

MEDIA RELEASE

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National award for Kununurra's native language program

An immersion-based native language program for young children in Western Australia's remote Kununurra area has won the Organisation Award at the 2015 HESTA Community Sector Awards.

The program — run by the Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring (MDWg) Language and Culture Centre — has been recognised for its role in revitalising the endangered local Miriwoong language, through activities with young children such as storytelling, songs, games, and arts and crafts.

MDWg Chairperson, Rita Boombi, who is also directly involved in the program's delivery, said more than 200 children had taken part in the program through partnerships with local childcare centres, as well as primary and secondary schools.

Ms Boombi said children involved in the program have benefited from a stronger sense of self-esteem and wellbeing, and show a more positive attitude towards learning and attending school.

A recent project evaluation showed that staff of partner organisations strongly believe in the relevance and meaningfulness of the program for the children in their care.

Similarly, all children taking part in the program found it both enjoyable and important to be regularly learning the Miriwoong language, with 90 per cent of children saying their participation made them feel a greater sense of pride.

The program facilitator, Stephanie Woerde, said the initiative had not only made a positive difference in the lives of the children involved in the program, but also to the Miriwoong Elders, and the broader community.

"There is now an increased knowledge of the local Miriwoong language in the community, providing greater assurance that it will continue to be part of community life for generations to come," Ms Woerde said.

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

"We're proud to acknowledge the MDWg Language and Culture Centre for teaching young Aboriginal children their native language, to help transform their lives and enrich the whole community," Ms Blakey said.

The MDWg Language and Culture Centre received a \$10,000 development grant, courtesy of proud Awards sponsor, **ME**.

Accepting the award, Ms Boombi said the development grant would allow the program to publish more books for children and for others in the community who would like to learn the language.

The Unsung Hero Award winner, Maureen Crawford of *Interchange* in Victoria and Social Impact Award winner, Karen Barnett, of Victoria's Port Phillip Housing Association, each received a \$5,000 **ME Everyday** Transaction Account and a \$5,000 education grant.

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

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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**.*