

WYNDHAM  
BUSINESS  
AWARDS  
2024



# ACHIEVERS

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR



On behalf of Wyndham City, I congratulate all entrants, finalists and winners of the annual 2024 Wyndham Business Awards.

Now in its 28th year, the Wyndham Business Awards are the respected business event in Wyndham that attracts high quality entrants.

Wyndham is home to more than 32,000 GST registered businesses of various sizes; from home-based sole

operations to large multinationals and everything in between.

This year, 168 entries were received across 12 categories that recognise the diversity in our business community: from start-ups, social enterprises to medium/large employers and excellence in sustainability, diversity and inclusion, local community and innovation.

The top three award categories entered were Small Business, New & Emerging/Start Up and Micro Business.

The 2024 Wyndham Business Awards celebrate local business, entrepreneurs, business leaders, innovators and hard-working operators.

The Awards highlight achievements and are an important and significant way to acknowledge and appreciate business excellence, accomplishments, and success.

They provide a unique opportunity for businesses across key industry sectors of all sizes and types to showcase their successes and be recognised for their hard work, effort, dedication, and commitment to their customers and the community.

On behalf of Wyndham City, thank you for taking the time to enter the Wyndham Business Awards. Congratulations to all finalists and winners of the Wyndham Business Awards.

It is certainly an outstanding achievement.

Cr Jennie Barrera

Mayor Cr Dr Jennie Barrera

MESSAGE FROM CR MIA SHAW



As Wyndham City's Future Focused Economy portfolio holder, I am delighted to congratulate the 2024 finalists and winners of the Wyndham Business Awards.

The annual Wyndham Business Awards is a prestigious awards event that promotes Wyndham businesses and showcases the vast array of different businesses in Wyndham, from the sole operators to the larger employers.

Council works closely with industry to attract, develop and support new entrepreneurs and new businesses to operate in Wyndham. We are focused on developing strategies and policies that support and encourage employment particularly for local residents.

Wyndham's future prosperity is dependent on dynamic economic growth.

Our aim is for Wyndham to continue to be progressive and the new frontier of liveability and prosperity.

Sole operator businesses in Wyndham are continuing to grow substantially and are thriving, with a diverse, creative, adaptive business model that can pivot to meet customer demands and the changing market.

I am very passionate about supporting Wyndham's local businesses. The Wyndham Business Awards recognise and showcase successful businesses and are an important way to recognise business achievements.

I congratulate all finalists and winners of this year's Wyndham Business Awards and thank them for their significant and important contribution to Wyndham City.

Cr Mia Shaw



Presented by Williams Landing, proudly developed by Cedar Woods

ALL GREEN NURSERY & GARDEN SUPPLIES

From little things big things grow, indeed! All Green, which began as a small backyard operation in 1979, has become a major industry leader over the past 45 years.

Now in its third generation as a family-owned operation, All Green employs a friendly and knowledgeable team of over 80 people. Its diverse and ever-expanding range of products can cater to every landscaping project, from the smallest home garden to large-scale developments, and its customers include members of the general public, trade professionals, builders and commercial industries.

Alongside its business endeavours, All Green consistently demonstrates a deep commitment to the community via programs that provide career pathways to young people and others facing barriers to employment. It also runs a plant-propagation project at the local prison.

All Green's focus on sustainability has become even more pronounced lately, presenting opportunities for innovation and further expansion. For example, by repurposing landfill-bound materials into high-quality soil, All Green has not only improved its environmental impact but also secured major projects in the region.

This sustainable approach to soil production is poised to drive All Green to even bigger and better things in years to come.

- FINALISTS**
- DIRECT VET SERVICES
  - RUBBER RECYCLING

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY WILLIAMS LANDING

At Cedar Woods, we strive to create quality homes, workplaces and communities that people are proud of. As a leading national developer of residential communities and commercial developments, we are the proud developer of Williams Landing, a world-class development master-planned for 21st-century living.

We are honoured to partner with Wyndham City Council, as it aligns with our commitment to foster growth and excellence in the local business community and to both recognise and celebrate the outstanding achievements of other businesses and entrepreneurs within Wyndham.

We are delighted to be a part of the 2024 Wyndham Business Awards and would like to extend our congratulations to all entrants, finalists and winners.

[williamslanding.com.au](http://williamslanding.com.au)

WILLIAMS LANDING

The Centre of the West  
Proudly developed by Cedar Woods

BUSINESS OF THE YEAR HONOUR ROLL

<b>2024</b> All Green Nursery	<b>2016</b> Encore Tissue	<b>2010</b> Alex Fraser Group	<b>2004</b> Costa's Mitre 10	<b>1998</b> Hudson's Drycleaning Group
<b>2023</b> Fruit2Work	<b>2015</b> ebm-papst A&NZ	<b>2009</b> Essence Food Studio	<b>2003</b> Claytons Kitchens Australia	<b>1997</b> Rick Wolany Toyota
<b>2022</b> Cake Creations by Kate	<b>2014</b> Mainstream Aquaculture	<b>2008</b> Rodpak	<b>2002</b> The Mansion Hotel	<b>1996</b> AB Oxford Cold Storage Co
<b>2019</b> Aqua Tap Plumbing	<b>2013</b> Aus Lock & Safe Company	<b>2007</b> Nufarm Australia	<b>2001</b> Cowland North Architects	<b>1995</b> Down Under Produce
<b>2018</b> Class Plastics	<b>2012</b> Plum Heating and Cooling	<b>2006</b> Cat Logistics Services	<b>2000</b> Claytons Kitchens Australia	
<b>2017</b> Hopper Motor Group	<b>2011</b> Werribee Open Range Zoo	<b>2005</b> Agfab Engineering	<b>1999</b> Redmond Repetition Engineers	





## BUSINESS PERSON OF THE YEAR

### SHAWN READ – SHAWN’S SWIM SCHOOL

Being rejected by Kmart might be the greatest thing to ever happen to Shawn Read. Because when his Year 10 job application was turned down, he took a position teaching at a swim school instead, and never looked back.

