

CASSOWARY COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL AUSTRALIA DAY AWARD WINNERS 2026

Citizen of the Year Award – Ken English

Ken English

Mr Ken English has been nominated because of his exceptional voluntary leadership, personal sacrifice, and sustained commitment to community safety in Cardwell, where he has been instrumental in restoring and operating the Cardwell Coast Guard Flotilla as a vital emergency service.

His achievements include:

- serving as Commander of the Cardwell Coast Guard
- leading the recovery of the flotilla from closure to becoming a fully functioning and respected unit
- personally, contributing thousands of volunteer hours to vessel maintenance, base and yard upkeep, saving the organisation tens of thousands of dollars in repair and servicing costs
- coordinating marine rescues, training runs, crew rostering, and radio operations, including more than 1,000 volunteer hours on radio watch
- organising and leading fundraising activities such as sausage sizzles and community markets, and actively recruiting volunteers to support these efforts
- mentoring members into leadership roles, including developing the current Deputy Commander
- alongside his wife Jackie, sacrificing personal time, holidays, and weekends to ensure the flotilla remains operational.

Through his selfless service, hands-on leadership, and unwavering dedication to saving lives and assisting vessels in distress, Ken English has made a profound and lasting contribution to the welfare and wellbeing of the Cardwell and wider boating community.

Young Citizen of the Year Award (Under 25) – Caleb Wodzislawski

Caleb Wodzislawski

Caleb has been an active and dedicated member of the Innisfail community for the past three years, generously giving his time to a variety of local organisations and initiatives.

He has volunteered at Riverfest, contributing long days to set-up, assist patrons, support fellow volunteers, and pack down after the event. Caleb has also supported community members by pressure washing properties and removing unwanted items, helping maintain a clean and welcoming environment.

As a member of the Cassowary Coast Regional Council Youth Advisory Committee, he contributes his voice and ideas to local decision-making. Through his consistent volunteer efforts, leadership, and willingness to assist others, Caleb has made a meaningful and positive impact on the social and civic life of the Innisfail community.

Lifetime Contribution Award – Margaret Dineen

Margaret Dineen

Margaret Dineen has been a dedicated and highly respected contributor to the Kurrimine Beach community for over two decades.

She has played a pivotal role in local organisations, including nearly 20 years with the Kurrimine Beach Fishing Club, serving over ten years as Secretary, where her leadership and organisational skills have supported the club's ongoing success.

Margaret has also been actively involved in the Kurrimine Classic, contributing to one of the region's major annual events and supporting local tourism and community engagement. Beyond sporting events, she volunteers extensively, participating in Clean Up Australia Day, supporting the Kurrimine Beach Progress Association, and assisting at local schools attended by her

grandchildren.

Her commitment to attending community meetings and contributing to initiatives strengthens the social fabric of Kurrimine Beach. Margaret's generosity, reliability, and willingness to support a wide range of community activities exemplify the values of civic pride, collaboration, and community wellbeing, making her an outstanding nominee for recognition through the Australia Day Awards.

Community Event/ Project of the Year – Tully Mill 100 Celebration

Tully Mill 100 Celebration

Tully Mill 100 Celebration has been nominated for its significant contribution to the social, cultural, and economic life of the Tully community.

The 2025 centenary commemorated 100 years of the Tully Sugar Mill, recognising its historical importance in the establishment and prosperity of the town. The celebrations included free community activities such as Mill tours, steam loco rides, cemetery tours, art and historical displays, a car show, and a centenary morning tea, as well as paid events including a gala dinner attended by over 500 guests and dignitaries.

The event engaged a broad cross-section of the community, including mill workers, farmers, local businesses, artists, and residents of diverse cultural backgrounds, fostering connection, pride, and belonging. Volunteers from community groups, the Hospital Foundation, the Men's Shed, Tully Arts and Cultural Group, and other local organisations played a central role in planning and delivering activities, including the preparation of exhibits, supervision of displays, and operation of events, enabling knowledge sharing and community empowerment.

