

# Thank you to our protectors

**Paul Nicolaou**



If 2025 reminded us of anything, it is that our sense of safety can't be taken for granted.

The Bondi Beach terrorist attack shocked Sydney to its core because it pierced the illusion that our city could be immune from violence seen elsewhere in the world.

Yet, amid the heartbreak, something else emerged with extraordinary clarity – the quiet heroism of those who run towards danger to allow others to get away from it.

This is the year we should formally acknowledge the people who keep us safe, hold our communities together and allow us to live in one of the world's most remarkable cities.

Our police, firefighters, paramedics, nurses, surf lifesavers, bushfire fighters and countless other essential workers are the unseen architecture of our society.

They are the reason Sydney continues to thrive as a global city that is both vibrant and liveable.

Bondi reminded us that in moments of chaos, it is these men and women who bring order.

In moments of fear, they bring reassurance. And in moments of tragedy, they bring compassion.

They don't do it for applause or for headlines. They do it because service is embedded in who they are. They are the human shield that protects us.

Think about the volunteers who patrol our surf; the nurses who care for us when we're at our most vulnerable; the firefighters who defend our homes and businesses; the police who keep our streets safe; the essential workers who ensure our city functions.

In 2026, let's go beyond words by making it the year governments, businesses and communities actively invest in the wellbeing, resources and long-term sustainability of our first responders and essential workers.

Gratitude is not measured with ceremonies alone, but by how we care for those who care for us.

We should resolve that this is the year to pause, reflect and say "thank you" to the people who make it all possible.

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