By the time he completed his Bachelor of Commerce degree at Melbourne University in 1992, Shawn had well and truly found his passion.

At 23, with the backing of his parents, he built a 17m x 6m pool in the vacant block of an industrial estate in Hoppers Crossing, and in April 1994 opened Shawn’s Swim School with two staff and 40 students.

By the end of 1994, he had 12 staff and 750 students, and by 2004, his business had ballooned to 20 staff, 1300 students and a waitlist. So, Shawn built another 25m x 8m pool next door to the first one, and now has 45 staff and 2500 students – per week!

Shawn credits his enormous success to his amazing team and the collaborative culture within his business.

In an industry that often struggles with retention, he is proud to have several staff members who have been with him for between 12 and 28 years.

#### FINALISTS

- EBONY CENTAZZO
- IMRAN ABUL KASHEM
- LOURDES PISCOPO

#### JUDGES STATEMENT:

*"Shawn takes great pride in his business and has made significant contributions to boards and advisory committees aimed at maintaining and improving standards within his industry. His school's reputation has allowed it to thrive and grow, and the decision to expand to a two-pool facility helped better service community needs while raising his profile and brand to another level. The business continually works toward maintaining industry standards, including in OH&S and environmental sustainability. Shawn has already created a long-lasting legacy within the Wyndham community, with his swim school operating for over 30 years and looking well set-up for the future."*

#### PROUDLY SPONSORED BY FINDEX WERRIBEE

Findex is once again delighted to sponsor the Business Person of the Year award. These awards hold special meaning to Findex as it reflects the values, work ethic and dedication of our own firm. As the largest accounting firm founded in Australia, we know a thing or two about strong business leadership, and when businesspeople surround themselves with talented staff and expert advisers, they not only impact the success of their own business but the wider business community. Findex provides an end-to-end financial solution, which gives us the privilege of working with businesses and businesspeople through all stages of their journey. Not only through the challenging and uncertain times but also the celebrations as they realise their visions and achieve their goals. All of which make up their story and being with them through that story, sharing that story, and being proud of that story IS our business. Sponsoring these awards is a great example of the celebrations we are honoured to be part of.

[findex.com.au/office/werribee](https://findex.com.au/office/werribee)

**FINDEX**  
Werribee



## YOUNG BUSINESS PERSON OF THE YEAR

### AMOL KASAJU – QUEST WERRIBEE

After arriving in Australia as a student in 2009, Amol Kasaju started working as a housekeeper, and soon fell in love with the hospitality industry. He was keen to learn and grow as much as he could, and dreamed of one day becoming a hotel receptionist in a smart-looking suit and tie.

Unfortunately, Amol’s limited English and lack of confidence made it difficult for him to find such a position.

Not one to give up, he immersed himself in TV news and newspapers to improve his language skills. And, finally, his tenacity and hard work paid off when he was given the opportunity to train as a receptionist during the graveyard shift.

On 20 February 2018, Amol and his current business partner took over Quest Werribee, where they have implemented many strategic changes, such as delegating responsibilities based on individual strengths and weaknesses. This has significantly improved guest satisfaction, staff morale, and business performance.

Amol firmly believes that a high-performance team naturally emerges when passionate employees are provided with the right environment, support, and work-life balance. And the many rewards and recognition he and his business have notched up over the years make it hard to argue with his approach.

#### FINALISTS

- LIAN CHINSEI KIPGEN
- RASHI DHAGAT

#### JUDGES STATEMENT

*"Amol is a measured, intelligent business leader who demonstrates exceptional clarity and focus in his objectives, articulating his vision with strategic precision for both short- and long-term success. He is integral to many business associations and initiatives across Wyndham, and makes an effort to promote local restaurants and service providers. He's involved in impressive environmental initiatives, and seems genuine about always finding ways to contribute for the good of his business, staff, guests, and the broader Wyndham community. Amol's outstanding achievements and keen business acumen are highly commendable, reflecting his strength and intelligence. He is a worthy winner of the Young Business Person of the Year."*

#### PROUDLY SPONSORED BY VICTORIA UNIVERSITY

Victoria University has been a proud sponsor of the Wyndham Business Awards since 1995, demonstrating our ongoing commitment to the vibrant Wyndham community. We are honoured to collaborate with Wyndham City Council and to celebrate the resilience and innovation of Wyndham's diverse businesses, which have both local and global impacts. Congratulations to all winners, finalists, and entrants across every business sector and industry category – we are thrilled to support these awards.

[vu.edu.au](https://vu.edu.au)

 **VICTORIA**  
**UNIVERSITY**





## NEW & EMERGING/START UP

### LYGOMETRYX.AI

Sifting through countless product listings, reviews, and comparison websites to try to find the best deals can overwhelm online shoppers, ultimately leading to “analysis paralysis” and delaying sales for retailers.

Into this no-win situation comes Lygometryx.AI, which uses the power of machine learning and AI to improve the online shopping process for both consumers and vendors.

Its B2C solution is the shopping assistant Kréta, which provides help with product discovery, research, comparisons, and finding the best ongoing deals and discounts.

