



VICTORIAN  
**volunteering**  
AWARDS 2025

Ceremony Program



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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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# 2025 Victorian Volunteering Awards

## Welcome

We are delighted to welcome you to the official ceremony for the 2025 Victorian Volunteering Awards.

Showcasing excellence by individuals, teams and organisations throughout 2025, the Victorian Volunteering Awards are run by Volunteering Victoria with the support of the Victorian State Government.

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

### Individual Awards:

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

### Organisation Awards:

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

### Overall Awards:

- *Premier's Volunteer of the Year*, Dame Elisabeth Murdoch Award
- *Premier's Organisation of the Year*, Volunteering Excellence Award

## About Volunteering Victoria

Volunteering Victoria is the state peak body for volunteering, focusing on advocacy, sector development and the promotion of volunteering. We enable organisations and individuals to meet community needs through volunteering.

Our vision is a happier and healthier Victoria and Victorians because we volunteer.

And when we volunteer, we:

- support each other
- care for the future of our communities; and
- mutually benefit from doing so



Share your photos and experiences from today's ceremony using the hashtag [#VicVolAwards2025](#)

# 2025 Victorian Volunteering Awards

## Order of Proceedings

### Guests arrive

- Tea and coffee served in the Foyer

### Master of Ceremonies

- Rana Hussain, Good.Human

## 9.30am

### Ceremony commences

#### Welcome to Country

- John Terrick, Wurundjeri Elder

#### Minister's Address

- Hon. Ros Spence MP, Minister for Carers and Volunteers

#### Presentations – Individual awards

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

#### Presentations – Organisation awards

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

#### Guest speaker

- Dr Susan Palmer, Gather My Crew  
*2024 Organisation of the Year Winner*

#### Presentation – Organisation of the Year

- Volunteering Excellence Award

#### Guest speaker

- Representative of Cherie McLean  
*2024 Volunteer of the Year Winner*

#### Presentation – Volunteer of the Year

- Dame Elisabeth Murdoch Award

#### Closing

- Con O'Brien, Volunteering Victoria Chair

## 10.30am

### Ceremony concludes

- Morning tea served in the Foyer
- Winners to meet on stage for official photos
- All finalists to collect certificate from reception desk

## 2025 Victorian Volunteering Awards Message from the Premier



There's something so special about volunteering: giving up your time and energy to help others.

And every day, thousands of individuals and organisations across our state quietly dedicate themselves to making a real difference. The annual Volunteering Awards are a time to recognise them, and the enormous contribution they make.

From public health to education to disaster relief, the 2025 nominees embody the values of care and compassion. As Premier of Victoria, I want to offer my heartfelt thanks, and recognise your hard work.

Congratulations to every finalist and winner at this year's Volunteering Awards.

And thank you to every single volunteer, for all that you do.

**The Hon. Jacinta Allan MP**  
Member for Bendigo East  
Premier of Victoria

## 2025 Victorian Volunteering Awards

# Message from the Minister



Every day, volunteers give their time and energy to support their communities.

The annual Volunteering Awards are an opportunity to recognise and celebrate the incredible impact of volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations across Victoria.

This year's awards program showcases the diverse ways volunteers are making a difference. This exceptional group reflects the diversity of Victoria's volunteers and the evolving landscape of organisations and causes where volunteers are leading change and contributing to their communities.

As Minister for Carers and Volunteers, I am incredibly proud of the work our volunteers do. Volunteering is so valuable to so many people, and it is truly one of our state's greatest assets.

Congratulations to all the award finalists and winners, and thank you for your ongoing dedication to your communities.

I look forward to working with you, and all of Victoria's volunteers, to continue building a vibrant, connected and thriving Victoria together.

**The Hon. Ros Spence MP**  
Minister for Carers and Volunteers

## 2025 Victorian Volunteering Awards Message from the CEO



It's an honour to gather again to celebrate the remarkable individuals and organisations recognised through the 2025 Victorian Volunteering Awards.

These Awards shine a light on all that is great and worth celebrating about the Victorian community at large – qualities like generosity, care and selfless giving. Through these legacies and honours, we recognise people whose example we hope to emulate and inspire future generations to follow.

At Volunteering Victoria, we passionately believe the best way to meet community needs is through active and generous volunteering. Doing what is important, not because it is paid for but because it really, truly matters, is what makes and builds community.

