



# 2025 **Australia Day** Awards

**Sunday 26 January, 2025**  
**Slim Dusty Centre, South Kempsey**

**Kempsey Shire Council Master of Ceremonies**

Mayor Kinne Ring & Stephen Mitchell

**Australia Day Ambassador**

Mark Morrison OAM

**Australia Day Awards Committee**



**KEMPSEY**  
Shire Council

# **ORDER OF CEREMONY**

## **Arrival**

Music by Dave McGrath

## **Official Welcomes**

Welcome to Country by Uncle Bob Smith

Welcome Address by Mayor Kinne Ring

## **Australian Citizenship Ceremony**

## **National Anthem and 'I Am Australian'**

Performed by Chris Rose

## **Ambassador's Address**

Mark Morrison OAM



## **Australia Day Awards Presentation**

## **Closing**

Mayor Kinne Ring – Stephen Mitchell

# THE AFFIRMATION

As an Australian Citizen  
I affirm my loyalty to Australia and its people,  
Whose democratic beliefs I share,  
Whose rights and liberties I respect,  
And whose laws I uphold and obey.

## ADVANCE AUSTRALIA FAIR

Australians all let us rejoice,  
For we are one and free;  
We've golden soil and wealth for toil;  
Our home is girt by sea;  
Our land abounds in nature's gifts  
Of beauty rich and rare;  
In history's page, let every stage  
Advance Australia Fair.  
In joyful strains then let us sing,  
Advance Australia Fair.

Beneath our radiant Southern Cross  
We'll toil with hearts and hands;  
To make this Commonwealth of ours  
Renowned of all the lands;  
For those who've come across the seas  
We've boundless plains to share;  
With courage let us all combine  
To Advance Australia Fair.  
In joyful strains then let us sing,  
Advance Australia Fair.

# I AM AUSTRALIAN

By Bruce Woodley and Dobe Newton

I came from the Dreamtime  
From the dusty red soil plains  
I am the ancient heart  
The keeper of the flame  
I stood upon the rocky shore  
I watched the tall ships come  
For forty thousand years I've been  
The first Australian

I came upon the prison ship  
Bound down by iron chains  
I fought the land  
Endured the lash  
And waited for the rains  
I'm a settler  
I'm a farmer's wife  
On a dry and barren run  
A convict then a free man  
I became Australian

I'm a daughter of a digger  
Who sought the mother load  
The girl became a woman  
On the long and dusty road  
I'm a child of the Depression  
I saw the good times come  
I'm a bushy, I'm a battler  
I am Australian

We are one  
But we are many

And from all the lands on earth  
we come

We'll share a dream  
And sing with one voice  
I am, you are, we are Australian

I'm a teller of stories  
I'm a singer of songs  
I am Albert Namatjira  
And I paint the ghostly gums  
I'm Clancy on his horse  
I'm Ned Kelly on the run  
I'm the one who waltzed Matilda  
I am Australian

I'm the hot wind from the desert  
I'm the black soil of the plain  
I'm the mountains and the valleys  
I'm the drought and flooding rains  
I am the rock  
I am the sky  
The rivers when they run  
The spirit of this great land  
I am Australian

We are one  
But we are many  
And from all the lands on earth  
we come  
We'll share a dream  
And sing with one voice  
I am, you are, we are Australian



# AUSTRALIA DAY AMBASSADOR

## Mark Morrison OAM

Mark Morrison has been a dedicated member of the Macleay Valley community since relocating with his wife Lesa during the holidays in 1992. Over the years, Mark has made significant contributions by coaching soccer, rugby league, touch football, rugby union, cricket, and basketball teams, while also pursuing interests in golf, music, and volunteering on numerous community led initiatives.

With a deep passion for empowering disenfranchised community members, Mark built a distinguished career in education, serving as a teacher and leader at St Pauls College, Kempsey Adventist School and MVC. In 2021 after a notable tenure as Principal of Macleay Vocational College, he returned to the classroom as a Physics and Science teacher in Sydney. Throughout his career, Mark has embraced the privilege of cultural immersion, continuously learning from and collaborating with Elders, guided by their wisdom and knowledge.



