

PO Box 615  
Carlton South VIC 3053  
hestaawards.com.au

 @HESTACSawards

**Media release: Thursday 12 June 2014**

## **NSW prisoners' advocate wins community sector 'Unsung Hero' award**

A former prisoner who rebuilt her life and started a grassroots charitable organisation to mentor other women affected by the criminal justice system has won the Unsung Hero Award at the 2014 HESTA Community Sector Awards.

Kat Armstrong, from the Women in Prison Advocacy Network (WIPAN), developed a mentoring program that supports women and female youth exiting prison as well as training them to become mentors themselves.

Ms Armstrong said WIPAN is the only community organisation in NSW dedicated solely to mentoring and advocating for women who are either within or exiting the criminal justice system.

"The organisation's mentoring program assists women to gain the skills, confidence and direction needed to overcome life's obstacles, particularly during the difficult transition period when leaving prison," Ms Armstrong said.

"We also run an accredited training course, in conjunction with TAFE NSW, to train female volunteers from the community to become mentors who can listen and support these women in a non-judgemental way."

Ms Armstrong said, since its inception in 2008, the organisation had trained 68 mentors and achieved almost an 80% success rate in keeping mentors and mentees out of prison. This has had a direct impact on reducing recidivism, which is currently 43% in NSW.

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

"Ms Armstrong's unwavering commitment to her mentoring program highlights the incredible dedication of those working in Australia's community sector — we are very proud to highlight her efforts with this national award," Ms Corboy said.

Ms Armstrong received a \$5,000 ME Bank *Everyday* Transaction Account and a \$5,000 education grant courtesy of long-term awards supporter, ME Bank.

On accepting her award, Ms Armstrong confirmed that she would donate the prize money directly to WIPAN.

"All of these women deserve a second chance so the prize money will go towards training more mentors and supporting women exiting the system," Ms Armstrong said.

Social Impact Award winner, Kairstien Wilson of the Association of Employees with Disability Inc. (VIC) — trading as AED Legal Centre — also received a \$5,000 ME Bank *Everyday* Transaction Account and a \$5,000 education grant. Organisation Award winner, the Hobart Women's Shelter, received a \$10,000 development grant — also courtesy of ME Bank.

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.

To learn more about the awards visit [hestaawards.com.au](http://hestaawards.com.au)

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

Issued by H.E.S.T. Australia Ltd ABN 66 006 818 695 AFSL No. 235249 Trustee of Health Employees Superannuation Trust Australia (HESTA) ABN 64 971 749 321.