*Oh and by the way, everyone who volunteers knows the secret that what you gain from volunteering often outweighs anything you can give!*

Every finalist and nominee reflects just one example of the collective strength of our volunteering community. Whether through grassroots initiatives, major organisations or informal acts of kindness, your efforts help create a more inclusive, connected and compassionate state.

We also recognise how volunteers and organisations are adapting, building more flexible, welcoming and sustainable models of engagement as we collectively respond to the way volunteering is evolving.

At Volunteering Victoria, we are proud to stand alongside members, partners and volunteers across all sectors as we navigate these changes together. The future may look different, but the spirit of volunteering remains the same: serving each other because we care.

To everyone recognised today – and to the 3.3 million who volunteer across our state – thank you. Your generosity and dedication are both humbling and deeply inspiring.

**Geoff Sharp**  
CEO  
Volunteering Victoria

## 2025 Victorian Volunteering Awards Ceremony MC



### Rana Hussain

Rana is a pioneer in the realms of inclusion and belonging, having charted an extraordinary journey through the landscape of sports administration, community engagement, social work and the media.

With a career marked by a relentless pursuit of positive change and a deep commitment to fostering inclusivity, Rana stands as a powerful advocate for social integration and tackling discrimination.

Continuing her mission to create a bigger impact, Rana started Good.Human, bringing all the facets of her work together in one place: Expertise, Advocacy and Impact. It's a movement focused on changing people's lives, cultures, and leadership all over the country.

Good.Human is an invitation to celebrate our shared humanity, supporting one another through life's ups and downs, aiming to build a world where everyone feels valued and included as they are. Rana's vision is a more inclusive and brighter future for all.

**Good.**  
Human

Scan the QR code for more information  
about Rana and Good.Human.



## 2025 Victorian Volunteering Awards

# About the Awards

Showcasing excellence by individuals, teams and organisations throughout 2025, the Victorian Volunteering Awards are run by Volunteering Victoria with the support of the Victorian State Government.

The Awards combine the previously separate Premier's Volunteer Champions Awards, featuring the Dame Elisabeth Murdoch Award for Volunteer of the Year, and the annual Volunteering Victoria State Awards. This creates a single nomination process and a more significant awards ceremony celebrating volunteers and volunteerism across the State of Victoria.



## Judging process

A judging panel considered all eligible nominations and rated each against the description for the selected Award category. Nominations with the highest combined scores were then shortlisted as finalists. A VIP selection panel awarded the overall winners in each category.

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

## 2025 Victorian Volunteering Awards

# Dame Elisabeth Murdoch Award

First awarded in 2013, the prestigious **Dame Elisabeth Murdoch Award** recognises extraordinary volunteering service, commitment and impact for people, a community, group, organisation or cause in Victoria.

The **Premier's Volunteer of the Year Award** is proudly named in honour of Dame Elisabeth's extraordinary legacy. This prestigious accolade celebrates her values of compassion, dedication and leadership in volunteering, recognising individuals who - like her - make a profound difference in the lives of others.

The winner of the Dame Elisabeth Murdoch Award, Premier's Volunteer of the Year, is also awarded a **\$10,000 donation** to a not-for-profit organisation of their choice.

### Trophy design

*"The overlapping leaves represent the interactive efforts of individuals within the community. Together, the leaves form a canopy that protects and helps others. This trophy was inspired by Dame Elisabeth Murdoch's passion for gardening and her lifetime support for the arts and those in need."*



### Dame Elisabeth Murdoch

**1902 - 2012**

A trailblazing philanthropist and passionate supporter of community wellbeing, Dame Elisabeth Murdoch's life was a testament to the power of generosity and service.

As a dedicated volunteer and advocate, she devoted herself to numerous causes, particularly in health, education and the arts. Many of Melbourne and Australia's most cherished institutions, from the Royal Children's Hospital to the Australian Ballet and the Botanic Gardens, have benefited from her involvement.

Dame Elisabeth's legacy as a champion of volunteering has left an indelible mark on communities across Victoria and beyond. Passionate about fostering cultural and social cohesion, her unwavering dedication to building strong, connected communities has inspired countless others to embrace the spirit of giving.

# Finalists

## Volunteer Leadership Award

Recognises those 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.



