VICTORIAN

volunteering

AWARDS 2026

Ceremony Program

THURSDAY 8 OCTOBER 2026

volunteering VICTORIA

VICTORIA State Government

For more information about the Victorian Volunteering Awards, visit:
volunteeringvictoria.org.au/awards

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.

To receive this document in another format, please email
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2026 Victorian Volunteering Awards

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VICTORIAN
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AWARDS 2026

We are delighted to welcome you to the official ceremony for the 2026 Victorian Volunteering Awards.

Showcasing excellence by individuals, teams and organisations throughout 2026, 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 Commitment Award
- Volunteer Impact Award
- Volunteer Leadership Award
- Young Volunteer Award

Organisation Awards:
- Inclusive Volunteering Award
- Volunteering Partnerships Award
- Grassroots Volunteering Award
- Volunteering Innovation Award

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

Share your photos and experiences from today's ceremony using the hashtag **#VicVolAwards2026**

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.

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2026 Victorian Volunteering Awards

Order of Proceedings

9.30am

Guests arrive

- Tea and coffee served in the Foyer

Master of Ceremonies

- Rana Hussain, Good.Human

10.00am

Ceremony commences

Welcome to Country

- Colin Hunter Jnr Jnr

Minister's Address

- Hon. Luba Grigorovitch MP, Minister for Carers and Volunteers

Presentations – Individual awards

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

Presentations – Organisation awards

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

Guest speaker

- Satyam Jayani, Gig Workers' Hub
  2025 Organisation of the Year Winner

Presentation – Organisation of the Year

- Volunteering Excellence Award

Guest speaker

- Glenys Watts
  2025 Volunteer of the Year Winner

Presentation – Volunteer of the Year

- Dame Elisabeth Murdoch Award

Closing

- Con O'Brien, Volunteering Victoria Chair

11.10am

Ceremony concludes

- Morning tea served in the Foyer
- Winners to meet on stage for official photos

2026 Victorian Volunteering Awards

Message from the Premier



More than 3.3 million Victorians across our state volunteer, strengthening and uplifting the communities we call home.

These remarkable Victorians give more than 732 million hours to their communities, with this number growing each year. These figures tell an impressive story, but behind every number is a person who gives their time to make a real difference.

Each year, the Victorian Volunteering Awards shine a spotlight on those outstanding individuals and volunteer-involving organisations.

As the Premier of Victoria, I am proud to celebrate and champion Victoria's volunteers. To everyone who has been nominated, shortlisted or recognised this year, congratulations. Your stories show just how much can be achieved when people choose to step forward and contribute.

And to every Victorian volunteer, whether your contribution is highly visible or happens behind the scenes, I extend a heartfelt thank you.

The Hon. Ben Carroll MP
Premier of Victoria

2026 Victorian Volunteering Awards

Message from the Minister



Volunteers are the people who step up, pitch in and make things happen.

Victoria's volunteers are one of our state's greatest assets. Whether it's coaching our kids, supporting people through tough times, caring for our environment or teaching others new skills, volunteers are at the heart of our communities.

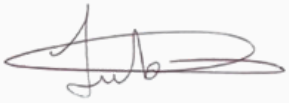
The Victorian Volunteering Awards are a chance to say a big 'thank you' – and to celebrate the people and organisations who give so much of themselves to make our communities stronger.

This year's finalists represent the incredible breadth of volunteering across our state. They remind us that there are so many ways to contribute, and that every hour and every helping hand makes a real difference.

As Minister for Carers and Volunteers, I am proud to stand alongside Victoria's volunteers and champion the important role they play in our communities.

To every nominee, finalist and winner, congratulations and thank you. Your generosity, commitment and passion inspire others to get involved and make a difference too.

Together, we can keep building a Victoria where people look out for one another and feel truly connected to their communities.



The Hon. Luba Grigorovitch MP
Minister for Carers and Volunteers

2026 Victorian Volunteering Awards

Message from the CEO



Today's ceremony is an opportunity to celebrate some remarkable people and organisations, particularly when you consider the scale of volunteering across Victoria.

Behind every finalist featured in this program are hundreds of other nominees, each with their own story worthy of recognition. Those reflect just a fraction of the 3.3 million Victorians who volunteer across our state.

This year, we received 458 nominations spanning 18 different sectors and representing communities across 267 suburbs. The calibre of this year's nominations was truly impressive.

For that reason, being named a finalist in these Awards is a significant achievement and one you should be incredibly proud of.

Mind you, we know volunteers aren't typically people who seek the spotlight. For many, recognition is probably the last thing on your mind. But your stories deserve to be told. You are genuinely inspiring people whose example can help shape what volunteering is and should be across Victoria.

At a time when organisations across Victoria are looking for more people to get involved, your example helps others see what volunteering can look like, the impact one person can have, and what they themselves can gain from giving their time. You remind us that there are many ways to contribute, and that volunteering can be for anyone, at any stage of life.

Each of you is 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.

