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Port Kembla nurse behind innovative workplace mental health program finalist in national nursing awards

A Port Kembla nurse — who re-designed and ran a program to increase awareness of mental health issues among her work colleagues — is a finalist in the 2014 HESTA Australian Nursing Awards.

Lara Tramacco, of BlueScope Steel (AIS) Pty Ltd's Port Kembla steelworks, has been recognised as one of five finalists in the Nurse of the Year category. She undertook initial training with the *beyondblue* Workplace Program and then tailored a mental health awareness campaign for the company's 3,500 employees.

Ms Tramacco has completed 32 mental health workshops for crews while working as a registered nurse at the company's on-site medical centre.

The workshops cover the signs and symptoms of mental health conditions and the ways in which interventions can successfully occur.

Ms Tramacco said people were always appreciative of the information, wishing they had known it earlier as it could have helped them through some difficult experiences.

"These workshops create a more open environment for discussing mental health issues without stigma, which is very beneficial in preventing workplace stress and associated mental health conditions," Ms Tramacco said.

Ms Tramacco developed the program while undertaking her normal duties, responding to accidents and emergencies.

Her work has increased awareness for individuals of their own mental health status, as well as that of their peers, when dealing with risk assessments and other safety issues.

The judges commended Ms Tramacco for taking an innovative approach to mental health promotion and early intervention in the workplace.

Ms Tramacco will attend an awards dinner in Sydney, where the winners will be announced on Thursday 8 May 2014.

A \$30,000 prize pool will be shared among the winners, courtesy of long-term HESTA awards supporter, ME Bank. The Nurse of the Year and the Outstanding Graduate Award winner will each receive a \$5,000 ME Bank *Everyday* Transaction account and a \$5,000 education grant. The Team Innovation Award winner will receive a \$10,000 development grant.

HESTA is the leading super fund for health and community services, with more than 770,000 members and \$27 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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