next

We will review your nomination form and only contact you or the nominee directly should any questions or issues arise with the nomination. Due to Privacy, we will only contact the nominee for clarification on their own personal details.

The NSW Volunteer of the Year Award Ceremonies are held in 25 regions. We will allocate nominees to a region based on the nominee's residential address for individual nominations, or on the organisation's address for team nominations.

We will hold an award ceremony in each region from August to November, where all nominees will receive a Certificate and region winners are announced.

Please note that the categories for Volunteer Leader of the Year and the Not-For-Profit Voluntary Governance Award will be recognised at a Ceremony in Sydney in early November.

Further information will be sent to the **nominees** via an e-invitation detailing the date, venue and booking information for their local Regional Ceremony. Please note that only nominees whose personal email address has been provided (ie. not the organisation's or nominators email address) will receive an invitation to attend a Ceremony. If this is not provided, a certificate for the nominee will be forwarded to the nominator for distribution to the nominee by the end of the year.

Details of the Regional Ceremonies are not publicly available. Depending on venue capacity, nominators may receive an e-invitation to attend their nominee's Regional Ceremony. We are unable to confirm this until two weeks out from the Ceremony.

Please visit our Frequently Asked Questions on our website for further information - <https://www.volunteering.com.au/frequently-asked-questions/> .

Judging Process

Two separate judging panels are appointed to select the winners for all award categories for the Regional Ceremonies and the State Gala Ceremony.

Before the judging process begins, all judges are required to disclose any potential conflicts of interest. Judges with a conflict of interest will not assess nominations where they have a potential or perceived conflict of interest.

The judging panel may also consider each nomination in a different category if they deem it more suitable for consideration under that category.

Judging Panel members will not be publicly disclosed.

The Centre for Volunteering reserves the right to verify the validity of nominations during this process, and disqualify any nomination which, in the opinion of The Centre for Volunteering, may bring themselves, the nominating organisation, or The Centre for Volunteering into disrepute, or is not compliant with the Nominator Guidelines.

The Centre may request further information or clarification from the nominee, nominator or referees.

Consent and Privacy

The Centre for Volunteering abides by its Privacy Policy and the Privacy Act 1988 when handling all nominee and nominator information for the 2026 NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards.

Please note that both the nominee and nominator will receive a confirmation email from The Centre for Volunteering once a nomination has been submitted. As the nominee must provide consent for being included in the Awards, their personal email address must be provided. If the nominee does not have their own personal email address, an email address of a family member or close friend must be provided in order for us to gain their consent. The nominator's or organisation's email address will not be accepted.

By submitting a nomination form, you, the nominator, agree to the listed terms and conditions:

As a nominator:

- You have received the nominee's consent to be nominated.
- You have followed your organisation's policies and procedures in putting forward this nominee for an award.

- You agree your organisation is not aware of any reason this nominee would bring themselves, your organisation, The Centre for Volunteering or the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards into disrepute should they receive an award.
- You agree should there be any legal, reputational, or other issues that may bring the nominee, their nominating organisation, or The Centre for Volunteering into disrepute that arise between the date of nomination and the awards ceremony that The Centre for Volunteering will be made aware of these issues as soon as possible.
- All information provided is accurate and true to your knowledge.
- Completed nominations must be submitted by 5pm Friday 29 May, 2026. The Centre for Volunteering will not accept responsibility for lost, late, incomplete, or incorrectly submitted nominations.

On behalf of the nominee:

- Nominees consent to The Centre for Volunteering using their information and photograph for the event promotion and other forthcoming projects.
- Nominees confirm that there are no legal, reputational, or other issues that may bring themselves, their nominating organisation, or The Centre for Volunteering into disrepute should they win an award.
- Nominees agree that, should any legal, reputational, or other issues arise between the date of nomination and the awards ceremony that may bring themselves, the nominating organisation, or The Centre for Volunteering into disrepute, The Centre for Volunteering will be made aware of these issues.

Child Safe Standards

The Centre for Volunteering is committed to the safety and wellbeing of every child who interacts with Centre services, activities and events, such as the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards program. This commitment to protect children from harm is outlined in The Centre's policies and procedures (<https://www.volunteering.com.au/about/what-we-do/child-safe/>) and through its implementation of the ten Child Safe Standards. As part of this commitment to protect children, The Centre requires parental consent for all nominees under the age of 18.

All nominees who are identified as 17 years or under at the time of submission, will be contacted in order for their parent or legal guardian to provide written consent for their inclusion in the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards.

If this written consent is not provided by the nominee's parent or legal guardian by Friday 29 May, 2026, their nomination will be included in the Recognition section of the Awards and their certificate will be forwarded to their nominator to distribute to the nominee by the end of the year. Any nominee under 18 years of age whose parent / legal guardian has not completed a consent form will also not be permitted to be invited to, or involved in, Regional Ceremonies for the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards.

Disclaimer

When we consider the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards, we examine a nominee's volunteering contribution and do our best to ensure the recipients are of a suitable character.

We ask nominees, nominators and their nominating organisations to confirm there are no legal, reputational, or other issues that may bring themselves, their nominating organisation, or The Centre for Volunteering into disrepute should they win an award.

We are not able to undertake police checks for all nominees or award recipients. We understand that not all members of the community have the same experience with nominees as those who nominated them for recognition.

Thank you!

Thank you for your interest in submitting a nomination for the 2026 NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards!

If you have any questions, feel free to contact us.

Phone: 02 9261 3600

Email: award@volunteering.com.au

Website: <https://www.volunteering.com.au/awards/about-the-awards>