



PO Box 615
Carlton South VIC 3053
hestaawards.com.au

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Life-long community advocates share Unsung Hero title in top national awards

Two outstanding women who have dedicated most of their lives to helping people with disabilities and other people in need, have been named joint winners of the Unsung Hero Award at the inaugural 2013 HESTA Community Sector Awards.

The Victorian winners are Meron Morrison, aged 88, who helped establish the Box Hill Citizens Advice Bureau 45 years ago, and Pam Erwin, aged 73 of Greensborough, who works with people with disability.

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

Mrs Morrison still works as a volunteer at the Citizen's Advice Bureau she helped set up 45 years ago. During this period, she has made thousands of referrals to community services, as well as helping with tax returns, financial counselling, social work appointments, and provided emergency relief and Christmas hampers.

"I have been fortunate to work with this organisation to help provide caring support to thousands of people in our community and to help them through difficult times, when that support is needed more than ever," Mrs Morrison said.

Joint winner, Pam Erwin, is a widow with four children — three of whom have an intellectual disability. Nominated for her work with people with disability, Mrs Erwin bought a 16-seater commuter bus with her own funds, so students with learning difficulties could travel together on excursions.

"The chance for young people to travel together creates friendships and, in some cases, life-long bonds," Mrs Erwin said.

Mrs Erwin later secured further funds to purchase two additional large buses to transport people with disability to school, medical appointments, and movie and theatre nights. She also volunteers at HiCity, an assisted-employment workplace in Heidelberg, and coaches netball teams.

HESTA CEO, Anne-Marie Corboy, congratulated the winners of each category.

"The judges had a difficult decision to make, with hundreds of excellent nominations and 15 outstanding finalists. The winners are a credit to the sector and their communities. We're proud to honour these exceptional individuals and organisations," Ms Corboy said.

Mrs Morrison and Mrs Erwin each received a \$5,000 ME Bank *EveryDay* Transaction Account — courtesy of long-term HESTA awards sponsor, ME Bank.

The winners of the HESTA Community Sector Awards were announced at an awards dinner in Adelaide on 25 March — during the Australian Council of Social Service National Conference.

The Social Impact and Organisation Award winners each received a \$10,000 development grant, courtesy of ME Bank.

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.

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MEDIA CONTACT: Luisa Saccotelli 0400 149 901 or Aileen Muldoon 0419 112 503