### Brendan Daynes

In just two years, Brendan has grown The Big S’Cool Walk from a bold idea into a volunteer-led movement, providing school supplies, repairing classrooms, and empowering students in remote communities. Based in Tullamarine, Brendan has mobilised schools, businesses, and families across Victoria to raise over \$100,000 and delivered three large-scale international events. His leadership has brought internet to seven classrooms, improved infrastructure at six schools, and delivered over 1,000 school supply kits, supporting more than 25,000 students in remote Filipino communities. Brendan has built a multigenerational network of volunteers, engaging people from toddlers to retirees, and proving that global change can begin in the heart of a Victorian community.



### Fred Alale AM

Fred is a community leader and public service executive with over 20 years’ experience in governance and financial systems. He is Co-Founder and Chair of the African Music and Cultural Festival, now in its 12th year, attracting more than 50,000 attendees annually at Federation Square. Fred currently volunteers as a board or committee member with eight organisations, including The National Theatre, Africa Day Australia Inc., and the Victorian African Communities Committee, and has previously served with six others. Recognised as a Member of the Order of Australia, he is dedicated to empowering communities, youth, and multicultural Victoria.



### Greg Sher

Greg is the Founder of The Break Inc, a volunteer-driven charity he has grown to more than 100 volunteers over the past decade. Dedicating up to 80 hours a week, Greg has pioneered programs spanning psycho-education, prison reintegration, youth diversion, counselling, and community support. His youth diversion pilot achieved 0% recidivism (against a national average of 45%) and he continues to design innovative, research-based approaches that fill critical service gaps. With deep compassion and extraordinary commitment, Greg continues to inspire, mentor and mobilise others to create life-changing opportunities for those too often left behind.



### Michelle Maxa

Michelle has been a driving force behind the Crib Point Community Market since 2016, serving as Booking Officer and two-term Chair of the Crib Point Community House committee. Despite living with chronic illness, she has led with resilience and determination, strengthening partnerships with local groups and providing vital fundraising opportunities for community organisations. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Michelle’s leadership ensured the market’s survival by keeping stallholders and partners connected and engaged. Through her dedication and inclusive approach, she has created a thriving, welcoming space that continues to strengthen her community.



### **Mohamed Al Abri**

Mohamed has dedicated over 16 years to volunteering in the LGBTIQ+ space including 3 years supporting LGBTIQ+ refugees. He has led two community sponsorship groups, helping queer refugees settle in Australia, access housing, and continue their education in their first year. He also volunteers for Thorne Harbour Health in LGBTIQ+ sexual health education, with Living Positive Victoria as a public speaker, and with Queer Arabs Australia and Queer Muslims Naarm, using photography as a tool to amplify marginalised voices. Through his deep commitment to intersectional inclusion, Mohamed has created safe spaces and led transformative change, driven by a deep sense of justice and community care.



### **Sahar Ghaly**

Sahar is the Founder of the Wise Angel Foundation, a volunteer-run charity supporting women and children affected by family violence. Drawing on her own experience as a survivor, she has built strong community networks and guided volunteers to provide essential aid, including food, clothing, and furniture, to thousands of individuals each year. Her compassionate and inclusive leadership helps survivors regain independence and confidence, while inspiring volunteers to serve with purpose. Through her dedication, mentorship, and advocacy, Sahar has created a welcoming and resilient community that fosters lasting social impact.



### **Sue Viney**

Sue has over sixteen years' experience as a volunteer consumer advisor with BreastScreen Victoria (BSV) and other health organisations, such as Monash Health and AHPRA. Through roles such as Co-Chair of BSV's Consumer Advisory Group and member of national quality committees, she has championed improvements in service quality, accessibility, and consumer experience. Sue's insight and collaborative leadership ensure that women's perspectives are embedded in decision-making, shaping more inclusive, high-quality breast screening services. Her sustained commitment and advocacy have directly improved early detection outcomes and fostered trust in breast screening programs across the local, state and national levels.

# Finalists

## Volunteer Impact Award

Celebrates those 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.



### Andrew Copolov

Andrew is the Founder of Gig Workers' Hub, a first-of-its-kind initiative that supports Victoria's delivery workers. Since 2022, he has volunteered over 4,000 hours to create a safe, welcoming space where riders can access amenities, targeted services, and a place to rest and socialise. By building trust within the community and forging partnerships with government and service providers, Andrew's dedication has strengthened support for riders and amplified their voices in the wider community.



