



2024

Volunteering Awards



Winners Showcase



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2024 Volunteering Awards

Message from the Premier

There's something so special about volunteering: putting your hand up to make a difference. And across our state, in so many ways, that's exactly what volunteers do.

Victoria's Volunteering Awards recognise outstanding volunteers and volunteer organisations, and the vital contribution they make.

While I know you don't do it for the accolades, it's clear your work doesn't go unnoticed.

We received an incredible 508 nominations for the 2024 Awards, demonstrating how much your communities value what you do. Every nominee, and every volunteer across our state, should feel very proud of the enormous difference you make.

So, as Premier, I want to give you my heartfelt thanks.

Thank you for all that you do – and for all that you'll continue to do.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jacinta Allan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the name.

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

2024 Volunteering Awards

Message from the Minister

Volunteers are one of our state's greatest assets, dedicating their time and energy to make a lasting impact. Their valuable contributions help build vibrant, connected and thriving communities across our great state.

The Volunteering Awards are a chance to recognise the hardworking volunteers that make a difference in Victoria.

This year's 50 finalists and eight winners embody the spirit of what it means to volunteer. From helping vulnerable young people to providing disaster relief, this standout group are dedicated to supporting others with compassion and care.

As Minister for Carers and Volunteers, I am proud of the exceptional work of volunteers in our state.

Congratulations to all the 2024 Volunteering Awards finalists and winners. Thank you for your service to your communities and the state.

I look forward to working with you, and all of Victoria's volunteers, as you continue your volunteering journey.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ros Spence'.

The Hon. Ros Spence MP
Minister for Carers and Volunteers

2024 Volunteering Awards Message from the CEO

Being involved in these Awards is a genuine privilege, providing the opportunity to learn more about the remarkable volunteers who dedicate their time, energy and passion to making a difference in their communities.

To our nominees – your commitment and generosity inspire us all, and this program recognises and honours your invaluable contributions.

I know I speak on behalf of our selection panel for whom judging this year's nominees has been both an honour and a challenge – like trying to choose your favourite hero. How can we possibly compare the immeasurable impact of such incredible individuals? Each nominee stands out in their own right, and every effort deserves recognition.

Only a few will receive awards, but every nominee should take pride in their achievements. Your work touches lives, strengthens communities, and exemplifies the very best of service to others. We celebrate you all.

And in doing so, we celebrate every volunteer across Victoria who cares for the community in both large and small ways.

Thank you for joining us in this celebration of service, generosity and community spirit.



Geoff Sharp
Chief Executive Officer
Volunteering Victoria

2024 Volunteering Awards

About the Awards

Showcasing excellence by individuals, teams and organisations throughout 2024, 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 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.

The ceremony saw 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

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** was selected by the Premier from the winners of the four individual categories.

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

2024 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.

Premier's Volunteer of the Year Dame Elisabeth Murdoch Award

CHERIE MCLEAN

For over 60 years, Cherie has demonstrated exceptional commitment as an Australian Red Cross emergency services volunteer. Her selfless dedication has supported disaster-affected communities and strengthened volunteer teams across Victoria.

Cherie played a vital role in responding to major crises, including the 1983 Ash Wednesday and 2009 Black Saturday bushfires, providing compassionate assistance to those in need.

As a respected member of her local team in the Mornington Peninsula, she has consistently shown remarkable leadership, empathy, and collaboration.

In 2022, Cherie embraced a new role within the Learning & Development team, already dedicating over 450 hours to guiding volunteers through online platforms.

Her patience, adaptability, and mastery of new IT skills significantly enhanced volunteer engagement and fostered a supportive learning environment.

Her willingness to go above and beyond has made her a trusted source of guidance and encouragement for volunteers and colleagues alike.

Cherie's unwavering commitment, reliability, and compassion have left a profound impact on Victorian Emergency Services and the lives of countless individuals.



"It's a huge honour to receive this award and I'm proud to accept it, not just for myself but in recognition of the invaluable efforts and support that Red Cross has made over the years - largely in part because of the often unsung commitment and extraordinary contributions made by its volunteers." - Cherie McLean

Premier's Organisation of the Year Volunteering Excellence Award

GATHER MY CREW

Gather My Crew is revolutionising informal volunteering by harnessing the power of technology to bring communities closer together.

