



VOLUNTEERING AWARDS

Canberra Region

HONOURING EXCEPTIONAL VOLUNTEERING

2026

NOMINATION GUIDE





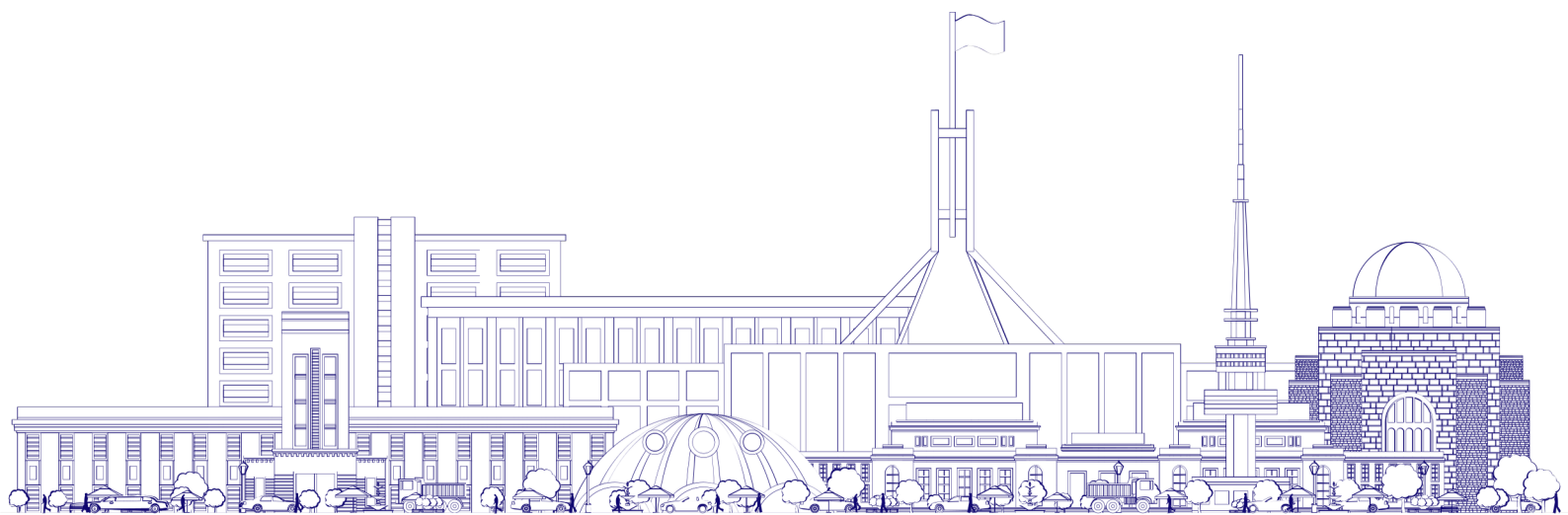
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

VolunteeringACT acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as the traditional custodians of the Canberra Region and recognises any other peoples or families with connection to this Country. We acknowledge and respect their vital ongoing contributions to the community and are committed to reconciliation. We will continue to walk alongside First Nations Peoples and embrace the traditions, stories, and wisdoms of the oldest continuing cultures in the world.

This document was created on Ngunnawal Country.

VolunteeringACT acknowledges volunteers of all ages, abilities, genders, and sexualities, and from all cultures. Their skills, expertise, and time are critical to delivering services and programs, and making Canberra a better place to live.

We also acknowledge the contribution of volunteer involving organisations that contribute to the health and wellbeing of our community.



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ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORT

VolunteeringACT is committed to making this nomination process accessible for everybody.

- To receive this guide in a larger print, contact our events team on 02 6251 4060.
- For free translation support, contact Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) at 131 450.
- For free support for people who are d/Deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech communication difficulties, contact the National Relay Service at 131 677 and then ask for 133 427.



DEFINITIONS

In this guide, we define the terms volunteer, nominator, nominee and Canberra Region as follows:

- **Volunteer:** An individual who gives their time willingly for common good and without financial gain.
- **Nominator:** An individual or organisation who submits a nomination form about a volunteer for the awards.
- **Nominee:** A volunteer, volunteer team, or organisation that is being recommended or put forward for the awards.
- **Canberra Region:** We consider the Canberra Region to be quite wide however, volunteers can be nominated from the south coast, Queanbeyan, Yass, Cooma, Goulburn, Wagga, Narooma etc to recognise their impact on our region.