Mark draws inspiration and energy from engaging with young people, valuing their stories and unique perspectives on the world. His impact extends beyond education, having featured in a 2019 episode of Australian Story on ABC TV. Additionally, he has contributed to elite-level Rugby League as a coach and recruitment officer, including roles with NRL teams, State of Origin squads, and Australian Schoolboys and Schoolgirls teams on international tours to Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and New Zealand.

A trusted advisor and active participant in wider community initiatives, Mark has served on several advisory boards and committees, including Kempsey Suicide Prevention, The Independent Schools Centre for Excellence Council, NSW Government Ministerial Committee of School Education Leaders, Australian Independent Schools Leadership Centre, the Lismore Diocese Schools and VET committees, ASSRL, and he was Chairman, Collegial Support Committee (NSW/ACT Branch), Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia. He is currently leading an exciting project to establish a new campus for Newington College in Eungai Creek, designed to provide cultural and service immersion experiences for Year 9 students in eight-week term programs.

In recognition of his outstanding service and commitment to the community, Mark was honoured as Kempsey's Citizen of the Year in 2016.

# VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

This award recognises an individual who gives their time willingly, without financial gain for the great good of the community. This award recognises efforts made in the last year.

## Dianne Carpenter

Dianne has been a dedicated volunteer with Tender Funerals Mid North Coast since 2022, contributing countless hours to support affordable, meaningful funerals and community education. Her work spans all aspects of the organisation, from administration and mortuary care to co-hosting market stalls and supporting families during bereavement.

Dianne plays a pivotal role in raising awareness about community-based death care and has helped establish Tender's Kempsey office.

As a community ambassador, Dianne educates others on end-of-life planning, fostering open discussions about death and its processes. Her compassionate and courageous work is reshaping death culture in the Macleay Valley, inspiring positive change.



## Geoff Clarke

Geoff Clarke has transformed the South West Rocks Maritime Precinct over the past five years, ensuring its survival and success. During COVID, he stepped in as President, overcoming financial challenges to preserve the heritage-classified buildings.

Geoff led the transformation of the Pilot's Cottage into a thriving Art Gallery and secured the Boatman's Cottage No. 1 as a Visitor Information Centre and Maritime Museum.

Through his leadership, over 70 volunteers now contribute to maintaining and restoring the precinct. Geoff's efforts have revitalized the precinct as a cultural hub, preserving local history and making it one of South West Rocks' most popular attractions.



# VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

## Beatrice Gray

Beatrice Gray is a valued member of the Vincent Court team and community, contributing many hours each week to supporting both residents and staff of the aged care facility.

Beatrice was of great help during COVID-19, supporting new residents entering the facility during this time. She assists with residents on drives, contributes to the Happy Hour on Wednesday afternoons, and runs the coffee shop for residents in the mornings.

In addition, Beatrice provides a great support to staff, inspiring them through tough times, and lifting people up when they are down.



## Margaret Jopling

Margaret Jopling, recipient of last year's Citizen of the Year Award, continues to support her community at the age of 90, continuing her volunteer work at the PCYC.

It is difficult to describe the impact of Margaret's contribution to PCYC. She is everywhere and involved in everything. From engaging children in table tennis games, to cooking dinner for 30 kids – Margaret is involved in it all.

Margaret is an inspiration to the community. At 90 she has more energy and drive than many people half her age.



## Jessica Kelly

Jessica has been a dedicated volunteer for the Saints Soccer Club for two years, contributing as secretary and stepping into multiple roles when needed.

Even during her pregnancy and maternity leave, Jessica ensured the club ran smoothly, setting up fields, managing the canteen, and enabling 400 players in the Macleay Valley to enjoy organised soccer each season.

Her efforts have positively impacted families and young people by fostering social connections, confidence, and mental well-being.

Beyond the club, Jessica supports people with disabilities and mental health challenges through her work at Key Employment while raising three



# VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

## Sonya Murphy

Sonya, President of Macleay Netball Association (MNA) since November 2022, leads a committee of eight to manage netball for over 600 players annually in the Macleay Valley.