Founded by psychologist Dr Susan Palmer, this innovative organisation empowers Australians to give and receive practical support during life's most challenging moments.

Their free app, tools, and resources enable individuals to rally a support crew of family, friends and neighbours, fostering 'coordinated informal care' that reduces isolation and makes volunteering more accessible.

With over 350,000 hours of community support facilitated through more than 55,000 volunteers, Gather My Crew's impact is profound.

The app's user-friendly approach allows those facing personal crises to design the help they need by listing tasks for volunteers to accept.

Gather My Crew is trusted by over 750 health providers as a reliable referral option, particularly in cancer, palliative care, and other acute areas. Their commitment to providing free, evidence-based, and innovative solutions ensures that support remains accessible to all.

By leveraging technology to build community connections, Gather My Crew reduces isolation and empowers neighbourhoods to garner support during difficult times.



Helping people, help people.

“To have the impact of our work recognised - and the power Gather My Crew's technology has to turn all of us into informal volunteers - is truly special. This award isn't just for us - it's for every person who has stepped up to quietly help someone within their own community.” - Dr Susan Palmer (Founder, Gather My Crew)

Volunteer Leadership Award Winner

ARFA SARFARAZ

Arfa is a recognised cross-cultural leader and advocate, serving as President of the United Muslim Sisters of Latrobe Valley (UMSLV) since 2015.

She has transformed UMSLV into a key organisation supporting new and emerging communities, fostering interfaith dialogue, and empowering women and youth.

Arfa has led initiatives such as the Hello Buddy mentorship program, anti-racism campaigns, and intercultural events. A skilled connector and mentor, she tirelessly supports migrant and refugee women, advocating for their inclusion and capacity building.

Through her leadership, Arfa continues to strengthen community resilience and multicultural engagement in the Latrobe Valley and beyond.



Finalists: Abdulmaseeh Feryou Anthony White Den Lim Donna Levinson-Murray Maddie Francis

Volunteer Impact Award Winner

BRENTON PONZA

Brenton is a remarkable volunteer whose passion and perseverance have left a profound mark on his community.

Living with cerebral palsy, he tirelessly fundraises and advocates for the Cerebral Palsy Education Centre (CPEC) and has completed 15 Melbourne Marathons using a walking frame.

Through his role as a CP Achieve Advisor, Brenton ensures those who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) are heard and valued in research settings. His commitment also extends to volunteering with the RSPCA, Collingwood Animal Farm, and Gymnastics Victoria.

Brenton's resilience, kindness, and determination make him a positive role model to others, proving that challenges are no barrier to meaningful contribution.



Finalists:

Chris Christofi

David Miller

Elizabeth Reen

Gina Poulos

Helen Gibson

Mustafa Kouklan

William Abley

Volunteer Commitment Award Winner

CHERIE MCLEAN

Cherie has served as an emergency services volunteer with Australian Red Cross for over 60 years.

During this time, she has helped respond to major disasters like the 1983 Ash Wednesday and 2009 Black Saturday bushfires, as well as providing leadership and volunteer support as an active member of her local team in the Mornington Peninsula.

Having undertaken a new role in 2022, she has already dedicated over 450 hours to the Learning & Development team, guiding hundreds of volunteers through online platforms and enhancing engagement.

Known for her empathy, collaboration and adaptability, Cherie displays remarkable commitment and passion for the organisation and supporting other volunteers.



Finalists:

Abdul Farahmad
Charlie Morshead

Chris Michalopoulos
Diane Walker

Gavin Hynam
Libby Petty

Mary McBride
Sharma Betanabhatla

Wendy Falconer

Young Volunteer Award Winner

TYRESE WALSH

Tyrese is a proud young First Peoples man who discovered a passion for volunteering through connecting with culture.

His leadership and cultural journey has made a significant impact on his peers, his mob, and his community.

As an ambassador for Anglicare Victoria's *Buldau Yioohgen* ('Big Dreams') program, Tyrese encourages young First Peoples to connect with their culture, fostering pride and empowerment. As a youth mentor, he builds trust with vulnerable young people, helping them confidently navigate their own journeys.

While juggling personal responsibilities at home, Tyrese remains committed to supporting his peers On Country, demonstrating resilience, compassion, and a deep dedication to community.



