

Greater Shepparton City Council

Volunteer Recognition Awards

Celebrating
17 Years

NOMINEE PROFILES 2026



Greater
Shepparton
CITY COUNCIL



We, Greater Shepparton City Council, acknowledge the Yorta Yorta Peoples of the land which now comprises Greater Shepparton, we pay our respect to their tribal elders, we celebrate their continuing culture and we acknowledge the memory of their ancestors.

Award Categories

Bella Ainsworth Young Volunteer (12 to 25 years)

Adult Volunteer

Long Serving Volunteer

Volunteer Team



Order of Ceremony

- Opening – The Wildlings (Simply The Best by Tina Turner)
- Emcees – Arbi Xhuti and Blayne O'Brien
- Acknowledgement to Country – Blayne O'Brien
- Mayor, Councillor Shane Sali
- Keynote Speech – Kaitlyn Martin, Singer/Songwriter
- The Bella Ainsworth Young Volunteer - Award Presentation
- A Message from our Councillors - Video Presentation
- Adult Volunteer – Award Presentation
- Long Serving Volunteer - Award Presentation
- RDA Shepparton – Video Presentation
- Volunteer Team - Award Presentation
- Closing – Kaitlyn Martin (We are the World by USA for Africa)

Please note: *Information in this booklet was correct at the time of printing and wording was taken from the Volunteer Recognition Award nominations that were submitted.*



Musical Entertainment

The Wildlings

Emcees

Arbi Xhuti



Blayne O'Brien





Arbi Xhuti is a proud Australian-born Albanian, born and raised in Shepparton. He is deeply connected to his culture and actively performs traditional folk dances at events like the Shepparton Albanian Harvest Festival. This provides an opportunity where he can celebrate and share his culture with the wider community.

Arbi dedicates his time volunteering within his school, Greater Shepparton Secondary College, as a second year Multicultural Student Leader, as well as contributing to the community through the Amplify Youth Committee.

He has high aspirations and passion to lead and bring meaningful changes that will make positive impacts within the Shepparton community.

Blayne O'Brien is a proud Yorta Yorta man, who has grown up in Shepparton.

At the moment, Blayne is working as a lifeguard, which keeps him on his toes while he looks out for others. This is a job where he has learned a lot about responsibility and teamwork.

Blayne is also currently completing his Certificate III in Business at Notre Dame College. This has given him the chance to set himself up for more opportunities down the track, although he admits it can be a bit of a juggle balancing work and study.

In the future Blayne aspires to work as a teacher or social worker, which will give him an opportunity to give back to his community.

Acknowledgement to Country - Blayne O'Brien



Mayor Councillor Shane Sali



Welcome to the Greater Shepparton Volunteer Recognition Awards Ceremony. Congratulations to all of tonight's nominees across our four award categories. This evening, we come together to acknowledge and thank the volunteers who make a meaningful contribution to our community.

On behalf of Greater Shepparton City Council, I extend our sincere appreciation for the work you do within our local organisations and community groups. Whether you are new to volunteering or have given many years of service, your contributions help strengthen our community and uplift those around you.

I hope you enjoy tonight's celebration and thank you once again for the important role you play in helping to make Greater Shepparton a better place for all.

Cr Shane Sali
Mayor
Greater Shepparton City Council



Keynote Speaker

Kaitlyn Martin

Kaitlyn Martin is a passionate singer who appeared on *The Voice* in 2024, turning three chairs and choosing Adam Lambert as her coach. Alongside her music, she has dedicated time to volunteer work and is starting university this year to study occupational therapy, hoping to combine her love of music with helping others.





Bella Ainsworth Young Volunteer Award Nominees

The Bella Ainsworth Young Volunteer Award

The Bella Ainsworth Young Volunteer Award is named in honour of Bella Ainsworth, a fierce advocate, champion and supporter of youth engagement in our community, who sadly lost her short battle with cancer in 2024 at just 30 years of age.

Bella's work and passion for better outcomes for young people in our community along with her wonderful ability to connect with youth, made Bella a well-respected and trusted ally whose dedication improved the lives of many.

It is our hope that young volunteers will be inspired by Bella's life, advocacy, and volunteerism.





Genesis Dal

This nomination recognises an outstanding volunteer with the Amplify Youth Committee who has made a significant creative and personal contribution to youth-led initiatives.

