

Media Release

Embargoed until 4pm, Wednesday 23 September 2026

Police helper named 2026 Central West Volunteer of the Year

Bathurst policing volunteer and community advocate Elizabeth Jane Talbot has been named 2026 Central West Volunteer of the Year, for two decades of giving and community service across the region.

Jane, as she is known to her community, was recognised today at the 2026 NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards at the Orange Ex-Services' Club.

The NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards are hosted by The Centre for Volunteering to help promote and support volunteering across NSW.

The Awards are now in their 20th year and celebrate the work of thousands of individuals and volunteer teams from a diverse range of organisations across the state.

Other individual and team awards were also announced today:

Central West Young Volunteer of the Year: Harrison Dare from Harden

13-year-old Harrison Dare volunteers at local events as a youth advocate and with local community services.

His support reaches way beyond his age, helping Hilltops Youth Action Group, The Book Nook, Harden Kite Festival, the Rotary Community Garden, Zac's Place Community Centre, and making craft items to donate to local not-for-profits and charities for fundraising raffles.

Central West Adult Volunteer of the Year: Lyn Townsend from Parkes

Lynn has been the driving creative and organisational force behind the Parkes Musical & Dramatic Society for the past three decades.

She has given thousands of hours to produce high-quality productions, while also supporting the development of the next generation of performers and creative leaders in regional NSW.

She introduced subtitles for hearing impaired audience members and pioneered autism-friendly performances, ensuring the theatre is welcoming and accessible to a broader cross-section of the community.

Central West Senior Volunteer of the Year: Elizabeth (Jane) Talbot from Bathurst

Jane gives her time with the Volunteers in Policing program where she works with the Crime Prevention Unit at Bathurst Police Station. She provides essential administration tasks, including data entry and document scanning, allowing police to give more time to frontline work.

She also volunteers with the Lifeline Central West Book Fair, Bathurst Eisteddfod, 2MCE community radio, and Bathurst Meals on Wheels.

Central West Emergency Volunteer of the Year: Natalie Cole from Turondale

Natalie is a first responder at the NSW State Emergency Service Sofala Unit where she attends emergency incidents, supports the training and mentoring of colleagues, and provides back up logistical support during floods, storms, crash rescues, and other serious and critical incidents.

Central West Volunteer Team of the Year: White Tie Ball Fundraising Committee from Orange

The eight members of the White Tie Ball Fundraising Committee give their time over six months of the year, making sure the Housing Plus marquee fundraising event is a success.

They lead the planning, coordination and delivery of the event, from ticketing, sponsorship, sourcing raffle prizes and gift bags, coordinating donations, and managing event logistics. Their volunteering directly supports Orange Orchard, a refuge for women and children escaping domestic and family violence.

The Centre for Volunteering CEO Gemma Rygate said volunteers from across the NSW Central West give so much to the local community.

“Volunteers help build strong and healthy communities across the state,” Ms Rygate said.

“They are always there when we need them most, giving their time and support across all areas of life including health, emergency services, education and community sectors.

“Volunteers are also role models for others, highlighting how volunteering can have such a positive impact on people and places. These awards celebrate the volunteering effort and impact.”

The NSW Minister with responsibility for Volunteering, Jodie Harrison said:

“Congratulations to our everyday heroes, the winners of the Central West Volunteer of the Year Awards.

“From the bush to the sea, volunteers are the true heartbeat of our communities. Thank you for your invaluable contributions. You make New South Wales the best state to live in.

“In partnership with the Centre for Volunteering, the NSW Government continues to build a sector that is strong and diverse, and to make sure volunteers like you are recognised for and supported in what they do.”

Central West award recipients will be invited to represent their region at the State Gala Award Ceremony at the end of the year, where the NSW Volunteer of the Year in each category will be announced.



Principal Partner



Regional Awards Sponsor



Awards Supporters



About the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards

The NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards are in their 20th year and have grown to become one of the largest celebrations of volunteering across Australia.

They are an annual program run by The Centre for Volunteering to recognise the outstanding work of volunteers and Leaders of Volunteers in every region across NSW.

Individuals or teams can be nominated in one of seven award categories:

- Young Volunteer of the Year – sponsored by the Minister for Youth – Hon Rose Jackson
- Adult Volunteer of the Year
- Senior Volunteer of the Year
- Volunteer Team of the Year
- Emergency Volunteer of the Year – sponsored by the Minister for Emergency Services – Hon Jihad Dib
- 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 seven categories.

The Awards are run by the Centre for Volunteering. The NSW Government is the principal partner for the awards.



Principal Partner



Regional Awards Sponsor



Awards Supporters