She dedicates countless volunteer hours to ensuring competitions run smoothly, from setting up courts and managing the canteen to coaching representative teams and fostering a welcoming, inclusive environment.

Under Sonya's leadership, MNA provides a safe space for women, girls, and players of all abilities and backgrounds to stay active, develop teamwork, and gain confidence. She inspires members to give back by volunteering as umpires, coaches, and helpers, creating a thriving, supportive netball community.



## Fiona Stuart

Fiona is very passionate about sports and fitness and enjoys getting out in her community and passing along her knowledge to others.

Volunteering her time to pass on her sporting and coaching knowledge, Fiona also volunteers time every Friday to help out at Kempsey PCYC for the U-Nites program focusing on Kempsey's children and young people.

Fiona encourages Kempsey's young people to learn sports and different games and activities, improving their fitness, connection to community, helping them achieve their goals and reach their full potential.



## Faye Vickers

Faye is the dedicated Event Director for the Horseshoe Bay Reserve Parkrun in South West Rocks, a fully volunteer-run initiative.

She leads a team of Run Directors, ensures weekly volunteer roles are filled, maintains equipment, promotes events on social media, and coordinates with Parkrun head office. Her efforts enable 40-100 walkers and runners of all abilities to participate every Saturday.

Faye also organises themed events and social functions, fostering community spirit and recognising volunteers. Her leadership has positively impacted participants' physical and mental well-being, creating a welcoming environment where friendships flourish. Faye's commitment makes Parkrun a vital community activity.



# LOCAL HERO NOMINEES

A Local Hero is a person or group who made the community stronger, given back, or been a role model for others. This award recognises efforts made in the last year.

## Ian Bradshaw

Since moving to the Kempsey Shire in the 1970s, Ian Bradshaw has been a dedicated community contributor. As a Sherwood Bush Fire Brigade volunteer, he used his farm tractor for fire response and later supported community projects through his business, Kempsey Garage Doors.

In retirement, he's volunteered for community transport, event logistics, and as 2IC with the SWR SES, assisting with storm recovery and flood missions. Passionate about local birdlife, he co-founded the SWR Birds Facebook community, authored birdlife photobooks, and built an osprey nesting platform. His efforts to educate and protect local habitats highlight his remarkable legacy.



## Lorne Cummins

Lorne has been volunteering at PCYC Kempsey for the last 18 months, helping with cleaning, gardening, setting up and preparing for programs and general assistance to the team.

Lorne rarely misses a day of volunteering at PCYC, with most of his impact behind the scenes. His assistance with helping prepare for activities, cleaning up and organising makes the task easier for the team at PCYC.

Lorne does not allow his disability to be a barrier to volunteering or his dedication and passion for his community.





# LOCAL HERO NOMINEES

## Tara Howard

Tara is a dedicated community leader whose selfless efforts have made a significant impact on Kempsey. Alongside running her businesses, she volunteers as president of the East Kempsey P&C and initiated the “Why Leave Kempsey” project to promote local businesses.

Tara restored the sensory garden on Forth Street, creating a welcoming space for all, especially those with mental health challenges. Her actions, such as removing posters from the old ANZ bank and returning abandoned trolleys, improve the town’s appearance, lifting community pride.

Tara’s tireless work inspires others, embodying true community spirit and making her a deserving Local Hero.



## Leacia Jane Martin

Leacia is a disability support worker who always goes above and beyond to ensure those needing support get treated in a respectful and caring way.

Leacia helps makes those in the community with various disabilities to feel part of the community and enjoy life in a way that others take for granted.

Well regarded by her peers, Leacia is often the first one to offer advice to fellow workers and give a helping hand above and beyond what is required, rewarded by receiving the Star Employee for Ability Options in 2024.



## Kystal Smith

Krystal Smith developed a pioneering financial literacy program for high school students across the Mid North Coast, covering vital topics like budgeting, superannuation, payslips, and the risks of buy-now-pay-later schemes.

Her program has empowered countless young people over the past three years to make informed financial decisions, benefiting families and communities.