Finalists: Aimaan Arora Hansikaa Sharma Mitchell Graham Olivia Ashcroft Thomas Maguire-Nguyen

Inclusive Volunteering Award Winner

SPECIAL OLYMPICS MELBOURNE INNER EAST

Special Olympics Melbourne Inner East (MIE) is dedicated to bringing sport, joy and inclusion to people with intellectual disabilities and autism.

MIE champions inclusive volunteering by empowering athletes with intellectual disabilities to take on leadership roles, including assistant coaching and committee positions, ensuring their voices guide strategic decisions.

With a diverse volunteer base of all ages and backgrounds, MIE promotes acceptance, social connections, and community involvement.

Their athlete-centred approach sets the standard for inclusive volunteerism, fostering a supportive environment that enables athletes to grow as leaders both on and off the field.



Special Olympics
Australia
Melbourne Inner East



Cally Bauman
Vice Chair, Special Olympics Melbourne Inner East

Finalists:

Australian Multicultural Women Association
Kitty Rescue Squad Australia

Edendale Farm (Nilumbik Shire Council)
St Kilda Gatehouse

Whittlesea Community Connections

Volunteering Innovation Award Winner

GATHER MY CREW

Gather My Crew is on a mission to simplify community care, making it easier for Australians to give and receive practical support during tough times.

Their free app and resources enable 'coordinated informal care,' allowing individuals to rally a support crew of family, friends, and neighbours to provide practical help.

With over 350,000 hours of local support facilitated and trusted by over 750 health providers, Gather My Crew is transforming how communities come together.

Founded by psychologist Dr Susan Palmer, the organisation is committed to reducing isolation and making informal volunteering more accessible through innovative, evidence-based technology.



Dr Susan Palmer
Founder, Gather My Crew

Finalists: Ardoch Barwon Health (Room 64) Birth For Humankind

Volunteering Partnerships Award Winner

VICWISE

VicWISE (now AusWISE) is a volunteer-led organisation dedicated to supporting international students and enhancing their employability through strong community partnerships.

Since 2019, VicWISE has collaborated with over 100 organisations, including universities, student clubs and industry leaders, to provide life skills training, financial assistance, mental health support, and career development opportunities.

In 2024, VicWISE formed a ground-breaking partnership with Crown Resorts to deliver nine workshops across Melbourne, Sydney and Perth, equipping students with essential skills.

Through these initiatives, VicWISE (now AusWISE) continues to lead efforts in supporting international students, easing their integration and helping them succeed in Australian society.



Manorani Guy
Founder and President, VicWISE (now AusWISE)

Life Skills Program
Art of Networking Across Cultures

Finalists:

A Better Life for Foster Kids
Blue Carbon Lab

Community Support Knox, Yarra Ranges & Surrounds (Ben's Place)
Monash Oakleigh Community Support and Information Service (MOCSIS)

Grassroots Volunteering Award Winner

TRIBE-MONBULK YOUTH

Tribe-Monbulk Youth focuses on creating a safe, inclusive space for young people.

Each week, up to 90 teens gather at the drop-in service to connect, engage and access support to navigate critical issues such as mental health, substance abuse, homelessness and family violence.

Tribe also strengthens community education by offering free drop-in sessions for parents and community leaders, as well as educational programs for TAFE students.

Run solely by volunteers, Tribe provides a welcoming environment where young people can find support and resources they need to thrive.



Belinda Grooby
Founder, Tribe-Monbulk Youth

Finalists: Action Sweetwater Creek Community Response Australia Friends of the Children Foundation Veterans For Fishing

2024 Volunteering Awards - Nominations

We would like to acknowledge and thank all nominees for their passion, dedication and commitment to their community.

