



Sunshine Coast Biosphere **Community Awards 2025**

**Celebrating Sunshine Coast locals and groups who have
made a significant contribution to our community**



Traditional acknowledgement

Sunshine Coast Council acknowledges the Sunshine Coast Country, home of the Kabi Kabi peoples and the Jinibara peoples, the Traditional Custodians, whose lands and waters we all now share.

We recognise that these have always been places of cultural, spiritual, social and economic significance. The Traditional Custodians' unique values, and ancient and enduring cultures, deepen and enrich the life of our community.

We commit to working in partnership with the Traditional Custodians and the broader First Nations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) communities to support self-determination through economic and community development.

Truth telling is a significant part of our journey. We are committed to better understanding the collective histories of the Sunshine Coast and the experiences of First Nations peoples. Legacy issues resulting from colonisation are still experienced by Traditional Custodians and First Nations peoples.

We recognise our shared history and will continue to work in partnership to provide a foundation for building a shared future with the Kabi Kabi peoples and the Jinibara peoples.

We wish to pay respect to their Elders – past, present and emerging, and acknowledge the important role First Nations peoples continue to play within the Sunshine Coast community.

Together, we are all stronger.



Image: 2024 Sunshine Coast Biosphere Awards Ceremony, Aunty Bridgette Chilli Davis, Welcome to Country.

A special thank you to our judges

Dr Greg Mews and Dr Leah Barclay
University of the Sunshine Coast

Paul Phillips
Unitywater

Cassie Grentell
Sunshine Coast Broadcasters

Corey James and Glenn Platt
Biosphere Community Advisory Group

Sunshine Coast Council gratefully
acknowledges its supporters:



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Mayor's Message

Congratulations on your nomination for the Sunshine Coast Biosphere Community Awards!

On behalf of Sunshine Coast Council and our entire community, it is my great pleasure to acknowledge and celebrate the outstanding achievements of all our nominees, across all categories.

Each of your stories reflects the heart of our Sunshine Coast Biosphere, showcasing why our region continues to be such a remarkable place to live, work, learn, and play.

You are the volunteers, the leaders, the changemakers, and the quiet achievers who enrich our way of life today and help shape a brighter, more sustainable future for generations to come.

In our Sunshine Coast Biosphere, we honour the deep connection between people and nature. These awards recognise your generous contributions to that shared vision – whether through environmental stewardship, economic innovation, or community building.

Thank you for your inspiring dedication and tireless efforts. Whether you've been protecting our natural environment, strengthening our local economy, or nurturing the wellbeing of our communities, you are making a meaningful difference, and for that, I offer my heartfelt thanks.



Mayor Rosanna Natoli
Sunshine Coast Council



Program

Pre-ceremony entertainment

Sam and Gemma Shepherd

Master of Ceremonies

Sunshine Coast Council CEO
John Baker

Welcome to Country

Aunty Bridgette Chilli Davis

Welcome

Sunshine Coast
Madam Mayor Rosanna Natoli

Healthy People Award

Sponsored by
My Weekly Preview

Creative Arts Award

Sponsored by
Sunshine Coast Arts Foundation

Healthy Planet Award

Sponsored by
University of the Sunshine Coast

Guest Speaker

Leon Stensholm

Community Group or Organisation Award

Sponsored by
Sunshine Coast Daily

Biosphere Business of the Year Award

Sponsored by Unitywater

Young Citizen of the Year Award

Sponsored by 92.7 MixFM

Senior Citizen of the Year Award

Sponsored by Maroochy RSL

Citizen of the Year Award

Sponsored by 7 News
Sunshine Coast

Healthy People Award

Sponsored by My Weekly Preview

Craig Allingham

Craig Allingham is a pioneer in men's health advocacy on the Sunshine Coast. After a distinguished career in elite sports medicine, he shifted focus to helping men recover from prostate cancer and improve overall wellbeing. Through education, research, and community programs like the Buderim Men's Shed, Craig empowers men to take charge of their health. His volunteer work, innovative programs, and personal dedication have created lasting health benefits and stronger community support networks for local men.

Club Pilates Sippy Downs

Club Pilates Sippy Downs is a locally owned studio that fosters wellbeing through a welcoming, supportive environment. Their team goes above and beyond to ensure every member feels valued, offering personalised guidance and encouragement. Their commitment to physical and mental health, combined with a strong sense of community care, makes them a standout example of how fitness spaces can nurture both individual growth and collective wellbeing.

Disabled Surfers Association Sunshine Coast

Disabled Surfers Association Sunshine Coast provides inclusive surfing experiences for people with physical or cognitive disabilities. Entirely volunteer-run, the organisation ensures each participant is supported by a team of helpers, creating a safe and joyful environment. Their partnerships with schools and surf clubs foster youth involvement and community spirit. The group's commitment to dignity, inclusion, and fun has made surfing accessible to many who otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity, enriching lives and building lasting connections.

Healthy People Award continued...

Eumundi Magpies FC

Eumundi Magpies FC is a not-for-profit soccer club fostering inclusion, community connection, and youth development since 2020. The club runs year-round programs for local children and leads initiatives like the Eumundi State School Soccer Tournament, a social inclusion program for students needing support, and the Magpies Support Fund, which ensures financial hardship doesn't prevent participation. Their work promotes diversity, wellbeing, and community partnerships, building a strong, socially cohesive environment and leaving a lasting positive legacy across the Sunshine Coast.

Anna Knapton

Anna Knapton's work as an occupational therapist has a profound impact on the wellbeing of older adults in the Sunshine Coast community. By helping individuals remain safe and independent in their homes, she reduces hospital admissions and delays aged care placement. Her tailored interventions, home modifications, and collaborative care approach empower clients and families alike. Anna's dedication enhances dignity, autonomy, and quality of life, allowing older adults to stay connected to their communities with confidence.

Mingle East Coast

Mingle East Coast, founded by Sophie and Adam, enhances mental health and social connection on the Sunshine Coast through inclusive, intergenerational events. By integrating breathwork and mindfulness into their gatherings, they provide tools for emotional wellbeing while fostering a strong sense of belonging. Their events unite people of all ages, reduce isolation, and promote community resilience. Mingle's work exemplifies how creative, community-led initiatives can support mental health and build a more connected, compassionate region.

Parkrun Australia

Parkrun Australia hosts free, weekly 5km events across 11 Sunshine Coast locations, encouraging participation from people of all ages and abilities. With nearly 100,000 finishers and thousands of volunteers, parkrun promotes physical and mental wellbeing, social connection, and inclusivity. It engages diverse communities and supports local tourism and businesses. Parkrun's accessible, volunteer-led model has created a powerful movement for health and community cohesion across the region.

Ashley Pendergast

Ashley, a veteran, founded Veterans Mixed Martial Arts to support fellow veterans through fitness, community, and mental health. Over three years, he has helped more than 100 veterans find purpose and healing. Ashley has raised funds through gruelling 24-hour grappling events and countless volunteer hours. His leadership and dedication have created a vital support network for veterans on the Sunshine Coast, making a profound difference in many lives.

Pride Performance

Josh Walters, through Pride Performance, has transformed youth basketball on the Sunshine Coast by creating inclusive, high-performance pathways for local athletes. His programs develop skills, build confidence, and open doors to international opportunities, including college scholarships in the U.S. Josh's mentorship, community partnerships, and advocacy for diversity foster a supportive environment where young people thrive.

