

A DAY OUT WITH AN NDIS WORKER LEADS TO VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD

It is more than just racing for Andrew

Michael Cowley

IT WASN'T the major award, but not one person in the room would dispute it was the highlight of the evening.

When Andrew Brett climbed onto the stage to collect his Greyhound Racing NSW Volunteer of the Year trophy there was the polite applause.

It was the kind offered for an unknown, amidst the clink of cutlery and muffled conversations.

When Andrew walked from the stage after accepting his trophy, having captivated the audience and provided them with smiles, laughs, and even the odd tear, he did so to a rapturous ovation.

As was explained on the night, Andrew is a vital cog in the team at the Casino Greyhound Club and loved by fellow workers and participants. It is a love he returns in bucket loads to the sport, and to the greyhounds.

Andrew, 19, was born with a rare genetic condition leading to growth issues, hearing and vision problems, and variable intellectual disability.

His parents Rick and Anne-Marie were even told at one point that his complex problems meant he would be lucky to walk.

Andrew doesn't walk now, he proudly strides out when he works at the Casino racetrack each week.

The fascination began after his parents had moved from Penrith to acreage in Casino just over nine years ago.

"An NDIS worker who was friends with a local trainer, took Andrew for a day out at the Lismore track," Rick said.

"He loved it and Scott Higgins who was the curator there, took Andrew under

his wing.

"When Lismore closed, Andrew got to go Casino and do work there."

He works four days a week at Casino and has a variety of jobs.

Some of these include covering the lure between races on race day, publishing race results, cleaning, and helping to lock up after race meetings.

"It's amazing what the sport has done for Andrew," Rick said.

"Our whole family and our friends recognise that immensely.

"To see the joy and happiness on his face while he is at the track is amazing.

"And everyone loves him, the officials, the staff, and particularly all the trainers

who interact and give fist pumps when they walk past.

"It's a small thing but it means a lot to Andrew.

"Special thanks must go to Butch [Casino trackman Dave McLeod] who has become a good mate and taken on Andrew as his helper.

"But this is a two-way street. Andrew really puts in there at the greyhound track, and he loves it.

"And it's brought acceptance and inclusivity too. It's great for the people of Casino, the town and all those involved in the community.

"It's incredible, and that reflects back to us when we walk down the street, and we'll see somebody from the greyhound track and they will come up and ask 'how you doing Andrew?',

and he's always excited to see people.

"It's uplifting for us as a family as well. And there's other benefits and gains from what he does as well, and the recognition he receives and the care that they provide to him at the greyhound track, it's wonderful."

But back to the award ceremony and Andrew held aloft his trophy as a premiership winning footballer would after a grand final victory.

"It was just unbelievable," Rick said.

"I had a big speech written out, and I just went to water.

"My eyes got tears in them and that was it."

Andrew looked the part in his tuxedo complete with

bow tie, but he had done so under some protest.

He had originally told his dad that he needed to wear his red Ladbroke's shirt as he was not only going there because of work, but he needed to be ready to work the next day as Casino was holding a race meeting.

"We came home from Sydney and Andrew took the trophy to the racetrack to show everyone.

"He put it on the desk in the office so everyone could see it, and everyone who came along congratulated him.

"Then Andrew got to take it out on the track. Pat Lavis won a race and got Andrew out for the winning photo along with Andrew's trophy.

"It just things like that that

touches your heart.

"He loves greyhounds and greyhound racing.

"Wherever we go we have stop in towns that have tracks so Andrew can get his photo taken there.

"We were at Bundaberg last year and had to go and get a photo in front of the track. We recently went on a trip and had to stop at Goulburn and Nowra for photos, and he's been to Wentworth Park a few times too and has photos from there.

"People are often very critical of the sport, but I cannot agree with that criticism.

"You only take it as it is for you and you only have to see the development in Andrew to see how good greyhound racing and its people have been for him."

From the left, Rick Brett with son Andrew and MC Simon Orchard at the GRNSW Greyhound of the Year Awards. Picture Ross Schultz



Smith's Group One production line in Forbes continues

NEWS FROM AROUND THE NSW REGIONS

LEADING trainer Jack Smith has had some star performers come out of his Forbes kennels and now he has another in multiple Group One winner Magpie Hector.

The up-and-coming stayer took out the Group One \$100,000 Fanta Bale Super Stayers at The Meadows in Victoria on February 28, a fortnight after winning the Group One \$75,000 Zoom Top Invitational at the same venue. In doing so, Magpie Hector became just the

fourth stayer to complete the Zoom Top - Super Stayers double in the same year, joining Drill 'Em (2010), Destini Fireball (2013) and the superstar whose name now adorns the event, the great Fanta Bale (2018).

"We've just got to pinch ourselves sometimes with these dogs, how lucky we've been. We don't take it for granted," Smith said.

In recent years Jack and his wife Maree have put the collar and lead on the likes of Feral Franky (24 wins and \$482,000 prizemoney),

Jungle Deuce (25 wins and \$649,000) and Palawa King (31 wins and \$1.1 million).

Double Fitch

Moments after completing an historic Group final double, trainer Steve Fitch declared his team are ready for next month's Golden Easter Egg. On February 27, Fitch prepared Cumbria Chrissy to win the \$40,000 Group Two Richmond Oaks, then less than an hour later her kennelmate Cumbria Jack was dynamic winning the \$40,000 Group Two Richmond Derby.

The only other trainer to complete the Richmond Derby and Oaks double is Jason Mackay who trained Path To Vegas and Zipping Catra to wins in 2012.

Another Taylor

Greyhound racing runs through the blood of Chad Taylor so it's no surprise to see the 18-year-old having success just a month after securing his trainer's licence.

Chad has been around greyhounds for many years with his grandfather Ron Ulrick and mother Karen Ulrick being long time industry

participants. Chad and his sister Holly have been regulars around the racetrack for several years helping their mother and grandfather, and Holly has also enjoyed great success since getting her licence in 2024, with already 40 winners to her name.

And Chad has got off to the perfect start - literally - in his training career, winning his first three starts with his greyhound Chad's Girl.

Frank Kennedy Memorial Run last week at Richmond, this event was won by the Charmaine Rob-

erts-trained Tank Keeping.

Frank was an iconic media figure in NSW during the halcyon days of greyhound racing in NSW during the 1960s and 1970s. He pioneered greyhound broadcasts and his name was synonymous with his beloved Richmond. He also promoted greyhound racing each Sunday on the Punters Post Mortem segment on Channel Seven's Sportsworld.

Frank Kennedy died aged 51 in 1977, and each year the Richmond club honours his memory.