



2025

TIDY TOWNS AWARDS

THANK YOU TO OUR 2025 TIDY TOWNS AWARDS PARTNERS, SPONSORS & SUPPORTERS



Keep Australia Beautiful NSW

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www.kabnsw.org.au

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Disclaimer

The information in this booklet has been provided by the Award nominees and referees chosen by them. Every effort has been made to present all the information contained in this booklet as accurately as possible.

Cover image: 2024 Overall Tidy Towns Award Winners, Parkes with 2025 Overall Tidy Towns Award Winners, Orange

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About the Tidy Towns Awards



Since 1981, the Tidy Towns Program has been rewarding and recognising projects around litter, waste management, recycling, heritage, community spirit and other environmental areas in towns across the breadth of NSW.

Winning the title of the "State's Tidiest Town" has become a much sought-after honour and is highly contested by small and large towns alike.

All regional towns, councils, community groups, businesses, schools and individuals are invited to take part in this program by submitting an entry in one of the nine categories or the Overall Award. The State Overall winner has the potential to become a finalist for the National Keep Australia Beautiful Awards and may also host the awards weekend for the year following their win.

AWARD POPULATION CATEGORIES

- Population category A: up to 1,500
- Population category B: 1,501 - 5,000
- Population category C: 5,001 - 12,000
- Population category D: 12,001 - 23,000
- Population category E: > 23,000

About KAB NSW



Keep Australia Beautiful NSW is the premier non-profit organisation leading behaviour change by engaging the community to continually improve our local environment.

Over our 40-year history we have built a state-wide network of dedicated businesses, community groups, councils, schools and individuals assisting our causes.

We deliver many programs throughout the state to promote sustainability and reduce litter:

- Tidy Towns Sustainability Awards (regional)
- Sustainable Cities Awards (metropolitan)
- EnviroMentors® environmental education program
- Annual Conference





Message from the CEO

Since its inception in 1981, the Tidy Towns Awards Program has continued to recognise and celebrate the remarkable efforts of regional councils, towns, businesses, community groups, schools, and individuals who are leading the way towards a more sustainable and resilient future. These dedicated participants not only protect and enhance our environment but also strengthen the social fabric and well-being of regional communities across New South Wales.

This 2025 publication showcases some of the outstanding entries from this year's awards, highlighting the creativity, commitment, and community spirit that define the Tidy Towns movement. By sharing these achievements, we hope to inspire others to take action, foster local pride, and continue building a cleaner, greener, and more connected Australia.

On behalf of Keep Australia Beautiful NSW, I would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to our valued partners for their ongoing support, and to our dedicated judging panel for their time and expertise in selecting this year's winners. Most importantly, congratulations to all of the 2025 award recipients and featured projects for their exceptional contribution and unwavering commitment to keeping Australia beautiful.



Warm regards,

Val Southam
Chief Executive and Executive Director
Keep Australia Beautiful NSW

Thank you to our 2025 Tidy Towns Awards Partners and Sponsors



Awards Categories

Circular Economy



Sponsored by



The Circular Economy Award is for any operationally viable projects in the circular economy which do, or could potentially, divert solid materials, fluids or energy from waste streams and return them to the productive economy.

Litter Prevention



Sponsored by



The Litter Prevention Award is for a project or program that reduces or prevents litter, through education, enforcement, infrastructure, clean ups and partnerships.

The Litter Prevention Award has two-subcategories:

- Land-based litter prevention
- Water-based litter prevention

Climate Change Mitigation & Adaptation



Sponsored by

snowyhydro

The Climate Change Mitigation & Adaptation Award is for projects that strengthen resilience to the impacts of climate change, reduce emissions, or sequester carbon from the atmosphere.

Heritage & Culture



The Heritage and Culture Award is for community projects that enhance and protect either our built heritage, natural heritage or indigenous cultural heritage.

Liveable Towns



The Liveable Towns Award is for projects that contribute to the liveability of a particular area addressing areas such as accessibility, public spaces, social equity, health and wellbeing.

Plastic Free Communities



Recognising innovation and programs that take action to tackle single use plastics, empowering individuals and businesses to avoid single use products and encourage more sustainable choices.

Local Heroes



The Local Heroes Award recognise individuals who demonstrate leadership and an outstanding commitment in any of the awards categories.

Young Legends (≤ 25)



The Young Legend's Award is for an individual, school (including classes or groups) or a group of individuals (25 years and under) who demonstrate outstanding commitment to their environment and show leadership in pursuing environmental outcomes in any of the awards categories.

Biodiversity Conservation



The Biodiversity Conservation Award is for projects which regenerate, conserve, or advance scientific understanding of biodiversity in terrestrial and marine ecosystems.

