

PO Box 615
Carlton South VIC 3053
hestaawards.com.au

 @HESTAACawards

Media release 17 July 2014

Volunteer energising residents through music a finalist in aged care awards

An aged care volunteer, from Lismore NSW, has been named a finalist in the 2014 HESTA Aged Care Awards for her work in establishing a choir for older people in residential care.

Deirdre Paillas, of UnitingCare Ageing's Caroonna site, is one of five finalists in the Individual Distinction Award category.

Ms Paillas has been recognised for her ongoing commitment to the Inspired Voices Choir that performs 'in-house' at the Caroonna aged care facility and at other locations and events in the local area.

Ms Paillas established the choir in 2009 to provide an opportunity for Caroonna residents to socialise and enjoy the experience of being part of a performance choir.

"When we sing together and are fully involved in a song the rest of the world becomes unimportant for a short while. The music can transport us to another place and transcend our limitations," Ms Paillas said.

The Choir now boasts 48 members, including residents and family members from Caroonna, UnitingCare Ageing staff and volunteers, as well as residents of other aged care facilities.

Ms Paillas organises rehearsals and performances, and ensures the choir is inclusive and enjoyable for everyone.

She tailors songs and arrangements that play to the strengths of individuals as well as the group. This gives members a strong sense of belonging and enhances their capacity to sing with energy, optimism and emotional involvement.

The choir has brought together many people who would otherwise not have socialised, and fostered confidence and a sense of pride in all those who take part.

A recent survey of choir participants found many looked forward to choir practice and were re-arranging doctor's appointments and other weekly commitments to avoid missing a session. One hospitalised resident even insisted he be discharged in time to perform his solo in an evening concert.

At times, Ms Paillas has gone to extraordinary lengths to ensure residents continue to be involved in the choir, including making practice CDs to help them rehearse their songs when they are unwell or unable to attend.

Ms Paillas and 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 Individual Distinction Award winner will receive a \$5,000 ME Bank *EveryDay* Transaction Account and \$5,000 towards further education. The Outstanding Organisation and Team Innovation Award winners will each receive a \$10,000 development grant.

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.

MEDIA CONTACT: Luisa Saccotelli 0400 149 901 or Aileen Muldoon 0419 112 503.