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Media release 18 March 2013

Food rescue service a finalist in national community sector awards

A Canberra food rescue service — which distributes leftover food from restaurants, caterers and supermarkets to more than 80 charities — has been named one of five finalists in the Social Impact category of the 2013 HESTA Community Sector Awards.

Communities@Work's food rescue program, The Yellow Van, collects and distributes more than 20 tonnes of food per month, allowing charities to provide 2,000 meals per day to disadvantaged people living in the Canberra region.

The Social Impact Award recognises an individual, organisation or network that has made an outstanding contribution to social justice in Australia, through policy development, advocacy, leadership or representation.

Director of The Yellow Van, David Burnet, said the service had been operating for five years and provided food for domestic violence refuges, disability support services, homeless shelters, youth drop-in centres, refugee programs and school breakfast programs.

"This service is the only operation of its kind in Canberra that delivers fresh food in refrigerated vans on the same day it is rescued, so that food ends up in the hands of people who need it, rather than in the bin," he said.

"We specifically seek out fresh fruit and vegetables, dairy products, whole grains and meat products, so the charities can provide nutritious meals to their clients. It also allows the charities to redirect funding to other areas of their operations, like life skills programs and training for youth.

"The average Canberra household throws out \$1,000 of food per year. We believe this food shouldn't go to waste when there are hungry mouths to feed."

The judges commended The Yellow Van for providing ongoing assistance to a wide range of charities.

Mr Burnet 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 Social Impact and Organisation Award winners will each receive a \$10,000 development grant. The Unsung Hero Award winner will receive a \$5,000 ME Bank *EveryDay* Transaction Account and a \$5,000 education 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 for tickets to the awards dinner or to learn more about the awards.

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