



*Westfield*

*Local Heroes*

2021

Westfield Local Heroes is a community recognition and awards program, designed to shine the spotlight on those people across Australia and New Zealand who make a positive impact to their local community and environment.

Individuals are nominated by their local communities, with the outcome of a public vote determining the three successful 2021 nominees for every Westfield centre.

# Westfield Local Heroes

Now in its fourth year, we have awarded \$4.88 million to 489 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 2021 nominees for being recognised by their communities and thank them for the important contribution they all make.



*Westfield*

**Airport West**

VIC

**Alyshia Clarke started her Dance 4 All studio to bring children of all abilities together to have fun and be themselves.**

Alyshia is a dance teacher and integration aide and started her dance studio to break down barriers for children with autism, developmental delays, physical challenges and sensory sensitivities who often feel excluded from social and sporting programs.

She trialled one all-abilities dance class to test the interest and put on a second class within a week following overwhelming demand.

The joyful classes are designed to help the children develop motor, social and cognitive skills.

Assistant buddies are welcome to attend at no cost so that every dancer has the support they need.

Alyshia's most memorable moments include watching a non-verbal child communicate and withdrawn students becoming increasingly confident.

She is thrilled the classes promote acceptance of the children, with the all-abilities classes growing faster than the mainstream dance classes she offers. Some families travel 45 minutes to attend.

Alyshia is proud to be nominated as a Westfield Local Hero. "I hope to become a positive role model for my students and the wider community. Neurodiverse children are gifted in ways that our society doesn't value enough," she says.

*Alyshia's nominator says: "Alyshia is a Westfield Local Hero because she challenges social barriers and stigma around disability. She believes everyone deserves a chance to dance."*



## Dancing through barriers

### Alyshia Clarke

Dance 4 All

*Passionate, Generous, Ambitious*

**"I hope to become a positive role model for my students and the wider community. Neurodiverse children are gifted in ways that our society doesn't value enough."**



## Providing support and safety

### Jocelyn Bignold OAM

McAuley Community Services for Women

*Passionate, Innovative, Campaigner*

*"We are on a constant path to providing more solutions through accommodation and support but also through our advocacy work. I am inspired every day by the work we are doing."*

**Jocelyn Bignold OAM leads an organisation that makes a considerable difference in the lives of women and children experiencing family violence and homelessness.**

As CEO of the McAuley Community Services for Women, Jocelyn is the driving force behind the non-profit, which operates a range of crisis to long term housing and was the first 24/7 crisis service in Victoria. It supported 1392 women in the last financial year, an 18 per cent increase over the previous year.

Working in partnership with other local services, 405 trauma counselling sessions were provided; more than \$218,000 in debt collectively owed by women linked to family violence was waived.

Under Jocelyn's leadership, McAuley also helped dozens of women who had been homeless or at risk of homelessness into permanent accommodation, 36 into employment and provided

tutoring for children whose schooling had been interrupted by family violence.

Jocelyn has over 25 years' experience advocating for women and was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in 2020 for her work.

She is determined to find new and better ways to support women and children.

Jocelyn says her nomination as a Westfield Local Hero honours her whole team. "We are on a constant path to providing more solutions through accommodation and support but also through our advocacy work. I am inspired every day by the work we are doing."

*Jocelyn's nominator says: "Jocelyn is a Westfield Local Hero because she has dedicated her life to initiatives that improve the safety of women and children in our community, leading by example and creating change."*

**Ali Halkic has reached more than 500,000 people with his bullying prevention workshops since he set up his Bully Zero organisation.**

Ali's son Allem was just 17 when he took his own life in 2009 after being relentlessly bullied online by a former friend.

From that moment, Ali has been in the public eye highlighting the dangers of cyberbullying. These include severe anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation.

Ali established Bully Zero eight years ago to garner community support for the thousands of Australians who experience bullying every day.

The non-profit's workshops help young people, parents and the wider community understand the impact people's actions can have on others, even if they are bystanders.

Ali's team also deliver a three-year program in workplaces. About one in four workplace mental health claims are caused by bullying.

Ali is proud that his evidence-based bullying prevention workshops resonate with young people, parents, teachers and employees.

He says his nomination as a Westfield Local Hero honours his son. "His tragic loss has equipped me with the tools to educate the community about bullying and the risks associated with it. Ultimately, these tools help save lives," he says.

*Ali's nominator says: "Ali is a Westfield Local Hero because his mission to prevent and reduce bullying through evidence-based education, advocacy and community support has saved lives."*

If you need support, please phone Lifeline: 13 11 14



**Putting an end to torment**

## **Ali Halkic**

Bully Zero

*Dedicated, Selfless, Determined*

**"His tragic loss has equipped me with the tools to educate the community about bullying and the risks associated with it. Ultimately, these tools help save lives."**

# Your 2021 Finalists



**Sandra Jacobs**

## **The Nappy Collective**

Sandra Jacobs is supporting the health and wellbeing of tens of thousands of vulnerable children through her Nappy Collective charity. The charity collects outgrown nappies from families and passes them on to parents who cannot afford enough nappies for their babies. Sandra has turned her local initiative into a national charity and has helped 140,000 families in eight years.



**Kristen Mirchevski**

## **Vision Australia**

Social worker Kristen Mirchevski lost her vision in childhood and leapt at the chance to help others lead an independent and fulfilling life. Kristen is a long-time client of Vision Australia and knew she was in the perfect position to volunteer to help others cope with the loss of their eyesight. She offers a listening ear to people who often have no one else to turn to.



**Kyle Hayes**

## **batyr**

Brave Kyle Hayes is smashing the stigma around mental health as a lived experience speaker with for-purpose organisation batyr. He encourages people to reach out for help through face-to-face and online presentations. Kyle is proud that he has become the adult he needed when he was younger. He helps young people open up instead of being told to man up.



# Recognising all of our 2021 nominees

Catherine Kruljac  
**PCD Australia**

Jill Goss  
**Parkinson's Victoria**

Steve Clogstoun  
**DDP Yoga**

Maddison parker  
**Access wildlife – keeping  
charlottes promise**

Barbara Davis  
**Korus Connect**

Marlon De Leon  
**Filipino Community Council  
of Victoria Inc.**

Mark Thomas  
**The Code 9 Foundation**

Lisa and Darren Doherty  
**Cream Town**

Janelle Ellis  
**Recovery plus**

Krysti Severi  
**Rescue Rehabilitate & Release**

Sandra Jacobs  
**The Nappy Collective**

Kyle Hayes  
**batyr**

Matthew Johns  
**Lighthouse Foundation**

Alyshia Clarke  
**Dance 4 All**

Jocelyn Bignold OAM  
**McAuley Community Services  
for Women**

Ali Halkic  
**Bully Zero**

Kristen Mirchevski  
**Vision Australia**

Logan Shield  
**Moonee Valley Sustainability**

**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



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

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

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SCENTRE GROUP