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Telehealth service recognised for improving Aboriginal health

An aged care provider using telehealth services to reach out to Indigenous communities in New South Wales and Queensland is a finalist in the 2014 HESTA Aged Care Awards.

The group — integratedliving Australia, based in Muswellbrook, New South Wales — is one of five finalists in the Organisation Award category.

Chief Executive Officer, Catherine Daley, said the *Staying Strong* Telehealth Pilot Project — funded by the Australian Department of Health — was designed to find innovative ways to deliver services to Indigenous communities in remote and rural areas.

“The project evaluation identified that telehealth monitoring at home reduced GP home visits and unplanned hospitalisations, through more accurate and timely GP diagnosis,” Ms Daley said.

“We’ve found that, with in-home telehealth monitoring, clients are taking charge and self-managing their health conditions.

“We piloted the telehealth model successfully in a number of Indigenous communities and now plan to extend services throughout New South Wales and Queensland, before moving into other states.”

The technology offers an individualised monitoring plan for clients who remain at home. Clients are trained in the use of the equipment and prompted to answer a daily ‘health interview’ and to monitor their vital signs.

Responses are recorded and transmitted to integratedliving nurses via a secure website. Depending on the monitoring results, the nurse liaises with the client, GP or local Aboriginal health service.

“Resulting interventions include follow-up GP consultation, specialist assessment, medication review and lifestyle changes,” Ms Daley said.

“This level of individualised monitoring and access to health services gives peace of mind to the clients’ families.

“Telehealth has provided opportunities to leverage services in a cost-effective way, while improving the social connectedness and health of consumers who are overcoming isolation to access health care.”

Ms Daley 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. 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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