



Rotary
District 9675



Rotary Inspirational Women's Awards 2021

19th September 2021



SERVE TO CHANGE LIVES

We gratefully acknowledge the support of our Vice Regal Patron, Her Excellency, The Hon Margaret Beazley AC QC, Governor of NSW.

What are the Rotary Inspirational Women's Awards?

*The Inspirational Women's Awards (RIWA) have been established to recognise women and young women who best exemplify Rotary's motto of **Service Above Self** (ie. the community service the individual performs above and beyond their normal role.) The 2021 Awards are proudly presented by the Rotary District 9675*

Message from the Governor of NSW

Her Excellency, The Hon Margaret Beazley AC QC

Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC, Governor of New South Wales, as Patron, has presented a message to celebrate and support the announcement of the finalists today. Please see the link below to see The Governor's message.



Message from Minister for Mental Health, Regional Youth and Women

The Hon. Bronnie Taylor MLC

"The Rotary Inspirational Women's Awards are a wonderful opportunity to acknowledge and thank women who give so much of themselves, yet ask for so little in return in city, regional and rural communities right across NSW.

They are the quiet achievers whose actions make a huge difference to their communities, and I congratulate all the nominees – you all deserve an Award!"



Message from Ms Lynda Voltz, MP,

Member for Auburn and the NSW Legislative Assembly

"During the COVID crisis it has been women in particular, our nurses, teachers and retail workers, that have held our community together. In our community, it is our women leaders, at the grassroots, that have been at the forefront of the community response..."



The messages can be viewed on the internet www.riwa.com.au

Programme

Master of Ceremonies

Sue Hayward PDG District 9675

Welcome

Jeremy Wright, District Governor, District 9675

Messages from

Her Excellency, The Hon Margaret Beazley AC QC, Governor NSW

The Hon. Bronnie Taylor, MP

Minister for Mental Health, Regional Youth and Women

Announcement of the finalists in each category

Inspirational Woman - Urban

Young Inspirational Woman - Urban

Inspirational Woman - Rural

Young Inspirational Woman - Rural

Inspirational Woman - Health Care Worker

Message from

Ms Lynda Voltz, MP,

Member for Auburn and the NSW Legislative Assembly

Announcement of Winners of each category

Louisa Hope, Ambassador for RIWA

Announcement of Overall Winners

Vote of Thanks

Rae-Anne Medforth – Chairperson RIWA

Due to the uncertainty created by the COVID virus, the Rotary Inspirational Women's Awards have been presented virtually this year.



Inspirational Women – Urban

Deborah Gersbach



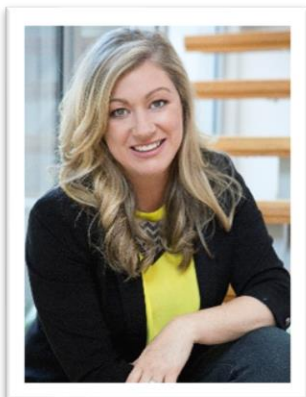
Initially in banking in central western NSW, Deborah Gersbach, already active in the wider community, became increasingly concerned about the plight of the disabled in society and in 1994 joined Northwest Disability Services in the Sydney Metropolitan area as Manager. She is now CEO of the organisation with more than 210 staff as well as volunteers, helping more than 450 people aged from babyhood to 70, developing and providing many services including accommodation, day programs, independent living skills training, social interaction, riding for the disabled, group holiday experiences and training in gardening skills and support work in cafes. She received a Paul Harris Fellow recognition, and Professional Excellence Award, from Rotary, and she has been awarded an OAM for her services to the disabled.

Fifi Hazzouri



Fifi Hazzouri is one of those extraordinary people who, afflicted with illness herself, has turned her attention to helping others. Enduring daily dialysis sessions and having survived multiple heart attacks and a double organ transplant, Fifi has turned around to set up her own charity, Diabetes Alive, primarily helping teenagers with diabetes, and their families, but also promoting good health and reaching out many cultures, including indigenous people. She has had a special outreach to low-income families. Diabetes Alive offers sufferers assistance through provision of insulin pumps, mental health counselling, advocacy and other products, and has dramatically improved the lives of many people.

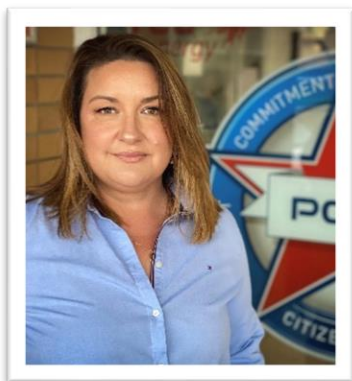
Melissa Histon



Melissa Histon was horrified by what she saw of sex trafficking in Nepal. Back home, she did not see much of that, but she did see plenty of abuse of women, the perpetrators overwhelmingly male, and not unrelated to the horrors she saw overseas. Melissa decided she could do something about the problem and founded a charitable organisation in 2016, called Got Your Back Sista, to help women experiencing domestic violence. The charity now assists women and children from Taree to Lake Macquarie in the Upper Hunter, providing resources, raising money and liaising with TAFE and private providers to provide quality training for women seeking a new life.



