



*Westfield*

*Local Heroes*

2019

Westfield Local Heroes is a community recognition and grants program, designed to shine the spotlight on those people who connect and enrich their local communities across Australia and New Zealand.

Individuals are nominated by their local communities, with the outcome of a public vote determining the three successful 2019 nominees for every Westfield centre. In total, we are recognising 121 Westfield Local Heroes across Australia and New Zealand in 2019.

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Each of the affiliated organisations of the Westfield Local Heroes have received a grant to support their work. Westfield will award 121 grants across Australia and New Zealand – totalling \$1.2 million.

We congratulate all the 2019 nominees for being recognised by their communities and thank them for the important contribution they all make to improving social wellbeing in their local areas.

[westfield.com.au/local-heroes](https://westfield.com.au/local-heroes) [westfield.co.nz/local-heroes](https://westfield.co.nz/local-heroes)

# *Westfield*

**Sydney**  
NSW

# Year-long sabbatical achieves deeply-rewarding results

**Jane Horvath** — Newtown Neighbourhood Centre

*Enthusiastic, Driven, Passionate*

When Jane Horvath took a year's sabbatical from her career to volunteer full-time, she offered her services to Newtown Neighbourhood Centre (NNC).

She grabbed an opportunity to help set up the centre's Newtopian Outreach, which uses the services of professional volunteers and trained 20 locals to engage with and support rough sleepers.

Thanks to Jane's pioneering work, amazing community support and leadership from NNC, community harmony has improved, and fear and stigma have been reduced. Now, other similar projects are planned.

Jane says being a Newtopian Outreach has been one of the most rewarding experiences of her life. "I have connected with my community of 20 years in a deeper and more authentic way."

Jane says she is used to working behind the scenes and feels many

emotions about being voted a Westfield Local Hero. Primarily, she sees it as a great reflection on what community can do, rather than necessarily celebrating her individual effort.

"It's confirming that what we are doing for people who are experiencing homelessness is having a positive impact, and that's really exciting."

Jane's colleagues respect her for prioritising the needs and interests of people experiencing homelessness wherever possible and including them in determining what response best serves their needs, rather than imposing solutions.

She also has strong values around the importance of acting and connecting locally, knowing one's neighbours and showing empathy towards those who are doing it tough.

Jane says it is not only people experiencing homelessness who benefit from the project. "The wider community can be distressed by the plight of people experiencing homelessness and feel powerless to assist or direct them to appropriate services."

Westfield Local Heroes are nominated and voted for by their communities. The top three finalists per Westfield centre are each awarded a \$10,000 grant for their organisation. Newtown Neighbourhood Centre will use its grant to replicate Newtopian Outreach in other areas. This will increase Sydney's capacity to assist people experiencing homelessness more effectively.

"As part of the Local Hero program, I've enjoyed getting out and walking the streets of Newtown having conversations to raise awareness of homelessness with businesses and the local community."

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## Sister mentors give girls an opportunity to thrive

**Jessica Brown** — Life Changing Experiences Foundation

*Selfless, Passionate, Inspirational*

Jessica Brown was a high school teacher for ten years, and it broke her heart to see girls falling through the cracks because of childhood trauma.

She was determined to give them an opportunity to thrive and break the cycle of unemployment and neglect that may have been in their family for generations.

So, seventeen years ago, she made many personal sacrifices to set up the Life Changing Experiences Foundation and the SISTER2sister program.

SISTER2sister pairs the girls up with trained mentors who often become safe and positive life-long role models.

The girls are also taken through an intensive course that helps them heal, build self-belief and set career goals.

The mentors are like big sisters that some of our girls never had, says Jessica. "For most of them, it is the first time in their life that they have had someone positive and stable."

Jessica feels honoured to be voted a Westfield Local Hero. "We don't do it for the recognition, but it's lovely to be recognised," she says.

So far, she has taken close to six hundred girls through the program and usually stays in touch with them afterwards. More than eighty per cent of the graduates have gone on to finish high school, and more than half of them are the first person in their family to do so.

Another positive outcome is that most can identify when a relationship is bad for them, says Jessica, who has been an NSW finalist for Australian of the

Year and received the 2013 NSW Woman of the Year-Local Hero Community Choice Award.

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The foundation will use its grant to cover the cost of training eleven mentors to ensure a safe, stable and positive experience for eleven girls.

"The grant means so much to us," says Jessica. We run on the smell of an oily rag, and every dollar makes a difference. The girls' lives are going to be changed by this money."

# Brave fighter helps vulnerable girls rewrite their future

## Vivian Stavis — Lillian Howell Project

*Inspirational, Passionate, Caring*

Vivian Stavis had been the manager of the Lillian Howell Project (Lillian's) for only a year when state reforms cut off funding.

Fearful for the vulnerable young women in her care, Vivian led a persistent lobbying campaign and a change.org petition that convinced the NSW government to backtrack. As a result, she received the Edna Ryan Award for community activism and feminist activity.

