

CITY OF PARRAMATTA CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARDS & AUSTRALIAN CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY

OFFICIAL PROGRAM

Australia Day, Thursday 26 January 2023
Parramatta Park



| PARRAMATTA



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Parramatta Park is the traditional lands of the Burramattagal people.

For more than 60,000 years, Parramatta has been the home of the Burramattagal people, a clan of the Dharug, who settled along the upper reaches of the Parramatta River.

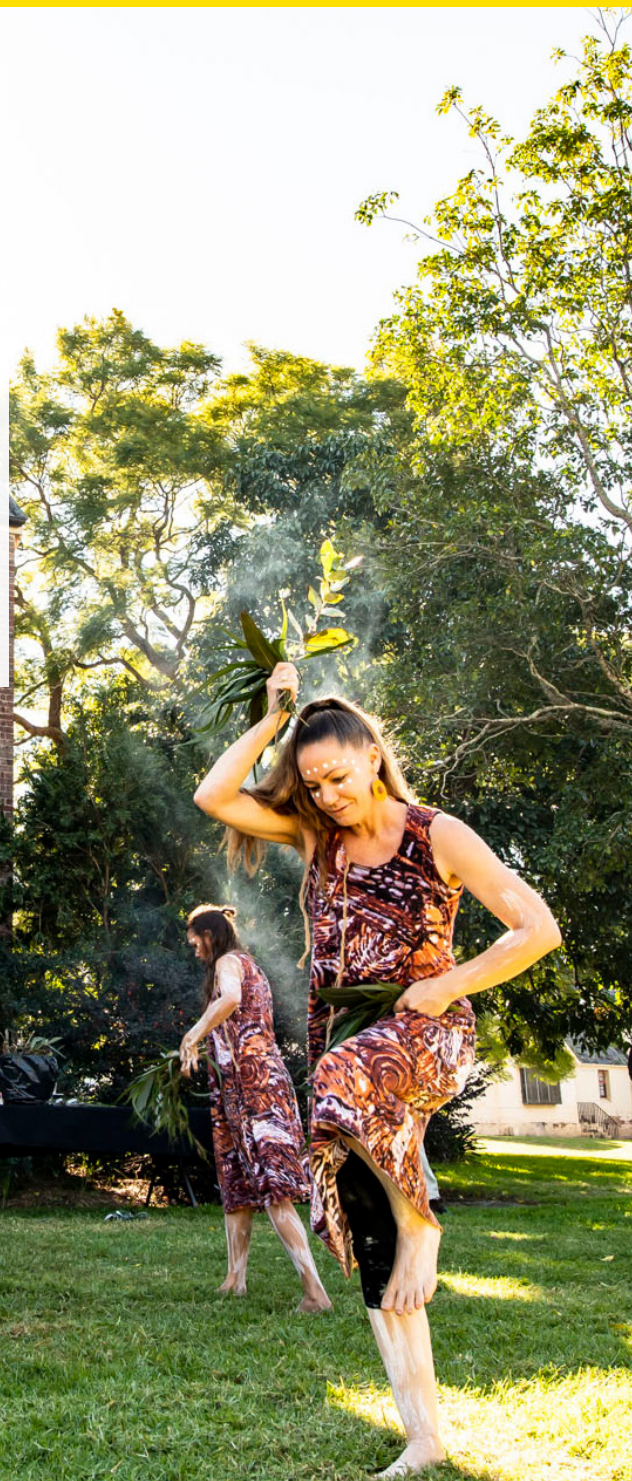
The City of Parramatta respectfully recognises the Traditional Owners of the land and waters of Burramatta (Parramatta), the Dharug peoples.

We acknowledge their unbroken connection to country and their elders and ancestors who are the keepers of knowledge.

We also acknowledge and celebrate Dharug culture as the first artists and storytellers of this country and their youth who will carry this deep cultural legacy into the future.

We pay our respects to the Elders past, present and emerging.

We extend our respect to all First Nations people visiting these sites.



CONTENTS

4	WELCOME TO COUNTRY
6	LORD MAYOR'S MESSAGE
7	AUSTRALIA DAY AMBASSADOR
8	ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS
10-11	CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARDS JUDGING PANEL
12-26	CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARDS NOMINEES
27	COUNCIL SERVICES

WARAMI

Welcome to Burramatta, Dharug Land. Warami is a Dharug word meaning 'good to see you'.

SMOKING (CLEANSING) CEREMONY

Led by Jessy Currie, the smoking ceremony is a traditional Aboriginal custom that involves burning native plants that produce smoke to cleanse and ward off bad spirits.

Aboriginal people traditionally perform smoking ceremonies to welcome people to their land and wish them success. A smoking ceremony also allows you to cleanse your past for a better future and connection to the land.