Justine Russell



Justine Russell, Youth Strategy & Programs Manager for NSW Police & Community Youth Clubs (PCYC), has a big job on her hands, managing PCYC NSW programs including Fit for Work, SAY Patrol, U-Nites, GRIT, Stepping Up, and Blue Light across the state. Justine's concern is for vulnerable and disadvantaged young people. Justine believes in working collaboratively with the local community, police and local PCYC clubs to develop localised strategies to re-engage young people with education and their communities. Each year Justine leads one of NSW's largest indigenous sporting events, Nations of Origin, which is a multifaceted sport, cultural, education and leadership program which attracts more than 1400 tournament participants and 300 volunteers during the four-day event.



Young Inspirational Women – Urban

Boe Meh Bird



Boe Meh Bird, a migrant at the age of nine, conscious of the needs of Karenni people from the embattled nation of Myanmar, has reached out to help fellow immigrants, offering them opportunities in leadership, career and personal development. Working through the "Let's Lead" program at SCARF (Supporting Children with Additional Needs, Relatives and Friends) in the Illawarra region, Boe has worked with young people from refugee backgrounds. She has become a vital link between the Karenni community and available services and programs. She has helped promote computer literacy courses and mentored Karenni community members in their search for employment.

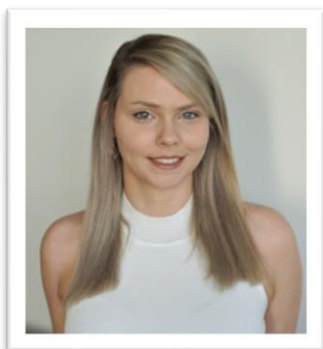
Rose Lewis



Rose Lewis, a final year Business/Law student at Western Sydney University, has already done just about everything. Arriving as a migrant in 2001, she set about volunteering for leadership roles, including national advisory groups for anti-racism and CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Women). Active at school, 2 years later Rose won a 2017-18 UNICEF internship which she undertook at university. There she co-created 26 reports on child protection, which have been translated into 18 languages. She has been involved in numerous activities at university, including membership of the university's Board of Trustees and in 2018-19, she won an award for a speech entitled "The role of financial literacy in preventing the economic abuse of older women".

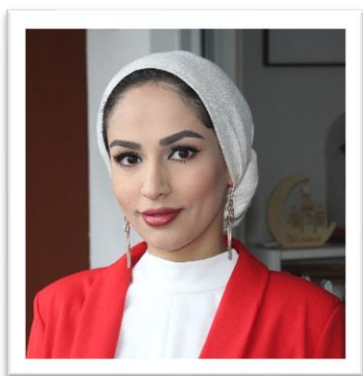


Gabrielle Phillips



A family member succumbing to a disease often spurs someone in a career choice. So it was with Gabrielle Phillips, who has a family member diagnosed with Huntington's Disease. Now about to become a PhD graduate, focussing on Huntington's, at the University of Wollongong, Gabrielle is an associate research fellow at the Illawarra Health and Medical Research Institute and belongs to a community advisory committee on Huntington's. But she has gone well beyond that. She has mentored with AIME (Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience) and teaches practical skills in multiple medical undergraduate courses. With what time she has left had, she volunteered with the St John's Ambulance Service.

Mina Skandari



So committed is Mina Skandari to her work in mentoring and developing the potential of young people that she has even devoted her first children's book to the subject. *You Are Amazing and Unique Just the Way You Are*, covers mental health, self-love, self-worth and altruism. Mina is based in Campbelltown and works at the Insurance Australia Group, but volunteers as a youth ambassador, leadership mentor and Macarthur Committee representative. She is part of the Australian Business and Community Network where she works as a leadership mentor for high school girls, most recently at Wiley Park, and is part of an upcoming UN education program.



Inspirational Women – Rural

Sarah Bancroft



The PCYC, established in 1937 for police to help youth, is alive and well on the NSW far south coast, where Sarah Bancroft, a police officer, has committed herself to helping young people troubled by drug use, mental health and other issues. Sarah has been particularly focussed on the indigenous community, going way beyond the call of duty to help those youngsters and their families. She runs a before-school program two mornings a week where young people are given breakfast, fun and fitness. She has also worked tirelessly to raise money to take two teams to the Rugby League tournament called Nations of Origin.