R&B Dance Fitness

R&B Dance Fitness, founded by Gillian Ketting, is a vibrant community empowering women through movement, self-expression, and connection. More than a fitness class, it promotes mental health, body positivity, and confidence in an inclusive, uplifting environment. Hundreds of women have found joy, friendship, and self-worth through its life-changing sessions. R&B Dance Fitness is a powerful example of how dance and community can transform lives and foster a healthier, more connected region.

Resolve Fitness

Resolve Fitness contributes to the Sunshine Coast's wellbeing by offering inclusive, expert-led fitness programs tailored to individual needs. Their group classes and personal training sessions support both physical and mental health. Beyond the gym, staff volunteer in community health initiatives, raising funds for people with special needs. Their commitment to accessibility, care, and community engagement makes Resolve Fitness a valuable contributor to local health and social connection.

Sunshine Coast Basketball Association

The Sunshine Coast Basketball Association (SCBA) has grown significantly since 2015, now supporting over 3,500 members across all ages and skill levels. SCBA fosters talent development—especially among youth and young female athletes—through inclusive programs, school partnerships, and regional events. Their initiatives promote leadership, community engagement, and healthy lifestyles. With a strong focus on pathways from grassroots to elite levels, SCBA has become a cornerstone of the region's sporting community, uniting and inspiring through basketball.

Sunshine Coast Paddlesports Club

The Sunshine Coast Paddlesports Club has promoted health, fitness, and social connection for over 30 years. Entirely volunteer-run, it offers inclusive paddling programs for all ages and abilities, from beginners to elite athletes. Through affordable sessions, school partnerships, and women's initiatives, the club encourages active lifestyles and community participation. Their events and culture of camaraderie foster wellbeing and belonging, making the club a vital contributor to a healthier, more connected Sunshine Coast.

Creative Arts Award

Sponsored by Sunshine Coast Arts Foundation

Finley Cameron

Finley Cameron is a passionate advocate for the Sunshine Coast's games industry. As Games Coordinator at Screen Queensland and a guest lecturer at UniSC, she nurtures local talent and fosters industry growth. Her leadership in events like Season of the Dev helps build a vibrant, inclusive creative community. With a strong background in game production and education, Finley's work empowers emerging developers, promotes innovation, and strengthens the region's cultural and economic landscape through digital creativity.

Lyndon Davis

Lyndon Davis is a cultural leader and Kabi Kabi Traditional Custodian whose artistic and educational work has profoundly enriched the Sunshine Coast. Through decades of performance, public art, and mentoring, he has shared Kabi Kabi culture with thousands, fostering deep community connections. His leadership in festivals, schools, and cultural programs empowers youth, supports emerging artists, and bridges traditional and contemporary practices. Lyndon's lifelong dedication strengthens cultural identity and ensures Indigenous knowledge remains a vibrant part of community life.

Stewart Elliott

Stewart Elliott is a passionate advocate for veterans, using poetry to honour service and foster public understanding. His works are shared at commemorative events and displayed nationally, offering healing and connection. Stewart also supports aged care, schools, and fundraising initiatives, including long-distance charity walks and volunteer work with veteran organisations. Despite personal challenges, he continues to serve his community with compassion and dedication, making a meaningful impact on veterans' wellbeing and public appreciation of their sacrifices.

Equity Works

The Equity Works store is a community-driven arts space that champions inclusion, accessibility, and sustainability. By supporting artists with disability, First Nations creatives, and diverse local makers, it removes barriers to participation and fosters economic empowerment. The store reinvests 100 per cent of sales into artists' practices and offers engaging, values-led programming that connects art with everyday life. Its innovative model strengthens the local creative economy and promotes a more inclusive, vibrant cultural landscape on the Sunshine Coast.

Laree Gadenne

Laree Gadenne has dedicated her life to promoting the Sunshine Coast through the arts. Her sitcom *Hard Knock Life*, created and filmed locally, showcases the region's beauty while providing opportunities for local talent in acting, production, and media. By bringing global attention to the Coast and fostering creative careers at home, Laree empowers the local arts industry. Her work builds pride, visibility, and economic opportunity for the community through storytelling and cultural celebration.

Paula Gowland

Paula Gowland, owner of Sunshine Coast Art and Framing Gallery, is a champion of accessibility and inclusion in the arts. Through her galleries, she supports local artists, mentors creatives, and provides affordable, sustainable framing solutions. Her initiatives engage diverse community groups and celebrate personal stories through art. Paula's leadership fosters participation, nurtures talent, and strengthens the region's creative economy, making her a vital force in building a more inclusive and vibrant cultural community.

Libby Harward

Libby Harward, founder of Munimba-ja Indigenous Arts Centre, has made a transformative impact on the Sunshine Coast through her dedication to First Nations arts and cultural empowerment. Her work creates safe, sovereign spaces for Aboriginal artists, fosters cultural understanding, and drives systemic change. Through programs like Blak Creatives and community-led exhibitions, Libby nurtures emerging talent and strengthens cultural identity. Her leadership and advocacy have enriched the region's creative landscape and deepened community connection to Country and culture.

Louise King

Louise King is a celebrated cellist and arts leader whose work has enriched the Sunshine Coast's cultural life for over 20 years. Through Cello Dreaming and the LONG LISTEN festival, she has created inclusive, high-quality music experiences that connect generations and communities. Louise mentors emerging artists, commissions new works, and champions regional creativity. Her leadership fosters artistic excellence and accessibility, making classical music a powerful tool for community connection, wellbeing, and cultural growth.

Mingle East Coast

Mingle East Coast, founded by Sophie and Adam, enhances mental health and social connection on the Sunshine Coast through inclusive, intergenerational events. By integrating breathwork and mindfulness into their gatherings, they provide tools for emotional wellbeing while fostering a strong sense of belonging. Their events unite people of all ages, reduce isolation, and promote community resilience. Mingle's work exemplifies how creative, community-led initiatives can support mental health and build a more connected, compassionate region.

Miss Lady Saint Diva

Miss Lady Saint Diva has been iconic in the world of arts and LGBTQIA+ on the Sunshine Coast.

Mudjimba Community Art Group

Mudjimba Community Art Group is a welcoming, volunteer-led collective that brings people of all ages together through art. Their inclusive environment fosters creativity, connection, and wellbeing, offering a safe space for self-expression and friendship. The group's impact is especially meaningful for individuals who may feel isolated, including neurodiverse participants. Through weekly gatherings and a strong sense of belonging, they enrich community life and demonstrate the power of grassroots creativity to uplift and unite.

Munimba-ja Arts Centre

Munimba-ja Arts Centre, founded by Libby Harward, is a vital cultural hub amplifying contemporary Aboriginal art and ideas on the Sunshine Coast. Rooted in community voice, it supports First Nations artists through culturally safe, responsive programs like Blak Creatives. Munimba-ja fosters connection, creativity, and visibility for Aboriginal expression, strengthening cultural identity and community engagement. Its ongoing work plays a key role in promoting inclusion, dialogue, and the growth of a vibrant, First Nations-led creative landscape.

Hope O'Chin

Dr (Aunty) Hope O'Chin is a revered Elder, artist, and educator whose lifelong work has profoundly enriched the Sunshine Coast community. Through her art and advocacy, she fosters healing, cultural understanding, and inclusivity. Her contributions span schools, galleries, and public spaces, promoting First Nations knowledge and reconciliation. Aunty Hope's dedication to education, peace, and human rights has inspired generations, making her a vital cultural leader whose impact continues to shape a more connected and respectful community.

