



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### St Kilda social housing advocate wins community sector award

A St Kilda community housing advocate, who developed a profitable social housing business providing affordable accommodation to low-income households, has won the Social Impact Award at the 2015 HESTA Community Sector Awards.

Karen Barnett — of Port Phillip Housing Association — was recognised for her 25-year commitment to Victoria's community housing sector and contributing to the development of local, state and national housing policies.

Ms Barnett started working in 1990 as a part-time, sole worker, managing 41 tenancies and developed the association into an award-winning social housing business with assets worth \$300 million, employing 35 staff and managing 1,083 tenancies.

Under her leadership, the association was the first community housing organisation in Victoria to establish a maintenance arm to undertake the asset management of its portfolio.

It also developed an innovative partnership with local council, which included using the space above council-owned car parks to develop new social housing.

"Our organisation became the first community housing association in Victoria awarded a major urban-renewal project for the redevelopment of a large public-housing estate," Ms Barnett said.

"The project led to a six-fold increase in the amount of social housing on the Ashwood Estate as well as developing properties for private sale."

HESTA CEO, Debby Blakey, presented Ms Barnett with her award at the third annual HESTA Community Sector Awards Dinner in Sydney on 25 June 2015.

"We're honoured to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts of Ms Barnett in providing housing to low-income earners and connecting them to services they need to transform their lives," Ms Blakey said.

Ms Barnett received a \$5,000 **ME EveryDay** Transaction Account and a \$5,000 education grant, courtesy of proud Awards sponsor, **ME**.

Ms Barnett credited her team when accepting the award, saying, "it's recognition of the work of many people with a shared concern."

The Unsung Hero Award winner, Maureen Crawford from Victoria — who founded the Interchange program for families of children with disabilities — also received a \$5,000 **ME EveryDay** Transaction Account and a \$5,000 education grant. Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre in Western Australia accepted the Organisation Award, receiving a \$10,000 development grant for its innovative, native language program for children, also courtesy of **ME**.

Ms Blakey, said the three winners reflect the important work of those working in the community sector in building stronger, more inclusive communities.

"The work of our winners has significantly improved the lives of individuals and communities often over a long period of time and in difficult circumstances. We are proud to acknowledge their achievements and give them the recognition they deserve," she said.

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

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*The 2015 HESTA Community Sector Awards is an initiative of HESTA and ACOSS, proudly sponsored by the bank owned by industry super funds, **ME**.*