Talented, modest, and deeply supportive of others, Genesis consistently applies her design skills to strengthen community connection and youth engagement. A key highlight of her volunteering journey was winning the Face of the Youth project, where she created a mascot now used across youth council-led projects. Since joining Amplify, she has contributed to the Mosaic Festival, Disruption Immersive Art Exhibition launch, Artist Engagement campaign for Converge on Goulburn, and has produced multiple posters and a dedicated merchandise design series for the committee. Her work has enhanced visibility, professionalism, and pride in Amplify projects.

Beyond her technical ability, she fosters a positive, inclusive environment by encouraging and supporting fellow volunteers. She deserves this award for her creativity, generosity, and meaningful impact on youth participation and expression across Greater Shepparton.



Gerard (Gerry) McCarthy

Gerry McCarthy is an outstanding 18-year-old volunteer who has demonstrated exceptional commitment to serving the Tatura and Greater Shepparton community since the age of 15.

He actively contributes his time to the Rotary Club of Tatura, including recycling initiatives and International Dairy Week, the Lions Club of Tatura supporting TatFest, the Tatura Football Netball Club through working bees, canteen and club support, and Bohollow Wildlife Sanctuary assisting with wildlife care and conservation.

Gerry is known for his reliability, strong work ethic, and willingness to help wherever needed, including early morning volunteering and physically demanding tasks. He understands that even small, consistent contributions can make a significant difference to the community.

Through his leadership, maturity and genuine commitment to helping others, Gerry strengthens the organisations he serves and is a highly respected and valued young member of the community.



Guneet Buttar

This nomination recognises an outstanding young volunteer who contributes extensively to the Amplify Youth Committee at Greater Shepparton City Council, while also actively serving her wider community through Girl Guides and the arts.

She is known for being open, responsive, highly responsible and consistently reliable. Key highlights include her role as MC at the 2025 Furphy Literary Awards, stage manager for Mosaic Festival and the Winter City Market talent show, and artist coordinator for the youth showcase at Converge on Goulburn. She has also represented her community by carrying the flag at the Tatura Australia Day ceremony and performed as the lead in a local theatre production.

Her leadership, willingness to take on responsibility, and genuine enthusiasm for new challenges make her an exceptional role model. She deserves this award for her sustained impact, professionalism and dedication to empowering young people and strengthening community connection across Greater Shepparton.



Noor Mgoter

Noor has participated, and continues to participate, in a range of youth targeted community events. She is committed towards creating safe and inclusive events that are accessible to all of Shepparton's youth.

She actively promotes awareness and inclusion of diversity, recognising the wealth that multicultural youth bring to the Greater Shepparton area. Noor is passionate about helping people and bringing people together as an expression of joy, community and faith.

She appreciates being part of the Greater Shepparton Community and wants to give back so that all youth have opportunities to feel the same sense of acceptance, appreciation and belonging.

Rowan Farren-Parnell

Rowan Farren-Parnell is currently the chairperson for the Mooroopna Steering Committee, which has been a driver in securing funding towards KidsTown, as well as helping others have their voices heard.

He is heavily involved with the local community and cares greatly about the future of the next generations and for those around him.

He has also been heavily involved in other community-based projects over the last four years including as working as chair for the Mooroopna Flood Recovery Committee and being a board member for the Mooroopna Rotary Club.



Ruby Cooper

Ruby Cooper is a young adult volunteer who supports the Book Buddies reading program at a local primary school. Ruby has volunteered consistently for six months, continuing her commitment from the previous year, and provides weekly one-on-one reading support to students. She listens to students read their reader books, offering encouragement, patience, and positive reinforcement that helps build confidence and improve literacy skills.

Ruby is a reliable and dedicated volunteer who demonstrates strong leadership and professionalism. As a young adult, she serves as a positive role model, showing students the importance of commitment and kindness. Students look forward to her visits and value the supportive relationships she has built with them. Ruby's consistent presence and positive impact make her a deserving nominee for the Bella Ainsworth Young Volunteer Award.



Adult Volunteer Award Nominees

Aaron Johnstone

Aaron volunteers in GV Pride's hub on a weekly basis, offering a warm welcome to LGBTIQ+ visitors, allies and customers alike.