Naomi Pettenuzzo

Naomi Pettenuzzo is a dedicated artist and community builder whose work celebrates the beauty of the Sunshine Coast. Through her art and the creation of “The Vanginas” women’s van-life group, she fosters connection, empowerment, and support among women. Naomi’s resilience and generosity inspire those around her, and her creative contributions enhance the region’s cultural identity. Her commitment to uplifting others through art and community engagement makes her a valued and impactful figure in the local arts scene.

Sunshine Coast Schools’ Drama Festival

The Sunshine Coast Schools’ Drama Festival empowers young people through theatre, offering inclusive, high-quality opportunities to create and perform original work. Run by dedicated volunteers, the festival nurtures creativity, confidence, and connection among students from diverse backgrounds. Through performances, workshops, and mentorship, it builds resilience and identity while enriching the region’s cultural life. By fostering youth voices and supporting local talent, the group plays a vital role in shaping a vibrant, inclusive arts community.

Tim Whybrow

Tim Whybrow is a Sunshine Coast filmmaker and musician whose documentary *Hot Water* has made a significant impact by raising awareness of marine conservation and community collaboration. Through storytelling and original music, Tim connects audiences to local environmental efforts and fosters inclusive arts engagement. His work supports regional creatives, encourages public dialogue, and broadens access to the arts. Tim’s dedication to community-driven storytelling exemplifies how creativity can inspire action and strengthen local identity.

Healthy Planet

Sponsored by University of the Sunshine Coast

Bamboo Projects

Bamboo Projects is a Sunshine Coast charity that combines environmental restoration with inclusive programs for people living with mental health challenges and disabilities. Since 2021, they've removed over 75 tonnes of marine debris and run impactful programs like Back2Work and Cleaning Up the Waterways. Their work fosters healing, inclusion, and environmental stewardship.

Barung Landcare

Barung Landcare is a long-standing environmental organisation based in the Sunshine Coast hinterland, dedicated to restoring and conserving local ecosystems. With over 600 members, Barung runs a native plant nursery, delivers education programs, and supports biodiversity through projects like Rainforest Resilience. Their work connects people to nature, supports endangered species, and builds ecological literacy across the region.

Chevallum State School

Chevallum State School has created a thriving sustainability program that integrates gardening, cooking, composting, and mindfulness into daily student life. With a strong focus on Indigenous culture and environmental education, students learn to care for the land and each other. The school's holistic approach, supported by volunteers, fosters a healthier, more connected generation.

Coolum and North Shore Coast Care

Coolum and North Shore Coast Care is a volunteer group dedicated to protecting coastal ecosystems and biodiversity. Since 2000, they've led conservation, education, and turtle protection efforts. Their tireless work supports marine life, informs policy, and inspires community involvement in preserving the Sunshine Coast's natural heritage.

Spencer Hitchen

Spencer is an inspiring Sunshine Coast teenager and environmental advocate who runs the 'Save Sunrise Glossies' social media pages. A Youth Leader and Ambassador, he raises awareness about forest and wildlife conservation through photography, public talks, and community action. Spencer has contributed to habitat protection, educational signage, and policy awareness. He founded World Stand UP 4 Nature Day and co-authored the Climate Action Youth Statement, demonstrating his dedication to protecting nature for future generations.

Mooloolah River Landcare

Mooloolah River Landcare is a leader in community-based conservation, offering educational walks, tree planting, and workshops that connect people to nature. Their Girls in the Wild program and native nursery promote biodiversity and sustainable land management. Through inclusive, hands-on experiences, they're building a more environmentally conscious Sunshine Coast.

Mooloolah River Landcare: Girls in the Wild

Girls in the Wild, led by Mooloolah River Landcare, is an inspiring program designed to spark girls' interest in science through hands-on environmental activities led by female scientists. Held during the 2025 summer holidays, the program empowered girls aged 10–13 to explore nature and science, fostering confidence and curiosity. With strong community engagement and plans to expand, the initiative is helping shape the next generation of environmental leaders.

Night Eyes Water and Landcare

Night Eyes is a not-for-profit organisation committed to cleaning waterways, foreshores, and streets around the Pumicestone area. Operating five days a week by boat and twice weekly on land, volunteers collect up to 600kg of rubbish per day. They also engage local schools to educate students about environmental impacts and the importance of volunteering. Their consistent efforts help protect marine life and promote environmental awareness across the Caloundra region.

Reef Check Australia

Reef Check Australia empowers volunteers to protect marine environments through citizen science, education, and clean-up initiatives. Based on the Sunshine Coast, they train divers and snorkelers to monitor reef health and engage communities in conservation. Their work supports biodiversity, water quality, and climate action, while fostering strong community connections.

Noelene Schulz

Noelene is a quiet community hero whose daily efforts keep the Sunshine Coast cleaner and more beautiful. At nearly 78, she walks almost 10 km each morning collecting rubbish, removing significant amounts of waste from public areas. Her dedication inspires pride and gratitude among locals, who regularly acknowledge her efforts online. Noelene's selfless commitment to the environment and her neighbourhood exemplifies the power of individual action to uplift and care for the community.

TurtleCare Sunshine Coast

TurtleCare Sunshine Coast is a volunteer-powered conservation program protecting endangered marine turtles through hands-on monitoring, education, and advocacy. Over 20 years, it has grown into a vital community initiative, engaging over 250 citizen scientists and thousands of residents. Their work informs environmental policy, supports biodiversity, and fosters deep connections between people and place. By uniting science, culture, and community spirit, TurtleCare ensures future generations can witness the wonder of turtles nesting on local shores.

Fien Van den Steen

Fien is a passionate advocate for sustainability, education, and global citizenship. With a background in journalism and environmental management, she combines academic excellence with hands-on leadership in climate action and policy. Fien's work spans local and international initiatives, empowering students, influencing legislation, and promoting sustainable development. Her dedication to community and environmental wellbeing makes her a standout contributor to both the Sunshine Coast and the global biosphere movement.

Tim Whybrow

Tim is a passionate marine documentary filmmaker whose latest work, *Hot Water*, explores ocean acidification and marine conservation. Shot largely on the Sunshine Coast, the film highlights local efforts to protect marine ecosystems. Tim dedicated over 1,200 unpaid hours to the project, using storytelling to inspire environmental awareness and action in the community.

Community Group or Organisation Award

Sponsored by Sunshine Coast Daily

Bamboo Projects

Bamboo Projects is a Sunshine Coast-based charity and NDIS provider that empowers people with mental health challenges or disabilities through environmental programs. Participants engage in conservation work, including waterway clean-ups and recycling, gaining skills and confidence. The organisation fosters inclusion, community connection, and environmental stewardship. With strong partnerships and a focus on long-term impact, Bamboo Projects transforms lives and landscapes, proving that social recovery and ecological restoration can go hand in hand.

Beau's Place

Beau's Place is a compassionate community initiative supporting individuals experiencing grief, pregnancy loss, or mental health challenges. Founded by Stacie Lusins, it offers a safe space for healing through counselling, peer support, and educational workshops. Inspired by personal loss, Beau's Place fosters resilience and connection, helping people navigate difficult journeys with empathy and understanding. Its programs empower individuals to grow through shared experiences, making it a vital source of hope and support on the Sunshine Coast.

