

Zonta's Woman of Achievement

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One of the founders of a local community organisation dedicated to stopping domestic and family violence has been awarded the Zonta Club of Blackall Range Woman of Achievement Award for 2021.

Maleny's Val France received the honour at an International Women's Day function at Maleny Community Centre last Monday. "Val is a wonderful advocate for women in the community," said Committee chair Ann Koenig.

"She is one of the leaders in the formation of the combined services group, which is now known as 'Speak Up Now, Stop Domestic and Family Violence'.

Ann described Val as a passionate worker who used her time and expertise as a lawyer to assist organisations with hands-on fundraising activities "from flipping burgers to making marmalade and chilli sauce for street stores, and organising concerts".

"She was involved with the Maleny IDAHO, which is the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, organising a major cabaret and other events to raise funds to support gay youth and regular get togethers in local restaurants. Not only is Val passionate about the prevention of domestic and family violence, she brings this passion as well as an enormous energy to whatever she undertakes."

Val said she was grateful to Zonta for the wonderful award and delighted that Speak Up Now could rely on support from Zonta, Rotary, and the Maleny Neighbourhood Centre. "We have also been supported by the Maleny and Blackall Range Lions Club, the Maleny CWA and the local RSL, and many, many individuals."

Speak Up Now was a collaboration between Quota, Zonta and Rotary.

"We all got together and we recognised the need to work towards an all-community response to help reduce domestic violence and elder abuse in our area. And together we, along with the Maleny Neighbourhood Centre are working towards changing the ending. That is, to reduce domestic violence abuse and help prevent further domestic violence-related murders. "Clearly it's an individual's choice to take up the challenge and call out gender bias and inequality. But wouldn't the world be a nicer place to live in if we all did this? Collectively we can all help to create an inclusive world. From challenge comes change, so let us all choose to challenge and change the ending so that women can live safely within their homes and in their workplaces and within the wider community.

"I am passionate in most things, and I wouldn't be able to do half of what I do without the love, support and contribution from my partner, Barb, who's here tonight, and without the support of friends and family. You allow me to do what I love to do best."



Zonta 2021 Woman of Achievement Val France with Ann Koenig.



Mary Donohue, Val France, Barb Jones and Jean Coffey.



Alison Huth, Petra Ladwig, Pat Cussens (Area Director for Zonta) and Ann Koenig.