Media Release

Lake Macquarie nurse weathers the storm to win national nursing award

Catrin Dittmar, a Lake Macquarie nurse who kept aged care residents safe during a severe storm was named Nurse of the Year at the 2015 HESTA Australian Nursing Awards in Brisbane last night.

A nurse at the RSL Care Bolton Point retirement village, Mrs Dittmar was recognised for her resilience, resourcefulness and the continuity of care she provided to residents when cyclonic winds hit the facility in April this year.

Unusually heavy rain and cyclonic winds hit Australia's east coast in April 2015, with the storm causing power outages and damage to the property over several days.

"With standard operating procedures completely changed overnight and support services not able to be relied upon in the usual way, we had to focus on the core needs of our residents," Mrs Dittmar said.

"Our priority was to reorganise the team and resources to enable a flexible delivery of care that also maintained the fundamentals, while at the same time reassuring residents with current information about the storm.

"For a while we also had no landline phone and no communication between the five buildings on our campus and simple things like being able to reach and check on everyone was a significant challenge.

"After dealing with what was a chaotic situation over the hours and days that followed, we were able to slowly get back to an even footing, establishing a level of calm and order back into the facility."

HESTA CEO Debby Blakey presented Mrs Dittmar with the Award at an awards ceremony in Brisbane on 15 October 2015.

"We are pleased to recognise the dedication and commitment shown by Mrs Dittmar in ensuring not only the safety of the residents but also ensuring they received quality care in extremely difficult circumstances," Ms Blakey said.

Mrs Dittmar received a $5,000 **ME** EveryDay Transaction Account and $5,000 towards further education, courtesy of proud Awards sponsor, **ME**.

Mrs Dittmar said she would use the prize money to start her Masters degree in Nursing, specialising in aged care and palliative care. She is also planning a well-deserved holiday.

Other Award winners were Outstanding Graduate, Narelle Place from Barwon Health, Victoria, who also received a $5,000 **ME** EveryDay Transaction Account and $5,000 towards further education. Street Health from Homeless Healthcare (Mobile GP) in Perth took out the Team Innovation Award and received a $10,000 development grant, also courtesy of **ME.**

For more information about the awards visit **hestaawards.com.au**

Follow the Twitter conversation **@HESTANurseAwds**

*The 2015 HESTA Australian Nursing Awards is a HESTA initiative, run in partnership with the Australian College of Nursing (ACN) and proudly sponsored by the bank owned by industry super funds, **ME**.*

Media contact

Luisa Saccotelli 0400 149 901 or Aileen Muldoon 0419 112 503.