Nadine Hickey



Nadine Hickey has lived in Cessnock all her life and that has always been good enough for her. From an early age, she has returned in abundance what Cessnock has given her, dedicating most of her spare time to the welfare of the community. Over more than 30 years, she has been involved in community groups such as the Link or Sink Group, Cessnock Relay for Life, Cessnock Public School P&C, Cessnock Basketball Stadium and Wheeling and Able. She has hosted fundraising events at her home and donated her own money. She is, as has been said, a "hidden treasure" in her community.

Cheryl McCarthy



Disasters come in all forms and Cheryl McCarthy, a Surf Life Saving Club member and Branch Director on the NSW far south coast, found no difficulty in handling the bushfire crisis that came in 2019. Evacuees from the flames started arriving at the Bermagui Surf Club in the early hours of New Year's Eve. Cheryl's team comforted and provided safe haven for up to 5,000 people. Once the fires had passed, Cheryl ensured that the emergency evacuation centre became a recovery centre where the public could find food, help and comfort. Widely acclaimed for her role in surf lifesaving, she encourages cooperation and liaison between the emergency services.

Christine Rodgers

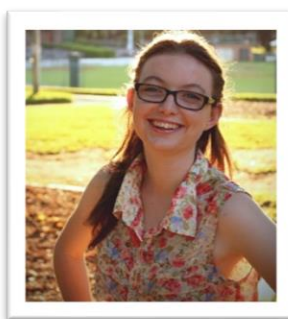


There could be few greater sacrifices than to remain at your post and protect the most vulnerable, while your home is being destroyed. Such was the case with Christine Rodgers, team leader in the Guy Street Supported Accommodation complex at Bateman's Bay, during the 2019/20 bushfires. Christine stayed to support four residents with disabilities, including one with profound disabilities. Noted for the way she has ensured that all residents be accorded dignity and respect, she faced a crisis of her own when her children were evacuated, and her home was burnt to the ground during the fires. Left with only the clothes she was wearing, she remained calm and ensured all the residents were safe.



Young Inspirational Women – Rural

Gemma Campion



Gemma Campion is one of those extraordinary individuals who, having suffered a serious health condition, turns their attention to helping others with the same problem. Gemma, by profession an Adult Acute Mental Health Clinician, suffered from scoliosis, which is an abnormal sideways curvature of the spine, normally just before a child reaches puberty. She underwent surgery in 2012, then started a support group in Sydney for fellow sufferers, named Curvy Girls, and led it for three years. She organised meetings, raised funds so that she and three others could attend an International Curvy Girls Conference in New York and mentored those who took over leadership.

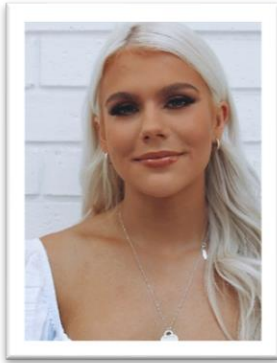
Fiona Lane



The onward march of women has taken them onto the AFL field, and Fiona Lane, a leader in several areas, including surf lifesaving, has been right at the AFL vanguard at Coffs Harbour. The women started their competition there three years ago and Fiona joined the local AFL club committee. In her profession as a childcare worker, she has helped others in professional development. Fiona has also led the way in local surf lifesaving. She was selected as one of the leaders at the first lifesaving development camp in April and is hoping to run more such events. Fiona is also organising an event to raise funds for mental health.



Emma Peat



There will always be people who turn adversity into opportunity, and so it is with Emma Peat, who lost four jobs during the pandemic. She decided at the age of 19 it was time to go out on her own. Having had some experience as a chef, she opened her own company, the Daily Dough Company, in Wyong, making and selling doughnuts and offering scrumptious classic doughnut packs, bouquets, speciality boxes and dessert boxes. She did so well that she opened another shop in Terrigal. She now sells a total of 2,000 donuts a day and has taken on 38 local people as employees.

Caitlin Pyke-Nott

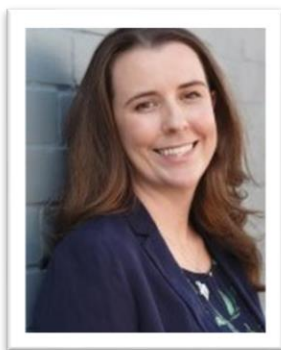


Caitlin Pyke-Nott has her work cut out being a director of two long day-care centres and an area manager with 30 early childhood staff in the Richmond Valley of northern New South Wales, especially as she is also studying for a Bachelor of Early Education. Caitlin has at the same time made strong community connections and developed educational programs to instil, in the children, a sense of respect, empathy and care for their community. Working in partnership with Our Two Hands, a local charity for the homeless in Casino, Caitlin is at pains to ensure that the children learn about things like homelessness, mental health and safety.



