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Bankstown Early Childhood Director a finalist in national awards

A Bankstown Early Childhood Director, who fostered a cohesive and skilled team of educators to enhance her centre's learning environment, is a finalist in the 2014 HESTA Early Childhood Education and Care Awards.

Ann Cahill, of UnitingCare Dove Cottage Children's Centre, is one of five finalists in the Outstanding Young Graduate Award category.

Ms Cahill has been recognised for her leadership in building the capacity of staff through professional learning, upgrading the centre's amenities and for forging links between the centre and the broader community.

Ms Cahill said engaging with staff on current learning theories and putting these into practice at the centre resulted in a united team with a shared vision and a clear sense of purpose in supporting children's learning.

"The team engaged in goal setting — for themselves and for the service — accepting ownership of the direction of the service and its guiding principles and practices," Ms Cahill said.

"We established a community of learners. As a result, the team implemented quality education and care, founded on relationship-based practice, where children are respected as individuals."

Ms Cahill led a major upgrade of the centre refurbishing the kitchen, outdoor play spaces, aesthetic enhancements and culturally relevant resources.

She was also involved in a number of community initiatives, including the development of a local Children and Family Hub and establishing a mentoring program with early childhood postgraduates.

Ms Cahill and other interstate finalists will be flown to Melbourne to attend an awards dinner, where the winners will be announced during the Early Childhood Australia National Conference on Saturday 6 September 2014.

A \$30,000 prize pool will be shared among the winners, generously provided by long-term HESTA awards supporter ME Bank.

The winner of the Outstanding Young Graduate Award will receive a \$10,000 development grant. The Advancing Pedagogy and Practice, and Excellence in Building Inclusion Award winners will each receive \$10,000 to further implement their program or initiative.

HESTA is the super fund for health and community services, with more than 785,000 members and \$28 billion in assets. More people in health and community services choose HESTA for their super.

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

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