

2023

Volunteering Awards

Program



The Victorian Government and Volunteering Victoria acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of the land and pay respect to their culture and their Elders, past and present.

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2023 Volunteering Awards

Message from the Governor



It's a pleasure to welcome you all to Government House for the 2023 Volunteering Awards. First presented in 2021, these awards recognise the work of altruistic Victorians.

This year, volunteers have continued to play an important role in the Victorian community. The causes to which they've given their time are as diverse as the people that call this State home.

Whether caring for flood victims, protecting our wildlife or supporting Victorians experiencing homelessness, each volunteer has made this State a better and more compassionate place to live.

We see the positive impact their work has in our metropolitan cities and regional areas. On behalf of all Victorians, I'd like to thank them for giving back to their community.

Congratulations to this year's nominees and award winners. We look forward to seeing what each of you do next!

Professor the Hon. Margaret Gardner AC
Governor of Victoria

2023 Volunteering Awards

Message from the Premier



Victorians are known for their compassion and kindness.

Our annual Volunteering Awards celebrate that kindness – recognising the commitment of our state's tireless volunteers.

This year, the Victorian Volunteering Awards saw 422 nominations across eight award categories. Each and every one of you has made an invaluable contribution to your community – and to our state.

As Premier of Victoria, it's an honour to help recognise your efforts. I'd like to congratulate all the 2023 Victorian Volunteering Awards nominees, finalists and winners.

And whether you've been volunteering for years or you're at the start of your journey – thank you.

You make our state better, fairer, kinder and more connected.

We're lucky to have you.

The Hon. Jacinta Allan MP
Premier of Victoria

2023 Volunteering Awards

Message from the Minister



Volunteers contribute so much to our state.

The Volunteering Awards are an opportunity to recognise their generosity and care, which helps to build resilient and inclusive communities.

The quality of applications received for this round of the Volunteering Awards speaks to the dedication of all the volunteers around the state. From providing fresh fruit and vegetables to people in need, to offering wigs to people who have lost their hair due to medical conditions or treatments, this year's nominees are proof that there are so many ways to volunteer and make a meaningful impact in the community.

As Minister for Carers and Volunteers, I am proud that the Allan Labor Government recognises the efforts of volunteers and the positive difference they make across Victoria. I am pleased to acknowledge the finalists' commitment to supporting communities across Victoria at the 2023 Volunteering Awards.

Congratulations to all the finalists and winners, and to all of Victoria's volunteers, thank you for dedicating your time and skills to help others.

A blue ink handwritten signature, appearing to be 'Ros Spence', followed by a small horizontal line.

The Hon. Ros Spence MP

Minister for Carers and Volunteers

2023 Volunteering Awards Introduction



The Victorian Volunteering Awards formally recognise, celebrate and thank volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations for their extraordinary and selfless contributions to Victorian people, communities, culture and environment.

Showcasing excellence by individuals, teams and organisations throughout 2023, the Awards are run by Volunteering Victoria with the support of the Victorian State Government.

Today's ceremony will see the announcement of winners in all eight categories:

Organisation Awards:

- Inclusive Volunteering
- Volunteering Innovation
- Volunteering Partnerships
- Grassroots Volunteering

Individual Awards:

- Young Volunteer
- Volunteer Impact
- Volunteer Leadership
- Volunteer Commitment

The Premier's Volunteer of the Year, Dame Elisabeth Murdoch Award has been selected by the Premier from the winners of the four individual categories.

The Volunteering Excellence, Organisation of the Year Award has been selected by the Premier from the winners of the four organisation categories.

On behalf of Volunteering Victoria, I congratulate all nominees and finalists for their valuable contributions in building inclusive, thriving communities across our state.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Geoff Sharp.

Geoff Sharp
Chief Executive Officer
Volunteering Victoria

Finalists

Inclusive Volunteering Award

Celebrates diversity and inclusion in volunteering programs to enhance support for people, a community, group, or cause in Victoria. Finalists have demonstrated inclusive and accessible volunteering practices that increased volunteer diversity or improved participation for a greater range of community members.



