

HESTA Australian Nursing Awards
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Queensland nurse's 'journey' strengthens kidney health

Three years ago renal nurse Jenny Anderson faced a choice — she could either walk away from the struggling Rockhampton Hospital Renal Service, which was floundering under a rapidly expanding workload and significant nursing workforce issues, or step up to the challenge of rebuilding the unit from the ground up.

Ms Anderson chose the latter. She successfully applied for the job of nurse unit manager, and took her passion — and the skills gained during 20 years of clinical nursing — to the task of strengthening and expanding the unit.

Today it has a dynamic team of mainly young nursing staff, assisted by a select band of experienced nurses “cajoled” out of retirement by Ms Anderson. The unit has moved into new purpose-built premises, established a satellite unit at Gladstone Hospital and significantly expanded home therapy services, allowing many patients to avoid a three hour drive for treatment.

The last few years had been “a journey”, Ms Anderson said, and her nomination in the Nurse of the Year category of the HESTA Australian Nursing Awards was a welcome chance to reflect on what she had achieved with her “amazing” team.

“I believe patients deserve the very best care that we can give them. Nursing is a privilege and you need to be doing the very best job you can to maintain high standards,” Ms Anderson said.

“I believe my job is to give staff, not just the clinical skills, but the skills to deal with all of the challenges that caring for patients with chronic kidney disease brings.”

With 30 per cent of renal patients from an Indigenous background, another of Ms Anderson's priorities has been ensuring culturally appropriate services that encourage Aboriginal patients to undertake and continue treatment.

She consulted with Indigenous patients and elders when establishing the new premises, commissioned Indigenous artworks for the unit and organised a community celebration featuring a traditional smoking ceremony.

Ms Anderson has also proven her ability to cope in a crisis. During the devastating Queensland floods last year, she ensured that more than 100 renal dialysis clients in outlying areas were able to continue their treatment, organising evacuation of some and helicopter drops of equipment to others.

There are five finalists in the Nurse of the Year category of the HESTA Australian Nursing Awards.

Nurse of the Year and Graduate Nurse of the Year will each receive a \$5,000 ME Bank *EveryDay* Transaction Account and a \$5,000 education grant. The Innovation in Nursing winner will receive a \$10,000 development grant to enhance or extend their project.

The prize money is provided by ME Bank, a supporter of the awards since 2008.

The winners will be announced at a gala dinner in Melbourne on Thursday 10 May. Interstate finalists will be flown to Melbourne for the event at Crown Entertainment Complex.

HESTA is one of Australia's largest superannuation funds with more than 730,000 members. It is chosen by more people working in health and community services than any other fund.

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

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