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New approach to life and death recognised in aged care awards

A renewed focus on end-of-life care has earned Southern Cross Care Victoria a finalist place in the 2014 HESTA Aged Care Awards.

Southern Cross Care, one of five finalists in the Outstanding Organisation Award category, has been recognised for respecting resident choice and focussing on the human side of palliative care.

Southern Cross Care Executive Manager, Wendy Waddell, said the organisation was adept at providing clinical support to dying residents but wanted to focus on improving quality of life throughout this stage.

“We conducted an in-depth review which found that, while our staff were competent with the clinical support and pain management of residents, we needed to expand all aspects of support including emotional, spiritual, relationships, resident wishes, likes and dislikes,” Ms Waddell said.

“Staff at each home now view end-of-life care as a team approach that places far greater emphasis on the human side of dying. This ensures that when residents die, they do so with the dignity and respect they deserve, and are fully supported and individually understood.

“We have introduced meals for visiting family members and fold-out beds for those staying over, to give them the option to stay longer.”

Palliative care equipment, such as comfort mattresses, has also been provided for residents, along with music, aromatherapy and soft lighting to create a soothing and peaceful atmosphere in the room.

Ms Waddell said that staff in each home have resolved that no resident will die alone and, where family cannot be there, extra staff are rostered to ensure the resident has someone with them at all times.

“The support doesn’t end with a resident’s death. At least one staff member will always be at the funeral and a personalised memorial service is held in the aged care home, featuring a memory book with photos and accounts of the resident’s life.”

The judges praised the palliative care initiative for respecting patient choice in end-of-life care.

Ms Waddell 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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