Butterfly Residential Care (Wandi Nerida)

Wandi Nerida, Australia's first residential facility for eating disorders, is a pioneering centre based in Mooloolah Valley. In just four years, it has become a national leader in holistic, person-centred care. With a focus on lived experience, family support, and post-discharge connection, Wandi provides transformative treatment and ongoing community engagement. Its partnerships with universities and health networks, along with its international reputation, reflect its commitment to innovation, compassion, and long-term recovery outcomes.

Caloundra Women's Shed

The Caloundra Women's Shed, founded by Evelyn, has grown rapidly in just two years, offering a welcoming space for nearly 80 women to connect, share skills, and support one another. From art classes to swim groups, the Shed fosters community, especially for newcomers, and continues to expand its inclusive and empowering activities.

Chiggy's Skateboarding

Chiggy's Skateboarding is a community-focused business offering skateboarding classes across the Sunshine Coast. It empowers youth by building confidence, social skills, and friendships through sport. The program nurtures talent and promotes inclusion, while also hosting events that foster community spirit. Chiggy's commitment to youth development and positive engagement makes it a standout contributor to the region's wellbeing and recreational culture.

Developmental Therapies

Developmental Therapies provides holistic physiotherapy services for children with disabilities on the Sunshine Coast. Since 2010, they've expanded to a team of seven physios and support staff, offering inclusive programs in community settings. Their approach fosters peer connection, family support, and community inclusion. Despite being a private practice, they go above and beyond, often volunteering time to ensure children and families feel empowered, connected, and supported throughout their developmental journey.

ECollaboration

ECollaboration is a leading environmental organisation, dedicated to conservation, education, and sustainability. Through partnerships and volunteer programs, they've restored koala habitats, removed marine debris, and trained hundreds in ecosystem management. Their traineeships empower marginalised groups, while school programs inspire future custodians. They exemplify collective action, aligning with UN Sustainable Development Goals and fostering a thriving, resilient biosphere community.

FESTURI

FESTURI is a vibrant, volunteer-led multicultural festival that has celebrated diversity on the Sunshine Coast since 1999. Through music, dance, food, and workshops, it brings communities together and supports cultural exchange. FESTURI provides a platform for multicultural artists and fosters inclusion, education, and economic support for local performers and businesses.

Forbes Care

Forbes Care is a community-based occupational therapy organisation that champions diversity, equity, and inclusion. With a strong focus on cultural sensitivity and professional development, they support clients from all backgrounds. Their New Graduate Program and inclusive practices have made a lasting impact on the Sunshine Coast, fostering a more connected and empowered community.

Free Little Pantry, Wurtulla

The Free Little Pantry in Wurtulla is a grassroots initiative supporting people experiencing homelessness and food insecurity. Operated entirely through community donations and volunteer advocacy, the pantry provides essential items to those in need. It raises awareness about local hardship and encourages neighbours to support one another. This simple yet powerful project exemplifies community care, compassion, and collective action in addressing food insecurity on the Sunshine Coast.

Gathaa Markets

Gathaa Markets, led by Aunty Dale, empower First Nations artists by providing a culturally safe platform to showcase their work. These markets celebrate Indigenous culture through art, bushfood, and storytelling, fostering community connection and economic opportunity. Gathaa promotes reconciliation and cultural pride while supporting emerging Indigenous entrepreneurs. The initiative exemplifies inclusive leadership and cultural preservation, making a lasting impact on the Sunshine Coast's creative and social landscape.

Golden Beach Community Garden

Golden Beach Community Garden is a thriving, volunteer-run space where locals grow food, share knowledge, and build friendships. It promotes sustainability, food security, and social connection. With composting systems, water-saving irrigation, and regular working bees, the garden is a model of grassroots community resilience and environmental stewardship.

The Journeymen

The Journeymen is a Sunshine Coast-based men's support group focused on emotional wellbeing and community connection. Through regular catch-ups, social activities, and family friendly events, they provide a safe space for men to share, support one another, and build meaningful relationships. The group fosters mental health awareness, reduces isolation, and strengthens community bonds. Their inclusive, grassroots approach makes a positive impact on men's lives and contributes to a healthier, more connected community.

Maroochydore Community Justice Group

Maroochydore Community Justice Group delivers culturally safe programs supporting First Nations people on the Sunshine Coast. Their 'Empowering our Mob' initiative fosters positive outcomes through collaboration with local services. The group has become a trusted leader in community wellbeing, creating inclusive spaces and promoting social change. Their ongoing commitment to justice, education, and health has made them a vital part of the region's support network for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

McConnell Dowell

McConnell Dowell has shown exceptional community leadership through its work on the Aura and Harmony Program. Partnering with The Compass Institute, they created inclusive training opportunities and sustainable initiatives like a vegetable garden and chicken coop. Their commitment to social responsibility, cultural inclusion, and local partnerships sets a benchmark for infrastructure projects across the region.

Community Group or Organisation Award continued...

My Dilly Bag

My Dilly Bag, founded by Aunty Dale Chapman, is a First Nations-owned enterprise promoting Indigenous culture through bushfoods, artisan products, and education. It empowers Aboriginal communities by creating sustainable income streams and preserving cultural knowledge. Through workshops and the GATHAA Markets, My Dilly Bag fosters reconciliation, community connection, and economic development. Aunty Dale's leadership has created a lasting impact on cultural pride and social cohesion across the Sunshine Coast.

RangeCare

RangeCare has supported older Australians since 1986 with in-home services and innovative programs like virtual reality therapy and digital literacy training. Their use of wearable tech and partnerships with Apple and local providers enhances safety and wellbeing. RangeCare's commitment to independence and inclusion sets a new standard in aged care.

Real Life Skills Support Services

Real Life Skills Support Services has grown from a small cooking class into a major disability support organisation employing over 80 locals. They champion inclusion, career development, and community connection through tailored programs and initiatives like 'Feed Their Future'. Their work fosters empowerment, reduces isolation, and builds strong partnerships across sectors. With a focus on holistic support and inclusive leadership, they've transformed lives and created a lasting impact on the Sunshine Coast's social fabric.

REFOCUS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Organisation

REFOCUS, led by Darcy Cavanagh, empowers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families through culturally appropriate services. With 17 programs and a growing team, they've successfully reunified 34 children with family under Delegated Authority. REFOCUS is a powerful example of community-led change, closing the gap and creating lasting impact across the Sunshine Coast and Moreton Bay.

Rhythm Initiative

Rhythm Initiative empowers people of all abilities through inclusive employment at its café and programs like Mulberry Meals and Parcels of Peace. Their work in Aura fosters dignity, connection, and hope, creating a thriving community where everyone feels valued. Rhythm's impact is deeply felt across the Sunshine Coast.

Soquilichi Rescue Ranch

Soquilichi Rescue Ranch (SRR), led by Miranda Wells, is a volunteer-run animal rescue dedicated to saving vulnerable cats, dogs, and horses from high-kill pounds and cruelty cases. With over 70 foster carers across South East Queensland, SRR provides safe, loving homes and thorough adoption processes. Entirely community-funded, SRR aims to purchase land to expand its impact. For 20 years, this close-knit group has prioritised animal welfare, creating a compassionate network committed to saving lives and giving animals a second chance.