So, thank you for allowing us to be inspired, to share your stories, and for everything you contribute to Victoria's communities.



Geoff Sharp
CEO
Volunteering Victoria

2026 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.

2026 Victorian Volunteering Awards

About the Awards

Showcasing excellence by individuals, teams and organisations throughout 2026, 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.



Pictured: 2025 Award winners

Judging process

All eligible nominations are assessed by a judging panel made up of volunteers from a diverse range of ages, genders, backgrounds, job titles, and life experiences – representing both Victoria's volunteering community and the broader community sector.

The panel rates each nomination against the description for the selected Award category, with those receiving the highest combined scores 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.

2026 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.

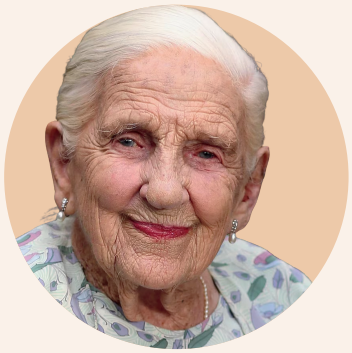
The **Premier's Volunteer of the Year Award** is proudly named in honour of Dame Elisabeth's extraordinary legacy. This prestigious accolade celebrates her values of compassion, dedication and leadership in volunteering, recognising individuals who - like her - make a profound difference in the lives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

Pays tribute to dedicated individuals with a sustained and substantial record of volunteering to support people, a community, group, organisation, or cause in Victoria. Finalists are long-serving volunteers whose reliability and commitment underpins organisational and community outcomes, and whose enthusiasm for volunteering is an inspiration to others.



Anthony Hargreaves

For 45 years, Anthony has been a committed volunteer at Charlton Golf Club, helping shape and sustain the club through decades of service. A committee member for almost 30 years, he has held numerous leadership roles and continues to contribute across course maintenance, junior development and club operations. Whether coaching new players, maintaining equipment or stepping in wherever support is needed, Anthony is known for his reliability and willingness to help. His contribution was recognised with Life Membership in 2022 and Golf Australia's Victorian Volunteer of the Year Award in 2025.



Georgia Sahinis

Georgia is a highly respected community leader whose lifelong commitment to service has had a lasting impact on Melbourne's Greek community. She has devoted many years to supporting older members of the community through her leadership with the Greek women's group of Lalor and Whittlesea and District Greek Elderly Citizens Club, where she has organised social, cultural and wellbeing programs that reduce isolation and foster connection. Georgia is also an active member of the Hellenic Women's Federation of Victoria, contributing to initiatives that celebrate Greek culture, promote volunteering and strengthen community engagement.



Joan Courtney

Melbourne Legacy has been an important part of Joan's life from an early age. Drawing on the support she, her mother and sister received through Legacy, Joan has spent many years giving back to the organisation and its community. Throughout her involvement, she has worked with junior Legatees, participated in gatherings for widows, and more recently spent time with veterans' families. Since becoming a Legatee in 2002, Joan has continued to serve the Legacy family, offering understanding, compassion and support.



June D'Cruz

For 30 years, June has given her time to supporting vulnerable older members of the community through Greater Dandenong City Council's Social Support Program. As a volunteer, she assists with activities including gentle exercise, craft, conversations, crosswords, board games and outings, helping create a welcoming and supportive environment for participants. She also remains attentive to clients' wellbeing and helps connect them with additional support when needed. June's compassionate and respectful approach has enriched the lives of many people over three decades of service, and she remains deeply committed to making a positive difference in her community.



Robert Lyng

Robert has volunteered with Our Village since 2016, where he leads the cot department and is affectionately known as the organisation's "Cotologist". He oversees the assessment, repair and safety checking of donated cots, helping ensure hundreds of families each year receive a safe place for their baby to sleep. Rob also trains and mentors other volunteers, sharing his knowledge and helping build a strong and supportive team. A familiar presence in the warehouse several days a week, he remains driven by the difference Our Village makes for families and the friendships formed through volunteering.



Rob Mathew

Rob has volunteered with the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre since 2001, after attending one of the organisation's very first information sessions. He began by welcoming people at reception and took on different volunteer roles as the Centre grew. He now supports the Foodbank team by sorting and packing fresh food and pantry staples for people seeking asylum. Twenty-five years on, Rob remains committed to helping where it is needed most, continuing to support the organisation as one of its longest-serving volunteers.



Robert Ward

Robert has contributed more than 37 years of volunteer service to public education in Melbourne's western suburbs. Beginning as School Council President of Tottenham Technical School in 1988, he went on to become the inaugural School Council President of Sunshine College following the merger of local secondary schools, serving in the role for more than three decades. Throughout this time, Robert has helped guide the college through significant change, while advocating for students and championing their voices in shaping the future of their school community. He has also made a significant contribution to lawn bowls as an administrator, national umpire and coach, continuing to volunteer throughout retirement to stay connected and give back to his community.