Krystal advocated nationally, presenting to 900 professionals at the Financial Counselling Association conference and initiating a petition for mandatory financial literacy in schools.

Her dedication inspires students, teachers, and professionals, showcasing Kempsey as a hub for innovation and advocacy. Krystal’s work sets a benchmark for practical, life-changing education.



# LOCAL HERO NOMINEES

## Debbie Swanson

Debbie is a dedicated community leader who has profoundly impacted the Macleay Valley through her commitment to education and cultural connection. As the leader of Daligur and Scribbly Gum preschools, she has guided her team to win awards, secure grants, and exceed preschool standards.

Debbie also secured a significant national grant for Indigenous children, enriching their education and fostering a deep connection to Dunghutti culture.

Her influence extends beyond education as she mentors others and leads a local dojo, inspiring young people through her passion and dedication. Debbie's unwavering commitment to children and families makes her a true role model.



## Willie Thompson

Willie has worked hard through volunteer work and paid employment to reduce the risk of recidivism in the Macleay Valley, running various volunteer men's groups to help them get through hard times.

He has worked with many young people who have been in the Out of Home Care (OOHC) sector, actively engaging with them to ensure they are supported and guided on the right path.

Willie has recently been supporting a group of young people at the Gordon Nixon Hub where he has been teaching them life lessons and practical skills such as how to maintain the lawns and gardens.



## Jan Wilkins

Jan has made outstanding contributions to the Macleay Valley. Beginning as a Scout volunteer in 1982, she served as Regional Commissioner for 15 years. After earning her nursing degree in 1999, Jan worked at Kempsey District Hospital, becoming a dedicated nurse educator who guided many students into successful healthcare careers.

Since joining NSW SES Kempsey in 2012, Jan has trained extensively in rescue operations and taken on leadership roles, including Cluster Training Coordinator, delivering vital training across multiple units. Her efforts have positively impacted countless lives.

Her dedication to empowering others and fostering resilience makes her an invaluable asset to the Macleay Valley.



# RECONCILIATION AWARD NOMINEES

The Reconciliation Award is a new honour being awarded for the first time in 2025. It is a person or group who has made significant efforts towards reconciliation by building relationships, respect and trust between the wider community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

## Real Futures

Real Futures is a majority Aboriginal-owned and staffed company whose aim is to empower their Mob to realise their employment aspirations and become workplace and community role models.

Real Futures is certified by Supply Nation as a majority Aboriginal owned, controlled and managed company who strive to build community capacity through targeted support programs and integrated training opportunities.

Christianna Cartwright, Real Futures CEO, is a Darug woman from Western Sydney who relocated to beautiful Dunghutti country on the Mid North Coast of NSW in 2002. With over 16 years' experience, Christianna has extensive knowledge of employment services and played a pivotal role in the development of Real Futures and its mother company Pathways to Pilbara.

Christianna is a strong advocate for gender equality and has driven the implementation and progress of the Women's Business Second Chance Hub to create best practice and enthusiasm for innovative ideas that can be applied to achieve the advancement and success of First Nations Women.





# RECONCILIATION AWARD NOMINEES

## Christa Smith

Christa is a passionate and dedicated community leader who inspires others with her tireless efforts.

She runs women's and young girls' groups at the North Street Community Hub, creating safe, welcoming spaces for connection and growth. Christa provides meals, transportation, and engaging weekly activities, positively impacting countless lives.

Her programs have increased school attendance for disengaged young girls and offered them a sense of purpose.

In addition to her community work, Christa manages a successful business, promoting cultural foods and inspiring others to pursue entrepreneurship. Her hard work and positivity make her an invaluable asset to the Macleay Valley community.



## Vicki Taylor

Vicki, a proud Dunghutti woman, is a beacon of reconciliation and cultural preservation in the Macleay Valley. As a preschool educator at Dalaigur and Scribbly Gum, she shares her culture and language with the youngest members of the community, fostering understanding and connection between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Her dedication to preserving and teaching the Dunghutti language is evident through her collaboration with the Benevolent Society, creating language videos for local early learning centers. Vicki's role in the Cinderella play was groundbreaking, inspiring younger generations to embrace their identity and strive for success. She is a true community leader.