STEPS Pathways College

STEPS Pathways College empowers young people with disability to live independently through a unique residential and day program. Since 2017, it has supported students in developing life skills, social confidence, and community engagement. With strong volunteer support and partnerships, the College fosters inclusion and long-term independence. Its impact extends to families, offering hope and peace of mind. Fundraising and local sponsorships sustain the program, which continues to transform lives and build a more inclusive Sunshine Coast.

Community Group or Organisation Award continued...

Sunshine Coast Animal Refuge

Sunshine Coast Animal Refuge (SCARS) is the region's longest-running shelter, rehoming around 1,000 animals annually. They provide refuge, foster care, and community education on responsible pet ownership. Through partnerships, they offer desexing programs and pet crisis care, supporting vulnerable people and their pets. Now in its 46th year, SCARS has rehomed over 46,000 animals – proudly continuing its mission of bringing and keeping pets and people together.

Sunshine Coast Art Group

Sunshine Coast Art Group (SCArt) is a 100 per cent volunteer-run organisation that brings people of all ages together through art, music, pottery, and sewing. It provides a welcoming space for creativity, learning, and connection, combating loneliness and fostering intergenerational friendships. SCArt plays a vital social role, especially for elderly members, and is a cherished hub of community spirit and artistic expression in Buderim.

Sunshine Coast Business Women's Network

The Sunshine Coast Business Women's Network has supported local women in business for over 20 years. It celebrates both emerging and established businesswomen, offering a platform for connection, growth, and recognition. The volunteer committee dedicates countless hours to ensure the network thrives. Their commitment to empowering women and fostering professional development has made a lasting impact on the region's business landscape.

Sunshine Coast Dunga Derby

The Dunga Derby is a four-day car rally supporting Rally for A Cause, aiding Sunshine Coast families facing life-limiting medical conditions. Since 2021, it has raised over \$850,000 locally, with over \$4 million raised since 2015. Teams fundraise through community events and connect with families during the rally. The event blends adventure with compassion, thanks to outstanding coordination by Fiona Martin. It exemplifies community spirit, generosity, and support for those doing it tough.

Sunshine Coast First Nations Networking Group

Sunshine Coast First Nations Networking Group is a collective of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, organisations, and allies. Since 2009, it has fostered culturally safe spaces for connection, advocacy, and action. With 270 members, SC1NG champions community-led initiatives, policy influence, and celebration of First Nations resilience. Its achievements include justice advocacy, NAIDOC events, and support for employment and housing. Entirely volunteer-run, SC1NG exemplifies the strength and impact of First Nations community-controlled leadership.

Sunshine Coast Multiple Birth Association

The Sunshine Coast Multiple Birth Association (SCMBA) supports families with twins, triplets, or more, offering emotional, practical, and financial assistance. From equipment hire to playgroups and peer support, SCMBA fills critical gaps left by government services. It fosters connection, reduces isolation, and provides a lifeline for overwhelmed parents. SCMBA is a grassroots, volunteer-driven organisation that builds resilience and community among families navigating the unique challenges of raising multiples.

Sunshine Coast Open House

Sunshine Coast Open House is a community festival that celebrates architecture, heritage, and design by opening normally inaccessible buildings to the public. Through tours, talks, and workshops, it fosters appreciation for place, sustainability, and cultural identity. The program champions inclusion, intergenerational engagement, and First Nations collaboration. Volunteers and local creatives are central to its success. By promoting civic pride and sustainable development, the festival strengthens community connections and leaves a lasting legacy aligned with the Sunshine Coast Biosphere values.

Sunshine Sign and Sing

Sunshine Sign and Sing, founded by Elaine and Zoe, promotes inclusive communication through sign language for children and young adults of all abilities. Their colourful, accessible resources are now featured in public parks, offering learning opportunities for families without internet access. As a not-for-profit, they've dedicated countless unpaid hours to improving communication and inclusion. Their work has transformed lives and fostered a more connected, understanding community.

The Balin Stewart Foundation

The Balin Stewart Foundation was created by Michael and Kerri-Lyn Stewart after the tragic loss of their son to knife violence. The foundation raises awareness about knife crime through school talks, community events, and memorials. Their work has united the community, inspired change, and created a legacy of prevention and hope. Their tireless advocacy and resilience have made a profound impact on youth safety and community wellbeing across the Sunshine Coast.

The Beach Matters

The Beach Matters is the Sunshine Coast's largest beach-focused community group, with over 7,500 local members. Entirely volunteer-run, they clean, monitor, and advocate for the coastline from Bribie to Noosa. Their work spans education, policy influence, and community engagement, promoting beach safety, sustainability, and environmental awareness. Through beach cleans, school programs, and social media, they've inspired thousands to protect our coast. Self-funded for years, they've distributed reusable bags and education packs, giving the beach a powerful voice in conservation.

The Parkinson's Centre

The Parkinson's Centre, opened in 2024, is Queensland's first purpose-built facility for people with Parkinson's and their partners. It offers evidence-based therapies, education, and support, including a unique Partner Connect™ program. With over 10,000 therapy visits and a growing reach, the Centre leads in allied health care, community outreach, and sector training. Its annual conference and fundraising initiatives have raised significant funds and awareness, making it a beacon of hope and innovation on the Sunshine Coast.

Trek Ready Himalayas

Trek Ready Himalayas raised over \$50,000 for Parkinson's research through grassroots community engagement and national media coverage. Their efforts sparked conversations and inspired others to support the cause. The team's dedication and outreach have had a significant impact on awareness and funding for Parkinson's, earning heartfelt appreciation from the community and research organisations. Their work exemplifies how local action can drive national change and support vital health initiatives.

Veterans Wellbeing Foundation

Veterans Wellbeing Foundation (VWF) provides holistic support to veterans and their families through inclusive programs, advocacy, and community partnerships. Their services include health, housing, employment, and mental wellbeing support. VWF fosters diversity, equity, and inclusion, empowering individuals through mentoring and training. With over 1,200 people assisted in seven months, VWF has become a trusted hub for veteran care. Their leadership and collaboration have created lasting community impact and improved quality of life for many.

VWF Command Post Café

The VWF Command Post Café in Beerwah is a unique not-for-profit initiative supporting veterans and the broader community. Opened in 2024, it serves as a café and wellbeing hub, offering access to health, financial, and social services. Staffed by volunteers, it has helped over 1,200 people in six months. With a 'pay it forward' system and a wellbeing officer on-site, it exemplifies inclusive community care and leadership, creating lasting impact across the Sunshine Coast.

Walk Talk Work

Walk Talk Work is a grassroots network of entrepreneurial women on the Sunshine Coast who meet weekly for walks and co-working sessions. It fosters personal growth, business development, and community connection. The group supports women from diverse backgrounds, offering mentorship, collaboration, and encouragement. Powered by generosity and shared purpose, Walk Talk Work has become a lifeline for many, transforming the local business landscape and creating a strong, inclusive community of empowered women.

WILVOS

WILVOS, based on the Sunshine Coast, has been rescuing, rehabilitating, and releasing native wildlife for over 25 years. Originally part of Queensland National Parks, it became an incorporated organisation in 1995 with just 20 volunteers. Today, it boasts 300 dedicated members. Operating a 24/7 hotline, WILVOS responds to thousands of calls annually from the community, helping injured, orphaned, and distressed animals. Their commitment to wildlife care has made them a vital part of the region's environmental support network.

