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Grassroots project informs NSW mental health strategy

A grassroots project that mobilised people who had experienced mental illness to provide input into a draft strategic plan for mental health in NSW is named a finalist in the 2014 HESTA Community Sector Awards.

The Community Mobilisation Project based at the NSW Consumer Advisory Group – Mental Health Inc. is one of five finalists in the Social Impact category. The project directly involved consumers and consumer agencies from regional, rural and metropolitan areas in the development of the draft plan.

Senior Promotions and Operations Officer, Esther Pavel-Wood said the project provided a model of best practice that could be used to increase consumer engagement and participation Australia-wide.

“The project involved conducting consultation sessions across the state with people with a lived experience of mental illness acting as facilitators,” she said.

“A consultation pack was developed and provided to facilitators with the necessary information resources and tools required in order to hold effective consultations.

“A survey was also developed so that consumers unable to attend a consultation could also provide input to the draft strategy.”

Ms Pavel-Wood said the project received positive feedback from consumers who said it had enhanced their skill base and had given them an opportunity to act as facilitators in consultation groups for the first time in their lives.

“The project established a process that utilises local people to conduct consultations within their local community instead of parachuting in outside consultants to gather information,” she said.

“It demonstrated that consumer-led consultation is not only possible and sustainable but vital to informing government decision making.”

Ms Pavel-Wood will receive complimentary registration for the ACOSS National Conference, with interstate finalists flown to Brisbane for the awards dinner, where the winners will be announced on Wednesday 11 June 2014.

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

The HESTA Community Sector Awards are presented in partnership with ACOSS the peak body for community services in Australia, as part of their commitment to building a strong, sustainable community sector supporting the needs of people affected by poverty, disadvantage and inequality.

HESTA is the leading super fund for health and community services, with more than 770,000 members and \$27 billion in assets. More people in health and community services choose HESTA for their super.

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

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