



# JAMES MERLINO MP

## STATE MEMBER FOR MONBULK



office: 1635 Burwood Hwy, Belgrave 3160 p: 9754 5401 e: james.merlino@parliament.vic.gov.au  
[jamesmerlino.com.au](http://jamesmerlino.com.au) JamesMerlinoMP JamesMerlinoMP

### MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 10 August 2017

## FINALISTS ANNOUNCED FOR 2017 LEARN LOCAL AWARDS

Member for Monbulk, James Merlino MP has today congratulated Leanne Fitzgerald who has been named a finalist in the outstanding practitioner category at this year's Victorian Learn Local Awards.

The awards recognise the contribution of the more than 300 Learn Local organisations and the staff who work tirelessly to help others.

Leanne is known for linking seemingly unconnected resources and opportunities to create innovation. She is always on the lookout for partnerships and funding sources that will contribute to the development of quality learning environments.

One example is the creation of the Coonara Community House garden, in partnership with the local TAFE, where people learn everything from composting to cooking wood-fired pizzas to keeping chickens and bees.

She led a team that produced *A House Around the Corner* – a series for Channel 31 showcasing Learn Local and Neighbourhood Houses across the state. In another initiative led by Leanne – a trial of Pop Up adult learning at Westfield Shopping Centre and other locations in Knox City, to make connections with people who may never have heard of Neighbourhood Houses or Learn Local.

Leanne has been providing leadership and mentoring for her peers across the Learn Local sector for over 20 years and is unwavering in her passion and dedication to adult learning.

This year, two acknowledgement categories, the Learn Local Legend and Learn Local Volunteer Champion, will be awarded in addition to the five traditional awards categories:

- Pre-accredited Learners
- Outstanding Practitioner
- Outstanding Pathways Program
- Excellence in Creating Local Solutions
- AMES Australia Diversity Innovation.

In total there is \$66,000 to be won across the seven categories, with the winners announced at this year's Learn Local Awards to be held on Thursday, 31 August.

James Merlino MP said the Andrews Labor Government is building a strong training system – ensuring all Victorians – regardless of age, postcode or background have access to high quality training.

Learn Locals have also benefited from the Government's \$20 million Reconnect Program, which provides wrap around support to help Victoria's most disadvantaged learners into training.



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#### Quotes attributable to Member for Monbulk, James Merlino MP

*"We have so many locals giving back to the community and these awards are a chance for us to show them our appreciation."*

*"Learn Locals make a huge difference in their community and it's all thanks to people like Leanne Fitzgerald."*

#### Quotes attributable to Minister of Training and Skills Gayle Tierney

*"Every Victorian, no matter their background or circumstances should have access to high quality training and that's what our 300 plus Learn Local organisations offer."*

**Media Contact:** John Ronan 0408 542 547 | [John.Ronan@minstaff.vic.gov.au](mailto:John.Ronan@minstaff.vic.gov.au)