Vinh Nguyen

For more than 40 years, Vinh has supported the Vietnamese and broader Australian communities through humanitarian aid, cultural leadership and volunteer service. After arriving in Australia as a refugee in 1983, he became deeply involved in community organisations, refugee advocacy and charitable initiatives. As a founding President of the Lions Club of Melbourne Vietnamese and founder of the Vietnamese 50Up Club, he has led efforts supporting medical care, disaster relief and community wellbeing. Vinh has also played an important role in preserving Vietnamese heritage in Victoria, including contributing to the development of the Vietnam War Memorial of Victoria.

Finalists
Volunteer Impact Award

Celebrates individuals 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 led to a demonstrable positive change.



Deirdre Moss

Since returning to Australia in 2015 after 44 years living abroad, Deirdre has spent more than a decade volunteering with EdConnect Australia. As a Learning Support volunteer at Mount Duneed Primary School and Geelong High School, she supports children and young people with literacy and classroom engagement. Deirdre helps students feel valued and supported, providing a trusted presence as they build skills, confidence and resilience to navigate challenges at school and in everyday life. She is also a passionate advocate for EdConnect and intergenerational volunteering, helping raise awareness and support for the program within the wider community.



Helen Schaper

Helen volunteers with genU as both an Aged Care Visitor and an Education Assistant, supporting older people and adult learners in Geelong. Through regular visits with four aged care residents, she provides companionship and meaningful connection, helping reduce the isolation many people experience in residential care. She also supports learners with diverse abilities as they work towards their educational goals. Known for her patient and caring approach, Helen helps create environments where people feel welcome, supported and able to participate with confidence.



Jenani Therone

Jenani is the founder of the Of Service Foundation and creator of *Of Service*, a 656-page publication documenting the stories and portraits of more than 100 Australian veterans. Through years of volunteer effort, she travelled across Australia to record veterans' experiences through interviews, photography and storytelling. The project has helped share and preserve veterans' stories through institutions including the Shrine of Remembrance and the Australian War Memorial. As a volunteer Chair of the Of Service Foundation, Jenani continues to build on this work, turning veterans' stories into enduring resources for families, communities and future generations.



Negin Foroughimehr

Negin is a Scientist at the Australian Synchrotron who is passionate about making science more accessible and inclusive across Victoria. Alongside supporting researchers at the synchrotron, she volunteers her time to lead initiatives that support women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), mentor students and early-career researchers, organise community events, and promote science through outreach and social media. Through her volunteering, Negin helps connect Victorian communities with science, encourages greater participation in STEM, and fosters a more inclusive and collaborative scientific community.



Reena Rana

Reena founded Indian Women in Australia (IWIA) in 2020 and has grown it into a national community of more than 19,000 members. Through IWIA, she provides counselling, workshops and advocacy for women and new migrants, with a focus on domestic violence, mental health and social inclusion. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Reena coordinated donation drives to support international students and vulnerable families. She also leads multicultural events that bring communities together and promote cultural understanding, while using her podcast and online platforms to share information, stories and support.



Shelley McGuinness

Shelley has volunteered with RSPCA Victoria since 2023, with impact across advocacy, animal welfare, community programs and organisational improvement. She supports the rehabilitation and wellbeing of dogs through enrichment, training and care, while assisting behaviour specialists and opening her home as a Foster Carer for dogs awaiting adoption. Recognised for her initiative, Shelley developed a Volunteer Procedure Manual that helps volunteers work safely and confidently. She is a valued mentor to new volunteers, supporting them to succeed in their roles, while also representing volunteer voices and helping strengthen the volunteer experience across the organisation.



Simone Pearce

Simone has been a long-serving volunteer with St John Ambulance Victoria for 44 years, making a lasting contribution to both the organisation and the Wyndham community. Two years ago, when the Wyndham division faced closure with no active members and limited resources, Simone stepped forward to rebuild it from the ground up. Through her leadership, mentorship and commitment, she grew the division from zero members to a team of 18 trained volunteers, while strengthening community partnerships and revitalising local facilities. Her efforts have created a lasting legacy through a thriving volunteer community that continues to deliver vital first aid and emergency support.



Tamsyn Hogarth

Tamsyn has dedicated 15 years to volunteering in wildlife rescue, rehabilitation and conservation. As the founder and volunteer coordinator of Fly By Night Bat Clinic, she contributes thousands of unpaid hours rescuing and rehabilitating Victoria's flying foxes and microbats. She leads emergency wildlife responses, mentors and trains new rescuers and carers, coordinates volunteers, advocates for improved wildlife welfare, and delivers community education to reduce human-wildlife conflict. Through her leadership, she has helped build a strong network of carers and responders, while raising awareness of the vital ecological role bats play, strengthening wildlife conservation and community engagement across Victoria.

Finalists
Volunteer Leadership Award

Recognises exceptional volunteers who lead, mentor, empower or coordinate other volunteers, outside of a paid professional capacity. Finalists have shown exceptional volunteer leadership and influence, and may have built effective volunteer networks and partnerships, contributed to volunteer engagement and retention or strengthened community connection.



