

Media release 17 November 2011

Young WA Aboriginal health manager wins top award

Perth Aboriginal Health Services Manager Jonathan Ford has been named Australia's top Young Leader in primary health for his work establishing the Mooditj Koort health and wellness centre in Kwinana.

The inspirational 28-year-old took out the \$10,000 Young Leader category in the HESTA Primary Health Care Awards, held in partnership with the Australian General Practice Network (AGPN), for his role at Moorditj Koort – which means 'good heart' in the local Noongar language.

In his twelve months at the Rockingham Kwinana Division of General Practice, Mr Ford built a strong support network for the local Aboriginal community through a range of health awareness programs.

"I want to build a strong and supportive Aboriginal community who have access to the services they need under one roof, in a place run by locals that they trust," Mr Ford said.

Thanks to Mr Ford's initiative and leadership, Moorditj Koort is now fully operational.

It offers services to the Aboriginal community including chronic disease management, maternal group practice, practice liaison, outreach, school-based health clinics and tobacco cessation, as well as asthma and diabetes education, dentistry, and health promotion activities. It also offers access to psychologists and addiction counselling and management.

Mr Ford's knowledge of local Aboriginal tradition, culture, language and community has been invaluable to the team at Rockingham Kwinana.

Kwinana has the lowest Socio Economic Index For Areas (SEIFA) score in urban Western Australia and one of the highest urban concentrations of Indigenous Australians in the Perth metropolitan area.

Through Mr Ford's work, some of the pressures faced by residents have now been alleviated.

"I saw what it was like to grow up in a community with inadequate health services – I saw the toll it took on the whole community – and I knew I had to do something about it," Mr Ford said.

"The community needs to take ownership of health issues and we know that overcoming health is not just restricted to the health sector it is also about education and housing.

"I am confident that the work we have done and are continuing to do in the area is increasing the health and the health awareness of our community."

The HESTA Primary Health Care Award winners were announced at a gala dinner during AGPN's National Forum. Each winner received \$5,000 in an ME Bank Online Savings Account and \$5,000 towards further education or implementation of their program or initiative.

HESTA CEO Anne-Marie Corboy congratulated Mr Ford and the other two category winners. "The HESTA Primary Health Care Awards recognise frontline health workers helping their communities battle cancer, chronic disease, mental illness and injury. They are an opportunity to celebrate three outstanding contributions and to reflect on the amazing job done every day in primary health," Ms Corboy said.

More information: Michelle Edmunds 0413 120 342

Photographs are available on request.