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## The Salvation Army Tasmania honoured for giving children a voice

The Salvation Army Tasmania has been recognised for developing an innovative early intervention project to engage with children who have witnessed family violence and trauma.

Safe From The Start is a project that assists support workers to talk with children under the age of eight who have witnessed family violence, been abused, affected by divorce, grief, bullying or who have experienced a natural disaster.

The Salvation Army Tasmania is among five finalists in the Organisation category of the 2015 HESTA Community Sector Awards. The Awards recognise those in the community sector who made an exceptional contribution to social justice in Australia by enhancing the wellbeing of disadvantaged individuals and communities.

The Salvation Army Tasmania's Development and Research Manager, Nell Kuilenburg, said the Safe from the Start project was developed in partnership with the University of Tasmania and Swinburne University. Part of the project involved developing evidence based one-day training program, website and a resource toolkit that has been distributed to 850 services around Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the US and the UK.

"Exposure to violence at a young age can impact the brain development of children but there is a lot we can do to help their future prospects by engaging and encouraging them to talk about their feelings," Ms Kuilenburg said.

"For a child living with violence, even one positive encounter involving an adult, can change their life for the better."

Ms Kuilenburg said the project aims is to ensure that children's voices are heard in the national discussion about family violence.

"As part of the project, we developed a training program and resources including children's books, puppets and DVDs to help adults engage with children in activity-based play to express their feelings. The project is unique in focusing on children and has a broad application to teachers, child carers, domestic violence and child protection workers, police, courts, foster carers and counsellors."

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