Aaron also assists on the pride merch stall/marquee at many events including GSCC's Summer City Market and other markets and events across the region.

Aaron assists every day, every year, on the charity Christmas gift-wrapping stall in the Maude Street Mall, ensuring families have their presents carefully packaged up for a gold coin donation.

Aaron developed a regular board games day for LGBTIQ+ people living with disability at the GV Pride Hub. This is an open community event where individuals can attend and support the event and each other, fostering and strengthening connections and skills.

Aaron goes above and beyond, ensuring LGBTIQ+ people and allies feel seen, valued and helped with whatever it is they may need.



Bernadette Brooks

Bernadette's kind and gentle demeanour has enabled families attending the Family Haven to build strong trust and respect, resulting in her becoming one of the very few trusted adults in many parents' lives. She turns up every week with a warm smile and genuine care, helping families feel welcome and fostering a strong sense of belonging. This same dedication is evident in the Book Buddies program, where she arrives each week ready to listen to students read and engage with them. Students eagerly look forward to her visits and are always keen to be the first to read with her.

Bernadette has made a significant difference to many families and students, often becoming the person that they feel most comfortable confiding in. Parents and students trust her with their stories and seek her guidance and support. Her experience and insight have also been invaluable to Family Haven staff supporting children's development.



Brenda Dean

Brenda currently volunteers with FamilyCare and the Country Women's Association (Potters). Brenda is a valuable volunteer, who consistently uses her broad skill set, critical thinking and kindness to make a meaningful difference to her community.

Brenda was the first volunteer to become involved with the client transport role for the Tuning into Kids Program at FamilyCare. Brenda provided valuable feedback to staff for small improvements, ensuring the transport ran smoothly, removing this barrier for multicultural community to attend. Brenda's leadership, flexibility, adaptability and commitment in the initial stages were integral to then expanding the volunteer team. Brenda consistently builds positive relationships in her volunteer role and her passion for the multicultural community to thrive is evident.

Brenda enthusiastically takes on many volunteer roles, most recently as Secretary of CWA Potters. Brenda's generosity, ability to adapt and manage complex situations is valuable to our community and admired by many.



Harriet Stagg

Harriet has been a volunteer at Shepparton Foodshare's busy Warehouse and Distribution centre for over 8 years, working 3 days per week. The work she does is physically challenging, high pressured at times, and has competing demands during the busy service periods. Harriet is a such a valued and trusted part of the Foodshare team, who others naturally turn to for support.

Shepparton Foodshare are pleased to nominate Harriet in recognition of her outstanding leadership and dedication to people experiencing hardship across our community. We are so incredibly appreciative of her hard work and dedication to the work we do and would love her to be acknowledged for her service by receiving a Greater Shepparton Volunteer Recognition Award.

Jane Tremellen

Jane has played a vital role in helping young people in Shepparton for quite a long time.

These have included The Scouting Association doing Joey Scouts for the past 34 years, and CRC Church with their Sunday School and Youth group. (just to name a few).

Jane has put in an astounding number of unpaid hours, over many years, to improve and better the lives of our young people in Shepparton.

We show our appreciation to Jane for her dedication and time to helping our young people in our wonderful town.



Leigh Bamford

Leigh has volunteered in several organisations, such as LGBTIQ+ in leadership, Victorian Council of Churches Emergency Ministries in Pastoral Care and Community Chaplain, and GV Health, to name a few.

Leigh deserves this award because he has always given 100 per cent in every group he has supported and helped with. Leigh has shown compassion and care with everyone he has helped. The time and effort he has put in, deserves to be recognised.

Leigh thoroughly enjoys every group he helps, always wants what is best for every person that he has come alongside and supported.

Mary Coad

It is wonderful community members like Mary Coad that are the backbone of small communities. Mary works in many organisations in Toolamba, quietly, but continuously in the background creating changes that benefit all community members, most of whom don't even know it.

Mary is a generous, quiet achiever with great passion for her community, and the time and commitment she has given to her community is unquantifiable.

Mary deserves to be celebrated, not only for the many hours of work, but the genuine passion she shares for the Little Town, with a Big Heart.



Michael Rowe

Michael is a valued volunteer at the Mary Coram Unit at GV Health.

