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## Legal centre protects youth from cyber stalkers

A legal centre based at the University of New South Wales has been recognised for its innovative support to youth and for its leadership in addressing the online abuse of children and young people.

The National Children's and Youth Law Centre directly helped more than 1,600 young people in 2014, and indirectly helped well over 1.1 million through their website, *Lawstuff*.

The centre 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 that made an exceptional contribution to social justice in Australia by enhancing the wellbeing of disadvantaged individuals and communities.

Centre Director, Matthew Keeley said online safety matters now accounted for 25 per cent of the centre's caseload and covered issues such as cyberbullying, cyberstalking, 'revenge pornography', blackmail, sextortion and grooming.

"We are the only practical and legal problem-solving service for all Australians under 25. Being accessible online 24/7, with a free and entirely confidential service, young people are becoming increasingly comfortable seeking our help for these incredibly sensitive matters," Mr Keeley said.

"We find that young victims of sexualised online abuse are especially isolated and in need of support. They often tell us that they do not think they can report their problem to their parents, school or police. In these matters, we may be the only adults that they have confided in."

Mr Keeley said the centre has also undertaken leading research and has successfully advocated for changing state and federal laws concerning cyberbullying and sexting to better protect young people.

The centre was the leading NGO contributor to the *Enhancing Online Safety for Children Act*, which establishes an e-Safety Commissioner to resolve cyberbullying complaints and a system of take-down notices to remove bullying content from the Internet.

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.**

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