Angelo D'Amore

Angelo is a respected Scout leader whose volunteer service has had a significant impact across the Bairnsdale Scouting community. As Cub Leader in Charge and Assistant Scout Leader, he has helped young people build confidence, leadership and resilience through Scouting. He has supported youth participation in major events, recently including Australian Jamboree 2025, Kangaree 2025 and Cuboree 2026, while mentoring project patrols toward Peak Awards and achievements such as Stradbroke Cups. Angelo also provides leadership, advice and grant-writing support to neighbouring groups, including the Paynesville Sea Scouts, and recently became Eastern Rivers District Cub Leader.



Arun Thomas

Based in Horsham, Arun is a nurse leader, board director, and dedicated volunteer whose contribution spans hands-on emergency response, mentoring, and community governance. As a Disaster Relief Australia volunteer and Psychological First Aid Trainer, he works on the frontlines of disaster recovery and community relief efforts while supporting the mental wellbeing of fellow volunteers and affected communities. Locally, Arun is Deputy Chair of the Centre for Participation and a Board Director for inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence and Dementia Doulas Australia. He also chairs the ACN Foundation Fundraising Committee, setting strategies that help distribute over $500,000 annually for national nursing scholarships, while mentoring the next generation of nurses to succeed.



David Marsh

David is a lifelong surf lifesaving volunteer and community leader with more than 35 years of service. As President of Anglesea Surf Life Saving Club, Chair of the Anglesea SLSC Foundation, Patrol Captain and Chair of the Council of Life Saving Clubs, he is passionate about building inclusive, sustainable volunteer organisations. David is recognised for mentoring emerging leaders, strengthening community connections and creating opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to contribute. Awarded the 2025 Life Saving Victoria Volunteer of the Year, he believes the strongest communities are built when people are empowered to lead and support one another.



Deb Robertson

Deb has led Eat Up's Ballarat program for a decade, helping it grow from 600 sandwiches for nine schools into a vital service supporting 37 schools and delivering around 70,000 free lunches to local students. She oversees the local operation, secures support from community partners, and coordinates weekly teams of more than 30 volunteers to help meet growing demand. Known for creating a supportive and welcoming volunteer environment, Deb's leadership has helped Eat Up become one of Victoria's strongest regional programs. She also contributes through Rotary, Ballarat Legacy and BreezeWay, supporting initiatives that strengthen wellbeing, education and community connection.



Jaqui O'Leary

Jaqui has led Seaford BeachPatrol since 2018, inspiring people of all ages to volunteer, connect and take action for their local environment. Under her leadership, 2,500 volunteers have removed more than two tonnes of litter, collecting 51,978 items from beaches and waterways. Serving as Vice President of BeachPatrol Australia, she has introduced and supported initiatives focused on volunteer recognition, leader engagement, communications and safety. Jaqui also authored the *Plastic Pellet Project – Nurdle Anymore!*, a citizen-science initiative that has contributed local evidence to research, reporting and advocacy on plastic pollution across Port Phillip Bay.



Jay de Graaff

Jay is a community-minded volunteer who is passionate about practical service, compassionate leadership and bringing people together. Since 2019, he has supported people experiencing homelessness through the Order of Malta's Community Care Van, providing outreach with dignity, respect and care. As Volunteer Coordinator for the South-Eastern Region, Jay works closely with Australian Catholic University to involve students in service while building their confidence, teamwork and community awareness. He coordinates volunteers, rosters and outreach activities to ensure every shift is safe, organised and effective. Jay leads by example, empowers others to contribute their strengths and builds partnerships that strengthen support for vulnerable people.

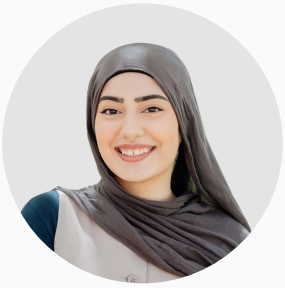


Megan Stapleton

Megan is a passionate volunteer leader who has dedicated countless hours to strengthening community music across Australia. Through leadership roles at local, state and national levels, she has championed initiatives that support volunteers, create opportunities for musicians of all ages and build stronger, more sustainable community organisations. A tireless advocate for collaboration, education and inclusion, Megan has led governance reform, delivered major events, and worked to strengthen the future of the community band movement. Her vision, strategic leadership and commitment to service continue to create lasting benefits for community music and the thousands of volunteers who make it possible.

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 through volunteering for people, a community, group, organisation, or cause in Victoria.



Berelian Daghagheleh

Berelian sought asylum in Australia at the age of six and spent several years waiting to become an Australian citizen. Drawing on her lived experience, she volunteers with the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, supporting people seeking asylum through the legal team's phone line. In this role, she helps clients access legal assistance and stay informed about their matters. Berelian is passionate about refugee advocacy and hopes to become a human rights lawyer, helping ensure more people can safely access protection and the support they need.



