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Carlton South VIC 3053
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Media release 14 May 2013

NSW health service leader a finalist in primary health awards

The primary care leader of an Aboriginal health service in regional New South Wales, who boosted patient services, has been named a finalist in the 2013 HESTA Primary Health Care Awards.

Shannon Robertson — of the Biripi Aboriginal Corporation Medical Centre in the mid-north coast town of Taree — has been recognised as one of four finalists in the Individual Distinction category for providing care of the highest order, while remodelling programs and services, and dramatically boosting patient services.

Mr Robertson oversaw a 30 per cent increase in services for Aboriginal people with complex care needs, and a 100 per cent increase in health assessments and care plans for people with chronic conditions in the area.

The awards recognise the dedication and professionalism of those working in primary health care including physiotherapists, dentists, pharmacists, therapists, GPs, rehabilitation professionals, health educators and medical practice managers.

Mr Robertson was nominated for the award by his health service colleagues, who highlighted his strategic leadership at a challenging time for the service when its future was under review and his help in expanding the reach of services.

"I came to the service at a difficult time when there was confusion about how to meet the requirements of funding bodies and deliver the right quality care mix, based on community need. Together, we have remodelled service delivery so we can offer a broader range of services — to try to close the gap in care between Aboriginal and non-Indigenous people in our community," Mr Robertson said.

The judges commended the nomination for demonstrating the work of a caring and skilled practitioner who has made a genuine contribution to patients, families and the community.

Shannon Robertson and the other finalists will be flown to Melbourne for an awards dinner on 6 June 2013, when the winners will be revealed.

A \$30,000 prize pool will be shared among the winners, courtesy of long-term HESTA awards sponsor, ME Bank. The Young Leader and the Individual Distinction Award winners will each receive a \$5,000 ME Bank *EveryDay* Transaction Account and a \$5,000 education grant. The Team Excellence Award winner will receive a \$10,000 development grant to put towards the implementation of their program or initiative.

HESTA is the leading super fund for health and community services, with more than 750,000 members and \$22 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.

MEDIA CONTACT: Luisa Saccotelli 0400 149 901 or Aileen Muldoon 0419 112 503