

## Young doctors project improving Indigenous health across Australia – a finalist in national primary health care awards

Today, HESTA announced the Young Doctors project as a Team Excellence finalist in the 2015 HESTA Primary Health Care Awards, for an initiative that trains Indigenous young people to be health ambassadors in their communities.

Designed and run by local Elders, respected community members and supported by health workers in each location, the Malpa Project initiative is an Aboriginal approach based on selecting young people with the right attitude and aptitude to become 'young doctors'.

Sammi Fatnowna, Malpa's national project manager said she strongly believes in empowering young people to become health leaders and has seen the direct benefit to communities.

"By preparing young people with the knowledge to provide hygiene, nutrition, environmental health and health literacy they are best suited to encourage others in the community to take on good habits," said Ms Fatnowna.

"Our Young Doctors are trained by a combination of Elders, traditional healers and community health workers, depending on the area, where the local language is used.

"This year more than 400 Young Doctors have been trained in NSW, Victoria, South Australia and Queensland and the projects run within primary school communities for fifteen weeks with fifteen young people between nine and ten years old.

By the end of 2015 there will be more than 500 Young Doctors across Australia. Participating schools have said that success can be measured by an increase in student attendance and academic achievement.

"We're demonstrating that shifting to genuine community capacity building is changing the health profiles of Indigenous people in rural, urban and remote locations and see this as a way to reduce longer term chronic health problems," said Ms Fatnowna.

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

For more information visit [hestaawards.com.au](http://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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