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| 2021 Winners |
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# Emerging leader award

**Llewelyn Prain**  
WaterAble

**Llewellyn Prain is the founder of WaterAble – a network established in 2020 for people with disability and their allies in the Victorian water industry. WaterAble was driven by Llewellyn's passion for disability inclusion.**

**Since its establishment, all 19 water corporations from across Victoria have partnered with WaterAble to raise awareness and improve inclusion across the sector.**

**Llewellyn also demonstrates disability leadership through her work as a non-executive director, a fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and dedicated public speaker. The majority of this work is unpaid.**   
**Llewellyn lost most of her vision in 2014 and she speaks publicly about her experience, consciously aiming to shift ingrained negative attitudes towards disability. She is a disability inclusion consultant and has contributed to significant outcomes across the health infrastructure, education and transport sectors. Llewelyn has also worked with Leadership Victoria to encourage more people with disability to serve on public sector boards.**

# Excellence in creating inclusive communities award

**Zoos Victoria**

**Families with children with disability often struggle to enjoy recreational activities. Appropriate facilities, access, acceptance, confidence and fear of judgement are barriers that prevent their full participation in community activities, often resulting in isolation and marginalisation. To assist families with children with disability navigate large zoo sites, Zoos Victoria has ensured accessible vehicle tours in place with buses all having ramp access to accommodate wheelchairs. Volunteers also offer free tours in electric golf carts through zoo grounds.**

**There are also sensory maps and social scripts designed and written by Zoos Victoria’s disability partners, which are provided for families to better support and prepare their children to visit the zoo. Zoos Victoria has committed to increasing recreational participation opportunities for children with disability and their families. Through infrastructure investment in innovation and inclusive practice, Zoos Victoria has created an accessible leisure experience for children and families with disability, building their confidence to actively participate in activities with the wider community to benefit health and wellbeing.**

# Excellence in employment outcomes award

**Rise Program**

**Department of Health**

**The RISE Program was established by the Department of Health and Human Services in 2017 as a partnership with Specialisterne, a unique, evidence-based and scalable employment pathway for people with autism. 30 people have joined the VPS since with half progressing their respective career pathways. The framework underpinning the program promotes recruitment and ongoing support to ensure equity, respect and clarity for participants.**

**Through implementation of the Rise Recruitment and Support Framework, the RISE Program aims to remove barriers to recruitment and provide meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities for autistic people. The RISE program's approach to recruitment and selection processes allows candidates to demonstrate their role-related skills and personal strengths. The program demonstrates the department’s commitment to equal opportunity and to ensuring disability is not seen as a barrier to success.**

**The way the program operates is transferable, focusing on non-IT business roles and aims to ensure awareness is raised around the benefits of employing people on the autism spectrum.**

# Excellence in promoting health, housing and wellbeing award

**Narelle Fairweather**

Nextt

In the last 12 months, Narelle Fairweather has found homes for 19 people with disability or with mental health challenges who were at risk of homelessness. Many people with disability risk homelessness, or find themselves in unsuitable living arrangements including hospitals, aged care homes or institutional housing models.

Narelle saw an opportunity to confront stigma and place vulnerable people with disability into suitable living arrangements and rental accommodation. Narelle works with multiple stakeholders – including Occupational Therapists and real estate agents. She has also worked closely with the NDIS to pave the way for better understanding with the real estate market and its agents about how NDIS services and supports operate.

Through her disability advocacy and outreach, Narelle has provided pathways for people with disability to access suitable work and living arrangements that allow them to thrive and flourish – breaking down stigma, perceptions and barriers preventing people with disability from moving into homes within the mainstream rental market.

# Excellence in promoting rights, fairness and safety award

**NDIS Access Team**

Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service

Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service has assisted vulnerable and isolated people with disability to obtain NDIS supports. After identifying a demographic of clients under financial administration but otherwise completely isolated and vulnerable, Villamanta's NDIS Access Team committed its work with State Trustees (STL) towards creating a clear referral process.

As a result of Villamanta’s work, many people with disability have access to funded support coordinators and can participate in day programs reducing barriers to social, economic and civic participation. Increasing this contact for people with disability has acted as a safeguard from abuse and neglect with better support for them to speak up for their rights, ensuring they are part of a fairer, more inclusive community.

# Volunteer award

**Thi Duong**

**Vietnamese Families with Special Needs**

**As part of her disability advocacy and volunteer outreach, Thi Duong has been President of the Vietnamese Families with Special Needs (VFSN) organisation for more than ten years. Thi is a respected leader and advocate in the Vietnamese community with a strong commitment to supporting people with disability, particularly children and families. Her work has created opportunities for Vietnamese children and young people with disability and their families to reduce isolation and improve community wellbeing, by connecting people experiencing vulnerability to crucial services and supports.**

**As a refugee herself, Thi brings her lived experience to her community outreach and has worked in refugee camps for the World Relief Organisation. She is now employed as a nurse in a busy emergency department, juggling home life caring for others (including a child with a disability) with volunteer work supporting Vietnamese families to help them care for children with disabilities. She has also led and developed strategic partnerships for the Vietnamese Families with Special Needs organisation to enable the group and its members to thrive.**

# Lifetime achievement honour roll

**Noel Bates**

Colanda Parents and Friends Association

Noel is a retired engineer and former mayor who has dedicated his life to creating an inclusive world for people with disability. He has worked to create a better life for his son Craig and everyone at Colanda Residential Services in Colac. Noel has supported and advocated for people with disability and their families in the Colac region for nearly 50 years. He has been a voice for Colanda residents and a champion for families. Through his efforts, he helped 72 Colanda residents to transition into 15 new homes in the community since the centre’s closure.

**Margherita Coppolino**

National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA)

For over two decades Margherita has volunteered tirelessly to protect and advance the human rights of all people with disability. Her advocacy, knowledge, lived experience and expertise around intersectional disability issues has shaped important discussions and informed policy development activities within state, national and international settings. As a result, Margherita has not only been pivotal in creating awareness around the diversity of disability, but her work has also directly improved access, and programs and services for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), LGBTIQ+, and women with disability in Victoria and throughout Australia.

**Maurice Gleeson OAM**

Blind Sports and Recreation Victoria

Maurice has made countless contributions to improve the lives of more than 25,000 Victorians with vision loss and their families over many years. He joined Blind Sports and Recreation Victoria in 1982 and has been President for the past 30 years. Through his tireless dedication, Maurice has been instrumental in breaking down the barriers to participation for people who are blind or vision impaired and creating a more inclusive society.

# Minister’s award for outstanding leadership

**Rocca Salcedo**

Dance & Roll Para Dance Club

Rocca Salcedo arrived from Colombia to pursue her studies in International Law. After less than a year studying at Melbourne University, Rocca became paraplegic following a pedestrian accident. In 2019 she established Dance & Roll – Victoria’s first para-dance club with the purpose to encourage people with physical disabilities to dance, enjoy music and be physically active.

Rocca is an unpaid Ambassador for VicHealth’s campaign This Girl Can - the first woman in a wheelchair to be included. She strives to make a real difference in the lives of people with disabilities.

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