### Keely Hamilton

Keely has transformed Humane Animal Rescue through her passion and expertise. Starting as a transport volunteer, she quickly expanded her role to case management, fostering, and behavioural support. Now Operations Manager, Keely coordinates complex logistics and leads volunteer education programs, including cat behaviour workshops, which have increased rescues by 20%. Her commitment to empowering volunteers and improving animal welfare has saved hundreds of lives and strengthened the organisation's culture of excellence. Keely's dedication, reliability, and leadership exemplify profound impact, creating better outcomes for animals and the people who care for them.



### Norm Duell

Norm has made an outstanding contribution to VICSES Seymour through his skill, dedication, and community focus. Beyond his vital role on the operational team, he spearheaded the creation of an innovative mini rescue truck that captures young people's imaginations and facilitates engagement on storm, flood, and road safety. Norm has also pioneered significant facility upgrades, driving improvements in safety, inclusivity, and operational performance that would not have been achieved without his vision. Norm's unwavering commitment, leadership, and genuine care have created a long-lasting legacy for both VICSES Seymour and the wider community.



### **Shashank Jain**

Serving as Treasurer and Technology Chair at Truganina Lions Football Club, Shashank has been instrumental in helping strengthen the club's visibility, governance, operations, and community reach. From launching the club's first website and an award-winning digital communication platform to enhancing financial discipline, securing sponsorships, and creating new revenue streams, his focus has been on building a culture of inclusivity, engagement, and long-term sustainability for members. Shashank volunteers with passion and integrity, committed to supporting grassroots sport and making the club a proud, vibrant hub for the Wyndham community.



### **Veronica Hill**

Veronica has dedicated over five decades to volunteering, always focused on creating opportunities for children. Alongside her late husband, she co-founded the local Little Athletics Club in 1975 and remained active in athletics until 2020. Veronica has also coached netball, supported scouting, and provided a safe, loving home for children facing challenges. For the past 19 years, she has served on the committee of the Doveton Show, a low-cost community event bringing joy and experiences to local families. At 85, Veronica is proud to continue contributing with energy and passion.

# 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.



### Bill Lawler

Bill has demonstrated extraordinary dedication to the Gippsland community over decades of volunteer service. For 32 years, he has served as an Independent Third Person, supporting people with cognitive disabilities and mental illness during police interviews, attending over 150 interviews in the past year alone. Bill also mentors new volunteers, contributes to program development, and has served 35 years with the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and 12 years on the board of Life Skills Victoria. His unwavering commitment, integrity, and compassion ensure vulnerable Victorians are treated fairly and with dignity.



### Glenys Watts

Glenys is a proud Gunaikurnai Elder, respected community leader and role model. For more than thirty years she has dedicated her time and energy to volunteering, making an extraordinary difference in Indigenous health, social and emotional wellbeing. She has been a driving voice in the Dhelk Dja – Safe Our Way family violence strategy, always advocating for culturally safe responses and services. Glenys is deeply committed to truth-telling and cultural preservation. Through her leadership in the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, she continues to strengthen culture, protect Country and create opportunities for the Gippsland Gunaikurnai community.



### Leanne Peterson

Leanne has devoted fifteen years as a volunteer facilitator with the Sunshine Support Group at the Self Help Addiction Resource Centre (SHARC). Drawing on her own lived experience, she provides a safe, empathetic, and non-judgmental space for families affected by a loved one's alcohol or drug use. Leanne's guidance, mentorship of new volunteers, and advocacy for family-inclusive practices have empowered countless individuals, fostering resilience, hope, and connection. Her unwavering dedication and compassion have made her an integral part of the SHARC community.



### Linda Widdup

Linda founded Aussie Hay Runners in 2019 after seeing the impact of drought on farming communities. Over six years, she has grown the operation from 4 trucks to a fleet of 74, coordinating the delivery of over 67,000 hay bales to more than 4,600 farmers across multiple states. Working tirelessly seven days a week with a small team of volunteers and drivers, Linda's dedication and determination provide practical, life-changing support to farming families, embodying the ethos: "It's not a handout, it's a hand up."