Individual Awards Nominations

Aaron Green	Anne Makhijani	Binita Hada Maskey	Christopher Mar	Dominic Boland
Aayushi Khillan	Anne Monk	Brad Munday	Claire Mouser	Don Marshall
Abdul Farahmad	Anthony White	Brenton Ponza	Colin Pickthall	Donna Levinson-Murray
Abdulmaseeh Feryou	Antonia Arfaras	Bryan Miller	Con Racovalis	Douglas Newberry
Abigail Fidele	Areeba Raja	Campbell Evans	Craig Jackson	Drew Maddison
Adrian Masterman-Smith	Arfa Sarfaraz	Carol Monaghan	Daniel Fleming	Edith James
Afraa Sagor	Ashley Scott	Carol Evans	Daniel Lowinger	Edwin Xu
Aijaz Moinuddin	Aurora Davey	Catherine Couche	David Broadbent	Eileen Bendall
Aimaan Arora	Avi (Oleg) Bendetsky	Chanh P Truong	David McGowan	Eileen Zimmerman
Alexander Young	Bailey Calderon	Charlie Morshead	David Miller	Elana Lewin
Amanda Splatt	Barry Rogers	Chengde Wang	David Sime	Elif Yuksek
Ambrose Strentz	Ben Longden	Cherie McLean	Dawn Delaney	Elizabeth (Libby) Howcroft
Amit Menghani	Beth Burke	Cheryl Cameron	Debbie Van Rhee	Elizabeth Mace
Amy Page	Betty Millett	Chris Christofi	Deepak Vinayak	Elizabeth Reen
Anastasia Zaytseva	Betty Reid	Chris May	Den Lim	Elli Meleck
Andrew Jurrjens	Beverley Rosenberg	Chris Michalopoulos	Devon Rego	Emma Smith
Andrew Williamson	Beverley Waldron	Christine Hanly	Diana Sussman	Emmanuela Amos
Anita Duesterhaus	Bill Hearn	Christine Hill	Diane Walker	Enver Malkic
Ann Andrews	Billy Lister	Christine Tolotchkov	Dick Rogers	Eric Jones

Individual Awards Nominations (cont.)

Evelyn Goldberg
Fiona Quinn
Frank Herbert
Gail Kavanagh
Gavin Hynam
Georgina Bier
Georgina Willis
Gina Poulos
Ginni Kocher
Greg Garlick
Gregory Byrne
Gurpreet Verma
Hans Wright
Hansikaa Sharma
Harm Jager
Harry Marsh
Hector de Santos
Helen Gibson
Helen Bell
Helen Gibson
Helen Mahemoff
Helen Simic
Helen Vinter
Hina Mairaj
Huw Provis

Iain Messer
Ian Stevenson
Indiana Marks
Jade Saligari
Jaia Pate
James McCarthy
Janet Bradley
Jasmine Hose
Jason Watson
Jay de Graaff
Jeanette Kerr
Jenna Webb
Jenni Sherry
Jennifer Clark
Jenny Werner
Jijun Yang
Joan Bradd
John Hawker
John Foster
John Kerr
John Koutras
John MacInnes
John Moore
Jonathon Tan
Joseph Rechichi

Josephine Jones
Josie Alexander
Joy McDermott
Jude Latta
Julian Reynolds
Julie Anne Issacson
Julie Nguyen
Karen Spencer
Karthick Thanigaimani
Kathryn Williams
Kay Crellin
Kaye Jordan
Kayla Vesel
Ken Berry
Kerri Boyd
Kerrigan JR La-Brooy
Kerry Jorgensen
Kevin Willersdorf
Kingsley Ugwumba
Kira Vella
Kirsten Marran
Krizia Garrido Castro
Kuldeep Singh
Kylie Hodor
Kym Irvine

Lachlan Conqueror
Laura Wheeler
Layeeque Nizami
Leeane Mead
Lewis Mason
Libby Petty
Lindy Spicer
Livio Basile
Louis Roller
Louise Andrews
Luca Giannessi
Luke Bowman
Maddie Francis
Maelor Himbury
Maggie Louey
Manjula O'Connor
Mara Bron
Marcus McEwen
Maree Fenech
Margaret Bevan
Margret Sloane
Margretta Fuller
Mark McCudden
Mark Shannon
Mary Holloway

Mary McBride
Mary O'Brien
Mary Patrickson
Matthew Gibney
Maureen Halit
Mel Boak
Melanie Mouser
Melina Schamroth
Melissa Fleming
Mendy Nutovic
Micaela Hanlon
Michael Burke
Michael Delanis
Michael Keith McGarvie
Michael Powderly
Mila Lazarovski
Mitchell Graham
Mona Hanna
Moncy Abraham
Monquie Rogelberg
Mustafa Kouklan
Nancy Emblin
Nasrin Rasoulzadeh
Nawal Moudgil
Ned Mahony

Individual Awards Nominations (cont.)