The centenary reflected the Tully community's values of collaboration, inclusivity, and mutual support, with generosity evident in contributions, prizes, and in-kind support from local businesses. Beyond cultural and social benefits, the celebrations contributed to wellbeing by providing engaging experiences, recognising local heritage, and promoting pride in community identity. The festival also supported financial sustainability, generating economic activity for local businesses and raising funds for the Tully Hospital Foundation, while national media coverage highlighted the region's vibrancy and strengthened the town's profile within and beyond the Cassowary Coast.

Service to Sports Award – Shayne Cini

Shayne Cini

Shayne Cini has been nominated for his significant voluntary contribution to sport and the community as President of the Etty Bay Surf Life Saving Club, where he leads by example and ensures every member feels valued as part of the surf lifesaving family.

Since joining the club, Shayne has completed more than 925 patrol hours, including 40 hours this season alone, and is a member of the 180+ Masters Boat Crew that achieved Bronze at the State ARSL competition.

As Sweep, Coach and Trainer for the Etty Bay SLSC female boat crew, he dedicates countless hours on the river and at the beach building skills, confidence and teamwork. Shayne coordinates water safety for club carnivals, the USM Ironman event at Palm Cove and weekly Nipper training and is also part of the Emergency Response Crew working with SES, Police and Council during regional weather events.

He is the driving force behind club fundraising at the Agricultural Show, Riverfest and Innisfail Christmas Party, and currently plays a key behind-the-scenes role coordinating the redevelopment of the clubhouse as liaison officer and chief organiser.

All of this is undertaken voluntarily while running his own banana farm and supporting his family, making Shayne an outstanding role model whose dedication helps keep Etty Bay beaches safe and strengthens the wider Cassowary Coast community.

Young Sports Person – Mackenzie Law

Mackenzie Law

Mackenzie Law has had an outstanding and highly successful year in sport, representing the Cassowary Coast, Peninsula, and North Queensland across multiple disciplines and competitions. Her versatility, commitment, and dedication enabled her to compete consistently at a high level throughout 2025.

Mackenzie's representative achievements include selection in Cassowary Coast Region Track & Field, Rugby League, and Softball, as well as Peninsula Softball and Track & Field teams. She earned a bronze medal at the Queensland Representative School Sports State Championships, highlighting her strong performance at state level. A particular highlight was qualifying for the 2025 Chemist Warehouse Australian All Schools Championships, where she competed nationally in Hammer, Javelin, and Discus as part of the Athletics North Queensland team.

Competing on the national stage demonstrated her resilience, adaptability, and determination against Australia's top young athletes. Looking ahead, Mackenzie aims to compete at the 2026 Australian Junior Championships and to requalify for both Peninsula Track & Field and the Athletics North Queensland teams for the national championships in Perth.

Beyond her results, Mackenzie exemplifies the values of hard work, perseverance, and sportsmanship, serving as a positive role model for her peers. Her achievements reflect a strong work ethic, passion for sport, and a promising future, making her a highly deserving nominee for recognition as a Young Sports Person.

Arts and Culture Award – Tales From Our Early Pioneers Bus Trip

Tales From Our Early Pioneers Bus Trip

The Tales From Our Early Pioneers Bus Trip was held on 16 August 2025 to commemorate 140 years of European settlement in the Mission Beach area, while also acknowledging First Nations history and heritage.

Organised by the Mission Beach Historical Society, the event provided an accessible and engaging way for residents and visitors of all ages to explore the local area's historical sites, including the graves of early settlers, Fenby's Gap, the Old Mission Site display, the Mija Memorial, and the grave of WWI veteran Sydney Harris. Volunteers, including long-term residents and Historical Society members, delivered commentary, distributed photos, and shared additional stories, while Deirdre Holmes, then Vice President, provided in-transit narration.