Afri-Aus Care

Afri-Aus Care actively promotes inclusive volunteering, focusing on empowering marginalised communities to enter the workforce and creating an inclusive space for volunteers from African and other CALD backgrounds. Launched last year, its UBUNTU Volunteer Network is based on the philosophy that individual and community development are interconnected. The network aims to address common barriers to volunteering, such as unemployment, legal difficulties, and lack of adequate qualifications. Afri-Aus Care remains committed to expanding the network, forging partnerships, and enhancing opportunities for the African Australian community.



Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria (BSRV)

Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria enhances the lives of people throughout Victoria who are blind or vision impaired through sport and recreation. BSRV has recently been focused on engaging people with vision loss and those from multicultural backgrounds in volunteering, as an activity to improve mental health, wellbeing and social inclusion. The aim is to empower these people through meaningful roles which help them to enhance their personal development and social connection.



Deafblind Victoria (DBV)

Founded in 2007, Deafblind Victoria is a grassroots organisation run by and for deafblind people, referring to those with both vision and hearing loss. Volunteers are essential to DBV's operation, with their volunteer program having grown from 4 volunteers to now over 50 volunteers registered. Deafblind volunteers work alongside deaf-sighted and hearing-sighted volunteers across a diverse range of ages, abilities, sexualities and genders. As a self-advocacy group, the organisation remains dedicated to breaking stereotypes and highlighting the valuable contributions of the deafblind community.



Port Phillip EcoCentre

The Port Phillip EcoCentre is a dedicated team of scientists, educators and 3,000+ volunteers who design and implement innovative environmental research, education, practical action and science-based advocacy. They believe connected communities drive change, bringing together people of all ages and backgrounds to spark solutions and inspire leadership. Their expertise and partnership network extends across Port Phillip Bay health and the urban ecology of Greater Melbourne, within the traditional lands and waters of the Kulin Nation.



Wellsprings for Women

Wellsprings for Women provides safe, welcoming places and services that enable women to thrive. Its programs focus on building skills and capacity for migrant and refugee women, improving social, economic and emotional wellbeing through education, family violence prevention, and housing and employment support. The diversity of Wellsprings' participants provides a richness of experience, but also the need for highly tailored grassroots solutions, grounded in culturally responsive lived experience. Wellsprings prides itself on its co-design processes with migrant and refugee women.

Finalists

Volunteering Innovation Award

Recognises the role of innovation and adaptation to continually improve the volunteer experience or enhance supports for people, a community, group, or cause in Victoria. Finalists have delivered positive outcomes through a unique volunteering program, or new practices or operating models to improve the work of their organisation.



**Association for
Children with a
Disability**

Association for Children with a Disability (ACD) **Community Champions Volunteer Program**

ACD is the Victorian advocacy service for children with disability (from birth to 18 years) and their families. Recognising the influence of peer support in disability communities, ACD established its Community Champions volunteer program in 2021. Volunteers are parents of children with a range of disabilities across Victoria. Volunteers share ACD's free information and resources with families of children with disability in their communities, share their personal experiences, and assist with ACD's advocacy work.



Bendigo Health **School Holiday Volunteer Program**

Bendigo Health has developed and implemented an innovative program offering high school students a volunteer experience in their health environment that builds awareness and provides a pathway to a future health career. Designed for students during mid-term breaks, students give three days of their holidays to volunteer alongside current volunteers at Bendigo Health. In return, students gain an understanding of the importance of volunteering, as well as a lived and environmental experience of the health sector.



Epworth HealthCare **Wig Salon**

Epworth HealthCare's Wig Salon exemplifies a commitment to innovation in volunteering, providing solace and empowerment to those navigating medical hair loss. Beyond delivering high-quality wigs, volunteers cultivate a compassionate environment for patients, addressing emotional needs during challenging times. With dedicated training and support, Epworth's Wig Salon ensures personalised consultations, tailored solutions, and a warm atmosphere. Volunteers play a crucial role in the program's success, helping clients feel heard and understood.



