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WA volunteers' drive impresses in national aged care awards

An aged care support service, which started out with a handful of volunteers in Bunbury, Western Australia is a finalist in the 2014 HESTA Aged Care Awards.

Opened in 1987, Community Home Care has grown to employ more than 60 staff, assisted by 70 volunteers, providing services to frail older people living in Greater Bunbury, and the Donnybrook and Balingup Shires.

As one of five finalists in the Organisation Award category, Community Home Care has been recognised for its high level of community engagement and ability to harness long-term support from volunteers.

Chief Executive Officer, Sue Clements, said the service started out offering transport services and social support to older people in their homes who were no longer able to get around easily.

"Since those humble beginnings, we have grown to become one of the major service providers in the region and now offer a range of programs including home support services, home maintenance, transport, social support, home smoke alarm servicing and, more recently, meals on wheels," Ms Clements said.

"All services are designed to enable clients to remain in their own home and maximise their independence and community involvement for as long as possible.

In addition, the service now offers a transport service to Perth, thanks to a large group of volunteers who drive clients to the city and help them attend medical appointments.

"This is of great benefit, as managing appointments can be very stressful and a number of clients would have had to travel by train, bus or taxi — which is more expensive and involves a lot of waiting around."

Ms Clements said the organisation is currently building a new Wellness Centre in Bunbury to service the south-west, which is due to open in early November. The South West Wellness Centre is co-located in a central community hub, alongside a Men's Shed group and other community organisations.

"The new centre will be financially beneficial, as we won't have to hire venues to house our expanding programs. More importantly, it will allow clients to simply come in for a chat and a cup of tea — this will give a real boost to the morale of volunteers, staff and our clients," she said.

Ms Clements and the other interstate finalists will be flown to Melbourne to attend the awards dinner, where the winners will be announced on Tuesday 5 August 2014.

A \$30,000 prize pool will be shared among the winners, generously provided by long-term HESTA awards supporter ME Bank. The Outstanding Organisation and Team Innovation Award winners will each receive a \$10,000 development grant, while the Individual Distinction Award winner will receive a \$5,000 ME Bank *EveryDay* Transaction Account and \$5,000 towards further education.

HESTA is the leading super fund for health and community services, with more than 770,000 members and \$27 billion in assets. More people in health and community services choose HESTA for their super.

Visit hestaawards.com.au for tickets to the awards dinner or to learn more about the awards.

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