KEY UPDATES IN 2026

- Self nominations will **not** be accepted.
- Responses to selection criteria for nominations can be submitted in audio/video format as well as in written form. However, key information on the written nomination form **must** be completed to provide contact information of the nominator and nominee, nominee photograph, and nominee brief bio for the Canberra's Choice Awards.
- Guidelines for the nominee photographs have been updated.
- All nominees are eligible to be named Volunteer of the Year. The Canberra Region Volunteer of the Year will be the ACT nominee to the Australian Volunteer of the Year Award in May 2027.



CONTACT DETAILS

VolunteeringACT events team

- **Email:** events@volunteeringact.org.au
- **Phone:** 02 6251 4060
- **Mobile:** 0493 350 005
- **Support hours:** Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm



ABOUT THE AWARDS

The Volunteering Awards, Canberra Region are an annual celebration for volunteers in the ACT and surrounds, established in 1991.

This premier event makes stories of spirit, kindness, innovation, inclusion, and resilience visible to our whole community.

The awards are held in recognition of International Volunteer Day, celebrated annually on 5 December.

VolunteeringACT invites you to nominate your friends, family, and colleagues for the 2026 Volunteering Awards, Canberra Region!



KEY DATES FOR 2026 AWARDS

- **Nominations open**
Tuesday 1 September 2026
 - **Nominations close**
Monday 12 October 2026
 - **Voting open for Canberra's Choice Award**
Monday 19 October 2026
 - **Voting close for Canberra's Choice Award**
Monday 9 November 2026
 - **Awards ceremony**
6.30pm, Thursday 3 December 2026
-



IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR ALL NOMINATORS

- Volunteers or volunteer teams who were nominated in previous years can be nominated again; however, they must be actively volunteering in the last 12 months.
- Nominations can be submitted for more than one volunteer and/or volunteer team. Please submit a separate nomination form for each nominee.
- A nominee can be nominated for more than one award category. Please submit a separate nomination form for each category.
- No nominations are required for the Canberra's Choice Award and the Volunteer of the Year Award. All nominations received in other award categories are automatically eligible for these two awards.
- The winner for the Canberra's Choice Award is chosen by public voting and the selection panel determines the winner/highly commended recipients for all other categories.
- The selection panel may consider a nomination for a different category if they deem it more appropriate.
- All nominees (except award winners and highly commended recipients) will receive a certificate of recognition. These can be collected at the end of the ceremony from the registration desk.
- VolunteeringACT will not accept responsibility for lost, late, incomplete, or incorrectly submitted nominations. The nominations close 5pm, Monday, 12 October 2026.



VOLUN
CAN

International
Volunteer Day

Volunteering ACT
an inclusive Canberra

HIGHLY COMMENDED
Kathleen Macdonald

HIGHLY COMMENDED
Kathleen Macdonald

HIGHLY COMMENDED
Chloe Wallace
Community Media Australia

HIGHLY COMMENDED

HIGHLY COMMENDED

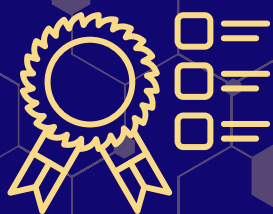
2025 VOLUNTEERING AWARDS, CANBERRA REGION

Volunteering
an inclusive Canberra



MORAY & AGNEV
LAWYERS





AWARD CATEGORIES

There are nine prestigious award categories to recognise diverse forms of volunteer excellence.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AWARD

This award recognises an individual or volunteer team who has made an exceptional contribution to support individuals and communities during personal or community crises, such as the cost of living crisis or natural disasters. The nominee demonstrates resilience, problem-solving skills, and a strong commitment to the cause.

For example, a volunteer who has provided food relief during emergencies, such as fires or floods; volunteers or teams who have offered online or phone support to people facing crises like family or domestic violence or mental health challenges; or volunteers who have assisted in organising, coordinating, or managing essential resources, such as distributing hygiene parcels, arranging emergency housing, or collecting donated food.

This award applies to volunteers in any sector, including food, housing, emergency and crisis, wellbeing, and mental health support.

YOUNG VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD

This award recognises an individual (aged between 12 and 25) or volunteer team who has shown outstanding dedication at a young age to volunteering within the Canberra Region. The nominee demonstrates a strong spirit of service, inspiring others through their enthusiasm and passion for social change.

For nominees under 18 years, we require parental consent to accept the nomination. For team nominations, at least half of the team members should be in this age bracket to be eligible for this award.