GoodCompany Foundation

Volunteer Mystery Bus

For over 20 years, GoodCompany has been a trusted bridge connecting businesses and charities in Victoria. Their Workplace Giving Platform offers reliable tools for Payroll Giving, Volunteering, Matched Giving, and Fundraising. The Volunteer Mystery Bus is a unique initiative, designed to reduce the administrative burden of corporate volunteering experiences. Serving over 400 charities, GoodCompany transports teams of 10 to areas of greatest need, facilitating meaningful engagement and making it easier for corporate teams to make a real difference.



Puffing Billy Railway

Emerging Stronger Project

Located in the heart of the Dandenong Ranges, Puffing Billy Railway has over 70 years' experience as a successful volunteer-based organisation. Having been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the team actively sought innovative volunteer re-engagement strategies. In partnership with Eastern Volunteers and Adult Multicultural Education Services, Puffing Billy sought to re-engage inactive volunteers and foster increased participation from CALD communities. Surveys, focus groups, and cultural awareness training helped to gain insight into the volunteer experience, resulting in the successful recruitment of 56 inactive volunteers and 12 CALD volunteers.



Warrnambool Community Garden

Warrnambool Community Garden is a vibrant community space dedicated to addressing local needs. Over 17 years, the site has grown to include 4 acres of produce and native gardens, providing a public space for community events, workshops and tours. Throughout the pandemic, they transformed an abandoned quarry into an accessible amphitheatre space and established a Garden Market to provide healthy food and valuable community connection. Demonstrating sustainable living practices, Warrnambool Community Garden unites over 100 members, fostering social connections and mental wellbeing through gardening and learning.

Finalists

Volunteering Partnerships Award

Pays tribute to the importance of collaboration and partnerships to achieve greater outcomes for people, a community, group, or cause in Victoria. Finalists have made a significant difference through establishing or maintaining effective and enduring partnerships with other organisations, business, or local community.



Ardoch

Workplace Volunteering Program

Ardoch is a children's education charity dedicated to improving educational outcomes in disadvantaged communities, ensuring all children can reach their full potential. Through strong partnerships with schools, community organisations, corporate volunteer groups, and funders, Ardoch delivers an impactful Workplace Volunteering program. Students are partnered with a workplace volunteer to help develop their skills and knowledge around future career pathways. In 2022, 600 Ardoch volunteers supported over 1,000 students across 25 schools, resulting in increased student confidence and engagement in their learning.



IPC Health

Deer Park Knitting Group

As a leading provider of community health services in Victoria, IPC Health delivers medical, allied health, and wellbeing services across six locations in Melbourne's outer western suburbs. One of its longstanding partnerships spans over 40 years with the Deer Park Knitting Group. Originating as an activity for health service clients, the group meets weekly, with proceeds from crafted items donated to IPC clinics. The group fosters essential social connections, consumer participation, community engagement, and serves as a valuable referral pathway for IPC Health clinicians.



Royal Flying Doctor Service Victoria

Community Transport Program

Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) Community Transport brings together volunteers, community organisations, healthcare services and RFDS' logistical expertise to improve access to healthcare. Since its inception in 2018, the program has completed over 27,000 transports for 1,200 clients, travelling more than 770,000 kilometres. The service has been operating in Rochester since early 2021, in partnership with Rochester and Elmore District Health Service. As a result of this collaboration, RFDS was able to provide impactful and timely support to the community during Rochester's devastating flood in October last year.



