



# Media Release

Thursday 26 January 2023

## Cockburn's Community Citizens shine at annual Australia Day awards

Some of the most dynamic people and places providing and facilitating volunteering in the City of Cockburn have again shone at our annual Australia Day Community Citizen of the Year Awards.

The overall title of Community Citizen of the Year for 2023 has gone to **Serena Gamble**, who has volunteered more than 1,500 hours and helped about 3,120 households in her community over the past three years.

Passionate animal lover and bushfire brigade volunteer **James Wild** was named the Youth (under 25 years) Community Citizen of the Year.

Co-founder of the Friends of the Community 15 years ago, and current Secretary and Treasurer, **Serene Anderson**, is this year's Senior (over 65 years) Community Citizen of the Year.

**Yangebup Family Centre**, which empowers a dedicated team of more than 70 volunteers, has received the Active Citizenship – Group or Event award for 2023.

Recipients were announced at the City's annual Australia Day Citizenship Ceremony where 48 New Australian citizens also pledged their commitment to our country on the 74<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Australian Citizenship.

Cockburn Mayor Logan Howlett said the awards demonstrated how volunteers held communities together, through thick and thin.

"These wonderful people and groups also demonstrate how enriching volunteering can be, for both those doing the volunteering and those who benefit. It's what community is all about, looking after each other and providing a safe space for everyone," Mayor Howlett said.

### **Awardees for 2023 are:**

Community Citizen of the Year – Overall: **Serena Gamble**

Community Citizen of the Year – Youth (under 25 years of age): **James Wild**

Community Citizen of the Year – Senior: **Serene Anderson**

Active Citizenship – Group or Event: **Yangebup Family Centre**



# Media Release

**Serena Gamble** has volunteered an estimated 1,560 hours as part of Feed It Forward over the past three years and as administrator of several community digital networking groups.

According to the Volunteering WA volunteer benefits calculator, that's equivalent to \$87,391 value to the community at \$56 an hour.

Described as a 'volunteer extraordinaire', Serena was also recognised at the City's annual volunteer awards, named third joint runner-up in the Volunteer of the Year category in October.

As a registered Feed it Forward volunteer, Serena gathers edible food that would otherwise go to landfill and distributes it to local families in need from her driveway each weekend year-round.

**James Wild** was the youngest member of South Coogee Volunteer Bushfire Brigade and fought numerous fires, including defending and saving homes during a Christmas Day fire in Armadale, and assisting the State Emergency Service.

The nature and animal lover administrated the Cockburn Pets – Lost/Found and All Things Pets and Wildlife online social media community.

He helped with donation drives for WA Wildlife, the Dogs' Refuge Home and Cat Haven in Shenton Park, and Kaarakin Black Cockatoo Conservation Centre.

As a member of Beeliam Wildlife he helped collect and transport sick Corellas and completes regular area patrols.

**Serene Anderson** is the co-founder, Secretary and Treasurer of Friends of the Community - a volunteer community group dedicated to making a difference in the lives of others.

With co-founder Norm Dale, she created the small food organisation which specialises in providing healthy low-cost food at special events, with 100 per cent of profits returned to community projects.

Friends of the Community has donated more than \$180,000 to 60 charities and individuals ranging from sponsoring local cadets and individuals in need, to state charities.



# Media Release

Another 27 local high school scholarships have helped all these students embark on university study.

In October, Serene was awarded the Mayor's Volunteer Award for 2022.

The community-led **Yangebup Family Centre** is a place where all community members can embrace diversity and belonging.

It has a dedicated team of over 70 volunteers and it's estimated that the financial contribution of these volunteers is in excess of \$100,000 pa. The centre provides a meeting place for 14 regular groups and a range of workshops attended regularly by 500 families.

Established in 1992, the centre is a safe space where people can find opportunities and develop networks in a supportive environment that also empowers volunteers to become future leaders in the Cockburn and wider community.

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