### **Rob Humphrys**

Rob has dedicated over a decade to volunteering at the Barb Martin Bushbank, an Indigenous plant nursery on Phillip Island. His commitment spans more than 2,000 volunteer hours, supporting seed collection, plant propagation, and nursery operations. When the nursery faced closure, Rob played a pivotal role in securing its future through a partnership with Phillip Island Nature Parks, ensuring ongoing conservation efforts. Today, he continues as a team leader, guiding volunteers and helping produce up to 100,000 native plants annually, including threatened species.



### **Roseanne Pirrottina**

Rosanne has demonstrated lifelong dedication to volunteering, from early community service and nursing to decades of supporting disability groups and caring for her late husband. For the past decade, she has volunteered at Austin Hospital and with LINK Community Transport as an Outings Host since 2023. Rosanne has supported over 150 outings for older people and carers, mentored new volunteers, and provided one-on-one assistance to socially isolated clients. Her compassion, reliability, and leadership have enriched programs and touched hundreds of lives.



### **Satbir Singh**

Satbir has shown exceptional dedication as Junior Program Manager at Clayton District Cricket Club. Over more than a decade, he has grown the junior program from 3 teams to 19, supporting over 160 young players in summer and 102 in winter. Despite living in Geelong, Satbir travels weekly – often leaving home at 5am – to set up grounds, coach, and mentor juniors. His leadership, organisation, and tireless commitment have strengthened community connections, provided opportunities for culturally diverse families, and inspired young people to thrive both on and off the field.



### **Thanh-Kham Tran-Dang OAM**

Kham is a founding member of the Australian Vietnamese Womens' Association (AVWA) since 1983, dedicated to supporting Vietnamese refugees. For more than 42 years, she has provided continuous volunteer service, holding key leadership roles including President, Secretary, and now Vice President. Under her leadership, AVWA has grown to 432 staff delivering aged, disability, and community care. A respected community leader, Kham is admired for her unwavering advocacy, compassion, and resilience. In 2021, she was awarded the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) for her service to the Vietnamese community of Victoria.

# 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.



### Christine Tolotchkov

Christine is a STEM professional and passionate leader dedicated to creating inclusive spaces for youth development. As the founder of Dose of Pharma, a podcast bridging STEM career gaps, she has empowered over 50 students to produce 60+ episodes, providing volunteering and personal growth opportunities. Her impact extends through Rotary youth programs and Monash University, where she mentors young people, contributes to program development, event coordination and builds volunteer teams. Christine's uplifting presence, creative vision and empathetic leadership inspires confidence and connection among hundreds of young people, enabling community-building and youth empowerment.



### Clancy Quirk

Clancy has dedicated more than eight years to volunteering with the Country Fire Authority (CFA), beginning as a junior member at 13 years of age and progressing to his current role as 3rd Lieutenant of the Traralgon Brigade. He also serves as Health & Safety Coordinator and Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) delegate, reflecting his devoted passion for operational leadership. Highly respected throughout both his brigade and the broader CFA community, Clancy strives to ensure his peers have a sense of trust and confidence – not only in their command structure, but also in themselves.



### Hoang Cam Vi Vo

An international student from Vietnam, Vi has transformed the volunteering culture at Deakin University over the past three years through her leadership and commitment to inclusion. She founded the Deakin Volunteering Hub, now with over 200 members, and has led food relief programs, blood donation drives, and awareness campaigns supporting student wellbeing. Elected as the first Vietnamese international student to Deakin's University Council, Vi has been a strong advocate for access and inclusion. Balancing full-time study and work, she continues to inspire fellow students through her passion for creating lasting impact.



### **Rumaysa Salman**

At just 18 years of age, Rumaysa is a passionate youth activist and community leader dedicated to empowering multicultural young people. She volunteers with the Centre for Multicultural Youth, where she recently organised a Careers Conference supporting refugee and migrant youth to pursue their aspirations. As a Victorian Youth Parliamentarian, she co-led a successful Bill promoting Auslan in schools and workplaces, advancing inclusion for the deaf community. Alongside roles with humanitarian and women’s rights organisations, Rumaysa has been volunteering since childhood, consistently championing equity, representation, and opportunities for diverse communities.