Four years later, Lillian's is going strong, providing supported housing for up to 11 teenagers at a time. They learn how to lead fulfilling lives and are helped to heal from sexual abuse, neglect, homelessness or family violence.

"Lillian's allows the girls to follow their dreams and to rewrite their future," says Vivian, who is

excited to be voted a Westfield Local Hero.

"It is amazing to be recognised for the work by the wider community. It's a real honour. For a long time, we had a very low profile. But the only way we can keep on thriving and providing opportunities for the girls is to garner community support."

Vivian has been working in community services for 15 years but says her best job ever is at Lillian's "supporting and empowering young women to be the best version of themselves".

Vivian's work also includes an outreach program. "We provide workshops in schools, promoting awareness about the causes of homelessness and providing information about services available for young girls."

Westfield Local Heroes are nominated and voted for by their communities, with the three top finalists per Westfield centre each awarded a \$10,000 grant for their affiliated organisation. Lillian's will use its grant to run workshops on wellbeing and resilience for 100 vulnerable young girls and women. Activities will teach the girls to thrive mentally and socially, help them to be more safe and secure within themselves and enhance their self-esteem.

"We want to run these workshops for the girls and young women that we case manage, to provide beneficial experiences to increase their social capacity. This also includes art therapy and play therapy," says Vivian.

More social outings, such as going to the cinema or doing ice-skating, are also on the cards.

**"It is amazing to be recognised for the work by the wider community. It's a real honour. For a long time, we had a very low profile. But the only way we can keep on thriving and providing opportunities for the girls is to garner community support."**

# Your 2019 Finalists

## **Kate Manton**

### **Settlement Services International**

Kate Manton's passion for diversity and inclusion makes her a perfect volunteer ambassador for the Welcome2Sydney project. Welcome2Sydney is run by Settlement Services International and helps new arrivals feel connected to the city and improves their self-confidence and social wellbeing. Kate is a driving force behind the project and has taken on the role of public spokesperson. She has personally helped more than one hundred refugees and other newcomers practice their English and form meaningful connections. "Being an ambassador has opened my eyes to the struggles faced by new arrivals," says Kate.

## **Kai Noonan**

### **ACON**

Kai Noonan is a rare advocate for people in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) community who experience domestic and family violence. She has worked tirelessly to raise awareness and develop resources since 2015 when she started managing a project on behalf of LGBTIQ advocate organisation ACON. She says LGBTIQ people are as likely, if not more likely, than people in the general population to be involved in an abusive intimate or family relationship, but they often don't know where to find help. This is something Kai wants to change.

## **Will Hawes**

### **Will2Live**

Will Hawes hit rock bottom seven years ago, living in his mum's garage, in debt and addicted to drugs. When he was ready to turn his life around, he could not find work. But he was grateful for the support he had and started giving back. He would make healthy sandwiches at his mums and walk the streets, handing them out along with a piece of fruit and water. That humble start turned into Will2Live, which now serves more than 700 hearty meals a week and holds mass support events for vulnerable people in Sydney.

# Recognising all of our 2019 Nominees

**Steve ANTHONY**  
Giant Steps Australia

**Helen APPLETON**  
Giant Steps Australia

**Jennifer BRISCOE-HOUGH**  
Tender Funerals

**Jessica BROWN**  
Life Changing Experiences Foundation

**Angela COOKE**  
Police Citizens Youth Club NSW  
(PCYC South Sydney)

**Denise CRAMSIE**  
Vision Australia

**Jeremy DIMECH**  
Bobby Goldsmith Foundation

**Sandy DONOHOE**  
Plates4Mates

**Fatma ELZEIN**  
Mummies Paying It Forward

**Sarah FOSTER**  
Childrens Book Council  
Australia (NSW) Branch

**Jessica GERAGHTY**  
Make-A-Wish Australia

**Michael GOLDBERG**  
Community Cat Carers

**Kylie HARRIS**  
Midnight Feast – theatre that unites

**Will HAWES**  
Will2Live

**Maureen HEFFERNAN**  
Open Support

**Jane HORVATH**  
Newtown Neighbourhood Centre Inc

**Leanne MacCALLUM**  
Giant Steps Australia

**Kate MANTON**  
Settlement Services International

**Rosano MARTINEZ**  
Youth and Family Connect

**Michael MOBBS**  
Sustainable House

**John MORAN**  
Ovarian Cancer Research Australia

**Kai NOONAN**  
ACON

**Ian PARTRIDGE**  
Youth Off The Streets

**Matt RODEN**  
Story Factory

**Vivan STAVIS**  
Lillian Howell Project Inc

**Cathryn STOKES**  
Mums 4 Refugees

**Chris VAGG**  
Pass It On Clothing & Co

**Lucy WATSON**  
Milk Crate Theatre

**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

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**SCENTRE GROUP**