



*Westfield*

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*Local Heroes*

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2018

Westfield Local Heroes were nominated and voted for by their communities, with the three successful Westfield Local Heroes per centre each awarded a \$10,000 grant to support their affiliated organisation's work, programs or activities.



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In the first year of the Westfield Local Heroes program, we received an overwhelming response and many heart-warming stories after asking the local community to nominate individuals who promote wellbeing and harmony in their communities.

We congratulate every one of our nominees and recognise the important contribution they make to their local community.

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*Westfield*

**EASTGARDENS**

NSW



**Lara Galea**  
The Shack Youth Services

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*Caring, Giving, Dedicated*

## How a struggling student became a straight-A achiever

The young student was struggling with maths and needed help.

On her first day at the Shack Tutoring Program she was highly anxious and didn't want to leave her mum's side.

But thanks to the safe and welcoming environment created by Lara Galea she has blossomed into a confident straight-A student.

She is an example of the difference Shack Youth Services makes in the lives of year 6-to-12 students in the Randwick and Botany areas.

The program is a partnership with the University of NSW, which handpicks tutors from its student body.

Thanks to Lara's tireless efforts to enrol young people in the program, 120 kids are improving at school this year.

"Their grades are just getting better and better," says Lara, who has worked for the Shack for three years and also coordinates its school holiday program.

The students' strong relationship with their tutors, who are not much older than them, is encouraging many to think about going to university.

Lara is delighted to be a Westfield Local Hero, mostly because it will make more young people aware of the Shack.

The \$10,000 Westfield Local Heroes grant will allow the program to continue and fund a refurbishment of the Shack's drop-in centre.

"The school holiday program and drop-in centre are entry points where kids come in and meet the staff," says Lara.



## Sophie Panigirakis Bayside Women's Shelter

*Upbeat, Positive, Hardworking*

### Marketing executive Sophie finds most rewarding role of her life

Sophie Panigirakis had a high-flying marketing job, but she always got the biggest buzz out of the philanthropy work she did for her company.

Now, between setting up her own consultancy and taking care of her family, she has volunteered to help establish a new women's shelter in Bayside.

The shelter, which is expected to open in October 2018, will offer emergency accommodation for up to three months to women escaping domestic violence.

Sophie and her passionate board colleagues have been busy on the project for more than a year. She says supporting women and children who are left homeless by domestic violence has become "a way of life, of sorts."

That might be an understatement. As chair of the marketing committee, she has been working until all hours, engaging with council, the media and the local community. She is also responsible for all marketing material and the Shelter's website.

Many see Sophie as the glue that holds the project team together and her willingness to devote time and energy to the Shelter has gone way beyond what is expected of her.

But Sophie's loving her role.

"This is the most rewarding thing in my life, other than my family of course. I am passionate about working to empower women and promote harmony in our multicultural community," she says.

As part of her philanthropy work, Sophie has been particularly touched by a mother-of-two who survived family violence but lost her home.

Like Sophie, the woman had been in a corporate job but escaping the violence meant she had to sleep in her car.

She asks: "How many thousands of women have feared for their lives, changed jobs and taken their kids from the place they call home in the middle of the night to find safety?"

Sophie says she is honoured to be a Westfield Local Hero as it will increase awareness of domestic violence. But she is grateful to have the support of her family so she can devote her time to community work, which she plans to continue for the rest of her life.

The \$10,000 Westfield Local Heroes grant will be used to add finishing touches to the Shelter.

"It is mostly in perfect condition," says Sophie. "But it needs furniture, a security system and playground equipment for children."



**Kylie Ostle**  
Mum Society

*Honest, Passionate, Dedicated*

## Kylie turns her job loss into an inspiration for mums

Sales and marketing manager, Kylie Ostle was on maternity leave when her office delivered the bad news. She had been made redundant four weeks before her scheduled return to work.

"My confidence was completely shattered," says Kylie, a mother of three girls aged one to six years. But Kylie sprang quickly into action, founding the Mum Society and connecting with other mums via Facebook. I thought, what if I bring women together to do something lovely and try to champion change in the workplace."

Nearly six years later, Kylie is helping thousands of mums feel less isolated through her special networking events and Facebook page. Many have transformed their careers with her help.

Kylie organises a brunch with a well-known guest speaker every month. Past speakers include Jessica Rowe, Sally Obermeder and Mary Coustos. So far, Mum Society has hosted just over 4,000 mums at the brunches.

