

Media release 19 September 2012

Tech-focused early childhood educator a national award finalist

An early childhood educator, from the Sydney suburb of Botany, has been named a finalist for the Outstanding Educator Award in the 2012 HESTA Early Childhood Education & Care Awards.

Kathryn Wetenhall, of John Brothie Nursery School, has been nominated for her extensive use of modern technology — particularly blogs — to observe and document the progress of children, as well as connect and communicate with their families.

According to Ms Wetenhall, parents and guardians are becoming increasingly busy and pressed for time, which has given rise to a need for new ways of engaging them in their child's education.

"We have amazing opportunities nowadays to enhance and document learning experiences for both parents and children. By keeping digital records accessible to the family, I aim to keep families informed about their child's learning journey and encourage family participation," Ms Wetenhall said.

"What we are looking for is the wow factor. When children are involved in an exciting new experience, we are able to record the experience using on-site cameras and upload it daily so the children's families can access it from wherever they happen to be.

"As well as videos and photographs of their children, we also keep individual digital journals for each child, and group project books, so parents can actually see what their child is learning throughout the year.

"We also have a large number of children from diverse cultural backgrounds with family overseas, so being able to involve them in the child's experiences is highly rewarding."

The judges commended Ms Wetenhall for taking an innovative approach to documenting child progress and engaging with family beyond traditional mediums.

The winner of the Outstanding Educator Award — and Advancing Practice Award — will be announced at a gala dinner during Early Childhood Australia's National Conference, at the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre on World Teachers' Day, Friday 5 October 2012. The Outstanding Educator winner will receive a \$5,000 ME Bank online *EveryDay* Transaction Account and a \$5,000 education grant.

HESTA is one of Australia's largest super funds, with more than 750,000 members and \$20b in assets. It is chosen by more people working in health and community services than any other fund.

Visit hestaawards.com.au to book tickets for the event or learn more about the awards.

MEDIA CONTACT: Jack Herbert 0405 584 567