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Southern NSW youth services group a finalist in national community sector awards

An organisation that provides support to young people and their families experiencing, or are at risk of, homelessness in regional New South Wales, is a finalist in the 2014 HESTA Community Sector Awards.

The Southern Youth and Family Services Association, is one of five finalists in the Social Impact category. They were recognised for providing a range of support services for young people and for its strong advocacy for positive change to reduce and prevent homelessness.

Policy Adviser, Helen Backhouse, said the organisation provides a range of services and in the 2012/13 financial year helped more than 2,500 young people and 1,500 families.

“Our services include accommodation, housing, education, training, employment, family support, Out-of-Home-Care, financial assistance, court support and living skills,” Ms Backhouse said.

“We also provide specific programs for young people, families, young parents, newly arrived immigrants, refugees, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and people from culturally diverse backgrounds.

“The commitment to social justice runs throughout the entire organisation, in its daily practice, interactions with the community and its public advocacy.”

Ms Backhouse said the organisation’s broad approach to challenging myths and stereotypes was highlighted recently when seven young clients held a media conference at the *2013 Youth Homelessness Matters Day*.

“Following the media conference, the young people, at the invitation of the NSW Treasurer, presented their short speeches in Parliament House, advocating for a commitment to funding and providing youth homeless services. Their strength, humour and tenacity touched the hearts of politicians in a way that will have a lasting impact.”

Ms Backhouse and the other interstate finalists will be flown to Brisbane to attend the awards dinner, where the winners will be announced during the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) National Conference 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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