Neil Smith
Neville Aphoy
Ngai Chung Cheng
Nikki Reynolds
Nina Jayilian
Nishant Sahoo
Noeleen Brown
Norma Wall
Olivia Ashcroft
Olivia Giannios
Pam Glover
Pam Redcliffe
Pamela Cunningham
Patrick Natoli
Paul James
Pauline Rockman
Paxton Turner
Payal Tiwari
Peta-Renae Turnbull
Peter Anstee
Peter Leffler
Peter Levy
Peter Mitchell
Planning Saw
Preeti Dalal

Quinney Brownfield-Hanna
Rachelle Mechielsen
Rahima Ahmed
Ralph Fallows
Randa Beirouti
Ray Rosales
Rebecca Sellers
Reena Rana
Rexford Hockley
Rhea Verma
Richard Hill
Rob Porter
Robert Harrap
Robert Thompson
Rose Habel
Roshani Shrestha
Rosie Elsass
Rosie Italiano
Rosie Keane
Roslyn Brown
Roslyn Devlin
Rupinder Kaur Batra
Russell Bradd
Sabine O'Doherty
Sabine Young

Sahar Ageed
Samantha Bewley
Samuel Graham
Samuel McColl
Sarah Welch
Saranbeer Kaur
Shafiq Ahmed Mohammed
Shally Khanna
Sharma Betanabhatla
Sheena John
Sheila Winter
Shoukry Sidrak
Simon Lewis
Sindy Paulina Hincapie
Sanchez
Sinead Hanlon
Sophia Hooper
Spencer Quinnell
Stacey Odwazny
Stacey Harriage
Stephen James
Stephen Choi
Stephen Cramond
Sue Quartermain
Syed Asad Ali Taqvi

Tammy Nguyen
Tania Pyle
Terry Derham
Terry Warbuton
Thomas Maguire-Nguyen
Tolulope Akinbiyi
Travis Little-Spence
Trevor Eddy
Tui Dewerson-Bogue
Tyrese Walsh
Vaithehi Jananthan
Valerie Wilson
Vanessa Balo
Wally Van Dort
Wayne Mace
Wendy Eldridge
Wendy Falconer
Wendy Wilkinson
Wilfred Reuther
William (Bill) Abley
William Ladds

Organisation Awards Nominations

Accelerated Evolution - The Break

AMES Australia

Ararat Neighbourhood House

Asylum Seeker Resource Center

Australian Plant Society Warrnambool and District Group

Australian Vietnamese Arts

Avalon Centre

Bakhtar Community Organisation

Ballarat Repair Cafe

Baptcare

Bass Coast Landcare Network

Beaumaris Art Group

Bendigo Chinese Association

Berengarra

Beyond Words

Blairgowrie Friends of Mornington Peninsula National Park

Brainwave Australia

Changepreneurs

Colac Area Health

Consultant Pharmacists Australia

Device Donors

Didi Bahini Samaj Victoria (DBSV)

Doveton Show

Dream Harmony

Eildon Park Tennis Club

EV Strengthening Communities

Feed One Feed All (FOFA)

Foodbank

Gethsemane Charity

Golf Australia

Green Hill Lake Development Board

Hawthorn RSL Sub-Branch

IPC Health

Jannat Events

Keeleys Cause

Kids First

Knitted Knockers Australia (Traralgon Branch)

Lort Smith

Maccabi FC Caulfield

Mirboo North Storm Cell Volunteers

Noble Park Community Centre

Park Towers Community Food Pantry

Paynesville Cricket Club

PMI Victorian History Library

Progressing Cobden

Reading Out of Poverty

Reynard Street Neighbourhood House

Rotary Inner Melbourne Emergency Relief
Network Inc. (RIMERN)

Shepparton Search & Rescue Squad

Sorrento Cricket Club

Souper Charity (Jewish Russian Community
Soup Kitchen)

South East Badminton Association

St John Ambulance Vic.

St Leonards Community Care

Sunshine Cowboys Sports Club

The Bridge

Turbans 4 Australia (Victorian Team)

U3A Southern Peninsula

Uniting Vic Tas

Urban Guerrillas

Volunteer West - Australian Multicultural
Community Services

White Ribbon

WYN Fm Radio