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New graduate training program in the running for aged care award

An aged care team that has developed a new graduate training initiative for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) personal carers is a finalist in the 2014 HESTA Aged Care Awards.

The Graduate Aged Care Worker Program developed by Southern Cross Care's Workforce Development Team is one of five finalists in the Team Innovation Award category.

The program supports new graduates of the Certificate III in Aged Care, in gaining additional practical experience as personal carers and increases their understanding of Australian workplaces

Clinical Education Coordinator, Margaret Ann Shevlin of Southern Cross Care (SA&NT), said 91 per cent of graduates approaching their organisation for employment come from non-English speaking backgrounds.

"This program focuses on two elements — improving employability and increasing technical skills of graduates so they can be successful in an Australian workplace," Ms Shevlin said.

"It's a six-week course, with graduates spending time both in the classroom and undertaking on-the-job training.

"The classroom setting aims to improve knowledge and clinical competency, while on-the-job training assists in the transfer of knowledge and practical skills, and boosts employability."

Graduates are allocated a residential site and are 'buddied' with a senior personal carer who has undertaken a mentor training workshop to develop skills and knowledge to assist the new graduate.

The training incorporates activities specifically targeting new migrants and refugees, who are learning English and developing skills required to effectively participate in the Australian workforce.

Mrs Shevlin said the program — which has been running for almost 5 years — has a 94 per cent success rate.

"Southern Cross Care has achieved a 70 per cent graduate retention rate, with 68 per cent of participants securing permanent employment," Ms Shevlin said.

"Graduates of the program show improved work performance in areas including problem solving, initiative, teamwork and efficiency," she said.

Mrs Shevlin 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 Outstanding Organisation and Team Innovation Award winners will each receive a \$10,000 development grant. 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 for the awards dinner or to learn more about the awards.

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