



## VERONICA WHITE MEDAL - 2020 NOMINEES

### Ali Brigginsshaw – Brisbane Broncos

Ali Brigginsshaw is at the top of her game on the field, captaining the Brisbane Broncos to the inaugural NRLW premiership as well as captaining Queensland and Australia. But it is her desire to help off the field which is the most impressive.

Growing up in Ipswich, Ali has a passion to give back to the community which supported her and is currently based in Ipswich SHS and Bremer SHS when she is not travelling throughout South East Queensland and Northern New South Wales presenting workshops to students with the Beyond the Broncos team.

Although 2020 has been a tough year for all, Ali has tried to stay connected with those in the Broncos Community who are doing it tough via video and Zoom chats. Ali has ensured that those who need an extra boost receive a video message from her including clients at organisations such as Camp Quality, Multicap and many individuals in the Broncos Community.

Ali is the first to put her hand up for any community visit, including previously visiting the Queensland Children's Hospital with fellow captain Darius Boyd, taking part in selling magazines with a homeless friend on the street for The Big Issue and hosting the NRL's In League in Harmony gala at the Broncos Leagues Club.

Ali has made an impact on many fans of the game, in particular a few young female players who she has gone above and beyond to support during difficult times. One example is young Charli Berghauser, who was devastatingly diagnosed with a pineal cystic tumour. An avid rugby league player, all Charli wanted to do was play football but had been sidelined with splitting headaches and mood changes. Charli played football for Jimboomba Thunder Rugby League Club since she was 5 years old and was already dreaming of the day, she could strap her boots back on before her life saving surgery.

Hearing about Charli's situation, Ali visited Charli and her family at their Jimboomba home to kit her out in the Broncos NRLW kit and lift her spirits during this difficult time. Ali took time from her busy schedule to make sure Charli felt supported by the rugby league community and got the chance to meet her idols. After Charli's surgery, Ali organised for Charli and her family to head to a Brisbane Broncos game and have Charli run out with the team as the official mascot. Ali was on hand to give Charli a behind the scenes tour of the stadium and have the chance to meet some Broncos legends. With Ali being Charli's favourite player, it was an amazing moment to share and an experience she will never forget.

Ali demonstrates each of the NRL's beliefs on a daily basis, both at work and when giving up her own time in the community. Although Ali has been a huge role model for young females, she has made it clear that she wants to be an inspiration for both male and females who have challenges or adversity they need to overcome.

## **Georgia Hale – New Zealand Warriors**

Georgia Hale is a champion sportsperson who has represented New Zealand in four separate sports, most recently as the captain of the Warriors Women – the youngest to do at just 24 years of age.

Georgia has used her sporting profile as a platform to create huge community impact around New Zealand, both in her role as Vodafone Warriors Community Coordinator but also through her contribution to community outside of work; exceptional qualities which have seen her honoured as the 2020 Young New Zealander of the Year.

In her Vodafone Warriors Community role, Georgia is part of a team working to enhance the lives of thousands of children every year by visiting schools around the country, not only educating pupils on the fundamentals of being a professional athlete but also their personal health and wellbeing as they transition into adults.

Using rugby league and her role at the Vodafone Warriors as a platform, Georgia has dedicated herself to helping children, rural communities, the intellectually disabled, and a wide range of other charities. One such community initiative was the Great Charity Day which raised more than \$120,000 for the club's Charity partners in its first two years.

Georgia's teaching experience has put her in good stead for this role which sees regular engagement with schools and grassroots rugby league clubs. One initiative close to her heart has been working with teams of people with intellectual disabilities.

As New Zealand managed through its Covid-19 lockdown response, Georgia's dedication to ensuring the wellbeing of individuals and groups within her community saw her assist with the collection of goods and supplies to service local food banks.

She's organised club staff to cook for families staying at Ronald McDonald House, who have children in Starship Children's Hospital; and more recently has supported the Cancer Society through transporting patients to/from treatments using club vehicles that have been idle with our football squad based in Australia through 2020.

And while much of Georgia's work in the community may be considered part of her role at the club, having a champion that connects with and inspires individuals and groups across society makes all the difference for rugby league as a community leader.

## Kezie Apps – St George Illawarra Dragons

Kezie Apps is a Jillaroo who is the co-captain of the Dragons 2020 NRLW team and was also captain of the 2019 NSW State of Origin Team. The Female Dally M winner (2016) is a Bega Roosters junior, who plays locally for Helensburgh in the Illawarra competition and is one of our game's most popular, decorated and recognizable players, but not only for her on-field endeavours.