Due to Michael's own experiences as a new amputee, which included feelings of isolation and not feeling that people could really understand what he was going through following having his leg amputated, he was determined to ensure that others had true peer support, rather than medical practitioners being the only supports.

Michael gives freely of his time to ensure the mental isolation that new amputees experience is lessened and provides them not just with advice, but with his own experiences and how he has navigated them. He ensures that they understand that the biggest battle is the battle of the mind. The physiotherapy and rehabilitation will take care of the physical recovery, however the mental struggle is arguably more important as it will influence their physical recovery and return to the new normal of their lives.



Peter Shields

Peter uses his skill set as a self-employed glazier to enhance his volunteering commitments to several different not-for-profit groups within the Dookie and district community. He is known for his reliability and hard work and regularly supports individuals and community events with tasks such as setting up community spaces to ensure these important events run smoothly.

Since 2011 Peter has been the president of the Dookie Agricultural Show and leads a great team to provide this family friendly, old style agricultural farming show each October.

Peter has been a continuous CFA volunteer since he was 16 years old, first with Dookie Rural Fire brigade and currently with Currawa Fire Brigade. Receiving a CFA National Emergency Medal in recognition of 30 years service.

With his unwavering commitment to volunteering for so many different groups, in areas requiring grass roots action, our district is a stronger and more connected community because of him.



Long Serving Volunteer Award Nominees

Giovanna Busiello

Giovanna deserves this award as her impact goes beyond 'helping out'. She truly changes lives of her group members and those less fortunate.

From helping the homeless by giving up her time to crochet squares that are turned into blankets and beanies, to the Shepparton Italian Women's Group where she strengthened the community bonds, inspiring others to get involved with the group so it can still carry on for the next generation. Due to her declining health, in January 2026 and after 42 years of volunteering, Giovanna stepped down as President.

Her long, outstanding commitment demonstrates genuine passion, selflessness, humility and devotion truly worthy of recognition.

June Zellely

Envoy June has continually volunteered with The Salvation Army in Shepparton for 40 years. Over those years she has held various roles, but through all of them, has exhibited a passion for people, a belief that every person is of value, and that there is always hope.

In one of her current volunteer roles, Community Connector at Salvos Community Connect, she is often approached by people who remember her impact in the lives of their parents or grandparents.



Kay Ball

Kay Ball has been a member of the Murchison & District Historical Society for 37 years. From 2001 until 2015, Kay was Secretary for the Society and since 2015 has been President. Kay is passionate about preserving local history for future generations. Kay has been instrumental in organising many events related to the Historic Society. The two recent standouts are the Murchison Meteorite 55th anniversary celebration weekend and organizing the Hans-Wolter von Gruenewalt art exhibition at the Shepparton Art Museum.

Kay is excellent at promoting the town of Murchison at every opportunity, whether it is on radio or her writing for local magazines and newsletters.

Kay is also an active member of both the Murchison Planning Committee and the Greater Shepparton City Council Heritage Advisory Committee. Kay was previously a member of both the Murchison DP Jones Nursing Home Management Committee and the Wybalena Retirement Village Management Committee.

Len Taylor

Len Taylor has been an active member of the Goulburn Valley Woodworkers Club since 1995. In that period, he has taken on every role required, both formal and informal. He is well respected in the club for his skills in all types of woodwork. However, his greatest contributions have been to the ongoing development of other members and the club's flagship event - the annual wood show.



Louis D'Amore

Louis has given 46 years of his life as a volunteer CFA firefighter with the Shepparton East Fire Brigade. He helped start the brigade and spent several years as Captain, helping guide it as it grew.

Over the years, Louis has always made time to support the brigade. He has recruited new firefighters, shared his knowledge, and worked hard to keep the brigade moving forward.

Louis is still actively involved today. He continues to attend meetings and plays an important role on the Brigade Management Team alongside the General Secretary. His long-term commitment and dedication have made a lasting difference to the brigade and the local community.



Luke Commisso

Luke's selfless dedication to the Country Fire Authority (CFA) has spanned over 20 years, but his most profound impact occurred whilst on his way to an emergency.

While responding to a fire call, Luke encountered a teenage boy who had crashed his motorbike and was in critical condition. Without hesitation, Luke pivoted from his original mission to provide life-saving first aid. His rapid assessment and immediate medical intervention were cited as the primary reasons the young man survived.

