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## Successful school program aims to stop cycle of domestic violence

A national education program delivered to primary and secondary school students has been recognised for helping to prevent the cycle of domestic violence.

White Ribbon Australia's *Breaking the Silence* Schools Program supports principals and senior teachers to embed models of respectful relationships in school culture and classroom activities. Students learn and experience respectful relationships, which helps prevent violence against women and girls.

The Program is one of five finalists in the Social Impact category of the 2015 HESTA Community Sector Awards. The Awards recognise those in the community sector who've made an exceptional contribution to social justice in Australia by enhancing the wellbeing of disadvantaged individuals and communities.

White Ribbon Australia CEO, Libby Davies said the Program adopted a best practice approach to educating school leadership on the issue and provided tools to build respectful relationships across the school environment, including into families and the wider community.

"Since its inception in 2009, the Program has been established in over 200 schools, reaching 110,000 children and 10,000 teachers," Ms Davies said.

"It has been endorsed by State and Territory governments and is flexible, age appropriate and culturally sensitive to ensure we meet the needs of individual schools and the wider community.

"It also assists schools to implement safer procedures to combat abuse at any level and equips teachers to respond to disclosures of violence by providing referral pathways to more specialist services if required."

Ms Davies said the organisation recently commissioned a national Youth Survey that found 75 per cent of young people believed that domestic violence was a common part of Australian society. The views of young people heightened the critical role of education in helping to prevent domestic violence.

"The survey highlights the need for our Program to be delivered to more schools so we can bring about greater social change and reduce the incidence of domestic violence across Australia," she said.

The Social Impact Award winner will receive \$5,000 in a **ME EveryDay** Transaction Account and a \$5,000 education grant. There are two other categories — Unsung Hero and Organisation. The Unsung Hero winner will also receive \$5,000 in a **ME EveryDay** Transaction Account and a \$5,000 education grant. The Organisation winner will receive a \$10,000 development grant, also courtesy of proud awards sponsor **ME**.

Finalists will be flown to Sydney for the awards dinner on 25 June 2015, where the winners will be revealed.

The HESTA Community Sector Awards are presented in partnership with the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) as part of the ACOSS National Conference 2015 and have been sponsored by ME since they started in 2012.

Learn more about the awards at [hestaawards.com.au](http://hestaawards.com.au)

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**HESTA is the super fund for health and community services, with more than 800,000 members and \$32 billion in assets.**