

Broome podiatry team building capacity in the Kimberley wins in national primary health care awards

A Western Australian team of regional podiatrists working to prevent diabetes related amputations was named the Team Excellence Award winner at the HESTA Primary Health Care Awards in Melbourne last night.

Based in Broome and Kununurra, the regional podiatrists from the Boab Health Services team provide the only podiatry services to remote communities across the Kimberley Region in Western Australia, covering an expanse of 419,558 square kilometres with a population of 34,794.

Amy Freeman, a regional podiatrist at Boab Health Services who undertook a review of current foot ulcer management in the region, said Indigenous people in the Kimberley are three times more likely to lose a lower limb due to diabetes-related conditions.

“Across the Kimberley, the rate of diabetes related lower limb amputation is two to three times the national average with an annual amputation rate of 15,” Ms Freeman said.

“The loss of a limb has far reaching impacts on an individual’s quality of life, their social and emotional wellbeing and their ability and value as a contributor within family and community.”

“What drives me as an educator and health professional is to make a difference to the lives of people who don’t necessarily have access to services. I’m proud of our team for building capacity across a number of remote teams from the ground up and the positive impact we’re making to the Kimberley.”

HESTA CEO Debby Blakey presented Ms Freeman with the Award at a dinner in Melbourne on 10 November.

“We are pleased to be supporting professionals showing exceptional leadership and commitment to achieving equality in health across Australia and bringing about positive changes in their chosen areas of work,” Ms Blakey said.

The team formed key partnerships and work closely with other professionals both within and external to Boab Health Services including Aboriginal care coordinators, diabetes educators, dietitians, medical staff, remote area nurses and administration staff to create an action plan to be used by service providers in other communities.

The HESTA Primary Health Care Awards recognise the dedication and professionalism of those working at the frontline of health care, including physiotherapists, dentists, pharmacists, therapists, GPs, rehabilitation professionals, health educators and medical practice managers.

The team received a \$10,000 development grant courtesy of proud Awards sponsor, **ME**.

Other Award winners were Individual Distinction, Don Palmer from NSW and Young Leader, Matthew Simpson from NSW Ambulance in Rozelle, who received a \$5,000 ME EveryDay Transaction Account and \$5,000 towards further education, also courtesy of ME.

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