Luke's actions embody the spirit of volunteerism, the ability to remain calm under pressure and the instinct to protect life above all else. His bravery and quick thinking have left an indelible mark on our community, making him a truly deserving candidate for this honour.



Maree Williams

Maree has given more than 15 years of outstanding volunteer service across St Mary's School Mooroopna, St Mary's Parish Mooroopna, the Shepparton Swans, and now at Rodney Park supporting Mons Peter Jeffrey.

Her contribution has positively impacted the wellbeing and opportunities of countless students and community members. At school, she provides ongoing care and support before, during, and after hours, at events, extra-curricular activities, camps, and carnivals. She coordinates first aid and oversees student health needs with diligence and compassion. Maree is trusted to manage complex situations calmly and seeks guidance from leadership when needed.

Within the Parish, she is an icon of service, supporting those in need, building community connection through Bingo, coordinating debutante balls, and continuing faithful assistance in retirement ministry.

Her humility, reliability, and generosity make her an exceptional and deeply valued volunteer and a very exceptional nomination for this award.



Matthew Dwyer

Matthew has made an outstanding contribution to the Shepparton East Fire Brigade through his service as a volunteer CFA firefighter. As a founding member and former Captain, he played a key role in establishing the brigade and shaping its early direction. Matthew has been actively involved in recruiting and training firefighters, ensuring the brigade is well prepared to support and protect the Shepparton East community.

He is a committed member of the brigade, consistently attending meetings and contributing to discussions as part of the Brigade Management Team. Matthew regularly raises and works through matters of importance, demonstrating his ongoing dedication to the brigade and its operations.



Paul Archer

Paul has dedicated the past 16 years to volunteering for GV Health through his remarkable battery recycling initiative, transforming unwanted lead-based batteries into vital funding for the Child and Adolescent Unit. Known across the Goulburn Valley as the 'Battery Man', Paul has raised an extraordinary \$880,000 to date, directly supporting essential equipment, therapeutic spaces and programs that enhance care and outcomes for young patients and their families.

Beyond the tangible health benefits, Paul's work has united the community around a shared purpose, supporting the wellbeing of local children.

Even while facing his own health challenges, Paul demonstrated exceptional resilience, adapting his volunteering model by establishing a central battery drop-off point and mobilising volunteers to ensure the initiative continued.

His unwavering commitment, innovation and deep community spirit make him a truly deserving recipient of this volunteer award. Paul's impact is profound, enduring and driven entirely by generosity and heart.



Wendy Hunt

Wendy is an extraordinary volunteer that the Shepparton, Goulburn Valley community should be proud of. She has dedicated over 40 years of volunteering to the community to support families who are vulnerable and in need for support. Wendy's compassion, empathy and kindness is evident in how she is proactive to pass on her knowledge to new volunteers and staff at the Caroline Chisholm Society.

Caroline Chilsholm Society say they are very fortunate and grateful to have Wendy as their longest serving volunteer and her work is a testament to the true spirit of volunteering, it is both selfless and compassionate.



Volunteer Team Award Nominees

Amplify Youth Committee

The Amplify Youth Committee (nominated twice for this award) is a passionate team of young volunteers who ensure the voices of Greater Shepparton's youth are heard, valued and acted upon. They co-design meaningful events and opportunities that celebrate creativity, culture and community connection—including the Youth Talent Quest, which showcases local talent, and their key contributions to the Mosaic Festival, where young people play an active role in sharing stories, traditions and performances.

Amplify reaches across cultural groups, age groups and interest areas to ensure no young person is left behind. Their leadership creates safe spaces for expression, builds confidence in emerging artists and leaders, and strengthens community pride.

Their work has significantly increased youth participation in local events and has created long-lasting pathways for young people to influence decisions and shape the activities they want to see. Amplify embodies the true spirit of youth empowerment, inclusion and community contribution.



Christmas For Those Alone Inc.

Christmas for Those Alone Inc., commenced in 2000 with the goal of providing a meal and companionship to community members in need of support and companionship on Christmas Day.

The Christmas For Those Alone Volunteer Committee and team have continued this legacy by donating thousands of hours of their time at monthly meetings, fundraising ventures, liaising with local businesses, lunch on Christmas Day and throughout the year to provide this service.

