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.

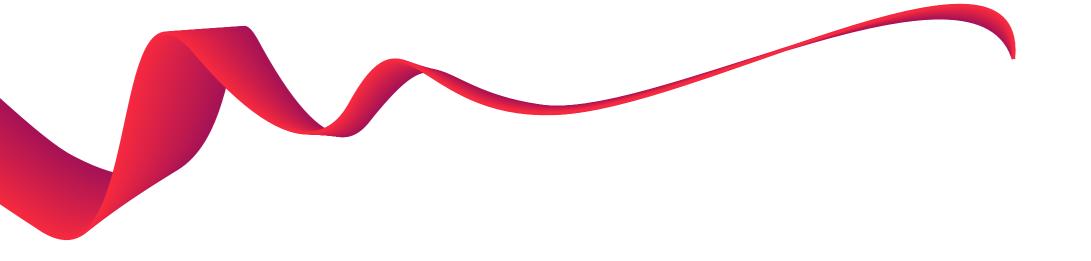
We congratulate all the 2020 nominees for being recognised by their communities and thank them for the important contribution they all make.

westfield.com.au/local-heroes westfield.co.nz/local-heroes

## Westfield

## Sydney

NSW



Max Burt was in a horrific car crash with a London fire engine and needs a carer to help him with many activities of daily living and uses a powered wheelchair to get around.

He moved to Sydney in 2011 with his Australian wife, Justine, and helps councils with their accessibility planning.

Max is deeply concerned about the impact of social isolation on people with mobility issues and the lack of readily available accessibility information.

"Not being fully integrated into everyday life is something which happens, in varying degrees, to people with mobility impairments," Max says.

"It's not only them. It's also everyone who spends time with them. You all get stuck, give up and stay in; everyone becomes excluded."

So he decided to do something about it and in 2018 founded a charity, WheelEasy, which produces a web app to promote mobility. "It brings together access information on everything from beaches to cinemas to cafes and invites people to share what they know.

WheelEasy has grown to cover the whole City of Sydney. And Max has a council grant for people to come together to map their local area in detail and share useful pictures. But this was interrupted by COVID-19 and social distancing.

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The WheelEasy Foundation will use its grant to expand the Mapping March program that was postponed by COVID-19.

Max's nominator says: "Max is making our local community a better place that is inclusive for all, and he has created an opportunity for the whole community to be better connected and to support each other."



Max Burt
The WheelEasy Foundation
Generous, Determined, Innovative

### Mapping for mobility

"Not being fully integrated into everyday life is something which happens, in varying degrees, to people with mobility impairments."

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#### **Azita Abdollahian**

**Shining Light Foundation** 

Courageous, Inspiring and Compassionate

### **Brave rescuer**

"From that night, I picked myself up, put my shattered pieces together and enrolled in university at the age of 40 to study psychology." When Azita Abdollahian arrived in Australia as a refugee, her husband was extremely controlling and would not let her integrate.

The young mother and former teenage bride taught herself English by watching the Wiggles.

She stayed in the marriage for 22 years, partly because she feared becoming homeless.

She plucked up the courage to leave when a police officer reached out to her during a visit to her home.

Azita recounts the words of a woman police officer who helped her reinvent her life. "She told me: 'Azita, you deserve to be happy, you deserve to be respected, and you deserve to be loved'.

"From that night, I picked myself up, put my shattered pieces together and enrolled in university at the age of 40 to study psychology."

Azita has launched the Shining Light foundation to support women on the streets of Sydney.

"Once I learned that my wounds are my superpower, I found it easy to connect to the most vulnerable people, especially all the women who ended up in the street due to domestic violence," says Azita, who is a qualified hairdresser.

Azita has worked with homeless people for more than five years, providing them with support, company, conversation, donated goods and haircuts.

From a person who couldn't speak English, Azita is now the author of her own book, encouraging and education others by sharing her own life stories.

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Shining Light Foundation will use its grant to buy a van to set up for haircuts and to deliver donated items.

Azita's nominator says: "Azita helps some of the most vulnerable people in our local community, helping them to rediscover their sense of self-worth and gain the skills and confidence to become contributing members of our community again."

Proud dad Ashley Scott has been an active and dedicated member of Rainbow Families since helping to start the organisation in 2015.

Ashley works hard to help Rainbow Families fulfil its purpose of providing support and resources to members of the LGBTIQA+ community so they and their families can live their best lives.

