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Sydney women's advocate a finalist in national community sector awards

Sydney social worker, Souhair Afiouny, who spent two decades assisting refugee women, has been named one of five finalists in the Unsung Hero category of the 2013 HESTA Community Sector Awards.

Ms Afiouny was recognised as a finalist for her work catering to the social, educational, vocational, recreational and, at times, spiritual needs of refugees and other women throughout Sydney.

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

In her work with the Islamic Womens' Welfare Association, Ms Afiouny has helped women in refuges escaping domestic violence, as well as those who are homeless, and women and children experiencing discrimination, emotional and financial abuse or other hardships.

She also worked to encourage the early detection of cancer and helped establish a dialogue between the Muslim community and the New South Wales police, through the 'Unlocking Doors' initiative of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

"I have been privileged to do this community development work and to work in the social justice field, where I am very conscious of the responsibility that people place in me to help them fix their lives or to guide them," she said.

The judges commended Ms Afiouny's effective social justice work and her work as a campaigner with a focus on inclusion across religious groups.

Ms Afiouny 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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