In the year 2000, there were 54 guests in attendance at the inaugural Christmas Day lunch whilst in 2025 over 400 guests attended. Records show that numbers are increasing every year, demonstrating the huge need for this service in the community, which is only made possible by the sponsorship of local businesses and the dedicated group of hard working volunteers who give their time to make this possible.



Community Accessibility

The Community Accessibility Volunteer Community Drivers are a dedicated team of 25 volunteers who generously give their time to support people across Greater Shepparton. Operating five cars and two buses, they provide safe, reliable transport for older residents and people living with disability, helping them attend medical appointments, access essential services, and stay connected with their community.

Beyond transport, this team offers something equally important: reassurance, companionship, and genuine human connection. For many clients, a familiar driver and a friendly conversation make a meaningful difference to their day. Their collective commitment ensures that individuals who may otherwise face isolation can maintain independence and continue participating in community life.

Working together with care, professionalism, and compassion, the Community Accessibility Volunteer Community Drivers quietly strengthen the social fabric of Greater Shepparton, one journey at a time.



Craft for a Cause

Craft for a Cause is a dedicated volunteer group that uses creativity, skill, and compassion to support vulnerable members of the community. The team generously gives their time to knit and craft high-quality handmade items that provide warmth, comfort and dignity to people experiencing hardship. Their work supports individuals and families in need through local services, delivering both practical assistance and a powerful message of care and connection.

The group demonstrates outstanding teamwork, reliability, and commitment, consistently producing and donating items despite limited resources and varying volunteer availability. By working collaboratively, sharing skills, and adapting to changing community needs, Craft for a Cause ensures their support remains meaningful and responsive.

This team deserves recognition for their selfless service, community spirit, and the positive impact they continue to make. Their efforts strengthen social connection, promote kindness, and embody the true values of volunteering and community care.



FNCC crew (First Nations Community Connections Crew)

The First Nations Community Connection (FNCC) Crew shows up consistently and authentically for themselves, their communities and for Headspace Shepparton. They generously use their lived and living experience to contribute to meaningful and considered events and activities that create positive outcomes for First Nations young people and communities.

The team has developed some incredible initiatives, such as the Mob Wellbeing Workshops, and has partnered with ASHE, Munarra Centre and Balitja Woka to deliver activities and events for young First Nations people that are grounded in culture, connection and learning.

The crew shows up monthly because they can see how creating these experiences and spaces for young mob is important and meaningful - their mantra is 'for mob, by mob.'



Goulburn Valley Pregnancy and Counselling Support

The Goulburn Valley Pregnancy and Counselling Support Team is a warm, dedicated group of locals who quietly make a huge difference every week. They're the friendly faces receiving donations, sorting through clothes and baby items, and putting together practical packs that help families doing it tough.

This year, they really shone during the Save Shepparton campaign. When the service was at risk of closing, they didn't just keep the sorting room running — they helped spread the word, talked to locals, encouraged donations, and rallied support that helped keep the doors open.

They deal with all sorts of challenges, from big donation surges to last-minute requests, and they always handle it with teamwork, good humour, and a whole lot of heart. Their commitment ensures families in the Goulburn Valley get timely, dignified support when they need it most.

This team truly embodies community spirit, and they deserve to be recognised.



Goulburn Valley Quilters Inc.

Goulburn Valley Quilters Inc. established in May 1985 and are an extraordinary group of volunteers who have been making and donating handmade quilts to our Dialysis Unit for 15 years. Meeting twice a month and working many additional hours at home, they dedicate 12-15 hours or more to each quilt. Approximately 60 quilts are donated each year.

Not only do the quilts provide warmth during treatment they brighten up the ward and bring comfort to patients who attend dialysis three times a week. If a patient passes away, the quilt is gifted to the family as a keepsake offering lasting comfort during their grief.

The Goulburn Valley Quilters commitment, generosity and quiet dedication have made a meaningful difference to hundreds of patients and families. They embody compassion in action and are incredibly deserving of recognition for their long-standing contribution to Goulburn Valley Health and our community.

Greater Shepparton Visitor Centre

The Greater Shepparton Visitor Centre deserve to be recognised for their ongoing effort in promoting our region and beyond.

The team provide a valuable service to boost our local economy by promoting Shepparton and the Goulburn Valley positively. They are a selfless, passionate group of volunteers who are proud of their region.

