



Victorian
**Environment
Friends
Network**

BEST FRIEND AWARDS 2026

About the Category

The Best Friend Award (BFA) is intended to celebrate and encourage environmental volunteering by recognising individual volunteers who make an outstanding contribution through exceptional dedication to their work in and for a Friends group.

Lifetime Achievement Award

You may also use this form to nominate someone for a Lifetime Achievement Award by submitting responses to Additional selection criteria for Lifetime Achievement Award listed below. The Lifetime Achievement award is given occasionally. It recognises an exceptional candidate's contribution to Friends groups and the Friends movement in Victoria over a long period of time, i.e., for 20 years or more. It is reserved for those nominees whose contribution demonstrates a lifetime of exceptional service to the Friends movement in Victoria.

Who can be Nominated

Nominations will be accepted from members of a nominating Friends group. Nominations should demonstrate that the nominee has made an outstanding contribution in areas listed below and/or other areas that the nominating Friends group consider make them an exceptional Friend.

Judging Panel

All nominations will be assessed by an independent judging panel against these criteria. Not all nominees will receive an award. The judging panel may make a special case for additional awards in the event of many exceptional candidates being nominated.

Completing the Nomination Form

The nomination form must be completed and signed by an office bearer or recognised representative of the nominating Friends group.

Please read the Selection Criteria carefully to ensure that your nomination is relevant. Please provide **up to the allocated number of words** for each Selection Criteria. Be specific about the scale and impact of the nominee's contribution. A cursory response of a few lines with insufficient supporting material to enable a thorough assessment of the nominee will not be sufficient for the nomination to be considered. The quality and adequacy of information in the nomination form and attachments will have a bearing on the outcome. That is, it is not just what the nominee has achieved, but how well the information is understood and presented, that will allow the judges to assess the nomination and make their decision on each nomination.



Selection Criteria

The nominee will have made an outstanding contribution under the following selection criteria:

1. Describe how the nominee has **supported the Friends group's activities** by, for example:
 - practising and teaching environmental skills, such as tree planting, weeding, litter collection, citizen science
 - organising group community events (e.g. arranging corporate volunteering days, morning teas, BBQs, supervising volunteers, and paperwork before events proceed on site)
 - attending network meetings, attending panel discussions on behalf of the Friends group, attending land manager's meetings, and managing Workplace Health and Safety requirements
 - communicating the value of the park/reserve* and environmental volunteering through websites, blogs, videos, talks and social media.
2. Describe how the nominee has formed **strong relationships** and developed partnerships and/or advocated against threats for the protection and benefit of the park / reserve*.
3. Describe how the nominee has **attracted funding** for the benefit of the reserve; through local fundraising, seeking support of corporates for events or through grants from government agencies.
4. Describe how the nominee has shown personal dedication and **leadership qualities** by supporting and encouraging the Friends group to work towards its goals, sharing knowledge and mentoring members to take on various roles within the group.
5. Describe how the nominee has supported sustainability and **succession planning** for the Friends group, e.g., introducing young people to the reserve or on the organising committee.
6. Describe how the nominee has had a **personal impact** in improving ecological condition, protective works and/or visitor facilities in the reserve.

* The term 'park/reserve' can also refer to species, waterway, or cultural heritage. It can also be used generically to refer to the purpose of the Friends group.

Number of Nominees

While it is anticipated that there will be only one nominee per Friends group, in some circumstances it is recognised that more than one volunteer may have made an outstanding contribution to delivering a specific project or to enabling the Friends group to fulfil its long-term objectives. In this case, more than one nominee per Friends group will be considered. Each nominee must be a recognised member of the nominating Friends group. The nomination form must be completed and signed by an office bearer or recognised representative of the nominating Friends group.

Length of Service

It is expected that all nominees will have demonstrated exceptional and regular contributions of volunteering involvement in the work of the Friends group over a period of at least five

years (preferably 10 years of service). In cases where a nominee's continuous service has taken place with different Friends groups, they can still be eligible provided the nomination is supported by referee reports from each of the relevant Friends groups.