# COMMUNITY GROUP OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

This award is presented to an organised group of people who have given outstanding service to the community or inspired others. Their efforts may have occurred over the last 12 months or over a number of years.

## Dunghutti Stroke Group

Amy Thompson and the Dunghutti Stroke Group have revolutionised stroke awareness and education within the Kempsey community, located in Australia's number one stroke hotspot.

After Amy's own stroke, she and the Port Macquarie Base Hospital stroke team held a stroke education day in 2023, sharing powerful recovery stories. This inspired the formation of the Dunghutti Stroke Group, dedicated to increasing stroke prevention and early response awareness, particularly among First Nations peoples.

The group launched the culturally relevant "Re-imagining F.A.S.T" campaign, supported by local health organisations and the Stroke Foundation. Their work includes producing educational t-shirts, banners, magnets, posters, lanyards, wristbands, and a short film featuring Dunghutti language and culture, displayed in healthcare facilities across the region. Their efforts have reached national audiences, with presentations at prestigious conferences and requests from health leaders to use their resources nationwide.

This groundbreaking initiative has significantly improved local knowledge about stroke symptoms, emphasising early hospital arrival to enhance treatment and recovery outcomes. The group's work also preserves local Aboriginal language and culture, enriching health messaging. Beyond education, the project has supported stroke survivors' personal recovery, transforming a small idea into a national movement, proving that "from little things, big things grow."



# COMMUNITY GROUP OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

## Macleay Valley Pipes and Drums

The Macleay Valley Pipes and Drums have been supporting Kempsey and surrounding towns for over 20 years, playing at events including ANZAC Day, Remembrance Day, local markets, and nursing homes.

There are many events throughout the year where pipes and drums are requested. On ANZAC Day the sound of a lone piper adds a solemn atmosphere, and pipes and drums playing at local nursing homes are a treat for residents.

The Macleay Valley Pipes and Drums inspire through their music. Watching a pipe band march through the street is uplifting to people of all ages and demographics.



## Macleay Valley Support Services

Macleay Valley Support Services (MVSS), a locally owned and operated disability support service, are staffed with amazing people who go out of their way to help their clients, treating everyone with respect, and taking care to treat people with a disability just like everyone else.

MVSS have core values which include trust, respect and community and they live their values in the work they do in supporting people with a disability to thrive in the Macleay Valley.



## Rotary Club of Kempsey West

West Kempsey Rotarians work tirelessly to raise funds for local organisations and individuals, supporting education for young people, and collaborating on important community projects.

They have provided funds to purchase white goods for the Wittitron shed project, placed seating at the cenotaph with Kempsey Shire Council (KSC) and the RSL sub-Branch, providing Christmas gifts to the mobile library service, as well as run an annual Christmas raffle to raise funds for the community.

Volunteers from West Kempsey Rotary cook at Australia day functions, the local show and many other events across the community, as well as supporting local community group grant applications.



# COMMUNITY GROUP OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

## South West Rocks Maritime Precinct

The group of volunteers who operate this precinct open all three heritage listed buildings seven days per week. This includes an art gallery, museum and gift shop.

As a group of over 70 volunteers, they have managed these Crown Land properties for over five years. Under the strict guidelines covering heritage buildings they have sensitively preserved them to an exemplary standard. All of this has been done with only the funds they have made through sales in the gift shop and commissions on art works sold in the gallery. President Geoff Clarke tirelessly applies for grants to make up any shortfall.

These iconic and historic old fishermen's cottages are not only maintained but used daily to show off this area's marine history and showcase the work of local artists. Talented local craftspeople make beautiful gifts, clothing and knick knacks for tourists and locals to take home as souvenirs.

Volunteers choose to work for our community because they love the Macleay Valley and want others to enjoy it as well. They play an important role in preserving these historic areas for future generations to understand how the local people contributed to the Kempsey Shire's economy.