On the B2B front, its customised shopping assistant seamlessly integrates with the IT systems of retailers, offering pre- and post-sales customer support to boost conversions. Retailers can also access advanced data science solutions focused on customer retention, churn, and sales predictions.

Lygometryx.AI has a growing waitlist for its beta launch next quarter, and has secured spots in notable programs such as the Startmate Launch Club and Catalysr Migrapraneurs, supporting its growth and providing vital resources. It also recently won second place in the 2024 WYNnovation Pitch competition.

Its unique, AI-driven tools streamline the shopping process, reduce information overload, and enhance the overall customer experience, while simultaneously empowering retailers with data-driven insights to improve sales and customer engagement.

#### FINALISTS

- BIBVAULT
- OPULENCE BARBERSHOP
- RUBBER RECYCLING
- ZHANI

#### JUDGES STATEMENT

*“Lygometryx.AI has hit the ground running with an innovative business model that looks set to revolutionise the way we shop and sell online.*

*It's a potential game-changer for local businesses without large marketing budgets, which could ultimately assist with and support our region's continued economic growth, even in these challenging times.*

*We were impressed by strong evidence of planning systems and processes that clearly drive business efficiency and growth. And by the fact that it already has a number of existing community business partnerships, and is in the process of developing more.*

*Congratulations to Lygometryx.AI on this award – we look forward to seeing the next stage of your journey!”*

#### PROUDLY SPONSORED BY SPARK INNOVATION HUB

Operating for a little over two years, Wyndham City's Innovation Hub SPARK was established as a collaborative space to support and mentor creative, innovative, solution-driven digital tech startups, emerging businesses and entrepreneurs. An integral part of Wyndham City's Economic Development Strategy, SPARK focuses on developing an innovative and entrepreneurial-based ecosystem. SPARK is proud to support the New & Emerging/Start Up category of 2024 Wyndham Business Awards, and we extend our sincere congratulations to all finalists and winners across all sectors and categories.

[wyndham.vic.gov.au/sparkhub](https://wyndham.vic.gov.au/sparkhub)

**SPARK**  
INNOVATION STARTS HERE

wyndhamcity  
city.coast.country



## MICRO BUSINESS

### STEM BIRDS

STEM Birds is a leading educational organisation dedicated to fostering a love of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics among young people.

It began in 2017 with founder and director Shalaka Ekbote's vision to make STEM education accessible and engaging for all primary and secondary students, regardless of their background or location.

Her passion for empowering children with essential 21st-century skills has seen STEM Birds grow into a diverse range of programs and courses designed to inspire creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities.

STEM Birds now has 13 locations across Melbourne, including classes in two primary schools in the Wyndham area. It has also expanded to Adelaide, and offers online coding classes for students all over Australia.

What sets STEM Birds apart is its innovative approach to learning, which combines cutting-edge technology with experiential teaching methods. It prioritises hands-on activities, real-world projects, and collaborative learning experiences to ensure that students not only acquire knowledge but also develop vital skills that will serve them well in the future.

STEM Birds is committed to empowering students to become confident, creative, and capable individuals who are well-equipped to thrive in an increasingly technology-driven world.

#### FINALISTS

- BEAT FREAKZ FIT
- BOUQUET CREATIVE
- DIGITXL
- TEST FAST

#### JUDGES STATEMENT

*“Shalaka's passion for what she does is infectious. She's extremely enthusiastic about educating the next generation of STEM workers, and in equipping as many 5- to 15-year-olds as possible with the skills they'll need to flourish and thrive in a wide range of industries in the future. Students are supplied with laptop computers and access to robots to make courses more affordable for parents. And STEM Birds also provides rentals to schools for the August science week and gives to the community through the robotics library. There's a strong focus on encouraging young girls into STEM, which poses clear benefits for both them and the broader community.”*

#### PROUDLY SPONSORED BY STAR WEEKLY

Star Weekly, publisher of the Wyndham Star Weekly, is the west's premier local media company connecting people and communities. Star Weekly is part of the Star News Group, an independent Australian family-owned media company with a 114-year history publishing newspapers and magazines across Victoria. Star Weekly has always connected people and communities and is proud of its commitment to both clients and readers. Our award-winning publications reflect the opinions, lifestyles, aspirations, concerns and personalities of the diverse communities in the west and northwest.

[wyndham.starweekly.com.au](https://wyndham.starweekly.com.au)

WYNDHAM  
**STARWEEKLY**





## SMALL BUSINESS

### DIRECT VET SERVICES

From just two staff when it first opened in 2010 to a team of 17 today, Direct Vet Services has built a thriving and resilient small business from humble beginnings.

Under the leadership of owner and founder Dr Karen Davies, Direct Vet Services is dedicated to educating pet owners on how to provide the best care for their pets, fostering non-judgmental and supportive client relationships. It also actively supports the training of veterinary and nursing students, shaping the industry's future leaders.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the clinic clearly demonstrated its unwavering commitment to animal welfare and the Wyndham community by continuing to serve both existing and new clients, even as other clinics closed their doors. To address staffing challenges, it created additional roles to support its veterinary team, ensuring uninterrupted local pet care throughout the crisis.

The clinic's community engagement and constant striving for excellence has positioned it as a cornerstone of veterinary care in Wyndham, with ample room for continued growth and success, underpinned by its innovative thinking and adaptability.