Standing Tall in Hamilton

Established in 2003, Standing Tall in Hamilton Inc. (ST) provides school-based mentoring for students in need across the Southern Grampians. Its dedicated volunteer mentors empower disadvantaged youth with essential life skills, fostering resilience and breaking the cycle of disadvantage. In 2023, ST expanded its reach by establishing formal partnerships with 15 schools and hosting an inaugural Volunteer Mentors Conference. Their commitment to collaboration is evident in their proactive approach and continuous efforts to leverage resources and partnerships for the benefit of the community.



Volunteer For Knox

Feed One Feed All & Resound Church

Operating across eastern Melbourne, Volunteer For Knox connects passionate and willing volunteers with local not-for-profit organisations in need. Recognising mutual benefits to both groups, Volunteer For Knox facilitated a valuable partnership between Feed One Feed All (FOFA) and Resound Church Youth Group. FOFA, a volunteer-driven food relief initiative, now benefits from a fully equipped commercial kitchen at Resound Church for their weekly meal preparations. Located at the same site, Resound Youth Group volunteer to help prepare, cook, and package 500-600 nutritious meals each week for those in need.



Woor-Dungin

Woor-Dungin is a not-for-profit organisation walking alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples toward self-determination. Woor-Dungin was established to support Victorian Aboriginal organisations in obtaining resources to advance important community projects. Its unique model involves consulting with Aboriginal partners about their needs and facilitating enduring partnerships between philanthropic bodies, pro-bono corporations and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. Woor-Dungin's major achievements in driving social and legislative change have been enabled by its skilled and committed volunteer workforce, who contribute over 2,000 hours per year.

Finalists

Grassroots Volunteering Award

Celebrates the commitment, impact, and importance of grassroots organisations in supporting local communities, people, groups, or causes in Victoria. Finalists are small community-led organisations that have provided important local services, led positive change, or supported social and community life.



Asian Australian Volunteers (AAV)

Asian Australian Volunteers (AAV), comprised mainly of individuals with Asian heritage, is a volunteer organisation committed to uniting and serving our diverse community. Its mission centres on aiding vulnerable community members, especially recent migrants, through diverse initiatives. AAV strives to foster a healthy social and environmental landscape, emphasising sustainability and positive social engagement. They aspire to establish a warm and supportive community where all can flourish by volunteering, forging connections, and raising cultural awareness.



BloodBikes Australia

Launched in September 2019 with a single volunteer, BloodBikes Australia has now expanded to 70 dedicated motorcyclists in Victoria. Providing swift, on-demand transport for crucial medical items, the team assists patients and healthcare providers in areas lacking alternative transportation. Volunteers cover all costs, including uniforms, fuel, tolls, and motorcycle maintenance. BloodBikes volunteers are a vital support to healthcare services in our communities, combining a passion for motorcycling with a commitment to helping those in need.



Community Support Knox, Yarra Ranges and Surrounds

Ben's Place

Ben's Place is a community pantry established by Founder and President Liz Bullen in memory of her son Ben, offering vital support to those facing mental health challenges. Addressing diverse needs, the pantry has evolved into a lifeline for individuals and families experiencing financial difficulties. Serving over 400 households weekly, including pensioners, people with disabilities, veterans, and those who are homeless, Ben's Place ensures access to nutritious food and essential supplies. The pantry's impact also extends to palliative care recipients and school breakfast clubs, promoting dignity and hope amid adversity.



Mornington Botanical Rose Gardens

The Mornington Botanical Rose Gardens were officially opened in 2008, showcasing over 4,000 roses, as well as native plants, structures, and sculptures over four acres. Solely managed and maintained by volunteers, the garden has transformed a vacant paddock into a special amenity in the local community, facilitating social interaction and attracting both local and international visitors. Operating without paid staff, the site is sustained through fundraising events, donations, and the dedication of volunteers, predominantly retirees averaging around 75 years of age.



Pakenham Eels Rugby League Club and Touch Association

The Pakenham Eels Rugby League Club and Touch Association was officially established in 2016 as a not-for-profit, dry (non-alcohol) sports club. The Eels have implemented a unique structure, delivering Rugby League during the winter season, and a Touch Football competition over summer. This allows the club to run additional community-focused programs that foster diversity and inclusion, including All-Abilities, Munchkin League (ages 3-5), SWITCH for inactive females, Voice Against Violence, and initiatives tailored for the CALD community.