Jessy Currie is a Bundjalung man from the Tweed Heads region, with bloodlines connected to the Gubbi Gubbi People. Growing up on the coast line of Caloundra, Queensland.

His Songlines come from the Quandamooka People, with the guidance and permission from his skinfather Josh Walker & Raymond Nunka Walker.



NULUNGU DREAMING DANCE - PERFORMANCE

Nulungu Dreaming was created in 2015 by Jessy Currie, with the dreaming to provide Cultural Knowledge & Cultural protocols and identity to Jarjums in all communities. Working with Children and Young people to close the gap on Disconnection with Culture Country and People with respecting the Traditional Owners of the Land we have been accepted to stand & teach on today Dharug Land.

Many of our performers come from all over the country from Queensland all the way down to South Coast and Inland.

Nulungu Dreaming prides itself on Respecting Cultural Protocol, Lore's and connecting Jarjums with identity, strength, pride and most importantly connection to culture.



WELCOME TO COUNTRY

Welcome To Country is a speech delivered by an Aboriginal Elder of the land we meet on, and is a sign of respect to acknowledge the traditional owners past, present and future. It is common protocol that a First Nations custodian performs the Welcome to Country for businesses, local governments, conferences and forums, official openings and ceremonies, and other events.

The Welcome to Country enables Traditional Custodians to give their blessing and welcome everyone to their Country. Today's Welcome to Country is conducted by Dharug Elder, Uncle Bruce Gale.

Uncle Bruce Gale is widely respected by both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal members of the community and has been a voice for his community through many committees and initiatives. Uncle Bruce was Chairperson of City of Parramatta

Council's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee for 14 years, and a committee member for 17 years. He was Secretary of the Sydney Region Aboriginal Legal Service for 10 years; a committee member of RailCorp Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee for 14 years and Chairman for 4 years; and a board member of the (IDAS) Indigenous Disability Advocacy Service.



Today, Uncle Bruce remains heavily involved in the community through his work as Secretary of Sydney Region Aboriginal Corporation and Secretary of the Aboriginal Housing Company Board.



AUSTRALIA DAY AMBASSADOR BEN FARINAZZO

Ben is a Veteran, dual Invictus Games gold medalist and an Ambassador for Lifeline and Soldier On Australia. He is a passionate advocate for mental health, Veterans and the healing power of sport.

Ben is of Aboriginal and Italian heritage. At age 16 he joined the Australian Defence Force and served as an Army Officer. In 1999, he deployed on active service as part of the International Force in East Timor. Following a decade in the military, he successfully transitioned to a civilian career and held several senior executive, CEO and board roles in Australia and offshore.

In 2015, following his service, Ben was diagnosed with chronic and severe post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety. He also suffered from a mountain

biking accident leaving him with significant neck and back injuries. Ben was required to re-learn basic motor functions and new techniques to manage his mental health and ways to reconnect with the world.

In 2018, he achieved his goal of representing Australia at the Invictus Games in Sydney, winning two gold medals in indoor rowing, and achieving a personal best in men's heavy weight powerlifting.

Following his return home, Ben received the honour of being appointed as an Ambassador for Australia Day. He is an Ambassador for Lifeline and Soldier On Australia and continues to be a passionate advocate for mental health, wounded veterans and the healing power of sport.

LORD MAYOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to this year's Citizen of the Year Awards and Australian Citizenship Ceremony. We are here to recognise outstanding achievements in our community and to thank you for your valuable contributions.

As the Lord Mayor of Parramatta, I am extremely proud of all our nominees. Our City pays tribute to all of you for your outstanding work in making Parramatta the best place to live, work, study and visit.

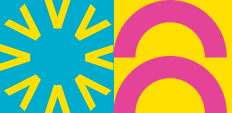
Today, we also officially welcome new Australian citizens to our city. We are honoured that you have chosen our city and country as your home. Diversity is our greatest strength.

On this occasion, we celebrate our diversity by welcoming new citizens from 35 countries across the globe.

I commend our finest citizens who are receiving an award today and welcome our newest Australians.