### **Sebastiano Patti**

Sebastiano has been playing soccer for five years and in 2025 – at 12 years of age – began helping to train the Under-9 girls’ teams at his local soccer club. He shares his love of the game by setting up equipment for drills and matches, and by assisting the coaches in encouraging players to improve their skills. He believes increasing female participation in soccer is very important. At both school and soccer, Sebastiano also helps neurodiverse children feel comfortable joining in activities and works to create a space where everyone feels included.



### **Thomas Volpe**

At just 10 years of age, Thomas demonstrates remarkable resilience and dedication through volunteering with the Kids with Cancer Foundation. Following personal loss, Thomas channelled his grief into helping others, assembling care packs to bring comfort and joy to children undergoing cancer treatment. His innovative fundraising efforts helped raise over \$288,000 in just two years, with more pledged in his late father’s honour. Thomas’ ability to inspire others, lead by example, and turn adversity into action reflects a deep commitment to making a difference well beyond his years.

## 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.



### Asylum Seeker Resource Centre

Asylum Seeker Resource Centre champions inclusive volunteering by creating opportunities that reflect the diversity of the communities it serves. Over 30% of its 500 volunteers have lived refugee or asylum seeker experience, and are involved in co-designing culturally safe, responsive services. Volunteers are embedded across all areas of the organisation, from delivering essential services to driving advocacy and community engagement. Through personalised roles, flexible pathways, and trauma-informed supervision, the program removes barriers and enables people of all ages, cultures and abilities to thrive. This values-driven model sets a benchmark for inclusive volunteering, transforming service into confidence, belonging, and systemic change.



### BreastScreen Victoria

BreastScreen Victoria delivers free breast cancer screening to women and trans and gender-diverse people aged 40 and over, focusing on those aged 50–74. As part of the national BreastScreen Australia Program, it operates permanent and mobile clinics across Victoria to provide equitable, high-quality care. Inclusive volunteering is embedded through a statewide Consumer Network, formal advisory groups, Service Quality Committee representatives, and Reading and Assessment Service volunteers. These roles centre lived experience and diverse voices – including Aboriginal, culturally diverse, LGBTIQ+, and disability communities – ensuring co-design, accessibility, and culturally safe care that reduces barriers and improves outcomes for all Victorians.



### Humane Animal Rescue

Humane Animal Rescue is a foster-based animal rescue dedicated to treating animals humanely and finding them forever homes. Operating across Victoria and NSW, the organisation removes financial barriers that often prevent people from volunteering. Foster carers receive all essentials, including food, supplies, and transport assistance, so they can focus on care without added stress. This inclusive model enables participation from single parents, students, retirees, and families who might otherwise be excluded. By valuing volunteers' wellbeing and normalising support, Humane Animal Rescue has built a diverse, engaged community committed to saving lives, one paw at a time.



## Rehmat Sandhu Foundation

The Rehmat Sandhu Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation supporting people with disabilities through inclusive programs, community events, and accessible services. It champions diversity and social inclusion across Victoria by creating opportunities for engagement and wellbeing. Inclusive volunteering is central to its work, with flexible roles, culturally appropriate support, and accessible venues enabling participation from people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. Through initiatives such as multicultural outreach and tailored volunteer programs, the Foundation empowers individuals, strengthens community connections, and ensures everyone feels valued and represented.



## STEM Sisters

STEM Sisters is dedicated to advancing equity in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) by empowering Women of Colour through inclusive, volunteer-led programs. Rooted in lived experience, STEM Sisters provides culturally safe spaces and leadership pathways for international students, migrants, and refugee women in Victoria. From mentoring and school outreach to publishing and public speaking, our 250+ volunteers co-design and deliver initiatives that challenge systemic barriers, increase representation, and build an intersectional movement for change. STEM Sisters exemplifies how inclusive volunteering can drive sustainable, community-led transformation in Australia's STEM ecosystem.



**WOMEN'S FEDERATION  
FOR WORLD PEACE AUSTRALIA**

## Women's Federation for World Peace

Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) Australia is a not-for-profit, volunteer-driven organisation, promoting leadership, education, and cultural harmony through initiatives that empower women and strengthen families. For over 30 years, WFWP has delivered mentoring programs, peacebuilding initiatives, and community events that foster intercultural understanding and social cohesion. These efforts align with its mission to foster peace through a culture of heart and service, creating inclusive communities and sustainable impact.