ParKanDo

ParKanDo is a peer support organisation, driven by four dedicated volunteers with personal experience of Parkinson's: Carmel, Mimi, Pam, and Peter. Tailored according to member preferences and through partnership with external providers, ParKanDo delivers diverse initiatives, offering emotional and social support, education, and shared information to individuals with Parkinson's, their families, and caregivers. Established just three years ago, the committee's commitment and dedication has seen the organisation become one of the largest of its type within Victoria.



Positive Attitude Inc.

Positive Attitude Inc. has been serving Friday lunches for 40 years, since established at the height of the AIDs pandemic in 1983. Dedicated to supporting individuals living with HIV, the team provides a free weekly lunch in a supportive, friendly environment. Guests are primarily resilient long-term survivors, along with friends and allies from the LGBTIQ+ community experiencing food insecurity. Fully volunteer-run and not-for-profit, Positive Attitude Inc. also hosts an annual Christmas day lunch, ensuring that nobody in the community spends the day alone.

Finalists

Young Volunteer Award

Celebrates the enthusiasm, initiative and leadership of young people in volunteering. Finalists are inspiring young people who have made a remarkable impact and contribution through volunteering for people, a community, group, organisation, or cause in Victoria.



Amy Gregorovich

Amy is an environmentalist passionate about elevating young people within the conservation sector. She volunteers with the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater, a group working to protect Victoria's critically endangered bird emblem. As part of the committee, she co-authors grant applications, develops fundraising campaigns, and collaborates with conservation experts to support youth involvement. She also helped create the 'Next Generation of Conservationists' program, facilitating opportunities for young people to gain transferable skills whilst volunteering on meaningful conservation projects.



Benjy Orwin

Benjy is a 14 year old Grade 9 student, who at 8 years of age started his own charity to support people in need. Socks 4 Support started out as a project to help keep those living on the streets warm. Through Benjy's dedication, the charity has grown significantly and now donates socks to people affected by varying forms of abuse, poverty, and natural disasters worldwide. Benjy has donated over 44,000 pairs of socks in the past 6 years, using this platform to encourage other young adults to stand up and make a difference.



Eliza Scott

Eliza's volunteer journey begun at Dionysus Theatre as production support, merging her love for life behind the curtain with community involvement. She also supports the MY Mount Eliza Fun Run, handling event coordination, marketing, and sponsorship to raise funds and awareness for myeloma. She found her true passion at FReeZA initiative in Frankston, where she coordinated safe, accessible live music and arts events for youth. After 2.5 years as a volunteer committee member, Eliza is overjoyed to now be employed to facilitate the program.



Gideon Stein

Gideon has dedicated his time as a Community Visitor for the Office of the Public Advocate for over five years. Beginning as the youngest volunteer, he now holds the role of Lead Visitor, where he advocates for the rights and welfare of people with disabilities. Gideon has also volunteered for various community organisations, including supporting young people with disabilities as a buddy for Flying Fox and serving as President of the Australasian Union of Jewish Students at Deakin University.



Holly Briggs

Holly has volunteered with Sparkways Mentoring Program as a mentor for over a year. This saw her meeting up with a young person on a regular basis to help him grow and develop skills in life, with a main focus on sport and communication skills. Seeing her mentee's development over the 12 months has been one of the most rewarding aspects. Although the official part of the program has now concluded, Holly continues to meet up with her mentee. Her experience volunteering has also inspired her to pursue a career in this space.



Joshua Wright

Joshua has proudly served as a VIC SES volunteer at the Nillumbik Unit in Eltham for nearly three years. During his tenure, he has acquired a diverse set of skills and qualifications, enabling him to make a meaningful contribution to our community. This includes expertise in Road Crash Rescue, Land-Based Swift Water Rescue, and many more. Within the VIC SES Nillumbik Unit, Joshua holds the leadership position as Section Leader Operations - Facilities and serves as one of the Unit's Duty Officers.

