

PeakCare Awards

The LEGEND

(Translation: Fabulous; famous for their unique qualities and impact over many years)

The LEGEND Award Candidate Nomination Statements

Lorraine Back, IFYS

Lorraine Back is an experienced child protection practitioner who has dedicated over 20 years to making a difference to the lives of children and young people. Lorraine is renowned for her passion and creativity, keeping children at the center of every conversation and action. Lorraine has been a mentor to many practitioners in sharing her commitment to making children safe, secure and connected.

Rosemary Bell, YFS

For almost 50 years, Rosie Bell has worked with families. For more than 11 of those years, she has been a valuable member of the YFS team working across a number priority areas as Burrabilly worker. Rosie's passion to support, serve and create change for families and community, is matched by her kindness, compassion, loyalty, wisdom, and humour. Across her career she has had several 'firsts'. She worked at the first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Medical Service in Red Hill. She was the first Aboriginal health nurse in Woodridge and in her 20's she was the only registered Aboriginal nurse in the Darwin Hospital Intensive Care unit and prides herself on the strong relationships she built with community members who would ask for her specifically. As a proud Nidgeri/ Jungerboi/ Junobin/ Burunggam woman she is proud of the heritage she is handing on to a new generation of Aboriginal workers, and still enjoys the chance to empower her people – while having a laugh with her YFS team.

Samantha Bonoccorso, Foster Carer

Since 2011, Sam has been providing a high level of care for children through her role as a Foster Carer. In addition to her carer role, Sam has contributed to the sector through her role as a FAST representative, facilitation of Mums and Bubs groups with Bayside Child Safety Service Centre, presented at Child Safety Symposiums and Conferences, the facilitation of recruitment events and expo's and most recently within her role with Anglicare to drive Carer support groups and events as well as her role with Davange Training which supports lived experience as a Foster Carer to be translated to professional qualifications. During Child Protection week 2020, Sam orchestrated an awareness video with several community groups highlighting the intersection of children's safety. Sam provides care to two children whilst continuing to be available for emergency placements as well as committing herself to her professional roles.

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Candyse Clunes, Able Care Foundation

Candyse Clunes is nominated for the LEGEND Award. She wears her heart on her sleeve, and does her job well.

Jason Field, Central Queensland Indigenous Development (CQID)

CQID CEO Jason Field is a proud Wiradjuri man, who established CQID in 2004 as a not for profit organisation with a workforce of four people, and which has now grown to 76 (96% Indigenous). Jason's vision was to focus on Indigenous children, young people and their families, community development, economic development, national and international Indigenous cultural exchange programs. Jason's partnerships with Traditional Owners across regions has enhanced service delivery to children, community and families, with the successful delivery of support services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in Rockhampton. CQID has expanded its footprint to support families as far west as Longreach and down to the Fraser Coast. Jason also contributes to the development of young Indigenous rugby league players, as president, coach and trainer at Emu Park Rugby League Club. This includes supporting the transport of young players from Woorabinda Aboriginal Community to training and weekend games. Innovatively, Jason is able to link families who engage with the club to the services of CQID when they need support.

Hope Flentjar, CREATE Foundation

Hope is a Youth Facilitator and former Young Consultant at CREATE. Hope consistently goes above and beyond her job role and is the living definition of a true LEGEND in the way she supports and engages young people, delivers creative and inspiring programs and completes the behind the scenes work that often gets forgotten or overlooked. Hope showed great leadership and initiative during the COVID lock down and developed lots of different and creative ways to engage with and support young people online. She regularly checked in with young people to make sure they were ok, had a regular person to connect with, and helped them find appropriate supports when required. She helped prepare and organise young people for speaking events or meetings with the Minister and Director-General and can deliver powerful advocacy messages that create a real impact. Hope is an incredible team member, inspiration to young people and all round wonderful human!

Petra Green, Lifestyle Solutions

Petra Green is nominated for the LEGEND Award. Petra always goes above and beyond to ensure all the young people in our care are provided with a high standard of care. Petra ensures the care environment is homely and welcoming.

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Mel James, Social Care Solutions

Mel James has worked in the sector her entire career. She has become a leader in quality practice and ensuring the needs of a child are at the forefront of all she does. Mel is willing to go above and beyond for children and the practitioners who work with children. Mel has been innovative in a changing and challenging child protection arena, she continues to think 'outside the box' and ensure quality practice is standard. Through her support and advocacy the standard of training for foster care assessors has improved dramatically. Mel is always willing to advocate for those less able to speak up and does so in a caring, supportive way. We are lucky to have her input in the sector.

Ann Marie Matthews, YCSS

Ann Marie was a Youth Worker for the Child Safety Department 15 years ago. When the changes to Youth Workers started, Ann Marie and her husband decided they would start their own residential company - Youth Care Support Services. YCSS has been operating for 14 years and has made a positive impact on numerous young people with their therapeutic approach. They also have a program KKAT - keeping kids at home and working with families which has also had a positive impact on many families.

Althea McKeown

My mother is a Torres Strait Islander and has worked in children's services since she was 18 in and outside of our community. All her employment since then has been working with children, parents and families. My mum and dad are also approved Foster Carers for the Child Safety Department. My mother's current role is a Foster and Kinship Care - Placement Support Worker where she recruits, trains and supports Foster and Kinship Carers throughout the Torres Strait and the Northern Peninsula Area. Her passion for working with children, young people, parents and families extends from assisting her parents with nurturing her siblings.

