

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Creator of Australia's first dementia garden honoured

A Newcastle aged care development manager who created one of Australia's first gardens for people with dementia has been recognised for her passion and commitment to realising the initiative.

Sheryl Cain — of community care provider integratedliving Australia in Port Stephens — has spent six years developing the Raymond Terrace Dementia Garden which will soon be officially opened to the public.

Sheryl Cain is one of five finalists in the Individual Distinction category of the 2015 HESTA Aged Care Awards. The Awards recognise those in the aged care sector who make an exceptional contribution to improving the quality of life of older Australians.

Ms Cain said looking out of her office window to an ugly patch of grass got her thinking about creating a fully-blooming dementia garden in its place.

“At that time there were no dementia gardens in Australia — and very few examples anywhere in the world — but I had heard that these gardens could help people with dementia reconnect with memories, engage them in gardening and stimulate their senses,” Ms Cain said.

“Gardens like this have been shown to offer an enjoyable form of exercise, helping older people to maintain their mobility and flexibility, while encouraging endurance and strength.

“All of this helps enhance wellbeing and prevent diseases like osteoporosis, while stimulating an interest in nature, gardening and other group activities.”

Ms Cain said the Port Stephens community had supported the garden initiative by providing planning expertise, fundraising, plants and equipment.

“Every plant was specially chosen, whether to minimise harm or for its perfume, which can act as a gateway to memory.”

“Now, when I look outside my window I see up to 40 people potting plants, composting, cutting flowers, feeding the birds and fish, raking leaves and playing board games. The garden brings meaning, purpose and hope to those with dementia and watching it come to life has been a very rewarding experience.”

Finalists are in the running for a share of the \$30,000 prize pool provided by proud sponsor, industry super funds' owned bank, **ME**.

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

**ME** CEO, Jamie McPhee, said, “we're delighted to give these outstanding individuals, the opportunity to develop and continue to progress their profession, and support innovative health programs that ultimately benefit the entire industry and community.”

The winners will be revealed at the HESTA Aged Care Awards dinner on Thursday 27 August in Canberra.

Learn more about the Awards at [hestaawards.com.au](http://hestaawards.com.au)

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*The 2015 HESTA Aged Care Awards is an initiative of HESTA, run in partnership with the National Aged Care Alliance and proudly sponsored by **ME**.*