#### FINALISTS

- LIVING PROSPECT REAL ESTATE
- SHAWN'S SWIM SCHOOL
- THE POOCH BEAUTY SALON
- VECTO CARAVANS

#### JUDGES STATEMENT

*"Direct Vet Services is an impressive and long-established small business that has served and supported the Wyndham community for many years. From the moment you walk in, you are greeted by friendly pets, instantly putting you at ease. And each consulting room is thoughtfully equipped with images to clearly explain the pet conditions, showcasing the business's forward-thinking approach. The facility boasts amenities comparable to a veterinary hospital, making it a standout establishment. With strong future plans and a commitment to training the next generation of professionals, Direct Vet Services is an absolutely worthy winner of the Small Business Award."*

#### PROUDLY SPONSORED BY WYNDHAM BIZNET

For 26 years, Wyndham BizNet has been the go-to for fun, social business in Wyndham! We offer monthly evening events from February to December, where business owners, leaders, and community can connect, network, and have a blast - all while enjoying the best food and venues Wyndham has to offer. Wyndham BizNet is all about supporting fresh businesses and building lasting friendships. Our events range from fun, vibrant social catch-ups to sessions featuring outstanding speakers, including local business heroes and respected leaders. We're proud to sponsor the Wyndham Business Awards and we offer our heartfelt congratulations to all the amazing entrants! Come join the fun at our next event and see what the buzz is all about.

[wyndhambiznet.com.au](http://wyndhambiznet.com.au)



**WYNDHAM BIZNET**  
FUN · SOCIAL · BUSINESS



## MEDIUM/LARGE BUSINESS

### ALL GREEN NURSERY & GARDEN SUPPLIES

When husband and wife Sam and Gianna Fragapane founded All Green in 1979, it was just a humble backyard nursery run out of their garden shed.

Since then, it has flourished into a robust family business that now employs a team of over 80 people, including horticulturists, trades specialists, delivery drivers and administration staff.

Spanning a combined area of 35,000m<sup>2</sup> across all its locations, All Green takes immense pride in offering an expansive selection of vibrant plants, premium landscaping materials, and unparalleled customer care to its local patrons.

Its knowledgeable team is ready to assist you at every turn, ensuring a warm welcome and expert guidance as you embark on your next gardening or landscaping project. And its vast array of products and services well surpasses the offerings of standard hardware stores.

All Green's commitment to quality, service and community runs deep, reflecting a dedication to enriching the lives of its customers and contributing to a thriving local ecosystem.

#### FINALISTS

- CARING LOTUS
- LMA (LABEL MANUFACTURERS AUSTRALIA)
- SITETECH SOLUTIONS

#### JUDGES STATEMENT

*"All Green's transformation from a family business into a more corporate structure is commendable. Over the past 12 months, it has strategically focused on enhancing its business operations with remarkable results. The prioritisation of people and culture has led to significant positive outcomes, and its exceptional processes, dedicated team, and strong relationships within the community are particularly impressive. Collaborative projects, such as providing job opportunities for individuals with barriers to employment, and the plant-propagation project in the local prison, showcase its commitment to making a positive impact. This well-deserved award is a testament to All Green's hard work, strategic vision, and unwavering dedication to both its business and its community."*

#### PROUDLY SPONSORED BY MEGALINES INSURANCE AND RISK ADVISERS

From humble beginnings as a home-run business in 2007 to Australia's #1 insurance broker in 2015, Megalines Insurance is a local Wyndham success story. Having won the Wyndham Business Awards multiple times, Megalines is now a proud regular sponsor, this year in the Medium/Large Business category. Megalines recognises that local businesses are the heartbeat of our economy, and with everything you've worked so hard for, you deserve the very best protection available should the unexpected happen. With a solutionist approach, we go above and beyond to help businesses across various industries obtain the maximum insurance coverage within their budget. From quote to claim, we advocate for you - and our policies are so tailored you could almost wear them.

[megalines.com.au](http://megalines.com.au)



**MEGALINES**  
INSURANCE & RISK ADVISERS





## NOT FOR PROFIT OR SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

### NATUREWEST

NatureWest is a not-for-profit environmental group that operates in Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Melton and Wyndham.

Every year, NatureWest undertakes an extensive planting program, restoring weed-infested areas with 15,000 to 20,000 native plants.

The organisation actively participates in local events such as fairs, exhibitions, and expos to educate the community on the importance of native biodiversity. And it leads the Wyndham Litter Warriors, a litter clean-up initiative with sub-groups in seven suburban areas.

NatureWest engages with schools through a popular program that includes both on- and off-campus events, highlighting the significance of nature and the impact of suburban litter.

It advocates for the protection of local biodiversity by meeting with all levels of government, and is actively involved in numerous committees, working parties, and strategy groups focused on environmental issues.

NatureWest administers the local Landcare Facilitator program for the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, and provides support to around 10 Landcare and Friends groups with a dedicated facilitator.

#### FINALISTS

- **BIG GROUP HUG**
- **EQ LEADERS**
- **TARNEIT BUSINESS ASSOCIATION**

#### JUDGES STATEMENT

*"NatureWest works tirelessly within the community to design and deliver projects and programs that will raise awareness, preserve and enhance the natural biodiversity of our region. This includes primary school curriculums, collaborations with council and service clubs, and affiliations with 13 other organisations. It does extensive and commendable on-ground work, including plantings for nature walks, the extension of habitat areas around homes, marine care, and plantings around our waterways. The judges were particularly impressed by the management and succession plan to ensure the ongoing future of the organisation. Congratulations to the entire NatureWest team for this well-deserved award."*

#### PROUDLY SPONSORED BY SOCIAL TRADERS

Social Traders has pioneered the growth of the social enterprise sector since 2008. We're Australia's certifier of social enterprises – purpose-driven businesses that create jobs and deliver services for a fairer and more sustainable economy. Today there are over 600 certified social enterprises and counting. We also specialise in social procurement. The 160 business and government agencies that have joined Social Traders purchase goods and services from social enterprises, creating impact and using their buying power for good. We're proud to support the Wyndham Business Awards, in particular the Not for Profit or Social Enterprise Award. We hope this partnership with Wyndham City Council will help elevate local businesses and social enterprises, while making social procurement "business as usual".