Cr Donna Davis
Lord Mayor
City of Parramatta





ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS

Master of Ceremonies

M'Leigh Brunetta, City of Parramatta

Welcome to Country

Uncle Bruce Gale, Dharug Elder

Australian National Anthem

*Australians all let us rejoice,
For we are one and free;
We've golden soil and wealth for toil;
Our home is girt by sea;
Our land abounds in nature's gifts
Of beauty rich and rare;
In history's page, let every stage
Advance Australia Fair.
In joyful strains then let us sing,
Advance Australia Fair.*

*Beneath our radiant Southern Cross
We'll toil with hearts and hands;
To make this Commonwealth of ours
Renowned of all the lands;
For those who've come across the seas
We've boundless plains to share;
With courage let us all combine
To Advance Australia Fair.
In joyful strains then let us sing,
Advance Australia Fair.*

Welcome Address

The Right Worshipful, the Lord Mayor of Parramatta Councillor Donna Davis

Australia Day Address

Ben Farinazzo, Australia Day Ambassador

CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Awards Address

Stephen & Karen Breckenridge Representatives from Homicide Victims Support Group
2022 Community Group of the Year

Presentation of Citizen of the Year Awards

The Right Worshipful, the Lord Mayor of Parramatta Councillor Donna Davis

AUSTRALIAN CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY

Minster's Message

Dr Andrew Charlton MP, Member for Parramatta

Pledge of Commitment

The Right Worshipful, the Lord Mayor of Parramatta Councillor Donna Davis.

Candidates will be asked to repeat the Pledge of Commitment out loud, a few words at a time.

Pledge 1 (Under God)

*From this time forward, under God, I pledge
my loyalty to Australia and its people,
whose democratic beliefs I share, whose
rights and liberties I respect and whose
laws I will uphold and obey.*

Pledge 2

*From this time forward, I pledge my
loyalty to Australia and its people, whose
democratic beliefs I share, whose rights
and liberties I respect and whose laws I will
uphold and obey.*

Presentation of Australian Citizenship Certificates

The Right Worshipful, the Lord Mayor of Parramatta Councillor Donna Davis

**80 people are receiving Citizenship today
from 35 different countries. They are:**

Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, China, Ecuador,
Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Italy,
Jordan, Lebanon, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands,
New Zealand, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Poland,
Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Singapore,
South Africa, South Korea, Syrian Arab Republic,
Taiwan, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates,
United States of America, Vietnam

CITY OF PARRMATT CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARDS JUDGING PANEL



Lord Mayor Councillor Donna Davis

First elected to City of Parramatta Council in 2017, Cr Donna Davis was elected Lord Mayor in January 2022, and is the third female Lord Mayor in its 160-year history. She is proud to lead this inclusive and diverse Council, which includes eight female Councillors. Cr Davis is passionate about including the community in Council's decision making and would like to provide more opportunities for public input. Cr Davis represents the Epping Ward and lives with her husband and two sons in Dundas Valley.



Margaret Tipper

Margaret Tipper was born in Parramatta and her family has had a close association with the City since the 1930s, when her grandparents opened a bakery near Parramatta train station. She has worked in Western Sydney most of her life and is presently the Executive Officer of WESTIR Ltd, a not-for-profit social research organisation based in Parramatta.



Deputy Lord Mayor Councillor Sameer Pandey

Deputy Lord Mayor Sameer Pandey was first elected to City of Parramatta Council in September 2017, becoming Deputy Lord Mayor in January 2022. Cr Pandey is passionate about community issues, social inclusion, preserving heritage, local services, and youth programs. He also advocates for better services for older people and people with a disability, education, infrastructure and ensuring our community has a strong plan for the future.



Matt Zahra

Matt Zahra has lived and worked in the Parramatta area most of his life. Growing up in Epping, he completed a Computing Science degree at the University of Western Sydney. He now works for eHealth NSW, supporting critical systems, and is a resident of Winston Hills. Matt values opportunities to help people get the best out of life as a local and is excited about the future of Parramatta.



Amar Singh - 2022 Citizen of the Year

Amar is the founding President of Turbans 4 Australia, a Sikh charity organisation based in Parramatta LGA. His passion is forming connections with people from all walks of life and breaking down the barriers of fear and misunderstanding while following the core Sikh values of equality, respect and service to humanity. Amar's contributions are entirely voluntary, often providing assistance in areas where there are large gaps in support, especially for the culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community.



CITY OF PARRAMATTA CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARDS NOMINEES

The award categories are:

Citizen of the Year:

A person who has made a noteworthy contribution to the City of Parramatta in one of three subcategory age groups that are:

- Young Citizen of the Year
in honour of David Shakespeare OAM
(16-30 years)
- Citizen of the Year (31-64 years)
- Senior Citizen of the Year
(65 years and over)

Community Group Award:

A local group or organisation, which has provided an outstanding contribution to the City of Parramatta community. This includes projects and events.