## 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.



### First Step

ResetLife

First Step is a not-for-profit health and legal services organisation in St Kilda that has supported individuals and families for over 25 years. Each year, they work with more than 1,800 clients experiencing complex challenges across substance use, mental health, and the justice system. Its multidisciplinary model brings together doctors, psychologists, mental health nurses, lawyers, and social workers to deliver wrap-around, trauma-aware care. Central to its alcohol and other drug work is ResetLife, a 16-week abstinence-based therapeutic program. By embedding lived experience through structured peer support, ResetLife enhances recovery outcomes and creates a community of hope, dignity, and sustained wellbeing.



### Royal Flying Doctor Service (Victoria)

Memory Lane

Flying Doctor Memory Lane, a service of the Royal Flying Doctor Service (Victoria), is a unique program that takes individuals in end-of-life care on a journey somewhere that is meaningful to them and their family. Staffed by healthcare professionals volunteering their time, the service uses custom vehicles to ensure comfort and safety for people who would otherwise be unable to travel. Trips have included favourite beaches, parks and bakeries; events including weddings, graduations and footy games; and often, a trip home one last time. The service is offered at no cost, thanks to the generous contributions of volunteers.



### Sunbury and Cobaw Community Health

Meaningful and Able Volunteering Co-design Project

Sunbury and Cobaw Community Health (SCCH) is a not-for-profit community health organisation providing services across Sunbury and the Macedon Ranges. The team of 260 staff and 70 volunteers work across sites at Kyneton, Romsey, and Sunbury, on the lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung, and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples. They work alongside partners and the community to strengthen the social fabric of our communities, promoting health equity, inclusion, and empowerment. In early 2025, SCCH led the Meaningful and Able Volunteering Co-design Project, working with disabled people, carers, and volunteer-involving organisations using a strengths-based approach to co-design resources that foster inclusive volunteering.



**Victorian Aboriginal  
Legal Service**

## **Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) VALS Infringements Clinic**

The VALS Infringements Clinic is a pioneering volunteer-led initiative within the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS), which has provided legal support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for over 50 years. Operating within VALS' Civil and Human Rights Practice, volunteers including university students, retired lawyers, and aspiring legal professionals work under qualified lawyer supervision to provide culturally safe assistance with infringement matters. In 2023-24, volunteers helped 112 clients achieve over \$300,000 in waived fines through Special Circumstances and Family Violence schemes. This innovative program continues VALS' legacy of addressing systemic justice barriers while offering trauma-informed advocacy that relieves financial stress.



## **What Were You Wearing? Australia**

What Were You Wearing (WWYW) Australia is a volunteer-led charity dedicated to ending domestic, family, and sexual violence (DFSV). The organisation leads national rallies, runs healing groups for victim-survivors, and drives systemic change through education and advocacy. With the largest social media following of any DFSV organisation in Australia (reaching more than 500,000 people), WWYW amplifies survivor voices nationwide. Its groundbreaking work includes successfully advocating for mandatory drink spiking training within the Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) framework, helping to create safer communities. As a victim-survivor-led movement, WWYW continues to build awareness, accountability, and pathways to healing.



## **Wyndham Bright Young Leaders**

Established in 2019, Wyndham Bright Young Leaders (WBYL) empowers young people through leadership development, education, community engagement, and impactful events. Founded by Rahima Ahmed, a proud member of the Oromo community in Victoria, WBYL provides youth from diverse backgrounds with opportunities to build confidence, skills, and social responsibility. Through workshops, mentoring programs, and community events, WBYL inspires the next generation of active, community-minded leaders while fostering cultural identity, collaboration, and meaningful contributions across Victoria's youth communities.

## 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.



### Buloke and Northern Grampians Landcare Network

Established in 2002, the BNG Landcare Network (BNGLN) unites 20 regional Landcare and community groups to deliver projects focused on environmental preservation and natural resource management. Through its Windharp Horizons Program, BNGLN and its partner organisations have created and implemented a 20-year Action Plan to revitalise the landscape and promote sustainability in environmental and agricultural practices. This volunteer-driven initiative aims to reconnect fragmented ecosystems, protect unique species and improve conditions for farmers, while fostering environmental stewardship and guiding local communities to create a more resilient environment both now and in the future.