Gurvijay Singh Mahal

At just 12 years of age, Gurvijay is an emerging journalist whose volunteering supports young people and multicultural communities across Victoria. As the youngest journalist, showrunner and host of *The Gabfest Radio*, he uses his platform to elevate youth voices and explore issues that matter to the local community. Beyond media, he has developed programs centred on boxing and Punjabi folk dance, creating opportunities to learn new skills and connect with community. Through these activities, Gurvijay helps other CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) young people develop confidence and take pride in their cultural heritage.



Lochie Antoniazzi

Lochie joined Student Youth Network (SYN) in 2024 at the age of 14 as a volunteer broadcaster, co-presenting *The Hoist* before becoming Executive Producer of *Amplify* the following year. In this role, he mentored a new group of young broadcasters and helped support the next generation of media volunteers. As SYN's Programming Coordinator, Lochie oversees volunteer development and programming schedules, while providing technical support across the organisation. He also played a key role in planning and producing SYN's 2026 *24 Hour Broadcast*, helping raise funds to create more opportunities for young people in community media.



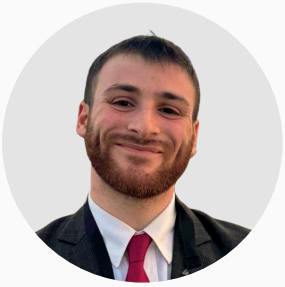
Natalie Smith

Natalie is a volunteer STEM educator and President of Robogals Melbourne. Now in her fourth year with the organisation, she has previously served as Vice President, Partnerships Manager and General Committee member. Natalie has contributed more than 200 hours delivering hands-on STEM workshops in classrooms, alongside countless additional hours coordinating programs, supporting volunteers, building partnerships and leading major events. She is passionate about making engineering and technology accessible to young people, particularly girls and students who may not otherwise see themselves represented in STEM. Through her leadership, Natalie works to create welcoming experiences that build confidence, curiosity and a lasting sense of possibility.



Phu Nguyen

Phu is a youth and community leader who has volunteered for more than five years to improve access to sport, mentoring and community connection for young people from culturally diverse and financially disadvantaged backgrounds. As President of Yarra Futsal Ballers and a leader within Home Ground Hub, Phu coordinates free futsal, soccer, basketball, camps and community programs across the City of Yarra. His work supports young people to build confidence, belonging, leadership skills and positive pathways. A former program participant himself, Phu is passionate about creating opportunities for young people to become volunteers, coaches, mentors and leaders within their own communities.



Quinney Brownfield

Quinney is an accomplished young leader whose volunteering spans education, mental health, homelessness, international aid and community service. Through leadership roles with Rotary in Australia and internationally, board positions with community organisations, and ongoing advocacy for young people, he works to create positive change and support others to get involved in their communities. His contribution has been recognised with several honours, including Frankston City's 2026 Young Citizen of the Year Award and a Paul Harris Fellowship from Rotary District 9815.



Rohan Richards

Rohan is a dedicated volunteer with the Victorian State Emergency Service (SES) and the Country Fire Authority (CFA), bringing more than 11 years of combined emergency service experience. Throughout his service, he has responded to over 113 emergency callouts, providing vital assistance to communities during times of need. Committed to continuous professional development, Rohan regularly undertakes training to expand his capabilities within both his SES unit and CFA brigade. His diverse skill set includes Road Crash Rescue, Structural Firefighting, and Fire Medical Response. Whether responding to emergencies, supporting rescue operations, or tackling complex incidents, Rohan approaches every challenge with professionalism, dedication, and a strong commitment to serving his community.



Shiao Lu Ooi

Shiao Lu is the Founder and Executive Director of Wombat Collective, a youth-led not-for-profit dedicated to empowering international students and multicultural young people through grassroots volunteering and community leadership. She has championed innovative initiatives that unite sustainability, intergenerational connection, and social inclusion, including Blooms Reborn, which repurposes donated flowers to brighten aged care homes, hospitals, and neighbourhood centres. Beyond Wombat Collective, she serves as a Youth Advisor with the Centre for Multicultural Youth and contributes to statewide multicultural initiatives. Her leadership, compassion, alongside commitment to fostering belonging continue to strengthen communities across Victoria.

Finalists
Inclusive Volunteering Award

Recognises organisations that reduce barriers to volunteering and champion equity, access and participation in order to broaden who can volunteer. Finalists have demonstrated inclusive and accessible volunteering practices that increase volunteer diversity and participation.

Foodbank Victoria

Foodbank Victoria is Victoria's largest food relief organisation, distributing over 26 million meals each year through its network of charities, schools and community groups across the state. Volunteers play an essential role in sorting, packing and distributing food to people experiencing food insecurity. To make volunteering more accessible, Foodbank Victoria has redesigned many roles to suit individual needs and strengths, enabling more people to contribute in ways that work for them. This approach has helped welcome more volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds while supporting the delivery of millions of meals to Victorians in need.

