

Media Release

28 October 2015



Young dentist delivering smiles in the Kimberley – a finalist in national primary health care awards

Today, HESTA announced Dr Jilen Patel as an Individual Distinction finalist in the 2015 HESTA Primary Health Care Awards, for his work in providing much needed — voluntary — clinical dental services, oral health care and education to remote Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley.

Dr Jilen Patel, a young dentist leading the Kimberley Dental Team, a not for profit organisation of volunteer dental and allied health professionals, has also helped establish mobile oral healthcare units delivering free dental care to the homeless, disadvantaged youth and the elderly living in residential care.

“Although dental services are a primary focus, a significant amount of time and effort is spent on oral health education and empowering both primary healthcare workers and staff with the skills and support to improve oral health care for residents.

“Our team is focused on providing easy to access, family friendly dental services, particularly in cases where access to ordinary services are limited, to people who are disadvantaged by barriers such as remoteness, cost and social adversity,” said Dr Patel.

“Underpinning the program’s success is the relationship we have built with the Aboriginal community, one based on respect, trust and friendship.”

During 2013, while delivering a newly built mobile dental clinic to Warmun community, Dr Patel and his team were involved in a devastating car accident. Dr Patel endured significant injuries, with his dominant hand crushed, he had multiple fractures. Despite requiring surgery for his injuries, after months of rehabilitation, Dr Patel and his team returned to their work where they continue to advance dental care in the region.

More than one million dollars’ worth of free dental treatment has been made available to vulnerable people across Western Australia through this wide-reaching prevention program initiated by The Kimberley Dental Team.

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.

Winners will be announced at the Awards dinner in Melbourne on Tuesday, 10 November.

The Individual Distinction and Young Leader Award winners will each receive a \$5,000 **ME** EveryDay transaction account and \$5,000 towards further education. The Team Excellence Award winner will receive a \$10,000 development grant.

For more information visit hestaawards.com.au

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The HESTA Primary Health Care Awards is a HESTA initiative, proudly sponsored by the bank owned by industry super funds, ME.

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