They are statisticians, storytellers, that smiley face, which keeps the visitor intrigued and wanting to return to explore.



MEAC (Mooroopna Education and Activity Centre) Volunteers

The volunteers at MEAC are the heart of our Neighbourhood House, consistently demonstrating kindness, compassion, and a genuine commitment to the community. They create a welcoming and inclusive environment where everyone feels valued, safe, and supported. Their knowledge of local services ensures that community members can access the help they need, while their warmth and friendliness turn MEAC into a trusted hub for connection and support.

Our volunteers navigate challenges with grace, good humour, and resilience, responding to complex situations with empathy and professionalism. They work seamlessly as a team, offering guidance, encouragement, and practical assistance to those experiencing hardship, isolation, or uncertainty.

Through their dedication, MEAC has become more than a service provider—it is a place where people know they belong. Their contribution strengthens the community every day and exemplifies the spirit of selfless service.

For their unwavering commitment, impact, and heart, our volunteers truly deserve this award.



Merrigum Community Planning Group

This nomination recognises a dedicated team of Community Planning Group volunteers who consistently demonstrate leadership, commitment and strong sense of community responsibility. The volunteers work collaboratively to identify local needs and turn ideas into inclusive, practical initiatives that strengthen connection and wellbeing.

The team has delivered significant achievements, including advocating for basketball court, delivering successful events, and securing funding to organise highly valued celebrations in the community. They have limited resources, yet they manage it effectively and efficiently and remain solution focused, flexible and reliable.

OLLY Vollie team

OLLY (Opportunities and Life Links for Young people) is an after-school program for high school aged young people, and the OLLY Vollies are an integral part of program delivery.

The team of OLLY volunteers displays invaluable attributes not limited to patience, kindness, curiosity, adaptability, and resilience. Using their experience, wisdom, knowledge, and authenticity to guide young people and form healthy relationships through creativity, cooking, games, and presence.

Each OLLY Vollie brings their whole selves into the space, allowing young people the opportunity to connect with people from varied walks of life in a safe and sustainable way. As well as keeping the program running smoothly, supporting activities, preparing and cooking dinners and treats, connecting to supports and services and modelling responsibility.



Oncology Support Volunteer Team

The Oncology Support Volunteers embody compassion, dedication and reliability providing invaluable support to patients, families, carers and staff within the Oncology Unit.

Their daily contributions range from serving meals, preparing information packs and managing supplies to offering comfort, conversation and reassurance to patients undergoing treatment. By creating a welcoming and supportive environment they allow clinical staff to focus fully on medical care.

The volunteer team's adaptability, emotional resilience and commitment to filling shifts for each other ensure uninterrupted support. Their compassionate presence enhances patient well-being, improves staff efficiency and strengthens the unit's sense of community.

The Oncology support volunteers consistently go above and beyond reflecting the highest values of empathy, teamwork and service making them truly deserving of this recognition.



Orange Sky Shepparton

The Orange Sky Shepparton team is a small but mighty group of volunteers committed to positively connecting their community. In 2025, working in partnership with The Family Haven Mooroopna, part of the Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project, they delivered 139 shifts, completing 582 loads of washing and providing 782 hours of conversation to people experiencing homelessness and hardship.

Although operating across three weekly shifts, the team functions as one interconnected crew, stepping in for one another to ensure the service runs consistently, with only one shift cancelled all year.

Through strong collaboration, reliability and a welcoming, non-judgemental approach, they create a safe space where anyone in need of support can access free laundry or simply find connection. Their teamwork and community spirit make them a deserving Volunteer Team nominee.



Shepparton East Fire Brigade

The Shepparton East Fire Brigade volunteer team is nominated for their exceptional dedication, bravery, and community spirit in safeguarding the region. As a crucial emergency response unit, this team has demonstrated outstanding commitment, often going above and beyond their duty to protect lives, property, and local infrastructure.

Key highlights include their rapid and effective response to critical incidents, consistent engagement in community fire safety education, and rigorous, ongoing training to ensure peak operational readiness. Their resilience in challenging conditions and collaborative approach to emergency management have been instrumental in fostering a safer community.

The team deserves this award for their unwavering professionalism and voluntary service, providing essential security to the Shepparton East area. Their selflessness, teamwork, and dedication to protecting others exemplify the true spirit of volunteerism and make them highly deserving of this recognition.