Finalists

Young Volunteer Award (cont.)

Celebrates the enthusiasm, initiative and leadership of young people in volunteering. Finalists are inspiring young people who have made a remarkable impact and contribution through volunteering for people, a community, group, organisation, or cause in Victoria.



Maya Pinn

Maya is a neurodiverse 24-year-old, single mother of 2 children, who utilises her lived experience to advocate for better outcomes for children with a disability. Her eldest has a rare genetic condition leading to implications including epilepsy, severe intellectual disability, and reliance on tube feeding and a wheelchair for mobility. Maya is currently finishing her Bachelor of Health Science, whilst working at SWAN (Syndromes Without A Name) and volunteering at Association of Children with a Disability. Maya also owns RareWear; an adaptive clothing business for children with disability and mobility challenges.



Trang Nguyen

A Year 9 student at Buckley Park College, Trang is a passionate advocate for inclusive education. She is also a Junior Debate Captain, the youngest Information & Communications Technology leader, and the designer of murals and diary covers for her school. Actively supporting multiculturalism and diversity, she volunteers for Moonee Valley Youth, contributing to community events like Moonee Valley Youth Fest and Cultural and Art Festivals. Her efforts focus on promoting inclusion and accessibility in our communities.



Finalists

Volunteer Impact Award

Celebrates people whose volunteering has made a remarkable difference for people, a community, group, organisation, or cause in Victoria. Finalists are volunteer innovators and pioneers or dedicated hard workers whose contributions have helped to improve outcomes or supported important changes.



Alix Carson

Alix recently graduated from law school with a keen interest in social and community justice. Throughout her degree, Alix thought it was important to give back to the community with the skills she was acquiring. Alix began volunteering at Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service in their infringements clinic, where she helped clients tackle their fine debts. Working with community and helping to get people back on their feet has been an incredibly fulfilling experience.



Grace Buschgens

Grace was raised in remote areas of the Northern Territory. Her unique childhood experiences fostered a strong sense of social justice that led to a career in the law. As a live-in volunteer at Servants Community Housing, Grace supports 38 residents, including survivors of gender-based violence, and people experiencing acute psychiatric illness, disability, incarceration, homelessness, and trauma. She is also the Principal Managing Lawyer of the Criminal Law Practice at the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service.



Jean Bohmer

With over 70 years of dedicated volunteer service, Jean has made significant contributions across diverse areas and organisations such as Lifeline, St John Ambulance, and Radio for the Print Handicapped. For the past 24 years, she has volunteered with Melbourne City Mission in the Palliative Care area, supporting carers with home and hospital visits. As part of the Bereavement team, Jean finds profound meaning and purpose in being trusted with compelling end of life stories.



Molina Asthana

Molina is an experienced commercial lawyer. She is the Chair of Gymnastics Victoria and serves on the boards of AMES Australia, Law Institute of Victoria, Graduate House of the University of Melbourne, Good Shepherd ANZ, AFL South East Commission and Table Tennis Victoria. Molina is the National President of the Asian Australian Lawyers Association, the co-founder of the Asian Australian Alliance and founder of Multicultural Women in Sport. She is also a Change Her Game Ambassador for the State of Victoria.



Pat O'Donnell

Pat has been an Independent Third Person for the Office of the Public Advocate for over 18 years, supporting people with a cognitive disability and/or mental illness during police interviews. He is also a Corrections Independent Support Officer volunteer, supporting prisoners with an intellectual disability during disciplinary hearings to ensure a fair and just process. Highly regarded for his extensive community contributions, Pat also volunteers his time with the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and has been a member for over 20 years.



