

# MEDIA RELEASE

## Local Touch legends wanted: Bunnings Home Ground Heroes nominations open



Nominator, Ken Laban with 2025 Bunnings Home Ground Hero, Vatau Sagaga

### **Nominations are open to celebrate the unsung heroes whose dedication and generosity help their Touch communities thrive, with selected recipients receiving \$5,000 to reinvest in grassroots sport**

As one of New Zealand's most community-driven sports, Touch relies on the tireless commitment of volunteers and supporters who give far beyond the sidelines to help players train, compete and represent their communities.

Bunnings Home Ground Heroes is inviting Touch communities across Aotearoa to recognise the volunteers who make the game possible. From organisers and coaches to those working tirelessly behind the scenes, the initiative celebrates the unsung individuals whose passion, commitment and mahi keep Touch thriving at a grassroots level.

Over the past five years, 20 Home Ground Heroes from communities nationwide have been recognised for their outstanding contributions to Touch. Their stories reflect the heart of the Touch community and highlight the lasting impact one dedicated person can make.

Touch NZ Chief Executive, Joe Sprangers, said the partnership continues to make a meaningful difference.

"Through the Bunnings Home Ground Heroes programme, Touch NZ has the opportunity to recognise and celebrate the people who are the backbone of our communities. In partnership with Bunnings, we've been able to acknowledge 20 remarkable individuals over the past five years, and we're excited to continue celebrating these everyday heroes," said Sprangers.



# MEDIA RELEASE

Bunnings NZ General Manager, Melissa Haines said, “Touch communities thrive because of everyday New Zealanders who give their time and energy to others. Home Ground Heroes lets us support that impact in a meaningful way, helping local volunteers do even more for their players and whānau. With many of our own team part of the Touch community, we’re proud to open nominations for 2026 and continue backing the people who strengthen their communities.”

Past recipients have used the support to expand local initiatives, reduce barriers for families and invest in equipment that strengthens participation. Among them is last year’s winner **Vataua Sagaga**, who has helped grow the Wainuiomata Touch community.

“The funding made a significant impact on our ability to deliver our junior module,” says Sagaga. “Because our module is free to enter, it removes financial barriers for whānau. Parents have told us how much it has supported their children’s wellbeing and mental health, which has been incredibly rewarding.”

In Kāpiti–Horowhenua, **Diana Manu** has long been regarded as the backbone of the province, ensuring its ongoing success through tireless leadership and advocacy. Without her influence, Touch in the region would not be the thriving community it is today. With the \$5,000 in funding, Diana has been able to purchase new playing tees for the under-12 and under-14 grades, responding to growing participation and replacing equipment that was more than 12 years old.

Leading on and off the field, Wellington U18 Mixed coach and former Bunnings Home Ground Hero **Hoani Smith** recently completed 10,000 passes in 10 hours to raise funds for his players, an example of the extraordinary commitment the programme aims to recognise. “Initiatives like Bunnings Home Ground Heroes provide a crucial lifeline to the local clubs that need it most. We are incredibly grateful for Bunnings Warehouse and their massive support of the Touch community here in Aotearoa.”

The 2026 Bunnings Home Ground Heroes initiative now invites Touch communities nationwide to nominate those who embody this same dedication. Nominators will simply need to outline how their nominee positively impacts the Touch community and how a \$5,000 grant would further strengthen their efforts.

Nominations close Saturday, 14 March 2026, with winners to be announced in mid-April.

For more information on the 2026 Bunnings Home Ground Heroes programme, visit: [Touch New Zealand - Bunnings Home Ground Heroes \(touchnz.co.nz\)](https://touchnz.co.nz)

- ENDS -

## Notes to the editor:

Since 2018, Bunnings Warehouse has been the principal partner of Touch New Zealand and the naming-rights sponsor for all national tournaments. In 2026, the Bunnings Home Ground Heroes initiative returns to recognise the volunteers who go above and beyond to support the Touch community, with five recipients each receiving \$5,000 to reinvest locally. Making a positive difference in the Touch community is just a small way Bunnings can lend a hand to the communities in which we operate.

### For media enquiries please contact:

Joe Sprangers – Touch New Zealand	+64 27 282 8691 <a href="mailto:joe@touchnz.co.nz">joe@touchnz.co.nz</a>
Nicki Covich – Bunnings NZ	+64 21 135 2780 <a href="mailto:nicki.covich@bunnings.co.nz">nicki.covich@bunnings.co.nz</a>
Chloe Koutsoukis – Sunday Gravy	+61 466 568 412 <a href="mailto:chloe@sundaygravy.com.au">chloe@sundaygravy.com.au</a>

[Bunnings](#) is a leading retailer of home and lifestyle products for consumer and commercial customers in Australia and New Zealand. We are a major supplier to project builders, commercial tradespeople and the housing industry. Our store network in New Zealand is made up of 51 locations, comprising Bunnings Warehouses, smaller-



# MEDIA RELEASE

format stores and trade centres. This physical network is supported by a growing e-commerce ecosystem and supply chain network. Bunnings employs more than 5,000 team members across the country.

