



**VOLUNTEERING TASMANIA  
AFTERNOON TEA TO ACKNOWLEDGE RECIPIENTS OF THE  
2026 TASMANIAN VOLUNTEERING AWARDS  
REMARKS BY  
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE CAROLINE WELLS  
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA  
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, WEDNESDAY 7 OCTOBER 2026**

Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to Government House.

It is a pleasure to be here with you as we celebrate volunteering across Tasmania, and especially the recipients of the 2026 Tasmanian Volunteering Awards.

And while today we are celebrating our award winners, I want to begin by saying something important: the fact is, every volunteer is a winner.

I'd would like to acknowledge the Palawa people as the First Peoples of lutruwita/Tasmania and the Traditional Custodians of the land we're gathered on today.

For countless generations, they have cared for this island, its landscapes, its waterways and its communities, and I'm grateful to be able to live, work and meet here.

I pay my respects to Elders past and present, and to any Aboriginal people with us today. Your continuing contribution to the cultural, social and spiritual life of our State is deeply valued.

I want to ask a simple question.

Think about the last time something in your community just worked. A footy match ran on time. A hot meal arrived at someone's door. A festival went ahead. A bushfire was contained. Someone new to town was made to feel welcome.

Now ask yourself: who made that happen? Very often, the answer is a volunteer.

Today, we celebrate the volunteers who help make our island work. To our award winners — congratulations. You have earned this moment.

Some interesting facts:

The most recent State of Volunteering Report found that 332,100 Tasmanians volunteered in 2023 — that's nearly seven in every ten Tasmanians aged 15 and over.

Together, they gave an extraordinary 89.4 million hours.

That is an enormous contribution. But behind every number is a person giving their time, energy and care to someone else.

Volunteering also brings significant economic and social value to Tasmania — estimated at around \$12.1 billion each year.

But the real value of volunteering can't be measured in dollars.

It is the person who packs up after the kids' game. The neighbour who checks in on someone living alone. The volunteer who visits an older Tasmanian. The emergency services volunteer who heads towards danger when everyone else is heading away.

It is all those small acts of connection and kindness that make a community stronger.

And we should also acknowledge that volunteering is changing.

Formal volunteering through clubs, charities and community organisations has declined in recent years. People are busy. The cost of living is a real pressure. Time is short, and burnout is a concern.

But there is an important message in the research: Tasmanians haven't stopped caring. Informal volunteering — helping a neighbour, a friend or someone in the community — has actually increased.

People still want to help. We need to make it easier for them to do so.

That means less red tape, greater flexibility and lower barriers to participation. It means supporting the people who coordinate volunteers and keeping our organisations strong.

And it means listening to volunteers themselves and asking: how can we build volunteering around the way people want to contribute today?

There are already plenty of reasons for optimism.

Seventy-two per cent of Tasmanians aged 15 to 25 volunteer. Young Tasmanians are stepping up and showing us that the spirit of volunteering is very much alive.

Our job is to make sure the door remains open for them.

And that brings me to today's award winners.

Congratulations to:

- **Kellie Woolnough – Launceston Volunteers for Community**, for Excellence in Volunteer Leadership and Management
- **Print Radio Tasmania**, for Inclusive Volunteering

- **TasNetworks**, for Workplace Volunteering Impact
- **Soroptimists International Launceston**, for Group Volunteering Impact
- **Georgie Ibbott**, for Individual Impact
- **Tyrese Holland**, Youth Volunteer
- **Scott Clarke AFSM**, for Lifetime Commitment
- And **Georgie Ibbott**, Premier's Volunteer of the Year.

You all show us what volunteering can achieve. You saw a need and said, *"I'll do something about that."* You showed up — sometimes once, sometimes every week, and sometimes for decades.

In doing so, you have made a difference in people's lives and strengthened the communities around you.

And behind every volunteer is a network of people who make that contribution possible — family, friends, colleagues and fellow volunteers.

So today, we thank you all.

Thank you for your time, your generosity and your commitment.  
Thank you for showing us what community looks like.

Tasmania may be a small island, but through its volunteers, it has an enormous heart.

Please join me in a very warm round of applause for our 2026 Tasmanian Volunteering Award winners — and for every volunteer across Tasmania.

Congratulations, and thank you.