[socialtraders.com.au](https://socialtraders.com.au)



Unlocking business for good



## EXCELLENCE IN INNOVATION

### RUBBER RECYCLING

In 2023, Mark Emmins was on a rescue mission. He wanted to use his extensive knowledge of waste management, recycling, engineering and fabrication to tackle illegal tyre dumping. And he was determined to drive the development of innovative, environmentally responsible and efficient new disposal solutions to stop them ending up in landfill.

So, he started Rubber Recycling, a facility that collects and processes waste tyres from all around Australia and gives them new life as beautiful rubber products. For instance, by turning them into eco-friendly mulch, or soft, slip-proof rubber granules for playgrounds.

Rubber Recycling's customer base includes automotive dealerships, tyre retailers, waste management companies, and local councils looking for reliable and compliant tyre disposal services.

One of the many innovations that set this business apart is its weight-based collection system, which is the first of its kind for scrap tyre collections.

Unlike traditional methods that charge per tyre, Rubber Recycling's trucks are equipped with scales to measure tyre weight onsite. Customers are then billed based on the total weight of their scrap tyres, ensuring total transparency and accuracy.

Whatever the job, Mark and his team are always willing to go the extra mile in their dedication to finding unique solutions to pressing environmental concerns.

#### PROUDLY SPONSORED BY THE GORDON

The Gordon, Victoria's premier regional TAFE, has been a leader in vocational education and training for over 135 years, with campuses in Geelong and Werribee. Founded in 1887, it consistently adapts to the evolving needs of students, industries, and communities statewide with its comprehensive range of accredited courses, apprenticeships, traineeships, certificates, diplomas, and industry-specific skillsets. The Gordon partners with local businesses to enhance the skills and knowledge of its students. In turn, Wyndham-based employers gain access to confident, job-ready graduates equipped with the necessary expertise to make immediate and meaningful contributions across various sectors. The Gordon is proud to sponsor the Wyndham Business Awards, which celebrate and promote excellence within our business community. Congratulations to all entrants, finalists and winners. [thegordon.edu.au](https://thegordon.edu.au)

#### FINALISTS

- **BIBVAULT**
- **EVOLUTION CREATIVE ARTS THERAPIES**
- **GLIMMER - THE SUSTAINABILITY NETWORK**

#### JUDGES STATEMENT

*"The level of innovation within Rubber Recycling is truly mind-blowing. Mark brings his years of experience to tackle any problem and develop a bespoke solution, either retrofitting existing solutions from other fields, or designing new ones. Not only does Rubber Recycling develop innovative ideas to improve processes, procedures and safety, it also addresses specific market gaps that may have significant environmental impacts, such as small-scale tyre recycling. And the way his business constantly customises off-the-shelf machinery to address ongoing challenges is an art in and of itself. This really is a stand-out company, with strong prospects for growth and great potential to put Wyndham on the map."*







## EXCELLENCE IN DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

### KENNEDY TAX & BUSINESS SERVICES

Founded by a group of seasoned professionals with over 100 years of collective expertise, Kennedy Tax & Business Services is a distinguished financial service provider that caters to individuals and small to medium-sized businesses.

Its core services include tax preparation, financial planning, business consulting, and accounting, and it has a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion from the top down.

Director Kennedy Weldemariam leads by example in this department, frequently participating in community events, offering his expertise whenever possible, and acting as a positive role model for the entire team.

KTBS actively recruits and supports employees with diverse backgrounds, and its advisors are proficient in more than 10 languages. This enables them to communicate effectively with clients from various cultural backgrounds, and to provide a more inclusive service experience.

The firm routinely offers free financial services to individuals and small businesses that face significant barriers to accessing professional advice, contributing to greater inclusion and financial stability within the community.

It also makes financial contributions to support local community projects and initiatives. These are designed to both address immediate social needs and to fund long-term programs that promote education, economic development, and social cohesion in diverse communities.

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#### FINALISTS

- ADI WORLD
- BEAT FREAKZ FIT
- CHANCE CREATORS

#### JUDGES STATEMENT

*"Kennedy Tax & Business Services demonstrates a distinct approach to diversity and inclusion in both its own internal practices and its engagement with clients. For example, the 65 per cent of its clients who are from migrant backgrounds and speak a second language are well catered for thanks to the tax and accounting practice's multilingual capabilities. Its staff can speak more than a dozen languages, including Tigrinya, Amharic, Russian, Italian and Gujarati. Kennedy Tax & Business Services also has a very strong commitment to supporting staff development and does extensive pro bono work within the community. Diversity is clearly at the heart of the business philosophy here."*



## EXCELLENCE IN CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

### CARING LOTUS

Established by Kerry Bolton in 2021, Caring Lotus is a dedicated NDIS provider that goes above and beyond to provide personalised, comprehensive support services to people with disabilities.

Knowing that its clients and support workers often experience isolation, Caring Lotus organises regular events to bring them together, creating a sense of community, inclusion and belonging. These events include an anniversary party for staff, clients and their families, and frequent get-togethers at the local coffee shop.