Biosphere Business of the Year Award

Sponsored by Unitywater

Aqua Ubique

This Sunshine Coast-based clean tech social enterprise uses atmospheric water generation to produce clean drinking water from air. Founded by a local veteran, it supports local jobs and donates units to remote First Nations communities. Its circular model eliminates plastic waste and transport emissions, aligning with SDGs and Sunshine Coast Biosphere values. Aqua Ubique champions innovation, sustainability, and community impact, offering a decentralised, low-energy water solution that benefits both urban users and vulnerable regions.

Bin Boss Noosa

Bin Boss Noosa is a waste management and rubbish removal service operating all over the Sunshine Coast. They offer services for events, providing clean-up crews and wheelie bin support. Additionally, they provide general rubbish removal, recycling services, and have been involved in events like the Nambour Rodeo. Bin Boss Noosa also emphasizes transparency in their process and provides ongoing communication with their customers.

Criminal Coffee

Criminal Coffee is a female-led café that has become a cherished community hub on the Sunshine Coast. Known for its warmth, inclusivity, and heartfelt gestures, it's a place where people feel seen and supported. From handwritten messages on coffee cups to delivering drinks to hospital-bound regulars, the team goes above and beyond. Criminal Coffee fosters connection, kindness, and belonging, making it more than a café - it's a space where community truly thrives.

Everdant

Everdant is a profit-for-purpose tech startup helping nano to small businesses adopt sustainable practices. Its platform removes barriers like cost and complexity, aligning with circular economy principles and five UN SDGs. With a goal to support 1,000 Sunshine Coast businesses in its first year, Everdant promotes resource efficiency, responsible procurement, and accreditation. It partners with government and industry to drive sustainability, contributing to the Sunshine Coast Biosphere's values through innovation, education, and economic resilience.

Sunny Rays

Sunny Rays Catering is a mobile, eco-conscious business offering private dining and event services across the Sunshine Coast. Run by life partners Dean and Brent, the business supports local producers, uses solar-powered trailers, composts waste, and operates paper-free. It's the first catering company certified by Ecotourism Australia and a two-time Sunshine Coast Business Award winner. Sunny Rays champions inclusivity, sustainability, and community, providing flexible services for all events while advocating for marginalised groups and environmental responsibility.

Thrifter

Thrifter is a community-based business that returned over \$1.5 million to sellers in 2024 and \$700,000 in the first three months of 2025. It saved more than 50,000 clothing items from landfill through circular fashion, excluding pop-up market figures. Founder Ren ensures sellers keep 100 per cent of profits, demonstrating deep commitment and passion. Thrifter is a powerful example of sustainable fashion and local economic empowerment.

Young Citizen of the Year Award

Sponsored by 92.7 MixFM

Robbin Bastiaans

Robbin, at just 21, has revitalised Caloundra Football Club as its President, stepping up during a time of crisis. She's led financial recovery, boosted female participation, and built a strong, inclusive culture. Robbin's hands-on leadership—mowing fields, coaching, and running the canteen – reflects her deep commitment. Balancing two jobs, she still gives her all to the club. Her energy, resilience, and passion have transformed the club's future and inspired a new generation of players and volunteers.

Finley Coll

Finley lives with quadriplegic cerebral palsy and uses a powered wheelchair and communication device, but his humour and leadership shine far beyond that. As Vice Captain at Meridan State High, he's championed disability inclusion and helped shape the Sunshine Coast Council's All-Abilities Action Plan. Through his internship at Spinal Life Australia, he leads workshops, advocates for accessibility, and initiated the FUNctional Market Day. Finley's voice, vision, and advocacy are transforming the region into a more inclusive community.

Young Citizen of the Year Award continued...

Sam Hughes

Sam, known as the Travelling Jackaroo, journeyed around Australia on a tractor to raise funds for vital causes including the Royal Flying Doctor Service, Dolly's Dream, and Drought Angels. His efforts raised an incredible \$260,000, showing his deep commitment to rural communities and mental health. Sam's unique and heartfelt approach to fundraising has inspired many across the country, making a lasting impact through both awareness and action.

James Milne

James is a passionate youth advocate and community leader. He founded the region's first youth-led mental health festival, Rewired, and openly shared his transition journey to foster inclusivity. As a member and now co-facilitator of the Young Leaders Academy, he's created safe, diverse spaces for young people. James's voluntary work, leadership, and advocacy for mental health and the queer community have left a lasting legacy on the Sunshine Coast, inspiring connection and understanding.

Senior Citizen of the Year Award

Sponsored by Maroochy RSL

Rhondda Alexander

Rhondda has been a tireless community leader for over two decades, coordinating Currimundi Neighbourhood Watch, Friends of Currimundi Lake, and TurtleCare. She organises bushcare, community events, and liaises with Council and police to resolve local issues. Rhondda also manages the Currimundi Sports and Recreation Hall and is affectionately known as the “unofficial mayor” of Currimundi. Her dedication, resilience, and leadership make her an outstanding community champion.

Wendy Coghill

Wendy has dedicated her life to education, sport, and community service. A teacher from age 19 to 77, she continues to mentor students in chess and lead initiatives like the ‘Chess Day of Excellence’. Wendy is also a champion indoor rower, surf lifesaver, and wildlife carer. Her energy, humility, and decades of volunteerism across multiple fields make her a remarkable role model and a deserving nominee for Senior Citizen of the Year.

Barbara Cross

Barbara, 72, is a beloved volunteer who has contributed over 250 times to Brightwater parkrun and supports numerous local fitness groups. Though not a runner herself, she uplifts others with her warmth and encouragement. Barbara also organises events in her lifestyle village and is known for her thoughtful gestures and inclusive spirit. Her tireless efforts and genuine care have created a strong sense of community and connection across the Sunshine Coast.

Anne Deans

Anne is a dedicated volunteer in Maroochydore, supporting the local community through the Maroochy Neighbourhood Centre's homework club, reskill programs, and craft groups. She is known for her generosity, friendship, and willingness to help wherever needed. Anne's quiet contributions have made a big impact, enriching the lives of children and adults alike and strengthening the bonds within her community.

Ivy Dempsey

Ivy, 78, is the heart behind Caloundra's weekly community breakfast for the homeless, held every Monday at the Uniting Church Hall. Despite recent knee surgery, she continues to coordinate volunteers, source food, and support those in need. Ivy's compassion extends beyond the breakfast - she's helped individuals find housing and medical care. Her behind-the-scenes dedication and unwavering kindness make her a pillar of the community and a true inspiration to all who know her.

Deb Ducrou

Deb has been a pillar of the Sunshine Coast Art Group, leading the Pottery Studio for 14 years and continuing to support members daily. She also volunteers weekly at the Botanical Gardens and UniSC Gallery. Deb's generosity, knowledge, and joyful spirit enrich every space she's part of, making her a beloved and inspiring community contributor.

Derek Foster

Derek is a lifelong environmental advocate, educator, and musician whose work has shaped the Sunshine Coast's ecological and cultural identity. He co-founded the Maroochy Wetlands Sanctuary and pioneered ecomusic to inspire conservation through song. His PhD research led to the Ecomusic Toolkit, now used in over 80 schools. Derek mentors youth through Kids in Action and leads countless community projects. His creative, inclusive leadership continues to empower generations to protect and connect with nature.