2022 Community Group Award recipients
with Lord Mayor Cr Donna Davis.



YOUNG CITIZEN OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

in honour of David Shakespeare OAM

Nass Aoun

Nass Aoun is the Founder & CEO of Flexi Africa, which promotes and sells African products online and creates opportunities in Australia for African-based vendors. Nass is also the co-director of La Mer Charity, a national charity supporting Australians impacted by congenital heart disease (CHD). He is very active in the community and is a member of The Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem, The Order of St John of Jerusalem, and The Order of Malta. In addition, he is a Member of the Maltese Chamber of Commerce, Parramatta and Canterbury Bankstown Chambers of Commerce, and is the Director of Membership at the Rotary Club of Five Dock. In his spare time, Nass volunteers for the Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Youth Organisation and The Salvation Army.

Zyntaurus Donna-Aroon

Zyntaurus has been a member of the Baludarri Wetland Bushcare Group since 2011. He first joined the City of Parramatta Bushcare Volunteer Program as a Scout, and since 2020 has taken on the role as Convenor of the group. Zyntaurus has gone above and beyond removing weeds, planting native local plants, and removing rubbish to transform a defunct landfill site into a viable salt marsh. He inspires younger volunteers like himself to join environmental fields and Bushcare programs to ensure lands and waterways are protected for years to come. He is also involved with the Parramatta River Catchment Group; assisted with the successful running of the Refugee Alternatives Conference; and in 2022 won the Youth Award for Bushcare. Through his efforts, Zyntaurus has positively benefitted both the local community and environment, showing what can be done to help protect and promote bushlands.

Shravan Manjunath Nagesh

Shravan has provided a valuable service to the community by volunteering as a Justice of the Peace (JP) with the City of Parramatta's community libraries. He has signed, certified and attested hundreds of documents and helped people with applications for visas, schools, universities, jobs, loans and more. He has volunteered his services after work, on weekends and on public holidays. During the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, Shravan continued his JP services via audio-visual links. He has also assisted in animal rescues and provided free temporary accommodation at his residence for international students when they first arrived in Sydney. His greatest asset is his desire to make a difference in his community and his willingness to go out of his way to help others.

Mohammad Raza (Bayan) Sohailee

Bayan is very passionate about Parramatta and has been volunteering for the past 10 years to make the local community a safer, healthier, and happier place to live. As a volunteer of St. John Ambulance NSW, he works diligently to deliver event health services to the community. Bayan is a student at Western Sydney University and volunteers as a MATES mentor, he is a member of the Student Representative Council, and is in the running for the Academic Senate and Board of Trustees position. He was awarded the 'Western Sydney University Unsung Hero Award' and has been on the Dean's Merit List for the past three years. Bayan has volunteered with the Parramatta SES, UNYouth, Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network, and Wellbeing Health & Youth. He is also a registered Justice of the Peace.



Hot air balloons rise into the sky above Parramatta Park at the 2022 Australia Day event.



CITIZEN OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

Jason Apel

Jason is a kind and compassionate local citizen who lives in Winston Hills and has been a great source of support to his neighbourhood. As the resident "go-to" neighbour, no task is too big or too small for Jason and he is always willing to help those in need. Despite his work or personal schedule, he has always been available to support his elderly neighbours at a moment's notice. Jason is an outstanding individual of great integrity and sets a great example to all, by never hesitating to help others in any situation.

Neel Banerjee

Neel is the founder of Nautanki Theatre Company, a non-profit theatre company based in Parramatta. Nautanki provides opportunities for diverse Western Sydney creatives and audiences to connect, grow, and tell stories. Through Neel's passion and perseverance, Nautanki has a reach of more than 100,000 people in Western Sydney. Neel also developed the Drama Sutra playwright program, which provides an opportunity for South Asian-Australian playwrights to have their work performed in the Parramatta LGA each year. He also created the Step in Saray program, which provides professional development for creatives from the South Asian community. Neel has also been responsible for the planning and organisation of the South Asian Theatre Festival for the past seven years since its inception in 2016.

Nicole Caldwell

Nicole works with the Christian Community Aid (CCA) emergency relief program, delivering essential services and community support to vulnerable individuals and families. Nicole predominantly works to support vulnerable women within the culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community by sourcing and delivering essential baby items, clothes, food, and hope to those in need. Her role involves many hours outside of work to support and guide CALD women to develop plans, make connections, and find the path to a better future. Nicole continued to perform her services in Parramatta throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, going above and beyond to help people in some of the hardest times of their lives.

Michael Campbell

Michael passionately believes in the power of literature - written, oral, and visual to change lives and communities. Since his appointment as Executive Director of WestWords in 2015, Michael has developed three studio spaces for aspiring writers to work at in Campbelltown, Parramatta, and Blacktown. Through his work at WestWords, Michael has facilitated a wide range of writing activities, writing groups, and workshops for people of all ages and ethnicities. He developed the Landscape Place and Me Program involving three secondary schools. Students met online, sharing and critiquing each other's writing, and then in-person at a bush camp where more writing took place and friendships were formed.