Communication & Engagement



The Communication and Engagement Award is for programs and projects that inspire environmental action through education, media and community engagement campaigns.

Community Spirit & Inclusion



The Community Spirit and Inclusion Award is awarded to communities that successfully demonstrate strong community spirit and inclusion in the face of ongoing challenges. This award is given to communities that refuse to 'give in' when facing a challenge.

Resource Recovery



The Resource Recovery Award is for projects or programs that conserve, recycle or minimise wastage of our everyday resources, which include water, food & organic materials, and waste materials.

Waterways & Marine Protection



The Waterways & Marine Protection Award is for programs and actions that create, restore and/or enhance our natural waterways and beaches,

Waste Avoidance



The Waste Avoidance Award is for projects or programs that address waste prevention or reduction and education.

Overall Award



The Overall Award is awarded to a metropolitan council that has successfully undertaken projects or actions in multiple areas of environmental sustainability and social inclusion.

Awards Judges and Assessors



Doug MacDonald

Doug is an Urban Designer, specialising in the planning, design and building of sustainable and resilient communities.

He brings to the Tidy Towns Competition expertise in environmental management, heritage, architecture, civil engineering, landscape architecture and public sector management. He has been on 'both sides of the fence', working with specialist consultants, councils and property developers.

Doug has a deep understanding of Torres Strait Islander & Aboriginal culture and an affinity with rural Australia having grown up in the Torres Strait Islands and Papua New Guinea and attended boarding school in rural Australia.

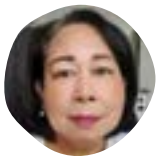


Paula Clasby

Senior Manager, Business Development,
TerraCycle ANZ

Paula is a creative, marketing, and business development professional with extensive experience supporting businesses to advance positive environmental and social change. She has worked in various sectors including health, marketing, design, print, hospitality, and over 10 years within sustainability and the built environment. Prior to TerraCycle, Paula worked with GECA (Good Environmental Choice Australia), helping individuals and businesses to advance the circular economy.

Paula prioritises purpose in all her work, drawing on her passion to drive TerraCycle's mission in Eliminating the Idea of Waste®.



Ana Corpuz

Senior Project Officer,
Murray Darling Basin Authority

Ana has over 25 years experience in strategic and operational policy and planning, regulatory review, project management, technical analysis, research and reporting, communication, stakeholder engagement, organisational systems, benchmarking and process improvement, governance framework setting and compliance monitoring.

Her focus areas are on environment and sustainability, water and catchment management, air quality, climate change, waste management, mining and exploration, land use, zoning and redevelopment, transport, contract management and mentoring.



Jeanne-Vida Douglas

Head of Innovation,
Property Industry Foundation

JV is an award-winning marketer, business journalist, and author working at the intersection of sustainability, innovation, and impact.

After early roles championing sustainable solutions across start-ups, media, and professional services, she pivoted following the 2019–20 bushfires to support renewable-energy and circular-economy leaders including Nectr, 5B, and TerraCycle.

Now, as Head of Innovation at the Property Industry Foundation, she advances social sustainability and reimagines solutions to youth homelessness.



Kylie Flament

CEO,
Social Enterprise Council of NSW & ACT

Kylie Flament is an award-winning social enterprise leader and sustainability expert with experience managing large teams and projects across corporate, government, and not-for-profit sectors.

She is currently the Chief Executive Officer of SECNA, where she advocates for building an economy that enables people and the planet to thrive.

She also sits on a number of boards and committees including as a non-executive director of People for Nature and on the Circular Australia industry taskforce.



Yolande Franklin

Small Business
Owner/Contractor

Yolande started working in local government in 2002 and quickly learnt the ropes of waste education, resource recovery and sustainable practices.

A horticulturist by trade, Yolande has long been an advocate of the environment, having grown up in the world heritage Blue Mountains and going on to study Resource Management at University before moving into her career alongside many other waste professionals. "The great outdoors is my greatest joy and being a caretaker my most challenging task".

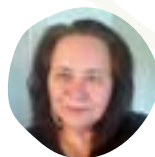
**Anna Lei**

PR & Communications Manager,
TerraCycle ANZ

Anna Lei is a public relations professional with experience across a range of industries.

She began her career at award-winning agency Ogilvy, specialising in consumer PR and influencer marketing, working with global clients such as Netflix, Xbox, eBay and American Express.

In 2023, Anna joined the TerraCycle marketing team hoping to incorporate purpose in her work and combine her passion for environmental advocacy with her professional expertise to champion sustainability and inspire positive change. Anna drives media relations, publicity, and community outreach to inspire and educate on sustainable practices at TerraCycle.

