



Toodyay Agricultural Society (Inc)

founded 1853

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2025 WA Volunteer of the Year Awards

The Toodyay Agricultural Society (TAS) recently recommended long-time, now-retired Committee member, Alison Wroth, for Lifetime Contribution to Volunteering recognition in this year's WA Volunteer of the Year Awards.

This award honours those who have dedicated over 20 years to volunteering and made a lasting impact on the WA community. While we weren't fortunate enough to secure a nomination this time, we'd like to take a moment to congratulate the deserving nominees: Brother Olly Pickett AM from Wheelchairs for Kids (Perth), Colin Longworth from Living Proud (Bayswater), and Nicole Kelly from the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (Tom Price). Their dedication is truly inspiring.

We'd like to take this opportunity to share some of the insights we gathered while researching Alison's involvement, so the community can get a real sense of the positive impact she's had over the years and the difference she's made in our local area.

Alison Wroth, née Cook, has been a dedicated and active TAS member for an impressive 31 years, having joined the Committee in 1994. Over the years, Alison has taken on a range of key roles, including two terms as President (2012-2014 and 2020-2022), and serving as Chief Steward for 18 years. Her contributions have also extended to Publicity and Promotions, Entertainment, and being part of the Central Group, where she was actively involved in the annual RASWA Central Group Displays. As the Rural Ambassador Coordinator, Alison played an integral role in supporting the Society's outreach and engagement. Alison was also the last recipient of the Toodyay Miss Showgirl title in 1992 and became a Life Member in 2016, a testament to her dedication and passion for the Society's success.

In Alison's words *"I have always helped at the Show since I was in Primary School as various family members; my Grandfather to my Mum were on the organising Committee. I have wonderful memories of the Busy Bees, setting up the Show, back in the years when the Committee needed no "outside" assistance as we do now. All manual work was done by the Committee to set up for the big day. My Mum, Lynn Cook, was Chief Steward or Hall Steward for many years, before the day of the online Showday Programme of course. Along with many other Section Stewards, when I was a teenager, I would help her prepare prize cards, transcribe entries from the Entry forms onto those historic red Section Steward Notebooks at home and I remember I came in handy when it came to cleaning the Lee Steere Exhibition Hall and the old Tearooms next door (now demolished)".*

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KEY CONTRIBUTIONS & ACHIEVEMENTS

- 150th and 160th Anniversary celebrations and Shows, including the "Jazz Ball" and "Spring Ball" events
- 170th Anniversary celebrations, unfortunately not including the planned "Dance through the Decades"
- Renovation of the Terrace Bar in 2021
- Planning of the 170th Toodyay Show Anniversary Quilt
- Chief Steward role: Initiated Exhibitors Workshops to encourage community participation, Judges Workshops to improve presentation and preparation of entries
- Developed the TAS Tee Shirt and Jacket
- Introduced the Rusty Roll and "Guess the Weight of the Steer" competitions, initially sponsored by Alison's family, to engage visitors and encourage participation. The Rusty Roll competition is now also held as a Facebook contest.
- Created the "Man Cake" class in the Cooking Section of the Schedule with the slogan "Size does not matter," which has become a popular attraction for local men
- Spearheaded the development of the TAS website in 2014, a vital tool for promoting the Show and improving online engagement
- Managed maintenance of the Sheep Pavilion, painting of the Lee Steere Extension / benches, and renovation of the Poultry & Pigeon Shed in 2014 during her presidency
- Coordinated the Rural Ambassador competition, helping local youth connect with others from similar rural backgrounds and supporting their ambitions. Managed the competition between Northam, York, Beverley, and Toodyay Ag Societies, organizing judges, venues, catering, and prizes
- Advocated for the continuation of the competition, which is at risk of losing support from other societies
- Participated in the planning and fundraising for the Youth Hall, one of the Society's key buildings, which involved significant community effort and volunteer support

IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY & ORGANISATION

Alison's passion for and expertise in the field of agriculture doesn't just aid the Society in their annual show organising, it inspires a whole community (most of whom she knows as a true country girl, born and bred), ensuring agriculture remains front of mind, valued, respected and celebrated for generations to come. Her profound impact...

