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AFL Cairns honours 2026 season’s best at Presentation Night

AFL Cairns celebrated the leading players, coaches, officials, volunteers and contributors of the 2026 season at its Presentation Night, held on Sunday evening in the Allen Aylett Room at Cazalys Social Club.

South Cairns Cutters’ Jeremy Piercy received the Crathern Medal as the League’s men’s best and fairest player. Piercy also finished second in the Tribal Sport Coaches MVP vote with 84 votes and was selected among the followers in the 2026 AFL Cairns Men’s Team of the Year, underlining the consistency of his senior campaign.

North Cairns Tigers leader Luana Healey claimed the Butland Medal as the women’s best and fairest player. Her season included 71 Tribal Sport Coaches MVP votes, selection at half-forward in the AFL Cairns Women’s Team of the Year, the women’s leading goalkicking title with 45 goals, and recognition as Women’s Coach of the Year. As coach, Healey guided the Tigers through an undefeated 16-0 home-and-away season and into a third consecutive Grand Final, following the club’s 2025 premiership.

South Cairns Cutters’ David Skeene was awarded the Reg Dean Medal as the men’s development grade best and fairest player. His award followed a competitive Cutters development campaign that reached the elimination final while continuing to provide opportunities for younger players.

| Major medal                                         | Recipient     | Season achievement                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Crathern Medal — Men’s Best and Fairest             | Jeremy Piercy | South Cairns Cutters; second in the Tribal Sport Coaches MVP vote with 84 votes; Men’s Team of the Year selection     |
| Butland Medal — Women’s Best and Fairest            | Luana Healey  | North Cairns Tigers; 45 goals, 71 Coaches MVP votes, Women’s Team of the Year selection and Women’s Coach of the Year |
| Reg Dean Medal — Men’s Development Best and Fairest | David Skeene  | South Cairns Cutters; recognised after the club’s development side reached the elimination final                      |

The night also recognised the competition’s emerging talent. Thomas Hession of South Cairns Cutters won the Troy Clarke Rising Star Award after a breakout senior season in which he assumed the Cutters’ sole ruck role. Hession was selected as the 23rd player in the Men’s Team of the Year and played an important part in the Cutters’ preliminary-final win that secured a Grand Final place.

Theressa Woosup of the Manunda Hawks received the Women’s Rising Star Award. Woosup made her senior debut in 2026, performed in multiple roles for the Hawks and featured in the Gold Coast Suns Under-16 Academy program.

| Emerging-player award         | Recipient       | Season achievement                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Troy Clarke Rising Star — Men | Thomas Hession  | South Cairns Cutters; breakout sole-ruck season, Men’s Team of the Year 23rd player and key contributor to the club’s Grand Final qualification |
| Women’s Rising Star           | Theressa Woosup | Manunda Hawks; senior debut, multi-position season and Gold Coast Suns Under-16 Academy involvement                                             |

Port Douglas Crocs coach Brad Cooper was named Men’s Coach of the Year after returning to the senior role and leading the Crocs to a 15-1 home-and-away record. The Crocs ranked first in the League for disposals, clearances and goals during the home-and-away season, following a campaign built on strong recruitment and high standards.

Healey’s coaching award came after an equally commanding season for North Cairns. Her Tigers were unbeaten in the home-and-away season, and her coaching approach was recognised for setting high standards, supporting younger players and strengthening the club’s culture.

| Coaching award            | Recipient    | Season achievement                                                                                    |
|---------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Men’s Coach of the Year   | Brad Cooper  | Port Douglas Crocs; 15–1 home-and-away record; Crocs ranked first for disposals, clearances and goals |
| Women’s Coach of the Year | Luana Healey | North Cairns Tigers; undefeated 16–0 home-and-away season and third consecutive Grand Final berth     |

The Tribal Sport Coaches MVP awards went to Port Douglas Crocs midfielders Murphy Short and Caity McPhee. In his second season with the Crocs, Short polled in 14 of 16 matches to win the men’s award with 86 votes. He led the competition for disposals at 32.8 per game and inside 50s at 6.4 per game, ranked second for contested possessions and third for tackles, and was selected in the Men’s Team of the Year.