Anne Carmichael

Anne is the Community Engagement Officer at Northmead Public High School, and continually makes herself available around the clock to help students. She helps with registering students for weekend sports and attends their games. She has also started a donation drive for sports attire, to ensure children have access to sporting activities regardless of their family's financial situation. Outside of work, Anne volunteers for St Vincent De Paul in Parramatta; donates and delivers leftover food from school activities to the Hope Hostel; and supports senior members of her neighbourhood who are recovering from surgery, by cooking meals and providing transport for appointments. During the COVID-19 lockdown, she organised food drop-offs, arranged Rapid Antigen Tests, and offered moral support to struggling families.

Jennifer (Jenny) Fuda

Jenny has been working with Parramatta Mission for the last eight years and recently stepped into a new position to set up a consortium for the Meals Plus service. Jenny works tirelessly to help run, fund, and grow Parramatta Mission's Meals Plus service which serves the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in the Parramatta LGA. Operating Monday to Friday, Meals Plus provides daily meals to 250 people per day, as well as essential items, shower and laundry services, and food parcels to around 60 individuals a day. Jenny continues to expand the consortium by bringing in new partners to best assist her clients. She operates with the utmost integrity, always has a smile on her face and is an inspiration to other team members and the whole organisation.

Jorrë Harris

Jorrë is passionate about improving the quality of Parramatta River not only for the Parramatta community, but also for the wildlife living in the river. His passion led to the creation of the Wardens of the Parramatta River Facebook group, where like-minded individuals can connect over their shared love for the Parramatta River and foster community spirit. Jorrë volunteers his time to facilitate and participate in local waterside clean ups. He has been essential in the transformation of the Ermington area, clearing over half a tonne of hard rubbish and plastic from a 300-metre section of river. Jorrë has also joined up with OzFish Unlimited, who are dedicated to helping recreational fishers restore Australian fish habitats and waterways for future generations.



CITIZEN OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

Lailei Huang

Lailei is a well-known local virtual reality artist, technologist, educator, and is the president of local not-for-profit organisation Australian Immersive Education Academy (AIEA). Through Lailei's efforts, AIEA has developed into a unique initiative dedicated to researching, developing, and delivering high-quality virtual reality educational workshops that make emerging technologies available and accessible to all. With many out of work hours, Lailei developed workshops to help participants to learn through play and think about a future driven by emerging technologies. They are usually provided to locals for free through partnership with Parramatta libraries. From late 2021 to June 2022, Lailei initiated a COVID Innovation Project where he successfully created two COVID-themed VR games to help families learn how to stay COVID-safe and hosted dedicated VR workshops.

Kim Jasper

Kim Jasper is the current President of the Dundas Valley Junior Rugby Union Football Club (DVJRUF). Over the past two years, Kim has been the driving force behind making DVJRUF the fastest growing rugby union club in Sydney. Kim provides a safe place for young children, and encourages the participation of girls in sport, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Kim ensures that all children are provided an opportunity to participate in sport by removing financial barriers and providing an affordable club, charging no registration or uniform fees. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Kim provided hampers and cooked meals for the vulnerable members of the community and check-in calls to seniors. Her outstanding example inspires many around her to also support these initiatives that benefit community.

Sandra (Sandy) Knox

Sandy has been an active member of the 1st Ermington Scout Group for the past 18 years and served in many positions. In 2016, Sandy started the Joey unit within the group and now leads and teaches the group's youth a wide variety of outdoors skills. Her program is so well loved and enjoyed there is often a wait list. Sandy also volunteers her time mentoring and training other Joey units and leaders throughout the district. Outside of her leader duties, Sandy organises several outdoor activities on a regular basis; facilitates Cub camps and other events; and assists with the committee's operations. Throughout her scouting journey, Sandy has completed advanced training and received several adult recognition awards from Scouts NSW.

Christina la Rose

Local bladder cancer survivor, Christina, launched bladder cancer charity BEAT in 2018. Since then, Christina has worked tirelessly to provide support to patients and carers alike. Christina manages an online and in person support group that connects vulnerable patients, providing a sense of community, and a safe space where stories and advice can be shared. Through her volunteer activities with BEAT, Christina compiles resources and shares her story, spreading awareness of the signs and symptoms of bladder cancer. This includes providing resources for doctors to share with their patients. In addition, she manages social media accounts to provide easily accessible information and spread awareness of this disease.