Maccabi FC Caulfield

Maccabi FC Caulfield is a community football club supporting more than 750 members from ages 2 to 95. Alongside its sporting pathways, the club delivers initiatives including the Mighty Bees All-Abilities program, Walking Football, and the Macctildas program for girls. The club supports people to volunteer regardless of their football experience, with opportunities ranging from event-day support to leadership roles. By creating opportunities for people with different backgrounds and experiences to contribute, lead and help shape the club's future, Maccabi FC Caulfield demonstrates that community spirit is the ultimate team sport, both on and off the field.

Olivia's Place

Based in Drouin, Olivia's Place is a pregnancy and early parenting resource centre, providing families with practical assistance, emotional support and essential baby goods. Guided by the belief that it takes a village to raise a family, volunteers are at the heart of everything the organisation does. Olivia's Place creates inclusive volunteering opportunities for people at different stages of life, including students, NDIS participants, corporate volunteer teams and those looking to reconnect with their community. By welcoming volunteers with a range of skills and experiences, the organisation helps create safe beginnings for babies and brighter futures for families across Gippsland.

Rheola Charity Carnival

Since 1871, the Rheola Charity Carnival has been a volunteer-run organisation raising funds for local hospitals and community facilities in central Victoria. Led by a committee of 20 and supported by more than 100 volunteers each year, the carnival creates opportunities for people of all ages, abilities and experience levels to contribute. Volunteers range from community members as young as 10 to those in their 90s, working side by side across generations. By welcoming both long-standing and new volunteers into roles that suit their skills and circumstances, the carnival fosters inclusion, community pride and lasting connections, while demonstrating the real difference volunteers can make in their community.

VincentCare

Ozanam House

VincentCare's Ozanam House provides accommodation and support services for people experiencing homelessness and disadvantage. Its Client Volunteer Program was created for people who have often been excluded from mainstream volunteering and employment opportunities, helping participants build confidence and reconnect with community. Through the O Café, volunteers train as baristas while contributing to a welcoming hub within Ozanam House. By creating pathways into volunteering for those who may have faced barriers to participation, the program has a life-changing impact on participants and their recovery.

Finalists
Volunteering Partnerships Award

Recognises the importance of collaborations and partnerships to achieve positive outcomes for communities or causes in Victoria. Finalists have built and maintained purposeful, enduring partnerships that enabled them to make a significant and sustained difference, beyond what could have been achieved on their own.

Bayside Community Emergency Relief

Bayside Community Emergency Relief (BCER) is a 100% volunteer-run grassroots charity established in 2020 to support people experiencing hardship and communities affected by disaster. Through partnerships with more than 100 not-for-profit organisations, community groups and frontline services, BCER coordinates emergency relief, comfort packs and practical assistance for people in need. Operating without paid staff, the organisation brings together volunteers, donors and partner organisations to respond quickly to emerging needs. This collaborative approach has strengthened community connections and enabled BCER to deliver support far beyond what any one organisation could achieve alone.

Dementia Alliance

Dementia Alliance is a volunteer-led charity based in regional Victoria, supporting people living with dementia, as well as their carers and families. Its flagship site, *Reflections at Eppalock*, is being developed through thousands of volunteer hours and a network of schools, community organisations, health services and local supporters. Together, these partnerships have helped create a dementia-inclusive sanctuary where people can connect and access respite in a welcoming environment. Through this collaborative approach, Dementia Alliance has created a model of community-led care, where volunteers help reshape how people living with dementia, carers and families are supported, included and valued.

Dress For Success Victoria

Dress for Success Victoria empowers women facing disadvantage to achieve economic independence through employment. Its impact is strengthened through partnerships with volunteers, employers, community organisations and referral agencies working together to support women on their pathway to work. Through these collaborations, the organisation provides professional styling, career support, mentoring, and job-readiness services that help women build confidence and prepare for employment. Dress for Success Victoria demonstrates how combining expertise, resources and community knowledge through purposeful partnerships can create stronger, more inclusive communities across Victoria.

It's the Little Things Community

It's the Little Things Community is a Melbourne-based charity that connects volunteers, schools and businesses to support people experiencing hardship through home-style meals and practical acts of kindness. Through partnerships with 11 trusted community organisations, the charity helps reach people facing homelessness, family violence, social isolation and other challenges. A standout collaboration with Rossbourne School has created supported volunteering opportunities for neurodivergent students, combining skill development with meaningful community contribution. Together, their volunteers demonstrate how small acts of kindness can create lasting impact for vulnerable people and the wider community.

