



Hardship and adversity helped shape these courageous leaders

Recognition A strong sense of commitment drives amazing women.

Hannah Tattersall

Standing in front of Parliament House in Canberra in 2015, Australian of the Year Rosie Batty dedicated her award to her son Luke, killed by his father in a violent incident the year before. "He is the reason I have found my voice and I'm able to be heard," she said.

The tragedy experienced by Batty is horrifying and something most of us are unable to identify with – but her voice has indeed been heard. Batty has become an influential campaigner against family violence, through the Luke Batty Foundation, which she closed earlier this year, and as chair of the Victorian government's Victim Survivor's Advisory Council.

As one of the 2018 The Australian Financial Review 100 Women of Influence, Batty joins a host of women who have overcome periods of hardship to rise to positions of influence.

The 100 Women of Influence have been selected with the help of executive search firm Korn Ferry and a highly respected panel of judges, including two previous overall winners of the award, Ann Sherry, executive chair of cruise company Carnival Australia, and Moya Dodd, lawyer and soccer official. The other judges were Mark Scott, secretary, NSW Department of Education, Barry Irvin, executive chair, Bega Cheese, Paul Zahra, retail adviser and diversity advocate, Sam Mostyn, director of Sydney Swans, Vanessa Hudson, chief customer officer of Qantas, Financial Review Chanticleer columnist Tony Boyd, Financial Review managing editor Joanne Gray and Sally Patten, editor of AFR BOSS magazine.

This year's list was chosen from a record 850 entries, a large increase on the 370 received in 2016, the last time the awards were held.

Jacqueline Gillespie, senior client partner and head of leadership development at Korn Ferry, says hardship can play a significant role in shaping leaders.

"It often helps galvanise their core



I've always had a drive to make a difference ... that my life should count for something.

Rosie Batty, above

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values and their sense of purpose. The other thing it does is [it] broadens perspectives and creates more meaning about things that happen," she says.

Those submitting applications this year were asked to demonstrate the competency of self-leadership (courage, resilience, self-development) through challenges and hardships.

This doesn't mean that women who had not experienced hardship scored less but it does perhaps explain why a large number of women disclosed stories of overcoming adversity on the way to where they are now. "The stories of these women's journeys were really compelling and quite important to their journey as women of influence," says Gillespie. "I do think people see themselves more holistically in the workforce, so they kind of bring all their experiences to bear as leaders and that includes what happens to them in

their personal journeys as well."

A 2014 Centre for Creative Leadership study of hardship concluded there are many lessons that can be learnt from adversity, including self-knowledge, sensitivity and compassion, limits of control and flexibility.

Because hardship experiences are not intentional, they act as a "wake-up call" to look inwards and decide what is important for one's life, the study found. For Batty, throwing herself headfirst into a cause gave her a reason to get out of bed again.

"I've always wanted to make a difference in my life," she tells *The Australian Financial Review*. "I didn't know what that looked like or what that would end up being, but I've always had a drive to make a difference and [the belief] that my life should count for something."

"Yes, busyness is a distraction, but it's also giving you purpose and meaning and direction, and when you lose your child, you've lost all of your meaning and all of your purpose in your life and the direction you were on as a mother. I feel very privileged and indeed lucky that as a white, privileged, well-educated woman, I was given the opportunity to be heard."

In a business environment, the ability to overcome adversity, which helps build leadership characteristics such as resilience, self-awareness and a broader perspective on problems, can be useful in times of lay-offs, budget cuts, mergers and acquisitions or corporate scandals. But more generally, it often gives people a sense of what they care about, says Gillespie.

At 23, Nataly Tormey was in hiding, protecting her two young daughters as she escaped a violent relationship. Tormey, who is also on the 100 Women of Influence list, wanted to make a difference not only to her own life, but to improving access to first aid for those who were unable to afford it.

Three years ago she founded The Parentmedic Movement, a global community of parents, doctors, nurses committed to educating parents about child first aid, sleep and safety.