As well as giving support workers thorough training to help them understand their clients' unique needs, preferences and goals, Caring Lotus embraces innovation through a number of initiatives designed to help it provide truly tailored care. For example, it matches its support workers with clients who share similar interests and passions, leading to stronger and more personal connections.

It also works closely with occupational therapists and other professionals to improve clients' overall wellbeing, and runs local business initiatives where clients can work alongside support staff to gain useful skills, earn an income, and feel a sense of accomplishment.

Perhaps most importantly, Caring Lotus champions autonomy by encouraging and empowering its clients to make decisions about their care and what it means to live their best lives.

#### PROUDLY SPONSORED BY HOLIDAY INN WERRIBEE

Holiday Inn Werribee stands as a beacon of hospitality in the vibrant city of Wyndham, offering guests a warm welcome and unparalleled service. Nestled in the heart of Werribee, it embodies the essence of comfort and convenience, making it an ideal choice for leisure and business travellers alike. The hotel boasts modern, well-appointed rooms and ensures a memorable experience with its attention to detail and commitment to excellence. Holiday Inn Werribee proudly supports the Wyndham Business Awards, and is delighted to sponsor the Excellence in Customer Experience. By aligning with this prestigious award, the hotel reaffirms its dedication to providing guests with unparalleled hospitality and exceeding their expectations at every turn.

[ihg.com/holidayinn](http://ihg.com/holidayinn)



#### FINALISTS

- EQ LEADERS
- LIVING PROSPECT REAL ESTATE
- RELIANCE REAL ESTATE
- ROSE'S KNITTING CENTRE

#### JUDGES STATEMENT

*"Caring Lotus provides exceptional customer service to the most vulnerable people in our society, giving them dignity and a sense of belonging. Through personalised care, social activities, and events, Kerry ensures each individual feels valued and connected. Her commitment to excellence extends to her staff, who are empowered with an app that provides instant access to information, enabling caregivers to answer any client question promptly. Thoughtful touches such as birthday cards, thank-you notes and welcome packs add an extra layer of care and warmth, making Caring Lotus truly exceptional and a worthy winner of the Excellence in Customer Service Award."*





## EXCELLENCE IN LOCAL COMMUNITY

### DIRECT VET SERVICES

Direct Vet Services was started in 2010 by Dr Karen Davies, and has since become a powerhouse of community engagement and support.

The clinic, which is dedicated to providing comprehensive care for everything from “pocket pets” to exotic species, also does pro bono work for the Wyndham Pound and looks after injured wildlife.

It is a strong advocate for animal welfare within the community, and works hard to make a positive impact by prioritising eco-friendly practices and Australian-made products.

It also offers training and mentorship opportunities for young people interested in veterinary medicine, and actively promotes and sells products from local businesses and entrepreneurs.

Dr Karen’s already multi-award-winning business is a testament to her leadership, which role models deep social values. The former Wyndham Business Person of the Year even turned her recent personal experience with breast cancer into a community awareness campaign by hosting morning teas, and organising fundraisers and education initiatives that showcased her resilience and sense of humour.

This clinic’s proactive approach to social responsibility has earned it a lot of respect and admiration, reinforcing its position as a caring and compassionate business dedicated to making a positive difference within the community.

#### PROUDLY SPONSORED BY WYNDHAM CITY

Wyndham City is thrilled to sponsor the Excellence in Local Community Award. This reflects Council’s commitment to our local community and local economy. Wyndham is a diverse, multicultural municipality with more than 32,000 businesses and our municipality is continuing to emerge as a major commercial hub. Council’s priority is to build on our economic strengths through facilitating investment, enabling and upskilling small businesses and in turn increasing local employment opportunities. Our vision is to recognise and support local business and organisations that positively contribute to Wyndham and foster community pride. Wyndham City is proud to support the Wyndham Business Awards Local Community Award and congratulates all finalists and winners. [wyndham.vic.gov.au](http://wyndham.vic.gov.au)



#### FINALISTS

- SHAWN’S SWIM SCHOOL
- TEST FAST
- WISE REMOVALIST

#### JUDGES STATEMENT

*“Direct Vet services is a deserving winner of Excellence in Local Community Award. Outside of an already thriving business track record and plans for future growth, Dr Karen’s clinic champions other local businesses in its supply chain, and actively engages with, supports and employs local community members. This purpose-driven business continuously demonstrates respect and a clear passion for Wyndham by helping drive local pet support and policy, and by being such a committed advocate for animal welfare. Having been in operation for almost two decades, it shows no signs of slowing down, which is only a positive for the community.”*



## EXCELLENCE IN SUSTAINABILITY

### ALL GREEN NURSERY & GARDEN SUPPLIES

At All Green, sustainability is not just a goal – it’s a fundamental principle that shapes every business practice and decision.

The nursery and garden supplies store was started in 1979 by the Fragapane family, who consistently review and adapt their environmental practices as needed to minimise their footprint.

All Green’s innovative sustainability and community-based initiatives include programs that provide young people entering the workforce with valuable experience and exposure to the job application process. And by collaborating with local schools, it has successfully employed several young people through its Junior Maintenance Program, creating sustainable pathways for employment.

All Green also make significant investments to transform raw materials into premium landscaping soils for gardens and lawns, including by repurposing materials that would otherwise end up in landfill.

The Fragapanes understand that sustainability is essential for their business’s long-term success, and are dedicated to integrating sustainable initiatives into every aspect of their operations.

By prioritising sustainability, they are not only reducing their environmental impact, but also creating opportunities for growth, development, and positive impact within the community and beyond.