He is part of the glue that keeps the organisation together, keeping the website up to date, helping to organise events, responding to emails and raise funds.

He has also been to Canberra to lobby politicians and successfully brought lesbian and gay parents together to hold joint family events.

But Ashley is most proud of his role in setting up antenatal classes that cater to the unique needs of LGBTIQA+ parents.

After a successful test program, the classes are now run by midwife educators from Sydney Local Health District.

Parents feel safe to ask questions they would not be able to ask in a traditional class, says Ashley. "When I had my children, there was no class available for gay dads who were expecting a baby. So I was handed a baby with no idea what to expect. Lucky for me, I had a wonderfully supportive family so I was fine," he says.

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Rainbow Families will use its grant to lobby for parenting law reforms and produce a guide for partners who are separating.

Ashley's nominator says: "Ashley had a vision of an organisation that connects, supports and empowers LGBTIQA+ parents and their children. Through his tireless work, dedication and ability to bring the community together, this goal has been achieved."

WESTFIELD 2020 LOCAL HEROES



**Ashley Scott** 

Rainbow Families

Dedicated, Determined, Caring

### Supporting LGBTIQA+ families

"Ashley is most proud of his role in setting up antenatal classes that cater to the unique needs of LGBTIQA+ parents."

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### **Your 2020 Finalists**

#### **Alison Covington**

#### Good360 Australia

Social entrepreneur Alison Covington is a donation enabler on a grand scale.

She founded Good360 to provide an online platform to connect the brand new surplus goods donated by businesses to charities and disadvantaged schools to help their communities in need.

So far, Good360 has sourced more than \$145 million of goods. That's over 14.3 million items matched to more than 2000 member charities and eligible schools.

"If Australians have the need, our partners have the goods and Good360 has the ability to efficiently connect them," Alison says.

#### Shazia Mia

#### Settlement Services International

Shazia Mia knows firsthand why migrants can live in Australia for many years and still speak limited English or lack knowledge about the local community.

She is doing whatever she can to help newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers assimilate into their new world.

As an enthusiastic volunteer ambassador for Settlement Services International's Welcome2Sydney program, Shazia continues to surprise and delight her colleagues with her dedication.

She has worked with more than 100 newcomers, boosting their confidence and practising English.

#### Anna Jane (AJ) Linke

#### Seaside Scavenge

Environmentalist Anna Jane (AJ) Linke has captured people's imagination with her novel approach to cleaning up plastic and textile waste.

The charity she started, Seaside Scavenge, organises fun clean-up events and clothes swap events.
There's live music, and local businesses give participants icecream, coffee and beer in exchange for trash tokens.

So far, 7546 Scavengers have participated in 75 waste education events. A point of pride is that eight out of ten had never previously participated in a clean-up.

## Recognising all of our 2020 nominees

Sally Irwin

The Freedom Hub

**Tory Archbold** 

Powerful Steps

Gabriella Holmes

Sir David Martin Foundation

**Brittany Bloomer** 

Pound Paws

**Ali Taylor**Listen Up Music

Dr Anne Fulcher

The Shepherd Centre
- For Deaf Children

Selina Thomas

NSW SES Volunteer's Association

Pastor Sam Stamos

Newtown Mission – Jordan Cafe

Kelliegh Jackson
Eves Front Limited

Julie Moffat

WIRES Inner West Branch

Kamalika Dasgupta Shequ Group Inc **Hamish Toohey** 

**Dominique Robinson** 

Tour De Cure

Kua

Anna Shepherd

Woolloomoolloo And Inner City
Police Community Scholarship
Foundation (Wicpcsf)

**Mary Mortimer** 

Pyrmont Community

Lliane Clarke

Voices Of Women

**Dea Richardson**Art Gallery New South Wales

Anna Jane Linke
Seaside Scavenge

Ashley Scott
Rainbow Families

Shazia Mia

Settlement Services International

**Azita Abdollahian**Shining Light Foundation

David Murphy

Balmain Little Athletics Club

Max Burt

The WheelEasy Foundation

**Alison Covington**Good360 Australia

Barry Irvin

Giant Steps Australia

Stella Healy
Ruff Sleepers

Rachael Bowen
Giant Steps Australia

Antonella Lopez
Work Warriors

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WESTFIELD 2020 LOCAL HEROES

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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

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