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Carlton South VIC 3053
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Hobart Women's Shelter wins national community sector award

The Hobart Women's Shelter, which has been providing a safe haven for women and children for the past 40 years, has won the Organisation Award at the 2014 HESTA Community Sector Awards.

The shelter operates 10 safe houses throughout the northern suburbs of Hobart and a community centre in Glenorchy. It was recognised for its holistic and innovative approach to service delivery.

Executive Officer, Sabine Wagner, said the shelter first opened in 1974 and, in recent years, had initiated a range of educational and other new services to help women and their children.

"In addition to crisis accommodation and support, for the past three years we have been providing services including the Women's Integrated Support Pilot Project, women's support groups and a women's choir," Ms Wagner said.

"Another key initiative is the Family Literacy and Vocational Education Resources and Support program, which supports women in rebuilding their lives after experiencing homelessness and/or domestic violence.

"The objective is to find opportunities for women to develop new learning skills and plan pathways into further study or employment, enabling them to live independent lives and teach their children to value educational achievement and life-long learning."

Ms Wagner said the program had contributed to a profound improvement in the way the women perceived themselves. More than half of the women who have undertaken the program have gone on to further study, while others have found jobs or become volunteers.

The Hobart Women's Shelter also published an anthology of biographical stories dealing with the theme of positive change — written by women — called *'Now and Then: Stories about Change'*.

HESTA CEO, Anne-Marie Corboy presented Ms Wilson with her award during the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) National Conference in Brisbane on 11 June 2014.

"We are honoured to acknowledge the outstanding achievements of the Hobart Women's Shelter — an organisation that exemplifies the critical work being done in the community sector," Ms Corboy said.

Ms Wagner attributed the Shelter's longevity to the sad reality that most people know someone affected by abuse.

The Hobart Women's Shelter received a \$10,000 development grant courtesy of long-term HESTA awards supporter, ME Bank.

"The prize money will allow us to continue providing programs that help transform women's lives," Ms Wagner said.

The Social Impact Award winner Kairstien Wilson of the Association of Employees with Disability Inc. (VIC) and the Unsung Hero Award winner, Kat Armstrong of the Women in Prison Advocacy Network, (NSW) each received a \$5,000 ME Bank *Everyday* Transaction Account and a \$5,000 education grant.

The HESTA Community Sector Awards are presented in partnership with ACOSS, the peak body for community services in Australia, as part of its 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. To learn more about the awards visit **hestaawards.com.au**

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

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