

Cowra Young Citizen of the Year Awards Nominees 2026

Cohan Howden

Cohan is an exceptional young leader whose commitment to his school and community sets him apart. His active participation in all school activities was recognised this year in his selection as the 2026 School Captain of St Raphael's Catholic School.

Cohan's involvement spans academic, sporting, and wellbeing initiatives. He has represented the school in Cross Country, Athletics, Swimming, and the Bathurst Diocese Spelling Bee, and served as an ambassador for the St Raphael's Push-Up Challenge. He is working toward his Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award, dedicating countless hours to physical activity, volunteering, and developing new skills.

Beyond school, Cohan is a committed member of the Cowra Youth Council, serving for five years and holding roles including chairperson and now deputy chair—the youngest person to have ever led the council. He plays a key part in organising community events, supports local causes such as the Festival of International Understanding and RDA fundraising, and volunteers at the Rotary Second-Hand Bookshop.

Cohan's maturity, dedication, and community spirit make him an outstanding role model and a worthy nominee for this award. Congratulations Cohan.

Adam Thain

Adam is a dedicated, community-minded young man whose quiet leadership and unwavering commitment have made a remarkable impact across Cowra and Woodstock. He volunteers countless hours with the Army Cadets, supporting overnight excursions, training programs, and leadership development for young people. His calm guidance helps shape confident, respectful future leaders.

Beyond cadets, Adam is a vital contributor to the Woodstock Pool, where he assists with maintenance, repairs, and welding to keep the facility safe and welcoming.

In his role as a Student Learning Support Officer at Cowra High School, Adam is highly respected for his compassion, patience, and ability to connect with students. His support fosters a more inclusive learning environment and makes a meaningful difference in students' daily lives.

Adam is an outstanding role model. He consistently demonstrates initiative, creativity, and a firm commitment to helping others. Congratulations Adam.

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Mary Apps

Mary Apps is a devoted and compassionate community member whose service spans more than three decades. For over 15 years, she has been a key member of the St Vincent de Paul Conference, serving as Treasurer, Secretary, and President, supporting countless individuals through difficult times.

For more than 35 years, Mary has also served the Catholic Church as a sacristan and Eucharistic minister, bringing communion, comfort, and companionship to the sick and elderly at Bilyara every Monday.

Mary leads ecumenical services, assists residents on outings, and supports parish life through her long involvement with St Raphael's. Since 2019, she has also contributed to the Cowra Ladies Probus Club, greeting members and helping at monthly meetings.

At 81 years of age, Mary continues to put others first. Her generosity, thoughtfulness, and unwavering dedication have brought comfort, dignity, and support to many, making her an invaluable member of the community.

Alan Barlow

Alan "Butch" Barlow has dedicated nearly 20 years to making our roads safer through his work with Butch's AI Driving School. With patience, professionalism, and a light-hearted approach, he has supported drivers of all ages and backgrounds, helping even the most nervous learners gain confidence behind the wheel.

Butch's friendly manner and genuine care turn every lesson into a positive experience, leaving a lasting impact on countless students and their families.

His long-standing commitment has significantly strengthened road safety within the community. By teaching safe, responsible driving habits, Butch has helped reduce risky behaviours and develop more aware, confident road users. The ripple effect of his dedication is clear—fewer incidents, stronger driving skills, and a community that values safety on its roads.

Butch's contribution over nearly two decades reflects extraordinary service, professionalism, and a genuine passion for helping others stay safe.

Jane Doolan

Jane Doolan is a passionate and tireless community supporter whose generosity and enthusiasm enrich countless local projects. As a former member of the NYE Beach Party Committee, she helped secure fundraising contributions, promoted the event, and volunteered on the day. She also contributed to the establishment of the Cowra Nature Based Adventure Playground on Bellevue Hill.

Jane is known for collecting and donating resources wherever they are needed—supporting Cowra Creates, Chances Community Project, the Dignity Bags initiative, and holiday programs at the library. Her motto, "Blessed to be a blessing," guides her constant giving.

She volunteers weekly at Mulyan Public School, reading with kindergarten students, and continues to support Carinya and the Beach Party with fundraising donations. Jane also sings in community choirs, performs in local theatre, and has volunteered for the Cowra Eisteddfod for five years.

Her longstanding involvement with Operation Christmas Child reflects her deep compassion and belief in spreading joy to others.

Jenny Friend

Jenny Friend is one of Cowra's quiet powerhouses of community service. A retired Special Needs Coordinator, Jenny now pours her time and heart into an extraordinary range of volunteer roles. She helps lead the Cowra Eisteddfod as a vice president, minutes secretary and Life Member, still coordinating speech and drama with passion. As president of Lachlan Legacy and secretary of the

Cowra contact group, she supports veterans' families across multiple towns and proudly helped stage Legacy's 100th Anniversary Torch Run.

Jenny also chairs Cowra Community Chest, serves as vice chair of Meals on Wheels, contributes to Red Cross emergency services, and continues to be a driving force in the Cowra Music and Dramatic Society.

Whether supporting seniors, organising arts programs, or helping residents through illness, loss or loneliness, Jenny shows up with humility, compassion and reliability. Cowra's 2025 Lions Citizen of the Year, she is the embodiment of service—making her community richer, stronger and more connected.

