

Media Release

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Wakefield Winners of the 2017 Australia Day Awards Announced

Outstanding community member Diane Spence has been declared as Wakefield Regional Council's Citizen of the Year, and local community initiative 'Friday Food Drop' has been awarded as the region's Event of the Year.

Selfless, inspirational and kind describes 2017 Citizen of the Year, Diane Spence, a local resident of Wakefield Regional Council.

Di was recognised by Council for her long-standing experience as Coordinator for the Red Cross organisation since 1998, her supportive guidance during and following the Pinery Bushfire, her influence within the musical community and her efforts in encouraging and mentoring youth.

Mayor Rodney Reid stated, "Di is a well-respected member of the Balaklava community who lives for an obvious purpose, and that is to help people in need."

On the devastating day of the Pinery Bushfire, Di retracted her resignation with Red Cross to lead the way in finding refuge for affected residents. She continued to work tirelessly throughout the ordeal and followed up with counselling individuals and families to help ease their circumstances. Furthermore Di organised Red Cross outreach support for people affected from floods in Halbury, Stockport and Clare.

Another creditable attribute for Di is her musical achievements. To name a few; Di was a key instigator in forming the Balaklava Eisteddfod Society in 1996 which still runs successfully to this day. She contributed 15 years of her livelihood teaching music at Balaklava High school as an astute, observant mentor for students and used the opportunity to encourage youth to be confident with their abilities.

Di conducted several local choirs including a group of young women in an a cappella choir, took on the role as Musical Director of many community arts productions, and is a member of the local Uniting Church who help organise the successful Balaklava Christmas Carol program.

Council's Event of the Year, Friday Food Drop, is an initiative by Balaklava Church of Christ and was selected for obvious reasons. The group of volunteers organise surplus food from supermarkets in Adelaide to be transported to Balaklava and handed to near 50 families in need. It is a community event worthy of acknowledgement.

Jason Kuchel, Wakefield Regional CEO said, "It is exceptional to see such resourcefulness to help disadvantaged families. This clearly demonstrates the considerate nature embedded within our community."

Not only do the families benefit with food, they benefit by developing friendships with the volunteers, adding to the quality of their lives. The initiative has proven to be so successful and beneficial, surrounding townships have become involved.

Wakefield Regional Council believes that one of the key elements in celebrating Australia Day is to recognise those who contribute sacrificially for the benefit of our community.

Further Information:

Interviews:

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