The event encouraged intergenerational engagement and discussion at each stop, fostering knowledge sharing and connection within the community. By highlighting the challenges and contributions of early settlers such as the Banfields, Cuttens, Reids, Webbs, and Fenby, and explaining the history of the Hull River Aboriginal Settlement, the bus trip provided context for Mission Beach's development and cultural heritage.

While not intended as a revenue-generating activity, the event enhanced community wellbeing by creating a shared learning experience, celebrating local identity, and strengthening pride in the area's history. Participants left with a deeper understanding of the region's past, its pioneers, and the resilience of its communities, contributing to the social cohesion and cultural awareness of Mission Beach.



Excellence and Innovation Award - Dr Adele Pile - Youth Reef Protection Initiative - Giringun Aboriginal Corporation, Manduburra

Dr Adele Pile

Dr Adele Pile has been nominated for her outstanding and innovative contribution to STEM education in the Cassowary Coast through the establishment of the Youth Reef Protection Initiative in 2024, the only educational outreach program in Australia providing primary and secondary First Nations students with practical STEM skills to monitor their sea country.

Developed in partnership with Giringun Aboriginal Corporation and Mandubarra Aboriginal Land and Sea Inc, and aligned with the Reef Authority's Tourism Reef Protection Initiative, Dr Pile leads weekly scientific monitoring of Bedarra and Kent Islands, collecting and uploading data on coral health, fish populations and reef threats to the Eye on the Reef portal to inform national reporting on the Great Barrier Reef.

Each Saturday, weather permitting, Dr Pile mentors small groups of young people and supervisors in conducting surveys, photo transects and fish counts, giving many their first experience snorkelling and engaging directly with marine science.

To date, more than 50 young First Nations participants and 18 parents have taken part in hands-on site stewardship. Through this initiative, Dr Pile not only builds STEM capability but also reconnects young people with their sea country, strengthening cultural identity, wellbeing and resilience while inspiring future pathways in science and environmental management.

Sports Person the Year – Kodi Worth

Kodi Worth

Kodi Worth has been nominated for his outstanding achievement in sport and his role as a positive mentor within the athletics community. Over the past 12 months, Kodi has demonstrated exceptional progression and consistency in javelin across club, state, national, and international levels.

Highlights include winning the U18 javelin title at the 2024 North Queensland Championships with a throw of 56.72m, placing second in the Open division, earning silver at the Queensland School Sport State Championships, and finishing fifth at the Australian All Schools Championships with a throw of 55.77m.

In 2025, Kodi set two new U20 records at the Coral Coast Carnival (57.47m) and Twilight Carnival (53.70m), won the U20 title at the North Queensland Championships, and placed third in the Open category, establishing himself as one of the region's most promising emerging throwers. Kodi's commitment extends beyond personal performance; he regularly mentors younger athletes at the Cairns Athletics Club, offering guidance, encouragement, and technical support, and has earned respect as a role model for his sportsmanship, leadership, and teamwork.

Balancing his athletic pursuits with an electrical apprenticeship, Kodi consistently demonstrates dedication, resilience, and ambition. His achievements and influence within the regional athletics community exemplify the values of leadership, perseverance, and positive role modelling, making him a deserving candidate for recognition as a young sports person.

Achievement Award – Glenda Sabadina, Tamara Gillard, Yvonne Moule, Raymond Evans and Sheryl Shaw

Glenda Sabadina

Glenda Sabadina has been nominated for her significant voluntary contribution to the community through her dedicated service at the Tully Nursing Home.

For the past 10 years, she has regularly assisted with activities for residents, providing support and companionship with enthusiasm and care.



Her commitment is entirely voluntary and reflects a consistent effort to enhance the wellbeing and quality of life of the nursing home community, going beyond the normal expectations of any paid role.