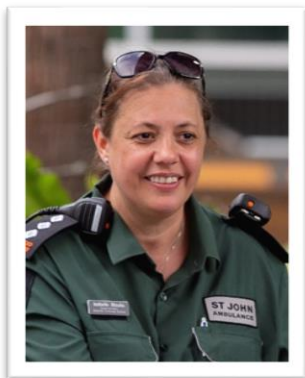
Inspirational Women – Health Care Worker

Dr Danielle McMullen



As NSW president of the Australian Medical Association, Dr McMullen has had a huge workload during the COVID pandemic. As well as running her general practice and attending to association affairs, she has been called upon many times to talk to the media, sometimes doing radio grabs between patient appointments. Over the Christmas/New Year period, she spent hours on media matters. As AMA president, she has had to attend frequent meetings with NSW Health, federal health counterparts, and other bodies. She has taken up the cause of gender equality in her profession and the future of general practice, but communication has been a top priority.

Isabelle Moutia



St John Ambulance has, for many years, provided enthusiastic first aid volunteers to cover many of society's nooks and crannies where people sometimes find themselves in trouble. In Granville, Isabelle Moutia has given 30 years to the service, training and developing young people and creating partnerships with local government and other emergency service organisations. She has raised three sons to be St Johns Ambulance Cadets and has supported her husband who has been a commissioner for St John NSW. Currently leading 168 volunteers, she works as a clinical support officer for Concord Hospital Emergency Department and has at all times displayed an extraordinarily kind and compassionate manner.

Louise Murphy



Louise is a Registered Nurse and has worked in mental health, and drug and alcohol services in NSW Health, prisons, and with the Australian Department of Defence. The bushfire crisis of 2019/20 exposed the many needs of those who had fought and suffered from the fires. Experienced in training first aid, mental first aid and positive psychology, Louise set to work helping emergency first responders and community members, including those impacted by trauma and suicide. During a Winston Churchill Fellowship, she came to understand the needs of emergency first responders and subsequently set up her own charitable foundation. The Australian First Responder Foundation looks after the mental health and wellbeing of emergency first responders so that they can continue to look after our communities.

Lauren Sturgess



The COVID pandemic has put great strains on the healthcare workforce, which has been at the frontline. Lauren Sturgess has always been ready to face the challenge. Starting at St George Hospital, Kogarah, as an Assistant in Nursing 18 years ago, Lauren is now the acting Director of Nursing & Midwifery. Her job in the pandemic has been to protect her staff and the greater hospital community, keeping the staff safe while putting COVID safe strategies into place. Lauren is known to have worked around-the-clock and has given her own time to counsel and guide staff in what is described as an exceptional leadership performance.



Ambassador

Louisa Hope

Louisa Hope was celebrating Christmas with her mother in the CBD, Sydney on 15 December 2014. A decision to enjoy a coffee at the Lindt café at Martin Place – would change their lives forever

During the Sydney siege, Louisa was shot in the foot and abdomen. As a result, she spent three months in recovery, firstly at the Prince of Wales Hospital in Randwick and at a private rehabilitation hospital.



Louisa always wanted to try and get some good out of the tragedy she survived. When opportunity presented itself, she realised she could make a difference to those who treated her every day during her long recovery.

She generously donated the \$25,000 she was gifted after her interview with Channel 9's Sixty Minutes program, to the Prince of Wales Hospital Foundation. A gift given from a heart of gratitude, Louisa was equally encouraged, when it was matched by the then NSW Premier, Mike Baird and the generosity of Australians at large.

In March 2015, the Prince of Wales Hospital Foundation launched the Louisa Hope Fund for Nurses - to help nurses at the hospital have access to 'seed money', via a grant process, for any necessary equipment, research, education that was nurse initiated and that they deem worthy.

Louisa has tirelessly been fundraising and continues to focus her efforts in raising funds for the "Louisa Hope Fund for Nurses at the Prince of Wales Hospital Foundation". In 2017, Louisa also initiated the "Louisa Hope Fund for Nurses at the Nepean Hospital Foundation" and is looking forward to ongoing fundraising with the Communities of both Hospitals.

The local community is important to Louisa where she enjoys playing an active role. She loves the multicultural lifestyle of her inner west suburb, settling down with a great book, and travelling when she gets the chance. Louisa's church and her great network of friends and family bring her joy each day.

These days she devotes much of her time and energy to making a difference with the Louisa Hope Fund for Nurses.

RIWA Organising Committee

Chair: Rae-Anne Medforth

RC Sydney Darling Harbour



I would like to thank all the members of the committee who have worked hard to make this event a success.

I also acknowledge the help given to us by Malcolm Brown.

Members:

Sally Dillon

RC Corrimal



Joanne Glaser

RC West Wollongong



Janice Hall

RC Hurstville



Sue Hayward

RC Sydney Darling Harbour



Dorothy

Hennessy OAM

RC Wollongong



Vera Liondas

RC Holroyd



Judith WARD

RC Kings Cross



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