Bruce Franklin

Bruce is the long-time president of the The St Vincent de Paul Society Queensland (Vinnies) Caloundra Conference, dedicating himself to helping the most vulnerable in the community. He provides personalised support, from emergency accommodation to emotional care, and inspires others to give back. Bruce's humility, compassion, and tireless service have transformed lives and created a ripple effect of kindness and community involvement across the Sunshine Coast.

Tony Long

Tony has dedicated over 50 years to shaping the Sunshine Coast through visionary volunteer leadership. He helped establish the Sunshine Coast Turf Club, Currimundi Community Kindergarten, and Sunshine Coast Stadium. As a board member of the Sunshine Coast Health Foundation, he secured major funding for the Wishlist Centre. Tony has also served in roles across education, emergency services, transport planning, and Rotary. His legacy is one of tireless service, community building, and transformative regional development.

Senior Citizen of the Year Award continued...

Diana O'Connor

Diana has led the Russell Family Park BushCare group since 2008, restoring rainforest habitat and building community spaces like the Village Hall deck. She collects native seeds for Barung Landcare and advocates for environmental education. Diana's leadership, generosity, and lifelong commitment to conservation have made her a beloved figure in Montville, where she was named Lifetime Citizen in 2024. Her legacy is one of sustainability, education, and community spirit.

Bill Tunbridge

Bill has devoted 26 years to the Glasshouse Bowls Club, mentoring junior bowlers and promoting inclusivity in sport. As a Bowls Australia-accredited coach, he's helped young players reach state level and introduced dozens of juniors to the game. Bill runs free coaching sessions, school programs, and community competitions, fostering sportsmanship and connection. His leadership has made the club a welcoming hub for all ages and abilities. Bill's passion and dedication have earned him life membership and widespread respect.

Alexandra Whitlock

Alexandra is a long-time volunteer at the Nambour Community Centre, where she provides vital support to those facing hardship. Known for her warm presence, Alex helps distribute fresh produce, clothing, and reading materials, creating a welcoming space for people doing it tough. Her dedication and compassion make her an invaluable part of the Centre's operations and a beacon of hope for many in the community.

Michael Wise

Michael has been a driving force behind Bloomhill Cancer Care since 2017, starting as a volunteer driver and barista before becoming Treasurer and then Chair. He led a major transformation of the organisation, culminating in a successful partnership with the Leukemia Foundation. Michael's leadership, financial expertise, and countless volunteer hours have ensured the sustainability of vital cancer care services. His dedication has left a lasting legacy for the Sunshine Coast community.

Dr Ken Wishaw

Dr Wishaw is a pioneering anaesthetist and rescue doctor whose innovations in helicopter medicine and trauma care have saved lives across Australia and beyond. In retirement, he champions dark sky preservation, co-founding the Australasian Dark Sky Alliance and advocating for smarter lighting to reduce light pollution. Ken organises stargazing events, advises councils, and helped shape the Sunshine Coast's Marine Turtle Conservation Plan. His global recognition and local advocacy make him a leader in sustainability and science education.

Citizen of the Year Award

Sponsored by 7 News Sunshine Coast

Paul Banks

Paul has volunteered for more than 20 years with Friday Night Burgers, consistently showing up to cook for those in need - sometimes over 100 patties in a night. He also volunteers weekly at The Everyday Foundation, staying until every task is complete. Known for his reliability and generosity, Paul is a quiet achiever whose steadfast commitment to helping others has made him a valued and dependable presence in the Sunshine Coast community.

Rhonda Barry

Rhonda is the heart of the Nambour Community Centre, tirelessly sorting food and clothing, and cooking meals for those in need. Her dedication brings hope to struggling families. Rhonda also volunteers with Lions and Guide Dogs, giving her time generously. In a world where many go without, Rhonda's compassion and hard work shine brightly. Her selfless service makes her a worthy nominee for Citizen of the Year, embodying the spirit of community care and support.

Rachael Bermingham

Rachael is the founder and volunteer leader of Beach Matters, a grassroots group with more than 7,500 members dedicated to protecting Sunshine Coast beaches. Over five years, she has contributed thousands of hours to beach clean-ups, education, and advocacy. Her leadership has influenced major infrastructure decisions, including halting the beachfront light rail project. Rachael's fearless community mobilisation, environmental stewardship, and unwavering commitment to coastal conservation have made her a powerful and inspirational advocate for the region. xxx

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Dale Chapman

Aunty Dale, a proud Yuwaalaraay and Kooma woman, has dedicated more than 25 years to cultural education, food sovereignty, and community empowerment on the Sunshine Coast. Founder of My Dilly Bag and the GATHAA First Nations Markets, she champions native bushfoods and Indigenous enterprise. Through workshops, mentoring, and tireless voluntary work, Aunty Dale fosters reconciliation, cultural revival, and economic opportunity. Her leadership, generosity, and deep cultural integrity make her a truly deserving nominee for Citizen of the Year.

Allison Clarey

Allison is a tireless community volunteer who supports vulnerable people through her work with Friday Night Burgers and The Everyday Foundation in Nambour. She provides clothing, toiletries, and thoughtful starter kits for those moving into housing. Allison goes above and beyond to help others, always offering her time, care, and compassion. Her quiet acts of generosity make a big difference in the lives of those doing it tough, and she is deeply valued by her community.

Vernon Corporal

Uncle Vernon, a proud Darumbal and Bidjara man, is the Sunshine Coast's first Aboriginal Police Liaison Officer. A former soldier and police officer, he chose to serve his community directly, supporting victims of domestic violence, mentoring youth, and fostering mutual respect between police and First Nations people. Through cultural education, street outreach, and programs like Booyah, he brings calm, connection, and cultural pride to the region. His lifelong commitment to community makes him a truly deserving nominee.

Citizen of the Year Award continued...

Barbara Cullinan

Barbara is a trailblazer in Parkinson's care, co-founding Queensland's first dedicated allied health centre for the condition. With over 25 years of experience, she's developed innovative programs, raised over \$90,000 for Parkinson's charities, and supported more than 10,000 therapy visits. She volunteers her time to educate, mentor, and advocate, building a strong, inclusive network of care. Barbara's leadership has positioned the Sunshine Coast as a national leader in Parkinson's support and community health innovation.

Charmaine Dunstan

Charmaine is a dedicated volunteer with Sunshine Coast Council, contributing over 1,200 hours at Landsborough Museum and Bankfoot House. Known for her warmth and creativity, she recently led puppet story times and regularly organises morning teas to celebrate fellow volunteers. Charmaine's genuine care and uplifting presence make her a cherished part of the team and a welcoming face for all who visit.

Kathleen Hope

Kathleen, CEO of SunnyKids, has spent over 14 years supporting families facing domestic violence. Her leadership of the SALT program provides emergency refuge and holistic support to those in crisis. Kathleen's 24/7 dedication, personal involvement, and fearless advocacy have saved lives and broken cycles of violence. She unites community and corporate sectors to create lasting change. Kathleen's compassion, courage, and commitment to vulnerable children and families make her an extraordinary community leader.

Peter Kennedy

Peter is the founding CEO of the Veteran Wellbeing Foundation and a full-time volunteer whose leadership has transformed veteran and community care on the Sunshine Coast. Through holistic services, peer mentoring, and inclusive programs, he has supported over 2,000 people in just seven months. His Command Post Café in Beerwah serves as a vital hub for wellbeing support. Peter's innovation, compassion, and tireless service have created a national model of care and connection.

