

Jeremy Hawkes – Speech - Citizen of the Year Award, Mid Murray Council - 2016

I am humbled to be the person who's been singled out from the thousands of people who do great things in our community.

So many people contribute to our region, whether it's simply picking up a piece of litter whilst you are walking down the street, or contributing to a local volunteer organisation, or helping to organise a community event, I believe that a community really comes alive when its residents are motivated towards selfless acts that bring joy to others.

When many local people contribute in a positive and consistent way, it's a powerful force, it has a real influence on the community, it's fun to be a part of and can be very appealing to outsiders.

I am very fortunate to have parents (both my own and Jodie's) that lead by example and have been contributors to our community their whole lives, also my group of friends, most of you are big community contributors. When your friends are in there doing what you are doing, it makes it easy and fun. Under these circumstances it's easy to be a positive contributor to local events and volunteering, because really it's just having fun with your mates.

Today we celebrate the things that are good about Australia and here in this region you don't have to look far to find things to be thankful for.

Those generous people that volunteer in a quiet unobtrusive way, they're the true heroes, their the backbone of our Australian society, it's what makes us uniquely different and special from other cultures.

I'd like to thank Samantha Krollig and Justin and Jodie Maloney for their work in the nomination for me for this award as well as the individuals that deemed me worthy of such a prestigious honour, it came as a complete surprise.

I'd also like to acknowledge the support, love and encouragement from my beautiful wife Jodie who manages to juggle a significant amount of Bowhill Engineering work, is also very busy with community roles and in her spare time manages to keep our 4 children Casey, Zoe, Molly and Cameron, safe and happy, without this support, tolerance and love everything else would seem quite pointless.

I have an unwavering faith in Jesus Christ, the joy that this trust brings to those who believe is incredibly important, I thank him for the many blessings that he has bestowed on myself, my family and my community, all of whom I love very much.

From a business standpoint, I'd like to acknowledge this local government's strong support of Bowhill Engineering over the last 18 months.

Winning the government tender to deliver two River Murray Ferry Hulls was definitely a collaborative effort.

In July of last year we launched the first of the new generation River Murray ferries, and without getting too dramatic, this event influenced the history for our little Bowhill and possibly even in a small way, the region.

The fact that there are local people working together to build important local infrastructure is inspiring, it's how it should be, and the best part is, it bucks the trend of importation from overseas.

Jobs, pride and an opportunity to grow technical skills for good local people flows for opportunities such as these.

If Bowhill engineering or myself can influence anyone with the belief that a successful business or career is possible from a regional base then this is my goal.

We want our youth to believe that, given some consideration, there are exciting opportunities in this region, we don't want our talent automatically thinking that they need to move away to pursue "a decent job". We need more people thinking "I'm going to have a crack, but I'd like to do it locally".

As a community, let's work together, let's think local, shop local, volunteer to support local events, even a small shift in the choices we make will see a real difference. Increased regional pride and even a dose of parochialism has the potential to make this an even more awesome place to live in the world.

There's an old saying that seems appropriate for a day such as this "If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together".

In closing, I'm one proud Australian to accept this honour and I do so as a representative of the thousands of volunteers that contribute to our wonderful community

Thankyou.