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Narrelle Paulsen, Anglicare Southern Queensland

Narrelle Paulsen has dedicated her life to supporting young people. Narrelle started her journey as a Foster Carer with her late husband and provided quality care for many children over 30+ years. Narrelle also volunteered as the local FAST Delegate supporting fellow carers advocate for children. Narrelle continues her passion through working as a Foster and Kinship Support Practitioner and Coordinator for Anglicare Southern Queensland, Gympie Foster and Kinship Team for the past 12 years. Narrelle continues to provide, quality training and support to carers in Gympie and surrounding areas. Narrelle has drawn on her knowledge, her skills and the challenges and triumphs of her Foster Children to author and publish a trauma-informed children's book called 'The Back-to-Front-Boy'. Narrelle has communicated that her drive to write this short story came from her recognition of the struggles of traumatized children who often feeling different to those around them. She hopes that this story will help traumatised children to celebrate their differences; that it will support carers and other children to be accommodating and supportive of traumatised children's differences; and that it will send an overall message that stakeholders supporting traumatised children need to look past the behaviours of these children and seek to understand the individual.

Jacqui Reed, CREATE Foundation

Jacqui Reed's two-decade career making a difference in the lives of Queensland children who are no longer able to live at home spans the out-of-home care and family services sectors, along with community work. Jacqui brings years of experience working in refuges and through the Queensland Child Protection Services, and in 2007 was appointed as CEO of CREATE Foundation, now leading a national team, undertaking social research and being an expert contributor to national media outlets and global conference presentations. Our LEGEND is committed to improving the future for those in care by informing government and agencies of their lived experience via independent consultation reports and evidence to pinpoint where change is needed most. A firm believer that given the right opportunities children and young people have the capacity to reach their full potential, Jacqui is a global advocate for children and young people to have better life outcomes.

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Carol Ronken, Bravehearts

Carol Ronken joined Bravehearts in early 2003 as Director of Research and has a BA(Psych) and Masters Applied Sociology (Social Research). Her passion and dedication to ensure active involvement in research, policy and legislative development that aims to prevent, respond to, and ultimately reduce the incidence of child sexual assault and exploitation in the community is nothing short of amazing. Previously (2011) she received an award from Queensland Police Service CPIU for her contribution to child protection and it would be so amazing to recognise just how important she continues to be in this space – her work is incredible, and she is highly regarded everywhere. She provides countless submissions to government to inform best practice and sits on working groups including: Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation Research Working Group, Australian eSafety Commissioner's Online Safety Consultative Working Group, Queensland Family and Child Commission Out of the Dark Committee, Twitter Trust and Safety Council and Australian Child Rights Taskforce.

Bryan Smith, Queensland Foster and Kinship Care

Bryan has dedicated over 25 years to the child protection sector, making a difference in the lives of children and people as a carer and then also through his professional career as he draws on his lived experience. Bryan's passion to be part of a system that promotes better outcomes for children and young people is one that he carries every day as he advocates for systematic change. Whilst Bryan's professional position is one that is now removed from the front line, Bryan has never lost sight of why he comes to work each day, and that will always be to improve life outcomes for children and young people and to create a system for foster and kinship carers where they feel a valued member of a care team where their views and opinions are respected and heard.

Millicent Stevens, IFYS

Millicent (Milly) Stevens is the Coordinator of a Residential House that cares for children in care with traumatic backgrounds, children who are survivors of changed times. Milly strikes me as a passionate, hard working individual whose aim is to bring out the best in young people who are on a journey of healing and recovery. She is innovative and responsive to the daily needs of young people and leads her staff with respect and courtesy. Milly works from the heart and is not only fulfilling her job description as Coordinator, but possesses a rare quality of humility. She is dedicated to arriving at the best outcomes for young people and staff alike. Milly has been working with children for around ten years and is always heard saying she loves it. Power and politics do not factor with Milly, she is without ego and respected for whom she is and what she believes. Our Area Manager unfortunately passed away early this year, and in her place, Milly stood up to support teams in three other residential settings, we applauded her.

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Lina and Paul Swalling, Foster Carers

Lina and Paul Swalling have dedicated their lives and opened up their home for over a decade to offer a safe and welcoming home for over sixty children in out of home care. For the past six years I have seen first-hand their commitment and fine detail in loving and caring for each individual child's needs. They are attentive and nurturing on every level going over and above to offer support to the children, some with complex behaviours and high needs. The extended family connections and support they put in place for the children to have access and a strong relationship with their biological families is inspiring. They currently support four children, two living in their home, one child in a respite capacity and one child they consistently visit and support living in a residential environment. Lina and Paul are LEGENDS and very worthy recipients of this award.

Melanie Walton

Melanie Watson is nominated for the LEGEND Award. Melanie wears her heart on her sleeve and gives it her very best every day regardless of any situation she comes across.

Dr Jeanette Young, Queensland Chief Health Officer

Dr Jeanette Young is nominated for her exemplary and dedicated service in keeping Queensland children, young people and families safe and well throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. In extraordinary times, Dr Young has displayed extraordinary dedication, resilience and leadership. The measured and accessible way in which she has communicated with Queenslanders from all walks of life has struck the right balance in promoting messages of remaining vigilant without causing unnecessary panic or fear. She has become the person we turn to, out of deep respect for her knowledge and an unswerving confidence in her integrity. The mantle of responsibility thrust upon her has been worn with dignity and grace, making her a source of comfort for many and an inspiration to us all. Dr Young is truly a legend.