Kezie has made a name for herself as an inspirational role model throughout the Dragons region and beyond thanks to her genuine interest, pro-active approach and all-round passion to help to help others.

Kezie played an instrumental role in the St George Illawarra Dragons bush fire relief tour at beginning of the year, an event that saw not only the entire NRL playing group visit bush fire effected towns from Lake Conjola to Cobargo but also the entire St George Illawarra Dragons organisation. Across three days the club visited schools, hosted community afternoons at Moruya and Batemans Bay as well as visiting the properties of local Jessop and Salway family farms in Cobargo, organised through Kezie's strong connection to the region.

This year Kezie has predominately been engaged in the Dragons very successful 'The Best You Can Be' Health and Wellbeing school program where she not only participates, but also leads and delivers a wide variety of these interactions and activities. The program has 78 schools involved in 2020 including 11 on the Far South Coast, an increase of 6 schools in 2019 due to Kezie's presence in the region.

Outside of her commitment to the NRLW and representative football, Kezie has regularly volunteered her time, making lasting impressions and ongoing associations for various organisations and charities. These include but are not limited to:

- Illawarra Disability Trust – Score Dragons
- Fight Cancer Foundation
- Ambassador and Advocate roles for Fight Cancer Foundation - Footy Colours Day, ANZ Stadium – Corporate and community ambassador, NRL League Stars Inspire and Hogs for Homeless, Deadly Blues program. NSWRL RESPECT Campaign, St George Bank – Footy Grants and St George Illawarra Dragons Best You Can Be ambassador.

Being a role model is a position of privilege for Kezie, she truly understands the influence she has, and her ability to inspire, particularly young girls.

Kezie has a unique ability to bring together a group of people, be it her teammates, work colleagues or the community groups/individuals with which she interacts and works. Kezie uses her position as a female rugby league player to lead and unite all with whom she comes in contact, her team-first mentality and approach always on display. She takes the necessary time to understand people and programs, quickly establishing how she can utilise her skills to bring people together.

## Simaima Taufa – Sydney Roosters

Simaima was and has always been a strong role model for many youth who aspire to achieve success either on the sporting field or off it.

Simaima has worked across the many community programs that the Sydney Roosters were doing prior to the COVID-19 shutdown. This included school programs and community outreach programs involving many of our grassroots sporting organisations. Simaima would spend 2-3 days each week in this space working across the Eastern Suburbs and Central Coast region.

Prior to joining the Sydney Roosters Simaima was engaged by the Mounties Football Club to run and participate in many of their programs held in the western region of Sydney. Whilst her time with the Roosters meant that Simaima struggled to continue with such work, she would whenever possible help with any of their specific youth development programs, particularly around their female rugby league pathway initiatives.

Simaima is a Player Advocate for the NRL's Violence Against Violence program. She was chosen by the Roosters Major partner Steggles to highlight and launch the Women's program for 2019. Simaima has long been regarded as a role model for not only her family but her teammates and colleagues. Her journey as always been recognised as inspirational to many people involved in the game. Today's Simaima messages and actions provide inspiration to the next generation.

Simaima has been captain of the Sydney Roosters NRLW team now for the past 2 seasons and has been captain of her club side for the past 4 years. To be named captain of any NRLW team you need to have exhibited the necessary traits that show you are a leader who can cajole, inspire and create the necessary positive environment that your teammates can respond to.

Being of Tongan ancestry Simaima has been a leader for many of the Pasifika girls that participate in community and elite programs. Many of these programs are made up of girls of Indigenous and European backgrounds. Simaima has always been instrumental in bringing these diverse backgrounds together. Simaima has also used this experience to work in many of the Roosters Indigenous programs that were conducted prior to the shutdown.

Subsequently due to the economic impact of COVID -19 the Club was forced to restructure the Community Department within the Sydney Roosters. This resulted in Simaima losing her role with the Club. However, Simaima was incredible with her reaction, insisting that others were more important than her to the organisation and that she understood the decision the club had made. She was concerned for her teammates and colleagues, putting them above herself in a typical selfless action that has come to characterise Simaima. Simaima has offered to continue to volunteer her services and time should there be a need to reengage with Roosters Community stakeholders in the future.