Bhumika Mayur Mhatre

Bhumika is the co-founder and President of Temple of Humanity Inc. and is passionate about community and forming connections with others. With a devotion for people, Bhumika has formed several websites and social groups with the purpose of connecting people from all walks of life and providing valuable help, information, guidance, and advice in their time of need. Bhumika is committed to bringing the Marathi community together for mutual support and growth and to preserve their rich heritage, history, and language for future generations. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she raised food and rent sponsorship for international students in Sydney and Melbourne. Among other projects, Bhumika runs online classes about cyber security with the aim to build cyber-safe families worldwide.

David Myers

David is the Scout Leader for 1st Parramatta Scout Group and has been overseeing the running of the Cubs and Joeys for more than 10 years. David is passionate about encouraging younger generations to enjoy the outdoors, and teaching the importance of good citizenship through volunteering and the social benefits it provides. David is often onsite throughout the week to support and train leaders. He organises regular hikes, camps, and other activities. David patiently supports club members to be independent and learn new skills, always encouraging the youth to get involved and give back to the community through Bushcare working bees, Clean Up Australia Day and tree planting days. In his spare time, David also volunteers with the City of Parramatta Baludarri Bushcare group.





CITIZEN OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

Tahera Nassrat

Tahera is a local resident, businesswoman, humanitarian and the founder and President of Afghan Peace Foundation (APF). Established in 2019, the foundation is a not-for-profit organisation supporting newly arrived Afghan evacuees to develop social connections and access community services. Tahera's involvement with the foundation is voluntary and she funds multiple activities herself to bring an ethnically diverse group of Afghan women together, as they work towards peace, harmony, and empowerment. Tahera has also participated in fundraising activities for a variety of causes, including bushfire appeals and to raise money for breast cancer, diabetes and autism research. As a business advisor and tax practitioner, Tahera undertakes pro bono work for charitable organisations and families struggling financially.

Dr Harunor Rashid

Dr Rashid works at the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance based at the Children's Hospital at Westmead and is affiliated with the Faculty of Medicine and Health, The University of Sydney, Westmead Precinct, and The Westmead Institute for Medical Research. He has worked passionately to improve vaccination uptake rates amongst marginalised people in Western Sydney, often meeting outside his office hours with local community members in informal gatherings, such as at mosques during Friday congregational prayers, to answer their queries and allay concerns. During the pandemic, he arranged a media conference with local leaders and health experts to publicise the importance of vaccination within the Islamic community and was also interviewed by the Associated Press. He advocated at a national level for travel medicine clinics to be included in the national COVID-19 vaccination roll-out program, and participated in a research program to improve HPV vaccination rates in the immigrant community.

Julia (Julz) Strykowski

Julz is a Parramatta local that has been an active volunteer within the community for more than 10 years. She is a passionate environmental educator involved with many community groups that she has founded, leads, organises and campaigns for. She is the founder of the Boomerang Bags Parramatta group, empowering local communities to tackle plastic pollution at its source. Julz is a co-founder of the Friends of Toongabbie Creek group, where locals can adopt and care for Toongabbie Creek. Julz also runs a waste-to-art program called PluckFastic, and her work has been featured at regional art shows and galleries in Sydney and won numerous awards and prizes. Julz is an extremely dedicated local with her volunteering efforts extending to the Parramatta Women's Shed, Greener Gatherings, and Plastic Free Parramatta.

Moses Vedamuthu

Moses is the Founder of the Support Organisation for Homeless and Asylum Seekers (SOHAS). Along with a small number of volunteers, he has provided support to vulnerable and disadvantaged local community members. Moses and his team have travelled more than 100 kilometres to identify people in need all over Sydney. Simultaneously, he travels to collect food and groceries from Parramatta Mission and other private grocers, then goes on to deliver these essential items to around 40 families in need. He has a holistic approach to helping others, ensuring that he is always available to help those in need, as well as inspiring young people to be part of his organisation.

Merven Virueda

Merven is passionate about youth and adult education and helping those locally to reach their career goals. In his role as Marketing and Programs Manager for the not-for-profit Parramatta Community College, Merven helps current and prospective students improve their professional and personal development. Often working in his personal time, Merven provides opportunities for the local community to learn new skills. He recently gathered support from local MPs and Councillors for the Summer Skills Program for the Youth, a program targeted at recent school leavers aged 16-24 years. Merven also visits high schools in Western Sydney to encourage children to improve their self-development skills.

Priya Wani

Priya is a dedicated volunteer in the Epping community, delivering her services locally and beyond. Away from her day job, Priya continually donates her time to assist the running of local school activities including the Mother's Day stall, Father's Day stall, school band activities, walkathons, election day stalls, and many others. She also supports local and small business within the Parramatta Local Government Area by promoting them through her networks. Priya has been recognised by several local organisations for her contribution, support, and achievements.