**Layla McNeil**

Strategic Business Manager,
Thesium

Layla has experience in environmental strategic policy development, project and contract management, program delivery, EMS auditing, stakeholder facilitation.

She has knowledge and expertise in developing and delivering strategic environmental and communication plans, cooperative agreements and contracts with multi stakeholders; educational and behaviour change campaigns; environmental auditing, waste and resource management planning; to creating, implementing, reporting and evaluating a variety of sustainability programs.

**Luciano Mesiti**

CEO, Primary Industries Education
Foundation Australia

Luciano is the CEO of Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia, whose aim is to promote food and fibre education in schools nationally. Prior to his appointment he was a high school teacher, teaching agriculture and technology.

Luciano has extensive experience in curriculum development in agriculture and technology and is a very passionate advocate of Landcare and sustainable land manage curriculum in schools. He has been a Tidy Towns judge and assessor for over 15 years and a great supporter of Keep Australia Beautiful.

**Lynda Newnam**

Principal,
Citizen Science Partnerships

Lynda is passionate about bringing volunteered knowledge, ideas and expertise into planning and regulatory processes to address environmental challenges within a framework that champions honesty, accountability and transparency and encourages collaborative stewardship. She has extensive project management experience, particularly in the environment and higher education, as well as 30 years in volunteering. Her formal qualifications are in primary school teaching and carbon management, with undergraduate degrees specialising in structural linguistics, anthropology and government as well as a Master in Environmental Management.

**Tasneem Rangwala**

PhD Aspirant, ISF UTS –
*Developing Adaptive Planning
Framework*

Tasneem is a 2020 National Council of Women NSW Australia Day Award winner for research achievements.

She is a dedicated leader driving change towards environmental enhancements. Her skills include environmental impacts assessments, project management, overseeing strategic regulatory programs, compliance audits and driving efficiency via enhancing quality of processes.

Tasneem has over 25 years' experience working across a range of industries including Environmental Consultancy, State Government Regulatory Authorities and the Biomedical Engineering field.

**Mike Ritchie**

Managing Director,
MRA Consulting Group

Mike has over 35 years' experience in the waste management and recycling industry. He has worked with all levels of government and the private sector.

Mike's roles have included Managing Director of MRA Consulting Group, Group General Manager SUEZ Australia, General Manager WSN Environmental Solutions and State Manager of VISY Recycling. He was also a director of a local government and Senior Advisor to the Mayor of Brisbane.

Awards Judges and Assessors



Jessica Speechley

Senior Coordinator Environmental Health, Blacktown City Council

Jessica leads a team of 17 Environmental Health Officers across three teams.

Jessica has been instrumental in implementing and advancing environmental health programs that enhance the well-being of Blacktown's residents.

Her dedication to creating a healthier and more sustainable community is reflected in her successful prosecution record.



Matt Taylor

Owner/Director, Heart HR

As a former CEO of Keep Australia Beautiful NSW, Matthew brings over 7 years' experience from his time managing the organisation, including the Tidy Towns program.

Since leaving KAB, Matthew held a number of roles but his passion for the environment has remained.

Currently, Matt runs his own HR consultancy to support small to medium sized businesses - including many not-for-profit organisations.



Dr Trevor Thornton

Senior Lecturer – Hazardous Materials Management, Deakin University

Trevor is currently employed as a Senior Lecturer at Deakin University and also consults widely on processes to develop and implement programs to reduce environmental impacts for a broad range of industry sectors.

Trevor has a wealth of experience, particularly in areas associated with waste management.

Trevor has been working in various aspects of the waste management industry for over 30 years as a regulator and consultant.



Chris Tola

Manager, Skilled Workforce Program, Regional Development Australia & Publisher, Surfing Roadies

Chris has had an active involvement with many organisations including Surfrider Foundation, Take 3, the Australian Coastal Society, the Australian Radioactivity Protections and Nuclear Safety Agency, National Parks and Wildlife and the EPA.

Since 2002, Chris has periodically been the Keep Australia Beautiful Clean Beach Challenge National Assessor and State Judge, and the Tidy Towns Assessor; and was the Keep Australia Beautiful (NSW) Program Manager for Clean Beach Challenge and the Tidy Towns Program (2002 – 2005).



Rick Wiezel

Manager Community Law Enforcement & Waste, Blacktown City Council

Rick has had a varied career working in the registered club industry, community capacity building sector, and local government.

Rick has led teams undertaking environmental education, city cleansing, graffiti removal and is currently leading community law enforcement (parkers and rangers) and waste collection at Blacktown Council.

Rick has been an assessor and judge for Keep Australia Beautiful periodically for over 20 years



Orange is recognised for its long-standing commitment to sustainability, resilience, and strong community collaboration.