- Preserves and promotes agricultural traditions
- Supports the continuity of time-honoured farming methods
- Helps educate younger generations about Toodyay's agricultural traditions
- Provides leadership and guidance to the Society, fostering a culture of respect for both history and progress
- Ensures the Ag Show remains authentic and educational
- Inspires new members, sharing expertise and instilling pride in agricultural heritage
- Supports local farmers and producers by promoting local agriculture
- Contributes to tourism by attracting visitors to the area "last year over 5,000 people attended our little country Show"
- Strengthens community bonds by celebrating shared history and values, fostering pride and participation in a local event

NOTABLE CHALLENGES & RESILIENCE

In Alison's words *"The main challenge during the entire time I have been involved with the Show is the hard task to encourage the younger age groups to take an interest in the organisation of THEIR Show instead of running 100 miles at the word COMMITTEE! Times have definitely changed and we have to approach membership and leadership in a different way. Succession Plans are absolutely necessary to provide support and stability to an organisation.*

Being President and losing much loved committee member Gaven Donegan so suddenly and getting TAS through his death and funeral just before the Decennial Ball and Annual Show was a huge personal challenge.

Cancelling the 2020 Show, a huge decision, but in a way coping with that and organising a Quiz Night to fundraise and provide a night of enjoyment on what would have been the Show, was a good way of handling 2020.

Over the years all the extra effort and time spent was for a worthy cause...the Toodyay Show, full stop. I don't look at anything regarding the Show as a sacrifice; even though more time to spend with my family instead of "doing Ag business" would have been appreciated".

RECOGNITION & AWARDS

- Shire of Toodyay Active Citizenship Award 2014 (for 2013 Show)
- TAS Life Membership 2015
- Rural Ambassador: Toodyay won the Central competition and progressed to the State Finals four times
 - Kirsten Wood
 - Dustin Michael
 - Megan Pearce
 - Tameka Baker

COMMITMENT & DEDICATION

Alison's commitment of her personal time has been truly remarkable—always there when needed, ready to lend a hand without hesitation.

We thought the best way to share the impact that Alison has had on the community throughout her lifetime was to give a shoutout to previous Committee members, in their words...

Cr Steven McCormick: *Since first meeting Alison approximately 10 years ago ,it was quickly apparent that she was someone committed to ensuring the ongoing success of a historic country Ag show for which Toodyay is well known for. Particularly In her capacity as society president , Her attention to detail in show preparation resulted in the committee producing outstanding shows over many years. Such is here lifetime commitment and passion toward the Toodyay Agricultural annual show, I could not think of a more worthy nomination to the "lifetime contribution to volunteering award".*

Nyaree Lawler: *I think it's worth mentioning that Alison has been integral in identifying and supporting local young people to be Rural Ambassadors, which has influenced their trajectory in as positive way. Her work and enthusiasm have ensured that agriculture remains a central part of the show. In particular local farmers, parents and tourists all enjoy and appreciate that aspect of the show. On a more personal note, Alison is always very friendly and supportive. She chats to everyone and is very well respected throughout the community.*

Lani McGeady: *I am writing to express my wholehearted support for the nomination of Mrs. Alison Wroth for the Lifetime Contribution to Volunteering Award. Having had the privilege of working closely with Alison over the years in different capacities, I have witnessed firsthand her unwavering dedication and profound impact on both The Toodyay Agricultural Society (TAS) and the broader Toodyay community. In my capacity as Principal at Toodyay Ballet School, I have had the pleasure of collaborating with Alison over many years. Her exceptional leadership and tireless work ethic have always been obvious, and she has always been an inspiration to me and I'm sure to others. Alison embodies the values of compassion, integrity, and dedication. Her genuine concern for the well-being of others and her commitment to making a positive difference are evident in all her endeavours. She approaches every task with enthusiasm and a positive attitude, inspiring those around her to strive for excellence. Alison's exceptional contributions over the past 32 years have left an indelible mark on our Toodyay community. Her dedication, leadership, and unwavering commitment to service make her a deserving candidate for the Lifetime Contribution to Volunteering Award. I cannot support this recognition of her service highly enough; it is so well deserved.*

Pam Jackson: *When I was on the committee of the Toodyay Agricultural Society (Inc) Alison Wroth was Chief Steward. While holding the position of Chief Steward, Alison also held various other roles. Some years President, some years Vice President. Alison worked hard to have all positions on the committee filled. Alison amazed me with her vast knowledge about the Toodyay Agricultural Society and she was fully aware of all that had to be done, to be achieved, to put on a successful Toodyay Show. After a few years on the committee, I took on the role of Cookery Steward at the show. After leaving my role on the committee, I continued as Cookery Steward until I left Toodyay in 2019. Alison Wroth has made a huge contribution to the whole Toodyay Community over many many years. Alison always had time, and a smile for anyone who approached her with a question, or favour to ask. As a volunteer, Alison's commitment and dedication to the people of Toodyay and surrounding areas has been huge.*