"There is this really wonderful shift around people, and women especially, using hardship and translating it into a viable mission or business idea; of women going through rough patches and coming out the other side saying,

Above, Shukufa Tahiri, who fled the Taliban as a child refugee; below, global food wastage campaigner Ronni Kahn. PHOTO: JANIE BARRETT, JESSICA HROMAS



Making a difference | Who's on the list

Category & name	Role	Organistaion	Category & name	Role	Organistaion
Arts, culture, sport			Innovation		
Anne Bunde-Birouste	Founding director	Football United	Emma Johnston	Dean of science & professor	University of New South Wales
Esther Anatolitis	Executive director	National Association for the Visual Arts	Janine Mahoney	Impact architecture program director	IPP consulting Pty Ltd
Judith Neilson AM	Founder	White Rabbit Gallery	Jemma Green	Co-founder & chair	Power Ledger
Kim Brennan	Management consultant	EY	Jodie Ward	Forensic DNA specialist	New South Wales Health Pathology
Natalie King	Enterprise professorial fellow	Victorian College of the Arts, Uni of Melbourne	Kristy Chong	Chief executive	Modibodi
Rachel Healy	Co-artistic director	Adelaide Festival Corporation	Kylie Charlton	Chief investment officer	Australian Impact Investments
Susan Alberti AC	Chairman	Susan Alberti Medical Research Foundation	Nicky Ringland	Computing education specialist	University of Sydney
Tania de Jong AM	Founder & chief executive	Creative Universe & Creativity Australia	Ros Harvey	Managing director	The Yield
Tracey Vieira	Chief executive	Screen Queensland	Sandra Kentish	Head of school of chemical & bio engineering	University of Melbourne
Board and management			Local and regional		
Catherine Fitzpatrick	General manager, group customer relations	Commonwealth Bank of Australia	Aunty Gail Allison JP	Founder & manager	Kindy Link, Nganggawalli Aboriginal Health
Clare Sowden	General manager, development & investment	AECOM	Bec Bignell	Co-founder	Cockatoo CoLab
Dayle Stevens	Divisional chief information officer	AGL Energy	Edwina Sharrock	Founder & chief executive	Birth Beat
Jenny Taing	Product manager, head of implementation, board director	Vanguard Investments Australia & Western Bulldogs Community Foundation	Joanna Newton	Research scientist	Agriculture Victoria
Jingmin Qian	Non-executive director	Abacus Property Group	Julia Telford	Director	Engage & Create Consulting
Josephine Louise Sukkar	Principal	Buildcorp	Juliet Duffy	Director	Regional Enviroscience
Kate Cole	Manager, occupational health & hygiene	Ventia	Kate Meade	Founder & director	The Victorian Dance Festival & ACE Radio
Rebekah Giles	Partner	Kennedys	Lorien Parker	Scientist & educator	SciencePlay Kids
Rosemary Julia Hicks	Chief executive	Australian National Fabrication Facility	Saba Nabi	Communication officer	Murrumbidgee Local Health District
Siobhan Toohill	Group head of sustainability and community	Westpac Group	Public policy		
Sue Kench	Global chief executive	King & Wood Mallesons	Chloe Munro	Professorial fellow, chair & independent director	Monash University
Trista Brohier	Executive general manager	Mach Energy Australia	Jane Alver	PhD candidate	Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis
Business and entrepreneur			Matina Jewell	Director	Matina Jewell Enterprises
Annie Parker	Global head of startups	Microsoft	Megan Davis	Pro vice-chancellor indigenous	University of New South Wales
Bridget Loudon	Co-founder & chief executive	Expert360	Miranda Stewart	Professor	University of Melbourne & Aust National Uni
Catriona Wallace	Founder & chief executive	Flamingo AI	Rosemary Lyster	Professor of climate & environmental law	The University of Sydney Law School
Dimitra Markogiannaki	Founder & chief marketing	WeTeachMe	Rosemary Sinclair	Chief executive	Energy Consumers Australia
Jana Matthews	Director & professor	Australian Centre for Business Growth UniSA	Sally Moyle	Chief executive	CARE Australia
Naomi Simson	Entrepreneur & co-founder	Big Red Group	Social enterprise and not-for-profit		
Ruth Hatherley	Founder & chief executive	Moneycatcha Pty Ltd	Bernadette Black	Founding director & chief executive	Brave Foundation
Simone Tully	Director	Australian Organic Meats Group	Berne Gibbons	Managing director	Vitro Software Pty Ltd
Diversity and inclusion			Donna Ciccio	Director & co-founder	Endometriosis Australia
Catherine Fox	Journalist	Self-employed	Emma Gierschick	Founder	Children of Disability Australia
Catia Malaquias	Lawyer, founder & board director	Starting With Julius	Laura Berry	Chief executive	Supply Nation
Diana Ryall	Founder	Xplore for Success	Lisa Kingman	Managing director	Social Good
Div Pillay	Co-founder & chief executive	MindTribes Pty Ltd	Liz Dawes	Founder & chief executive	Robert Connor Dawes Foundation
Jennifer Macklin	Director, diversity & inclusion	Royal Australian Navy	Nina Funnell	Anti-sexual assault advocate & journalist	End Rape on Campus Australia
Jo Burston	Founder & chief executive	Inspiring Rare Birds Pty Ltd	Rochelle Courtenay	Founder & managing director	Share the Dignity
Lisa Annesse	Chief executive	Diversity Council Australia	Ronni Kahn	Founding director and chief executive	OzHarvest
Michelle Redfern	Founder	Advancing Women in Business & Sport	Rosie Batty	Anti family violence campaigner	Rosemary Anne Batty Pty Ltd
Prue Gilbert	Founder & chief executive	Grace Papers	Tanya Jackson-Vaughan	Executive director	Refugee Advice & Casework Service
Silke Bader	Managing director	L Media	Tracey Spicer	Author, journalist & broadcaster	Spicer Communications
Violet Roumeliotis	Chief executive	Settlement Services International	Young leader		
Global			Anna Hush	Director	End Rape on Campus Australia
Fiona Reynolds	Chief executive	Principles for Responsible Investment	Eva Mackinley	Founder	The Last Straw
Jennifer Wittwer	Principal agent	Steeorra Consulting	Jade Hameister	Student	Haileybury College
Juliet Willetts	Research director & professor	Institute for Sustainable Futures, Uni of Tech	Karen McGrath	Global marketing manager	Act for Peace - Ration Challenge
Kate Swaffer	Co-founder, chair & chief executive	Dementia Alliance International	Macinley Butson	School student & company owner	School TGIS & Company Scilutions
Nataly Tormey	Director	Boardroom Rebels Society	Maddison O'Grady-Lee	Student	Macquarie University
Sanushka Seomangal	Special counsel	Thomson Geer	Mercedes Page	Founder & chief executive	Young Australians in International Affairs
Taryn Brumfitt	Founder	Body Image Movement	Naba Alfayadh	Co-founder	Happy Brain Education
			Olivia Fleming	Founder	The Little HELP Project Tasmania INC
			Samantha Devlin	Director of partnerships	The Footnotes
			Sarah Warmoll	Co-founder & schools program director	The Footnotes
			Sheree Rubinstein	Founder and chief executive	One Roof
			Shukufa Tahiri	Policy officer	Refugee Council of Australia