A proud and active participant in the Tidy Towns program for many years, Orange has previously been named State Winner in 1982, 2016, 2018, and 2020 - a testament to its consistent dedication to environmental excellence and civic pride.

The city's achievements span a wide range of initiatives that reflect innovation, inclusion, and long-term vision.

Projects such as Zest Fest: Refills not Landfill have significantly reduced single-use plastics, while Planting for the Future engaged local youth in biodiversity conservation and native tree planting.

The Lake Canobolas: Places to Swim project enhanced accessibility and environmental design, and Electrify Orange is driving local climate action by helping households transition from gas to clean electricity.

Meanwhile, the Rainbow Festival celebrates diversity and inclusion, strengthening social connection and community spirit.

With its proactive Council, dedicated volunteers, schools, and community groups working in partnership, Orange continues to exemplify how collaboration, innovation, and shared purpose can create lasting environmental and social impact across the region.



2025 Overall Tidy Towns Population Category Winners

WINNER

Population Category A



Coomba Park

Coomba Park is a small but spirited lakeside community in the Mid North Coast region, with a population of just 750.

This tight-knit town is quickly becoming known for its growing community pride and collaborative energy. Driven by strong local leadership and passionate volunteers, Coomba Park is embracing sustainability through a variety of grassroots initiatives.

The town's strengths lie in its sense of inclusion, commitment to resource recovery, and the enthusiastic involvement of residents who are working together to enhance both the natural and built environment. A powerful example of what even the smallest communities can achieve with heart and determination.

WINNER

Population Category C



Forbes

Forbes has a deeply embedded culture of sustainability, collaboration, and civic pride.

The town's environmental efforts are supported by strong communication and cooperation across all parts of the community — from local government to residents and volunteers.

As a long-time leader in sustainable initiatives, Forbes continues to demonstrate its commitment to both long-term environmental stewardship and the power of a self-help community spirit. The town's legacy of success is matched by its ongoing energy, innovation, and pride in place.



WINNER

Population Category D



Singleton

Singleton continues to set a high standard through its coordinated community networks and strong commitment to environmental sustainability.

The town has a long history of achievements in the Tidy Towns program and remains deeply engaged in improving the local environment and quality of life.

Singleton is particularly strong in building partnerships across a wide range of community organisations. These partnerships foster a united approach to local challenges and highlight the town's ability to work together with purpose and passion for shared goals.



2025 Local Heroes Award



Fred Maw (decd) Orange

In recognition of Fred's many years of dedicated service to the Orange Tidy Towns Committee, and his unwavering passion for showcasing Orange and supporting its communities.

Fred's legacy continues to inspire those who knew and worked with him

Biodiversity Conservation

WINNER

Population Category D



Farmers Creek Revegetation Lithgow Oberon Landcare

This ongoing project addresses historical degradation along Farmers Creek, an important waterway in the Sydney catchment.

Through revegetation, weed control, and community workshops, the initiative improves local biodiversity and water quality.

Lithgow Oberon Landcare collaborates with Lithgow City Council and community members, guided by the Farmers Creek Masterplan.

Efforts include plantings, environmental monitoring, and educational engagement, helping restore a vital ecosystem while building local stewardship for long-term environmental care.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Population Category D



Birds, Bees and Butterflies Urban Walks Hunter Region Landcare Network (Singleton)

This initiative tackled the spread of invasive and non-native plants in Singleton and raised awareness of native alternatives.

Free guided walks helped residents identify non-native species and discover local flora that supports birds, bees, and butterflies. Informal afternoon teas encouraged community discussion.

The project fostered stronger ties between residents and environmental groups, leading to more native plantings in home gardens.

Future plans include expanding walks across seasons and sites to deepen community engagement and ecological understanding.



HIGHLY COMMENDED

Population Category D



Gardens of Stone Visitor Centre

Australian Ecosystems
Foundation (Lithgow)

Secret Creek Sanctuary protects endangered species like Eastern Quolls and Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies through feral-free habitats and conservation programs.

Following the 2019–20 bushfires, a long-held vision for a visitor and cultural centre was realised with support from recovery grants.

Developed in partnership with OneMob and local stakeholders, the Gardens of Stone Visitor Centre now boosts ecotourism, supports biodiversity education, celebrates Aboriginal culture, and creates regional jobs, enhancing species protection while strengthening environmental awareness and community resilience.



2025 Local Heroes Award



Diana Thorning Singleton

In recognition of Diana's long-standing service to Singleton Tidy Towns and her outstanding contributions to the local community - a true reflection of her compassion, leadership, and civic pride.



