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NSW program empowering young carers a finalist in national community sector awards

A program supporting young carers to become role models in the community — so they can help other youth in similar circumstances — has been named a finalist in the 2014 HESTA Community Sector Awards.

The Young Carer Leadership program run by Carers NSW was recognised as one of five finalists in the Social Impact category for raising awareness of the role of young carers and improving support for them.

Carers NSW CEO, Elena Katrakis, said there were more than 850,000 carers in NSW and at least 100,000 of these are aged 25 years and under.

“There are many young people who are caring for a family member or friend who has a disability, mental illness, drug or alcohol dependency, chronic or terminal illness, or who is frail,” she said.

“These young people are a vulnerable group of carers. They are carrying out significant caring tasks and assume responsibilities usually associated with adulthood. Many of them don’t identify as being carers, or are not recognised as carers by their family, professionals or the community.

“This program empowers young carers to speak publicly about their own experiences, act as role models to raise awareness of the issues they’ve experienced, and to help improve support from service providers.”

The program involves a two-day workshop, providing young carers with valuable leadership, media and presentation skills. “After completing the workshop, the graduates become Young Carer Leaders and are supported to pursue opportunities and to share their personal stories more widely,” Ms Katrakis said.

“Some Young Carer Leaders have given presentations at schools and conferences, others have featured in the media, appearing on the SBS Insight program, Today Tonight, and in Marie Claire magazine.”

Ms Katrakis 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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