SENIOR VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD

This award recognises an individual (aged 55+) or team whose volunteering contributions have made a notable impact in the Canberra community.

For example, a senior volunteer or team has demonstrated sustained contribution and commitment through their long volunteering service record or by dedicating a large amount of their time volunteering within or across multiple organisations.

For team nominations, at least half of the team members should be age 55+ to be eligible for this award.

FIRST NATIONS VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD

This award recognises an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individual or team who has made a notable volunteering impact in the Canberra Region through exceptional leadership, cultural knowledge, and dedicated service. The nominee demonstrates a strong commitment to fostering growth in community, preserving cultural heritage, and driving meaningful change through their volunteer efforts.

When nominating a team for this award category, at least half of the team members must be Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander volunteers to be eligible for this award.

A separate panel including majority First Nations Peoples chooses the winner and highly commended for this category.

INCLUSION AWARD

This award recognises an individual or volunteer team who has worked to reduce or remove barriers to participation in the Canberra community. The nominee has actively championed diversity and inclusion and created supportive, accessible, and equal practices and opportunities for volunteers of every age, gender, sexuality, ability, and culture as well as recognising people with differing experiences and identities.

Recognising diversity is only the first step towards an inclusive Canberra. Inclusion involves respecting, listening to, and including the diverse range of peoples and experiences that exist throughout Canberra and the region, and this award is for someone who epitomises an inclusive approach.

VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP AWARD

This award recognises a volunteer or a volunteer team who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in the volunteering sector without necessarily holding a senior title. The nominee has demonstrated their leadership skills and commitment to strengthening volunteering through collaboration, advocacy and action. This is an award for someone who guides, inspires, and supports others through their leadership.

If you wish to nominate a volunteer coordinator or manager (paid or unpaid), please nominate them for the 2026 Volunteer Manager of the Year Award - nominations close 5pm, Tuesday 6 October 2026.

VOLUNTEER TEAM OF THE YEAR AWARD

This award recognises a volunteer team, program, or organisation that has worked collaboratively and demonstrated commitment to inclusion, innovation, and service, making a notable impact in the Canberra Region.

For example, a volunteering team that has overcome barriers in its work and has delivered outstanding outcomes in the community through supporting events, providing services, or driving community initiatives.

CANBERRA'S CHOICE AWARD

This award recognises a nominee who has won the hearts of the Canberra community. The winner of this category is chosen through public voting, highlighting the power of community recognition and appreciation of volunteer efforts.

All nominees from the above seven award categories are automatically eligible for the Canberra's Choice Award. There are no specific eligibility criteria for this award category.

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD

This award recognises an individual who has demonstrated exceptional contribution, commitment and compassion through their voluntary service. It recognises outstanding contributions to volunteering in the Canberra Region, showcasing kindness, innovation, inclusion, and resilience that benefit our entire community.

All nominees from the seven award categories are automatically eligible for the Volunteer of the Year award and are selected by the judging panel.

AUSTRALIAN VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

The Australian Volunteer of the Year Award recognises an outstanding volunteer whose contribution reflects the diversity and impact of volunteering.

Finalists from each state or territory Volunteer of the Year awards together form the nominees for the Australian Volunteer of the Year Award.

The Canberra Region Volunteer of the Year will be the ACT nominee to the Australian Volunteer of the Year Award in May 2027.

While one individual will be recognised, this moment reflects the collective contribution of volunteers who strengthen communities across Australia.



L-R: Mel Cantwell (Chief Operating Officer, VolunteeringACT); Sajid Hassan (Chair, VolunteeringACT); Her Excellency the Honourable Ms Sam Mostyn AC; Lynette Hearfield (Trish's nominator); Trish Carling (ACT finalist); Heather Fitt (Senior Manager: Policy & Advocacy, VolunteeringACT) and Jean Giese (CEO, VolunteeringACT)



“As a palliative care volunteer, I appreciate the opportunity this award provides for me to talk about the things I care deeply about - providing high quality palliative care and support to those in our community who are living with life-limiting illness.”

Trish Carling
Winner, 2025 Volunteer of the Year
ACT Finalist, 2025 Australian Volunteer of the Year



ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA



SELECTION CRITERIA



Nominations are accepted for an individual volunteer, a volunteer duo or larger team, or a volunteer organisation that has made a notable contribution to the Canberra Region. This can include areas such as community work, sport, education, science, culture, arts, or environment.