Kerry Knowles: *Alison is always dedicated and thoroughly committed to everything in which she is involved, and the Toodyay Agricultural Society was the beneficiary of such service over many years. Alison loves the Toodyay community, where she has lived all her life, and has always looked for ways to make it the best community for everyone who lives there. While Alison is a reluctant leader, her immense knowledge of the local community has always been her greatest asset as she works tirelessly to support others and lead by example. She is very solution focussed, and this is particularly evident with the commitment toward ensuring the annual Toodyay Show was a milestone event every year. Alison looks to the future, building on past success, while working consistently in the present to achieve the best outcome for her community. I have had the privilege of working with Alison over the past twenty-five plus years as a community member, committee member and a close and valued friend.*

Jenny Hildred: *I have been involved with Alison through the TAS as a steward and as a committee member and also as Treasurer of the TAS. Also, in regard to sponsorship through our local Toodyay Op Shop and now as a volunteer for food preparation for the judges and stewards. Alison has always shown an incredible professionalism and enthusiasm towards volunteers and the numerous tasks required to make our TAS happen over the years she has been involved. Alison has always volunteered information and assistance to anyone, and any commitment involved with the running of our TAS. She is a source of great inspiration for others and has worked tirelessly over many years sharing her expertise. I feel fortunate to have been involved during some of this time.*

Bruce Shenn: *My thoughts... I followed Alison into the presidency position of The Toodyay Agricultural Society in 2003 as Alison had served the maximum allowable term (3 years) under The Society's Constitution. During my term in office, I drew on Alison's decades of experience within the Society to assist in achieving a successful event. While Alison's strengths were many, I found her enthusiasm in networking with the Toodyay community and beyond to assist in achieving the Society's goals invaluable. In her direct responsibility as Chief Steward, the encouragement and support she gave to the stewards of all ages was unlimited. She had a penchant for the 'Rural Ambassador' competition and encouraged and supported rural youth to participate in this Australia wide event which has been responsible for developing confidence, presentation skills and enthusiasm amongst the participants. While Alison's personal contribution to The Show was outstanding, it was always her aim to include the Toodyay population in its organisation, thus ensuring that it has been a true community, volunteer organised event. Hope these few words may assist Karen. Well done to you for progressing this. If I can help further let me know. Cheers, Bruce*

Judy Rowston: *I am fully in support for Mrs Alison Wroth being nominated for the Lifetime contribution to volunteering. Alison contacted me just after my family and I moved to live in Toodyay, asking if I were keen to join a community group. Through this contact I spent 5 years on the Toodyay Agricultural show committee and have been a show steward working alongside Alison for 8 years. At the time Alison was 2nd vice President, club President, Rural Ambassador Representative, Chief Steward and wrote the monthly report for the local Toodyay Herald newspaper. With 100% support from her family, Alison went over and beyond what was required of her in the above-mentioned roles, she always did it with so much passion and enthusiasm. Often using her own funds to ensure project could move forward and be successful. Alison always availed herself to come to your home, meet you in the town or to speak on the phone with anything show related. Alison spent a lot of time talking to business owners seeing support in the way of long-term sponsorship, which assisted with the finances needed to put on such a huge event like the Toodyay show. Alison was a fantastic teacher and mentor, she constantly reached out to the Agricultural members and residents of Toodyay, encouraging them to join the team or in some small way contribute to ensure her beloved show was a huge success. Her knowledge of Toodyay, the History of the Toodyay Agricultural Show and Historical Toodyay Show grounds were so important to her. Alison's reward was watching the joy on patrons faces on show day each October, hearing the laughter of the Children and always ending the show with the fireworks.*

Kristee Jolly: *Alison Wroth's dedication to the Toodyay Agricultural Society and the broader community is worthy nomination for the Lifetime Contribution to Volunteering Award. Alison was the one who encouraged me to join the TAS committee, as she recognised the importance of including young voices in decision-making. Her passion for ensuring that Toodyay's youth felt valued and involved was evident in everything interaction I had with her. Alison didn't just keep TAS traditions alive—she actively worked to inspire the next generation of volunteers and invited young volunteers like me to contribute new ideas and start new traditions. Her deep love for the Toodyay community has left a lasting impact, and I feel incredibly fortunate to have worked alongside her. Toodyay is a better, more connected place because of Alison, and I can't think of anyone more deserving of this recognition.*

