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Free iPhone app makes Villa Maria a finalist in community sector awards

A new iPhone app designed to make Melbourne more accessible to older people, those with a disability, and for carers, has seen the Villa Maria organisation named a finalist in the 2014 HESTA Community Sector Awards.

The Melbourne-based Villa Maria marketing team is one of five finalists in the Organisation Category, and was recognised for designing a new iPhone app 'Out & About – Accessing your Community'.

The not-for-profit Villa Maria organisation works with older people, children and adults with disabilities, their families and carers and designed the app to make planning a day out in Melbourne easier.

Villa Maria Executive Manager Marketing, Rebecca Ryan, said the app is the first of its kind in Australia and features venues and events based on their accessibility features.

“For those with a mobility limitation, simply heading out to the library or park or to catch up with friends can take enormous time, effort and planning to ensure that facilities like accessible parking, toilets, wheel chair ramps and public transport are available,” she said.

“The app puts information people need into the palm of their hand. They can use it before leaving home or when they’re out and about and filter information based on their own accessibility requirements.

“The app currently contains listings from the whole of greater Melbourne from the Mornington Peninsula in the south to the city of Wyndham in the west, the city of Hume in the north and the Yarra Ranges in the east.

“Over 2,000 downloads of the app in the first three months gives some objective measure of the app’s impact so far.”

Ms Ryan 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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