WINNER

Population Category E



Planting for the Future Orange Youth Action Council

Led by the Orange Youth Action Council during Youth Week 2025, this project empowered local youth to take environmental action by planting over 200 endangered Silver-Leaf Candlebark trees at Pinnacle Reserve.

Supported by Orange City Council, Iberdrola Australia, and environmental partners, the initiative restored habitat, enhanced biodiversity, and promoted conservation of a threatened species.

It also inspired young people to actively protect their local environment, building a legacy of stewardship for future generations.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Population Category E



Bridges Hill Park Signage Project Cessnock Tidy Towns

This project enhanced Bridges Hill Park in Cessnock by installing interpretive signage identifying local flora, including native and remnant species.

With support from Cessnock City Council and the Wonnarua Language Reference Group, signage features traditional Wonnarua plant names and uses.

Located near the playground and walking trails, the signs promote awareness of the park's ecological and cultural significance, educating visitors about both past and present natural values in an accessible and engaging way.



WINNER

Population Category A



Recycling Hub

**Sarah Jane Huntley &
the Coomba & District
Progress Association**

Launched in 2021 by a passionate group of local women, the Coomba Park Recycling Hub collects hard-to-recycle items not accepted in standard bins.

Operated by volunteers at the Community Hall, the hub has diverted over 70kg of waste from landfill by sending items to TerraCycle.

This grassroots initiative is a shining example of how small communities can lead the way in sustainability through education, collaboration, and encouraging responsible disposal habits among residents.

WINNER

Population Category D



Circular Organics in the Eastern Riverina

**Riverina Eastern Regional
Organisation of Councils**

This initiative, supported by the NSW EPA, aimed to reduce food waste from hospitality businesses across four Riverina towns by diverting it to FOGO collections.

A dedicated Circular Economy Project Officer worked directly with local food businesses to improve source separation and composting outcomes.

By boosting participation in organics recycling, the project reduced landfill waste, improved compost quality, and supported circular economy goals, creating environmental and operational benefits for local councils and communities alike.



HIGHLY COMMENDED

Population Category D



Singleton Council - The Energy Wise Program Singleton Council

Singleton Council's Energy Wise Program helped residents tackle rising energy bills by promoting energy-efficient behaviours.

Through a video series and a hands-on community workshop, participants learned practical tips on heating, cooling, insulation, solar, standby power, and more.

The free Save Energy Kit, available through the council, extended impact at home.

By delivering accessible, actionable advice, this initiative empowered the community to reduce energy use, save money, and support long-term environmental sustainability.

WINNER

Population Category E



Electrify Orange Campaign Orange City Council

Orange City Council joined the national 'Electrify Everything' campaign in 2025, inspiring residents to transition to all-electric homes.

Partnering with Electrify 2800 and local volunteers, the campaign delivered engaging communications including videos, podcasts, an action plan, and free toolkits loaned through the library.

A community night attracted over 116 attendees.

The initiative promoted climate action, reduced fossil fuel dependence, and empowered residents with knowledge and tools to electrify their homes and lifestyles.



HIGHLY COMMENDED

Population Category B



Greta Migrant Camp Photographic Display

Greta Sustainable Community / Tidy Towns Committee

To commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Greta Migrant Camp, volunteers created a touching photographic display of school photos, enhanced using AI and printed for exhibition.

Mounted chronologically for easy viewing, the display was a nostalgic and emotional experience for many former residents.

The project highlighted the importance of preserving community history, especially for displaced people.

The photos are now housed at the Greta Museum, offering ongoing access and education for future generations.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Population Category C



Ben Hall Trial Reenactment **Forbes Shire Council**

Reviving a locally written play about bushranger Ben Hall, Forbes Shire Council and its Heritage Committee staged a successful community theatre event celebrating regional history.

Originally written by Forbes solicitor Dominic Williams, the re-enactment brought Ben Hall's story to life, drawing wide interest and participation.

It demonstrated the power of storytelling in cultural preservation and highlighted Forbes' strong community spirit and dedication to celebrating heritage in engaging and accessible ways.

Communication & Engagement

WINNER

Population Category B



Let's Get it Sorted Waste Education Bega Valley Shire Council

This school-based waste education program empowered students to understand, reduce, and manage school waste through real-world learning.

Beginning with waste audits, students analysed and identified key waste streams before developing strategies to cut landfill contribution.

A final audit measured improvements. The hands-on, student-led process not only reduced waste but also built a sense of ownership and environmental responsibility, creating long-lasting behavioural change within school communities and promoting a sustainable culture from a young age.

WINNER

Population Category D



Grow it; Know it; Share it! Slow Food Singleton

Slow Food Singleton is a community organisation dedicated to growing, learning, sharing, and preparing local produce.