Tienyi Long

Tienyi was born in Malaysia and moved to Australia when she was 15. She is passionate about inclusion and equity, and supporting young people to achieve their full potential. Tienyi currently works as a not-for-profit lawyer at the Youth Support and Advocacy Service, and as senior manager at the Sir Zelman Cowen Centre. She has also volunteered as a facilitator for life skills and legal knowledge, an advocate for youth issues, and a mentor for young lawyers and professional migrant women.

Finalists

Volunteer Leadership Award

Recognises people who have shown exceptional volunteer leadership and influence in support of people, a community, group, organisation, or cause in Victoria. Finalists are inspiring people who have built effective volunteer networks and partnerships, empowered others, or engaged and strengthened community.



Caitlin Grigsby

Caitlin has been a passionate community leader for over half her life, co-founding Gippsland Pride Initiative (GPI); a volunteer-led LGBTQIA+ organisation. As President of Gippsland Ranges Roller Derby, she pioneered the first Australian Roller Derby 'Pride Cup' and the Gippsland Pride Gala, now a premier queer event in the Victorian calendar. Since its incorporation in 2019, GPI has produced valuable LGBTQIA+ insights through the 'Rainbow Brick Road' Project and Report, hosted multiple sell-out Pride Galas, and orchestrated 150+ community activations across 6 regions.



Ian Bodycoat

Ian is a dedicated leader in volunteering, having contributed thousands of hours to the Port Fairy to Warrnambool Rail Trail over 18 years. Serving as the inaugural Secretary and later as Treasurer on the committee, he secured funding of \$1.35 million to equip volunteers, resheet the trail, and transform the Koroit Station precinct into a vibrant community hub. Ian's visionary efforts include refurbishing the station, installing a playground, fitness circuit, and BBQ, as well as overseeing the creation of an environmental corridor by treeing the Rail Trail.



Roger Paterson

Born in Charlton in 1945 and raised on a family farm, Roger was instilled with the values of community contribution and helping others from a young age. Now semi-retired, he channels his energy into serving as a volunteer on eight committees, including two as President. With over 60 years of service at the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and a diverse array of roles in sports clubs, farming associations, and veteran organisations, Roger's quiet leadership, integrity, and commitment define his exceptional contributions to the Wedderburn community.



Ros Thurrowgood

As a community visitor, Ros has had the privilege of visiting people with disabilities living in group homes for 20 years. These visits have given her the opportunity to report on issues relating to the care of the residents and also to encourage positive support with outcomes. For some residents, community visitors become a very important part of their lives, especially where there is little or no family involvement. Ros values being an independent and strong advocate for residents through her role.



Rufina Chan JP

Rufina is a committed lifelong volunteer and esteemed leader in multiple charity organisations, including as President of the Chinese Stroke Support Group and two-time President of the Lions Club of Melbourne Chinese. Across her many leadership roles, Rufina passionately advocates for and mentors young volunteers. One of her significant achievements is the founding of the Sunshine Group, guiding over 15 enthusiastic young individuals to make substantial community contributions.



Tea-Rose Passon

Tea has been a member of Port Melbourne Life Saving Club since 2013, where she first completed her Surf Rescue Certificate (SRC) and Bronze Medallion in 2014. She also manages School Lifesaving programs, supporting over 2,000 students per year and providing critical water safety and lifesaving education. Through her roles as Club Vice President, Patrol Director, and Nipper Management, Tea has achieved over 1,500 patrol hours between 2014 and 2023.

Finalists

Volunteer Commitment Award

Pays tribute to dedicated and passionate individuals with a sustained and substantial record of commitment to people, a community, group, organisation, or cause in Victoria. Finalists are long-serving volunteers and reliable hard workers whose significant contribution and enthusiasm for volunteering is an inspiration to others.



David Jefferies

David has devoted 13 years to volunteering as a Learner-Driver Mentor with South Eastern Community Links. He has played a pivotal role in facilitating disadvantaged young people to access 120 hours of supervised driving practice, and ultimately obtain their driver's license. For many this unlocks employment opportunities, educational pursuits, and enhances social mobility and community engagement. In his role, David has forged enduring friendships and derived great satisfaction from guiding inspiring young people to become safe and competent drivers.



