



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

2025 ST JOHN AMBULANCE VICTORIA AWARDS CEREMONY

Saturday 15 November 2025

Acknowledgments

Sheena Watt MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Emergency Services, *representing the Minister for Emergency Services*

Georgie Crozier MP, Shadow Minister for Health

Steve McGhie MP, Member for Melton

Cameron Oxley, Chancellor of the Australian Priory of the Order of St John

Mark Engel, Chairman, St John Ambulance Victoria and **Leh-Anne Engel**

Gordon Botwright, Chief Executive Officer, St John Ambulance Victoria

Tim Wiebusch ESM, Emergency Management Commissioner, Emergency Management Victoria

Distinguished Guests

I begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the lands on which this House stands – the Wurundjeri and Bunurong people – and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.

It's a pleasure to represent Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC, Governor of Victoria, this morning for the Order of St John Ambulance Victoria Awards.

The Ballroom that we meet in today is almost a century and a half old.

Built in the wake of the Gold Rush, the grandeur of the design reflected not only the newfound wealth of that era, but also the desire to create a space befitting of celebrating the achievements of Victoria and its citizens.

Today, we are honouring the service of members of an organisation almost as old as the building itself.

The contributions of those who have been recognised today form part of the rich story of St John Ambulance in Victoria, stretching back over 140 years.

However, these ceremonies can only ever show us a snapshot of that story.

Each award often represents years of dedicated service, or a display of unwavering commitment under very challenging circumstances.

They also fail to fully capture the extent of all the indirect benefits that extend from these efforts.

Like a ripple in a pond, every act of service reaches far beyond that moment in time.

For every person provided with First Aid training, there are countless others who may potentially benefit from their skills.

For every defibrillator installed in a neighbourhood, there is untold peace of mind with that community.

And for every person provided with assistance, their day is made immeasurably better – or, in some cases, they are able to continue living long and active lives as a result.

At events right across our State – including often here at Government House – St John volunteers are a familiar and comforting presence.

And while we always hope to avoid accidents and emergencies, we are ever grateful for the compassion and expertise of these volunteers as they arise.

Just last month, at the Melbourne Marathon, St John volunteers treated as many patients as a major hospital sees in a full day.

Across a year, the impact of these kinds of contributions on the wider community is immeasurable.

No two recipients today share the same story, but collectively they help paint the picture of the breadth of work of this organisation.

Whether you're putting on your 'greenies' to work at events or in patient transport...

...or donning a black polo to teach first aid classes...

...or wearing red as you undertake vital community engagement in schools...

Your service may look different, but what you have in common is that you have found your calling under the banner of 'For the Service of Humanity' – just as many generations before you.

As one youth member summarised:

"St John is more than first aid; it's a family."

"It's where you learn, grow, help others, and find your place."

I'm sure that sentiment rings true for many of you here today.

Though it is not something you do for accolades, I wish to congratulate everyone who has been acknowledged in this ceremony.

Through your many contributions, in all their forms, you have helped make Victoria a stronger and safer place for all those who call it home.

And you should be just as proud of that fact as you are of the award you've received today.

My fervent hope is that in Australia, and Victoria in particular, there is never a shortage of volunteers willing and able to stand up to serve as members of the St John Ambulance.

By your example of dedication, service, and leadership, I am reassured we are in good hands.

I now invite Sheena Watt to address us.