Through its Grow it; Know it; Share it! program, which includes Edible Garden Trails and Monthly Crop Swaps, the group promotes sustainable food practices and community connection.

The Trails showcase local gardens, while the Crop Swaps, held at Singleton Library in partnership with Singleton Council, encourage produce sharing and learning.

These initiatives build environmental awareness, reduce food waste, and strengthen community resilience.



WINNER

Population Category E



Tours: Telling Stories and Halving Waste

Halve Waste, AlburyCity Council

Following the introduction of a regional three-bin system and waste strategy, Albury Waste Management Centre opened its doors to the public.

Tours have become a powerful educational tool, drawing over 1,500 visitors in 2024 alone - from school groups to councillors.

The hands-on experience helps demystify waste processes, foster behaviour change, and inspire action.

As a cornerstone of community engagement, the tours have helped the region exceed waste reduction goals and strengthen its circular economy.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Population Category E



What's Killing Our Trees? **Wingecarribee Shire Council**

Responding to community concerns about widespread tree dieback, Wingecarribee Shire Council partnered with the Southern Highlands Australian Plant Society to investigate and educate.

A forum and resources were developed to inform residents about Phytophthora, a destructive water mould causing tree loss.

The project promoted practical prevention, safe removal, and species selection for replanting.

This collaboration strengthened community awareness and action, helping protect the region's trees and biodiversity through shared knowledge and proactive management.

Community Spirit & Inclusion

WINNER

Population Category A



Welcome to Coomba

Coomba & District Progress Association

To address isolation in their remote community, Coomba & District Progress Association created a digital Welcome Pack, easily accessed via QR codes displayed throughout the village.

This user-friendly resource connects residents and visitors to vital local services, activities, and emergency contacts.

Regularly updated and promoted through social media and newsletters, the pack strengthens community engagement, supports local businesses, and eliminates the need for one-on-one outreach, ensuring all newcomers feel informed and welcomed.

WINNER

Population Category B



Greta Seniors

Monthly Morning Tea

Greta Sustainable Community / Tidy Towns Committee

This heartwarming initiative brings seniors together for monthly morning teas, fostering connection and reducing isolation.

Spearheaded by the daughters of a beloved past organiser, the event now includes guest speakers, themed activities, and raffles.

Held at the local club, it offers a relaxed, accessible venue where seniors can gather socially.

Strong community support and volunteer leadership have ensured the program's ongoing success, making it a vital and cherished part of Greta's community life.



WINNER

Population Category C



Welcome to Forbes Events Forbes Shire Council

The annual Welcome to Forbes Events are designed to warmly introduce new residents to their community while showcasing local volunteer organisations.

These inclusive, well-attended gatherings feature food, entertainment, community group stalls, and Councillor meet-and-greets.

By creating a space for newcomers to connect and engage, the event strengthens local networks, encourages community participation, and helps foster a sense of belonging - demonstrating Forbes Shire Council's commitment to a welcoming, vibrant, and connected community.

WINNER

Population Category D



Singleton's Early Childhood Art Exhibition Singleton Heights Pre-School

What began as a child's 3D diorama blossomed into a community-wide art exhibition celebrating the creativity of local young children.

Hosted at the Singleton Civic Centre, the event brought together early childhood services across the region, with families and community partners joining the opening night.

The exhibition showcased children's voices and talents, fostered collaboration, and highlighted the value of early learning.

It was a joyful and inclusive event that strengthened community pride and connection.



WINNER

Population Category E



Rainbow Festival Orange City Council

Held in March 2025, the second Rainbow Festival was a joyful celebration of LGBTQIA+ pride and inclusion.

Orange City Council partnered with community groups to deliver 13 diverse events - from street parties to storytelling sessions- creating a safe, affirming space for all.

With strong local participation and visible allyship, the festival empowered local voices and deepened community understanding.

It demonstrated the power of collaboration and showcased Orange as a vibrant, inclusive, and welcoming place for all.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Population Category E



Cessnock Community Garden Cessnock Community Garden Association

Cessnock's Community Garden has become a thriving hub of sustainability, education, and connection.

Volunteers have created a flourishing space that provides fresh produce for members and local groups.

The garden receives strong support from community organisations and local businesses.

Young people visit weekly to learn gardening skills as part of their NDIS plans.

The project promotes healthy living, environmental education, and inclusive community engagement, enriching the lives of all who participate.



JOINT WINNER

Population Category A



Coomba Park Foreshore Halfcourt Coomba & District Progress Association

With no funding available from council, Coomba locals banded together to build a hard surface halfcourt at the foreshore park.

Through community fundraisers, volunteer labour, and donations of materials, the project was brought to life. The new halfcourt provides a valuable recreational space for all ages, fostering physical activity, social interaction, and community pride.