Additional selection criteria for Lifetime Achievement Award

1. *Length of service.* A nominee will have had regular honorary involvement in the work of one or more Friends groups over **at least 20 years** or a period that would qualify in the view of the judges as a 'lifetime'.
2. *Contribution at a strategic level.* A nominee will have made an **exceptional contribution** to the promotion and enhancement of Victorian Friends groups at either a regional or state-wide level. Examples of this might include representing Friends groups on state-wide committees and having a significant impact on relevant policy or procedural approaches, playing an advisory role for research groups or for government or statutory bodies that enhances the impact of environmental volunteering, or making a significant contribution to the knowledge of environmental issues within Victoria.

Referees

All nominations must include **three (3)** written references, including a reference from the agency land manager **on their letterhead**, where Friends groups work with an agency or state or local government. In the event of a nominee's service taking place with different Friends' groups, a single referee report may be sought from each of the groups additional to the primary Friends group.

Recent Photograph of Nominee

At least three high resolution (i.e., 1MB of more) electronic images of the nominee (preferably working in the field) must be included with the nomination.

PowerPoint and Video Presentation for Winners

A PowerPoint or short 2-minute video to highlight the work undertaken by the group can be provided for our Awards Ceremony.

Successful Nominees

In the event of a nominee receiving a Best Friends Award, any money that may be attached to the award will be paid to the nominating Friends group for the group to decide on how the funds will be spent.

Submission of Nominations

Nominations can be entered via the [VEFN website](#) or emailed to awards@vefn.org.au with all supporting documentation attached. Please place 'Best Friends Award' in the subject line.

Closing date for nominations is **Monday 31st August at 5pm**. Nominations received after the deadline will not be accepted.

If you have any questions, please contact Carol Challis (VEFN Awards Subcommittee Chair) on 0411042511 or awards@vefn.org.au.



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BEST FRIEND AWARD - NOMINATION FORM 2026

Nominating Friends Group:

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Friends Group Contact:

Name:	
Address:	
Phone:	
Email:	

Nominee:

Name:	
Address:	

Is the nominee aware he/she has been nominated? YES/NO

Is this a nomination for a Lifetime Achievement Award? YES/NO

Is your group able to make a PowerPoint/video presentation for our Awards Ceremony?
YES/NO

What year did the nominee join the group actively?

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Nominee's Involvement in the Friend Group:

What role/s has the nominee fulfilled? (Max 300 words)

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SELECTION CRITERIA

Describe the nominee's achievements with reference to the selection criteria.

Selection Criteria No 1 (max 300 words)

Describe how the nominee has supported the Friends group's activities by, for example:

- practising and teaching environmental skills, such as tree planting, weeding, litter collection, citizen science
- organising group community events (e.g. arranging corporate volunteering days, morning teas, BBQs, supervising volunteers, and paperwork before events proceed on site)
- attending network meetings, attending panel discussions on behalf of the Friends group, attending land manager's meetings, and managing Workplace Health and Safety requirements
- communicating the value of the park/reserve* and environmental volunteering through websites, blogs, videos, talks and social media.

Selection Criteria No 2 (max 300 words)

Describe how the nominee has formed strong relationships and developed partnerships and/or advocated against threats for the protection and benefit of the park / reserve*.

Selection Criteria No 3 (max 300 words)

Describe how the nominee has attracted funding for the benefit of the reserve; through local fundraising, seeking support of corporates for events or through grants from government agencies.

Selection Criteria No 4 (max 300 words)

Describe how the nominee has shown personal dedication and leadership qualities by supporting and encouraging the Friends group to work towards its goals, sharing knowledge and mentoring members to take on various roles within the group.

Selection Criteria No 5 (max 300 words)

Describe how the nominee has supported sustainability and succession planning for the Friends group, e.g., introducing young people to the reserve or on the organising committee.

Selection Criteria No 6 (max 300 words)

Describe how the nominee has had a personal impact in improving ecological condition, protective works and/or visitor facilities in the reserve.

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SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS OR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD (If applicable)

Length of Service (max 300 words)

Contribution at a strategic level (max 300 words)

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS OR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Referees:

All nominations must include written references, including from the agency land manager, where applicable. Please include contact details for each referee.

Name & Position:	
Phone & Email:	

Name & Position:	
Phone & Email:	

Name & Position:	
Phone & Email:	

Photo/s attached? YES/NO

Signed:	Role:	Date:

SUBMISSION OF NOMINATIONS

Checklist:

- Form filled in
- References provided
- Supplementary information attached
- Photos attached
- Signed

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