Shepparton RSL Appeals Co-ordinators - Bruce and Sandy Davis

Bruce and Sandy work tirelessly in co-ordinating the RSL Anzac and Remembrance Day Appeals, which they have been undertaking for the past 11 years. During these campaigns they work long hours, seven days per week, and their (recorded) volunteer hours in the 2025 Year totalled 703 hours.

The Co-ordinators and their team of volunteer sellers surpassed \$1 Million, which goes towards assisting Veterans in need of assistance. These funds are utilised for various needs of Veterans, for example; financial assistance, short term accommodation, transport for medical appointments, emergency food, assistance with children's education, etc.



Soroptimist International Shepparton Inc.

With over 55 years of dedicated volunteering in our community, Soroptimist International Shepparton is committed to improving the lives of women and girls across the Greater Shepparton community. Through advocacy, education and practical support, the team works tirelessly to promote gender equality, safety and opportunity for those experiencing disadvantage.

Key highlights include successful fund-raising initiatives, delivering of educational scholarships, support for women facing family violence, homeless women, and strong partnerships with the local organizations to respond to emerging community needs. Members contribute diverse skills, compassion and lived experience, enabling the team to manage challenges and deliver sustainable outcomes.

What sets Soroptimist International Shepparton apart is its unwavering commitment to service, collaboration and empowerment. The team consistently turns care into action, creating lasting positive change for individuals, families and the wider community. This dedication, impact and leadership make Soroptimist International Shepparton highly deserving of recognition through this volunteer award.



South Shepparton Community Centre Inc.

The volunteer staff at South Shepparton Community Centre are at the forefront of the community when they enter the premises. As each of them live locally and understand the challenges that face the community. Every person who attends the Centre receives exceptional service and care thanks to the volunteers. For so many, life is challenging and navigating it can seem insurmountable. For those people to see a smiling face and hear a friendly voice, it can make a huge difference to their day and their life.

Without the support and dedication of the volunteer staff, the Community Centre would not be able to operate, and for this, South Shepparton Community Centre are truly grateful and proud to be associated with them all.



Vision Australia Volunteer Radio News Reading Team

The Vision Australia Volunteer Radio News Reader Team are integral to keeping the community informed, particularly for individuals who are blind, have low vision, or cannot access printed materials. Their dedication ensures that local news, events, and key content are accessible through volunteer-read programs, fostering inclusion and independence.

Despite challenges such as a building ownership change and increased competition for volunteers, the team has shown resilience, adapting to maintain their essential service. They have taken on additional responsibilities, demonstrating an unwavering commitment to breaking isolation and bridging the information gap. Their passion and teamwork ensure that no one in the community is left behind.

The Vision Australia's Volunteer Radio News Team's tireless efforts, adaptability, and dedication to service make them highly deserving of the Award. Their work significantly impacts the lives of many, reinforcing the power of volunteering in strengthening communities.



We Listen

We Listen Suicide Loss Support Group is a dedicated volunteer team providing compassionate, peer-led support to individuals and families grieving suicide loss across regional Victoria. Facilitating regular groups, the team creates safe, understanding spaces where people can share their experiences without judgement. Their work reduces isolation, breaks down stigma and ensures that no one faces suicide bereavement alone.

The volunteers' lived-experience leadership, trauma-informed approach and strong community partnerships have made We Listen a trusted and vital support network. Their commitment, empathy and consistency have brought hope, connection and healing to countless people. For these reasons, We Listen is a deserving nominee for the Greater Shepparton Volunteer Team Award.



Your Year to Volunteer – Video Presentation

Your Year to Volunteer Videographer & Photographer:

Digital Journey Photography - Jacob Dedman



Your Year to Volunteer participants:

Jenny Grant



Ray Donnan





Jessica Bentley, Erin Mohi, & Lana Ingram

Shepparton Riding for Disabled provides equine-assisted programs which offer individuals with disabilities the chance to grow in confidence, strength, and well-being.

Run by volunteers, Shepparton RDA believe in the importance of inclusion and the joy that comes from working together.





THANK YOU!

**Greater Shepparton City Council
acknowledges, recognises and thanks
all volunteers that give their time
throughout the municipality.**