

## Liz Downes - Acceptance Speech

Volunteer of the Year Award 2020

December 2020

I would like to thank all of you at Queensland Volunteering and to acknowledge some very special people who have helped, supported and inspired me.

First, in relation to my work at JCU's Mabo library, I must pay tribute to Special Collections Librarian Bronwyn McBurnie who is the absolute model of what every volunteer manager should be and I am so grateful to have been given such absorbing and worth-while work to do in my retirement and to help keep my brain active.

In relation to my wildlife conservation efforts – almost everyone in the conservation field in Queensland will know the name of Margaret Grace Thorsborne, AO.

Sadly, Margaret passed away in 2018 but for nearly 40 years she was a beloved friend and a wonderful inspiration. Margaret dedicated her long life to protecting our precious wildlife and wildlife habitats, set a wonderful example of how to live lightly on the earth, and inspired countless people, locally and much farther afield, around Australia and beyond.

Most importantly, despite setbacks, disappointments and hard times (such as, at age 83, the loss of her home in Cyclone Yasi) *she never gave up*.

When you have someone like that in your life as a role model, you just have to do the best you can!

Along the way I discovered that while it is never easy, the knowledge that you are trying to make a difference is fulfilling, just to be doing a little bit of good in the world. Along the way I also made some wonderful friends and had many beautiful experiences in amazing places, to counter the sad times, the disappointments, the losses.

Finally – and I have to say this – anyone who follows the news today, cannot be unaware that we are at an absolute tipping point regarding the future of our unique wildlife and natural ecosystems – those very ecosystems that also underpin our own health, well-being and prosperity. And that it will take enormous efforts to avoid catastrophic losses. (I don't use such words lightly)

So – I would like to accept this award in Margaret's name and in the names of everyone who works so tirelessly, but with such hope and determination, in the conservation movement. Thank you everyone.