Tamara Gillard

Tamara Gillard has been nominated for her significant voluntary contribution to the arts and youth development in the Cassowary Coast. Over the past four to five years, she has actively supported the Innisfail Young Performers Competition Association as Secretary and Treasurer, co-designing competition programs and assisting visiting adjudicators to ensure the event runs smoothly.

Tamara also serves as Secretary of the Innisfail Community Band, helping to recruit new members, contribute to projects, and perform at community events. Beyond the arts, she volunteers as Secretary of the Innisfail State College P&C Association and participates in the local Youth Consultative Committee, supporting youth initiatives including the establishment of the University Centre to improve access to tertiary education.

All of her contributions are undertaken voluntarily and go well beyond her role as a teacher, including after-hours involvement with student music programs and school band rehearsals.

Yvonne Moule

Yvonne Moule has been nominated for her long-standing voluntary contribution to the Cassowary Coast community.

She has dedicated countless hours supporting school tuckshops at Innisfail State High School and Innisfail State College and has volunteered for decades coaching and mentoring students in softball, inspiring generations of young players through her patience, encouragement, and passion for the game.

Yvonne is also a life member of the Mundoo P&C and actively participates in Innisfail State College P&C meetings, supporting initiatives that promote student growth and success. All of her contributions are undertaken voluntarily and reflect a quiet, steadfast commitment to the wellbeing and development of young people in the region.

Raymond Evans

Raymond Evans has been nominated for his outstanding achievement, leadership and selfless commitment to the Tully community over more than 23 years of voluntary service. As a long-standing member of the Chamber of Commerce and a trusted local chemist, Raymond has contributed to virtually every major community event and initiative, including Read to Me Day, the 2019 World Rafting Championships and the Tully 100-Year Celebrations, where he applied his creativity, organisational skills and tireless energy to planning, costume and merchandise design, presentations and coordination. He also runs a weekly dance group, teaches debutantes, supports church and school festivals, and provides behind-the-scenes assistance whenever a need arises. Widely regarded as approachable and generous, Raymond inspires others through his consistent actions, encouraging volunteering, creativity and community pride. His business operates as a community hub, supporting fundraising and providing practical assistance, including willingly signing statutory documents and supporting grant applications for local organisations. These contributions are given freely and extend well beyond the normal expectations of his paid role, reflecting more than two decades of dedication to promoting the social, cultural and emotional wellbeing of the Tully community.

Sheryl Shaw

Sheryl Shaw has been nominated for her longstanding service to the Mission Beach community. Sheryl Shaw has dedicated over 20 years to administration and reception at Mission Beach State School. She supports students and families by providing food, uniforms, and school supplies, and ensures all visitors are welcomed and respected. Sheryl volunteers her time for community events such as cent sales, sausage sizzles, markets, pie drives, and Australia's Biggest Morning Tea, and also assists local sporting clubs. She has helped community members attend medical appointments and organised support for individuals with disabilities in multi-sport competitions. Her ongoing commitment reflects a strong dedication to the wellbeing of students, families, and the wider Mission Beach community.

Young Arts and Culture Award – Oscar Van Haaren

Oscar Van Haaren

Oscar Van Haaren has been nominated for his outstanding voluntary contribution to the cultural life of the Cassowary Coast community over the past 12 months.

Oscar has generously donated his time to perform the Last Post at the RSL Dawn Service, Vietnam Veterans Day Parade and Remembrance Day services, and has travelled to local schools to perform at their ANZAC commemorations, inspiring younger students to pursue music and arts pathways.

He has been selected for a range of extension music programs in Cairns and Townsville and has performed in two school musicals at Innisfail State College, with invitations to continue in future productions. Beyond music, Oscar is an active member of the Innisfail Woodworkers Guild, where he volunteers alongside senior members and demonstrates woodturning at community displays, helping to preserve traditional craft skills.