### Candlebark Community Nursery

Candlebark Community Nursery is a not-for-profit, volunteer-run organisation that has been helping people care for the environment for over 30 years. Growing a wide variety of local native plants, including rare and threatened species, the nursery supplies tens of thousands of plants for habitat restoration and biodiversity projects. In recent times, its volunteer base has grown to more than 90 people, many of whom are retirees, elderly, people with disabilities, or experiencing social isolation. In this way, the nursery is not only a source of plants, but also a welcoming place of connection, wellbeing, and education for the community.



### Gig Workers' Hub

The Gig Workers' Hub (GWH) is Australia's first dedicated space for food delivery riders, a workforce often overlooked despite being essential to city life. Founded in 2022, it provides a safe, welcoming environment where riders – many international students or recent migrants – can rest, connect, and access support in their own languages. At its heart are volunteers with lived experience of delivery work and migration who offer peer-led care, practical support, and pathways to other services. The Hub has influenced policy, reduced isolation, and built solidarity across cultures, showing how peer-led action can transform wellbeing for Victoria's most vulnerable workers.



## The Water Well Project

The Water Well Project is an award-winning charity dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of migrant, refugee and asylum seeker communities by delivering free, interactive health education sessions. These are led by trained volunteer healthcare professionals and designed to empower individuals with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to navigate the healthcare system and manage their health. Each session is co-designed with community leaders to ensure content is culturally appropriate, relevant, and tailored to each group's specific needs. Sessions are delivered in familiar community spaces to foster comfort, trust and participation.

## 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.

### Good Grub Club Daylesford



Good Grub Club Daylesford is a grassroots community organisation addressing local food insecurity through volunteer-driven initiatives. Dedicated volunteers deliver comprehensive food assistance including hamper distribution, pantry services, and weekly community lunches, currently serving 60 people weekly. Operating from basic facilities, volunteers demonstrate exceptional commitment by preparing three-course meals, coordinating food distribution, and providing social connection for isolated community members. Good Grub Club exemplifies grassroots community spirit, transforming individual dedication into collective impact that strengthens food security and builds community resilience in Daylesford.

### Lions Club of Yarrawonga Turban Angels



Since 2015, Turban Angels has brought hope and dignity to cancer patients by creating and distributing free, high-quality headwear. What began at a kitchen table has grown into a dedicated group of volunteers meeting weekly to sew and pack turbans for oncology units across Australia. With over 80,000 turbans delivered to date, this grassroots initiative thrives on compassion, laughter, and community spirit. Entirely funded by donations, Turban Angels exemplifies the power of passionate volunteers to make a profound difference – one stitch at a time.

### She Won't Be Right Mate



She Won't Be Right Mate (SWBRM) is a volunteer-run mental health initiative based in the Yarra Ranges, dedicated to breaking the stigma around mental health through community connection and support. Founded by Marcus and the SWBRM team, the annual event brings together families, local businesses, schools, and car enthusiasts for a day of inclusivity, conversation, and fun. To date, SWBRM has raised around \$80,000 to support Eastern Health's Maroondah Hospital, funding ward upgrades, exercise equipment, and therapeutic family programs. Through creative events like car shows, children's activities, and wellbeing stalls, SWBRM fosters hope, awareness, and meaningful community impact.



## The Sisterhood Project

The Sisterhood Project, founded by volunteers Grace and Skye Larson, is a not-for-profit delivering free baby and child first-aid courses across Victoria, prioritising rural, regional, and under-served communities. It also provides the 'All Hands Lifesaver' app nationwide, making lifesaving skills accessible to all. By removing barriers like transport, childcare, and language access, the organisation empowers families with practical, evidence-based skills to act confidently in emergencies. Its mission is to prevent childhood deaths from preventable accidents and illnesses, including respiratory disease, by equipping caregivers with lifesaving knowledge.



## Unity Libyan Youth Association

Unity Libyan Youth Association empowers multicultural youth and women through inclusive education, wellbeing, and leadership programs. Guided by lived experience and community insight, the organisation designs culturally responsive initiatives that foster resilience, social cohesion, and opportunity. Its work spans mental health, disability inclusion, sport-based engagement, and creative arts, with a strong focus on advocacy and capacity-building. Proudly representing the Libyan-Australian community and broader migrant voices, Unity Libyan Youth Association creates safe, vibrant spaces where children and families can thrive.

