

*Westfield*

*Local Heroes*

2020

Westfield Local Heroes is a recognition and awards program that discovers and celebrates people across Australia and New Zealand who make a positive impact to their local community and environment.

Individuals are nominated by their local communities and a public vote determines the successful 2020 nominees for every Westfield centre.

The successful heroes are each awarded \$10,000 for their affiliated organisations.

*Westfield*  
*Local Heroes*

Since the program began, we have awarded \$3.62 million to 363 community organisations.

Every year, we recognise more than 120 Westfield Local Heroes and provide more than \$1.2M in community grants to their affiliated organisations.

We congratulate all the 2020 nominees for being recognised by their communities and thank them for the important contribution they all make.

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

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

# Westfield

# Liverpool

## NSW

**During her working day and after hours, special education teacher Myrna Dominguez tries to improve the quality of life of families living with autism.**

Myrna has been working in the disability field for over 20 years and has been with the Autism Advisory & Support Service for 4.5 years. She has achieved several wins in that time.

She uses her knowledge and experience as a teacher to deliver behavioural support and social skills programs to primary and high school students.

Myrna also works with teachers to develop specific learning plans for students with autism and provides mentoring and training to carers, educators and disability staff.

Out of work hours, she supports overwhelmed parents, making phone calls to arrange access to much-needed funding and services.

"I have worked with families who were so desperate for support that the only option for them was to give up care of the children to the state, she says.

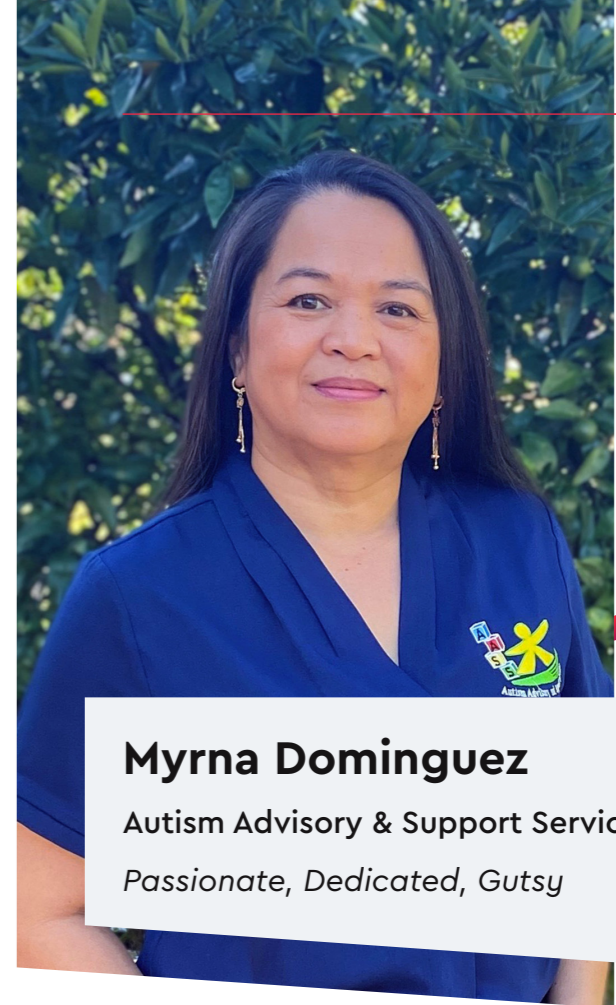
Myrna's passion comes from her own experiences as the mother of a child with autism. She fought hard for an educational package to support her son during his entire school journey, and he now leads a happy and fulfilled life. He is currently studying a Diploma in Music Performance and enjoys making music with his friends.

"The passion that I have for supporting families, carers and individuals comes from having a lived experience of how wonderful and difficult the autism journey can be," she says.

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.

Autism & Advisory Support Service will use its grant to create a sensory room to provide a calm, relaxing space for children and adults with autism.

*Myrna's nominator says: "Myrna is a dedicated and courageous advocate. Her personal and working life is dedicated to improving the lives of children and adults with autism and their families."*



**Myrna Dominguez**  
Autism Advisory & Support Service  
*Passionate, Dedicated, Gutsy*

## Helping families with autism

**"The passion that I have for supporting families, carers and individuals comes from having a lived experience of how wonderful and difficult the autism journey can be."**





## Malaemie (Mal) Fruean

South West Multicultural and Community Centre Inc

*Passionate, Selfless, Committed*

## Community connector

**"We encourage people to be proud of their culture but to also engage in the beautiful diversity that we have in NSW," Mal says.**

**Malaemie (Mal) Fruean thrives on being a community connector and has helped many people during a volunteering and professional career that spans more than 20 years.**

Mal is CEO of the South West Multicultural and Community Centre, where she takes a personal interest in everyone who walks through the door.

Mal listens to what people want and guides them into the centre's many programs. If needed, she connects them with her extensive network of trusted social workers, caseworkers and other service providers.

Services at the centre include a mums and bubs group, exercise classes, language lessons, cultural engagement meetings and a seniors group.

Mal is particularly proud of her food hamper program, the demand for which has soared during COVID-19. She is also pleased with the centre's efforts to help released prisoners reintegrate with society.

Mal is committed to multiculturalism, but she is a proud Maori woman and the centre attracts many Pacific people.

"We encourage people to be proud of their culture but to also engage in the beautiful diversity that we have in NSW," Mal says.

"It is a blessing to do this work, and the reward is being able to open up a pathway for people."

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.

South West Multicultural and Community Centre will use its grant to help cover the costs of trainers, facilitators and ongoing expenses.

