



*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*

**DONCASTER**

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## **Karen Fox** Special Olympics – Melbourne Inner East

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*Committed, Enthusiastic, Kind*

### **Karen leads a team where everyone wins**

Every Wednesday a special group of swimmers meet at their local pool.

They are members of the Melbourne Inner East Special Olympics team and are training for local competitions and a chance to compete on a state, national or even world stage.

Coordinator and coach Karen Fox is always there to offer encouragement.

"It's all about the athletes, giving them a chance to train, compete and improve as well as have fun," she says.

At any time, around 40 intellectually disabled athletes aged between 10 and 40 train with the squad.

"Apart from the physical benefits, participation encourages social inclusion," says Karen, who has been a volunteer at the club for more than 10 years.

She is an active member of the Special Olympics committee and was a carer and team manager of the Victorian swimming team the Special Olympics National Games in South Australia.

The club training is tailored to the needs of each athlete so they can improve their swimming and self-esteem.

Thanks to her warm personality and enthusiasm, Karen has created an environment where everyone is welcome and included.

She encourages the swimmers to focus on personal bests rather than medals.

"We create equal opportunity for everyone and they all feel they are with friends," she says.

Karen feels honoured to be voted a Westfield Local Hero.

"It will increase the profile of the Special Olympics and show the community how amazing our athletes are. And it means that volunteers get recognised for all the effort they put in."

The \$10,000 grant will go towards hiring the pool, new equipment and further training for the three volunteer coaches.

"We're also looking at getting some uniforms so the athletes feel part of a team," says Karen.



## Eva Jo Edwards Connecting Home and Link Up

*Exemplar, Mentor, Nurturer*

### Eva jo helps people of the Stolen Generation reclaim their identity

When Eva jo Edwards's six children each reached about five years of age, she stopped giving them lots of hugs.

It wasn't that she loved them any less. It was just that she had no experience of parental love beyond the age of five. That's how old she was when she and her siblings were wrenched from their family and community to spend the next 13 years as wards of the Department of Human Services.

"A lot of the Stolen Generation struggle to tell their kids they love them every other day," says Eva jo.

One of her passions is to educate all Australians about what happened to the Stolen Generation not so long ago. She shares her story widely, talking at schools, libraries and at corporate events.

"It's not about making people feel guilty, it's about learning from our past and healing our future," she says.

Thanks to what she describes as her own 30-year journey of healing, she is able to be a profoundly positive role model for people in her community.

She is a storyteller, an empathetic listener and an emotional healer. She is also an active volunteer for the two Stolen Generation organisations in Victoria, Connecting Home and Link up.

Connecting Home focuses on emotional rehabilitation and Link up helps people trace lost family and compile their family tree.

One of Eva jo's roles is to help find traditional names of descendants who were shunted around Victoria as a function of the land removal policies which predated the stolen generation policies.

Eva jo has only recently uncovered her own family history. "Last year I finally felt complete knowing who my family is and where I am connected."

She feels blessed to have been supported by the community and voted a Westfield Local Hero.

The \$10,000 Westfield grant awarded in her honour will be shared by Connecting Home and Link Up.

Connecting home will use its money to provide urgent emotional and financial support to people in need.

Link Up will use its portion to help people trace their family and return to country. This is a healing opportunity for people to visit Gravesites or homes where their family were once part of a community.



## **Melissa Noonan** Limbs 4 Life Incorporated

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*Passionate, Determined,  
Selfless*

### **How Melissa's trauma inspired her to help others**

Melissa Noonan came up with the idea for Limbs 4 Life soon after losing her right leg above the knee in an accident.

She was undergoing rehabilitation and was feeling isolated and worried.

"I couldn't believe how many amputees there were in rehab and I couldn't understand how in a country such as ours information and support didn't exist," she says.

It was only a chance meeting with another amputee that provided her with some guidance and comfort. "It was just amazing to share my fears and concerns with him and ask all the questions I had."

One year later, Melissa founded Limbs 4 Life.

Volunteers who have lost limbs provide one-on-one support to children and adults who have lost limbs through an accident or illness or who were born with limb differences.

There are also social activities and web-based information.

Melissa's unflagging efforts include visits to schools and community groups to share her story and raise awareness.

She is determined to help prevent future amputations by encouraging prevention, such as foot-health checks for older people and those at risk because of diabetes.

Initially, Melissa balanced Limbs 4 Life with her paid work. But a small seed grant eventually enabled her to become a paid executive officer — albeit with a significant drop in salary.

Limbs 4 Life responds to 2000 calls a year and around 150 people who have lost limbs have been trained to provide support.

It's a testament to Melissa's dedication that she has been recognised with three previous awards, including a Pride of Australia Medal for Courage.

She says, "it is an absolute thrill to be voted a Westfield Local Hero."

Limbs 4 Life will use its \$10,000 Westfield grant to help increase its volunteer workforce and to print information kits.

"It will help cover our volunteer insurance, which is quite costly," says Melissa.

# Your 2018 Finalists

## **Jeanette Carrison** | Foster Care Association of Victoria

*Dedicated, Unselfish, Caring*

Jeanette has taken over 50 foster kids into her own home over the last 20 years until they can find a permanent family. She began foster caring as a single mum with four children, and has continued to be a safe haven for kids in crisis.

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## **Pippa French** | 3000acres

*Passionate, Generous, Creative*

By building community gardens, running educational workshops and facilitating residents to share their resources, Pippa through 3000acres has helped people grow fresh and healthy food. Through events and community gardens they promote social wellbeing through fighting isolation (bringing people together – mental health), ensuring people understand and have access to fresh/healthy food (physical health) and creating safe outdoor spaces for learning and sharing.

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## **Jo-Anne Otten** | Crossway Lifecare Ltd

*Compassionate, Tenacious, Caring*

Through her work as the Youth COACH Program Coordinator at Crossway Lifecare, Jo-Anne implements a mentoring program for at-risk and vulnerable young people in Doncaster and surrounding communities. Passionate about empowering disadvantaged youth, Jo-Anne works to increase resilience, create a sense of belonging and maintain their engagement with education and employment.



# Recognising all of our 2018 Nominees

**Jeanette CARRISON**  
Foster Care Association of Victoria

**David DYASON**  
Run Warrandyte

**Evajo EDWARDS**  
Connecting Home and Link Up

**Chantell FELLOWES**  
Little Lotus Books

**Karen FOX**  
Special Olympics –  
Melbourne Inner East

**Pippa FRENCH**  
3000acres

**Ian HOLOWKO**  
MICH Joint Venture.  
ABN 89381619828 (Manningham  
Inclusive Community Housing Inc)

**Liza KARRAS**  
Melbourne Volunteer Branch of  
Make A-Wish Australia

**Roy KOSSENA**  
Write On

**Natalie KYRIACOU**  
My Green World

**Chris LLOYD**  
Mitcham Thunder Basketball Club

**Bob MIETUS**  
Leukaemia Foundation

**Anthony (Tony) MONLEY**  
Doncaster Community Care and  
Counselling Centre Inc (Doncare)

**Melissa NOONAN**  
Limbs 4 Life Incorporated

**Jo-Anne OTTEN**  
Crossway Lifecare Ltd

**Peter ROYCE**  
300 Blankets Inc

**Jade SHANAHAN**  
Big Brothers Big Sisters Australia

**Mel TURNBULL**  
Firekeepers Incorporated

**Cathy WILLIAMS**  
Team Kill Cancer Inc



**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

Kidslines: 0800 54 37 54

Depression Helpline: 0800 111 757

Samaritans: 0800 726 666

Family Violence Information Line: 0800 456 450





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