| Tribal Sport Coaches MVP | Recipient    | Season achievement                                                                                     |
|--------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Men                      | Murphy Short | Port Douglas Crocs; 86 votes, 32.8 disposals and 6.4 inside 50s per game; polled in 14 of 16 matches   |
| Women                    | Caity McPhee | Port Douglas Crocs; 84 votes, career-high 54 disposals in Round 8 and just under 37 disposals per game |

Centrals Trinity Beach Bulldogs captain Josh Butland won the Matt Walsh Medal as the men’s leading goalkicker for a second successive season. Butland kicked 91 goals across the 2026 home-and-away season, including 10 goals in the final round to secure the Bulldogs’ place in finals. A dominant aerial forward and game-changing leader, he was also named captain of the Men’s Team of the Year.

Healey’s 45 goals made her the women’s leading goalkicker. An agile and damaging forward in the air and at ground level, she was a central avenue to goal in the Tigers’ unbeaten home-and-away campaign. North Cairns Tigers forward Thomas Ketchup took the development leading-goalkicker honour with 37 goals, providing a consistent and strong target in a demanding season for his side.

| Leading-goalkicker award                    | Recipient      | Season achievement                                                                                            |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Matt Walsh Medal — Men’s Leading Goalkicker | Josh Butland   | Centrals Trinity Beach Bulldogs; 91 home-and-away goals, including 10 in the final round; back-to-back winner |
| Women’s Leading Goalkicker                  | Luana Healey   | North Cairns Tigers; 45 goals and a key forward in an undefeated home-and-away campaign                       |
|                                             | Thomas Ketchup | North Cairns Tigers; 37 goals and a reliable forward target                                                   |

Cairns Saints’ Tiarna Ahwang received the peer-voted Women’s Player of the Year Award. The award recognises the player most respected by her peers for performance, attitude and conduct on and off the field. Ahwang was acknowledged as a consistent, determined and fair competitor, represented Queensland Country and the All Stars during the season, and earned a half-back selection in the Women’s Team of the Year.

The Cairns Total Physio Goal of the Year was awarded to South Cairns Cutters’ Cooper Wanders, while Cairns City Lions forward Eric Cox won the Heightened Services Mark of the Year. Cox was also selected in the forward line of the Men’s Team of the Year.

| Feature and peer-voted awards           | Recipient      | Season achievement                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Women’s Player of the Year — peer voted | Tiarna Ahwang  | Cairns Saints; Queensland Country and All Stars representation; Women’s Team of the Year selection |
| Cairns Total Physio Goal of the Year    | Cooper Wanders | South Cairns Cutters; selected from the season’s standout goals                                    |
| Heightened Services Mark of the Year    | Eric Cox       | Cairns City Lions; Men’s Team of the Year forward selection                                        |

AFL Cairns also recognised the people who help make the game possible across the region. Nick DeWolf and Kyra Hourigan received the Trevor Willis Umpires of the Year honours. Colette Lavis of the Manunda Hawks was named Volunteer of the Year for her leadership in the women’s and girls’ program, commitment to the senior women’s side, work strengthening links with the junior club and weekly efforts to ensure a team could take the field.

AFL Cairns Board Member Tom Jones was awarded Life Membership in acknowledgement of decades of service at club and league level.

| Service award                     | Recipient                     | Contribution recognised                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Trevor Willis Umpires of the Year | Nick DeWolf and Kyra Hourigan | Outstanding service to umpiring across the 2026 season                                               |
| Volunteer of the Year             | Colette Lavis                 | Manunda Hawks; leadership across women’s and girls’ football, senior program support and junior-club |
| Life Membership                   | Tom Jones                     | Decades of service at club and AFL Cairns league level                                               |

AFL Cairns congratulates all 2026 Presentation Night winners and acknowledges the players, coaches, umpires, volunteers, clubs, sponsors and supporters who contributed to an outstanding season. The League now looks forward to the season’s crescendo at this weekend’s Grand Finals.

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