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South Australian youth worker a finalist in national community sector awards

A teacher and social worker helping young people at risk has been named one of five finalists in the Unsung Hero category of the 2013 HESTA Community Sector Awards.

Caz Lewis J.P. has spent the past 14 years as a volunteer and grassroots youth worker throughout the state, assisting homeless young people, children under guardianship, those who have dropped out of school and who may be tackling drug and alcohol problems.

The Unsung Hero Award recognises individuals who have made an exceptional contribution to enhancing the wellbeing of individuals or communities in need.

Mrs Lewis has a strong focus on re-engaging young people with education, while also working in a 24-hour youth sobering up and rehabilitation centre, and as a street youth outreach worker on weekends.

"I believe in trying to make positive, sustainable change in young people's lives so they can have a better future, one where they feel special, regardless of their initial circumstances," she said.

"Often this means supporting people to give up their addictions, keeping them safe and working towards their dreams, and perhaps more importantly, showing them what they need to do and the steps they can take to help turn dreams into reality."

The judges commended the nomination for Mrs Lewis' long-term work as a grassroots youth and social worker who has made a huge impact on the lives of the young people she has worked with and the broader community.

Mrs Lewis and the other finalists will be flown to Adelaide to attend an awards dinner, where the winners will be announced during the Australian Council of Social Service National Conference on Monday, 25 March 2013.

A \$30,000 prize pool will be shared among the winners, courtesy of long-term HESTA awards sponsor, ME Bank. The Unsung Hero Award winner will receive a \$5,000 ME Bank *EveryDay* Transaction Account and a \$5,000 education grant. The Social Impact and Organisation Award winners will each receive a \$10,000 development grant.

HESTA is the leading super fund for health and community services, with more than 750,000 members and \$21 billion in assets. More people in health and community services choose HESTA for their super.

Visit hestaawards.com.au to purchase tickets for the awards dinner or to learn more about the awards.

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