An academically high-achieving student, Oscar balances his studies with these community commitments entirely on a voluntary basis, often making up missed schoolwork in his own time. His aspiration to join the Australian Army Band further reflects his dedication to service through the arts. Oscar's passion, generosity and commitment encourage, enrich and inspire others, making him a worthy recipient of this award.

Sustainable Environment Award - GBR Safaris - Girringun Aboriginal Corporation

GBR Safaris - Girringun Aboriginal Corporation

GBR Safaris, Girringun Aboriginal Corporation, and Mandubarra Aboriginal Land and Sea Incorporated are nominated for their outstanding voluntary contribution to maintaining a sustainable local environment.

Following the February 2025 Tropical Low and resulting unprecedented flooding, the organisations undertook rapid action to assess impacts on nearshore marine ecosystems, which had not been previously documented in real time.

Initial surveys by GBR Safaris and Girringun revealed extensive mortality on the landward side of Brook Islands and across Bedarra Island to a depth of 4m. The organisations coordinated with Reef Authority and other stakeholders to develop a comprehensive survey protocol, pooling resources, boats, and personnel to document the damage.

Between 3–5 April 2025, over 1,000 photographs were collected and uploaded to the Eye on the Reef national database, providing the first detailed record of flood impacts in the region to inform recovery efforts.

These actions were undertaken voluntarily and outside the scope of their funded programs, demonstrating a strong commitment to environmental stewardship, advocacy, and innovation. Through their dedication, GBR Safaris, Girringun, and Mandubarra have contributed essential data, supported scientific understanding, and strengthened collaborative approaches to protecting the Great Barrier Reef and local marine habitats, exemplifying leadership and care for country in the Cassowary Coast region.

Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) in Education Award – Callum Saunders

Callum Saunders

Callum Saunders has been nominated for his outstanding and innovative contribution to STEM education in the Cassowary Coast region as a high-achieving student at Innisfail State College who consistently demonstrates excellence across mathematics, science and practical engineering pathways.

Identified early for accelerated Mathematics and extension Science, Callum completed Mathematical Methods in Year 11 with a strong result and has achieved outstanding internal results in Physics, Chemistry and Specialist Mathematics in Year 12. His STEM capability extends beyond



the classroom, exemplified by completing a Certificate II in Furniture Making in Year 10, where his handcrafted coffee table won first place for craftsmanship at the DATTA Cairns Regional Awards and Junior Champion at the Innisfail Show.

Callum further pursued engineering through the JCU Engineering Link Program in 2023 and the competitive Engineering Futures Residential Program in 2024, demonstrating initiative and commitment to extending his learning beyond school. He has been granted early entry into a Bachelor of Engineering at CQU Cairns for 2026, choosing to remain in the region with the aspiration of giving back to his local community. Callum's academic excellence, practical innovation and proactive engagement with tertiary STEM opportunities make him a deserving nominee who inspires others to pursue STEM pathways.

Community Group Award – Cardwell RSL Sub Branch

Cardwell RSL Sub Branch

The Cardwell RSL Club has been nominated for its exceptional contribution to the Cassowary Coast community, promoting social, cultural, and economic wellbeing.

The Club upholds RSL Australia's charter through respectful ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day ceremonies, preserving local heritage and fostering community pride. Beyond commemorative events, it supports schools, local organisations, and community initiatives—including the Aliens Festival, Cardwell Lions Club, and Coast Guard—with donations exceeding \$20,000 in 2025.

Its wheelchair-accessible clubhouse provides a welcoming space for weekly activities such as Bingo, Cards and Mahjong, the Seaside Quilters, and the Crafts Group, while the popular Sunday Barbecue and lunch offers affordable meals for residents and visitors, encouraging connection across generations.

Through volunteer support, inclusive programs, and consistent engagement, the Cardwell RSL strengthens community cohesion, facilitates participation, and enhances the vibrancy and resilience of Cardwell and the wider Cassowary Coast, making it a highly deserving nominee for Community Group of the Year.