As they continue to evolve and innovate, sustainability will remain at the forefront of their mission, driving a more sustainable and prosperous future for all.

#### PROUDLY SPONSORED BY PROJECT SPACE

Established in 2021, Project Space is an Australian business that specialises in project marketing. We cover all residential densities, including luxury apartments, lifestyle projects, and house-and-land packages. We also cover commercial and industrial real estate, including warehouses and office spaces. Our team of professionals is focused on simplifying the complex property market for you, and will tailor long-term strategies that take into account your current situation and prioritise your unique needs and goals.

As a company, we embody a strong commitment to cutting-edge research and data-driven methodologies. We provide individualised and caring support, and believe in empowering our clients with relevant knowledge and data so they can confidently invest in a brighter future. [projectspacevic.com.au](http://projectspacevic.com.au)

#### FINALISTS

- ISUZU AUSTRALIA LIMITED
- LMA (LABEL MANUFACTURERS AUSTRALIA)
- QUEST WERRIBEE

#### JUDGES STATEMENT

*“All Green’s comprehensive approach to sustainability is very impressive, encompassing not only environmental aspects but also people development and community connectedness. With almost 50 years of experience, this family-owned business has developed its model to include a significant range of products and services, while at the same time seeking to develop the capability and employment pathways of its staff. Not only do the Fragapanes demonstrate a significant commitment to emission reduction and environmental standards in their own operations, they also seek opportunities to work with partners to solve their waste problems and convert them into valuable assets.”*





# Our Judges



**AAMIR QUTUB**

Aamir is an award-winning tech entrepreneur and the Founder and CEO of Enterprise Monkey, a global software development company headquartered in Geelong.

As an angel investor and philanthropist, Aamir actively supports a range of innovative ventures and social initiatives. He contributes as a speaker at major technology and entrepreneurship events, sharing insights on digital innovation and business strategy. And he serves as a judge and mentor for several startup accelerators, including StartSpace, where he supports the development of international student-led startups.

Aamir is also a member of the Geelong Authority, where he helps shape the city's economic and cultural strategies.



**BRAD REGAN**

A proud resident of Melbourne's west for more than 50 years, Brad takes a real-world approach to helping business owners from any sector grow profits, expand their revenue base, and increase the overall value of their business.

After over 20 successful years in corporate, Brad completed an MBA at LaTrobe University in 2011, where he majored in Strategic Management and Marketing, and was awarded a Dean's Commendation in each of his three years.

Since starting Real Edge in Business in 2015, Brad has taken a systematic, structured, fact-based approach to unleash the profit and growth potential of dozens of businesses.



**BARRY F. HARVEY A.M.**

Barry's long and distinguished business career included a period as an Owner and Director of Austco Polar.

As a lifetime supporter of Wyndham industries and the wider community, he has been actively involved in various boards, committees and social projects over the years. Among many other acts of public service, he acted as Chair of Wyndham Industrial Liaison Committee for two decades, and has been Chair of the WynBay Local Learning Enterprise Network for the past 23 years.

In 2000, Barry was named Wyndham Citizen Of The Year, and in 2001 he was awarded a Queens Honour, Australian Medal.



**PROFESSOR BRUCE WILSON**

Bruce is Director of the European Union Centre of Excellence at RMIT, where he leads research and debate on EU-Australian relations, encourages mobility for staff and students, and helps build partnerships between Australian universities and organisations and their European counterparts.

Over the past decade, he has worked on various projects to promote the importance of building place-based innovation systems capability in country districts, cities and regions.

He has presented keynote presentations in EU Joint Research Centre forums on Smart Specialisation and place-based innovation, and was co-editor of the Australasian Journal of Regional Studies (2015-18, 2021-22).



**DANNY ONG**

Danny is the Partnership Manager at Deakin University Faculty of Business and Law, where he is responsible for managing partnerships with corporations, government agencies, and not-for-profits. Prior to this, he was the MBA Coordinator and Student Experience Coordinator.

He previously worked at Monash University in the areas of international project management and international student employability. And he has professional experience in the development of international education and research projects, including identifying emerging opportunities and coordinating projects in Southeast Asia, the Middle East and China.

Danny is passionate about international education in Australia, especially the experiences and welfare of international students.



**ELISE BUCHOLTZ**

With over 15 years' experience in print and digital publishing, Elise is an independent business, commercial and creative consultant who supports clients across the lifestyle, visitor economy, and hospitality sectors.

She previously spent 13 years in various commercial, marketing, and leadership roles within Time Out Group, including regional Managing Director APAC. During this time, she advocated for cities, created enduring partnerships across the visitor economy, and developed and grew Time Out's renowned awards and event programs.

Elise is a committee member for Melbourne's Collins St Precinct Group, runs mentorship services for women, and believes experience is the best currency.



**HAKIM HALIM**

Hakim is the Singapore-born cheesemonger who founded the world's first all-Australian cheese retail and advocacy brand, RIPE.

He won Melbourne's Small Business of the Year award in 2023, and the Australian Small Business Champion award in 2024.

In addition to championing Australian produce, Hakim is a member of the Melbourne's Economic Advisory Committee and runs a social enterprise, The Cheese Social.

In his free time, he enjoys cooking for the people close to him, wining and dining at the best restaurants around the world, and relaxing at home with his lap cat, Luka.

Ifrin is the CEO of SisterWorks, an organisation that supports the economic empowerment of migrant women through a range of programs, entrepreneurship and employment opportunities.

She first started volunteering at SisterWorks during a sabbatical from a 23-year career in management consulting and quickly realised that its mission resonated deeply with her.