Nominees must be -

- working as a volunteer, or a volunteer team, not paid employees
- actively volunteering in the Canberra Region in the last 12 months - this can be across multiple organisations

Volunteers or volunteer teams who were nominated in previous years can be nominated again; however, they must be actively volunteering in the last 12 months.

There are two selection criteria to assess a nominee's volunteer work and its impact within an organisation and in the community at large.

SCOPE OF VOLUNTEERING WORK

Describe the nominee's volunteer role, responsibilities, and activities. This can be within one or across several volunteering programs or organisations. (Word limit: 300 words)

IMPACT OF VOLUNTEERING CONTRIBUTION

Describe how the nominee's work has benefited and impacted the community, such as information on barriers reduced, people impacted, time dedicated, successes and broader benefits. (Word limit: 300 words)



NOMINATION PROCESS

Nominations are accepted for an individual volunteer, a volunteer duo or larger team or a volunteer organisation that has made a notable contribution to the Canberra Region. Read the eligibility criteria to know more.

To submit a nomination for the 2026 Volunteering Awards, Canberra Region, follow the steps below -

1. Read the award category descriptions to identify which category best suits your nominee.
2. Seek the nominee's consent. The nomination will not be accepted without the nominee's consent. Read the guidelines below to know more.
3. Prepare responses to the selection criteria.
 - The responses can be submitted in written or in audio/video format. Read the guidelines below to know more.
4. Complete the nomination form available on our website.
 - If the response to selection criteria is submitted in written format, the nominator must complete the entire nomination form.
 - If the response to selection criteria is submitted in audio/video format, the nominator must still fill in relevant sections of the nomination form to provide contact information of the nominator and nominee and upload a nominee photograph.

NOMINEE CONSENT

To nominate a volunteer or a volunteer team for the awards, the nominator must ensure the nominee has consented to their nomination. We will confirm consent from the nominee via email. The nomination will not be accepted without nominee consent.

By submitting the nomination form, the nominator agrees they have the following permissions from the nominee:

- Nominee's consent to VolunteeringACT using their information and photograph for event promotion and our forthcoming projects.
- Nominee's confirmation there are no known or foreseeable legal, reputational, or other issues that may bring themselves, their nominating organisation, or VolunteeringACT into disrepute should they win an award.
- Nominee's agreement that should any legal, reputational, or other issues arise between the date of nomination and the awards ceremony that may bring themselves, the nominating organisation, or VolunteeringACT into disrepute, VolunteeringACT will be made aware of these issues as soon as possible and their nomination may be withdrawn.

INFORMATION REQUIRED IN THE NOMINATION FORM

1. Contact details of the nominator and nominee.
2. Select the award category for the nomination and write the selection criteria response. The response can also be submitted as an audio/video file as per the guidelines below.
3. Optional - upload supporting documents such as media articles about the nominee's work, photographs of nominee's work or achievements, letters of support.
4. Write one catchy sentence describing the nominee's work for the Canberra's Choice Award public voting portal. Think about the public - this is all they will read about the nominee.
5. Upload the nominee's photograph as per photograph guidelines below.
6. Accept the terms and conditions of the nomination, both as a nominator and on behalf of the nominee.

The nomination form is available on our website.

AUDIO/VISUAL GUIDELINES

Responses to selection criteria for nominations can be submitted in audio/video format as well as in written form. However, key information on the written nomination form must be completed to provide contact information of the nominator and nominee, nominee photograph, and nominee brief bio for the Canberra's Choice Award and consent to the terms and conditions.

- Speak clearly. The selection panel will not be judging the quality of your audio/visual skills, but they do need to hear the nomination criteria responses clearly to consider the nomination.
- Begin the recording with your name (nominator), name of the nominee, and the award category for which the nomination is being submitted.
- The nominator may speak naturally or read from notes.
- Clearly state the selection criteria question before answering it.
- Keep the audio or video file between 3 – 5 minutes overall. Provide a response to each selection criteria question in maximum 300 words or within two minute each.
- Record your audio and/or video in MP3 or MP4 formats. Use the nominee's name as the file name when uploading the file.

The nomination will not be accepted if all the information is not provided.

PHOTOGRAPH GUIDELINES

- Ensure nominee photographs are clear and against a clean background.
- Avoid photographs from group lunches or cropped photographs from personal parties or public places such as restaurants.
- If you do not have a photo of your nominee at the time of submitting the nomination form, please upload the organisation logo as a placeholder and provide us with the nominee's photograph as soon as possible via email - events@volunteeringact.org.au.
- **Nominee photographs will be used -**
 - On the Canberra's Choice Award voting portal
 - In the awards ceremony presentation
 - In overall communications and promotion of the event in media, on VolunteeringACT's social media, newsletters and website.