Life Saving Victoria

Safely Engaging with Water Program

Life Saving Victoria's *Safely Engaging with Water Program* is delivered in partnership with the Sikh community at Gurudwara Siri Guru Nanak Darbar (SGND) to help multicultural adults build confidence and skills to be safer in and around water. The partnership combines Life Saving Victoria's water safety expertise with the cultural leadership, outreach and local knowledge of the Sikh community. Community leaders and volunteers play an important role in engaging participants and creating a welcoming environment for learning. Through this ongoing collaboration, the program is making water safety education more accessible while strengthening community participation and connection.

Nurture The Future Foundation

Nurture The Future Foundation is a volunteer-led charity that harnesses the skills, networks, and generosity of professionals across the built environment to create safe, welcoming, and trauma-informed spaces for vulnerable communities. By connecting architects, designers, project managers, consultants and industry partners with for-purpose organisations, the Foundation transforms environments that support women, children and young people experiencing disadvantage, including homelessness, family violence or out-of-home care. Through strategic advice, design expertise, project delivery and collaborative partnerships, Nurture The Future demonstrates how skilled volunteering can create lasting social impact, helping turn ambitious visions into spaces that foster safety, healing, dignity, and hope.

Finalists
Grassroots Volunteering Award

Recognises the positive impact achieved by small organisations with limited resources. It celebrates the community leadership and responsiveness of small grassroots organisations that have provided important local services, led positive change, or supported connection in social and community life.

3081 Angels

Since 2012, 3081 Angels has been providing practical support to families experiencing vulnerability through a dedicated team of volunteers in Heidelberg Heights. Working entirely without paid staff, volunteers clean, repair and package donated children's items before delivering them directly to families. Since its inception, the organisation has assisted almost 5,000 families with essentials including prams, cots, clothing, toys and books. Beyond material aid, 3081 Angels builds trusted relationships with families and community agencies, helping connect people with additional support while fostering a strong culture of care, dignity and generosity.

Activate Youth

Activate Youth is a volunteer-led, multicultural not-for-profit organisation dedicated to empowering young people to lead lives of purpose and service. Built on the belief that empowered youth create stronger communities, Activate Youth provides meaningful opportunities for young people to develop leadership, strengthen employability, improve wellbeing, and foster lasting community connections. Every initiative is designed and delivered by passionate volunteers who generously contribute their time and experience to support others. Through innovative programs and a commitment to inclusion, Activate Youth has become a platform where young people are inspired to grow as leaders, give back to their communities, and create lasting change.

ARTFam

ARTFam is Australia's only national not-for-profit organisation dedicated exclusively to supporting, educating, connecting and advocating for individuals and families impacted by assisted reproductive treatment (ART) and donor conception. Through independent peer support, trusted resources, education, community programs and advocacy, ARTFam empowers intended parents, donor-conceived people, donors and surrogates to make informed decisions and build meaningful connections. By reducing stigma and promoting transparency, inclusion and wellbeing, ARTFam helps ensure that no one navigating fertility treatment or donor conception does so alone.

Ethiopian Community Association of Victoria

The Ethiopian Community Association of Victoria (ECAV) is a wholly volunteer-run, not-for-profit organisation that has supported Ethiopian and East African communities since 1984. With more than 100 volunteers, ECAV provides settlement support, youth mentoring, community advocacy and cultural programs that strengthen connection across generations. Volunteers also assist families during times of bereavement, helping ensure community members receive culturally appropriate support when it is needed most. Through grassroots leadership and a strong commitment to community solidarity, ECAV continues to preserve cultural identity, support new arrivals and bring people together through shared community events and initiatives.

Loch Community Development Association

Loch Village Post Office

Established in 1998, the Loch Community Development Association (LCDA) is a volunteer-led organisation dedicated to supporting initiatives that enhance life in Loch and surrounding communities. Since 2023, LCDA volunteers have operated the Loch Community Post Office, helping preserve an essential local service that was at risk of closing. One of only a handful of volunteer-run post offices in Australia, it provides postal services five days a week while creating a welcoming place for residents to connect. Profits generated through the service are reinvested into local projects, helping support the long-term wellbeing of the Loch community.

The Chinese Stroke Support Group

Established in 2012, the Chinese Stroke Support Group is a volunteer-led organisation supporting Chinese-speaking stroke survivors and their carers across Victoria. Through its Sunshine Group volunteer program, members receive practical guidance, peer support and opportunities to stay connected throughout their recovery journey. Volunteers coordinate regular activities, share health and community information in-language, and help members navigate services that can otherwise be difficult to access. A distinctive feature of the organisation is its peer-support model, with former stroke survivors and carers often returning as volunteers to support others facing similar challenges.

United Seniors Club

United Seniors Club is a grassroots, volunteer-led organisation supporting multicultural seniors in Melbourne's west. Driven by a dedicated team of volunteers, the club coordinates a range of activities, including wellbeing programs, digital literacy support, excursions, and cultural celebrations. This includes its *Cooking Together, Eating Together and Sharing Culture* project, where members share traditional culinary skills and heritage. Operating with no membership fees, United Seniors Club provides a welcoming space where older adults can stay active, support one another and remain connected to community life.