SENIOR CITIZEN OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

Ron Della Vedova

Ron is the current president of the Rydalmere Conference of St Vincent de Paul Society championing and supporting the disadvantaged. Under Ron's leadership, members of the Society visit around 100 households to deliver food, bedding, furniture, and white goods to community members in need. Support also includes counselling and administrative assistance. Support is provided to those unable to cope without additional financial and emotional support, some being quite isolated from the community. In 2019, Ron was responsible for setting up the Bartlett St Project. The project enabled residents of the Bartlett St Social Housing units to engage socially in a meaningful and mutually beneficial manner. The initiative has had a lasting impact in raising morale of the residents.

Jocelyn Dodd

Jocelyn has been volunteering with the City of Parramatta Community Care services for almost 10 years. Jocelyn has volunteered in several roles with fervour and shown an exemplary commitment to enriching the lives of the vulnerable people she supports. As a Community Connector with the Social Inclusion services, Jocelyn took on the role of supporting people with disability and teaching them life and digital skills. Jocelyn also volunteers her time with the Over 55's Leisure and Learning service, making herself available for any enquiries ensuring that new participants feel welcome, while also teaching computer skills at the Seniors Computer kiosk. She also offered her support at the Social Lunch program with the Meals on Wheels service, where she was matched with a participant who was in the early phase of Alzheimer's disease, delivering meals and providing support.

Leslie (Les) Liddell

Since 2015, Les has been proudly serving the community in Dundas through his work as a Justice of the Peace (JP) at Dundas Library. His helpful nature and engaging personality are greatly appreciated by not just the library, but the community where his services are much sought-after. He has served as a JP for more than 60 years. Les' dedication to help others comes from his extensive background in social work and community engagement. He continues that today through declaring his home a 'Safety House' through the Safety House Program, designed for school children seeking shelter and safety if they are feeling threatened, scared or lost. Les is also a volunteer police officer as part of Neighbourhood Watch.

Philip (Phil) Marsh

Phil joined the City of Parramatta's Community Care volunteer team five years ago and has been an invaluable volunteer for the Meals on Wheels service, delivering meals to the elderly and people with a disability. He also donates his time as a Recreation Support Volunteer with the Social Inclusion service, facilitating social activities for a group of participants with a disability. Phil will not hesitate to help if the need arises and his compassion, friendliness, and respectful personality have captured the attention of all those who interact with him including staff and participants.

Hong Wang

Hong is a Parramatta local and director of registered charity and arts organisation, Australia International Elite Cultural and Arts Centre Inc (AIECACI). AIECACI supports local arts and cultural performances within the Parramatta Local Government Area and beyond. Hong leads the performing arts group in performances at community events and nursing homes, bringing their cultural performances to the elderly, and celebrating seasonal festivals. Hong has organised many charity events to raise funds for people affected by bushfires, drought, and floods. She has also raised funds for children's cancer charities.





COMMUNITY GROUP AWARD NOMINEES

Dundas Area Neighbourhood Centre (DANC) - Friday Connect Program

Dundas Area Neighbourhood Centre (DANC) is a small not-for-profit organisation that provides support and guidance for the most marginalised of our communities. The Friday Connect program is a social support initiative providing free food and material aid to the local community. Each week DANC works in partnership with the Tzu Chi Foundation who bring hot meals to the centre for distribution to those in need. DANC also provides free food hampers from Oz Harvest and pantry items from Second Bite. These items are a huge help to many who have been struggling post-pandemic with the rising cost of living. The Friday Connect program also allows an opportunity for people to socialise, connect and share stories. These conversations are an essential lifeline for many.

Little India Harris Park Business Association

Little India Harris Park Business Association (LIHPBA) is a not-for-profit community organisation in Parramatta focused on community projects with grass roots experience in Western Sydney. Since its inception in 2015, LIHPBA has created a cultural hub in Harris Park for members of the Southeast Asian communities. LIHPBA partners with like-minded organisations to promote arts, culture, and multiculturalism within Western Sydney. The association has supported local businesses the last few years by providing free food packs, sanitiser packs, and masks, and has assisted with procuring staffing and business for local small business owners throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Once COVID-19 restrictions lifted, LIHPBA played a leading role in bringing everyone together for positive social, cultural, and creative experiences. They also coordinate key cultural events such as Diwali festival, and projects which address domestic violence.

Parramatta State Emergency Service (SES)

The Parramatta State Emergency Service (SES) is a group of volunteers selflessly serving the community. Day and night, weekdays and weekends, 365 days a year, the crew at Parramatta assist in all emergency events within the Local Government Area. This passionate group volunteer outside of their work and family commitments to make the community a safe place to live and work. Sydney had some significant weather events in 2022, and the SES served the community tirelessly during this time saving lives and protecting property. The SES volunteers are everyday members of the community with jobs, families, hobbies, and interests. In undertaking their service to the community, they often put their own wants and needs second to those that they serve. The Parramatta SES deliver an outstanding service and are a highly regarded crew.