It stands as a shining example of grassroots action, demonstrating what a motivated community can achieve together.

JOINT WINNER

Population Category A



Coomba Masterclass Kirsty Duncan & the Coomba & District Progress Association

The Coomba Masterclass series connects community members through low-cost, skill-sharing workshops led by talented local volunteers.

For just \$5, participants have learned everything from cooking arancini to writing fiction, bush tucker knowledge, and even manicure techniques.

Hosted in the community hall, the program celebrates local knowledge, promotes lifelong learning, and strengthens social ties.

The Masterclass initiative showcases Coomba's wealth of talent and its commitment to creativity, collaboration, and intergenerational connection.

Liveable Towns

WINNER

Population Category D



Grow it; Know it; Share it! Slow Food Singleton

Slow Food Singleton champions local, sustainable food through Edible Garden Trails and monthly Crop Swaps.

Trails highlight ten home gardens, where residents learn directly from growers, while Crop Swaps encourage community members to exchange excess produce, recipes, and gardening tips.

In partnership with Singleton Library and Council, these initiatives have sparked widespread interest in growing and sharing food.

The program strengthens food resilience, social connection, and environmental awareness in the Singleton community.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Population Category D



Back Pack Pals Dyson Family Foundation (Singleton)

Back Pack Pals addresses weekend hunger for school children by discreetly providing bags of food to those in need each Friday.

Initially piloted at one school, the initiative has grown to support 19 schools and now delivers 350 bags weekly.

Without collecting personal information, schools identify students most in need.

The program fills a critical gap when support services are closed, ensuring children return to school nourished, ready to learn, and with dignity intact.



Category Award Winners

Litter Prevention

Award category
sponsored by:



HIGHLY COMMENDED

Population Category E



Lake Canobolas: Places to Swim Orange City Council

Recent upgrades to Lake Canobolas have improved accessibility, safety, and recreational opportunities for locals and visitors alike.

Enhancements included better paths, inclusive access points, and upgraded amenities. Supported by Orange City Council, the NSW Government, and Cadia Valley Operations, the project has revitalised this much-loved natural space.

It encourages outdoor activity, environmental appreciation, and community connection while showcasing a strong, collaborative approach to enhancing regional liveability and wellbeing.

WINNER

Population Category A



Butt Bins Coomba & District Progress Association

Coomba Park tackled cigarette litter with the installation of dedicated butt bins along its foreshore.

Located near popular gathering spots, these bins prevent pollution in Wallis Lake - a vital waterway for oyster farming and fishing.

This project complements the town's broader environmental efforts, including a successful recycling hub, and is maintained by a dedicated volunteer group.

It reflects Coomba's commitment to sustainability, community pride, and protecting its precious natural surroundings.



HIGHLY COMMENDED

Population Category A



Brunch Cafe/Recycling Hub

The Brunch Café, Sustainability Hub & Coomba & District Progress Association

The Brunch Café and Recycling Hub work together to promote sustainability and community connection in Coomba Park.

Volunteers prepare wholesome meals using bulk ingredients with minimal packaging, while organic waste is composted or fed to local chickens. Non-recyclable items are sorted and processed via the Recycling Hub.

Both initiatives operate under the Coomba & District Progress Association, offering a circular economy model that combines food, friendship, and environmental stewardship, all while reinvesting proceeds back into the community.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Population Category E



Waste & Resource Recovery Strategy 2026-31

Cessnock City Council

Cessnock City Council's Waste & Resource Recovery Strategy 2026–2031 provides a clear roadmap to deliver sustainable, cost-effective waste services.

The strategy prioritises increasing diversion from landfill, improving recycling outcomes, and raising community awareness, while complying with all safety, environmental, and legislative obligations.

This forward-looking plan sets strong goals for resource recovery and lays the groundwork for community education and engagement, ensuring the region remains a leader in responsible waste management into the future.



WINNER

Population Category B



Robertson Public School Young REPS

Robertson Public School Young Robertson Environment Protection Society (REPS)

Robertson Public School's Young REPS initiative empowers students to restore the endangered local rainforest by propagating and planting endemic species.

With support from the local council and the state government, students built native plant nurseries, greenhouses, and led revegetation efforts.

The program fosters biodiversity, environmental leadership, and sustainable funding through plant sales. Challenges like seed sourcing were addressed through strong partnerships.

Young REPS is a powerful model of hands-on, youth-led conservation with lasting community impact.

WINNER

Population Category C



UHSC Sustainable Schools Odyssey

Upper Hunter Shire Council

The Sustainable Schools Odyssey is an education initiative by Upper Hunter Shire Council supporting schools to become environmental leaders.

