

MEDIA RELEASE

21 May 2026

Celebrating volunteers in the City of Melton

Volunteers from across the City of Melton were recognised this week at a special event hosted by Melton City Council, celebrating their generous contributions to the community.

Winners of the 2026 City of Melton Community Volunteer Achievement Awards were also announced at the event which coincided with this year's National Volunteer Week.

The awards recognise the outstanding efforts of community members who dedicate their time to making a positive and lasting impact, enhancing the lives of individuals and strengthening the community.

This year's award winners included:

- **Citizen of the Year: Rohit Kumar**

For recognition of ongoing community leadership and involvement.

Since 2016, Rohit has shown extraordinary leadership in building a more connected, inclusive and supportive community for multicultural families, seniors, people with disability and vulnerable residents across the City of Melton. Through founding and leading multiple award-winning organisations: the Australian Integrated Fijian Association of Victoria, Australian Integrated Care Services and Australian Integrated Marketing and Merchandise Services, he has delivered countless free programs, cultural celebrations and inclusive events that bring people together and create a true sense of belonging.

- **Young Citizen of the Year: Alanis Furtado**

For community leadership by people under the age of 25.

Alanis has shown exceptional commitment to ensuring young voices are heard through the City of Melton Youth Advisory Committee and community initiatives focused on inclusion, wellbeing and opportunity. She has advocated on issues including mental health, youth violence, homelessness and financial literacy, while fostering meaningful conversations through radio, podcasts and forums. She also mentors primary students through the Melton Reading Club and supports youth empowerment by coordinating accessible workshops focused on inclusive learning supports.

- **Intercultural Engagement Leader of the Year: Amit Menghani**

For leadership that celebrates our diverse community.

Through volunteer service with the CFA, SES, Scouts Australia, and Make-A-Wish Australia, Amit has worked tirelessly to encourage people from culturally diverse backgrounds to participate fully in community life. Drawing on his migrant experience, he has helped newly arrived families feel welcome and connected. His impact has been meaningful and far-reaching including supporting inclusive youth programs, community safety initiatives and culturally respectful support for families. He also co-founded the Aintree Children's Academy to nurture creativity and belonging among children and young people in our community.

MEDIA RELEASE

- **Disability Access and Inclusion Leader of the Year: Michelle Hobbs**

For commitment to improving the life of people living with disability.

Michelle leads with compassion and heart, creating safe, welcoming, and empowering environments where people feel valued, included and supported to thrive. Through her involvement in inclusive programs such as Specialist Hoops Victoria, she has helped participants build confidence, resilience and meaningful social connection. Michelle's long-standing commitment to volunteering across community support programs and local organisations reflects a deep and selfless dedication to helping others.

- **Gender Equity Leader of the Year: Tom Markowski**

For community leadership, promotion of gender equality and commitment to advancing the status of women and people of all genders.

Tom's vision, persistence and passion have transformed opportunities for women and girls at Spring Hills Football Club. He championed the club's first all-girls team and led a strategic plan to establish a senior women's side. For eight years, he has coached senior and junior NPL teams, helping position the club as a leader in female participation in Melbourne's west while creating strong pathways for girls of all ages to participate, compete and thrive in local community sports.

Melton City Council congratulates all award winners and nominees for their exceptional contributions, and thanks all volunteers for their positive contribution to our community.

Quotes attributable to City of Melton Mayor Cr Lara Carli:

"National Volunteer Week is an opportunity to recognise and thank the incredible volunteers who support Council programs and services right across our community."

"Volunteering creates friendships, strengthens communities and builds a sense of belonging. It helps people feel connected, supported and valued, and those things are more important than ever in a growing and diverse community like ours."

"I'd like to congratulate the winners of this year's City of Melton Community Volunteer Achievement Awards and all those who were nominated. Your commitment and generosity do not go unnoticed."

"Thank you to all volunteers in our community for your commitment to helping others and the joy, care and connection you bring to the City of Melton."

ENDS

Melton City Council media enquiries (not for publication): Catherine Chapman– Media and Communications Advisor on 0427 595 552.