



Title: Two Peas in a Pod

Category: Club Person of the Year

Club Name: West Pymble Bicentennial Club

Entrant: Emma Ritchie

- 1. Provide an outline of the program, project or cause that addresses each of the following aspects:**
 - a. The program/project/cause objectives**
 - b. The support the club provided, i.e. was it financial, in-kind, staff volunteers or use of club facilities?**
 - c. A timeline of activities/events**
 - d. Any developments made since implementation (for example: if the support spans multiple years, how has the program grown? Will the club provide support again? Will the program be enhanced in the future?)**

Sorry. Im writing this in a slightly unorthodox manor compared to the lay out of the questions and keeping it as a "story"

I am nominating not 1 person for this category, but a married couple, which a lot of people treat as a united person :) - Mick and Lea James.

Mick is currently the Chairman of the board and Lea, is his wife. There is nothing they would not do for each other, and nothing they would not do to help their local community Club.

They have been married to each other for the past 40 years, and both grew up locally and went to school in the area. They have 2 beautiful children. The love that Mick and Lea have for each other is unwavering, they are committed and connected deeply to each other. The same passion they have for each other also goes into the love they have for their local community and Club.

Mick and Lea are well known faces at the Club whom the community know and love. Outside of the Club Mick and Lea have supported many community people whether it be their business, sporting groups and families. Keep it local is a big part of their believes.

I have been at the Club only for the past 5 years and can only tell the times that I have shared with both, however there would be more stories from local members who would be able to support their devotion to the Club prior my arrival as they have been part of the Club for over 10 years. Each year becoming more involved in making sure that there is a Club here in West Pymble to service their community and support their community.

Mick started fighting for the Club survival the first year he joined the board - he joined the board because the community was very close to losing WPBC. The Club was in debt and had less than 20K to its name. There was not a lot of time left before the doors would be locked. With Mick came the lovely Lea by his side. Mick and the board at the time started to work towards making the Club sustainable and Lea would volunteer her time to help with the operations, from ordering, promoting to vacuuming the floors.



Eventually, the Club reached a point where it was starting to tread water thanks to their help.

Mick and Lea organised many events for the community to use the Club such as world cup nights, trivia, painting sessions, when if there were no staff, they would man the bar together until sometimes 2 or 3 in the morning. If something breaks, Mick and Lea work on fixing it, hanging it, or improving it. If I need help, they are the first to put their hands up.

There are very rare points in their lives they are not thinking about how to make the Club more community minded or even just ways to help the Club with patronage. An example - Mick and Lea are known for their morning walks around the community, and from time to time when walking they will take flyers for events at the Club with them and complete a letter box drop at the same time.

Lea and Mick are both always promoting the Club at any opportunity they can.

COVID SUPPORT -

During both lockdowns, there was intense pressure on the Club to maintain a revenue stream while keeping wages down, so we opened the door for takeaway, online activities, and meat raffles. Again, Mick and Lea came to the rescue. Both have full time roles yet, every day the Club was open in lockdown they would put each 20 plus hours work to help the club survive - there was nothing they wouldn't do to help. Mick was known around the community as the delivery man taking meals, puzzles and more to people's houses. Lea would take orders over the phone staying connected to the community. They helped, clean, cook and more to help keep the Club going.

The first lockdown Lea was heavily involved with the Club, however not long after the first lockdown Lea was diagnosed with oesophagus cancer, which meant she had to take a step back to look after herself. Lea started Chemo and did this for 3 months, during this time, Lea would work out when she had "good days" between therapy, pop on her gloves (the Chemo intensified cold/cool weather) and come up to the Club to do things such as decorate for Halloween trivia nights, update advertising screens around the club and more.

After the first stages of Chemo, Lea required surgery and a lengthy recovery as her whole stomach and most of the oesophagus was removed. A very life changing surgery. The community came to support the people that supported the Club at this point sending care packages to their family and more. In addition to the surgery more Chemo was required.

In true Lea spirit, after being diagnosed with Cancer the first thing Lea wanted to do was host a morning tea at the Club to raise funds for the Cancer Council.

Through out the period of Leas recovery, Mick did not waiver from the Clubs side, he spent days visiting his wife in hospital and supported the Club after work by help with activities like selling meat raffle tickets every Friday and Saturday, helping grab glasses when we were short staffed and more.

Another lockdown was looming, Mick again stepped up to the plate and was our delivery man again while Lea who was still recovering, nothing could stop her from helping - we started online trivia for the community and she spent days at home on the computer in bed searching for trivia questions for our weekly online trivia.

Once we were open again, the Club faced issues with being short staffed. Mick continued to help every Friday and Saturday night.

2. Provide a brief insight into why this program, project or cause was supported by the club.

In your answer, summarise:

- a. How the project, program or cause was first presented to the club. For example, did a member present it to the Board or Executive team, was it part of a ClubGRANTS submission, did it come from a local business or the community based on a need, was a survey conducted to identify areas of community need, etc.**
- b. Why it was important to the club to support this community need.**

Lea, while still recovering, maintained being a hero to the Club. An example, we had Melbourne Cup coming up and sold lots of tickets. On the day our head chef called in sick, leaving me to cook on my own – I called Mick to let him know and next thing I know, Lea was by my side, still recovering helping cook and get the food out, at that time Lea would only last a few hours and would have to rest, she stayed with me for 6 hours and wouldn't go until she knew that I was through the worst of the service. Lea was very proud to announce recently that her cancer was in complete remission.

COMMUNITY EXAMPLES –

Below are some examples of how they have supported the community.

Tomorrow Man – Our community was struck with sorrow when a local young man gave up on life. The loss of life was felt throughout everyone as the young man had only just finished his HSC at a local school. The wake was held at the Club and Mick could see the devastation especially with the young man's classmates. It was a very sad and dark day. Mick was concerned for the young man's class mates. He called a group called tomorrow man who host workshops around NSW, their work shops are designed to educate teach and talk to men about how to have hard conversations, but also provide them with tools to apply to daily life to help foster a positive and happy life. The workshop did come with a cost, Mick sourced funding for this through sponsors and he contacted parents to pass along the details of the workshop. We had over 40 people attend all who left with something to help them in their future.

Bocce – We have 2 very lovely young men who come to their Club with their carers, every week they look forward to 1 activity – lawn bowls with Lea. Lea volunteers every Saturday afternoon to coach and show the 2 special needs chaps how to play bowls. Their carers tell me that the Bowls is the highlight of the week and the dearly look forward to it each week, it has provided them with more meaning. Lea has religiously done this for many years and even decorates their table for dinner with balloons when it's a birthday (as she does for the staff too on occasion) . Sadly COVID has put a stop



to it for the past year and a bit but Lea has stayed in touch via phone. We are very excited to say that they are coming back for the first time this Saturday on the 26th of Feb.

3. Provide an outline of the positive impact the club's contribution had on the community.

Personally, Mick and Lea have been a rock through out my time here not only professionally but in my life. They have supported and provided me with love good and sad times (including nominating me for heart of the community last year to polar opposite sad times of the passing of my father). Their support has helped me grow into a better person, they have had this impact on many people in the community.

There are so many more examples of what they have done, and this is just highlighting some. To me, Mick and Lea are truly the definition of what it means to be Community Club Person of the year.

4. Add any credits here (optional).

I understand that this is based on community member of the year, but their whole story tells of how they are community people each year they are here. It is very hard to put into words just the work and love they have for their community and their Club, I just hope that I have done them justice.

5. Supporting material:

- *To request copies of the supporting documents, please email events@clubsnsw.com.au*