## The Old Rectory Op Shop

In 2024, the Old Rectory Op Shop team contributed over 6,500 volunteer hours, providing affordable clothing and goods to the Kempsey community. Located on the grounds of All Saints' Church and supported by The Anglican Parish of Kempsey, the Op Shop has been a vital community resource for over 25 years. Volunteers tirelessly process donations, sort goods, and dispose of waste to ensure the availability of clean, high-quality items.

The Op Shop serves as more than a retail outlet; it offers free clothing and essentials to individuals in need, including those seeking employment, recently released from prison, or impacted by natural disasters. Beyond material support, the shop fosters friendship, connection, and care, creating a welcoming space for residents and visitors alike.

Despite challenging economic conditions, the Op Shop continues to provide a wide range of items, including clothing, toys, books, kitchenware, and decor. This initiative reflects the generosity and dedication of its volunteers and donors, who ensure the Macleay Valley community has access to essential items and a nurturing space for support and connection. The Old Rectory Op Shop stands as a beacon of community service and care.





# YOUNG CITIZEN OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

This award is presented to a person who is 30 years or younger and who has given outstanding service to the community or inspired others. Their efforts may have occurred over the last 12 months or over a number of years. The recipient must be aged 30 or younger on 26 January 2025.

## Zailen Campbell- Cook

Zailen is an inspiring young leader who has recently graduated from Melville High School, leaving a lasting impact on his school and community. He leads by example, whether delivering Welcome to Country, participating in cultural events like National Sorry Day and NAIDOC assemblies, or volunteering at community initiatives such as Reconciliation Walks and school events.

Zailen's dedication extends to sports, earning him a position in the St George Dragons SB squad. His mindset and leadership inspire peers to embrace opportunities and strive for excellence. From promoting mental health awareness to leaving motivational messages for future students, Zailen exemplifies the values of growth, resilience, and community contribution.



## Janae Darko

Janae has been volunteering at PCYC Kempsey for 18 months. Her main contribution has been helping with the gymnastics programs. Janae helps to set up the equipment, assists the instructor during classes, demonstrates techniques, helps motivate the students and after the classes cleans up and packs away the equipment.

Janae's contribution to the gymnastics classes helps motivate the students and helps them to improve their techniques..

It is inspiring to see a young person contributing to the community and being a role model for other young people. Janae leads by example and motivates others with her own achievements.



# YOUNG CITIZEN OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

## Ruby Hoskins-Gould

Ruby is an inspiring young leader who dedicates her time to spreading cultural awareness and fostering inclusivity within her community. At just 15, she has achieved remarkable success in dance, education, and leadership. Ruby has earned awards for kindness and leadership in dance and has served as a student teacher for five years, teaching individuals of all ages and abilities.

A proud Indigenous young woman, Ruby is active in the Junior Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, serving as Vice President in 2024 and Treasurer in 2023. She has performed Welcome to Country in language, participated in NAIDOC events, and danced with Dhanggati Baayati at Dance Rites 2024.

Ruby's leadership shines through her involvement in community events and her school-based apprenticeship with the Commonwealth Bank. She is a true role model.



# CITIZEN OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

This award is presented to a person who gave outstanding service to the community, or has been an inspiration to others. Their efforts may have occurred over the last 12 months or over a number of years. It is a great honour to be nominated for citizen of the year.

## Michael “Mick” Adams

Mick Adams has dedicated a lifetime to serving and uplifting the South West Rocks community through his tireless contributions to surf lifesaving, education, and civic engagement.

Since moving to the area in 1965, Mick has embodied the values of community spirit, leadership, and resilience.

A surf lifesaver for over 20 years, Mick earned multiple accolades, including the Mid North Coast Honour Banner for Outstanding Service. He performed hundreds of rescues, mentored youth, and held leadership roles in the South West Rocks Surf Life Saving Club, where he was awarded life membership in 2013.

Mick’s commitment extended to organising water safety programs, major competitions, and community events such as the Gaol Break Ocean Swim.

A devoted educator, Mick taught at Melville High School, serving as a Year Adviser and created welfare initiatives for students. His advocacy also led significant local efforts to improve marine safety, community infrastructure, and environmental protections.