Christa Hundy

At the heart of Cowra Library's vibrant children's programs is dedicated volunteer Christa Hundy, a creative force who has transformed early literacy and family engagement across the community. Drawing on her own experience as a parent, Christa brings energy, imagination and an instinctive understanding of how young minds learn. From dress-ups and messy play to interactive storytelling and themed craft sessions, she creates experiences that spark joy and keep families coming back.

Christa not only designs and delivers weekly and school-holiday activities; she promotes them tirelessly across social media and community noticeboards, helping families discover a welcoming, free space to learn, play and connect. Her work with local community groups has strengthened partnerships and expanded the Library's reach, with standout outreach events at Brougham Park Family Fun Day, the Festival of International Understanding, Sakura Matsuri and the Cowra Show.

Thanks to Christa, Cowra Library is more than a library—it's a lively, inclusive hub for families of all ages and abilities.

Christine Murphy

Christine Murphy is a dedicated community leader who founded the Arthritis Support Group in Cowra in 2016. Driven by compassion, Christine has served as President ever since.

Under her guidance, the group has provided invaluable support to people living with arthritis, offering expert knowledge and practical advice through guest speakers, doctors, and medical professionals. Christine has organised sessions on pain management, relaxation therapy, meditation, tai chi, pool exercises, diet, and fall prevention.

Christine's unwavering commitment continues to improve lives, offering guidance, hope, and connection to those managing arthritis in Cowra.

The Inner Wheel Club of Cowra is another of Christine's passions, serving as an active member for many years and leading the group as President since 2024. Through her work she embraces the Inner Wheel vision of building a legacy of impact, compassion and friendship both within and beyond the Cowra community.

Danielle Spence

Danielle Spence is a passionate advocate for women in sport and the driving force behind the 'She Matters Movement'. Recognising the lack of appropriate change facilities for female athletes in Cowra, Danielle took action, collaborating with local stakeholders and personally fundraising to create safe, inclusive spaces for women in sport.

An active member of the Cowra Sport and Recreation Committee and the Management Committee of Cowra Early Childhood Services, Danielle also volunteers with Junior Rugby League, fostering pathways from junior to senior players and addressing barriers for female participation.

Her efforts culminated in the opening of new female change rooms at West Cowra Recreation Ground in April 2025, marking a milestone for inclusion.

Danielle's outstanding leadership, unwavering passion, and tireless persistence were nationally recognised when she received the 2025 NRL Community Award in the Women in League category. She accepted the award in front of tens of thousands of people during the pre-game formalities at the NRL Grand Final at Accor Stadium in Sydney, highlighting her remarkable impact on grassroots sport and her dedication to empowering women in rugby league.

Samantha Sculthorpe

Samantha Sculthorpe has made a life-saving difference in Cowra through tireless fundraising and community generosity, raising approximately \$30,000 to provide defibrillators across local schools, businesses, and public spaces. What began as a goal to fund three units grew to 10, all installed with the support of her husband, free of charge.

For over eight years, Sam has passionately shared her knowledge, training people of all ages in CPR and first aid, including children at Carinya Day Care, proving that no one is too young to learn.

Sam also organised a memorable fundraising event featuring Greg Page from The Wiggles, sharing his personal experience with cardiac arrest. Through ongoing training sessions and community education, Sam continues to save lives and empower Cowra with vital skills.

Cowra Community Group of the Year Awards Nominee 2026

Cowra Driver Reviver

The Cowra Driver Reviver is more than a roadside rest stop—it's a lifeline for travellers and a shining example of community collaboration. Staffed and coordinated by a dedicated committee and supported by local volunteers and groups such as the CWA and Lions Club, Cowra's Driver Reviver has remained open during public and school holidays, when many others cannot.

Providing free refreshments, snacks, and advice on staying alert, the service plays a crucial role in reducing fatigue-related accidents and improving road safety across Cowra and surrounding areas. But it's not just about safety—travellers consistently comment on the warmth and friendliness of the volunteers, who share a smile, a chat, and insights about the history and attractions of Cowra, leaving visitors with a lasting positive impression.

Through perseverance, coordination, and a strong sense of community, Cowra Driver Reviver continues to protect lives and showcase the very best of what a connected, caring town can achieve.

Dr Warren Whiley Memorial Award for Arts and Culture

Graham Aphorpe

Graham Aphorpe is a pillar of Cowra's arts, culture, and community life. Since arriving in Cowra in the late 1980s, Graham has dedicated over 35 years to preserving and sharing the Shire's rich

history, particularly its World War II heritage. His meticulous research and storytelling have brought Cowra's POW Camp, the Breakout, and the experiences of Indonesian internees to life through books, exhibitions, heritage trails, public talks, and innovative interpretive projects, including the holographic display at the Cowra Visitor Information Centre, the replica guard tower at the POW Camp, and the 75th anniversary memorial sculpture.

Beyond historical preservation, Graham has served as Chair for multiple POW Camp commemorations and as Secretary of the Cowra Breakout Association since 2003, guiding it from a veterans' group to a community-focused organisation promoting education, remembrance, and reconciliation. His contributions have been recognised internationally, including by Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2024 for fostering mutual understanding.

Graham's generosity extends across Cowra through St Raphael's Catholic Church, the Cowra Pistol Club, the Lions Club, and the Cowra Musical and Dramatic Society. His unwavering commitment, leadership, and creativity have enriched Cowra's cultural identity and community life, making him a deserving nominee for the Dr Warren Whiley Memorial Award.