

## Media Release

26 January 2026

# Welcoming new citizens and celebrating community in Alice Springs

New Australians and local residents who contribute to the life of Alice Springs were recognised today during Australia Day ceremonies held in the town centre.

The morning began with the return of the popular Fun Run, with locals running, walking and rolling around the iconic Todd River. The event brought people together for a shared experience that reflected connection, participation and community pride.

Following the Fun Run, Alice Springs officially welcomed 71 adults and 14 children from India, Sudan, Bangladesh, Philippines, Liberia, United States, Thailand, Taiwan, New Zealand, Italy, Nepal, Germany, France, Papua New Guinea, Kenya, China, Mexico, Zimbabwe, Indonesia, South Sudan, Kuwait, Ireland, Zambia, South Africa, Pakistan, Switzerland, Malaysia, Kazakhstan, and Egypt. The ceremony recognised the diversity and richness that new citizens bring to the community.

The celebrations continued with the presentation of the Centralian Awards, recognising individuals and organisations who have made outstanding contributions to community life in Central Australia.

### 2026 Centralian Awards recipients:

- **Centralian Citizen of the Year:** Wendy Corkill
- **Young Citizen of the Year:** Ben Russell
- **Senior Citizen of the Year:** Elaine Kngwarraye Peckham
- **Community Event of the Year:** Alice Springs Beanie Festival 2025

Alice Springs Town Council recognises the importance of acknowledging contribution, service and connection within the community. Council acknowledges all award recipients and nominees for the positive impact they have made and continues to support initiatives that strengthen community life in Central Australia.

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### 2026 Centralian Citizen of the Year Awards – Recipients’ Biographies

#### **Centralian Citizen of the Year –Wendy Corkill**

Wendy Corkill has dedicated her life to improving people’s health and wellbeing in Central Australia.

As a cardiac nurse, Wendy has played a key role in building heart health services across the region, including outreach programs that support remote communities. In 2013, Wendy helped establish CT Cardiac Angiography in Alice Springs, bringing advanced heart testing to the in the absence of a resident cardiologist.

Wendy has shared her knowledge and expertise through research, nursing textbooks, conferences, and volunteer work overseas. She is the longest-serving member of the Central Australian Research Ethics Committee.

Known for her compassion, clear communication, and deep commitment to her patients and community, Wendy continues to give generously to community events and initiatives, creating a lasting positive impact across Central Australia.

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### Young Centralian Citizen of the Year – Ben Russell

Ben has been volunteering at the Alice Springs Public Library for over ten years. Each week, he comes in with warmth, friendliness, and enthusiasm, assisting with a wide range of tasks that help the library serve the community.

Ben takes great pride in his work, always carrying out his duties to the best of his ability. His dedication and positivity lift the spirits of the entire team. He never lets obstacles stand in his way and consistently demonstrates a strong sense of community spirit.

A valued and respected member of the Library team, Ben is someone the Library staff genuinely look forward to welcoming every Friday.

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### Centralian Senior Citizen of the Year – Elaine Kngwarraye Peckham

Elaine Kngwarraye Peckham is a senior Central Arrernte Custodian of the land of Alice Springs/Mparntwe and surrounding areas.

Elaine has dedicated her life to human rights, justice and wellbeing, particularly of Aboriginal People.

Elaine established the Central Australian Aboriginal Strong Womens Alliance (CAASWA), empowering Aboriginal women to have a voice in decisions and policies that affect their lives and future generations.

She has also co-founded Elder's groups to empower Aboriginal voices, protect culture, and support young people to stay connected to Country.

Elaine has served on numerous boards and works closely with local organisations to educate, advocate and improve intercultural understanding.

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### Community Event of the Year – Alice Springs Beanie Festival 2025

The Alice Springs Beanie Festival is a much-loved event that attracts interstate and international visitors, showcasing Alice Springs on both the national and international stage.

In 2025, the Alice Springs Beanie Festival celebrated its 29th year. 7000 beanies were entered from around the world, and 6000 visitors attended, making it the biggest festival to date.

The festival included workshops held before the main event in remote communities, local schools and across Alice Springs. Aboriginal women shared their skills, stories, language, and culture with participants and visitors.

The Alice Springs Beanie Festival was made possible by the efforts of 140 volunteers, along with sponsorship from many local businesses. This support highlights the strong connections within the Alice Springs community.

**ENDS**

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