Beyond his professional roles, Mick volunteered extensively, supporting community projects, mentoring others, and even representing South West Rocks internationally as a tour guide. His legacy includes numerous rescues, life-saving initiatives, and a deep impact on his community, earning him admiration as a role model and local hero. Mick’s lifelong dedication is a true testament to his unwavering service.



# CITIZEN OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

## Mary Button

Mary Button, a proud Ngaku woman born in Kempsey, has dedicated over 50 years to improving the lives of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.

Starting her career in the 1970s as an Aboriginal Education Assistant at Kempsey South Public School, she later achieved a Bachelor of Teaching and made a remarkable impact on generations of students and their families.

Mary was instrumental in relocating the old Burnt Bridge School to Kempsey South, transforming it into an Aboriginal Resource Room. This space became a hub for cultural education, after-school programs, art classes, and community support initiatives.

Her tireless efforts ensured students had food, clothing, and access to cultural excursions, art programs, and academic support, benefiting all students regardless of background.

Beyond her work in schools, Mary served as an Aboriginal Elder with the Department of Corrective Services, mentoring inmates to support rehabilitation. She is a founding member of the Dunghutti Elders Aboriginal Corporation, serves on the Board of Governance for the Aboriginal Medical Service, and is an active member of the Kempsey Aboriginal Lands Council.

Mary's lifelong devotion to education, cultural preservation, and community wellbeing has earned her immense respect and made an enduring impact across the Kempsey region.





# CITIZEN OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

## Evelyn Jacobs

Evelyn Jacobs, affectionately known as Mrs. J or Ev, has dedicated over 30 years to the Kempsey community through tireless volunteering, mentoring, and inspiring young people to succeed.

As a high school teacher for more than two decades, she has positively impacted countless lives, while her involvement with Kempsey Basketball Association has been transformative, providing opportunities for young people to play locally and at a representative level.

Ev's contributions extend beyond basketball. She has served as president and secretary of various local clubs and associations, including the surf club, sporting clubs, and the eisteddfod society. Her efforts in coaching, refereeing, and fundraising have made sporting dreams a reality for many, including raising funds to take young players to tournaments across the state and even the USA. These initiatives supported Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth by providing uniforms, equipment, and travel opportunities.

Recognised with the Basketball NSW Long Service Award, Ev continues to inspire with her commitment to education, community service, and youth empowerment. Her fundraising efforts, such as Bunnings BBQs and cake stalls, have united the community and enriched lives. Evelyn is a true local hero whose generosity, dedication, and impact over three decades make her deserving of recognition and celebration.



# CITIZEN OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

## Maree Tyne

Maree Tyne, a lifelong resident of the Macleay Valley, has dedicated over 50 years to her community through volunteering, committee involvement, and support for local projects. Balancing three jobs as a beautician, community support worker, and cattle farmer, Maree still finds time to contribute extensively to her community.

As secretary of the Willawarrin Community Hall Committee since 2018, Maree organizes events such as market days, children's activities, and community celebrations. She also leads the Willawarrin Campdraft as its longstanding organizer, securing grants for infrastructure upgrades and coordinating the event's logistics for over 13 years. Her contributions extend to the Willawarrin Public School P&C, where she continues to fundraise despite her children no longer attending.

Maree is an active member of the Willawarrin Rural Fire Brigade, serving as a firefighter and treasurer since 2020, and has volunteered for the Macleay Cancerian Ball, raising funds for cancer patients. She also assisted with the 2023 "Need for Feed" emergency hay run, offering her property and time to support local farmers.

Maree's unwavering commitment, exemplifies selflessness and community spirit, making her an inspiration across the Macleay Valley.





## THANK YOU

Kempsey Shire Council and the Australia Day Awards Committee congratulate our 2025 Australia Day Award recipients and the community members who became Australian citizens today.

Thank you to all the volunteers and staff who made this event possible.

Special thanks to our Ambassador,  
Mark Morrison OAM.

We wish you all a happy  
and safe Australia Day





# Reflect. Respect. Celebrate.

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