Finalists
Volunteering Innovation Award

Recognises the role of adaptation and responsiveness to continually improve the volunteer experience or enhance supports for people, a community, group, or cause in Victoria. Finalists have implemented new or adapted approaches to address challenges in volunteer engagement.

Epworth HealthCare

Epworth HealthCare is Victoria's largest not-for-profit private health service, combining exceptional clinical care with a strong focus on compassion, patient experience and community connection. Volunteers play an important role across the organisation, providing practical assistance and meaningful human connection to patients and their families. In response to needs identified by patients and clinical teams, Epworth introduced the *Patient Care Cart*, a volunteer-led service that delivers bedside comfort items to support wellbeing during their hospital stay. Through strong volunteer training and close collaboration with staff, the initiative has enhanced the patient experience while reducing non-clinical demands on Epworth's nursing teams.

Inclusion Melbourne

Inclusion Melbourne is Victoria's longest-serving community-based support organisation, supporting people with intellectual and cognitive disabilities, as well as those experiencing social isolation, for more than 78 years. Through its *Leisure Buddies* program, Inclusion Melbourne delivers a person-centred volunteer initiative that fosters meaningful relationships and community inclusion. The program matches participants with trained local volunteers based on shared interests, creating lasting friendships that build confidence and encourage greater participation in community life. Through ongoing volunteer training and support, Inclusion Melbourne has developed a transformative volunteering model that helps to create stronger, more inclusive communities where every person's participation is valued.

Lazarus Community Centre

Lazarus Community Centre is a Geelong-based organisation supporting people experiencing homelessness, disadvantage and social isolation. Volunteers are at the heart of its operations, helping deliver meals, clothing, laundry and other essential services in a safe and welcoming environment. Unlike many volunteer programs, volunteers at Lazarus play an active role in shaping the culture and impact of the organisation, not just delivering services. This relationship-driven approach places human connection at the centre of volunteering, fostering trust, dignity and long-term positive outcomes for those accessing support.

Life Saving Victoria
Gippsland Sporting Hub

Life Saving Victoria (LSV) is a not-for-profit organisation supporting more than 45,000 members and a statewide network of lifesaving clubs and volunteers dedicated to aquatic safety, community sport and active participation. Through the Gippsland Sporting Hub, LSV has reimagined how volunteer development and sport participation are delivered in regional communities, shifting from a centralised model to a locally led approach. By bringing training, coaching, officiating and development opportunities directly to Gippsland and Bass Coast, the Hub reduces barriers to participation and strengthens local capability. It also creates flexible pathways for volunteers to build skills, take on new roles and contribute within their own communities.

Scouts Victoria

Scouts Victoria is a youth development organisation delivering programs for young people aged 5 to 25 across metropolitan and regional Victoria. In response to changing expectations around volunteering, Scouts Victoria has introduced a flexible, role-based model that allows people to contribute according to their skills, interests and availability. The organisation has also implemented a centralised digital onboarding system, making it easier for new volunteers to get involved while reducing administrative demands on existing volunteers. These changes have created a more accessible and sustainable volunteering experience, allowing volunteers to spend more time supporting young people through Scouts Victoria's youth-led programs.

Second Chance Animal Rescue

Second Chance Animal Rescue is a community-based animal welfare organisation dedicated to rescuing, rehabilitating and rehoming animals in need across Victoria. Its volunteer program supports every aspect of the organisation's work, from animal care and foster networks to community outreach and the Pet Food Pantry. Designed to be flexible and responsive, the program offers a range of opportunities that reflect different skills, interests and availability. Through specialised volunteer training, a strong foster network and the use of digital tools to support engagement, Second Chance Animal Rescue continues to evolve its approach to volunteering. This responsiveness has led to more consistent, high-quality care for animals, faster adoption outcomes, and a stronger, more connected volunteer community.

Street Side Medics Victoria

Street Side Medics Victoria provides a free GP-led mobile medical service for people experiencing homelessness or hardship. The organisation has developed a flexible volunteer model that brings healthcare directly to communities through mobile clinics operating across Melbourne and Geelong. Each clinic team includes volunteer GPs, nurses, paramedics and non-medical volunteers who work together to deliver care in a safe, accessible and welcoming environment. By adapting healthcare delivery to meet people where they are, volunteers build trust, reduce barriers to care and provide personalised support beyond a traditional clinical setting.

Transit Soup Kitchen And Food Support

Transit Soup Kitchen and Food Support is a grassroots organisation supporting people experiencing food insecurity, homelessness and financial hardship across Melbourne's south-east. Faced with rising demand and changing patterns of volunteer participation, Transit transformed its volunteer program to be more flexible, accessible and sustainable. This included introducing a customised QR-code volunteer and guest management platform, digital onboarding and tailored training, while creating volunteer pathways that reflect different interests, skills and levels of availability. The redesign improved volunteer retention, reduced administrative burden and expanded access for underrepresented groups, enabling the organisation to extend its support to 1,700 people each week.