Through the Youth Council platform, schools form Youth Environment Councils, participate in STEM workshops, and showcase sustainability projects.

The annual Odyssey Presentation Day recognises student and teacher Environmental Champions.

The program builds networks between schools, council, and community, empowering young people with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to lead local environmental change.

Young Legends

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Population Category C



The Forbes Youth Action Team Forbes Shire Council

Forbes Youth Action Team (FYAT) has been reinvigorated through targeted engagement by Council to better represent local youth.

Now an official Council committee, FYAT includes diverse members from schools, disability groups, and First Nations communities.

Councillors attend meetings, ensuring young voices are heard in decision-making.

The group plans inclusive activities, shaping a youth-friendly future for Forbes.

FYAT demonstrates how councils can empower the next generation and embed youth perspectives in local governance.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Population Category C



Waste and Landfill Reduction Queanbeyan West Public School

This innovative school project tackled landfill through three key actions: repurposing 744 kg of old uniforms for reuse or textile recycling, donating unused school resources to Papua New Guinea, and introducing FOGO bins in every classroom.

Students were involved in all stages, learning about waste reduction and sustainability.

The initiative diverted significant material from landfill, supported global educational access, and embedded environmental responsibility across the school community - an inspiring example of whole-school engagement in sustainability.



Category Award Winners

Waterways & Marine Protection



HIGHLY COMMENDED

Population Category D



Singleton - Our Community-Our Future Singleton Clontarf 120

This youth-led initiative engaged Singleton Clontarf Academy students in local environmental efforts through Clean Up Australia Day, National Tree Day, and community clean-ups.

Students worked alongside councils and environmental groups to tackle litter, protect habitats, and restore local spaces.

The project fostered leadership, teamwork, and civic responsibility while improving the environment.

Ongoing engagement proved crucial to success, and future plans include involving more partners and expanding awareness to deepen the initiative's lasting impact.

WINNER

Population Category C



Lake Ainsworth Aquatic Weed Management Lennox Head Landcare and Partners

Since 2015, Lennox Head Landcare and community partners have led the fight to protect Lake Ainsworth from invasive aquatic weeds like Water Hyacinth.

Volunteers host regular working bees to remove the fast-growing weed, supported by groups like Rainbow Region Dragon Boaters and local councils.

Their efforts preserve the lake's ecological health, water quality, and recreational value.

This proactive, long-term project showcases how community-led stewardship can safeguard precious natural resources from environmental threats.

Waste Avoidance

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Population Category A



The Brunch Cafe Coomba & District Progress Association

The Brunch Café champions waste avoidance through bulk purchasing, reusable storage, and a zero-disposables policy.

Meals are served on crockery, with leftovers, coffee grounds, and food scraps repurposed for compost or local chooks.

Ingredients are prepared from scratch using efficient, sustainable practices that minimise packaging and food waste.

Supported entirely by volunteers, the café operates with a deep commitment to environmental care - turning everyday meals into an inspiring example of community-led sustainability in action.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Population Category C



Recycling and Circular Economy Toronto Area Sustainable Neighbourhood Group

In response to rising plastic waste in Lake Macquarie and the Hunter region, this project drove impactful grassroots action.

Volunteers convinced 75 cafes to distribute reusable coffee cups and collected 2,000 petition signatures urging local councils to support recycling innovation and job creation.

To tackle plastic bag use, they offered Boomerang Bags made from reclaimed fabric.

This multifaceted initiative has raised awareness, inspired behaviour change, and contributed to the region's evolving circular economy.



HIGHLY COMMENDED

Population Category D



Snowy Valleys Council Zero Waste Strategy Snowy Valleys Council

Snowy Valleys Council's Zero Waste Strategy has transformed waste management across the region.

Originally implemented in 2019, a 2024 review confirmed remarkable progress—including a 61% drop in landfill waste and significant growth in FOGO participation.

The strategy focuses on kerbside upgrades, education, and partnerships with processors to improve material recovery.

Backed by residents, schools, and local stakeholders, the initiative demonstrates a successful, long-term commitment to sustainability, positioning Snowy Valleys as a leader in regional waste innovation.

WINNER

Population Category E



Zest Fest: Refills not Landfill Orange City Council

At Orange's Zest Fest, almost 4,500 attendees embraced a new reusable cup system that eliminated an estimated 15,000 single-use cups.

Participants purchased durable, branded cups to use throughout the event - and at future Council events.

With strong stakeholder support and proactive education, the initiative set a new benchmark for low-waste event delivery.

It demonstrated Council's commitment to waste avoidance, behaviour change, and sustainability, while engaging the community in fun, meaningful climate action.



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