SOURCE: WESTPAC, FINANCIAL REVIEW

"You know what? I want to make a difference in people now going through that," she says.

Shukufa Tahiri was separated from her father when she fled civil unrest and fundamentalism under the Taliban in Afghanistan at the age of six.

She spent the next six years in Pakistan in a refugee enclave, before reuniting with her father in Australia in 2006 at the age of 12.

Now a policy officer with the Refugee Council of Australia, she says she wouldn't describe herself as someone who has experienced terrible suffering,

but she does recognise her ability to identify with people who may have gone through something similar.

"For me it was defined in the sense that there were policy issues that I could take on and work on in the sector to improve the lives of people around me: people who are more marginalised than I have been. There is a sense of familiarity in that. You can connect with the sense of injustice that they're feeling," she says.

Gillespie says what makes a leader someone people can connect to, is their authenticity. "That shows up in lots of

different ways, but certainly it's about understanding the leader better and knowing what they care about, what drives them, what their passions are, what their interests are."

Liz Dawes, who founded the Robert Connor Dawes foundation after her son passed away from brain cancer in 2013, says, "being a leader feels natural for me, but being a real person is important".

Five years on, she has expanded the charity to be the biggest paediatric brain cancer foundation in Australia and has been crucial in lobbying the

federal government to secure funding for a disease that kills more young people than any other cancer.

"We have so many people volunteering, helping, and I think they feel connected to what we're trying to do."

Dawes says talking about her son is part of celebrating him.

"I knew the day he died that it was never going to get easier and it hasn't. But we're channelling his positive energy into doing something, hopefully, that will make a difference." This year's 100 Women of Influence list features women working across a spec-

trum of industries demonstrating a strong sense of commitment to a cause - from Ronni Kahn, whose company OzHarvest has partnered with United Nations Environment to host events to raise awareness about the alarming rates of global food wastage; to author, journalist and broadcaster Tracey Spicer, who has dedicated the past decade to amplifying women's voices and broke the first #metoo stories here.

The winners of each of the 10 categories and the overall winner will be announced at a gala dinner in Sydney on October 17.