Deb Andrijich: *Alison certainly has given unwavering dedication and commitment to the Ag Show and the Society as a whole. I guess a stand out for me would be her contribution to the "Saving of the Show Bar" it was the historical background that Alison was able to provide which I'm sure was the major contributor to keeping the Bar. Her powers of persuasion and determined attitude was evident from beginning to the end result of repair work being undertaken – when someone at the Shire eventually used some common sense to save rather than demolish.*

Megan Ebdon: *During my 17 years in Toodyay, I was always aware of Alison's standing in the community as a hard-working and willing volunteer. Alison is a member of several organisations. It was after she invited me that I joined the Toodyay Agricultural Society. In this organisation, Alison works tirelessly throughout the year and on show day to make the Toodyay Show a success. In several leadership roles in the society including as President, Alison demonstrated outstanding qualities including compassion, a willingness to help and support fellow members in their roles. As well as members and other volunteers, Alison is loved and respected by show patrons and other show communities in Western Australia. I was also a member of Julimar Volunteer Bushfire Brigade. Alison is a valued auxiliary member of the Brigade. Whenever there's a fire emergency, Alison is there working behind the scenes, preparing meals for fire-fighters and others as well as taking the meals to the fireground. She is loved and respected by all members of the Brigade. Alison can be seen outside a coffee shop in Toodyay on her phone, on Weekdays, contacting people and being available if anyone in the above organisations need her help and advice. Her Husband, Charles Wroth, is well known as a member and leader in several community organisations and Alison supports him willingly and enthusiastically. I thank Alison for her outstanding service to the Toodyay Community.*

Wayne Fletcher: *I was a Committee member of the Toodyay Agricultural Society for 12 years. Alison was on the Committee for all of those years and many more to total an amazing 32 years. In my time, I think she was President for six of those years. Her long term experience gave her a total understanding of all facets of the Show and she was able to use this experience to not only guide and assist others in organising the Show but also to see the Show further develop and adjust to changing times and community needs. But Alison was not just a Committee member along with the associated portfolios she held. She devoted almost her life to the betterment of the Agricultural Society. Complete dedication with little reward apart from personal satisfaction. It was a pleasure to work with her as her experience instilled confidence and an assurance that everything that needed to be done, would be done. Thankyou Alison Wroth.*

David Chitty: *I have been on the Committee of the Toodyay Agricultural Society for many years and became Patron in 2017. Alison has put her heart and soul into the running of the Toodyay Ag. Society from the time she has been involved. She served two 3 year terms as President – one term during Covid, which would have put extra pressure on her. She was made Life Member in 2016. She has been Chief Steward of the Pavillion for many years, been involved with Miss Show Girl and now Rural Ambassador from the start, helped with fund raising and promotion and membership drives through street stalls – Alison was always there to help. Also sourcing Judges for all sections of the show and running of workshops for the new stewards. A very good networker – always trying to get new people to be involved and help them to feel part of the show. She has been involved in decision making of most of the activities to do with the show. Her dedication to the show is second to none – but she also has a human side, is a warm likeable and friendly person. I have known Alison most of my life, but only really got to know her when she joined the Committee – we have become very close friends and I feel she is very deserving of being nominated.*

Rick and Pauline Mallick: *Alison embodies the true sense of a Volunteer, she is always thinking of others and the cause at hand before herself, and in doing so, is the first to put her hand up whenever something needs to be done, she also welcomed us into the fold with open arms and was always quick to share her knowledge and experience with us new committee members, which was invaluable as the encyclopedia for all things Toodyay Ag Society, and the Toodyay Show in general. Good for a chat and openly warm with her advice when sought.*

Karen Dore: *I nominated Alison for the Lifetime Contribution to Volunteering Award because, like so many others, I was welcomed to town by her warmth and generosity. Before long, just like so many before and after me, I found myself gently—and kindly—‘coerced’ into joining the TAS Committee! Her ability to inspire others to get involved is priceless. Alison’s years of volunteering have truly shaped the Toodyay community. Her leadership, guidance, and unwavering dedication have created a legacy that’s hard to match. Even though she retired last year, Alison hasn’t really gone anywhere. She’s still passing on her wealth of knowledge and experience, ensuring the next generation of volunteers is ready to pick up where she left off. She hasn’t left us high and dry—she’s still here, a steady guiding hand when we need it most.*

