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NEWCASTLE PERMANENT CHARITABLE FOUNDATION PROUDLY AWARDS 2023 CHAIRMAN'S MEDAL TO CAREY BINKS

Recognising six years of volunteering with Ronald McDonald House Newcastle, Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation has awarded its 2023 Chairman's Medal to Carey Binks, for his ongoing care, commitment and compassion for seriously ill children and their families.

Located on the John Hunter campus, Ronald McDonald House Newcastle is a home away from home for over 600 regional families per year, many of whom can find themselves staying for weeks and even months at a time to be close to a child receiving treatment at the hospital.

As well as Carey being awarded the Chairman's Medal, Ronald McDonald House Newcastle will receive a \$5,000 grant to be used for volunteer training, development and recognition.

Jennifer Leslie, Chair of Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation, said National Volunteer Week was a fitting time to acknowledge the tremendous contribution Mr Binks continues to make to children and families who may be in their most desperate hours.

"For the past six years, Carey has given over 3,500 hours as an overnight volunteer, on hand to receive and support vulnerable regional families who are tired, stressed, and facing the trauma of serious childhood illness or injury in the middle of the night," said Ms Leslie.

"Carey has undertaken additional training to perform this role, and he is widely admired for his strong interpersonal abilities which enable him to help families in a calm, empathetic, and non-judgemental manner.

"As a highly capable and valued team member, Carey is relied on to train new volunteers, imparting his knowledge, and experience to help new team members to thrive.

"Highly respected amongst the Ronald McDonald House Newcastle team and their beneficiaries, as well as hospital staff, Carey serves as a positive, sensible, and caring role model. He is always available for a chat, a game of pool, or some light entertainment with his guitar."

First presented in 2018 in honour of the late Michael Slater, who served as Chair of Newcastle Permanent Building Society and Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation for nearly ten years and spent more than 50 years volunteering his time and talents to local organisations, the Chairman's Medal is recognition for an outstanding volunteer who sets aside their own priorities to better the community.

Mr Binks was shortlisted as a finalist for the Chairman's Medal in 2022.

"Someone once told me, 'You may have a sad day but never a bad day at the House,'" he said.

"Our clients come mainly from Northern NSW – places like Taree, Tamworth, Armidale, Inverell, all the way up the coast and even out west – so they've come quite a way to get here and they sometimes stay for in excess of 12 months, so it's their home away from home.

Media release

“The facilities are great at the House and our job is to make sure these families have got everything they need. We make them feel welcome, and every day we ask the parents how they’re going and how their kids are going.

“The parents and siblings – brothers and sisters often come and stay – are often our main focus. These sick kids have got the best care in Australia in the children’s hospital, so we look after the parents, because they go through the trauma with their kids.”

Ross Bingham, CEO of Ronald McDonald House Charities Northern NSW, said Mr Binks’ volunteering during COVID-19 was critical in ensuring Ronald McDonald House Newcastle was able to continue to operate.

“In the early stages of the pandemic, we saw an immediate reduction in volunteer numbers – down almost 80% from 230 to approximately 50. During periods where operations were run by skeleton staff, with no daily volunteers and only three volunteers suitably trained for overnight duties, Carey became indispensable as he picked up approximately 90% of the overnight shifts,” said Mr Bingham.

“With Carey’s support, we were able to continue operations, supporting up to 18 vulnerable families during a profoundly difficult and isolating time – for both families and the charity.

“Volunteer numbers are recovering slower than expected by Ronald McDonald House, and of the 140-strong volunteer cohort, Carey is one of just 15 men. His bright, empathetic, and friendly style is highly regarded and it is his ability to engage with other fathers that draws admiration.

“Carey is a thoughtful volunteer contributor. He initiates conversations and seizes opportunities to suggest ways of doing things better, safer or in the best interest of the families with a seriously ill or injured child being supported.”

Video and audio can be found here: <https://spaces.hightail.com/space/YLlrxzLWN>

Previous winners of the Newcastle Permanent Charitable Society Chairman’s Medal:

2022: [Helen Walker-McCready](#), SHINE for Kids

2021: [Sue Clark-Pitrolo](#), the Kaden Centre

2020: [Garth Howard](#), Cancer Council NSW

2019: [Carolyn Comyns](#), Autoimmune Resource and Research Centre (ARRC)

2018: [Damian Charleson](#), Camp Quality

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Media contact:

Please contact Ebony Smith for additional information or interviews:

ebony.smith@newcastlepermanent.com.au

About Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation

Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation provides more than \$1 million in grants each year to charitable projects aimed at improving the health and social wellbeing of vulnerable people in regional New South Wales. Since its establishment in 2003, the Foundation has provided more than \$26 million to some 550 community initiatives.