The Parramatta Women's Shed

The Parramatta Women's Shed (PWS) is an independent community group in Parramatta offering weekly sessions in woodworking and maker/repair sessions. The mission of the PWS is to provide a space to empower women with new skills, help reduce environmental waste, and to build a resilient community to support each other. The Shed is proud to boast women from a wide variety of backgrounds - some who are using tools for the first time, and others who are experienced users willing to share their expertise. PWS has welcomed more than 70 women through its doors. Members have created a variety of projects for themselves and the community, including bird and wildlife nesting boxes to help native animals recover from bushfires.

Sherwin Park Community Garden

Started by locals, the Sherwin Park Community Garden project will improve health, wellbeing and food security for people living in the Local Government Area. Led by Susan Price, the group has worked to build a great foundation for a new community garden, engaging local residents at every opportunity on how it will be designed and operated. They hope to help people living in units to grow their own food and support vulnerable communities. The Sherwin Park Community Garden will be located in North Parramatta and is currently in the design phase. The group's perseverance, passion, and positivity to all aspects of the project is to be commended.

Support Organisation for Homeless and Asylum Seekers

Support Organisation for Homeless and Asylum Seekers (SOHAS) is committed to enhancing the quality of life of people from marginalised and vulnerable communities around Parramatta, Cumberland and Blacktown areas. The organisation supports people in need including seniors, asylum seekers, international students, temporary visa holders, people experiencing homelessness, and refugees. SOHAS continues to provide groceries and essential services to people who were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown. During the severe flooding in 2022, SOHAS delivered 850 food boxes to flood affected families. The organisation also assists migrants and refugee communities in gaining employment and settling in the community, as well as providing help during times of crisis.

COMMUNITY GROUP AWARD NOMINEES

St Merkorious Charity

St Merkorious Charity (SMC) provides disadvantaged community members with relief from the effects of poverty by donating food, hygiene items, clothing, and hope to vulnerable individuals and families. The charity aims to tackle poverty at the root with love, compassion, and tolerance. In partnership with Star Property Management, SMC has successfully secured employment for willing and able-bodied homeless people in Parramatta. Additionally, SMC has developed education programs to assist culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) residents with healthy eating and sourcing local ingredients. In 2021, with support from Multicultural Australia, SMC was able to offer COVID-19 vaccinations for people experiencing homelessness in Parramatta.

Temple of Humanity Inc

Temple of Humanity Inc (TOHI) is a non-profit charity in Parramatta based on the concept that all humans are equal. TOHI seeks to bring multicultural communities together for communal harmony, and provide a safe place where people of various religions and cultures can gather in one place, regardless of their faith. TOHI has been a source of support to women and children, especially in times of distress. The charity also provides several educational talks and classes, including topics on meditation, mental health, loss and grief, and cyber security awareness for families. TOHI and its 32 volunteers work every day to help those in need.

WestWords

WestWords is a Western Sydney not-for-profit arts organisation based in Parramatta. Their goal is to support local and emerging artists in their literary pursuits, from traditional prose to modern mediums, including podcasts. WestWords celebrates and champions the stories of the people, places, and cultures that are at the heart of Western Sydney. They believe in the power of literacy, self-expression, and creativity to change lives and the experiences of communities through a comprehensive program of support. WestWords prides itself on its principles of access, diversity, excellence, innovation, and integrity, a reflection of the intrinsic beliefs of Western Sydney itself. WestWords supports local artists through education and economic incentives, returning benefits to the community.



COUNCIL PROVIDES SERVICES TO SUPPORT YOU

The City of Parramatta Council provides more than 40 services to improve the quality of life for residents and make Parramatta a great place to live, work, play and invest. These include:

- Libraries, Community and Childcare centres
- Social services such as Meals on Wheels, Neighbourhood Aid, and environmental initiatives
- Parks, reserves, and open public spaces
- A diverse events program, as well as arts and cultural initiatives
- Essential services such as waste collection and road maintenance

Scan QR code or visit
cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au
to learn more.



“ HAVE
YOUR
SAY ”

PARTICIPATE PARRAMATTA

Participate in conversations that matter to you, sign up to Participate Parramatta today! Stay informed about opportunities to have your say on exciting projects that shape our community. It's quick, easy, and free! Scan the QR code or visit participate.cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au/register to learn more.





@parracity
@atparramatta



@cityofparramatta
@atparramatta



@cityofparramatta
@atparramatta

SIGN UP TO LOCAL
NEWS & EVENTS



Scan the QR code or visit
cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au to learn more