



# Media Release

6 December 2017

## **‘Big Friendly Giant’ named Cockburn’s Inspiring Volunteer**

A man committed to serving his community – including dressing up as Roald Dahl’s much-loved children’s literary character, the BFG (Big Friendly Giant), during Book Week – has been named the City of Cockburn 2017 Inspirational Volunteer of the Year.

Cockburn Rotarian Geoff Webb also took out the 2017 Award’s Community category in recognition of his local volunteer work since moving to Cockburn in 2011.

After many years volunteering in the Bunbury community, the Rotarian quickly joined Cockburn organisations where he immediately began making a difference to the lives of locals.

One of his greatest triumphs has been setting up Cockburn Men’s Shed. A founding member and current treasurer, Mr Webb has been instrumental in raising funds to build the shed, which will open in 2018.

As a local Rotarian, he served in the areas of Community and Club Service, before becoming President in 2016-17, but also received the prestigious Rotary International Paul Harris Fellowship Medal in 2006 for his contributions to the Rotary Foundation which supports education.

Variously described as selfless, of exemplary character, invaluable service and devoted commitment, Mr Webb is also an active Community of Aubin Grove resident group volunteer.

He was one of 102 nominees, up from 99 in 2016, across six categories in the 2017 awards.

Other category winners were –

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- **Arts & Culture:** Kerry Mace, President of Free Spirit Dance Community, helped host the largest Middle Eastern dance festival ever held in WA which catered to over 700 people. Over the past year, this gentle leader has delivered a vibrant program of events for dancers, their families and the people of Cockburn, where she is the first to arrive to set things up and the last to leave.
- **Indigenous:** Rueben Hayden-Nelson (Cockburn Basketball Association) has made a huge impact in six months, promoting basketball for females, establishing a free development program to help girls gain the skills and confidence to play at a high level.
  - He has also created an indigenous academy, and off the court volunteers weekly at local schools teaching students about Indigenous culture, and drives a mini bus to take local Aboriginal women to appointments.
- **Environmental & Animal Protection:** Elaine Christy has volunteered with Friends of Cockburn Wetland Centre for 15 years. The retired primary school teacher has inspired and educated locals as she supports, conserves and promotes our local wetlands. She participates in bird surveys, conducts workshops for primary school students for World Environment Day and the centre's school holiday programs, where she is well-known for her homemade biscuits.
- **Sports & Recreation:** Lyn Kapor (life member South Lake Dolphins Swimming Club) has been a club volunteer for more than 22 years as Secretary, Equipment Officer and Pennant Coordinator. She was also a member of the Swimming WA Competition Board for many years and a Director of Swimming. She is passionate about welcoming people of all backgrounds and abilities, encouraging two junior swimmers to gain success on the international stage, one winning silver at the 2016 Rio Paralympics and another competing at the 2009 Taipei Deaflympics.
- **Youth:** Natalija Zestic (Fremantle Multicultural Centre) runs a Job Club for people aged 16-24, from refugee and humanitarian backgrounds attending the Intensive English Centre. Although, a full time student, she still finds time to help young refugee people seeking socio-economic independence.

Mayor Logan Howlett said more than 2000 people currently volunteered their time and experience in Cockburn.



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“I thank all our volunteers for their continuous generosity, dedication, passion, commitment and contributions to the community,” Mayor Howlett said.

“Without volunteers many of our local clubs and groups would not exist today, and many more people’s lives would be much less enriched.”

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