TIPS FOR PROVIDING A SUCCESSFUL NOMINATION

The Volunteering Awards, Canberra Region are an excellent opportunity to recognise, acknowledge, and celebrate volunteer and volunteer teams for their exceptional contributions to our community.

Below are some tips to ensure your application stands out!

- Read the award category descriptions carefully to ensure you select the most appropriate category for your nominee.
- Consider your nominee's dedication, impact, and contribution over the past 12 months.
- Provide specific and measurable examples to demonstrate the impact of your nominee's efforts. Get help from your team members for examples/case studies to support the nomination.
- Start early! Writing a persuasive nomination application can take time. Take time to collect examples from everyone to highlight what makes your nominee stand out.
- Remember the selection panel only has available the information you provide in the nomination - think about what someone who does not know your volunteer or volunteer team might need to know or be impressed about.

Example of good nominee photographs



Example of not so useful photographs - hard to see nominee





SELECTION PROCESS

An independent judging panel is appointed to select the winners and highly commended for all award categories - except the Canberra's Choice Award.

A separate panel with majority First Nations Peoples will select the winner and highly commended for the First Nations Volunteer of the Year Award.

All judges disclose existing and/or potential conflicts of interest. Judges with a conflict of interest do not evaluate those nominations.

- The judging panel may consider nominations in a different category if they deem it more suitable for that category.
- Each award category will have one winner and up to two highly commended individuals (depending on the number of nominations received for that category).



TERMS AND CONDITIONS

VolunteeringACT will abide by its privacy policy and the Privacy Act 1988 when handling all nominators' and nominees' information and photographs for the 2026 Volunteering Awards, Canberra Region.

The nominee and the nominator will each receive an email of acknowledgement and to ensure nominee consent to be nominated. Without consent, the nomination will be withdrawn and not accepted.

By submitting the nomination form, the nominator agrees to the listed terms and conditions.

AS A NOMINATOR

- You have received the nominee's consent to be nominated.
- You have followed your organisation's policies and procedures in putting forward this nominee for an award.
- You agree your organisation is not aware of any reason this nominee would bring themselves, your organisation, VolunteeringACT, or the 2026 Volunteering Awards, Canberra Region into disrepute should they receive an award.
- You agree should there be any legal, reputational, or other issues that may bring the nominee, their nominating organisation, or VolunteeringACT into disrepute that arise between the date of the nomination and the awards ceremony that VolunteeringACT will be made aware of these issues as soon as possible and their nomination may be withdrawn.
- All information provided is accurate and true to your knowledge.
- The nominee's photograph(s) are per the guidelines provided.
- **Completed nominations must be submitted by 5pm, Monday 12 October 2026 via the Microsoft Form on our website.**
- VolunteeringACT will not accept responsibility for lost, late, incomplete, or incorrectly submitted nominations.

ON BEHALF OF THE NOMINEE:

- Nominees consent to VolunteeringACT using their information and photograph for event promotion and our forthcoming projects.
- Nominees confirm there are no known or foreseeable legal, reputational, or other issues that may bring themselves, their nominating organisation, or VolunteeringACT into disrepute should they win an award.
- Nominees agree that should any legal, reputational, or other issues arise between the date of nomination and the awards ceremony that may bring themselves, the nominating organisation, or VolunteeringACT into disrepute, VolunteeringACT will be made aware of these issues as soon as possible and their nomination may be withdrawn.



DISCLAIMER

Award winners are nominated by the Canberra Region community. When we consider the Volunteering Awards, Canberra Region, we examine a nominee's volunteering contribution and do our best to ensure the recipients are of a suitable character.

We ask nominees and their nominators on behalf of their nominating organisations to confirm there are no legal, reputational, or other issues that may bring themselves, their nominating organisation, or VolunteeringACT into disrepute should a nominee win an award. We are not able to undertake police checks for all nominees or award recipients.

We understand that not all members of the community have the same experience with nominees as those who nominated them for recognition.

Thank you for your interest in the 2026
Volunteering Awards, Canberra Region!

If you have any questions, feel free to
contact us.

- **Phone:** 02 6251 4060
- **Email:** events@volunteeringact.org.au
- **Website:** www.volunteeringact.org.au

VOLUNTEERING AWARDS

Canberra Region

Nominate today!