Over the years, Ifrin has held many inaugural leadership positions at SisterWorks, including Head of Social Enterprise, Chief Operating Officer and Deputy CEO.

Her leadership has helped grow the organisation from a small grassroots charity into the respected social enterprise it is today.



**IFRIN FITTOCK**



**JANA PERERA**

Jana is a seasoned executive with a strong track record of success in complex organisations across the TAFE, higher education and private sectors, leading teams across functional areas while leveraging cross-functional capability through focused collaboration.

As the Director of Commercial & Business Development in the newly formed Future Skills division at Monash College, Jana leads strategic business initiatives, driving external engagement, and building partnerships. Her role encompasses strategic and operational leadership of the business development, commercial projects and marketing areas on both domestic and international fronts, with a primary focus on fostering and expanding strategic partnerships.





JESSICA COTTER

Jess is a senior communications, engagement, marketing and project lead management professional currently contracting to the Victorian Institute of Medicine (DJCS).

With over 25 years of experience, Jess has enjoyed a diverse career across numerous sectors, including all levels of government, manufacturing, e-commerce, small to medium-sized business, and not-for-profit organisations.

This is the third year Jess has been a judge for the Wyndham Business Awards. She delights in the new connections she makes with the amazing entrants she meets each year, and in learning all about their exceptional business efforts and successes.

Katrina is the Commercial Operations and International Manager at The Gordon.

With over 17 years' experience in the vocational education sector, Katrina brings operational leadership expertise in many areas, including stakeholder management at all levels across government, community, business and industry.

She is adept at developing and executing projects, strategy and growth planning, client experience, event and partnership management, process improvement, student recruitment, and building high-performance teams.

Katrina has a strong work ethic driven by passion for people, business efficiency and outcomes. This is her second year judging the Wyndham Business Awards.



KATRINA BYE



LES WATSON

Les has over 30 years of experience as a trainer, speaker, facilitator, and coach in self-management, motivation and communication.

Often called 'The Time Lord' due to his passion for time management and productivity, Les is the author of *Get Back An Hour In Every Day*. He also runs two businesses – one is called Get More Time, and the other is the acclaimed Creating Success Coaching program, where he specialises in helping small business owners who are overloaded or struggling to grow find more time, energy and profits.

This is his second year judging the Wyndham Business Awards.

For the past six years, Ross has been with the Small Business Mentoring Service Inc, where, as a Senior Business Executive, he brings over 48 years of professional experience to nurturing and empowering small businesses. Before that, he spent 11 years in financial services with the Bendigo and Adelaide Bank.

Whether through strategic guidance, coaching, or mentorship, Ross is passionate about delivering tangible value by cultivating the skills of small business owners and aligning their growth with their organisational objectives.

He believes that success for small businesses is not a destination, but an ongoing journey.



ROSS JENNINGS



PUJA GANGULI

A Sustainability and Innovation Strategist, Puja is the current Strategic Partnerships Lead of Electrification and Innovation at AGL, where she focuses on supporting the transition to green energy.

She has a diverse background spanning food, hospitality, media, journalism and education, and her recent tenure as a lecturer at Monash University involved equipping young people with the skills and mindset necessary to tackle complex challenges and drive innovation.

Having navigated the start-up landscape herself, Puja is dedicated to fostering a robust support system for businesses through her professional and philanthropic efforts, enabling them to drive forward-thinking practices and sustainable growth.



REBECCA OVEREND

Rebecca is a Relationship Manager for Melbourne Chamber of Commerce, specialising in stakeholder management of Victoria's Universities and TAFEs, Healthcare-providers and Victoria's Council members.

She is a deeply passionate and compassionate people person, with 15 years of experience working in the Australian tertiary education system.

Rebecca is also an experienced philanthropic fundraiser who thrives on creating transformational opportunities for disadvantaged students through the empowerment of education.

Her background in biomedical and psychological sciences enables her robust understanding and appreciation for philanthropy and business development within the health and wellness sectors.



SAKSHI THAKUR OAM

Sakshi Thakur is a Catalysr Foundation alumni and Entrepreneur in Residence. She is also the co-founder of Sewing the Seeds, a social enterprise that provides textiles education and employment to women in India in an effort to help break the poverty cycle by removing social and economic barriers to safe employment.

Sakshi was also formerly a manager at Social Enterprise Network of Victoria (SENVIC), and worked at EY in Finance. She has a Masters of Entrepreneurship from Melbourne Business School, where she worked on her tech startup.



SABINA CURATOLO

Sabina is an advocate for environmental and social impact, and came to investing after recognising the enormous opportunity to drive positive change through the mobilisation of private resources.

She previously worked in international development, advising senior decision-makers in government, international institutions, civil society, and the private sector.

Most recently, Sabina was Senior Director of Impact at Breakthrough Victoria (BV), where she led the development of the fund's approach to impact management. Prior to joining BV, Sabina was a founding partner and Head of Impact at Bridges Australia, and before that she was CEO of Impact Investing Australia.



STEVE SULLY

Over his 40-year career, Steve established himself as a leading urban strategist with specific skills in urban planning, economic development, urban advocacy, investment and development attraction, and place management.

He has managed and led numerous local government planning and economic development divisions, and state government project teams and planning panels. He also established and led Planning by Design Pty Ltd for 13 years.

After retiring as Director of City Development and Executive Officer of Positioning at Brimbank City Council, he still consults part-time, providing strategic advice to local government authorities, and is a board member for a range of organisations.





[wyndham.vic.gov.au/businessawards](http://wyndham.vic.gov.au/businessawards)