"It's a family friendly environment, but it really is very much about these women being the best version of themselves. We have had women struggling with postnatal depression and it gives them a purpose to get out and shake things up a little bit," says Kylie.

Kylie recently received a thank you email from a mum who was inspired to set up her own business after attending an event.

"She said it transformed her life. It's a really lovely endorsement of what we do."

The Mum Society has also helped 450 mums into more flexible jobs through its networking capability.

"We've had lots of businesses come along searching for help and we've managed to share those opportunities among our community."

Kylie says it is humbling to be voted a Westfield Local Hero, but feels it acknowledges all of her hard hard work.

The Mum Society will use its \$10,000 Westfield Local Heroes grant to fund an online maternity leave program to help women make the most of their family time while keeping in touch with their work and on top of opportunities for promotion. It will also be used to support disadvantaged Mums with free access to the events and a legal fund.

"A legal fund will also be established to help women who suffer workplace discrimination while on leave," says Kylie.

"Establishing this fund will better support women to know exactly where they can turn."

# Your 2018 Finalists

## **Peter Cooley** | First Hand Solutions Aboriginal Corp

*Passionate, Dedicated, Unselfish*

Peter is the CEO of First Hand Solutions Aboriginal Corp and has been working with Aboriginal youth for the last 15 years to help them reconnect to culture and build them into strong community leaders. Peter facilitates youth leadership camps, road trips and cultural exchange trips. Peter has recently created a new social enterprise called IndigiGrow, which is a native bushfood and plant production project located in La Perouse public school including development of a unit of work for students.

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## **Randa Habelrih** | Emrich MATES

*Passionate, Inspiring, Leader*

Randa is passionate about shifting the focus from autism awareness, to autism acceptance and inclusion. Through her work at Emrich Mates, Randa helps to provide opportunities and events which celebrate the strength of the individual and reset the standards of inclusion. Randa organises initiatives such as Leaders2MATES, ModelMATES events, Autism and ME conferences as well as online support groups for parents.

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## **Samantha Payne** | The Pink Elephants Support Network

*Beautiful, Supportive, Tenacious*

One in four pregnancies in Australia end in miscarriage, so through The Pink Elephants, Samantha has created a network for others experiencing the same grief, as well as producing support literature and online resources to help guide couples through the emotional turmoil of loss and infertility. Sam is the co-founder and drives the success of the charity from writing content to contacting press for reach and also networking with hospitals and GP's to distribute the care kits.



# Recognising all of our 2018 Nominees

**Tracey AYTON**

Little Heroes Swim Academy  
Limited

**Peter COOLEY**

First Hand Solutions Aboriginal  
Corporation

**Julia ELIOPOULOS**

Begin Bright, Maroubra

**Ben FITZGERALD**

New South Wales Police Force

**Lara GALEA**

The Shack Youth Services

**Randa HABELRIH**

EMRICH MATES

**Maria HEATON**

Sydney Children's Hospital

**Michelle HONAN**

Sydney Children's Hospital

**Vicki JOHNSTON**

**Andrew LAZARIS**

City of Sydney Basketball  
Association

**Sherri LONGBOTTOM**

La Perouse United Junior Rugby  
League Football Club

**Sandra NEWELL**

Maroubra Bay Public School

**Kylie OSTLE**

Mum Society

**Sophie PANIGIRAKIS**

Bayside Women's Shelter

**Samantha PAYNE**

The Pink Elephants Support  
Network

**Pam SMITH**

Sydney Children's Hospital

**Ben STAMMER**

Can Too Foundation Ltd

**Darren TAHU**

Father Chris Riley's Youth Off  
The Streets

**Dr Elysia THORNTON-BENKO**

Wellac Lifestyle (Wellness After,  
And During Cancer. Wellness And  
Contented Living)

A decorative red ribbon graphic that starts as a thick, straight line on the left and then curves and loops into a thinner, wavy line on the right.

**If you or anyone you know would like more information on what support is available:**

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**AUSTRALIA**

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800

MensLine: 1300 78 99 78

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636

1800RESPECT: 1800 737 732

**NEW ZEALAND**

Lifeline: 0800 543 354

Suicide Crisis Helpline: 0508 828 865

Kidsline: 0800 54 37 54

Depression Helpline: 0800 111 757

Samaritans: 0800 726 666

Family Violence Information Line: 0800 456 450





SCENTRE GROUP

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