Neil King

Neil is a dedicated volunteer who gives his time selflessly across aged care, youth mentoring, mental health support, and homelessness services. With over two decades of unpaid service, he supports vulnerable people through programs like Marcus Mission, Connect Kids, and the Sleepbus. His quiet leadership and compassion inspire resilience in individuals and the broader community. Neil's commitment to helping others, without seeking recognition, makes him a powerful example of community spirit and service.

Shannon Lemanski

Shannon is a former Army engineer turned cleantech entrepreneur, leading Aqua Ubique : a Sunshine Coast-based social enterprise turning air into clean drinking water. His work reduces plastic waste, supports remote First Nations communities, and creates local jobs. Shannon's leadership has helped shape the region's startup identity and inspired others through mentoring and innovation. He's also developing Project B100, a biodiesel initiative, and co-designing sustainable water solutions with Indigenous communities. Shannon's mission-first approach is building a cleaner, fairer future.

Maria Morris

Maria is a dedicated volunteer who has spent over nine years providing free legal support to vulnerable individuals, including victims of domestic violence and those facing injustice. Overcoming personal adversity, she completed a law degree in record time and has since used her skills to advocate for those without access to legal representation. Her tireless efforts have brought hope and justice to many, making her a pillar of compassion and resilience in the Sunshine Coast community.

Courtenay Noble

Courtenay has led national animal safety campaigns from the Sunshine Coast for over a decade, funding them personally without seeking donations. In 2022, she supported over 200 flood-affected families and continues to care for rough sleepers and their animal companions. She provides essential supplies, pro bono vet access, and supports independent wildlife carers. Courtenay's self-funded, hands-on approach reflects deep compassion and commitment to both people and animals in need across the community.

Amanda Oxley

Amanda, founder of Oxley Plus salon, combines professional excellence with deep community service. She provides compassionate hair care for women experiencing hair loss and volunteers through Haircuts for Homeless. Amanda also supports international aid, environmental sustainability, and disability employment through the Sustainable Salons program. Her inclusive, voluntary efforts both locally and abroad, enhance dignity, wellbeing, and environmental responsibility, making her a role model for socially conscious business and community leadership on the Sunshine Coast.

Janelle Parsons

Janelle, founder of Rise & Thrive Co., has dedicated over 2000 voluntary hours since 2023 to breaking cycles of domestic violence and youth mental health struggles. Through programs like No Filters Needed and Bounce Back 3x3, she empowers adolescents using sport and trauma-informed education. Coaching, mentoring, and advocacy are part of her daily life. Recognised with multiple community awards, Janelle's work is a powerful legacy of resilience, early intervention, and unwavering commitment to youth wellbeing.

Judith Richards

Judith is a trauma recovery pioneer whose personal journey inspired the creation of The Richards Trauma Process (TRTP), a transformative method helping people overcome trauma, anxiety, and depression. Having survived severe abuse and illness, Judith turned her pain into purpose, offering hope and healing to thousands. Her work is grounded in lived experience, compassion, and innovation. Judith's impact on trauma recovery is profound, making her a truly deserving nominee for Citizen of the Year.

David Ross

David is a creative and dedicated educator at Maroochydhore before and after school care, known for transforming everyday activities into imaginative learning experiences. With themed events and engaging setups, he brings joy and inclusivity to children's lives. A two-time national Employee of the Year, David also fundraises for cancer charities, including founding the Bloomhill Cancer Care Walk. His long-standing volunteer work and infectious enthusiasm make him a standout community contributor.

Citizen of the Year Award continued...

Michael Shadforth

Michael has led the Caloundra Chamber of Commerce for 14 years, transforming it into a dynamic hub for business and community. With over 20 years of volunteer service, he's fostered collaboration, innovation, and regional growth. Michael's hands-on leadership and passion for connection have empowered countless entrepreneurs and built a strong, supportive business ecosystem. His belief that "strong businesses build strong communities" is evident in every initiative he leads. Michael's vision and dedication define true civic leadership.

Chotima Smart

Cho is a vibrant volunteer at the STEPS Garden Centre, where she's contributed over 250 hours since 2023. Her passion for succulents and sustainability shines through her social media platform, 'Succulents and Cho', which educates and inspires thousands. Her creative arrangements support the Centre's mission, which funds programs for young people with disabilities. Cho's energy, generosity, and community spirit make her a standout contributor to both gardening and social inclusion on the Sunshine Coast.

Claire Smith

Claire is a tireless wildlife advocate who raised over \$600,000 during the 2019 - 20 bushfires, supporting 50 rescue groups. She built Queensland's first kangaroo hospital and is now fundraising \$5 million for a koala conservation centre. Claire also writes and donates children's books to those in trauma. Through the Lionhearted Foundation and various local charities, she empowers women and supports vulnerable communities. Named Queensland's Local Hero in the Australian of the Year Awards, Claire's impact is truly remarkable.

Christine Thomas

Christine is a proud Wakka Wakka woman, social worker, and community leader whose voluntary work spans reconciliation, justice, and healing. As founder of the Cygnet Centre, she co-designs trauma-informed services and mentors emerging leaders. Christine co-chairs the Sunshine Coast First Nations Network, advises Council on its Reconciliation Action Plan and leads anti-racism efforts. Her work strengthens cultural safety, equity, and community connection. Christine's leadership is grounded in integrity, compassion, and a deep love for her people and place.

Suzanne Wilson

Suzanne is a passionate environmental educator who works at Mooloolah Valley Landcare. Though part-time, she volunteers extra hours to teach young people about native plants and insects vital to the Sunshine Coast ecosystem. A lifelong local, she brings deep knowledge and heartfelt dedication to her work. Suzanne's enthusiasm and care for the environment inspire others and contribute meaningfully to conservation and sustainability efforts across the region.

Sunshine Coast Biosphere

What makes the Sunshine Coast Biosphere special?

The Sunshine Coast Biosphere is internationally recognised for our region's unique environment, vibrant communities, thriving local economies, and commitment to sustainability.

It is home to beautiful landscapes, diverse plants and animals, and rich cultural history. It's a place where we can live, work, play and learn how to take care of our planet.

It reminds us that together we can all make a difference.

Quick facts about our biosphere

Recognition: Became a biosphere reserve in June 2022, as part of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Program

Location: One of five in Australia, with three in Queensland

Coverage: Includes the entire Sunshine Coast local government area and 5.5km off the coast

Cultural Significance: Located on the traditional lands of the Kabi Kabi and Jinibara peoples

Global network: There are 759 UNESCO biosphere reserves in 136 countries (as at end of 2024).



Our commitment

Together we:

Care for our natural environment

Belong to a thriving community

Grow our local economy

Create a sustainable planet

How can you get involved?

- **Adopt sustainable actions:** Make small changes in your daily life, like reducing waste, using renewable energy, driving less and buying locally grown food.
- **Join community projects:** Participate in local conservation and sustainability projects such as tree planting, beach clean-ups and food rescue.
- **Become a volunteer:** Many organisations within the Biosphere offer volunteer opportunities. You can join various community groups and help out.
- **Support local businesses:** Buy locally produced goods, choose eco-friendly products and support businesses that are committed to sustainability.



Learn more about the
Sunshine Coast Biosphere



sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au

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