Lou Baulsom

Lou has been an invaluable and committed volunteer with Family Life for 24 years. Joining in 1999, she seamlessly navigated various roles, from receptionist at the Head Office to supervising the Op Shop in Hampton East. Lou's compassionate spirit extended to teaching mothers at the Keith Street Community House and participating in community programs, showcasing her diverse skills. Her infectious can-do attitude, adaptability, and commitment have made her an invaluable asset to Family Life and the community she serves.



Peter Narandja

A proud Australian by choice, Peter was born in Croatia in 1933 and arrived in Melbourne in 1959 on a migrant ship. After working as a fitter and turner at Vickers Ruwolt in Richmond, Peter chose early retirement and became a self-employed professional in Daylesford. During this period, he dedicated his time to volunteering at the Daylesford Tourist Information Office. In 2004, Peter returned to Melbourne and over the past 17 years has demonstrated unwavering commitment as a City Ambassador for the City of Melbourne.



Poh Chee Lim

Poh Chee has been a dedicated volunteer for over 12 years at Chinese Peer Connection, providing telephone support to Chinese-speaking Victorians affected by gambling harms. His exceptional commitment is evident through consistent weekly shifts and increased call volume during the COVID-19 pandemic. Known for his empathetic and non-judgmental approach, Poh Chee makes 200 calls annually and has supported over 2,000 callers grappling with gambling addictions. Through his reliability and genuine passion for helping others, clients have reported feeling more hopeful in their recovery journeys.



Raju Adhikari

Raju is an experienced community leader with over 28 years of volunteering service in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) organisations and research experience at CSIRO. As an advisory figure for various bodies, including the Victorian Multicultural Commission, the New and Emerging Community Policy Advisory Committee, and Ethnic Community Council of Victoria, he is a passionate advocate for migrant communities and international students. Dr. Adhikari is highly revered for his intellect, innovation, and enduring commitment to volunteerism.



Rosita Fernandes

Rosita has served as an outstanding Leisure Buddy volunteer for Inclusion Melbourne since 1999. As an inclusion advocate for people with a cognitive disability, Rosita builds natural community connections to enable those she supports to access community activities and feel valued in society. Rosita brings enthusiasm, warmth and a smile to everything she does. She quickly builds trusted relationships and camaraderie with people and is an inspiration to all for her 24 years of dedicated volunteer service.

Finalists

Volunteer Commitment Award (cont.)

Pays tribute to dedicated and passionate individuals with a sustained and substantial record of commitment to people, a community, group, organisation, or cause in Victoria. Finalists are long-serving volunteers and reliable hard workers whose significant contribution and enthusiasm for volunteering is an inspiration to others.



Timothy Chiu

For 30 years, Tim has been a committed volunteer for Disability Sport and Recreation. Every year since 1993, Tim has attended camps to provide opportunities for hundreds of children with disabilities to challenge themselves in outdoor recreational activities. His knowledge and skills as a physiotherapist enable him to motivate and support the children, ensuring they get the best possible experience. Tim has been recognised with various awards, including the prestigious Lord's Taverners Award for his significant contribution to junior wheelchair sport; and the Disability Sport and Recreation Lifetime Achievement Award.



Tony Davis

A dedicated figure in the sporting community, Tony's commitment to volunteering spans over five decades. As a founding member of Kyneton Little Athletics, he has been a steadfast volunteer every Saturday morning for 53 years, holding roles such as Secretary, starter, line marker, and representative at regional and state conferences. His humble and kind demeanour, coupled with unwavering dedication, has played a pivotal role in fostering the growth and success of Kyneton Little Athletics, where he continues to make a lasting impact at the age of 83.



Share your photos and experiences from today's ceremony using the hashtag **#VicVolAwards2023**

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