*Mal's nominator says: "Mal is committed to others and has assisted, supported, mentored and inspired hundreds of people from all walks of life."*

**Elizabeth Wicks has worked for The Smith Family for many years and goes above and beyond to help students from disadvantaged backgrounds get the support they need to succeed at school.**

Elizabeth helps more than 400 students from schools across the local area through the Learning for Life program, which has three long-term pillars: attendance at school, completion of Year 12 and post-school engagement in work, study or training.

Elizabeth embraces the cultural diversity of the area and is mindful of the challenges newly arrived refugees may be facing.

"Working with families from such culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds requires constant training on my part so that I can ensure the programs I am offering are relevant and applicable to the families and take into consideration their unique circumstances," she says.

"I aim to create safe, fun and engaging programs for our students to be excited about being a part of."

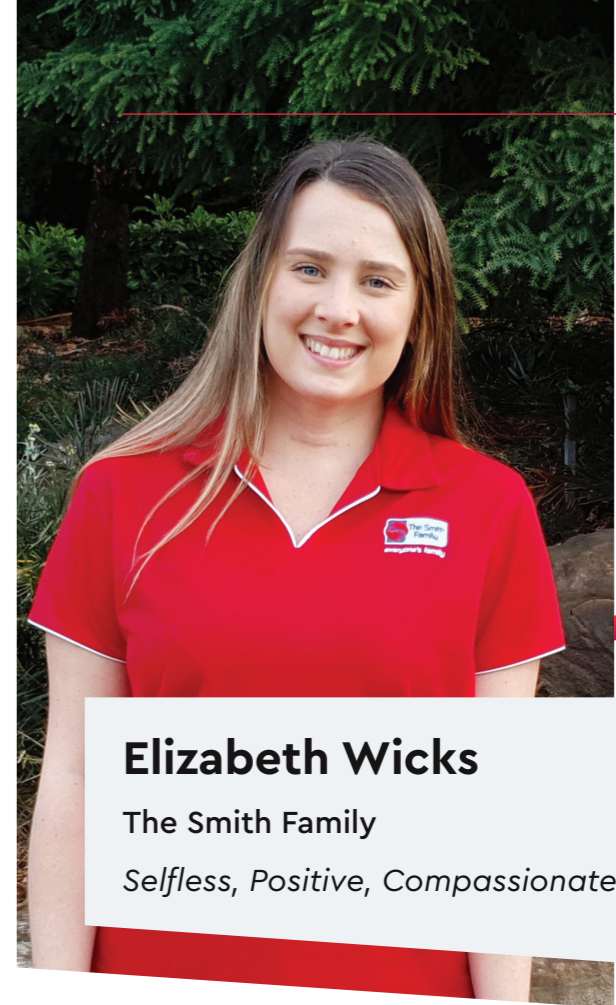
Elizabeth often fills in when volunteers are unable to make it and does whatever she can to remove barriers to learning.

"Recently, I delivered a Digital Access Program to families living in Liverpool, providing them with a refurbished computer and a year's worth of internet access to support their schooling."

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.

The Smith Family will use its grant to establish an after-school program.

*Elizabeth's nominator says: "Elizabeth works tirelessly to ensure that students living in disadvantage in the Liverpool area truly have access to the resources and support they need to succeed at school and create better futures for themselves. She is a star!"*



## Elizabeth Wicks

The Smith Family

*Selfless, Positive, Compassionate*

## Helping students succeed

**"I aim to create safe, fun and engaging programs for our students to be excited about being a part of."**

## Your 2020 Finalists

### Stephanie Wait Core Community Services

Residential youth worker Stephanie Wait goes the extra mile for at-risk youth, including making sure every homeless young person she supports has a gift at Christmas.

Stephanie is a Residential Youth Worker at a crisis refuge run by Core Community Services.

It's not uncommon for young people to lash out because they are afraid, and many have been refuge-hopping for a long time because there is not enough accommodation.

Having experienced homelessness herself, Stephanie says: "I won't give up on a young person, even if they have given up on themselves."

### Carla Filipakis Decorati

Early childhood teacher Carla Filipakis is doing her bit to tackle childhood obesity and put children on the path to healthy eating.

Carla runs a specialised children's events business, Decorati, and uses her educational skills to advocate for healthy childhood nutrition.

She offers healthy cooking classes to children in collaboration with early educational centres, primary schools and the wider community.

"I want to make a change," Carla says. "To give back is so rewarding and means the world to me," she says.

## Recognising all of our 2020 nominees

**Adam Washbourne**  
Fighters Against Child Abuse  
Australia (FACAA)

**Lisa Buchanan**  
Liverpool Neighbourhood  
Connections

**Master Paul Mitchell**  
United Taekwondo

**Carla Filipakis**  
Decorati Kids

**Myrna Dominguez**  
Autism Advisory & Support Service

**Elizabeth Wicks**  
The Smith Family

**Stephanie Wait**  
Core Community Services

**Malaemie Fruean**  
South West Multicultural  
And Community Centre Inc

**Dave Barnes**  
Navy Cadets

**Cameron Elliott**  
Children's Tumour Foundation

**Kylie Pussell**  
Miracle Babies Foundation

**Nikhil Autar**  
Playwell Ltd

**Darlene Mene**  
Macarthur Adventist College

**Caitlin Gallagher**  
Wombat Care Bundanoon

**Donna Sillett**  
Macarthur Makeovers

**Vinita Singh**  
ANATLA V Pty Ltd  
- Thrive Festival

**Nadia Loprete**  
Make-A-Wish Australia

**Arash Salehi**  
Core Community Services

**Michelle Legg**  
Wollondilly Women In  
Business Network

**Robyn Phillips**  
Liverpool Girls Physical  
Culture Club

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

---

**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

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

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

---



*Westfield*  
*Local Heroes*  
2020

SCENTRE GROUP